



## River Courses

In the north German lowlands the Elbe becomes a broad, little obstructed and unregulated river. The river spreads out, seeks new paths, broadens the meanders, constantly changing the landscape, to the extent that man allows.

There is no set rhythm to the behavior of the river, no constants, except for dynamism and change itself. Especially typical for the Elbe are the summer floods. Since olden times these have been called »Johanni-Hochwasser« (»John the Baptist floods«). Sometimes they do not occur for years on end, only then to return with impressive magnitude. On the other hand, the winter floods are often more moderate than those of other German rivers. The yearly flood rhythm of the Elbe leaves its traces in the dike forelands. Here the gleaming sandbanks and bayous alternate. The gnarled remains of ancient alluvial forests give the landscape its special charm. The Middle Elbe is Germany's only sand-bed river. Sediment pushes itself forward with the floods. The millennia-long interplay between sedimentation, elution, desiccation, rewetting, and new sedimentation has created a richly structured mosaic of basins, depressions, bayous with varying degrees of silt deposits, and interior dunes formed by post-glacial piling like



those near Quitzöbel and Klein Schmölen (Lesser Schmölen). Within a small geographical area plants and animals can be found in the Elbe floodplain that require totally different habitats, whether extreme wet or downright aridity. The Biosphere reserve takes care of the preservation and improvement of this dynamic of the broad floodplain. In Germany's biggest dike back transfer near Lenzen 420 hectares flood area were returned to the river.

## Environmentally-Sustainable Land Use

Meadows and pasturing have for centuries left their mark for centuries on the landscape of the Elbe. In spite of the incalculability and often wet feet for men and animals farmers have never wanted to do without pasturing even in the forelands.



In the Elbe-Brandenburg River Landscape Biosphere Reserve, as in all the large reserves of Brandenburg, the goal is to show that land use can be environmentally sustainable. The State of Brandenburg invests considerable financial resources in the contractual nature conservation with agriculture. In the Elbe floodplain extensive cultivation was achieved on about one-half of the available grassland areas. The administration of the biosphere reserve supports the efforts toward the sales of regional, agricultural products. Work is done together with farmers and producers in secondary occupation to present and sell the products from the Westprignitz.

## Nature Watch

Whoever visits the Elbe floodplain seeks quiet, openness, and pristine beauty. But when the beauty of the landscape, intact ecological cycles, and important – because often the last – habitats for rare species are to be maintained, then one requires the intelligent and careful direction of the numerous »quiet seekers«. In the Brandenburg biosphere reserve this is accomplished by the personnel of the nature watch. Over the course of a two-year training program the men and women gain a foundational knowledge about ecosystems, conservation, biotope preservation, preservation law, historical development of the cultural landscape, tourism, and public relations work. The staff of the nature watch are equally available to visitors and locals to answer questions about the nature watch. They perform



environmental education work in schools and kindergartens and present the biosphere reserve at festivals, exhibitions, and other regional events. The supporting organization for the nature watch in Brandenburg is the foundation NaturSchutzFonds Brandenburg (Preservation Foundation of Brandenburg). Personnel from the nature watch are active in all Brandenburg large reserves and are easily identified by their uniform with the preservation owl as its symbol.

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Photographs: F. Neuschulz, R. Podloncky, B. Königstedt, V. Rinne (BUND)  
Map: Pro Line Concept, Berlin  
Design/Production: Power DesignThing GmbH  
Printing: Landesvermessung und Geobasisinformation Brandenburg  
As of: September 2013



Organisation  
der Vereinten Nationen  
für Bildung, Wissenschaft  
und Kultur



Flusslandschaft Elbe  
Biosphärenreservat im Programm  
Der Mensch und die Biosphäre  
seit 1979

Landesamt für  
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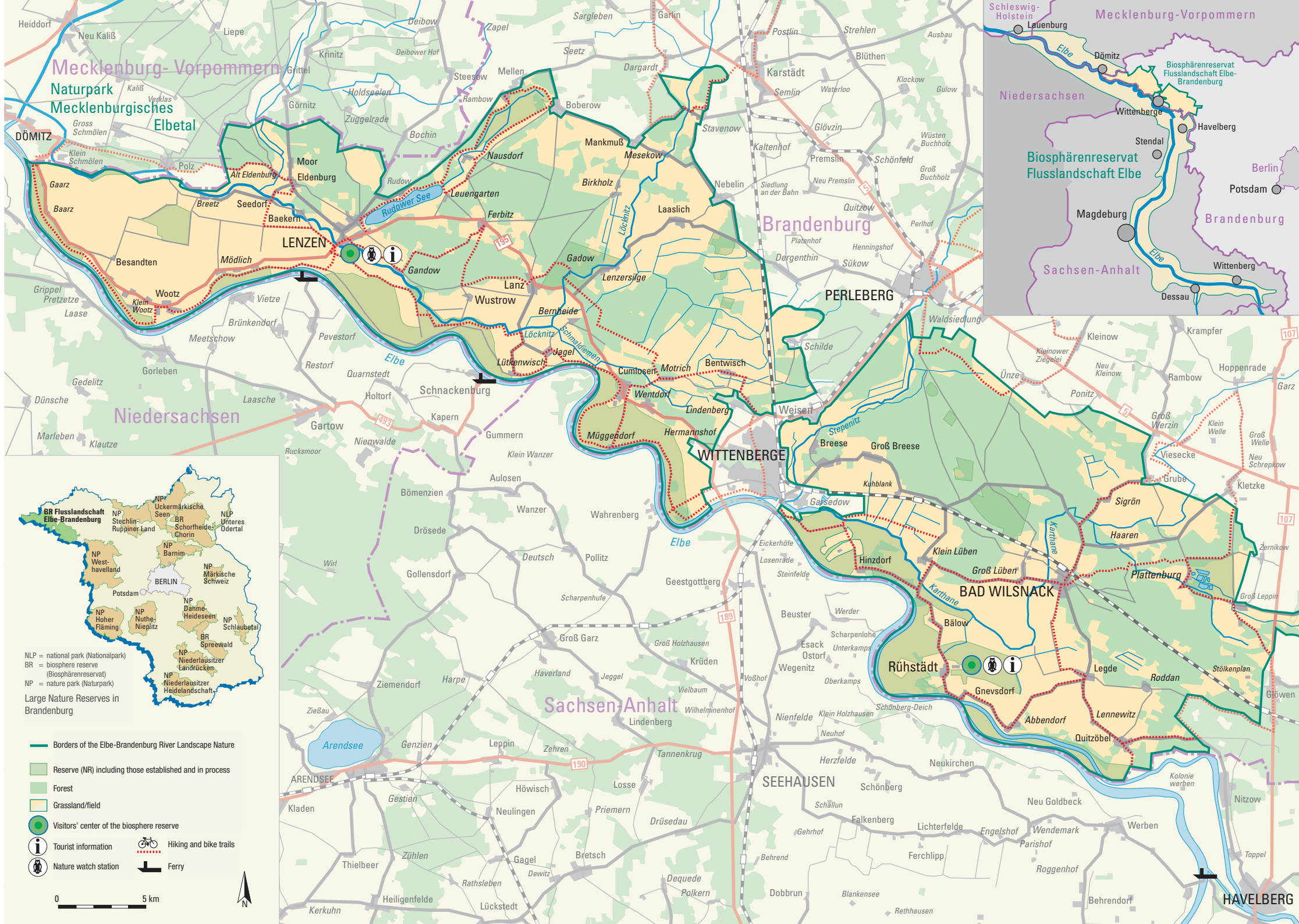


Elbe-Brandenburg  
River Landscape  
Biosphere Reserve

Nationale  
Naturlandschaften







The exhibition "Globe-trotter Adebar" of the NABU, shows all about the stork. Varying exhibitions in the gallery offer news even to regular guests.



On the premises of Lenzen Castle the BUND (League for Environment and Nature Conservation) operates the European Center for Floodplain Ecology, environmental education and visitor information. The permanent exhibition »River landscape along the Green Belt« can be seen here.

"Pan cake ice" floats on the Elbe in winter.



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The scientific interest in the near-natural river floodplain landscape and the historically accumulated cultural landscape on the river is large. Annually up to 30 scientific works are created in the biosphere reserve.

## Culture in the Cultural Landscape

Places such as Rühstädt, Bad Wilsnack, the Plattenburg (the oldest extant moated castle in northern Germany), Lanz (the hometown of the father of gymnastics, Friedrich Ludwig Jahn), or the Lenzen Castle are visited by many guests in the summer time. But there are other things to be discovered along the river. The marvelous Low German houses in the Marschhufendörfer (»row villages«) in the Lenzerwische, old cottage gardens, small village churches, in which one can still find the traces of times and generations past. Take the time to talk with the people in the villages. Come to know their sense of humor, their love of the old stories and of the river. Rühstädt is Germany's number one stork village. Over 40 breeding pairs return to this place every year. Thousands of tourists are drawn to Rühstädt during the stork season. In October 1995 eight staff members of the former nature park administration took up room in the new buildings of the preservation station on the edge of the village, which has since become a tourist magnet. Here one can see a stork exhibition of the conservation union. In the gallery of the house cultural events take place. The visitors' center is also the starting point for the numerous tours that the staff of the nature watch offer primarily in the summer months.