

Strasbourg, 3 October 2016
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T-PVS/DE (2016) 15

CONVENTION ON THE CONSERVATION OF EUROPEAN WILDLIFE
AND NATURAL HABITATS

Standing Committee

36th meeting
Strasbourg, 15-18 November 2016

REPORT
BULLERÖ AND LÅNGVIKSSKÄR NATURE RESERVES
(SWEDEN)

24-26 August 2016

Category B

*Document prepared
by Pierre Galland (Switzerland)*

1. INTRODUCTION

The European Diploma, Category B, was awarded to the Bullerö and Långviksskär Nature Reserves in June 1988 and has been regularly renewed. The last visit took place in 2002; the diploma was then renewed in 2008 until June 2018 without on the spot appraisal.

In view of the renewal in 2018, a mission was organized by the secretariat. It took place from August 24th - 26th, 2016. The itinerary by boat and on foot on some of the islands was very well prepared and the visit perfectly organised. Our warm thanks are due to those whose helpfulness and hospitality contributed to making it both successful and pleasant, in particular Mr Björn Carlberg and Mrs Asa Lagerlöf, from Nature Conservation unit of the Stockholm County. Mrs Anna von Sydow, of the Swedish Environmental Protection Agency, joined the mission. In addition we met representatives of the Swedish Society for Nature Conservation, The Archipelago Foundation, local farmers and reserve warden.

The schedule of the mission with the name of contributing persons is attached to the report.

2. SITE AND VALUE OF THE RESERVES

The Bullerö and Långviksskär Nature Reserves are part of the Stockholm Archipelago, which is the Largest of the Swedish archipelagos with the following main features:

- 30 000 islands, islets and skerries, a few of them inhabited year-round
- Shoreline ~10 000 km, ¼ of Sweden's
- Values for recreation, biodiversity and cultural heritage
- 13 000 permanent inhabitants
- 50 000 holiday homes
- Extensive boat-life and tourism during summer

It is a generally flat area, with a mean height of 10 m above sea level. It has shallow waters, with a mean depth of 10-20 m. The bedrock is old and constituted mostly of granite and gneiss. The average land upraise is 4 mm / year

The Stockholm County hosts:

- 2 national Parks
- 310 Nature Reserves
- 1 national City Park
- 236 Natura 2000 sites

The protection covers ca. 9 % of the land area and ca. 8 % of the marine area

The Bullerö and Långviksskär Nature Reserves were formerly very large private estates, which explains why they have kept their wild character, with very few buildings or facilities. They have exceptional landscape qualities and host a very rich biodiversity. The 2 reserves are adjacent but have been kept separated for historical reasons (different land property rights). Bullerö and Långviksskär Nature Reserves are part of a larger Natura 2000 site, the Bullerö-Bytta, which includes:

- 1110 Sandbanks which are slightly covered by sea water all the time (382 ha)
- 1150 Coastal lagoons (47 ha)
- 1170 Reefs (4355 ha)
- 1620 Boreal baltic islets and small islands (1622 ha)
- 1630 Boreal baltic coastal meadows (2,3 ha)
- 6270 Fennoscandian lowland species-rich dry to mesic grasslands (2,7 ha)

- 9070 Fennoscandian wooded pastures (3,8 ha)

The vegetation of Bullerö and Långviksskär is dominated by pine trees in high ground, spruce and deciduous trees (birch, alder, ash, maple) in lower ground. There are also several small peat bogs with heather, as well as wetland areas with rushes and reeds. Four hundred species of vascular plant have been recorded. On the whole, the forests are young, since most of the islands were extensively cleared to provide farming land or firewood. Lower ground has been used for small-scale farming, often as grassland.

The area is a nesting site for some 100 species of bird, including the white-tailed eagle (*Haliaeetus albicilla*) and large numbers of eiders (*Somateria mollissima*). The aquatic fauna include both freshwater species, such as pike (*Esox lucius*) and saltwater species, such as herring (*Clupea harengus*).

Bullerö nature reserve covers 4'300 ha (450 ha land) ; it was established in 1967 and is managed by the County Administrative Board

Långviksskär Nature Reserves reserve covers 2'300 ha (120 ha land) ; it was established in 1983 and is managed by the Archipelago Foudation.

The Bullerö nature reserve is owned by the Swedish state. Långviksskär Nature Reserve is owned almost entirely by the Stockholm Archipelago Foundation. They are both subject to the usual reserve regulations.

3. MANAGEMENT

The management of both reserves depends from different authorities; however their management is very similar and is implemented by the same people. There is an old management plan for each of the reserves, one for Bullerö, established in 83, and one for Långviksskär, in 1984. They should have been updated many years ago, but the preparation of new plans has been postponed in view of the establishment of a National Park for the area. .

The environment is exceptionally clean and very well preserved. To cope with the influx, and with the numerous boats which moor near the islands, the two managing bodies uses press campaigns, leaflets, etc. to inform visitors and alert them to the need to be careful. It also provides simple but effective toilet and rubbish collection facilities on a few easily accessible islands. The wardens make regular inspection rounds and are often called by visitors in difficulties.

Self-discipline also plays quite an active role. Most visitors come regularly and attach great importance to the site's being clean and tidy. Its nature limits pressure on the land. In general the land and the waters around are kept very clean, with little visible impact from visitors.

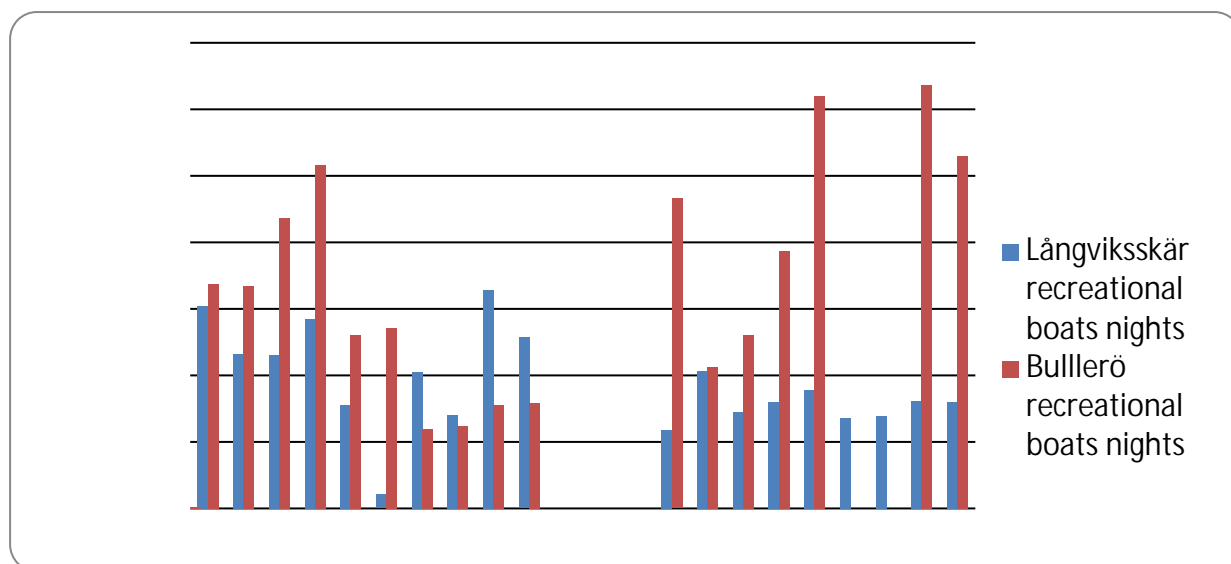
Some problems come from canoeing. These small boats, very low on water, arriving quickly and silently, can easily frighten the birds. There are also problems We also have problems with small fast boats.

The site is managed by the County Administrative Board and the Archipelago Foundation established in the County of Stockholm.. Bullerö NR has the double size and more than the double working staff. There are also much more management activities in Bullerö NR such as grazing, regular boats, more cottages, guest house, exhibition, schools visiting, open sauna and facilities for disabled persons. The Stockholm County administrative Board is the authority responsible for the management, while the Swedish Environmental Protection Agency the overseeing authority. The Foundation is very active in the whole archipelago. It owns and administers about 15 % of the area. Its Council brings together 8 representatives from the County, 5 representatives from the city of Stockholm and 3 from other municipalities.

In addition the Swedish Society for Nature Conservation is active in the whole county and particularly in the Stockholm Archipelago. It has 220'000 members nationwide, and more than 60'000 for the Stockholm County.

3.1 Visitor reception facilities and surveillance

The Bullerö and Långviksskär nature reserves attract a great many visitors in private boats. There has been a considerable increase in the past, with more than 51'000 boat/nights in Bullerö in 1997 and 28'500 in Långviksskär. The numbers vary depending on the weather and current trends are difficult to assess; however, there has been a sharp decrease in Bullerö by the turn of the century, but since 2007 the available figures have shown a significant increase.



It must be mentioned that counting is done irregularly and by different persons. The most precise figures are those from the cottages rental which have almost reach their maximum capacity in Bullerö NR. There is no figures for the tent nights, but they have increased due to the improvement of the facilities. Systematic counts of visitor with a representative sampling systems could be part of the site's monitoring in the future. The available figures are presented in annex.

There are also day visitors, most of whom come to Bullerö, which has a regular boat service during the summer, supported by the County Administrative Board. Bullerö, where visitors concentrate, offers modest accommodation (cottages) and has simple facilities for them - an exhibition, a nature trail and a culture trail too. There are no admission fees, even for the exhibition and trails on Bullerö. Garbage collection and use of public toilets is also free of charge. Fortunately, there are no snack bars, restaurants or other commercial activities of the kind which might be expected. The demand for the cottages during the summer season is very high.

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3.2 Restoration and maintenance of buildings

Major efforts consist in restoring and maintaining the reserves' existing buildings, respecting the original style and materials. Houses which are not occupied by wardens or the islands' few residents are rented out to visitors or offered as short-term accommodation in exchange for maintenance work. A house on Långviksskär is offered free of charge to interested artists for short periods. On the same island, a former military barrack is being improved, with space for visiting scientists.

No new buildings are planned.

3.3 Maintenance of traditional farming activities

Several islands were regularly inhabited up to the 1940s. The residents raised livestock and farmed a number of meadows and pastures reclaimed from the forest, which firewood collection had left in a very poor state. These grassy areas helped to diversify the landscape and environment, but the natural forest re-growth has now absorbed most of them.

Farming has declined since the 50's. Nowadays, some cattle are still regularly kept on some of the lands of Bullerö in the summer, and this means that the pastures are more or less maintained. Several hay meadow areas have been reclaimed and are maintained on Bullerö and Långviksskär, the aim being to show how they were traditionally used and also to promote the fauna and flora associated with this type of environment. The farming activities are strongly encouraged and supported by the authorities in order to maintain open landscape and biological diversity. A few farmers live permanently outside of the protected areas and use some parts of the reserves during the summer. However without government or foundation incentives, most of the former farmland would be abandoned. Tress Trees have been cleared in some areas and efforts have been made for encouraging ancient practices such as pollarding.

3.4 Protection of fauna

Birds are the main focus of attention. Protection activities include regular counts and monitoring of colonies or nesting areas. Access to the most vulnerable breeding zones is prohibited during key periods. These prohibitions are clearly signposted, but surveillance has recently had to be increased after several cases of non-compliance. The white-tailed eagle is the focus of careful monitoring; formerly a feeding programme was intended, among other things, to provide its population with food low in pesticides. There is no need for a feeding programme any more, since the population has increased significantly. The population of White tail eagle is still growing, while there has been significant changes in the Eider populations, their main locations having apparently switched to other areas without clear explanation.

Campaigns to destroy or at least control the mink, a carnivore which escaped from mink farms a long time ago, are organised regularly but remain a never ending task, with little hope to get entirely rid of the species, which can re-invade islands on the frozen sea. Minks are trapped or shot by the islands' warden.

The is a small population of roe deer, with no signs of overgrazing.

The water quality in the Archipelago is quite good despite the permanent eutrophication; however there is a concern with the blue-green algae expansion in the shallow waters. Fish populations are more or less stable.

3.5 Monitoring and research

Some of the meadows which are again being mown are botanically monitored. Small fenced areas provide useful points for comparison.

Some meadows are mown rather early, but this has to be done before the main tourist season. In any case, these environments have no exceptional flora.

Bullerö and Långviksskär are covered by the Foundation's project, "A living archipelago – protection and management of fauna on the Stockholm Archipelago", which is also economically supported by the County Administrative Board (currently 140 000 kr/year). This incorporates work already under way on the white-tailed eagle and extends the research to the Caspian Tern and to the alcidae (auks) - the Guillemot (*Uria aalge*), Black Guillemot (*Cepphus grylle*) and Razorbill (*Alca torda*) - and also to the Grey Seal (found on small islands on the seaward side of the Archipelago). Started in 1991, the project is contributing usefully to management of the Archipelago's vulnerable species. A important study has started now on *Fucus vesicularia*.

I would be useful to make the results more easily available to managers and visitors of the reserves and ideally some research programmes should be more specifically management orientated.

A comprehensive monitoring scheme should be part of the future Management plan.

3.6 The proposed national park

The nature protection is highly considered by the current Swedish government and the budgets have been increased for the last few years. Sweden is in the process of expanding its network of national parks, and the Bullerö and Långviksskär area is on the list of future designations. The proposed national park, which would incorporate the Bullerö and Långviksskär Nature Reserves and extend much further to the south, is facing an important issue. Under Swedish law, national parks may be established only on state-owned land there are still whole islands or part of some of them which belong to private people or independent foundations. However it must be noted that in the current situation the level of protection is very high and regulations are very well respected despite the lower status of protection.

3.7 Current environmental issues

The main environmental current issues which occur in the Bullerö and Långviksskär reserves are common to most of the Stockholm Archipelago.

Historic land use: maintenance of a small-scale farming and fishery, after a significant decline since 1950. The lack of grazing animals in summer and the limited hay making have an influence on the landscape and its biodiversity.

Great number of holiday homes established from end of 1800s . One of the consequences is the raising of the land value which might hinder the establishment of a national park. Fortunately different foundations have been able to by large areas that are maintained for conservation purpose.

The tourism, including boat traffic, building construction (holiday houses) etc. While building construction is severely limited in the reserves, boat access is authorized in almost all islands. Some areas are closed during the first half of the year, in order to protect the breeding bird colonies.

The eutrophication of water with algae blooming is a serious concern. It is closely monitored by the County Administrative Board but there is almost no possibility of action to control of this phenomenon.

4. CONCLUSION

There are no significant changes since the last appraisal visit in 2002. However there is a higher concern of the authorities at the different levels and a very good cooperation among them and with private foundations and NGOs, which must be underlined. In conclusion, we recommend the renewal of the European Diploma, Category B, awarded to the Bullerö and Långviksskär nature reserves.

The following recommendations, which aim at protecting the reserves' natural and landscape assets more effectively in the long term, of the islands, should be attached to renewal; they aim at encouraging the managers and the managing authorities to continue their efforts to improve the management of the natural environment as well as visitor facilities.

1. Start without delay the preparation of a management plan for both Bullerö and Långviksskär nature reserves, including a simple but comprehensive monitoring system including birds, fishes environmental parameters and visitors.
2. Pursue the efforts of establishing a national park including both reserves as well as surrounding islands and waters.
3. Continue to monitor the activities which are potential sources of disturbances, and enforce the regulations in particular on the closed areas.
4. Continue providing support to farming activities on the islands, following the objectives of landscape and biodiversity conservation.
5. Continue the campaign to control the population of minks.

Annexe 1: Visitors' statistics in Bullerö and Långviksskär nature reserves

Number of visitors in Bullerö and Långviksskär nature reserves																						
(3.5 persons per boat)																						
	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Långviksskär recreational boats nights	30400	23200	23100	28500	15500	2100	20500	14100	32900	25700				11800	20600	14450	16000	17750	13650	13900	16150	16000
Bullerö recreational boats nights	33700	33400	43700	51600	26100	27100	12000	12400	15600	15900				46600	21300	26100	38730	62070			63650	52940
Bullerö passengers regular boat																					593	2417
Bullerö passengers taxi boat/charters																	3528	3649			6159	6545
Total number Bullerö and Långviksskär	64100	56600	66800	80100	41600	29200	32500	26500	48500	41600	0	0	0	58400	41900	40550	58258	83469	13650	13900	86552	77902

Annexe 2: Programme**DRAFT PROGRAM OF THE ON THE SPOT EXPERT APPRAISAL OF BULLERÖ AND LÅNGVIKSSKÄR NATURE RESERVES AUGUST 24-26 2016**Final program of the visit, revised August 24th**WEDNESDAY, 24TH AUGUST**

- 12.39 Arrival by train from Jönköping at Stockholm Central Station (train booking by Mr Galland).
- 15.00 Meeting with NGOs at the office of Stockholm County Administration Board (address Regeringsgatan 66, Stockholm, 1 km walk from the Central Station/Metro station Hötorget).
*Dep. Head of Nature Conservation unit Mr Björn Carlberg
Nature Reserve Management Coordinator Ms Åsa Lagerlöf
Chairman, Stockholm region of the Swedish Society for Nature Conservation Ms Beatrice Sundberg*
- 17.00 Free time
(Hotel booking in Stockholm by Mr Galland)

THURSDAY, 25TH AUGUST

- 8.00 Transport by car from hotel to Stavnäs port. Pick-up by County Administrative Board at hotel.
- 9.30 Trip to Långviksskär Nature Reserve with the boat Vindbådan. Morning coffee on board.
*Dep. Head of Nature Conservation unit Mr Björn Carlberg
Nature Reserve Management Coordinator Ms Åsa Lagerlöf
Environment Officer Mr Mats Nordin
Representative from Swedish EPA Ms Anna von Sydow*
- 10.30 Arrival at Långviksskär. The Archipelago foundation receives us and describes the management of Långviksskär Nature Reserve. Walk around the Island.
*Head of Environment, Archipelago foundation Ms Karin Strandfager
Nature Conservation officer, Archipelago foundation Ms Karen Andersson
Ranger Långviksskär Nature Reserve Mr Urban Söderberg*
- 12.00 Light lunch at Långviksskär.
- 12.30 Round-trip in the nature reserve by boat. Stop at Tärnskär and Hallskär.
- 14.30 Back at Långviksskär. The Archipelago foundation leaves the boat. Transport to Bullerö Nature Reserve.
- 15.00 Arrival at Bullerön where the ranger receive us. Coffee break. Management talk with the Stockholm County Administrative Board. Tour around the island with focus on buildings, facilities for visitors and restoration of pastures.
Ranger Bullerö Nature Reserve Mr Jan Olsén
- 19.00 Dinner
- Sauna is available for interested. Stay overnight at Bullerön in simpler forms, arranged by the County Administrative Board. No equipment is needed.

FRIDAY, 26TH AUGUST

- 8.00 Breakfast
- 9.00 Round trip in the southern part of Bullerö Nature Reserve by boat. Stop at several islands. Discussion about the situation in the Baltic Sea with focus on proliferation of toxic algae, birdlife, mink and disturbances in bird sanctuaries.
Environment officer Ms Sonja Råberg
- 11.30 Lunch at Östanviks gård.
- 12.15 Round trip in the northern part of Bullerö Nature Reserve by boat.
- 14.00 Back at Stavsnäs port. Transport by the County Administrative Board to Stockholm City.
- 15.30 Arrival Stockholm City. Departure by plane from Arlanda airport.