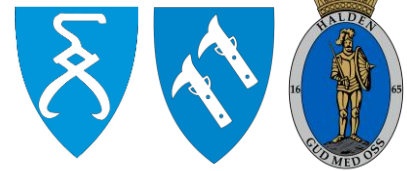


Intermunicipal strategy for biodiversity



Four municipalities started in 2022 a joint effort to look into working across municipal borders to better protect and improve biodiversity and natural habitats on a wider scale, than only locally. The idea behind is to create dependency and more cooperation on preservation and restoration of nature and having the municipalities push each other forward. An annual trophy will be handed out to the municipality with the best measure or that is clearly in the lead. In 2025 three out of four adopted the strategy.

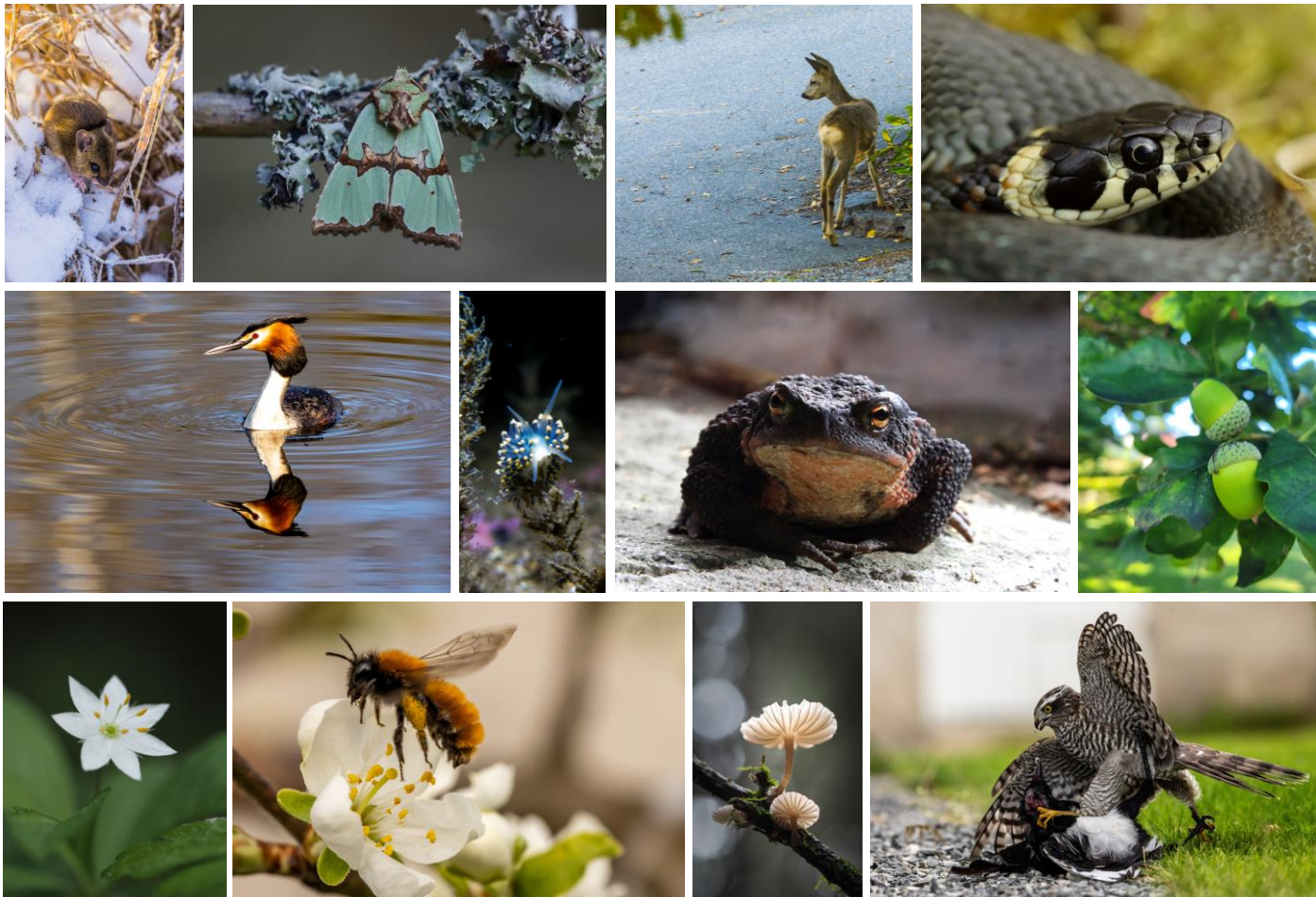
The Halden river basin connects the four municipalities, and there has been a long history of cooperation, from building a canal system with locks to transport timber, to later cooperation on building resilient communities and towns, water quality and food production and on business development and tourism.

What happens when one municipality plans to build next to a wetland that is an important habitat for the municipal bird of their neighbor? What happens

when all municipals just “takes a little piece here and there” on a regional level? What rights have a downstream stakeholder when industry gets approved a new release to water?

These are questions we aim to get more focus on from stakeholders, policy makers and administrators. We have seen on a national and regional level a “piece by piece” degradation of nature, where every local authority only see their own little part, in stead of looking to the effects on the larger scale. Having an intermunicipal cooperation and dependency to protect and preserve natural habitats and biodiversity might help to lift the viewpoint from local to regional.

In order to find the best solutions and to have efficient decision making without making irreversible effects on biodiversity, the local authority needs to have a broad knowledge of how to do so. By cooperating an aim in the strategy is to learn from each other, share best practices and evaluate each other to improve the processes.

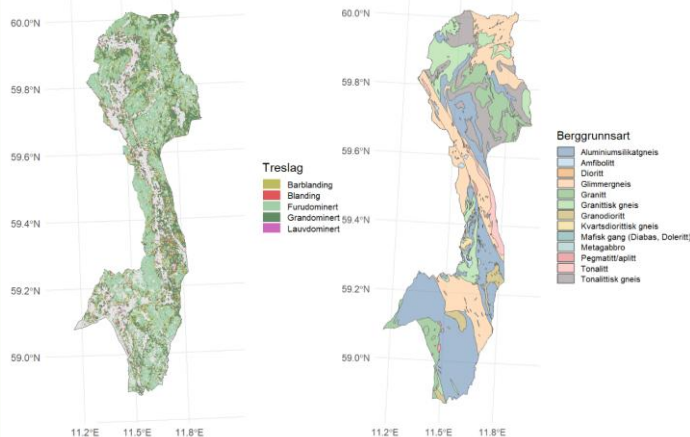


The knowledge basis

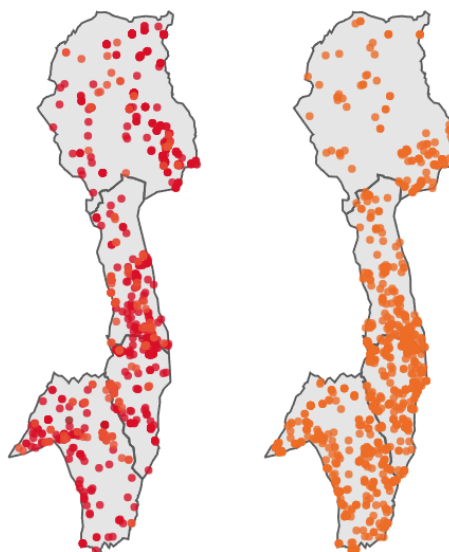
To ensure that decisions are made on a basis of knowledge, a big effort was put in to building a document to comprise of the knowledge available at the time of making the plan. This included everything from the natural baseline for biodiversity, such as geology, climate, landuse and water sheds. The document then further explore what we know of different species and taxa in the region, taking in to account everything from algae, lichens and rotifers to mammals and vascular plants, their endangered species within that taxa and the invasive species within the region.

An interesting find from the assembling of the knowledge basis was to look at who have done the registration of the different species. Volunteers are here shown what immense important role they have in building the knowledge that we have today. For example, for birds there was made over 270 000 registrations of nearly 300 species of bird within the period of 2000 til 2023, and where 94% of the total was made from Birdlife volunteers.

The document was also digitalised to include searchable tables and maps to make sure more of the details of the knowledge base was available to both the policy makers and the stakeholders. A weakness is that data will have to be manually updated from time to time, to ensure the most recent registrations. It is made clear on the web materials that this can not be used alone, but together with the national data bases.



- Kategori
- 1: Kritisk truet (CR)
 - 2: Sterkt truet (EN)
 - 3: Sårbar (VU)
 - 4: Nær truet (NT)



Over: Map of endangered vascular plants in the region
To the left: Maps of forest type registration and geology

Goals, aims and measures

To achieve consensus on a strategy that puts biodiversity and nature higher than it has previously been on the agenda could be a challenge. In a public hearing the suggested strategy was both called to invasive for development of the municipality but also toothless and to weak by volunteers from the environmental side. A sign of a document that has found a middle ground where no one is satisfied.

Being an intermunicipal plan it became evident in the working group that we could not have demands and measures that were too specific, due to the differences in the four municipalities, but also with the challenge of having no room for amendments in before adoption by the municipal councils, with four different sounding strategies. Therefore, the goals and the aims are specific, but the actual measures to reach the goals are up to each municipality to decide.

Now the work starts with the implementation of the strategy.



Possible partnerships

We are looking for sibling regions that work on a regional level with implementations of measures to preserve and protect biodiversity and natural habitats. It would be positive to have a region where a plan, strategy or other policy guidelines have been decided upon by local authorities to ensure this to be taken in to account when developing local communities and towns.

We have spent a lot of time building the documents and the knowledge bank, but with entering the implementation process we need to also build the idea bank for measures. For now, many of the aims rely on information and dissemination to the public, to make sure they can implement their own efforts. Further we need to also implement measures by the municipality, through allocation of public funding in the municipal budgets. In 2025 there has been smaller initiatives, where local seeds for flowering plants have been handed out, and constructed nesting sites for vulnerable species.

