



The role of the Royal Swedish Academy of Agriculture and Forestry is, with the support of science and practical experience, to promote agriculture and forestry and related activities, for the benefit of society. The Academy was founded in 1811 at the initiative of Karl XIV Johan and started its work on 28 January 1813.

The Academy's 210th Commemorative Meeting

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Academy Vice President Lena Ingvarsson

The Commemorative Meeting of the Royal Swedish Academy of Agriculture and Forestry (KSLA), June 12, 2022

A historic Commemorative Meeting in several ways

Your Majesties

Honorary Fellows

New Fellows

Laureates

Esteemed Fellows

Distinguished Guests

I hereby declare 210th Commemorative Meeting of the Royal Swedish Academy of Agriculture and Forestry opened!

A festive gathering that is historic in that it falls on a beautiful summer day, instead of on Karl-dagen the 28th of January as tradition otherwise dictates. And we all know the reason for this deviation.

For the same reason, last year's Commemorative Meeting also became historic, because it was cancelled. But to quote a well-known Swedish author and artist, "to cancel a festive occasion is also an occasion". In our case, immediately resurrected in digital form.

Today, in the here and now, we are pleased to be able to gather together again in real life. Albeit in a somewhat scaled-down model, but at the same time digitally improved and definitely not stripped down. It is a pleasure to greet all our participants, even at a distance, from both near and far.

For everyone here at the Stockholm City Hall, and to those watching on the big screens, we wish you a warm welcome to the 2022 hybrid festivities!

Earlier in the year the Academy's collegium gathered to introduce our new board members and discuss future activities. We were all relieved over the pandemic's restrictions having finally been lifted, and everyone hoped to return to some form of lasting normality. But simultaneously we were aware that a new unpredictable event, "a black swan", could well arise again to disrupt our existence.

True to form, on the 24th of February, the worst occurred, not as a black swan but in the guise of a black and predatory raven that arose and darkened the skies of the East. And yet again, we were instructed to remind ourselves of the perhaps most important basic tasks allotted to our Royal Academies: to stand up for free thought, free science and free speech.

The task of the Royal Swedish Academy of Agriculture and Forestry is to work for the benefit of society and for the sustainable use and responsible management of the green and blue industries' natural resources. KSLA pursues issues that ultimately concern our living conditions and affect us all.

Sustainability in particular has therefore long been one of the Academy's key concepts – and will no doubt continue to be so for many years to come, if one is to believe the future investigations our newly elected fellows were instructed to make once having entered the Academy.

But instead of looking ahead for a moment we should take a look back into the past. Here we can see it has been 50 years since the UN Conference concerning human environment was held in Stockholm. The 1972 Conference carried the embryo of what would come to be defined as sustainable development in the Brundtland Report 15 years later.

At an Academy seminar earlier this spring, together with other experts, some KSLA fellows who participated in the Stockholm Conference were invited to reflect on how global environmental work has developed since start-off half a century ago. The list of significant progress could be made long. Unfortunately, this progress is easily disregarded by the monumental environmental challenges facing mankind and the planet – challenges that only very recently attracted attention in the follow-up conference “Stockholm+50”. Someone summed up our seminar by saying that “the importance of the Stockholm Conference cannot be overestimated”.

Soon we might hear whether today's keynote speaker, Henrik Ekman, agrees with that conclusion.

In 1972 the total population of the earth reached 3.8 billion, today it has grown to 7.9 billion. UN estimates tell us we will reach 10 billion by 2050 already. At which time the soil of the Earth, the farmers of the world and the international food distribution system will, according to the World Resources Institute, need to provide 50 percent more food. It is difficult to imagine the demands placed on the Earth's resources in order to support the food supply for perhaps two billion more people, achieve this in a fossil-fuel free economy while simultaneously protecting biodiversity, taking back carbon dioxide from the atmosphere and securing same beneath the ground.

The World Resources Institute estimates that the growing of food alone requires new cultivation of almost 600 million hectares of agricultural land, corresponding to almost 15 times Sweden's land area (lakes and rivers excluded). At the same time, extensive global soil destruction is estimated at 1 percent of all arable land per annum. New land is hard to find.

We have identified three important overall activities for the Academy during the 2017–2020 period. We are setting up three new committees whose members are fellows from all sections, inclusive of the historical unit, as well as external experts where the need arises.

The equation of a 50 percent increase in demand for food and 30 percent degeneration of arable land in less than 30 years hence, obviously does not go together. The dilemma can only be solved by preserving and protecting the existing arable land and simultaneously developing farming methods and crops that provide more with less. More food, diversity and climate benefits with less use of energy and chemicals under reduced environmental impact. The development of such methods is ongoing both internationally and in Sweden. A development with which KSLA and many of our fellows are deeply involved. On the downside the implementation of new forms of agriculture, on a comprehensive practical scale, take a long time.

It is important therefore, to secure the arable land we already use, not least in our own country. Per capita, Sweden has five times the amount of land beneath asphalt and concrete compared with Central Europe. This is partly understandable in a sparsely populated country with an extensive road network. But why have we placed five times more arable land per person beneath commercial shopping centers than, for example, Germany? KSLA is concerned regarding this development and believes current legal protection against building on agricultural land needs to be stronger. Especially considering the need to be able to secure our national food supply in the long term and in times of crisis.

Modern plant breeding, using such technologies as the Nobel Prize-winning “genetic scissors” CRISPR/Cas9, creates great opportunities to produce plants on a scientifically verified basis that produce significantly higher production, are adapted to climate change and/or are resistant to various pests. This is something that is highlighted within the academy’s project “Växtnoden” (the Plant Node). Crops developed with new genomic technologies can be of great help in meeting major future challenges. Hopefully, the ongoing review of EU regulations will soon make use of such technologies possible.

Agricultural land makes up 8 percent of Sweden’s land area, while 69 percent is forested. The forest and iron ore, the forest and timber, the forest and papermaking, do in many ways form the basic foundations of Sweden’s prosperity. After a heavy draining of forest resources, the first Forest Conservation Act was instigated in 1903, which stipulated reforestation obligations consequent to depletion of forest assets. Since then, the use of forests has been regulated by law, decided by the elected representatives in the Swedish Parliament. Something that is often overlooked when today’s forest resources are discussed and sometimes criticized. The Royal Swedish Academy of Agriculture and Forestry is happy to improve knowledge concerning the forest and the history of the agricultural industries.

Far into our time, the forest was primarily seen as a renewable, economical production resource, with a desire to sustain and increase both capital and returns. In such terms, results have been astounding. During the last 100 years, 5–6 billion m³ have been felled in the country’s forests. The result has been outstanding in such terms. Should all this timber be laid in a three-meter wide and three-meter-high stack, it could run almost 20 times around the equator. And yet we have twice as much forest today as we had a century ago.

However, this production success has its price. The number of habitats supporting forest-dwelling plants, animals and insect species has deteriorated. Awareness of this began to grow in the 1980s and was manifested through the 1994 Forest Management Act, with its equalisation of production and environmental goals, along with forest environmental certification systems. This also marked the beginning of a significant change in forestry methods and protecting biodiversity became increasingly important.

The Stockholm Conference in 1972 was the first time the climate issue was addressed at the highest political level. Since then climate change unfortunately has grown into what is perhaps the greatest threat to the living conditions of future generations. Growing trees absorb carbon dioxide. They can then, if so desired, be converted into raw materials able to replace fossil fuels and various fossil-based products. Our country's rich forest supply is a favourable asset as seen from the climate perspective.

Last year we experienced yet another highly charged public forest debate. This time concerning the central question of how the forest benefits our climate and can be optimised and weighed up against timber production, while taking biodiversity into account. To agree on a well-balanced supposition in this regard is rather like watching an Indian rope trick.

One could say that KSLA here was in the "eye of the debate storm". But our role is not to take a stand in a scientifically divided public debate, which in part is emotionally driven and also contains political dimensions. Our task is to offer an arena where opinions can be broken against each other in a respectful dialogue – and from this dialogue extract knowledge and experience data to support decision-makers, opinion leaders and the general public.

The Swedish Academy of Agriculture and Forestry has now navigated through a two-year pandemic. There have been curves and uphill along the road, or "slack engine" as the ski legend Assar Rönnlund might have put it, but nevertheless almost all planned activities have been carried out. Let be in other forms and on other occasions than originally intended. That this has been made possible can to a large extent be attributed to all committed fellows as well as a competent, dedicated and loyal office staff. To all of you, I want to say a big thank you!

Someone said that the work at the office consists of 98 percent daily but fun knuckle and 2 percent glamor. Tonight it's about these two percent.

Once again, a warm welcome to the 2022 Commemorative Meeting!

Lena Ingvarsson



Academy Secretary Eva Pettersson

The Commemorative Meeting of the Royal Swedish Academy of Agriculture and Forestry (KSLA), June 12, 2022

The Academy's 209th year of activity

Your Majesties

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New Fellows

Laureates

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Distinguished Guests

Welcome to KSLA's 210th Commemorative Meeting. It was two and a half years ago that we sat in City Hall with no idea about what was coming. But finally, we are here again! And this time it's summer and probably the first time KSLA's birthday is celebrated on a day other than the correct birthday. However, I am convinced that the Academy's founder King Karl XIV Johan would overlook this fact.

I am childishly fond of amusement parks and I love having flutter in my hair and those wonderful butterflies in my stomach. Normally, the Academy's years spin like a carousel and I think you can compare our activities to those horses bouncing up and down on the carousel or when they spin the fastest, maybe you can compare the activities to the whirlwind at Gröna Lund, the amusement park in Stockholm. Regardless of speed, it has gone around, around until 2019. But then something happened. A pandemic entered the arena and took over almost everything. The carousel became a roller coaster. It goes up and it goes down, it swings and it bounces. It has been a revolutionary time that has messed things up but the situation has also opened up for positive changes. Personally, I am basically a roller coaster person, but not without reason I would prefer carousels for a while to come.

Despite the turmoil with the pandemic, the activities have rolled on at a rapid pace during 2021. More than 60 seminars and roundtable discussions have been held in addition to all meetings in KSLA's groupings. Thanks to digital means, the number of participants in KSLA's activities has increased and, in some cases, up to as many as 200 people have participated.

The Academy's activities are largely financed by dividends from our asset management. Despite Covid-19, the total return for 2021 was all time high. Then it went downhill in full speed and the sad reason for this is well known. Recurring monitoring by the Academy's finance committee and dissemination of risks are high priorities. But nowadays, we mainly apply sitting still in the famous boat.

2021 was the year when KSLA started podcasting for real. During the year, 12 podcasts were effected and many of the Academy's areas were represented. Sustainability, climate, spruce bark beetles, taverns, healthy food, antibiotic resistance and biodiversity are just a few of the topics discussed. If you have some time to spare, put on the headphones, take a walk and give yourself a well-deserved improvement within and forestry and related fields.

KSLA's work with referrals has increased in recent years and in 2021 and involvement in EU issues has seriously taken off. This has resulted in KSLA making a great number of contributions to the EU's consultations on issues concerning the Academy. Sometimes with a short notice and I am deeply impressed by the commitment, competence and will of the Academy fellows that make it possible for KSLA to contribute to important topics. The forest has been discussed lengthwise and crosswise in recent years. The interpretation of knowledge is different and so are our values and sometimes the debate has been quite hot. To shed light on the issue, with the hope of an increased understanding of each other, KSLA and IVA arranged a seminar entitled *The Forest's trench warfare - peace brokers are sought*. In addition to this, the Academy has arranged a large number of activities with a focus on the forest. Among other things, an excursion has been carried out to study spruce bark beetles.

Food supply is more relevant than ever and KSLA, together with the Government Offices of Sweden and SIANI, arranged two seminars on the UN summits on the world's food system during the year.

To supply people with food, emergency preparedness needs to work. At the seminar *Sweden's food preparedness from farm to fork*, it was discussed how we can increase the robustness of the food chain. It can be stated that several different parts of the chain need to function. Labour, transport and cultivation systems are important parts that were discussed at KSLA during 2021.

KSLA's youth committee repeatedly raises important issues, including the concept of sustainability and how the interpretation of the concept can vary and in what way one acts on the basis of the interpretation. *Sustainability – an awkward conversation* was the title of a seminar that was followed up by the podcast episode *Will we ever be sustainable?* In both cases, there was a collaboration with KSLA's unit Library, Archives and Historical Projects (BAHP).

The Academy's historical activities are woven into both the present and the future, and it is quite common that history repeats itself. The round table presentation as well as the podcast about the book *Biodiversity, natural benefits and ecosystem services* state an example when past, present and future meet.

Collaboration within the Academy, with other academies and other organizations is a strength. *The significance of varied farming for the schnapps, the herring and the song* was a gift to the Swedish Musical Academy's 250th anniversary. History, song and music in the spirit of agriculture were performed interspersed with a double quartet from the choir Orphei drängar. And it worked out just fine to enjoy choir singing in a digital version.

How we can create a balance between game and feed is a project conducted at the Academy's second donation farm in Sörmland, Barksätter. The deer happily munch on the juicy pasture in Sörmland's fields and have no respect for either farmers or property boundaries. To overcome the problem in the long run, Barksätter's board arranged a rewarding meeting between the neighbours in the area.

Tonight we are about 350 guests, which can be compared with 2019 and 2020 when we were over 600 guests. All happy conversations roared like in a dryer during dinner in the Golden Hall. Due to that annoying pandemic, we chose to reduce the number of guests this year to avoid too much crowding and maybe this time you can actually find that person you longed to talk to in the slightly more sparse crowd.

The previously composed menu with winter as a starting point, has been adjusted slightly in the sign of summer, but I do not intend to reveal more than that, instead I leave that part to our dear meal presenters Christina Möller and Carl Jan Granqvist.

I would like to extend my warmest thanks for the year that has passed to all fellows and others who are involved in KSLA's activities and last but not least, thank you to the Academy's fantastic office. You are my pillars in thick and thin!

Finally, I would like to share a couple of verses from a poem written by Professor August B Temu from Tanzania who is one of our international fellows. With this, I would also like to extend a special welcome to all the international fellows who are present here today.

So, the world's forests met in Sweden,
Weakened by the rise in heat so sudden,
Migrating in search of a new Eden,
Homo sapiens puzzled and saddened,
Their insatiable greed ever hardened,
And earth's fall so clearly predicted!

Ubiquitous foresters re-conceptualize,
Mechanisms establish and actualize,
Cooling our burning planet to realize,
Hopes and aspirations to materialize,
Landscapes revert and harmonize,
And sapiens prosper and recognize!

Thank you very much for your attention!

Eva Pettersson

Translation: The KSLA office.



Principal Speech, Henrik Ekman

The Commemorative Meeting of the Royal Swedish Academy of Agriculture and Forestry (KSLA), June 12, 2022

The reverse side of the medal: From model farm to silent spring – to what?

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Not much is as usual this year. KSLA's Commemorative Meeting is supposed to be held in January. Always festive, with associations to the Nobel banquet when you arrive at the City Hall in darkness and sleet.

Yet. To instead gather at the brightest time of the year. "In the June night that never ends", quoting the Swedish poet Harry Martinson. And then we can go home on foot, humming on the song *Slowly we walk through the city*.

The reason why we meet in June and not in January is the pandemic, which together with the war in Ukraine has reminded us of the importance of preparedness and livelihood, issues that are close to KSLA.

But so are the environment and sustainability, issues that in many ways took off in Stockholm just 50 years ago.

Stockholm 1972

During a couple of June weeks in 1972, Stockholm was a meeting place for a diverse group of people from all over the world – politicians, diplomats, activists and journalists – who had come here for the first UN summit on the world's environment, under the motto *Only One Earth*.

Stockholm -72 was the first international environment conference. It was no coincidence that it was arranged here. It was the fruit of work, somewhat in the background, by some foresighted diplomats with Sweden's UN ambassador Sverker Åström and Börje Billner in the lead.

The General Assembly approved their proposal, and on Monday 5 June 1972, the conference was inaugurated with speeches by, among others, Prime Minister Olof Palme and chairman of the conference, Minister of Agriculture Ingemund Bengtsson. In the audience was also a young Crown Prince, Carl Gustaf.

The conference's final document *The Stockholm Declaration* consists of an introductory environment declaration and 28 principles. It says things like states have an obligation to ensure that activities within their own borders do not harm the environment in other states. It certainly had its significance when 35 countries later could agree on a convention for the protection from long-range transboundary air pollution.

Stockholm -72 was also the occasion when the climate issue was addressed for the first time at the highest level. Here the seeds were sown for both the UN Climate Panel, IPCC, and the climate convention adopted in Rio 20 years later.

The media coverage was massive. In total, more than 1,200 journalists were accredited. Anyone who wants to know more should read the anthology *Stockholmskonferensen 50 år* (KSLA's journal no. 1-2022, in Swedish), produced by the Academy's International Committee. In this volume those who participated tell their stories. I myself had just started studying journalism at the university and for a journalism student with the ambition to work with nature and environmental issues, there was hardly anything bigger to cover. Still, I left just as the conference was being held in my hometown. I had signed up for a camp that the youth organization the Field Biologists arranged in East Africa and not even a UN conference on the environment could compete with that dream trip.

On the other hand, one might say that I got to experience a couple of the issues that the conference addressed – biodiversity, development – in real life. Not least the Stockholm Declaration's principle no. 4, that “man has a special responsibility to safeguard and wisely manage the heritage of wildlife and its habitat”.

I'm having a hard time seeing that we have taken that responsibility.

Säby

In my journalism about nature, environment, and agriculture, I have often used our family estate Bjärka-Säby in Östergötland as a starting point. Since my father was redeemed from the farm early by his brothers, I have been able to play a freer role than if our family were still the owner. At the same time, I carry with me a respect for the conditions under which a farmer works. It has probably vaccinated me against simplified answers.

In 1872, exactly one hundred years before the environment conference in Stockholm, my great-grandfather Oscar Ekman, one of Gothenburg's successful merchants, became the sole owner of Säby as the estate was then called. His main business was trade, but he was no stranger to any kind of business. As he himself lived in Gothenburg, he hired a trustee, and the choice fell on Ivar Insulander, the most respected principal at Claestorp agricultural college.

When he arrived in 1876, he saw a farm where the previous owners, with some exception, were not particularly interested in agriculture. There were probably traces of the general cultivation zeal of the 19th century. A lot of the old hay meadows had been cultivated. But Insulander is unhappy with the way it had been done.

”...as this cultivation work was carried out with plows by vermländningar (men from the province of Värmland), the cultivated shapes became extremely irregular, since a substantial part of the land was very stone-bound and overgrown with trees, which made it inaccessible to the plow.”

Now he had to gather the fields into ”as cohesive, rounded shapes as the hilly terrain allows”. Bit by bit, Ivar Insulander pulled the farm out of its slumber. More meadows were cultivated. Huge masses of stone were cleared away. The marshes were dug out and the fields were ditched.

The cows were replaced, and the yearly milk production increased from an average of 480 to 700 jugs, or almost two thousand liters.¹

The milk was turned into butter and cheese in the farm dairy, housed in the old castle from Sweden’s period as a great power, that has stood uninhabited since the owner Germund Ludvig Cederhielm built a new mansion in the 1790s. The dairy products won awards and were exported to London. In the old castle, the manor cheese was born.

Bjärka-Säby reflects the achievements of all Swedish agriculture. At the beginning of the 19th century, 850,000 hectares were farmed, at the end of the century 3.5 million hectares. And the bell tolled for the corncrake and the Eurasian curlew.

The poisons and Silent Spring

Already in Insulander’s time, chemicals were introduced for plant protection, such as copper and sulfur preparations against fungal infections. But I do not know if they occurred at Bjärka-Säby.

The breakthrough for chemical pesticides came with the Swiss Paul Müller’s discovery in 1939 that dichlorodiphenyltrichloroethane, or DDT, effectively attacked the nervous systems of insects. During World War II, it was used with great success against malaria mosquitoes in Asia and against lice that spread spotted fever in Italy. In 1948, Müller was awarded the Nobel Prize in Medicine.

But the medal had a flip side.

This year, we are not only paying attention to the 50th anniversary of Stockholm -72. 60 years have passed since Rachel Carson’s *Silent Spring* was published in the United States. When it came out in Swedish in 1963, I was twelve years old but already very interested in birds. I cannot say that I read the book, but my bird watching friends and I read about it in the magazines *Fältbiologen* and *Sveriges natur*. And we saw with our own eyes what was happening out in nature.

¹ 1,834 liters (1 jug = 2.62 liters)

Because the poisons she warned about also existed in Sweden. In addition to DDT, a whole cocktail of chlorinated substances such as dieldrin, aldrin, toxaphene, pentachlorophenol, and organic phosphorus compounds such as malathion and parathion.

Swedish farmers also used mercury to treat the seeds against fungal diseases. The seeds were eaten by yellowhammers and by mice, later taken by kestrels.

And we young bird watchers saw how yellowhammers and kestrels disappeared.

The neonicotinoids

After *Silent Spring* and the debate that it started, the most dangerous substances were soon banned one by one. And the birds came back.

Farmers started to use a new group of insecticides, neonicotinoids. They were shown to break down faster and be less dangerous to us humans.

But they have proven to pose a severe threat to the insect fauna. One reason is that they act systemically, meaning that the poison is taken up and spread throughout the plant, even to the pollen of the flowers. They are also very toxic to insects. Killing a bee requires 7,000 times as much DDT as imidacloprid, a neonicotinoid.²

The toxin levels in the rapeseed pollen from plants grown from treated seeds are sufficient for bees and bumblebees to no longer be able to navigate properly. Bumblebee colonies do much worse next to fields with treated rapeseed than with untreated. The production of new queens is 85 percent lower, which has been shown by a group of Lund researchers.

But insects are generally declining – many of us have noticed that windscreens are no longer sticky from crushed winged insects – and an important alarm came in 2017. German entomologists then published a report showing that the biomass of insects decreased by three quarters in a quarter of a century. They had had traps out for 27 years in nature reserves.

A major threat to the wild bees is that the landscape is emptied of flowers. Rachel Carson also writes about this in *Silent Spring*. Preserving wildflowers is not just an aesthetical issue. They are needed for the wild bees, whose help the farmers need.³

But nowadays the weed-free cultivation and chemical destruction of bush hedges and wild plants are eliminating the last sanctuaries of these pollinating insects and tearing apart the threads that unite life with life.⁴

Silent Spring was written 60 years ago. At that time, the average harvest of winter wheat in Sweden was 3,520 kilograms per hectare. Today it is 6,600, almost twice as high. In southern Sweden, the ten-ton clubs of the eighties are back, farms where the wheat harvest is over ten metric tons per hectare.

² According to the British entomologist Dave Goulson: *Silent Earth* (2022)

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid.

It is, of course, an incredible gain for the national economy. At the same time, over the past sixty years, we have lost so much diversity, not least wild pollinators.

Because the medal has a reverse.

IPBES

The EU is working on getting rid of the harmful chemicals. But the problem of depleting habitats remains. And as Rachel Carson writes, “In the long run, it may be worse to destroy the homes and food of wild animals than to kill them right away.”

Habitat loss is also No. 1 on the list of the five most important causes of species extinction, according to the UN Research Panel on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services, IPBES. In second place is direct over-exploitation – overfishing, illicit hunting – or that they are immediately killed.

Climate change is now ranked as the third most important.

Chemicals and pollutants come in fourth place...

... and invasive species on the fifth.

The Middle Spotted Woodpecker

Bjärka-Säby offers a telling example of how the loss of habitats leads to the extinction of species.

The small, beautiful bird middle spotted woodpecker – in size just between smaller and larger woodpeckers, which it resembles with its red head and whiter face – is a specialist in oaks. In the 18th century, when southern Sweden was almost dominated by hay meadows with old deciduous trees, it was found from Skåne to Mälardalen.

But the development in agriculture and forestry suited the bird badly. When the cultivation of clover broke through, the hay meadows lost their former significance. Several were plowed, and many oaks disappeared. Province after province lost their middle spotted woodpeckers.

But my grandfather, who had taken over the estate and was named Oscar just like his father, loved the beauty of the oaks. At Bjärka-Säby, therefore, many oak meadows were preserved as pastures. Their biodiversity and beauty were maintained and at least the middle spotted woodpecker was given a respite.

The Grazing and Pasture Association

During the beginning of the 20th century, the Swedish Grazing and Pasture Association ran a campaign to get farmers to separate forest and pasture from each other. In the pasture, the trees ought to be removed.

The driving force was the adviser Anders Elofson, a fellow of KSLA.

Elofson was engaged for a review of Bjärka-Säby's pastures. His proposal: clearing and fertilizing all the pastures of the farm, with one exception – the centrally located oak groves. On those, he writes instead that "The goal for cultivation here should be to get the best possible grazing without encroaching on the meadow's park character."

Elofson knew that my grandfather loved the beauty of the oaks.

In the end, not much was done with the Grazing and Pasture Association's recommendations. The oak groves were largely left in peace at Bjärka-Säby, which today constitutes the core of the Östergötland oak landscape.

Of course, it came into play that Grandpa could afford to forgo maximum benefit. Today, few landowners can afford that. Therefore, the headline of KSLA's magazine number 5-2017 is completely correct: "Without money – no pastures and meadows".

Oscar Ekman's love for the oaks gave the middle spotted woodpecker a respite. A small population could survive for a few more decades. But the general development was relentless, and towards the end there was only a remnant of the population left in Östergötland, with Bjärka-Säby as the main stronghold.

I always used to see the bird when I strolled in the oak groves along Stångån with my camera in March and April. The rapids were gone, sacrificed when the new power station in Hovetorp was built in 1960. But the oaks and the middle spotted woodpecker remained. It was a matter of course to hear it greet spring with its nasal howling, instead of drumming.

But the pairs became fewer and fewer, and in 1982 the beautiful bird was declared officially extinct in Sweden.

What is the significance of its disappearance?

Yes, Sweden's food supply has not been fundamentally shaken. But the pastures have become poorer.

Can that feeling be reason enough to preserve species, to give up the rational?

I think so.

So my father Carl was born and raised in Bjärka-Säby. He was redeemed from the farm early and became an entrepreneur and business leader. The result could perhaps be described with the old saying that "The best way to create a small fortune is to start with a large one."

His great love was for music and writing verses, something that was definitely inherited.

My Östergötland roots and the legacy of dad's lyrics would eventually be united in the character Rune Runeman who appeared on the radio when the program P1 Morning was started just over 20 years ago. I want to end with a verse I wrote when Astrid Lindgren passed away:

A sad blackbird from Kvell
let us hear a quiet drill,
with farewell in the song,
you can almost hear the crying,
for time never wants to stand still.

The village noises died away
properly faded its rosy skin.
For the noise villagers
and the noise village cows
the signs in the sky have been grey.

The last cow will soon be sold,
Gone are the stallions and the mares,
Now there are only the animals
in the literature,
there is no more carpentry in the shed.

For Emil has moved to the city,
spruce grows in his meadows.
Farewell to the dairy
And the bumblebee and the bee,
It's like night in the middle of the day.

But – writers see everything so clearly,
an end they can see as a start.
For if everything numbs,
there will be no summer
in case no one gives it a start.

So therefore, you sad thrush,
our joy disappeared in a rush,
but will come again
after tears and rain
let us hope that its break won't be long

Henrik Ekman

Translation: The KSLA office.