

## HEROES IN THE NATURE 2023

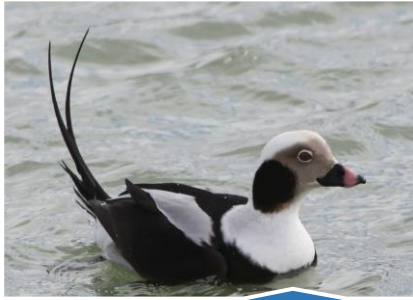


Foto: Uku Paal

**Bird of the year:  
the long-tailed duck**

they leap from tree to tree. Their leaps can be anywhere from 20–50 metres. They glide silently and can change direction and slow down by using the glide membrane, or patagium, between their limbs. They rarely move on the ground. Suitable habitats have been preserved only in the old mixed and deciduous forests in North-Eastern Estonia, which have aspens with hollows. They feed on leaves, buds and sprouts. They nest in the hollows of thick aspens and have 2–3 young. The species belongs to protected category I and is primarily threatened by logging, loss of habitat and habitat fragmentation. Read more: [Eesti Ornitoloogiaühing](#)

**The Siberian flying squirrel** (*Pteromys volans*) is a very rare rodent with large eyes. The species is mostly active in the evening and at night. They live in trees, where

**The Scots pine** (*Pinus sylvestris*) is our most common tree species. It is very undemanding when it comes to soil fertility, but it needs a lot of light. The tallest known pine in the world grows in Põlva County in Ootsipalu (46.6 m). Pine needles grow in bundles of two. It is pollinated from May to June and the seeds mature in the following autumn. Pine provides food to mammals (moose, squirrel), birds (woodpeckers, western capercaillies), insects (cockchafers, Hyllobia), etc. Pine is the most utilised tree by humans: it is used for timber, in the chemical industry, in medicine, etc. The slender pines in heathy forests and the puny bog pines are the same species. Pine was the tree of the year for the first time in 2001. Read more: [loodusajakiri.ee](#)

**The green shield-moss** (*Buxbaumia viridis*) is an inconspicuous moss with a height of around 1–2 mm. It grows on decaying stumps and trunks in mixed spruce forests. Only when the year is favourable, can the moss grow spore capsules of up to 2 cm. The spores in them do not mature until the following spring. The green shield-moss grows primarily on the western islands of Estonia, but can also be found on the mainland. It belongs to protected category I and is a signature species of a key biotype. It is threatened by loss of habitat. Read more: [Eesti Samblasõbrad](#)

Of our white-flowered orchids, **the narrow-leaved helleborine** (*Cephalanthera longifolia*) has the largest flowers (around 15 mm). It blooms in May and June. The flowers are pollinated by small bees. The flowers have no scent, as they do not contain nectar. The height of the plant is up to 50 cm, its leaves are light green, long and tapered. It grows in the western part of Saaremaa in alvar and dune forests as well as wooded meadows. It can also be found in a few places on other Western Estonian islands and the mainland. The species belongs to protected category II. It is threatened by afforestation and clearcutting of habitats. Read more: [Eesti Orhideekaitse Klubi](#)

**The herald** (*Scoliopteryx libatrix*) is a moth with orange stripes on its jagged grey forewings. Its wingspan is around 40 mm. The species is very widespread here. The imagoes fly from August to October and from May to July. In spring, the female moth lays her eggs on a deciduous tree, mostly willow. Willow is a food plant of caterpillars. In late summer, a moth emerges from the pupa and will soon go to overwinter in caves and cellars. The herald is one of the most long-lived (nearly a year) and one of the few moths that overwinters as an imago. Read more: [Eesti Lepidopteroloogide Selts](#)

**The cep** (*Boletus edulis*) is one of the most sought after and valued edible mushrooms. It can be eaten raw. The mushroom has a brown matte cap with burnt-looking edges. The stem is whitish with a white or light brown netted pattern at the top. The flesh of the mushroom is white, with a pleasant taste and aroma. The flesh does not change colour when cut. It grows in spruce and mixed spruce forests. Read more: [Eesti Mükoloogiaühing](#)

**The European whitefish** (*Coregonus lavaretus lavaretus*) is a migratory fish. They live in the coastal sea and spawn in the sea as well as in the Pärnu River and Narva River. The species prefers areas with cooler water. European whitefish have a slender silver body, their upper jaw protrudes further than the lower jaw and they have an adipose fin before the caudal fin. The young feed on zooplankton and later primarily on benthos. It is a commonly eaten and valued fish. In order to ensure offspring, the minimum catch size of the European whitefish in the sea and the rivers discharging into the sea is 35 cm. Catching them is prohibited during their spawning in autumn. In Lake Peipus lives the Peipsi whitefish, which is a subspecies of the European whitefish. Read more: [Kalastaja](#)

**Umbric Podzol** (PZ) is an acidic and nutrient-poor sandy soil with a humus layer of more than 5 cm. When used as arable land, Umbric podzols need to be limed and fertilised. Common forests on such soil are thick spruce forests or heathy forests and mixed stands. In their sparse undergrowth grow rowans, raspberries, blueberries, lingonberries and mosses. Umbric Podzols are common primarily in South-Eastern Estonia. Read more: [Eesti Maaülikool](#)

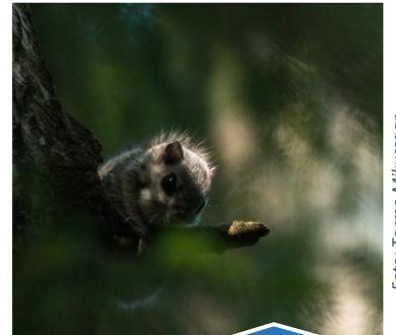


Foto: Tarmo Mikussaar

**Animal of the year:  
the Siberian flying squirrel**



Foto: Maris Sepp

**Tree of the year:  
the Scots pine**

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Foto: Maris Sepp

**Orchid of the year:  
the narrow-leaved helleborine**

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Foto: Maris Sepp

**Fungus of the year:  
the cep**

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Foto: Rain Erala

**Fish of the year:  
the European whitefish**



Foto: Maris Sepp

**Moss of the year:  
the green shield-moss**

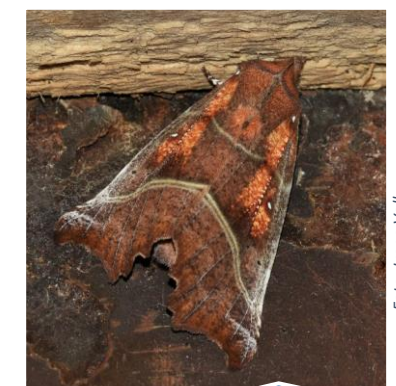


Foto: Irene Volk

**Butterfly of the year:  
the herald**



Foto: Alar Astover

**Soil of the year:  
Umbric Podzol**