

Ramsar Information Sheet

Transcript of the original document.

1. Date this sheet was completed: 01.06.1997

2. Country: Estonia

3. Name of wetland: **Soomaa National Park**
(in Estonian: *Soomaa Rahvuspark*)

4. Geographical co-ordinates: 58°25'N 25°05'E

5. Altitude: 15-30 m above sea level

6. Area: 37,169 ha

7. Overview

Large, flat wilderness area.: integral complex of four bogs (+ fens and transition bogs) separated by unregulated rivers with flood plain and wooded meadows and surrounded by extensive forests (including swamp forests/carrs).

8. Wetland type: M Tp Ts U W Xf Xp

9. Ramsar Criteria: 1a, 1c, 2a, 2b, 3b, 3c, 4b

10. Map of site included: Yes

11. Name and address of compiler:

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12. Justification of criteria selected under point 9:

1a - it is a particularly good representative example of a natural or near-natural wetland, characteristic of the appropriate biogeographical region.

1c - it is a particularly good representative example of a wetland which plays a substantial hydrological, biological or ecological role in the natural functioning of a major river basin.

2a - it supports an appreciable assemblage of rare, vulnerable or endangered species or subspecies of plant or animal, or an appreciable number of individuals of any one or more of these species.

2b - it is of special value for maintaining the genetic and ecological diversity of a region because of the quality and peculiarities of its flora and fauna.

3b - it regularly supports substantial numbers of individuals from particular groups of waterfowl, indicative of wetland values, productivity or diversity.

3c - it regularly supports > 1% of the individuals in a population of *Cygnus columbianus* and *Grus grus*.

4b - it is an important spawning ground for *Esox lucius*.

13. General location:

Pärnu and Viljandi Counties; 40 km east of Pärnu (52,000 inhabitants); 30 km Viljandi (22,000 inhabitants).

14. Physical features:

Natural origin. In bogs, bedrock is covered by sand and lake sediments, and by peat deposition (average 3-6 m, maximum 9.5 m). One relict lake (dystrophic, 6 ha), numerous bog-pools. The bogs of Soomaa have the highest marginal slope in Estonia (up to 6 m).

As the Halliste River flows into the Navesti River at 160° ("against" the stream) it causes annual floods on a vast territory. The absolute amplitude of the water level is 5.46 m.

15. Hydrological values:

The most valuable part of the extensive wilderness area remaining in SW Estonia. Kuresoo Bog is one of the two best survived large bogs in Estonia, its species diversity is among the highest. Annual floods of Halliste River and its tributaries are of international value.

16. Ecological features:

Peatland areas are composed of the following: 75% bogs (of transition type between maritime and continental ones; mainly open-grass bogs and dwarf-shrub bogs, partly pine bogs), 20% transition bogs, and 5% fens (thanks to lack of drainage, they have survived in their original state). River banks are covered with alluvial meadows and forests of great botanical value. Forests belong to a variety of site types; unique swamp forests (carrs) are of special interest.

17. Noteworthy flora:

Bog flora contains elements of both marine and continental bog types. Adjacent forests are valuable for surviving carrs (swamp forests) and other site types in original (natural) condition where e.g. *Epipogium aphyllum*, *Gypsophila fastigiata*, *Astragalus arenarius* are growing. Floodplain meadows are rich in species (ca 200 flowering plant species) including *Gladiolus imbricatus*, *Iris sibirica*, *Sedum telephium*.

18. Noteworthy fauna:

Birds: The species composition of these bogs -especially Kuresoo- is one of the most representative in Estonia, including *Aquila chrysaetos* (3-4 pairs), *Grus grus* (more than 20 pairs), *Numenius phaeopus* (more than 100 pairs), *Pluvialis apricaria* (ca 150 pairs), *Calidris alpina schinzii* (3), *Falco columbarius* (4), *Lagopus lagopus* (2), *Circus pygargus* (7), etc. Adjacent forests support good populations of *Dendropus leucotos*, *Ciconia nigra* (3-4 pairs), *Aquila pomarina*, *Tetrao urogallus*; *Crex crex* is still numerous on flood plain meadows (50-100 pairs).

Stopover and roosting site during autumn migration for *Grus grus* (ca 1000), *Cygnus columbianus* (ca 500) and during vernal migration for *Cygnus columbianus* (ca 2000).

Mammals: 36 species of mammals have been counted, including *Canis lupus*, *Lynx lynx*, *Ursus arctos*, *Alces alces*, *Lutra lutra*, *Castor fiber* and *Pteromys volans*.

19. Social and cultural values:

The regular flooding has caused some anthropological peculiarities (adaptation of local architecture to overflowing; preservation of craft and use of archaic single tree one piece boats). Important area for seasonal traditional berry-picking (*Oxycoccus palustris*, *Rubus chamaemorus*) and small scale hiking. Quite regular scientific monitoring and research (hydrology of bogs; botanical research esp. in flood plain forests and meadows).

20. Land tenure/ownership of:

- a) site: About 90% state-owned land. Ca 10% will be reprivatized to legal owners in the near future.
- b) surrounding area: State and private land.

21. Current land use/principal human activities:

- a) site: Less than 100 permanent inhabitants. Extensive forestry, small-scale agriculture, hunting, berry-picking, tourism
- b) Surroundings/catchment: Forestry (especially to the west and south), agriculture (especially to the east).

22. Factors adversely affecting the site's ecological character, including changes in land use and development projects:

- a) site: regulation schemes for the Halliste river and its tributaries; intensifying of forestry; drainage of agricultural and forest lands; hunting.

All these threats have been significantly lessened with the establishment of the national park, however weakness in implementation of the protection rules pose a serious potential threat, especially in the area of forestry.

- b) Surroundings/catchment: Pollution of water from agricultural fertilisers; forestry; drainage of neighbouring agricultural and forested lands.

23. Conservation measures taken:

On the 8th of December 1993, Soomaa was declared by Estonian Parliament as a National Park, safeguarding the whole wilderness complex (36,740 ha). The protection rules were approved by the Estonian Governmental Regulation no. 244 of 20 June 1995 (published in *Riiga Teataja* I, 1995, 59,1008).

24. Conservation measures proposed but not yet implemented:

According to Estonian Governmental Regulation No. 48 of 04 March 1997 the management plan for the area has to be completed by the end of 1999. The area is proposed IBA (in 1996); categories A1, A4, B1, B3.

25. Current scientific and research facilities:

A field station of the Botanical Institute of Tartu University is situated at Tipu. An ornithological inventory of the bogs was carried out between 1986 and 1992.

26. Current conservation education:

The biological field station at Tipu regularly hosts study trips from Tartu University. A booklet prepared about Soomaa National Park has been prepared providing general and conservation information. A memorial museum of the composer Mart Saar is located at Hüpasaare (NE part) where a nature trail has been established. The museum has issued a booklet in which some pages are dedicated to nature.

27. Current recreation and tourism:

Seasonally visited by berry-pickers. Small-scale hiking and hunting. Since the establishment as a national park, tourism has increased. There are some local lodging places and organised canoe excursions.

28. Jurisdiction:

Vändra Commune, Pärnu County, EE3461

Tori Commune, Pärnu County, EE3481

Paikuse Commune, Pärnade puiestee 1, Paikuse, Pärnu County, EE3600

Kõpu Commune, Kõpu, Viljandi County, EE2963

Suure-Jaani Commune, Nurme 5, Suure-Jaani, Viljandi County, EE2910

Vastemõisa Commune, Viljandi County, EE2902

Ministry of Environment, Department of Nature Conservation, Tompuiestee 24, EE0100, Tallinn, Estonia

29. Management authority:

Soomaa National Park, Pargi St. 2, EE2900 Viljandi, Estonia

30. Bibliographical references:

Valk, U. Estonian peatlands, Tallinn 344 p. (in Estonian, with English and Russian summaries).

“Eesti Loodus” (journal “Estonian Nature”) 1975 No. 4, 1977 No. 10.

Kukk, T. (toim.) 1994. XVII Eesti loodusuurijate päeva ettekannete kokkuvõtted, Tipu, 11-12 juuni 1994: Soomaa Rahvusparki loodus. - Eesti Looduseuurijate Selts, Tartu, 99 lk.