

WHAT I ASPIRE TO BE WHEN I GROW UP?

Baltic Gender Competition

Helmi Ahonen, Sonja Kirla and Saara Virkkunen

COULD I BECOME A MARINE BIOLOGIST?

- We are three high school girls, Helmi, Saara and Sonja. We study in the Olari High School science and mathematics line in Espoo, Finland.
- Our common interest is biology and especially the biology of the Baltic sea.
- We have gotten acquainted with scientific research this autumn at the Tvärminne Zoological Station.
- Could we find role models for ourselves?
 - Saara and Helmi found their role models, Maiju and Heidi, rather easily.
 - Sonja had some difficulties because she saw herself studying the birds of the Baltic. However, we didn't find a female scientist like that. We picked Camilla due to her very practical work including, for example, diving.

HELMI INTO MAIJU?



Helmi Ahonen

Watch the whole
transformation:
lyli.fi/muutos

Maiju Lehtiniemi

FT MAIJU LEHTINIEMI

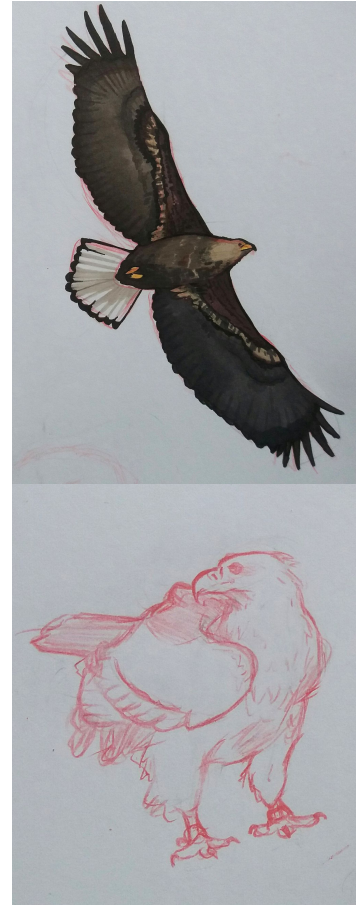
Maiju didn't know what she wanted to be when she grew up. She thought of many careers, for example a figure skating coach. Eventually she ended up studying biology. Through many coincidences she found herself working with marine biology - and continued working with it.

I chose Maiju as my role model because she studies alien species. That is a current topic nowadays due to the climate change and the present state of the Baltic Sea. Our common interest is biology and the Baltic sea.

HELMİ

Biology has always interested me in many ways and I am seeking to have a job related to it when I grow up, for example a veterinarian. I'm especially interested in bigger organisms and their behaviour. I'm also interested in art and drawing: I'm considering combining making illustrations with my future job. I have also done horseback riding for many years.

Nature and the Baltic Sea are close to my heart. I live next to the sea in Soukka. As my main subjects I study biology and chemistry. My interest in animals is based on the countless nature documentaries I watched as a kid that sparked my interest in wildlife.



SAARA INTO HEIDI?

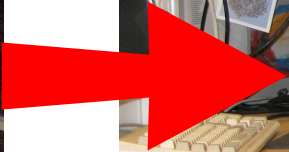


Image: Panu Hänninen

FT HEIDI HÄLLFORS

Heidi is a marine biologist working at Finnish Environment Institute. She is an expert on phytoplankton. Her work includes monitoring and researching phytoplankton and developing new ways of plankton research.

Heidi's interest in biology started in high school. Before deciding to specialize in phytoplankton she was interested in genetics and plants. She got her master's degree in 2003 and her doctoral thesis in 2013 in Helsinki University. Her topic was dinoflagellates of the Baltic.

I chose Heidi as my role model because her work includes microscoping. I find it really fascinating to see the little things of this world with my own eyes.



SAARA

Hi, I'm Saara! I'm interested in space. It's as intriguing to see the big things of the universe through a telescope as it is to see the little things through a microscope.

The Baltic Sea is also very important to me. I live very close to the shore so I spend a lot of time there with my dog. My interest in biology arose in comprehensive school and it's just growing now that I study in high school.

SONJA INTO CAMILLA?



FT CAMILLA GUSTAFSSON

Camilla is a scientist working at the Tvärminne Zoological Station. She already knew as a child that she'd become a marine biologist. That was because she spent a lot of time at sea and in nature.

Camilla graduated from high school in 2001. That was the same year Sonja was born. Camilla continued her studies in Åbo Akademi. Her disputation (*Biodiversity and ecosystem functioning in angiosperm communities in the Baltic Sea*) in 2013 was about the influence of abundant plant populations on marine littoral ecosystems. Nowadays her work includes sampling with diving, analyzing data, tutoring students and writing scientific articles.

SONJA

I have been interested in all kinds of fascinating animals since I was a little kid. My special interest in biology arose in fifth grade when I got my first binoculars after reading many bird guides. Even today I continue to use these binoculars.

Now I study biology and chemistry as my main subjects. Birds and other macroscopic organisms are still my biggest passion and I hope I can continue on this path with my future studies and job.



Personally I don't see myself as a diving marine biologist. I'd prefer to do research on the birds of the Baltic, for example the eiders. Unfortunately, I didn't find a female ornitologist - that's why I accepted Camilla as my role model. After all, I don't want to become a man.

THANK YOU,

- Maiju Lehtiniemi, who visited our school and held a Science course lecture about experimental research.
 - Heidi Hällfors, who was on the phone and kindly answered all our questions.
 - Camilla Gustafsson, who answered our emails from the other side of the world, Australia, unbelievably fast.
 - Our biology teacher Maija Flinkman, who inspired us to do this project
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- All images except for few exceptions have been taken by us.
 - The drawings have been made by Helmi and Sonja.

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