

Germany

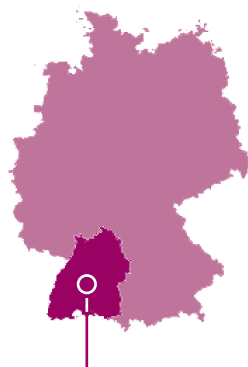
Habitat Management through Natural Grazing:

Project „Urzeit Weide“ in Schelklingen



HEIDELBERGCEMENT

BACKGROUND



Baden-Württemberg,
Germany

Former quarries become arenas for ecological processes as natural succession develop. Such locations provide abundant light, warm microclimate and diverse structure which result in high species diversity. However, with time the vegetation will develop into scrub and then forest losing a great number of rare and threatened species on the way. One way to maintain the initial open structure and associated plant communities is through grazing or other forms of disturbance. Grazing animals promote small-scale dynamics and thus increase the diversity of habitats and habitat structures. For example, they maintain open ponds and reduce the cover of shrubs and trees. Their droppings fertilize the soils and attract numerous insects, and in turn birds, reptiles and amphibians.

Location	Baden-Württemberg, Germany
Size	75 ha
Mineral type	Limestone
Habitat(s) created	Calcareous grasslands, open limestone rock and pioneer vegetation, small tree and bush stands, water ponds and water-fringe vegetation
Target species	National Red List and EU priority species: Woodlark, Red-backed Shrike, Little ringed Plover, Eagle Owl, Corn Bunting, Yellow-bellied Toad, Tree Frog, rare plants e.g. <i>Lathyrus nissolia</i> , orchids e.g. <i>Orchis militaris</i> , <i>Dactylorhiza maculata</i> and dragonflies e.g. <i>Libellula quadrimaculata</i> , <i>Ischnura pumilo</i> .
Protected areas	Natura 2000 sites: SPA "Täler der mittleren Flächenalb" and SCI „Blau und kleine Lauter“
Organisations	HeidelbergCement plant Schelklingen, NABU Baden-Württemberg and ISTE (Industrieverband Baden-Württemberg)

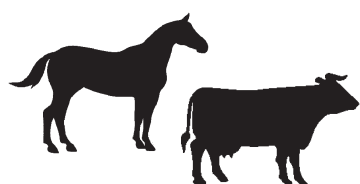
WHY IS THIS PROJECT NEEDED?

The Gerhausen quarry has gradually been taken out of use and HeidelbergCement's plant Schelklingen is responsible for ensuring stability and safety of the old quarry. At the same time, there is an opportunity to promote biodiversity of species and habitats that are rare in Germany and across Europe. Calcareous grasslands are among the most species rich communities in Central Europe but they have decreased dramatically in recent years. In Germany and the EU these habitats are considered of highest priority for conservation. With this in mind HeidelbergCement has approached NABU for advice on grassland conservation and management that is easy to achieve and not financially demanding.

PROJECT OBJECTIVES

- Increase of the species richness associated with calcareous grasslands in the quarry and surrounding area of 75 ha.
- Restore and maintain a diverse cultural landscape of extensive livestock grazing.
- Support the preservation of primitive animal breeds of cattle and horses.
- Environmental training and education in cooperation with NABU Baden-Württemberg and their local groups.

MAIN ACTIVITIES



- The establishment of a semi-wild herd of primitive cattle, descendant of the legendary Aurochs, and Konik horses to freely graze the area of the former quarry following an assessment of the suitability.
- Installation of safety fencing and winter shelter for the animals to support their survival and safety.
- Attention to the animals' health status and well-being is provided by a care taker.
- Implement a monitoring programme to follow the development of the vegetation.

PUBLIC BENEFITS

Natural grazing is a well-recognized conservation strategy that brings additional benefits, such as restoration of ancient breeds of domestic animals, organic production of meat, aesthetical improvement of the landscape and learning opportunities. The creation of a cultural landscape will increase the value of the area for recreation activities such as hiking and biking. At special viewpoints wall charts will explain the local ecology and the role of the grazing animals and about mining and landscape history. Regular informative activities will be organized for the surrounding communities to give an overview about the project. For schools and other interested groups guided tours will be offered. Local NABU groups will have the opportunity to get involved in monitoring surveys.

Visitors to the quarry are well informed



Free grazing cattle and horses



These activities are part of the BirdLife – HeidelbergCement Biodiversity Conservation Programme: Giving nature a second chance

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