

9070 Fennoscandian wooded pastures

Management of Natura 2000 habitats. Summary



Fennoscandian wooded pasture with large old oak trees at Kinnekulle (SE054 0063), South Sweden. Photo: Vikki Bengtsson.

The habitat type can briefly be characterised as pastures in which a tree layer of varying density is a striking element. The type covers various complexes ranging from sparse forest to coppice of trees and scrub, in a mosaic with open patches of grassland character. The tree layer consists mostly of deciduous trees, including oak, ash, lime, birch and grey alder, although conifers may also occur. The impact of grazing is a key element and the ground vegetation is characterised by species typical for grassland and meadow habitats. The habitat is almost entirely exclusive to the Boreal region.

Wooded pastures are some of the most species-rich habitats of the Boreal biogeographic region. Several rare and threatened species of insects (including the hermit beetle, *Osmoderma eremita*), lichens and fungi are linked to the large old trees of various species that are typical for this habitat.

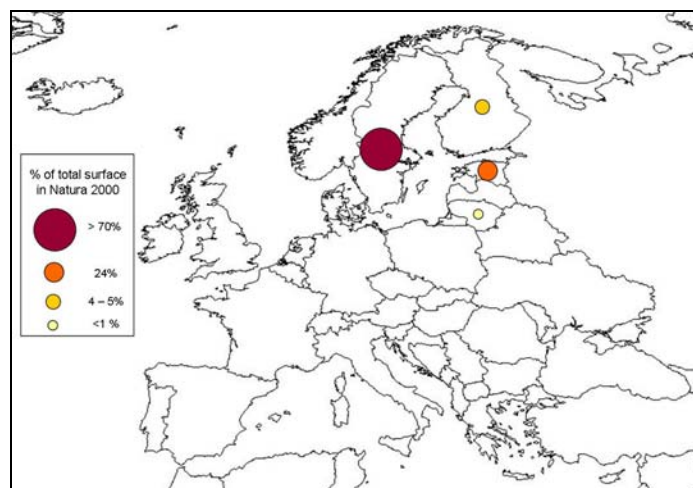
Using outlying forest land for grazing was the traditional way of keeping livestock in most parts of the Nordic countries, often combined with slash-and-burn practice, from the establishment of permanent settlements in Northern Europe around 5000-6000 years ago until recently.

It was not until the shift towards more intensive livestock husbandry on cultivated land and the use of artificial fertilisers during the 20th century that this practice was finally broken. The changes over the last 100-150 years have resulted in a drastic decline of various kinds of wooded pastures, i.e. what remains today are just fragments of the former range.

The main objectives for the management of the remaining wooded pastures are to maintain the mosaic of small open glades (max. 1 ha, often smaller) dominated by grassland vegetation, to reduce shading that allows for inflow of light to the ground and on tree trunks, while providing an adequate density of trees.

Grazing must be the key tool for their ongoing management, although regular clearing may be a necessary complementary measure. When reopening a site for grazing, restoration in order to reduce overgrowth and to overcome problems of internal fertilising is usually a necessary first step.

For sites where protecting viable populations of any threatened and rare species is a key objective, regular active management as well as any restoration has to consider various species-specific requirements. In order to avoid gaps in the age structure of large host trees, management planning has to be for a time frame of several centuries (or many human generations).



Percentage distribution of the total surface of wooded pastures in Natura 2000

The complete text of the document is available at: http://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/natura2000/management/best_practice_en.htm

Management of Natura 2000 habitats is a project launched by the European Commission in January 2007 aimed at defining best practices for management of habitat types included in Annex I of the Habitat Directive (92/43/EEC) that need active recurring management. Twenty six habitat types that are representative of different bio-geographical regions have been considered.