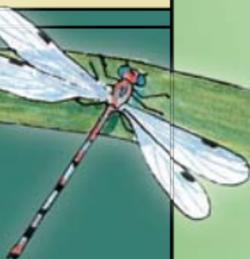


# Uutela Nature Trail

5



Luontopolut



## Welcome to Uutela!

Uutela is the largest and most naturally diversified recreational area in East Helsinki. It includes rugged glaciated rock formations, coastal scenes bordered by flood meadows and alder trees, forest and marshland, old summer houses, and the historically important features and grazing lands of Skata Farm.

### Uutela Nature Trail

The nature trail at Uutela consists of two walking tours of differing length forming a figure of 8 pattern. Visitors are free to follow either or both of these tours. The Forests and Grazing Lands of Uutela Tour is about 2,500 metres in length. You will find the starting point and information board for this tour by the roadside in Uutelantie. The Gloe Lakes and Flood Meadows Tour is about 1,500 metres long. The starting point for this tour is near the Särkkäniemi Nature Conservation Area car park. Most of the nature trail follows public footpaths. The route is signposted and marked with green and white ribbon. There are fifteen checkpoints along the route at locations indicated by numbered posts as shown in the picture to the right. You will find descriptions and explanations of these checkpoints in the following pages of this guidebook.

### What should I take on a nature trail?

Choose suitable outdoor clothing and footwear according to the weather. Although most of the nature trail is fairly easy to negotiate, there are also some more challenging stretches in tour 2 that are marked on the map on the following page of this guidebook.

The checkpoint descriptions include some simple nature trail exercises that may be fun to try, especially for children. You may find that binoculars and a notebook are helpful in completing these exercises, but such aids are not essential. The answers to specific exercise questions are given on the last page of this guidebook.

There are campfire shelters at Niemenapaja and Nuottaniemi where you may picnic in scenic surroundings.

### Some things to remember:

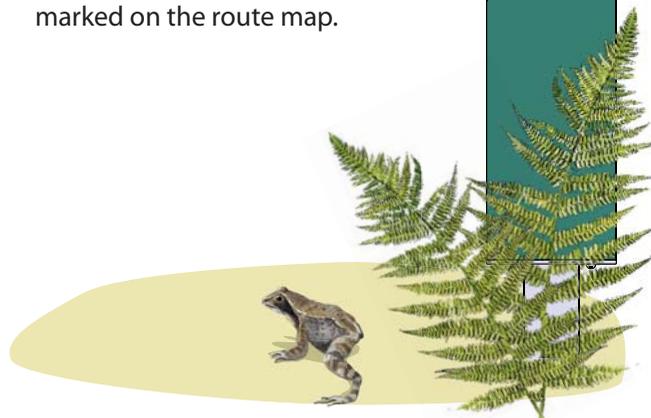
- Do not drop litter or otherwise damage the environment.
- Stay on the path, especially between April and July.
- Cycling is prohibited in the Särkkäniemi Nature Conservation Area.
- Fires may not be set except at the special camp fire shelters marked on the route map.

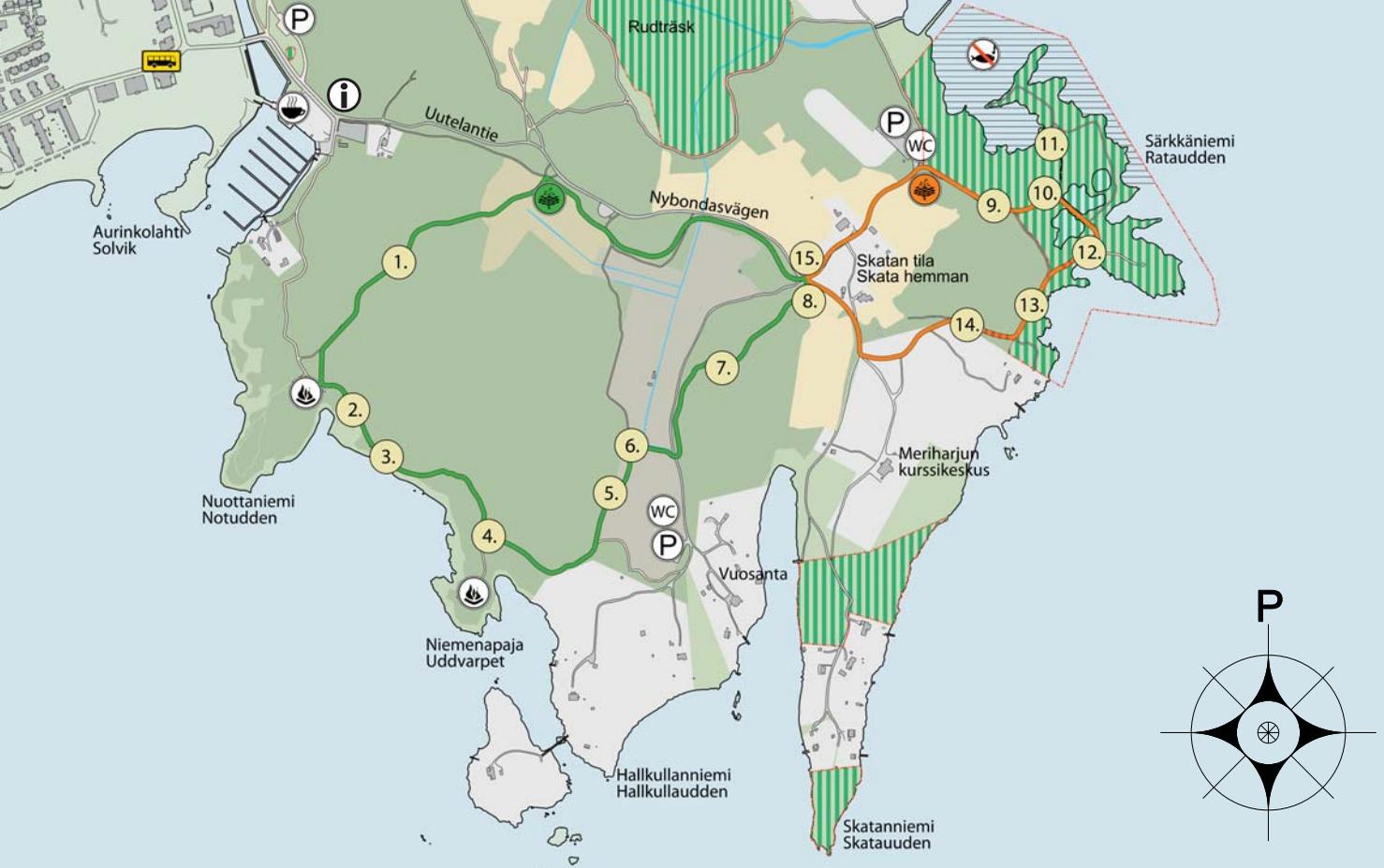


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## Uutela Nature Trail



Starting point for Nature Trail, route 1



Starting point for Nature Trail, route 2



Nature Trail,  
route 1



Nature Trail,  
route 2



Nature Trail Checkpoint



Uutela information board



Camp fire shelter



Car park



Toilets



Café



Fishing prohibited



Protected areas and important natural sites



## Welcome to the Paridae bird forest

You are surrounded here by bilberry forest and rocky pine stands. The most common kind of tree in bilberry forest is the spruce, which imposes greater demands on its location than the pine tree. Here you should be able to find plants that are typical of young coniferous forest areas: the twinflower and chickweed wintergreen are delicate species that follow the contours of the ground. The twinflower blooms in mid summer, while the chickweed wintergreen already flowers in the early summer.

This is an area where the environment has been preserved in an almost natural state.



**Twinflower**  
*Linnaea borealis*

Owing to the rocky terrain, logging was not commercially viable in this part of the formerly private forests of Vuosaari Manor. The forests elsewhere on the estate were logged and they are nowadays much younger than these rocky pine stands.

Utela is the largest continuous forest area in East Helsinki where bird species that prefer natural forest may be observed. Have you been lucky enough to see, or at least hear the noisy black woodpecker, the owl-like hooting of the wood pigeon, the gentle tree call of the tree creeper, or the ti-ti tsa tsa call of the willow tit?



**Willow tit**  
*Parus montanus*



**Chickweed wintergreen**  
*Trientalis europaea*



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## Stone against ice: a struggle of titans

More than ten thousand years ago this very spot was covered by an ice sheet almost one kilometre thick. The immensely strong bedrock was compressed and scraped by the colossal power of ice. The outcome was a smooth rockface leading to an impressive cliff face that the ice was unable to grind down.



**Green polypody**  
*Polypodium vulgare*

The rock of the cliff partly comprises dark gabbro, which occurs rarely in Finland. Gabbro is an alkaline rock that sustains growth on the cliff of normally fastidious ferns such as maidenhair spleenwort. There are gaps in the cliff where green polypody grows, even in the winter. Can you see it growing there now?



## Beach life

Any plant or small animal living on a coastline must be highly adaptable. It must withstand moisture, the baking, desiccating heat of the sun, and the impact of salty seawater. Shoreline plants need to be tough, with strong roots to prevent them from being carried away by waves, wind or ice.

Variations in sea level and wave conditions are constantly changing the appearance of the Nuottalahti shorelines. When the sea level is low you can search for seashells in the sand, while at high water it is a good time to observe the forms taken by rock faces. And who knows what delights the sea has washed up on the beach?

Have you spotted any diving ducks or elegant mute swans in the off shore waters? They come here to feed on seabed plants or to catch small fish. And if you are really lucky, then you might even catch a glimpse of a grey seal here!



### EXERCISE:

Can you draw a water bird in your notebook?



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Goosander  
*Mergus merganser*

## Death is a new beginning

Dead and decaying timber is vital to many organisms. Woodpeckers and certain Paridae birds are only too happy to fashion their nooks in softened wood. The owl, goldeneye duck and great tit use existing nooks for nesting, food storage and shelter from cold weather. Uutela has many old trees, dead and dried out pine, broken and rotting birch, and fallen, decaying spruce.

Fungi help timber to decay from the inside out. A study of the tree trunk shows which bracket or other fungus dwells within. It is easiest to find the conk of a well-developed bracket fungus that has been growing for many years, while young and soft bracket fungi can only be found in the autumn. Some bracket fungi are most particular in their choice of company, and only take up residence in the wake of another specific type of



**False tinder fungus**  
*Phellinus igniarius*

bracket fungus as “dessert” following the main course. The most common bracket fungi, such as red-belt fungus or tinder fungus, will attack any kind of tree, while rarer varieties only infect a certain species of timber such as spruce or aspen.



### EXERCISE:

*How many different types of bracket fungus can you spot? How many living species did you find on a single dead tree trunk?*

The path towards the cape leads to a resting spot where you are free to take a break to admire the sea view!



**Tawny owl**  
*Strix aluco*

## Farmers and burrowers

To the right of the trail you can see a valley that has been farmland for generations, but was originally shallow seabed. An uplifting of the clay soil in this area created a fertile area fortified with seabed nutrients. The area was farmed for some years before it passed into the hands of the Helsinki Worker's Institute students' association, and was parcelled out to allotment gardeners. The vegetables grown on these allotments were a welcome addition to the diet of many local people in the 1950s, when fresh vegetables were not always available in the shops. These 100 square metre patches are nowadays used for growing vegetables, berry bushes and ornamental plants.

There are some burrows in the ground on the left side of the trail. Badgers dug these holes using the long claws of their forepaws. The burrows have

also been occupied by raccoon dogs. In larger dens of this kind a raccoon dog can live in the upper levels while a badger dwells below. The allotments and ditches provide a source of food for both types of animal. Badgers like to eat roots, earthworms and berries, while the omnivorous raccoon dog is happy with almost anything edible, ranging from frogs to the pickings of human refuse.



### **SOMETHING TO THINK ABOUT:**

*What would you like to grow if you were an allotment holder here?*



**Badger**  
*Meles meles*



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## Visitors displace locals

This area has also become a new home for uninvited guests that are difficult to evict. Alien species like the giant hogweed or the rabbit may be pretty to look at, but they can cause a lot of damage to the indigenous environment. Other invaders that have settled in Finland include the raccoon dog that spread into Finland from Russia, the mute swan brought from China, mink that have escaped from fur farms, and the Canada goldenrod formerly cultivated only in gardens. Alien species are disruptive, because they are not held in check by natural

predators, and their consequent rapid spread denies living space to indigenous plants and animals.

The fragrant Himalayan balsam is another invasive variety encountered here. This plant has spread from gardens and allotments into surrounding uncultivated areas. It thrives in lush, damp environments such as groves, ditches and the fluffy soils of spruce mires.

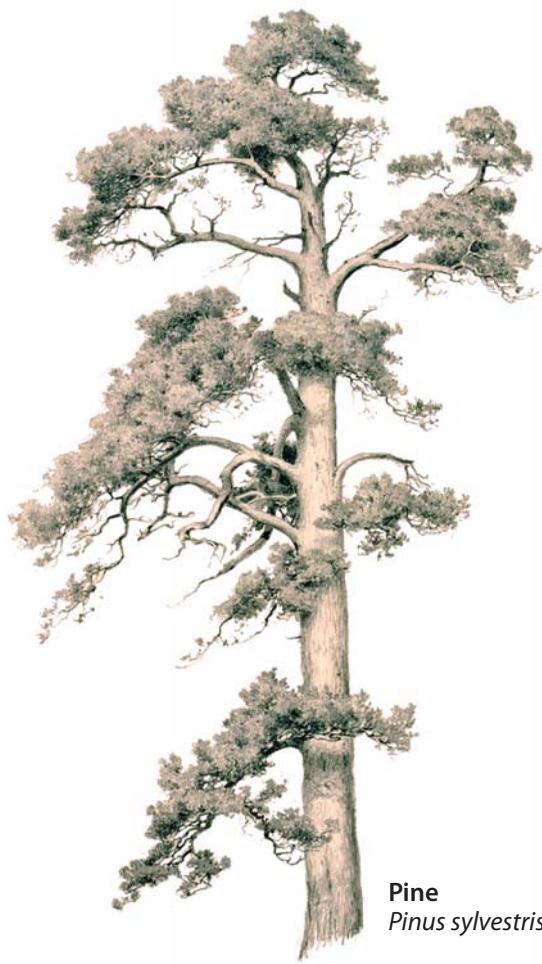


**Raccoon dog**  
*Nyctereutes procyonoides*

**Himalayan balsam**  
*Impatiens glandulifera*

## The old Scots pine has seen it all

I have been growing here since the birth of Alexander II, Czar of Russia and Grand Duke of Finland, nearly 200 years ago. I am proud of my advanced age, and of the thickness and beauty of my shield bark compared to younger pine trees. Over the years I have seen all manner

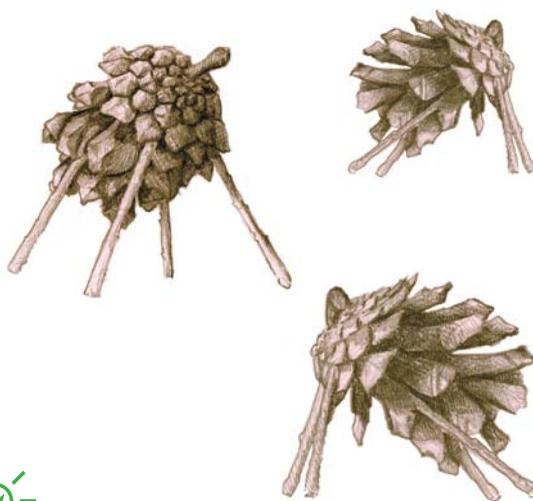


Pine  
*Pinus sylvestris*

Eero Järnefelt: Pine sketch

of things come to pass. The valley spread out before me has always been farmed, but in my youth it was a place for growing rye, as well as long grass in damper areas to make hay for draught oxen.

When the Russians bombed the almost uninhabited district of Vuosaari in 1944 I thought I would soon be reduced to cinders. Helsinki city centre escaped damage by an organized widespread blackout, while fires were lit in Vuosaari to mislead the bomber pilots. Luckily I escaped the flames at that time, because only nowadays could my shield bark survive the heat of a major fire.



### EXERCISE:

*Why not make some toy sheep out of pinecones with sticks for legs, the way children used to do? You can also use smaller sticks for the horns on the head of a ram.*



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## The call of history

The view from here is of a rural landscape fashioned over the centuries. This area was forest before the arrival of man. The newcomers cleared the forest initially to create fields for crops, and later used the land for animal grazing. Without this use for grazing, the open landscape would soon take on the appearance of a coppice before finally reverting to forest once again.

But why is there a heap of stones in the field? Before the age of heavy machinery, lumps of stone were lifted from the ground by hand and carried to these piles in horse-drawn barrows! Hay was cut from the field with scythes, and if the blade struck a stone, then it would lose its edge. This made it important to clear the stones away.

The fields of Mustiala Institute. I. K. Inha, Finnish agriculture, 1899. (Detail)



The buildings of Skata Farm at the crossroads date from the late 19th century. These were self-sufficient times, when grain and vegetables were grown locally and fish were caught in local waters.

The farm would probably have a draught horse, with a few dairy cows, some pigs and some chickens. After the wars the horse was replaced by a tractor, the meadows became grain fields and cattle were no longer kept.

This is the end of the first tour of the nature trail. You may continue on the second tour through Särkkäniemi Nature Conservation Area, or return to the starting point. You will find answers to the exercises on page 15 of the checkpoint descriptions.



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## Bats abound

Bats are the nocturnal predators of coastal woodlands, devouring insects in huge quantities on warm summer nights. Uutela is a good place to see the swift-flying northern bat, which is well adapted to urban environments, as well as the whiskered bat that prefers a forest life, and the water bat that preys along shorelines.

These bats can cover quite considerable distances in dry weather under cover of darkness, provided that the night temperature does not fall below about five degrees Celsius. During the colder months they hibernate in cool, dark and enclosed places such as cellars. Some species even migrate south for the winter. Bats also favour the roof spaces of old buildings. If size and conditions

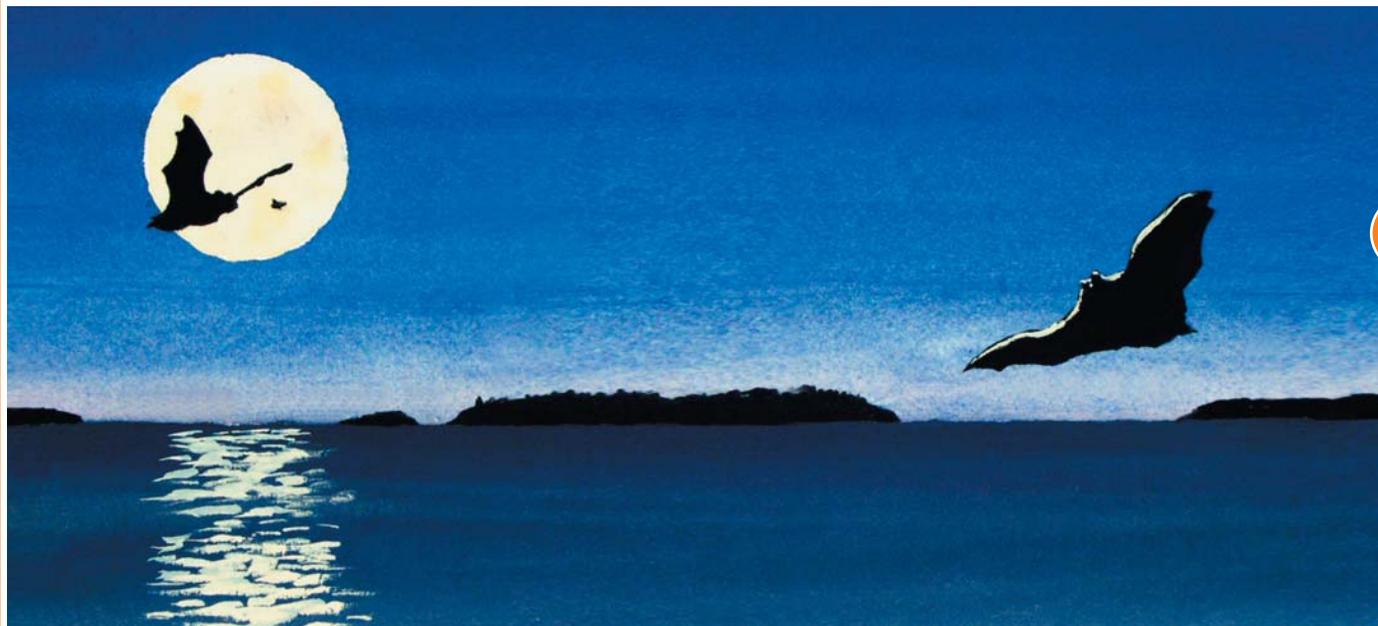
permit, they may also nest together in sizeable colonies.

You can help bats by building a bat box where bats can sleep by day without fear of owls, cats or other predators.



### EXERCISE:

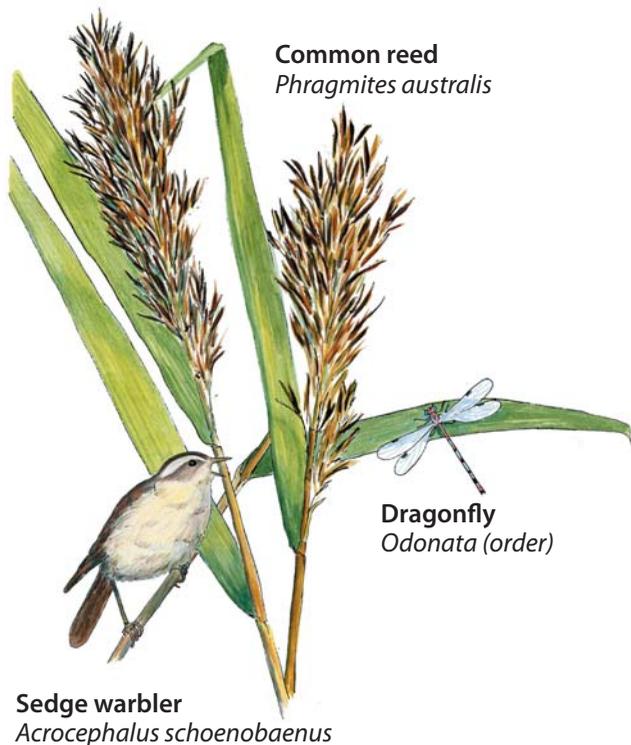
*Have you ever seen a bat? Can you find the bat box near the checkpoint?*



## The coastal lagoons and gloe lakes of Uutela

On both sides of the trail you can see a speciality of Uutela: coastal lagoons and gloe lakes. The slow uplifting of land following the last ice age creates shallow coastal lagoons. If a sandbank forms at the entrance to the bay, then the bay will gradually constrict forming a gloe lake or pond that is only linked to the sea during high water. This gloe lake will subsequently dry out to form an open flood meadow that gradually gives way to forest.

The southern gloe lake is hidden under vegetation. This is usually common reed together with the rarer sea club-rush with its characteristic



3-angled stem. The distinct crackly call of the sedge warbler clearly indicates that this bird enjoys the shelter of the reedbed in early summer.

Male frogs call the females to the pond during the spawning season in spring. Can you hear them croaking? The female selects the male that fertilises the spawn that she deposits in the water. The eggs then hatch into tadpoles that remain in the pond as they grow into tiny frogs. It's OK to look at these creatures, but you mustn't touch them, as frogs and their spawn are protected by law.

Dragonflies sparkle like jewels as they dart here and there. These advanced flying skills are essential, as dragonflies prey on smaller flying insects. Their larvae also terrorise the underwater environment, where they feed on a wide variety of small creatures.

You will find checkpoint 11 by turning round and retracing your steps for a short distance.



**Frog**  
*Rana temporaria*



### EXERCISE:

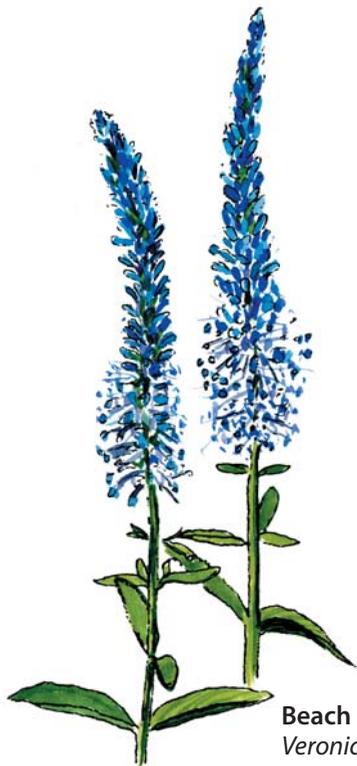
Close your eyes and count how many distinct natural sounds you can hear. Where are these sounds coming from?

Any children in your group might enjoy singing the frog song *We all stand together!*

## Desperately seeking salt

The Uutela coastlines are stony, and the flood meadow is only a narrow strip of land. The plants that grow near the water's edge in seacoast flood meadows are typically saltmarsh rush, seaside arrowgrass and centaurium. These species are known as halophytes or salt plants, as they cannot survive without a high salt content in the soil. The salinity of the Baltic Sea diminishes in the more remote reaches of the Gulf of Finland and the Gulf of Bothnia, which makes it harder for halophytes to grow in these areas.

The short, yellow birdsfoot trefoil grows in coastal sands and meadows, and flowers in June-July. Birdsfoot trefoil is not just a coastal plant, but also occurs on roadsides and railway



Beach speedwell  
*Veronica longifolia*

- 26 -

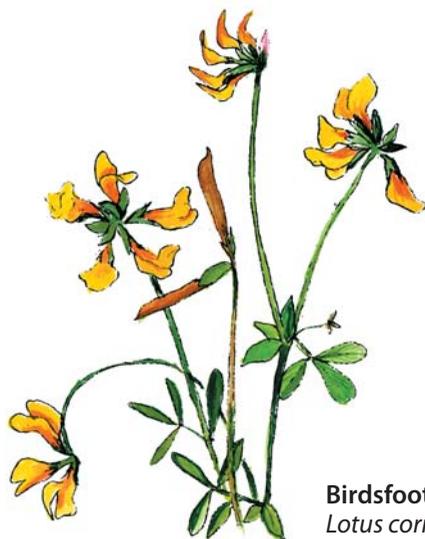
embankments, and on gravel ridges in southern Finland. Beach speedwell is a handsome plant with blue, spike-shaped flowers that you will find growing on the shorelines of Särkkäniemi together with chives, the smallest species in the onion family.

You are free to take a closer look at the natural wonders of this coastal area by continuing along this path and rejoining the nature trail a little further along. Please note, however, that the beach path can be wet in places and part of the route passes over duckboards.



### EXERCISE:

Can you estimate the salt content of seawater off the coast of Helsinki?



Birdsfoot trefoil  
*Lotus corniculatus*

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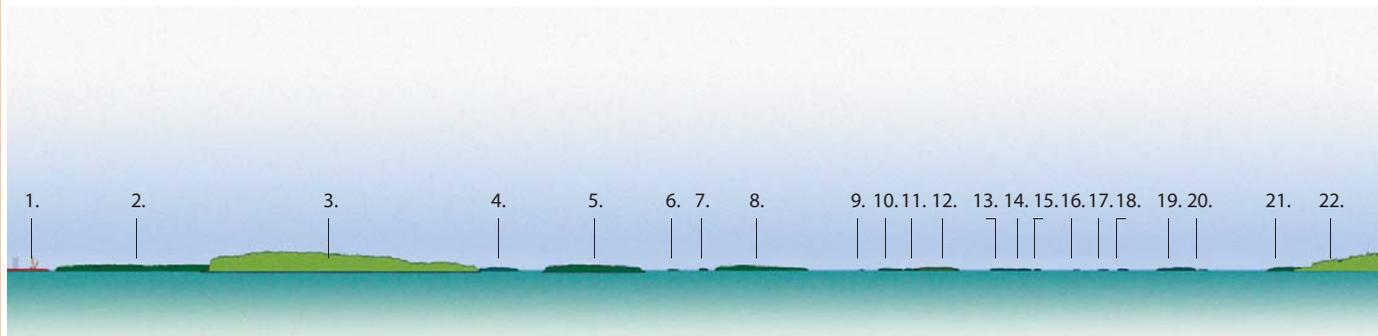
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## Wide-open spaces

The sea view across Skatanselkä from this checkpoint stretches all the way to the islands of Musta Hevonen and Kuiva Hevonen. This coastline varies daily according to wave conditions and the southwesterly wind. The view is greyish in overcast weather, whereas the reflected glare from the sea on sunny days makes the islands appear almost black by contrast. What colours dominate the landscape today?

Storms pile up large quantities of bladder wrack seaweed on the shore in autumn. Bladder wrack is packed with nutrients and provides an excellent substrate for many plants that thrive in salty conditions. The seaweed pile also provides a diversified micro-environment populated by small arthropods e.g. midges: a world within a world.



### EXERCISE:

- 1) Can you identify and name the islands that are visible from here?
- 2) Take a pebble from the beach and feel it in your hand. Is the surface rough or smooth?



Bladder wrack  
*Fucus vesiculosus*



## Shoals beneath the waves

A pike lurks by the shore waiting to pounce on passing minnows. Striped perch fry are swimming together with eyes peeled for predators. Farther out to sea herring and sprat are moving in a large shoal. Freshwater perch and seawater herring can come into contact off the coast at Uutela. Such encounters are possible because the brackish water of the Baltic Sea is a halfway house for both species.

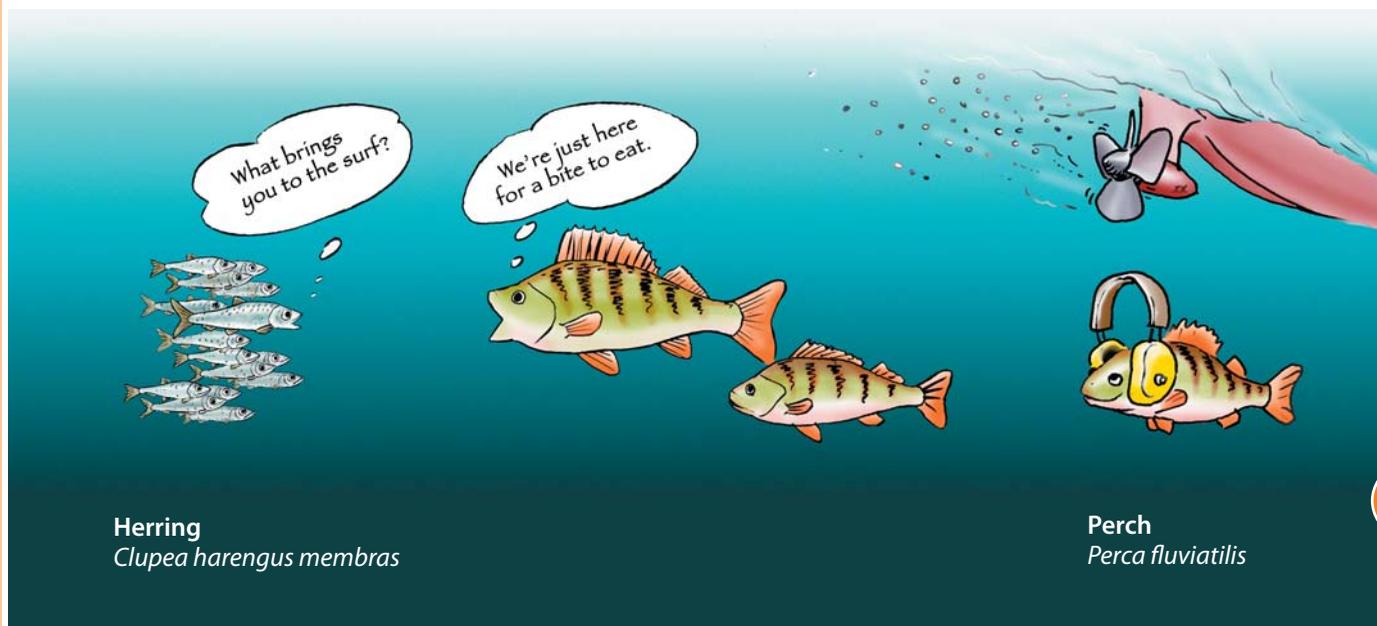
The sea here is also home to whitefish and salmon. Although both of these predatory fish species are native to the Gulf of Finland, much of the present stock has been specially bred for planting. Artificial restocking of fish has become necessary, because natural spawning is no longer successful in many river locations.



### EXERCISE:

*Imagine that you are a fish swimming in the surf. What do the ships visiting Vuosaari Harbour look like from your fish-eye point of view? How do you think the propellers of small motor boats and large freighters sound to the ears of a fish?*

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Herring  
*Clupea harengus membras*

Perch  
*Perca fluviatilis*

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## By the dusky light of a spruce mire

Spruce mires form when coniferous forest becomes waterlogged. This process begins when more water collects in low-lying areas than can flow away or evaporate. A spruce mire will then form when there is plentiful vegetation and moving, acidic water. Many fastidious plant species thrive in these areas.

As plants with a high tolerance of shade and excess water, spruce trees are quite comfortable under such conditions. They effectively overshadow and smother other types of tree that require more light.

Peikko: Klampe-Lampe. John Bauer, 1909

This is what often gives spruce mires their dusky and enchanted atmosphere. How easily can you imagine a gnome or elf peeping out from behind a spruce tree?



### EXERCISE:

*Can you remember any songs about elves and gnomes that live in the forest?*



## Thanks for coming!

The nature trail ends here. We hope your visit was rewarding! You can return from here to the starting point at the Särkkäniemi parking area, or head towards Aurinkolahti to find the start of the second nature trail tour. More energetic visitors may also head for Skatanniemi cape to admire its splendid glaciated rock formations and sea view. This also provides an opportunity to view some fortification equipment dating from the First World War.

**We hope to see you again!**

### Answers to exercises

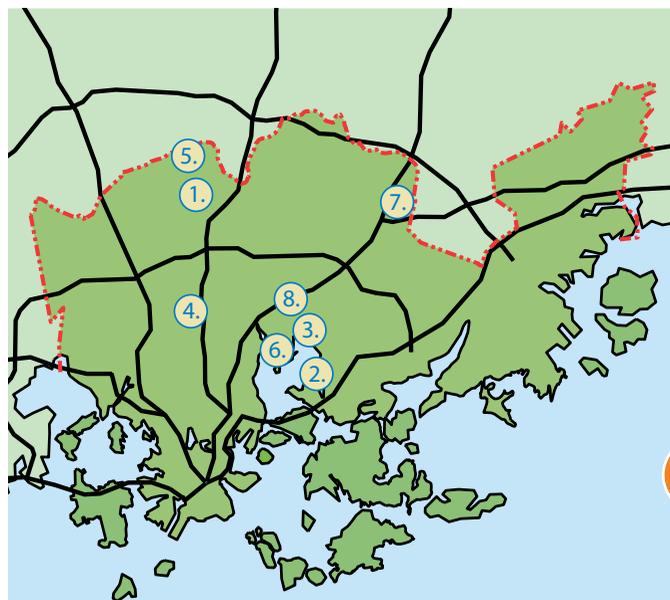
11. The salt content of seawater off the coast of Helsinki varies between 4 and 7 parts per thousand. This is roughly 4 to 7 teaspoons of salt per five litre of water.
12. Names of the islands and features visible from checkpoint 12:
  1. Vuosaari Harbour
  2. Mölandet
  3. Pikku Niinisaari (Lilla Bastön)
  4. Skogsholmen
  5. Krokholmen
  6. Krokholmshället
  7. Tallholmen
  8. Svarta Hästen (Musta-Hevonen)
  9. Pentarn
  10. Handskholmen (Hanskinen)
  11. Torrhästklobbarna
  12. Torra Hästen (Kuiva-Hevonen)
  13. Estlotan (Eestiluoto)
  14. Träsklandet
  15. Granlandet
  16. Itätoukki (Östertokan)
  17. Kuminapaasi (Kumminhället)

18. Tammaluoto (Märaskrinet)
19. Pihlajaluoto (Rönnskär)
20. Nuottakari (Notgrundet)
21. Iso Leikosaari (Stora Lekholmen)
22. Skatanniemi (Skataudden)

### Other nature trails in Helsinki:

1. Haltiala
2. Kivinokan Puumerkkipolku
3. Viikarien Viikki, lasten luontopolku
4. Maunula
5. Niskala arboretum
6. Pornaistenniemi
7. Slättmossen)
8. Viikki arboretum

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**NATURE TRAIL 1:**  
The Forests and Grazing Lands of Uutela

**NATURE TRAIL 2:**  
The Gloe Lakes\* and Flood Meadows

\*The Gloe lakes are a coastal lagoon separated from the ocean by a natural earth bank. Salt water may enter the lagoon during high seas. The Gloe lakes are formed as the land rises from the sea.

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City of Helsinki  
**Public Works Department**  
(09) 310 39000

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