

Connecting nature pearls along the Green Belt of Fennoscandia



A green corridor of more than
1000 km along the border

Kivakkatunturi fell, wilderness of Paanajärvi National Park (RU) © Metsähallitus Parks & Wildlife Finland

Activities and Results

- Transboundary parks implemented projects funded by EU's neighbourhood and cross-border-cooperation programmes including: raising awareness and knowledge of cross-border nature protection areas, developing new networks, enhancing sustainable use of natural resources, monitoring joint populations of border-crossing animals and creating new products for the promotion of Green Belt of Fennoscandia (GBF).
- Transboundary monitoring of border-crossing species produces valuable data for nature conservation and management of populations, e.g. joint brown bear monitoring every 4th year, annual water bird registration are considered best practices in Pasvik-Inari. Oulanka-Paanajärvi National Parks share migratory brown trout population, intensively monitored in an EU's ENPI Karelia CBC-funded project in 2013-2014.
- Networking of protected area managers is important, but so is bringing together target groups. Teachers and their pupils in northern Norway, Russia and Finland cooperate under Phenology of North Calotte theme. Students and teachers from upper secondary schools and managers of Oulanka-Paanajärvi National Parks created and put together best practice examples for international youth camps in protected areas, emphasising natural and cultural topics.
- Communication on the Green Belt of Fennoscandia, its purpose and benefits helped familiarise local people, decision makers, tourists and others with the idea and network. New advertisement and documentary films about transboundary parks were produced, showing the pearls of nature and their cross-border history and culture. A travelling exhibition about natural and cultural values of the Green Belt of Fennoscandia circulates in visitor centres, libraries and schools in all three countries complemented by a board game.

PASVIK-INARI
TRILATERAL PARK

Finland/Norway/Russia

OULANKA - PAANAJÄRVI
NATIONAL PARKS

Finland/Russia

Summary

The Green Belt of Fennoscandia (GBF) is an ecological network of existing and planned protected areas situated in the border areas of three countries: Finland, Russia and Norway. It extends from the Baltic Sea to the Barents Sea.

The existing nature protection areas along the national borders form the physical core areas and base of the GBF. Transboundary Parks, like Pasvik-Inari Trilateral Park and Oulanka-Paanajärvi National Parks, having long-lasting and active cross-border cooperation, are at the heart of the Green Belt development. They are important cornerstones for the ecological connectivity of the region, providing green corridors for local as well as migrating species.

Biodiversity of the region also benefits the local economy, culture and social well-being in the area. The functional GBF approach is inclusive towards different networks of regional and municipal level actors: Protected areas of differing status, scientific institutions, enterprises like sustainable nature tourism businesses, NGO's, and other bodies, which operate in the cross-border area cooperate to create a network of biodiversity-rich pearls along the Green Belt of Fennoscandia.

Contributing to ecological connectivity in Europe's northern-most regions, the GBF can be considered an excellent example of Green Infrastructure. Not only does it take the physical connectivity of land into account but it is also a tool to create common mind-sets in people living and working along the borders in order to achieve better biodiversity protection and sustainable local livelihoods.

Green Belt of Fennoscandia

A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on cooperation for the development of Green Belt of Fennoscandia was signed by the Ministries of Environment of Finland, Norway and Russia in 2010. These three countries commonly turn the Green Belt of Fennoscandia into a model area where sustainable development is supported through transboundary cooperation.

In the Strategy for the Green Belt of Fennoscandia until 2020 the common goals for future cooperation will be defined. The activities used to implement the strategy will be based on projects and mainstreaming of biodiversity policies into society and cross-border cooperation.

The Green Belt of Fennoscandia forms the northernmost part of the larger network European Green Belt. The European Green Belt spans 24 countries, reaching along around 12.500 kilometers from the Barents Sea to the Baltic Countries, from there through Central Europe to the Black, Ionian and Adriatic Seas. The vision for the European Green Belt, states: "our shared natural heritage along the line of the former Iron Curtain, is to be conserved and restored as an ecological network connecting high-value natural and cultural landscapes while respecting the economic, social and cultural needs of local communities".

Pasvik  Inari
Trilateral Park



Pasvik-Inari Trilateral Park

Pasvik-Inari Trilateral Park entity was established in 2008 as a result of the long-term cooperation between nature protection authorities in Norway, Russia and Finland dating back to early 1990's. The Trilateral Park consists of three nature protection areas in Norway, one in Russia and one in Finland. The total area of Pasvik-Inari Trilateral Park is 1889 km². Main themes of the international cooperation are nature monitoring, environmental education and promotion of sustainable nature-based tourism.

The lush valley of the Pasvik River stretches from Lake Inari in the south towards the Barents Sea in the north, appearing as a vital nerve in the mosaic landscape of small lakes, mires, wetlands and virgin Taiga forests. The region comprises a unique nature system where European, eastern and arctic species meet. Here, some of the species reach the ultimate limits of their distribution. The area is also an important nesting and resting place for a large number of migratory birds.

The Pasvik-Inari region is a meeting point for different cultures too. Several Sámi people live in the area; the Northern, Inari and Skolt Sámi. Since the Early Middle Ages, Finns, Norwegians and Russians also have settled in the region. Although different cultures coexist in the area and have learned a lot from each other, they have each retained their distinctive traditions.

Oulanka-Paanajärvi National Parks

Oulanka and Paanajärvi National parks have a common history since the establishment of the latter, in 1992. Together they form a reasonably large (about 1340 km²) wilderness-like area that has attracted scientists, artists and tourists since late 1800's. The twin park is in its own class for biological diversity: Oulanka harbours more Natura 2000 habitats than any other National Park in Finland. Also, the variety of habitats contributes to the number of species: this region is one of the hot spots in Finland, especially considering its northern location.

The cultural history of Oulanka-Paanajärvi shows features of a transition zone between Finnish and Karelian traditions. Originally populated by forest Sámi people, it developed in the 1700's rapidly to finally be a large village along Lake Paanajärvi shores. Oulanka remained largely unpopulated, which eventually was a blessing for today's nature loving enthusiasts. Today, traces of past settlement in Paanajärvi are clearly seen in fields and pastures, which have remained unforested. They are an important element of the cultural landscape of Paanajärvi.

Cooperation between both parks focuses on development of good visitor services, and joint communication. The cultural heritage of Paanajärvi has been cherished: several buildings of both Karelian and Finnish style have been reconstructed.

Key messages / Lessons learned

- 1 Nature protection areas, which are physically connected to cross-border protection areas, can be considered as such Green Infrastructure.
- 2 Twin parks and trilateral parks along the Green Belt of Fennoscandia form a chain of hot spots for biodiversity and species protection, but as well for international cooperation and sustainable development benefitting local communities.
- 3 People make the difference and a cooperation work! Open and transparent communication increase mutual understanding of different cultures and work environments. That again contributes to solving many of the numerous common challenges: differing legislation and level of protection status, many languages, different terminology and methodologies, working culture, funding issues, border restrictions and formalities, possible conflicts between different interest groups and stakeholders, effects of water regulation and pollution issues etc.

FURTHER INFORMATION

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