

THE MANAGEMENT OF A NATURE RESERVE FACILITATES COOPERATION

In the lowlands of Nuthe-Nieplitz nature reserve south of Berlin, the conflict between air sports enthusiasts and nature conservationists was threatening to escalate when the administration of the nature park invited all parties involved to a meeting. Low fly-overs and landings of hot-air balloons in particular had given rise to heated debates in the local area - in the wetlands used by geese and cranes for resting - and to a violent exchange in the daily press.

At the meeting, both sides had an opportunity to get to know each other and to exchange information on their own motivations and possible scope for action. Nature Watch staff, foresters and hunters reported on their observations and described the effects that low-flying balloons are capable of inducing on wild animals. The balloonists informed participants about their dependence on wind and weather conditions and the limited manoeuvrability of the balloons.

An experience that was at once both impressive and conducive to acceptance was a joint trip to the lowland area, where 200 cranes and several thousand geese could be observed from a newly constructed look-out tower. The event concluded with the mutual assurance that each party would treat the other with respect. The balloonists agreed to fly as high as possible over the sensitive area. For further cooperation, the idea was put forward that they should share in promoting tourism in the nature park.

Photos (not reproduced):

Barnacle geese

Garganeys