



# Press release

Statistics Netherlands

PR99-152  
15 June 1999  
9.30 hrs

## More bats, breeding birds stable

Bats had another good year in 1998, while the total number of breeding birds remained stable. New figures from Statistics Netherlands based on information gathered by volunteer organisations show that some species of breeding birds are declining in numbers. Populations of birds which prefer open terrain in particular have deteriorated in recent years.

More reptiles were seen in 1998 than in previous years as well, although it is uncertain whether this is a real increase or based on better observation conditions.

## Conservation measures paying off for bats

Bats which spend the winter in bunkers and similar places have increased their numbers by 70% since 1990. The numbers of many species are now at the level of the fifties or even higher. In addition to the use of less pesticides, the creation and protection of winter sanctuaries has aided this recovery.

## Invasion of the corncrake

The number of birds has been fluctuating around the 1990 level for a number of years now. Since 1996 there has been a slight increase, due to the recovery of species which suffered from the severe winter of 1995/1996.

Conservation policy is aimed at birds like ruffs, corncrakes, and godwits, whose the yearly fluctuations in number are quite drastic. A strong invasion of corncrakes pushed up their number by 10% in 1998.

## More shrubs and high grass in natural areas

Dutch natural terrain is becoming more and more grown over with shrubs and high grasses, plants which grow more rapidly as the land dries out and there is too much fertiliser in the rain.

Species which live in overgrown terrain, such as whitethroats and bluethroats have been developing favourably in the last few years. Their numbers have even doubled since 1990. Other species are hampered by the growing over of open heath land, dunes and reed land. The skylark and the great reed warbler, for example. Many of these species have shrunk to half the numbers of 1990.

## Many reptiles observed in 1998

Nearly all reptiles have suffered severely from environmental deterioration such as desertification and over-fertilisation. For the first time since 1993, the start of the reptile monitoring project, this decline seems now to have stopped, and there was even a record increase of 40% in 1998 compared with 1997. The rapid growth is probably somewhat flattered: cold-blooded reptiles need the warmth from the sun, and when there are only few sunny days, as was the case in 1998, they appear in larger numbers at a time.

For further information, please call A. van Strien, tel. +31 70 337 42 14; e-mail: [asin@cbs.nl](mailto:asin@cbs.nl).

Statistics Netherlands  
Press Office

P.O. Box 4000  
2270 JM Voorburg  
The Netherlands  
tel. +31 70 337 58 16  
fax +31 70 337 59 71  
e-mail:  
[persdienst@cbs.nl](mailto:persdienst@cbs.nl)

Statistics Netherlands  
is a department of  
the Ministry of  
Economic Affairs