

## The Herbivore Community on *Veratrum album* (Liliaceae) in Central Europe

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The white hellebore, *Veratrum album*, an extremely noxious perennial weed, grows on European and Asian pastureland. Its alkaloids belong to the most powerful known biogenic poisons. In Europe and Japan, abortion and miscarriage by cows are often referred back to consumption of hellebore. With its size (height up to 1.5 m, leaves max. 40 cm) and longevity (rhizomes can live for several decades), this plant is able to overgrow extensively managed parts of pastureland. Whereas a lot of work on chemical and mechanical control of *V. album* has been done, the possibilities of biological control have not been investigated yet. In Switzerland 23 species of insects have been found. Despite the toxic alkaloids, most of the herbivores are oligo/polyphagous. Herbivore attack rarely occurs on fresh plant material with high alkaloid content. Coleoptera are totally absent. A monophagous sawfly shows the typical characteristics of a *K*-strategist within a food-web of low connectance. A stem-mining fly and a fungus, *Puccinia veratri*, are promising candidates for biological control and will be studied more intensively.

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