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## Scientists call for action: Protect Sweden's Old-Growth Forests

**It is now 2010, the year in which the Swedish environmental objective, Sustainable Forests, should be achieved. Despite the critical state of forest biodiversity, the Swedish government has decreased the budget for forest protection and advocates an intensification of forestry activities. In an appeal, leading scientists demand that the Swedish government takes appropriate action to protect Sweden's last old-growth forests and other forests with high conservation value, before it is too late.**

So far, 29 scientists in Sweden and Finland have signed the appeal. They claim that sustainable forestry cannot be achieved in Sweden when 95 percent of the productive forests are exploited, and only a few percent of the forest land are set aside for nature conservation. Sweden has a large proportion of Western Europe's old-growth forests and is committed, internationally and nationally, to stopping the loss of biodiversity. The scientists mean that it is the duty of the Swedish government to abide by these obligations.

"Theoretically we have a good environmental policy and the Swedish environmental objectives are exemplary," says Bengt Gunnar Jonsson, Professor in Plant Ecology at Mid Sweden University. "However, there is a discrepancy between ends and means - the political will to implement the policy seems in practice to be insufficient. Consequently, we are faced with an increasingly impoverished forest landscape. The environmental goal in the Swedish Forestry Act is clearly subordinate to the goal of production."

In 2010, decisions will be taken regarding the Swedish environmental objectives for 2020. In their appeal, the scientists demand that a new area objective should be adopted, in line with leading nature conservation research, in which 20 percent of Sweden's productive forest will be protected. To achieve this, large areas of forest land must be restored, since there are too few remaining forest areas with high conservation value in Sweden today.

The scientists demand that the budget allocated to forest protection be increased to the level needed for the long-term protection of forest biodiversity. Safeguarding the remaining older forests also preserves the soil carbon storage and mitigates climate change. The scientists also recommend that a greater variety of forest management methods be employed in the remaining 80 percent of productive forest, and say that greater environmental consideration must be taken regarding biodiversity and water.

"Sweden is one of the world's richest countries," says Sven G Nilsson, Professor in Ecology at Lund University. "We can therefore afford to protect the last natural forests and also restore the lost biodiversity of other forests. We have inherited a rich flora and fauna from our ancestors which we must pass on to future generations."

The Swedish organization Protect the Forest initiated this appeal from scientists to protect the last old-growth forests and other forests with high conservation value in Sweden. The organization is now seeking broad support from the public and from other scientists. Anyone who wants to sign the appeal, can access it via the Protect the Forest website (see link below).

### **For more information, please contact:**

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**Link to the Appeal:** [www.protecttheforest.se/upprop](http://www.protecttheforest.se/upprop)