

Celebrations of the International Year of Biodiversity in the Netherlands

Establishment of the Dutch National Committee IYB2010.

To prepare for the IYB 2010, preparatons took place in 2009 for the establishment of a national Committee which took the form of a nation-wide [Coalition for Biodiversity 2010](#). The Coalition was formally launched on 4 November 2009. Local and provincial governments, NGOs, businesses and research institutes were invited to join and commit themselves to organise one or more activities to promote the cause of biodiversity during 2010. The response was enthusiastic and membership grew steadily till around 200 at present. The Coalition was chaired by Mr. Onno Hoes, Member of the Provincial Executive of Noord-Brabant. HM the Queen's sister, Princess Irene von Lippe Biesterfeld was the Patroness of the Coalition.

Launch of the IYB2010

The IYB itself was opened jointly by the Minister of Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality, Mrs. Gerda Verburg, and the Minister of Science and Education, Mr. Ronald Plasterk. For this occasion, a festive ceremony on 28 January 2010 was organised and attended by over 300 people. At this event, the National Centre for Biodiversity (NCB) was launched at the is hosted by the National Museum of Natural History, Naturalis. NCB/Naturalis co-hosted the secretariat of the Coalition together with the IUCN Netherlands Committee. The Coalition website was also presented at the opening ceremony. It has now been linked to the Dutch Clearinghouse Mechanism, www.biodiversiteit.nl.

World Biodiversity Day 22 May 2010

On 22 May, World Biodiversity Day was celebrated with a nation-wide event themed "Biodiversity Is Life!". Coalition partners laid out puzzle trails in over 30 nature area, farmlands and botanical gardens which were hiked by numerous children. This way they discovered for themselves the meaning, functions and values of biodiversity. Various famous Dutch 'showbizz' personalities accompanied the children and their parents in their search for 'the treasures of biodiversity'. The Coalition's patroness, Her Majesty Princess Irene von Lipp-Biesterfeld, led the puzzle hike around a natural lake (Tenellaplas) in the company of Coalition Chair Onno Hoes. This was broadcast on the Dutch school television and in various news reports. The puzzle trail remained in place during the rest of the year.

In the afternoon and evening of the same World Biodiversity Day, the elderly youth was engaged in a national debate about the role of youth in biodiversity conservation. They concluded that schools should increase efforts to experiencing nature and explain the importance of biodiversity conservation. Consequently, a petition was written and presented to politicians of various political parties.

In addition, local governments, NGOs organised numerous other activities connected to WBD. All events were announced on the Internet on www.biodiversiteit.nl, in texts, pictures and clips.

Other IYB celebrations in 2010

During the rest of the year, Coalition partners and other organisations organised a great variety of activities to promote awareness biodiversity among the public. The Coalition distributed a flyer with a discount voucher for major 'green' events and parks. Events were scheduled for almost every day of the year. Highlights:

Green Fashion Competition: The Amsterdam International Fashion Week organised the Green Fashion Competition, in which (upcoming) fashion designers were challenged to create a design related to biodiversity conservation.

ASN Bank: This bank which specializes in sustainable banking added biodiversity to its criteria for investment in 2010, next to human rights and climate.

Cities: The City of Leiden and partners organised a competition for the best idea to conserve biodiversity. The prizes were distributed during a biodiversity festival Life Live organised by NCB Naturalis. Elsewhere in Leiden, citizens created a biodiversity-rich garden, 'Free Green' in a derelict area. The cities of Rotterdam and Tytsjerksteradiel organised a competition for the most environmentally friendly garden. A leading gardening magazine featured biodiversity in gardening.

Annual events: Several annually returning events and exhibitions elaborated on the theme of biodiversity in 2010, such as: Nature Photo Festival; Children's Farm Day; October Month of Knowledge; Amsterdam Botanical Garden, and Earth Day Celebration at Erasmus University Rotterdam. Artis Zoo devoted their entire annual programme to biodiversity.

Websites, Blogs, Magazines, Publications: Various Coalition partners kept blogs and websites on biodiversity, and a number of magazines published specials on biodiversity

IYB Activities co-financed by the National Government

Nightlife in the Zoo: Twelve zoos opened their doors during summer nights to acquaint visitors with an undiscovered aspect of biodiversity - the huge variety of nocturnal animals;

Sail 2010 Amsterdam, an Armada for Biodiversity: during this million-visitors nautical exhibition from 19-23 August, marine and coastal biodiversity was highlighted by a flyer campaign and multimedia show on the vessel 'Fleur de Passion'. This event drew much press attention.

'Green School Living': schools were encouraged to 'regreen' their schoolyards by developing communication materials, introducing an online/offline game for school youth, and linking in with formal education in biology. Some 10,000 school children were reached.

The Edible City and its Insects: around 20,000 citizens of the city of Groningen were encouraged to plant fruit trees and other edible plants which at the same time would attract butterflies and bees.

Municipal Ambassador Species: municipalities were encouraged to select and adopt their very own ambassador species in order to call attention for biodiversity.

BioB@ttle: in the city of Amersfoort an online/offline social game about biodiversity was launched in which teenagers and business companies were challenged to engaged actively in biodiversity conservation.

Sturdy Women: small groups of female employees of large companies encourage their bosses to adopt biodiversity-friendly practices in their company's operations.

Nature in the City: one episode in a running national tv series on nature in urban areas focused on biodiversity and presents exciting examples for action, reaching around 1,5 million viewers.

Little Bee Fleur: this children's book for children of 6-10 years old tells the story of life and adventures of the honey bee in a cheerful way, thus raising awareness about biodiversity among the very young. It includes recipes and tips for action.

Help for a Healthy Sea: biodiversity life in the North Sea was displayed on inter-active pillars in the Sea Life Scheveningen museum. Visitors received information on how they themselves can contribute to a healthy North Sea.

Taste the Season: a seasonal vegetable calendar was published and distributed by the Coalition in order to create a practical link between biodiversity and consumption.

Biodiva: this was the icon of a IYB closure campaign directed to consumers run by the Coalition from December 2010 till January 2011. Through social media (Twitter, Hyves) and website messages 'Biodiva' promoted four different themes related to consumers' behaviour during four consecutive weeks, such as having a 'meatless day', or avoiding food wastage.

And finally...

The Coalition kept receiving membership applications and is now re-shaping itself into a more steady organisation to take care of the International Decade of Biodiversity. The IYB celebrations have certainly helped to raise the level of awareness of biodiversity among the Dutch public. Hundreds of thousands of people have taken action for biodiversity in numerous ways, and will certainly continue to do so in the future.

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