

Where Nature is at Home

The vast majority of publicly-owned natural landscapes in Austria are managed by the Austrian Federal Forests agency (ÖBf), which is the largest eco-systems manager in Austria, responsible for approximately 850,000 hectares. These properties include forests, meadows, moors, lakes, glaciers, mountains and several conservation areas such as national parks and the Vienna Woods Biosphere Reserve. Sustainability is the guiding principle for all ÖBf's activities and the company only harvests what nature can constantly replace. The Conrad Observatory, one of the world's best geophysical research facilities, is located in an 8 km² forest on the Trafelberg one of the areas managed by the ÖBf.

The forest populations in the area of the Conrad Observatory are predominantly mixed woodlands with larch, spruce, beech, pine and sycamore maple. Especially unusual, and therefore worth mentioning, is the presence of yew. The forest is managed in small lots with the aim of naturally regenerating highly biodiverse mixed woodlands. In fact, the Austrian Federal Forests refrains from cultivating a number of areas that have conservation value, leaving the forest to develop naturally without human intervention.

As well as forestry, much of the Trafelberg is used for hunting purposes, in the main red deer, chamois and roe deer. A flourishing population of wood grouse (Fig. 1), one of the most eastern stocks in the Alpine arc, is carefully managed in a grouse preserve and sustainably hunted.



Figure 1: Wood grouse (*Tetrao urogallus*) performing a courtship display – the Trafelberg is an ideal habitat for the wood grouse. Photo credit: ÖBf Archive/W. Gailberger.

The area in the immediate vicinity of the observatory is only hunted by the ÖBf itself, to ensure that measurements can be carried out without disruption.

The Trafelberg is also home to the highly endangered Mountain Apollo butterfly (Fig. 2). The ÖBf regularly cultivates the forage areas of this butterfly to safeguard the survival of this rare species.

Thanks to the management of the Austrian Federal Forests, the Trafelberg will remain a highly biodiverse woodland area and thus a valuable natural treasure for future generations.



Figure 2: The Trafelberg is also home to the highly endangered Mountain Apollo butterfly (*Parnassius apollo*). Photo credit: ÖBf Archive/W. Gailberger

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