

# NATURAL CLIMATE BUFFER



Belgium

## DemerDelta

### Introduction

DemerDelta is a floodplain area which consists of nature reserves Schulensbroek and Webbekomsbroek in the eastern part of Flanders. It revolves around the Demer river, the backbone of the Natura 2000 European protected area 'Demer valley' and lies at the crossroads of three regional ecoregions with entirely different abiotic conditions. It has traditionally been a confluence of multiple streams with inverse deltastructures which created a floodplain comprising a broad and flat inland 'riverpolder' with a unique vegetation within the Atlantic biogeographic region. All these elements make it an ideal blue green space in which water and nature are key for climate and nature goals. The area is particularly interesting for threatened species that thrive in open areas with floodplain dynamics and marshland which makes it ideal for the expansion of durable core populations of the target species.

The area is perfectly suited for climate change adaptation purposes. It is crucial for water storage in the region at peak flow events that increasingly occur these last years. In addition, water retention, one of the main goals in the reserve, helps to counter droughts and is essential for nature values.

The European LIFE project Delta, which runs from 2016-2023, focuses on habitat and ecohydrological restoration aimed at the target species in the project area of about 2,000 ha.

### Issues & key challenges

- Countering habitat loss, fragmentation and degradation
- Boosting insufficient population sizes
- Restoration and challenges of a deficient water regime for habitats (drought, long term (summer) flood peaks)
- Dealing with recreational and agricultural pressures
- Local policy and stakeholder involvement



### Legal Status

Natura 2000 (Birds and Habitats Directives)

Nature reserve

### Habitats and Protected Species

Silverweed grasslands, living environment Creeping marshwort; Lowland hay meadows (6510), transition to Molinia meadows (6410) or Nardus grasslands (6230); Transition mires (7140); Oligotrophic to mesotrophic standing waters (3130); Calthion grasslands, habitat for Corncrake; Natural eutrophic lakes (3150); Tall herb fringes (6430); Reedland, habitat for Great and Little bittern.

Corncrake; Great bittern; Little bittern; Red backed shrike; Bluethroat; Spotted crane; Marsh harrier; Great crested newt; Weather loach; Creeping marshwort; Floating water-plantain

### Management

Natuurpunt (NGO)

Flemish government: ANB (Agency for Nature and Forest) & VMM (Flemish Environmental Agency)

### Information sources

[www.demerdelta.be](http://www.demerdelta.be)

[www.facebook.com/LifeDelta/](https://www.facebook.com/LifeDelta/)

[www.natuurpunt.be/pagina/life-delta](http://www.natuurpunt.be/pagina/life-delta)

[www.natura2000.vlaanderen.be/project/life-project-delta](http://www.natura2000.vlaanderen.be/project/life-project-delta)

[www.vmm.be/water/projecten/life-delta](http://www.vmm.be/water/projecten/life-delta)

### Outcomes & benefits

- Prevention of floods through water storage and buffering peak flow events
- Prevention of droughts and optimisation of nature values through water retention
- Restoration of ecohydrological conditions
- Restoration of habitats for threatened European species
- Zoning recreation and creating a support base in a densely populated and heavily recreated area



### Lessons learnt & future

- A good ecohydrological study is key for decent restoration decision making in wetlands.
- Well aimed restoration measures can (in some cases) lead to quick results (e.g. the Red backed shrike returned and the number of breeding pairs increased from 1 to 20 in 6 years).
- The importance of broad cooperation with local stakeholders and their involvement and support.
- Consistently going for the goals with good communication will give you long-term results.

Future projects will focus on completing the habitat puzzle through purchases and restoration in line with the larger set of nature goals for the area, which are anchored in the nature management plans for the nature reserves.



NATURAL SPONGE



BLUE-GREEN SPACE

More info



VLAAMSE MILIEUMAATSCHAPPIJ



AGENTSCHAP NATUUR & BOS



Eurosite Factsheet

Wetlands and Climate Change

[www.eurosite.org](http://www.eurosite.org) | [info@eurosite.org](mailto:info@eurosite.org)