



Boundless Green

Nature for four Million

HABITAT
EUREGIO



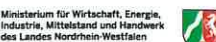
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COMMUNE D'OUPEYE



Boundless Green

Nature for four Million

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Colophon

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Nature for four Million

Perhaps it's best to see it at night. From the dark hills or the peaks in Eifel or the Ardennes, looking out over the sea of light from Liège, Maastricht, Heerlen or Aachen. The two faces of the Euregio Maas-Rijn. The local alongside the global. The small-scale juxtaposed with the vast expanse.

Agriculture for the global market place but also regional products for domestic use. A hazel dormouse that rustles a leaf along a hollow and the first wolf howl that brings the expanse of nature in the hinterland of Europe into sharp relief. A heavy downpour in the Ardennes that leads to high water on the Maas in the blink of an eye.

The Euregio Maas-Rijn, in a nutshell, can be described as a growing expanse of modern cities contrasting with a shrinking countryside. With the corresponding, increased chance of problems. With man and nature entering a new relationship with one another. No longer a daily fight to produce food from every available square meter, but high-tech agriculture that frees us up to spend most of our lives doing other things.

The four million inhabitants of the Euregio are at will to engage in other, pleasurable activities. In the city and also the surrounding areas. Building a new alliance between city and countryside. A thousand year old cultural landscape intertwined with a new network of top quality nature reserves. A robust natural world which fulfils a huge number of urban needs. Clean drinking water, living alongside nature, relaxation, adventure, a place where you can encounter spectacular animals and carefully extract minerals that provide a positive contribution to the landscape. Sustainable high-water management as a result of containing the source and

creating space for streams and rivers. Nature for four million.

Over the past few years, in all of these areas in the Euregio Maas-Rijn, important initiatives have started up and created an 'indicator' region for Europe in the 21st century thanks to the dozens of organisations and hundreds of people that have put in an effort.

The partners within Habitat Euregio have also contributed towards the exemplary role that is fulfilled by the region. They have worked together closely on activities within the region to restore the environments of endangered animal and plant varieties and repair ecological links between habitats. Some of these activities will be described in this brochure in order to serve as a source of inspiration for and encourage others to take up the baton.

It was very important to involve the citizens of this landscape too. They have been invited to roll up their sleeves and work on the recovery; to join excursions on the trail of rare species; to enjoy and relax in these outdoor areas. While at the same time, of course, respecting and providing space for nature.

Building a new alliance between city and countryside so that the natural area that encompasses four million can continue to provide nature for four million.

A daring exploit

Working together in the Euregio Maas-Rijn

Can a hazel dormouse hear the language difference between someone from Flanders and a Dutch person as he wends his way through the blades of grass? Does a thick shelled river mussel worry whether the section of the river it lies in is governed by the laws of Wallonia or Germany? It would seem obvious that people have to join hands across borders to look after the natural world but this is not always easy in a European region which involves three countries, three language communities, over one hundred municipalities and many administrative layers. Nevertheless, the Habitat Euregio-partners managed to find one another and make it happen.

Language and culture differences are significant within the Euregio Maas-Rijn, which has a relatively small surface area of just 11,000 km². Meeting or reading an official report is sometimes hard in your own language, let alone in a foreign tongue. Etiquette can be much less formal in one country than in another. And all this requires adaptations and a certain degree of understanding. Another important difference is the way in which the parties that work on natural conservation and development are organised. They may or may not fall under an authority; they could be associations or non-profit organisation that receive subsidies or associations that are entirely dependent on donations or gifts from members. And then we have differences in terms of legislation, policy and implementation. Even though these differences make collaboration more complicated, they are the very reason for accepting the challenge. They also, however, have a negative impact on the continuation of possibly endangered plants and animal species because they contribute towards

shrinking habitats. Just like many other man-made activities and interventions in the landscape.

The thirteen nature and landscape organisations from the Netherlands, Germany and Belgium rolled up their sleeves and entered into effective relationships to strengthen green infrastructure and balance this with the needs of a modern society. They developed good examples and instruments which will also benefit other parties.

To start with, they set up a round-table, the 'Euregionaal Platform voor Natuur en Landschap' (Euregional Platform for Nature and Landscape), where they could meet every six months to initiate projects and share information, knowledge and experiences regarding protective measures. These meetings led to the creation of activities and projects that have provided significant contributions towards improving the ecological network.

The activities concerned can be split into two groups: activities that initially focussed on restoring specific habitats, such as ancient woodlands, and activities that concentrated on reducing and preferably closing gaps in the network of green connections. Some of these activities have been included in this brochure. They are a direct consequence of effective collaboration between the project partners.

There were no monumental misunderstandings. The will to understand one another was always evident. After three years of Habitat Euregio, communication lines are short and organisations know who they are

dealing with and what they could signify for one another. Problems are resolved in close consultation and there is a desire to take on new projects together.

The realisation that it is high time to improve the ecological network means that everyone is 'singing from the same hymn sheet'. There is also huge enthusiasm for the surrounding natural area in all its glory and for unique and intriguing species in particular. It is a fact that, despite its population density, the Tri-Country Park is an attractive area with impressive biodiversity.

Communicating about this valuable natural area with the residents of the Euregio Maas-Rijn was a separate and very important aspect of the project. All of the partners worked on this by providing readings, offering tours and organising conferences about Habitat Euregio in general or specific elements of the project. Interested parties, for example, were introduced to reading the tracks of wild animals such as the lynx or wild cat, during courses provided in this context. An eye-catching poster that was distributed during meetings and manifestations showed which characteristic animal species can be found in the area. The film 'Op zoek naar de lynx' (Looking for the lynx) which was shown as part of the popular Flemish programme 'Dieren in Nesten' reached out to a much wider audience.

Direct communication with the citizen also takes place within the project area itself. Habitat Euregio is all about nature but has also set itself the task of strengthening the links between man and nature. The work on the ecological network thus also went hand in hand with laying out recreational connections. Information signs with details about biodiversity, the importance of natural development and conservation and the Habitat Euregio were placed at numerous locations.





“Thanks to Habitat Euregio, knowledge about biodiversity has increased in the region. Concrete protective measures can be more effectively prepared and implemented.”

Ludy Verheggen, Dienst Landelijk Gebied

Protecting habitats

Within the ecologic network in the Euregio Maas-Rijn, there are habitats for a number of special animal species, so-called indicator species. A significant number of this type of species means that the quality of the natural area, i.e. water management, ground, vegetation, biodiversity, scope and the cohesion of the neighbouring areas – is well balanced and effective. Indicator species function as just that: if they are flourishing, it indicates that other species in the area are doing well too. Indicator species are often species that effectively take on the role of ambassador for nature. In the Euregio Maas-Rijn region, this involves the hazel dormouse, otter, wild cat, lynx, nurse frog and certain varieties of crayfish, mussel and fish.

Habitat Euregio facilitates cross-border collaboration in order to improve the habitats for a number of these species and improving the quality of habitats also leads to better quality ecological networks.

The sub-projects on the following pages each focus on a specific biotope: small-scale cultural landscape, old forests and upriver streams. It is only a selection of the activities that have been carried out. When dealing with sub-projects, the partners that have played a specific role will be mentioned.





New highways for the hazel dormouse

New highways for the hazel dormouse

Management work along the wooded edges in the Geul and the Gulp has led to an important quality improvement in terms of the hazel dormouse's habitat. Areas where hazel dormice can be found have been linked by planting new rows of trees and shrubs.

It may be tiny but the hazel dormouse is very important as an indicator species in the Tri-Country Park and as a connecting link between the project partners. As an endangered species, it seeks refuge along the edges of woodland in Dutch Zuid-Limburg and in the Belgian and German border areas. The Instandhouding Kleine Landschapselementen (IKL), as a specialist in small-scale cultural landscapes, focuses on the habitat of this mouse in collaboration with other parties.

The approach to the woodland periphery in the valleys of the Geul and the Gulp was unique: the fact that there was talk of one owner of multiple wooded areas, i.e. Staatsbosbeheer, meant that the management work could be conducted across long, unbroken distances.

Dienst Landelijk Gebied (DLG) took the lead when setting up a cross-border recovery plan for the hazel dormouse's habitat. An inventory involving all of the partners provided insights into where the existing habitats were located in relation to one another, how isolated they were, the locations of the most favourable connection zones and how they could be created. This knowledge then formed the basis for a Bosranden Econet in the Tri-Country Park. Other mammals, birds and insects also benefit from this ecological network.

The people who carried out the management work along the wooded edges in the valleys of the Geul and the Gulp were able to benefit from newly acquired knowledge and insights. These insights will also be useful in terms of future management. The hazel dormouse will certainly not be left to fend for itself once this project has come to an end however. In Zuid-Limburg, a coppicing brigade has been set up; volunteers work under the leadership of IKL on small-scale management tasks in wooded sections within the mouse's environment. Involving volunteers, i.e. people from the surrounding area who are concerned about the hazel dormouse, leads to focussed efforts in relation to sustainable management.





High-flyers across the border

The ecology of ancient woodlands

Research into bird and bat populations in ancient woodlands led to further insights being gained into the cohesion between biotope and biodiversity. An important discovery was that this ancient woodland needed urgent protection as a location for breeding and raising young and in order to provide a safe haven for threatened species such as the whiskered bat and the middle spotted woodpecker.

Processing location: the Aachener Stadtwald in Germany. Employees of the NABU-Naturschutzstation Aachen string nets between the trees in order to capture woodpeckers and bats. They then apply radio transmitters to the backs of animals so that they can locate their habitats. The same research is being conducted in the Vijlenerbos in the Netherlands and in the Preuswald in Belgium.

Researchers charted the forests carefully and worked according to the Habitat guideline. But what is actually required in order to ensure that the woodlands fulfil the conditions of this European guideline, which aims to guarantee biodiversity in the Member States? A woodpecker such as the middle spotted woodpecker and bat varieties such as the whiskered bat and the natterer's bat can only survive woodlands that provide sufficient old and dead wood with plenty of structural details.

The project offered the opportunity to conduct systematic research into these partially threatened woodpeckers and bats and also into insects and other species that characterise ancient woodlands. On the basis of the research results, set out within a databank, the NABU-Naturschutzstation Aachen and the project partners established a concept for future conservation and protection measures. This will impact upon woodland in general and species of bat and woodpecker in particular.





Wallonia-Germany string of pearls

Water quality of upriver streams

In both the streams of the Belgian section of the Hoge Venen-Eifel natural park and those that form part of the German Perlenbach-Fuhrtsbach system in the Eifel at Monschau, work is taking place on improving the living conditions for threatened species. The thick-shelled river mussel, the freshwater pearl mussel and the European crayfish are being paid particular attention. A successful breeding and expansion programme has been set up for the freshwater pearl mussel and the European crayfish.

In the first half of the twentieth century, the two aforementioned mussel varieties were still widespread in Europe; the freshwater pearl mussel was prominent in the northern region. As a result of water pollution, the destruction of habitats or clogging of the base layer of streams by over-erosion, however, 90% of the populations have disappeared. A cross-border inventory demonstrated that the two species are only present in Belgium in the hydrographical Our basins. In the Eifel, the freshwater pearl mussel is only managing to survive in the Perlenbach-Fuhrtsbach system.

The European crayfish, which is vulnerable to diseases brought across by American species of crayfish, can now only be found in a few isolated populations in this area. It has completely disappeared from the Eifel.

The Biostation StädteRegion Aachen has been working on a breeding programme for the freshwater pearl mussel and the European crayfish for some time. This will ensure the survival of the last population of freshwater pearl mussels in Noordrijn Westfalen. In close consultation with the Management Commission for the Natuurpark Hoge Venen-Eifel, the Biostation is breeding and distributing young pearl mussels in streams within Wallonia.

The freshwater pearl mussel and the thick shelled river mussel need extremely clean and pure water in order to survive. A measurement network involving 82 stations in the Belgian section of the Hoge Venen-Eifel natural park and 7 stations on German territory enables the water quality of the streams to be closely monitored. Physical/chemical and biological analyses of the water take place on a regular basis in the streams of the Amel (Amblève), the Our and the Roer (Rur) and in the Perlenbach-Fuhrtsbach system. Wherever quality is found to be lacking, measures to address this, will be taken in the future.





“Thanks to Habitat Euregio, the green corridors between large natural areas have improved. Flora and fauna can now spread out much more easily.”

Ludwig Vandenhove, Provincie Limburg (B)

Green corridors

A very fine network of motorways, railways, canals, cycling or walking paths enable residents and visitors to explore the sites and sounds of the Euregio Maas-Rijn. The area is divided up by various transport methods. Nature, however, has its own routes: the dip of a river, the edge of a wood, the forest itself, a stream, an orchard full of tall trees, an old ditch. Over the course of time, human infrastructure and other interventions in the landscape, such as urbanisation and industrialisation, have criss-crossed these natural connections at many different locations. This means that populations of many species have become isolated from one another and this is detrimental to the survival of the species as a whole.

Habitat Euregio set itself the task of working on the recovery of ruptures in the cross-border ecological network. Attention was paid to the major corridors between the Eifel and the Hoge Kempen:

- Hertogenwald – Voerstreek – Sint Pietersberg;
- Hoge Venen – Geuldal – Maasdal;
- Aachenerwald – Wormdal – Brunsummerheide – Rode Beek.

Work, however, also took place on smaller, local landscape elements that are used as connecting routes by a range of species: a wooded bank, a pool or a swale. The sub-projects on the following pages all contributed, in their own way, to the recovery of the ecological network.





On the trail of predators

Missing Lynx

Research with movement-activated cameras in the south east of the Tri-Country Park provided knowledge about the migration of indicator species such as the European pine marten and the wild cat. The lynx, upon which the research was focussed however, is still missing.

The cameras were placed on the Welkenraedt ecoduct and in woodland that provides a corridor between the Tri-Country Park, on the one hand, and the Eifel and Hoge Venen, on the other.

With the project Missing Lynx, ARK Natuurontwikkeling is drawing attention to missing links within the natural world. Can animals from the Eifel or the Hoge Venen reach the Tri-Country Park or is their migration hindered by motorways, railways or waterways, for example? The population of European pine martens and wild cats in Eifel and Hoge Venen is growing but these species are seldom found in the Flemish and Dutch parts of the Tri-Country Park. The situation, however, can change rapidly. Observations of the European pine marten in Wallonian Bois de Beusdael and in the Flemish part of this forest were made one hundred metres from the border with the Netherlands. The return of the wild cat to Zuid-Limburg also seems likely in the near future; it was observed to the south of Aachen and on the Welkenraedt ecoduct. In both cases, the animal was located no further than 12 km from the Dutch border.

Missing Lynx is very much a communication project. Lectures, excursions and publications have involved the general public in natural developments in general and in the missing links in the ecological network, in particular. A specially developed course, for example, helped nature enthusiasts improve the quality of sightings and observations of animal tracks.

With an impressive summary map of the area, Missing Lynx demonstrated the natural cohesion within the Euregio and the collective ambition to work on supporting an area that attracts man, plants and animals. The map was created as a result of input from Belgian, German and Dutch partners. The interactive 'Dwaalfilm Maasvallei' about the River Park Maasvallei also provided easy access in terms of public involvement.





Restoration work in the Garden of Eden

GEB Noordal-Altenbroek

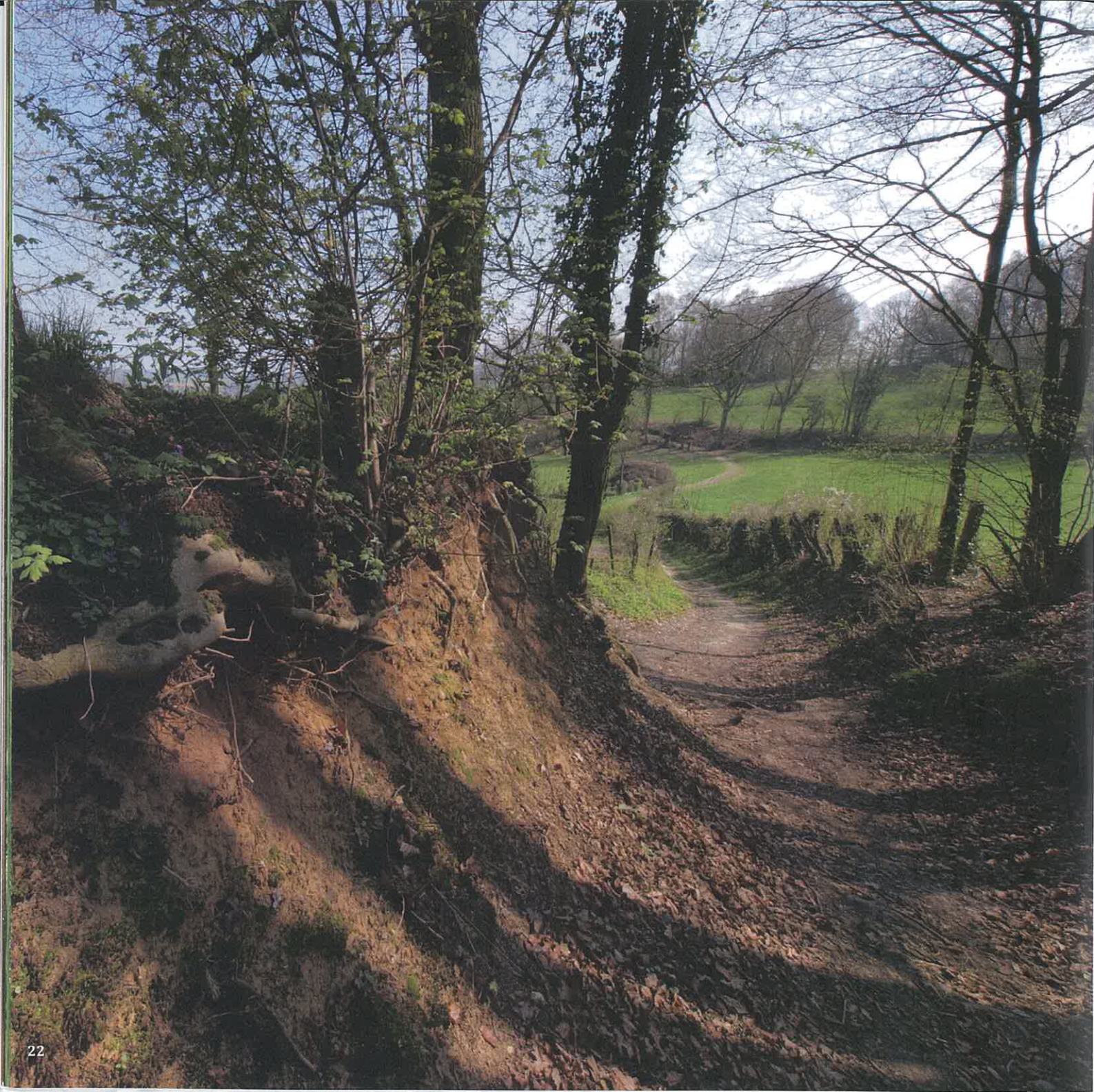
In the characteristic hilly landscape, parties work together to retain and restore a small-scale natural area with a large range of grasslands, small landscape elements and woodland and the gradual transitions between them. You could almost call the Grensoverschrijdend Ecologisch Basisplan (GEB) in the far south of Dutch Limburg and the Belgian Voerstreek a new Garden of Eden. Or an oasis.

An oasis? Certainly from the point of view that nature is being given a better chance than elsewhere. But certainly not from the viewpoint that it is a solitary island within a desert. The Grensoverschrijdend Ecologisch Basisplan must form a link in the connection between large natural areas and between the Maas and the Voerstreek. Only if this is the case, can the Ardennes heath land find its way back from the hills and valleys in the south to the more northerly Altenbroek. Before the project began, the unique Voeren heath land had disappeared completely. Now, however, the conditions have been created for its recovery. In order to provide space for the heath land once again, Natuurpunt took the lead in removing non-native growth over an area covering 20 hectares.

Heather and nardus grasslands form part of the Voeren cultural landscape but are not typical of this area. Swales, however, are. Centuries ago, these were formed when farmers created terraces diagonally on slanting agricultural land in order to prevent erosion. Nature was able to take its course and, as a result, herbaceous plants or trees formed extended hedgerows within the landscape. The rich growth offered shelter for many different species, such as the hazel dormouse, the badger and the red backed shrike. It was, in a sense, typical Flemish ribbon development, including the corresponding passageways. These swales also served as natural corridors; excavation and ineffective management, however, have jeopardised their ecological role.

And it is high time to take action. The Agentschap voor Natuur en Bos took on the challenge of setting up a protection plan for the swales and thus mobilised a great many cooperative parties.





The hazel dormouse took a central role in almost all of the tasks that took place in Altenbroek and in the Noordal. In the Noordal, for example, characteristic, small-scale landscape elements were restored to their former glory in order to simplify the mouse's passage across the border from Belgium.

And there he is again, the little hazel dormouse. The requirements this little climbing champion sets for his habitat are quite complex. He needs a large variety of food within a small area. Low vegetation along the edges of woodland and woodland paths, thickets rich in blackberry bushes and wooded areas with a large variety of berries and fruit-bearing plants are ideal. The mouse moves around via shrubs and trees. The clippings from woods and rotting swales and hedgerows are therefore catastrophic for this little creature.

The Natuurmonumenten association was one of the parties that worked on the restoration of cultural historical elements such as hollows, hedgerows and swales. The woods also regained their natural form; in between lines of planted trees, younger trees have the task of creating more of a wilderness. It is not just the hazel dormouse, however, that benefits from these design measures; the red backed shrike, the stag beetle, sand bees, butterflies and other insects all benefit from improvements to habitats and green connections.

Within the GEB Altenbroek-Noordal, other species were also paid particular attention by all those involved; the nurse frog may not have a cute-appeal of the hazel dormouse but it is just as unique and just as threatened.

Small interventions were often sufficient to restore twenty biotopes for amphibians; cleaning a pool, pruning work or setting up an overwintering shelter. Forty new pools were also created. This brings the total number of biotopes to just under 170. The Regional Landscape Haspengouw en Voeren and the Agentschap voor Natuur en Bos are two of the organisations that are supporting this. Much time and effort has gone into involving and motivating many land owners; they must give their permission for activities to take place on their land.

Those involved were so highly motivated, in fact, that the nurse frog now has a wide choice of pools and some of the residents of the Voeren have joined together in a new amphibian workgroup. This workgroup will ensure there is strong, local support and will take care of monitoring and managing the pools. As a result of discussions with Dutch specialists and organisations, the Dutch example was also used to start a nurse frog platform.





A hop, skip and a jump between Maas and Kempen

Landscape link the Oude Weerd

A former gravel extraction area covering 29 hectares in the north of Oud-Rekem was restructured as a nature reserve; the Oude Weerd. Fencing was installed for large grazers; hedgerows and thickets were planted; pools were created and the first amphibians have now taken up residence. The Oude Weerd forms an important stepping stone between the RivierPark Maasvallei and the Hoge Kempen National Park.

One glance at the map clearly shows the huge size of the mark made by man on the area between the Maas river basin and the Hoge Kempen National Park. It is peppered with canals, ditches, gravel pits and other pools. The Oude Weerd appears to be an insignificant piece of land but handing this land back to nature and setting it up as a landscape link is of huge importance. Exceptional plant and animal species such as the European stonechat, the nightingale and the beautiful demoiselle are delighted to have this at their disposal. The Oude Weerd is part of the programme that the Kempen en Maasland Regional Landscape set up in order to restore the routes of streams, small landscape elements and recreational connections.

Residents were involved in the Oude Weerd in various ways. On the initiative of Natuurpunt, they were invited to take part in management tasks and this led to greater awareness about the importance of green corridors. Nature enthusiasts can also get to know the area better thanks to the signed walking paths and information boards provide further explanations about the history of the area.

The Kempen en Maasland Regional Landscape set up an easy-access landscape desk that could be consulted by private individuals and also farmers in relation to questions about landscape maintenance and subsidy arrangements.





Chitter chatter in an old pit

Brock gravel pit

The former Brock gravel pit in Oupeye has been set up as a nature reserve. The gravel pool has been modified so that the flora and fauna that typifies still-standing water can, once again, take up residence. The pit forms an important link in the Maas cross-border ecological network. The walking routes, picnic tables and information boards have opened up the area for ecotourism.

Across Wallonia, you can find pits that are no longer used and which have been left to go to wrack and ruin. Tucked out of the way, hidden from prying eyes and overgrown with brambles, they pose a real danger especially as youngsters are often tempted to swim in the pools. This clearly corresponds to significant risks.

Swimming, however, is no longer possible in the pool of the former Brock pit. Thanks to the efforts of the Oupeye municipality, however, the pit is now more welcoming than ever for those wanting to relax and enjoy the rich biodiversity. This is important for the local population that is under pressure from industrial developments in the direct vicinity.

Modifications to the steep banks of the gravel pits have created shallow pools where the highly endangered natter jack toad feels right at home and the creation of sandy hillocks serves to encourage the kingfisher back to this area. The old pit also offers shelter to various species of duck during their migratory journey to the south. A number of water birds also overwinter here and the fish population has improved significantly.

The pit is being given a great opportunity to flourish in every ecological sense once again. The access created for tourists and recreational pursuits ensures that there is plenty of support for natural development. The Brock pit thus provides an example for other abandoned gravel pits that could serve as stepping stones in the network of green corridors.



“In terms of measures that focus on animal species, the collaboration benefits from the fact that all of the available expertise is combined and used effectively for conservation objectives.”

Claus Mayer, NABU Aachen





Onwards towards the future

International databanks

Everything that took place within the three-year duration of the Habitat Euregio was targeted towards sustainability: the collaboration itself, the results of activities in the region, communicating and involving groups from the surrounding areas. In terms of tangible and useful resources for future conservation programmes, the databanks containing information about the hazel dormouse, the woodpecker and the bat will be indispensable.

The NABU-Naturschutzstation Aachen has set up a databank for various woodpeckers and bat varieties. Research was initially targeted towards the Aachener Wald in Germany but, in addition, measurements were taken in the Vijlener Bos in the Netherlands and the Preuswald in Belgium. So which species were found? What does the middle spotted woodpecker get up to? And the natterer's bat? How do these populations develop? What do they require from their habitats?

The data is collated within a geographical information system so that it is clear where the animals are located. As a result, it is possible to take targeted conservation measures. The data, however, is not accessible to all on the internet. The fact that it concerns endangered species means it is impossible to provide free access to all the details. This would mean that anyone could locate the species and, as a result, make them vulnerable. Also, a population of bats may have found shelter in a private shed, for example, and opening up this data could then impact upon privacy. In order to provide an insight to the general public, regarding the prevalence of species, summary maps will be made available via the internet.

However, the completion of Habitat Euregio does not mean that work has come to an end. The NABU-Naturschutzstation Aachen is seeking opportunities for connecting data to databanks from the Dutch and Belgian sister organisations, for example.

A databank has also been set up for the hazel dormouse as part of the 'Hazel dormouse recovery plan in the Tri-Country Park'. The databank is intended to gain insights into where the hazel dormouse is located. It also provides an answer to the question as to whether particular measures, such as laying and managing wooded areas, have a positive impact upon the spread of this indicator species.

Hazel dormouse populations in previously un-researched areas have also been charted. This takes place with the help of as many as 600 nesting tubes; these are elongated, square cylinders made of plasticised corrugated card that are hung several metres above the ground in trees and shrubs. The hazel dormouse is happy to take up residence in these and thus signals his presence. The locations are then recorded using coordinates. The results of the research and the expertise that is gained are then disseminated via symposia, a newsletter, an explanatory film and a website. All of this provides site managers with further insights into ensuring that the landscape is set up in a hazel dormouse-friendly manner.

Dienst Landelijk Gebied conducted the research in collaboration with the Ecological consultancy Natuurbalans, Zoogdiervereniging Nederland and the Flemish Natuurpunt Studie and with the help of volunteers.



A future for nature and for Habitat Euregio

Nature is never finished. It is always developing. This applies to species, to habitats and also to biodiversity as a whole. It also applies to the Euregio Maas-Rijn. Habitat Euregio has provided substantial impetus to the survival and distribution chances of a number of indicator species, to the development of green corridors between the nature parks and to the awareness of people in the surrounding area. But there is still much to be done.

The activities in this brochure form the prelude to a future in which a leading role has been established for residents, users and those who enjoy the natural environment. It is a long-term project in terms of raising awareness about the value of nature among four million residents.

The partners within Habitat Euregio plan to continue along the route they have formed collectively, even when the Interreg-subsidies come to an end once the project is completed. There is a real chance that new subsidies, both national and European, will be available. But, aside from the financial issues; there is simply no way back. The collaboration has generated ideas and initiated sub-projects. It would be unimaginable to not reap the rewards. For example:

- ARK Natuurontwikkeling already worked for Habitat Euregio across borders, e.g. in the area of the Grensmaas between the Netherlands and Belgium. As a result of the Missing Lynx project, the collaboration has now developed to include other European regions where organisations are working on expanding the habitats of predators such as the wild cat, lynx and wolf.

- The collaboration between Natuurpunt, the Agency for Nature and Woodland, Natuurmonumenten and the Regional landscape Haspengouw-Voeren in the Noordal-Altenbroek border region will be continued in the adjoining areas and on the Sint-Pietersberg. A small dot on the map will thus become an oil slick that spreads outwards; an oil slick with positive consequences, you understand!

- Over the course of the project, the Euregionaal Platform Natuur formed a round table committee which enabled the partners to gather together at least once every six months. With support from the Tri-Country Park project, this forum for ideas about landscape and nature will be maintained. All nature and landscape organisations will be invited to pull up a chair and speak with a clear voice on the subject of nature in the Euregio. Also within the world of politics.

One plus one is three; those involved with Habitat Euregio understand this better than anyone. The combination of workforces and experiences from various nature organisations and governments leads to increased efficiency; the exchange of knowledge guarantees cost savings. But primarily; working together on such a pleasant and vital project generates enthusiasm to continue and carry on working on better natural connections and habitats in the Euregio Maas-Rijn.



The partners introduce themselves

Who plays a role within Habitat Euregio?



Biologische Station StädteRegion Aachen e.V.

www.bs-aachen.de

The Biologische Station, located in Stolberg, was founded in 1998. Its aim is to work with nature conservation and agricultural organisations to protect native and endangered natural features in the region and contribute towards retaining a natural cultural landscape.

One of its key tasks is to regularly inventory certain plant and animal varieties. On the basis of the data, protection and retention measures are then planned and implemented. Alongside protecting and restoring the characteristic fruit orchards in the region, the Biostation also works on various LIFE and Interreg projects which focus on returning swamps and watercourses to a natural state and projects that target species protection in relation to the freshwater pearl mussel, yellow bellied toad, little owl, whinchat and European crayfish.

Broad publicity and a multi-faceted events programme ensures that residents from the region and other interested parties are involved and kept informed.



NABU Naturschutzstation Aachen

www.nabu-aachen.de

The NABU-Naturschutzstation Aachen is a sub-department of the non-profit association NABU Aachen (Naturschutzbund Deutschland Stadtverband Aachen e.V.). The tasks of the NABU-Naturschutzstation include carrying out management and restoration work in nature reserves and in the cultural landscape of Aachen. Important building blocks in order to do this effectively are inventories and documentation about the fauna and flora and the publication of expert insights that have been gained. The Naturschutzstation Aachen also regards itself as a link between nature conservationists and land users and aims to persuade citizens to voluntarily work on nature conservation.





Agentschap voor Natuur en Bos

www.natuurenbos.be

The Agentschap voor Natuur en Bos (ANB) invests in contemporary policy and the management of woodland, natural areas and parks and supports partners which strive to attain the same goals. The Agentschap voor Natuur en Bos works together with many different partners and thus creates a larger support base for the natural world. The door is open to all; from large multinationals that would like to plant trees to a local youth group that would like to camp in the wilds. The Agentschap voor Natuur en Bos is the largest owner of green spaces in Flanders. It manages 42,300 hectares of its own woodland, nature reserves and sites. Given the fact that the agency also helps others with managing their sites, the agency actually manages around 75,000 hectares or woodland and nature reserves. The Agentschap voor Natuur en Bos clearly has both its (wellington-boot clad) feet firmly on the ground. Its site expertise and experience form important pillars for helping to form policy.



ASBL Commission de gestion du Parc Naturel Hautes Fagnes-Eifel

www.botrange.be

(ASBL Commission de gestion du Parc Naturel Hautes Fagnes-Eifel, CGPNHFE) In the eastern corners of Belgium, in the province of Liège, the Nature Park de Hoge Venen-Eifel and its 72,000 hectares offers much more than just the extensive heath land and peat-based landscapes for which it is well-known. Expansive woodland, the streams of the Our, reservoirs and picturesque villages all contribute towards completing the picture. Many actors are working from the basis of the Botrange Nature Park Centre towards the same goals: alongside nature education and awareness-raising, the Nature Park Hoge Venen-Eifel's study centre also focuses on the protection, retention and management of natural heritage, landscape management and set-up; rural and economic development (with partnerships and cooperatives in tourism areas) and innovation and research within the context of environmental protection.



Parc naturel Hautes Fagnes - Eifel

Regional Landscape Kempen en Maasland (non-profit organisation)

www.rlkm.be

The Regional Landscape Kempen en Maasland (RLKM) works on sustainable regional development in the north east of Belgian Limburg on the basis of current and potential qualities of nature, landscape and regional identity of the Hoge Kempen, the Maasvallei and the Kempen~Broek. On the basis of this mission, residents and visitors are invited to carefully enjoy nature, the landscape and the individuality of the region. Managers and authorities (municipalities, farmers, nature associations) are, in turn, invited to increase the value and appeal of nature and the landscape with the same degree of care. RLKM thus aims to use nature and landscape management to create further value within nature that can be experienced and appreciated via recreation and tourism.



Regional Landscape Haspengouw en Voeren (non-profit organisation)

www.rlh.be

Haspengouw en Voeren are exceptional areas in the south of Belgian Limburg. A beautiful landscape characterised by rivulets, fields, hollows and orchards, each with its own charm in every season.

Regional Landscape Haspengouw en Voeren non-profit organisation (RLH) is a cooperative partnership between governments, nature associations, agricultural organisations, game management bodies and tourism associations. All with the mission to strengthen nature and landscape in consultation with all users.

Natuurpunt beheer (non-profit organisation)

www.natuurpunt.be

Natuurpunt actively works on the sustainable retention of nature in Flanders by buying up natural areas, managing them and also studying the nature they offer. Via its policies, Natuurpunt is able to impact upon nature policies at a local, regional, national and international governmental level.

Natuurpunt takes care of nature but also aims to do much more. The busier life becomes, the more people will need green spaces. Thanks to the efforts made by Natuurpunt, unique woodlands, heath lands, dunes, valleys and polder landscapes are being effectively protected.

Natuurpunt also works on improving the natural world; expert management means that volunteers can successfully increase the number of species in nature reserves. The survival chances for rare and endangered species are thus improved. Natuurpunt deliberately opens up nature reserves so that they can be enjoyed, studied or managed by all.

Natuurpunt positions its role in a broad, social context. Working towards stunning natural areas is pointless if the surrounding soil, water and air are allowed to go to the dogs. That is why Natuurpunt champions a liveable world for man, plants and animals here and everywhere on the planet.



Municipality Oupeye

www.oupeye.be

The municipality of Oupeye is a local, public service. As part of its environmental and social responsibilities, it would also like to offer its residents the opportunity to live and participate in leisure activities in an environmentally-friendly manner. It is aware that social development and the green element is an objective that extends further than the municipal borders. The municipality Oupeye would like to integrate this vision within the Euregio's school of thought.





ARK Natuurontwikkeling

www.ark.eu

As an innovative nature organisation, the ARK association aims to demonstrate how social change and needs can continually lead to new opportunities for nature and landscape. Activities such as mineral extraction, water management, urbanisation and healthcare are served by natural development and local economies flourish thanks to nature, recreation, tourism and an appealing investment climate for businesses and institutions. ARK stimulates people to seize these opportunities.

Dienst Landelijk Gebied

www.dienstlandelijkgebied.nl

Dienst Landelijk Gebied (DLG) works today on the landscape of tomorrow. Living, working and engaging in leisure activities in a beautiful and sustainably organised Netherlands. With valued natural areas, space for water and healthy agriculture. As a public organisation, this is what DLG works on together with residents, governments and interested parties. From design to realisation.

DLG is an agency of the Ministry of Economic Affairs and has been helping realise cohesion and development within the rural landscape for over 75 years. DLG does this via projects for governmental clients from all governments; the state, provinces, water boards and municipalities.

Provincie Limburg

www.limburg.nl

The Province of Limburg is the most important link between the State and the municipalities of Limburg. It champions provincial interests for all residents, businesses, organisations and institutions in Limburg. Within the Dutch government, the province is principally responsible for natural management. The Province of Limburg was the initiator, twelve years ago, of the Tri-Country Park, within which ten authorities in the Netherlands, Belgium and Germany cooperate. Habitat Euregio is one of the projects that has been created as a result of this collaboration. The Province of Limburg is also an important co-financier of Habitat Euregio's Dutch partners.


Stichting Instandhouding Kleine Landschapselementen in Limburg

www.ikl-limburg.nl

The Instandhouding Kleine Landschapselementen association in Limburg (IKL) works on the sustainable development of the cultural landscape in the Dutch province of Limburg. Special attention is paid to the regional and identity-providing landscape features and actively involving the residents in caring for the landscape. One of the aspects of IKL's work is the improvement of habitats for characteristic and endangered species (plants and animals).



Dienst Landelijk Gebied
Ministerie van Economische Zaken

provincie limburg 



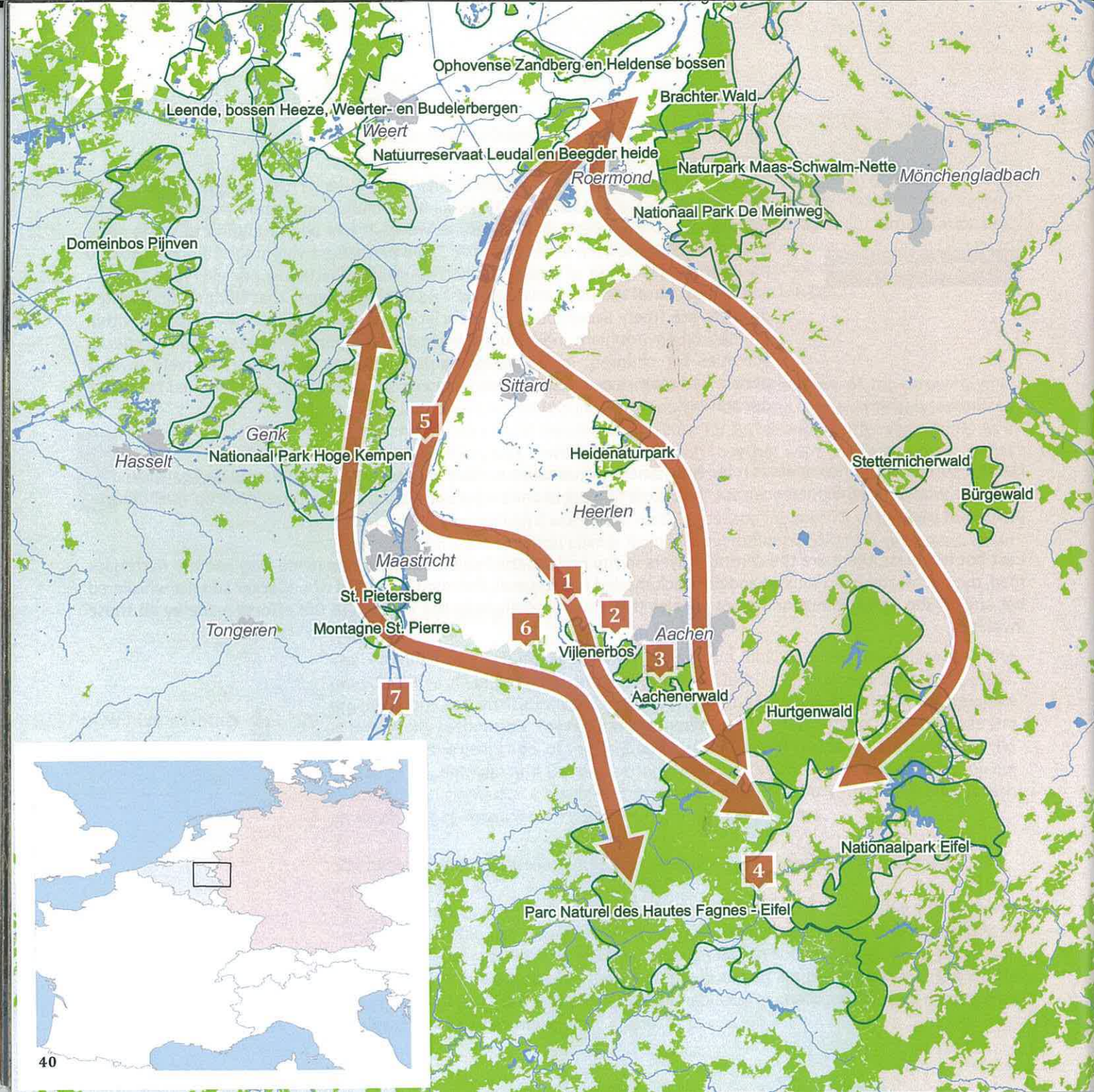
Natuurmonumenten

www.natuurmonumenten.nl

Natuurmonumenten is an association that takes care of the natural world in the Netherlands by purchasing and sustainably managing nature reserves and by representing the interests of the natural world. It has been fulfilling this role since 1905, with support from friends, almost 3,800 permanent volunteers, around 730,000 members and a range of businesses. Across the Netherlands. For everyone. That is why almost all of the natural areas and valuable landscapes that Natuurmonumenten protects are freely accessible. The association organises numerous activities within the natural environment in which anyone can participate. They also organise special activities for children. In so doing, Natuurmonumenten aims to actively involve people with nature and demonstrate how important it is that it is retained for future generations.

Habitat Euregio also encompasses roles for: numerous institutions, citizens, associations, companies and governments that, one way or another, demonstrate their commitment to the project and often quite literally roll up their sleeves and get stuck in.

Last but not least, there are the central players in the project: the hazel dormouse, the nurse frog and the natterjack toad, the freshwater pearl mussel and the thick shelled river mussel, the middle spotted woodpecker and the whiskered bat and all the other animal and plant species that can hopefully reap the rewards of the efforts made by all those involved.



Habitat Euregio on the map

Legend

-  Natural connections
-  Water
-  Urban area
-  Forest
-  Outline of nature reserves / parks
-  Belgium
-  Germany
-  The Netherlands

Areas for special attention:

- 1** Small-scale natural landscape
- 2** Missing lynx
- 3** Ancient wooded areas
- 4** Quality pulse of upriver areas
- 5** Landscape link the Oude Weerd
- 6** Grensoverschrijdend Ecologisch Basisplan (GEB)
- 7** Brock gravel pit





A few terms explained

Glossary

Ecological network

The habitats of plants and animal species, whether or not they are endangered, and the green connections between them. Also referred to as green infrastructure.

Euregio Maas-Rijn (EMR)

Founded as a workgroup in 1976, the EMR is one of the oldest, cross-border collaborative partnerships in Europe. In 1991, it obtained a judicial statute in the form of becoming an association according to Dutch law. Members of the EMR are: the south of the province of Limburg (NL), the province of Limburg (B), the province of Liège (B), the German speaking community (B) and the Region of Aachen (D). The association is headquartered in the building of the German speaking community in Eupen. The highest decision-making body is the board, to which the Euregio Maas-Rijn reports. You could call the EMR an umbrella organisation that encompasses the fourteen partners within Habitat Euregio.

GEB

The GEB, the Grensoverschrijdend Ecologisch Basisplan Noordal-Altenbroek is the name of one of the sub-projects of Habitat Euregio.

Habitat

The living environment of a particular plant or animal species. Every species has specific requirements of its habitat.

Habitat guideline

European guideline that obliges member states to protect and maintain the habitats of threatened animal species with the aim of guaranteeing biodiversity.

Hedgerow or embankment

Thick woody planted areas that are wider than a single row of trees. They often comprise trees that are managed as coppices, possibly combined with a few ascending trees. If hedgerows are planted on an embankment created by man, we refer to a wooded embankment.





Indicator species

Animal species that set particularly high requirements on their habitats. If these requirements are fulfilled, one can be sure that other, less demanding species are also being maintained within this area. Indicator species in the Euregio Maas-Rijn include the hazel dormouse, the thick shelled river mussel, the whiskered bat and the middle spotted woodpecker.

INTERREG

A European subsidy programme intended to stimulate and encourage cross-border collaboration and strengthen the economic, social and cultural potential of border areas. Habitat Euregio is supported via the Interreg IV-A programme from the Euregio Maas-Rijn.

Management work

Human intervention in the landscape that is intended to ensure that landscape is retained intact so that the native and regional animals and plants can thrive. This could involve knotting willows, removing exotics, maintaining hedgerows or pruning trees.

Movement-activated cameras

Special cameras that record a photo or film if there is movement in front of the camera. It is a modern tool for filming or photographing wild animals, e.g. in order to demonstrate their presence in a particular area.

Natura 2000

A European network of protected nature reserves within the territory of the member states of the European Union where work is taking place on retaining and restoring biodiversity. Natura 2000 is all about protecting habitats but also contributes towards species protection. Habitat Euregio has contributed to the implementation of measures for the Euregio Maas-Rijn, as set out in the Natura 2000 management plans.



Small landscape elements

Elements within the landscape that typify the area and which often play an important role with the habitats of particular animal species. This could involve a wooded embankment, a hedge, a swale, a pool or a row of pollard willows.

Small-scale cultural landscape

A changing landscape (e.g. an orchard, field and wooded edge that adjoin one another) with a large diversity of small landscape elements. Species that form part of the habitat, such as the hazel dormouse and the red backed shrike, function as indicator species that can be linked back to this type of cultural landscape.

Swale

Substantial bends in the relief of inclines in loamy regions, usually peppered with trees or shrubs. Swales can be recognised in the landscape as ribbons of trees and shrubs or grassy vegetation. They are important as connection routes, shelter and habitats for many diverse species.

Thicket

Shrubby vegetation up to a height of around five metres.

Tri-Country Park

The name of the green 'heart' of the Euregio Maas-Rijn, hemmed in by the cities of Liège, Aachen, Maastricht, Hasselt and Heerlen. It is also the name of a cooperative partnership that works towards retaining and strengthening open spaces in relation to the surrounding, urban areas.

EUREGIO





A hazel dormouse hides in the undergrowth. A freshwater pearl mussel lies hidden on the bottom of the stream. A nurse frog is hard to spot between the stones and the banks of the pool. They don't necessarily stand out, these endangered species, but they are nevertheless central to the Habitat Euregio project. If they are thriving, this tells us a great deal about the quality of the natural world as a whole. Thirteen partners from Belgium, Germany and the Netherlands are therefore working side by side at various locations within the Euregio Maas-Rijn region in order to ensure these and other animal and plant species feel at home. This brochure explains what these thirteen partners have been up to. In the hope that others, among the four million citizens that populate the area, are inspired to follow their example and make an effort for nature.

Boundless Green Nature for four Million

