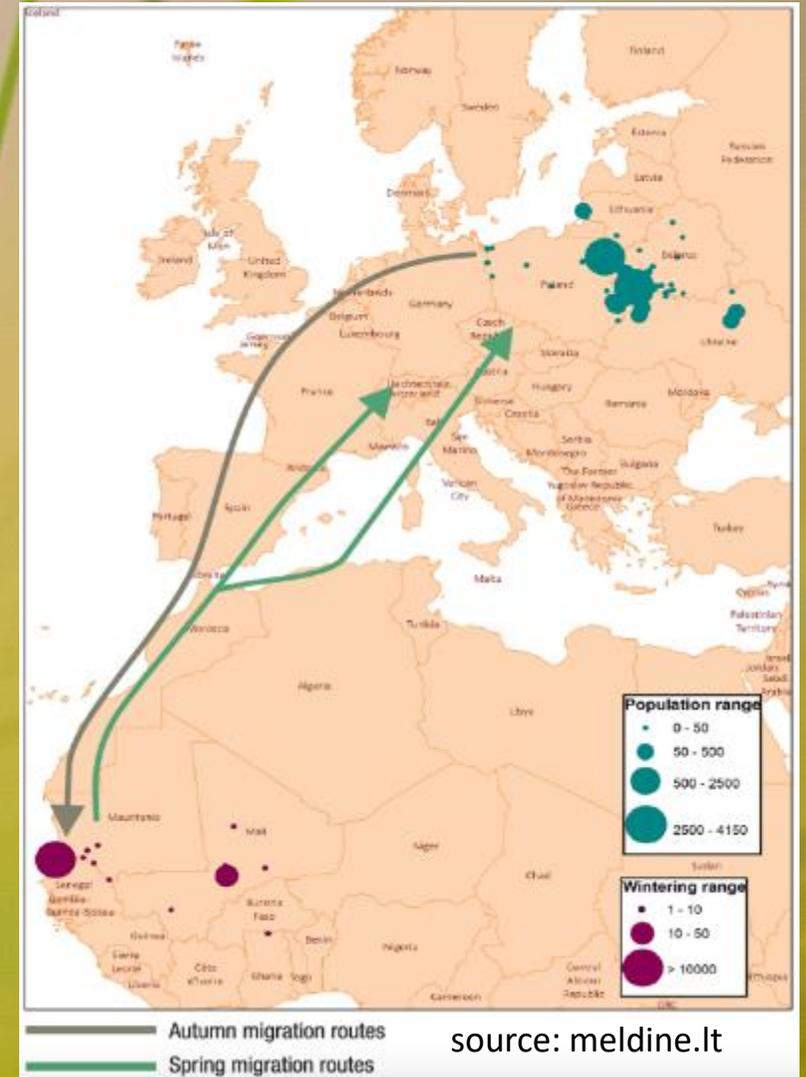


Aquatic warbler conservation & habitat restoration in cooperation with farmers

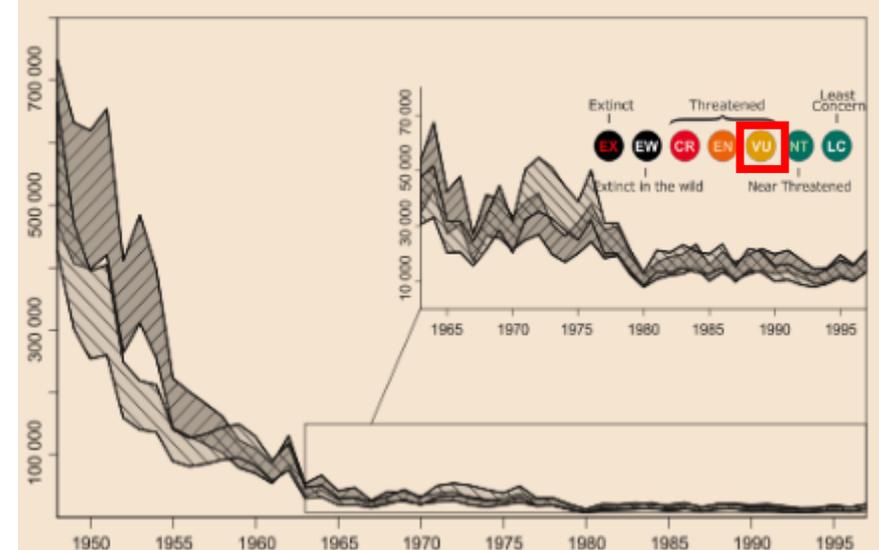


Aquatic warbler – the Europe’s rarest songbird, long distant migrant

Migration route



- 200 times more rare than African elephant
- Global population less than 16 000 birds
- Breeds only in 4 countries: Poland, Lithuania, Ukraine, Belarus;



↑ Historic and current breeding range

← Global population trend



Umbrella species of fen mire habitats

Aquatic warbler habitat



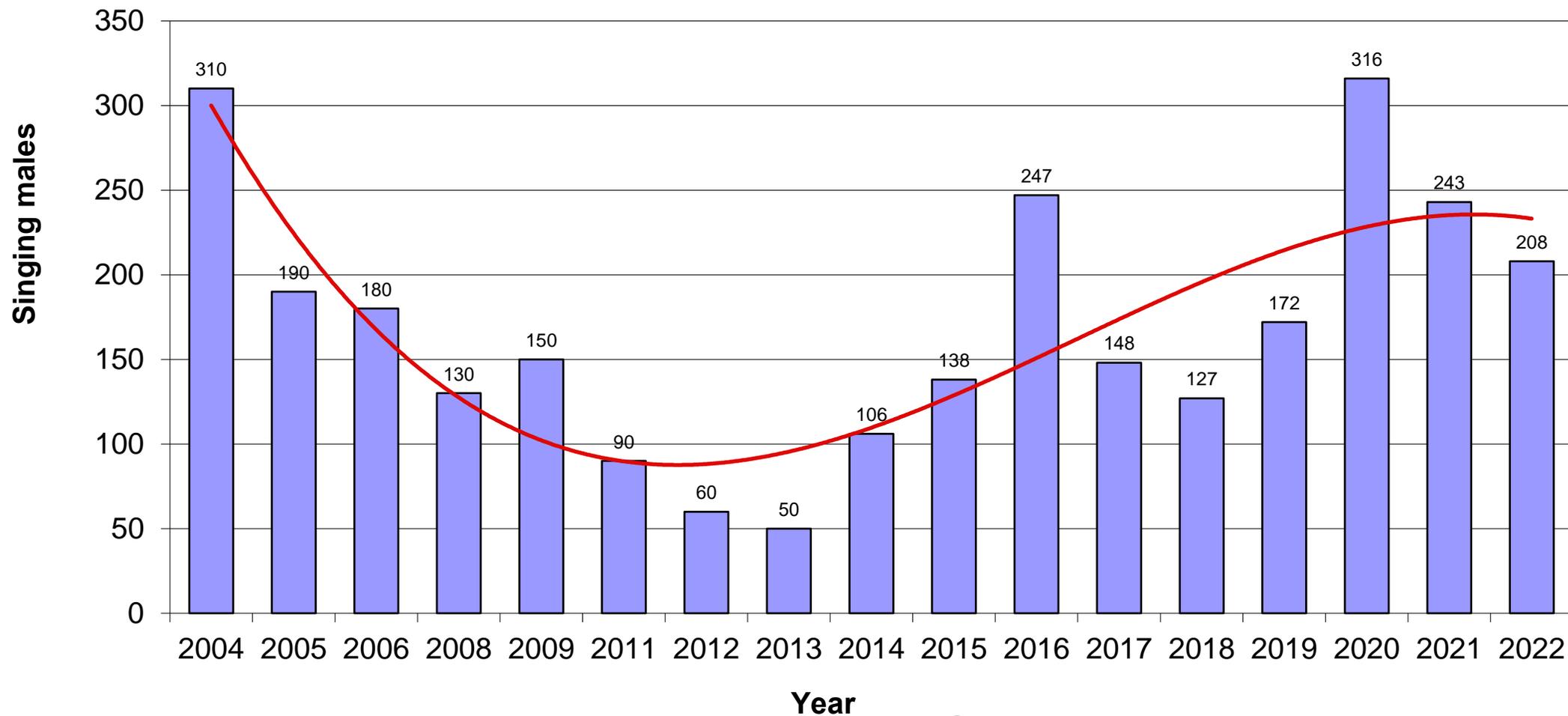






The start of our conservation adventure

Aquatic warbler population dynamics in Lithuania



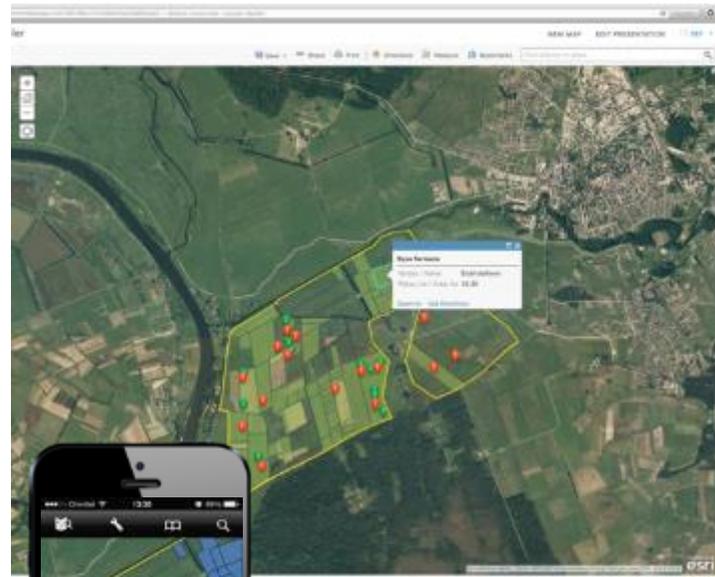
Conservation project: LIFE BalticAquaticWarbler

Conservation project: LIFE MagniDucatusAcrola

Farmers involvement



Protecting every nest to ensure good breeding success



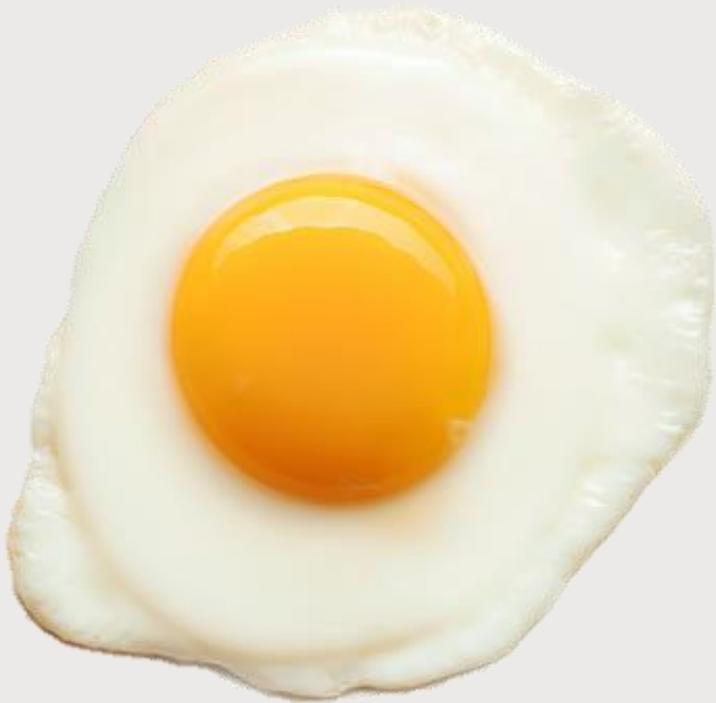
Change of perception towards the farmer

From favourable conservation status of the bird species to favourable conservation status of a farmer



Farmer – not as conservation tool but as an important driver for disturbance of ecosystem succession (and degradation)

Building
relationship
instead of just
doing business

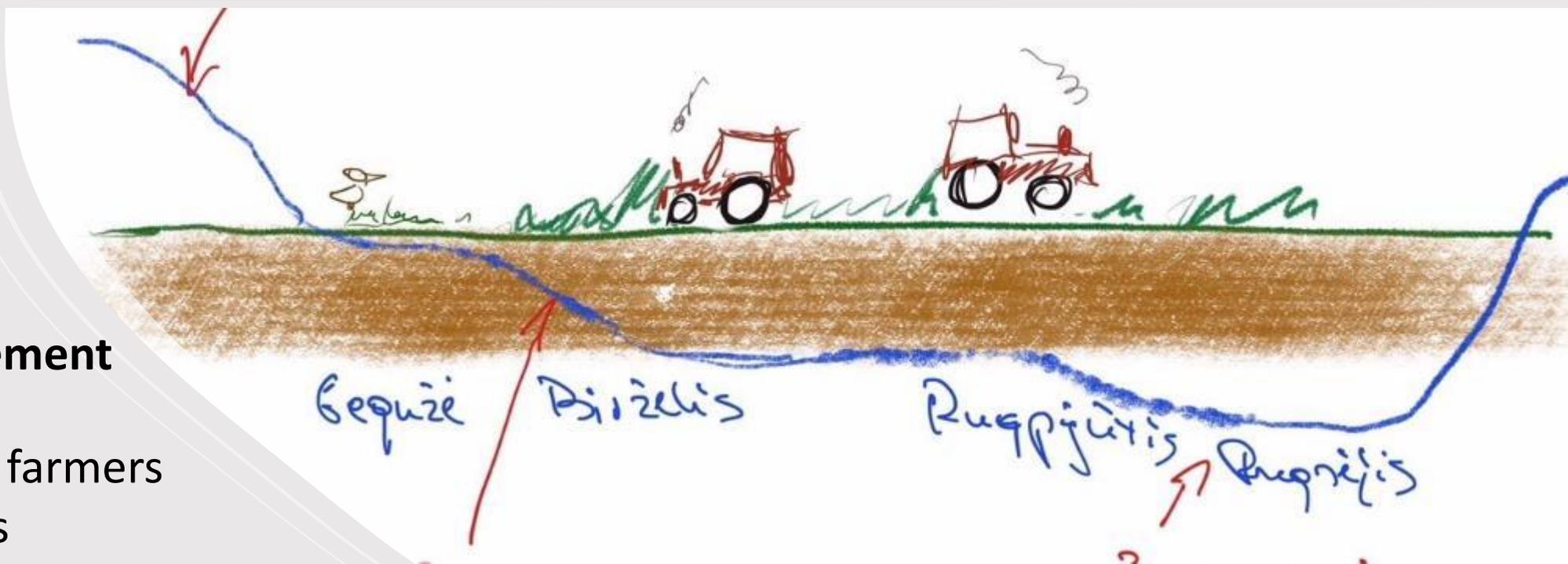




Farmers engagement







Water level management

Meeting interests of farmers
and aquatic warblers

Challenge of farming and conservation

**Late mowing of fields
create economic losses
for farmers**



**AW breeds in a habitat
used for farming
business**

**Late-cut biomass is
a problematic waste**

Special agri-environmental measure under landscape stewardship programme

Aquatic warbler conservation in natural and semi-natural meadows

AW singing male counts performed first decade of June. Plots observed with singing males extracted for late mowing.

- For plots where AW singing males observed - mowing after August 15;
- For plots where AW singing males NOT observed – half of area mowing in July;
- For all area – mowing shall be completed by October 1st. Baled or stacked biomass may be left for winter, but should be removed from the field until March 1st next year;
- Extensive grazing (1 SLU/ha) allowed until October 15.

Payment: **291** eur/ha (+ others possible: direct, Natura 2000, LFA)

Aquatic warbler conservation in wetlands

- Full mowing of the area shall be done within 2 years (50% each year);
- Start of mowing allowed from August 1st;
- Mowing shall be finished until October 1st, stacked or baled biomass can be removed from field by March 1st next year;
- Maximum grazing density allowed 1 SLU/ha;

Payment: **160** eur/ha (+ others possible: direct, Natura 2000, LFA)

Targeted agri-environmental scheme for aquatic warbler conservation proved to be very successful



Alka polder (2021)

App. 79% of aquatic warbler singing males in Lithuania observed (2021) in plots declared for special agri-environmental scheme

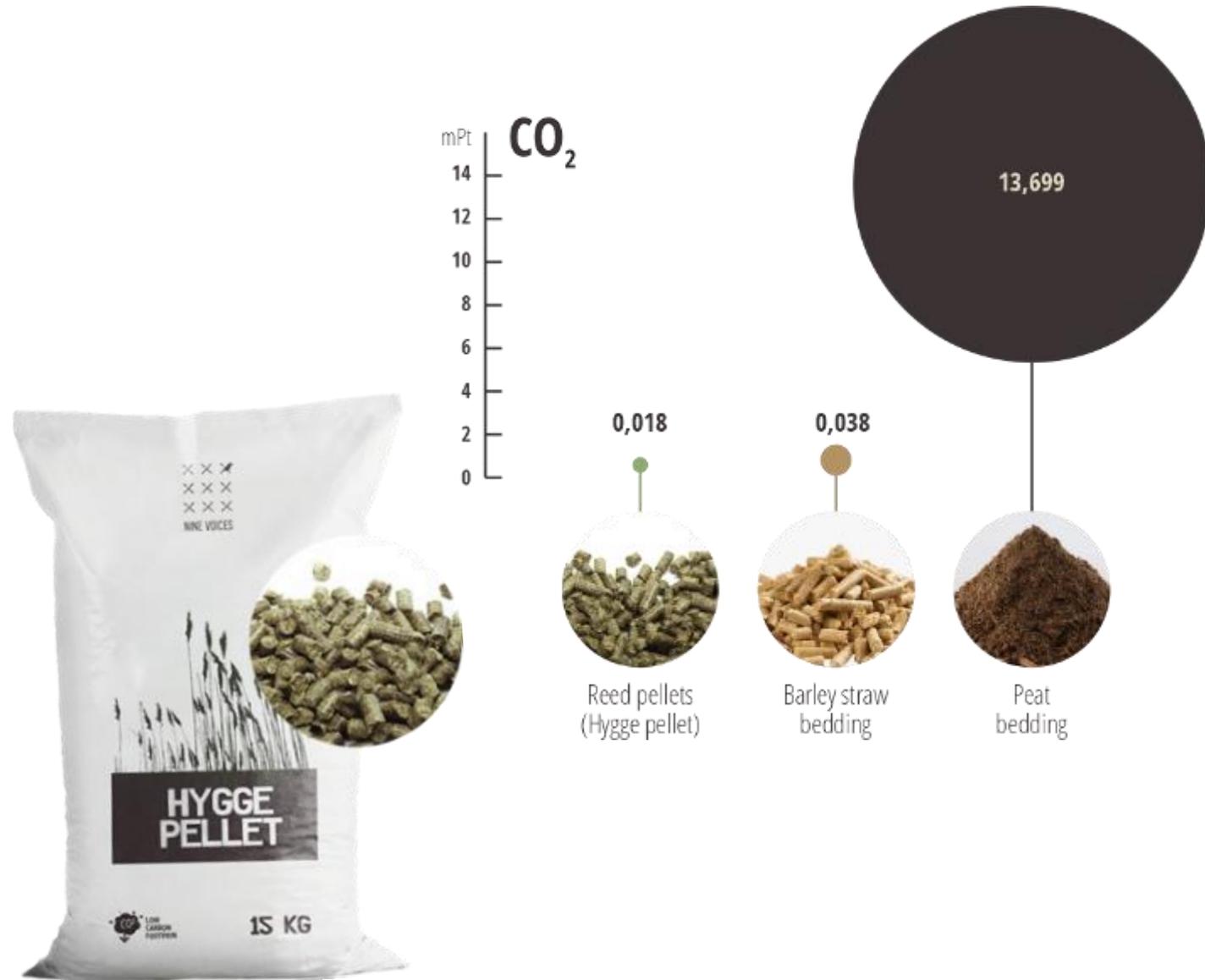
Dealing with the late-cut biomass



Grass pellets – farming product from Aquatic warbler breeding habitat

Climate friendly equine bedding

- Saves aquatic warbler
- Climate friendly alternative to the peat bedding;
- No need for artificial monoculture crop fields, watering or fertilization;
- Easy to use: quick spreading, even distribution, remove wet spots only, light packaging;
- Does not cause allergies (little dust, high temperature treated);
- Biodegradable – good fertilizer for the fields



Farming in peatlands - need for changing perception how we understand farming





Special compensation scheme for farmers for late mowing



Late-cut biomass a problematic waste

Grass pellets – farming product



Water level management to meet interests of farmers and birds



Relationship building between farmers and conservationists