

Category: Co-Winner of the Special Biodiversity Award
Company: Hülskens GmbH & Co. KG, Wesel
Location: Reeserward, Germany

With the project “Renaturation Reeserward – a man-made nature haven” the enterprise Hülskens GmbH & Co. KG in Wesel and the Centre for Nature Conservation in Rees-Bienen participate in the campaign “Countdown 2010” conducted by the International Union for Conservation of Nature and the State of North Rhine-Westphalia whose goal is to maintain and support biodiversity.

Like many other extractions the former extraction site Reeserward is located in today’s Rhine floodplain and bird sanctuary “Lower Rhine”. Initiated from a jointly developed and implemented renaturation concept a long-term monitoring plan has been introduced to analyse which of the ecological structures established on a trial basis prove particularly effective for enhancing the diversity for species and allow the area to function as an ecological valuable part of the Rhine floodplain.

The design of the connection to the Rhine, the segmentation of the water and land areas, the side ditches and flood channels as well as the creation of dynamic largely open biotopes combined with extensive agricultural usage are the main focus areas. It is being investigated in how far specific measures affect the fish and other water organisms, as well as in how far they affect the breeding or passing migrant birds and vegetation.

The visionary target is to identify those measures which have proven successful and apply them to other renaturation in the region in form of a model project. This way, a substantial contribution with respect to diversity of species can be attained in terms of the Alliance for Nature, if contrary to traditional, often poorly structured and ecologically, not exactly optimally designed renaturation the functions as floodplain habitats stands as the main objective and can serve better as paradigm for prospective planning.

The enhancement of biodiversity in the Rhine floodplain and particularly in the bird sanctuary “Lower Rhine Area” as well as in several nature conservation and FFH areas along the Lower Rhine is of special concern, as the riverbed deepening of the Rhine and a lack of natural floodplain dynamics have drawn attraction to e.g. the drying up of the plain or a lack in sandy-gritty pioneer locations. If existing and future extraction respectively renaturation areas are managed in a more ecological way with direct reference to flood plain characteristics, they can serve as valuable manmade habitats. Their impacts often exceed local aspects and can – as shown by spawning migration of fish to the backwaters and ponds or the migration of juvenile fish into the Rhine – positively influence the entire system of the Lower Rhine system.

