

THE EXPERIENCE OF UPPLAND

Photo Mats Wilhelm

There is something special in making excursions in a familiar landscape. Inward pictures and memories from earlier hikes add to the present scenery. I also remember similar motives which I have photographed at other sites. Taken together, this creates a kind of total experience of the landscape, which turns excursions in an everyday landscape to magnificent and sometime euphoric adventures.

The plain, the ridge and the river

This is the soul of the landscape Uppland, at least for the people living in and around Uppsala. It is the land risen from the sea; bays which have become slender rivers whose water sometimes fill deeper basins, known as lakes.

1 *Anemone pulsatilla*

These flowers are the great attractions at the ridge during spring. Later, the environment here will become much drier and more drought resistant flower species will take over. This particular stand exhibits a deviant colouration close to pink instead of purple. It turns up with its lovely bouquet every year.

2 Foraging bumblebee

Salix species have got the appropriate attribute "springs main breakfast". Lots of nectar- and pollen feeding insect species are entirely dependent of the nourishment they can gather from these flowering shrubs and threes. Many clumps of *Salix* are cleared away every year due to ignorance, but still I can rejoice the yellow-flowered threes during Easter time.

3 Oxhagen Nature Reserve

Pastures can be really species-rich if they are maintained properly. In Oxhagen Nature Reserve north of the village Skyttorp grazing animals are few and many plants are left to bloom. Through various within-season grazing managements or every second year grazing, control can be taken over flowering and ensure that the plants set seed and manage their survival.

4 Meeting heifers

During hiking one day in May the man Ale met these curious creatures in Hårsbäcksdalen. Ale, who now lives in Storvreta like me, wanted to show me his childhood areas and together we had a nice day in the land south of Heby.

5 Heifers at Focksta village

It is an idyllic picture, but it also tells something about the how the present land use has changed the landscape. Formerly, animals grazed land which was difficult to cultivate. Now, they graze croplands and much of the old grazing areas are overgrown by shrubs and threes.

6 Otter

For a long time, it was a dream to see an otter, but after that the strain recovered; I began to see them several times a year. Usually the meeting was hastily or from afar. The opportunity for a close up suddenly showed up out River Fyris , upstream Valsgårde during a late winter walk into the wind. This female and her cubs had a party at a big bream and probably thought I was a fox who wanted to steal their kill.

7 Spotted redshank

The flooded wetlands offer excellent resting and feeding areas for wading birds migrating through Uppland during the journey to their northern breeding areas. A spotted redshank take off from the shallow water in early May at Lake Vendelsjön, long after the sun has gone down. Although I have been here a large part of the day, I would not go home. The early summer night sounds of wings and voices.

8 Great Egret at the river Fyris

Uppsala residents' main recreation area is threatened by the growing town. The area hosts not only the famous Fritillaries. Here, along the River Fyris downstream Uppsala, lots of migratory birds are resting close to the city, so easy to see even in everyday life. Many people have discovered that a moment of birding makes the work during the weeks so much easier. Often, quite rare species visit the area, as this Great Egret.

9 *Stellaria graminea*

To lay on your stomach on the ground, looking really close is a part of the experience of the landscape. As children we often did that, but still it pays off to change perspective. *Stellaria graminea* is the high vegetation companion on damp soil.

10 Time off white chaff

When the seeds are released from the tall oatgrass the chaffs shine white by the backlight in the roadside towards Björklinge at Lena village. There is a butterfly called “white grass” flying then. Unlike the similar “mountain grass”, which is worn out this time of year, the former is much fresher. The season therefore gives a hint at species identification.

11 Old Uppsala piles

Some places do not need an overview shot to be recognizable. A hint of a hump and the special and insect friendly vegetation that covers the popular burial mounds at Old Uppsala do enough for localizing. At this site some of the solitary bees where caught, which Linnaeus described and named.

12 Skattmansö river valley

Here in the Skattmansö river valley there is a nature reserve further upstream, but maybe the landscape is even more beautiful downstream where the fields undulate along the river chine. Traditionally, farmers with grazing animals are of course the prerequisite for such a landscape to persist and not to be overgrown.

13 Roe dears on a stubble field

Lines and shapes of the cultivated landscape fascinates, especially in autumn when the farmer's activities replace each other, each with its exciting expression. Stubble fields are important for wild animals and birds, but they have become rather rare nowadays when

autumn ploughing is applied also for the fields that will be sown in spring. The picture is from Skattmansö river valley photographed from the ski slopes.

14 Autumn ploughing

Colour and shape close to Storvreta village.

15 Riding

Rain pulls away and the sun shines again. The rider has a nice way ahead towards Altuna at River Jumkil. In another picture in my computer the horse can be seen on a distance to dance around with its rider. This horse does not like rain and because it is blind on one eye it pulls back in that way. The most remarkable was that the dance suited to the rhythm of a jazz music piece that I listened to in the car while I waited out the rain. Magic!

16 Geese in the night

One of the biggest attractions in the wild is the large quantities of wild geese resting on plain lakes in spring and autumn. Tens of thousands of geese come in to spend the night in the Hjalsta Bay every night during autumn. Often they will not fly in until it is almost dark, which means that many visitors may miss the really big spectacle. Actually, you should never go home those nights – the early morning is equally amazing when all the geese leave the lake to fly out to graze on the fields.

17 Ärentuna church

In this context the medieval church and its tombs represent the old heritage buildings and all the people who lived before us. There is probably no place in Uppland where we do not see the traces of human activity. The ancients were inventive, they made hay on the mire Vissjön, and picked it up on the ice in winter, they charred in the forests, built the gutters for fishing and got water power from the rivers. We can see traces of all this, if we bring our eyes.

18 Three barns

Visiting the same place at different times of the year brings an additional dimension to the landscape. These barns at Långtora are called "Three barns" by the birdwatchers.

19 Three barns become four

The same barns as in the previous image been joined by another have by shift in perspective. These barns are in pretty good shape, but others can be quite dilapidated. In order to preserve the traditional landscape elements the County Board provides money to restore old buildings in the country.

The forest

Upplands' proximity to northern Sweden is making itself felt in many of the province forest environments, while other forests are more lush and nutritious, by southern type. Together, they contribute to a wide variety of hiking possibilities.

20 Hunting team

Game hunt brings together many people for outdoor experiences and fellowship in the woods. The Nature photographer's work is perhaps more lonesome, but borrows many methods from

the hunt: Early mornings, long outdoor stays, waiting, excitement, camouflage and packed lunch. The image is taken in Skyttorp area.

21 Capercaillie

When the days get longer in late winter, grouse start to play even if there is a heavy cover of fresh snow in the woods.

22 Pine and lingonberries

At several places in Uppland, there are pine trees of a really strong variety, such as in Kronoparken in Uppsala, and here in Harg pine park.

23 Forest setting with lung lichen *Lobaria pulmonaria*

You need to get a few miles away from the city and well-trafficked roads to reach an air environment so clean that lung lichen thrives. Styggkärret Nature Reserve on Ulleråkers common north of Uppsala is a haven for all who find it.

24 Moss-covered roots

Tree roots on small floodplains at Skarbo cape in Lake Vendelsjön where the recurring spring floods had brought with them the earth and produced a fascinating small scale landscape.

25 Forget-me-not

It flowers in the forest beds, in swamps and ditches on the nutritious soil. Bo Zetterlind writes "Have you forgotten that the forest is your home? Ant roads under the sky. The glade where lightsome conversations grow, the clearing where you play with a rain. Are they forgotten? Do you not remember them?"

26 River Fiby

If you turn directly left from the path into Fiby Natural Reserve you can walk on the edge of reserve, among sword lily leaves along River Fiby and then connect to the trail in the forest reserve when you reach Lake Fiby.

27 Dirt road

Forest idyll at Tyttbo in Färnebofjärden National Park.

28 Field work

Can this forest at Norrskedika become a nature reserve do you think? Staff from the county administration at work.

29 Sea eagle

The landscape bird of Uppland is now seen almost as often in the inland as along the coast. Its old reputation as a competitor to man is gone and it is no longer threatened. Sure it takes some fish, but it also makes much use to clean up the environment after wildlife accidents.

The coast

We may think that we know the coast, where it is, but today's coastline is not the same as a thousand years ago. Really old boathouses are now on land due to land uplift. Uppland has

much coastline, varied and beautiful, summer paradise for some people, daily life and work of others.

30 Boat

Varnished, nice and neatly anchored the Roslagen boat is waiting for a trip on Kalleröfjärden.

31 Rippled water

Outer Archipelago cliffs, constantly flushed, smooth and sun-warmed. A rest for eyes which received too many impressions in the human world. The calm lagoon waters rippled for a moment in the wind.

32 Pebble beach

Countless rolling stones - as many as the sailors who have lost their lives in the sea outside. So can thoughts come when you sit on the banked board on the tip of the peninsula Billudden, thinking.

33 Ship in night harbour

The old training ship Constancia have searched natural harbour in a sheltered bay. Some time for exploring the island wait before the ship's bell calls for dinner.

34 Sand beach and rocks

At Långsand just south of Billudden sand have ended that have been washed out from the stone squares on the ridge.

35 Boathouses

Boathouses on the island Singö.

36 Cows and gees in the Ledskär bay

The shallow bay at Ledskär is a paradise for birds, a little north of the village Skärplinge. The heavily grazed meadows are a must for shorebirds to dare to land and thrive.

37 Coast of the Lake Mälaren

Maybe we do not realize that there is a coastline also along our largest lake, as here at Kalmarnäs. Right now the lake contains pure freshwater, but what will happen if sea level rises as polar ice melts?

38 Birding at Örskär

The hostel at Örskär is usually fully booked during May. The island is an outpost where many eastern migratory birds like to rest after many hours over the high seas. The old cultural environment around the lighthouse and the island calm life adds to recreation.

For more information about the photographer, please use www.matswilhelm.com