

**Annual Report 2023  
on the nature and landscape conservation area  
“Wollmatinger Ried-Untersee-Gnadensee” (Germany)**

<b>Reporting period:</b>	1 October 2022 to 30 September 2023
<b>Country:</b>	Germany
<b>Name of the area:</b>	Wollmatinger Ried-Untersee-Gnadensee Nature Reserve
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## 1 CONDITIONS

The renewal of the European Diploma for the Wollmatinger Ried up to 28 November 2029 was approved by the Council of Ministers of the Council of Europe on 4 September 2019 and was linked to three conditions:

**a) Study on the expansion of the core zone of the nature reserve**

*(Prepare a study on the legal possibilities to expand the strict core zones of the Wollmatinger Ried-Untersee-Gnadensee Nature Reserve and report to the secretariat by 2024)*

The review of the legal framework for the expansion of the nature reserve up to the state border was conducted in 2021. The results of the review presented in the 2021 annual report will form the basis of the report that must be sent to the Bern Convention. Work will continue on the report as soon as the PEPL (cf. Section 1c) is submitted.

**b) Preserve “Schneggλισand-Wälle”, silting areas and natural processes**

(Reject any proposals or plans aiming to eliminate naturally-built barriers like the so-called Schneggλισand and silting areas and enable undisturbed natural processes without human intervention in a larger area, except in case of public interest e.g. flood protection)

The natural silting and erosion processes in the entire protected shallow water zones continued throughout the reporting period. There have been no calls for the estuaries to be dredged. If the Nature Reserve Ordinance (Naturschutzgebietsverordnung) were to be amended, an assessment would be carried out to determine whether existing prohibitions on making changes to the geology and water areas can be stipulated more precisely to ensure with complete certainty that the Schneggλισand remains undisturbed.

**c) Management plan**

(By 2022 draft and adopt a management plan meeting the provisions and objectives of the European Diploma for Protected Areas and addressing the recommendations attached to the renewal of the Diploma)

In 2021, the Freiburg Regional Administrative Authority tasked the “ARGE 365° - ABL - Kiechle” Working Group with the preparation of the Management Plan (PEPL). One part of the performance specification concerns the implementation of the recommendations and conditions stipulated by the Council of Europe. As the faunistic and floristic surveys could not be carried out as planned in 2021 due to high summer water levels, the surveys were completed in 2023.

The avifaunistic data underline the outstanding and very high national and international importance as a breeding, moulting, resting and wintering area.

The dragonfly surveys were completed in 2021, with individual follow-up surveys in 2022 and 2023. With a total of 47 dragonfly species recorded, the Wollmatinger Ried is one of the most important dragonfly sites in southern Germany. Two indicator species, the spotted darter (*Sympetrum depressiusculum*) and the siberian winter damselfly (*Sympecma paedisca*), deserve special attention in conservation and development efforts.

The orthoptera surveys were completed in 2021 and 2022. Wollmatinger Ried has a high species richness for a wetland. Twenty-five species have been recorded. Faunistically noteworthy species include: wart-biter (*Decticus verrucivorus*), marsh cricket (*Pteronemobius heydenii*), capero’s ground hopper (*Tetrix ceperoi*) and woodland grasshopper (*Omocestus rufipes*). The Wollmatinger Ried is of supra-regional importance for the conservation of the orthoptera fauna due to the high number of especially unusual and sometimes rare species.

Butterfly walks were carried out as planned in 2022. The most striking result is a mass presence of the scarce large blue (*Phengaris teleius*).

The moth fauna is characterised by the presence of a number of highly specialised species, especially those which use reedbeds for their habitat.

The ground beetle surveys were carried out as planned and analysed in the reporting year: More than 6,000 individuals of 81 species of ground beetles were recorded in the ground trap surveys. Of these, 28 species and over 10% of the individuals are either on the federal or state Red List (including early warning list, G and D). Of particular note are the ground beetles *Agonum hypocrita*, *Agonum versutum*, *Anisodactylus nemorivagus* and *Pterostichus aterrimus*. The Wollmatinger Ried therefore has an outstanding ground beetle fauna and is an area of national importance.

The vegetation surveys could not be carried out in 2022 due to staff shortages. The surveys were therefore completed this year. The initial results will be summarised in the upcoming interim report in mid-December.

The elaborate process of creating inventory maps will take place in winter 2023/2024, following which action maps will be created.

The project team is in close contact with the Freiburg Regional Administrative Authority and the NABU Lake Constance Centre. In this context, findings were presented and initial proposals for maintenance and development measures were discussed during several joint inspections in the Wollmatinger Ried. These have been documented in the current interim report.

This will be followed by further internal technical consultations and round tables with external stakeholders during the winter.

As a result of the re-mapping, the completion of the maintenance and development plan has been postponed until 2024 and is due to be completed and agreed by the end of September. **We therefore ask the Council of Europe for a corresponding extension of the deadline for the submission of the new maintenance and development plan.**

## 2 RECOMMENDATIONS

In addition to the conditions stated above, the Council of Ministers has also issued six recommendations that, when implemented, will secure progress in the following areas:

a) **Harmonisation of the protective provisions and NSG (nature reserve) extension on the water side**

*(In co-operation with the Swiss authorities, assess the possibilities to harmonise the regulations for the protection of nature at both shores and to extend the Wollmatinger Ried-Untersee-Gnadensee Nature Reserve to the state border in order to enlarge the water zone, which is especially important during low water periods in winter)*

Moulting waterfowl once again lacked sufficient undisturbed water areas as a result of low summer water levels. This demonstrates that there is a technical case for an extension of the protected area in the direction of Switzerland.

However, in the absence of more precise plans for demarcation and the necessary legislation, no contact has yet been made with Switzerland to explore the possibility of harmonising nature conservation legislation.

b) **Improvement of the networking between the NSG (nature reserve) and the hinterland**

*(Pursue the efforts to improve the connections between protected sites in the hinterland and the Wollmatinger Ried-Untersee-Gnadensee Nature Reserve in connection with the extension of the trunk road B33, including the enlargement and/or adaptation of the nature reserve's boundaries. Compensation measures should be continued and the construction has to be carried out with the least impact for the protected area)*

A new connecting corridor between Hegne and Reichenau Waldsiedlung is being developed as part of the extension of the B33 motorway: North of the Waldsiedlung tunnel, which was completed last year, the vegetation has successfully developed into a species-rich grassland. To the south, between the Waldsiedlung tunnel and the Wollmatinger Ried, the first hay meadow species have colonised the Wollmatinger Ried. In the coming years, targeted maintenance measures will further promote the development of typical, species-rich *Molinia* meadows.

c) **Ending fishing in the most sensitive areas**

*(End fishing in the most sensitive areas, mainly Schläuche and southern Hegne Bay, under the provisions of the bilateral treaty between Germany and Switzerland with the aim to improve the quality of the area as a breeding ground, wintering place and moulting area)*

The question of restrictions on commercial fishing will be clarified as part of the planning of measures for the maintenance and development plan (cf. Section 1c).

d) **Closure of the cycle path**

*(Abandon the still existing cycle path between the B33 road and the protected area boundaries, which is only used by a limited number of cyclists, and include the path into the Wollmatinger Ried-Untersee-Gnadensee Nature Reserve to enable efficient control)*

In June 2023, the spokespersons for the Reichenau Cycleway Initiative told the landscape conservation association that they did not want an official cycleway in accordance with the recommendations for cycleway facilities (ERA). However, the requirement to maintain a

continuous, narrow, unsealed path between the B33 and the nature reserve, which can be used by cyclists from time to time, is maintained.

It should be noted that the 3rd amendment to the planning approval documents for the extension of the B33 in Constance no longer includes a cycle path on the south side of the B33 and under the green bridge. The cycle path runs parallel to the L 221 state road (which is to be reclassified as a district road from the Kindlebild junction) to the Reichenau level crossing and then follows the railway line towards Constance. This cycle path is now used as the "Bodensee-Radweg" (Lake Constance cycle path). The Regional Administrative Authority therefore considers the construction of a cycle route from Reichenau to Constance south of the B33 to be complete.

Furthermore, a cycle route south of the B33 is not possible due to the need to ensure the necessary functionality of the existing green bridge, which is why no exemption from the prohibitions of the Wollmatinger Ried NSG ordinance can be granted under nature conservation law.

e) **Reduction or termination of disturbances**

*(Reduce or stop disturbances impacting on the protected area caused by leisure activities and sports through awareness raising and dissemination of information to boat rental companies, and to hot-air balloon and zeppelin tour operators)*

The company Zeppelin NT regularly reminds its pilots of the particular sensitivity of the protected area during internal training sessions. During the year there were therefore no disturbances caused by zeppelins flying overhead.

The NABU Lake Constance Centre and the Constance rowing club Neptun e.V. are planning a training programme to make young rowers aware of the sensitivity of waterfowl to disturbance.

f) **Consideration of interests of the protected area during constructional development of adjacent municipalities**

*(Strictly consider the boundaries of the protected area, their potential for further development and the need for sufficient buffer zones to meet the objectives of the protected areas when examining the further extension of building areas in the communities concerned)*

Despite the objections of the recognised nature conservation organisations, the municipality of Reichenau's urban development plans for the new "Lindenbühl West" area, 250 metres north of the protected area, continue unabated. The full implementation of these plans would also destroy open spaces that are still used as feeding habitats by valuable breeding and resting bird species in the Wollmatinger Ried. Nature conservation concerns were also taken into account by the relevant nature conservation authorities as part of the early involvement in the 38th amendment of the "Lindenbühl West" zoning plan in October 2022 and must be taken into account by the municipality of Reichenau.

### **3 AREA MANAGEMENT**

The contract between the state of Baden-Württemberg and NABU for the management of the site has been extended for a further five years.

### **4 BOUNDARIES**

No legal changes were made to the boundaries of areas of conservation during the reporting period.

## **5 OTHER INFORMATION**

Among the value-determining plant species, dry site species declined slightly, while wet site species developed positively.

The international importance of the area of conservation for resting and wintering waterfowl was again confirmed this year. As in the previous year, low water levels during the summer months had a negative impact on valuable breeding and moulting birds. The drying up of the protected areas forced the regionally important moulting communities of the red-crested pochard to move elsewhere.

The planned landscape maintenance work could be more or less carried out to the extent planned. The protected area continues to be adversely affected by climate-related changes and high visitor pressure, particularly on the water side. Land use, for example, is considered unfavourable because it can lead to islanding effects in the long term.

## **10 Effects of the awarding of the European Diploma on the area of conservation**

The award of the prestigious European Diploma enhanced all-round appreciation of the area of conservation among residents and visitors to the region, local administrations and municipal councils. This prestigious award therefore made it easier to uphold the priorities of the area of conservation, particularly vis-a-vis competing interests.