SIGNILSKÄR AREA

Location: 60° 09' N, 19° 20' E.
The islands are situated in the Åland Sea, in the province of Åland and in the municipality of Eckerö.

Area: 11 960 ha, comprising 598 ha of land.

Protection status: In the ownership of the province of Åland. An unofficial bird sanctuary since 1937. The area is already included in the Ramsar Convention sites and in the Natura 2000 network of protected areas.

Site description: The area includes Signilskär Island in the outer archipelago and about 50 islets in the surroundings. Signilskär Island is 1.5 km long and partly covered by vegetation. It has two rather extensive deciduous forests, meadows and a small mire. Islets around Signilskär are mostly treeless.

International and national importance:
The islands have a diverse and abundant archipelago bird fauna. The most common species is the Eider *(Somateria mollissima)* with over 1000 pairs. Other breeding birds include e.g. Black Guillemot *(Cepphus grylle)*, Razorbill *(Alca torda)* and Velvet Scoter *(Melanitta fusca)*. Five species of Gulls *(Larus spp.)* breed in the area together with Arctic Skua *(Stercorarius parasiticus)*.

The area is an important feeding and wintering area for White-tailed Eagles *(Haliaeetus albicilla)*.

In the surrounding waters Ringed Seals *(Phoca hispida)* and Grey Seals *(Halichoerus grypus)* occur numerously near Märket Island.

Protection criteria: 2b and 3b.

Changes in ecological character:
The quality of water has declined.

Management measures:
None needed at the present.

Possible threats: Oil accidents are possible as the area is situated near a busy and narrow shipping lane.

Research: There has been a functioning bird ringing and research station on Signilskär since 1937. The site is included in the areas where the development of waterfowl populations of the western Åland archipelago is monitored.

References: Haapanen 1973, Haapanen & Rassi 1980, Hilden & Hario 1993, Niemelä et al. 1988, Rassi 1977, Finnish Legislative Collection 44/76.