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An ornithological observation



I am not an ornithologist. But I do like birds. Preferably those which are flying free, which are not stuck in a cage. I recently came across a bird I had never seen before, early one morning in the Bernese Alps. A strange, loud, rolling sound pierced the silence. What was that? A proud black grouse, *Lyrurus tetrix*, appeared on a nearby hill. Its magnificent blue-black plumage glistened, its tail feathers glowed white, and

its crest red. Its call reverberated through the vast basin of the valley. Then it flew away. It was a stroke of luck for me. As a potentially endangered species, the animal is included on the Red List and has become so rare on the northern side of the Swiss Alps that I was highly unlikely to cross its path. This is nothing new: biodiversity is under extreme pressure in Switzerland too.

The Swiss parliament is also presently occupied with the topic of protected animals. It wants to permit the shooting of hitherto strictly protected animals. There is still disagreement about whether to now target wolves and beavers – or perhaps wolves and lynxes. It was further proposed that levels of protection of the grey heron, the goosander and the unremarkable woodcock should be relaxed. Our black grouse was also included in the debate. This raised the question in the Council of States as to why the Confederation puts endangered species – including the black grouse – on the Red List and then simultaneously permits their numbers to be depleted.

First protect, then decimate. That is clearly a dramatic change of position. Furthermore, the more contradictory established policy seems to be, the more incomprehensible it appears to outsiders. Perhaps this is why students are currently taking to the streets in their thousands. They are calling loudly for consistent climate policy, as this is the only way to avoid a potentially disastrous shift in the climate change process. They clearly have little confidence in policy to date.

From an ornithological perspective, the city centres on strike days can be compared to a noisy aviary. However, the old hands in the political establishment are increasingly responding to the youthful twittering: in light of the coming elections, the majority of Swiss parties are painting themselves green. This is reason enough for the "Swiss Review" to pay closer attention and explore the issue in depth. What makes the young people who are marching at the forefront of these demonstrations tick (Page 6)?

MARC LETTAU, CHIEF EDITOR

Cover photo: Young climate activist Wirada Läderach during a demonstration in Bern. Photo: Danielle Liniger