



Stappersven (© Slootmaekers)



Black-necked grebe (© Slootmaekers)

Objectives of LIFE HELVEX



Smooth snake (© Slootmaekers)

Actions:

- Researching water purification options and constructing a purification plant to clean fertilized water from Steertse Heide before it enters Grootte Meer.
- Investigating the hydrology (water management) to establish the water levels in Stappersven / De Nol.
- Purchasing land in Steertse Heide to stop further fertilization, both on Dutch and Flemish side.
- Removing the silt layer to reduce grasses and unwanted vegetation on the pool banks.
- Felling planted pine trees, except for outstanding trees, and cutting sods down to the sand layer to create an open dynamic dune landscape.
- Chopping spontaneously-grown trees and stripping the topsoil to create more wet and dry heath and to create an open area connecting Grootte Meer and Steertse Heide.
- Removing invasive alien species to create more diverse woods
- Raising awareness among the broader public through the website, social media, information panels, information evenings, press articles, a DVD, ...
- Developing a nature-inspired game and constructing walking paths, a watchtower and a look-out platform.
- Starting maintenance

Expected results:

- Water purification between Steertse Heide and Grootte Meer
- Restoration of 56 ha (138 acres) of inland dune (2330): Nolse Duinen
- Restoration of 30 ha (74 acres) of pools (3110): Grootte and Kleine Meer and one small pool
- Restoration of 90 ha (222 acres) of wet heath (4010), dry heath (4030) and pool banks in Stappersven, ...
- Removal of invasive alien species on an area of 60 ha (148 acres)
- Increase in birds listed in the Birds Directive, such as European nightjar, woodlark, little grebe, black-necked grebe, ...
- Construction of a watchtower and look-out platform
- Beautiful and attractive heathland with high natural and recreational values for visitors

Typical species:



Shoreweed (© Slootmaekers)

Shoreweed: This unsightly little plant is one of the pearls of Grootte Meer. It is a rare species in both the Netherlands and Flanders. It grows on very poor, humid, sandy grounds and pool banks. Purifying the surface water of Steertse Heide is essential to preserve this species!

Woodlark: At this moment, there are 100 breeding pairs in the border park. Through the LIFE project we will enlarge their habitat: open heath with spread-out trees.



Woodlark (© Slootmaekers)



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Target image of dune landscape (© P. van Rheenen)

Cross-border restoration of heathland, inland dunes and pools and integrated invasive plant management in cross-border park De Zoom – Kalmthoutse Heide



AGENTSCHAP NATUUR & BOS

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HELVEX - LIFE PROJECT



Roughening and afforesting in Grootse Meer – October 2014
(© Sloomakers)

The European LIFE project HELVEX is a collaboration between the cross-border park and its partners on both sides of the border (Natuurpunt, Agentschap voor Natuur & Bos and Natuurmonumenten) and aims at increasing natural values. The project focuses on restoring inland dunes in De Nulse Duinen, pools in Stappersven, Grootse Meer and Kleine Meer, and dry and wet heath in the area around Mont Noir. A wet area connecting Steertse Heide in Flanders and Grootse Meer in the Netherlands will be created to ensure that species can cross the border again.

