

Wise Birding Holidays

Bird and mammal watching tours



FINLAND: Wolverines, Bears & Birds

Plus Saimaa Ringed Seal Extension

Monday 28th May - Friday 1st June 2018

6 Wise Birding Clients

Leaders: Chris Townend & Esa Muikku

HIGHLIGHTS OF TRIP

Wolverine: Great sightings over 2 nights in the Erä Eero hides with up to 5 animals.

European Brown Bear: A single animal wandered through the forest on our second evening in the forest hides.

Ural Owl: A fabulous start to the tour as we enjoyed great views of an adult and a juvenile in lovely evening light. Then a second adult during a night drive!

Saimaa Ringed Seal: Fabulous views during a late afternoon boat trip on lake Haukivesi. Here we watched an animal sunbathing on a rock and another swimming.



The above Wolverine taken by tour participant Andy Stanbury. We watched it during the early morning sunshine on the 29th May.

Tour Summary

This short break is specifically designed to see Wolverine and European Brown Bear by spending two nights in a purpose built hide. Late May / early June is also prime time to see one of the rarest seals in the world, the Saimaa Ringed Seal. At this time of year the seals are moulting and therefore come out of the water to bask in the sun and dry their fur. We enjoyed great views of animal basking out of the water. Finally, early June is also a great time for breeding birds and we were spoiled this year with some fabulous views of two Ural Owls, Hazel Grouse and Red-breasted Flycatcher. We enjoyed a total of 6 species of mammal and 63 species of bird.

Flights from Helsinki to Joensuu airport are regular and from Joensuu it is just a couple of hours drive to our hotel at Lieksa. Here, we stay at a comfortable hotel for meals and to rest after our first night in the hides. The journey to Linnansaari National Park to see the Ringed Seals is only 2.5 hours from Joensuu and involves an overnight stay by the side of the very scenic Lake Haukivesi.

Monday 28th May: ARRIVE JOENSUU

After a quick connecting flight from Helsinki to Joensuu of around an hour, we soon arrived in the small and friendly airport of Joensuu. We then continued our journey by road to the town of Lieksa. En route Whooper Swans and Goldeneyes were the notable species present on roadside lakes. Once at Lieksa, we checked into our hotel and had dinner before heading out to meet our local guide, Esa.

Within just a 20 minute drive from our hotel we were enjoying fabulous scope views of an adult Ural Owl in the early evening sunshine sat near its nest box that contained at least one well grown juvenile. A group of 8 - 10 Bohemian Waxwings attempted to distract us from watching the owl along with numerous mosquitoes!

A late evening drive in the gloom produced a second Ural Owl thanks to Cheryl's sharp eyes, but otherwise the drive was very quiet.

Tuesday 29th May: PATVINSUO NP - LIEKSA - KELJANPURO LODGE

After a late finish from the night before, we met for breakfast at the civilised start time of 07.30hrs and then headed out to explore the nearby Patvinsuo National Park. Whereas others chose to catch up on more sleep!

A walk in the forest produced excellent views of a beautiful singing male Red-breasted Flycatcher and a very close flight view of a singing male Hazel Grouse!

Other birds around the forest included Pied Flycatcher, Common Redstart, Tree Pipit, Cuckoo and Great Spotted Woodpecker. We then returned to our hotel at Lieksa and checked out the nearby wetland where we were treated to a small group of beautiful Little Gulls, Common Terns, Willow Warbler, Reed Bunting and a single Ruff.

After lunch at the hotel, we took the short 30 minute drive to Keljanpuro Wildlife Lodge and the Erä Eero hides where we would spend the night. After a welcome briefing from Heini, we collected our food and drink orders and transferred to the hides overlooking Uuronlampi Lake and Meadows. After a very windy and sleepless night we were finally rewarded with a fabulous view of a single Wolverine. It appeared right outside the hide the following morning, posing in the early morning sunshine!

Wednesday 30th May: KELJANPURO LODGE

At around 07.30hrs we returned to our hotel for breakfast and some time to sleep!

We met for lunch at around 1.30pm and then returned to the Erä Eero hides. Once again we arrived for late afternoon and transferred to our hides. This time we visited the forest hides and were distributed in various hides in close proximity to each other.

The weather had improved and was less windy and as a result mammal activity was much better with numerous Wolverine sightings throughout the night, with up to four different animals recorded. Some great behaviour was enjoyed with animals scratching, chasing and climbing trees! A European Brown Bear walked through the forest at around 10pm but sadly didn't loiter!

Thursday 31st May: KELJANPURO LODGE - JOENSUU - ORAVI

This morning we met at the lodge for breakfast and swapped stories of the night's wildlife encounters over coffee and homemade porridge. We then took the short drive of around 1.5 hours to the airport where the tour concluded for Ian and Paul. The remaining four members of the group continued a pleasantly quiet journey through a landscape of endless forest and lakes and a couple of short car ferries. Highlights en route were two low flying Honey Buzzards. We arrived at the resort of Oravi during the late afternoon where we checked into our lakeside accommodation.

After lunch and a short rest we took the short walk from our rooms and boarded our private boat and met our local guide. It was a beautifully calm and sunny late afternoon on Lake Haukivesi. The lake is part of the Saimaa Lake system and makes up much of the Linnansaari National Park. During our three hour guided cruise we were treated to excellent views of a Saimaa Ringed Seal basking in the sun on one of the many rocky islands that are scattered around the lake. It was great to see another seal later in the evening actually swimming in the water. Highlight birds included Red-breasted Merganser, a fishing Osprey and a fly over Black-throated Diver.

After an evening meal, we ventured out on a short drive in the hope that we may just get lucky with a Lynx that had been seen recently! No sign of the Lynx, but a Roe Deer and a couple of Cranes were the highlight.

Friday 1st June: ORAVI - JOENSUU

After breakfast we left our accommodation and just a short distance from the hotel we enjoyed some great views of two adult Common Cranes with a juvenile right beside the road. We then continued our journey to Joensuu airport for our mid morning flight back to Helsinki to connect with flights home.

Conservation Donation – Following this tour to Finland £120 was transferred to the Wise Birding Holiday's central conservation fund. This will be used to support a conservation project in the future, yet to be determined.

For the last three years Wise Birding Holidays has been supporting a number of small conservation projects. Once a target amount has been reached this money will be used to support one single project in the hope of achieving more for species conservation. Currently this amounts to nearly £5,000. Please visit our [Conservation News](#) and [Latest News](#) links to find out more.



Our first Wolverine made us wait with our first sighting at just after 6am. Photo by tour participant Andy Stanbury





One of the Ural Owls seen on our first evening (above) and the beautiful Red-breasted Flycatcher (below) taken by tour participant Ian Court





**Common Tern at the Lieksa wetland (above)
and an Osprey from Lake Haukivesi (below)**





We had great views of a number of Wolverines during our second night which we spent in the Forest Hides





Lake Haukivesi with its numerous rocky islands is the best place to see one of the rarest seals in the world, the Saimaa Ringed Seal





More Wolverines!





More photos from this and other tours can be viewed on our
Flickr site: www.flickr.com/photos/129663578@N06/albums

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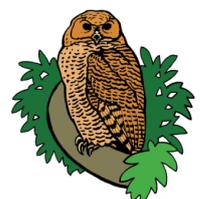
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FINLAND: Birds & Mammals Checklist for 28th May - 1st June 2018

This bird checklist follows the nomenclature and classification from HBW and BirdLife International Illustrated Checklist of the Birds of the World and the associated online resource, HBW Alive

#	Common Name	Scientific Name	#	Notes
1	Hazel Grouse	<i>Bonasa bonasia</i>	1	A male bird was heard calling in Patvinsuo NP on the morning of the 29th. It then gave us all a very close flyby!
2	Whooper Swan	<i>Cygnus cygnus</i>	2	Recorded in small numbers on four days, including birds seen from the wolverine hides on Lake Uuronlampi and a displaying pair near Oravi on the 31st.
3	Common Goldeneye	<i>Bucephala clangula</i>	3	A single bird on the 28th en route to Lieksa and also recorded on Lake Haukivesi during our boat trip.
4	Red-breasted Merganser	<i>Mergus serrator</i>	4	At least 2 birds recorded during the boat trip on Lake Haukivesi.
5	Mallard	<i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>	5	Recorded on three days, mostly on Lake Uuronlampi.
6	Eurasian Wigeon	<i>Mareca penelope</i>	6	A single bird near Lieksa on the 29th May.
7	Common Teal	<i>Anas crecca</i>	7	Recorded on on the 29th and 30th.
8	Great Crested Grebe	<i>Podiceps cristatus</i>	8	Recorded on the 31st May only whilst travelling to Oravi.
9	Common Woodpigeon	<i>Columba palumbus</i>	9	Recorded on the 28th and 29th only.
10	Eurasian Collared Dove	<i>Streptopelia decaocto</i>	10	Recorded on the 29th only.
11	Common Swift	<i>Apus apus</i>	11	Recorded on the 30th and 31st May only.
12	Common Cuckoo	<i>Cuculus canorus</i>	12	Heard calling on two days in Patvinsuo NP and from the hides. Finally seen on the 31st May.
13	Common Crane	<i>Grus grus</i>	13	Two birds seen in flight near Oravi on the 31st May and then 2 adults with a well grown chick on the morning of the 1st June.
14	Arctic Loon (Black-throated Diver)	<i>Gavia arctica</i>	14	A single bird in flight during our boat trip on Lake Haukivesi on the 31st May.
15	Northern Lapwing	<i>Vanellus vanellus</i>	15	Small numbers recorded on three days.
16	Eurasian Curlew	<i>Numenius arquata</i>	16	Small numbers recorded on three days.
17	Ruff	<i>Calidris pugnax</i>	17	A single bird seen at the wetland near our hotel in Lieksa on the 29th May.
18	Eurasian Woodcock	<i>Scolopax rusticola</i>	18	A single bird seen by some during the early hours of the 29th May whilst driving the roads near Lieksa.
19	Common Snipe	<i>Gallinago gallinago</i>	19	Recorded at the Lieksa wetland and a bird heard drumming from one of the hides during the early hours on the 31st May.
20	Common Sandpiper	<i>Actitis hypoleucos</i>	20	A single bird seen during our boat trip on Lake Haukivesi.
21	Green Sandpiper	<i>Tringa ochropus</i>	21	A single bird near Oravi on the 31st May.
22	Common Greenshank	<i>Tringa nebularia</i>	22	Heard displaying from the hides during the early hours of the 31st May.
23	Little Gull	<i>Hydrocoloeus minutus</i>	23	At least 5 birds in beautiful summer plumage at the Lieksa wetland on the afternoon of the 29th.
24	Black-headed Gull	<i>Larus ridibundus</i>	24	Small numbers recorded on four days.
25	Mew (Common) Gull	<i>Larus canus</i>	25	Recorded on at least two days. Most obvious around the hides with groups of up to 12 birds often feeding on the bait scraps.
26	Lesser Black-backed / "Baltic" Gull	<i>Larus fuscus</i>	26	Recorded on three days.
27	European Herring Gull	<i>Larus argentatus</i>	27	Recorded on the 29th from Lake Uuronlampi.
28	Common Tern	<i>Sterna hirundo</i>	28	Small numbers recorded at the Lieksa wetland on the 29th and again during our boat trip on Lake Haukivesi on the 31st May.
29	Ural Owl	<i>Strix uralensis</i>	29	Fabulous views of an adult in the early evening sunshine near Lieksa on the 28th with a well grown juvenile in a nest box. Plus a different adult during a night drive!
30	Osprey	<i>Pandion haliaetus</i>	30	Great views of two different birds during our boat trip on Lake Haukivesi.
31	European Honey Buzzard	<i>Pernis apivorus</i>	31	Two adults soaring low over the forest while travelling to Oravi on the 31st May.
32	Western Marsh Harrier	<i>Circus aeruginosus</i>	32	A single bird hunting by the roadside en route to Oravi on the 31st May seen by Andy.
33	Eurasian Sparrowhawk	<i>Accipiter nisus</i>	33	A single bird on the 29th seen by Chris.
34	Great Spotted Woodpecker	<i>Dendrocopos major</i>	34	Recorded on three days with very obliging birds from the hides.
35	Eurasian Skylark	<i>Alauda arvensis</i>	35	Birds heard singing at Joensuu airport on the 28th and again on our return on the 31st.
36	Collared Sand Martin	<i>Riparia riparia</i>	36	Recorded around the wetland at Lieksa on the 29th May.
37	Barn Swallow	<i>Hirundo rustica</i>	37	Recorded on at least two days.
38	Northern House Martin	<i>Delichon urbicum</i>	38	Small numbers seemingly nesting at Joensuu airport on the 31st.
39	Tree Pipit	<i>Anthus trivialis</i>	39	Singing birds heard in Patvinsuo NP on the 29th.
40	White Wagtail	<i>Motacilla alba</i>	40	Recorded on at least four days.

#	Common Name	Scientific Name	#	Notes
41	Bohemian Waxwing	<i>Bombycilla garrulus</i>	41	A small group of 8 birds tried their best to distract us from watching the nearby Ural Owl on the 28th May. Sally also saw another 2 birds nearby.
42	Northern Wren	<i>Troglodytes troglodytes</i>	42	Singing in Patvinsuo NP on the 29th.
43	Mistle Thrush	<i>Turdus viscivorus</i>	43	Recorded whilst travelling to Lieksa on the 28th May.
44	Song Thrush	<i>Turdus philomelos</i>	44	Single birds heard singing on the 29th.
45	Fieldfare	<i>Turdus pilaris</i>	45	The commonest of the thrushes and recorded daily.
46	Common Blackbird	<i>Turdus merula</i>	46	A single bird on the 28th was the only bird seen.
47	Common Redstart	<i>Phoenicurus phoenicurus</i>	47	Singing in Patvinsuo NP on the 29th.
48	European Pied Flycatcher	<i>Ficedula hypoleuca</i>	48	Small numbers singing in Patvinsuo NP on the 29th and also seen well at the wetland near Lieksa.
49	Red-breasted Flycatcher	<i>Ficedula parva</i>	49	A cracking singing male showed very well in Patvinsuo NP on the 29th May.
50	Willow Warbler	<i>Phylloscopus trochilus</i>	50	Seen and heard singing on at least three days.
51	Garden Warbler	<i>Sylvia borin</i>	51	Heard singing at Oravi near our accommodation on the 31st May and 1st June.
52	Great Tit	<i>Parus major</i>	52	Recorded on the 29th only.
53	Eurasian Treecreeper	<i>Certhia familiaris</i>	53	Heard and seen in Patvinsuo NP on the 29th.
54	Common Magpie	<i>Pica pica</i>	54	Recorded daily.
55	Eurasian Jackdaw	<i>Corvus monedula</i>	55	Recorded on the 31st May and 1st June only.
56	Hooded Crow	<i>Corvus cornix</i>	56	Recorded daily.
57	Common Raven	<i>Corvus corax</i>	57	Recorded daily.
58	Common Chaffinch	<i>Fringilla coelebs</i>	58	Recorded on at least three days.
59	Eurasian Siskin	<i>Carduelis spinus</i>	59	Recorded on at least three, mostly flying over.
60	Common Linnet	<i>Carduelis cannabina</i>	60	Recorded at Joensuu airport on the 31st May.
61	Common Rosefinch	<i>Carpodacus erythrinus</i>	61	Ian had a singing male near the hotel in Lies on the 29th May.
62	Eurasian Bullfinch	<i>Pyrrhula pyrrhula</i>	62	This northern form was heard giving its nasal calls and seen well at Keljanpuro Lodge on at least two days.
63	Reed Bunting	<i>Emberiza schoeniclus</i>	63	A bird was singing at the Lieksa wetland on the 29th.
Mammals				
1	European Brown Bear	<i>Ursus arctos</i>	1	A single animal wandered through the forest at around 10pm on the 30th May, but sadly did not loiter!
2	Wolverine	<i>Gulo gulo</i>	2	Sightings from both hides. A single animal at 06.10hrs on the 30th May for 15 minutes from the Uuronlampi Lake hide. Plus at least 3 - 4 individuals from the forest hides with sightings between 7.10pm on the 30th May until 3am the following morning.
3	European Hare	<i>Lepus europaeus</i>	3	A single animal near Oravi on the evening of the 31st May.
4	Mountain Hare	<i>Lepus timidus</i>	4	Three animals were seen on our first evening travelling to Lieksa, including a single animal right outside our hotel!
5	Red Squirrel	<i>Sciurus vulgaris</i>	5	Up to 3 animals seen at the feeders at Keljanpuro Lodge on threeo days.
6	European Roe Deer	<i>Capreolus capreo</i>	6	A single animal was seen near Oravi on the evening of the 31st May.