

Company: Cimenteries CBR s.a.

Location:

- Visé and Bassenge Walloon Region, Belgium
- Riemst, Flemish Region, Belgium

Objective To preserve a network of almost 100 km of galleries of old underground Quarries to ensure the safety of its huge ecological, paleontological and historical interest.

Context Following the generalized degradation of the habitats in Northern Europe, this site became the most important site of Belgium and the Netherlands for the wintering of the bats. It sheltered more than 4500 individuals belonging to 9 different species of these particularly endangered mammals.

This area shelters a high variety of botanical and animal species, many rare, even extremely rare species in Belgium, including a wide variety of Orchids, numerous burying insects, rare butterflies and important wintering population of bats.

Solution Aware of this established fact, the CBR company proposed to the Walloon Region and to the NGO "Natuurpunt" the repurchase of the site for 1 symbolic euro to insure the conservation and the transmission to the future generations of this historic and biological jewel.

The management of the site is now ensured by the Nature and Forests Division of the Walloon Region Ministry and the NGO "Natuurpunt", in association with the workgroup "Plecotus" of the NGO "Natagora". They insure together the monitoring of the site, the winter inventories and some guided tours.

Result The huge network of caves of Caster now accommodates the most important concentration of bats of Belgium and the Netherlands. Its population is the object of systematic winter inventories since 2000. The number of individuals and species has increased in a constant way, passing to 4512 individuals belonging of at least 9 species in the year 2008. 4 Natura 2000 classified species are on the list, the. Another species registered on national's red list also appears.

This site, formerly private, is now a part of the public domain, insuring the perpetuity of its exceptional patrimonial interest. Some guided tours are organized during the "European Bats Night".

Partners Ministry of the Walloon Region
Natuurpunt

