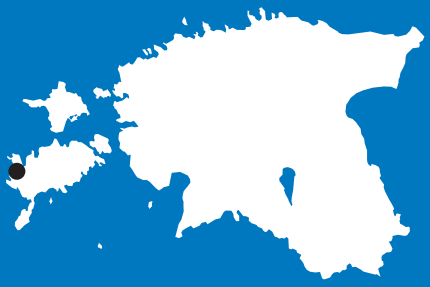
Republic of Estonia
Environmental Board

Vilsandi National Park



Vilsandi National Park

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WELCOME TO VILSANDI NATIONAL PARK!

The history of the park's establishment can be traced back to 1906 when the first steps were taken to protect bird species on the Vaika Islands. Back then it was customary to take from nature anything of value – people would collect eggs from the nests of ducks and mergansers to such an extent that only a few birds were able to produce any offspring. Also, brooding eiders were caught right off their nests. Artur Toom, a lighthouse keeper on Vilsandi Island, viewed such behaviour as a crime against nature and started to look for ways to protect the wild birds on the six Vaika Islands to the west of Vilsandi. In 1910 the Riga Naturalists Society rented the Vaika Islands from Kihelkonna rectory to form a reserve for the protection of seabirds. Vaika Bird Reserve was the very first protected area established in the Baltic States.

After World War II nature conservation was not a priority in Estonia, and the National Nature Reserve of Vaika was only created in 1957. In 1971 it came to include the island of Vilsandi and its surrounding smaller islands, and was named the National Nature Reserve of Vilsandi. By 1993, the reserve had come to include the western edge of the island of Saaremaa, and thus Vilsandi National Park was established.

The national park was primarily created to protect coastal landscapes, the sea, small islands rich in bird species, the cultural heritage of the area as well as protected species and their habitats. In terms of management planning the region is divided into strict nature reserves, conservation zones and limited management zones.

The national park spans the municipality of Saaremaa, stretching from Harilaid to Soeginina on the mainland of Saaremaa and including some 160 islands, islets and reefs. The largest among them are Vilsandi, Loonalaid, Salavamaa and Vesiloo. The park covers a surface area of 23,882 ha, of which more than two thirds is sea, making it the national park with the largest marine area in Estonia.

The bird and habitat sites of Vilsandi, Tagamõisa and Karala-Pilguse belong to the Natura 2000 network formed for the protection of habitat types and species of European importance. In 1997, the national park was added to the List of Wetlands of International Importance, or the Ramsar List.

A group of moulting mute swans, Arne Ader

Grey seal in a rookery, Kunter Tätte

NATURAL VALUES

Biota

In Vilsandi National Park the mild maritime climate, the abundance of habitats, soils on limestone bedrock, openness to distribution routes and long-standing traditions of maintaining semi-natural communities have created conditions conducive to the emergence of diverse flora and fauna.

Vilsandi marks the border of the distribution area for a number of plants and thus many rare species can be found here. More than 520 species of vascular plants have been recorded, of which protected species include the shoreweed, sea wormwood, Danish scurvygrass, black bog-rush and Saaremaa yellow rattle. 32 species of orchids, including the *dactylorhiza* of Saaremaa (an endemic species), are characteristic of the region.

Also, other types of biota found here exhibit high levels of biodiversity. Alvar grasslands are the preferred habitats of many insect species, such as skipper and fritillary butterflies and the rattle grasshopper. Due to a variety of marine habitats, fish populations here are among the most diverse in Estonia. These waters are suitable habitats for the whitefish, Atlantic salmon, European river lamprey and bullhead. Locals mostly catch flounder and Baltic herring.

Sandy coastal areas are preferred by the endangered natterjack toad, a species under protection, while shallow bodies of fresh water are home to the European medicinal leach, known for its peculiar habits. Vilsandi National Park is also an important breeding, stopover and wintering site for birds. A total of 247 bird species have been recorded in the area, of which 114 breed here. Eiders, gulls, ducks and terns build their nests on islets. Such rare species as the white-tailed eagle, Eurasian eagle-owl and short-billed dunlin are also seen here. The national park is home to such large mammals as the elk, red deer, roe deer and wild boar, while marine mammals like the grey seal use it as a breeding site and have their rookeries here.

Green-winged orchid, Rainar Kurbel

Natterjack toad, Jarek Jõepera

Pied avocet, Arne Ader

Habitats

The Open Sea

The marine habitats in Vilsandi include reefs, underwater sand banks, foreshores, coastal lagoons and wide, shallow bays. To the west of Vilsandi Island the seabed varies to a great extent; to the east it drops sharply by dozens of metres; while in the shallow bays of Kihelkonna and Kuusnõmme the seabed is mostly covered by sand or stones. In shallow stagnant waters, various green algae communities exist along with abundant zoobenthos (amphipods, bristleworms and bivalves). In Kihelkonna Bay, agar-agar and eelgrass are found side by side. These shallow areas are invaluable feeding sites for water birds, which come here to breed or simply for a stopover. Phytobenthos is generally absent in shallow waters which are open to waves and have a seabed covered with stones. Still, the dolomite seabed in the deep waters to the west and north of Vilsandi is covered in a thick layer of seaweed, which serves as a feeding site and shelter for shellfish (the common cockle and river nerite), crustaceans and fish (Baltic herring and cod).

Coast and coastal meadows

In the national park you will find low limestone cliffs (Soeginina, Elda and Loonalaid) and strips of rocky coastline consisting of biohermic limestone i.e. bearing the remains of various organisms (the east coast of Vilsandi Island and the Vaika Islands), which are home to small but highly resilient species such as the Danish scurvy grass, wall-rue and shining cranesbill. Large, sandy beaches and dunes are typical of the Harilaid region. Gently sloping coastal banks which border coastal meadows and dry up in the summer, turning into salt flats, can be seen on Vilsandi Island on the Kuusnõmme and Eeriksaare peninsulas. This mosaic of intertwined habitats is home to the common seablite, sea pearlwort, long-bracted sedge and sea wormwood. The waves rolling in from the open sea are occasionally quite strong and prevent the rapid growth of reed-beds on the shores of shallow coves, pushing ice masses over the ground in spring. Although coastal meadows cover 12% of the park's mainland area, vast coastal meadows in good condition have disappeared due to the cutting back of livestock grazing.

Relict lakes and fens

The area has been quietly emerging from the sea for the last 7,000 years. As a joint effect of currents and the vertical instability of the Earth's crust, every now and then a small cove closes up, leaving a small waterhole in the lowest part of it: this is how relict lakes form. Many such lakes can be found in the national park. The youngest

ones are replenished during strong storms, such as Sauelaht and Lüllelaht on Papissaare Peninsula. Still others are freshwater lakes, the inland Laialepa Bay on Harilaid Peninsula being among the largest.

Many of these lakes are as little as one metre deep and tend to turn into muddy puddles, especially if the summers are dry. All of these bodies of water are important breeding and feeding sites for birds. To build their nests, cranes seek out grassy islands in relict lakes because foxes and raccoon dogs cannot get to them due to the water barrier. Also, the rare European medicinal leech can be found in relict lakes. In addition, such lakes serve as an excellent habitat for a number of dragonfly varieties and other insect species.

Over time, these relict lakes turn into fens. There are also rare spring fens, calcareous fens where the swamp sawgrass grows and alkaline fens which stand out for their biodiversity in the region.

Alvar grasslands

Alvar grasslands can be predominantly found in regions where limestone outcrops have formed over the course of millions of years. These areas feature somewhat crumbly limestone deposits or limestone-rich pebble moraine, or simply shingles and pebbles, and the calcareous soil is thin, measuring less than 20 cm. These very dry meadows occur naturally on shingly coastal berms. Elsewhere, they have emerged as a result of long-term livestock grazing. Alvars were used for grazing mainly sheep and horses. Alvars are rarely found elsewhere in the world, which is why these communities are unique in the global context and in need of special protection. Here, the largest alvar grasslands have survived around Atla and Kõruse, while small patches can be found practically everywhere. Historically, the whole of Vilsandi Island was covered by alvars. Currently they make up 10% of the national park's area.

Alvars are characterised by extremely harsh habitat conditions: trees have a difficult time growing there. As if the fact that precipitation is less frequent in coastal areas were not enough, rain water quickly disappears through the shingle and rubble. During rainy periods, these areas are flooded, whereas during the dry season plants have to make do with water from dewdrops. The vegetation on alvars is diverse, but sparse and low-lying. Alvar grasslands are important habitats for the rare green-winged orchid, pyramidal orchid, burnt orchid and several other more common orchid species, as well as for the hop trefoil and

Dragon's teeth, Rainar Kurbel

Rattle grasshopper, Ain Piir

prostrate rocket. In addition to plants, a number of mosses and lichens which have adapted to extreme growing conditions can be found here. Among the rarest are such species as the white-rim lichen and *Cladonia convolute*.

Forest communities

Historically, only a small proportion of the park's area has been covered with forests. These forest stands, few and far between, were carefully preserved and their timber was used primarily for construction purposes. Today, young and middle-aged forests grow where man once kept semi-natural communities – meadows, wooded meadows, heaths and alvars – from becoming overgrown. Forests start to appear where no cattle graze or no mowing is done. Forests cover some 47% of the park's land area.

Here, pine forests are the most common forest type, growing in areas with sandy as well as limestone-rich soil. Heath and mesotrophic forests tend to grow in sandy soil (around Harilaid Peninsula), whereas alvar forests – which, like alvar grasslands, are abundant in species – favour calcareous soil (Suur-Vilsandi, around Atla and Kuusnõmme Peninsula). These sparse forests are especially favoured by the protected orchid species of narrow-leaved helleborine, while the red helleborine is found less often. The lady's slipper orchid, the species with the largest flowers of all the orchids found in Estonia, as well as the lesser twayblade and early coralroot, both with quite a nondescript appearance, grow here and there in these forests. Here and there, ivy lianas creep along the ground and climb the tree trunks.

Oak, aspen, linden and hazel stands can be found in overgrown wooded grasslands Near swamps, narrow strips of Fennoscandian swamp woodscan be found – for example, forests of stunted birches or pines, as well as mixed forests. One of the most impressive habitats in the national park is without doubt the birch grove on the Soeginina cliffs.

CULTURAL HERITAGE

The oldest traces of human settlement in the national park and its surroundings are the sites of Loona, Undva and Pajumõisa, once inhabited by seal hunters and fishermen and dating back to the Stone Age, as well as the burial sites in Loona, Kurevere and Lümanda from the Bronze Age. Ancient heaps of fieldstones in Kurevere and Loona bear witness to much earlier agricultural activity in the area. While the oldest archaeological findings point to settlers being from the Baltic region, later discoveries more frequently indicate objects as well as place and family names of Scandinavian origin. Vilsandi National Park is situated entirely within the former Kihelkonna parish.

Although the farmsteads in Vilsandi were quite large (60-70 ha), the soil in arable lands was poor and yielded barely enough to feed a family. Cottagers owned little land, if any: men used to work on ships or helped out elsewhere with ship-building or construction work while women tended to farming tasks. Fishing was an additional source of income and livelihood – and an important one at that.

Several impressive farm compounds and buildings have survived to our day in the national park. Barn dwellings represent the oldest type of housing, of which only a few are still standing. In the courtyard were various outbuildings for storing clothes,

Sailing ship "Antonia" in Papissaare harbour
Estonian Maritime Museum (MM F 814/83)

meat, fish and cereal crops; a shed for various kinds of livestock (cows, sheep and pigs); and a smoke sauna-cum-summer kitchen under the same roof, where elementary blacksmithing was done. 'Wheel houses' (in the local dialect the word *rattad*, or wheels, referred to wagons) and 'potato rooms' with smokers where potatoes were stored during the cold season are structures unique to the region. Farm courtyards were often separated into different sections, such as a clean yard, a vegetable garden and an area for domestic animals.

The largest ports in the area were once in Papissaare, Atla and Kiirassaare. In the late 19th century, Papissaare became an important ship-building centre. Before World War I, a seaplane base was built here and some of its hangars have partially survived to this day. A 3.1-kilometre cobblestone road – a heritage conservation site – runs from Kihelkonna to the port at Papissaare. Before World War II, Jaagarahu was the most important passenger and commercial port in the region, and limestone was shipped from here to be used as a raw material in the chemical industry.

Smoking fish in a smoker, Maris Sepp

Another typical feature of the region is shared landing places for boats. Those at Pikanina in Kuusnõmme, accompanied by wooden structures for clearing fishing nets, or 'net gardens', are among those still in relatively good condition. The former landing places are marked by dozens of rows of stones on the gently sloping seashore. Nearby are boat sheds for storing fishing gear and more poles used for hanging up and clearing fishing nets (popularly known as net

Ilaste windmill (restored in 2014), Valmar Voolaid

gardens, or *vabu*). Even fishermen from other regions had their fishing spots and landing places. During the fishing season they were accommodated on nearby coastal farms. The catch was sold or exchanged for other foods. After stormy weather, everyone went to the beach to see what treasures (*aakrik*) the sea had brought in. Seaweed mixed with mud and washed ashore was used as a fertiliser.

Here, heritage landscapes have undergone significant changes in the last century. Trees are taking over in what were once open landscapes with windmills, ports, landing places, stone fences and old villages; many pastures and hayfields (called 'meadows' by the locals) have fallen out of use or are overgrown with junipers; and windmills, lighthouses and military structures are no longer used for their original purposes and are still standing solely due to being maintained by their owners.

Of the three manor complexes in the region, those at Atla and Kuusnõmme have perished. The main building of Loona Manor has been restored, along with its granaries, cowshed, building for horse carts and park house. Here, near Abaja Bay, is the site of the country's first mud baths, constructed in 1924 by the owner of Rootsiküla Manor, and the location of the summer mansion of Pajumõisa Manor in the village of Oju.

Whether intangible cultural heritage survives depends first and foremost on the local people who learned the skills and took in the knowledge from an early age, or on people who have moved here and are interested in getting to know the local culture. Ship-building skills died out after World War II. Such traditional skills as tar-making, lime-burning, preparing traditional dishes (round dumplings of a sort and pan-baked bread), brewing beer and making smoked fish in a smoker are still kept alive.

The oral tradition includes a lot of ghost stories, which can be compared to typical troll stories from Sweden. Today, only a few people still speak the local dialect.

Loona Manor, Toomas Tuul

SIGHTS AND HIKING TRAILS

The centre of Vilsandi National Park

The centre of Vilsandi National Park is in Loona Manor, built in the 16th century. A beautiful lane of maple trees leads up to the manor. In the early 19th century the main building was renovated in Classical style and survives as such to this day. In addition to the main building, a building for horse carts, a granary and grain dryer, a gardener's house, agricultural buildings for livestock and a milk cellar are still standing in the manor park.

Nearby is a settlement from the Stone Age and a few ancient burial sites. The settlement was once inhabited by seal hunters and fishermen. Also, a subterranean cemetery dating back to the 13th century has been discovered in the area.

The RMK (State Forest Management Centre) Vilsandi Information Centre is situated in the former agricultural buildings for livestock, functioning currently as an exhibition centre. Visitors will enjoy a permanent exhibition which provides an overview of the region's history and natural values. Another exhibition about fossils is to be found in the stone building at Loona.

A romantic old port road leads from the manor to the harbour in Kiirassaare. Near the centre is Miku forest park, which has a clearly marked nature trail.

Vilsandi Island

Vilsandi Island measures approximately 6 km across and is up to 2 km wide in parts. It is divided into two parts – Suur-Vilsandi and Väike-Vilsandi (Greater Vilsandi and Lesser Vilsandi, respectively). The narrow cove separatingthe two is called Vahemeri (the 'In-between Sea'). The coastal landscapes are highly varied here. The island features dolomite coastal cliffs (in German *Felsand*, or rocky, craggy land) after which it is named, as well as flat coastal meadows. The seashore is dotted with junipers and reeds. The central part of Suur-Vilsandi is covered by alvar pine forests, typical of dry soil. Quite differently, conditions in the forests on Väike-Vilsandi are wetter. When walking along the coast, views of small islands stretch in every direction. One of the most picturesque is the pebbly Vesiloo Island to the north of Vilsandi.

Typical plant species growing on the island are the sea kale, dragon's teeth, white stonecrop and goldmoss stonecrop. Also, several orchid species are quite common here, such as the green-winged orchid, greater butterfly orchid, military orchid and wild Baltic orchid. In addition, a number of rare fungus species have been recorded here.

The first permanent settlers on the island were Captain Doll and his wife, survivors of a Dutch shipwreck in 1703. The captain, also the founder of Tolli Farm, worked as a hayfield guard for Kihelkonna Church Manor. Other permanent inhabitants followed only in the 18th century when farming families from the western part of Saaremaa settled here. Their main sources of livelihood were seafaring, fishing and raising livestock. In 1934, there were 31 households – a total of 169 people – on the island. Today the island has three permanent residents.

Redshank, Kunter Tätte

The heritage landscape of the island features post mills, stone fences, the lighthouse at Vilsandi and a rescue station boat shed.

Vilsandi lighthouse is the oldest surviving lighthouse in Saare County. The current structure was completed in 1809, but has been renovated and modified a number of times. The 37-metre lighthouse is a heritage conservation site.

Vilsandi weather station is located by the lighthouse and is the oldest of its kind in Estonia. The first meteorological observations date back to 1865. Vilsandi Island is the sunniest location in Estonia.

Vilsandi rescue station was built right at the foot of the lighthouse in 1874 because the shallows and reefs around the island were once the region where most shipwrecks occurred in the coastal waters off Saaremaa. It is the only wooden rescue station (boat shed) which has survived in its original location, and was renovated as such in 2012.

Vilsandi integrated environmental monitoring site is located next to a trail leading to Vesiloo Island. Here, the impact of air pollution on ecosystem function is studied.

Vilsandi air monitoring station is used to conduct air sampling surveys, with results pointing overwhelmingly to the long-range environmental transport of pollutants originating from Western Europe. It is a background station, since major sources of pollution do not exist locally. The monitoring station is located near the observation tower, in a central, open area to the south.

Vilsandi hiking trail (6 or 6 km) starts at the observation tower and there are information boards along the way. Trails lead to the west and north. Heading north, the trail passes the integrated environmental monitoring site, and it is possible to wade through the water to Vesiloo Island. Heading west, the trail takes you to a sandy beach in the south-western part of the island – the swimming spot and camping site in Kulpri – and from there to the foot of the lighthouse.

Vikati Information Centre and camp site are located in the port of Vikati on Vilsandi. Here, a variety of information is available to visitors, and those stranded due to storms can spend the night here. At the camp site you will find firewood, a table with benches and an information board.

Kulpri camp site has tables and benches, a dry toilet and a campfire. It is located by a hiking trail, in the south-western part of the island. The site is also accessible to those coming ashore in kayaks.

Väike-Vilsandi recreational area is a place for taking a break while visiting islets. There is an information board and a table with benches.

Sheep on Vilsandi Island, Jarek Jõepera

Harilaid Peninsula and Kiipsaare Lighthouse, Sven Začek

Harilaid Peninsula

Harilaid is an elongated peninsula with a winding shoreline in the northern part of the national park. A couple of centuries ago it was an island, but it is now connected to Tagamõisa Peninsula. Harilaid is mostly covered in pine forests, but also has a lake – the former Laialepa Bay.

Due to the sea eroding the soil in some places and bringing it ashore in others, the coast of Harilaid is constantly changing, especially around Kiipsaare Promontory. Kiipsaare lighthouse was erected in 1933 in what was once the central part of the peninsula. Today it is quite a way off into the sea.

The natural conditions on the peninsula are highly varied and a number of protected plant species grow here. The rarest are the sea holly, sand couch-grass, creeping willow and marsh pennywort. Dry heaths are home to numerous mosses and lichens, while the sea pea, sand ryegrass and European marram grass grow in sandy coastal areas. Harilaid is a stopover site for birds. The Steller's eider, a bird species endangered worldwide, comes here to winter. Such amphibians as the natterjack toad and moor frog inhabit these areas. Laevarahu Islet, located to the west of Harilaid, is a grey seal rookery.

On Harilaid, major efforts are being undertaken to restore the habitats of the natterjack toad. This involves removing planted pine forests from sandy plains as well as creating open landscapes and bodies of water where these animals can freely move around and spawn. These efforts also benefit a number of other species seeking out open sandy plains.

Harilaid hiking trail (11 km) explores the varied coastal environment. It is an excellent spot for observing birds and seals. There is a camp site by the trail. Visitors are also welcome to walk along the seashore.

Harilaid recreational area has a large car park and is a suitable place for taking a break. It is the start and end point of the hiking trail of the same name. There are information boards, shelter, a table with benches and dry toilets on site.

Harilaid camp site is located on the shore of Laialepa Bay, by the Harilaid hiking trail. A three-kilometre, clearly marked trail leads to the site. Visitors can leave their cars in the

Sea holly, Raul Kern

Harilaid recreational area car park. There is a campfire, a table with benches and a dry toilet. Laialepa Bay is an excellent spot for bird-watching.

Kuusnõmme Peninsula

Kuusnõmme Peninsula, extending towards the north-west, is mostly covered in pine forests, of which some are natural and others planted. There are a few shallow lakes in the area, locally known as *silmad* (eyes). Such rare species as the Alpine butterwort, Saaremaa yellow rattle and mountain St John's wort can be found here. Orchids growing on the peninsula include the narrow-leaved helleborine, fly orchid and lady's slipper orchid. This quiet, uninhabited peninsula is a favourite spot of many birds and animals. The common viper is not an uncommon sight, while white-tailed eagles keep watch, sitting on old pines.

Kuusnõmme Manor was built in the 16th century. The manor changed hands many times because agriculture was not very profitable due to the poor soils. In 1922, the University of Tartu opened a biology station in the main building, managed by Professor Johannes Piiper. Also, the university established a number of test areas as part of an experimental forest district on the peninsula, of which the 'American forest' is the best known. Study and practical tasks were carried out in the national park for some 20 years. The main building was destroyed in a fire in 1984. Today, only its foundations and the ruins of some outbuildings can be found on the site.

Käkisilma-Vilsandi hiking trail (5 km) goes through the sea and across a number of small uninhabited islets before ending on Väike-Vilsandi. It is clearly marked and accessible when the water level is low and the sea water is warm, unless the current in the Käkisilma channel is too strong. Ask for further information about the trail conditions at the RMK Vilsandi Information Centre. Footwear is a must on this trail. Visitors can leave their cars in the car park at the Käkisilma camp site.

Käkisilma camp site is located on the tip of Kuusnõmme Peninsula. There is a car park, an information board, tables with benches, shelter, a campfire and a dry toilet on site.

Biology station of Kuusnõmme 1925; Zolk, National Archives of Estonia, Film Archive

Elda Peninsula

Elda Peninsula in the southern part of the national park is mostly covered in alvar grasslands and overgrown wooded meadows. Beautiful views open up from the Soeginina and Elda cliffs. Fossils from the Silurian Period can be found on Soeginina cliff, and the broadleaf forests growing on top of the cliffs are rich in protected species like the common ivy and wild garlic. From here you can see Innarahu Islet, where grey seals have their rookeries and also give birth to their young in winters with limited ice cover. The cliff at Elda differs from that of Soeginina in terms of appearance – the area on top of the cliff is treeless, while on the shore a limestone layer is neatly exposed. When looking west from the cliff you can see Salavamaa, beyond which is the westernmost point of mainland Estonia: Nootamaa. To the north-west is the second-largest island in the national park (Loonalaid), while to the north the views border Vilsandi Island with its lighthouse.

Atla village. The oldest part of the village is located in the Austla forest with its ancient stone fences. During the pre-war period there were 75 households in the village. Atla was among the largest villages in the national park, in terms of both population and area. The village is divided into three parts: Atla-Alt (the oldest cluster village), Atla-Mäe and Atla-Niidi. Some hundred people fled from the war by sea, while around 25 were deported. Today there are fewer than 10 permanent residents in the village.

Elda camp site is located on Elda Peninsula, by the Kööbe coastal lagoon. The area around the camp site is excellent for seal-watching. There is a car park, information boards, tables with benches, a campfire and a dry toilet on site. Visitors are asked to explore the cliffs on foot, by walking along the seashore or taking the path that winds its way through privately owned land up to the tip of the peninsula. Visitors can leave their cars in the camp site car park.

Evening lights at Soeginina cliff, Allar Liiv

INSTRUCTIONS FOR VISITORS

- When moving around in nature, follow the conservation rules of Vilsandi National Park, everyman's right and best practice.
- When driving a motor vehicle, use the designated roads only. It is permitted to ride bicycles on trails.
- Camping and making fires is allowed in specially arranged and designated places only (see the map). Before leaving, make sure to put out the fire.
- When moving around in nature, dogs must be kept on a leash at all times.
- It is permitted to pick berries, mushrooms and other wild produce.
- Please do your best not to leave any trace of your presence. Do not leave any garbage behind – take it with you.
- Fishing is allowed according to the Fishing Act and the conservation rules of Vilsandi National Park.

Hiking trails go through areas used for livestock grazing, which may be **fenced off with electric fencing.**

- Use the specially arranged places or crossings to pass grazing enclosures.
- Do not touch electric fencing or any of its metal parts, as these may be live.
- Use the plastic handle to open the crossing gate.
- Make sure you close all gates.
- Do not disturb or feed livestock.

Käkisilma-Vilsandi hiking trail:

- Accessible when the water level is low and the sea water is warm, unless the current in the Käkisilma channel is too strong.
- Before setting out on the hike, seek further information from the RMK Vilsandi Information Centre.

If you become aware of activities that are potentially harmful to the environment or visitor facilities, call the environmental emergency hotline 1313

For emergency services, call 112

Fossil in Vesiloo Island, Kunter Tätte

Did you know?

- The foundations of Vilsandi National Park were laid in 1910 with the establishment of Vaika Bird Reserve.
- More than two-thirds of the park's surface area is covered by sea.
- The westernmost point of mainland Estonia is in Vilsandi National Park.
- The Steller's eider, a bird species endangered worldwide, winters in the national park.
- The rookeries of the grey seal in Vilsandi are among the largest in Estonia.
- 32 species of orchids grow in Vilsandi National Park.

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