

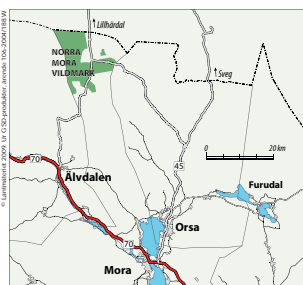
Welcome to Norra Mora Vildmark Nature Reserve

The reserve covers 14 928 hectares. It is protected to conserve an environment with unique species and spectacular scenery. The nature reserve was established thanks to the cooperation of the common forests of Östnor, Rymdalen, Färnäs, Nusbås and Garsås, who are landowners in the reserve. Small parts are owned by the State. The reserve is managed by the County Administrative Board.

Within the nature reserve, it is forbidden to:

- drive motor vehicles off-road, with the exception of snowmobiles on marked trails when the ground is snow-covered, and with the exception of residents of the area who may travel to and from existing trails.
- damage living or dead trees, with the exception of the gathering of fallen branches for firewood.

How to get to the nature reserve:



Drive via Älvdalen or Orsa. Car park and information signs can be found at Skuråsen, Vackerbodarna and Brändfljoten – see map over the page.

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Text: Bengt Oldhammer, Photo: Peter Turander/Azote, Cover, Knausås, Munkhäden, lung lichen; Pär Johansson/Naturton-wolf lichen, snötvingda granar, bear den, willow grouse, golden eagle, Jenny Sander-Anjosvarden, Halaporus odoratus; Bengt Oldhammer-hare's-tail cottongrass; Lef Östergren-bear; Maria Jons-torralk; Ingegerd Kaptens-Korskällan; Älvdalens Local History Association-mire hay.

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A NATURE RESERVE IN DALARNA



Norra Mora Vildmark



Hare's-tail cottongrass

"A corner beyond all honour and decency"

On the 12th June 1686, the Swedish King Carl XI wrote in his diary that he travelled through "the twelve league forests that divide Härjedalen and Dalarna". He stayed at Ulvsjön, a desolate place where, forty years prior to the King's visit, there was a border between Norway and Sweden.

Carl XI met some fellows from Mora, and complained of the bad road, but received a witty reply that he did not dislike, that the road was the best defence against an enemy invasion. Today the King is still remembered, in the form of the King's Road.

Twelve league forests are nowadays little heard of outside fairy tales. Sweden has only four really large forests left: Mud-dus, Sjaunja, Pärälven and a military firing range also in the far north of the country. In these places, the forest stretches away for ten kilometres in all directions.

In the rest of Sweden, the forest landscape is fragmented by logging trails, clear-cuts, young plantations and buildings. An exception is the north of Mora Municipality, a region that is unique in southern and central Scandinavia.

In 1921 the writer Karl-Erik Forsslund wrote in his work Med Dalälven från källorna till havet (Along the River Dalälven from its Sources to the Sea), that this was "a corner beyond all honour and decency". The villagers of Garsås thought their forested outfields were so far away that they sometimes called them Denmark.



Borderlands and forest living

A popular place to visit, that was already written about in 1403 is Korskälla, in Krosskeldo. This was a resting place for pilgrims on the journey to St. Olaf's tomb at Nidaros (Trondheim), as well as a border post.

The old marketplace at Jamtmot is far more mythical, which may have been used in the fifteenth century. It was certainly a meeting place for traders during the Little Ice Age in the eighteenth century. The writer Lars Levander wrote that many came here, such as "Jämtlanders with butter and tallow, Norwegians with herring and sprats, Mora fellows with clocks, Älvdal people with wrought iron and Venjan men with glass from the Johnnesholm works".

The exact location of the marketplace is not known, and generations of oral tales have been mixed with fantasy. Perhaps the winter market was located around Oremyran in the eastern part of the nature reserve?

At Rövarbergsgrottan Cave, just north or here, robbers once dwelt and lay in wait for horse riders. The tales of robbers who were captured, put in irons and beheaded are many. In Härjedalen, it is told how the first shotgun came to the region, and how it was used to dispatch the last robber at Jamtmot.

The wilderness was not always wild. On the contrary. Severin Solder writes: "Our vast lands have, since time immemorial, been travelled. With mire ore and furnaces determined men worked from spring until Christmas. In summer and winter crowds of mowers and summer farmers could be seen and heard. The wilderness was filled with sounds from

singing calling their cows home. In winter long lines of horses and sledges arrived, with which men conveyed iron traps, timber and different types of animal fodder".

The large mires provided iron for scythes made at the Långö works, hay for winter fodder and also grazing for the animals on the summer farms. There are a number of historic iron ore extraction sites in Norra Mora Vildmark, and mire hay was gathered as recently as the 1950s.

This area was on the edge of the region to the east used by Finns who lived on slash-and-burn farming. This was also practiced by the summer farmers for improving grazing. At Dödasen, it was said that the goat herders failed to set fire to the poor ground, which is why it is called the "Dead Ridge". Busk Sigrid at Särnaheden once complained of this work and said that "All want to graze but nothing will burn".

The great change to this subsistence farming took place in the nineteenth century, when logging attracted crowds of people to the area. Things became lively. As a result, there are today only a few untouched forest stands left in the area, mainly in the landscape between Brynnbåsmören and Prästslättåsen. Mora's largest old forest lies here.



Norra Mora Vildmark natural reserve from Anjosvarden natural reserve.

Mire and forest

The nature reserve's high altitude, combined with high precipitation, gives it a humidity that is one of the highest in the country. The visitor can experience magical mists that sweep in through the valleys. The moisture benefits epiphytic lichens, of which several species drape the trees.



Korskälla

The mires undergo several transformations. During autumn the deergrass colours the mires a magical gold. Early on, metre-deep snow covers a desolate and empty landscape. Hardly any life can be heard.

When early summer approaches, and hare's-tail cottongrass sways in the wind, the mires spring to life that the northern tundra – there are birds everywhere. Meadow pipit, yellow wagtail,

redpoll, golden plover, wood sandpiper, greenshank and whimbrel can be heard warning or singing as the hiker approaches.



Wolf lichen

If trees could talk ...

Since clear-cutting as practiced today did not come into fashion until the middle of the last century, many trees were left. The forest is noticeably varied in age, and is a very natural forest.

In the nature reserve, pine and spruce trees of 200 to 300 years of age are more the rule than the exception. In several places there are pines of 400 to 500 years of age or more. The cause of the great age is the meagre bedrock with granite and porphyry, the harsh location and the recurring fires that impregnate the pine with resin.

At Skuråstelet there is an old forest fire site, with living trees bearing traces of fires from the seventeenth century. Landedaråsen and Rövarberget boast thousands of pines with so-called fire scars, some with scars from five different fires during three centuries.

The wealth of standing dead pines and spruce is great in almost all of the nature reserve, and wolf lichen is common in many places. However, there is a lack of fallen dead trees, particularly pines. In the more productive parts, largely along streams and spruce-lined valleys, the number of dead and rotting trees has happily increased during the last ten years.

The rare bracket fungus Halaporus odoratus can be found on willows that grow after fires. Its aniseed scent can be smelled from 20 metres away, and the fungus was in some places used in linen cupboards. Linnaeus wrote in his Lapland Journey that it "in bygone days it was used by young men for encouraging love in maids and acquiring their favour".

Today the bracket fungus is protected, and one of a hundred or so rare plants and animals that have been found in the surveys of this wilderness area, with around 30 in Norra Mora Vildmark. Many more await discovery.



Dead pine



Mountains or low alpine plateaus? But for how much longer?

In the north-western part of Norra Mora Vildmark lies the municipality's highest peak, Knausås, at 787 metres above sea level. Munkhäden is three metres lower, but still 20 metres higher than the well-known Anjosvarden. These low-alpine plateaus are a mixture of mountain and forest. This area can be regarded as an archipelago of low alpine plateaus (over thirty), just above the tree line in north-western Dalarna. They arose during the last thousand years by fires and harsh climatic conditions.

With the current global warming, these heaths and low alpine plateaus will once again be swept into the taiga's cloak. In the picture the view from Munkhäden.



Lung lichen



Halaporus odoratus

Bears live here

This is classic bear country. Visitors frequently see droppings or signs in the form of excavated anthills and claw marks on pines and sometimes spruce. They often scratch themselves against trees, and tussocks of hair can be found in the dripping resin. The dens are dug in the large anthills that characterise sparse pine forest.

Lynx, wolverine and wolf can regularly be seen in the area, and otters patrol the water courses, having increased greatly in recent years. Perhaps the most common predator is the weasel. In winter its tracks can often be seen in the snow, even though it spends most of the time under the snow. Seeing the difference between the tracks of weasels and stoats is often difficult, since female stoats are much smaller than males. Their main prey are bank voles, wood lemmings, grey-sided voles and Norway lemmings, which are all occasionally found in the area.



Bear



Bear den



Willow grouse



Golden eagle



Knausås 787 m

Remote Wilderness

Today it is still possible to hike through continuous old forest from the Finnish settlement at Untorp through Norra Mora Vildmark and on to Härjedalen and the Vedungsfjäl-len Mountains. The route is over eighty kilometres long, and passes only two minor roads.

In this wilderness, the rambler can experience complete silence and unbroken views of forest as far as the eye can see. A desolate land where time stands still.

The Norra Mora Vildmark Nature Reserve covers an area of 15 000 hectares, and is one of Sweden's largest outside the mountain region. It is adjoined by the nature reserves Vämhuskölen, Anjosvarden, Stopån and Näcksjövarden, forming

a total of 23 000 hectares of protected area.

If you also count the adjoining protected and unprotected old forest in the Rotälven and Dyverdalen valleys, and on either side of the Härjedalen border, a further 10 000 hectares can be added.

This wilderness has survived for several reasons. Besides its lonely location, the area was divided between many landowners. There is probably no other Swedish nature reserve with so many landowners as Norra Mora Vildmark. This, in combination with a barren environment dominated by vast mires and hilltops with alpine characteristics, means that landowners in many villages have used the area for hunting, rather than for forestry and road development.

