

Press release from Protect the Forest, Sweden, 6 Sep 2016:

## International experts condemn Swedish forestry

**The image of Sweden as a global sustainable forestry leader got shattered when scientists, forest experts and representatives from environmental NGOs from Russia, Finland and the UK visited threatened natural forests in Vildmarksriket (the Wilderness Empire) and Ore Skogsrike (Ore Forest Empire) in Dalarna in Sweden last week. The Swedish forests turned out to be overexploited from an ecological point of view. The pressure on the Swedish forests grows due to an increasing demand for bioenergy and so called sustainable forest products in consumer countries like the U.K. and Germany.**

Some of Europe's largest forest companies and exporters of forest products come from Sweden, such as SCA, Stora Enso, Sveaskog and Holmen Skog. More than half of the Swedish forest land is FSC-certified, which intends to guarantee that old-growth forests and environments for endangered species are protected and that the forestry is sustainable and shows consideration for e.g. water, biodiversity, climate and social values.

Experts and representatives from Russia, Finland and the UK were traveling by car through heavily exploited Swedish forest landscapes where plantations and young production forests had replaced the natural forest. The purpose was to travel to two areas where a larger proportion of the landscape consists of high conservation value forests. The natural forest at Brännvinsberget, which is included in the Ore Skogsrike, is planned to be felled by the state-owned and FSC-certified forest company Sveaskog, although the area is a habitat for a wide range of red-listed species. Local conservationists have found over 40 different so-called indicator species in the area, that is, species that indicate that the forest has high conservation values.

Olli Turunen, forest expert from the nature conservation organization FANC in Finland:

"In Sweden, forests are being logged that already 20 years ago would have been protected as reserves on the same latitude in Finland. The Swedish FSC-certified forest companies seem to be unable to recognize and protect high conservation value forests. In Finland, we have the expression "jopa sokea kana näkee sen perssilmällään," which in this context means that even a blind man can see that these are areas with high conservation values and they must be protected."

The nature conservation expert Olga Iljina from the organization SPOK in Russian Karelia:

"The Swedish law and the protection of species and their habitats appear very dim in the light of that it is allowed to destroy such valuable forests as we have seen examples of here in Dalarna. The Swedish forestry model is promoted as the best and the most sustainable in the world, but not even red-listed species linked to this type of habitat has a strict legal protection in Sweden."

Vildmarksriket and Ore Skogsrike are two forest landscapes below the montane region which have unusually high concentrations of high conservation value forests in Sweden. This is why experts suggest that these forest areas are especially important to protect as reference areas and functional nature. The experts are upset that Sweden is not even capable of protecting the most high conservation value landscapes, habitats and species.

Anastasiya Philippova, nature conservation expert from NeoEcoProject in the Russian Leningrad region said:

"The visited forest areas Ore Skogsrike and Vildmarksriket, whose conservation values have already been identified by Swedish nature conservation experts and scientists, must definitely be excluded from forestry and appropriate measures must be taken in order to ensure long-term protection. There is still a threat to unprotected high conservation value forests in Sweden, but strangely enough also to certain voluntary set aside areas that are exempt from forestry today. It is shocking that even voluntary set aside areas, within the framework of the FSC, can be replaced and logged at any time. This must be investigated and adjusted."

The use and demand of so called biofuels from the forest is increasing. Swedish forest companies guarantee that these products come from sustainable forestry. This claim is questioned by the participants on the excursion in the Swedish forest.

Mark Olden from the UK environmental organization Fern said:

"Dalarna's remaining patches of old growth forest are under intense threat, with precious habitats and rare species being destroyed. The reality on the ground is far from the model of sustainable forestry that industry promotes. Forests which are already overburdened by the demands of the pulp and paper market will be threatened further if they are cleared to meet the EU's growing demand for bioenergy."

### Contact:

Olli Turunen (Finland): [olli.turunen@sil.fi](mailto:olli.turunen@sil.fi)

Olga Iljina (Russia): [olga.spok@gmail.com](mailto:olga.spok@gmail.com)

Anastasiya Philippova (Russia): [zhmugedra@gmail.com](mailto:zhmugedra@gmail.com)

Viktor Säfve (Sweden): [viktor.safve@skyddaskogen.se](mailto:viktor.safve@skyddaskogen.se)

Mark Olden (UK): [mark@fern.org](mailto:mark@fern.org)

## Background on the Vildmarksriket (Wilderness Empire) and the Ore Skogsrike (Ore Forest Empire) and Forest and Climate:

### Vildmarksriket:

In 2010, an inventory of the forest biodiversity values was completed in Vildmarksriket, on behalf of the three municipalities of Mora, Leksand and Vansbro in Dalarna (50 000 hectares). Large parts of these areas were previously terra incognita - unknown land from a nature conservation point of view. The inventory showed that there were at least 20 percent forests worth protecting, most of which were unknown to the landowners. Today, 12 percent are protected or planned to be protected in different forms. The remaining high conservation value natural forests, which mainly consist of pine, are felled by, among others, the FSC-certified companies Bergvik Skog AB/Stora Enso.

Vildmarksriket (the Wilderness Empire) was selected by the WWF as one of the "Swedish pearls" in 2013.

<http://www.leksand.se/Bygga-bo-och-miljo/Natur-och-gronomraden/Naturomraden-naturresept/Ovriga-naturomraden/Vildmarksriket/>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Bb-hdAGSh9g>

<http://www.leksand.se/Documents/Bygga,%20bo%20och%20milj%C3%B6/Natur/Vildmarksriket/Vildmarksriket.pdf?epslanguage=sv>

<http://www.leksand.se/Documents/Bygga,%20bo%20och%20milj%C3%B6/Natur/Vildmarksriket/%C3%B6versiktskarta%20Vildmarksriket%20150%20000.pdf?epslanguage=sv>

### Ore Skogsrike:

In 2013, a report was published about **Ore Skogsrike** (50 000 hectares) which is located in the north part of the municipality of Rättvik, Dalarna. This is one of North Europe's most protect worthy and intact landscape with natural pine forests. At the moment, the FSC-certified Sveaskog is planning to conduct large-scale fellings in high conservation value forests – some of them have 40 red-listed and indicator species, such as Brännvinsberget.

WWF selected Ore Skogsrike to be one of "Swedish pearls" in 2015.

[http://www.rattvik.se/download/18.383f8f7a14a590a52591ca3f/1420624279432/Oreskogen\\_webbversion.pdf](http://www.rattvik.se/download/18.383f8f7a14a590a52591ca3f/1420624279432/Oreskogen_webbversion.pdf)

<http://www.rattvik.se/nyheter/nyheter/2015-06-26-ore-skogsrike-pa-forsta-plats-for-dalarna-i-wwfs-omrostning-svenska-parlor-2015.html>

### Climate and Forests:

Can we use forest products to save the climate?

**The timber industry thinks so - they argue that forests should be clear-cut in order to mitigate climate change. This idea just so happens to coincide with the industry's business interest.** On our new website <http://climateandforest.org> we debunk Myths about Climate and Forest from the timber industry.

What does state-of-the-art research say about this? From a strictly business-as-usual point of view, replacing concrete with wood products might benefit the climate, but there is no scientific consensus on this issue. A lot of research in fact runs counter to the timber industry's views, in particular when we take a broader view of human resource use.

Follow the links on the website and explore! Then read under Solutions about what we can do to save both climate and forests. **Website:** <http://climateandforest.org>.