

Forest Wilderness without Borders

A piece of wild nature has returned to the core of the old, civilized continent of Europe. Here, in the neighbouring national parks Šumava and Bavarian Forest where the Iron Curtain used to separate people and nature, wilderness is reawakening increasingly. Again forests, only complying with natural forces, grow like in ancient times.

The scenarios of nature could be taken from Graf Sternberg's historic description of the Bohemian forest in 1806, as well as from narrations about enchanted forests of the world of fairy tales and legends where Little Red Riding Hood meets a bad wolf: "... leads the so-called path ... through a swampy forest where one can hardly get out of the terrible muddle; windbreaks thrown one on top of each other, piled up during the centuries and on their rotting backs a second generation emerges daringly..."

A number of species, which were extinct in former times, have returned to the newly developing wilderness.

The lynx is roaming again through the open forests and bog lands, and the impressive Ural Owl breeds on tree skeletons, broken by the wind. In the not too distant future the wolf's howling might be heard again and the imposing silhouette of the elk might be gazed on again.

Man as well plays a part in Europe's Wild Heart: coming from a manipulated, mostly disenchanting natural environment he once again will be able to learn how to be astonished about a nature that returns to its original state.

Those who are hiking through this forest and who let the forest with its exceptional development and its bizarre tree figures take effect on them will perceive the myth of the Bohemian Forest.



Europe's Wild Heart

The borderline between the Czech Republic and Germany, which is also the border between Šumava National Park and Bavarian Forest National Park, goes right through this reawakening wilderness. This is where a trans-frontier wilderness area is planned in a joint project: Europe's Wild Heart.

Project partners: Šumava National Park (CZ) and Bavarian Forest National Park (D)

Project Goals:

- ♥ development of a wilderness area according to the criteria of the IUCN (World Conservation Union) in the core zones of the two national parks
- ♥ present project area: 13,554 ha thereof Šumava National Park: 7,263 ha Bavarian Forest National Park: 6,291 ha
- ♥ planned enlargement until 2028 to about 25,000 ha

Wilderness Area According to IUCN:

- ♥ area, which is to a large extent not influenced by man
- ♥ serves research purposes
- ♥ no extensive management measures permitted
- ♥ touristical use is restricted to marked hiking trails

Planned Management Measures:

- ♥ guidelines for a uniform management of the united core zone (wilderness area)
- ♥ joint public presentation
- ♥ guided tours into the wilderness area
- ♥ establishment of a training (education) and research centre in Kvilda
- ♥ additional cross-border trails
- ♥ closing down of unnecessary forest roads and renaturalisation of disturbed habitats
- ♥ cross-border monitoring and research projects



Dear Reader,

today, a visit to wilderness is usually connected to traveling to other continents, or just to the reading of books about the old past. Many people do still believe, that wilderness is something bad and dark, dangerous, something that should be "civilized".

But it is exactly the population of the most "civilized" parts of the world, which now more and more wants to escape and looks for the wilderness to travel to. After an almost total liquidation of wilderness from our surroundings, we have suddenly noticed that we miss it. Some people do, because they simply want to see how nature can work by itself, how breathtaking the action of the natural powers can be, which maintained this planet sustainable for hundreds of millions of years, long time before humans have started to intervene. Some other miss it, because some plants, animals, natural habitats or processes may be seen only there. And we are more and more aware that natural powers of wilderness are, at least in part, absolutely necessary even for the most modern human society: they regulate the climate, help to keep the water clean, protect against flooding, serve us to gain clean air.

Remnants of wilderness are home to life evolution - and we should not forget, that we humans are also product of this evolution. They are our point of reference, where we can check how good or how bad our solutions are; they create a most valuable laboratory for scientists for the study of ecosystems, research in new medicaments or new solutions, say in energy efficiency or other fields. Therefore it is good, that we do not need to travel and find the natural powers of wilderness only in the Amazonian forests, the forests of Siberia or New Caledonia, but we can also see them here - in the middle of Europe, in the Šumava Mountains.

I think, that it is our moral and ethical duty to keep natural powers acting everywhere, where the present stage of ecosystems still allows that. Core zones of the Šumava and Bavarian Forest National Parks are doubtlessly of such a quality. So come and try to observe and do not evaluate: just look from a small distance to a unique world, which is so rare in Europe now!

Sincerely

Ladislav Miko

Director of Directorate B,
Protecting the Natural Environment
European Commission



A Touch of the Taiga

Natural spruce forests on mountain crests and high-altitude plateaus are characteristic features of this landscape. As relicts they are closely related to the northern Taiga forests.

At first sight, the autocratic spruce tree provides them with a monotonous and gloomy appearance. However, on closer inspection they turn out to be an army of snow broken and deformed disabled trees which mutate into wood ghosts with their widely spread out and gnarled branches in the fog.

Allowing natural, for these forests typical bark beetle cycles, the two national park boards have broken with the tradition of a forestally preserved managed forest and have initiated the development back to conditions which are similar to primeval forests. The rich forest regeneration that grows up below old trees, which were killed by the bark beetle, disproves all fears and worries of critics, saying that here no forest could ever grow again.

In Europe's Wild Heart myriads of spruce seedlings use the large natural stock of rotting wood as germination bed and grow into impressive trees.

In the Wet Kingdom of Peat Moss

Peat bogs belong to the ecologically most important and esthetical most impressive habitats of the two national parks. As the centre of species diversity they are valuable refuges for ice-age relicts of former tundra landscapes in today's forest landscape.

With drops of a glittering and sticky liquid the sundew attracts small nectar-loving insects to digest them on its small trap-leaves. The sundew withdraws them the vital nitrogen, which is very rare in the bogs.



Giant Trees and Species Diversity

The mountain mixed forest, the most important forest community concerning the expanse, has been misused by hundreds of years of forest exploitation. Today, the share of the originally dominating tree species, beech and fir, has been reduced to a minimum.

Now, the prevailing tree species is the spruce because it was supported by forestry. But here as well bark beetle and wind throw help the mountain mixed forests in a regulating way to regain their original composition of tree species. As in former times, primeval forest-like stands emerge with giant trees that leave the beholder in respectful amazement.



Luxuriance of Blossoms and the Dance of Butterflies

Formerly, the poverty of this meagre landscape forced the people of the Bohemian Forest to use pastures and hay meadows situated at a high altitude.

Being economically unimportant for a long time, but also of impressive beauty, the relicts of this era are spread over the large forest areas of both national parks and enchant the visitors with the charm of old park-like landscapes.

Enchanted by Sound and Light

Murmuring waters underneath a tangle of moss-covered giant rock and a tall-forb community in a richly coloured luxuriance of blossoms receive the hikers in the ravine forest of the 'Höllbachsprengr'.

Rare tree species as mountain elm, broad leaved lime, sycamore and plane maple prosper in this high humidity.



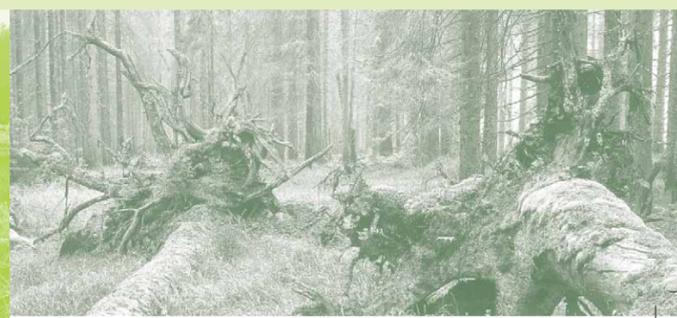
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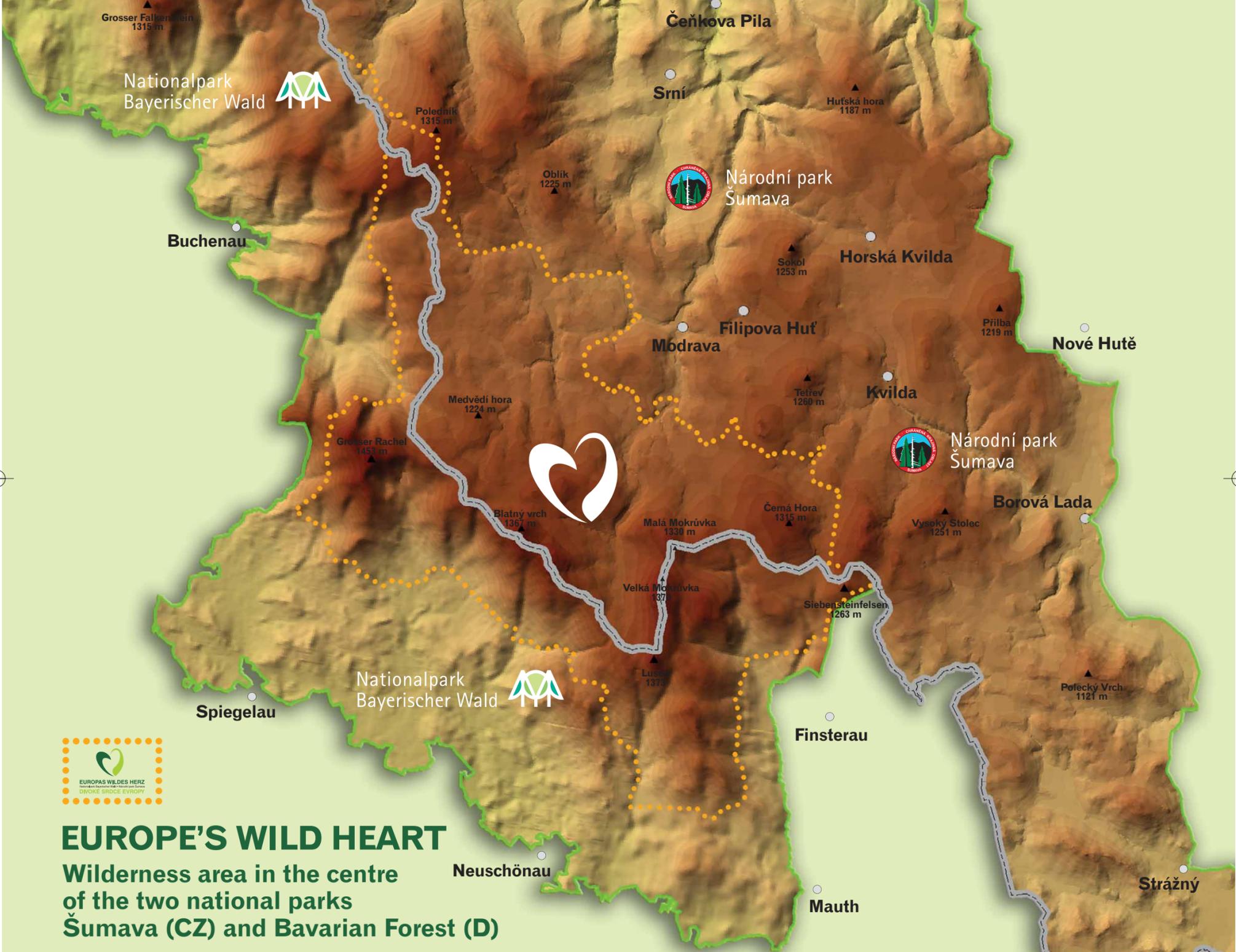
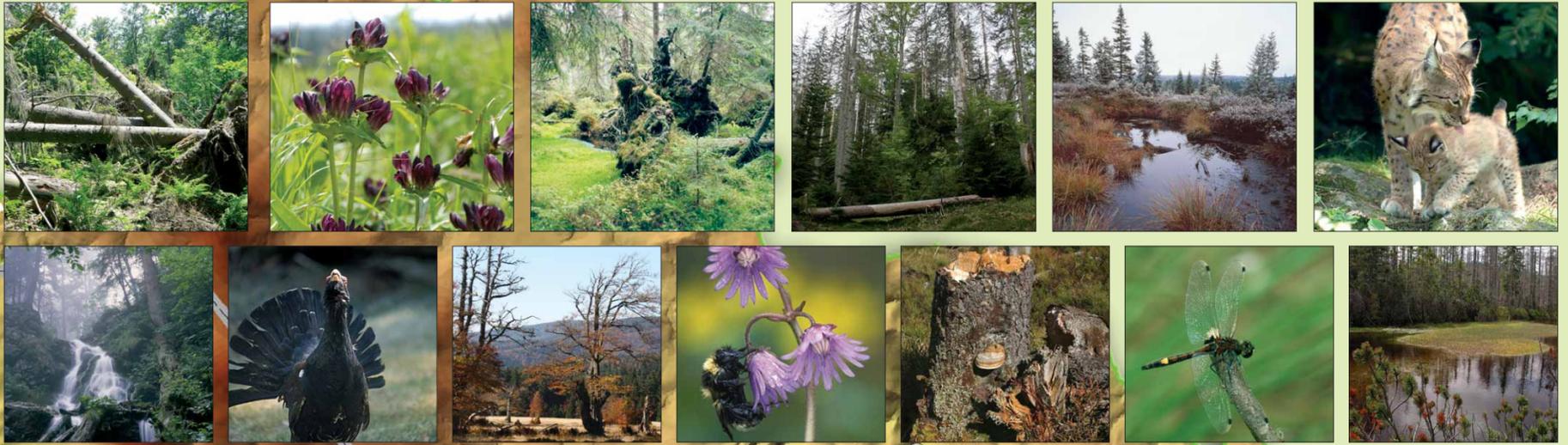
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Národní park
Šumava

Nationalpark
Bayerischer Wald





EUROPE'S WILD HEART
 Wilderness area in the centre
 of the two national parks
 Šumava (CZ) and Bavarian Forest (D)

