

Shepherding Weeks

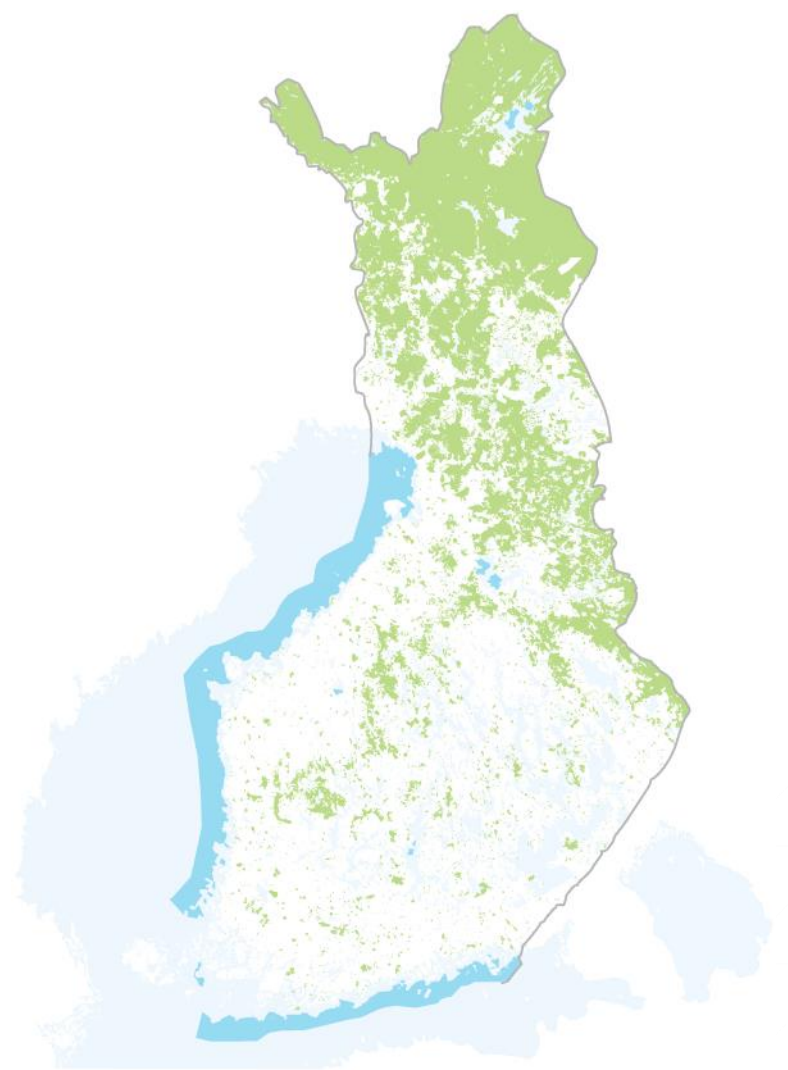
Tapio Heikkilä, Senior Environmental Advisor,
Ministry of the Environment

Tiina Hakkarainen, Communications Officer,
Parks & Wildlife Finland

What is Metsähallitus?

A state enterprise governing all state-owned lands and waters in Finland.

- One third of Finland's total area: over 12 million hectares.
- Business activities include a forestry company Metsähallitus Forestry Ltd, Metsähallitus Property Development and seed production.
- Public administration tasks are run by Parks & Wildlife Finland, which consists of
 - National Parks Finland
 - Wildlife Service Finland
- www.metsa.fi/web/en



Organisation of Metsähallitus



Parks & Wildlife Finland

Parks & Wildlife Finland is a Metsähallitus unit responsible for:

- conservation of nature and cultural heritage;
- management of protected areas, including National Parks;
- outdoor recreation, promotion of nature tourism;
- sustainable game and fisheries;
- fishing and hunting permit sales.



Organisation of Parks & Wildlife Finland

DIRECTOR: Timo Tanninen

NATIONAL PARKS FINLAND

Deputy Director
 Development Projects Director
 International Affairs Director
 Data Administration Manager
 Financial Manager
 Communications Manager

Regions

COASTAL AND METROPOLITAN AREA

LAKELAND

OSTROBOTHNIA-KAINUU

LAPLAND

Regional Director

Regional Director

Regional Director

Regional Director

PROTECTED ARE MANAGEMENT PLANNING: Manager

Regional Land Use Manager

Regional Land Use Manager

Regional Land Use Manager

Regional Land Use Manager

NATURE AND CULTURAL HERITAGE CONSERVATION: Manager

Nature Conservation Manager

Nature Conservation Manager

Nature Conservation Manager

Nature Conservation Manager

RECREATION AND NATURE TOURISM: Manager

National Park Superintendents

National Park Superintendents

National Park Superintendents

National Park Superintendents

PROCESSES

WILDLIFE SERVICE FINLAND

DIRECTOR: Jukka Bisi

SOUTHERN FINLAND

OSTROBOTHNIA

LAPLAND

Game and Fisheries Manager

Game and Fisheries Manager

Game and Fisheries Manager

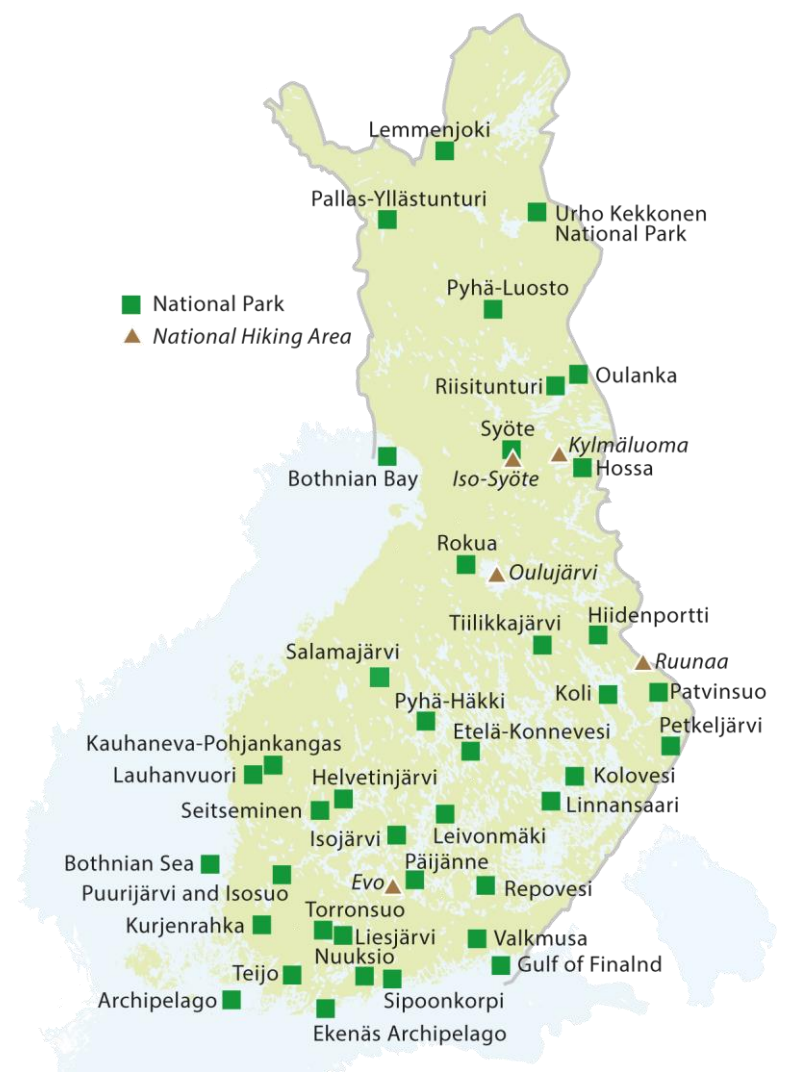
Parks & Wildlife Finland manages our most pristine natural and cultural heritage

- One organisation manages all state-owned areas reserved for nature conservation and hiking:
 - 40 national parks;
 - 19 strict nature reserves;
 - 5 national hiking areas;
 - 12 wilderness areas in Lapland;
 - over 3,000 other protected areas and
 - cultural heritage sites;
 - staff over the whole country: 505 person/years in 2017.



National Parks and National Hiking Areas

- 40 national parks, total area 10,018 km²;
- 5 national hiking areas, total area 243 km²;
- Parks & Wildlife Finland provides basic facilities: 6,000 km of trails; 2,000 km of skiing routes and ca. 2,000 campfire sites and wilderness huts.



Shepherding Weeks
benefit people,
landscape management
and nature
conservation





Shepherding weeks

- is a unique concept developed by Metsähallitus, Parks & Wildlife Finland;
- the concept combines an experience-rich holiday with caring for valuable traditional rural landscapes;
- facilitates co-operation between Metsähallitus, the volunteer shepherds and the sheep farmers and is of national benefit;
- the concept was selected as the best landscape project in Finland in 2016.



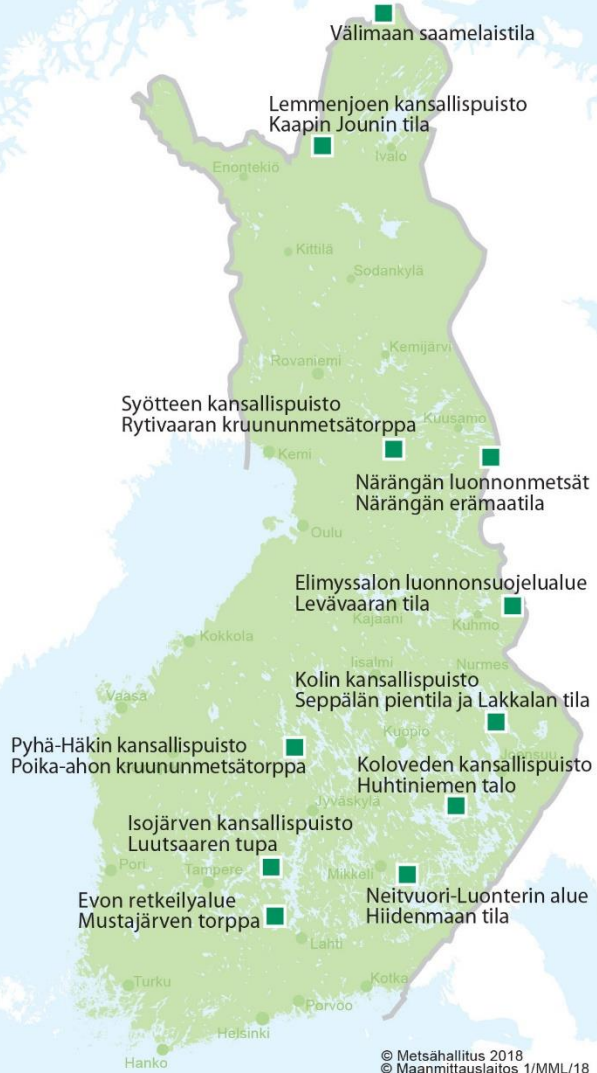
Shepherding weeks

The Shepherding Weeks, which attract thousands of applicants each year, are a truly unique way to organise landscape management and conservation efforts.

The concept is a combination of nature conservation and management, strengthening relationships between people, nature and landscapes, and providing an unforgettable holiday experience.

Shepherding weeks

- The shepherding farms are located in valuable landscapes and their conservation is important.
- Grazing is a good way to manage traditional rural landscapes. The grazing animals also enliven the landscape.
- Volunteer shepherding activities are organised in 12 separate locations each summer.
- Last year we also incorporated into the concept cow herding weeks in the Evo Hiking area.





Shepherding weeks

- During the Shepherding Weeks, volunteer shepherds take care of a herd of sheep for a week as they perform landscape management in national parks and conservation areas.
- Grazing animals are required for the maintenance of traditional landscapes as they keep the meadows open and this secures the biodiversity of such habitats.
- Thanks to the project, valuable traditional rural landscapes are maintained and public awareness of the importance of landscape is increased.



Shepherding weeks

- The arrangement involves volunteer shepherds travelling to the locations for a week each, to care for the sheep that maintain the landscapes.
- The shepherds provide the animals with fresh drinking water, keep an eye on their general condition and herd them from a depleted patch of pasture to the next.
- The weeks are subject to a fee, which is used to cover the location's maintenance costs and nature management expenses.
- The most important motivations for becoming a volunteer shepherd are caring for the sheep and experiencing the tranquility of nature.



The farmer is also happy

- The sheep can graze happily on excellent pastures and receive the proper care.
- Not all sheep farmers have enough land, which means that many farmers also benefit from the volunteer shepherd arrangement.
- Moreover, the farmers get to lighten their work load with at least some of their sheep being cared for by temporary shepherds in nearby conservation areas.



Shepherding weeks

The decrease in traditional grazing-based cattle farming has resulted in meadows and their abundant flora and fauna becoming increasingly rare in Finland and throughout Europe.

Grazing animals are required for maintenance of the traditional landscapes, by keeping the meadows open and securing the biodiversity of these habitats.



Shepherding weeks

Taking care of traditional landscapes is hard work for the staff in conservation areas.

If it wasn't for the shepherds, many farms with their beautiful courtyards, pastures and meadows would go entirely neglected.

For this reason, the help is extremely valuable to the landscapes, nature and Metsähallitus, Parks & Wildlife Finland





Shepherding weeks

- Working as a shepherd for a week is a chance to do important work to preserve valuable landscapes.
- At the same time, participants get to enjoy amazing vistas, beautiful nature and a leisurely lifestyle while caring for sheep.
- For a volunteer shepherd, the week is a valuable source of well-being - wool-lined therapy amidst amazing landscapes.
- Shepherding weeks have introduced thousands of people to landscape management. At the same time, awareness of the value, significance and change of landscapes has increased.



Shepherding weeks

- The most important motivations for becoming a volunteer shepherd are caring for the sheep and experiencing the tranquility of nature.
- Volunteering is often connected to greater satisfaction in life. Perhaps this is also a reason which makes the Shepherding Weeks so unique and popular: happy people contribute their time for greater biodiversity, co-working with sheep that require care and shelter. What a beautiful way to help!
- The popularity of the concept has been quite astounding: this year we received 8,483 applications. The lucky winners were selected by lottery by the end of February.

Visits to nature improve our well-being
-87 % of the visitors to national parks
and hiking areas estimate that the visit
had health benefits.
-The health benefit was estimated on
average worth 100 € per visit.





Everyone is happy - including the landscape

- During the Shepherding Weeks, the landscape and nature are managed in an exemplary and effective manner that respects traditions and benefits all parties involved.
- The sheep owners and sheep gain access to quality pastures that may be hard to find, and the shepherds help the farmers with caring for and keeping an eye on the animals.
- The operations also strengthen the volunteer shepherds' relationship with landscapes and nature, providing them with new experiences and improving their well-being.

Thank you for your interest

More information:

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