Exposé: Research on Endemics in the Hohe Tauern National Park

Endemics are species that occur worldwide only in a very limited area and therefore play a special role in biodiversity. Their conservation is of the highest priority in nature protection. Ironically, in the Hohe Tauern – one of Austria's most important centers of endemics (Rabitsch & Essl 2009) – up-to-date, precise data on their distribution, habitats, and threat status are still lacking. Available information is mostly historical and of limited use.

The Hohe Tauern National Park offers ideal conditions for the presence of highly specialized and partly relict species due to its location at the center of the Alpine arc, its altitudinal variation, and its glacial history. Many endemics remain insufficiently documented, even though national and international regulations – from the Biodiversity Convention to regional laws – require reliable data to support their protection.

While other regions, such as the Gesäuse or the Southern Limestone Alps, have already been studied, comparable up-to-date research is missing for the Central Alps. The **two scientific projects** announced aim to fill this research gap and, for the first time, establish modern, standardized foundations for endemic species management in the Hohe Tauern National Park.

Objectives and Expected Outcomes of the Two Scientific Projects (Selection)

- Development of current, GIS-compatible datasets for selected endemic groups
- Supplementation and updating of scientific reference collections
- Addition of data to the standard biodiversity database in coordination with the House of Nature
- Closing knowledge gaps in species inventories ("white spots")
- Documentation of habitat requirements and ecological behavior in the field
- Estimation of population sizes, threat potentials, and causes of endangerment
- Provision of baseline data for future biodiversity monitoring
- Identification of conservation management needs
- Scientific and popular-science presentation of results

These two projects make an important contribution to understanding Alpine biodiversity and strengthen the foundation for protecting unique species in the Hohe Tauern National Park. For scholarship recipients, they offer the opportunity to work on a current, ecologically highly relevant, and so far scarcely researched topic.

At the same time, it should be noted that the topic must be carried out independently, with academic supervision provided by a university advisor. The National Park can partially provide data, but it cannot assume scientific supervision of the work. If necessary and reasonable, certain expenses for essential fieldwork can be covered by the National Park.

ESSL F. & W. RABITSCH (Hrsg.) (2009): Endemiten Österreich. Kostbarkeiten in Österreichs Pflanzen- und Tierwelt. — Naturwissenschaftlicher Verein für Kärnten, Klagenfurt und Umweltbundesamt, Wien.