Woodlands and Norwegians

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Songli in 2009

Songli 1900

Songli 1912

Songli 2011
Sokka farm, Nordmore. Peat was cut here (and widely in coastal Norway) for domestic fuel until the early 20th century due to lack of woodland on property.

Dale (snow depth >5cm, winter 09-10: <10 days)
Norway is a heavily wooded country below the natural treeline, including in areas of mild and oceanic climate on the same latitude, and with the same Caledonian orogeny geology and landforms, as Highland Scotland.

- The extent of woodland cover has considerably increased over the last century, especially in mild coastal regions and near the tree line inland.
- This has been mainly due to a decline in grazing pressure.
- The volume of all standing timber in Norwegian forests has increased 155% over the last 80 years*, partly through increases in area and partly through changes in commercial forestry management.
- The volume of deciduous standing timber has increased 136%, almost entirely through naturally-seeded increases in deciduous woodland area.
- How do Norwegians use their forests?

*Source: Statistisk sentralbyrå
Ownership structure

- 119,600 woodland proprietors in 2008 (Total population: 4.9 million)
- Average property 58 hectares productive woodland
- 97% of owners private individuals
- 80% of area owned by private individuals
- 20% of area owned by forestry companies, state, etc.
- Forestry employs 3,900 full time equivalents in direct timber harvesting
- The wider industry (processing etc) employs 22,000 full time equivalents

Woodland properties operated as part of farm (‘landsbruk’) unit

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- ‘Landsbruk’ includes the sense of a farmstead living by a diversified use of the land – crops, grazing, forestry, fishing, hunting, gathering, (selling) recreation
- Much of which is ‘off balance sheet’
- ‘Landsbruk’ as an occupation has been in long-term decline (some signs of stabilising recently), but is much more significant as an employer, and very much more so culturally, than is farming in the UK
- Almost all ‘landsbruk’ operations are owner-occupied
- Many landsbruk operations now sell timber extraction rights on their property rather than exploiting them directly

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More is in mixed-use for timber, firewood, grazing, hunting, and forest products.

Trees in this form of management are felled in small cuts, or selected individually ("plukkehøgst"). This results in a more varied woodland structure.

Grazing
Willow grouse (red grouse are the British form of this species) are mainly found in open mountain woodland; they are the main small game species in Norway. Usually hunted through walk-up shooting with retriever dogs.

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- Usually hunted through walk-up shooting with retriever dogs.
Moose (elk) range from sea level to the upper limit of the birch/willow zone, almost never far from wooded cover, throughout Norway except for SW coastal regions.

Harvest now stabilised after recovery from overhunting.

Harvest of red deer continues to increase (formerly very rare due to overhunting).

Mainly in SW Norway. Forest animals, ranging from sea level to the tree line - rarely on open ground in Norway.
Hunting is a major economic and recreational use of woodland.
About 190,000 Norwegians go hunting in any one year.
Many more take part as part of the ‘hunting team’, but do not shoot themselves.
Main small game species willow and black grouse, capercaillie, hazel grouse, arctic hare, beaver.
Main large game red deer, moose, and roe deer.
Hunting is also very important socially.

*Source: Statistisk sentralbyrå.

Gathering
Berries, fungi and common flowers may be picked by anyone as part of ‘Allemannsretten’ ('Everyman’s right').
Fuelwood
2009 household fuelwood consumption: 1 600 000 tonnes (9% up on 2008), or 816kg per household

2008 declared income from fuelwood sales: 323 million kroner (£37 million)

*Source: Statistisk sentralbyrå

Education
Most Norwegian children go to kindergarten.
All kindergartens often go on excursions into the woods.
About a third of kindergartens are "nature kindergartens", outdoors all day in most weathers.
Excursions and longer stays ("camp school") in the woods are a frequent and integral part of the curriculum throughout the period of compulsory education.

Hytter (cabins)
Number of cabins, summer houses, etc, Norway, 2009: 398 884 (1 per 12 inhabitants)
Source: Statistisk sentralbyrå
Hiking and rambling (etc.)

Det norske turistforening (Hiker’s Association) membership: 233,000 (4.8% of population)

Skiing

(Oot on tour – never soor!

(392,000 hits for exact phrase, Google)
• All of the economic and social activities described in this talk take place in the landscape shown here.
• 100 years ago this whole area was open rough grazing. The only trees were scattered granny pines.