

KOITELAISKAIRA MIRE AREA

- Location:** 67° 40' -50' N, 26° 50' -27° 40' E.
The area is situated in the province of Lapland, in the municipality of Sodankylä.
- Area:** 38 777 ha, comprising over 24 000 ha of mires and about 1 000 ha of water.
- Protection status:** The area is owned by the state and will most probably be established as a Strict Nature Reserve in the 1990's. It is already included in the Ramsar Convention sites and in the Natura 2000 network of protected areas.
- Site description:** Koitelaiskaira is an extensive and mire-rich watershed area between the Rivers Luiro and Kitinen. The mires are mostly of the aapa mire type characteristic of northern Finland. There are extremely wet flark fens without ridges and minerotrophic aapa mires growing birches. Along the brooks there are willow (*Salix*)-stands and herb- and grass-rich spruce mires. There are almost one hundred kilometers of rivulets and brooks. The heath forests for the most part form small pockets. Because the Koitelaiskaira fell is quite high, all forest types of the northern Finland are represented.

International and national importance:

Koitelaiskaira is among the most valuable representatives of the aapa mire zone of Northern Finland. Because of the untouched wilderness and the extremely watery bogs, Koitelaiskaira is the most important area for the conservation of wild birds and mammals in the central part of Lapland.

The bird fauna is diverse. Whooper Swan (*Cygnus cygnus*) and Bean Goose (*Anser fabalis*) are typical species. There are 17 annually breeding waterfowl species, the most common being Teal (*Anas crecca*) and Goldeneye (*Bucephala clangula*). On the lakes and ponds a number of rare species breed, including Velvet Scoter (*Melanitta fusca*), Common Scoter (*M. nigra*), Smew (*Mergus albellus*) and Red-throated Diver (*Gavia stellata*).

There are 13 species of waders breeding in the area. The most abundant are Wood Sandpiper (*Tringa glareola*), Ruff (*Philomachus pugnax*) and Snipe (*Gallinago gallinago*). The Red-necked Phalarope (*Phalaropus lobatus*) and Broad-billed Sandpiper (*Limicola falcinellus*) are common on the wet flark fens. There are several other threatened or rare bird and mammal species in the area as well, such as Golden Eagle (*Aquila chrysaetos*), White-tailed

Eagle (*Haliaeetus albicilla*), Peregrine Falcon (*Falco peregrinus*), Bear (*Ursus arctos*) and Wolverine (*Gulo gulo*).

Protection criteria: 1b, 2a, 2b and 3b.

Changes in ecological character:

No observations.

Management measures:

The area has not been managed in any way. The Finnish Forest and Park Service is preparing a management plan with more accurate definitions.

Possible threats: Mining activities; there are valuable ore deposits in the area.

Research: The bird fauna has been studied since the 1960's. The area is a classic research site of aapa mire vegetation. The first aapa mire types of northern Finland were described in this area.

References: Cajander 1913, Haapanen & Rassi 1980, Haapanen & Nilsson 1977, Haapanen et al. 1966, Häyrinen & Ruuhijärvi 1969, Committee Memorandum 1976, Finnish Legislative Collection 44/76, Virkkala 1984.