

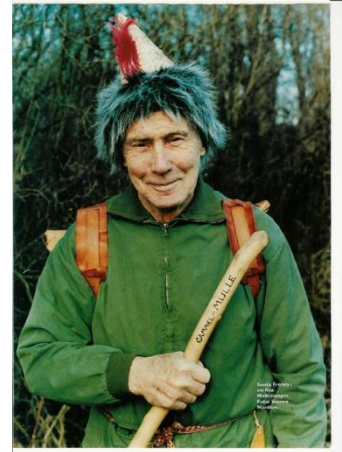
Skogsmulle – how it started

Friluftsförbundet, ” Swedish Outdoor Association”

Friluftsförbundet is quite an old organization. It was established already in 1892. The original purpose of this voluntary, non political, non profit and non religious organization was to promote skiing. The program however was enlarged to outdoor activities all the year around as time went on. Activities also was developed for younger people, and finally even children could also take part in the organizations program. In the middle of the 1950-ties it was discussed that an outdoor school for children as young as 5 years ought to be established.

Gösta Frohm

Gösta Frohm became employed at Friluftsförbundet’s central office in the beginning of the 1940-ties. His task was to develop Friluftsförbundet’s program, to improve the quality of the education of leaders and to develop new activities. He was really the right person for those subjects, very creative and enthusiastic. He stayed until he retired 1973 and then he continued to work as a volunteer in the organization till he died 90 years old. He became a kind of “Mr Friluftsförbundet”. What he is most remembered for is however the “Skogsmulle School”. This was started in 1957 and then was developed by Gösta to the full concept which here is described.



This is “Gösta’s story”, partly as told by himself

It was summer 1956. We had come to a deadlock about the troll’s name and its appearance. In lacking a better idea, I then suggested my own family’s outdoors symbol which was marking all our sport equipment, even the canoe. We called it “the troll Mulle” which, even in our fantasy, was deeply rooted in the forest and nature. When (from my children), I got a question about nature that I was not able to answer, I hid behind the answer “I will ask Mulle about that”. “Ha, you don’t know the answer” shouted my daughters. We fantasized, pretended and we had fun with “Mulle”.

Göstas idea thus was to start a “Troll School” for 5 year olds in Friluftsförbundet. What should it look like? Gösta went to a famous wig maker.

Wearing a green training overall, and with a piece of birch bark in my hand, I sat on a chair at Lundh’s wigmaker atelier behind the Royal Dramatic Theater in Stockholm. While I was fantasizing and talking about the forest and Mulle, the wigmaker was creating the original Mulle’s wig with buffalo hair. When I left the atelier, I was perfectly satisfied.

Gösta presented his idea not only for the Friluftsförbundet organization but also to “The National Board of Health and Welfare”, the authority which had special emphasis on childrens care taking.

But the National Board of Health and Welfare said: “We are not going to have a troll because it is going to scare the children!”

*The compromise became **Skogsmulle** and **The school of Skogsmulle**. From the beginning, the goal was to discover nature, to play in the nature and to take care of nature.*

Skogsmulle had come to stay!

Göstas idea was not accepted in the Friluftsförbundet's own organization from the beginning.

It was difficult in the beginning, until Stockholm's Children's Playgrounds got interested. Friluftsförbundet trained the leaders of Stockholm's Children's Playgrounds. The driving force was Stina Wretling-Larsson. The first year of cooperation with the Children's Playgrounds, we had 3000 children joining the school of Skogsmulle in Sweden. Then even the Friluftsförbundet's board got very surprised and started to take Skogsmulle seriously. Marianne Andersson was employed as a child adviser. The wheel started to spin all over Sweden. Ideas, tracks, questions and games were exchanged between the leaders both locally and when they had training courses in Sweden.

Mulle became the children's best friend!

In the beginning of the sixties, we had a whole barrow full of stuff in the school of Mulle. Due to lack of time, the "Mulle book" was not finished until 1969. But it was an unexpected success when the illustrationist was Björn Gidstam. He was accepted after the children test. The surroundings and the biotopes in the book are from the area close to Lida courtyard. In Storlien in north Sweden, the leaders wanted to call Skogsmulle "Fjällmulle". ("Skogsmulle" means Mulle from the forest and "Fjällmulle" means Mulle from the mountains.) A new model was needed for the children in the mountains after their training at the school of Mulle in the home area. The "Mulle book" finishes with Mulle saying "Hi kollikok, I am going to the mountains now", disappearing up a path in the forest. He had heard about the mountains, and he had to go there now. The children in the "Mulle book", Sten and Anna, also went to the mountains together with me and Gidstam.

Skogsmulle and his friends Fjällfina, Laxe and Nova!

Fjällfina came 15 years after Skogsmulle and was then followed by Laxe in the water and Nova coming from the space.

How many Swedish children have joined the Skogsmulle School?

The Skogsmulle School celebrated its 50th anniversary 2007. There was no doubt that it had been a great success – but how many Swedish children had taken part during those 50 years. The statistics existed, though of course not exact. Figures from 1 – 2 million children have been presented. Another way to present the result could be to try to estimate how many of the Swedish population who have been in the Skogsmulle "age", e.g. 5 – 6 years old have met Skogsmulle. The result is really impressive because the result is that around 20 % of all Swedish children have been to Skogsmulle school!