



European Fire in Nature Conservation Network

North-Rhine Westphalia: Controlled fire and heather management in the nature reserve *Westruper Heide*

As one of the oldest nature reserves in the German state North-Rhine Westphalia, the Westruper Heide is under strict protection since 1937. The area is covered with heather, grassland and juniper stands, which grow on poor sandy dunes. It is located south of the city of Haltern and in the vicinity of the Ruhrgebiet. Since ten years, several conservation and restoration projects took place, and since six years, a sheep herd is grazing in the area.

The Westruper Heide is one of the last remaining dry *Calluna* areas in the Haltern area and provides habitat for unique bee species. However, the *Calluna* stands are overmature and monotonous. To regenerate the stands and to create structural diversity, prescribed burns are conducted in the area since two years by the Fire Ecology Group (GFMC) and *.33 H&H Heidepflege* to create small, highly structured burnt areas which are distributed over the entire area.

Results of the first burns are very promising, so that fire in combination with sheep herding is the method for heathland management in the Westruper Heide.

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Visual Impressions:



Winter burn 2002/2003



In front: *Calluna* regeneration one year after fire