

Drösing (Lower Austria): hotspot of wild bee diversity in the east of Austria

The municipality of Drösing is supplying rare species of wild bees with a communal area as a habitat: in cooperation with the NHM Vienna, the area is being redesigned to meet the needs of these species and encourage their settling.

Many wild bee species prefer their locations to be dry and warm. The eastern part of Austria with its Pannonian climatic elements is thus home to an extremely large diversity of species. In the course of a research project of NHM Vienna in the nature reserve “In den Sandbergen” in Drösing, which was completed in 2019, experts even discovered two extraordinary species: *Ammobates punctatus*, a rare cleptoparasitic sand specialist, and *Icteranthidium laterale* (carder bees) which had previously been found only once in Austria. These interesting finds also aroused the interest of Josef Kohl, mayor of Drösing. “I am delighted to learn that our community is home to rare wild bee species,” the mayor enthused. After contacting the NHM, he quickly decided to make a communal area available so as to give these species a larger habitat.

“I think it’s great that insects can reclaim their habitat in this way,” says Dr. Dominique Zimmermann of NHM Vienna. Together with Sabine Schoder, MSc, she will optimise an area to accommodate the needs of rare wild bee species over the next two years. A suitable site has already been selected at a small lake (Liliensee) near Drösing. In the course of the project, the experts will provide additional nesting sites in the form of a clay wall, exposed sand areas and a deadwood spot. Regional plants will be planted in order to supply the wild bees with an appropriate choice of blossoms. The project team considers it very important to keep the population informed by providing information panels explaining the special features of the site and the wild bee fauna as well as to encourage them to design their own gardens in a nature-friendly way.

This project also represents a step towards curbing the progressive loss of habitats worldwide. Every day, nature is being deprived of more land, in Austria as elsewhere, due to ground-sealing and intensified land use.

The project is financially supported by the “Give Bees a Chance” initiative of ARCOTEL Hotels. If hotel guests who stay more than one night voluntarily renounce having their room cleaned, the hotel will make a contribution to support local initiatives that are committed to the protection and conservation of bees.

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