

HEROES OF 2022 IN NATURE



Photo: Karl Adami

**Bird of the year:
the Eurasian woodcock**

Eurasian woodcock (*Scolopax rusticola*) is a common breeding bird in Estonia with a crow's size, brown, with a rather long beak and short legs. Its habitat is associated with old forests with clearings or forest rides nearby. The clearings witness peculiar mating flights of the males in the spring. The woodcock is a very skilled pilot who only works in the twilight and at night. The special eye structure allows it to observe the surroundings 360 degrees without turning its head. Its main food is earthworms, insects, and other invertebrates. Its nest is on the ground; only females take care of the chicks. The woodcock is a hunting bird. [Read more: Eesti Ornitoloogiaühing](#)



Photo: Leo Ensoo

**Animal of the year:
the brown bear**

The brown bear (*Ursus arctos*) is the most widespread bear, with about a thousand individuals inhabiting our forests. A bear, like a human, is a plantigrade. The ochlophobic bear, with a rather nocturnal and sheltered lifestyle, is the largest omnivorous predator in Estonia. Female bears weigh up to 200 kg, male bears even over 300 kg. Hibernation helps them to survive

winter. In January, a bear mother will give birth to 2-3 cubs who will stay with their mother for a couple of years. Communication with peers takes place through scratching, chewing, and scent marks left on rub trees. [Read more: looduskalender.ee](#)



Photo: Ave Hruugen

**Tree of the year:
rowan**

Rowan (*Sorbus aucuparia*) was the tree of the year for the first time in 2000. It is one of the most widespread plant species in Estonia, which can grow as a tree or shrub. In the forest, it remains the plant of the undergrowth; in the open landscape, it can become a tree twenty meters high. Rowan pomes are food for many birds and mammals. Humans use pomes in culinary and medicine. Rowan is considered a sacred tree because there is a pentagon known as a witch's sign at the top of the berry. There are four species of rowan growing naturally in Estonia: rowan, Swedish whitebeam, semi-rowan, Finnish whitebeam, and rock whitebeam (protection category II). Rowans easily hybridize to each other. [Read more: loodusajakiri.ee](#)



Photo: Marit Kivisild

**Orchid of the year:
the marsh orchid**

Marsh orchid (*Orchis latifolia ssp. baltica*) is widespread throughout Estonia, more common on the west coast, islands, and in south-eastern Estonia. The orchid, which usually has brown spots on its leaves and an average height of 60 cm, grows in moist and marshy places – meadows, grasslands, on the banks of water bodies. It blooms from mid-June to mid-July; the inflorescence is pinkish-purple, dense and curly. The pollinators are bees, bumblebees, flies; there is no nectar in the flower. It is a species of protection category III whose habitats are endangered by overgrowth. The family of March orchids is named after the finger-shaped tuberous roots [Read more: orhidee.ee](#)



Photo: Helen Kivisild

**Moss of the year:
Neckera pennata**

Neckera pennata (*Neckera pennata*) is an eye-catching moss that grows on deciduous tree trunks in old deciduous and mixed forests, sometimes in parks. The moss forms light or yellowish-green, slightly shiny pads with upwardly curving shoots. Neckera pennata that belongs to protection category III is a characteristic sp rowaecies of key habitat. It is threatened by the loss of suitable habitats when cutting old forests. [Read more: Eesti Samblasõbrad](#)

fungus, under certain conditions, a thick white-yellow-light-brown crusty coating which is called a disease - Epichloë typhina - forms on the upper leaf sheaths of certain grass species. Because of this dual nature, it gives food for thought to a nature lover and matter for research to scientists. [Read more:](#)

[Eesti Mükoloogiaühing](#)



Photo: Tõnu Ploompuu

**Fungus of the year:
Epichloë typhina**



Photo: Marit Kivisild

**Butterfly of the year:
the scarce heath**

The scarce heath (*Coenonypha hero*) is widespread in Estonia but not a common butterfly with a wingspan of 26-30 mm. From the beginning of June to the beginning of July, it can be found in moist habitats such as forest roads and clearings, wooded meadows, grasslands, edges of bushes, and swamps. Butterflies fly little, relatively slowly, and low. Caterpillars feed on grasses and overwinter. Protection category III. [Read more: eElurikkus](#)

Artificial soil (T) is land that has been modified, remodeled, and affected by machinery. The natural upper part of the soil is partially or completely destroyed or removed, mixed with the subsoil, buried in a dump, or mixed with non-natural materials, such as industrial waste. Artificiality means a strong transformative effect of human activities on the appearance and development of the soil. Soil formation is also a natural process in areas associated with plants and another biota. Artificial soil is found in quarry areas with restored vegetation, densely populated areas, areas surrounding buildings and roads. Artificial soil is constantly being added. [Read more: Eesti Maaülikool](#)



Photo: Endla Asi

**Soil of the year:
the artificial soil**



Photo: Almar Rakk

**Fish of the year:
perch**

Perch (*Perca fluviatilis*) lives in rivers, lakes, coastal seas, and bog lakes. Perch are predatory fish that feed on aquatic invertebrates and various fish species, including their conspecifics. The minimum size for perch when catching it from the sea is 19 cm, there is no minimum size for freshwater, usually 20-25 cm long fish are caught. Fishing is allowed all year round. Perch is a valued fish on our menu. Finnish national fish. [Read more: Aasta kala](#)