



Audi Environmental Foundation

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Audi Environmental Foundation: Bat nature trail supports wildlife conservation efforts

- Information display boards raise awareness of endangered animals
- Dr. Rüdiger Recknagel, Managing Director of the Audi Environmental Foundation: “We want to inspire visitors to care for nature and the environment”

Ingolstadt/Handthal, June 6, 2016 – The educational facility “Steigerwald Center – experiencing sustainability” has gained yet another highlight: From now on, a bat-themed nature trail will teach visitors of all ages about these mammals, some of which are threatened with extinction. The nature trail was officially opened on Friday in Handthal, Lower Franconia, by representatives of the Audi Environmental Foundation, the Wildlife Conservation Federation in Franconia, the Bavarian State Ministry of the Environment and Consumer Protection, and the Bavarian State Forestry Commission.

What do bats eat? What do they do in winter? And why do they sleep hanging upside down? Answers to questions like these about the bat species can now be found on the 300 meter (*984.3 ft*) long bat nature trail at “Steigerwald Center – experiencing sustainability.” It extends the more than 1,000 square meter (*10,763.9 sq ft*) information center in Handthal. Visitors of all ages can learn more there about the forest habitat at hands-on interactive stations.

Four new stations feature large, colorfully designed display boards that teach visitors interesting facts about native bat species and their habitat. They learn, for example, how bats use echolocation to track their food. An innovative design means that the display boards appeal to multiple age groups simultaneously, including preschoolers, students and adults. Younger visitors learn more about bats through numerous pictures and hands-on interactive stations. At a special fun station there is a bar where



they can hang upside down, just like a bat. Informative text modules, on the other hand, teach adults in detail about the endangerment of bats and about ways to protect them.

A special feature of the information display boards along the bat nature trail: Their frames are not made of wood, but of metal. Even so, they are covered with a special powder coating that gives them a wood-like appearance. This makes the surface of the metal frame look and even feel like the bark of a tree. As a result, the frames blend in perfectly with the forest ecosystem while also being more durable than frames made of wood.

Visitors can also use their smartphones to access more in-depth information about bats online using tracking numbers.

The use of modern technology has always been a part of the concept of the Steigerwald Center. The digital resources are an attractive and modern way to help visitors learn more about the subject of environmental protection. The “tree experience”, for instance, explains cycles of nature like photosynthesis in an especially clear and easy-to-understand way. “We provide sustainable and integrated support for projects that protect the environment. That is important to us. This is why we not only focused on the interior of the information center, but also get visitors interested in wildlife conservation and the environment directly outdoors in nature and using multimedia. The new bat nature trail is a fun way to raise awareness and inform people,” said Dr. Rüdiger Recknagel, Managing Director of the Audi Environmental Foundation.

Environmental education and wildlife conservation are two focal areas for the Audi Environmental Foundation. This also includes the company's involvement with the Steigerwald Center, which opened in 2014. The Audi Environmental Foundation is supporting the project over a five-year period with EUR 250,000. The center is using the money in particular to acquire high-quality multimedia exhibits.

The bat nature trail is the third environmental education and wildlife conservation project for the Audi Environmental Foundation in the Franconia region. The foundation has already supported the “Outdoor Classroom” environmental center project in Breitengüßbach as well as the environmental education project “The last jackdaw colonies in Bavaria.”

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