

What is the benefit of protected European areas for reptiles and amphibians?

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In a new project of the University of Twente, researchers of the faculty ITC will be studying how much reptiles and amphibians are protected by the network of European protected areas which are together called the Natura 2000 network. Natura 2000 areas cover almost 20% of the land surface of the 28 member states. They already make a major contribution to the economy of Europe by providing a vital range of goods and (ecosystem) services that contribute to jobs and human wellbeing.

The research will be done by researchers at the faculty of Geo-Information Science and Earth Observation of the University of Twente, dr. Bert Toxopeus, dr. Kees de Bie and dr. ir. Thomas Groen. Groen: "In the Netherlands we have 166 [areas](#) which are part of the European Natura 2000 network, for example the Wadden Sea or the moorland in Drenthe. The biodiversity in Europe is rapidly decreasing so sustainable protection of flora and fauna is desperately needed. With the Natura 2000 areas we intend to prevent that nature in Europe and in the Netherlands is becoming more uniform. A large number of species are specifically targeted to be protected by the Natura 2000 areas. We want to find out if Natura 2000 areas also benefit other species, in our case the [reptiles](#) and amphibians."

This work is part of a bigger project which is financed by the European Commission. Alterra has the lead in this partnership and will look with partners from the Netherlands, Italy and the UK at how many species in Europe are protected by the Natura 2000 network. The Alterra led

partnership will carry out its research over the coming year and it is expected that the results will have a wider influence in relation to a broad review that is presently being carried out by the European Commission in order to establish the 'fitness for purpose' of the current European nature legislation.

The project partners are the Faculty of Geo-information Science and Earth Observation, University of Twente (ITC-UT), the Dutch Butterfly Conservation organisation (De Vlinderstichting), Sovon (the Dutch Centre for Field Ornithology), the British Trust for Ornithology (BTO) and the Italian Institute for Applied Ecology (IEA - Istituto di Ecologia Applicata – Sapienza, University of Rome).

Provided by University of Twente

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