



the northern and central parts of Brandenburg – did not reach Lower Lusatia. Instead the highly varied moraine landscape was formed in the Wolstonian Stage that ended 180,000 years ago. The natural lakes that it left in its wake have long since silted up. The Kirchhain-Finsterwalder Basin extends over more than half of the nature park. The expansive ice front basin is interrupted by the valley of the Kleiner Elster (Lesser Elster).

Two Elsters

Its bigger sister river, the Schwarze Elster (Black Elster), flows through the Breslau-Magdeburg glacial valley in the south of the nature park. With many winding backwaters and the remains of alluvial forests, the Kleine and Schwarze Elster together with the Großer and Kleiner Röder (Greater and Lesser Röder) form extended lowlands with wet woodlands, meadows, and moors.

Where the Kleine and Schwarze Elster meet in the west of the nature park, there opens the so-called Kleine Spreewald (Smaller Spreewald). It is similar to the »real« Spreewald with its alder stocks, dark, boggy soil, and simultaneously points to the origin of the name »Schwarze Elster,« referring back to the Germanic words for alder and bog.

Large, unspoiled pine woods and forests with remnants of deciduous forests grow on the sandy plateaus that form the edge of the Kirchhain-Finsterwalder Basin in the north of the nature park. Of special note are the naturally rejuvenating beech forests in the northwest of the park – otherwise beech is rare in Lower Lusatia – and the presence of Lower Lusatian lowland spruce and silver fir. In the northwest large blankets of blueberries lie in the pine forests. Original deciduous forests are located in the heart of the nature park. On the former military training ground in Bad Liebenwerda one of the largest unspoiled sessile oak forests in Germany – the Prösa – is still extant. The seeds of the trees, which have grown in this place for

150 to more than 300 years, are today sent all over the world. The 30-year-long military use of this area, ending in 1988, has left both grey-hair grass meadows and broad heather meadows. In the autumn a shepherd and his herd of moorland sheep tends to the violet and white blooms of the heath.



Post-Mining Landscape

Rich seams of brown coal were located here under the surface. The more than one-hundred-years of brown coal mining in the eastern part of the nature park has left a strong mark on the cultural landscape.

Attractive local recreation areas have been created in the recultivated pit mines, such as the Grünwalder Lauch or Bad Erna (Erna Bath). The abandoned slag heaps also provide the ideal habitat for highly specialized grasshopper and beetle species such as the tawny earwig and the slender blue-winged grasshopper. The rare matricary grapefern, moonwort, and the small pear-leaved wintergreen grow on older virgin soils. The water in the mining lakes serves as safe sleeping grounds for more than 3,000 common cranes and thousands of bean geese and greater white-fronted geese.



Beaver



Heraldic Animal – Western Capercaillie

In earlier times the Western capercaillie was so frequent in Lower Lusatia that rakish capercaillie hunts in the royal forest was obviously worthwhile. Today this galliforme, which is almost as large as a turkey, is severely endangered throughout Germany. Until 1975 it was considered an inhabitant of most all the larger evergreen and mixed forests in Lower Lusatia. A species protection project is being implemented for this bird native to the pine heaths in the Lower Lusatian Heathland Nature Park and to the neighboring Lower Lusatian Upland Nature Park. This aids not only the Western capercaillie but also help increase the distribution of such species as Tengmalm's owl, the black woodpecker, and the Eurasian woodcock that also live in old forests. Other rare and impressive species such as the black stork, the white-tailed eagle and ospreys make their homes in large contiguous forests.

In the 14th century the administration in Liebenwerde felt forced to employ a beaver hunter – the last beaver died in 1965 in an arm of the Elster near Prieschka. Hunting and habitat destruction weakened the 100-animal-strong beaver population of 1945. Since 1970 however beavers are increasingly found here. Today this water resource manager and builder of the animal kingdom is just as extensively present in the Elster lowlands as the European otter. Northern lapwing and common snipe breed in the meadows, white storks and

cranes feed here. In the backwaters such plants as water chestnut, water pineapple, and common water-crowfoot are present, while in the damp meadows the heath spotted orchid, the Western marsh orchid, and marsh gentian are to be found. In the moors one can even see species of sundews. The improved water quality of the Schwarze Elster has since attracted fish such as the European chub, which is severely endangered in Brandenburg, the Northernpike, and gudgeon.

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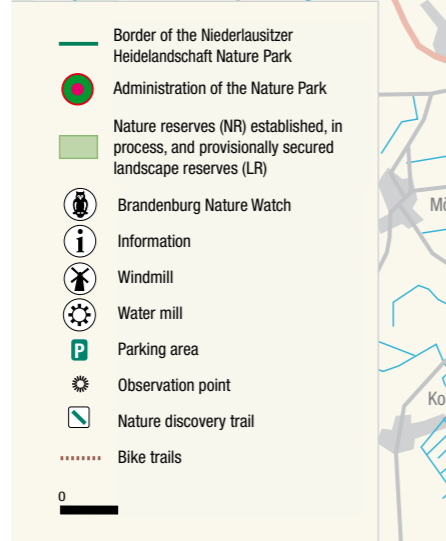
Naturpark Niederlausitzer Heidelandschaft

Nationale Naturlandschaften

Nature Park in the South

The Niederlausitzer Heidenlandschaft (Lower Lusatian Heathland) is the southernmost nature park in Brandenburg. The 480-square-kilometer area is located on the border to Saxony, around 70 kilometers from Dresden and Cottbus or 100 kilometers from Berlin and Leipzig. With brown coal mines in the area and a former military site in its middle the nature park arouses particular attention. It conceals surprises both in its diverse near-natural landscape as well as in the dramatic remnants of decades of human activity. The last ice age – the Weichselian glaciation that ended 10,000 years ago and formed





A permanent exhibition is being shown in the Nature Park House in Bad Liebenwerda which is interesting for small and tall folks.



Until 1925 there was a sawmill in addition to the Elster Mill Plessa. Today, with the help of the NRW-Stiftung (North Rhein-Westphalia Foundation), the restored building houses the association of the nature park and a base of the Nature Watch.



Versatility is a signature feature of the nature watch in the nature park. As an intermediary between

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people and nature, the rangers provide information to visitors, maintain species-rich habitats, explore nature as a place of learning with both young and old or document the state of protected plants and animals.

PLACE	Information	Accommodations	Discovery trail	Bike rental	Riding/charabanc	Canoeing	Camping ground	Swimming	Museum/Gallery	Cultural or architectural monument	Archeological monument
Bad Liebenwerda	•	•	•	•					•	•	
Beutersitz		•									
Buchhain										•	
Dobra										•	•
Döllingen	•	•	•						•	•	
Domsdorf	•	•	•						•	•	
Dreska		•									
Dübrichen										•	
Eichholz-Dröbzig										•	
Elsterwerda	•	•	•						•	•	
Fischwasser										•	
Friedersdorf		•									
Gorden										•	
Grünwalde	•	•	•					•	•	•	
Gruhno										•	
Haida/Würdenhain		•		•*						•	
Hohenleipisch	•	•								•	
Kahla		•		•*	•					•	
Kraupa		•								•	
Lindena					•					•	
Lugau		•								•	
Maasdorf	•	•	•							•	
Nexdorf										•	
Oppelhain	•	•	•							•	
Plessa	•	•	•	•					•	•	
Prestewitz		•									
Prießen										•	
Prieschka										•	
Rothstein	•									•	
Rückersdorf		•				•	•	•		•	
Saathain	•		•							•	
Schadewitz										•	
Schilda										•	
Schönborn		•								•	
Sorno	•									•	
Staupitz	•									•	
Thalberg			•							•	
Tröbitz	•	•	•			•	•	•		•	
Wahrenbrück	•									•	
Werenzhain									•	•	
Winkel		•								•	
Zeischa				•*				•		•	
Zinsdorf		•								•	
Zobersdorf		•								•	

* = Bike rental outlet and accomodation at camping-site