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**Committee for the activities of the Council of Europe
in the field of biological and landscape diversity
(CO-DBP)**

Group of specialists – European Diploma for Protected Areas

20-21 January 2003
Room 2, Palais de l'Europe, Strasbourg

**Bullerö and Långviksskär Nature Reserves
(Sweden)**

RENEWAL

Expert report by
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(Switzerland)

*Document established by
the Directorate of Culture and Cultural and Natural Heritage*

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The European Diploma for Protected Areas was first awarded to the Bullerö and Långviksskär Nature Reserves in 1993 and is now being renewed for the second time.

The Secretariat did not accompany the expert on his visit to the park.

Appendix I reproduces Resolution (98) 20 which was adopted when the Diploma was last renewed. In Appendix II the Secretariat presents a draft resolution for possible renewal.

1. INTRODUCTION

The European Diploma, Category B, was awarded to the Bullerö and Långviksskär Nature Reserves in 1988 and has been regularly renewed. We visited the Park on 6 and 7 August 2002, with a view to the next renewal, due in 2003.

Mr Per-Magnus Ahren and Mr Anders Berquist, from the Swedish Environment Protection Agency, Mrs Cecilia Persson, Mr Björn Carlberg and Mr. Anders Nylén, from the Stockholm County Administrative Board, Mr Johan Ahlbom and Mr Berndt Festin, from the Stockholm Archipelago Foundation, took part in visit, with the managers of the reserves, Mr Johan Stake in Bullerö, Mrs Cecilia Fors and Christer Glaad in Langviksskär.

The itinerary, by boat and on foot, was very well chosen and the visit impeccably organised. Our warm thanks are due to those whose helpfulness and hospitality contributed to making it both successful and pleasant. A special thank to the main organiser, Mrs Persson.

2. SITE AND VALUE OF THE RESERVES

The Bullerö and Långviksskär Nature Reserves are part of the Stockholm Archipelago, which comprises some 24,000 islands, 150 of them inhabited year-round. This is a very popular leisure and recreation area, particularly for Stockholmers. There are approximately 40,000 week-end houses in the area and more than 50,000 boats with sleeping facilities.

The Bullerö and Långviksskär Nature Reserves were formerly very large private estates, which is the reason why they have kept their wild character, with very few buildings or facilities. They have exceptional landscape qualities.

The Reserve has an area of 8,200 ha and includes roughly 1,200 islands of all sizes, consisting of gneiss bedrock, mostly covered with birches, heather and some pines. There are also several small peat bogs, 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.

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*).

The Bullerö and Långviksskär Nature Reserves are owned almost entirely by the Stockholm Archipelago Foundation and are subject to the usual reserve regulations. For historical reasons, the two reserves are managed more or less independently.

3. MANAGEMENT

There is a detailed management plan for each of the reserves, one for Bullerö, established in 1983, and one for Långviksskär, in 1984. They should now be updated and discussions have started on the issue.

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 28,000 in Långviksskär. The numbers vary depending on the weather but there is a sharp decrease in recent years, with 12,000 boat in Bullerö in 2001, and 14,000 in Långviksskär. This is explained mainly by the tendency of the Swedish people to take more holidays abroad.

There are also day visitors, most of whom come to Bullerö on package tours. Bullerö, where visitors concentrate, has simple facilities for them - an exhibition, a nature trail and a culture trail too. Fortunately, there are no snack bars, restaurants or other commercial activities of the kind which might be expected.

To cope with the influx, and with the numerous boats which moor near the islands, the Foundation 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 being clean and tidy. Its nature limits pressure on the land; visitors instinctively walk on the bare rock, rather than the vegetation, and this reduces the amount of trampling.

The main problem comes from canoeing. These small boats, very low on water, arriving quickly and silently, can easily frighten the birds.

A new leisure activity is becoming a new source of disturbances: ultralight aeroplanes, able to land on water and flying at very low altitude.

The site is managed by the Archipelago Foundation in the County of Stockholm. The Stockholm County administrative Board is the authority responsible for the management, and 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. It has recently been totally renewed. Its new Council brings together 8 representatives from the County, 5 representatives from the city of Stockholm and 3 from other municipalities.

There are no admission fees, even for the exhibition and trails on Bullerö. After careful review of the situation, the Foundation has decided to stick to the principle of free access.

3.2 Restoration and maintenance of buildings

Major efforts continue regularly to restore and maintain 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 certain 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 forest has now absorbed most of them.

Nowadays, some cattle are still regularly kept on the islands of Bullerö and Ragskär in the summer, and this means that the pastures are 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. Major efforts continue to be made to continue to reclaim pastures from areas recently forested and to reintroduce 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.

Campaigns to destroy mink, a carnivore which escaped from mink farms a long time ago, are organised regularly and have yielded good results in recent years, 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.

The white-tailed eagle is the focus of careful monitoring and a feeding programme which is intended, among other things, to provide it with food low in pesticides.

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

3.5 Scientific 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". This incorporates work already under way on the white-tailed eagle and extends the research to the Caspian Tern and to the alcidæ (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*.

It would be useful to make the results more easily available to managers and visitors of the reserves.

3.6 The proposed national park

The proposed national park, which would incorporate the Bullerö and Långviksskär Nature Reserves and extend much further to the south, is still discussed, but with little possibility of it becoming reality in the foreseeable future. Under Swedish law, national parks may be established only on state-owned land and the most interesting islands, particularly Kastön, are owned by a private foundation, which takes great care to protect their natural assets, but has no wish to part with them. In addition, price of land has gone up considerably in the archipelago.

4. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, we recommend that the European Diploma awarded to the Bullerö and Långviksskär nature reserves be renewed.

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

1. update the management plans of the two reserves;
2. maintain a good balance between information and research on the reserves' historical aspects and on their natural aspects, especially aquatic life;
3. ensure a close surveillance of activities which are potential sources of disturbances such as canoeing and flying with ultralight aeroplanes;
4. continue the efforts to limit the population of mink.

APPENDIX I

COUNCIL OF EUROPE

COMMITTEE OF MINISTERS

RESOLUTION (98) 20

ON THE RENEWAL OF THE EUROPEAN DIPLOMA

AWARDED TO THE BULLERO AND LANGVIKSSKAR NATURE RESERVES

(Sweden)

*(Adopted by the Committee of Ministers on 18 September 1998
at the 641st meeting of the Ministers' Deputies)*

The Committee of Ministers, in accordance with 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 (93) 19 renewing the European Diploma to the Bullerö and Långviksskär Nature Reserves, Category B;

Having regard to the proposals of the Committee for the Activities of the Council of Europe in the field of Biological and Landscape Diversity (CO-DBP),

Renews until 12 June 2003 the European Diploma awarded to the Bullerö and Långviksskär Nature Reserves;

Attaches the following recommendations to the renewal:

1. An adequate budget and resources should be provided to cope with the growing number of visitors;
2. There should be closer surveillance of certain activities, particularly canoeing;
3. The possibility and advisability of charging admission to the information centre on Bullerö, particularly for visiting groups on package tours, should be considered;
4. A good balance should be maintained between information and research on historical aspects of the reserves and on natural aspects, especially aquatic life;
5. Efforts should continue to limit the mink population.

APPENDIX II

Draft resolution on the renewal of the European Diploma of Protected Areas to the Bullerö and Långviksskär Nature Reserves (Sweden)

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, as amended by Resolution (98) 29 on the Regulations for the European Diploma of Protected Areas;

Having regard to Resolution (88) 12 awarding the European Diploma of Protected Areas to the Bullerö and Långviksskär Nature Reserves;

Taking into consideration the expert's report presented at the meeting of the Group of Specialists - European Diploma of Protected Areas on 20 and 21 January 2003;

Having regard to the proposals of the Committee for the Activities of the Council of Europe in the Field of Biological and Landscape Diversity (CO-DBP);

Renews the European Diploma of Protected Areas to the Bullerö and Långviksskär Nature Reserves until 12 June 2008;

Attaches the following recommendations to the renewal:

1. update the management plans of the two reserves;
2. maintain a good balance between information and research on the reserves' historical aspects and on their natural aspects, especially aquatic life;
3. ensure a close surveillance of activities which are potential sources of disturbances such as canoeing and flying with ultralight aeroplanes;
4. continue the efforts to limit the population of mink.