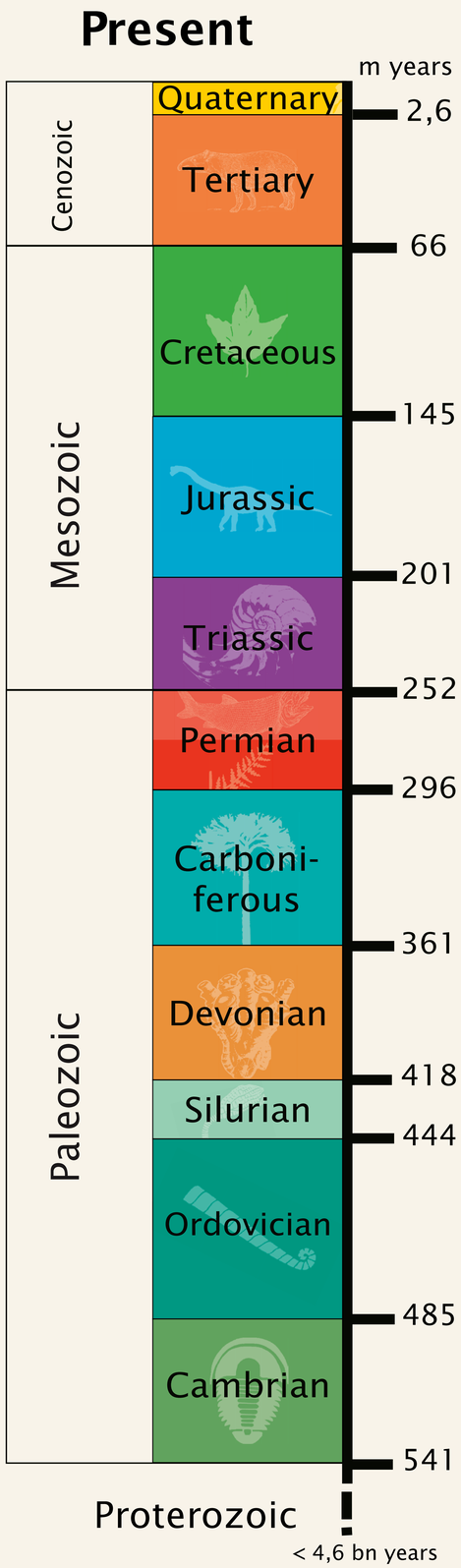
Kirschensoog Karst Spring

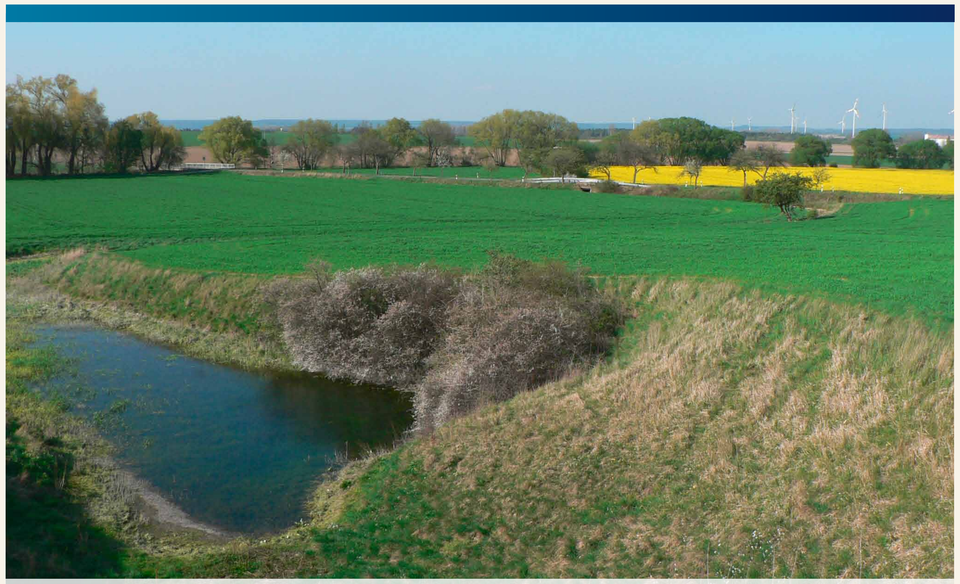


The Mystery of the Dancing Stones

As Prof. Max Prütz (1876-1945), director of the Bureau for Inland Waterways in Hildesheim, stepped onto the field not far from here on August 28th, 1922, he observed a sudden, large discharge of water from a hollow. The water exited the ground as if from a garden hose and rose rapidly. On the bottom of the spring he saw "the stones dancing". The basin was soon full and water proceeded to flood the road. Later estimates placed the rate of flow at 3 m^3/s. As a result, a wide culvert was constructed beneath the road. Over a period of 34 years the professor recorded only six more of these, to him, mysterious natural phenomena.

What Prof. Max Prütz had observed was an outflow of water from the intermittent karst spring called Kirschensoog, near Alt Wallmoden. This spring only discharges water occasionally – after heavy rainfall or snow melt. The hollow is an elongated sinkhole with steeply sloping sides. It covers an area 75 m long and 20 m wide in the Kirschensooker field. The bottom of the spring lies 4 metres lower than the surrounding field and becomes shallower towards the north. It is connected to the Neile River, to the west of the spring, via a drainage ditch.

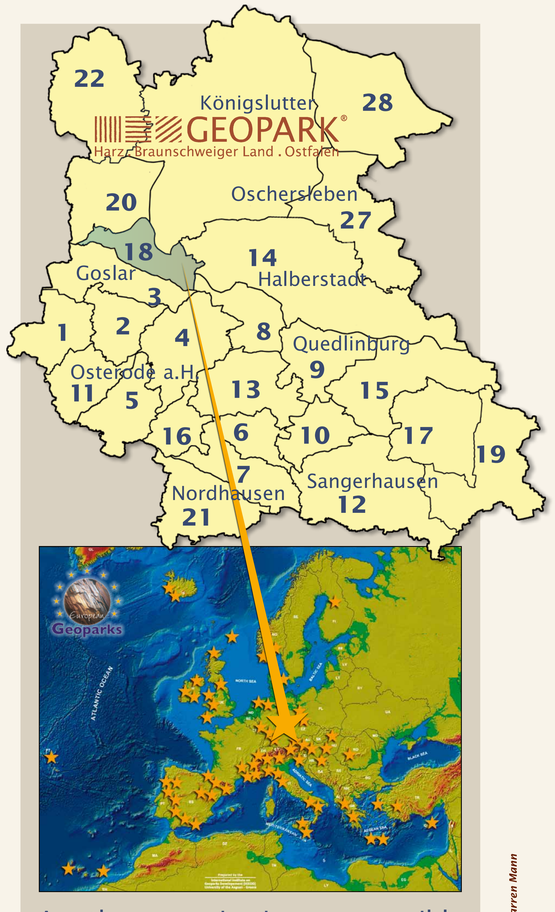
The Kirschensoog karst spring is a protected natural monument due to its particular geologic and hydrologic importance. Via an upstream system of underground cavities, it is fed by the Riechenberg-Langelsheim-Baddeckenstedt karst channel. This 27 km long karst water system stretches along the western flank of the Innerste basin. The stone formation is comprised of Turonian planar limestone from the Upper Cretaceous and includes many sinkholes and intrusive structures. Towards the centre of the basin, the limestone is overlaid by an aquiclude of marlstone. The marlstone dams the karst water and redirects it toward the western flank of the Innerste basin. There it flows along the border between karstic and aquicluding layers to the deepest reachable point near Baddeckenstedt. In that area the water returns to the surface via karst springs.


Kirschensoog Karst Spring


The closest church is located in Alt Wallmoden. A chapel was built there as early as 1248.

Kirschensoog – Kirchenbrunnen

In old records, spellings such as "Kirschensooth" or "Kirchensooth" can be found. The Low German word "sooth" means "well". The present-day name of Kirschensoog is, therefore, a disparaging variation of the name Kirchenbrunnen ("church well"). In the past, the field containing the karst spring belonged to the church. The earlier name points to the spring's use as a source of drinking water. It was, however, too unreliable for this purpose. Due to the irregularly recurring, surging nature of the outflow, the Kirschensoog spring was designated a "Hungerbrunnen" (hunger spring), and associated with bad omens. Flooding of the field was followed by poor harvests, which could, in turn, lead to starvation, increased prices, or the threat of war. This is what is referred to in the old saying "Farmers do not perish in dry years, but in wet ones".



As the organisation responsible for the 6,202 km^2 of the UNESCO Geopark's southern section, the Regionalverband Harz, based in Quedlinburg, has set itself the goal of making the geology and mining history of the Harz region clear and comprehensible. It oversees a network of Landmarks and Geopoints spread throughout this section of the Geopark. Landmarks, like Liebenburg Palace for example, are widely visible or especially well-known points of interest and lend their names to defined areas of the Geopark. Geopoints are windows into geological history. The karst spring Kirschensoog is Geopoint 9 within Landmark 18 - Liebenburg Palace. For further information:

www.harzregion.de

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