



PRESS RELEASE

AN INFORMATION FROM THE NATIONAL PARK THAYATAL

New species of cicada found in the National Park Thayatal Sensational contribution to the Year of Biodiversity

(Hardegg, June 2010) **Suited to the International Year of Biodiversity, scientists have a sensation to report: a species of cicada was found in the National Park Thayatal for the first time in Austria: the Big Leafhopper. A total of 167 species were documented, but research has not yet ended. Further sensational discoveries are not excluded. For Robert Brunner, Director of the National Park, it confirms that protected areas are indispensable.**

A survey of the cicadas in the National Park Thayatal led to an astounding discovery: among the already 167 known species, there was new evidence for Austria. The Big Leafhopper (*Paluda flaveola*) is in good company in the cross-border protected area. Eight more species could be found for the first time in Lower Austria, but also other highly threatened or endangered species of cicadas were documented.

Mr. Gernot Kunz, cicada specialist at the University of Graz, goes even further in his estimations. Because of the high variety of plants in the Thayatal, he considers the area of the park as one of the most important habitats for cicadas. He assumes that more than 230 species are native to this protected area.

In Austria, there are a total of 600 species of cicadas, which therefore are part of one of Austria's animal groups richest in species and individuals. They feed principally off plants and are even often tied to a unique host plant. Because of their specialised feeding, the high density of species and individuals in every terrestrial grassland biotope and their high sensitivity to varying environmental conditions, cicadas are becoming more and more important as indicators in nature conservation surveys and monitoring measures.

Two thirds of the documented cicada species occur in the open areas of the National Park, the dry grasslands and the meadows. "Through regular tending measures and mowing of these habitats, the National Park Thayatal makes an important contribution to the protection of species", explains national park biologist Claudia Wurth-Waitzbauer, "land consolidation, the renunciation of the extensive use of marginal areas such as neglected grasslands, as well as the transformation of grassland into arable land are responsible for the endangering of the local cicada fauna".

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The National Park Thayatal supports:

