Ottenby Nature Reserve is located on the southern cape of the island of Öland. Thousands of migrating birds rest here in spring and autumn on their way north or south, and these large gatherings make Ottenby Nature Reserve one of Sweden’s top bird areas. Within the reserve there are also a great number of nesting bird species, some of which are rare in the rest of the country, e.g. collared flycatcher, golden oriole and southern dunlin.

The area is part of the World Heritage site Agricultural Landscape of Southern Öland, and is strongly characterised by human land use over thousands of years. The large number of grazing animals on the Schäferiängarna meadows and the land along the lighthouse road, together with hay-making, are prerequisites for maintaining the open character of the landscape and biological diversity. For centuries, bird life and plants have adapted to living conditions in the open landscape and would disappear if the land became overgrown.

The reserve consists of the areas: Ottenby lund, Schäferiängarna and Västra mark, each with a character of its own.

Ottenby lund

Ottenby lund (Ottenby Grove) is today a mixed deciduous woodland, dominated by oak and birch. The area forms the largest contiguous deciduous forest on southern Öland. Ottenby lund is a royal hunting ground with winding hay meadows, wooded patches of old oaks and wet areas. Some of the remaining hay fields in the grove are still cut. Artificial fertilisers were used on practically all meadows during the 1960s, and the flora is now fairly depleted. One exception is the small north-eastern Kyrkängen meadow, which escaped artificial manuring. Here you can still find species favoured by hay-making such as heath spotted orchid, spotted dandelion, viper’s-grass and common milkwort growing in profusion. Meadowland farming ended after World War II and the grove started to overgrow. Through repeated thinning out, the forest has become more open and now Ottenby lund road, where Västra mark turns into a shore meadow, you find a girth exceeding 400 centimetres and are more than 450 years old. The ancient trees and the moist climate in the grove are of great importance for the rich and unique flora of lichens. The great number of old trees and the dead wood in the grove also contribute to a rich insect fauna with several rare species such as lesser stag beetle, noble chafer and Dorcatoma substriata beetle. The rot-unusual moth prefers the open deciduous woodland.

In May, visitors to Ottenby lund are met by an amazing bird chorus from chiffchaff, willow warbler, wood warbler, icterine warbler, garden warbler, blackcap and several species of flycatcher. In early summer, it’s also possible to hear the strong fluting from golden oriole. Little grebe and moorhen nest in Lake Lundsjön in the southern part of the grove. In the landscape around Kyrkängen meadow to the north, barred warbler and corn crake can be heard in May. Autumn is a favourable time to watch out for eastern bird species, e.g. palla’s warbler, which rest in the grove on their way south.

The royal fallow deer in the grove are descendants of the deer that King Johan III introduced to Ottenby lund in 1569, when all of Öland was proclaimed a royal hunting ground. It was a royal hunting ground until 1800. The royal fallow deer should be kept to 150 to 200 animals, varying from year to year.

Schäferiängarna

Winter fodder for the animals in Ottenby was for a long time gathered from a very large meadow, Skogsgräset, which included parts of today’s Schäferiängarna meadows, has today around 1 200 cattle and 1 200 sheep grazing in the reserve. The farm also has one of the largest and most modern dairy herds and an art gallery open during summer.

A song thrush is skillfully removed from a net at Ottenby Bird Station. A golden oriole (Oriolus oriolus) has today around 1 200 cattle and 1 200 sheep grazing in the reserve. The farm also has one of the largest and most modern dairy herds and an art gallery open during summer.

Remember this when visiting the nature reserve!

- Do not disturb birds, plants or animals.
- Do not pick flowers, pick berries or damage any vegetation.
- Do not feed any birds, animals or plants.
- Do not feed the forest animals.
- Do not walk off the marked trails.
- Do not use radios, record players, or similar in a disturbing way.
- Do not litter.
- Do not usercis, record players, or similar in a disturbing way.
- Do not damage or remove fencing.
- It is not permitted to hunt, kill, capture or harm wild animals or their habitats or in any other way disturb wildlife.
- Do not damage or remove fixed natural objects or surface formations.
- Do not damage or remove fencing.
- Do not litter.
- Do not use radios, record players, or similar in a disturbing way.

Further information

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The name Schäferiängarna was first met in 1570 in a book written by the writer Carl Linnaeus’s travel Eyebright (Euphrasia stricta var. tenuis) to Öland in 1741. On earlier maps this part of Skogsgräset was referred to as Skogsgräsetsägen.

Västra mark and Håstinghagen

These western outfields towards Kalmarstunna were called Grythagen on old maps. Today, the area is divided into two pastures – Västra mark and Håstinghagen. Most of the western grassland and areas of shrubby cinquefoil are very old outfields that have been grazed continuously by cattle, sheep and horses.

Large parts of Västra mark and Håstinghagen consist of dry grassland with soft-brome, sheep’s-leaf and ribwort plantain as some of the dominant species. The grass Sesleria alismoides and shrubby cinquefoil grow in more moist areas. Other characteristic plants in Västra mark and Håstinghagen are green-winged orchid, military orchid, burnt orchid, saw-wort, fen violet and yellow oxytropis. Among the rarer plants are montia minor and common centaury.

Birds characteristic for the shrubby areas are mainly species such as linnet, red-backed shrake, common whitethroat and lesser whitethroat. Among the rarer birds are common rosefinch and barred warbler. Further south along the lighthouse the true avocet

Pied avocet (Recurvirostra avosetta)

The southern part of the grove Ottenby lund and part of the present day Västra mark pasture. Grazing animals were kept away until the hay had been cut and gathered in, and then let into Skogsgräset for after-grazing. Traditional meadow management was carried out on the northern parts of Schäferiängarna until the early 1940s. Thereafter, the areas used for hay started to diminish and in the 1960s, hay-making was stopped altogether. Schäferiängarna were instead used for grazing from early summer until late autumn. In 1988, hay-making and after-grazing were resumed on a small area in the northernmost parts of Schäferiängarna, and today an area of 55 hectares north of the Ängsvaktar-trail is cut and grazed. The hay meadow is highly species-rich and an area of 1 square metre can contain up to 40 species of herbs and grasses. Here you find species dependent on hay-making, such as the eyebright variety tenuis (Brenner) Kalas and grass-of-Parnassus. The meadows are highly important for birds, both as nesting and resting places. Schäferiängarna today contain some of Sweden’s largest and most species-rich populations of nesting waders, e.g. curlew, black-tailed godwit, common redshank and southern dunlin. The sandbank east of the Schäferiängarna meadows has one of the largest populations of pied avocet in Sweden. In late summer and autumn, the meadows change from nesting places to resting places – the first to arrive are the south-migrating arctic waders and later in autumn the arctic geese appear. On days with the “right” conditions, it’s possible to see flocks of several thousand birds.

The name Schäferiängarna was first mentioned in Carl Linnaeus’s travel

Grass of Parnassus (Parnassia palustris)