

Biosphere Reserve Šumava

Biosphere Reserve

A good place to live





A few introductory words

That landscape fascinates us. Maybe due to its vastness and still due to certain loneliness. We like it, and the same as parents show love to their children, we try to protect it too. We have established protected areas in good faith, but then we have been thinking about what to do about them. We have learned to live with a protected landscape area, but somehow we are at a loss what to do about the national park. So why another one, moreover of an „environmentalist“ type?



There are not many people in our country who know there is a biosphere reserve in the Šumava region. It is one of the possibilities, which has scarcely been used so far, how to make the Šumava region a good place to live and to prevent it from coming to nothing in spite of all our efforts. Let us have a more detailed look at the biosphere reserve together. To begin with it is enough to know that as for its area it is approximately as large as the area of both large-scale protected regions – those of the protected landscape area and the national park.

And let us start, in no way surprisingly, from the preserved natural heritage.

From the point of view of Central Europe Šumava region represents vast unbroken territory with the least disturbed mountainous countryside. In spite of growing human activities, especially the influence of glass-making and lumbering dating back to the Middle Ages, this mountain system has remained a territory with the largest expanse of continuous moorland. That is the reason why large-scale protected areas could be established on both the Czech and the Bavarian side of the border in the second half of the 20th century. On the Czech side a protected landscape area covering the territory of 1 630 km² was established in 1963, subsequently a biosphere reserve followed in 1990 (1 670 km²) and finally a national park was established in their most valuable natural part in 1991 (690 km²).

These protected areas include most of the valuable natural communities of the Šumava region, such as the remnants of old-growth mountain forest stands, glacial lakes and mountain or valley peat bogs which need strict protection. At the same time the Šumava region represents an omnipresent blend of unbroken countryside and the tracks of centuries-old presence of humans which give this very sparsely populated area – seen from Central European point of view – a special charm and remarkable mysteriousness. And the very biosphere reserve involving both the phenomena – nature and man – can help us to understand our integration with the natural environment we are an unseparable part of better.

Thanks to the cultural landscape of the Šumava foothills we are able to perceive how unharnessed the wild nature of the core parts of the National Park is, and at the same time the apparent untidiness of this wilderness helps us to appreciate the scenic beauty of the Šumava foothills countryside which has been looked after by humans for centuries.



We have
inherited
our natural
environment



Flora

As a whole the flora of the Šumava region is characteristic of lower species diversity as compared with e.g. the vegetation of the Alpine or Carpathian regions. It is mainly due to relatively monotonous geological and soil conditions and at the same time to the predominance of forest vegetation in the mountains where, with the exception of small islands, the subalpine level of vegetation is missing.

On the other hand, Šumava is a comparatively vast mountain range with plenty of space for differences in local natural conditions which also become evident in the composition of local flora and the occurrence of vegetation types. It can clearly be seen e.g. when flat wetter areas of the Šumava plains are compared to the rugged drier parts of SW Šumava region, to the Šumava foothills or the geologically poorer area of the Royal High Forest in the west.



Natural forest-free area

Natural non-forest vegetation can be found in the Šumava region in the form of small islands and on small areas only. In the long term non-forest vegetation remains below the upper boundary of the expanding forest in extreme habitats only. Thus, in the period before human colonization the only places of occurrence of natural non-forest vegetation were the cliffs of lake cirques, subalpine spring areas, frost forest-free zones, upland moors, rock rifts etc. Later these habitats became an important source of species which participated in creating non-forest communities depending on human activities. The best preserved primary communities of the Šumava region are represented by the Šumava upland moors frequently referred to as marshland. Although they came into being as spring bogs of marshy character at the beginning, they currently have the nature of typical upland moors being low in nutrients. Depending on the conditions of the location the Šumava moorland deposits developed in two basic types: As upland and lowland moors between which there are transitional forms.



Forests of the Šumava region

The Šumava region and forests belong inseparably to each other, and even today forests cover most of the area of the biosphere reserve. Forest communities in the Šumava region are influenced apart from geological subsoil by the surface appearance and by soil types. These are mostly low in calcium content and limit the species diversity of plant communities. Forest development and the current state of forest stands are closely connected with the economic and cultural development of the region. Owing to the late colonization of the area the species composition of the stands is in patches still close to the original composition (spruce, fir, beech, maple, elm), although spruce predominates over the other tree species. However, the last decades of the care for the forests in the whole of the biosphere reserve are characteristic of a goal-directed efforts of most forest managers for „making forests look like nature“ and for bringing them nearer to natural species composition.

This change has not occurred and even today does not always occur within the bounds of well-established standards we are used to only. A public discussion that has not been finished so far was provoked by the rise of vast areas of dying forest in the core zones of the National Park as a consequence of interference-free forest management used by nature conservation authorities after destructive hurricanes (Kyril). Vast areas of wind fallen trees were left unprocessed in a part of the area, thus causing bark beetle outbreak and die-offs of spruce trees.

On the other hand, the signs of climate change, which can hardly be questioned, represent a challenge to adaptation measures even in such a traditional branch of exploiting natural resources as forestry. A biosphere reserve represents an ideal environment for using all forms of forestry management under comparable conditions and gives a chance to use them in general when dealing with this valuable natural resource.

Meadows and pastures

The vast majority of today's forest-free areas in the Šumava region, with the exception of a few above stated communities, such as moors, originated from human activities and are dependent on their permanent care. The intensity of human care was and still is even today of decisive importance for the



character of the Šumava forest-free areas and influences their biological diversity in a fundamental way. Each of us can tell wide range of meadows and pastures from those no more used today and gradually becoming overgrown in secluded localities of the National Park up to those regularly mown

or grazed near farmhouses in more densely populated localities nearer to the edge of the biosphere reserve. And just this mixture of different intensity of usage, frequently even on a small local scale, makes the Šumava biosphere reserve so varied both from the point of view of species and the landscape character. Scientists and legislators have for a long time been struggling hard with this term which is difficult to grasp, for people living in the Šumava region and also for its perceptive guests the landscape character means the feeling of the place where they feel good.



Animals

New landscape elements (meadows, fields, housing estates, road network etc.) brought about changes towards greater diversification of the local fauna. There are species in question living in the open countryside and species which are found near human settlements and which make use of the environmental changes caused by humans. On the other hand, the number of animals tied to their natural habitat went gradually down and big predators (bear, wolf, lynx, wildcat or some birds of prey) disappeared under the



influence of the fact of being chased by humans. Some of the big predators (lynx) have successfully been brought back to the Šumava region by man, others (wildcat, wolf) gradually come back on their own. For some of them (bear) today's Šumava region seems to be a forever forbidden territory irrespective of the existence of the National Park.

In recognition of the high natural value of the Šumava region and its relatively good state of preservation there were two large-scale protected areas established there. First it was the Šumava Protected Landscape Area in 1963 covering an area of 1 630 km² and it was followed by the establishment of the Šumava National Park in its part adjoining the state border on an area of 690 km² in 1991.

Among the main reasons for establishing large-scale protection of the Šumava region ranks a unique extent of preserved natural or near-natural communities, and before all their entirety without major disturbance by way of transit roads, high percentage of forest land (up to 85% in the central part of the Šumava region) and vast areas of moors included among wetlands of international importance within the frame of the so called Ramsar Convention. Quite a few of the protected animals and plants come from glacial times and a good many of them occur only in the Šumava region in connection with the local environment.

Nature protection in large-scale areas is a natural and logical priority of the founder. It can particularly be seen in the case of the National Park whose function in relation to the area is logically conservative. Therefore, it is hardly expectable that the management will support a „standard“ development of the area the way we interpret it in common countryside. The mutual cooperation of the National Park management and the local authorities is, however, very desirable and beneficial, e.g. as far as joint services for the visitors to the area with plenty of opportunities for the local people are concerned.

One of the reasons for establishing the Protected Landscape Area in 1963 was the conservation of the countryside, a historically cultural highland countryside. It is the conservation of the landscape character being for the most part created by cultural human activities that has become one of the main subjects of care of the management of the Landscape Protected Area after the foundation of the National Park in environmentally most valuable parts of the then already existing Landscape Protected Area.

On the way to taking in the term biosphere reserve we have so far been dealing with nature and its protection, now it is the first time we are coming across culture.

We protect the nature



Countryside and people / people and countryside

In spite of relatively late colonization today's Šumava region reflects long-term human activities in a mountainous countryside. One of the evidence are numerous deforested areas used as meadows and pastures which co-create the picturesque character of the countryside. For the most part they are concentrated to low-lying areas of the Šumava foothills, but they are sporadically scattered over the mountainous parts of the Šumava region, too.

The farmer and the forester have hand in hand shaped the countryside as two essential landscape creators for centuries. There was no idyll in question, on the contrary, it was an everyday struggle for basic living. And yet, or it might precisely have been the reason why their relation to countryside – the provider contained elements of sustainability from our current point of view. A farmer knew well there was another day coming after this day and that there were limits to the countryside's exploitation. Up to now there is a proverb preserved in the memory of the local people saying that the farmer went to the forest only then, when his house was destroyed by fire or when he came under the hammer.

The picture of the Šumava region from the beginning of 20th century is naturally a thing of the past already with regards to the dramatic political changes in the post-war years in connection with the transfer of the German population and setting up the „Iron Curtain“ in the border area. It was different in the region of the Šumava foothills where the continuity of the settlement remained more or less preserved thanks to the Czech ethnic group. The influence of this settlement stability finds expression in, among other things, the traditional extensive ways of landscape management continuing until today.

This, from the point of view of damages to countryside, positively perceived extensivity, together with technologies for large-scale production, which require many times fewer workers than the number of the people living on the local natural resources in the past, causes job offers to be fewer in number as well. Of course, it is also due to the fact that the time-consuming and physically challenging job of a farmer is not attractive for most members of the young generation. The countryside, as it has always been the case, is going to change in a way.

„Countryside appears to us such as we ourselves are. We find in it what we have brought in from elsewhere“.

Josef Váchal



Šumava region has become a biosphere reserve

Since 27th March 1990 (still before the establishment of the Šumava National Park) Šumava region has become a part of the international network of UNESCO biosphere reserves established within MaB – Man and Biosphere programme. The Šumava biosphere reserve was established in order to protect forests, meadows, lakes and rivers under typical conditions of European highlands. Today we say in one breath in keeping with the principle of sustainable coexistence of people with the local natural environment. The Šumava Biosphere Reserve with its area of 1670 km² includes the area of the entire Šumava National Park (www.npsumava.cz) and most of the area of the Šumava Protected Landscape Area. There

is also an area without the status of special nature protection within the Biosphere Reserve. A current worldwide trend with the newly established biosphere reserves is increasing the percentage of these „environmentally not specially protected“ areas than it was the case in the past.

Delimitation of the Šumava Biosphere Reserve

There are no exact boundaries delimiting the area of the Biosphere Reserve. It is not necessary for the people to be inside the reserve to talk about things that link them together and to solve them together. We currently address more than fifty villages in the Šumava region.



What is the sense of a biosphere reserve?

No new restrictions at all unless we impose them on our own and voluntarily to protect our environment. There are enough restrictions in the Šumava region due to large-scale protected areas of the national parks and landscape protected areas being established there. And the benefits? Unfortunately, none the greater so far. Governmental institutions, which are for the most part „managers“ in the Czech Republic, are naturally not very motivated for encouraging development, they ideally enable it to get plus points for their own environmentalist activities. What has the biosphere reserve to offer us is a broader view of the life in the Šumava region? It makes possible to see the area in all the forms of its life and also the vastness of its spatial arrangement. It enables to find and subsequently use mutual benefits in apparently competitive activities in such a way that all the participants are the winners. The potential of the biosphere reserve has not been exploited very much in the Šumava region so far, that is why there has been an agreement concluded between the RDA and the management of Šumava NP aiming at coordinating activities of the biosphere reserve with a view of injecting new life into the Šumava region.

A little bit history

The origin of the idea of biosphere reserves is to be looked for in UNESCO – an organization of the United Nations for education, science and culture which was founded in 1945 as a direct reaction to the horrors of the world war which was just over at that time. It has its seat in Paris and currently involves 195 countries. Its main

goal is to maintain international peace by way of developing cooperation in education, science and culture and promoting respect for human rights and the order of law. UNESCO is involved in the sphere of education, natural sciences, social sciences and humanities, culture, communication and information.

The Man and the Biosphere Programme (MAB)

In 1970 an intergovernmental programme of worldwide cooperation in ecology was established during UNESCO general conference. It was given a name the Man and the Biosphere. Its acronym – Egyptian cross – has hereafter become a symbol of united approach to environmental protection. The introductory statement of the UNESCO document (1971) says that the goal of the MAB Programme is “to develop the basis within the natural and social sciences for the rational and sustainable use and conservation of the resources of the biosphere and for the improvement of the overall relationship between people and their environment; to predict the consequences of today’s actions on tomorrow’s world and thereby to increase people’s ability to efficiently manage natural resources of the biosphere”.

The establishment of coordinated worldwide network of sites representing the earth’s main ecosystems has become one of the basic

UNESCO projects within MaB programme. In these sites genetic resources should be conserved, and at the same time these ecosystems could be both investigated and monitored as well. These sites of the worldwide network were given the name “biosphere reserves”. The term biosphere has become a common part of the vocabulary of natural scientists, sociologists and also that of politicians. There have 631 sites in 119 countries of the world been involved in this programme at the time of the publication of this brochure. In the Czech Republic there have 6 biosphere reserves been established so far, those of the Křivoklát region (1977), Třeboň (1977), the Šumava region (1990), The Giant Mountains (1992), The White Carpathians (1996) and the Dolní Morava region (2003). Each of them is unique in some way. As we already know that one of ours in the Šumava region has been established to protect forests, meadows, lakes and rivers under typical conditions of European highlands.



What is a biosphere reserve about then?

Every UNESCO biosphere reserve was established in order to fulfil three basic functions which strengthen each other: those of protection, development and logistics.

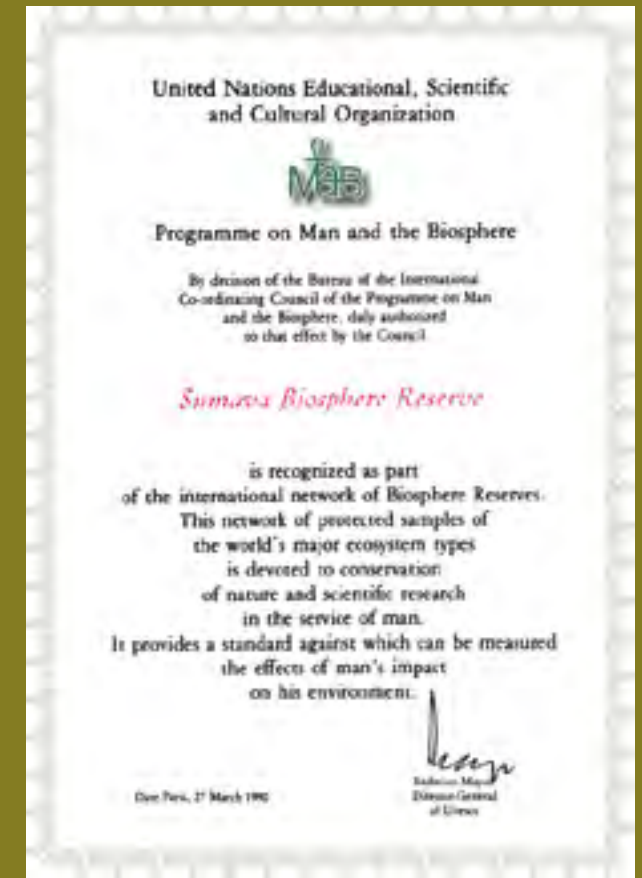
This refers particularly to:

- conservation of natural and cultural diversity
- socially, culturally and environmentally sustainable economic development
- logistic support to research, monitoring, environmental upbringing and education

Of special importance is the involvement of local villages and the participation of all the interested parties in the planning and management process in relation to the entire area of the biosphere



reserve. With the population and its pressure on the environment growing it is becoming more and more apparent that man plays an important role in biosphere reserves. The role of a thrifty person in the countryside, that of a sensible user of natural resources and also that of a landscapist. It is the local farmer that is irreplaceable for the conservation of natural diversity. The current European system of natural diversity conservation NATURA 2000 is entirely based on this fact. Anyway, let us come back to a biosphere reserve.



No fear of zoning

Every biosphere reserve is divided into three main zones:

- core zone – is meant for nature protection, monitoring and non-destructive research
- buffer zone – surrounding or adjoining the core zone, it is meant for activities compatible with environmentally friendly procedures
- transition zone – for activities where people jointly aim at sustainable use of natural resources

Only the core area requires special legal protection and, therefore, it is ideal when its area and that of a protected area, such as that of a nature reserve or a national park overlap each other. In our story of the Šumava region the zoning in the biosphere reserve plays a similar role. Apart from the most valuable natural areas of the national park the core zone also involves the most valuable parts of the landscape protected area, e.g. the area of Boubín Hill and that of the Royal Frontier Forest.

This way of zoning is used under lots of geographical and cultural conditions worldwide and is one of the strongest points of the MaB biosphere reserve concept making the incorporation of protected areas into a wider countryside easier.



People are welcome

The concept of a biosphere reserve – sustainable coexistence of man and nature – is entirely dependent on the people not leaving the Šumava region. Traditional ways of making a living based on exploiting natural resources (farming, forestry), but also lot of handicrafts processing natural raw materials (glassmakers, wievers) and numerous services linked with them (blacksmiths, saddlers, ropemakers) are on the decline or have already disappeared completely. There are not many offers from the industrial sector either due to the low density of population. Job opportunities in towns outside the biosphere reserve are not attractive for most of the local inhabitants owing to long transportation distances. The way how to make young people not leave the Šumava region (biosphere reserve) is to find an attractive enough offer of job opportunities. The natural environment, no matter how positively it may be perceived, is itself not enough to preserve rural life, however, the potential of its usage is enormous. The job of farmers and foresters is by no means discredited by the fact that experiences have recently been sold, too, instead of natural products. Tourism and travel-related services are the sector which prevails in the villages inside the National Park as a way of making a living with the local population. The situation is different outside the National Park in the Landscape Protected Area where the traditional way of making a living still prevails. It is just there where there is the biggest potential for the development of sustainable tourism as an accompanying economic activity.

A group of five cyclists are riding across a wooden bridge. The bridge has a wooden railing and a cobblestone path. The background is a dense forest of tall evergreen trees under a blue sky with some clouds. The cyclists are wearing various colored jerseys (blue, red, orange, black) and helmets. They are all looking forward and pedaling.

Experience the countryside / preserve life

The number of the days the guests stay for in the National Park is around two million, another hundreds of thousands of days is the time the visitors spend in the Landscape Protected Area. In contrary to accommodation and catering services, which are primarily the object of attention of private entities, the offer of leisure time activities is provided prevaillingly by public corporations, frequently nonprofit ones.

In spite of the Šumava region being frequented by undoubtedly increasing number of visitors it is thanks to its vast area still a destination with activities which are ecologically sustainable for the environment. Maybe nowhere else in the whole of the Czech Republic can you meet so many cyclists or cross-country skiers in winter time who make use of a dense network of forest tracks and minor forest roads, a remnant of the way how the area had been made use of before. And it is just there where the potential of a friendly countryside within the wider biosphere reserve presents itself with a lot of both marked and unmarked tracks and paths, picturesque villages with local pubs...





Ready to welcome guests

Thanks to a lot of different organizations there are numerous activities referring to tourism taking place in the area of the Šumava Biosphere Reserve. Due to their character they fulfil the mission of a biosphere reserve. It goes beyond the bounds of possibilities of this brochure to name all of them, that is why just some of them are mentioned. “The Flagship” providing guests with easy to find information about quality goods is the project of labeling regional products and services as ŠUMAVA original product®, www.regionalni-znacky.cz. The project is being looked after by the Šumava Regional Development Agency, one of the two coordinators of the Šumava Biosphere Reserve. Tourist information centres in the

Šumava region, irrespective of the fact whether they are operated by the government, villages, non-governmental organizations or by the private sector, cater for the visitors so that they may feel at home in the Šumava region. Nevertheless, their activities are more and more frequently targeted at the inhabitants of the Šumava region. The Šumava Biosphere Reserve is typical not only for its natural beauties, but at the same time it also offers a wide range of cultural events presented on the websides www.isumava.cz or www.sumavanet.cz. By their distribution all over the Šumava region they bear witness to the fact that the main cultural area seen from a historical perspective is situated along the very edges of the

biosphere reserve. This phenomenon balances the „predominance“ of nature in the central part of the biosphere reserve seen from a large scale point of view of the Šumava region. The management of the Šumava National Park (www.npsumava.cz), the other of the partners of the Šumava Biosphere Reserve whose main task is taking care of the natural environment of the national park offers natural experiences in a number of its facilities, such as the Owl Flight Cages near the village of Borová lada or the educational trail called Soumarské rašeliniště. There are new outdoor enclosures for wolves not far from the townlet of Srní or that for red deer near the village of Kvilda looking forward to their visitors. All through the summer there are Green Buses at the visitors’ disposal crossing the

Šumava region. The guide books to the Šumava region is also an activity where a wider view of the Biosphere Reserve is gradually being applied. As for the history of skiing the Šumava region by no means lags behind the Giant Mountains. In order to satisfy the needs of today’s guests and those of local skiers, too, the region has been doing its best to put the project Šumava White Trail, www.bilastopa.cz, into practice. The philosophy of the Biosphere Reserve also corresponds well with Via Nova, the new pilgrims’ path in old footsteps. The European pilgrims’ path of 21st century leads from the Bavarian Vilshofen to the Czech Svatá Hora near Příbram. On your own or with a guide making a pilgrimage to yourself.

Enchanted by the Šumava region

Poets, composers, painters and lots of other artists were in the past and still may be enchanted by the Šumava region at present. There is hardly any Czech who would not know the story about the birth of Smetana's symphonic poem Vltava somewhere near Čechkova Pila above Rejštejn. Klosterman, Stifter, Váchala, but also current artists have been impressed by the wild nature in today's National Park, but also, and by no means less intensively, by the moderate and picturesque character of the Šumava foothills (the painters Maxmilián and Alois and also the sculptor Josef Boháč, brothers coming from the town of Volyně, the painter Josefa Krejsa from Husinec or the painter Jiří Řeřich from Písek and lots of others - to name some at random).

Thanks to the unique photos from the archives of Josef Seidl, a photographer from Český Krumlov, it is possible even today to have an insight into the life of the bygone Šumava region, an insight into the existential bond of the local people with the surrounding nature.

One of the aims of the Biosphere Reserve is to preserve as much as possible from both the material and spiritual cultural heritage of the Šumava region.

A countryside full of life

In the Biosphere Reserve you can find all that the National Park focusing its attention to the environment cannot offer at all or just to a small extent for objective reasons.

Apart from landscape monuments, such as castles, chateaus, strongholds and other witnesses of the „great“ past of the Šumava region there are numerous chapels, wayside shrines, crosses, but also historical ways of using the countryside, e.g. reservoirs, canals, tree slides, trails which put the finishing touches to the landscape detail. After all, the whole countryside of the Šumava foothills is just one big cultural project owing to a large number of various events making use of and developing the cultural heritage of the Šumava region.

From the cultural aspect nearly all of them can be used in tourism, nevertheless, it is the cultural significance for the local inhabitants in the sense of strengthening the bonds between man and countryside that may be even more important.



Together also across the borders

The Šumava Biosphere Reserve has no direct cross-border partner in the form of a biosphere reserve on the Bavarian side. The biosphere reserve Bavarian Forest, established in 1981 and covering an area of 133 km², i.e. that of the Bavarian Forest National Park of that time, was abolished in 2007. Owing to the Bavarian Forest National Park being enlarged in August 1997 the biosphere reserve became smaller than the newly enlarged national park. As the full attention was focused on keeping up high management standard of the national park, there was not a necessary agreement found in the region for similar steps to be taken in the biosphere reserve. The most natural cross-border partner of the Šumava Biosphere Reserve is Bavarian Forest Nature Park and it is its focus on supporting the balance between natural and cultural aspects of the wider Bavarian Forest countryside that links it with the Šumava Biosphere Reserve.

Within the project of the Šumava Biosphere Reserve the Bavarian Forest National Park represents before all a cross-border partner of the Šumava National Park which shares common responsibility for natural heritage preservation in the common area of the Šumava region.

Of great importance for the partnership in cross-border communication and supporters of the idea of sustainable life are non-governmental organizations. Frequent partners on both sides of the border who try to fulfil the idea of man's sustainable life in the countryside are small societies. Apart from nature it is this particular cultural aspect that links the partners very often. It is not any different with the Bavarian KuLaMu or both of the partner societies of Karel Klostermann.

Seeing neighbours without barriers

If it were not for the oncoming problems with the migration from regions outside Europe, it would appear that border crossings are things of the past within the united Europe and that their role is reduced to helping to solve regional topics, such as common conservation of particularly valuable natural areas, in this case those of the Šumava region and the Bavarian Forest. A compromise usually goes a long way. It's been 25 years since the efforts to find a satisfactory solution to nature protection and at the same to provide a sufficient connection between both of the areas in the Šumava region started. It is particularly the biosphere reserve that offers a suitable common platform for negotiations on an agreement.



Bavarian Forest National Park

One of the most reputable European national parks came into being in 1970 and reached its current area of 242 km² in 1997. Under the motto „Let nature be nature“ the mountain forest is allowed to develop without the interference of man there, which is entirely unique under the conditions of otherwise densely populated Central Europe. It is a long process for the local inhabitants to accept the idea of natural development without the interference of man, and this process is still not at an end today. The National Park had to defend its existence with its undisputed economic benefits for the region. The economic effect arising from the protected area being frequented by lots of visitors was and until today has been one of the most important arguments for the existence of the national park and an important basis for the relationship between the management of the national park and the local inhabitants.

Bavarian Forest Nature Park

The most natural cross-border partner of the Šumava Biosphere Reserve is Bavarian Forest Nature Park and it is its focus on supporting the balance between natural and cultural aspects of the wider Bavarian Forest countryside that links it with the Šumava Biosphere Reserve. Since 1967 it's been based on a society principle covering the area of 2 780 km² of the countryside between the Danube and the uplands of the Bavarian Forest National Park.

Out of the six information centres of the nature park „Sonnenhaus“ in Zwiesel is probably the best-known. The railway station in Bayerisch Eisenstein boasts the newest centre where the visitors gain information about the vast cross-border area between the Danube and the Vltava River with its large-scale protected areas and the opportunities offered to visitors.





Gaining knowledge by playing

The Šumava region offers educational and get to know nature activities in probably a larger number than it is the case in the whole of the Czech Republic. It is the management of the Šumava National Park that participates in organizing them for the most part, however, non-governmental organizations have recently joined in organizing their own activities, too. Most information centres offer additional activities which complete the two centres of ecological education run by the management of the National Park in Stožes and Horská Kvilda. A number of non-governmental profit free organizations take part in programmes of environmental education for both the children and the adults, too. The way they approach environmental topics widens the view of plenty of vital questions discussed in the Šumava region.

Of importance is the cross-border cooperation with similar facilities on the Bavarian side and above all making use of the wonderful activities offered by both of the Bavarian protected areas. Specialized facilities for environmental education (Falkenstein Wilderness Camp, Youth Forest Home...) are combined with a direct natural experience (Seelen-Path, Forest Playgrounds near Spiegelau, Upland meadows and Moors...). Except for occasional language barriers there are no other limits any more.





Science for nature / nature for science

Biosphere reserves are established world-wide with the goal to become educational laboratories of sustainable development, at least in their permanently inhabited parts. Supporting traditions and innovative approaches do not contradict each other, innovations are frequently based on local experience. Of great importance is the cooperation with universities, research and development institutions and, generally, with the whole experts community. Apart from offering opportunities for basic research a biosphere reserve is above all a suitable natural laboratory for students. Lots of high technologies currently in use are picked up from nature, from animal and plant traits. An example could be the whole branch of science of bionics whose main subject matter is creating as close a mutual link as possible between biology and technology including a natural link to other branches of biology. Where else other than in a biosphere reserve should new high technologies be tested in sustainable cohabitation with the environment.

The University of South Bohemia in České Budějovice, the same as that of West Bohemia in Pilsen having their seats in the close vicinity, are undoubtedly of mutual advantage for both the region and the academic institutions.



A good place to live

Human pressure on the environment being on the increase, the national parks and their unique natural features becoming more and more endangered, a biosphere reserve appears to be an ideal means of modelling sustainable cohabitation of man and nature. It is just that balance in the vast area of the Šumava region that enables undisturbed natural development in some areas and sustainable exploitation of natural resources in favour of the local inhabitant, the farmer in others.

Anyway, no matter how good the management of the biosphere reserve may be, it itself won't help the Šumava region very much. The threat of the countryside shrinking to a mere space for construction activities of a few chosen, which the local people will have little profit from, anyway, is quite real with respect to political instability in the Czech Republic. On the other hand, lots of local businessmen already know that a friendly countryside offering sustainable activities is much surer to attract visitors to the region. This

also holds true for cross border cooperation whose potential has not by far been used to its full yet. The same as natural diversity is perceived in a positive way, it is none the less desirable to strengthen cultural diversity.

The projects aiming at equipping the region and having respect for the local countryside are well responded to by the European Funds, however, there are other financial possibilities owing to UNESCO patronage, too. The future simply lies with the biosphere reserves. The more people move to cities, the more frequently they leave them. Why not just come to our region provided that we are able to offer them something else than they live through all the week, all the year round. The offer of typical local products and services might be the reason why they should come back to our place or even live in our countryside and make a common contribution to fulfilling the motto of our biosphere reserve „Good place to live“. For nature and man alike as its inseparable part.

Ten pros for the Šumava Biosphere Reserve

Chance for the future of the region

A broader bird's eye view of the area

Space for both nature and culture

Preserving natural diversity

Maintaining cultural heritage of the region

Participation in world network of biosphere reserves

Sharing experience within the network

Promotion of cultural diversity

Laboratory of sustainable development

Šumava Biosphere Reserve in details*

1670 km² is the area of the biosphere reserve itself (BR), another 800 km² are made up of the cadastres of the villages outside the BR which are directly linked to it

30 thousand inhabitants live in the BR and on its border

40 thousand inhabitants live outside the BR in close contact with its territory

70 thousand inhabitants live in 55 villages and the military training area of Boletice within the wider area of the BR covering 2 450 km²

18 inhabitants / km² is an average population density inside the BR

50 inhabitants / km² is an average population density in the area adjoining the BR from outside

28 inhabitants/ km² is an average population density in the wider area of the BR as a whole

* (all the data stated are of a general nature)

This brochure has been published with the aim of widening the basic knowledge of the Šumava Biosphere Reserve and of its potential for sustainable life in the Šumava region. In contrary to the comprehensive and lots of data containing publication Biosphere Reserves of the Czech Republic, Jan Jeník a kol., Empora, Praha 1996, a part of which was a chapter on the Šumava region, this brochure does not try to give a detailed survey of taxons and of all the corresponding data. As for the data its contribution is much more modest, it focuses more on the links due to which a UNESCO biosphere reserve was established in the Šumava region a quarter of a century ago. We thank our readers for the kindness they will accept this contribution with.

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