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GULDBORGSUND



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Atlantic Isles



Naturpark  
Maribosøerne



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Seminar of the EUROPARC Nordic-Baltic Section

## Public Health and Experience of Nature – the Role of Protected Areas

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### Nature Park Maribosøerne



The nature park comprises 4 lakes surrounded by meadows, broad-leaved forest, reed beds, marshes, farmland, and the old historical town of Maribo. The landscape is protected by the Danish Act of Nature Conservation in accordance with the EEC Bird and Habitat Directives. It is also a wildlife reserve, and a Ramsar site – the only Danish lakes on the global list of wetlands to be protected.

The lakes are eutrophic and shallow, with high densities of submerged water plants, many islands, bays, and peninsulas. All these create an exceptionally long “coastline” and a highly productive ecosystem, with many places for birds and animals to feed and breed. In many areas none or very little human activity is accepted – except at a distance.



The area of the nature park covers 50 square km, of which one quarter is covered by lakes. One of these, lake Søndersø, is the eighth largest in Denmark and has the most islands (22 in all). It has high densities of pikes. The water is often clear to the shallow bottom, on the average less than 2 m deep. Near the town of Maribo sailing is permitted – otherwise not.



The broad-leaved forest is a mixture of oak, beech, willow, birch, alder, etc. with several square kilometres with no logging allowed. It contains many rare species of mushrooms and insects. Roe deer and fallow deer live in the forest together with badgers, beech marten, stoat, and lesser weasel. Hunting is allowed in most parts in the forests, but restricted on the water.

Among the breeding birds are (in number of pairs counted): 1800 cormorants, 35 bitterns, 125 grey herons, 390 great crested grebes, 60 red-necked grebes, 105 little grebes, 7 black-necked grebes, 25 mute swans, 550 greylag geese, 270 pochards, 10 red-headed ducks, 250 tufted ducks, 300 mallards, 1200 coots, 125 water rails, 1-5 Savi's warblers, and 1-2 great reed warblers.



The white-tailed eagle – the symbol of the park – also breeds here. One pair has since 1995 raised 20 young. Recently, 19 wintering white-tailed eagles were counted - the highest number counted at one place in Denmark. During the winter and the migration period, thousands of geese and ducks, amongst those several hundreds of little merganser can be seen. The geese are feeding on the harvested fields, and many of the diving ducks are flying to the sea, and feeding during the night.



People have lived and flourished around the lakes since the Stone Age. The landscape tells the story from then to now. Many ancient monuments from the Bronze and Iron Ages can be found, as well as numerous ruins of medieval castles. The town of Maribo (Maria's home) was built around the Monastery of Birgitta, and significant manor houses dominate the landscape.

Today, around 6.000 people are living in the tranquil town of Maribo. It contains the new city hall of the municipality of Lolland, many shops, a camp site, hotels, and restaurants. The Nuns of Birgitta have recently resettled next to the cathedral. The historical railway, an open air museum, and a collection of historical breeds of domesticated animals should also be mentioned.



The administration of the nature park, founded in 1992, is today shared by the municipalities of Guldborgsund and Lolland. Most of the land is private, with the manor house of Engestofte as the largest landowner. The manor house of Knuthenborg, the Municipality of Lolland, and the Environment Ministry also own significant areas. A nature school is situated next to the lake.