

Balogh Rita

kornyezetvedelem@hm.gov.hu

A RÁKOSI VIPERA ÉLŐHELYVÉDELME ÉRDEKÉBEN TERVEZETT TERMÉSZETMEGŐRZÉSI FELADATOK A TÁBORFALVAI LŐ-GYAKORLÓTÉREN

Absztrakt

A Táborfalva lő-gyakorlótéren a rákosi vipera faj és élőhelyének védelme elsődleges feladat, hiszen élőhelye része a Natura 2000, az EU Ökológiai Hálózatának. Védelmi természetvédelmi szempontok szerint a védelmet a jövő nemzedék számára a természetvédelmi kezelési fenntartási terv és az EU források biztosítják.

At the Táborfalva training area the Hungarian meadow viper conservation is a priority task, because the area is part of the NATURA 2000 EU ecological network. The key for conservation is the nature management plan and executive nature management task used by EU funds.

Kulcsszavak: *rákosi vipera, védelmi természetvédelem ~ Hungarian meadow viper, defence nature protection*

The Hungarian Ministry of Defence and the Armed Forces make an effort for paying attention to the protection of the environment during the execution of military training, exercises and other tasks related to defence.

The defence of the nation cannot mean the destruction of nature. The Hungarian Ministry of Defence has been paying increased attention for handling environmental problems since 1994 in order to establish the conditions for applying the best available technique in environmental protection related to military activities. The Hungarian Army has to fulfill strict environmental regulations since the beginning of our NATO/EU membership. From thematic sub-actions referring to the third planning phase of the National Environmental Program the conservation of biological and landscape diversity deserves highlighted interest. This is not else but the implementation of tasks related to the conservation of natural values occurring at the shooting ranges, and exercise areas of the Hungarian Armed Forces.

More cautious, sustainable utilization of the ecosystem is a stressed task for the sake of the conservation of biological diversity and landscapes. Contrary to opinions living in

common knowledge - being acknowledged by the national nature conservation - it was proved in the last some years that in many cases there are still such natural values existing on military exercise areas which far surpass the flora and fauna of similar areas treated by the civil sphere. The enclosure of shooting ranges and exercise areas and the usage order considering zonality have also been contributed to this. This fact is proved by documented surveys which were focusing on the natural values of more important shooting ranges and exercise areas during the designation of Hungarian areas of the Natura 2000 Ecological Network of the European Union thus deserving protection by the EU.

The Hungarian Army is conscious about to find the answer for that key question, how it is possible to satisfy the needs of the present generation such way not to divest future generations from the possibility of harmonic coexistence with nature and prevent environmental natural heritage of all of us from irreversible damage.

After Hungary's joint to the EU, last year we designed the NATURA 2000 areas for the establishment the NATURA 2000 Network in Hungary, harmonization with Wild Birds and Habitats Directive.

In recognition of the fact that the Armed Forces ranges and exercise areas contain some of the best natural areas in Hungary, the Protection of Landscape and Biodiversity Defence Action Programme was established by the Hungarian Ministry of Defence. As a result of the fulfill conservation work, today they represent important sanctuaries for numbers of rare and endangered species of plants and animals. In the framework of Protection of Landscape and Biodiversity Defence Action Programme are developed Nature Management Plans and Basic Surveys of natural values of military areas.

At the military sector the nature protection task was coordinated and led by the MOD for the establishment of NATURA 2000 Network, from designations of military areas to achievement of Nature Management Plans.

For protection of military areas including NATURA 2000 sites at first a global agreement was prepared between the Hungarian Ministry of Defence, Ministry of Environment and Nature Agency.

The nature management is the key for protection of natural values. The nature management plans ensure that a satisfactory balance is achieved on the Armed Forces training areas between:

- protection of natural values,
- the Armed Forces' need to train and educate units under realistic conditions.

The structure of the developed nature management plans are:

- Basic survey of the area and biological registration.
- determination of management tools:
 - o Potential natural values
 - o Ideal management tools and
 - o Summary of effects.
 - o Practical management tools

The Nature Management Plan of Taborfalva Training Area is an individual management plan because the managed area has Natura 2000 sites. At the beginning of the task the military task performance was complied to the Nature Protection local regulations.

Moreover close cooperation was organized between the national park directorate and the local military authority, with the help and management task performance of Hungarian Birds Association, we start to minimize the threats of viper's habitats.

The Hungarian Meadow Viper is particularly distinct plainly and steppe subspecies of the *Vipera ursinii* species and has become one of the most endangered reptiles in Hungary and Europe. It is categorized as a distinct subspecies in the Red Data Books and listed in the Berne Convention Annex II. and the EC Habitats Directive Annex II., as well.

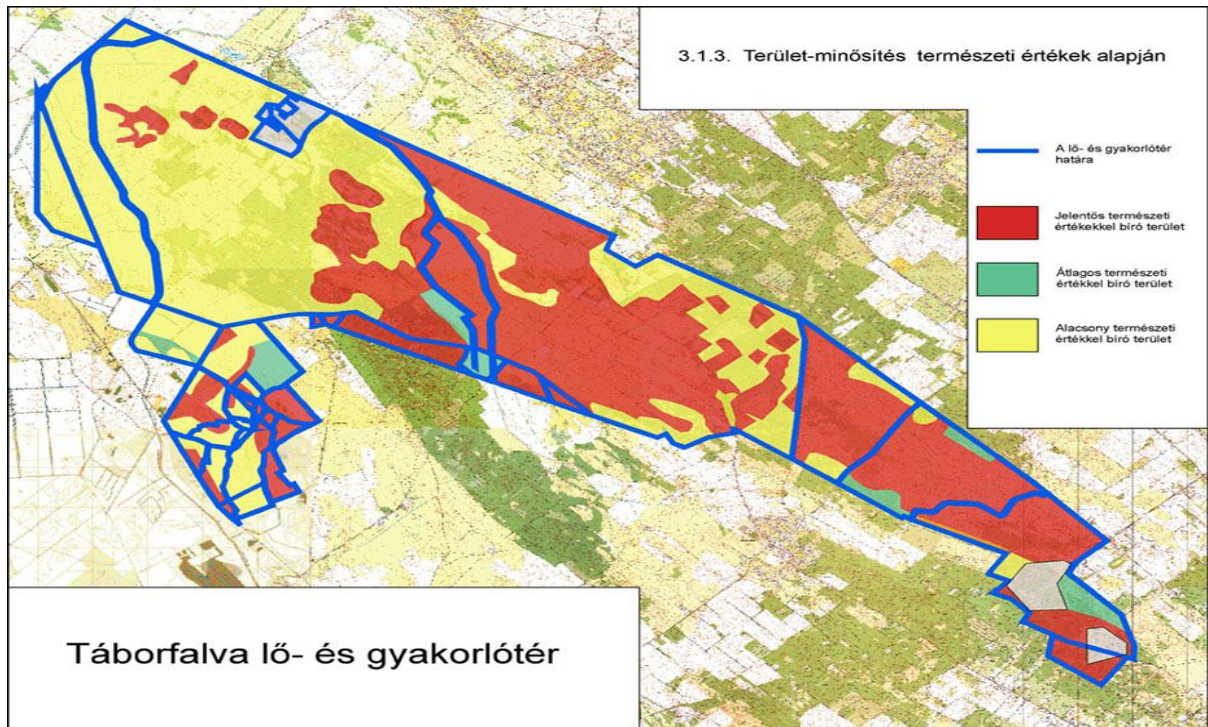


Picture 1. Hungarian Meadow Viper

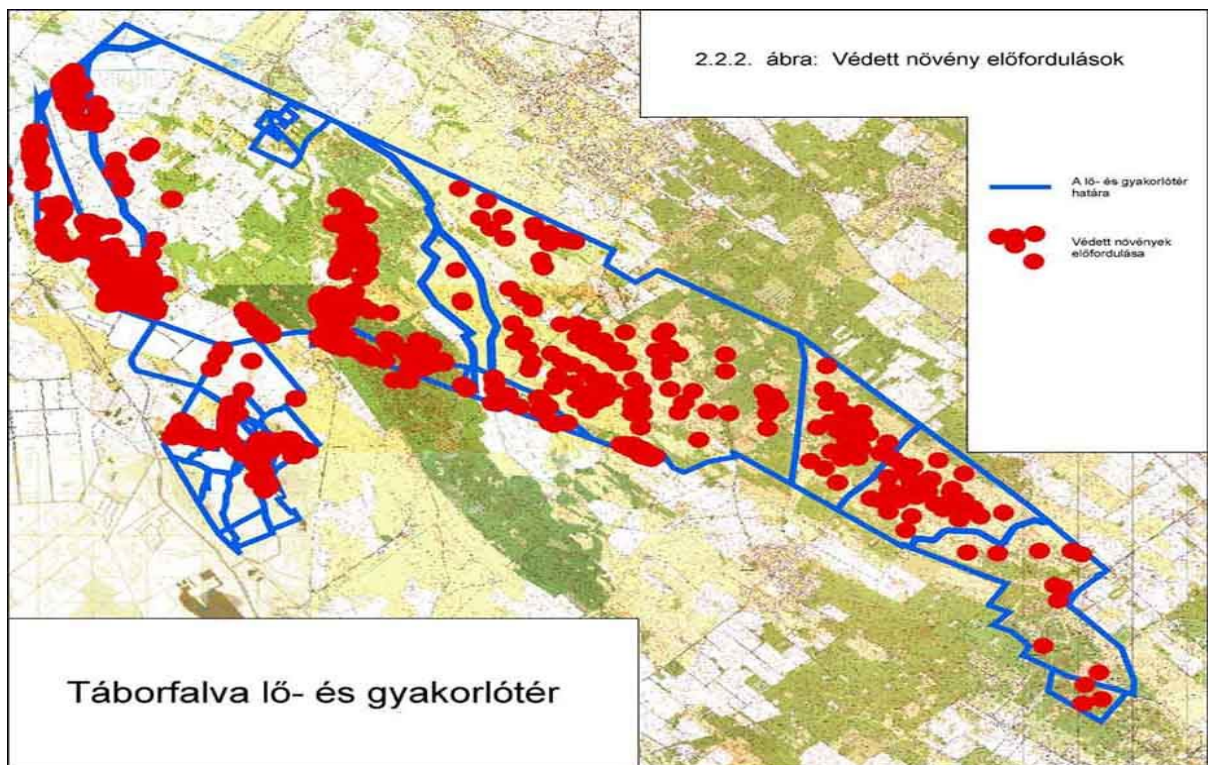
There are 2 populations in the Hansag Region and 10 populations in the Kiskunsag Region in Hungary. The largest population of the Kiskunsag Region is living on the Taborfalva Training Area.

This small, harmless viper has two year reproduction cycle and the female produce 2–20 young. It feeds predominantly on large invertebrates; especially crickets and grasshoppers, but lizards, frogs and nestling rodents are also taken. Being entirely restricted to lowland with sandy habitats of alluvial meadows and pusztas in Hungary. This species requires dry and wet, sandy habitats in close proximity.

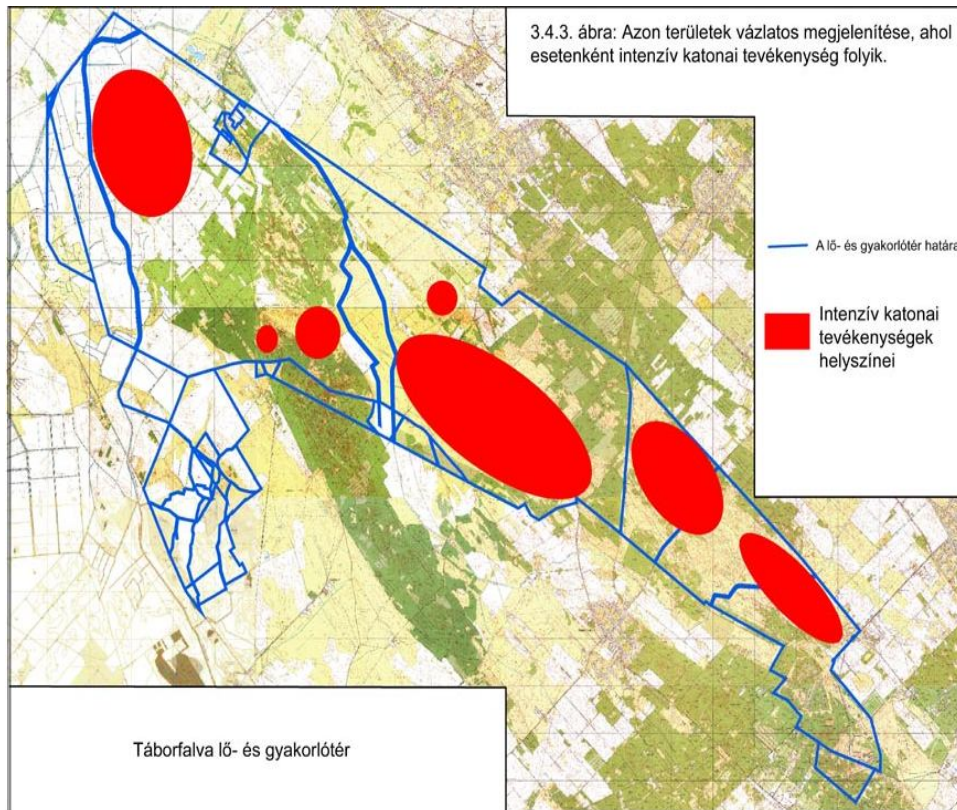
At the Taborfalva training area there are some valuable parts, which is marked with red sign.



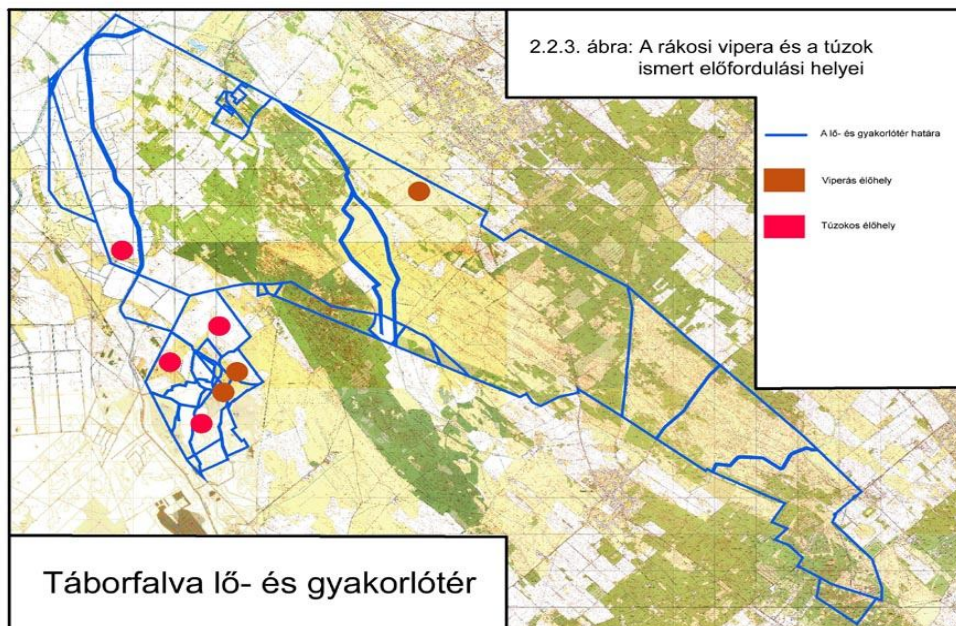
There are some populations of endangered species of plants, animals.



At intensive exercise areas there are no restrictions to the military task performance, so called free zones. These are degraded areas, based on the basic survey.



These are sensitive areas, where the natural values have greater priority than military applications. The sensitive areas were designated based on habitats of viper and great bustard populations.



Nowadays the Táborfalva nature management plan is put into effect. Now the troops are trained on the area using the management map with the knowledge where are located sensitive areas and free zones.

During 1 year operation we will collect our experiences and lessons learned from the point of view of military applications and nature protection and we will review our plan together with local military and nature protection agencies.

For growing environmental awareness of our troops, we will educate additional nature care knowledge at the yearly organized environmental officer course.

When the plan was put into effect we made cooperation with the MOE to take an active part in the EU funded life project for growing Hungarian Meadow Viper population on the Kiskunsag region. The training area is used as a research area for biological registration.

The Meadow viper information point is a new idea to get to know national and international troops this harmless viper.

At first with pamphlets to introduce them this viper and to show where the populations are located on the training area based on the management plan.

And some words about the effective nature management, now the hot management tasks (grazing, mowing) are executed by the Hungarian Birds Association.

The rest of the management tasks are planned to complete by eco-farmers. With the help of MOE and the local national park directorate we could find the correct eco-farmers to work with.

The special nature maintenance tasks will be performed by the local national park directorates' experts.

For the execution of the last 2 tasks we need civil military cooperation and special nature protection skills to conserve Hungarian Meadow Viper population's future generations.

The future tasks are the following:

- GIS based mapping tools, to illustrate the location of habitats and the area which will be used during the exercise simultaneously.
- Nature maintenance and re-establishment initiatives using EU funds, together in national cooperation.

The general conclusion is that the close cooperation between Military and Civil Nature Conservation Authorities, controlled military task performance harmonized with the developed Nature Management Plan, execution of nature management objectives and the threats minimization are going to grow the Hungarian Meadow Viper population on the Taborfalva Training Area and being preserved for future generations.

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