

Forest. Your Nature.



Schutzgemeinschaft Deutscher Wald
Forest is our thing.

The SDW advocates

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About a third of Germany's area is covered in forest – and that's a good thing! After all, the forest is not only an important habitat for animals and plants, it also offers so much more. The forest protects us against natural catastrophes such as landslides and flooding, it provides us with the sustainable raw material of wood and offers us a space where we can relax and fill up on strength and calm – any time we want.



The forest is our commitment

Photo: pixabay.com

We began taking action to protect the forest as far back as 1947. Since then, forest enthusiasts throughout the country have continually strived for the maintenance and the health of our forests. This careful and conservative use of the forest ensures that the basis of life for people, animals and plants is safeguarded. We convey this message through our focus on forest education and public relations work, and thus amend our society's alienation from nature. We are also active in nature conservation with numerous practical campaigns such as tree planting, the the campaign "Saving the Chestnut" and species protection programmes.

Who are we?



The Schutzgemeinschaft Deutscher Wald (Conservation association for German Forests – SDW) has around 25,000 members throughout Germany, for whom the forest is something very special, something worth protecting. There are numerous federal state associations in addition to the national association. Many of our members also volunteer in one of the 350 local SDW groups. In these, they conduct tours, maintain information stands and exhibits, support the Waldjugendspiele (Youth forest games), conserve biotopes or are involved on a political level for the forest.

As a recognised nature conservation association, we advocate the forest practically and politically. Therefore, the SDW may participate in all planning that may impact the forest and nature. We integrate forest-friendly solutions into our assessments. One further task is the constructive collaboration for the benefit of the forest in many important committees, both regionally and nationally.



We also have many active young people. Our youth organisation, the Deutsche Waldjugend, engages for the forest in 400 local groups. The focus is on practical nature conservation work as well as forest education work. The nature-conservation organisation carries out its project and work on a voluntary basis.

What is our aim?

We want to make sure that the forest is fit and healthy. The three branches of sustainability – economy, ecology and society – can and should be implemented equally in and with the forest. This is the only way to successfully safeguard the forest with all its facets and functions for future generations. We also want to increase knowledge and understanding for the forest, so we are espe-

cially active in the area of forest education. We provide facts and information

about the forest in a child-friendly way in many projects. Professional training also provides teachers in schools and preschools with factual ideas for enabling children and young people to experience nature. Our information and educational materials also facilitate the dissemination of knowledge in the form of structured lessons.

What can you do?

You can give the forest a voice with your membership. The more members the Schutzgemeinschaft Deutscher Wald has, the more political presence it will have so that the forest gets the representation it deserves. Membership is possible in both the national association and the state associations. With an active membership, in which you are also practically active, you provide support to local SDW groups. Of course, we also warmly welcome donations, with which you can support specific, earmarked projects or help promote the work of the SDW in general.

This is what we work towards:

- Sustainable forestry that cares for and maintains our forests
- The protection of our forests and urban trees through policies
- Making children and adults aware of nature in the context of education for sustainable development



Photo: G. Hein



Photo: Landesforsten.RLP.de/Markus Hoffman

Education in the forest for all!

Forest education has been of particular importance to the SDW since its founding. School forests were quickly established, youth camps organised in the woods and forest youth hostels and “forest houses” opened. Soon after, we founded our youth association, the Deutsche Waldjugend. In the following years, forest education developed into an instrument to convey knowledge about the forest and its functions.

Today we go one step further: the forest has been given an additional function – one of education. The forest as a place of learning is ideal for illustrating sustainability in all its dimensions and applying the ideas of the education for sustainable development.



Photos: B. Kohler

For schoolchildren

Education for sustainable development has the goal of recognising and challenging our own actions. Based on one example, skills are learned that can also be applied to other areas of life. The forest offers the perfect background for this.

As a UN Decades project for education for sustainable development, the SOKO Wald was critically acclaimed. Since its inception in 2011, this project continues to provide valuable content to students in primarily 5th and 6th year classes. In it, pupils experience the forest in the middle of the city with all senses and discover it in their own living environments.

Experiencing the forest in the classical sense is made possible during the Waldjugendspiele. These sports events are organised by the SDW, in collaboration with some federal states. Along a course in the forest with 10 to 15 stations, children are given tasks and are asked forest ecosystem questions which they have to solve using observation, instinct and skill.



For children and young people

The forest is not only a place of learning but also one of adventure and fun. To convey this, we approach children and young people with various leisure activities. There are a number of options in the Waldjugend in particular. Children and youths between the ages of 8 and 27 get together at the regular meetups. Through practical work in and with nature, they learn how to treat it and gain a lot of knowledge. In tent camps during holidays, social skills are also developed, and a sense of community fostered.

For educators

The opportunity to experience nature is a pre-requisite for handling it with respect. The ability to transfer knowledge and developing skills through one's own actions are decisive in this. With our educational training and materials, we provide educators specialist information and ideas for implementation so they are able to teach forest-related knowledge in an age-appropriate way.

In our training courses “Nix wie raus in den Wald!” (Out into the forest we go!) and “Die Klimaköner” (The climate masters), we combine theory and practice. Specialist lectures provide the basis, practitioners report on their experiences and then participants try it out for themselves. This way, complex topics such as the forest ecosystem or its interrelation with the climate can be worked through and taught in a way appropriate to the target group.

For forest educators



There are many different options for collaboration with the SDW for trained and certified forest educators. Waldmobile (forest-mobiles), attended by forest-educators, have been made available by many state associations. The Waldmobil supports educational work on the school playground, in the city or in the forest with a wide range of equipment and learning amenities.

For well-founded forest-educational work, we also collaborate with specialists in our educational projects and seminars. For this reason, the SDW connects these specialists within forest education networks in many state associations. These networks mediate exchange between individual forest educators, SDW members and with other cooperation partners such as the state forestry authorities. This guarantees the high quality of our forest educational projects.

In order to promote the exchange and the qualification of those interested in forest education, the SDW organises specialist seminars on forest education. These offer the latest findings from science, opportunities to network and practical ideas for implementation.

We support:

- Space in teaching curricula for experiencing nature
- Well-founded forest-educational knowledge for teaching personnel
- Awareness of the forest, sustainability and nature conservation in and with nature



A young child with light hair, wearing a blue and yellow jacket and dark pants, stands in a forest holding a sapling. The child is smiling and looking towards the camera. Behind the child, a large pile of gardening tools, including shovels and axes with wooden handles, is scattered on the ground. The background consists of tall, thin trees and a dense forest. The lighting is bright, suggesting a sunny day.

**We're planting
the future!**

Photo: Hans Miedl

Planting trees increases our forest cover and brings green to our cities and communities. It also has great symbolical value, as it demonstrates doing something now that will benefit future generations. Planting trees has been part of our activity since the founding of the SDW. In one of the largest participatory events in the environmental sector in Germany, the “Day of the Tree” on 25th April, more than 100,000 trees are planted every year. This ranges from the planting of seedlings in forests and parks to installing large, individual trees in cities and along boulevards. Many plantings are only possible with the support of sponsors, who make a sustainable contribution to our domestic forests. Trees are also planted more and more for special occasions, for example to mark births, baptisms or weddings. Our SDW groups offer special promotions in this regard throughout Germany.



Photo: pixabay.com

Day of the Tree

Day of the Tree has developed into one of the largest and most successful participatory events. Be it a tree in a park, on a boulevard or a seedling in a reforestation area, planting a tree is always a gesture for the future.

25th of April every year marks the day of celebration for trees by the SDW in collaboration with cities, forestry agencies and municipalities. The tree of the year is often planted on this special day.



Photo: Peter Edel

Event and sponsored trees

Special events deserve special commemoration. As growing gifts for the future, trees are becoming ever more popular for births, baptisms or weddings. Many SDW offer family and friends the opportunity to plant a tree for their loved one or the newlyweds. A community event can often grow out of this. Families grow together into the future and at the same time make a contribution to our environment.

School forests

School forests help to promote the appreciation of nature to children and young people. Through practical activities, insight into ecological interrelations and identification with “their” forest, the children come to know the woods and thus their environment as something valuable and worth protecting.

Three trees for German unity

2015 was the 25th anniversary of the reunification of the two Germanys. On this occasion, the Schutzgemeinschaft Deutscher Wald supported growing memorial sites comprising three trees as commemoration of this important, peaceful event.

More than 270 towns and communities took part. Three trees were planted in each of the locations in the form of an equilateral triangle with sides each 10 metres in length. A beech symbolises the West, a pine symbolises the East German states and an oak symbolises the reunited Germany. The growth of these trees documents the growth, resurgence, transformation and merging of the once divided country.

We support:

- The widespread establishment of school forests
- More trees in our towns and municipalities
- An increase in the proportion of forested area in Germany

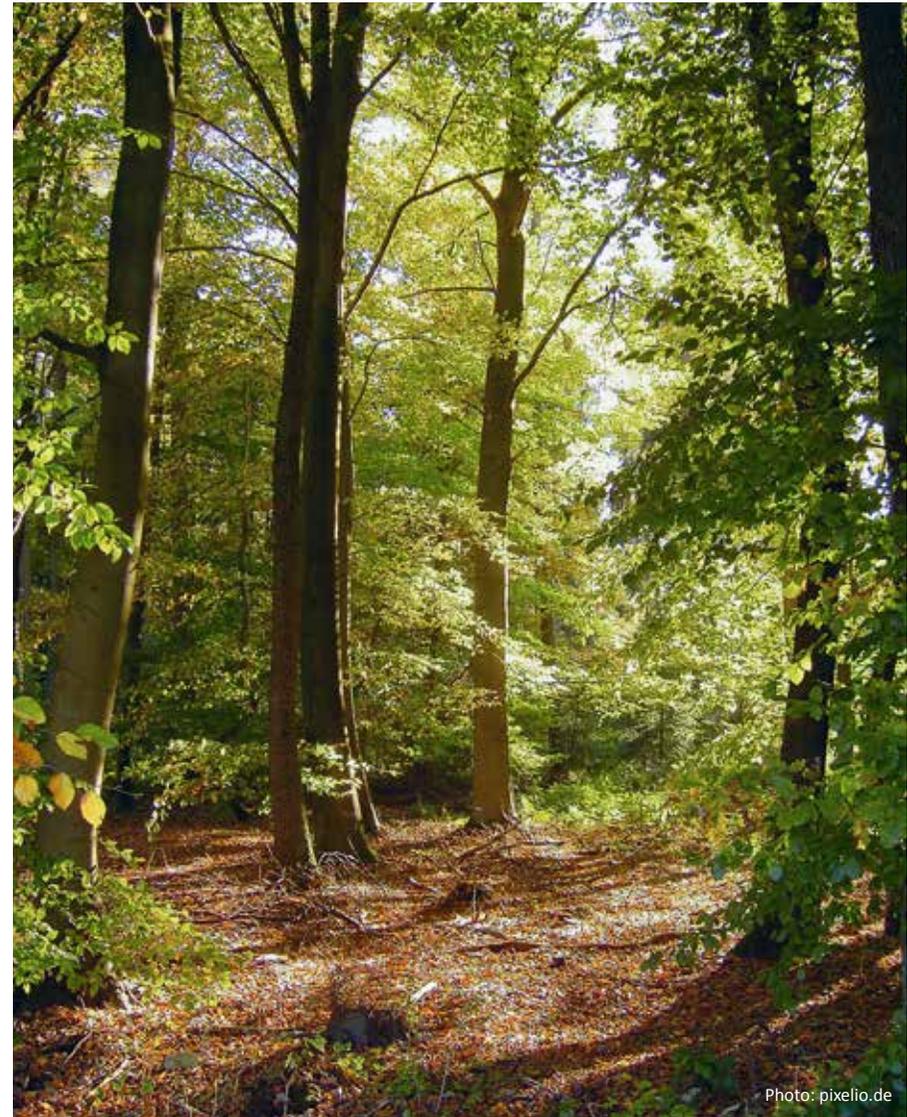


Photo: pixelio.de



Photo: Michael Seefeld



Photo: Johannes Artl

Local projects

The SDW groups carry out numerous projects across Germany. These range from forest-educational projects and the maintenance of various biotopes to the management of museums and other facilities. Operation is often based on collaboration with other associations and institutions. These are often educational facilities such as forest youth hostels and museums, but also educational forest trails. A large part of these projects is only possible thanks to the work of volunteers and donations, which make it possible to offer educational services free of charge or affordably to schools and children/youth groups. This diverse array of projects allows the SDW to inspire people from all social groups to cultivate a deeper appreciation for the forest.

The birds of prey centre in Cologne

Sick or injured birds of prey and owls are nursed back to health in the Cologne area in the SDW Cologne's birds of prey centre in Gut Leidenhausen. Staff and volunteers have been taking care of the feathered patients since 1967 in order to release them again into the wild. This makes the birds of prey centre in Cologne one of the oldest facilities of its kind in Germany. The work of the SDW thus makes an important contribution to species conservation and, in some cases, safeguarding the population of endangered birds. In addition to the birds of prey centre, Gut Leidenhausen also offers a wildlife reserve, a fruit museum, a forest school and a forest museum.

The nature conservation tower near Berlin

Since 1990, many helping hands have turned the former border observation tower near Hohen Neuendorf into a meet-up place. Together with a great number of schoolchildren, the SDW state association for Berlin, SDW Oberhavel and the Deutsche Waldjugend Berlin-Brandenburg have planted over 80,000 trees in the meantime. The tower truly deserves its designation today as a nature conservation tower. Numerous forest-educational events take place on the grounds every year. Children and young people can also explore a range of biotopes here.

The WÄLDERHAUS in Hamburg

The SDW has made a special name for itself in Hamburg with the WÄLDERHAUS (forest house). Alternating exhibitions and numerous events convey the connections between the forest, the environment and sustainability. WÄLDERHAUS's location is a particular draw, as it is situated in the heart of Hamburg and is easily accessible to the city's population. By combining its exhibition space with a hotel and a restaurant, the building is also of great interest to a large number of tourists, who are impacted by the forest themed setting.



The UmweltAkademie in Rhineland-Palatinate

Seminars, courses, interdisciplinary conferences – the training and professional development program of the UmweltAkademie (Environment Academy) is diverse. The goal of this facility operated by the SDW state association of Rhineland-Palatinate is to consolidate environment and nature conservation knowledge, as well as experiential education to promote scientific discussion and aid in decision-making. The institution has been promoting exchange between specialists and interested parties since 1979. In collaboration with state scientific institutions, the facility also carries out its own research projects.

The Woodgrouse Project in Thuringia

The constant decline in suitable habitats and increasing populations of predators has led to a decrease in the population of woodgrouse for many years. For this reason, there have been efforts in Thuringia since as far back as 1970 to protect the populations of this endangered bird. Germany's only woodgrouse breeding centre, run by the state forestry administration, can be found in Langenschade. It was established in 2012 in cooperation with SDW Thuringia in order to make an important contribution to species conservation.

The Ammersee trail in the Bavarian Alpine foothills

The Ammersee is a unique natural area and an important leisure area for the populations of Munich and Augsburg. In order to foster appreciation for nature in this common area of interaction, the SDW state association of Bavaria has developed an educational trail, highlighting how to treat nature with consideration. Using information boards, interactive objects and a website, the SDW informs about the unique natural and cultural landscape of the Ammersee region.



We advocate:

- Involvement of interested citizens
- Scientifically-based projects in the areas of forest education and nature conservation
- Widespread services for young and old



A close-up photograph of oak leaves and a tree trunk. The leaves are in various shades of green, from bright yellow-green to deep forest green. The tree trunk is dark and textured. The background is a soft, out-of-focus green.

Competent forest conservation!

Photo: Philipp Schomaker

Our forest is an important and delicate ecosystem. Air pollution, fertiliser run-off, soil sealing and fragmentation of the landscape by our infrastructure strongly afflict the forest and its inhabitants. We see it as our duty to do something for the protection of the forest.

Numerous employees and volunteers promote the forest locally in the various SDW groups. Alongside the planting of trees, they undertake dialogue with politicians and other responsible bodies and take a stand for the forest when construction projects threaten it. A large number of SDW nature conservation projects are also underway across Germany. These include species conservation programmes and wild animal rehabilitation centres as well as projects for the promotion of rare tree species.

Nature conservation projects

Be it breeding programmes for European bison, hatcheries for woodgrouse, rehabilitation centres for injured or orphaned wild animals or fruit museums for the preservation of rare varieties – the SDW’s engagement is diverse. Its work focuses on species conservation programmes for the protection and growth of endangered animal species populations as well as landscape management work. With united strength, the regional SDW groups maintain forest edges, establish fruit orchards or restore streams. In doing so, they make a contribution to the conservation of rare animal and plant species.

Saving the Chestnut!

The horse chestnut has been under threat from the horse chestnut leaf miner since the beginning of the 1990s. The moth’s caterpillars eat their way through the leaves of the tree, leading to the premature shedding of the leaves. In order to halt the rapid spread, the SDW calls annually for a day of action.

The widespread collection of fallen leaves makes it more difficult for the leaf miner to survive the winter. With this effective measure, every individual can contribute to the conservation of horse chestnut trees in cities. Carrying out this activity, many committed people participate every year on the second Saturday in November to secure the future of these beautiful urban trees.



The Deutsche Alleenstrasse (German boulevard route)

The Deutsche Alleenstrasse is the flagship project for tree-lined boulevards in Germany. It runs directly through Germany from Rügen to Lake Constance. The aim of the route is to protect existing boulevards and create new ones. After all, boulevards like this are a unique natural and cultural asset. They provide important habitat in otherwise cleared landscapes and help to increase biodiversity.

The supporting partners of the Deutsche Alleenstrasse are the ADAC and the SDW. More than 30,000 people seek out information on the boulevard routes every year and on the spectrum of activities of this joint venture.

We work towards:

- Protection of the trees in our boulevards and cities
- Wide distribution of tree species in the forest, including rare species
- Comprehensive concepts for the conservation of biodiversity in the forest

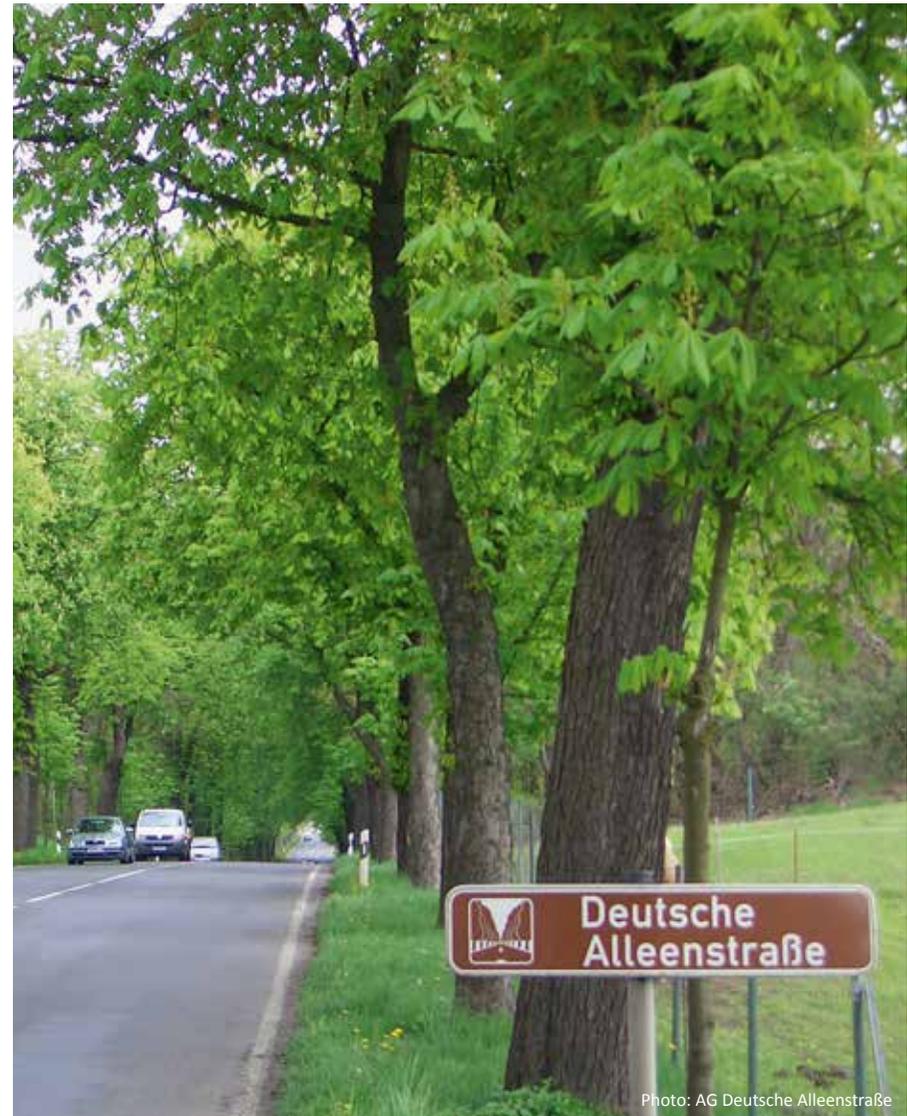


Photo: AG Deutsche Alleenstraße





Future-orientated use of the forest

Photo: pixabay.com

We give the forest a voice. Since the founding of the SDW, we continue to strive for the sustainable and naturalistic utilisation of our forests. Among many things, our domestic forests provide us with the renewable and environmentally-friendly raw material of wood which is better for us to use than wood from distant forests. To safeguard the standards of close-to-nature forestry, we are involved in various committees for forest certification. We aim to establish these high standards internationally.

Ambassador for an integrative approach

The sustainable and naturalistic utilisation of our forests is important. The SDW is committed to realising this with an integrative approach, meaning that a single forest area can play several roles. This way, the forest can be utilised with attention to both nature conservation concerns on the one hand and the demands of people seeking recreation on the other. An integrative forestry approach thus promotes the fulfilment of the protective, utilisation, recreational and educational functions of the forest in one area. We therefore see it as our duty to advocate for a sustainable, close-to-nature and integrative forest management with the foresters, policymakers and the public. This applies both on a national and an international level.

Politics on a regional and federal level

We give the forest a voice. With assessments and through long-standing collaboration in various committees, we do our part for the forest. On a regional level, we are represented on boards and evaluate construction projects and landscape management issues for city trees and forests. In federal politics, we are involved in various processes concerning the forest as a whole in Germany. The federal government's Charter for Wood and Forest Strategy 2020 are just two examples. As a recognised nature conservation association, we are also involved in the legislative process.

Committee work

We advocate for the forest in various committees and boards in both forestry and nature conservation sectors. This takes place on all levels and even in the European context since the protection of the forest extends beyond national borders. Examples of these are the Deutsche Forstwirtschaftsrat (German Forestry Board), the Deutsche Forstzertifizierungsrat (German Forestry Certification Board), the Deutsche Naturschutzring (German Nature Conservation Ring) and the European Environmental Bureau.



Photo: Beate Kohler

FUTURE-ORIENTATED USE OF THE FOREST

These committees pool the voices of many associations so they can present themselves together on the political stage. To ensure that the forest is not lost in the perplexity of political topics and demands, we regularly take part in the voting processes and network worldwide with allies for whom the protection and use of the forests is also of great importance.

Certification

To ensure sustainable forestry worldwide, we advocate the establishment of forest certification. This guarantees compliance with ecological and social standards. We are both directly or indirectly involved through our committee work in the further development of these standards and the various certification systems.

We promote:

- The sustainable, soil-friendly utilisation of the forests through a single tree selection system
- Climate-adjusted selection of species for the current and future safeguarding of the forest's functions
- Worldwide establishment of ecological and social standards of sustainable forestry by means of certification



Photo: pixabay.com



A photograph of two young girls in red jackets hugging a large tree trunk in a forest. The girl on the left is smiling and looking towards the camera, while the girl on the right is also smiling and looking towards the camera. They are both holding hands and forming a heart shape against the tree trunk. The background is a blurred forest with green foliage.

Visit us in the forest

Photo: Tino Sieland/SDW Thüringen

Many of our projects and facilities are available to you as a visitor. We would be delighted to have you discover more on site about the various forest-related topics and our work. We extend a warm invitation for you to visit our facilities and institutions. You can also become actively involved in our local, district and regional associations and we are always on the lookout for interested laypersons and specialists for maintenance work, tree planting, tours, lectures and other activities. Simply get in touch with the responsible state association and we will be happy to then pass your enquiry on to the respective local SDW group.

SDW facilities

SDW (co-)trusteeship

-  Forest education
-  Nature conservation
-  Educational trail

SDW cooperation:

-  Forest education
-  Nature conservation
-  Educational trail



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