

= Vätsäri Wilderness Area =

The Vätsäri Wilderness Area (Finnish : Vätsäriin erämaa , Swedish : Vätsäriområdet) is located along the northeastern shore of Lake Inari in Inari , northern Finland , stretching all the way to the Finland ? Norway border . The landscape is dominated by taiga forests of Scots pine , bog and bodies of water . The northeastern part rises as a treeless fell ridge . Vätsäri is one of twelve wilderness areas in Lapland and covers an area of 1 @, @ 550 square kilometers (600 sq mi) . The wilderness has one marked trail and a few cabins . The reserve is under the management of Metsähallitus (Administration of Forests) and was established with the other wilderness reserves in 1991 . It is part of Pasvik ? Inari Trilateral Park along with Øvre Pasvik National Park and Øvre Pasvik Landscape Protection Area in Norway , and the joint Norwegian ? Russian Pasvik Nature Reserve .

The area has a short growing season , cold winters , little precipitation and poor soil quality created by the gneiss bedrock . Lake Inari has been affected by acid rain and loss of fish from the Paatsjoki River Hydroelectric Plants . The reserve is an important habitat of the brown bear and also has a large moose population ; reindeer husbandry is practiced by the Samis . Whitefish and vendace are the most common species of fish , the latter being an introduced species .

= = Geography = =

The wilderness area is located on the northeastern shore of Lake Inari and stretches northeastwards into a treeless fell ridge . It is located entirely within the municipality of Inari , and the reserve 's eastern border is the Finland ? Norway border . The landscape consists of taiga forests of Scots pine in the lower areas , bog , thousands of small lakes , and creeks . The reserve covers an area of 1 @, @ 550 square kilometers (600 sq mi) . Most streams in Vätsäri flow into Lake Inari , which has the Pasvik River as its outflow . Construction of the Paatsjoki River Hydroelectric Plants has changed the hydrology considerably , providing for a more stable regulation of Lake Inari , but reducing the flow speed . Water levels are now highest during autumn and lowest during spring , opposite of before .

The bedrock consists of basement gneiss with occasional slate and volcanic rock . The Inari Basin was created after the last glacial period when an ice blockage in the Pasvik River hindered the draining of melted water in the area . The climate is harsh and allows only a limited growing season of between 110 and 120 days . Temperatures may rise to 25 ° C (77 ° F) during summer , but fall to ? 40 ° C (? 40 ° F) in winter . The northeastern part of the reserve is moderated by the Barents Sea and so winter temperatures are higher and there is less snow . Precipitation is 200 to 500 millimeters (8 to 20 in) during the year , half of which falls during the growing season . Not until June does the ice melt . Some lakes in the eastern part of the Wilderness are damaged by acid rain from the Norilsk Nickel plant in Nikel , Russia .

= = History = =

The area was populated in the Stone Age by Inari Sami people shortly after the last glacial period ended about 8000 BC . The first documents from the area are tax records from the 16th century . The Inari Sami originally engaged in reindeer husbandry , but later switched to farming and herding cattle and sheep . The area belonged to the Inari Siida beginning in the Middle Ages . Until the border was closed in 1852 , the Sami from Norway came during winter to herd their reindeer . The border closing caused some Norwegian Sami to settle in the area and continue with reindeer husbandry . This caught on among the Inari Sami , and the amount of husbandry increased during the 20th century . People in the area traveled up Lake Inari and onwards to the coast of Finnmark , Norway , to fish during summer . Records of markets in Finnmark date back to the 16th century , and in the 1880s about 150 people traveled to the coast each year . Logging in the southern part boomed during the 1920s , when logs were driven down the Pasvik River to Elvenes and Jakobsnes in Norway . Previously there were birch forests in the fells , but in the 1960s their leaves were eaten

by the caterpillar of the Autumnal Moth , leaving the fells barren . The construction of the Paatsjoki River Hydroelectric Plants starting in the 1940s had a strong negative effect on the fish population ; in 1976 the authorities therefore enforced the obligatory introduction of fish in Lake Inari .

The twelve wilderness areas in Lapland were all created in 1991 to protect both the natural wilderness and the Sami culture . These areas combined cover an area of 14 @, @ 903 square kilometers (5 @, @ 754 sq mi) , where such activities as road construction and mining are prohibited , as is logging in some areas . Pasvik ? Inari Trilateral Park was established in several steps : Øvre Pasvik National Park was created in 1970 , the Russian part of Pasvik Nature Reserve was established in 1992 , and the Norwegian part created the following year . In 2003 the national park was expanded and Øvre Pasvik Landscape Protection Area was established , creating a continually protected area spanning three countries .

= = Management = =

The wilderness area is managed by Metsähallitus a government agency which manages the state @-@ owned land in Finland . The area is not a strictly protected area , instead falling into the Natura 2000 network . Limitations include the mandatory maintenance of forests in their natural state and a ban on logging . The sale and leasing of land is prohibited , as is construction of permanent roads and mining .

= = Nature = =

The area shares a common brown bear population with Norway and Russia . Other predators include red fox , stoat , pine marten and the rare wolverine and Eurasian lynx . The gray wolf was common until the 1940s . There is also a large population of moose . Inari ? Pasvik has a shared population of 6 @, @ 000 reindeer , which are herded to different areas depending on the season . Fences have been installed to hinder reindeer from wandering across the national borders .

Whitefish and vendace are the most common fish species in Lake Inari , the latter having been accidentally naturalized . Lake trout can be caught in creeks . Other fish found in the park include Arctic char , grayling , pike , perch , burbot , three @-@ spined stickleback , ninespine stickleback and minnow . Stocking with fish has resulted in the introduction of Atlantic salmon , vendace and lake trout .

The lower areas of the wilderness area are covered by a taiga forest of Scots pine . Less common trees include downy birch , goat willow , aspen and rowan . Logging in the past has mostly occurred in the southern part (" Kessi ") , a large proportion of Vätsäri 's forests being old @-@ growth forests . The barren soil makes for poor growth conditions and most of the ground vegetation in the forests is subshrubs . One area with limestone rock features green spleenwort . The reserve is located in an area between a western and eastern vegetation zones , giving rise to unique combinations of species , such as Siberian spruce and red cottongrass .

= = Recreation = =

Most recreation takes place around Lake Inari , although a limited number of visitors hike into the fells . The reserve is a demanding hiking area and inexperienced hikers are recommended to avoid traversing the wilderness . The freedom to roam grants everyone the right to hike , ski and short @-@ term camping everywhere in the area . The park can be accessed from National Road 971 and 969 ; public transport is available to Nellim .

The Piilola Trail is the only marked trail in the park ; it is 35 kilometers (22 mi) and connects the reserve to Øvre Pasvik National Park . Its northern starting point is at Sortbryststjern in Norway and the southern end is at Kessintie Road . The trail is so demanding that it is not recommended for beginners . Lake Inari offers good fishing , making it a popular visitor attraction in the reserve . Boating on the lake is popular and harbors are located in Inari , Veskonieni and Nellim , in addition to several places where boats can be launched . The open parts of the lake can be stormy . There is

a canoeing route which connects Lake Inari to several adjacent lakes , with two open wilderness huts along the route . During winter there is a snowmobile route between Nuorgam , Näättä , Sevetijärvi , Nellim , Ivalo and Inari .