



Heritage and challenges for the cross-border territory

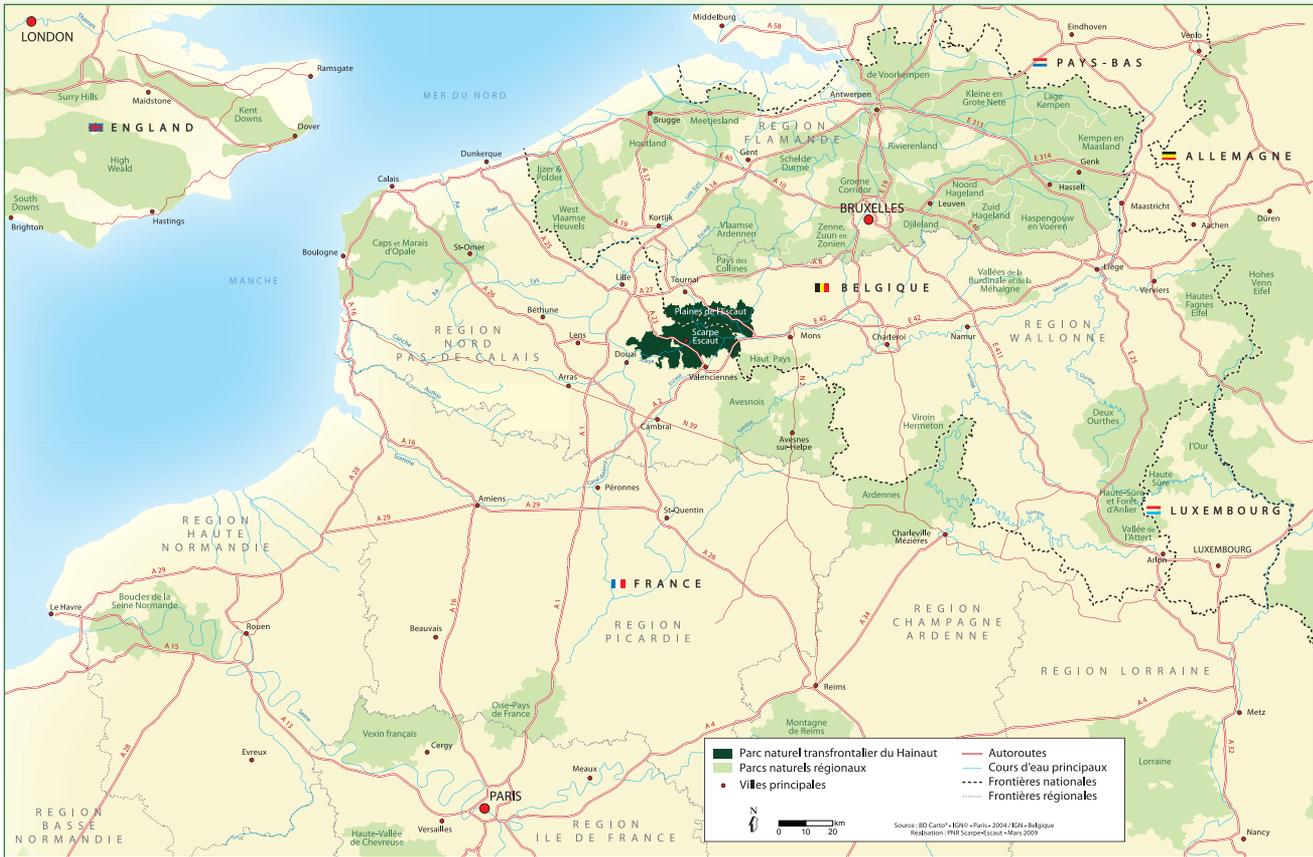
The Hainaut Cross-border Nature Park is a 750 km² territory composed of two Nature Parks that have worked together for about twenty years: The Scarpe-Escaut Regional Nature Park located in the Nord region of France between Douai and Valenciennes, and the Escaut Plains Nature Park, located in Wallonia, between the Belgian cities of Mons and Tournai. Their collaboration is supported by European programs, in particular Interreg.

The territory is a vast reserve for biodiversity and natural resources that is recognized at the European level: close to one-third of the park's area has been listed in the European network of protected sites and is mainly composed of forests, swamps, prairies, ponds and waterways. It is also a highly populated territory (225 000 inhabitants with a density of 340 inhabitants/km²) that is confronted with urban pressure from surrounding metropolitan areas.

There are multiple challenges to conciliate environment, economy and quality of life. They mainly concern the **protection of water resources** (the territory's groundwater also supplies neighboring metropolitan areas with quality drinking water), the **restoration of the ecological network** (also called the ecological corridor that designates areas needed for animal species to circulate and live), the **perpetuation of dynamic agriculture**, the **maintenance of typical and diversified landscapes**, the **development of nature tourism** as well as the **mobilization of inhabitants** and their eco-responsible habits.



The Hainaut Cross-border Nature Park in the heart of Europe



The Federation of Regional Nature Parks in France

- Defends collective interests for Regional Nature Parks with national and international authorities
- Participates in the definition and the implementation of policy in favor of rural areas in France
- Publishes and informs about ethics in Regional Nature Parks and their actions in France and abroad.

The Federation of Nature Parks in Wallonia

- Defends interests for Nature Parks with political authorities;
- Establishes a partnership and exchange between the different Nature Parks;
- Defends the Nature Parks' point of view within various opinion groups;
- Represents Nature Parks in Wallonia at international seminars;
- Develops visibility and image for Nature Parks in Belgium and abroad.



The Hainaut Cross-border Nature Park - How it works



The Park's organization

The Hainaut Cross-border Nature Park's governance is constantly evolving. It has no legal structure and currently depends on a partnership agreement that is essentially based on a framework for ongoing consultation organized with the following bodies:

- **The Joint Association for Management of the Scarpe-Escaut Regional Nature Park:** This is the decision-making body for the French park. It is equally composed of elected officials from the Conseil régional du Nord-Pas de Calais, the Conseil général du Nord, the Etablissements Publics de Coopération communale and from the towns along with the President of the Escaut Plains Nature Park.
- **The Management Commission for the Escaut Plains Nature Park:** This is the decision-making body for the park in Wallonia. It is mainly composed of elected officials from the park's towns, the Hainaut Province and representatives for nature conservation associations as well as representatives from the economy, craftsmanship, tourism and recreation sectors. The President of the Scarpe-Escaut Regional Nature Park is a member of the Commission.
- **The Cross-border office:** It meets at least three times a year and includes members from the Office of the Management Commission for the Belgian park, members from the Office of the Joint Association for Management for the French park, as well as members from the Office of the Association of concerned towns (body for formulating proposals and consultation for the Scarpe-Escaut Regional Nature Park).
- **The Cross-border plenary assembly of elected officials:** usually organized once a year, grouping all elected officials from both parks for debate and reflection on future directions for the Hainaut Cross-border Nature Park.

Technically, contact between teams from both parks is organized as follows:

- Meetings for cross-border management (1/month),
- Cross-border plenary assembly (1/year),
- Coordinating meetings according to poles and missions (2/year),
- "Daily" meetings and exchange between senior officials for the two parks.



A Charter with a cross-border dimension

The territorial strategy for the Scarpe-Escaut Regional Nature Park is specified in its Charter, a collective agreement among the actors within the classified territory that expresses the shared responsibilities in the project according to each one's skills. The Charter is organized according to vocations, directions and measures in which individual signatory commitments are specified. The role of the Joint Association for Park Management, as animator-federator, initiator-participant or operator, is to coordinate the implementation of the Charter based on deployed measures.

In 2005, at the time of revising the Charter for the Scarpe-Escaut Regional Nature Park, both frontier parks voted in favor of elaborating a new charter with a cross-border dimension with the following limits: actions will be carried out within the legal framework of each country and the classification only concerns the French territory. A cross-border diagnostic of the territory was carried out and the Charter's challenges and strategies were defined after consultation among all of the actors on each side of the border.

The four established lines for each level of partnership are:

1. **Land of solidarity** between urban and rural areas where a new way of living in the territory is invented.
2. **Land of nature and heritage** where water, buildings and mining have shaped the territory's rural character and identity.
3. **Land of planned development** where local resources, along with the cross-border Park's values, generate economic activities.
4. **Land of mobilization** where individuals invest in their territory.

In 2010, a Partnership agreement was signed between the two Parks in parallel with the approval of the cross-border Charter, which is valid until 2022.





Missions for the Scarpe-Escaut Regional Nature Park

According to the decree n°94-765 dated September 1st, 1994, a Regional Nature Park has the mission:

- to protect natural and cultural heritage, particularly through adapted management of environments and landscapes;
- to contribute to territorial development;
- to contribute to economic, social, cultural development and to quality of life;
- to ensure reception, education and information for the public;
- to carry out experimental or exemplary actions in the above mentioned sectors and to contribute to research programs.

Missions for the Escaut Plains Nature Park

According to the Wallonian decree dated July 3, 2008, a Nature Park has for objective:

- ensuring protection, management and valorization of the Nature Park's natural and landscaped heritage;
- contributing, within the boundaries of the Nature Park, to define and direct territorial development projects according to principles for sustainable development;
- encouraging sustainable development within the Nature Park's territory, by contributing to local economic and social development, as well as to the improvement of quality of life;
- organizing reception, education and information for the public;
- participating in experiments for new ways of managing rural areas, in testing innovative planning procedures and methods, as well as setting up European programs and European territorial cooperation;
- looking for ways to collaborate between Nature Parks and, when pertinent, ways for cross-border collaboration with similar areas in bordering regions or countries;
- supporting implementation of rural development operations in communities within the territory and ensuring consistency of cross-community projects within the scope of community programs for rural development.



Key dates

1968

- Creation of the first French Regional Nature Park between the Scarpe and Escaut rivers, called Parc naturel régional Saint Amand les Eaux-Raismes.

1983

- Agreement protocol between Wallonia and the Nord-Pas de Calais for the creation of a "cross-border" Nature Park.

1991

- First Interreg file for cross-border cooperation in the Scarpe and the Escaut plains.

1996

- Creation of the Escaut Plains Nature Park (Belgium) by decree from the Walloon government.

2005

- **April 29:** Signature of the agreement for cross-border partnership between the Scarpe-Escaut Regional Nature Park, the Escaut Plains Nature Park, the Conseil scientifique de l'environnement Nord-Pas de Calais and the Faculté polytechnique de Mons in relationship with the Belgian association, "La Malogne", for increased knowledge of the sub-soils and soil.
- **June 14:** The Scarpe-Escaut Regional Nature Park officializes its commitment to emphasize the cross-border objective of its new territorial project at the time of its charter renewal for the period of 2010-2022.
- **December 12:** The Escaut Plains Nature Park deliberates and shows its approval to engage in this action.

2006

- **June 2:** 1st Cross-border meetings – "Let's share our landscapes..." (elected officials).
- **July 2:** 1st edition of the Festival of the Hainaut Cross-border Nature Park (Bon-Secours/Condé sur-Escaut) for the 10th anniversary of the Franco-Belgian park.

2008

- **February 26:** The Management Commission for the Escaut Plains Nature Park shared the cross-border vocations and challenges during a debate on the territory's future.
- **May 27:** 2nd Cross-border meetings – "Reclaiming our industrial and mining past" (elected officials).
- **July 3:** New Walloon decree concerning the Nature Parks: the Nature Parks in Wallonia have the role of promoting cross-border cooperation.
- **September 6 and 7:** 2nd edition of the Festival of the Hainaut Cross-border Nature Park (Lesdain/Rumegies).

2010

- **January 8:** Official signature of a partnership agreement between the Scarpe-Escaut Regional Nature Park and the Escaut Plains Nature Park.
- **July 4:** 3rd edition of the Festival of the Hainaut Cross-border Nature Park (Bon-Secours).
- **August 30:** Classification decree for the new charter for the Scarpe-Escaut Regional Nature Park (2010-2022) for a territorial project with a cross-border dimension.

2011

- **December 2:** Plenary assembly of cross-border elected officials – "Is the cross-border dimension beneficial?"

2011-2013

- A new management plan for co-construction for the Escaut Plains Nature Park for the period 2012-2022.
- Structuration of new governance for the Hainaut Cross-border Nature Park and reflection on the creation of a common legal structure.



Educational facilities in the cross-border Nature Park

Maison du Parc naturel des Plaines de l'Escaut

Installed in 2002 on the edge of the Domain Forest of Bon Secours, the Maison du Parc is intended to be a gateway to the Escaut Plains territory. The building's daring architecture shelters an audio-visual itinerary about the forest's fauna and flora, the Forest stop, a reception area for informing the public, a tasting area, animations, exhibits...as well as the administration departments of the Escaut Plains Nature Park. The site also hopes to reflect actions in favor of sustainable development: natural building materials, educational pond, flowered meadow, wood-burning furnace...

Maison du Parc naturel des Plaines de l'Escaut

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Tel. : + 32 [0]69 77 98 10
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accueil@plainesdelescaut.be

*The gateway
to the territory*



Maison de la Forêt

Built in the heart of the domain forest of Saint Amand-Raismes-Wallers and close to the recreational area in Raismes, the Maison de la Forêt welcomes school groups and groups from recreational centers for full or half-day animations. Youth will be supervised by professional nature guides for made-to-measure animations requested by teachers or vacation and recreation center directors. They will enjoy permanent and temporary exhibits about the wooded environment in a very rich natural environment in the heart of the Sabatier area, a space with an area of 173 hectares composed of a forest area, a flat mining heap, a cone-shaped mining heap (the highest in the Valenciennes region) and three ponds created by mining subsidence.

From April to October, the Maison de la Forêt also organizes guided hikes for the public on Sunday mornings with various themes such as the forest, frogs, bats, owls, mushrooms, etc, as well as visits of the museographical area and the information hall.

Maison de la Forêt

Etoile de la Princesse - Site de Sabatier
59590 Raismes (France)
Tel. : + 33 (0)3 27 36 72 72
maison-de-la-foret@pnr-scarpe-escaut.fr

*Full or
half-days*



Centre d'éducation à l'environnement d'Amaury

Located by a pond in a former mining site and in one of the department's sensitive natural areas, the Amaury Center for Environmental Education is specialized in nature stays for school groups from kindergarten through high school and vacation and recreation centers. After an exchange with the teaching staff that is responsible for a project, the Center offers a program that is adapted to teaching objectives, to the age group and the length of stay. The children and their accompanying adults may stay for full-board or benefit from daily animations for several days, consecutive or not. The Amaury Center also organizes a monthly guided nature excursion for the general public.

Centre d'Amaury
59199 Hergnies (France)
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*Educational stays
for several days*



Gîte de groupe le Luron

Next to the Maison du Parc naturel Régional Scarpe-Escaut, in the Saint-Amand forest, the Gîte de groupe du Luron is a group accommodation with the "Panda" label from the WWF (World Wildlife Fund). Due to its capacity (24 beds), the lodging is adapted to school groups as well as recreation centers and associations who autonomously build their discovery program, particularly with the help of the "Panda" chest (scientific documentation, hiking sheets, binoculars, etc.).

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Autonomy

