

# Nature conservation projects in the DACH region

## Our activities at a glance



### Regional project



### DACH region

Germany, Austria,  
Switzerland



### Measures

Revitalisation of peatlands, transformation of agricultural land,  
forest reconstruction, environmental education

Our initiatives in regional nature conservation work to preserve and restore natural habitats and to adapt them to climatic changes. This includes, among other things: the protection and reconstruction of native forests, the preservation of animal and plant biodiversity, peatland protection and restoration, or the transformation of formerly agricultural land. In several different projects, experts and volunteers work together to protect ecosystems and make them more climate resilient.

Nature conservation projects are a valuable addition to certified climate projects. Would you like to support a certified climate project and get involved in regional climate action at the same time?  
Find out more about our combined projects (page 14).

## Background on nature conservation in the DACH region

Forests, peatlands, and meadows: Intact ecosystems bind CO<sub>2</sub> and are home to many animal and plant species. Additionally, they ensure an optimal water balance on the land, making it easier to mitigate the influence of droughts or floods.

That is why nature conservation is essential. Projects such as the renaturation of moors and streams, or the planting of hedges and flowering strips, create a near-natural state in areas that have been converted for agricultural use by humans in the past.

The restored areas play an important role in the so-called biotope network. Because habitats are often cut up, arable land and roads are insurmountable obstacles for many animals. The consequences are far-reaching: foraging and reproduction become difficult. If there is no gene flow between isolated sub-populations, this leads to genetic impoverishment in the long term and, as a consequence, to lower survivability. Restored areas are ecological stepping stones that allow animals to move from one biotope to the next. Flower patches can open a path through the arable desert, hedges can connect two forests.

### How does the support work?

We regularly discuss with our local partners which programs currently need support. We then plan the discussed measures together on-site and implement them at the next possible time.

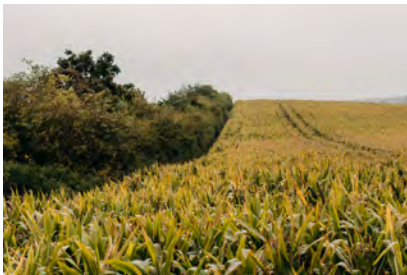


32% of habitats in Germany are in inadequate condition, 37% in poor condition, mainly agriculturally used areas, but also lakes and peatlands (assessment by federal and state governments).

## Where we are active – our sites

Our nature conservation measures take place at various locations in Germany, Austria, and Switzerland. When making our selection, we take into account what is currently needed and work closely with our local partners.

**1. Transforming agricultural land, Westphalia and Münsterland\*:**



**2. Peatland restoration, Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania\*:**



**3. Forest reconstruction, Thuringia\*:**



**4. Forest reconstruction, Basel Country\*:**



**5. Peatlands, environmental education, renanturation, Karwendel\*:**



\* The number shows the location on the map.

## What is being done – nature conservation measures in the DACH region

The places where our projects take place are home to many unique landscapes. With various nature conservation measures, we protect the biological diversity of the region and restore the original state of damaged areas.



The transformation of agricultural land is done in close cooperation with local partners and in consultation with the respective farmers.



### Transforming of agricultural land

Intensively used agricultural areas such as fields are usually very species-poor. With our agricultural projects in Westphalia and Münsterland, we are redesigning these agricultural deserts so that they can harbour many different animal and plant species and create migration corridors for animals that enable animals to move between different habitats. With a financial contribution, we ensure that farmers in certain areas are no longer dependent on intensive agricultural use. This makes it more attractive to restrict intensive land use and manage the land more gently or even cease activity altogether.

Land previously used for agriculture can be upgraded in a variety of ways. Examples are:



**Planting and maintenance of hedges and thickets:** Hedge structures provide an important habitat and refuge for birds and small mammals such as hedgehogs and hares. When hedges are in bloom, they attract many insects that provide food for birds and other animals.



**Planting and maintenance of flower patches:** So-called flower patches, areas with meadow flowers and herbs, provide insects with a habitat and food source. Rabbits and partridges also benefit from the diversity of herbs and the dense vegetation as cover.



**Creation and maintenance of ponds and watering holes:**

Watering holes are shallow, temporary standing waters in hollows or depressions in the ground. Ponds and watering holes are important for frogs, toads, and other amphibians. Also various insects, such as dragonflies, benefit from them. They use wetlands as breeding grounds, for example.



**Planting and maintenance of orchards:**

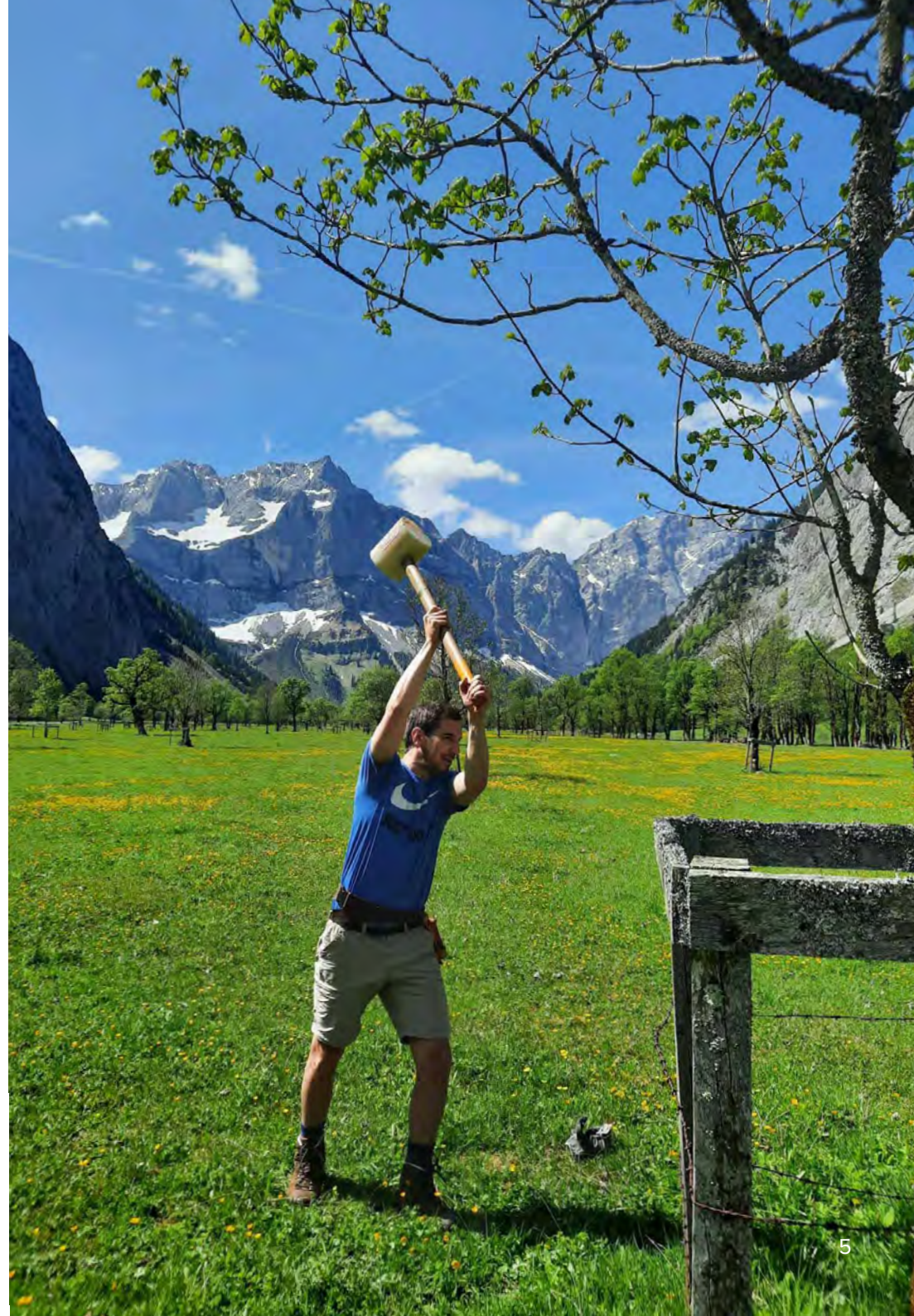
Rare and old fruit tree species are also planted in orchards and thus preserved. Orchard meadows have a great added value for many animals: insects benefit from the blossoms, mammals from the fruits. When the trees have reached a certain age, they provide shelter for bats and owls with their not always straight growth forms and branch cavities.



**Renaturation of streams:** Streams were often straightened in the past. By restoring them to their original meandering (i.e. winding) course, we create new habitats for animals and plants. In addition, a natural stream course protects against erosion.



**Fencing of trees worth protecting:** More than 2,200 sycamores grow in the Karwendel Nature Park, which are important habitat for animals such as woodpeckers and bats. Many of the trees date back to the 17th century. Without protection, the landscape is in danger of disappearing as the older trees reach their natural age limit and no young trees can grow up on their own due to land grazing. Therefore, new maple trees were planted and fenced to guarantee protection of the trees. The fences are now checked and repaired annually.





## Peatland restoration

Intact peatlands are important ecosystems and offer many benefits:

- **Carbon sink:** Peatlands can build up an immense carbon sink over centuries and millennia. Peatlands thus have a stabilising effect on the climate and play a decisive role in climate action.
- **Water reservoir and erosion control:** Intact peatlands absorb and store rainwater like a sponge. Thus they are a great water reservoir and protect against soil erosion and flooding. They also contribute to high groundwater quality.
- **Space for biodiversity:** Peatlands are an important habitat for many specialised and endangered animal and plant species, such as the bittern, a heron species, and the sundew, a carnivorous plant.

In the past, people drained many peatlands by digging drainage ditches to allow the water to drain away. They were then able to extract peat, which serves as a building material and fuel in many places, and use the drained areas for agriculture. As a result, the typical peatland vegetation became rarer and rarer and many animal and plant species adapted to these habitats have since declined sharply or are even threatened with extinction. In addition, when the water level in the peatland sinks, the peat comes into contact with air and begins to decompose. Carbon, methane, and nitrous oxide, some of which have been stored in the peat for centuries or even millennia, are released again.

Thus, drained peatlands emit many greenhouse gases. Depending on the degree to which the area is drained, these emissions can be greatly reduced within a few years through rewetting.

Our projects support the following measures:



**Peatland protection:** On the one hand, we help to preserve and expand existing peatlands and wet meadows. This protects bird, reptile, and insect species that depend on the peatland habitat.



**Rewetting:** On the other hand, we promote measures to rewet drained peatlands, for example in the Karwendel Nature Park and Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania. This is done by closing the drainage ditches that were previously dug. In this way, water can once again accumulate in the peatlands through precipitation or inflows. The emission of harmful CO<sub>2</sub> can thus be greatly reduced and the fauna and flora typical of peatlands can slowly return.

It can take different lengths of time before the natural state of a peatland is restored. Depending on the condition of a drained peatland, years to centuries may pass. Only in the long term can the biomass in the bog soil build up again and remove CO<sub>2</sub> from the atmosphere, which is permanently stored in the form of carbon in peat mosses, for example. Rewetting is a continuous process. The landscape changes gradually and passes through different stages – from wet meadow to raised bog. But even a wet meadow is already an important habitat and can harbour a great diversity of species.

Intact peatlands can bind greenhouse gases for centuries and millennia and are one of the largest carbon sinks in the world.





## Forest reconstruction

Forests are not only among the planet's most important carbon sinks, but also have many other positive effects. Forests are home to enormous diversity of species. They filter rainwater and thus contribute to clean groundwater and an optimal water balance. They also protect against erosion, avalanches, and floods.

However, the consequences of climate change are also noticeable in our native forests: tree species such as spruce suffer from drought because their shallow roots do not reach deeper layers of soil that contain water. Weakened trees are particularly susceptible to pests such as the bark beetle. It is therefore important to convert our forests into climate change-resilient mixed forests and to bring structurally weak forests and monocultures into a condition adapted to the location and future climate. To do this, we are implementing various measures in the Thuringian Slate Mountains, in the Karwendel Nature Park and in Basel-Landschaft:



**Tree planting:** We support the conversion of structurally poor forest stands (for example spruce monocultures) to healthy mixed forests. For this purpose, the site, climate, soil and current vegetation are analysed and then tree species are planted that are typical for the site and suitable for the current and expected future climate. The aim is to achieve a high structural diversity with a variety of herbaceous, shrub and tree layers of different ages.



**Deadwood enrichment:** Old and dead wood is essential for a functioning forest ecosystem. Some individual trees remain in the forest as deadwood and provide refuge for many animals such as the rare fire salamander and various insect species. In standing deadwood, for example, various woodpecker and owl species can build their nesting cavities.



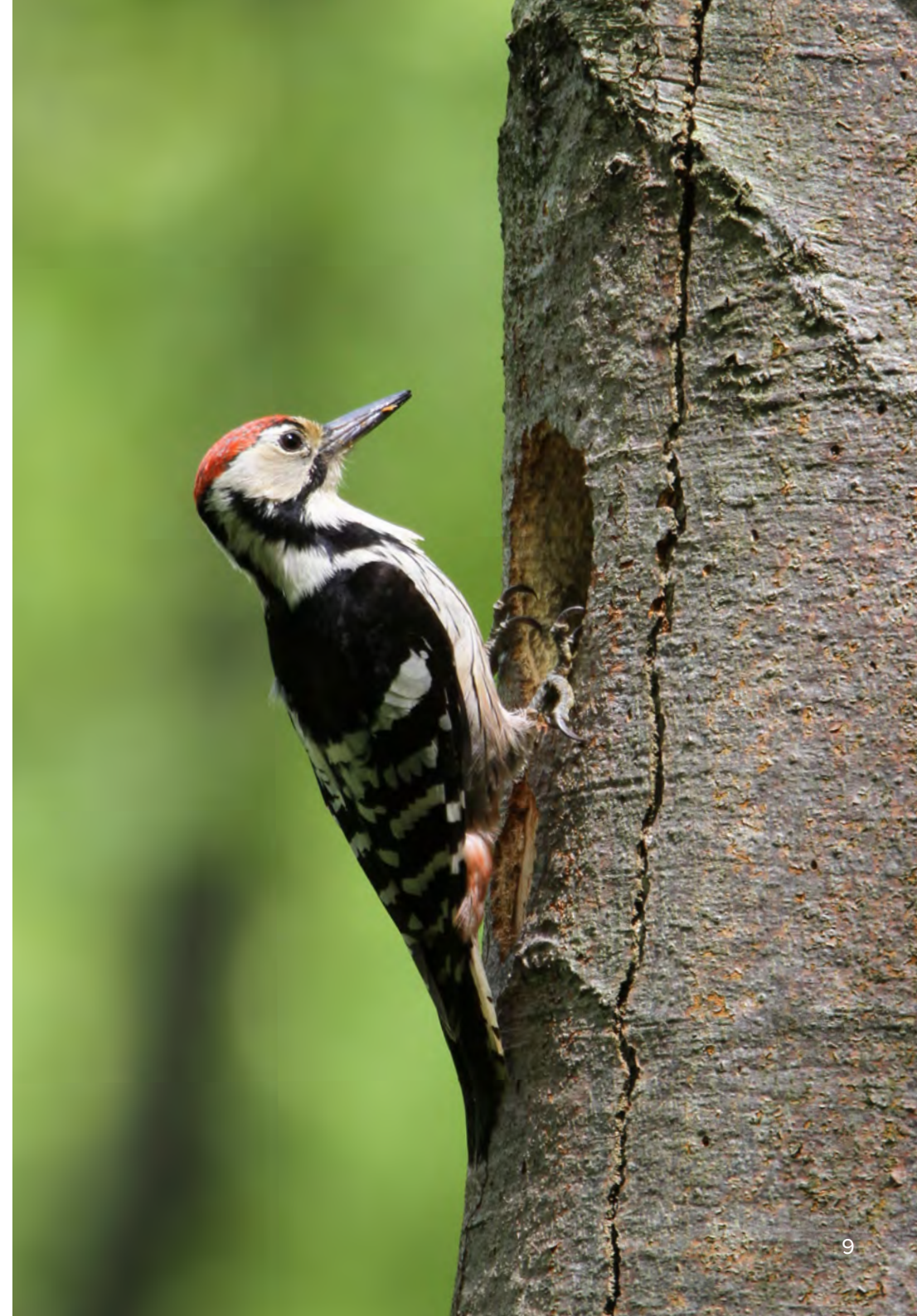


**Species conservation:** The Karwendel Nature Park and parts of the Thuringian Forest areas are located in a Natura 2000 area“, i.e. an area worthy of special protection. This area is home to rare species such as the peregrine falcon, eagle owl, boreal owl and black stork. The capercaillie, a bird species threatened with extinction, also has one of its last refuges here. To preserve the habitat of these animals, the forest is being gently restructured: individual trees are removed and blueberry bushes are planted in their place, which serve as a food source for the capercaillie. Deadwood is left in the forest as a refuge for the animals, and areas in the Thuringian Slate Mountains and the Karwendel Nature Park are set aside. This means that the forests are placed under protection and no longer used for forestry. By protecting the forest areas, primeval forest-like forests can develop that are home to enormous biological diversity.



**Forest edges with tree and shrub species:** The cover of forest edges with shrubs and smaller tree species is a kind of protective wall for the forest. It protects the forest from strong winds and from erosion of the upper soil layer by wind or water. In this way, nutrients are not lost and the soil remains fertile.

Climate change and with it the increase in weather extremes such as heat, prolonged drought, and storms pose a major threat to the forest. Forest restructuring makes the forest more resilient and adaptable.





## Environmental education

Together with the team of the Karwendel Nature Park, we offer people interested in nature the opportunity to complete a qualification as climate educators. The training is offered across borders in Tyrol, Upper Austria, and Bavaria. The modules of the training program are oriented towards regional habitats and impart expert knowledge on climate change and methods of climate change education.

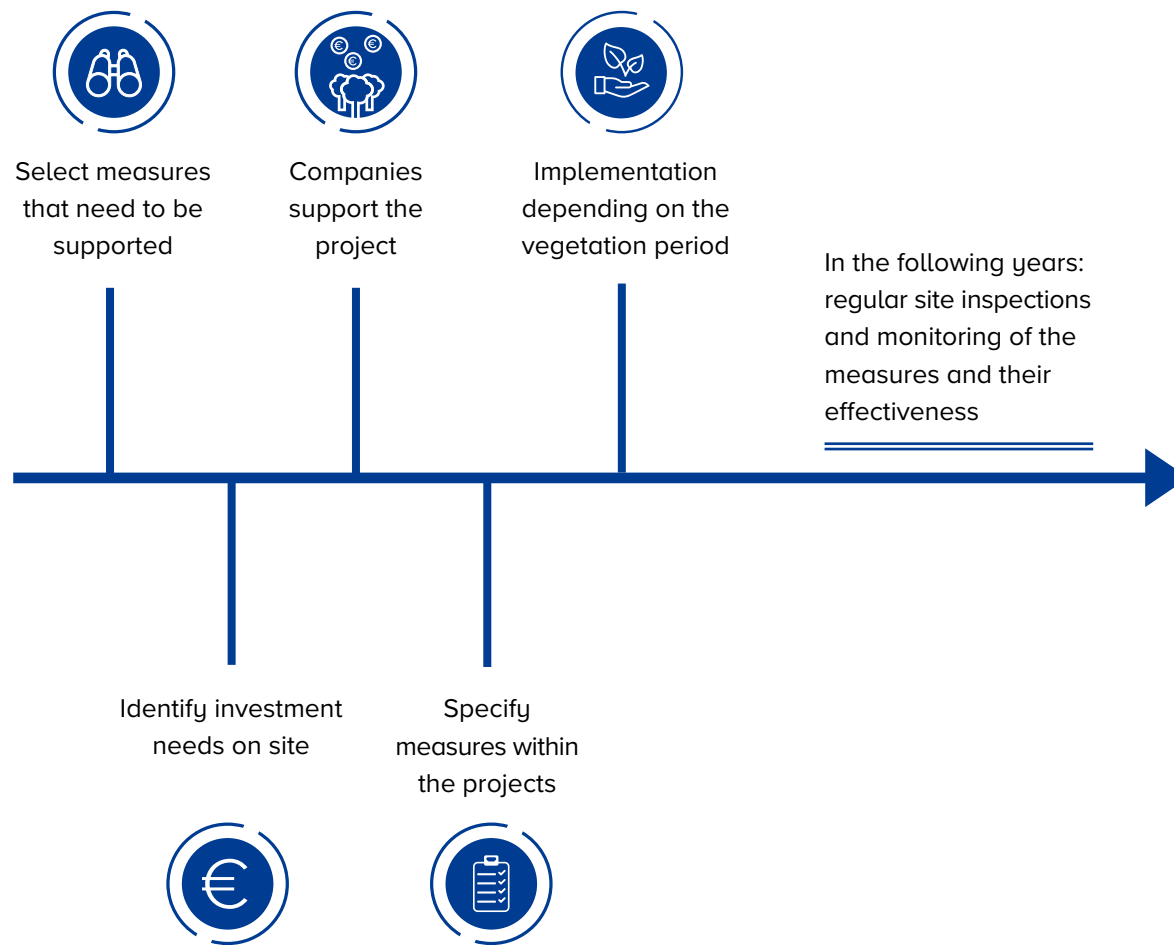
As future experts, the graduates make an important contribution to making other people aware of the consequences of climate change in the Alps and to empowering them to take climate action.

ClimatePartner covers parts of the costs and thus awards scholarships to participants who cannot finance the qualification in any other way.

With the training as a climate educator, our project in the Karwendel Nature Park offers a very special measure: it enables the trainees to make the effects of climate change comprehensible for themselves and others.

## Nature conservation projects over time

How does an idea become a project? What steps are necessary and how do we ensure the success of a nature conservation measure in the DACH region?





## A contribution to the Sustainable Development Goals

# SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

Nature conservation measures in Germany, Austria, and Switzerland contribute to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), among other things because peatlands store large amounts of CO<sub>2</sub> and habitats for many animal and plant species are protected.



**Clean water and sanitation:** Intact and restored peatlands contribute to high water quality. Forest soils too filter rainwater, provide clean ground water, and ensure high drinking water quality.



**Climate action:** Peatlands and forests remove CO<sub>2</sub> from the atmosphere and thus have a stabilising effect on the climate.



**Life on land:** Forests protect against erosion, avalanches, and floods and are habitats for many animal and plant species. The protection of deadwood is a key factor for diversity in the forest and a prerequisite for the occurrence of birds, insects, fungi, and lichens. Hedges, flower strips, orchards, bogs, and ponds are also home to a variety of animal and plant species, including those that are particularly worthy of protection.

## Lend a hand!

At our regular hands-on activities and excursions, experts explain why the various nature conservation measures are so important and how you can get involved yourself.

We regularly invite the supporters of our nature conservation projects in the DACH region to participate in activities or excursions so that they can experience the success and relevance of our projects.

Together, the participants will receive a short introduction from our experts before they get to work on projects themselves or explore the project area together with us.

Would you also like to become active in our nature conservation projects? Get in touch with us. We look forward to hearing from you!



## Combined projects: international climate action meets regional commitment

With combined projects, ClimatePartner combines verified emission reductions through an internationally certified climate project with an additional and voluntary regional commitment, such as the restoration of peatlands in Germany or the restructuring of forest in Switzerland.

In addition to international climate action, you can also help improve our domestic ecosystems:



For this purpose, we offer so-called combined projects: In this case, companies finance a certified climate project on the one hand. In addition, for every tonne of CO<sub>2</sub> saved through the contribution to this climate project, a regional initiative in Europe is supported.

## Your partner for climate action



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