

## Užava Nature Reserve

### Natura 2000 site

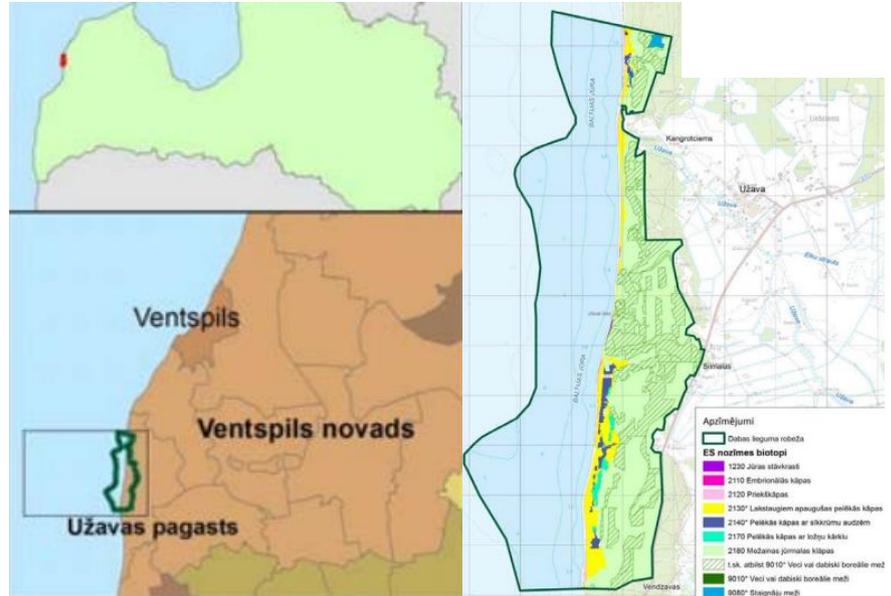
Užava (LV0520300)

**Area:** 3012 ha

**Established:** 1999

### Importance of protection:

The territory lies along the Baltic Sea coast and comprises 11 diverse habitats, as well as 32 species protected under the Birds and Habitats Directives. It is a site of particular significance for the conservation of gray dunes. Two vascular plant species listed in the EU Habitats Directive have been found here: *Dianthus arenarius ssp. arenarius* and *Linaria loeselii*. One of the few *Eryngium maritimum* sites in Latvia.



11 habitats protected under EU Habitats Directive- 6 coastal and inland dunes, 2 coastal and salt-tolerant habitats, 2 forests, 1 freshwater.

Qualifying features are *Sanbanks which are slightly covered by sea water all the time* (1110), *Wooded dunes of the Atlantic, Continental and Boreal region* (2180), *Dunes with Salix repens* (2170), *Decalcified fixed dunes with Empetrum nigrum* (2140\*), *Fixed coastal dunes with herbaceous vegetation* (2130\*), *Shifting dunes along the shoreline with Ammophila arenaria* (2120) and *Embryonic shifting dunes* (2110), and very rare habitat in Latvia *Humid dune slacks* (2190).

The Project “Optimising the Governance and Management of the Natura 2000 Protected Areas Network in Latvia” (LIFE19 IPE/LV/000010 LIFE-IP LatViaNature) is implemented with the financial support of the LIFE Programme of the European Union and Ministry of Smart Administration and Regional Development. The information reflects only the LIFE-IP LatViaNature project beneficiaries’ view and the European Climate, Infrastructure and Environment Executive Agency is not responsible for any use that may be made of the information contained therein.

33 species are protected under the EU Habitats and Birds Directives: 26 birds, four fishes, two flowering plants, and one mammal.

The Užava Nature Reserve was one of 14 specially protected nature areas where, by the end of 2023, Latvijas valsts meži (LVM) implemented habitat improvement and restoration measures within the **KHZ-SAM project "Implementation of management measures in specially protected nature areas and micro-reserves to improve the conservation status of habitats and species"** (5.4.3.0/20/i/001)

**Duration:** February 2021 to December 2023.

**Budget:** Total project budget was EUR 3.52 million - 85% funding from the EU Cohesion Fund and 15% from the National state budget.

**Area:** Across specially protected nature areas throughout Latvia (14 sites).

**Main objective:** Restoration and enhancement of habitats of European Union importance and contribution to the creation of suitable conditions for the long-term, sustainable survival of protected species and their habitats.

### Habitat Management

In 2021-2023, Joint Stock Company "Latvia's State Forests" (LVM) initiated significant restoration actions on about 170 hectares of the reserve, focusing on restoring and improvement of forest-covered and grey coastal dunes habitat quality. Activities included removal of trees and shrubs and active management of dune habitats to maintain open sandy areas, which are essential for the unique plant communities and dependent species and improvement of forest stand structure in the wooded dunes.

Both wooded dunes and grey dunes require natural disturbance processes, such as wind action and fire, as well as regular disturbance of the ground vegetation. These processes help to maintain open sand patches and create conditions that support a diverse ground-layer plant community. In the absence of such disturbances, grey dunes gradually become overgrown, leading to the loss of habitats essential for many plant and animal species that are restricted to coastal environments.



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In the Užava area, some dune habitats had already become overgrown with trees and shrubs. Therefore, significant habitat management measures have been implemented here to support the long-term conservation of grey dune habitats and improvement of the structural quality of wooded dunes habitats.

### **2180 habitat (*Wooded dunes*) Management & Methods**

- Pine forest- thinning of old and large pine trees, maintenance of open areas-14,76 ha.
- Reduced unwanted overgrowth of young pine trees by thinning, controlled residue burning on site and maintaining open areas -4,75 ha.
- Restoration of forest stand structure in artificially regenerated pine stands – creation of openings, selective thinning, and an increase in the amount of deadwood- 75,71 ha.

### **2130\* habitat (*Fixed coastal dunes with herbaceous vegetation*) Management & Methods**

- Reduction of undesirable vegetation and burning of logging residues in controlled fire sites also burning the moss and litter layer – 50,86 ha.

#### **Results:**

2130\* habitat now features biologically old, sand-buried pine trees and junipers, and conditions have been created to support the long-term existence of the habitat and the species associated with coastal dunes, including characteristic plants, lichens, and invertebrates. The measures improved the quality of the 2180 habitat - by promoting forest structures typical of natural forests, such as structural diversity, openings, and deadwood. Improved light conditions now provide more favourable habitats for rare and specially protected plant and animal species.



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