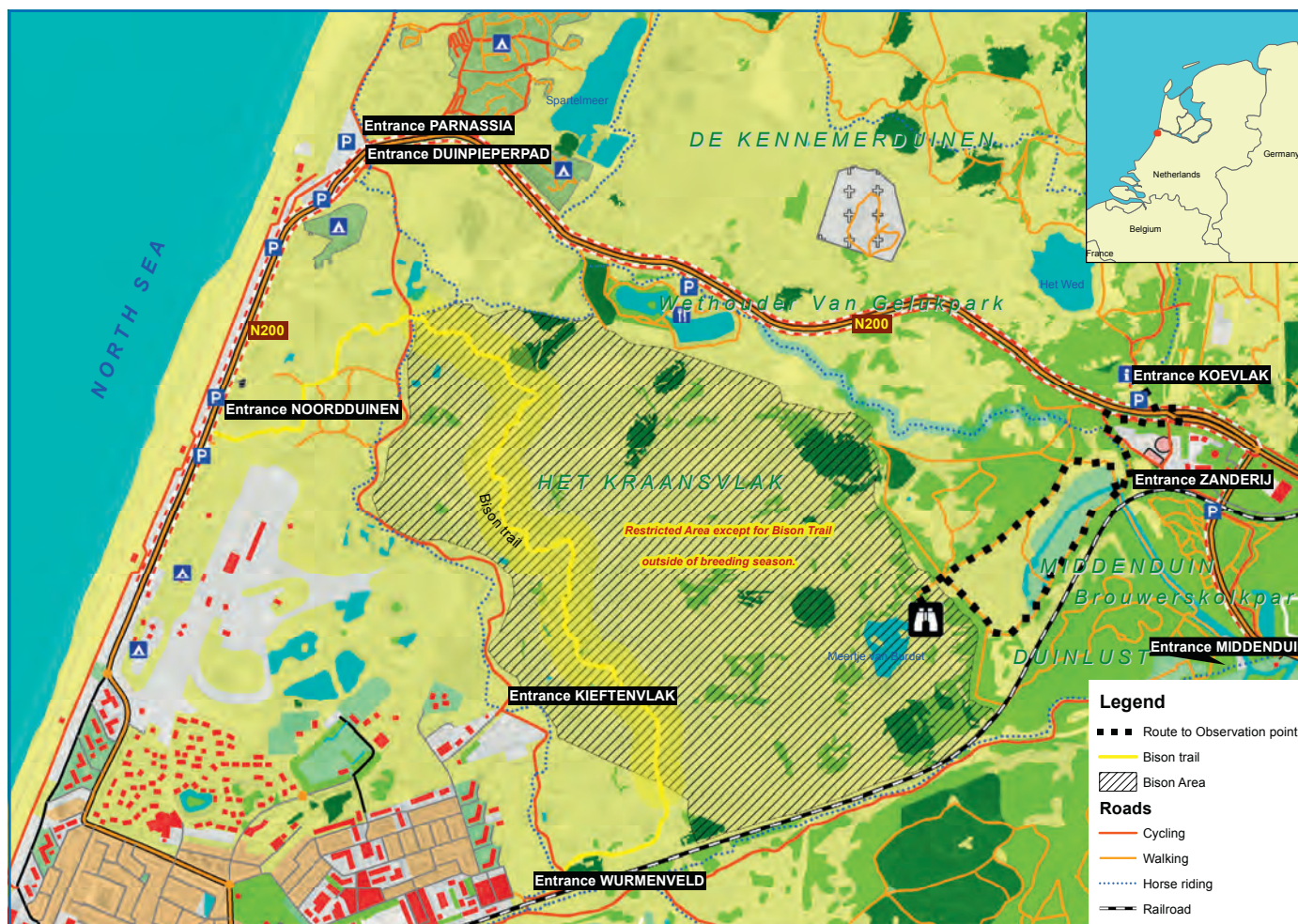


European bison in Kraansvlak



From visitor center 'De Kennemerduinen' (entrance Koevlak), a marked walking route leads to the observation point of the bison area. You find the center at Zeeweg 12, 2051 EC Overveen.

The bison trail can be reached from the following entrances of the N.P Zuid-Kennemerland: Duinpieperpad, Noordduinen, Kieftenvlak and Wurmenveld.



Project partners:

The bison project has been made possible through support from:





In early historical times wild European bison, also known as wisent, roamed freely through large parts of Europe. Based on fossil remains found in the North Sea, together with findings just across the border in Belgium and Germany, it is very likely that bison inhabited the Netherlands too. The European bison was completely extinct in the wild, with only a few individuals remaining under captive conditions in Europe. Fortunately, a breeding program for the restitution of the species started in 1929 in Poland, saving Europe's largest land mammal from the brink of extinction. Nowadays, bison population is increasing in number and distribution thanks to combined efforts of nature conservation organizations, reintroduction projects, breeding centers and zoos. Nevertheless, this flagship species remains in the Red List of Threatened Species (IUCN) and successful conservation measures are still essential.

The first European bison project in Holland

Since April 2007, European bison have been back in Dutch scenery after being released in Kraansvlak, which is part of the 3800ha National Park Zuid-Kennemerland. Consisting of old and young coastal sand dunes, natural dune ponds and a varied mosaic of vegetation (from open dune grasslands to dense coniferous and deciduous forests), Kraansvlak offers a wide diet choice to its inhabitants. Since 2009 calves are born every year.



More natural sand dunes

Due to different factors, the dunes started to become overgrown by grasses and shrubs, turning dynamic open dunes into thickly covered fixed dunes. This brings along changes to such

a degree that the typical fauna and flora become endangered or even get lost. Open dunes are internationally important and protected in Europe, an unique landscape that should be conserved. The expectation is that bison, in combination with other grazers, stop and decrease vegetation encroachment and bring back opened landscapes. Bison feed on grasses, young trees and shrubs. They debark even full-grown trees and rub off barks from trunks. Besides, bison love taking sand baths, which enable the wind to blow the loose sand again. Therefore, European bison behaviour plays an unique role in the ecosystem, with a different impact on it than horses, cattle, rabbits or other grazers.



Research

From the start of the project in 2007, research on bison ecology is taking place in Kraansvlak. The animals live under natural conditions and no supplementary feeding is offered at any time of the year. Studies on foraging behaviour, impact on vegetation and landscape, habitat use, social behaviour, interaction with other animal species, as well as with humans, and public perception are the main focus of this pilot-project.

In 2012, the pilot was evaluated and a report covering the five years of experience became available (in Dutch at www.wisenten.nl). The results of the diverse studies may be of interest to managers of other natural areas in order to gain knowledge and experience about this emblematic and protected species and its important role in the ecosystem when living under natural conditions.

Welcome to visit

Thanks to the use of GPS collars, anyone can check the position of the herd in the project website and consider the chance to see the animals.

Close to the main drinking spot is the **observation point**, bison are often seen here, especially during warm days. Along most part of the perimeter of Kraansvlak there are public walking- and biking paths from which the bison are frequently spotted by recreants of the National Park. Uniquely for areas in which bison live, there is **the bison trail: a free-access walking route through the western part of the bison area** (check our website for opening periods). This route offers to visitors the chance to see European bison roaming freely through the dunes. An unforgettable experience!

Besides, **guided excursions** are offered for groups and photographers. Get to know all about bison with an experienced forester. Availability, prices and booking of excursions can be checked via www.np-zuidkennemerland.nl.

Guide lines:

- The bison area is a restricted access terrain except for the bison trail outside of the breeding season.
- Please stay on the bison trail.
- Keep at least 50 meters distance with the animals.
- Do not feed animals.
- Let the animals choose their way freely and give them space. Do not approach or walk behind them.
- Turn around and walk back when the animals are on the trail or walk towards you.
- Keep larger distance from calves, all large grazers protect their young.

Stay updated!

We offer up to date information via:

www.wisenten.nl

www.facebook.com/wisentenkraansvlak

www.twitter.com/Wisenten

