

Large forests and quiet lakes - Welcome to the Nature Park

On 365 square kilometres, forest and lakes, marshes and dunes, fields and bogs, but also picturesque villages, are combined to one colourful mosaic of habitats.

Goldberg, Krakow at the Lake, Waren/Müritz -each of these towns features a shoreline with at least one big lake. Between them stretches the Nature Park Nossentiner/Schwinzer Heide, in the very heartland of the Mecklenburg Lake District. The Nature Park -this is wide, flat land, large pine forests and great lakes. And quite a number of little lovely and surprising features are sprinkled over the landscape: hidden waters, mysterious bogs, grasslands of rich biodiversity, and then streams and lakes again ... This richness of habitats creates homes for countless animal and plant species. Soaring white-tailed eagles over forests and lakes, the voices of cranes from the marshes, the quacking of grey geese in the pastures at lakesides and belling red deer in autumnal woods: These are some impressions visitors of the park may take home. But also worth seeing is the old monastery in Dobbertin, various manor houses and medieval churches and chapels and neat hamlets in the woods and fields.

We, the park administration, wish you a nice stay here!

History of the Landscape

The landscape's surface was created during the Frankfurt and the Pomeranian thrusts of the last Ice Age period. For the last time, approximately 20.000 years ago, glaciers approached from the north. Where they came to stop and melted they left chains of hills with lakes in between -the endmoraine in the north of the Nature Park. Countless meltwater streams dumped vast amounts of sand and gravel south of the glaciers. This defines the main ground of today's Nature Park. Where glacial meltwaters carved out grooves and holes in the surface, lakes and bogs are often to be found now. Icewater also ran into hollows left over by rests of dead ice locked by sand. The oldest human traces in the Nature Park are 10.000 years old. About 5.000 years ago humans began to clear woods in order to layout fields. From that time on, the people settling in this area have shaped



Dobbertin monastery

their natural surroundings more and more to their needs, so that today's Nature Park can be regarded as 100 % manmade. Some spots, though, have only been used sporadically and so have been left more or less to nature itself. Today, these natural areas are especially worth being protected. Another part of conservation, on the contrary, covers habitats initially made by man, like former peat cuttings, heaths, drained lakes, abandoned meadows ... Like the landscape, settlements can be seen as a fine

Hikers on a guided tour

On the way on a draisine

Treasure of history as well. In the course of time, whole villages disappeared whereas others prospered. Forest workers' hamlets, e.g., were too poor to build their own chapels. But in other villages you can still find manor houses, castles and fine parks and gardens. The Nature Park -this is harmony of culture and nature. It's no wonder that to the natives this is home, and to guests this comes as a great place for recreation and inspiration. The Nature Park was established by the law of the federal state to protect, to tend and to carefully develop this area, which includes parts of the districts of Ludwigslust-Parchim, Rostock and Mecklenburgische Seenplatte. It is meant to be transformed into a region where human activity is sensitive of natural conditions and where the landscape is brought to human use without damaging or even destroying its unique character.



Forestry

At the end of the century, the forests of what today defines the Nature Park area were devastated. Many places had been deforested for more and more fields. Vast amounts of wood had been cut beyond any regulations and used in tar ovens, glassworks or for timber. The remaining wood grew too old since it was broadly used as wood pasture, so that pigs and cattle made new growth impossible. Sustainable use of land was practically unknown. Heath overgrew the overused areas. In order to conquer the severe lack of wood, regulated forestry was introduced then. The authorities of the Dobbertin monastery established the first forester's estate in Schwinz in 1760. Then pine forests, as we still know them, were planted on large scale. Some pine trees in the Jellen Nature Reserve are still even there from those days. The afforestation of that time was a great historical-cultural performance of the young forestry and of the forest-owners. On the other hand, pine monocultures are

likely to suffer from storm and pest damage. For this reason, foresters today are eager to manage forestry closer to nature in order to establish more resistant mixed forests dominated by oak and beech. Those seeking quiet nature for recreation will love these woods for their beauty and rich diversity of wildlife. Besides, sustainable forestry will certainly remain an important economic factor in the structurally rather poor region of the Nature Park and its surroundings.

Shepherd's Beech near Dobbinn is considered the strongest beech tree in Mecklenburg featuring an 8,40-meter circumference of its trunk

Agriculture

Agriculture has got an enormous impact on our landscape. Already in the landowners' economy typical of Mecklenburg, large fields and pastures were created. This large-scale agriculture was further developed after World War II. Producers in the Nature Park mainly cultivate grain, rape and corn. Approximately 30 % of the Nature Park area is used as pastures, cow breeding and cattle husbandry being of main importance. Beside that you find dairy farming and sheep-keeping, as well. The herds of cattle and flocks of sheep can very well be used for the conservation of the landscape, as by grazing they help to preserve the specific habitats responsible for the rich number of precious animal and plant species. Larger herds of cattle you can, for instance see in the marshes of Dobbiner Plage near Dobbertin, in the boggy meadows near Karow, or in the area of the upper lakes of the river Nebel. On the shore of Lake Drewitz flocks of sheep can be found, and sometimes so also in the juniper woods near Wooster Teerofen.

Agriculture is mainly done on the periphery of the Nature Park around a number of lakes and in the lower places.



In addition to professional fishery many lakes are also used by anglers.

Fishery

Fishing has a long tradition on the lakes of the Nature Park. Not without reason monasteries like Dobbertin and Malchow and many other places were built directly on the lakesides. In former times, every single larger lake fed at least one fisherman and his family. Today, fishing is done on 36 of the 60 lakes, this means on 95 % of the park's lake area. Most important fishes are whitefish, carp, eel, pike, zander and perch. Drag nets and fish traps are commonly used for fishing in the area. Fishermen sell their catches either directly after coming in from the lakes, or they offer it as already refined fish to hotels and restaurants in the region. During your stay in the park you should not miss a good traditional meal of fish. But if you prefer to prepare your own fish, please contact the local fishermen or fishing clubs. Some fishermen also offer the opportunity to experience fishing directly. People interested may, for instance, accompany the experts to the fish traps in the lakes.



A LANDSCAPE OF SPECIFIC BEAUTY

Vast forests - quiet lakes



Nature Park
Nossentiner/Schwinzer Heide



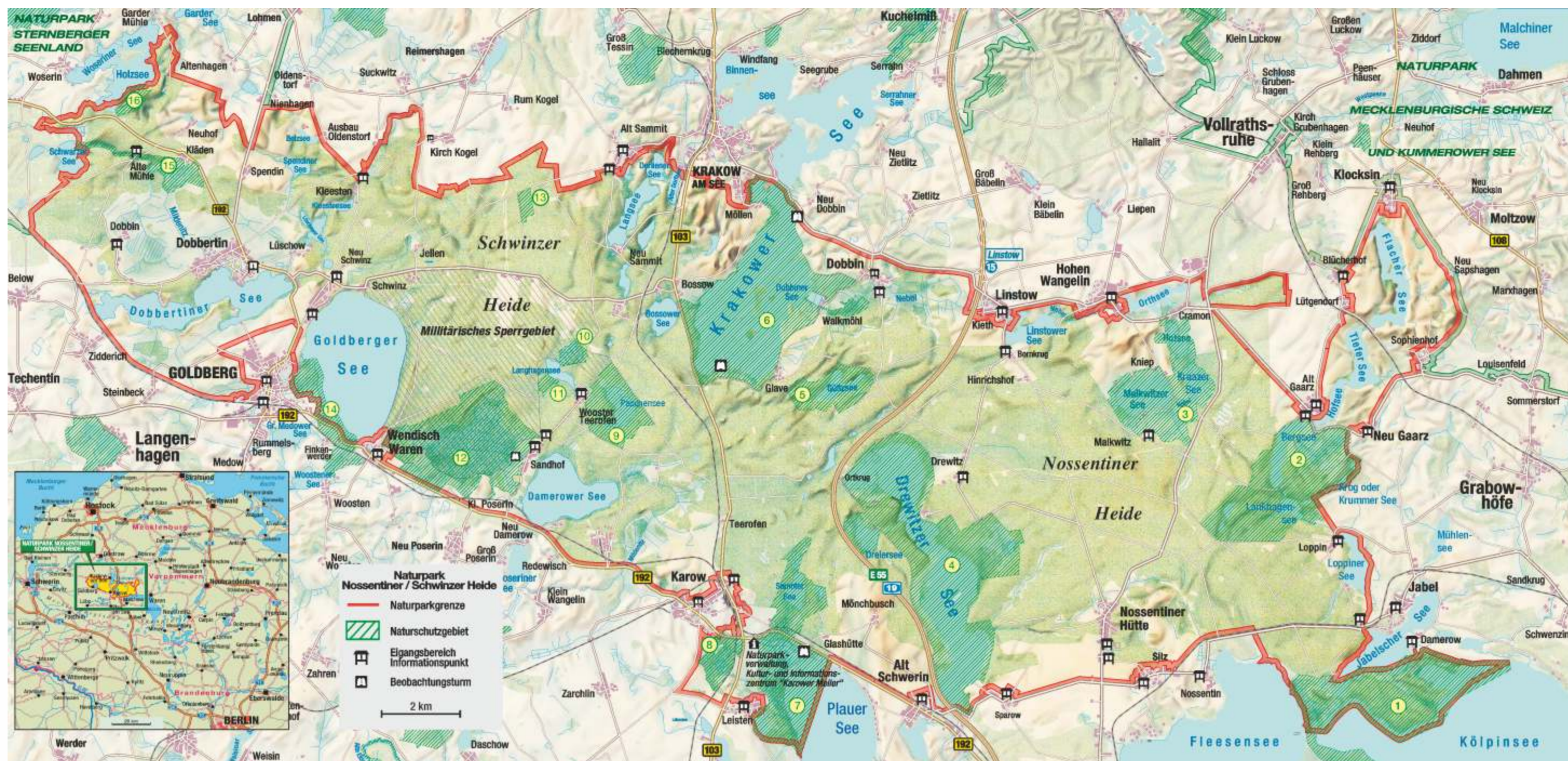
Nature Tourism

The vast forests, the many lakes and quiet villages create outstanding surroundings for relaxation and recreation. Hiking, biking, fishing and swimming, picking mushrooms, bird watching and riding are the most popular tourist activities here. At some places canoeing is possible, too, and between the villages Damerow and Borkow you can go through the Nature Park on a draisine. This way guests and inhabitants can experience nature intensely and can get to know well some of the characteristic features of the landscape and the villages. For the nature reserves (NSG) there are special rules to be obeyed. Nature has clear priority there. Nevertheless, most nature reserves are accessible for tourists, too, as long as visitors stay on the marked paths. Observing towers have been erected within these areas to enable visitors to experience nature closely. From there you will have brilliant views over former peat cuttings, large lakes and fens, you may perhaps hear the voice of the bittern or watch a white-tailed eagle or a kingfisher without disturbing them. Another unforgettable experience in the park can be the red deer's mating season in September. Suitable accommodation is surely provided, whether you prefer hotels, guest houses, holiday homes or camping sites.



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Life in the villages

Landscape and villages define a unity. Both have been created by many generations of mans. Numerous villages in the Nature Park for centuries were possessions of the monasteries of Dobbbertin and Malchow. They had to pay taxes and to give produce to the monasteries, and their inhabitants were obliged to work in various services. But today most villages remind us of the era of landowners. Being surrounded by lovely landscape, most of the estates feature their own parks and gardens. The manors are grand and therefore are often called "castle" by the natives. Interesting architecture is to be found for example in Neu- and Alt Sammit, Karow, Blucherhof, Alt Schwerin, and in Neu- and Alt Gaarz. In some places, the stables and barns belonging to the "castles" are also still present and more or less well-preserved. Along the single main street of most of these villages, like pearls on a string, the low-ceilinged brick or rock cottages of the former rural workers can still be found. Good examples for this are Linstow and Sparow. Places like Glave, Bornkrug, Drewitz, Malkwitz and Wooster Teerofen could also preserve their original character. For the visitors they may seem a bit dreamy in their solitude, far off any busy road. Today, tourists in the Nature Park appreciate the fact that these hamlets have survived without any remarkable.

Hamlet Sandhof



Grass snakes (*Natrix natrix*)



Water soldiers (*Stratiotes aloides*)

Conservation of Nature

It is the outstanding aim of the Nature Park to preserve or even improve the balance of nature in a landscape that has thoroughly been developed and changed by man. Created by human economy this landscape can only be preserved in its authenticity by continuous use. The decisive criterion is the environmentally-friendly, i.e., sustainable character of this use. Tourism in the area is also submitted to this aim. So you can find various categories of nature preserves in the Park: Four areas of protected scenery (LSG) have been established. They cover 75 % of the territory, and they most of all serve as a means of conservation of the major scenery. Other categories of protection are the "natural monuments", the "protected parts of landscape" and -last but not at least -the "nature reserves" (NSG). All protected areas are marked by the sign of the black "nature reserve owl" on a yellow background. There are sixteen nature reserves in the Park -they comprise 19 % of its total size and constitute the strictest category of protection. Here the conservation of nature is prior to any other aspect. In some of the reserves totally undisturbed development of the natural processes is intentioned (e.g. Jellen, Lake Branten), others are cautiously tended in order to retain them as relics of an original way of rural economy (e.g. dune pine forest). Nearly the whole park has been categorised "European Bird Reserve", and more than 10.000 hectares are held under European law, according to the so-called „Fauna-Flora-Habitat“ ("FFH") direction.

Nature Reserves

- 1. Damerower Werder**
777 hectares, two peninsulas, ancient trees, bison enclosure with observation tower
- 2. Lakes and marshland south of Alt Gaarz**
774 hectares, richly featured lakes and fens
- 3. Upper lakes of the river Nebel**, 508 hectares, origin of the river Nebel, dry hills and sandy grassland
- 4. Lake Drewitz with Lake Lübow and Lake Dreier**
1455 hectares, calciferous hard-water lake
- 5. Lake Gültz**, 192 hectares, nutrient-poor clear-water lake
- 6. Krakow Upper Lake**, 1148 hectares, waterfowl and bird reserve of international importance
- 7. North Shore of Lake Plau, Lake Samot and Lake Hof**
631 hectares, marsh and lake area of national importance
- 8. Lake Branten**, 89 hectares, marsh and bog area
- 9. Lake Paschen**
228 hectares, clear-water lake, poor in chalk and nutrients
- 10. North Shore of Great and Little Lake Langhagen**
40 hectares, precious lake and bog vegetation
- 11. Dune-pine forest on the Lake Langhagen**
16 hectares, ancient pine and juniper vegetation on an old inlanddune
- 12. Great and Little Serrahn**
721 hectares, drained lake, extensive reed marsh
- 13. Jellen**, 24 hectares, ancient forest with approx. 200 year old pines and junipers
- 14. South shore of the Lake Goldberg** (planned)
191 hectares, drying zone of a shallow-water lake
- 15. Kladener Plage and break-through Valley of the river Mildnitz**, 144 hectares, drained lake and natural course of the river Mildnitz
- 16. Kladen**, 40 hectares, beech forest with ancient unit



Nature reserve Krakow Upper Lake see from the observation tower "White-tailed eagle"



Nature reserve Great and little Serrahn seen from the observation tower "Red deer"



Damerower Werder nature reserve for bison