

## LATVIA NATIONAL REPORT FOR THE AQUATIC WARBLER MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING AND ACTION PLAN

This reporting format is designed to monitor the implementation of the Action Plan associated with the Memorandum of Understanding Concerning Conservation Measures for the Aquatic Warbler *Acrocephalus paludicola*. Reporting on the Action Plan's implementation will support information exchange throughout the range and assist the identification of necessary future actions by the Signatories. The questions presented here go beyond the scope of information already requested from CMS Contracting Parties for national reports to the CMS Conference of the Parties.

### GENERAL INFORMATION

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<p><b>Reports submitted to date:</b> none</p>
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<p><b>Memorandum Signed by the State:</b> 30.IV.2003</p>
<p><b>Designated Focal Point (and full contact details):</b></p> <p>Mārtiņš Kalniņš, Nature protection board. Eksporta iela 5, LV-1010 Riga, LATVIA</p>

## OBJECTIVES

### 1.0 POLICY AND LEGISLATIVE

#### 1.1. *To promote national and international broad policies and legislation which favour the conservation of the Aquatic Warbler and its habitat*

##### 1.1.1. *Promote the full protection of the Aquatic Warbler and its habitats through national and international legislation*

- a) Is the Aquatic Warbler protected under national legislation in your country?  
 Yes, the species is protected and protection level is sufficient  
 Yes, the species is protected, but protection level is not sufficient  
 No, the species is not protected
- b) If Yes, please describe the state of protection and limitations and conservation responsibilities this protection status imposes on the state, conservationists and land-users.

Species is protected by the Species and Habitats law of the Republic of Latvia (in force since April 5, 2000), Aquatic Warbler is included in the Annex 1: "Strictly protected species" of the regulations No. 396 of the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Latvia (accepted on November 14, 2000). The species is fully protected against killing and disturbance of individuals and breeding sites.

- c) If the Aquatic Warbler is not protected or protection level is not sufficient, please describe what your country is planning to do to ensure highest possible protection of the species.
- d) Is there national legislation in place in your country that ensures effective protection of Aquatic Warbler habitat (breeding, stop-over and wintering sites), including prevention of potentially detrimental activities (drainage, mineral extraction, industry, etc.).

Yes  No

- e) If Yes, please provide details.

Establishing of Specially Protected Nature Territories in the breeding and stop-over sites of protected species is governed by the regulations No. 415 of the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Latvia (accepted on March 28, 2000). Use of the Lake Liepāja restricted nature territory (the only known breeding site of Aquatic Warbler in Latvia) is regulated by the individual regulations No. 114.

- f) If No, please describe measures taken to ensure protection of Aquatic Warbler breeding habitats.

##### 1.1.2. *Seek national or international policy incentives to maintain suitable farming practices at breeding sites which are impacted by drainage or threatened by succession*

Are there any national or international policy incentives to maintain suitable farming practices at breeding sites in your country (agro-environmental schemes, etc.)?

Yes  No  Country is outside of breeding range

If yes, please describe briefly the nature of the incentives and whether they are effectively applied or used by farmers and land-managers.

The agri-environment scheme under Rural Development Programme in Latvia is active since 2004. Applying to the scheme is voluntary and does support management of existing agricultural lands. However, it does not support restoration of grassland habitats (on abandoned lands overgrown with bushes) suitable for Aquatic Warbler and other wet meadow bird species.

If no, please describe what measures are being taken to ensure availability of such incentives.

## 2.0 SPECIES AND HABITAT PROTECTION

### 2.1. *To promote adequate protection of the breeding sites and remove key factors adversely affecting the breeding habitat*

#### 2.1.1. *Seek designation as protected areas of all sites regularly holding breeding Aquatic Warblers.*

- a) In the table attached (Annex I), please provide details for all regularly occupied Aquatic Warbler breeding sites in your country and indicate their protection status (*please expand the table if necessary*).
- b) If Aquatic Warbler breeding sites currently are not fully protected or protection level is not sufficient, please provide information about constraints and what your country is planning to do to ensure full and adequate protection of these sites.
- c) If Site Management Plans have not been developed for all Aquatic Warbler breeding sites, please describe what hampers development of Management Plans and what your country is doing to ensure development, approval and implementation of Site Management Plans for regular Aquatic Warbler breeding sites.

Site management plan for the Lake Liepāja Natura 2000 site has not been elaborated. Needs for site management plans currently exceeds the existing capacity to develop these plans, since the planning process is a relatively new activity, and there are 336 Natura 2000 territories in Latvia in total.

- d) Please advise what assistance you would require to complete or improve existing Site Management Plans.

Support letter signed by an official from the EU to the Ministry of Environment of the Republic of Latvia to set Lake Liepāja site management plan as a priority could help the responsible authorities in Latvia to seek particular funding.

#### 2.1.2. *Prevent habitat alteration, habitat fragmentation, pollution and other factors that could be detrimental to the Aquatic Warbler in its breeding sites*

- a) Are new *development* projects that could potentially have a detrimental effect on current or potential Aquatic Warbler breeding sites (such as drainage, peat extraction, construction of highways, etc.) subject to environmental impact assessment in your country?

Yes       No       Country is outside of breeding range

However, potential Aquatic Warbler breeding sites outside the protected territories are not necessarily a subject to environmental impact assessment.

- b) Have there been any potentially detrimental projects *implemented* in any Aquatic Warbler habitat in your country since signing this Memorandum of Understanding?

Yes  No

- c) If yes, indicate sites involved, give details and describe the outcome of impact monitoring if available.

- d) Has implementation of any potentially detrimental project in any Aquatic Warbler habitat in your country been *halted* since signing this Memorandum of Understanding?

Yes  No  not applicable

(no project has been planned according to our knowledge)

- e) If Yes, please give details.

## **2.2. To manage the breeding habitat to increase numbers, productivity and distribution**

### *2.2.1. Regulate water levels and restore natural water conditions*

- a) Has water management been implemented at Aquatic Warbler breeding sites in your country?

Yes  No  Country is outside of breeding range

- b) If Yes, please describe actions taken, sites involved and effects expected/achieved.

- c) What constraints are limiting implementation of these activities at other sites in need of effective water management?

### *2.2.2. Prevent natural succession of the vegetation by undertaking management where necessary*

- a) Has vegetation management been undertaken at Aquatic Warbler breeding sites in your country to prevent natural succession?

Yes  No  Country is outside of breeding range

- b) If Yes, please describe actions taken (mowing, bush-removing, etc), what equipment was used for vegetation management and how efficient it was. Please refer to reports if available and comparative analysis of different types of equipment if it was conducted.

- c) If No, what constraints are limiting vegetation management at other sites where it is needed and what is your country doing to ensure proper vegetation management at Aquatic Warbler breeding sites?

Vegetation Management is constrained by the fact that Lake Liepāja does not have Site Management Plan and agri-environment scheme is not sufficiently promoted among land-owners and managers. Besides, agri-environment scheme does not support restoration of meadows (as mentioned above).

### 2.2.3. *Hand-scything and mowing*

- a) If historical information is available, please describe to which extent current Aquatic Warbler breeding sites were hand scythed and mown.

Probably all grassland area of the current Aquatic Warbler breeding site.

- b) Are hand-scything and mowing being applied for habitat conservation for the Aquatic Warbler in your country?

Yes  No  Country is outside of breeding range

- c) If Yes, please describe how this was approached, which sites were involved and the area covered. Please provide details if conservation effect of hand-scything and mowing has been evaluated. Please refer to published materials if available.

- d) What constraints are limiting hand-scything and mowing at sites where extensive habitat management is needed?

Hand-scything is hard to implement and not rewarding economically. Agri-environment scheme is not sufficiently promoted among land-owners.

### 2.2.4. *Controlled burning*

- a) Is controlled burning a legal habitat management tool in your country?

Yes  No

- b) If Yes, is burning used as a habitat management tool for Aquatic Warbler? Please describe actions taken, sites involved and effects achieved or expected. Please refer to published materials if information regarding the effects of controlled burning has been summarized and published.

- c) If No, then what actions are being undertaken to legalize controlled burning?

### 2.2.5. *Grazing*

- a) Has grazing been used for habitat management at Aquatic Warbler breeding sites in your country?

Yes  No  Country is outside of breeding range

- b) If yes, please describe which animals are used, which sites are involved and what effects are expected/achieved. Please give reference to published materials if information regarding the effects of grazing has been summarized and published.

Grazing is used at the Lake Liepāja coast in another place (neighbouring municipality), outside the known Aquatic Warbler breeding site, to restore and maintain wet meadows.

2.2.6. *Disseminate habitat management recommendations to land managers*

- a) Are Aquatic Warbler habitat management recommendations being disseminated to land managers and other interested parties in your country?

Yes  No  Country is outside of breeding range

- b) If Yes, please describe ways of dissemination of habitat management recommendations to land managers used: events, publications, etc. Please give reference to published materials.

- c) If No, then what constraints are limiting dissemination of habitat management recommendations and what should be done to overcome these constraints?

There has been no initiative to organize information campaign on the Lake Liepāja as Aquatic Warbler breeding site.

- d) Please advise if there is successful experience other Range States can draw on and what assistance your country would require to help share this information.

2.3. ***To protect the Aquatic Warbler and its habitat in the winter quarters and along the migration route***

2.3.1. *Promote the protection and appropriate management of wintering and passage sites*

- a) In the table attached (Annex I), please provide details about major Aquatic Warbler passage and wintering sites in your country (*please expand the table if necessary*)

- b) Are primary Aquatic Warbler passage/wintering sites appropriately managed in your country?

Fully  Partially  No

- c) Please list on-going and implemented projects and provide brief information about results achieved.

Grazing by horses at Lake Pape is organized by WWF-Latvia but apparently for other purposes than restoration of wet grassland habitats for birds. For instance, it does not involve cutting and removal of bushes.

- d) What are the remaining gaps and what is your country planning to do to ensure sufficient protection and management of primary passage/wintering sites?

2.4. ***To restore habitats for the Aquatic Warbler***

2.4.1. *Undertake the ecological restoration of potential breeding sites*

- a) Have potential or irregularly occupied Aquatic Warbler breeding sites in your country been evaluated?

Fully  Partially  No  Country is outside of breeding range

- b) If Yes, what initiatives aimed at ecological restoration of potential breeding sites have been undertaken in your country? Which sites are involved and what effects are expected/achieved?

Some potential irregular breeding sites may not be completely evaluated, but the small national population on the limit of species' breeding range limits the potential of research and conservation projects.

- c) If No, what are the constraints and which actions should be taken in order to overcome these constraints?

### 3.0 MONITORING AND RESEARCH

#### 3.1. *To develop and implement a monitoring programme enabling population trends to be tracked*

##### 3.1.1. *Distribution of a methodology for counting Aquatic Warblers*

- a) Is the methodology adopted for counting Aquatic Warblers used on the national level *different* to what is advised in the Aquatic Warbler Species Action Plan?

Yes  No  No methodology is adapted

- b) If Yes, please describe briefly possible differences and amendments.

- c) Does your country have experience applying this methodology and what can be learned from this experience?

- d) What does your country do to distribute and familiarize relevant institutions/specialists with this methodology?

##### 3.1.2. *Undertake national surveys to estimate breeding populations*

- a) Have national (all-country) surveys of Aquatic Warbler breeding population been undertaken in your country?

Yes (give years) the only breeding site is visited every year since 2000

No

Country is outside of breeding range

- b) If Yes, what methodology is used (full counts, transect counts, etc.) and what organization was coordinating the survey?

**full counts**

- c) What is the size and trend of the national breeding population (vocalizing males)? Please refer to published materials if applicable.

Year of survey:	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
Population size:	3	2	1	0	1	0

- d) If Yes, to which extent was the territory of your country covered by the survey:

Fully (> 90 % of suitable habitats surveyed)

High (60-90 % of suitable habitats surveyed)

Medium (30-60 % of suitable habitats surveyed)

Low (< 30 % of suitable habitats surveyed)

- e) When is the next national (all-country) survey of the Aquatic Warbler planned in your country?

The only breeding site at Lake Liepāja will be visited again in 2006.

- f) If no national surveys have been conducted, please indicate existing constraints and what you country going to do to ensure that national surveys of the Aquatic Warbler are conducted?

3.1.3. *Collect data at the major known passage sites and identify further resting sites*

- a) Have studies at known Aquatic Warbler passage sites been conducted in your country?

Yes  No

- b) If Yes, please describe briefly, which major passage sites are being monitored, what monitoring is being conducted (Aquatic Warbler population, habitat parameters, impact assessment, migration strategy, etc) and which organizations are involved?

Aquatic Warblers were captured during ACROPROJECT sites at Lake Liepāja (1987, 1988) and Lake Pape (1985–1990). Since 1991 the mist-netting occurs only at Lake Pape and too late in Autumn (in September) to compare with captures at the end of 1980s (end of July, beginning of August). Intensity of mist-netting has also decreased: at the moment only 20–50 m of mist nets remain, compared to ca. 180 m of mist-nets at the end of 1980s.

- c) What are the main findings and what conservation implications do they have?

- d) If Yes, to what extent are major known Aquatic Warbler passage sites are being monitored in your country?

- Fully (> 90% of known sites)  
 High (60-90 % of known sites)  
 Medium (30-60 % of known sites)  
 Low (< 30 % of known sites)

- f) To what extent have major Aquatic Warbler passage sites been identified in your country?

- Fully (> 90 % of suitable habitats surveyed)  
 High (60-90 % of suitable habitats surveyed)  
 Medium (30-60 % of suitable habitats surveyed)  
 Low (< 30 % of suitable habitats surveyed)  
 No monitoring is conducted

- g) What are the gaps and what is your country doing to address them?

3.1.4. *Identify major wintering areas*

- a) Have studies aimed at identifying Aquatic Warbler wintering areas have been conducted in your country?

Yes  No  Country is outside of wintering range

- b) If Yes, what are the main findings and conservation implications? If available, please refer to published reports.
- c) If Yes, To what extent was the territory of your country covered by the survey of wintering areas?
  - Fully (> 90 % of suitable habitats surveyed)
  - High (60-90 % of suitable habitats surveyed)
  - Medium (30-60 % of suitable habitats surveyed)
  - Low (< 30 % of suitable habitats surveyed)
- d) If wintering sites have been identified, to what extent are these sites being monitored during migration?
  - Fully (> 90% of known sites)
  - High (60-90 % of known sites)
  - Medium (30-60 % of known sites)
  - Low (< 30 % of known sites)
  - No monitoring is conducted
- e) If your country is outside of Aquatic Warbler wintering range, which international initiatives aimed at identification of Aquatic Warbler wintering grounds has your country been involved in? What are the main findings?

Planning discussions in International Aquatic Warbler Conservation Team to evaluate best method to identify and find Aquatic Warbler wintering habitat in Africa.

- f) What are the gaps and what needs to be done to help address them?

### 3.1.5. *Research into habitat characteristics at migration and wintering sites*

- a) Has research into habitat characteristics at migration and/or wintering sites been conducted in your country?
  - Yes      No
- b) If Yes, please provide a list of on-going and completed studies with references if results are already published.
- c) What are the main findings and conservation implications?
- d) What are the remaining gaps and what needs to be done to address them?

### 3.1.6. *Research on movements during the breeding season / exchange of subpopulations*

Has research on Aquatic Warbler movements during breeding season/exchange of subpopulations been conducted in your country?

- Yes  No  Country is outside of breeding range

If Yes, please describe which territories were covered, what methods were used (colour ringing, radio-tagging, etc.) and what were the main findings. Please give reference to published materials if available.

If Yes, was the research on movements during the breeding season coordinated with researchers from neighbouring Aquatic Warbler Range States.

- Yes  No

If the research hasn't been conducted, what is your country planning to do to initiate such cooperation?

3.1.7. *Develop and implement an international monitoring programme*

Is your country participating in development and/or implementation of international Aquatic Warbler monitoring programmes?

Yes  No

If Yes, please list on-going and completed projects and indicate which areas they focus on and which other countries are involved. Please provide reference to published results if available.

The species expert from Latvia has been participating in International Aquatic Warbler Conservation Team expeditions to monitor Aquatic Warbler populations.

Are there areas that haven't been properly addressed, if so, what needs to be done to assist your country in addressing these gaps?

3.2. *To promote research useful for the conservation of the Aquatic Warbler in the future*

3.2.1. *Undertake comparative studies on breeding success and population recruitment in different habitats*

a) Have studies on breeding success and population recruitment in different habitats been conducted in your country?

- Yes, in collaboration with other Range States
- Yes, on the national scale
- No comparative studies have been conducted
- Country is outside of breeding range

b) If available, please list on-going and completed studies and give reference to published reports.

c) What are the main findings of these studies?

d) Are there any future comparative studies your country is able to initiate? What would be needed to do this?

e) If no comparative studies are being implemented, what is your country planning to do to stimulate this research and what assistance would be required?

3.2.2. *Assess the effect of burning, scything, mowing, grazing and water conditions on breeding populations*

a) Effect of which of the following factors and potential habitat management techniques on Aquatic Warbler breeding population was assessed in your country?

- Controlled burning
- Scything
- Mowing
- Water conditions
- Other \_\_\_\_\_ (what)
- No assessment has been conducted

- b) What are the main findings and conservation implications? If available, please give reference to published reports.
- c) Are there any gaps? What limits further assessment of this factor's effects?

3.2.3. *Develop collaborative research and monitoring programmes between range-states*

- a) Is your country involved in international collaborative and monitoring programmes on the Aquatic Warbler?  
 Yes    No
- b) If yes, please provide brief details about on-going and completed projects. Which Aquatic Warbler range states are involved? What fields studied?

A method to identify Aquatic Warbler eggs by their microstructure from museum collection at Zoological Museum of University of Latvia is under development. This would enable us to evaluate a few historic records of the Aquatic Warbler breeding in Latvia.

- c) What are the main findings and conservation implications?
- d) What are the gaps and what is needed to address them?

#### 4.0 PUBLIC AWARENESS

##### 4.1. *To ensure development of a strong network of organisations and individuals committed to the conservation of the Aquatic Warbler*

- a) Does a network of organisations/individuals committed to the conservation of the Aquatic Warbler exist in your country?  
 Yes    No    not applicable (too tiny population)
- b) If Yes, how broad is this network and what organizations/individuals are taking the lead in facilitation and coordination of its development?
- c) What actions does your country undertake to broaden the circle of organisations and individuals committed to conservation of Aquatic Warbler?
- d) What successful experience can other Range States draw on?
- e) What would be needed to establish a network if it does not already exist or to improve an existing one?

##### 4.2. *To use the Aquatic Warbler as a flagship species*

Has the Aquatic Warbler been used as a flagship species in your country for the inventory and protection of wetlands?  
 Yes    No

If Yes, please briefly describe how and provide examples if available.

If No, what limits promotion and use of the Aquatic Warbler as a flagship species and how does your country plan to address this?

Insufficient information on the importance of Aquatic Warbler as a threatened species.

#### ***4.3. To prepare educational materials promoting and giving information***

a) Have any educational and promotional materials about Aquatic Warbler been developed in your country?

- Yes, specifically devoted to the Aquatic Warbler.
- Yes, the Aquatic Warbler is included into materials with a broader context.
- No, Aquatic Warbler is not covered in educational and promotional materials.

If Yes, please describe the nature of such materials and how they were disseminated. Please give reference to published materials if available.

A brochure devoted to nature processes, protection of birds and habitat management in floodplain meadows in Latvia as a product of a Life–Nature project was prepared in 2005 (Keišs O. 2005. Putni palieņu pļavās [Birds in floodplain meadows, in Latvian]. Latvian Ornithological Society, Riga, Latvia, 24 pages). The brochure was distributed to the landowners at the project sites (unfortunately Lake Liepāja is not project site at this Life–Nature project).

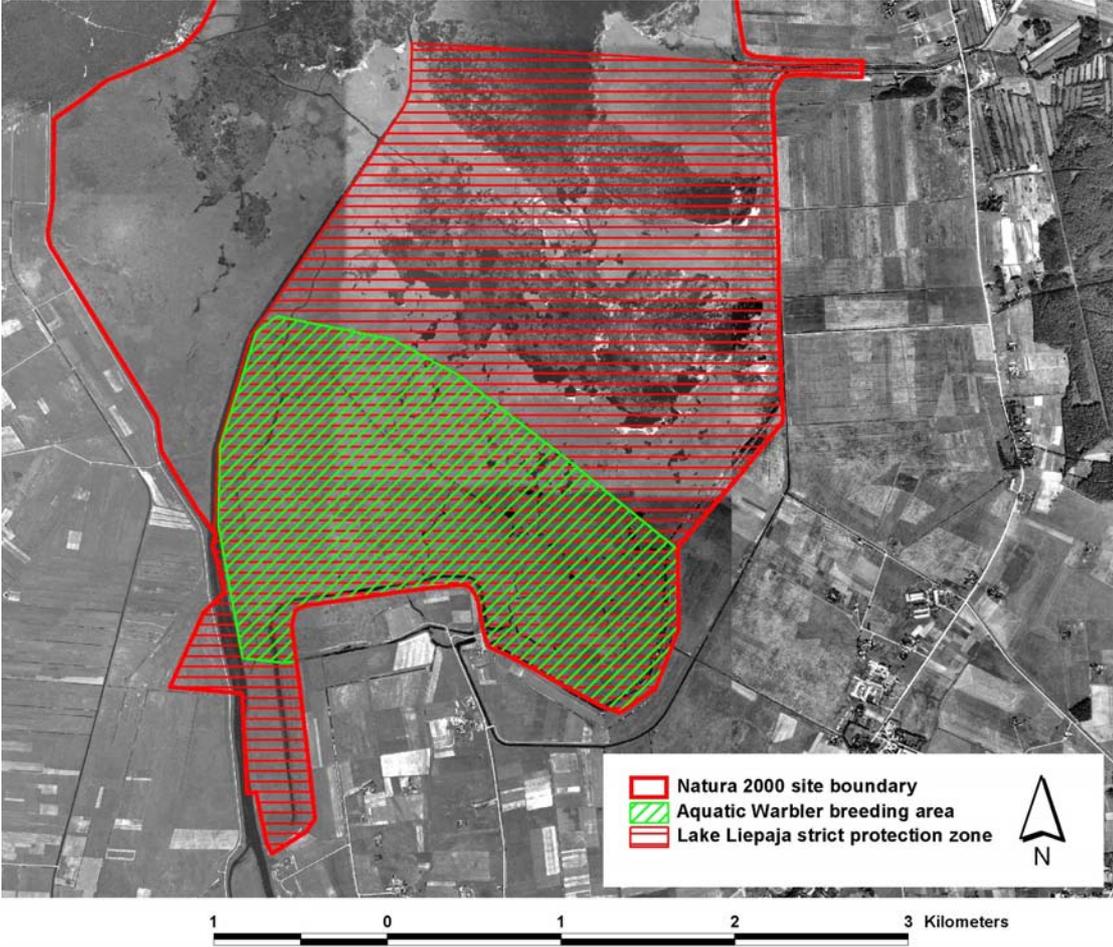
If No, please describe what limits development of such materials and give details about what your country is planning to do to promote Aquatic Warbler and its conservation.

## PART II. COUNTRY-SPECIFIC ACTIONS

Please report on the implementation of the country-specific actions listed for your country in Part II of the Action Plan and provide information if that is not already covered by your answers under Part I. Please describe not only the measures taken but also their impact on the Aquatic Warbler or its habitat in the context of the objectives of the Memorandum of Understanding and the Action Plan. Where you have already answered on country-specific actions in Part I, please only add a reference to the relevant answer here.

Lake Liepāja Aquatic Warbler breeding site has adequate legal protection status. As already mentioned, Lake Liepāja does not have Site Management Plan and habitat management at the Aquatic Warbler breeding area (see map) has not been planned and implemented.

**Aerial view of the Aquatic Warbler breeding site at lake Liepāja**

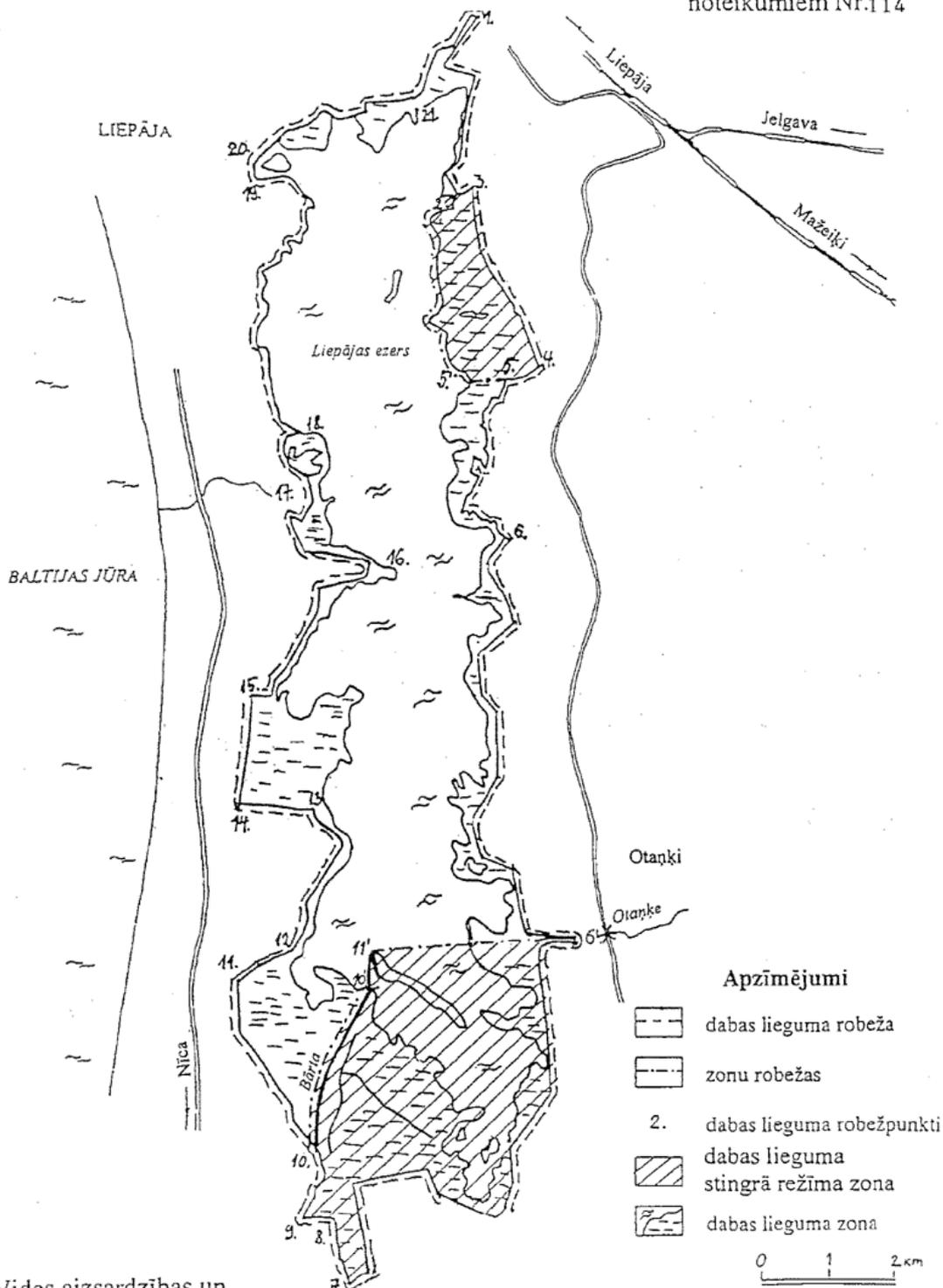


## Lake Liepāja restricted nature territory

(copy of the Annex 1 to the regulations Nr. 114 of the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Latvia: Map of the restricted nature territory "Liepājas ezers")

1.pielikums  
Ministru kabineta  
2000.gada 28.marta  
noteikumiem Nr.114

Dabas lieguma "Liepājas ezers" shēma



Vides aizsardzības un  
reģionālās attīstības ministrs

V.Balodis

**Annex I**

Name of the site, geographical coordinates	Status (B – breeding, W – wintering P – passage)	Aquatic Warbler population supported (vocalizing males (breeding) or individuals (migration or wintering))	Year of survey	Total area of the site	Area of the site under protection	Type of protection	Does protection level fully reject possible detrimental developments? [Yes/No]	Site Management Plan (D – developed, A - approved, I – implemented)
Lake Liepāja	B, P	B 0–5, P–?	2000–2005	B: 350–400 ha	all known breeding site	strictly protected area	Yes	
Lake Pape	P, (B ???)	unknown, up to 5 individuals captured in a season	1966–2005	passage site	Lake Pape Nature Park	Nature Park	Yes	