

WELCOME TO THE DUINBOSSEN OF DE HAAN



The Duinbossen of De Haan is one of the coast's green treasures. The 152 ha large area consists of three parts. From west to east, there is the Duinbossen of Klemskerke, Vlissegem and Wenduine. These link up with the nature reserves of De Zandpanne and De Kijkuit, which are both managed by Natuurpunt. As a result, a large and varied dune area with forest, dune scrub and dune grassland is created. The whole area is cut in two by the city centre of De Haan.

BACKGROUND

The dunes in the Duinbossen belong to the so-called young dunes that were formed after the 11th century following substantial sand drifts on the beach.

The fairly sudden transition here from high dunes to polder plain, also referred to as inner dune edge, was already planted with elm in the late 18th/early 19th century. These trees were to prevent the fertile agricultural land in the polder plain from disappearing below the dune sand that was drifting inland.

The first actual planting of trees in the dunes between Wenduine and Bredene dates back to 1838. At that time Scots pine and hardwood trees were mainly planted, which were managed as coppice wood. Not much was left of the planted trees due to a combination of poor maintenance, opposition from local farmers who let their animals graze there, and wood theft. In 1880, a second attempt was made. For this purpose mainly hardwood trees were planted. This time, the First World War and the great drought of 1921 put a spoke in the wheel. In 1922, the management of the state dunes was entrusted to the then administration of Waters and Forests.

New afforestation activities were carried out. At first, mainly black pine trees were planted, but later on also abele trees, maple trees, poplars, willows and other species.



NATURE VALUES

The Duinbossen of De Haan not only consist of forest. The area is also covered with open spaces with bare sand and marram grass, moss dunes and dune grassland. Very rare plant and animal species can be found here which adapt to the special climate and soil of dune areas. Lizard orchid, star moss and lesser marsh grasshopper are but a few of the rare species.

Also remarkable are the nest mounds (anthills) of the protected red wood ants, an edge-of-forest species which is unique in the wide area. Red wood ants clean up dead animals and hunt caterpillar, among other things.



red wood ant

In the transition from open spaces to the closed forest typical dune shrubs can be found. Although sea-buckthorn is the most striking species, a large number of other shrub species grow here as well, such as hawthorn, spindle and creeping willow. These shrubs are important to birds like turtle doves, nightingales and Cetti's warblers.

Forests are fairly unique at the coast. Because of their special values two parts of the Duinbossen in De Haan have been designated as forest reserve. The forest reserve was named after Jan De Schuyter, a former forester in West Flanders.



nightingale

MORE INFORMATION

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common sea-buckthorn



lizard orchid

MANAGEMENT

Recently the Duinbossen have been given a facelift. Alien trees were cut, local species have been planted, new ponds have been dug and grazing plots have been laid out...

The Agency for Nature and Forests aims to create a more natural forest which is rich in structure and contains many open spaces. These open spaces with moss dunes and dune grassland must be maintained as a priority in keeping with the European Habitats Directive.

A lot of works have also been executed in order to enable recreational users to enjoy these areas. Chicanes for pedestrians and wheelchairs, service gates and horse stiles have been put in place to guide the many different recreational users. Apart from walkers and riders, cyclists have now also been given a place in the forest. In consultation with the local mountain bike club a new mountain bike path has been constructed.



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