



PWN. Puur water en natuur. *PWN*

ARK *Duin*
BeHOUD

Stichting Kritisch Bosbeheer



Wisents at the Kraansvlak

Two thousand years ago wild wisents lived in large parts of Europe. From South-England to the depths of Russia and from South-Sweden to the Pyrenees. Although remains of wisents have never been found in the Netherlands itself, they have been found just across the border in Belgium and Germany, so wisents are very likely to have lived in the Netherlands too.

Since April 2007 they have been back to Dutch scenery, namely at Kraansvlak, part of the 3800 ha National Park South-Kennemerland consisting of old and young coastal sand dunes. The 220 ha Kraansvlak area has always been closed to the public. Now that the wisents have come to live here wisents and the public will remain separated, except during guided excursions, which are planned as of 2008.

Protected species

The wisent was almost extinct in Europe. Fortunately a breeding programme was started in 1923 and currently wisent population consists of more than 3000 individuals distributed over European natural areas and breeding centres. In this way the current project helps this last wild European bovine animal to survive.



More natural sand dunes

Due to various factors the dunes are becoming overgrown by grasses and scrub, preventing the sand from blowing. Many characteristic dune plant species and animals disappear. Open dunes, however, are internationally important and protected in Europe.

An unique landscape, which we should not allow to disappear forever. Through the re-introduction of wisents we expect openness to return. The animals eat grass, young trees and shrubs. They debark even full-grown trees and rub off barks from trunks, which kills the trees sometimes. The animals also love taking sand baths, which may enable the wind to blow the loose sand again. In this way wisents have a different impact on vegetation than Konik horses, cows, rabbits and other grazers.



Wisents love taking sand baths, thus providing a counterforce against overgrowing of open dune areas.

Research

In order to gain knowledge and experience of wisents PWN, Stichting Duinbehoud, ARK and Stichting Kritisch Bosbeheer are working together. From 2007 until 2012 the impact of wisents on dune habitat as well as their natural foraging behaviour will be studied. In addition, it will be studied how wisents react to the public and interact with other grazers. Groningen University is conducting research into social behaviour of these bovine animals and their use of space. Where do they live, where do they graze and where do they take sand baths? Research is also done into the effects of wisents on vegetation and landscape. Radboud University Nijmegen studies the impact of this newcomer on the existing fauna. The results of the study will be made available to managers of natural areas in and outside the Netherlands. The first results show that the dune lake is frequently visited by the wisents in order to graze there. In addition, they stay in open areas more often than expected.

Wisent watching

In various locations (see map on reverse side) you will have a chance of seeing the wisents. Close to the watering place an observation post has been made. A fenced footpath across the grazing area directs visitors to this special spot.

Along the southern side of the wisent area runs the 'Fisherman's path'. From this foot and cycle path it is also possible to take a look at the area. Using binoculars will increase chances of 'spotting' the wisents.

More information: www.wisenten.nl



Apart from the efforts of participating parties, the wisent project has been made possible through support from:

