

ORNITHOLIDAYS TOUR TO FINLAND
Owls, Woodpeckers & Grouse

19 – 27 May 2012



Leaders: Simon Boyes, Ari Latja and Tuomas Seimola

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A Personal Diary

Saturday, 19 May

All but two of the group gather at Heathrow's Terminal 3 for the midday flight to Helsinki. It's in a British Airways Airbus, and takes two and a half hours. Helsinki is cloudless, and two hours ahead of BST. As we wait for our connection, we meet Uli and Christa, who have just arrived from Berlin. Distant Common Skylark and Northern Wheatear help to pass the spare hour. The onward Finnair flight to Oulu is in a Brazilian-made Embraer 190, and takes 45 minutes. Luggage soon arrives, and we meet Ari, our naturalist guide. He drives us the short distance to the Airport Hotel, which overlooks a bay in the Gulf of Bothnia. After some time to unpack, we sit down to a fine dinner, watching a Short-eared Owl between courses as it hunts over the hotel garden. A short leg-stretch after the meal brings us more views of this elegant owl, as well as a brief view of a roding Woodcock. Iain finds a Western Marsh Harrier. Out on the sea are Northern Shoveler, Common Shelduck and Red-breasted Merganser. It is still light at 11 p.m. when we head off to bed.

Sunday, 20 May

A pre-breakfast outing takes us to an area of mixed (birch and pine) forest along the shore of the Gulf of Bothnia. We start with close-ups of Wood Warbler and Pied Flycatcher. A tower overlooks the shore, with Eurasian Curlews bubbling and Common Snipe drumming around us. Little and Arctic Terns work their way along the shore, but a Caspian Tern is only seen briefly flying past. At the yacht-club, a drake Smew rests with many Goosander. Our first Common Crane is in a field: a non-breeder, with a brownish mantle.

After a fine buffet breakfast, we set out to explore the forests south of Oulu. Turning onto a forest track, we soon flush a Black Grouse, and watch a second one, a hen, on the ground near the minibus. A short walk turns up a Common Crossbill and a pair of Willow Tits, greyer than the subspecies we are familiar with in the UK. The highlight of the stop is a pair of Three-toed Woodpeckers, which we watch in the scopes. For a while a Green Sandpiper perches up on a dead stump, a sure sign of being on territory. Unusually for sandpipers, the Green takes over an old thrush nest. Common Cuckoos, Tree Pipits and Common Redstarts are also here: all are common summer visitors. Up another track nearby we find two male Red-backed Shrikes asserting the boundaries of their adjacent territories. Miles puts us onto a Black Woodpecker, but all too quickly it disappears into the forest. Much more obliging is a fine Wryneck, which utters its ringing song from a birch close to us. Our last morning walk is in the small hope of a shy pair of Ural Owls, which Ari reckons is worth a quick look. We draw a blank here, but Ari's first Spotted Flycatcher of the year is a small consolation. Whinchats and resting Common Cranes attract our attention on our way to lunch.

The lunch spot is an ABC cafeteria in Raahe, where we have a fine choice of a hot buffet and salads. In the afternoon, we head towards Oulainen, and divert again onto a forest track. Ari soon has his scope lined up on a magnificent Great Grey Owl, after a short walk on a spongy carpet of moss. We are in a mature spruce forest, where these owls often take over an old Northern Goshawk nest. However, this one has been erected for the owls by a local forester. The Finns have an excellent record of nature conservation. Another forest road leads us to a forest edge overlooking a marsh. Here an Ortolan Bunting sings from a wire, and a Woodcock puts in another brief roding appearance. (It is nowhere near dusk, but heavy cloud and a light drizzle encourage its display). The star of this location is a young Tengmalm's Owl, expectant for food at the entrance of its nest-box. It is a month old, on the point of fledging, and a dark chocolate colour all over. It frequently blinks and winks at us as we silently watch it. Ari searches for a parent nearby, but without success. One more owl prowl is denied us on the return journey – because of heavier rain falling. Instead we head back for a checklist and a superb salmon dinner, but the plan for an evening excursion is foiled by more rain.

Monday, 21 May

We watch both Garden Warbler and Blackcap as they sing in the hotel garden; Redwings are in good voice too, though the more abundant Fieldfares must take the wooden spoon for a thrush's song. In total contrast to yesterday evening, the morning is cloudless – and stays so all day.

After breakfast, we head south to continue with the owl prowl we missed yesterday: a Ural Owl site down another forest track. Passing Common Cranes and Roe Deer, we stop by a pinewood where the ground is covered in round reindeer lichen and bilberry – the softest of carpets to tread on. Ari asks us to wait as he locates the owl, perched not far from its nest-box. Ural Owls can be aggressive, so he moves slowly. Once he finds it, we have superb scope views of this large, pale owl as it barks gentle warnings at us not unlike a dachshund's *woof!* From the box, Ari can hear the young chicks. We leave the family in peace and rejoice along our way, passing another close Black Grouse.

Another forest track leads us to a parking spot where a Eurasian Pygmy Owl immediately responds to the CD playback. Worried at first, it settles down to watch us quietly as we enjoy its spotted crown, yellow eyes, and streaked breast in the scopes. It is surrounded by small birds which form its diet: Common Chaffinch, Willow Warbler, Blue Tit, Brambling, Eurasian Siskin and Goldcrest all scold the mini-predator. A Eurasian Treecreeper also appears, and we have a brief view of a barking Northern Goshawk that we assume is also nesting nearby: they are usually silent away from the nest.

Happy with the owls, we proceed to the coast at Varessaikka, where a selection of waders includes Wood Sandpiper and Temminck's Stint. Northern Pintail and Northern Shoveler swim in the shallows. We are hoping for Ruff in their breeding plumage, (and hopefully in fighting mode too), but their migration seems to have already passed. Next come more Common Cranes – by the end of the day we have watched over a hundred, both in graceful flight and at rest in the fields. Flocks are made up of immatures which will spend the summer up here with no nesting duties. Stock Doves are a surprise so far north, and a fine Ortolan Bunting sings in the morning sunshine.

Lunch is at the superb visitor centre at the Liminka Nature Reserve, featuring a delicious reindeer casserole cooked just for us, with salads, juice, a local root-beer and coffee. The photographic exhibition of local birdlife is worth a look, and an attractive Owls of Finland T-shirt is on sale. We head out to the viewing platform that overlooks the bay, but the cold wind off the sea reduces our time here. There are Black-tailed Godwits in superb brick-red breeding plumage, Northern Shoveler and Greylag Geese, but Ari is disappointed by the small number of waders on show. Inland, we try a spot for Terek Sandpiper with no luck, but the day's final walk is a great finale. Ari has heard of a trip of Eurasian Dotterel (the collective noun is unique to this species). We eventually find the right field, guided by phone messages from Matti, one of Ari's colleagues. Here are at least 36 Eurasian Dotterel, with several Northern Lapwing and two Golden Plover. The chestnut breast and black belly of the Eurasian Dotterel's breeding plumage is clear in the scopes. Also along the way are more Ortolan Buntings, a song-flighting Whimbrel, and our first Common Rosefinch, an immature male singing but not yet red. The overhead chorus is of Common Skylark and Eurasian Curlews bubbling. We return to base, delighted with a day of sunshine and fine Finnish birds.

Tuesday, 22 May

We leave Oulu after breakfast, for the journey to Kuusamo. First stop is at the Oulu Airport lake, where Common Scoters swim and Little Gulls hover and dip after insects in the manner of marsh terns. The direct road to Kuusamo would take not much more than three hours, but we take an intriguing variety of scenic routes and forest tracks, and spend the day over the journey. A pause for a Black Woodpecker yields only two fine Green Hairstreak butterflies, but at the next forest stop a Red-breasted Flycatcher is very obliging. Its breast is only a pale pink, typical of a first time breeder, only a year old. But its song is well developed and as it catches flies around us, it offers great views. Reindeer start to appear along the way: they are all domesticated, owned here by Finns rather than the *Saami* (Lapps) further north. Most of the adults wear neck-collars. A Black Grouse (another hen) appears on the left at the same moment as an Arctic Hare on the right. At Pudasjarvi we break for a mid-morning coffee at one of the ABC service stations. Now we divert into the Syöte National Park, where a White-tailed Eagle flies over the undulating spruce forest. Here the snow is still in the process of melting, and the rivers are full to bursting. The park is beautiful even if it fails to produce a few of the local species that Ari is hoping for. This is the closest we have come to needing our rubber boots, which most of us have brought as a precaution. This year we are lucky, but sometimes they would be necessary.

An excellent buffet lunch features many choices and bilberry pie to follow. The afternoon highlight is a superb Hazel Grouse, which gives us fine views on both sides of the minibus. It stays put as we step out and take its photo as it perches up in a leafless birch. (Spring is only just starting at 66°N). We try a spot for Northern Hawk Owl, but the last sighting was a few weeks back, and we have no luck. They like the edges

of forest where they can see their vole prey from dead trees. Sadly there are few voles this year, and the owls are harder to find than usual. Dave is in good form in the spotter's seat, finding first a male Black Grouse near Posio, then a female Capercaillie which feeds unconcerned on the verge, as she scoffs bilberry buds. The last birds of note are a pair of Black-throated Divers on their breeding lake. Ice is still melting from the fringes, so they probably have not begun nesting. Instead they spend much of their time feeding under water. We arrive at our comfortable hotel in Kuusamo, in good time to relax before dinner. Once we have called the checklist, we hurry off to bed as we have an early start....

Wednesday, 23 May

We leave soon after sunrise, at 0400, for a grouse safari. By the time we arrive back at the hotel for breakfast, we have found ten Capercaillie and eight Black Grouse as we explore the area of Rukajarvi. The point of the especially early start is to try to see male Capercaillie at their lek, where (at the height of the season) they make weird calls like popping corks as they strut about with tails raised and fanned. Three males are at the lek, but not in full display. We also see both cock and hen perched atop vantage points (a spruce tree and a telegraph pole), and several more females feeding on verges. Black Grouse are also scattered along the way, including a smart cock displaying to a hen in a meadow with reindeer looking on. Arctic Hares are abundant, with 50 counted, mostly still in white winter coats. There are not many patches of snow left for them to feel well camouflaged. Later in the day, all will retreat into the forests. There are Smew on a lake, a pair of Northern Pintail, a displaying Common Greenshank, and three Golden Plover. Robin and I have a view of a Bluethroat in the scope, but it soon disappears without trace. It must be passing through, not holding territory. The surprise of the early safari is the Red-flanked Bluetail, which sings from the top of a tall spruce near Ruka, in a site new for Ari. These elusive and beautiful birds are back from their winter in south-east Asia, and are conspicuous for a few days in spring before resuming their skulking habits near the ground.

The substantial buffet breakfast tastes especially good after our early start. Ari requests a short rest before we take to the field again, which all are happy to comply with. Setting off again, we start at a Little Bunting site, but Ari fears they have not arrived back yet. So we spend a leisurely hour watching Black-throated Divers on a large lake which they share with various duck such as Common Goldeneye and Eurasian Wigeon. Dave puts us onto a Waxwing: soon we find its mate too. They are feeding at the water's edge in the bushes, usually concealed, but sometimes clear in the scopes. In May there are few berries for them – so their diet changes to buds, flowers and beetles (according to the Handbook of Birds of the World). At Iivara we try a boardwalk which is a known Rustic Bunting site, but we only find Common Crane and Green Sandpiper on territory. There are signs of Beaver activity: a huge lodge and many felled saplings. Luckily Ari knows another spot for the buntings, where after half an hour of no views or half-views, we have a male singing its lively jingle, then preening at length. We have time for second and third looks in the scopes.

Lunch is another of the day's many high spots: a delicious home-cooked meal of reindeer stew and mash with lingonberries, salads, and bilberry tart. This is cooked almost exclusively for us in a remote forest café which is open only by appointment. The feeder outside has a shy pair of Eurasian Bullfinch visiting, but the bread we put out in the hope of attracting Siberian Jay remains untouched. Our chef tells us that at six o'clock this morning it was -4°C; but now it feels pleasantly warm under another cloudless sky. As we drive back towards Kuusamo, we screech to a halt for a pair of Siberian Jays, which appear at last on the forest edge. They make obliging photographic subjects, as they emerge to feed on bread from our breakfast buffet. After several morsels swallowed, they disappear with the later offerings into the depths of the forest where they cache it. Throughout our encounter, these subtly coloured jays are completely silent.

Our final stop is on a lakeshore close to our hotel. The foreground has a stunning pair of Red-necked Grebes, which are clearly thinking about nesting. There are three Reeves, feeding up busily on small prey items on a muddy island. Sadly we seem to have missed their mates the Ruffs, which are both fantastically adorned in May and fascinating to watch too as they skirmish at their arctic leks. Most have already left for tundra further north. Little Gulls are feeding right in front of us, and thinking about nesting too on muddy islands offshore. We also have many Muskrat to watch: mini-Beavers in appearance, originally introduced from North America. In the distance is a great flock of two hundred or so Whooper Swans, which keep up a quiet bugling in the background. Among them swims a drake Velvet Scoter among many other duck.

We head back earlier than usual, to give a longer rest before dinner. There is time to explore and enjoy the hotel sauna; but Dave and Iain have other ideas. Exploring the lake shore (two minutes' walk away), they

come across 32 Red-necked Phalaropes and nine Velvet Scoters. It has been another day of high achievement in the beautiful Finnish wilderness.

Thursday, 24 May

Before breakfast, one Red-necked Phalarope is still on the lake, feeding and spinning with Little Gulls and Common Goldeneye along a line caused by an upwelling of nutrients. There is a female Smew and two male Ruff, but they in are in the mood for sleeping rather than fighting.

We set out just after nine o'clock to explore the Oulanka National Park. Along the way we stop at a lake where Red-necked Grebes are braying like donkeys, and where we notice several nest-boxes, put up for Common Goldeneye and Smew. Ari tells us that last year there were so many voles in the Kuusamo area that Tengmalm's Owls took over many of the boxes. From last year ("the best ever for owls") to this year ("the worst ever, both in the Oulu and Kuusamo areas"), the vole crash has been dramatic. So we continue, resigned to missing Northern Hawk Owl. A sharp stone gives one of our tyres a puncture, but Ari and I soon change it: though maybe not quite as fast as a Formula 1 pit-stop team. We make short stops hoping for Bean Geese (we're a week too late), Little Bunting (a week too early), and White-throated Dipper (water-levels too high)! Now, a drama begins to unfold: a text message from Ari's colleague Matti announces that he has found a Northern Hawk Owl, only 15 minutes' drive from where we are.

We are soon at the parking place at Valtavaara, a classic site for Red-flanked Bluetail. But the owl was seen on top of a hill that involves a steady climb. Christa and Vivian stay by the vehicle and wish us good luck. On the way up, we meet Antero (another of Ari's colleagues), coming down with a Spanish group. They show us their photos, but alas, the owl has flown. Despondent, we trudge on, and pause at the top to regain breath. Within a few minutes, Ari and I relocate the owl, magnificent on a dead branch not 50m away. All have great scope views; we stay with the owl for ten minutes or so, and follow it a few times as it moves perch. When Matti's group arrives for more photo opportunities, we leave them to it, and head down the hill happy.

We enjoy the lunch picnic in the sun, with flasks of coffee from the hotel. We continue north to Oulanka National Park, stopping first at the superb visitor centre. From here we walk to the rapids on the Oulanka River, which are impressively swollen by snow melt. Next we set off on a loop road along the Russian border. A male Black Grouse along the way brings today's final score to Black Grouse 3, Capercaillie 3. Smew at a remote lake are especially active, as a white male chases three females. Both Smew and Velvet Scoter are proving fairly common in this area. There are great views of a perched Common Cuckoo. The one Hazel Grouse of the day now appears, well seen on both sides of the minibus. Now we stop at a clear-felled area which we think also looks good for Northern Hawk Owl. Within a minute one appears: a welcome catch-up for Vivian and Christa. This time we have found our own Northern Hawk Owl, on a new site for Ari. This individual, though more distant, is nevertheless very obliging, as we watch it for 50 minutes. When Ari's scope is fully zoomed, the owl almost fills the picture. It often wags its long tail to help with balance, as it perches atop a small spruce, one feathered foot on top of the other. For a minute, it makes itself thin and looks nervous as a raptor passes; we look to see what the owl's sharp eyesight has picked up, but we see only blue sky. Two Yellow Wagtails, on territory here, fuss around the owl, hoping it will leave them in peace. The owl is a confirmed vole specialist that will not bother the wagtails. We conclude that the owl is not nesting, but living alone and trying just to survive.

Back by the lake after dinner, the phalaropes have gone; but the Common Goldeneye flock has reached 130.

Friday, 25 May

Ruff, Smew and Black-throated Diver are just a few of the birds visible within a minute's walk of the hotel before breakfast. From the table we continue to watch a Common Chaffinch, finishing her nest-building with a disguise of lichens, to match the adjacent birch trunk: here there are no leaves out to help hide the nest.

Our last Kuusamo morning is short and leisurely. We try the territories of various Siberian Tit pairs but without success. It remains our one missing northern speciality. At Ruka we see Common Greenshanks mating on a small island in a lake. Their breeding plumage is spangled with black and silver – subtly different from their plain grey winter appearance. Also on territory here are Wood Sandpiper (perched in a

tree) and Green Sandpiper (in song-flight). Best is a Black Woodpecker, which looks great in the scopes as it peers out of a nest-hole in a pine – almost in a front garden, and right by a road. They are not always in the depths of forests.

We pack and take an early lunch in the hotel. Then it's off to Kuusamo Airport, where we say our warm farewells to Ari. The ATR 72 is a propeller-plane, operated by Flybe, which takes 90 minutes to reach Helsinki. Here we meet Tuomas on a hot afternoon, with a similar VW minibus to the one Ari drove. Heading first to the hotel in Espoo, we unpack and enjoy an early dinner. Then it's out into the field, for a look at Laajalahti, a reserve of mixed forest and open marsh. The evening light is perfect as we find a Black Woodpecker, perched across a branch (unusually for a woodpecker). Next comes a Hawfinch, feeding at the top of an oak. It is elusive and hard to point out as it hides behind the young leaves. Out on the woodland edge, a tower overlooks a wetland, where many of the duck and wader species from the north are in view. It is one of 644 bird-watching towers or platforms in Finland, and one of the few with wheelchair access. A Great Reed Warbler sings from a reed-bed, and a Caspian Tern flies past three colourful hot-air balloons. There are a few migrant Ruff and a Little Ringed Plover. As the sun starts to set, we head back to the hotel.

Saturday, 26 May

The early outing is to Nuuksio National Park, on the north-west side of Helsinki. We start with an obliging Greenish Warbler, perched on top of a high spruce. All the features are clear as it sings in the sun. Fieldfares are everywhere, carrying food to nests, and Redwings more conspicuous too than in the north. We try various spots in forest edge for Grey-headed Woodpecker, but with no luck. We are close to the city, yet in lovely undulating farmland and forest edge, with sunlit green birches full of bird-song. A Garden Warbler gives us what Vivian calls 'tonsil views.' Finally, in a front garden, Tuomas finds us a Blyth's Reed Warbler. Watching for ten minutes reveals three birds, a mated pair and an intruder. They provide close views as they sort out their domestic problems. Tuomas explains that (like many migrants to Finland) they stop singing as soon as they pair, and start nest-building immediately.

A nine o'clock buffet breakfast tastes great after a good early session. Now we head east to Viiki, an area of forests, meadow and marsh just to the east of the city centre. In the woods, a Thrush Nightingale is frantically trying to attract a mate with sustained song from an exposed branch. An Icterine Warbler is trickier, but most of the group have views of the lemon-yellow breast and long bill. Out on the reedbeds, a male Common Rosefinch sways on the reeds in its tropical scarlet colours. Eurasian Hobbies catch dragonflies above our heads, and we watch a Western Marsh Harrier carefully as it quarters the wet meadow where Citrine Wagtails are nesting. We see these recent colonists in distant flight and perched on a fence, but no-one could claim a great view.

We enjoy an urban lunch at Chico's, in a nearby shopping mall. Shrimps, club sandwiches, mini-burgers and pancakes are some of the chosen dishes. Now for half an hour we make a city tour, and out to the shore where there are abundant Barnacle Geese. We watch Common Eiders with chicks while enjoying the Italian ice-creams that Tuomas recommends.

Last evening we visited the north end of Laajalahti: now it's the turn of the southern end. Here are much better views of Caspian Terns on the ground, and our first Gadwall. Surprisingly the fishing Osprey is our first too; and we have another Eurasian Hobby overhead. Another local birder points out a half-hidden Broad-billed Sandpiper, which eventually shows off its crown stripe and long bill well. Tuomas leads a detour to a Penduline Tit's nest, where the owner appears and offers views. Equally exciting is a close-up Lesser Spotted Woodpecker, a bird becoming harder to see in the UK. We are back in good time to relax before our final dinner. The excellent salmon main course comes with bottles of Chilean *Chardonnay* offered by Ornitholidays.

Sunday, 27 May

No-one would guess that the ponds at Suomenoja are old water treatment works: now they look like a typical gravel-pits reserve with reeds and thousands of breeding Black-headed Gulls. This is our destination before breakfast, and we are soon enjoying our target species, the Slavonian Grebe. One close one, in brilliant breeding plumage, shows well as it is not inclined to dive. The red eye looks like a ruby in the morning sun. Also here are our first Common Pochard, a Red-backed Shrike, and thirteen Black-throated Divers overhead. They are all in a line, migrating north.

There's nothing to beat a good Scandinavian breakfast buffet. Now we visit Kirkonummi, an area of fields and marshes south-west of Espoo, which used to be a good area for owls. But Tuomas explains that the cycles of vole populations have stopped in southern Finland, and owls of all species are now scarce here every year. The area is still interesting for diurnal raptors, since a pair of Montagu's Harriers bred here last year, and were seen recently. We climb a new birding tower which Tuomas is keen to inspect. These towers and platforms almost always have other visiting expert birders, who swap the latest sightings and form an amazing network country-wide. So we learn that the harriers have left, probably because of a shortage of food. Never mind: we have six immature Common Cranes on the ground and a further 24 in the air, bugling. They will probably spend the summer here. Another Eurasian Hobby gives a display of dragonfly-chasing above us, and we have a singing Grasshopper Warbler, which can be watched in the scopes as it reels its endless rattle. The gently sloping forehead and buff tones are distinctive when seen so well. There are Whinchats, Yellow Wagtails of the northern grey-headed subspecies, and Northern Lapwings with a half-grown chick. A final stop is to see if a Grey-headed Woodpecker is on territory in a small wood, which it may be; but these are usually shy and elusive birds. However, from across the road in a dandelion-filled meadow comes the grating sound of a hidden Corncrake. There is no track across the meadow for luring the singer (or croaker perhaps) across – so it has to remain a 'heard only.'

The rest of the story is quickly told. We have an hour back at the hotel for packing and lunch. The hotel restaurant is closed on a Sunday, but the staff show great flexibility, and rustle up a mild chicken curry especially for us. Since I checked us in for the flight on-line last night, there is no rush to arrive at the airport early. We say farewell to Tuomas, and to Berlin-bound Uli and Christa. Finnair – part of the same alliance as British Airways – fly us home. We land early at Heathrow, at 1650, in a heat-wave. Luggage soon arrives, and we disperse to our various homes, digesting our wonderful experiences in Finland.

Acknowledgements

Many thanks to all of you for participating in the tour with such enthusiasm and good humour. I hope we may meet up on another Ornitholiday again soon. Ari and Tuomas were brilliant bird-finders, communicators, and safe drivers – special thanks to them both. I would also like to mention the unfailing kindness, courtesy and efficiency of all the Finns we met. It is a great pleasure travelling in this beautiful country. Thanks also to Miles for the photographs that illustrate this report.

Simon Boyes
Ornitholidays
29, Straight Mile,
Romsey,
Hampshire,
SO51 9BB
Tel: 01794-519445
E-mail: info@ornitholidays.co.uk

June 2012

Itinerary and Weather

Wherever possible, **shade** temperatures at dawn and midday are given. With so much sunshine, the weather often felt pleasantly warm. However, the Arctic winds along the Oulu coast were often bitterly cold.

- 19 May Arrive Oulu 2020, (via Helsinki).
Helsinki: sunny 15°C (59°F); Oulu: cloudy 8°C (46°F)
- 20 May Oulu, Raahe, Oulainen.
Cloudy a.m, light rain pm. 8-13°C (46-55°F)
- 21 May Oulu, Paavola, Varessaikka, Liminka.
Sunny, 8°C (46°F)
- 22 May Oulu to Kuusamo, via Syöte National Park and Posio.
Sunny, 8-11°C (°F)
- 23 May Kuusamo, Ruka, Iivaari.
Sunny, 0-10°C (32-50°F)
- 24 May Kuusamo, Valtavaara, Oulanka National Park.
Mostly sunny, 10-16°C (50-61°F)
- 25 May Kuusamo, Ruka. Fly to Helsinki, Laajalahti (north end), Espoo.
Kuusamo: sunny, cloudy later, 10-15°C (50-59°F); Helsinki: sunny, 15-21°C (59-70°F)
- 26 May Helsinki: Espoo, Nuunksio National Park, Viikki, Laajalahti (south end).
Sunny, 13-23°C (55-73°F)
- 27 May Helsinki: Espoo, Suomenoja, Kirkonummi. Depart 1600.
Sunny, 14-23°C (57-73°F)

CHECKLIST OF BIRDS SEEN DURING TOUR

No of days recorded	Location	Abundance Scale (max. seen on 1 day)
1 2h means seen on 1day and heard on 2 other days	O = Oulo area (latitude 65°N) K = Kuusamo area (66°N) H = Helsinki area (60°N) > = on journey to	1 = 1 – 4 individuals 2= 5 - 9 3 = 10 - 99 4 = 100 - 999

SPECIES	No of days recorded	Location	Abundance Scale	SCIENTIFIC NAME
Mute Swan	3	O	H 2	<i>Cygnus olor</i>
Whooper Swan	6	O K	4	<i>Cygnus cygnus</i>
Greylag Goose	3 1h	O	H 3	<i>Anser anser</i>
Canada Goose	3	>K	H 2	<i>Branta canadensis</i>
Barnacle Goose	1		H 3	<i>Branta leucopsis</i>
Common Shelduck	1	O	1	<i>Tadorna tadorna</i>
Mallard	9	O K	H 3	<i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>
Gadwall	2		H 1	<i>Anas strepera</i>
Northern Pintail	2	O	K 1	<i>Anas acuta</i>
Northern Shoveler	7	O K	H 2	<i>Anas clypeata</i>
Eurasian Wigeon	6	O K	H 3	<i>Anas penelope</i>
Eurasian Teal	6	O K	H 2	<i>Anas crecca</i>
Common Pochard	1		H 1	<i>Aythya ferina</i>
Tufted Duck	8	O K	H 3	<i>Aythya fuligula</i>
Common Eider	1		H 3	<i>Somateria mollissima</i>
Common Scoter	2	O K	2	<i>Melanitta nigra</i>
Velvet Scoter	2		K 2	<i>Melanitta fusca</i>
Common Goldeneye	7	O K	H 4	<i>Bucephala clangula</i>
Smew	4	O K	2	<i>Mergellus albellus</i>
Goosander	6	O K	3	<i>Mergus merganser</i>
Red-breasted Merganser	6	O K	H 2	<i>Mergus serrator</i>
Western Capercaillie	3	K	3	<i>Tetrao urogallus</i>
Black Grouse	5	O K	2	<i>Lyrurus tetrix</i>
Hazel Grouse	3	K	1	<i>Bonasa bonasia</i>
Common Pheasant	1	>K	1	<i>Phasianus colchicus</i>
Corncrake	- 1h		H -	<i>Crex crex</i>
Black-throated Diver	4	K	H 3	<i>Gavia arctica</i>
Slavonian Grebe	1		H 1	<i>Podiceps auritus</i>
Great Crested Grebe	4	K	H 2	<i>Podiceps cristatus</i>
Red-necked Grebe	2	K	1	<i>Podiceps grisegena</i>
Great Cormorant	3	O	H 2	<i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>
Grey Heron	2		H 1	<i>Ardea cinerea</i>
White-tailed Eagle	2	O >K	1	<i>Haliaeetus albicilla</i>
Osprey	1		H 1	<i>Pandion haliaetus</i>
Western Marsh Harrier	4	O	H 1	<i>Circus aeruginosus</i>
Common Buzzard	1	>K	1	<i>Buteo buteo</i>
Eurasian Sparrowhawk	2	O	H 1	<i>Accipiter nisus</i>
Northern Goshawk	1	O	1	<i>Accipiter gentilis</i>
Common Kestrel	2	K	1	<i>Falco tinnunculus</i>
Eurasian Hobby	2		H 1	<i>Falco subbuteo</i>
Common Moorhen	1		H 1	<i>Gallinula chloropus</i>
Eurasian Coot	3		H 2	<i>Fulica atra</i>
Common Crane	6 1h	O K	H 4	<i>Grus grus</i>
Eurasian Oystercatcher	3	O	H 2	<i>Haematopus ostralegus</i>
Little Ringed Plover	2		H 1	<i>Charadrius dubius</i>
Common Ringed Plover	2	O K	1	<i>Charadrius hiaticula</i>
Eurasian Dotterel	1	O	3	<i>Charadrius morinellus</i>
European Golden Plover	2	O K	1	<i>Charadrius apricaria</i>
Northern Lapwing	6	O	H 3	<i>Vanellus vanellus</i>
Temminck's Stint	2	O K	1	<i>Calidris temminckii</i>
Broad-billed Sandpiper	1		H 1	<i>Limicola falcinellus</i>
Common Sandpiper	8	O K	H 1	<i>Actitis hypoleucos</i>
Wood Sandpiper	3 1h	O K	1	<i>Tringa glareola</i>
Green Sandpiper	5	O K	H 1	<i>Tringa ochropus</i>

Common Redshank	4		O		H	3	<i>Tringa totanus</i>
Common Greenshank	2	1h		K		1	<i>Tringa nebularia</i>
Black-tailed Godwit	1		O			1	<i>Limosa limosa</i>
Whimbrel	2		O	>K		1	<i>Numenius phaeopus</i>
Eurasian Curlew	7	1h	O	K	H	3	<i>Numenius arquata</i>
Eurasian Woodcock	2		O			1	<i>Scolopax rusticola</i>
Common Snipe	4		O		H	2	<i>Gallinago gallinago</i>
Red-necked Phalarope	2			K		3	<i>Phalaropus lobatus</i>
Ruff	4			K	H	2	<i>Philomachus pugnax</i>
Black-headed Gull	9		O	K	H	4	<i>Larus ridibundus</i>
Common Gull	7		O	K	H	3	<i>Larus canus</i>
Herring Gull	5		O	K	H	1	<i>Larus argentatus</i>
Great Back-backed Gull	1		O			1	<i>Larus marinus</i>
Lesser Black-backed Gull	2			K	H	2	<i>Larus fuscus</i>
Little Gull	6		O	K		4	<i>Larus minutus</i>
Little Tern	2		O		H	1	<i>Sterna albifrons</i>
Caspian Tern	3		O		H	1	<i>Sterna caspia</i>
Common Tern	6		O	K	H	3	<i>Sterna hirundo</i>
Arctic Tern	6		O	K		1	<i>Sterna paradisea</i>
Rock (Feral) Pigeon	2		O	K	H	3	<i>Columba livia</i>
Stock Dove	3		O		H	1	<i>Columba oenas</i>
Common Wood Pigeon	8		O	K	H	3	<i>Columba palumbus</i>
Common Cuckoo	3	4h	O	K	H	1	<i>Cuculus canorus</i>
Great Grey Owl	1		O			1	<i>Strix nebulosa</i>
Ural Owl	1		O			1	<i>Strix uralensis</i>
Northern Hawk Owl	1			K		1	<i>Surnia ulula</i>
Tengmalm's Owl	1		O			1	<i>Aegolius funereus</i>
Eurasian Pygmy Owl	1		O			1	<i>Glaucidium passerinum</i>
Short-eared Owl	3		O	K		1	<i>Asio flammeus</i>
Common Swift	5		O	K	H	3	<i>Apus apus</i>
Black Woodpecker	3	1h	O	K	H	1	<i>Dryocopus martius</i>
Great Spotted Woodpecker	6	1h	O	K	H	1	<i>Dendrocopos major</i>
Three-toed Woodpecker	1		O			1	<i>Picoides tridactylus</i>
Lesser Spotted Woodpecker	1				H	1	<i>Dendrocopos minor</i>
Wryneck	1		O			1	<i>Jynx torquilla</i>
Common Skylark	3		O		H	1	<i>Alauda arvensis</i>
Common Sand Martin	2		O	>K		2	<i>Riparia riparia</i>
Barn Swallow	8		O	K	H	3	<i>Hirundo rustica</i>
Common House Martin	2		O		H	2	<i>Delichon urbicum</i>
Meadow Pipit	5		O	K	H	1	<i>Anthus pratensis</i>
Tree Pipit	3	1h	O	K	H	1	<i>Anthus trivialis</i>
White Wagtail	8		O	K	H	2	<i>Motacilla alba</i>
Yellow Wagtail	3			K	H	1	<i>Motacilla flava</i>
Citrine Wagtail	1				H	1	<i>Motacilla citreola</i>
Bohemian Waxwing	1			K		1	<i>Bombycilla garrulus</i>
Dunnock	1			K		1	<i>Prunella modularis</i>
European Robin	1	2h	O	>K	H	1	<i>Erithacus rubecula</i>
Thrush Nightingale	1	1h			H	1	<i>Luscinia luscinia</i>
Bluethroat	1			K		1	<i>Luscinia svecica</i>
Red-flanked Bluetail	1			K		1	<i>Tarsiger cyanurus</i>
Common Redstart	5	1h	O	K		2	<i>Phoenicurus phoenicurus</i>
Northern Wheatear	5		O	K	H	2	<i>Oenanthe oenanthe</i>
Whinchat	6		O	K	H	1	<i>Saxicola rubetra</i>
Song Thrush	4			K	H	1	<i>Turdus philomelos</i>
Redwing	4	2h	O	K	H	1	<i>Turdus iliacus</i>
Mistle Thrush	5	1h	O	K		2	<i>Turdus viscivorus</i>
Fieldfare	8		O	K	H	3	<i>Turdus pilaris</i>
Common Blackbird	4		O		H	3	<i>Turdus merula</i>
Garden Warbler	2	1h	O		H	1	<i>Sylvia borin</i>
Blackcap	1	3h	O		H	1	<i>Sylvia atricapilla</i>
Common Whitethroat	2				H	1	<i>Sylvia communis</i>
Lesser Whitethroat	-	3h	O	>K	H	-	<i>Sylvia curruca</i>
Grasshopper Warbler	1				H	1	<i>Locustella naevia</i>
Sedge Warbler	2	2h	O	K	H	2	<i>Acrocephalus schoenobaenus</i>

European Reed Warbler	1	1h			H	1	<i>Acrocephalus scirpaceus</i>
Marsh Warbler	-	1h			H	-	<i>Acrocephalus palustris</i>
Blyth's Reed Warbler	1				H	1	<i>Acrocephalus dumetorum</i>
Great Reed Warbler	1	1h			H	1	<i>Acrocephalus arundinaceus</i>
Icterine Warbler	1				H	1	<i>Hippolais icterina</i>
Willow Warbler	6	3h	O	K	H	3	<i>Phylloscopus trochilus</i>
Wood Warbler	1	1h	O		H	1	<i>Phylloscopus sibilatrix</i>
Greenish Warbler	1				H	1	<i>Phylloscopus nitidus</i>
Goldcrest	1	1h	O	>K		1	<i>Regulus regulus</i>
Spotted Flycatcher	4		O		H	1	<i>Muscicapa striata</i>
Red-breasted Flycatcher	1			>K		1	<i>Ficedula parva</i>
Pied Flycatcher	6	1h	O	K	H	2	<i>Ficedula hypoleuca</i>
Great Tit	5	2h	O	K	H	2	<i>Parus major</i>
Coal Tit	-	1h		>K		-	<i>Periparus ater</i>
Eurasian Blue Tit	5		O		H	1	<i>Cyanistes caeruleus</i>
Willow Tit	1	1h	O	K		1	<i>Poecile montanus</i>
Penduline Tit	1				H	1	<i>Remiz pendulinus</i>
Eurasian Treecreeper	2		O	>K		1	<i>Certhia familiaris</i>
Red-backed Shrike	2		O		H	1	<i>Lanius collurio</i>
Common Magpie	8		O	K	H	3	<i>Pica pica</i>
Eurasian Jay	1			K		1	<i>Garrulus glandarius</i>
Siberian Jay	1			K		1	<i>Perisoreus infaustus</i>
Western Jackdaw	5		O		H	3	<i>Corvus monedula</i>
Rook	3		O		H	2	<i>Corvus frugilegus</i>
Hooded Crow	9		O	K	H	3	<i>Corvus cornix</i>
Common Raven	3			K		1	<i>Corvus corax</i>
Common Starling	3				H	3	<i>Sturnus vulgaris</i>
House Sparrow	3		O		H	1	<i>Passer domesticus</i>
Tree Sparrow	1				H	1	<i>Passer montanus</i>
Common Chaffinch	8		O	K	H	3	<i>Fringilla coelebs</i>
Brambling	2	3h	O	K		1	<i>Fringilla montifringilla</i>
Common Redpoll	1		O			1	<i>Carduelis flammea</i>
European Goldfinch	1				H	1	<i>Carduelis carduelis</i>
Eurasian Siskin	4	1h	O	K	H	2	<i>Carduelis spinus</i>
European Greenfinch	4	1h	O	K	H	1	<i>Chloris chloris</i>
Eurasian Bullfinch	1			K		1	<i>Pyrrhula pyrrhula</i>
Hawfinch	1				H	1	<i>Coccothraustes coccothraustes</i>
Common Crossbill	2		O	K		1	<i>Loxia curvirostra</i>
Common Rosefinch	2	1h	O		H	1	<i>Carpodacus erythrinus</i>
Yellowhammer	4	1h	O	K		3	<i>Emberiza citrinella</i>
Common Reed Bunting	8		O	K	H	2	<i>Emberiza schoeniclus</i>
Rustic Bunting	1			K		1	<i>Emberiza rustica</i>
Ortolan Bunting	2		O			1	<i>Emberiza hortulana</i>
MAMMALS							
European Hare	3		O		H	1	<i>Lepus capensis</i>
Arctic Hare	4			K		3	<i>Lepus timidus</i>
Muskrat	2			K		3	<i>Ondatra zibethicus</i>
European Red Squirrel	4		O	K	H	1	<i>Sciurus vulgaris</i>
Stoat	1		O			1	<i>Mustela erminea</i>
Roe Deer	1		O			1	<i>Capreolus capreolus</i>

Reindeer were also seen roaming in the Kuusamo area, but are domesticated.

BUTTERFLIES included Small Tortoiseshell, Peacock, Green Hairstreak and Camberwell Beauty.

This list represents those birds and other animals seen by party members of this tour.

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Great Grey Owl



Eurasian Pygmy Owl



Northern Hawk Owl



Tengmalm's Owl



Ural Owl



Short-eared Owl



Capercaillie



Siberian Jay



Thrush Nightingale



The group birdwatching

Front cover: Hazel Grouse

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