



National Parks Finland

# Benefits for Nature and People



METSÄHALLITUS



# Our impact is growing — how about funding?

The importance of nature to Finns was very visible as Finland celebrated 100 years of independence. More than 300,000 people participated in the Nature Day events coordinated by National Parks Finland and implemented by an extensive network of partners.

**H**ossa became Finland's 40th national park, and the international media focused a lot of attention on the role of nature in Finland's centenary celebrations.

Last year, visitor numbers in national parks exceeded the 3 million mark for the first time – in a country with a population of 5.5 million. This represented an increase



of 10% over the previous year. The local economic impacts of visits to our nature and historic sites increased even more, i.e. with 11%, reaching 258 million euros.

**METSÄHALLITUS** is a state-owned organisation managing a third of Finland's area. Parks & Wildlife Finland is a unit of Metsähallitus, consisting of National Parks Finland and Wildlife Service Finland.

National Parks Finland manages protected areas and historic sites and provides free facilities for visitors.

Visitors do not just leave money in the local economy, they also return home full of wellbeing. More than 87% of them feel that the visits have fairly significant or very significant impacts on health and wellbeing.

National Parks Finland's projects were impressive. In 2017, an investment of just under 0.5 million euros in funding from the state budget resulted in more than 1.5 million euros of external funding for nature conservation projects that we implemented with support from the European Union's LIFE fund. Together with our partners, we improved the state of inland waters, restored wetlands and light and fire environments to their natural state, and enhanced the protection of the endangered Saimaa ringed seal.

However, the popularity of nature sites and nature tourism cannot continue to grow without investments in the quality and maintenance of facilities at destinations. This is why National Parks Finland has cut back on the facilities at less popular sites in order to maintain the services at busier sites.

In spite of this, some on-the-ground facilities are already in poor or deteriorating condition. The accumulated repair debt is 44.2 million euros at nature sites and 72 million euros at historic sites. The challenges of maintaining facilities and sites must be resolved in order to safeguard the growth in nature tourism and the values of our unique national heritage.



Finland was the first country in the world to raise its flag in honour of nature. Söderskär old lighthouse island off the metropolitan coast welcomed visitors on Nature Day in August 2017. JARI KOSTET

Timo Tanninen, Director,  
Parks & Wildlife Finland, Metsähallitus

# Healthy parks – healthy people



The Pallas–Yllästunturi and Pyhä–Luosto National Parks celebrated their 80<sup>th</sup> anniversaries in 2018. MIKKO KARJALAINEN / VASTAVALO.FI

**Diverse natural environments provide habitats for many different species. Such settings are also a significant source of social, physical and mental wellbeing for people. For Finland, natural areas and their facilities for visitors also represent a major asset in terms of tourism.**

**N**ational Parks Finland protects and manages valuable nature and historic sites all around the country. We use public funds to provide good basic services for outdoor recreation.

This encourages everyone to get out into natural settings, and creates favourable conditions for business activities related to nature tourism. All of our partners are committed to the principles of the sustainable use of nature. Visitors buy local services and produce economic activity.

We cooperate with nature conservation and wellbeing sector organisations, both

locally and nationally. The natural environment increases resistance to disease and allergies.



The Saimaa ringed seal population is recovering. During winters with little snow, more and more pups are being born in breeding dens the mothers have made in artificial snowdrifts created by National Parks Finland and volunteers in the Saimaa Seal LIFE Project. TIMO SEPPÄLÄINEN

## NATIONAL PARKS ARE FOR EVERYONE

Finland's 40 national parks have been established to protect and highlight our precious nature. National parks are open free of charge to everyone who wants to admire our natural treasures on a relaxed picnic or a more demanding hike.

Visitor numbers topped 3 million in 2017. The benefits to visitors were increased fitness and great experiences, while the surrounding regions gained 206.5 million euros and 2,055 person-years of employment.

• [www.nationalparks.fi](http://www.nationalparks.fi)

• [www.metsa.fi/web/en/economicbenefitsofnationalparks](http://www.metsa.fi/web/en/economicbenefitsofnationalparks)





**Funding of € 0.5 M from the state budget resulted in € 1.5 M of external funding for nature conservation projects that we realised with support from the European Union's LIFE fund in 2017.**

The European Union covers 60% of the nearly € 9 M budget for restoration measures in the Hydrology LIFE Project.

## Productive conservation work and services based on demand



The rare *Pulsatilla patens anemone* benefited from translocation in the Light & Fire LIFE Project. JOUNI PENTTINEN

**National Parks Finland manages state-owned protected lands and waters throughout Finland, securing nature conservation and providing sustainable facilities and services for visitors to these areas.**

**W**e work using public funds under the supervision of the Ministry of the Environment, the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, and Parliament.

We are constantly building up our knowledge of Finland's threatened species and habitats, and our rich cultural heritage. We also compile statistics on visitor numbers, and review visitor feedback. We target our management measures cost-

effectively to ensure that Finland's valuable natural and cultural features are preserved and people can enjoy them.

### **Project funding multiplies state money**

We have a wide range of externally funded projects. However, we need state budget funding for the self-financing portion. We multiply this with project financing. EU LIFE funds enable us to realise large, multi-year conservation projects together with our local partners. Through the Freshabit IP LIFE Project, 30 partners work under the supervision of National Parks Finland to enhance nature conservation and nature tourism in selected areas with ecologically



valuable inland waters. The Hydrology LIFE Project safeguards peatlands, small water bodies and important bird lakes in 103 Natura 2000 areas. The Light & Fire LIFE Project is restoring sunlit habitats, including esker slopes and sand dunes, to benefit their typical flora and fauna.

We also use external funding and partnerships to enhance historic sites and our services around Finland.

### Wide-ranging services to meet demand

Our nature sites and cultural heritage sites have six million visitors every year, while our nature centres welcome about a million visitors. Many visitors discover these places with help from our popular websites [nationalparks.fi](http://nationalparks.fi) and [excursionmap.fi](http://excursionmap.fi). We maintain facilities including nature trails and public jetties, campfire sites and wilderness cabins, ski-trails and snowmobile routes.

We particularly strive to develop services in the most popular areas. We have



The medieval Raseborg Castle Ruin is a popular site for events, but it also requires constant maintenance. VENLA LUOSTARINEN

increasingly been outsourcing such work and collaborating with local firms.

However, some of the on-the-ground facilities and service structures are in poor condition and investments are required to

maintain popular destinations. The accumulated repair debt is 44 million euros at nature sites and 72 million euros at historic sites.



We have developed popular mountain biking trails in national parks. SAARA AIRAKSINEN





Metsähallitus works actively to assess the state of marine nature in, for example, the five national parks located in maritime areas and the Kvarken Archipelago World Heritage Site. *ESSI KESKINEN*

## Parks & Wildlife Finland

**Metsähallitus is a state-owned enterprise responsible for managing the country's land and water areas. It has business activities and public administration tasks. Parks & Wildlife Finland is in charge of public administration tasks and comprises National Parks Finland and Wildlife Service Finland.**

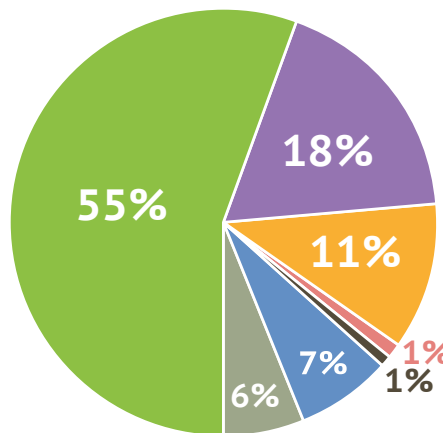
### National Parks Finland

- manages state-owned nature reserves and historic sites
- provides free facilities for visitors to these areas
- compiles GPS data on conservation issues in protected areas
- maintains snowmobile tracks and sells snowmobile permits
- participates in international collaboration on nature conservation.

**Wildlife Service Finland** runs state-owned hunting grounds and fishing waters, also selling fishing and hunting permits and supervising these activities.

### Public funding of our administrative work in 2017

Most of the P&WF activities are financed from government funds, though we also earn income from rentals and sales of fishing and hunting permits.



- Ministry of the Environment 34.0 M€
- Income from rentals & permit sales 11.3 M€
- Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry 7.0 M€
- Ministry of Employment and the Economy 0.5 M€
- Ministry of Justice 0.8 M€
- EU project funding 4.2 M€
- Other funding 3.6 M€

**Total funding allocated to our administrative work in 2017: 61.4 M€**

## National Parks Finland 2017

**National Parks Finland achieved all the targets set by Parliament for our activities.**

- We managed or restored areas of ecologically valuable habitat totalling 5,746 hectares (including 4,600 hectares of traditional farmland habitats).
- We surveyed 6,400 occurrences of species.
- We restored several important historic sites, also developing related services for visitors.
- Our national parks welcomed 296,500, or 10%, more visitors than in 2017.
- Our web services at Luontoon.fi (incl. the English version Nationalparks.fi) were used two million times, while our Retkikartta.fi (Excursionmap.fi) site was visited more than four million times.
- We had 606 valid cooperation agreements with nature tourism enterprises.
- We provided useful work experience for inmates of open prisons (approximately 51 person-years).
- Volunteers made valuable contributions to our work in 2017, totalling about 26 person-years.

[www.metsa.fi/web/en/parksandwildlifefinland](http://www.metsa.fi/web/en/parksandwildlifefinland)  
[www.nationalparks.fi](http://www.nationalparks.fi)  
[www.excursionmap.fi](http://www.excursionmap.fi)

## Areas managed by National Parks Finland

- 40 national parks (incl. the newest, Hossa, established on 17.6.2017), 19 strict nature reserves, and more than 700 other statutory nature reserves
- 12 wilderness areas in Finnish Lapland, 5 national hiking areas, and more than 3,000 other sites protected under various conservation programmes
- approx. 380 legally protected buildings and structures and about 2,000 ancient sites
- Some 3.6 million hectares of state-owned lands and 0.8 million hectares of state-owned waters.

## Visitor numbers

- National parks: 3,104,700
  - National hiking areas 237,900
  - Historic sites: 730,800
  - Nature centres: 1,198,900
  - Other popular attractions: 676,200
- Total number of visits in 2017: 5,948,500**

## Facilities and services

Customer surveys assessing satisfaction levels regarding nature centres and outdoor facilities show an average rating of 4.3 (on a scale of 1–5).



National parks, hiking areas and nature centres entice people to enjoy nature all around Finland.

During 2017, we maintained over 6,000 km of trails and other routes, as well as more than 2,000 dry toilets. Planned reductions in the provision of campfire sites will target sites that are seldom used and account for less than 3% of all visits.

## Working throughout the country

National Parks Finland and Wildlife Service Finland work a total of some 500 person-years all over the country. We also employ many local contractors and enterprises engaged in tourism, hospitality and catering. Volunteers make valuable contributions by collecting information on species, restoring nature and organising events.

**National Parks Finland's nature conservation work is impressive both in terms of its results and when measured in euros. National Parks Finland works in close cooperation with a variety of stakeholders and makes use of digitalisation.**

PENTTI HYTTINEN,

DIRECTOR GENERAL, METSÄHALLITUS

## Metsähallitus organisation

MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE AND FORESTRY

MINISTRY OF THE ENVIRONMENT

Metsähallitus Board of Directors

Director General  
Units

### BUSINESS OPERATIONS

**Metsähallitus Forestry Ltd**

Management of state-owned multiple-use forests and sale of timber

**Metsähallitus Property Development**

Holiday and commercial plots, extraction and wind power project development

### PARKS & WILDLIFE FINLAND

**National Parks Finland**  
Management of national parks and other protected areas and cultural heritage sites, hiking services

**Wildlife Service Finland**  
Managing and supervising hunting and fishing on state-owned lands and waters

Siemen Forelia Oy | MH-Kivi Oy





# National Parks Finland

## HEALTH FROM NATURE

- When exploring natural settings people feel fitter, more positive and less stressed.
- Just 15–20 minutes in a natural setting is enough to lower your blood pressure.
- Over 87% of visitors felt that spending time at the sites had significant impacts on their health.
- Easy trails, adequate signposting and good online services encourage people of all ages and capabilities to explore natural areas.

## INCOME FROM NATURE

- Every euro of public funds invested in Finland's national parks by the authorities brings approximately ten-fold benefits to local economies.
- Finland's national parks and hiking areas benefit local economies by more than 250 million euros a year.
- Well-managed facilities for outdoor recreation contribute to Finland's positive image as a great destination and attract more tourists to our country.

## LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

- Our child-friendly facilities encourage families and schools to bring kids to our areas to experience and learn about nature. We also provide opportunities for volunteers to work in natural settings.
- Our active management of Finland's ecologically valuable areas contributes to the conservation of global biodiversity.
- The importance of outdoor recreation in promoting public health will continue increasing.

*nationalparks.fi*

The website provides up-to-date information on the national parks and other hiking destinations.

It contains practical tips for everyone from disabled people or families with small children to experienced trekkers.

Hike and find recreation in these magnificent spots!

Experiencing nature relieves stress, speeds up rehabilitation and helps immigrants to feel at home in a new country.

[www.nationalparks.fi](http://www.nationalparks.fi)

[www.nationalparks.fi/hikinginfinland/healthandwellbeing](http://www.nationalparks.fi/hikinginfinland/healthandwellbeing)