



Whinchat, Green Belt Saxony-Anhalt (Ute Machell)

Environmental education with kindergarten children in the Green Belt Thuringia (BUND Project Office Green Belt)

# Closing Gaps in the Green Belt Germany

## A Project by BUND (Friends of the Earth Germany)

### The Green Belt - Backbone of Habitat Diversity in Germany

The outstanding ecological value of the 1,393 km long inner-German Green Belt lies in the connection of 149 different habitat types, home for more than 1,200 red-listed plant and animal species. It connects habitats that, in today's intensively used cultural landscape, are otherwise cut off from one another. It crosses 17 natural regions of Germany and, like a backbone builds linkages to more distant habitats.

The so called "central Green Belt", the area from the former border of West-Germany (FRG) and East-Germany (GDR) to the former way for military vehicles, has a size of 17,712 ha (177 km<sup>2</sup>) and is about 50 to 200 metres wide. 64% of the area are endangered habitat types from the German Red List, 68% are protected. By adding the protected area within a 10-kilometre corridor, this ecological network extends to more than 2,200 km<sup>2</sup>.

### First Achievements

Due to the management measures within the project "Closing Gaps in the Green Belt" various endangered species profited: For example the Whinchat (*Saxicola rubetra*), flag ship species of the German Green Belt. In the model region "Arendsee-Salzwedel" (Saxony-Anhalt) a survey of clutches on an area of 1,100 hectares verified that the breeding success could be doubled after the first year the measures were conducted.

In two of the project regions also two critically endangered dragonfly species were found along ditch systems: The Mercury Bluet (*Coenagrion mercuriale*) and the Ornate Bluet (*C. ornatum*). The occurrence will be now surveyed and monitored and the management of the ditches will be adapted to its needs by intensive exchange with the water management associations.

### Public Relation

Integral part of the project is a comprehensive public relation work: Information events, press trips and continuous media work, films and various information material, an exhibition, information panels along the Green Belt and many more activities. Also the Green Belt mascot was developed and the name "Bandi" was determined by a name-competition on Facebook.

### Contact:

**BUND Project Office Green Belt**  
**Regional Coordinator Green Belt Central Europe**  
 BUND Naturschutz in Bayern e.V.  
 Hessestrasse 4, 90443 Nuremberg, Germany  
 phone ++49-911-575294-0  
 fax ++49-911-575294-20  
 greenbelt@bund-naturschutz.de

Bund für  
Umwelt und  
Naturschutz  
Deutschland



FRIENDS OF THE EARTH GERMANY

### Closing Gaps

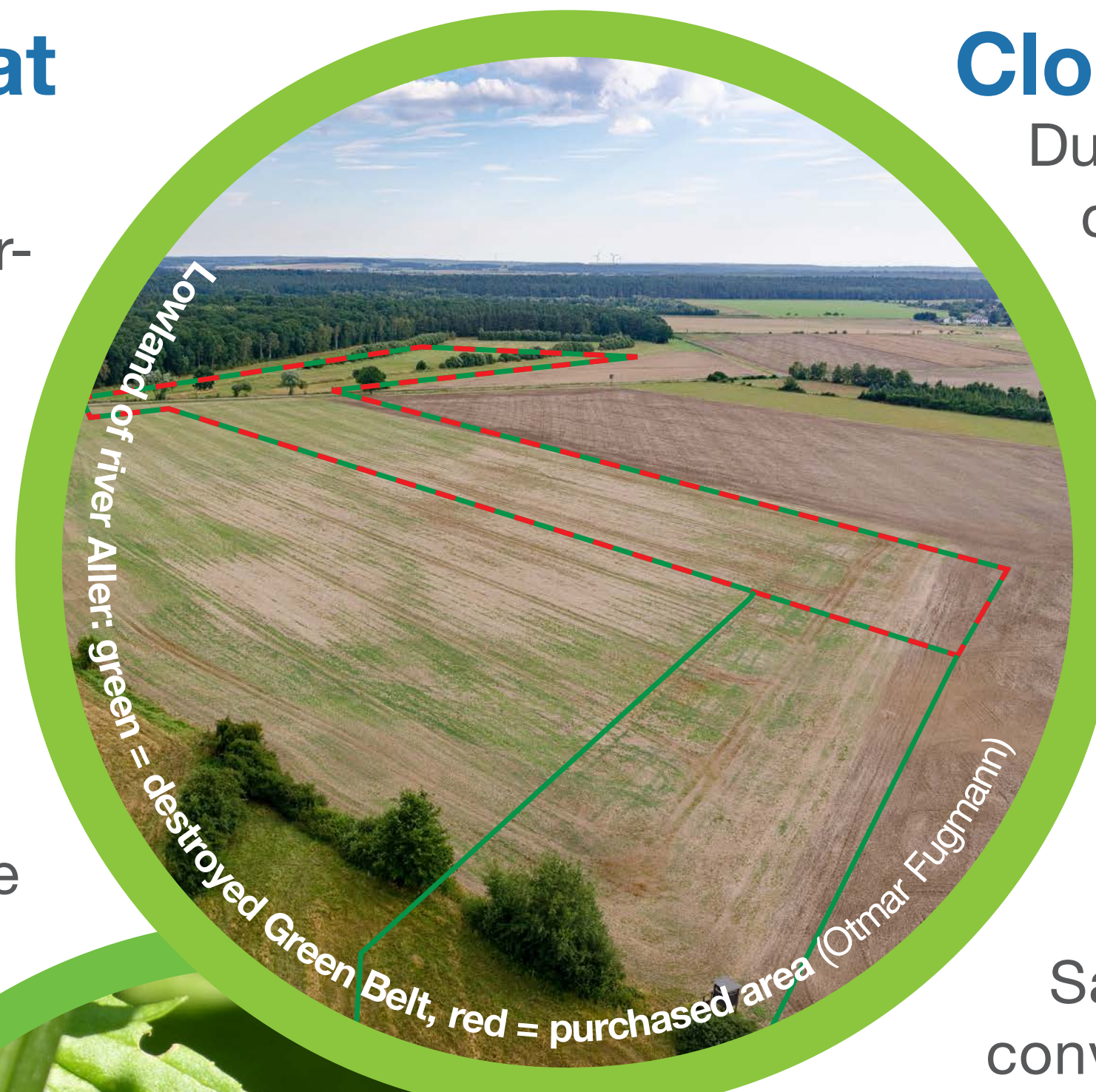
Due to pressure from industrial agriculture valuable habitats are converted into intensively managed grassland or farmland. 87% of total area of the central Green Belt and 80% of length are still near-natural, but 13% of total area is destroyed by agriculture, intensively managed grassland, road construction and commercial development. BUND is working to restore former connections and create new cross-linkages.

In cooperation with the German Federal Agency for Nature Conservation (BfN) BUND launched in 2012 the project "Closing Gaps in the Green Belt" (duration until 2018). In collaboration with its regional divisions in Thuringia and Saxony-Anhalt, BUND is purchasing large areas of land and converting them into valuable habitats. Furthermore, BUND is aiming at developing cross connections to other ecological corridors.

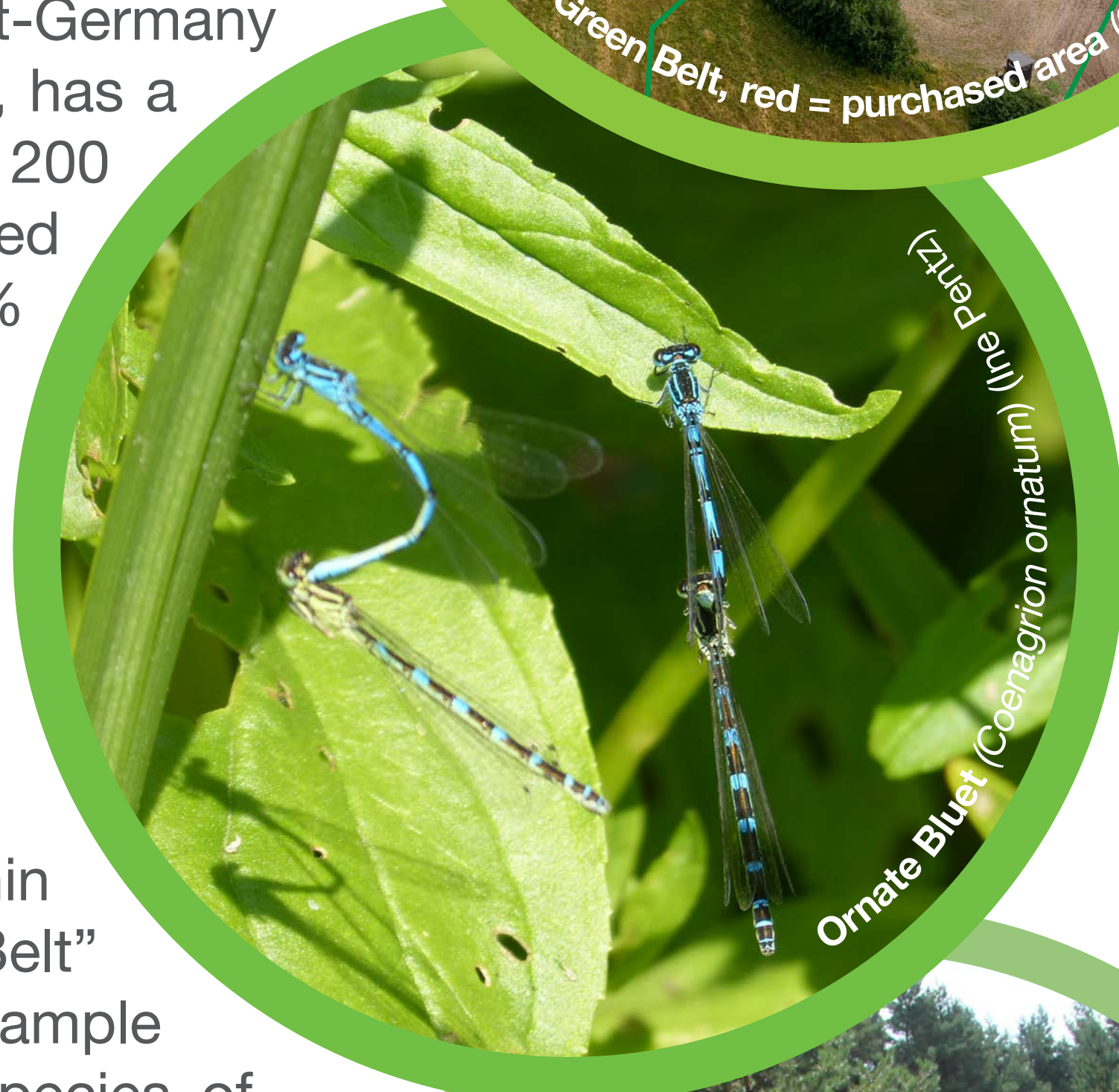
### Purchase of Land, Habitat Management and Monitoring

Up to now (11/2016) 100 land parcels with an overall size of 91 hectares (128 football fields!) could be purchased in the model regions of the project. BUND is cooperating closely with farmers and land users. For the purchased areas new lease agreements were concluded which regulate the nature-related use of the areas: This comprises e. g. the converting of arable land into extensively used grassland, less frequently mowing and abandonment of fertilization.

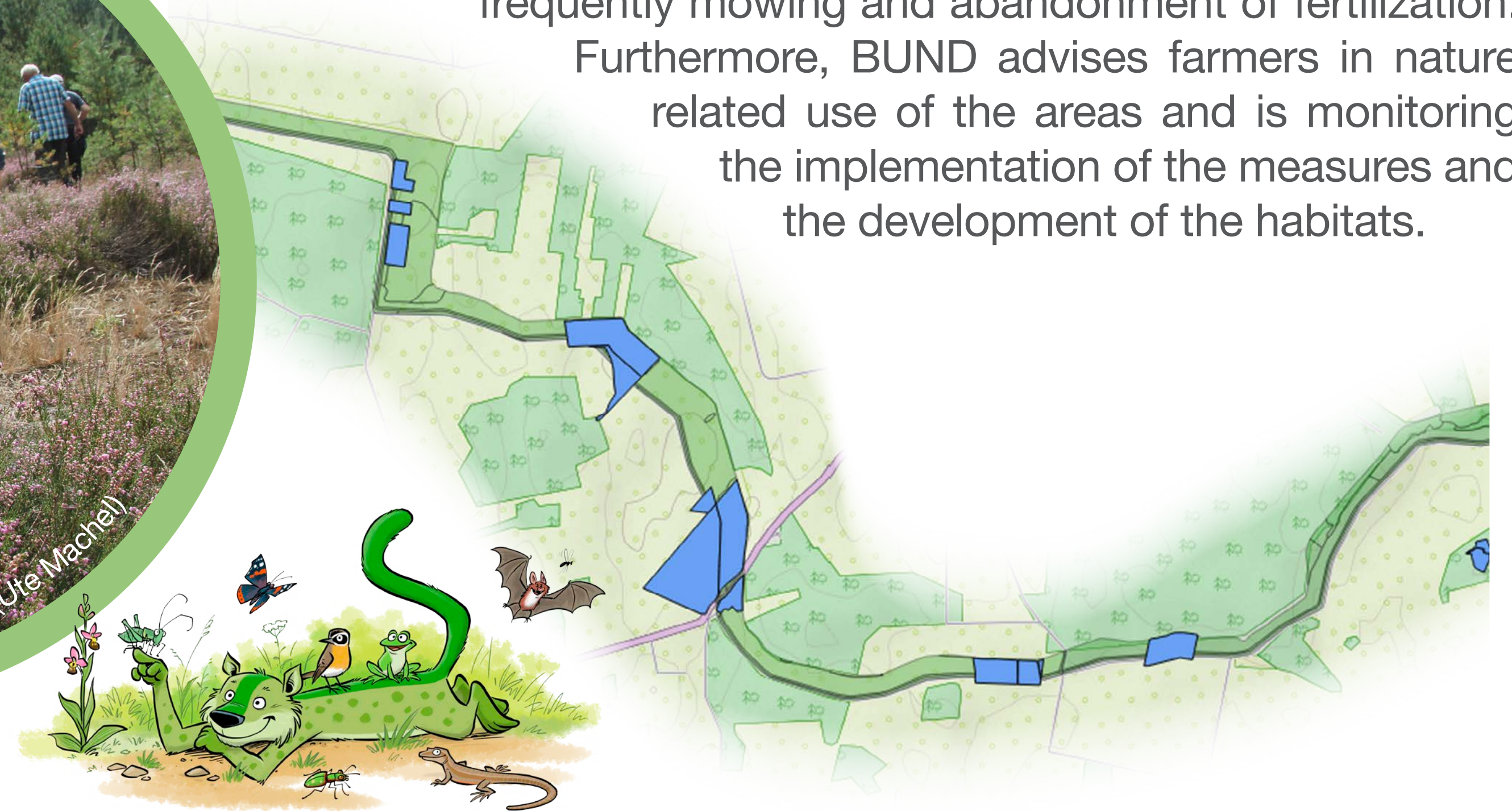
Furthermore, BUND advises farmers in nature related use of the areas and is monitoring the implementation of the measures and the development of the habitats.



Lowerland of river Aller-green = destroyed Green Belt, red = purchased area (Ottmar Fugmann)

Ornate Bluet (*Coenagrion ornatum*) (Zuzana Eul)

Bandi and hiker's in heather along the Green Belt (Ute Machell)



### More than 25 years of Green Belt Work

This and other projects are made possible by donations for the Green Belt, so BUND can provide the necessary matching funds. In 'closing the gaps', BUND is building on its more than 25 years of uninterrupted Green Belt activities, which today are being implemented in nine pilot regions, where BUND purchased around 700 hectares of valuable habitats.

### Literature:

Geidezis, L.; Schlumprecht, H., Leitzbach, D.; Frobel, K. (2015): Forschungs- und Entwicklungsvorhaben "Aktualisierung der Bestandsaufnahme Grünes Band mit Schwerpunkt der Veränderungen in den Offenlandbereichen" / Update of the habitat type inventory of the German Green Belt with an emphasis on changes in open areas (English abstract available), *Natur und Landschaft* 90 (11): 503 - 509.

BUND/Friends of the Earth Germany (2015): *Nature Heritage Green Belt – Borders separate. Naure unites.* English leaflet, revised 2nd edition.

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