

Welcome to the Šumava National Park

Geographic and Natural Conditions

Location: The National Park is situated along the southwest borders of the Czech Republic with the Federal Republic of Germany and Austria covering an area extending from Železná Ruda in the NW Zvonková in the SE.

Area: 69 030 ha.

Altitude: From 600 m (the Otava River valley at Rejštejn) up to 1378 m (Plechý Mountain)

Climate: Depending on the altitude, this ranges from a milder humid climate (in the Vltava River valley area) to a cold humid climate. The region and mainly the plateaus enjoy plenty of rainfall; annual precipitation is between 800-1600 mm (of which almost half is in the form of snow). The average temperature is 2°C.

Geomorphology: The Šumava Mountains; a part of Bohemia Masive, were created, as a result of mountain-creating processes, 380-310 milion years ago; the collision of two continental slabs - Gondwany from the south and Laurusie from the north. They are made up mainly of granite, gneiss and mica schist. During Alpine folding the edge parts of the Bohemia Massive were lifted including prezent Šumava Mountains , which were further modified by erosion and climate changes. It is a woody mountain range with vast plateaus (Pláně), in the central part with occasional protruding heights and dřeplly eroded water stream valleys (Vydra and Křemelná Revers). At approximately the same altitude of 1000-1100 m there are attractive remains of glacial activities in the form of 8 glacial lakes enclosed by face moraines(the only phenomena of this type found in the Czech Rublic).

Hydrography: The Šumava Mountains create the main continental watershed between the North Sea and Black Sea. With its countless spring areas and peat bogs, rills and torrents , plus the major Vltava and Otava Revers, the Šumava region is one of the most significant headwaters.



Flora

The Šumava is a relatively large mountain chain, which includes a variety of landscape types. Differences in local natural conditions are then apparent in the composition of local flora and vegetative types. The dominating type is forest vegetation, which came to its present form during long-term development in the Post-Glacial Period. However, long-term forest management largely changed the natural character of these forest communities. At present, as a result of these changes, forest vegetation represents a large mosaic ranging from greatly changed unoriginal forest communities to almost natural remains of forest stands, which have been preserved in several Šumava localities (Boubín, Smrčina, Stožec, etc.). Extensive farming in deforested areas created non-forest areas. Only part of the original meadow and pasture communities has been preserved. Here, most of the protected and endangered species of Šumava flora are concentrated. The flora diversity of the Šumava region is not based on the high number or diversity of species, but the whole area is remarkable for its various combinations of miscellaneous elements and for the preservation of unique communities, primarily found in extreme habitats (peat bogs, lake cirques).



Fauna

The fauna of the Šumava region arrived at its present form during the Post-Glacial Period, and originally it was almost exclusively of woodland character. Most of the woodland animal species except for large predators (bears, lynxes, wolves, wildcat), have survived to the present. The upper parts of clear Šumava water courses are some of the most significant habitats of the otter in the Czech Republic. The unique fauna of invertebrate animals bound to upland peat bog communities includes a number of rare relic glacial species of northern origin. The Šumava region, as an extensive area, provides a suitable environment for large vertebrates. Populations of wood grouse and black grouse have also survived here. The only large predator permanently living today within the Šumava regions is the lynx.



Nature Trails

The Vydra River Canyon

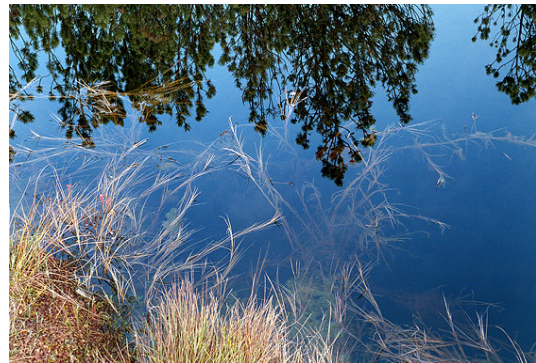
A 7 km long path along the Vydra River situated between Antýgl and Čeňkova Pila. A canyon valley with significant geomorphologic phenomena in Zone I of the NP.



Tříjezerní slat'

(The Three-Lake Peat Bog)

You can start from The Rokyta parking lot (4km) or from Modrava village (3,5km). The corduroy path goes through the peat bog. It is a typical peat bog with three peat lakes and rare vegetation (sundew, etc.)



Chalupská slat'

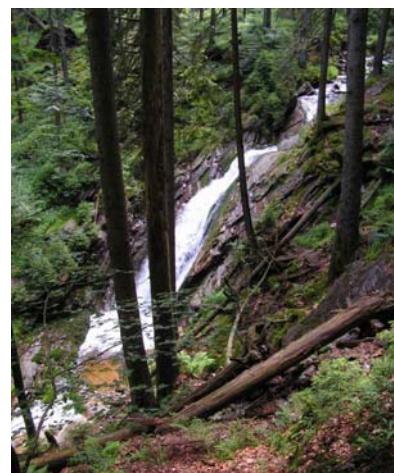
(The Chalupská Peat Bogs)

The peat bog is accessible by a 260 m long corduroy path with a view of the largest peat bog lake in the Czech Republic (1,3 ha, depth of 1,5 m), accessible from the Svinná Lada parking lot.



In the Šumava National Park and PLA:

Bílá strž - The highest waterfall in the Czech Republic (14m), accessible from Černé jezero (Blake lake) or from Hamry village.



Poledník

(1315 m above sea-level)-An observation tower on its top with extensive views of both parks. Access from Prášily, Srní and Modrava.



Černé jezero

The biggest and deepest Šumava lake with occurrence of rare quillwort *Isoetes lacustris*. Access from Špičák or Železná Ruda.



Čertovo jezero

The only Šumava lake draining into Danube River. The most acid lake. Access from Špičák to Železná Ruda.



Jezero Laka

It is the shallowest Šumava lake with floating islands. Access from Nová Hůrka.



Prášilské jezero

The surrounding damaged stands are gradually recovering. Access from Prášily.



Transport within the Territory

Hiking, Cycling or by Green Buses

The Šumava region offers an almost intact landscape where visitors can regain physical strength, and win back spiritual well being. The network of marked tourist, cycling and water tourist routes connecting places of interest help the visitors to get to know the countryside and its laws as well as the Šumava region's historical inheritance. Furthermore, they are accompanied by thematic nature trails. During the summer season, "Green Buses" provide mass transport within the Šumava National Park with possible connection to a similar system in the neighbouring Bavarian Forest National Park. The special "Approachable Šumava" program provides disabled people with alternative transport possibilities. Bus excursions organised outside main seasons will enable access to places closed to passenger cars. During the winter season the Šumava region is a paradise for cross-country skiing due to its numerous tracks. The additional network of small parking lots at track approaches completes parking lots in villages.



National Parks Mission

The main mission of the national park is not only to protect and preserve unique; untouched or slightly influenced larger natural areas which show off the diversity, beauty and power of nature, but also to be a basis for further sustainable life on Earth for its inhabitants. National parks, in accordance with international criteria, protect primarily undisturbed natural development (unlike natural parks) and they serve as:

1. Large natural "islands" and comparison areas to counter intensively exploited landscapes.
2. An area showing people the beauty, strength and "vulnerability" of nature and the ability to recognize natural patterns.
3. An area serving for the spiritual edification of man, and his physical and spiritual recreation.



Why do peatlands resemble the northern tundra and taiga?

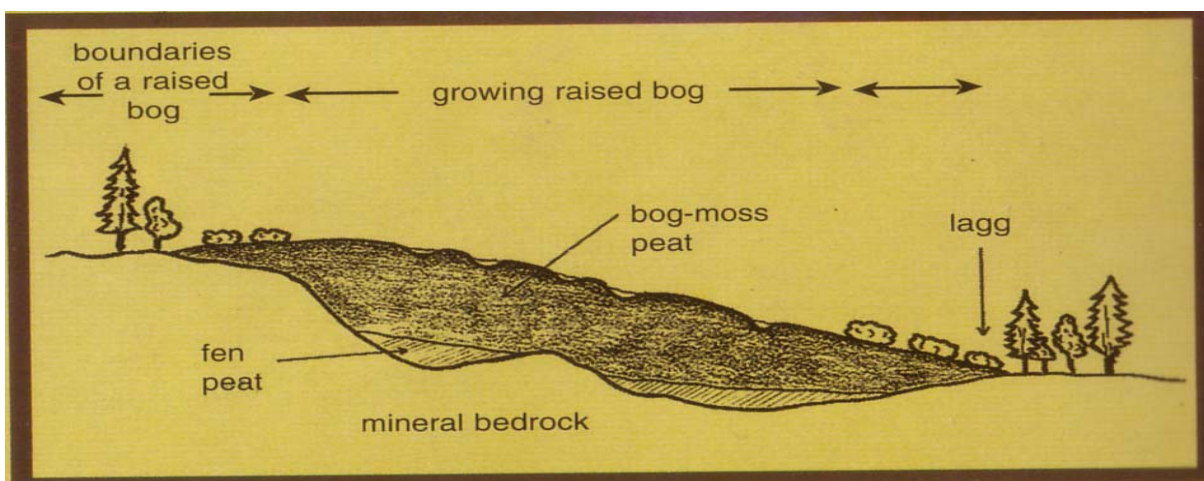
When, during a walk through the Šumava landscape, we find ourselves on a mire (a living peatland), we feel as if in a different world. Tall spruce trees are replaced by their dwarf and twisted forms, and of other trees only pine and birch prevail. Also, the vegetation proves remarkably different form that of the surrounding meadows and



pastures. Thus mires remind us rather of the more northern areas of our hemisphere. Most of the Šumava mires started developing in the Late Glacial Period, some 10-15 thousand years ago. The vegetation of the tundra, resistant to the cold, was pushed south to our latitudes by the advancing ice-sheet from the north and thus became common in Šumava. The severe conditions that prevail in mires have prevented the forest from encroaching too much, and enabled cold-loving plant species to survive here. Many such species are today seen as living reminders of the glacial period and as such these survivors are called glacial relicts.

What is a mire and does it develop?

A mire is a remarkable natural feature - it can form in the surrounding of springs, or places where water is retained for long periods. The base of every mire is formed of layers of organic mud (fen peat or bog-moss peat), created by the dead litter of wetland plant species.



The types of peatbog in Šumava

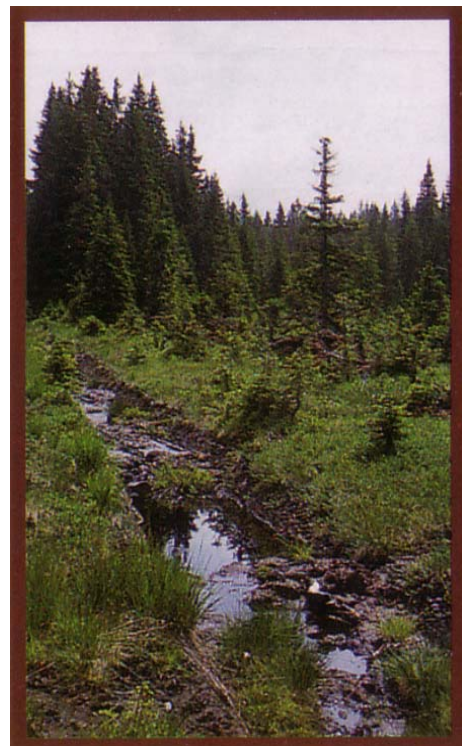
Thanks to its relatively flat relief, and humid and cold climate, Šumava is ideal for the



development of peatbogs. Most of the peatbogs are found in the spring areas of plateaus (these will be high plateaus bogs), and in bottoms of the flat valleys of the Křemelná and Vltava rivers (these are valley raised bogs). High plateaus bogs are characterised by their bog-lakes and being covered by a bog type of dwarf pine *Pinus x pseudopumilio*. They appear at altitudes of about 1000 m asl. and are typical in the area of Modrava. To this type also belong Jezerní slat' and Tříjezerní slat' (slat' meaning a peatbog of this type), both bogs being accessible along board walks. Valley raised bogs are older, they generally will not have boglakes, and their surface is more stable and less quaking. They are often totally overgrown with bog pine (*Pinus rotundata*), along with birch (*Betula*) and, in the lagg areas, pine (*Pinus sylvestris*). They appear at altitudes of about 800 m asl. An example of a valley raised bog is Mrtvý luh which, with a surface area of over 300 ha, is the largest of all Czech peatbogs.

Preserved them and we save our selves

People always feared swampy ground. Such shaky ground was of no use or benefit to humankind and only formed a source of troublesome insects. And so man started to drain these so-called wastelands - reclaiming swamps and mires of agriculture or forestry. With increasing knowledge, however, we now start to see completely unique natural value of mires and try to preserve them. Unfortunately, only now, at a time when the majority of wetlands, including mires, have been destroyed for even, are we discovering the irreplaceable role of wetlands in the water regime of the landscape - as well as their influence on climate and important nutrient



cycling.

Zonation

Šumava NP was established in 1991. The National Park is divided into three zones, and the Protected Landscape Area (PLA) is divided into four zones. The strictest protection measures are applied in Zone I, the most valuable parts of the National Park (peat box, original mountains spruce



stands, etc.) or small protected areas in PLA. Here, the visitors has the role merely of a silent observe. Also, the picking of forest fruits or mushrooms is forbidden here, as they are a natural part of the countryside.

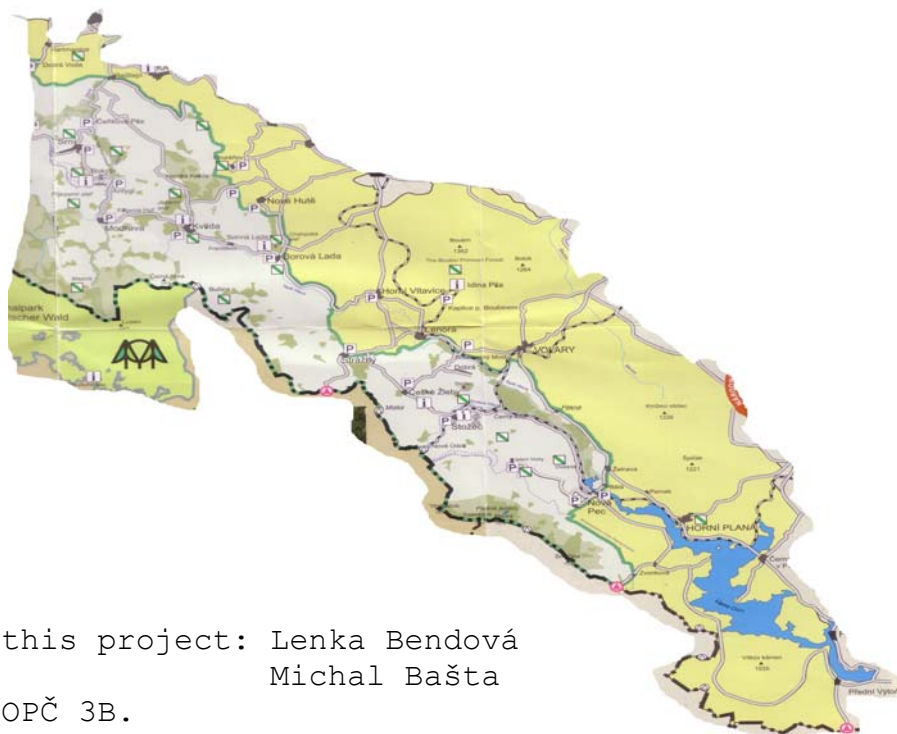
Problems of Šumava NP

Since the 1990s Šumava NP has been facing the problem with the bark beetle that is destroying the spruce forests very quickly. The problem is that the artificially planted spruce monocultures are not resistant to the bark beetle the mixed forests. The question is how to deal with the disaster. First there were two different opinions: economists and politicians who wanted to cut down the damaged trees and sell the wood against biologists and ecological organizations (such as DUHA) which wanted to keep the first zones without intervention and let the nature work because the large clearances aren't resistant to the wind, so cutting down causes even bigger deforestation than the beetle. Finally the specialists have won and cutting down in the first zones has been stopped. The only right way is to respect the beetle disaster as a part of wildlife and leave the dying trees in the forest. Sometimes it is sad to look at the dry dead trees, but death is a part of life and you can enjoy a lot of young little trees growing from the dead ones. The rotting wood supports them with all necessary nutrients, so in the place of the old spruce forests a new, mixed, much healthier forest is growing now...



The Region's History, Sights and Settlement

Man has been contributing to forming the landscape since approximately the end of the 12th century (the first colonization). Until the 18th century, the whole area was covered by intact primeval forests which were a part of the border woodland. Nonetheless, since olden times frequented frontier crossing have existed here (e. g. "The Golden Path", documented as early as in the 11th century). Further colonization accompanied by glass manufacturing, logging and pastoral development (17th - 18th century) had a crucial impact on the formation of current forested and forest-free Šumava ecosystems. At present, there are 7 settlements within the Šumava NP, permanently occupied by 1 000 inhabitants; on the other hand, the number of visitors is many times increasing during both summer and winter season.



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