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EUROPEAN COMMITTEE FOR THE CONSERVATION  
OF NATURE AND NATURAL RESOURCES

Committee of Experts - Protected Areas

APPLICATION FOR THE AWARD OF THE EUROPEAN  
DIPLOMA TO BULLERØ AND LÅNGVIKSSÅR  
NATURE RESERVES

On-the-spot appraisal  
by Mr BROGGI

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Award of the European Diploma to the  
BULLERÖ and LÅNGVIKSSKÄR NATURE RESERVES (Sweden)

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1. Introduction

On 13 March 1986, the Swedish Government decided to apply for the award of the European Diploma to the Bullerö and Långviksskär Nature Reserves and instructed the nature protection services to take the necessary steps. Under the application entered on 1 April 1986, the choice of category A or category B was to be made following discussions with the Council of Europe, whose competent bodies held an on-the-spot appraisal on 1 and 2 September 1986 in accordance with the Regulations for the European Diploma (Resolution 73/4).

We were accompanied by Mr Jean-Pierre Ribaut, Head of the Environment and Natural Resources Division and were received for a general introduction on the morning of 1 September by Mr Bernt Festin, the Director and Mr Johan Ahlbom, the Assistant-Director, at the headquarters of the Stockholm Archipelago Foundation. Then, in the company of the warden, Stig Söderberg, we visited the Långviksskär reserve by motorboat and stopped at four islands. We spent the night at Bullerö, and on the morning of 2 September we visited the main island and other islands of the archipelago, together with the warden, Johan Stake. Mr Stefan Malmberg of the Swedish National Environment Protection Board accompanied us throughout the visit. We had as a basic document the report SN-ZP (86) 24, which gives general information on the areas inspected. We have also received or consulted various documents concerning the natural conditions and the management plans for the reserves.

2. Brief description of the reserves and their natural heritage

Bullerö and Långviksskär are located at either end of the immense archipelago of the Schären Islands on the east coast of Sweden, 50 kilometres south-east of Stockholm. Within the protected area of 8,200 ha are some 1,200 islands with an area of 726 ha; the bedrock is primarily gneiss, and the islands are covered with birches, heather, and, on several islands to the west, pines. There are also several small wet zones with enclaves of peat bogs and reed beds which flourish because of the low salinity of the water. More than 400 vascular plants have been recorded.

Over 100 different kinds of birds nest on the islands, including numerous aquatic species. More than half the 60 pairs of white-tailed eagles (*Haliaeetus albicilla*) counted on the east coast nest in the Stockholm archipelago, and one or two within the reserve. The white-tailed eagle is fed in winter on site, but the broods have been consistently disappointing in recent years.

In earlier times the largest islands were used as pasture-land and were inhabited year-round. Today, only one fisherman and his wife and the family of the warden remain.

There is a striking virtual absence of human encroachment within the reserves. The area has been spared weekend houses, and the rare groups of homes are what remains of the old settlement. This part of the archipelago offers a fairy-tale landscape.

### 3. Legal status

The Bullerö reserve, which has some 900 islands and rocks covering approximately 400 ha set in a total area of 4,000 ha, was created on 5 December 1967. Until the 18th century, the main island was inhabited for one to two months at a time by herring fishermen. Between that time and 1908, only three families lived there, about 50 persons in all. The archipelago then became the summer residence of an artist and an industrialist, before being taken over by the state and designated a nature reserve in 1967.

Eight-ninths of Långviksskär are owned by the Stockholm Archipelago Foundation and one-ninth by Sture Andersson, a resident fisherman. It contains some 400 islands and rocks covering approximately 320 ha in a total area of 4,200 ha, was designated a nature reserve on 22 December 1983. The entire archipelago is part of an interconnected system of nature reserves. For this particular sector, the stated objective is to maintain nature and the cultural heritage in their original state and make them available for recreation while taking particular care to protect bird life. Accordingly, three bird sanctuaries have been marked off which are closed to the public from 1 February to 15 August.

In addition to the usual reserve regulations, no hunting is allowed, except that the resident fisherman is allowed to take birds in autumn for his own consumption. Fishing is authorised with a permit. Apart from the above-mentioned exceptions, access to the islands is unrestricted. Camping is permitted for only two days. Certain islands have an adequate infrastructure with toilets, litter bins and hostels, which are maintained by the environmental protection service, the Stockholm Archipelago Foundation. The island of Bullerö is inhabited year-round by a warden who divides his time between that activity and fishing. His wife does "Naturum" work three months of the year. Another warden lives on Långviksskär in the summer and also runs a water taxi service.

The buildings on the main islands of Bullerö, Långviksskär and Ragskär are used by the employees of the nature protection service, artists and others as summer residences.

The current legal status would appear to be adequate.

### 4. Problems affecting the nature reserves

There is a good inventory of the flora and fauna in the two reserves. We were able to consult the detailed protection, maintenance and improvement plans drawn up for Långviksskär in 1983 and for Bullerö in 1985.

#### 4.1 Water pollution

The water quality in the protected area is good but there is concern at the growing pollution of the Baltic Sea through PCB, dioxin and heavy metals, which may well have serious long-term effects on the ecosystem.

#### 4.2 The impact of visitors

The reserves are only accessible by boat. A water taxi service operates from 15 June to 20 August, in particular to Bullerö, but most of the visitors come in their own boats. The information centre is used by 10,000 to 15,000

persons per year. During the high season, from mid-June to the end of August, there are many visitors, and an estimated 500 boats moor at the islands. On the archipelago of Bullerö, as many as 250 refuse sacks have to be removed and 25 toilets emptied every week.

Angling does not yet seem to have caused any damage to the ecosystem. The facilities are so designed as to channel visitors movement. Several hostels have been dismantled because of their adverse impact. Before 1 July, the buildings on Ragskär are not used out of consideration for a white-tailed eagle pair nesting in the vicinity. The bird sanctuaries are indicated as such on the marine chart and in information leaflets and are clearly marked by buoys. The boundaries of the reserves are also marked well.

#### 5. Conclusions and recommendations

Having taken into account the on-the-spot appraisal and on-site discussions and having considered the documents and reference material, the expert is in full agreement with the proposal by the Swedish Government to award the Bullerö and Långviksskär nature reserves the European Diploma and concurs with the arguments advanced to justify the European interest of these areas. By virtue of the regulations contained in Resolution (73) 4, we suggest that the Bullerö and Långviksskär nature reserves should be awarded the European Diploma in category B. The importance of the area for recreation, its cultural significance as the last island site inhabited year-round, and its flora and fauna, warrant such a classification.

On the basis of the on-the-spot appraisal, the expert makes the following recommendations:

##### Control of tourist traffic

The tourist flows have probably reached saturation point, and their impact must therefore be monitored constantly with a view to channelling their movements appropriately, making improvements and eliminating any adverse impact occasioned by the infrastructure. The boundaries of the bird sanctuaries must be altered as necessary, the effects of camping and angling monitored and the use of the buildings clearly regulated.

##### Extension of educational facilities and other maintenance measures

The creation of the "Naturum" information centre and of a marked nature trail on the island of Bullerö was a success. Any improvement of these facilities will be welcome. We suggest publishing the leaflet in English, German and, if necessary, other languages. It might prove useful to organise youth camps to do maintenance work to safeguard the areas previously under cultivation and to draw attention to the ecological features of the islands. The maintenance work conducted in several sectors of the three largest islands to maintain the traditional hay meadows was a wise decision.

##### Monitoring of the reserves

The staff and resources of the monitoring bodies must be geared to deal with the influx of visitors, and, in particular, their mobility must be improved. Accordingly, money must be allocated and the staff needed must be found so that the administration can discharge its tasks. For the monitoring

work, it would be a good thing if wardens could be maintained throughout the year at the two present support points and a seasonal increase in their strength during the nesting season and in the summer would help with monitoring the environment and educational work.

Measures to combat water pollution.

The pollution by the states bordering the Baltic Sea is causing very serious damage to the marine ecosystem, because poisonous substances accumulate in what is virtually a closed inland sea whose waters are hardly replenished. An effort must be made to reduce this threat with the help of international agreements.

Vaduz 11 March 1987

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