



NATURE RESERVE IN ÖREBRO COUNTY

# Murstensdalen



Photo: Eva Ekholm-Pehrson, Länsstyrelsen

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.

## 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.

## 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.

### Facts

Established: 2001

Area: 763 hektar

Landowner: Naturvårdsverket

Managed by: County Administrative Board (Länsstyrelsen)



Länsstyrelsen  
Örebro län

