

A Wonderful Friday

From Conflict to Cooperation in the East Vättern Scarp Landscape



Roger Olsson

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”The husbandry of yesteryear merges with the landscape, it weaves its patterns alongside nature’s own, and that tapestry, at one and the same time a thousand years old and as young as spring itself, bears the name Sweden”.

Carl Fries in Old Sweden

Introduction

Pressures on the natural environment are hardening both in Sweden and worldwide. There are many interests that compete to exploit the resources found in a rural landscape – forestry, agriculture, fishing, mining, energy, tourism, and people who want enjoy a better quality of life, and some of these have great impact. When so many stakeholders are active simultaneously, it is not surprising that there are conflicts. It is also why WWF takes an active part working with a landscape perspective.

Anyone who has travelled the highway north of Jönköping has certainly marvelled, as I did, at the dramatic backdrop of crags and cliffs that plunge down into Lake Vättern. The district holds many secrets, a vibrant scenery hosting many rare species as well as magical settings where the artist John Bauer drew inspiration, rare earth metals coveted by a whole world, perfect locations to build wind turbines in – at the same time as it is also home to farmers who for generations have used the smålandian countryside to harvest timber and raise crops. In recent years residents in the surrounding towns have become more and more interested in moving to these pastoral surroundings.

Here Roger Olsson brings to life a process that began when conservation interests challenged the traditional use of forest and land in East Vättern. Here is an unfolding saga rife with dramatic scenes, confrontation, joy, a growing respect between protagonists and the recognition of conservation as party to the process. This experimental workshop has led to the UNESCO Man and the Biosphere (MAB) programme acknowledging that the natural cultural values in East Vättern have given it the right to sit among the 600 regions of the world that have been bestowed the epithet Biosphere Reserve! An excellent example of local stakeholders – provincial authorities, landowners and conservationists – acting locally while thinking globally.

Enjoy reading!

Håkan Wirtén, Secretary General of WWF

Preface

More than 40 years ago, in 1971, the MAB programme was established. More than 40 years ago, some visionary people sat together and reflected on key challenges and issues facing the Planet as regards relationships between people and nature. In 1976, the first biosphere reserve was established. Nominated by governments, biosphere reserves are areas of terrestrial, coastal or marine ecosystems that are internationally recognized under UNESCO Man and the Biosphere programme.

Biosphere reserves are established on the fundamental principle that people are part of the ecosystems that they shape and that the ecological and societal systems are mutually dependent. The importance of combining knowledge for the management of the resources and biodiversity has been highlighted since the establishment of the World Network of Biosphere Reserves which comprises today 621 sites in 117 countries. The experience of the MAB programme has demonstrated that values and principles such as trust, reciprocity and collective action do exist in certain conditions and that when people trust each other, they find solutions, as well as the energy to create and build positive actions.

20 years ago, some visionary people sat together on the Eastern slopes of lake Vättern and reflected on what could possibly be done to overcome the conflicts between conservation and development. Together, they were able to work on interactions between people and nature, between people and people. They used diversity as a source of enrichment and knowledge and were able to build a long term vision and shared objectives for the area.

The strength of a biosphere reserve lies in its people. People are the key to making a biosphere reserve a living and lasting success for sustainable development in action. People are the roots for making a biosphere reserve a model, a source of inspiration for present and future generations. Long, full life to East Vättern Scarp landscape. Biosphere Reserve and welcome to the World Network of Biosphere Reserves. You make this World Network unique and special.

Meriem Bouamrane
Programme specialist
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Table of contents

A wonderful Friday	7
East Vättern – an idea takes shape	9
Facts: The physical geography of East Vättern	12 - 20
<i>The typography of East Vättern</i>	<i>12</i>
<i>Map</i>	<i>13</i>
<i>Broadleaf deciduous forest</i>	<i>14</i>
<i>Lake shores, streams and ponds</i>	<i>15</i>
<i>West-facing slopes</i>	<i>16</i>
<i>East-facing slopes</i>	<i>17</i>
<i>Forest edge habitats</i>	<i>18</i>
<i>Pastures</i>	<i>19</i>
<i>Giant and pollard trees</i>	<i>20</i>
A conflict looms	21
Conservation is about people	26
Don't rock the boat!	31
LEKO and dual planning – a trail-blazer	37
A project group in search of a project	39
Success factors	43
Appendices	50



A wonderful Friday

Biosphere Reserve. For most people probably just a difficult word void of meaning. For others the dream of a community where economic progress walks hand in hand with a care for living nature on which all prosperity is founded. A vision of a sustainable society, not only for humans but also for the hazel dormouse, the ancient relict *Nothorina* beetle and crested newts.

On September 9, 2012 the landscape around Gränna and Huskvarna, east of the mighty primary rock fault along the shoreline of Lake Vättern, was incorporated into that vision.

The East Vättern Scarp Biosphere was inaugurated.

The road has been long, with many bumps and detours along the way, not least a trip to Transylvania. Things might have turned out very differently. In hindsight it is surprising that the journey took place at all. It could just as easily have ended before it began. More precisely, at a meeting in Jönköping a November afternoon in 2000.

I'll never forget that Friday, says Ryno Andersson, Chairman of the Ölmstad section of the Federation of Swedish Farmers – FSF.

Ryno was a land owner representative in the East Vättern project group. That Friday afternoon the

group was summoned at short notice. A crisis was brewing.

The chairman, County Conservation Officer Johan Uhr, hadn't managed to get hold of everybody. But Ryno Andersson and his FSF colleague Göran Karlsson were present, as was Anders Johansson from the Södra forest cooperative. The Gränna Forest Group (GFG) was represented by Claes Hellsten and Lasse Söderström. As was customary, Peter Jonsson, the county project manager, took down the minutes.

The forest group had been fanning the flames as usual. They had invited the head forester, chair of the County Forestry Board, to go with them to visit some planned logging sites. Their message was that forests with high conservation values were about to fall to the chain saw because the authorities were unaware of the existence of rare plants and animals, species needy of protection. Existing inventories were substandard.

That this was high on the GFG agenda was nothing new. But the group had arranged the excursion with the head forester on their own initiative, without consulting FSF and others in the project group first. This was the last drop in a beaker that had been brimming over with mistrust and conflict for years.



– Ryno was furious because we were rocking the boat, Claes Hellsten remembers.

Ryno Andersson's position was crystal clear. If you belong to a group you work in the group, and don't run off and do your own thing. Now there was to be no more sneaking about in the bush. Henceforth the forest group was not to venture into the woods without contacting landowners first.

Impossible, objected Claes Hellsten. Members of the group, a band of loosely organised enthusiasts, won't be able to call round to five or ten different landowners before setting out on a spur-of-the-moment Sunday ramble, with binoculars and magnifying glasses dangling from their necks.

Ryno Andersson countered. He had received several ultimatums from his members: stop cooperating with the forest group, or we quit FSF.

Johan Uhr was also berated. Ryno and FSF demanded that the county board remain neutral.

– We felt that the board was more or less running the forest group's errands, Ryno says. When it came down to concrete issues GFG was always more up to speed than the county board.

Everyone realised that without landowner participation it would be pointless to continue.

Claes and Lasse declared that GFG was prepared to step down if this was necessary for the project to survive. FSF and Södra rejoined that the forest group ought stay on board, but that they should stick to the rules. Rules that were sometimes, according to Claes, completely unreasonable.

In 1988, when the first project group meeting was held, the inclusion of GFG was already in question. But even then Johan Uhr brought matters to a head – if anything is going to come out of this everyone must to take part. And after that, for two years, the project team had met almost every month. A lot of time and effort had been invested in building an effective working relationship. Now all of that was at stake.

And on that Friday afternoon time was running out.

The meeting ended without any conclusive decisions being taken. No minutes from the meeting were recorded, either then or later. All there is are memories, and five sheets of pencilled notes. However, twelve years later everyone involved points to this November meeting, the most turbulent in the group's history, as a turning point.

Today East Vättern is renowned in Swedish nature conservation circles, an acclaimed success story. Dissertations have been written about what happened and why. Delegations from other countries and continents have come to see and learn how landowners, government agencies and environmental organisations can work together for sustainable development.

And Simon Jonegård from Destination Jönköping, East Vättern Biosphere Reserve coordinator doesn't hesitate:

– The first years of confrontation were crucial. Without them we wouldn't have succeeded.



The working group 2011.



Ryno Andersson and Claes Hellsten discuss pollarding and traditional farming methods.

East Vättern – An idea takes shape

Ryno Andersson was for many years president of the East Vättern FSF Ölmstad chapter and its environmental officer at county level. He is now retired, or so he says. But when I want to interview him I have to wait until the morning chores in the barn are done.

– Drop by for breakfast half past seven.

We sit down to eat. And Ryno tells me how, in 1962, the bank in Gränna denied him the loan of 10 000 Swedish crowns he needed to take over the family farm in Ölmstad.

– Farming had no future in Sweden; you weren't supposed to encourage young people to gamble on it...

But Ryno had decided, bank loan or no bank loan. A generation later, his daughter and her family have taken over the farm, and the countryside bears witness to who was right or wrong about the future

of farming. This isn't a depopulated area, quite the contrary. More and more people from Huskvarna and Jönköping want to live in the beautiful and varied landscape now known as East Vättern. For Ryno, who has lived here all his life, this name is a novelty.

– It popped up in the 1990s. But today, everyone knows what it stands for, and I think it plays an important role for commitment. There was a time when Ryno Andersson wasn't particularly interested in knowing what the name East Vättern Scarp Landscape stood for. GFG worked hard to populate the concept with an abundance of rare insects, mosses and fungi that no landowner had ever heard of, but which – it soon became apparent – threatened to stop them exploiting their own forest as they saw fit.

– I hardly knew anything about birds or plants, when I became a farmer, says Ryno. I knew less



Elder-flowered orchid

than my father. He walked along behind his horse, and when he took a break he sat down in the grass. I sat up on a tractor, and on top of that I was harried by streamlining requirements.

– Today I'm somewhat ashamed of that. I've learned since then and now I take pride in knowing what I've got on my land.

Those who cultivate the fields and forests of East Vättern have a lot to be proud of. Elf-cap moss, Lesser Spotted Woodpecker, noble chafer, jelly lichen and at least a hundred species more, and don't forget the mountain bulin snail. It's only found here, in the whole of Scandinavia.

The Mountain bulin snail is about 15 millimetres long, and has an extended, conical shell, with grey, brown and black speckles. It can be seen crawling on tree trunks in the moist broadleaf forests on the slopes and in the ravines. This is a difficult habitat for both livestock and humans, and hardwood trees have probably grown here without interruption since the interglacial around six thousand years ago. Otherwise it's difficult to explain the presence of this little snail. If you can only travel at a speed of a few centimetres per hour, you can't move to a new forest if the old one has been chopped down.

The long unbroken chronicle of broadleaf deciduous forest probably explains the abundance of rare species. Many of them have limited ability to spread further afield. They need a stable environment, century after century of moist, leafy gloom and decaying wood. A new road or a clearing on the edge of their living space lets in the sun and wind, and then desiccation and disaster is a fact.

For other species it's just the opposite. The wryneck, hazel dormouse and field gentian are three typical examples. They – and many others like them – have their origins in the savannah-like deciduous landscape that once covered the expanse now occupied by Europe's modern-day farmlands. During the interglacial this landscape was kept open by grazing wild horse, auroch and wisent. Today domestic animals fill the same function. Without them the habitats of the denizens of the meadows and sunlit forest edges would soon decline.

The irregular patchwork of cultivated and untouched creates the alluring and varied East Vättern landscape with its unique natural values. It also poses challenges for those charged with looking after these lands. It's not just about whether to cultivate or leave undisturbed, but about doing both, and doing the right one in the right place.

Today Ryno Andersson knows this is possible. Back then, when the East Vättern concept was only just beginning to take shape, things were different.

– They think you can live on air, he and the other landowners said about the Gränna Forest Group.

Dead wood lives! retorted the forest group and compiled ever lengthier lists of endangered species in the primeval forest.



Mountain bulin snail and Hazel dormouse



The topography of East Vättern

East Vättern spans an area from Lake Tenhult in the south to Omberg in the north. In the west its expanse is bounded by the island of Vising, and on land by the massive fault which makes up the eastern shore. In the east, the boundary has been drawn in the rift valleys that run parallel to the shore of Lake Vättern. The most pronounced of these begins at Tenhult and runs north through Lake Ram and the lakes at Rävling to Lake Bunn. Further to the east a rift valley starting at the E4 highway in Östergötland runs through numerous small lakes down to Lake Noen in the municipality of Tranås.

The project, and later on the biosphere reserve, is grounded on this topography. When an application for recognition as a biosphere reserve was made, parish boundaries were laid over natural formations to emphasise the human geography. Today the area encloses nine parishes in the municipality of Jönköping and one in Tranås. Lake Vättern and Vising have also been incorporated in the biosphere reserve. The part of the escarpment that lies in Östergötland has not been included, though this has been discussed.

East Vättern now comprises a total of 104 000 hectares. 32,000 hectares of which are made up of lakes. There are more than 1,000 farms in the area, most of them quite small. The average holding has just over 20 hectares of forest. The bedrock is extensively fractured, giving rise to a broken and hilly landscape. The huge volume of water in Lake Vättern has an effect on the climate and bestows long, mild autumns. This, combined with thousands of years of farming –

especially grazing – has created a small-scale mosaic of habitats that are unique to Sweden. This also means that plant and animal life is prolific. Today, after more than a decade of inventorying, over 300 red-listed species have been found in the area. A red-listed species is one registered in the official list of the species in Sweden that are more or less endangered, or risk becoming so.

In 1997 the World Wide Fund for Nature, WWF, placed the East Vättern Scarp Landscape on a list over the 100 most valuable forest areas in Europe. Only five areas in Sweden are on that list.

Today there are 30 nature reserves, 23 protected biotopes and 23 conservation agreements inside the biosphere reserve. Most landowners have so-called Green forest management plans where about five per cent of the forest is set aside for conservation. When the project started there were eight reserves, one protected biotope and no conservation agreements. Green forest management plans had not yet been implemented.



Fingalstorp, a mosaic landscape of crags, pastures, edges and fields.



The East Vättern Scarp Biosphere. Boundaries were changed to follow the borders of the ten parishes contained within the biosphere reserve and no longer exactly match the physical geography of the project area with the rift valleys to the east. A social layer was imposed over the biological to emphasize the importance of the people who live and work in the district.



Lasse Söderström and Kjell Antonsson hunting beetles.



Baneberry



Silky sheath mushroom



Elm-ash forest. Getingaryd.

Broadleaf deciduous forest

Hardwood forests of oak, hazel, ash, elm, linden, maple and beech are above all found on crags and in gullies. Some of them have been allowed to grow undisturbed for a long time, and there are many old trees and large quantities of dead wood. This type of forest is rare in Sweden and is home to many rare and endangered species.

Mountain bulin snail, silky sheath mushroom and black-and-red longhorn beetle are some examples of these endangered species.



Prästkvarn Pond, an extremely species-rich small body of water with newts and a rich fauna of insects. Dug in the 1960s, restored in 2011 when the quagmire on the north shore was removed.



Northern crested newt



Röttle Creek gully

Lake shores, streams and ponds

Most watercourses in East Vättern rise in the east and flow into Lake Vättern. The Röttle and Huskvarna creeks are spawning grounds for the Vätter trout. Often there is a rich fauna of insects and other bugs in the streams. Utters, Lesser Spotted Woodpeckers and Grey Wagtails live in the rivers and in the broadleaf forests at the shore edge.

Small pools of water are among the most diverse habitats in this rural landscape. Ideally, they should be open and sunlit. Creatures like the crested newt thrive in these ponds and this is one of the principal areas of its distribution in the country.



Lake Vättern



Musk beetle



Lesser Spotted Woodpecker



Pollarded linden



Ola rock outcropp

West-facing slopes

Along the slopes facing Lake Vättern there are wide expanses of mixed oak and pine forest, including many pollard trees, spruce and specimen of nearly all native hardwoods. This is typical for the Vättern escarpment. Long stretches of the shoreline are dominated by linden and pine woods. The crags are gaunt and inaccessible and for this reason they haven't been logged much. The long unbroken history of these slopes and the special climate they enjoy, with plenty of sunshine and warmth, has favoured a distinctive flora and fauna, with many rare species.

For example, old pine and oak trees and sunlit, dead tree trunks harbour a rich beetle fauna. Musk beetle, oak lichen and linddyna (*Biscogniauxia cinereolilacina*) are character species.



Jordanstorp



Heather lichen



Elf-cap moss



Ullticka (Phellinidium ferrugineofuscum)

East-facing slopes

In the east the rift valleys are dominated by pine, spruce and aspen, often with an abundance of old-growth trees and dead wood. Silviculture has been limited in steep and boulder strewn areas. Many shade-loving species such as lungwort, elf-cap moss and ullticka (*Phellinidium ferrugineofuscum*) thrive here.



Blomcock (Lepturalia nigripes) on field scabious



Flowering hazel



Spotted Flycatcher



Wintergreen berries

Forest edge habitats

The fringes between forest and open or semi-open agricultural landscape are often a rich habitat, not only because both arboreal and pastoral species can be found there. A sunny forest edge offers a favourable micro climate. A variety of flowering shrubs, such as rose, blackthorn and willow provide a rich insect fauna, which in turn attracts many insectivorous species. In a larger perspective the entire East Vättern Scarp Landscape can be seen as a broad patchwork of deciduous forest edge lying between Lake Vättern and the coniferous forest tracts to the east.



Globe flower



Pastures with sunlit old pines are a home for the rare Nothorhina beetle and other creatures.



Alpine bistort



Natural pastures with high natural values need a lot of upkeep. Bengt and Maria Sjöberg in Tolarp are two of many active farmers who put in long hours making hay, fencing, maintaining and turning out livestock.

Pastures

Species-rich, biologically valuable pastures are a common nature type in East Vättern – although rare in the country as a whole. Meadows are seldom mowed with hand held scythes nowadays but the practice was widespread until the mid 1940s. Remnants of fauna typically found in scythed pastures can still be encountered today. A wide range of plant species are entirely dependent on grazed pastures. Cowslip, bistort and milkwort are three examples. In their turn many insects rely on the grassland flora.

If livestock is no longer turned out to graze, plants favoured by this are displaced by more competitive species, such as cow parsley, meadowsweet and cranesbill. For a few years these look beautiful, but they are the beginning of a process that ends in spruce forest gloom.



Pollarded ash. Vässingsarp



Hornet



Elm lichen

Giant and pollard trees

Longstanding trees in grazing grasslands are invaluable for biodiversity. Many insects are reliant on a variety of species of coarse, sunlit trees. Such trees often have crevices in which both birds and bats can live. Their rough bark is a habitat for many rare lichens. Decaying wood in hollow old oaks has its own unique insect fauna.

Traditionally leaves were gathered as winter fodder, mostly from linden, ash and elm. This practice was called pollarding. Pollard trees were a natural part of the agricultural landscape. They were very old and often hollow. A number of rare and endangered beetles found a home in such trees. They also hosted a unique flora of lichens and mosses. Hornet, elm lichen and noble chafer are examples of species associated with old-growth grassland trees.

Over 4000 ancient pollard trees have been documented. In recent years pollarding has been taken up again in some parts of East Vättern, as part of conservation efforts. The pruning of old pollarded trees has been resumed, and in addition hundreds of new pollard trees have been created.

A looming conflict

In 1992 the bugles called to battle over a wooded area in Adelöv. The landowner, state-owned Assi Domän, wanted to sell, and there was an overhanging risk for widespread clear cutting. A band of enthusiasts mobilised to defend the forest. Many of them, including Claes Hellsten, had grown up in the district and been raised as merry ecological musketeers in the ranks of the Jönköping and Huskvarna section of the Swedish Youth and Nature association. Their interest in nature had influenced their choice of career and now there were several university-educated biologists in the old teenage gang. The Friends of Hulu Forest was constituted, and all the rare and endangered lichens, mosses, fungi and insects in the forest were soon painstakingly mapped and used as arguments in the struggle to protect the virgin forest.

– Our blood was up, Claes Hellsten observes today when he talks about how it all began, and how much of his adult life has come to revolve around the East Vättern project. He is a local resident and his small farm in Stamseryd, a few miles south of Gränna, is as much conservation project as agricultural holding. As befits a biologist, perhaps. When Claes Hellsten shows people around his property, it is not grazing heifers or hay harvest prospects that top the bill. Instead it's the holes gnawed by beetle larvae in old-growth pines on the hill that drops down towards Röttle creek.

In 1994 The Friends of Hulu Forest became the Gränna Forestry Group, and Claes the new group's leader. Formally, the group is associated with the

Huskvarna circuit of the Swedish Society for Nature Conservation, SSNC, exactly how it's difficult to work out. Formalities have never been the group's strong suit.

– I don't think we've ever held a board meeting and we only adopted our statutes about two years ago because we had to have a registration number. We have a mailing list with 20-30 addresses, but people have come and gone.

Perhaps mostly gone – into the woods. Our main concern has been sneaking about the bush, as the landowners put it. And for every covert excursion our knowledge of the area's unique natural assets grew, species by species, area by area.

– It was vital that the group included people proficient in biology, says Claes. We spanned many different groups of organisms. We were able to compile terrific species lists.



Gränna Forest Group 1994



– Others made invaluable contributions – everything from photo documentation to putting up exhibitions or serving coffee and buns at meetings and on field trips. When it came to the crunch a lot of people were prepared to pitch in.

This was a time when the conflict between forestry and conservation and threats to the forest's rare plants and animals was national news. Gränna Forest Group appeared more and more often in the media, and pushed themselves forward whenever landowners and foresters met, for example at Södra's forest days.

In the mid-1990s the forest group presented the area's natural assets in an exhibition at the Andrée Museum in Gränna. East Vättern was launched. The ball was definitely rolling.

Local landowners reacted to the news that they lived and worked in East Vättern without any noticeable enthusiasm. They had other things to think about.

– Sweden had joined the EU, and we farmers had a lot of new rules to keep track of, Ryno Andersson, FSF boss in Ölmstad remembers. Surveyors were scurrying around the fields measuring and counting. We weren't used to it, it felt like a vote of no confidence.

At the same time as this was going on a nationwide survey of especially species-rich and valuable habitats in the forest, known as key biotopes, was taking place. This meant even more running about in the fields,



Middle Spotted Woodpecker. Extinct 1982. From the exhibition John Bauer's trollwood at the Andrée Museum 1995.



Jordanstorp 1995. Large numbers of massive trees were uprooted by the storm. These windthrows were an effective barrier to wildlife grazing. Photo on left: Clonal growth of young broadleaf shoots. Råby forest 2011.

and for many, it was unclear what the forestry board surveyors were doing and what it would lead to. People became more and more irritated.

– You've got time to spy on me and my property, but not manners enough to come down to the farm to say hallo, commented one landowner.

There is a Swedish proverb. "An accident rarely comes alone." A severe storm swept through the district. It caused worse devastation locally than younger sister Gudrun would ten years later. Many windthrows were left as they fell.

Let them lie there, GFG said. Dead wood lives! In biological terms this is true, many virgin forest species live in and depend on dead and decaying tree trunks. But at the same time totally at odds with local knowledge and customs. Leaving uprooted trees scattered about in the woods for the sake of some creepy-crawlies – unthinkable!

– A farmer with a heap of manure behind the barn and dead trees in the forest is a poor farmer, Ryno Andersson says. He doesn't take advantage of the resources at hand. That's what I had been taught, I was brought up that way.



Anders Berntsson and Olle Dahlstrand inventorying wood-decay fungi.



Sune Adelind, founder of Friends of Hulu Forest and Lasse Söderström hunting for insects. Stänkelstorp.



Claes Hellsten and Gudrun Romeborn. Photo documentation Kabbarp.



Thomas Fast inventorying lichen.

The forest group paid no heed. It became increasingly obvious that neither the county nor the forestry schools were keeping track of the natural values in the local forests, key biotope inventories notwithstanding. The answer was the One Step Ahead methodology, borrowed from a similar voluntary group in Jokkmokk, and a well-known recipe for success in conservation circles.

Forest owners planning logging operations were compelled to submit an application to the forestry authority, which at that time was called the Swedish National Board of Forestry (now the Swedish

Forestry Agency). Logging applications are in the public domain and clever Step Ahead activists could periodically drop by the local offices and check newly received applications. If any of them appeared to impact sensitive forest areas a small field trip was called for, which in turn – if the foreboding turned out to be true – resulted in a list of endangered species. And then the conflict between logging and protection was a fact.

The forest group's modus operandi was to first approach the landowner with their findings and recommendations.

– Some were interested from the very start, with others we ran into a brick wall, Claes remembers.

GFG wouldn't accept any stonewalling. If the landowner rebuffed them, the next step was the forestry and county administrative boards, who were urged to fulfil their obligations and ensure that the forest was protected. If all else failed the media could be alerted. Endangered species threatened by logging – authorities passive!

– As soon as we submit a logging application the forest group kicks up a fuss, FSF members complained to Ryno Andersson.

Anyway, how was it possible that one government agency, the forestry board, thought it OK to carry out logging operations in forests that another government agency, the county administrative board, wanted to protect? The forestry board had been sent the appropriate logging application, and no one had objected. Didn't one hand of the state know what the other was doing?

It wasn't just the landowners who were finding things difficult. The county administrative and forestry boards ended up in the dock because they weren't watching out for natural values that were being compromised, or because they didn't act. Södra, The forest owners association, to which almost all rural landowners belonged, ended up caught in a vice. Södra's environmental policy pledged to avoid logging in key biotopes. At the same time Södra took on operations in areas that the forest group's nitpicking activities proved to include just such key biotopes.

Things were further aggravated by the fact that members of the forest group were also hired as surveyors by the authorities. This might seem ill-advised, but not many people can recognize a few thousand threatened forest species at a glance. For the landowners things became even more confused. On whose mandate was GFG acting? Were the conservation authorities on their side? In many landowner eyes the

forest group had taken on some sort of self-assumed authority role. This was extremely provocative.

– We didn't know how all this would turn out, remembers Ryno Andersson. We were afraid that they would take over, stop us using our land as we wanted.

At least one attempt was made during those years to pour oil on troubled waters. GFG was invited to Södra's trustee meeting to explain what they were doing and why.

– It was like negotiating with the Mafia, says Claes Hellsten with a wry grin. We tried to joke and lighten the mood. They just sat with their arms crossed. They didn't even turn up the corners of their mouths.

– There was quite an aggressive atmosphere, says Ryno Andersson about the same meeting.

Perhaps it was somewhere about then that Claes Hellsten's roadside letterbox was trashed for the first time. It would happen again, as would slashed tires and late-night phone calls, before the worst was over.

Ryno Andersson felt that something had to be done. Johan Uhr, the county conservation officer, was ultimately responsible for all environmental issues in the county. Ryno had hadn't had anything to do with him, didn't know him at all. And he and his members didn't have overly much confidence in the county's conservation authorities. Yet Ryno Andersson lifted the receiver and called John Uhr.



Tense meeting in the woods, key biotope or not?

Conservation is about people

Johan Uhr was an unusual conservation director. He had been trained as a social scientist, not as a biologist.

– I'm interested in group dynamics, it was part and parcel of my training, he says when we meet in the county administration building in Jönköping. Nowadays, he's only in his office two days a week. He's close to retiring, but still wants to be a part of things and help East Vättern with the final spurt across the finishing line.

– The most exciting aspect of the job is meeting people. Conservation is 70-80 per cent a peoples skill.

Johan Uhr remembers well the call from Ryno Andersson, that day 15 years ago.



Patrik Wandin and Johan Uhr, County Administrative Board, Hans Harryson, Södra.

– Ryno was annoyed that people were running about all over the place, GFG activists. According to Ryno some said that they came from the county. Ryno's members were afraid that a lot of nature reserves were in the wind.

– I knew that an inventory of key biotopes was underway, Johan Uhr says. And I knew the forest group. They were no shrinking violets. They were both ambitious and talented. I also knew that there were significant natural values in the area and that it would be necessary to establish nature reserves sometime in the future.

– I realised straight away that I had to try and sort this out. We had to have a functioning working climate.

That he would be getting mixed up in what was by now a full-blown conflict didn't deter Johan Uhr.

– I saw the strained circumstances as a challenge, not as something to be afraid of.

The first attempt at conflict management wasn't a brilliant success. A mass meeting in Gränna with all of the parties involved. Gränna Forest Group versus angry landowners, and as so often in this kind of thing, it was those who were most angry who set the agenda and tone of the meeting. It was, to quote one of the academic treatises written on East Vättern, shambolic.

– Mass meetings aren't easy, it's probably better not to have too many of these, reflects Johan Uhr today.



Lotta Samuelsson, WWF, Torbjörn Szwere, County Forestry Board, and Peter Jonsson, County Administrative Board. For several years Peter worked as the East Vättern coordinator.

Instead Johan suggested that they put together a smaller group, with representatives from all parties concerned: FSF, Södra, Jönköping's municipality, the county administrative board, the forestry board and the Gränna Forest Group.

For Ryno Andersson and FSF it was far from given that they could sit down at the same table as GFG. The group was a red rag to many members.

– But I thought that perhaps, in spite of everything, it was better that people talked to one another, says Ryno today.

As has been made clear, Johan Uhr had already decided. If anything was to go to happen everybody had to participate.

The project group was set up, everybody was on board, and with this the East Vättern project was formally constituted.

The year was 1998 and Gränna Forest Group had recently sharpened their criticisms of the key biotope inventory. The group had carried out a control inven-

tory in a small part of the area and argued based on their results that the forestry board had missed 60 per cent of the key biotopes.

– In fact they had overlooked 90 per cent, but we wanted to be on the safe side, says Claes Hellsten today. Nobody would be able to accuse us of exaggeration or bias.

The defective inventory was a major concern for SSNC, who organized a nation-wide press conference at the site of one of the inadequately researched key biotopes.

The key forest biotope inventories would have to be redone and done properly this time. Likewise, meadowed land and other wooded areas in the agricultural landscape had to be inventoried in exactly the same way. This was the ultimatum that GFG dumped on the project group table.

Around the time of the SSNC wake-up call, WWF, another major conservation organization, published a list of Europe's 100 most valuable forests. Only five



areas in Sweden were on the list, and East Vättern was one of them – principally due to the lengthening list of endangered species uncovered by the forest group’s painstaking research.

At this time Lotta Samuelson joined the project as a representative for WWF.

– It was probably a good thing that an outsider came into the group, Lotta says. I was a newcomer and had no close relationship to anybody. I could joke about things that none of the others could, or dared.

– It was very tense in the group, everyone was wary. I was given a dressing down when I happened to employ a technical biological term. Coming here and showing off with fancy terminology that no one else understands ...

In other words the prevailing mood was not conducive to negotiation.

– We demanded that a comprehensive key biotope inventory be done. The landowners told us to keep our mouths shut, says Claes Hellsten. We had to swallow quite a lot ...

– Sometimes tempers flared, Ryno Andersson says.

– The atmosphere was somewhat charged, John Uhr remembers with a smile.

He hadn’t expected any rapid progress. He knew it was a question of establishing trust within the group. So from the outset he stressed that he didn’t want the organisations to change sitting representatives. They should all try to get to know each other, not just as an assortment of opinions, but as people.

– We began by talking, working out our roles, Johan says.

Outside the meeting room things carried on as usual. The forestry group organised a seminar in Gränna, “Owls and Land Snails”, the first of three in collaboration with WWF. Guest experts were

invited to talk about the area’s unique natural values.

– It was important to invite experts from the outside, says Claes Hellsten. People realised we meant business. And it was always the nerdy lectures on shady bugs that got the highest evaluation scores.

Claes Hellsten remembers that there were quite a few landowners in the audience, and some have later testified that it was these talks that made them change their minds about the forest group and its efforts.

But Ryno Andersson hadn’t quite got there yet. His recollection is that not many landowners were willing to turn up at events arranged by the forest group, at least not then, when the first seminar was held. Many of them weren’t at all happy with Ryno’s decision to involve FSF in the project.

– I received many calls and critical comments from members. How can you sit down and talk with these people? But I said it’s better that we’re part of this and get some idea of what they’re doing. Otherwise we won’t know what they’re getting up to ...

GFG charted more and more key biotopes and continued to fight against logging that threatened natural values in the district.

– It’s disturbing that they overlooked so many places. Invaluable natural values risk being lost, Tomas Fasth from the forest group said in the local newspa-



Freeholder Ingemar Wetterheim laid down these oak logs in 2000 to benefit biodiversity.

Göran Karlsson, FSF representative and Claes Hellsten. Södra field excursion 2002.



The numbers of capercaillie in East Vättern have diminished significantly and since the mid-1980s nearly 90 per cent of courting grounds have been abandoned. The bird's habitat (marshes, pine forests and bilberry-spruce forests) has suffered degradation, a result of clear cutting and fewer spruce plantations, which means that they and other species that require large areas for survival are in trouble. Pressure from wild grazing has led to a fall-off in the planting of stands of pine.

per, Jönköpings Posten. The headline was big, bold-face and black, "Sloppy Inventory by Forestry Board". The much-criticized key biotope inventory had only been carried out in forested areas. Now the the board conducted a similar survey in the agricultural landscape. In 1999, when the inventory was finished, it ended up in a filing cabinet in Jönköping. This just wasn't the right moment to bring up additional protected areas.

The project group met practically every month, but disagreed on most things, couldn't decide anything. There was a lot of talk, often in agitated tones. Claes Hellsten remembers:

– Each time I said that we must think about biodiversity, and the landowners said every single time that we should think about yield and money, and finally everyone had heard this ad nauseam and

nothing needed to be said anymore...

Two years had passed and maybe at long last something was about to happen in the group. I know exactly what you think, you know exactly what I think – so where do we go from here?

Then all of a sudden GFG discovered three key biotopes threatened by the axe. Despite all the wisdom they had accumulated, despite all the species lists and maps they had provided the authorities with, year in and year out. The group lost patience, decided to show the authorities how bad things were. An invitation was sent off to the head forester. GFG did this off its own bat and – as the others saw it – behind the backs of the project team.

The crisis was a fact. The project group was summoned to a meeting. This was on a Friday in November 2000.

Don't rock the boat!

– Claes is very can-do and knowledgeable, Ryno Andersson observes over the breakfast table. I respect him a lot and have great confidence in him.

– A handshake is all you need to seal a deal with Ryno, Claes Hellsten comments.

How do you create a climate in which ingrained patterns can be overcome and windows of opportunity opened?

How is it possible to turn suspicion and conflict into trust?

How could Claes and Ryno, nine years after that momentous Friday meeting, stand beside each other on the stage at the Jönköping Gala accepting an award for the initiative of the year: the idea of making East Vättern a biosphere?

– It was all down to luck, enthusiasm and personal chemistry, says Johan Uhr.

– They were wonderful people, says Lotta Samuelson, WWF representative in the project group. And when it came down to the nitty gritty there was a will to compromise.

– And Johan's leadership was important. There were so many meetings, but he let everything take the time it needed and didn't give up.

– Johan is very calm, Ryno Andersson says. He commands respect and knows how to cool tempers down.

– Personal courage matters, says Lotta Samuelson. Not least Ryno was very straightforward. He stood up for the group in front of the landowners.

– Ryno was fearless, he could take on anybody, says Johan. And Claes' great achievement was to shed light on the natural values in the area.

Unreserved acclaim and kind words. Now the conflict is history and perhaps not worth digging up again, let alone brandishing around. Ryno says he doesn't recall that he and Claes ever snarled at each other, and when John Uhr retells the project group's history all of a sudden he exclaims:

– It's pretty much a myth that there were so many conflicts at the beginning ... And then he smiles a little when reminded of what happened to Claes Hellsten's letterbox. Seven times in a row.

Claes Hellsten consistently employs stronger language than the others when talking about what happened, and he stresses the importance of conflict for success. Without countless confrontations in the woods and in the media the Gränna Forest Group would never have been recognised as party to the case. The project and the project group were ultimately a consequence of the irritation the landowners felt that a small, vocal group meddled in things they weren't supposed to, and were forcing the authorities to act against landowner interests.



*Award ceremony: Jönköpings Gala 2009.
Ryno Andersson and Claes Hellsten.*

That the Friday meeting in November 2000 was crucial is uncontested. Although, as we have seen, no immediate decisions were taken. Everything was left hanging in the air over the weekend. Maybe because nothing else was possible, or because John Uhr wanted to let people cool down a little before he acted.

– On Monday John called and told us not to quit, Ryno Andersson remembers. And I said that on our part we were willing to take our responsibility seriously.

Johan Uhr also explained to everyone what was at stake. From now on there were to be no loose canons. Everything had to be done in the group, not outside it. “Don’t rock the boat” was the watchphrase that came to guide all future actions. As was “cards on the table.” There was to be no keeping things under cover or sneaking around behind anyone’s back, we were all to keep each other fully informed.

– There were still some tough and tense meetings, Johan Uhr says, but nobody ever questioned whether we should continue. Everyone was to play their part, and everyone was to stand by the group. We had all agreed to that and we would stick to it. And there



Tomas Fasth, pollard tree inventory. 4000 elderly trees have been registered in East Vättern, half of them on the Östgöta side (north of the biosphere reserve).

was sort of a feeling that from now on we all depended on one another.

The project group agreed to redo the key biotope inventory, and this time to do it properly. Without a joint survey, a map of the area’s natural values that everyone accepted, it would be impossible to get anywhere.

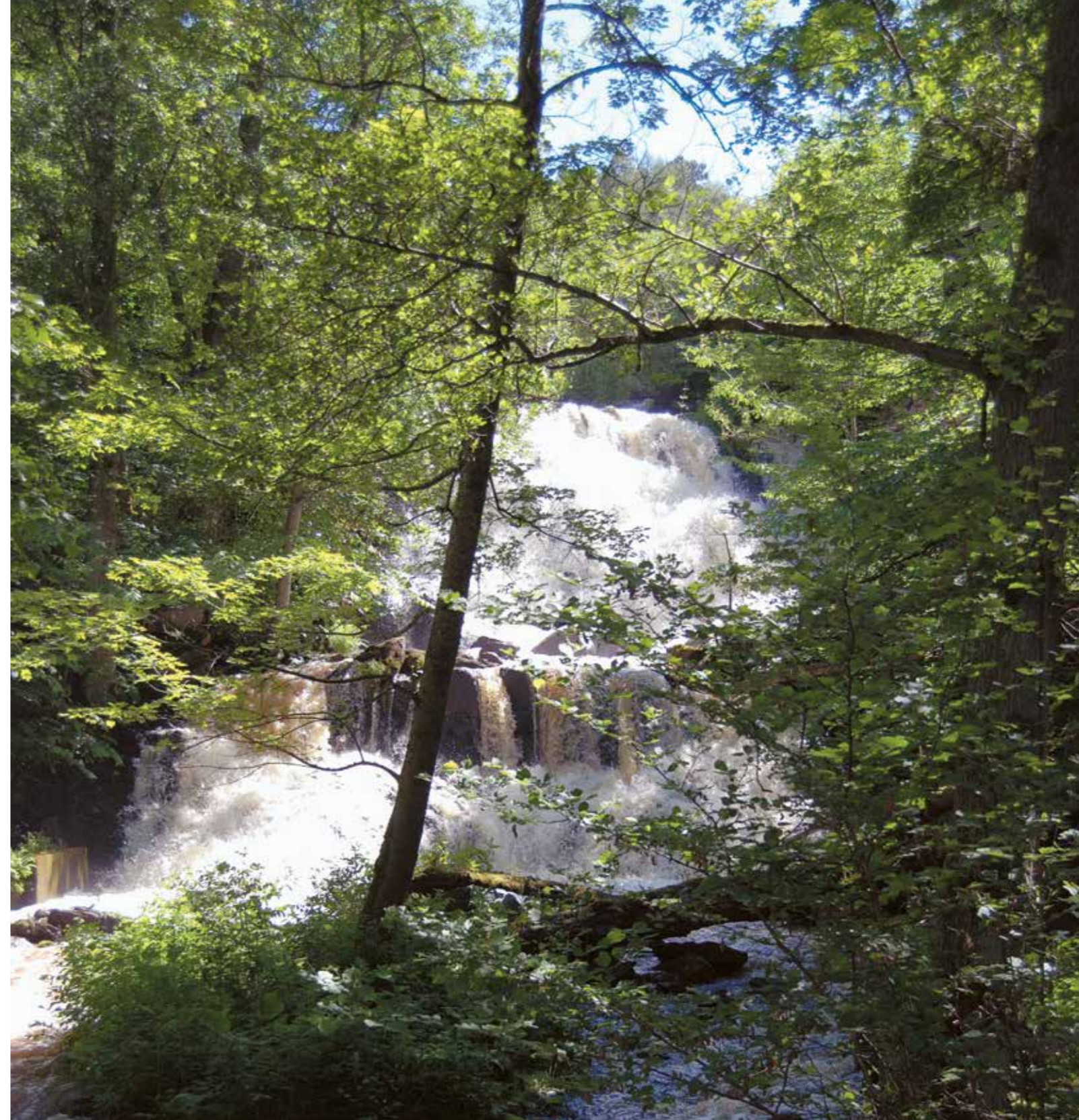
The landowners must have realised that now there would be more protected areas on the map and that they would incur the risk of more restrictions on doing as they wanted with their property. Yet FSF agreed to a new key biotope inventory.

– The whole area was to be treated in the same way, says Ryno Andersson. And there was a big difference, this time the landowners knew what was happening.

Before inventorying commenced in 2001 eight information meetings were held in the district. The landowners were told what was going to be done and why. FSF sent out the invitations to these meetings. This was one way of showing what it really meant to stand behind the group, and as Johan Uhr saw things, an important symbol.

Yet there was still some hostility. Tomas Fasth was one of the biologists selected by the County Forestry Board. Recognised, skilled, undoubtedly one of the best in the country, but simultaneously the GFG member who, in forest owner eyes personified the hated sneaking around in the bush. The man popped up like a jack in the box all over the place, managing to find some endangered insect or other practically every time anybody wanted to cut down some trees. At once the project group took up the issue of Fasth’s participation. Renewed conflict, more heated debate. The head forester persisted. It mustn’t be possible to dispute the inventory, nothing was to be missed. It was vital to get hold of the person best suited for the job.

So that’s what happened. In retrospect, it turned out that whatever was a key biotope for Tomas Fasth





was also a key biotope for other surveyors. No more no less.

Once the inventory was completed 1,400 key biotopes had been identified in East Vättern – many more than the first time around. A little more than five per cent of productive forestland had been classified as a key biotope or natural value area (areas with high conservation values that don't quite merit key biotope status).

Over 400 properties were affected, the owners were informed in a letter signed jointly by the county administrative and the forestry boards. Most were told that a small fraction – less than ten per cent – of their acreage was to be classified as a nature reserve, but a few found out that more than half of their property was to be designated as a key biotope.

After a new round of information meetings it was apparent that feelings could still run high. Many were angry that once again people were creeping about in the bushes without landowners being informed.

– In Gränna someone pushed me up against a wall and told me that no way would there ever be reserves on lands passed down to him from his father and grandfather, says John Uhr. The fact is there will always be a small group that gets angry ...

Afterwards the authorities were self-critical about the way in which they had passed on the news. People should have been better informed in advance about what was going to happen, and why. Information about the outcome should have been gradual, not given out to the whole district at once. Owners of properties with a large number of key biotopes should have been told in person, in the field. This had to be weighed against the insistence on the part of landowners that chapter and verse be made available without delay. All cards on the table.

Anyway, this was an end to discussions on natural values in East Vättern. The project group had been issued with a common map.



Lasse Söderström, Gränna Forest Group's insect expert and representative in the working group. He has devoted thousands of hours to compiling species lists over East Vättern beetles.

– It was a key success factor, says Johan Uhr.

Around this time John Uhr and the project manager Peter Jonsson were summoned to their boss, governor Birgit Friggebo. Södra's management wanted to discuss East Vättern with the county. John and Peter, armed with every conceivable argument for the defence of the project and its methods, took a deep breath and stepped into the governor's office. Christer Segerstéen, Södra's chairman, was already ensconced there.

– Excellent, excellent, Segerstéen said. This is the way it should always be.

Christer Segerstéen remembers the meeting in the governor's office well.

– We had been told that county authorities didn't have enough resources to work in this way, in close contact and in concert with landowners, he says today. We wanted to stress the value and importance this had – not least towards the higher authority of the Environmental Protection Agency.

In 2002 Södra organised a major field trip to East



Christer Segerstéen, Södra chairman. Södra excursion. Hultsjö.

Vättern. Among other things they wanted to show that private forest owners were being hit hard when a large proportion of their holdings were classified as key biotopes. Södra was pushing for more government compensation. They weren't objecting to the common natural values map, the survey accepted by all concerned, and they commended the methods developed in East Vättern.

Södra's field excursion was something of a classic, Johan Uhr says. Of course they had more resources than the we did. And the support they gave us was important

The picture of East Vättern was definitely beginning to change, from conflict zone to role model. And a shared body of knowledge, the common map, was in place. It was high time for Johan and the county to reveal which areas of East Vättern they wanted to turn into nature reserves. This was all to be done at one fell swoop, in a single package.

– Landowners would be given a straight verdict, once and for all. This is what we want to do, and



Restoring pasture and meadow in Tolarp.

then we're through. Cards on the table ...

It took a few years. The reserve package was presented in 2005. Twelve zones, totalling about one per cent of the region's overall acreage. 80 properties were affected, and once again, despite protests from the project group, property owners were notified by post. There had been more than enough of what the group called "brown envelopes", impersonal missives from the authorities plumping down in letterboxes at short notice.

– Of course face-to-face meetings are better, but this just wasn't possible, Johan says. We didn't have the resources.

The letter was sent, and John and his staff prepared to ride out a storm of landowner wrath.

And almost nothing happened.

– Apparently we had prepared the ground pretty successfully...

Today about half of the nature reserve package has been implemented. The board has stuck to its plan, but some new reserves have been added on landowner initiative.

Now that the reserve package was in place John Uhr felt that the East Vättern project was getting close to the finishing line. All that remained was an implementation phase in which the tools society had at its disposal were to be brought into play. Not only the nature reserves, which were county responsibility, but also advice and information packets to landowners, environmental grants from the EU and forestry board funds for habitat and wildlife conservation, to name just a few. A lot of tinkering, indubitably, but mostly straightforward conservation tasks, hardly meriting a project of their own.

Johan Uhr proposed that the East Vättern project be phased out.

– But I thought some sort of forum should still exist, Ryno Andersson says. We had found each other and it felt good to be part of the process.

– All of us were reasonably unhappy with the compromises we had gone through, Claes Hellsten says. We had started to cooperate.

LEKO and dual planning – a trail-blazer

In 2001, on a WWF initiative the project group decided to try out a new planning model in part of East Vättern, mainly in the Ölmstad parish in the west of the reserve.

The LEKO acronym stands for ecological core landscape area (*landskapsekologiskt kärnområde*). The method had been developed by the forestry board, as an aid for mapping boundaries in particularly valuable or sensitive areas. Based on green forest management plans it combines measures for active forest management with measures designed to protect natural and cultural values. The method necessitates close cooperation between forestry and nature conservation authorities and a dialogue with landowners.

The idea behind the LEKO project was to try to find ways to preserve and develop the area's natural assets while taking production interests into consideration. And the project took LEKO one step

further, out of the forest and into the farm. A dual planning strategy was applied that encompassed the entire holding and the natural values it contained.

– In an agricultural landscape it's not just a matter of protection and leaving undisturbed, it's about nature needing upkeep and husbandry. There was quite a degree of consensus on this. So it was a good idea to begin there, Johan Uhr says. That's what you do in conflict situations, start with what you can agree upon.

– The LEKO project was very constructive, Ryno Andersson says. Not least thanks to Lars-Göran Lindgren, who led the project. He got the landowners involved.

– He was a really good sort, he knew the name of every plant. And he had two ears and a mouth, a pleasantly surprised landowner in the LEKO area is rumoured to have said after Lindgren's visit to his farm.



Lars-Göran Lindgren



Fredrik Lundberg. Turning out livestock at Galgen, a restored grassland with ancient oaks.



A project group in search of a project

On a day in May Claes Hellsten takes us along winding roads on a guided tour of East Vättern. The countryside and farms throb with life. Cattle and sheep graze all around, the fields are newly ploughed and glistening, tractors busy themselves in the landscape.

Here and there water glitters in the lush swaths of broadleaf. Small ponds, many so newly excavated that greenery hasn't had time to encroach upon the bare soil around the edges.

– Small bodies of water are great for crested newts, Claes says. A new project in East Vättern.

Ryno Andersson is one of many who dug a pond on their land.

– But I don't think I'd ever heard of great crested newts before ...

– It's important to do non-controversial, things says Claes. This doesn't threaten the land-owners in any way, and it's in plain sight out in the landscape. And you shouldn't underestimate peoples' willingness to do irrational things – things that aren't economically justifiable. Moreover, it is much easier to get people to do something than to stop them from doing something ...

In other words: digging a pond in the meadow can be fun, to leaving windthrows to rot in the forest is not. "Dead wood lives" is still the one slogan that hasn't had much penetration in East Vättern, despite more than a decade of dialogue and exchanging know-how.

Old pollarded Alm. The circumference of the trunk is more than five metres. Skraparp.

– It still feels wrong, it's probably a generational issue, says Ryno Andersson.

But let's not get ahead of ourselves. The road is long from the 2005 reserve package to today's newt ponds, and we still haven't got to Transylvania.

Simon Jonegård joined the project in 2004, when the county handed over the project to the forestry board. At that time Simon was working at the Jönköping county district.

– I never got mixed up in any conflicts, Simon Jonegård says. When I joined the group everyone saw things in more or less the same way and was working in concert.

A project group not engrossed in internal conflicts needs a project. This turned out to be pollarding – an activity that perfectly fits Claes Hellsten's agenda. It does something, it is visible in the landscape, it is uncontroversial and undeniably irrational. Nowadays cows don't eat leaves anymore.

In an earlier age it was different. Pollarding – leaf harvesting – was a necessity. Sheaths of leaves and hay from the meadow were winter fodder for livestock, and the more you could collect, the more animals you could keep. And the more animals you had the more manure there was to spread on the fields next spring. In East Vättern pollarding was still carried out well into the 1950s. Linden, ash and elm were the preferred trees types.

Trees that are pollarded can grow very old. From a conservationist point of view they often host remarkable environments, containing a rich variety of rare mosses and lichens, and with many endangered

beetles and other bugs in their decaying bowels.

The project group decided to conduct an inventory of old pollarded trees in East Vättern. This was followed by demonstrations of pollarding techniques in the field and a study circle on pollarding and traditional ways of using the land. They also went on field trips based on older maps.

– The inventory found about 2,000 old pollarded trees Claes Hellsten says. Probably about 500 of them are pollarded again today, plus many new ones.

It was pollarding and the growing interest in the traditional agricultural landscape that meant that the road to the East Vättern biosphere reserve passed through Carpathian's green hills in the Romanian province of Transylvania. Claes Hellsten had visited the area once before, for the same reason as many other Swedish biologists and conservationists. The scenery in this part of Europe is a reminder of what Sweden must have looked like 150 years ago. A land of mules and scythes, with vast meadows and pastures scattered around ancient villages down in the valleys.



Margareta and Ryno Andersson with Lasse Söderström on their way to mow hay. Botiza 2007

– Even then I felt I needed to return with the landowners from East Vättern says Claes.

Summer 2007 this trip back in time came off. Some 20 Swedish farmers, government officials and forest group members stayed a week with families in Botiza, roaming the surroundings and mowing the meadows.

– Seeing the countryside, the way they swung a scythe, how they let nothing go to waste, it was amazing, says Ryno Andersson.

Johan Uhr didn't come along on the trip, but underlines that it was important.

– There was an unprecedented camaraderie. There they sat, the adversaries of the first electric meetings, drinking beer together in the evenings.

Afterward the participants from the six project group organisations wrote down and published their experiences and impressions from the Rumanian expedition. Coordinator Simon Jonegård wrote: "To work intensively to integrate cultural and conservation values in places like East Vättern is a challenge we must meet if we are to create a sustainable and vibrant



The Rumanian crew on their way home. 2007



Simon Jonegård. The coordinator who ensured that the biosphere reserve project became a reality.

countryside. Moreover we must lift our eyes and see landscape as an integral part of people and society."

When Simon formulated this reflection both he and the project group had a pretty clear idea of how to pursue this interleaving of people and landscape, in thought and action. The tool was called biosphere reserve. The group had investigated other options, but this seemed the most promising. And Simon knew what it meant. When he arrived in Jönköping in 2004, he had just completed his training as geographer in Kristianstad and his thesis was about how to set up biosphere reserves.

In 2008, UNESCO, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, accepted East Vättern as a biosphere reserve candidate.

In 2011, the project group clubbed a common vision for the biosphere reserve. Among other things East Vättern will be "an example of collaboration between different interest groups."

Imagine if anyone had tried to suggest this vision at the meeting that Friday in November, eleven years earlier.

– This is definitely a joint undertaking, says Johan

Uhr. The heads of WWF, SSNC, Södra and FSF sent a joint letter to UNESCO in support of the application. I think that's unique. There wasn't even space for NGOs on the application form.

Summer 2012 the East Vättern Scarp Landscape Biosphere Reserve non-profit organisation was formed, and the project group definitely went down in history. Four of the group's original members sat on the board of the new association: Carl-Olof Thulin from the County Forestry Board, Göran Karlsson from FSF, and, of course, Claes Hellsten and Ryno Andersson.

– The biosphere reserve could be a way for us to put ourselves on the world map, says Ryno. I don't exactly think it will bring more money in to the district, but it may become more attractive to live and work here.

Spreading the shared vision to a wider audience is one of the many tasks facing the biosphere reserve's new board.

– It won't be easy, Simon Jonegård says. There are 40,000 people living in East Vättern and most of them aren't even members of any of the organisations that have backed the project so far.

– East Vättern began as a nature conservation project, today it is much more than that, says John Uhr. Now it's about conservation, development and research. Now, the biosphere reserve concept must be populated. This is where it begins ...

Much is still doubtful. But one thing is certain. Gränna Forest group will continue to sneak about in the bushes, whether they grow in a biosphere reserve or not. Right now the group is especially interested in natural windsnaps and high-cut stumps of pine and spruce. And they pay home visits on request.

– We have a long list of landowners who want our advice on nature conservation on their farms, says Claes Hellsten. We have difficulty fitting everyone in.



Success factors

- You can't write a handbook for projects like this, says Johan Uhr.

To begin with, he thinks it would be impossible to work in the same way as in East Vättern in most other places. This would require an inordinate amount of time and resources.

Johan Uhr also talks about a special Jönköping spirit, a tradition of cooperation and understanding between the authorities and landowners. Simon Jonegård shares this opinion.

- Sustained commitment is a Jönköping trait that is rooted in our strong community programmes, he says.

Moreover, says Johan Uhr, two of the key success factors in East Vättern were fortuitous circumstances and personal chemistry, elements that are difficult to plan or stage. John is the only one to speak of luck, but many others emphasise the personalities of those involved as critical to the outcome.

- The group was made up of a lot of really decent and ambitious people, Lotta Samuelson says.

Besides, everyone was willing to compromise.

- They weren't at all short-sighted, says Carl-Olof Thulin, the forestry board representative who joined the group just after the stormy November meeting. They respected each other, listened, and understood that you stand to gain more if you don't stick pig-headedly to your principles at all costs.

- If we assume that this sort of person is not only found east of Vättern, and that the Jönköping spirit may after all have counterparts in places like Skovde, Surahammar or Sollefteå, there might still be some useful lessons to be learnt from the East Vättern project, lessons that can help to turn confrontation into constructive collaboration elsewhere as well.

This section is an attempt to gather a few such experiences in succinct, bulleted form. Some are taken from the official reports and scientific papers written about the project, but most are musings by people who took part in the process and who were interviewed for this publication.

Bioblitz, Röttle 2012. 24-hour inventory that drew around 1000 local and long-distance guests. Max Koschatzky, Petra and Robin Hansson were some of the nearly 100 surveyors and officials who led the gathering.



Tomas Fasth, Susanne Lothigius and landowners Maria, Elisabeth and Ingmar Rosenkvist discuss the cultural and natural values of the recovered pollard treescape that was formerly a spruce plantation. One of thirty pastures that have received a fencing grant through WWF. On many holdings landowners, government authorities and NGO volunteers have collaborated in package solutions that would not have been possible without the contributions of each and every one of them.

It takes time to build trust

Building trust takes time. It was important that members already sitting in the project group weren't changed and that the group met repeatedly over an extended period, even though it could not agree upon much.

Leadership was also important. Johan Uhr was not afraid of conflict, he was familiar with group processes, and knew it was necessary to be patient.

Dialogue pays dividends

Conflicts can only be resolved if a forum for dialogue exists. In East Vättern the project became this forum. There, a small group of people, all with a clear mandate from their respective organisations, were given the opportunity to get to know each other and build mutual trust.

Those involved have always regarded the attempts made with mass meetings at various times through the years as less rewarding. In conflict situations it is difficult to prevent the meeting agenda and tone from being set by those who are most frustrated and aggressive. The space for constructive dialogue is limited.

Meetings in the field, however, are a method that often gives good results. Clashes over individual sites can seem insurmountable in a meeting room, but often take on quite different proportions in the forest. Above all landowners are more likely to voice their viewpoints and their local knowledge in their own neck of the woods, where they can touch and see. The gap between academic and practical knowledge is lesser when, for example, it becomes necessary to discuss how upcoming logging activities are to be organised while preserving natural values.

Avoid brown envelopes

It's long time since official letters came in brown envelopes. The expression "brown envelopes" was nonetheless frequently used inside the project to describe an impersonal form of communication to be avoided as much as possible.

Landowners shouldn't be informed of the natural values on their land, or the plans the authorities are contemplating in a letter that suddenly plumps down in the letterbox.

– It's easy to get upset and adopt a negative attitude, and that puts a particular slant on things, says Ryno Andersson.

Landowners and conservation organisations have frequently been critical of the practice of communicating exclusively via the written word. But this has often been the case, despite protests, for example when the county informed the East Vättern landowners about the nature reserves package.

– "Brown envelopes" had caused resentment in the past and it would have been better with a personal visit, Johan Uhr says. But there were around 80 landowners. It was impossible for us to visit them all.

All cards on the table

Transparency was one of the demands Johan Uhr made of the project after the critical meeting in November 2000. "All cards on the table," became a maxim in the group. Primarily it meant getting an overview of the natural values in the locality and finding out how they could be cared for and preserved.

Of course openness generates trust, but it also requires trust. That the demands Johan Uhr made on the group after the crisis meeting became a turning point was certainly partly due to the fact that the time was ripe. Group members and their arguments had been chafing against each other for years.



Mezereon blooms before its leaves open.

Thanks to personal chemistry the group had learned to distinguish between people and ideas. Everyone was tired of confrontation and realised that if they didn't change attitude and reach a compromise there was no way forward.

Local support and a birds-eye view

Gränna Forest Group had a lot of local backing. Most members resided locally, and some were themselves landowners.

– It probably helped them a lot, says Ryno Andersson. Claes owns land himself so he knows what it involves.

Of course, the group's familiarity with local conditions has also helped lift the inventories.

Meanwhile, the group's ties to conservation organisations at the national level – SSNC and WWF – are important. This showed other players that the group was more than rural fanatics and troublemakers.

National organisations could also position the local discussion in a national and global context – threats to biodiversity and the importance of preserving it. Perhaps this was especially evident when WWF placed East Vättern on their international list of 100 biodiversity hot spots.

– WWF's decision was positive, it linked our district into an international perspective, says Ryno Andersson. We were given a confirmation that the nature around us held great value.



Gränna Forest Group receiving Jönköping municipality's environmental award 1999.

The fact that WWF was a member of the project was also significant.

– Our role was to provide a birds-eye view, to look at the whole from outside, says Lotta Samuelson.

In conflicts about specific sites WWF could adopt a neutral stance and provide input on matters of principle. WWF also could bring into the project ideas and experiences from elsewhere.

Similarly Södra's involvement made it possible to situate the landowners' positions in a larger context. Support from Södra's leadership became – like WWF's involvement – a testimony that the project was on the right track, and that what they were doing was important.

A common map

When the key biotope inventory was completed in 2001, there existed a comprehensive register of natural values in East Vättern, an overview no one was willing or able to challenge. The parties were united in their support of the inventory.

All parties agree that this “common map” was



Dead Wood Lives.

crucial for the changeover from confrontation to constructive collaboration.

It was no longer possible or useful to discuss the nature of reality, or if there really was a problem. Instead, it was important to begin discussing how various issues and conflicts of interest should be addressed and resolved.

A concept to rally around

The concept East Vättern Scarp Landscape did not exist prior to 1994, either in the district itself or among scientists and administrators.

The name is a direct result of the work carried out by the project and over the years has become a unifying symbol, a brand as it were. In recent years, the concept has been used to build up an awareness of the district's natural and cultural values and foster pride in them.

To rally people in mutual efforts towards sustainable cultivation is a pedagogical mission, and the East Vättern Scarp Landscape concept is a tool that can be used to further that undertaking. When the district's unique assets are taken into account, it is easier to understand the need for protection and cautious husbandry, but also the potential for tourism as well as forest and agricultural product processing industries.

Today the term East Vättern Scarp Landscape has a positive connotation. It is associated not only with valuable natural assets, but also with conflict resolution and collaboration. A growing number of local businesses, particularly those in the hospitality industry, make use of the term.

Sticklers for facts

For the voluntary conservationists – Gränna Forest Group – credibility has been crucial. At the beginning of the process and for many years after that



Bengt Sjöberg, independent forest owner.



Lars Hakeman, Tanja Hellsten Romeborn, Pelle Hakeman. Sustainable tourism seminar 2009.

their data and assessments were strongly contested. If the group had been found guilty of negligence or error, or if it they had fought for specific areas without an adequate documentation of the natural values they contained, the East Vättern project would most likely never have come to fruition. The group became involved in the process firstly and lastly because it had a better knowledge of the area's natural assets than anybody else, including the responsible authorities.



Bengt Ehnström and Lars Söderström inspect a beetle trap. Bengt is among the experts who have helped with distance species identification, inspiration and training.

Leading from the front

During the first few years conflicts In East Vättern were often between cultivation (i.e, logging) and the formal protection (nature reserves or biotope protection) of individual forest areas. It was either or. Later, the focus shifted towards pastures, forest edges and similar environments where natural values are often dependent on tradition in various forms. Active and interested farmers are essential for the conservation of these natural values. The possibilities of combining conservation and cultivation became apparent, and in time, more and more practical examples of how this could be achieved were discovered.

At an early stage LEKO and dual planning contributed to show how it was possible to simultaneously plan for production and conservation at an individual property level.

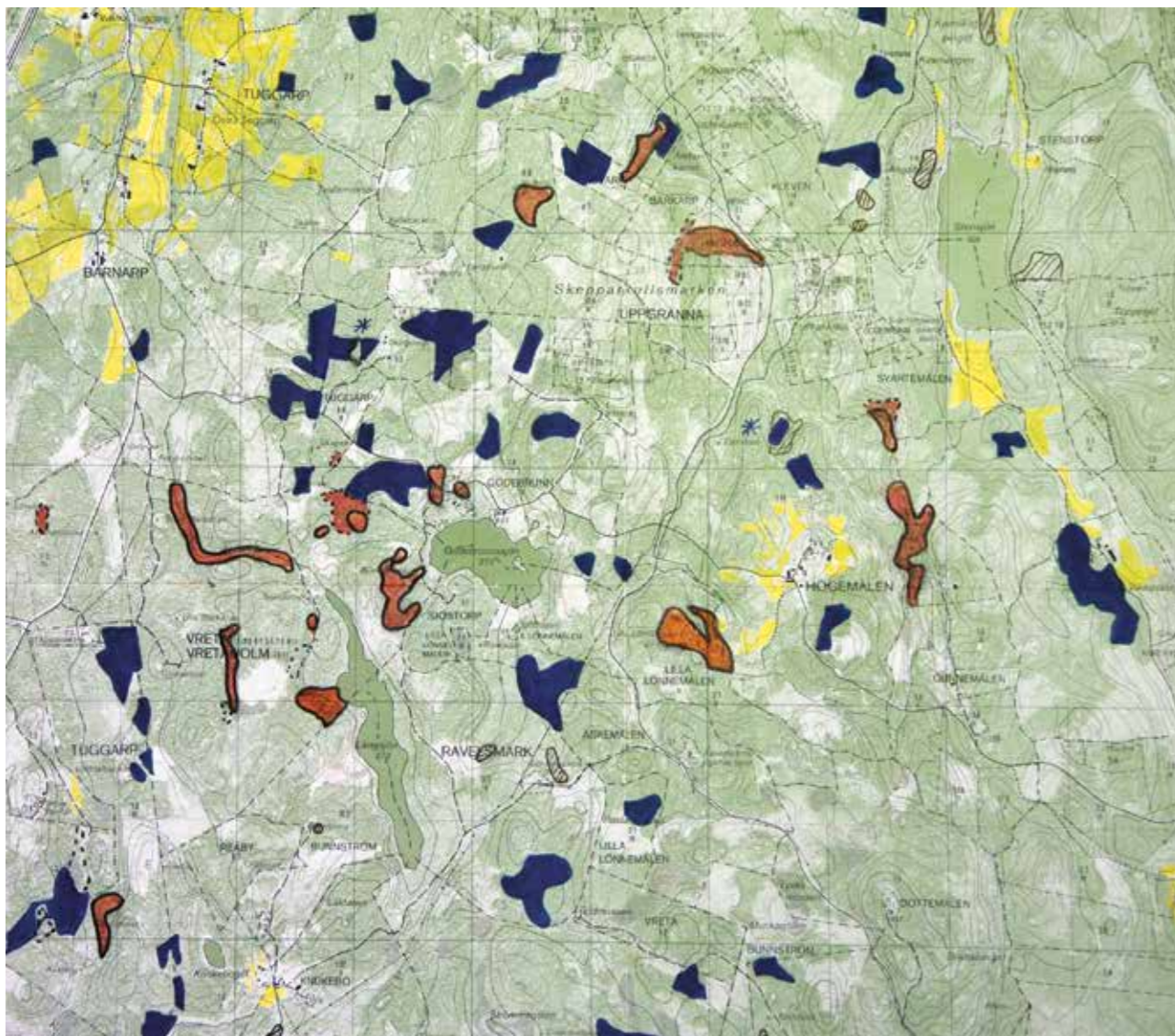
WWF fencing grants opened another door. Since the late 1980s, WWF has striven to restore biologically valuable grasslands across the whole of Sweden; this has included giving fencing grants to keepers of livestock. In East Vättern financial support for fencing was proof that conservation interests were not trying to lay a dead hand on the landscape, but were well aware of the values generated by cultivation.

– Fencing grants meant a lot psychologically, Ryno Andersson says.

In an increased number of cases these fencing grants opened the door to a deeper collaboration. For the landowner, it was the first positive contact with nature conservation organisations and government agencies, and paved the way to continued dialogue and access to the full tool kit of funding and support that would enable cultivation and conservation to be successfully combined on their own holdings.

*East Vättern Day. Röttle 2011.
Games in front the EcoBus.*





*This map from 2000 shows areas harvested during the last ten years (dark blue), key biotopes not registered with the Forest Agency (orange) and registered key biotopes (hatched areas), * denotes a recently felled woodland key biotope. Assembled by the Gränna Forest Group prior to the excursion with the County Forester.*

Control Inventory carried out by the Gränna forest group in 1998. Mauve areas show key biospheres identified during the Forestry Board's routine inventory. Orange areas show key biospheres not yet registered.

Letter of recommendation



Naturskyddsföreningen



Rekommendationsbrev inför bildandet av biosfärområde Östra Vätterbranterna

Undertecknade organisationer har, allt sedan starten 1998, deltagit i arbetet inom det tidigare projektet, numera biosfärkandidatområdet Östra Vätterbranterna. Vi har aktivt stöttat de många delprojekt som genomförts och har sett Östra Vätterbranterna som ett viktigt område för dialog och samverkan runt landskapets nyttjande och bevarande.

I en trakt som kännetecknas av både höga naturvärden och ett aktivt brukande av skog och jordbrukslandskap har förankringsprocessen hos lokala aktörer hela tiden varit central. Utan medverkan av såväl brukarna som deras organisationer hade projektets framgångar knappast varit möjliga. Naturvårdens organisationer har bidragit med kunskaper både om globala, regionala och lokala bevarandevärden. Ur de tidiga konflikterna har vuxit fram en dialog och samverkan som nu kan tjäna som modell för andra områden i landet med liknande förutsättningar.

Inom ett framtida biosfärområde bedömer vi att det finns stora möjligheter att utveckla en helhetssyn för långsiktig hållbar utveckling med hänsyn tagen till och aktiv medverkan av skilda intressen från myndigheter, markägare och brukares organisationer samt naturvårdens företrädare.

LRF, Naturskyddsföreningen, Södra skogsägarna och Världsnaturfonden WWF ser processen fram till ansökan om biosfärområde som en god fortsättning på det mer än tioåriga projektet Östra Vätterbranterna och har aktivt deltagit i processen med framtagande av ansökan.

Organisationerna vill härmed uttrycka sitt stöd för ansökan och ser fram emot att bli en del av ett världsomfattande nätverk för hållbar utveckling.

Lars-Göran Pettersson
Förbundsordförande
Lantbrukarnas riksförbund

Mikael Karlsson
Ordförande
Naturskyddsföreningen

Christer Segersten

Håkan Wirtén

**Letter of recommendation for the establishment
of the East Vättern Scarp Landscape Biosphere Reserve**

The undersigned organisations have participated in the East Vättern Scarp Landscape collaboration since it began in 1998, even before it evolved into a biosphere reserve candidate. We have actively supported the many sub-projects that have been carried out and have seen the East Vättern Scarp Landscape as an important area for dialogue and collaboration regarding landscape use and conservation.

In an area characterised by high natural values and at the same time active use of forests and agricultural landscapes, it has always been crucial to establish support among local stakeholders. Without the participation of the users and their organisations, the project's successes would not have been possible. Nature conservation organisations have contributed their expertise in global, regional and local conservation values. Dialogue and collaboration have grown out of previous conflicts, and the methods developed can serve as a model for other areas in the country in similar situations.

It is our belief that a future biosphere reserve will have great opportunities to develop a holistic view for long-term sustainable development that takes consideration of and enjoys the active participation of diverse interests from authorities, landowners, user organisations and representatives from nature conservation organisations.

The Federation of Swedish Farmers, the Swedish Society for Nature Conservation, Södra Skogsägarna and the World Wildlife Fund have all actively participated in developing the biosphere reserve nomination. They see the nomination process as a good continuation of the ten-plus-year East Vättern Scarp Landscape project.

The organisations hereby express their support for the nomination and look forward to becoming a part of the worldwide network for sustainable development.

Lars-Göran Pettersson
Chairman
Federation of Swedish Farmers

Mikael Karlsson
Chairman
Swedish Society for Nature Conservation

Christer Segersten
Chairman
Södra Skogsägarna

Håkan Wirten
Secretary General
World Wildlife Fund (WWF)

The East Vättern Scarp Landscape is a byword in Swedish conservation circles and has received international acclaim. It stands for a model where landowners, government agencies and non-profit conservation organisations cooperate constructively to combine the exploitation of land and forest with the preservation of natural values. This collaboration has led to the establishment of the East Vättern Scarp Landscape as a Biosphere Reserve.

A long tug of war between conflicting interests lies behind this success story and today's fruitful working relationship. "A Wonderful Friday" tells how aggression turned into trust and a willingness to pull together to foster sustainable development across the community.

This is a saga that everyone who works cultivating and nurturing nature and the land will do well to study.

