

## GRASSROOTS: Environmental chains

Zachary Topelius once wrote: *“The forest is like a fur to a country.. A country in the deep North needs a good winter coat, but if it decides to remove the fur coat, it has only itself to blame for freezing to death.”*

It's enough! Nature is not only a raw material! Since the late 1970's, Finnish environmental movement has taken to civil disobedience and defended forests and lakes by building dams, climbing up to trees singled out for felling and chaining themselves to excavator, not heeding police advice to leave the area.

The environmental movement has given birth to a political party that has taken environmental issues to Parliament. With a vote guaranteed by one share, forest activists fight for their cause also in the annual meetings of forest companies. To keep old-growth forests standing, they campaign: don't finNish ancient forests!

The programme **Environmental chains** concentrates on two Finnish environmental activists.

In the spring of 1979, a bunch of young environmentalists from around the country gathered at Kojjärvi to stop a valuable bird lake from being dried up. Ville Komsu was one of the young people blocking the discharge ditch with a dam and chaining themselves to an excavator to stop the ditch from being dug. Even though opposing the authorities was a new phenomenon in Finland at the time, this civil disobedience was met with extensive public sympathy. In the following decade, the Kojjärvi activists were involved in bringing the Green movement to the political party platform.

In November 1988, a group of people stopped fellings in Talaskangas forests, and this started a long-term civil action to protect old forests. The forest activist tried to stop the felling by going in between the trees and the saws and by climbing up the trees. One of the participants of this dispute was Matti Liimatainen, a 15-year-old school boy who was also arrested and taken to police jail. The events had a profound effect on Matti. He has continued preserving the forests, and is now responsible for forest preservation at Greenpeace.

## Grassroots environmental chains - CAPTIONS

Photographer: Tiia Väre

1. Ville Komsu was one of the young environmentalists who built a dam and chained himself to excavator in order to defend one of the most important bird lakes in Finland from the fate of drying up back in 1979. What came out of this non-violent civil disobedience? Find out in the programme Grassroots – Environmental chains.
2. The statue named Daisy was built by the very first Finnish environmentalists who back in 1979 wanted to defend one of the most important bird lakes in Finland from the fate of drying up. What else did they achieve? Find out in the programme Grassroots – Environmental chains.

3. The Finnish forest activists are looking for endangered species in order to preserve the disputed old growth forests in Northern Finland. They call this type of action “mining” the future felling sites.