

Unit 1. Forest and humans

Slash-and-burn culture and Telkkämäki heritage farm



Famous Finnish painting presenting slash-and-burn:
Eero Järnefelt: *Wage Slaves / Burn-Beating*, 1893

Description

Slash-and-burn-culture was widely practiced in Northern Europe for centuries. Especially common it was in Eastern Finland during late 19th century, when the rural population was increasing rapidly. In slash-and-burn culture either old pine or spruce forest or younger deciduous trees were felled and then burned. The advantage of slash-and-burn culture was the fact that it made possible to simultaneously clear and fertilize the area and raise a notable rye or turnips crop within 1-2 years. Thus slash-and-burn culture enabled the colonization of new areas which was utilized e.g. when Finns moved to Sweden and Northern America. The slash-and-burn culture in Finland diminished in the turn of 19th and 20th century when timber started to have industrial value and more permanent field-based agriculture replaced slash-and burn.

Telkkämäki slash-and-burn heritage farm at Kaavi in Eastern Finland functions as an open-air museum of slash-and-burn era. The estate is farmed using traditional methods and the smoke from slash-and-burn fires still rise into the sky during summertime. At this small nature reserve visitors can go back in time and see how people lived and farmed in the past.

The pastures around the Telkkämäki farm are bordered by the same kind of broadleaved forest that was there during the change of the 19th and 20th century, and the whole landscape was formed as a result of slash-and-burn agriculture. The last time this was used at Telkkämäki for traditional farming was in the 1930s. Today the land in the reserve is still burnt annually.

The building which is today the main house at the farm was built in the late 1800s. The house has been restored to what it was like in the early 1900s. In addition to the main building the grounds also include a barn, a drying barn, granaries, and a smoke sauna. And in addition to these buildings, the grounds contain the animals which graze there. During summer the pastures are inhabited by indigenous sheep, cows chickens and horses.

Thanks to still practiced slash-and burn, grazing and reaping the grounds of the farm at Telkkämäki have remained beautiful meadows.



Traditional slash-and-burn is still practiced frequently in Telkkämäki

Activities

Events

- Public events centred on slash-and-burn agriculture are arranged at Telkkämäki annually; these events include slash-and-burn fires, sowing turnips and rye, as well as, threshing rye in the drying barn, harvesting turnips and a Puskasoitto concert.

Nature Trails

- There are two, short nature trail in the area, which are both under 2 km long and lead through olden and modern slash-and-burn landscape.

Impact:

The slash-and-burn culture had a major impact on Finnish landscape, creating various types and stages of meadows and broadleaved-tree stands.

Source:

Metsähallitus (Finnish Forest and Park Service)

<https://www.nationalparks.fi/telkkamakiheritagefarm>