

Habitat Protection Areas and Nature Conservation Agreements 2022

In 2022, the Swedish Forest Agency created 103 new habitat protection areas and 55 new nature conservation agreements. This is a marginal increase from the record low number of new area protections in recent years. These 158 protected areas cover almost 1,200 hectares.

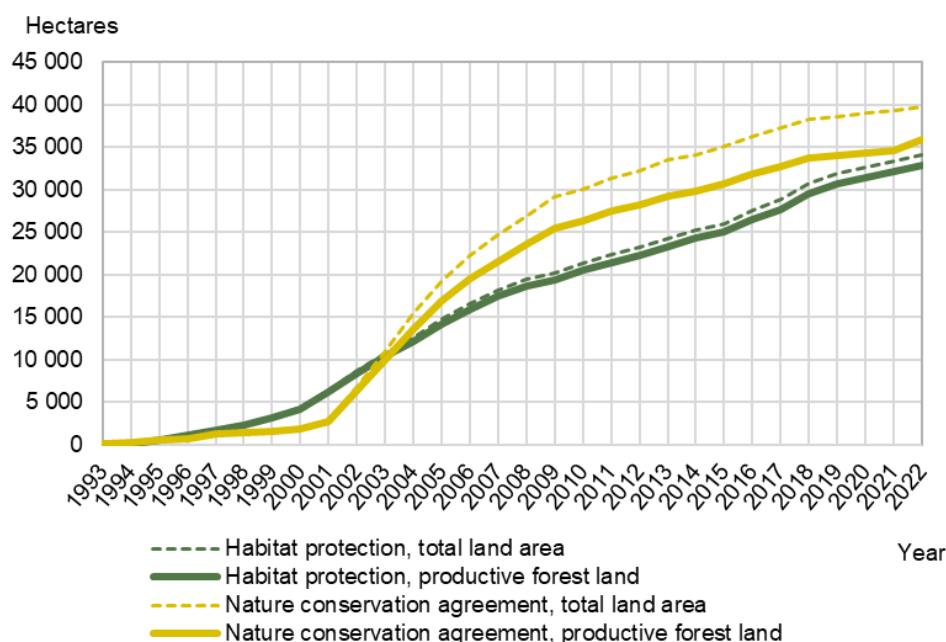
The reason for the low levels in recent years is that the Swedish Forest Agency has had to reserve funds for intrusion compensation for denied logging for forests above the limit for montane forests.

How much area is protected?

A total of 73,900 hectares of land were either habitat protection areas or nature conservation agreements at the end of 2022, of which 68,700 hectares were on productive forest land. Of the productive forest land, 32,900 hectares were in habitat protection areas and 35,800 hectares in nature conservation agreements. See Figure 1.

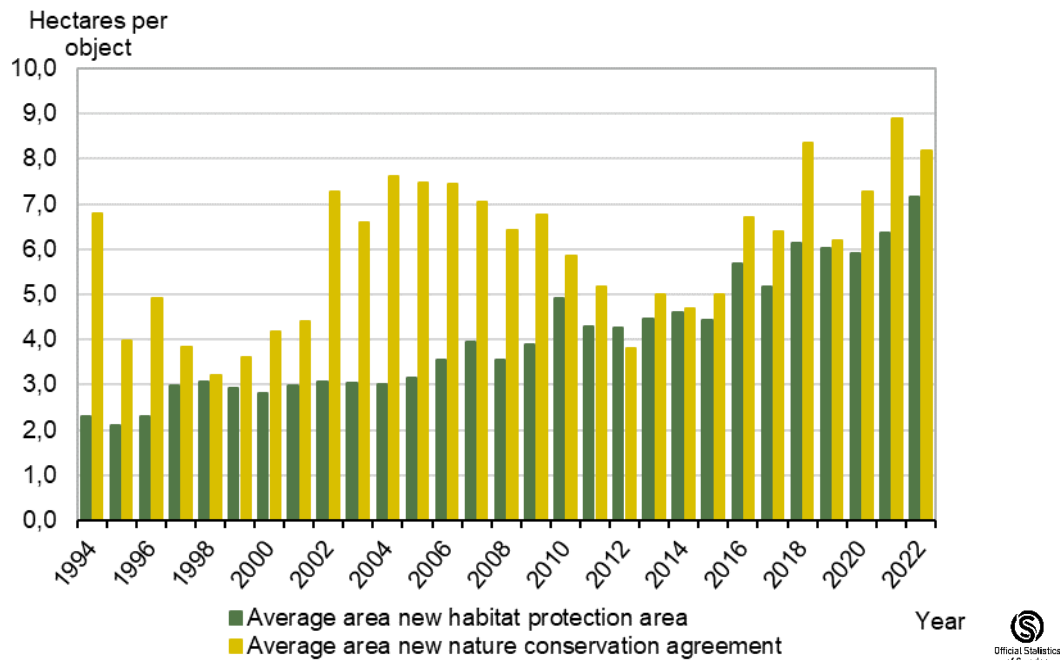
The average productive forest land area for new habitat protection areas in 2022 was 7.2 hectares. For nature conservation agreements, it was 8.2 hectares. The trend is that habitat protection areas have become larger over time, while nature conservation agreements vary more between years. See Figure 2.

Figure 1. Land area and productive forest land within habitat protection areas and nature conservation agreements, hectares.



Source: Swedish Forest Agency

Figure 2. Average productive forest land area in hectares per habitat protection area and nature conservation agreement. The figure shows the average of the new objects each year.

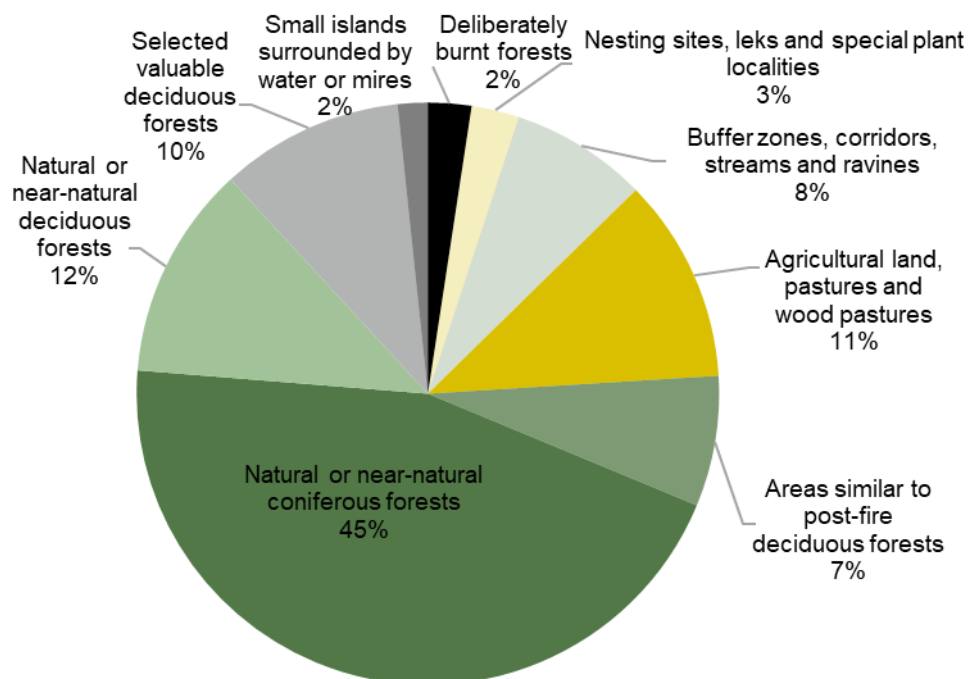


Source: Swedish Forest Agency

What biotope types are protected?

The agreements signed by the Swedish Forest Agency are linked to specific biotopes. There are about 20 different ones. The most common habitat type for nature conservation agreements is natural or near-natural coniferous forests, which is on 16,100 hectares of productive forest land, which is 45% of all productive forest land under nature conservation agreements, see Figure 3.

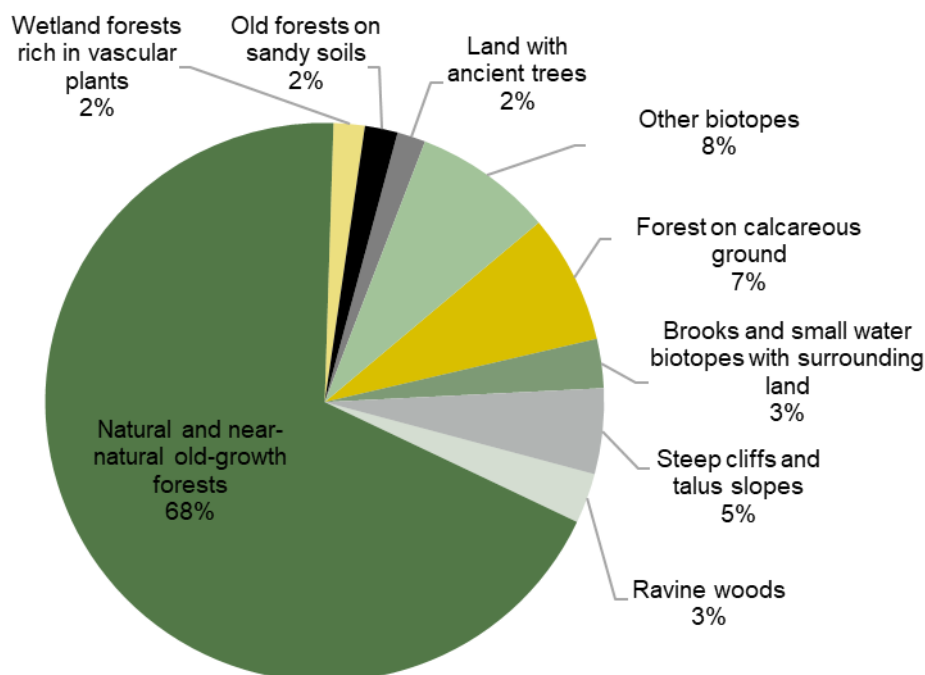
Figure 3 Nature conservation agreements, broken down by habitat types, share of productive forest land area, 2022.



Source: Swedish Forest Agency

The most common biotope type in habitat protection areas is natural and near-natural old growth forests. They make up 22,500 hectares or 68 percent of the productive forest land area in the habitat protections, see Figure 4.

Figure 4. Habitat protection, broken down by biotope types, share of the productive forest land area, 2022.



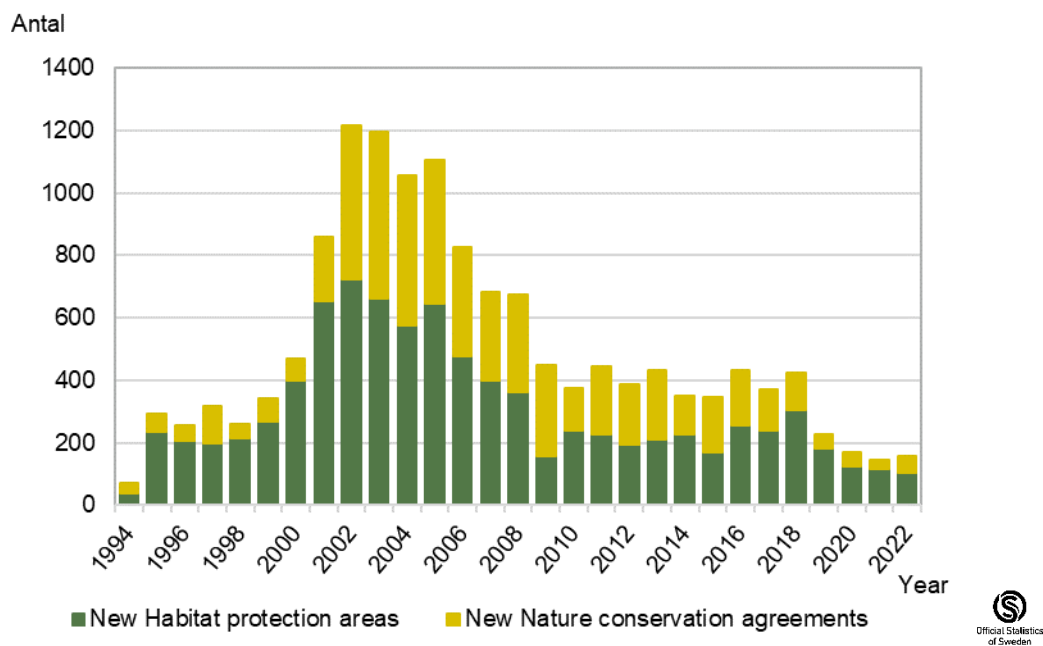
Källa: Skogsstyrelsen



How many protected areas are there?

There are almost 8,800 areas with habitat protection areas and 5,500 with nature conservation agreements formed by the Swedish Forest Agency. In the first half of the 2000s, the number of protected areas increased the most. The highest number was in 2002, when 1,216 formally protected areas were established. The annual average for the period from 1993 to 2022 is approximately 550 new protected areas per year. In recent years, however, the number of new protected areas has remained below average. In 2022, 103 new habitat protection areas and 55 new nature conservation agreements were formed. This is a marginal increase compared to the record low levels of recent years. The total area under new protection in 2022 was 1,200 hectares, which is also a slight increase compared to recent years, but well below pre-2019 levels.

Figure 5. Number of new habitat protection areas and new nature conservation agreements per year



Source: Swedish Forest Agency

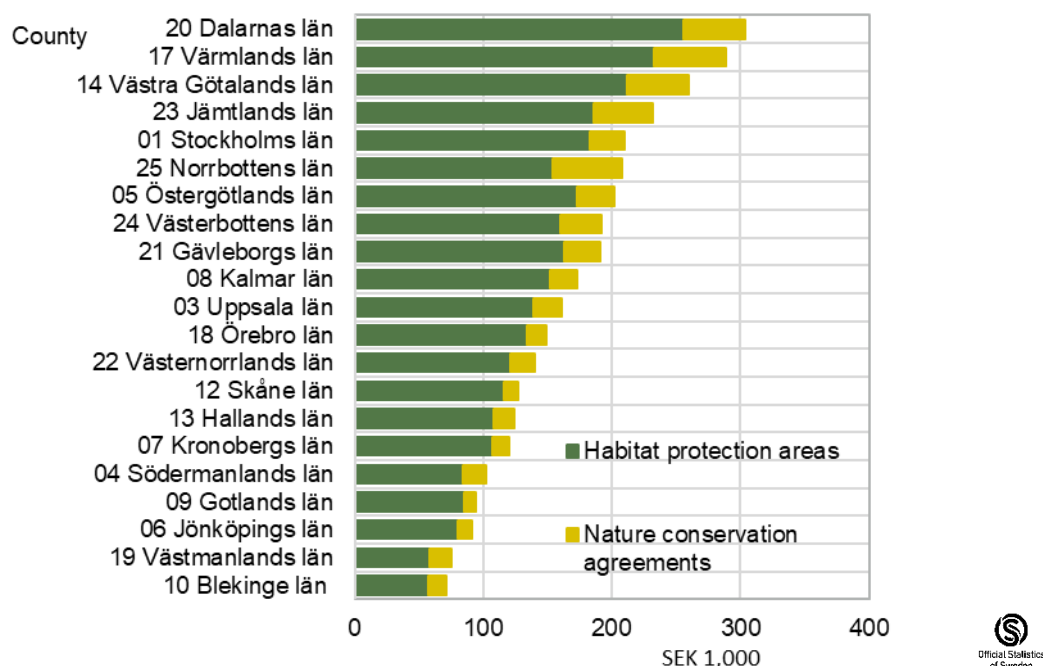
Funding and compensation affect

A major reason for the drop in the level in the 2020s is that most of the allocation has had to be reserved for compensation for intrusion to landowners who apply for felling above the limit for montane forest, where permits are often refused. The landowners are then entitled to compensation for the intrusion, but these areas are not habitat protection areas or nature conservation agreements.

What is the compensation?

The total accumulated compensation is just over SEK 3.5 billion, of which SEK 3 billion for habitat protection areas and SEK 550 million for nature conservation agreements.

Figure 6. Total compensation for the formation of habitat protection areas and for nature conservation agreements per county in 2022, SEK 1,000.



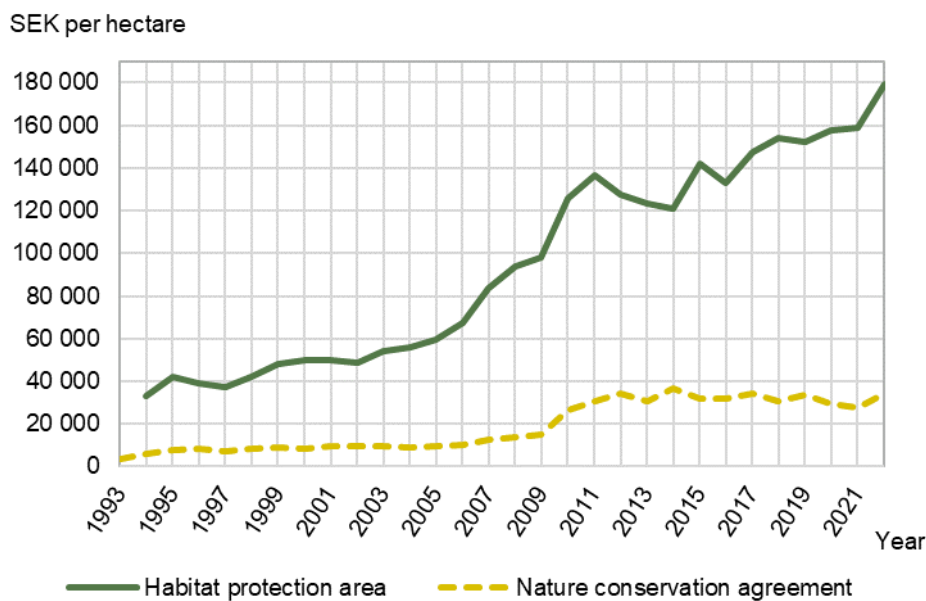
Source: Swedish Forest Agency

The average compensation in 2022 for habitat protection areas was SEK 179,00 per hectare and for nature conservation agreements just under SEK 34,000 per hectare. The average compensation is preliminary because it happens that the Swedish Forest Agency decides on compensation for protection without previously agreeing with the landowner on compensation. In those cases, the compensation will be SEK 0 until an agreement on compensation has been reached or until compensation is determined in court.

In 2009, a 25 percent surcharge was introduced for biotope protection on the infringement compensation in addition to the market value. This increase, as well as the increased reimbursement rates for nature conservation agreements introduced in the early 2010s, can be seen in Figure 7.

In general, the increase in the price of forest properties means, among other things, that the compensation for habitat protection increases over time. For nature conservation agreements, on the other hand, the trend is not increasing, the number of agreements signed per year has decreased sharply in recent years. This means that a few but large agreements with low timber values in terms of area can have an impact on the average level of compensation in the statistics. Short term agreements are also lower compensated than longer ones.

Figure 7. Average preliminary compensation for newly added habitat protection areas and nature conservation agreements*, SEK per hectare of productive forest land.



Source: Swedish Forest Agency

* The graph shows average compensation per hectare in cases where agreement on compensation has been reached.

Habitat protection areas and nature conservation agreements above the limit of montane forests and social values

Above the limit of montane forests, a total of 140 hectares of productive forest land is protected as habitat protection areas and 780 hectares of productive forest land protected as a nature conservation agreement. In 2022, no new habitat protection areas or nature conservation agreements were formed above the limit for montane forests, the same was true for several of the previous years. In 2016, the latest protection above the limit for montane forests was formed, however infringement compensation for denied felling in montane forests has been paid out.

Since 2015, it is possible to sign nature conservation agreements in areas that have high social values. So far, the Swedish Forest Agency has agreed on 15 such areas. They comprise a total of 90 hectares of productive forest land. Here, too, it has been a few years since the last agreement was signed in 2019.

More protected forest

The statistics in this factsheet only cover the formation of habitat protection areas by the Swedish Forest Agency and nature conservation agreements. These formal protections can also be formed by other authorities and municipalities.

There are also other types of formally protected forest land, for example nature reserves. More complete statistics on newly formed formally protected forest areas is given in the statistics on Protected Nature that Statistics Sweden and the Swedish Environmental Protection Agency publish every spring.

As well as statistics on formally protected forest land, statistics on voluntary set-asides, consideration areas and unproductive forest land are published in June. The

statistics for 2022 are not compiled yet, but in 2021 formal protection was formed on a total of 16,400 hectares of productive forest land and in 2020 on 11,700 hectares.

How we compile the statistics

The data is based on the Swedish Forest Agency's internal management system Navet. The hub includes all habitat protection areas decided by the Swedish Forest Agency and signed nature conservation agreements.

One element in the formation of habitat protection areas is to delimit the area in the field. The border is digitized and added to the case management system. In the field, measurement of the volume of forest is also carried out. The data is used for a valuation that forms the basis for the remuneration. A similar procedure exists for conservation agreements.

Decisions on new habitat protection areas and the signing of nature conservation agreements are made continuously during the year.

In January of the following year, we make a summary and an analysis of the past year's work. After that, we publish the results of the official statistics. The statistics refer to site protection decided by 31 December of each year at the latest.

Some nature conservation agreements turn into, for example, nature reserves or expire over time, and the statistics therefore underestimate the amount of nature conservation agreements formed somewhat in previous years.

[Mer information om undersökningen.](#)

Explanation

Habitat protection areas

Habitat protection areas are smaller areas of land or water that provide habitat for endangered animal or plant species or that are otherwise particularly worthy of protection. The governing constitution is the Environmental Code (1998:808). The areas are usually 2 to 10 hectares but can be up to about 20 hectares in size. The landowner receives compensation in an amount equal to the reduced market value of the property with a supplement of 25 percent.

The Swedish Forest Agency, the county administrative board, the municipality and the landowner can take the initiative to form habitat protection areas. The decisions are valid in perpetuity. On forest land, it is usually the Swedish Forest Agency that is responsible for the decisions.

Nature conservation agreements

A nature conservation agreement is a civil law agreement that can be signed between landowners and the state through the Swedish Forest Agency or the county administrative boards. Municipalities can also sign nature conservation agreements. The agreements are limited in time to a maximum of 50 years and are voluntary. The compensation varies depending on the length of time the contract lasts. For a 50-year agreement, the landowner receives 60 percent of the area's root net in compensation.

The purpose of the agreements is to develop and preserve natural values. Since 2015, there is also the possibility of signing agreements for areas with high social values. For these areas, the starting point is to preserve and develop forests with high social values, that is, the values created by human experiences of the forest.

Above the limit of montane forests

The boundary of montane forest is described in the Regulation on the boundaries of montane forest; SKSFS 1991:3.

Productive forest land

Forest land that, according to accepted assessment criteria, can produce on average at least one cubic meter of timber per hectare per year.

Official Statistics of Sweden

The statistics are produced by the Swedish Forest Agency, which is responsible for official statistics in the area.

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