

Reintroduction project "Common Hamster in Aachen (North Rhine-Westphalia) - the second year"

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In Aachen, the common hamster (*Cricetus cricetus*), originally widespread, disappeared in the 1990s. As in other regions, the reasons for this were the intensification of agriculture and the loss of habitats. Especially in Aachen another reason was the establishment of an industrial estate. In May 2018, the NABU Nature Conservation Station Aachen made in North Rhine-Westphalia (NRW) the first attempt to reintroduce field hamsters (*Cricetus cricetus*) and released 26 animals. Another 33 hamsters were released 2019. The releases 2018 and 2019 took place in intensive co-operation and support with local farmers, the province Limburg (NL), the Gaia Zoo (Kerkrade, NL) and the lower nature protection authority of the city Aachen.

The content of the presentation is a review of last year's work and results, this year's release of hamsters and their development. In addition, observations on the significance of different structures in the area are discussed. Finally, the future management and habitat development will be presented.

Review - what happened in 2018

- suitability and availability of the area
- organisation of area management
- release of 26 animals
- 10 burrows in mid-summer
- first proof of reproduction in the wilderness of released hamsters in NRW

Development in 2019

- agricultural use
- hamster population spring 2019: 5 burrows end of may
- release of 33 hamsters
- proof of reproduction
- hamster population autumn 2019: 32 burrows end of September

Observations of interest

- special structures in the release area seem to have a positive effect
- only a few hamsters could be observed outside the releasing area

Future management

- crop rotation
- Creation of a further fallow as an additional structure

Outlook

- repetition of release
- acquisition of further "hamster-friendly" farmland
- public relations work
- creation of suitable retreat structures (fallows)
- monitoring

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