



23 April 2014

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BeeFacts

Eh da-Flächen (Just there-areas)

Space for bees, blossoms and biodiversity

Space becomes increasingly scarce and thus ever more precious in our agricultural landscape. In addition to settlements, also traffic infrastructure demands land. Agriculture, on the other hand, does not provide us with food alone but also contributes more and more to our energy supply. The available land resources must therefore be used as efficiently as possible. With regard to agriculture, this calls for a sustainable production which includes care for the development of biological diversity. Bees and flowering plants, both being important protagonists of the natural environment, deserve particular attention. In addition to the contributions of farmers, however, there is a need for active involvement of all members of society and for the exploitation of new pathways.



Foto: Biene © Jovic

Virgin soil on a road side (photo: Christoph Künast)

On the trail of “Eh da-Flächen” (just there-areas)

The term “Eh da-Flächen” refers to areas which are just there and do not serve any particular purpose. Such areas are neither used for the conservation of biodiversity nor for any agricultural production. They are nothing special and can almost be found everywhere. Engrains, roadsides, dams alongside motorways or railway lines, public greens in villages, and dams alongside waterways are just a few examples. How do such areas look like?

- They are affected by human activities.
- These areas are either on a small-scale and compact (such as meadows in a borough or a knuckle between two roads for example) or rather narrow and longish extending alongside roads and other traffic ways.
- Areas which are small-scale and compact are usually isolated whereas narrow and longish plots often function as connecting corridors.
- Several of these areas may form a network within an agricultural landscape.

Close proximity to agricultural areas or settlements often leads to interdependencies with measures taken in these areas.

When looking at the usefulness and limitations of “Eh da-Flächen”, there is a focus on bees as well as plants and habitats essential for their survival.

Not all bees are alike

There are about 560 different bee species in Germany, the honeybee *Apis mellifera* being just one of them. Bumblebees and solitary bees as well as a number of parasitic species are often summarised under the term “wild bees”. As these wild bees do not have a beekeeper taking care of their brood, they need two near-natural habitats: areas where melliferous plants are growing, and areas where they can raise their brood.

Which contributions can be expected from “Eh da-Flächen”? Which measures could be taken to achieve an ecological upgrade?

Variety of blossoms:

“Eh da-Flächen” are often covered by vegetation that serves a specific purpose, such as protecting roadside slopes against soil erosion by rain water for example. In spite of this purpose, number and type of blossoms on these areas can be systematically improved. Such activities support honeybees and bridge the gap in melliferous plants which occurs when flowering of oilseed rape and fruit trees has come to an end. Wild bees which often depend on very special melliferous plants (such as redberry bryony for example) can specifically be supported.



Bryonia sand bee (*Andrena florum*)
(photo: Christoph Künast)

Breeding grounds for wild bees:

Wild bees need space for their offspring. Other than flowering meadows, such breeding grounds are mostly unremarkable and not very attractive. And yet, these areas also need protection and care. The following table provides an overview on breeding habits and habitats.

Where wild bees breed

| Habitat | in % (circa) |
|--|--------------|
| Self-dug passages in the soil | 50 |
| Existing cavities in the soil | 19 |
| Self-gnawed passages in deadwood or in stems of plants | 3 |
| Freestanding nests | 1 |
| “Cuckoo bees”, acting as parasites of other wild bees | 24 |
| Unassigned | 3 |

Use areas deliberately

“Eh da-Flächen” do not offer a panacea that could solve the lack of bee habitats and food for all times. Wild bees in particular often have very specific requirements with regard to habitats, and frequently depend on special melliferous plants. In addition, not all “just there-areas” are suitable for an ecological upgrade. Areas next to very busy roads, for example, should not be used in order to avoid road casualties.

And yet, Eh da-Flächen offer useful resources for pollinating insects when suitable measures for an ecological upgrade are taken.

Additional Information is available (in German only) in the brochure “Blütenbestäuber brauchen mehr Lebensraum – Wie Eh da-Flächen die biologische Vielfalt fördern können” (Pollinators need more habitats – How Eh da-Flächen can enhance biological diversity).

http://www.innovation-naturhaushalt.de/fileadmin/user_upload/eh-da/FNL-EhDa-Broschuere.pdf