



Strasbourg, 17 May 2024

T-PVS/Files(2024)38

CONVENTION ON THE CONSERVATION OF EUROPEAN WILDLIFE  
AND NATURAL HABITATS

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**Standing Committee**

44<sup>th</sup> meeting  
Strasbourg, 2-6 December 2024

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**Bureau of the Standing Committee**

10-12 September 2024  
Strasbourg

**New complaint: 2023/2**

**Alleged damage to protected habitats and species  
due to logging activities in the Belpau Emerald  
Network (CH000028), (Switzerland)**

**- REPORT FROM NGO-**

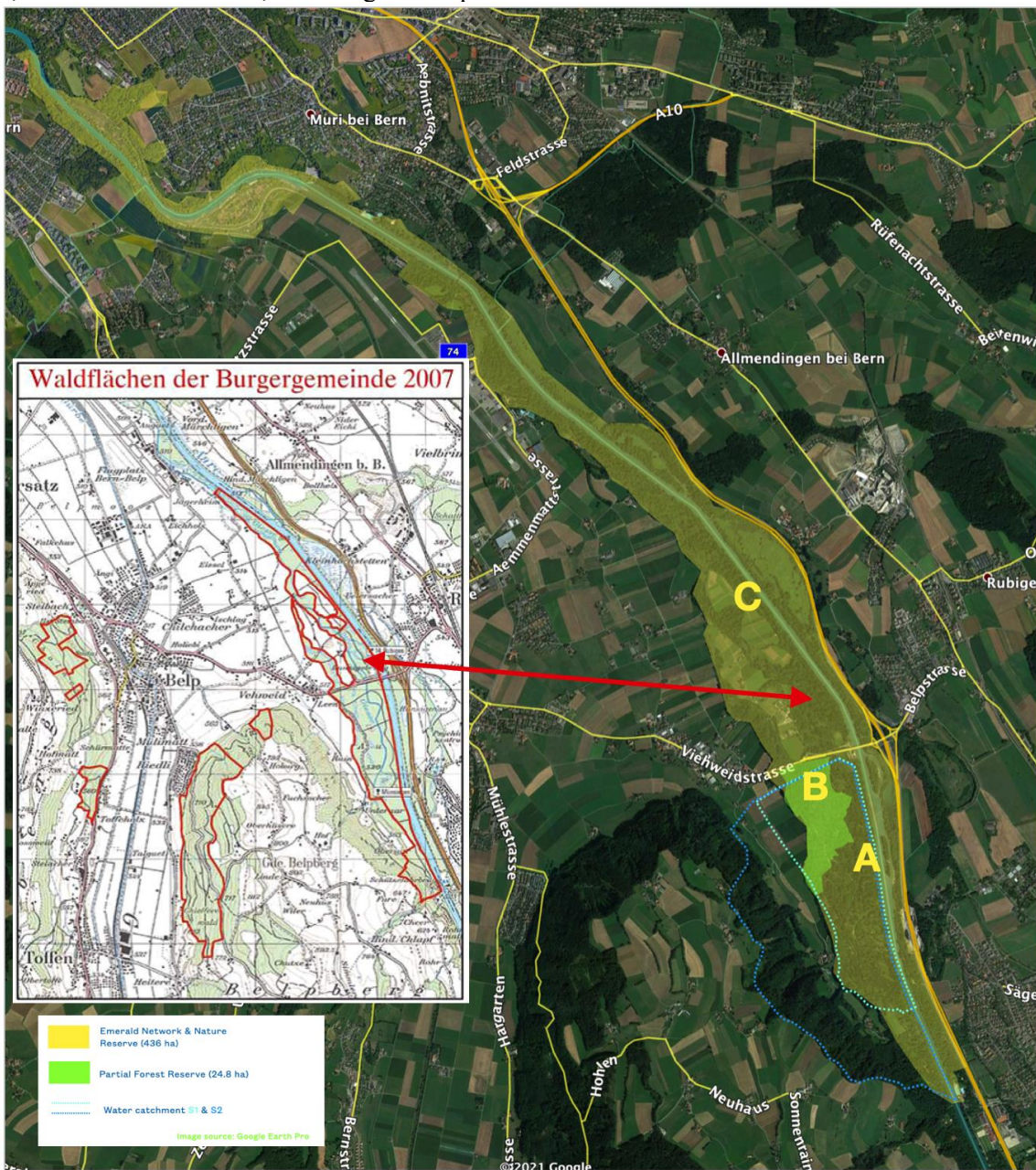
*Document prepared by  
Biofuelwatch (complainant)*

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### Further evidence of fresh logging in the Belpau Emerald Network, Biofuelwatch ([www.biofuelwatch.org.uk](http://www.biofuelwatch.org.uk))

Since submitting the complaint in July 2023, logging within the Belpau Emerald Network has continued unabated. Fresh spurs, heavy machinery, freshly felled trees including around ponds and both biomass (in the form of slash, trunks and logs) and piles of timber were observed. The biomass consisted largely of oak, pine and beech while the timber came from very old habitat ash, beech and oak trees.

As Biofuelwatch warned in the complaint, the risk of windthrow increases after logging and many trees, mostly oak, left exposed from previous interventions were indeed uprooted or snapped by strong winds in autumn 2023. Windthrow had been removed instead of leaving it to decay naturally, resulting in more damage to soil and vegetation. Additional trees along paths have been marked for future felling or have already been felled, no doubt because they are/were deemed to pose a danger to the public. Fresh silvicultural interventions were noted within the Emerald Network site in both the Obere Belpau (A and B) and the Untere Belpau (C), please see map below. These areas belong to the [Burgergemeinde Belp](#) (map inset) which, according to its website, is committed to “take over the tasks assigned by the state over some 1,049 hectares of forest”, including the Belpau’s.



**Obere Belpau logging at A (see map on page 1 for general area), outside the Forest Reserve**

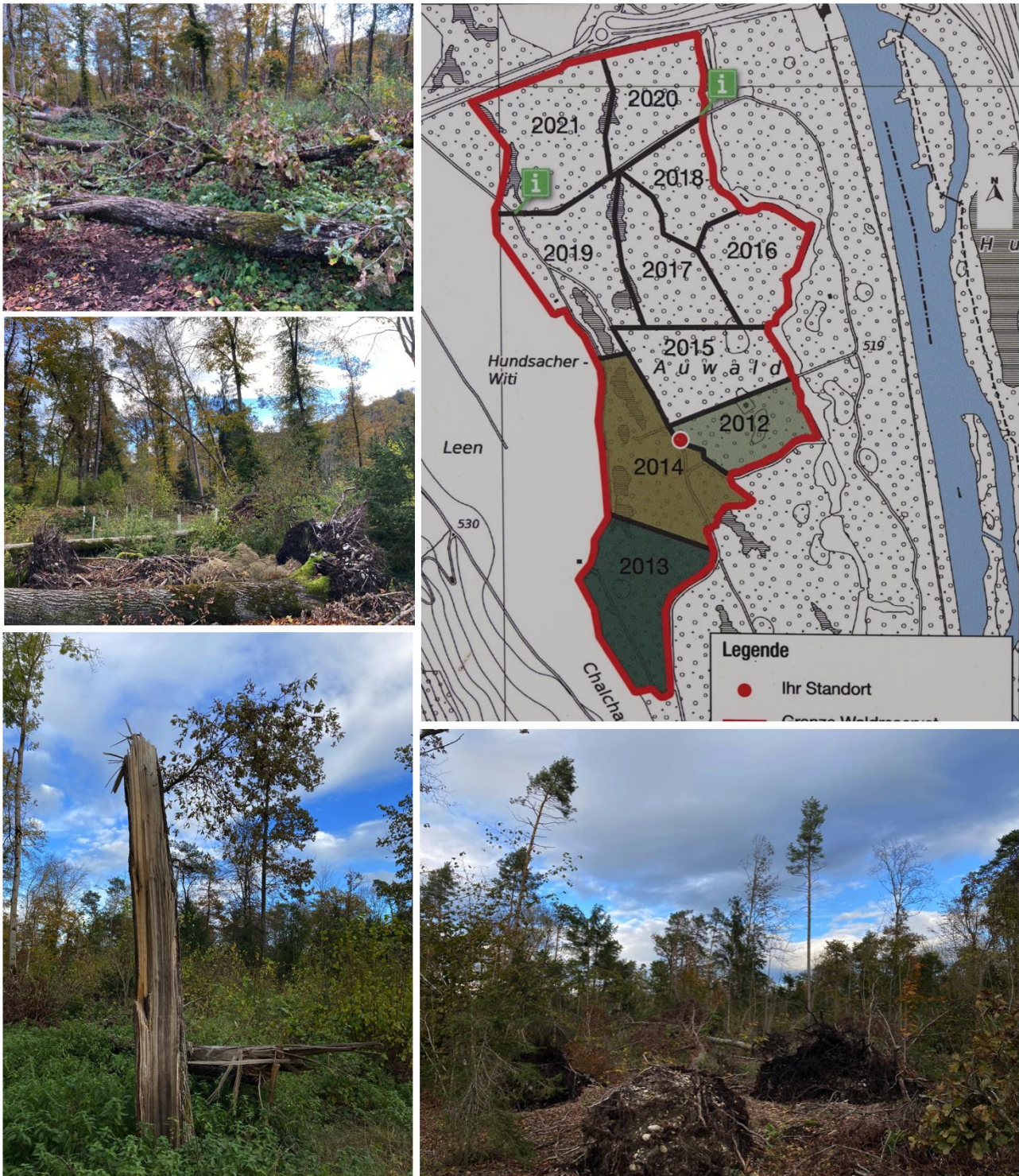
All photos this page were taken on 6 May 2024 within the Obere Belpau Emerald Network, but outside its designated Forest Reserve, with heavy machines in operation stacking large trunks of what appeared to be oak; extensive windthrow, windsnap and uprooted trees, particularly on the edge of existing clearcuts; muddy spurs and damage to soil; eutrophic ponds and a new joint cantonal and community sign asking visitors to respect wildlife within the Aarelandschaft Thun-Bern nature reserve, without mentioning the Emerald Network.



**Obere Belpau logging at B (see map on page 1 for general area), inside the Forest Reserve**

The Obere Belpau Forest Reserve has been logged in sections every year since 2013 (see map below, though the schedule was delayed by Covid and logging continued in 2022, 2023 and 2024). A PanBern 2010 report advocated “moderate forest management” using “close-to-nature” silviculture and stressed that negative effects on the forest were “to be ruled out”.

However, a visit on 6 November 2023 revealed extensive and recent windsnap and windthrow (photos below) in the most recently logged sections (2020 and 2021). A subsequent visit on 27 January 2024 (photos on page 4), revealed fresh logging; extensive soil damage; and both biomass (slash and trunks) and timber (trunks with



tags) piles, consisting mostly of hardwood, including old habitat trees. Moreover, many of the trees in the top left hand corner of the map which lies outside the Forest Reserve but still within the Emerald Network site and

which include very old beech and oak have been marked for felling despite showing no sign of disease or danger to the public.



More windthrow was observed here on 9 May 2024, along with biomass (slash and trunks) piles; fresh spurs; false acacia (*Robinia pseudoacacia*) and fresh logging, not just of windthrow but of healthy, old trees, mostly beech.

