
THE TILBURG REPTILE EXHIBITION "EXOTIC TERRA FLORA"

A new herpetological attraction has recently opened its doors in Tilburg, Holland, though it is as yet unnoticed by many reptile lovers in the Netherlands. Maybe this article can change draw attention to the exhibition.

Exotic Terra Flora is a private enterprise by Jan Walhout, well known in herpetological circles in the Dutch province of Brabant. Walhout has been a reptile keeper for many years, breeds insects and is a small scale reptile dealer. He has established a firm which owns the permanent exhibition of amphibians and reptiles in a magnificent old farm house in Tilburg called "De Oliemeulen" (meaning "The oil mill"). When entering the farm house, the visitor comes into a picturesque hall in which some vivaria are placed. Also, there are Japanese Bonsai-trees and other plants, and a large open vivarium with plants and small waterfalls, housing small lizards and frogs. Amongst all this, there are drawings and paintings by the "house artist" Jan de Koning. De Koning has produced the framed drawings and aquarels which are exhibited all over the exhibition: beautifully detailed works of art in an illustrative style reminiscent of Japanese and Chinese classical drawings. Part of this work is original, part is reproduced and all can be bought.

Most of the exhibited animals create a healthy impression, and the vivaria are clean and well decorated. Walhout has chosen a "natural" decoration of logs and branches, live plants and a ground covering of sand, soil, peat or bark. In some vivaria sawdust is used. The cages are kept clean, the faeces of snakes and large lizards are taken away as soon as possible. Of course, there

are too many animals to sum up here, but I would like to mention the beautiful large *Iguanas*, the *basilisks*, the blue tongued and pink tongued *skinks*, the young *crocodile*, and of course the enormous *Varanus salvator* high in the attics. There is currently more to enjoy for the lovers of large lizards than for snake fans, but there are plans to change that too. At any rate there are the obligate Burmese python, the king snakes, the rat snakes, the sand vipers (along with the bamboo vipers the only venomous snakes in the collection), and the more unusual species like Montpellier snakes (*Malpolon monspessulanus*).

The vivaria with poison arrow frogs are interesting apart from their beautiful inhabitants because of the new, ingenious and effective system of artificial mist (a veil of mist coming slowly down from the top of the vivarium).

For the tired, the hungry and the thirsty, there is a nice little bar and some tables and chairs in what could be called a refreshments corner.

The exhibition gets no subsidiary funds from the local authorities and the old farm house is very expensive housing, so the firm has to do something to survive. The exhibition is growing to be (and needs to be) a centre of herpetological activities, not only as a "home" for almost all the local herpetological and ichthyological societies in the neighbourhood, but also as a monthly (every second friday night of the month) meeting place for amateur herpetologists in Holland and Belgium. Recently the "Landdag" (annual meeting) of the Dutch Herpetological Society "Lacerta" was held in De Olie-meulen, with about 1500 visitors in two days. During all these meetings, people meet, talk, and trade animals, food and vivarium necessities. Plans include private imports and wholesale tradings, and maybe also normal trade. The settled reptile pet shops in Tilburg and surroundings will not be very

enthusiastic about these plans, I suppose.

In my opinion, Exotic Terra Flora is a good thing for all amateur herpetologists in Holland and Belgium. It is certainly on its way to become an interesting centre for vivarium activities.

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