

NATURE SCORE CARD



Sweden

Sweden has been a member of the European Union since 1995. Its Natura 2000 network consists of 4084 sites, covering 75509km². Terrestrial sites are covering 55280 km² (13.32% of the land area) while marine N2000 sites are covering 20229km². The below analysis and recommendations suggest that national authorities still need to make further efforts in order to fully implement the Birds and Habitats Directives and effective conservation of threatened species and habitats to be achieved on the ground.

	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Transposition Site designation Management of sites Species protection Avoid deterioration of sites, disturbance of species and implementation of appropriate assessments Habitats and species monitoring Promotion of research Non-native species Stakeholder engagement, public participation and communication Funding and resources
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Landscape connectivity

ACTION PLAN FOR NATURE IN SWEDEN

<p>Transposition and designation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sweden still has some insufficiencies to deal with. For example the most valuable site Södra Midsjöbanken was excluded from the recent designation of the very large N2000 site “Hoburgs bank och Midsjöbankarna”. 	<p>Prevention of negative impacts</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A better and more thorough implementation (enforcement and compliance) of the general species protection provisions in both Birds Directive and Habits Directive, especially in forestry/forest landscape
<p>Active management to achieve favourable conservation status</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Connectivity and green infrastructure are key words here, and in Sweden lacks sufficient tools to deal with this challenge. 	<p>Funding</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fairly good basis is available for such a “Bird monitoring investment”. However, sufficient grants from state government to enforce the monitoring program in this direction are still missing.
<p>Monitoring and research</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Expand and develop the national and regional monitor programs in order to better cover how conservation status of the listed habitat types and species evolve over time. 	<p>Stakeholder engagement</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Full implementation and enforcement of the Aarhus Convention, in order to establish generally better conditions for environment-NGOs to support and push implementation of Birds Habitats Directive. This goes especially for the sectors forest/forestry and game and hunting.

The information in this scorecard is based on expert analysis from Naturskyddsforeningen, BirdLife Sweden WWF Sweden Full details on the following pages.

LEGAL REQUIREMENT	STATUS IN SWEDEN
<p>Transposition</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The transposition of the Birds and Habitats Directives is completed with some possible shortcomings when it comes to the article 12-16 cluster.
<p>Site designation</p> <p>Designate and establish sites that form the Natura 2000 network of protected areas</p> <p><i>Habitats Directive, art. 3 & 4</i> <i>Birds Directive, art. 3 & 4</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> According to the Commission's Natura 2000 barometer some small part (about 1 %) is still missing. The marine Natura 2000 network is incomplete. There are still some insufficiencies to handle according to Commission's Natura 2000 Barometer (25 % more sites plus some 10-12 % scientific reserves). The Natura 2000 sites are integrated in your country's protected area's system? There is a huge overlap, both in number of sites and in area. However, the management framework is specific for Natura 2000, which is a necessity given the huge number of sites.
<p>Management of sites</p> <p>Establish site protection measures in Natura 2000 sites</p> <p><i>Habitats Directive, art. 6(1)</i> <i>Birds Directives, art. 4(1) & 4(2)</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Almost all the conservation objectives have been set for each site. In general the conservation objectives are adequate, but probably no one has made a thorough scrutiny, nor SEPA or we (more than 4000 sites). Management plans had been developed by the county administrations. A special instrument ("conservation plan") has been designed for this purpose. The presence of a conservation plan has been a prerequisite for the government decision on designating the site as an SAC. The effectiveness of management plans has to be further assessed in every Natura 2000 site. In general the conservation plans hold to a good standard. Swedish Environmental Protection Agency has done sample controls among the Country Administration decisions. Management plans have been implemented, but in general with a lot of shortcomings that are not yet at "the surface". SSNC and Birdlife Sweden have the ambition to play a watchdog role at local level, but there is still a lot of work to do on this. According to the ordinance for protected areas under the Environmental Code: the county administrations have been designated as the management authorities.
<p>Species protection</p> <p>Ensure species protection</p> <p><i>Habitats Directive, art. 12-16</i> <i>Birds Directive, art. 5-9</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There has been some species protection plans approved, but far below the amount listed within annex 4. There have also been a lot of limitations within their implementation. Although the Swedish Environmental Protection Agency (SEPA) is in charge of derogations (compilation at national level), it is impacting protected species and the <i>basis</i> for derogations could in some cases absolutely be challenged.
<p>Avoid deterioration of sites, disturbance of species and appropriate assessment</p> <p>Ensure no deterioration of habitats and disturbance to species in Natura 2000 sites</p> <p><i>Habitats Directive, art.6(2)</i></p> <p>Ensure that plans or projects likely to affect Natura 2000 sites are subject to appropriate assessment</p> <p><i>Habitats Directive 6(3)</i></p> <p>Ensure that developments affecting the integrity of the site are not approved unless there are no alternative solutions, and for</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The legislation is in place to protect sites from degradation or actions that do not fall under article 6(3). The compliance is in general good, but we have no consolidated overview of the status. Article 6 procedures to assess the implementation of projects and plans are in place. However, it is not certain that <i>every</i> plan or program, that has a risk to have negative impact on a Natura 2000 site, <i>really goes through</i> the required procedure. We have clear indications that the responsible authorities (most often the County administrations) do not start an article 6 procedure in order to assess whether the plan or program will have adverse effects on the site or not. Therefore the case may never reach the 6.3-6.4 procedures. However, it is very difficult to have a full and consolidated opinion on this The appropriate assessments (as regards article 6.3) are in general in line with the legislation, and carried out by private consultants. Sometimes we can see poor quality in their job. The "independence" of these consultants can of course be questioned, as they are hired by the exploiting companies.

<p>imperative reasons of overriding public interest and if compensatory measures are taken</p> <p><i>Habitats Directive 6(4)</i></p>	<p>The environmental courts have in general improved the way they handle 6.3-6.4 cases, including final verdicts.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The precautionary principle is not codified clearly in the legislation; it is loosely defined as a concept. Its application is therefore questionable.
<p>Landscape connectivity</p> <p>Encourage the management of landscape features to improve the ecological coherence of the Natura 2000 network</p> <p><i>Habitats Directive art. 3(3) & 10</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is not sufficient landscape connectivity. The legislative tools are much weaker outside protected areas Natura 2000 in general. There is a big need to address the green infrastructure needed on the connectivity issue. • In general protected areas are not used to cover the any shortfalls of the requirements given how our landscape and land use look like. We need new and better tools that are more integrated into the dominating land use sectors, i.e. forestry, agriculture and infrastructure. The Government has commissioned the 21 country administrations to develop and launch action plans for green infrastructure (to be finished in autumn 2018).
<p>Funding and resources</p> <p>Identify funding needs</p> <p><i>Habitats Directive, art. 8</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SEPA has produced a Prioritized Action Framework in 2013. It is doubtful that the necessary material has been included and may require revision. • In general grants for nature conservation from the national government's budget are well defined. However there is a shortage of grants in order to cover all the forest sites of high conservation values (forests are very expensive to protect). The total needs for managing the Natura network successfully from a long term perspective is not known. From the NGO side we can see that there is absolutely a need to substantively increase the grants for nature conservation. The "Natura 2000 part" is in general fully integrated in the rest of the nature conservation budgets. Recently the government has substantially increased the budget for protecting and managing valuable nature.
<p>Habitats and species monitoring</p> <p>Undertake monitoring of the conservation status of habitats and species of Community importance</p> <p><i>Habitats Directive, art.11</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A monitoring network has been established but it is questionable if it is suited for purpose. There are severe shortcomings. This goes especially for monitoring of species/populations, marine sites and populations and also certain terrestrial habitat types. The monitoring programs are historically designed very much for purposes related to pollution and environmental protection (not biodiversity). • Although data is generally publicly available, much differs between species, and between habitat types. In general better data in regards to species. The Swedish Species Information Centre is doing a good job on this, commissioned by Swedish Environmental protection agency.
<p>Promotion of research</p> <p>Encourage research and scientific work</p> <p><i>Habitats Directive, art. 18</i> <i>Birds Directive, art. 10</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The scientific community has received support for research projects to assess the status of threatened species, but there is still a significant need to expand support.
<p>Non-native species</p> <p>Ensure that introductions of non-native species do not prejudice native habitats and species</p> <p><i>Habitats Directive, art. 22</i> <i>Birds Directive, art. 11</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Efforts have been recent, and the plans implemented have been sparse.
<p>Stakeholder engagement, public participation and communication</p> <p>Stakeholder engagement and public participation are key to ensuring effective implementation</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • WWF was the most active organisation. NGOs have been active in the assessment process. • The levels of stakeholder participation within the development of management plans are questionable. The capacity of NGOs is much weaker there. WWF provided an example of this in a European report last year, Asköviken in Lake Mälaren • There is adequate public consultation in the process of approving management plans, but input from civil society is in general weak.

Improved (horizontal) implementation of the Aarhus Convention is needed. Very little has been done in raising awareness for Natura 200 sites.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR SWEDEN

1. Expand and develop the national and regional monitor programs in order to better cover how conservation status of the listed habitat types and species in Birds and Habitats Directive evolve over time (= status and trends). Relates to article 11 and 17 in Habitats Directive and the corresponding articles in Birds Directive. The existing programs do not meet the needs that we have in order to be able to make a proper assessment and reporting. Fairly good basis is available for such a "Birds monitoring investment". However, sufficient grants from state government to enforce the monitoring program in this direction are still missing.
2. Full implementation and enforcement of the Aarhus Convention, in order to establish generally improved conditions for environment-NGOs to support and push for implementation of the Birds and Habitats Directive. This is specifically relevant for the sectors forest/forestry and game and hunting. The three pillars of Aarhus being of outmost importance for our ability to successful contribute to the implementation of the Birds and Habitats Directive (as well as other EU environmental directives of course).
3. An improved and more thorough implementation (enforcement and compliance) of the general species protection provisions in both the Birds Directive and the Habitat Directive, especially in forestry/forest landscape. Government and its agencies have been lagging behind in this aspect, and application of these provisions started in forestry as late 2014-2015. There are still a lot of uncertainties in regards to how these provisions should be applied. The issue is very sensitive also at a political level, and the forestry sector claims that government should change (risk of water down) the ordinance.
4. Reinforcement of stronger tools (including legislation) in order to fulfill the aims of article 10 in the Habitats Directive. In the wider landscape as whole, where agriculture and forestry are dominating land use, there is a long term decline of certain bird species. These are vast areas *outside* the Natura 2000 network. Connectivity and green infrastructure are key words, and in Sweden we lack sufficient tools to deal with this challenge. The processes with regional action plans are in motion (County administration has been commissioned by government) but it is still a very long way to go.
5. Shortcomings in the marine ecosystem in general. The selection of species and habitats in annex 1, 2 and 4 is in the first place rather poor from a Swedish (and especially Baltic Sea) perspective. Inventories in the marine environment in general are not as comprehensive as compared to the terrestrial side. The designation of sites: Sweden still has some insufficiencies to deal with. For example the most valuable site "Södra Midsjöbanken" was excluded from the recent designation of the very large Natura 2000 site "Hoburgs bank och Midsjöbankarna". A complaint has been filed by Birdlife Sweden on this matter. We hope that this will evolve into an infringement case if not addressed in a satisfactory way by Swedish authorities.
6. We want to see an improvement of the Natura 2000 network in the future. This can be motivated by first of all new and deepened knowledge. Some important sites from a nature conservation point of view are still missing in the Natura 2000 network. The overlap between IBAs and SPAs is fairly good. Since the bulk of the designation work was done 1995-2005 (roughly) we now have a much better knowledge base for the designation of the sites. It is of importance that the network is not perceived as completed, rather a reflection of the current situation. Based on improved scientific information it must be possible to update the network. This recommendation should be valid for the whole EU.