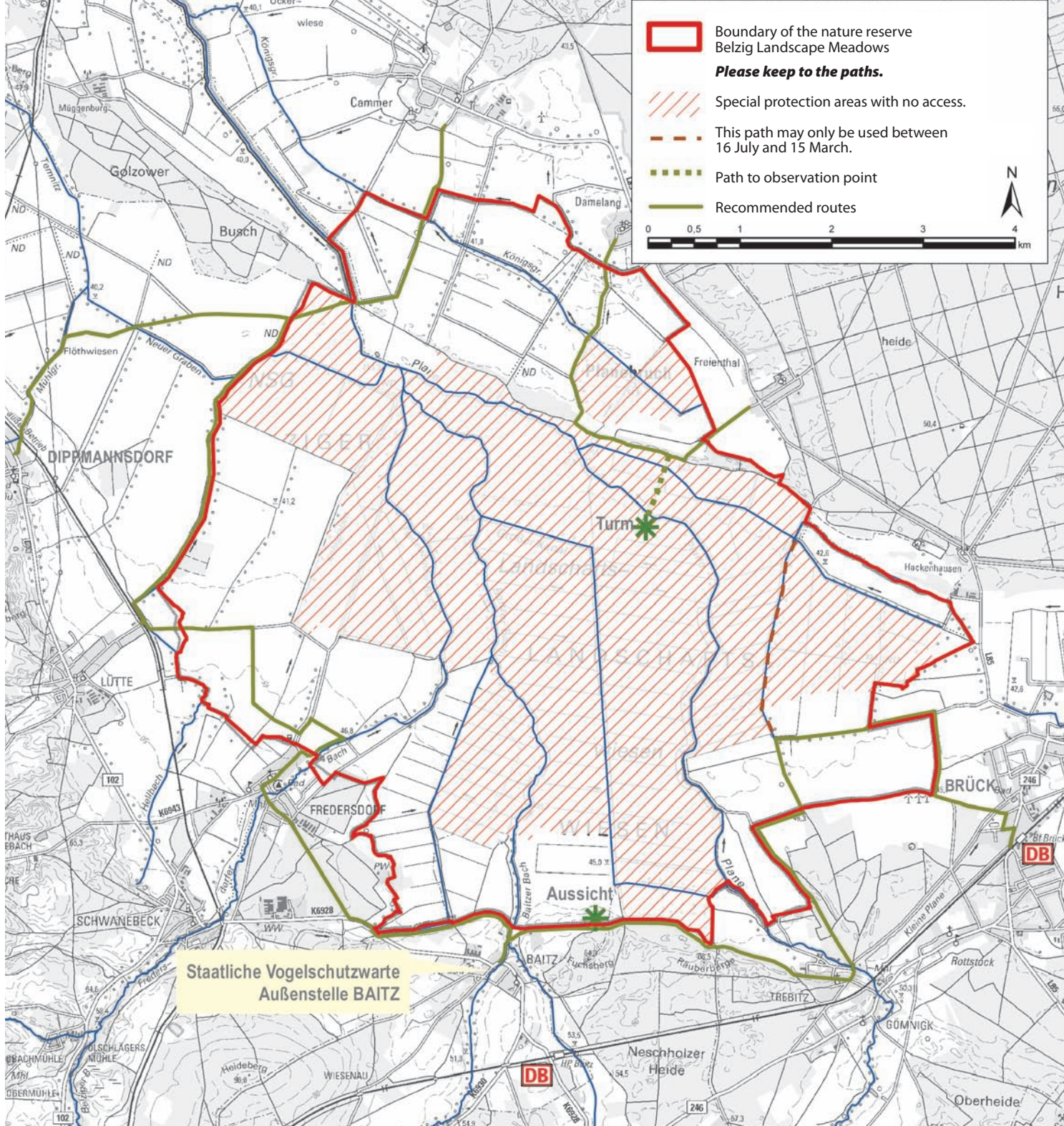




## Walk Recommendations and Observation Points

To enjoy the spectacular and unique display of mating great bustards in spring it is best to use the observation point ("Turm", see map) at the edge of the "Belzig Landscape Meadows". It is open all year round and you do not need to register. Access to the observation point is at your own risk.

The Bird Conservation Centre and park rangers offer guided tours during the mating season. You can find more details about these events on the High Fläming Nature Park website ([www.hoher-flaeming-naturpark.de](http://www.hoher-flaeming-naturpark.de)) or in the local press. All year around the European Cycle Route R1 between Baitz and Brück/Trebitz offers impressive views of the low-lying, approximately 44 km<sup>2</sup> Belzig Landscape Meadows. During the winter season there are excellent opportunities to observe thousands of migrating geese and ducks resting here for stop-over. At the local Baitz field office of the Bird Conservation Centre of Brandenburg there is a small but lovely exhibition of the Great Bustard and other zoological exhibits (mounted birds and mammals) presented in a life-like environment. Rangers give guided tours through the exhibition upon request.



little owls

## Hints for friends of nature

- » Parking facilities are available in the nearby villages. It is not allowed to steer motor vehicles inside the nature reserve.
- » To enjoy nature please remain on the designated pathways.
- » Please keep noise to a low level and don't scare any animals. For observation purposes please bring a decent pair of binoculars or a spotting scope.
- » Please keep dogs on leads at all times.
- » Leave all plants and animals where they are.
- » Camp fires, tents, bathing and ice-skating are not permitted.
- » Please do not bring any remote-controlled vehicles or drones.
- » Please do not leave anything behind that you have brought with you.



## Contact:

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**Society for the Protection of Great Bustards**  
Please also visit the website of the associated NGO Förderverein Großtrappenschutz e.V. [Society for the Protection of Great Bustards], become a supporting member or adopt a Great Bustard chick: [www.info.grosstrappe.de](http://www.info.grosstrappe.de)

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Map: Data on nature reserve administration of High Fläming Nature Park on the basis of: LGB,  
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Nationale  
Naturlandschaften



The High Fläming Nature Park is part of "Nationale Naturlandschaften" (national natural landscapes), the umbrella body for German national parks, biosphere reserves and nature reserves, operated by EUROPARC Deutschland e.V. [www.europarc-deutschland.de](http://www.europarc-deutschland.de).

**LFU**  
Landesamt für Umwelt

**Naturwacht**  
Brandenburg



Habitat for great bustards and other species.

# Belzig Landscape Meadows

Naturpark  
Hoher Fläming





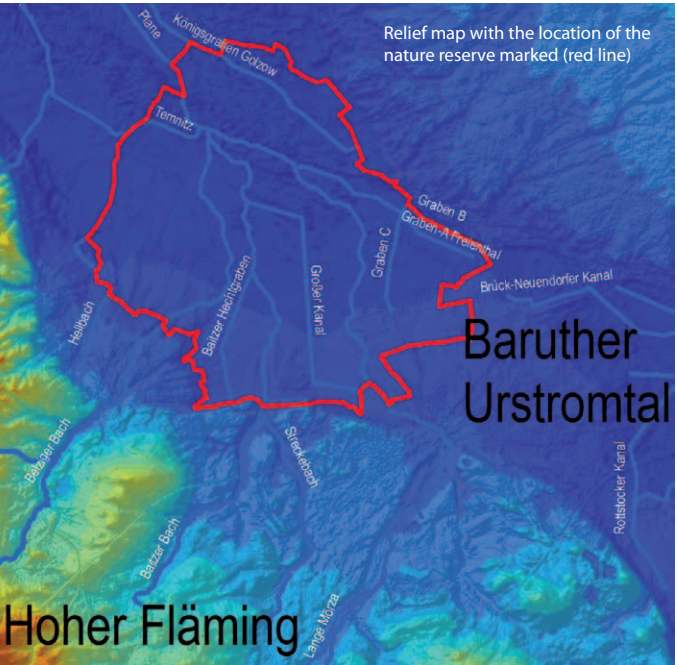


### A marsh along the mountain chain ...

Approximately 21,000 years ago, melting water from the Weichselian ice age poured out at widths of up to eight kilometres through the ancient glacial valley (Baruth Urstromtal) north of High Fläming hills and formed a plain. The light sands were scattered throughout the post-glacial tundra landscape and formed typical inland dunes at the valley's edges, which can still be seen today.

Constant run-off of groundwater from the surrounding plateaus turned the valley into marshland. It was possible for plants well adapted to high water levels, such as peat moss, sedges, reeds and alders, to flourish. Over the millennia, large areas of dead plant mass accumulated and formed peat layers. This is how the percolation mire developed - a rarity in the Federal State of Brandenburg. The mire was only permeated by the clear and still freely meandering small streams named Plane, Belziger Bach and Fredersdorfer Bach.

After the wood was cleared, the construction of an artificial drainage system significantly lowered the groundwater, so that the formerly inaccessible areas could now be farmed with heavy agricultural machinery. This caused rapid peat decomposition, lowering the



### The Belzig Landscape Meadows

It's hard to imagine that, until around 300 years ago, the vast expanse of the Belzig Landscape Meadows was still dominated by impenetrable woods. Trees and shrubs grew on wet ground in an ancient glacial valley. It was comparatively recently that forests were cleared and an artificial drainage system was built for agricultural use in the former borderlands to Saxony. Nowadays, the degraded percolation mire with near-natural streams is used for extensive grazing, fallowing or sometimes intense arable farming. In the year 2005 the habitats of numerous rare bird species and vegetation types have been put under protection on an area of 4435 hectares forming the nature reserve of Belzig Landscape Meadows. The Belzig Landscape Meadows is one of the last habitats for the endangered Great Bustard (*Otis tarda*) in central Europe and also harbours other rare bird species. For this reason it also enjoys the status of Special Protection Area under European bird conservation legislation. The State Bird Conservation Centre of Brandenburg, Baitz field office, and the park rangers of the High Fläming Nature Park are responsible for this protection and are more than happy to provide further information to you. Visitors also have a strong obligation to protect the area successfully. Please keep to the official paths while enjoying your natural surroundings and do not interfere with vulnerable areas.

ground surface by up to 80cm (2 ½ feet) over the last century. This process is somewhat decelerated in the most ecologically valuable areas where water levels are high and agricultural use is low. The winter floods offer ideal protection for the marsh as well as for migrating birds such as nordic geese.



### The Key to Success: An Abundance of Insects

The great bustard is one of the heaviest flying birds on earth. Inhabiting open grassland, great bustard arrived in the Middle Ages when forests were cleared and large areas of farmland appeared. The "Brandenburg ostrich" colonised the damp lowlands of Brandenburg in the 18th century and has lived here since. Populations have decreased drastically since the 1950s as a result of more intensive farming. One of the last three populations remaining in Germany has survived in the Belzig Landscape Meadows. After numbers of Great Bustard in Brandenburg had decreased from 3,000 in the 1940s to 57 birds in the mid-1990s, great efforts were made to secure the remaining habitat. By 2016, there were 232 great bustards living in Germany, 72 of them in the Belzig Landscape Meadows. Chemical fertilisers and pesticides were banned over large areas, so that a high level of floral and insect diversity developed.



Great bustard chicks rely on precisely this type of protein-rich nutrition. To maintain a stable population of this still critically endangered species it is necessary to artificially hatch some of the first clutches of eggs and elaborately reintroduce the chicks into the wild. Adult great bustards readily feed on winter oilseed rape grown on the periphery of the nature reserve. Also many other of the approximately 170 bird species accounted for in the area, such as the great grey shrike, hoopoe, nightjar, little owl and lapwing, profit from the environmentally-friendly agricultural activity.

Small farmland birds once typical across the country, such as the whinchat, yellow wagtail, meadow pipit and skylark, can also be seen here today. Farmers receive compensation for a possible loss of income following agri-environmental measures and contractual natural conservation.



### Refreshing – Fläming's Small Streams

The unspoilt sections of the streams Belziger, Fredersdorfer and Baitzer Bach are of special value. These small streams keep a low temperature even in summer and are still home to the European otter, brown trout, brook lamprey, loach and gudgeongude. Banded demoiselles and common clubtails can be seen near the banks. Moreover the beaver has returned here.

Renaturation concepts have been developed to restore the good ecological condition of the more regulated stream sections. For example, some of the backwaters have already been rearranged as rock ramps and fish ladders



### Of Predators and Prey

The inconspicuous weasel is joined by numerous European hares and European roe deer in the Belzig Landscape Meadows. The latter form part of the diet of a grey wolf pack living on the neighbouring military training ground at Lehnin. Electronic fences have been especially upgraded to keep wolves away from livestock.

The grey wolf does not pose a danger to bird wildlife, but smaller predators such as red fox, raccoon and raccoon dog do so. These latter three threaten the nowadays very rare groundnesting birds by predation on their eggs and offspring. For this reason, two protected areas have been set up to effectively keep out these smaller mammal predators. Great bustards living in the wild often choose these very areas to breed and rear their chicks in peace.

