

Welcome to the EU Federsee Nature Reserve



Discover the largest fenland in southwest Germany

The Federsee lake is situated in South West Germany, in the District of Biberach. It is the largest fenland in South West Germany and covers an area of 2920 ha completely registered in accordance with the Council Directives 92/43/EWG and 79/409/EWG. It is home to several FFH habitats like Molinia meadows on lime and clay, alkaline fens or bog woodland and also to large populations of rare animal and plant species. 270 bird species live here, plus 600 butterfly species, 10 types of orchid, 12 of Germany's 25 bat species and over 700 types of plant.

You can explore this unique fen landscape either from path, boardwalk and observation towers or you can join a guided tour from NABU. Take the opportunity to visit the permanent exhibition in the nature conservation centre of NABU in Bad Buchau and learn about the local area. We are happy to advise you on where the most interesting things can currently be seen in the reserve. Entry to our centre is free.

The nature conservation centre of NABU



The nature conservation centre was founded by NABU, the German Association for Nature Conservation. NABU is the oldest and largest conservation organisation in Germany. It is active across Germany through over 2000 local groups, and has been involved here at the Federsee for over 100 years.

As the NABU-Federsee centre is part of a non-governmental organization, we finance our work primarily through donations and guided tours.

What we do

We work for the federal state Baden-Württemberg to look after the Federsee lake and fen. We are a major contributor to the conservation of habitats for many threatened fen meadow species – after all, the Federsee fen is an important EU Bird Reserve.

Our work basically falls into three areas:

- The year-round scientific study and protection of the Federsee area. For example, we advise landowners on conservation measures and carry out regular surveys of rare animal and plant populations.
- In spring and summer our main focus is on publicity and environmental education. We offer about 400 guided tours per year. Details of our public tours are available on our events calendar. For groups we offer private tours with various themes. Our visitor centre is open six days a week in summer, where we have a permanent exhibition about the Federsee nature and act as a helpful contact point for questions about nature.
- In autumn and winter our work focuses on practical landscape conservation. We mow large areas of fen meadow to prevent the fields from becoming overgrown with bushes and trees. This would be a big problem for light-loving plants, like orchids, as well as for ground-breeding birds. As the ground is too wet to drive on, most of the mowing is done by hand with brushcutters.



Restoration of habitats

The Federsee fen was partially drained over the last 200 years, with the original aim of reclaiming land for agriculture. Falling water levels remain the biggest threat to the Federsee fen today, threatening not only the unique fenland habitat but also the internationally significant archaeological sites situated in the underground.

From 1997 - 2002, around 250 hectares of fenland were restored with financial assistance from the EU through the LIFE+ development programme.



A second LIFE+ project ran from 2009 until March 2014. The aims of this project were, above all, to restore and rewet large areas of fen meadow owned by the state. This will not only provide habitats for rare species, but will also help to protect archaeological sites which have been preserved in the moist peat for many thousands of years. The Bronze Age "Forschner" settlement (a world heritage site), for example, lied beneath a gliding airfield and could only be preserved through the removal of the airfield.

In the northern part of the Federsee fen, place of two world heritage sites from the stone age, blocking of 30 km of drainage ditches and construction of a new stream course helped to restore large areas of fenland. About 200 hectares were rewetted in the project.

The origin of the Federsee fen

The Federsee fen was formed by glacial processes. Around 200,000 years ago, during the Riss Ice Age (the same time as the Wolstonian in the British Isles), a glacier from the Alps moved over the area, gouging out the basin where the Federsee now lies, and depositing Alpine sediment in moraines around the outside.

During the last glacial period (Würm in Germany, Devensian in the British Isles), the last glacier stopped just south of the Federsee and melted, around 12,000 years ago, depositing sediment at the snout in a terminal moraine, which acted as barrier that closed off the basin from the south. Meltwater from the glacier flowed into the closed basin to form the Federsee, which had an area of 33km². After the end of the last Ice Age, the lake slowly began to fill in to form land.

In many areas this process continued. Organic material built up until plants growing on the surface could no longer reach the nutrient-rich groundwater with their roots, forming a raised bog. Earlier the southern Federsee fen was covered by several metres of raised bog. The peat has been almost completely removed.



More information:

www.NABU-Federsee.de

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