

# Natura 2000 targets document Summary

Setting conservation objectives for the  
Natura 2000 network in the Netherlands





## *New trails, vital nature*

The Ministry of Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality strives for a larger and more robust natural area. The main objective of nature policy is the development of a national ecological network of nature areas spanning the whole of the Netherlands. The Ministry strives to maintain the diversity of flora and fauna, and acts when these are threatened. The Ministry also supports the development of new nature. Working together with conservation organisations, the Ministry aims to find new ways to improve people's contact with nature. Nature is there to be protected and enjoyed.

# Natura 2000 targets document

## Summary

# In essence

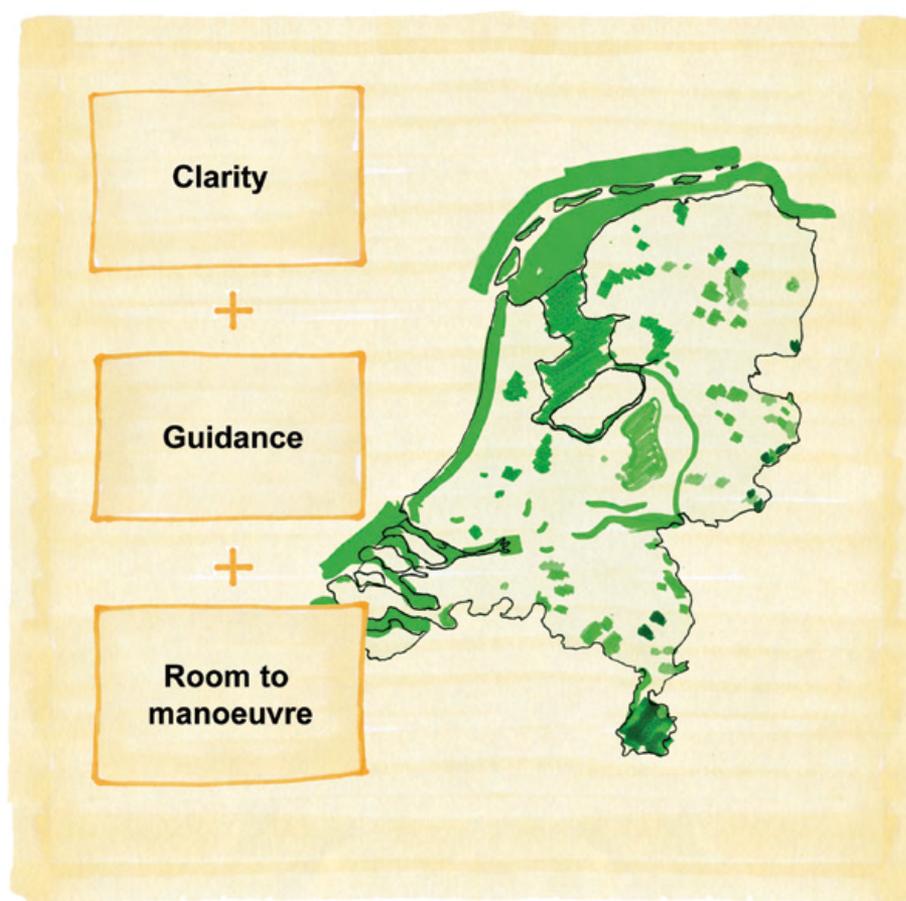
## Introduction

This document is a summary of the Natura 2000 targets document. The Natura 2000 targets document is a policy document of the Dutch Ministry of Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality (LNV, 2006<sup>1</sup>). It sets out the framework for the designation decisions for the 162 Natura 2000 sites and also lays down guidelines for the Natura 2000 management plans to be drawn up subsequently. Both are important steps in the implementation of the European Natura 2000 network in the Netherlands. Taking as its basis the documents used previously in selecting and designating the Natura 2000 sites, the Natura 2000 targets document sets out the system used to formulate Natura 2000 targets at both national and site level. The Natura 2000 targets document also specifies the criteria used to delineate the Natura 2000 sites. For the habitat types, species of fauna and bird species for which the Netherlands has European responsibility, conservation status, relative importance in Europe and main objectives for the Netherlands are determined for the purpose of formulating the Natura 2000 conservation objectives.

The results are outlined briefly in this summary. Before examining the underlying philosophy of the Natura 2000 targets document, we will start with a brief explanation of the Natura 2000 network.

## What is Natura 2000?

The European Union has set itself the target of halting the decline in biodiversity by 2010 (Göthenburg, 2003). One of the main instruments by which this objective is to be achieved is the implementation of the site-specific parts of the Birds and Habitats Directives. This means setting up a network of nature areas of European importance: the Natura 2000 network. The main objective of the network is to safeguard biodiversity in Europe. In this connection, it has been agreed that the Member States of the European Union will take all necessary measures to ensure a 'favourable conservation status' of species and habitat types of Community importance. In the Netherlands, this involves 51 habitat types, 95 bird species and 36 other species. The design



and selection of the measures takes account of economic, social and cultural requirements as well as specific regional and local aspects. Clearly, particular importance is assigned to measures to be adopted in the context of safety.

## Philosophy of the Natura 2000 targets document

The basic philosophy of the Natura 2000 targets document is threefold: clarity, guidance and room to manoeuvre. One of the underlying ideas in this respect is that the Ministry of Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality has opted to have the details of the conservation objectives, in terms of extent, location and timeschedules, worked out in the Natura 2000 management plans. The reasoning behind this is that it is at the level of the Natura 2000 management plans, in interaction with the users concerned and the site managers, that we

can best determine where exactly and with what features, to what extent and at what pace the conservation objectives can be achieved. In order to ensure cohesion between the contribution made by individual sites and the contribution made by the Netherlands Natura 2000 network to European biodiversity, a number of choices have been made at the level of the Natura 2000 targets document and the designation decisions. In view of the Netherlands' European responsibility, therefore, this document gives clarity and guidance, where necessary, the further details worked out in the Natura 2000 management plans.

<sup>1</sup> See text box Other documents and information sources p. 14-15 (all references are listed there).

## Clarity

The main objective of the Natura 2000 network is to safeguard biodiversity in Europe. The species and habitat types that fall under this obligation must therefore be maintained at or brought up to 'favourable conservation status' at national level. The Netherlands' contribution to the Natura 2000 network is based on 162 sites totalling around a million hectares (two-thirds of which are open water).

What is required for 'favourable conservation status' is reflected in the Natura 2000 targets. These targets have been set both at national level and for each specific site. The total of all of these targets shows the contribution to be made by the Netherlands to the European network of Natura 2000 sites. A number of choices have been made in this respect, at both national and site level. Those choices are based on eight guiding principles used to formulate Natura 2000 targets, which are summarised as follows:

1. Targets should be in harmony with national policy wherever possible, especially on the creation of the National Ecological Network (provided it is in line with our European obligations).
2. Targets should be practically and financially feasible and require minimum effort from the public and the economic sectors and have minimum consequences for them.
3. Existing quality and size should be maintained and, where necessary, improved, both at national level and in each individual site.
4. More effort should be directed at those species and habitat types for which the Netherlands plays a more crucial role, or those whose survival is seriously threatened.
5. Less effort should be expended on species or habitat types where improvement cannot reasonably be expected.
6. Targets should anticipate natural dynamics and climate change, by being able to withstand the test of time.
7. Targets should direct conservation and management efforts in a site, while at the same time leaving scope for a local approach.
8. Targets should be set taking account of existing management budgets.

### 8 guiding principles used to formulate targets and conservation objectives:

1. in harmony with existing policy wherever possible
2. practically and financially feasible
3. maintain and, where necessary, improve
4. more effort where NL plays a more crucial role
5. do what can reasonably be expected of NL
6. anticipate natural dynamics and climate change
7. guide conservation and management efforts
8. take account of existing budgets

### principles

1. strategic localisation
2. balance between 'guidance' and 'room to manoeuvre'

The Netherlands' contribution to the Natura 2000 network was determined on the basis of these guiding principles. A number of choices have already been made in this respect, but some have still to be made. The results are contained in the Natura 2000 targets document. Examples of choices already made are: for the Haringvliet, conservation objectives are in harmony with the agreements relating to the 'kier' [whereby some of the Haringvliet storm barrier's sluices are left open]. For heaths and sand drifts, more effort is needed in the context of management. For fish-eating birds, such as the great crested grebe (A005) and little gull (A177), no recovery objective has been formulated at national level as yet. The options for improving the quality of the habitat (Ijsselmeer and Markermeer & IJmeer) are to be investigated first. For the Oosterschelde, the conservation objectives have been adjusted in line

with the annual decline of sandflats. In view of the site's vital importance for shellfish-eaters, the options for minimising the decline of sandflats are being investigated.

Conservation objectives should guide conservation and management efforts in the sites, but also leave scope for a local approach. In formulating conservation objectives at site level, the balance between 'guidance' and 'room to manoeuvre' was therefore an important starting point. In the following pages, we examine the principle of strategic localisation that played an important role in assigning specific conservation objectives to particular sites, especially as regards improvement targets.

## Guidance

As indicated above, details of the conservation objectives, in terms of extent, location and time schedules, are worked out in the Natura 2000 management plans. To that end, further guidance is given with the aid of core tasks, maintenance or improvement targets, 'sense of urgency' and what are known as 'credit formulations', where necessary.

The core tasks indicate the most important contributions that a specific site makes or can make to the Natura 2000 network. They also give an idea of the main buttons that would have to be pressed in order to continue delivering that contribution or to deliver it in the long term. The core tasks are an important aid to focus and the necessary prioritising that may have to be done within the Natura 2000 management plans.

Guidance is given by indicating whether the target is directed solely at maintaining the existing situation or at improving the situation. Based on the Natura 2000 targets at national level and an assessment of the situation in specific sites, it is indicated whether the contribution made by a particular site is sufficient (maintenance target) or whether that site will have to make a greater contribution in the long term (improvement target) in order to achieve the target at national level. In assigning a maintenance or improvement target to specific sites, the principle of strategic localisation was used. See the text box on the following page.

'Sense of urgency' is used to guide the pace of realisation of the conservation objectives (and the use of necessary measures). In view of the current conservation status at national level and the situation in specific sites, a sense of urgency has been assigned to a number of core tasks. A sense of urgency pertains if an irreparable situation is likely to occur within the next 10 years. A sense of urgency may relate to a problem with water conditions or with land management.

In a limited number of situations, 'credit formulations' have been used. This means that a slight reduction has been permitted for a particular species or habitat type, to the credit of a different species

or habitat type. In such a case, the latter is under severe threat and the aim is to expand its habitat or area (in case of habitat types). If there is insufficient scope to achieve both conservation objectives side by side within a particular site, the choice is made in the designation decisions. For example, for a number of species of goose, it has been specified that the size of the foraging area may be reduced slightly to the credit of, for example, wet alluvial forests (H91E0) or dry grasslands of the River Area (H6120). The 'credit formulation' has been applied with as much restraint as possible. This means that, for the other conservation objectives in the further elaboration of the conservation objectives in the management plans, there is sufficient scope in the sites to work out their extent, location and timeschedules in more detail. For a number of

habitat types and species, 'occurrences' outside the Natura 2000 sites contribute towards the achievement of the national target. For a small number of habitat types and species the decision was taken to formulate 'complementary' conservation objectives. This means, for example, that a conservation objective has been formulated for *Molinia* meadows (H6410) in a Birds Directive site. This concerns habitat types and species for which the Netherlands has a special responsibility and which are under threat. One of the reasons is to focus the objectives on the Natura 2000 sites. In addition, in a few situations conservation objectives have been formulated for the development of features that do not yet exist, such as active raised bogs (H7110).

### Giving guidance with

#### Core tasks

- Site's most important contribution

#### Maintenance or improvement task

- Target achieved or yet to be achieved

#### Sense of urgency

- Management and/or water conditions
- Bring conditions up to standard within 10 years

#### 'Credit formulation'

- Conservation objective incorporates the principle that a decline is permitted to the credit of another objective

### Giving guidance to

#### Designation decisions

- Maintenance or improvement target
- Credit formulation
- Complementary conservation objectives

#### Management plans

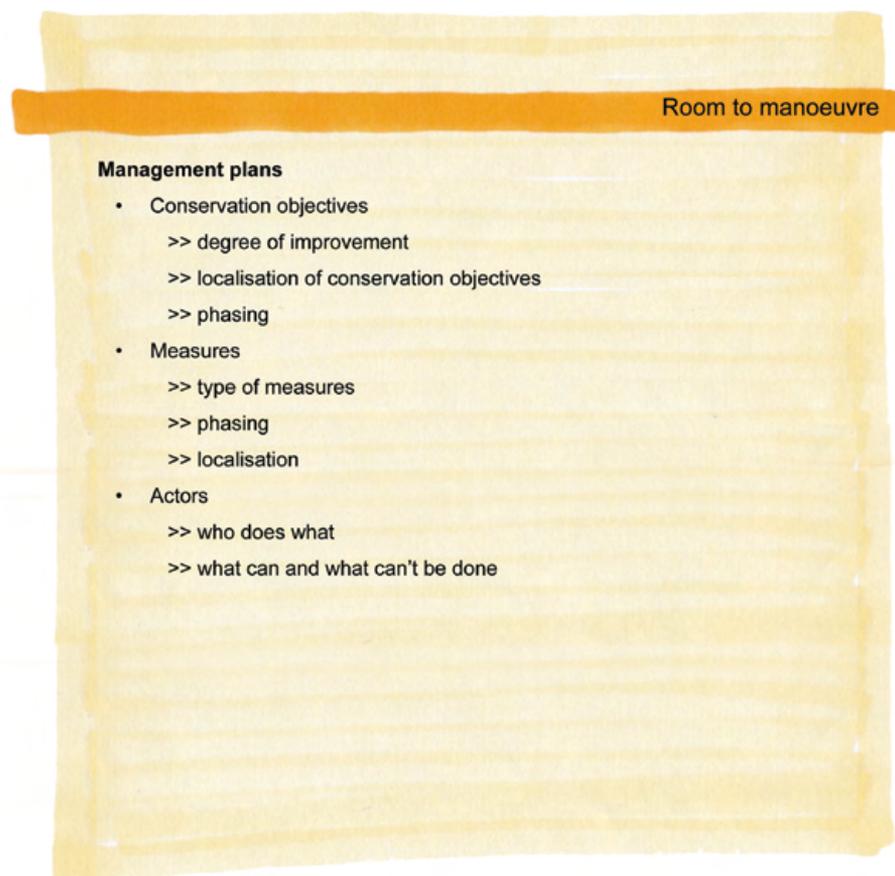
- Core tasks:
  - >> focus on prioritising
- Sense of urgency:
  - >> pace of realisation of conditions

## Room to manoeuvre

An important element of the philosophy of the Natura 2000 targets document is that the extent, location and timeschedules of the conservation objectives are worked out in more detail in the Natura 2000 management plans. There is scope in the management plans for indicating where exactly and at what pace measures must be taken in order to achieve conservation objectives. The starting point is and remains that the conditions for habitat types and species must not deteriorate. This also means that the Natura 2000 management plans state the pace at which a maintenance or improvement target is to be achieved.

The degree of scope for this more detailed interpretation depends on the nature of the habitat type or species. If the latter places very specific demands on the environment, or is difficult to replace or move, there will be less scope. On the other hand, in situations with an active natural dynamic, the system itself 'determines' where, for example, humid dune slacks (H2190) or white dunes (H2120) will occur in a given period. This may also have consequences for the nature and intensity of measures. For example, it is possible to conceive of situations where, as a consequence of an 'improvement target', 'no intervention' is an appropriate measure. The 'room to manoeuvre' approach also creates scope for adjusting the pace of realisation or the nature of the measures in line with developments in understanding and new information, for example.

In the Natura 2000 management plans it is possible to determine, in consultation with interested parties and land managers, which measures will be taken in order to achieve the conservation objectives. In connection with the localisation of conservation objectives, the management plan can also consider where those measures can best be localised. In determining the measures and in localising the improvement targets in particular in the Natura 2000 management plans, the principle of strategic localisation can also be applied. The principle of strategic localisation was used initially in assigning maintenance or improvement targets to specific sites.



## Strategic localisation

In formulating conservation objectives at site level, account was taken of current quality as well as the options for maintaining or creating a sustainable situation in the long term. Maintenance targets were assigned, for example, if the habitat of a species is already up to standard. Or if it is not possible to improve the ecological conditions any further, or the effort is not counterbalanced by the resulting additional contribution that the site could make towards achieving the Natura 2000 target at national level. The choices were based on the analyses and the site-specific information. For example, the KIWA & EGG reports (2005/2006) provides information about opportunities and challenges for habitat types in

specific sites. Information about challenges and possible ways of overcoming them. Improvement targets were assigned, for example, if the habitat type is not yet up to standard but the necessary measures have already been taken or planned. Improvement targets were also assigned if specific measures are to be planned on the basis of existing policy, e.g. anti-groundwater depletion policy. The essence of strategic localisation is that improvement targets are assigned primarily to those sites where the maximum benefit (contribution towards achieving Natura 2000 targets at national level) can be achieved with the minimum effort.

**Conservation objective  
at site level**  
(designation decisions)  
improvement or  
maintenance target

Giving guidance

**Extent, location and  
timeschedule  
of conservation  
objectives worked out**  
(management plans)

**Natura 2000  
targets document**  
- core tasks  
- sense of urgency  
- credit formulation

Balance between 'guidance' and 'room to manoeuvre'

# Process and role of the document

## Process

The Natura 2000 targets document was first drafted between November 2004 and October 2005 on the basis of discussions involving experts and site managers, available information and expert judgement. From December 2005, consultations were held on the basis of that draft with Dutch provinces and other authorities as well as social organisations, economic sectors and other interested parties. In parallel, a quick scan was carried out by KIWA & EGG (2005/2006) and a global cost estimate was undertaken by the Agricultural Economics Research Institute (LEI, 2006). The reactions and global cost estimate were also used as input for the final Natura 2000 targets document and the conservation objectives incorporated into the draft designation decisions.

The first tranche of draft decisions has been published for public review early in 2007 (LNV, 2006). Publication of the other designation decisions is expected in the course of 2007. On the basis of the views submitted on the draft designation decisions and the opinions of the provinces, the Minister of Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality will adopt and publish the final decisions. Interested parties and organisations which have previously submitted a view will have the opportunity to appeal against the final decision. The drafting and adoption of the Natura 2000 management plans is an important next step. The competent authorities (provincial governments, Ministries of Defence, of Transport and Water Works and of Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality) are currently making preparations for the management plan drafting process and interaction with involved or interested parties.

## Role of the document

The Natura 2000 targets document explains the targets for the 162 Natura 2000 sites and the system used in setting those conservation objectives. It forms the framework for the designation decisions and also directs the Natura 2000 management plans to be drawn up. The Natura 2000 targets document is primarily intended for the parties responsible for drafting the management

plans and for the parties involved or having an interest in the designation decisions for the Natura 2000 sites. This does not affect the fact that the document, in connection with the designation decisions, can also play a role in the granting of specific permits.

### *Relation to management plans*

The role of the Natura 2000 targets document in relation to the Natura 2000 management plans has already been discussed in the previous chapter, which talked about the balance between 'guidance' and 'room to manoeuvre'. The relevant core tasks and indications of 'sense of urgency' are included in Chapter 5 of the document. This document also indicates whether or not a water objective applies. The elements of maintenance or improvement target and the 'credit formulations' are contained in the draft or final designation decisions. The relationship between the Natura 2000 targets document and the management plans to be drafted will be worked out in more detail in the Management Plan Guide.

### *Relation to designation decisions and conservation objectives*

In relation to the frameworks for the formulation of conservation objectives and the designation decisions, it should be pointed out that the Natura 2000 targets document cannot be viewed separately from the earlier documents drawn up for the purpose of selecting and designating the Birds Directive sites in 2000 and the documents drawn up for the purpose of selecting and proposing the Habitats Directive sites (2003-2004). The method used for the selection and designation or registration of sites in documents drawn up for that purpose, such as the Memorandum of Reply Birds Directive (2000), the Justification document (2003) and the List document (2004), is unchanged. The Natura 2000 targets document does state the conditions under which and how conservation objectives are formulated at site level. In principle, conservation objectives are formulated for habitat types and species included in the Natura 2000 databases as submitted to the European Commission in 2004. As a result of the

enlargement of the EU to 25 Member States, the species ram's-horn snail (H4056) was added for the Netherlands. In relation to birds, the lesser white-fronted goose (A042) was added on the basis of a decision of the highest Administrative Court (Council of State).

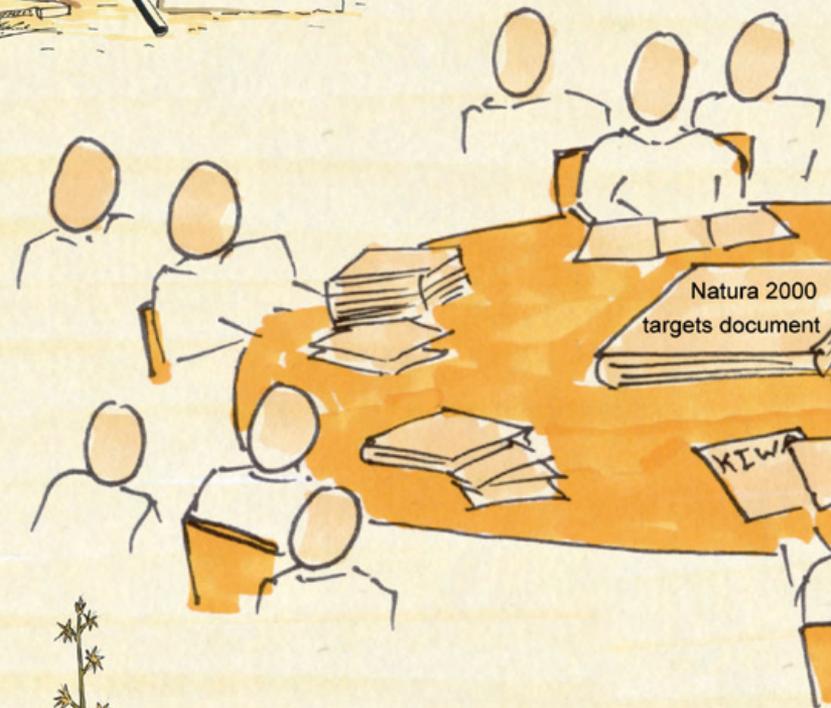
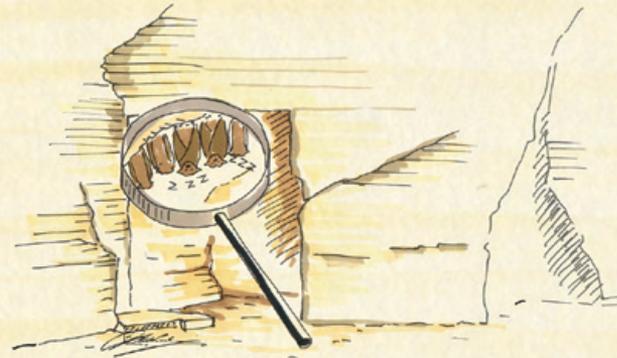
On the basis of new information about the occurrence of habitat types and species, the current assessment of whether a site is making or will be able to make a relevant contribution for a species or habitat type, conservation objectives were formulated for specific sites. This may mean that a species of bird for which a conservation objective was formulated in an earlier designation decision is now deemed (on the basis of the criteria applied in 2000) not to require a target any more. The reverse situation may also occur. This means that the criteria were applied using the data from the period 1999-2003 (SOVON & CBS report, 2005). The same analysis was applied for habitat types and species. In the case of habitat types, the habitat types for which the Netherlands has responsibility were interpreted in more detail. This, in combination with the assessment of conservation status, led to the proposing of changes to the Natura 2000 databases. The Natura 2000 sites documents (LNV, 2006) state, for each site, if and why changes are to be made to the Natura 2000 database.

In formulating the Natura 2000 targets at site level (conservation objectives), a number of standard formulations were used (see text box on page 10). Conservation objectives were formulated, for example, in terms of preserving area and maintaining quality (for habitat types) or increasing the size and/or improving the quality of the habitat with carrying capacity for a population of at least xx pairs. The Reader's Guide to the Natura 2000 sites documents (2006) contains a summary of these formulations and, where necessary, states how the explanations of the conservation objectives should be read. It also indicates the situations in which certain formulations are used.

## Process and role of the document

### Process

- Discussions
- Consultation rounds
- Development of public support
- Sharing of information
- Expert meetings



### Documents

- List document
- Justification document
- Sites document
- Memorandum of Reply Birds Directive





### Data

- SOVON database
- Vegetation database + vegetation mapping
- Species data
- Other data



### Opportunities and risk analysis

- Meetings with experts and managers
- KIWA & EGG quick scan
- Netherlands Environmental Assessment Agency (MNP)
- Information plans and projects
- LEI cost analysis

## Examples of conservation objectives at site level

### *Relation to delineation of the Natura 2000 sites*

The delineation of the original Birds and Habitats Directives sites was based on a number of partly overlapping basic principles. For the sake of clarity, congruent or overlapping Birds and Habitats Directives sites are combined and delineated further. The aim is to achieve a delineation that is as unambiguous as possible. The Natura 2000 targets document includes the guiding principles for applying the delineation of the Natura 2000 sites. The document also indicates that built up area, metallated areas (e.g. roads) and railways have textually been excluded from the sites, because it is hardly possible to exclude all such areas on the maps. Where possible, it is done on the map; where this is not possible, a textual excluding note in the explanatory memorandum to the designation decision is used.

### *Evaluation dates*

The Natura 2000 targets document is based on the best available information at this time. Due to a number of uncertainties about expected developments, such as natural dynamics and climate change, an evaluation is scheduled for the year 2015. If necessary, changes will then be made to conservation objectives and designation decisions. An evaluation of the Water Framework Directive is also scheduled for 2015, which may also influence the Natura 2000 targets. Targets (and conservation objectives) may also be recalibrated and, if necessary, adjusted if sites are designated in a subsequent tranche and when the management plans are drawn up.

### *General conservation objectives*

Preserve the contribution of the Natura 2000 site to biological diversity and favourable conservation status of natural habitats and species within the European Union.

Preserve the contribution of the Natura 2000 site to the ecological coherence of the Natura 2000 network both within the Netherlands and within the European Union.

Preserve and where necessary restore spatial cohesion with the environment for the purpose of sustainable conservation of the natural habitats and species occurring within the Netherlands.

Preserve and where necessary restore the natural characteristics and the coherence of the ecological structure and functions of the site as a whole for all habitat types and species for which conservation targets have been formulated.

Preserve or restore site-specific ecological conditions for the sustainable conservation of the habitat types and species for which conservation objectives have been formulated.

### *Habitat types*

**\*H91E0 Alluvial forests with *Alnus glutinosa* and *Fraxinus excelsior* (Alno-Padion, *Alnion incanae*, *Salicion albae*)**

Conservation objective Expand area and improve quality of wet alluvial forests, riparian forests (subtype C).

Explanation The habitat type wet alluvial forests, riparian forests (subtype C) occurs at many sites on the Veluwe, but in most cases it covers only a small area and is of moderate quality. Along the natural streams (Hierdense Beek) and on the transition to the IJssel valley (Middachten) there are larger and better-quality examples. For sustainable preservation of the biological community within the site, it is important to increase both area and quality.

### *Species*

#### **H1614 Creeping marshwort**

Conservation objective Preserve size and quality of biotope in order to expand population.

Explanation At the moment this concerns one of the larger sites where creeping marshwort occurs in the Netherlands. The biotope of the species has expanded hugely due to natural development and the species has already become established in this new area. Expanding the population of creeping marshwort is necessary in order to preserve the species in this site in a sustainable manner.

### *Breeding birds*

#### **A295 Sedge warbler**

Conservation objective Preserve size and quality of the habitat with carrying capacity for a population of at least 220 pairs.

Explanation The reedlands in the Groote Wielen are home to one of the key populations of sedge warbler in the Frisian Lakes. From 1993 to 1997, 100-125 pairs were counted each year. For the period 1999-2003, the average number of pairs is estimated at 220. In view of the national favourable conservation status in relation to population size, it is sufficient to preserve the existing situation. The site has sufficient capacity for a key population.

### *Non-breeding birds*

#### **A056 Shoveler**

Conservation objective Preserve size and quality of the habitat with carrying capacity for a population of 100 birds on average (seasonal average).

Explanation Shoveler numbers are of international importance. One of the site's roles is as a foraging area. The data are not yet suitable for a trend analysis. Maintaining the current situation is sufficient because the national conservation status is favourable.

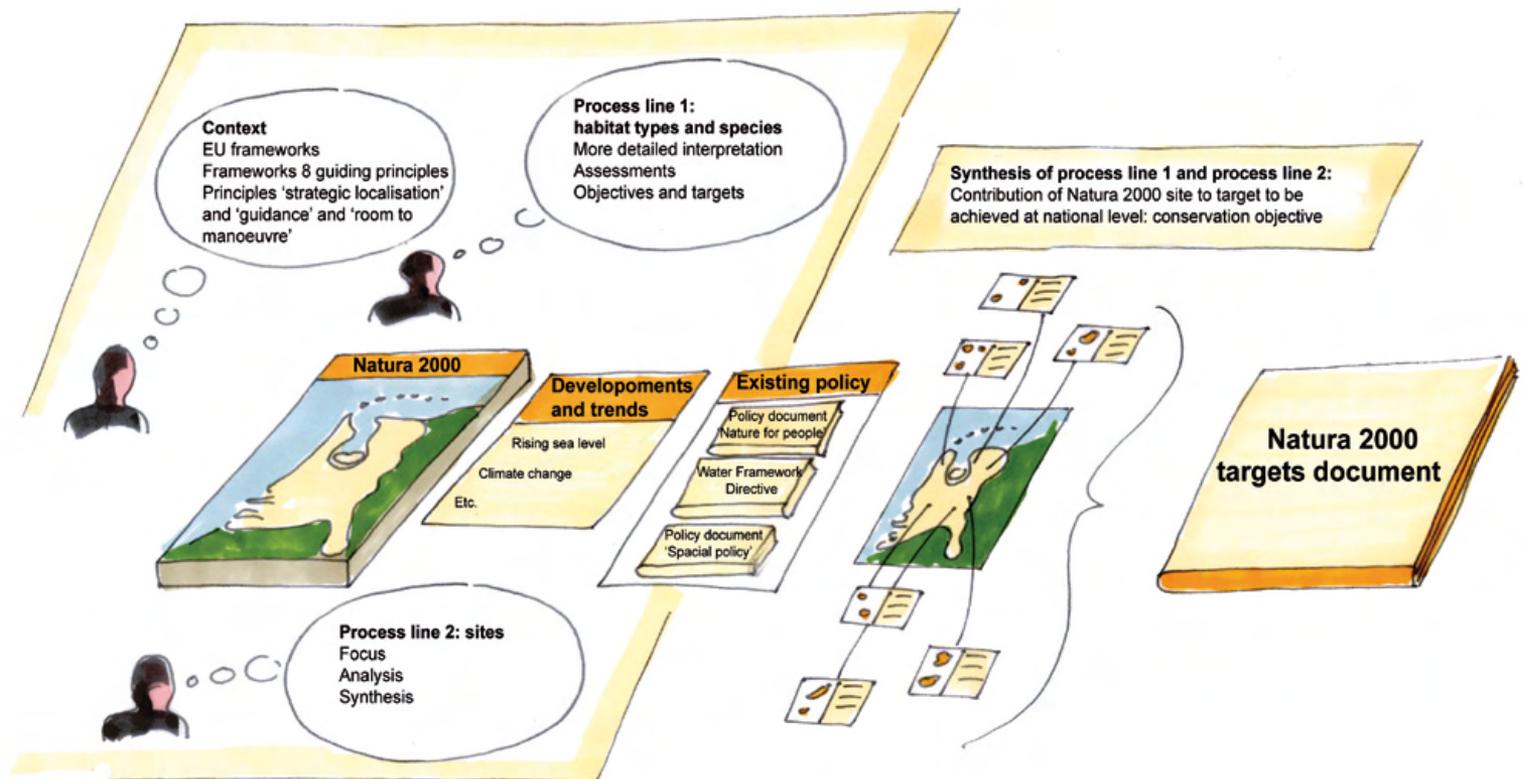
Frameworks for formulating conservation objectives at site level are included in the Natura 2000 targets document. The Reader's Guide to the Natura 2000 sites documents (LNV, 2006) contains various standard formulations and explains them in more detail.

# Approach

The role and process of the Natura 2000 targets document was discussed above. This chapter concerns the approach taken in formulating the Natura 2000 targets at national level and at site level.

A dual approach was taken. One process line focuses on habitat types and species and leads to the targets at national level and also to a picture of the relative importance and conservation status of the habitat types and species for which the Netherlands has responsibility.

The second process line leads to conservation objectives at site level. The analyses carried out in connection with this second process line provided important input for the purpose of assigning conservation objectives to specific sites. These steps are explained below. The main results are set out in the next chapter.



# Process line 1 Habitat types and species

## More detailed interpretation

### Step 1:

#### Define habitat types and species

Concrete products of step 1 are the Natura 2000 profiles (LNV, 2006). These describe the types of vegetation that come under a particular habitat type. A number of definitions have been adjusted compared with an earlier version, for the sake of better coordination with the definition process in the neighbouring countries and the interpretation used in a European context. The profiles also consist of the following elements: profile (description, relative importance), quality (characteristics of good structure & function), ecological conditions, contribution of sites, assessment of national conservation status (including the definition of favourable conservation status).

## Assessments

### Step 2:

#### Determine relative importance within EU

The extent to which the Netherlands can make a contribution for a particular habitat type or species to favourable conservation status at European level is determined by:

- the position of the Netherlands within the area of distribution;
- the extent of occurrence in the Netherlands;
- the Dutch proportion of the total European area (in the case of habitat types);
- the Dutch proportion of the European population or the biogeographical population (in the case of species);
- contribution to ecological variation (this is the case when a habitat type in the Netherlands is clearly richer in species or clearly different from elsewhere in Europe).

### Step 3:

#### Assess conservation status

In assessing the conservation status of habitat types and species, the 'traffic light approach' developed in an EU context was adopted. 'Favourable' is green, 'unfavourable - inadequate' is amber and 'unfavourable - bad' is red. In the case of habitat types, the aspects of distribution, size, quality and future prospects were examined. In the case of species the aspects studied

were distribution, size of population, habitat and future prospects. The assessment was based on inventory and monitoring data and on best expert judgment. Many experts and site managers took part.

## Objectives and targets

### Step 4:

#### Define improvement targets

Improvement targets were formulated for all habitat types and species, on the basis of relative importance and conservation status. These targets were then imposed, in addition to the assessment of 'favourable conservation status', at national level.

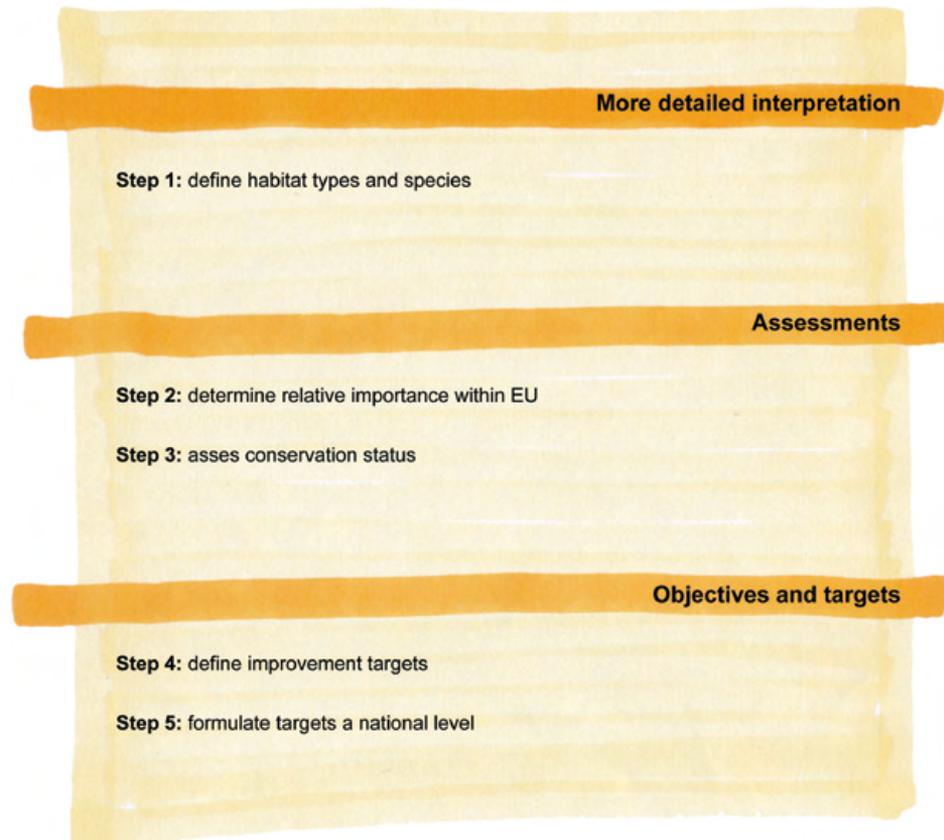
The most important improvement targets at national level were then put together. They were formulated primarily for habitat types and species for which the Netherlands plays a crucial role and whose conservation status is 'unfavourable - inad-

equated' or 'unfavourable - bad'. The targets relate to better management or to improving ecological conditions and may concern both individual habitat types or species and cohesive landscapes or systems.

### Step 5:

#### Formulate targets at national level

If the conservation status was unfavourable, the targets were formulated in principle in terms of improving quality or extending the area or distribution. If a recovery target was deemed unrealistic, an exception was made. If the conservation status was favourable, the targets were formulated in principle in terms of preserving the current situation. An improvement target may have been formulated to benefit geographical distribution, ecological variation and/or risk spreading (for specific sites).



## Process line 2 Sites

### Focus

#### Step 1:

##### Assign sites to Natura 2000 landscape

For the sake of a convenient arrangement, eight Natura 2000 landscapes were identified and individual Natura 2000 sites assigned to them.

#### Step 2:

##### Formulate core tasks

Core tasks were formulated for the eight Natura 2000 landscapes. This was based on the information from process line 1 about habitat types and species, supplemented by the specific processes for the landscape and specific options to maintain or to improve the conditions. The core tasks relate primarily to habitat types and species which are under severe threat and/or for which the Netherlands plays an important or crucial role. The core tasks set priorities (including priorities for the management plans) and highlight the similarities and differences between the sites.

#### Step 3:

##### Assign core tasks to sites

Core tasks were then assigned to all Natura 2000 sites. This also indicates which sites make the relatively largest contribution towards achieving the national targets. Four core tasks were assigned to each site in principle, sometimes more in the case of larger or more varied sites. A good geographical distribution within the landscapes and throughout the Netherlands was taken into account. Core tasks were assigned carefully on the basis of the information from process line 1, expert meetings and on the basis of the feasibility analysis (see steps 4 and 5).

### Analysis

#### Step 4:

##### Assess feasibility

For each site and for each central objective, the current situation and the 'seriousness of the objective' were assessed. Feasibility was indicated using the traffic light approach. Green means the desired situation has already been achieved or will be achieved with measures already planned. Amber means partial feasibility with existing policy. Red means that the desired situation cannot

be achieved with existing policy. A sense of urgency was assigned if an irreparable situation is likely to arise within the next 10 years.

#### Step 5:

##### Assess seriousness of the objective

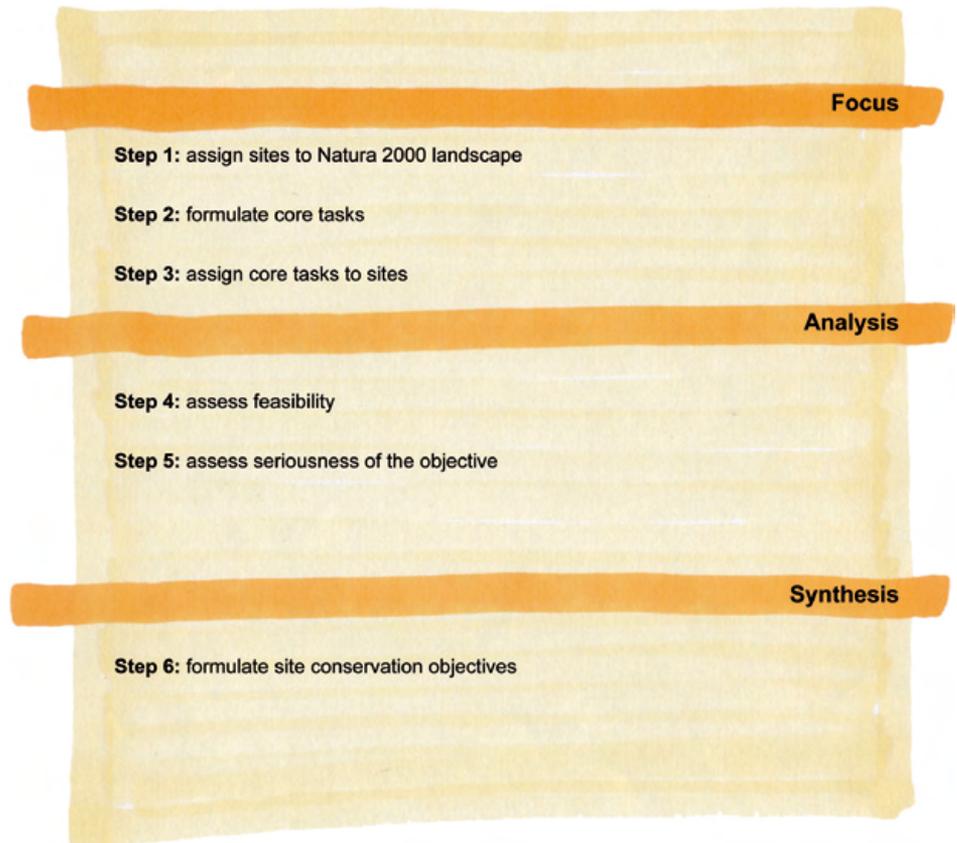
The 'seriousness of the objective' indicates, in terms of time, money, scale and social acceptance, the size of the disparity between the current situation and the desired situation. This was also indicated in terms of green, amber and red. This analysis was based partly on meetings with experts and managers, a quick scan by the KIWA & EGG focused on water conditions, and information from the Netherlands Environmental Assessment Agency (MNP) and the Dutch Centre for Field Ornithology (SOVON). In addition, the global cost analysis drawn up by the LEI was used for the final formulation of conservation objectives at site level.

### Synthesis

#### Step 6:

##### Formulate site conservation objectives

On the basis of the steps, 'focus' and 'analysis', site conservation objectives were formulated in terms of preservation and/or improvement. For habitat types and species that come under one of the core tasks focussing on improvement, conservation objectives were generally formulated in terms of extending and/or improving. A higher target was set in a site if the site has a high potential for certain habitat types or species and relatively little effort is required in order to attain that higher target. In a site with the same potential but where more effort is required, a lower target was set. This made sure that the above-mentioned principles of 'harmony with existing policy wherever possible' and 'practically and financially feasible objectives' were taken into account.



## Other documents and information sources

### Policy document

*Natura 2000 framework memorandum (2005)*

*(In Dutch: Natura 2000 contourennotitie)*

This policy document sets out the frameworks for Natura 2000 targets, decisions and management plans. For example, it includes the main ideas and the principles to be used in formulating the Natura 2000 targets.

### Documents for the purposes of previous designation and registration

*Memorandum of Reply Birds Directive (2000)*

*(In Dutch: Nota van Antwoord Vogelrichtlijn)*

This memorandum was issued following receipt of the views submitted during the public preparatory procedure that preceded the designation of 49 Birds Directive sites in March 2000. It has three sections: (1) General section containing the submitted views and responses. Annex 1 contains a detailed explanation of the selection criteria and delineation method relating to the Birds Directive sites as applied since 2000; (2) Site-specific views and responses and (3) Thematic index of questions and list of parties submitting views.

*Justification document (2003)*

*(In Dutch: Verantwoordingsdocument)*

This document deals with the selection method applied for the registration of Habitats Directive sites in 2003.

*List document (2004)*

*(In Dutch: Lijstdocument)*

This document states separately, for each habitat type (annex I) and each species (annex II), which Habitats Directive sites meet the selection criteria, and gives a brief explanation (the Natura 2000 profiles document states how the agreements used in the selection process relate to the subtypes as currently differentiated).

*Sites document (2004)*

*(In Dutch: Gebiedendocument)*

This document deals with the delineation method, contains the maps delineating the registered Habitats Directive sites and lists the habitat types and species for which each site was registered.

*Reaction document (2004)*

*(In Dutch: Reactiedocument)*

This document contains the memorandum of reply relating to the public preparatory procedure for the registration of Habitats Directive sites which took place early in 2003.

### Designation decisions

*Draft designation decisions (2006), including*

*explanatory memoranda and draft maps*

*(In Dutch: Ontwerp-aanwijzingsbesluiten, inclusief nota's van toelichting en ontwerpkaarten)*

These documents indicate, for each of the Natura 2000 sites, for which species and/or habitat types the site in question is designated. Maps (scale approx 1:25000) indicate the delineation of the sites. The explanatory memorandum provides background about the designation on the basis of the Birds and Habitats Directive, a site description, delineation description and explanation of the map and conservation objectives. (See also Reader's Guide to Natura 2000 site documents).

*Designation decisions for protected and state nature monuments coinciding with Natura 2000 sites (inc. explanatory memoranda)*

*(In Dutch: Aanwijzingsbesluiten beschermde en staatsnatuurmonumenten, die samenvallen met Natura 2000 gebieden (incl. nota's van toelichting))*

These nature monuments lose their status on designation as a Birds or Habitats Directive site. These documents indicate for each nature monument why the site in question was designated at the time, a description of the site and natural features occurring within it that have to be protected, and an explanation of the delineation. Maps of the delineation are included. The decisions including explanatory memoranda are appended to the draft designation decision for the Natura 2000 site in question.

*Designation decisions for Birds Directive sites (inc. explanatory memoranda, maps and any amendment decisions)(In Dutch: Aanwijzingsbesluiten*

*Vogelrichtlijngebieden (incl. nota's van toelichting, kaarten en eventuele wijzigingsbesluiten)*

The formal decisions of the Minister of Agriculture,

Nature and Food Quality by which the Birds Directive sites were designated at the time. The explanatory memorandum to each decision contains a list of bird species for which the site was designated. Decisions dating from 2000 and later give a summarised account of selection criteria and delineation method (worked out in more detail in the Memorandum of Reply Birds Directive, 2000).

*Decisions taken on appeals against designation as a Birds Directive site which resulted in amendment of the original decision*

*(In Dutch: Beslissingen genomen op bezwaren tegen de aanwijzings als Vogelrichtlijngebied die tot wijziging van het oorspronkelijke besluit hebben geleid.)*

There was a right of appeal in relation to the Birds Directive sites designated in the year 2000. The appeal procedures resulted in amendments in a number of cases.

### Working document for designation decisions

*Natura 2000 sites documents (2006)*

*(In Dutch: Natura 2000 gebiedendocumenten)*

The sites documents contain the following elements for each site: profile, area description, change of delineation, habitat types/species, core tasks, conservation objectives, changes to database (plus reasons) and synopsis (summary of conservation objectives, including information about relative contribution and conservation status at national level).

*Reader's Guide to Natura 2000 sites documents (2006)*

*(In Dutch: Leeswijzer Natura 2000 gebiedendocumenten)*

This guide gives a brief explanation of the various sections of the Natura 2000 sites documents. This explanation is also relevant to the (draft) designation decisions. Where relevant, a connection is made with other documents such as the Natura 2000 targets document. It also includes a glossary of terms used in the Natura 2000 sites document and the Natura 2000 targets document.

### Analyses

*KIWA & EGG (2005/2006) Challenges and opportunities analysis Natura 2000 sites*

*(In Dutch: Knelpunten en kansen analyse Natura 2000 gebieden)*

This report investigates the challenges and opportunities facing the habitat types. It outlines current and potential challenges and possible ways of overcoming them, and indicates which challenges need to be overcome as a priority.

*LEI cost analysis report (2006)*

*(In Dutch: LEI rapportage inzake kostenanalyse)*

This report indicates which costs associated with achieving the Natura 2000 targets are not covered by existing policy. It also states the financial benefits from Natura 2000.

### Background document

*Natura 2000 profiles document (2006)*

*(In Dutch: Natura 2000 profielendocument)*

The profiles document gives a detailed description of all habitat types and species for which sites have been or are to be designated (including distribution, contribution of sites, relative importance, conservation status, literature sources). This document explains the assessment of relative importance and conservation status as included in the Natura 2000 targets document. It also includes the Dutch interpretation of habitat types (and subtypes). To this end, the document includes a number of general tables which translate the habitat types etc. to the plant communities as included in the Atlas of Plant Communities and the Staatsbosbeheer catalogue.

### Information sources

*SOVON & CBS (2005) Trends van vogels in het Nederlands Natura 2000 netwerk. SOVON information report 2005/09. SOVON Vogelonderzoek Nederland, Beek-Ubbergen*

This document provides information about numbers and trends of all bird species for which Birds Directive sites have been or are to be designated. The numbers included in the conservation objectives for birds are derived from the figures in this report.

*Staatsbosbeheer vegetation database*

*(In Dutch: Vegetatiedatabank Staatsbosbeheer)*

Since 1989 the Dutch national forest service Staatsbosbeheer has been using a monitoring system whereby the vegetation in important sites is described and mapped by a particular method. The data are entered in a database containing vegetation maps and photographs. An important aspect of this database is the vegetation typology (Business management catalogues 2003). The typology monitors the vegetation of the Netherlands, but supplements it with non-described communities and is designed in such a way that both changes in quality and changes in processes can be monitored.

*SynBioSys*

SynBioSys is an abbreviation of 'syntaxonomic biological system'. As the name suggests, this computer programme operates in principle at the level of the biological community. The programme records all available information about plant communities such as species composition, ecology, succession, zoning, distribution and conservation. It is based on the National Vegetation Database (LVD), managed by Alterra. It currently contains around 350,000 photographs dating from the period 1930-2000. These photographs are assigned to a vegetation type and so connected with habitat types. The system offers the possibility of determining the national distribution of habitat types, provides an indication of the most important sites and can be used to describe changes dating back to 1930.

*"Inhaalslag Verspreidingsonderzoek mollusken van de Europese habitatrictlijn" Inventarisatieperiode 2004-2005. Nauwe korfslak *Vertigo angustior*. Stichting Anemoon, Hillegom*

This report (2006) describes results of distribution research into the narrow-mouthed whorl snail in various Natura 2000 sites.

The above reports and databases are examples of information sources. Important information has also been drawn from the consultation meetings and meetings of experts. It should be pointed out that the Natura 2000 profiles document contains

the most important information sources for each habitat type, species or bird species.

### European Commission documents

*Interpretation Manual of European Union Habitats - EUR25, adopted by the Habitats Committee on 4 October 1999 and consolidated with the new and amended habitat types for the 10 accession countries as adopted by the Habitats Committee on 14 March 2002*

This is the official interpretation adopted by the Habitats Committee of all habitat types included in Annex I to the Habitats Directive. The Natura 2000 profiles document contains the Dutch interpretation. Atlantic Region. Reference List of habitat types and species present in the region (Doc. Atl/B/fi n. 5, July 2002) This list, usually shortened to 'Reference List', comprises habitat types and species for which the Member States in the Atlantic Region are required to designate sites. This list forms the starting point for the selection of Habitats Directive sites and their assessment by the European Commission.

*Atlantic Region. Conclusions on representativity within pSCI of habitat types and species. Seminar held at Den Haag, The Netherlands. June 2002 (Doc. Atl./C/ rev.2, July 2002)*

Assessment by the European Commission of the list of Habitats Directive sites registered by the Netherlands in 1998. On the basis of this assessment, the Netherlands extended the registration considerably in 2003.

*Commission Decision 2004/813/EC of 7 December 2004 adopting, pursuant to Directive 92/43/EEC, the list of sites of Community importance for the Atlantic biogeographical region (OJ EC L 387)*

List drawn up by the European Commission, under Article 4 of the Habitats Directive, of Habitats Directive sites ("Sites of Community Importance") registered in the Atlantic region to be designated by the Member States.

Most of these documents are available at [www.minlnv.nl/natuurwetgeving](http://www.minlnv.nl/natuurwetgeving).

# Results

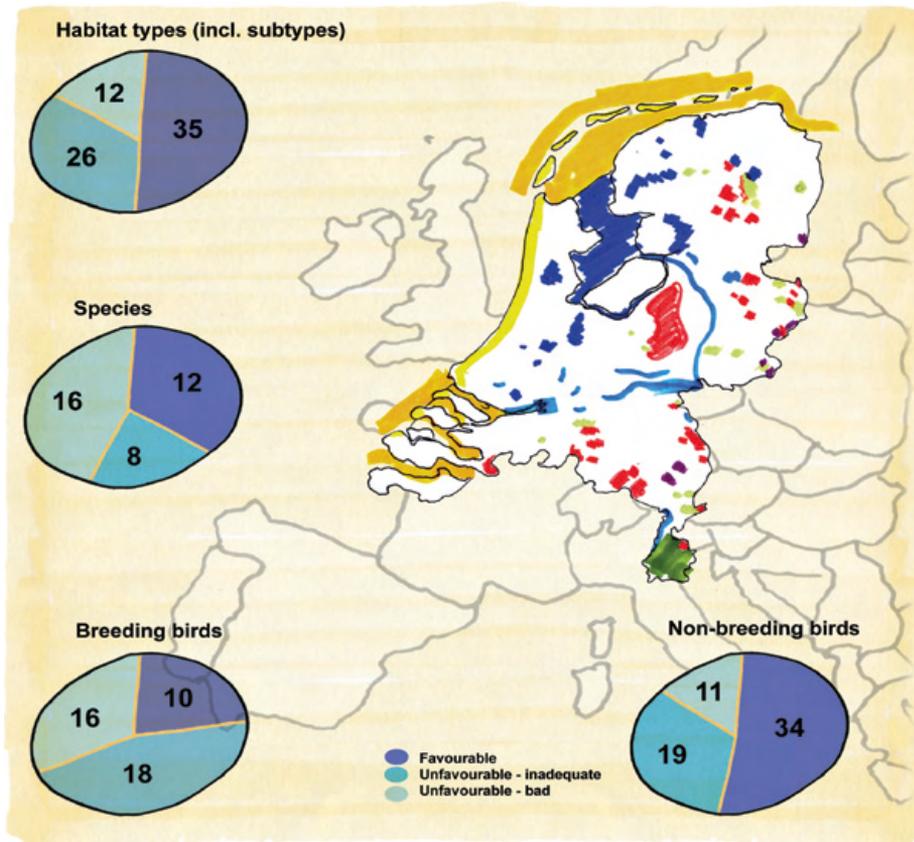
This chapter gives an outline of the main results in words and pictures.

## Relative importance

In determining the relative importance of nature in the Netherlands in a European context, we gained a clearer picture of the importance of the Netherlands for habitat types and species for which the Netherlands has taken on the responsibility of protection on a sustainable basis. One of the main ideas underlying the formulation of Natura 2000 targets is that more effort is required for species and habitat types for which the Netherlands plays a crucial role and for species and habitat types that are under severe pressure.

Despite its small area, the Netherlands is of crucial relative importance in a European context for a number of habitat types, species of fauna and bird species. The figure *Relative importance* gives a picture of the distribution of scores between the various categories of relative importance for habitat types, species and bird species. This results in the following picture. For more than half of the non-breeding birds, the Netherlands is of very great importance. The relative importance of the species in Annex II and of the breeding birds is the same: around a quarter score in the category 'very great'.

For around half of the habitat types, the Netherlands is of very great importance. This is mainly due to its 'ecological variation' and partly due to its relatively large share in a European context. Examples include sand drifts (H2330), wet heaths (H4010), dry grasslands of the River Area (H6120), *Molinion* meadows (H6410) and *Nardus* grasslands (H6230). For Annex II species such as the large copper butterfly (H1060), root vole (H1340), Roger's Bristle-moss (H1387) and the fen orchid (H1903), the Netherlands is of very great importance. Species of breeding birds which breed in the Netherlands to a considerable extent include coastal breeding birds and marsh birds. For non-breeding birds, the Netherlands is most important for geese followed by stilts. For a number of these species, more than half



of the international population spends time in the Netherlands each year.

## Conservation status of habitat types and species

Non-breeding birds score best, in relative terms, on conservation status. The score 'unfavourable - bad' for breeding birds coincides to a large extent with the score 'unfavourable - inadequate' for a number of habitat types that form important habitat where improving quality is the main objective. The habitat types score 'unfavourable - inadequate' in relation to quality relatively often.

The figure *Conservation status* gives a picture of the scores of the various categories of conservation status for the habitat types, species and bird species. A general picture and a picture for the Natura 2000 landscapes. To summarise the resulting picture: at present, 12% of habitat types have a favourable conservation status, 54% an 'unfavourable - inadequate'

status and 34% an 'unfavourable - bad' status. In the case of species, only a minority (12%) have a favourable conservation status, 44% are assessed as 'unfavourable - inadequate' and 44% as 'unfavourable - bad'. In the case of breeding birds, 36% score 'favourable', 11% 'unfavourable - inadequate' and 52% 'unfavourable - bad'. In the case of non-breeding birds, 51% score 'favourable', 32% 'unfavourable - inadequate' and 17% 'unfavourable - bad'. It should also be pointed out that the figure states the absolute numbers (in the case of habitat types, the numbers of subtypes).

The picture for each Natura 2000 landscape is different for the habitat types, species and bird species. In the landscapes Lakes and Marshes, Higher Sandy Ground and Hills of Limburg, no habitat types score 'favourable'. In the case of species, the proportion of species scoring 'unfavourable - inadequate' is largest in the landscapes Dunes, River Area, Higher Sandy Ground and Brook Valleys. Breeding birds and non-breeding

birds show a relatively large proportion scoring 'favourable' in virtually all of the landscapes. A striking result is the relatively large proportion of birds scoring 'unfavourable - bad' in the Natura 2000 landscapes Dunes, Lakes and Marshes and Raised Bogs. In the case of non-breeding birds, the proportion 'favourable score' in virtually all landscapes is the largest, most clearly in the North Sea, Wadden Sea and Delta, River Area and Lakes and Marshes.

### Core tasks and sense of urgency

The Natura 2000 targets document includes the main objectives for the Natura 2000 network for the habitat types and species. Those objectives may relate to more appropriate management and/or better arrangement of ecological conditions. Examples include extending damp and wet grasslands and improving quality, improving the quality of sand drifts, open grassy cover in the dunes for breeding birds such as the short-eared owl (A222) and improving the quality of the habitat for marsh breeding birds.

The essence lies not in an approach focused on specific habitat types and specific species, but in an approach focused on their mutual cohesion. For the Natura 2000 landscapes, therefore, objectives of landscape cohesion and internal completeness were adopted, which were then elaborated further in core tasks. One of the main objectives at landscape level is preserving sufficient scope for dynamic processes. In dynamic systems in particular, conservation cannot mean that everything stays the same. For example, erosion and sedimentation processes change the size and locations of embryonic dunes (H2110) from year to year.

For a long-term sustainable result, a coherent approach, as indicated in the core tasks, is necessary. Parts of sites which do not contain any Birds and/or Habitats Directive features also have a specific significance for the sustainable conservation of Natura 2000 habitat types and species. For example, they are necessary in order to create sustainable ecological conditions, for the internal and external cohesion of Natura 2000 sites or the long-term introduction of planned natural features.

The figure *Core tasks* summarises the core tasks for each Natura 2000 landscape.

A total of 97 core tasks have been assigned to Natura 2000 sites. For a number of core tasks, a sense of

urgency has been assigned to specific sites. A sense of urgency was assigned if an irreparable situation is likely to arise within the next 10 years. The assessment is that a core task and the associated conservation objectives will no longer be achievable otherwise. This means, for example, that specific measures must be taken within the next 10 years in order to bring water conditions up to standard. 29 sites have been assigned a sense of urgency in relation to the water conditions (🌊) (26 land sites and 3 large bodies of water). A water objective (w) was assigned if the water conditions are not up to standard to a greater or lesser extent. 31 sites were assigned a sense of urgency in relation to management (🌿). In particular, this concerns for example the core tasks for grey dunes, reed marsh, dry grasslands and black grouse. The core tasks and the indication of sense of urgency are important to the focus of the Natura 2000 management plans and also to the prioritising of measures.

### Natura 2000 targets at national level

The Natura 2000 targets at national level, like those at site level, are formulated in terms of preserving the area and quality of a habitat type, preserving or improving the quality of the habitat of a species, and/or extending the distribution of a species or habitat type. Based on these guiding principles, the Natura 2000 targets were formulated and a number of choices made. The figure *Natura 2000 targets at national level* gives a summary of Natura 2000 targets at national level for habitat types, species and birds.

In the case of targets at national level, it was decided to set a high objective for habitat types which have a very unfavourable conservation status and for which the Netherlands has a major responsibility. This relates largely to nutrient poor grasslands, the area and quality of which has declined greatly in recent decades. Examples are grey dunes (H2130), dry grasslands of the River Area (H6120), *Nardus* grasslands (H6230) *Molinion* meadows (H6410) and alkaline fens (H7230). In various sites, both increasing size and improving quality have been set as conservation objectives. For all landscapes, a recovery objective has been set for the majority of habitat types. This may relate to both

Core task

#### 1.12 High-tide roosts for birds

Preserve and restore undisturbed high-tide roosts.

Why

Great international importance for migratory birds.

Assigned to sites

120. Zoommeer; 127. Markiezaat.

Core task

#### 3.08 Reed marsh

Improve quality and increase size of reed marsh with the associated breeding birds (bittern A021, great reed warbler A298), plus root vole \*H1340

Why

Root vole is a priority. International importance for Dutch subspecies of root vole and for bittern due to large proportion of the population and central location. The River Area has long been of great importance within the Netherlands for threatened marsh birds such as black tern (A197), bittern (A021) and great reed warbler (A298).

Assigned to sites

36. Uiterwaarden Zwarte water en Vecht (🌿, w); 67. Gelderse Poort (🌿, 🌊, w); 105. Zouweboezem (w); 112. Biesbosch (w).

Core task

#### 5.03 Alkaline fens and quaking bogs

Restore quality and extend area of alkaline fens H7230 and transition mires and quaking bogs (quaking bogs) H7140\_A, in mosaic with nutrition poor grasslands.

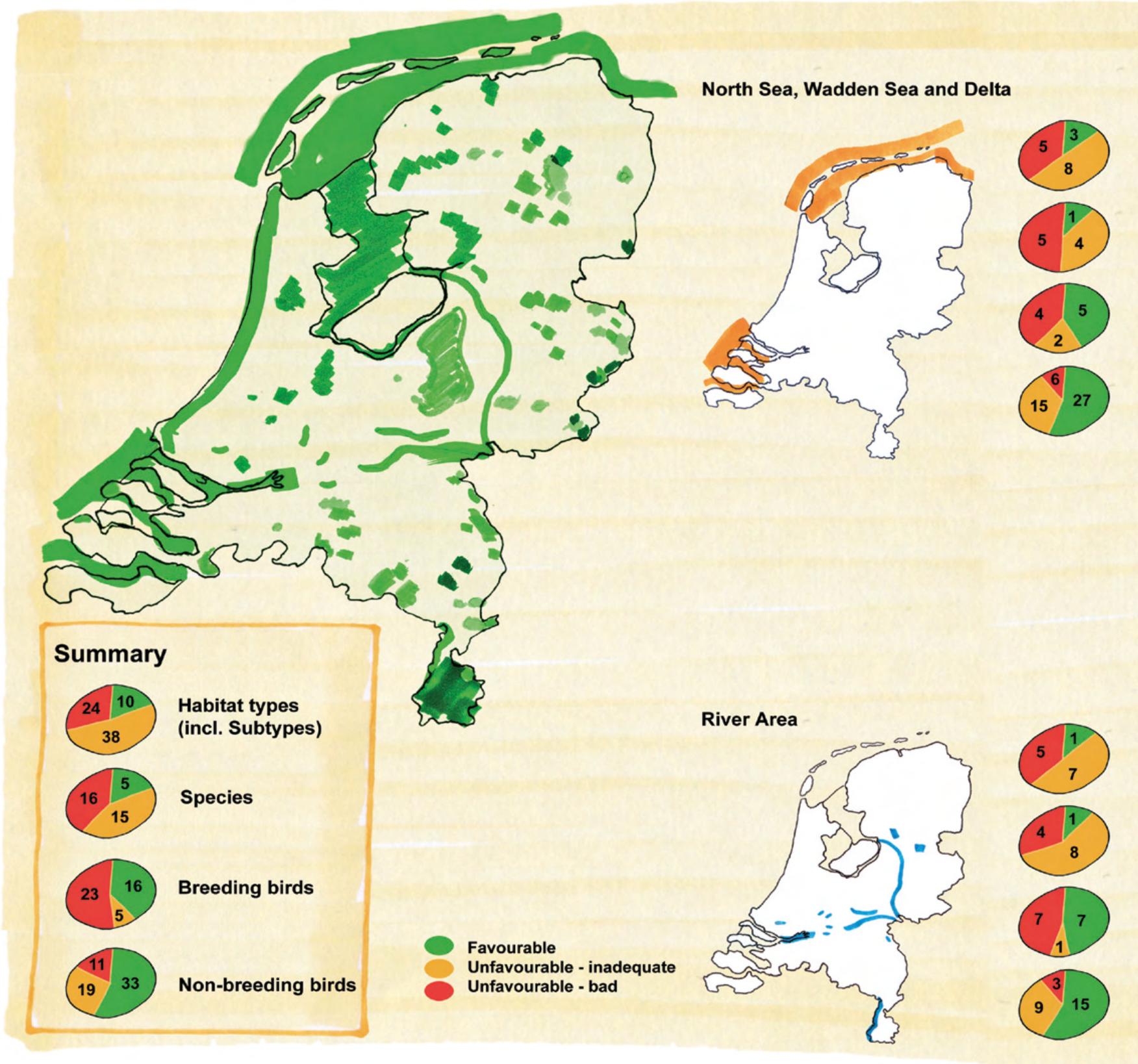
Why

International importance for transition mires and quaking bogs (quaking bogs) in the Atlantic region due to central location and relatively large size. Important at national level for many unusual species and potentially for slender green feather moss (H1393). Current area of both habitat types is small.

Assigned to sites

25. Drentsche Aa-gebied (w); 28. Elperstroomgebied (🌊, w); 45. Springendal & Dal van de Mosbeek (w); 48. Lemselermaten (🌊, w); 52. Boddenbroek (w); 60. Stelkampsveld (w); 65. Binnenveld (🌊, w); 130. Langstraat (w).

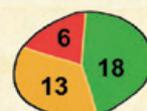
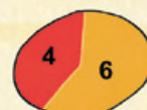
# Conservation status



### Dunes



### Lakes and Marshes



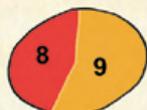
### Brook Valley



### Raised Bogs



### Higher Sandy Ground



### Hills of Limburg



### North Sea, Wadden Sea and Delta



- Covered sandbanks
- Marine mammals
- Covered sandbanks (incl. biogenic structures)
- Foraging function fish-eating birds
- Quality of estuaries
- Restore salt influence Haringvliet
- Freshwater-saltwater transitions
- Wadden area
- Hinterland twaite shad
- Diversity of tidal flats
- Rest and foraging areas
- High tide roosts for birds
- Breeding habitat
- Habitat of root vole
- Low cover
- Diversity of salt marshes
- Breeding area and foraging area
- Creeping marshwort
- Brackish areas inside the dikes



### River Area



- Migratory fish
- Water plants
- Open water
- River banks with pioneer vegetation
- Improve quality of freshwater tidal area
- Water soldier communitie
- Wet alluvial forests
- Reed marsh
- Wet grasslands
- Grass-eating water birds
- Fish and amphibians
- Shortly inundated grasslands
- Dry grasslands
- Forests of hardwood trees

## Dunes



White dunes and embryonic shifting dunes  
Grey dunes  
Decalcified fixed dunes  
Dry wooded dunes  
Humid dune slacks (incl. wet wooded dunes)  
Grasslands  
Dune water courses  
Inner dune margine

## Lakes and Marshes



All stages of terrestrialisation  
Moulting and rest area  
Marsh fringes  
Shortly inundated grasslands  
Perennial reed  
Completeness of succession stages in space and time  
Brackish tall herb fringe communities  
Bog woodland  
Wet grasslands

## Brook Valley



Water plants  
Restore courses  
Alkaline fens and quaking bogs  
Habitat of scarce and dusky large blue  
Nutrient poor grasslands  
Brook valley sides  
Wet alluvial forests  
Oak-hornbeam forests

## Raised Bogs



Extend active raised bog  
Regeneration degraded raised bogs  
Laggzones  
Grasslands on uncut peat  
Improvement of dedgraded raised bogs  
Bog margines

## Higher Sandy Ground



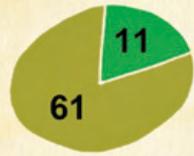
Very weakly buffered pools  
Weakly buffered pools  
Dystrophic pools  
Small peat bogs  
Wet heaths  
Nutrient poor grasslands  
Oak-hornbeam forests  
Shrub rich dry heaths  
Connective zones  
Black grouse  
Juniper scrubs  
Drifting sand landscape  
Old sessile oak forests  
Beech-oak forests with holly  
Buildings for Geoffroy's bats

## Hills of Limburg

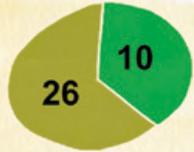


Mosaic of dry grasslands  
Yellow-bellied toad  
Oak-hornbeam forests and fringes  
Well structured acidophilous forests  
Fish and water plants  
Alkaline fens  
Calaminarian grassland  
Brook valley forests  
Desmoulin's whorl snail  
Mosaic of drygraslands in pits  
Hibernation of bats

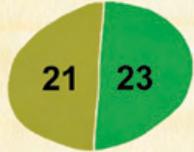
# Natura 2000 targets at national level



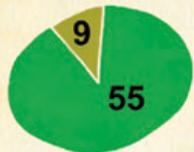
Habitat types (incl. Subtypes)



Species



Breeding birds



Non-breeding birds



## Examples of Natura 2000 targets at national level

increasing size and improving quality, or simply to improving quality.

In the case of species, a recovery objective has been set at national level for more than half of the species. This relates in particular to butterflies, dragonflies and migratory fish as well as to the beaver (H1337) and root vole (H1340). The Natura 2000 landscapes North Sea, Wadden Sea and Delta, River Area, Brook Valleys and Lakes and Marshes in particular are required to make a contribution in this respect. In the case of breeding birds, a conservation objective has been formulated for 23 of the 44 species at national level. The species for which a recovery objective has been set at national level are primarily species which occur in the Natura 2000 landscapes Dunes, Higher Sandy Ground, Raised Bogs and Lakes and Marshes. This concerns marsh birds such as bittern (A021) and little bittern (A022), and dune birds such as wheatear (A277) and short-eared owl (A222). In the case of Higher Sandy Ground and Raised Bogs, it concerns species such as whinchat (A275) and red-backed shrike (A338).

In the case of non-breeding birds, targets have been formulated for 56 of the 64 species at national level. A recovery target at national level has been formulated for only 9 species. A recovery objective has been formulated for a number of shellfish-eaters in particular. That target is to be achieved by the Natura 2000 landscape North Sea, Wadden Sea and Delta (from the Wadden Sea area). For a number of species such as fish eaters, no national recovery objective has been set for the time being. A recovery target has been set at national level for the golden plover (A140), black-tailed godwit (A156) and crane (A127). An improvement in the situation must come from outside the Natura 2000 sites.

Natura 2000 target

### **H91F0 Riparian mixed forests of *Quercus robur*, *Ulmus laevis* and *Ulmus minor*, *Fraxinus excelsior* or *Fraxinus angustifolia*, along great rivers (*Ulmion minoris*)**

Increase distribution, increase size and improve quality.

Explanation

Increase area of habitat type forests of hardwood trees at likely sites, preferably near existing sites and adjacent to existing forests. This can be achieved in part by converting cultivated forests at suitable sites. The best opportunities for extension are in sheltered parts of the River Area, where there is no damming up of water, e.g. in the shelter of railway embankments and bridges. In terms of location, there are good opportunities for extension at sites where the river cuts through a lateral moraine, as in the IJssel valley (Uiterwaarden IJssel (38)), along the Lower Rhine (Uiterwaarden Neder-Rijn (66)) and along the Overijsselse Vecht (Uiterwaarden Zwarte water en Vecht (36)).

Natura 2000 target

### **H1321 Geoffroy's bat**

Preserve size and quality of habitat in order to maintain population.

Explanation

The only two breeding colonies are in Abdij Lilbosch en voormalig klooster Mariahoop (151). The species overwinters in marlpits in South Limburg: Bemelerberg & Schiepersberg (156), Geuldal (157), Sint Pietersberg & Jekerdal (159) and Savelsbos (160). A large proportion of the habitat (especially the foraging area) is outside Natura 2000. The current summer population comprises 250 – 500 individuals.

Natura 2000 target

### **A292 Savi's warbler**

Increase size and improve quality of habitat in order to restore a population of at least 5 key populations of 100-400 pairs with a minimum overall total of 2,000 pairs.

Explanation

Savi's warbler is a breeding bird of the European mainland, found north as far as Estonia. It is

most common in Eastern Europe and, due to the decline in numbers in Northwest Europe, the Dutch population is an important and somewhat isolated outpost in the west. With 3% of the EU population, the relative importance is great. The numbers in the Netherlands, but especially the size of the area, have declined, resulting in a very unfavourable conservation status for the aspects of distribution, habitat and future prospects. The aspect of population is still assessed as favourable for the time being. The target set is in accordance with the recovery plan for marsh birds. Over 80% breed in Natura 2000 sites, particularly in Lakes and Marshes (especially in Oostvaardersplassen (78) (over 25%), Wieden (34) and Weerribben (35)) and around 10% in River Area (mainly in Biesbosch (112)).

Natura 2000 target

### **A068 Smew**

Preserve size and quality of habitat with capacity for a population of 690 birds on average (seasonal average).

Explanation

The declining tendency in the long term is not significant, due to wide fluctuations. The international trend is positive, however, and the decline in the Netherlands may be a consequence of climate-related shifts in the overwintering areas. In the most important region (IJsselmeer region), the quality of the habitat has deteriorated, though (poor smelt status in IJsselmeer (72) and Markermeer & IJmeer (73)). The future is uncertain due to continuing climate changes. Concentrating this species in the IJsselmeer regio makes the future even more uncertain in view of developments in the fish stock. There is great international responsibility due to the large proportion of the international population that makes its home in the Netherlands (15-25%). No recovery target applies due to the difficulty in controlling suspected causes. The capacity estimate was calculated over 1997-2003, a period following the decline of smelt in Markermeer & IJmeer (73). Within the Natura 2000 network, the sites IJsselmeer (72), Markermeer & IJmeer (73), Veluwerandmeren (76), Oudegaasterbrekken, Fluessen e.o (10) and Alde Feanen (13) make the greatest contribution.

# Frequently asked questions about conservation objectives at site level

## **Question 1: For which habitat types and species have conservation objectives been formulated?**

In principle, conservation objectives are for the habitat types and species, including birds, stated in the Natura 2000 database as submitted in 2003 and 2004 to the European Commission. Only in the case of habitat types and species recorded in the database as not occurring to a significant extent (code D for representativeness or population) is no target set. In the course of preparing the Natura 2000 targets, new information became available. The Natura 2000 sites documents include proposals for amendments to the databases. In the case of birds, the latest trend data were used in that respect.

## **Question 2: Were conservation objectives set only for qualifying species?**

Conservation objectives were set for all bird species, both qualifying and delineation species. Conservation objectives were formulated for all habitat types and species in a specific site. The difference between 'most important site for' and 'also registered for' was used for the purpose of selecting the sites. Together, they account for a given proportion of the total Dutch area or proportion of the total population. That proportion has been assessed as sufficient by the European Commission. This does not affect the fact that, in view of the obligation to restore habitat types and species or bird species to favourable conservation status, a target may now be formulated for a specific site aimed at increasing its size or improving its quality.

## **Question 3: What does conservation mean?**

Conservation can mean preserving, increasing or improving. Improving can be done in three complementary ways:

- increasing the area of a habitat type or the size of the habitat of a species;
- improving the quality of a habitat type or of the habitat of a species;
- improving the spatial cohesion of a habitat type or the habitat of a species by connecting, by improving the distribution (both at national level and within a specific site).

Increasing the size and/or improving the quality of a habitat may relate both to preserving the popula-

tion at a given level or to expanding the population. What is more, expanding or improving need not by definition be done by human intervention. Dynamic processes or succession, for example, can increase the area of a given habitat type. Conservation does not mean that every habitat type or habitat of a species must always exist to the same extent or on the same location. The management plans to be drawn up must contain further details on whether it is necessary to take certain measures in order to achieve a target such as extending the area of a habitat type or habitat. Depending on the dynamic that exists in the areas, more or less human intervention may be necessary.

## **Question 4: Which year was taken as the starting point in setting the conservation objectives?**

In setting the conservation objectives at site level, no specific year was adopted as a reference year (for example, the time of designation as a Birds Directive site or registration as a Habitats Directive site). In setting the conservation objectives has been looked at the (minimum) necessary number of species and/or minimum necessary size of habitat or area of habitat type required in order to achieve favourable conservation status at national level. The Netherlands has not undertaken to preserve or restore a particular level from the past, but to take measures to preserve or restore the natural habitats and the wild animal and plant species of Community importance to favourable conservation status. This does not affect the fact that the guidelines as included in the Natura 2000 framework memorandum are also to be followed in this respect.

## **Question 5: Are features in a site permitted to decline?**

No, in principle a habitat type or habitat of a species may not decline in a specific site ('standstill principle'). Exceptionally, a conservation objective is formulated in terms that permit some decline, but only if this is necessary in order to achieve national favourable conservation status of a different habitat type or species and if there is not

sufficient scope within a specific site to achieve a conservation objective focused on increasing size and/or improving quality (so called credit formulation).

## **Question 6: How are the numbers to be used?**

The numbers used are an indication of the desired carrying capacity of the habitat and an aid in determining the measures to be taken and the monitoring of developments in the sites. This does not mean that a manager must guarantee the presence of the same number of birds in a site every year. That would be illogical because, for non-breeding birds for example, the numbers, that represent the carrying capacity of an site, are based on averages over a given period. The target has been formulated in such a way as to place the emphasis on size and quality of the habitat, which must be up to standard or brought up to standard. In addition, depending on the food supply elsewhere, for example, or the distribution of frost over the land, or causes outside the Netherlands, the numbers change each year 'by definition'.

## **Question 7: How are fluctuations in numbers taken into account?**

Due to their great mobility, numbers of non-breeding birds in a site can fluctuate widely from year to year due to changing circumstances inside or outside the site. The same applies, for example, to habitat types consisting of pioneer growth (such as river banks with pioneer vegetation). For a number of coastal breeding birds, with variable occurrences, conservation objectives at regional level have been set for the Delta. This does not affect the fact that sufficient size and quality of the habitat in the various subareas/sites must be kept up to standard as if the birds visit the site every year to breed. For other birds, see Question 6.

## **Question 8: Where are the conservation objectives laid down legally (codified)?**

In accordance with the 1998 Nature Conservation Act, the conservation objectives are set down in the site designation decisions. More details of the conservation objectives, in terms of extent, location and timeschedules, are included in the Natura 2000 management plans. The Management Plan Guide gives a more detailed explanation in this respect.

**Question 9: What is the significance of the relative contribution?**

One Natura 2000 site makes a larger relative contribution towards achieving favourable conservation status or the national target. This relative contribution, or the difference between contributions, was taken into account in formulating the conservation objectives. When granting permits or assessing administrative or other measures, it is reasonable to take account of the relative contribution for a habitat type or species towards the achievement of the national target. For example, for the entire IJsselmeer region, when adopting specific management measures, account can be taken of which Natura 2000 site makes the most important contribution towards achieving a national target. The core tasks assigned to specific sites also provide a guide in this respect. These core tasks indicate the niche of a Natura 2000 site and make it clear which species and/or habitat types make or will make the largest relative contribution.

**Question 10: How are the dynamics of natural systems taken into account?**

More details of the formulated conservation objectives, in terms of extent, location and timeschedules, are contained in the management plans. In addition, the conservation objectives have been formulated in such a way that they state, for example, that the area should be preserved, but within the limits of natural fluctuations. This does not mean that habitat types must always be in the same place. In a number of situations, it is stated that extending the area of a given habitat type (for example, by succession) may be at the expense of a different habitat type. In some cases, only the presence of a habitat type is stated as a target, without specifying the required area.

**Question 11: When are the conservation objectives to be achieved?**

The Habitats Directive and the Birds Directive do not state any deadline for achieving favourable conservation status for habitat types and species. For the core tasks, and the habitat types and species coming under them, for which a sense of urgency has been formulated, it is reasonable to ensure that appropriate measures are taken to bring the specific ecological



conditions up to standard as quickly as possible, but certainly within the next 10 years.

**Question 12: What happens to conservation objectives for Nature Monuments that coincide with Natura 2000 sites?**

Where a Natura 2000 site, or part of one, is designated as a protected nature monument under the Nature Conservation Act, the conservation objectives are added to the designation decision insofar as they are not the same as or coincide with the Natura 2000 conservation objectives.

Further information about the conservation objectives at site level can be found in the Reader's Guide to the Natura 2000 sites documents.

# Natura 2000 landscapes

- North Sea, Wadden Sea and Delta
- Dunes
- River Area
- Lakes and Marshes
- Brook Valleys
- Higher Sandy Ground
- Raised Bogs
- Hills of Limburg
- River Area and Higher Sandy Ground
- BrookValleys and Higher Sandy Ground
- Raised Bogs and Higher Sandy Ground



1	Waddenzee	55	Aamsveen	109	Haringvliet
2	Duinen en Lage Land Texel	56	Arkemheen	110	Oudeland van Strijen
3	Duinen Vlieland	57	Veluwe	111	Hollands Diep
4	Duinen Terschelling	58	Landgoederen Brummen	112	Biesbosch
5	Duinen Ameland	59	Teeselinkven	113	Voordelta
6	Duinen Schiermonnikoog	60	Stelkampsveld	114	Krammer-Volkerak
7	Noordzeekustzone	61	Korenburgerveen	115	Grevelingen
8	Lauwersmeer	62	Willinks Weust	116	Kop van Schouwen
9	Groote Wielen	63	Bekendelle	117	Manteling van Walcheren
10	Oudegaasterbrekken, Fluessen en omgeving	64	Wooldse Veen	118	Oosterschelde
11	Witte en Zwarte Brekken	65	Binnenveld	119	Veerse Meer
12	Sneekerveergebied	66	Uiterwaarden Neder-Rijn	120	Zoommeer
13	Alde Feanen	67	Gelderse Poort	121	Yerseke en Kapelse Moer
14	Deelen	68	Uiterwaarden Waal	122	Westerschelde & Saeftinghe
15	Van Oordt's Mersken	69	Bruuk	123	Zwin & Kievittepolder
16	Wijnjeterper Schar	70	Zuider Lingedijk & Diefdijk-Zuid	124	Groote Gat
17	Bakkeveense Duinen	71	Loevestein, Pompveld & Kornsche Boezem	125	Canisvlietse Kreek
18	Rottige Meenthe & Brandemeer	72	IJsselmeer	126	Vogelkreek
19	Leekstermeergebied	73	Markermeer & IJmeer	127	Markiezaat
20	Zuidlaardermeergebied	74	Zwarte Meer	128	Brabantse Wal
21	Lieftingsbroek	75	Ketelmeer & Vossemeer	129	Ulvenhoutse Bos
22	Norgerholt	76	Veluwerandmeren	130	Langstraat
23	Fochteloërveen	77	Eemmeer & Gooimeer Zuidoever	131	Loonse en Drunense Duinen & Leemkuilen
24	Witterveld	78	Oostvaardersplassen	132	Vlijmens Ven, Moerputten & Bossche Broek
25	Drentsche Aa-gebied	79	Lepelaarplassen	133	Kampina & Oisterwijkse Vennen
26	Drouwenezand	80	Groot Zandbrink	134	Regte Heide & Riels Laag
27	Drents-Friese Wold & Leggelderveld	81	Kolland & Overlangbroek	135	Kempenland-West
28	Elperstroomgebied	82	Uiterwaarden Lek	136	Leenderbos, Groote Heide & De Plateaux
29	Havelte-Oost	83	Botshol	137	Strabrechtse Heide & Beuven
30	Dwingelderveld	84	Duinen Den Helder - Callantsoog	138	Weerder- en Budelerbergen & Ringselven
31	Mantingerbos	85	Zwanenwater & Pettemerduinen	139	Deurnsche Peel & Mariapeel
32	Mantingerzand	86	Schoorlse Duinen	140	Groote Peel
33	Bargerveen	87	Noordhollands Duinreservaat	141	Oeffelter Meent
34	Weerribben	88	Kennemerland-Zuid	142	Sint Jansberg
35	Wieden	89	Eilandspolder	143	Zeldersche Driessen
36	Uiterwaarden Zwarte Water en Vecht	90	Wormer- en Jisperveld & Kalverpolder	144	Boschhuizerbergen
37	Olde Maten & Veerslootslanden	91	Polder Westzaan	145	Maasduinen
38	Uiterwaarden IJssel	92	Ijperveld, Varkensland, Oostzanerveld & Twiske	146	Sarsven en De Banen
39	Vecht- en Beneden-Reggegebied	93	Zeevang	147	Leudal
40	Engbertsdijksvennen	94	Naardermeer	148	Swalmdal
41	Boetelerveld	95	Oostelijke Vechtplassen	149	Meinweg
42	Sallandse Heuvelrug	96	Coepelduynen	150	Roerdal
43	Wierdense Veld	97	Meijndel & Berkheide	151	Abdij Lilbosch & voormalig Klooster Mariahoop
44	Borkeld	98	Westduinpark & Wapendal	152	Grensmaas
45	Springendal & Dal van de Mosbeek	99	Solleveld & Kapittelduinen	153	Bunder- en Elsoërbos
46	Bergvennen & Brecklenkampse Veld	100	Voornes Duin	154	Geleenbeekdal
47	Achter de Voort, Agelerbroek & Voltherbroek	101	Duinen Goeree & Kwade Hoek	155	Brunsummerheide
48	Lemselermaten	102	De Wilck	156	Bemelerberg & Schiepersberg
49	Dinkelland	103	Nieuwkoopse Plassen & De Haeck	157	Geuldal
50	Landgoederen Oldenzaal	104	Broekvelden, Vettenbroek & Polder Stein	158	Kunderberg
51	Lonnekermeer	105	Zouweboezem	159	Sint Pietersberg & Jekerdal
52	Boddenbroek	106	Boezems Kinderdijk	160	Savelsbos
53	Buurserzand & Haaksbergerveen	107	Donkse Laagten	161	Noorbeemden & Hoogbos
54	Witte Veen	108	Oude Maas	162	Abtskolk en De Putte

# Colofon

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