

## SÖDERSKÄR-LÅNGÖREN ISLANDS

**Location:** a: Söderskär 60° 07' N, 25° 25' E,  
b: Långören 60° 08' N, 25° 30' E.  
The islands are situated in the middle part of the Gulf of Finland, in the province of Southern Finland and in the city of Porvoo.

**Area:** 9 632 ha, of which Söderskär area 1 382 ha and Långören area 8 250 ha. The area of water is 9 555 ha and of land 77 ha.

**Protection status:** Söderskär has been a bird sanctuary protected by the Nature Conservation Act since 1930. The State Game Research Institute is responsible for the administration and management of the area. A part of the water area is still in private ownership. The Långören area is owned by the state and protected as a bird sanctuary during the breeding season. The areas are already included in the Ramsar Convention sites and in the Natura 2000 network of protected areas.

**Site description:** The area includes the Söderskär group of islands in the outer Finnish archipelago together with surrounding islets, and the low esker island of Långören together with its surrounding 62 small islands and islets. These islands are mostly treeless.

### **International and national importance:**

The breeding seabird fauna of the area is diverse and abundant. The total seabird fauna in 1993 comprised 2 800 pairs in Söderskär and 600 pairs in Långören. The most abundant breeding species was Eider (*Somateria mollissima*) with about 1 500 pairs. Other regular waterfowl species include e.g. Tufted Duck (*Aythya fuligula*), Red-breasted Merganser (*Mergus serrator*), Goosander (*M. merganser*) and Velvet Scoter (*Melanitta fusca*).

The wader fauna of Söderskär islands is diverse. In 1993 the species included Turnstone (*Arenaria interpres*) with 23 pairs, Redshank (*Tringa totanus*) 14 pairs, Oystercatcher (*Haematopus ostralegus*) 12 pairs, Ringed Plover (*Charadrius hiaticula*) 7 pairs and Common Sandpiper (*Actitis hypoleucos*) 5 pairs.

Good numbers of gulls and terns breed (1993) on Söderskär islands: Great Black-backed Gull (*Larus marinus*) with 15 pairs, Lesser Black-backed Gull (*L. fuscus*) 66 pairs, Herring Gull (*L. argentatus*) 380 pairs, Common Gull (*L. canus*) 150 pairs, Arctic Tern (*Sterna paradisaea*) and Common Tern (*S. hirundo*) together about 200 pairs. The Black Guillemot (*Cepphus grylle*) population has decreased during the last decennium; in 1993 there were only 200 breeding pairs.

The number of breeding seabird fauna has high annual fluctuations due to variable weather conditions. The whole area with its surrounding shallow banks is an important resting place for migrating seabirds.

**Protection criteria:** 2b and 3b.

**Changes in ecological character:**

The vegetation on the islands has become more abundant and rich. In this way safe nesting places have been formed, but on the other hand some open-nesting species have decreased.

**Management measures:**

The capture of American Mink (*Mustela vison*) has been intensified.

**Possible threats:** American Mink increasing in numbers, threat from oil accidents and increased leisure boating. The area of Långören which is unguarded has suffered from increased boating and the open season of seabird hunting in autumn. The large number of Herring Gulls has a negative effect on the breeding success of other species.

**Research:** There is a field station of the Finnish Game and Fisheries Research Institute on Söderskär. The bird populations of the area have been monitored regularly since 1949. The field station also functions as a research and ringing station for migrating birds. A vegetation survey of the area has been carried out.

**References:** Grenquist 1965, 1966, Haapanen & Rassi 1980, Hario 1985, 1990a, 1990b, Hario & Stenman 1980, Hario et al. 1986, Hilden & Hario 1993, Paavolainen 1957, Suomalainen 1979, Finnish Legislative Collection 44/76.