



Helsinki

With Sissi on the Herp Trail

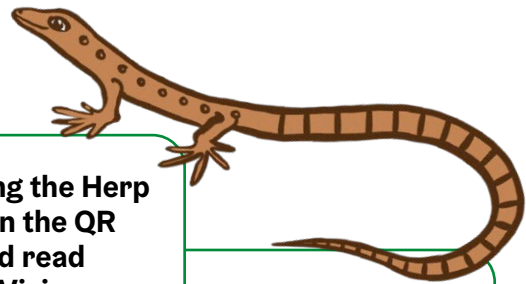
**Supplementary material for those
visiting the Herp Trail in Uutela,
Helsinki, with children**

With Sissi on the Herp Trail

The *With Sissi on the Herp Trail* supplementary material is designed for use by groups of children and families visiting the Herp Trail. The Herp Trail is located in Uutela, Helsinki. The material introduces children to herps in an age-appropriate way and through play. You can utilise the material directly or adapt it to suit the needs of your group.

THE HERP TRAIL is a nature trail located in Uutela, Helsinki. It teaches you about the snakes, lizards and frogs of Uutela through photos and text.

Walk along the Herp Trail, scan the QR codes and read Sissi the Viviparous Lizard's messages.



Here's how it works

Before your visit:

- Familiarise yourself with the *With Sissi on the Herp Trail* material and instructions.
- Set up your mobile phone's QR scanner or print out the location cards.
- You can prepare your group for the visit with additional games. You can find them under the section: More lizards games and activities.
- Familiarise yourself with the Herp Trail at hel.fi/uutela > Routes and nature trails > Herptile trail.

During your visit:

- Walk along the Herp Trail. Start with information board 1 and continue in numerical order. The map and green pinecone markers will point you in the right direction.
- Stop at the information boards along the Herp Trail. Scan Sissi's QR codes from the information board posts and read the content to the children on your mobile phone. Alternatively, you can print out the location cards before you visit and use them.
- The material also includes optional games to play at the start or end of the route.

After your visit:

- You can think back on the herps and the visit with the help of Sissi's colouring page.

HERP is the collective name for snakes, lizards, turtles, tortoises and amphibians. A person who studies them is a herpetologist.



This environmental education material was produced in cooperation with SYKLI Environmental College. Text by Hannamari Nylander and a team of experts, edited by Mosatonttu Oy. Map template by WSP. Graphic design and drawings by Vappu Ormio. KYMP/YMPA 2026.

Tips for your visit

Timing your visit

The best time of year to see herps is April–May. Herps are shy animals that you may not see on every visit or at all in winter. However, you can view great photos of the herps of Uutela all year round on the information boards along the Herp Trail.

Gear

Dress in weather-appropriate clothing. If you happen to come across an adder on the trail, boots will provide the best protection. Remember to pack a lunch with you! Pack your lunch in a reusable lunch box to avoid waste during your trip. There are picnic tables and an accessible Helsinki-Outhouse next to the Uutela kota. Pick up your litter and take it with you.

Adders

The adder is a unique and valuable animal, and there is no need to be afraid of it. However, adder bites are dangerous, especially for children, people with allergies and pets. In the event of an adder bite, call 112, stay calm, avoid moving the bite site and follow the instructions provided. Staying on the trail reduces the risk of bites.

Uutela kota

Daycare groups in Helsinki can reserve the Uutela kota (sheltered fire pit) for their use. Instructions can be found on the City of Helsinki intranet. Those hiking by themselves can drop by the kota while it is being kept open by volunteers (often on Sundays). You can find the kota's opening hours on Facebook on the page 'Uutelan kota'.



Location and route

Location

The *With Sissi on the Herp Trail* material follows the Herp Trail. The Herp Trail is located in the Uutela outdoor recreation area, approximately 3 km from Vuosaari metro station at Särkkäniemi, 00990 Helsinki.

More information on the location and how to get to Uutela: hel.fi/uutela.

Route

- The Herp Trail is 1.4 km long.
- Open all year round, no winter maintenance.
- Visiting all the information boards should take approximately two hours.
- The Herp Trail starts and ends next to the Uutela kota.
- There are 11 information boards along the Herp Trail in three languages (Finnish, Swedish, English), featuring many photographs. The posts of the information boards have QR codes that provide access to the *With Sissi on the Herp Trail* supplementary material.
- The route is marked with green pinecone markers. There are signposts at all the intersections along the route.
- The ground along the entire nature trail is hard-surfaced, but there are small holes and duckboards in places.
- There are benches and tables near the Uutela kota for taking a break. The benches are sized for adults.
- There is an accessible dry toilet (Helsinki-Outhouse) near the Uutela kota.
- More information about the Herp Trail and more details on accessibility: hel.fi/uutela > Routes and nature trails > Herptile trail

The posts of the information boards have QR codes that provide access to the *With Sissi on the Herp Trail* supplementary material.

With Sissi on the Herp Trail

Helsinki

Printable location cards
(alternative to using the QR codes)



1

With Sissi on the Herp Trail

Welcome to Uutela, a place of frogs and snakes!

” Hello! I’m Sissi the Viviparous Lizard. I’m glad you’ve decided to join me on this adventure and meet my herp friends. Do you know what a herp is? The word herp means all lizards, snakes and frogs.

We herps are timid creatures. You might see us if you walk quietly on the nature trail and don’t make a lot of noise. You won’t see us in winter. That’s when we’re hibernating to survive the cold.

Task: The silent magic word

I have a magic word that allows me to move silently:

Shh-Shh-Shh-Sissi-sisilisko

Your job is to keep quiet when I say the magic word *Shh-Shh-Shh-Sissi-sisilisko*. Shall we see how it works?

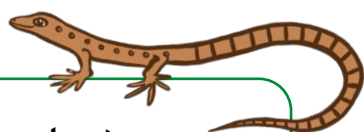
2

With Sissi on the Herp Trail

Common adder

” Do you know what the adder’s most distinguishing characteristic is? That’s right, the zigzag pattern on its back. However, there are also adders that do not have a zigzag pattern and that are completely black.

The adder is a timid animal. If you run into one, give it plenty of space and move calmly. Did you know that adders have poor eyesight and smell with their tongues?



Task: Smell with your tongue

I have a fun task for you. Now you get to show your tongue and see if you can smell with it like an adder. Can you sense smells on your tongue? What kind of smells can you sense?

3

With Sissi on the Herp Trail

Adders will defend themselves

” When you walk, the ground shakes and timid adders will quickly slither away. There is no need to fear adders. An adder will only bite if it feels threatened.

Dogs, especially puppies, are curious and like to sniff the ground with their snouts. Sometimes, on rare occasions, an adder may defend itself against a dog that gets too close by biting the dog on the snout. A dog that gets bitten on its snout needs to be taken to a vet.

Task: The ground shakes

Split into two groups: the walkers and the adders. The walkers stamp their feet on the ground, while the adders feel the ground with their hands. Can you feel the ground shake? Switch so that everyone gets to stamp and feel.

Frogs

” Have you ever seen a jelly-like substance in a pond? If you look closely, you may see tiny little dots inside the jelly, or spawn. The spots develop into nimble little tadpoles, which grow into tiny frogs. In the autumn when the temperature drops, frogs go into hibernation. They stay almost motionless until the spring, when the sunshine starts to warm them up again.

Task: The Pienet sammakot song

Next you get to sing!
Does anyone know this Finnish song about little frogs?

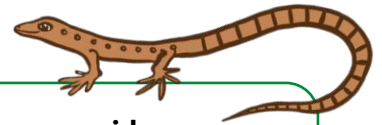
Pienet sammakot, pienet sammakot,
ne lystikkäitä on,
pienet sammakot, pienet sammakot,
ne lystikkäitä on.
Ei korvia, ei korvia, ei häntää laisinkaan,
ei korvia, ei korvia, ei häntää laisinkaan.

The Pienet sammakot song, Finnish folk song

Viviparous lizard

” Have you ever seen a lizard that is missing its tail? We viviparous lizards have a unique ability to confuse predators: we can drop our tails when threatened.

We like to eat insects, worms and spiders. Our favourite spots here in Uutela are the rocks on the shore and tree trunks, especially when the sun is shining warmly! I know we're cute, but please leave us alone in our own home environment.



Task: Let's eat some spiders

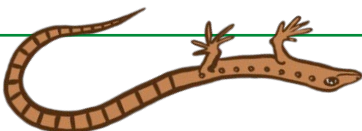
Viviparous lizards like to eat insects and spiders. Imagine what spiders would taste like. Delicious, aren't they? Yum!

Common toad

” Have you ever seen a creature that looks like a frog, but waddles instead of hopping? If so, you may have met a common toad. Did you know that toads move at night when the air is more humid? Toads love to eat worms, snails and insects.

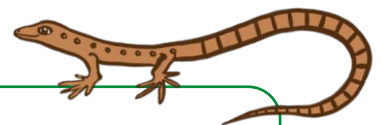
Task: The common toad's evening walk

Your task is to waddle to the next information board like a toad: slowly, crouching, taking big steps, 'scooping' with your front flippers by your side.



Grass snake

” Now let me tell you a little bit about the grass snake. The grass snake is the largest snake in Finland. The easiest way to identify the grass snake is by its yellow or pale neck spots and black colour. Did you know that the grass snake has excellent fishing skills?

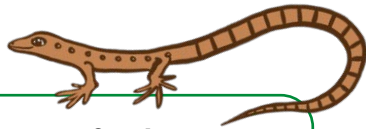


Task: Giant snake

The next task is all about cooperation! Form a line and place your hands on the shoulders of the person in front of you. Then walk slowly together in line while winding, like a giant grass snake.

Smooth newt

” Have you ever heard of smooth newts? Well, let me tell you about them! Smooth newts have spotted skin. Baby smooth newts develop from tiny eggs in the water. When the newts grow up, they crawl onto dry land. If you’re hoping to meet a smooth newt, it’s best to be out and about at dusk!



Task: The smooth newt’s food poem

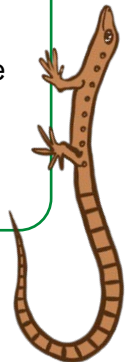
A newt in the pond is thinking away,
How should I proceed today?
Should I have salad for lunchtime fare,
Or a waffle with cream to spare?
But a newt would rather munch on flies,
Than enjoy a cream waffle surprise.
What about you, what would you choose?
Oat milk and a bun you wouldn’t refuse?

Molting

” Have you noticed that sometimes your clothes are suddenly too small and don’t fit anymore? That’s when you get bigger clothes. We herps don’t wear clothes. But our skin also gets too small and tight as time goes by. Fortunately, we know how to replace it with a new skin. Convenient, isn’t it!

Task: Small clothes

Imagine wearing clothes that are too small. How does it feel? How do your toes feel if your shoes are too small?



Slow worm

” Although the slow worm looks like a snake, it’s actually a legless lizard. Slow worms move slowly and are skilled at hiding. Slow worms can live up to several decades!

Task: The slow worm’s poetry game

I’m beautiful and copper-bright,
I never wish anyone spite.
(stroke your skin)
I move slowly and hide in the brush,
I’m not a snake, so no need to rush!
(squirm and shake your head)
I’ve lived for ten or twenty years,
(count with your fingers)
A legless lizard, would you believe your ears?
(stamp the ground)
I love to snack on grubs small,
Picking them at dusk from the soil’s soft fall.
(pick up a grub from the ground and eat it, smacking your lips)

The herps of Uutela

” Does anyone remember who else lives here in Uutela besides me? That’s right; grass snakes, adders, slow worms, frogs, common toads and water newts. Well remembered!

Task: The herp quiz

Now it’s time for a little herp quiz!

Who has a yellow neck spot?

- The grass snake

Who can drop their tail?

- The viviparous lizard

Which lizard has no legs?

- The slow worm

Which herp moves by waddling?

- The common toad

Who has a zigzag pattern on their back?

- The common adder

Who has a spotted stomach?

- The smooth newt

Who is called a tadpole when they are small?

- The frog



More lizardly games and activities

You can use these games and activities to introduce your group to herps before your visit. You can also play the games during your visit, for example in the clearing next to the Uutela kota.

● Follow the herp

Walk in line. The first in line shows what to do, and the others follow. You can imitate the leaping and croaking of a frog, the scuttling of a viviparous lizard, the waddling of a toad... You can also make a giant snake: The children hold hands and the instructor pulls the line in a twisting motion. Finally the line rolls up, like a snake basking in the sun.

● Lizard's tail

A variation of duck, duck, goose. Draw a large circle on the ground and add semicircles to make a 'nest' for each participant. One of the players is the viviparous lizard and 'drops their tail' (a stick, glove, etc.) behind another player's back. The player behind whom the tail was dropped starts running in the opposite direction to the lizard. The aim is to try to beat the lizard to the empty nest. The player left without a nest becomes the next lizard. (This game is suitable for preschool and school-age children.)

● Lizard-frog-toad

The game is played by drawing three long lines on the ground. The first line is the lizard's home, the second is the frog's and the third is the toad's home. The person running the game calls out lizard, frog or toad in turn and the children try to get to that animal's home as quickly as possible.

● Protected

Discuss what it means for an animal or plant to be protected.

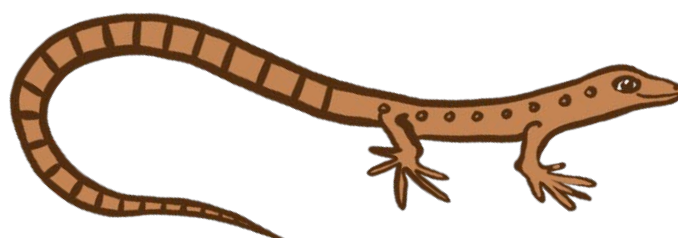
The purpose of protection is to protect the species in question. A protected plant may not be picked. A protected animal, or its young (e.g. tadpoles), may not be caught or kept as a pet.

● A quiet walk

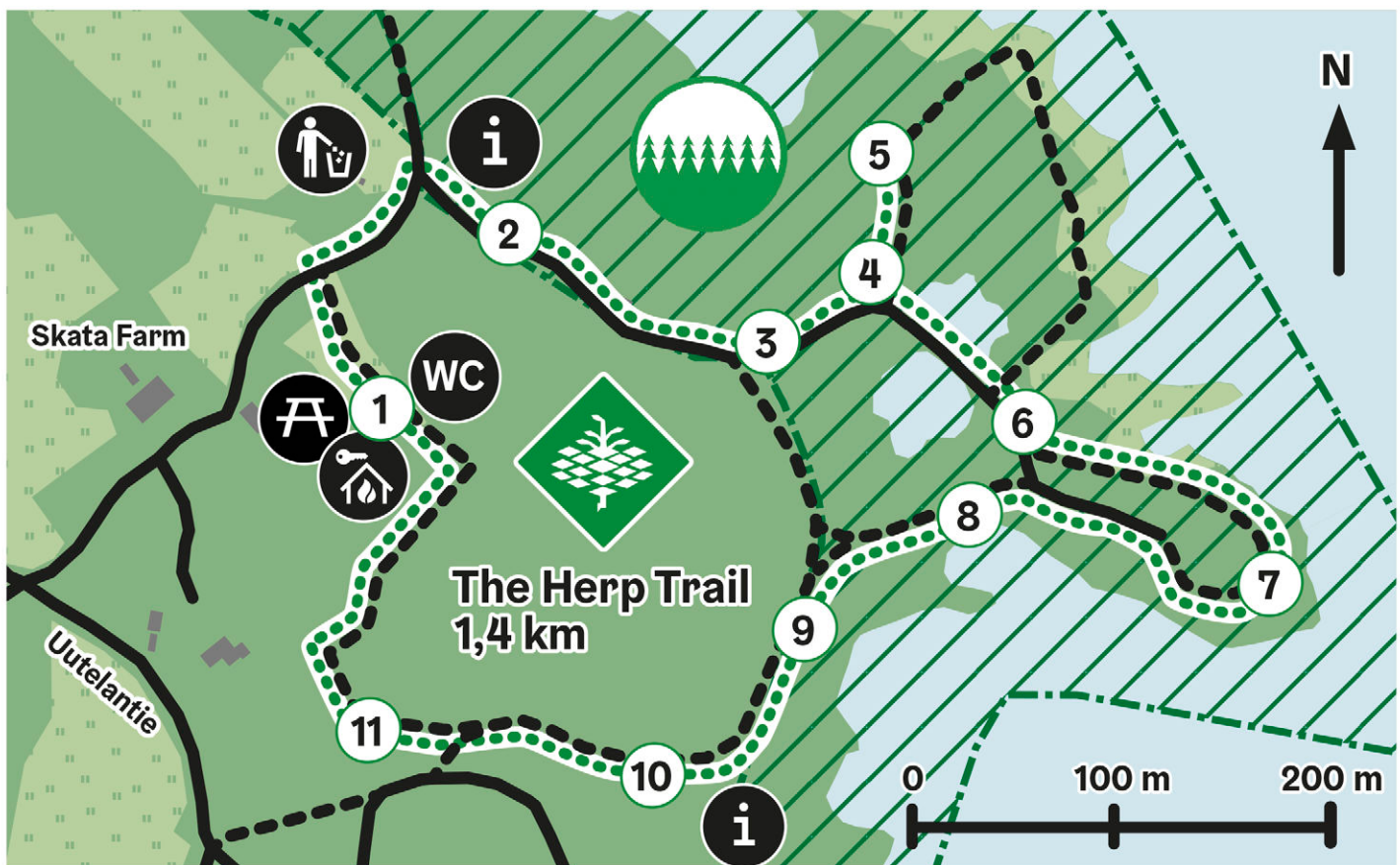
Practise how to walk quietly and softly together. Do your shoes or clothes make noise? What other sounds can you hear? (E.g. birds, the wind, rain, leaves on trees, grasshoppers, etc.)

● Herps as a project

Your visit to the Herp Trail can also be part of a larger learning project. Read up on literature about herps and find out what they are, how they live and what they eat. You can also include an evolutionary perspective; frogs, snakes and lizards have been on Earth for millions or even hundreds of millions of years, so they are much older than humans.



Map of the Herp Trail



The Herp Trail



Särkkäniemi
nature reserve

- 1 Welcome to Uutela,
a place of frogs and snakes!
- 2 Common adder
- 3 Adders will defend themselves
- 4 Frogs
- 5 Viviparous lizard
- 6 Common toad
- 7 Grass snake
- 8 Smooth newt
- 9 Molting
- 10 Slow worm
- 11 The herps of Uutela



Trail or duckboards



Road or hiking trail



Forested area



Open area: pasture, meadow,
field or allotment



Water area



Buildings



Nature reserve map board



Picnic tables



Helsinki-Outhouse



Kota



Waste bin

