

Mobile flock of ducks

The project supported by the activity "C.6.1 Development of small grant scheme for landowners" in the project competition "Small grant scheme for invasive species management" implemented within project LIFE-IP LatViaNature.

- ✓ Target species: Spanish slug (*Arion vulgaris*)
- ✓ Method: Mobile flock of ducks
- ✓ Project implementation time: 01.06.2022. – 01.11.2023.
- ✓ Project implementer: Ilze Šarna
- ✓ Project implementation area: In total 6.62 ha (5.46 ha in 2022, 5.74 ha in 2023)
- ✓ Grant amount awarded: 5 000 EUR
- ✓ The size of the mobile flock of ducks: A total of 15 Indian Runner ducks, dividing them into territories in the ratio of 5:5:5. From 12.04.2023. – a total of 11 Indian Runner ducks, dividing them into territories in the ratio of 4:4:3.
- ✓ The actual cost of the method: 730.57 EUR per 1 ha (summed costs of both years of project implementation), on average in one year: 365.29 EUR/1 ha. The total cost of the method: 4836.35 EUR.

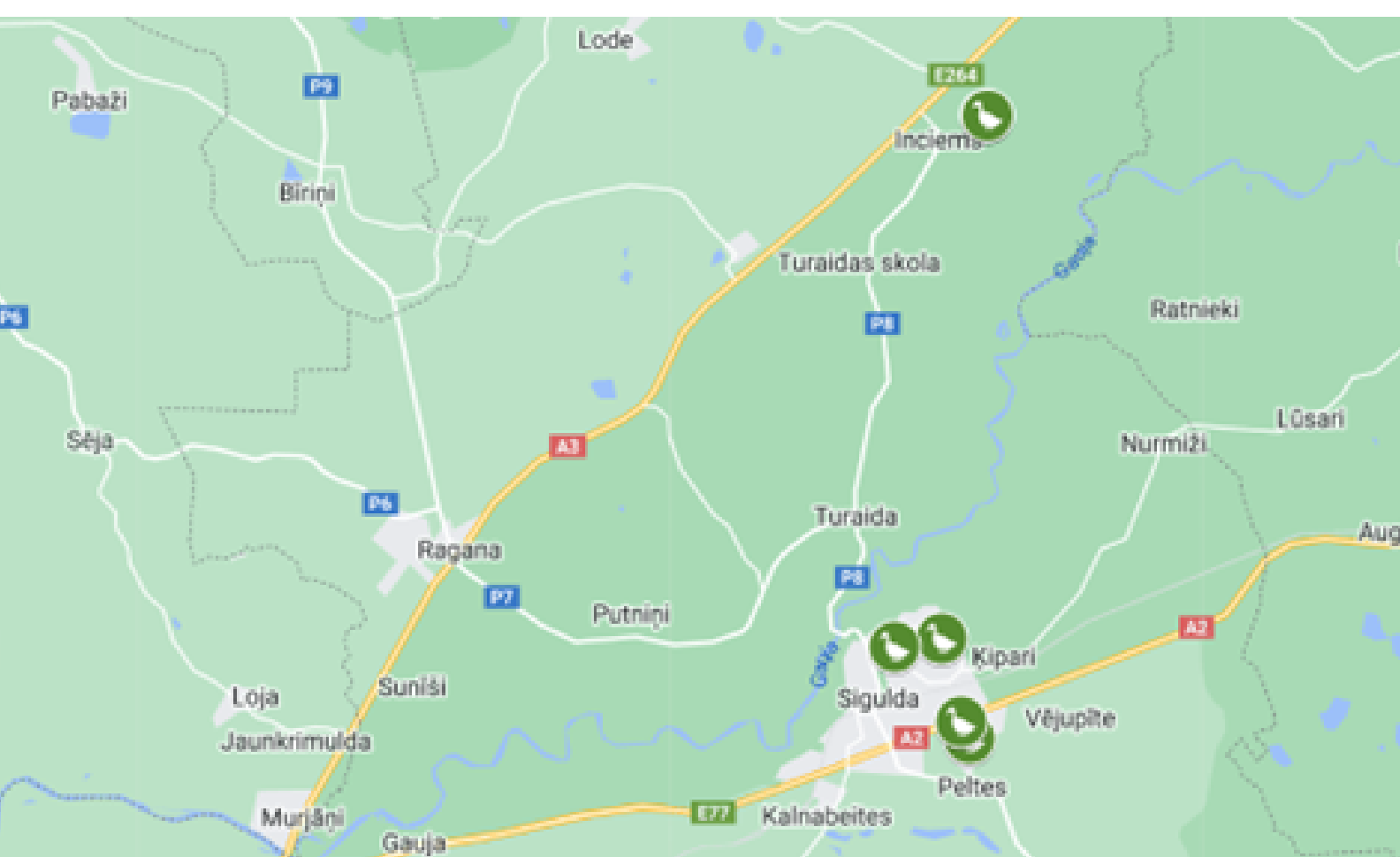


Actions taken:



In each territory, ducks were provided with the welfare requirements of poultry keeping – water and feed, an enclosure, shelter against adverse weather conditions and a mobile bird house. An electric fence was installed in the Sigulda county territory. In closed territories, ducks were allowed to move freely.

Project implementation territories



- In total 6 properties – 4 properties in Sigulda and 2 in Inciems, Krimulda parish, Sigulda county.
- Of these, 5 are the territories of private houses and 1 is an apple orchard belonging to the municipality of Sigulda region.
- In 2022 project was implemented in 3 territories, in 2023 – in 4 territories.



Conclusions



Results

- 2022 – from initially 10–25 specimens/m² in early summer to 1–10 specimens/m² in autumn;
- 2023 – from initially 1–10 individuals/m² in early summer to 1–3 individuals/m² in autumn.
- Weather is one of the most important factors affecting the distribution of molluscs. The summer season of 2023 was very dry and the weather during this period could have affected the result.

Challenges during project implementation

- The purchase of inventory was delayed, as a result of which the Mobile flock of ducks was placed in territories later than planned (June 2022) – in September 2022.
- 4 ducks were bitten on 12.04.2023, which made it necessary to reassess the provision of bird safety and assess whether it will affect the course of project implementation. The reduction of the total flock introduced corrections in the number of birds brought to the territories – the remaining 11 ducks were divided in the ratio 4:4:3.

Insights, effectiveness of the method

- One of the most environmentally friendly and effective methods. With proper maintenance of ducks, the number of molluscs in the invaded area can be significantly limited or kept low independently. A reduction in the number of molluscs has been observed with the use of Indian Runner ducks. But as soon as the containment of molluscs in the territory is stopped, their population size can recover.
- Mobile flock of ducks is easy to move and place in territories. The method can be applied in any area where it is possible to install a fence to restrict ducks and ensure the welfare requirements of poultry keeping. However, in areas where Spanish slug invasion is considered very high (>100 individuals/20m²), there is a risk of poultry death as a result of "overeating" or suffocation of birds.