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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

**Store Mosse National Park
(Sweden)**

RENEWAL

Expert report by
Mr Pierre Hunkeler
(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 Store Mosse National Park in 1988 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) 19 which was adopted when the Diploma was last renewed. In Appendix II the Secretariat presents a draft resolution for possible renewal.

INTRODUCTION

In 1988, Store Mosse National Park was awarded the European Diploma, Category A, which has been regularly renewed. We visited the Park on 8 and 9 August 2002 in connection with the next renewal, scheduled for 2003.

Mr Arne Andersson, Parks warden in charge of the Park, and Dr. Johan Rova, National Park Manager at the County Administrative Board, took part in the visit.

We had very useful discussions with representatives from municipalities involved and with very active members of the association of the friends of Store Mosse National Park. The visit was covered by the local newspapers and TV.

We toured some peatland areas, saw the new trails and infrastructures and examined the sensitive sections of the Park's outer limits and surrounding areas.

The organisation of the visit was excellent and we must warmly thank all those who helped to make it pleasant both by their helpfulness, through their wise choice of itineraries and the way they shared their knowledge of the area.

SITUATION AND VALUE OF THE PARK

Situated in the southern central part of Sweden, approximately 70 km south of Jönköping, Store Mosse National Park covers 7,850 ha, on the territory of the municipalities of Gnosjö, Vaggeryd and Värnamo. It is made up of a patchwork of extensive peatland, large areas of low-lying marshland, lakes and pine forests. The presence of morainic islands and elongated sand dunes means that the countryside and vegetation are varied.

The Kalvasjön and Kävsjön Lakes are permanent, while Häradsösjön and Horssjön Lakes are temporary. The level of Lake Kävsjön was greatly lowered by artificial means in the 19th century in order to reclaim swath and pastureland, a change which made the site more attractive for waterfowl.

Vegetation is typically that of acid peat and sandy areas, with the exception of the Björnakullen region, where water supplies with more nutrient and calcium content encourage a different type of vegetation with several rare species.

The Park includes the most important peatland complex in southern Sweden. The site has other assets besides its vegetation, being of great interest for fauna, especially birds. It is home to a remarkable combination of northern and southern species. At least 100 species reproduce in the Park, including the crane (*Grus grus*), the wild swan (*Cygnus cygnus*) and the jack-snipe (*Lymnocyptes minimus*). It is also a stopping-place for migratory birds, attracting large numbers. Store Mosse National Park is on the Swedish list of internationally important wetlands and also figures on the list of sites covered by the Ramsar Convention.

Evidence of human presence includes a series of old farms surrounded by pastureland which is still partly in use, where it is not being wooded, together with peat pits which have already been well

recolonised by sphagnum. Around Lake Kävsjön, mowing and grazing in the marshland areas, abandoned at the end of the century, have now been resumed over a limited area.

MANAGEMENT

The long awaited management plan has now been formalised and is a useful instrument.

A vegetation map has just been finalised on the basis of satellite imagery, but without, at that stage, controls on the ground.

On the basis of old but precious data from 1912, a map of the thickness of the peat has been prepared and will be a very useful reference for management decision.

Work is underway to complete an inventory of vegetation types on the basis of Natura 2000 criteria.

As foreseen, AssiDomän, a private company, is no longer entrusted with the Park's management since the retirement of the former director in 1998. Direct responsibility has passed to Jönköping County. Financing is primarily by the State Nature Conservation Service.

Staff is currently made up of one chief park warden, employed full-time. Some work is contracted to outside firms. Help is received from a number of volunteers, such as the very active Association of Friends of Store Mosse, a group of dedicated handicapped people and students involved in research and management activities.

The entire Park is State property, this being a legal obligation for Swedish national parks.

The Management Board, established about five years ago, brings twice a year all interested parties together. It is made up of representatives of the Park, the Jönköping County, the three municipalities concerned, the Farmers' Union, the Society for Heritage Conservation, the Friends of Store Mosse, the Association for the Promotion of Outdoor Life, the Swedish Society for the Protection of Nature and the Society of Ornithologists. The relationships with the municipalities are very good.

3.1. General objectives

Generally speaking, the Park should be left to evolve naturally while allowing visitor access in those areas where their presence does not run counter to the objectives of conserving and protecting the environment. These principles correspond perfectly with the requirements of the European Diploma.

3.2. Peatland and marsh

These are left to develop naturally without any interference. The Björnakullen marsh, which has been cleared and mown, and the area surrounding the Lake Kävsjön observation tower, which has been grazed and mown to maintain open areas for waders, are exceptions to this rule.

The project planned to speed up the revitalisation of the former peat pits around Kittla Kull, by blocking off some drainage canals, will be reviewed on the basis of the results of the hydrological study which has just started.

3.3. Forests

The principle of avoiding any action is in keeping with the objectives for the Park. The exceptions (retaining certain meadows, maintenance of edges of roads and canals) are perfectly justified.

Another exception, also justified, is the intensive management of the trees around old farms. Recently wooded areas are cleared and thinned to provide more light to pastures. Several species of trees are pollarded according to former practices so as to reconstruct the former landscape.

To date, the forest has never burned, but the risk exists. Very occasional fire in the pine forests would not necessarily be negative, being part of the natural dynamic of this type vegetation.

3.4. Farming land

The land concerned includes the formerly abandoned fields and grazing land at Svänö and Lövä, lake edges and the Björnakullen meadows. Following clearing and regular mowing in the latter area, remarkable populations of orchids have reappeared.

One of the difficulties is to obtain enough cattle to obtain a good grazing pressure on pastures.

3.5. Wetland areas and hydrology

The recommendation to undertake a study of the general hydrology of the park has now been followed up. The decision has been encouraged by complaints from neighbours of the Park in the region of Häradsö, where the water level has risen in recent years and made mowing of some areas difficult or impossible. In addition, the water level is rising along some roads, as indicated by the fact that some trees are dying.

The results of the study, underway, should provide the necessary information on the Park's general hydrology, the Park's dependence on external water supplies and the impact of peat digging on the outer edges of the Park. It will provide the basis for decision on issues such as the management of the level of the lakes and the maintenance (or not) of the various drainage canals,.

No interventions are planned until the results of the study are analysed.

Regarding the cleansing operation on the Fläsebäcken, it was done in the early 1990s, but on a very limited scale and only on about 150 m (from the main road bridge and upstream). No cleansing has been undertaken since.

3.6. Fauna management

No particular management measures are planned apart from restoration, grazing and grass cutting on the shore of lake Kävsjön to provide suitable open wetland habitat for birds, especially waders, and provision of food for golden eagles to reduce their consumption of pesticides.

Hunting is forbidden in the Park.

Fishing rights still exist for Lake Kävsjön and lake Kalvajön. On lake Kävsjön, they are limited to fishing on ice in winter and will be phased out in the long term. On lake Kalvajön, the situation is legally very complicated, as collective fishing rights linked to the land were forgotten and not formally terminated when the park was established. A legal procedure is underway, but, if the principles are important, the impact of the present situation is not dramatic.

3.7. Public access

The Park is very well equipped. There are several excellent observation towers, especially the main one, on lake Kävsjön and a remarkable network of paths and planked trails in the peat bogs, now extending nearly 40 km. The network is well maintained. It will no longer be extended, with the exception of some connecting trails.

The recent additions are excellent : a impressive trail for handicapped people, leading to lake Svartgölen, entirely constructed by a team from the Friends of the Store Mosse, and cultural trails in former farmland. Plans are being finalised to construct an important "Naturum" (nature information centre) not far from the existing main tower.

The question of staff has not been really resolved, with the Association of Friends of Store Mosse still assuring most of the presence in visitors' centres.

The buildings within the Park boundaries - which are of some architectural and historical interest – continue to be well restored and fitted out. They are used to accommodate overnight visitors or rented for short stays; there are about one thousand overnight stays annually.

Park surveillance is limited. Fortunately, visitors to the Park are well-behaved and there have been hardly any serious difficulty. The advent of new sports, such as mountain biking, has not brought any problems.

3.8. Park limits and buffer zone

There are still plans to continue to purchase land around the limits when opportunities arise, to expand the Park and in particular to include the interesting peatland lying to the north-east. This action is not regarded as urgent. This peatland is already protected by general provisions protecting wetlands of interest. Purchase poses delicate problems of financing and of the loss of hunting rights. It should be borne in mind that under Swedish law, a parcel of land may only be included in a national Park if it is owned by the state.

There is no buffer zone proper, but on the whole, the situation is satisfactory. A large part of the perimeter is surrounded by forest, most of it publicly owned, which acts as an good buffer zone. However, there seems to be no limit on clear cutting almost to the limits of the Park.

In the Södratorp - Björnekullen region, the approaches to the Park are wooded or extensively farmed. Moreover, a watercourse flowing into Lake Herrestads acts as a boundary and prevents any fertiliser or pesticide from filtering into the peatbogs. A similar situation exists to the north-east of the Park, whilst in the north, large areas of peatland adjoining the Park are protected.

However, the slow filling up of drainage canals is likely to have consequences outside of the park, as has already happened in the Häradsö area.

Adalen continues to be the most sensitive region, where major peat digging work is under way on the basis of rights which existed before the Park was set up, and were renewed for ten years in 1995. With peat pits stretching as far as the Park boundary, the buffer zone is effectively inside the Park. The scope for limiting the drainage effects on the peatlands in the Park should be studied as well as restoration measures to be introduced once operations stop.

The development plans of the municipalities concerned are under review. The new drafts will be considered by the County, which will see to it that the uses planned for the area surrounding the Store Mosse Park are compatible with its conservation.

3.9. Scientific monitoring and research

Most of the scientific information on birds and plants is collected by amateurs. Monitoring of the managed areas is regularly carried out.

Research has started on certain insect groups, such as carabids, tipulidae and craneflies.

Some students do their field work in the Park.

In view of the Park's interest, it would be useful to encourage more important research activities, notably in applied ecology. The Park should also be more closely involved in the work carried out and informed of the results.

3.10. Cultural aspects

There have been major developments in this area, and the production of an excellent report of the historical analysis of the landscape in the farmland of Svänö, with details on the way the area was managed in the past and a clear reading of the tracks left on the land.

3.11. Roads and railway lines

A road and a railway line cross the Park at its narrowest point. Their impact is acceptable. The speed limit on the road has now been set at 70 km per hour.

4. CONCLUSION

By way of conclusion, we unreservedly recommend the renewal of the European Diploma for the Store Mosse National Park. The value of the site and its size, its remarkable state of preservation and existing facilities for the public testify to its European interest.

The renewal should be accompanied by the following recommendations, which are meant to improve protection of the Park's natural and landscape values in the long term:

1. actively pursue the hydrological survey, review and complete the management plan on the basis of the results obtained;
2. ensure a better balance between professionals and volunteers involved in Park management and visitor information;
3. encourage more actively scientific research in the Park, for example through a Life Programme;
4. monitor the impact of peat digging in the outer edges of the Park and make provision to restore the area close to the Park in due time, to minimise the negative influences on the Park;
5. establish a buffer zone around the park with the objective of covering the entire hydrological system that influences the Park.

Appendix I

COUNCIL OF EUROPE

COMMITTEE OF MINISTERS

RESOLUTION (98) 19

**ON THE RENEWAL OF THE EUROPEAN DIPLOMA
AWARDED TO THE STORE MOSSE NATIONAL PARK
(Sweden)**

*(Adopted by the Committee of Ministers on 18 September 1998
at the 641st 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 (93) 18 on the award of the European Diploma, Category A, to Store Mosse National Park;

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, Category A, awarded to the Store Mosse National Park, until 13 June 2003;

Attaches the following condition to the renewal:

1. Rapidly finalise the management plan and the vegetation map;

Attaches the following recommendations to the renewal:

1. Ensure a better balance between professionals and volunteers involved in Park management and visitor information;
2. Verify that regional development plans being drawn up by the municipalities concerned take due account of the Park's conservation requirements;
3. More actively encourage scientific research in the Park, notably studies that are useful for its management;
4. Monitor the Park's general hydrology, notably the management of the main canal and the level of the lakes, the flooding of the disused peat pits near Kittla kull and the dependence of the central area on external water supplies;
5. Monitor the impact of peat digging on the outer edges of the Park and make provision in good time for a restoration plan;
6. Continue with the proposals to extend the park.

APPENDIX II

Draft resolution on the renewal of the European Diploma of Protected Areas to the Store Mosse National Park (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) 11 awarding the European Diploma of Protected Areas to the Store Mosse National Park;

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 Store Mosse National Park until 13 June 2008;

Attaches the following recommendations to the renewal:

1. actively pursue the hydrological survey, review and complete the management plan on the basis of the results obtained;
2. ensure a better balance between professionals and volunteers involved in Park management and visitor information;
3. encourage more actively scientific research in the Park, for example through a Life Programme;
4. monitor the impact of peat digging in the outer edges of the Park and make provision to restore the area close to the Park in due time, to minimise the negative influences on the Park;
5. establish a buffer zone around the park with the objective of covering the entire hydrological system that influences the Park.