



National Parks in the Netherlands



Foreword

Nature is important to all of us. Not just in the ecological sense. We also need nature as a space to relax in and help us find peace. Nature policy in the Netherlands aims to protect nature and develop it further. But for real nature conservation we need a broader base of support. Not only from the public but also from the authorities, politicians and the industry. It is not enough just to have a set of rules.

What is the best way to get this broader base of support? I believe it can only be done by giving people the opportunity to really experience nature. And this is what our National Parks are for. There, the effects and motives of our nature policy becomes clear. Nature in our National Parks is protected in a sustainable way, but it is also made accessible to the public. You can enjoy the parks by bicycle or on foot, or you can go boating. The excursions or visitor centres also provide opportunities for learning more about nature.

The strength of our National Parks lies in the cooperation between the many regional parties involved. Obviously, cooperation is not necessary only in the National Parks, but for the protection of all nature in the Netherlands. I am proud of the many places in the Netherlands which give evidence of the positive results of our nature policy. Each National Park represents an important share of the nature we still have. They are well worth a visit!



A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a large, stylized 'C' followed by a horizontal line and a small flourish.

Cees Veerman
Minister of Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality



Bert Muller / Foto Natura

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Biesbosch

1. Introduction

Nature policy in the Netherlands aims both to preserve nature and to continue the development of nature. These aims are achieved through the protection of species and the protection and development of nature areas. Protecting areas does not mean putting a big fence around them and making public access impossible. On the contrary, the Dutch government wants nature areas to be open to the public wherever possible. Nature areas are important to people, as places to unwind and to experience stillness, space and beauty.

Our National Parks are excellent examples of how nature-oriented recreation and nature conservation can be combined. The Netherlands has twenty National Parks. Each park has its own characteristic nature and landscape. The combination of natural beauty and outdoor recreation in the National Parks draws millions of visitors per year.

This brochure explains the Netherlands' nature policy in the National Parks. Many different parties work together closely to make a National Park what it is: an area of outstanding natural value combined with excellent facilities and a broad range of activities.

In the second part of this brochure, you will find brief descriptions of each of the National Parks. We hope to see you in one of our parks in the future!

For more information go to www.nationaalpark.nl



Wood anemone / Hans Dekker



2. What is a National Park?

There are twenty National Parks in the Netherlands. The two oldest parks, Hoge Veluwe and Veluwezoom, were founded by private parties. The remaining eighteen parks were established over the last twenty-five years by successive ministers for Nature.

National Parks are areas of exceptional or outstanding natural value. A national park must have an area of at least one thousand hectares. Policymakers treat the national parks as a single unit, referring to it as the system of National Parks in the Netherlands.

The National Parks were established with four main objectives:

- the protection and development of nature and the landscape;
- outdoor recreation;
- education and extension;
- research.

2.1 Nature and landscape

National Parks invariably have beautiful landscapes which harbour a wealth of rare or unusual plants and animals. The system of National Parks preserves a wide range of landscapes characteristic to the Netherlands, from dunes, tidal flats and stream valleys to woodland, heath and fens. Naturally, each park has its own specific animal population,

among them rare bird species, deer, badgers, beavers, otters and seals.

2.2 Nature for people

Our National Parks were also created for the benefit and enjoyment of the public. The different groups involved in the running of the National Parks work together to provide a variety of outdoor recreation and education activities. Activities are allowed provided they do not cause undue disturbance to nature.

Outdoor recreation is encouraged in the National Parks. There are extensive networks of cycling and walking trails, canoeing routes, wildlife observation huts and vantage points. There are benches to rest on, signposts, recreational maps and information panels. Most parks also have a wheelchair trail. People are free to explore a National Park on their own, but they may also choose to participate in a guided excursion.

Education and extension are important preconditions for the quality of a natural experience, and also generates support for and involvement in the National Parks. Most parks have one or more visitor information centres which aim to inform and amuse both young and old, raising an appreciation of nature along

Hans Dekker



the way. The attractive presentations focus on the parks' natural values, nature management, man's influence on nature and the importance of nature conservation. Visitor centres also organise courses, activities and special projects for visiting schools or people who live in or near the park. The visitor centre is also a starting point for walks and guided excursions.

Each National Park has its own internet site and most also publish a regular park bulletin which includes a schedule of activities. Brochures, folders and maps are also available. In order to simplify internet access to the parks' website, a general website was launched: www.nationaalpark.nl.

Sharing knowledge with the public is important because knowledge is the key





Niels Kooyman / Foto Natura

to more support for nature policy. Sixteen National Parks have an IVN education and information consultant to coordinate and help realise educational activities.

2.3 Research

Research is an important instrument for policymakers. Research provides important data that substantiates the effects of management measures.

Research also provides information on how animal and plant populations develop, and on the effects of recreation. The results can be used to direct large visitor flows in order to minimise the damage to nature.



Groot Boschberg Appelscha

3. Cooperation

3.1 Consultative Body

Within the parks, owners, site managers and other parties work closely together. This is the key to the National Parks' success.

All the stakeholders in a National Park sit on a Consultative Body. The provincial authorities are responsible for running the secretariat of the Consultative Body. In the Consultative Body, the stakeholders develop a common vision for the area, which is laid down in a so-called management and development plan (Beheers- en inrichtingsplan) usually covering a ten-year period. They meet at regular intervals to work out the practical details of the plan and to monitor implementation.

3.2 Partners

The partners in the National Parks are landowners, site managers (National Forest Service, Natuurmonumenten, the provincial landscape trusts, municipalities, Ministry of Defence, private parties), various public bodies (national, provincial and local authorities, water boards), educational (IVN) and recreational organisations (Royal Dutch Touring Club, regional recreation boards) and local businesses. Together, all these parties pursue a

common mission: 'to manage, protect and develop the park in a sustainable manner, to enable research and ensure public access.'

It is vital that the people who live in and around a National Park support the park and its objectives. The task of generating regional support is taken very seriously. More and more initiatives with private parties are coming off the ground and benefiting local economies.

3.3 Cooperation

Between the national parks we also see close cooperation and mutual fine-tuning. The Samenwerkingsverband Nationale Parken (cooperation between National Parks in the Netherlands) was established in order to organise and intensify the cooperation between National Parks. Park representatives meet regularly to discuss common affairs and exchange experiences. The National Parks have also developed a joint presentation via internet and a common house style. In this way, the parks operate as a national system while each park yet retains its specific character and identity. Other parties in the cooperation are the Ministry of Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality, the National Forest Service and Natuurmonumenten.



Information pillars will be posted in the national parks from 2005 as part of the common house style. The first sixty pillars have been financed largely with a grant from the ANWB Fund, in honour of the silver jubilee of Queen Beatrix of the Netherlands in 2005. The pillars can be recognised by their distinctive orange sash.

The cooperation is the primary contact for both public and private parties.

3.4 Transcending national boundaries

Nature does not stop at national borders. Cooperation with our neighbours and at the wider European level is vital. A good example of effective cross-border cooperation is the Zoom-Kalmthoutse Heide Cross-border Park. The largest part of the park lies in Belgium. The Dutch and Flemish authorities share responsibility for the area's natural values.

De Meinweg National Park is another example of cross-border cooperation. It is part of the Dutch-German cross-border park Maas-Swalm-Nette.

The European Federation for National Parks, Europarc, is the official platform for cooperation with national parks and reserves outside the Netherlands (www.europarc.org).

4. National Parks in nature policy

Nature in the Netherlands has suffered considerable losses in the past. Our high population density caused nature areas to be sacrificed to agriculture, housing, roads and industry. In 1969, the Netherlands joined the IUCN, the International Union for the Conservation of Nature, and pledged to protect important ecosystems, for example by establishing national parks. The degree of protection afforded to nature in the National Parks depends on the legislation that applies to a particular area (such as the Birds and Habitat Directives). The designation 'National Park' has a value similar to that of a Michelin rating for a beautiful and accessible nature area.

4.1 European network

Most of the National Parks are part of the European network of nature areas, Natura 2000. All the Member States contribute to this pan-European ecological network, which aims to protect and promote the development of species and ecosystems of Community interest. For example, the root vole which lives only in the Netherlands. The Natura 2000 network ensures the survival of specific species and habitats as laid down in the European Birds and Habitats Directives.

4.2 The Netherlands' nature policy

Sufficient protection of distinct ecosystems is important, but not enough. Isolated nature areas that have no physical connection with other nature areas are vulnerable. Rare plants and animals run a greater risk of extinction in small, isolated areas. That is why the Dutch Government set out a plan to realise a national ecological network made up of large, interlinked nature areas. By 2018, the network should comprise 750,000 hectares, or roughly 18% of the Netherlands' area. In addition, more than six million hectares of protected waterscape will be realised: lakes, rivers, sections of the Dutch North Sea and the Wadden Sea. The national ecological network will form the backbone of Dutch nature: it will enable the sustainable preservation of both common and rare plant and animal species in the Netherlands.

The National Parks are, of course, part of the national ecological network. They are referred to as the 'jewels of the national ecological network' because of their outstanding natural value and amenities for visitors. The National Parks cover an area of 120,000 hectares, or 3% of Dutch territory.

4.3 National funding

The Ministry of Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality is bound by international agreements on national parks to ensure the functioning of the Dutch system of national parks as a whole. The Minister grants annual subsidies to the parks to implement their year plans, as based on the ten-year management and development plans. The Ministry may also give one-off support to activities that enhance the quality of the national parks system.

List of special characteristics, per national park



National Park	province, country	no.*	date established	area (ha)	visitor centre*	special characteristics
Schiermonnikoog	Friesland	1	19-07-1989	5,400	1	first official park, dynamic area with dunes and salt marshes
Lauwersmeer	Groningen/ Friesland	16	12-11-2003	6,000	0	former estuary, many birds
Alde Feanen	Friesland	18	in progress	4,000	1	most recent official park, marshland, important waterbird habitat
Drents-Friese Wold	Drenthe/ Friesland	9	22-07-1999	6,100	2	one of the largest coherent nature areas in the Netherlands
Drentsche Aa	Drenthe	14	04-12-2002	10,600	0	both National Park and National Landscape
Dwingelderveld	Drenthe	2	22-08-1991	3,700	3	largest wet heathland in Europe
Weerribben	Overijssel	3	24-06-1992	3,500	2	largest reed marsh in Europe
Sallandse Heuvelrug	Overijssel	17	16-10-2004	2,740	2	heathland and hills, home of the black grouse in the Netherlands
Utrechtse Heuvelrug	Utrecht	15	11-10-2003	6,000	0	glacial ridge covered with woodland and heath
Duinen van Texel	Noord-Holland	12	01-05-2002	4,300	1	varied dune landscape, many plant and bird species
Zuid-Kennemerland	Noord-Holland	7	21-11-1995	3,800	1	dunes and country estates
Oosterschelde	Zeeland	13	08-05-2002	37,000	0	largest park, dynamic saltwater tidal area
De Zoom - Kalmthoutse Heide	Noord-Brabant, Belgium	10	17-07-2001	3,750	1	international park with heathland, bog pools and woods
De Biesbosch	Noord-Brabant/ Zuid-Holland	5	10-03-1994	7,100	3	largest park on land, one of last freshwater tidal areas in Europe
Loonse en Drunense Duinen	Noord-Brabant/ Zuid-Holland	11	28-03-2002	3,400	0	largest shifting sand in Europe
De Groote Peel	Limburg/ Noord-Brabant	4	01-07-1993	1,340	1	smallest national park, but largest area of raised bog in the Netherlands
De Meinweg	Limburg	6	08-06-1995	1,700	1	terraced landscape, part of Dutch-German border park
De Maasduinen	Limburg	8	30-10-1996	4,200	0	longest and oldest river dune in the Netherlands
Veluwezoom	Gelderland	x	1930	5,000	1	first park, founded by private party
De Hoge Veluwe	Gelderland	x	1935	5,400	1	best-known park, privately owned
total	Netherlands			125,030	21	

Remarks

* count includes visitor centre, information centre, natural history museum, nature information centre, orientation centre, nature activity centre

* no. = order in which the parks were officially designated by the Minister for Nature



Schiermonnikoog

Schiermonnikoog National Park became a national park in 1989. Dunes and salt marshes make up the largest part of this most northerly of the inhabited Dutch Wadden Sea islands. The eastern point of Schiermonnikoog is perhaps the only pristine nature area remaining in the Netherlands. Here, wind and water

sculpt an ever-changing landscape. The wide, sandy beaches along the island's northern shore attracts many visitors in summer. Cars are prohibited on the island's few roads, except for holders of a special licence, making this a paradise for cyclists and walkers as well as birdwatchers. Schiermonnikoog has about 300,000 annual visitors, especially day-trippers. Schiermonnikoog National Park has an area of 5,400 hectares, which is managed largely by Natuurmonumenten. Natuurmonumenten also runs the visitor centre which offers excursions and expositions.



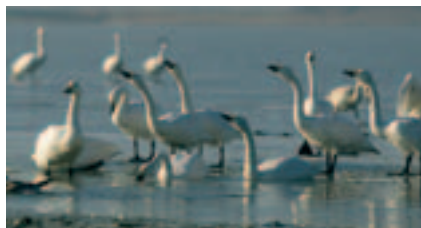
Common seal / *Gerrit van Ommering*



Jorgen de Bruin

Lauwersmeer

Lauwersmeer National Park, a unique nature reserve of 6,000 hectares, is situated on the borders of the provinces of Friesland and Groningen. Just over thirty years ago, this estuary was part of the Wadden Sea. Fear of a major flood resulted in the construction of a dike to close the estuary and protect the region from the destructive forces of the sea. The dike was completed in 1969. The estuary became a wetland with fields of purple orchids and grass-of-parnassus, flowering from May to July. Rare bird species can be sighted here, such as the black-winged stilt, the hen harrier and the bearded tit. The area is also a wintering site for thousands of migratory waterbirds such as Bewick's



Bewick's swans / Wim Smeets / Foto Natura

swan, widgeon and barnacle goose. In order to prevent shrub encroachment, the fields are grazed by Highland cattle, Konik horses and traditional landrace cows and horses. The National Park is managed by the National Forest Service.



Alde Feanen

In the heart of the province of Friesland lie 4,000 hectares of fenland which make up Alde Feanen National Park. This is a land of canals, lakes, former turf ponds, reed vegetation, quaking bog and fields of marsh marigold. More than 450 plant species and 100 bird species occur here. Water birds, marsh birds and meadow birds feel particularly at home in De

Alde Feanen. The national park attracts 350,000 visitors each year. The area is best explored by boat or canoe, although there are also excellent walking and cycling trails. Park excursions are arranged by the visitor centre. The park is managed by It Fryske Gea.



Bluethroat / Frits van Daalen / Foto Natura



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Drents-Friese Wold

On the border of the provinces of Friesland and Drenthe lies Drents-Friese Wold National Park, the second largest area of woodland and heath in the Netherlands. Within these extensive woodlands lie the shifting sands of Aekingerzand, a restored stream valley and the Grenspoel bog pool. The beautiful moorlands of Doldersum and Wapse are also worth mentioning. The park harbours many rare species of flora and fauna such as the alcon blue butterfly and the dwarf rattlesnake plantain of the orchid family. Each year, the park draws more than one million visitors. The visitor centres at Appelscha and Diever are the starting point for 32 marked walks, scores of cycling routes



Adder / Hans Dekker

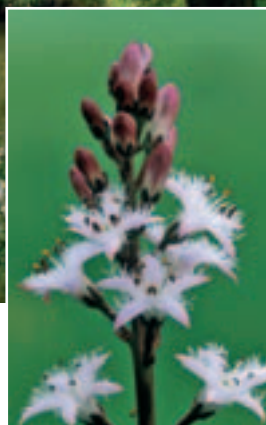
and equestrian trails. Visitors may spot rare birds from watch towers on Doldersumerveld and Aekingerzand. The 6,100 hectare Drents-Friese Wold National Park is managed jointly by the National Forest Service, Natuurmonumenten, Drentse Landschap and Maatschappij van Weldadigheid.



Drentsche Aa

The official name of this national park is the Drentsche Aa National Landscape, to reflect the broader objectives for this area. Nature and agriculture have co-existed here for thousands of years. The farms clustered around village commons and the typical 'essen' fields are characteristic for this area, which is perhaps one of the best preserved stream valleys of western Europe. The park comprises more than 10,000 hectares. One-third of this is designated nature reserve. Through it all meanders the Drentsche Aa, not actually a single stream but a confluence of many different streams. The Drentsche Aa National Landscape is located roughly in the triangle of Assen, Gieten and Glimmen, and is best explored by bike or

on foot. Half a million to one million visitors come here each year to experience the area's rich natural and cultural heritage: the traditional villages, the es fields, the woods and heaths, the burial mounds and megalithic structures (hunebed), the bog pools and flowering meadows with their scatterings of orchids, and the wider vistas out over the stream valley. The area is managed jointly by the National Forest Service, the Ministry of Defence, the Drentse Boermarken and Drentse Landschap.



Marsh trefoil
Cisca Castelijns / Foto Natura



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Dwingelderveld

Dwingelderveld National Park lies in the south-west of Drenthe and was established in 1991. This park of almost 3,700 hectares contains the largest wet heathland in western Europe. There are more than 60 bog pools on the heaths and in the woods. The striking juniper shrubs feature in many local legends. Dwingelderveld is extremely popular and attracts over 1.5 million visitors each year. Sixty kilometres of walking trails and 40 km of cycle paths allow visitors to explore the area, while the visitor centre gives a fascinating overview of the history and the park's special characteristics. The centre is



Juniper berries
Fred Hazelhoff / Foto Natura

also the starting point for excursions. The park is managed mainly by the National Forest Service and Natuurmonumenten.



Philip Friskorn / Foto Natura

Weerribben

Water is the main feature of the 3,600 hectare Weerribben National Park, situated near Steenwijk in the north-west of Overijssel. The long channels in this flat bog marsh are the remnants of peat extraction. The National Park also features quacking bog, reed meadows, hay pastures and marsh woodlands. Together with the neighbouring nature reserve De Wieden, it forms the largest freshwater marshland area of western Europe. The otter was reintroduced here in 2002. They are not troubled by the one million annual visitors who explore the area by bicycle, on foot, or by boat or canoe. The canals and channels are also popular with ice skaters in cold winters. Weerribben National Park has a



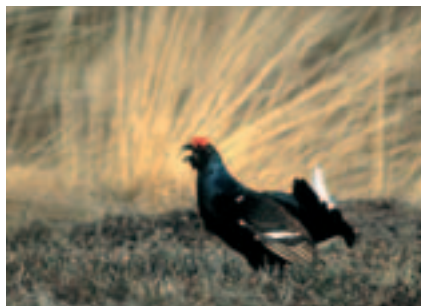
Large copper
Angelique Belfroid / Foto Natura

nature activity centre in Ossenzijl and a visitor centre in Kalenberg. The area is managed primarily by the National Forest Service.



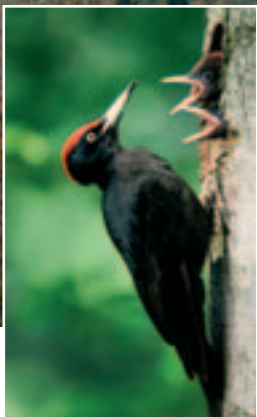
Sallandse Heuvelrug

Between Holten and Hellendoorn lies a ridge of hills (an esker) called Sallandse Heuvelrug. This is the only place in the Netherlands where the black grouse survives in the wild. The land here is a mix of dry heathland and mixed deciduous-coniferous woodland. The ridge was formed during the second-to-last Ice Age. The highest point on the ridge, Koningsbelt, is 75 m above sea level. Sallandse Heuvelrug attracts more than one million visitors per year, especially cyclists and walkers. There is an information centre, a meeting point for excursions and a visitor centre which offers a range of excursions to suit all tastes. The park is roughly 2,700 hectares in size and is managed by the



Black grouse
Michiel Schaap / Foto Natura

National Forest Service and Natuurmonumenten. They work together closely with the neighbouring estates, Noetselenberg and Holterberg (with a combined area of 1,000 ha).



Black woodpecker
Duncan Usher / Foto Natura



Ronno Tramper / Foto Natura

Utrechtse Heuvelrug

Utrechtse Heuvelrug National Park (6,000 ha) is situated largely on a wooded glacial ridge that was formed in the last Ice Age. Forest covers most of the ridge, although there are a few heaths and bog pools and shifting sands. At the foot of the ridge lie the water meadows of the Rhine. These are also part of the park. About 100 bird species breed in the National Park. There are also badgers and pine marten, butterflies and dragonflies. The National Park has a rich cultural heritage, too: barrows,

ancient farmland and tobacco farms. The area is managed by the National Forest Service, Utrechts Landschap, Natuurmonumenten, Recreatieschap Utrechtse Heuvelrug and many private landowners.



Frits van Daalen / Foto Natura

Duinen van Texel

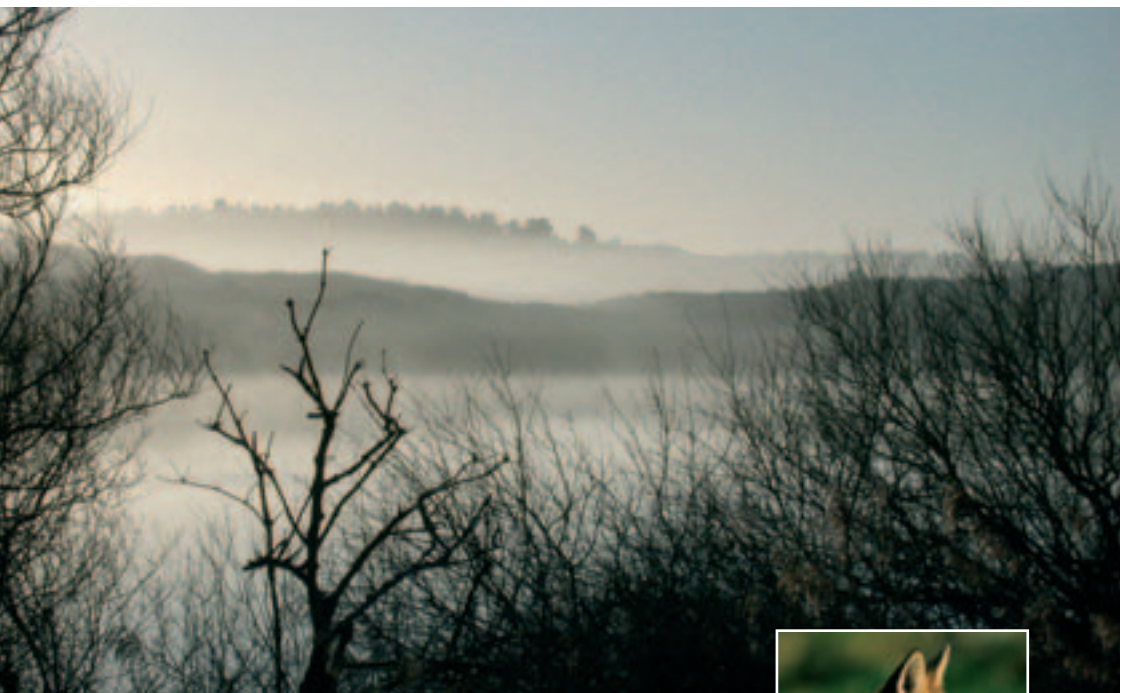
The logo of the Duinen van Texel National Park sports a spoonbill, and for good reason. The park has been renowned for its diverse avian population since its establishment at the beginning of the 20th century. About 80 bird species breed here, including the rare species short-eared owl and the little tern. Duinen van Texel National Park covers an area of 4,300 hectares. De Slufter, a salt marsh, and De Hors, a large sandbank are perhaps its best known features. Each year, five million people visit the island of Texel and the National Park. The island is also a popular destination for school trips. Walking and cycling are popular activities, and there are wheelchair trails

for the disabled. The visitor centre is open to everyone who wants to know more about the island's natural features. The park is managed by the National Forest Service and the Ministry of Defence.



Spoonbills

Danny Ellinger / Foto Natura



Zuid-Kennemerland

In the dunes of the province of Noord-Holland, between IJmuiden and Zandvoort, lies Zuid-Kennemerland National Park which encompasses an area of 3,800 hectares. The beach, the dunes on limey soil, the stately countryhouses and dune woodlands are an oasis for inhabitants of the busy Randstad urban conglomeration. Zuid-Kennemerland has two million visitors a year; mostly city dwellers who come for a day to ramble, cycle or horse ride. During the summer months, it is possible to swim in the dune lake 'Het Wed' or of course in the North Sea itself. The visitor centre is housed in an industrial monument in Overveen. This building, a machineworks built in 1898



Fox
Wil Meinderts / Foto Natura

for the Haarlem Waterworks, has been beautifully restored and is now called 'Duincentrum De Zandwaaier'. The park is managed primarily by the National Forest Service, Natuurmonumenten and PWN, the regional water company.



Post adorned with seaweed

Oosterschelde

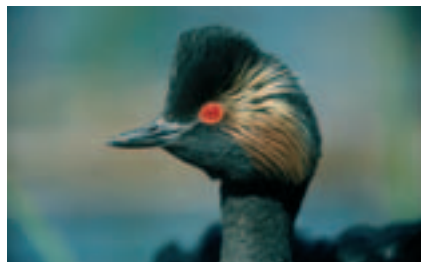
Oosterschelde National Park lies in the heart of the Delta region. This tidal area is the largest national park in the Netherlands, covering an area of 37,000 hectares and with more than 125 km of shoreline. At low tide, the sandbanks and salt marshes are laid dry. A great number of birds gather here in search of food while seals relax on the sandbanks and nurse their young. At high tide the sandbanks and salt marshes are inundated once again and the birds move on to the higher, more vegetated salt marshes, or to the polders and creaks behind the inner dikes. There is also a rich underwater diversity: octopus, fish, mussels and other creatures normally found on rockier

coasts such as anemones also occur here. There's lots to see and experience for nature lovers and many excursions are organised. Oosterschelde National Park is managed by the Directorate-General for Public Works and Water Management, the local councils, Waterschap Zeeuwse Eilanden, the National Forest Service, Natuurmonumenten, Zeeuws Landschap and the Province of Zeeland.



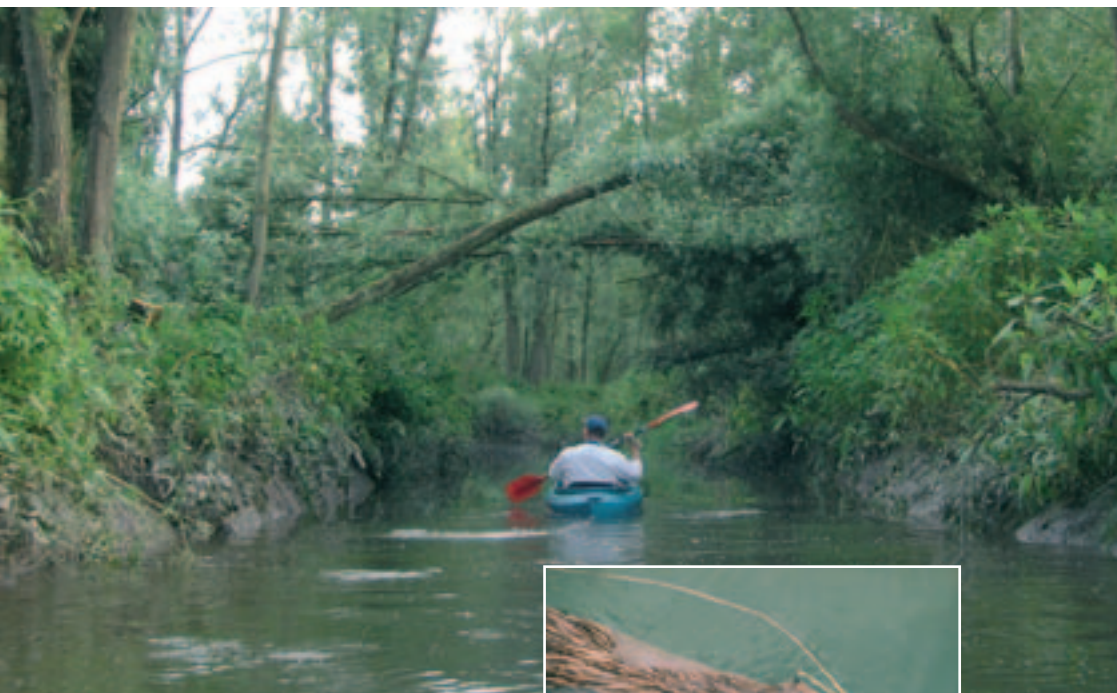
De Zoom-Kalmthoutse Heide

The cross-border park Zoom-Kalmthoutse Heide, nestled between Ossendrecht and Kalmthout, features bog pools, dry and wet heaths, dunes, small-scale farming and extensive woods. Rare birds such as nightjar, wheatear and wood-lark make their home here. This international park is managed jointly by the Dutch and Flemish authorities and nature organisations. The park has an area of 3,750 ha and attracts 150,000 visitors who come here to walk, cycle or ride. The visitor centre is situated in the Flemish part of the park. The park is managed mainly by



Eared grebe
Dietmar Nill / Foto Natura

Natuurmonumenten, the National Forest Service, the Nature section of the Flemish Community and private landowners.



De Biesbosch

On the border of the provinces of Noord-Brabant and Zuid-Holland lies De Biesbosch National Park. This 9,000 hectare park is one of the last remaining freshwater tidal areas in Europe. Major rivers and creeks run through the park, which also features marshy woodland and serge grasslands. This varied landscape was created by floods in 1421. The influence of the sea and the rivers Maas and Rhine make this a very dynamic area with a rich diversity in flora and fauna. The Biesbosch is particularly important for rare species of birds such as the kingfisher, but the park is also famous for its beavers, which were successfully re-introduced here in



Beaver
Wil Meinderts / Foto Natura

1988. Since then, the population has grown to 150 animals. Even though the Biesbosch can almost only be reached by water (there are only a few places with access over land), it still gets as many as half million visitors each year. There are some walking trails in the area, but most visitors choose to explore the area by boat. Rowing boats or canoes can be rented, or one can take an excursion on with a touring boat. The area is managed mainly by the National Forest Service and the Directorate-General for Public Works and Water Management.



F. Kapteijns / Natuurmonumenten

De Loonse en Drunense Duinen

This National Park contains the largest area of active shifting sands in Europe. Here, in the dunes of Loon and Drunen, the shifting sands result in an ever-changing landscape. South of the shifting sands is De Brand, one of the last traditional landscapes of Brabant:

wet marsh woodland, reed vegetation and grasslands. The 3,400 ha park welcomes 1.5 million visitors per year. Walking and cycling trails and equestrian paths provide access to the area. There are also nature talks and excursions and a special programme for schools. Natuurmonumenten and Brabants Landschap are the main managers of the national park.



Badgers

Archief Vereniging Das en Boom



Niels Kooyman / Foto Natura



Spatula leaf sundew with prey
(dragonfly)
Jan Vermeer / Foto Natura

De Groote Peel

De Groote Peel National Park lies on the border of the provinces of Noord-Brabant and Limburg. This peat bog, with an area of 1,400 hectares, is renowned for its diversity of birds. 95 different species breed here, while more than 250 species have been spotted here over the last 100 years. The dry and wet heaths and peat wells are also important habitats for dragonflies and butterflies. De Groote Peel, 1,340 ha in size, is accessible only on foot. 150,000 visitors per year follow the boardwalk trails into areas that would otherwise be inaccessible. The park has a new visitor centre, built according to the highest ecological standards, as well as a birdwatching hut. The park is managed by the National Forest Service.



Cisca Castelijns / Foto Natura

Meinweg

De Meinweg National Park lies to the east of Roermond, near the German border and encompasses woods, heaths, bog pools and streams. The terraced landscape is characteristic for the region and is due to fault lines below the surface. The four terraces bridge an altitude of about 50 metres. Almost one million visitors a year enjoy walking, cycling, horse-riding here. There is also a visitor centre. The area covers 1,700 ha and is part of the German-Dutch border park Maas-Swalm-Nette. De Meinweg is the only nature area in the Netherlands where a population of wild boars is allowed to



Wild boars

Fred Hazelhoff / Foto Natura

roam freely. The adder, prominent in the park's logo, also occurs here.

De Meinweg National Park is managed primarily by the National Forest Service and the municipality of Roerdalen.



Flip de Nooyer / Foto Natura

Maasduinen

In the north of the province of Limburg, on the eastern banks of the Maas river, lies De Maasduinen National Park. The park has an area of 4,200 ha: woods, heath, bog pools and raised bog. There is a large variety of amphibians, reptiles and birds here, including the crane. These birds can be observed from the observation hut on the shores of Westmeerven. The high river dunes are also worth seeing, as well as the Geldersche Niers canal which during high water becomes a frothing quick-flowing river. Over the years, the riverbed has visibly eroded.



Red-backed shrike
Danny Ellinger / Foto Natura

The park also has archaeological monuments. About a quarter of a million visitors come to De Maasduinen each year. They can walk or cycle or take part in a guided excursion. As yet, the park has no visitor centre. De Maasduinen National Park is managed by Limburgs Landschap, the municipality of Bergen, the National Forest Service and private landowners.



Jan Vermeer / Foto Natura

Veluwezoom

Just north of Arnhem lies one of the largest uninterrupted nature reserves in the Netherlands, which includes Veluwezoom and Deelerwoud National Park. The landscape of this 5,000 ha park was formed by glaciers during the Ice Age. The area is quite elevated for Dutch standards, there are long ridges of hills covered by woods, heaths and shifting sand. The northern end of the park is wilder than the southern slopes, with its genteel country estates and stately lanes. Not only is the landscape itself very varied but it is also home to a diverse range of different plants and animals including red deer, wild boar, badgers and reptiles. The area is an important breeding ground for many



Pine marten
Dietmar Nill / Foto Natura

birds. The park is a delight for walkers and cyclists: there are dozens of signposted routes. And there is always something to do or learn at the visitor centre in Rheden. Veluwezoom is the oldest national park in the Netherlands and was founded by private landowners in 1930. It is now managed primarily by Natuurmonumenten.

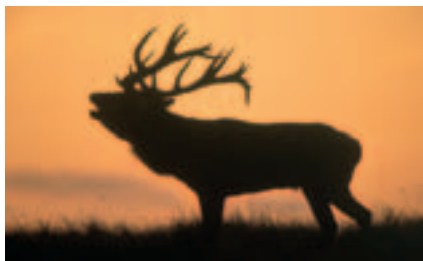


Jan Vermeer / Foto Natura

Hoge Veluwe

Hoge Veluwe National Park comprises dry sandy soils, woods, heathland, shifting sands and old agricultural settlements. Red deer, moufflon and wild boar are commonly seen in the 5,400 ha park. Visitors can explore the park on one of the 2,000 'white bicycles' which can be borrowed at no extra

charge. At Hoge Veluwe National Park, natural beauty and art go hand in hand. The world-famous Kröller-Müller Museum is situated in the park and boasts an art collection that includes paintings by Van Gogh, Seurat and Picasso and sculptures by Rodin and Henry Moore. Hoge Veluwe National Park gets about 550,000 visitors per year. The park was founded by a private party. It is managed by the Hoge Veluwe National Park Foundation.



Red deer
Duncan Usher / Foto Natura

Colophon

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