Highest alpine moor in Switzerland

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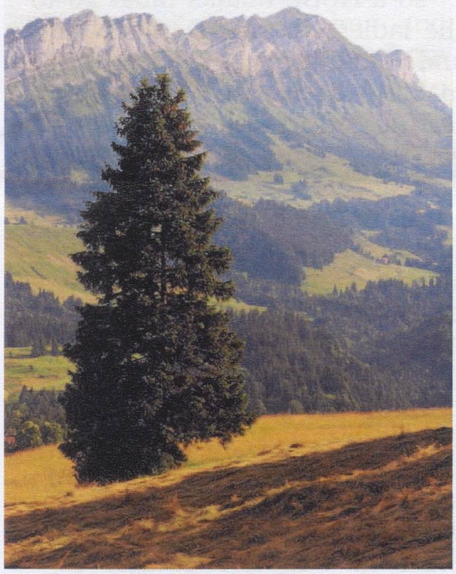
Sometimes being a little removed from the mainstream can be a lucky break for a region.



Entlebuch valley

This is indeed the case for the Entlebuch Valley, the narrow valley full of gorges, with the Kleine Emme flowing through it, between Schrattenfluh, Napf and the Luzerner Hinterland. It is thanks to its remoteness that the Entlebuch Valley has remained as intact as it has. It still has unique alpine moors, and the people who live here still engage in traditional forest and agricultural cultivation. Therefore, the valley's chances to become a UNESCO Natural Biosphere Reserve Site candidate are quite good.

Hikers will want to explore this beautiful region. Start in Sörenberg, where Switzerland's largest Alpine moor system lies just underneath the Schrattenfluh, Rothorn and Hohgant. Or they may prefer to explore the Moor Didactic Trail of Entlebuch, weaving the beauty of the Finster Forest into the lovely landscapes so typical for this region.

from the internet

The history of Goldpanning in the Napf area

According to Posidonius (135 - 50 B.C.) the Celts and the Gauls have collected alluvial gold. Switzerland had a reputation for being an area rich in gold. Celtic gold coins have been found near the Napf.

It is thought also that the Romans came to the Napf area as the name of the stream "Grande Fontanne" comes from the Latin word meaning "fountain". Was this perhaps the fountain of gold?

The oldest record of Swiss gold prospecting dates from the 11th century; the Muri Monastery paid the "denarius aureus" with gold dust from the Reuss as its papal dues.

Goldprospecting, which must have been practised much earlier, became a profession for people from the Lucerne region from the 14th to the 19th century. Those professional gold prospectors were called "golders". As early as 1523 the State of Lucerne was granted a monopoly for the buying of indigenous precious metals. Up to 1800 the monopoly purchased 31 kg of placer gold, which was smelted into 1500 gold coins. However, this figure does not represent the total output. The gilders and the goldsmiths preferred the Lucerne gold to that from other localities because of its exceptional purity and paid the golders very well for it.

The form of the gold

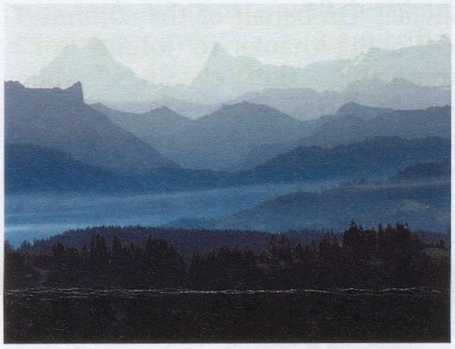
The alluvial Napf gold occurs mainly as gold flakes. It is characterised by a porous surface and a brilliant yellow colour. The size of the grains varies between 0.2 and 2 mm across and at least 0.1 mm thickness.

Transportation downstream causes a reduction in size of the grains of gold. They are abraded by the moving gravels. This fact can be demonstrated by the number of grains weighing one gramme. For example, in the Grande Fontanne 1500 to 2000 particles weigh one gramme, in the lower course it is some 3000. In the Rhine between Freiburg and Mannheim it is 20,000 particles and further down it can be 160,000 particles.

Events since 1900

After 1900 the profession of a goldprospector was abandoned. An 18th century goldprospector could survive thanks to the Napf gold but could no longer today. The purchasing power of gold has declined in the last two hundred years while wages have risen. Despite this there have been new attempts. In 1933 the engineer Killias found gold around the Ramisgummen (the neighbouring massif to the Napf). He collected nuggets of a previously unknown size, but this harvest was insufficient for commercial exploitation.

In 1939 an Anglo-Swiss society methodically studied the Napf area with a view to an even-



View from Napf

tual exploitation. These studies showed that even if sometimes there was an appreciable quantity of gold, exploitation would render the countryside useless. The findings of the Bureau of Mines of the Confederation struggling against unemployment of 1941 and 1943 reluctantly came up with the same result.

Since then and up to 1967 the Napf gold was forgotten. Then the area was slowly rediscovered by amateurs.

from the internet