



National Park Simulator - a game for comprehending biodiversity

Photo: Reijo Juurinen

HALTIA

Maria Salin, nature educator

The Finnish Nature Centre Haltia

- ▶ Haltia is a gate to Finnish nature
- ▶ Situated on the doorstep to Nuuksio National Park in Espoo (30 km from Helsinki)
- ▶ Bus from Espoo centre takes you to Haltia
- ▶ Open the year around. Welcome!



Photo: Jari Kostet

HALTIA

www.haltia.com/en



Photo: Tony Syrjäinen

Haltia's organisation

- ▶ Administrated by Metsähallitus, Parks & Wildlife (funded by the Ministry of Environment)
- ▶ 80% of the financing comes from the surrounding municipalities (Espoo, Helsinki, Vantaa, Kauniainen, Kirkkonummi, Vihti) and Folkhälsan
- ▶ Retkipaikka (a private company) runs the customer services and Haltia shop, the restaurant is run by Delicatessen restaurants.

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Photo: Jari Kostet

Haltia's services

- ▶ Nature exhibitions and nature trails
- ▶ Public events about nature and outdoor activities
- ▶ Nature school for grades 3-9
- ▶ Inspiring guided tours for all ages
- ▶ Courses and teaching materials for educators about outdoor education and nature interpretation

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National Park Simulator

- ▶ A field game that can be played in many kinds of natural surroundings
- ▶ Target group 5th to 9th grade, suitable also for older students
- ▶ Length 1-2 h



Photo: Jari Kostet

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Photo: Elina Pilke

The pedagogical principals

- ▶ Outdoor learning
- ▶ Gaming
- ▶ Working together
- ▶ Comprehension
- ▶ Multiple perspectives
- ▶ Coordination, reconciliation
- ▶ Creativity

The idea and goals

- ▶ To demonstrate biodiversity and the need and means to protect it
- ▶ To increase understanding about the connection between species and habitats
- ▶ To increase understanding of how human caused changes affect biodiversity
- ▶ To give knowledge about the means of nature conservation
- ▶ To look at things from many perspectives and practise reconciliation



Photo: Elina Pitke

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What is so inspiring about games?

- ▶ The possibility to create
- ▶ The possibility to develop
- ▶ Rewards: points, earnings, placements
- ▶ Working together, belonging to a team
- ▶ Clear rules, easy game mechanics

Game elements in the National Park Simulator

- ▶ The team builds their own area, makes choices and decisions
- ▶ The team does assignments to earn parts or points
- ▶ The game has a time limit and different stages
- ▶ You get points that can be counted together



What is done in the game?

- ▶ Each team creates a miniature national park.
- ▶ The goal is to make the area as diverse as possible regarding species and habitats.
- ▶ The team studies the habitats within their area and tries to place as many species as possible.
- ▶ Each team starts with five species. A species can be placed in the area only after a suitable habitat has been found.





Photo: Elina Pilke

What is done in the game?

- ▶ By doing assignments the team can get more species cards, habitats and an additional area.
- ▶ The teams build service for hikers/visitors, like paths and camp fire sites, from natural material.
- ▶ The needs of nature protection is coordinated with the needs of the visitors to insure that the species are not disturbed too much.
- ▶ The game is won by the team who gathers the most points from species and nature conservation.

Game reflection is important

- ▶ During the game there might be a lack of patience to read the information
- ▶ Tying up things to get the big picture
- ▶ Making sure things are understood
- ▶ Giving feedback to the players and making them reflect
- ▶ Reaching the learning goals



Photo: Elina Pilke



Photo: Jari Kostet

Feedback about the game

- ▶ I learned a lot!
- ▶ Inspiring!
- ▶ It was fun to build!
- ▶ This would make a great computer game!

Game materials online

- ▶ The materials were published in 2023 in Finnish and Swedish
- ▶ Can be printed out from [Metsähallitus publications website](#) >>





Photo: Elina Pilke

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haltia.com/luontokoulu