

surface. This means that the amount of nitrogen polluting Mjels Vig will be reduced by 20 tonnes per year in future.

Birdlife

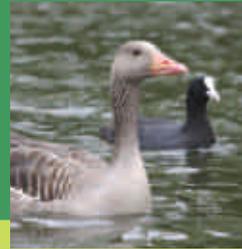
The first spring the lake was refilled, grebes and red-necked grebes had already begun to build their floating nests and breed their young. Nests are usually “tethered” to reeds, but in the newly recreated lake, the nests were tethered to dead bushes which were covered with water but whose branches still reached above the surface. Mallards and mute swans now nest and breed here, and the little black and white tufted ducks dive for food alongside the coots. In a few years the grey geese will occupy the lake, and we will be able to hear their chatter and watch how they fly between the lakes in beautiful, characteristic V-shaped formation.

Walking trail

Begin your walking tour from the pump house near Mjels or from Broballe. There are car parks at both spots as well as picnic tables so you can enjoy lunch or a cup of coffee. The path along the drainage canal is very atmospheric, and you can sense the history of the lake and the passage of time when you contemplate the drainage canal at the edge of the recreated lake. Yellow buntings and wrens sing their unique songs from the shelter of the thicket. Ducks search for food along the water’s edge and herons stand in majestic poses while waiting patiently for their catch.

Path connections

Continuing your tour along ”E Govl” is highly recommended, as it provides the opportunity of an excellent walk along Mjels Vig to Oldenor, another recreated lake, and further on to the idyllic Dyvig.



54927, 12.2009
Tekst og fotos:
NATURFØRTÆLLEREN Steen Røjberg.

Mjels Sø (Mjels Lake)

– a walking tour



Sønderborg Kommune
Natur og miljø
Rådhusvej 10
6400 Sønderborg
www.sonderborg.dk

Skov- og Naturstyrelsen
Sønderjylland



Mjels Lake

The walking tour around Mjels Lake is 4,5 km in length and follows level terrain all along the lake. The tour offers the walker a rich and varied experience of an elongated lake in the hilly landscape of Als. The lake is located in a very long, narrow subglacial stream trench formed by a glacier during the Ice Age.

This is also a tour that gives those who walk it a solid sense of the cultural history of a time when lake areas were drained to create more arable land.

Mjels Lake has been both drained and cultivated since the 1800s, but in 2006 it was recreated as a lake. Birds have flocked to the area to create a varied bird life along the lake, where you can view geese, ducks and grebes up close in their natural habitat.



First Mjels Lake was a fiord

Until the 1500s, Mjels Lake was part of an elongated fiord system consisting of the current Mjels Vig, Mjels Lake and the drained Bundsø (Bund Lake). The ferry berth at Mjelsgård, and likely a bridge or ford near Broballe, were used to get around by pedestrians.

Then it became a lake

Around 1590, Duke Hans the Younger built a dam near Mjels Vig as well as one near Broballe so that one would not have to go the long way round the fiord. Locks were implemented so that water could run out, but not in. This meant that salt water gradually drained away and that the two freshwater lakes, Mjels Lake and Bund Lake, were created.

Draining the lakes

The first initiative to drain the lakes was taken in 1845. However, only when two steam engines were installed to pump the water out through drainage canals the project really did get underway.

The yellow pump house near Mjels Lake, where the steam engine once stood, has been maintained in its original state and is located at the picnic area near Mjels. Very few of these steam pump houses have survived in Denmark, and the one at Mjels Lake is considered to be of unique regional value.

Recreation

Times changed, and the soil in Mjels Lake later became considered marginal farm land. Cultivation was stopped, and in 2006 the lake was recreated with funding from the Danish Forest and Nature Agency, Sønderjylland County, and the Municipality of Nordborg. Funding was also received from the Water Framework Directive and not least Åge V. Jensen's Foundation, both of which helped make the project possible.

Nitrogen

When nitrogen run-off from agriculture reaches the sea, it contributes to the growth of algae. This causes oxygen depletion, which brings with it worsened conditions for marine life, and at its most extreme can lead to the so-called "slime layer", ebullition of methane gas, and the death of fish and other marine animals.

A shallow lake such as the new Mjels Lake can convert this nitrogen into a gaseous state that is entirely harmless and which evaporates into the atmosphere.

Now water from 1500 hectares of surrounding areas runs through the lake, which is expected to provide an annual conversion of 350 kg of nitrogen per hectare of water

