



Infosheet

Water:Ways – comprehending, experiencing and protecting water habitats

Glaciers, streams, rivers, riparian ecosystems, lakes and bogs - they all exert a strong pull on people looking for rest and relaxation. At the same time, as habitats, they are of particular importance to a diverse fauna and flora. As a result, the human use of the environment for leisure-time pursuits and relaxation often competes with the fauna's and flora's claims on their habitat - a competition which could often be avoided by behaving responsibly in the outdoors. Such responsible behav-

iour can be achieved by being aware of the singularity of these habitats and the threat imposed on them and their fauna and flora on the one hand and knowing about the needs of individual species on the other hand. In order to impart this knowledge as well as to increase delight in and enthusiasm about our environment, the Water:Ways campaign has been initiated in 2011 by Naturefriends International in cooperation with Naturefriends Austria and the Austrian Federal Forests.

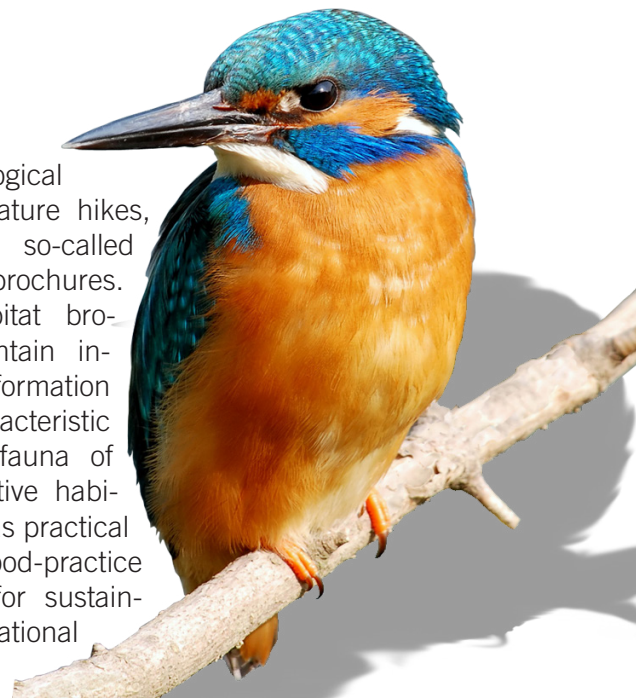


Water:Ways 2011 to 2015

The Water:Ways campaign was launched in 2011, the focus being on mountain habitats characterised by water, “glaciers, karst and mountain forests”. Until 2015, the thematic foci will change annually, comprising “streams, rivers and alluvial forests”, “lakes and littoral zones” and “bogs and swamp forests”. Every year, a union of habitats will determine the activities which are aimed at different target groups ranging from families to teenagers and children. The official kick-off for every thematic focus will take place around the World Environment Day on 5th June.

In accordance with the respective annual thematic focus, we will implement a number of activities in the outdoors as well as make available information material

and pedagogical tools for nature hikes, including so-called habitat brochures. These habitat brochures contain interesting information on the characteristic flora and fauna of the respective habitat as well as practical tips and good-practice examples for sustainable recreational use.



Water:Ways international

In addition to the national thematic foci, the campaign is planned to be raised to the international level over the next few years. Implementation together with European and African Naturefriends associations as well as a thematic expansion to “sea-shores” are also scheduled.



Joyful nature experience

Activities in the outdoors that take place all year round all over Austria compose the core of the campaign. The range of activities extends from adventure hikes, bicycle tours and youth work camps to drawing and photo competitions.

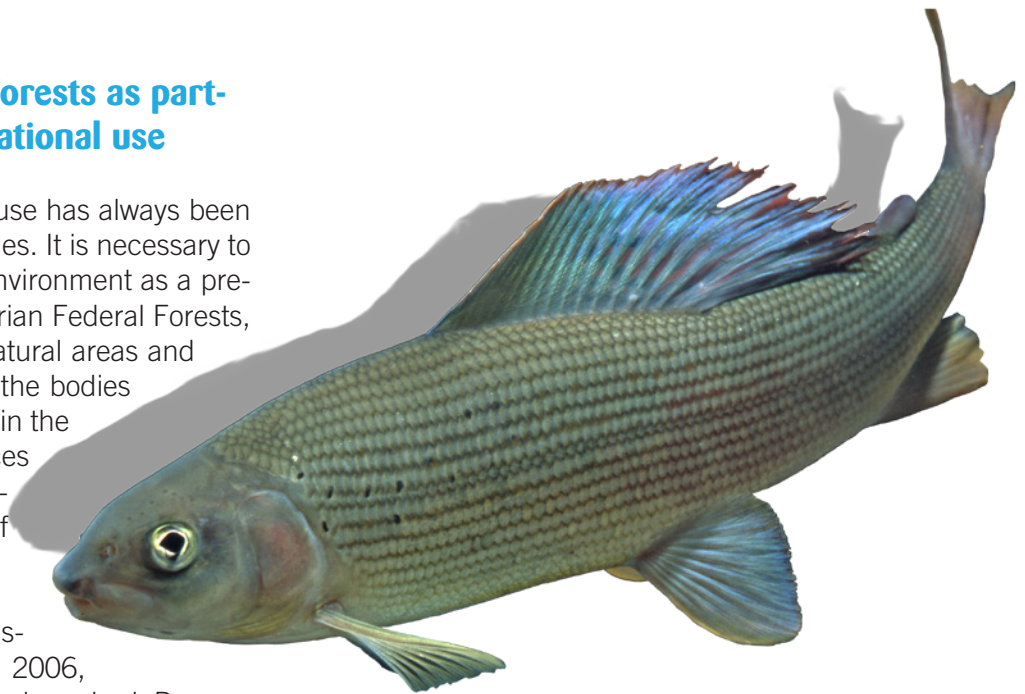
The sub-project “Kids for Nature” is dedicated entirely to children. They can experience the water habitats in their environment together with guides trained in environmental education and capture all their impressions on pictures or texts.



Naturefriends and Federal Forests as partners for a sustainable recreational use

Fostering sustainable recreational use has always been at the heart of Naturefriends activities. It is necessary to convey the characteristics of the environment as a prerequisite for protecting it. The Austrian Federal Forests, the biggest manager of Austrian natural areas and lakes, is especially responsible for the bodies of water and water-related habitats in the Alps. Its core tasks and competences encompass the preservation, sustainable use and organisation of natural areas.

This successful partnership for sustainable recreational use started in 2006, when the Natura Trail campaign was launched. By now, a Natura Trail network of more than 30 Austrian and more than 100 European theme trails through protected areas has been established (see www.naturatrails.net). The Austrian and the German Commission for UNESCO awarded the title of Official Decade Project under the heading of the UN decade "Education for Sustainable Development". The Natura Trail project has been awarded several national awards as well - amongst others, the Austrian Prize for Safeguarding and Management of the Cultural Landscape 2010 -, establishing Natura Trails as a brand name for environmentally friendly leisure-time pursuits in protected areas.



Based on this, the Water:Ways campaign focuses on comprehending, experiencing and protecting water habitats. The most important aims of the campaign are protecting biodiversity and raising environmental awareness as well as integration in the UN decade "Education for Sustainable Development". The manifold activities contribute to the implementation of several initiatives such as the Convention on Biological Diversity, the Ramsar Convention for the protection of wetlands, the Alpine Convention and EU legislation like the Water Framework Directive, the Habitats Directive and the European Bird Protection Directive.



Further information and (free) ordering of habitat brochures:

Naturefriends International (NFI)
Diefenbachgasse 36
A-1150 Vienna
Tel.: +43 1 892 38 77-17
nature@nf-int.org
www.wasser-wege.net



Supported by the
European Union

April 2012