



INTERNATIONAL EXCHANGE OF PROTECTED AREA ACTORS

# Sharing know-how



## Why is it worth looking at the broader picture?

*“Looking at the broader picture softens the boundaries in thinking, finds solutions, and clarifies alternatives, possibilities, new approaches and self-perception.”*

Participant in the ANNIKA final workshop



Jens Posthoff

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# Dear Reader,

It has been recognized for decades that environmental and nature conservation issues need to be addressed not only regionally, but also globally and with cross-border cooperation; this has been the basis for a large number of international agreements, such as the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) or the climate change agreement. If one looks at the extent to which their goals have so far been fulfilled, it is clear that dealing with such “Herculean tasks”, like climate protection and the preservation of biodiversity, requires a much greater effort not only from politicians and business, but from society as a whole at a global, regional, and local level.

Undoubtedly, protected areas make an indispensable contribution to the preservation of biodiversity. In order to ensure the necessary management of protected areas and to adapt them to the increasing tasks, a sufficient number of well-qualified employees must be available, in addition to adequate financial resources. It is also very helpful for the ongoing development of the competence of those involved in protected areas to look at the wider picture; that is, to learn from each other in an international context. This was the focus of the project “Akteure aus Nationalen Naturlandschaften im internationalen Kompetenz-Austausch (ANNIKA – Actors from National Natural Landscapes in International Competence Exchange)” with its five-week, cross-border study visits by full-time staff and volunteers from German National Natural Landscapes and foreign protected areas, including intensive preparation and evaluation.

Therefore, with this booklet we will take you on a journey. Follow the 30 or so study visit participants to five European countries. They focused on contemporary themes in protected areas: inclusion and accessibility, regional development and tourism, education for sustainable development, and alternative financing strategies. Allow yourself to be guided by a variety of proven and inspiring practical examples, working practices, and conservation management strategies that the participants experienced abroad, discussed with local colleagues, and analysed for their significance in their own protected areas.

In retrospect, we can summarize thus: the study visits enriched the participants and hence their protected areas. On the one hand, they brought home from the exchange with the foreign hosts tangible ideas for implementation and practical solutions. On the other hand, we can unquestionably speak of broadening horizons, of raising awareness of differences in working conditions and cultures. An understanding of this is indispensable for any subsequent cross-border cooperation. Building on this, the project has demonstrated the high value of international exchange of expertise – for the participants, for the protected areas involved, and for the political and social issue of “cross-border cooperation in nature conservation”. We would like to thank all those who supported and facilitated the multifarious exchange of expertise within the framework of the project: to the Federal Ministry of the Environment for financing the project, as well as to the protected area authorities and nature



Prof. Dr. Beate Jessel  
Photo: privat

Guido Puhlmann  
Photo: EUROPARC  
Deutschland

conservation organizations in Austria, the United Kingdom, the Netherlands, Finland, and Germany. They were willing to share their knowledge and experiences as hosts. We also thank all the participants in the study visits for their intensive participation. From these, we can all draw forward-looking conclusions on the further international exchange of knowledge and expertise between those involved in protected areas.

Following on from the international study visits, we hope that this booklet will give you interesting and inspiring insights into the variety of issues being worked on in protected areas.

Prof Dr. Beate Jessel  
President German Federal Agency  
for Nature Conservation

Guido Puhlmann  
President EUROPARC Deutschland e. V.



Katja Arzt



Erika Hofmann

# Project description

Actors from National Natural Landscapes in the International Exchange of Competence

(ANNIKA = “Akteure aus Nationalen Naturlandschaften im internationalen Kompetenzaustausch”)

**Project period:** October 2015 – August 2018

## Core content:

- ♦ A total of five one-week **study visits by full-time and voluntary actors from protected areas** on defined specialist topics and the general topic of “Volunteer management”; the programme consisted of excursions, lectures, and discussions with local experts
  - ♦ “**Accessibility and inclusion in protected areas**” (Austria)
    - 04-10/09/2016: Donau-Auen NLP, Purkersdorf NRP, Gesäuse NLP, Kaunertal NRP
  - ♦ “**Regional development and tourism in protected areas**” (United Kingdom)
    - 17-22/10/2016: Brecon Beacons NLP, Wye Valley AONB, The Cotswolds AONB
  - ♦ “**Regional development and tourism in protected areas**” (Germany)
    - 14-18/05/2017: Müritz NLP, Schleswig-Holstein Wadden Sea NLP
  - ♦ “**Alternative financing strategies for protected areas**” (Finland)
    - 24-30/09/2017: Nuuksio NLP, Leivonmäki NLP, Southern Konnevesi NLP, Isojärvi NLP
  - ♦ “**Education for sustainable development in protected areas**” (Netherlands)
    - 01-07/10/2017: De Sallandse Heuvelrug NLP, Weerribben-Wieden NLP, Dwingelderveld NLP, Drents-Friese Wold NLP
- ♦ Translation of **EUROPARC Deutschland technical publications into English** and their international distribution
- ♦ A total of four two-day **introductory workshops** for German participants in study visits
- ♦ Two-day **final conference**, amongst others for German participants to reflect on project experience and draw conclusions
- ♦ Present **publication** with participant reports and project findings
- ♦ **Project evaluation**, amongst others in the context of **evaluation of the introductory workshops and the study visits** by participants, participant reports on the special subjects of the study visits, and the **master’s thesis** “Between Global Claims and National Reality: International Activities for Protected Areas by the Example of the ANNIKA Project” (Clarissa Plendl, University of Applied Sciences Fulda, 2017)

## Participants:

- ♦ **From Germany:** 24 participants; of which 13 full-time officials from administrations of National Natural Landscapes, 6 full-time employees from associations/foundations, 4 volunteers, 1 former full-time employee from a Cameroonian national park
- ♦ **From protected areas of other countries:** 7 participants; including 6 from administrations, 1 volunteer

## Acronyms and abbreviations

AONB	Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (protected landscape category in the United Kingdom)
ESD	Education for sustainable development
IUCN	International Union for Conservation of Nature
IVN	Instituut voor natuureducatie en duurzaamheid (Conservation and environmental education organization in the Netherlands)
NGO	Non-governmental organization
NLP	National Park
NRP	Nature Park



Christian Grassl

# Austria: Accessibility and inclusion in protected areas

## Introduction to the study visit

### Protected areas visited

- ✦ Donau-Auen National Park (Vienna, Lower Austria)
- ✦ Purkersdorf Nature Park (Lower Austria)
- ✦ Gesäuse National Park (Styria)
- ✦ Kaunergrat Nature Park (Tyrol)

### Background information

Austria, like Germany, has committed itself via the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities to create conditions for equal participation in society. The difference: The German Federal Equal Opportunities Act essentially applies only to public agencies at the federal level, the Austrian Federal Disability Equality Act applies fundamentally and also includes the private sector. All public transport and buildings therefore have had to be

barrier-free since 1 January 2006 (with a transitional period of 10 years); this also includes publicly accessible visitor facilities in protected areas. However, theory and practice are also still far apart in Austria. In Austria, matters of nature conservation fall exclusively within the competence of the federal states. Federal law provisions only regulate cooperation between the federal government and the federal states in the establishment and maintenance of national parks.

**Protected area categories:** The six Austrian national parks – designated since the beginning of the 1980s – correspond to IUCN Management Category II. For the almost 50 nature parks, the following applies: „Nature Park“ is not a separate protection category but a predicate given to nature conservation or landscape

conservation areas. Another large protection area category in Austria is “biosphere park” (biosphere reserve).

**Protected area administrations:** The support agencies for national parks are non-profit limited liability companies whose shareholders are the federal and state governments. They employ permanent staff throughout the year (for the visited national parks, approximately 20-25 people), plus seasonal workers. Additional national park rangers work mostly on an independent basis, mostly in visitor care. The agencies for nature parks are generally associations whose members include local communities, tourism organizations, and other regional actors such as landowners and infrastructure managers.

### What did we discuss, what were the important findings?

- ✦ Accessibility should also allow people with disabilities direct experience of nature.
- ✦ Accessibility also means comfort for non disabled people.
- ✦ Accessibility goes beyond measures for people with reduced mobility.
- ✦ Technical aids for the mobility impaired have advantages and disadvantages.
- ✦ Off-road tours for the blind are an innovative idea for German protected areas.
- ✦ Regional networks are indispensable for the implementation of accessibility in tourism services.
- ✦ Implementing accessibility is a process that takes time and perseverance.
- ✦ Accessibility must be honestly communicated in order to remain credible and inviting.

# Around the world in 7 days by wheelchair? or: 6 days barrier-free through Austria?

(Text basis: Christian Grassl, Berchtesgaden National Park Authority)

Seven people, including a wheelchair user, travelled for six days by public transport to four Austrian national parks and nature parks – meaning many impressions, real life experiences of barriers as well as accessibility, and stimulating exchange with experts on site. Each protected area visited has its own “character” with regard to accessibility; selected aspects of them are outlined below. And each is a piece of the puzzle in the overall picture. So finally – with a view to Austria and Germany – the question arises, “where do we stand?”

## National parks and nature parks with specific “barrier-free” accessibility

In Donau-Auen National Park, environmental education is designed according to the two-senses principle; that is, it should be possible for visitors to receive information using at least two senses. With relatively simple equipment, the National Park Administration thus sensitizes a very wide public to the protection of animals and plants native to the Danube, for example in the outdoor area and underground Danube aquarium on Schloss Orth – both accessible by wheelchair. A highlight is that visually impaired people can use off-road tours to explore the cut-off meanders of the Danube in the area (see section “Experiencing wilderness up close – offers for people with visual impairments”). It is perceptible that value is placed on well-trained, experienced employees.

„There are different people, sometimes they happen to be blind,” says the Director of Purkersdorf Nature Park, formulating the view of disabilities as something



Orientation for visitors with reduced mobility in Gesäuse National Park

(Mareike Garms)

normal. Pupils of all ages receive the opportunity in Purkersdorf Nature Park to step into the role of visually impaired or handicapped people with inclusive educational offers and to get new experiences of nature with different senses. A central part is the “Blind Date” nature trail, recently revised with the support of, among others, a school for the blind and visually impaired. The barrier-free route has a very simple but effective guidance system using a wooden handrail and 15 panels in written script and braille, offering nature experiences and information to mobility-impaired as well as visually impaired people. One conclusion: seeing the panels with rather long, complicated texts and directions in braille, it makes sense to focus more on the KISS principle – Keep It Short and Simple.

In Gesäuse National Park the basis of visitor facilities and infrastructure is an overall concept for nature experiences with active elements, especially for families. These offer interesting contents for comprehension (tactile) and investigation (visual). The perspective of “Nature experiences for mobility impaired people” is integrated into it. An outstanding, special offer for wheelchair users is the “barrier-free hiking guide” with descriptions of twelve different wheelchair-suitable tours in conjunction with a Swiss-Trac (see section „Comparison of aids for people with reduced mobility in protected areas“). Gstatterboden National Park Information Centre is very challenging with its elaborate architecture and smart geology exhibition, but it no longer meets the current requirements of a barrier-free and inclusive exhibition. As is general in



Karlesjochbahn in Kaunergrat Nature Park: naturally also suitable for wheelchair users

(Tobias Wiesen)

protected area visitor facilities, how well the handling of severely handicapped people succeeds and how extensively the building's possibilities are used by people with disabilities depends on trained staff.

### **Kaunergrat Nature Park – a good partner for the whole region**

Despite its narrow, high mountain location, Kaunertal and the adjoining Kaunergrat are still well developed; much has been done thanks to a lot of heart and good contacts to get funding in a short time to get disabled visitors "on their feet". The entire region, with 400,000 overnight stays a year, offers many recreational activities for the mobility impaired, including skiing, cycling, and hiking. In terms of accessibility, something tangible

rather than something contrived has developed here, with accessibility highlights such as the Piller Moor high moor trail and several viewing platforms over 3,000m in height. Conclusion: nothing is impossible if important actors are one hundred per cent convinced, the local council, tourism managers, the nature park manager, and this conviction generates widespread acceptance in the region.

### **Accessibility in Germany and Austria – where do we stand?**

Barrier-free experience of nature is in its infancy in Germany, as well as in Austria, and is still piecemeal everywhere. The fact that serving a minority actually benefits many more people is not very well known.

In Germany, there are about 13 million people, from infants to senior citizens, who all benefit from barrier-free services. The problems arise in mainstream society and almost every family is affected: sometimes a pushchair is needed, but there are different sizes, language levels and learning processes to be confronted.

It is still assumed that consistent implementation of accessibility is only possible with elaborate, detailed, and therefore cost-intensive planning. In old buildings you can use simple tools to overcome the restrictions which create hurdles in life – mobile ramps for wheelchairs or large room numbers on the doors for the elderly with visual impairment. Unfortunately there are still too few experts in this area, especially with knowledge about financial funding opportunities. However, those who think from the outset in terms of planning accessibility and interview locally severely handicapped people for their expertise, will save a lot of money and tough negotiations on whether a meaningful and sustainable investment can be made (see "Model Management Plan on Accessibility" in Berchtesgaden National Park and section "Developing possibilities for barrier-free nature: involve people with handicaps!"). A guiding principle: with demographic change, we should all start to think, feel, and act fully accessible.

Perfect accessibility has not yet been achieved in Austria. Nevertheless, barrier-free offers work and are accepted, as some best-practice examples in Austria have shown. These should be advertised in wider networks and on general travel platforms, as accessibility equates to higher comfort and better-quality offers. Success comes with visitors!

# Developing possibilities for barrier-free nature: involve people with disabilities!

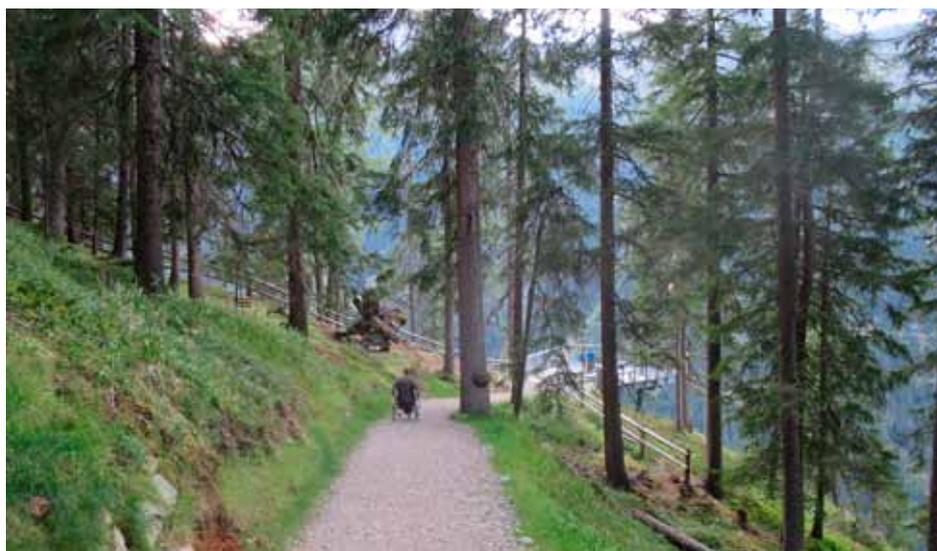
(Text basis: Veit Riffer, Volunteer at Saxon Switzerland National Park Centre)

The following report includes my very personal views and thoughts as a wheelchair user on the subject of accessibility, and therefore does not claim to be objective. People concerned with their own handicap often have a different perspective on the topic than people who do not have to deal with it from their own practical point of view. Of course, the views of people with physical, sensory, and cognitive limitations will often be different – depending on their own self-perception and their perceived position in society. My statements are based on the following assumptions:

- People with disabilities actively shape their own lives, using support from third parties where necessary.
- People with disabilities communicate clearly, but politely, with third parties about their need for support.
- People with disabilities want to be treated in the same way as others – without preference, without special treatment, without exclusive offers – and accept help if needed as compensation for disability-related restrictions.

## Austrian parks cooperating with disabled people

In each of the protected areas visited in Austria, efforts are being made to make nature accessible to people with handicaps. It is not only about the barrier-free design of visitor facilities, such as information centres, but also to experience activities in the natural environment, in the heart of the protected areas. The fact that people with disabilities actively participate and are involved in the development and design of (largely) barrier-free experiences



No steps on the way to “Adlerblick” viewpoint in Kaunergrat Nature Park

(private archive Veit Riffer)

has had a significant impact on quality. Their involvement changes the sensitivity to the topic of the respective protected area management and, more specifically, their overall strategy.

In Donau-Auen National Park, staff from Austrian Federal Forests have been working together for some years with the international organization “Friends of Nature” and a local self-help group for the blind and visually impaired. In the effort for more accessibility, one tries to intervene as little as possible in natural conditions, but rather relies on the needs-based support of visually impaired and blind visitors in the form of personal accompaniment on tours through the areas (see section “Experience wilderness up close – opportunities for people with visual impairments”).

Purkersdorf Nature Park offers, among others, a discovery path tailored to the needs of blind and visually impaired

visitors (see section “The service chain in barrier-free tourism – practical examples from Austria”). Thanks to contacts with a self-help group for the blind and visually impaired, the knowledge of those in question was used for practical solutions in the implementation of accessibility.

In Gesäuse National Park, among the services focussed especially on people with reduced mobility is a barrier-free hiking trail and rentable wheelchair traction devices. During the design of the barrier-free “Leierweg” theme path, in



Over the moorland by wheelchair: Piller Moor trail in Kaunergrat Nature Park

(private archive Veit Riffer)



Front cover of barrier-free hiking guide

addition to those responsible for the National Park, the planning office tasked with this job brought on board the organisation Lebenshilfe Ennstal and several of its mobility-impaired clients.

A “barrier-free hiking guide” includes tour suggestions for hikes in Gesäuse using a Swiss-Trac wheelchair tractor. An active wheelchair user from the region was instrumental in its development; also, through their voluntary and hands-on work, she assisted in preparation of all the essential information.

In contrast to the above-mentioned protected areas, the stakeholders in Kaunergrat Nature Park already have many years’ experience of dealing with people with reduced mobility. It is quite clear that they extensively consulted on accessibility here, with a view to the practicability of appropriate measures. The reason for this is a wheelchair user permanently employed in the district, whose job is partly financed by project funds. This very committed young woman uses her knowledge to help private and public decision-makers during the preparation, planning, and implementation of projects to improve accessibility in the region. Her perspective as someone directly affected by the situation helps to avoid poor decisions. In Kaunergrat Nature Park an open-minded climate has been developed for visitors with disabilities,

especially in Kaunertal. Nowhere else on the journey did I have the feeling that it was so easy to be a human with a handicap.

### Comparison with Saxon Switzerland National Park Region

Similar to the protected areas visited in Austria, there are a few dedicated and handicapped people in my home region who support local stakeholders in the selection and planning of measures to improve accessibility infrastructure. These people on the Czech and German sides of the mountains are usually volunteers and provide advice to institutions when needed (e.g., National Park Administration), tourist service providers (e.g., hotels), and associations (e.g., tourism associations). In addition, further projects in this environment are implemented by associations and clubs. However, since their implementation is usually financed by grants, these activities often end when the funding or the project ends. Therefore, above all it is the continuous personal commitment of participants from the ranks of public administrations as well as the interest groups and business associations, in addition to commitment from private individuals, that over the years develop extensive informal networks and attracts other interested parties. Last but not least is the strategy of taking small steps that has been jointly pursued; it does not demand the

immediate implementation of one hundred per cent accessibility, but rather considers the possibilities for the participants in a much more practical way.

### Involving people with disabilities promotes practicality

In my opinion, the participation of interest groups or individuals with practical life experience as a disabled person contributes significantly to a user-oriented development of barrier-free infrastructure. How local decision-makers perceive the wishes and needs of visitors in this target group often depends on the intensity of personal exchange with those in question. However, it should not be forgotten that this type of communication is not a one-way street. Only when people with mobility, sensory, or cognitive limitations actively participate in the design and improvement of accessibility on the ground does this ensure that the projects are tailored precisely to their needs. The sustainability of barrier-free opportunities and activities, their perception and acceptance stands or falls on the involvement of all involved.

**Tour:** Leierweg beim Weidenkam  
**Stufe:** Einstiegstour  
**Parkplatz:** Parkplatz Weidenkam  
**Aufstieg:** ca. 1 Std.  
**Abstieg:** ca. 1/2 Std.  
**Strecke:** 2,2 km (Hm- und Rückfahrt)  
**Höhenmeter:** 487m  
**Wegoberfläche:** Asphalt, Holzsteg, Macadambelag  
**Max. Steigung:** 11 %  
**Akkuverbrauch des Swiss-Tracs:** ca. 30 %  
**Einkehr:** Gasthof zur Bachbrücke  
 Mai – Oktober  
 Tel.: +43 (0)361 150036  
 www.bachbruecke.at

**Barrierefreies WC:** Weidenkam  
**Besonderheiten:** Kindersagenkauflich  
 Achtung: Rad- bzw. KFZ-Verkehr möglich!

**Naturerlebnis Schwimmgut Aussicht** ★★★★★

**Höhenprofil**

**Natur erleben ... auf Spielsteine!**

**Spaß und Action**  
 Einige Stationen fördern Aktivität und sportliches Ergötzen...

**Erholen und Genießen**  
 ...weitere Stationen zum Entspannen einladen.

**Weg- und Stege**  
 Zurück geht es über einen breiten Weg über einen Stein- und Holzsteg über Asphalt bzw. zu einer Aussichtsplatte.

4 [www.nationalpark.co.at](http://www.nationalpark.co.at)

Barrier-free hiking guide for Gesäuse National Park with twelve tour descriptions, including the Leierweg

# The service chain in barrier-free tourism – practical examples from Austria

(Text basis: Mareike Garms, formerly Black Forest National Park Administration)



Tactile paving in Purkersdorf Nature Park, to be touched with white canes, helps give orientation (Mareike Garms)

People with disabilities have a right to self-determined and comprehensive participation and equal opportunities. This also means that a journey without barriers can take place. In order to guarantee a barrier-free stay at a holiday destination, it is essential that consistent attention is paid to the tourism service chain. This consists of many individual services, such as arrival and departure, transport, and leisure facilities on site. Every single service affects the entire travel experience. A weakening or failure of a chain link can lead to complete failure or even termination of the trip. It should be noted that different visitor groups, even in barrier-free tourism, have different demands on the service chain.

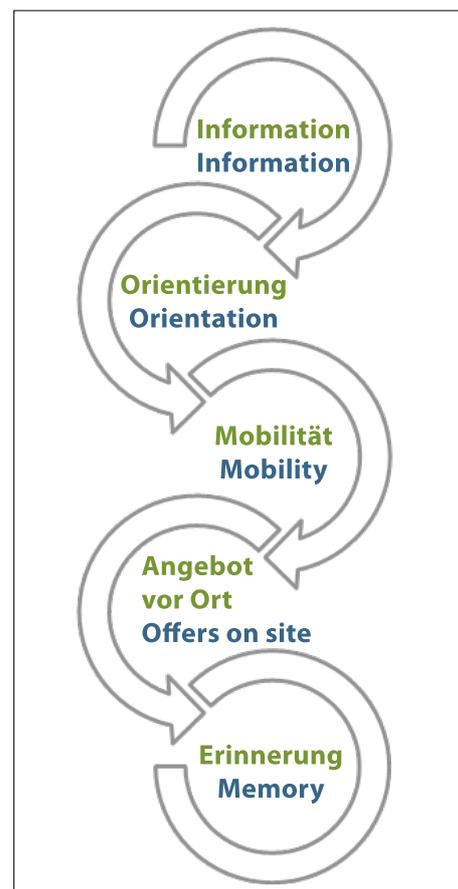
## “Information” chain link and example of Weisseespitze Hotel in Kaunergrat Nature Park

In barrier-free tourism, precise planning plays a key role before a trip, and therefore so does information gathering.

The barrier-free four-star Weisseespitze hotel – the “first wheelchair hotel in the Alps” – is located in Tyrol near Kaunertal Glacier. It is considered a pioneer in the region, where accessibility is now given up to a height of 3,108 metres. The hotel appeals in particular to people with reduced mobility. It also offers a comprehensive range of recreational activities: mono-ski, Swiss-Tracs, handbikes, and a Wheelchair Roadbook with a multitude of barrier-free holiday opportunities in the region (see section “Information materials for accessibility – practical example of Rolli Roadbook”).

The communication of barrier-free opportunities by the three stakeholders (Kaunergrat Nature Park, service providers, and tourism organization) is exemplary. Worth particular mention is the communication of detailed information, for example the indication of overnight accommodation ranging from “totally wheelchair friendly” to “restricted wheelchair access” on the Nature Park homepage, and detailed information on tourist opportunities in the Wheelchair Roadbook.

One criticism is that, although one hundred per cent accessibility is communicated in the offers aimed strongly at people with reduced mobility, it is not so for people with visual impairment, for example.



The tourism service chain (eigene Darstellung/own diagram)

## “Orientation & Mobility on site” chain link and example of “Blindenpfad” in Purkersdorf Nature Park

An adequate number of barrier-free mobility services for all means of transport and guidance on the ground, such as information panels or signs and waymarking, should now be part of the equipment standard of successful tourist destinations. Purkersdorf Nature Park has developed a sensory nature adventure trail under a project called “Blind Date”. Along the one-kilometre route there are 18 new panels in Braille and written script. Handrails, wooden structures, tactile paving, and explanations on the panels point the way. The path also offers sighted

people a special chance for sensory perception. A positive aspect is that the concept follows a more inclusive approach. The path was not created exclusively for visually impaired people and offers hands-on areas for all visitors. However, the panels contain too much information and are not well illustrated. Furthermore, visually impaired people in particular require detailed information in advance about the location as well as accessibility. There is a train station in the immediate vicinity, but there is no guidance from there to the path.

### “Offers on site” chain link and example of the theme path at the Willow Dome, Gesäuse National Park

Activities during a visit significantly contribute to the satisfaction of visitors. The Willow Dome Discovery Centre in Gesäuse National Park offers, among other things, the “Leierweg” barrier-free hiking trail, which specifically targets wheelchair users. Swiss-Trac wheelchairs can be rented from the Willow Dome. Numerous discovery points especially geared to wheelchair users have been installed along the route. People without disabilities should be able to experience them as explicitly uncomfortable to sensitize them to “handicaps”.

A positive aspect is the conceptual development of the hiking trail with the participation of interested groups. Furthermore, the routing is clear and the discovery points are explained in easy language.

### “Memory” chain link and the example of off-road guide

A visit or a trip is reflected on afterwards and recorded in a variety of forms, for example in photo albums, holiday tales, travel blogs, and souvenirs. Depending on the degree to which travel objectives were fulfilled, a level of satisfaction develops, which in turn increases the probability of a new trip to the destination area.

In Donau-Auen National Park there is a guided tour for visually impaired and blind people (see section “Experiencing wilderness up close – opportunities for people with visual impairments”). The participants are repeatedly invited to examine special features along the way. The shell of a great ramshorn snail is both a tactile object and a memory at the same time: “This snail is missing from my collection at home.”

### Barrier-free tourism in the Black Forest National Park

In the Black Forest National Park, barrier-free nature tourism plays a key role, in which all service providers have to work closely together – as a connector, co-operation partner, and direct tourist provider of, for example, guided tours in sign language. It is therefore necessary to approach the respective service providers of the National Park region with the topic of “accessibility”, for example as part of an information event or further training for partner companies. The tourism concept, which was developed together with the National Park region in 2017, contains the concept of making accessibility a cross-sectional task, as well as creating a



Touch, smell, and taste play key roles for people with visual impairments during the off-road tour in Donau-Auen National Park (Mareike Garms)

transportation concept. The National Park principle of “We remove existing barriers and do not create new ones” applies, among others, to the building of the new information centre, the creation of new paths, and route maps. The practical examples from the study visit in Austria confirm the relevance and importance of internal and external communication for National Park work.



Bridge over the Enns in Gesäuse National Park with a view through the railing at wheelchair height

(Mareike Garms)

# Information materials for accessibility – practical example of Rolli Roadbook

(Text basis: Beatrix Knappertsbusch, Kellerwald-Edensee National Park Authority)



Description of Piller Moor in Rolli Roadbook

People with a disability depend heavily on detailed information for their endeavours. The Rolli Roadbook – presented during the study visit to the Kaunergrat Nature Park – gives good suggestions for accessibility information in Kellerwald-Edensee National Park in terms of comprehensiveness, clarity, and information content.

## Rolli Roadbook in detail

The Rolli Roadbook presents 84 pages of excursion destinations and hiking trails for visitors with reduced mobility in the border area between Italy, Switzerland, and Austria. It provides a lot of easy-to-understand information and is very handy as a printed edition in a ring binder format. The manual can be downloaded from various websites. On the first two pages its handling is described in Italian and German, the following critical review is purely of the German information. The introductory page is very descriptive with internationally understandable symbols. With the help of a traffic light system, paths are divided into different levels of difficulty: green means a smooth surface with slight gradients while red inter alia signifies gradients or difficult obstacles. In addition, a scale of up to five smileys helps in the overall rating, ranging from easy/comfortable to strenuous/difficult.



Front cover of Rolli Roadbook

On the introductory page, icons are shown which are used on subsequent pages, for example to show the location of a restaurant. A positive is that the assessments of the paths were made by wheelchair users and are thus subjective. It should also be recommended to bring a companion. The Rolli Roadbook differentiates between tours with Swiss-Trac (i.e. with a wheelchair tractor), excursions, cultural tours, hiking routes, hand bike tours, and viewpoints. This division is very successful, as it appeals to both different age groups as well as those who are more athletic or culturally interested. The tours are described in more detail on the following pages. Each tour has a map showing the route from start to finish in different colours, analogous to the traffic light system. Icons refer to parking, as well as refreshments and handicapped accessible toilets in the immediate vicinity. The following is a brief list of the most important facts (starting point, end point, difficulty level, surface condition, route length, duration, address) as well as a detailed text, further details of the route, and information about the location, culture, other highlights in the area.

## “Piller Moor Trail” in Rolli Roadbook – a critical view

The map of the Piller Moor trail has the Swiss-Trac symbol in the top right-hand corner. Swiss-Trac can be rented from the nearby Naturparkhaus (Nature Park Centre). To get to the starting point of the tour, you either have to take the Swiss-Trac by car to the car park entrance to Piller Moor, or take the Swiss-Trac from the Naturparkhaus car park to Piller Moor. Unfortunately, there is no barrier-free hiking trail or pavement on the route, so the road must be used. This is also very popular for motorcycle tours and thus heavily used. The Rolli Roadbook does not give any information about the possibility of leasing Swiss-Trac in the Naturparkhaus, nor about the distance between the Naturparkhaus and the entrance to Piller Moor or the rather dangerous approach by Swiss-Trac to the starting point.



Overview map of Piller Moor in Rolli Roadbook

I would also like to comment on the details of the route. The paths are either gravel paths or boardwalks. These are easily accessible by wheelchair and Swiss-Trac. During our visit, however, one of our wheelchair participants got a wheel stuck between two wooden planks. Since he is very athletic, he was able to free himself. A less able wheelchair user would have had to wait for help.

**Accessibility information in Kellerwald-Edersee National Park**

In Kellerwald-Edersee National Park there is still no specific print material about accessibility such as a leaflet or booklet. Barrier-free offers, such as tours with wheelchairs and prams or guided tours in German sign language, are advertised in the annual calendar of events, through press releases and on the National Park homepage. Since 2018, the calendar of events is marked by symbols (wheelchair user, symbol for visually impaired and blind people), and an extra page also indicates the barrier-free offers and gives tips for hiking on your own as well as the information facilities. Since each group of people with disabilities places special demands on print media, such as Braille or simple language, it will not be possible to create one leaflet for all audiences and offers. Given that Kellerwald-Edersee National Park has a fairly wide range of options for people with limited mobility, this could be a thematic approach for a new leaflet, or it would make sense to supplement existing leaflets with information on accessibility. Rolli Roadbook offers good assistance.

**Add accessibility information to the path leaflet**

There are specific possibilities for improvement in the “Quernstweg and Dreierherrenstein– Route” path leaflet. This leaflet describes two hiking routes, which provide information about traces of history in the National Park with the help of numbered stops and maps. The leaflet contains information about the route



Classification of routes in Rolli Roadbook

length in kilometres and height profiles for the circular routes. On the overview map, the sections of the route which are suitable for people with restricted mobility are marked with corresponding symbols.

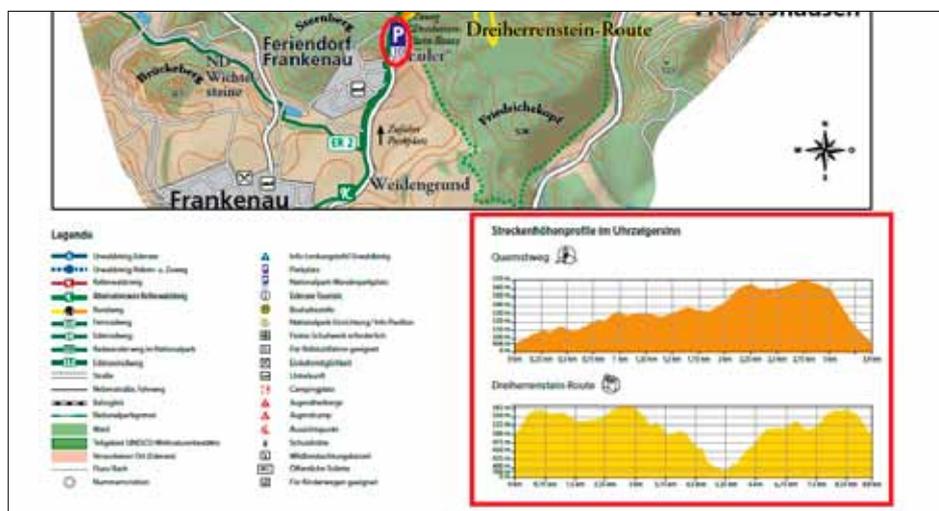
In a new edition, it would be good to also mark a route for wheelchair users which leads to Quernst chapel; this route is only for skilled wheelchair users. Further information about surface conditions and the time needed to complete this section by wheelchair should be added. Furthermore, at the chapel there is a dry-compost toilet, which is also equipped for the disabled. Unfortunately, this leaflet currently only contains the “WC” symbol. It would be possible to insert another rolly symbol here. Disabled parking spaces already available at the National Park entrance at Kellerwald-Uhr, but unfortunately not marked explicitly on the overview map for the hiking trails or the journey. Again, a rolly symbol would help. The relevant information for the target audience should be described in the

text. Finally, it makes sense to add a rolly symbol on the front cover to catch the attention of the target audience.

These improvements should be incorporated in a new edition. The benefits of this approach are reasons of cost and the fact that the leaflets are established in the region and have a large sphere of influence through word of mouth.



Wheelchair-suitable dry compost toilet at Quernst chapel (National Park Kellerwald-Edersee)



Overview map of Quernst in Kellerwald-Edersee National Park (from „Quernstweg and Dreierherrenstein Route“ leaflet)

# Comparison of aids for people with reduced mobility in protected areas

(Text basis: Tobias Wiesen, Eifel National Park Administration)



Swiss-Trac wheelchair tractor

(Tobias Wiesen)

Making natural treasures accessible to all people – with or without disabilities – this goal requires, amongst other, resources for people with reduced mobility. Experiences from national parks in Austria and Germany show issues to be considered.

## Swiss-Trac – in use in Gesäuse National Park

During the study tour in Austria, participants were able to get to know and test the well-known Swiss-Trac resource in Gesäuse National Park. The National Park website informs you that the equipment is available for rental and can be used at the three visitor centres (Admont Information Office, Willow House Discovery Centre, Gstatterboden National Park Pavilion) as well as on “Lettmair Au” theme path and “Leierweg” barrier-free hiking trail. The rental fee is 25 Euros per person per day. Choosing Swiss-Trac for activities in Gesäuse National Park seems to make sense since the devices offer a very good technical

complement to the abovementioned barrier-free opportunities. The small size of the traction device also means it can be easily transported between the various barrier-free facilities in the National Park. However, as thus far there are only two devices available for hire, use by larger groups is not possible for the time being.

Swiss-Trac is a wheelchair tractor that can be connected to any wheelchair in just a few moments, provided that the coupling is available. Operating the device only requires short familiarization and can be learned quickly during a self-test. During the test drive different gradients were negotiated with no significant limitations. However, the journey was mainly on asphalt or a good forest track. According to the manufacturer, Swiss-Trac can handle climbs of up to 20%. A positive was the choice of two different speeds. However, a lever must be pressed constantly for steady driving, which over time is quite tiring for the inexperienced.

When acquiring Swiss-Trac for institutions, such as National Natural Landscapes, one aspect is particularly important: to attach it to a wheelchair, a coupling must be present. In order to avoid lengthy conversions, a wheelchair with a coupling is often ordered alongside the actual traction device. As a result, visitors who want to rent Swiss-Trac for a tour at short notice can start immediately. However, it is then necessary to leave their own wheelchair and get into the offered wheelchair. The cost of the purchase increases with the additional wheelchair,

resulting in a final price of several thousand Euros.

## Zoom Uphill – in use in Eifel National Park

Since 2016, “Zoom Uphill” all-terrain wheelchairs have been used in Eifel National Park. They are approved as electronically operated wheelchairs and may thus operate in forests without any legal problems. For beginners it takes a bit of getting used to, but it soon becomes routine. The device also managed gradients of up to 55%, and the surface driven on can be almost ignored; from mud to very coarse gravel, all surfaces were mastered.

The devices are leased via an external provider. As a certified National Park



Four-wheel drive “Zoom Uphill”

(Zoomability)



Joëlette with attendants

(Pilar Elloriaga, Wheel the World, Joëlette and Co)

Forest Guide, it offers tours with Zoom Uphill, amongst others. Basically, the devices can only be borrowed as part of a guided tour. The National Park Administration includes the offer in its own marketing and advertises the guided tours, for example, in leaflets, on the homepage, or at fairs. Especially in the areas of visitor guidance and information, there are advantages for the National Park; the guided tour leaders can act as multipliers for it. All sides benefit from each other, which makes it a very good example of collaboration.

In order to avoid possible conflicts with other visitor groups, an agreement was concluded in advance between Eifel National Park Authority and the tour provider. This regulates, amongst others, the permitted maximum speed to 6 km/h (it is capable of 20 km/h), the supervision of groups by certified National Park Forest Guides, or the approval of paths to be used. A map with all hiking trails in the National Park is attached to the agreement, on which the paths approved for the devices are clearly marked. By choosing certain routes, the character of smaller paths can be maintained to appeal to hikers, since they are not used by the devices.

A disadvantage compared to the other two resources mentioned is the need to switch from your own wheelchair to the Zoom Uphill. Not everyone is willing or able to do so. In addition, the rental fees are rather high, especially in comparison to Swiss-Trac. For a two-hour tour, the provider wants 89 Euros. However, the tours take place in the company of a certified National Park Forest Guide and thus come with a wealth of information about the route and the region. At around 16,000 Euros, the acquisition costs are the highest in comparison to the two other described products. The provider in Eifel National Park is also the general importer for Germany and Luxembourg.

#### **Joëlette – an environmentally friendly but labour-intensive alternative**

A Joëlette is a single-wheeled wheelchair which can be used off-road to give people with disabilities the chance to experience the countryside. It is certainly the most environmentally friendly as a non-motorized wheelchair. Two attendants are required to use it: the front person takes care of pulling and steering, while the rear one is responsible for balance. The personal experience of the author (all three “positions” tested) is mixed. A

Joëlette offers good opportunities to get people with disabilities into the real countryside. Even gradients over 20% can be overcome, whereby the use and thus the “limits of experience” always depends on the accompanying people. For example, teamwork can be strengthened in a school class using the Joëlette, as students can also be attendants. In more difficult terrain, however, adults should operate the Joëlette.

From the author’s point of view, the necessity of two accompanying people represents the greatest disadvantage for use in a National Park (Eifel), especially with groups. Often only a few accompanying people are present, or the support is provided by a ranger. In this case, they would have to operate the Joëlette at the same time as conducting the actual programme. This is not practical. But for a family that wants to do a hike, the Joëlette certainly makes sense and enables a relative with disabilities to participate in difficult hikes.

# Experience wilderness up close – opportunities for people with visual impairments

(Text basis: Harald Wieck, formerly Kellerwald-Edersee National Park Authority)

“Accessibility and wilderness” is an exciting topic, especially since at first glance not many implementation options seem feasible. But if you go deeper into the subject, then there are opportunities that were previously thought of as unfeasible.

## Off-road tour for blind and visually impaired people

Of particular interest in Austria was the pragmatic approach to “accessibility”. In particular, the day in the Donau-Auen National Park has shown that, with relatively little effort, an eventful day in the wild can be designed even for blind and visually impaired people: On our excursion, which started at Schloss Eckartsau, there were two visually impaired participants. The approximately two-kilometre hike led across rough terrain into a dry Danube side arm. The two ladies mastered this stretch completely by themselves, within the orientation of the group. In addition to their pronounced other senses, they only have their white canes. It was interesting that in particular the smelling and feeling of leaves and other objects was very pronounced and done very intensively. For a guided

tour with this target group a maximum distance of about three kilometres should be planned.

According to the guide, visually impaired and blind groups regularly come from the metropolitan area of Vienna. These discovery tours in the countryside are received very positively, as they represent a welcome change to otherwise monotonous routines. Organizing such trips does not incur major outlay for the organizers, as there are always accompanying people in these groups, who can point out e. g. the nature of the ground, branches at face level and what to experience. This practical example has shown that such trips should be practicable in other protected areas too, provided the routes are not too long. Since there are thus far not so many offers of this type in Germany, there is the possibility to develop further tourist customer groups.

## Accessibility in National Park Kellerwald-Edersee

Kellerwald-Edersee National Park, with its almost 6,000 hectares of truncated low mountain landscape, offers very



In 2016, to mark the 10th anniversary of Quernst chapel in Nationalpark Kellerwald-Edersee, a tactile scale model was inaugurated in front of it. (Harald Wieck)

few natural options for implementing accessibility. An exception is the area of Euler/Quernst, which is relatively flat and already has a good infrastructure for people with reduced mobility. Opened in 2017, KellerwaldUhr Information Centre, with its wheelchair suitable area, is an ideal starting point for experiencing nature for the blind and visually impaired. Only about 1.6 kilometres from KellerwaldUhr is Quernst chapel, on the edge of the National Park. A multifunctional and barrier-free route leads to this chapel. In addition to walkers, it is also used by horse carriages and wheelchair users. It also serves the staff of the National Park as an important feeder road into the area.

## The idea: Quernstpfad for the blind and visually impaired

Alongside the barrier-free route between KellerwaldUhr and Quernst chapel, there is the so-called Quernstpfad, which is a diverse, narrow path over fallen trees – maximum 30 cm high – and leads past various deciduous and coniferous species. Our goal is to make this approximately 1.6-kilometre-long route accessible to the



“Off-road” excursion onto a dry riverbed of a side arm of the Danube in Donau-Auen National Park; in the background is the hiking guide with the two visually impaired participants (Tobias Wiesen)



After a successful survey, the official nationwide logo "Reisen für Alle", as per Deutsches Seminar für Tourismus (DSFT) Berlin e. V.

blind and partially sighted as part of the nationwide "Reisen für Alle" ("Travel for everyone") certification programme. Here we enter new territory in Germany. The existing implementation of accessibility in the Euler/Quernst area is only just the beginning of a total area of accessibility.

Existing facilities:

- ♦ Two disabled parking spaces at KellerwaldUhr National Park entrance
- ♦ Wheelchair access to Quernst chapel
- ♦ Scale model of the chapel for the blind and visually impaired
- ♦ Disabled toilet close to the chapel.

Measures necessary:

- ♦ Redesign of Quernstpfad into a discovery trail for the blind and visually impaired, with advice from experts on legal requirements and possible implementation of the path
- ♦ Design and construction of KellerwaldUhr information centre as a barrier-free "facility for all", with completion in 2017.

### Redesign of Quernstpfad

Due to its narrow width (about 50 cm), the existing path to Quernst chapel is only suitable for single-file use. On the track there are fallen trees from a storm which have to be crossed. To enable all visually impaired and blind people to hike as independently as possible, it should be clarified with experts whether a guiding rope should be attached to the hillside. In addition, it must be clarified to what height the laying trees are acceptable on the path. Since these tours are staffed

by specially trained rangers, exciting and adventurous guidance should be given in cooperation with the group helpers.

The cost of this redesign will amount to about 13,000 Euros. Since the implementation can be done by our own ranger staff, the costs will only extend to the guiding rope and certification.

In combination with the wheelchair accessible main route, there is a circuit of almost three-kilometre that can be marketed as a half-day trip. After completion, the route should be certified with the nationwide "Barrierefreiheit geprüft" ("Accessibility checked") certificate and published on the National Park website and on [www.deutschland-barrierefrei-erleben.de](http://www.deutschland-barrierefrei-erleben.de). For the redesign of the Quernstpfad, there are discussions

with the German Blindenstudienanstalt "blista" (an Institute for Blind Studies) and the company "freiheitswerke". If these discussions are positive, implementation of the project could begin before long.



The Euler/Quernst area in Kellerwald-Edersee National Park: on the left the Rolliweg (wheelchair route), in the middle the planned discovery trail, and on the right the challenging hiking trail (GIS Landesbetrieb Hessen-Forst)



Jens Posthoff

# United Kingdom: Regional development and tourism in protected areas

## Introduction to the study visit

### Protected areas visited

- ✦ Brecon Beacons National Park (Wales)
- ✦ Wye Valley Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (Wales and England)
- ✦ Cotswolds Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (England)

### Background information

**Protected area categories:** In the United Kingdom, the protected areas categories National Park and Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) refer to historically evolved cultural landscapes. They correspond to IUCN management category V (Protected Landscape) and are thus more comparable to nature parks or landscape conservation areas in Germany than to national parks. Specifically, national parks in the United Kingdom do not focus primarily on nature conservation and biodiversity, but on scenic beauty.

### Protected area administrations:

The national park authorities are independent and state-funded administrations, but not state-run. The land in national parks is for the most part privately owned, including organizations like the National Trust or public institutions. The management of AONBs is carried out by regional authorities and municipalities. The larger AONBs are managed by independent authorities.

### What did we discuss, what were the important findings?

- ✦ People are the centre of attention in all the areas visited, meaning that man comes first, then the landscape, and only after that the plants and animals in the countryside.
- ✦ Volunteers are extensively involved in all visited protected areas and are held in extremely high esteem.
- ✦ The ambassador concept is extremely effective for public relations and image building.
- ✦ Digital systems are very effective in planning and management, for example in volunteer management.
- ✦ Tourism: the positive attitude of „Tourism is our friend“ determines the work of the protected area administrations.
- ✦ A good combination of nature conservation, art and culture strengthens the protected areas.

# Regional development through trekking opportunities in national parks

(Text basis: Michael Lammertz, Eifel National Park Administration)



View from the Beacons Way in the Brecon Beacons National Park (Jens Posthoff)

One way of extending the length of stay of national park visitors, and thus increasing tourism value, is the development of attractive multi-day opportunities. For this purpose, hiking offers in national parks are appropriate as they allow one to immerse into nature, and other means of mobility are usually limited. Trekking-routes crossing a national park are a special opportunity.

## The Beacons Way – a trekking opportunity in the Brecon Beacons National Park

The Beacons Way crosses the whole of the Brecon Beacons National Park, from west to east over a distance of 152 km, mostly along the ridges and often off the beaten track. It includes eight daily stages of 14-23 km. The captivating route passes through landscapes with high hills and deep valleys, as well as extensive moorlands, and it includes many of the most spectacular viewpoints in the National Park. Through the installation of eight works of art along the route, the path also has a cultural aspect. Depending on the section, the route can be demanding and needs good physical fitness, as well as knowledge and experience in map reading and compass work because the route is not continuously waymarked. Summer is the recommended season,

with better conditions for drying clothes and equipment. Good preparation is essential; this is especially true for the western stages, as accommodation is not always available and it may be necessary to organize a shuttle. Alternatively, you can carry a tent and camping equipment and legally camp along the route. Both have drawbacks: the additional weight (tent) reduces the experience of the countryside, and a shuttle interrupts the “flow”, which can prevent that special mental relaxation achieved during longer uninterrupted trekking tours. According to information from locals, only a very few people attempt the full length of the route.

So far, no bookable arrangements have been developed for the entire Beacons Way. Guided, multi-day hikes are offered on sections by the Brecon Beacons Society (an outdoor organisation and a private guided-walk organiser), but so far it has received little response; the reasons could not be determined by the author.

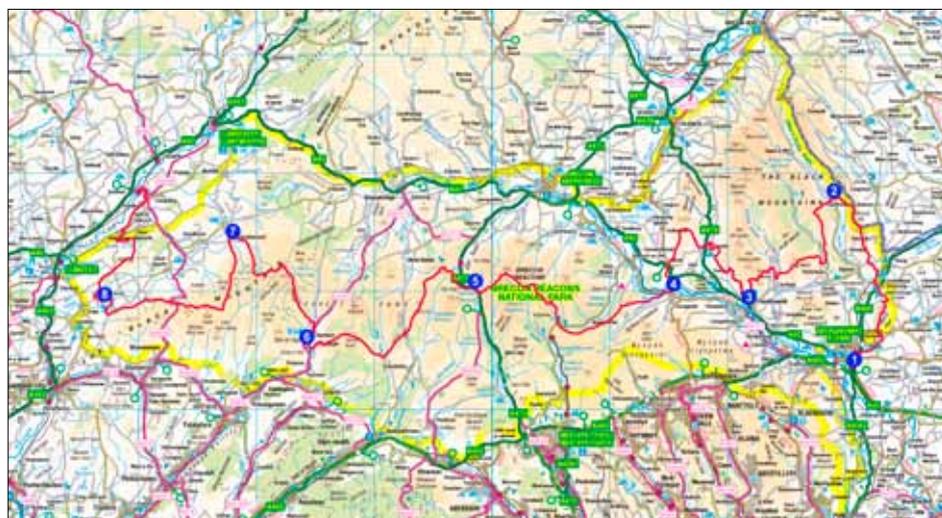
The Beacons Way is not classified as a National Trail; that is, there is no

government support for maintenance. Maintenance and repair is done through volunteer work. The Brecon Beacons National Park has 138 volunteers (with 122 full-time staff), who work around 12,000 hours each year. Organization of the volunteer work is done very professionally (see section “Volunteering and management”).

## A comparison: “Wilderness Trail” hiking offer in Eifel National Park

In Eifel National Park there has been a similar hiking offer since 2007: the “Wilderness Trail – four days through Eifel National Park” also crosses the entire National Park, from south to north. With an overall length of 85 km, divided into four daily stages with a total of 1,891 metres of altitude difference and 2,251 vertical metres of descent, the Wilderness Trail is also a challenging long-distance route.

The main difference to the Beacons Way is the Wilderness Trail’s comprehensive package that allows physically fit people



The route of the Beacons Way in the Brecon Beacons National Park

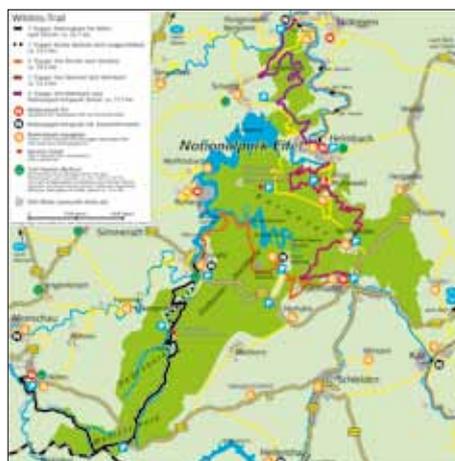
(Brecon Beacons National Park Authority, Karte/Map: Crown copyright and database rights 2018 Ordnance Survey 100019322)

to hike, even if they have no navigation experience or are willing or able to carry a lot of luggage, including a tent. The package includes: comprehensive waymarking, booking of tourist arrangements with a tourist organization cooperating with the National Park Administration (Monschauer Land Touristik) with overnight stays between all daily stages, usually with an official partner of the National Park (Eifel National Park hosts), hiking map and book, return transport from the end point to the starting point with the trail express bus, stamp booklet, as well as a certificate and pin badge for completion of the entire trail.

With the package, the following additional options can be booked: luggage transport, be accompanied by registered National Park guides and forest guides, accommodation at one central location on all days with a shuttle service to and from the start and finish points of each daily stage. The Wilderness Trail can be booked by Germans two or three times per year as a week of paid educational leave ('Bildungsurlaub'). Since the launch of the Wilderness Trail, more than 5,000 people have booked the package, with at least as many visitors organizing the hike themselves. Including 20 weeks of paid educational leave weeks, the value added generated by the Wilderness Trail amounts to around €250,000 per year.

### Recommendations for the Beacons Way, Brecon Beacons National Park

The value added of the Beacons Way could be significantly increased if 1) the existing infrastructure gaps were closed by the establishment of overnight accommodation in the eastern part, plus continuous waymarking, and 2) the package is improved, especially in the form of an offer of return transport to the starting point. There should be an attempt to classify the Beacons Way as a National Trail. This would be very helpful for marketing and would signify national



The Wilderness Trail in Eifel National Park  
(map base LVerMA NRW, Bonn 2006  
map graphics Nationalparkforstamt Eifel, N. Kolster)

support of the National Trail, with which the above-mentioned optimization measures could be funded. The classified Cotswold Way in the Cotswolds AONB receives state funding of £67,000 a year.

With 4.8 million day-visitors per year, the potential for the Beacons Way seems quite large. In addition, the example of the Eifel National Park Wilderness Trail, with only 870,000 visitors per year, shows that significant volumes can be achieved through attractive crossings of national parks if the package is fully-developed. The fact that this would somewhat jeopardise the image of the Beacons Way as a trail for adventurers is a price worth considering.

### Recommendations for the Wilderness Trail, Eifel National Park

While the Beacons Way has the image of being suitable as a complete route just for adventurers, the Wilderness Trail has so far lacked a corresponding low-budget variant with this image. This could be achieved through the establishment of official nature camp sites along the Wilderness Trail, that is sites acceptable in terms of nature conservation and suitable for a natural experience. Their use must of course be according to well-defined rules (number of tents per pitch, number of nights, etc.). Technically, such trekking camps could base themselves on the concept of nature camp sites in Nordeifel National Park (near Eifel National Park) which have been operating since 2015. The establishment of this low-budget variant for the Wilderness Trail would have the following advantages: 1) channelling the current wild camping in the National Park; 2) customer retention of today's "wild youth" who return at a later age with better financial resources and book the Wilderness Trail package with accommodation at National Park partners.

Elements of the outstanding volunteer management in the Brecon Beacons could be transferred to Eifel National Park to optimize the use of volunteers in the field, including on the Wilderness Trail.



Accompanying materials for the Wilderness Trail in the Eifel National Park

(Sylvia Montag)

# Recreation and health in protected areas

(Text basis: Natalie Beller, Black Forest National Park Administration)

Recreation and health are becoming more and more important in modern times, with stress and the hectic and increasingly complex and fast processes of everyday life. The countryside offers space for activities, recreation, encounters, awareness, as well as air quality and a healthy climate, thereby influencing one's own quality of life (Ensinger, 2016).

## Prescription Walks – Cotswolds Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

The "Prescription Walks in Winchcombe" project was developed in the Cotswolds AONB on a voluntary basis through the "Walkers are Welcome Winchcombe" initiative, in cooperation with the AONB management. It is aimed in particular at people with physical disabilities and those who are physically impaired or ill, but also at single people, often elderly, without a social network. The aim is to promote physical and mental health and well-being through exercise in the countryside – a natural remedy. Just like any other prescribed medication, the patients are given a prescription emphasising nature as a remedy and are encouraged to use it. The routes are matched to an individual. The seven circular walks in Winchcombe, with a length of 1-2 miles, are simple and easy to walk with plenty of seating.

In the six-month pilot phase with accompanying monitoring, the prescribed walks should be issued by a local doctor free of charge. Patients can walk independently on a walking schedule or join a guided weekly health walk. Regular visits to the doctor show whether well-being and/or state of health have changed. Assuming a successful pilot phase, recognition of prescriptive walks will be



In the "mindSCAPE" project, people with dementia are taught to do handicrafts with natural materials (Wye Valley AONB Partnership)

sought from the health insurance or health care services. In this case, the project hopes to cover its costs by receiving a financial sum for each prescription issued.

Prescription Walks have the opportunity to be developed as an offer not only for the local population, but also as a tourist product, for example in cooperation with spa clinics, health hotels, hiking guides, or as part of occupational health management. Prescription Walks could be used preventively as well as for rehabilitation. Unfortunately, the landscape itself plays no role, therefore

there is no direct reference to the protected area. What is relevant is exercise in the countryside, not characteristics such as wilderness or cultural landscape, so the landscape characteristic should be adjudged by this.

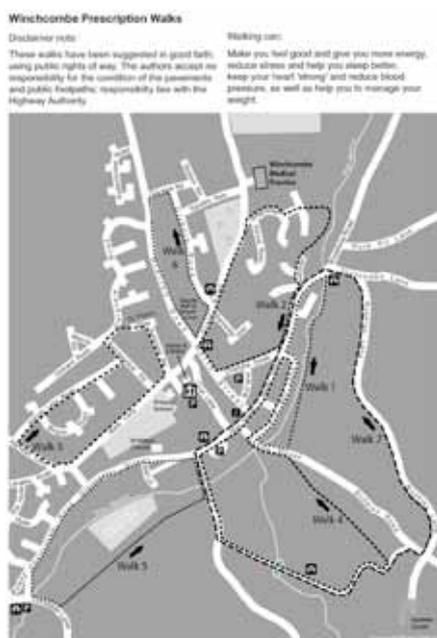
## mindSCAPE Project – Wye Valley Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

The Wye Valley AONB's "mindSCAPE" project focusses on dementia patients and their carers; it was commissioned by the Wye Valley AONB in 2014 in cooperation with the Forestry Commission, Forest Dean District Council, Dementia Adventure, the Alzheimer's Society, and initiated by the Forest of Dean Dementia Alliance. It is funded by the National Lottery for four years.

People with dementia often feel isolated, have no access to natural space or do but



mindSCAPE Logo



Map showing the Prescription Walk routes (Robert Talbot)

with limitations, and they cannot socialize or participate in recreational activities. In this project dementia patients and their carers (family or professional) should be encouraged to do so in monthly workshops. At the same time, it is the goal to (re)establish physical and mental well-being and a connection with nature. Creativity and community have an important role in the workshops. Activities include designing with natural materials, wood carving, or woodland walks. They take place outdoors, with suitable premises used in winter or in bad weather. In the first year, the artists and volunteers who held the workshops were specially trained in dementia or first aid.

After each event, a simple written survey is conducted to discover the satisfaction of dementia patients and carers; every six months there is a more detailed one. Despite assistance, a response from dementia patients is only partially possible. Qualitative results are therefore often based on personal, individual discussions. The workshops will be additionally documented by photography; the artistic work will be kept for later comparisons. The impressions of the

observations are regularly discussed together in the group. In addition, in the second year, an external agency was commissioned for evaluation. The project is very professional. It offers great potential for working together with the region and the people who live there, as well as the possibility of strengthening the importance of the countryside, and thus of nature conservation.

### Findings and conclusions

The mindSCAPE and Prescription Walks projects have shown that the topic of recreation and health is important for a protected area far beyond the simple tourist link. Rather, this should be considered under the umbrella of “regional development”, be it in services for sick people (e.g. in cooperation with clinics), or preventive (e.g. in occupational health management). In addition, the projects in British protected areas made it clear that regional partners and sustainable financing are essential. One finding is that the reference to the protected area must be clearly stated. After all, the countryside itself and its resources are the basis for health and recreation.

The Black Forest National Park Administration is already working very well together with the tourism region, for example in the development of a common tourism concept. This concept also includes the area of health. On the basis of scientific research, offers for “National Park Experience & Relax” are being developed as part of the concept. During internal discussions in the National Park Administration, the mindSCAPE project met with a very positive response. However, the Administration currently lacks the human resources to build such a project/study. The first step is to work together with a partner from garden therapy next year. This planning is based on a similar idea: bring nature home for people who no longer have access to

nature, for example in the nursing home. The Black Forest National Park is also planning a health day as an offer for occupational health management, as well as a “Health Week in the National Park” in cooperation with clinics. In addition, it is considering having the main topic of the National Park annual programme 2018 with a focus on recreation/relaxation/health and having targeted events, such as awareness walks.



Tympanum workshop in the open air, an offer from “mindSCAPE” project (Wye Valley AONB Partnership)

# Regional development, tourism and nature conservation: financing options from third-party funds

(Text basis: Denise Horstmann, Kellerwald-Edersee National Park Administration)



Marking the Cotswold Way – donations for guided walking tours are welcome income for the Cotswold AONB  
(Jens Posthoff)

In Great Britain, protected areas rely heavily on specially raised funds and donations to finance their work; they are attracted and used in particular for regional development and tourism. Their experiences are inspiring for the National Natural Landscapes, which would gain new scope for action through a more extensive acquisition of third-party funds, such as donations – for example easier implementation of short-term projects and freedom in the content orientation of investment.

## Examples of financing from British protected areas

The mixed funding of the Brecon Beacons National Park is, among others, from basic Welsh state funding, from requested Leader grants, and from tourism revenues. For example, tourism companies pay an annual fee for services such as further education and consultations through the National Park in the Green Tourism Business Scheme. The revenue from visitor centres, which are mainly operated free of charge by volunteers, is not enough to generate a profit. No funds are taken for events such as tours of the Park.

The Wye Valley Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty is also working on a core budget and earns additional funds through third-party funded projects. For example, funding from the National Lottery for the four-year project “mindSPAPE” (see section “Recreation and health in protected areas”) of £30,000 and funding for the biennial “Wye Valley River Festival”. The latter takes place for two weeks along the River Wye, with 28,000 coming last year to see nature and culture. A big plus for the AONB is that the festival revenues remain with the protected area administration.



Cotswolds Visitor Giving logo

In the case of the Cotswolds AONB, guided walks are an important source of income. Visitors appear to be more affluent and willing than in the aforementioned protected areas. Through voluntary donations for free guided tours

along the Cotswold Way, the AONB receives approximately £30,000 a year. In addition, there are donation schemes (e.g. the “Visitor Giving Scheme”) in which visitors are automatically asked to donate £1 on their online accommodation booking (see section “Cooperation programmes of protected areas and businesses”).

## Fundraising for Kellerwald-Edersee National Park

The following donation income opportunities are paramount as financing options for the National Park because other sources of funding have already been successfully developed.

Due to the special position of the public administrations and in compliance with the budget law, it requires a lot of effort to manage all the donations that reach Kellerwald-Edersee National Park Authority. This also means that frequently recurring donations, such as the “Visitor Giving Scheme” in the Cotswolds when booking a hotel, are rarely used. The fact is, if donations are transferred to the state’s account, they would go into the general state budget. In order to ensure the availability of funds for a specific purpose in the National Park, booking it via a support association (“Förderverein”), a foundation, or a similar institution is expedient. For this reason, all donations in Kellerwald-Edersee National Park are made through the Förderverein, a registered and non-profit association. It can easily accept smaller donations with a donation receipt and use it with other donations for a project. For example,

in the past it has thus been possible to finance exhibition modules in the National Park Centre and BuchenHaus, as well as an electric wheelchair for handicapped people.

The potential for donation income has certainly not been exhausted. Inspired by examples in the visited British protected areas, below there are three ideas for publicising future donation in Kellerwald-Edersee National Park and other National Natural Landscapes.

#### Idea: species sponsorship

In Kellerwald-Edersee National Park there are about 630 higher plant species and 4,484 animal species. In the “species sponsorship” donation programme, donors actively support the protection of and research into flora and fauna through their donation. Donations received through sponsorships are used by the Friends of the National Park for various projects, such as scientific activities based on works contracts, to look after well-known species, or to discover and study new species. It makes sense to set a minimum value for the donations, so that no undue burden arises in the administration of small amounts. All patrons are visually publicised in a prominent place with the selected animal or plant species. They also receive a certificate.

#### Idea: charity walk

Similar to the well-known “charity run” format, Kellerwald-Edersee National Park offers a charity walk: people donate a pre-agreed amount of money per person for a certain period of time. These funds could be used, for example, for management measures such as road construction, signage, or information points. This donation variant could be extended to several national parks. In this case, the participants receive a stamp card, on which they can receive a stamp for each of the protected area that has been hiked in. This gives them the additional incentive



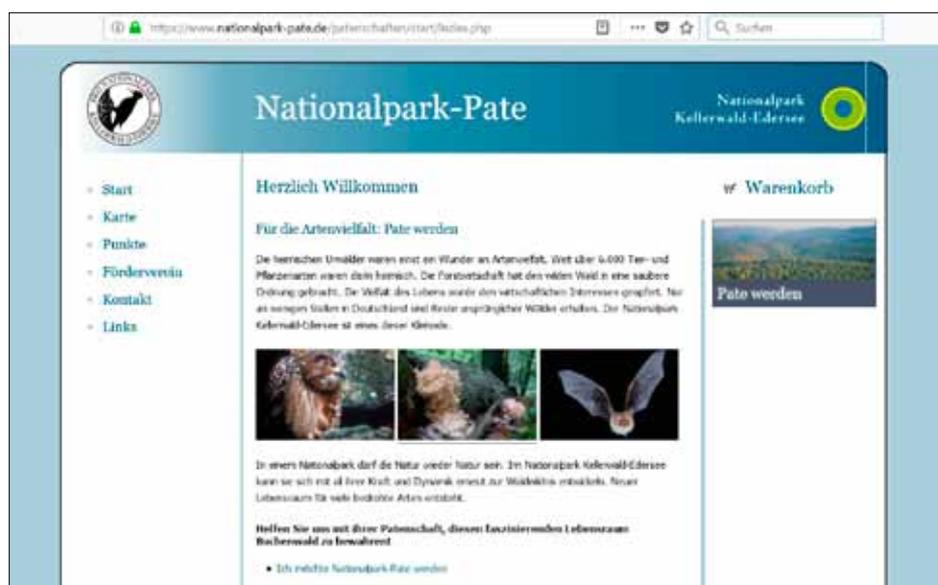
The German Kellerwald-Edersee National Park can promote sponsorship with its special habitats and their species  
(Stephanie Schubert)

to explore several protected areas. The total collected donations can then be used, for example, for projects of EUROPARC Germany, from which many protected areas benefit.

#### Idea: “rounding up” for the National Park

“Rounding up” is an already widespread donation system. For example, if you are shopping in a grocery shop, you can voluntarily round up the total to the next full Euro. The difference is often donated to charitable projects. The National Park

currently has two facilities where entrance fees can be paid and shop items can be bought. This can also lead to an opportunity for visitors to voluntarily round up. The difference will be invested in new exhibition modules at the facilities. This, in turn, creates benefits for the donors themselves. This system can also be applied to all protected areas in Germany and, when handled through EUROPARC Germany, benefit many protected areas.



General sponsorship is already been offered by the friends' association of Kellerwald-Edersee National Park

# Anchoring protected areas in society and instruments to further strengthen them. Or: how to live more successfully with numerous allies.

(Text basis: Roland Schulz, formerly Naturwacht Brandenburg)

My personal impression from Great Britain: the well-being and experience of people are at the forefront. In the end, this also serves the landscape, the animals and the plants, but only after humans. Brecon Beacons, Wye Valley and the Cotswolds are cultural landscapes with well-established traditional uses. This connects the visitors, and even more so the locals with the protected areas: they feel that they are sharing in these uses and the beauty, which must be preserved together. The attitude on the part of the protected area administrations is noticeable everywhere: "All our work is based on partnership!", as put by Richard Tyler, Manager of Sustainable Tourism in the Brecon Beacons National Park in Wales.

## Participation opportunities bring anchoring

Numerous opportunities for participation connect the local people with their area and make them open to dealing with it more closely. The Ambassador Programme is impressive, as well as numerous smaller initiatives such as "5 ways to love the Brecon Beacons", "Thank you for buying local", "Edible Cotswolds", "Local food for breakfast", "Walkers are welcome" with 120 participating municipalities and perhaps the most notable approach with the "Cotswolds Choice" brand (see section "Cooperation programmes of protected areas and businesses"). In addition, strong volunteering in all visited areas ensures a wide-ranging connection of the protected

areas with the population (see section "Volunteering and management").

To integrate visitors: their opinion is requested in many places. Visitors can put red hearts on a map of the Brecon Beacons National Park, on their favourite place, a place where they had a special experience, an exceptionally friendly encounter. They can write postcards, note down what they like, what should be improved. It also gives them the opportunity to connect through interaction with the protected area, to work for its future. Every little counts!

## Crossover offers: nature plus X

The approach of the visited protected areas convinced us that cultural and sporting events should be linked with nature, so that culture and nature form



Visitor opinion is in demand: visitors stick red hearts on a map of the Brecon Beacons National Park to mark their favourite place (Jens Posthoff)

a temporally-limited entity. Nowadays, it is festivals where people cycle through the countryside and enjoy community cultural events in the evenings, outdoor art events such as the Wye Valley River Festival, readings in the countryside as part of a literary festival. Through these combinations, other groups in society can be connected and become acquainted with



Oriel CriC Gallery in Crickhowell: exhibition room for 40 regional artists and regional product showroom

(Jens Posthoff)

nature through culture and can build their own bridges to nature.

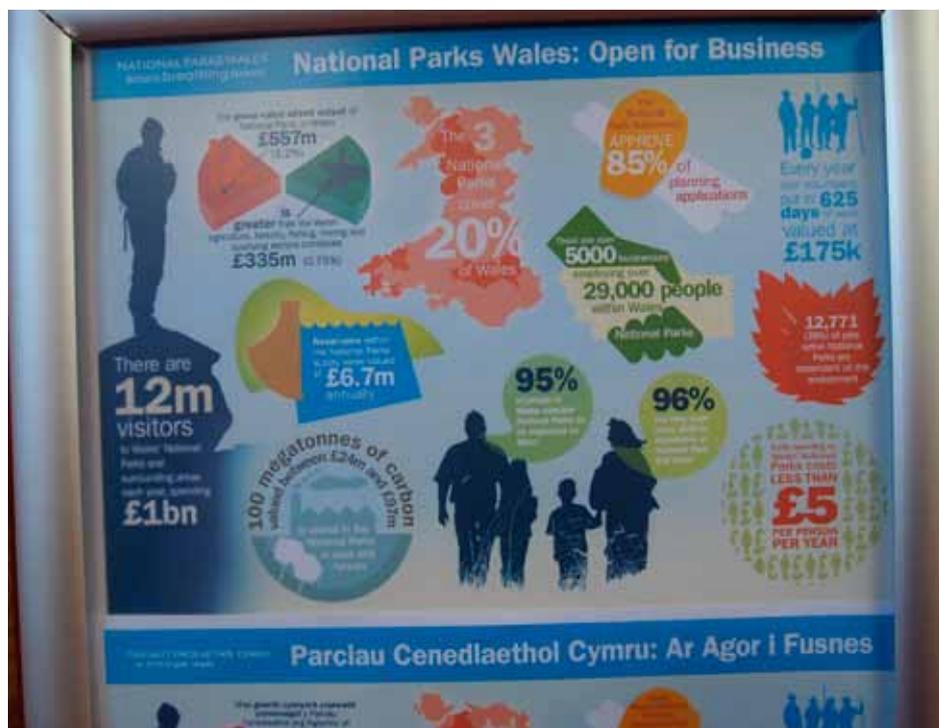
Art and nature also meet in buildings. For this purpose, particular multi-functional focal points can be created. A prime example is the Oriel CriC Gallery at Crickhowell, Brecon Beacons National Park. It is both an exhibition and showroom for 40 regional artists! In the basement are public toilets, a service for tourists that is not to be underestimated. Volunteers answer questions in a large, friendly entrance hall and distribute numerous leaflets about tourist attractions in their protected area. Of course, there are books from the region and many typical products for sale, and comfortable seating invites you to linger. The gallery organizes bus trips as well as helping local schoolchildren with their homework.

#### Tradition and future supported by protected area authorities

AONBs are often places where traditions live on which would otherwise be lost. Thus, they stand for identity, preservation, community, and act as a breakwater against the virtual flood. The Cotswolds AONB's Old Prison information centre offers courses for 12 regionally-based crafts, such as dry stone walling or blacksmithing.

In economically important tourism promotion, the Administration maintains good cooperation with regional players. The Administration in Brecon Beacons organizes 25 further education offers per year for tourism providers. Through support programmes, they also assist them with individual advice on how they can significantly improve their offer with low investment.

The striking communication of the achievements is appealing: colourful posters tell how the AONB prepares the way into the future of these rural regions. "How we made a difference 2015/2016" or "National Parks Wales Open for Business".



Poster "National Parks Wales: Open for Business"

(Jens Posthoff)

#### Comparison with Brandenburg's National Natural Landscapes

For the employees of British protected areas, talking to people is more important than in Brandenburg. In Brandenburg, there are participative engagement opportunities, but in my opinion much less and not as low-threshold as in Britain. There is significant room for improvement here. The fact that the combination of art and culture can succeed was impressively demonstrated several years ago by an event by the Stiftung NaturSchutzFonds Brandenburg. In the Berlin Konzerthaus, the Junge Philharmonie Brandenburg dedicated its spring concert to nature conservation and the Naturwacht (ranger organization). In addition to many other accompanying events, rangers distributed brochures and two Brandenburg ministers advertised on stage for visits to National Natural Landscapes in Brandenburg. For us, events of this kind are unfortunately rather the exception.

So, there are attempts in Brandenburg, but so much more is possible. And then we come to sponsors. Sponsors are traditionally more generous in Britain than in Brandenburg. Here are still undiscovered treasures. Overall, in Britain the subject of cultural landscape is a

broad, common, and therefore unifying basis in society. This connection should be strengthened in Brandenburg.

#### Findings and conclusions

The conclusions are simple: take your time to inspire people from near and far for their special landscapes and their wealth. How? Exciting children's activities such as the Junior Ranger programme of the Naturwacht Brandenburg. There was a time when Brandenburg was full of round tables. The time is right again to launch a variety of projects in the areas which are planned and realized by interested people from all walks of life in their areas. That creates and binds roots. Joint cultural festivals, sports activities or art, always in conjunction with and in the context of local nature.



The "Dry Stone Walling Academy" in the Cotswolds AONB: traditional crafts are taught in workshops, such as dry stone wall construction (Stephanie Schubert)

# Cooperation programmes of protected areas and businesses

(Text basis: Anja Szczesinski, WWF Wattenmeerbüro)



The "Farm Shop" offers numerous regional products as an Ambassador of the Brecon Beacons National Park  
(Denise Horstmann)

Cooperation programmes between protected areas and largely regionally-based businesses are, in many places, a valuable and effective instrument for promoting nature conservation objectives, nature-friendly holiday experiences, and sustainable regional development.

## Ambassador Scheme – Brecon Beacons National Park

The Ambassador Scheme in the Brecon Beacons National Park is designed for tourism businesses and individuals who feel connected to the National Park and wish to provide their visitors with quality information and a special National Park experience. A prerequisite for recognition as an Ambassador is a three-day training session ("Sense of place" module) to get to know the National Park (even better), to study the history and cultural heritage of the region ("Park in your heart" module) and to deal with the subject of visitor service ("Customer Service" module). Participants should understand what makes a visit to the Brecon Beacons National Park so special and can thus provide excellent visitor information and a comprehensive "National Park Service". The certificate is awarded for one year. Participation in further training courses or the annual "Ambassadors Exclusive Event"

qualifies for re-certification. Visitors can see the Brecon Beacons Ambassador logo at more than 120 Ambassadors, including accommodation, restaurants, and tour operators.

## Visitor Giving Scheme – Cotswolds Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

In the Cotswolds AONB, working with businesses as part of the Visitor Giving Scheme focuses on providing financial support for nature conservation through tourism. Since the launch of the programme in 2013, 19 participating companies have donated £16,600 through the Visitor Giving Scheme. So far ten projects have been supported, including restoration of habitats and the improvement of hiking and riding trails.

The programme was initiated by a local hotel, which asks for a donation of £1 in the booking process to directly benefit the Cotswolds AONB, to which it adds a further £1. At the time of booking, the donation is displayed as an "opt-out" offer. This means that visitors automatically donate unless they disable the option. The costs of the accommodation and the additional donation are clearly shown.



Certified: the operator of "The Grange Guesthouse" is a National Park Ambassador  
(Anja Szczesinski)

## The Cotswolds Choice – Cotswolds Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

Another approach to business collaboration is the Cotswolds Choice regional brand to promote landscape-friendly, regional products. Visitors have the opportunity to contribute to the preservation of the landscape and sustainable development by purchasing these products. Cotswolds Choice membership is open to any regional business that meets quality, environmental, and sustainability criteria and adheres to certain landscape conservation standards. The area of origin for Cotswolds Choice products is defined as the area of the Cotswolds AONB and the Cotswolds Joint Character Area. Full members are companies involved in the manufacture, processing and distribution of products. In addition, they must lie within the said region or a two- to (in exceptions) five-kilometre wide buffer zone. Associate members include organizations and individuals who support the programme. Members are entitled to use the brand name and logo in connection with the qualified products. In addition to promoting landscape protection and regional identity, the programme aims to provide networking opportunities for its members, as well as providing expert advice and funding on issues such as environmental and quality management, value creation, and marketing. The programme was launched in 2014 and presented during the study visit; however (as of early 2018) it is apparently discontinued.



Cotswolds Choice logo

### National Park Partners in Schleswig-Holstein Wadden Sea National Park

In Schleswig-Holstein Wadden Sea National Park, the National Park Partner Programme offers tourist businesses, municipalities, and nature conservation associations in the region the opportunity to work together with the National Park Administration. The main purpose of the partnership is to protect the natural environment and to bring it to visitors to the west coast of Germany. There are now more than 170 National Park Partners from a wide variety of categories, from mudflat and tour guides to hotels and restaurants, from galleries and museums to tourist leisure facilities and transport companies. Recognition as a Partner is based on a detailed application, which includes a visit by a review group and an external “environmental check” of the company. A public procurement council, in which the National Park Administration, tourism and nature conservation organizations are represented, decides on acceptance. Regular participation in National Park training is obligatory for the Partners. The recognition is awarded for three years, after which a renewed, simplified application is necessary.

### German and British examples: comparison and transferability

Compared to the Ambassador Scheme of the Brecon Beacons National Park, the criteria and the application process are relatively strict and complex, which on the one hand certainly creates a hurdle for potential partners, but on the other hand preserves the programme’s high standards of quality and sustainability.

A programme similar to the Visitor Giving Scheme is currently not available in Schleswig-Holstein Wadden Sea National Park. In its 2014 study “Reisen und schützen – Wie kann Tourismus finanziell zum Schutz des Wattenmeeres beitragen?” (“Travelling and Protecting – How Tourism Can Contribute financially to the Conservation of the Wadden Sea?”), the WWF examined various financing instruments, including donations and voluntary contributions, and assessed their transferability to the Wadden Sea. The Visitor Giving Scheme represents a (further) illustrative example which could particularly be transferred to the National Park or, moreover, to the Wadden Sea World Natural Heritage Site.

Even a regional brand such as “Cotswolds Choice” does not exist in Schleswig-Holstein Wadden Sea National Park. As part of the National Park Partner Programme, the question of a category

for National Park products has been discussed several times, but the procurement council has so far always voted against it on the basis of the high complexity of the criteria and the time-consuming and labour-intensive quality control. However, the issue of product branding is still relevant at the level of the World Natural Heritage Site and the “Cotswolds Choice” example provides interesting experiences for the further development of “branded” Wadden Sea products in the Dutch and Danish Wadden Sea region business cooperation.



Cotswolds regional products

(Anja Szczesinski)



Partner company of Schleswig-Holstein Wadden Sea National Park – Hallig shipping company Heinrich von Holdt with the excursion ship MS Seeadler

(Stephanie Schubert)

# Volunteering and management

(Text basis: Dörte Ackermann, Saxon Switzerland National Park Centre, and Jens Posthoff, Saxon Switzerland National Park Administration)



A volunteer guide from the Cotswold AONB accompanies visitors to attractions on the Cotswold Way (Stephanie Schubert)

Involving volunteers in the tasks of a protected area creates identification through participation. Thanks to the involvement of volunteers, a strong regional anchoring of the areas is achieved in the British protected areas we visited. The hands-on offers for volunteers correspond to their motivation, such as socializing, spending time with others, using craft skills or acquire new ones that promote physical and mental health, feeling useful, giving something back, and protecting nature.

## Volunteer involvement in the Brecon Beacons National Park

In the Brecon Beacons National Park, about 135 volunteers perform around 12,000 hours of volunteer work every year. The volunteers normally must be at least 18 years old; exceptions are specific youth programmes. Weekly, fortnightly or monthly tasks are usual; the volunteers themselves set the agenda. Most activities take place on weekdays, supplemented by weekend tasks. Volunteers provide their own food during the tasks. Because training and qualification of volunteers is an expense for the Authority, the volunteers commit to work for at least ten days a year.

There are six work groups where the volunteers can do practical work, for example in the uplands or in the visitor centre. These are managed by a responsible volunteer in close consultation with full-time staff from the National Park Authority. In addition, there are special tasks, such as greeting and accompanying visitors, helping the photographic library, assistance with monitoring data, and maintenance of interpretation panels. Volunteers have privileged access to a clear and functional Internet-based communication platform. There they receive up-to-date information on upcoming tasks and keep in touch with their own group. After completion of volunteer assignments, a report is completed for the National Park via the online platform.

The favourable conditions which support the high motivation of the volunteers are their autonomous, self-determined work, good coordination and follow-up of the tasks via the communication platform, and close cooperation with the full-time employees, their support and feedback. As a result, the volunteers have been

constantly involved in this for years, resulting in friendships and acceptance for the protected area among the local population, and at the same time being multipliers for nature conservation.

## Volunteer involvement in the Wye Valley AONB

In the Wye Valley AONB, about 45 volunteers support the protected area with 2,700 hours of work every year. The tasks are practical work such as landscape maintenance, planting, rehabilitation of dry stone walls, and road construction, but also participation in the Junior Ranger programme as well as assistance with exhibitions and events.

Given that the Wye Valley AONB is financially significantly worse off than the Brecon Beacons National Park, this protected area is even more dependent on volunteering and sponsoring to secure its own share of third-party funded measures (especially Leader funding). Coordination of volunteer work is done via other supporters, for example the Forestry Commission.



Typical task of volunteers: construction of dry stone walls in the Wye Valley AONB

(Wye Valley AONB Partnership)

### Volunteer involvement in the Cotswolds AONB

Around 350 volunteers commit themselves to the Cotswolds AONB, totalling approximately 45,000 hours per year. They support the protected area in working groups, for example in practical landscape conservation measures. In addition, they volunteer in networks of communities, farmers, residents, etc., with the aim of establishing trails and help directly in the construction and maintenance of the Cotswold Way. They work as hiking guides and support events in the protected area, such as in schools.

In addition to the management of protected areas, many initiatives and associations also offer volunteering activities, from one-off day tasks to continuous long-term cooperation: botanical monitoring, repair of bridges and fences, monitoring of the public footpath network, and fundraising support are just a few examples. Some associations offer training, for example for tree wardens or in landscape management. The acquired expertise binds the volunteers even more intensively.

In summary, for the Cotswolds AONB: due to the high number of visitors (approximately 23 million per year) and the associated high profile, there is also a strong interest and a high willingness of the population to get involved here.

### Findings and conclusions

It is significant that the protected area authorities we visited are for the most part state-financed, but land management is mainly based on volunteering and third-party funding. Many of the management tasks that are carried out, for example, in Saxon Switzerland National Park by full-time employees or on the basis of an order from third parties, in the British protected areas fall into the scope of the volunteer coordinators and volunteers. The only compensation the volunteers receive is



Employees of the company LogMeIn (formerly Citrix) renew a damaged path during a volunteer task in Saxon Switzerland National Park (Jens Posthoff)

petrol money through associations, which in turn attract the funds through donations, with training and sometimes equipment coming from the protected area authorities.

Similar to German protected areas, volunteers are mostly active in retirement or pre-retirement age. The identification of the volunteers with “their” area is impressive; they carry a high degree of responsibility for management of their area and represent it. Evidence of the integration and cooperation of stakeholders was seen on our study visit in the active participation of British volunteers: on the Cotswold Way alone, we were accompanied by nine people (eight volunteers and one full-time employee, who remained in the background). In the protected areas visited, volunteers are fully-fledged colleagues and an integral part of the Authority’s work. Volunteers have autonomy in the implementation task, which the Authority supports. Competition between full-time staff and volunteers was imperceptible to us. All the participants knew each other, and the

warm and appreciative treatment created an almost family atmosphere.

A distinctive feature of volunteer management is that people’s needs are the focus. Discussions also highlighted the interesting aspect that volunteers bring new volunteers.

Based on this experience, the following recommendations are made for German protected areas: establish an Internet platform for the coordination of volunteer tasks, allow administrations to use social media to attract volunteers, and value volunteers better – like fully-fledged employees.



Volunteers making walking sticks for pilgrimage walks to Tintern Abbey in Wye Valley AONB (Wye Valley AONB Partnership)



Stephanie Schubert

# Germany: Regional development and tourism in protected areas

## Introduction to the study visit

### Protected areas visited

- Müritz National Park
- Schleswig-Holstein Wadden Sea National Park

### Background information

For regional development and sustainable tourism in National Natural Landscapes (see “Protected area categories”), the nationwide partners programme plays an important role, under which 27 park-specific partner initiatives are active; that is, regional cooperation of the respective administration with outstanding companies which are in contact with

visitors. Throughout Germany, more than 1,400 businesses from the areas of accommodation, restaurants, crafts, transport, education, etc. are working together with park authorities.

**Protected area categories:** German protected areas include 16 National Parks, 17 Biosphere Reserves (16 with UNESCO recognition) and over 100 Nature Parks. Since 2005, many of them are presented under the common umbrella brand “National Natural Landscapes”.

**Administration of protected areas:** In Germany, nature conservation is largely the responsibility of the federal states. Accordingly, protected area authorities of the national parks and most biosphere reserves, (and to some extent the nature parks), are state administrations subordinate to the state environment ministries. In the case of nature parks, there are a variety of administrative structures and legal forms, including associations, administration unions, and departments of district authorities. The financial and personal administrative features are correspondingly very different.

### What did we discuss, what were the important findings?

- **The attractiveness of nature is of great importance for regional development and tourism;** protected area authorities require open communication with the population in order to communicate the **added value of sustainable tourism.**
- **Foreign visitors rated the National Natural Landscapes Partner Programme as very positive and worth copying;** similar approaches in their home countries are still in the early stages or do not exist.
- **From the companies perspective, there are many motivational factors** for being characterized as a partner company: marketing advantages, image improvement, networking with like-minded companies, etc.
- **The goal-oriented integration of non-governmental organizations and volunteers** into the work of Schleswig-Holstein Wadden Sea National Park is based on **success factors:** division of responsibilities, increased trust, cooperation between colleagues, and support for protected area management (including area management, visitor guidance and information, nature discovery offers)
- **The designation of the UNESCO World Natural Heritage Ancient Beech Forests in Müritz National Park is accompanied by adapted visitor management** with, for example, routing to reduce noise in sensitive areas and with visitor information.

# Regional development and engagement of local communities in protected areas through a sustainable tourism perspective

(Text basis: Jimena Castillo, Kullaberg Nature Reserve, Sweden)

The inclusion of the community as decision makers and actors is important for finding a proper balance in the management of a protected area. Focusing on tourism, the consensus of protected area administrations with stakeholders and other local actors is important when processing strategies for sustainable tourism that shall, among others, contribute to the positive development of the communities. Since there are many interests and conflicts related to tourism in protected areas, perhaps one of the most important lessons learned from the study trip is the high value of positive interaction between public authorities, private business, and civil society. Their positive cooperation and welcome participation in regional development ensures transparency and commitment. It encompasses public debate, political decision-making, policy formation and implementation, and fosters a consensus to find solutions together in a comfortable and constructive balance.

## Regional development and sustainable tourism in protected areas

Regional development is a wide-ranging concept that can best be seen as a process



"Learning by doing" and in dialogue with local actors: the study group testing the offer of Kanu Hecht, a National Park Partner Company (Stephanie Schubert)



Expertise exchange with National Park Ranger Martin Kühn in the mudflat habitat near Hallig Hooge

(Stephanie Schubert)

through which a certain number of institutions and/or local people mobilize themselves in a given region in order to create, reinforce, and stabilize activities using the resources of the territory as best as possible (Greffé, 1989, 1990, 1993<sup>4</sup>). The tourism industry related to protected areas has great potential to improve regional development when combined with the engagement of the local actors who strive for sustainable management of the natural resources.

It is important to mention that the tourism industry has an undeniable impact on the host communities, affecting social, economic, and environmental aspects. On the one hand, creating cooperation relationships between protected area managers, municipal authorities, and local actors is essential in order to join efforts for minimizing the negative impacts of tourism. On the other hand, sustainable tourism generates long-term benefits for the people, environment, and economy of the tourism area. Sustainable tourism has positive results in the wellbeing of the inhabitants, life quality, and inclusion of local actors as decision makers. A well-planned strategy to develop sustainable tourism improves local facilities, generates new products, services, businesses, and jobs. At the same time, it maintains a high level of tourist satisfaction and promotes awareness of environmental issues and sustainable tourism practices. Because of the positive impacts on local society, it is most likely that local people, as a consequence, will appreciate and value protected areas as an important aspect of their communities' development.

### Building a sense of belonging

Once stakeholders have realized the importance of the natural values of protected areas and the social and economic profits of sustainable tourism, and once local people have identified the direct benefits of being neighbours of protected areas, a sense of personal



Canoeing - a favoured outdoor sport in Müritzer National Park

(Stephanie Schubert)

belonging and maybe pride awakens in the members of the community. Seeing the economic benefits and contribution to development of the region, stakeholders and inhabitants perceive the importance of participating actively in nature protection and conservation efforts. This sense of belonging leads to sustainable tourism management through environmental education, involvement of local people in nature conservation, enhancement of natural and cultural heritage, improvement of natural resources management, and a direct contribution to develop the community economy.

### Lessons learned from German protected areas

One of the most important aspects of the study trip was having the opportunity to “learn by doing”: the agenda enabled us to experience tourism activities ourselves and to establish a dialogue with stakeholders and managers of the protected areas. What we learned during the study trip was that the managers of the protected areas have built up good cooperation relationships with business owners and associations of dedicated residents that develop tourism services in the national parks' area of influence. Looking at the

history of national parks, it was not easy to start the dialogue with the community and there were many social sectors pushing against the declaration of national parks. But, after many years of dialogue and collaboration, they work together in something similar to a mutual interaction where all the parties benefit from the cooperation. Based on the experiences in the visited national parks, protected area management must be oriented to open a frank dialogue with society while listening to their demands. I also learned that it is essential to build new capacities in the tourist sector, create job opportunities, and promote tourist services to increase the economic benefits that lead to positive regional development.



Onsite introduction to the specifics of the holm Hallig Hooqe in Schleswig-Holstein Wadden Sea National Park

(Giacomo Benelli)

# Sustainable tourism strategies for protected areas

(Text basis: Giacomo Benelli, EUROPARC Federation)

Lately, protected areas have more often been considered as very important tourist destinations in Europe. Due to increased tourist pressure and the important natural features that must be preserved within their borders, it is important for these protected areas to have well-structured strategies in place for developing tourism in a sustainable manner. For a protected area's tourism strategy and its activities, in general it is essential to define priorities, work out the activities in detail, define work stages and responsibilities, and immediately strive for discussion and agreement with all the relevant stakeholders.

## Sustainable tourism strategies of Müritz and Schleswig-Holstein Wadden Sea National Parks

In both visited national parks – Müritz and Wadden Sea – the level of strategic planning and implementation of sustainable tourism appeared to me significant and remarkable. In Müritz (through past experience (2011-2015) with the European Charter for Sustainable Tourism in Protected Areas) and in Wadden Sea (through the World Heritage Destination programme), both park administrations have engaged with local stakeholders to develop sustainable tourism strategies. Both these strategies are based on a coherent and reliable volume of data, able to provide a clear baseline from the outset. At the end of their action plan, conceived to achieve the agreed strategic objectives, they are in an excellent situation to monitor and assess the changes that have occurred in their territories.



The very well-developed hiking and cycling network in Müritz National Park offers a wealth of information to visitors  
(Giacomo Benelli)

While in the Wadden Sea, I noticed that the tourism strategy is clearly communicated with specific and comprehensible publications; in Müritz the current strategic objectives are not so clearly published and widely available. Therefore, the current priorities were not entirely clear (e.g., nature conservation vs. tourism development) and could lead to some contradictory perceptions.

Looking at the general conditions, both parks appeared well supported by the local communities, with an apparent low level of conflicts, high investment in visitor management and visitor centres, good infrastructure, and local and unique nature tourism events. By way of example, two selected aspects of the tourism strategies and their implementation are discussed below.

## Focus: visitor management and visitor centres

In Müritz, the administration has built up a system for visitor management that works well; a traffic strategy plays an important part in this. The Park has reduced traffic access to a minimum, closing roads or restricting them to local traffic only, and vehicles are guided to 23 main entrance gates on its borders. Monitoring for traffic reduction is consequently conducted, including



Environmentally friendly mobility made easy in Schleswig-Holstein Wadden Sea National Park

(Giacomo Benelli)

seasonal bus services and events for environmentally-friendly mobility. There is a clear strategy for improving the Park's cycle-hiking-canoe network, which includes well waymarked cycling routes for approximately 60,000 cyclists per year within the Park and in its surroundings. Parking and visitor infrastructure are provided and are connected to the hiking and cycling routes. Visitor centres, bird-hides, observation towers, boardwalks, and so on contribute to guiding visitors to the right places and are all very well maintained. Canoeing is also well managed by providing infrastructure and information along the waterways.

Coming to Wadden Sea National Park, there are various successful stories of involving volunteers and developing partnerships with local stakeholders within the framework of sustainable tourism that enable the Park to implement effective tourism-related events and visitor management, like the Brent Goose Festival and guided tours on boats. In this context, the involvement of local NGOs, with their well communicated strategic planning on sustainable tourism, is outstandingly positive. Another tourism aspect: visitor centre management is impressive in Wadden Sea National Park. Using the example of Multimar Wattforum: aquariums with live animals are a major attraction, modern and interactive displays, appealing texts, messages, and design as well as visitor services contribute to its strengths. From my perception, the Centre's visitors experience an "excessive" concentration of information, activities, messages, and so on. In my opinion it is also worth discussing redistribution of smaller visitor centres within the large areas of the Wadden Sea, for example encouraging excursions to the various areas of the National Park.

#### Focus: international tourists

The low number of international visitors in both parks is surprising, despite the



Müritznationalpark Information Center in Kratzeburg

(Giacomo Benelli)

potential in terms of attractiveness of landscapes, species, and tourism offers for visitors. At present, the guides and the services seemed mainly prepared and accustomed to work at a national level only and welcome tourists from Germany. Overall the command of English amongst tourist professionals was below average for Europe. Against this background, international tourism is underdeveloped and one would wonder if this is part of the strategic approach (to focus and prioritise more on the German market), or if this is an aspect that should be addressed by the protected areas during the next programming and planning period of their tourism strategy.

A possible recommendation would be to work on a new and updated survey on future visitor markets. From my experience with the European Charter for Sustainable Tourism in Protected Areas in other European countries, I would also recommend that the protected areas reinforce their attitude and their willingness to share a European vision and be open to attract future visitors from other countries.

#### Recommendations for innovative approaches in tourism development

Innovative approaches for discovery and nature-based experiences could be further developed in a quality approach. In particular, given that water is the unique selling point of the area, water-based activities need more development and some innovative input, such as special guided tours, more specialized guides available, use of electric boats or solar boats, and special accommodation by the water. Though the national parks do offer attractive activities, more effort can be made to highlight and further develop them, as well as integrate them into existing tourism marketing. This implies attractive, motivating, and practical information that combines natural and cultural highlights with key activities.



In the Multimar Wattforum Visitor Centre, visitors can experience mudflat fauna first-hand (Giacomo Benelli)

# Quality management in business partnerships of protected areas

(Text basis: Erika Józsa, Balaton-felvidéki National Park, Hungary)

Most protected areas are at least partly utilized by people, for recreation, tourism, or farming with an impact on natural assets. Sustainable long-term management of protected areas can only be successful if all of the stakeholders support them. People benefit from the ecosystem services provided by a protected area; thus, in the longer term they are interested in the maintenance of natural heritage. It is essential to become aware of the common goals which are the basis for fruitful cooperation between the local stakeholders and nature conservation authorities, providing mutual advantages. Proper quality management of this partnership system can remarkably contribute to the sustainable development of a region.

## Quality management based on strategies

A good strategy, developed by involving all stakeholders and with respect to ecological, economic, and social benefits, is an essential basis for quality management in sustainable regional development. In the context of protected areas and business partners, such a strategy provides the possibility to balance environmental needs and economic interests. Monitoring, appropriate surveys, and studies serve as a very important fundament for those strategies. An example of a successful strategy and quality management in partnership networks of protected areas is the “European Charter for Sustainable Tourism in Protected Areas”<sup>5</sup>; it is recognised internationally as a model for high-quality sustainable tourism management.

## Quality management in the German protected areas partner programme

In the field of regional cooperation, the German partner programme applied by the national parks, nature parks and biosphere reserves, together with EUROPARC Germany, is a good example of quality management: “quality instead of quantity”, enhanced involvement and training of the partners, balanced distribution of responsibilities and duties between the different partners provide good results.

The EUROPARC Germany working group (AG) “Partners of National Natural Landscapes” developed the following minimum standards, which are applicable for all partner initiatives in National Natural Landscapes in Germany<sup>5</sup>:



Müritznationalpark Partners at a glance (Giacomo Benelli)



The Hallig Café “Zum blauen Pesel” is a partner business of Schleswig-Holstein Wadden Sea National Park and offers regional delicacies (Stephanie Schubert)

- Written agreement/contract between the respective administration and its partner: the contract term should be limited and should not exceed three years. After that, evaluation is essential for an extension of the contract.
- Cooperation activities: the partner initiative is actively involved in the EUROPARC working group “Partners of National Natural Landscapes” and actively seeks cooperation between the participating areas.
- Advisory body: the administration of the protected area employs an advisory body for the development and management of the partnership network. The advisory body should consist of representatives of the administration as well as of representatives of the partner businesses and, where applicable, further important regional organisations. Responsibilities of the advisory body are, inter alia, consulting and deciding upon the admission of businesses as future partners as well as joint advancement of the criteria and procedures.
- Internet presence of the partner initiative: the partner initiative operates its own website or a page on the protected area website. The website should also contain information for potential partners (application forms, criteria), for the participating partners (internal area), and a link to the central website ([www.nationale-naturlandschaften.de/partner](http://www.nationale-naturlandschaften.de/partner)).
- Nationwide minimum standards for partners of National Natural Landscapes: specific criteria for the partners can be set by the advisory body in compliance with the minimum standards defined by the EUROPARC working group “Partners of National Natural Landscapes”. Existing certification schemes can be used as guidance for the verification and evaluation of the environmental and sustainability criteria. The partner supports the use and/or sale of regional



The website <https://nationalpark-partner-sh.de> provides information on the partner businesses of Schleswig-Holstein Wadden Sea National Park

products and informs its guests, operates in compliance with typical regional traditions, nature-friendly, or eco-friendly, products must be clearly labelled. Quality and environmental standards for businesses are verified by an Ecolabel, a regional recognised brand or a certification scheme designated by the advisory body.

- Designation of the participating businesses: businesses participating in the cooperation are consistently named as partner of the national park, biosphere reserve, or nature park.
- Using the corporate design of the respective protected area.
- Unified logo and logo use: participating businesses use the partner logo, which corresponds to the corporate design of National Natural Landscapes.
- Self-perception and reflexion of the protected area’s administration: the administration of each protected area is obliged to review its own criteria and to determine the development goals accordingly.

#### **Balaton-felvidéki National Park: business partnerships and quality management of the Park product brand**

Balaton-felvidéki National Park is mainly situated in the north of Lake Balaton, which is the second most popular tourism

destination in Hungary. The tourism sector largely contributes to the local, regional, and even national economy. Balaton-felvidéki National Park has an extended partnership network with local tourism providers and key actors of regional development such as hotels, tourism destination management organizations, other service providers, and local producers.

An example for partnership activities is the “Balaton-felvidéki National Park Product” brand system, introduced in 2013. It aims to support local enterprises and husbandry by extending recognition of their products. The National Park administration organizes lots of events and uses different communication tools for promoting National Park products. A certain process is carried out for the approval of the products, including a form to fill in, a meeting of a committee where products are examined and sampled, and a contract to be concluded with the local producers of the approved products for use of the label, including a review of the production process by the National Park Directorate.

# Partner initiatives in protected areas – Müritz National Park

(Text basis: John van den Berg, Staatsbosbeheer, Netherlands)

Partner initiatives in German protected areas foster collaboration between protected area management and regional businesses and create a close connection of the enterprises to “their” National Natural Landscapes. The main aims of the partner initiatives are:

- to protect the natural environment,
- to enable visitors to experience nature,
- to strengthen sustainable regional development.

## Regional partner initiatives in a national network

For partner initiatives in the German National Natural Landscapes there is a set of harmonized minimum standards and criteria established in the overall national partner programme (see section “Quality management in business partnerships of protected areas”).

## Benefits for a business are:

- Promotion of themselves as National Park Partner, Nature Park Partner or Biosphere Reserve Partner; for example, representation on a common internet platform, on the protected area website, and in information centres with leaflets and brochures of the partners on display.
- A direct line to the park administration and exclusive information from the park.
- A range of training and information material for partners, staff, and visitors.
- Access to an online database with high quality pictures for their own use.
- Network connections to other partners with the option of joint action.

## Benefits for a protected area are given because partners...

- are ambassadors of the park,
- inform the public about the protected area in a qualified way,
- operate sustainably and, as role models, exemplify and promote sustainable and environmentally friendly behaviour with important multiplier effects,
- give important support in political debates on conservation topics,
- provide certified high-quality, environmentally friendly goods and services from the region,
- take part in protected area activities and events,
- support and amend protected area activities and events.



Kanu Hecht rents out a large selection of boats and has overnight accommodation for water lovers in Müritz National Park (Erika Jozsa)

## Partner businesses in Müritz National Park

Two partner businesses in Müritz National Park, selected out of 44 in total, are the “Zur Fledermaus” guest house and the “Leddermann” restaurant, both located in the town of Waren in or on the border of the National Park. On the website of the pension “Zur Fledermaus” and at the entrance to the building, the “Müritz National Park Partner” logo is clearly visible accompanied with a short explanation of the partner programme. In



“Zur Fledermaus” guesthouse is a partner company of Müritz National Park and offers cosy and authentic accommodation (Erika Jozsa)

this case the guest house makes use of the marketing advantages of its partnership with the National Park by presenting themselves with the logo. Inside the guest house there is also a facility to display brochures of the other National Park Partners. The guest house stands out by organizing excursions with a certified nature guide. As the owner of the guest house is a bat “connoisseur”, it also has a small exhibition on bats; additionally, in the garden, there are bat and bird boxes as well as species of plants and trees which support insects. The building is located closely to a place where large numbers of cranes gather in autumn – one of the iconic species of this National Park.

“Leddermann” restaurant clearly profits from the beautiful scenic view on the edge of the National Park over meadows next to Feisneck Lake. On the restaurant website the partner logo is only presented at the bottom, and inside the restaurant the logo was not visible, nor was other information about the National Park. Recently the restaurant moved to another location in the centre of Waren, so this reflects the former situation.

A third partner of Müritz National Park is Hecht Canoe Station in Kratzeburg, on Kabelick Lake. It is a small family

enterprise where you can rent canoes and surf boards, have a light lunch, and stay overnight in simple accommodation. Hecht Canoe Station also organizes excursions in the National Park. Mr. Hecht advocated the Park during our visit and stated clearly that his business could only flourish thanks to the Park. It is obvious that here canoeing is an important way of experiencing one of the essences of the National Park.

A fourth National Park Partner is "Alte Kachelofenfabrik" in Neustrelitz, a restaurant, hotel, gallery, and cinema which is located close to the National Park. The Partner logo is shown on the website, but inside it was not noticed. The hotel is run on the basis of an ecological concept and is built with nature-friendly materials. It is fully booked during the summer as it cooperates with a tour operator that offers cycling holidays.

### Evaluation of the visited partner businesses

The ambassador function for a protected area has a different implementation with the various partners. The most active ambassador for me was without a doubt Hecht canoe station. Due to the long time spent outside in the National Park with the owner, there was ample opportunity to speak about the Park. An important factor was the enthusiasm of Mr. Hecht, who himself was very aware of the importance of nature. Because he loves nature and being outside, he makes his living by renting canoes.

But at "Zur Fledermaus" guesthouse we also met a convinced nature and national park lover. Even the name of the guesthouse ('Fledermaus' means 'bat') was based on this feature. So here the ambassador function was also implemented well.

In the two restaurants – where you spent most time inside and have mostly no return visit – the opportunities for the ambassador function are more limited. However, in Wadden Sea National Park



In the middle of the forest, in Serrahner Buchenwald World Heritage Site, the small National Park Partner Company Ferienwohnung Vitt offers nature-oriented accommodation (Stephanie Schubert)

I saw a fine example of a dining room decorated with pictures and attributes of the Park. An option could be that the menu partly consists of ingredients from the National Park (region). And on a table mat under your plate there could be written or visual information about the Park. This table mat would be a device to educate guests in an informed way.

The obligation for the partners to attend partner meetings where they are informed about the latest developments within the protected area are a good basis to educate guests in an informed way. But there is a difference in the client contact moments of the various partners, for example restaurants compared to a canoe station. So, I suppose there are different opportunities for partners to advocate the Park. This is a good thing for protected areas to realize.

The different enterprises operated in different segments of the tourism market. The "Alte Kachelofenfabrik" on the one hand was clearly orientated at a culturally-interested public, whereas the canoe station had a more basic product. Together they reached or covered a broad public. I think that protected areas should

cooperate with all kinds of enterprises, but that within each market segment they should endeavour for high quality.

### Comparison with the Netherlands

At this moment there is no partner initiative in Dutch national parks. During the rest of the year I will promote a partner initiative within my organization. The first steps are underway.



Serrahner Buchenwald World Heritage Site Exhibition (Giacomo Benelli)

# Partner initiatives in protected areas – Wadden Sea National Park

(Text basis: Noemi Campo Herrera, Oyambre Natural Park, Spain)

The core of the German protected area partner initiatives are co-operation agreements between park administrations and a great variety of local businesses that support the idea of looking after the environment through the locals. This model gives inspiration to the Spanish Oyambre Natural Park to promote a similar approach.

## High diversity of partner businesses in Wadden Sea National Park

In total, 178 tourism companies and institutions that are especially connected to Schleswig-Holstein Wadden Sea National Park have become official National Park Partners. They meet special criteria and inform visitors and customers about the National Park and the region (see section “Quality management in business partnerships of protected areas”).

## As a National Park Partner you are distinguished as:

- particularly environmentally friendly and sustainable,
- a quality supplier, where the customer is king,
- regionally committed and motivated,
- ambassador of the national park idea,
- friendly and competent advisor in national park matters.

The visited partner businesses in Wadden Sea National Park were unique and together they demonstrated the high diversity of enterprises that cooperate with the National Park: the range of these partners comprise, for example, the three-star hotel “Strandhotel Fernsicht”, with more than 50 bedrooms and a restaurant. Here, rather less information about the National Park and none about

other partner businesses was apparent. Following the first impression, at this hotel there was less „partner feeling“ than at other partners we visited. Another partner is the shipping company MS Seeadler. It conducts trips to the biosphere reserve area of Schleswig-Holstein Wadden Sea from the ports of Schlüttsiel and Hallig Hooge. The company offers regular trips to various destinations within the islands and people can also rent a boat for group trips. As an example of informing tourists about the value of the Wadden Sea, our trip on the MS Seeadler to Hallig Hooge was accompanied by a National Park ranger who was guiding a big group of children – an excellent experience. After fishing sea fauna, the ranger showed and explained the live animals to the highly interested children that could observe them in a tank on board.

On the holm “Hallig Hooge”, the very small and cosy “Café zum blauen Pesel” is run together with the “Hus Waterkant”



Catching marine animals with National Park staff on the excursion ship MS Seeadler, a National Park Partner company (Giacomo Benelli)

guest house, which gives the opportunity to stay longer on Hallig Hooge, a place where most people only spend a few hours. Although, because of a lack of time, we could not get much direct information about the experience of being a National Park Partner, the first impression of the café was “partner like”. The café even has a flag with the Partner logo in a very visible area next to the house.

All mentioned partner businesses present the “Partner Nationalpark Wattenmeer”



On the way to Hallig Krog, a National Park Partner company on Hamburger Hallig

(Giacomo Benelli)



Landschaftsmodell des Wattenmeers am Besucherzentrum Multimar Wattforum  
Model of wadden sea landscape at Multimar Wattforum Visitor Centre

(Stephanie Schubert)

logo on the front page of their websites.

### Cooperation with partners in Spanish protected areas and the Natural Park of Oyambre

There are very few experiences in Spain similar to the partner programme in Germany, more related with local products than with local business in general: the “Natural Park of Andalusia” brand is a quality mark awarded by the Ministry of Environment and Spatial Planning of the Regional Government of Andalusia to those craft and natural products, as well as tourism services – accommodation, catering, and active tourism – that are produced within the Andalusian natural parks and their areas of socio-economic influence. It offers the businesses a new opportunity for their promotion and commercialization of products and services within natural parks in Andalusia. With the “Natural Park of Andalusia” brand, the population and companies settled in the natural park benefit from the valorisation of the territory and can offer

visitors products and services associated with their environmental values of the Park and differentiated from the rest by their natural and authentic quality.

Another example is the “Natural Brand from the Castillan y Leon”, likewise supported by the Environmental Ministry. The Natural Brand is a distinction of food products, tourist services, and crafts of companies located in a protected natural space in the region Castilla y Leon. A commitment to good environmental practices as well as promotion and dissemination of the values of the respective protected natural area, where the activity is carried out, must be undertaken.

A few years ago we tried to start a partnership and natural park brand implementation in natural parks and Natura 2000 sites in Cantabria, taking those programmes as an example of what we could do. In the Natural Park of Oyambre we interviewed most of the local

business with the aim of knowing the level of acceptance that the brand could have. We conducted around 50 interviews in total and in most of them the answer was quite positive, as they felt the brand could report a benefit in terms of reputation and retention in their business.

We did not continue with the project partly due to lack of time, although in general the perception of the businesses was positive, and some of them wanted to be part of it. At the moment this is something that we might return to.

# Tourism management in German and Portuguese protected areas: different settings – equal challenges

(Text basis: Fernando Louro Alves, Parque Florestal de Monsanto, Portugal)

Being a Mediterranean country, our actual context of protected areas in Portugal is completely different from the visited parks in Germany. The main differences are:

1 the cultural context, 2 the investment capacity, and 3 the ecology of the landscape. Nevertheless, the approach that was followed in the course of the study trip led our discussion to management strategies of protected areas – and these are applicable in any context. The kind of use, carrying capacity, management of visitors, their impact, strategies for nature conservation, everything can be very easily compared to our own case. Our common challenge is how to attract visitors and, at the same time, how to lower their negative impacts on nature. While exchanging experiences and approaches with German park staff, the perspective of us foreign participants, including from Portugal, constituted a good basis for comparison on several issues.

## Müritz National Park from a Portuguese perspective

Parque Florestal de Monsanto in Portugal, where I come from, is a forest. The main natural values of Müritz National Park are the natural ecosystems, such as lakes (something we really miss) and one of the last pristine forests of *Fagus sylvatica* in Europe.

On the one hand, in the course of the study trip in Müritz National Park we learned about the Park's aims and approaches: the management of Müritz National Park focusses on the non-interference status (rewilding), which seems impossible against the background



Multimar Wattforum Visitor Centre of Schleswig-Holstein Wadden Sea National Park

(Fernando Louro Alves)

of our conditions of fire sensibility. We got insights into the introduction of artistic elements into the forest as attractions for visitors, as well as into the positive effects of the rangers. We found out



The World Heritage Route in Müritz National Park offers an accompanying app with a lot of information about the outstanding beech forest

(Fernando Louro Alves)

about the different cultural background of the German visitors versus our own, regarding high environmental awareness and cautious behaviour in German wildscapes. Finally, we got inspiring insights understanding the National Park in dealing with the small stakeholders acting inside the Park and not expecting to have very big financial support from big entrepreneurs.

On the other hand, we could let Müritz National Park benefit from our international experiences in subjects like redesigning nature paths (slowing them down, basing them on interesting spots) and turning landscapes into learnscapes. This goes together with enriching the information provided to the visitors and the constant critical question "Do they really need it?"

From a general viewpoint, I personally worried that if visitors that usually come

to the Park because of the lakes then turn their attention to the forests, is the sufficient for them? How are you going to manage the increase in visitor numbers?

### Inspiration from Schleswig-Holstein Wadden Sea National Park

Portugal has a coastline of more than 800 km. The majority of foreign and national visitors look for the seaside. These kinds of tourists usually generate very big impacts on sensitive ecosystems. The big issues are redirecting these visitors to a welcoming centre and organizing them to take more advantage of the values, and at the same time lowering their impact.

In Schleswig-Holstein Wadden Sea National Park, we learned about communication with the rangers, national park guides, and local promoters resulting in acceptance of the Park by all the inhabitants, stakeholders, and others. It was enlightening to see the National Park's approach in planning the main information centre as a facility, growing in size as need requires. From a Portuguese point of view, it was impressive understanding the capacity of German visitors coming to the beach and, regarding the conservation areas, leaving their cars far from the beach and sometimes travelling some kilometres on foot or by bike.

### Conclusion from the international study trip and outlook

One of the themes most interesting on the fieldtrip was the subject of volunteering and partnership. We saw that there was good and very effective volunteer work organization, which led to them helping in many small tasks. The partnership with local and national non-governmental organizations was also shown to be very efficient and we in Portugal will need to work more on this subject. The green labelling as "National Park Partner" (see sections "Partner initiatives in protected areas – Wadden Sea National Park" and "Partner initiatives in protected areas – Müritzn National Park") and the businesses' ethical, social and



Untouched nature in Müritzn National Park is a big attraction for tourism

(Fernando Louro Alves)

environmental responsibility showed good results, which is probably an effect of the involvement of all the stakeholders within protected areas. The lower scale of the partners and the personal connection with the rangers and the park in total avoids greenwashing.

This study trip was especially interesting for me – and I think for many other participants – because we are usually very involved on reactive tasks concerning the management of our areas and we sometimes "forget" to think "out of the box". By looking at other situations we see our own errors and we provide solutions both by hearing about other experiences or just because we are out of our context. The participants came from different contexts, bringing very different backgrounds in terms of training, in terms of organization (NGOs, administrations, etc.), experience and the like. This was also a factor of enrichment of the study trip because by this means we could learn with each other and lose our own "dogmatic" truth. It is possible to learn more while talking to other experiences than by reading lots of books.

As soon as I got to my office, inspired from the study trip, I immediately put some tasks on their way in order to ameliorate our aims and methods. Some

examples:

- Improve communication with stakeholders inside the Park.
- Look for small business partners instead of big investors.
- Reorganize the structural function of the rangers and their training.
- Reinforce the need of support from all the stakeholders involved in environmental education.
- Organize international cooperation.
- Organize an international fieldtrip to our Park?



Katja Arzt

# Finland: alternative financing strategies for protected areas

## Introduction to the study visit

### Protected areas visited

- Nuuksio National Park
- Leivonmäki National Park
- Southern Konnevesi National Park
- Isojärvi National Park

### Background information

About a tenth of Finland's land area is under protection to various degrees. Responsibility for nature conservation lies with the Finnish Ministry of the Environment. Throughout Finland, and hence also in the national parks, "Freedom to roam" applies. This allows all humans to move freely throughout the countryside and, for example, collect mushrooms and berries. On the same basis, campfires and overnight stays (permit required), boating and swimming are also allowed in national parks.

**Protected area categories:** The heart of the Finnish protected areas are the national parks and various nature reserves (strict nature reserves, mire reserves, etc.). All protected areas are based on the Nature Conservation Act and have been established since 1930. The 40 national parks occupy about 2.7% of Finnish territory and comply with IUCN category II. They are all located outside of inhabited areas, which results in a high level of acceptance among the population.

**Management of protected areas:** Parks & Wildlife Finland is a department of the Finnish National Forestry Administration Metsähallitus and is responsible for the national parks as well as many other protected areas and heritage sites. The regional administrative units of Parks & Wildlife Finland each manage a group

of national parks that have no individual administration. Theoretically, in this system there are only one to two full-time employees per national park. Financing of nature conservation measures often takes place through EU funding.

### What did we discuss, what were the important findings?

- Stated core assumption: conservation is a task for all of society, therefore financing of national parks must be done mainly by the state. However, this is only very limited.
- Intensive cooperation between national parks and partner companies on the ground enables environmental education and nature experiences and increases awareness of the areas.
- Communication focuses on the potential of the national parks and their potential uses, such as hiking, fishing, and overnight stays. These uses also generate revenue.
- Finnish national parks offer a variety of activities for volunteers, for example voluntary Shepherd Weeks, or accompanying people with disabilities on a national park trip.

# Cooperation between protected areas and companies

(Text basis: Martin Rimmler, Black Forest National Park Administration)

Many of the tasks that are typically carried out by German national park administrations are often outsourced in Finnish national parks due to their comparatively low human and financial resources. This approach leads to extensive and intensive cooperation with companies. In 2016, there were 518 companies offering services in Finnish national parks. By signing a co-operation agreement with Metsähallitus, they commit themselves to following the principles of sustainable nature tourism when they operate in a national park area. Two statements made by one of Park & Wildlife Finland's employees illustrate the understanding of business cooperations, namely:

“Companies are helping us do our jobs”, “We want companies to do good business through the national parks”. The outsourcing of national park related activities is presented here by way of example:

## Visitor centres

Metsähallitus, or rather Parks & Wildlife Finland, owns 30 visitor centres, some of which are in joint-ownership with the municipality concerned. Only a few visitor centres are operated by themselves; most are leased to companies, as well as the Haltia – the Finnish Nature Centre in Nuuksio National Park, which we visited. In the building there is an exhibition (paid), shop, restaurant, lecture hall, and smaller meeting rooms. It is used by regular guests, groups, business people, and for conferences. The lease for the centre is one million Euros for the initial ten years.

For Metsähallitus, or rather Parks & Wildlife Finland, this form of cooperation



Part of a camp in Southern Konnevesi National Park, a partner of Parks & Wildlife Finland

(Martin Rimmler)

benefits from reduced capital expenditure. The construction costs are incurred, but the maintenance, operation, and personnel costs are left to the tenant. In turn, the leasing company has the opportunity to build a business.

## Guided tours

The shortage of staff at Parks & Wildlife Finland means that the organization itself hardly operates any environmental education. In Leivonmäki National Park there is a Friends association, currently with about 60 honorary members. Amongst others, they lead groups through the National Park and specifically facilitate the elderly, people with disabilities, and refugees. With only a small number of initiatives in Finland, the number of National Park Friends is low, and Parks & Wildlife Finland often cooperates with private entrepreneurs offering guided tours. They receive no financial support from Metsähallitus, but can determine the prices of their tours independently. Metsähallitus offers free training sessions

with up-to-date information about the protected areas, which are not obligatory but usually well-attended. The content of the guided tours is not checked by Metsähallitus; they trust that the tours are carried out in the spirit of Parks & Wildlife Finland. Likewise, the companies report the number of guests to Metsähallitus every year on a basis of trust. From this they will be charged an amount for the maintenance and repair of the paths, fire sites (including firewood), and toilets in the protected areas. Southern Konnevesi National Park charges a fee of €1.50 per person to Parks & Wildlife Finland.



Service station with a fuel and catering partner of Parks & Wildlife Finland near Southern Konnevesi National Park

(Martin Rimmler)

### Huts/camps

In the national parks there is usually also accommodation available in the form of huts or camps. These are also operated not by Parks & Wildlife Finland, but by leasing companies, as in the case of Heretty hut in Isojärvi National Park, which we visited. In Southern Konnevesi National Park, most of the income earned by local entrepreneurs is through overnight stays. Metsähallitus advertises the accommodation and tours on its website and in social media – an effective and therefore important method for companies. In addition, social media also acts as a means of control for Parks & Wildlife Finland. Customer satisfaction and also cases of divergences from the guidelines of Parks & Wildlife are visible here.

### Partner companies in transport infrastructure

In addition to commercial activity within protected areas, Metsähallitus also cooperates with companies in their vicinity, for example with catering partner companies along the transport infrastructure. From the outside, they usually look like of a motorway service station: on second glance, one recognizes that elements of the regional nature and culture are incorporated. These companies have also signed an agreement with Metsähallitus committing themselves to more sustainable management. It is to be assumed that this is also not checked by Metsähallitus or Parks & Wildlife Finland. There is no detailed list of criteria for partner companies. In addition, there are no plaques or certificates indicating an award as a national park partner. Information material about the protected areas is not available, or only sporadically. It is evident that a partner-ship with companies in the Finnish protected areas is less of an award or indication of a special connection with the protected area and its objectives. Rather, it's all about making common use of the region: Parks



Catering partner of Parks & Wildlife Finland near Leivonmäki National Park, with old skis and sledges on the walls as features of regional culture (Martin Rimmler)

& Wildlife Finland manages the protected areas, focusing on preserving nature, while the cooperating companies provide visitor care and want to earn from it.

### Transference to protected areas in Germany

There are major differences between Germany and Finland with regard to business cooperation with national parks. For partnerships with National Natural Landscapes, there is the official framework of the EUROPARC partner initiative: if you want to become a partner, you usually have to fulfil a list of quite demanding criteria. Following its award, the company publicly represents the respective protected area, its value, as well as that of the environment in general.

In Finland, this communicative aspect plays a lesser role. The offer and the service for the visitors are foremost. This makes Finnish protected areas more flexible in cooperation with companies. But they have to be. On the one hand, the right of access and use of the parks is more extensive and opportunities for experiencing nature are more supported. On the other hand, the financial and personnel framework does not allow for comprehensive visitor support. Without

detracting from the communicative aspect, there are certainly opportunities in Germany to make cooperation between protected areas and private companies more flexible and to integrate the latter more. The example of Hunsrück-Hochwald National Park serves well here. Most tours are given over to external, certified national park guides. In addition, licensed companies may use the National Park logo for sales items, such as plates and cups.



On the ceiling of the partner enterprise (previous illustration) water and fish are represented as elements of the National Park (Martin Rimmler)

# Health care as a source of funding for nature conservation

(Text basis: Hubertus Welt, Freundeskreis Nationalpark Schwarzwald e. V.)

My particular interest in the study visit to Finland was in regard to alternative, additional ways of obtaining resources for the Black Forest National Park, but also for the Friends of the National Park.

## Financing protected areas as a task for the whole of society

Metsähallitus aims for recognition that nature conservation is a task to be financed by society as a whole. This means that, in addition to those interested in nature conservation, the entire population and all state structures should also be financially charged for the preservation of nature and the management of national parks and their facilities. The strategy of Metsähallitus is thus to meet the everyday needs of the population, but also the business plans of third parties and other state departments with nature conservation responsibilities, in order to bring in this funding. The focus is, for example, sports and leisure needs, catering requirements of locals and visitors, private tourism offers, opportunities for small business owners, and the inclusion of offenders. The respective target groups and partners accept paid offers, usage rights, services and the like from the national parks, and thus provide money for the maintenance of the parks. In order to use sources of finance from other departments, it is also the task of Metsähallitus to win over the respective political superstructure of the respective target groups (e.g., judicial and school administration) and corresponding associations (e.g., municipal associations and tourism organizations) to achieve co-financing of the parks.

## One approach: raising funds by combining nature education with health care

Metsähallitus has chosen the path of seeking recognition for health care as a benefit of national parks. If successful, part of the financing of the parks will be requested from the health system structures. After my visit to Finland, both

seem important and correct to me for our national parks. Several Finnish people repeatedly mentioned that the preventative and curative effects of forest visits, and physical activity in the countryside has been investigated with significant positive results. In fact, this reflects a truism on a scientific basis. Together with the Black Forest National Park Administration, I



Trail through Southern Konnevesi National Park

(Katja Arzt)



"Healthy Parks – Healthy People – Finland, Health and Wellbeing 2025 programme" booklet from Metsähallitus

have therefore decided to look at the question of whether a win-win situation can be developed for Friends of the Park and the health care system.

The idea of the project is to use health insurance-financed preventative measures in the form of guided walks in the National Park area (or beyond) to bring about the desired health effects, to combine this with teaching about nature, and to use the tuition fees for financing in the above-mentioned meaning. Behind this is the knowledge that various health insurance companies already provide their members with free or heavily subsidized prevention in the form of back exercises, nutrition advice, relaxation offers such as yoga, amongst others. So why not

establish an offer as outlined above, which is used to lower blood pressure, reduce stress, lose weight, aid mental health, and so on, and do it in coordination with the health care system? This must first be discussed and decided upon by the executive committee of the Friends of the Park, and then a strong argument built.

### Requirements for implementation in the Black Forest National Park

Implementation would require, among other things, the following measures and cooperation:

- Obtain research results from Metsähallitus on the health effects of the forest/national park visits
- Make contact with the National Park Administration and Department 3 (National Park Planning, regional development and tourism), to include research findings on nature experiences, wildlife, health, and recreation
- If applicable, research comparable offers in other regions
- Contact with local and regional health insurance companies, and possibly with pension insurance institutions, to see if they are interested in such an offer

- Find stakeholders and seek the expertise of, for example, doctors; use existing contacts with management board members
- Win over politicians and organize events on the topic
- Win over organic shops and vegetarian restaurants, as well as nature park owners to promote the offer to their customers
- Involve electric car suppliers and public transport
- Include tourism associations
- Clarify with adult education centres if such an offer would be co-financed
- Organise training of National Park guides on aspects of health
- Find sponsors for this idea
- Public relations, including in the National Park Magazine

### From "Healthy Parks – healthy people – Finland, Health and Wellbeing 2025 programme"<sup>6</sup>

"Our knowledge of the benefits of nature and outdoor recreation for human health and well-being has increased tremendously over the last few years. Nature has a highly positive impact on our physical, mental and social well-being. Visitor surveys and feedback support this – visitors gain a wide range of health benefits from outings in the wild. Our common goal is to inspire people to move and stay in the natural environment more often and for longer periods. Outdoor recreation activates people and promotes their health, regardless of their age and condition." (Timo Tanninen, Executive Director, Parks & Wildlife Finland/ Metsähallitus and Jukka Bisi, Director, Game and Fisheries/Metsähallitus)



Simple infrastructure in Isojärvi Nationalpark that supports the enjoyment of nature and recreation

(Katja Arzt)

# Volunteering in Finnish national parks

(Text basis: Mathias Heckroth, Mellumrat e. V.)

Talkoot is a Finnish word for a traditional form of neighbourhood or community help in Finland. Originally, individual projects were achieved through joint work, for example building a house. Nowadays, Talkoot in Finland is an important form of financing for many clubs, with members contributing to the club for free.

## Volunteering: tradition and benefit for national parks

Talkoot also plays an important role in nature conservation work. As the saying goes, "Good for you and good for nature". Talkoot is not just volunteer work, but an event that also strengthens the sense of community and strengthens the acceptance of nature conservation. Due to its traditional roots, participation in Talkoot is correspondingly high in the sense of a societal obligation.

Finland's national parks offer great opportunities for volunteering. Typical voluntary activities are the recording of special animal and plant species, or the maintenance of the cultural landscape through mowing or clearing work, but also the renovation of important historic buildings or the conservation of animal and fish populations on state land is partly based on the use of volunteers. The numbers are impressive; according to the Finnish protected area administration Metsähallitus, in 2016 3,788 volunteers participated in 211 different volunteer activities in Finnish protected areas. This contribution of volunteers equals approximately 25-person years.

During the study trip, we got to know members of the Friends of the National Park group in Leivonmäki National Park;



Finnish Shepherd Weeks - a popular offer for volunteers

(Outi Ala-Härkönen)

amongst others they organize a driving service and guiding service in the National Park for the elderly and/or people with disabilities. This form of volunteering increases awareness, acceptance, and opportunities to experience the National Park.

## Vapaaehtoiset paimenet luonnonsuojelualueilla – voluntary shepherds in protected areas

A special concept of volunteering is the Finnish Shepherd Weeks. The concept is a combination of nature conservation and management; at the same time, it strengthens the relationship of people to nature and the landscape. For payment of a fee, the arrangement comprises spending a week as a volunteer shepherd in a location where sheep maintain, and thus preserve, the landscape. The task is to provide the animals with fresh drinking

water, to keep track of their general condition, and to lead them from one pasture to the next. Very simple huts or shepherd wagons are used for this. The income from the paying volunteers goes back into the sites for their preservation and maintenance. The popularity of the concept is now so great that this shepherd's life has been won by lottery. Every year, there are more than 4,000 applications for a total of 142 weeks in twelve different national parks and other protected areas.



METSÄHALLITUS

Metsähallitus Park & Wildlife Finland offers the popular Shepherd Weeks for volunteers



Thanks to volunteers, landscape conservation with sheep can take place

(Tiina Hakkarainen)

The decline of traditional pastoral farming means that meadows with their rich flora and fauna are becoming increasingly rare in Finland. Grazing animals keep the landscape open and thus ensure biodiversity. During the Shepherd Weeks, the valuable landscapes are managed in an exemplary and effective manner, respecting traditions, and increasing the acceptance of the population through actions and experiences. A win-win situation: the shepherds get access to quality pastures that would otherwise be difficult to find, and the volunteer herders help to care for the animals. The operation strengthens the volunteers' relationship with the landscape and nature, giving them new experiences and an unforgettable holiday. In carrying out the activities, Parks & Wildlife Finland has taken all important aspects into account, from safety and liability to potential problem situations. In 2017, the Shepherd Weeks concept established by Parks & Wildlife Finland was selected by the European Landscape Convention as the best landscape project in Finland. From 2018, cow herding weeks will also be incorporated into the concept.

The Shepherd Weeks concept developed in Finland could be implemented in all European countries as a new kind of nature management.

#### Conclusions and learning effects from the study visit

An important point for me is the significance of public relations. Voluntary commitment can only be successful if, in addition to the value of the actual work undertaken, it also succeeds in increasing the acceptance of nature conservation and in spreading its benefits to the population in the outside world. The example of the Shepherd Weeks makes this very clear and, in my opinion, this would be a good concept which could be introduced in Lower Saxony Wadden Sea National Park. The connection between voluntary commitment and landscape management can succeed here.

In addition, the sobering realization is that ever-diminishing financial resources are shaping nature conservation work, not only in Germany but also in other European countries, as shown in this

example from Finland. At this point it became clear to me that a (large) state administration or large non-governmental organization has more possibilities and manpower to acquire funds. Many projects of the Finnish nature conservation authorities are EU funded. Here I see a good chance to also improve financial conditions in National Natural Landscapes in Germany. The issue of health care through countryside recreation is of great importance in Finland, and could be focussed on more and more in Germany as well.



On a joint excursion with volunteers of Friends of Leivonmäki National Park (Katja Arzt)

# One perspective on protected area financing: cost saving and cost reduction

(Text basis: Mercy Nambu Diangha; Cameroon, Germany)

Financing is one of the factors that most limits the management of protected areas. Because finances impact virtually everything else that protected area management entails, inadequate financing poses great risks, which may result in reduced protected areas management.

Alternative funding strategies are therefore urgently needed and being adopted at different levels. Amongst these strategies are those that save or reduce management costs of the protected areas.

## Financing Finnish national parks

National parks in Finland are mainly funded and managed by the government agency Metsähallitus, specifically its Parks & Wildlife Finland department, with support from regional administrators. Metsähallitus' current budgets for protected area management are not enough to run the entire programme of work for all parks in the country and are expected to face more trimming in the near future. Downsizing budgets has triggered negative public feedback on park activities and biodiversity conservation in general. Creation of additional revenue and adopting strategies to save and/or reduce current costs – and simultaneously improve nature conservation – is a probable way forward and imperative for the financing of Finnish national parks.

## Cost reduction and saving strategies

Leasing protected area management services to private entrepreneurs (see section “Cooperation between protected areas and companies”) has greatly relieved Metsähallitus of specific responsibilities. At the same time, it has saved costs for implementing activities and tourist services such as running restaurants and

lodging services, saunas, rental services for conference rooms, outdoor camping and camping huts, tents and other tourist equipment, transportation services, guided excursion, and camping in the parks, as well as gift shops.

In addition, costs for the seasonal maintenance of hiking and biking trails, grilling and open camping sites is a burden. In Nuuksio National Park these costs are reduced through seasonal hiring of well-behaved prisoners for reduced pay. It should be mentioned that this approach gives prisoners the opportunity to interact with nature and also the chance to earn pocket money for themselves. Additionally, volunteer services help to fulfil specific protected area management tasks that are not financially feasible (see section “Volunteering in Finnish national parks”). In Leivonmäki National Park, a business model for volunteering through a lottery system (Shepherd Weeks) has been adopted as a cost reduction strategy and at the same time as revenue for the Park,



Nuuksio Nature Centre in Nuuksio National Park: an example of third-party financed and externally operated national park infrastructure (Katja Arzst)

among others by claiming registration fees from the applicants.

Regarding funds solicited from external sources: infrastructure development, such as the construction of Nuuksio Nature Centre at Haltia, attracted additional funds both from international partners (Jane and Aatos Erkko Foundation) and regional municipalities (Espoo, Helsinki, Vantaa, Kauniainen, Kirkkonummi and Vihti, and Solvalla Nedre). Such co-financing acts freed Metsähallitus from



German-Finnish „open air“ knowledge sharing in Southern Konnevesi National Park

(Katja Arzst)

the total cost if it were to sponsor the project alone.

### Ancillary effects

The approach of leasing out park management services to companies and communities, together with cooperation with external supporters, achieves social recognition of the national parks as a common project to be financed. It is a means of empowerment by Metsähallitus because it offers, for example, employment opportunities for local entrepreneurs and the integration of prisoners and volunteers.

In Leivonmäki National Park, sales of forest products, including berries and craft objects made from fossil material collected from the Park, has helped the community and the Friends of the Park initiative to raise funds for themselves and for the Park. A remarkable aspect is the fact that the community being fully engaged at this level and in close bonds with the National Park has helped reduce the costs that Park management would have faced for conducting awareness and sensitization campaigns in the community.

### Inherent limitations

Looking at cost saving and co-financing, there are several inherent limitations to be considered. On the one hand, leasing tourism activities to private sectors, for instance, focuses more on business returns. As a consequence, the lack of a system for monitoring the business risks related to the state of biodiversity and ecosystem in the Park makes this a bigger problem for Park management. On the other hand, the strategies above may not provide sufficient revenue for regular and additional spending for the Park's activities in the long term. Finally, tangible contributions from external sources facilitate progress, but funding from external sources is not always easy to find and often comes with a lot of conditions and restrictions.



Informationen und Erfahrungen aus erster Hand im Isojärvi Nationalpark  
Information and experiences at first hand in Isojärvi National Park

(Katja Arzt)

### Suggestions for cost reduction and fundraising in national park management

Looking into the future, it is mainly the responsibility of Metsähallitus and interested stakeholders to ensure that Finnish national parks continue to flourish. First and foremost, the development of a transparent budget for each park that targets specific programmes of work is imperative. Second, national park lobbyists should be granted opportunities to justify the need for more funding for the parks in parliament as these may pave a way to a sustainable future cost reduction approach, which will benefit the government even further.

The development of a fund-raising strategy should be a consultative process involving all interested stakeholders.

Limited consultation and networking with interested stakeholders, as was the case with the Friends of the Park initiative in Leivonmäki National Park, left the communities with very little alternative funding options.

Adopting eco-tourism strategies with fees charged according to financial need for the park may target specific programmes

of work and help reduce cost burdens. Entrance fees have been proven to be an effective source of revenue for most national park services elsewhere. In the visited Finnish national parks, entrance fees are not charged, but they should be considered. Adopting the conservation of biodiversity as a core principle for carrying out the national parks' mandate and sustainably exploiting ecosystem services from within parks for economic gains may attract more investors and conservation organizations, as well as additional external funding for park management. Adopting habitat banking or conservation banking schemes in park management could pool together a range of credits from biodiversity conservation and development schemes, which may help in monitoring the parks landscape in the long term.

By brokering arrangements between land-owning communities, planning authorities and institutions that benefit from good environmental conditions (e.g., health institutions, education and research institutions), a lot of money could be found to create and manage habitats and to protect threatened and vulnerable species in the national parks.



Neele Larondelle

# Netherlands: Education for sustainable development in protected areas

## Introduction to the study visit

### Visited protected areas

- Sallandse Heuvelrug National Park
- Weerribben-Wieden National Park
- Dwingelderveld National Park
- Drents-Friese Wold National Park

### Background information

The Netherlands is characterized by a high population density, economically intensively used landscape and, thus, by high pressure on the countryside; but it also has very high environmental consciousness in the population. Valuable natural areas are often strictly protected, but are mostly isolated “islands of nature” surrounded by intensive agriculture.

**Protected area categories:** In the diversity of protected area categories, the 20 national parks occupy a prominent

position. They correspond in part to IUCN management category II, often to category IV; in the latter case they are more comparable to German biosphere reserves or nature parks. Another less stringent protected area category is “National Landscapes” which, through their combination of agricultural areas with natural and cultural history, shape the image of the Netherlands.

**Protected area administrations:** In the Netherlands, state conservation was decentralized in 2013 and responsibility given to the provinces. The consequence is, amongst others, a variety of administrative structures and management forms of the national parks, partly led by the state organisation Staatsbosbeheer and partly by private organisations, for example

Natuurmonumenten. The non-governmental organisation Instituut voor natuureducatie en duurzaamheid (IVN) undertakes a large amount of educational work in cooperation with the protected area administrations.

### What did we discuss, what were the important findings?

- In national parks, much of the educational work is undertaken by well-established non-governmental organisations (NGOs).
- In the Netherlands, the concept of education for sustainable development (ESD) is not as strong as it is in Germany.
- In national park educational programmes with schools, the involvement of parents plays an important role, thus becoming further beneficiaries of the educational content.
- The participation of young people through attractive and serious offers makes it possible to firmly anchor protected areas in the region.
- Volunteering is very well developed in the national parks; the key success factors are personal contact with and high esteem from the full-time employees, but also Dutch society in general.

# ESD with youth: the example of “Junior Consultant Agency”

(Text basis: Carolin von Prondzinsky, Naturwacht Brandenburg)



The comprehensive IVN website for the “Jongeren Adviesbureau” increases its visibility, ([www.ivn.nl/ivn-jongerenadviesbureau](http://www.ivn.nl/ivn-jongerenadviesbureau))

Younger children are usually more enthusiastic about environmental and nature issues than teenagers. Nevertheless, educational work with teenagers is appealing and worthwhile because they are better able to use their knowledge and act independently. A convincing approach is the Dutch example of the Junior Consultant Agency, which not only provides the tools for sustainable action, but also allows immediate practical application in “real life”.

## “Jongeren Adviesbureau” – Junior Consultant Agency

The concept of the Junior Consultant Agency was developed by IVN (Instituut voor natuureducatie en duurzaamheid) and since 2001 has been implemented nationwide with secondary school students. The project idea is that teens work on a real job from a company or (government) organisation. It always has a sustainable or social relevance and ranges from campaign development to the sparing use of drinking water in Dutch schools, from regional

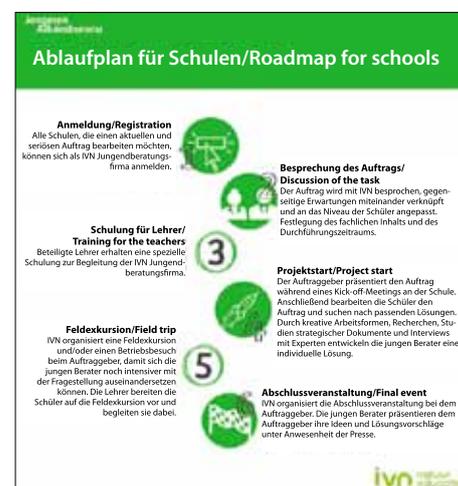
development of a municipality taking into account various interests in use to the production of renewable energy by a company. IVN acts as an intermediary between companies and schools and as a professional companion. The teenagers put together a team of experts, the Junior Consultant Agency, and take on roles such as secretary, creative thinker, practical implementer, or presenter. To familiarize themselves with the respective topic, they hold talks with employees of the company and, if necessary, with other experts. After further independent research and the development of a solution to the problem, they develop a tangible result, such as a model, poster, or report. They present this to the client and leave it for them to use. Within half a year, the companies will inform the teenagers about further developments. Companies pay €8,000 for project organisation, and €4,000 for repeated cooperation.

The benefit to the supplier is that the young minds are not yet stuck in old ways of thinking, but are more capable

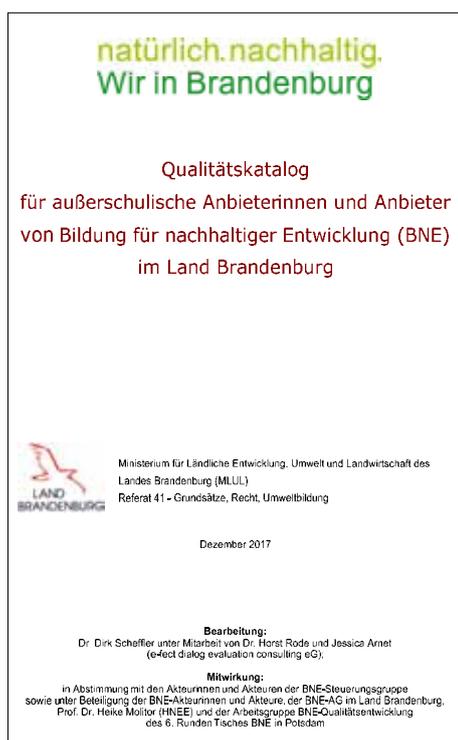
of providing creative and innovative food for thought with a “thinking out of the box” approach. For teenagers, the appeal lies in the possibility of being involved in something “real” that has opportunities for implementation and whose results they can follow and witness. They develop skills such as being self-reliant, team work and interdisciplinary work, learning to research and interview, they practice organising and presenting, and they can bring their creativity to life. The network of project partners, which has grown steadily for 17 years, speaks for itself: according to the IVN website, around 2,500 students in 65 schools and 40 companies or (governmental) organisations in 10 provinces are now involved every year.

## Evaluation of Junior Consultant Agency<sup>7</sup>

The basis for the evaluation is the “Qualitätskatalog für außerschulische Anbieterinnen und Anbieter von Bildung für nachhaltige Entwicklung (BNE) im Land Brandenburg (Dezember 2017)” (“Quality catalogue for extra-curricular providers of Education for Sustainable



Roadmap for a “Jongeren Adviesbureau” IVN project



Quality catalogue for extra-curricular providers of education for sustainable development (ESD) in the state of Brandenburg

Development (ESD) in the State of Brandenburg (December 2017)". This is roughly divided into two quality areas, the quality of the offer and the management quality of a project.

The following evaluation of the “Jongeren Adviesbureau” refers exclusively to the criteria for the quality of the offer and thereby only to the approach, methods, and shaping competencies to be acquired.

Except for the quality criteria marked in the table with “\*”, only those are considered which are assumed as having been fulfilled with each Junior Consult Agency project. For both items marked with “\*”, the current level of knowledge is not sufficient to assume that it applies in each individual case. Since the contracts within the framework of the Junior Consultant Agency must always have a social or sustainable relationship, there is a lot to suggest that it does. If a task does not have one or both of these features, the instructor could remedy it with a specially-made one. Thus, the project Junior Consult Agency can certainly be regarded as a high-quality ESD programme with regard to the quality of the offer.

### ESD in protected areas in Brandenburg and the Netherlands

Due to the “ErlebnisVielfalt” (“diverse experience”) programme initiated in 2016 by Naturwacht (ranger service) Brandenburg, there are now a whole series of projects in Brandenburg’s National Natural Landscapes that correspond conceptually to the criteria of the Brandenburg ESD quality catalogue. The educational offers presented by the Dutch colleagues are very professional, carefully designed, and cleverly thought out. In its own way, each fulfils different criteria of the named ESD quality catalogue. However, most of them do not seem to fully comply with this standard, but testify to a rather open and less conceptually-based (but certainly refreshing) approach to ESD. Even such projects can greatly promote the idea of sustainability among children and teenagers – and sometimes a little less may be more!?

	Section	Applicable quality criteria in the programme	Minimum requirement met
<b>Approach</b>	Variety of topics	Multidimensional * Inter-/transdisciplinary	(X)
	Perspective diversity	Contentious *	(X)
<b>Methods</b>	Action orientation activated	Experience and experiment Activating Reflective Interactive Holistic Multimedia	X
	Appropriate and sound	Appropriate for aims, target groups, content and concept Tried and tested	X
	Supportive	Preparatory Follow up / continuation	X
<b>Shaping competencies</b>	Methods skills	Interdisciplinary knowledge acquisition and processing	X
	Social skills	Plan and act together with others Recognize and weigh up conflicts of interest when reflecting on action Participate in collective decision-making processes	X
	Personal skills	Can plan and act independently	X

Table 1: Evaluation of the IVN “Jongeren Adviesbureau” programme based on the Brandenburg ESD quality catalogue

# Primary school education opportunities: the example of “Vogelreise”

(Text basis: Nadja Poser, Naturwacht Brandenburg)

Weerribben-Wieden National Park offers a number of primary school programmes developed by the IVN (Instituut voor natuureducatie en duurzaamheid) that address children between the ages of 5 and 12. They are part of the curriculum of the province of Overijssel, so that each class uses an offer in the National Park at least once a year. Booking is done online and at the same time documents are available for download, from travel directions to a preparation folder<sup>8</sup>. On the project day the classes are supervised by volunteers.

## “Vogelreise” educational offer in Weerribben-Wieden National Park

The birdwatching programme for grades 3 and 4 covers five common bird species in the national park: great cormorant, common buzzard, greylag goose, great crested grebe, and sedge warbler. Each small group takes on the role of a bird species and gets to know the life and dangers of their bird in a fun way, completing tasks at different stations. As a follow-up at school, the small groups present their bird species to each other, for example as a small play, as a newspaper or website report, or a photo exhibition. The following analysis examines the “common buzzard” stations for the group as an example. The basis for this is the “Qualitätskatalog für außerschulische Anbieterinnen und Anbieter von Bildung für nachhaltige Entwicklung (BNE) im Land Brandenburg (Dezember 2017)” (“Quality catalogue for extra-curricular providers of Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) in the State of Brandenburg (December 2017)”)<sup>9</sup>.

**Station 1, Nest:** The buzzard introduces itself as Max. The children get to know the breeding behaviour of buzzards and work together to create a small buzzard nest. The buzzard has a name; with this, the children are already beginning to identify with it and empathy is encouraged. The change in the perspective of the buzzard allows a comparison to the real-life situation of the children, because they know the buzzard. There is an environmental view from the buzzard’s perspective and from the point of view of humans. Teamwork is required in the nest construction task. In summary, ESD quality characteristics 3.1.1, 3.1.2, 4.1.1, 4.2.1, and 4.3.3 can be found at this station.

**Station 2, Neighbours:** Max describes how he lives with his wife Bea and introduces some of his neighbours - tawny owl, Eurasian hobby, northern goshawk. The children are given the task of looking up the buzzard and its neighbours in a bird guide.



Study material from the “Vogelreise” (“bird journey”) programme, with species that are frequently found in Weerribben-Wieden National Park: great cormorant, common buzzard, greylag goose, great crested grebe, and sedge warbler (Nadja Poser)



Environmental educator Thea Peters from IVN introduces the „Vogelreise“ („bird journey“) programme in the typical landscape of Weerribben-Wieden National Parks (Neele Larondelle)

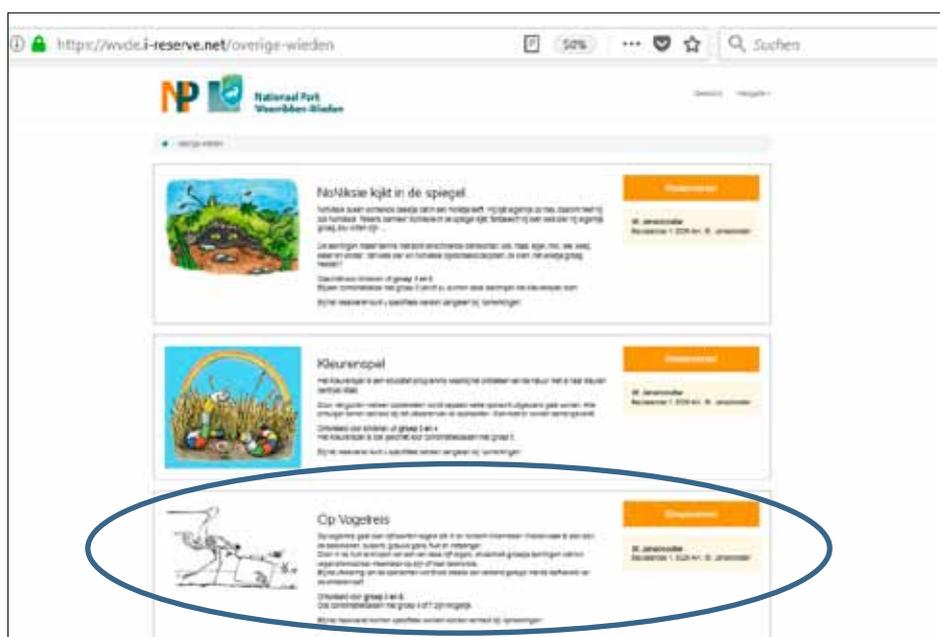
The buzzard lives together with other animals; the children learn that one must get on with one’s neighbours to live well together. The children learn that others also have different needs and thus live differently. To find out what the other animals look like, the children are given the task of looking up the neighbours in the bird guide – a stimulus for independent problem solving. In summary, ESD quality characteristics 3.1.1, 3.1.2, 3.1.3, 3.1.8, 3.2.1, 4.1.1, and 4.3.3. can be found here.

**Station 3, I live here:** Max the buzzard describes his territory and which requirements it must satisfy. As an activity, two groups of children are given the task of painting two pictures of the surroundings.

The focus here is on taking individual facts and creating comprehensive knowledge in the context of a habitat. However, there is no comparison with one’s own habitat and reference to overlapping habitat. Although the station promotes cooperation in a pair and the powers of observation, it does not correspond directly to any ESD quality feature.

<sup>8</sup> s.a.: <https://wvde.i-reserve.net/overige-wieden>, <http://www.np-weerribbenwieden.nl/op-vogelreis>

<sup>9</sup> s.a.: <http://www.mlul.brandenburg.de/cms/media.php/lbm1.a.3310.de/BNE-Qualitaetskatalog-BB.pdf>; Categorization of the above-mentioned methods and their quality criteria: 3.1.1 experience, test; 3.1.2 situated; 3.1.3 activating; 3.1.5 reflected; 3.1.8 multimedia; 3.2.1 appropriate for goals, target groups, content and approach; Categorization of the above-mentioned shaping competence and their quality criteria: 4.1.1 Cosmopolitan and integrating new perspectives in building knowledge; 4.2.1 Can plan and act together with others; 4.3.3 can show empathy for others



Die "Vogelreise" wird über das Online-Portal des Nationalparks Weerribben-Wieden gebucht:  
The "Vogelreise" ("bird journey") can be booked via the online portal of Weerribben-Wieden National Park:  
<https://wvde.i-reserve.net/overige-wieden>

**Station 4, My favourite food:** Max the buzzard explains which food he likes to eat and where he finds it. As an activity, the children are given the task to discover at what distance they can still see a toy mouse and to compare it with the visibility of a common buzzard.

At this station there is a direct relationship to the children's own world, as well as a connection between food intake and dangers from humans. Similar to station 1, there is a change of perspective and like station 2 there is a comparison. In this task, the senses are addressed and compared. The children learn that others perceive the environment differently: I am not you, you are not me. This promotes the development of sensitivity to the environment. In summary, ESD quality characteristics 3.1.1, 3.1.2, 3.1.5, 3.2.1, and 4.1.1 can be found at this station.

**Station 5, Here's how I do it:** At this station, the children learn about the behaviour of the buzzard and are given the task of sitting on a pole like a buzzard, making a mewling noise. This station conveys species-specific knowledge in a classic environmental education way.

**Station 6, Dangers:** Max talks about the dangers that sometimes threaten him, such as white-tailed eagles, cars, or poisoned baits. As an activity, the children play a quiz with danger cards.

Again, there is a reference to your own life. The children learn about the effects of their own lifestyle on the environment. However, in the game with the danger maps, subsequent reflection on which dangers could be reduced as well as recognition of sustainable action or dealing with dilemmas is missing. In summary, this means that the ESD quality characteristic 3.1.2 can be found.

**Station 7, Holidays:** This station is about the overwintering behaviour of buzzards. As an activity, the children should find the countries on a world map where they were once on holiday or where they would like to visit.

Looking at migratory behaviour looks across country borders and also looks at their own life. However, the global connection is not made tangible. Connections between plane/train/road travel and CO<sub>2</sub> emissions could be

made here. In summary, the ESD quality characteristic 3.1.2 can be found.

**Station 8, Appearance:** This station describes the appearance of buzzards and, as an activity, the children get a puzzle with the image of a buzzard. This station conveys species-specific knowledge in a classic environmental education way.

### Summary and learning effects from the study visit

ESD quality characteristics can be recognized in the methods, but overall there is a lack of reference to the children's own lives and reflection of their own actions. More dimensions could be interconnected, and dependencies could be considered which also touch the children, so that conclusions could be made at the end with regard to protective measures or sustainable travel. Working in small groups and the subsequent follow-up are important methods and promote competencies anchored in the ESD concept. The next step is to optimize the "Vogelreise" primary school programme to the conditions of our Lower Lusatian Heath Nature Park and to ESD standards.

# GPS rally as an education opportunity

(Text basis: Christina Winter, Naturwacht Brandenburg)

The use of electronic devices in educational work is usually very popular with children and teenagers. It is certainly the experience of Naturwacht (ranger service) Brandenburg that schools ask for GPS rallies as an educational module. As such it should be aligned with the criteria of education for sustainable development (ESD).

## GPS rally in Sallandse Heuvelrug National Park

Sallandse Heuvelrug National Park offers a GPS rally to 11 to 12-year olds. This takes up the nature and history themes of the region and consists of stations that small groups children run through alternately. The teams receive a GPS device with the station coordinates, a questionnaire, and a key. This allows them to open boxes with tasks and work materials on the ground at the stations.

**Cultural history station:** In front of the foundation walls of a former 19th century house, the teams receive information about the family that lived there and the task of finding six things that were already there and three things that are new.

**Animal tracks and signs station:** The task is to find, identify and present animal tracks and signs in the forest. The children sharpen their awareness of small clues about living things.

**Ice age stones station:** The children receive a datasheet about abiotic factors that form stones, search for stones, and thus capture the glacial character of the landscape.

**Orientation with compass and map station:** With a compass and a historical map, the boundaries of three former municipalities should be traced and thereby the use of the tools should be learned.

**Remembrance of the Second World War station:** This is located at a monument to the Second World War on the site of a former of barracks, where Jewish forced laborers were housed. The participants are invited to examine the monument and to answer questions.

## GPS rally conceptual design in Grumsiner Forst nature reserve in Schorfheide-Chorin UNESCO biosphere reserve

The GPS rally takes place in a mixed beech forest area. It is designed for grades 7 to 10. Under guidance, the groups run alternately around the stations with their GPS devices.

**Biosphere reserve station:** Objective: Participants get to know the concept of biosphere reserves and can reproduce their zoning. ESD goals: planning and working



The GPS rally as a training ground for the ESD goal "Planning and working together with others" (Christina Winter)

together with others; participating in decision-making processes; motivating others to become active.

The participants receive information about Schorfheide-Chorin Biosphere Reserve, and the objectives and zoning of biosphere reserves. They are then able to design a biosphere reserve model with natural materials and present it.

**Forest ecosystem station:** Objective: The children can explain the term "ecosystem" and know relationships and dependencies, especially in a forest. ESD goals: forward-looking thinking and acting; identify and



The illustrations provided help with identifying the objects found

(Christina Winter)



Orientierung während der Rallye mit Kompass und Karte  
Orientation during the rally with map and compass

(Neele Larondelle)

balance risks, dangers, and uncertainties. The children receive a text about ecosystems. They then identify the forest ecosystem network in the district: a child with a ball of string names an element of the forest (e.g., tree), keeps one end of the string and throws the ball to another child. They then name an element of the forest associated with the previous one (e.g., caterpillar), then throw the ball of string, and so on. When the child who started retrieves the rope, a network can be seen. Next, a component of the “ecosystem” disappears: one child lets go of the rope, and all who feel the relaxation of tension also let go. This shows how an ecosystem can collapse when components are eliminated. At the end, the supervisor encourages reflection.

#### **Animal tracks and signs station:**

**Objective:** The participants identify animal tracks and signs in the forest and can draw conclusions about the animal world. **ESD goals:** to motivate others to become active.

The children receive a summary of possible animal tracks and signs in the forest (feeding, droppings, footprints, etc.) and use flags to mark those found on site. On a tour, they identify the tracks and signs together and draw conclusions about animal life in the forest.

#### **Ecosystem services station: Objective:**

The children can explain ecosystem services and transfer them to the forest. **ESD goals:** forward-looking thinking and acting; finding and using interdisciplinary knowledge; recognizing and balancing risks, dangers, and uncertainties; planning and working together with others.

The children receive information about ecosystem services. In groups, they think about what the forest provides, present the results, and discuss what is needed to maintain the services and what they can do themselves to help.

**Plant identification station: Learning objective:** the children learn and identify classic forest plants (including edible ones). **ESD goals:** to motivate others to become active.

The children receive a plant identification card, with information on location requirements and edibility, and look for the plants on site. The accompanying person stimulates the discussion on how the range of species could change depending on forest type and forest management.

**Sustainability station: Objective:** the children can describe sustainability and sustainable forestry for themselves.

**ESD goal:** gaining and acting on interdisciplinary findings; recognizing and balancing risks, dangers, and uncertainties; recognizing and considering conflicting goals when reflecting on strategies for action.

Three same-sized groups are positioned on three buckets (“human”, “forest”, “time”) that are ten metres apart in a triangle and contain twelve pieces of wood each. One group member runs to the given bucket of another group (“human” runs to “forest”, “forest” runs to “time”, “time” runs to “human”), takes a piece of wood and places it in its own bucket, “human” always take two pieces of wood. The end of the game is when a group can no longer bring a piece of wood back to its own bucket. There is a discussion on people taking more wood out of the “forest” than went in. Together, the children consider how the rules need to be changed so that the game could go on forever. Based on these findings, the term “sustainability” is explained and transferred to human action.

The rally concludes with a reflection on the term “sustainability” and the biosphere reserve objectives. The children can contribute their own ideas about sustainability in everyday life.

#### **Conclusions from the study visit**

The study visit in the Netherlands showed that we are on the right track in Brandenburg. In education, we deal with sustainability and put a strong focus on ESD. From our experience, ESD does not play such a major role in Dutch protected areas. In addition, ESD is considered less strictly conceptual than in Germany. The categorization of ESD aspects into sub-competences was not evident in the Netherlands. The experience of nature and the teaching of nature knowledge with diverse methods are in the foreground here. Nonetheless, the methods selected often correspond to different ESD criteria.

# Strengthen the impact of ESD: final presentation of educational programmes

(Text basis: Dominik Maier, Hainich National Park Administration)

Two examples from Dutch educational programmes show that final presentations by the participating children in front of their families are a useful addition to the educational offers of national parks in order to deepen what they have learned and to disseminate the content.

## “Nature Ambassador” education programme

The “Nature Ambassadors” educational programme of Weerribben-Wieden National Park pursues the goal of familiarizing children and young people with traditional, semi-natural economic systems in the water-rich region and with natural phenomena which they can impart in their personal surroundings in the spirit of nature ambassadors.

One component of the programme, the “Woordvoerders van de Eendekooi” (literally “spokesman of the duck decoy”), is aimed at school classes with children approximately twelve years old. Ducks as typical aquatic creatures and the historical trap for ducks in this case serve as illustrative examples of native species and traditional use. The programme consists of four phases: 1. visit to the school class by a duck-catcher with a dog; 2. station programme around the duck decoy (see below); 3. presentation preparation at school; 4. presentation at school for the families of the participating children. The programme phase at the duck decoy has six stations, which the children go through in small groups. The stations deal with the themes of how the duck decoy works, tree species around the water and determining the age of trees, duck nests made of wicker baskets, noise maps, duck happy families, and duck sayings.

## “Natural forest” education programme

Once a year, Drents-Friese Wold National Park offers the education programme “Bos natuurlijk” (“natural forest”) for children aged 11-12 years and upwards. In total, 125 children from five schools can participate. The fact that there is a waiting list of five years gives the offer an exclusive character, but is something to be viewed critically. The programme is accompanied by 25 supervisors – five rangers plus volunteers. During “natural forest”, the children should have direct



Cooking outside in the programme “Natural forest” as a nature experience for children (Dominik Maier)

experiences with nature and get ideas for future trips to the countryside. Similar to “Woordvoerders van de Eendekooi”, the process is divided into several phases:

1. Preparatory lesson(s) at school on the subject of forest ecology, accompanied by volunteers;
2. excursion day with several programme points (see below);
3. a large presentation event for the



A duck decoy is a trap which used tame ducks and special dogs to capture wild ducks (Neele Larondelle)

families of the participating children, during which the schools and the workshop groups introduce themselves with their experiences and results. The excursion day consists of a two-and-a-half-hour cross-country wilderness track with rangers, and one-hour workshops led by volunteers on topics such as looking for and identifying mushrooms and small animals, survival under tarpaulins and lighting fires, building huts and wilderness food (preparing herb soup and bread herb cream cheese). The end of the day is a spent together grilling marshmallows.

## How much ESD is in it?

This discussion only refers to the brief insight that was gained, so it may be that the lack of individual ESD elements is criticized, even though they do actually exist. In “Nature Ambassadors”, different aspects of the integration of ecology, economy, society, and culture are shown and their interconnectedness becomes clear. Both programmes, however, lack

guidance for a more sustainable lifestyle and global perspectives. For “Natural Forest”, even encroaching on nature was tolerated which actually promoted non-sustainable behaviour, for example in building huts from fresh material such as grass, twigs and moss. The selection of topics would allow a global perspective to be integrated, for example certain individual workshops/stations could be replaced. Both programmes illustrate that sustainability as well as education are important to Dutch National Parks, but ESD (as understood and implemented as a concept in Germany) seems unknown.

However, individual elements can be easily-adapted to ESD as we understand it; for example, presenting what has been learned and developed to the families of children and teenagers, which is reflected in both programmes. In the case of “Natural Forest”, this presentation is organised centrally; as a result, the type of presentation can be better influenced and the contents conveyed can be checked. The relatively large organisational effort is affordable for the schools and the accompanying national park, as it is limited to one event per year. For “Nature Ambassadors”, the final event is left to schools, so quality control is more difficult. For this reason, more participants will be reached every year and simultaneously with less organisational effort.

The above-mentioned closing events will support the shaping competencies of children and young people, how they can plan and work with others, how to motivate themselves and others, to become active, to participate in collective decision-making processes, and to gain interdisciplinary knowledge and action. Whilst preparing presentations, they revise the educational topics and deal with them more intensively. They become multipliers, which disseminates the topics further. Not only do children and teenagers receive information, they



Hainich National Park: Ideal learning place for young ancient woodland experts

(Katharina Sabry)

become agents themselves, which is an important aspect of ESD.

### Suggestions for a planned “Ancient Woodland” educational programme

The idea: in Hainich National Park’s programme, participants aged around 12 to 14 are trained and qualified to be ancient woodland experts and to be able to pass on their acquired knowledge. The following is a rough outline for a multi-day event, suitable for example for project days. The final step is the presentation of the content, inspired by the study visit. The procedure consists of four modules: 1. In-school preparation, supported by national park personnel, for the topics “What is ancient woodland?”, “Where can we find ancient woodlands?”, “Ancient woodland in the middle of Germany”, “Let nature be nature!”; 2. ancient woodland expedition in the “Ancient woodland in the middle of Germany”, which allows them to experience first-hand and get to know its special features; 3. Workshops entitled “Ancient woodland in danger”, where the children learn from examples of various threats to ancient woodland and develop ways of behaving to counteract them. The opinions of local stakeholders

should also be included, for example as a video interview. Workshop topics are agriculture (monocultures, palm oil, cocoa, soya, livestock), logging (furniture, paper, firewood), and mineral resources (aluminium, coltan as a conflict material). Afterwards, the children create short presentations and introduce them to the other groups; 4. Joint presentation by the children in front of their families, with a focus on the theme of ancient woodland (which is based on programme modules 1 and 2) and the workshop topics from module 3 (which the children present at information stands).

# Qualification of volunteers in the educational work of Dutch national parks

(Text basis: Lea Potrafke, Volunteer in Unteres Odertal National Park)

Education in Dutch National Parks is mainly done by volunteers – an approach that provides ideas, but also raises critical questions.

## Volunteers in education: many tasks, few conditions, matching qualifications

Unlike in Germany, Dutch national parks are not wholly owned by the state, but mainly by two national organisations, the private organisation “Natuurmonumenten” and the state organisation “Staatsbosbeheer”. Another significant difference to the German system is that a large part of the educational offers is developed and coordinated by a central organisation, the “Instituut voor Natuureducatie en Duurzaamheid” (IVN

– Institute for Nature Education and Sustainability). As these organisations have only a few permanent staff per national park, the protected areas depend on many active volunteers, including in education. In Dwingelderveld National Park alone, 80 active volunteers are currently assisting 3.5 permanent administrative posts. Each of the three mentioned organisations coordinates, supervises, and trains volunteers in the visited national parks. The type and scope of the qualifications, as well as the further support of the volunteers in terms of equipment and expense allowances, vary greatly depending on the organisation and the area of responsibility of the volunteers (see Table 1). Most projects

involving volunteers focus on the ability to interact with children. Advanced ecological expertise and a professional “green background” are often unnecessary. Qualifications for the activity are made as shown in the table, for example in workshops and by shadowing full-time employees or experienced volunteers.

In comparison, the qualification requirements for the honorary Junior Ranger supervisors are higher; they organise and hold regular Junior Ranger meetings of children and teenagers. A prerequisite for a Junior Ranger supervisor is, amongst others, a minimum age of 21 years and, in addition to good knowledge of the area and its natural environment, a

Responsible body	Project	Tasks	Qualification	Equipment, financial support
<b>Sallandse Heuvelrug National Park</b>				
IVN	Rental to schools of teaching boxes on ecological themes	Development, Implementation	1.5 years long, weekly	Uniform
Natuurmonumenten	Public excursions twice a week	Implementation	Workshops, shadowing	Uniform €7.50/excursion travel expenses
National Park Authority/IVN	GPS tour for school classes	Implementation	6x half-day training	Travel expenses
<b>Weerribben-Wieden National Park</b>				
IVN	Varied primary education programme	Implementation	Workshops, shadowing	Uniform
<b>Dwingelderveld National Park</b>				
IVN/Natuurmonumenten	School programme on the “Big Five” of the region	Implementation	Workshops, shadowing	Travel expenses
<b>Drents-Friese Wold National Park</b>				
IVN	Annual big event for five school classes	Implementation, partly organisation	Workshops	Travel expenses
<b>Junior Ranger Netherlands (all four National Parks)</b>				
IVN	Junior Ranger activities	Preparation, implementation	State-wide training and workshops	Uniform €25 per event

Table 1: Areas of application, qualification and equipment of volunteers in selected Dutch national parks

strong sense of appreciation for children and teenagers on an equal footing, together with the ability to recognize the individual differences of Junior Rangers and to promote their development. To develop these skills, there are nationwide IVN training programmes. It's interesting to note that Dutch Junior Rangers are being qualified under the Junior Ranger Programme so that they can support and represent the parks as they get older. After the age of 18, they automatically become volunteers of the IVN. As part of the Junior Ranger programme, they learn, above all, to carry out a variety of landscape management work.

### Findings and conclusions

Compared to Germany, there is a lot of responsibility for volunteers in the education work of Dutch national parks. This is due to the support structure of the national parks, but certainly also influenced by the importance that social engagement has in this country. The intensive use of volunteers in education, be it ESD or environmental education, must also be viewed critically in the following respect: education is a valuable asset and should not be exclusively in the hands of untrained volunteers. Otherwise, this could lead to a reduction in the quality of educational work and also to a lowering of social esteem. On the other hand, using volunteers to support professionals in educational work has many positive side effects, including: protected areas receive immediate support, so they can increase the scope and intensity of their educational work; the volunteers benefit from a wide range of opportunities for informal and non-formal education, identify with "their" protected area, and thus act as multipliers of nature conservation and sustainability thoughts in their social environment; young volunteers gain orientation with regard to their education interests and career aspirations. As support for full-time skilled workers, the value of volunteering

in environmental education and ESD of large nature reserves is very high – especially as it becomes clear on closer examination that there is a high positive correlation between the goals of ESD and voluntary work. So, you could say: volunteering is living ESD.



Volunteers in Sallandse Heuvelrug National Park continue their education during an excursion

(Nico Driessen)



Volunteer Junior Ranger supervisors in action in Drents-Friese Wold National Park

(Nico Driessen)

# Volunteering as an opportunity for ESD

(Text basis: Nancy Langer, Volunteer in Unteres Odertal National Park)

On the one hand, the successful spread of education for sustainable development (ESD) depends on how many people it is conveyed by. Volunteers working in a wide range of educational opportunities in Dutch National Parks play an important role here, simply because of their large numbers. Secondly, success depends on the opportunities for individuals to develop their competencies in the sense of ESD. Volunteer placement is an excellent learning ground for it.

## Volunteering in educational programmes in Dutch national parks

Volunteers are involved in large numbers in the Dutch National Parks visited.

The cooperation of 40 to 80 volunteers annually is the rule. Amongst others, they support the education sector, including those with strong ESD as well as those with a classic environmental education background. The areas of activity of the volunteers are things like guided tours, lectures, and programmes for school classes, such as GPS tours or the supervision of Junior Rangers. The tasks also include design (such as the development of educational material) and organisation (such as the maintenance and delivery of educational kits to schools). Depending on the area, the volunteers are trained (see section “Qualification of volunteers in the educational work of Dutch national parks”). Volunteers are often retired people who want to do something for nature and society in their free time. Volunteer coordination is one of the main tasks of the full-time employees in the national parks.

In general, for the visited Dutch national parks, the type and utilisation



Voluntary educational programme for school classes in Sallandse Heuvelrug National Park

(Nico Driessen)

of volunteer management seems far ahead of us. Particularly striking are the comparatively high number of actively cooperating volunteers and their strong involvement. For example, the demand is so high for volunteering opportunities in Dwingelderveld National Park that the National Park has to select those interested through intensive interviews.

Conditions for enhancing commitment appear to be the following in particular: the Dutch population is generally much more open to voluntary participation and self-commitment than the German one. The commercialization of national parks is highly marketed for them, for example through the sale of souvenirs in national park centres, but also through



An advertisement for the TV casting show “Boswachter gezocht” (“Ranger Wanted”) – also making Dutch national parks attractive to volunteers

(Neele Larondelle)

the television series “Boswachter gezocht”, a casting show in which rangers are sought. The positive image of the national parks promoted in this way seems to be particularly attractive to volunteers. The attraction may also be due to the fact that, in a country very strongly dominated and shaped by people, nature has a unique position as a special place for discovery and recreation.

### Volunteering in the Lower Oder Valley National Park

The helpers who actively work in the Lower Oder Valley National Park are 18 volunteers who are bound by agreement, as well as one or two on their voluntary ecological year or from the federal volunteer service. These volunteers help with the education of the Junior Ranger group. Other activities include participation in annual inventories and various major events, such as “Whooper Swan Days”, or “Crane Week”. In addition, eight hobby ornithologists are among the volunteers who support Naturwacht (ranger service) bird counts. Thus, both the number of volunteers and the number of fields of utilisation is comparatively small. However, possibilities in the National Park are also severely limited since volunteer management in the Lower Oder Valley is always the responsibility of a member of Naturwacht and the administration, whereas volunteer coordination only represents a partial aspect of their entire work spectrum. Even though the volunteers are integrated into the EUROPARC programme “Ehrensache Natur – Freiwillige in Parks” (“Pride in nature – volunteers in parks”), there is no capacity for dedicated volunteer management staff. Although the number of full-time employees in Lower Oder Valley National Park is high

in comparison with the Dutch examples, the overall staffing capacity of the main and voluntary workers is insufficient for educational activities, especially for young target groups which should be actively promoted. Despite great equipment and possibilities, environmental education opportunities for children and teenagers have been reduced to a minimum.

In order to increase volunteering involvement in Lower Oder Valley National Park for the implementation of ESD, the following measures could be appropriate: establishing a wider range of volunteer projects and creative ideas to attract new volunteers. The direct involvement of students from Eberswalde University for Sustainable Development (HNE) could also be a great benefit for the National Park, as its professional profile fits exactly into the activities of the National Park and ESD. At the same time, the students would have the opportunity to gain work experience and to improve their future job opportunities. The main problem in the implementation of such measures will certainly be management and qualification of the volunteers, as both activities require a lot of time and coordination, which could probably only be covered by a dedicated full-time staffing position.

### The opportunities of volunteering for ESD

In my opinion, investing in volunteering has a high potential for ESD. As shown

very impressively in the Netherlands, the use of volunteers enables the implementation of ESD programmes on a much larger scale. As a result, the recipient group also grows because both the participants and the intermediaries benefit from the knowledge transferred. Volunteers in particular perform an excellent multiplier function because they not only communicate ESD aspects in the programmes, but also, with their high degree of engagement with the topic, they are likely to orient their lifestyle towards sustainable development. In doing so, they bring aspects of sustainable development into their personal environment and encourage their fellow human beings to live a more sustainable lifestyle. It would be a quick and comprehensive way of working towards social development goals on a large scale. At the same time, volunteers directly and indirectly promote the protected area and volunteer work within it, thus furthering the acceptance of the protected area in the population. Because volunteering not only presupposes but also promotes commitment, dedication, sense of community and tolerance, the whole of society can benefit from it.



# Visitor centres in Dutch national parks

(Text basis: Erika Hofmann, Kellerwald-Edersee National Park Authority)

Visitor centres are the main hub for visitors in national parks. They give a first impression of the protected area, present its special features and the value of the nature conservation idea with an exhibition, and inform about further national park offers. Thus, they can serve as a multiplier for selected topics and for education for sustainable development (ESD). In order to communicate ESD, the establishment must be credible and consistent in its facilities; another relevant criterion is also the selection of products that are for sale. ESD is based on value and competence. Choosing sustainable products has a direct connection to everyday life and lifestyle. To comprehensively fulfil the multiplier function (i.e. to reach many visitors), good infrastructure and accessibility are of great advantage. On-site parking, toilets, a restaurant, and a shop complete the attraction. In the following analysis of Dutch national park visitor centres, the focus is on the placement of the respective protected area issues, the design of the centres, and the offers for visitors.

## The concept of Dutch centres: shops in the foreground

The visitor centres in the Dutch National Parks visited (administered by state organisations such as Staatsbosbeheer or private organisations such as Natuurmonumenten) are generally considered to be large shops with restaurants. The background is that they must generate revenue. Smaller exhibition components are now integrated into all centres. The theme of the protected area is usually visible. Despite the high number of guests, no value is placed on multilingualism. The selection in all the visitor centre shops (books, gifts, nature

games) is appealing and invites you to browse. Often, nests for birds, bats and insects are sold. The wood products are strikingly cheap; unfortunately, these are also generally made of tropical wood. Admission is free.

**Buitencentrum Sallandse Heuvelrug**, in the National Park of the same name, was originally just a shop. Information boards and mobile exhibition components, generally on the theme of sustainability, were added later. The interactive elements are aimed at primary school children; there is much to discover and solve via games. In terms of content, the theme of the National Park is difficult to grasp, as the extensive and very attractive shop attracts most attention. This is located on the ground floor together with the café and impressive indoor fireplace. Upstairs are a planetarium and the observatory. There are guided tours for children and events for groups. In the surroundings there are some themed trails and parkour “playground equipment”. The centre is geared to a high number of visitors, with about 150,000 of them per year. According to Ms. Raven, Manager of the centre, the goal is to generate high revenues through the shop, thus supporting the building itself, including the exhibition.

**Bezoekerscentrum Wieden**, in Weerribben-Wieden National Park, has an exhibition with a large children’s “discovery corner”, a small shop, and a hanging chair to relax in. The centre is small, so the café is housed in a separate building. The exhibition is modern and attractively designed, with a close relationship to the environment. The facility offers an extensive primary school



Buitencentrum De Sallandse Heuvelrug with observatory (Nadja Poser)



Shop in Buitencentrum De Sallandse Heuvelrug (Erika Hofmann)



Indoor fireplace in Buitencentrum De Sallandse Heuvelrug (Erika Hofmann)



Bezoekerscentrum De Wieden (Nadja Poser)



Children's "discovery corner" in Bezoekerscentrum De Wieden (Erika Hofmann)

programme. In outbuildings, there are seminar rooms and a “learning workshop”, and the centre is adjoined by a large outdoor area with a boardwalk that leads through the reeds.

The exhibition of the **Bezoekerscentrum Dwingelderveld** in Dwingelderveld National Park was renovated in 2016. The design developed for this purpose aims to integrate the exhibition directly into the shop. On the subject of water, amongst other information about aquatic animals, umbrellas were offered. In the opinion of the study group, this appeared somewhat irritating and distracting when trying to focus on the exhibition. A particularly impressive exhibit is a large felt landscape model, made by volunteers from the centre. All exhibition modules are mobile and easy to dismantle, which means that the building can also be used as a lecture hall for 80 people. The café works as self-service based on trust. For hygiene reasons, only packaged goods are offered, which are paid for at the entrance cash desk. The relaxation zone in the café corner looks bright and inviting under the motto “feel at home”. A bike rental service and an elaborately designed outdoor area complete the centre’s attractions. Around 200,000 visitors come every year. The surrounding heathland is visited by 500,000 people. The concept of the centre is very cost-effective; as in the other centres, the cash desk and the shop are run by unpaid volunteers, who only receive compensation for travel expenses.



Bezoekerscentrum Dwingelderveld: exhibition with integrated shop

(Erika Hofmann)

**Bezoekerscentrum Appelscha**, in Drents-Friese Wold National Park, offers an open visitor reception with good hiking advice, an interactive exhibition, attractive shop, and large restaurant. The exhibition contents are “the tree”, “animals of the forest”, and “wood products”. They are closely related to the local protected forest area, one of the largest in the Netherlands. Reference to the everyday (as a criterion of ESD) is visibly made. Various theme trails begin at the building, for which action instructions are borrowed from the centre, sometimes also in foreign languages.

### Summary and comparison with visitor centres in Germany

The priority of generating income from the sale of products is reflected in all the centres evaluated in the Dutch national parks. This was also confirmed by our companion Thea Peters from the nature conservation organisation IVN. The visitors expect an extensive selection and range of suggestions to consume. There are many cheap products, for example from tropical wood. The extent to which economic and social needs and the use of natural resources balance sustainable development is questionable in terms of visitor centre priorities. Their layout is dominated by the large sales area. The exhibition themes are only perceived at second glance, and only if you have genuine interest.

Empirical research shows that exhibitions for adults and children provide an important source of information on



Entrance area of Bezoekerscentrum Appelscha in Drents-Friese Wold Nationalpark  
(Erika Hofmann)

various issues. This also applies in their function as an extracurricular learning place. The focus of attention in exhibitions is an important tool for all target groups. In comparison, I see the common concept in Germany of separating the exhibition from the sales area as more suitable. Against the background of our fast-moving world, content can be more purposefully conveyed in a calmer atmosphere, and the exhibition can have a real effect on the guests.

In Kellerwald-Edersee National Park, we offer attractive exhibitions at all visitor information sites. At our two shops in the National Park Centre and the Wild Animal Park, we are increasingly focusing on regional products and fair trade. The revenue is allocated to a state account and does not directly serve to increase the budget of the shops or the National Park facilities. The advantage is that we can better consider aspects of sustainability in procurement.



Stephanie Schubert

## Lessons learned and outlook

“ANNIKA” means gaining insights into many places, changing perspectives, recognizing similarities and differences, questioning supposed self-evident facts, sharing knowledge, and learning from existing experience. On the whole, the project “Actors from National Natural Landscapes in the International Exchange of Competence” was a complex learning process. On the one hand, learning took place at the individual level, with specialist knowledge from the main topics of the study visits which is relevant to the daily or specific work in the participants’ “home” protected areas. Evidence of this can be found in the reports in this booklet. On the other hand, the project brought overarching findings and answers to the questions: what benefit does international knowledge and competence exchange have for actors from protected areas, and how should potential study visits be carried out in the future? Here are some answers that the project found:

### What benefit does international knowledge and competence exchange have for actors from protected areas?

The question of the benefits of international knowledge and competence exchange was, among other things, at the centre of the ANNIKA Closing Meeting in April 2018. It appears at three levels:

The **benefit for individual participants** lies in the proverbial broadening of horizons, that is, the participants gain new

knowledge, they develop their technical and intercultural competences, and expand their understanding of relationships. They receive suggestions for the further development of their own tasks, sharpen their critical view of their own work, and they are stimulated to question and reflect. In practical terms, a big benefit lies in the improvement of foreign language skills. In addition, personal recognition as a selected participant is valuable. The experience of “pulling together” with other German and foreign colleagues leads to an increase in motivation. Newly valued personal contacts and suggestions for personal plans are, so to speak, “collateral benefits”.

The **benefits for those responsible of protected areas** (the administrations of National Natural Landscapes and protected areas abroad) is the expansion of knowledge and competence of employees in terms of personnel development. For the technical tasks, working methods, and procedures in the protected areas, tangible stimuli for development come from the external view, the input of new ideas, and empirical values. Last but not least, international exchange means an improved image for the respective protected area. Presenting on the international stage gives them positive attention and increases public appreciation.

The **benefits for the international networking and cooperation of protected areas** (a political goal) lies in

the fact that the parties involved promote and consolidate the understanding of nature conservation as a borderless task. People with similar tasks in different countries are brought together, contacts established, fundamental links with parks abroad are explored, thus paving the way for future long-term international cooperation. The chances of success are increased by the fact that people are prepared and have an understanding of working conditions and ways of working in potential partner countries that differ from their own. From a developed sense of community with international colleagues, the motivation arises to tackle tasks together.

### What are the findings and proposals for the future?

The following conclusions for future study visits can be drawn from the experiences of the project:

It is to be expected that the resulting specific insights and suggestions will also be diverse in follow-up activities, depending in particular on the specialist topics, countries visited, previous knowledge, and areas of interest of the participants.

On the one hand, they include specific ideas and aids for implementation and action (see participant reports); on the other hand, there is awareness-raising and broadening of horizons, for example in

aspects such as types of organizations for protected areas, self-image and attitude of protected area administrations and actors, the role of protected areas in society, and differing international professional concepts.

It must be remembered that the exchange of expertise and the transferability of ideas and activities can be made difficult by the fact that, for example, protected area categories in Germany and abroad have significant differences in terms of structures, task, and so on; in addition, even technical topics and concepts are interpreted differently depending on the country.

The study visits were strongly orientated towards Germany in terms of coordination, topics, and the financing of participation costs. This led to difficulties in attracting foreign participants. Therefore, the recommendation is to provide for joint content planning and equal financing with foreign partners in the future. Suitable topics would be, for example, “wilderness”, “climate protection”, and “nature conservation and agriculture”.

In addition to professional exchange via discussions with foreign partners, exchange and reflection within one’s own travel group are very enriching. There is a lot to commend directing the study trips to full-time staff AND volunteers. With regard to the role and potential of volunteers, it seems appropriate, for example, to make the application procedure less complicated. A general problem is scheduling, whereby volunteers are more available at weekends, and full-time employees on working days. It should be considered whether study visits can also be recognized as educational leave.

The time frame of about one week has been proven to be a suitable period for study. Alternatively, shorter study visits may make sense if they are more limited in terms of themes.



Learning by exchanging expertise and own experience

(Beatrix Knappertsbusch)

In terms of technical implementation, that is the coordination and organization of study visits, tenders have to be very well directed to potential applicants. In larger authorities in particular, lines of communication are sometimes not permeable enough to get information to suitable professional people – full-time or voluntary. The existing EUROPARC Federation network, which could be used in a targeted way, is helpful for the planning of international study visits as well as the acquisition of participants abroad.

A basic insight is that longer-term collaborations require financial and human resources, common themes, and institutional consolidation. Protected

areas abroad with similar landscapes are particularly interesting for further cooperation. Limited time and financial resources of the authorities are serious obstacles; against this background, a catalyst and coordinator is important. This could be a federal authority or an NGO such as EUROPARC Federation, EUROPARC Germany, or Verband Deutscher Naturparke (Association of German Nature Parks).

After the very good experiences with the hosts on the study visits, it can be assumed that protected areas administrations visited in the future will also be hospitable, open-minded, and helpful – an important and highly valued prerequisite for their implementation.



Testing the Gnome Path (“kabouterpad”) in Drents-Friese Wold National Park

(Neele Larondelle)

# Imprint

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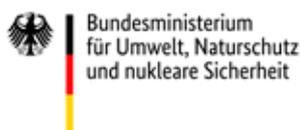
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EUROPARC Deutschland is the umbrella organisation for National Parks, Biosphere Reserves, Nature Parks and Wilderness Areas in Germany. The charity is the bearer of the trademark “Nationale Naturlandschaften (National Natural Landscapes).

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