

# Annual report 2019 on the European Diploma Area "Wurzacher Ried Nature Reserve"

04.12.2019

**Reporting period: October 1 2018 until September 30 2019**

**Country: Germany**

**Name of the area: Wurzacher Ried (Fen) nature reserve**

**European Diploma extension: 2009 until 2019 (currently 10 years)**

## **Central authority concerned:**

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

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## **1. Conditions for the extension of the European Diploma**

*By 2021, revise the 2007 management plan or draft a new management framework meeting the provisions and objectives of the European Diploma for Protected Areas and complementary to the Natura 2000 management plan in preparation.*

### ➤ **The conditions:**

The new management plan (MaP) for the FFH and bird sanctuary "Wurzacher Ried und Rohrsee" was completed with effect from November 1 2019. The management plan presents the occurrences of the habitat types and species of the Habitats Directive on a plot-by-plot basis and specifies the objectives and measures that must be taken to conserve these habitats and species and, where appropriate, to improve their condition and their development.

All previous maintenance and development measures in the Wurzacher Ried will be adjusted and further developed in line with the new findings.

## **2. Recommendations on the extension of the European Diploma**

### **Recommendation 1:**

*Investigate the possible technical methods to connect the aquatic system of the Haidgauer high moor, separated by the trunk road B465, through water channels or other technical measures in order to enable more water flow towards the eastern part of the moor and to ensure water exchange especially in the Randlagg.*

### ➤ **Recommendation 1:**

The road section of the B 465 leading through the Wurzacher Ried was ranked number 5 in the list of the most important re-networking sections nationwide in the 'State concept for re-

networking roads in Baden-Wuerttemberg' of the Baden-Wuerttemberg Ministry of Transport in 2015. Against this background, Department 44 (Road Planning) of the Tübingen Regional Administrative Authority, in technical coordination with Department 56 (Nature Conservation and Landscape Management) commissioned a feasibility study to examine possible nature conservation improvements on this road section. In recent years, a wide variety of surveys and site investigations have been carried out to this end and relevant technical solutions have been examined. The final feasibility study with corresponding technical solutions is expected to be available for further discussion next year.

**Recommendation 2:**

*Develop a precautionary concept on how to deal with invasive species, to be prepared in case of their appearance, according to EU-regulation 1143/2014.*

➤ **Recommendation 2:**

For years now, the occurrence or presence of invasive species has been observed, and individual species such as the Canadian goldenrod (*Solidago canadensis*), glandular balsam (*Impatiens glandulifera*), Japanese knotweed (*Reynoutria japonica*) and the giant hogweed (*Heracleum mantegazzianum*) have been systematically managed by means of appropriate preventive measures. Thanks to this continuous observation, new occurrences can be quickly and specifically repressed or controlled. The distribution of neobiota (i.e. neophytes) in the area has so far been limited by the measures taken and its further spread has been largely controlled.

**Recommendation 3:**

*Pursue the efforts to create a view tower next to the Torfmuseum to provide an additional attraction in the area without disturbance of the ecosystem.*

➤ **Recommendation 3:**

In the year under review, further progress was made in the effort to build an observation tower as part of the visitor guidance system at the Haidgauer Torfwerk. There is a general consensus among all participants that this project makes sense, and various financing options are currently being examined. The intention is to bring the project to a concrete planning phase in 2020.

**Recommendation 4:**

*In cooperation with the aeronautical authority, stop any unnecessary acrobatic flights over the Ried with negative impacts on the site and especially the birdlife.*

➤ **Recommendation 4:**

The contacts initiated with the aviation authority on the part of the nature conservation administration appear to have had initial positive effects. In the year under review, there was a significant decline in the number of aerobatic flights.

**Recommendation 5:**

*Resume negotiations with landowners in order to acquire land in the outlying areas – mainly near the village of Albers – to limit and further stop the deposition of substances harmful to the sensitive environment. In case of inconclusive results, long-term agreements should be negotiated to reduce depositions.*

➤ **Recommendation 5:**

The land acquisition will be continued in accordance with the financial possibilities of the State of Baden-Wuerttemberg and the existing offers of private landowners. At present there are concrete negotiations and coordination talks regarding the purchase of properties in the town of Bad Wurzach, with an area of about 50 hectares as well as the hillside areas near Albers with about 17 hectares. The financial means for this are available in principle, so as things stand at present, a positive conclusion of the long-standing efforts to take over these marginal areas – which are important for the protected area – could be realised in the near future.

**Recommendation 6:**

*Preserve the integrity of the landscape around the basin of Bad Wurzach and avoid the construction of technical infrastructure on the hills and hilltops in the visual range of the Wurzacher Ried.*

➤ **Recommendation 6:**

All previous plans in this regard have been successfully averted; no current planning projects are known at present.

### **3. Area management**

#### **Maintenance and development measures**

The measures defined in the maintenance and development plan (primarily mowing work in the moor meadows and rewetting procedures) were also further implemented in the current reporting year. In the care and development zone, mowing work in the context of contract nature conservation will continue to be carried out by local farmers (approx. 300 hectares with 35 local farmers). Around 15 hectares of moorland will be mowed with the state-owned mowing caterpillar. In addition, measures were taken in the year under review to safeguard and improve FFH habitat types (e.g. lime-rich fens).

An increase in peat moss growth can be seen in the rewetting areas, which indicates a corresponding regeneration of the body of peat. The shrubbery and afforestation of the fen has been significantly reduced by the wetting measures. The waterlogging activity of the beaver (*Castor fiber*), which immigrated here in 2000, supports this development and increases the diversity of habitats. The beaver population in the fen is still stable with 8-10 families.

In the year under review, the third breeding success of the crane (*Grus grus*) underlines the positive development of the biotope structures in the rewetting areas. This is still the only breeding site in all of Baden-Wuerttemberg. Another quite remarkable feature in the area is also the renewed breeding success of the black stork (*Ciconia nigra*).

#### **Natura 2000 management plan**

In the year under review, the Regional Administrative Authority in Tübingen completed the faunistic and floristic surveys and the recording of the FFH habitat types for the development of a new “Natura 2000 management plan”, which was finished and published by November 2019.

#### **Monitoring**

Monitoring work was suspended in the year under review. The intention is to continue this work as soon as possible after the new Natura 2000 management plan has entered into force, in accordance with the updated maintenance and development measures.

### **The moor protection concept of the state of Baden-Wuerttemberg**

The state government of Baden-Wuerttemberg pushed ahead with the objectives laid down in the state's concept for moorland protection. The aim of this concept is the medium to long-term renaturation of all regenerative high moors and the adaptation of land use to low moorland in terms of climate protection and the preservation of biological diversity. The Wurzacher Ried (Fen) is one of 6 pilot areas in the country in which research contracts for the further optimisation of the renaturation measures have been awarded to relevant specialist planning offices. In the period under review, further extensive hydrological data was collected in the Wurzacher Ried by means of a close-meshed measuring level network, with the aim of developing and implementing an appropriate catalogue of measures for the rewetting of degraded high moorland sites. In the year under review, data on various animal groups relevant to nature conservation was also collected, and this should serve as a basis for further planning, when taken together with data from the Natura 2000 management planning and other biotic studies. Further planning steps are envisaged for the coming year.

### **Nature Conservation Centre Wurzacher Ried**

The Nature Conservation Centre in Bad Wurzach is the main facility that manages the local care of the Wurzach Ried, the coordination of all care measures, public relations and (in particular) information for visitors. In the year under review, the Centre again hosted around 350 events. Approximately 47,000 people visited the Centre, the Peat Museum and the Peat train. Around 120 projects were offered especially to children, young people and school classes as part of nature education programmes. Approximately 2,000 people took part in the projects.

The permanent exhibition "MOOR EXTREM" in the new extension of the former Maria Rosengarten monastery, which was newly and innovatively designed in 2013, continues to enjoy great popularity. It is an important building block in the educational work of the Nature Conservation Centre. The move into the new office and the functional rooms of the Nature Conservation Centre in the historic Maria Rosengarten monastery complex in 2017 created an excellent environment for the continued successful and future-oriented work of the Centre.

## **4. Borders of the area**

There were no changes during the reporting period.

## **5. Further information**

The fact-finding visit of Minister President Winfried Kretschmann

On June 22 2018, the Minister President of Baden-Wuerttemberg, Winfried Kretschmann, visited the Nature Conservation Centre. He was informed about the new premises of the Centre in the restored former Maria Rosengarten Monastery and about the current status of the plans and measures within the framework of the state's moor conservation concept. Mr. Kretschmann was delighted with the positive developments in the accommodation of the centre as well as the promising measures in the pilot area of Wurzacher Ried. In particular, the Minister promised his support for the efforts to build a viewing tower (see Recommendation 3 on the extension of the Diploma).

### **Public relations in the European Diploma areas**

The official request of the Council of Europe to draw attention to the European Diploma with the logo in its public relations work on the European Diploma areas was fully complied with. The European Diploma with logo can meanwhile be found in all effective public media, such as the event programme booklet, the website of the nature conservation centre, info flyers and protected area signage. A separate station is dedicated to European Diploma in the permanent exhibition of the Wurzacher Ried Information Centre.