

Annual Report 2022
on the nature and protected landscape of the
"Wollmatinger Ried - Untersee - Gnadensee" (Germany)

Reporting period: 1 October 2021 to 30 September 2022

Country: Germany

Name of the area: 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 enlarge 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 the previous year. The results of the legal review presented in the 2021 annual report will form the basis of the report that must be sent to the Bern Convention Secretariate by 2024. Work will continue on the report as soon as the PEPL management plan (cf. Chapter 1 c) is submitted.

b) "Schneggisand-Wälle", silting areas and natural processes preserved

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

Natural silting and erosion processes continued in the entire protected shallow water zones 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, the HNB has given assurance that 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 Schneggisande remains undisturbed without any human intervention.

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 2020, the management plan (PEPL) for the Wollmatinger Ried was tasked by the Freiburg Regional Administrative Authority. 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 continued in 2022.

The breeding bird data, which are collected annually by the NABU Lake Constance Centre, were evaluated with regard to territory distribution and promotion measures. The surveys of moulting, resting and wintering bird species were carried out in 2021/2022. These data are currently still being evaluated.

The dragonfly surveys were carried out in full in 2021. Forty-six recorded species of dragonfly demonstrate that the Wollmatinger Ried is one of the most important areas for dragonflies in southern Germany. The species spectrum is mainly composed of species adapted to the ecological conditions created by dynamically fluctuating water levels. From a nature conservation perspective, the currently documented occurrences of the two indicator species, the spotted darter (*Sympetrum depressiusculum*) and the siberian winter damselfly (*Sympecma paedisca*), deserve special mention.

The orthoptera survey was carried out in 2021 and identified a total of 25 species. In 2022, only a follow-up survey of the areas flooded in 2021 was conducted. Outstanding evidence of the population strength of cepero's ground hopper (*Tetrix ceperoi*) was found in temporarily flooded reed meadows. This was also the case for the population of wart-biter (*Decticus verrucivorus*): a high individual number and density of this species was found to be present. Only a small population of common green grasshopper (*Omocestus viridulus*), a species that lives in habitats of moderately wet, more intensively cultivated grassland, was found.

The butterfly and moth survey was carried out as planned in 2022. The most striking result is a mass occurrence of the scarce large blue (*Phengaris teleius*), of which approximately 500 individuals were identified on the day of the survey. Otherwise, the Wollmatinger Ried is poor in valuable butterfly species, which is primarily due to the general lack of butterflies in the Lake Constance region. The moth fauna is characterised by the presence of a number of highly specialised species, especially those which use reedbeds for their habitat. An example of a specialised wetland species that is not dependent on reedbeds is the splendid brocade (*Lacanobia splendens*). The highest concentration of these "owlet" moths in Baden-Württemberg can be found in the Upper Swabian moors. Otherwise, they appear only very locally outside this region (< 5 occurrences).

The ground beetle surveys were conducted as planned and the recorded animals are currently being identified. A number of valuable species have already been identified. The plan is to have identified species by the end of the year.

The vegetation surveys had to be suspended owing to a shortage of staff. Despite great efforts on the part of the Higher Nature Conservation Authority (HNB), no suitable contractor could be found at short notice for the extensive mapping. There are only a few specialists

with the technical competence to map the habitat types in the whole of the Wollmatinger Ried and these were already working on other assignments. These surveys will therefore be completed in the coming year.

An interim report containing the main results of the faunistic surveys is planned for December 2022.

The project team in charge of the management plan 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 the first joint inspection in the Wollmatinger Ried. Follow-up steps are being prepared.

Therefore the completion of the management plan has to be postponed until 2024 owing to re-mapping.

We therefore ask the Council of Europe for a corresponding extension of the deadline for the submission of the new management 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)

In the course of the investigations for the management plan, it became clear that at low water levels, valuable communities of waterfowl are forced to move to deeper water zones outside the protected area. Here, however, they are exposed to more disturbance. An extension of the protected area is therefore recommended by experts.

However, as more precise plans for a demarcation and legal regulations are not yet available, contact has not yet been made with Switzerland to harmonise nature conservation regulations.

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)

Construction work on the B33 Waldsiedlung Tunnel and the green bridge leading over it was completed and the tunnel opened to traffic on 14 July 2022. In order to develop a functioning, new wildlife crossing for the western part of the Wollmatinger Ried, these areas will need to be planted specifically for this purpose. This will probably take several years.

The green bridge east of the Kindlebild junction is maintained by the road administration and has not yet reached the desired state of maintenance.

More extensive enlargements of the areas of conservation are planned in connection with the ongoing development of the B33 (see Chapter 4).

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

(End fishery 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 breeding ground, wintering place and moulting area)

The restrictions which may need to be imposed on commercial fishing to safeguard the breeding grounds, wintering places and moulting areas of waterfowl and reed birds are currently being clarified in connection with the evaluation of data collected for the management plan (see Chapter 1 c).

The low water levels meant that very little commercial fishing took place in the core areas of the NSG in the year under review.

Any limitation of fishery due to expansions of non-fishing zones within the nature reserve is conditional on the consent of Switzerland.

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 an efficient control)

There were no new developments or decisions regarding the future of the former cycle path along the land boundary of the protected area during the reporting period

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)

Due to the low water levels in summer (cf. Chapter 6.1), NABU's floating protection and observation station could only be used for a few weeks. As a result, there was a higher number of disturbances, especially from stand-up paddlers who landed on the water side and then explored the dry mud zone on foot up to the reed beds.

The Regional Administrative Authority has placed attractively designed information signs with instructions on how to behave in areas that are particularly problematic.

Contact was again made with the operator of the Zeppelin-NT and no new disturbances have since been recorded.

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 of sufficient buffer zones to meet the objectives of the protected areas when examining the further extension of building areas in the communities concerned)

The municipality of Reichenau is planning the construction of a new building area Lindenbühl West between the Waldsiedlung and Lindenbühl parts of the town. Some of the affected areas are currently still used as feeding habitats for valuable breeding and resting bird species of the Wollmatinger Ried.

3 AREA MANAGEMENT

No relevant changes took place during the reporting period.

4 BOUNDARIES

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

There are still plans related to the extension of the B33 to enlarge the area of conservation on a small scale up to the new roadway.

5 OTHER INFORMATION

The reporting period was characterised by high temperatures, periods of low precipitation and low summer water levels. This had a negative impact on the population of most of the valuable plant species.

The international importance of the area of conservation for resting and wintering waterfowl was again confirmed this year. The breeding success of the reed-breeding bird species was negatively influenced by the water level dynamics. As in the previous year, four pairs of lapwings bred in the area.

Planned landscape conservation work could be carried out as foreseen.

The protected area continued to come under pressure from the large number of visitors to both the land and water sides. The area is especially threatened by the advancing encroachment on land in the vicinity, in particular for new housing.

11 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.