

Icon Species Exhibit

Green Office Utrecht University



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Nature's blueprint for success

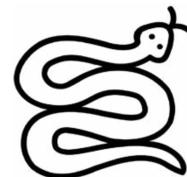
Utrecht Science Park (USP) is home to a great number of ecosystems. It contains woodlands, fields, ponds, ditches, banks and so on. Keeping these ecosystems healthy with plenty of life, growth, food and opportunity for carbon storage, requires a healthy biodiversity ratio.

Animal – plant interactions with their environments are pivotal as ecosystems rely on these species and vice versa. Having certain types of species present in an ecosystem indicate its level of fruition. This exhibit showcases a selection of Icon Species of which its presence is deemed important for the health of ecosystems all over Utrecht Science Park.

Take a few minutes to learn more about the badger, pine marten, little owl, grass snake, scarce chaser, great crested newt, earthnut pea and the grey partridge. There's more to them than you think.

uu.nl/biodiversity







Grey partridge

* *Perdix perdix*

FAMILY

Phasianidae

SIZE

15-30cm

FOOD

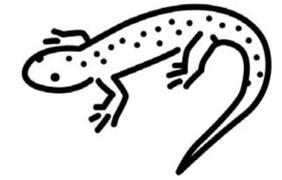
Seeds, greens, insects

The grey partridge is a bird which inhabits many parts of Europe and Northern-America. This bird prefers to reside on arable land and meadows.

Grey partridges can grow up to thirty centimeters tall and feed mostly on grasses, weeds and grains. Occasionally they feast on an insect or two. The partridge is an endangered species which makes preserving them in Utrecht Science Park (USP) ever so important.

Did you know

Partridges are notorious for their egg count. Partridges can lay up to fifteen eggs per nest.



Great crested newt

* *Triturus cristatus*

FAMILY
Salamandridae

SIZE
13-16cm

FOOD
Small invertebrates

The great crested newt is an amphibian that spends most of its time on land. When it's time to mate, the newt moves to water.

Utrecht Science Park has plenty of wetlands and green lands. This makes it an ideal habitat for the newt.

This species is important because of the ecosystem services it has to offer. For example, it recycles nutrients from water to land and vice versa. By providing this service, newts help make soils more fertile.

Did you know

The great crested newt has over forty different scientific names, all being synonyms.



European pine marten

* *Martes martes*

FAMILY

Mustelidae

SIZE (without tail)

46-54cm

FOOD

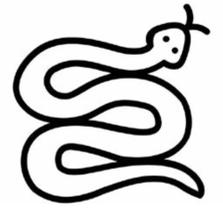
Small animals, berries

The European Pine Marten is a small predator native to Northern Europe. Pine martens are most commonly found in well-wooded areas as their semi-retractable claws allow them to quickly climb and run on tree branches.

Pine martens fulfill an important ecological role regarding the dispersal of seeds, which they eat as part of their varied diet. By passing the seeds, the marten disperses them all over its habitat, allowing new trees and other vegetation to grow.

Did you know

The nimble pine marten can outrun a squirrel in a chase at high altitudes in treetops. It is the only mammal known to be capable of this.



Grass snake

* *Natrix natrix*

FAMILY
Colubridae

SIZE
90-150cm

FOOD
Amphibians

The grass snake is bound to wet habitats. It prefers sunny dikes close to water, not too much open field and piles of organic matter to breed in.

Because the grass snake is an endangered species in the Netherlands, its presence in Utrecht Science Park will hopefully boost its overall existence. In 2019, Utrecht University has built several nesting piles for grass snakes.

Did you know

The grass snake isn't a biter. When it feels threatened, it plays dead.



Earthnut pea

* *Lathyrus tuberosus*

FAMILY

Fabaceae

SIZE

70-120cm

GENUS

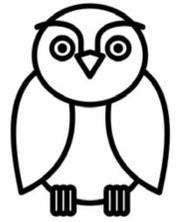
Lathyrus

The earthnut pea is a climber and grows two to six pinkish red flowers on each stem. They provide nutritious foods for a number of animals as they are able to grow edible tubers.

Earthnut peas usually grow in grassy areas, forests, hedgerows and banks. The plant loves loamy soils, making Utrecht Science Park an ideal habitat. This plant is able to fixate nitrogen, making soils more fertile. Because of this feature the earthnut pea increases biodiversity in ecosystems.

Did you know

Slugs have the hots for these peas. Its fondness of this plant however is dangerous as they completely devour the plant upon sight.



Little owl

* *Athene noctua*

FAMILY
Strigidae

SIZE
22cm

FOOD
*Insects, small reptiles,
small mammals*

Appropriately named ‘little owl’, this bird is barely bigger than the blackbird, and is mostly recognised by its beautiful yellow eyes and its light “eyebrows”.

They live in small landscapes and mostly eat mice, but also other small animals, amphibians and insects. The little owl is a bird on the red list, and its conservation in Utrecht Science Park is very worthwhile and would increase the biodiversity of this area.

Did you know

Baby little owls leave the nest after just one month, but the parents still take care of them for another five weeks.



Scarce chaser

* *Libellula fulva* (male)

FAMILY

Libellulidae (Korenbouten)

SIZE

42-45mm

FOOD

Small insects

The scarce chaser is a species of dragonfly found in Europe. It prefers floodplains and marshes with a dense vegetation. Utrecht Science Park has it all and is therefore a great habitat for the scarce chaser.

The scarce chaser is an important species to improve biodiversity as it feeds on pest insects, making it a natural pesticide for Utrecht Science Park. Eliminating pest insects means more food for other species and peaceful growth for many types of vegetation.

Did you know

Adult life means near-death for scarce chasers. The animals' larvae stage is almost two years, while the adult life stage is only three months.



European badger

* *Meles meles*

FAMILY

Mustelidae

SIZE (without tail)

71cm

FOOD

Mostly invertebrates

The badger prefers an undisturbed environment which has enough food, ground to dig in and places to hide.

Since badgers primarily prey of invertebrates, their presence may control certain insect pest population. In addition, they can act as seed dispersers since they also consume large amounts of fruit.

Did you know

The badger is one of the largest predators that lives on land in the Netherlands. Their total length, head to tail, can be up to 90 centimeters (!)



This exhibit is a collaboration between the Green Office and the Utrecht Biologists Association (UBV)

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Bibliography

All information about the Icon Species was written and gathered by the **Utrecht Biologists Association (UBV)**

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