

FAUNA

The area is rich in species of birds (40 species). The bog lakes on the eastern side of the wetlands are temporary homes for various migrating water and marsh birds, such as cranes, bean geese, white-fronted geese and whooper swans. The protected area is a safe habitat for ospreys, capercaillies and grouses. Golden eagles, merlins and horned grebes can also be met.

As for mammals, beavers are quite numerous in the protected area. Roe, elks, grey hares, mountain hares, foxes, and wild hogs also live here permanently. It is possible to meet even a bear or a wolf.

RARE PLANTS

In the protected area some rare species of plants, such as the Austrian rippensame, water lobelia and lake quillwort, which belong to protected category II, as well as the greater butterfly-orchid, bird's-nest orchid, creeping lady's tresses, wolf's-foot clubmoss, northern running-pine, and northern ground-pine of protected category III grow.

FOR HIKERS

To get an overview of the protected area, visit the information cabin with an exposition at Lake Valgejärv. You can take in the bog and forest on the Meenikunno hiking trail, which consists of a 2.4-kilometre-long board trail and a 3.4-kilometre-long forest path. A splendid view of the bog opens from the 11-metre-high observation tower at Liipsaare. You are allowed to put up your tent only at Lake Mustjärv. There are outdoor fireplaces at the Liipsaare Forest Hut, at the Päikeseloojangu Forest House and on the shores of Lake Valgejärv and Lake Mustjärv.

In the Meenikunno Nature Reserve, it is prohibited to stay at the Nohipalo, Oodsipalo and Vinso Conservation Zones from 1st March to 30th June, and at the Saapasaarte Conservation Zone from 15th March to 15th July.



Photo: Peat moss, M. Kala

DOS AND DON'TS FOR VISITORS

- Keep the protected area clean, do not drop litter.
- Put up your tent and make a fire only at the prepared and marked places.
- You can pick berries, mushrooms and other forest goods in the nature reserve.
- In order to preserve the oligotrophy of Lake Valgejärv, you should bathe only in Lake Mustjärv.
- A visit by or event with more than 50 participants should be co-ordinated with the administrative authority of the protected area.
- Do not cycle outside the trails and paths.
- Drive your motor vehicle only on the provided roads and park it only in the car park.

When you see damage done to the nature, sights or visiting objects, inform the Environmental Inspectorate by phone 1313.



ADMINISTRATIVE AUTHORITY

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MEENIKUNNO Nature Reserve



Photo: Open Bog, M. Kala

MEENIKUNNO NATURE RESERVE

The Meenikunno Nature Reserve was founded in 1981 as a protected wetland. In 1999, the protected area was enlarged up to 2,651 hectares. The objective of the nature reserve is to maintain and protect the unique bog, the lakes and bumps at Nohipalu as well as the habitats of protected species.

LANDSCAPE

The protected area is located on the plateau of South-Estonia. The prevailing surface forms are moraines and bogs. In the south of the bogs, the Nohipalu bumps are located, the most expressive of which are the hills of Kamarusmägi and Tuudipalu. The height of the bumps is 10-15 metres.

BOG

The south-western part of the bog arose when a body of water overgrew after the Ice Age more than 8,000 years ago. The development of the rest of the bog has started in a relatively unique way for Estonia: the bog peat has sedimented directly on the sand.

The peat layers of the Meenikunno bog, which are up to six metres thick, are saturated with water but the sand beneath them is saturated only partially, so that the bog is 'hanging' on dry sandstone. This means that the ground water is deep down and there is a dry layer under the bog.

The bog with the approximate area of 1,500 hectares is predominantly covered with scattered woods, but there are also several bog pools and lakes (Kamarusjärv, Middle Suujärv and Big Suujärv). Bog islands are abundant, where old pine trees grow. The largest of the islands, Pähnisaar, is, however, covered with groves of birches and aspens.



LAKES VALGEJÄRV (VALGÕJÄRV) AND MUSTJÄRV

In the protected area, two lakes at Nohipalu, located close to each other but having totally different characteristics, are worth attention. These lakes, rich in rare species, have big scientific significance.

Lake Valgejärv (White Lake) with its sandy shores has very clear water due to the very low level of nutrients. Its name comes from the limestone layer in its bottom. Lake Valgejärv feeds from precipitation but it also depends on changes of the level of groundwater. A slow flow of groundwater, which gets its water from the whirlpools on the edges of the Meenikunno bog, passes through the lake. Thus the lake's water level depends on the inflow of the bog water.

Lake Mustjärv (Black Lake), however, has brownish acidic water, rich in organic compounds. Its shores are low and boggy, and its bottom is covered with brown gyttja. The inflows are a bog ditch and a spring stream, the outflow is the Niitsiku stream.



Photo: Grouse lek in spring, M. Muts