



# Murstensdalen

**The Murstensdalen valley is the second largest and the wildest of the nature reserves in Örebro county, after Kindla. It is quiet and undisturbed, with deep ravines, high plateaus with old pine forest, stretches of bogs, ponds and lakes. Murstensdalen is a large, remote area that provides a habitat for many unusual species of plants, fungi and animals.**

## Highland area

The nature reserve consists of a high plateau, the Mosserud Plateau, which in the east ends in a rift valley with steep, rocky sides, the real Murstensdalen. The highest point in the area is 306 metres a.s.l. and the lowest around 190 metres. West of the area is the Lokadalen valley. The bedrock is granite.

## Use of the forest

The forest in Murstensdalen was first exploited in the golden years of mining from the 17th to the 19th century. After the mining period forestry took over but the wood was thought to be of too poor quality to be worthwhile, so the forest was left undisturbed. The nature reserve has been virtually uninhabited and only one crofter's cottage, Karlbo, is known.

The forest is being allowed to develop freely so that it can take on the character of old, native forest. Many of the young stands will be burned down when they reach a suitable age. In the area there are around 30 small and large lakes, ponds and bogs. The lakes are poor in nutrients, so many lack fish. Three of them have Swedish names that refer to this.

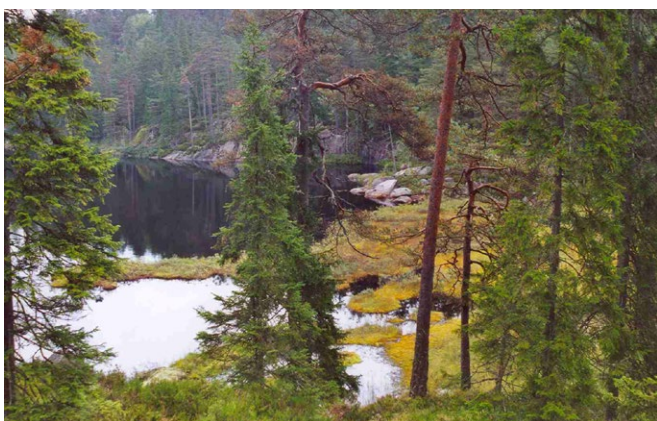


Photo: Eva Ekholm-Pehrson, County Administrative Board

## Forest fires – important for many species

The forests in Bergslagen have been affected by recurrent forest fires. There are clear traces of fires at many places in the nature reserve. A survey of fire history in Murstensdalen shows that when the area was undisturbed natural forest, major fires occurred about five times a century. From the start of the 17th century, mining and Finnish migrants practising slash and burn cultivation had a significant impact on the landscape, and forest fires in that period increased to about ten per century. No major fires have occurred in the area since 1809.

One of the oldest currently living pines in Murstensdalen dates from 1545. The oldest dead pine stub that remains, and that could be dated, took root in the 13th century and probably died in the major fire of 1575. Tree rings provide a record of events taking place during the lifetime of a tree and the number of fires that occurred through the centuries at the site where the tree grew.

## Diversity of species in natural forest

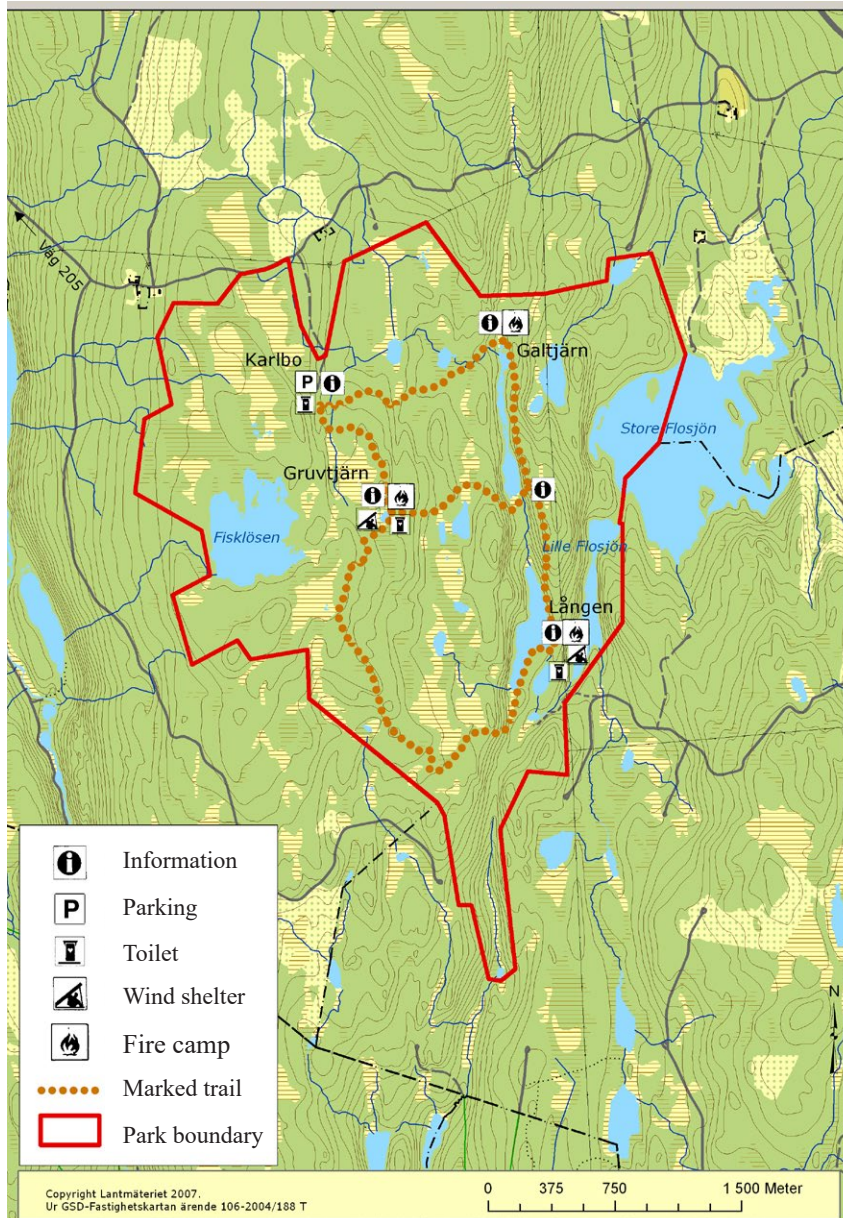
The forest in the nature reserve grows on infertile soil. The extensive, sparse and slow-growing pine forest alternates with rocky areas and marshland. In the east, a valley runs in a north-south direction, with nutrient-rich soil that supports lush spruce forest instead. Ground vegetation comprises scrub such as bog bilberry and dwarf birches, and the rocky areas offer good conditions for many types of lichen. Many unusual fungi and plants live near and on the old or dead trees.

A number of specialised bird species live in the old coniferous forest. The capercaillie has a very strong population, and many mating areas are known. One of the region's few pairs of three-toed woodpecker breeds here. The woodpecker leaves clear traces, such as rings around spruce stems, in its quest for insects. Around some of the smaller ponds, species include the red-throated diver and crane.

## Three of Sweden's four biggest predators

Three of Sweden's large predator species are temporary visitors or permanent inhabitants in the area. The lynx has a strong population and the area is occasionally visited by bears and wolves. Fishing is currently managed in some of the lakes by Karlskoga Angling Club, which is working to build up the brown trout population. However, the general public may not fish in the nature reserve. Hunting takes place in the nature reserve.





### Paths and picnic places

There is a car park in the northern part of the nature reserve. Two circular paths begin at the car park, with lengths of 5 and 12 km respectively. Along the path there are two wind shelters with barbecues, and a separate barbecue. Camping is permitted for a maximum of 24 hours by Lake Lången. The paths are marked and are planked over wet areas. The walks are challenging and undulating in places.

### § In the nature reserve, you are not permitted to:

- disturb animals or damage plants
- have dogs unleashed
- pick flowers, lichens or wood-decay fungi. However, you may pick berries and edible fungi
- climb on the cliffs
- light fires except where designated and using only designated wood
- sleep overnight anywhere other than in the log cabin and the wind shelters, or in a tent at the site by Lake Lången, and then for only one night
- drive motor vehicles or cycle
- set up notice boards, placards, posters or similar
- set up orienteering control points or mark trails with paper strips

### How to get there

The nature reserve is situated 25 km north of Karlskoga and south of Loka. There is a signpost on road 205 between Grythyttan and Karlskoga. The car park is in the northern part of the nature reserve.

### Facts about the nature reserve

Established: 2001

Area: 763 ha

Landowner: Swedish Environmental Protection Agency

Managed by: County Administrative Board

Established by: County Administrative Board