



Photo Luuk Croijmans

Rare beetle in trial field

A rare ground beetle has been spotted in a trial field near the campus.

This beetle of the species *Harpalus signaticornis* had not been seen in the Netherlands for about five years, says PhD candidate Luuk Croijmans, who found the beetle. He bases this on information from the Renkum ground beetle expert Hans Turin. The insect is known to be rare and was thought to have died out by the turn of the millennium. The last examples were caught in South Limburg in 1960, but in 2000 entomologists spotted the beetle again in the Planken Wambuis nature area near Ede, not far from Wageningen. After this, the insect was seen in Wageningen and even on campus (the Droevendaal experimental farm). According to Turin, it looked as if the species was making a comeback. But for the past five years there have been no more sightings — until Croijmans saw his ground beetles last summer. In a trial field next to the campus of all places. 'It was a wheat field that hadn't developed properly due to disease, so you got an open field with a variety of herbaceous plants.'

Croijmans says the finding demonstrates the resilience of nature. 'Last year, that field was a flourishing wheat monoculture, the kind of place this species would probably not do well in at all. This year the habitat is more diverse and suddenly the species has reappeared.' RK