

## ANNUAL REPORT 2023

### Siebengebirge/ Germany Nature Reserve

**Name of the area:** Siebengebirge Nature Reserve

Year and number of years since the award or renewal of the European Diploma of Protected Areas

**Award**    **2021**    **2**    **years**  
(until 09/2024)

<b>Certifications/</b>	<b>Nature Reserve Area</b>
<b>Designations</b>	<b>FHH-Area</b>
	<b>European Diploma of Protected Areas</b>
	<b>National Geotope</b>
<b>Date of delivery</b>	<b>DEC 12, 2023</b>

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#### **Authority responsible for its management:**

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## Introduction

In agreement with the „European Diploma for Protected Areas Secretariat (Mr. Marc Hory) the postponed on-the spot-appraisal-visit to the Siebengebirge/Germany reserve was carried out by Dr. Peter Skoberne (Slovenia) and Dr. Renata Kosinska (Poland) from October 16th-18<sup>th</sup>.2023. In a preparatory video meeting, intensive correspondence (mobile/social media/written documents) we outlined the programme and shaped details in common. Short Power Point introductions opened the day for 14 different field trip destinations. Joint working dinners with all key stakeholders in the reserve and political representatives (District Administrator, mayors) rounded the days off. Both sides have perceived and estimated the open and pleasant atmosphere of the days, and we to meet just these two experts with their personality and consulting experience.

## 1. Conditions

**To draw up a management plan within three years in order to guarantee the preservation of the reserve and its cohesion within the larger area of the nature park.**

According to the management plan, presented in 2015, a lot of measures were successfully completed or started. Others, unexpected in 2015, but urgently necessary, caused e.g. by drought, bark beetle crisis, fir tree death or wolves, had to be initiated.

### Measures completed and in progress in 2022/2023

- wild cat mapping(combination of lure sticks and photo traps) successfully finished. Results were published (MM VVS “Siebengebirge 1”, p. 27-30)
- In the Logebach-valley suitable sites were created for the reintroduction of the yellow-bellied toad: 28 smaller ponds as reproductive waters, 8 larger ponds as residence waters
- On Korf Hill (a former fallow vineyard) a meadow orchard was created: Fruit trees got a browsing protection, two drystone-walls (67 m+ 84m) were built. This measure is embedded into a spacious overall concept to connect dry-warm habitats along the Siebengebirge Rhine slopes via an open land corridor. This biotope network shall enable the locally isolated lizard populations to spread unhindered. The dry stone walls have got the function of stepping stones. Temporary goat grazing connected with bush clearing prevents cane sprouting of woody plants. The fence system was wolf-repellent optimized. Beside the lizard also other species – like the rock bunting, the smooth snake and butterflies will profit from these measures. Evaluations in 2022 and 2023 have impressively confirmed the presence of *Pyropteron chrysidiformis*. Last evidence in 1937.
- On Kellerberg a non native Robinia/ black locust area was removed and within a three-year period transformed into species-rich grassland and maintained in sheep grazing.
- In cooperation between the Biological RSK Station and the federal government project Chance 7 three further compound axes between open landscape axes and between two meadow orchards were created.
- A yellow-bellied toad protective fence was constructed and maintained in the Bonn part of the reserve.
- A nature discovery trail in the northern part of the reserve was installed and shall contribute to decentralization and visitor management.
- In the nature reserve part Siebengebirge (Rhein-Sieg-Kreis) the Chance7 project from 2020-2023 invested 2.000.000 € in the implementation of measures for the establishment and maintenance of biotopes.
- In the same period the Chance7 project invested 50.000 € for identical measures in the smaller Bonn nature reserve part.
- In the period 1922 – 1925 the Chance7 project invests (treaties have been signed with the City of Bad Honnef) more than 1.100.000 € in reforestation (50 ha), open landscape biotopes (9ha) and compensation payment for forest area set aside (106 ha “Wildernis” area).
- Long term vegetation investigations (once a year) are carried out on 37 areas

- Monitoring is carried out for the the following species according to the FHH Directive: wall lizard, smooth snake, midwife toad, yellow-bellied toad, great crested newt an 8 bat (microchiroptera)species
- For bat protection an alarming system was installed at the entrance to the underground quarries, the most relevant winterquarter of bats in NRW.
- The Rhein.Sieg-District appoints 5 new nature conservation officers
- Particularly noteworthy is the renewal of the hiking trail and cycle path marking according to the route plan of the nature conservation ordinance. Bilingual self-explanatory badges are unmistakably clear from the marking.
- In addition, the type of waymarking immediately informs the visitors. wether they are staying in the nature serve (250 encarved stone blocks 5000 ha)- or in the nature park (small metal plates- 11.200 ha)

## **2. Recommendations**

**2.1 In case of changes in the management of the area, the leading role of the VVS (Verschönerungsverein für das Siebengebirge VVS), whose work to date has been fully satisfactory in the eyes of the Council of Europe, should be maintained;**

As mentioned in our 2020 annual report, the leading role of the VVS has been secured by its full integration into the nature Park assembly, its possession of the central Siebengebirge area (850 ha), its roads and hiking trails, 26 refuge huts, 180 benches, its relevant financial and honorary output into the nature park, its only exhibition/information center in the reserve, and above all by its establishment of its own wildernis area (since 2010) as a unique selling point in the Siebengebirge.

**2.2 develop a new financial plan together with local communities and the Rhein-Sieg-District.**

no changes

**2.3 continue the provision of financial support by the North Rhine Westphalia government**

The support of the different Federal and NRW institutions over these years is outstanding, though only about 15 % flow into nature protection.

### **Financial support for the Siebengebirge Region 2010 - 2022**

• Federal Government ( Mount Petersberg)	45.000.000,00 €
• Federal Government (Project Chance7)	8.500.000,00 €
• NRW/Cologne District Government (Drachenfels)	6.922.000,00 €
• NRW MUNLV	200.000,00 €
• NRW Foundation (17 projects)	2.800.000,00 €
• NRW Regional 2010 Institution	39.000.000,00 €
• NRW Forestry Administration (since 2019)	102.000,00 € (anno)
	<b>102.524.000,00</b>

**2.4 maintain great vigilance regarding the possible construction of new roads.**

No changes

**2.5 minimise disturbance caused by traffic on all roads crossing the Siebengebirge area and consider the setting up of a system of public transport for visitors;**

Meanwhile in cooperation of VVS, Königswinter community and Rhein-Sieg District 3 pollards have been istalled to block illegal traffic especially to Drachenfels and Löwenburg.

## **2.6 continue investigating the possibility of extending the wilderness area so as to guarantee the preservation of the natural beauty, features, resources and biodiversity of the Siebengebirge as a protected area;**

In 2010 the VVS - supported by the NRW government – decided to establish its private “wildernis area” with a size of 523 ha. The NRW Forest Authorities officially added other 208 ha, and the NRW Foundation another 93 ha on Petersberg, in 2022 the VVS got the NRW Government confirmation to add another 51 ha.

In July 2023 the city of Bad Honnef - in a treaty with the Federal Chance7 project - committed itself immediately to set aside 106 ha of its forest in return for financial compensation (waiver of utilization. Thus the wildernis area covers 981 ha in the reserve.

The NRW Government has envisaged to enlarge the VVS wildernis area by another 31 ha. This would even surpass the recommended minimum size (1000 ha) of such areas in densely populated regions, as the Bonn-Cologne conurbation is.

## **2.7 encourage the continuation and extension of scientific research**

Though the Siebengebirge has been object of research for so many years there is no end to scientific studies in different fields. especially in biology, geology, history and social sciences. We think there are certain reasons why the Siebengebirge becomes the center of such attention:

- There is the immediate proximity of two universities (Bonn – 10 km) and Cologne (30 km) with 35.000 students each.
- The small size of the Siebengebirge of only 50 qkm makes it easy to grasp.
- There are several institutions here that are well-known for their supervision of scientific studies.
- Since several years the VVS publishes its own magazine “Siebengebirge” twice a year and provides authors opportunity of publishing summaries of their investigations.

Currently, the following studies are being supervised:

- 1 Bachelor thesis (Vegetation) Bonn University
- 2 Master theses (dead wood beetles) (Koblenz University)
- 1 Master thesis (Vegetation) Bonn University
- 1 Master thesis ( Potential Biotop network areas) Bonn University
- 1 Dissertation ( Orthoptera) Trier University
- 1 Master thesis (Wet meadows) Bonn University
- 1 Master thesis (lycopod locations) Bonn University
- 1 Master thesis (Garden escapees) Bonn University
- 1 Master thesis (Amphibians) Bonn University
- 1 Bachelor thesis (Refusal National Parks) Bonn University

## **5... Other information**

### **5.1 Extensive reforestation measures**

Extreme temperatures and drought-hit summers had led to an enormous expansion of the bark beetle populations in 2018/19.. It was above all the spruce-tree that was dried out and thus weakened against the bark beetle attacks.. As a result – with the exception of the wildernis area in the reserve –the spruce stocks had to be felled., especially in the southern (Bad Honnef) part of the reserve. Reforestation had the aim of achieving a climate stable, drought resistant and species-rich mixed forest.

Meanwhile during the periods from 2020 – 2023 altogether nearly 75.000 deciduous trees of different climate adapted species were planted by the main stakeholders in the reserve.

### Reforestation 2020 – 2023

Planted by	number
VVS	15.000
NRW Forest Authorities	15.000
Bad Honnef	20.000 City 25.000 Chance7 project

#### 5.2. Rejection of a VVS-exhibition in the former Burghof hotel

From the ranks of the VVS the serious suggestion had come up to establish a VVS exhibition on the Siebengebirge in the former Burghof hotel half way up the Drachenfels and to give up its present location in the forester's lodge on the Margarethenhöhe.

Both, advisory and executive board of the VVS, discussed this topic in detail and came to the unanimous decision to reject this proposal.

The decisive reasons were:

- The completely uncertain future of the hotel with the pending court judgement on the BUND claim against the expansion of the hotel.
- The exhibition would be set up in a rented property. VVS and probable public investments would be made on a place whose future is exposed to the owner's decisions.
- The VVS would lose its independence and its representation in the heart/center of the Siebengebirge.
- The VVS would relocate its headquarters at the edge of the tourist stream of leisure motivated day tourists to the Drachenfels, whereas the VVS has its focus on visitors who are interested in nature based recreational activities.
- And these nature loving ecologically interested visitors have got their target on the Margarethenhöhe near the present VVS-center and nature park house.
- This area is easily accessible by cars and public transport from all directions with extensive car park facilities. It is the central starting point of the official hiking trail network and the central point of departure to all the attractive destinations of the reserve within walking distance from here.
- The Burghof location is not accessible by means of public transport, which is a significant aggravation especially for demand groups motivated by education (pupils, students, school classes, active seniors, families with children)
- A relevant aspect was that the relocation of the exhibition would mean one more attraction in straight line like on a "string of pearls" in addition to already five existing ones and would lead to an accumulation of attractions on a confined space.
- This is the exact opposite of our plans to decentralize the flow of visitors to the reserve.

The VVS council recommended to reflect on an expansion of the existing exhibition or the construction of new exhibition building on VVS property on the forester's house area.

Königswinter, December 12, 2023

Hans Peter Lindlar  
(Chairman)

Klaus Breuer/Gustav Becker  
(Members of the Board)