Ancient cultivated region

The Upper Lusatia heath and pond region has evolved over many centuries as a result of human use. The Slav settlers who came here after 860 A.D. called the land which was covered in bogs and forests “vlézle” (village), to which the German name “Lusitz” is related. The first documented evidence of the building of fish ponds dates from the year 1248.

»Biosphere Reserve – the key phrase

There are currently 621 biosphere reserves in various parts of the world. They are the “ecological states” of the UNESCO Man and the Biosphere programme, model regions in which nature conservation and sustainable management are intended to contribute to the preservation of unique natural and cultivated regions and to develop them further. In biosphere reserves, the coexistence of man and nature should be so balanced that a balance is reached whereby biodiversity is present on one hand and man finds opportunities for sustainable economic and cultural development on the other. The work of the biosphere reserves is thus determined by the following main principles:

– demonstration of sustainable economic development
– well-founded ecological research and environmental management
– positive environmental education and training

Each biosphere reserve consists of core, maintenance and development zones. The core zones are strictly protected areas for preserving biological diversity. Maintenance zones surround the core zones, naturally sustainable uses are possible here. Finally, development zones allow a wide range of sustainable uses resulting from the management of land, forests and ponds, tourism and systematic rock development.

Welcome to the Biosphere Reserve

The headquarters of the Biosphere Reserve is housed in an old, rectangular farmhouse in Wartha, enclosed on all sides by buildings. The HOUSE OF A THOUSAND PONDS is also located in the compound, offering visitors to the heath and pond region a wealth of information, the chance to visit the permanent exhibition or sample regional specialities in the bistro. So all in all, the HOUSE OF A THOUSAND PONDS is the ideal starting point for excursions and guided tours of the heath and pond region, to watch water fowl, or for a trip to the naturally sustained pond farm.

Nature and adventure trails

The Nature Trail Gartenträger Teich und Observe and the Schilder-roundwalk take visitors past characteristic features of the unique cultural landscape.

Guided tours, excursions and more

An extensive programme of guided hikes, excursions, tours, camps and seminars for groups of children and teenagers and adult and young nature lovers alike provide a deeper understanding of the complex interdependencies of ecosystems. For the calendar of events and more detailed information, please contact: HOUSE OF A THOUSAND PONDS, Tel.: +49(0)35932/36560, Fax: +49(0)35932/36561, Internet: www.haus-der-tausend-saecke.de

Getting around in the Biosphere Reserve

The coincidence of human beings and nature is also shapes tourism in the Biosphere Reserve. Our guests appreciate the heath and pond region because in it they find peace, space for their children, recreation for the whole family and a part of the countryside without noise or exhaust fumes. They want to experience nature, are curious about our villages and their people and want to see what sustainable management means in practice.

Biosphere hosts

In the Biosphere Reserve, our guest encounters outstanding hosts. The Biosphere Reserve rewards accommodation and fine dining establishments as well as owners of holiday apartments who contribute in a particular way to the promotion of regional economic cycles, to the preservation of the environment and to the maintenance of the cultural landscape. 14 accommodation providers (hotels, guesthouses, camping sites and holiday apartments) currently bear the distinction of “Biosphere Host”.

Cycle and hiking trails

A chaining network of cycle and walking paths open up the heath and pond region with its scenic beauty and landscapes. Long-distance cycling and hiking trails such as the Spreeweg and the Fröbelweg pass through the Biosphere Reserve. The Schilder-roundwalk takes visitors to the biosphere of the landscape and the characteristic patterns of the culture inherent to the Lusatian pond region and to the large and the small attractions existed in the Biosphere Reserve.

Recommended — map: Länder- und Rudresherkarte Oberlausitzer Heide- und Teichlandschaft 1:40,000, Biosphere reserve published by Baustein, Sachsen Kartographie GmbH Dresden (Hg) | in 2012

Forms of guided and direct agricultural marketing

Rausmühlen in Rödau-Neudorf

Most and sausage specialities, extensive range of regional products

Tel.: +49(0)35932/52277

Bier-Brotbäckerei in Gödlitz

Milk and sausage specialities, extensive range of regional products

Am Spinnwege 14, 02964 Gödlitz OT Rödau, Tel.: +49(0)35932/50020

Bier-Brotbäckerei Schäfers Mühlen in Ruhland

Milk and sausage specialities, extensive range of regional products

Klein , 02695 Ruhland OT Feldau, Tel.: +49(0)35932/43542

Pachrous Hofladen in Rödau-Neudorf

Bakey and confectionery products, most and sausage, extensive range of agricultural products from the region, Friedersdorf Str. 1, 02964 Rödau OT Kirchmühle, Tel.: +49(0)3572/85851

Gärtnerische Tischlerei in Gödlitz

Milk and sausage specialities, extensive range of regional products

Spinnwege Straße 10, 02964 Gödlitz OT Rödau, Tel.: +49(0)35932/50020

Gärtnerische Tischlerei in Gödlitz

Milk and sausage specialities, extensive range of regional products

Am Spinnwege 14, 02964 Gödlitz OT Rödau, Tel.: +49(0)35932/50020

Imbiß Bäckerei in Ruhland

Milk and sausage specialities, extensive range of regional products

Klein , 02695 Ruhland OT Feldau, Tel.: +49(0)35932/43542

Bauernhof Haus am See in Oppitz

Fermentation products, 02999 Lohsa OT Driewitz, Tel.: +49(0)35932/365-50

Bauernhof Hofmühle in Friedersdorf

Fermentation products, 02999 Lohsa OT Driewitz, Tel.: +49(0)35932/365-0,

Bauernhof Klitten in Litschen

Fermentation products, 02999 Lohsa OT Driewitz, Tel.: +49(0)35932/365-50

Bauernhof Reipen in Neudorf

Fermentation products, 02999 Lohsa OT Driewitz, Tel.: +49(0)35932/365-50

Bauernhof Haus am See in Oppitz

Fermentation products, 02999 Lohsa OT Driewitz, Tel.: +49(0)35932/365-0,
Watercourses

Rivers, streams and ditches are the landscape’s lifelines. The Schwarzer Schleppe and the Weihersgraben stream and numerous smaller streams and ditches run through the Biosphere Reserve. Meadows containing streams and rivers, fast-flowing and slow-nourishing waters, floodable plains and deep pools predominate and flat banks form ideal living conditions for many animals and plants in the Biosphere Reserve. The following can still be seen: kingfisher, otter, water shrew, striped dragonfly/handrewed damsel (laphygma splendens) and common sandpiper. Copperhead snails and brook lamprey, river-water-starrums, branched barreed and marsh marigold. The ditch system, which has been established over the centuries for filling and draining the ponds, has been restored and new ones have been added in other areas. To be found on the banks are bulrush, hops, narrow-leaved cattail, branched barreed, arrowhead, the yellow bladderwort (pontederia cordata), fine-belled toad, smooth newt, sand lizard and gray snake. Tree frogs and water frogs give an account on summer evenings. Most of the other animals in the pond are also active at dusk or at night. Otter, polecats, smallha\r\n\r\nHautkatzen (the Mustela gen.) and Daubenton’s bat scurry about their territory when people are asleep. Continued management of the ponds guarantees their conservation. Lavazian carp, bream, pike, small pike, eel, lamprey and sturgeon continue to be the most important export items of the heath and pond region. Freely caught or smoked, they can also be purchased direct from the pond management companies or can be sampled as a cooked speciality in the restaurants all over Upper Lusatia.

Meadows, forage grass fields and nature conservation are important objectives. Orchid pastures must only be cut after the seeds have matured. During the time when the breeding inhabitants of the meadows are raising their young, there is no grazing or mowing. Large and small agricultural concerns, family agricultural businesses and agricultural cooperatives, support the work of the Biosphere Reserve and demonstrate that conservation of nature and the environment can certainly go hand-in-hand. Discover for yourself the quality and taste of our healthy agricultural products. Fruit and vegetables, meat and sausage specialities from cattle, hens, and poultry represent what is available in the direct marketer’s farm shops, in the weekly markets throughout the whole region and in the natural product markets in the Biosphere Reserve centre.

Fields, meadows and pastures

Even fields, meadows and pastures moulded by agriculture have their place in the biosphere of the heath and pond region. In the last few decades, many traditional uses have been relinquished. Some areas have been amalgamated and drained. Boundary ridges, hedges, lakes, groves and clearance commons have disappeared. The use of herbicides has caused a drastic decrease in wild field herbs. Without wild herbs there is no food for insects and, in the end, parasites and hares have no means of existence. Together with the local farmers, the Biosphere Reserve is showing that this development is not reversible. And so chemical pesticides and external fertilizers are no longer used on these wild field herbs. The objective is to reestablish the abstract plant community characteristic of our cultivated region, in conjunction with the cultivation of old types of grain crops and other types of cultivated plants. Over the past few decades, grassland management has also changed. The mosaic of small multi-purpose areas has disappeared. The drawdown of the groundwater table and earlier and more frequent cropping in addition to fertilization have lowered the rise of crops with little variety and with few competitive grasses. With the flowers and the butterflies, colours have also disappeared from the meadows. As a habitat for plants and animals, intensively managed grasslands of only minor significance.

In the Biosphere Reserve there are still meadows and pastures with many species and also special treasures – orchid pastures. This means that the maintenance and development of the valuable grasslands by means of care and use is in line with the conservation and development of the biosphere reserve's great natural landscapes.

Forests

Wood and dilly – in the heath and pond regions, extremes are found side by side. Even the heath has been created by man. Uncontrolled exploitation of the forests as a result of grazing and tree-felling have led to the depletion of the sandy soils. Finally, only tough grasses with little food value grew there, along with stunted trees and bushes. The humus topsoil was constantly removed and used as bedding in stables or as fertilizer in the fields. The heath was also used as an army exercise terrain, and the exercise regularly destroyed the plant cover.

Today, the heath is one of the most highly endangered habitats. Without proper care and care, the heath will gradually revert to forest. In order to preserve this heathland, on specialities of Upper Lusatia, it will again be granted by the regional conservation sheep farm. 750-head flock of Moorelocks sheep and also by goats. It is also planned to introduce elk as »routemaster of the landscape« in an enclosure of around 155 ha, as part of a scientific study.

Many care species of birds, such as hoopoe, Eurasian nightjar and red-backed shrike nest here. Numerous sunny areas and an abundant source of food make the heath the favourite habitat of the common viper and other reptiles.

Thick sandy grasslands

This sandy grassland is an early stage in the healing process of damaged landscapes. In the Biosphere Reserve, there are wide areas of thin-grassland in former army exercise areas and in the mining rehabilitation land. On the inhospitable slopes of the open-cast mine, only the following special species thrive: grey hair-grass, Meniscus spicata (anguina maritima), shepherds purse, thrift, small yellow-stemmed, mouse-ear hawkweed, sheeps bit (jacobaea maritima), small forget-me-not, Carthusian pink and meadow pink. This sandy grassland is now very rare in Germany. Most of its inhabitants, many species of vetches, grasses and buttercups, as well as lizards, are among the species threatened with extinction.

Nature's reserve for the conservation of nature and the landscape. The Lusatian marshland was once covered in moors and bogs. With the expansion of pond management, many moors were transformed into ponds. Bogs and meadows were later drained for agriculture or destroyed by peat farming. The sinking of ground water over a large area as a result of brown coal mining led to the almost complete destruction of the swamping habitat. Less than 1% of the original swamps land is left.

There are still phragmites reed swamps in the Biosphere Reserve, at the edge of ponds low in nutrients and in some low ground in forests. A lack of nutrients and a monoculture typical for the swamps produce a totally individual area of plants and animals. There are phragmites reeds, cranberry, bog bilberry, hermione and common cottongrass, bog rosemary/marsh andromeda (andromeda polifolia), types of sandwort and willowherb, heath colors, cross-leaved heath, marsh (purple cloverleaf) (potentilla palustris), marsh orchids and also many types of insects that cannot find a food source away from the swamp. Spotted crane (peranica penzica), common crane and cormorant have their nesting grounds in the reed beds of the edge of the swamps.