NATUR VÅRDS VERKET

Åtgärdsprogram för särskilt skyddsvärda träd i kulturlandskapet

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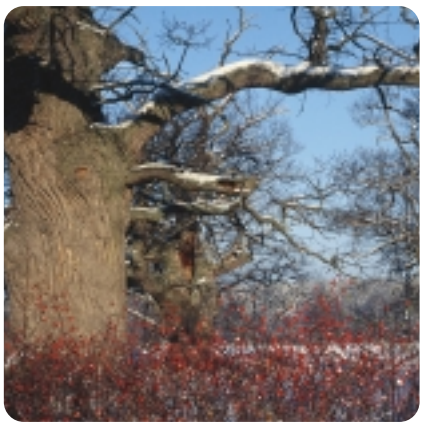

Summary

A long-term and successful conservation strategy for the protection of trees with high conservation values associated with the landscape in southern Sweden demands a holistic approach which takes special consideration of the trees within the cultural and agricultural landscape. These trees are in many respects considered to be key for the conservation of a great number of threatened plants and animals as well as being an important part of our environmental heritage. In recent times management of the trees in the agricultural landscape has been neglected despite the fact that these environments often contain larger concentrations of ancient and valuable trees than in the wooded landscape. This Action Plan for Trees with High Conservation Values in the Cultural and Urban Landscape is expected to have a positive impact on over 400 Red Data Book species.

Trees with high conservation values include the following:

a) Giant trees; trees with a diameter greater than 1 meter at the narrowest point at breast height.
b) Ancient trees; spruce, pine, oak and beech older than 200 years. Other tree species older than 140 years.
c) Large and hollow trees; trees larger than 40 cm in diameter at breast height with hollowing in the main stem.

Trees with high conservation values are thus defined from individual characteristics. Both living and dead trees are included in this definition. Trees with high conservation values are not common in the landscape and should be considered as indispensable regardless of whether they are found in woodland, agricultural or urban settings. This Action Plan suggests different conservation strategies that are suited to the varying ecological and cultural contexts in which these valuable trees are found. The conservation strategies outlined in this Action Plan places a higher priority on the following; large and ancient oaks, farm environments, pollarded trees, avenues and other roadside trees, parks and churchyards.

Conservation aims and prioritised tree habitats

Large and ancient oaks – giant trees

The population of giant trees are continually and slowly reducing in many areas at the same time as recruitment is slow or completely lacking. The total number of large ancient trees (with a girth greater than 4 meters) in Sweden is estimated to be 35 000 of which 3 000 are formally protected. It is thought that approximately 70 per cent of these trees are oak. A recent estimate of the loss of giant trees is thought to be 0.5-1 per cent per year. Physical damage along with felling of individual trees are obvious problems particularly in urban areas but also within the agricultural landscape. However it is considered that lack of management and the consequential overgrowing of the agricultural landscape is the most serious threat to the population of ancient and giant oaks. This Action Plan outlines criteria for estimating favourable condition status for ancient oaks based on lack of competition, free from physical damage, crown vitality and adequate regeneration.

At least 80 % of all giant oaks within protected areas* should have favourable condition status by 2014 in every county (60 % by 2008).
At least 60 % of all giant oaks outside of protected areas should have favourable condition status by 2014 in every county (50 % by 2008). Ancient oaks within general habitat protection areas are included in the goal.

* This includes Natura 2000-areas, national parks, nature reserves, natural monuments, and specific habitat protection areas in the agricultural landscape.

Parks, churchyards, farms and trees in urban environments

Trees are found in many different situations within the urban environment. Trees with high conservation values are mainly found in parks and churchyards. They can sometimes be found where they are a remnant from a time prior to urbanization; such as pasture oaks and pollards and thus have a high nature conservation value as well as a historical value. The current level of knowledge about the conservation values of parklands is limited. There are approximately 3 000 churchyards in Sweden of which around 2 500 are situated in the countryside. Many of these have high conservation values.

The percentage of green open space in urban areas is continuously diminishing according to the National Board of Housing, Building and Planning. In Stockholm, Göteborg and Malmö the open spaces and land not built upon makes up 27 per cent, compared with 37 per cent in other urban areas. Exploitation of green open spaces, park management which does not take nature conservation into consideration and lack of appropriate management (crown reduction, cutting on safety grounds and clearing around oaks) are the main threats. Many trees are felled on the grounds of safety despite the fact that they could be saved by appropriate pruning.

The number of trees with high conservation values within parks, churchyards, farms and urban environments should not be reduced, nor the associated nature conservation, historical and public enjoyment values. The number of trees with high conservation values within each situation should not reduce by more than 15 % by 2014.

Avenues

Avenues are found throughout the country and the ongoing surveys of avenues along public roads carried out by the Swedish Road Administration will give an indication of the geographical spread. Location maps have also been produced by the National Land Survey of Sweden and the Swedish Environmental Protection Agency. Removal of trees with high conservation values in avenues is still a severe threat to a large percentage of the biodiversity in many counties.

The number of trees with high conservation values in avenues should not be reduced nor the associated nature conservation, historical and public enjoyment values. The number of trees with high conservation values within avenues along national public roads should not reduce by more than 15 % by 2014.
Avenues with trees with high conservation values along local public or private roads should not reduce in number at a county level by 2014

Pollarded Trees

It is estimated that there are approximately 700 000 pollarded trees in Sweden of which 400 000 are found on the island of Gotland. The majority of these pollards are ash. Felling, lack of pollarding and overgrowing of meadows and pastures are the main threats to the populations of old pollards. According to the environmental subsidies paid out in 2002, 23 500 trees were managed through pollarding that year.

The number of pollards in the agricultural landscape which are managed in a pollarding cycle should be at least 100 000 by 2010. Those areas where pollarding has taken place more recently should be given higher priority e.g. Gotland, the area between the woodlands and the coast in the County of Blekinge and the Brå area in the County of Kalmar.

Objectives for increased knowledge

- A reporting system and digital map for trees with high nature conservation values accessible on the internet by 2004.
- At least 80 per cent of all known giant oaks outside protected areas in the counties of Stockholm, Södermanlands, Kalmar, Blekinge and Västmanlands are located and registered on an accessible digital map system by 2006. Other counties should have the same objective to be achieved by 2008.
- In areas which have a high incidence of giant oaks and other large deciduous trees in a regional and national perspective, a good level of knowledge about their condition status as well as the need for any protection or other conservation measures is required.
- Each Government Authority who has responsibility for trees with high conservation values should have a good level of knowledge about their conservation management.
- Creation of a 5 Week university course in the nature conservation management of trees.
- The District Councils (including all appropriate departments) and their contractors should have a good level of knowledge about the appropriate management of trees with high nature conservation values.
- The general public and landowners should have a good level of knowledge regarding the high nature conservation and cultural values of trees.
- Courses available for contractors and arborists along with a “green card” system.

Outcomes

The development of interest and engagement in the conservation, cultural and human enjoyment values associated with these trees is considered to be one of the most important factors for successful and sustainable management of the existing population of trees with high conservation values. Due to the fact that a large number of such trees are found in the transitional zone between woodlands and the agricultural landscape, within urban areas and by roadsides, there is a substantial need for co-operation between government authorities, the forestry and agricultural sectors and landowners in order to ensure the management of tree

with high conservation values wherever they occur is implemented in a satisfactory way.

It is preferable that the different stakeholders focus on measures that are aimed at the conservation of giant trees, the management of the cultural landscape and the creation of a replacement generation. An increase in the available funds for local and regional initiatives with these kind of objectives are is in order to make this possible.

Summary of recommended actions:

- Safeguard existing interest in old trees that landowners and the general public have!
- Identify and protect trees with high conservation values, beginning with regions with a particularly high concentration of core areas and Red Data Book species. Give high priority to surveys of giant trees, avenues along private roads, churchyards and parks.
- Manage the land around large oaks and other light demanding trees.
- Let the dead trees live; “wanted dead or alive”!
- Prioritise crown reduction, safety pruning and pollarding.
- Do not forget regeneration and replacements.
- Avoid digging in the vicinity of trees with high conservation values.

Monitoring and reviewing

The Swedish Environmental Protection Agency is responsible for the continuous monitoring of the objectives of the Action Plan. The organisation which has the main responsibility for the implementation of measures to reach each objective will submit a short written report to the Swedish Environmental Protection Agency by the 30th November each year. This will include a county by county report of work carried out. This Action Plan is valid from 20th May 2004 until 31st December 2008 and shall be reviewed in 2008 or earlier if circumstances dictate.

Budget

The total cost for the specific management as highlighted in sections 4.2 and 4.3 comes to an estimated 460 million kronor. The costs are spread over the period from 2004-2014 and are divided amongst surveys, information, training and protection measures. The costs refer to funds over and above those currently available from the Swedish Board of Agriculture and the National Board of Forestry.