



# Living in harmony with nature



United Nations  
Educational, Scientific and  
Cultural Organization



Schwäbische Alb  
Biosphere Reserve since 2009  
Man and the Biosphere Programme

Biosphärengebiet  
Schwäbische Alb



*“The colourful dots on our undulating grain fields have become rare, but old cultivation methods in the Biosphere Reserve offer carrot bur parsley, cornflower, Thymelaea, ball mustard & co. a second chance.”*



Dieter Ruoff  
Volunteer of the Schopfloch Alb Nature Protection Centre, author and hobby photographer



*Cornflower*

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## A cultural landscape worth protecting - the Swabian Alb Biosphere Reserve

*The Swabian Alb Biosphere Reserve is located about 50 km southeast of Stuttgart, the state capital. It encompasses 29 cities and municipalities from two administrative districts and three rural districts as well as the former Münsingen military training area.*

From the Alb foothills up to the steep and rocky Albtrauf and the Alb plateau all the way down to the river Danube in the south, the Biosphere Reserve spans approximately 40 km from north to south and is especially characterised by the impressive slope and ravine forests of the Albtrauf.

Yet the orchards in the Alb foothills so characteristic for the landscape, and the varied traditional cultural landscape on



*Silver thistles – a characteristic and protected guest on the low-nutrient meadows on the edge of the Alb*

the Swabian Alb with its juniper heaths, low-nutrient grasslands, meadows, pastures, cultivated fields and forests also shape the typical, natural character of the Swabian Alb Biosphere Reserve. An important part is also the former Münsingen military training area in the Reserve's centre.

The landscape in that location has not changed in 100 years. The idea for creating a Swabian Alb Biosphere Reserve started at the end of 2005, when the army stopped using the training area.

From the start, everybody involved agreed that the cultural and historical value of the 6,700-ha area could only be preserved with a large-scale, integrative concept.

The cities and municipalities bordering the military training area (Bad Urach, Münsingen and Römerstein in the Reutlingen administrative district) were the



*Pine marten*

first that wanted to become a part of a biosphere reserve.

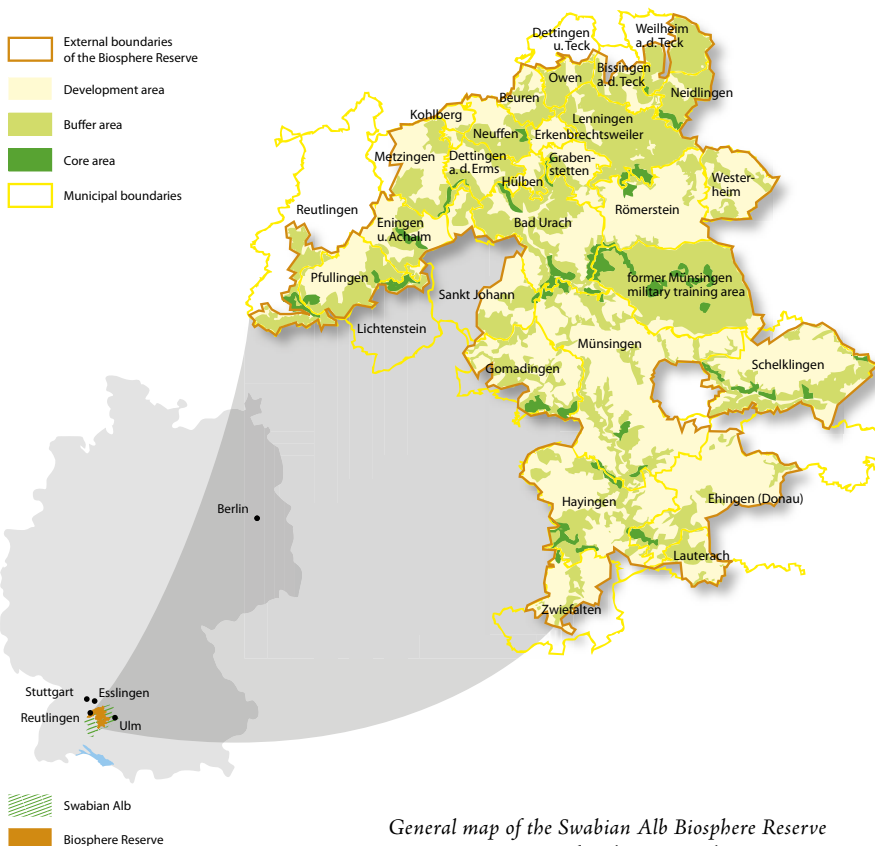
Then, more and more of the surrounding cities and municipalities expressed their interest to get involved in the Biosphere Reserve.

## Important facts & figures

- + Founded in 2008
- + 50 km southeast of Stuttgart
- + 40 km north-south extension
- + 29 cities and municipalities
- + 3 rural districts
- + 2 administrative districts



*View from Jusi towards the northeast*



*General map of the Swabian Alb Biosphere Reserve and its location within Germany*

Map design: Viva Idea, Stuttgart

## Why is our landscape so worth protecting?

The Swabian Alb has an impressive variety of natural points of interest, traditional cultural landscapes, geological attractions and historical sites.

Gentle hills alternate with rugged cliffs, dry valleys and expansive high plains. From dense beech forests, paths lead through sunny meadows and heath landscapes.

Experience the hunting elegance of the peregrine falcon, discover the colourful splendour of multi-coloured butterflies and the sometimes bizarre shapes and scents of the plants growing on the meadows and juniper heaths.

Allow your soul to unwind in a landscape of charming individuality which is truly unique.



*Beech forests (top), juniper heaths (left), low-nutrient limestone meadows (middle) and orchards (right) are the four characteristic faces of our Biosphere Reserve.*



## The characteristic features of the landscape - steep ravines and colourful meadows

*The Swabian Alb is a landscape to be enjoyed and discovered with quite a few surprises in store for visitors. It is the home of sheep, cattle and buffalos, many different kinds of fruit, juniper berries and other delicacies merely waiting to be nicely prepared and served on your dinner table.*

The Swabian Alb Biosphere Reserve is characterised by a highly varied landscape. The reasons for such variety are different geological and climatic conditions as well as a very old form of traditional land use.

Apart from the beech forests along the Albtrauf as well as the ravine and talus forests, the juniper heaths and low-nutrient limestone meadows and heaths which are typical of the Alb, large contiguous orchards are found in the foothills.



*Shepherd with flock in the Biosphere Reserve*

The main idea behind a biosphere reserve is sustainable regional development where people and nature are in harmony with each other. Gentle grazing by sheep, goats, buffalos and cattle preserves the natural balance and ensures an exquisite variety on the menus of the Biosphere partners.

Visitors see the latter as wonderful eye candy especially in the spring, while the owners of these orchards see them as delicious autumn food.

# 850

Baden-Württemberg's only  
Biosphere Reserve covers an area  
of 850 square kilometres

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#### What does "sustainability" really mean?

*"Sustainable" development is defined as development that satisfies the needs of today's generations without risking those of future generations.\**

This applies especially – but not only – to the responsible extraction of raw materials from nature and the preservation of resources and their full return or recycling where possible. As early as in the 18th century, forestry operated under the principle of "Only cut as many trees as they are able to grow back!"

\* Source: 1987 Brundtland report

*Sand lizard*



*“Those who take organic products seriously, buy them regionally. We organic farmers can show our stables, where we keep animals with dignity in a species-appropriate manner, with the same good conscience as our fields and meadows on which arable crops and animal feed grow on a healthy soil without chemically-synthetic sprays and GMOs.”*



Elke Walter

Organic farmer out of conviction and wife of organic farm operator Emil Walter in Westerheim





The UNESCO worldwide network of currently 621 biosphere reserves shows how it is possible to live sustainably. These model regions protect landscapes shaped by humans.

In Germany alone, there are currently 15 UNESCO biosphere reserves.



*Peregrine falcon hunting*

## Not just (dreams of) landscapes - vision and idea of the biosphere reserves

*As of May 2013, there are 621 biosphere reserves in 117 countries across the globe included in the worldwide network of UNESCO biosphere reserves. In Germany alone, there are currently 15 of them.*

According to German law, large-scale cultural landscapes with a rich natural diversity can be declared “biosphere reserves”. These biosphere reserves are model regions of great beauty and with a high quality of life that show how business, settlement and tourism can develop further in a forward-looking way in harmony with nature and the environment.

# 60,000

This many insects are eaten by one single animal of some bat species in one year from May to October

If a biosphere reserve wants to achieve UNESCO’s international recognition, it has to meet the stipulated criteria.

Changes in the global ecosystem and the loss of functionality of many biospheres, in particular, make the biosphere reserve network an important part for the future of our children and grandchildren.

Nature reserves also contribute towards absorbing the ever-growing shortage of important natural resources, which, in view of current demographic trends, are becoming increasingly important.



*A herd of Arab mares with their foals in Marbach's state-owned stud farm*



*Metzingen vineyards and view of the Albtrauf*

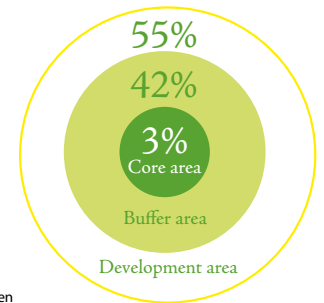


*Bee orchid*

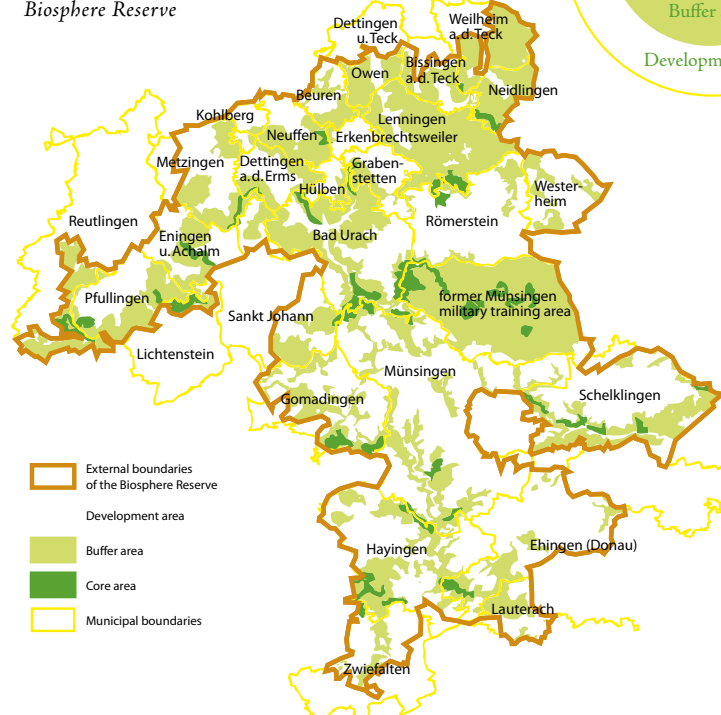
# Wilderness meets beauty and culture - core, buffer and development areas

*Behind the biosphere reserve concept stands the spatial division into three areas of different utilisation: core area, buffer area and development area.*

Each area has a different importance for people and nature; by allocating the different functions „protection“, „preservation“, „utilisation“ and „development“ to the various areas, the aim is to implement the region’s sustainable development in a practical way.



*Distribution of the areas  
in the Swabian Alb  
Biosphere Reserve*



*Red kite in the morning sun*

## Important facts

Core area	natural state as intact as possible
Buffer area	protective land use, “protecting through using”
Development area	sustainable economic activity



*The core area near Eningen unter Achalm*

## Core area – the wild one

The expression “natural state as intact as possible” perfectly describes the core areas’ basic character. These areas are neither used by forestry nor commercially exploited in any other way. The priority here is the protection of natural and nearnatural biospheres and living communities.



*Springtime feeling with spring snowflake in the core area*

The various small core areas in the Swabian Alb Biosphere Reserve encompass, above all, the ravine, slope beech and talus forests growing on the steep slopes of the Albtrauf with their deeply-cutting side valleys and the classical forests of the northern Alb, called “Kuppenalb”.

Impressive observations in the core area show how development in nature takes place without human interference. This does not mean complete human exclusion, as access is permitted on marked trails. Hunting is also allowed, albeit in a limited way.

It is in the core area where especially those animal and plant species believed to be almost extinct have the space they need for their development.



*Black woodpecker feeding its young*

At the moment, about 3% are registered as core area; the forests are jointly owned by the municipalities, the state of Baden-Württemberg and the federal government.



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### The inhabitants of the buffer area

Tangy-smelling field thyme and protected plant species such as the blue spring gentian and the typical silver thistle flourish on the meadows and rocky areas where sheep graze.

It is a generously set table for many threatened animal species, among them the beautiful swallowtail and the rare mountain grasshopper. Even the very rare Northern Wheatear, threatened with extinction in Baden-Württemberg, has found its home here along with many other bird species.

*Swallowtail*

### Buffer area – the lovely one

The essence of the buffer area is best described with “protecting by using”. The goal is especially the preservation of extensively used cultural landscapes and of many animal and plant habitats, too. Buffer areas are, for example, extensive sections of the former military training area, the Large Lauter Valley or the Lenning Valley. Their continued existence depends on the careful use that these valuable habitats – such as orchards, juniper heaths or hay meadows – are subject to.

For people, these areas of sustainable agricultural land use can also serve as recreational and educational areas.



*The Large Lauter Valley*



*Grain harvest on the Swabian Alb*

### Development area – the cultural one

Finally, the development area is marked by human economic activity. It is expressly understood to be a human habitat as well as an economic and recreational area. Sustainable development of humankind and nature is supported in this area through, among other things, assistance programmes and the Region’s added value is increased by protecting its resources and the environment.

People can use their habitat without destroying it or endangering it for future generations. This is the core message of the development area, whose positive impact reaches beyond the boundaries of the Biosphere Reserve.

The densely populated Swabian Alb Biosphere Reserve represents an open market for the marketing and sale of regional products and services that has

no equal. The positive impact for the development of the entire region should not be underestimated.

The subject of renewable energy is also becoming increasingly important. Existing and new kinds of energy are being exploited with the least possible environmental disruption and made available for humankind.

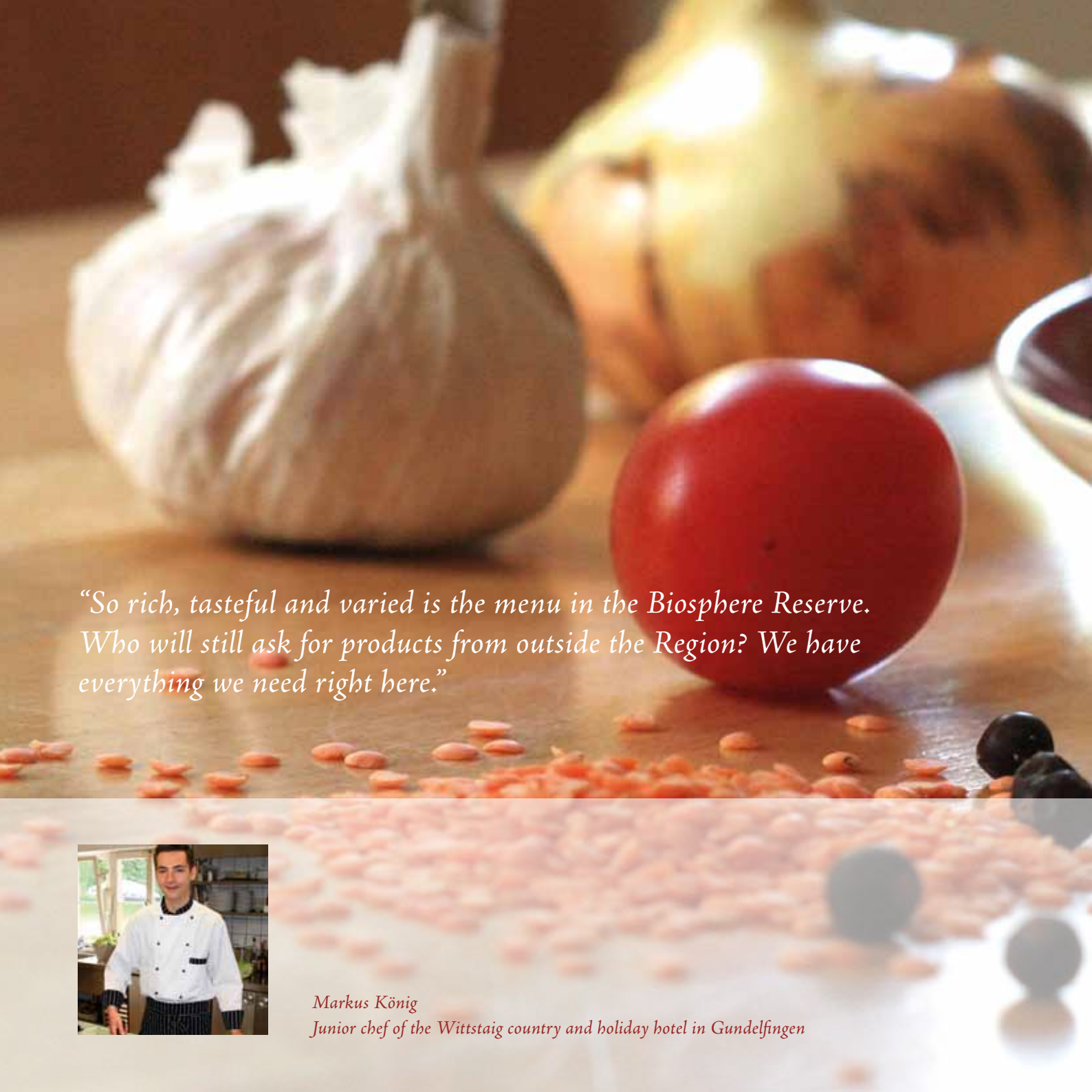


*Wind energy turbines near Münsingen*

Together with the inhabitants and numerous stakeholders, objectives and visions are being worked out for the region, written down in a kind of manual for the future – the so-called Framework.



*Factory outlets in Metzingen*



*“So rich, tasteful and varied is the menu in the Biosphere Reserve. Who will still ask for products from outside the Region? We have everything we need right here.”*



*Markus König  
Junior chef of the Wittstaig country and holiday hotel in Gundelfingen*





## Rooted with body and soul - the Biosphere Reserve partners

*Only those who observe the strict quality standards become Biosphere partners. An enthusiasm for the vision and a close bond with the land and the people are basic requirements for a productive collaboration.*



The roughly 100 officially recognised partners that support the project are not only hotels and restaurants, but also specially trained nature and landscape guides (so-called biosphere ambassadors) as well as extracurricular education partners.

All of them support the high quality of their products and services and are proud to meet the strict, externally controlled quality standards.

They want to show their guests and customers the beauty of the landscape and showcase the Region's services and products from their best side.

The partnership's objectives are:

- ✦ Better information for guests
- ✦ Close collaboration between the protected area administration and partner businesses
- ✦ Development of a network with additional regional partners
- ✦ Contribution to sustainable regional development

Visit the partners and experience the Biosphere Reserve with all your senses.



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**The partners of the Biosphere Reserve**  
Here you can find detailed information and an interactive map on which all Biosphere partners are marked:

[www.biosphaerengebiet-partner.de](http://www.biosphaerengebiet-partner.de)



## Current close-up information - the information centres

*In many places of the Biosphere Reserve, the centres welcome visitors with exciting subjects and exhibits.*

The Biosphere Reserve is crisscrossed by a network of information centres, situated close to sights, tourism information booths and railway stations, for example.

Their objective is to bring all facets of the Biosphere Reserve closer to the visitor. The most varied topics such as agriculture and forestry, renewable energy, geology, sustainable tourism, conservation or urban development are presented in these centres.

Some information centres also offer field trips, lectures or workshops and house interesting exhibits about the Biosphere Reserve.

For a current map of the centres, visit: [www.biosphaerengebiet-infozentren.de](http://www.biosphaerengebiet-infozentren.de).

# 1491

The Marbach state-owned stud farm was founded in 1491, making it the oldest institution of its kind in Germany. This is also where one of the information centres originated.



*Beuren open-air museum*



*Information centre in the Wimsen mill*



## Welcome to the Biosphere Centre!

Since the autumn of 2010, we have been welcoming visitors from all regions in our two stylishly renovated buildings of Münsingen's „Altes Lager“. It was our concern to ensure that both residents and visitors would experience the flair of the Biosphere Reserve equally. Allow yourself to be enchanted by the interactive exhibition of the Swabian Alb Biosphere Reserve.

An experience in itself -  
the Swabian Alb  
Biosphere Centre



### Our centrepiece -

the “Swabian Alb Biosphere Reserve office at Tübingen’s Regional Council”, the full and correct name of the office, has been set up in the middle of the Biosphere Reserve.



The employees of Tübingen’s Regional Council are your contact for the many different tasks related to the Biosphere Reserve. They manage its development and attach special importance to the involvement of the population. In addition, they bring new ideas to the Region and support the players in the implementation of sustainable projects.

The office is an important link between people and nature.



*Pictures of the exhibition:  
Biosphere cinema (top), in the beech forest (left), loving detail: felt slippers  
with Alb motives (middle), entrance area with regional shelf (right)*





### The exhibition in the Biosphere Centre

On about 450 square metres, visitors can experience more about Baden-Württemberg's first Biosphere Reserve. How large is it? What are its special features? Why has it been designated with the UNESCO label?

# 1897

The two buildings of the Biosphere Centre were built in 1897 and meet current energy standards after their restoration.

You get to know the people living in the Biosphere Reserve, get a glimpse of their work and share their passion for the animals, landscapes and plants living in the Region. And those who would like to hear what Alb residents have to say about "city slickers" and vice versa, can simply join us at our "regulars' table".

Numerous films and soundtracks certainly keep boredom away. In addition,



*Ammonite from the black Jurassic rock*



*The cosy bistro offers delicious seasonal snacks and dishes for small and big appetites*

those who need a breather are cordially invited to snuggle up and make themselves comfortable "in the leaves" and watch the red kite as it flies over the beech forests.

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### The Biosphere Centre

Ever since the Swabian Alb Biosphere Centre opened its doors on 23 October 2010, the interactive exhibition has been attracting children and adults who want to experience worldwide biosphere reserves, Münsingen's military training area, local forests, beekeeping, grazing and the Region's city-countryside relationship in an entertaining way.

The Biosphere Centre also serves as an information centre for the GeoPark Swabian Alb.





#### Imprint

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