

PROTECTED NATURAL SITES

FFH 16

The designation of protected areas helps to maintain clusters of habitats and populations from which species can be redeployed. Some types of sites enjoy stronger protection than others¹: state nature reserves and approved nature reserves (*réserves naturelles domaniales - RND et réserves naturelles agréées - RNA*), forest reserves (*réserves forestières - RF*), wetlands of biological interest (*zones humides d'intérêt biologique - ZHIB*), underground caves of scientific interest (*cavités souterraines d'intérêt scientifique - CSIS*) and integral forest reserves (*réserves intégrales en forêt - RIF*).

The network of sites is growing, but is still not very extensive

In Wallonia, areas with habitats and populations of rare or endangered species, or that constitute outstanding examples of associations of species in excellent conservation status are listed by the Public Service of Wallonia (SPW-DG03) in a database as sites of great biological interest (*sites de grand intérêt biologique - SGIB*)². Of these roughly 2,640 sites (more than 94,000 ha)³, 537 sites received one of the following protection status in 2016: RND, RNA, RF, ZHIB or CSIS. Their combined surface area was 14,296 ha (95% of these sites were also found in the wider matrix of the Natura 2000 network⁴). In addition, 5,544 ha of public deciduous forests (2% of the Walloon deciduous area or 3.8% of the public deciduous area) were recorded as RIF. Combined, these sites covered 1.18% of the Walloon territory. On average, over the period 1990-2016, just over 550 ha were designated each year.

Various management and protection arrangements

Within these sites, human activities are prohibited or aimed at environmental management⁵. RND and RNA can be integral (no management is carried out to allow natural phenomena to evolve) or directed (appropriate management is implemented). The management plan for RND, RNA and RF must be approved by the Walloon Higher Council for Nature Conservation (*Conseil supérieur wallon de la conservation de la nature*). ZHIB and CSIS are managed on the basis of the various measures specified in each designation order. Within the RIFs, where wood

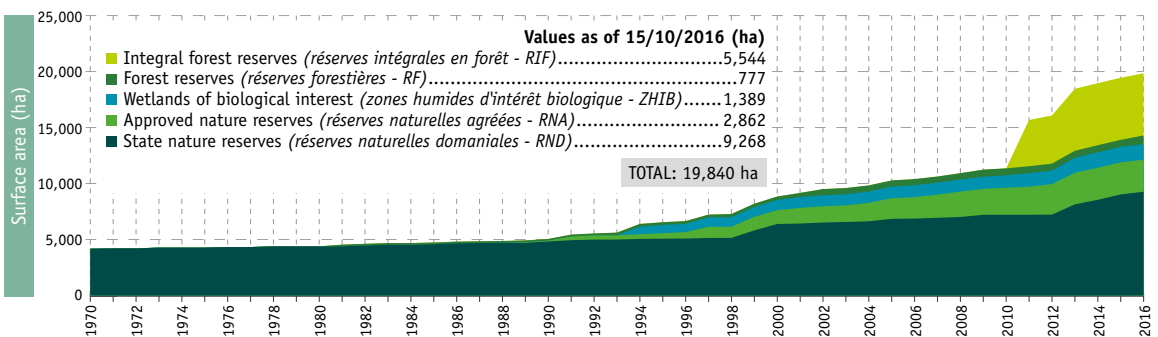
exploitation is difficult or impossible⁶ and/or not economically viable, no intervention is made⁷ to allow the ageing of the forest and the expression of its natural dynamics.

Budgets determine the consolidation of the network

In addition to the availability of the land in question, its market value and available budgets determine how quickly the network can be strengthened. Over the period 2009-2015, the acquisition, using the regional budget⁸, of land to be transformed into RND represented an average budget of €169,390/year. Over the same period, subsidies granted to associations for the purchase of land to be transformed into RNA amounted to an average budget of €175,390/year. In addition, it is often the case that properties belonging mostly to municipalities or provinces are made available free of charge to the Nature and Forests Department (SPW - DG03) for the creation of RNDs. In its 2017-2019 Regional Policy Declaration, the Walloon Government undertook to increase the number of sites which are conducive to biodiversity, including nature reserves.

[1] Other types of land protection: natural parks, protected areas in sector plans and classified sites | [2] <http://biodiversite.wallonie.be>. A SGIB does not have legal protection status. | [3] Reference date for all figures: 15/10/2016 | [4] → FFH 15 & Map 56 | [5] Example of management: Extensive mowing or grazing in open areas to avoid their closure by the growth of woody species | [6] E.g. sloping land | [7] Except the control of game or securing roads | [8] Excluding grants awarded under LIFE programmes (→ FFH 19) and excluding grants awarded as part of the Walloon Rural Development Programme (*Programme wallon de développement rural - PwDR*) 2014-2020

Fig. FFH 16-1 Surface area of protected natural sites in Wallonia



Number of protected natural sites in Wallonia (as of 15/10/2016)

RND ¹	RNA ¹	RF ¹	ZHIB ²	CSIS ^{3,4}	RIF ⁴	TOTAL
215	150	18	74	80	Information unavailable	537

* Underground caves of scientific interest (no surface area)

Legal bases:

¹ Law of 12/07/1973 on Nature Conservation

² Decree of the Walloon Regional Executive of 08/06/1989

³ Walloon Government Decree of 26/01/1995

⁴ Decree of 15/07/2008 on the Forestry Code

SOERW 2017 – Source: SPW - DG03 - DNF