



Five years of narding

Our care of unique meadows in Beskydy

Preservation of species-rich *Nardus* grasslands
in pSCI Beskydy



Final report of the project Preservation of species-rich Nardus grasslands in pSCI Beskydy

Preservation of species-rich Nardus grasslands in pSCI Beskydy (LIFE12 NAT/CZ/000629) project was implemented between 2014 and 2019. We took care of 50 hectares of meadows and pastures within the Site of Community Importance Beskydy. We were testing alternative and cheaper way of conservation management other than animal herding. We were providing environmental education to the wide public on the topic of meadows and pastures in Beskydy and succeeded to include local farmers. The project was implemented by ČSOP Salamandr, the partner of the project was the Ministry of the Environment of the Czech Republic. The entire project budget was 607,879 EUR. The fund from the LIFE programme of the European union was 455,544 EUR.



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Loosing meadows in Beskydy.

Beskydy—mountains in the easternmost part of the Czech Republic, landscape formed by shepherds and their flocks for centuries. Time passes and shepherds are gone. Those, who stayed cannot protect valuable meadows from young trees which naturally take over the habitat. Loosing meadows means loosing their tiny inhabitants. Beskydy need someone to care of them if they are to stay themselves.



Mountain meadow is the hotel and restaurant for pilgrims from the kingdom of insect, birds and other animals. The better care of meadows, the richer life in the mountains.

Pasture is the way, though it is a bit risky in the land of bears and wolves. Bringing water for sheeps daily and preparing hay for winter is time consuming chore. Let alone expensive. Pasture is simply very costly. That is why farmers and shepherds loose their interest.

The character of the mountains is dependent on animal herding. So the question is, how to continue with pasture without sheeps? We searched for the appropriate management, which would not ruing the landscape nor our wallets.

What were we doing?

We were taking care of 18% of Nardus grasslands in Beskydy during last five years.

We were clearing meadows of young trees and shrubs which started to grow in the meadows after years of neglect.

6 ha

Forest take over abandoned meadows. Slowly but steadily. That's why they need to be rescued as the Sleeping Beauty.

We were mulching old grass there, where its thick layer prevented growing flowers.

15 ha

Mulching is rather aggressive act. It is used rarely in case of meadows in protected areas. Certainly not more often than once per ten years. It is advised to do it early in the spring, before meadow is fully awake after winter.

We were disturbing grass turfs to create space for tiny herbs.

47 ha

We replaced sheep snouts and muzzles and thus created spots with open soil to help butterfly caterpillars to find the right temperature and moisture without searching for it on the edge of the meadow. Such spots also helped growing species of flowers which can't compete with other plants.

We were mowing
knowing, that regular
mowing is elemental for
it's quality and richness
of species.

173 ha

The part of this work was done
by local farmers who own these
lands as well as Salamandr in
cooperation with them. The
farmers contributed on 16% of the
total area.

We were herding
our sheeps in steep slopes
with no access for our
machines.

88 ha

A sheep is not a lawn mower
though. Each breed has different
apetite. We found out, that the
original breed from this area,
Valaška, is the most modest one.
It did not strike againts poor diet
and very tough terrain.

But that's not all.



What else were we doing?

We didn't have only a hay on our minds. We did some research and educative activities as well.



We were monitoring butterflies, these connoisseurs of meadows during last five years. Where there is abundance of butterflies, there is also abundance of other insect. We were also monitoring 24 botanical sites year by year, to evaluate impact of our management. We evaluated all meadows as one in the end.

We were monitoring

butterflies and plants, to make sure that we do our work well.

We were issuing

bulletin (*Zpravodaj CHKO Beskydy*), to inform about the project and other events in Beskydy.

We were organizing

the photo competition called *Valašská krajina* to get people out of their homes.

We were giving lectures

to the children in classrooms as well as out in meadows to inspire next generation of people who will be deciding about the future of Beskydy.

What did we learn?

We take care of meadows in Beskydy nearly twenty years. We got surprised anyway, how steep and stony nardus grasslands are. We could use our machines in such terrain only partly. We would never be successful without our determination and appetite of our sheeps.

We had always have a dialogue with local farmers. This time was different. They had to be in our favor for long time in row. It was thirty seven of them, who were actively cooperating with us. We are going to keep working with many of them in future. We are grateful to them.



And so, life came back to the meadows.

Little, fragrant flowers appeared here and butterflies appeared among them.

Mosaic of blooming meadows attracted peacock butterflies and fritillaries. Previously common Glanville Fritillary and Silver-spotted Skipper have returned.

Great reward for our work is return of critically endangered Large Blue butterfly. It went extinct during last decades but noticing our effort it has returned to four areas near Rožnov.

We enabled contented growth to Golden Potentilla on the ridge of the Radhošť mountain. This unmistakable spring flower grows in only a few more spots in Beskydy.

— *Return of the Large Blue butterfly
into pastures near Rožnov*

Resurrected meadows have to stay alive.

We monitored all six hundred *Nardus* grasslands in Beskydy and took care of number of them.

We brought meadows back to life but they are going to disappear without further care. That is why we set up *Managment plan for Nardus grasslands in pSCI Beskydy*. We estimated quality of meadows related to relevant agricultural subsidies and proposed improvements for those, who make decisions.

Nardus grassland in bloom, area of Horní Vsacko region —



We have not finished.

We have learned a lot about Nardus grasslands and we want to continue to care of them.



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