

Wise Birding Holidays

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FINLAND: Boreal Owls and Taiga Specialities

Saturday 17th - Wednesday 22nd May 2014

Tour Participants: Neil Stocks, Doug Cullen, Peter Alfrey, Sue Healey and Helen Booker

Leaders: Chris Townend, Antero Topp and Petri Tamminen

HIGHLIGHTS OF TRIP

Ural Owl: Fantastic views of an adult bird near a nest with a chick.

Great Grey Owl: Three birds seen at close range including a male guarding a nest.

Tengmalm's Owl: Two different birds, both at nest boxes.

Northern Hawk Owl: Great views of two birds near the Russian Border.

Siberian Tit: Two birds in forest near Kuusamo performed at point blank range.

Siberian Jay: Two birds called and chased each other in forest near Kuusamo.

Three-toed Woodpecker: A female bird drumming on a dead stump on our last morning was a great finale!



SUMMARY

Finland is quite simply superb at this time of year and we were blessed with a good vole year meaning lots of Owls! Owls were the main focus of the tour as well as the Taiga specialities and we saw all the key species in glorious weather!

Our final tally included no less than three separate Great Grey Owls, two Tengmalm's Owls, two Northern Hawk Owls, two Ural Owls (including chick), a single Eurasian Pygmy Owl and four Short-eared Owls!

Other specialities included Siberian Tit, Siberian Jay, Three-toed Woodpecker, Black Woodpecker, Red-flanked Bluetail, Willow Grouse, Black Grouse, Capercaillie, Pallid Harrier and numerous waders all displaying and calling literally everywhere we went. From lekking Ruff, to calling and displaying Wood Sandpipers and numerous Temminck's Stints, 100s of breeding plumaged Little Gulls and displaying Red-necked Grebes, Finland has something for everyone!

Saturday 17th May

Flight from London Gatwick to Oulu via Helsinki.

Our flight arrived into Oulu at around 4pm and after checking into our hotel we were straight our birding!

Areas visited: Parras Lumi Joki, Liminka and Kempele Bay

Highlights: A singing male Ortolan Bunting and our first Tengmalm's Owl and Common Cranes of the trip!

Sunday 18th May

With almost 24 hour daylight, we were up early and departed our hotel at 4am, but returned later in the morning for breakfast and a very welcome siesta! We then spent the afternoon and early evening birding some more forest and Papin Järvi (Papin Lake). For those still keen after dinner, a short stroll from our hotel allowed some good birding overlooking Kempele Bay.

Areas visited: Siikajoki, Papin Järvi (Lake) and Kempele Bay

Highlights: Without doubt today's highlights were seeing no less than three Great Grey Owls, including a male sat metres from us as it guarded a female on the nest and an adult Ural Owl that showed superbly. Add to this three Short-eared Owls, a Black Woodpecker, a European Honey Buzzard, 150+ Little Gulls in full breeding plumage and numerous waders including 8+ Eurasian Dotterel and a Marsh Sandpiper, and our first day got off to a great start!

Monday 19th May

Today we visited another woodland before breakfast and then did some more local birding around Oulu before then travelling North-East to Kuusamo where we arrived later in the afternoon. Once again our hotel was well positioned beside Lake Toranki which meant birding was just a short walk from our hotel.

Areas visited: Sanginjoki, Oulu, Taivalkoski and Kuusamo / Toranki Lake

Highlights: A superb singing male Hazel Grouse sat out on an open branch for a good few seconds allowing everyone to see this often tricky bird. Another two birds were seen whilst driving the forest. Our fifth owl species made it onto the list with a Eurasian Pygmy Owl at the nest, and all before breakfast!

A breeding plumaged Slavonian Grebe in Oulu and a visit to Kuusamo rubbish tip for the "must see" Heuglin's Gulls! Then there were the displaying Red-necked Grebes, 25+ Black-throated Divers, more Little Gulls and 20+ Velvet Scoters on Lake Toranki, just outside our hotel!

Tuesday 20th May

A full day's birding around the forest and lakes near Kuusamo and time for an afternoon siesta before a "night" drive after dinner.

Areas visited: Kuusamo, Valtavaara and Kuntivaara

Highlights: For many, today's clear highlight were watching two Northern Hawk Owls as the female sat on its nest stump and the male sat in a tree nearby. Siberian Jays and Siberian Tits at point blank range were also special species for many of the group. We had a good "grouse" day with some wonderful views of Willow Grouse, Black Grouse and no less than six Capercaillies including many just on the roadside. Mountain Hares were also a highlight with many animals still in their white winter coats. Then of course there was the stunning male Red-flanked Bluetail that sang just metres from us against a backdrop of snow covered hills- simply superb!

Wednesday 21st May

Having seen all the target species so well, we enjoyed a more civilised time for breakfast! We then enjoyed a leisurely drive back to Oulu, but of course taking many stops en route to do more birding! We stopped in Syöte NP and arrived back at our now familiar hotel with good birding in Kempele Bay.

Areas visited: Kuusamo, Taivalkoski, Syöte NP and Kempele Bay

Highlights: Another three Capercaillies today, more displaying Red-necked Grebes and White-tailed Eagle were highlights before we waved goodbye to Kuusamo. More waders in Kempele Bay including Temminck's Stints and at least three calling Spotted Crakes during an after dinner stroll!

Thursday 22nd May

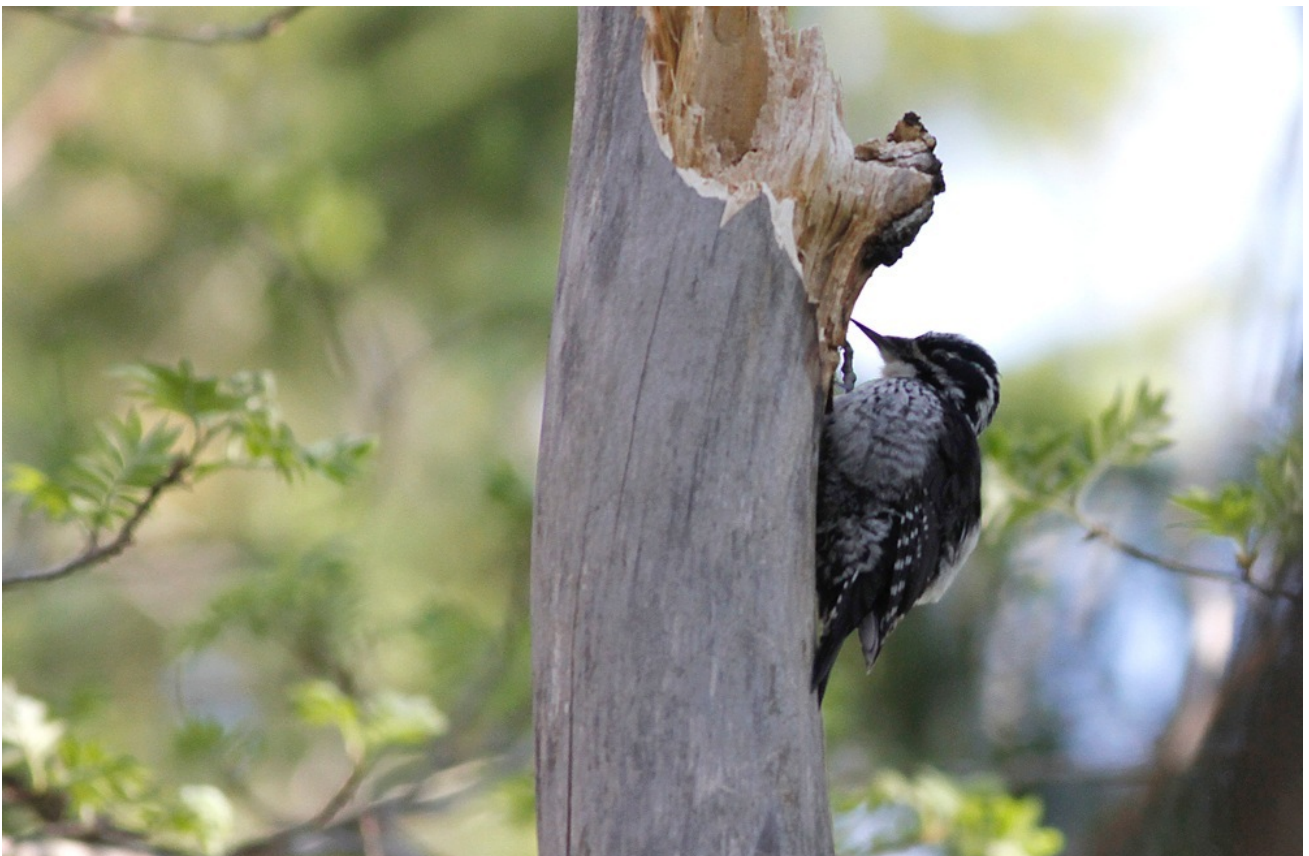
Despite being our last day, we still packed in as much birding as we could before our afternoon flight back to the UK.

Areas visited: Siika Joki, Liminka Bay and Kempele Bay

Highlights: The clear highlight for most was having excellent views of a female Three-toed Woodpecker as it fed on a dead stump just a few feet from us. A superb male Pallid Harrier over our minibus lingered around for a few minutes for us all to enjoy some great views as it hunted overhead. A great end to the trip was finally seeing a group of Common Rosefinch near Liminka Bay followed by enjoying yet more waders including lekking Ruff and no less than eight White-tailed Eagles and a Montagu's Harrier at Kempele Bay.























Conservation Donation – Following the successful conclusion of this tour, a £125 donation from Wise Birding Holidays was made to [Finnature's Next Box Scheme](#):

Each year Finnature put up a number of owl nest boxes for various owl species. In recent years, the number of natural tree holes has declined and so this project creates further nesting opportunities for a number of species and also allows careful monitoring of breeding success.

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#	COMMON NAME	SCIENTIFIC NAME	NOTES
1	Black-throated Diver	<i>Gavia arctica</i>	Recorded on three days with a high count of 25+ birds at Kuusamo
2	Great Crested Grebe	<i>Podiceps cristatus</i>	Two birds recorded on the 18th
3	Red-necked Grebe	<i>Podiceps griseigena</i>	Recorded on four days, including a number of displaying birds and a max. count of 5 on the 19th and 21st
4	Slavonian Grebe	<i>Podiceps auritus</i>	A single bird gave great views just outside Oulu on the 19th
5	Great Bittern	<i>Botaurus stellaris</i>	A bird was heard booming at Kempele Bay on the 21st
6	Mute Swan	<i>Cygnus olor</i>	A single bird was recorded at Papin Järvi Lake on the 18th
7	Whooper Swan	<i>Cygnus cygnus</i>	Recorded daily with a max. count of 60+ birds on the 19th
8	Greylag Goose	<i>Anser anser</i>	Recorded on five days in small numbers of 1-3 birds
9	Barnacle Goose	<i>Branta leucopsis</i>	A group of 40 birds were recorded at Papin Järvi Lake on the 18th
10	Common Shelduck	<i>Tadorna tadorna</i>	Recorded on four days
11	Eurasian Wigeon	<i>Anas penelope</i>	Recorded on five days
12	Common Teal	<i>Anas crecca</i>	Recorded on five days
13	Gadwall	<i>Anas strepera</i>	Recorded on two days
14	Mallard	<i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>	Recorded on five days

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15	Pintail	<i>Anas acuta</i>	Recorded on five days
16	Garganey	<i>Anas querquedula</i>	Recorded on three days with max. counts of 2 including drakes
17	Northern Shoveler	<i>Anas clypeata</i>	Recorded on five days
18	Tufted Duck	<i>Aythya fulicula</i>	Recorded on five days with a max. count of 60+ birds near Kuusamo
19	Common Scoter	<i>Melanitta nigra</i>	Recorded on three days in small numbers
20	Velvet Scoter	<i>Melanitta fusca</i>	Recorded in the Kuusamo area on two days with 20+ on the 19th
21	Common Goldeneye	<i>Bucephala clangula</i>	Recorded on four days
22	Smew	<i>Mergus albellus</i>	Recorded in the Kuusamo area on two days with 10+ on the 20th
23	Red-breasted Merganser	<i>Mergus serrator</i>	Recorded on four days
24	Goosander	<i>Mergus merganser</i>	Recorded on three days
25	Willow Grouse	<i>Lagopus lagopus</i>	Chris spotted a single bird sat on the snow near Kuusamo and was soon followed by a run of sightings with the final tally being 4 birds all on the 20th
26	Capercaillie	<i>Tetrao urogallus</i>	Some excellent sightings of males and females, including at least 6 birds on our evening drive near Kuusamo on the 20th
27	Black Grouse	<i>Tetrao tetrix</i>	A very common "roadside" bird recorded on four days with 20+ birds on the 18th

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28	Hazel Grouse	<i>Bonasa bonasia</i>	A cracking male performed well to all first thing on the 19th with further sightings in the same forest of another 2 birds by some of the group as we drove around using our vehicle as a hide
29	Grey Partridge	<i>Perdix perdix</i>	Two birds were seen in the agricultural land near Oulu on our last morning
30	Common Pheasant	<i>Phasianus colchicus</i>	Heard on three days
31	White-tailed Eagle	<i>Haliaeetus albicilla</i>	Recorded on four days with a max. count of 8 birds on our last day
32	Montagu's Harrier	<i>Circus pygargus</i>	A tail-less ringtail was seen on our last morning at Kempele Bay
33	Pallid Harrier	<i>Circus macrourus</i>	A superb male was a great spot from the minibus by Neil and Helen on our last day and showed exceptionally well to everyone
34	Marsh Harrier	<i>Circus aeruginosus</i>	Mostly single birds recorded on three days
35	European Honey Buzzard	<i>Pernis apivorus</i>	A single bird spotted by Antero showed well as it flew over us whilst having lunch on the 18th
36	Common Buzzard	<i>Buteo buteo</i>	Just a single bird recorded on the 18th
37	Eurasian Sparrowhawk	<i>Accipiter nisus</i>	Single birds were recorded on the 17th and the 18th
38	Common Kestrel	<i>Falco tinnunculus</i>	Seen daily with a max. count of 3 birds on the 20th
39	Eurasian Hobby	<i>Falco subbuteo</i>	A single bird was seen on the 19th as we stopped en route to Kuusamo
40	Merlin	<i>Falco columbianus</i>	A single male bird was seen on our first evening's birding

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#	COMMON NAME	SCIENTIFIC NAME	NOTES
41	Spotted Crake	<i>Porzana porzana</i>	At least three birds were heard outside our hotel near Kempele Bay on the evening of the 21st
42	Common Crane	<i>Grus grus</i>	A common sight and sound with birds seen on five days
43	Oystercatcher	<i>Haematopus ostralegus</i>	Recorded on three days with a max. count of 10 at Kuusamo
44	Little Ringed Plover	<i>Charadrius dubius</i>	Recorded on three days
45	Common Ringed Plover	<i>Charadrius hiaticula</i>	Recorded on two days
46	Eurasian Dotterel	<i>Charadrius morinellus</i>	A group of at least 8 birds on the 18th was a great find by Antero
47	European Golden Plover	<i>Pluvialis apricaria</i>	Three birds were seen in fields around Oulu on the 18th
48	Northern Lapwing	<i>Vanellus vanellus</i>	Recorded daily
49	Temminck's Stint	<i>Calidris temminckii</i>	Some good views of this wader and seen on three days with the best views in Kempele Bay outside our hotel in Oulu
50	Dunlin	<i>Calidris alpina</i>	A single bird in Kempele Bay on the evening of the 18th just a short walk from our hotel
51	Common Sandpiper	<i>Actitis hypoleucos</i>	Recorded on five days
52	Green Sandpiper	<i>Tringa ochropus</i>	A bird in the forest near Oulu on the 18th
53	Wood Sandpiper	<i>Tringa glareola</i>	Recorded on five days including many singing and displaying birds
54	Redshank	<i>Tringa totanus</i>	Recorded on four days

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#	COMMON NAME	SCIENTIFIC NAME	NOTES
55	Spotted Redshank	<i>Tringa erythropus</i>	A single summer plumaged bird in Kempele Bay on the evening of the 18th just a short walk from our hotel
56	Common Greenshank	<i>Tringa nebularia</i>	Recorded on four days
57	Marsh Sandpiper	<i>Tringa stagnatilis</i>	A single bird feeding in Kempele Bay on the evening of the 18th just a short walk from our hotel
58	Black-tailed Godwit	<i>Limosa limosa</i>	Recorded on four days on agricultural land and in Kempele Bay
59	Bar-tailed Godwit	<i>Limosa lapponica</i>	Two birds on the 21st in Kempele Bay
60	Common Curlew	<i>Numenius arquata</i>	Recorded daily
61	Whimbrel	<i>Numenius phaeopus</i>	Recorded on five days
62	Woodcock	<i>Scolopax rusticola</i>	A single bird flushed from the side of the road on the morning of the 19th
63	Common Snipe	<i>Gallinago gallinago</i>	Recorded on four days
64	Ruff	<i>Philomachus pugnax</i>	Recorded on five days with some impressive lekking males!
65	Little Gull	<i>Larus minutus</i>	Recorded on five days with some excellent views of flocks between 100 and 150 birds at times
66	Black-headed Gull	<i>Larus ridibundus</i>	Recorded daily
67	Common Gull	<i>Larus canus</i>	Recorded on the first three days only
68	Herring Gull	<i>Larus argentatus</i>	Recorded on three days

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#	COMMON NAME	SCIENTIFIC NAME	NOTES
69	Great Black-backed Gull	<i>Larus marinus</i>	Only recorded on the 18th in Kempele Bay
70	Lesser BB Gull (Baltic Gull)	<i>Larus fuscus fuscus</i>	Recorded on three days
71	Heuglin's / Siberian Gull	<i>Larus heuglini</i>	Two birds were seen well at the rubbish dump near Kuusamo
72	Common Tern	<i>Sterna hirundo</i>	Recorded on five days
73	Arctic Tern	<i>Sterna paradisaea</i>	Recorded on five days
74	Little Tern	<i>Sterna albifrons</i>	Recorded on two days in Kempele Bay on the 18th and 21st
75	Woodpigeon	<i>Columba palumbus</i>	Recorded on five days
76	Rock Dove / Feral Pigeon	<i>Columba livia</i>	Recorded on the 19th in Kuusamo
77	Common Cuckoo	<i>Cuculus canorus</i>	Heard on four days and seen on one day
78	Short-eared Owl	<i>Asio flammeus</i>	Some good views of four birds around Oulu with 3 on the 18th and 1 on the 21st
79	Northern Hawk Owl	<i>Surnia ulula</i>	Fantastic views of a pair of birds near the Russian border including a female on the nest and a male nearby
80	Ural Owl	<i>Strix uralensis</i>	An adult bird showed exceptionally well near Oulu on the 18th and was voted bird of the trip. The bird sat in trees near the nest and a well developed chick was just visible in the nest stump
81	Great Grey Owl	<i>Strix nebulosa</i>	We were treated to three of these magnificent birds. Two females on the nest and a male sat guarding one of the nests all near Oulu on the 18th

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#	COMMON NAME	SCIENTIFIC NAME	NOTES
82	Eurasian Pygmy Owl	<i>Glaucidium passerinum</i>	A single female was seen at the nest on the 19th near Oulu
83	Tengmalm's Owl	<i>Aegolius funereus</i>	Single birds were seen at the nest on the 18th near Oulu and the 20th near Kuusamo
84	Common Swift	<i>Apus apus</i>	Small numbers recorded on just two days
85	Eurasian Wryneck	<i>Jynx torquilla</i>	Two birds showed well on the 18th near a Great Grey Owl site
86	Black Woodpecker	<i>Dryocopus martius</i>	A bird was watched visiting its nest hole on the 18th
87	Great Spotted Woodpecker	<i>Dendrocopos major</i>	Recorded on three days and seen on two days
88	Three-toed Woodpecker	<i>Picoides tridactylus</i>	A drumming female was located on our last morning near Siikajoki giving very close views and a great finale to our trip
89	Common Skylark	<i>Alauda arvensis</i>	Recorded on three days
90	Barn Swallow	<i>Hirundo rustica</i>	Recorded on five days
91	Common House Martin	<i>Delichon urbica</i>	Recorded on two days
92	Sand Martin	<i>Riparia riparia</i>	Recorded on two days
93	Tree Pipit	<i>Anthus trivialis</i>	Recorded on four days
94	Meadow Pipit	<i>Anthus pratensis</i>	Recorded on two days
95	White Wagtail	<i>Motacilla alba alba</i>	Recorded daily
96	Yellow Wagtail	<i>Motacilla flava thunbergii</i>	Recorded daily and all were of the <i>thunbergi</i> or Grey-headed form

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#	COMMON NAME	SCIENTIFIC NAME	NOTES
97	Bohemian Waxwing	<i>Bombycilla garrulus</i>	Heard only by some of the group on the 20th
98	White-throated Dipper	<i>Cinclus cinclus</i>	A single bird on a river near Kussamo on the 20th
99	Dunnock	<i>Prunella modularis</i>	A single bird was heard on the 19th
100	European Robin	<i>Erithacus rubecula</i>	A bird was seen on the 18th and others heard on the 20th and 21st
101	Red-flanked Bluetail	<i>Tarsiger cyanurus</i>	A superb singing male showed exceptionally well on the 20th at the traditional site near Kuusamo. Another bird was heard singing on the 21st in Syöte National Park
102	Bluethroat	<i>Luscinia s svecica</i>	A single bird remained typically elusive in a ditch beside agricultural land on our last morning near Oulu
103	Common Redstart	<i>Phoenicurus phoenicurus</i>	A fairly common breeding bird in the forests and recorded on three days
104	Whinchat	<i>Saxicola rubetra</i>	Pleasing to see good numbers of breeding birds recorded on three days
105	Northern Wheatear	<i>Oenanthe oenanthe</i>	Recorded daily
106	Common Blackbird	<i>Turdus merula</i>	Only recorded on one day
107	Fieldfare	<i>Turdus pilaris</i>	A very common breeding bird with birds seen daily
108	Song Thrush	<i>Turdus philomelos</i>	Recorded on just two days
109	Redwing	<i>Turdus iliacus</i>	Recorded daily and the exceedingly variable songs were heard from the different regions we visited
110	Mistle Thrush	<i>Turdus viscivorus</i>	Recorded on four days

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#	COMMON NAME	SCIENTIFIC NAME	NOTES
111	Sedge Warbler	<i>Acrocephalus Schoenobaenus</i>	Recorded on there days mostly only heard
112	Garden Warbler	<i>Sylvia borin</i>	A bird was heard singing on the 21st
113	Lesser Whitethroat	<i>Sylvia curruca</i>	Recorded on three days
114	Common Chiffchaff	<i>Phylloscopus collybita</i>	Recorded on just two days
115	Willow Warbler	<i>Phylloscopus trochilus</i>	A very common species seen daily and interesting to see the subtle plumage differences of these “northern” birds
116	Goldcrest	<i>Regulus regulus</i>	Heard on just two days
117	Spotted Flycatcher	<i>Muscicapa striata</i>	Recorded on three days
118	Pied Flycatcher	<i>Ficedula hypoleuca</i>	Relatively common as a breeding bird and recorded on four days
119	Siberian Tit	<i>Parus cinctus</i>	Two birds performed brilliantly in forest near Kuusamo on the 20th
120	Willow Tit	<i>Parus montanus</i>	Recorded on three days
121	Crested Tit	<i>Parus cristatus</i>	A single bird showed well on the 19th near our Pygmy Owl site
122	Coal Tit	<i>Parus ater</i>	Recorded on the 18th only
123	Blue Tit	<i>Parus caeruleus</i>	Recorded on five days
124	Great Tit	<i>Parus major</i>	Recorded daily
125	Eurasian Treecreeper	<i>Certhia familiaris</i>	Heard only on the 18th

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#	COMMON NAME	SCIENTIFIC NAME	NOTES
126	Red-backed Shrike	<i>Lanius collurio</i>	An adult male was a good find by Pete on the 18th after having just filled our boots with Great Grey Owl views!
127	Siberian Jay	<i>Perisoreus infaustus</i>	Two vocal birds showed very well indeed on the 20th in forest near Kuusamo
128	Eurasian Jay	<i>Garrulus glandarius</i>	Recorded on two days
129	Common Magpie	<i>Pica pica</i>	Recorded daily
130	Western Jackdaw	<i>Corvus monedula</i>	Recorded on five days
131	Northern Raven	<i>Fringilla corax</i>	Recorded on three days
132	Hooded Crow	<i>Fringilla cornix</i>	Recorded daily
133	Rook	<i>Fringilla frugilegus</i>	Only recorded around the coast on three days
134	Common Starling	<i>Sturnus vulgaris</i>	Recorded on our first day only near Oulu
135	House Sparrow	<i>Passer domesticus</i>	Recorded on four days
136	Common Chaffinch	<i>Fringilla coelebs</i>	Recorded on five days
137	Brambling	<i>Fringilla montifringilla</i>	Recorded on four days including some cracking males
138	Eurasian Siskin	<i>Carduelis spinus</i>	Recorded on the 18th only
139	European Greenfinch	<i>Carduelis chloris</i>	Recorded on the 18th only
140	European Goldfinch	<i>Carduelis carduelis</i>	Recorded on the 18th only

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#	COMMON NAME	SCIENTIFIC NAME	NOTES
1	Grey Seal	<i>Halichoerus grypus</i>	A single animal in Kempele Bay on the 18th
2	Forest Reindeer	<i>Rangifer tarandus fennicus</i>	Recorded on three days
3	European Hare	<i>Lepus europaeus</i>	Recorded on three days
4	Mountain Hare	<i>Lepus timidus</i>	Recorded on four days with some excellent views near Kuusamo where 15+ animals with varying amounts of winter coats
5	Red Squirrel	<i>Sciurus vulgaris</i>	A single animal near Oulu on the 19th with a grey lower body
6	Muskrat	<i>Ondatra zibethica</i>	Amusing mammals recorded at most water bodies on four days
7	Common Frog	<i>Rana temporaria</i>	Recorded on one day
8	Mouse Sp	-	One seen on the 19th
9	Vole Sp	-	One seen on the 20th by Pete

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