



# PROTECTED SPECIES

of plants and animals  
in Sweden



# Protection of plants and animals

Any plant or animal that is in danger of plundering may be given protected status, which means that it is forbidden to pick, catch, gather, kill or in any other way injure the species in question. This is not meant to hinder farming or forestry, but it is expected that the greatest possible consideration for threatened or endangered species shall be taken, in connection with any kind of land use.

The need for protection may apply to endangered species that are highly vulnerable if caught or gathered, as well as to species that are not so rare but popular to catch or gather. In some cases, species are protected by international agreements to which Sweden is a party, or in an EU-directive.

A species may have protected status throughout the country, in one or more counties, or in a part of a county. At present, there are about 300 species with protected status throughout the country, and an additional fifty in one or more counties.

This brochure provides several examples of protected plants and animals in Sweden. A complete list of all species protected at the national level, including details on exceptions that apply in certain cases, is available on the Agency's web site at: [www.naturvardsverket.se](http://www.naturvardsverket.se)

The pasqueflower (*Anemone pulsatilla*) and the pyramidal saxifrage (*Saxifraga cotyledon*) are protected throughout Sweden.





TORE HAGMAN/N



BENGT EKMAN/N

The two orchids lesser butterfly orchid (*Platanthera bifolia*) and pyramidal orchid (*Anacamptis pyramidalis*) with the butterfly (*Parnassius Apollo*) sucking nectar.

## Vascular plants

Many of the protected vascular plants are seldom seen because they are very rare, and sometimes difficult to identify. Others are more familiar and sought-after. In either case, picking them may threaten their survival. Among the flowers that may not be gathered are the northern dragonhead, northern primrose, white mullein, live-ever, marsh gentian, sea lavender, sea holly, spring anemone, yellow bog saxifrage, fringed lilac, St. Bernhard's lily and pheasant's eye.

## Orchids

Orchids often have special habitat requirements, and many are therefore endangered as a result of environmental changes. Another problem is that many of the unusual or especially attractive species have been subject to extensive collecting. It has even happened that entire beds of orchids have been dug up, to be transplanted in gardens or sold to collectors in Sweden and abroad. All wild orchids have protected status throughout the country and may not be picked. Examples include the black vanilla orchid, fly orchid, heath spotted orchid, creeping lady's-tresses, burnt orchid, marsh helleborine, fairy slipper, bird's nest orchid, red helleborine, ghost orchid, common twayblade and small white orchid.

The Lady's slipper (*Cypripedium calceolus*) and all other orchid species are protected throughout Sweden.



PER-OLOV ERIKSSON/N

## Liverleaf and cowslip

Liverleaf (*Hepatica nobilis*) and cowslip (*Primula veris*) are popular spring flowers that many people like to gather. But liverleaf is not able to spread if it is picked; it has nearly been eliminated in some places where it has been subjected to extensive gathering. It is not allowed to pick liverleaf in counties of Stockholm, Skåne, Halland or Västerbotten, nor in parts of the county of Västra Götaland.

Cowslip may not be picked in Skåne, Halland and Örebro counties. In the rest of the country, it is permitted to gather a bouquet for personal use, but not to dig up the flowers, draw them up by the roots, or gather large quantities for commercial purposes.



LENNART BROBORN/N



BENGT EKMAN/N

In some counties, liverleaf and cowslip may not be picked at all.

## Mistletoe and clubmoss

Mistletoe is protected in the entire country. But landowners are allowed to remove it in order to preserve the host tree, as long as the local population of the species is not endangered.

Clubmoss grows very slowly, and has therefore suffered damage due to previous collecting. It is now prohibited to dig up all species of clubmoss, or to gather them for commercial purposes. The threatened species *Diphasiastrum chamaecyparissus* may not be picked at all. In Blekinge County, all species of clubmoss are protected.

Stag's horn clubmoss (*Lycopodium clavatum*) may not be gathered for commercial purposes.



P. ROLAND JOHANSSON/N



TORRE HAGMAN/N



BENGT ERKMAN/N

The rare (yellow) wolf lichen (*Letharia vulpina*) and the endangered beard lichen (*Usnea longissima*) are protected throughout the country.

## Mosses and lichens

Many of the protected mosses and lichens are unknown to most people because they are so rare. Two of the lichens that are more familiar are the yellow-coloured wolf lichen and the beard lichen. Examples of protected mosses include green shield-moss, shining hookeria, *Dichelyma capillaceum*, *Pyramidula tetragona* and *Cephalozia macounii*.

*Cladonia stellaris* is often used for Christmas decoration and is sold as “white moss” even though it is a lichen. It is not protected; but since lichens grow very slowly, it should be treated with care and never picked without reason. The Swedish law permitting free access to the countryside does not include the right to gather large quantities of moss or lichen for commercial purposes.

*Cladonia stellaris* is not officially protected. Nevertheless, it is not permitted to gather entire growths of the lichen.



JAN SCHÜTZER/N

## Mushrooms and berries

Five mushroom species are protected throughout Sweden and may not be gathered: lion's mane, *Haploporus odorus*, *Hapalopilus croceus*, *Hericium erinaceus* and *Pycnoporellus alboluteus*. Otherwise, it is permitted to gather mushrooms and berries anywhere, with the exception of certain restrictions in nature reserves and other protected areas.



LENNART MATHIASSON/IN

The lion's mane (*Sarcosoma globosum*) is protected and may not be gathered.



HANS-EBBE LINDSKOG/MYRA

The stag beetle (*Lucanus cervus*) is protected throughout the country.

## Butterflies and other insects

There are over 25,000 species of insects in Sweden, and 27 of them are protected throughout the country. Examples of species that may not be collected are the *Parnassius mnemosyne*, the marsh fritillary, Apollo, the hermit beetle, the stag beetle and the dragon fly.



OJA JENSEN/STERN

The *Parnassius mnemosyne*

## Frogs, toads and lizards

All frogs, toads and lizards have protected status throughout Sweden. Several species are rare or endangered due to alteration or disappearance of their habitats, which are often located in wetlands and pools of water. The rarest species are the pool frog, firebellied toad, agile frog, spade-foot toad, common tree frog, edible frog and green toad, natterjack toad, warty newt and sand lizard. These may never be killed, injured, collected or moved.



Never remove the European tree frog (*Hyla arborea*) or any other kind of adult frog or lizard from its habitat.

The most common species – the slow worm, viviparous lizard, smooth newt, common frog, moor frog and common toad – may be picked up for



*Bufo bufo*

on site study, but may not be removed from the area.

It is also permitted to take home a small quantity of eggs or tadpoles in order to observe their development into adult forms; but then they must be returned to the place where they were collected.

The slow worm (*Anguis fragilis*) is a protected species that resembles a snake, but is actually a legless and completely harmless lizard.



The harmless smooth snake can be confused with the poisonous adder.



## Adders and other small snakes

Sweden has three species of snakes, which all are protected throughout the country. They are the adder, the smooth snake and the grass snake. The grass snakes are completely harmless. So is the rare smooth snake; but since it sometimes is confused with the adder, it is occasionally killed by mistake.

Adders live primarily on voles and mice, and may thus be of some use. They never attack humans spontaneously, they only strike if they feel threatened. Grounds can be made unattractive to snakes by cutting grass very short, removing brushwood, and by keeping piles of compost and leaves at good distance from the house. It should be noted however, that the same measures will also discourage hedgehogs.

It is not permitted to catch or kill adders and other snakes in the wild. Adders found on house grounds may be removed or, if no other alternative is available, may be killed as the last resort. Grass and smooth snakes may never be moved without explicit permission.

The adder (*Vipera berus*) is a protected species. The female is usually brown and the male grey, but there are also completely black specimens.







JONAS FORSBERG/N

Do not take hedgehogs or other wild mammals home with you!

## Birds and mammals

In addition to protected species of plants and animals, all wild birds and mammals are off limits for hunting throughout the country. There are exceptions during hunting seasons on some fifty species, including the elk (moose), roe deer, fallow deer, hare, red fox, certain ducks and other wildfowl. Hunting is not allowed without the permission of those who own the hunting rights.

Unless permission is granted, it is never allowed to catch, injure or kill bats, hedgehogs, dormice, small birds, birds of prey, or other birds and mammals on which there is no hunting season. Neither is it permitted to gather bird's eggs or damage nests.

Do not remove young animals that appear to be abandoned. It does more harm than good, and is not permitted. Mothers often leave their young unattended, but nearly always remain nearby. Also, it is not permitted to keep wild animals without permission.

Specimen of certain rare species are turned over to the state if they are found dead. Any such animal that is discovered must always be reported to the police. The “*state's wildlife*” consists of the bear, wolf, wolverine, lynx, musk ox, Arctic fox, otter, whales, osprey, honey buzzard, barn owl, hawk owl, eagle owl, snowy owl, great grey owl, Ural owl, bittern, puffin, smew, black-necked grebe, avocet, grey-headed woodpecker, white-backed woodpecker, middle spotted woodpecker, kingfisher, roller, hoopoe, golden oriole, lesser white-fronted goose, Caspian tern, black tern, storks, eagles, kites, falcons and harriers.



It is not permitted to catch or kill bats without explicit permission.

MIKAEL GUSTAFSSON/N

Preventive measures are the preferred solution to the problem of damage caused to buildings, grounds or crops by woodpeckers, bats, cranes and other animals that may not be hunted. It is not permitted to remove or disturb such animals without permission. If necessary, the relevant county council should be contacted for advice on appropriate measures.



The hawk owl and the kingfisher are included among the “state’s wildlife”.

## Fish and mussels

It is forbidden to fish for the threatened species wels and freshwater pearl mussel. These are two out of four species subject to fishing which are protected year-round throughout the country.



The freshwater pearl mussel (*Margaritifera margaritifera*) is protected throughout the country.

## Basic consideration and the right of public access

In Sweden, everyone has the right of free access to nature. It is permitted to gather mushrooms, berries and flowers that do not have protected status. But there is always a responsibility to exercise care and consideration for people, wildlife and the natural environment.

It is not permitted to cut down trees or to break off twigs and branches on someone else’s land. Neither does the right of public access include permission to dig up entire plant beds or to gather large quantities of moss and lichen.

Special regulations apply in nature reserves and other protected areas. Often, this includes prohibitions against gathering certain species, in addition to those that are protected nation-wide.

## Exceptions & exemptions

In addition to the exceptions for amphibians and reptiles noted above, it is permitted to collect a few specimens of protected vascular plants, mosses and insects for purposes of documentation. The species in question are specified in the Species Protection Ordinance (2007:845).

Anyone who wishes to collect specimens of protected plant and animal species for scientific or nature-conservation purposes must apply for an exemption from the relevant county administrative board. Applications for exemptions concerning birds and mammals must be submitted to the Swedish Environmental Protection Agency.

County administrative boards should also be contacted for advice on preventive measures against damage caused by animals that may not be hunted, as well as for permission to remove such animals, and to apply for compensation.

## Protected species in Sweden

A complete list of all plant and animal species that are protected throughout Sweden is available on the website of the Environmental Protection Agency at: [www.naturvardsverket.se](http://www.naturvardsverket.se)

Information on which species are protected within individual counties is available on the website of the county administrative boards: [www.lst.se](http://www.lst.se)

Everyone is welcome to enjoy nature according to Sweden's right of public access. It is permitted to gather mushrooms, berries and flowers that are not protected; but consideration must always be shown to animals and the natural environment.



## Additional reading

Ahlén, I. Andrén, C. & Nilsson, G. 1995. *Sveriges grodor, ödlor och ormar*. Naturskyddsföreningen.

Gärdenfors, U. (ed.) 2010. *The 2010 Red List of Swedish Species*. ArtDatabanken, SLU, Uppsala.

## Information on the Internet

ARTDATABANKEN ([www.artdata.slu.se](http://www.artdata.slu.se)): Red lists and data sheets on protected and red-listed species.

SWEDISH COUNTY ADMINISTRATIVE BOARDS ([www.lansstyrelsen.se](http://www.lansstyrelsen.se)): Links to all the individual counties' websites, which include information on protected species.

NATIONAL MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY ([www.nrm.se](http://www.nrm.se)): Information on Swedish plant and animal species.

SWEDISH ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY ([www.naturvardsverket.se](http://www.naturvardsverket.se)): Information on a variety of subjects, including: natural history and nature conservation, living near wildlife (including tips on how to deal with snakes on house grounds), protected and red-listed species, large predators, etc.

SWEDISH AGENCY FOR MARINE AND WATER MANAGEMENT ([www.havochvatten.se](http://www.havochvatten.se)): Is responsible for maintaining Swedish seas, lakes and rivers.

SWEDEN'S ENTOMOLOGICAL SOCIETY ([www.sef.nu](http://www.sef.nu)): Pictures and descriptions of protected species of insects and spiders in Sweden.

## Regulations:

Species Protection Ordinance (2007:845)

Ordinance regarding Fishery, Aqua Culture and Fishery Trade (1994:1716)

Regulation on Hunting (1987:905)

Environmental Code (1998:808) Chapter 8:

Regulations regarding protection of plants and animals.

