

Welcome to Härmanö Nature Reserve!

The Nature Reserve includes Stora and Lilla Härmanö. The island is exposed to the wind and the weather due to that fact that it is located on the outer edge of the archipelago. This greatly characterises the countryside of the six kilometre long island. The western part is dominated by cliffs washed clean by the sea, exposed bedrock and heathland. In the eastern part there are flower rich meadows. Centuries of grazing and cutting have shaped the landscape and created an attractive mosaic of old fields in amongst the rocky terrain. There are lots of small wetlands and pools on Härmanö, some of which are the result of historic peat extraction. Beavers have built dams in the last decade or so, creating large areas of inter-connected open water.

Recreation

Härmanö Nature Reserve conserves something of the traditional Bohuslän landscape whilst also being a paradise for outdoor recreation. You can go hiking, swimming, bird-watching or fishing. Remember to wear good footwear and have a packed lunch with you on your hikes. The distances are long and the

terrain is hilly and often difficult to walk through. Marked trails facilitate hiking. The roads from the village to Klippevik and from Höpallen to Härm are suitable for disabled visitors. There is a disabled toilet at Grindebacken.

Remains of ice and people

The bedrock of Härmanö is gneiss which is broken up into a multitude of cracks, crevices and valleys. Black ribbons of diabase run in a north-southerly direction across the whole island, but are most evident at Härmanö Huvud and Långekilen. The ice sheet has left traces in the form of rock sculptures such as giant's kettles, depressions and rock pools.

Several areas are rich in chalk due to the shells in the soil. Sandhålorna by Grindebacken has the remains of a shell-bearing gravel bank that was quarried. The shell-bearing gravel was formed when the ice sheets melted when the island was under water. It is made up of shells from snails and mussels which have been mixed with sand and gravel. This was historically used in the production of glass and porcelain as well as a food additive for chickens.

Significant ribbons of the mineral calcite can be seen here and there. Calcite was quarried at Höpallen and Stenvik in the first half of the 1900s.

In Skållehus, near the island's southern tip, a dozen or so house foundations from the 1500s and 1600s have been excavated. Some of the houses were probably inhabited all year-round. Bones of cattle, sheep, pigs, geese and chickens, as well as iron objects and pottery remains have been found. The settlers fished for cod and other white fish and even hunted porpoises, seals and seabirds.

Buildings

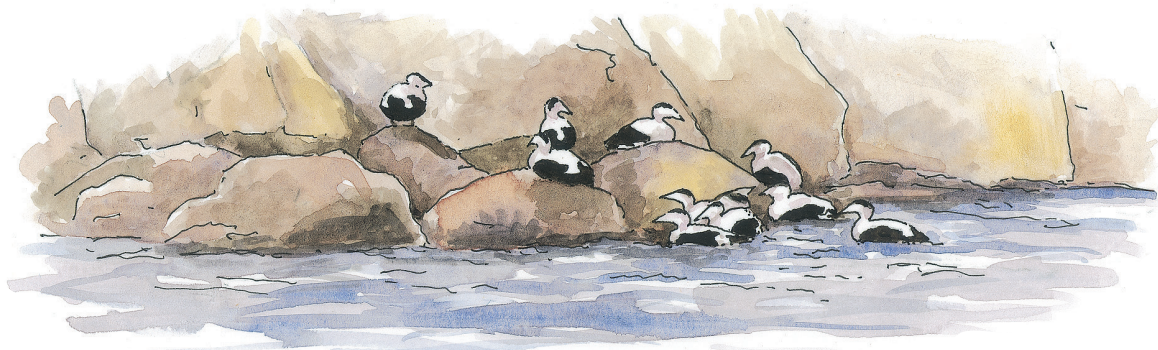
On the eastern side of the island, there have been farms since at least the 1500s. Farming was combined with fishing and cargo shipping. The farm at Härm, which is located in the middle of the eastern shore, is the oldest and is where all the buildings were located. In association with the land reform in 1831, the farms and their associated land on the island were divided into five parts. This was when the stone walls which still criss-cross the landscape were built.

During the latter part of the 1900s, the importance of agriculture declined and the land is now managed in accordance with the management plan for the Nature Reserve.

The farms of Myren, Grindebacken and Höpallen are active, with grazing animals which keep the landscape open on the northern part of the Reserve.

Härmanö and the island of Gullholmen form the local community, which was originally a fishing village. This fishing village is mentioned in documents from the late 1500s, but it is possibly even older. Fishing for herring was periodically important for the islands' economy. The varying supply of this "silver of the sea" over the centuries has left its mark on the economy, population and settlements. In the early 1900s up until the First World War, it was fishing for ling and mackerel in the North Sea that ruled the economy. The fishing was done with cutters purchased from England. Later the cutters were used for cargo transport instead.





Eiders, *Somateria mollissima*

Birdlife

Härmanö is in a good location for migrating birds. At Härmanö Huvud, in the far south-west, you can see white-tailed eagles, auks, scoters and several species of geese. Ravens nest on the southern cliffs. Wading birds nest at Vadet, on Lilla Härmanö, and you can sometimes see osprey hunting here.

Flowering woodlands and meadows

Lush broadleaved woodlands grow in the valleys where liverleaf flower in the spring. The drier meadows and those along the shore often have a species rich flora. This is because the soil is rich in shells. When hay cutting, which is done when the flowers have set seed, the cut material is removed to avoid adding more nutrients to the soil.

The animals are put out to graze after cutting. There are many flowers in the meadow that are dependent upon cutting and grazing. In May the ground shimmers yellow from all the cowslips. These are later followed by meadow saxifrage, common milkwort, lousewort, seaside centaury, bloody crane's bill, irish fleabane, greater yellow rattle, greater knapweed and a variety of other herbs.



Sea buckthorn, *Hippophaë rhamnoides*



Sea buckthorn forms thickets at Klippvik and at Svinegilja there is a small grove of gnarly sea buckthorn trees. Sea buckthorn is dioecious, which means that they have female and male flowers on different individuals. Sea buckthorn flowers form on bare branches in mid-May and the small flowers are wind pollinated. It is rare that the bush produces berries on Härmanö.

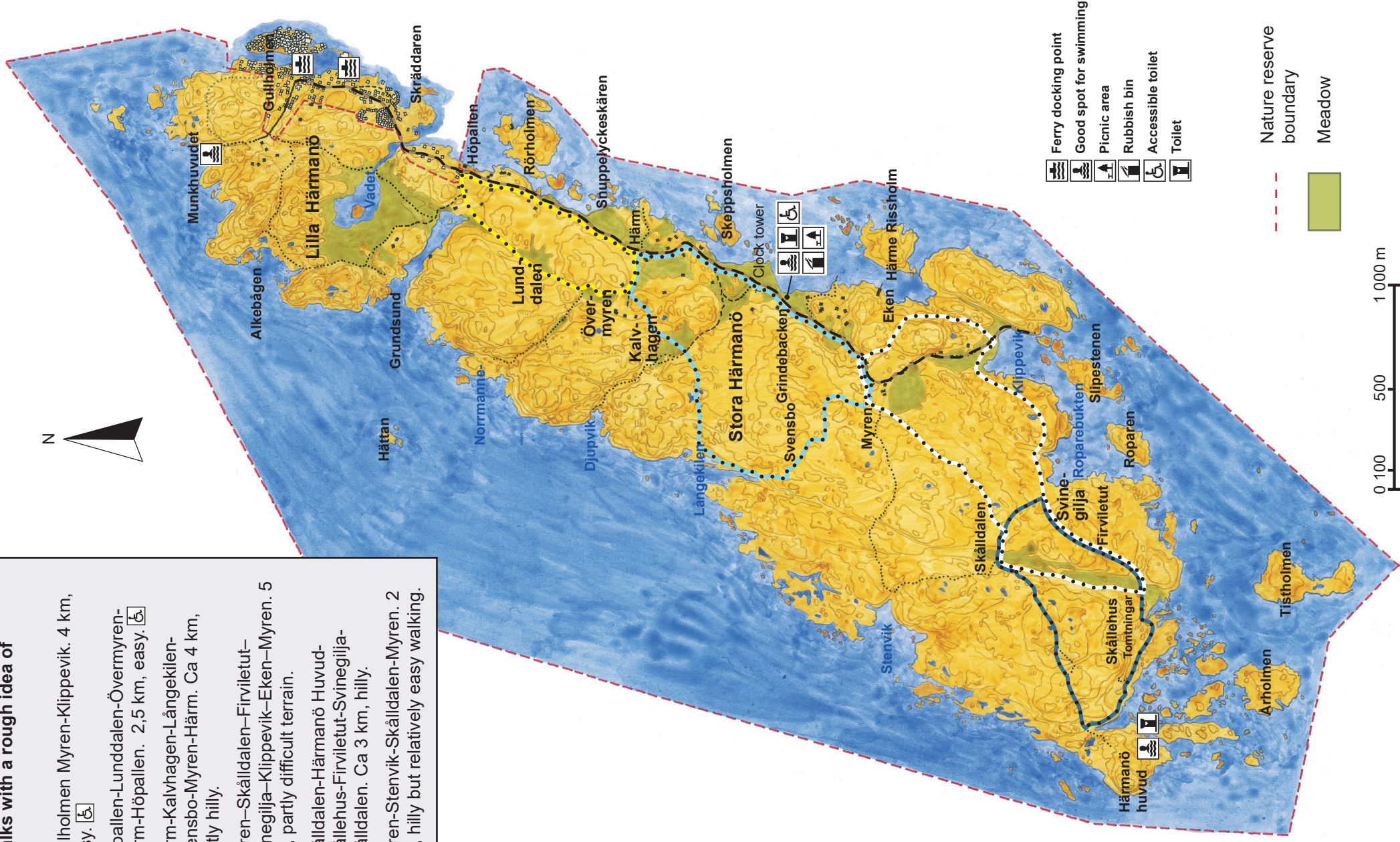


Royal fern, *Osmunda regalis*

Royal fern is the largest fern in Sweden. The spores are on the top of the leaves rather than on the underside. Royal fern has only been recorded from Härmanö and Härön in Bohuslän. In southern Sweden, royal fern grows along riverbanks with the leaves hanging over the water, but on Härmanö it grows upright in the peat bog with stiff stalks. The latin name for royal fern *Osmunda* is thought to mean "Gods' gift to mankind", and *regalis* means "regal". The Swedish name "safsa" is thought to be an old word for "know". It was said that wise women could go to a clump of royal ferns in the morning in "silence and fasting" to ask advice.

Suggested walks with a rough idea of distance

- Gullholmen Myren-Klippevik. 4 km, easy. 
- Höpallen-Lunddalen-Övermyren-Härm-Höpalen. 2.5 km, easy. 
- Härm-Kalvhagen-Långekilén-Svensbo-Myren-Härm. Ca 4 km, partly hilly.
- Myren-Skåldalen-Firviletut-Svinegilja-Klippevik-Eken-Myren. 5 km, partly difficult terrain.
- Skåldalen-Härmanö Huvud-Skållehus-Firviletut-Svinegilja-Skåldalen. Ca 3 km, hilly.
- Myren-Stenvik-Skåldalen-Myren. 2 km, hilly but relatively easy walking.





The heathlands of Bohuslän

The heathlands have been cleared with the help of money from the EU

The heathlands of Bohuslän have become overgrown over the last century. The reason is the loss of grazing animals and that wood is no longer essential for heating and cooking. This is why during the period 2010-2015 heathlands and meadows were cleared and old trees were released from competition with the support of the EU Life Fund. The crowns of the trees can now stretch out. The sun reaches the trunks, providing places for lichens and warmth-loving and rare insects such as beetles.

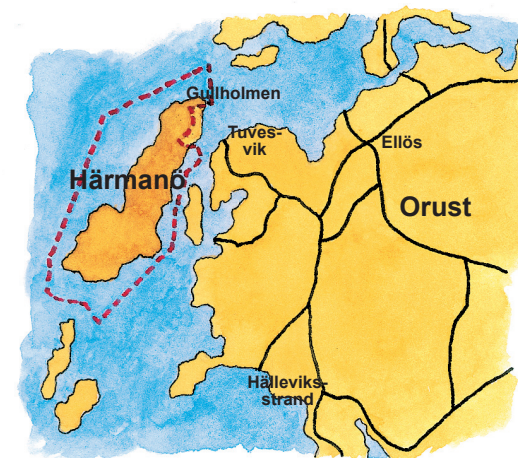
Burning is a traditional method for regenerating old heather and favouring insects and plants. Grasses and herbs return after burning, the grazing improves and the biodiversity increases. Grazing animals are essential to stop overgrowing and they create the open habitats upon which the plants and animals of the archipelago are dependent.

Heather – a useful plant for people and animals

On the poor soils of the rocky outcrops and heathlands, the heather flowers flame violet in August. The plant is not very fussy and can grow on almost all soil types except chalky soils. Heather has a woody stem and in the historic tree-less landscape, the islanders used the woody parts for fuel. The plant was also important for grazing and as winter fodder for livestock and as bedding in the barns. Women used heather to make mattresses, because it filled well and had the ability to keep away unwanted guests. The tenacious roots were used to make wicker baskets, the woody branches were used to make brooms and the finest branches for whisks.



Heather,
Calluna vulgaris



Location

Härmanö lies west of Orust and is most easily reached by ferry from Tuvesvik to Gullholmen or with your own boat. The Nature Reserve was created in 1967 and covers the entire island with the exception of the village at Gullholmen.



Regulations for the Nature Reserve

It is forbidden to:

- pick flowers and dig up plants
- bring a dog not on a lead
- camp
- make a fire
- leave rubbish such as glass, metal, plastic, paper or equivalent
- drive a motor vehicle without permission



Länsstyrelsen
Västra Götaland



Väst kuststiftelsen
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