



- Natural Disturbances by Humans?
- - Prescribed fires in heathlands -

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### Introduction

Heathlands are man-made ecosystems, which are unique habitats for several endangered species. They developed through intensive use of these areas, nutrient export and regular burning or mowing. In our days, the use of heather and sheep grazing have disappeared, so that the formerly poor soils have accumulated more and more nutrients. The heathlands we know today are senescent and haven't been used since ~~many decades~~ <sup>many decades</sup>. Natural succession of pioneer tree species and grasses can be observed in all not-used heathlands. In the long run, these areas will develop into forests, if no conservation action takes place.



Fire - a natural disturbance - used by humans

Wildland fires occur since biomass and oxygen are available on this planet.

In the case of heathlands, fires were set by shepherds since centuries to stimulate sprouting.



### Fire and ethics

The destructive power of fire can be observed at many places, and also in heathlands it consumes the entire flora and fauna, which can not escape or can not take cover. Fire interrupts the natural path of succession and puts the ecosystems into an earlier stage.

Do humans „have the right“ to interrupt natural succession, using the extreme power of fire? Is this extreme intervention in an ecosystem acceptable?



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