



Österåkers

Here and on the nearby information board you can find out more about the unique fields of Karum. The fields are farmed using the three-field system, as in the 19th century. You can read about what that means, and the three different stages of the three-field system, here and at two other fields.

KARUM'S TUFTY FIELDS

In the 19th century, the fields looked like Österåkers in front of you. The field is tufty and the grain is not growing in straight rows. That was what it looked like in the past when farmers sowed by hand. They used fewer seeds than today and therefore the grain was sparse and unevenly spread. On modern fields, the grain grows in rows as straight as an arrow.

If you look carefully you will see that the field is edge-to-edge with the meadow. No wall separates the field from the meadow – and that is how it was in the past. When the farmer had harvested the hay on the meadow and the grain in the field, the cattle were let in for post-harvest grazing on the stubble that remained, the weeds in the field, and the new growth on the meadow. Nowadays the meadows are re-created and lie edge-to-edge with the fields, like in the 19th century.



Photo: The County Administrative Board in Kalmar County.

Why do the fields bloom in Karum?

In Karum we want to show what the fields may have looked like in the 19th century. Now, as then, no pesticides are used to kill animals and plants that spoil the crops. Weeds are only combated mechanically, but that is not as effective. Therefore, there are a lot of weeds in the fields. The fields of Karum are now among the most important places in Sweden for preserving old types of field weeds. Some of them produce beautiful flowers.

The three-field system, as in the 19th century

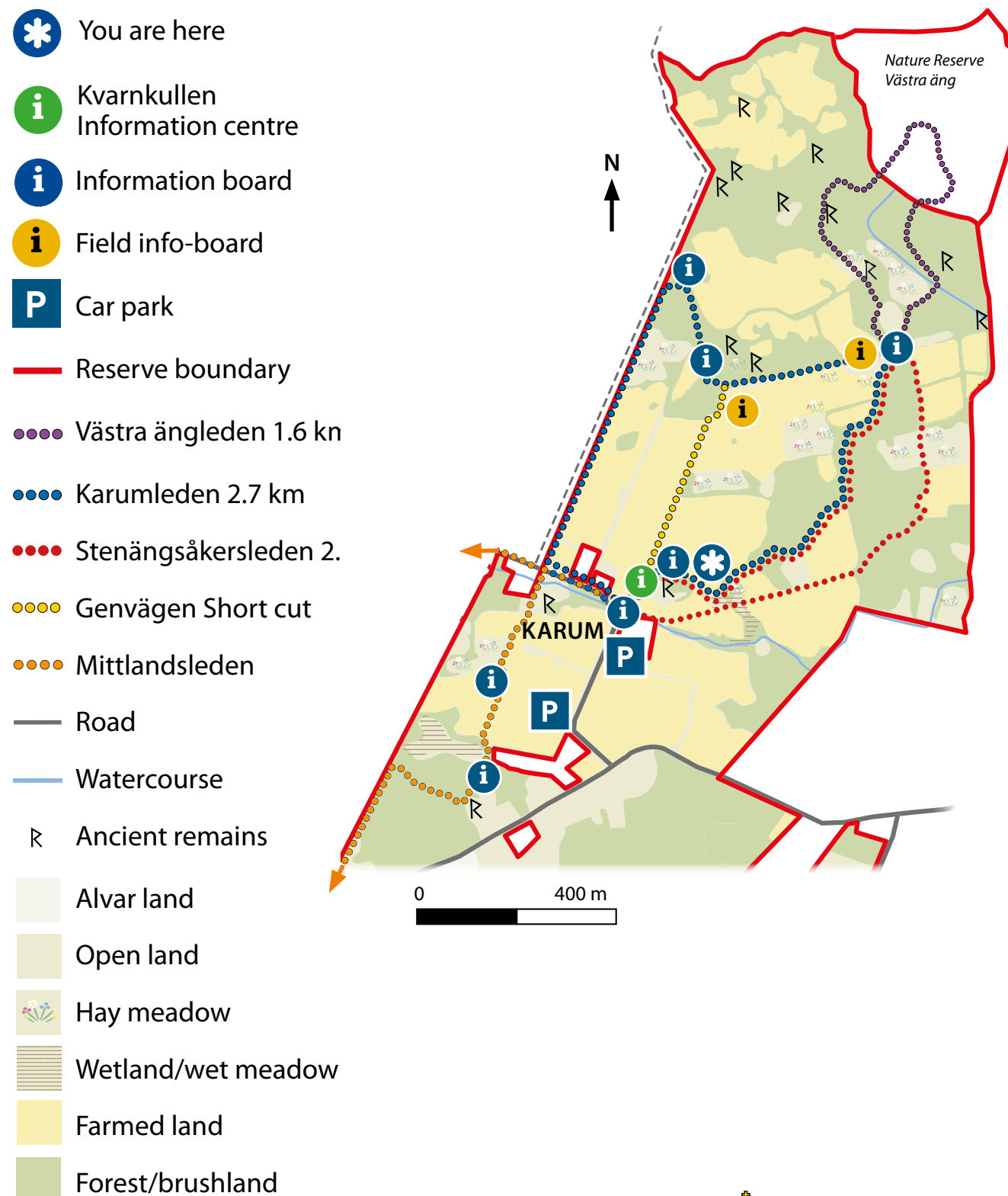
The fields in Karum are today farmed using the three-field system – that means that:

- A third of the fields are sown with rye.
- A third of the fields are sown with barley.
- A third of the fields are not sown at all – the soil is resting/lying fallow.

The field where rye grows one year is sown with barley the next year. For the third year, the field lies fallow. Then it starts again.

The three-field system had its big breakthrough on Öland in the 18th century. Before that, the farmers grew grain on every field every year, known as single-crop farming. Or, half the fields were fallow every year, which is known as the two-field system.

At the end of the 19th century, farmers took up crop rotation. That often means a series of five or six crops, but without the field lying fallow for a single year.



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