

CO-OPERATION IS THE KEY TO SUCCESS

Management is a co-operative effort involving numerous actors. The restoration of overgrown meadows starts with clearing. Local service providers are used to remove trees which have taken over the meadows. Volunteers are also an invaluable help. Volunteer camps are organised by, for example, WWF and the Finnish Association for Nature Conservation.

Management is continued with grazing and mowing. The owners of grazing livestock are making an invaluable contribution to the preservation of biodiversity and the landscape. Some 20,000 cows, sheep and horses are hard at work every summer, grazing in nature protection areas. Mowing is currently so rare that each and every area to be mowed is considered vital.

Farmers, organisations and even private persons can receive funding for the restoration and management. Centres for Economic Development, Transport and the Environment (ELY Centres) play a key role by granting funding as well as setting guidelines and ensuring oversight. Various national and EU-funded projects are indispensable, particularly in the early stages of restoration efforts. Guidelines and planning assistance is available from agricultural advisory bodies, such as ProAgria and The Rural Women's Advisory Organisation.



Photo: Katja Raatikainen

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

NATURE CONSERVATION AT METSÄHALLITUS:
www.metsa.fi/web/en/nature-conservation

VOLUNTEER ACTIVITIES AND SHEPHERDS IN
NATURE PROTECTION AREAS:
www.nationalparks.fi/en/volunteerwork

CONTRACT GRAZING AND GRAZING BANK:
www.laidunpankki.fi

AGRICULTURAL FUNDING SCHEMES:
www.mavi.fi/en

SPECIES AND HABITATS:
www.ymparisto.fi/en-US/Nature

NATURAL TREASURE TROVES

TRADITIONAL RURAL BIOTOPES IN FINNISH NATURE PROTECTION AREAS

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PARADISES OF BIODIVERSITY

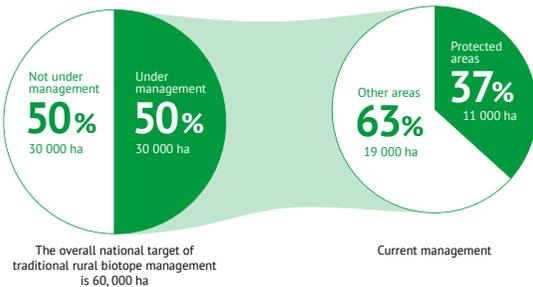
Beautiful meadows, wooded pastures and grazed woodlands, otherwise known as traditional rural biotopes, are some of our most diverse and most endangered natural resources. The species found in these biotopes are ancient, dating back to the plains formed after the last Ice Age. In the 1900s, the area occupied by meadows shrank drastically to less than a percent of the area previously comprised of meadowlands. This led to a rapid decline in species. Today, a quarter of our endangered species in Finland live primarily in our traditional rural biotopes. Colourful butterflies flying above flowery summer meadows, busy bumblebees and wading birds in coastal meadows are part of our unique and precious nature, which needs our help to survive.



Photo: Maija Mussaari

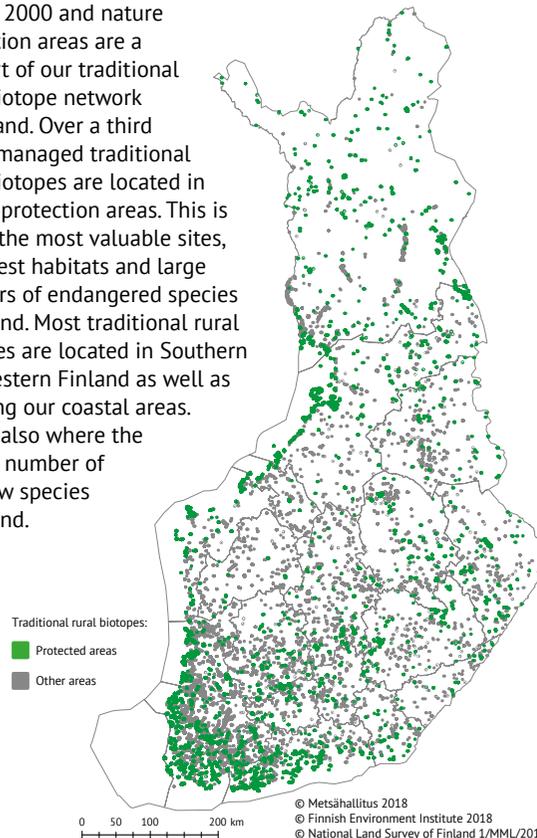
INCREASING THE AREA OF MEADOWS IS VITAL TO THE SURVIVAL OF SPECIES

Meadows will not survive without management. The national conservation target for traditional rural biotopes has not yet been achieved. Even some of our most valuable meadows are still without proper management. This is why immediate action is needed to stem the loss of species. In addition to increasing the amount of meadow area, proper management is of the utmost importance. When cows and sheep are brought into meadows in the spring early enough before the grass dries too much, there will be enough feed for the entire summer, but still the meadow remains low-growing. Many meadow species, such as the familiar bluebells and wild strawberries, need plenty of light and space to compete with other, larger species.



OVER A THIRD ARE FOUND IN NATURE PROTECTION AREAS

The meadows and pastures found in Natura 2000 and nature protection areas are a key part of our traditional rural biotope network in Finland. Over a third of the managed traditional rural biotopes are located in nature protection areas. This is where the most valuable sites, the rarest habitats and large numbers of endangered species are found. Most traditional rural biotopes are located in Southern and Western Finland as well as all along our coastal areas. This is also where the largest number of meadow species are found.



METSÄHALLITUS IS THE LARGEST ORGANIZER OF MANAGEMENT

Metsähallitus Parks & Wildlife Finland is responsible for the management and use of the entire network of state-owned nature protection areas. On privately-owned nature protection areas, Metsähallitus works in co-operation with land owners and ELY Centres. Metsähallitus plans, implements and sets guidelines for management efforts, also in nature protection area meadows and pastures. With the co-operation of livestock owners, landowners, rural entrepreneurs, advisory bodies, volunteers and the government, we will be able to restore our rural landscape and meadowlands to their full glory!



Photo: Katja Raatikainen



Photos: Outi Ala-Härkönen

MEADOWS & PASTURES – NATURE’S TREASURE TROVES

BIODIVERSITY ON THE REBOUND

Meadows, wooded pastures and grazed woodlands are unique environments, each with their very own species. Management ensures biodiversity by preserving habitats vital to these species. Biodiversity also maintains human immunity to a host of diseases.

BENEFITS FOR LOCAL ECONOMIES

Livestock owners benefit from summer pastures in protected areas, when their fields are freed up for other uses. This environmentally-friendly production method gives a boost for marketing, when consumers are offered ecologically sustainable products. Traditional rural biotopes also generate work for other rural businesses engaged in nature management and tourism.

MORE OPPORTUNITIES FOR RECREATION

In nature protection areas, there are hiking trails near local sites that also allow hikers to see grazing animals in their element. Coastal meadows are popular birdwatching sites. One's own relationship with nature can also be strengthened by participating in management work, for example by volunteering.

FOOD FROM MEADOW TO TABLE

Meat production in local meadows and other natural pastures is far more environmentally-friendly than production in tilling fields or using imported meat. People living in nearby population centres can follow the lives of these grazing animals and gain a greater understanding of the origin of their food.

LANDSCAPES AND CULTURAL HERITAGE ARE PRESERVED

Traditional agricultural landscapes are an important part of the Finnish cultural history. Grazing animals help to maintain the landscapes. Also, ancient ruins are sometimes discovered beneath the mat of dead grass when meadows are restored. Managed landscapes make rural tourism even more attractive.

NUTRIENTS AND WATER CIRCULATE – CARBON IS SEQUESTERED

Covered by vegetation the whole year round, traditional rural biotopes retain water and sequester carbon. Grazing and mowing removes more nutrients from meadows than they receive. This reduces run-off and the eutrophication of watersheds. The wood produced during clearing can be used for energy, building or the manufacture of wood products, and mowing biomass for improving soil condition.

THE GENOME IS PRESERVED FOR POSTERITY

Many wild cousins of our domesticated crops live in traditional rural biotopes. If necessary, their genomes can be used to improve the hardiness of cultivated plants as our climate changes. Landrace animals are exceptionally effective managers of nature, and traditional rural biotopes offer them excellent pastures to graze.

HOME OF USEFUL INSECTS

Traditional rural biotopes offer a wide range of feeding and mating habitats for insects. From meadows, pollinators and predatory insects move around to nearby fields, improving crop yields and reducing pests.