

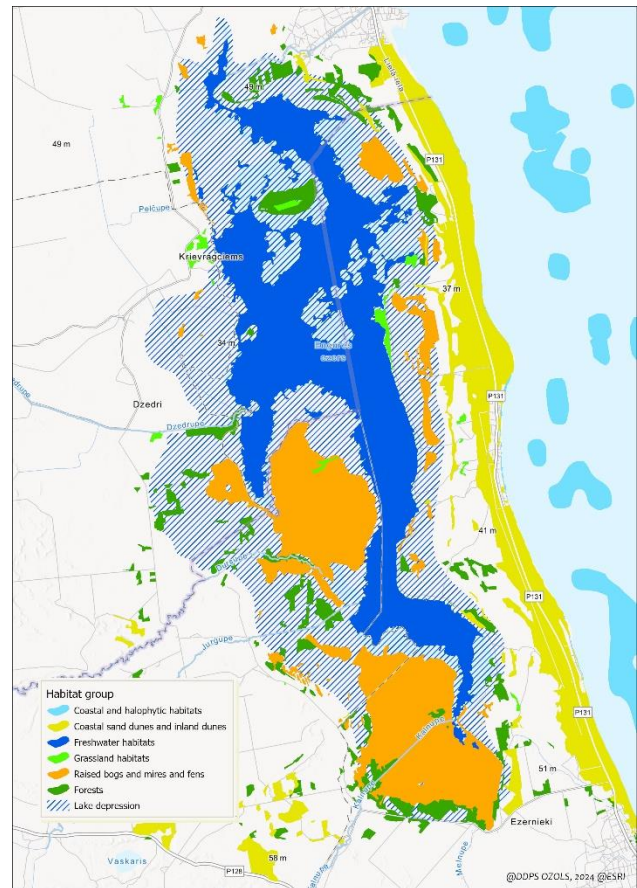
NATURE PARK “Lake ENGURE”

Protection category: *Natura 2000* area (LV0302800), wetland of international importance

Area: 12,580 ha

Year of establishment: 1957

Biodiversity: The Nature Park was established for the protection of birds, however, all the surroundings of Lake Engure are exceptionally biologically diverse and abundant. 28 habitats of EU importance are found here. The largest areas are occupied by freshwaters, forests, as well as fens and transition mires. Lake Engure and its surroundings are an important waterfowl habitat. 188 bird species nest in the Nature Park, nevertheless, one could meet here almost all bird species discovered in Latvia. 876 species of vascular plants have been found in the Nature Park. 84 of them are included in the Red Data Book of Latvia, while 55 are designated as specially protected species.



LAKE ENGURE – THE CORE OF THE NATURE PARK

Habitat of EU importance 3140 *Hard oligo-mesotrophic waters with benthic vegetation of Chara spp.*

Lake Engures is the largest lagoon lake in Latvia, which developed in the area where the Littorina Sea formed a shallow bay, and one of the most outstanding Charophyta lakes in Latvia. It is a shallow and naturally overgrowing lake with an average depth of only 0.4 m. However, the shallow and extensive littoral has facilitated the formation of Habitat 3140 with a characteristic mosaic-like plant cover structure of emergent plants and charophytes. There are 59 species of aquatic plants in the lake, 10 of them are charophytes, forming extensive and vital stands. The most common species of charophytes are *Chara aspera* and *Chara tomentosa*. Specially protected species *Najas marina* and *Cladium mariscus* are also found in the lake.



History of lake management

A channel connecting the lake to the sea was dug in 1842, and the area of Lake Engure decreased from 90 km² to 45 km². However, the areas lost to the lake created habitats suitable for many rare plant species. At present, Lake Engure covers only 35 km², because the shallow water area of the lake is overgrowing and turning into fens and transition bogs. Its area is decreasing over the years.



Management measures

The quality of habitat 3140 is mostly influenced by overgrowing of the lake with reeds, which reduce the area available for charophytes. During the project “Implementation of the management plan for Lake Engure Nature Park” (LIFE00NAT/LV/7134) in 2001-2004, reeds were mowed, as well as grasslands restored on the shore of the lake. They are being grazed by cattle, which have become the most visible inhabitants of the Nature Park. Fragmentation of reeds was formed by mowing and creating a mosaic of watercourses and marshy places within the project “Restoration of Bittern habitats in two coastal lakes in Latvia” (LIFE COASTLAKE) in 2013-2018.



Habitat conservation objectives

The quality of Lake Engure as a habitat of EU importance can be assessed as good. A significant increase in the area of the habitat is not possible without fundamental reconstruction of the landscape. The conservation objective is to maintain the lake within its present area and quality. In order to maintain a favourable conservation status of the habitat, it is necessary to delay overgrowing of the lake, especially the development of emergent plants, as well as to prevent water pollution.

