

Where the wild river rushes ...

The "wild Wutach Gorge", located between Neustadt and Wutachmühle, was, for a long time, feared for its rough terrain. Even today only few roads cross the gorge, but marked hiking trails maintained by the Schwarzwaldverein (Black Forest Hiking and Mountaineering Association) make it readily accessible. Observant hikers will be treated to a wild German river environment unique for its geology and landscape history. The Wutach Gorge offers a congenial habitat for many rare animals and plants, some of them endangered. Due to its unspoiled nature, its geological distinctiveness, and its flora and fauna, the gorge was declared a nature reserve in 1939 in order to preserve it as a natural environment and recreational area for future generations. It thus ranks as one of the oldest nature reserves in Germany's southwestern state of Baden-Württemberg. Under the Natura 2000 initiative, the area is now also protected by the European Union.

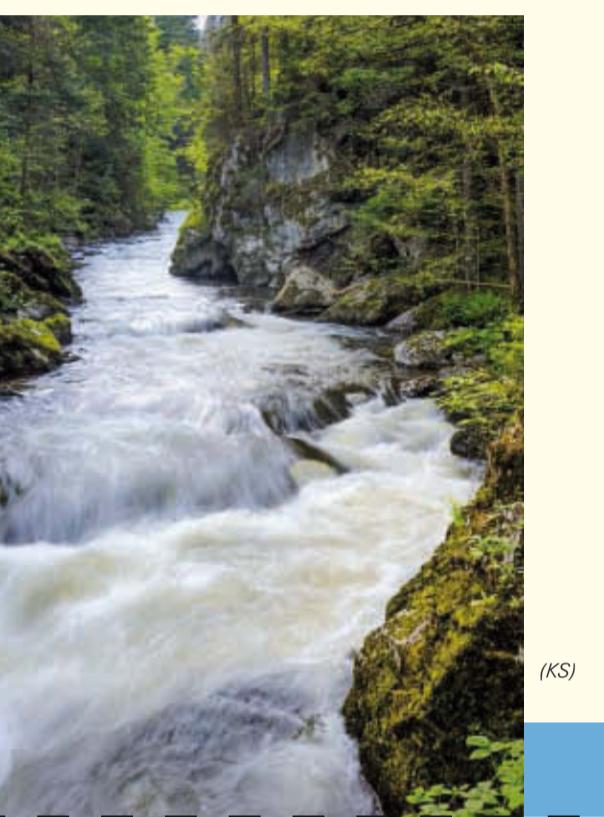
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 Natura 2000

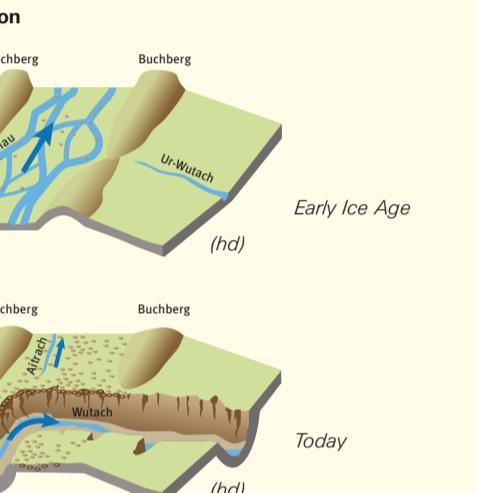
The Wutach Gorge – Nature Reserve and Natura 2000 Protected Area



Baden-Württemberg
REGIERUNGSPRÄSIDIUM FREIBURG



Stages of diversion

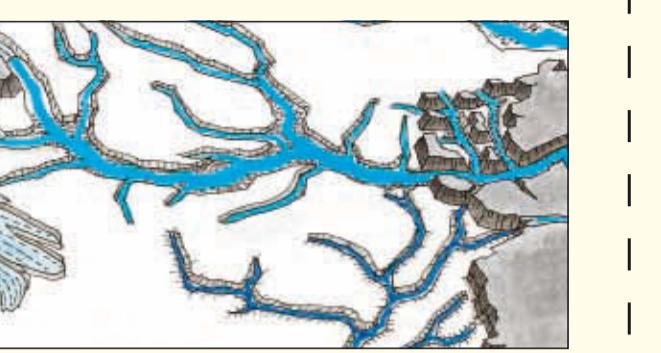


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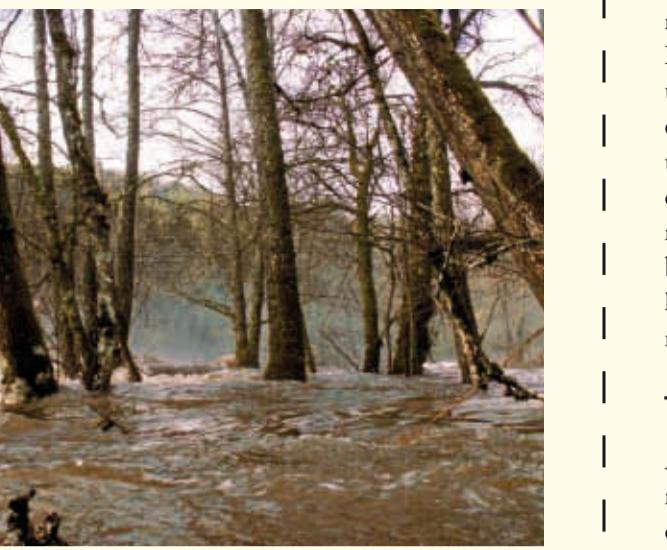
The formation of the Wutach Gorge

Let's take ourselves back 25,000 years to the last ice age, when the higher-elevation areas of the southern Black Forest were covered by a thick ice shield, with glacier tongues also stretching eastwards. Meltwater was carried down by the so-called



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 Natura 2000

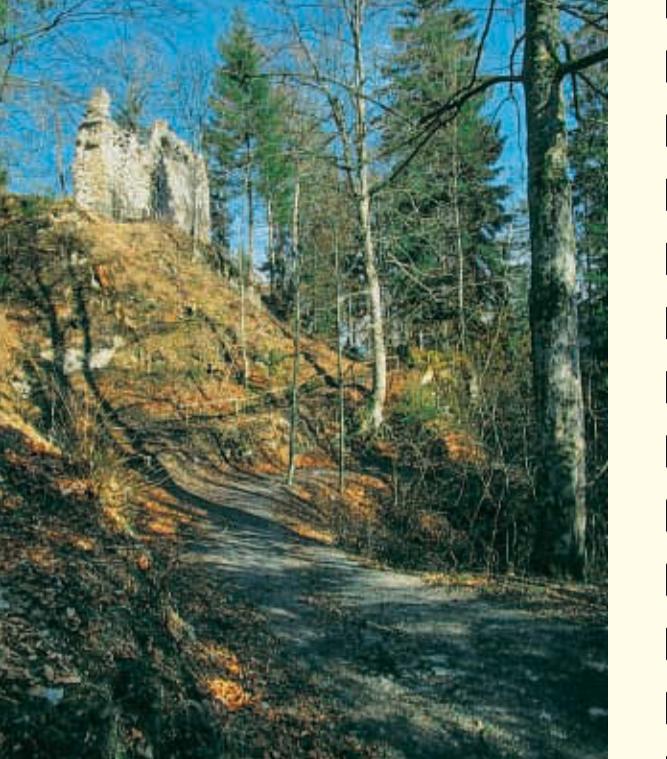


(MS)

nal hurdle to the valley of the Ur-Wutach, the original Wutach River, to the south. For about the last 12,000 years, this sharp turn southward towards the upper Rhine has been irreversible, establishing the present-day course of the river with the distinctive knee of the Wutach (Wutachknie) near today's village of Achdorf. After its diversion, the Wutach River carved a new bed for itself down to 180 m (600 ft) below the old valley bottom of the Feldberg-Danube. To this day, through erosion, high waters, and flooding, this untamed and unspoiled wild river continues to shape the face of the landscape.

The deepening of the Wutach River

A 30-km hike (about 20 mi) along the Wutach River offers a richly varied journey through several hundred million years of geological history. Like a geology textbook example, the Wutach cuts through almost all the rock strata to be found in southwestern Germany. From a narrow bedrock gorge of Black Forest gneiss and granite, the river flows over the distinctively colored Buntsandstein (sandstone from the Lower Triassic period) into the Muschelkalk (shell limestone from the Middle Triassic period) gorge with its bright, often steep walls. Close



(Gei)

it impossible to build bridges or roads that would last. The first evidence of a temporary wooden bridge dates only from the 15th century. Small settlements developed around such crossings or near the scattered gypsum mills, flour mills, and sawmills. Hikers can still spot ruins of medieval castles high up on the edges of the gorge, such as the ruin of Neu-Tann-

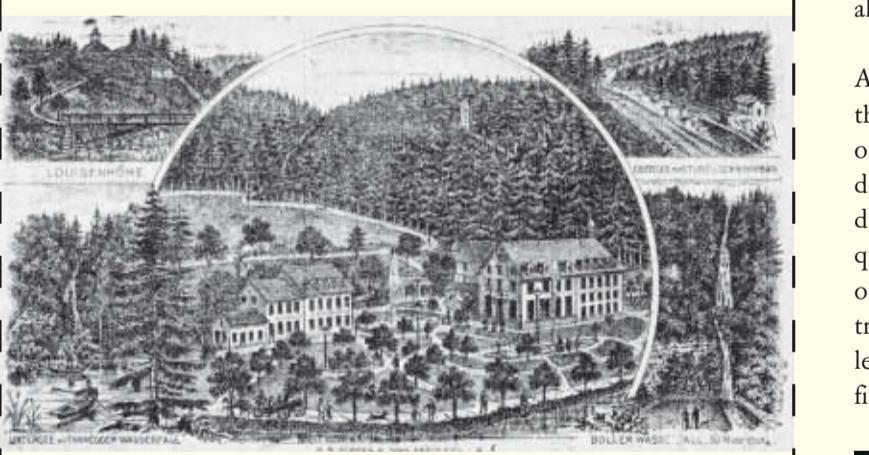
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could not survive. Today, only the Schattenmühle mill is still generating power from the Wutach River. Stallegg, a hydraulic power station on the Wutach and a new facility close to Ettlingen show that using the steep drop of a wild river (a gradient of 1% compared to 0.1% found in more level river channels) for power generation is still a valid proposition. Though today we enjoy the beauty of nature in the Wutach Gorge, up until a hundred years ago people struggled to wrest their livelihood from it, in the process transforming the gorge into a cultural landscape.



View of the former spa of Bad Boll, around 1890

An unusual feature of the Wutach Gorge was the renowned health resort of Bad Boll. During the 19th century, this luxurious thermal spa was built around the mineral spring that had been known for its healing powers since the late Middle Ages. The spa's glory days extended from 1887 to 1914. The excellent cuisine at the resort, the spa gardens with their two ponds on which gondola rides were offered, the variety of medicinal baths, and, not least, the electric illumination of the gardens and local waterfalls were big attractions around the turn of the century. In 1894, Bad Boll was taken over by an

English fishing club that subsequently promoted opening up the gorge for hikers. Over time, Bad Boll's popularity waned and the buildings were used for other purposes until they were finally demolished. In 1991, it became the property of the state of Baden-Württemberg. Today, forestry is the most important industry in the gorge. Attempts are under way to nurture the species-rich woodland communities and preserve the near-natural mixed deciduous forests typically found in this area. The forest plays an important role in protecting against erosion and rockfall. Also, a few smallish sawmills make use of the abundance of wood found along the Wutach River.

Around 1900, the Wutach River was famous for being one of the best trout rivers in Europe, and its fishing industry was of great importance. The water quality of the Wutach River deteriorated until the 1970s from, among other things, the industrial plants situated in its drainage basin. Today, the water quality has again reached a level that allows various species of fish typically found in wild rivers – such as the rare brown trout (*Salmo trutta*) – to live there. Conservationists and fishing leaseholders share one goal: to preserve a diverse indigenous fish population in this near-natural river setting.



Brown trout (*Salmo trutta*) (Be)

The Wutach Gorge: A paradise for plants and animals

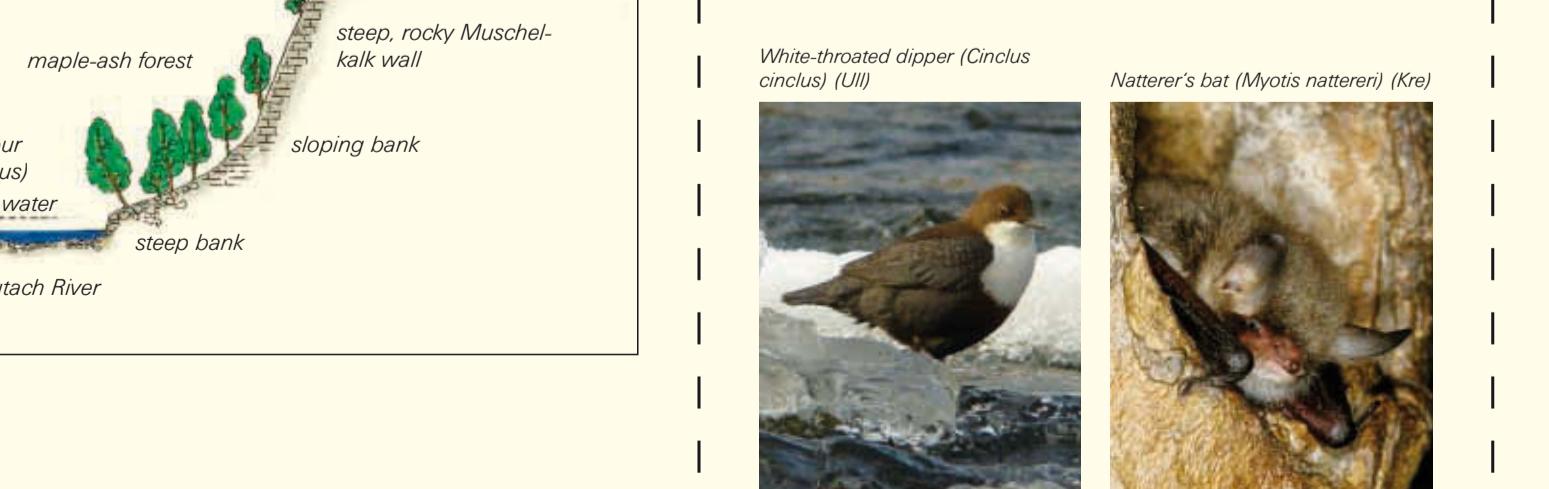
Unique climatic influences, diverse landforms, and a variety of soils result in a colorful mosaic of gorge microhabitats, ranging from extremely dry (for instance, around the limestone rocks) to extremely wet (e.g. in the floodplain) and offer a home to varied plant communities. Of the approximately 2,800 ferns and flowering plants catalogued in southern Germany, around 1,000 species alone can be found in the Wutach Gorge.

Let's look in more detail at two examples of these diverse plant communities. On the shadowy, moist northern slopes of the Muschelkalk gorge we find a species-rich maple-ash forest. In spring, wild garlic (*Allium ursinum*) and spring snowflakes

(*Leucojum vernum*) cover the forest floor. In summer, they're replaced by perennial honesty (*Lunaria rediviva*), baneberry (herb Christopher, *Actaea spicata*), and other plants that love humus-rich, moist soil. The older trees with their thick layers of moss and lichen make the woodlands look like an enchanted forest.

In the floodplain at the bottom of the gorge, an altogether different picture emerges. During high waters, the Wutach River builds up new gravel islands on which pioneer plants like creeping yellowcress (*Rorippa sylvestris*) and herb Barbara (*Barbara officinalis*) grow. On firm gravel surfaces, red canary grass (*Phalaris arundinacea*) and large populations of striking common butterbur (*Petasites hybridus*) can be found.

The animal world of the Wutach Gorge is similarly diverse. Zoologists estimate that about 10,000 species of vertebrates, arthropods, and molluscs live here. Characteristic animals you might spot, with a bit of luck, include the white-throated dipper (*Cinclus cinclus*), the fire salamander (*Salamandra salamandra terrestris*), typically active after a rainfall; and *Liparus germanus*, a small black weevil. Each of these species has its peculiarities. For example, the white-throated dipper catches its prey underwater and *Liparus germanus* cuts countless holes into the leaves of the common butterbur.



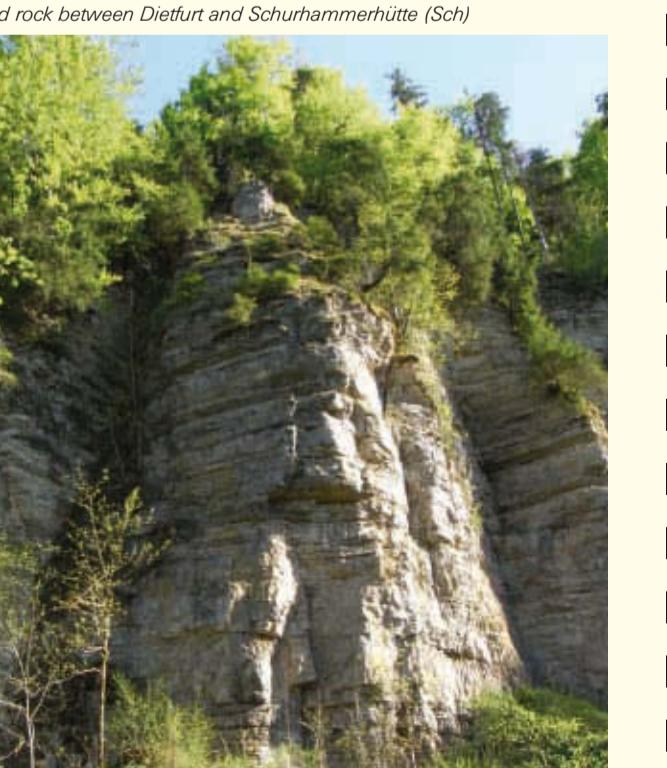
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Conservation is key

The Wutachschlucht-Gauchachtal Nature Reserve was established in 1939. Shortly afterwards, the area was threatened by an ambitious project. In 1941, plans were afoot to dam the river to generate power. However, with the help of an advo-



cacy group called "Save the Wutach Gorge," organized by the Schwarzwaldverein and its future president Fritz Hockenjos, it was possible to prevent the dam project from going forward – a lasting legacy of the Schwarzwaldverein. In 1989, the nature reserve's boundaries were revised. The Wutach Gorge now encompasses 950 hectares (over 3.5 sq mi), with the surrounding conservancy area covering another 415 hectares (1.6 sq mi).

Comprehensive protective provisions are necessary to preserve the unique Wutach Gorge. The number of visitors is already high, and it is increasing. The resulting impact on nature can be kept to a minimum only if preservation rules are strictly followed. We can only protect what we know – hence this

Important local contacts are the volunteer "Wutach Scouts", who wear lapel pins saying "Naturschutzdienst". Please support these volunteers from the Schwarzwaldverein and the Bergwacht (Mountain Rescue Service) in their work – your cooperation is crucial!

Since 1994, a full-time nature conservation officer – the "Wutach Ranger" – has worked in the gorge on behalf of the nature conservation authorities. The officer is glad to tell you about his work and the programs on offer (for contact information, see the inside of this brochure). The Schwarzwaldverein, the area's municipalities, and the three districts of Breisgau-Hochschwarzwald, Schwarzwald-Baar-Kreis, and Waldshut can provide additional information.



Wutach floodplain with thick carpet of common butterbur during the summer (Gei)

Exploring the gorge on shank's pony

For decades, the many hiking trails through the Wutach Gorge have been marked and maintained by the Schwarzwaldverein and its volunteers. The long-distance trail from Freiburg to Lake Constance (Querweg Freiburg-Bodensee) – waymarked by a red-and-white lozenge on a yellow background – follows the gorge between Haslachschlucht and Achdorf.



The following routes are particularly recommended for half-day or day hikes:

- Kappel-Gutachbrücke via Räuberschlössle to Schattenmühle (10 km)
- Schattenmühle to Bad Boll (4 km)
- Schattenmühle – Inselwirts-Keller – Bachheim (11 km)
- Lotenbachklamm (1 km)
- Round trip: Bachheim Wanderparkplatz (hikers' parking lot) – Inselwirts-Keller – the mouth of Gauchach Creek – Gauchachschlucht to Burgmühle – Bachheim (10 km)
- Round trip: Boll – Bad Boll – Schurhammerhütte – via Rosshütte back to Boll Wanderparkplatz (hikers' parking lot) (8 km)

Tips for getting to the Wutach Gorge

Using public transport is quick and environmentally friendly. The Wutach Gorge can be easily reached by bus and train. During the season, special runs of hikers' buses are available on weekends and holidays. With a complimentary KONUS Guest Card (offered by accommodation providers), visitors can travel on those for free as well. You can get brochures and further information about transportation options from Deutsche Bahn, Südenbadenbus (www.suedbadenbus.de), or local tourist offices.

Additional sources of information

The Wutach Gorge (Wutachschlucht) hiking map (scale: 1:35,000), issued by the Landesvermessungsamt (state surveying office) and the Schwarzwaldverein, at Schlossbergstrasse 15, D-79098 Freiburg, tel: 0761-380530, www.schwarzwaldverein.de

General information:

- local tourist offices and online at www.wutachschlucht.de and www.schlachtensteig.de
- Martin Schwenninger, full-time nature conservation officer, Landratsamt Waldshut, tel: 07703-919412, email: wutachranger@web.de.
- Expertly led tours upon request and with prior registration.

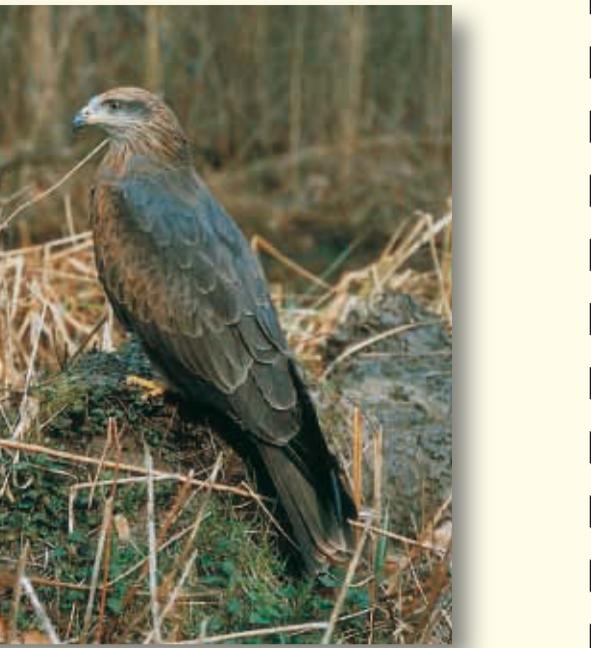
This brochure can be obtained

- at municipal offices and local tourist offices, the Schwarzwaldverein (see above), or LUBW (see back panel)
- in the Gorge itself at Gasthaus Schattenmühle, at the information booth at Wutachmühle, or from the nature conservation officers in the field.

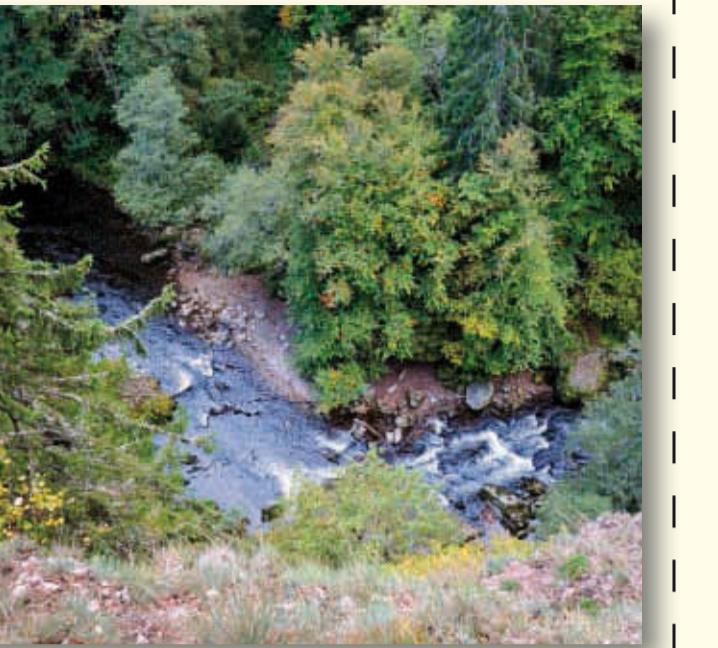
Picnic areas with fire pits are located at Wutachmühle, Schurhammerhütte, and near Dietfurt.

Hint: You don't have to begin your Wutach Gorge hike at the main entry points. Why not hike from one of the surrounding villages across the scenic Muschelkalk plateau and let yourself be surprised by the impressive drop of the gorge?

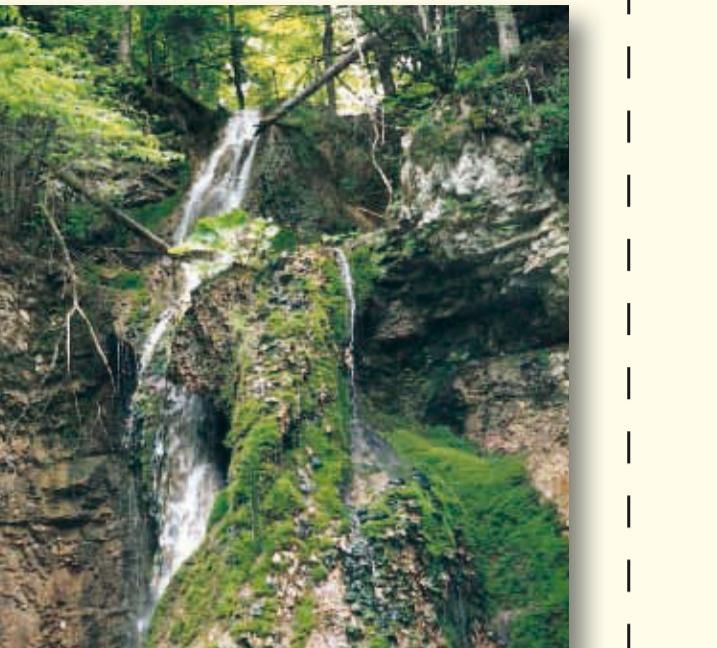
Please note: Depending on the weather and the time of year, some stretches of the gorge's trails can be slippery and dangerous. Wearing appropriate footwear and paying careful attention are important for a safe hike. Should you, despite every precaution, slip, look for the signs put up by the Bergwacht to help you identify the rescue sector (Rettungssektor) you're in and get help fast.



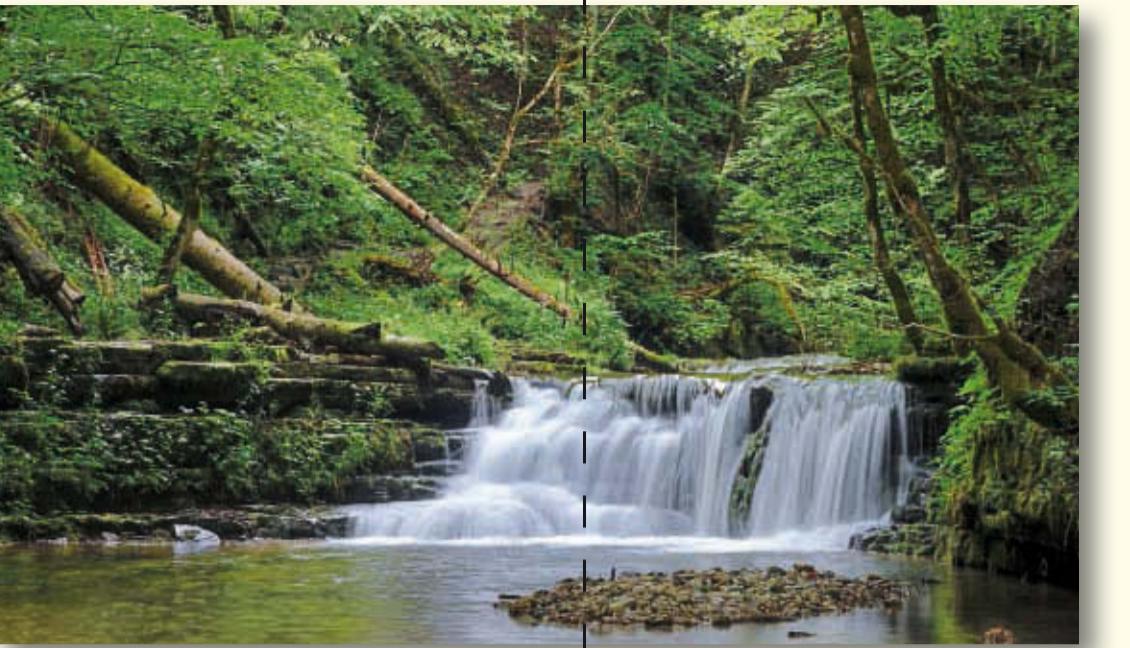
Black kite (*Milvus migrans*) (Dan)



Rock at Räuberschlössle (KS)



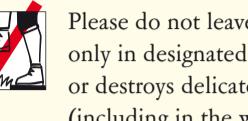
Waterfall at Tannegg (Ker)



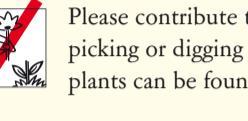
Gauchach Gorge (KS)

For nature's sake

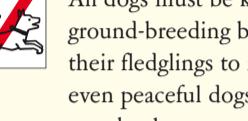
We're delighted you're showing an interest in the nature reserve and hope you'll relax and enjoy the beauty of nature. At the same time, to assist the Nature Conservation authorities in protecting this environment, please abide by the following rules:



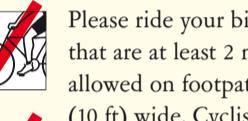
Please do not leave the marked trails. Rest or take breaks only in designated picnic areas. Leaving the trails damages or destroys delicate flora and fauna in the nature reserve (including in the water). At steep slopes, other visitors may be endangered by falling rocks if you go off the trail.



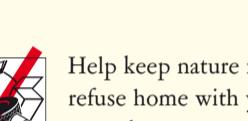
Please contribute to preserving the area's biodiversity by not picking or digging up any plants. Many rare and threatened plants can be found in the gorge.



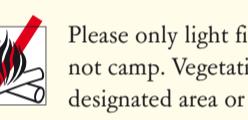
All dogs must be kept on a leash. Whenever dogs are around, ground-breeding birds tend to leave their nests, exposing their fledglings to increased danger. On the narrow trails, even peaceful dogs can be a danger to each other unless kept on a leash.



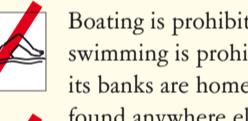
Please ride your bike or mountain bike only on solid trails that are at least 2 m (6.5 ft) wide. Horseback riding is not allowed on footpaths or on marked hiking trails less than 3 m (10 ft) wide. Cyclists and equestrians will find an extensive network of trails surrounding the Wutach Gorge. There are no horse or bicycle trails traversing the gorge lengthwise.



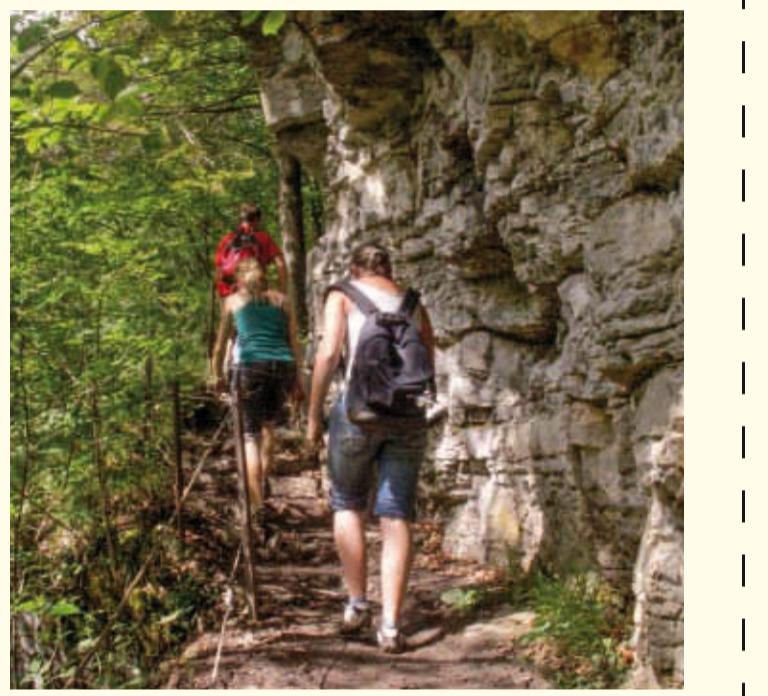
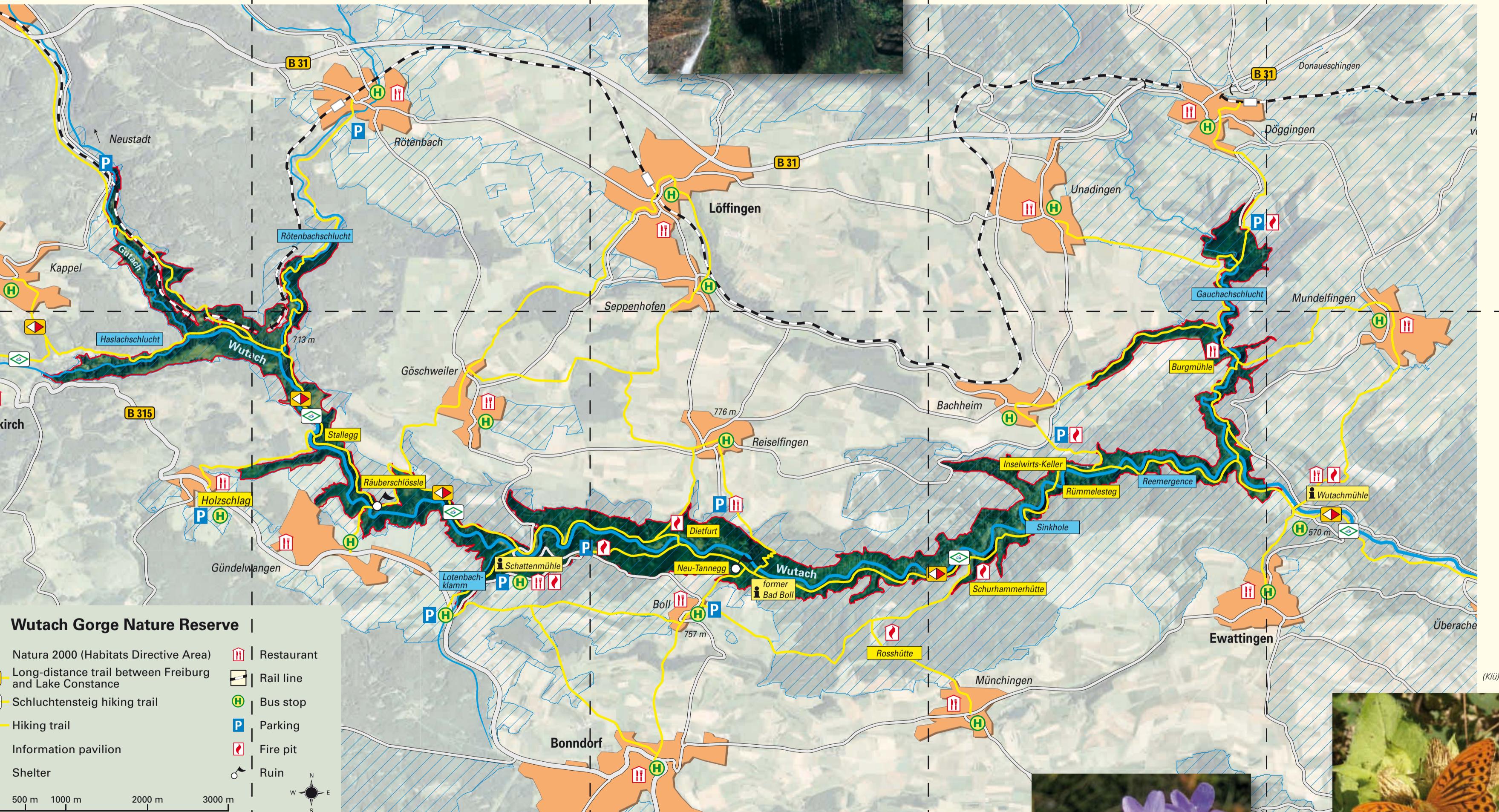
Help keep nature free of litter and garbage by taking your refuse home with you. Within the nature reserve, there are no garbage cans.



Please only light fires in designated barbecue areas, and do not camp. Vegetation is damaged when a fire is lit outside a designated area or when a tent is put up. Also, wild animals living in the reserve need nighttime peace.



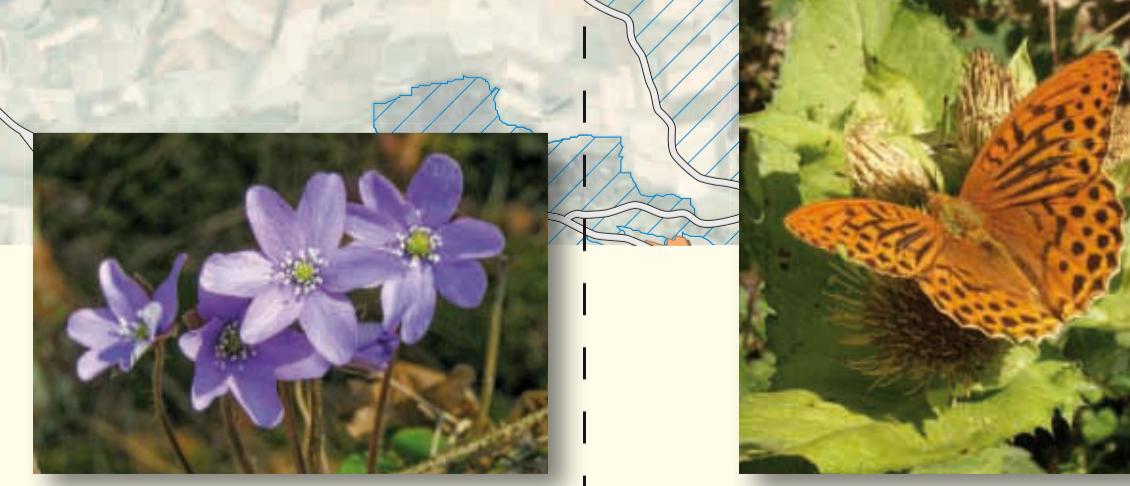
Boating is prohibited between March 1 and July 31, and swimming is prohibited year-round. The Wutach River and its banks are home to special animals and plants no longer found anywhere else. Swimming and canoeing disturb these habitats and threaten rare species. Also, your own safety may be endangered by rockfall into the river.



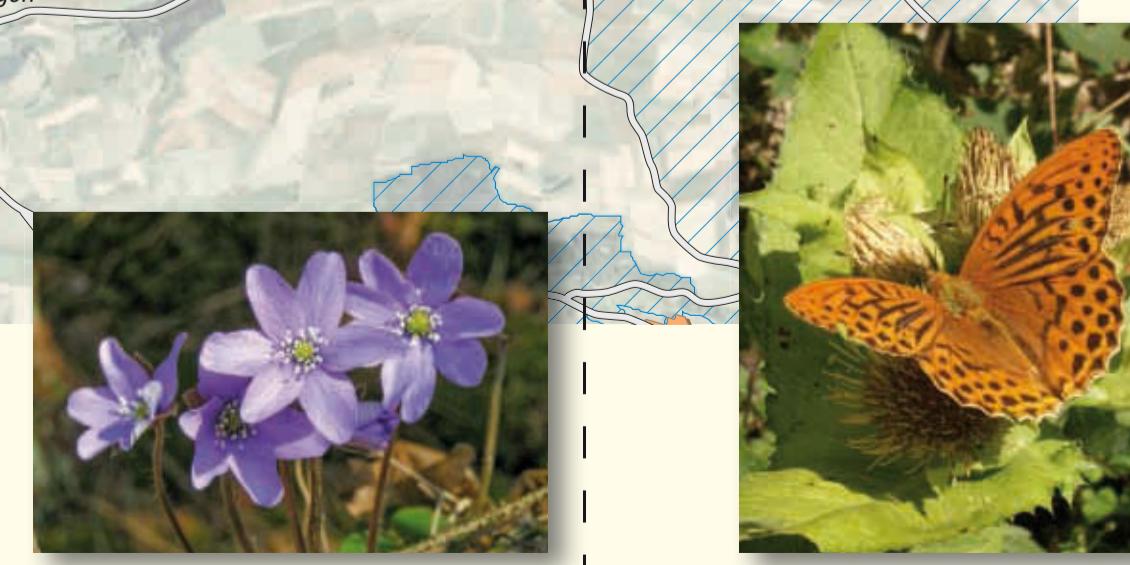
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Rümmelesteg (MS)



Liverwort (*Hepatica nobilis*) (MS)



Silver-washed fritillary (*Argynnis paphia*) (MS)



Josef's rock (Ker)