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Dedicated to Professor Dr. H. Engel

Fifty years of
"Comité ter bestudering van de Molluskenfauna in Nederland"

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INTRODUCTION

In his article on the distribution of *Lymnaea glabra* in the Netherlands, den Doop (1913 : 41) remarked that the mollusk fauna of this country had not much been studied. Miss Scholten (1913 : 348) agreed with this opinion, she thought that our mollusk fauna was only known to a very few conchologists. Miss Scholten believed that it would be useful if shell collectors from different places should publish their records with exact dates and localities, and she started in her publication by giving the distribution of 61 Dutch land and freshwater snails, known to her since 1912.

Van der Sleen (1914 : 450) supported the idea to come to a better knowledge of the Dutch mollusk fauna; he enlarged Scholten's list with ten non-marine gastropods, he gave new localities for a number of landsnails, and started with a list of 16 freshwater bivalves. Van der Sleen also asked for references on marine shells, since he intended to publish a list of marine mollusks of the Netherlands (van der Sleen, 1915). Also in 1914, Pinkhof published about Dutch slugs, as a reaction on miss Scholten's article.

With these publications the idea for the start of the "Committee to study the Dutch Mollusk fauna" was born, although it is difficult to state when the Committee precisely was founded. The year 1915 is mentioned in the literature (Scholten, 1919 : 67; van der Sleen, 1921 : 110; van der Feen-van Benthem Jutting, 1953 : 430; van Benthem Jutting, 1959 : 7); however, when studying the files of the Committee, we discovered that the activities had started in 1914. In a letter, dated 26 January 1914, van der Sleen informed M. M. Schepman and J. H. Vernhout that he and Miss J. Scholten, J. den Doop, and M. Pinkhof had agreed to form a commission to study the recent Dutch mollusks, and he invited Schepman and Vernhout to participate. The

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plans of what the commission would like to do were already fixed at the beginning of 1914: a) assembling a collection of Dutch mollusks with exact locality data; b) forming two card files concerning the collection, respectively according to locality and species. Miss Scholten would keep the administration, the collection should be kept in the Zoological Museum of Amsterdam, and the identifications must be checked by three members of the commission. In May 1914 the members paid their dues (5 guilders), and card files were bought the same year. A set of regulations was made up in 1914, and corrected by the members, until the bylaws were confirmed in June 1915 and signed by J. den Doop, W. C. van Heurn, M. Pinkhof, M. M. Schepman, Miss Johanna Scholten, Dr. W. G. N. van der Sleen, and Dr. J. H. Vernhout. C. Druyvesteyn became a member in November 1915. June 1915 is therefore considered the official start of the "Comité ter bestudering van de Molluskenfauna in Nederland", known in short as the "Mollusken Comité". Of the original members of the Comité only van Heurn is still alive at this time.

FURTHER HISTORY OF THE "MOLLUSKEN COMITÉ"

During the first years of its existence the members were pouring in specimens and informations for the collection and card indices of the Comité. Schepman (unpublished manuscript, 1915) had written a list of land and freshwater mollusks, found and likely to be found in the Netherlands, to be used by the members of the Mollusken Comité. For the marine mollusks the names were taken from the "List of British Marine Mollusca", published by the British Conchological Society. During 1915 and 1916 typed lists were issued for the nonmarine mollusks found in many places in the Netherlands. The first printed lists were published in 1917, mentioning 115 nonmarine and 37 marine species. In the lists of 1918 these numbers had grown to 120 and 62 respectively, and in 1919 74 marine species were reported. Miss Scholten (1919) published an article on some land and freshwater species, and the first faunal report of the Comité was written by van der Sleen (1921), a list of all the recent Dutch mollusks known from the card files of the Comité, with some remarks on the localities of a number of species. The list contained 105 marine and 144 nonmarine species and subspecies.

Some changes had taken place in the Comité; as new members were chosen Dr. C. A. van der Willigen (1917), Miss W. S. S. van Benthem Jutting (1919), and I. A. J. de Wilde (1920). Schepman died in 1919, and Miss Scholten had to stop her activities in 1920; her place as administrator of the Mollusken Comité was taken by Miss van Benthem Jutting, who was appointed curator of shells at the Zoological Museum in Amsterdam.

Except for the annual dues of the members, the Comité was financially supported by donations from the "Rijksmuseum van Natuurlijke Historie" in Leyden; the "Nederlandsche Dierkundige Vereeniging" gave donations in 1916 and 1917, "Teyler's Stichting" in Haarlem supported the Mollusken Comité since 1917.

The year 1923 was critical for the continuation of the Mollusken Comité: scientific activities had slowed down, two members were lost (van der Willigen, 1922, and Druyvesteyn, 1923), and the financial supports from Teyler and the Rijksmuseum in Leyden were stopped. However, a proposal to discontinue the Comité was not accepted, and three new members were appointed instead: Dr. L. F. de Beaufort, Miss A. P. C. de Vos, and P. de Bruyne. The renewed activities resulted in a publication by Miss van Benthem Jutting (1927), in which the species number of Dutch mollusks was brought to 107 marines and 156 nonmarines, and the list of municipalities where they were collected was largely increased.

The Mollusken Comité faced another crisis in 1934. Most of the ten members, except for the administrator Miss van Benthem Jutting, did not show any activity for the Comité, due to change of work or moving out of the Netherlands. The condition that the identifications had to be checked by three members gave rise to much delay in incorporating the records in the card files. The number of members could not be enlarged, since it was agreed that only ten could participate. After a request from the administrator a number of them asked to remove their names from the list of members.

In 1934 the Netherlands Malacological Society was founded, open to every malacologist. The Mollusken Comité had a meeting (20 October 1934) with the board of directors of the new Malacological Society, and it was agreed that both institutions should continue their activities. In the following years nothing is heard from the Mollusken Comité, however, a new list of species was published in 1947 by van Benthem Jutting in *Basteria*, the journal of the Malacological Society. From this we learn that the silence within the Comité was not due to inactivity. A large number of locality records was incorporated during the years, totalling in 1947 to more than 11,000. The list of 1947 contained 344 species of recent Dutch mollusks, the old division in marine and nonmarine shells was left, and the system of Thiele was accepted.

In 1948 there was an attempt to unite the Mollusken Comité with the Netherlands Malacological Society, however, it failed. Mrs. van der Feen-van Benthem Jutting gave a lecture for the Malacological Society on 19 April 1952, titled "Foundation, development, and working methods of the Mollusks Committee" (abstract in *Corr.blad Ned. mal. Ver.*, 48 : 430—431, Febr. 1953). She suggested again to bring the two institutions together, and finally the fusion between the Comité and the Society was established in 1955. It was agreed that the Society should take over the Mollusken Comité, but that the Comité would continue its activities within the Society (*Corr.blad Ned. mal. Ver.*, 63 : 600, March 1956). The Society received the card files and it would control the funds of the Comité. The collection became the property of the Zoological Museum in Amsterdam, the Museum was host of the Comité collection since its foundation in 1915. The collection of the Comité was kept separate for a number of years; however, during 1966—1967 it was incorporated into the collection of the Zoological Museum.

Being a part now of the Malacological Society, the Mollusken Comité received new regulations, in which the aim and the methods of work were

established. Instead of the former ten members, the new Comité from now on would consist of five members, under which should be the curators of mollusks at the Rijksmuseum van Natuurlijke Historie in Leyden and the Zoological Museum in Amsterdam. At the time of the fusion these positions were held by Dr. C. O. van Regteren Altena and Mrs. van der Feen, both already belonged to the Comité for more than 20 years. The card files remained in the Zoological Museum and Mrs. van der Feen continued to be the administrator of the Mollusken Comité. Three new members were appointed for a period of six years: D. Aten, P. Kaas, and L.P. Pouderoyen. Until 1965 these five formed the Comité, then Mrs. Dr. van der Feen retired as curator of mollusks in Amsterdam. Her place in the Comité was taken, *qualitate qua*, by the new curator Drs. H. E. Coomans, who also took over the function of administrator. The Comité lost another member in 1967 when D. Aten passed away.

Every year since the fusion the activities of the Mollusken Comité were reported by the administrator in the "Correspondentieblad" of the Malacological Society — **63** : 600 (1956), **68** : 655 (1957), **74** : 715 (1958), **80** : 793 (1959), **86** : 866 (1960), **92** : 936 (1961), **98** : 1005 (1962), **103** : 1068 (1963), **108** : 1122 (1964), **112** : 1170 (1965), **117** : 1226 (1966), and **122** : 1294 (1967).

At this moment more than 15.000 records concerning the distribution of Dutch mollusks have been filed by the Mollusken Comité (Coomans, 1966). The cards were recently stored in 20 new steel cabinets (Coomans, 1967). Each record receives a number and is written down in a notebook and on two cards. One card is for the geographical file, it indicates the locality of the specimens as exact as possible, with ecological circumstances, abundancy, collector, and collection where stored. The second card is for the systematic card file. Every identification must be checked and signed for by a member of the Comité, to prevent misidentifications being recorded in the card files.

For more than fifty years the Mollusken Comité has proved to be a very useful institution for the study of the Dutch mollusk fauna. The two card indices will answer all questions about where a particular species is found, or which species are living in a certain area of the Netherlands. The publications of the Comité (printed species lists in 1917, 1918 and 1919; Scholten, 1919; van der Sleen, 1921; van Benthem Jutting, 1927, 1947) are important sources for the knowledge of the distribution of the Dutch mollusks. The card files of the Comité were also used for the malacological parts of the "Fauna van Nederland" by van Benthem Jutting (1933, 1943), and van Benthem Jutting & Engel (1936). Every malacologist who wants to be informed on the recent Dutch mollusk fauna needs the information stored by the Mollusken Comité.

Since its foundation in 1915 the files of the Mollusken Comité have been kept in the Malacological Department of the Zoological Museum in Amsterdam. To the retiring Director of the Museum, Professor Dr. Hendrik Engel, who has been with the Zoological Museum almost as long as the Mollusken Comité, this article been dedicated by the author.

ALPHABETICAL LIST OF MEMBERS OF THE MOLLUSKEN COMITÉ

* administrator

Mr. D. Aten	1955—1967 (†)
Professor Dr. L. F. de Beaufort	1923—1955
P. de Bruyne	1923—1934
*Drs. H. E. Coomans	1965—
J. E. A. den Doop	1915—1934
C. Druyvesteyn	1915—1923 (†)
*Mrs. Dr. W. S. S. van der Feen-van Benthem Jutting	1919—1964
Jhr. W. C. van Heurn	1915—1934
P. Kaas	1955—
Dr. M. Pinkhof	1915—1934
L. P. Pouderoyen	1955—
Dr. C. O. van Regteren Altena	1932—
M. M. Schepman	1915—1919 (†)
*Miss J. Scholten	1915—1920
Dr. W. G. N. van der Sleen	1915—1934
Dr. J. H. Vernhout	1915—1934
Miss A. P. C. de Vos	1923—1932
I. A. J. de Wilde	1920—1955 (†)
Dr. C. A. van der Willigen	1917—1922

Mrs. Dr. van der Feen was member for the longest period, the author is grateful to her for reading the manuscript.

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