



## Postcards highlight local responsibility for threatened species

Picture postcards featuring threatened species including the natterjack toad (*Bufo calamita*), small pasque flower (*Pulsatilla pratensis*) and red kite (*Milvus milvus*) were sent in January 2007 to the heads of every single municipal authority in Denmark, with new year greetings from the current environment minister Connie Hedegaard. At the same time, every municipality was given special responsibility to protect one threatened species found locally. The idea behind the postcard campaign was to remind Denmark's new expanded municipalities of their obligation to cherish nature and ensure that threatened species are suitably protected.

### New year greetings

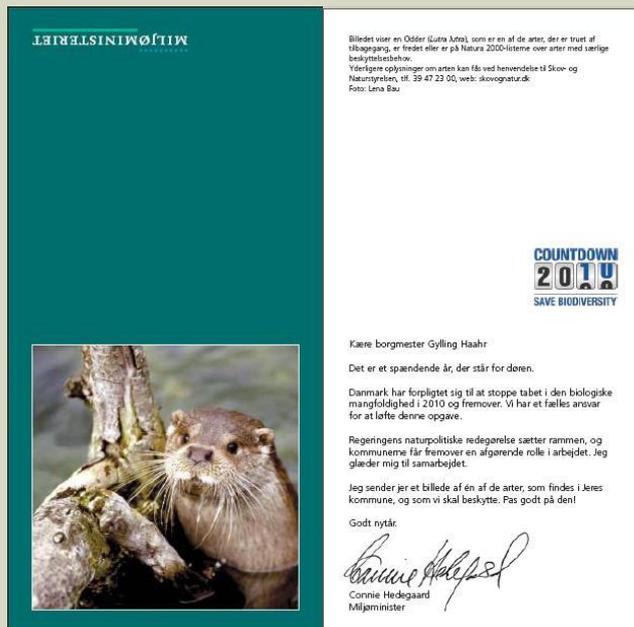
Administrative changes implemented in Denmark at the end of 2006 shifted responsibility for the conservation of threatened species from the former provincial authorities to the municipalities. At the same time, the Ministry of the Environment resolved to conduct an innovative publicity campaign. In collaboration with the national environmental research institute, the forest and nature conservation authorities and ornithological organisations, the ministry selected one threatened plant or animal species known to live in each municipality to assign to each local authority as their specific responsibility. Postcards featuring the selected species were also sent to local media. The campaign particularly stressed Denmark's responsibility to help halt the ongoing global decline in biodiversity by 2010. The postcards also contained references to the international Countdown 2010 initiative and its related targets.

### Giving conservation a face

The postcards aimed to highlight the municipal authorities' new obligations to protect nature, and to spread information about threatened plants and animals. Assigning a single species to each municipality makes the need to conserve threatened species feel more concrete, by giving the task a face – or a flower. In addition to increasing awareness of the need to protect the chosen species, such an approach can also increase wider local interest in the conservation of other rare species found locally, and their natural habitats.



Special responsibility for protecting the beautiful but threatened early purple orchid has been assigned by the Danish environmental authorities to the municipality of Odder. Photo: Henrik Pyndt Sørensen/Biofoto.



The Danish municipality of Varde received this postcard from the national environmental administration informing the local authorities about the area's otters (*Lutra lutra*) and calling for special collaboration on their conservation. Otter photo: Gunner Høj Christensen, AQUA.

### Rapid results

The Danish municipality of Odder received a postcard from environment minister Connie Hedegaard featuring a photograph of an early purple orchid (*Orchis mascula*) – a species protected throughout Denmark. The minister's greetings included an appeal for the local authorities to safeguard this beautiful flower in their municipality. This work began within just two weeks, when an alert local resident warned the authorities that some of these rare orchids were at risk. A patch of some 300 orchids had spread from a marsh and an apple orchard to the banks of a ditch that the authorities had been planning to clear out. After such measures, conducted every 5–10 years, the excavated material is usually dumped beside the ditch, where the orchids now grow. As a result of this new awareness, the authorities were able to ensure that the ditch-clearing work did not endanger the orchids.

## Postcards well received around Denmark

The postcards were warmly welcomed by heads of municipalities and local media throughout the country. The campaign gained positive media coverage in local newspapers over a period of two months. Many municipalities initiated their own nature conservation projects, including examples featured on this fact sheet.

## Postcard chain spreads to Norway

Norway picked up on the successful Danish postcard campaign, launching a similar scheme in 2008. Environment minister Erik Solheim sent a total of 430 personal postcards appealing to the heads of every single municipality the length of Norway to take special care of a chosen threatened species found locally. Solheim launched the Norwegian postcard campaign by posing for the TV cameras in the municipality of Nesodde holding a great crested newt (*Triturus cristatus*). The campaign was well received by both municipal leaders and the media, with coverage including weekly radio slots featuring a different species every Sunday throughout 2008.



Norway's environment minister Erik Solheim goes face to face with a great crested newt. Photo: Trond Folkersahm.

## Similar campaigns ahead elsewhere

Finland, the Faroe Islands and Iceland are all considering following the successful examples set in Denmark and Norway by carrying out similar postcard campaigns aiming to increase awareness at municipal level of the need to conserve biodiversity.

Denmark is also now adapting its own initiative in a new way. This latest campaign aims to highlight the need to conserve entire biotopes. The present environment minister Troels Lund Poulsen has sent new year greetings to all Danish municipalities in January 2010 using postcards featuring photographs of different types of natural habitat that are under threat.

### Sources:

Agency for Spatial and Environmental Planning [www.blst.dk](http://www.blst.dk)  
[http://www.blst.dk/Biodiversitet/Kommune2010/truede\\_dyr\\_planter/](http://www.blst.dk/Biodiversitet/Kommune2010/truede_dyr_planter/)  
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Danish National Environmental Research Institute [www.dmu.dk](http://www.dmu.dk)  
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[www.dirnat.no/kommunearter](http://www.dirnat.no/kommunearter)  
Municipality of Greve, Denmark, Michael Løgstrup  
Municipality of Ishøj, Denmark, Jørgen Johansen  
Municipality of Odder  
Århus Stiftstidende, January 18, 2007.



European green toad. Photo: Johnny Madsen/Biofoto.

## A brighter future for Denmark's green toads

Green toads (*Bufo viridis*) are rare in Denmark, where they are only found in a few scattered localities on islands, including some in the municipality of Greve. The toads need to keep warm, and their toadspawn will only develop into tadpoles and tiny toads in ponds that are shallow and sunlit. The overgrowth of ponds with reeds can be a serious problem. To help their own assigned threatened species to survive, the municipal authorities of Greve have been working since 2007 with Strandparken I/S and the Danish Society for Nature Conservation, clearing reeds from seven ponds and excavating four new ponds for the toads, with positive results. Toads took over the new ponds the following summer, and in summer 2009 their croaking could be heard and their spawn spotted in eight of the area's eleven potential spawning ponds.



Avocets have been protected in Denmark since 1922. Photo: Lars Gejl/Biofoto.

## Better habitats for avocets

The new year greetings sent to Ishøj gave the local authorities special responsibility to protect the rare avocet (*Recurvirostra avosetta*), which lives on shore meadows and small islands in the Strandparken area. In 2006 only three pairs nested locally, but the Ishøj authorities worked to restore suitable habitat by clearing overgrown vegetation. Sheep and goats have also been grazed on the islands to help keep them open, in the hope that more avocets will nest. It is too early as yet to assess how these measures will affect the future prospects of these striking birds.