



VOLUNTEER MANAGEMENT: A WEALTH OF EXPERIENCE AND IDEAS

“Volunteers in Parks” are welcome!

Nationale
Naturlandschaften





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“The ‘Volunteers in Parks’ program impressively demonstrates how each of us can get involved in maintaining Germany’s most beautiful and treasured landscapes. It’s well worth the effort because helping out in the National Natural Landscapes is also about expanding our own horizons, discovering natural wonders and sharing experiences with kindred spirits.”

Rüdiger Nehberg, alias Sir Vival
Survival expert and human rights activist (TARGET e.V.
Rüdiger Nehberg)

Dear readers,

allow us to take you on a special voyage of discovery through the National Natural Landscapes¹!

Discover a wealth of experience in volunteer management – collectively acquired and consolidated by numerous colleagues – and incorporate into your daily work this extensive pool of knowledge relating to all aspects of “Volunteers in Parks”. This brochure presents a sampling of the results from the past three-year project phase of this German nationwide volunteer program.

The present brochure complements and expands upon the previous publication “Teamarbeit in Großschutzgebieten – Freiwilligenmanagement in Planung und Praxis” (Teamwork in large scale protected areas – volunteer management: planning and practice)², which illustrates volunteer management techniques and their use in conservation areas. The brochure that you now hold in your hands focuses on highlights and special approaches in the world of volunteer management. It deals with school partnerships that foster involvement, the international “Volunteers in Parks” program, corporate volunteering and the issue of equal opportunities.

In 2008 we celebrated the fifth year anniversary of “Volunteers in Parks”. These years have been a real learning process for us marked by ambitious pioneering work – and countless rewarding experiences. Along the way, the nationwide volunteer program has helped 29 protected areas join forces to collectively improve professional volunteer management in parks, for the benefit of protected areas and volunteers. Working to-

gether, we have developed and consolidated the role of volunteer coordinators in parks, created guidelines for volunteer management in the National Natural Landscapes, established a wide range of cooperations designed to foster volunteer involvement and, most importantly, recruited volunteers for Germany’s conservation areas.

Key sources of motivation and drive for developing the program came from the “Volunteers in Parks” themselves, with their enthusiasm for nature and natural landscapes, their interest in conservation issues and their desire to help. But positive feedback from outside Germany – such as when we received the “Active Citizens of Europe Award” from Volonturope and gained recognition as an official project of the United Nations Decade of Education for Sustainable Development – has shown us time and again that we are on the right track, i.e., one that paves the way toward a brighter future for Germany’s National Natural Landscapes. With satisfied volunteers who are professionally organized, our parks gain priceless outside input and ideas, along with advocates and multipliers and, of course, new friends!

We would like to express our heartfelt thanks to those who have funded this project, in particular the Heidehof Foundation, which has been involved right from the start, the German Federal Agency for Nature Conservation (BfN) and the German Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety (BMU), the Saxon Regional Conservation Foundation/Conservation Funds, the BINGO! Environmental Lottery, the Nord-

deutsche Stiftung für Umwelt und Entwicklung/NUE (Northern German Foundation for Environment and Development), and the Manfred Hermsen Foundation. Thanks to their collective support, they have made it possible to continuously develop the program. I would also like to extend a special thanks to the park administrations and organizations responsible for the stewardship of Germany’s National Natural Landscapes, and particularly to their volunteer coordinators, who have invested energy and resources in this “common cause” over the past few years. You have made a key contribution toward the success of “Volunteers in Parks”.

Now the challenge is to combine the experience of the past years with the willingness to continue to use the latest volunteer management techniques in the future. This well-established, solid foundation will allow “Volunteers in Parks” to keep on prospering. I invite you all to take part in this challenge for the future – as volunteers, advisors and supporters.



Axel Tscherniak

*Project Leader and Managing Director of
EUROPARC Deutschland*

¹ National Natural Landscapes: an umbrella name, established in 2005, for Germany’s national parks, nature parks and biosphere reserves

² EUROPARC Deutschland 2006

Volunteer management in the National Natural Landscapes

“Volunteering is perhaps our most valuable form of renewable energy.”

European Parliament,
Committee on Regional Development, 2007

Overview of the volunteer program

Previous program phases:

- “Preparatory project for integrating volunteers into the work of Naturwacht Brandenburg (ranger organization in Brandenburg)” (2003)
- Project: “Establishing a volunteer program in German large scale protected areas” (2004-2006)

Current program phase:

Project: “Establishing a Germany-wide volunteer program in large scale protected areas with international diversification”

Time frame:

03/2006–01/2009

Project organizers:

EUROPARC Deutschland e.V.

Project management:

Axel Tscherniak

Project coordination:

Anne Schierenberg

Project partners:

Conservation area management/stewardship organizations, Gesellschaft zur Förderung des Nationalparks Harz (Friends’ Club of the Harz National Park), Akademie für Ehrenamtlichkeit Deutschland (German Academy for Volunteer Work)

Financing:

Heidehof Foundation, the German Federal Agency for Nature Conservation (BfN) with funds from the Federal Environment Ministry (BMU), Saxon Regional Conservation Foundation/Conservation Funds, BINGO! Environmental Lottery, Norddeutsche Stiftung für Umwelt and Entwicklung/NUE (Northern German Foundation for Environment and Development), Manfred Hermsen Foundation

Budget:

608.200,- Euro

Overall objective:

Establishment of a Germany-wide volunteer program similar to the US National Park Service’s Volunteers-in-Parks Program

Specific goals:

- Establish/stabilize and further develop volunteer management structures in Germany’s National Natural Landscapes
- Network the volunteer management of National Natural Landscapes throughout Germany
- Create more opportunities for citizens to actively take part in society and help shape their surroundings, i.e. increase the number and diversity of ways for

potential “Volunteers in Parks” to get involved

- Recruit new active volunteers and advocates for the National Natural Landscapes
- Establish and expand cooperations with schools, mobilize schoolchildren as volunteers and thereby secure the future of volunteer nature conservation
- Establish and expand international cooperations between conservation areas and open up German parks to international volunteer programs
- Integrate additional regional partners, for instance from education, industry and politics, into the volunteer program as part of regional and/or Germany-wide cooperation programs
- Promote public awareness of volunteer management in parks and strengthen the role of nature conservation throughout the German volunteer movement

Methods:

- Conceptual and structural preparation of volunteer management in parks that are new to the program
- Training and professional development for “old” and “new” volunteer coordinators in participating National Natural Landscapes



Fig. 1: The volunteer coordinators of Germany's National Natural Landscapes (Nov. 2006)

From front to back, left to right.

First row:

Imke Zwoc (Wadden Sea NLP of Lower Saxony), Anne Schierenberg (EUROPARC Deutschland), Anne Spiegel (Lower Saxony Elbe Valley Meadows BR);

Second row:

Manuel Krause (Naturwacht Saarland/Bliesgau BR), Uwe Müller (Eichsfeld-Hainich-Werratal NRP), Carolin Mölich (Hainich NLP), Heike Flemming (Lower Oder Valley NLP), Ingo Höhne (Nuthe-Nieplitz NRP);

Third row:

Annett Rabe (Vesser Valley-Thuringian Forest BR), Peter Körber (Hamburg Wadden Sea NLP), Uwe Brückner (Middle Elbe BR), Thomas Kegel (German Academy for Volunteer Work);

Fourth row:

Uwe Ipsen (Lauenburg Lakes NRP), Birgit Kieschnick (Upper Lusatia Moorland BR), Michael Künzel (Erzgebirge/Vogtland NRP), Kerstin Didt (Schaalsee BR), Steffen Küppers (Harz NLP);

Fifth row:

Sabine Wieter (Drömling NRP);

Sixth row:

Martin Kremer (Rhön/Hesse BR), Markus Plate (NRP Teutoburg Forest/Eggegebirge NRP), Annemargret Behrens (EUROPARC Deutschland);

Seventh row:

Rüdiger Biehl (Hainich NLP), Timo Kluttig (TERRA.vita NRP), Stefan Büchner (Southern Black Forest Nature Conservation Center), Sibylle von Hoff (Müritzn NLP), Sabine Stab (Saxon Switzerland NLP Center), Kristina Brendler (Southeast Rügen BR);

Not pictured:

Roland Ertl (Bavarian Forest NLP), Jürgen Herper (Elbe-Brandenburg River Landscape BR), Elfi Laack (Schorfheide-Chorin BR), Matthias Pantelmann (Lüneburg Heath NRP), Jeanett Moszeik (Düben Heath NRP), Silke Ahlborn (Schleswig-Holstein Wadden Sea NLP)

- Definition of new fields of activity and development of new job descriptions for volunteers
- PR work, development and running of advertising campaigns
- Training and assignment of volunteers, recognition of their achievements
- Establishment and expansion of partnerships with schools
- Establishment and expansion of international partnerships
- Evaluation of the volunteer program
- Establishment of structures for long-term financing of the volunteer program
- Ongoing supervision and coordination of the project by EUROPARC Deutschland
- Professional supervision and direction of the project by a coordinating committee, composed of representatives from the participating conservation areas and cooperation partners

Volume of volunteer work:

2006: approx. 1,700 volunteers donated more than 38,000 hours

2007: more than 2,000 volunteers (increase of approx. 17%) donated more than 59,000 hours (increase of approx. 55%)



Participating conservation areas:

Baden-Württemberg:

- Southern Black Forest Nature Conservation Center/Feldberg Nature Conservation Area

Bavaria:

- Bavarian Forest National Park

Brandenburg:

- Elbe-Brandenburg River Landscape Biosphere Reserve
- Schorfheide-Chorin Biosphere Reserve
- Lower Oder Valley National Park
- Nuthe-Nieplitz Nature Park

Hamburg:

- Hamburg Wadden Sea National Park

Hessen:

- Rhön Biosphere Reserve

Mecklenburg-Vorpommern:

- Schaalsee Biosphere Reserve
- Southeast Rügen Biosphere Reserve
- Müritznational Park

Lower Saxony:

- Lower Saxony Elbe Valley Meadows Biosphere Reserve
- Harz National Park
- Wadden Sea National Park of Lower Saxony
- TERRA.vita Nature Park
- Lüneburg Heath Nature Park

North Rhine-Westphalia:

- Teutoburg Forest/Eggegebirge Nature Park

Saarland:

- Bliesgau Biosphere Reserve (Naturwacht Saarland)

Saxony:

- Upper Lusatia Moorland Biosphere Reserve
- Saxon Switzerland National Park Center
- Dübener Heide Nature Park
- Erzgebirge/Vogtland Nature Park

Saxony-Anhalt:

- Middle Elbe Biosphere Reserve
- Drömling Nature Park

Schleswig-Holstein:

- Schleswig-Holstein Wadden Sea National Park
- Lauenburg Lakes Nature Park

Thuringia:

- Vessertal-Thuringian Forest Biosphere Reserve
- Hainich National Park
- Eichsfeld-Hainich-Werratal Nature Park

Awards and honors:

- “Active Citizens of Europe Award”, presented by Volonteurope (October, 2007)
- Official project of the United Nations Decade of Education for Sustainable Development, recognized by the German national committee for the UN Decade (November, 2007)

What is a volunteer activity?

What are its particular qualities?

- It is
- + Voluntary
 - + Unpaid
 - + Oriented toward public welfare
 - + Organized

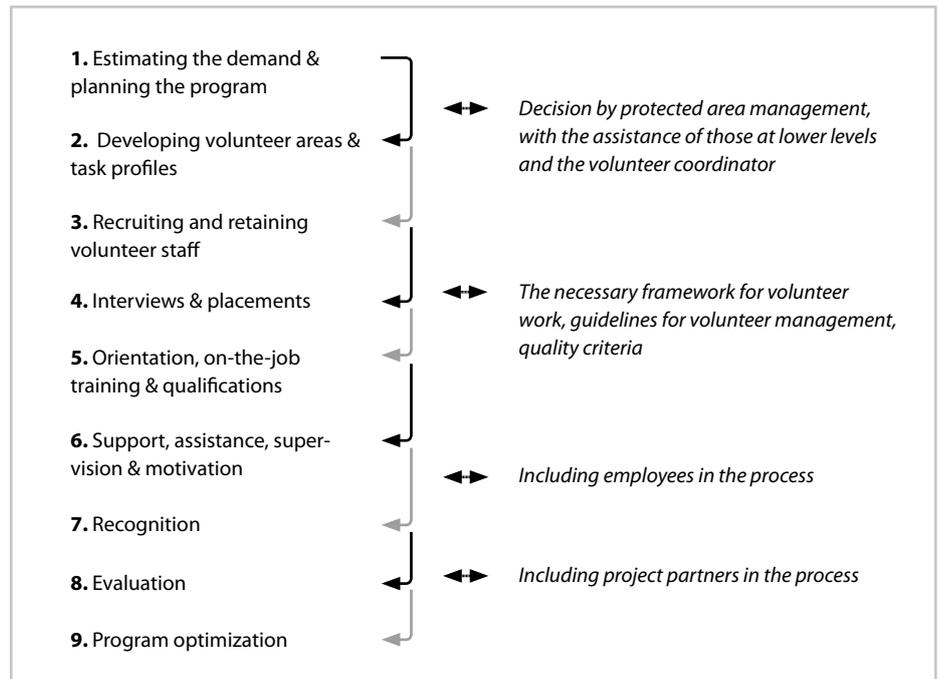
What is volunteer management?

- + Planning, organizing and coordinating volunteer work in an organization
- + Balancing the goals, tasks and interests of the organization with the motivations, expectations, interests and needs of volunteers

3 The German phrase „Freiwilligen-Management“ is a word mark of the German Academy for Volunteer Work (fjs e.V.). For more information, email: akademie@ehrenamt.de

4 For more information (in German) about volunteer management in the National Natural Landscapes, please refer to: EUROPARC Deutschland 2006: Teamarbeit in Großschutzgebieten – Freiwilligenmanagement in Planung und Praxis (Teamwork in large scale protected areas – volunteer management: planning and practice)

Fig. 2: The process model of volunteer management (according to the German Academy for Volunteer Work, 2004)



What is volunteer management in parks?⁴

Why implement volunteer management in the National Natural Landscapes?

Volunteer management is the organizational framework and working method used in the National Natural Landscapes to integrate volunteers into protected area management in a professional manner. But why do the National Natural Landscapes want to integrate volunteers? Because conservation areas and their paid staff receive vital practical assistance from volunteers and volunteers are particularly valuable as park advocates and multipliers. The volunteers also benefit from their activity; volunteering in Germany's national parks, nature parks and biosphere reserves is a great way for them to do something meaningful, meet others with similar values, learn new things and expand their horizons.

How does volunteer management work?

Volunteer management makes use of recognized, tried and tested management techniques, including formulating tasks and goals, implementing measures to achieve them, obtaining and deploying resources, evaluating results and optimizing management (see Fig. 2). But strategic planning also requires flexibility. After all, we are dealing with people who want to contribute their own ideas and have a say in things.

What are „Volunteers in Parks“ in Germany and what do they do?

“Volunteers in Parks” are people of all ages, male and female, with diverse qualifications, skills and interests, who perform volunteer work in Germany's National Natural Landscapes. Their assignments may be one-time, sporadic or ongoing in nature, and they typically originate from “their” protected area or its surroundings. Occasionally they come from completely different regions in Germany or even from abroad.

The volunteers often sign up as individuals, but groups – particularly from schools and companies – also perform volunteer work in the National Natural Landscapes. “Volunteers in Parks” work in the following fields:

-  Practical species and biotope conservation: e.g., installing and inspecting amphibian fencing, mowing meadows, planting and caring for trees
-  Nature observation: e.g., mapping flowers, counting various animal species, work in research projects
-  PR work/environmental education: e.g., leading field trips, staffing visitor information centers, planning and carrying out programs for groups of children and youth
-  Monitoring/upkeep of visitor facilities: e.g., maintaining nature trail stations and rest areas, adopting nature and hiking trails
-  Office work: e.g., data entry and analysis, press relations, (photo) archiving

What makes it work, and what causes problems?

Experience with the volunteer program shows that certain conditions promote or hinder the success of volunteer management in the National Natural Landscapes.

Productive conditions include:

- Appointment of a volunteer coordinator who is familiar, accepted and well-qualified within the protected area
- Volunteer coordinator supported by protected area management and other paid staff
- Clearly defined areas of assignment and activities for volunteers
- Regular contact between protected areas and volunteers
- Sharing experiences among protected areas
- Individual support from the protected areas in organizational and content-related issues; step-by-step instructions and coordination by the project organizers

Unproductive conditions include:

- Ambiguous legal and financial frameworks
- Lack of authority for the volunteer coordinator
- Lack of support for the volunteer coordinator by protected area management and other paid staff
- Shortage of time on the part of the volunteer coordinator

Guidelines for working with “Volunteers in Parks” in the National Natural Landscapes

Goals and tasks of the National Natural Landscapes

As mandated by law, the fundamental goal of management and stewardship organizations responsible for the National Natural Landscapes⁵ is to protect, maintain and develop Germany’s most valuable landscapes. The primary tasks of the National Natural Landscapes are to promote nature conservation, sustainable land use, education for sustainable development, ecologically sound tourism, and environmentally and socially responsible regional development, and enlist the support of the general population in these areas.

The National Natural Landscapes participating in the “Volunteers in Parks” program are convinced that integrating volunteers into protected area management significantly helps them fulfill their responsibilities, as described above, and achieve their goals.

Quality standards for national parks – cooperations and partners

Volunteer management:

Germany’s National parks welcome cooperating with volunteers as a way of enriching their activities and solidifying the regional standing of their conservation areas. The conservation areas offer opportunities for people of various ages, training, skills, and interests. Volunteer management involves providing professional support and organization, integrating volunteers into the team of paid staff and acknowledging the achievements of those who donate their time and effort.

(Results of the research and development project “Entwicklung von Qualitätskriterien und -standards für deutsche Nationalparks” (Developing quality criteria and standards for German national parks), June, 2008)

⁵ Hereafter also referred to simply as „National Natural Landscapes“ or „protected areas“; organizations responsible for the National Natural Landscapes include state governments, municipal authorities and associations.

Definition of “Volunteers in Parks”

“Volunteers in Parks” are people who, in cooperation with the respective protected area, donate their time, skills and knowledge to support the conservation area in its activities..

Volunteers

- Decide for themselves how to get involved because they are interested in and enjoy a certain activity
- May work on an ongoing basis or on a specific project, for a limited time or indefinitely, by arrangement
- Act independently within the framework agreed upon with the respective protected area
- Are not paid for their work (reimbursement of out-of-pocket expenses is not payment)

The role of “Volunteers in Parks”

- Volunteers provide a valuable link between management/organizations responsible for protected areas and society. Thanks to their backgrounds and personal interests, this gives rise to a lively interplay among administrative actions, societal interests, the population, other institutions and developments in the region.
- Volunteers make it possible for conservation areas to carry out additional or more extensive activities and projects by donating their time and expertise as additional unpaid workers.
- Volunteers are key advocates and multipliers for “their” conservation area and serve as role models in society.
- The “outside perspective” of volunteers provides management and organizations responsible for the National Natural Landscapes with helpful feedback on their actions and identity. Their unique understanding, insights

and ideas enrich the ways that paid staff approach their work.

- Volunteers are not a stopgap measure. They complement the activities of paid staff but are no replacement for them. They may not be used to reduce costs or eliminate staff.

Volunteer management in the National Natural Landscapes

- Professional volunteer management enables the National Natural Landscapes to fulfill their responsibility to society and promote citizen involvement in their spheres of action.
- The National Natural Landscapes active in the volunteer program see professional volunteer management as an integral component of protected area management. It is one of their key areas of activity in the context of education for sustainable development.
- Professional volunteer management is an indispensable basis for working with volunteers and a prerequisite for reaping long-term benefits from the cooperation, both for the protected area and paid staff as well the volunteers and society at large.
- Only with the proper structures and programs in place can the protected areas provide individuals and groups of various ages, levels of qualification, skills and interests with attractive opportunities to personally contribute to the positive development of the National Natural Landscapes while uniquely experiencing the characteristics of the respective protected area as “participants”. Thanks to professional volunteer management, protected areas ensure meaningful volunteer assignments, the necessary support and information, opportunities for

learning and personal development, and recognition for the achievements of volunteers.

- Collegial interaction between paid staff and volunteers forms the basis for successful volunteer management.
- As a permanent element of their conservation area management, the National Natural Landscapes continuously invest in volunteer management structures and processes, particularly in the form of human resources, materials and funding. This includes assisting volunteer coordinators by supporting them conceptually and practically in their responsibilities and helping them develop and expand their skills in volunteer management.
- Conservation areas active in the volunteer program see networking with other parks in the umbrella organization of EUROPARC Deutschland as an essential component of volunteer management that allows them to take advantage of synergistic effects, learn from the experience of other National Natural Landscapes and achieve greater public awareness.

Last update: Dec. 12, 2008

Education and “Volunteers in Parks”

“The real purpose of learning is not knowledge, but action.”

Herbert Spencer (1820–1903), English philosopher and sociologist

What does volunteer work have to do with education?

It is often said that we live in a knowledge society. But what does that mean for our education at a time when knowledge increases exponentially within just a few years and, at the same time, becomes obsolete more quickly than ever before?

“Lifelong learning” is a highly promising approach to this situation, and one that is increasingly gaining in importance. Furthermore, it is becoming increasingly clear that, instead of detailed specialized knowledge,

people need specialized skills – skills that allow them to recognize tasks and problems in context, use interdisciplinary approaches, acquire and select specific information, develop ideas to meet challenges and apply these ideas to everyday situations. But education involves more than just learning about strategies and work methods. It also focuses on social learning. This includes, for example, the ability to communicate, cooperate and work in a team. It also entails developing special sensitivities and learning how to act both independently and responsibly. What role does volunteer involvement play here? Volunteer work requires the

above-mentioned competencies and, at the same time, offers an opportunity to put them to use – and this is true at every age. In short, volunteer work educates people throughout their lives.

Education for sustainable development and “Volunteers in Parks”

For a number of years, the concept of “education for sustainable development” has demonstrated that learning is about more than absorbing specialized knowledge. The United Nations has proclaimed the period 2005-2014 as the UN Decade of Education

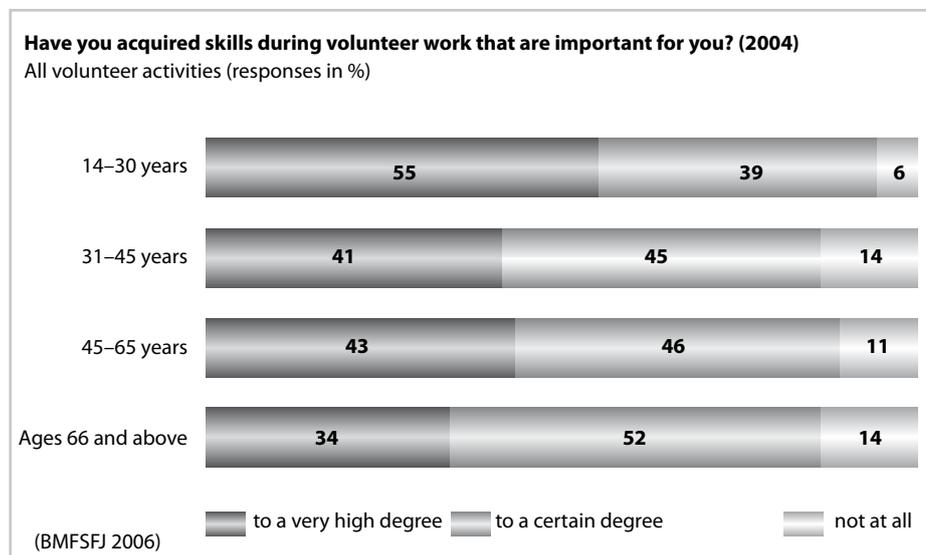


Fig. 3: Photo of schoolchildren from Grossengottern elementary school exploring areas that they have adopted in the Hainich National Park.



for Sustainable Development. During this decade, it is aiming to establish the ideas and principles of sustainable development in all areas of education.

What types of institutions are required here? Of course traditional educational institutions, from elementary schools to universities, are the first that come to mind, but schools that offer adult education and – with increasing importance – all actors in what is known as “non-formal education” and “informal education” also play a large role (see box).

Germany’s National Natural Landscapes have an educational mandate, which falls into the areas of non-formal and informal education. Protected areas achieve an impact on their target groups to a certain degree with traditional forms of learning, and to certain degree as a “byproduct” of an activity that primarily serves other purposes. One example of this is the volunteer program. Although the primary aim of the program is to recruit “helping hands” for the parks, the volunteer program also has a diverse educational impact and thus overlaps in many ways with the UN Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (see page 12.)

What is the objective of “education for sustainable development”?

Education for sustainable development (...) aims to empower people to actively shape an ecologically sound, economically effective and socially equitable environment, taking into account global aspects. (German Federal Ministry of Education and Research, 2002)

What is lifelong learning?

It encompasses all formal, non-formal and informal learning at various learning venues, from early childhood to – and including – the retirement phase. The word “learning” is understood here as the constructive processing of information and experiences to engender knowledge, insights and competencies. (Bund-Länder Commission for Educational Planning and Research Promotion, 2004)

What is non-formal education?

Non-formal education is defined as long-term organized education that does not necessarily follow the tiered system of formal education. It can be conveyed both inside and outside of schools and is intended for individuals of all ages. (Swiss Commission for UNESCO, 2008)

What is informal education?

Informal learning is defined as learning processes that take place in daily life, without clearly formulated objectives. This is a lifelong learning process in which all individuals develop approaches, values, competencies and knowledge that are based on their experiences and the educational influences and resources in their surroundings, including their family and neighbors, work and play, markets, libraries and media. (Swiss Commission for UNESCO, 2008)

Elements of education for sustainable development – their role in the volunteer program

	ROLE IN THE VOLUNTEER PROGRAM
LEARNING BY INTEGRATING AN OPEN-MINDED APPROACH WITH BROADER HORIZONS	The combination of enthusiastic people from diverse social groups, age groups, etc. with the “culture” of the protected areas promotes among all participants openness to other points of view and the mutual learning required to achieve collective (work) results.
FORESIGHTED THINKING AND ACTION	Full-time and volunteer staff in protected areas are oriented toward long-term developments aimed at maintaining and, if possible, enhancing the ecological (and, to some extent, economic) and social value of the landscape. This entails farsighted thinking and action.
GAINING INTERDISCIPLINARY INSIGHT AND TAKING ACTION	Thanks to their wide range of vocational skills and other qualifications and competencies, volunteers add to the expertise and expand the range of options available to the protected areas. Supported by the structures of the volunteer program, the combined efforts of full-time and volunteer staff provide lessons in interdisciplinary cooperation.
COLLECTIVE PLANNING AND ACTION	Full-time and volunteer staff contribute their skills and knowledge toward achieving shared objectives, which fosters collective planning and action.
PARTICIPATING IN DECISION-MAKING PROCESSES	Volunteers participate by selecting their activities and the extent of their involvement and shaping their activity to suit their own interests, abilities and skills. They also participate in internal park meetings and task forces, supervise new volunteers, and contribute to the further conceptual development of the program, for example, during the annual assessment of the volunteer working season. Thanks to their close contacts with the project organizers, volunteer coordinators have a direct influence on the program (strategic planning, content of further education, development of working aids, etc.) and independently implement the program inside the park.
MOTIVATING OTHERS TO BECOME ACTIVE	At regular professional development courses, volunteer coordinators receive additional qualifications and support in motivating volunteers. They then pass this on to others in the protected areas, for example, to other full-time or volunteer staff who supervise new volunteers.
REFLECTING ON THEIR OWN IDEALS AND THOSE OF OTHERS	Regular continuing professional development for volunteer coordinators help them crystallize their own expectations, goals, etc. and those of the volunteers. Thanks to their activities, volunteers are exposed to new points of view (of the protected areas, other volunteers). This encourages them to examine their own ideals and those of others.
INDEPENDENTLY PLANNING AND TAKING ACTION	Regular professional development courses enable volunteer coordinators to independently plan and take action within the scope of volunteer management in their conservation areas. Depending on the agreed range of tasks, volunteers are given an opportunity to independently plan and take action. At the same time, they receive support from the volunteer coordinators.
SHOWING EMPATHY AND SOLIDARITY WITH DISADVANTAGED INDIVIDUALS	Disadvantaged groups (for example, the unemployed, people with a low level of education, etc.) are given equal opportunities in the volunteer program. Full-time staff members experience how important it is to value these individuals and, thanks to this experience and the project organizers, learn how to stand side by side with disadvantaged groups.
MOTIVATING ONESELF TO GET INVOLVED	Professional development courses for volunteer coordinators also focus on people’s own motivational factors and encourage them to explore what can be achieved through self-motivation. Experiences in volunteer management help volunteers become more familiar with their own motivational factors and pursue ideal conditions in the future.

Getting schoolchildren involved – school outreach projects within the volunteer program of the National Natural Landscapes

The volunteer program in the National Natural Landscapes allows individuals to volunteer their services and use this involvement as a non-formal educational opportunity. However, the program can also be linked to formal education – usually with schools. This is an easy and practical way for children and young people to help out in “their” protected areas. At the same time, the volunteer work fosters young people’s education.

Learning volunteering at an early age

Anyone who engages in volunteer work at an early age is more likely to volunteer their services to non-profit organizations later on in life. Half of all volunteers in Germany have already worked as volunteers before they reached the age of 20. Many of them take on volunteer positions at an early age (see Picot 2001).

Role models, but also targeted measures, underscore the importance of social issues and the willingness to do something for the common good and take responsibility for oneself and for others. In addition to families, schools can contribute a great deal toward helping young people develop this willingness and the required skills. Aside from providing contact to an important age group, what makes schools special is that they have access to all social groups and strata. If volunteer work is promoted here, it ensures that providing community services does not evolve into a privilege of the “socially advantaged.”

Involving schoolchildren in volunteer work as a complementary activity to traditional classroom instruction is becoming increasingly important in Germany, partly because many schools in Germany are moving to a full-day format. A wide range of experiences have been gained abroad, for example, in the



Fig. 4: Photo of students from Rosslau High School removing rubble that has been illegally dumped in the Middle Elbe Biosphere Reserve

“It goes without saying that schoolchildren have to be able to read, write, do arithmetic and understand cause and effect. They have to be able to use modern media, master foreign languages and much more. All of this is important, and yet it’s still not enough. We face social changes which require that each and every one of us exercise a new degree of personal responsibility, self-determination and solidarity. Only those who have learned to get involved and take responsibility for themselves, as well as for the community, – only those who dare to tackle unsolved problems and, together with others, venture into new territory will be prepared to meet the challenges of our modern society.”

Ursula von der Leyen, German Federal Minister for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth, 2007



Fig. 5: Photo of school-children experiencing nature first-hand along the banks of their adopted stream, the Schilde, in the Schaalsee Biosphere Reserve

US, where “service learning” – integrating volunteer work into school instruction – has already been incorporated into the curriculum, and to a certain extent in the UK. Similar initiatives have been launched in Baden-Württemberg and in selected schools across Germany.

But schools and families should not be alone in promoting volunteer work for young people. Other groups and organizations, including companies, associations and cultural institutions, should also see themselves as sharing responsibility for the education of the young people in their surroundings. Both sides – schools and potential partners – should venture to broaden their horizons and be prepared to jointly test new approaches.

Types of cooperation and benefits for the cooperation partners

There is an extremely wide range of types of cooperation that protected areas can establish with schools. These include:

- Project-related or long-term cooperations, such as campaign days, project weeks and sponsorships
- Activities as part of school instruction or outside the time spent at school
- Involving study groups, entire classes or the entire school, in some cases with the participation of parents, siblings, etc.
- Arts and crafts, scientific or public relations activities by the schoolchildren

In principle, all types of schools, from elementary schools to high schools, are suitable for collaborations with protected areas in the volunteer program.

“Systematic cooperation with extracurricular partners enhances the opportunities and options available for educational work in schools. This makes it possible to expand the range of issues addressed, and it can also foster competencies that are primarily acquired at non-school learning venues and programs. (...) In addition to civil society organizations and scientific institutions, companies are key cooperation partners of education for sustainable development. Cooperation programs with these partners can, within the scope of education for sustainable development, lead to the development of school partnerships, student companies and jointly run projects and campaigns.”

Standing Conference of the Ministers for Education and Cultural Affairs of the Länder of the Federal Republic of Germany (KMK) and the German Commission for UNESCO (DUK) 2007

The National Natural Landscapes and schools in the volunteer program – the benefits of cooperation projects

Benefits for schoolchildren

- Ensuring that school days are more eventful and exciting
- Taking pleasure in being able to actively change their surroundings according to their own convictions (schoolchildren generally WANT to get involved; see Picot 2006)
- Enjoying a growing sense of community in the class, study group, etc.
- Creating incentives to develop an interest in certain issues and areas of focus, thus helping to develop personal and vocational orientation, contacts for internships, training, etc.
- (Further) developing – also from mutual learning – social competencies and key qualifications (ability to engage in teamwork, communication and problem-solving skills, independence, leadership and management competencies, developing empathy, a sense of responsibility, reliability, etc.) that are helpful in later training and professional life
- More intensively and sustainably absorbing knowledge through learning by doing, testing themselves in real-life situations that are appropriate for their age group, and gaining opportunities to apply this knowledge in concrete situations and experiencing the impact of their own actions

Benefits for the National Natural Landscapes

- Launching effective initiatives to fulfill their own educational mission
- Mobilizing young people and raising their awareness for issues that concern the conservation areas (and, to a certain extent, raising the awareness of their parents), and enlisting schoolchildren as the next generation in volunteer nature conservation
- Enriching conservation area work thanks to the schoolchildren’s and teachers’ impartial and unbiased points of view, fresh ideas, energy and enthusiasm
- Receiving practical support from schoolchildren, teachers, parents etc. in nature conservation and environmental education projects
- Strengthening the conservation area’s foundation in the region
- Enhancing public awareness and media interest and creating an increasingly positive image for the conservation area

Benefits for schools

- Enriching the atmosphere and learning at the schools thanks to a stronger connection to the social setting “at their doorstep” and a more practically-oriented approach to teaching; learning venues and programs in school settings add to the range of issues addressed and methods used in teaching; a “school” evolves to become a diversely networked “learning center” (see Deutscher Bundestag, 2002)
- Receiving practical and non-material support for the planning and implementation of new forms of learning and learning projects thanks to the addition of new members of the “school community,” for example, protected areas in which schoolchildren can familiarize themselves with volunteer fields and forms of volunteering and where volunteer roles can be tried out and practiced
- Enjoying an improved school climate and learning atmosphere thanks to enhanced social competencies and increased learning motivation among the schoolchildren and their stronger identification with the school
- Boosting the school’s image and enhancing the quality of the school; this ensures people’s loyalty to the school and helps attract new students and parents (particularly important in rural areas with an increasing lack of schoolchildren as a result of demographic changes)



Fig. 6: Photo of students from Lindenberg high school in Ilmenau mowing and raking hay on a mountain meadow near Breitenbach in the Vesser Valley-Thuringian Forest Biosphere Reserve

Requirements for successful cooperation programs with protected areas and schools

Mutual understanding and transparency

Schools and protected areas each have their own working methods and approaches. When they collaborate on projects, this can quickly give rise to prejudices, skepticism of other working methods, misunderstandings and disappointments. In order to prevent this, it is important not only to be genuinely willing to accept the new partner and the new tasks, but also to recognize and address the differences. The perspectives of diverse professions and skills have to be mutually recognized and appreciated as productive and stimulating. Furthermore, the participants should clearly define what they expect from each other and what the individual partners can and would like to contribute to the cooperation project. What do the partners hope to gain from the collaboration? What is the guiding educational and methodological concept for the work? Where are problems likely to arise?

Obligations and commitments

A high degree of personal and ongoing commitment is needed on both sides. This is where the motivation of the staff of the National Natural Landscapes and the teachers plays an important role. Outstanding school cooperation programs only succeed thanks to personally motivated key individuals and continuity among the personnel. For long-term cooperation programs, it is also essential to firmly establish the collaboration in the structures and work processes of the schools and conservation areas (“institutionalization”).

Work organization

From the perspective of the National Natural Landscapes, it is often difficult to introduce conservation projects into the school’s daily routine. Concrete activities are severely restricted by strict curricula, tight class schedules, and reductions in the number of years attending school. Over the long term, policymakers, school administrations and extracurricular partner organizations have to work together to remove such obstacles. Once the required conditions for a coop-

eration have been clarified, the tasks and responsibilities should be clearly established to avoid any conflicts. Ideally, this division of labor is laid down in the form of a cooperation agreement between the partners. To ensure the ongoing success of the project, it is extremely important to keep the lines of communication open between the school administration and the staff members of the park administration.

Financial resources and logistics

Since the volunteer locations in the National Natural Landscapes are often difficult to reach with public transit, it is usually necessary to organize transportation for the schoolchildren. The involvement of parents and grandparents should also be taken into consideration here. Additional costs will be incurred for equipment, tools, seeds and seedlings, specialized literature, etc., and financing for these items needs to be secured, possibly from sponsors.

Focus

The main focus of the collaboration is on the needs of the schoolchildren. So it is important to recognize their motivations, expectations, needs, skills and abilities, along with their fears and concerns, and to take these into account when planning and implementing projects.

What do young people (ages 14-24) expect from their volunteer activities? They expect that:

- The activities will be fun
- They will interact with nice people
- They will be able to expand their own knowledge and experience
- They will be able to help other people
- They will be able to do something for the common good
- They will take on responsibilities and have opportunities to make decisions
- They will also receive recognition for their activities
- They can pursue justified personal interests
- The activities will also improve their career opportunities
- They can thus also use this to tackle and find solutions to their own problems (see Picot, 2006; rated according to importance)

In order for projects with schoolchildren to be successful, it is necessary to offer them opportunities and place demands on them that are appropriate for their age group. To help motivate them, the tasks and expectations should be clearly defined. It is helpful to establish a connection to current issues. Endless, monotonous activities should be avoided. The schoolchildren should also be taken seriously and be allowed to face challenges on their own. Concrete results and independent achievements are important and motivating experiences – and they boost children’s level of involvement.

Demands placed on the partners in school cooperation programs

Both cooperating partners – schools and protected areas – need to meet each other halfway to achieve a productive collaboration. It is necessary both to make resources available and rethink their own routines – and alter them if required.

Examples of what schools need to do:

- Expand their own educational mission to go beyond imparting theoretical knowledge and focus on promoting social competencies and a sense of community; teachers then see it as their job to accompany and facilitate learning processes and create opportunities that link the experiences – which the schoolchildren have gained within the scope of the cooperation project – with classroom instruction
- Launch a school development process: Make “learning to be involved” a key mission of the school and not just treat it as an afterthought to an otherwise unchanged routine, i.e., recruit participants, adapt work structures and processes, clarify the allocation of responsibilities and, if possible, locate sponsors and/or apply for grants and manage the projects, etc.
- Share the responsibility for education with other people and institutions; recognize that there are outside knowledge and skills, which are important for the school
- Recognize and integrate non-school partners as permanent, valuable and reliable elements of school life, and not just as service providers; join forces with them to develop new forms of learning; regard them as equals and support them
- Recruit a teacher (or a number of teachers) who would like to assume the responsibility of acting as a “key person” and is capable of creating a positive working atmosphere between the project partners, generate enthusi-

asm for the project and enable a sense of achievement for the schoolchildren (both short and long-term); acknowledge and support the activities of this person

Demands placed on the National Natural Landscapes include:

- Determine suitable volunteer fields and activities for school cooperation programs, which depend, for example, on the specific environmental and organizational conditions in the conservation area, and thus define coherent demands placed on the cooperation partners
- Prepare for special requirements and interests of the schools, which, for example, depend on the type of school, the social background and age of the schoolchildren, the planned type of cooperation, etc.
- Create a realistic budget for the planned activities (this must be allocated to the National Natural Landscapes by the appropriate authorities in order to work successfully)
- Select a main responsible figure in the protected area with sufficient time and educational qualifications who is capable of creating a positive working atmosphere between the project partners, generating enthusiasm for the project, conveying an appreciation for nature, and enabling a sense of achievement for the schoolchildren (both short and long-term); the selected person should act as a long-term contact for the schoolchildren and be at their disposal; acknowledge and support the activities of this person

School cooperations in the volunteer program – practical example 1

Vesser Valley-Thuringian Forest Biosphere Reserve: Project week with Lindenberg high school in Ilmenau

(Annett Rabe)

BACKGROUND

Without maintenance, there would be no meadows. In the 1960s, the agricultural sector engaged in more intensive use of land and, as a result, farmers stopped using many marshes and smaller mountain meadows, which provide a habitat for a wide range of species. Natural vegetation, such as shrubs and bushes, gradually returned and a number of these areas slowly returned to forestland. In order to maintain the existing meadows in the biosphere reserve, we therefore have to do more than just protect them. Such initiatives only make sense if they go hand-in-hand with usage designed to maintain their current state. To this end, maintenance contracts are concluded and funding is made available to support the farms. When it comes to particularly valuable areas, the administration staff assume responsibility for the maintenance. On the topic of collaborating with schools, the administration of the biosphere reserve also cooperates with other schools in the region, although this tends to be of a traditional nature within the framework of project days for elementary school children. Nevertheless, close cooperation with individual schools ensures that contacts are established with the same children on a number of occasions – laying the cornerstone for additional cooperations in the future, for example, as volunteers!

GOALS

The purpose of conducting project days and volunteer activities with schoolchildren is to provide participants with access to nature. Moreover, it allows young people to cultivate and re-structure social contacts in a different environment, test their own limits and experience things outside of the everyday school routine. Volunteer projects also help protect and maintain mountain meadows.

ESTABLISHING CONTACT WITH THE SCHOOL/ LAUNCHING THE COOPERATION

- Autumn 2006: A biology teacher called the administration of the biosphere reserve
- Project week approved for July 9-13, 2007
- April 2007: in-house coordination of possible fields of application
- May 2007: action plan coordinated with the school
- June 2007: schedule for the week elaborated, insurance issues clarified

ACTIVITIES OF THE STUDENTS

- Monday: project week introduced, working on the moors
- Tuesday: meadow maintenance
- Wednesday: meadow maintenance and peeling spruce
- Thursday: excursion through the area, awarding certificates
- Friday: impact of project week within the school assessed

OUTCOME

- The schoolchildren and their teacher were highly motivated
- The in-house technical staff reacted positively to the collaboration
- The press showed a great deal of interest in the project
- Awarding certificates: the schoolchildren were pleasantly surprised and proud
- A positive outcome of the week is the desire to repeat this type of volunteer work again with other schoolchildren

Organizing school cooperations

(according to Strenger, 2006)

1. How can I get my foot in the door?

Non-school partners generally first try calling the school to set up an appointment. This first step is often rather difficult because you cannot get past the school secretary, who screens access to the busy school principal. Nonetheless – don't give up, remain flexible and accept an appointment for a phone conversation, even if the time of day seems a bit odd at first, for example, 8:35 a.m., because that is precisely when the children have recess. You can also try to recruit the teachers who focus on the subject areas concerned. It is important to underscore your own expertise, what you are offering, and the benefits for the schoolchildren.

2. The first meeting

Everyone is working under a tight schedule, so it is important to be well prepared. Your own objectives should be presented in a highly structured manner. This includes putting your own expectations into words. Cooperation partners have something to give and would like to receive something in return, and both of these aspects should be clarified right at the beginning.

3. The cooperation agreement

If the cooperation partners are of the same mind, they should at any rate conclude a written agreement covering the objectives, framework, controlling, design, use of space, materials and specifics. It is a good idea to finalize this in a festive atmosphere to underscore the special importance of the collaboration.

How can we acknowledge the schoolchildren’s volunteer work?

A personal commitment to community services definitely deserves recognition. Young people in particular feel a sense of accomplishment and recognition when they receive:

- Certificates and similar documents that they can use later in professional life
- ID cards, passes, documents
- Small presents, vouchers or mementos that relate to the work done
- PR activities, for example, writing articles in the newspaper, receiving congratulations from celebrities and making use of opportunities to publicly present their own activities and accomplishments

Young people are generally more motivated by short-term rewards for their volunteer work than by long-term recognition.

Further reading online:

- www.servicelearning.de
Service learning network – learning through volunteer work
- www.transfer-21.de
Transfer-21 program, Free University of Berlin, Department of Educational Future Studies; education oriented toward the concept of sustainability
- www.blk-demokratie.de
“Living and Learning Democracy” program of the Bund-Länder Commission for Educational Planning and Research Promotion

School cooperations in the volunteer program – practical example 2

Schaalsee Biosphere Reserve: The Friedensring elementary school in Wittenburg adopts a stream

(Wolfram Lindenkreuz)

BACKGROUND

The section of the Schilde stream that is located in the biosphere reserve is being restored to its natural state. The project’s acceptance is boosted by additional multipliers from the region.

OBJECTIVES

- The schoolchildren are to be involved in the planning, education and implementation process (in addition to stakeholders such as owners, users etc.).
- In keeping with the principles of education for sustainable development, the project aims to foster the competencies of the schoolchildren, including:
 - Thinking ahead
 - Remaining open to new prospects
 - Thinking and acting in an interdisciplinary manner
 - Planning and acting in a way that is oriented toward sustainability
 - Showing commitment
 - Motivating oneself and others
 - Reflecting cultural models

ESTABLISHING CONTACT WITH THE SCHOOL/ LAUNCHING THE COOPERATION

At the outset of the Schilde project, the administrative office in charge of the Schaalsee Biosphere Reserve contacted the Wittenburg elementary school because the restoration measures were to take place within the school’s catchment area. The immediate proximity of the restoration project, and the practical instruction that this entailed, encouraged the elementary school teachers to enter into a cooperation agreement. They adopted the Schilde stream in June, 2005.

ACTIVITIES OF THE STUDENTS

Each third-grade class agrees to adopt the Schilde for a period of two years. This includes:

- Conducting worksite inspections
- Participating in beaver excursions
- Planting new vegetation
- Monitoring fish populations
- Conducting water studies
- Designing an exhibition
- Building a micro wastewater treatment plant

OUTCOME

- Received positive feedback from both the schoolchildren and their teachers.
- The adopt-a-stream project was honored with the 2006 environmental award of the district of Ludwigslust.
- The regional media reported favorably on the adoption project.
- Factors contributing to the success of project include:
 - The motivation of the schoolchildren to take responsibility for “their” Schilde
 - The motivation of the teachers to use this extra instructional activity
 - The motivation of the biosphere reserve administration to engage in education for sustainable development over an extended period
 - Staff continuity in biosphere reserve management
 - Funding/logistics

School cooperations in the volunteer program – practical example 3

Middle Elbe Biosphere Reserve: Project days with Rosslau high school

(Uwe Brückner)

BACKGROUND

The Middle Elbe Biosphere Reserve is the only large scale protected area of its kind in Germany that features a typical stretch of river landscape. The goal is to preserve the appearance of the flood-plain meadows and forests along a near-natural winding river course.

OBJECTIVES

- The idea is to bring children and young people on board as future multipliers who will carry on with the idea of the biosphere reserve.
- They are to convince their future fellow citizens to adopt a (more) sensible approach to nature; these young people (hopefully) will pave the way to a brighter future for our society.
- In today's general climate of increasing apathy and lack of motivation, there is an expectation that those who "have been with us" will acquire – and have acquired – an appreciation for their surroundings (in other words, I can only love and protect what I understand). Nevertheless, there is often a sense of helplessness when searching for ways to capture young people's interest.
- Schoolchildren should get involved of their own volition and work in a team (interest of the school, the teachers).
- Schoolchildren acquire a greater sense of self-esteem and the feeling that they have done something good.

ESTABLISHING CONTACT WITH THE SCHOOL/ LAUNCHING THE COOPERATION

At first, the biosphere reserve sent letters of invitation to all schools in the region, which prompted a request submitted by Rosslau high school.

ACTIVITIES OF THE STUDENTS

Within the scope of the project days, students in the 11th and 12th grades can voluntarily opt to take part in an ecology day at the biosphere reserve (alternative activities include, for example, watching a film), which includes practical activities on the Elbe meadows, such as:

- Replanting and maintaining the oak groves to restore the appearance of the Dessau-Wörlitzer Gardens
- Renovating fences surrounding tree plantings in the soft and hardwood meadows
- Removing refuse and debris after floods

OUTCOME

- A high degree of satisfaction with the young people's interest in nature and the biosphere reserve.
- Particular dissatisfaction with the fact that teachers often think that they can just drop off their students and kick back and relax all day long.
- The schools need to realize that such initiatives are excellent advertising for their school (within the context of school closings).



Fig. 7: Photo of schoolchildren from the Friedensring elementary school inspecting their adopted stream, the Schilde, in the Schaalsee Biosphere Reserve



Fig. 8: Photo of members of the youth volunteer group in Hainich National Park monitoring a device designed to lure wildcats.



School cooperations in the volunteer program – practical example 4

Hainich National Park: Sponsorship schools

(Carolin Mölich)

BACKGROUND

Sponsorships help prompt schools to conduct independent work activities in – and for – the national park. The schools' study results are added to the research work of the national park. The sponsorships are deliberately arranged with schools (eight elementary schools, two combined lower and intermediate secondary schools and one high school) in order to ensure a long-term collaboration. This has sparked so much interest in sponsoring an area in the park (with supervision by the park staff) that the personnel simply cannot keep pace with the demand.

OBJECTIVES

- Promote the development of a non-school learning venue
- Engender an understanding of complex natural systems
- Offer opportunities to gain practical experience
- Foster a willingness to cooperate within the school groups and engage in volunteer work
- Help develop a feeling of responsibility for our environment

ESTABLISHING CONTACT WITH THE SCHOOL/ LAUNCHING THE COOPERATION

Contact has existed for years via school study groups focusing on the area of the national park and environmental education. The sponsorship forests were officially assigned to 11 schools in the summer of 2007.

ACTIVITIES OF THE STUDENTS

Environmental studies of the sponsorship areas (forests, meadows, ponds etc.) based on "work contracts" awarded by the national park administration, e.g:

- Mapping meadow plants
- Mapping tree species and forest composition
- Documenting transitional processes
- Documenting water levels
- Photographic documentation of sponsorship areas
- Writing annual research reports on the sponsorship areas

Note:

Depending on the school, the activities of the schools within the scope of the sponsorship program either take place on individual days or regularly and in connection with regular instruction.

OUTCOME

The first annual meeting took place in September, 2008. The schools have presented the initial results of their research and experiences in the sponsorship forests, demonstrating impressive accomplishments and a wide diversity of approaches. After only one year, many schools already strongly identified with "their" small piece of the national park.

School cooperations in the volunteer program – practical example 5

Bliesgau Biosphere Reserve: Meadow orchards project with the Bellevue comprehensive school from Saarbrücken

(Manuel Krause, Naturwacht Saarland)

BACKGROUND

Meadow orchards are a prominent element of the cultural landscape in the Bliesgau Biosphere Reserve. Many years ago, meadow orchards were planted around villages in Germany. Many of these are now endangered or have disappeared altogether due to new housing construction, lack of maintenance, land consolidation and similar developments.

Before the school project was launched, many of these orchards were in extremely poor shape, with thick bushes growing up around nearly all the trees. Over half of the fruit trees needed to be replaced with new saplings.

To pave the way for the project, a license agreement was signed between the owner and the Bellevue comprehensive school in Saarbrücken. The project was supervised by the Naturwacht Saarland (ranger organisation) and the biosphere's association.

OBJECTIVES

- Students (all from the state capital, Saarbrücken) were to be given an opportunity to gain new experience, work outdoors and, at the end of each job, see what they have accomplished and thus enhance their level of motivation during their daily school routine.
- Thanks to the maintenance and care of meadow orchards close to the city, valuable work in nature conservation was to be performed for the biosphere reserve.

ESTABLISHING CONTACT WITH THE SCHOOL/ LAUNCHING THE COOPERATION

The school approached the biosphere association, which then contacted the Naturwacht Saarland. The collaboration began in September, 2008 and is planned to continue until 2013. The launch went well. There was a meeting on location with the Naturwacht staff members, the class and the teachers involved in the project. On another occasion, the class went to the location on its own. A schedule has been drawn up for 2009 with all the agreed maintenance activities and other deadlines.

ACTIVITIES OF THE STUDENTS

A school class with approximately 10-15 students is taking part in this project. The group's activities include:

- Caring for the old orchard trees
- Removing dead fruit trees
- Planting old types of fruit trees
- Mowing the meadows and removing the cut grass

OUTCOME

Anyone working in a protected area who would like to engage in a school project like this should budget sufficient time, since teachers require adequate support, especially at the beginning of the project. Experience to date has revealed that the most effective approach involves allowing the school to take the first step because highly committed teachers are required if such projects are to be a success for both sides.

International “Volunteers in Parks”

“We generally say that the Germans are much better than us in ecology, so I was interested to see how it actually works there. A biosphere reserve was a good place to start because it really shows how man can live – as close as possible – in harmony with nature.”

Martin Nousis (Frankreich), Freiwilliger im Biosphärenreservat Südost-Rügen

Breathing life into cross-border cooperations with parks⁶

Nature conservation extends across borders, Europe is growing together and global issues are gaining in importance. These are all good reasons in the volunteer program as well to promote our natural desire to make new discoveries, expand our personal horizons and contribute our ideas and energy to international activities. Many National Natural Landscapes have already gained experience with international contacts, collaborations and, in many cases, volunteer activities. Existing contacts have been established in a variety of ways, for example, via official partnerships with protected areas abroad, via city and community partner-

ships, via institutions of higher learning, via direct requests from students, via private contacts and via the offices of the European Voluntary Service (EVS).

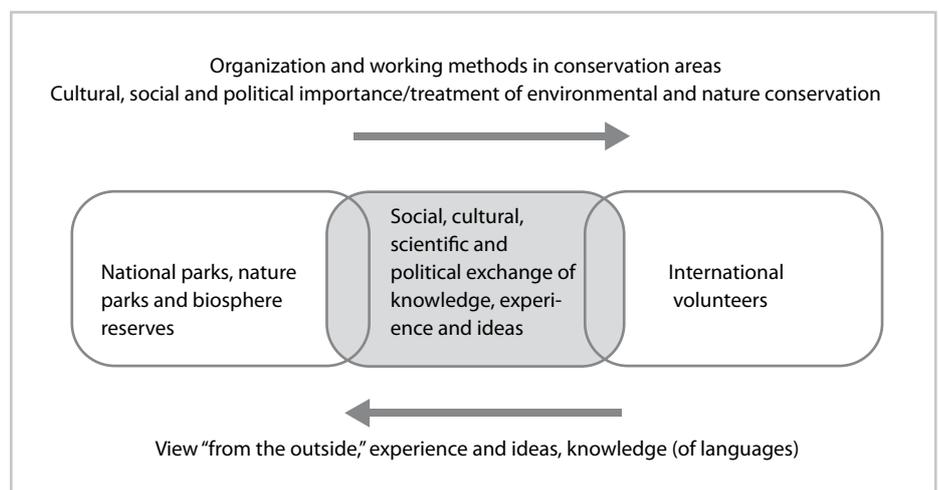
This experience has shown that international cooperation is demanding, complicated in some cases, and often requires a great deal of determination. But the enormous rewards usually make it well worth the effort. Without one key ingredient, however, it is neither possible to successfully launch a project nor to achieve satisfactory results over the long term. What’s needed is a “driving force,” i.e., people who bring an enormous amount of motivation and personal commitment to international work, from the initial idea to the realization.

International cooperation can, for example, entail that volunteers from other countries become involved in protected area work. This involvement comes in a number of different forms, as described in detail in the following text, for example:

- Individual volunteer activities
- Volunteer activities organized via the European Voluntary Service
- International work camps
- E-volunteering

⁶ The following content is based on the bachelor’s thesis by Hinske 2006; a study of 40 national parks, nature parks and biosphere reserves

Fig. 9: The exchange of knowledge, experience and ideas between National Natural Landscapes and international volunteers



Benefits of involving international volunteers in the National Natural Landscapes

BENEFITS FOR SOCIETY AND INTERNATIONAL VOLUNTEERS

- By integrating international volunteers into their work, National Natural Landscapes meet their obligation to help Europe grow together and, in a remarkable way, fulfill the educational mission that has been bestowed upon them.
- National Natural Landscapes foster the personal initiative and social commitment of European citizens. Volunteer activities in protected areas give people an opportunity to actively familiarize themselves with nature conservation in areas outside their home country and forge a personal and emotional link to a region or a landscape by working in nature conservation and environmental education projects, and it allows them to develop openness and understanding for lifestyles and environmental protection activities in other countries. This also helps them develop on a personal level, for instance, by fostering greater self-confidence and a deeper awareness of environmental issues. Self-confident and environmentally conscious people are the key to successful (international) nature and environmental conservation.
- In the primarily rural regions where conservation areas are located, which only have a small proportion of foreigners, the National Natural Landscapes promote tolerance by bringing people from abroad into contact with the regional population and by highlighting and acknowledging their successful voluntary work.
- By establishing and maintaining contacts with "colleagues" in the foreign partner organizations, and integrating foreign volunteers into their work, the staff of the National Natural Landscapes demonstrate openness and tolerance toward other countries and cultures, and thus serve as role models.

BENEFITS FOR THE NATIONAL NATURAL LANDSCAPES

- Existing contacts of the National Natural Landscapes to conservation areas abroad can be enlivened, intensified and enriched by exchanging volunteers.
- People with other cultural backgrounds bring new viewpoints to ongoing activities at the National Natural Landscapes and enrich the work by adding new momentum. There have been excellent experiences with the inspiring involvement of foreign volunteers, particularly when it comes to the parks' environmental education work.
- Working together with volunteers from other countries primarily gives National Natural Landscapes an opportunity to expand their activities for third parties in the areas of environmental education and PR work. This includes offering printed and online information in additional languages, conducting multilingual events, etc.
- The staff of the National Natural Landscapes forge personal contacts to individuals abroad and/or intensify these networking activities. This allows them to improve their competencies in dealing with foreign individuals – and to enhance their knowledge of foreign languages, which is instrumental to their own daily work in the protected areas (for example, when communicating with foreign guests).
- National Natural Landscapes have an opportunity to present their work in a positive light. Activities by foreign individuals, EU funds, etc. convey a sense of importance, which generates more prestige for the park over the long term.
- By linking the National Natural Landscapes to the existing EU "YOUTH IN ACTION"/ European Voluntary Service program, conservation areas and their staff benefit from established structures and previous experience. This includes cost-effective continuing education offers and financial support, e.g., to cover food and lodging for volunteers and fund information services.
- National Natural Landscapes can reward "their" volunteers, e.g., within the scope of the European Voluntary Service, by arranging for them to work in a foreign protected area.
- National Natural Landscapes receive organizational support and advice from EUROPARC Deutschland. This includes making information available, helping with applications, promoting exchanges of experience, recommending partners abroad, etc. This significantly reduces the workload of the individual parks.

Fig. 10: Importance of sharing experiences gained during international collaborations by large scale protected areas (Hinske 2006)

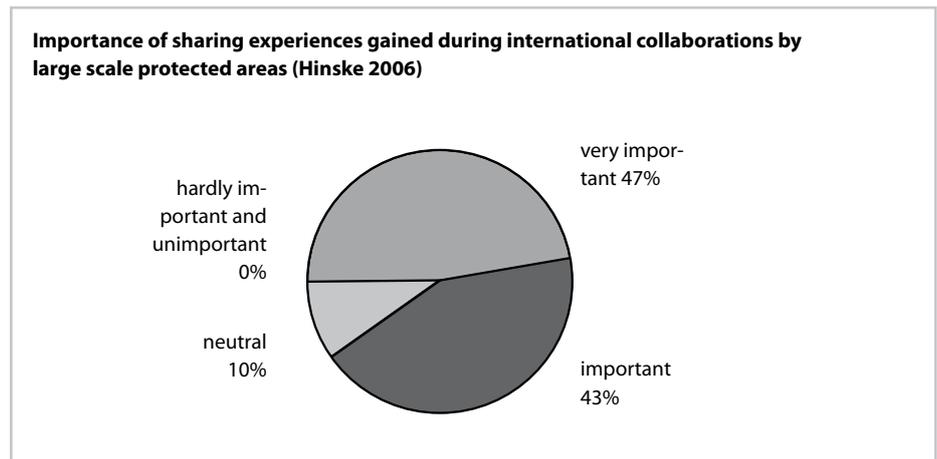
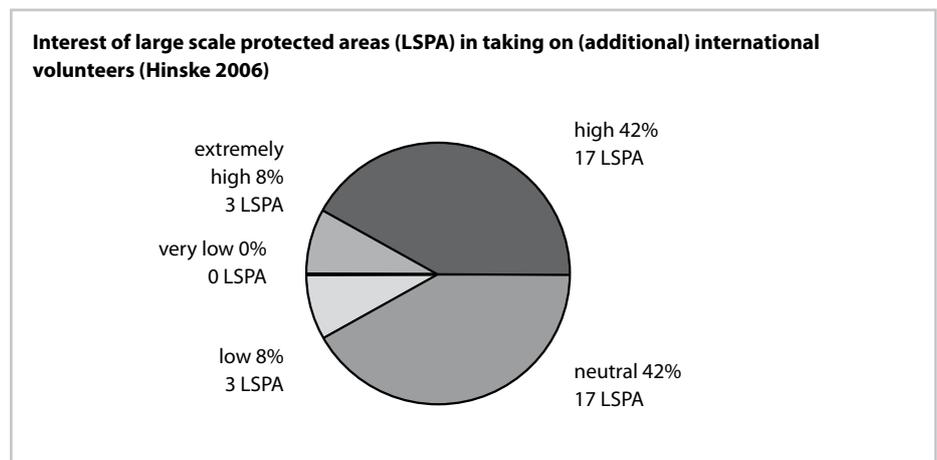


Fig. 11: Interest of large scale protected areas in taking on (additional) international volunteers (Hinske 2006)



What are the National Natural Landscapes looking for?

Ninety percent of the National Natural Landscapes rate the exchange of experience with other protected areas that comes with international cooperation projects as 'important' or even, 'very important.' Nevertheless, nearly all of the parks that Hinske (2006) surveyed feel that international cooperation is only possible if it entails no additional costs, or if funds have been provided to cover this expenditure. Resources such as time, money and personnel are key limiting factors for all conservation areas.

A total of 18 out of the 40 surveyed National Natural Landscapes have partnerships with one or more conservation areas abroad. These are located in Austria, Bulgaria, Colombia, Croatia, the Czech

Republic, Estonia, Finland, France, Indonesia, Italy, Kyrgyzstan, the Netherlands, the Philippines, Poland, Russia, Sweden, Spain, South Korea, Turkey and the UK. The contacts to the individual partner protected areas and the joint activities undertaken differ in terms of their intensity. It is not possible in every situation to actually benefit from the opportunities afforded by cross-border exchanges among partners. This has meant that a number of the international partnerships that have been built up with a great deal of dedicated effort have eventually lost momentum and been discontinued. Over one-third of the protected areas surveyed (38%) already have experience specifically with international volunteers. Four-fifths of these protected areas rate their experiences as good to very good. In some cases, the volunteers were sent by a partner protected

area, and in other situations they were placed by a third-party organization or they independently applied for a volunteer position in Germany.

Existing contacts to partner protected areas abroad and the predominately positive experiences with international volunteers suggest that cross-border volunteer activities should be further consolidated as a cornerstone of the international cooperation among parks. Not surprisingly, there is a great deal of interest on the part of the National Natural Landscapes (see Figure 11). Although involving international volunteers can be an extremely enriching experience, having sufficient means of communication is the key to success. All surveyed National Natural Landscapes thus feel that it is necessary for the international

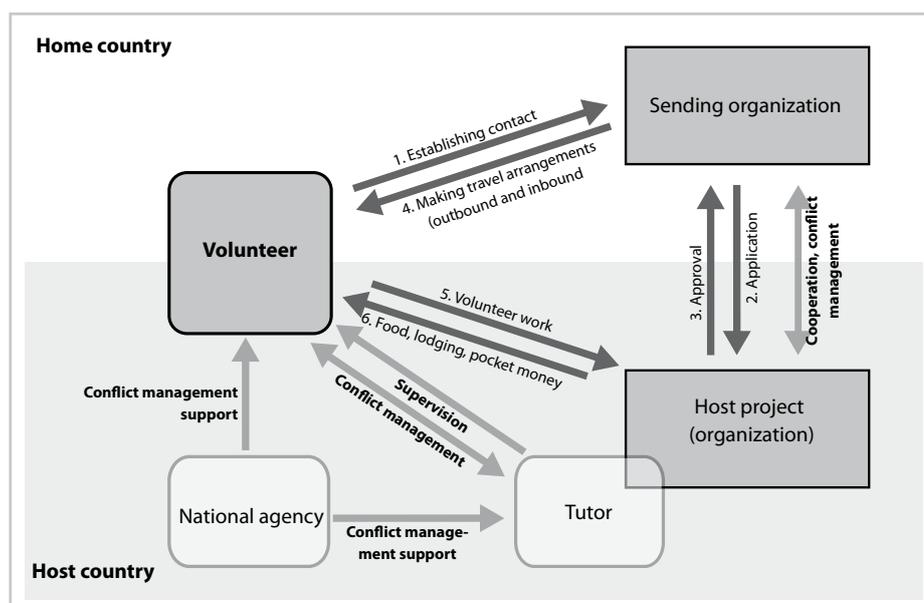


Fig. 12: Areas of responsibility and activities in the European Voluntary Service (in some cases, there is also a coordinating organization, see text)

volunteers that work with them to have at least a basic working knowledge of German. Three-fourths of the parks feel that a working knowledge of English is also necessary. The required linguistic knowledge varies, of course, depending on the activity, such as working outdoors, conducting scientific research, doing office work or conducting informational and educational activities, for example, with guests. Two factors should generally be taken into consideration. First, the staff members of the protected areas often have a poor knowledge of English and have few opportunities to practice using the language. Second, the National Natural Landscapes are typically located in rural regions. A limited knowledge of English among the local population makes it even more difficult to integrate volunteers into the area's social activities. In conjunction with this publication, a checklist has been made available for placing international volunteers in the National Natural Landscapes.

The European Voluntary Service⁷

The European Voluntary Service (EVS) is part of the EU "YOUTH IN ACTION" program (2007-13) and a "learning service" primarily for individuals ages 18-30. In Germany the EVS is handled by the German agency JUGEND für Europa, which has its headquarters in Bonn. Thanks to organizational and financial support from the EU, the activities of the EVS include offering protected areas an opportunity to send volunteers abroad and host volunteers from abroad.

Taking in and sending out EVS volunteers – who does what?

Every EVS project is based on a partnership among the following project players:

- One or more volunteers
- One or more sending organizations (in the home country of the volunteer)
- One or more host organizations (at the volunteer's placement site)
- A coordinating organization (= applicant) can simultaneously serve as a sending or a host organization

The project partners can locate each other independently or use the EVS database⁸.

1. The role of the volunteers

- Work for a nonprofit project for 2 to 12 months (may not serve as a replacement for paid staff)
- Participate in accompanying seminars:
 - Pre-departure training in the home country, at least 3 days
 - On-arrival training in the host country, 10-12 days during the first 4 weeks following their arrival
 - Mid-term meeting (sharing experiences) in the host country within 7 days of the service's mid-point (only if the EVS lasts longer than 4 months)
 - Final evaluation meeting in the home country, at least 3 days

⁷ Information last updated 26 January, 2009, subject to change

⁸ Database of EVS host and sending organizations: http://ec.europa.eu/youth/evs/aod/hei_en.cfm

Costs and EU-funded services in the European Voluntary Service

SERVICES FOR THE HOST ORGANIZATION

NUMBER OF VOLUNTEERS PER PLACEMENT SITE	usually 1 (to 100) individual(s)
AGE	18–30 years (exception: from 16 years)
LENGTH OF SERVICE, TIMEFRAME	from 2 weeks (usually at least 6 months) to 12 months, flexible timeframe
VOLUNTEER HOURS/WEEK	30–35 hrs/wk
INSURANCE FOR VOLUNTEERS	liability, health, accident insurance

RESPONSIBILITIES/COSTS FOR THE HOST ORGANIZATION

ORGANIZATION AND SUPERVISION	preparing, supervising voluntary work on location
COMMUTING COSTS (E.G., BETWEEN LODGING AND WORKPLACE)	depending on the local conditions; approx. €40 per volunteer for each service month
LODGING	depending on the local conditions; approx. €200 per volunteer for each service month
MONTHLY ALLOWANCE FOR MEALS FOR VOLUNTEERS	€205 per volunteer for each service month
LANGUAGE COURSES/INSTRUCTION	depending on the local options; approx. €50 per volunteer for each service month

RESPONSIBILITIES/COSTS FOR THE SENDING ORGANIZATION

ORGANIZATION AND SUPERVISION	before and after the EVS; ongoing contact (e.g., phone/postage costs)
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EU SUBSIDIES

FOR THE HOST ORGANIZATION	€400 per volunteer for each service month
FOR THE SENDING ORGANIZATION	€450 per volunteer, one-off payment
TRAVEL COSTS (INBOUND/OUTBOUND) FOR VOLUNTEERS	100%
VISAS, RESIDENCY PERMITS, VACCINATIONS	100%
POCKET MONEY	€105 per volunteer for each service month
SEMINARS FOR VOLUNTEERS	100%
COORDINATING COSTS (FOR THE COORDINATING ORGANIZATION, WHEN MORE THAN ONE HOST AND/OR SENDING ORGANIZATION IS INVOLVED)	€126 per partner organization and €105 per volunteer, one-off payment (only for projects with more than two partners; a portion for the coordinating organization only if it is also acting as the host or sending organization)

OVERALL COSTS FOR THE HOST ORGANIZATION

COSTS SEE ABOVE: COMMUTING COSTS, LODGING, FOOD, LANGUAGE INSTRUCTION	if paying for lodging costs = €200 per service month: 1 service month = approx. €500 EU subsidy: €400 per service month
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2. The role of the sending organization

- Supporting the volunteers in the search for a suitable project and establishing contact
- Preparing for the stay abroad and the corresponding individual needs of the volunteer
- Ensuring that volunteers take part in the pre-departure training
- Maintaining contacts during the volunteer service
- Supporting the volunteers during reintegration following their return

3. The role of the host organization

- Preparing and organizing the placement site (safe and appropriate living and working conditions for the volunteers)
- Organizing/financing lodging, mobility on location and food
- Organizing/financing language instruction (during working hours)
- Personal support and guidance for the volunteers by providing a tutor (staff member at the placement site)

4. **The role of the coordinating organization (= the applicant, but can also be the host or sending organization)**
- Administrative and quality enhancing support for the project partners and their networking
 - Submitting applications for funding

Applying for EVS funding – what is the process?

1. **Applying for recognition as a sending, host and/or coordinating organization**
- An application⁹ to be recognized as a sending, host and/or coordinating organization is submitted in German and English to the German agency Agentur JUGEND für Europa (may be submitted at any time); a concrete volunteer project and concrete volunteers are not required for this application.
 - After the application has been submitted, the German agency JUGEND für Europa will contact the applicant or, if necessary, pay a visit on location.
 - Acceptance or rejection generally comes within six weeks after the application has been submitted.
 - If the application is accepted, it is valid for three years; it is possible to receive an extension
2. **Funding application for sending and hosting volunteers**
- The coordinating organization submits an application for the funding of a concrete EVS project¹⁰ on behalf of the established host and sending organizations; the application is sent to the German agency JUGEND für Europa in accordance with predetermined deadlines (five per year); the

volunteers can, yet need not be, already selected; the duration of the project is longer than the amount of time that the volunteer spends working for the host organization, since it also entails preparatory and follow-up work (total max. 24 months).

- If the application is granted, the coordinating organization receives a funding agreement; furthermore, the coordinating, host and sending organizations confirm their cooperation in the form of an activity agreement.

International work camps

Work camps with international volunteers are an excellent opportunity to pool resources for the use of international volunteers, mobilize a large number of people to achieve tangible results and a sense of achievement, win over partners and attract public attention. A work camp can be planned and implemented either independently or with a partner organization. The amount of work involved should not be underestimated, but it is already possible to point to many positive experiences (see following examples).

Additional information on the European Voluntary Service

The German agency JUGEND für Europa

- www.jugend-in-aktion.de/europaeischer-freiwilligendienst

Point of contact in single German states

- www.jugendfuereuropa.de/jfe/direktkontakt

⁹ Form can be downloaded at www.jugend-in-aktion.de

¹⁰ Form can be downloaded at www.jugend-in-aktion.de

Work camp – practical example 6
Wadden Sea National Park of Lower Saxony:
ijgd Work Camp
 (Imke Zwoch)

WHO WORKED – AND WHEN?	11 participants from Slovakia, Ukraine, Italy, South Korea and Germany; three weeks, summer 2007
HOW WAS THE CONTACT ESTABLISHED?	Contact to the organizer Internationale Jugendgemeinschaftsdienste (ijgd) was established via the administrative district of Wesermarsch; ijgd recruited participants
WHAT WAS IMPORTANT IN THE PREPARATION PHASE?	Organizing lodging, food, bicycles, recreational programs, instructors, building materials and permits, press conferences, financing (obtaining funds from foundations and sponsors)
WHAT WORK DID THE VOLUNTEERS PERFORM? HOW WAS THIS SUPERVISED?	Construction of a 150-m-long wooden walkway with a railing and non-slip planks on Sehestedt Moor; at the end of the walkway, after the work camp activities were finished, a viewing platform was built as an additional attraction for guests. Supervision by the ijgd work camp leader, professional guidance by the Meyershof training workshop (six young people from there also took part); The "networker" on location was the administrative district's nature conservation commissioner, whom the national park administration has closely worked with for many years; he used his contacts and was also on the site during the work to look after the young people.
WHO WERE THE SUPPORTERS?	People and institutions from the region, including the Wesermarsch administrative district and the Meyershof training workshop (practical experience for the trainees, with supervision from the professional staff of the training workshop), the Jade community (lodging in the school and kindergarten buildings), the German Red Cross (provided cots), the lost and found office of the city of Brake (bicycles), Wadden Sea Foundation, Hoppe Foundation, BINGO Environmental Lottery, sponsors like a water and dyke association (Deichband) and a local bank
HOW WAS THE ACTIVITY ASSESSED IN RETROSPECT?	Very good, very effective, helping to integrate all participants in the national park region, excellent multiplier impact and highly attractive for the media
WHAT FEEDBACK DID THE PARTICIPANTS GIVE?	The young people had a really great time, and also enjoyed getting to know and spending time with young people from other countries; prejudices were overcome; during the recreational/ weekend events, they also felt very warmly received in the region (thanks to positive media coverage, people were aware of who they were during their volunteer stay).
WHAT CONCLUSIONS CAN BE DRAWN – WHAT LESSONS CAN BE LEARNED?	The ijgd camp entails a great deal of organization on location (see "Preparation"), approx. ½ year of preparation time; definitely worthwhile for all participants, but staff need sufficient availability.
WHAT IDEAS AND PLANS ARE THERE FOR SIMILAR ACTIVITIES?	Currently no suitable initiatives are planned for such groups; the ijgd is very interested, however, in organizing camps in the national park in the future.

Work camp – practical example 7
Erzgebirge/Vogtland Nature Park:
Eco Camp
 (Michael Künzel)

WHO WORKED – AND WHEN?	15 young people (16 to 20 years old) from the Czech Republic, Poland and Germany; two weeks, summer 2008 (8th Eco Camp)
HOW WAS THE CONTACT ESTABLISHED?	Word-of-mouth and a follow-up visit in each neighboring country; in Poland, by visiting the Chelmy Nature Park and in the Czech Republic by visiting the Dalovice agricultural school; this paved the way for building close ties
WHAT WAS IMPORTANT IN THE PREPARATION PHASE?	Putting together a schedule and a program of events; early exchanges of information, cultivating contacts with partners to select the young people and make inbound and outbound travel arrangements
WHAT WORK DID THE VOLUNTEERS PERFORM? HOW WAS THIS SUPERVISED?	Maintaining mountain meadows and doing clearing work (removing trees and bushes on the Arnica Meadow in Winselburg) with a diverse supporting program: presentations on conservation, environmental and climate protection, herb-picking trips, trips along the moor and mining nature trails as well as the German and Czech mountain meadows, visits to the Oberlauterbach Environmental Center, the Riedelhof in Eubabrunn, the Gläserner Bauernhof in Siebenbrunn (a model working farm), the Schneckenstein visitor mine and the Saxon-Bohemian Mineral Center, the Arboretum and Vogtland Arena in Klingenthal, and a German-Czech-Polish evening of cultural events
WHO WERE THE SUPPORTERS?	The Eco Camp was jointly organized by the Erzgebirge/Vogtland Nature Park, the Vogtland district and the Oberlauterbach Environmental Center. – Vogtland district: sponsored minibuses for transportation and prepared certificates – Oberlauterbach Environmental Center: helped with the preparation and provided equipment for mowing the meadows and transporting wood – Financial support was provided by the Saxon Regional Conservation Foundation, the Orden Silberner Bruch, EUROPARC Deutschland and countless other sponsors
HOW WAS THE ACTIVITY ASSESSED IN RETROSPECT?	This voluntary work, which has now become a tradition, is rated very highly because it makes it possible to maintain valuable mountain meadows with their unique combination of species, e.g., arnica, orchids and moor meadows where it is not possible to use heavy equipment. The camp made it possible to exchange experiences and make new friends.
WHAT FEEDBACK DID THE PARTICIPANTS GIVE?	It was a great experience, the work was useful and interesting and they would like to return next year.
WHAT CONCLUSIONS CAN BE DRAWN – WHAT LESSONS CAN BE LEARNED?	Continuation of the Eco Camp; transferring the experiences from each camp to the following year and/or using this to derive improvements; it would be good to have a permanent main source of funding.
WHAT IDEAS AND PLANS ARE THERE FOR SIMILAR ACTIVITIES?	Continuing with the Eco Camp over the coming years to maintain the current condition of the mountain meadows and further expand our ties to neighboring countries; student exchange programs for similarly oriented projects are under consideration in the neighboring countries.

Potential cooperation partners for international work camps in the National Natural Landscapes

(Last update: 19 Jan. 2009, subject to change)

	Internationale Jugendgemeinschaftsdienste (ijgd)	Service Civil International (SCI)
INFORMATION/ CONTACT ONLINE	www.ijgd.de	www.sci-d.de
SERVICES FOR THE NATIONAL NATURAL LANDSCAPES		
NUMBER OF VOLUNTEERS PER CAMP	10–20	10–20
AGE	16–26 years	from age 16
CAMP DURATION	2–4 weeks (usually 3 weeks)	2–4 weeks (usually 3 weeks)
TIMEFRAME	June–Sept.	March/April, July–Sept.
AMOUNT OF WORK PER DAY/WEEK	5 hrs/d, 5 d/wk	5–6 hrs/d, generally Mon.–Fri.
SUBSIDIES		usually €8 per participant per day (€5,50 deducted for food)
INSURANCE	Liability, health; accident insurance when not working	Health, accident insurance
RESPONSIBILITIES/COSTS FOR THE NATIONAL NATURAL LANDSCAPES		
ORGANIZATION SUPERVISION	Organizing the work project, work materials, professional guidance	Organizing the work project, work materials, professional guidance
COMMUTING COSTS	Between lodging and workplace	Subject to negotiation
LODGING	Lodging for groups with cooking + sanitary facilities	Lodging for groups with cooking + sanitary facilities
INSURANCE	Occupational accident insurance (for time spent working + commuting)	Possibly liability insurance
FOOD AND/OR ONE-OFF PLACEMENT FEE, PROGRAM FEE	Approx. €200 per participant for two weeks, approx. €270 per participant for three weeks is charged afterwards	A max. of €290 per participant (regardless of the duration of the placement) is charged afterwards
COSTS FOR PARTICIPANTS		
PLACEMENT FEE/ PROGRAM FEE	€80 per participant and camp (from Germany)	€82 per participant and camp
TRAVEL COSTS (INBOUND/OUTBOUND)	100%	100%
TOTAL COSTS FOR THE PLACEMENT SITE		
	2 weeks, 15 participants: approx. €3,000 3 weeks, 15 participants: approx. €4,000 transportation, accident insurance, possibly lodging	2 weeks, 15 participants: approx. €3,800 3 weeks, 15 participants: approx. €3,600 possibly transportation, possibly lodging
CONSERVATION AREAS WITH EXPERIENCE		
	Barnim NRP, Westhavelland NRP	
OTHER		

The precise amount of the program fee is subject to negotiation;
= Project of the UN Decade for Sustainable Education

Natural Landscapes

Internationale Begegnung in Gemeinschaftsdiensten (IBG) (International encounters in community service)	Bergwaldprojekt (BWP) (Mountain forest project) (only partially with international volunteers)	
www.ibg-workcamps.org	www.bergwaldprojekt.de	
SERVICES FOR THE NATIONAL NATURAL LANDSCAPES		
10–20	10–28	NUMBER OF VOLUNTEERS PER CAMP
18–30 years old (exception: from 16 – over the age of 30)	from age 18	AGE
Usually 3 weeks	5 days (+ 2 inbound/outbound)	CAMP DURATION
Usually June–Sept.	March–Dec.	TIMEFRAME
Usually 30 hrs/wk, Mon.–Fri.	8 hrs/d, 5 d/wk	AMOUNT OF WORK PER DAY/WEEK
		SUBSIDIES
Liability, health, accident insurance	Accident insurance, participants must have their own health insurance	INSURANCE
RESPONSIBILITIES/COSTS FOR THE NATIONAL NATURAL LANDSCAPES		
Organizing the work project, work materials, professional guidance	Organizing the work project (professional guidance provided by the Bergwald forest ranger)	ORGANIZATION SUPERVISION
From lodging to the worksite, preferably a distance that can be reached by foot		COMMUTING COSTS
Lodging for groups with cooking + sanitary facilities	If required, lodging for groups with cooking + sanitary facilities	LODGING
		INSURANCE
€13 per participant and day	Total of €4,000 to €4,500	FOOD AND/OR ONE-OFF PLACEMENT FEE, PROGRAM FEE
COSTS FOR PARTICIPANTS		
€60 per participant and camp	Free of charge; exceptions: family and family-child projects (program fee of €100 per child), company and group projects, forest schools for classes (upon request)	PLACEMENT FEE/ PROGRAM FEE
100%	100%	TRAVEL COSTS (INBOUND/OUTBOUND)
TOTAL COSTS FOR THE PLACEMENT SITE		
2 weeks, 15 participants: approx. 2,700 3 weeks, 15 participants: approx. €4,100 possibly transportation, possibly lodging	1 week: €4,000 to €4,500 for 15–28 participants, depending on the lodging	
CONSERVATION AREAS WITH EXPERIENCE		
	Harz NLP, Rhön BR (Bavaria), Kellerwald-Edersee NLP, Rhön BR (Hesse) 2009, Eifel NLP 2009	
OTHER		

E-volunteering – practical example 8

Schleswig-Holstein Wadden Sea National Park: Translating the national park leaflet into Russian, Turkish, Spanish and Bulgarian

(Silke Ahlborn)

HOW WAS THE CONTACT ESTABLISHED?	3 times via the www.freiwillige-in-parks.de website and once via an internship in the national park administration (Bulgarian)
WHAT WAS IMPORTANT DURING THE PREPARATION?	It was sometimes important to clarify that this is a voluntary, i.e., a non-paid position, which is something that two of the applicants had not realized. They ended up however doing the job in a voluntary capacity. The texts had to be well prepared to clearly indicate how much translation work had to be done.
WHAT WORK WAS DONE BY THE VIRTUAL VOLUNTEERS?	Translating the German or English leaflet text into one of the four languages and doing follow-up editing and proofreading
HOW DID THE COLLABORATION TAKE PLACE?	Entirely via e-mail; All volunteers were available to answer questions and provide feedback, for example, by proofreading the leaflet after it was laid out.
HOW WERE THE VIRTUAL VOLUNTEERS RECOGNIZED?	The volunteers received a folder, key chain and a t-shirt as a thank you, plus a confirmation of the translation by post. The work of the volunteers was made known within the national park administration and received a very positive response.
WHAT CONCLUSIONS CAN BE DRAWN FROM THESE EXPERIENCES?	The collaboration went extremely well and the volunteers were able to use the written confirmation of the translation on their CVs.

E-volunteering

"Volunteers in Parks" can also work at home or at a desk. There are a wide range of ways to support the National Natural Landscapes from a distance, for example, through e-volunteering. The European Parliament's Committee on Regional Development (2007) defines e-volunteering as follows: "The term, virtual volunteering' or ,e-volunteering' denotes volunteer work that is entirely or partially done via the Internet. This makes it possible for individuals to perform volunteer work even if they cannot pursue activities on location due to time constraints, personal reasons, disabilities or household obligations."

Virtual volunteers perform a variety of different jobs for conservation areas, including:

- Writing texts about conservation areas, projects, park services etc.
- Creating leaflets, posters, etc.
- Developing methods, content and illustrations for environmental educational materials
- Translating texts for leaflets, brochures, websites, etc. into other languages

"I came across the ad as I was looking for a part-time job on the Internet. The charm exuded by northern Germany, my love of nature and the fact that it allowed me to do more for environmental protection than just making donations sparked my enthusiasm for this work."

**Nuran Anette Batu (Istanbul),
e-volunteer for the Schleswig-Holstein Wadden Sea National Park**

Companies as “Volunteers in Parks”

“We succeeded in doing something meaningful as volunteers during our annual company outing while having fun at the same time.”

Windwärts Energie GmbH, after volunteering in Harz National Park

Doing good together

Can a company be a “good member of society”? And if yes, how? This question has become increasingly important in Germany in recent years. There has been a broad and ongoing debate – in companies, with companies, and about companies. Terms such as corporate (social) responsibility and corporate citizenship have become popular. These are concepts that

originated in the US and have since spread to Europe. With varying areas of emphasis, they describe the responsibility of a company to society, i.e., whether a company perceives itself to be a “good member of society” and acts accordingly. What does this mean exactly? For a long time, companies focused exclusively on maximizing profit. But there have been growing demands among the public and companies themselves to do more than simply increase sharehold-

er value. Companies should accept responsibility for their actions and the resulting consequences. Treating employees fairly, developing more environmentally friendly manufacturing processes, and making long-term investments, ideally also in the region where the company is based, are becoming increasingly important instead of just the relentless, short-term pursuit of profit.

The basics of corporate involvement

What is corporate responsibility (CR)?

Corporate responsibility is an overarching term comprising corporate social responsibility and corporate citizenship (see below).

What is corporate social responsibility (CSR)?

There are a number of definitions for corporate social responsibility. Essentially, it involves companies contributing to sustainable ecological, economic and social development. CSR and CR are often used as synonyms.

What is corporate citizenship (CC)?

Corporate citizenship is about companies being involved in society and establishing partnerships with nonprofit projects and organizations. While various types of involvement are

possible here, donations of money and in-kind support are among the most common forms. Additionally, company employees are encouraged to donate their time, for instance, helping out charitable projects and organizations (see also the explanation of corporate volunteering below).

What is corporate volunteering (CV)?

More and more companies choose to engage in volunteer activities with all or part of their staff. These projects may last a few hours or days, or they may run for longer periods of time, as is the case when projects are sponsored. Individual employees may also be given time off for CV activities so they can share their professional knowledge and skills in selected projects (also referred to as “secondment”).

Corporate partnerships for a good cause

Partnerships with charitable and nonprofit organizations are among the most common activities of socially responsible companies. They support organizations in many ways, including:

- Monetary donations, typically earmarked for selected projects or events
- In-kind donations, such as equipment, materials, and office supplies
- Time donated by company employees

Concrete examples of companies involved in partnerships include a roofing company building a sandbox for a local kindergarten, apprentices from small and medium-sized companies reading to patients at nurs-

ing homes, and teams of employees from large companies planting trees. The extent to which a company supports charitable organizations often depends on the size of the company. The size of a company usually depends on the number of employees:

- Small companies: under 50 employees
- Medium-sized companies: under 250 employees
- Large companies: 250 or more employees (general guidelines; annual sales also have an influence on how a company is categorized)

In most cases, corporate partnerships benefit not only the “good cause” but also the company, either directly or indirectly.

Corporate volunteering in the National Natural Landscapes – experiences and recommendations

The National Natural Landscapes offer myriad opportunities for getting involved, including for companies. Corporate volunteering includes activities like mowing meadows, clearing heaths and moorlands of encroaching shrubs and trees, building or dismantling fences, and maintaining trail signposts. Both large and small teams can be deployed, and the concrete projects may be one-off tasks and last for one or several days. Partnerships for sponsoring a biotope, a conservation area facility, an environmental project, or similar are also attractive for both parties and form the basis for long-term cooperations.

Partnerships between National Natural Landscapes and companies in the volunteer program

Benefits for the National Natural Landscapes

Depending on the type of cooperation:

- Practical support for nature conservation and environmental education projects (workers, expertise)
- Material support (providing materials) or financial support for nature conservation and environmental education projects
- Access to new target groups; volunteer activities can be used as initiatives to educate about the environment

Benefits for companies

- An attractive environment for staff development: employees practice interpersonal skills, teamwork, dealing with new situations, etc. during volunteer assignments
- An enhanced company image thanks to positive publicity; depending on the type of cooperation, additional advertising for the company by the protected area
- Access to potential customers through the protected area (those interested in nature, for example)
- Opportunities for presenting products, e.g., at visitor information centers, promotional events, etc.
- Improved employee loyalty and motivation resulting from the following:
 - Positive feelings for the involvement of “their” company and enjoyment of the volunteer project
 - Benefits for themselves and their families from events in parks such as company outings and children’s programs
 - A connection to the region for new residents

The National Natural Landscapes have amassed a wealth of experience through their cooperations with companies. Some practical tips for success:

- Internally clarify the purpose of such measures: is it to generate publicity, obtain funding, or what exactly?
- Internally determine responsibilities and properly prepare the activity
- Discuss the details with the company, come to agreement, and deploy the company effectively, i.e. with concrete goals, to achieve meaningful results
- Corporate volunteering is good advertising for both sides; PR work can enhance this
- Weigh up the “managerial effort” with the “results”
- Consider recruiting volunteers to direct the work
- Companies often also give non-cash support (providing equipment, e.g., flatbed trucks, augers)
- Consider establishing a series of assignments over a longer period of time (repeat projects)
- Mutual visits strengthen the relationship
- Give volunteers a feeling of accomplishment and organize positive moments and thank-you events

Further reading online:

- www.cccdeutschland.org
Centrum für Corporate Citizenship Deutschland e.V. (CCCD Center for Corporate Citizenship in Germany), a competence center and platform for exchange between industry, research and politics
- www.upj-online.de
The initiative “Unternehmen: Partner der Jugend” (UPJ) e.V. (Companies: Partners of Youth), a German national network of socially responsible businesses and local non-profit intermediary organizations
- www.csr-news.net/main
CSR news from the Corporate Responsibility Foundation
- www.csrgermany.de
Platform for networking and exchanging experiences from the Federation of German Industries (BDI) and the Confederation of German Employers’ Associations (BDA)

Through the eyes of the company – volunteering in Harz National Park

“On the morning of August 29, 2008, we met at the site of our volunteer project. There were more than 40 of us out of a total workforce of 50 at Windwärts Energie GmbH in Hannover. The location: below the Brocken mountain in Harz National Park. Our task for the day: clearing spruce growth from both sides of an emergency service road. This is completely different from the work that we normally do as a project development company for renewable energy. After being warmly welcomed by

Steffen Küppers, director of the Brunnenbachsmühle forest youth hostel, and Anne Schierenberg, Project Coordinator at EUROPARC Deutschland, we immediately went to work with the equipment provided. For nearly five hours, we cut down small trees together using handsaws and employed heavy-duty shears to remove limbs and branches. We were assisted by two friendly and experienced forest workers. There was also plenty to eat and drink: delicious lunch packages and beverages helped keep us motivated. We also learned a lot about Harz National Park from Mr. Küppers. Fully satisfied with the job we’d done, our team called it a day that afternoon. We

succeeded in doing something meaningful as volunteers during our annual company outing while having fun at the same time.

„It was also a very useful day for the team development processes at Windwärts,” comments Sylvia Reckel, head of Human Resources at Windwärts Energie. “We are a growing company with many new employees. A joint work assignment with shared experiences and results is ideal for integrating staff members into the company.”

Windwärts Energie GmbH

Working with companies – practical example 9

Harz National Park: Forest work, Windwärts company

(Steffen Küppers)

WHO VOLUNTEERED?	The company Windwärts Energie GmbH; approx. 40 employees
HOW WAS THE CONTACT ESTABLISHED?	In May 2007, a phone call was received from a company employee who had taken part in a volunteer assignment while employed at Effem (now Masterfood, former partner of EUROPARC) about seven years earlier and who wanted to do something similar with Windwärts. The goal for the company was to promote teamwork and do something meaningful on the company outing.
WHAT WAS IMPORTANT IN THE PREPARATION PHASE?	Due to the short-term nature of the project and the goal of promoting teamwork, it was explained that volunteering is all fine and well but not necessarily very helpful. The break-even analysis (how much work must be done to cover the costs?) was explained to the company. What kinds of refreshments and other services would be provided for a fee were discussed, and a written volunteer agreement was signed.
WHAT WORK DID THE VOLUNTEERS PERFORM? HOW WAS THIS SUPERVISED?	The company team was deployed for half a day, clearing an overgrown emergency service road by hand. This activity was selected: 1) due to the short-term nature of the project (no time for training) 2) to allow as many people as possible to work together in the same place. The alternative activity of removing fences was rejected as being “too destructive.” The group was supervised by three employees from the Brunnenbachsmühle forest youth hostel.
HOW WAS THE ACTIVITY ASSESSED IN RETROSPECT?	Harz National Park is extremely satisfied with the results.
WHAT FEEDBACK DID THE COMPANY GIVE?	The company was very enthusiastic at the end of the event and submitted a very positive report (as specified in the volunteer agreement) for the employee newspaper of Harz National Park and the EUROPARC website.
WHAT CONCLUSIONS CAN BE DRAWN FROM THESE EXPERIENCES?	Professional preparation and execution are essential. These kinds of groups cannot be supervised “on the fly”!
WHAT IDEAS AND PLANS ARE THERE FOR SIMILAR ACTIVITIES?	There is always a demand for similar activities. For instance, the group requested another assignment, but at a different location, to become familiar with a different area of the park (referred to www.freiwilige-in-parks.de). The National Park will accommodate the wishes of inquiring groups in future projects.



Fig. 13: Photo of Windwärts Energie clearing an emergency service road in Harz National Park



Fig. 14: Photo of volunteers who have been out collecting trash in Müritznationalpark instead of working in the hotel. An excellent way to make a difference.



Fig. 15: Photo of apprentices from the AIRBUS plant in Nordenham and volunteer supervisor Ewald Dehade marking trails in Wadden Sea National Park of Lower Saxony

Working with companies – practical example 10

Müritz National Park: Trash-collecting campaign of the Hotel Radisson SAS Resort Schloss Fleesensee

(Gerd-Peter Heyde)

WHO VOLUNTEERED?	Employees of Radisson SAS Resort Schloss Fleesensee
HOW WAS THE CONTACT ESTABLISHED?	Through a park administrator whose daughter works in the hotel
WHAT WAS IMPORTANT IN THE PREPARATION PHASE?	Clarification of logistical and supervisory issues
WHAT WORK DID THE VOLUNTEERS PERFORM? HOW WAS THIS SUPERVISED?	As requested by the volunteers, trash was collected along the east shore of Feisneck lake. The volunteers were supervised by Peter Heyde, head of ranger deployment and national park service, and Erhard Seidl, ranger in the Müritzhof district.
HOW WAS THE ACTIVITY ASSESSED IN RETROSPECT?	Very positive; the work was performed with great enthusiasm and success.
WHAT FEEDBACK DID THE COMPANY GIVE?	The activity was fun and the volunteers enjoyed interacting with the supervisors. It is definitely planned to repeat the project once a year.
WHAT CONCLUSIONS CAN BE DRAWN FROM THESE EXPERIENCES?	Experience shows that activities with volunteers from the region are most effective. Consequently, cooperation with communities must be actively pursued in this area and local companies should be directly contacted.
WHAT IDEAS AND PLANS ARE THERE FOR SIMILAR ACTIVITIES?	Continue with established activities such as the event at Wacholderheide with the NABU Nature and Biodiversity Conservation Union and the Müritz National Park Office, continue to improve the environment of the visitor center in Blankenförde together with the community and the Müritz National Park Office, deploy the German Armed Forces, e.g., to maintain the biotope, continue cooperation with employees of the Radisson Hotel.

Working with companies – practical example 11

Wadden Sea National Park of Lower Saxony: Maintenance of visitor guidance facilities by AIRBUS apprentices

(Imke Zwoch)

WHO VOLUNTEERED?	Apprentices (1st year of training completed) from the apprenticeship program of the AIRBUS plant in Nordenham. 2007: 18 participants, 2008: 8 participants (see "conclusions" below for the reasons behind a smaller group)
HOW WAS THE CONTACT ESTABLISHED?	Personal contact between the former director of the national park visitor center in the local region (now working as a volunteer) and a training supervisor at Airbus
WHAT WAS IMPORTANT IN THE PREPARATION PHASE?	Limited window of availability (3 weeks of "time off" in July, between the 1st and 2nd years of training); planning daily work assignments and routes, organizing the supervision, vehicles, tools, press dates
WHAT WORK DID THE VOLUNTEERS PERFORM? HOW WAS THIS SUPERVISED?	Repair, cleaning, and replacement of visitor guidance infrastructure in the national park (signs, information panels; removal of trash as needed); continually supervised by an AIRBUS trainer and the volunteer from the national park visitor center mentioned above; also supervised at times by park employees (area manager/volunteer coordinator); catering organized by AIRBUS. Between work assignments, volunteers also took part in other activities, such as visiting the national park visitor center, including tours/lectures and hiking along the Wadden Sea.
HOW WAS THE ACTIVITY ASSESSED IN RETROSPECT?	Very good: the apprentices are skilled and work hard; an excellent multiplier effect was achieved for the national park in the region and beyond, as the apprentices come from all across Germany.
WHAT FEEDBACK DID THE COMPANY GIVE?	The company is satisfied and interested in pursuing the cooperation.
WHAT CONCLUSIONS CAN BE DRAWN FROM THESE EXPERIENCES?	Because the apprentices work very efficiently, the team size must be limited, otherwise they are not sufficiently challenged. One supervisor and vehicle for materials are nonetheless required for each group (limiting factor). The size of the national park poses a problem (distance between "base camp" and work sites -> more driving) -> consider organizing decentralized break sites in the future.
WHAT IDEAS AND PLANS ARE THERE FOR SIMILAR ACTIVITIES?	Currently only planning to continue the cooperation with AIRBUS. These kinds of activities are essentially limited to signs, etc. because in contrast to forest and moor conservation areas, no group-specific work such as bush removal is necessary.

Working with companies – practical example 12

Barnim Nature Park: Removal of bird cherry by the British Embassy

(Dirk Krone)

Working with companies – practical example 13

Rhön/Hesse Biosphere Reserve: Maintenance of dry grasslands by the Commerzbank branch office in Fulda

(Martin Kremer)

WHO VOLUNTEERED?	The British Embassy in Berlin as part of its “away days,” including British ambassador Sir Michael Arthur	Commerzbank branch office in Fulda; employees and their families
HOW WAS THE CONTACT ESTABLISHED?	Inquiry by the embassy	Through regular contact as part of the company’s environmental internship program
WHAT WAS IMPORTANT IN THE PREPARATION PHASE?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Direct contact between volunteers and local coordinators – Agreements with partners are direct, concrete and binding – Finding the ideal compromise between volunteer preferences and available opportunities; not all requests can be fulfilled in the park – Funding should be available or must be acquired 	Arranging dates, providing equipment, organizing an enjoyable final event including coffee, cake and BBQ
WHAT WORK DID THE VOLUNTEERS PERFORM? HOW WAS THIS SUPERVISED?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Removal of bird cherry bushes (pulled out by hand, no equipment necessary) in a conservation area within the nature park; one-day activity. – Work supervised by the Naturwacht Brandenburg (ranger organisation) and relevant district forester. 	Clearing of an area overgrown with bushes: rangers had cut and prepared the area in advance with chainsaws and line trimmers; the bank employees and their families collected the cuttings into large piles for burning.
HOW WAS THE ACTIVITY ASSESSED IN RETROSPECT?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – It was a success in terms of nature conservation – Pleasant atmosphere despite the hard work – Could have lasted longer 	Positive, enhanced the image of the Rhön Biosphere Reserve; intensified existing contacts
WHAT FEEDBACK DID THE COMPANY GIVE?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Extended an invitation to the evaluation event, which we gladly accepted – Discussions made it apparent that embassy employees were still enthusiastic 	Very satisfied; the activity also brought the bank employees closer as colleagues.
WHAT CONCLUSIONS CAN BE DRAWN FROM THESE EXPERIENCES?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Concrete preparation is of the utmost importance. – Partners involved must be competent and reliable. – Detailed agreements facilitate coordination. Directly discuss unrealistic expectations and cancel the event if necessary. Nothing is worse than an unsatisfactory project for participants and organizers. – Weather-appropriate catering (hot drinks in case of cold weather) is essential for a positive atmosphere. 	Only those who were already aware of conservation issues participated. The inclusion/participation of families was important. The work involved should not be overestimated: 2 hours of work means 2 hours of pleasant interaction in the course of an afternoon. The biosphere reserve did not have to organize much and enjoyed positive PR.
WHAT IDEAS AND PLANS ARE THERE FOR SIMILAR ACTIVITIES?	Because planning and deployment take up quite a bit of time, only one additional assignment is planned at the moment. This time it will include individuals with disabilities. Initial discussions are currently taking place. It is planned to mow a hiking trail and remove the cuttings.	This type of event can be repeated at short notice, however demand is limited at the moment.

Equal opportunity in the volunteer program: the example of gender mainstreaming

“Embracing diversity’ describes an attitude that recognizes the principles of both equality and variety.”

Dr. Hubertus Schröer, Institute for Intercultural Quality Development, Munich

Equal opportunity and diversity

“Equal opportunity” is an undeniably complex issue. What does the phrase mean and what does it have to do with volunteer management?

Equal opportunity and the closely related issue of diversity have gained considerable ground in Germany in recent years. The two terms have to do with appreciating the broad range of mentalities, lifestyles, beliefs, interests, qualifications, expertise, etc. that people bring with them from their personal surroundings. People should have an opportunity to express their individuality and use it in a positive sense.

It is interesting to note that companies in particular are focusing on the issues of diversity and diversity management. They see advantages in catering to a society that is becoming more diverse in many ways, including an increasing number of older people, a larger proportion of women in the workplace and as customers, and the growing purchasing power of ethnic minorities. By specifically appealing to diverse target groups, a company can expand its market and achieve a competitive edge, or recruit

suitable workers from a diverse pool of candidates. A conscious commitment to staff diversity also helps employees feel more appreciated and identify more with the company. Moreover, it enhances their ability to learn from one another within the company.

What works well for companies here can also be applied to protected areas and the volunteer program, both of which focus on “human diversity,” which should be recognized and fostered for the benefit of individuals and the protected areas. Equal opportunity and diversity management are very broad terms, but gender mainstreaming is a concrete example of both concepts. Gender mainstreaming involves diversity and equal opportunity for men and women. It recognizes that there are inherent unequal conditions for men and women in our society, including:

- Their social situations, resulting from various traditions and societal expectations. This is associated with inequalities in their roles, for example, in terms of the power that they wield in families and at the workplace, combined with differences in income, decision-making authority, etc.

- The biological differences between men and women, which determine for instance to what extent an individual is “affected” by pregnancy, birth and nursing.

Gender mainstreaming for parks and volunteers

What does gender mainstreaming have to do with protecting nature and the National Natural Landscapes?

Nature conservation and protected areas are also essentially about people – for instance, people who make a living from nature and the landscape, who are responsible for protecting and developing an area, who see the region as their home or who enjoy a particular area as a vacation destination. And wherever different people come together, there is automatically a broad range of individual needs, perceptions, opinions, preferences, etc. that are linked to factors such as one’s upbringing, living situation and personal experiences.

Are there specific differences between men and women? Yes, for example, they have different ways of perceiving and interacting with nature. According to a study by the

What does gender mean?

Gender describes the socially and culturally constructed ROLES of men and women. In English, we distinguish between sex, which is a BIOLOGICAL aspect, and gender, which is SOCIAL in nature.

Gender roles manifest themselves in what is generally considered to be “typically male” or “typically female”. This may involve different clothing for men and women, “typical” occupations and household responsibilities, and “typical” behavior patterns in public and with one another. In contrast to biological sex, it is assumed that one is not born with social gender but that it is learned, practiced and stabilized in childhood and can thus be altered.

What does gender mainstreaming mean?

First, to clear up a common misconception, gender mainstreaming is not about “promoting women” or “feminist politics”; it focuses equally on both men and women. What is it then? Gender mainstreaming is a strategy for achieving equality for men and women in all areas of life. The various living situations and interests of women AND men are taken into consideration, and existing roles and clichés are critically examined. The idea is to “soften” existing rigid gender roles. In gender mainstreaming, an activity or a behavior is not characterized as “typically male” or “typically female”; care is also taken that no one is limited in his/her personal freedom or disadvantaged because of gender. This allows men and women to behave more freely and gain new experiences in various areas of life, such as at the workplace, in the household and during recreational activities.

The challenge is to be aware of gender-specific differences within one’s own target groups and actively address them, without generating or even reinforcing clichéd roles and stereotypes. Germany has been legally required to practice gender mainstreaming since 1999, when the Amsterdam Treaty came into force in the European Union. All administrative and organizational levels of the federal and state governments, including state conservation area management, are responsible for implementing the policy.

German Federal Ministry for the Environment, more than 65% of women vs. only 35% of men reported that being close to nature plays a decisive role in their personal quality of life (see BMU 2006). Another study indicates that women apparently have a greater affinity for nature and its conservation than men do (BfN 2004).

Further insights were gained in the pilot project “Einführung des Gender Mainstreaming im Nationalpark Eifel” (Introducing gender mainstreaming to the Eifel National Park) 2004/2005. The goal of this project was to develop practical tools for achieving gender mainstreaming in the work of the national park, especially in the areas of education and public relations. Observations and experiences in the environmental education field (in this case with children and youth) at the Eifel National Park identified gender-specific differences (see ISOE 2005). These differences manifest themselves, for example, in the different interests, skills and previous experiences of male and female children and youth, in the way they perceive nature and in how strongly they experience fear and revulsion.

For the work of protected areas, it thus makes sense to take into consideration not only the age, level of education and cultural differences when dealing with people, but also perceptions and behaviors that are gender role specific. Additional reasons for actively using gender mainstreaming as a strategy include complying with legal requirements and guidelines, serving as a role model, and improving the image of a protected area and the quality of park management.

What does gender mainstreaming have to do with volunteer management?

People play a key role in volunteer management, more so than in protected area management in general. Equal opportunities for women and men and promoting diversity should also be goals here. In volunteer management, this includes:

- Areas of volunteer assignment and activity
 - What volunteer jobs will be offered to whom and under what conditions?
- Treatment of volunteers
 - How are volunteers addressed and motivated?
 - How are volunteers trained (content, methods) and supervised?
 - How are volunteers publicly portrayed and recognized?

“Every day, a broad range of colleagues work together as a team and come up with diverse ideas for how we can stand out from the competition. We want them to be able to contribute their very specific talents, skills and ‘differentness’ to the company. The key to achieving this is a working environment that values each and every individual so that everyone feels motivated to collaborate and contribute to the success of the company. This provides us with a competitive edge in meeting customer needs, but also on the job market when competing for the most talented applicants. Ultimately everyone benefits – from the individual to the company.”

Michael Schmidt, Board of Directors, BP AG 2007

Why apply gender mainstreaming to the National Natural Landscapes and the volunteer program?

- **To fulfill legal requirements:** These originate from the EU Council Directives for achieving gender mainstreaming, the Amsterdam Treaty (Articles 2 & 3) and the Basic Law of the Federal Republic of Germany (Article 3). Germany-wide and state-specific regulations also apply.
- **To coordinate activities with the UN Decade of Education for Sustainable Development 2005-2014:** The equal treatment of men and women is a key issue in education for sustainable development.
- **For role model and multiplier purposes:** Through their commitment to gender mainstreaming, protected areas take on an additional societal responsibility. Volunteer coordinators in particular have a multiplier effect with

respect to volunteers by consciously exemplifying awareness of gender issues.

- **To enhance the public perception and image of protected area management:** The PR work and educational services of protected areas can reach a broader audience, including volunteers and visitors, by taking gender-specific aspects into consideration to improve access to various environmental topics and events.
- **To enhance the quality of protected area management:** Many aspects of gender mainstreaming complement established and future quality standards in protected area work and volunteer management. Observing them improves the quality of life and working in protected areas through enhanced consideration and tolerance of different ways of thinking, working

and behaving, different skills, qualifications, interests and opinions, as well as through correspondingly modified work structures and processes. This means that gender mainstreaming should play a much greater role in protected areas in the future:

- **To promote awareness of inequalities that exist** between men and women when it comes to societal freedoms and duties that are “taken for granted”;
- **To increase awareness of and reduce (intentional and unintentional) unequal treatment** – Discriminatory treatment in the daily workplace of protected areas and specifically in volunteer management. When everyone feels they are treated equally and taken seriously, it facilitates open, social relationships.



Fig. 16: Photo of volunteers who have mowed meadows in the Barnim Nature Park (part of Berlin Volunteer Day)

- **To promote greater and more balanced participation and inclusion of paid staff and volunteers** (and specifically of women): This makes it possible to include otherwise potentially ignored views, opinions, suggestions for improvement, etc. from people who are normally relatively reserved and thus hardly have a voice in making decisions and solving problems, thereby increasing their value, success and acceptance.
- **To promote the autonomy and independence of paid staff and volunteers:** This is achieved by allowing activities to be chosen and knowledge imparted independently of gender; the increasing openness to new experiences and exchange of knowledge leads to a more satisfying cooperation for all participants.
- **To expand the knowledge and expertise of paid staff and volunteers:** In this process, men and women increasingly share experiences and working methods/ approaches and learn from one another.

“A key result (of the ‘Introducing gender mainstreaming’ pilot project in the Eifel National Park) is that we are much more fine-tuned to the concerns and interests of the diverse groups involved with the national park. This is important because it allows us to anticipate how our projects will affect women, men and other population segments. Gender mainstreaming helps establish higher-quality services that are better tailored to our target groups and lead to more satisfied park visitors.”¹¹

Henning Walter, Director of the Eifel National Park

Gender mainstreaming in volunteer management – how is it done?

The following are suggestions for optimizing the gender-mainstreaming qualities of the volunteer management in the National Natural Landscapes:

Planning where volunteers work

- Take into consideration and respect the different interests and needs that male and female volunteers may have, for instance, with respect to location and time of day. This might concern outdoor activities – alone or with others, during the day or at night – or the possibility of volunteers’ bringing children with them
- Make it possible for men and women to try out activities that are less “typical” for their specific gender

Recruiting volunteers

- Address and present male and female volunteers equally in terms of language, imagery and topic selection (see info box)
- In presentation materials, take into consideration the wishes, fears and concerns of all volunteers and provide detailed information about volunteer activities (what is done when and how?) to avoid ambiguity and uncertainty and motivate people to take on “gender-atypical” tasks
- Use advertising media that make information available to men and women in the same manner and choose media that have maximum acceptance among women and/or men
- Place advertising for special involvement opportunities at typical “women’s places” and “men’s places,” where each group can be specifically reached

How to implement gender mainstreaming?

A few examples in text and images¹²

Avoid sexism when using names and forms of address

- “Mr. Miller and Mrs. Miller” or “Thomas Miller and Anja Miller” instead of “Mr. Miller and wife”
- “The Anja and Thomas Miller family” instead of “The Thomas Miller family”

Mention occupational titles of both men and women

- “National Park Director Susan Smith and Volunteer Coordinator Hans Meier” instead of “National Park Director Susan Smith and Mr. Meier”
- “Prof. Thomas Miller and Research Assistants Antje Volt and Katja Watt” or “The research team from the University of Jena” and not “Prof. Thomas Miller from the University of Jena and his staff”

Avoid stereotypical and/or discriminating descriptions and representations of men and women

- Men are not the only ones who “determine something,” “demand something,” “make their viewpoint clear” or “express an opinion”
- Women are not the only ones who “believe something,” “desire something,” “concur,” “confirm” or “make claims”
- Avoid imagery, camera angles, symbols, drawings, animations, figures, etc. that are insulting or confirm/reinforce stereotypical gender roles

Strive for balance in depicting men and women

- Ensure a balanced relationship between the number of men and women, girls and boys in images, text, videos, radio features, etc.
- Equally present the achievements and characteristics of men and women, boys and girls
- Alternate between “gender-typical” topics so that the overall content is (gender-) neutral and mutual interest is cultivated

Placing, training and supervising volunteers

- Avoid propagating stereotypes based on traditional gender roles; for instance, do not categorize activities as “typical men’s work” or “typical women’s work.” Instead encourage everyone to try everything; this gives volunteers the opportunity to try their hand at new activities without restrictions, to gain new experiences, to potentially discover unknown abilities and interests and to expand their horizons

- When supervising and training volunteers, set a good example: show that work, tasks and responsibilities are taken on equally by paid staff of both genders

¹¹ The complete interview (in German) is available online at: www.nationalpark-eifel.de/go/eifel-detail/german/Ueber_uns_oder__Forschung/Verwaltung/367_gender_mainstreaming_im_nationalpark_eifel.html

¹² Revised in accordance with: ISOE 2005a

- When teaching something, make information equally available for all
- View existing gaps in knowledge in a (gender-)neutral manner and compensate by explaining or demonstrating
- Use a range of media (daily newspapers, trade journals, the Internet, etc.) to present and reward the achievements of volunteers and thus reach “everyone”

Recognizing volunteers

- Include volunteers in decisions and ask them for their ideas and opinions; listen to their opinions without prejudice, i.e., do not respond with “What could a man/woman possibly know about that?”
- Show the same respect for everyone (for example, don’t say: “Not bad for a woman.”)
- When planning events held in recognition of volunteers, pay attention to different needs (do not limit yourself to “male” or “female” kinds of celebrations); also organize “atypical” experiences and cultivate curiosity in the process
- Show the same appreciation for tasks traditionally performed by women, such as nondescript “desk work” and social welfare activities, as for the physically strenuous and high-profile jobs more frequently carried out by men
- Recruit open volunteers and/or paid staff to promote and advance gender mainstreaming in volunteer programs and management
- “Passively” inform about gender issues and gender mainstreaming, for instance, by providing literature to paid staff and volunteers for them to read independently
- Expand your own knowledge of and expertise in gender mainstreaming by attending suitable training sessions (exchange practical experiences, develop routines for one’s own work)
- Promote gender mainstreaming by networking with colleagues in one’s own protected area and/or from other areas
- In cooperations (e.g., with schools), agree on the goals of gender mainstreaming with the cooperation partner in order to coordinate content and methods

Further development of gender mainstreaming in protected areas

Further reading online:

- www.isoe.de/projekte/nrw_instrumente.htm (German only)
Guidelines and checklists for implementing gender mainstreaming in national parks, from the ISOE Institute for Social Ecological Research
- www.dnr.de/dnr/projekte/projekt.php?id=13 (German only)
Recommendations from the “Gender Greenstreaming” project of the Deutscher Naturschutzring, the umbrella organization of German nature conservation and environmental NGOs
- www.gender-mainstreaming.net (German only)
German Federal Ministry of Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth
- www.bpb.de/themen/M2VX4I,0,0,Gender_Mainstreaming.html (German only)
German Federal Agency for Civic Education
- www.genderkompetenz.info/eng
The GenderCompetenceCenter at the Humboldt University of Berlin
- www.genanet.de/home.html?&L=1
genanet – focal point gender, environment, sustainability

Summary of the project phase and future outlook

“After a group tour, it is always gratifying to observe how much visitors enjoyed the landscape and how receptive they are to issues of nature conservation.”

Hubert Volkmar, volunteer at the Rhön Biosphere Reserve

In addition to nature and cultural highlights, the greatest treasures of Germany’s National Natural Landscapes are enthusiastic people who enjoy getting involved and feel personally fulfilled through volunteer work. A professional framework is essential for maintaining, cultivating and developing this wealth in the long term. The “Volunteers in Parks” program of the National Natural Landscapes represents such a framework.

The volunteer program has matured in the past three years, developing into a respected, powerful and professional tool. It is a tool for the parks but also for the numerous volunteers and various groups involved with the program, including individuals, companies, the media, educational institutions, nature conservation associations and social organizations.

What has been achieved in this partnership is apparent in the following results from the 03/2006–01/2009 project phase:

- Following successful basic training, the volunteer coordinators of the 14 National Natural Landscapes that have joined the program since 2006 were awarded the “Volunteer Coordinator in large scale protected areas”

certificate from the German Academy for Volunteer Work. All 29 of the volunteer coordinators from participating protected areas who underwent training in the years 2003 to 2006 additionally expanded their knowledge by taking part in annual workshops and an educational trip to British national parks. The network of volunteer coordinators has developed into an important professional exchange committee for the National Natural Landscapes in Germany.

- Opportunities for “Volunteers in Parks” were significantly expanded to include more than 150 assignments throughout Germany, including both one-time and ongoing activities, taking into consideration volunteers’ personal interests and abilities, time availability and preferences for working alone or in a group.
- The National Natural Landscapes enjoy more and more support from “Volunteers in Parks” every year. Whereas some 1,700 volunteers performed more than 38,000 hours of work for conservation areas in 2006, in 2007 this figure increased to more than 2,000 volunteers with more than

59,000 hours of nature conservation and environmental education work, an increase of approximately 18% in the number of volunteers and 55% in the number of hours.

- Guidelines for working with “Volunteers in Parks” in the National Natural Landscapes have been formulated in collaboration with the volunteer coordinators. These guidelines provide program partners with a common working foundation and promote professional treatment of volunteers in protected areas while helping the volunteer program to develop further.
- The issue of volunteer management has been integrated into quality standards for Germany’s large scale protected areas since 2008, as part of the Quality Standards for National Parks (Cooperations and Partners). This shows that professional volunteer management is increasingly becoming an integral part of park policy and a symbol of high quality.
- Public, societal and political perception and appreciation of the volunteer program has increased considerably, as evidenced by numerous awards

- and honors at the regional, national and international level. These include Volonteuropé's Active Citizens of Europe Award, recognition as an official project of the United Nations Decade of Education for Sustainable Development, and distinction in the 2005/06 environmental competition of the state of Mecklenburg-Vorpommern. The fact that a national park volunteer was personally invited (as one of nine representative volunteers nationwide) to a reception by German Federal President Horst Köhler in 2008 is also an indication of the high regard that the program enjoys. Yet another example is survival expert Rüdiger Nehberg's impassioned testimonial to "Volunteers in Parks" (see p. 2).
- The volunteer program in the National Natural Landscapes has become a flagship program at the European level. Its nationwide orientation serves as an inspiring example for other countries, where programs have been park-specific up to now. Furthermore, EUROPARC Deutschland is a key member of the EU GRUNDTVIG "European Volunteers in Parks" learning partnership, a network of protected areas and park-related organizations in eight European countries launched in 2008. German parks and EUROPARC Deutschland now additionally serve as host, sending and coordinating organizations in the European Voluntary Service.
 - The National Natural Landscapes have significantly expanded and consolidated their volunteer opportunities for schoolchildren and schools promoting volunteering. This is yet another way in which the parks make an important contribution to the comprehensive, social education of young people.
 - The involvement of companies in protected areas has increasingly become a cornerstone of the volunteer program (corporate volunteering). Every new assignment helps eliminate reservations and increase mutual appreciation. Park projects benefit from the numerous helping hands and new contacts, while companies discover new opportunities to practice teamwork and gain access to new target groups.

The experiences and results presented here show the areas that the volunteer program of EUROPARC Deutschland and the National Natural Landscapes should focus on in the future to better utilize untapped potential. These include:

Strengthening the community of "Volunteers in Parks"

"Volunteers in Parks" have "been bitten by the bug." It pays off to appreciate and support them more consciously as a community of park friends – young and old, qualified and unqualified, experienced and inexperienced, mobile and local volunteers alike. Many things are more fun when done in a group, success comes easier, and variety is the spice of life (and work). Moreover, as personal conviction and a feeling of belonging grow – both of which are essential factors to the friendship between volunteers and the National Natural Landscapes – it makes the program increasingly attractive for others, and previously uninvolved onlookers are motivated to become active in protected areas.

Transforming "the weak" into "the strong"

"Engagement macht stark" (Empowering involvement) is the motto of the Germany-wide Week of Civic Involvement. Volunteer work is not limited to kind-hearted help from already "strong" people. Getting involved also strengthens the "weak" in our society. This includes people who are

"different," for example, the disabled and individuals from different cultural backgrounds. Overcoming prejudice and enabling everyone to participate is something protected areas do to promote the social cohesion of our society. It quickly becomes apparent that not only the supposedly weak are strengthened as a result but also the protected areas themselves.

Enhancing educational benefits for volunteers

Volunteering provides program participants with new knowledge while allowing them to practice their skills and expand their personal horizons. This opportunity is available to volunteers of all ages and stages in life. It is the responsibility of the protected areas participating in the program to further broaden the scope of the available opportunities for lifelong learning for volunteers. The enhanced personal benefit for volunteers will in turn motivate them to become even more involved.

In the space of just a few years, the volunteer program has literally and figuratively broken new ground in the protected areas. It has engendered new prospects, new competencies, new structures, new activities, new exchanges and new partnerships. EUROPARC Deutschland looks forward to continuing this cooperation with the same degree of enthusiasm – for the benefit of Germany's National Natural Landscapes, the "Volunteers in Parks" and the countless program partners.

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ABBREVIATIONS

BR	biosphere reserve
EVS	European Voluntary Service
LSPA	large scale protected area (national park, nature park, biosphere reserve)
NGO	non-governmental organization
NLP	national park
NRP	nature park
PR	public relations

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“My most memorable experience was sitting on the Helgoland dunes for an entire day with a camera, observing and photographing grey seals.”

Maike Paul, volunteer at Wadden Sea National Park of Lower Saxony

“It is always nice to discover new and hidden springs in the course of our investigations.”

Udo Kaiser, volunteer at the Rhön Biosphere Reserve

“It is amazing to stand at the Tauerwiesen Pond with a group and see approximately 150 cranes fly overhead, hear the distant roaring of stags and observe great white egrets at the edge of the water.”

Gisbert Hiller, volunteer at the Upper Lusatia Moorland Biosphere Reserve

“It is always a pleasure to show the national park with its motto ‘Let nature be nature’ to hiking groups, whether children or adults, and see how they gain a greater understanding for nature. Hiking in the fog between dead wood at the side of the trail is a spooky highlight. It’s easy to imagine a dwarf behind every tree and bush, telling strange stories.”

Jutta Obst, volunteer at Harz National Park

