



## Endangered species

This issue focuses on endangered species, i.e. species that are listed on a national or international Red List: the otter (two full articles), the hamster and the Leisler's bat. In the book reviews even an extinct species is highlighted: the aurochs. Although the rabbit is not endangered, the prospects for this species may be doubtful since the appearance of the Viral Haemorrhagic Syndrome in the mid 1990s. Bankert et al. compare several methods for estimating rabbit densities, which knowledge may be useful in the near future if problems for the rabbit become a reality.

We have certainly made progress in our knowledge about and experience with the re-introduction of some of these endangered species, as can be concluded from the story about the "Knaardijk-otter" from Jansman et al. Although this otter, which was found as a traffic casualty, is not known from the data book of the otter breeding programme, the authors present evidence about the origin of this individual. On the basis of an analysis of factors including PCB contamination and DNA pattern of several dozens of individuals bred in the Netherlands and from central Europe, they conclude that this individual still must have escaped from the breeding programme in the Netherlands.

Is this emphasis on endangered species an illustration of the current status of mammal research in the Netherlands and abroad? Not at all. Fortunately, more common mammal species are studied as well. But the emphasis on endangered species may be illustrative of the way priorities

are set in mammal research: usually research funding is more forthcoming when endangered species are involved. Sadly we have to admit that this bias in our research interests and consequently our insufficient (ecological) knowledge of more common mammal species often results in poor conservation: a decline in a previously widespread species may be noticed too late, and knowledge about causes or effective counter measures are lacking, resulting in yet another endangered species. Especially governmental organisations are primarily interested in these so-called endangered species. One wonders if this policy results in a good understanding of the role of all mammals in- and outside our nature reserves and knowledge about how to guarantee their long-term survival.

Another question that can be asked is about the authors who publish in *Lutra*. In this issue a large number of "senior mammalogists", most of whom are long-term members of the VZZ, publish the outcomes of their research, present a book review or have submitted a short communication. Chris Smeenk presents a new overview of strandings of Cetacea on the Dutch coast. Bauke Hoekstra provides a new list of publications about mammals that appeared in the Netherlands in 2001. Sim Broekhuizen and Sip van Wieren are co-authors of the articles on the Knaardijk-otter and rabbit densities respectively. Van Bruggen and Van Bree provide us with a necrology of Van den Brink. These contributions are very much appreciated. But it also raises a question, namely who will follow them in the

future? In the meantime authors from abroad still find their way to *Lutra*, and with success. The article from Sidorovich et al. about the food supply of the otter in small rivers in Belarus is a good example and there is more to come.

However, in our opinion there are still many more mammalogists who should consider publishing their work in *Lutra*, and we invite them to do so. Especially for students and starting researchers, whether institutional or private, with little or no experience in scientific publishing, *Lutra* offers an accessible platform to communicate their research results. The editorial board therefore invites them once again to submit their manuscripts. Do not hesitate to contact us at an early stage of writing if you have questions about the scope or structure of your article; we are happy to advise you so as to maximise the chances of acceptance. New blood is a necessity, otherwise even the authors of *Lutra* may become an endangered species thus threatening our journal with extinction.

Looking forward, what is coming up? The next issue of *Lutra* will be a special on the beaver. Extinct for long time in the Netherlands and Belgium, the species has now been re-introduced in several locations, and is also receiving much attention in other European and North-American countries. This special will be a result

of the Third International Beaver Symposium, organised by the VZZ this month in Arnhem, the Netherlands; we will keep you informed!

Once again one of the editors has left the board. Liesbeth Bakker, secretary of the editorial board, has followed her predecessor Marcel Huijser, going to the USA for a post-doctoral position. In the years that she was a board member several changes occurred in the way we deal with authors and manuscripts. Liesbeth was one of the leading people when it came to formulating the new approach. Her last contribution to *Lutra* was the compilation (together with others) of the rodent special. We thank Liesbeth for all her contributions and wish her lots of further success. Jasja Dekker is our new secretary. The editorial board is happy to announce another new member, Kamiel Spoelstra. Kamiel is strongly involved in the diverse activities of the Field Working Group of the VZZ, both within and outside the Netherlands. He is also working on his PhD in Groningen, focusing on circadian behaviour in mammals. In recruiting Kamiel, the editorial board hopes to achieve a tighter link with the Field Working Group of the society. We are also happy that, with Kamiel, we can count another bat specialist on our board, and thereby increase the publishing of new findings and experiences in the broad field of bat research.

