

What happened in the Šumava National Park?

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Šumava is largest National Park in the Czech Republic. It is 69 thousands hectares large, majority of its area is covered by forest. Only about ten percent of forests are ancient ("virgin") stands. The rest is "man made" i.e., it had been felled and replanted by humans. However, it does not necessarily imply unnatural species composition.

Activity of bark beetles is a natural process in old Norwegian spruce forests. These beetles (in Central Europe mainly *Ips typographus*) attack old trees, lay eggs into bark, and their larvae feed on underlying phloem tissue. Majority of thus attacked tree dies out. Now, after an outbreak of bark beetles that lasts for 15 years, about 14% of forest cover of Šumava National Park are damaged. There are two hypotheses among the concerned circles:

1. The bark beetle outbreak is a natural disturbing process in habitats of mountainous "taiga" forests. As every natural process, it had begun naturally, and would naturally end up even without interference of humans.
2. The outbreak is a horrible catastrophe, which might last for ever, or at least until the "pests" has eaten whole forest cover of the Šumava NP.

Before establishing NP, area of present NP Šumava was proclaimed as a Biosphere reserve(1990). Core zone (natural zone) included approximately 40 % and formed from 14 pieces. In the beginning (NP was established in the year 1991) the park was divided to three zones (according Nature Protection Act) i.e. natural, managed and recreational zone. First zone (natural) had about 22% of whole area and was divided to 50 separate pieces.

Because in central Europe there is not an example - except the Bavarian forest NP - how to solve bark beetle problem in such type of NP, headquarters of the Šumava NP and Ministry of Environment decided (1995) to divide NP differently into zones. However, only 13 % of the NP area was included into the new natural zone, which was moreover fragmented into 135 separate pieces. That such policy was nonsensical is clearly seen from Table 1, which compares state of zonation in selected national parks in mountains and highland of Central Europe.

Furthermore, there was an agreement that except the natural zones administration of the Šumava NP will implement strict anti- bark beetle management which means clear felling of all attacked stands. Natural zone was declared as inviolable. It is of interest that all income from logging flows to headquarters of the NP.

In the year 1999, director of Šumava NP asked Ministry of Environment for permission to "manage bark beetle" (i.e. to cut trees) also in natural zone. The crux of the problem is that the administration of the NP was wholly controlled by technocratic-minded foresters. They believe that they are able to rule the development of ecosystems better than nature.

The fragile balance of these ecosystems was constantly threatened under the Park administration's present clearcutting policy. Thanks of the intensive campaign, which included tens of specialists and scientists from the Czech Academy of Science, universities, and the WWF, and thanks particularly to two blockades of clearcutting by Czech NGOs minister of Environment recall previous director an established new director. He has entomological backgrounds and Šumava start changing step by step to the real national park

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Name of NP	Country	Founded in	IUCN Category	Area of NP (ha)	Area of buffer zone (ha)	Percentage of natural zone	Number of fragments of the natural zone
Bayerischer Wald	D	1970	II.	24.250	0	40	4
Białowiecki PN	PL	1921	II.	10.502	0	45	1
Kalkalpen	A	1997	II.	16.500	?	82	1
Donau - Auen NP	A	1997	II.	9.300	0	85	1
Berchtesgaden	D	1978	II.	21.000	0	67	1
Triglav NP	SLO	1961	II.	83.807	0	66	1
Tatranský NP	SK	1948	II.	74.111	36.574	67	7
Šumava NP	CZ	1991	II.	69.030	0	13	135
Krkonoše NP	CZ	1963	II.	36.300	18.400	12	13
Karkonoski PN	PL	1959	II.	5.578,5	11.226	30,78	1
Podyjí NP	CZ	1991	II.	6.260	3.000	34	1
Kampinoski PN	PL	1959	II.	36.562	1 km from borders	13	23
Šwiss NP	CH	1914	I.	16.887	0	100	1

Tab. 1: Selected European National Parks

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ZOBODAT - www.zobodat.at

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Artikel/Article: [What happened in the Sumava National Park? 243-244](#)