

BIODIVERSITY CASE STUDY

Company: Cement plant Schelklingen, HeidelbergCement

Country: Quarry Vohnenbronnen, Baden-Württemberg, Germany

Title	Species protection program Grey Partridge (<i>Perdix perdix</i>)
Context	The intensification of agriculture and the growing use of pesticides led to an alarming decrease in Central Europe's grey partridge population. Large-scale land consolidations caused nearly the complete loss of partridge habitats. Therefore, the cement plant started the partridge project in 2008. The aim of the project was to create a structured landscape with a mosaic of large optimal partridge habitats in the Vohnenbronnen quarry. Of course, numerous other species, especially bird species, adapted to open habitats, and mammals like hares and roe deer are benefiting from the measures. Some partridge breeding pairs of the partridge were noted 8 years ago, close to the quarry. But all of these animals disappeared in the last few years. The fact that the bigger part of the surrounding area around the quarry is determined by mixed forests and intensively used agricultural land makes the creation of rich structured open habitats so much more important.
Solution	The quarry is 99 ha, 23 ha of which had been classical as recultivated. The south-western slopes had been reforested and new forests established by sowing forest plants. The upper parts of these woodlands are disrupted by thermophile semi-dry grassland, which are optimal feeding habitats for the partridge. To create further optimal partridge habitats, four insular woodlands and grassland with fruit trees were planted in the quarry floor. In between these woodlands, wild fields have been sown with a harmonized mixture of plants which meet the requirements of the partridge. Places for sand bathing were created in three locations. To protect the breeding sites of the partridge and other bird species, around 6 ha short term biotopes were spread over the whole area. These biotopes are characterized by species rich ruderal flora and open scrublands, which are perfect habitats for the partridge. 72 partridges derived from a German breeding were released in September 2008. While most were released directly into the quarry, 20 young partridges are still kept in aviaries to adapt to the new surrounding.
Result	Since the grey partridge is a highly endangered species which became very rare in the intensively used agricultural landscape, it is a species of common interest. To facilitate the adaptation phase, supplementary feeding places have been installed. These were well accepted in the beginning. After the partridges had been sighted over several weeks within the quarry area, it was realized, that the bigger part of the animals emigrated to settle in the nearby nature protection area „Schmiechener See“. What exactly led to the emigration of the animals remains unclear. Possibly, they felt disturbed by the ongoing operation in the quarry area. It is expected that the young animals, which are still kept in the aviaries, will stay in the quarry area after the release, because they have already adapted to their habitat.



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