

Allianz für Borstgrasrasen

(Alliance for Nardus grasslands)
Conservation, regeneration and redevelopment
of Nardus grasslands in the North Rhine-Westphalian Eifel
(Life10 NAT/DE/006)
Layman's report





Imprint:

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the 21st century must be a century of the environment. Otherwise, the future of our globe will be in a bad state, Klaus Töpfer, Director of the United Nations Environment Agency and former Federal Environment Minister, emphasised at the end of 1999. Environmental protection must once again be writ large. For our region - the Northern Eifel - the LIFE Project: "Allianz für Borstgrasrasen" (Alliance for Nardus grasslands) is an important active measure of preservation and development of environmental protection and conservation of special habitats in the area of the Natura 2000 sites, Wiesen, Borstgrasrasen und Heiden bei Sistig", "Manscheider Bachtal und Paulushof", "Baasemer Wald", "Heidemoor am Moorbach" and "Dahlemer Binz". On more than 100-hectare, species-rich Nardus grasslands, Mountain hay meadows, Dry and Wet heaths were mainly created by the transformation of spruce forests. With this large measure, which includes a project funding of € 2.6 million, the formerly typical cultural landscape of the Eifel will be regenerated again, and the requirements for the maintenance of the so-called Natura 2000 si will be met. The interests of our environment are clearly at the forefront here. For it is only through the alliance of various actors - the "Ministerium für Umwelt, Landwirtschaft, Natur- und Verbraucherschutz des Landes Nordrhein-Westfalen", "Kreis Euskirchen", "Biologische Station im Kreis Euskirchen e.V." and the municipalities of Hellenthal, Kall and Dahlem - that it is possible to implement such sustainable projects. Sustainable landscape development and the preservation of biological diversity also means using nature as part of its regenerative capacity and carefully managing existing resources.

The goal is clear: It is "in" again to protect nature and to let it blossom again "as colourful and as varied" as it once was.

My special thanks go to all those involved.

Active protection of nature and the environment is a central challenge of our time. But at the same time, it offers opportunities and perspectives to preserve the typical habitat of people, animals and plants.

Günter Rosenke
District Administrator Kreis Euskirchen





Diversity beats monotony

Due to the extreme use of the natural beech and oak forests, the Eifel was from the 18th to the 19th century in large parts almost woodless and covered with wasteland. Pictures by the Eifel painter Fritz von Wille (1860-1941) testify to this predominantly open land-scape with its heathlands and meagre grasslands.

Hard economic requirements led to the reforestation of the meagre litter areas, meadows and pastures with spruce. After 1815, this reforestation program was started in the Eifel under "Prussian direction". On the heavily devastated sites, spruces were more successfully cultivated than demanding deciduous trees. Their wood grows quickly, and financial profits can be made comparatively rapidly. Municipalities that now have large forest areas also continue to pursue this type of commercial forest.

Spruce forests can be valuable sources of income for forest owners, but of course, they also fulfil various forest functions: for example, they supply environmentally friendly raw materials and energy sources. Also, these coniferous forests meet a variety of features that serve to protect people and the environment: regulation of the water balance, securing good drinking water, protection against erosion, balancing effect on the climate, they purify the air ... - many people also use spruce forests for recreation.

However, the dense planting as a monoculture and the intensive care until the spruce harvest makes this habitat somewhat hostile to life for most animal and plant species.

Similarly, the open land habitats created in the project fulfil the described functions in nature and landscape. Besides, they are also hoards of biological diversity. They contain genetic richness and

diversity of species with special requirements and typical biocoenosis: In addition to many "common species", Nardus grasslands alone include more than 28 characteristic plant species.





A successful project needs strong partners!

◆ The willingness to act in this way was decided in the relevant committees of the communities. The committee members had the project explained to them on site.

Discussions had to be had and agreement to be reached in advance with all those who use nature and landscape in the project area: with the forest and area owners themselves, with the owners of neighbouring forest areas, with hunting tenants, with farmers, local residents and with tourism experts.

Since the project involved converting large areas of forest into open land, a forestry permit had to be obtained. In cooperation with the responsible "Regionalforstamt Hocheifel-Zülpicher Börde (regional forestry office)", this was organized under a public law contract. The pure forest functions lost as a result of forest conversion were also compensated.

To successfully implement a conservation project of this magnitude, owners who make their land available for conservation on a permanent basis are particularly needed. In addition to a few private forest owners and the "Nordrhein-Westfalen-Stiftung Naturschutz, Heimat- und Kulturpflege (North Rhine-Westphalia Foundation for Conservation, Heritage and Cultural Heritage)", it was above all the three municipalities of Hellenthal, Kall and Dahlem that agreed to convert local spruce forests into open land and to forego income from forestry permanently. The municipalities also decided that the land should be used extensively for agricultural purposes or maintained for conservation purposes in return for a small lease. The municipalities involved have even reinvested the compensation, awarded for the provision of land in the form of a harvesting levy, in conservation measures.

Multiple gains for nature!

"Behind the inconspicuous title "Allianz für Borstgrasenrasen" there is a major project for the benefit of nature and landscape conservation. A large-scale project under the umbrella of which three communities, private property owners, the "Biologische Station im Kreis Euskirchen e.V.", the "Regionalforstamt", the "Kreis Euskirchen" and the "NRW Stiftung" all have worked together successfully for several years for the benefit of conservation. Right from the start, politicians and the public were informed and involved in the ideas for implementation. Today, anyone can hike through meadows on signposted paths, find out about the aim and object at information points or join guided hikes. Sustainable forms of management, as well as nature and landscape experiences, are lived here and kept for future generations". (Rudolf Westerburg, Mayor of the municipality of Hellenthal)



To achieve our goal, special conservation measures were carried out:

Early harvesting of coniferous forests

In non-critical areas (dry, species-poor, easily accessible) large wood harvesting machines, the harvesters were used. In valuable, ecologically particularly sensitive areas (damp, species-rich herb layer), the trees were individually cut down using power saws and carefully pulled out with logging horses.

In order not to pollute the areas later with nutrients from the remaining brushwood, the areas were meticulously cleared.

Shrubland

Primary plants had settled on areas that had not been reforested, for example after the great storms at the beginning of the 1990s. These were cleared with machines, by hand or "with the help of goats". Here, too, everything was cleared.

Treatment of the areas with forest mulchers

A forestry mulcher was used wherever possible so that the areas prepared in this order could later also be worked with agricultural machines. With this impressive machine, the remaining stumps and branches were tilled and evenly distributed so that the tilled material could quickly rot.

In some cases, however, the areas were wet so quickly after the timber was harvested, that it was no longer possible to use the heavy forest mulcher without causing damage to the soil. Initially this posed as a problem, but then it turned out to be quite positive: studies of the fauna showed that a protected area can benefit significantly if stumps and other remnants of cultivation can be used as a biological structure by the animal world.

Closing drainage ditches

By closing the forest drainage ditches, the rapid drainage of water from the project area is prevented. This keeps the area wet for longer and restores the original water regime. The remaining water naturally co-determines what thrives on the new open-lands.









Together we have succeeded ...

A CORD AND



"Within the framework of the project, additional areas could be identified and upgraded in terms of conservation. The development and safeguarding of the maintenance and use of these areas could be implemented sustainably for the future through good cooperation with the project executing agencies and mutual support". (Daniel Boos, Lower Conservation Authority, "Kreis Euskirchen")

Which methods lead to success? How can sensitive areas be gently developed into the desired habitats? Can all measures be implemented with the available financial resources? How can the actors of the region support each other in conservation to achieve common goals?

The challenges that such an extensive conservation project brings with it can only be mastered with the support of many. Thereby it has been possible to exceed the initially set goals.

With organisational and financial support from the "Kreis Euskirchen", pieces of land in the Natura 2000 site "Dahlemer Binz" were enclosed with a fence. Only with such a fence, the area can be grazed with a mixed group of goats and Icelandic horses in the future. In the Natura 2000 site "Heidemoor am Moorbach", the district and project also cooperated in the implementation and financing of complicated and costly development and maintenance measures. Needless to say, a wealth of experience, good contacts in the region and some areas were brought into the project by the "NRW-Stiftung".

The "Bergwald Projekt", various conservation associations, the "Förderverein St. Stephanus, Sistig", the "Jugendfeuerwehr Dahlem" and many individuals were involved with expertise and personal commitment in sensitive areas where careful manual work was required.











What to do next ...

SE INVINENTAL

The Nardus grasslands, Heaths and Mountain hay meadows were formerly created by agricultural activity — consequently, the habitats restored in the project are to be used and preserved by human hands as a cultural landscape.

For all project areas, farmers could be won as main or secondary occupation, who will cultivate or maintain the areas in the future with their specialised knowledge, available technical equipment, an appropriate livestock and local knowledge.

The often difficult management of the low yielding areas can become an economic pillar through participation in contractual conservation. Contractual conservation is a promotional instrument in which farmers actively support and are rewarded for the preservation of valuable open-land habitats. In cooperation with agriculture, the cultural landscape program in particular preserves, develops and sustainably conserves the valuable habitats created through conservation-compatible use. This protects endangered animal and plant species and preserves a diverse cultural landscape with different forms of use.

In intensive coordination and advisory talks between the Biological Station and the farmers, the particular requirements arising from the project were considered and taken into account.



"With their participation in contractual conservation, farmers provide vital ecological services: Without this participation, the objectives achieved by the project could not be secured in the long term. The project was able to benefit from the long-standing good cooperation with farmers. We have succeeded in placing all areas with farmers who have already developed an understanding of the regulations and special requirements - but also of possible opportunities - over many years of participation. They work reliably in the sense of conservation requirements."

(Julia Roden, Area Manager Contractual Conservation at the "Biologische Station im Kreis Euskirchen e.V.")

Obtain through adapted use ...!

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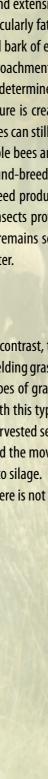
"I am setting up a new farm in the Eifel. At the moment it is difficult to get access to leased land. Therefore, I am glad that I can manage meadows and pastures which were developed in the project with my old breeds in the future. I was also able to contribute my experience and knowledge of how such areas are farmed ecologically." (Patrick Thomas, farmer)

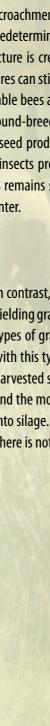
The not very productive meadows, pastures and heaths will be mown in the future and/or grazed with different breeds of domestic animals. It was possible to win a large sheep farm with a considerable flock of sheep to move across the areas. The seeds of rare plants that remain stuck in the sheep's fur are carried from field to field, thereby restoring the old diversity. Mixed groups of goats, Icelandic horses and extensive cattle breeds can also be fed on the difficult, not particularly fat pastures and heaths. They also like to eat the leaves and bark of emerging trees and shrubs, thus counteracting shrub encroachment.

Due to the different predetermined mowing or grazing times, a mosaic-like usage structure is created. Somewhere, food sources and hibernation structures can still be found for flower-visiting insects such as bees, bumble bees and butterflies. Through the late, staggered mowing, ground-breeding birds can bring their brood to a safe end: the rich seed production of the diverse vegetation and the abundance of insects provide them with sufficient food. "Leftover grass" always remains someplace. Here the game finds cover and grazing in winter.

> In contrast, the intensively cultivated, highyielding grasslands with a few high-yielding types of grass are cultivated in large fields: with this type of cultivation, large areas are harvested several times in one single action and the mown material is mainly processed into silage.

There is not much left for the "wildlife".







Not only nature should benefit ...

The conservation gain for nature, landscape and biological diversity through the project is undisputed. But what else does the region gain from such a project?

To answer this question, a socio-economic study was carried out. At various information events farmers and tourism professionals in particular were informed about how the newly created conservation areas can be used for agricultural purposes, as well as also for tourism, and how their value can be enhanced.

The available subsidies were mainly used to finance measures implemented by local companies, businesses, offices and service providers.



"As a gardener and landscaper, I am always happy when I can implement projects in nature." (Frank Pütz, gardener and landscaper)

In the project areas vegetation development, birds, butterflies and grasshoppers were investigated. Of course, the number of species and diversity increased rapidly after the creation of open meadows, pastures and transition areas to near-natural deciduous forests compared to the former spruce forests.

Vegetation

In fact, the desired habitat types Nardus grasslands, Mountain hay meadows, Dry and Wet heaths could be substantiated on the entire project area. To a lesser extent, the vegetation is still in development. It has become clear that even rarer species that are difficult to establish can be transferred with the chosen methods. Particularly in the Natura 2000 sites "Wiesen, Borstgrasrasen und Heiden bei Sistig", individual species such as the Marsh gentian have already spread via the neighbouring, wonderfully equipped areas of the "NRW Stiftung" into the project areas. Soon the blue of the gentian will also cover the new meadows created in the project.

Birds

Tree Pipit, Wood lark, Red-backed shrike, Great Grey shrike, Common Stonechat and Meadow Pipit already use the newly created, richly structured open landscapes. Due to the inadequate drainage after the spruce harvest, not all areas could be mulched. Birds and other species use the resulting mosaic-like habitat structure of the short-grass areas with bare soils and areas with remaining stumps and individual shrubs, wet depressions and small dry elevations. Nourishment-visitors such as wheatear, crane and even whinchats

Nourishment-visitors such as wheatear, crane and even whinchats could be found among others. Whether the project areas will ever be populated by whinchats is questionable given the continuing negative population development throughout Germany. Everything the unique species needs is available: wet grassland, fallow areas, extensively used meadows, high perennial meadows and low-growing, low-nutrient pastures as well as vertical structures of previous years' perennials, individual shrubs and pasture fences, which serve as observation and singing places. The table is set with a plentiful supply of food in the form of insects for Whinchats.

Maybe the project logo's bird will use the prepared habitat in the future?





Grasshoppers, butterflies and zygaenidae

Ringlet, Marbles White, Common Blue, Meadow Brown, Common Wart-biter, Bog Meadow Bush-cricket, Lesser Mottled Grashopper quickly found their way to the new areas. The project significantly improved the habitat qualities for these species. On the core areas, some notable, partly nationally significant species are already present. Even the Purple-edged Copper has already been identified.



Beautiful and varied ...



"As a nature guide, I like to pass on my knowledge about this unique Eifel landscape to interested people on my hikes to the Nardus grasslands. In the seminar "Guides for Nardus grasslands" I got didactic suggestions and reliable information about the history, fauna and flora of this speciesrich natural treasure. (Gigi Griebel, tour guide)



Right from the start, the public and all those involved in the project were informed and engaged in the measures. The measures carried out in the LIFE+ Project *Allianz für Borstgrasrasen* have changed traditional uses and - clearly visible - also the landscape through the large-scale conversion of forests into open-land. Acceptance of the measures can only be achieved if the purpose and necessity of such a substantial conservation project can be convincingly communicated.

The project's website, an exhibition on loan, brochures and excursions organised through the staff of the Biological Station - all these are offers that interested parties can and do use from now on. Specially trained tour guides accompany people who want to have these treasures of the Northern Eifel shown to them in a competent and eventful way.

In the meantime, the initial scepticism about the measures has given way to enthusiasm about the project results.







To give guests and locals the opportunity to explore the protected areas, visitor management concepts were developed in cooperation with other partners from the region. Circular trails with information boards, information on hiking apps on routes through the project areas, equipped shelters, walkways and benches at particularly beautiful vantage points ensure that the unique landscape with its protected areas can be experienced without harming the protected objects.





"I only know the landscape in the "Ländchen" with Nardus grasslands and believe that these make the hilly landscape with forests and cultivated meadows even more varied and thus more attractive. Not to mention the benefits of biodiversity. However, the beautiful, varied path should perhaps be integrated into the existing network of hiking trails so that the meadow can also be found. Who knows, maybe it will become a famous attraction such as the Narcissus meadows in the Monschauer Perlenbachtal". (Claudia Träger, publisher Glanzpunkt Eifel)

Made! Short and concise!

LIFE+ Allianz für Borstgrasrasen

- coordinator
- associate partner
- **▶** budget
- project duration
- natura 2000 sites
- project objectives

- ▶ conservation, regeneration and reintroduction of Species-rich Nardus grasslands in the North Rhine-Westphalian Eifel (LIFE10 NAT/DE/006)
- ▶ financed by the EU funding programme LIFE (L'Instrument Financier pour l'Environnement), funds from the state of NRW and the district of Euskirchen

Biologische Station im Kreis Euskirchen e.V.

- ▶ Ministerium für Umwelt, Landwirtschaft, Natur- und Verbraucherschutz des Landes Nordrhein-Westfalen
- ▶ Kreis Euskirchen

2.6 million

+ mobilisation of additional financial resources

2011-2019

DE 5505-301 Wiesen, Borstgrasrasen, und Heiden bei Sistig

DE 5505-304 Manscheider Bachtal und Paulushof

DE 5604-301 Baasemer Wald

DE 5605-304 Heidemoor am Moorbach

DE 5505-309 Dahlemer Binz

▶ large-scale restoration of the particularly endangered habitat type Species-rich Nardus grassland (6230*)

restoration of the endangered habitat types *European-dry-heaths* (4030), *Northern Atlantic wet heaths with Erica tetralix* (4010) and *Mountain hay meadows* (6520)

- ▶ creation of large coherent Nardus grassland complexes
- ▶ promotion of characteristic animal and plant species of Nardus grassland
- restoration of original water conditions
- ▶ identification and initiation of sustainable forms of land use
- ▶ promotion of the identification of the population with habitats resulting from historical uses
- reviving a vibrant cultural landscape
- creation of a network of actors in the region
- ▶ promotion of the acceptance of the European Network Natura 2000
- consolidation and extension of Natura 2000 sites

Nature conservation

▶ new development or restoration of Nardus grasslands, Mountain hay meadows, Dry and Wet heaths with ecologically valuable woods

- ▶ enlargement / rereporting Natura 2000 sites 72 ha
- ▶ development of maintenance and development plans > 115 ha

117 ha

Financial

r totest law compensation money implemented to	
compensate for forest functions	270.000 €

• ownership compensation reinvested in nature

conservation measures 279.000 €

▶ value added by awarding contracts to companies,

• forest law compensation money implemented to

firms, offices and service providers 1.700.000 €

Nature conservation measures

conifers felled and cleared	65 ha
▶ bush removal	26 ha
▶ machining with the forestry mulcher	48 ha
drainage ditches closed	> 4.500 m
purchase of mown material	> 92 ha
transfer of mown material	> 48 ha
vegetation control measures	> 26 ha
▶ fences set	> 4.770 m
conclusion of management contracts	> 77 ha

Raising public awareness, information and participation:

• development and implementation of visitor guidance concepts through

refuges

▶ 2 routes with information boards, benches, jetties and equipment of existing ▶ 4 information boards and 2 hands as a strictle singular and because the

▶ 4 information boards and 2 benches outside circular paths

setting of 2 routes in a (hiking) tour portal:

"Durch bunte Wiesen und Weiden im Ländchen", theme trail - "Manscheider Bach tal und Paulushof"; "So weit das Auge reicht: blühende Vielfalt!", theme trail -

"Wiesen, Borstgrasrasen und Heiden bei Sistig"

▶ exams and studies ▶ environmental impact study: forest transformation in the framework of the

LIFE+ Project *Allianz für Borstgrasrasen*

socio-economic study

▶ media and give-aways ▶ internet presentation: www.life-borstgrasrasen.eu

▶ mobile, borrowable exhibition: "So bunt, so vielfältig!"

▶ brochure: "So bunt, so vielfältig!"

poster: "So bunt soll's werden!"

laymen's report

Iflyers, postcards, postcards with seed bags, pencils, bags, calendars

▶ setting of films in the YouTube channel of the "Eifel Biostationen"

▶ publications, press releases, press articles, announcements, radio and TV contributions

training of tour guides

use of volunteers

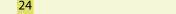
▶ informed persons at exhibitions, conferences, excursions, trainings, seminars, readings, professional exchange and other events



> 70 Personer

> 1.000 Personen

> 1.000 i cisonen



In the alliance participated:



... AHO-NRW · Alexander Rauw · Alfons Lückerath · Andreas Siegel · Andreas Weidner · Anika Pötschke · Anja Miano · Axel Jakob · Beate Jacob · Bergwaldprojekt e.V. · Bernd Mannheims · Bernhard Ohlerth · Bettina Gräf · Botanischer Garten der Universität Osnabrück · Brian Linden · Brigitte Hilger · BUND Kreis Euskirchen · Burkhard Grebe · Claudia Träger · Conni Schmitz · Deutsche Vernetzungsstelle Ländliche Räume · die KollegInnen aus den LIFE Projekten "Wald Wasser Wildnis", "Rur und Kall", "Ville-Wälder" und "Nard-Us" · die KollegInnen aus den Verwaltungen der drei beteiligten Kommunen und des Kreises Euskirchen · die KollegInnen der Bezirksregierung Köln · Dieter Pasch · Dietmar Krumpen · Dirk Zöll · Dorfgemeinschaft "Ländchen" · Dorfgemeinschaft Sistig · Dr. Harald Groß · Dr. Konrad Lechner · Dr. Manfred Alletse · Dr. Wolfgang Schumacher · Eifelverein Dahlem · Ekkehard Fiebrich · Eva-Maria Hermanns · Fam. Cremer · Fam. Göbel · Fam. Hüllbrock · Fam. Peters · Fam. Thelen · Förderverein der Kirchengemeinde Sistig · German Lippert · Gigi Griebel · Günter Wagner · Hans-Peter Pütz · Helmut Dahmen · Horst-Karl Dengel · Jan Grell · Jan Roeland · Vos · Jochen Rodenkirchen · Jugendfeuerwehr der Gemeinde Dahlem · Julia Roden · Julia Zenner · Karl Wey · Katja Nolte · KNU Kreis Euskirchen · Landesamt für Natur, Umwelt und Verbraucherschutz Nordrhein-Westfalen · Lothar Gerhards · Louisa Knips · Manfred Trinzen · Manni Lang · Marietta Schmitz · Marita Müller-Ahrens · Markus Linden · Markus Thies · Michael Murk · Michael Schulze · NABU Kreis Euskirchen · Naturpark Nordeifel e.V. im Deutsch-Belgischen Naturpark Hohes Venn-Eifel · Naturzentrum Nettersheim · Norbert Joepen · Nordeifel Tourismus GmbH Projektbüro "Wanderwelt der Zukunft" · NUA · Olaf Ahrens · Patrick Thomas · Regionalforstamt Hocheifel-Zülpicher Börde · Shazia Kratz · Simone Wolf · Stefan Meisberger · Thomas Paetzold · Ulrike Garbe · Verena Lenzen-Glorius · Veronika Neumann · Volker Hoffmann · wirkstatt e.v. · …



Ministerium für Umwelt, Landwirtschaft, Natur- und Verbraucherschutz des Landes Nordrhein-Westfalen















... and many, many more. Thank you!







