



Aquarium of Brussels Chronicle



The first Aquarium of Brussels was started in 1906 by Goffinet Barons and was situated close to the Ter Kameren Bos, on Avenue Louise 525 around the corner from the current roundabout.

This aquarium was meant to popularize scientific ideas for a broad public and in fact was called “Aquarium and Museum of Fish Cultivation of Brussels”.

After it survived the first WW, this aquarium had to stop its activities. This happened either in 1936 with the economic crisis or later during the second world war. The building was demolished in the 1950's or in the 1960's.

Much later, in the 90's Mrs. Roose and Mr. Demol hoped to set up a public aquarium in the Brussels area, on one hand to protect the environment and on the other hand to save certain species. All was from a scientific and educational approach.

They found it important and absolutely necessary to react to environmental disasters and to the apparent indifference of those with political power and economic strength, and this without financial help for this cause.

Finally they contacted 19 Brussels' communities to find a location for the aquarium. Ten communities reacted, one of which was Koe-kelberg. They had the need for a location where the following business activities could be held:

- An exhibition space with space attached beyond
- Quarantine quarters and technical room
- A hall with seating and projection room for the public
- A reception area with a souvenir shop
- A cafeteria
- A hall for temporary exhibitions
- Space for workshops for kids
- Space for administration and employees... .

Unfortunately, such facilities weren't available in any of the city communities. It was necessary to have a stable structure (permanent installations were costly).

To set up and manage an aquarium, legal expertise would be necessary. This was set up in 2001 with the organization Fish Passion, Centre of Study of Aquariums. After a while, when the building for the Aquarium of Brussels was named the Aquarium Center, it was decided to change the legal name of the non-profit organization to attain a better public media profile.

The non-profit organization that now manages the Aquarium of Brussels, has bi-lingual status (French and dutch) and even though the original name was changed, part of it was kept for historical and practical reasons.

This idea of the non-profit corresponded with their desire not to have a commercial aquarium but a public aquarium, and to start a lively educational museum on official property of the City of Brussels

With extremely limited budgets, and after much research, Mrs. Roose bought buildings found in poor condition. At the end of 2002 the construction work began. The choice was influenced by finances, the desired surface and the wish for the aquarium to be located in one of the above mentioned communities. The internal installations, the fish tanks, electricity, water systems were designed, and brought about and financed by non-profit founders.

So after three years of construction the aquarium was officially opened on 17 September 2005. It was open to the public on 27 September 2005.



HABITAT AND CHOICE OF ANIMALS

The interior covers a total of 1.200 m².

Displayed are 47 tanks and 1 outdoor fishpond. In quarantine are fifty tanks essential for breeding.

The choice of small aquatic species was decided initially, given the precarious situation of these fish in the natural environment. Many of these are endangered and are bred in the quarantine space. Sharks, whales and other big fish are not present to avoid sensationalism.

The educational aspect is primordial. The playful route takes visitors along in Belgium, Africa, America, Asia and the Oceans and finally ends in warm tropical seas.

For each explored continent fish, amphibians and spineless creatures are represented, with décor and plants of them all in 'aquarium bio tropics'

9 water tanks (4 amphibian, 2 with sweet water en 3 with brackish water

1 terrarium for poisonous frogs [Dendrobatidae]

6 sea water tanks (1 North Sea—cold water, 4 reef tanks with corals and 1 aquarium with fish

The various tanks are given appropriate care regarding to water quality, wellness of the animals, plants and so forth

POPULATION

Small species will be recognized by water creatures enthusiasts, but are often the species that are seriously endangered or are even starved in their own environment. Many species are red listed on the international list from the IUCN or The International Union for the Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources).

This international list shows the precarious state some animals are found in.

From the two hundred and fifty (250) exhibited specimens exhibited in the Aquarium of Brussels, thirty five (35) are on the list of IUCN and three have come out of their normal environment. The selected animals are from breeding programs so that they are not unnecessarily removed from their natural habitat. More of these species are already bred in the quarantined area of the Aquarium.

(INTER)NATIONALE RESPONSABILITIES

The Aquarium of Brussels is acknowledged as a zoo by the Federal Ministry of the Public Health, thus they are sometimes approached to keep animals that have been confiscated.

The Aquarium must take into account specific laws and make scientific ideas available to the general public.

The conservator of the Aquarium of Brussels, Mr. Demol, is also internationally active. He is treasurer for the prestigious organization "World Ocean Network". The Aquarium of Brussels is the only Belgian participant in the World Day of the Ocean (8 June).

The Aquarium of Brussels is also member of the "European Union of Aquarium Curators" (EUAC) and takes part in European programs to save species.

The Aquarium of Brussels is also active in tourism; it is part of the landscape of Brussels.

Due to its unique role in Western Europe (species, approach and education), the Aquarium is in demand as regards (inter)national and university studies and other extracurricular activities, in the areas of fish breeding, chemistry, biology and tourism.

CLOSING

Through its educational approach and philosophy (protection of the environment), the Aquarium received a 2 -star eco-label from the City of Brussels.

Through the choice of small animals the Aquarium of Brussels is respected as unique in its genre. Although, the Aquarium of Brussels is relatively small in comparison with the big sea aquariums found along the French coast, it is well worth a visit.