



It's not only about keeping your balance on the bike, it's also about balancing the amount of space some fauna need to prevent disturbance.



Learning experience



Topic  
Erosion, MTB specific



10 min  
+ reflection

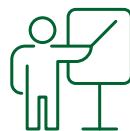


Participants

- Know about the impact of (wild/ unauthorised) trails on fauna and flora
- Are able to distinguish between animal tracks and official bike trails
- Train their balance/skill



Suitable for  
outdoor sport instructors  
and course participants



Practical sessions



Outdoor F2F



Materials needed

No



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## Preparation

Make a large square box and use rocks or backpacks to mark the corners of the box.

## Activity instruction

Step one: All participants enter the box with their mountain bikes, ensuring they have shifted down to the lowest gear of the bike. The goal is to keep your balance on the bike at a low speed, making it difficult for the other participants. If a participant must put their feet (foot) on the ground, it means they're out of the game and need to exit the box.

Step two: Gradually the trainer/instructor makes the box smaller and smaller to add more difficulty to the game, and in the end have only one winner, one person left in the box.

## Reflection and discussion

In a reflection and discussion phase, the educator explains similarities with creating wild/ unauthorised trails. Wild trails could potentially shrink the habitat of fauna as they cut the habitat into smaller pieces which could cause more disturbance, especially for species that are more sensitive to disturbance and during breeding /mating season. See background knowledge.

If there's an animal track close by, you can teach the participants how to distinguish an animal track from a regular trail. Search for footprints, poop, or fur on the bark of trees / shrubs to find proof that this is an animal track and not a recreational trail. Then explain to not use these animal tracks for recreation.



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## Background knowledge

Mountain biking can have impacts on the ground, flora and fauna, however those impacts vary a lot between different ecosystems and habitats. As guides/leaders/instructors you are responsible to inform yourself about the area you are moving around in and analyse the situation in your specific place.

A study on the impacts of MTBing (Grapentin, Bielig, Heidemüller & Sobek, 2018) shows some examples to give you a first idea:

For the fauna, especially reptiles, even narrow paths sometimes represent insurmountable barriers. They cut up habitats and make exchanges more difficult or, in the worst case, isolate populations (Mader, 1984, p.7).

Even the widening of narrow paths can have serious consequences: after being used only 50 times, forest soil needs about 19 months to return to its original state, if this is still possible at all (Goefft and Alder, 2001, p.195 for an Australian case study). And, the higher the area, the longer the regeneration takes.

Databases to inform yourself about possible impacts:

- Trail foundation website (German website with library in other languages too): <https://trail.foundation/de/home/umwelt/>
- EU directory website with N2000 areas: <https://www.eea.europa.eu/data-and-maps/data/natura-13>



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## Literature

- Grapentin, S., Bielig, N., Heidemüller, A. und Sobek, T. (2018). Wie Boden, Flora and Fauna auf Mountainbiker reagieren. Ein Überblick zum Stand der Forschung. Available online: <https://www.mountainbike-tourismusforum.de/forschungsstand-mountainbiken-natursport-umweltauswirkungen>
- Goeft, U., Alder, J. (2001): Sustainable mountain biking: a case study from the southwest of Western Australia. Journal of Sustainable Tourism, 9/3, p. 193–211.
- Mader, H.-J. (1984). Inselökologie – Erwartungen und Möglichkeiten. Laufener Seminarbeiträge, 7, p. 7–16.
- Thurston, E., Reader, R. J. (2001): Impacts of experimentally applied mountain biking and hiking on vegetation and soil of a deciduous forest. Environmental Management, 27/3, p. 397–409.



### Key words

#fauna, #habitat  
#wild trails  
#erosion  
#Mountainbike



### Source

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