



Hunting

Hunting provided much-needed extra food in the archipelago, and was primarily pursued for meat. Hunting water birds used to be a significant way – next after seal hunting – to get fresh meat onto the archipelago household’s table. Male water birds were hunted in the spring as the females were laying their eggs and keeping the bird population going. Seagull’s eggs were also collected.



DECOY- THE BLACK GROUSE. PHOTO: HANS HÄSTBACKA

The most primitive method was the so-called passive hunting, in which the animals were lured into traps, holes or snare wires. Traps that kill or capture a game animal with a weight are a very old type of hunting equipment, and were originally used for hunting a number of different animals. In his text on Malax from 1767, Erik Klingius describes the way peasants caught capercaillie, black grouse, hazel grouse and willow grouse using traps.

Snare wires were used to catch both large and small animals. The hunters laid snare trails that could have hundreds of wires and led into the woods. The snare wires were first made from horsehair – later from brass wire – and were smeared with fir twigs and pine resin to scent them. A hare trap was set in the garden and a bird trap in the woods.

Traps of various sizes were used for hunting bears, wolves, lynxes, pine mar-

tens, squirrels, hares, otters and seals. The traps had to be treated so that they didn’t give off a metallic smell and scare the game away, so they were burned and smeared with fir twigs and resin.

Active hunting was practised with spears, clubs and bows, which were later developed into crossbows. All of these methods lost their importance when firearms were introduced, with rifles and shotguns starting to dominate all kinds of hunting. Bird hunting had the primary role in the 20th century and you can still find some of the mounds the hunters laid behind on the islands. Stuffed birds were floated on the water to lure water birds into shooting range. Forest birds were hunted using decoys that were placed in trees or on long poles in the tree tops. In the late winter and spring, the hunting took place in the birds’ display grounds, but only male birds were shot.

Hares were shot whenever there was a chance – people did not go out to hunt

hares for the whole day. It was not that common to use hounds – they were mainly used by the bourgeois hunting parties.

Fur Animal Hunting

Animals hunted for their fur included squirrel, fox, muskrat, stoat and otter. At certain times, it was even profitable to hunt fur animals. Squirrel skins used to be quite sought-after in Finland.

Fox skins could bring a good income: in the 1920s, a good fox skin was worth the price of a milk cow.

Stoats were hunted with instant-kill traps in the winter when the fur was white, suitable hunting spots being fields, ditches, barns and drying barns. The Ostrobothnia coat of arms displays six white stoats on a blue background, which shows how much the animal was valued.

After being introduced in 1919, the muskrat became an important fur animal. It was hunted in the spring using leghold traps and cage traps.

The otter was a more challenging animal to catch as it could move both on land and in water, and travel long distances under the ice, in shallow shore waters, and between the ice and the water along the shore. Its pelt was extremely valuable.

Kvarken Archipelago Nature Reserve

- The Kvarken archipelago was inscribed on the World Heritage list in July 2006.
- Total area 194 400 ha of which 85 % is sea.
- Metsähallitus, Natural Heritage Services is responsible for most of the maintenance of hiking trails and facilities in the area.

