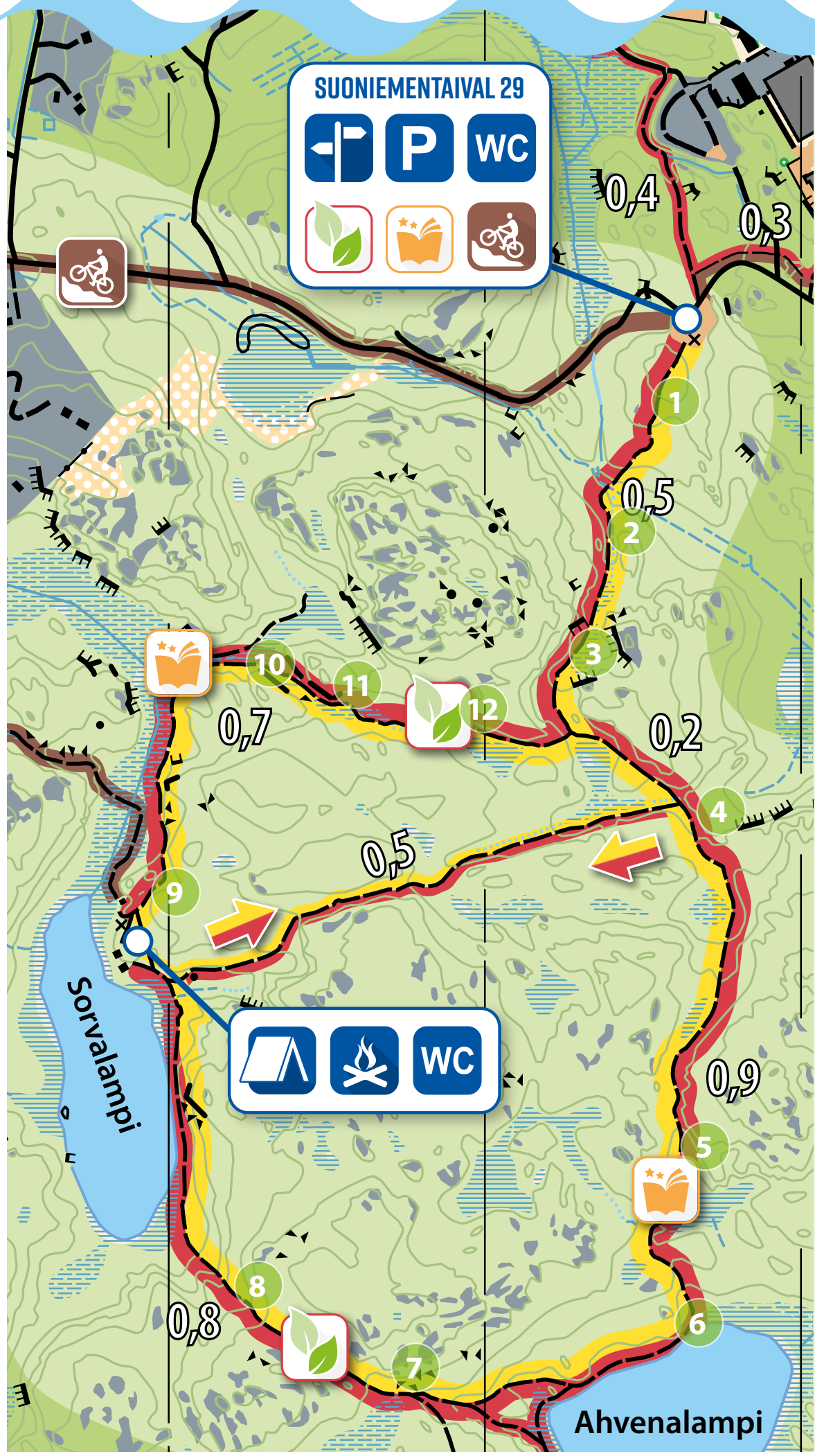
Nature trail in Karnaistenkorpi



1. *Kaistenkorpi – forest heartlands*
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Nature trail in Karnaistenkorpi

Lue lisää Karnaistenkorvesta!
More information in English.

LOHJA
Lake town

The forests in Karnaistenkorpi have been left to grow in peace into diverse natural woodlands that serve as habitats for numerous species.

Photos: Laura Ahopelto

Karnaistenkorpi - forest heartlands

Karnaistenkorpi is one of the largest continuous forested areas in Lohja. Its nature is rich and diverse. Along the nature trail, you will see majestic spruce forests, wooded mires, rocky forests and small ponds.

These different habitats have supported the development of local biodiversity from plants to mammals. The area is also home to many endangered species like European crested tit (Lophophanes cristatus) and Siberian flying squirrel (Pteromys volans), and many others.

Stay sharp in the forest – you may not be able to see or hear many of the animals, but they will be observing every passer-by.

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Kuva: Janne Mankinen / Vastavalo.net

Broadleaved trees and their inhabitants

Can you hear the sighing of aspen? Can you smell the leaves of birch?

In biodiverse forests, coniferous trees are accompanied by large aspens, birches and other broadleaved trees. These trees are important for many forest species, who nest or find their food in them.

The wide-eyed **Siberian flying squirrels** (Pteromys volans) favour aspen. They typically nest in holes carved by great spotted woodpeckers (Dendrocopos major). The flying squirrels are also fine with the stick nests of common tree squirrels, usually found in spruce trees. The flying squirrels usually eat buds and leaves of aspen and alder. They move by gliding from tree to tree.

Did you know that flying squirrels are nocturnal animals and only rarely seen during the day? New mothers and offspring may be seen during the daytime in the spring and summer, as these are busy times for nesting and learning.

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Polypores *and* ***other fungi*** *serve an important purpose in the forest ecosystem by breaking down and recycling wood.*

Broadleaved trees add to the biodiversity of the forests.

Photos: Laura Ahopelto

What does a biodiverse forest look like?

As you look around, you can find many signs of biodiversity that will indicate a rich forest in a nearly-natural state.

First, you will notice the large spruce trees, dotted by broadleaved trees. The rocks will have some old pines growing on them, covered in thick bark. Next, you may see fallen or standing decayed trees. Old forests have a thick and soft moss layer on the forest floor, inviting travellers to take a load off their feet.

In Karnaistenkorpi, some of the trees are more than a century old. The old trees are accompanied by younger trees, waiting for their day high in the sun. Dead trees leave behind decaying wood, ensuring that the forest's natural cycle can continue. Decaying wood is an important seedbed for many forest organisms such as fungi, mosses and insects, which in turn feed other forest organisms.

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The cep *is one of the most delicious mushrooms found in Finnish forests. A slug has had its fill of this one.*

Bumblebees *are nature's essential workers. They pollinate different plants.*

Photos: Laura Ahopelto, Hannu Huovila / Vastavalo.net

Berries and mushrooms

Late in the summer, the forests are full of pickers looking for berries and mushrooms. The best spots are closely guarded secrets, of course, but rest assured that you can pick your bucket full of blueberries, trumpet chanterelles (Cantharellus cibarius) and even ceps (Boletus edulis) in Karnaistenkorpi.

Anything left behind by people is never wasted, as many forest species will happily eat berries and mushrooms. For example, the black grouse (Lyrurus tetrix) eats blueberries, and squirrels and deers will snack on mushrooms.

Did you know that pollinating insects are vital for forests as well?
Without pollinators, blueberry flowers will not bear fruit.

Nature trail in Karnaistenkorpi

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A bright red lower belly and back of the head are characteristic of male great spotted woodpeckers, one of the most common species of woodpecker.

A tree pecked by a woodpecker.

Photos: Janne Kekäläinen / Vastavalo.net, Lohjan ympäristönsuojelu

Woodpeckers

The forest is full of birds. Even when we can't see any, their songs can be heard throughout the forest, especially in the spring. Apart from sound, other signs of birdlife can be found in different parts of the forest. Have you seen marks left by woodpeckers on the trees of Karnaistenkorpi?

Woodpeckers typically make a nest by carving a hole into a tree such as an old aspen rotted by the aspen bracket. They find their insect meals by pecking on decayed wood.

Did you know that each species of woodpecker has a distinctive striking sound and strike pattern? The **great spotted woodpecker** (Dendrocopos major) pecks on the trunk systematically, row by row. The **three-toed woodpecker** (Picoides tridactylus) likes to peel back spruce bark to reach the tasty treats lurking inside the trunk. The **white-backed woodpecker** (Dendrocopos leucotos) leaves a deep conical hole. The **black woodpecker** (Dryocopus martius) is the fiercest and may completely shred part of the trunk.

Nature trail in Karnaistenkorpi

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Ahvenalampi is surrounded by a lush green swamp in the summer.

*The **black-throated diver** (Gavia arctica) and the **red-throated diver** (Gavia stellate) look very similar, but can be distinguished by their necks.*

***Grass snakes** (natrix natrix) can be identified by the yellow colour of their neck. Did you know that grass snakes can swim?*

Photos: Lohjan ympäristönsuojelu, Henri Koskinen / Vastavalo.net , Janne Kekäläinen / Vastavalo.net

Ponds and their banks teem with life

Karnaistenkorpi has two ponds, and you are currently looking upon Ahvenalampi.

This is a barren wilderness pond with a maximum depth of only two metres. The pond is vital for many inhabitants of the Karnaistenkorpi woods.

In the summer, you can sometimes spot **red-throated divers** (Gavia stellate) swimming along its surface. The pond is surrounded by a swampy strip that is teeming with life. The pungent smell of the **marsh tea** also known as **wild rosemary** (Rhododendron tomentosum) is a familiar one in Finnish nature. Other summer guests include grass snakes and common lizards enjoying the sun on the shores of the pond, and butterflies flitting from flower to flower.

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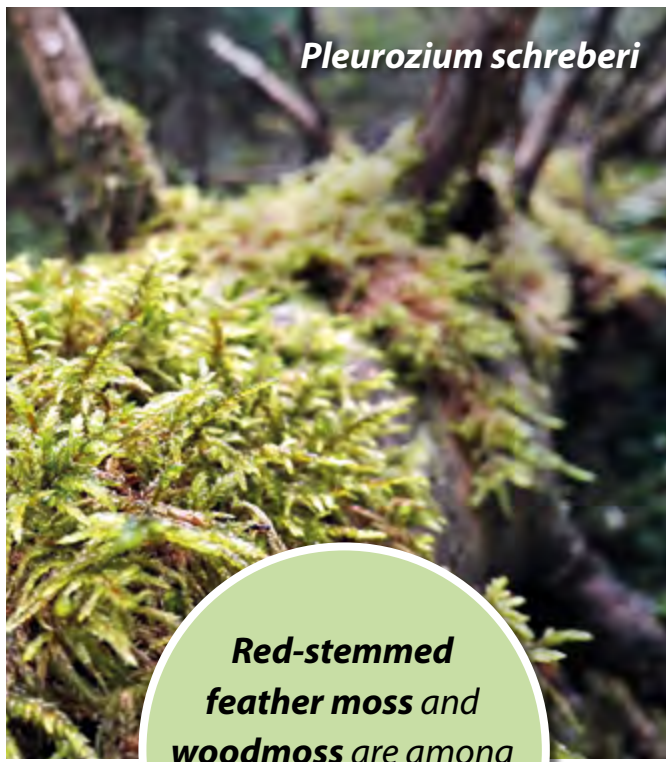
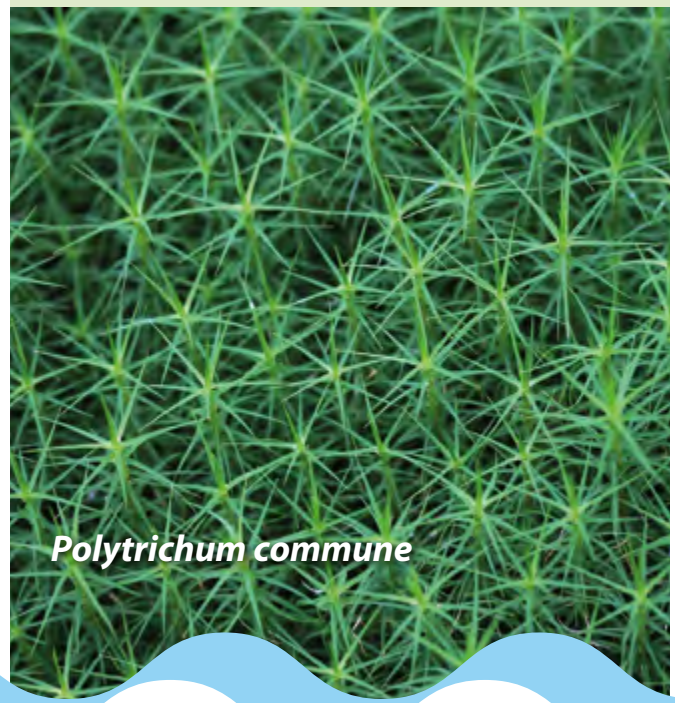


Red-stemmed feather moss *and* ***woodmoss*** *are among the most common in Finland's forests.*

Common haircap moss *and* ***sphagnum moss*** *tell-tale signs of formation of peatland.*



These mosses are usually found only in old forests.

Soft forest floors

The forest floor is covered in a colourful layer of moss.
In time, the mosses will grow over fallen trees and rock faces as well.

Mosses come in many shapes and colours. They each indicate the local nutrient and moisture levels. Mosses perform many functions important for the whole ecosystem. For example, they retain water and become new soil as they turn into peat. Sphagnum moss plays a particularly vital role: bogs covered in it are significant carbon sinks.

Squat and see the fine detail of the world of mosses!

Nature trail in Karnaistenkorpi

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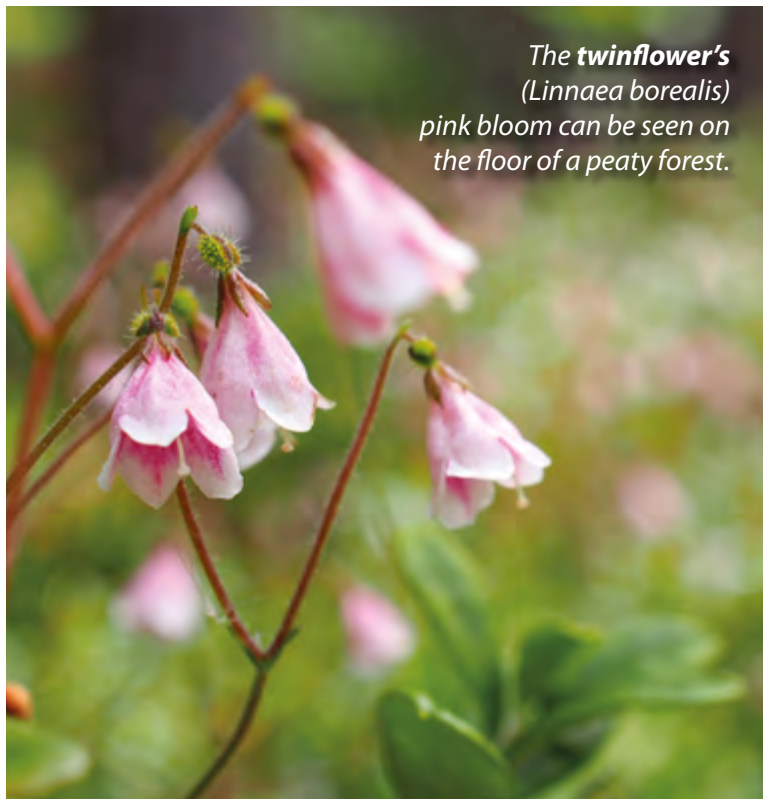

*The **twinflower's** (Linnaea borealis) pink bloom can be seen on the floor of a peaty forest.*

*The **marsh tea** (Rhododendron tomentosum) is a strong-smelling plant typically found in pine mires. It is easy to identify by its needle-shaped leaves and woody stem.*

*The **beech fern** (Phegopteris connectilis) grows in spruce mires. Its most distinctive features include a sturdy stem and characteristic leaf shape.*

***The bogbean** (Menyanthes trifoliate) grows in wet locations, including pond shores and mires. It is easy to identify by its three leaves.*

*The **herb-paris** (Paris quadrifolia) grows in herb-rich forests and can be identified easily by its four large leaves. Note that it is poisonous.*

*The **common heather** (Calluna vulgaris) grows in rocky forests, and its flowers are violet.*

Photos: Laura Ahopelto

Plants tell a story

Plants indicate the local biotope – from peaty and herb-rich forests to mires. Each biotope has a distinctive flora that forms and grows according to the available light, moisture and nutrients.

Many plants are easy to identify, even without their flowers. The most important characteristics include the leaves, growth habit and natural site of the plant.

Can you identify the species in the pictures?
How many of them can you spot along the trail?

Nature trail in Karnaistenkorpi

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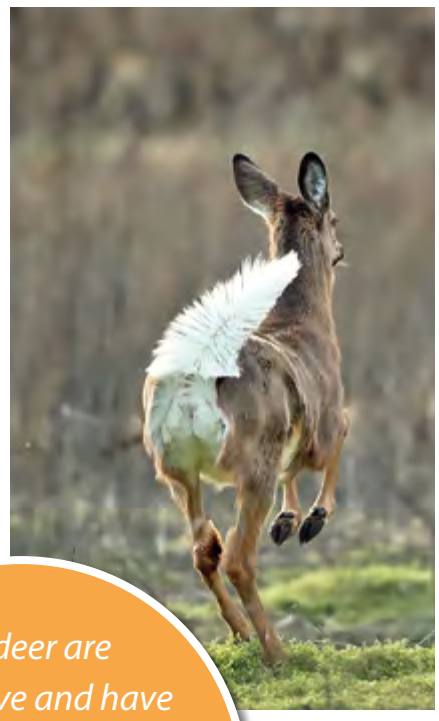
Spotting a lynx with its tufted ears is extremely rare, but paw prints are easier to find.



Roe deer are diminutive and have almost no tail.

The long tails of white-tailed deer make them easy to identify.

Bulls, male elk, grow antlers.

Photos: Niko Pekonen / Vastavalo.net, Pixabay CC BY-NC 2.0, Tom Murray / Flickr CC BY-NC 2.0 • Illustration: Milja Viljamaa / MiljART Oy

Horns and paw prints

Very lucky hikers may catch a glimpse of one of our larger animals in Karnaistenkorpi, such as an elk or even a lynx.

Elks (Alces alces) are the largest mammals in Finland. Fully adorned with antlers, bulls reach well above two metres in height and can weigh as much as a small car! Smaller horned animals in Karnaistenkorpi include the **roe deer** (Capreolus capreolus) and the **white-tailed deer** (Odocoileus virginianus). The white-tailed deer is the larger of the two with a longer tail – it is also an invasive species, not native to Finland.

Karnaistenkorpi is known to host some **lynx** (Lynx lynx), but like all cats, they move silently and stay out of sight, avoiding the paths of people. Their presence is easiest to detect in snowy winters from their paw prints.

Nature trail in Karnaistenkorpi

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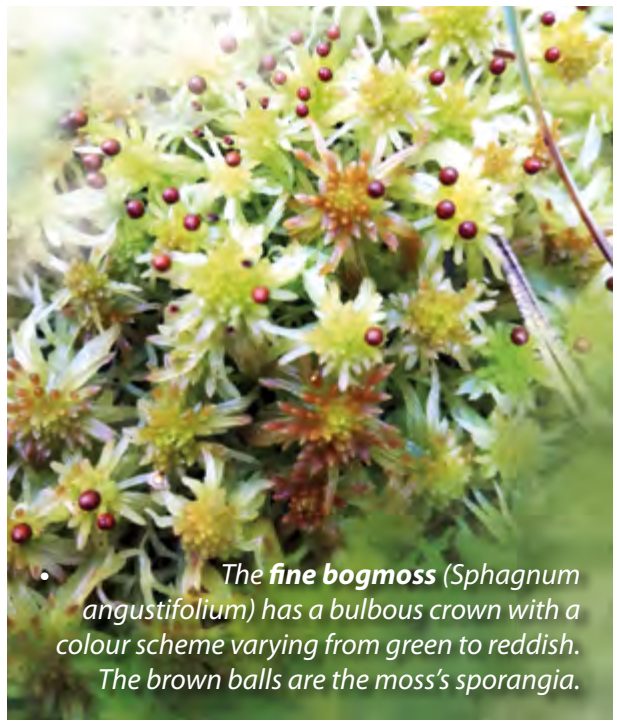
These kind of spruce mires can be found in many places in Karnaistenkorpi.



The **fine bogmoss** (Sphagnum angustifolium) has a bulbous crown with a colour scheme varying from green to reddish. The brown balls are the moss's sporangia.

The **common green peat moss** (Sphagnum girgensohnii) is green and has a star-shaped crown.

In Karnaistenkorpi small pine mires can be found near the ponds.

Photos: Laura Ahopelto

Mires in forests

Many places in the forests will have little mires like the one you see before you. Forming in rock depressions and brook valleys, these mires are part of the ecosystem and important for biodiversity, as they offer various habitats to different species.

There are many different types of mires in Finland which differ, for example, by their nutrient level, types of dominant trees, vegetation and moss layer.

Most of the mires in Karnaistenkorpi are dominated by spruce or broadleaved trees and include herbaceous species such as **bogbean** (Menyanthes trifoliate), **bog arum** (Calla palustris) and **heath spotted orchid** (Dactylorhiza maculate).
The other typical kind of mires are nutrient-poor, usually dominated by pine, and the most common plants are variety of dwarf shrubs such as **marsh tea** (Rhododendron tomentosum) and **bog whortleberry** (Vaccinium uliginosum).

Other mire types include nutrient-rich fens and treeless fens. All different mire types have their typical species of sphagnum moss, which indicate the mire's nutrient content.

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The cracks in the rock are the cleavage planes. When aligned and regular, the cracks form a fracture set, as seen in this rock face.

The rock has fractured in angular pieces.

Photos: Lohjan ympäristönsuojelu, Oona Hillgen

Rocks and cliffs

Signs of the previous ice age can be seen in Karnaistenkorpi.

The complex terrain of the area is the result of weathering and erosion, as well as ice streams from ice sheets carving out the valleys. The nature trail features hilly and rocky terrain, and the area has a fracture line crossing from northeast to southwest, which is manifested as ponds and steep-walled valleys.

The nearby rock face has a web made up of squares and rectangles of different sizes. This type of fracture is common in bedrock, but rarely is it as regular as in the rock seen here.

Nature trail in Karnaistenkorpi

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Photos: Oona Hillgen, Lohjan kaupunki

Karnaistenkorpi

as part of an ecological network

Many places in Karnaistenkorpi let you forget that the forest is located on top of a highway. Things are quiet in the small valleys among the rocks and trees, and this natural peace is enjoyed by people and numerous animals alike.

The forests of Karnaistenkorpi are an important part of the ecological network in Lohja and the whole Uusimaa region. Large forests and connecting wooded corridors are the skeleton of the ecological network. A functional and well-connected ecological network supports biodiversity by allowing different species to spread to different areas in search of new habitats. Many species also pass through the forests of Karnaistenkorpi to west and east.

The integrity of this ecological network is threatened in many places by the construction of buildings and roads. This is why extensive forested areas like Karnaistenkorpi, including their ecological corridors, should be conserved.

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