

Estonia

Visible Autumn Migration

Monday 02 October – Monday 09 October 2017

Principal Leader: Kaarel Vohandu

2017 Cost: **£1,999** single room supplement **£100**



Ornitholidays has already visited Estonia over ten times to see its beautiful countryside and rich wildlife. Over 10 per cent of the country is protected in an effort to preserve its flora and fauna and so many areas remain wild and unspoilt. We now have a tour in the autumn to witness one of the planet's great spectacles – that is the visible migration of literally hundreds of thousands of birds as they move from their northern arctic breeding areas to their winter quarters, via strategic land masses in Estonia. October can produce staggering counts in Estonia – 1.7 million Common Chaffinches, 102,000 Bramblings, 75,000 Long-tailed Ducks, 44,000 Eurasian Siskins, 13,000 Common Cranes, 960 Eurasian Sparrowhawks, 132 Lesser Spotted Woodpeckers and 88 Rough-legged Buzzards – these are numbers tallied on just single days in the autumn! Our itinerary explores the western coastal headlands, where these large numbers of migrants pass, and we hope to be able to witness some of these extraordinary movements.

It will not only be the visible migration that we hope to see as we shall look for some of the other exciting species to be found here at this time of year which may include White-tailed Eagle, Hazel Grouse, Grey-headed, Black and White-backed Woodpeckers, Tengmalm's and Eurasian Pygmy Owls, Great Grey Shrike, Bohemian Waxwing and possibly Yellow-browed Warbler. There is also the possibility we may see an influx of species such as Spotted Nutcracker or Common Crossbill. Of course there will be mammals too, which may include Elk, Raccoon Dog, Wild Boar and Red and Roe Deer.

Throughout the tour we have Kaarel Vohandu leading us, one of Estonia's foremost birders.

ITINERARY

Days 1 & 2

We take the morning flight from London to Tallinn where we arrive in the early afternoon. We then drive to Parnu where we stay for the next two nights. The next day we drive to Munalaiu harbour, where we may spot our first migrating Eurasian Sparrowhawk, or perhaps

White-tailed Eagles hunting sea duck. We take a short ferry trip to Kinhu Island and head for Cape Pitkana, which is definitely the most interesting migration point for passerines and raptors in the autumn. If the winds are favourable we may see large numbers of Eurasian Sparrowhawks, with lesser numbers of Merlin, Hen Harrier, Eurasian Hobby, Rough-legged Buzzard, or perhaps a late European

Honey Buzzard. Geese may be moving and we might have large numbers of White-fronted and Bean. We take our lunch at the tip of the island where the local women still wear their national costume as their everyday attire. Hopefully we shall see large numbers of Common Chaffinch, Bramblings and Eurasian Siskins on the move as well. We return to the mainland and head back to Parnu for dinner.



Common Cranes



Bohemian Waxwing

Days 3 & 4

This morning we shall visit the Kabli bird station near the Latvian border, which is the oldest ringing station in Estonia. We can witness the scientific study of the migrating birds and may see some birds in the hand, which could include Crested Tit, Lesser Spotted Woodpecker and perhaps even some eastern vagrants such as Yellow-browed or Pallas's Warblers. It is worth visiting at first light because Tengmalm's Owls are regularly caught here and they are released in the early morning. Later we visit the Soometsa woodlands where we hope to find Grey-headed, Black and White-backed Woodpeckers and Hazel Grouse. In the late afternoon we drive to Virtsu harbour and take the ferry to Muhu Island and make for Kuressaare where we stay for two nights. The next day we target the Sorve Peninsula and Saare Spit, which is the last point for birds moving south. Migrant raptors can often be seen in good numbers and we can hope for Lesser Spotted Eagle amongst them. Again passerine migration might be fantastic with finches and tits moving. We may also find Tengmalm's and Eurasian Pygmy Owls at Viidumae Nature Reserve.

Days 5 to 7

After breakfast we can continue our birding at the Loode coast and at Loue Bay and also visit Sorve Bird Observatory. Later we return to the mainland and drive to Matsalu Bay, where we stay for three nights. Matsalu National Park is the most famous birding area in Estonia, with over 40 square kms of floodplain and costal

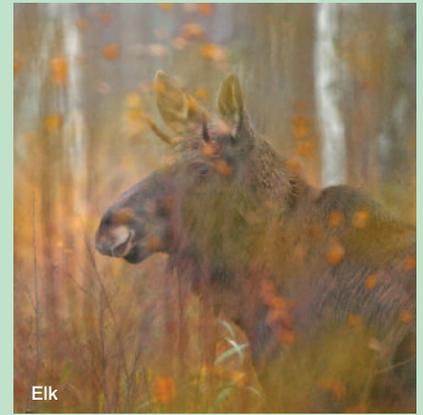
meadows, riparian and costal woodland, river delta and marshlands. This area is amazing for attracting migrant birds and typically the bay at this time of year is covered with white spots – these being 10,000 Whooper and Bewick's Swans. The fields may hold thousands of geese, with Barnacles, Bean, Greylags and White-fronted, while there may also be thousands of ducks present as well. We have two full days in the area to explore and also visit Cape Poosaspea. The cape is a narrow bottleneck where over two and a half million Arctic breeding wildfowl pass in the autumn. On some days over 100,000 divers, geese and ducks pass, with high daily counts of 8,400 Velvet Scoter, 6,000 Greater Scaup and 2,000 Red-throated and Black-throated Divers being recorded. Rarer birds which can sometimes be seen here include King Eider, White-billed Diver, Grey Phalarope and Little Auk. We shall also visit Haapsalu Bay where Common Goldeneye congregate and we have a chance to find Smew. Large number of Common Cranes will also be present and they produce a lovely spectacle as they feed, with a backdrop of grey tree trunks and golden leaves.

Day 8

On our way back to Tallinn we will visit some old mixed forest where we hope to see Black Grouse, with the possibility of Capercaillie and Hazel Grouse. We then have the chance to have a short tour of Tallinn Old Town, which is a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Later we depart for Tallinn airport and our flight back to London.



Spotted Nutcracker



Elk

Outline Itinerary

| | |
|-----------------|--------------------------------------|
| Day 1 | Fly to Tallinn and transfer to Parnu |
| Day 2 | Parnu |
| Days 3-4 | Kuressaare |
| Days 5-7 | Matsalu Bay |
| Day 8 | Depart Tallinn |

Party Size

Maximum of 12 clients (two leaders with more than six clients).

Accommodation

Comfortable accommodation in twin/double and single rooms, with private facilities.

Transport

By minibuses driven by the leaders.

Includes

All flights, meals, accommodation, transport, entry fees, services of the leaders, VAT, airport taxes and tips.

Gradings

 Good

 150

 Mainly Cool

 Low

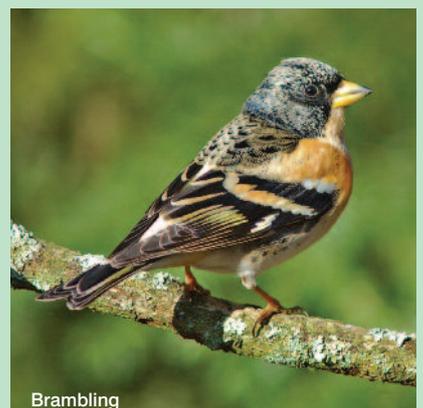
 Normal

 Moderate

 Good

 Moderate

 Scheduled



Brambling