



## Friends of Parks in the Harz Mountains and Germany – Situation, History, Cooperation, Outstanding Projects and Developments

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### 1. European context

Like Koli National Park, the Harz National Park is located along the European Green Belt and therefore part of the largest European ecological corridor, spanning 12,500 km (7,900 miles) – from the Barents Sea at the Russian-Norwegian border, along the Baltic Coast, through Central Europe with the Harz and the Balkans to the Black Sea and incorporating many important NATURA 2000 sites. So the Koli and Harz areas are partners along this belt.

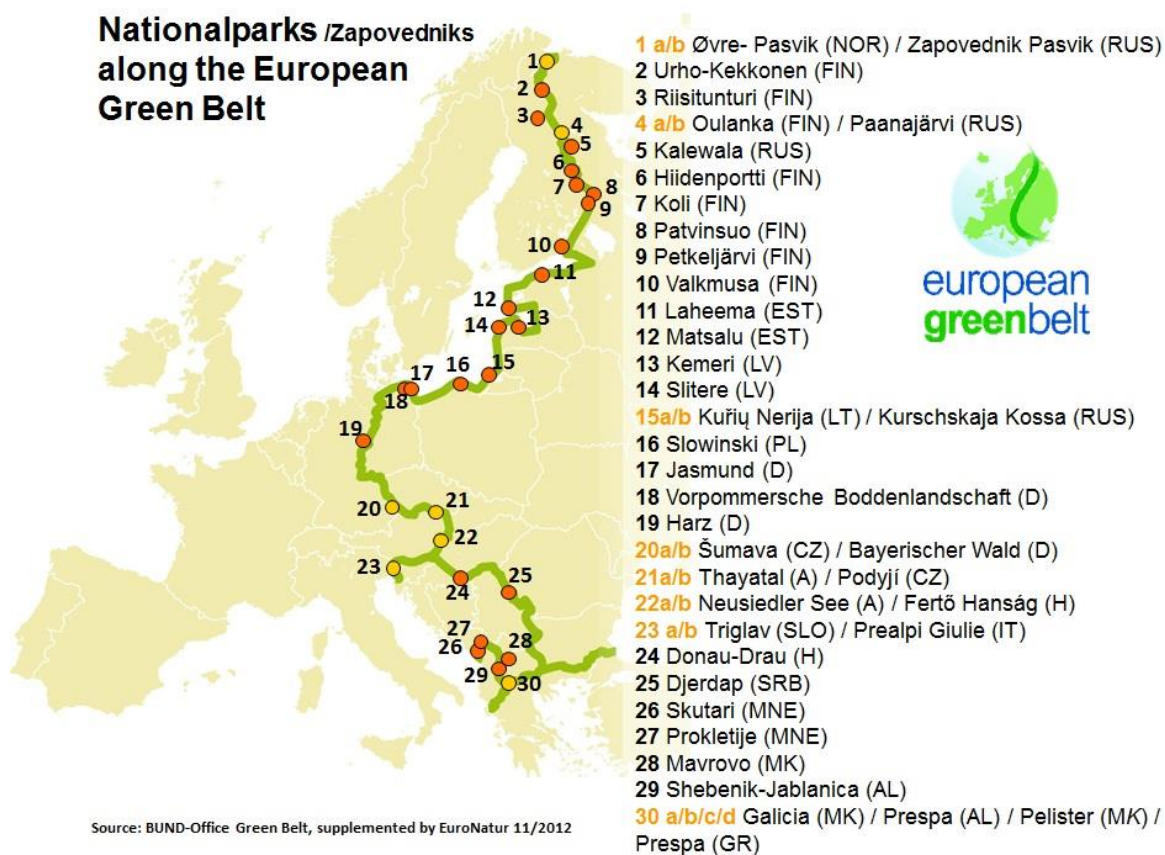


Figure 1. European Green Belt (BUND office Green Belt).

## **2. Friends of the Harz National Park**

Friends of the Harz National Park (Gesellschaft zur Förderung des Nationalparks Harz e.V., alias GFN) is a registered charity founded in 1990. Our main purpose is the promotion of the National Park and its protection. We help the park by sponsoring, lobbying, public relation work and environmental education as well as by other methods and in other fields necessary to support its development goals. GFN also supports nature conservation and environmental education within the National Park authority and its national park centres, youth work and production of environmental education material and publications. GFN also ran one of the National Parks Visitor Centres for many years till we handed its management over to the authority (Brockenhaus Visitor Centre on the Brocken summit) and helped to build up other visitor centres, e.g. in Torfhaus and Sankt Andreasberg. We also aim to promote nature conservation activities across the wider Harz region where ever possible.

GFN has experience in the following fields:

- Development and publication of guidelines on wilderness conservation work.
- Development/publication of guidelines for nature conservation management of Natura 2000 sites.
- Expert studies proposing how best to protect the biodiversity components.
- Expert studies proposing best management options for protected areas.
- Participation in management planning for protected areas.
- Environmental education in protected areas.
- Public relations work for protected areas.
- Sponsoring and fundraising for protected areas.

At the moment, GFN has more than 60 individual and NGO members. At just € 35, the annual fee is low, as we do not want to be a competitor to other NGOs like BUND and NABU. Good networking and cooperation with the other NGOs with whom we are sharing a common goal of supporting the park is more important to us. GFN is member of EUROPARC Deutschland and the EUROPARC Federation.

## **3. Harz National Park**

The Harz National Park is located at the southern range of the great northern plain of Germany. It was created when two National Parks joined up in 2006 to create one unified National Park – this was a first in the whole of Germany. GFN helped to develop the first Master plan for this joining process. We pushed the politicians all the time until the first park in Germany spanning across two federal states, Lower Saxony (former West Germany) and Saxony-Anhalt (former East Germany) was created. The joined park now covers an area of 24,700 hectares (95 square miles; approximately 10 % of the Harz mountains area) spanning 25 kilometres (16 miles) from east to west and 35 km (22 miles) from north to south. It is part of the Natura 2000 network and one of the largest woodland National Parks in Germany. Elevation ranges from 230 m (754 feet) above sea level to the highest point, the Brocken summit, with 1,141 m (3,743 feet).

The Harz National Park offers the entire range of characteristic ecological systems from lowland beech woods to sub-alpine vegetation with variations in height, slopes and rocks. The park offers an ecologically complex landscape and contains different vegetation zones. The Harz NP is virtually uninhabited, containing only a few small hamlets. Nearly all the land within the park is woodland and mainly owned by the federal states.

Scientific research has identified a large number of different habitats, which are – based on central-European standards – quite close to their natural condition. This includes rocky biotopes, a lot of running water and large beech, spruce and mixed woodland areas. In several parts of the Harz Mountains however felling of trees and replanting of appropriate native species of local provenance must be carried out, in order to get closer to original, natural woodland conditions.

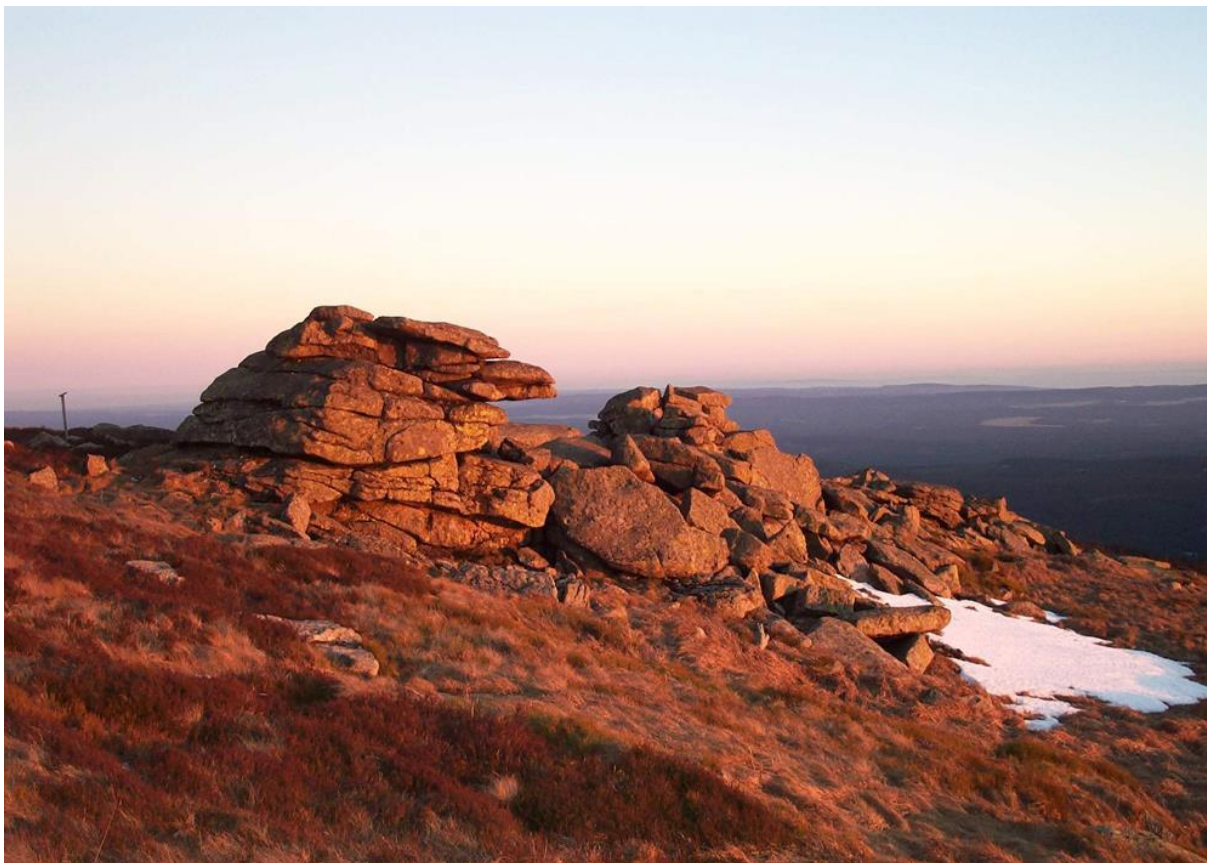


Figure 2. Unique rocky highland landscape on the Brocken in the Harz National Park. Photo: Harz NP archive.

### **Unique profile of Harz National Park**

One of the priorities for the future of the Harz National Park will be to provide environmental information and education services. With its geographical location, the beauty of its landscapes and characteristic natural environment, the park is one of the most significant recreational areas within central Europe. The Harz Tourist Federation estimates that more than 5 million people stay overnight and approximately 10 million visits happen in the wider park area and its adjacent towns

every year. A group of 40 rangers and several National Park Visitor Centres provide education and recreation services for the guests. The park was the first German National Park within the Network of European Charter for Sustainable Tourism in Protected Areas and is part of the UNESCO Geopark Harz . Braunschweiger Land . Ostfalen.

With its development, work and the friends, the Harz National Park is a good example of German Network of National Parks.

#### 4. German National Parks and protected areas with “Friends”



Figure 3. German National Parks (BfN).

After the German reunification in 1990 and developments since then, there are now 16 National Parks, with the Bayerischer Wald National Park being the oldest (established in 1970). They cover 13 of the 16 federal states and a total area of 2,145 km<sup>2</sup> or 0.6 % of the German terrestrial territory.

There are more than 100 Associations or Clubs who act as “Friends of Parks”. The following Friends of National Parks are currently active:

#### **Bayerischer Wald National Park**

- Freunde wilder Natur - Pro Nationalpark Bayerischer Wald;
- Verein der Freunde des Ersten deutschen Nationalparks Bayerischer Wald e.V.;
- Pro Nationalpark Freyung-Grafenau e. V.; and
- Pro Nationalpark zur Förderung des Zwieseler Winkels e.V.

#### **Berchtesgaden National Park**

- Verein der Freunde des Nationalparks Berchtesgaden e.V.

#### **Hunsrück-Hochwald National Park**

- Freundeskreis Nationalpark Hunsrück e.V.

#### **Kellerwald National Park**

- Förderverein für den Nationalpark Kellerwald-Edersee e.V.

#### **Eifel National Park**

- Förderverein Nationalpark Eifel e.V.

#### **Hainich National Park**

- Gesellschaft zur Entwicklung des Nationalparks Hainich e.V.; and
- Verein der Freunde des Naturparks Eichsfeld-Hainich-Werratal und des Nationalparks Hainich e.V. (VDF).

#### **Hamburgisches Wattenmeer National Park**

- Verein Jordsand zum Schutze der Seevögel und der Natur e.V.

#### **Harz National Park**

- Gesellschaft zur Förderung des Nationalparks Harz e. V.

#### **Jasmund National Park**

- Verein der Freunde und Förderer des Nationalparks Jasmund e.V.

#### **Müritz National Park**

- Förderverein Müritz-Nationalpark e.V.

#### **Niedersächsisches Wattenmeer National Park**

- Förderverein Nationalpark Niedersächsisches Wattenmeer e.V.

#### **Schleswig-Holsteinisches Wattenmeer National Park**

- Verein Jordsand zum Schutze der Seevögel und der Natur e.V.

#### **Schwarzwald National Park**

- Freundeskreis Nationalpark Schwarzwalde.V.

#### **Sächsische Schweiz National Park**

- Freunde des Nationalparks Sächsische Schweiz e.V.

#### **Unteres Odertal National Park**

- Verein der Freunde des Deutsch-Polnischen Europa-Nationalparks.

#### **Vorpommersche Boddenlandschaft National Park**

- Förderverein Nationalpark Vorpommersche Boddenlandschaft e. V.

More “friends of” organisations are working to establish new National Parks in Germany, e.g. for the projects.

- Ammergebirge ([www.initiative-nationalpark-ammergebirge.de](http://www.initiative-nationalpark-ammergebirge.de)),
- Murnauer Moos,
- Karwendelgebirge,
- Steigerwald ([www.pro-nationalpark-steigerwald.de](http://www.pro-nationalpark-steigerwald.de)),
- Spessart,
- Dalum-Witmarcher Moor,
- Grenzwald,
- Senne-Eggegebirge ([www.foerderverein-nationalpark-senne.de](http://www.foerderverein-nationalpark-senne.de)),
- Peene,
- Lieberose ([www.lieberoserheide.de](http://www.lieberoserheide.de)),
- Stechlin,
- Bode-Selke-Tal,
- Siebengebirge([www.nationalpark-siebengebirge-buergerverein.de](http://www.nationalpark-siebengebirge-buergerverein.de)),
- Pfälzer Wald/Soonwald ([www.soonwald.de](http://www.soonwald.de)),
- and more.

There are 15 UNESCO Biosphere Reserves covering 13 federal states and 3 % of German territory. Some of these overlap with National Park boundaries and cooperate with their friends or have own friends organisations.

In addition, there are 104 Nature Parks (similar to Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty in England) covering some of Germany’s most important landscapes and one quarter of the territorial area. They enjoy a lower level of protection and their main purpose is to connect people with nature near where they live, to help them to touch and to experience nature and to get involved in practical nature conservation. Many Nature Parks overlap National Parks or Biosphere Reserves.

Moreover, there are 15 Geoparks in Germany, some of them with UNESCO status. Many of them are also partly overlapping with the other types of park designations.

## 5. History of Parks in Germany

1909	Creation of the registered charity "Verein Naturschutzpark" (VNP); early plans for creations of National Parks, hampered in part by World War I & II
1957	Creation of the first Nature Park Hoher Vogelsberg (federal state of Hessen in West Germany) instigated by VNP president Alfred Toepfer; local clubs and "friends of" groups to support Nature Parks, mostly within the German hiking clubs.
1963	Creation of the umbrella organisation for Nature Parks (Verband Deutscher Naturparke; VDN)
1970	Creation of the first National Park: Bavarian Forest and first "friends of" registered charity (Verein der Freunde des Ersten Deutschen Nationalparks Bayerischer Wald e.V.); Dr. Hans Bibelriether played an important role in this and was the National Park Chief Executive from 1969 to 1978, later playing key roles in the EUROPARC Federation and the World Commission on Protected Areas
1973	FNNPE, later named EUROPARC Federation founded by German patron Alfred Toepfer, Hamburg; it represents hundreds of responsible authorities and thousands of Protected Areas in 37 countries and facilitates international co-operation in all aspects of Protected Area management to improve and conserve our shared natural heritage.
1979	Creation of first Biosphere Reserves in Germany: Vessertal-Thüringer Wald and Flusslandschaft Elbe (landscape along the River Elbe) in the then German Democratic Republic; the friends role was provided by the central Kulturbund (Cultural Association of the German Democratic Republic) and similar clubs
1991	Creation of FÖNAD, later named EUROPARC Deutschland, first national section of the EUROPARC Federation, instigated by Dr. Hans Bibelriether
2000	The Geoparks movement develops; friends are local clubs and different national geological institutions; later creation of European Geoparks Network
2004	Creation of the Global Network of Geoparks GGN
2015	Just some days before this presentation in the Koli Network Seminar for Friends of Parks, UNESCO International Geoscience Programme (IGCP) joined up with GGN to form International Geosciences and Geopark Programme (IGGP), a new umbrella organisation for Geoparks

Figure 4.

Hans Bibelriether, father of the first German National Park friends organization (Photo: Klaus-Dieter Briel).



## 6. Cooperation between National Parks, Geoparks and friends groups

Today, there are over 100 “friends of” groups and registered charities in a broader sense in Germany. They are supported by national networks listed at the end of this presentation; VDN for Nature Parks and EUROPARC Deutschland with Nationale Naturlandschaften for National Parks, Biosphere Reserves and some Nature Parks and their friends) and national NGOs such as BUND, NABU and DNR. There is a fairly good cooperation amongst most of these organisations, including a number of specific projects. It will be important to involve the Geoparks in the cooperation network of the Protected Areas. Up to now, these connections have often been poor.

## 7. Some important projects to develop “park & partner friendships”

### Project Bayerischer Wald and Šumava National Park

In 1991 a large portion of the Šumava mountains in the Czech Republic was declared a National Park. The National Park has a long shared border with the Bayerischer Wald National Park, Germany. The vision is to create a natural woodland providing a home for rare species such as Elk (*Alces alces*), Lynx (*Lynx lynx*) and Capercaillie (*Tetrao urogallus*) combined with an attractive sustainable tourism offer along the European Green Belt. A whole “family” of friends organisations cooperate with the Bavarian park, whereas there is only a small number of friends in the Šumava Park and much work to do.

### Project Wadden Sea

Since 1978, the Netherlands, Germany and Denmark have cooperated to protect the tidal flats of the Wadden Sea as an ecological entity. The Guiding Principle of the Trilateral Wadden Sea Cooperation is to achieve, as far as possible, a natural and sustainable ecosystem in which natural processes can proceed. The organisation Förderverein Nationalpark Niedersächsisches Wattenmeere.V. (Friends of



the Lower Saxony Wadden Sea National Park) is a registered charity. It supports the National Park and the Biosphere Reserve in the areas of nature conservation, research and public relations, especially working towards recognition of the Wadden Sea as a UNESCO World Natural Heritage site. There is a whole family of other NGOs and large as well as small groups that have been working intensively over many years to establish National Parks and to achieve effective regulations to protect the sensible Wadden Sea ecology. These include WWF, BUND, NABU, AKN, BSH, LBU, Mellumrat, NHB, NVN, Watten-Rat Ost-Friesland, WAU and others.

### **The Geopark Harz . BraunschweigerLand . Ostfalen and South Harz Gypsum Karst Landscape Biosphere Reserve**

The Geopark Harz . Braunschweiger Land . Ostfalen is located in Northern Germany and includes the Harz Mountains and land to the north stretching towards the City of Braunschweig. It covers an area of approximately 3,700 square miles over ten districts in three federal German states. It is formally recognised by UNESCO. At its southern border a rare Gypsum Karst can be found, formed in the late Permian period (also known as Zechstein in Germany). It is the largest continuous gypsum karst area in Europe and runs as a narrow belt extending through the States of Lower Saxony, Thuringia and Saxony-Anhalt. This gypsum belt has developed a remarkable diversity of different types of sulphate karst.

The most pronounced features of the South Harz landscape are more than 20,000 sinkholes in addition to countless uvalas, ponors and karstic springs, more than fifty larger caves and other karst phenomena plus many archaeological sites, all confined to small spaces of individual gypsum outcrops. The product of these natural conditions combined with a very extensive management of the land is a vast mosaic of closely interconnected but diverse habitats, including dry meadows, lime-beech forests, gypsum escarpments, rocky biotopes, spring bogs, and water-filled fens.

The South Harz gypsum karst area is also an important habitat for many bat species and the European Wildcat (*Felis silvestris*). This outstanding area is very important to preserve. Several parts are already protected, however, its importance is not well known internationally. Gypsum quarries still characterise the landscape in many places and have led to controversy between the gypsum industry and nature conservation organisations. Sadly, parts of this landscape are being destroyed – at many places anhydrite, gypsum and dolomite is quarried by globally operating businesses.

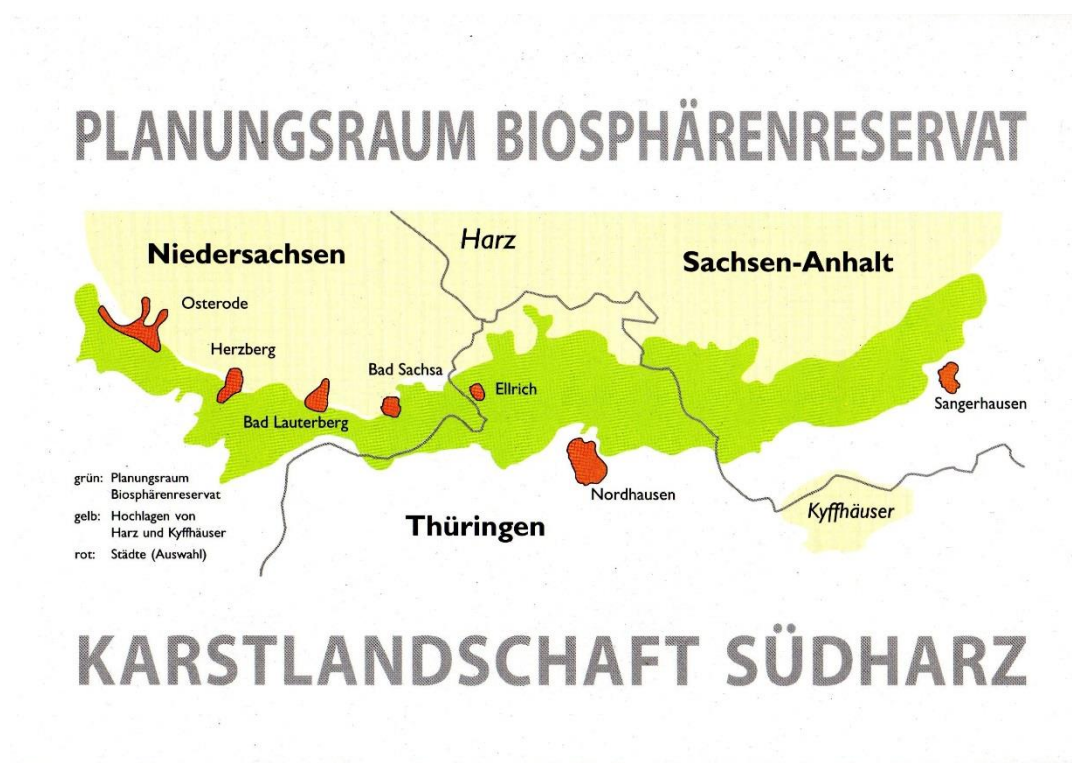


Figure 5. Future vision of the Biosphere Reserve Karstlandschaft Südharz spanning over Lower Saxony in the west, Thuringia and Saxony-Anhalt in the east (GFB e.V.).

Guidelines 4 and 9 from IUCN (1997) and Recommendation 4 from IUCN (2008) say that states whose territories include karst terrains situated on evaporite rocks should consider the potential of their sites for Natural World Heritage recognition. With that in mind, designation of a UNESCO World Natural Heritage site should be considered for this gypsum karst landscape. So far, only Saxony-Anhalt has protected its share of the gypsum karst belt in form of a Biosphere Reserve. There is no other Biosphere Reserve in a gypsum karst area world-wide! Several friends organisations of this area, e.g. GFB e.V., and the large NGOs like BUND and NABU vigorously object to the issuing of new extraction permits. In order to ensure the long-term protection of the gypsum karst landscape they demand the establishment of a cross-boundary UNESCO Biosphere Reserve, designated "Karstlandschaft Südharz", and the designation of more parts of the gypsum karst landscape as Natura 2000 sites.

## References

IUCN 1997: Guidelines for Cave and Karst Protection. – Gland, Switzerland. Internet publication in: [http://www.iucn.org/about/union/commissions/wcpa/wcpa\\_puball/wcpa\\_pubsubject/wcpa\\_cavespub/](http://www.iucn.org/about/union/commissions/wcpa/wcpa_puball/wcpa_pubsubject/wcpa_cavespub/)

IUCN 2008: World Heritage Caves and Karst. A Thematic Study. – IUCN World Heritage Studies 2, Gland, Switzerland. Internet publication in:

[http://www.iucn.org/about/union/commissions/wcpa/wcpa\\_puball/wcpa\\_pubsubject/wcpa\\_cavespub/?2079/World-Heritage-Caves-and-Karst](http://www.iucn.org/about/union/commissions/wcpa/wcpa_puball/wcpa_pubsubject/wcpa_cavespub/?2079/World-Heritage-Caves-and-Karst)

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KNOLLE, F. & KEMPE, S. 2009. The South Harz and Kyffhäuser Gypsum Karst – A Unique Landscape.– Internet publication in: [www.karstwanderweg.de/publika/knolle/engl/index.htm](http://www.karstwanderweg.de/publika/knolle/engl/index.htm)

## **Internet**

### Links to National Parks and Authorities

[www.nationalpark-harz.de](http://www.nationalpark-harz.de)

[www.nationalpark-bayerischer-wald.de/english/index.htm](http://www.nationalpark-bayerischer-wald.de/english/index.htm)

[www.nationalpark-hainich.de](http://www.nationalpark-hainich.de)

[www.nationalpark-berchtesgaden.de](http://www.nationalpark-berchtesgaden.de)

[www.waddensea-secretariat.org](http://www.waddensea-secretariat.org)

[www.npsumava.cz/en](http://www.npsumava.cz/en)

### Links to Geoparks

[www.unesco.org/new/en/natural-sciences/environment/earth-sciences/global-geoparks](http://www.unesco.org/new/en/natural-sciences/environment/earth-sciences/global-geoparks)

[www.globalgeopark.org](http://www.globalgeopark.org)

[www.europeangeoparks.org](http://www.europeangeoparks.org)

[www.geopark-harz.de](http://www.geopark-harz.de)

### Links to Biosphere Reserves

[www.bioreskarstsuedharz.de](http://www.bioreskarstsuedharz.de)

### Links to Friends of Parks and Umbrella Associations

[www.gfn-harz.de](http://www.gfn-harz.de)

[www.dnr.de/about-us.html](http://www.dnr.de/about-us.html)

[www.freunde-wilder-natur.de](http://www.freunde-wilder-natur.de)

[www.nationalpark-zeitschrift.de](http://www.nationalpark-zeitschrift.de)

[www.pro-nationalpark.de](http://www.pro-nationalpark.de)

[www.pronat-zwiesel.de](http://www.pronat-zwiesel.de)

[www.freundeskreisnationalparkhunsrueck.de](http://www.freundeskreisnationalparkhunsrueck.de)

[www.foerderverein-nationalpark.de](http://www.foerderverein-nationalpark.de)

[www.vdf-thueringen.de](http://www.vdf-thueringen.de)

[www.gfn-harz.de](http://www.gfn-harz.de)

[www.irm.mathematik.hu-berlin.de/~teschke/fver.htm](http://www.irm.mathematik.hu-berlin.de/~teschke/fver.htm)

[www.muertitz-nationalpark.de/foerderverein](http://www.muertitz-nationalpark.de/foerderverein)

<http://www.nationalpark-wattenmeer.de/nds/kooperation/foerderverein>

[www.jordsand.de](http://www.jordsand.de)

[www.pro-nationalpark-schwarzwald.de](http://www.pro-nationalpark-schwarzwald.de)

[www.nationalparkfreunde.info](http://www.nationalparkfreunde.info)

[www.unteres-odertal.info](http://www.unteres-odertal.info)

[www.bodden-nationalpark.de](http://www.bodden-nationalpark.de)

#### Links to Conservation NGOs

<https://en.nabu.de>

[www.bund.net/ueber\\_uns/bund\\_in\\_english](http://www.bund.net/ueber_uns/bund_in_english)

#### Links to International Organizations

[www.iucn.org/about/work/programmes/gpap\\_home](http://www.iucn.org/about/work/programmes/gpap_home)

[www.euoparc.org](http://www.euoparc.org)

[www.european-charter.org](http://www.european-charter.org)

[www.europeangreenbelt.org](http://www.europeangreenbelt.org)