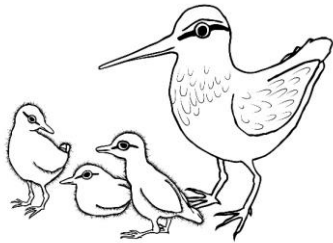


Unique Species

Pretty feathered pink & common sandpiper



With intact habitats, the Gesäuse offers space for some very rare and endangered species. The pretty feathered pink and the common sandpiper are representative of all species with a high rarity value and special protection status in the national park.

Threatened Habitats

The red lists of endangered animal and plant species in Austria are getting longer every year. The main reason for this is the loss of natural habitats. In Gesäuse National Park, where nature is given free rein, many species find a refuge. On the free-flowing Enns you will find numerous gravel banks with their specially-adapted flora and fauna. There is enough dead wood in the forests which many insects live on and, as a result, woodpeckers and other animals. Human interference is kept to a minimum and large areas remain largely unaffected by human influence.

In addition to the high diversity of natural and threatened habitats, historical landscape changes also contribute to the high level of biodiversity in the area.



Pretty Feathered Pink, Photo: Greimler

During the last Ice Age around 10,000 years ago, the mighty ice sheet that covered the entire Alpine region advanced as far as the Gesäuse region, while the area itself remained almost ice-free.

Many alpine species were able to survive here, but some of them did not spread back into the Alps after the Ice Age. They still only occur in a few regions. These species are called *endemics* and Gesäuse National Park is particularly rich in such local unique species. The pretty feathered pink is one of these endemics.

Pretty feathered pink



CHARACTERISTICS

- Habitat:** Limestone and dolomite scree fields . Sparse mountain pine thickets and Scots pine forests exclusively in the north-eastern Kalkalpen on the south side of the Dachstein massif and Grimming mountain, in the Toten Gebirge and Gesäuse Mountains!
- Occurrence:**
- Flowering period:** May to July
- Growth height:** 10 to 20 cm
- Unique feature:** very limited distribution, local unique species (endemic)

The pretty feathered pink (*Dianthus plumarius* subsp. *blandus*) found here is a subspecies of the actual carnation, well-known as a cultivated form from the garden. In the Haindlkar and Gsenggraben, where it is particularly common, it is easy to spot in early summer from May to July.

In addition to its pink flowers, long, runner-like leg shoots and the lanceolate leaves, the pink carnation is characterized by its intense scent, like honey. During the main flowering period, you can often smell the plants before you spot them along the way.

The unique thing about the pretty feathered pink is its very small distribution area. This species is found only in the north-eastern Kalkalpen on the south side of the Dachstein massif and Grimming mountain, in the Toten Gebirge and the largest populations is in the Gesäuse Mountains! It survived the last Ice Age in this area and stopped spreading after the glacier retreated. Due to their limited distribution, preserving their habitat is an important goal in nature conservation!



Cluster of pretty feathered pink, Photo: Greimler

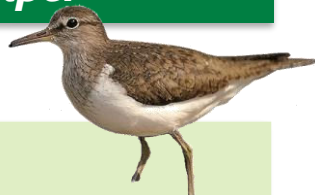
During the nesting and fledgling-rearing period between May and July, common sandpipers must not be disturbed, otherwise they may abandon their nests!

In Austria, this species is highly endangered and strictly protected. It is listed in the Red List of Breeding Birds. The loss of habitat in particular is leading to its downfall. Unfortunately, as a result of intensive management and construction on watercourses, there are hardly any gravel banks and natural shore areas left. Fortunately, in Gesäuse National Park, where the river Enns can still flow freely, there are still some ideal areas for the common sandpiper to breed. Four to six pairs are recorded here every year - a considerable proportion of the total Styrian population!



Common Sandpiper, Photo: Marek

Common Sandpiper



CHARACTERISTICS

- Habitat:** gravel bars and forest edges on gravel banks of rivers and lakes
- Occurrence:** Europe including Scandinavia
- Breeding season:** May to July
- Height:** 18 to 20 cm
- Unique feature:** great rarity on Central European waters

What can I do??

Avoid any disturbance in the sandpiper breeding areas and respect the ban on entering the shore areas.

Do not trample on scree off the trails and respect the ban on picking flowers.

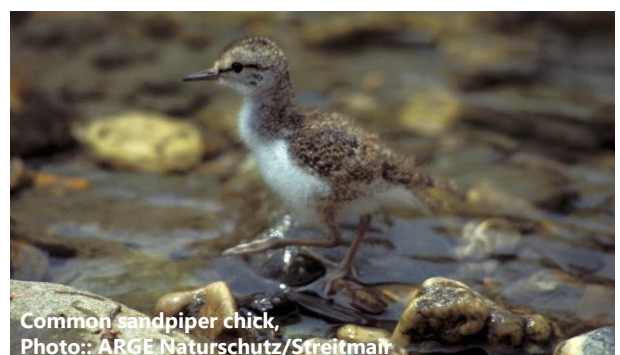
Further information

Department of Nature Conservation & Research
www.nationalpark-gesaeuse.at/en/research-and-monitoring

The common sandpiper (*Actitis hypoleucos*) is a small wading bird found along the banks of water bodies. Its plumage is mottled grey-brown on top and pure white on the belly. Constant rocking on its hindquarters and the call "hidididi" help to identify it.

Its diet consists of insects, spiders and crustaceans, which it catches by prodding its long beak into river banks and water.

In addition to predators, floods pose the greatest threat to clutches of eggs and chicks that are not yet able to fly.



Common sandpiper chick, Photo: ARGE Naturschutz/Streitmar