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Group of Specialists on Protected Areas
(PE-S-ZP)

Strasbourg, 6 - 8 March 1996

TAMMISAARI ARCHIPELAGO
NATIONAL PARK
(Finland)

Award of the European Diploma

On-the-spot Appraisal
by Mr E KUIJKEN (Belgium)

I. Introduction

1. During the meeting of the Group of Specialists on Protected Areas in March 1995 at Strasbourg, the application for the European Diploma was considered for the Tammisaari National Park in Finland. In accordance of the regulations an on-the-spot appraisal must be carried out on this area.

2. In order to enable the Steering Committee for the Conservation and Management of the Environment and natural Habitats (CDPE) to advise the awarding of the Diploma through its Group of Specialists on Protected Areas (PE-S-ZP), the undersigned prof. E. Kuijken carried out the expertise.

This took place on 29-31.05.95 in the attendance of dr. Jean Pierre RIBAUT of the Secretariat of the Council of Europe. We are very grateful for his important contributions during this visit and the discussions with several contact persons.

Our sincere thanks go to dr. Martti Helminen, who organised the stay in Finland in a most efficient and pleasant way, bringing us in contact with relevant authorities and institutions. His personal knowledge on the ecology of Finnish nature and on the situation of nature conservation in his country was extremely helpful.

3. The responsible of the National Park, ir. Timo Tanninen of the Forest and Park Service (South Coast Park Area, Vantaa) and his staff managed our visit most effectively, so that the geographical situation and natural values of the Park became explained, and both results and problems of management could be observed in the field. He also arranged the necessary contacts with the visitors centre, the local authorities (Major) and the press. We very much appreciated our stay in the Rödjan campsite itself, where we got interesting information on the history of this unique settlement by Thorvald Strömberg. We are very grateful to ir. Timo Tanninen for his kind collaboration and wish to express our sincere thanks to the whole National Park staff as well.

II. Objectives of the appraisal

4. The experts' visit aims to assess the actual state and ecological conditions of the site as well as the realisations and problems in the fields of management, research and education. These are described in detail in the application reports, the National Park Master Plan and some supplementary scientific research information that we could examine.

Also the regulations concerning land use, tourism, hunting and fishing and the views of local authorities and government responsables on the future development plans of the National Park were subject of lively discussions.

III. General Situation of the Tammisaari Archipelago National Park

5. Location, ownership, status and objectives:

The archipelago is situated in the southern Baltic, about 100 km west of Helsinki, in the western part of the Gulf of Finland, near the city of Tammisaari (Ekenas). The urban district of Tammisaari covers 721 Km² of land and 1000 Km² of water. There are 12000 inhabitants and 4000 summer cottages. The National Park has been created from two formerly existing nature reserves.

The actual boundaries of the National Park are rather artificial, having an important Southern part outside the protected area (5000ha?), although it is recently also state owned and under management of the Forestry and Park Service. Some smaller private plots are geographically situated withing the Park, but the regulations do not imply here. Exchange of these plots with land outside the park (mainland or other islands) could improve the conservation status of the whole.

The National Park covers an area of ca. 4800 ha, mostly marine habitat and some 200 small islands totalling only 500 ha are of land (no mainland is included in the Park). Plans exist to enlarge the park in order to create more logic geographical boundaries and a better ecological entity.

The National Park is managed by the Finnish Forest and Park Service, South Coast Park Area. Most of the area is owned by the Finnish State and only some 18 small plots of private land are geographically included but do not fall under the Park status.

The National Park regulations are based upon the Nature Conservation act of 1923 (!) and were laid down in 1992: *The Park has been established for the purpose of preserving a representative part of the archipelago and marine ecosystem, and to promote environmental research and nature study. It includes two strict nature reserves that already existed before.*

The National Park further provides opportunities for boating, teaching and research. In the principles of the Act 485/89 (1989) the safeguarding of the needs of professional fishing is also given prominence. In certain representative places, heritage landscapes and the buildings belonging to the government will also be preserved (Rödjan, Jussarö). Parts of the area are under military regulations as well.

6. Ecological characteristics:

The National Park presents a full cross section of the ecological gradient from the open sea (marine zone) succeeded by the outer archipelago, the inner archipelago towards the mainland (outside the park). The salt water gradually turns to brackish and fresh (distrophic or oligotrophic) in small pools and lakes on the larger islands.

In the marine zone, treeless rocky islets of red granite are characteristic. On some larger islands in this zone, only some scarce Scots pine, Birch and Alder trees grow. In small freshwater pools the aquatic ecosystems develop into fine mires with interesting vegetations contrasting to the halophilous plantlife along the shores.

The outer archipelago islands still have strong influence from the sea but are nevertheless forested with mainly Scots Pine, reaching the shoreline only in sheltered bays. Some of these shallows gradually become separated from the sea by lifting of the land after glaciation.

Finally the inner archipelago zone is represented on the larger island of Älgö, where reed-filled bays are typical ecosystems. Relatively old coniferous forest covers the island, with herb-rich Alder stands along the coastline. The peatlands belong to several types, with transitional forest mires with spruce and birch or Scots pine bogs. Three fresh water lakes are included in the Park, the Storträsket being the largest one, with a magnificent small island. A permanent plot for the ecosystem monitoring is situated here.

The biodiversity of the national park is very impressive. This is the combined result of the presence of so many different habitat types in three zones mentioned between the mainland and marine area and the tranquillity and management of the park as a whole.

Flora and fauna are represented by several critical, rare or threatened species. Among mammals, Greyseal, Elk (*Alces alces*) and Badger (*Meles meles*) are to be mentioned. Especially birdlife is rich and varied with indicators for outstanding nature values such as Osprey (*Pandion haliaetus*) and Eagle owl (*Bubo bubo*) breeding in the wooded parts of the archipelago. Many typical seabirds and waterfowl are nesting, among others Black guillemot (*Cephus grylle*), Razorbill (*Alca torda*), Velvet scoter (*Melanitta fusca*) and Caspian tern (*Sterna caspia*).

Plantlife is as well varied because of the gradients in habitats from marine islets over brackish bays and shallows to fresh lakes and mires. Many species can be found that are typical for old virgin woods, herb rich peatlands and semi natural meadows, fresh, brackish or salt coastlines, sheltered shallows or bare rocks. Inventories are made for vascular plants and mushrooms.

7. Land-use and public access

In order to maintain this wealth of nature, land use is strictly regulated. So is public access in general, taking into account a zoning in basic and restricted parts. The motorised transport especially is subject to constraints in basic parts, with some exceptions in marked navigation channels (the boating route from Helsinki to Hanko passes through the park). Most of all other movements (walking, skying, canoeing, swimming etc.) are permitted in basic parts. Some service areas are situated along these channels where the only access points are.

In most restricted areas (such as Jussarö and Storträsket) visitors are only allowed to use nature trails during guided tours. The park service can also establish temporary restricted plots (for breeding birds, research etc.).

Supplementary to the examples of regulations and restrictions mentioned above, the outermost (marine) parts of the national park belong to a military protection area in which foreign visitors only exceptionally have entrance. The military activities on some islands, however, can disturb breeding birds or vegetations in some degree.

Apart from land-use restrictions, some activities or sports using natural resources are subject to stronger regulations:

- activities such as mushroom and berry picking are allowed within the accessible parts
- all kinds of fishing, for professional, household consumption or recreational reasons, are allowed to some extent, subject to permissions from the Forest and Park Service and with specific limitations concerning the techniques used, the number of nets etc. Some closed areas are designated (on permanent or temporary basis) and the reproductive capacity of the natural fish populations is taken into account as a basic principle (no fish farms or restocking).
- hunting is a matter of some concern, especially because of traditional spring shooting of male Eiders (*Somateria molissima*) in the month of June. There are too many impacts and unknown risks at population level, even for a species that is at present and in this area relatively common; a policy of extinguishing this right in a five-years period is to be recommended. Although strict regulations exist indeed, shooting of some rather common species could become a disturbing factor for rarer ones.

These land use and harvest regulations very well take into account the specific needs and privileges of local people living within the archipelago, in order to reduce excessive pressure from visitors.

8. Nature education and outdoor recreation

One central visitors centre is situated in the small harbour of Tammissaari, so that most tourists can collect information about all aspects of geography, history, environment and wildlife in this part of the Baltic.

The centre provides accomodation and guidance facilities using sophisticated audiovisual and exhibition arrangements (translation of Finnish comments and map legends in some foreign languages is to be recommended).

A second centre (or 'information point') has been installed at the historic Rödjan site, a former fishermans' holding where exhibition panels on wildlife and restoration of authentic culture in a small museum-like house are most attractive and function to inform visitors on manifold values of the site. Also on the island of Jussarö with its virgin forest an information point is located in an abandoned cultural site.

In both spots, apart from some basic public services and facilities offered, nature trails have been established in order to present the different zones and ecosystem characteristics of the islands and which permit to enjoy the varied scenary of the archipelago.

Some tourist business activities require permissions from the Park Service; they are mainly restricted to guided or directed tours by rowing boat, canoeing or skying. Facilities as wooden shelter, boathouse, small cottages, toilet, sauna, tentsites with fireplace etc. are very attractive for visitors such as camp schools (35-40 persons). Nature trails and boardwalks with guided tours enhance this type of ecotourism without danger for disturbance of natural values.

9. Research and nature management

The National Park creates several opportunities for environmental research. The University of Helsinki Tvärminne Zoological Station has a long tradition in this field. Integrated environmental monitoring is established in permanent plots (e.g. Storträsket Lake on Älgö island: measurement of airborne pollutant effects and acidification of the ecosystem). The Forest and Park Service itself is actively involved in making inventories of flora and fauna as far as personnel can set free.

Many ecosystems almost need no active nature management, except for the semi-natural herb rich meadows (mowing or grazing) or formerly drained fens (filling ditshes) that can be restored. Forest growth can be restricted locally in order to prevent overgrowing of specific valuable situations, endangered species or habitats.

Fauna management also is restricted to reduce, viz. maintain population levels of exotic viz. grazing or predator species that risk to disturb natural balances. Some working camps of WWF are organised in order to help cleaning up the Park.

Nature management and research activities are well covered in the Master Plan; in addition to this a set of special plans is developed for the management of specific issues (fire control, waste management etc.).

10. Personnel and budget

At present, the Forest and Park Service has only a limited number of staff working exclusively for the National Park: 4 (temporary) guides, 1 part-time warden and 1 maintenanceman. The seasonal aspects of the personnel requirements depend on the number of visitors and tourists.

The annual budget is 0.5 mio FMark (80% salaries) with a supplementary 1.0 mio FMark for the visitors centre. Here the need for 1 permanent biologist (training and research), 1 education officer and extra guides is to be mentioned in order to inform 25000 visitors.

11. Summarising conclusions

a. The Tammisaari National Park is of outstanding international importance from both biogeographical and biodiversity point of view. This is due to favourable factors, such as

- the ecological gradient of salt over brackish to freshwater habitats
- the gradient of environmental dynamics in parallel to this series
(=the differences of inner and outer archipelago)
- the presence of islands of different area
- the low human settlement and moderate use of natural resources
- the presence of old and relatively virgin forest parts
(= core area and source of species for restoration plans elsewhere)
- the diversity of vegetation types and rare or endangered plant species
- the presence of concentrations of specific breeding and migrating birds

b. The National Park has great social importance

- the local authorities are fully in favor of the Park as public attraction
- outdoor recreation with limitations needed for safeguarding nature
- establishment some concentration sites for public use and school facilities
- nature education through visitors centre, folders, nature trails, guided tours
- shooting and fishing regulations with respect to the 'wise use' concept
(with specific priorities for local people of the archipelago)

- c. The nature management paying special care to natural processes and some semi-natural ecosystems, well in balance with cultural landscapes and social aspects.
- d. The Forest and Park Service gives full attention to research in collaboration with universities and the Finnish Environment Center (integrated environment monitoring) and with follow up of several own monitoring schemes
- e. The Finnish authorities involved merit our sincere congratulations for all efforts already undertaken for the long term conservation of the existing Park, and for the future developments as described in the National Park Master Plan.

IV. Proposed recommendations

- 12. In order to make use of the moral importance of the European Diploma, some improvements could be considered without changing the actual principles of management and conservation
 - a. Enlargement of the Park:
 - (1) the actual boundaries of the protected area do not guarantee an optimal ecological entity as it could be; enlargement of the area under protection is to be considered as a priority, in order to include more marine ecosystems at the edge of the open sea with concentrations of specific or rarer breeding and migrating birds.
 - (2) efforts and budgets are needed to acquire most relevant private islands or enclaves in order to include them in the Park regulations.
 - b. Hunting regulations:
 - (1) it is very important that the Park authorities have the competence to restrict the area where hunting is allowed, to determine specific open seasons, to close shooting for certain species and to further limit the number of permissions; these measures are to be based upon data from monitoring and research.
 - (2) hunting regulations and restrictions through special permissions for some islands or a limited number of days require control mechanisms and enough personnel.
 - (3) especially in the planned enlargement area, it is necessary to stop spring shooting after the end of April; this especially implies a stop of shooting Eider males in June, being the central breeding season; notwithstanding its long tradition, further hunting of seabirds in the enlarged part of the Park may only be considered on 3-4 islets without breeding birds.Also the autumn hunting (from mid-september) is to be regulated as strict as possible, with a limited number of permissions for local people only.

c. Nature management and research:

(1) some semi-natural vegetations of former open landscape need active restoration by cutting shrubs and small trees, combined with grazing or mowing regimes.

(2) except when endangered species need specific circumstances or measures, the principle of leaving natural habitats untouched is to be continued; only further restoration of water levels in a few drained fens need active management by filling ditches.

(3) as to research, the existing programs need supplementary funding in order to guarantee long-term and integrated monitoring schemes, some of them being expensive indeed (e.g. seabottom sampling, basic analysis of ecosystem functioning in old forests).

(4) there is an urgent need of publishing the present results on inventories of vascular plants and vegetations as a contribution to scientific knowledge and as a basis for conservation; supplementary efforts are recommended for monitoring other groups, such as: terrestrial and freshwater invertebrates, fungi and lichens, algae and benthos organisms in the marine to brackish gradient.

d. Military training:

(1) some supplementary (temporary) restrictions are needed in order to reduce the disturbance caused by landing and exercises on some islands with breeding birds.

(2) temporary restriction of shooting in the marine area during the breeding season is to be considered.

e. Education and public access:

(1) supplementary funding is required in order to fulfil the tasks of education at the visitors centers, the guided visits and training camps for a growing public at all levels; especially further reinforcement of staff is essential during the tourist season (e.g. biologist, training officer, technician, warden)

(2) information for the foreign public is to be available in English and other languages (folders, exhibition etc.)

(3) more signals and information panels are to be put along the main boating routes and canals, not only when entering the National Park, but also before approaching the most vulnerable spots and protected areas (bird colonies).

13. Final conclusion:

Taking into account the great biological importance of the National Park, the balanced management of both cultural and ecological values, the specific research, education and training efforts and the sustainable level of recreation and tourism, we strongly recommend to award the European Diploma in category B.

A P P E N D I X I

Draft Resolution (96) ...

on the Award of the European Diploma to the Tammisaari Archipelago National Park (Finland)

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 the proposals of the Steering Committee for the Conservation and Management of the Environment and Natural Habitats (CDPE);

Having noted the agreement of the government of Finland;

After deliberation,

Solemnly awards the European Diploma, Category ... to the Tammisaari Archipelago National Park in accordance with the Regulations for the European Diploma (Resolution 91/16);

Places the aforesaid park under the patronage of the Council of Europe until ... 2001;

Awards the Diploma on the following recommendations:

1. to stop the spring shooting of the Eider as soon as possible ; then, extend the south-west limits of the national park;
2. to intensify the scientific research and the publication of their results with supplementary financial resources;
3. to manage the natural habitats whilst respecting the needs of the indigenous species;
4. to develop the supervision and information-education of the visitors especially in summer;
5. to study the "sponsoring" possibilities to realize certain short-term actions, the financial means given at this park are modest.