



Eawag's outdoor facilities receive certificate for their near-natural design

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Topics: Organisation & Staff

The near-natural landscaping of the green spaces around the Eawag buildings in Dübendorf not only promotes biodiversity, but also offers employees and visitors an attractive environment in which to spend time. Because of this, Eawag has now been awarded the certificate for near-natural company premises by the Natur & Wirtschaft (Nature & Economy) Foundation.

You don't have to walk far if you want to spend your lunch break in a green space at the Aquatic Research Institute Eawag. The terrace at the aQa restaurant, surrounded by near-natural meadows, the steps by the re-naturalised Chriesbach stream or one of the benches in the green strip between the buildings are perfect for a relaxing break. The near-natural elements were not only created for employees and visitors, but also to promote biodiversity.

Eawag has now received a certificate from the Natur & Wirtschaft Foundation for its near-natural company premises. In its announcement of the Eawag award, the foundation writes that Eawag demonstrates the feasibility of a balance between near-natural wilderness and a well-kept appearance through targeted planning and maintenance, and this not only increases the quality of life for people, but also protects natural habitats.

Eawag significantly surpasses specifications

To receive the certificate, at least 30% of the surrounding area must be designed in a near-natural way. Eawag significantly surpasses that, with 90% of its entire site being designed and maintained accordingly in a near-natural way. "The near-natural areas of over 8,320 m² show an impressive variety of woody plants and habitats," writes the foundation.

Not all the elements that were created as retreats and habitats for various animal species are immediately apparent, e.g., the wild hedge strip including deadwood along the Chriesbach stream, the heaps of stones or the sandy area newly created in spring for wild bees next to a small pond.

In Eawag's outdoor facilities, deadwood, a small pond, wild hedges and specially created small structures such as heaps of stones and sandy areas provide habitats for various animal species, thereby contributing to ecological biodiversity (Photos: Eawag, Claudia Carle, Alessandro Della Bella).

An unobstructed path for wild animals thanks to the lack of fences

According to the Natur & Wirtschaft Foundation, it is also worth noting that the site is open and continuous, as there is no fence along the plot perimeters. "The openness of the terrain promotes permeability for wild animals, because many fences and other inconspicuous obstacles often make it impossible for small animals such as hedgehogs to move around freely."

Afterwards, the environmental team, led by Dionys Hallenbarter, is now seeking certification for the Eawag site in Kastanienbaum. The application to do so has already been submitted to the Natur & Wirtschaft Foundation.

Commitment to bringing more nature to your doorstep

The Natur & Wirtschaft Foundation assists companies and institutions with designing their sites in a near-natural manner and awards a nationally recognised label to exemplary sites. More than 500 Swiss institutions from all sectors are currently certified. This results in a natural area of around 40 million square metres, with many of the designated areas being true biodiversity hotspots. For example, all of Switzerland's endangered amphibian species can be found on the certified sites.

Cover picture: 90 percent of the entire Eawag site is designed to be near-natural and is also maintained accordingly (Photo: Eawag, Alessandro Della Bella).

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