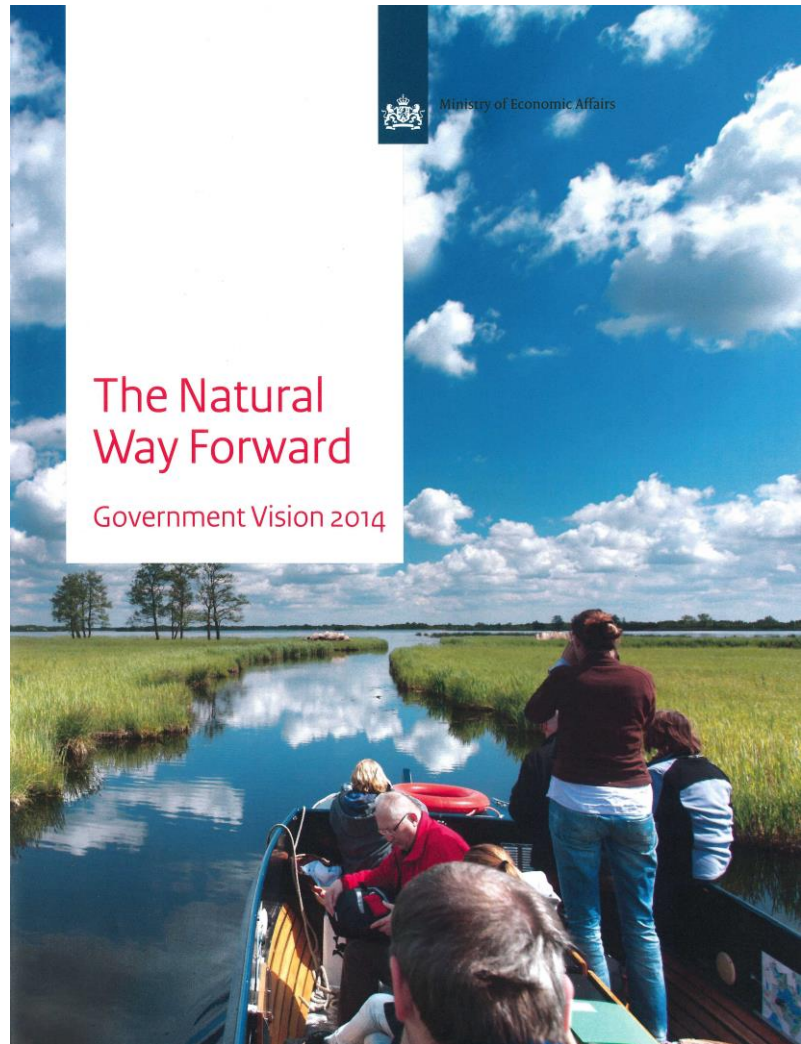


The Natural Way Forward

Government Vision 2014
The Netherlands

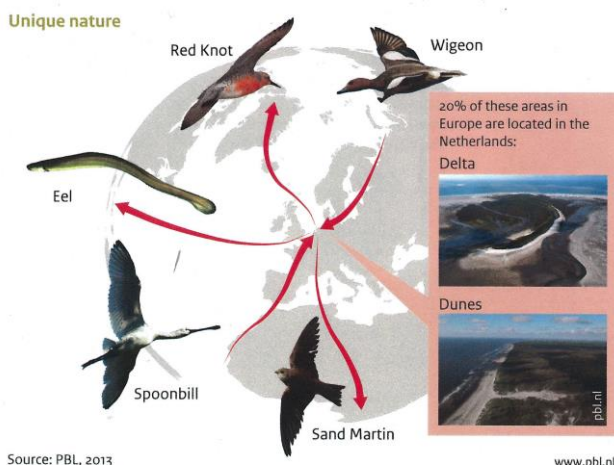
Introduction

Our natural environment is of great value to people, not only in the form of protected nature reserves in the Netherlands or further away, but also for nature close to home, in towns and cities and in the countryside. Species richness is an important component of this natural environment. In our country and in the global context we set great store by species richness because we would like to pass it on to future generations. When we see special plant and animal species get into difficulties we are keen to improve the situation, whether close to home or far away.



Nature does not respect national borders. Our country functions as a staging post for migrating birds and fish. Sustainable production and production chains, a prerequisite for nature and biodiversity, are not constrained by national borders either. That is why it is so important that when measures are put in place for the benefit of habitats of flora and fauna and the sustainability of trade chains, this

is done in partnership with other countries. It might well be that the Netherlands as a trading nation with strong economic relations worldwide has a special responsibility in this respect.



The Netherlands has an important role as a staging post for migrating birds and fish.

We have invested a great deal in nature and biodiversity already. This has produced some successes but this does not mean we can sit back and relax. We have been able to slow down or reduce the deterioration of many species and habitats but there is still much to be done in that area.

We have now come to a point where we have to ask ourselves if the approach we have used and trusted so far will get us far enough. While people's concern with nature and sustainability has become deeper and broader we also see that most people seem to think that the protection of species and habitats is a matter best left to the government rather than something they can be engaged in themselves.

This issue is addressed in this Vision. It tries to reconcile these two seemingly opposing trends and at the same time make progress in realising our own objectives for biodiversity as we have agreed to do with our international partners. The government believes that this is possible. It wishes to work towards robust and diverse nature, which is not just able to cope with the impact of society but actually thrives on it. With a solid foundation in place this means more emphasis on natural systems and the scale of the landscape so that the focus on the conservation of specific species and habitats in places where they were found earlier can be reduced.

Greater involvement of the public will result in a broader and more mature form of nature embedded at every level of society and supported by the commitment of the public, businesses and private organisations. Nature that needs no protection from society but is an indispensable and integral part of it. People's involvement will not only benefit nature but also biodiversity and its associated national and international objectives. The endeavour to place nature at the heart of society is based on the government's vision that a society is shaped by its people, not by its government. This also implies that the future scenarios and the objectives set down in this document do not always accompany government measures like for like. In a society where people seem increasingly able to bring nature objectives closer to realisation, it is right and proper for the government to exercise restraint and adopt a facilitating and encouraging role.

The publication of this Vision is followed by a round of consultations with the public to learn what must be done to accelerate the desired developments. This will then serve as the basis for an implementation programme to be drawn up by the government, provincial authorities, businesses and civil society organisations.