



Verbund

By our own power.

Biodiversity Policy

With its 'Mission V', VERBUND has set itself the goal of being a leader in the energy transition. We are committed to sustainability and to taking responsibility for the protection, conservation and promotion of biological diversity, whilst ensuring the safety of people, facilities and the energy supply.

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Our Impacts on Biodiversity

As Austria's leading energy company and one of Europe's largest producers of electricity from renewable energy sources, we rely on a wide range of technologies. These include, in particular, **hydropower**, **photovoltaics**, **wind power**, **green hydrogen**, as well as **gas-fired power stations** to ensure security of supply.



Common sandpiper

Biological diversity / Biodiversity:

species diversity,
genetic diversity and
diversity of ecosystems



The use of these technologies has both direct and indirect effects on biodiversity. Our business activities may [affect the status of species, their population size and gene pool](#), as well as the [extent and condition of ecosystems](#). Resource extraction through the procurement of products can also have a negative impact on biodiversity.

One positive contribution made by VERBUND is the enhancement of the recreational function as an ecosystem service, as local recreational areas are created and promoted along many watercourses.

We attach great importance to minimising the negative impacts of our business activities on biodiversity to a minimum. Biodiversity is therefore a key focus of VERBUND's sustainability agenda.

Our Commitments

A prerequisite for a sustainable future is the preservation of intact ecosystems, respect for planetary boundaries and adaptation to climate change.

That is why, as part of our business activities, we contribute to the protection, conservation and promotion of biodiversity and near-natural habitats. In doing so, we are guided by the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), the EU Biodiversity Strategy, the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals – in particular Goal 15, ‘Life on Land’ – and national biodiversity strategies.

Planetary Boundaries refer to the ecological limits or carrying capacity of our planet. Only a certain amount of resources is available, and the Earth can only withstand a certain level of negative impacts without suffering long-term damage.



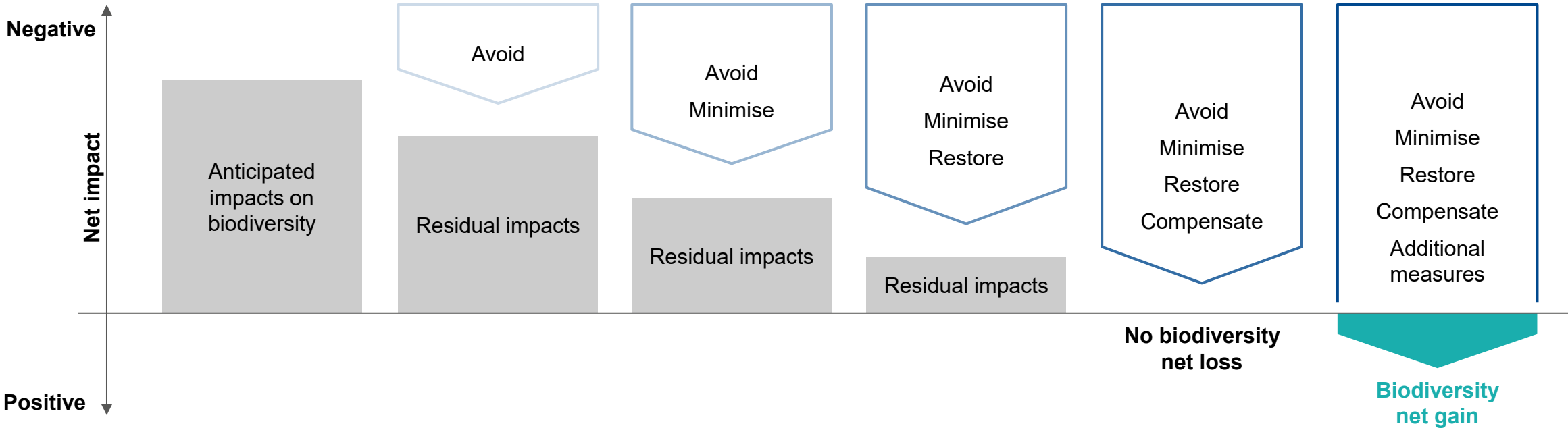
We are committed to responsible management and to the protection, conservation and promotion of near-natural habitats and native species for present and future generations. In doing so, we pursue the Group-wide objective of continuously improving our measures and strategies; furthermore, we are committed to internally established principles.

Our strategic commitments to sustainable nature conservation prioritise the protection, conservation and enhancement of high-quality habitats above all else. We are guided by the four-tier mitigation hierarchy – avoidance, minimisation, restoration and compensation – thereby ensuring implementation across all project stages and areas of activity. Furthermore, in the construction and operation of facilities for the generation and transmission of electricity, we are committed to continuous development, research and knowledge transfer.

The ‘biodiversity mitigation hierarchy’ sets out a hierarchy of damage reduction comprising the steps of avoiding, minimising, restoring and compensating the negative impacts of activities on biodiversity.



Biodiversity Mitigation Hierarchy



1 Avoidance

includes measures that prevent impacts on natural or near-natural ecosystems in the first place.



2 Minimisation

includes measures to reduce the duration, intensity or extent of impacts that cannot be completely avoided.



3 Restoration

or ecological enhancement of impaired ecosystems is achieved through targeted measures.



4 Compensation

means offsetting the remaining negative impacts after implementation of the previous steps in the mitigation hierarchy.



Responsibility for the Protection, Conservation and Promotion of biodiversity



Bumblebee

Avoid

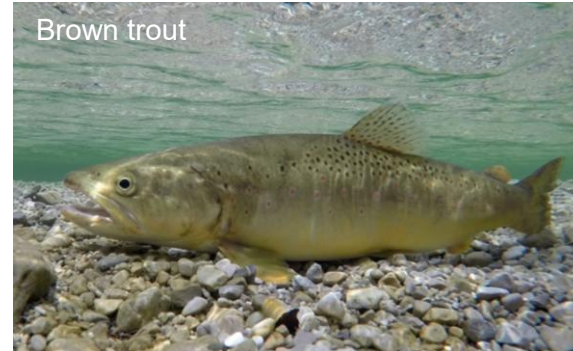
We analyse the impacts of our projects in advance in order to identify and - where possible and sensible - avoid negative impacts.
We avoid the disturbance and destruction of habitats and sensitive ecosystems by avoiding protected areas wherever possible when selecting sites for our projects and by taking into account sensitive ecosystems rich in species and structures, important breeding areas and migration routes in our planning.
In the operation of our plants, we avoid negative impacts as far as possible by monitoring and reducing emissions.



Danube crested newt

Minimise

Even before a project begins, we relocate protected animal and plant species where necessary. During construction and operation, we minimise negative impacts on flora, fauna and habitats.



Brown trout

Restore

We restore or enhance degraded ecosystems by connecting, reconnecting and enhancing biodiversity.
Before, during, or after the completion of projects, seeding, planting and the creation of habitats take place.



Demoiselle

Compensate

Any unavoidable remaining negative impacts on local biodiversity are offset by comprehensive ecological compensation and mitigation measures or by creating new habitats for the same or other species.

Examples of Implementing the Mitigation Hierarchy

	Hydropower	Windpower	Photovoltaics	Thermal power
Avoid 	 By revitalising and expanding existing power plants, further interference with ecosystems is avoided.	 Key bird migration routes are avoided when selecting sites.	 Particularly species-rich and valuable ecosystems are excluded from site selection.	 No use of pesticides on green spaces.
Minimise 	Potential impacts are minimised through the implementation of hydromorphological measures and the targeted release of residual water.	Wind turbines are temporarily switched off when bird migration is high.	Mowing is adapted to the needs of native bird species and insects.	Natural development of open spaces and habitats through minimal intervention.
Restore 	The installation of fish migration aids restores passability at hydroelectric power plants and in tributaries.	Ecological enhancement through the creation of native habitats in accordance with the EU Habitats Directive.	Planting of native, site-suitable shrubs and trees around facilities.	Decommissioning of facilities and greening of areas.
Compensate 	The creation of diverse riparian habitats, such as gravel banks and shallow water zones, helps to offset the impacts.	Use of special seed mixtures on compensation areas to provide food and cover for small mammals and small game and, subsequently, to serve as foraging areas for birds of prey.	Establishment of flowering areas with endangered plants.	Management of invasive plant species on the greened areas.

Our Principles on Biodiversity



We specifically monitor the environmental impacts of our projects, prepare monitoring reports and take action where necessary.

When integrating biodiversity into the planning and implementation of projects, we adopt ecosystem-based approaches and rely on nature-based solutions wherever possible.

We respect areas designated for biodiversity conservation and plan, build and operate our facilities in compliance with any applicable conservation requirements.

We expand our renewable energy capacity in line with our strategic objectives, whilst responsibly balancing all aspects of sustainability.

We actively involve stakeholders and their interests in our projects. Collaboration with local communities and stakeholders is essential for us in order to jointly develop solutions for the protection, conservation and promotion of biodiversity.

We develop and implement integrated biodiversity strategies for both terrestrial and aquatic areas. We optimise the implementation of our biodiversity-enhancing measures by incorporating the latest scientific findings.

We promote applied research and maintain close contact with experts in science and research.

Land Management that Promotes Biodiversity



Measures relating to woodland and meadows

- Environmentally sound use and management with infrequent mowing and the avoidance of fertilisers and pesticides
- Flower strips, regional plant seeds and native shrubs and tree species
- Sustainable, soil-conserving forest management promoting diverse, climate-resilient stands and interconnected habitats.

Agri-environmental programmes in Spain

To improve habitats for threatened steppe bird species, VERBUND is already implementing over 840 ha¹ large-scale agri-environmental programmes as part of PV projects. The measures include fallows, field margins, green cover crops, nest protection and water points, and are implemented through voluntary agreements with farmers, landowners and nature conservation organisations. This improves breeding, foraging and refuge habitats whilst maintaining agricultural land use.



Little bustard



Restoration of Aquatic Ecosystems



Measures to restore and enhance the natural functions of major watercourses and their floodplain landscapes

- Construction of fish migration aids to restore ecological connectivity
- Removal of hard bank reinforcements and development of dynamic floodplain areas
- Revitalisation and creation of structurally rich habitats for aquatic and terrestrial species

LIFE Blue Belt Danube-Inn (2021-2029)

Ecological connectivity will be restored through the construction of five fish migration aids at the power plant sites in Jochenstein, Schärding, Passau-Ingling, Ybbs-Persenbeug and Aschach. At the same time, around 7 ha of high-quality floodplain habitats will be created. In addition, bank reinforcements will be removed and functional gravel banks covering an area of approximately 11 ha will be created. To improve the ecological quality of existing watercourses, desedimentation measures will also be implemented across an area of around 14 ha.



Research Projects for Conservation and Enhancement of Biodiversity



Closing knowledge gaps through targeted research initiatives:

- Improving our understanding of processes within aquatic ecosystems
- Fish migration behaviour and habitat use
- Effectiveness of ecological measures to support fish populations
- Optimising hydropower utilisation with regard to surge attenuation and residual flow

Chip the Fish

In several research projects in Austria and Bavaria, Germany, the migratory behaviour of fish is being monitored over the long term using PIT tag technology in order to reconstruct their movement patterns. This enables fish migration aids to be assessed in terms of their detectability, passability and usage, whilst also providing insights into the migration behaviour, habitat use and habitat requirements of the fish. These insights form an important basis for the evaluation and further development of aquatic ecological measures.



tagged Barbel

Measures for Birds and Bats



Measures to ensure the safe coexistence of energy generation facilities, birds and bats

- Adjusting the operation of wind turbines during bird migration or when bats are active
- Markings and protective devices to prevent collisions and electric shocks
- Nesting aids

Red-footed falcons at the Mingorrubio wind farm (Spain)

Long-term conservation measures for the red-footed falcon, classified as endangered, involve nesting site management and monitoring programmes. Over 15 years of monitoring have confirmed active breeding colonies since 2009 – with population trends bucking the regional pattern. In 2024, the colony reached record numbers with 19 breeding pairs and 27 chicks. The results were presented at the Spanish Conference on Environmental Impact Assessments (CONEIA) in 2026.



Our Biodiversity Targets

Beyond our commitments, we have set ourselves **SMART** targets: specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and time-bound.

- 1** Expansion and integration of the LEAP approach into biodiversity management by 2028
Stronger integration of the 'Locate', 'Evaluate', 'Assess' and 'Prepare' (LEAP) steps into biodiversity management
- 2** Surveys of current status and potential, and the development of guidelines for biodiversity-friendly management by 2030
Monitoring of owned and leased land at power generation facilities and the definition of guidelines as a basis for concrete action planning
- 3** Implementation of projects for the connectivity and restoration of habitats
LIFE Riverscape Lower Inn (2020-2028)
LIFE Blue Belt Danube-Inn (2021-2029)
LIFE WeNatureEnns (2024-2031)
- 4** Restoring fish passage at 92 hydropower stations by 2027²
Restoration of structural and functional continuity at hydroelectric power plants through fish migration aids



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