



**PALLAS-
OUNAS**

Pallas-Ounastunturi National Park

The purpose of Pallas-Ounastunturi National Park is to preserve the area's uniquely variable fell land, forest, and peatland wildlife.

500 sq.km in area. Established in 1938 among Finland's first national parks. In the municipalities of Enontekiö, Kittilä and Muonio.

Highest summits: Taivaskero 807 m, Pallas Pyhäkero 770 m, Laukukero 763 m, Outtakka 723 m.

Snow buntings arrive about 10. 4

Birch bursts into leaf 13–16. 6

Midnight sun (at Muonio) approx. 25. 5–20. 7

Russet time at its best 6–10. 9

Permanent snow cover approx. 15. 10

Continuous darkness (at Muonio) approx. 3.12–3.1

Outdoor maps 1:50 000 Hetta-Outtakka and Pallas-Olos cover the area.

Further information available from:

The Information Centre, 99330 PALLASTUNTURI, tel. (9696) 2451

Nature conservation wardens, 99400 MUONIO, tel. (9696) 7327

Metsäntutkimuslaitos (Finnish Forest Research Institute), Box 1230, 96101 ROVANIEMI, tel. (960) 318206

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illustrations: Tuula Vuorinen
Oy Länsi-Suomi, Rauma 1988

Geology

Lying at the junction of Ostrobothnia and the forested zone of Lapland, the Pallas-Ounastunturi fell chain attains a higher altitude than any other fell chain in Finland's coniferous forest zone (taiga). Its round-topped fells rise to more than 700 m above sea level. The fells are the remnants of the Svekokareliidi mountains. Originally several kilometres high, the latter formed some 1,800 million years ago. In the course of the ensuing 800 million years these mountains were eroded down to roughly their present dimensions. At that time the Earth was occupied only by primitive forms of life.

The last Ice Age, which ended around 10,000 years ago, ground a few metres off the tops of the fells and gave them their present form. Today the Ounas region consists of gently sloping fells embracing peatlands and lakes. Pallas, on the other hand, is characterised by steep east-facing slopes, sheer-sided gullies and masses of broken rock. The fell chain rolls on to Ylläs, after which it continues to Aavasaksa in a somewhat more flattened form. Quartzites and amphibolites characterise the fell chain, which geologically speaking belongs to Lapland's schist region.

Moraine deposited by the great ice sheets covers the bedrock. Sand dunes, "tievas" (sand formations shaped like pyramids) and meltwater channels are other reminders of the Ice Age.

Flora

Growing conditions on the treeless **fell summits** vary considerably even over small areas. Exceptional endurance is demanded of plants growing on ridges from which winter gales sweep the snow down into gullies and valleys. Aside from tough stone-hugging lichens and diminutive mosses, flowering plants like *Diapensia* manage to survive in this inhospitable environment. Protection during the winter is afforded by gullies in which, however, the growing season is foreshortened. Such situations support their own special flora which includes dwarf cudweed and two-centimetre high dwarf willow.

Crowberry and mountain heath inhabit places with little snow in the winter, while the bilberry dominates situations where the snow lies more thickly. Growths of wild azalea and mountain heath are often interspersed with a rush, *Juncus trifidus*, and rose-scented *Pedicularis lapponica* (akin to red rattle and lousewort). These are perennials; annuals would never survive in these harsh conditions. More luxuriant vegetation is to be found in the lime-rich area of Ounastunturi, where mountain avens, for example, decorates the slopes.

Upland brooks and streams are fringed by meadows containing a relatively rich flora, by tall sedge tussocks, and by dense growths of willow. Lower down these give way to mossy spruce woods, as well as



Cassiope hypnoides



Diapensia lapponica



Phyllodoce caerulea

deciduous woods dominated by graceful ostrich ferns and also inhabited by alpine sowthistle and *Actaea erythrocarpa*.

The fell birch zone forms a ribbon between the coniferous forest zone and the bare areas above the timberline. These **forests** are old, being composed mainly of trees that have been there for at least two hundred years. In the southern part of the national park the spruce predominates, but this tree is absent from the northern part, which lies beyond the northern limit of the species.

Open forests growing on dry mineral-poor soils are ideal for hiking. The undergrowth is low, there are no thickets, and the trees are well-spaced. In the northern sector of the park there are pine forests with prominent lichen growths. Grazing has altered the character of their flora, reindeer lichens having been replaced by species of *Stereocaulon* unpalatable to reindeer.

Peatlands in the national park are treeless mires in which raised lines of tussocks alternate with very wet areas. Nutrient-poor bogs are inhabited by dwarf birch, bog rosemary and cloudberry, the more nutrient-rich peatlands by *Salix myrsinites*, *Saxifraga hirculus*, and alpine sawwort. Lakes in the area are of the oligotrophic, or nutrient-poor, kind.

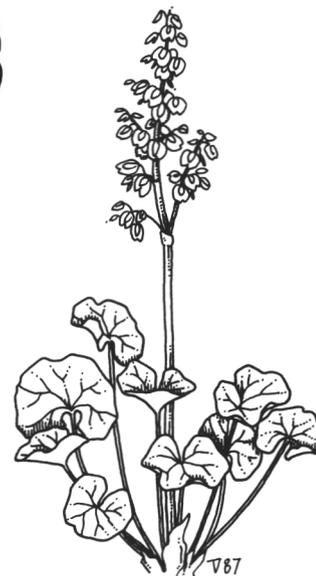
While the flora of the national park is primarily natural, there has been a certain ingress of species accompanying cultivation, cabin and road building, and hay making. Such immigrants include tufted vetch, globe flower and *Polimonium acutiflorum*.



Botrychium multifidum

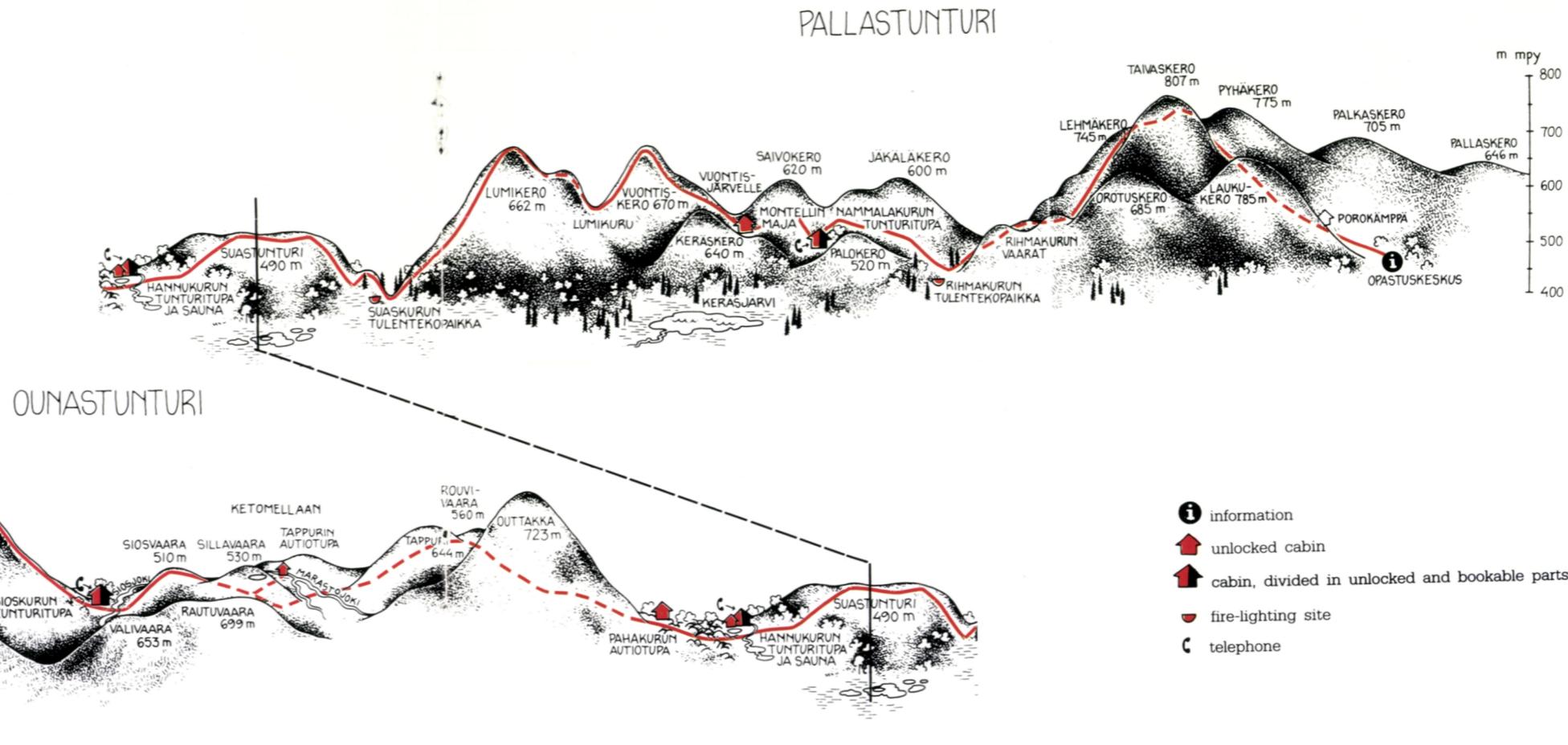


Pinguicula vulgaris



Oxyria digyna

Hetta-Pallas summer route



Fauna

Few mammals inhabit the bare **fell tops**, the exception being the Norwegian lemming, which is plentiful in some years. Such prey attracts stoats and weasels to the fells. The glutton, or wolverine, stays close to the reindeer.

In winter open fells are inhabited only by the ptarmigan. Further down, in the fell birch zone, there are willow grouse. Among the migrants, the snow bunting is the first to arrive: it is considered the park's mascot. May sees the arrival of the dotterel and the extremely common golden plover. One of the commonest fell-land birds is the meadow pipit, the shore lark by contrast being an endangered species. Long-tailed skuas and buzzards hunt over treeless summits.

In the **forests** at lower elevations southern species like the chaffinch and great spotted woodpecker dwell. The songthrush, redstart and brambling are all abundant. The hawk owl and goshawk hunt in the forests, where even the golden eagle may build its nest. Winter forests are enlivened by the presence of Siberian jays, Siberian tits and crossbills, the latter nesting as early as March. In unfrozen tracts of still running water one may glimpse the dipper. Black grouse and capercaillie displays herald the coming of spring.



Buteo lagopus

Forests and peatlands in this area support large numbers of shrews and voles. Among the larger mammals, the elk is the commonest. Occasionally the brown bear, lynx and wolf may put in an appearance.

Waders like the ruff and whimbrel live on **peatlands** and **shores**, often in the company of a variety of ducks. Arctic terns arrive for the summer from as far away as the Antarctic.

Lakes in the park are the homes of pike, perch and whitefish. Streams harbour grayling and trout. Ospreys and otters are allowed to hunt in the national park – but such activities are prohibited to human visitors.

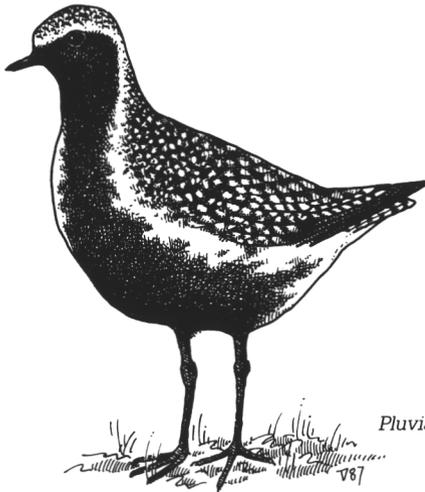
While mosquitoes, gnats, midges, no-see-ums and horseflies are unlikely to be overlooked by the summer visitor, endangered invertebrate species also live in the park which include at least one kind of spider and one species of long-horn beetle.

Reindeer husbandry

Tourism is one of Lapland's most recent and rapidly growing sources of income. Reindeer husbandry, on the other hand, has been practised in the region since the 1600s. The national park extends into three reindeer herdsman association districts: Näkkälä, Kyrö and Muonio. Both the old forests, with their beard mosses, and the open fells provide essential sources of nourishment for reindeer.

Tourists are expected to take care not to disturb reindeer, particularly in the spring when the females are gestating. A second critical time occurs around midsummer, when herds are rounded up for the marking of the new calves. The careless interloper may cause the gathered herd to disperse in a panic. If you come across a herd being rounded up, either by-pass it quietly or sit down and watch it go by. Remember to close any gates and the like in reindeer fences after you have passed through them.

Reindeer husbandry, hunting, fishing and hay making are traditional parts of the Lappish way of life. Habitats influenced by them, as well as old buildings and other structures, are preserved for their historical value.



Pluvialis apricaria

National park services

The Pallastunturi information centre can supply information on the park, hiking routes, and nature trails. Marked trails lead from the Pallas hotel to Hetta, Rauhala, Jerismaja and Toras-Sieppi, and thence to Olos. There are also shorter trails crossing the park. In winter trails are not kept open, but park staff and reindeer herdsman move about on snowmobiles and provide instant skiing tracks! Information about the park can be obtained from the Pyhäkero services cabin during the tourist season.

Over most of the park camp fires and camping are permitted only in marked places alongside the hiking

trails. More detailed instructions are included in the park regulations.

There are several unlocked cabins in the park, as well as three locked cabins which have to be booked in advance. All cabins are equipped with wood-burning stoves, a gas stove and cooking utensils. In addition, the locked cabins have beds complete with bedding, the unlocked cabins having only bunks. Cabin reservations have to be made at the Pallas information centre.

The national park is managed and cared for by the Finnish Forest Research Institute. Visitors can record their own observations at the Pallas information centre, as well as suggest improvements. Where large parties intend to hike in the park it is appreciated if the centre is informed in advance, in order to avoid accommodation problems at the cabins.



Sibbaldia procumbens

THE PURPOSE OF THE NATIONAL PARKS is to protect and conserve nature in an untouched state for future generations. In addition to recreation, the parks are also used for research and teaching purposes.

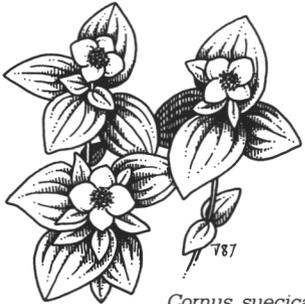
IN THE NATIONAL PARK YOU ARE ALLOWED TO

- ★ roam freely about on foot, or ski
- ★ camp and light camp fires in the places reserved for these
- ★ pick berries and wild mushrooms

BUT YOU ARE NOT ALLOWED TO

- ★ leave litter
- ★ disturb animals, or remove plants or stones
- ★ hunt or fish, except within a small section of Lake Pallasjärvi
- ★ let dogs or cats off the leash
- ★ damage buildings or other structures
- ★ drive motorised vehicles across country
- ★ camp or light fires anywhere other than where signs permit you to do so

N. B. Under Finnish law, local inhabitants have the right to hunt, fish and carry on reindeer husbandry.



Cornus suecica



Salix herbacea



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