



Strengthening Local Ownership



Exploring the relation between woman and forest through ages

KAJAANI

HOSSA REGION

FINLAND

Linnanvirta event promotes sustainability of green areas

Linnanvirta event takes place in the centre of Kajaani, around the northernmost stone castle ruin of Europe, by River Kajaani. It's a park festival aimed to gather people from and around Kajaani, combining different forms of culture, activities for children etc. Metsähallitus Parks & Wildlife (PWF) has facilitated the event and taken the lead from the beginning of its history. In 2017, Linnanvirta was organized with the special theme of recreation in the wilderness, raising awareness of the use and protection of local green areas and engaging local people and communities. The newly established Hossa National Park along with other recreational and protected areas managed by PWF were introduced in the event. The ultimate target was to increase local ownership of these areas and to promote their sustainable use through engaging the general public.

ASCENT was well visible in the event. An information point was established where visitors could ask about PWF protection areas in the Kainuu region. Several experts from PWF were present to talk with the public and to introduce sustainable recreation.

Organising and planning the event was a joint effort with dozens of stakeholders. This was not only a target but also essential in creating an event of such scale. Linnanvirta was also an exercise to “explore new concepts for balancing tourism, cultural and economic interests with

environmental needs” and “generate knowledge on the impacts on the environment, local biodiversity resources and promote civic pride of the environmental resources and unique local and cultural heritage” as outlined in the overall objectives of ASCENT.

The ultimate aim for organizing Linnanvirta with a “green” theme was to gather a large number of visitors and to generate a feel of pride for the local green areas. About half of the population of Kainuu region lives in Kajaani and these people are mostly

the ones using recreational and protected areas - therefore the main target group of Linnanvirta. The idea was to bring the forest in the middle of the town and lower the threshold to try activities as well as to help finding out possibilities for outings close to home. Nature and culture were tightly tied together - in the hope of generating revelations and experiences that would increase the respect people have towards the Finnish nature and its conservation.

Outcome

Approximately 5500 people attended the Linnanvirta event in 2017. It was estimated that around 800 of those were directly involved with ASCENT and the introduction of protected areas at the information point. This kind of visibility for ASCENT could not have been possible without the overall programme of the event weekend. Numerous new contacts were created between PWF, visitors and other organisers.

Linnanvirta aimed to reach people of Kainuu from young to old, from town and from the rural surroundings as they are the main target group using protected areas of the region. Hundreds of families took part in the activities.

Organisers were asked for feedback and they gave an overall score of 4,42 out of 5 to the event. Organisers were mostly happy with the variety of the programme, visitor numbers, the good organizing and the great ambiance of the event.

Positive comments dominated the visitor feedback during the weekend, although no feedback forms were distributed. ASCENT and the green theme of 2017 made Linnanvirta exceptionally popular and the ethos of "what you respect, you'll want to care for" was well received amongst visitors.



Key Findings & Learning Points

It was encouraging to see that organizing an event such as Linnanvirta is a great way to gather lots of interested people and to raise awareness and promote sustainability of natural environments. Mixing arts, activities and handing out information in a leisurely way proved to be a winning combination to support the targets set by ASCENT.

Most of the learning points were connected with practicalities and safety issues. A bridge crossing the river inside the festival area was closed for most of the event but opened for traffic on Saturday evening. This caused some congestion as the visitors of the event flocked to the narrow bridge. It was also evident that more PWF personnel is required to organize such a largescale event than what was available in 2017.



FURTHER INFORMATION

Contact details: Sari Alatosava
Park Superintendent
Metsähallitus
Parks & Wildlife Finland

e-mail: sari.alatosava@metsa.fi
mobile +358 408 014 044

www.ascent-project.eu