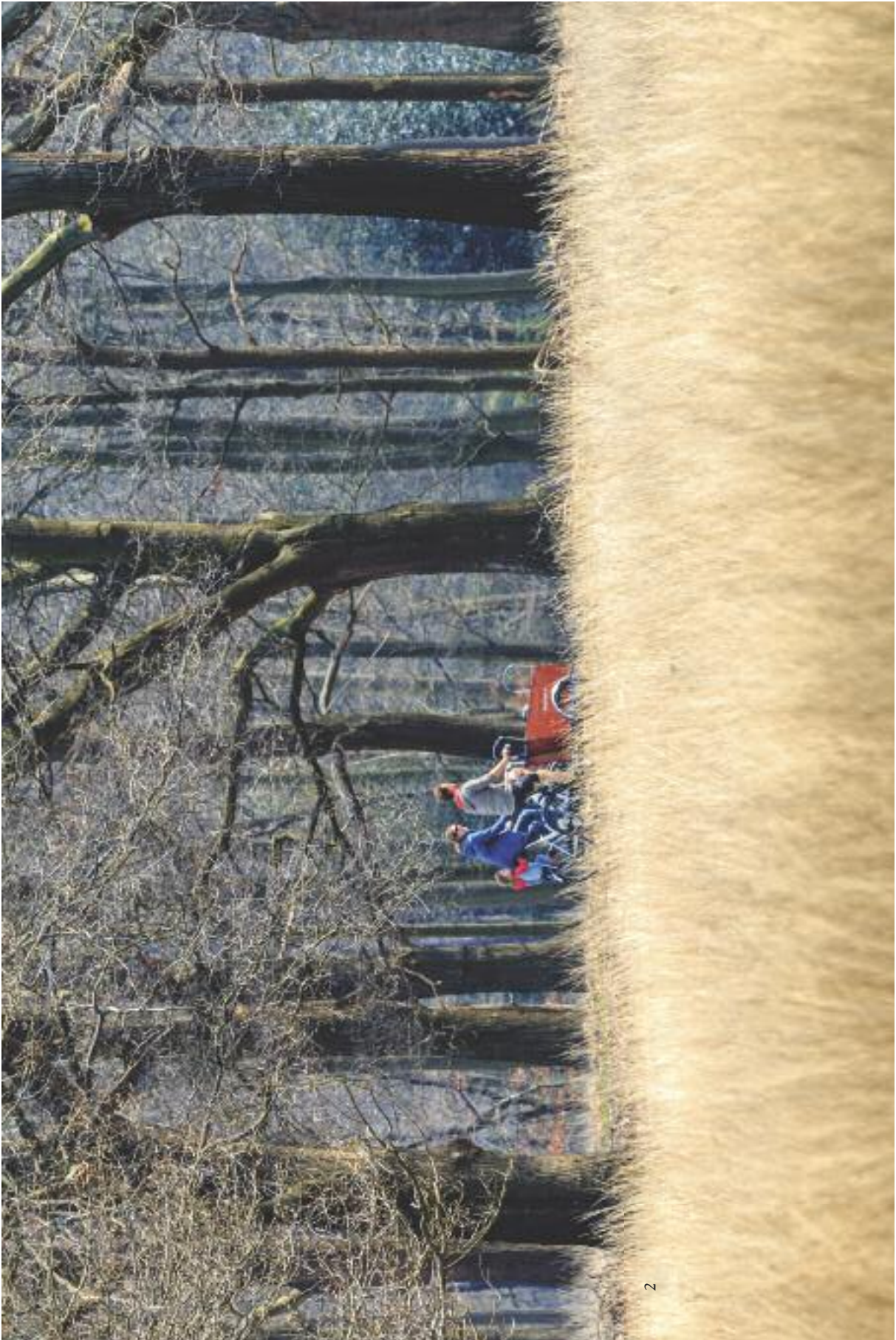


ANNUAL REPORT 2015



STICHTING HET NATIONALE PARK
DE HOGE VELUWE



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Foreword

To mark the occasion of the eightieth anniversary of the founding of the 'Stichting Het Nationale Park De Hoge Veluwe,' a large marquee was erected at the heart of De Hoge Veluwe National Park in the summer of 2015. Employees, friends, guests, and visitors came together to celebrate the event.

It was surprising to hear the number of languages being spoken at the receptions and meetings. While it was no surprise that Dutch could be heard, attendees were also conversing in English, French, German, and other European languages. This shows how, for a long time now, a party at De Hoge Veluwe is no longer an exclusively Dutch event. The full name of the Park may well contain the word 'National,' but the meaning of the Park is increasingly taking on an international dimension. In light of this evolution, this year's Annual Report is being published in English.

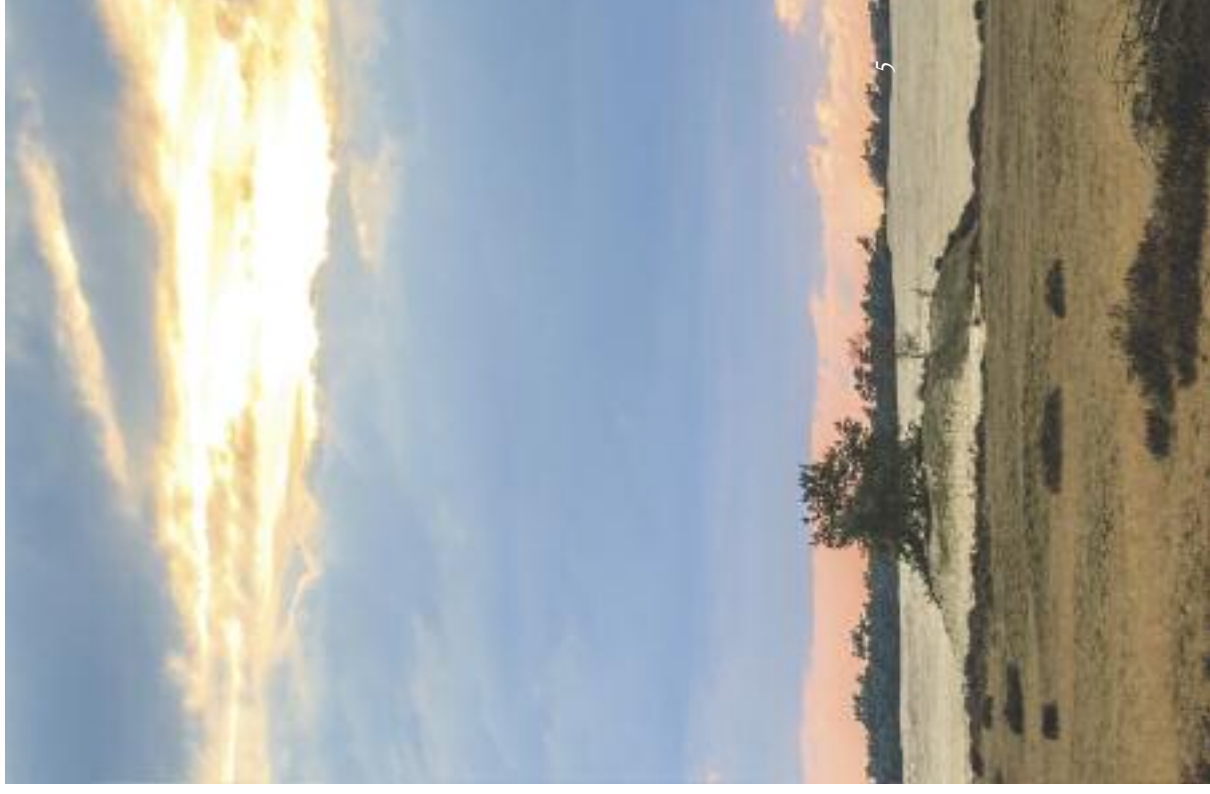
The governors, the management of the Park, and the great deal of research conducted in the area all have significant European connections. For example, the Park has a lot of contact with the European Union and international organizations in the field of

ecology, sustainable nature conservation, and the management of private country estates. Not only that, but the laws and legislations governing management and conservation in the Park have acquired a significant European component.

In this Annual Report, we will investigate the European dimension of De Hoge Veluwe National Park. We will look both at how the Park is viewed by others in Europe and the importance of the Park for European Partners. The report will also be presented to a number of important contacts in the Park's management. While we are eager to know what the Park can learn from these people and their organizations, it should be noted that many international contacts refer to the management model used by De Hoge Veluwe National Park as an example to follow. This is because our model has

carefully struck the balance between maintaining a high ecological and cultural value while allowing for intensive recreational use. In short, without relying on structural and financial support from the government, it successfully balances ecological with economic interests. Many European partners see this model as an example of how to successfully manage private country estates and nature areas.

We are at the threshold of a new era that will see Europe and European regulations play an ever more significant role. Additionally, this is an era in which the plans for a new Central Area of the Park will take on an ever more concrete form. Finally, it is a period in which affiliations to traditions are set to grow in importance. In the midst of all these changes, the private country estate that became part of the Stichting Het Nationale Park De Hoge Veluwe in 1935 will be preserved for future generations, honouring the mission of the Park's founders: Mr and Mrs Kröller-Müller.





Brussels is becoming more important



Seger van Voorst tot Voorst

Director and trustee of De Hoge Veluwe National Park

“These days I consider myself more European than Dutch. Organizations and individuals alike have to move with the times. The networks and activities of De Hoge Veluwe National Park are becoming ever more international. As a private foundation, we must respond accordingly. Our visitors come from all parts of the world, and Europe is becoming increasingly important in terms of legislation.”

Brussels. The European Union has attracted much criticism of late, but in our experience it has been a major force for good in terms of nature conservation.”

“A Dutch organization must be able to look beyond the national boundaries. Decisions made in Brussels often have greater influence than those made by national government or regional authorities. Much of the legislation which governs the activities of De Hoge Veluwe National Park stems from the European Union. The Natura 2000 programme and the Habitats Directive are two examples. They provide an overall framework within which national governments are expected to develop and refine their own regulations. The Dutch government has opted to delegate the practical implementation to the provincial authorities. As the owner and manager of a national park, we are of course directly affected by decisions made at this level. However, the most important, fundamental decisions are all taken in

A European perspective

The Annual Report 2015 therefore has a distinctly European perspective. De Hoge Veluwe National Park is active within several European networks and alliances. Its director, Seger van Voorst tot Voorst, is Vice President of the board of Friends of the Countryside (friendsofthecountryside.org), member of the Wildlife Estates steering committee (wildlife-estates.eu) and Vice Chairman of the Dutch delegation to the International Council for Game and Wildlife (icg-wildlife.org). It maintains close contact with many other international organizations. This is part of a deliberate strategy. “We are now far more outward-looking than in the

past,” Seger van Voorst tot Voorst explains. “We take a keen interest in what is happening elsewhere and how similar organizations approach the relationship between nature management and economic interests. There are many private estates in Europe which, like De Hoge Veluwe, are trying to strengthen that relationship. We have implemented a strategy which we believe will enable us to do so in a consistent, sustainable way. Our approach has attracted much interest. We often welcome representatives of other European organizations, be they government bodies, private sector organizations or research institutes, who wish to see for themselves how we manage to attract so many visitors and yet maintain such a high level of biodiversity. And, of course, they want to know how we do so while remaining financially self-sufficient. Our key objective is to combine nature and economic activities in a responsible way, whereby we can largely cover our own costs. We do not wish to rely on long-term government subsidies. In this respect, we have become a role model for many other organizations in Europe.”

Visitor numbers exceed expectations

The economic model adopted by De Hoge Veluwe National Park is largely based on the admission fees paid by visitors, of whom there were no fewer

than 578,667 in 2015. A significant number (310,000) also opted to visit the Kröller-Müller Museum, perhaps drawn by the ‘Van Gogh & Co’ exhibition which ran from April till September. In any event, overall visitor numbers exceeded the projections. “One important factor was the fine weather we enjoyed in 2015,” Van Voorst tot Voorst suggests. “For the Dutch public, recreational day trips are very much dependent on the weather. Many visitors come to the Park to walk or cycle, perhaps using the free ‘White Bikes’ we provide. Another factor is that we now organize activities and special events every weekend and on public holidays, usually in the Park’s central zone. This proactive approach has proved very effective. We have plans for an extensive upgrading of the entire central zone, but it is gratifying to see that visitor numbers are increasing even before we make any major investments. The Park and museum have set a target: we wish to welcome at least 600,000 visitors a year in 2020 and beyond. We are already well on the way, but if we are to achieve and maintain this figure, then we will need to make major investments in our public amenities over the next few years. The Kröller-Müller Museum, our valued partner for the past eighty years, has a major marketing tool in the form of its unique art collection. The Park offers a similarly unique visitor experience based on

landscape, nature and cultural history. The combination of museum and Park will continue to attract many visitors from home and abroad.”

Managing by quality

De Hoge Veluwe National Park must ensure that high visitor numbers can never jeopardize ecological quality. “The Park is so attractive by virtue of its ecological values,” states Van Voorst tot Voorst. “We have achieved high biodiversity through intensive nature management. The Park as a whole is a protected Natura 2000 area, while some sections also fall under the European Birds and Habitats Directives. Several bird species on the conservation Red List can be found here. The opportunity to observe them in the wild is a major attraction for some visitors. Our approach to nature management demonstrates that it is entirely possible to combine conservation with high visitor numbers. The secret is intelligent zoning and management based on quality. I certainly base everything I do on quality, as do the Park’s 130 staff and 350 volunteers. I think we all consider it to be a matter of honour.”

Eightieth anniversary

De Hoge Veluwe National Park Foundation was formed in 1935 and celebrated its eightieth anniversary in 2015. This auspicious milestone was

marked by an extensive programme of events. Among the highlights was a grand outdoor reception for which a large marquee was erected in the central zone. The guest of honour was Mr Henk Kamp, Minister of Economic Affairs. He was presented with the first copy of Ariëtte Dekker’s biography of founder Anton Kröller, originally written as her doctoral thesis. “In his speech, the minister praised the manner in which we operate as a private sector organization. That is of course very gratifying,” Van Voorst tot Voorst recalls. “I found it a very inspiring occasion. It is always nice to see so many friends, supporters and business contacts together in one place – so many happy faces and so much enthusiasm. The event provided an excellent opportunity for me to remind everyone of our organization’s principles and objectives. I could tell them about our current activities and how they chime with the original wishes of our founders, Anton and Helene Kröller-Müller. I could explain how we manage the estate responsibly, in keeping with the demands of today. The event also gave me the chance to thank our many generous donors. Without the support of the corporate sponsors, funds and private individuals, we would be unable to make the investments which are essential to the continuity of De Hoge Veluwe National Park.”

Legislative obstacles

In 2015, we saw considerable time and energy devoted to the implementation of the new Nature Conservation Act (Wet Natuurbescherming), which replaces the existing Nature Conservation Act, the Flora and Fauna Act and the Forestry Act. De Hoge Veluwe National Park contributed to the preparatory process on several occasions. In 2015, we submitted written statements to the Parliamentary Standing Committee for Economic Affairs and to the Senate, setting out our standpoints and opinions. “We regard the new Nature Conservation Act as more of a hindrance than a help,” states Seger Van Voorst tot Voorst. “It allows the owner of a nature area very little room for discretion and we believe that it conflicts with the basic principles of ownership, as defined by property law. The media chose to focus on the issue of hunting but we take a much broader view. For us, it is all about the owner’s right to determine management policy and practice. The new act gives too much influence to parties who have no direct responsibility for land or nature. They make the decisions but it is the landowner who must pay the costs and face the consequences. If a national park – the second oldest national park in our country – identifies shortcomings in the legislation and suggests that it is inadequate, I believe that the lawmakers should take notice. Basically, we are



saying that government authorities should have more confidence in the owner of a nature area rather than imposing all sorts of petty rules and restrictions. The owners know the local circumstances and requirements better than anyone. They can be trusted to do whatever is necessary to maintain and promote natural values. The European regulations are very workable so why complicate matters at national and provincial level? The new legislation is overly restrictive and merely creates unnecessary expense for the landowners. Anyone wanting to make changes to their own property must commission a string of external assessments, all of which take time and are very costly. These rules are intended to protect natural values, but in practice those values are already fully protected. Of course owners will take proper care of their property – doing so is in their own interests.

Otterlose Bos

The past year has also seen some notable successes. One protracted legal issue was finally resolved. It concerned the Otterlose Bos, an area of sand dunes interspersed with distinctive juniper bushes. Although owned by De Hoge Veluwe National Park, the area is actually outside the official boundaries of the Park itself. For several years, we have been keen to redraw the boundaries to include Otterlose Bos, but

this would entail altering the legal status of Bovenindesweg, the road which runs through it, which would then no longer be a public right of way. In 2015, the Council of State ruled that it was indeed permissible and appropriate to redraw the Park’s boundaries to include Otterlose Bos. “This is actually an important case for all private landowners. It establishes that the public interest of conservation, specifically that of a Natura 2000 area, outweighs the public interest of free access. We are very pleased. The area will remain open to the paying public, but now falls under the direct management and supervision of the Park.”

Another change announced in 2015 was that visitors will in the future be required to remain on the designated paths; they will no longer be permitted to roam at will. “I realize that this is a major step, and one which in many ways is regrettable,” states Van Voorst tot Voorst. “However, the measure has been made necessary by the conduct of a specific group of visitors. Many animals, particularly the red deer, have been subject to excessive disturbance. We shall now carefully examine whether the herds display more natural behaviour. I would like to point out that we have compensated for the new restrictions by opening up some areas which were previously ‘out of bounds’ to the public. We believe that the bona fide visitor will now have even greater

opportunity to observe the animals in their natural surroundings. The deer are likely to move about in smaller herds and visitors will be able to access more areas, provided they remain on the paths. We have attempted to explain the reasons for the changes as fully as possible and there has been extensive media coverage. We have received very few complaints, and there has been no impact on ticket sales.”

New chairman of the Supervisory Board

One final noteworthy development in 2015 was the departure of Frank Schreve, who stepped down as chair of the Supervisory Board of the De Hoge Veluwe National Park Foundation. “We are extremely grateful to Frank Schreve for his expert input and advice,” says Van Voorst tot Voorst. “He did not want any fuss, so we decided against holding the customary reception to mark his retirement. Instead, we published a mini-biography of Frank under the title ‘There’s a lot of things you can leave to others’, one of his favourite maxims. It is our tribute to an extremely good chairman.” The chairman’s gavel has been passed to Fred de Graaf. While Frank Schreve’s background was in business and commerce, Fred de Graaf brings many years’ experience in public administration.

“That does not necessarily mean that he will take a different approach to the role of supervisory director,” says Van Voorst tot Voorst. “Both gentlemen know precisely what ‘supervision’ entails. It is not the same as hands-on management. A good, strong Supervisory Board is crucial to an organization like ours, as is an effective Advisory Council. The members of the Supervisory Board have certain statutory responsibilities. We ensure that they are also given every opportunity to contribute their expertise and experience. They will be kept fully informed about our objectives, strategy and decisions. The combined knowledge and networks of the board members are of inestimable importance to the organization. Their input and support ensure the effective and responsible management of De Hoge Veluwe, a truly unique national park which is known far and wide as the ‘green treasure house of the Netherlands’.”



The year in brief

January 2015

From 2015, members of the public may arrange to have a cremation urn buried in De Hoge Veluwe National Park. Four areas have been designated for this purpose and the exact location for your burial can be chosen in advance. Although there will be no visible marker or memorial, the location can always be found using GPS. Interment rights are granted in perpetuity, which means that the site will never be disturbed. There is considerable interest in this form of 'natural burial', which offers a unique way of expressing a sense of connection with the Park and landscape. A significant proportion of the burial charges will be devoted to maintaining nature in De Hoge Veluwe National Park.

February 2015

Our updated website was launched in February. The new version is dynamic and visually appealing, making extensive use of photos and videos. Clear navigation helps users to plan their visit to the Park, buy tickets or order items from the webshop. The site is currently available in Dutch, English and German. A Chinese version will go online in 2016. De Hoge Veluwe National Park also expanded its social media presence in 2015. Special activities such as photo contests have attracted considerable interest on Facebook, while many Twitter users now follow 'tweets' by our Park wardens. At least two activities are organized in De Hoge Veluwe every weekend. Some are large scale public events but we also organize specialist lectures, exhibitions and performances, such as the regular hunting horn demonstrations by 'De Overlopers'.

The number of activities increases yet further during school holidays. The traditional Winter Lectures are particularly well attended, as are the falconry displays and the monthly farmer's market with produce from the region.

March 2015

March saw the publication of a manifesto ('Wild van de Veluwe') in which several nature organizations suggest ways in which to increase public awareness of the Veluwe region as a whole. One proposal is to seek nomination as a UNESCO World Heritage Site. As the largest private landowner in the region, De Hoge Veluwe National Park has taken a prominent part in the discussion. We have written to the Province of Gelderland calling for the current policy to be maintained since it enjoys such widespread support. We consider it inappropriate for there to be any change of direction.

Like other local landowner organizations (notably Gelders Particulier Grondbezit and Leisurelands), De Hoge Veluwe has chosen to distance itself from the manifesto. Our standpoint is that current policy, which was subject to long and careful preparation, is now beginning to prove its effectiveness. Neither De Hoge Veluwe National Park nor the other private nature managers see any value in experimenting with new consultation networks.

April 2015

For many organizations involved in outdoor recreation, April marks the beginning of the season. The campsite within De Hoge Veluwe National Park opened its gates this month, and by November had clocked up more than 14,000 tourist nights. One of April's highlights was the fourth annual De Hoge Veluwe Highland Games. Some 250 young

people from seven regional schools and colleges competed in traditional events such as log-sawing, the stone toss and tractor-pulling.

April also saw the start of the festivities to mark the eightieth anniversary of De Hoge Veluwe National Park. The first event – a gala concert by the Youth Orchestra of the Netherlands – took place on April 26, the exact date of the Park's foundation in 1935. Later in the year, the anniversary programme included the presentation of a new biography of our founder, Anton Kröller. It is written by business economist Ariëtte Dekker, who also gave a series of well-attended lectures about her research into the life of our illustrious benefactor.

May 2015

The second Nature Photography Day attracted many visitors. The event included various workshops

and lectures, as well as a large photographic equipment fair. The day also marked the launch of a nature photography contest.

The traditional open air concert at the foot of Franse Berg proved as popular as ever. In addition, the courtyard of Country Residence/Museum Jachthuis Sint Hubertus hosted its first classical music event, a recital by pianist David Manneke.

June 2015

In June, a huge marquee was erected on Marchantplein in the very centre of the Park. It formed the setting for the official reception to mark the eightieth anniversary of De Hoge Veluwe National Park Foundation, which included the first showing of a new film about the Park. The guest of honour was the Minister of Economic Affairs, Mr Henk Kamp, who was presented with the first copy of Ariëtte Dekker's biography of Anton Kröller.





Director Seger van Voorst tot Voorst gave a entertaining speech in which he described plans for the redevelopment of the Park's central zone. Ecologist and film-maker Ruben Smit is perhaps best known for the nature documentary 'The New Wilderness', which has attracted both critical and popular acclaim. He has produced a series of short films about nature in De Hoge Veluwe. Each film features a particular species which can be found in the unique biotopes of the Deelse Veld: a grasshopper, a lizard and a frog. Together, these films present the story of this remarkable area and what De Hoge Veluwe National Park is doing to conserve it for future generations. We apply an active land management approach which ensures that all the various biotopes will continue to co-exist.

July 2015

A ruling handed down by the Council of State resolved a longstanding legal dispute concerning Otterlose Bos. Although owned by De Hoge Veluwe National Park, this particularly vulnerable nature area has until recently not been recognized as part of the Park itself. We have for some time attempted to establish new boundaries, but the proposals were contested by the municipality of Ede. The highest administrative court in the land has now ruled in our favour: Otterlose Bos is indeed part of our national park and subject to the usual rules which apply elsewhere. It will remain accessible to local residents and visitors, provided they pay the standard entrance charge. The court's ruling is of significance to other private landowners in the Netherlands.

In July, Country Residence/ Museum Jachthuis Sint Hubertus was nominated for membership of the international 'Iconic Houses Network', which includes some one hundred architecturally significant buildings of the twentieth century.

August 2015

The recurring events held in various parts of the Park continue to attract more visitors every year. The 'Dutch Open Rutting Championships' and the 'Day of the Horse' are particularly well attended. Two new events were introduced in 2015, both of which have the potential to become extremely popular. The first is the Forest and Wood Day, conceived as part of the 'Made in Gelderland' programme which celebrates the cultural heritage of the region and its traditional handicrafts.

The second is the Science Weekend. Many visitors are keen to witness one of nature's own special events, the annual (red) deer rut. Once again, our Park wardens led several highly popular group excursions to watch the spectacle from a safe distance.

September 2015

Regrettably, one of the Park's longstanding partnerships came to an end in September. 's Heeren Loo is a residential care facility for people with learning difficulties, many of whom helped out in the Jachthuis Sint Hubertus tearoom. This part-time employment provided valuable social contact and occupational therapy.

Unfortunately, 's Heeren Loo is now unable to meet the expenses of the volunteers who accompany and supervise the residents, whose jobs in the tearoom have

now been passed to staff of the Pluyn care organization. There have also been changes at the Park's main restaurant on Marchantplein, which was previously run by an external company under the name 'De Koperen Kop'. It was decided not to renew the outsourcing contract, whereupon De Hoge Veluwe National Park assumed full responsibility for the restaurant's management and operations. The existing staff were transferred onto the Park's payroll and in late 2015 the name was changed to 'Parkrestaurant'. This is temporary; a more permanent name will be chosen once the planned upgrade of the central zone has been completed.

October 2015

The eleventh annual 'Exercise Weekend' was extremely successful, attracting over three thousand participants. Saturday

10 October was given over to De Hoge Veluwe Walking Day, while Sunday 11 October saw De Hoge Veluwe Run. Participants could opt to run various distances, including a cross-country 'trail' across rough terrain. In the central zone was a large market with stalls selling various sporting goods. De Hoge Veluwe Run has now established itself as a prestigious national sporting event. Its success owes much to the sterling efforts of volunteers from many organizations, including the Park itself.

In October, it was announced that from 2016 visitors will be required to remain on the designated paths, except when accompanied by a Park warden or during an organized excursion. It will no longer be possible to roam at will. This decision was made due to increasing disturbance of wildlife, especially red deer. It attracted considerable





media coverage. Park staff are able to explain the necessity of the measure on request. By way of compensation, several areas which were previously 'out of bounds' are to be opened to the public. They offer the chance to observe animals in their natural surroundings.

November 2015

The 'Pump House' building on the road leading to Country Residence/Museum Jachthuis Sint Hubertus has been extensively restored and given a new function. The building was designed by the Belgian architect Henry van de Velde in a mock-Egyptian 'mastaba' style. It originally formed the main structure of a windmill intended to pump groundwater to supply the ornamental lake in the grounds of the Jachthuis. Soon after its completion in 1923, it became obvious that this was unnecessary;

the water level in the lake would be maintained by rainwater alone. The windmill was promptly dismantled. A spiral staircase has now been installed and the Pump House will function as an observation point offering a panoramic view of the peat meadows all around. In one of her letters, Helene Kröller-Müller mentioned the possibility of using the building as a 'belvedere'. Today, almost eighty years later, her idea has come to fruition.

December 2015

The total number of visitors to the Park in 2015 was 578,667, very slightly fewer than in the preceding year (581,876). The main attractions during the year were the activities to celebrate the eightieth anniversary of the Park and those organized as part of Van Gogh Year (marking the 125th anniversary of the painter's death). A promotional campaign

run by the Province of Gelderland also served to boost attendances. Sales of annual passes ('Beschermerskaarten') reached almost 15,500, an increase of approximately 3% compared to the 2014 figure (15,000). A total of 343,717 visitors entered the Park's Visitor Centre in 2015, of whom 178,202 went on to visit Museonder. These figures are largely unchanged compared to the preceding year. The Park Shop achieved a total revenue of approximately 368,000 euros, very slightly less than the 372,000 euros recorded in 2014. The Theekoepeel (tearoom) also experienced a slight decline in revenue to approximately 80,000 euros.



“It’s going well just as it is!”



“The objectives of our respective organizations – De Hoge Veluwe National Park and the CIC – are similar in several respects. There are many points of convergence. Like the CIC, De Hoge Veluwe strives to achieve a good balance between ecology and economy. I believe it is doing so very effectively based on extensive experience and a high level of nature management expertise.”

Jonkheer Klaus von Chrismar (The Netherlands)

Klaus von Chrismar is chairman of the Dutch delegation of the CIC, the International Council for Game and Wildlife Conservation. (The abbreviation ‘CIC’ derives from the original French name, Conseil International de la Chasse et de la Conservation du Gibier.) “We are a global organization with many members in Europe,” he explains. “One of our objectives is to promote controlled hunting as part of sustainable nature management: an instrument used to maintain and increase biodiversity. Our approach to wildlife management is very similar to that of De Hoge Veluwe.”

Valid component

Klaus von Chrismar knows De Hoge Veluwe well. As a child, he often visited the Park with his family, inspired by the books by naturalists such as Gazebeek and Wigman. Later, his contacts with the Park have been in a more official capacity, as both the CIC and De Hoge Veluwe are members of various European consultation bodies.

What does he think of the strategy adopted by the Park? “As I understand it, De Hoge Veluwe wishes to maintain an appropriate balance between flora and fauna, achieving the highest possible level of biodiversity. That balance depends on the degree to which the land can support the various wildlife

species. Wildlife management is therefore partly a question of regulating numbers. Populations must not be allowed to grow to a level that the habitat cannot sustain. This entails culling, or controlled hunting. It is not an end in itself but a means to an end. It is a valid component of nature management practice.”

Economy and ecology

What does Von Chrismar see as De Hoge Veluwe’s strengths? “As a private landowner and nature manager, the Park devotes due attention to the economic aspect of hunting, which is both a management instrument and a source of revenue. There is no conflict of interests. The Park has made a deliberate decision to regulate and oversee all hunting itself. It invites a regular group of hunters to practise their sport within the Park, for which they pay a licence fee. They must also sign a contract with very stringent conditions. In my opinion, quality control is more than adequate and the Park is able to combine ecological and economic interests very effectively.”

European representation

“Another of the Park’s clear strengths is its active participation in various European forums. It has realized that in today’s age of globalization and internationalization, it must be represented at the European level and it must contribute to the process of furthering European interests. It is essential to maintain contact with the European institutions to ensure that the interests of private landowners are taken into account by the policy-makers. De Hoge Veluwe is performing this role very well.”

Does the chairman of the Dutch delegation of the CIC have any tips for the Park’s management? Is there any room for improvement? Von Chrismar smiles. “No, I think they should carry on just the way they are. There will always be room for improvement, but I would say that it’s going well just as it is!”

Role model

The Netherlands is a small country. There are of course nature areas which are far larger than De Hoge Veluwe elsewhere in the world, and elsewhere in Europe. Does Klaus von Chrismar

think the Park has any European significance? "Yes I do. De Hoge Veluwe is an extensive nature area in the very heart of the Netherlands. Its location alone makes it an important component of Europe's main ecological structure. In addition, I think that its successful management strategy makes De Hoge Veluwe National Park a valuable role model. It shows the world how to handle nature management and biodiversity, and how controlled hunting can be used as both a wildlife management instrument and a source of revenue. The Park supports the CIC's message by demonstrating how the age-old interaction between man and nature works in practice. That's very much in the spirit of its founder, Anton Kröller, don't you think? My only advice is therefore: carry on! The Park bases its strategy on practical experience gained over many years. Those who rely entirely on theory can learn much from its success."

cic-wildlife.org





Nature conservation: “doing it properly!”



Thomas Edward Coke (United Kingdom)

8th Earl of Leicester

The Holkham Estate has been the seat of the aristocratic Coke family since the early 17th century. Its current owner, Thomas Edward Coke, is the eighth Earl of Leicester. The huge estate, covering over 10,500 hectares, includes a landscaped park, farmland, forestry and a coastal nature reserve. Seger van Voorst tot Voorst visited Holkham Estate several times at the invitation of Tom Coke.

Sustainable management

Holkham Estate is situated in the county of Norfolk in East Anglia, the region of England that lies just over the North Sea from the Netherlands. At the heart of the estate is Holkham Hall, a magnificent historic house which is open to the public for much of the year. Despite his ‘blue blood’, the Earl is a down-to-earth, approachable man who likes to be known as Tom Leicester. He runs the Holkham Estate as a modern commercial business. Alongside arable and livestock farming, one of its main sources of revenue is tourism. The estate as a whole has adopted a ‘sustainable management’ approach, geared to safeguarding its long-term future.

Small team

Tom Leicester first visited De Hoge Veluwe National Park in 2008. He has returned on several occasions. The ‘White Bikes’ and the Kröller-Müller Museum seem to have made a lasting impression. “It’s a lovely wildlife estate,” he says. “The Park has a nice feel to it. It looks great. It is tidy, but still wild. The Museum in the centre of the Park is a huge asset.” He points to similarities between De Hoge Veluwe and Holkham. Both are largely reliant on private funding, and both have a relatively small team of staff. On the other hand, Holkham Estate is somewhat larger and derives more income from rents (farmland and buildings) and from its catering operation.

Catering

Can the two organizations learn from each other? “We were interested in the White Bike scheme,” Tom recalls, “but we decided that in our case it would be more efficient to have the more traditional hire arrangements. A keen entrepreneur came forward and we awarded him the concession.” One aspect from which De Hoge Veluwe might learn much is the way in which Holkham runs its catering operation. “Cafés are really good business. I don’t mean high-end restaurants with expensive chefs, but small cafés that serve good quality food, a nice sandwich.” Tom Leicester also stresses the importance of educational activities, something to which both De Hoge Veluwe and Holkham already devote much attention. “It is very important to give urban children the opportunity to get in contact with nature.” Nature and wildlife management is another area in which cooperation might well pay dividends. “I think exchange visits are not a bad idea at all. We do that already: I visited the Park at the invitation of Seger van Voorst tot Voorst. But I think the exchange of ideas on more levels in the organization is also useful. We are for instance keen to learn from your relationship with the Museum.”

European perspective

Holkham Estate is on the other side of the North Sea. De Hoge Veluwe National Park is in mainland Europe. How does Tom Leicester see the Park’s significance in the European context? “The Netherlands is a densely populated area. It is important to maintain a wild, open area like De Hoge Veluwe. The Park is situated close to the German border; it might be of interest to reach out to the German public. Could they be encouraged to visit? After all, you have an amazing feature: sand dunes close to the border!” Asked his views on how De Hoge Veluwe is managed, Leicester replies: “I like the views of Seger van Voorst tot Voorst on wildlife management and I like the model he has applied. He is in fact practicing proper ‘old-school’ nature conservation. He has a robust way of operating and is not afraid to tell the public the true story of nature conservation if necessary. Well, in my opinion the management is doing it properly!”

holkham.co.uk

Consistence and consensus



Pierre Crahay coordinates the Life Plus and Natura 2000 projects of the European Landowners' Organisation (ELO). He knows De Hoge Veluwe National Park very well both on paper and from visits, having been to the Park on some ten occasions in his various capacities. "This landscape is so other-worldly. As a Belgian, I feel as if I am thousands of miles from my home."

Pierre Crahay (Belgium)

The Park as an example

However, Pierre Crahay also feels at home in the Park. "The reception by management and the employees is always very warm and friendly. I feel extremely welcome." When asked his opinion on the Park's management model, he goes on to explain, "For us at the ELO, the Park's management model is an example to Europe when it comes to private nature areas. It has a developed a sensible and rational private management model with a sustainable character. I think it is a terrific example of how to combine the landscape's value in terms of

nature, history, and tourism. An American journalist with an interest in European nature conservation recently visited the ELO. I took the journalist to De Hoge Veluwe National Park in order to demonstrate a typical example of what we are promoting in a European context: fewer costs for society by applying private management while achieving tremendous ecological results."

Consistency

Crahay believes that these two aspects – economy and ecology – can strengthen each other. "It is the model of combining sustainable and traditional countryside activities on the one hand and increasing ecological value on the other that we are

representing within a European context. As mentioned before, we believe the Park is truly a shining example in this respect.” When asked what improvements could be made to the Park’s management, Crahay lets out a burst of laughter. “It would be very pretentious of me to suggest any improvements, I think! As I said before, what I see before me is a landscape and biodiversity of exceptional quality that is supported by an able and friendly team of employees. The power of De Hoge Veluwe National Park lies in its commitment to nature conservation. It has been doing this for almost a century with the help of professional employees and many volunteers. The Park is not a burden to anyone – quite the contrary, in fact.”

Consensus

The opinions on the factors that contribute to successful nature conservation have changed over the years, says Crahay. He explains, “Nature conservation has not always been as we know it today. For instance, it was a subject of conflict ten to fifteen years ago, during which ecology was confounded with ideology. Nature conservation became political and monopolized. If you look at the

results of that approach, you notice that it has produced few benefits for ecology. This is why we are striving for a model of consensus that involves private parties, private owners, citizens, and users of nature and the countryside. That process of involving parties is a big trend nowadays and has become a real art. I believe the consensus model holds the key to successful nature conservation. In my eyes, De Hoge Veluwe National Park is an example of how this can work.”

A collective effort

Pierre Crahay has some tips and suggestions for the Park. “Keep on doing what you’re doing; continue current policy; and carry on overcoming obstacles. When I look at the Park, I see a team of able people who are applying a model that I believe could be applied to nature conservation in the whole of Northern Europe. We are collaborating with the European Commission in order to set up a database of all Natura 2000 areas in Europe. You could call it a ‘collective project’. This database should gather all specific problems and solutions so that we can learn from good practice in the field of sustainable agriculture, water management, and nature

conservation. As it stands, too few people are aware of good examples in these areas. I believe De Hoge Veluwe's management model will play a significant role in this database. It would be a great achievement, and something to be proud of, if owners of nature areas in Hungary or Spain could learn from De Hoge Veluwe National Park. The Park demonstrates like no other the benefits of sensible, private management."

europeanlandowners.org



Congratulations for the National Park



Humberto Delgado Rosa is director for natural capital, DG Environment, with the European Commission. He states: “De Hoge Veluwe National Park is part of the Natura 2000 site ‘De Veluwe’, one of the largest Natura 2000 sites in the Netherlands, designated both as a Special Protection Area under the Birds Directive and a Special Area of Conservation under the Habitats Directive. The very rich and diverse landscapes of the National Park include several Natura 2000 habitat types, such as drift-sand heathlands and Nardus grasslands and they are home to many rare and vulnerable species.”

Humberto Delgado Rosa (Portugal)

Interviews

Balanced management

Delgado Rosa: “But what makes the National Park so special is that, apart from its exceptional nature value, it is also a great recreation area, in the proximity of one of the most densely-populated areas of Europe. De Hoge Veluwe National Park is a landscape that has been for many years, and still is, strongly influenced by active human intervention, including nature and landscape management, farming and game management. The Park is therefore a very interesting example of a Natura

2000 site, where a balanced management approach has allowed the conservation of vulnerable species and habitat types while at the same time ensuring a high recreation value and diverse human activities. The example of De Hoge Veluwe National Park illustrates that Natura 2000 areas are not nature reserves for wilderness, closed to human activities. Instead, they can be home to a rich biodiversity which provides multiple economic benefits and services to society.”

Congratulations

Delgado Rosa: "De Hoge Veluwe also shows how private ownership and initiative can be the motor of successful nature management proactively involving land owners and managers in the management of Natura 2000 sites. Recognition of their merits in contributing to nature conservation objectives is an essential incentive for them to continue their action. I would therefore like to congratulate De Hoge Veluwe National Park for its achievements in nature conservation since its foundation in 1935 and encourage it to pursue its engagement for the preservation of our common natural heritage, recognised and protected by the EU Natura 2000 Network, with the same commitment and perseverance."

ec.europa.eu





“Keep showing the fantastic efforts to the public”



Thierry de l'Escaille is Secretary-General of the European Landowners' Organization (ELO), whose members represent landowners throughout Europe. ELO is committed to promoting a sustainable and prosperous countryside and organizes interdisciplinary meetings that bring together key actors from the rural sector and policymakers at a local, regional, national, and European level. Below is an interview with the Secretary-General of this large think tank organization.

Thierry de l'Escaille (Belgium)

Could you tell us a little bit about your relationship with De Hoge Veluwe National Park?

“The European Landowners' Organization (ELO) has had a long relationship with De Hoge Veluwe National Park. As one of the few privately managed parks in the country, they are an excellent example of what private management and smart thinking can achieve. The Park embodies the values that we want to showcase in Europe: good ecological management, sound economic thinking, and playing a big role in educating the Dutch public about the environment and the requirements for successful management.”

What do you think of the foundation's policy and management? In your opinion, what are the strengths and what can be improved?

“The strength of the foundation and its management is in ensuring that the Park management is run on a sensible environmental basis, and that one always ask what works best. So often, we see that public land managers are stuck in their ways. As a private foundation, however, the Park need to keep questioning its actions, as this generates a forward-thinking management style that is a great example of what can be achieved in a small country.”

In what ways is De Hoge Veluwe National Park an asset to Europe?

“Firstly, De Hoge Veluwe's heath, dunes, and forests make it a unique habitat in Europe. It is home to many species of flora and fauna in that are very

valuable to Europe, and that is an extraordinary asset to the continent. Secondly, De Hoge Veluwe has learned very well how to balance a high number of tourists with sustainable environmental care. It is not always easy to have visitors while maintaining high nature values, but De Hoge Veluwe manages it very well and there is much that can be learned from its approach. Finally, the Park represents a private enterprise in the countryside, with high visibility and a remarkable history. These are the kinds of places that we believe Europe should have more of. Furthermore, the Park holds the Wildlife Estates Label, which was developed by ELO to demonstrate what private land can do for biodiversity while maintaining jobs and incomes in the countryside. De Hoge Veluwe is one of the best examples of Wildlife Estates we have.”

In what way could the Park support your organization?

“Bring examples and thinking to Brussels! We are always in need of the kind of real, practical terrain management skills and issues that a park like De Hoge Veluwe highlights. It is very important that the policymakers here in Brussels understand what effects their rules can have on the day-to-day

business of the Park. We have invited Seger van Voorst tot Voorst to many of our events, and we are always happy to hear his contributions, as well as those from your staff, whom we have invited to come and talk in detail with people here.”

What advice would you like to give De Hoge Veluwe National Park?

“Make sure that you are ready for the future and keep showing your fantastic efforts to the public across Europe!”

europeanlandowners.org



“A beautiful balance”



Professor Klaus Hackländer is head of the Institute of Wildlife Biology and Game Management at the University of Natural Resources and Life Sciences, Vienna (BOKU). The institute’s name may be long but Hackländer can sum up its activities in three words: ‘research and education’. It is currently involved in a long-term study examining the effects of the (partial) removal of boundary fences around De Hoge Veluwe National Park.

Klaus Hackländer (Germany)

Real science

As part of the research, Prof. Hackländer visits the park at least once a year. He does not confine himself to meetings with other researchers and Park managers, but can often be seen ‘out in the field’. It is still too soon to arrive at any firm conclusions, he states. “This is the third and final year of data collection. Colleagues from Wageningen University, Alterra and De Vlinderstichting are monitoring the situation because we want to know how removing the fences will affect the vegetation and biodiversity within the Park. Neighbouring areas have a higher population of red deer and wild boar. Are these animals more likely to migrate when the fence is gone? If so, how will the increased numbers influence the existing balance in the Park?”

As far as we can tell, there has been only a low-level effect so far. Animals do use the new openings but variables such as weather, changes in tourism practice or a large wildfire would have a greater effect on nature than any incursions of deer. On the other hand the management of the Park is adapting to changing situation and thus any instability of the ecosystem is averted. But again, it is too early to draw conclusions; the data has yet to be processed.” Klaus Hackländer’s research enjoys considerable support from the Park’s management. “They are really open to the outcome of the monitoring. While they are proud of the way they manage nature and are convinced that they are doing it right, there is also a genuine scientific interest in the results. There is no bias: our monitoring is real science. Students from my university acknowledged this during internships, too.”

Human involvement

Klaus Hackländer sees the involvement of volunteers as a key strength of De Hoge Veluwe National Park. "Volunteers play a very important role. The Park has a unique link with its 'friends', and their help in collecting data at every possible level is much appreciated – not only in this monitoring project but on numerous other occasions. The quantity of data they have collected over the years is enormous. It represents a treasure house of information that we have only just begun to explore." A second major strength, the professor believes, is the Park's management strategy. "De Hoge Veluwe has successfully combined nature conservation with leisure recreation. I am happy to see that. The aim is to include visitors rather than exclude them. People should be part of nature and they should bring human culture to nature. The joy of being in the great outdoors does much to foster public support for nature conservation. Raising awareness and interest, maintaining the cultural traditions surrounding the economic use of nature: all rely on inclusiveness. The Park demonstrates that the value of nature can be reconciled with various practical uses. Large numbers of people come to witness the deer rut in the autumn, yet the Park has been able to maintain its fragile ecosystems with their unique species of flora and fauna." Are there

any aspects that could be improved? "Not in my view. De Hoge Veluwe National Park has found a beautiful balance between nature and tourism."

Sharing ideas

Klaus Hackländer is equally enthusiastic about the Park's cooperation with his institute, a partnership which has developed over the course of several years. "It is a real win-win situation. We can do some really interesting science, drawing on the vast reservoir of data collected here. Conversely, the Park can use the results of our research to refine its nature management strategy. In the European context, we can use the Park as a best practice example which demonstrates how humans and wildlife can co-exist. Sharing ideas can lead to better strategies for similar nature areas throughout Europe. From a conservation point of view, the delicate landscape of De Hoge Veluwe is unique: the sandy soil interspersed with heathland and so forth. It must be protected. But equally important is the Park's management model. The way it operates is very relevant to European culture."

boku.ac.at

“Tell us what is really happening on the grounds”



Konstantin Kostopoulos (Greece)

Konstantin Kostopoulos is responsible for the Wildlife Estates (WE) Label at the European Landowners' Organization (ELO), a network of exemplary estates that voluntarily agreed to adhere to the philosophy of sustainable wildlife management and land use. The network of labelled estates started in 2005 – with estates in Spain, Belgium, France, Portugal, Scotland, and the Netherlands – and has been continuously growing ever since.

Today, the WE Label is represented in 17 countries, with 191 labelled estates covering more than 1,000,000 hectares. In the Netherlands, De Hoge Veluwe National Park is one of the few nature areas that may hold the WE Label. Below is an interview between the Park with Kostantin Kostopoulos, COO of Wildlife Estates.

Could you briefly describe your relationship with De Hoge Veluwe National Park?

“The Wildlife Estates Label, which I have been coordinating now for two years now, has a long history with the Park, as it was one of the first pilot estates of the initiative in 2005. Indeed, the management of De Hoge Veluwe National Park was already exemplary at that time and used as a

scientific and practical base for discussions between the experts of the project. The Park hosted one of the first Wildlife Estates working groups in 2007.”

What do you think of the foundation's policy and management? In your opinion, what are our strengths and what can we improve?

“De Hoge Veluwe National Park's success is in the way it combines a variety of activities for the wider public while preserving the traditional use of the land. I believe this is a great strength, as it shows that different interests can coexist to maintain the environment without excluding economic and social entrepreneurship.”

In what ways is De Hoge Veluwe National Park an asset to Europe?

“Europe is the place where people and wildlife have

interacted for centuries, and De Hoge Veluwe National Park is one of the most emblematic examples of this peaceful coexistence. It encourages private land managers to engage with wildlife management and the conservation of biodiversity in order to guarantee a better quality of life for European citizens.”

In what way could the Park support your organization?

“The Park was a crucial component in the development of the Wildlife Estates Label. I would then say that the Park should continue communicating on its positive role, as it will encourage other parks and estates to take part in the project and receive the Label. We need the Park to provide information on what is really happening on the grounds so that we can better communicate to public authorities at a European, regional, and local level.”

What advice would you like to give to De Hoge Veluwe National Park?

“Continue what you are doing and explore new opportunities at a European level. There are methods of research and nature management that may be of interest!”

wildlife-estates.eu



“Independence secures biodiversity”



Cycling with his partner through the landscape of De Hoge Veluwe National Park is an experience Prinz Michael zu Salm-Salm will remember for a long time to come. He believes the Park is “special, different, and unique”. As an entrepreneur and owner of a country estate in Germany, Prinz Michael zu Salm-Salm emphasizes the importance of sustainable individual management of natural areas and country estates.

Prinz Michael zu Salm-Salm (Germany)

Friends of the Countryside

In addition to his entrepreneurial activities, Prinz Michael zu Salm-Salm holds a number of positions in society and management. Amongst others, he is the Vice President of the European Landowners’ Organisation interest group and the President of the European network organization Friends of the Countryside. The latter organization represents a large number of European country estate owners and promotes a holistic approach to the economic, social, and environmental management of the countryside. The organization supports private businesses and rural property throughout the European Union. The organization writes the following on its website: “Friends of the Countryside believes that the future of Europe’s countryside is

dependent on the individual management decisions of its millions of entrepreneurs and private landowners. The future depends on a strong relationship between them and the public authorities. In the face of burdensome regulations and expropriation of land or business, European history has shown us that private enterprise and property are the best guarantee of economic, social, and environmental protection and the development of the countryside. It encourages good management practices.”

Synergy of culture and nature

This is a concept that Zu Salm-Salm has encountered in the management of De Hoge Veluwe National Park. He explains, “Active management is the only way to preserve the

biodiversity of De Hoge Veluwe National Park – and it is being done in an exemplary fashion! Taking a look at forestry, the Park’s management has struck the balance between natural regeneration and active thinning. The uniqueness of De Hoge Veluwe lies in its independence and its high level of biodiversity. An active management style is in line with the views and ideals of Mrs and Mr Kröller-Müller. Those ideals, enshrined in the synergy of human culture and nature, are seen as a directive for the National Park.”

An example to Europe

Zu Salm-Salm believes it is crucial that the Netherlands continue to be home to areas such as De Hoge Veluwe National Park. “It is astonishing that one can still find unspoiled nature in such a highly populated country like the Netherlands. “However, the continued existence of this landscape benefits from being independent, as Zu Salm-Salm explains. “It is important for a nearly private park such as De Hoge Veluwe to stay independent, as independence secures biodiversity. Instead of top-down regulations, De Hoge Veluwe Park has a bottom-up style!” In his eyes, the value of the Park is in the way in which it acts as an example to the rest of Europe. “The continuous trend of sustainability in Europe can be further strengthened by showcasing a national park like De Hoge Veluwe

that is so special, different, and unique. De Hoge Veluwe is an example to follow in terms of independence, management, diversity, and culture. This synergy of culture and nature is unique in Europe, incorporating Country Residence/Museum Jachthuis Sint Hubertus and the Kröller-Müller Museum into a natural landscape. It is a truly unique combination.”

Pursue current policy

By demonstrating the implementation of an active and independent management model, the Park provides moral and practical support to the organization Friends of the Countryside, of which Prinz Michael zu Salm-Salm is the President. He explains, “De Hoge Veluwe National Park helps to emphasize the importance of nature and sustainability in our society. The Park influenced our discussions at a European level about how to strike a balance between nature and culture.” It is therefore no surprise that his advice to the Park’s management is to pursue current policy: “To stay free from fiscal interventions, it is important that the independence of the Park be reinforced. In my opinion, the Park’s management should pursue their current excellent policy.”

friendsofthecountryside.org

“Regulations have gone too far”



Schreijer-Pierik is one of the better-known Dutch politicians in the European Parliament. She was elected in 2014, joining the European People's Party (EPP), in which she represents her Dutch political group, the Christian Democratic Appeal (CDA). She is a member of the European Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety; Agriculture and Rural Development; and Fisheries. At the end of 2015, she presented a research report that concluded that the Netherlands has gone too far with the implementation of the Birds and Habitats Directives.

Annie Schreijer-Pierik (the Netherlands)

Too many rules

Annie Schreijer-Pierik has a great deal of contact with De Hoge Veluwe National Park within the framework of the European directives for Natura 2000. She explains, “Our collaboration aims to ensure that the Netherlands no longer adds its own rules to European directives, such as the Birds and Habitats Directives. In the 1970s, regulations aimed at promoting nature conservation were formulated with the best intentions, but the appetite for legislation has gone too far, with the Netherlands in particular adding unnecessary rules to the list. For instance, so as not to disturb a certain species of bird, the Park is forbidden from maintaining the

health plants. We'd be better off leaving considerations of that ilk to the experts at the National Park!”

Fewer 'add-ons'

Schreijer-Pierik is collaborating with the EPP in the European Parliament in order to arrive at a more balanced implementation of the Natura 2000 directives in the 28 member states. “If the Netherlands continues to be more fanatical than other EU countries, then there is no level playing field for farmers, citizens, and companies in and around nature areas. For example, many authorities in the Netherlands claim that expropriations of farmers' land for Natura 2000 have to take place 'because the EU said so'. However, I've found out

that this is untrue. And don't let anyone tell you otherwise! With the help of the Park, the many municipal councillors, members of the provincial council, and others, we are trying to convince the Dutch government to reduce the number of national 'add-ons' to European legislation!"

Unique in Europe

The management of De Hoge Veluwe National Park supports this cause. When asked to comment on her experiences with the governors of the Park and the importance of De Hoge Veluwe to Europe, Schreijer-Pierik says, "The Park's management can make swift decisions and is easy to get in touch with. It is also entirely clear that the interests of the plants and animals are the governors' and management's priority. These are people with a true passion for nature. Despite the name 'Hoge' ('high' in Dutch), De Hoge Veluwe is actually the largest lowland nature area in Northern Europe. This makes it unique in Europe and the world. It is fantastic that something like this exists in our densely populated country. Let's not forget: with more than 400 inhabitants per square kilometre, the Netherlands is amongst the top ten most densely populated countries in the world. What's more, the Park is home to the Kröller-Müller Museum, an invaluable element in the European art world."

Advice for the Park

Asked whether the Park can support her work in European politics, Schreijer-Pierik comments, "We at the European Parliament can always be contacted directly; lobbyists don't need to intervene. Seger van Voorst tot Voorst knows how to make his opinions heard!" Asked whether she has any advice for the Park, Schreijer-Pierik goes on to say, "The most important thing is to continue the good work for nature and the National Park. This may involve weathering the hail of criticism and fighting against the build-up of red tape. As long as the Park maintains the care and love it has for nature, I am convinced that many generations to come will be able to enjoy the beauty of the landscape, the wildness, and the biodiversity."

Perfume

Many people in our country are surprised that this landscape is so nearby, says Annie Schreijer-Pierik. She concludes with an anecdote. "When I was a Member of Parliament, I was once invited to watch the deer rut. I woke up very early, showered, and put on 'Poème' – my favourite perfume – before setting off to De Hoge Veluwe. Once I arrived, the warden growled: 'Because of your perfume, we won't see any deer today!' I felt a little awkward, but we went to sit in the hide anyway. You'll never guess

what happened next. As the sun rose, a huge deer came and stood in front of us for around fifteen minutes. He then lay down for two hours. After that, another twelve beautiful deer appeared on the horizon. It was a beautiful sight. I couldn't help but say to the warden: 'I think my perfume actually attracts the deer!'"

annie-schreijer.eu





“Maintaining the balance”



Frits Thissen has been Agricultural Attaché with the Permanent Representation of the Netherlands to the EU since 2010, a role he assumed on behalf of Belgium and Luxembourg a year later. As a diplomat, he is chiefly concerned with policy matters and economic cooperation. In his own words, he is the ‘eyes and ears’ of the Dutch Minister for Agriculture, Martijn van Dam.

Frits Thissen (the Netherlands)

Network

There is a global network of Agricultural Attachés who represent the interests of Dutch agriculture. They promote the nation’s export trade, and they support the development and implementation of relevant policy. The network currently has 48 offices in 42 countries. As Frits Thissen explains, his remit goes beyond agriculture in the narrow sense of the word. “My portfolio includes topics such as commercial fisheries and food safety. And, particularly relevant here, it includes nature and nature management.”

Management model

Frits Thissen knows De Hoge Veluwe National Park and the Kröller-Müller Museum extremely well. He has visited on many occasions and has regular contact with management and staff. “The Park is a marvellous national asset, the second largest contiguous nature area in our country. Few other areas can rival its ecological importance. In the European context, De Hoge Veluwe National Park is also notable for its management model. The Park is run by a private sector organization which has not only succeeded in conserving important natural values but has managed to attract an ever increasing number of paying visitors. The Park offers an example that many similar organizations would do well to copy. I can tell you that Brussels is keeping a very close eye on De Hoge Veluwe National Park’s management model – in a positive sense, I hasten to add!”

Wider application

“Of course, as an outsider I am not familiar with the details. But when I look at De Hoge Veluwe I see a large nature reserve with very high biodiversity and important natural values. I see an area which has been made accessible to the public without any significant reliance on public resources. I believe that this model can and should be applied elsewhere. Speaking in a personal capacity, I see absolutely no objection to paying to visit a well-maintained nature area such as this.” Thissen draws a parallel with nature reserves in the United States. “People there are more than willing to pay. They know that their entrance fees help to maintain and conserve the natural assets.”

Balancing act

“But it is a fine line to walk. It can be difficult to reconcile the interests of conservation on the one hand and public accessibility on the other. Doing so calls for research and in-depth knowledge. You must monitor how all the various factors influence each other. You have to be particularly alert if making any changes to the management model. It is a delicate balancing act which demands ongoing attention. There is very little room for error. I would like to compliment the management and staff of De Hoge Veluwe on their courage and on the tenacity

with which they adhere to this approach. Seger van Voorst tot Voorst’s efforts are particularly praiseworthy. My message is, carry on – but please be careful not to lose your balance!”

European nature policy

Does De Hoge Veluwe National Park have a part to play at the European level? “I strongly believe that the Park’s economic strategy should be emulated by other nature managers,” Thissen replies. “They would certainly benefit. De Hoge Veluwe is also a valuable role model for policy-makers. This allows us to show that the Netherlands has something to offer on the economic side of nature policy. The Park is actively reaching out to other European organizations and is helping to develop new networks. We shall be happy to lend our support wherever possible.”

Cross-pollination

Finally, we asked the experienced diplomat if he had any tips for De Hoge Veluwe management. “Continue to maintain the balance. At a more practical level, seek cooperation with landowners and managers, both public and private, national and international. After all, we have one common

objective: to propagate and conserve valuable nature with the highest possible biodiversity. I think that better communication would help everyone to benefit from each other's ideas and experience. We need more 'cross-pollination' to maximize the positive effects. This does not entail a radical change of direction or abandoning current strategies altogether. But we can always learn from each other. We should identify best practices and look for effective means to share our knowledge. In short, we must look for ways in which to move forward together."

eu.nlmission.org





Seen by Europeans as a success story



“I have been involved with De Hoge Veluwe National Park – in various capacities – for more than 25 years. That involvement will continue. While I have stepped down as Chairman of the Supervisory Board, this most certainly does not mean I am bidding farewell to De Hoge Veluwe.” These were the words of Frank Schreve, who stepped down as Chairman of the Supervisory Board in December 2015.

Frank Schreve (the Netherlands)

Learning from one another

If anyone fully appreciates the importance of international contacts, it is Frank Schreve. This is also reflected in his private life. Mr Schreve explains that “I have worked abroad for many years, and I have family in Austria, Switzerland, France, Belgium, America ... In the course of my extensive travels, I have visited many national parks and private estates throughout the world. The picture that emerges from this Annual Report is one that is very familiar to me. I have seen similar problems, similar issues and, yes, similar opportunities in private estates and national parks here in the Netherlands and elsewhere. We can all learn a great deal from one another.”

Examples to follow

Here, Frank Schreve is referring to Yosemite National Park in the west United States, one of the first national parks in the world. He has walked and climbed in that park on many occasions, and has also studied its management model. Mr Schreve explains that “Yosemite is obviously much bigger than De Hoge Veluwe National Park, but the challenges involved are the same. Both parks charge an admission fee and both are attempting to achieve the right balance between a high nature value and facilities that are attractive to tourists. Yosemite National Park has tackled this problem through the use of area zoning, and we can learn from this. They use concentrated tourism exploitation, as do we – on a small scale – with our nature-friendly campsites. A high-value approach can be very effective here. For instance, it enables

you to develop activities outside the Park's regular opening hours. On another topic, we could learn a great deal from the way Holkham Estate handles merchandising. You can learn a lot by observing how other parks do things, and by keeping an open mind."

International recognition

While De Hoge Veluwe National Park studies solutions developed in other countries, parks and private estates outside the Netherlands are benefitting, in turn, from De Hoge Veluwe's experience. Frank Schreve points out that "This is evident from the comments in this Annual Report. Many external observers are interested in the way in which De Hoge Veluwe combines the development of nature conservation with visits and recreation. It is this that makes the Park special – its numerous species of reptiles and insects, its unique flora, and its high level of biodiversity. We draw great satisfaction from these developments, and we are constantly striving to boost them still further. Some fine-tuning is occasionally required, such as suspending "off-path" walking. In terms of finding the right balance, we appear to be doing a good job, if the recognition our management methods receive from international organizations is anything to go

by. Other Europeans see De Hoge Veluwe as a success story." Frank Schreve adds "As our Managing Director has already stated in his interview in this Annual Report, the regulatory framework imposed by Brussels is becoming increasingly important. I concur with that analysis. It is imperative that we align ourselves with Europe. Other nature management authorities in the Netherlands may, perhaps, not yet be sufficiently aware of this necessity. While I would not suggest that other managers adopt every detail of De Hoge Veluwe's management model, I certainly believe that they could learn from various aspects of this system."

Development of the Central Area

As a member of the board and, later on, as Chairman of the Supervisory Board, Frank Schreve pushed for a new governance model for De Hoge Veluwe National Park. The model he envisaged had a Managing Director/manager, together with a Supervisory Board that operated in the background, monitoring events and serving as a sounding board for the management of the National Park. In retrospect, how does he assess this transition to greater professionalization? Mr Schreve states that "More than ever before, the Managing Director personally instigates operations. This development,

together with a extremely capable management team, has created an organization that is both active and highly effective. It is a model that was needed to meet the demands of the times, and it still works well today. From the employer's perspective, it helps the organization attract professional and capable people." Frank Schreve sees the development of the Park's new Central Area as one of the major challenges for the future. Accordingly, this task will fall to the new Chairman of the Supervisory Board, Fred de Graaf. Mr Schreve also intends to be involved in this. "As I have already stated, I may have stepped down from the Supervisory Board, but this does not mean I am bidding farewell to De Hoge Veluwe." My continued involvement will take many different forms, such as helping with the fundraising required for the development of the new Central Area."



Visitor numbers

De Hoge Veluwe National Park received 578,667 paying visitors in 2015. That represents a decrease compared to 2014, when 581,876 people visited the Park. Visitor numbers totalled 516,456 in 2013, 496,643 in 2012 and 525,631 in 2011. For 2015 the number of visitors was estimated at 525,000. For 2014 the figure was 515,000 and for the other years it was 500,000 annually. The Kröller-Müller Museum welcomed 310,602 paying visitors in 2015. In 2014 the figure was 325,713.

15,477 Guardian Cards (annual cards) were sold for the Park in 2015, almost 500 more than in 2014 (15,043). The Visitor Centre was visited by 343,717 people (2014: 341,061). Of these, 178,202 (2014: 183,109) continued to Museonder.

Country Residence/Museum Jachthuis Sint Hubertus was visited 28,221 times.

In 2014 this figure was 28,151. There were 14,296 overnight stays on De Hoge Veluwe campsite. In 2014 this figure was 13,666.

Statement of operating income and expenses
(in thousands of euros)

	2015 Actual	2014 Actual
INCOME		
Admission fees	5.060	4.984
Rental and leases	434	437
KMM fee	229	227
Packages	34	47
Sundry income	1.535	1.349
	7.292	7.044

EXPENSES

Personnel expenses	3.025	2.955
Sundry direct costs	2.178	2.151
Packages	5	19
General expenses	512	419
Cash	25	17
Depreciation and amortization	1.027	859

6.772 **6.420**

OPERATING RESULT

Extraordinary income and expenses

520 624

411 -484

RESULT

931 **140**

Balance sheet as at 31 December (in euros)
(before appropriation of the result)

	2015	2014
ASSETS		
FIXED ASSETS		
Intangible fixed assets	215.938	0
Tangible fixed assets	11.234.360	10.715.550
	10.450.298	10.715.550
CURRENT ASSETS		
Inventories	115.479	139.011
Short-term receivables	1.105.865	1.422.765
Cash	812.412	1.163.788
	2.033.756	2.725.564
TOTAL ASSETS	13.484.054	13.441.114
LIABILITIES		
EQUITY		
General reserve	6.682.599	6.391.763
Unappropriated result	931.457	139.945
Special-purpose reserve for automation	0	245.000
Revaluation reserve	2.363.950	3.446.450
	9.978.006	10.223.158
PROVISIONS		
	755.464	644.405
LONG-TERM DEBTS		
	718.632	0
SHORT-TERM LIABILITIES AND ACCRUALS & DEFERRED INCOME		
	2.031.952	2.573.551
TOTAL LIABILITIES	13.484.054	13.441.114

The operating result amounts to € 520,000. After the change in extraordinary income and expenses of € 411,000 the final result is € 931,000 positive.
Ernst & Young Accountants LLP has issued an unqualified independent auditor's report.

Compared to 2014 the operating result decreased by € 104,000, from € 624,000 positive to € 520,000 positive.

This decrease is due particularly to:

	€
- higher admission fees due to a price rise	76.000
- an increase in sundry income due to higher revenue for Jachthuis Sint Hubertus, rental bikes, nature conservation subsidy, fundraising and a decrease in revenue from nature conservation and Stichting Faciliteiten	186.000
- an increase in personnel expenses due to greater use of agency workers	- 70.000
- an increase in sundry direct costs due to higher nature conservation expenses with a corresponding increase in the nature conservation subsidy	- 27.000
- an increase in general expenses due to higher administrative expenses, representation expenses associated with the 80th anniversary and partly offset by lower costs of advisers	- 93.000
- an increase in depreciation and amortization due to investments made	- 168.000
- net amount in respect of other items	- 8.000
	- 104.000

Management Team

S.E. baron van Voorst tot Voorst
director
H. Beukhof
Head of central services, deputy director
J.R.K. Leidekker
Operations
M.M. Kokke
Visitor Management
A. Roelofsen
Catering and Retail

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Delta Programme Commissioner
S.A. Reinink
director, Royal Concertgebouw Amsterdam
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J.G. Trapman
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H.E.M. Vrolijk
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