



Continuing decline in biodiversity

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Topics: Biodiversity

Biodiversity in Switzerland has continued to decline sharply in recent decades, and this trend is persisting. This is the result of an analysis by 35 scientific institutions all over Switzerland. Experts spoke today at the Zurich Zoo and the Neuchâtel Natural History Museum about their findings. The number of amphibians continues to decrease, in spite of protective measures for major spawning grounds, and conservation assistance programmes. Although moorland areas enjoy constitutional protection, they are nevertheless decreasing in size and are threatened by drying out and nitrogen input. Dry meadows with rich biodiversity are disappearing and greatly endangered plant types are disappearing in especially large numbers.

According to the professionals, the situation of surface waters is equally concerning. "In the lakes, the number of native whitefish species decreased by almost 40 percent between 1950 and 1990 as a result of eutrophication," reports Eawag's Florian Altermatt, who was involved in the study. In the meantime, the problem of eutrophication has been largely addressed, but with the introduction of hormone-active substances, active ingredients in pharmaceuticals and plant protection substances, new problems with negative impacts on aquatic organisms have arisen, explains Altermatt. Swiss waters also continue to suffer as a result of habitat loss, and the quality of habitats is also declining, due to construction or insufficient residual water volumes.

Measures to conserve and support rare plants, animals and habitats are to a certain extent proving effective, according to the scientists. In order to achieve a more complete turnaround of the trend, however, far more comprehensive efforts in all areas of society and policy will be needed. For this reason, the implementation of the proposed action plan for a biodiversity strategy in Switzerland is of the utmost importance.

Related Links

Media information by the Swiss Academy of Science

Report: "Zustand der Biodiversität in der Schweiz 2014" (The state of biodiversity in Switzerland, 2014)

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