

Fishing industry in Ostrobothnia 2010



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Ostrobothnian Fisheries Association – a lively 80-year-old association!

The Ostrobothnian Fisheries Association (Österbottens Fiskarförbund) will celebrate its 80th anniversary this year – a respectable age for an active association! The association was founded in order to support professional fishing in Ostrobothnia in different ways. The main task was to look after the interests of the trade and develop and support the necessary opportunities needed in order to utilise the sea resources, support the conditions required for professional fishermen to make a living, as well as the consumers' possibilities to have fresh domestic fish on their tables.

Today, these aims are equally important. The trend to prioritise food produced in the area and use local primary products is positive for the trade. Unfortunately seals, cormorants and quotas and restrictions have been testing the patience of the fishermen, and as a result many fishermen have stopped fishing professionally. Therefore not only has the association an important task in supporting the working conditions within professional fishing, but also in looking after the water owners' interests, managing the fish populations, as well as co-operating with sport fishermen and other fishing organisations. Project work is one important part of the association's activities today, since the financing of the association's activities requires its own initiative and sources of income.

Fishing is still an active industry in Ostrobothnia compared to many other parts of Finland; here we also still have the main part of the domestic fishing-equipment industry. Fish commerce, fish processing and fishing tourism also support the trade. The task of the Ostrobothnian Fisheries Association, in the form of looking after the entire fishing sector, is extremely important.

Over a number of years I have had the opportunity to work together with a happy and cheerful team of professional fishermen within the association and its board, and with a knowledgeable and professional group of workers. It has been rewarding in many ways, especially I have learned to appreciate the straightforwardness and sense of humour among the professional fishermen, as well as a diverse and solid grounding of the branch possessed by the employees within the association.

The association is celebrating its 80th anniversary working. There are many organisations within fishing, and through good co-operation we will get the best results. Therefore, we would like to honestly thank our good colleagues and co-operation partners for their good and rewarding help given for the benefit of the trade.



Helena Boucht-Lindeman
chairman, Ostrobothnian Fisheries Association

Fishing needs politicians

Professional fishing in Finland is fighting great challenges. In ten years, the number of professional fishermen has halved, and at the same time the seal- and cormorant problem, as well as the diminished number of fish, threaten the future within the fishing industry. Political action is now needed to safeguard professional fishing in our country.

We Finns eat a lot of fish and we prefer Finnish food. The trend that we have seen during the past few years will soon lead to a situation whereby Finnish fish is very rarely seen on our plates. According to my opinion, politicians have not yet woken up and realised that strong measures are needed to support professional fishing in the future. However, we cannot solve all the problems with political decisions alone. On the other hand, there are many questions that can be solved if there is a political will. For example, we should regulate the seal- and cormorant population more actively than today. We should also have a serious discussion about professional fishing compared to sport fishing. There is a conflict here, because some people think that sport fishing in the rivers of Lapland is more important than the opportunities for professional fishermen fishing salmon in the Bothnian Bay.

Many challenges within fishing are decided within domestic policies. However, the common fishing policies are being revised at the EU-level. At this level I have initiated the question concerning a separate policy for small-scale coastal fishing. The seal-and cormorant problems are also mentioned in the European Parliament's position concerning the reform we approved last winter. The new policies are going to come into force from 2013. Personally I look forward to policies that place more consideration on the needs and demands of the different regions.

One other important question within fishing is the state of the Baltic Sea. Our sea is in bad shape, which can be seen, among other things, in the form of less fish in the sea. We must make more of an effort to restore the eco balance of the Baltic Sea. There is a clear connection between the fish population and the condition of the sea.

Professional fishing needs more friends – friends who will make sure there is a future for the industry and that the Finnish consumers will be able to eat domestic fish.



Carl Haglund

The writer is a member of the European Parliament and vice-chairman for the Parliament's fishing board

Greetings from the Regional Council of Ostrobothnia

Since fish is a natural resource that everyone benefits from, our coastal fishermen should be allowed to work with it. Thanks to coastal fishing, we have access to the natural resources for fish processing and fish commerce all around the country; and consumers get healthy ecologically-raised food on their tables. Without fishing we wouldn't have access to Finnish natural fish all year round. The alternative is to import even more fish from abroad, or in other words, export more and more money and work places from the country.

I want to briefly describe how important it is that the Ostrobothnian Fisheries Association exists today, and how important it was that the association was founded 80 years ago.

Fishing is an important livelihood in the coastal and archipelago villages in Ostrobothnia. When seen in a national perspective, Ostrobothnia is an important fishing region. Here we can find approximately one third of all the professional fishermen in the coastal area. Unfortunately, the number of professional fishermen has decreased during the past few years, and in the national forecast it is expected that during the next ten years the number of fishermen will decrease by as much as half the current level. However, despite the decreasing number of professional fishermen, fish catches have increased to record levels. And although fishing has become more effective, the question still to ask concerns whether fishing has become more effective at the expense of traditional coastal fishing.

In Ostrobothnia we can find a great deal of the country's total fishing-related activities, especially when taking into consideration that most Finnish fishing equipment is manufactured in Ostrobothnia.

Professional fishing along the coast shows large variations concerning the size of the catch, which makes the economic situation very unstable for coastal fishermen. A comparison between the coastal catches and the catches brought in by fishing boats > 10 m, shows that the large fishing boats can only supply us with Baltic herring, sprat, salmon and whitefish, while the coastal fishing supplies the variety: Baltic herring, salmon, trout, whitefish, smelt, id, roach, pike, perch, pike perch and burbot. The varied needs of consumers can be satisfied through coastal fishing, and not by open sea fishing alone.

When looking at fish consumption, it is obvious that the assortment of fish and fish products has grown. Today, rapidity and logistics are becoming even more important factors for fish consumers. Those days when the total fish catch increased rapidly seem to be over, so in the future we must think of developing the entire fish-processing process. In Finland more fish is consumed on average than in Europe. And this consumption is increasing all the time. The fastest growing segment on the fish product market is ready-made food products as well as fresh-fish products. These are issues we need to consider when talking about the development of coastal fishing, especially since we can see that an ever increasing part of fish products are based on imported, farmed fish.

The establishment of new economic opportunities within coastal fishing has been dependent on investments in trade and processing. These opportunities have also improved the fishermen's socio-economic situation. One of the reasons why the Ostrobothnian Fisheries Association was originally founded was to organise the fish trade on a co-operative basis. As extra fish was caught, investment in freeze stores was subsequently needed. Today we can see

an increasing demand for processed fish products, which has led to more investments in both small-scale and large-scale processing, which in turn has led to a diversification of the income within fishing.

But the concerns for the fishermen's economic conditions remain. And that is nothing new. In spring 1932, a national committee was appointed with the task of suggesting measures to remove such circumstances that could be harmful for the fishing industry. The initiative came from the Member of Parliament, Otto Jacobsson, from Vaasa. The committee made a thorough report, in which views on the following were presented: the fish population and its maintenance and increase, fishing methods and fishing equipment, the necessity of building fishing harbours and fishing lighthouses, facilitation of fish transportation, fish prices, loans for the acquisition of fishing equipment and boats, fishing rights for fishermen without land, organisation of the fish trade by starting common fish trade companies, compensations for storm damages, etc. Seen as a whole, the report concerned everything that was seen as being useful for the economic and social existence of the coastal- and archipelago settlement.

As can be seen, the same problems are still here today. However, nowadays we should have better economic opportunities to tackle the problems. And we should also have a larger interest for securing the continued existence of the fishing industry. The professional fishermen feel, with good reason, that their activities are becoming increasingly restricted by different limitations. Fishing has now become more difficult due to other factors like, for instance, the rapid increase of the seal population, and now the cormorant population as well. Measures are also needed today to deal with the continuing deterioration of the water environment and subsequent reduced fish population. Fishing is an industry, whose existence is totally dependent on the ecological balance in our water courses and sea areas.

The aims of the Ostrobothnian Fisheries Association are as follows: to support the fishing industry within its field in order to ensure a continued fish production in our waters; to develop economically-viable methods for utilising and profiting from fish production; and that the consumption of domestic fish increases. All these things are relevant and need to be supported from our society through investment that would benefit fishing on a national, regional and local level. The Regional Council of Ostrobothnia completely supports the aims of the Ostrobothnian Fisheries Association.



Olav Jern
Head of the Regional Council of Ostrobothnia

The co-existence of seals and humans along the Gulf of Bothnian coastline

Seals have been important for the survival of humans in our archipelago ever since humans settled along the coast after the last Ice Age. Seals have been made into clothes, shoes, food and train oil – one example is that train oil was the third largest exported good from the region in the 1700s. Seals and humans have competed for the same food – fish.

A few decades ago, the seal population in the Baltic Sea was relatively small, but during the 1990s it started to increase. If you compare articles in the magazine *Fiskeritidskriften* from the early 1900s with the articles written today, you will notice that many arguments and statements are the same, with only approximately 90 years between them.

In the beginning of the 1900s the seal hunt became more intense, a bounty was introduced and there was a demand for seal as a natural resource, which kept a certain balance between fishing and the seal catch. What does it look like today? We have a licensed hunt for grey seals, but this year we have also had a directive concerning a prohibition against the selling of seal products. The EU encourages a sustainable development and a sustainable use of resources – but is it sustainable to hunt a few thousand seals in the Baltic Sea if you can't do anything with them afterwards? At the same time, the costs increase for every piece of damage that the growing seal population causes to the fish catch and equipment. Seals appear to have a very special status within the EU!

Shall we eat fish caught in the Kvarken or shall we eat imported fish in Ostrobothnia? The trend within the food industry is moving towards cleaner foods without additives, and the trend seems to be here to stay. More and more people want ecologically-grown high-quality produce. One of the big trends within cooking in the world right now is to buy fresh food directly from the producer, which should promote the fishing industry. If we are to believe the trend readers in our society, then we are looking for traditional tastes, the possibility to buy products produced in the neighbourhood and the chance to rediscover grandmother's well-tested recipes.

Is fish allowed to be a seasonal product? Today, the market and institutional households require a steady, reliable supplier all year round - can our fishing industry live up to the commercial demands? Does it have to? This can be a chance for forgotten fish species to have their modern breakthrough, but that requires an open mind and a will to experiment among the consumers.

Today we are supposed to introduce an eco-system-based management of the sea's resources. This is an interesting proposition when there are approximately 50 000 grey seals or more in the Baltic Sea. One has to wonder how these seals are supposed to be integrated into this comprehensive policy. Just over one year ago, there was a conference about the future of fishing in Stockholm; the EU representative presented how they believe that the commercially-important fish populations will develop during the next few years. All factors affecting the fish population were taken into consideration. As a result, the bar on the graph with the heading "unknown mortality" (among the fish populations) grew. One interpretation can be that it is the seal population that causes the unknown mortality among the fish population. If not the seals, then who or what is taking an ever-increasing part of the fish stock? The question concerning how the increasing seal population's need for food had been

considered in future fish-population calculations was answered by the EU representative as follows: “In no way. It is not ad hoc, it is not possible to discuss Seals in the EU”. In other words, they make plans for how to fish in the Baltic Sea, but they don’t consider the seals’ need for food. What do the seals eat according to the EU if they don’t eat fish? Knowledge about the affects of fish-eating predators on the eco-system level is limited. The seal- and cormorant populations consume as much or more than the professional fishing catches of the commercially-important fish populations. However, the comparison is not easy to make, since the affect is dependent on which age structure the predator’s catch has, as well as which other species the predator eats, which in turn leads to an indirect affect on commercial fish populations.

But, is there fresh fish to be had? To an ever increasing extent it is others who take care of the fish before the fishermen get it up from the sea. How did it become like this, and where is it going to end? The seal problem is not a politically hot question – more like a question that only a few politicians dare to discuss. The questions to be answered are whether we here in Ostrobothnia shall eat fish from the Kvarken or if the fish on the counter is going to be imported from other parts of the world.

Anita Storm
chairman, the Ostrobothnian Fisherwomen

Revisions to the fishing law

A complete reform of the fishing law is taking place at the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry. The work started in autumn 2008 and is supposed to be finished during 2011. The basic aim of the reform is to support both free-time fishing as well as professional fishing.

A more specific aim is to introduce a fishing law that will correspond with today’s demands concerning basic rights, for example. Changes made within other jurisdictions are also considered in the reform process. Since the system of regulations must be easy to overview, the new law is going to be more explicit and simplified.

Another important goal with the law is to regulate fishing rights, fishing methods, management of fish populations and fishing administration. The new fishing law will decide on the rights of the various parties to regulate fishing as well as the ways of regulation. Decisions concerning the regulation of fishing are made, for example, by the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry; the Centres for Economic Development, Transport and the Environment; the fishing areas; and by the owners of fishing rights.

It is possible to follow the revision work and provide feedback on the Ministry’s website at www.mmm.fi

In the cormorant kingdom

It was late July and the verdant nature along the shores was teeming with life. I was sitting in the fishing harbour in Kantlax waiting for Kaj Wiik, the chairman of the Munsala Western Water Cooperative, who had promised me a tour on Monåfjärden Bay; the number-one cormorant kingdom in the Swedish part of Ostrobothnia.

As I had arrived too early I used the time to relax with bird observations in and around the fishing harbour. Wagtails on matchstick legs were hunting flies on the piers and shores. A few swallows were catching insects close to the water surface, probably midges that had recently hatched. A little south from the harbour I watched the splendid sight of an old white-tailed eagle flying from the mainland towards an island overgrown with grass and surrounded by reeds; an island full of black-headed gulls nesting.

Under a cloud of white and grey-brown mottled black-headed gulls, the eagle flew towards the shoreline and easily and elegantly plucked a young gull from the water. With a screaming tail of gulls after him, the white-tailed eagle flew back to the mainland and quickly disappeared into the coastal forest. After a while the eagle returned and once again succeeded in snatching a young fledging gull. It looked easy, like picking a piece of cake from a plate.



© Hans Hästbacka

Kaj Wiik is the chairman of the Munsala Western Water Cooperative.

When Kaj Wiik parked in the harbour and we greeted each other, the eagle came hunting for a third time. One more low-flying pass over the water and then a third gull was in the eagle's yellow talons. Apparently the white-tailed eagle had fully-fledged young in the pristine coastal forest and could easily find food due to the nest's proximity to the black-headed gull colony.

- Yes, there are three pairs of white-tailed eagles at Monåfjärden Bay, Kaj said, so you can see eagles every day. And now it looks like the eagles have also started to pick cormorants in the colonies, Kaj continued. Two of last year's colonies are empty this summer, and close to both colonies there was a pair of eagles nesting, who probably had no difficulties in finding food. There have been many observations of white-tailed eagles using cormorant colonies as larders, both in Finland and in Sweden. Life is easy for cormorant-eating eagles and between the cormorant meals the eagles can pick up any fish that the cormorants dropped on the ground. In the places where white-tailed eagles have started feeding on cormorants, the cormorants' breeding results have decreased substantially, and in certain places the local cormorant population has stopped increasing or started to decrease.

Eat or be eaten is the simple rule in nature. Wagtails and swallows catch insects, white-tailed eagles pluck cormorants and black-headed gulls – and the cormorants eat many kinds of fish. However, it has not been made clear how much the cormorants affect the fish population and

professional fishing, despite the fact that cormorants have increased considerably in the Baltic Sea lately; in many places cormorants have been met with hatred, poaching and illegal nest plundering. For cormorants, the Baltic Sea is an ideal place to inhabit - it is rich in fish and there are many islands and skerries to nest on.

- Today there is no point putting out nets on Monåfjärden Bay during the summer, because you will never get any fish in them. The bay was once rich in whitefish and Baltic herring, but not anymore, Kaj told me while we were driving out on the bay in the homemade boat he once used for whitefish trap fishing.

- I started fishing in 1987 and fishing was my livelihood for many years, Kaj told me when I asked him about his fishing. But the profitability slowly decreased and finally there was nothing else to do but to stop and start work as a fur farmer instead. I did that before the cormorants came, so my change of profession was not due to the cormorants. Now I don't even think of putting out a whitefish trap, because the whitefish have gone.

Monåfjärden Bay, with its bed of sand and rock and direct link to the open sea in the north, is an ideal environment for fish. Was the fishing pressure too big on whitefish during the liveliest years, before the cormorants came? Is it the cormorants' fishing that prevents the whitefish from returning or is there simply not enough whitefish to fill the bay again? The number of whitefish has decreased in many fishing waters due to different reasons. And what do the cormorants in the bay eat nowadays, when people can't catch any fish by net fishing? The questions concerning cormorants and fishing are many, and to a large part unanswered so far, although answers are urgently needed.

First we drove to Fjärdsgrundet Island and kept a proper distance from the protected skerry where the cormorants started nesting almost ten years ago. Although there have been 450 cormorants nesting on Fjärdsgrundet Island this summer, new colonies have also been formed elsewhere. Lots of cormorants, both old and young, were either sitting on the skerry or on large stones along the shore. The air was filled with flying cormorants and seagulls nesting together in the colony. Many cormorants were regurgitating fish from their throats, and so providing free meals for the scavenging seagulls. The white-tailed eagles are not the only ones who benefit from the cormorants.



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Monåfjärden Bay has become the cormorant kingdom in the Swedish part of Ostrobothnia.

As we continued the boat trip towards Lillgrundet Island in the south-east, we could see cormorants all around us, both in the air and on the water. Here we were in the middle of the cormorant kingdom. Lillgrundet Island had only five pairs of cormorants last year, but 110 pairs this year. The colony on Granskärsbådan Island had probably moved away from the white-tailed eagles to the safety of Lillgrundet Island.

We landed on the whitewashed skerry, while the cormorants were flying away. Only the southernmost promontory and also the northernmost still have any grass growing. The rest of the island is covered with nests and droppings. Two nests still contained fledglings. The others had either flown off or swam away from the skerry in order to return when we left the shore.

We were curious about the transformation of the skerry during one summer and which fish the cormorants eat. In a cormorant colony there are always fish on the ground, more or less digested and the smell from the birds' droppings and rotten fish is pungent. During our tour on the skerry we noticed three fish species in many examples: perch, ruffe and roach. The cormorants didn't need more than that to survive and breed. The sooty-black cormorants eat the fish that is available and can then have quite a wide choice of species, but they can of course also live on just one fish species if it happens to exist in large amounts in the cormorants' fishing waters.

- It would be important to investigate the cormorants' choice of food, Kaj said when we continued our journey. The investigations in southern Finland concerning the cormorants' choice of food don't necessarily show the cormorants' choice of food in Ostrobothnian waters.

Monåfjärden Bay with its four cormorant colonies and its local population of approximately 3000 birds can provide researchers with an interesting rewarding place to conduct fieldwork. From a professional fisherman's point of view, all research concerning cormorants and how they affect the fish population and fishing on a local level is very important. Professional fishing definitely cannot take on another attack – the problems with the seals are more than enough. For professional fishing it is important to understand the cormorants. It is much easier to adjust the cormorant population locally, if this turns out to be necessary due to professional fishing, than it is to adjust the seal population.

During the duck and geese hunting season on Monåfjärden Bay in the late summer, the hunters are allowed to shoot 75 cormorants as a small first step within the regulation of the local cormorant population. Hunting cormorants is not the easiest thing, but the hunting will at least provide researchers with some birds, so they can determine which kind of cormorant they are dealing with. That is one of the unanswered questions in the on-going cormorant debate and also a question that, practically, has no relevance for professional fishing.

Text and photo: Hans Hästbacka

On the spring ice with Ulf Granqvist; a fisherman in Molpe



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- Come at quarter to seven, then we can benefit from the frost in the morning and I will have time to fillet the perches in the afternoon, says Ulf Granqvist, when I call him in the evening and ask if I can go with him on the spring ice in Molpe.

- There are lots of perch now after the worst winter-fishing season I have ever seen over the years, so I have concentrated on fishing perch. I have approximately 70 nets under the ice, the other ones I have taken up, Ulf tells me.

At five o'clock in the morning the alarm clock rings. The day is dawning while I drink my morning tea at home in the kitchen. The ground outside is covered with a thin layer of frost, which is good considering we are going to go out on the ice where it has been very wet and slushy this late in April.

Five minutes before the agreed time I arrive at Ulf's home. We put on our winter overalls and drive out to the south-west side of Bredskär Island, where Ulf has his snowmobile and other equipment at his uncle's cottage. Only rough spring ice lies as far as you can see to the west. The archipelago is still covered with ice, but if the warm weather continues as it did earlier in the month, the perch fishing can be over within a week.

The morning sun is shining brightly on the ice where a few pairs of whooper swans and grey geese are either standing or lying. At the same time, flights of swans, geese and seagulls are flying north under the blue April sky. This is the time of year for migrating birds to return and it makes the morning lively.

Sometimes the snowmobile and sledge go through the frozen surface on the ice. The water streams around the snowmobile and comes up on my rubber boots where I stand on the skis watching the birds during the trip. Ulf stops at a short row of three nets to the north of Halsön Island.

- Now we will see if the perch has moved since yesterday. I have the innermost net in this row as a control net and try it first of all every morning. If there is fish in this net, it is a good premonition for today's fishing, says Ulf.

Ulf ties the line to the net at the outer hole in the ice and comes walking towards the other hole where he searches the nets. Under the slush there are between twenty and thirty centimetres of frozen ice. It is still safe to be on the ice.

There is jerking and pulling in the net and Ulf starts to pick perch after perch from the net. When the net has been searched, there are twenty perches floundering on the ice. The net has 43 mm holes and it catches good-sized fish, which are suitable for filleting. For Ulf it goes without saying that he must process the fish he catches by filleting them. It makes the fishing more profitable and the consumer will get a more wanted fish without bones to put directly in the frying pan. In addition, the fish fillets are fresh when they arrive at the purchaser in Helsinki, already the following morning if the day before has been a sending day.

- Okay, this looks good, Ulf states in a satisfied tone, while he pulls the net under the ice again, cuts the throats open on the fish and puts them in a blue tub on the sledge. Now we can just continue until the tub is full.

We drive over to a rocky bay, which is outside Halsön Island. From the forests along the shoreline we can hear birdsong from a blackbird and chaffinch, screaming from a pair of cranes, as well as gagging grey geese and the sound of a lonely black grouse in the bay. Seagulls are already gliding above us waiting for unwanted fish, and the day's first white-tailed eagle comes flying by on its wide wings.

- You don't need to be alone on the ice anymore, when spring has really started and many migrating birds have arrived, Ulf states, while picking the perch out of the net. The seagulls and the eagle can fight over the roaches, while we drive towards the next row of nets.

- But what has happened to the black grouse population, Ulf wonders while cutting the throats open on the perches. Earlier, black grouse were seen everywhere on the ice. Now you can be pleased if you see or hear one or two black grouse. There are lots of racoon dogs around. Their tracks have been seen on the ice between the holes this spring. I wonder if the racoon dogs affect the black grouse population at all?

We turn off from the north shore of Halsön towards a longer row of nets. These nets have been in the water all winter, mostly fishing for whitefish, but the catch has been bad during the winter. Close to a precipice north of a skerry, the two first nets contain a good amount of perch. Apparently spring has made them move towards the precipice. The inner nets can stay under the ice, but Ulf takes up the outer nets and says that he will be very busy taking up the other perch nets during the two last days on the ice.

- Look what a beautiful fish perch is, Ulf says when he puts the fish in the tub. And luckily enough, perch fillets are highly appreciated and sought after. For my all-year-round fishing, perch is an important fish, but when whitefish and salmon can be caught I concentrate on them. But you can never be sure about the catch. Fish comes when it comes, and a good fishing place this year, is not necessarily a good fishing place next year.

When I ask Ulf about how large a family he has to provide for with his fishing, he answers with a smile and an openhearted explanation about fishing.

- I have four daughters, but the oldest already studies now and mostly provides for herself. But it is not the family that forces me. It is the fishing that drives me, and the family will be provided for at the same time. Fishing for me is an incurable disease that I am as dependent on as a drug addict is for drugs or an alcoholic is for drink. It has always been like that in the Granqvist family; my father and my uncles and my grandfather were all inveterate fishermen. It is in the blood and it won't go away. I have to fish. I grew up with it. It is my way of living and I fish between 320 and 330 days annually.

By the former row of nets the seagulls are still fighting over the unwanted fish around the holes in the ice. The harsh squawking of the seagulls fill the spring morning air and attract two eagles that are now flying quickly towards the holes. The eagles land on the ice in a cloud of complaining sea gulls and pick a roach each. We listen to the sounds of the seagulls and gaze at the eagles.

- For me as a professional fisherman, a positive change of attitude has taken place, says Ulf suddenly. Earlier people said "you just fish" and they wanted fish cheaply or for free. Today, people appreciate your profession and come and ask if they can buy some fish. If there is no fish for sale that day, they ask if they can come the following day and buy some fish. And nobody questions the price; they always pay what it costs. That feels good.



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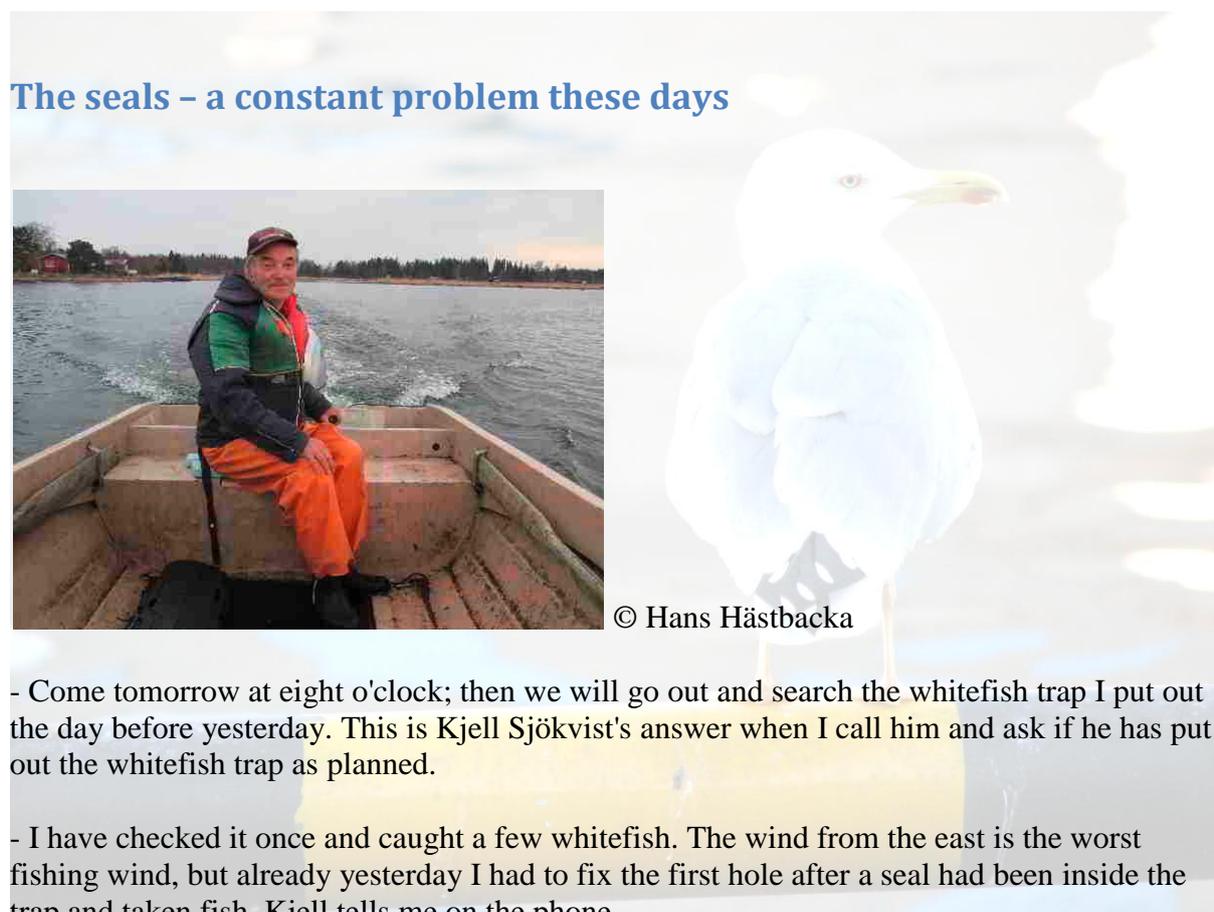
The snow mobile is the given means of transport for the professional fisherman.

We drive to two short rows of nets northeast from Halsön Island, where Ulf fills up the tub with some more perch. There is no room for any more, and the next step in the day's fishing is the filleting work at home. Fortunately Molpe frys is close in the village – they take care of all the leftovers after filleting and use them in the manufacture of fodder for the fur trade. The responsible disposal of leftovers is something that the healthcare authorities regularly control.

When we have loaded the tub with the perch and other equipment in the car and drive towards Ulf's home, we have time to talk about the upcoming spring fishing in open waters. Then an intensive period begins within the annual fishing cycle, as well as the problems with seals that take part of the catch and destroy the equipment. Ulf tells me briefly about last summer's salmon fishing in the sea.

- Last summer I had a grey seal by the salmon traps every day and I hardly got any complete salmon to deliver to my customers. I saw the seal every day in the distance, but couldn't do anything about it. Luckily I got some help from a hunter, who had a licence for seal and he managed to shoot the grey seal already on the first day he waited for it. After that the salmon traps were left in piece for an entire week, until the next grey seal appeared and started taking fish from the traps. During the seal-free week I had time to deliver ordered salmon to my customers, but after that it stopped again. It is certainly a strange world where the fisherman lives, when the seals decide over the fisherman's catch and income.

Text and photo: Hans Hästbacka



For Kjell Sjökvist in Nämånäs the seal has become a constant problem these days, and many other Ostrobothnian fishermen are in the same situation. This is a problem that has forced many fishermen to either stop professional fishing altogether, or turn fishing into a sideline or hobby alongside a safer professional life: a professional life where seals can't tear the equipment apart or destroy both the catch and the opportunities for making a living.

I meet Kjell at his home in Nämånäs at the agreed time. We drive down to his family's summer house on a small island near Äggrund Island. It is a warm day in May and the air smells freshly green; the naked spring is turning into a light-green pre-summer. Newly arrived nightingales and scarlet rosefinches are singing in all directions. Some grey geese keep an eye on us from a skerry overgrown with grass outside Kjell's cottage. Arctic terns and gulls with

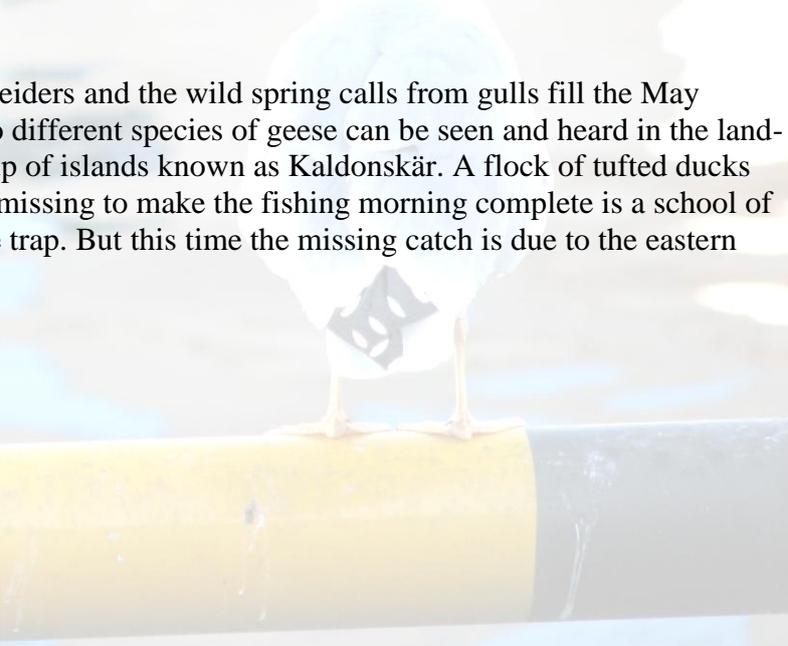
deep voices patrol the shores or rest on stones in the water near the shore. The birdlife in the archipelago is at its best.

We head south passed the islands known as Västra Ljusören, Ljusgrund, Södra Flatskäret, Högkobbracket and Österstgrund. Some fishing boats are searching the nets for whitefish in the calm May morning. There are eiders, mergansers, geese and gulls everywhere in the water. The birdlife is rich in the Nämpnäs archipelago, and for Kjell, who is a fisherman and hunter, the seething birdlife enriches his workdays.

South from Östsynnerstgrund Island, Kjell has put out his whitefish trap on the edge of a deep channel, in order to lead the fish towards the land arm and into the trap – here there are also seals that are more than willing to stay by the traps to steal the caught fish. Although it is mostly grey seals that search the traps, a few ringed seals have also started to appear by tackle in the outskirts of the archipelago.

- We were out seal hunting on the ice one week ago, Kjell tells me while he is starting to search the whitefish trap. We caught eight grey seals, five adults and three younger animals. A few licences have been saved for seal hunting by whitefish and salmon traps in order to get rid of the seals that start to live by the traps. Here by the Östsynnerstgrund Island I can hide the boat out of sight of the seals and then wait for any seal that has stayed by the whitefish trap. I prefer to shoot the seal while it is inside the fish house. Then I won't lose the seal, and I can take it as a welcome catch.

The sounds from yearning male eiders and the wild spring calls from gulls fill the May morning in the archipelago. Two different species of geese can be seen and heard in the land-rich archipelago around the group of islands known as Kaldonskär. A flock of tufted ducks are flying north. The only thing missing to make the fishing morning complete is a school of whitefish in the fish house in the trap. But this time the missing catch is due to the eastern wind, not the seals.



© Hans Hästbacka

Kjell is searching the whitefish trap on a warm calm morning in May.

After Kjell has checked his entire trap, the catch consists of two whitefish and one herring. The bigger whitefish will be a good meal for Kjell and his wife. I will settle for the smaller whitefish, and the herring will be cut into pieces and used as bait in the mouse traps that are constantly set in Kjell's toolshed by the summer house. It is important to keep mice and field-

mice away from the shed, otherwise the nets and other equipment will be destroyed by the small busy rodents.

We drive slowly back east from Kaldon Island in order to have a look at the archipelago birds and enjoy the May morning. Kjell is telling me about some old fishermen's cottages located on the eastern side of Storkaldon Island. It was at those cottages where he fished and learned the trade from his father and uncles. The village of Nämptnäs has always been the big fishing village in Närpes and there are still professional fishermen to be found in the village, despite the large problems caused by the seals.

Above all it is the gray seal that causes problems for the professional fishermen, but now the ringed seals have also started to appear by the different fishing tackle and steal the caught fish; at the same time the tackle gets torn – which in turn means many extra working hours repairing the different tackle used, if it is at all possible or economically viable to repair it at all.

One reason to explain the increasing number of seals by the fishing equipment in good fishing spots is due to divided schools of fish. Naturally the schools of fish react to the seal presence and their active fishing, either by escaping or when the schools become divided. Once divided, the fish hide on or near the seabed. These days it is not as easy for fishermen to find and catch fish in profitable numbers as it was earlier, i.e. before the seals came into the archipelago and learned how to take fish from the nets.

The only effective cure against the seals is hunting – and then only if a hunt is large enough to deter the seals from being near a human presence again. The hunt on the drift-ice in spring is an interesting and exciting form of hunting that still attracts many hunters. When thinking about the professional fishermen's tackle, it is seal hunting by the fishing tackle and in the best fishing spots that is the most efficient form, because then you will get rid of the seals that stay by the tackle. The seals that get shot are soon replaced by new seals, which in their turn must be hunted down. But not all seals come to the outer archipelago or into the archipelago, and the seals that stay out at sea are not causing any problems for the professional fishermen.

My opinion is that the most effective way of protecting the coastal professional fishing in Ostrobothnia is to have a free seal hunt all year round in the archipelago, all the way out to the outer archipelago. Let the interests of professional fishermen and their possibilities to make a livelihood come first, and leave the seals out on the sea in peace instead. By concentrating the seal hunt to the outer archipelago and the archipelago due to the fishing, it is possible to remove seal after seal by the permanent tackle and in this way protect the tackle and the catch.

When we return to Kjell's home we share the minimal catch. After that, other work takes over on this warm and verdant day in May. In the evening Kjell calls me and tells me that he has been out to the whitefish trap again in order to spot the seal that had made the holes in the trap the day before. This time Kjell didn't have to lie waiting behind a rock to spot the rising oval wet head of a grey seal by the whitefish trap, because the seal had got stuck in the land arm and drowned. This time it was a young grey seal.

Kjell had the dead grey seal in the boat, where it was photographed as well as possible. Later I drove to his home in order to watch Kjell cut up the dead seal. With a deft hand Kjell skinned and cut the young seal into pieces and put a large piece of seal meat with bones in a bucket for me. After two days of soaking in water to get rid of the blood, and three hours of boiling, the

seal meat was tender and tasted excellent with lingonberry jam and boiled onions and potatoes. And then the thought hit me: The more seals we eat, the better it is for the professional fishermen. And seals even taste good!

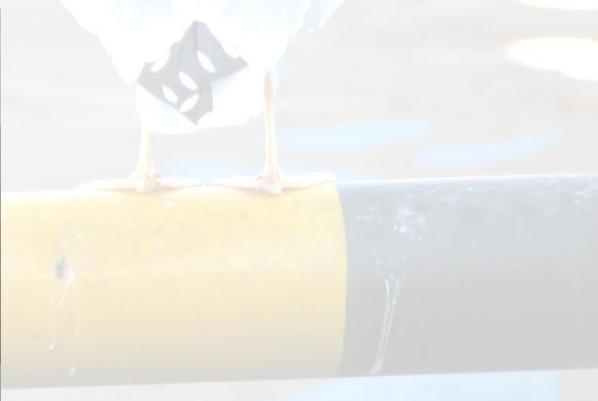
Text and photo: Hans Hästbacka

Co-operation between fish mongers is important!

A swarm of day-resting moths meets me at the door to the Kala-Lasse fish hall in Replot. The fish hall is surrounded by forest in three directions and the moths seem to like it in the sunny glade. The moths don't cause any hygiene problems, like flies would inside the fish hall. The moths are nearly an interesting phenomenon and they naturally attract my attention.

Tage Snygg, who is the boss for the activities at Kala-Lasse, which was founded in 1989, notes my interest in the moths and he tells me that there are rather few moths this year. Last year, the outside wall was completely covered with moths some mornings – they had been attracted to the place by the strong light in the night; but when the night lamps are switched off, the number of moths decreased considerably.

After having talked about the moths we can move over to my task for the day, which was to gain an insight into the fish mongers work today. There are several fish mongers in Ostrobothnia; everything from private entrepreneurs to companies with many employees. Their activities are concentrated on purchasing whole fish and fillets from fishermen, processing the fish, and distribution to the buyers at different locations in the country.



© Hans Hästbacka

In the afternoon, Ralf Norrgård, Tage Snygg and Joachim Snygg can take it easy after the day's work in the fish hall.

During my visit, it is perch and whitefish that are the important fish for the day. Some autumn days there can also be large quantities of pike coming in, when the professional fishermen have been out fishing for pike in larger bays and in the outskirts of the archipelago. While I am talking to Tage in the office, Ralf Norrgård and Joachim Snygg are filleting whitefish in the nearby hall. Ralf Norrgård from Iskmo had earlier been a professional fisherman, but now he has changed to the work in the fish hall, while Tage's son Joachim Snygg is taking the chance to work with fish during his autumn holiday.

- We only fillet smaller amounts of fish ourselves by hand, Tage Snygg tells me. The rest of the filleting work we buy from fish monger Snickars in Norra Vallgrund. The filleting service is part of the co-operation with fish monger Snickars. Another co-operation partner is Fiskboden in Jakobstad. We three fish mongers together can secure large enough and regular volumes for our customers, Tage continues.

- It is much better to co-operate and help each other than to compete and knock each other over, Tage emphasises during our conversation. This way the fish market with many fish mongers can continue for everybody's benefit: Professional fishermen, fish mongers and consumers.

Tage Snygg has been a fish monger since 1981, and he, like many other fish mongers, has long experience in the branch. Today the fish monger is as much of a fish processor as a fish monger. To an ever increasing extent the consumers want ready-made and totally bone-free fillets to put in the frying pan. That goes for both private consumers as larger restaurants. Whole fish can mostly be sold during the summer, when many summer-cottage owners want whole fish for their grill or smoke oven.

90% of all the fillets are sent with regular cold-transport to Helsinki. The Helsinki region is like a magnet for the fish commerce. There are lots of people living in this area, many restaurants and chain stores and many purchasers. It is important for the fish mongers to satisfy the large demand for fish fillets in the Helsinki area, but the access to fish varies with the season and the weather. The purchasers and the consumers have had to get used to that, and the fish commerce must live with it.

A geographically large enough area to buy from, including many fishermen, gives at least larger possibilities for regular deliveries of fillets to waiting customers. Consequently Kala-Lasse buys fish from around 100 fishermen, from Lohtaja in the north to Harrström in the south. Of all these fishermen there are around 30 professional fishermen and the rest have fishing as a side line or hobby.

- When everything goes well, when the weather is good and the professional fishermen can fish regularly, the work as a fish monger is good and satisfying, despite the fact that the work day starts at five in the morning and finishes sometimes in the afternoon, Tage Snygg finishes our chat about the fish market today. August this year is a good example of this; then the perch fishing was good all month and the fishermen were able to deliver large amounts of perch fillets during the entire month.

Text and photo: Hans Hästbacka

Smoked Baltic herring and other smoked fish from Sundom

A few days later, when I meet Britta and Yngve Rönqvist in Sundom there is a fragrance of fish smoked with alder wood in the air, which is the speciality of the family-owned business called I. Rönqvist. The traditions with smoked fish have a long history in the village – who hasn't heard about Sundom-smoked Baltic herring – and Yngve and Britta are passing on those traditions.

Yngve has just driven the smoked fish of today into Vaasa for further transport to expecting purchasers and consumers. One established customer, for example, is the department store Stockmann in Helsinki, a large customer for the company. Today's transport included smoked Baltic herring, whitefish and char. The Baltic herring comes from Kaskinen, while the whitefish comes from fishermen in Sundom, Söderudden and Bergö. The char has been farmed in Sweden, and it has become a very popular product among many customers.

- I have been standing by the smoke oven since I was seven-years-old, Yngve states, when we are going out to the smokehouse in order to have a look at the establishment built in 1979 close to the farmhouse. It has been 50 years since I learned how to smoke fish. In those days, and for many years after, my father gave good advice. Smoking fish is something I have really known about for a long time, but it still requires concentration and a certain amount of time.

Outside the smokehouse the alder wood is piled up along the wall and covered with tarpaulins. It is the alder wood that is going to give the fish a nice colour and the special taste that the smoked fish has. The smoke, in combination with salt, is also an excellent way of preserving fish, and in former times it was - besides salted fish - a safe way to preserve fish during the summer. In those days every fishing village in the archipelago had its own smoke oven that was often used.

- The alder wood goes like hot cakes in the smokehouse, Yngve answers when we discuss the consumption of wood. Almost 200 metres of wood go up in smoke during one year. I don't need to and I would not have time to fell that much, but the actual splitting of the wood I take care of.

At the same time as Yngve is a fish monger and fish processor together with his wife Britta, he is also a fisherman, if and when there is time over for the family's traditional profession. Yngve is the seventh generation of fishermen on his father's side and he fishes whitefish and Baltic herring when he has a chance.

Yngve also has an education as a driving instructor, but that profession he has never had time for. Fishing has taken all his time and that choice of profession has been natural.

- Of course, the company takes most of our time, Britta and Yngve say. Sixteen hour working days are part of the picture, when the fishing goes well in different parts of the archipelago and we have to smoke larger amounts of fish and send the smoked fish further. But, sometimes it happens that we get a day off, when there is a storm and the fishing is resting for everybody.

- How it is going to be with the professional fishing in the future is unsure, Yngve continues our discussion. The average age among the fishermen is high and few younger people take over. The seals cause big problems for the trade and that makes young people hesitate before choosing this profession. However, as long as there is enough fish we are going to continue smoking it. The smoked fish is a refined product with good preserving qualities, and many consumers like it.



© Hans Hästbacka

Sundom smoked Baltic herring is a well-known concept. Earlier, Baltic herring caught in hoop nets were the given raw material, today the raw material is trawled Baltic herring taken ashore in Kaskinen.

Text and photo: Hans Hästbacka

Baltic Herring is a valuable fish

Baltic Herring catches are large in Ostrobothnia, approximately one fourth of the total Baltic Herring catch in Finland. Most of the Baltic Herring is caught by trawlers in the Gulf of Bothnia. This takes place all year round, except for the coldest period of the year when the boats can't go out due to the ice. Thanks to a few larger companies and their investments, as well as support from the city, the Kaskinen harbour has developed into the largest and most modern fishing harbour in Finland. Nowadays, Baltic Herring fishing employs almost 70 persons in and around the Kaskinen fishing harbour. At the same time as trawling has become more modern and effective, the coastal fishing using Baltic Herring traps has diminished considerably.

Earlier we ate lots of Baltic Herring in Finland in all forms; as fresh, filleted, smoked, grilled, pickled etc. The rest that we didn't eat ourselves was used as fodder at mink- and fox farms. Today, the consumers have become used to other kinds of fish, often imported, and the consumption of Baltic Herring is continuously declining. Furthermore, the use of Baltic Herring as fodder has also diminished. Therefore, the companies handling Baltic Herring have for a long time been exporting deep-frozen Baltic Herring for human consumption to Russia and Estonia. Some of the Baltic Herring has also been exported to Denmark and Sweden for the production of fish flour and fish oil.

Baltic Herring is worth a renaissance among the consumers. It is too valuable to only be used within fodder manufacturing or for fish flour. We cannot afford to let the Baltic Herring stay in the Baltic Sea either, and that way contribute to eutrofication – we should fish the Baltic Herring for its phosphorous and nitrogen content. There are a large number of recipes for Baltic Herring to choose from. A small variation with the spices gives the recipes a modern touch. Baltic Herring is definitely a valuable fish.

The equipment industry in Ostrobothnia has a long history

For some reason, the fishing equipment industry in Finland has been concentrated to Ostrobothnia, perhaps because the coastal fishing used to be a large and important source of livelihood. Today, that would probably be called a fishing-equipment cluster. Unfortunately, many circumstances have led to the situation whereby the coastal fishing is rather reduced today. Such circumstances are for example quotas and restrictions, water pollution and the reduced number of fish, the hard conditions within the profession, etc. However, the equipment industry has still been very important for the development of fishing in Finland. The industry has been able to offer work in the archipelago and scarcely-populated areas and so been able to contribute to a reduced number of people moving away from these areas. Due to these circumstances we have a more active archipelago in Finland than in Sweden for example.

The pioneer within the manufacturing of equipment in Ostrobothnia was Oy Aino Lindeman Ab, which was founded in 1895, and active within fishing and international trade; in those days in the form of exporting fish, ant-eggs and lichens, and importing petrol, oil and salt. The first net factory was located at the Palosaari sound in Nikolaistad, as Vaasa was named in those days. Later the factory moved to the part of the city called Vetokannas, and in the late 80s it moved to Replot Island. Together with Anders Ohls from the village Björköby the company developed the first net machines, and in the 1950s the production of nets in synthetic material, double knots, patent cork-head ropes and foot ropes etc. Gradually the manufacturing has been automated and adjusted, and new ecological materials and methods have been taken into use. These days, the company also works with machine manufacturing and project work.

During the 1950s and 1960s, new companies started working within the branch, for example Granqvists Rope Factory in Gerby, which only recently ended production, as well as Björkö Telnfabrik, which is still working in Björköby, mostly working with the manufacture of net ropes, ropes and other equipment for professional fishing in Finland and abroad.

In Närpes you will find Närpes Telnfabrik; they produce lead chains, lead ropes and float ropes mostly for export. Another company is Närpes Frisport, who manufacture ropes and nets.

In Jakobstad you will find Oy Kivikangas Ab, which is working within the basic livelihoods of gardening and fishing. The equipment is mostly made in Estonia and China and the range of accessories is large.

ScandiNet in Nykarleby has specialised in the manufacture of fish-farming cages, fish traps, trawls etc. In addition there are a number of one-man firms, which serve the fishing sector in different ways. Today many professional fishermen have their own mounting machines and manufacture their own equipment.

Other operators on the market are import companies, and nowadays the Finnish equipment sector is hard pressed by the competition from the Far East. A shrinking market in combination with an increasing low-price of imports doesn't make the situation very easy for the domestic equipment industry. However, creativity, innovation, quality and local anchorage are values that are still hopefully appreciated and so guarantee a continued

domestic manufacturing of high-class equipment for both hobby fishermen and professional fishermen.

We eat more and more farmed fish

Today we have a situation where farmed fish dominate the fish counters in the shops. Much of the farmed fish is imported. The domestic rainbow trout has had a firm position on our fish market for a long time. The farmed domestic whitefish has also become a common sight in the fish counters, and work is being done to produce farmed pikeperch, for example. During the next few years we will surely find more farmed fish species; species that we have got used to buying as wild fish.

Aquaculture or fish farming has never really been big in Ostrobothnia. Our waters are a bit too shallow and it is difficult to find good protected areas for fish farming in cages in the inner archipelago. This, in combination with strict environmental requirements, limits the possibilities for fish farming in Ostrobothnia. However, Finland is an important producer of, for example, rainbow trout in Europe. The production of rainbow trout for food consumption was almost 13 000 tonnes in 2009, of which 11 000 tonnes took place in the sea areas. In addition, more than 700 tonnes of whitefish and approximately 160 tonnes of other fish species were produced in the Finnish fish farms.

The farming of fish for food consumption in Ostrobothnia is concentrated to the southern parts of Ostrobothnia. There are 13 fish farms producing fish for food in the sea in Ostrobothnia, all of them within the Ostrobothnian Centre for Economic Development, Transport and the Environment area. The total production in these fish farms was barely 800 tonnes in 2009. Many fish farmers also process their own and other fish farmers' fish.

In addition to the farming of fish for food, there are four fish farms producing fish fry for fish planting as part of fish management. The farming takes place in dams that have been dug for this purpose, and the main fish species is sea trout.

Natural nourishment dams are also one part of the fish farming in Finland. These are land areas that have been made into shallow water storages where fish fry can grow during one summer. Species that are farmed in the natural nourishment dams are, for example, whitefish and pikeperch for fish planting as part of fish management. There are nine natural nourishment dams for fish farming in Ostrobothnia, and the most known one and also the largest one is Sandfladan in Vallgrund at Replot, where whitefish is farmed.

Fishing tourism in Ostrobothnia

Although fishing tourism is a relatively new livelihood, like all forms of nature tourism it is constantly growing. So what exactly is fishing tourism? Fishing tourism is fishing during a trip, somewhere other than at the person's home or summer house. The expression fishing tourism also includes the buying of services in combination with the hobby, which can include everything from fishing packages to lodging, fishing permits or equipment.

Today, there are 1 108 companies in Finland offering some kind of fishing-tourism services. However, only 8% of these companies only provide fishing; the other companies primarily offer other types of services such as lodging, farmhouse tourism, safari services etc. Altogether, these companies have an annual turnover of 18 million euro. However, most of these companies are found in the lake district of Finland.

In 2009, a co-operation project began in Ostrobothnia in order to promote the development of fishing tourism within the coastal areas. This project goes under the name Kvarken Fishing and is run by the Ostrobothnian Fisheries Association in co-operation with Vaasa Adult Education Centre, Vakk. The aim of the project is to create the right conditions in order to increase fishing tourism in Ostrobothnia. Anybody interested in this project can read more on the project webpage at www.kvarkenfishing.fi

Today, fishing tourism in Ostrobothnia is almost non-existent, despite the fact that we have lots of pike, which is one of the most sought-after fish among fishing tourists. In short, we have the pike, but we lack almost everything else that a fishing tourist requires.

Those very few companies in Ostrobothnia providing fishing services mostly focus their services or products towards companies, and their respective needs in terms of recreation or programmes for their guests. We have very little direct fishing tourism in our area; what does exist is sporadic and is not based on any uniform or target-oriented marketing.

In the future, this project is going to concentrate on the problem areas needing to be solved before a more regular and economically important form of fishing tourism can begin in our coastal region. Specifically, our region lacks easy-to-access products that could be bought. Therefore, the region needs to develop fishing packages in co-operation with fishing guides and cottage entrepreneurs, especially if we want to develop international fishing tourism. It is worth noting that organisers of fishing tourism from abroad have already shown an interest in our region.

However, other parties within tourism require more knowledge surrounding the potential that fishing has to offer. For companies renting out cottages there is a large potential for increasing the type of accommodation offered, since fishing is mostly done outside the actual tourist season. Since anything worthwhile in this respect will require investment – a certain amount of adaptation or an increase in the number of services offered might also be required. One aspect here is also the fact that it is important to increase the co-operation between different types of tourism entrepreneurs.

The present situation regarding the licences required by fishing guides to be able to fish must also be resolved in a sensible and sustainable way. Since the fishing guides are entrepreneurs, they are not able to use the provincial lure-fishing permits. Local ownership associations

together with the fishing districts could seize this moment and work together as a motor for regional development and support entrepreneurship within fishing.

Here in Ostrobothnia pike is often seen as a ‘rubbish fish’, which should be exterminated. However, seen in a fishing-tourist perspective, it is a precious resource; and the bigger the fish the better! The regions investing in fishing tourism must reconsider the value of pike, since the fact that you will probably catch a pike and possibly a big one attracts fishing tourists. Also in a fishing management perspective, the big pikes are precious, since they keep the population of roach and other ‘rubbish fish’ low. Many fishing tourists, especially those from European countries, appreciate rules and the fact that no over-fishing occurs. For them, fish is a small resource and they can find it hard to understand that we have an abundance of fish in our waters. Catch and release programmes in combination with clear rules as to how much you are allowed to fish and the size of fish you are allowed to keep, goes without saying for them.

The largest potential, in order to increase the turnover within fishing tourism, is to find more customers from abroad. However, before reaching this point we have a few criteria to fulfil. The first criterion won't be a problem, since it concerns high-quality fishing and an abundance of pike. But some more work needs to be done in order to fulfil the other criteria: the implementation of a well-functioning reception service, access to fishing information and fishing rules, access to fishing guides and/or cottage hosts who are knowledgeable about fishing, language skills, services available during stays, well-maintained boats with reliable motors for customer use, good and beautiful accommodation close to the fishing water (doesn't have to be on the shore) but preferably with running water, and accessible fishing statistics.

The Kvarken archipelago and Ostrobothnia have not formally been known as a target for fishing tourism. One of the project goals will be to make this region known under the slogan Pike Paradise.



Carina Rönn
project co-ordinator

The Coastal Action Group – for fishing in Ostrobothnia

The Coastal Action Group for fishing in Ostrobothnia/KAG is one of the 7 national fishing groups that have been granted financing from the European fishing fund, the state and the municipalities until 2013.

Aktion Österbotten r.f. (Action Ostrobothnia) is the programme host for the Leader project – and the village activities as well as for the Coastal Action Group's programme. In order to reach the goal set in the programme, two strategic entities have been chosen: Knowledge development and cultural heritage. The work method is based on a few corner stones, for example new thinking and co-operation and with emphasis on local business life in order to make sure the inhabitants can earn their living. KAG is going to work according to the Leader principles, which means that the ideas should come from the field, i.e. those who are working with fishing and fishing-related activities in the coastal municipalities. The long-term strategy of the Coastal Action Group is that the project results should produce synergy effects, which in the end should give an improved life quality and increased belief in the future, and that the area should feel attractive to live and work in, all year round.

Those wanting to develop their livelihood can apply for project money from the Coastal Action Group's programme. The Coastal Action Group has recommended more than 20 projects; most of which have received financing of up to 90 %. A summary of all the granted projects can be read on our homepage at www.kag.aktion.fi

In Europe, many of the Coastal Action Group projects have fortunately enough been noticed by the European fishing group's network unit FARNET. The last time a project was noticed was when it took place at a seminar in Spain, where a project was presented concerning a course on fish-skin tanning with the Korsholm Adult Institute as the project owner. Many other projects have also been noticed within FARNET-Magazine, which is an interest-group magazine with wide-spread coverage all over the EU. The magazine can be read on-line at www.farnet.eu/

Mikael Nygård, Project Manager



Fishing rules

Here are the fishing rules according to the Fishing Decree as well as local rules according to decisions made by the different fishing regions in Ostrobothnia.

Minimum measurements according to the Fishing Decree:

Sea salmon 60 cm (in the Gulf of Bothnia 50 cm)

Sea trout 50 cm

Lake trout 40 cm

Pike perch 37 cm

Grayling 30 cm

The fishing regions may also have their own regulations concerning the minimum measurements for other fish species in their water areas, or they may have decided that the minimum measurements for the above-mentioned fish species are larger than what is mentioned in the Fishing Decree.

Regional fishing regulations in Ostrobothnia

Based on the Fishing Law the fishing regions have introduced the following regulations concerning equipment, minimum measurements or protected areas within their water areas or parts of them. The decision of the ELY-Centres (Centres for Economic Development, Transport and the Environment) (former TE-centre) concerning the prohibition of jigging and angling can be found on the websites of the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, www.mmm.fi

Since all running water-courses in Ostrobothnia are deemed to contain whitefish or salmon, according to the decision of the TE-centre, it is not allowed to fish based on common fishing rights in streams and rapids. The water owner's permission is needed for fishing in streams and rapids.

A map of the fishing area borders can be found on the website given below.
www.ahven.net/svenska/fiskeomrade.php

Kristinestad-Storå fishing area

The fishing area includes the city of Kristinestad as well as the municipalities of Lappfjärd and Isojoki.

Närpes-Kaskö fishing area

The fishing area includes Närpes town and Kaskö town. The fishing area has implemented its own regulations concerning the minimum measurements for whitefish.

Korsnäs-Malax fishing area

The fishing area includes the municipalities of Korsnäs and Malax as well as Vaasa city. The fishing area has implemented its own regulations concerning the minimum knot

measurements in nets. The allowed minimum knot measurements in nets used in the sea is 40 mm, with the exception of herring, smelt and bait fishing.

Korsholm fishing area

The fishing area includes the Korsholm municipality. The fishing area has implemented its own regulations concerning the minimum measurements for whitefish. The whitefish minimum measurement is 30 cm and must be considered within all forms of fishing. The fishing district has also formed a protected area that includes the River Kyrönjoki estuary and the area around the estuary; within this protected area fishing of pike perch is forbidden during June. The prohibition includes all kinds of fishing, also with hand-held equipment.

North Kvarken fishing area

The fishing area includes the municipalities of Vörå and Vähäkyrö. The fishing area has implemented its own regulations concerning minimum knot measurements in whitefish nets in the sea. Whitefish seabed nets must have a knot distance of 38 mm or larger, and surface nets must be 50 mm or larger. Based on the Law of Fishing the fishing district has also formed a protected area that includes the River Kyrönjoki estuary; within this protected area the fishing of pike perch is forbidden during June. The prohibition includes all kinds of fishing, also with hand-held equipment.

Nykarleby fishing area

The fishing area includes the city of Nykarleby. The fishing area has implemented its own regulations concerning the minimum measurements for whitefish. The whitefish minimum measurement is 30 cm in the sea area, and must be considered within all forms of fishing.

North Swedish-speaking fishing area

The fishing area includes the municipalities of Larsmo, Pedersöre, Kronoby as well as the cities of Jakobstad and Kokkola. Based on the Law of Fishing the fishing district has formed a protected area in Lake Larsmo-Öjasjön. The protected time is from 15.5-15.6, and it means that the fishing of pike perch is forbidden with all kinds of equipment during this time every year. The fishing district has also introduced a minimum measurement for whitefish that concerns all sea areas. The minimum measurement for whitefish is 25 cm within all types of fishing.

Did you know that

- Whitefish is the provincial fish in Ostrobothnia
- If you own a summer house and/or part of the common water areas, and the water part-owner association is a member of the Ostrobothnian Fisheries Association, then you are also indirectly a member of the association
- There are 560 registered professional fishermen in Ostrobothnia (Kokkola-Kristinestad) (in the year 2009). Of these, approximately 140 have fishing as their main livelihood.
- Approximately half of the whitefish catch in the sea area is caught by professional fishermen in Ostrobothnia, one third of the Baltic Herring catch, and approximately one fifth of the perch catch.
- Kaskinen is Finland's largest and liveliest fishing harbour when considering both the unloading of Baltic Herring and the fishing companies' activities surrounding fish reception and processing in the harbour.
- In 2007, the fish consumption in Finland was 17.2 kg per person calculated as fillet weight; of this 5 kg were from domestic fish and the rest imported.

