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## Thal Nature Park – Solothurn's Fine Natural Heritage



<http://www.solothurn-city.ch/en/discoveries/natural-sites/thal-nature-park-5136.html>

*The Thal Nature Park in the Canton of Solothurn is the only Regional Nature Park of national significance after the Entlebuch region. Read about this unique treasure in the Jura Mountains.*

The “Thal” District is tucked away north of the city of Solothurn between two Jura mountain chains, including by the Weissenstein peak in the south-west and the Wasserfallen peak in the north-east. The valley slopes gently towards the east and the local town of Balsthal, where a “Klus”, a break through the Jura mountain chains, allows access to Switzerland’s central plains.

The “Thal”, as the valley is known, has always been quite remote due to the mountainous Jura chains surrounding it. As a result of its remoteness, the effects of human activities have been moderate. Significant areas of forest continue to exist, with agriculture mainly limited to the valley bottom.

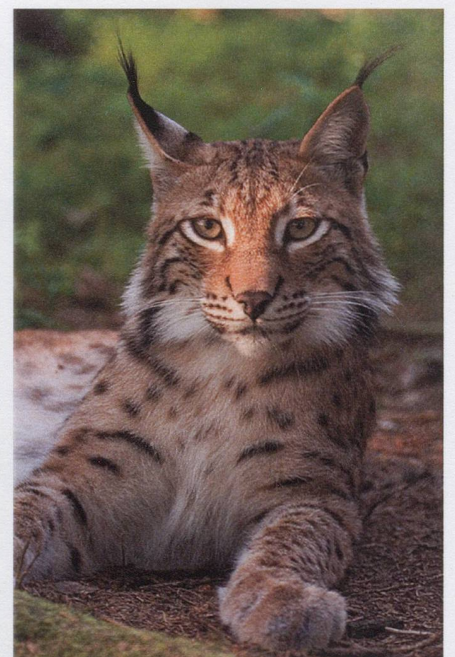
Similar to the Entlebuch region, the Thal Nature Park promotes the preservation of nature and landscape, by integrating the local communities and economy. Nature tourism has particular importance, given the many Jura mountain tracks which are accessed from the Thal and the economic opportunities it provides.

Nature is rich with its beech, beech-pine and fir forests. Higher up in the mountains, cattle grazing and dry meadows are the main feature. It is this natural diversity which allows many

common and rare animals and plants to flourish, from the many undisturbed waterways and forests, to the peaks of the Jura mountain chains. Up there, chamoix, raptors and even lynx are present, while in the lower forest areas, many rare bird species, bats, badgers, foxes and stoats occur.

As a little side note: although I have been born in the City of Basel, I am a Citizen of the village of Matzendorf which lies in the middle of the Thal Nature Park. My ancestors by the name of Eggenschwiler had to escape from the French Alsace during the 30 Year War in the early 1600s. At the time, marauding mercenary armies of various origin are said to have killed as much as 50% of Alsace’s population. My ancestors, being Catholic, carefully circumvented Protestant Basel, with the Thal probably pretty much the first habitable (and Catholic) place they came across in the safety of Switzerland.

The Thal Nature Park is well organised by a dedicated council and organisation consisting of members of the local communities. It offers many cultural and nature-based experiences for all levels of activity and ages. It will be a must see for me next time I am in Switzerland and maybe it will be for you, too! SW



Rare lynx

Photo: Bernard Landgraf, [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lynx#/media/File:Lynx lynx\\_poing.jpg](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lynx#/media/File:Lynx lynx_poing.jpg)