

Biosphere Reserve Kristianstads Vattenrike®

ACTIVITIES 2009



Kristianstads Vattenrike

Biospere Reserve



PHOTO: PATRIK OLOFSSON/N

There are biosphere reserves all over the world. These protected areas, officially recognised by the UN agency UNESCO, demonstrate how to tackle the practical challenges of combining nature conservation with development.

Kristianstads Vattenrike Biosphere Reserve, established in 2005, includes the greater part of the Municipality of Kristianstad, from the forests to Hanöbukten Bay with the rich wetlands of the River Helge å and the town of Kristianstad at its heart.

Extent: Greater part of the Municipality of Kristianstad.

Area: 104,375 ha. Land and lakes, 90,515 ha; marine area, 13,860 ha. (Total land area of municipality: 134,620 ha.)

Population: approx. 71,000 incl. approx. 30,000 in the Kristianstad urban region. (Total population of municipality: 77,000)

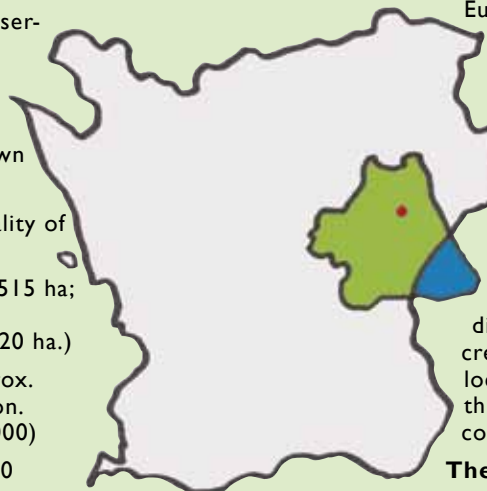
Species worthy of preservation: 20 globally red-listed species, including corn-crake and great raft spider, and some 60 EU listed species, including thick-shelled river mussel and sand pink (*Dianthus arenarius*). Around 700 nationally red-listed species in all, a high figure compared to other areas of Sweden.

Approx. 30% of red-listed species in the province of Skåne occur in the biosphere reserve. The wetlands are home to 120–130 regularly breeding species of bird. In all, some 260 species have been recorded. At least 38 different species of fish have been caught in the inland waters: 32, including European catfish and loach, spawn in fresh water.

Development projects: Local projects include biogas for municipal buses, wetlands ecotourism and the development of products from the wet grasslands. Biological and recreational values are being developed hand in hand on one golf course in the sandy grasslands.

Zoning: The area's status as a biosphere reserve has not led to any new rules or directives. Zoning is a tool for prioritising and creating resources for working together with local residents, financial backers, etc. to avert threats and develop the natural values of the core areas and buffer zones.

Thematic landscapes: Ten thematic landscapes with high natural values have been identified. Work will progress to all ten themes, but to date the main focus for conservation, development and support has been on the wetlands. Now, however, projects on the sandy grasslands have also commenced in earnest.



The year in review – 2009

As this year marks the 20th anniversary of our operations, it feels natural to delve a little deeper than usual into the past.

On 1 September it was 20 years since work with Kristianstads Vattenrike formally began, although a model for financing and guidelines for the scope and objectives of the project had originally been formulated in 1988. The Nature School also celebrated its 20th birthday in 2009, the result of an initiative presented to the press at Färlöv School, with the help of the then County Governor, Einar Larsson, on 1 September 1989.

In the intervening 20 years many of the original visions have been realised and more are in the pipeline. Today most people see our local rivers and lakes as resources, even if it may still take time for them to learn how to take care of these natural values to ensure their long-term sustainability.

What we called a “wetlands centre” back in 1989 is now taking shape as the naturum Vattenriket visitor centre, due for completion in autumn 2010. Many people wanted to experience the wetlands from the water and, after examining numerous proposals, we engaged the help of a private entrepreneur to initiate boat excursions on the river in 1994. Today there are also fantastic opportunities to enjoy summer and winter boat safaris in Kristianstads Vattenrike.

Our strategy for arousing public interest in what used to be dismissed as “waterlogged countryside” is based on making these areas accessible, so that people can experience their natural values first-hand without compromising them. This involves, for example, building boardwalks, outdoor museums and bird-watching towers. Early initiatives included the Canal House Outdoor Museum and the Linnérundan Trail, which links central Kristianstad to the seasonally inundated grasslands at Isterinäset and Lillö.

In the early 1990s, with the help of job creation programmes, we were able to transform the castle ruins at Lillö from the vandalised eyesore of the 1970s and 80s into an attractive visitor site and a venue for exhibitions and various events. During the past year, for example, Lillö hosted an evening get-together as part of an international conference on eco-system services.

The outdoor museums at Åsums ängar and Pulken are excellent places to see eagles and cranes, and when we built these visitor sites in the 1990s, we also incorporated long wheelchair ramps. In recent years we have made many conscious efforts to improve access to Kristianstads Vattenrike, particularly at Pulken, Ekenabben and Norra Lingenäset.

For years we have also been working with landowners, authorities and other stakeholders to develop the area's natural values – originally in the wetlands, but recently also in the sandy grasslands. This dialogue was an important criterion when Unesco in Paris approved our designation as a biosphere reserve.

The basis for all these activities, and indeed the appeal of Kristianstads Vattenrike itself, is the varied landscape with its many values, from forest to wetland, sandy grasslands to the coast and the sea beyond. In the future we will all need to lend a hand to encourage more people to become involved and to improve knowledge so that we can enjoy and develop the values of Kristianstads Vattenrike in a sustainable way.

Sven-Erik Magnusson

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Coordinator

Kristianstads Vattenrike

Biosphere Reserve



The weather year – 2009

After two very mild years, 2009 was more normal in terms of temperature. When the temperature plunged below -10° C on the night before 5 January, this was the first time we had experienced such cold since March 2006.

Spring was exceptionally dry, but with May came the rain. On average it rained every other day throughout the summer, but relatively high temperatures meant that few people experienced the summer as a poor one. The rain continued into autumn, with an unusually wet and mild November, when the mean temperature for the month was higher than that in October. On 18 November a storm blew in with strong, westerly winds, and around 10 December the weather changed dramatically. The following weeks saw a steady fall in temperature. Five centimetres of snow fell on 22 December and although we had plus degrees on Christmas Eve, with a little goodwill, it's fair to say that Kristianstad had a White Christmas in 2009.



PHOTO: SVEN-ERIK MAGNUSSON

Flows in the River Helge å were not particularly high during the year, so the work of building the new visitor centre and excavating the lake there progressed smoothly and to schedule..

naturum Vattenriket



PHOTO: PATRIK OLOFSSON/N

When complete in autumn 2010, the visitor centre “naturum Vattenriket” (a name approved by Sweden’s Environmental Protection Agency) will be the gateway to Kristianstads Vattenrike’s many attractions. This activity centre for local residents, tourists, conference guests, schoolchildren, researchers and others will house exhibitions, an auditorium, Nature School, restaurant and other facilities.



PHOTO: SVEN-ERIK MAGNUSSON

Where dense thickets of willow once grew, a 1-hectare lake is being excavated in front of the new visitor centre. Some 10,500 cu.m. of sediment have been removed, in many places down to 1.5 metres below sea level, the average depth of the lake during the summer low-water season. There will be wonderful lake views from the centre’s large windows.



PHOTO: SVEN-ERIK MAGNUSSON

Here, piling work for a temporary bridge has extended halfway out into the River Helge å by the Tivoli Swimming Baths. All of the 1,000-plus wooden piles for the bridges that connect the visitor centre with the west bank and the city beyond will be removed once the 300-metre long pedestrian and cycle bridge is complete. .

Sandy grasslands

The outlook is bright on the sandy grasslands in Kristianstads Vattenrike. The high natural values there are attracting more and more attention at the same time as the Biosphere Office is intensifying cooperation with landowners, farmers, researchers, the County Administrative Board, Kristianstad Golf Club and other stakeholders. The aim is to preserve local species and make sustainable use of the natural values through recreation, outdoor activities and grazing.



Large Blue butterfly
(*Maculinea arion*)
PHOTO: PATRIK OLOFSSON/N

PHOTO: CARINA WETTEMARK

Clearing trees at Jarlstorp

The Biosphere Office has already made inventories at Åsumfältet. The old military shooting range has proved to be one of southern Sweden's prime sites for a host of threatened insects, including the beautiful but rare Large Blue butterfly (*Maculinea arion*).

One of the very finest sites, at Jarlstorp, risked becoming overgrown with self-seeded pines. Now many of these have been uprooted, and it is hoped that this will encourage breckland thyme and other flowering plants that are important for insects to become established here and thrive.

Nature Conservation Agreement

In 2009 the Biosphere Office and the County Administrative Board compiled documentation for two nature conservation agreements for Ripa sands. The intention is to preserve and reinforce the high natural values of these sandy, calcium-rich soils. These values are dependent on grazing and soils that are repeatedly disturbed and displaced as in the traditional rotational system of cultivation and fallow. The agreements will ensure that the area continues to be used in a way that benefits the many threatened species here. The initial agreement, the first of its kind in Skåne, was signed on 14 May.



FOTO: CARINA WETTEMARK

Wetland nature reserves in the lower reaches of the River Helge å

When work with Kristianstads Vattenrike first began in 1989, the focus was on the wetlands of international importance on either side of the lower reaches of the River Helge å (the Ramsar site). Various problems were identified, such as eutrophication leading to lakes becoming choked, reduced grazing and haymaking activities on the seasonally inundated grasslands, and declining populations of Black-tailed Godwit and other waders. It also became apparent that relatively small areas were protected as nature reserves and that public access to the wetlands would need to be improved.

These important issues have always been taken up in the rolling three-year activity programmes approved by the municipality and the Country Administrative Board, but new issues have also arisen over time, such as the brownification of the waters, the disappearance of rushes and the sudden death of eels.

Based on the priorities outlined by the activity programme, the Biosphere Office, the municipality and the Country Administrative Board have worked together to protect areas by creating nature reserves, producing knowledge summaries and conducting a dialogue with landowners and users about proposals for reserves and management plans, before making any final decisions.

In 1989 there were two reserves covering a total of 187 hectares. What was then the Norra Lingenäset reserve now forms part of the Näsby fält reserve. Today, just over 20 years later, there are nine reserves covering 2,519 hectares of state-owned, municipal and private land.

Decisions are also pending for a new 450-hectare nature reserve at Åsums ängar and Åsumallet. Further wetland areas form part of the municipal nature conservation fund or have been purchased by the Swedish Environmental Protection Agency in order to be protected as nature reserves.

PHOTO: HANS CRONERT



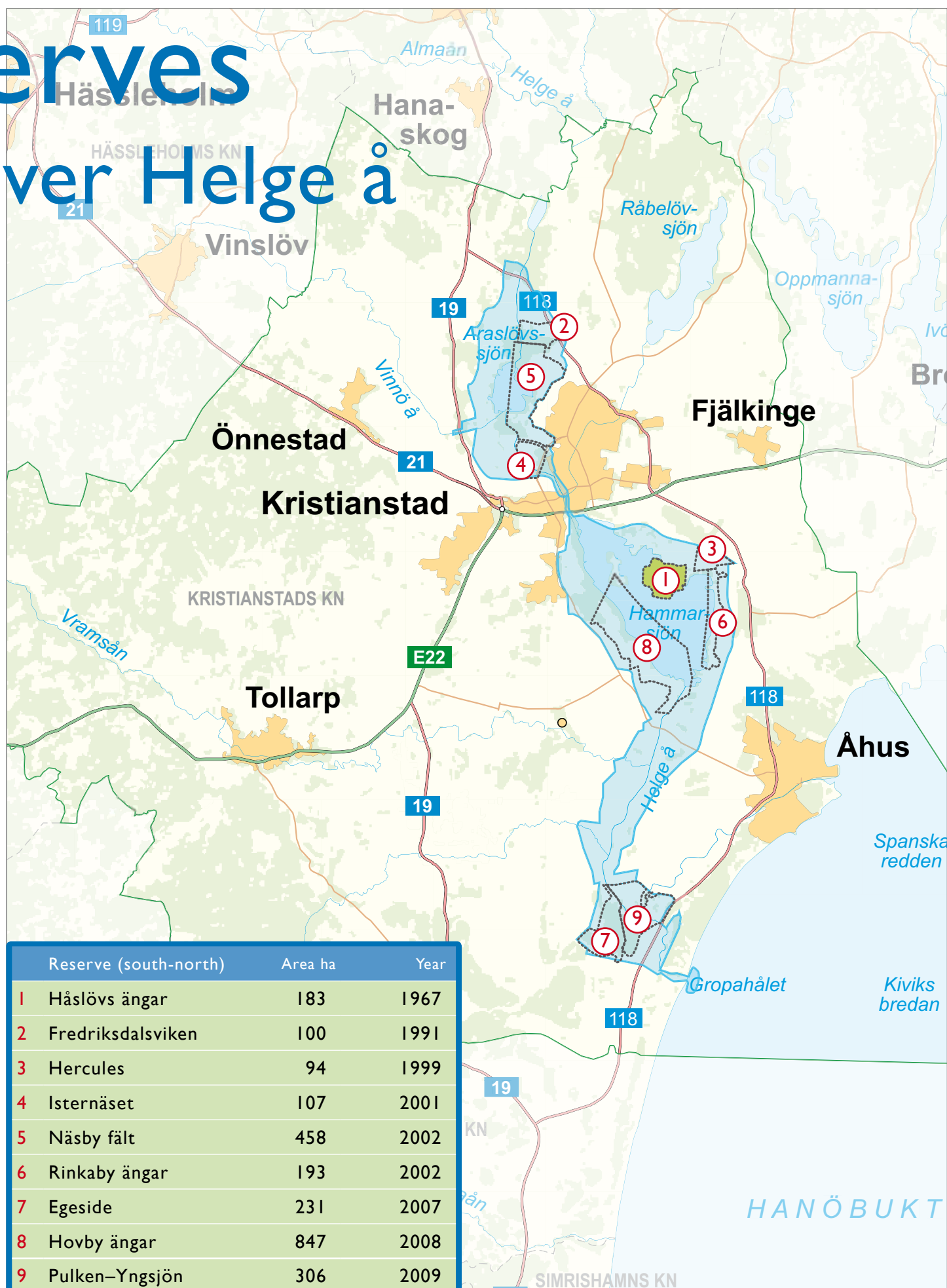
Black-tailed Godwit at Björkhäll in the Hovby ängar nature reserve. The Black-tailed Godwit is a characteristic bird in the seasonally inundated grasslands and the municipal bird of Kristianstad.

PHOTO: KARIN MAGNTORN



To protect the wetlands it is essential to maintain good relations and co-operate with landowners.

Reserves River Helge å



Reserve (south-north)	Area ha	Year
1 Håslövs ängar	183	1967
2 Fredriksdalsviken	100	1991
3 Hercules	94	1999
4 Isternäset	107	2001
5 Näsby fält	458	2002
6 Rinkaby ängar	193	2002
7 Egeside	231	2007
8 Hovby ängar	847	2008
9 Pulken-Yngsjön	306	2009
Total area	2519	

Map of the wetlands. The dotted grey lines mark the boundaries of the nature reserves. The area shaded in blue shows the Ramsar site (international convention on wetlands).

Our 20th jubilee

The weather gods were certainly on our side on 20 September when Kristianstads Vattenrike and the Nature School celebrated their 20th anniversary at Ekenabben. Not a cloud in the sky, shirt-sleeve temperatures and hardly a ripple on the surface of Lake Hammarsjön. That was the setting for a successful open-air get-together at Ekenabben for the 800 or so visitors who came on foot, by bicycle or car to enjoy the various activities.





PHOTO: SVEN-ERIK MAGNUSSON

Ekenabben – a natural place to meet

Kristianstads Vattenrike and the Nature School celebrated their joint 20th jubilee on 20 September with an open-air get-together at Ekenabben in glorious sunshine. Local entrepreneurs, societies and other partners provided more than 20 activities to appeal to all ages and interests, including boat trips on Lake Hammarsjön, spider expeditions and high-tech “geocaching” treasure hunts.

There were also long queues to sample the tasty hamburgers made with meat from cattle that graze on the local wet grasslands.

Nature trails for young and old

The Nature School had a busy day taking care of all the children and adults eager to explore the natural surroundings. There were bag-nets for everyone who wanted to search for insects in the lake, and Sam and Andreas were on hand to help and guide. Next door, Ola and Lars from Kristianstad University had a fascinating display of mosses, lichen, spiders, etc.

For the children there was an “Ancient Tree Trail”, complete with a tree fairy equipped with special nature goggles and the ability to grant wishes!



PHOTO: OLA MAGNTORN

Boat trips

The warm sunshine ensured that the two activities on Lake Hammarsjön were soon fully booked. Landskapet JO offered trips out to Kvinneholme, guided by landscape scientist Jan Olsson. Visitors heard about the exciting history of Kvinneholme, where there was once a house and a market gardener's. There were also plenty of kayaks on the lake throughout the day, thanks to the generosity of Klingheim's Kayak Centre, which offered opportunities for young and old alike to try their hand at kayaking..

Meeting Professor Mosquito

More than 200 people took part in the combined walk and quiz. It was a tough challenge: even the winner managed only 16 correct answers to the 20 questions about Kristianstads Vattenrike. Standing in the middle of the broad boardwalk through the wet forest was mosquito researcher, Arne Halling, who sets traps in this damp environment to collect and examine the many different species of mosquito. One question was how many mosquitoes Arne caught in the summer of 2007. The answer? 16,779! The quiz also took participants past the birdwatching tower, where the local ornithological society's displays included information about research into the region's birds of prey.



PHOTO: SVEN-ERIK MAGNUSSON

Ekenabben boardwalk completed

As one of five visitor sites that have been the focus of a project to improve public access in Kristianstads Vattenrike, Ekenabben is now accessible for wheelchair users and visitors with prams. Thanks to the winter ice, the new 150-metre boardwalk through the wet forest could be completed early in the year. The boardwalk is made of oak and galvanised tubular metal to cope with the damp surroundings.



PHOTO: KARIN MAGNTORN

Record numbers of cranes successfully fed

Each March and April thousands of cranes rest in Kristianstads Vattenrike on their northern migration. While these large flocks are a major attraction for nature-lovers, the hungry birds are bad news for the farmers who sow in spring. To minimise the damage, attempts are made to attract the cranes to specially selected sites where they are fed with barley. This year's efforts were particularly successful, and for several days visitors were treated to the sight of thousands of cranes feeding and dancing on the fields. This spring's invasion was one of the most intensive to date, with more than 4,000 cranes resting at Pulken!



PHOTO: HANS CRONERT

New birdwatching tower

The despair two years ago when the old birdwatching tower at Norra Lingenäset burnt down has now been transformed into delight! Thanks to financing from the County Administrative Board and the Municipality of Kristianstad, a new tower has been built and was officially opened in April when the forest floor was carpeted with beautiful blue anemones. With new gravel paths leading to the tower it is now easy, even for wheelchair users and families with prams, to make use of the facility!



PHOTO: SVEN-ERIK MAGNUSSON

Golfers help flora and fauna to flourish

As mentioned last year, the Biosphere Office is working with Kristianstad's Golf Club in Åhus to create a golf course in harmony with the area's high natural, cultural and recreational values. The sandy grasslands around Åhus are home to plants and insects that are rare in other parts of Sweden and, in certain cases, the rest of Europe. Several of these species are dependent on the soils being disturbed and displaced to expose the light, calcium-rich sand. In May the first trials began on the golf course to test different methods of working the topsoil to encourage the flora and fauna of the sandy grasslands to flourish. Several test sites have been created on the golf course where inventories will be made and followed up..



PHOTO: CARINA WETTEMARK

Work starts on naturum Vattenriket

On 4 June construction work started on the naturum Vattenriket visitor centre. Bengt Gustafson and Helene Fritzson sunk the first pile watched by members of the press and representatives of the Swedish EPA, Kristianstad Municipality, White Architects and the construction company, NCC. To everyone's delight, a stork flew overhead and landed in what will soon be the centre's new lake. Clearly the project had been given the go-ahead from the region's birds!



PHOTO: CARINA WETTEMARK



PHOTO: KARIN MAGNTORN

“Nature Day” on National Day

On 6 June, Sweden's National Day, several local businesses and societies assisted the tourist office and the Biosphere Office with the first local “Nature Day”. Throughout Kristianstads Vattenrike there were opportunities for visitors to get closer to nature with activities that included kayaking, a mosquito safari and an open-house event at the home of a local food artist. The 100-plus visitors to Lillö castle ruins, where there were refreshments for sale, made the most of the sunny weather.

Conference on ecosystem services

Nature offers many products and services that we tend to take for granted. This was the theme for a two-day international conference held in Kristianstad in June, with lectures from Swedish and foreign researchers as well as municipal representatives. The first day was rounded off with a boat trip on the River Helge å and supper in the castle ruins at Lillöw.



PHOTO: SVEN-ERIK MAGNUSSON

Grazing at Äspet

During the summer cows were put out to graze by the lagoon in the Äspet nature reserve. This important environment for ducks and waders risked becoming overgrown with common reeds, tall herbs and undershrubs. Now the hooves and mouths of the grazing cows are helping to open up and rehabilitate this important breeding and resting environment. Later in the autumn, in another activity that also contributed to the restoration work, the emergency services trained the drivers of tracked vehicles here.



PHOTO: HANS CRONERT

THE YEAR IN REVIEW

September-December 2009

PHOTO: OLA MAGNTORN



20th birthday party in brilliant sunshine

The weather could not have been better when Kristianstads Vattenrike and the Nature School celebrated their joint 20th birthday on 20 September. Around 800 people visited Ekenabben during the day to take part in activities for all ages and interests. The boat trips to Kvinneholme were soon fully booked and the hamburgers made with meat from cattle that graze on the local wet grasslands proved extremely popular, too. Many visitors stayed for hours, taking part in insect safaris and quizzes, paddling on the lake, meeting the "tree fairy", or simply enjoying the late summer sunshine.

Ospreys on their way south

As we have reported in previous annual reviews, researchers at Lund University are studying the migration of osprey in and around Kristianstad. Several birds have been fitted with transmitters that are now producing some exciting results. One young osprey from Lake Hammarsjön actually migrated northwards and spent almost two months by a lake outside Nyköping before finally making its way south to France.



PHOTO: PATRIK OLOFSSON/N



PHOTO: EBBA TROLLE

Reports

Each year the Biosphere Office's "Vattenriket i fokus" series publishes various reports. The eight reports for 2009 were packed with interesting facts about, for example, the natural and cultural values of Åsumfältet (Nils-Otto Nilson), a landscape plan for Ripa and Horna sands (Merit Kindström) explaining how to preserve and develop the sandy grasslands around Åhus, and, for the historically interested golfer, a cultural analysis of Kristianstad Golf Club's courses in Åhus (Liselott Wernersson).

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