

Help Track Biodiversity!

The Alpenverein has long had as one of its fundamentals the protection of alpine natural environments. In 2013 a specific commitment on biodiversity was added, and, following a pilot in 2015, the “*Vielfalt bewegt! Alpenverein*” project starts in full in 2016, with **everyone** invited to join in. With 500,000 members we should get plenty of useful data.



Alpine Appollo – Photo by Jürgen Petutschnig



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What's it all about?

The main idea is to gather observations of 17 key species deemed to be key indicators of the state of high-alpine ecosystems over a number of years and so build up knowledge of the status of biodiversity and species interdependencies. We also hope to increase mountain-lovers' awareness of and enjoyment of wildlife, including the fine detail of their surroundings. Note also that the project is totally dependent on volunteer work.

For now the focus is on 17 different plant and animal species, selected by an expert team to be indicators for ecosystem health, their adaptability to the changing climate, and about whose distribution there is currently little solid data. Over the years the project should build up a large amount of useful information, which will be published on the internet, thus informing all and helping scientists, conservationists and politicians to maintain and improve the long-term health of these high-alpine ecosystems, and to find a balance for us all between enjoying nature and protecting it.



Alpine Salamander - Photo by Fredrich Böhringer



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What actually needs doing?

An information pack to aid rapid recognition is available that can easily be packed without adding extra weight to your rucksack. More detailed information is also available on the internet and for use at home. This includes a list of precisely what data (such as exact location, altitude) is needed to render what is gathered scientifically useful.

Two forms of monitoring are planned. Firstly, you may make a commitment to frequently revisit the same places, to track changes in the species found there over time. I don't expect that many or indeed any AACUK members will be able to do this, so I won't go into it here. If interested please consult the "Vielfalt Bewegt" web pages, [link at end] Secondly, one-off observations from anyone while walking in Austria are sought. Observations should only be made from waymarked paths, in order to protect the wildlife. Plants must not be picked.



Golden eagle in flight – Photo by Juan Lacruz



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How can I take part?

Contact Birgit Kantner, preferably by email (in English or German) to birgit.kantner@alpenverein.at. You will then be registered as an observer, sent an observer number and an information pack, and can get started. If anyone has already taken part in any similar activity (in any country), please tell Birgit about it: your observations and impressions will be valued.



Spotted gentian (Gentiana Punctata) – Photo by Opiola Jerzy

How do I make and record an observation?

Be somewhere in Austria, preferably above the tree-line. See one of the 16 species. Photograph it. Record the time, date and exact place. It's necessary to give the precise latitude and longitude - to do this you either need to have with you a GPS, smartphone, or similar (this is best), or to carefully mark the location on a large-scale map and work out the lat/long later. Apps for Apple and Android devices are available from the website.

Hopefully a good few members of Sektion Britannia will be moved to join in!

Full information about the project is at https://www.alpenverein.at/portal/natur-umwelt/vielfalt_bewegt/index.php - currently only in German. If there's enough demand, it'll get translated into English.

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