„The challenges of the 21st century can only be tackled and resolved working together for a same purpose.“

Perspective reversal in outdoor climbing during the 21st century.

Together with the climbers from bordering countries as well as Luxembourgish nature conservation organizations we aim to build a bridge between outdoor sport and protection of the environment.

Symposium 24/25 September 2022, Berdorf

Since the 50s and the creation of the “Groupe Alpin” the sport was done on various sites around Luxembourg. The sport changed from being solely a preparation for alpinism during the 80s to becoming an independent sport which is also an Olympic discipline since 2020.

At the same time as the boundaries of performance were pushed further in competition, the limits in outdoor climbing made an identical evolution in Luxembourg. However, this evolution in outdoor climbing has been compromised and blocked for over 20 years due to the limitation of climbing to the outdoor site Wanterbaach and thereby hindering the progression of athletes.

With the constantly growing popularity of the sport, the rush of climbers to the climbing site Wanterbaach is growing in the same way. To avoid any problems which could arise due to over frequation it would be recommendable and necessary to reopen other areas in Luxembourg, like it was the case in the past.

The symposium organized by the Luxembourgish climbing federation aims to initiate a thought-provoking impulse which is necessary to lead to a change of mentality in the climbing community and among the different environmental stakeholders regarding outdoor sport on a regional as well as global scale. Thus, a possibility of collaboration is created among all the interest groups to analyse and find solutions together in order to practice sport in a sustainable way in the future. We are convinced that outdoor sport is the ideal medium to sensitize as well as leading to concrete environmental action.

The federation is ready to take the necessary next steps and demands the authorization to reutilize the areas which are prohibited since the 90s in order to be able to better fan out the climbers and avoid agglomerations. In our opinion this is the only way to avoid a complete overflow of the most sensitive areas and to create an advantageous situation for all the parties which are involved.

The symposium is addressing the community of climbers, of the environment and municipal government whilst raising political and legislative topics and all the people that are interested in these matters are welcomed to take part.

Jacques Welter (LU)
Jacques Welter has been a passionate climber since the 1980s; As a nature lover, he quickly switched from alpinism to sport climbing; At the end of the 80s he was involved in Groupe Alpin and was able to help develop the Wanterbaach and other climbing areas; as an adventure educator, he dealt early on with the effects of nature and climbing on people.

After a short historical review, he will introduce us to the topic of the symposium.

Lena Müller (DE)
Lena Müller is doing her PhD in ecology at the University of Innsbruck on the effects of the climate crisis on mountain regions. In 2020, she was the first German woman to climb a route of the grade E9 with the trad test piece “Prinzip Hoffnung” and travelled to the crag mainly by train.

Climbing in the face of the climate crisis - how can we practice our climbing sport more sustainably? Tips and tricks for sustainable climbing, film screening „More than a route“

Dr. Ingrid Schumacher (LU)
Ingrid Schumacher is an environmental economist, alpinist and sport climber. Over the last decade he has been concerned with sustainability in his professional - as well as personal lives. In his sport he has experienced steady growth whilst at the same time learning about the sustainable maintenance of climbing crags.

“An expansion of climbing areas can have a positive impact on the economy of the communities and still help nature conservation if it is done right.”

Dr. Sandra Cellina, Mikis Bastian (LU)
Dr Sandra Cellina is Head of the Nature Department of the Nature and Forestry Administration of Luxembourg, Mikis Bastian is Head of the Ecology Department of the Mullerthal Nature- & Geopark.

The two speakers present the national and European legal conditions that apply to the Mullerthal in general and to climbing in the Wanterbaach/Siwerschof in particular. They illustrate this with the species and habitats whose protection is to be ensured.

“Nature conservation, an insurmountable hurdle?”

Dr. Kollert (DE)
Dr. Jürgen Kollert : The history of the development and implementation of the climbing concepts in the Northern Franconian Jura and the neighbouring climbing areas.

Presentation of the existing zoning system with regard to a nature-compatible practice of climbing, taking into account current environmental protection guidelines such as Natura 2000 and FFH guidelines. Presentation of the currently applied measures for the protection of endangered (raptor) bird species.

Koen Hauchecone & Joe Dewez (BE)
Koen Hauchecone and Joe Dewez are responsible for the ecological management of the Natural Climbing Sites (NSS) in Belgium.

“The first environmental permits were obtained in 2004 and are valid for 20 years. Since then, the federations have been able to establish a direct and beneficial collaboration with the authorities concerned. The latter came to the realization that the proper management of a climbing site can also lead to an improvement of biodiversity as a whole.”

Thibault Meunier (F)
As an employee of the climbing federation in the Bas-Rhin, I am in charge of the management and the restoration of natural climbing sites. The main task is to ensure that access to our climbing sites is guaranteed. First of all, we need to update our agreements and finding new sources of funding.

From an environmental point of view, I have worked with nature conservation associations (LPO, Alsace Nature, ..) and government agencies (Department, DREAL, ..). To guarantee a follow-up of temporary closures for nesting, I am in charge of writing a charter for the whole of the Vosges Massif (signature planned for 2022) and thus put emphasis on informing the climbers, rather repressing them.
Workshops

Decentralisation
How can we achieve a decentralisation of climbing on mid-term? Which hurdles will we have to face, targeting a minimum of 300 routes on different spots? How can we satisfy the needs of the sportsclimbing community while respecting the ecological obligations?

Sensibilisation
What are the conditions to be developed, what values should we activate in order to encourage a „Green Climbing“ behavior with a low ecological footprint?
We want to carry out an analysis of the current situation and give first signs of improvement.

Impact
- Description of the current situation as seen by the climbing federation and environmental protection
- The impact of climbing on nature
- Presentation of models in our neighboring countries
- Volunteer agreement for the territory
- Consequent guidance model (3 zones)
- Compensation measures; zéro CO2, my climate
- Ecolabel for climbers
- Public transport: Shuttle for climbers between Trier and Luxembourg-city
- Special rates with local players (hotels, campsites, restaurants...)

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