

# NETWORK OF FOREST HABITATS OF EUROPEAN IMPORTANCE IN LATVIA – MAPPING AND ANALYSIS, AND CONSERVATION STRATEGIES

Guntis Brūmelis<sup>1</sup>, Sandra Ikauniece<sup>2</sup>, Brigita Laime<sup>1,2</sup>, Agnese Priede<sup>2</sup>, Didzis Tjarve<sup>1,2</sup>, Ieva Ābeltiņa<sup>2</sup>, Jānis Puga<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Faculty of Biology, University of Latvia, Jelgavas iela 1, Rīga LV-1004, Latvia

<sup>2</sup> Nature Conservation Agency, Baznīcas iela 7, Sigulda, Latvia, LV-2150

## INTRODUCTION

Mapping of forest habitats of European importance in Latvia (EU boreal biogeographical region) was conducted in 2017–2021, with the aim to determine their distribution and quality. A total of 274 experts participated in field survey, all of whom participated in training and calibration sessions. Experts were given maps with obligate areas to survey (identified from the forest register and other sources). In the field, identified forest habitats were mapped and information on structures, processes and species were entered on the standardised data forms. The area of mapped forest habitats was about 33,000 ha (9% of total forest area). Only 30% of this area is in the Natura 2000 network and only 4% of the total forest area in Latvia is strictly protected. Therefore, there is great need for improving conservation strategies, based on quality parameters of the habitats. Algorithms are being developed to assess quality of the mapped forest habitats, with the aim identify those for protection.



Training and calibration on data sheet entry.

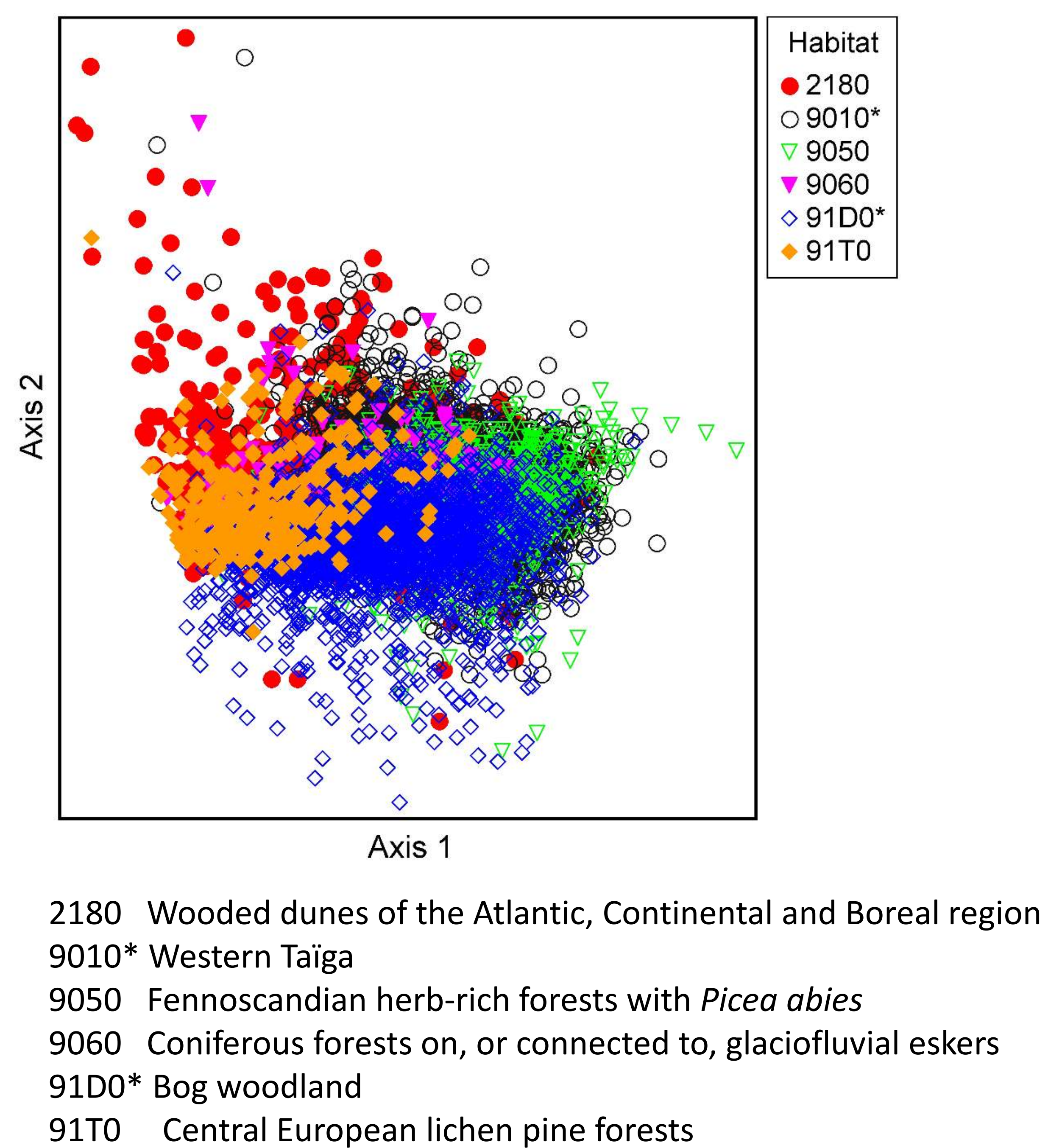
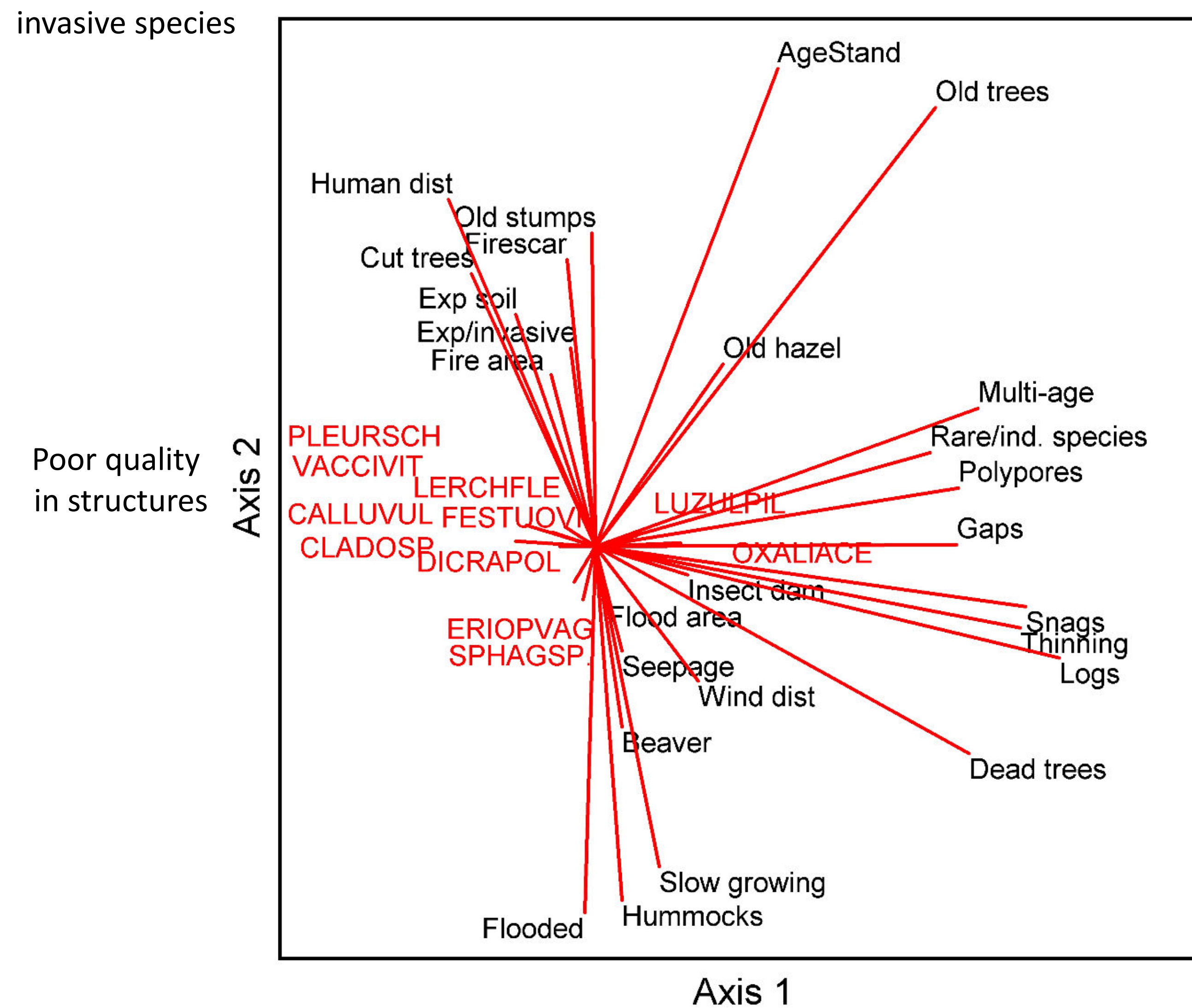
Maps of quadrats and GPS with links to various relevant maps and layers.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

Stratified random selection of about 10,000 mapped habitat polygons each with a standardized data form (typical boreal zone forest habitat types), was used for analysis. A matrix of data on structures and processes was used in PCA analysis.

## RESULTS

Old stands with fire and cutting disturbance, expansive and invasive species



EU-importance forest habitat types like wooded dunes, Central European lichen pine forests, and Coniferous forests on eskers have minimal amounts of structures, which are more common in boreal forest with spruce (Fennoscandian herb-rich forests with *Picea abies* and Western Taiga). Bog woodland and Western Taiga habitats have variable amounts of structures and processes.

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