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Connectivity of the Natura 2000 network across the Belgian-Dutch borders in the Meuse Basin



Project forum of the Three Countries park – 26 march 2015

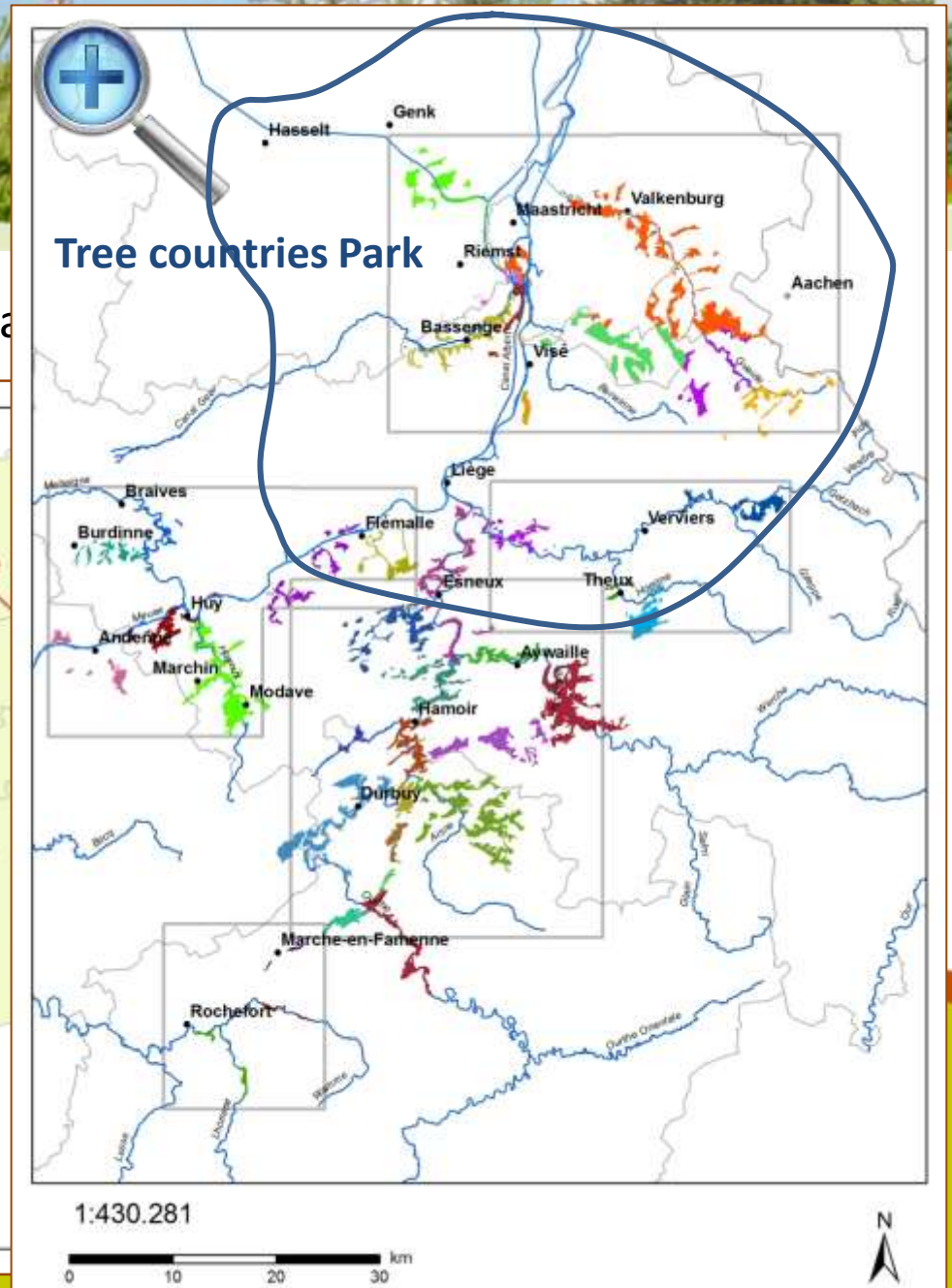


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- Six years project (mid 2014-mid 2020)
- More than 15 millions Euro for which 75% contribution from EU
- Seven partners from two countries: Belgium (Walloon and Flemish regions) + the Netherlands (province of Limburg) :
 - Three associations : Natagora, Natuurpunt and Natuurmonumenten
 - Two public services : DNF (dpt nature et forêt), ANB (Agentschap voor natuur en bos)
 - One limited liability company : De Scheepvaart (Albert Canal)
 - One university : University of Gent (phyto-extraction of phosphates)

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- 40 various Natura 2000 areas located



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Objective 1

OAKS AND HORNBEAMS
FORESTS

RUPICOLOUS
GRASSLANDS

CALAMINARIAN
GRASSLANDS

Restoration of 345 ha of threatened
pastoral habitats and associated species

CALCAREOUS
GRASSLANDS

HAY
MEADOWS

ACIDOPHILIC
GRASSLANDS



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- Pursue of the restoration work on N2000 areas previously acquired:
 - Cut of shrubs, trees and woody shoots
 - Mowing and grazing (sheeps)
 - Control of invasive plant species
 - Land stripping
 - Forest edges management
 - Replacement and set-up of fences

Restoration of calcareous grassland



Montagne Saint-Pierre (WL) – Cut of trees on 1,8ha
Februari 2015

Restoration of oaks-hornbeams forests



Maasbos (NL) – Cut of shrubs on 1,2ha
Januari 2015

Restoration of calcareous grassland



• Phosphates phyto-extraction on dry grasslands:

- Intensive fertilisation : more N and P was applied to fields than crops could take up
- Excess N: leaches to groundwater, very mobile
- Excess P: does not leach, very immobile, → accumulation in the soil

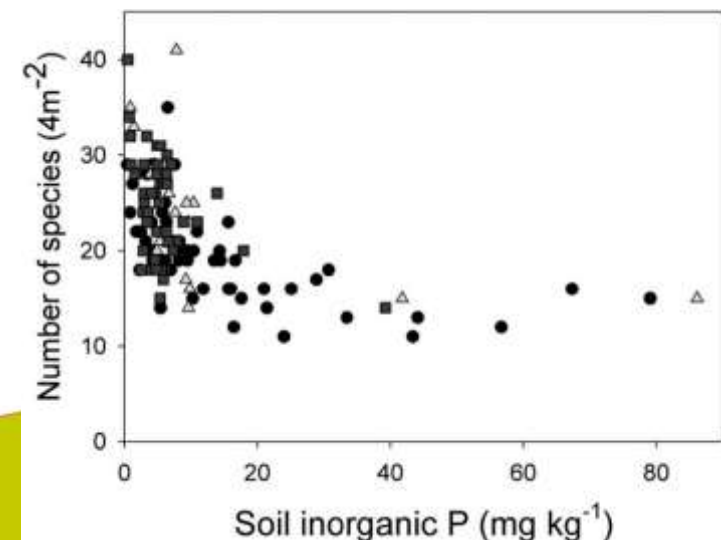
1) Measure of P concentrations in soils

2) If soils rich in P , spreading of Nitrogen (mineral N) followed by several (3 to 5) grass mowings

Natuurpunt : 60 ha
Natuurmonumenten : 10 ha
Natagora : 5ha

Plant species loss from European semi-natural grasslands following nutrient enrichment – is it nitrogen or is it phosphorus?

Tobias Ceulemans^{1*}, Roel Merckx², Maarten Hens³ and Olivier Honnay¹



Objective 2

FLANDERS 40ha

WALLONIA 60ha

Purchase of 129ha additional private land to create new nature reserves:

NETHERLANDS 29ha

Majority of dry grasslands but also calaminarian sites, hay meadows and oaks-hornbeams forests

Purchase of a calaminarian site in Trooz (WL)



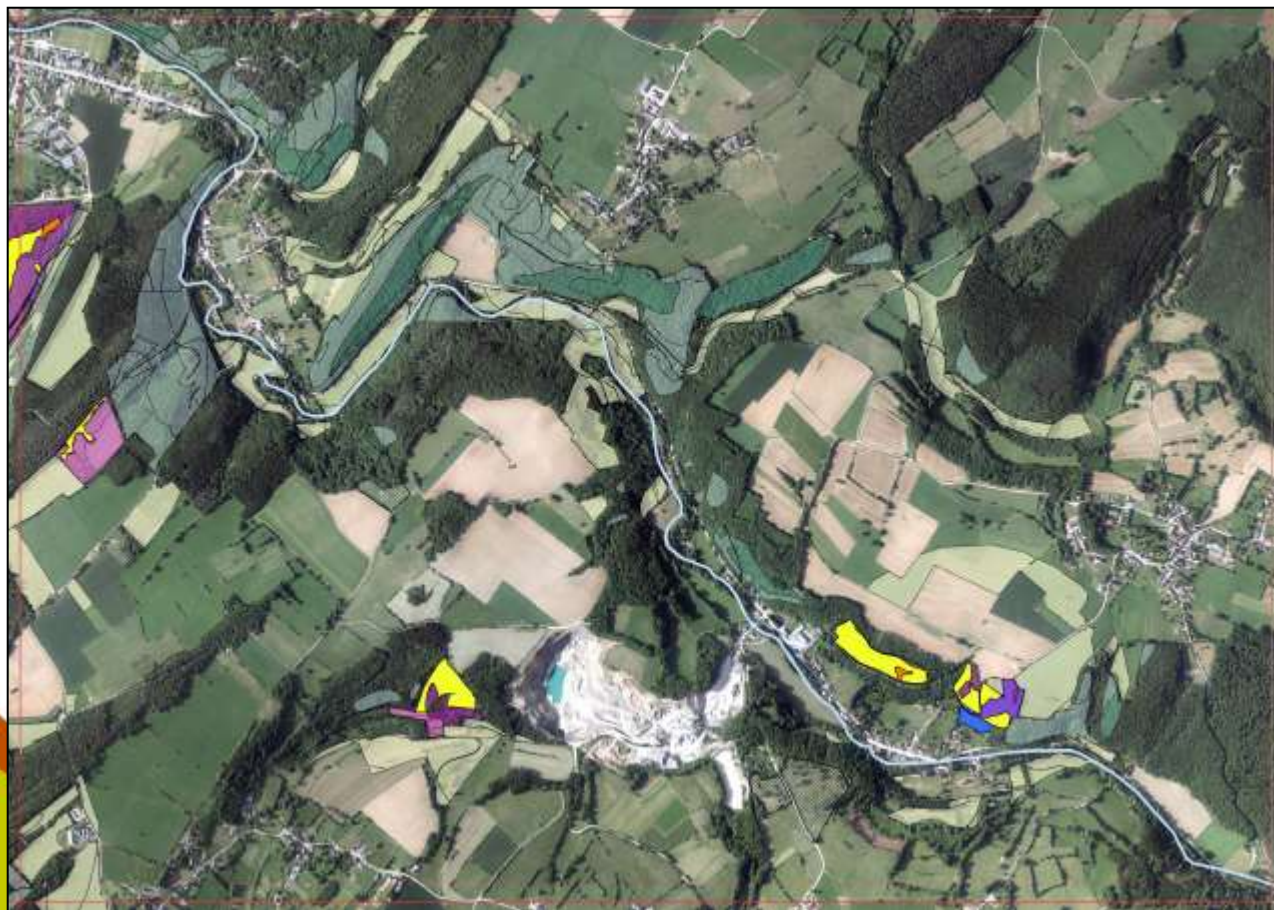
« La Rochette » (WL) – 26ha
Acquired end 2014






Objective 3

Improvement of the grassland ecological connectivity in the N2000 sites and between them

- Collaboration with the aCREA (Ulg – C. Doppagne/S. Hendrickx)
- Mapping that modellizes climate conditions, soil characteristics, orientation of grounds, Slopes of fields, ...
- Notion of « portance écologique » = value that assigned o priority order in terms of preservation and that defines the possibility of restauration of calcareous grasslands

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-  Existing nature reserves
-  Calcareous & rupicolous Grasslands restored during the LIFE hélianthème
-  N2000 calcareous grasslands
-  Potentially interested calcareous grasslands
-  to prospect (PE > 40)

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109 maps (3x4 km) with potential interest in the project area

[More information available on www.orbi.ulg.ac.be](http://www.orbi.ulg.ac.be)

Objective 4:

Myotis myotis



Rhinolophus hipposideros



Better knowledge on 4 endangered bats species and concrete actions of protection



Rhinolophus ferrumequinum

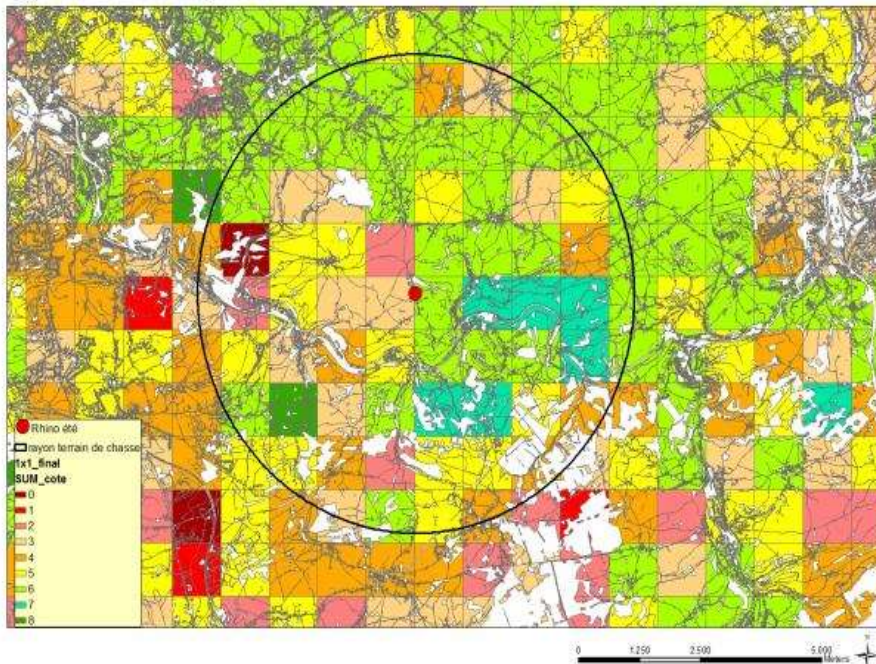


Myotis emarginatus

- Study of the quality of habitats

Analysis tool constructed with Arcgis and based on a cotation (0 -8) taking into account the % of hedgerows, orchards, forests and urban zones for each square kilometer in the project area (+ buffer zone of 5km outside the project area)

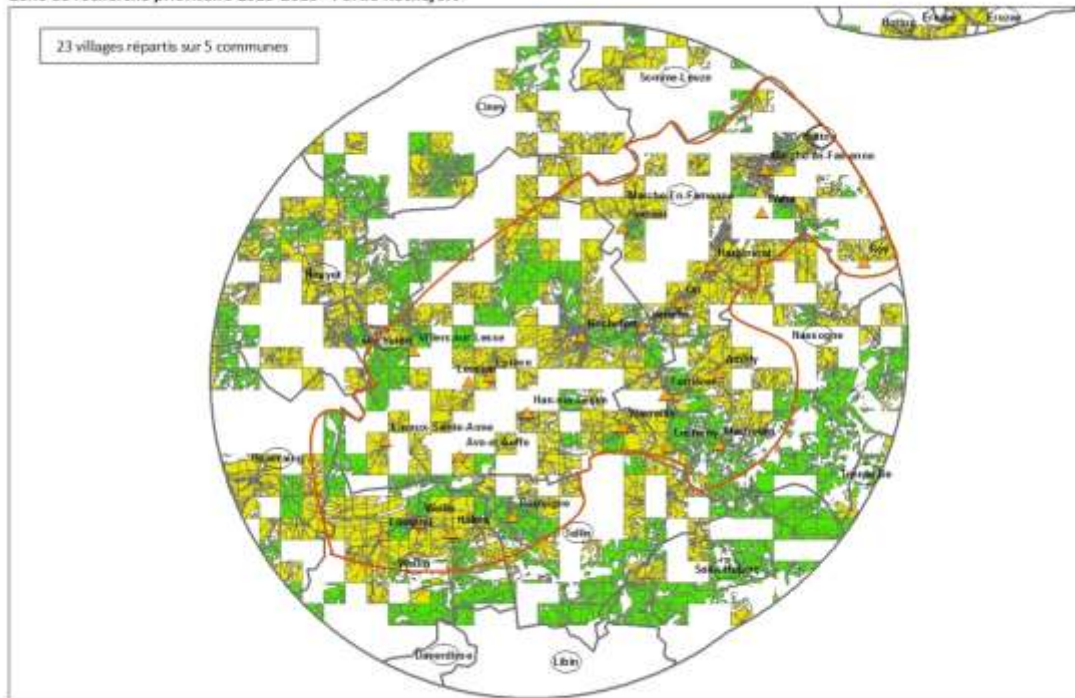
Buffer autour des colonies de reproduction



- Research of breeding colonies

Based on the knowledge of wintering sites, historical data of breeding colonies, movements of species and the study of the quality of habitats, a research area has been defined to prospect in 2015 and 2016 by students

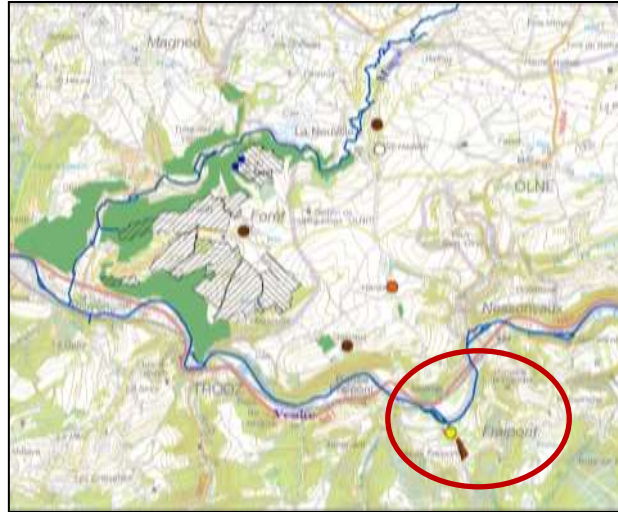
Zone de recherche prioritaire 2015-2016 - Partie Rochefort



Actions of protection:

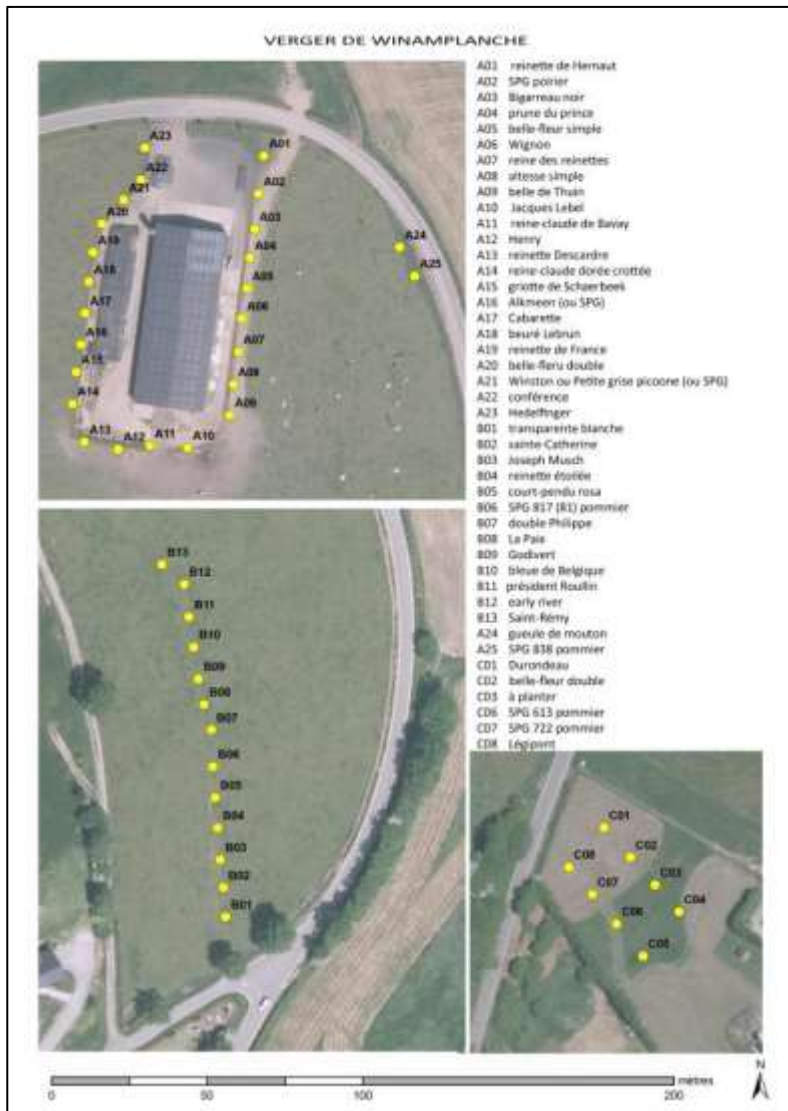
- Impact on Landscape:
 - Restoration of 40km of hedgerows
 - Plantation of 500 fruit trees
 - Creation of 50 ponds
- Support of breeding colonies:
 - Improvement of the quality of at least 10 nursery colonies
 - Network of nursery roosts by fitting out 15 unoccupied buildings

Breeding colony of *R. Ferrumequinum* (more than 17 individuals)
in a private chapel in the village of FRAIPONT



The old floor will be replaced to protect the colony

Orchard Plantation



43 fruits trees planted in novembre 2014

- Other objectives:

- Dispersion/reintroduction of typical dry grasslands plant species (*Hippocrepis comosa*, *Anthyllis vulneraria*, *Sanguisorba minor*, *Salvia pratensis*, *Juniperus communis*, *Pyrus communis*, *Malus sylvestris*)



2014-2015: 420 plants were planted in 9 sites
2015-2016: 810 plants will be planted in 15 sites

coming from several origins (Ourthe, Lesse and Lomme's valleys) to improve genetical diversity but with the same ecotype



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- Other objectives:

- Develop exchanges of expertise between partners but also with NGOs and public sector agencies in Belgium and the Netherlands
- Ensure the adhesion of the public and land managers to the goals of the project using several communication tools and field trips

Thank you for your attention

