

EVENTS, EXCURSIONS AND ESCAPE GAMES

Environmental Education in the Flying Squirrel LIFE project



drawing: Janus Ahonpää / Kuopio Natural History Museum

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Flying Squirrel LIFE (LIFE 17 NAT/FI/000469)

E2 Engaging general public

E3 Exhibitions and environmental education



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E2 – Engaging general public

The purpose of the public events was to share information about the flying squirrel with participants of all ages and to involve the public in conservation measures for the species. During the project, the Kuopio Museum of Natural History organized a total of 37 public events, reaching 2,040 participants. For adults, there were, among other things, expert lectures and panel discussions, while for families with children, 25 nature trips and cultural events were organized in cooperation with local cultural actors, who brought especially music to the events. Some of the happenings took place during the covid pandemic, so they were organized online.



Public excursions about flying squirrels inspired the whole family to get out in nature. Forests suitable for flying squirrels are also important for human well-being.

photo: Anu Ruohomäki / City of Kuopio

Nest box events were particularly popular: 140 volunteer box builders of all ages participated in the three events. Some of the nest boxes were later taken to the forests of the city of Kuopio.



The public was able to participate in concrete conservation activities at the nest box events.
photo: Mari Wikholm / Kuopio Natural History Museum

E3 – Exhibitions and environmental education

The most significant part of the project at the Kuopio Natural History Museum was the hiring of an ambassador for school visits. Without project funding, such extensive outreach to schools and kindergartens in the surrounding area would not have been possible. During the project, the environmental educator made 195 visits and met as many as 3,516 children or young people of different ages, telling them about the life of flying squirrels during diverse environmental education sessions.



The flying squirrel escape game designed for schoolchildren was also fun for adults.
photo: Mari Wikholm / Kuopio Natural History Museum

The Kuopio Museum of Natural History, the Metsähallitus Forest and Park Services Nature School Haltia and the City of Jyväskylä produced together an extensive environmental education package in Finnish and Swedish called "Following the Trail of the Flying Squirrel". The Finnish-language guide was printed as a booklet, which has been distributed to schools, kindergartens and children's clubs all over Finland. The Swedish version is available online. The material has also been stored in the national environmental education material bank Mappa, where it can be freely used.



The life of flying squirrels in Kuopio was also monitored through a trail camera during the project. In the summer of 2020, valuable new ecological information was obtained from a video recording when a hungry stoat climbed into a nest box and caught the flying squirrel mother and three young from there. Previously, stoats had not been observed to be a significant threat to flying squirrels.

Three flying squirrel-themed exhibitions were produced during the project. The traveling exhibition "In Flight" was on display in six venues during the project and reached 31,626 visitors. The flying squirrel also plays a prominent role in the renewed permanent exhibition of the Kuopio Museum, which has been visited by 245,876 visitors by the end of 2024. In addition, part of the outdoor exhibition implemented by Metsähallitus Forest and Park Services was moved to Väinölänniemi, Kuopio.



Kuopio city mascots Pähkä the flying squirrel and Kamu the frog admire the "In Flight" exhibition.
photo: Niko Nevalainen / City of Kuopio