

NATURE . WILDLIFE

GERMANY'S WILD RESERVOIRS

45' (ENG, GER)

Nowhere in Germany it rains as much as in the area of Bergisches Land, in North Rhine Westphalia. More than 130 years ago, people began to build dams - mainly for flood protection and as a drinking water reservoir. They all have one thing in common: they change the character of a river enormously.

One of the smallest dams in the Bergisches Land is the Panzertalsperre, with an area of just four-and-a-half football pitches. On the other hand, the Dhünntalsperre is the largest with the area of 660 football pitches. They all transform a stretch of flowing water into still and stagnant water. As a result, completely diverse ecosystems have developed there: where the dipper once dived for insect larvae, cormorants and gray herons now fish and swans and coots cavort. In recent summers, even greater challenges have emerged: the effects of climate change - from extreme drought to destructive floods. On a smaller scale, a rather industrious dam master is operating flood protection: The Beaver. However, the water masses of the Wupper tore away half of his majestic timber castle - and the four young beaver kids were not seen again afterwards. Have they survived the flood? Not everyone can cope with the constant change in the dams, but they still remain an important wonder of engineering for many: for us humans as well as for a number of animals. By combining water management, ecological requirements and tourism a worthwhile goal is possible: Because for the Bergisches Land, its dams are among the most valuable and popular infrastructures that the region has to offer.



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