

A functional forest ecosystem is more than just trees

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In 2011, the University of Jyväskylä held an academic conference on the ecological restoration of forests. The conference was visited by 53 researchers from 10 European countries. Now the researchers' ideas and discussions have been published in the appreciated *Biological Conservation* publication series.

The researchers discussed the state of forests and how the situation of endangered [forest](#) species could be improved by restoring [natural forest](#) functions and structures that have disappeared from forests. This kind of activity is called [ecological restoration](#). For example, the European Union has politically committed to restore 15 per cent of weakened habitats by 2020, if necessary.

In the publication, the researchers suggest that to successful, ecological restoration should be planned and implemented at the landscape level. A restoration process should also take into account the environmental changes, conflicting land use pressures and social problems in the future. For example, the prevention of climate change, the collection of wood for bioenergy and conflicting financial interests complicate the optimal use of ecological restoration.

The main message of the researchers is that a functioning forest ecosystem is much more than just trees. A natural forest ecosystem consists of a huge amount of different species and functions. "For example, species dependent on old trees, decayed wood or burned wood have disappeared in many areas," says researcher Panu Halme from the

Department of Biological and Environmental Science at the University of Jyväskylä. Halme is the leading author of the article.

More information: Halme, P. et al. 2013: Challenges of ecological restoration: Lessons from forests in northern Europe, *Biological Conservation*, 167: 248-256.

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