

Preservation of the Pearl Mussel (Mulette Perlière) in the Normandy Region

A CAP funded project which aimed to contribute to the preservation of the pearl mussel in the Normandy Region.

EAFRD-funded projects

Location: Normandy, France

Programming period: 2014-2020

Priority: P4 – Ecosystems management

Focus Area: Biodiversity's restoration, preservation & enhancement

Measures: M07 – Basic services & village renewal

Funding:

Total budget	140 000.00 (EUR)
EAFRD	70 000.00 (EUR)
National/Regional	70 000.00 (EUR)

Timeframe: 2017 to 2021

Project promoter: CPIE Collines Normandes

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- One board game was created, complete with an accompanying pedagogical guidebook dedicated to schoolteachers.
- 30 information panels were added near important environmental sites that have pearl mussel populations and supporting print materials were distributed locally.

Lessons & Recommendations

Even though the project was successful in raising general awareness about the pearl mussel, it is still difficult to achieve positive results because river watersheds are deeply impacted by many different pollutants that are brought in by the rain.

Context

Since 2010, the 'Collines Normandes' association – a Permanent Centre for Environmental Initiatives (CPIE) – undertakes actions to ensure the preservation of the freshwater pearl mussel within the framework of the national plan for species preservation in France. Its activities aim to support the return of the pearl mussel in Normandy's rivers, but replenishing the population of this endangered species depends upon improving and sustaining the water quality of the rivers. It is the combination of these actions that should lead to the stabilisation of the pearl mussel population and the long-term maintenance of river ecosystems.

From 2010 to 2016, 'Collines Normandes' was part of a LIFE+ project to protect the pearl mussel in partnership with the "Bretagne Vivante" association. In 2017, to continue these actions, the CPIE engaged in a

Summary

The 'Collines Normandes' association – a Permanent Centre for Environmental Initiatives (CPIE) launched a project for the preservation of the pearl mussel in the Normandy Region. This project took place from 2017 to 2021 and sought to preserve the freshwater pearl mussel and the river ecosystems upon which this endangered species depends.

Project results

- A database of mussel populations and habitats was created and shared with relevant stakeholders.
- More than 100 000 pearl mussels were raised at the Brasparts breeding station.
- Activities for local people reached 164 residents; 11 activities for schools reached 245 children; and a daytrip for the local high school (to the Brasparts breeding station) was attended by 32 students.



local water agency which aimed to improve both the conservation of river systems and the protection of the pearl mussel.

Objectives

The RDP project had aims to:

- Learn more about the pearl mussel species: habitat adaptation, life cycle, and river ecosystem.
- Protect the pearl mussel and its habitat. Reinforce the juvenile population in Normandy's rivers.
- Raise awareness within the local population, and especially fishers and anglers, about the species and their specificities.

Activities

The project enabled several different activities:

Activities to reinforce the pearl mussel population. These activities were related to the preservation and the reinforcement of the population. For these actions, it was necessary to rehabilitate the habitat and to improve the water quality of the rivers.

- Action 1: 'Settling in' of new adult populations at specific sites to follow their reproduction rate. Those sites that present satisfactory results in terms of survival and growth of pearl mussels are then selected for the reintroduction of juveniles.
- Action 2: Pearl mussel breeding in breeding tanks. After breeding, juveniles of a sufficient size are reintroduced into their natural environment. The reintroduction can only be made in river ecosystems that are considered to be suitable (oxygenation of sediments, preserved natural habitat) and that were previously identified in action 1.
- Action 3 (2023): An inventory of the species in Normandy's river system and an analysis of the natural environment
- In parallel and within the framework of the national plan for pearl mussel preservation, an action to improve river water quality is also in progress.

Activities to raise awareness about the species. A campaign of communication and awareness-raising actions were developed.

- Action 4: A training programme for fishers and anglers was organised to help them identify the pearl mussels in the rivers where they fish.
- Action 5: Delivering awareness-raising actions for children in school as well as other local stakeholders. The target groups were invited to discover the breeding sites and get information on the species.

- Action 6 (2021): Creation of a board game: "A l' eau Mulette!" ("Into the water, Pearl Mussel!") to present the urgency and the challenges of preserving water quality to help stakeholders understand their impact on the natural environment.

Main results

The project has achieved the following:

Action 1: A database of mussel populations and habitats was created and shared with relevant stakeholders.

Action 2 and 3: A report presenting the results of the breeding action was produced in 2021. Today, more than 100 000 pearl mussels have been raised at the Brasparts breeding station.

Action 4: A presentation and training programme were organised for local stakeholders and especially for fishers and anglers, and additional information about the pearl mussel was added to the local fishing Guide.

Action 5: 10 Activities for local people reached 164 residents; 11 activities for schools reached 245 children; and a daytrip for the local high school (to the Brasparts breeding station) was attended by 32 students.

Action 6: one board game was created, complete with an accompanying pedagogical guidebook dedicated to schoolteachers.

To complete this action, 30 information panels were added near important environmental sites that have pearl mussel populations and supporting print materials were distributed locally.

Key lessons

In general, the project helped to build a better understanding of the pearl mussel and their habitats. However, it was difficult to engage local stakeholders in the action and to make them realise that the species was endangered.

Even though the project was successful in raising general awareness about the pearl mussel, it is still difficult to achieve positive results because river watersheds are deeply impacted by many different pollutants.

Additional information:

n/a

