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STRABAG, A STONE QUARRY AND A SCHOOL: WORKING TOGETHER FOR NATURE IN GAADEN

- **Rigorous application of renaturalisation measures**
- **Official opening of biotope**
- **Nest boxes for birds built by local school students**

Gaaden, 3 July 2014 In 2012, it was bee hotels and bat boxes; this year, the students from the Mödling Higher Technical Institute (HTL Mödling) constructed and built some 20 bird nesting boxes for the Gaaden stone and rock quarry operated by Mineral Abbau GmbH, a subsidiary of publicly listed STRABAG SE. In recognition for their hard work, the students were invited on 26 June 2014, just before the end of school, to not only present the nest boxes and officially open a biotope at the quarry, but also to witness a blasting that brought down several thousand tonnes of rock.

Emilia Knoll

After the spectacular blasting event, the group proceeded to the already renatured portion of the quarry, where seven years ago rock had still been quarried and today nature has already regained the upper hand. With the nest boxes constructed by the students from the Mödling Higher Technical Institute's Wood Engineering Department this year, the stone and rock quarry will be able to offer homes to owls, tomtits, magpies and other birds starting this summer. Each individual nest box was made specifically for a local bird species that lives in the Vienna Woods. Before they began their work, the students conducted the necessary research to learn more about the special needs of each individual species of bird, such as how they enter their nesting place. "It was an enjoyable and interesting project," explains Emilia Knoll, who designed and lovingly constructed a nest box for an owl. To give her box a natural look, she decorated the outside with tree bark. The nesting boxes will be affixed to suitable places around the site in the coming days.

Along with the presentation of the nest boxes, the newly created biotope was officially opened in the presence of Dr. Philipp Enzinger, the administrative head of the Mödling district; Rainer Schramm, the mayor of the town of Gaaden; and Dr. Harald Rossmann, the environmental ombudsman for the state of Lower Austria.

"The biotope will help nature shape itself," explains Andreas Mittermeir, division manager at the Gaaden quarry: "We leave it up to nature to decide what sort of flora and fauna establishes itself here. We do not conduct any planting ourselves. We simply create the preconditions."

The Gaaden quarry focuses on renaturalisation instead of land reclamation. The aim is not to create “second-hand nature” but to provide the right conditions for nature to maintain itself and to ensure a high species diversity in keeping with the local context. In conclusion, District Commissioner Enzinger praised the completely new approach being taken at the Gaaden quarry as a commendable and exemplary initiative.

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