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COMMITTEE FOR THE CONSERVATION AND MANAGEMENT
OF THE ENVIRONMENT AND NATURAL HABITATS

Group of Specialists - Protected Areas
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Sarek and Padjelanta National Parks
(Sweden)

Renewal of the European Diploma

Expert report
by

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1. The category A European Diploma was first awarded to the national parks of Sarek and Padjelanta in 1967. The latest renewal was on 25 June 1987.
2. The expert was not accompanied by a member of the Council of Europe Secretariat when visiting the parks.
3. Resolution (87) 8 adopted on the occasion of the last renewal is reproduced in Appendix III. In Appendix IV, the Secretariat proposes a draft resolution relating to the renewal of the Diploma in 1992.

1. Introduction

The category A European Diploma was awarded to the national parks of Sarek and Padjelanta in 1967, and has been renewed on four occasions since then. The latest renewal was on 25 June 1987.

As the situation of the parks is to be reviewed by the Committee in 1992 with a view to renewing the Diploma, the time was right for an on-the-spot appraisal in accordance with Article 9 of the Regulations (Resolution (73) 4). I was asked by the Environment Conservation and Management Division to carry this out. I visited the area on 26 August 1991 with Dr Curt MATZON (Swedish Environmental Protection Agency) and Dr Jan FROM (Mountain Unit). I wish to thank them both very much for their help and the information they provided, and also the other persons whose names are mentioned in Appendix 2.

2. Description of the national parks

Sarek and Padjelanta are described in a previous Council of Europe document (SN-ZP (85) 44), but for those who are not familiar with that report, a brief word on the two sites would be helpful. I propose to give a short description of each park separately and then comment on the natural assets of both under the same heading, since this is what the geographical continuity of the two places demands and it will be remembered that the Council of Europe Diploma has been awarded to both on a single occasion.

2.1 Sarek

Sarek is one of the most unspoilt national parks in Europe. It comprises 1,970 km² of mountains, glaciers and deep valleys which form one of the most remarkable mountain parks on the European continent. There are 200 peaks over 1,800 m high, and 6 which exceed 2,000 m, and more than over a hundred glaciers. Birch forests account of 9% of the park's area, glaciers for 7%, rivers and lakes for 2% and peatlands for 1%. The remainder (80%) harbours some 20 types of mountain vegetation (4). It is therefore an extraordinary landscape of remarkable quality. The National Park was established in 1909. All the land is state-owned.

Sarek is an extremely wild area. There is only one footpath (the Kungsleden Trail): it is 16 km long and penetrates one of the southern corners. There are no facilities in the park that might in any way detract from the principle of total wilderness. There are only a few bridges and huts for the Sami (=Lapp) population. It is rightly considered as an example of what an unspoilt natural area should be (1).

Two other national parks, Stora Sjöfallets and Padjelanta, lie along Sarek's eastern, northern and western borders, and form the best buffer zones that can be imagined.

2.2 Padjelanta

Padjelanta's 1,984 square kilometres lie between Sarek and the Norwegian border. It is a much more recent park than Sarek, having been established in 1962. It is a vast plateau between 800 and 900 metres above sea level, with two very large lakes, Vastenjaure and Virihaure (considered to be the most beautiful lake in Sweden) and some fairly high peaks, though less high than those of Sarek (the highest being Jeknafo, 1,837 m). Here too, montane vegetation predominates (over 82%), and 15% of the area is covered by water. The remainder features birch forests, glaciers and peatlands. Padjelanta comprises one of Sweden's largest glaciers, Älmäjekna. All the land is state-owned, although the park comprises several Sami villages, inhabited only in the summer.

Padjelanta shows few traces of human intervention. It is crossed by a footpath (150 km long, consisting partly of wooden planks and including several bridges). There are some magnificent Swedish national park cabins along the path, 8 in all, so that visitors may discover the park without risk. There are also 3 Sami villages in the interior, which are used in the summer for grazing reindeer. In fact, the degree of human influence, although minimal, highlights the difference between the two parks where management policy is concerned.

2.3 Natural assets

A protected area of some 4,000 km² in Europe, without any appreciable human influence in the form of permanent housing, roads or transmission cables, is in itself quite a remarkable asset. The only activities that are pursued (reindeer grazing, occupation of Sami dwellings in the summer and excursions by several hundred rambblers) pose no threat to its conservation.

Other remarkable assets of these parks include: the glacial landscape with some very important geomorphological features; a fairly diverse flora, considering the rigours of the climate and the comparatively short biological history of these sites since the last ice age (400 higher plant species have been recorded at Padjelanta); and, most importantly, a flourishing fauna, characterised by the presence of major European carnivores, including the brown bear, the wolverine, the lynx and the wolf. The two last-named species are somewhat rare in these parks, being discernible only by their tracks in the snow (and not every winter at that). Even so, I was privileged to observe four bears during my last visit, three in the park and one close to the periphery. However, according to the experts, even a territory as large as this is not sufficient to maintain a bear population: the individuals monitored by radiotelemeter not only move from one park to another, but wander several dozen kilometres from the point where they were first observed. Swedish Lapland's bear population is estimated at some 30 individuals.

Other species I should mention are the arctic fox and the elk. Where the elk is concerned, Sweden's major specimens are to be found in the Rapalen valley in Sarek, (I did indeed observe some outstanding specimens there). As to birds, I can only pick out a few examples from a long list: the white-

tailed eagle, the golden eagle, the Rough-Legged buzzard, the Gyr falcon, the Siberian Jay, the long-tailed Skua, the Ptarmigan, the snowy owl, etc. These are the most demanding of the European high altitude bird species; many other birds of a less symbolic kind may be observed in both parks.

The park regulations prohibit all interference with the natural world, animal (with the exception of hunting by the Sami population and, to a very limited extent, angling), vegetable or mineral.

2.4 Management and surveillance

Responsibility for management, in the field, lies with the Mountain Unit (Fjällenheten). At the time of our visit, this unit was part of the Swedish Environmental Protection Agency and had relations with the regional government for its activities. In 1992 it is planned to entrust all administrative duties to the regional government; it will thus acquire full responsibility for the national parks.

The Mountain Unit has a staff of 19, several office workers and twelve field wardens. Its responsibilities are very broad (covering all the Northern parks and reserves, that is to say approximately 10,000 km², and a network of footpaths totalling 2,000 km), but there are only four wardens to supervise the areas to which the Council of Europe has awarded its Diploma. The staff is not large, but the fact that there are so few problems (the population density in the locality is 0.4 per km²), means that a sufficient level of security can be provided by the local police and customs officers, and by the presence of 7 cabin hosts during the summer.

All the parks' facilities, in particular the cabins and footpaths, are in very good condition, and their upkeep is satisfactory. Sweden's national parks have an outstandingly good reputation among their visitors.

2.5 Scientific research

In every Swedish park there is a general research programme in which priority is given to items recommended by the management teams. It is submitted to the Agency for approval, and generally the Agency responds by providing the necessary infrastructures. Its co-operation may go further than this in some cases.

The research priorities at present are the brown bear "radio tracking" campaign, (a project devised by the Swedish Environmental Protection Agency with the assistance of WWF) and the monitoring of the major predators. A new system of compensation for reindeer breeders has been introduced. Certain birds have also had their movements monitored in both parks.

It should also be noted that the vegetation map was produced after the Diploma was last renewed.

3. The Sami population

The Sami people (a term I prefer to "Lapps" which has slightly contemptuous or paternalistic overtones) inhabit the parks in the summer, especially Padjelanta. For them, the land is very valuable as deer pasture. There are about 125 reindeer breeders, with over 25,000 animals. This works out at approximately 25 ha per head (glaciers and lakes not included) and only

during the summer. There would appear to be no risk of overgrazing, as the officers responsible for the parks will confirm. The increased herd sizes following the Tchernobyl disaster (as a result of the slump in the reindeer market) has not added to the risks, which are generated mainly by the modernisation of technical facilities: use of motorcycles for herding the animals, modernisation of summer dwellings, use of snowmobiles etc. There are also hostile attitudes to the major predators which capture some 500 reindeer per year in the regions (although the victims receive generous compensation from the authorities).

I discovered that the Sami people take only a limited part in the life of the parks despite the efforts of the staff of the Swedish Agency. We really must encourage these efforts and strongly recommend the fullest possible Sami involvement in the life of the parks (doing repair work or maintenance on cabins, providing visitors with information on Sami life etc). One possible way forward has been opened with the Ajtte Museum at Jokkmokk whose theme is Sami culture and the national parks of Northern Sweden. In fact the museum already makes a contribution: one of its botanists spends the summer in the Staloluokta cabin and takes visitors on guided tours of Padjelanta. For its part, the Mountain Unit helps to finance the Museum. A campaign to increase the Sami population's awareness of the park's assets, directed particularly at schools is a further possibility to explore.

Where reindeer grazing is concerned, it is clear that at present some techniques have adverse effects, especially the use of mountain motorcycles. Encouragement should be given to reviving older techniques (the use of dogs) or to using more sophisticated, more expensive but less destructive equipment such as helicopters.

4. Recommendations associated with the Diploma

In 1987 when the Diploma was last renewed, the following recommendations were approved by the Committee:

4.1 that the Fjällnheten be provided with sufficient financial resources for the administration, maintenance and surveillance of the national parks.

I find that this point causes the Fjällnheten's staff no alarm and that the financial situation is one of satisfactory stability. The transfer of responsibility from the state to the region will make no difference in this respect

4.2 Enforcement of the regulations banning motorcycles in the park

At present a problem arises with the use of motorcycles at Padjelanta (and not at Sarek) in the case of the Sami population because the laws on the breeding of reindeer authorise it. However, it cannot be a very serious problem for the park because I had to outside the parks in order to discern any effects. In my view it is unnecessary to maintain this requirement, which cannot be taken into consideration separately in connection with the activities of the sames.

4.3 That dialogue be increased with the Lapps

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I consider this requirement to be very important for the future of the parks, and although some progress has been made in this direction, the recommendation should be maintained (see paragraph 3 of this report).

4.4 That priority be given to improving information as part of the management plan

I noticed that information panels on the natural environment have been put up at the Staloluokta cabin; also a guide from the Jokkmokk museum shows visitors the variety of the flora for which this part of the park is famous. Similar panels exist in other cabins. Also, a whole range of publications is available concerning the parks. These very useful initiatives are consistent with the recommendation, and I think that some action is called for.

4.5 That more applied research be done, including a programme on changes in the various methods of running national parks, and a carnivore programme including a study of the impact of large predators on the ecosystem.

This recommendation is having its effect: for instance, some excellent geobotanic maps have been produced in recent years, and the major predators of the region have been the subject of practical research, of which the findings have been published (5) (6). Here again, I think it necessary to maintain the recommendation.

5. Prospects for the parks

I have seen an excellent publication setting out the Swedish authorities' plans for the future of the parks. From it, I learned of a scheme to expand the Padjelanta park by including the Sulitelma range in the south-western part (23,000 Ha); and also to extend Sarek by the inclusion of Tjuoltadelen, the Rapadalen inland delta - an extraordinarily interesting feature - and the western part of the Stora-Stófallet park. Although this last measure may seem purely an administrative one since the territory is already a national park, it will undoubtedly make a difference because Sarek is governed by more restrictive regulations; besides which, it is the area to which the Council of Europe has awarded its Diploma! No timetable for implementing these plans has been drawn up, however.

From the administrative standpoint it is planned to transfer responsibility for management from the national to the regional authorities in a very short time (between the time this report is drafted and the time it is presented to the Committee). This plan is not generating any great alarm, although potential conflict between conservation and development (and particularly between tourism and the exploitation of natural resources) will have somehow to be resolved. I can report that the regional network of protected areas is already quite substantial: 730,028 Ha, shared among 62 nature reserves, which means that between 15 and 20 per cent of the territory making up the network will remain under regional authority management. When the parks are included, with all their staff and financial resources, this will improve the cohesion of the network of protected natural areas. Even so, the guarantee offered by the Swedish national parks network must not be lost.

6. Miscellaneous points

Even though we can announce ahead of time that the situation in the parks justifies the Diploma's renewal, I have to add a number of points not reported hitherto.

The first is the lack of any formal management plan for the parks. A work programme is all that exists. A form of management exists, of course, based on:

- non-intervention in the ecosystems at Sarek, a situation almost worthy of a strict nature reserve according to the IUCN definition and,
- with limited but impressive infrastructures at Padjelanta. The two parks are managed in different ways, but both forms are effective.

There should therefore be a recommendation to the effect that management plans be drawn up for each of the parks, and perhaps the time is right now that a new era is opening under the regional authorities. The plans should guarantee the continuity of what I have called the management policy of the two parks, and may also open the way to dialogue with the Sami people, or even give them a consultative or active role on some aspects of management.

Secondly, I wish to report the impression I had of the park's human resources. Of course the low population density in the region (0.4 per ha for the locality that includes both parks) and the lack of outside planning would not justify having an army of wardens, but the appointment of just four wardens (working in pairs in view of the difficult terrain) would seem to be the minimum one could recommend. Since the slightest change in the present conditions would inevitably require an increase in the number of wardens, the best course is to recommend this without delay.

6. Conclusions

Our first conclusion, and the principal one, is that the committee be urged to renew the Diploma (category A) for both parks, Sarek and Padjelanta (Sweden), in view of their magnificent conservation status, the guarantees offered by Swedish legislation and the dedication shown by the staff responsible for the future of these exceptional sites.

7. Recommendations

In the four years that have elapsed since the last renewal action has been taken on the first, fourth and fifth recommendations made at the time. I now propose a new version as follows:

7.1 The plans featured in the "Nationalparksplan för Sverige" concerning Padjelanta and Sarek make for better protection of both these parks, and we would encourage the Swedish authorities to carry them through to completion as quickly as possible.

7.2 Formally drafted management plans for both parks would be a valuable aid to their conservation, and would also permit consultation with the Sami (Lapp) people and open the way to their involvement, thus demonstrating that decentralised management will not impair the high standard of conservation for which the parks are noted.

7.3 Information campaigns would also have long-term beneficial effects for both parks.' They could be targeted on visitors (to teach them about Sami life) and on the Sami people (to increase their awareness of the value of the national heritage within their territory. Co-operation with the Jokkmokk museum could be stepped up for this purpose.

7.4 The major predators should continue to be the subject of research and to be conserved, since the presence of such species in the region represents a very significant European asset.

APPENDIX I

BIBLIOGRAPHY AND DOCUMENTATION

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Note : Les documents du Conseil de L'Europe et les rapports annuels de parcs ne sont pas énumérés, mais ils ont aussi été consultés.

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**COUNCIL OF EUROPE
COMMITTEE OF MINISTERS**

RESOLUTION (87) 8

**ON THE RENEWAL OF THE EUROPEAN DIPLOMA
AWARDED TO THE SAREK AND PADJELANTA NATIONAL PARKS**

*(Adopted by the Committee of Ministers on 25 June 1987
at the 409th meeting of the Ministers' Deputies)*

The Committee of Ministers, under the terms of Article 15.a of the Statute of the Council of Europe,

Having regard to Resolution (65) 6 instituting the European Diploma;

Having regard to Resolution (67) 23 awarding the European Diploma to the Sarek and Padjelanta National Parks;

Having regard to the proposals of the Steering Committee for the conservation and management of the environment and natural habitats (CDPE),

Renews the European Diploma, category A, awarded to the Sarek and Padjelanta National Parks, until 26 October 1992, subject to the following recommendations:

— that the *Fjällensheten* be provided with sufficient financial resources for the administration, maintenance and surveillance of the national parks;

— that the regulations banning motorcycles in the parks be enforced;

— that dialogue be increased with the Lapps enjoying ancestral rights to carry on traditional activities inside the national parks;

— that priority be given to improving information as part of the management plan;

— that more applied research be done, including a programme on changes in the various methods of running the national parks, and a carnivore programme including study of the impact of large predators on the ecosystem.

APPENDIX IV.

Draft Resolution (92) ...

ON THE RENEWAL OF THE EUROPEAN DIPLOMA AWARDED
TO THE SAREK AND PADJELANTA NATIONAL PARKSSweden

The Committee of Ministers, under the terms of Article 15a of the Statute of the Council of Europe,

Having regard to Resolution (65)6 instituting the European Diploma;

Having regard to Resolution (67) 23 awarding the European Diploma to the Sarek and Padjelanta National Parks;

Having regard to the proposals of the Steering Committee for the Conservation and Management of the Environment and Natural Resources (CDPE),

Renews the European Diploma, awarded to the Sarek and Padjelanta National Parks, in category A, until.....1997

Attaches to the renewal the following recommendations:

1. The plans featured in the "Nationalparksplan för Sverige" concerning Padjelanta and Sarek make for better protection of both these parks, and it would be advisable for the Swedish authorities to carry them through to completion as quickly as possible.

2. Formally drafted management plans for both parks would be a valuable aid to their conservation, and would also permit consultation with the Sami people and open the way to their involvement, thus demonstrating that decentralised management will not impair the high standard of conservation for which the parks are noted.

3. Information campaigns would have long term beneficial effects for both parks. They could be targeted on visitors to teach them about Sami life) and on the Sami people to increase their awareness of the value of the natural heritage within their territory) . Co-operation with the Jokkmokk museum could be stepped up for this purpose.

4 The major predators should continue to be the subject of research and to be conserved, since the presence of such species in the region represents a very significant European asset.

5. It is to be hoped that the plan to extend the parks will be carried out as it can only enhance the protection afforded by the European Diploma; the competent authorities are asked to keep the Council of Europe informed in due course.