

Historical references for fish in the Rhine and Meuse catchment area

Level:	Master
Start:	Anytime
Project duration:	6 months
Project form:	Literature study, database construction and analysis, MCA
Supervision:	Rob Lenders

Background and short content of the project

Fish belong to the most threatened fauna species of the Rhine and Meuse for several reasons. Anadromous species like salmon have disappeared from the Rhine because of combinations of causes: spawning areas have become unsuitable or cannot be reached anymore, water quality is insufficient for young fish and intensive fisheries have impacted adult populations. Momentarily, many actions are undertaken to improve riverine fish communities (a.o. within the context of the Water Framework Directive).

In order to assure the efficiency and accuracy of rehabilitation measures, historical references for fish communities are developed. However, systematic surveys of fish in the Rhine and Meuse were hardly ever carried out before the second half of the 20th century. Only for some commercially interesting species like salmon such surveys are available for earlier times. In order to reconstruct historical references other methods have to be applied. Zoo-archaeological data and other data from archives can help in developing such palaeoreferences. Examples of how this can be done are available from Belgium and Germany but were never carried out for the Netherlands or for the rivers Rhine and Meuse as such.

Aim of the internship is to build a historical database of fishes of the rivers Rhine and/or Meuse and to analyze the data in such way that meaningful references can be constructed.