



LIITO-ORAVA-LIFE (LIFE17 NAT/FI/000469)

MONITORING OF DETAILED PLANS IN ESPOO 2019—2021 SUMMARY REPORT



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SUMMARY

The City of Espoo participates in the EU-funded Flying Squirrel LIFE Project in 2018–2025. One of the goals of the project is to evaluate the impact of land use planning on the flying squirrel and to explore the practices that best support the protection of the flying squirrel.

For the evaluation, five detailed plan areas in different stages of implementation were selected in Espoo. All the monitored areas have flying squirrel habitats that have been protected through plan symbols and regulations. The presence of flying squirrels and the effect of plan symbols were monitored in each detailed plan area from 2019 to 2021. In four sites, residential and infrastructure construction had started before the monitoring began. The goal of the first year of the three-year monitoring project was to establish the habitat patches (forest areas) and movement routes of flying squirrels in each site. A total of 16 forest patches occupied by flying squirrels and 17 routes between these patches were selected for monitoring. All of these were tracked in the two succeeding years.

The presence of the flying squirrel was surveyed based on their faecal pellets, which are easily found in springtime. At the same time, the researchers evaluated whether the sites indicated as flying squirrel habitats with plan symbols had remained suitable for the flying squirrel. Any changes in the habitats were recorded. The quality of and changes in the movement routes between habitat patches was also documented by photography.

This monitoring report describes the status of the flying squirrels in the spring of 2021 and evaluates the changes that took place during the monitoring period. The number of forest patches inhabited by flying squirrels decreased slightly during the monitoring period (15 patches in 2019, 13 patches in 2021). However, only minor land use measures were carried out in the sites indicated as flying squirrel habitats with plan symbols, and thus the quality of the habitats was preserved. The decline in the number of flying squirrels may be due to the fluctuating population changes typical to flying squirrels. The quality of the moving routes between the habitats remained adequate, with the exception of one route that was broken as a result of wood clearance. The route had not been indicated as a flying squirrel site with a plan symbol.

The monitoring data shows that the protection of the flying squirrel can be promoted through plan symbols indicating flying squirrel sites and related plan regulations. The monitoring data suggests that if the surface area of the forest patch designated for conservation is small, the flying squirrel may not survive unless the surrounding environment remains forested. Also, routes to other forest patches in at least two directions should be protected. One spring of surveying does not reveal all the forest patches and breeding sites used by the flying squirrel, as, at any given time, some of the sites are temporarily deserted.

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