# [***Finland : In 2023, the Helmi programme took significant steps to slow down biodiversity loss***](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:605H-K2Y1-JDJN-61FJ-00000-00&context=1516831)

TendersInfo

February 24, 2024 Saturday

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**Length:** 581 words

**Body**

In 2023, the Helmi habitat programme actively promoted habitat restoration and management. The programme is jointly organised by the Ministry of the Environment and the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry for 20212030.

The restoration and management of bird waters progressed well in 2023. The renovation work was completed at 34 sites and continuous maintenance was arranged at 16 sites. Catches of invasive alien species, mink and raccoon dogs, continued at 72 valuable bird water sites. A total of 24 new waterfowl sanctuaries and resting areas were established.

"The Helmi programme has brought together in an exemplary way the parties and actions preventing ***biodiversity*** ***loss***. For example, the restoration of valuable bird waters and the monitoring of their impacts are carried out in cooperation between water area managers, environmental administration, contractors, hunters and birdwatchers. The strengthening of bird populations requires this kind of good and long-term cooperation," says Minister of the Environment and Climate Change Kai Mykknen.

The seaside meadows in the Natura areas of Northern Ostrobothnia are managed with agri-environmental support on a total of about 4,000 hectares. Among other things, the critically endangered marsh cockerel has benefited from management measures. Despite the nationwide low of the species, the nesting population in the managed coastal meadows of Northern Ostrobothnia has more than doubled in ten years.

"The Finnish Wildlife Agency has investigated the motives of those who caught mink and raccoon dogs. One of the biggest motivators turned out to be the opportunity to have a positive impact on the state of bird populations and nature reserves," says Minister of Agriculture and Forestry Sari Essayah.

Restoration of coastal meadows protects nests of endangered birds

Encouraged by the good results, the management of seaside meadows has been expanded and intensified in the Helmi programme. For example, in the Natura area of the Siikajoki bird waters in Tauvo's outer beak, Metshallitus Parks & Wildlife Finland has restored a total of about 100 hectares of habitat for the marsh cockerel and several other endangered wetland bird species. The area has been cleared, reeds removed and annual grazing or mowing has begun on an additional 52 hectares.

The restoration of coastal meadows reduces the risk of destroying bird nests. Birds that require an open nesting environment are able to nest further away after clearing, protected from predators moving along the edge of the forest. Bird nests on cleared dunes are also safe from sea water rises caused by increased high winds. In addition to bird populations, management also improves the habitats of several rare and endangered marine plant and insect species.

The dredging of the Helmi bird water restoration in Lake Ansionjrvi in Hausjrvi was completed in 2023. Dredging opened up a more diverse habitat and nesting environment for aquatic and shorebird life. In total, more than 15,000 cubic metres of sediment was excavated and transferred to the site. The work was completed just before the lake froze in late October.

The aim of the restoration work is to reduce the overgrowth of the shallow lake bay areas and to create new water areas in already overgrown areas. Excavated ponds, channels, wetland pools and nesting islands form new nesting sites and feeding areas for bird chicks in Lake Ansionjrvi. A more diverse beach area also benefits other animal species in the area.

**Classification**

**Language:** ENGLISH

**Publication-Type:** Web Publication

**Journal Code:** 812

**Subject:** AGRICULTURE DEPARTMENTS (90%); ***BIODIVERSITY*** (90%); ***BIODIVERSITY*** CONSERVATION (90%); BIRDS (90%); CONSERVATION (90%); ECOSYSTEMS & HABITATS (90%); ENVIRONMENTAL DEPARTMENTS (90%); HABITAT CONSERVATION (90%); LAND RECLAMATION (90%); MAMMALS (90%); NATURAL RESOURCES MANAGEMENT (90%); WILDLIFE CONSERVATION (90%); COASTAL CONSERVATION (89%); FORESTRY & ENVIRONMENT (89%); GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENTS & AUTHORITIES (89%); LAND CONSERVATION (89%); ORNITHOLOGY (89%); WILDLIFE (89%); AGRICULTURE & ENVIRONMENT (78%); BIRDING (78%); CLIMATE CHANGE (78%); DOGS (78%); GOVERNMENT ADVISORS & MINISTERS (78%); LAKES (78%); PARKS & PLAYGROUNDS (78%); SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE (78%); WATER CONSERVATION (78%); WATER RESOURCES (78%); INVASIVE SPECIES (77%); MANAGERS & SUPERVISORS (73%); INSECTS & ARACHNIDS (72%); WEATHER (68%); INVESTIGATIONS (65%)

**Industry:** AGRICULTURE DEPARTMENTS (90%); FORESTRY & ENVIRONMENT (89%); AGRICULTURE & ENVIRONMENT (78%); PARKS & PLAYGROUNDS (78%); SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE (78%); WATER CONSERVATION (78%)

**Load-Date:** February 24, 2024

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