

ANNUAL REPORT 2019

Siebengebirge/ Germany Nature Reserve

State: Germany/ North Rhine Westphalia

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 2011 **8 years:**

Certifications/ **Nature Reserve Area** SU-001K2

Designations **FHH-Area** DE5309-301

European Diploma of Protected Areas 940004

National Geotope

Central authority concerned:

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Authority responsible for its management:

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Condition

1. 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.

In June 2015 we delivered our Management Plan for the Siebengebirge Nature Reserve within the requested three-year period.

As described in our 2017 and 2018 annual reports, its main project aims are to be realized within the Large Scale Conservation Project “Chance7 – Natur – und Kulturlandschaft zwischen Siebengebirge und Sieg”. This 14.6 million € budget national programme for a ten-year-period from 2013 -2023 has set the ambitious goal of promoting nationally important landscapes providing outstanding habitats for protected plant and animal species.

Meanwhile – in spite of a tedious process of measures in nature – considerable results in different projects can already be presented to the public. Remarkable are especially

- the building of 14 toad tunnels under a much frequented road to preserve the animals (with a peak of 7000 animals a year) from crossing the road on their way to the spawning grounds and back and being killed by cars,
- The recovery of some outcropping rocks and sun-spoilt abandoned quarry slopes on the Petersberg that had become hideously overgrown, with the result of xerotherm rock locations being reduced. Brushwood was removed to offer space for thermophile plants and animals. To guarantee a long-term success of these locations, sheep grazing – consistent with nature conservation - is practiced.
- Small rainwater-fed pools near the quarry entrances were dug and a fish pond renatured, especially for amphibians
- the restoration of the heath habitat “Komper Heide”

Outstanding concerning the preservation and furtherance of biodiversity is a project two partners are involved in and make their contributions to: the “national “Chance7” management and a private organization, entitled “Bürgerinitiative Naturschutz Siebengebirge”: Meadow Orchards = “Streuobstwiesen”. For centuries they have been important elements of the Rhenish landscape. These meadows with scattered fruit trees belong to the most beautiful but also most threatened biotopes in our region. To preserve them durably you need a continuous maintenance of the trees, but also a regular use of the grassland.

Meadow orchards have been made a priority habitat in the Chance7 Action Plan.

On the other hand, they are the activity field of the private initiative since it bought this 10 ha area in 1991 and exemplarily cared for it. Just a few days ago it was awarded as “Model Project of the UN-Decade Biological Diversity”.

One of the key characteristics of orchards, making them important to wildlife, is the habitat mosaic generated by the presence of both a tree canopy and a grassland area. Fruit trees have special characteristics: they are short lived, age quickly and at an age of 70/80 already they develop veteran features, tree types such as beech and oak, take hundreds of years to develop. Such veteran features are holes in the trunk and branches, sections of deadwood in the canopy, sap runs or creviced bark. All of them are important to wildlife for many

reasons. Another special feature of fruit trees is the development of spring blossom which provides an early nectar source for our bees. Though most of the fruit that these trees produce is harvested for human use, the fruit that is missed or falls to the ground, provides an invaluable source of food to many animals. The grassland habitat with scheduled periods where the grassland is left ungrazed to allow it to recover, is useful to wildlife in terms both of fauna and flora. Thus this tree –grassland habitat allows a wealth of different wildlife to live within the same section of land.

The goal of these two projects is to maintain and enhance these remaining natural areas and to connect them via ecological stepping stones and corridors, especially for less mobile species.

Focal point of present activities is the strenuous removal of tree and shrub cover from a huge waste rock material pile of the former Wolkenburg quarry on the sun-spoilt southwest Rhine side of the Siebengebirge. This is the northwestern outpost of the continental climate with excellent habitats for thermophile plants and animals which will be given wide living space here. In order to preserve these rare habitats they are kept clear by goats. To create a haven in these areas for thermophile animals (e.g. lizard) students have skillfully erected dry-stone walls.

2. Recommendations

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

As presented in our 2018 annual report, there has been a change in the management of the Nature Park. From 1986 until 2018 the Verschönerungsverein für das Siebengebirge VVS was manager of the Nature Park. On the initiative of the VVS, the communities of Bad Honnef, Königswinter and Sankt Augustin - who so far profited from what the other partners paid - and the city of Bonn, the Rhein-Sieg-District, the VVS and the state of North Rhine - Westphalia entered into a contract with the Rhein-Sieg-District as the new manager of the Nature Park. All partners contribute 200.000 € (personnel expenditure only) per year.

The decisive role of the VVS has been secured in the association assembly because of its historical merit of having rescued the Siebengebirge from destruction 140 years ago, of having maintained it for all those years, and of being the owner of 850 ha in the centre of the area, who looks after roads, hiking trails, 26 refuge huts, 185 benches, bridges, brooks, wells and monuments.

In addition - with its wildernis area (since 2010) the VVS has created a unique selling point in the Siebengebirge and runs the only exhibition centre right in the middle of the reserve. Moreover, the Rhein-Sieg District manager of the Park is a member of the VVS-board.

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

Cf. 2.1

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

The support of the NRW government including the NRW Foundation is remarkable this year. The restoration of our Forsthaus Lohrberg from 1907, classified as a historic document, was supported by the NRW Foundation with 150.000 €. Contributions for the maintenance of the nature park amounted to 33.000 € this year.

Substantial reconstruction measures on the famous medieval Drachenfels ruin that was in danger of falling to pieces swallowed nearly 3 million € NRW resources. New cables (40-60 m long) with anchors at their ends had to be drilled through the volcanic rocks. These anchors equipped with measuring instruments of high accuracy could not stand the enormous pressures any more and had to be replaced during a three-year period. After having been closed for more than two years the famous hike to the top of the hill has just been opened again.

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

New roads have neither been built nor are they planned. In the VVS- wildernis area –where nature is left to itself - several logging tracks were given up and renaturalized.

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;

The improvement of the public transport system has made some progress in so far, as daytime bus connections to two touristic “hotspots” (Margarethenhöhe and Heisterbach Abbey) have time intervals of only half an hour. It would be of advantage if these intervals were also applied on Sunday connections.

After intensive negotiations the Rhein-Sieg-District this year has agreed to employ two fulltime supervisors with the only task of controlling the District nature reserves, a measure we thankfully appreciate. Voluntary honorary nature protection guards, having no official legitimation, are/were of help indeed, but in certain cases not effective enough.

After an only three-month-experience with these controllers we observe that car-drivers, mountain-bikers, dog owners, but also walkers have realized the probability of being confronted with these controllers who did not only admonish visitors but also fined them for disregarding the nature reserve rules in force. Relatively rare are illegal car drivers; there are more offences by mountain-bikers, but newspapers have reported about this new controlling system and we thoroughly notice the consequence. Nevertheless most stubborn are dog owners with dogs unleashed.

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;

Meanwhile the official wildernis area in the Siebengebirge covers 835 ha:

- Siebengebirge	VVS – area	543.0 ha
- Siebengebirge	NRW- Forestry	200.0 ha
- Siebengebirge	NRW Foundation	93.0 ha

This wildernis area - even after an only nine- year existence first developments can be recognized – is highly estimated and respected by visitors. The Siebengebirge wildernis area is an opportunity to demonstrate that such an area can successfully exist in the vicinity of an urban agglomeration.

In 2019, in connection with the 150th VVS birthday, special wildernis trails, people ask for, will be presented.

2.7 encourage the continuation and extension of scientific research

For more than 250 years the Siebengebirge has been described, first by geologists, then by Rhine romanticists from all over the world, and since 1900 by scientists of nearly all fields. So there is hardly any field that has not been elaborated on.

Nevertheless every year there are quite a lot of students, experts who want to get insight into the VVS-archives that has been scientifically recorded by the VVS for 150 years and is open to the public.

This year there is one publication worth mentioning that surpasses all the other "smaller" publications.

- *Zeugen der Landschaftsgeschichte im Siebengebirge. Historische Nutzungen und ihre Auswirkungen auf die Landschaft.* B.Bouillon/ J.Kling/ C.Lamberty, Hrsg. LVR Rheinland 2019, 346 S

3. Site Management:

Cf 2.1

4. Boundaries:

According to the NRW ministries the Siebengebirge nature protected area covers 5094 ha

SU – 001K2	Honnef	Siebengebirge	4.272 ha
SU 028	Königswinter	Komper Heide	53 ha
SU 033	Königswinter	Eisbachtal/Nebensiefen	8 ha
SU 083	Königswinter	Basaltsteinbruch Hühnerberg	142 ha
SU 085	Königswinter	Segelfluggelände Eudenbach	50 ha
SU 087	Königswinter	Basaltsteinbruch Eudenberg	54 ha
BN – 001K1	Bonn	Ennert	515 ha

5. Other information:

5.1 Influence of the diploma

The diploma promotes regional acceptance just as national/international appreciation for the reserve. Of special support were the recommendations of the 2011 renewal to strengthen the role of the VVS in the new nature park administration.

5.1 Bark beetle crisis

Like in many German forests, in the Siebengebirge reserve heat and drought in 2019 have caused damages to larger areas of the fir tree forest, especially in the southern (Bad Honnef) part of the reserve. While in the central (VVS) part deciduous trees (beech, oak) meanwhile make up for nearly 85 % of the forest, in the community of Bad Honnef fir tree areas still take 60 % with all the consequences of the bark beetle explosion.

Trees being infested had to be cut down to stop the insect from spreading. Reforesting is costly. One ha of new woods costs between E 5.000 – 10.000. The town of Bad Honnef has decided to pay for these costs and plans to plant different types of trees to create new woodland. By increasing variety these forests shall become more resilient to climate change.

5.3 Global market leader actively involved in ecological measures

4 million € the enterprise Wirthgen, global market leader for road construction machines at the eastern edge of the Siebengebirge with 2000 employees, has started to invest into an ecological

project, the Siebengebirge nature reserve will surely profit from. A 50 m wide “green corridor” will connect a forest area east of the A3 Motor Way and the ICE railway track Cologne-Frankfurt with the Siebengebirge forest west of these “barriers”, so that animals of all kinds can cross here. This green corridor, planted and covered with deadwood and basalt stones, is planned with heads of heath, natural vegetation in this region.

5.4 Verschönerungsverein für das Siebengebirge VVS, manager of the Siebengebirge Reserve, celebrates its 150th anniversary in 2020.

Founded in 1870 by personalities looking further ahead, the VVS had the aim of saving the Siebengebirge from being destroyed by quarries on nearly every mountain. English Rhine romanticists, who since 1825 came in hundreds of thousands in steamboats from London, praised the entrance to the romantic Middle Rhine with its castles and villages as an “ideal” country. And just here “stone lords” had started to break solid basalt for river regulation, road and railway line building. In this situation the VVS succeeded in directing the view of the Siebengebirge from an object of exploitation to that of an aesthetical, beautiful landscape. As there were no nature protection laws in Germany until 1919, the only chance to save land was by buying it. To achieve sufficient financial resources to do so, the VVS was granted a lottery by the Prussian King and Parliament. This lottery was so successful that –against resistance from many sides – the VVS bought nearly all the quarries from their owners. So our organization is owner of 850 ha nature protected area to the present day, has built all roads and hiking trails, bridges, huts and benches, looks after brooks and wells, has changed the former shrubs to an impressive high forest, maintains the Oelberg Guesthouse and the Forsthaus Lohrberg with exhibition and centre of environmental education, all that with only honorary members. And for scientific research we have set up an archive that contains all important records, files of the Siebengebirge since 150 years.

I hope you can imagine that we are proud of having been awarded for the Siebengebirge with the European Diploma.

In 1971, when the diploma was handed over to the VVS for the first time, the European Council appreciated the rescue of the Siebengebirge this way:

“The fact that one of the most fantastic volcanic landscapes of Germany was saved from destruction by the quarry industry will be gratefully appreciated in the future as one of the most outstanding achievements of the 19th century nature protection movement.”
Council of Europe, Strasbourg 1971

In the near future we will inform you about the extensive full year programme of our 150th anniversary and look forward to seeing a member of the European Council on the occasion of your renewal visit here in 2020.

Königswinter, Dec. 2, 2019

Verschönerungsverein für das Siebengebirge VVS

Klaus Breuer

Hans Peter Lindlar