

Protected areas

Innholdsfortegnelse

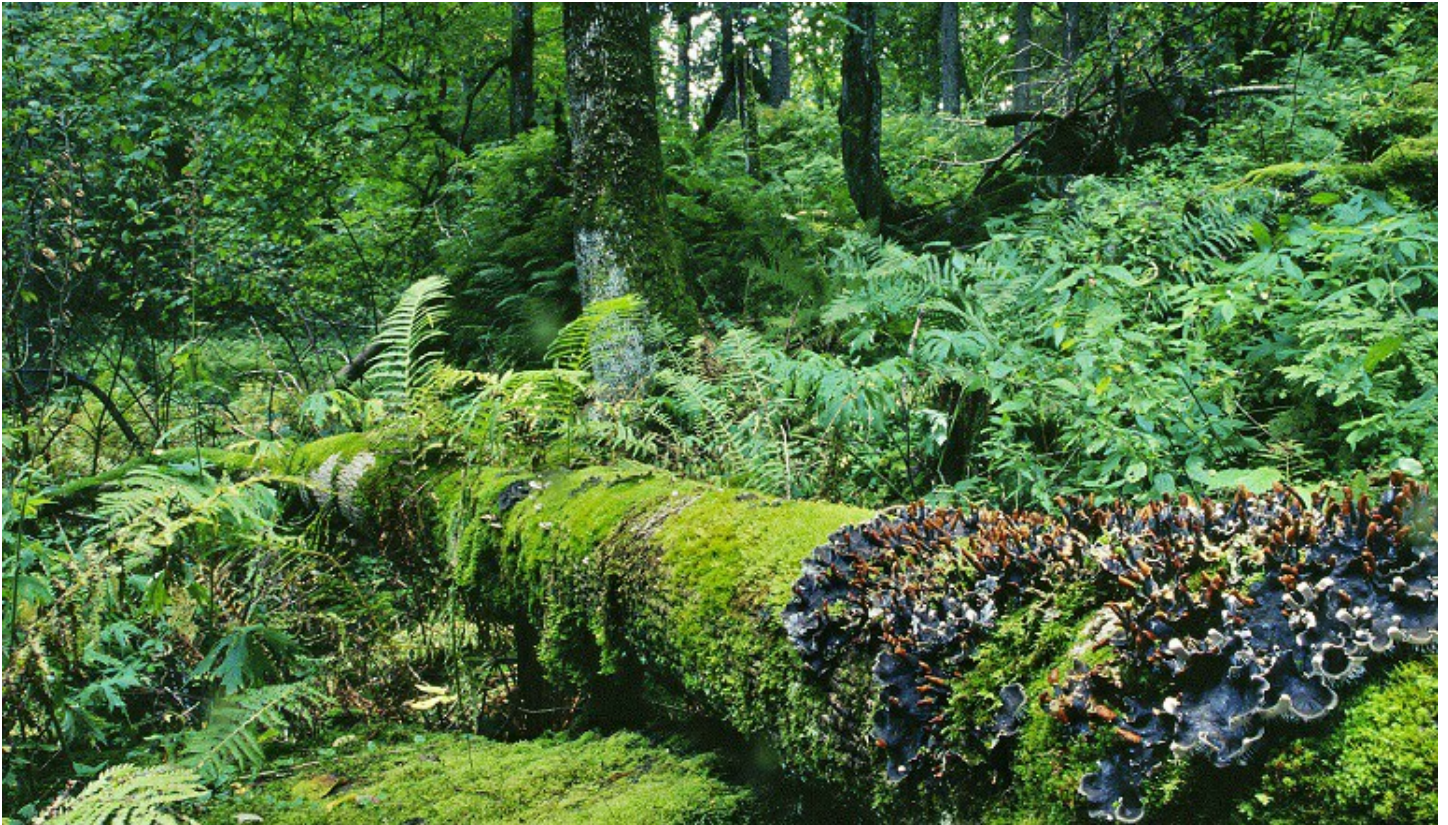
Protected areas

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The main purpose of protecting areas is to safeguard a representative selection of Norwegian habitats and landscapes for future generations and to protect areas of special value for plants and animals.



An old summer farm with log buildings and surrounding pasture in Gutulia national park, Hedmark. Photo: Bård Bredesen, Naturarkivet.no



A fallen elm covered in lichens and mosses. Dead wood is a vital part of forest ecosystems. This is from the valley Almedalen (the name means “elm valley”), part of Hagahogget nature reserve in Asker west of Oslo. Photo: Kim Abel, Naturarkivet.no



This is one of the largest oaks in Norway, in the protected landscape of Berge in Hordaland. The purpose of the protection of this area is taking care of ancient oaks, a water with interesting vegetation and old buildings. Photo: Kim Abel, Naturarkivet.no



Gjermundsholmen nature reserve in Telemark, which was established to protect the attractive and distinctive coastal landscape. The calcareous bedrock supports characteristic woodland, scrub and grassland including many rare plant and insect species. Photo: Sigve Reiso, Naturarkivet.no



From Semsvannet protected landscape close to Oslo. The boggy area by the lake is an important wetland that supports several rare species of sedges and insects. Photo: Kim Abel, Naturarkivet.no

STATE

About 17 per cent of mainland Norway is protected

The degradation and fragmentation of habitats is the greatest threat to biodiversity in Norway. By establishing national parks and other protected areas, we can safeguard threatened and vulnerable habitats and areas of international, national or regional importance.

The Convention on Biological Diversity is the global agreement on the conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity. At the Nagoya summit in 2010, the world's countries agreed on new goals – the Aichi targets – to be achieved by 2020. These include ensuring the effective conservation of ecologically representative areas covering at least 17 per cent of terrestrial and inland water areas and 10 per cent of coastal and marine areas.

Protected areas in mainland Norway

About 17 per cent of mainland Norway is now protected under the Nature Diversity Act. A large proportion of this consists of mountainous areas. A number of other habitat types, such as those in coastal and marine habitats, are not yet adequately represented.

Coastal waters within the baseline around mainland Norway cover an area of 90 000 km², but only about 2 900 km² of this is protected. Norway has an international responsibility to safeguard a representative selection of fjord and coastal areas of types that are hardly found anywhere else in the world. Two of the national parks include skerries off the coast, but fjords are very poorly represented.

In addition, Norway has designated the island of Jan Mayen north-east of Iceland as a nature reserve. The reserve includes a marine area of approximately 4 315 km² around the island.

The map shows Jotunheimen National Park, which includes Norway's highest mountain, Galdhøpiggen (2469 m), and Jostedalsglaci, the largest glacier in Northern Europe. The map layer also shows other types of protected areas. You can zoom in or out to explore further.

Protected areas in Svalbard

A much higher proportion of Svalbard than of mainland Norway is protected, including large marine areas. National parks and nature reserves are protected under the 2002 Svalbard Environmental Protection Act. Altogether, they cover 65 per cent of the area of the islands and about 87 per cent of the territorial waters out to the 12-nautical-mile territorial limit.

IMPACT

Habitats and species may disappear

Continued fragmentation and development of areas of natural habitat will have a negative impact on biological diversity. There is a risk that important habitat types will disappear altogether. Future generations may have more restricted opportunities for sustainable use of biological diversity and for experiencing Norway's natural riches than we do today.

PRESSURE

Growing pressure on the environment

General social trends and driving forces such as population growth, rising consumption, technological developments and trade are increasing the pressure on the natural environment. Large areas without infrastructure development are becoming fragmented, and important habitats for plants and animals are being built on, cultivated, drained or logged. Agriculture, forestry, tourism and road construction are some of the activities that change the natural environment most radically.

In Norway, every year the authorities responsible for managing protected areas assess current threats to the areas. Overgrowing of open habitats, invasive species and disturbance, followed by infrastructure development and wear and tear are considered to be the most severe threats.

RESPONSE

More protected areas and better management

In Norway, the Nature Diversity Act is the most important instrument for expanding protection and ensuring more representative protection of the natural environment. It also provides a basis for improving management of the protected areas.

Today more than 25 per cent of the protected areas have a management plan. The need for such plans varies from one type of area to another, depending particularly on whether an area requires active management to maintain its conservation value and on how heavily it is used.

Active management to maintain conservation values includes measures such as removal of invasive species and in some areas, where overgrowing is a threat to biodiversity, cutting, burning or removal of vegetation, for instance through livestock grazing. Waste collection is also important. Mapping of habitats and restoration, particularly of marsh and wetland areas, are also required.

Information boards and safety signs, as well as brochures, maps, information on the Internet, boundary markers and maintenance of paths and trails are vital to facilitate sustainable use of the protected areas.

It has been estimated that strategic or operational management plans are needed for about 1500 protected areas in Norway

Work on protection plans

- Almost all the proposals in the nationwide national park plan have been implemented. When this work is completed, a representative selection of mountain habitats will be protected.
- In 2003, the Storting gave its support to efforts to expand protection of forested areas. A long-term programme to encourage landowners to protect areas of forest on a voluntary basis is in progress. In addition, areas owned by the state and other authorities are being protected. At the beginning of 2016, about 2.9 per cent of the total area of productive forest was protected.
- Most counties have adopted protection plans for mires, wetlands, deciduous broad-leaved forests, rich deciduous forests and important coastal sites for seabirds.
- Work on the first phase of Norway's marine protection plan is in progress. The goal is to safeguard a representative network of marine protected areas.

Norway still needs to expand protection for a number of habitat types, particularly in lowland areas and productive forest.

Protection is important, but we must do more

Protected areas play an important part in maintaining viable populations of plants and animals, but protection alone is not enough.

Even when all the current conservation plans have been implemented, some habitat types will not be adequately represented, and most of the country will not be protected under the terms of the Nature Diversity Act. The way we treat and manage the rest of the "ordinary" countryside will therefore be of vital importance for the maintenance of biological diversity.