

NATURE AND ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION, GAME CONSERVATION

The human hunger for room requires immense space for housings, industrial areas, and traffic routes. Raw material is being used carelessly and energy is wasted thoughtlessly. Modern agriculture uses great amounts of pesticides. The quest for arable land heartlessly exploits limited resources. Unhealthy substances are still added to food and fodder. Trash is stored in an unsafe way, air is polluted by poisons, dust, and exhaust. Sewage can seep away or is discharged into rivers without sufficient treatment. Every day, people are exposed to nerve-racking noise. Because of increased needs for rest and relaxation, the ones seeking rest and relaxation take their everyday stress to the last corner of the untouched wilderness.

Among hunters nature protection has a more than a 100-year- long tradition. Nature protection developed from the idea of conserving limited sources. It was as early as 1893, when the General German Hunting Conservation Association condemned the unnecessary killing of birds in Italy and filed a petition with the "Reichtstag" in this matter. In 1900 a request to prohibit search and drive hunts during springtime was filed, and in 1926, German hunters recommended that obligatory conservation- be introduced. This obligation has been included in the Federal Hunting Act only since its most recent amendment. With slogans "Without hunters no game" and "Hunters protect nature", German hunters make their critics understand that hunters, coming from an old tradition, considered, and still consider nature protection as their very own cause, and that on the densely populated cultivated land in Germany, wild animals cannot be left on their own.

Man historically has divided animals and plants into those which are beneficial and to those without benefit or as pests. Man normally conserves what he could use, but destroys what gets in his way. Because of this, species like wolves, lynxes, bears, eagles, and eagle owls almost became extinct. Fortunately this all or nothing concept was replaced by the idea that man should care for all of nature resources. Under this concept the practice of controlling levels of certain species, e.g. cloven-hoofed-game, came into being to ensure these animals would have sufficient food at adequate habitat.

To foster an understanding of conservation many areas of Germany have established, nature reserves and bird sanctuaries, as well as nature and animal parks to show that animals bring life to nature, enrich nature and help make our lives more beautiful.

Each person, who enters hunting land with a firearm accepts great responsibility for nature, game, and humanity. Each hunter must ensure that a great variety of animal species can continue to live in secure and healthy habitats; (biotopes) that excessive hunting is precluded and that endangered species are protected.

On 20 December 1976 the German Parliament adopted the Act on Nature Protection and Countryside Preservation "Bundesnaturschutzgesetz" (Nature Protection Act) which states that:

Nature and countryside will be protected, preserved, and developed in settled and unsettled areas in such a way that :

1. the productivity of the natural balance,
2. the utilization of natural goods,
3. plant and animal life,
4. the variety, special characteristics, and beauty of nature and the countryside

will be ensured, on a long term basis, as basis for human life and as a prerequisite for human recreation in nature and in the country side.

PROTECTION OF NATURE IS PROTECTION OF PEOPLE

High demands and the progress of civilization and technology plus enormous economical development made it necessary to protect the permanently endangered countryside against further disadvantageous influences and to correct biological imbalances of nature, animals and human beings.

What is included in the Nature Protection Act?

- it includes the maintenance of rare and endangered plant species
- the protection of animals that may not be hunted
- the prevention of improper appropriation and
- abuse of plants, and parts of plants and animals

Natural Monuments which are individual creations of nature, the maintenance of which, because of their special characteristics, is in the public interest, e.g. rocks, geological exposures, wandering blocks of rock, tracers of glaciers, springs, water courses, old or rare trees, group of trees, and biotopes.

Nature Reserves - demarcated areas where special protection of the entire nature or of individual parts e.g. bird sanctuaries, bird protecting coppices or plant reserves is in the public interest for scientific and historical reasons, for reasons of local history and geography, or for folklore, because of the beauty of the country side or because of its special characteristics.

All Other Parts of the Countryside, that contribute to the beauty and animation of the scenery or that deserve to be maintained in the interest of birds, especially of song birds and small game hunting. Also included are trees, groups of trees or bushes, balks, avenues, ridge hedges and other hedges, parks and cemeteries.

To be identified as protected areas, it is necessary to be listed as such in the German "Naturdenkmalbuch" (Nature Monument Book), or the "Naturschutzbuch" (Nature Protection Book).

Nature Parks and their functions: Nature Parks are parts of the countryside that are noted for their forests and natural beauty. Such as nature parks have been established in many countries to include America, Switzerland, England, Netherlands, Japan and Sweden, as well as in Germany. Because of everybody's obligation to use property in a social responsible way, nature parks are open to all sections of the population. Most of these parks and rest areas refuges have marked trails and bridle paths, which lead visitors back to their starting point.

Nature Protection Authorities are distinguished between the highest, upper and lower-protection authorities. Lower nature protection authorities are the lower administrative authorities, such as chief administrative officers of rural district. In cities not belonging to a rural district, lower nature protection authorities are usually lord mayors or town councils. In each nature protection authority a nature protection agency was created to provide professional advice. Nature-protection authorities can issue directives concerning the landscape to protect it and preserve the joy of nature.

Protection of wild plants - Abusing wild plants or destroying their stocks is prohibited. Abuse of wild plants includes excessive removal of flowers and ferns, malicious and useless cutting of herbaceous plants and shore plants, and unauthorized burning of plants which provide cover for nests and young animals. Picking wild fruits of the forests, such as berries and mushrooms, will be allowed if the amounts of wild fruits of the forest picked is within local practice (Baden Wuerttemberg, Bavaria, Hessen) In Saarland legal provisions may prohibit picking wild berries, mushrooms, hazelnuts, herbs, and flowers for a limited period and at certain locations.

How are mushrooms picked appropriately? If you find mushrooms, you should always leave some, especially young mushrooms. Do not step on mushrooms, not even on poisonous ones. They are important in the chain of decomposition and, to a smaller extent, provide food for game. Do not tear mushrooms out of the ground. Turn them above the ground until they come loose. Mycelia must stay in the ground. Be especially careful when picking meadow mushrooms. Mushrooms that grow on the edge of forests, can be mistaken for the extremely poisonous death cups.

Completely protected plants may not be damaged or removed from their sites.

Some of the more common protected wild plants are: ostrich fern, hart's tongue, king fern, feather grass, lilies, orchids or orchis (lady's slipper, cephalanthera, black nigritella, and butterfly orchid), fraxinella, daphne, lesser-yellow foxglove, white and yellow water lilies, gentian, and edelweiss.

May branches be cut in forests, shrubbery, or hedges without approval ?

NO branches may not be cut, regardless of whether or not economic damage is done in individual cases. This does not apply to cutting branches for bouquets. Branches that may not be cut include Christmas trees, bouquets of wild flowers, amentiferous branches of the willow, hazelnut, asp, alder or birchtree. Anyone carrying, transporting, or offering decorative branches for commercial purposes must give proof of having acquired the branches legally.

From 15 March through 30 September the following provisions have been issued to protect habitats-nesting, breeding places or shelters:

1. Clearing, cutting or burning hedges, shrubbery, and hedges,
2. Burning soil-covering on meadows, barks, unused areas, slopes, and hedges
3. Removing weed and weed-grass stocks

in the countryside is prohibited. In Saarland this prohibition applies from 15 February on; in years, when it is especially cold and humid, the prohibition may start as late as 1 March.

In Baden Wuerttemberg and in Bavaria the prohibition applies throughout the year; in Hessen it applies from 16 February to 31 August (for weed, from 1 March to 30 September).

The following prohibition protect native, non-hunted wild birds - pursuing non-hunted wild birds and maliciously disturbing, catching, or killing them is prohibited. Damaging or removing their eggs, nests or other breeding places of protected birds (and selling their meat is also prohibited, Baden Wuerttemberg). From 1 October to the end of February, nests of small birds may be removed from buildings, unless they contain young birds.

Producing, offering , or buying birdlime, lime-twigs, springs, or other bird-catching devices that do not catch birds without wounding them or that do not kill birds immediately.

Involving children when removing nests or catching birds.

Catching or killing wild animals in masses without reasonable and just cause is prohibited.

Game Conservation

Game conservation includes all measures hunters designed and used to protect and improve game stock which are appropriate, rich in species, strong and healthy (that is, adapted to the biotopes). On the other hand, game conservation should not be so excessive that game is allowed to damage agriculture, forestry, and fishing. In Germany modern conservation must first of all be biotope conservation, that is, modern conservation must aim to maintain and develop habitats.

What are biotopes? Biotopes are habitats that are marked by certain creatures. (The Greek word bio means life; biotope means habitat). Such habitats therefore include animal and plant species that require the same environmental conditions. The quality of biotopes depends on the condition of their soil and climate. Foresters often talk about location and "Kleinstandort" (miniature location) when referring to biotopes. Requisites of biotopes nowadays include everything, animals or plants need to meet their requirements for life. Fodder and cover are some of these requirements. In a habitat, only a certain number of individual creatures can exist. As far as hunting is concerned, this means that, when providing food artificially, the stock density of a certain type of game cannot be increased as one pleases, if there is too large a surplus in game, body size, weight, number of young animals and resistance will otherwise decrease constantly. In addition, enemy factors (predators, parasites, and vectors), which are usually well-balanced, will regulate stock density. When stock density increases too much, hunters must interfere by shooting sick and weak game (conservation measure). Otherwise, a great number of game would die over the winter because of lack of fodder and diseases. Biotope capacities must therefore not be exceeded. Modern conservation must first of all be biotope conservation; that is, modern conservation must aim to maintain and develop habitats.

Game Density

Game density is the amount of game counted in resting places or fodder areas of 100 hectare or 1 square kilometer in March. Depending on the quality of biotopes, 1 to 3 red deer or fallow deer and 4 -8 roe deer per 100 hectares are considered normal game density. Game density must always be adapted to the requirements of biotopes and game -fodder areas. General rule: Less game, better fodder, and quiet! Game density was formerly regulated by big-game-animal predators (bears, wolves, lynxes, eagles, and eagle owls. Today, hunters have to regulate game density by hunting in undisturbed biotopes. Without hunters, there would be no more game because, being "Schadwild" (game causing damage), game would be killed off.

What punishments does the "NatSchVO" (Nature Protection Decree) provide for?

Punishments include imprisonment,(in severe or aggravated cases) and fines of up to DM 150. A Adults who have adolescents under the age of 18 can be held responsible if these adolescents violate provisions of the Nature Protection Decree (NatSchVO).

What are the different kinds of forests we distinguish?

There are three categories of forests:

- Deciduous forests with oak trees, red beeches, or hornbeams.
- Coniferous woods with spruce, fir, pine, and larch trees.
- Mixed forest stands.

In areas that are exposed to high humidity or flooding, alder, ash, poplar, and willow trees are predominant. Forests of mixed types of deciduous trees that are located in flatlands along rivers are called lowland forests or riparian forests. Originally, they were preserved forests with rich undergrowth in their original form. Unfortunately, this ideal that ensures the balance of forest and game has been lost because of "Wirtschaftswald". (cultivated forests.)

When are forests called "Forste"

Forests are called "Forste" when they have been cultivated. As a result of a technique that was practiced during the last century, forests today often are monocultures (stands of similar type and age). Monocultures are susceptible to pests (nun moths, pine-bud moths, pine looper moths, eight-dentated bark beetles, and "Waldgaertner" pith borers and are destroyed by forest fires and storms. To combat the pests, today mixed forests or spruce forests with some deciduous trees are planted. When conditions for cultivation are difficult (steep slopes or dry sites, continuous forests are preferred. Continuous forests are those in which trees that must be cut are cut, and the forest stand is allowed to regenerate naturally. (Growing young trees from seeds or from shoots growing out of root stocks).

How important are forests to the balance of nature?

Besides providing wood, forests greatly influence the microclimate and are of great significance for the water balance of nature. The Federal Forest Act results in forests protecting agricultural areas against becoming parched and turning into steppes, store water, and water conservation as well as providing as source of oxygen. Forests furthermore provide shelter and food for game, birds, and small animals. Educators therefore must emphasize the value of forests to young people.

What are forest-hunting lands?

Forest-hunting lands are hunting -lands that are forest areas in which hunting is permitted. In these forests, stands of coniferous, deciduous wood, and mixed forests can be found.

What are field-hunting lands?

Field-hunting lands are mostly open or cultivated field areas. There is no doubt that reallocation of arable land is necessary, however, when reallocating arable land, care must be taken to ensure these are biologically healthy and have plenty of hedges and ridges with "lebenden Hecken" (quick hedges).