

The Centre of Fish Culture of Linkebeek was built in 1947 by prof. M. Huet, lecturer in Limnology and Pisciculture at the University of Louvain. The fish culture was at that moment run by the University. Since 1980 the Centre became the property of the government, first under responsibility of the Ministry of Agriculture but now under the Ministry of the Flemish Community. The work at the station is led under direction of the Institute of Forestry and Wildlife Management at Groenendaal.

Originally one of the principal purposes of the Centre was to assist the training of colonial and metropolitan hydrobiologists and fish culturists. The Centre also aimed at popularising pisciculture and demonstrating various fish culture methods and their applications. The station possesses a complete range of all types of pisciculture practised in our regions.

Nowadays the aim of the Centre of Fish Culture is to carry out scientific research concerning fish culture and fish populations, and to produce fingerlings for restocking in public waters.

The Centre of Pisciculture is situated at Linkebeek at some six miles south of Brussels. The property covers an area of 8.67 ha and includes a valley with a brook ('Jezuïetenbeek') which is fed by several springs ('Springs of Schaveye') rising in the upper part (a small brook forest). Approximately 40 fish ponds are situated in this valley. Their surface is varying from 0.5 to 21 are (total surface of the fish ponds is 1.5 ha). As the fish culture station is fed by a series of rheocene springs, the water temperature is rather cold and relatively constant (approximately 10°C) at the springs. During its way downstream, the water is gradually warming up (in summer). Due to these different water temperatures over the various ponds it is possible to practise in this station salmoniculture as well as esociculture and cypriniculture.

Although former times several species of salmonids (a.o. *Oncorhynchus mykiss*, *Salvelinus fontinalis*, ...) were bred, nowadays only brown trout (*Salmo trutta fario*) is cultured, as for several ecological reasons this species is most indicated for restocking in Flandrian waters. Culture of brown trout includes raising of spawners, incubation of eggs in troughs and production of fingerlings and two years old trout.

Concerning cypriniculture several species have been cultured : a.o. carp, tench, rudd, roach, gudgeon, minnow, bitterling, ide, ... Today, especially ide, gudgeon and bitterling are grown. The latter two spawn naturally in the ponds, while the former one has to be reproduced under controlled circumstances.

Production of pike fry is a major point in the fish culture activities of the Centre. Each year 200 to 400 000 of pike alevins are raised for purposes of restocking.

Besides fish culture activities the Centre, is characterised by a striking variation in biotopes of important ecological value. Wet hayfield areas alternate with forest, but most important are the aquatic and semi-aquatic biotopes, especially important for a whole variety of associated plant communities, with several rare species.