

GSN Best Practice Competition 2009



Application form

Applicant

Organisation, country	Sweden
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Headline of best practice initiative	 Nature year 2009, www.naturensar.se

Description of best practice initiative

Describe the basis of your best practice initiative (why, what, when, where; budget in EUR).

This year is the centennial of the first national parks and the first nature protection law in Sweden and in Europe. We have gathered all major stakeholders in nature conservation under one umbrella organisation with a common website, www.naturensar.se, and symbol. The celebrations started in January and will continue throughout 2009. The symbol we have chosen for Nature's Year is a butterfly, representing the beauty and fragility of our natural environment. In the butterfly's wings you can see trees and people, a reminder of the importance of how people interact with nature.

The aim is to create interest in Nature Year and nature conservation and to coordinate our different activities in time and space. We want to increase public awareness of the 25 participating organisations, show the broad span of actors involved and create interest in the activities taking place all around the country.

So far some 800 activities have been entered in the web calendar. The National parks day on May 24 was a great success with activities in almost all of Sweden's 28 national parks. Other highlights were the celebration of Earth Hour March 28 (WWF), the night of Environmental Day June 5, and the centennial of the Swedish Society for Nature Conservation. We are currently looking forward to Wild Flowers Day on June 14 and the inauguration of Kosterhavets national park in September. The Swedish government is using the Nature year 2009 symbol on the high-level meeting on biological diversity in September, during the EU presidency.

The common goal is to highlight nature conservation although we've chosen the name Nature year 2009. We have agreed not to focus only on history, but also on the present and the future for nature conservation.

It is impossible to say how much all activities during Nature Year 2009 will cost since all interaction group members finance their own activities. Swedish EPA has financed the website, the symbol and produced information material. We estimate the costs to be around 100 000 EUR.

What was the main objective of the initiative and what were the results obtained (please quantify)?

The purpose of the collaborative project called *Nature Year 2009* is to give a retrospective view of nature conservation and also to look at it in the context of future challenges, thus strengthening the position of nature conservation. The project has three sub-objectives:

Coordination

Gather key players to form an interaction group to create an overview and facilitate synergies between various players, and between planned activities.

Result:

- Ongoing dialogue and participation in the interactivity group on the national level.
- A broad cooperation between the participating organisations and others on the regional level, a vast majority of the activities to celebrate Nature Year 2009 are planned and carried out as joint projects.

Joint platform for Nature Year

Develop a joint platform comprising a message, a symbol and a website, to communicate effectively with selected target groups.

Result:

- We have managed to create an identity for Nature year 2009 – the symbol, website and message are in place and working.
- The organisations happily use the symbol and message on their web sites and contribute activities to the calendar and write articles to the website www.naturensar.se

Communication

Create interest in *Nature Year* and nature conservation. Increase public awareness of the participating organisations. Show the broad span of actors involved and create interest in the activities taking place to celebrate 100 years of nature conservation.

Results:

- The strategy has paid off. We have a strong synergistic effect in using a national identity (Nature Year 2009) to convey all the local activities carried out by many organisations.
- All types of media have reported on Nature Year 2009. There has been features on TV and radio about Nature Year 2009, a popular nature radio program have broadcasted from national parks. A popular morning program on TV will probably broadcast from Strömstad in September, both from the high level meeting and the inauguration of Kosterhavet national park.

What type of media did you use (TV, radio, print, electronic)? Why this choice of media?

The main channels for the cooperation project are the website and the personal encounter.

Since we have a network approach we work through the channels of the participating organisations. Each organisation is responsible for producing the information material it needs. All types of media will be used: exhibitions, TV-films, leaflets, web articles etcetera.

The project has produced various types of marketing/information material, such as leaflets, roll-ups, advertisements for paper and web, power point presentations. All organisations are free to use and print the originals.

Who was the target group?

For practical and logical reasons, the external target groups for *Nature Year* coincide with the target groups each organisation in the interaction group has identified for its own operations, i.e. those participating in, attending, or interested in the activities arranged in 2009.

The internal target group for *Nature Year* comprises the organisations belonging to the steering group and interaction group.

Both these target groups include *non-governmental organisations, local and regional authorities, the media, politicians/decision makers, businesses* and of course *people with an interest in the environment*.

What were the main messages?

Main message: Nature year 2009 – 100 years of national parks and nature conservations.

On the website we have different themes during the year in order to coordinate our communication: celebration, knowledge, activities, participation. Each theme has it's own message, i.e. the importance of biological diversity under the knowledge theme.

Who were the partners? Did you involve other institutions/ministries/agencies/NGOs?

Some 20 organisations have signed the deal on cooperation during Natures Year 2009. Thus they can use the symbol and enjoy the benefits of being visible on the website. Many more organisations are involved in the celebrations, since the participating organisations can use the symbol in cooperation project with organisations outside the interactivity group.

The steering group consists of Swedish Society for Nature Conservation, WWF, Discover Sweden (tourist organisation), the County Administrative Boards, Swedish Travelling Exhibitions (a government body) and the Swedish EPA.

The participants are

NGO:s: Swedish Society for Nature Conservation, WWF, Friluftsrämjandet - Outdoor life for everyone, The Study Promotion Association, Swedish Botanical Association, The Swedish Local Heritage Movement, Discover Sweden, the Swedish Ecotourism Association

Authorities: the County Administrative Boards, Swedish Travelling Exhibitions, the Swedish government, The Swedish Species Information Centre, Swedish Center for Nature Interpretation, Swedish Environmental Protection Agency, The Swedish Museum of Natural History, Swedish National Heritage Board, Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions.

Others: Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences, Skansen in Stockholm (the oldest open-air museum in the world), four Nature foundations, The Royal Swedish Academy of Agriculture and Forestry.

Who financed the activities, amount of finances?

All organisations finance their own activities. Swedish EPA finance the management and joint costs for running the cooperation, i.e. develop and run the website, design of the symbol, produce some information material.

Did you experience any specific difficulties during the action that could be learned from?

1. Time. To get people that already have enough to do, to participate and to voluntarily accept new tasks in order to get the cooperation going and the website filled with new articles and entries. We have no standard solution, but have designed the project to be time efficient and synergistic.

2. Time again. Although websites with calendars are quite common you have to build your own to suite the needs. Here we wanted to present some 20 organisations in one calendar. We started last autumn but the many of the organisations did not have their final plans for 2009 until the year had started. How many activities should we measure the site for. The solution is to build scalability in both the project and the website.

3. And again. It was also time consuming to create the strategy for the cooperation. You have to discuss in detail what needs to be regulated and what should be left to the participating organisations to decide.

Did you receive any feedback after your activities? Did you carry out an evaluation of the results and if yes, what was the outcome?

As we are half way into 2009 we are constantly getting and gathering feedback on the cooperation and press clippings. We have a format for evaluation of the individual activities, and have not yet compiled them.

We plan to evaluate the project when it is over and will then focus on the following evolution objectives :

- Participating organisations feel that internal coordination has worked well and that there has been a constructive dialogue within the network.
- Participating organisations feel that the common identity, calendar and website have fulfilled a function and have been an effective means of providing information about *Nature Year*.
- The participating organisations have reached their defined target groups via the website, and the target groups have considered the information published to be beneficial.
- *Nature Year* has made an impact in the media.

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Is any follow-up or duplication of this experience foreseen?
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We plan to have a final seminar at the end of the year to make a closure of Nature Year 2009. There is a great interest from participating organisations to continue this cooperation around a website and symbol. The evaluation will show us what to do.
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Why do you consider that your proposal should be selected as the best practice initiative of the year?
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We are turning a centennial into a cooperation for the future on nature conservation. Although NGOs, authorities and other stakeholders in Sweden have worked together before on nature conservation this is a unique project on a larger scale than ever before. This cooperation and the structure and strategy of the project have a potential usefulness beyond the year 2009.
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We have increased the interest in and knowledge about nature conservation. More people have encountered nature with their own senses.

Please feel free to attach any printed material, photos etc.
Send your application to the Secretariat by 10 June 2009.