

Ängsö National Park

Ängsö National Park was established in 1909 and includes 190 hectares. The purpose of the national park is to preserve the old agricultural landscape, essentially unchanged. The land is owned by the state, through the Swedish Environmental Protection Agency. The County Administrative Board of Stockholm administers the national park.

Within Ängsö National Park it is forbidden to, for example:

- enter the bird sanctuary indicated on the map during the period from 1 February until 15 August; the ban extends to 100 metres from the shore,
- enter uncut meadows or cultivated fields,
- light fires
- pick flowers or damage vegetation,
- damage the ground, remove rocks or other natural objects.

It is permitted to:

- bring dogs as long as they are on a leash at all times,
- fish with hand-gear, except in the bird sanctuary.
- put up tents for 2 days at designated locations

Full regulations for visitors are posted on information boards.



Visitor information

You are always welcome to visit Ängsö, but you can only reach the national park by boat. The company Blidösundsbolaget operates near-daily services from Stockholm, from the middle of May until the middle of August (phone: +46-(0)8-2430 90). For information about other boat and taxi-boat services contact Norrtälje tourist office (phone: +46-(0)176-719 90). There are plenty of moorings for those arriving by their own boat. Remember, however, that a large part of the eastern side of the island is a bird sanctuary, where entry is forbidden during the period from 1 February until 15 August; the ban extends to 100 metres from the shore.

Tickets for a guided tour of the island are sold on the regular boat services. The national park guide conducts the tour and will meet you on arrival. Guided tours for groups arriving by taxi-boat can also be booked via the park warden (phone: +46-(0)176-26 20 23).

A rest area and a shelter are found on the island, as well as an exhibition by the jetty for regular boat services. There is a network of marked trails. In summer, when the ground is dry, prams and wheelchairs can access the wider paths. People in wheelchairs should enter the island at the Hemudden wharf.

There is no shop, restaurant or accommodation on the island.



Elder-flowered orchids *Dactylorhiza sambucina*

For further information

Ängsö nationalpark
760 10 Bergshamra
Sweden
Tel./fax:
+46-(0)176-26 20 23

County Administrative Board
of Stockholm
Section for Nature Conservation and
Management
Box 22067
104 22 Stockholm, Sweden
Tel.: +46-(0)10-223 10 00
www.lansstyrelsen.se/stockholm

The purpose of national parks in Sweden is to preserve large areas in their natural state for research and recreation. They should be made available to the general public without losing their original character.

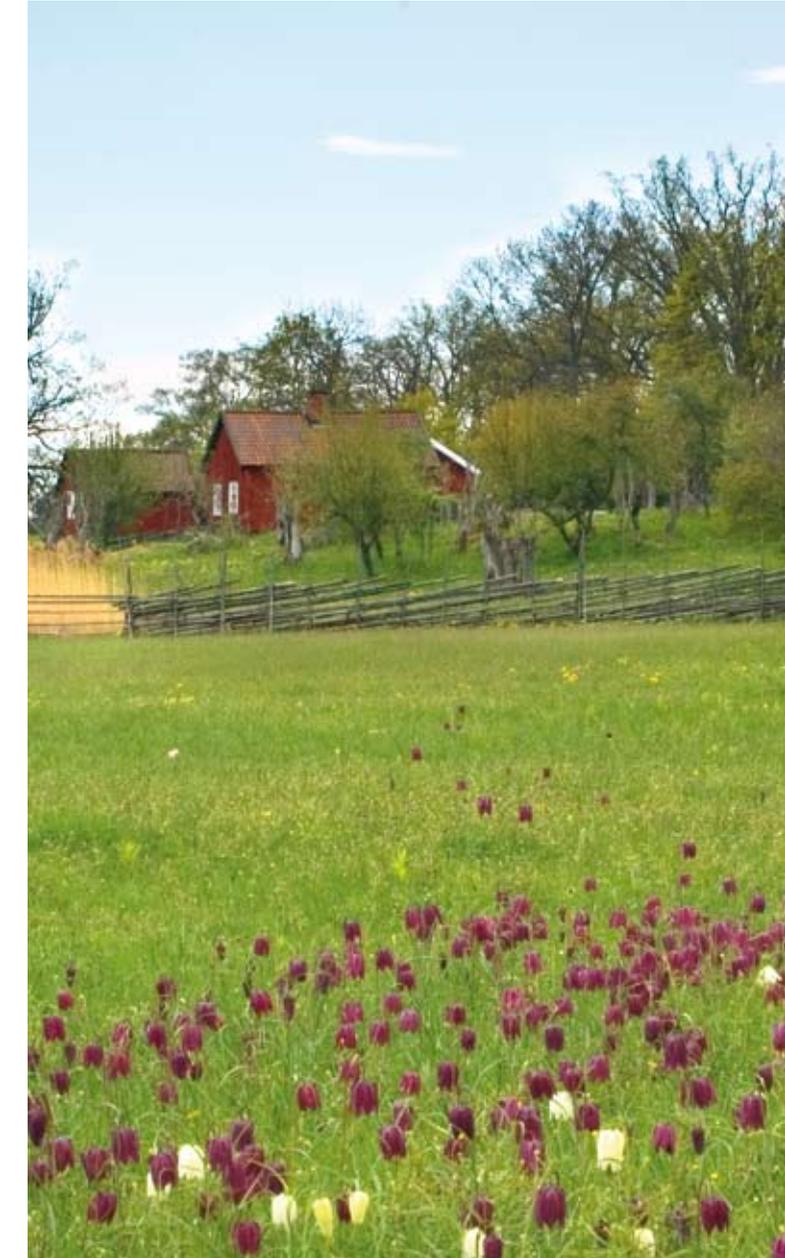


The site is part of the European network of nature protection areas, Natura 2000.



SWEDISH ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY

Production: County Administrative Board of Stockholm
Layout, text (unless otherwise stated): Naturcentrum AB
Illustrations: Nils Forshed. Map: Hans Sjögren
Translation: Maria Morris for Stefanie Busam Golay | Stilren
Front page photo: Croft at Hemviken, fritillaries in the foreground
Printed 2010. 10 000 copies. Revised: 2017-07-11





Ängsö has many visitors and is known for its ancient landscape with flower-rich meadows, leafy deciduous woods and idyllic crofts.

Welcome!

Ängsö National Park is located in the heart of Roslagen and contains much of the natural and cultural assets of this archipelago area. The foremost sights include the ancient agricultural landscape with hay-meadows, grazing pastures, small patches of arable land and several kilometres of traditional fencing. The variety of flora and fauna is the result of traditional farming practices over many centuries.

Ängsö's early history

Hay-making has been carried out here since the Middle Ages, when Ängsö consisted of two smaller islands. The farmers on Väringsö rowed here to harvest the hay. The first map of Ängsö is from 1639 and shows that large areas on both islands were hay-meadows. After the hay was cut, cattle grazed the meadows. The hay was brought home in the winter with the use of sledges.

A crofter's holding was built on the Hemudden headland in 1725–1726. As the land rose, the sound between the islands became shallower, and by the end of the 18th century it was probably possible to walk between the islands.



National park era

The creation of Ängsö National Park: In the early 20th century, some of the oaks on Ängsö were threatened by felling. Ivar Afzelius, judge and president of the Svea Court of Appeal, had his summer home on Väringsö. He wrote: “This vegetation, richer and more unaffected than otherwise found in the area, offers together with other natural conditions on the island a very special pleasure; in its present condition it is the most beautiful exhibit of upland Swedish archipelago environment.” Mr Afzelius argued for protection and raised the idea of designating Ängsö as a national park. The idea was realised in 1909, when Ängsö became one of the first national parks in Sweden and in Europe.

Neglect and encroachment: Ängsö became a national park for aesthetical reasons, but there was little awareness of the need for maintenance. At that time, many experts believed that hay-meadows and wooded meadows were a natural vegetation type that would be damaged by hay-making and grazing. The crofter Carl Edvard Carlsson was therefore only allowed to use the land nearest his home. The rest of the island, the national park, was left abandoned, which led to overgrowth. Spruce, brushwood and tall grass encroached meadows and deciduous groves.



It wasn't until the mid-1930s that the leading scientists in this field realised the benefits of hay-making and grazing to the flora and fauna of meadows. In 1943, a catalogue of measures was proposed for Ängsö, which resulted in extensive clearance work and resumed hay-making and grazing.

However, after a few years the crofter moved with his animals from the island, and the land was once again abandoned.

Resumed management: Renewed efforts were made in the 1950s to make Ängsö into a worthy national park. A warden was employed and a warden's house was built in 1954. The farm buildings were restored and extended, land was cleared, meadows were cut and grazing animals were re-introduced on the island. The first management plan for Ängsö came into force in 1975.

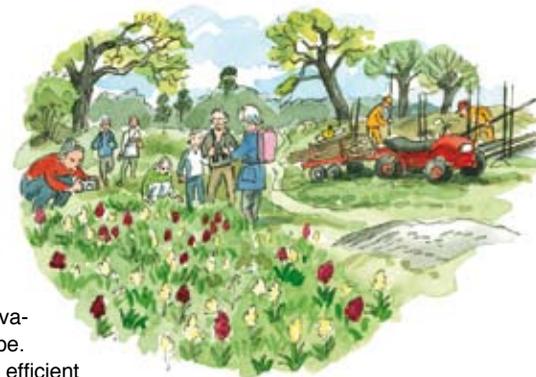
Initially, traditional scythes were used for restoration work, but they were eventually replaced by mechanical cutters.



Today, Ängsö is managed to conserve the largely re-created ancient agricultural landscape with meadows, pastures, fields and forest. The meadows are cleared in the spring and cut in late summer. Cattle graze the meadows after the hay has been harvested.

Many of the ash *Fraxinus excelsior* and lime *Tilia cordata* trees on Ängsö have been pollarded. Pollarding was a way of providing extra winter fodder for the animals. Pollarding, or the gathering of leaf fodder, has been resumed in recent years using traditional methods. This type of management gives the trees a characteristic look and can, if done with care, prolong the life of the trees.

The meadows on Ängsö are now managed in order to retain the ancient cultivated landscape. Modern and efficient methods are used.



Crofts on Ängsö

Crofts built at the Hemviken bay during the period 1805–1825 replaced the original buildings from the 1720s. The crofts are enclosed by traditional fencing and are well protected near the Hemviken bay, surrounded by oak hills and flat rocks.

Another croft, Adamstorpet, is found by the Svartviken bay. This is where Adam and Carolina Michelsson came to live in 1857. Adam was a day worker on Väringsö, five kilometres south-west of Ängsö. One January evening in 1864, Adam disappeared. Most likely he went through the ice and drowned, leaving Carolina alone with three children.

There are many stories about poor Carolina and her struggle to support herself and her family. One story concerns the two pines near the meadow Adamsängen. It is said that Carolina pulled sick children through the forks of the trees. One tree was said to cure rickets and the other to cure all other illnesses.

“Adam and Eve”

The far corner of the meadow Långängen, by the Norrudden headland, is one of the most popular attractions on Ängsö – a lovely glade meadow with elder-flowered orchids *Dactylorhiza sambucina* (in Sweden their charming common name is “Adam and Eve”). From mid-May until early June, the meadow is a carpet of purple and yellow from this vigorous plant. Which colour represents Adam and which Eve, is a subject of debate.

When the meadow was cleared from aspen *Populus tremula* brushwood in the 1960s, only 50 orchids were found. However, in recent years more than a thousand elder-flowered orchids bloom every spring. The species has declined in the rest of Sweden, most likely due to reduced grazing and encroachment of old pastures.

Diversity of birds and flowering herbs

In spring, the birds on the island are in full activity. The many old hollow deciduous trees contain many habitats for hole-building species such as pied flycatcher *Ficedula hypoleuca* and nuthatch *Sitta europaea*. Black woodpecker *Dryocopus martius*, great spotted woodpecker *Dendrocopos major* and stock pigeon *Columba oenas* are other species favoured by the abundance of nesting trees. Large holes are used by goldeneye *Bucephala clangula* and tawny owl *Strix aluco*.

The Hemviken bay has one of the largest populations of great



A couple of great crested grebes *Podiceps cristatus* displaying their courtship ritual.

crested grebe *Podiceps cristatus* in Sweden. The grebes returning in March and April after their long stay abroad are a true sign of spring on Ängsö. During spring, the grebes are lively and loud; the couples bicker and perform their courtship ritual in front of curious visitors. The diet of the great crested grebe consists mainly of fish, of which there is plenty in the Hemviken bay.

Ängsö is also the island of white-tailed eagles *Haliaeetus albicilla*. The eagles seek refuge in the old forests that surround the meadows and wooded hills. The coniferous forests are left untouched, and there is an abundance of standing and fallen dead trees.

The cornucopia of flowers is astounding in spring and early summer. Bird's-eye primrose *Primula farinosa*, cowslip *Primula veris*, fritillary *Fritillaria meleagris*, greater yellow-rattle *Rhinanthus serotinus*, ramsons *Allium ursinum*, spring pea *Lathyrus vernus*, wood anemone *Anemone nemorosa* and yellow star-of-Bethlehem *Gagea lutea* are some of the species that flower in profusion on Ängsö.

Spring pea *Lathyrus vernus* blooms in May.
Photo: M. Jansson / County Administrative Board of Stockholm

