

IV) Appendix

Protected area categories in Austria

“Biosphere reserves? What did you say? Is this something like a nature reserve?”

If you are interested in the UNESCO model regions, you will come across these and similar questions. It is hardly surprising that a term as abstract as this is not widely understood. A closer look reveals that it is predominantly the large number of different protection categories that causes confusion. Who would know what distinguishes a “tranquillity zone” from a “national park” and why there are “nature conservation areas” as well as “Natura 2000 sites”? In an attempt at clarifying some of the terms we have put together below a list of the most important national and international protection categories.

This summary of the protected area categories in Austria is based on the following literature:

IUCN, FÖDERATION EUROPARC (Ed.), 2000: *Richtlinien für Management-Kategorien von Schutzgebieten. Interpretation und Anwendung der Management-Kategorien für Schutzgebiete in Europa.*

UMWELTDACHVERBAND (Ed.), FRANZ MAIER (Author), Feb. 2004: *Branding of Different Protected Area Categories – Aufbereitung der Schutzgebietskategorien. (developed within the IPAM project – Integrated Protected Area Management).*

The spider diagrams are drawn according to the estimates of the Austrian NGO “Umweltdachverband”. The weighting in the respective categories occurred as follows: primary objective: 4, secondary objective: 3, possible objective: 2, not relevant: 1.

International categories

IUCN categories

For a quarter of a century now the IUCN (World Conservation Union) has been providing direction for the classification of protected areas. Setting international standards enables a comparison between countries and encourages mutual understanding across borders. The first, historic, step was the definition of the term “national park” by the general assembly of the IUCN in 1969. The categories that emerged in the wake of that have been repeatedly revised over the years. Since 2000, there are now six clearly defined and distinguishable IUCN protected area management categories that are recognised all over the world.

International

IUCN-Criteria

- I) Wilderness Area
- II) National Park
- III) Natural Monument
- IV) Species Management Area
- V) Protected Landscape
- VI) Managed Resource Protected Area

Pred

- World Her
- Biosphere

I. Strict nature reserve / Wilderness area

This category puts ecosystems that still extend, in a near-natural state, over larger areas under strict protection. No human intervention is permitted. The dynamic interaction between plants and animals is allowed to take place without interference. This enables research and environmental monitoring within a natural setting. Wilderness areas have only limited public access. Visits are mainly possible for gathering knowledge but not for recreation in a classic tourist sense. Outside the Nordic region such areas are completely missing in Europe. Due to intensive land-use that has been going on for a long time and because of high population density, there remain only small remnants of unspoiled ecosystems. The only recognised wilderness area in Austria is a primeval forest of about 500 ha at Rothwald, south of Lunz am See on the border between Lower Austria and Styria.

II. National Park

The idea of a national park comes from North America. Great natural landscapes were to be protected from development and maintained for future generations. The first national park in the world was the Yellowstone National Park in the US, set up in 1872. National parks secure the last remnants of original habitats, with conservation a top priority. In the strictly protected core zones nature is left to its own devices. For an area to be recognised as a protected area of IUCN category II, there must not be any economic land-use on at least 75 per cent of the total territory. In contrast

icates

itage Site
Reserve

Europe

Natura 2000

Designations

- FFH-Site
- Bird Protection Area
(Special Protected Area)

- Biogenetic Reservate

Austria

Legislation

Designations

- Nature conservation area
- Landscape conservation
area
- Tranquillity Zone
- others

- Nature Park
- others

to the wilderness areas, the national parks serve predominantly for recreation and for raising environmental awareness. Comprehensive excursion packages invite the visitors to experience nature with all their senses. The unique natural landscapes should get people enthusiastic and sensitised to conservation issues. Management plans control the use of natural resources and the flow of visitors. In Austria there are seven national parks covering a total area of ca. 2.500 square kilometres (~ 3 % of the state territory). To date, the national parks Neusiedler See-Seewinkel (Burgenland), Donau-Auen (Lower Austria), Upper Austrian Limestone Alps, Thayatal (Lower Austria), Hohe Tauern (only the Carinthian part) and Gesäuse (Styria) have been internationally recognised according to IUCN criteria as category II. The brand label “National-parks Austria” was specifically created for advertising and promoting the image of all Austrian national parks (<http://www.nationalparks.or.at>).



III. Natural Monument

Natural monuments protect specific natural features such as caves, water falls or fossil beds. As a rule, this category applies to smaller areas of less than 1000 ha. They might be exposed to high numbers of visitors. The Trübbachhöhle cave in the Großes Walsertal is one of the natural monuments in Austria.

IV. Habitat/Species Management Area

Biotopes preserve areas that abound in species. Especially in Europe, such areas often came into existence through human intervention and can be only maintained in the long term through preservation measures. For instance, the early clearing of central European forests created open grassland that were conquered by light-loving plants and animals. They include dry meadows, important sites for many orchids and rare insects. Without human intervention, the forest would reclaim these areas within a short time. Here only mowing or extensive grazing can preserve biodiversity in the long run.

V. Protected Landscape /Seascape

Europe has been used agriculturally for more than a thousand years. Extended cultural landscapes dominate the appearance of the continent. Co-existence between man and nature over such a long time has created a variety of habitats, a mosaic of natural and cultural spaces. IUCN category V protects such traditionally evolved landscapes together with their richness of species. The management of such areas seeks to encourage sustainable forms of land-use and to preserve the cultural specifics. Such regions offer a lot in terms of recreation. Tourist activities create value for the local population. The Austrian nature parks usually are designated in this category.

VI. Managed Resource Protected Area

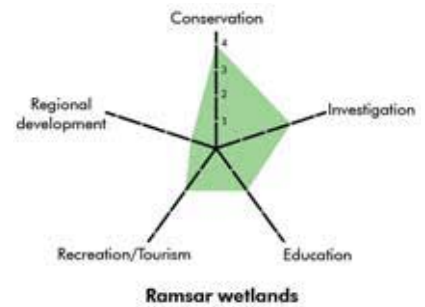
The last category is also the most recent of all IUCN categories. It protects intact natural habitats from which natural produce may be harvested. At least two thirds of the area must be in a natural state. A limited area can be occupied by ecosystems changed by man, but not by intensive farming areas. Suitable areas include mainly parts of Scandinavia, for instance those where the Saami people live.

International cesignations

The following protected area categories should be understood as “labels” awarded after application by the international community to the respective states. By designating such areas the countries enter a voluntary commitment to apply certain protective measures. There are no sanctions envisaged if the criteria are not met, but the label can be taken back.

Ramsar wetlands are humid biotopes of international importance. The so-called “Ramsar Convention” aims at protection and harmonious use of the habitats of rare birds on mud flats and waters. In 1971, Austria signed the agreement in Ramsar, Iran, and ratified it in 1983. It is binding under international law. The national Ramsar committee, co-ordinated by the Ministry for Agriculture, Forestry, Water and the Environment, reports on the

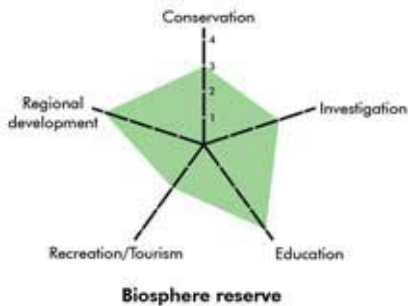
status quo every three years. In Austria to date, 16 Ramsar wetlands with a total area of 137,325 ha (1.6 per cent of the state territory) have been designated (figures for January 2004). They include the Hörfeld-Moor in Carinthia and the Donau-March-Auen in Lower Austria.



In 1972, UNESCO passed a convention on the protection of world heritage. **World Heritage and Natural Heritage Sites** preserve the testimony of vanished cultures and the treasures of existing ones as well as natural and cultural landscape of exceptional beauty for future generations. The main objective of this designation is not the protection of sites of special ecological value but rather the preservation of unique areas of special importance for mankind. The World Conservation Union IUCN assesses the applications of individual states. If a world heritage site is not sufficiently protected against adverse influences, it is entered into a “Red List” of endangered areas. Should the situation worsen, the designation is revoked. Austria ratified the World Heritage Convention in 1993. The coveted designation was awarded to Hallstatt-Dachstein/Salzkammergut (Upper Austria/Styria), Wachau (Lower Austria) and to the Neusiedler See (Burgenland).



Biosphere reserves are extended representative samples of natural and cultural landscapes, in which the management of the reserve and the local population jointly work out concepts for the protection and development of the region and then cooperate in their implementation. This approach deviates from the long-held practice of maintaining protected areas without any human influence. Essentially biosphere reserves fulfil three functions: maintaining ecosystems, developing the region in socio-economic and ecologically sustainable terms, and encouraging education, research and environmental monitoring. To facilitate this comprehensive task, the areas are meant to be subdivided into core, buffer and transition zones. The regional governments file their applications with UNESCO within the MAB programme “Man and the biosphere”. If accepted, the biosphere reserve is evaluated every ten years. This international designation too does not entail any concrete national protection regulation. The Austrian province of Vorarlberg is the only region so far to have included the designation as a separate protective category in its conservation legislation.

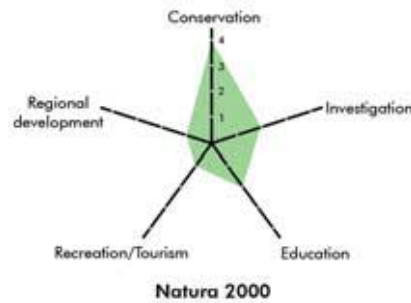


European categories

Natura 2000 sites

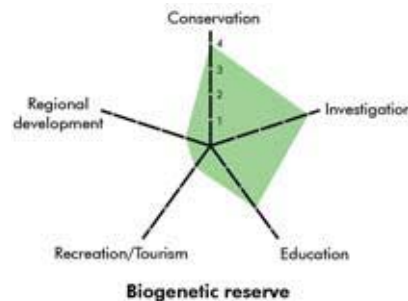
The European Union aims to build up a network of ecological protection areas in an attempt to secure the natural habitats and the biodiversity of Europe. This network of areas is known by the name of “Natura 2000”. It is based on the Fauna Flora Habitats (FFH) Directive of 1992. It commits the EU member states to report areas with particularly valuable types of habitats (listed in appendix I) or areas in which endangered animal and plant species occur (named in appendix II). The Natura 2000 network now contains not only areas that fulfil the criteria of the Habitats Directive, but, since 2004, also Special Protected Areas (habitats) designated according to the Birds Directive. The two EU directives form the first comprehensive legal basis for protecting biotopes and species within the European Union, with clear guidelines on proportions and types of habitat that must be protected. The provincial governments

nominate the Natura 2000 areas, an official representative of the federal provinces passes them on to the EU Commission. Maintenance plans must be presented for all areas and anything that might lead to a degradation of the habitats or to disruption of the species must be avoided. In Austria to date, some 212 areas have been nominated (figures from 2003). Together they take up 16.6 per cent of the state territory



Designations in Europe

In 1976 the Council of Europe (based in Strasbourg) created the network of **Biogenetic reserves**. It serves to maintain a representative selection of habitats in which typical, unique, rare or endangered animal and plant species occur. The countries voluntarily protect these areas. Every five years they report the current state of the areas on a form. The network of biogenetic reserves paved the way for the introduction of the strictly regulated Natura 2000 network.

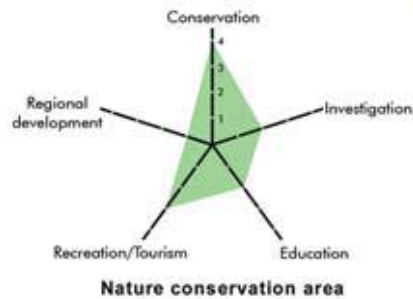


National categories

Nature conservation area

A nature conservation area is a predominantly natural or near-natural habitat containing rare or endangered animal or plant species. Interventions that cannot be reconciled with the conservation aims are to be prevented. The affected provincial governments determine the conservation aims for the nature reserve. Often agricultural and for-

entry use is permitted. In case of danger all human intervention in the conservation area, down to entering it on foot, can be forbidden. Nature conservation areas represent the most common and most important conservation category in Austria. Currently there are 377 nature conservation areas in Austria, covering 3,280 square kilometres, that is 3.8 per cent of the entire country (figures from December 2000).



Landscape conservation areas

A landscape conservation area is a near-natural area of particular character, beauty or recreational value. Its primary objective is the preservation of the characteristic landscape for the population or for tourism. Measures that would permanently change the special landscape characteristics or its historic value have to get special permission. The protection objectives are defined by the affected provincial governments in their conservation legislation. In terms of size, at 9120 square kilometres (about 11 % of the state territory), landscapes conservation areas are the most common protection category in Austria.



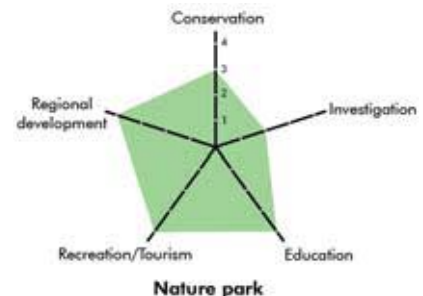
Tranquillity zone (Ruhegebiet)

Tranquillity zones are areas for gentle outdoor recreation. Technical development for tourism or traffic such as cablecars, T-bar lifts or roads open to public traffic are not allowed here. Characteristic for these areas is the low level of noise pollution. Tranquillity zones exist only within the framework of the conservation regulations of the province of Tyrol. The reserve Gurgler Kamm reaches into the tranquillity zone "Ötztaler Alps".

National designations

Nature park (Naturpark)

In nature parks the emphasis is on maintaining precious cultural landscapes. They offer information, education and recreation for the local population and for visitors, but they are also instruments for sustainable regional development. Unlike national parks, which also offer information and recreation, nature parks do not usually include nature zones where human use is prohibited. The designation "nature park" is issued as a regulation by the provincial government. In all provinces that have such conservation areas, with the exception of Styria, the label "nature park" is an additional designation of existing conservation areas and not a category of its own. In autumn 1995, the existing nature parks formed the association "Verband der Naturparke Österreichs (VNÖ)" with the aim of raising the quality of nature parks and of implementing joint marketing projects (<http://www.naturparke.at>).



List of acronyms

ALPARC = Network of Alpine protection areas based in Gap, France

ALPNET = Alpine Network for biodiversity research of the European Scientific Foundation

ARGE = Working group (Arbeitsgemeinschaft)

AVL = Working group on vegetation ecology and landscape planning (Arbeitsgemeinschaft Vegetationsökologie und Landschaftsplanung), technical office for landscape ecology

BMBWK = Federal Ministry for Education, Science and Culture (Bundesministerium für Bildung, Wissenschaft und Kultur, Zukunftsministerium)

BMLFUW = Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, Environment and Water Management (Bundesministerium für Land- und Forstwirtschaft, Umwelt und Wasserwirtschaft, Lebensministerium)

BOKU = University of Natural Resources and Applied Life Sciences, Vienna

BR = Biosphere Reserve

BRIM = Biosphere Reserves Integrated Monitoring

BSE = Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy, mad cow disease

CBD = Convention on Biological Diversity

CIPRA = Commission Internationale pour la Protection des Alpes; International commission for the protection of the Alps

COP = Conference of the Parties

DIVERSITAS = International biodiversity programme

DÖAV = German-Austrian Alpine Association (Deutsch-Österreichischer Alpenverein), founded in the mid-19th century

ECO – Ecology, Communication, Organisation (Institut für Ökologie in Klagenfurt)

EU = European Union

FAO – Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations, based in Rome

FFH = Fauna-Flora-Habitats

FORNE = Research for sustainable development (Forschung für nachhaltige Entwicklung), an Austrian initiative of the council for the development of research and technology of the federal government

GEF = Global Environmental Facility, financing instrument of the biodiversity convention

GIS = Geographic Information System

GLORIA = Global Observation Research Initiative in Alpine Environments, an Austrian initiative to establish a global monitoring network to capture the impact of climate change on the environment

IBA = Important Bird Area

IBP = International Biological Programme [Title „Primary production in biological systems and human welfare“ (1965–1975)]

ICC = International Co-ordination Council of the MAB programme

ICSU = International Council of Scientific Unions

IGBP = International Geosphere-Biosphere Programme

IHDP = International Human Dimensions Programme on global environmental change

INTERREG = Joint initiative of the European fund for the integration of the regions within Europe

IUCN = The World Conservation Union, was: International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources

IYM = International Year of Mountains, declared by the United Nations in 2002

LEADERplus = Liaison entre Actions de Développement de l'Économie Rurale (EU liaison between measures to develop the rural economy)

Glossary

anthropogenic = created by humans or emerging or changing under their influence.

Best practice = best possible implementation

biodiversity = abundance of ecosystems, symbioses, animal and plant species as well as the genetic variability within a species.

biodiversity convention = an agreement, worked out in 1992 at a UN conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) in Rio de Janeiro, which has since been signed by 187 states and the EU. Core points of the convention are the conservation and the sustainable use of biodiversity as well as a just balance of benefits from that use.

biosphere = totality of that part of the earth that is inhabited by organisms

biotope = habitat of certain animal and plant communities.

ecosystem = a dynamic community of plants, animals, and micro-organisms plus their inanimate environment, which interact as a functional unit.

endemic species = animal and plant species that are native to a very limited area only.

eutrophy = deposit of nutrients that leads to overfertilisation in an ecosystem.

fauna = totality of animals in the wild.

flora = totality of plants in the wild.

hemeroby = the extent of human influence on ecosystems, from the Greek “hémeros” (tamed, cultivated) and „bíos“ (life).

INTERREG = since 1990 an acronym for cross-border co-operation within Europe. The regions are meant to overcome their disadvantages as border regions by co-operating with adjoining regions in neighbouring countries. The overall objective is a harmonious regional development across state borders within Europe.

LEADERplus = joint EU-initiative for the development of rural regions, aims at overcoming development bottlenecks and at utilising site specifics in the best possible way. Supports new ideas and measures to strengthen regional identity and to improve the competitiveness of regions.

LIFE = a financial support programme established in 1992 for environmental projects within the EC.

LIFE Nature = supports conservation projects in EU member states with the goal of preserving biodiversity in Europe. Particular attention is being paid to bird reserves and ecologically valuable areas that are included in the European protected areas network Natura 2000.

limnology = also: freshwater biology, the science of life in inland waters such as rivers or lakes.

monitoring = long-term, regularly repeated and targeted surveys in terms of an ongoing observation with statements on the state of and the changes in nature and landscape.

neophyte/neozone = migrated or (inadvertently) introduced non-native plant or animal species that forms populations in the newly settled area.

pH = measure of the acidity of a solution, from Ponderus Hydrogenii (lat. pondus = weight; hydrogenium = hydrogen). A pH level of 0 to <7 denotes an acidic, a pH of 7 a neutral, and a pH level of >7 to 14 denotes an alkaline solution.

red lists = record of endangered animal and plant species at national, European or international level.

REGIO – regional planning association Großes Walsertal, association for encouraging regional development of the valley community in the Walsertal.

rough grazing (pasture) – unfenced, extensively used pasture, where farm animals are kept.

Umweltdachverband = Austrian umbrella organisation based in Vienna, includes 34 environmental NGOs such as BirdLife Austria, Club Arc Alpin, Friends of the Nature, Alliance for Nature Protection, etc.

win-win strategy = a method of solving problems and conflicts whereby all involved parties benefit. The concept was developed in the 1970s and 1980s at Harvard University in Cambridge, USA.

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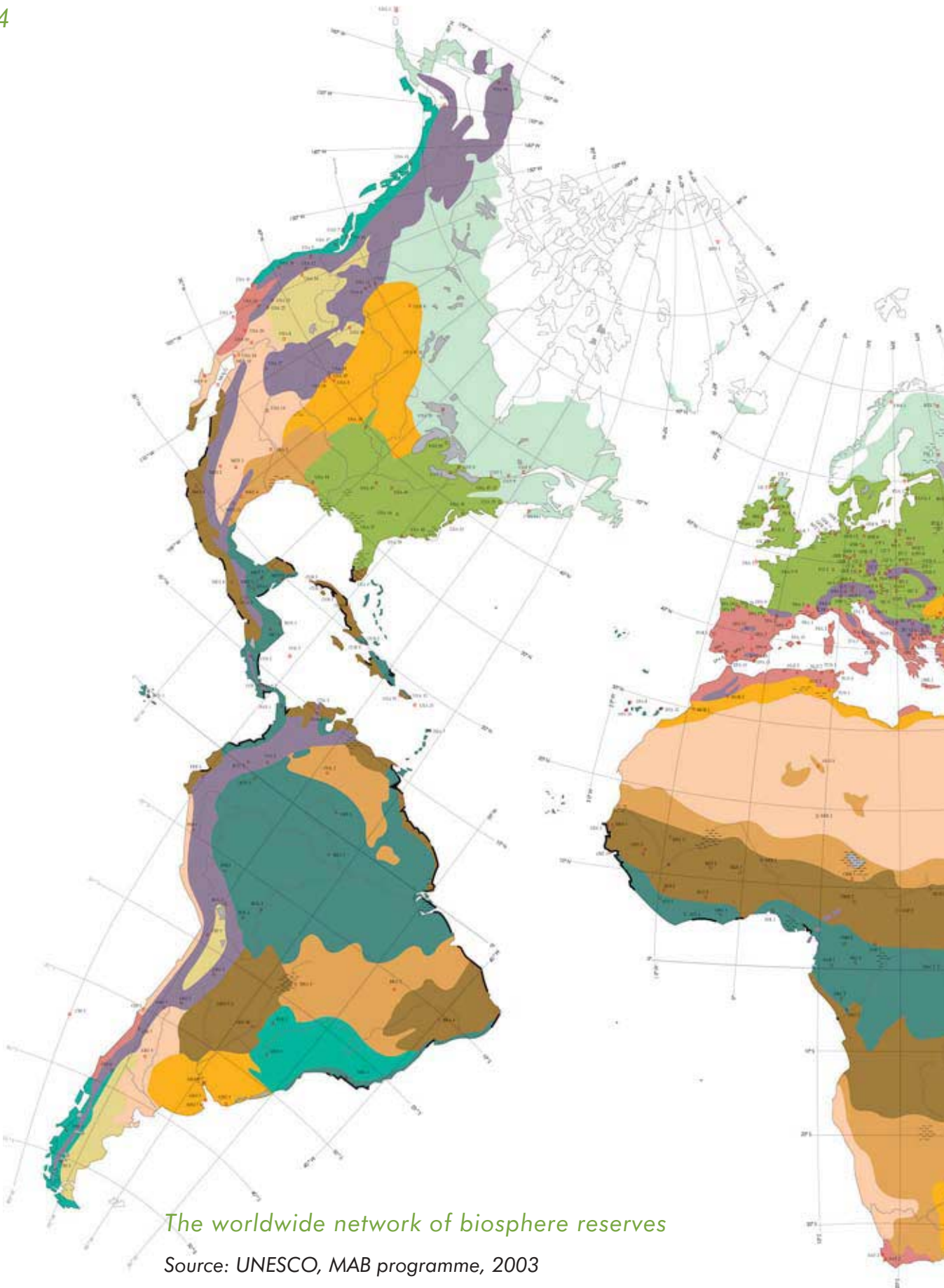
German MAB National Committee: <http://www.bfn.de/05/0506.htm>

UNESCO's MAB programme: <http://www.unesco.org/mab>

Austrian MAB National Committee: <http://www.oew.ac.at/deutsch/forschung/programme/mab.html>

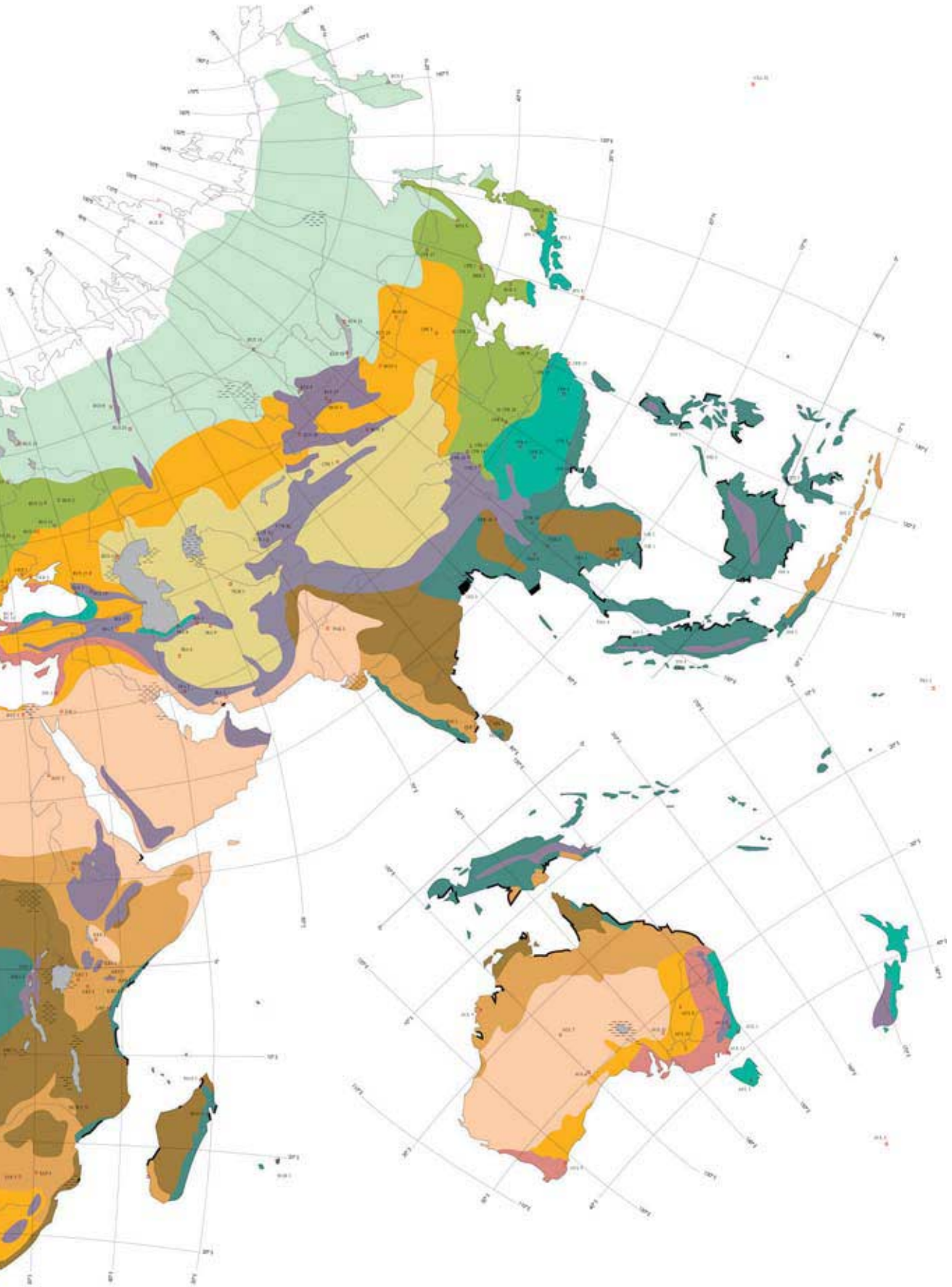
Protected area categories in Austria:

<http://www.umweltbundesamt.at/umwelt/naturschutz/schutzgebiete>



The worldwide network of biosphere reserves

Source: UNESCO, MAB programme, 2003



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