# [***Finland : Biodiversity loss can also be combated on transport routes***](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:69GP-TDR1-F11P-X18S-00000-00&context=1516831)

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**Body**

Traffic and transport routes play a major role in ***biodiversity*** ***loss*** for better or for worse. Roads fragment living environments and traffic causes emissions, among other things. On the other hand, the environment of fairways can provide favourable living conditions for many species.

Safeguarding ***biodiversity*** and the functioning of ecosystems is a matter of life and death.

"Alongside climate change, ***biodiversity*** ***loss*** has become one of the greatest threats to humanity. Solving ***biodiversity*** ***loss*** and improving the situation requires action at all levels, both internationally and locally," says Tapio Ojanen, Deputy Director of the Department for Transport Networks and Service Level at the Finnish Transport Infrastructure Agency.

The topic is topical in Finland, as the Ministry of the Environment has launched a cross-sectoral programme mentioned in Petteri Orpo's Government Programme preparation of the National ***Biodiversity*** StrategyThis is an external link.

Traffic and traffic routes contribute to ***biodiversity*** ***loss***. In Finland, the Finnish Transport Infrastructure Agency is responsible for state transport routes. In total, we are responsible for approximately 78,000 kilometres of roads, just under 6,000 kilometres of railways and 16,300 kilometres of waterways.

"In total, the Finnish Transport Infrastructure Agency has approximately 100,000 kilometres of traffic routes. We are a significant land user in Finland, owning approximately 2,000 square kilometres of land. In terms of surface area, we are talking about an area more than twice the size of the Helsinki metropolitan area. The significance is increased by the fact that there are routes all over Finland," Ojanen points out.

Because the transport network is extensive, it splits up many areas.

"For example, a road or railway can split a nature area. This, in turn, affects living environments in many ways," Ojanen says.

According to current knowledge, traffic routes and traffic affect nature and the species living in it in at least six different ways:

1) Barrier effects (making it more difficult for animals and sometimes plants to pass around) 2) Road fatalities

3) Disturbances (e.g. noise, light and emissions can interfere with the success of animals and plants) 4) Habitat ***loss*** (previously undeveloped land becomes built-up)

5) New natural values (the periphery of fairways forms new habitats) 6) Alien species (construction and management of pathways may expose them to the spread of alien species)

Most of the effects of traffic are negative. When a habitat becomes fragmented, it can also have unpredictable effects. Some species do not tolerate traffic and human disturbance as well as others. And if one species disappears from the site, the entire ecosystem can change.

"It is important to remember that one person's ***loss*** can be another's happiness. New environments can be extremely important for the survival of some species. Many meadow and meadow species thrive on the periphery of fairways," Ojanen says.

Ways to combat ***biodiversity*** ***loss***

Fortunately, negative effects can be prevented to some extent. For example, barrier effects and traffic fatalities can be reduced by building crossing points for animals. These include green bridges used by many animals.

"Green bridges and tunnels reduce the adverse effects of traffic on different species. For example, in the E18 MuurlaLohja project, several tunnels were built on the Turku motorway. Thanks to the tunnels, the sensitive environment of the area is less disturbed by traffic," says Ojanen.

The tunnels on the Turku motorway are one good example of how ***biodiversity*** ***loss*** can be prevented already on the drawing board. When new routes are planned, the aim is to avoid, for example, building a new terrain corridor. Various studies and studies also provide information on how the fairway would affect nature.

However, if construction is chosen, it is important to take ***biodiversity*** into account in the chosen solutions. For example, in the final stages of a construction project, landscaping and landscaping are important ways to reduce adverse impacts.

Systematic planning and the importance of information are also reflected in the maintenance of existing routes. For example, the timing of mowing takes into account the safeguarding of ***biodiversity***. Mowing is also used to prevent the spread of invasive alien species.

"Preventing ***biodiversity*** ***loss*** must be done at all levels: design, construction and maintenance. We have taken many steps to prevent ***biodiversity*** ***loss*** and more needs to be done. Important means include raising awareness and updating the operating principles of transport infrastructure management if necessary. It is also a question of strategic choices: how much are we prepared to invest in, for example, reducing the barrier impact of the existing transport network," Ojanen sums up.

The article is based on a presentation given by Tapio Ojanen at the Finnish Transport Infrastructure Agency's Environment Day on 12.10.2023.

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