



Photo: P.-O Bygdén/Skogen i Skolan, Sweden

School projects in Finland, Norway, Sweden and Denmark

Children learn from the forest

– The best time to influence the attitudes of people is when they are young, says Birgitta Wilhelsson from the Swedish project “Forest in School”. And the very best time is between the ages of 11 and 12. They are curious about life and eager to learn.

– But, if we want to increase our children’s awareness of the forest, we need to expose them to a variety of activities over the years.

The forest is an excellent educational resource for children of all ages, a fact that has been recognized in all of the Nordic countries. News and Views has looked at school projects in Norway, Denmark, Sweden and Finland.

The forest of today belongs to the kids of tomorrow

School project in Finland

15,000 teachers visiting website each month

Skogsreflexen is a website launched in 1999 and administered by the Forestry Development Centre, Tapio.

The section for teachers and pupils offers education material and tips on activities and experiences year-round, all developed by teachers or in collaboration with teachers.

The material includes almost 200 activities and tasks for both indoor and outdoor use.

– Skogsreflexen is visited by 10,000

to 15,000 teachers every month, says Gerd Turku-Mattson, who is responsible for the project.

– This figure includes both the Swedish-language section, and the corresponding Finnish-language section (called Metsä vastaa), The total number of visitors is over 40,000 per month, she says.

Skogsreflexen also has a newsletter aimed at teachers, which is distributed bimonthly.

www.skogsreflexen.net.

(only in Finnish and Swedish)

From the website

“Collect 10–20 droppings from hares or other animals, plant them in potting compost in a pot indoors. Water and wait 1–2 weeks. If you are lucky, plants will grow up from seeds contained in the droppings. This will show you what kind of diet the hare has.” Tip from Skogsreflexen.

School project in Sweden

One of every six schools has its own forest

The project known as “Forest in School” (*Skogen i Skolan*) started in 1973 with the aim of offering educational material to schools, concerning forests and the forest industry.

The project has established school forests across the whole country. The first one was established in 1982, and there are currently 950 such forests.

A school forest is a specified area that the school can use for outdoor activities and lessons. An agreement with the forest owner might, for example, permit the pupils to build a wind break or cut down some trees.

There are 5,500 elementary schools in Sweden; one in every six of these currently has a school forest.

The Swedish “Forest in School” project uses a range of materials to engage the children. A free magazine is distributed quarterly to 19,500 readers. The website has almost 15,000 individual visitors per month.

Regional forest activity days last year involved 92,000 pupils and 25,000 teachers. The forest days give the project organisers the chance to meet the pupils and teachers face-to-face.

– We have assessed the attitudes of the children who have participated in project activities, says Birgitta Wilhelmsson, head of *Skogen i Skolan*. The investigation, which was led by the researcher Gun Lidestav, found that pupils who took part in “Forest in School” had a more positive attitude towards the forest, forest industry and the fact that forests can be utilized by man. However, their interest in the forest *per se*, e.g. for outdoor activities, was not changed.

– Apparently, the willingness to play outdoors must be established much earlier, by the parents, says Birgitta Wilhelmsson.

www.skogeniskolan.se



Photo: Olof Bergvall/Skogen i Skolan, Sweden

School project in Denmark

Denmark – concrete tasks mean more effective learning

The Danish “Forest in School” project (*Skoven i Skolen*) started in 1999, aiming to “increase knowledge about forests and timber among the people of Denmark.”

The project is based on a cooperative effort between governmental and non-governmental organisations, and the administration is located with the Danish Forest Association.

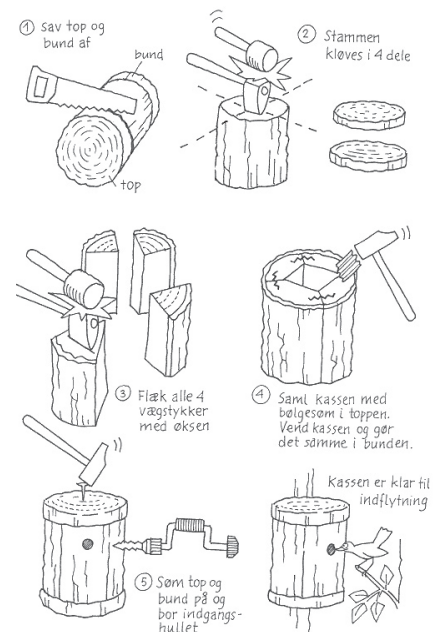
The concept of outdoor schools is one of the fundamental features of the “Forest in School” project. The Swiss psychologist Jean Piaget found that learning is more efficient if children work within a framework of concrete actions of practical relevance. This is also the motive for the “Forest in School” project: to develop activities in the forest in which children can use a wide range of their senses for solving tasks they are given.

There are currently 45 forest schools (*SkoleSkove*) in Denmark, but one forest can serve several schools. Some of them have facilities such as wind breaks, fire places or exhibitions of forest tools, while others offer the school the opportunity to undertake activities that are usually prohibited in Danish private forests.

In Støvringgaard Kloster on Jutland, pupils and teachers from Mellerup Friskole are allowed, for example, to cut branches of bushes over 10 m tall, to collect berries, mushrooms and cones, and to install nesting boxes for birds.

A newsletter is sent out 2–4 times each month, with advice on new activities adapted according to the time of the year.

www.skoven-i-skolen.dk



How to build a bird-cage. From the Danish educational material

School project in Norway

Norway – tree guitars and balancing acts

The Norwegian school forestry project “Learning with the forest”, is administered by the Forestry Extension Institute (Skogsbrukets kursinstitutt).

The Tree web (www.treeven.no) is a web-based part of the project where information is presented in a format that is targeted towards young people. They can create their dream house, design a chair or learn about musical instruments.

Jon Eivind Vollen, head of the institute’s pedagogics department, gives an example:

– Every kid who has held a guitar has also tried to play the riff from Deep Purple’s “Smoke on the water”. We teach them how to play it, and at the same time give them a short history of rock music. Kids are usually unaware that almost all guitars, both electric and acoustic, are made of wood. The experience makes the children prepared for a wider discussion about wood and forests.

The project rests on three pillars, each of equal importance:

- 1/ Outdoor recreation
- 2/ Seeing the forest as an ecosystem

3/ Seeing the forest as a source of income.

Almost every school in Norway has its own personal contact within the project.

Jon Eivind Vollen says that the internet has an increasingly important role for children seeking information. Wikipedia is starting to be more important than school textbooks. Therefore, “Learning with the forest” emphasises material on the web. Four specific sites have been launched:

Out in the forest inspires the children to participate in outdoor activities

The Tree web ([treeven](http://treeven.no)) is dedicated to wood as a material for building, construction, making paper and clothes

The Energy web describes experiments and games about energy in general and bioenergy in particular.

Kongleposten (Cone-post), which is a meeting place on the web for the children.

The editor highly recommends readers to visit www.treeven.no and look at the film “Balansekunst”

(Balance act), which effectively weaves together the forest activities of yesterday with the kids’ life of today.

www.skoleskogen.no

www.skogkurs.no



- The forest is an excellent learning ground. In mathematics, children can measure the height of a tree or count the year-rings to assess its age, says Jon Eivind Vollen.

New secretary of SNS

Sune Haga is the new secretary of SNS, succeeding Pauline Stenberg, who has been appointed Professor of Forest Mensuration and Management at Helsinki University.

Sune Haga is 53 years old and has been head of communications for Skogscentralen Kusten, one of 13 regional governmental forest organisations. After more than 25 years in that organisation, he has experience of forestry planning,



administration and information.

Rotating duty

Finland’s responsibility for providing the SNS secretary started in 2006 and ends on 31 December 2009.

The duties of the secretary are to coordinate and administer funds

for the Nordic research networks and projects, to arrange meetings and workshops, and to inform and maintain contact with the various partners of SNS.

– This is an interesting and challenging field, says Sune Haga, who looks forward to following Nordic forestry and forest research closely. I will try to participate in many meetings within the framework of SNS, he says.

Sune Haga lives in the coastal city of Vasa, but the office of SNS is in the premises of Metla in Helsinki.

– I will manage the commute to Helsinki well, he says. My three daughters all live in Helsinki, so I will have a chance to see them more often.

sune.haga@metla.fi

“Sharing forest information globally”

GFIS, the Global Forest Information Service is expanding and cementing its position as the main international gateway to forest information.

GFIS currently has 75 information-providing partners who post news, and notices of events, publications datasets or job vacancies through the gateway.

GFIS is led by IUFRO, and the service is maintained and developed by Metla in Finland.

The information is provided mainly through RSS-feeds, a format which facilitates automatic harvest of data from the provider's websites to be used in GFIS.

The user can currently choose between interfaces in English, Spanish or French, but more languages will be added.

There have been training workshops in Russia, China and Costa Rica in order to assemble more information-providing partners.

The new gateway has been running since January 2007.

– We are still at the feeding phase, but in the beginning of next year, we will start promoting the GFIS gateway to potential new users, says Eero Mikkola, coordinator of GFIS.

www.gfis.net,

contact: mikkola@iufro.org

The GFIS team at Metla in Finland: Juha Hautakangas, Eero Mikkola (coordinator) and Heikki Ruponen.



Shortcuts

Modified wood – an environmentally friendly preservation

Picture: "landscape of poles" from Simlångsdalen.

The Norwegian Forest and Landscape Institute (Skog og Landskap) is evaluating the efficacy of various modifying treatments that change the properties of wood, without using toxic preservatives, for increasing its resistance to decay when in contact with soil. The tested measures include acetylation, furfurylation, heat treatment and preservation with linseed oil. The researchers hope that one or more of the treatments can replace traditional preservation with CCA (copper, chrome and arsenic).

Euroforest portal launched

A new portal for forest and forestry information has been launched by the EFI (European Forest Institute) in Finland. The portal contains a news section and a metadatabase of web resources – web pages of organisations, networks, information providers, databases, and selected major reports.

The portal offers a technical platform from which to establish new "local forest portals" for sharing information about specific regions.

Source: <http://forestportal.efi.int/>

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www.nordicforestresearch.org

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