Vlaanderen
is natuur

WELCOME TO THE YSER ESTUARY

AGENTSCHAP
NATUUR & BOS

The Yser is the only big river in our country that flows directly into the sea. Salt and fresh water meet in the estuary and there are tides. This results in 130 hectares of special biotopes of mud flats, salt marshes, dunes, beaches and polders. The large numbers of coastal and wading birds, such as common shelducks, redshanks, Eurasian oyster catchers and curlews that find food and rest all year round on the mud flats, the salt marshes and the beaches of the Yser estuary. Maybe you will meet a seal during your visit! Every winter some can be seen in the fairway or on the salt marshes.

DECAY AND RESTORATION

For a long time, things were not looking too good for the nature in this area. This was due to silting up, pollution, disruption, construction plans and a dilapidated marine base. In 1999, a start was made on the restoration of the natural environment: the buildings were demolished and all the concrete roads and underground pipes were dug up. Eight docks and the quays were dismantled and, finally, 333,000 cubic metres of dredged sludge were excavated.

Outside the nesting season additional hundreds of waders make a pit stop here before continuing their journey to their hibernation areas (bar-tailed godwits, spotted redshanks, dunlins...) or that stay here to hibernate (redshanks, grey plovers, curlews...). The fish in turn attract, for instance, cormorants and common seals.

The salty marshes are located a little higher and annual sea-blite, samphire and purple blooming sea lavender grow on them. They are crossed with furrows through which the sea water floods the salty marshes at spring tide (twice a month).

To enjoy the flora of the dry dune grass areas you usually have to bend your knees! Broad-leaved thyme, sticky stork's bill, lady's bedstraw ... grow as close to the ground as possible to escape the biting sea wind. If you are lucky you will find the parasitic bedstraw broomrape that grows higher. The dunes are a major attraction for the European stonechat and the northern wheatear. A herd of sheep grazes the open landscape and maintains the moss and grassland vegetation.

Common Shelduck

MUD FLATS AND SALT MARSHES

The mud flats are the barren muddy plates that are covered in water twice a day at high tide. The fertile clay particles that are always left behind turn the mud flats into an abundant feast for millions of small invertebrates, such as worms, crustaceans and snails that live on organic waste, and in turn are the staple diet of many fish and birds. You can see oyster catchers and shelducks foraging for food at low tide all year round.

Yser estuary anno 1958

Yser estuary anno 2004

SCOTTY

In order to allow visitors to enjoy this as much as possible, a cycling and walking path has been created. Scotty, the Eurasian Oystercatcher, will teach you everything about the natural biotopes of beaches, mudflats, salt marshes, dunes and polders with their typical flora and fauna. A bird hide, two viewing blinds and a nature educational tide pool with amphitheatre will introduce you to the life in salty creeks, mudflats and salt marshes.

Eurasian Curlew

Common Seal

FURTHER INFORMATION

Agency for Nature and Forests
Jacob van Maerlantgebouw
Koning Albert I-laan 1/2 bus 74
8200 Brugge (Sint-Michiels)
Telephone: 050 24 77 40
wvl.anb@vlaanderen.be
www.natuurenbos.be

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Agentschap voor Natuur en Bos Koning Albert II-laan 20 bus 8, 1000 Brussel

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NOORZEE

MILITAIR DOMEIN

VIERBOETEWEG

KUSTWEG

LAGE DUINENSTRAAT

SCHORRESTRAAT

ALEXISSTRAAT

HET PIETEGELEED

HALVEMAANSTRAAT

PIETESAS

KREEK VAN LOMBARDSIJDE

DE IJZER

DE IJZER

HAVENGEUL

DIENSTWEGHAVENGEUL

ELISALAAN

ALBERT I-LAAN

ALBERT I-LAAN

MAURITSPARK

NOVUS PORTUS

LEGEND

- DUNE GRASSLANDS
- BEACH
- WATER/BROOK
- BRYOPHYTE DUNES
- MOBILE DUNE
- SALTINGS
- SALT MEADOWS
- BREEDING GROUND (ACCESS DENIED)
- PUBLIC ROAD
- WALKING PATH
- CYCLING AND WALKING PATH
- INFORMATION BOARD
- PARKING AREA
- PILLBOX RUINS
- VIEWPOIN
- AMPHITHEATRE
- BIRD WATCHING SHED
- NO ENTRY DURING SHOOTING PRACTICE
- FERRY
- PARK AREA BOUNDARY
- LIGHTHOUSE