

Biodiversity and ungulate management in managed forests

Questions about the equilibrium between forest vegetation and ungulate populations (especially roe deer, red and fallow deer, mouflon and wild boar) have been investigated since 2015 in a German project called „Biodiversity and ungulate management in managed forests“, or BioWild-Projekt for short. This is a collaboration between the Universities of Dresden, Göttingen and Munich and the German ProSilva Group, called Arbeitsgemeinschaft Naturgemäße Waldwirtschaft (ANW), which acts as the as lead partner.



An older control plot in a similar stand with a visibly different natural regeneration inside (silver fir and some beech) and outside (mainly beech) the fence. Photo: Martin Scholz



One of our fenced BioWild control plots just after construction in an adult beech stand with some admixture of silver fir and Norway spruce. Photo: Stefan Schneider

Lasting for a six-year period (from 2015 to 2021) the BioWild-Projekt is funded with approximately 1,9 Mio Euros by the Federal Program for the Biological Diversity with resources from the Federal Agency for Nature Conservation (BfN) with money from the Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety (BMU). Additional funds are provided by participating forest owners, forest administrations and NGO's. In total 2,5 million Euros are available to the project partners and the five pilot regions in Baden-Württemberg, Northrhine-Westphalia, Saxony-Anhalt, Thuringia and the Saarland. The pilot regions cover in total about 25.800 ha of forest and represent the most common forest types in Germany.

The BioWild-Projekt is structured into the following three sections:

- **In 2015 and 2016:** identification of the five pilot regions, establishment of 496 fenced and unfenced control plots as well as the completion of the first botanical inventory. Synchronization of hunting periods for all game species in those five regions and implementation of the continuous compilation of hunting data for all ungulates shot on 25.800 hectares until 2021.
- **2017 until 2020:** annual botanical inventory of the forest vegetation on all plots, including measurements of horizontal and vertical cover as well as the evaluation of nutritional browse values for all counted plant species. Development of data interpretation techniques and forest growth modeling, based on the first and subsequent annual botanical inventories and all hunting data. Regular communication on the balance between forests and ungulate populations.
- **2021:** final inventories, analysis and modeling. Synthesis of all knowledge and findings of the BioWild-Projekt and the provision of easily understandable information material for all stakeholders.

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