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"The History (1620–2003) of Land Use, People and Livestock, and the Relationship to Present Plant Species Diversity in a Rural Landscape in Sweden"

Dahlström, Anna, Sara A.O. Cousins, and Ove Eriksson

Dahlström, Anna, Sara A.O. Cousins, and Ove Eriksson. "The History (1620–2003) of Land Use, People and Livestock, and the Relationship to Present Plant Species Diversity in a Rural Landscape in Sweden." *Environment and History* 12, no. 2 (May, 2006): 191–212. doi:10.3197/096734006776680218 . The traditional agriculture in Europe favoured numerous plant and animal species that are presently declining. Integrated studies based on various sources are needed in order to unravel the complex relationships between changing landscapes and biological diversity. The objectives of this study were to describe changes in land use during c. 350 years in a Swedish agricultural landscape in relation to changes in human population and livestock, and to analyse relationships between historical land use and present-day plant species diversity. There were only minor long-term changes in land use, population and livestock between 1640 and 1854 in the two studied hamlets, but detailed data 1620–41 showed a large short-term fluctuation in livestock numbers. After 1854 larger changes took place. Grasslands were cultivated and livestock composition changed. After 1932, livestock number decreased and most of the former grazed outland (areas located outside the fenced infields) turned into forest by natural succession. 7 per cent of the study area is still grazed semi-natural grassland. The highest plant species richness is today found on semi-natural grassland with a long continuity of grazing. The distribution of five target species suggests that previous land use still has an important effect today. The majority of their occurrences are remnant populations located in previous outland pastures which are today forests. All rights reserved. © 2006 The White Horse Press

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