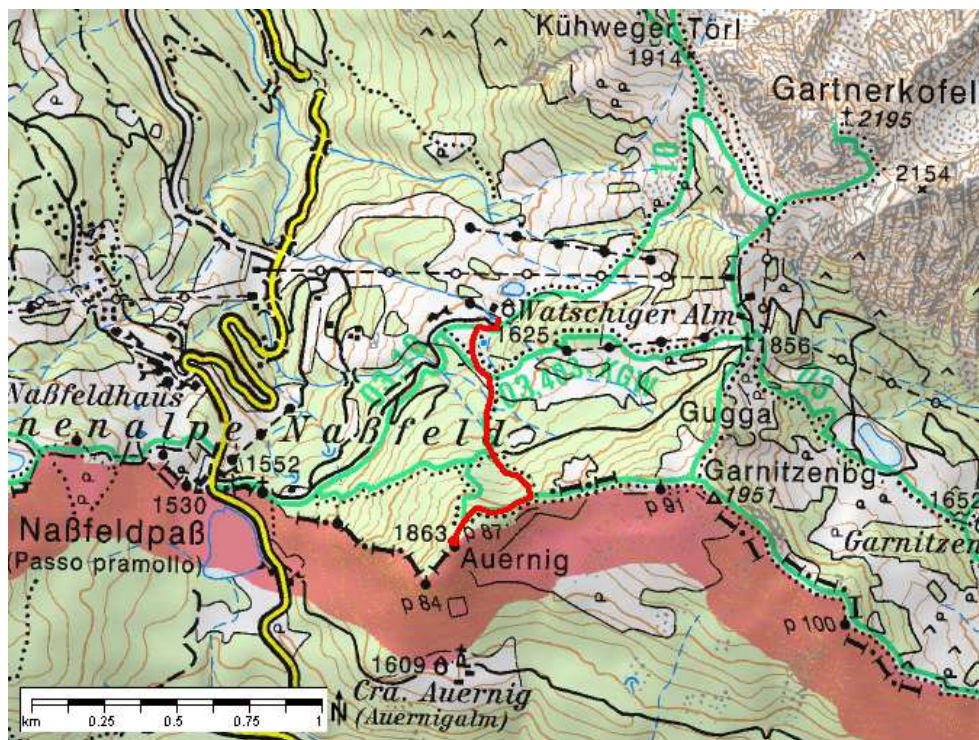


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Geotope 28: Auernig – the Mass Grave on Top of the Mountain



Red marking: Hiking route according to advance description; green tracks: hiking trails; ©BEV: Federal Office for Calibration and Measurement, 2005.

Access:

From Watschig Alm the trail in southern direction is followed to the summit of the mountain Auernig (1863 m).

Description of the Geotope



View from southeast to the summit of mountain Auernig.

The easy accessible mass grave near the top of mountain Auernig is interesting for several reasons. Firstly, it has long been known for the silicified fauna and flora occurring in the so-called calcareous bed "s" of the Upper Carboniferous Auernig Formation, secondly, it has

yielded a highly diverse fauna comprising many groups of organisms and thirdly, because of its excellent preservation showing many delicate details of the skeletal parts.

The mass grave contains up to one cm big shells of fusulinids which resemble a spin-like grain of rice. These tiny animals belonged to an extinct group of protozoa, namely the foraminifera which are regarded as excellent time-markers to compare coeval sequences across the globe. Other organisms include netlike bryozoans, calcareous algae, trilobites, brachiopods, snails, bivalves and small shells of ostracods.

Of special interest is the chemical alteration of aragonite or calcite by pure silica. Since quartz withstands weathering much stronger than calcium carbonate the fossil remains stand out distinctly on the surface of the rock and can be recognized with naked eye. These animals inhabited a low-energy environment of a not too deep seabottom close to the coast. Since there was no terrigenous supply from the continent, an extended uniform shelf platform developed.



Silicified microfossils of bed "s" (bryozoans, fusulinids, brachiopods, snails).