

# COUNCIL OF EUROPE

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# CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

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EUROPEAN COMMITTEE FOR THE CONSERVATION  
OF NATURE AND NATURAL RESOURCES

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Committee of Experts on Protected Areas

WOLLMATINGER RIED NATURE RESERVE  
(Federal Republic of Germany)

ON-THE-SPOT APPRAISAL

by

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(Switzerland)

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Report relating to the on-the-spot appraisal of the Wollmatinger Ried  
Nature Reserve (Federal Republic of Germany)

1. TERMS OF REFERENCE

The specified tasks were markedly similar to those carried out for the two previous appraisals (1977 and 1982). Particular attention was paid to compliance with the recommendations in Resolution (83) 5, which was adopted by the Committee of Ministers on 26 May 1983.

Dr. Jean-Pierre Ribaut, Head of the Environment and Natural Resources Division of the Council of Europe, was also present for the appraisal.

We were welcomed, accompanied and provided with information by:

Dr. Fuchs, Hauptkonservator für Naturschutz, Landratsamt Freiburg  
(Baden-Württemberg),

Dr. G Leutenegger, Oberforstrat, Staalt, Forstamt, Constance,

Dr. H Jacoby, Deutscher Bund für Vogelschutz, and his collaborators.

Presentations and discussions were combined with an inspection of the nature reserve, on 17 February, and with a visit by lake police boat to the lake areas, on 18 February. So the wintry weather did not prevent us from obtaining a satisfactory view of the current situation, as a supplement to the annual reports, information provided and discussions held. We are very grateful to the officials responsible for the reserve for easing our task in this way. Our visit was rounded off by a final conference at the Constance Landratsamt, at which Mr Hable, of that office, and Mr Sempfersdörfer, Director of the Oberste Naturschutzbehörde, Stuttgart, were also present.

2. THE TERMS OF REFERENCE, POINT BY POINT

2.1 The current condition of the area

The very full and detailed annual reports for 1982 to 1986 inclusive show that the reserve, which is the subject of constant care, remains highly valuable and has undergone several improvements.

The problem of water-fowling, the main cause for concern at the last appraisal (in 1982), was solved in 1984 (see 2.2.1).

The management of the natural environment has continued according to carefully thought-out plans, drawing on current scientific studies of vegetation development, in particular. For example, there was a methodical investigation into the consequences of the arson which affected the reed-beds on 9 March 1984; the results of that study were undeniably important for the evaluation of such incidents. Now, after three growth periods, the reed-beds have recovered.

## 2.2 The state of preservation of flora, fauna and the landscape

### 2.2.1 Fauna

The annual reports provide a lot of important data about birds, confirming the ornithological value of the reserve in the nesting season and during migration and wintering periods.

The problem of water-fowling on the lake, which had previously been a major drawback, was solved when "Gemeinschaftliche Wasserjagd" was abolished through a referendum in the canton of Thurgau - following a popular initiative - on 29 January 1984. The people of Thurgau, by 19,557 votes to 18,231, imposed a new constitutional provision, which was approved by the Federal Assembly after the Swiss Federal Tribunal had rejected an appeal by supporters of this traditional form of shooting. As abolition took effect on 1 October 1985, the main cause of disturbance to migratory birds has been eliminated, so the Council of Europe's formal recommendations are essentially being complied with.

The effects of abolition have been studied, and we are convinced that the numbers of birds wintering in the reserve have increased dramatically. The reports also refer to the presence in late autumn of large groups of Anatidae in the area covered by the shooting ban. Among other points worthy of note is the presence of a remarkable collection of whooper swans (*cygnus cygnus*), something impossible previously in this most suitable location: we saw a hundred or so while we were on the lake.

However, a new water-fowling regulation which came into force in Thurgau, in October 1986, still allows such shooting by tenants of farmland on the Swiss shore adjacent to the reserve. This unfortunate rule preserves an area of disturbance, the effect of which is particularly marked when low water exposes a large part of the lake area within the reserve. We therefore recommend that the Council of Europe try to persuade the Swiss Confederation to find a solution in accordance with the Ramsar International Convention and the Berne Convention.

Invertebrates were studied as well as birds - inventories were taken of Orthoptera, Lepidoptera, Odonata and Heteroptera (bugs), etc - and preliminary research was conducted on Amphibia and Reptiles.

### 2.2.2 Flora

The annual reports note encouraging increases in the populations of several rare and endangered plants. Botanical studies, both floristic and phytosociological, are playing an increasing part in decisions about the type of maintenance work to be done.

### 2.2.3 The landscape

No changes to report.

## 2.3 Maintenance and improvements

The Wollmatinger Ried Nature Protection Centre mentioned in 1982 is functioning perfectly, and there are plans to build an annex to it.

A major operation affecting the channel which takes water from the treatment plant is under consideration. This would involve raising part of the channel's banks to avert the risk of its overflowing when heavy rain falls, and it would be expedient to re-establish links between the areas of the reserve separated from each other over a length of 1,250 metres by creating two 80 metre long grassed "bridges". It would also be a good idea to thin out, and in places to clear, the growing lines of trees on both sides of the channel, thus restoring the open aspect of the wet grasslands. The cost of the project is estimated at 400,000DM, spread over three years.

Maintenance of each area of the molinia grasslands in turn continues, with controlled mowing, the effects of which are still being studied, as suggested by a Council of Europe recommendation (No. 4, 1983).

Where the fertile meadows are concerned (cf. Council of Europe Recommendation No. 5, 1983), certain difficulties are continuing with one farmer who cannot, under existing law, be forbidden to apply manure. A solution is expected shortly.

Nevertheless, wherever it is technically possible - depending on the level of the lake - regular maintenance covers huge areas: the Constance forestry office arranged for 130 hectares to be mown in 1986 while the DBV mowed 37. The total annual cost is estimated at some 200,000DM, 90% of which, in principle, is met by the government and 10% by the DBV.

It is planned to mark more clearly the boundary of the area within which boats are prohibited along the shore of Ermatingen bay. An improvement of this kind is even more necessary along the Gnadensee shore, where the windsurfing problem becomes acute during the high season. Municipalities must be persuaded to accept these markers ...

#### 2.4 Problems involving adjacent areas

Mention must be made of the Hegne campsite, a source of physical disturbance on the shore of the Gnadensee, adjacent to the reserve. There are still obstacles in the way of the removal of this site.

The (private) development of plots on the island of Schopflen along the Gnadensee shore is giving cause for concern.

The road along the edge of the reserve on the airfield and "Gölden" side is to be widened to four lanes, but without encroaching onto the reserve. Although this will regrettably cut the reserve off from the surrounding land, the plans have had to be accepted in order to avoid the construction of a new road further back, which would have caused severe damage to countryside and forests so far almost unaffected.

#### 2.5 Purchases of land

The government's policy is to acquire more land in order to increase its control of the area. It is a slow process, on account of negotiations with landowners (some of whom cannot be found) and the extreme complexity of the long, narrow plots concerned. 50,000DM per year has been set aside for purchases between 1987 and 1990.

## 2.6 The impact of activities of members of the public

The effects of such activities on land are well under control, thanks to supervision and limited public access. Compliance with regulations about activities on the lake areas is increasing, although occasional cases of indiscipline occur.

Acts of vandalism seem to be rare, one example being the arson affecting the reed-beds in 1984, to which reference has already been made.

## 2.7 Budget and management

Budget estimates for the four years from 1987 to 1990 add up to 1,060,000 DM just for expenditure on maintenance and improvement of biotopes, planning, purchasing and providing information for visitors (data supplied by the Bezirksstelle für Naturschutz und Landschaftspflege, Freiburg i.B.). As already mentioned, the government meets 90% of this cost and the DBV 10%.

## 2.8 Scientific follow-up

The DBV's annual reports are evidence of methodical scientific study, and they list all the publications deriving from this work.

The overall research programme (Recommendation No. 6, 1983) has not yet been formally set up, but numerous studies will be started in various fields as soon as interested experts and students can be recruited. At the moment, it appears that priority is not being given to setting up an official scientific committee, in view of the difficulty of finding enough experts to participate in its work.

## 2.9 Naturmuseum

We visited the museum, which has an exhibition about the Wollmatinger Ried at which the European Diploma is on display. We were very impressed and feel that the information provided to the public is satisfactory and fits in with the other subjects dealt with at the museum (which is very well run). As there are plans to relocate the museum, the opportunity will probably be taken to broaden the scope of the exhibition, thus complying with Council of Europe Recommendation No. 3, 1983.

## 3. RENEWAL OF THE EUROPEAN DIPLOMA

The undersigned recommends that the European Committee renew the Diploma, in category A, for a period of five years.

This decision would be fully justified by the value and role of the reserve, its state of preservation and the exemplary efforts made to safeguard the quality and unusual variety of its natural environment.

The recommendations made when the Diploma was renewed in 1983 have been complied with as far as possible. Only a few points of detail remain to be resolved.

The problem of water-fowling has been very largely solved, as a result of the referendum in the canton of Thurgau. The shooting regulations still in force on the Thurgau shore would, however, be grounds for the Council of

Europe to try to persuade the Swiss Confederation to give both the lake and its Swiss shores adjacent to the Wollmatinger Ried the status of a reserve of international importance, in the spirit of the Ramsar Convention. This area, combined with the reserve set up by the Federal Republic of Germany, would constitute a harmonious whole, although, in this case, this suggestion cannot be the subject of a recommendation associated with the European Diploma.

The following recommendations could be linked with renewal:

- it should be ensured that the improvement of the road running along the edge of the reserve is effected in a way that preserves the integrity of the natural environment as far as possible;
- the problems on the Gnadensee shore caused by any lakeside developments at Schoppflen and by the Hegne beach and campsite should be solved;
- the boundaries of the reserve should be marked on the lake areas so clearly that there are no incursions into the waters of the reserve by boats or windsurfers;
- the policy of maintaining grasslands and improving biotopes should be resolutely pursued.

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The undersigned offers his thanks to the authorities and departments concerned and to Mr H Jacoby (of the DBV) for their welcome and their keenness to provide us with information. Once again, I was impressed by the care devoted to the Wollmatinger Ried Nature Reserve and by the continuous co-operation between official bodies and the Deutscher Bund für Vogelschutz, all of which are to be congratulated on their efficiency.