

The Netherlands' biodiversity at risk

A call for action



The Netherlands hosts a large proportion of the species that are threatened at the European level, and has the important responsibility for protecting these species within its territory. Species in the Netherlands require greater action to improve their status. While many species already receive some conservation attention, others do not. Species can be saved from extinction but this requires a combination of sound research and carefully coordinated efforts. The Netherlands as an EU Member State has committed to halting biodiversity loss by 2020 but urgent action is needed to meet this target and better monitoring capacity is required to measure if the target is met.

Considerable conservation investment is needed from the Netherlands to ensure that the status of European species improves in the long term. This document provides an overview of the conservation status of species in the Netherlands based on the results of all European Red Lists completed to date. It does not provide the status of the species in the country, therefore we invite the reader to cross check national and sub-national Red Lists. Together, they can be used to help guide policies and local conservation strategies.

The European Red List

The European Red List of Species is a review of the conservation status of more than 6,000 species in Europe according to the IUCN Red List Categories and Criteria and the regional Red Listing guidelines. It identifies species that are threatened with extinction at the European level so that appropriate conservation actions can be taken to improve their status. The geographical scope is continent-wide, including European parts of the Russian Federation and Turkey as well as the Macaronesian Islands. The Caucasus region is not included.

To date, European regional assessments have been completed for all mammals, reptiles, amphibians, butterflies, dragonflies, freshwater fishes and freshwater molluscs and a selection of saproxylic beetles, terrestrial molluscs, and vascular plants. Assessments of pollinators, medicinal plants, birds and marine fishes are currently under development.

The European Red List is compiled by IUCN Global Species Programme, with funding from the European Commission.

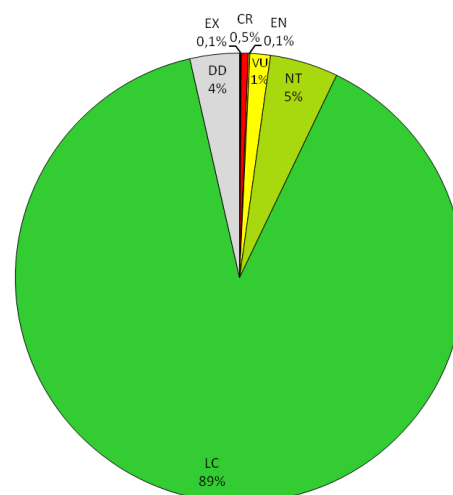
Conservation status

The Netherlands is host to an estimated 35,583 species of animals and plants. This number represents 23% of the total species described for Europe and could represent more than 2% of the species in the world. According to the table below, approximately 14% of the species assessed by the European Red List of Species are present in the Netherlands. For some of the taxonomic groups, the percentages of European species that occur in the Netherlands are particularly high; such as dragonflies, mammals, amphibians and saproxylic beetles.

Of the 814 species assessed that occur in the Netherlands, the groups comprising the highest number of species are vascular plants, saproxylic beetles and freshwater molluscs. Of the total number of species assessed in the country 2%* are considered threatened and at least 5% are Near Threatened at the European level, and one species is already Extinct. Many of these species are endemic to Europe and are found nowhere else in the world.

Species that are considered threatened at the European level and occur in the Netherlands are found mostly in wetlands, forests and grasslands. These ecosystems require particular attention in order to ensure the habitats of these sensitive species remain.

European status of species in the Netherlands



Number of species assessed within each IUCN Red List category at the European level

Species group	No. of sp. in Europe	No. of sp. in the Netherlands	% of European sp. occurring in the Netherlands	No. of threatened sp. in the Netherlands (status at European level)		
				CR	EN	VU
Mammals	233	74	32%	2	0	4
Reptiles	140	7	5%	0	0	0
Amphibians	83	16	19%	0	0	0
Freshwater fishes	522	55	11%	1	0	1
Butterflies	435	57	13%	0	1	3
Dragonflies	137	70	51%	0	0	1
Saproxylic beetles**	431	84	19%	0	0	0
Terrestrial molluscs**	1,233	49	4%	0	0	2
Freshwater molluscs	854	77	9%	1	0	1
Vascular plants**	1,826	325	18%	0	0	0
TOTAL	5,894	814	14%	4	1	12

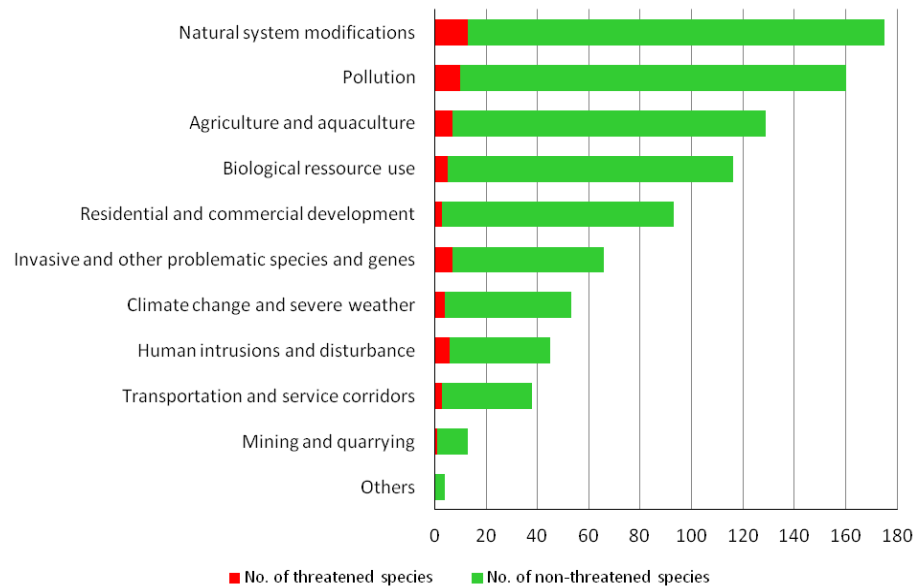
**Not comprehensively assessed, selected species only.

This table does not include the Not Applicable (NA) species in Europe (species introduced after AD 1500 or species of marginal occurrence). The data are based on the results of the European Red List (European region wide assessment).

Major threats

Habitat loss, fragmentation and degradation are the most significant threats at the European level to species that occur in the Netherlands. For freshwater species, major threats include pollution caused by agricultural and forestry effluents, over-extraction of water, and non-native invasive species. Other major threats come from logging and wood harvesting, droughts and urbanization and tourism.

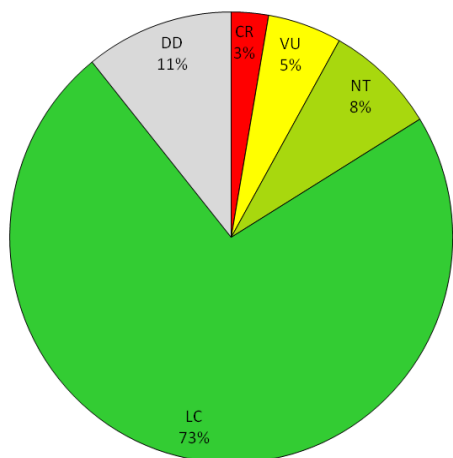
Major threats at the European level to species occurring in the Netherlands



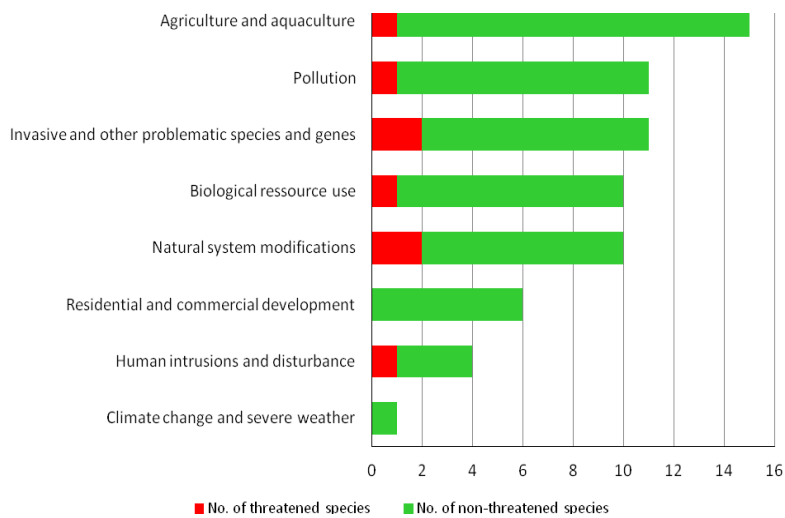
Mammals

The Netherlands hosts 32% of all the mammals that occur in Europe. Of these 74 species of mammals, 9%* are threatened at the European level and at least an additional 8% are considered Near Threatened. The major threats at the European level that can possibly (or potentially) affect mammals in the Netherlands is habitat degradation as a result of agricultural expansion and intensification. Mammal populations are also highly threatened mainly by pollution caused by agricultural and forestry effluents, invasive non-native species and hunting and trapping.

Status at European level



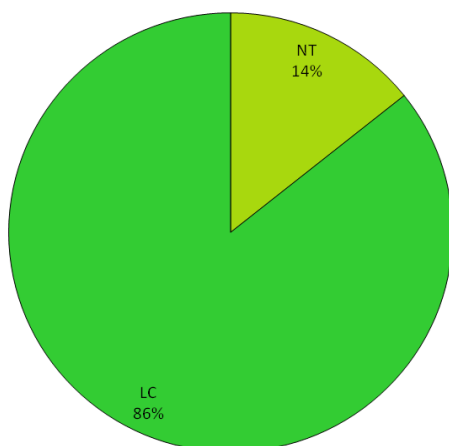
Threats at European level



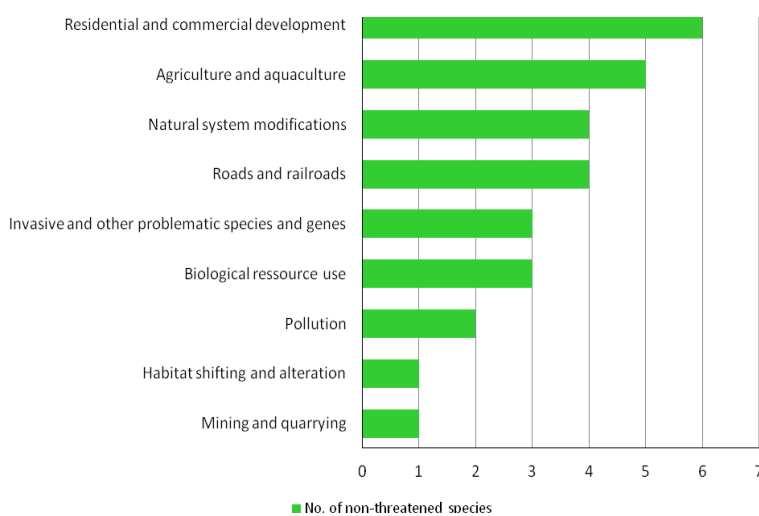
Reptiles

Reptile species in the Netherlands represent 5% of all the reptiles in Europe. The conservation status of reptiles in the Netherlands based on the European Red List data is relatively good since none of them are considered threatened at the European level, 14% are considered as Near Threatened and 86% as Least Concern. Habitat loss, fragmentation and degradation especially due to agricultural intensification and urbanization are the main threats to this group at the European level. It is also interesting to note that at least 28% of the reptile species in the Netherlands may be threatened by human persecution and control, especially snakes.

Status at European level



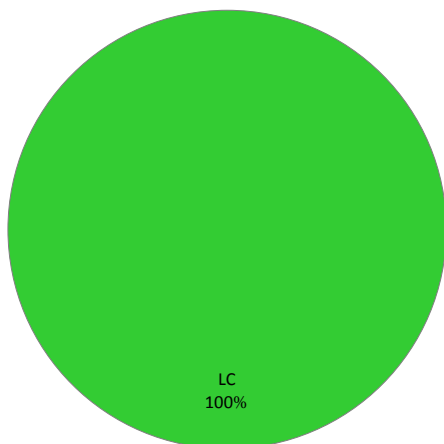
Threats at European level



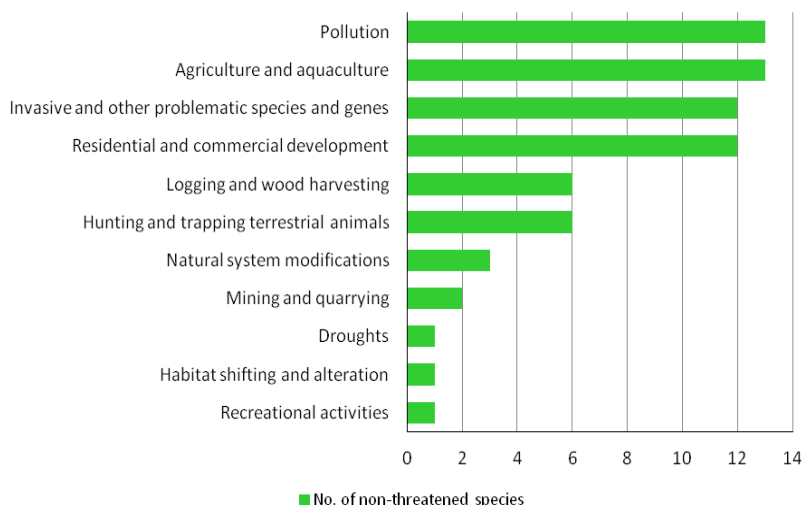
Amphibians

Amphibians in the Netherlands represent 19% of all amphibians occurring in Europe. The conservation status of amphibians in the Netherlands based on the European Red List data is relatively good since none of them are considered threatened. The main threat to this group at the European level is the loss and degradation of suitable breeding habitat mainly due to agricultural intensification and pollution caused by agricultural and forestry effluents.

Status at European level



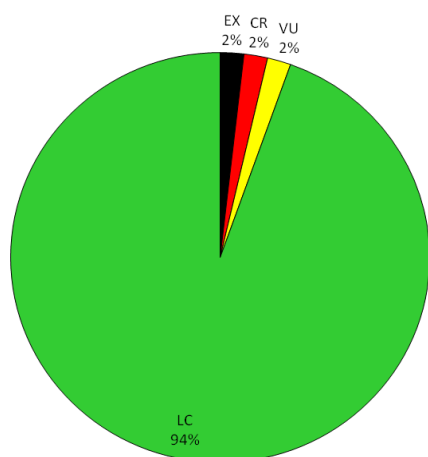
Threats at European level



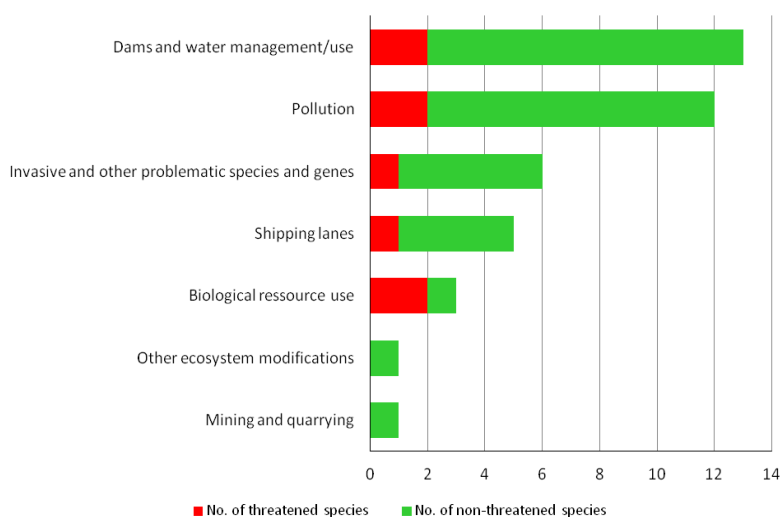
Freshwater fishes

Freshwater fishes are one of the most threatened groups at the European level. Four percent* of the species that occur in the Netherlands are threatened at the European level and one species is already Extinct. The percentage of total threatened species that is observed in the European region is 40%*. Additionally, freshwater fishes have a high percentage of endemism in the European region: up to 80%. The most important threat to this group at the European level is modification of the physical and chemical characteristics of freshwater rivers and lakes due to dam construction. Water quality deterioration as a result of agricultural and forestry effluents also poses threats to this group.

Status at European level



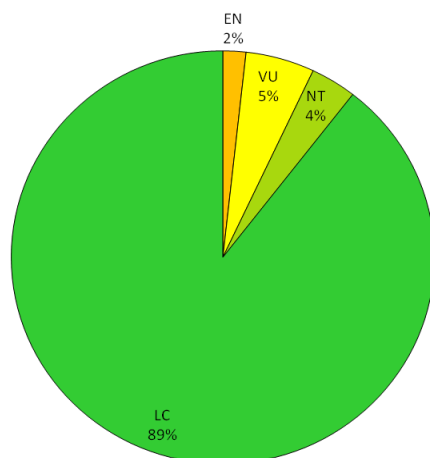
Threats at European level



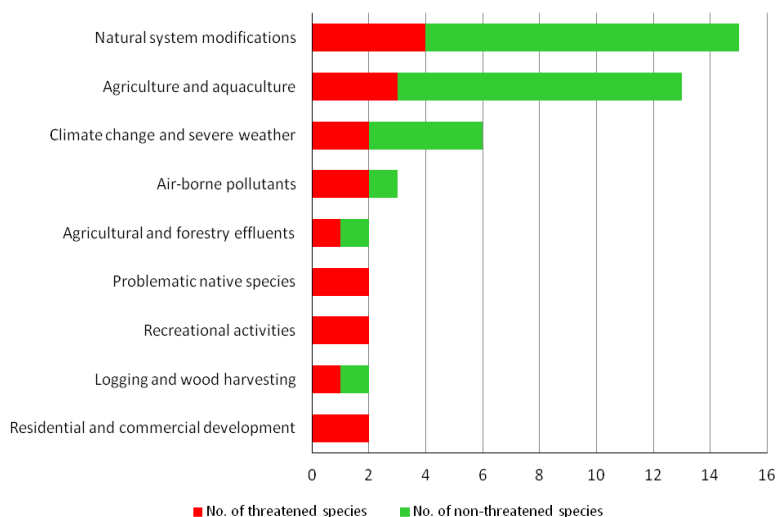
Butterflies

The Netherlands hosts 13% of all butterfly species in Europe and 7%* of them are considered threatened at the European level. The conservation status of butterflies in the Netherlands based on the European Red List data is relatively good since approximately 89% of the species are classified as Least Concern. However, butterflies have very specific food and habitat requirements at different stages of their life cycle so they are very sensitive to changes in their environment, especially to habitat management such as overgrazing, undergrazing or changes in forestry practices.

Status at European level



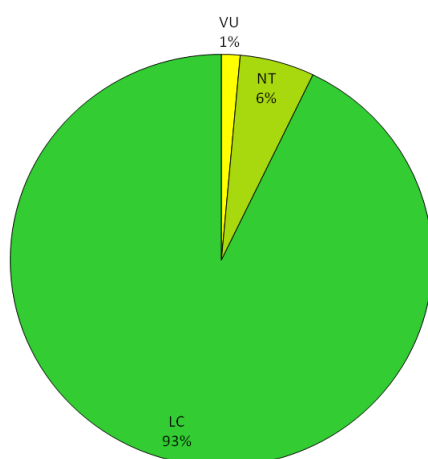
Threats at European level



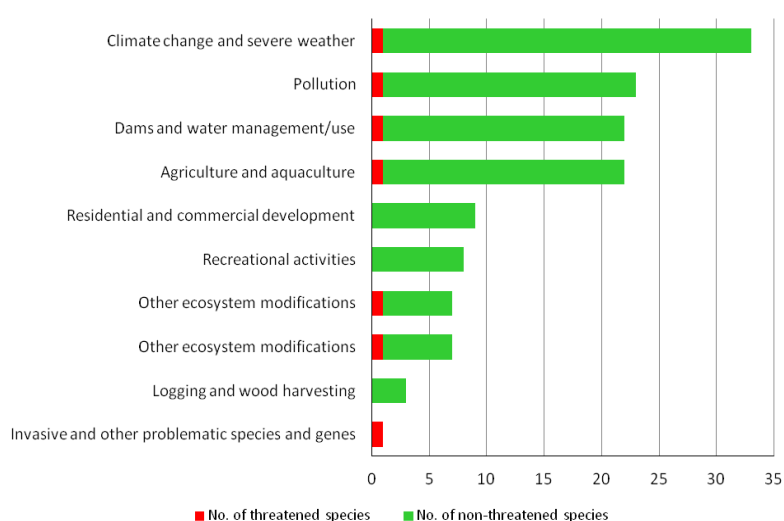
Dragonflies

Fifty-one percent of all the dragonflies in Europe are present in the Netherlands. In this country, 1%* of the dragonflies are considered threatened at the European level. This group is adversely affected by desiccation caused by dry weather, fires and increased water extraction for irrigation and human consumption. River species are also affected by ecosystem modifications such as the construction of dams and reservoirs and water quality deterioration.

Status at European level



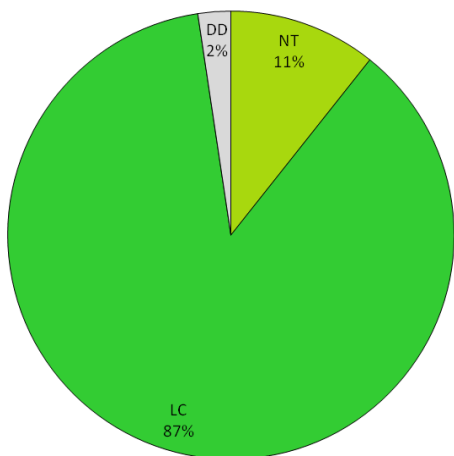
Threats at European level



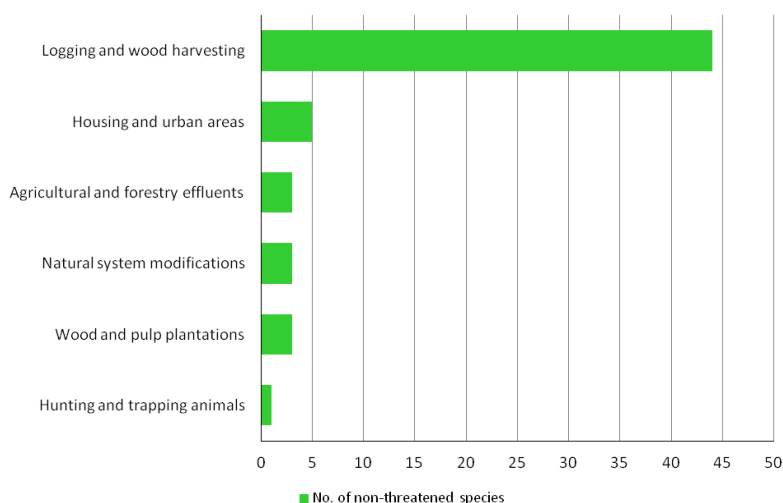
Saproxylic beetles

Nineteen percent of the beetle species assessed by the European Red List are present in the Netherlands. The conservation status of saproxylic beetles in the Netherlands based on the European Red List data is relatively good since none of them are considered threatened, 11% are classified as Near Threatened and 87% as Least Concern. The species in this group are very dependent on the dynamics of tree aging and wood decay processes. The major threat to this group is logging and wood harvesting; therefore these beetles require sensitive conservation management of tree populations irrespective of their situation.

Status at European level



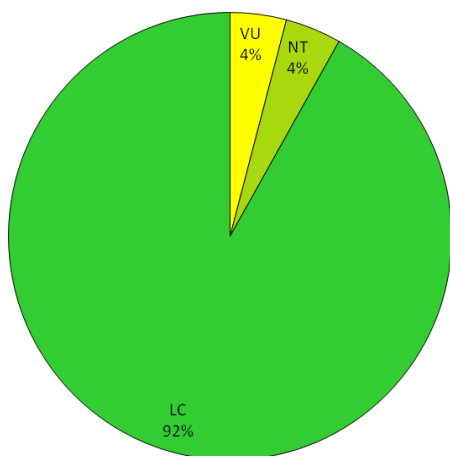
Threats at European level



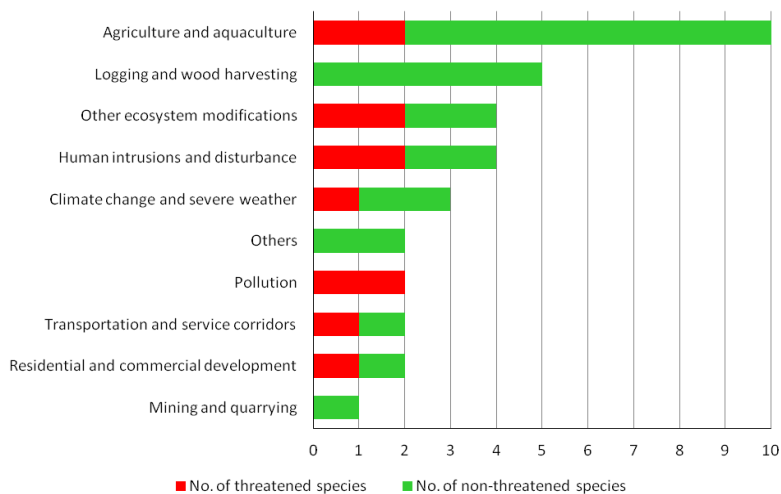
Terrestrial molluscs

Four percent* of the terrestrial molluscs assessed that are present in the Netherlands are threatened and 4% are classified as Near Threatened at the European level. The major threats to this group at the European level are continuous destruction of suitable habitat as a result of livestock and farming, and logging and wood harvesting.

Status at European level



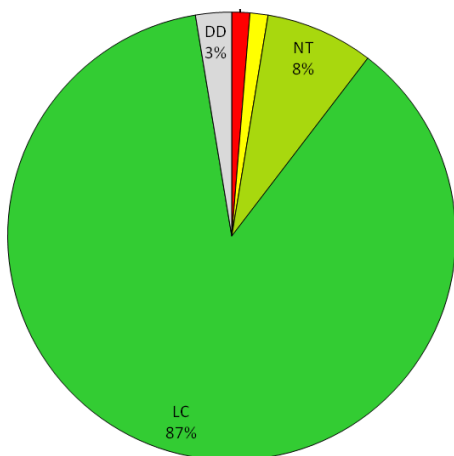
Threats at European level



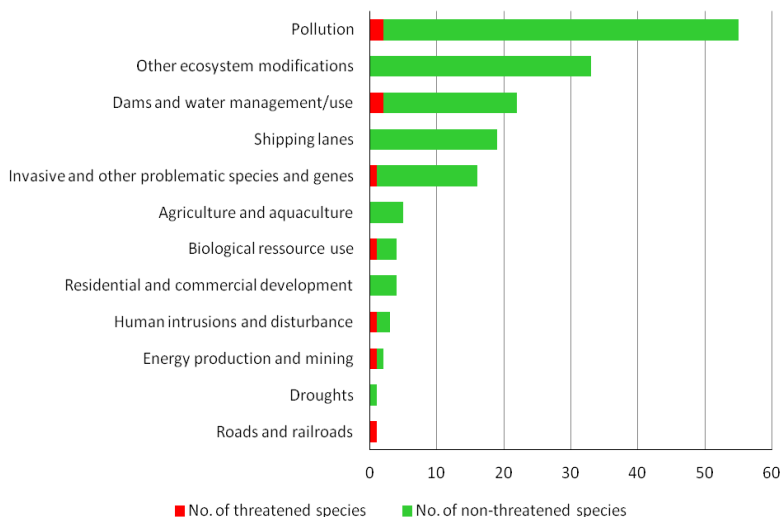
Freshwater molluscs

Nine percent of all the freshwater molluscs in Europe are present in the Netherlands. Three percent* of the species in this group are considered threatened at the European level. Water pollution especially the one coming from agricultural effluents and domestic urban waste water is the main threat to this group at the European level. Changes of physical and chemical characteristics of freshwater rivers and lakes due to dam construction also pose threats to this group.

Status at European level



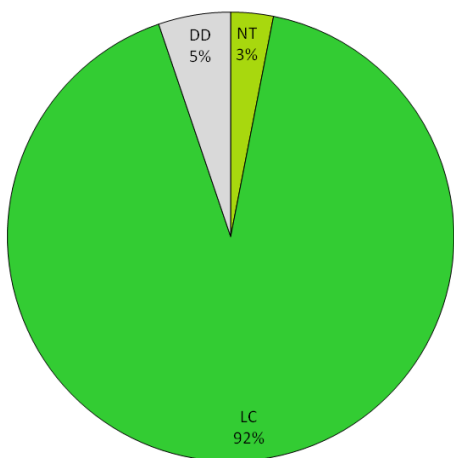
Threats at European level



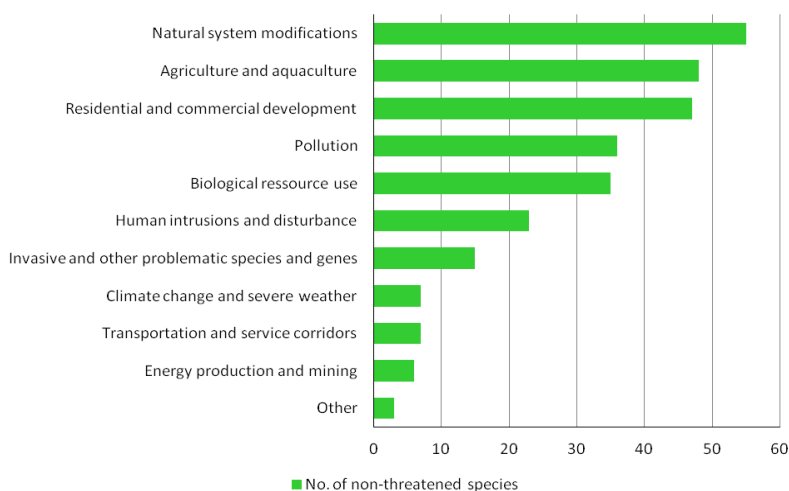
Vascular plants

At European level, priority crop wild relatives, aquatic plants and all species included in the annexes of the Habitats Directive, Bern Convention and CITES have been assessed. A total of 325 species are found in the Netherlands, which represent 18% of the total of species assessed in Europe. The Netherlands is also one of the countries that has a high number of endemic aquatic plants. The conservation status of plants in the Netherlands based on the European Red List data is relatively good since none of them are considered threatened, 3% are classified as Near Threatened and 92% as Least Concern. For terrestrial plants habitat degradation as a result of urban and tourism development has the worst impacts. For aquatic species, direct habitat loss caused by natural systems modification is the main threat.

Status at European level



Threats at European level





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<http://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/conservation/species/redlist> and
<http://www.iucnredlist.org/europe>

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Cover photo by Jens Kipping (*Coenagrion mercuriale*)

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*The proportion of threatened species in this document is calculated as follows: (EW + CR + EN + VU) / (total number of species assessed - EX - RE - DD). Since the number of threatened species is often uncertain because it is not known whether DD species are actually threatened or not, this formula considers that DD species are equally threatened as data sufficient species.