



Bengt Ek: Place your research in a wider and applied context to make it more interesting for the media. Photo (portrait) Hedda Thomson Ek

“Use me to communicate your research”

Research results must be disseminated and used to prove their value. News & Views asked an editor of a leading forestry magazine for advice on how media can be used to reach a broader audience than the traditional research community. Make contacts with journalists and get some media training, are two of his suggestions.

Bengt Ek is chief editor of the Swedish forest magazine Skogen (“The forest”), which, since 1914, has been on a mission to support good practice in forestry and silviculture. The monthly magazine is read by over 100 000 people, many of whom are forest officers, entrepreneurs or forest owners. Skogen is, therefore, a powerful channel for disseminating new results and important facts, which are transformed into useful advice and interesting articles.

Bengt Ek has had positive experiences in using scientists as sources for the articles; and he wants to be used by them as a channel. Over the years, he has seen a shift towards scientists being more open to approaches from the media. Swedish forest researchers are often available for interviews, and he can easily contact a person to check a fact. In the past, researchers were much more resistant to making comments about subjects outside their own specific area of expertise.

– I am very glad when researchers dare to place their research in a wider and often applied context, and to reason and argue on topics that are also beyond their narrow fields of expertise, he says.

How does a forest magazine collect its content? Bengt Ek admits that he hasn't the time to scan all websites and new research reports actively. Instead, he relies on research contacts

that the journalists themselves make when a new topic is raised, a new method is implemented etc. But he welcomes researchers who contact the magazine directly. Some institutions send all their scientific reports to Skogen on a regular basis, which means that these have a much greater chance of being featured.

Examples of this are the bachelor theses from the forest technicians' school. All of them are sent to Skogen, and since the journalists know them, they will also be heavily cited.

– Applied results are often more interesting for the media, no matter if they are produced by a student or through a rigorous peer-review process from a top research team. But even basic research can prove interesting when put in context by the scientist.

Read Bengt's practical advice →

Bengt's practical advice for better mass-media relations

Based on his almost 25 years experience in forest communication, Bengt Ek has a number of pieces of simple advice on how scientists can become better communicators. Some have discovered them already, but many have not:

- ✓ Set aside resources for communication, both in the research programme and at a central level of the university. The researchers themselves simply do not have the time to spend on communication.
- ✓ Produce an accessible package of the information. Sending a research report in a peer-reviewed journal to a journalist in your field is far better than nothing. But even better, of course, is to add a press release or a short summary in a newsletter. Popular short reports, such as the series Fakta Skog from SLU or Results from Skogforsk, are obviously even better. If the information about the research is appealing, journalists will turn to the original source for more information.
- ✓ Make active contacts with the media – a magazine, radio or TV.
- ✓ Get to know which editor works with your subject. If you have something interesting to say, chances are that you will have your research mentioned.
- ✓ Invite a journalist to the university, for example for six interviews in 3 hours! A quick way to reach out, efficient for both the journalist and the researchers.
- ✓ Be trained in media! A 2-hour course can work miracles if it is efficiently planned. Again, learn which magazines, radio or TV contacts are most relevant. Familiarise yourself with their different ways of working (how urgent, what is interesting, when, etc.). Open your eyes to the news in your own backyard.
- ✓ Create a scoop. Offer an exclusive to one magazine. Journalists are reluctant to miss such bait.
- ✓ Use your position! A researcher usually has high credibility. If two parties in forestry are arguing, journalists turn to the scientist for the correct answer.
- ✓ Rid yourself of any phobia of journalists. Maybe you have had a bad experience, but get over it. They are not there to do you harm, and you can usually check the citations.
- ✓ Use also older knowledge, which may be “old” only to you, together with your results. Newspapers are more willing to write about a small finding if it is put into a bigger, preferably hot, context. Use climate change, hands on advice etc. to get your message across.
- ✓ Work with the available resources. Each country has its own channels, such as websites, silvicultural handbooks and magazines.. Wikipedia is another good channel.
- ✓ Do not mix forestry and agriculture in communication activities. The target groups are very different.
- ✓ Don't forget to invite media to interesting seminars and excursions.

Last but not least: Remember that good communication also opens up sources of good finance.

Use your excursions and seminars to reach media. Photo: Silvinformation



New networks

Ten networks were granted funding by SNS and EFINORD for activities in 2013. The decision was taken at the SNS board meeting in November 2012.

Forest Water Mercury

The Northern forest water mercury network – NorForM – will arrange a workshop along with a visit to the Norwegian Forest Mercury Study in Långtjärn. The workshop will be used to shape the group's messages in preparation for an international conference on Mercury in Edinburgh, August 2013.

Coordinator Prof. Kevin Bishop, Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences.

Participants also come from Finland, Norway, Scotland, NW Russia and Ireland.

Read more about the network in News & Views No. 6, 2011.

Social indicators in forestry

The network "Social indicators in forestry – North European co-operation with wider Europe" was established in 2012, focusing on standardising and harmonising social indicators. The aim of its work in 2013 is to exchange ideas about social indicators of forestry with experts from other parts of Europe. The common interest is to discuss how to develop social indicators, and to monitor changes with respect to social issues, particularly recreation and tourism, in forestry and forest use. A two-day workshop will be held in Copenhagen, Denmark. Many participating experts are also part of a COST network, focusing on similar issues at the European level.

Coordinator Tuija Sievänen, Finnish Forest Research Institute.

Partners represent Denmark, Finland, Norway, Sweden, Estonia, Lithuania, NW Russia, Germany and the UK.

Forest policy science

The Nordic network on forest policy science was established in 2010 and aims to bring together scientists dealing with forest policy issues from a social scientific perspective. The network will now expand to involve Baltic countries and researchers from other social science disciplines. In order to achieve these goals, three sessions and a network meeting will be held within the Nordic Environmental Social Science Conference, organised by the University of Copenhagen.

Coordinator Daniela Kleinschmit, Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences.

Countries represented at the meetings are Denmark, Sweden, Norway, Finland, Lithuania, Latvia, Germany and the UK.

Natural disturbance

The network "Natural disturbance dynamics analysis for ecosystem based management" has previously focused on the consequences of disturbance for forest development at varying scales, and how humans can mitigate negative effects through tree breeding, stand structure and stand composition. In 2013, focus will be on disturbance and carbon dynamics. A meeting will take place in Kaunas, Lithuania, together with the PRIFOR network. The aim is to develop future joint activities and to explore topics for a common scientific conference on carbon dynamics in natural forests.

Coordinator Prof. Kalev Jõgiste, Estonian University of Life Sciences.

Partners in the network represent Finland, Iceland, Norway, Sweden, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, the Netherlands, Poland and NW Russia.

Wood science and engineering

The network "Northern European network for wood science and engineering", which was formed in 2004 but has roots from the 1970s, will focus on the durability of wooden products in its 2013 activities. A two-day workshop will be organised in Hannover (Germany). The major theme of the workshop will be "Durability and performance of wood and wood-based products".

Coordinator Erik Larnøy, The Norwegian Forest and Landscape Institute.

Partners represent Denmark, Finland, Norway, Sweden, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Germany and the UK.

Read more about the network in News & Views No. 2, 2012.

Forest inventory

The Nordic-Baltic cooperation group for forest inventory will organise a network meeting, a scientific conference and a field trip in Lithuania in August 2013. The network started its activities several decades ago, but this is the first meeting in a Baltic country. Initially, this network was a cooperation between National Forest Inventories (NFIs) and experts in the field of forest inventory and forest management planning in the Nordic countries. The network has now expanded to cover countries and regions such as NW Russia, Poland, the Baltic states, Germany and Ireland.

Coordinator Prof. Gintautas Mozgeris, Aleksandras Stulginskis University, Lithuania.

The history of primeval boreal forests

The Nordic working group on the history of primeval boreal forests – PRIFOR – has several activities scheduled for 2013. A workshop on northern tree-line dynamics is planned to take place in northern Finland. PhD-courses on forest history and biodiversity, as well as on dendro-ecology, will be hosted by SLU and Mid Sweden University. The network will also run collaborative activities with the Natural Disturbance Network.

Coordinator Prof. Bengt Gunnar Jonsson, Mid Sweden University.

Read more about PRIFOR in News & Views No. 6, 2012.

Forest mycology

The network "North European forest mycologists" (NEFOM) will strengthen the collaboration between Nordic and Baltic fungal ecological laboratories. It builds on previous collaboration on DNA-sequencing of fungi. In 2013, the network will arrange a workshop for PhD-students and post docs in Tallin, Estonia, and a meeting focused on EU-research applications. NEFOM will also continue to develop a database of sequenced fungi and various bio-informatic tools.

Coordinator Rasmus Kjøller, University of Copenhagen.

Other participants represent Norway, Sweden, Finland, Iceland and Estonia

Urban and rural studies

The new network "Forest in urban and rural studies" will strengthen Nordic research on forests in urban and rural studies. The core of the network consists of the competence area "Forest in rural studies" at the Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences, Center for Rural Research in Norway and Danish Centre for Rural Research. One seminar (in Alnarp, Sweden) and one workshop (in Enaforsholm, Sweden) are planned, with the aims of producing long term research proposals and organising a specific forest session at the Nordic Rural Research conference in Trondheim in 2014.

Coordinator Gun Lidestav, Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences.

The core group involves Norway, Sweden and Denmark, but Finland and Iceland will also be invited.

Forest regeneration

The Nordic network of forest regeneration network dates back to 2001, and has organised several workshops and PhD courses over the years. In September 2013, a PhD course and workshop on "Forest regeneration research – a Nordic perspective", will be organised. The focus will be broadened from theoretical aspects to include practically oriented questions and solutions. The course will be arranged as a roundtrip through the Nordic countries and ending in Estonia.

Coordinator Marek Metslaid, Estonian University of Life Sciences.

Students and researchers from Estonia, Finland, Sweden, Latvia, Lithuania, Denmark and Norway will participate. Colleagues from the UK, Poland, Russia and Germany will also be invited.

Shortcuts

Umeå Plant Science Centre "among the world's best"

Sweden's governmental innovation agency, Vinnova, has evaluated its four Berzelii Centres, and has given a spectacular endorsement of the one at the Umeå Plant Science Centre (UPSC). The evaluation team concluded that it "is one of the top forest biotechnology research establishments in the world."

Read more on www.upsc.se

Norwegian expertise exported to Africa

Researchers at Forest and Landscape and the Norwegian University of Life Sciences are teaching Tanzanian researchers how to monitor forests efficiently using remote sensing. The new National Carbon Monitoring Center in Morogoro will employ modern methods such as SAR (Synthetic Aperture Radar) and laser scanning.

Read more: www.skogoglandskap.no

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- relevant to the Journal
- interesting for the readers.

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