

"Naturschutzdienst BL": Experiences from a New Project in the Canton of Basel-Landschaft, Switzerland

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Introduction

As many other nature reserves the protected areas in the canton of Basel-Landschaft are visited very frequently. Accordingly, the pressure on nature is high, especially since violations of the nature reserve rules by the visitors occur quite often. To avoid damages of protected organisms and areas the department «Nature and Landscape» of the «Amt für Raumplanung», the agency responsible for the regional development planning in the canton of Basel-Landschaft, established a ranger service in the three nature reserves, where the pressure is highest.

The cantonal office hired two agencies – Hintermann & Weber AG in Reinach/BL and Locher, Schmill, Van Wezemaal & Partner AG, Basel – to organise this ranger service for a first period of three years.

The aim of the ranger service, which is called «Naturschutzdienst BL», is to better protect the nature reserves by informing visitors about the existing nature reserve rules. Additionally, the rangers patrol the areas regularly. Besides this, the rangers maintain and monitor selected species in the three areas.

Methods

To begin, a team of twelve persons had to be formed and trained. Instructions in taxonomy and ecology, as well as communication skills were part of the training program. While the ranger team was trained, the means of communication were created: a logo and uniform that identify

the Naturschutzdienst-Rangers; a website (www.naturschutzdienst-bl.ch) as an information platform; a brochure, which is handed out to visitors; information panels to inform about the new service.

To inform the public about the management project, a media conference was organised at the launch of «Naturschutzdienst BL». During the whole pilot phase, the media regularly informed the public to improve the acceptance of the «Naturschutzdienst BL».

The ranger-team roams the area about 1700 hours per year. That is about one day per week. Normally, there is always a team of two in action.

Results

The main problem faced during the last three years was people who walked dogs into nature reserves, where dogs are not allowed, or let them walk unleashed, where a leash is required. Other problems included people who left the trails or people who didn't respect the driving ban. At the end of the pilot period the new management project has reached a lot of its aims:

- Violations of the rules became a lot less frequent.
- The «Naturschutzdienst BL» is well accepted by the visitors.
- No severe destruction was observed during the last three years
- 17 species were monitored. The annual development of the populations is observed.

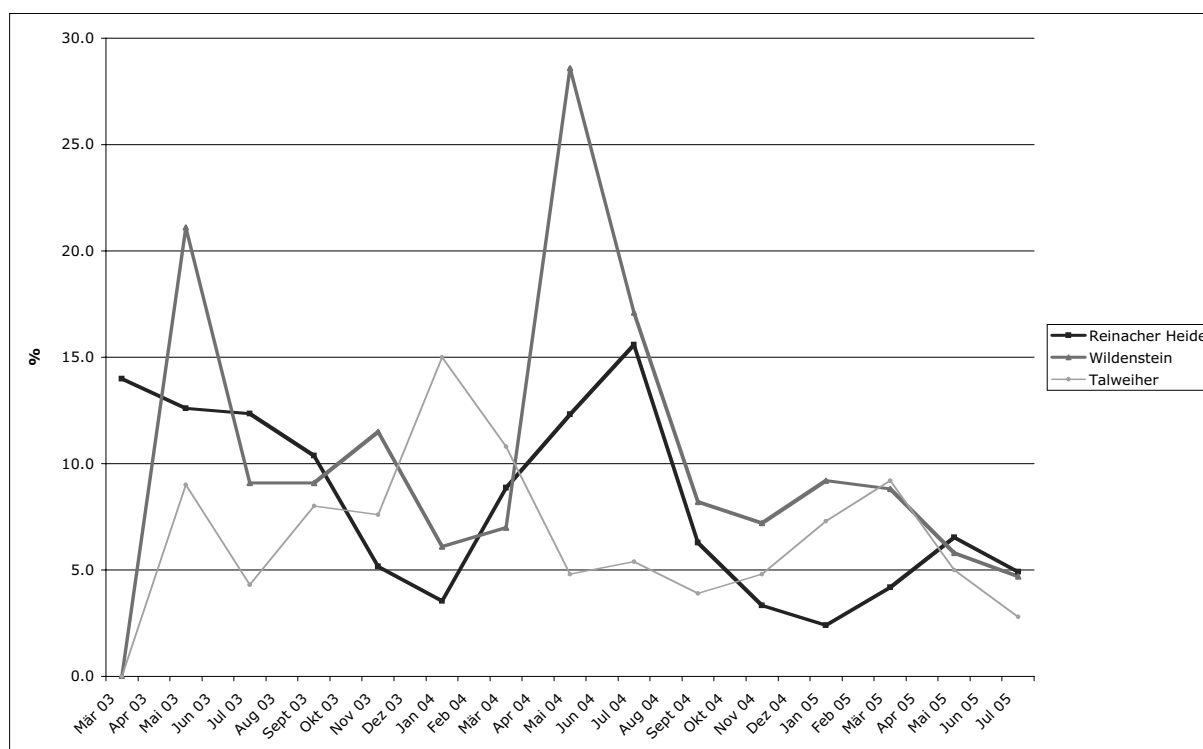


Figure 1: The percentage of visitors who did not respect the nature reserve rules declined in all three nature reserves.

But, as an evaluation by the University of Basle (see references) shows, there are still improvements to make. Three students of the program MGU (people – society – environment) surveyed the ranger service. During the summer of 2005 they asked 185 visitors of the nature reserves about their opinion of the ranger service, the acceptance of the nature reserve rules and what they would like to improve in the areas.

Surprisingly 90 % of the persons questioned, accepted the nature reserve rules well. Improvements that were mentioned quite often were «more information» or «better control of the nature reserve rules». But most of the persons want to change nothing.

Yet, only 15 % of the persons questioned know about the ranger service. The knowledge of what the rangers do and who they work for is very vague. Often the «Naturschutzdienst BL» was confused with other Swiss nature organisations. But those who have already met the rangers have a good opinion about them.

Conclusion

The canton of Basel-Landschaft decided to continue the ranger service for the next three years. In this period we have to make the «Naturschutzdi-

enst BL» more widely known by even better informing the public, but also by optimizing the action periods in the nature reserves thus increasing the efficiency of the rangers work.

References

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