



SACHSEN-ANHALT



EUROPÄISCHE UNION

ELER

Europäischer Landwirtschaftsfonds für die Entwicklung des ländlichen Raums



SSC  
Species Survival Commission



# Status of the reintroduction project in "Zerbster Land" (Saxony-Anhalt, Germany)

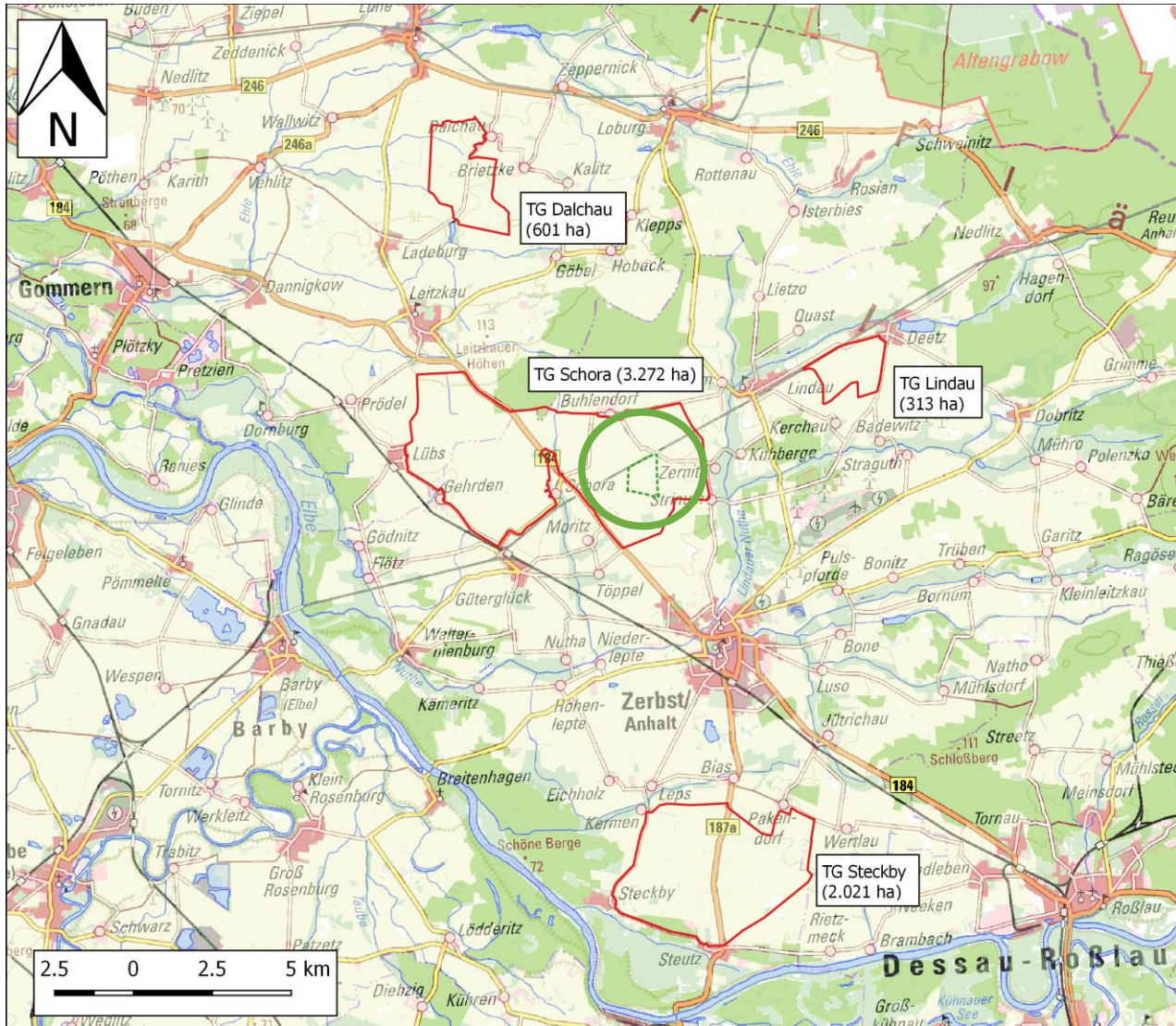


René Köhler  
Society for the Protection of Great Bustard  
Bratislava, 18 September 2023

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# 1. Where is Zerbster Land? Location of the project area



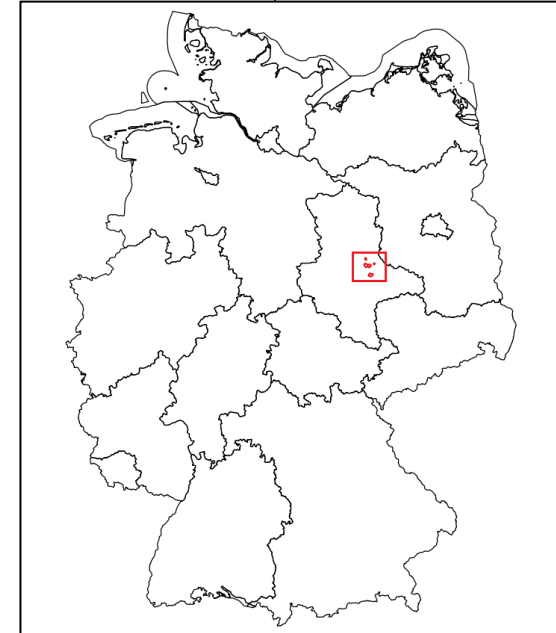
## Projektgebiet

- EU-SPA Zerbster Land
- NSG Osterwesten

Kartengrundlage: Bundesamt für Kartographie und Geodäsie (DTK 250)

Maßstab 1:120.000

**SPA:**  
62 km<sup>2</sup> in size  
98 % arable land



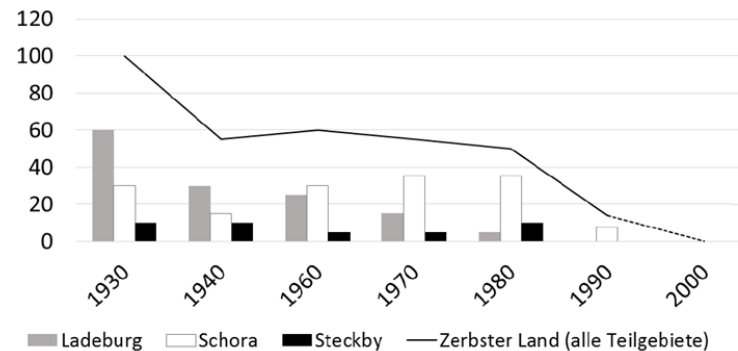
## 2. Past and causes of extinction in Zerbster Land



- traditional breeding area
- stable sub-population of approx. 50 to 60 individuals until the 1980s
- Great bustard reinforcement programme: release of 190 hand-reared juveniles between 1973 and 1981
- local extinction of the subpopulation in the 1990s



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STAAR (2016)

# 3. Feasibility study (2018/19)



- investigation on recently abandoned Great bustard areas -> Zerbster Land ranking first

## Content of the study, based on the IUCN guidelines for reintroductions (2013), i.a.:

- analysis of the reintroduction in England
- investigation of general suitability and of current threats
- acceptance study / socio-economic implications
- development of a release-strategy including selection of the core area for release
- indicators of success / monitoring
- schedule and cost calculation
- exit strategy

**Machbarkeitsstudie**  
zur Wiederansiedlung der  
Großtrappe im Zerbster Land

René Köhler  
Förderverein Großtrappenschutz e. V.

[https://www.grosstrappe.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/PDF\\_Machbarkeitsstudie-Zerbster-Land\\_28\\_06\\_19.pdf](https://www.grosstrappe.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/PDF_Machbarkeitsstudie-Zerbster-Land_28_06_19.pdf)

# 3. Feasibility study (2018/19)



- **Conclusion: clear recommendation for the start of a reintroduction project!**

- high proportion of open land
- low degree of fragmentation
- proximity to existing breeding areas
- regular sightings of dismigrating immature birds

- **Prerequisites:**

- long-term support by the state / acquisition of suitable funding programmes
- high acceptance by local land users and local residents
- habitat improvement
- implementation of disturbance and predation management

**FÖRDERVEREIN e.V.  
GROSSTRAPPENSCHUTZ**

## Machbarkeitsstudie

zur Wiederansiedlung der  
Großstrappe im Zerbster Land

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## 4. Project preparations (starting 2019)

i.a.:

- technical exchange / consultations with responsible authorities and interest groups
- intensive advice to local farmers on suitable agri-environmental schemes
- public relations / cooperation agreements
- construction of an anti-predator fence (14 ha)



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# 5. Implementation of the reintroduction project (starting 2021)



- start of EAFRD pilot project (2021-2024)
- development of infrastructure (project office, monitoring, visitor management, etc.)
- hiring project staff



# 5. Implementation of the reintroduction project (starting 2021)



- habitat improvement measures
- 2023: nature reserve (100 ha)
  - 14 ha anti-predator-fence
  - 6 ha fallows with special seed mixtures
  - 2 ha alfalfa-clover-mix
  - 100 % herbicide free farming



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## 5. Implementation of the reintroduction project (starting 2021)



Arrival of 10 hand-reared bustards in the release area on 26 July 2022

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# 5. Implementation of the reintroduction project (starting 2021)



- successive release into the wild (“soft release”) cf. *Guidelines for the reinforcement and reintroduction of the Great Bustard (Otis tarda)*, adopted at MOS3, April 2013
- temporary supplementary feeding outside the aviary
- temporary keeping decoys in the aviary

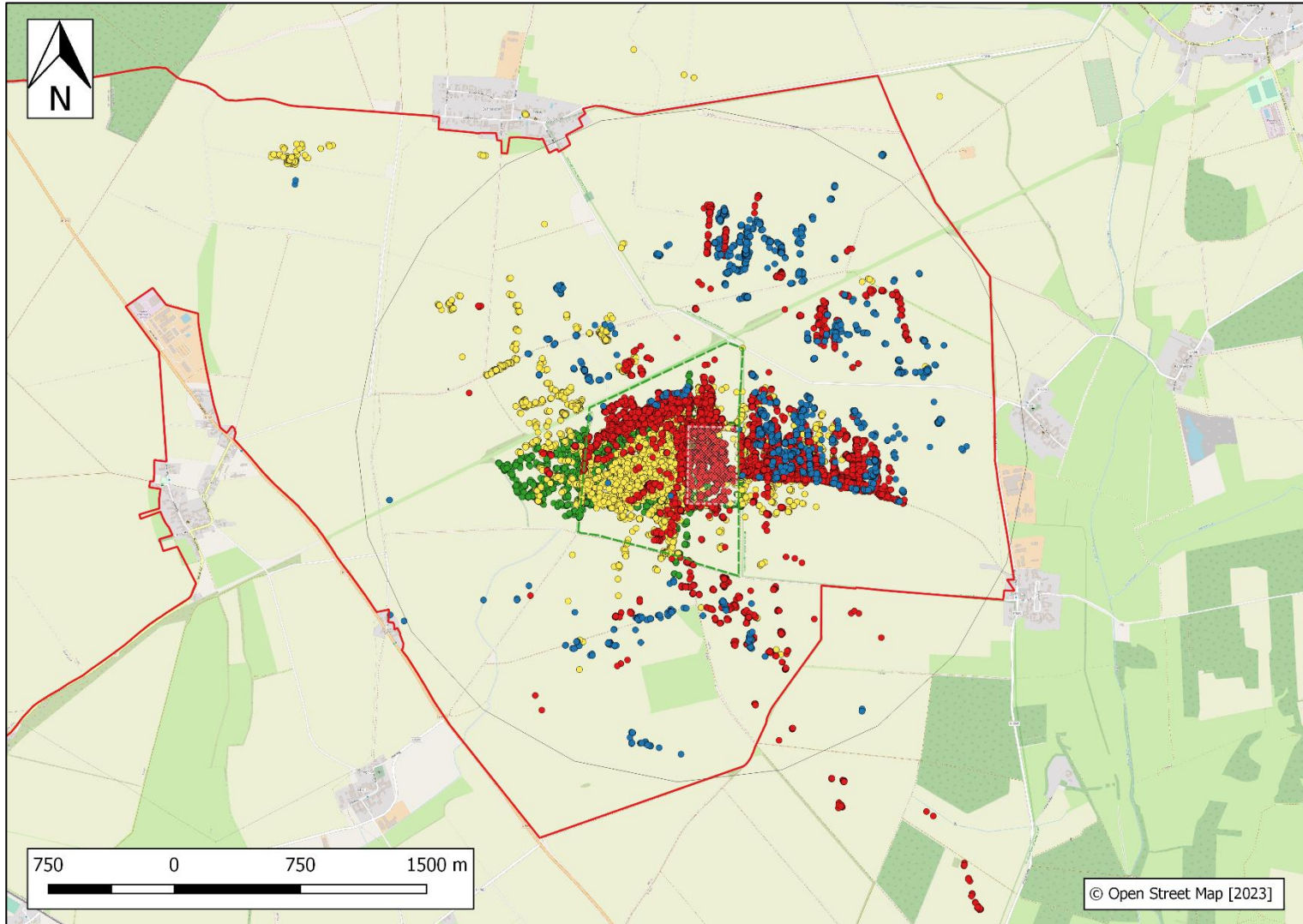


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# Spatial use of four GPS-transmitted females in the course of release (29.08.-13.12.)



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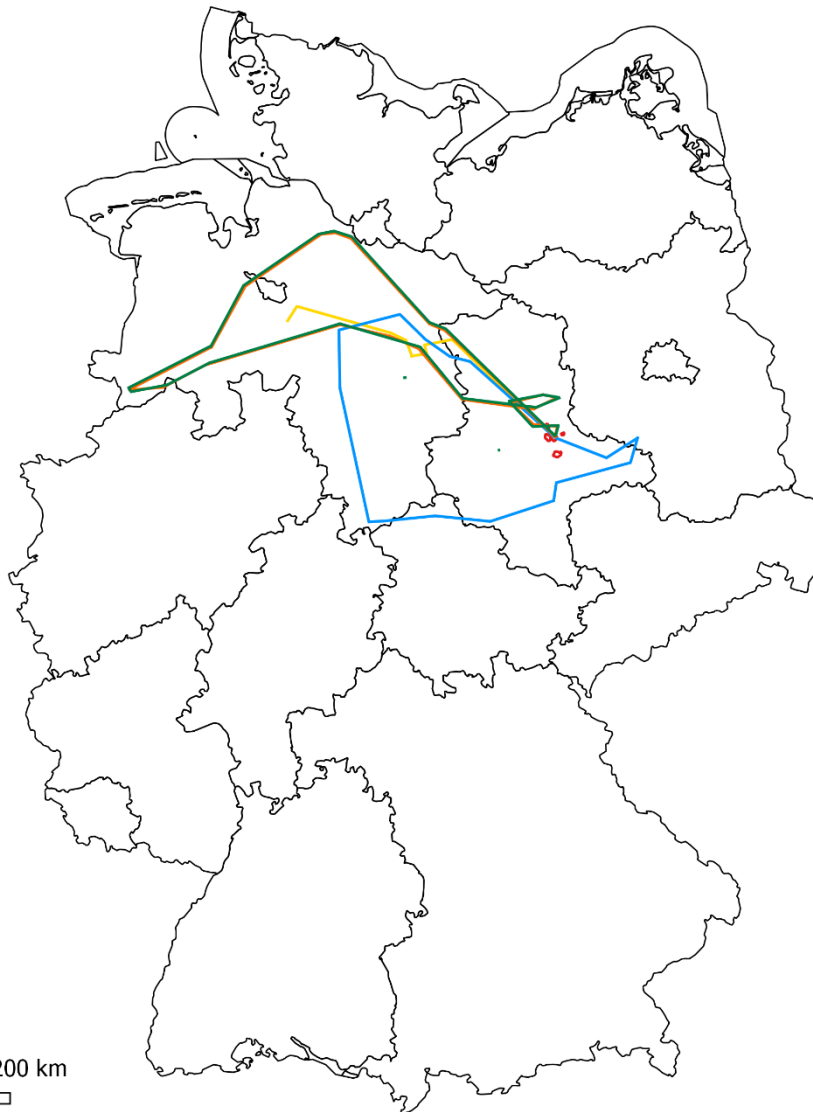
**99.5 % of all detections within a 2-km-radius of the fencing**






# Free-ranging bustards on winter rape (12 December 2022)



© Matthias Keller

# Migration of 4 females with GPS-transmitters (13 December 2022 to 26 April 2023)



	EU-SPA Zerbster Land
	weissRR
	weissTT
	weissUU
	weissYY
Kartengrundlage: © GeoBasis-DE / BKG (2023)	



# 6. Present status and outlook



- 7 out of 10 birds completely released into wild
  - at least 6 out of 7 bustards survived the winter migration -> **survival rate of  $\geq 60\%$  after 1<sup>st</sup> winter**
  - currently 3 resident immature females in the release area
  - 2<sup>nd</sup> release of 15 young birds since 3 August 2023
  - End of the EAFRD financed pilot project September 2024
- Short-term goal: implementation of first releases and establishment of a small resident group in the release area
- Long-term goal: self-sustaining sub-population, in exchange with other sub-populations
- Need for long-term project funding!



Many thanks for your attention!

