

Estonia

# RIPARIA - SAND MARTIN CONSERVATION IN ESTONIAN QUARRIES



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## BACKGROUND



According to recent estimates of the long-term population trend, Sand Martins in Estonia have declined by more than 50%. However, accurate figures and possible local reasons for the decline are unknown. The aim of the project is to clarify Estonian population figures for Sand Martins, describe their habitats and investigate their breeding success under different conditions. A conservation guideline and site management plans for the species at mineral extraction sites will be produced through applied research and collaboration with extractive industries. Biodiversity management at mining sites is new for the country.

<b>Location</b>	Estonia
<b>Area</b>	Industrial and natural habitats of sand martin throughout Estonia
<b>Mineral type</b>	Sand + limestone
<b>Habitat(s) targeted</b>	Vertical sand faces + heaps of limestone screenings
<b>Target species</b>	Sand Martin
<b>Organisations</b>	Estonian Ornithological Society, Kunda Nordic Tsement

## WHY IS THIS PROJECT NEEDED?

Sand Martins use steep slopes and heaps in mineral extraction sites as an alternative to their declining natural habitats. The species is protected and it is prohibited to destroy their nests and disturb them during the breeding period. Mining activities therefore need to be adapted to allow extraction to continue without breaking the law. In practise, the implementation of such management measures depends on the knowledge and awareness of operators and their willingness to adapt. Sand Martin management guidelines are not yet developed in Estonia and the project will raise awareness among quarry operators about on how to adapt their activities. At the same time, it will inform the public about the special role of quarry habitats for Sand Martins. The ultimate goal of this project is to enhance better conditions for this species in Estonia and increase its breeding success.



## PROJECT OBJECTIVES

### Objectives

- Reliable estimates of the population size, habitat use and breeding success of Sand Martins will be acquired through wide citizen participation. Local research, clarifying the reasons for the Estonian Sand Martin's decline, will inform the design of management activities.
- Guidelines for Sand Martin habitat management on mining sites will provide mining companies with practical advice for conflict-free extractive activities compatible with Sand Martins. Through greater awareness, accidental destruction of colonies during mining or reclamation activities will be reduced.
- Local Sand Martin colony management plans for 2-3 selected quarries run by Kunda Nordic Tsement will follow these guidelines, serving as an example of good practice to be communicated and followed.

## PUBLIC BENEFITS

By participating in the project's citizen science activities, people of different ages will learn about the ecology and conservation of Sand Martins, a burrow-nesting colonial bird. As public opinion of mining is quite low in Estonia, a new perception of quarries as habitats could showcase a more positive aspect of the excavation activity. Quarry managers are also encouraged to participate in the national assessment which will raise their awareness about the inhabitants of their mining sites.



Sand Martins excavate and occupy their nests from April to September, a period in which mining activities need to be adapted.



These activities are part of the BirdLife – HeidelbergCement Biodiversity Conservation Programme: Giving nature a second chance

For more information:

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