Applying the index of biodiversity potential (IBP) in the Flemish context: a comparison of set-aside and managed forests

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Context

The **IBP** was first developed as an **efficient tool for forest managers** to include **biodiversity** in their daily work (Larrieu and Gonin, 2008). The **10 factors** of the IBP represent forest composition, continuity and structure. They are chosen based on scientific evidence that they can support forest biodiversity. These factors can be turned into scores ranging from 0-5 based on thresholds. The uncapped IBP does not stop after reaching such a threshold.

To test the applicability of the IBP in the Flemish context the new **IBP version for the BENELUX** was applied to the Brabantse Wouden. Here the biodiversity potential of **managed and unmanaged forest** was compared. It was expected that set-aside forests score higher on IBP factors linked to old-growth.

10 factors of the IBP

1. Tree species richness
2. Vertical structure
3. Standing deadwood
4. Lying deadwood
5. Very large trees
6. Habitat trees
7. Openness
8. Temporal continuity
9. Wet macrohabitats
10. Rocky macrohabitats

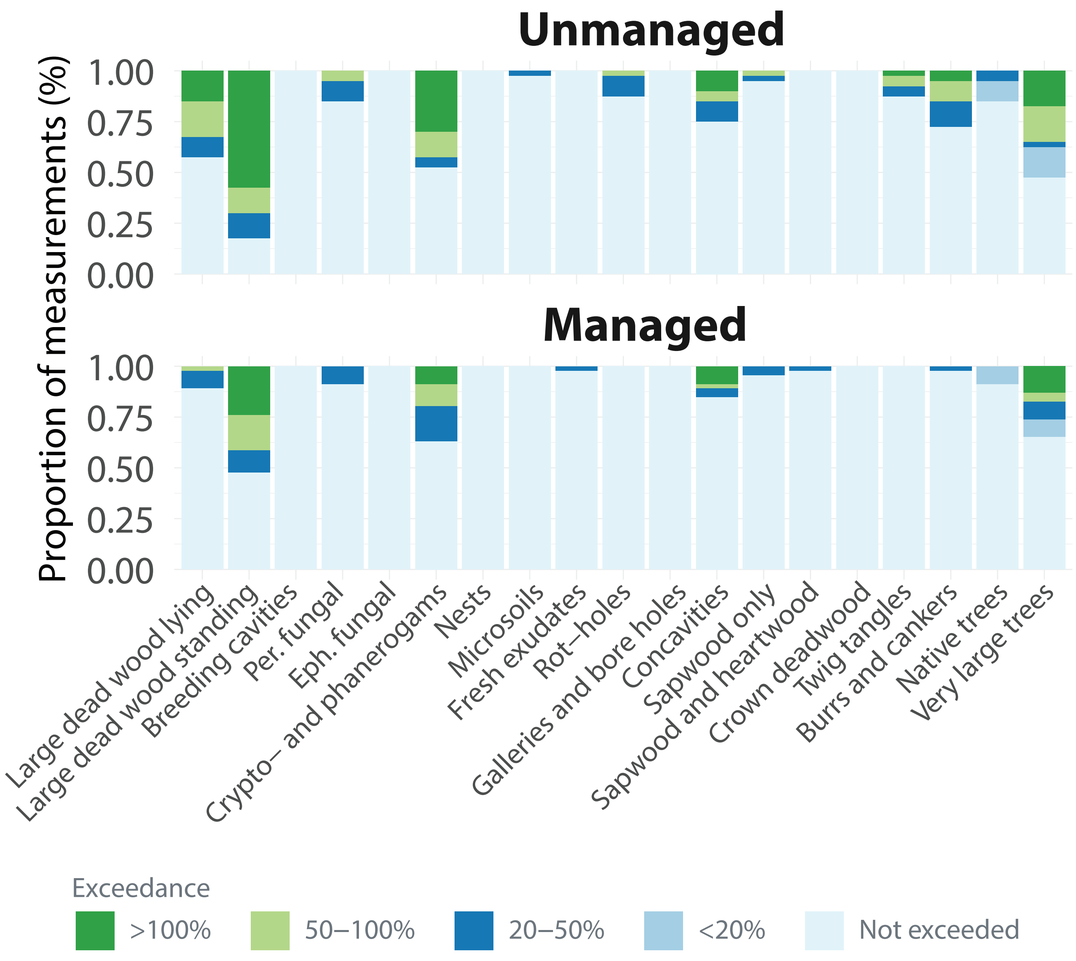
Want to know more about the IBP? Scan this QR-code!

Can we measure a forest's biodiversity potential in less than 30 minutes?

Field surveys

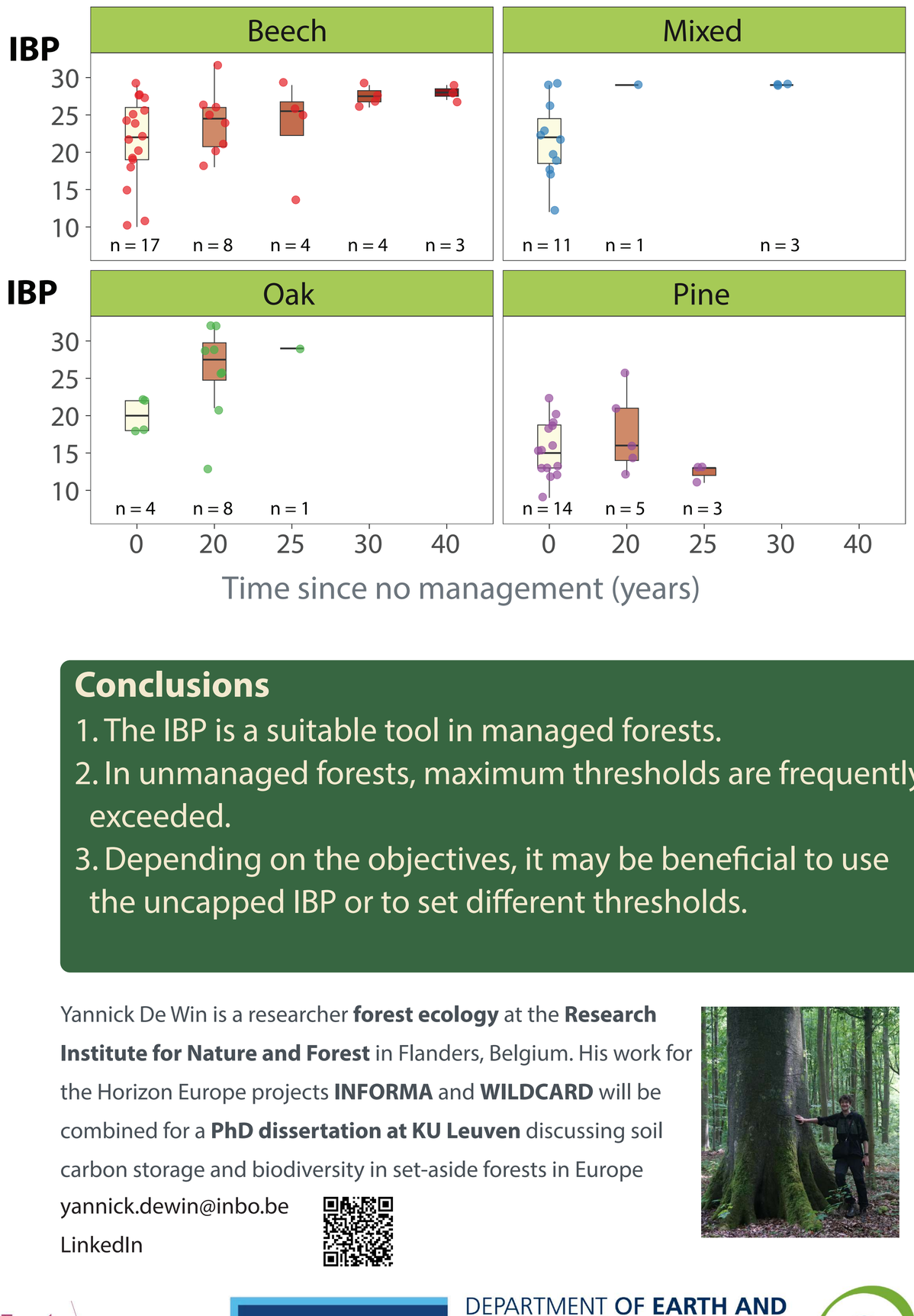
- Location: National Park Brabantse Wouden located at the center of Belgium.
- Design: INFORMA forest management platform with clustering of managed and unmanaged forests.
- Method: Circular plots of 1 ha, accounting for at least 10% of a forest patch No capping was used during the fieldwork.

Maximum threshold are often exceeded, especially in unmanaged forests. This could lead to a loss of information.



IBP-scores increase with time since no management

This can be contributed to increases in lying and standing deadwood, very large trees and microhabitats.



Conclusions

1. The IBP is a suitable tool in managed forests.
2. In unmanaged forests, maximum thresholds are frequently exceeded.
3. Depending on the objectives, it may be beneficial to use the uncapped IBP or to set different thresholds.

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