

The Feistritz gorge near Herberstein – an eldorado for xylobiontic beetles

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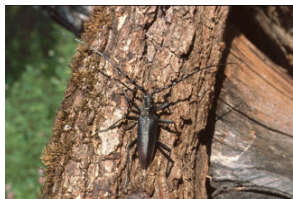


In 2003 the Feistritz gorge area near Herberstein (Oststeiermark district) comprising 120 ha, has been declared as **Austria's first „European Refuge“**.

About in 1980 some rare relict beetle species were discovered and at that time the importance of the area as a nature reservation has been highlighted in expert contributions. In 1991 a purposeful scientific stocktaking of the beetle fauna begun. The results exceed all

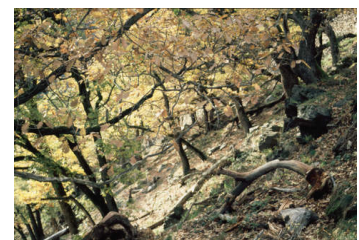
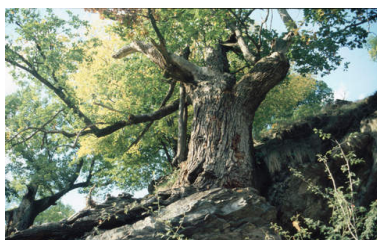
expectations:

Four of the five beetle species protected by European Union law and occurring in the Steiermark were found living in the area: The **Great capricorn beetle** *Cerambyx cerdo*, the **Stag beetle** *Lucanus cervus*, the **Scarlet beetle** *Cucujus cinnaberinus* and the **Hermit beetle** *Osmoderma eremita* which is a high priority species. A total of 2124 species was found. 130 of these are listed in Austria's red data books (State: 15.07.2016).



The singular combination of characteristics of the geology, the climate and the vegetation of this habitat is responsible for the high species diversity:

- the Feistritz gorge cuts through an apophysis of an crystalline mountain range
- the area is situated at the margin to the tertiary basins to the north
- the peripheral location with already pannonic and mediterranen influences, locked toward the north
- the up to 260 m high scarp, causing different small climatic conditions
- the variety of the vegetation on a small area – ranging from moist ravine forest to extremely dry nutrient poor silicate-grasslands
- and as a main factor the centuries old broad-leafed forest stands containing a high amount of dead wood on the southern slopes of the Feistritz.



28 species of the list of Germany's 115 pristine forest relict species (J. MÜLLER et al., 2005: Urwald-Reliktarten – Xylobionte Käfer als Indikatoren für Strukturqualität und Habitattradition) were proven in the protected area so far:

<i>Aeletes atomarius</i>	<i>Dicerca berlinensis</i>	<i>Trox perrisii</i>
<i>Epierus comptus</i>	<i>Eurythyrea quercus</i>	<i>Osmoderma eremita</i>
<i>Ampedus cardinalis</i>	<i>Teredus cylindricus</i>	<i>Aesalus scarabaeoides</i>
<i>Ampedus brunnicornis</i>	<i>Eustrophus dermestoides</i>	<i>Megopis scabricornis</i>
<i>Brachygonus dubius</i>	<i>Allecula rhenana</i>	<i>Cerambyx cerdo</i>
<i>Ischnodes sanguinicollis</i>	<i>Mycetochara flavipes</i>	<i>Rhyncolus reflexus</i>
<i>Megapenthes lugens</i>	<i>Neomida haemorrhoidalis</i>	<i>Rhyncolus sculpturatus</i>
<i>Podeonius acuticornis</i>	<i>Platydema dejeanii</i>	<i>Gasterocercus depressirostris</i>
<i>Elater ferrugineus</i>	<i>Corticeus fasciatus</i>	
<i>Lacon querceus</i>	<i>Tenebrio opacus</i>	

The Feistritz gorge near Herberstein ranks among the most important reserves for European xylobiontic beetles.