

LOCAL ACTION FOR BIODIVERSITY

A SERIES OF LOCAL CASES



Amsterdam, The Netherlands

Conserving biodiversity through careful local and regional planning

SUMMARY: Amsterdam is home to a large variety of fauna and flora and the city goes to great lengths to maintain the status quo. There are approximately 200,000 trees in the city's open spaces, and the collage of interconnected landscapes provides a home to many wild animals, including 140 species of birds 34 mammal species, 60 fish species, 6 species of frog and salamanders, as well as the grass snake.

Biodiversity & biodiversity management in the City of Amsterdam

Every four years the municipality draws up an environmental policy plan. The policy plan for 2007 – 2010 defined the aims of the environmental policy as making Amsterdam a clean and pleasant place to live. The policy focussed on pollution reduction, energy conservation, waste separation and water conservation. Another important aspect of the environmental policy is soil remediation, as sinking groundwater levels cause soil subsidence thus making it difficult for trees to grow in the city.

The importance of trees in Amsterdam

The citizens of Amsterdam treasure their trees, despite the fact that the growth medium, often consisting of sand brought in from elsewhere, is not always the most suitable for trees. Old trees and trees of special significance have been catalogued in a number of city boroughs and the city's central government has published a 'Manual for Monumental Trees'.



Lomanstraat: trees growing under difficult circumstances require special attention

Certain city boroughs have even appointed a special committee who comprise not only tree consultants, but also local residents. These committees give advice on tree-cutting requests. The utmost is done to retain trees within the boroughs. Sometimes construction plans are altered to keep a tree from being uprooted, trees are temporarily moved, or if it can't be helped, trees are transplanted elsewhere in the city.

In 2004, the first 'Integral Mains and Cables Tunnel' was built in the Netherlands, along the Mahlerlaan in Amsterdam. This

concrete tunnel is high enough to negate digging up the street in order to carry out repairs and inspections. Above the tunnel, 100 Silver Maples were planted in a special soil mixture more than one metre deep. At the Zuidplein in the Zuidas, 70 trees were planted in tree containers that form part of the structure of the car park below. More than 19 different tree varieties were planted, making it not only an important windbreak, but also adding some natural atmosphere to the square.

Smart Urbanization

Governing bodies in the northern wing of Amsterdam the “Noordvleugel” have put together an extensive metropolitan development strategy, the: “Noordvleugel 2040” whereby they are hoping to create a metropolis in which the advantages of city and countryside are closely interlinked. This strategy pays special attention to the region’s landscape which is rich in conserved natural greenery.

The Noordvleugel is a unique system of urban networks and natural ecosystems

“Green Roads”

In order help animals live in the busy city, Amsterdam has constructed ‘green roads’ These include grassy ‘animal highways’ alongside the A10 highway ring and main railway tracks and ‘eco-ribbons’ that interlace the city’s green areas comprising of - sluices, linked gardens, embankments and tunnels. Park squirrels are now connected to the outside world, and polecats and foxes are making their way into the city parks in the outskirts of the city.

For more info on this project, contact:
info@dro.amsterdam.nl

which are home to a rich reserve of biodiversity and provides a wide array of ecosystem services such as:

- use of the green surroundings in care and welfare programmes;
- food production for the regional market;
- uses in tourism/leisure/wellness;
- water storage;
- filtration of the air and thus improvement of the air quality
- storage of CO₂, by planting trees, for example.

None of the landscapes in the region are the same and the core qualities of each landscape are clearly defined to enable appropriate action plans for each.



View of the Old Schans canal in the centre of Amsterdam at Queensday. On either side are old and young, resistant elms. In total the municipality of Amsterdam has more than 75,000 elms in management.

Involvement in international initiatives

In June 2004, Amsterdam signed the Countdown 2010 declaration and pledged to invest 12 (has increased to 20 million 2006-2010) million Euro for investment in parks, landscape and biodiversity conservation and implement a 2010 plan of action that will enhance the efforts already undertaken by the City of Amsterdam. They are also one of the 21 pioneer cities in ICLEI’s Local Action for Biodiversity project and European leaders in the field of biodiversity conservation.

City contacts & profile



More than a cultural centre, with a variety of habitats conserved both within and around the city.

AMSTERDAM covers 219 km² and has a population of 751,757 people. It had a humble start as a fishing village in the 1300s and from 1568-1648, Amsterdam became one of the most important ports in the world. Although Amsterdam is intensely urbanized, 12% of its area consists out of parks and nature reserves and the city is meticulous in planning new developments to include green areas which are valuable for their ecosystem services as well as the physical well-being of city residents.

Name: Johan van Zoest/Geertje Wijten

Department: Physical Planning Department

E-mail: j.vanzoest@dro.amsterdam.nl; g.wijten@dro.amsterdam.nl

Website: www.dro.amsterdam.nl

LOCAL ACTION FOR BIODIVERSITY is a global urban biodiversity initiative of ICLEI – Local Governments for Sustainability in cooperation with IUCN. This pilot project of 21 cities around the globe focuses on the key roles that local governments play in conserving the world’s biodiversity and retaining the relationship between people and nature. See: www.iclei.org/lab; lab@iclei.org
For more information on the Mayors Conference “Local Action for Biodiversity” organised on the occasion of CBD COP 9 in Bonn, May 2008: www.iclei.org/biodiv-bonn2008

COUNTDOWN 2010 is a powerful network of more than 600 partners working together towards the 2010 biodiversity target. Each partner commits additional efforts to tackle the causes of biodiversity loss. The secretariat – hosted by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) – facilitates and encourages action, promotes the importance of the 2010 biodiversity target and assesses progress towards 2010. See: www.countdown2010.org

CITIES & BIODIVERSITY is an initiative of local governments and UN agencies to increase awareness on the relevant role of cities and towns for conserving and managing biodiversity. See: www.iclei.org/biodiversity

THE “CITIES & BIODIVERSITY CASE SERIES” is started in 2008 on the occasion of the UNCBD Conference of the Parties (COP) 9 in Bonn/Germany in May 2008. Funding is provided by UNEP, with co-funding from ICLEI, IUCN and the City of Bonn. The case descriptions are compiled by the “Local Action for Biodiversity (LAB)” project team in the ICLEI Africa Secretariat and ICLEI’s International Training Centre.
© UNEP & ICLEI, 2008. Pictures, texts and quotes are free of use with a reference to this source.

