The national parks reflect Sweden’s nature

Coniferous forest

Coniferous forest is the most widespread nature type in the country, occupying the large national parks in the immediate vicinity of the mountain ranges. The forests in the south have a barren and ancient character, with pine trees up to seven hundred years old in Muddus. The forest is often denser and more barren and ancient in the south, as in Norra Kvill.

Wetlands

Approximately one-fifth of Sweden’s land area is covered by different types of wetland, such as moors, marshland and damp meadows. Many plants and animals are especially adapted to these wet places and they are important for birds such as the carrie and the golden plover. There are magnificent wetlands in, for example, Waddes and Store Mosse National Parks.

Broadleaf forest

Broadleaf forest with beech, ash, oak and elm trees is a very old nature type that emerged during a warmer climatic period 8,200 years ago. It is rich in species and also contains many threatened species. Nowadays, broadleaf forests exist only south of the Dalälven, for example, in Söderåsen, Dalby Söderskog, Stenshuvud and Ångslöv National Parks.

Lakes and streams

Sweden is one of the countries in the world that has the most lakes. We also have several rivers which are completely or almost completely unaffected by the construction of hydroelectric power plants. As such, Vindelälven, Torneälven, Kullaälven and Piteälven are protected as national rivers. In addition, there are fine freshwater environments in Gyslet National Park and Pärnänsjöarna National Park.

Mountains

The national parks in the mountainous regions are characterized by steep slopes and great differences in altitude. The slopes are often covered by mountain birch and ancient coniferous forests.

Coast and sea

National parks along the coast offer great contrasts. Skellefteåns sandbanks rising from the sea, Blå Jungfrun’s granite rocks, Gotland Sandön’s dunes and the lush forests of Ängsö. As of September 2009, there will be a new view, Kosterhavets rocky south and open sea.

The difference between national parks and nature reserves

SWEDEN WAS THE FIRST COUNTRY IN EUROPE to adopt a nature conservation act and to establish national parks. This happened in 1909. The idea then, as well as now, was that pristine nature should be preserved for present and future generations. Nature conservation has developed since then and is now a matter of both preserving and enjoying the diversity of our nature in a sustainable way. It is not costly, as individuals and for society as a whole, to look after the precious nature we have.

National parks or nature reserve?

Today there are two main ways to protect nature in Sweden, as a national park or as a nature reserve. Both of these are included in the Environmental Code, but the national park signifies a stronger form of protection than the nature reserve.

National parks

The Government and the Riksdag make decisions about establishing national parks, which must be in state-owned land. The national parks constitute large, unique areas representative of Swedish landscape types. The parks should be accessible for outdoor recreational interests.

Nature reserves

The decision to establish a nature reserve is taken by the County Administrative Board and must be based on consultation with landowners and other parties concerned. The land may be publicly or privately owned. Nature reserves may consist of small or large areas. Many nature reserves are established in order to preserve natural habitats and species that live there, whereas others are established in order to promote outdoor life – or for both reasons.

Establishing and managing national parks

The Swedish Environmental Protection Agency bears the main responsibility for nature protection in Sweden and prepares decisions made by the Government and the Riksdag for the establishment of new national parks. The Swedish Environmental Protection Agency has made a national park plan of suitable areas. The 21 county administrative boards in the country are normally responsible for the administration of national parks and nature reserves but some national parks are administrated by special trusts.

Information about the National Parks

During 2009 we are celebrating Nature’s Year to commemorate 100 years of Swedish national parks and nature conservation. In 1909, Riksdagen established the first nine national parks in Sweden.

In this booklet we present all of Sweden’s national parks and the fantastic nature you will see in them. On our websites you will find more information about each national park, including maps, activities and links to nearby tourist offices.

www.swedishparks.se/nationalparks
www.lansstyrelsen.se
www.naturensar.se

Nature’s Year

In 1909, Sweden introduced its first ever nature conservation act. At the same time, the Riksdag made a decision to found nine national parks – the first national parks in Europe! To celebrate the centenary we have designated 2009 as Nature’s Year. Lots of activities you can participate in are being organised throughout the country. Come out and enjoy our beautiful nature! Read more on www.naturensar.se
The finest nature we have

National Park System - The very finest examples of Sweden’s natural landscapes. This is where the most precious parts of our nature heritage are preserved for the sake of nature itself and for future generations to come.

Many valuable areas still remain to be protected. This takes place above all through the establishment of nature reserves, national parks and many of them are tourist attractions which include the Great Barrier Reef in Australia, Grand Canyon of the United States and the Galapagos Islands in Ecuador.

In addition to the national parks, we have more than 3,200 nature reserves. The total area of nature conservation areas in Sweden is almost 54,000 square kilometers, or 12 percent of the total area of the country, which corresponds to the average percentage of conservation areas in the world.

Our national parks in figures