The Finnish forest reindeer (*Rangifer tarandus fennicus*) is a subspecies of the large and widespread reindeer (*Rangifer tarandus*) population. The (sub)speciation took place during the last ice age, and since then, there have been major changes in the Finnish forest reindeer’s range. Once commonplace in Fennoscandia and North-western Russia, by the early 1900s, the sub-species had become extinct in Finland. Today, the Finnish population is a result of migration from Karelia in Russia and the release of captive-bred stock. The current world population in Finland and Russia together is approx. 4 500, of which the Finnish population is around 2 000.

The Finnish forest reindeer is listed in Annex II of the Habitats Directive and its conservation status was assessed as “unfavourable-inadequate” in the most recent Article 17 reporting. It is listed as “near threatened” in the 2010 Red List of Finnish Species, following the categorisation of the IUCN.

The major threats to the sub-species are excessive mortality caused by large carnivores and traffic, and the potential genetic dangers of in-breeding. Habitat change is exacerbating large carnivore predation.

Objectives

The main objective of WildForestReindeerLIFE is to achieve a “favourable” conservation status for the Finnish forest reindeer by 2023. This will be done by
extending and defragmenting its range, reducing mortality rates and improving genetic diversity in wild and captive bred populations in Finland and Sweden.

If the project is a success, it is hoped it will enable relevant authorities and stakeholders to start reintroducing the subspecies in other parts of Fennoscandia.

Specific objectives are to:

- Increase the range of the species via reintroductions in two Natura 2000 areas;
- Prevent cross-breeding with domestic reindeer;
- Improve the genetic diversity and viability of a small and isolated in situ subpopulation in Finland;
- Improve the genetic diversity of the ex situ population both in Finland and in Sweden;
- Reduce species mortality;
- Improve habitat in multi-use forest landscapes; and
- Improve the knowledge base of local communities and the general public in terms of Finnish forest reindeer conservation and management.

Expected results: The project expects to achieve the following results:

- A total of 121 Finnish forest reindeer will be tagged with GPS collars;
- A census of the subspecies will be carried out in 2017 and 2018 and a follow-up census to determine the results of the project will take place in 2022 and 2023;
- Assessment of levels of subspecies mortality due to traffic and illegal killing;
- Mapping of potential habitat on state land, preparation of education material for habitat recognition, and selection of a set of target areas including 400 ha of restoration pilots;
- Reintroduction of more than 30 Finnish forest reindeer in the Seitseminen and Lauhanvuori Natura 2000 network sites, including at least six GPS-tagged animals;
- Local acceptance of the reintroduction of the subspecies in the Seitseminen region;
- An increase of the Ähtäri-Soini-Karstula subpopulation after three reinforcement releases totalling 20-30 individuals;
- An increase in number of founders of the captive bred (ex-situ) Finnish and EU forest reindeer population from eight to 14;
- An end to hybridisation and mingling of domestic and Finnish forest reindeer in the project areas;
- A reduction in subspecies mortality from traffic and more accurate identification of the causes of mortality;
- An update of the existing management plan for the subspecies in Finland;
- Completion of a strategy for replicating the reintroduction of the subspecies elsewhere in the EU; and
- A dissemination plan including training of guides and displays in zoos.

Results
Environmental issues addressed:

Themes

Species - Mammals

Keywords

environmental impact of transport, population dynamics, conservation of genetic resources, monitoring

Target EU Legislation

- Nature protection and Biodiversity
- Directive 92/43 - Conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora - Habitats Directiv ...

Target species

Rangifer tarandus fennicus

Natura 2000 sites

| SCI  | F10311002 | Seitseminen |
| SCI  | F10800001 | Lauhanvuori |

Top

Beneficiaries:

Coordinator: Metshallitus Parks & Wildlife Finland

Type of organisation: National authority

Description: Natural Heritage Services (NHS) of Metsähallitus is a public authority responsible for nature conservation. In Finland, NHS manages, utilises and protects more than 9.1 million ha of state-owned land and 3.4 million ha of marine and freshwater areas, including protected areas and national hiking areas. Most of these areas are situated in the eastern and northern parts of the country. It is also responsible for the nationwide protection and management of
these areas and their habitats and species. NHS promotes activities that help to preserve biodiversity, while also providing a wide range of free outdoor recreational facilities and visitor centres.

**Partners**

Ranuan eläintarha / Ranua Zoo, Finland
Suomen riistakeskus / Finnish Wildlife Agency, Finland
WWF Suomi / World Wide Fund for Nature Finland, Finland
Korkeasaaren eläintarha / Helsinki Zoo, Finland
Liikennevirasto / Finnish Transport Agency, Finland
Ähtäri Zoo, Finland
Paliskuntain yhdistys / Reindeer Herders' Association, Finland
Luonnonvarakeskus / Natural Resources Institute Finland, Finland

**Administrative data:**

- **Project reference**: LIFE15 NAT/FI/000881
- **Duration**: 01-OCT-2016 to 30-SEP-2023
- **Total budget**: 5,164,538.00 €
- **EU contribution**: 3,054,098.00 €

**Project location**

- Uusimaa(Finland Suomi)
- Satakunta(Finland Suomi)
- Pirkanmaa(Finland Suomi)
- Pohjois-Savo(Finland Suomi)
- Pohjois-Karjala(Finland Suomi)
- Kainuu(Finland Suomi)
- Keski-Suomi(Finland Suomi)
- Etelä-Pohjanmaa(Finland Suomi)
- Keski-Pohjanmaa(Finland Suomi)
- Pohjois-Pohjanmaa(Finland Suomi)
- Lappi(Finland Suomi)

**Read more:**

- Project web site
- Project web site - 2
- Publication: Technical report
  - Title: "Metsäpeuran palautusistutuksen sosiaalisten vaikutusten arviointi Seitsemisen kansallispuistossa ja lähiympäristössä" (813 KB) Author: Juha Hiedanpää, Jani Pellikka Year: 2017 Editor: Luke Luonnonvarakeskus