



National Park Zuid-Kennemerland



What is a national park?

For centuries people thought that space, water and other natural resources were inexhaustible. As the world population grew, people increasingly exploited areas of previously untouched nature. They cut down trees to make way for farming. They hunted and kept animals in the surviving woodlands and forests. These woodlands gradually diminished in area. They were replaced by cultural landscapes which may look fairly natural, but in fact bear little relation to the original, unadulterated state.

The first misgivings about these developments were felt in the USA. They led in 1871 to the creation of Yellowstone as the first national park in the world. In 1909 Sweden was the first country in Europe to create a national park. Many other countries followed suit. In 1969 in response to the very different motives for designating national parks, the International Union for the Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources (IUCN), an agency of the United Nations, formulated a definition of national parks which was to apply world-wide.

The main aim in creating national parks is to protect large natural areas and the species of flora and fauna they contain. Secondary aims include environmental education, nature-related recreation and scientific research. Nowadays national parks can be found in practically every country in Europe. Altogether they offer their visitors an overview of the great variety of the wildlife and landscapes of Europe.

The Dutch national parks fit well into the entire European network. In 1969 the Netherlands signed international agreements concerning the establishment of valuable nature reserves as national parks. The Dutch nature reserves are relatively small and often contain valuable ecosystems rarely found elsewhere, such as dunes, peat bogs, and heathland. You can safely assume that if an area is designated as a national park, it contains valuable flora and fauna and is well worth a visit.

In the Netherlands national parks are designated by the Minister of Agriculture, Nature

and Food Quality (LNV). He has done so for all the landscapes which are characteristically Dutch. A national park is administered by a Consultative Body representing owners, managers and administrators. The provincial council provides the secretariat.

The Ministry of LNV contributes a good deal to the costs of administration and maintenance, and information and education within the national parks.



Welcome to National Park Zuid-Kennemerland



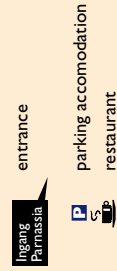
*Enjoy and experience nature in:
**From way back the most breathtaking,
natural surprise in the Randstad
National Park Zuid-Kennemerland!***

Dune areas are a precious part of the world's natural beauty. Very few countries have such extensive dune areas as the Netherlands. For that reason the dunes are an important part of the ecological main structure, the network of nature reserves in the country.

Zuid-Kennemerland National Park lies in the heart of the busy Randstad urban conglomeration. Each year two million people visit the park for peace and recreation. Mostly people who live in or near the park go to their 'rear dunes' for outdoor activities such as hiking, cycling, horse riding and swimming. The vast 3,800 hectare dune area primarily consists of young calcareous dunes with the rare species of flora and fauna that live there. Furthermore there are broad beaches, lovely inland

dune forests and peat polders. The natural landscape is in marked contrast with country estates and other cultural-historical elements, such as bunkers and the sea village landscape.

Originally the area featured wet dune slacks. Groundwater extraction during the twentieth century has caused water draw-down in many of these dune slacks and a decrease in the richness of species. The year 2003 marked the end of the water extraction period and the beginning of large-scale rewetting of the dunes. The dune slacks are recovering and getting wet again and many specialised species are returning. Administrative interventions such as grazing by running free cattle, cutting peat, excavating and permitting dunes to drift again are aimed at restoring the species variety.



Origination of the landscape

Natural development

Towards the end of the last ice age, some 10,000 years ago, the ice caps started to melt. This caused the water level of the North Sea to rise. The Dutch dune landscape began to form some 5,500 years ago under the influence of sea, sand and wind. The rising sea level and sand deposits created a long line of sand banks. Tiny plants were able to colonise the coastal sand area with its washed up organic remains of dead plants and animals. They became the beginnings of barrier beaches which later on developed into what we now call the Old Dunes. In the lower parts peat was formed. At about the beginning of our era this dune formation process came to a standstill.

During the tenth and eleventh century major climatic changes occurred. Violent storms partially washed away the sand dunes. The sand was first deposited off shore but later blown shorewards again by prevailing westerly winds. Sand drifts



created sand piles that 'wandered' over the Old Dunes. This marked the beginning of the Young Dunes. When, after several hundred years, the climate became milder again, the vegetation cover in the dune area increased. At present the most western Young Dunes are the first defense against the sea. The Old Dunes are situated more inland. Many villages and cities have arisen on top of these barrier beaches, among which Beverwijk, Spaarnwoude, Santpoort, Velsen and Haarlem.

People and landscape

National Park Zuid-Kennemerland remains fairly unspoilt, but human influences can be found throughout the whole area. The first people to inhabit the wood covered barrier beaches arrived some 5,000 years ago when the landscape was still dynamically changing. Here they could at least keep their feet dry and dispose of fresh water. They hunted and cut fire wood in the area.

Recent dune excavating projects show that in the past almost all dune slacks have had experimental forms of cultivation. In addition the dunes were exploited for sand production, wood production and hunting, among other things. They were also a desirable location for country estates. The landscape's natural beauty and the short distance to Amsterdam will definitely have played a role in the latter.

At the end of the eighteenth century the typical sea village landscapes arose from the coastal settlements; here the nutrient-poor sandy soil was used - without much success though – for cultivation and goat and sheep keeping. The deeply dug out rectangular lands surrounded by small dams can still be recognized in the landscape, for example near Zandvoort and in the Kraansvlak.

During the nineteenth century people have further curbed the dynamic processes in the dune area. One way to do this was to grow trees. In the first decennia of the last



century – for reasons of sand erosion prevention and also wood production- conifers such as Corsican and Austrian black pines have been planted in the dunes. Trees that are actually not endemic to this area, but they do thrive. During the last century water extraction, acid rain and booming recreation have caused enormous changes to the dune area. Many administrative interventions are directed towards reversing the negative results of these influences.



Water extraction

The dune area's sandy soil naturally contains a large supply of fresh water. The discovery that dune water is excellent drinking water altered this. During the fifteenth century breweries had already begun using this pure water for brewing their beer. Well over one hundred years ago the Zuid-Kennemerland water company started water extraction in the Kennemer dunes in order

to meet the demand for clear and safe drinking water in the cities. Consequently dune grass lands dried up and wet dune slacks disappeared. Only during the second half of the Nineties did the moisture level in the dunes increase again; groundwater extraction was reduced and there were four very wet years in a row. In 2003 water extraction has been discontinued altogether. Gradually more and more dune slacks are rewetted.



Grass encroachment

Industry, intensive cultivation and traffic induce acid rain. Lime dissolves in acid rainfall causing dunes to decalcify and sour faster than they did before. Acid rain also contains nitrogen, which is a nutrient to the dune sand. Specialised dune plants such as the burnet rose are therefore in danger of disappearing, grasses on the contrary thrive. Other causes of grass encroachment are the process of drying-up and the for many years on end – due to

diseases - low number of rabbits. By trimming the grass and allowing cattle to graze certain areas of the park the management tries to put an end to this process.

Recreation

During the second half of the twentieth century people living in the neighbourhood increasingly visited the dune area to enjoy its peace and space. Not only the construction of footpaths and cycle tracks, but also of camp sites and parking accommodation logically followed. More and wider roads to the coast were built. Cyclists, hikers and horse riders were likely to disturb plants, birds and other animals. Due to the institution of area zoning recreation is better controlled nowadays. Most of the public facilities are now to be found close to the main park entrances. This implies that further down the park it is quieter. For the day tripper but particularly for all that lives in the dunes.



Nature and landscape

Dune areas feature an enormous scenic diversity. Differences in soil, height, climate and water table provide a variety of living conditions for plants and animals. Factors of sand, rain and wind continue to intensify these dynamics.

Beach and foredunes

The shore-line area of beach and foredunes is a fragile one. Fresh winds regularly blow across the smooth surface and there's little to hinder their momentum. Sea water continually floods the lime-rich sand and during stormy weather the waves pound the first series of dunes. Only pioneer plants such as rush-like couch grass and the pale pink flowering sea rocket are immune to these sometimes brute forces of nature. The first series of dunes, the foredunes, break the strongest blows of sea and wind. Their primary function is to protect the land from the sea. The extremely tough marram grass with its long spreading roots stabilizes the foredunes

and it traps drifting sand to help to prevent coastal erosion.

On the inland edge of this first series of dunes the prevailing climate is much milder. Here it is possible for other kinds of vegetation to begin to take hold, such as sea buckthorn and elderberry bushes. The blue sea thistle is another species that will grow here. This plant is covered by a wax coating which protects it against dehydration. The great ringed plover broods in this belt of the dune area, whereas it is primarily a beach-foraging bird.

Sometimes nature takes us by surprise.

Kennemer Beach is a case in point. Here, in the saline zone, fresh water seeps upwards from the dunes to form a pond. At high tide the sea sometimes reaches as far as this pond, which makes the water brackish: sweet salt.

Highly adapted plants such as parnassus, orchids and sea bindweed grow here. It is also the zone where the sand lizard and the natterjack toad are perfectly at ease.





Dune area

Behind the foredunes the landscape is open. A creeper that thrives in the lime-rich sandy soil, the dewberry, helps hold the sand in place with its stems and underground root web. The low-growing burnet rose and the blue-coloured dune pansy love this zone as well. Further inland there is more shelter from the sea breeze. With these better conditions the vegetation increases and shrubs as the elderberry and spindle tree grow higher. The shy roe deer finds himself a hiding-place in this thicket and the protected escargot feeds on the herbal flora. This dense bush with plenty of berries and insects makes a very attractive territory for songbirds such as the white-throat, stonechat and nightingale. In spring and summer flowering dune plants produce surprising colour contrasts: the bluish purple of viper's bugloss set against the yellow of ragwort and evening primrose.





A few names of dune lakes in this area are 't Wed, Vogelmeer, Oosterplas and Cremermeer.

Inner dune belt and country estates

Between the open dune area and the urban territory is the inner dune belt; woodlands with mostly deciduous trees. The varied and colourful undergrowth is dominated by 'stinse plants', since centuries gone wild non-native plants, such as snowdrop, wood anemone and bear's garlic.

In the seventeenth century a large number of wealthy merchant traders were looking for a country residence for the summer months. Royal residences and country estates were built all along the inner dune edge. Many of these country estates have been preserved, although a number of them are being progressively swallowed up by the dune landscape. The different styles of garden lay-out and landscaping are in places still visible. Majestic rows of trees

are another evidence of the fashion at that time. The characteristic landscaping and buildings are part of today's impressive cultural history.

Elswoot is probably the best preserved, most beautiful and most water rich country estate. The estate was founded in 1634 and features rich animal and plant communities. A great number of hole-nesting birds live in the estate's old trees and the icehouse is used by the bat population.

Places of interest

The Eere cemetery, remains of the Atlantik wall and other elements in the park still have historical value. A special working group studies how to preserve and revive this cultural history.

The Zuid-Kennemerland National Park also comprises of a number of smaller properties and parks that are being managed by private owners or municipal authorities.

About National Park Zuid-Kennemerland

Organisation

For ages nature has served man. This has largely changed into the reverse with the creation of the national park. Zuid-Kennemerland was designated as a national park in 1995 to ensure protection and conservation of the nature reserve between the cities of IJmuiden and Zandvoort.

To this end a so-called management and development plan has been drawn up which outlines the desired developments in the park for the next couple of years, with as first matter of importance the interests of nature and users.

In control of the national park are the following parties: Provincial Water Company PWN Noord-Holland, the Society for the Conservation of Natural Monuments, the State Forest Service, the municipalities of Velsen, Bloemendaal, Haarlem and Zandvoort, the Society for Nature and Environment Education IVN Noord-Holland and the province of Noord-Holland.

There are also a number of private land owners involved. All these parties work closely together and regard the park, when it comes to managing, as one single area. The united strength of all these parties expresses itself in the adherence to a common house style and to uniform admission rules and signposts. This fruitful cooperation is clearly visible in the northern part of the park: here the joint site management has set up a grazing area of well over 2,000 hectares, for which the fences between the different territories had to be pulled down.

Nature conservation and development
In the next years management activities in National Park Zuid-Kennemerland are directed towards further restoring natural systems. Natural dynamics are necessary for a variegated landscape and rich animal and plant communities. Visitors here can experience and enjoy nature to its fullest.





Drifting dunes

Sand drifts bring lime-rich sand to the surface. Embryo dunes are formed, allowing - in time - colonisation by well adapted plant and animal species. In the 'wake' of the drifting dunes the erosion continues until groundwater level is reached, creating an ever extending wet dune slack. Thickly covered fixed dunes become acid and age to a degree that the typical flora and fauna are lost. This explains why dune-drifting is again permitted in some areas of the open dune belt. To speed up the process, the site management excavates the dune scrub and upper thin layer of humus in places. As a result entire dunes and slacks, such as the large dune of "De Bruid van Haarlem" (The Bride of Haarlem), are constantly in motion again. The site management follows the dunes' drifting behaviour very closely. In about 2010 the outcome of this survey could well be that more dunes will be permitted to 'wander' in the future. In 2006 the dunes of National Park Zuid-

Kennemerland were declared a Geological Monument. Near "De Bruid van Haarlem" an information board has been posted outlining this declaration. "De Bruid van Haarlem" is a good example of a parabolic dune, the sort of dune of which the entire area is made up. The area is very typical of the formation of the Dutch coastline.

Wet dune slacks

Before groundwater extraction began to take place wet dune slacks were abundant in the sand dune environment. Since the water extraction activities have stopped, the groundwater bubble is growing again. In several areas the soil is soggy once more, and low slacks, such as the Zuidervlak, are at times under water. In combination with the restoration management of shoveling scrub, mowing grass and permitting cattle to graze, all sorts of specialised plants are re-establishing themselves in the wet dune slacks. Parnassus, common centaury and northern gentian are just a few of them.

The natterjack toad and the smooth newt have become common species again.

Grazing

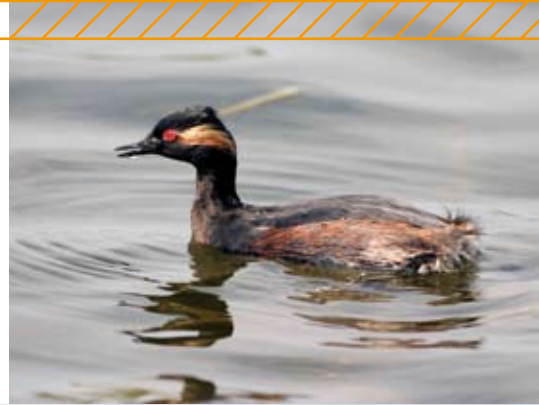
To restrict the encroachment of grasses into the dunes and to restore the environmental diversity, the site management has deliberately introduced big grazers. Cattle, horses and ponies graze a large part of the national park. Big grazers, which live in herds, eat grasses and tough dune reed, but feed on shrubs and trees as well. By tramping the vegetation down they create blowouts. With the help of small herbivores such as rabbits and roe deer they keep the dune landscape open, creating space for a number of highly specialised plant species, among which are the dune pansy, thyme and viper's bugloss. Visitors need not be afraid to walk into these grazing animals; they have been chosen on their calm behaviour. ***When dealing with the free running cattle there are however three golden rules:***

do not touch, do not feed and keep your distance.

Woods and lakes

The national park's woods are a natural habitat for squirrels and birds of prey such as the hawk, buzzard and wood owl. In addition some of the woods have a cultural-historical value.

The dune lakes have a natural and some of them also a recreational function.





The originally steep banks of the Vogelmeer lake have been levelled off some years ago. Specially built small islands in the lake offer birds more possibilities to brood and forage. Swamp and open water birds, such as the black-necked grebe and water rail, as well as amphibians feel better at home now on and around the lake. To the visitor the lake has become even more attractive than it used to be. Many passers-by stop at its side to enjoy the beautiful scenery and numerous birds.

Connections

Good connections offer man and animal greater prospects for exploring new possibilities or extending their habitat elsewhere. The Zuid-Kennemerland National Park is engaged in establishing more ecological and recreational connections with nature reserves in the surroundings. The first actions for building an 'ecoduct' over the Zandvoortselaan have already been taken, as this busy road proves to constitute a

barrier for animals to travel safely from one dune area to another. Within the park itself the pulling down of fences also means more space for visitors and animals.

Nature-centred recreation

The national park includes an extensive web of recreational facilities. Due to zoning the visitor can fully enjoy nature while not excessively disturbing plants and animals. Inviting footpaths and cycle and riding tracks run through the whole area, e.g. the Duinpieperpad in the Kraansvlak where you cycle through a sea village landscape patched with old farming lands. The real hiker can reach secluded areas by choosing the smaller trails. Some parts of the park, particularly in the northwest and the south, are reserved as a refuge for animals. These areas will be kept closed to the public, even when in future times more visitors are expected.

Communication and education

Communication and education serve both nature conservation and nature-centred recreation. The support of the population is indispensable for the park's continuation. To get this, much attention is given to an open and service-orientated attitude towards the public.

National Park Zuid-Kennemerland also provides a variety of teaching packages and excursion programmes for schools and visitors, and effectively cooperates with volunteers from all regional conservation and environmental societies. Detailed information can be obtained from the visitor centre, the flyers near the park's entrances and of course the website www.npzk.nl. The visitor centre of this national park, 'Duincentrum De Zandwaaier', has been in operation since 1999. Visitors can contact the centre in person, by telephone or digitally for inquiries, questions and bookings. De Zandwaaier is also the point of departure for many educational activities.

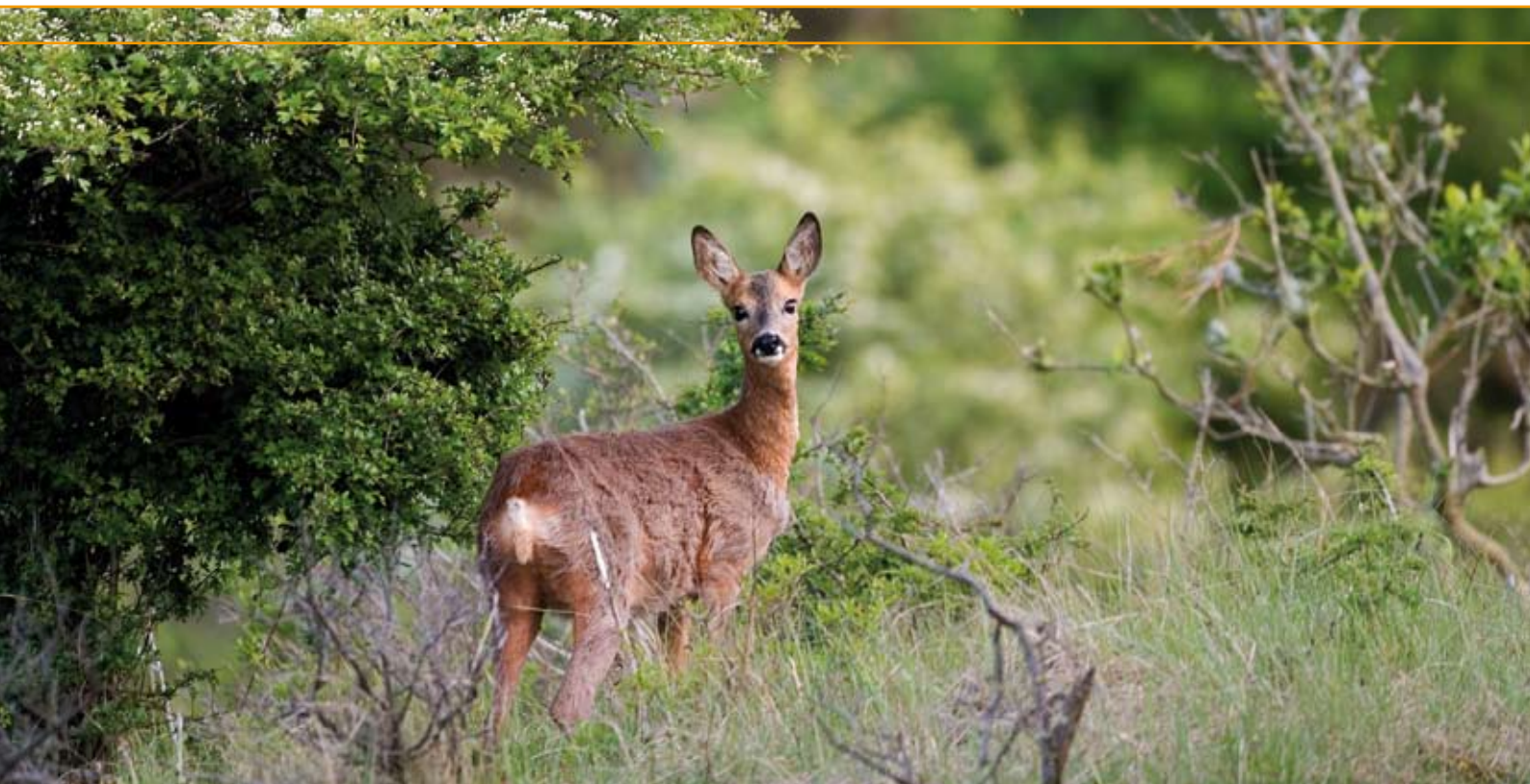
Research

The park's management constantly seeks the conservation and improvement of nature's quality. Scientific research and monitoring are necessary for good management. Only in this manner a picture arises of how species and the landscape will develop in the course of time.

The various parties work together at a single monitoring system to further optimize management.

Through population studies and investigations a lot of information about birds, dragonflies, bats, butterflies, lizards and roe deer among others, has already been made available. Apart from foresters and researchers also a great number of volunteers plays an essential role in collecting the data.





Information on the area

*For further and up-to-the-day information about National Park Zuid-Kennemerland see the website: www.npzk.nl
Information on all Dutch national parks is on website: www.nationaalpark.nl*

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