



LIFE+ project

**Bogs, flowing waters and nardus grasslands
in the Bavarian Forest National Park**



Nationalpark
Bayerischer Wald



Towards a European virgin forest

Situated in the South-East of Germany and surrounding the mountain peaks Falkenstein, Rachel, and Lusen, the Bavarian Forest National Park directly borders the Czech Republic. Opened in 1970, it is Germany's oldest national park, which pioneered the nationwide accepted national park philosophy "Let nature be nature".

Within an area of 240 square kilometers, the park conserves the mostly forested landscape of a low mountain range. The plant and animal communities characteristic for such a habitat in Central Europe are free to develop according to their own rules.



Natura 2000 and LIFE+ Conservation of habitats and biodiversity

In the beginning of the 1990s, the EU established the Europe-wide habitat network Natura 2000 based on the guidelines of the Birds Directive and the Habitats Directive. The goal of this network is to sustainably preserve biodiversity. The LIFE+ program is the EU's funding instrument for measures that improve the environment in regions of the Natura 2000 network.

In 1998, the Bavarian Forest National Park became a part of the Natura 2000 habitat network. At the European level, the national park is an important component of the network as it contributes to the protection of rare priority natural habitats, such as bogs, peatland forests and mat-grasslands. Furthermore, the national park offers retreat areas for endangered species, such as the black stork, the European bullhead, and the ground beetle *Carabus menetriesi ssp. pacholei*. Since fall 2013, the national park has been using the LIFE+ program to improve the conservation status of its Natura 2000 habitats.

LIFE+

LIFE+ in the national park

The LIFE+ activities, which will be implemented at about 25 sites in the national park, focus on three different habitat types: bogs, rivers and streams, as well as the nardus grasslands of historic mountain pastures.

Focus Bogs

Hydrologic restoration



Bogs and peatland forests with their rare and highly specialized species are not only regarded as a special feature of the national park. They are also habitats of particular value within the Natura 2000 network.

However, in the past, many bog areas were heavily damaged or completely destroyed through drainage and cultivation. With the aid of LIFE+, ditches and field tracks will be levelled and shrubs atypical for the habitat will be removed. Through these rehydration measures, the water resources and ecosystem functions of these valuable areas will be sustainably improved, especially for such rare species as the black stork and the large white-faced darter.



Focus Rivers and streams

Improved water connectivity and natural dynamics



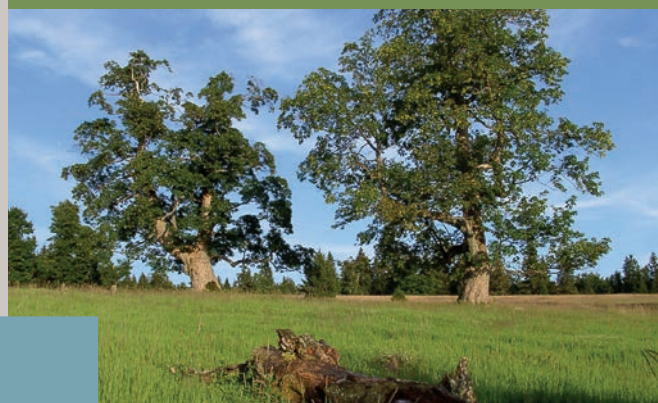
In the national park, the natural dynamics and connectivity of many rivers and streams for aquatic organisms are strongly restricted. Partly, this is caused by historic adaptations of the waterbodies to the needs of timber rafting, which particularly affected riverbeds and areas along riverbanks. But also modern road and railway construction contributed to the impairment of the water ways.

With the LIFE+ objective of improving these water habitats, the obstructed sections will be renaturalized, and canalization will be reconstructed or removed. These measures will benefit all organisms living in or around the streams and rivers, including also the European bullhead and European otter, species listed in the Habitats Directive.



Focus Historic pastures

Conservation of nardus grasslands through grazing



Reminiscent of “islands in a woodland ocean”, the so-called “Schachten” are high-altitude, unforested pastures that were created by historic cattle grazing. The specialized and rare species found in these habitats, e.g. mountain arnica and nardus-grass, render them of Europe-wide importance worthy of protection.

So far, volunteers have been instrumental to the preservation of the old pastures by mechanically clearing the forest brush. However, without the influence of animal browsing and treading typical of pasture use, the nardus grasslands are losing their characteristic qualities as the ground vegetation gradually transforms into a habitat dominated by shrubs and sedges. Therefore, within the LIFE+ activities, the national park is exemplarily testing the grazing of red mountain cattle on the Rukowitz Schachten. The aim is to develop a new conservation approach for sustainably preserving nardus grasslands by using this traditional method. The trial grazing project, however, is as an experiment with an open outcome.

LIFE+ project in the Bavarian Forest National Park

Aims of the project:

- + Hydrologic restoration of bogs and peatland forests
- + Restoration of connectivity and natural dynamics of rivers and streams
- + Trial grazing of historic pastures to preserve nardus grasslands
- + Increasing knowledge and acceptance of Natura 2000

Duration: 10/2013 – 09/2018

Project budget: 1.3 million Euro

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Life+ grazing



Life+ restoration of connectivity and natural dynamics of rivers



Life+ hydrologic restoration of bogs



Bavarian Forest National Park



border

0 5 km

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The Bavarian Forest National Park has been awarded the European Diploma in 1986.

**Nationale
Naturlandschaften**

