

SUMMARY

Markuszevska I. Old clay pits in south-eastern Wielkopolska Region (SW Poland) as unique elements of agricultural landscape.
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A lot of small anthropogenic depressions (with area of few hundreds to few thousands square meters and depth down to 4 m) originated as results of clay excavation in the vicinity of Krotoszyn (51°41'43" N, 17°26'14" E) in SE Wielkopolska during last 150 years. The obtained clay rich in calcium carbonate was used to lime arable fields until the 1950s. In Poland, such geoforms appear only on this area. In the study carried out in 1999–2005 a total of 1 426 depressions were recorded as a relic of about 14 500 clay pits present there by the end of 19th century. The actual depth of former clay pits does not exceed 1.5 m and their individual areas range from 1 to 3 000 m². However, despite the relatively small total area of these geoforms (6 ha on the area of 35 000 ha) they form a dense network (up to 25 objects per km²) of refuges and migration corridors of high importance to native plant and animal species occurring in highly altered landscape and, therefore, are crucial for local biodiversity. Current transformations of these depressions, both natural and anthropogenic, lead to their elimination which may happen within 10–20 years. To maintain these unique forms an appropriate protection is needed.