

Project area

The Natura2000 site "Oberlauf der Rur" is the key area in the regional and supra-regional biotope network for the Violet Copper within the StädteRegion Aachen. It is located in the northern Eifel, which is characterised by high precipitation, low temperatures and poor soils. The river Rur rises in the moors of the Hautes Fagnes and is fed by numerous tributaries on its way through the Eifel. Species-rich meadows and extensive forests line adjacent slopes and meadows.

Area size: 938 ha, height above sea level: 550-280 m, long-term averages precipitation and temperature: 1100 mm, 6.5°C



Facts and figures

The project at a glance

Title: „LIFE Patches & Corridors“ LIFE 15 NAT/DE/000745

Objective: The overall objective of the project is the establishment of a habitat network for the violet copper (*Lycaena helle*) within and between various nature conservation areas in the Northern Eifel. This butterfly is more than rare in Europe and in Germany it is only found in a few regions. The preservation of existing habitats and the creation of new habitats such as wetlands and alluvial forests will promote not only the natural Eifel landscape but also its valuable biodiversity.

Duration: January 2017 to December 2022

Total budget: 2,5 million euros

The project is supported by the LIFE funding programme and funds from the state of North Rhine-Westphalia and the Aachen urban region.

Contact and further information

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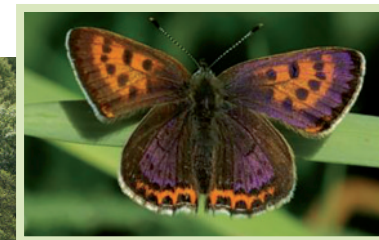
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Project partner



Ministerium für Umwelt, Landwirtschaft,
Natur- und Verbraucherschutz
des Landes Nordrhein-Westfalen



Patches & Corridors


A Habitat Network for the Violet Copper

Habitat network... not only for the Violet Copper

The Violet Copper (*Lycaena helle*) owes its name to the blue-violet shimmer, which shows itself with the male over the entire wing surface and with the female butterflies at the wing edge.

The females lay their eggs on the caterpillar's only food plant - the common bistort (*Bistorta officinalis*). The caterpillars of the butterfly hatch in June and then pupate. The pupa hibernates and hatches the following year between May and early June. The adult coppers use various plant species as a source of nectar.

Semi-open, flower- and nutrient-rich wet meadows, fallows, fringes and strongly light-flooded alluvial forests with common bistort are preferentially used as a habitat.



Many of these habitats have been lost to the special butterfly, through intensification of agriculture,

the abandonment of extensive grassland farming, or by afforestation with spruce. Plants imported from far away countries such as the himalayan balsam (*Impatiens glandulifera*) suppress and displace the important forage plant.

The LIFE project Patches & Corridors provides new habitats for the Violet Copper, optimises existing biotopes and enables an exchange of local populations by establishing stepping stones and corridors between the protected areas.

Along with the butterfly, other animal and plant species in the wet meadows and light alluvial forests benefit from these efforts, too.

Habitats of special interest

Wet tall herb fringe habitats of water courses

Along creeks, nearby rivulets and moist ditches or where water seeps out of grassland, the nutrient-rich, moist tall herb meadows extend in spring and summer as a colourful band of flowers. They connect a wide variety of habitats. With common bistort, meadowsweet, valerian, wild angelica and broad-leaved marsh orchid, they provide a habitat for numerous insects with their lush growth. Not or only sporadically mown, animals and plants can develop undisturbed.

Mountain hay meadows

The nutrient-poor, sparse mountain meadows have a high proportion of herbaceous plants: This makes them an important habitat for a large number of animal species, their colourful flowering diversity enriches the landscape. Formerly a result of little intensive agriculture, they are still only mowed once or at most twice. The already from afar with its purple flower carpet recognizable wood cranesbill and the spicy smelling baldmoney are characteristic species.

Forests of slopes, screes and ravines

High humidity and a coarse, rocky subsoil on steep slopes and in gorges are the determining characteristics of this particularly rare habitat. Sycamore, ash and wych elm, which have become rare due to the dying of elms, immerse it in lush, moist green.

Alluvial forests with common alder and ash

Alluvial and riparian forests are habitats that are exposed to natural changes due to flooding, erosion, deposits and groundwater fluctuations. Especially when they are light, they contribute significantly to the networking of different habitats.

Bog woodland

This near-natural forest community grows on very acid soils under high water levels and nutrient deprivation. Downy birch, alder buckthorn, blueberry and various types of peat moss can be found regularly.