



## **Zweckverband “Schaalsee-Landschaft”**

### **One large scale nature conservation project involving two federal states**

#### **Landscape**

Along the former border between East and West Germany and between Schleswig-Holstein and Mecklenburg-Vorpommern, extends a sparkling ribbon of smaller and larger lakes. This chain of lakes and intermingled hills was formed in the Weichsel ice age 20,000 years ago when glaciers (and later meltwater) fashioned this landscape. Today it's a mosaic of deep clearwater lakes, dark boggy lakes and eutrophic shallow waters that are surrounded by a wide belt of reed and alder carrs full of water, bogs and wet grassland.

Otters live here along with bittern, cranes and kingfishers. Hilly broadleaf beech and unwanted timber stands complete the richness of habitats which offer hidden nesting places for birds of prey as well as cave and hole dwelling creatures like woodpeckers and bats. The only remains of the old cultural landscape are networks of boundary hedges, hedge-brushes and avenues. The interlinking of this diversity explains the occurrence of the large number of protected species of plants and animals as well as lots of opportunities for the local people and visitors to have nature experiences. So conserving this is our aim!

**The Zweckverband “Schaalsee-Landschaft”** was established on 1st January 1991 by the 3 administrative districts of Nordwestmecklenburg, Ludwigslust and Herzogtum Lauenburg as well as the environmental foundation WWF Germany (Worldwide Fund for Nature) and involves two federal states (Mecklenburg-Vorpommern and Schleswig-Holstein). It's tasks are to protect and develop the native biodiversity found along the former border with help from the Federal Agency of Nature Conservation and both federal lands. This large 335 sq km area is representative of the specific importance of these habitats for the Federal Republic of Germany. Nature protection has to involve local people: the bylaws are based on local government law and enable a “nature protection democracy”: in the general meeting, members of the parliament of the district assembly and the WWF, decide together how to implement the aims, using only voluntary contracts.

75% of the funding is paid by the Federal Ministry of Environment and 15 % by the two federal lands. The remaining 10% comprises maintenance costs paid for by the environmental foundation WWF Germany with help from donors.

From 1991 until 2010, 4,600 hectares of valuable biotopes were acquired. The varied landscape makes this region especially attractive to many people seeking recreation. It is essential to protect the special status of nature in the Schaalsee landscape for the community, by minimizing and preventing damaging impacts. In the same period both federal lands were able to designate 8,000 hectares of important landscape as nature reserves.

### **Aims of the “Zweckverband Schaalsee-Landschaft”**

- 1) to prioritise the purchase of suitable areas for nature conservation in the project core zone
- 2) to ensure the implementation of the aims of the management plan
- 3) to conserve and develop the native biodiversity of the land properties
- 4) to keep the public informed about the project

### **Schaalsee**

The Schaalsee is the central point of this large scale nature conservation project. It has an area of 2,300 ha. It is the deepest lake in northern Germany (72m). Its special qualities are the many bays, peninsulas and islands. There isn't a single point along the shore from which the whole lake can be seen. The variety of the shoreline is characterised by alder carrs, wide reeds and steep slopes with old beech forest. These biotopes accommodate many species of plants and animals. Because of its size and the established resting areas, the Schaalsee is a refuge for different species of waterbirds. They are very sensitive to disturbance while they are moulting, resting or overwintering. The Schaalsee has consequently been designated as a bird reserve of special European importance.

### **Leaving nature to it's own devices - benefits from Wilderness**

A main task of the project is to develop and conserve native broadleaves and protect natural processes. The Zweckverband “Schaalsee-Landschaft” has 1,600 ha of forest which has mainly developed unhindered by humans. In cooperation with the forest administration of the districts, the two federal lands and also private forest owners, some forest areas will be allowed to develop naturally. Drainage of carrs will be stopped and non-autochthonous species like spruce removed. Many species will profit from this new wilderness, especially those dependent on forests with old trees and dead timber; such as the white-tailed sea eagle, red kite and cave and hole dwelling creatures like woodpeckers and bats. Visitors will also benefit because of the increased opportunities for new nature experiences.

### **How you can contribute to the protection of Schaalsee-Landschaft**

We would like to invite you to get to know Schaalsee-Landschaft better. However the sensitivity of this landscape demands consideration from the visitors.

Please use only the official network of trails. Respect the fact that there is no access to some parts of the forests and shore zones which are breeding and resting places for many creatures.

The Zweckverband “Schaalsee-Landschaft” supports the development of sustainable tourism such as hiking, cycling and observation of nature as well as providing information boards, hides and observation towers (see the map).

Opportunities for water sports can be found at the Ratzeburger See or Salemer See. However at the Schaalsee opportunities for water sports are only partially possible and permission is needed from the owners of the lake and the conservation authority.

**For further information please contact**

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