

TROPICAL BIRDING

POLAND

The Primeval Forests and Marshes of Eastern Europe

May 22 – 31, 2015

Tour Leader: Scott Watson

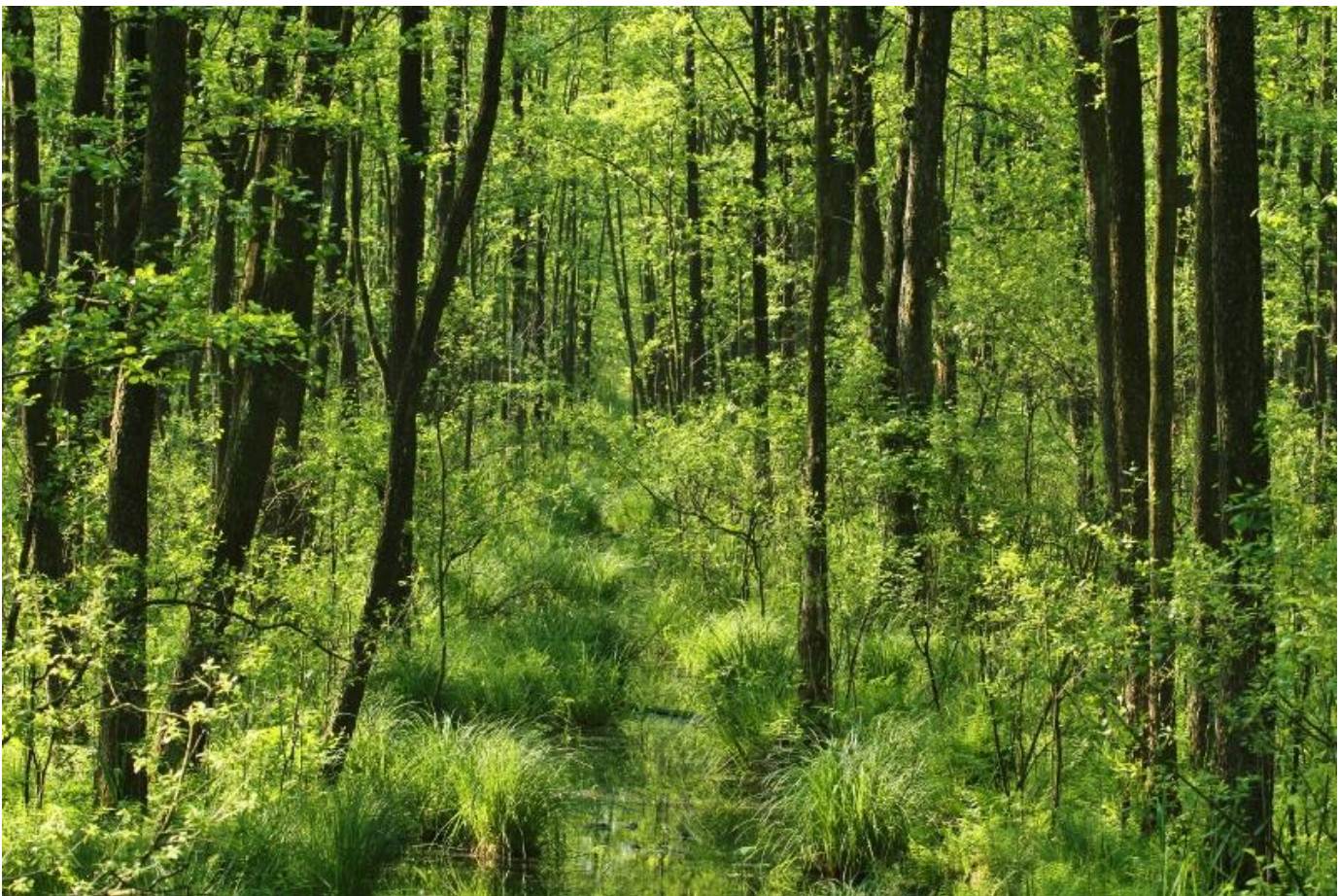
Report and Photos by Scott Watson



Like a flying sapphire through the Polish marshes, the Bluethroat was a tour favorite.

Introduction

Springtime in Eastern Europe is a magical place, with new foliage, wildflowers galore, breeding resident birds, and new arrivals from Africa. Poland in particular is beautiful this time of year, especially where we visited on this tour; the extensive Biebrza Marshes, and some of the last remaining old-growth forest left in Europe, the primeval forests of Bialowieski National Park, on the border with Belarus. Our tour this year was highly successfully, recording 168 species of birds along with 11 species of mammals. This includes all 10 possible Woodpecker species, many of which we found at their nest holes, using the best local knowledge possible. Local knowledge also got us on track with a nesting Boreal (Tengmalm's) Owl, while a bit of effort yielded the tricky Eurasian Pygmy-Owl and the trickier Hazel Grouse. We also found 11 species of raptors on this tour, and we even timed it to the day that the technicolored European Bee-eaters arrived back to their breeding grounds. A magical evening was spent watching the display of the rare Great Snipe in the setting sun, with Common Snipe "winnowing" all around and the sounds of breeding Common Redshank and Black-tailed Godwits. Mammals were also front and center on this tour, and we did quite well finding 3 of the critically endangered European Bison, as well as multiple Moose, Red Fox, Eurasian Boar, and an unexpected encounter with a Northern White-breasted Hedgehog. Combine this with great accommodations, friendly people, and delicious Polish food, and you have the makings of a great European tour.



The Polish forest in spring is a whole new level of green.

Itinerary

May 22: Warsaw to Bialowieski NP

May 23 – 27: Most time in Bialowieski but also visited Knyszynska Forest and Siemianowka Reservoir

May 28-28: Biebrza Marshes and Bialystock Fishponds

May 30: Narew Valley

May 31: Narew Valley to Warsaw

May 22, 2015

After a nice breakfast in the attractive capitol of Warsaw (known as the city of parks, palaces and gardens) we were off, eastwards to the border of Belarus, and into the primeval forests of Bialowieski. Once out of the city the scenery turned to beautiful pastures covered in wildflowers interspersed among the vibrant yellow fields of canola. One of the first birds we saw is also one of the largest, the WHITE STORK, which amazingly nests in rural residential areas, with many residents putting up nesting platforms for these beautiful birds. It is said that a Stork nesting above your house will give your family 5 years of good luck, so it is no wonder nearly 25% of the world's population breeds in Poland alone. Both EURASIAN JACKDAWS and ROOKS were plentiful in the farm fields as well.



Seen as a sign of good luck, White Storks are common and approachable here in Poland.

One of our first stops was along the way was at a wooded area along the shores of the Bug River. Here we found our first breeding BLACK-HEADED GULLS and COMMON TERNS. On the wooded edge a male RED-BACLED SHRIKE was seen hunting for insects, and some nearby chattering lead us to a beautiful BARRED WARBLER which just arrived from its wintering grounds in Africa. Our first LESSER WHITETHROAT was found here, along with a whole host of finches including; COMMON CHAFFINCH, EUROPEAN GREENFINCH, EUROPEAN GOLDFINCH, the striking EURASIAN LINNET, and even a couple EUROPEAN SERIN.

Onwards we went, and after lunch and checking into our accommodation in the afternoon we continued birding, and getting our first taste of the forest. We started at a nearby tower to scan the clearing and edges for some introductory birds. Just so happens one of the biggest targets was waiting for us on arrival. An adult LESSER SPOTTED EAGLE was perched at the top of a tree, giving great views for us. Here we also saw our first EURASIAN MARSH-HARRIER and a pair of the strange EURASIAN WRYNECK, a weird, and sometimes difficult to see Woodpecker species. From here we ventured into the forest for our first crack at true Bialoweiza birding. Woodpecker holes where everywhere, and it didn't take us long to find our first GREAT SPOTTED, the most common species here. Multiple EURASIAN JAYS were feeding in the pine canopy, while a brief view of a RED-BREASTED FLYCATCHER decide to elude us. Walking along quiet forest road eventually lead us to a family group of CRESTED TITS, the tougher species from the commoner GREAT and EURASIAN BLUE TITS we saw earlier. Our final birds of the first day was the famous EUROPEAN ROBIN and a beautiful male YELLOWHAMMER. With a sunset around 10pm it is easy to forget about resting, so it was time to get back to the hotel for some well-deserved dinner, which consisted of delicious Pierogis and cabbage. A fitting end to a great first day.



Fields of canola and Eurasian Jackdaws (*monedula* ssp.) are common sights of the Polish countryside.

May 23, 2015

Today we had to be at our birding sight for sunrise, which in north-east Poland in the late spring means an unreasonable 3:30am departure! Although, this was crucial to get our first sightings of the critically endangered EUROPEAN BISON feeding in a misty fields in the very early morning light. Bialowiecki Forest is the last stronghold for this species, which was nearly hunted to extinction. Amazingly we saw three individuals here from a population of about 400. While watching these Bison in complete silence we were startled when a CORNCRAKE gave its incredibly loud crackling call a few meters away. It was the first time in my life I was scared by a Rail. After a little coaxing we ended up with stellar views of this very shy species. So by 4 am we already saw two of our biggest target species of the day.

Now armed with our local guide it was time to go on a hunt for a very special diurnal Owl, the very hardy Eurasian Pygmy-Owl. It was a fairly brisk morning, but eventually the sun came up and got the birds singing. First was a nice YELLOWHAMMER and the friendly song of a COMMON CHIFFCHAFF perched atop a tall spruce tree. Suddenly we hear the distant call of a Pygmy-Owl and we were off, straight through the woods to try and get closer. Eventually a pair of mobbing GREAT SPOTTED WOODPECKERS gave way to good looks at Poland's smallest, and toughest Owl, the EURASIAN PYGMY-OWL, capable of preying on birds much bigger than itself. With another target in the bag it was time to make our way back through the woods, and get to the southern end of Bialowiecki Forest. But before we could make it back to our vehicle we were treated to a COMMON SHREW cross the trail in front of us, and then a family group of WILLOW TITS.

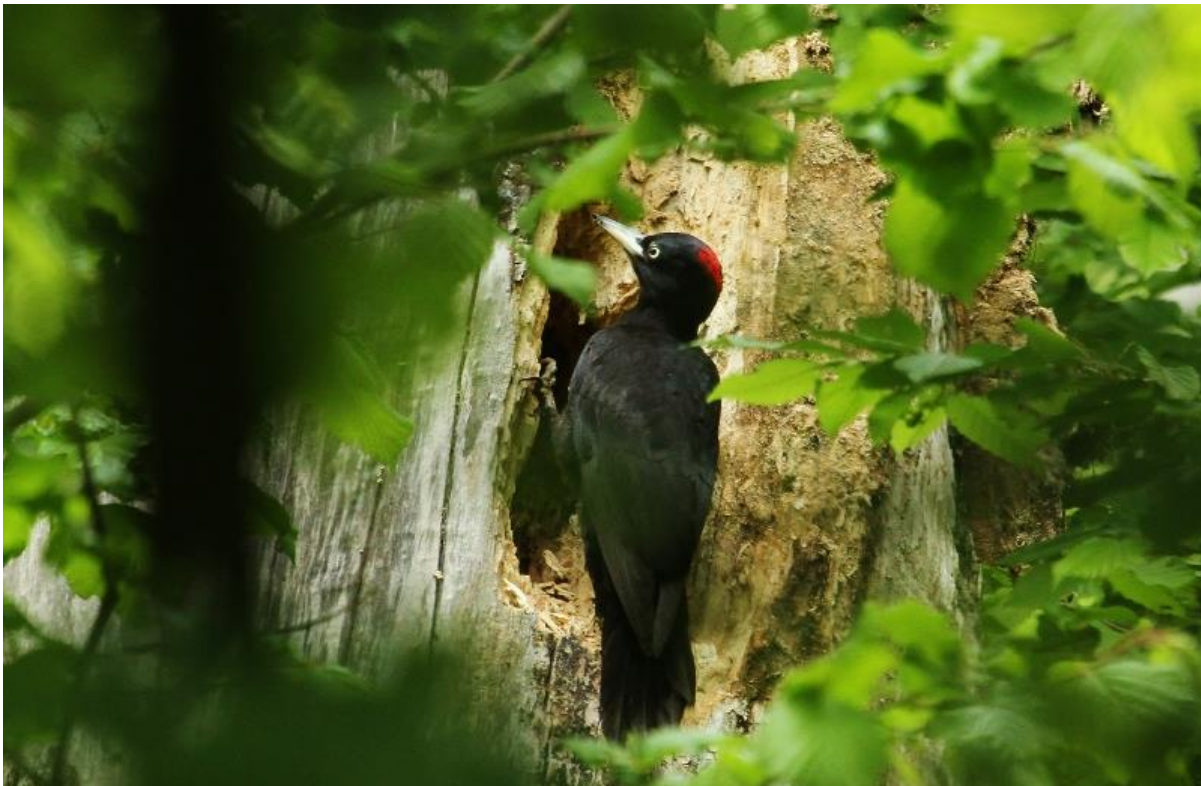


The difficult to see Corncrake started the day off on the right foot!



Three critically endangered European Bison in the early morning mist.

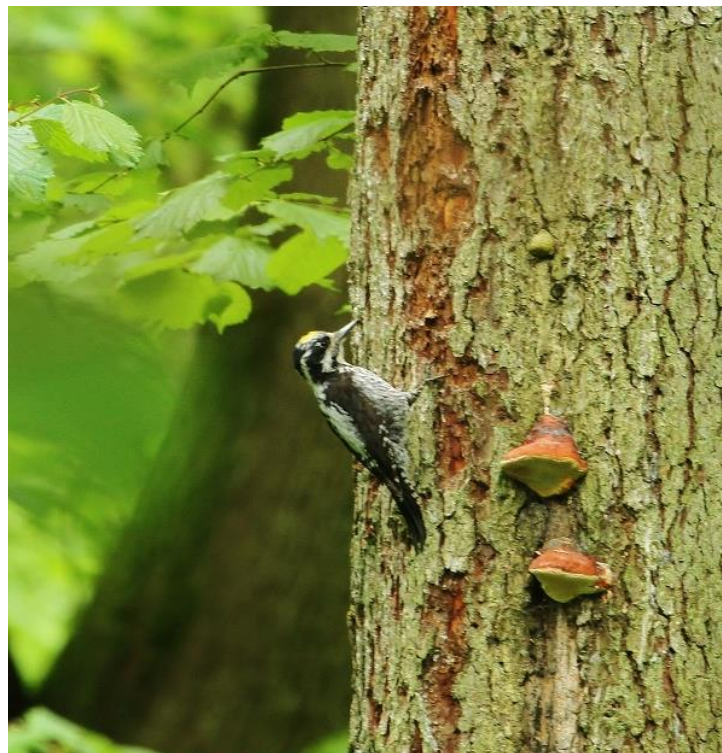
Now in the southern area of the park we walked through an area of open grass which was highlighted by a few WHINCHATS in full song. Next we found a pair of FIELDFARE, a beautiful European thrush species, feeding in this open area as well. Now at the forest edge we immediately heard some nearby tapping, and we eventually tracked down a WHITE-BACKED WOODPECKER. Into to the forest now, our first flurry of activity held a single FIRECREST (in the Kinglet family), the beautiful, ground nesting, WOOD WARBLER, a stellar EURASIAN NUTHATCH, and three COLLARED FLYCATCHERS. Definitely some high quality birds in quick succession. From here we were in full Woodpecker mode, and some great local knowledge got us to an active nest hole. Left as a surprise, it took 15 minutes until a nice MIDDLE SPOTTED WOODPECKER came in with food to feed its begging chicks deep in the nest hole. Not far away we were lead to a Great Spotted Woodpecker active nest, and it was great to watch the busy adults in full parent mode, giving an endless supply of food to their hungry chicks. Walking through this rich forest, trees covered in mosses and lichens, and the forest floor covered in wildflowers, on a beautiful spring day, it feels like anything is possible and we were ready for surprises. Shortly after this train of thought some movement on a nearby tree trunk revealed a stunning EURASIAN THREE-TOED WOODPECKER feeding among the bracket fungus on a spruce. This was a much wanted species for the group and it was a great one to get so early. But with no time to celebrate we heard some very loud tapping further up the trail, and with light feet we scurried forward finding a huge BLACK WOODPECKER hunting for grubs. This, the largest Woodpecker in Europe, was a real crowd pleaser, and was to be our best views on the tour. Well at 9:30am it was time for a late breakfast after a very busy 6 hours of morning birding!!



The amazingly huge Black Woodpecker looking for food in a dead spruce.

Taking it easy during the early afternoon, we started our second shift of birding in some secondary habitat, picking up a newly arrived ICTERINE WARBLER singing its very complex song, and well as the less than colorful, GARDEN WARBLER, and SPOTTED FLYCATCHER, two more migrants having just arrived from Africa. A stop at an active woodpecker hole lead to more amazing views of a Eurasian Three-toed. Now making our way back to the hotel, we

were driving slowly through the forest roads when some excellent spotting had us slam on the brakes and back up to check for movement on the forest floor. After a short search we got onto a surprise pair of the very tricky HAZEL GROUSE!! We eventually got great looks at these birds, but were very shy non-the-less. This was a great final bird of a very long, yet extremely successful first full day of the tour!



We enjoyed some great Eurasian Three-toed Woodpecker action today!

May 24, 2015

After a delicious breakfast we were off to the wetlands of Siemianowka Reservoir, a complete habitat shift from yesterday. We started the morning atop a high blind where we could scan a great distance across the wetland. The first birds seen were a few waterfowl species including; GRAYLAG GOOSE, MUTE SWAN, many MALLARDS, and a couple of GARGANY. Our first GREAT CRESTED GREBES were nice, as was a distant flock of raucous COMMON CRANES. Raptors were in evidence for this vantage point as well, with many EURASIAN MARSH-HARRIERS and COMMON BUZZARDS, but also a prize GREATER SPOTTED EAGLE and the uncommon BLACK KITE. Next we walked down a perimeter berm with adjacent vegetation and water channels. It was from here we started to see many Tern, 4 species in fact with many COMMON, and WHISKERED TERNS, along with a few BLACK and the stunning WHITE-WINGED TERNS. A COMMON CUCKOO then flew overhead and eventually perched for great views, after having heard it for 2 days. Nearby, the beautiful and varied song of a THRUSH NIGHTINGALE caught our attention, and after a 20 minute effort we finally got views of this ultra skulker. Further down we also saw a much more cooperative MARSH WARBLER among the multiple EURASIAN REED-WARBLEDERS.

After lunch we travelled to the western end of this reservoir to an area with more extensive reed marsh. Here we caught up with our first of many REED BUNTINGS, including multiple striking males. Also around were multiple WHITE WAGTAILS and even a couple CITRINE WAGTAILS to add a splash of color. As we were watching a singing GREAT REED-WARBLER in the cattails a huge shadow passing above us had us look up just as a huge adult WHITE-TAILED EAGLE was soaring above. This massive fish specialist is a common resident at this reservoir with

up to 3 breeding pairs. On our way out we got our first SEDGE WARBLER and then at the wooded edge a skulking EURASIAN RIVER-WARBLER.



Some birds of the morning around Siemianowka Reservoir. Clockwise from top right; Great Crested Grebe, Great Spotted Woodpecker, and a beautiful male Reed Bunting.

After dinner the birding continued, as we headed north-west from the park to a short-grass wet valley to look for displaying Great Snipe. After a 45 minute drive, we threw on our rubber boots and took off into the marsh. The 7pm sun was still pretty high but the COMMON SNIPEs had already started to display. Flying high up into the air and then falling, projecting their specialized outer tail feathers, and when air vibrates over the feathers it produces a high pitched drumming sound. Quite spectacular to watch. But now it was time to get to work in finding our target, at first we spread out in hopes of flushing one, which was very successful, and we ended up with great fly-by views of the very uncommon GREAT SNIPE, a very tough bird to see in Europe. But we wanted to see the display, and this required some waiting and listening, but this was easy to do with Common Snipe, NORTHERN

LAPWINGS, and Sedge Warblers flying around, as well as a nearby COMMON GRASSHOPPER-WARBLER. Now with the sun setting for real a Great Snipe display was finally heard, and then amazingly spotted by a member of the group. A little bit distant, but we had great scope views of a male Great Snipe in full display, first it stands straight up, puffs out its chest, spreads its tail, and then spreads and flutters its wings while giving an extremely complex range of bubbling and croaking sounds. An amazing site indeed. It was dark for the walk back, but the clear night and full moon made it even more magical. We finished the evening off with awesome scope views of Jupiter and its moons.

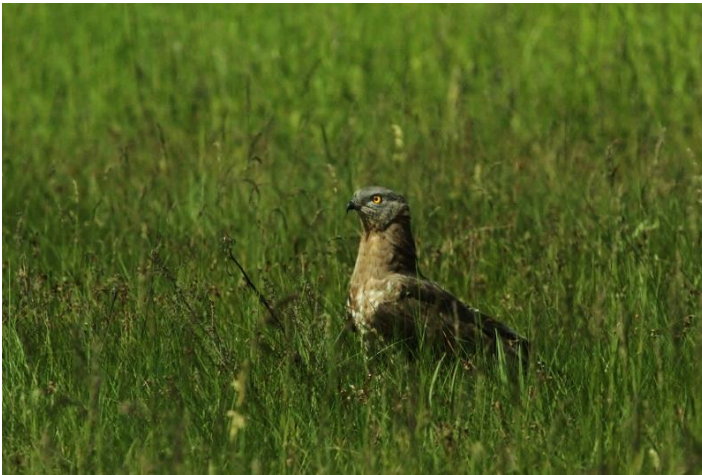


Late evening is when Snipes take flight making it easy to compare the white-bellied Common Snipe (left), and the bar-bellied Great Snipe (right).

May 25, 2015

After a late night prior we had a bit of a rest this morning accompanied by a great breakfast with BLACK REDSTARTS just outside our hotel window. We started by driving some of the open agricultural meadows north, along the border of Poland and Belarus. Our first target was a couple of colorful ORTOLAN BUNTINGS perched on a wire accompanied by our first CORN BUNTINGS. Then came our first SKY LARKS in full display, and a perched NORTHERN SHRIKE. Next came a friendly EUROPEAN HONEY-BUZZARD which was perched on the ground and allowed for great views. Eventually we came to the quaint village of Swistoczany and explored its rural cobblestone streets. This was like going back in time, with each house built the traditional way, many using thatch roofs, and each window had a different hand-made lace curtain. Added to this the natural gardens were full of wildflowers, attracting COMMON REDSTARTS, SONG THRUSH, a MISTLE THRUSH, LESSER WHITETHROAT, Great Tits, many Yellowhammers, Common Chaffinches, and our first COMMON ROSEFINCH singing its sweet “nice to meet you” song. From here we headed into the Knyszynska forest where it was a little bit quiet, and our extended search for Nutcracker was fruitless. We did however see multiple flocks of the boisterous EURASIAN JAYS flying through the predominantly pine forest. Clearings in this forest were good for mammals with ROE DEER, RED FOX, and EURASIAN HARE all seen well. On our way back through the open meadows our first MONTAGUE’S HARRIER gently soared by us with more Roe Deer looking on. Then dipping back into the forest we found two great Accipiters; EURASIAN SPARROWHAWK and the amazing NORTHERN GOSHAWK. We now had time for one more stop, and it was at a fish pond complex surrounded by agriculture. This somewhat weird habitat provided us with some great first birds of the trip, including our only STOCK DOVES of the tour. The muddy edges of the fish ponds held multiple LITTLE RINGED PLOVERS, GREEN SANDPIPER, COMMON REDSHANK, and a surprise late lingering

SPOTTED REDSHANK. A muddy clearing also had a beautiful *flava ssp.* WESTERN YELLOW WAGTAIL. Now time for dinner which consisted of some incredible Belarus style Pierogi.



A great morning in some open habitat gave great views of European Honey-Buzzard and Whinchat.



Some beautiful old homes around the tiny village of Swistoczany.

May 26, 2015

Today we spent more time in different areas of Bialowieski Forest. On our first stop we walked along a lush old-growth trail bordered by intermittent bogs with many dead-heads, and in turn we saw a few woodpeckers including another huge lack Woodpecker as well as multiple Great Spotted. A loud cracking sound lead us to our second CORNCRAKE of the tour, and in the nearby trees it was great to watch both Great and Eurasian Blue Tits bringing food back to their nests. Close by we found our first EURASIAN PIED FLYCATCHER, which after some effort we got decent views. A stop in a quaint village lead to some good birding with our best views of the shy BARRED WARBLER and then a beautiful EURASIAN GOLDEN ORIOLE which flew right over our heads, looking like a flying lemon until it perched in a nearby tree. Some quiet high-pitched notes high in a tree gave way to our best views of the stunning HAWFINCH with its huge bluish bill.

Eventually we followed a long forest trail (seeing EURASIAN RED SQUIRREL on the way) to a new, and very well built, viewing tower, overlooking a beautiful bog area of the forest. We scanned here for quite some time in

hopes of a fly-over Nutcracker, but was not to be. Although, we still saw some quality stuff, especially high overhead with European Honey-Buzzard, Common Buzzard, and Eurasian Sparrowhawk, and dozens of COMMON WOOD-PIGEONS all seen well. A GREEN SANDPIPER flew overhead at the same time a large male EURASIAN WILD BOAR came in for a drink from a small pool near the tower, not noticing our presence. It was now time to leave and make our way back through the forest, but not before we found a family of Crested Tits, having our first good looks at the shy EURASIAN WREN, and then 3 GOLDCRESTS to complete our Kinglet targets for the trip.



It is easy to explore and survey the fens and bogs of Bialowieski NP from the very well-built towers. Even able to get eye-level views of a Eurasian Blue Tit at its nest hole.

May 27, 2015

Now our last day in the Bialowieski area it was time to do some clean-up of anything missed. Unfortunately the rain was heavy and the air was cold this morning, but despite this we simply got our umbrellas out and slapped on our rubber boots and headed into the forest. This proved very worthwhile getting more great views of Hawfinch, Icterine Warbler, and finally our first EURASIAN TREECREEPER, one we were starting to get a little worried about. As the rain slowed we found another party of Goldcrest, and yet another Eurasian Nuthatch picking its way down a tree trunk. We eventually made it to a forest shelter to wait out the rain, which also had a very nice view of some pine trees filled with cones. Luckily this brought in a flock of 20 EURASIAN SISKINS, gorging themselves, and trying to stay dry. In the afternoon the rain had slowed to a drizzle so we made our way to another great stakeout for a very special Owl. Three days prior a forestry worker had found the nest hole of an Owl, and today was our day to see it. Making our way through a complex network of trails (and seeing a EURASIAN HOOPOE along the way) we eventually came upon the hole nearly 30 feet up a lone pine tree. After a few minutes we saw some movement and then a cute head popped out, it was a BOREAL (TENGMALM'S) OWL! A very cool, and very difficult to see species mostly found in northern boreal forests. A real bonus bird, as this can be very difficult to find at night.



Masters of the forest in their own right the majestic Boreal Owl and the comical Eurasian Red Squirrel.



We enjoyed amazing views of Water Rail and this surprise Northern White-breasted Hedgehog in the daytime!

The mid-afternoon was spent at a wetland blind in the town of Bialoweiza itself. One of the first birds that flew by briefly was a LESSER SPOTTED WOODPECKER, but was to be our only view for the tour. In the distance we could hear some Rails, and with a little coaxing we had stunning views of 2 WATER RAILS with two small fluffy chicks. The hide is nearly 20 feet in the air, which is perfect for seeing down into the reeds without shy birds like rails even knowing you are there. After another view of a White-backed Woodpecker we decided to try another stakeout in a different section of forest. Here we waited by a possibly active hole, for the second time. After 10 minutes we were second guessing our decision until a head popped out, and just like that we were looking at a GRAY-FACED WOODPECKER peering back at us. Our eighth species of woodpecker so far in this forest alone. With more rain threatening we made our way back to the vehicle, but not before stopping to check out the silver colored marsh frogs, and then a real surprise, the usually highly nocturnal, NORTHERN WHITE-BREASTED HEDGEHOG. We watched this ball of spines for 5 minutes until it waddled away unperturbed. A great end to a great final day in Bialoweiza National Park.



Regular sites around the forest; Gray-faced Woodpecker in a nest hole, and one of many Beaver dams.

May 28, 2015

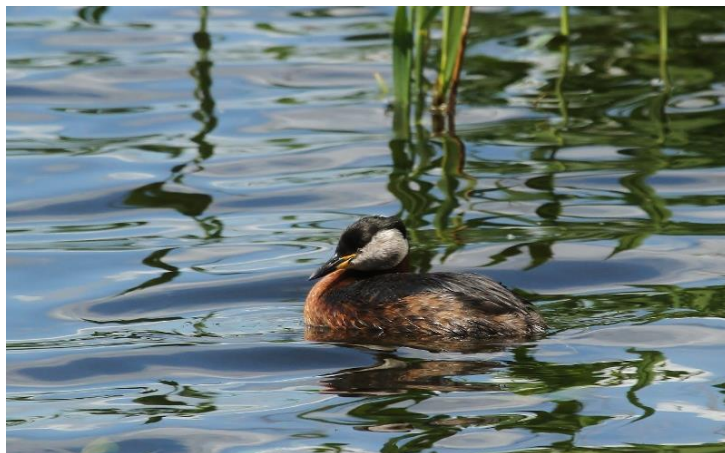
Leaving our accommodation in the morning after one last amazingly huge breakfast we headed further afield into new birding habitat. Our first stop is to the north, just outside the quiet city of Bialystok, the Bialystok Fishponds, a famous stop for resident birders looking for some great wetland specie. This special site is amazingly diverse being

so close to a city, and this is immediately evident upon arrival with the vehicle surrounded by breeding BLACK-HEADED GULLS and a stunning BLUETHROAT we could see even before leaving the van. Walking the elevated dykes around this wetland makes this very easy birding, and allows for great positioning to look down into the reeds, which was very helpful in finding the pair of shy LITTLE CRAKES quietly feeding in the reeds, unaware that we were looking right at them. GREAT-CRESTED GREBES, EURASIAN MOORHEN and EURASIAN COOTS were everywhere, and very common breeders. A less common breeder is the EURASIAN PENDULINE-TIT which can be difficult to find, but with more great local knowledge all we had to do was walk up to the stake out nest and wait. It only took 10 minutes before we were watching the ultra-cute Penduline-Tit working on its immaculate woven nest made from soft plant materials. These nests are so well made that they used to be used as children's shoes in central Europe.



Hundreds of Black-headed Gull pairs nest in the reeds of Bialystok Fish Ponds.

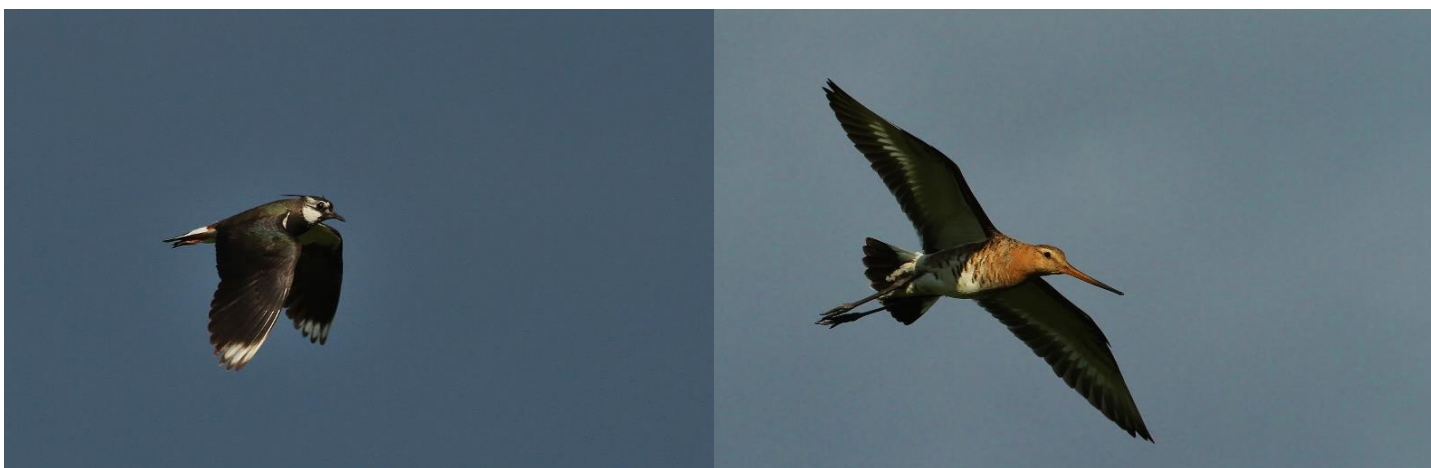
Onward we went to an area of more open water in hopes of some waterfowl. It wasn't hard to spot our target family of WHOOPER SWANS swimming across the furthest pond, with our first RED-NECKED GREBES in between. In an adjacent pond we scanned through a large group of ducks, which were mostly the common MALLARD but we also found 3 TUFTED DUCKS, a couple GREEN-WINGED TEAL, and a single EURASIAN WIDGEON. During our morning here we could hear the deep booming call of Bitterns on many occasions, but these camouflage masters were never visible until we eventually flushed on which was presumably hunting along the side of the dike, allowing great flight views of GREAT BITTERN, as easily missed species. After seeing our first WOOD LARK give its display flight, our final new bird in the wetland just happened to be the only member of the family Panuridae, the striking BEARDED REEDLING. We enjoyed great views of at least 4 of these bearded beasts as they left their presumed nest patch into their hunting grounds. This shy marsh species was a real bonus to this already awesome day of birding. Alas it was now time to leave through the maze of nesting Black-headed Gulls for a new woodpecker not far away. In a nearby city park we found a very active pair of SYRIAN WOODPECKERS tending to their nest hole. This is a tough species in Poland, with a very limited range in the north-east.



Favorites of the fishponds; a family of Whooper Swans and one of many Red-necked Grebes.

After another delicious lunch we went into an area of undulating agricultural fields dotted with sandy cliff outcrops, just in time for the arrival of the technicolored jewels of Europe, the EUROPEAN BEE-EATER. In fact these birds, of which we saw about 15, arrived just one day prior from their incredible journey all the way from South Africa. Also here were our targets TAWNY PIPIT and a single NORTHERN WHEATEAR. Our next destination was in an area of wet meadow where we dozens of pairs of COMMON REDSHANK and BLACK-TAILED GODWITS were breeding. It was incredible to watch these amazing birds in beautiful breeding plumage flying low around us in afternoon light. A few NORTHERN LAPWINGS also came around showing their glistening green plumage. On the way back to the vehicle we caught up with the rare BLYTH'S REED-WARBLER singing in a low tree, a real bonus bird!

Now in the marsh valley of Biebrzanski National Park we reached our final stop of the day, the wetland boardwalk of Długa Luka for Europe's rarest migratory songbird and the only globally threatened songbird on the European mainland, the AQUATIC WARBLER. It only took us 5 minutes to find our first of 6 Aquatic Warblers signing at the top of the reeds, easily distinguished from the different sounding and less streaked SEDGE WARBLERS which are abundant here. As the day was winding to a close 3 SHORT-EARED OWLS began to hunt over the shallow wet grasses, as were a couple MONTAGU'S HARRIERS. Now it was time to head back for our gourmet meal at our nearby luxury lodge, marking the end of a busy and bird-filled day!



Amazing views were had of Northern Lapwing (left) and Black-tailed Godwit (right).



The easy-to-bird habitat of Długa Luka home of this Aquatic Warbler, a globally threatened species.

May 29, 2015

Established in 1993, Biebrzanski National Park (or Biebrza Marshes), the largest national park in Poland, is a 100km long depression in the Biebrza valley consisting of wetland, fens, bogs, and wet woods, making Biebrza marshes a critical breeding area for many of Europe's wetland species. In the morning we drove a wet forest road, first making a stop for a singing THRUSH NIGHTINGALE and were able to see it as it flew across the road and perched up for a second. The woods here are lush and green, and we even spotted our first MOOSE of the trip, this area being the best spot in Europe to see these huge beasts. Another site we visited today was successful in finding our target GREENISH WARBLER, then we visited a private area along a river bordered by wet meadows in search of CITRINE WAGTAILS, after a bit of a search and some false alarm WHITE and WESTERN YELLOW WAGTAILS we found of couple of these citric stunners, giving our best views for the tour. Also here was EURASIAN REED-WARBLER and a nice EURASIAN HOOPOE. After lunch we visited a more forested area where a pair of EURASIAN BULLFINCHES were a real surprise, and then headed to another riverine area to finish of the day. Here we saw an amazing 5 species of Terns, best being our first LITTLE TERNS but we also had a mating pair of WHISKERED TERNS, multiple COMMON and BLACK TERNS, and a colony of the absolutely stunning WHITE-WINGED TERNS. Waterfowl were in attendance too, best being GRAYLAG GOOSE, GARGANY and a few GREEN-WINGED TEAL, and although our hunt for RUFF only gave brief views of one (most have already gone further north), we did have more great views of Common Redshank and Black-tailed Godwits. On the way back we found another large MOOSE standing near the roadside not far from our lodge, making for a great welcoming party before another amazing dinner.

After dinner we stood outside in the lodge parking lot in hopes of a fly-over EURASIAN WOODCOCK, and after 15 minutes we saw 3 circular passes by this chunky shorebird just before night fell. Once it was dark enough we walked down the road and into the woods to try some owling and were successful in finding a family group of TAWNY OWLS and a heard only EURASIAN NIGHTJAR.



Two big targets we found today; Citrine Wagtail and a Eurasian Woodcock in near dark.



This Moose was seen nearby out very comfortable lodge in the National Park.

May 30, 2015

On our final full day of the tour we visited the marshes of Narew Valley to try and clean up some of the birds we have missed. Our first stop was at another WHITE-WINGED TERN colony to watch these amazing birds in breeding plumage as they fly over their deep green breeding grounds. Suddenly a burst of activity sent the Terns into a flurry until we found the culprit, a nice RED-FOOTED FALCON in search of food. Our first stop of the day was at Podlaski Szlak Bociani and found our first, and only, GREEN WOODPECKER of the tour in the visitor center garden. Next we birded the wetland boardwalk loop finding many more of the same great species plus our previously only heard SAVI'S WARBLER, this time allowed amazing views, of this less than amazing looking LBJ.



The stunningly beautiful White-winged Tern.

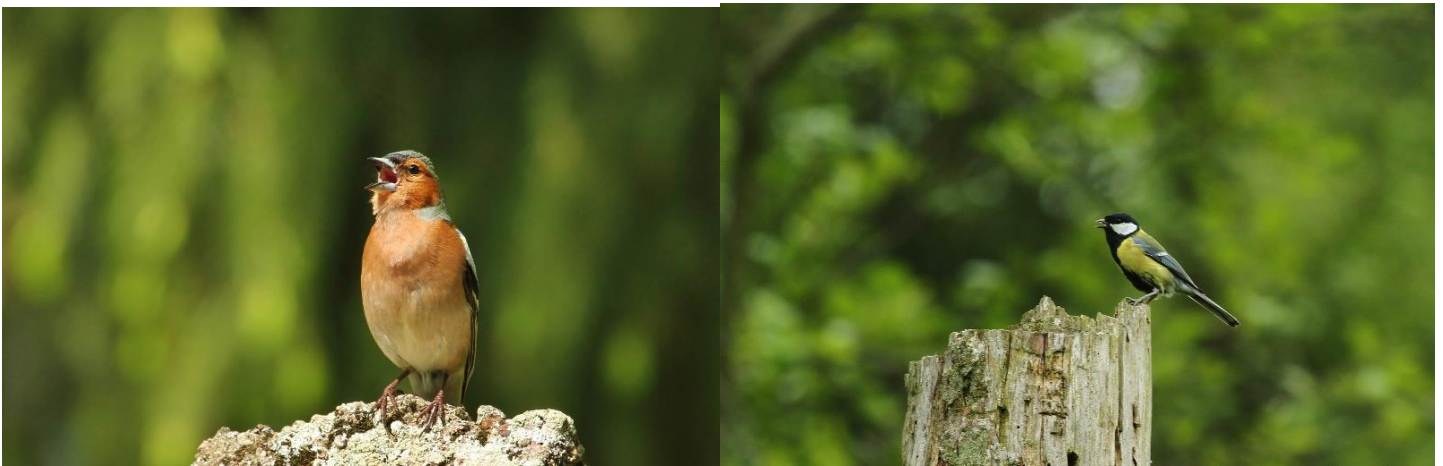
After our final Pierogi lunch at a restaurant along a quiet river we headed to another fish pond area where we completed our quartet of Grebes for the tour, a single LITTLE GREBE and a pair of beautiful BLACK-NECKED GREBES actively hunting. Further along, a huge adult WHITE-TAILED EAGLE dominated the area, and we even witnessed its sheer power as it dove down and caught a fish. In the shrubs nearby we enjoyed our best views of a BLUETHROAT hunting for grubs, soon joined by a GREAT REED-WARBLER. Our final sighting here was a group of 18 non-breeding WHOOPER SWANS sitting at the edge of a distant pond, looking dejected after a very boring breeding season for them. It was now time to head back to our lodge and enjoy our final great dinner at the lodge.

May 31, 2015

After seeing more of the same birds around the lodge this morning it was time for the 3 hour drive back to the airport in Warsaw for our international flights home. All of us leaving with memories of Poland we won't be forgetting any time soon!



This beautiful and friendly Bluethroat is a very dangerous hunter of larva.



Two of the most common birds in Poland Common Chaffinch (left) and Great Tit (right).

Bird List - Using Clements 6.9 (August 2014). Heard only = H

	Anatidae (Ducks, Geese, and Waterfowl)	
1	Graylag Goose	<i>Anser anser</i>
2	Mute Swan	<i>Cygnus olor</i>
3	Whooper Swan	<i>Cygnus cygnus</i>
4	Gadwall	<i>Anas strepera</i>
5	Eurasian Wigeon	<i>Anas penelope</i>
6	Green-winged Teal	<i>Anas crecca</i>
7	Mallard	<i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>
8	Garganey	<i>Anas querquedula</i>
9	Common Goldeneye	<i>Bucephala clangula</i>
10	Common Pochard	<i>Aythya ferina</i>
11	Tufted Duck	<i>Aythya fuligula</i>
	Phasianidae (Pheasants, Grouse, and allies)	
12	Common Quail (H)	<i>Coturnix coturnix</i>
13	Hazel Grouse	<i>Bonasa bonasia</i>
	Podicipedidae (Grebes)	
14	Little Grebe	<i>Tachybaptus ruficollis</i>
15	Great-crested Grebe	<i>Podiceps cristatus</i>
16	Red-necked Grebe	<i>Podiceps grisegena</i>
17	Black-necked Grebe	<i>Podiceps nigricollis</i>
	Ciconiidae (Storks)	
18	Black Stork	<i>Ciconia nigra</i>
19	White Stork	<i>Ciconia ciconia</i>
	Ardeidae (Hérons, Egrets, and Bitterns)	
20	Great Bittern	<i>Botaurus stellaris</i>
21	Gray Heron	<i>Ardea cinerea</i>
22	Great Egret	<i>Ardea alba</i>
	Accipitridae (Hawks, Eagles, and Kites)	
23	European Honey-Buzzard	<i>Pernis apivorus</i>
24	Lesser Spotted Eagle	<i>Clanga pomarina</i>
25	Greater Spotted Eagle	<i>Clanga clanga</i>
26	Eurasian Marsh-Harrier	<i>Circus aeruginosus</i>
27	Northern Harrier	<i>Circus cyaneus</i>
28	Montagu's Harrier	<i>Circus pygargus</i>
29	Eurasian Sparrowhawk	<i>Accipiter nisus</i>
30	Northern Goshawk	<i>Accipiter gentilis</i>
31	Black Kite	<i>Milvus migrans</i>
32	White-tailed Eagle	<i>Haliaeetus albicilla</i>
33	Common Buzzard	<i>Buteo buteo</i>
	Rallidae (Rails, Gallinules, and Coots)	

34	Water Rail	<i>Rallus aquaticus</i>
35	Little Crake	<i>Porzana parva</i>
36	Corncrake	<i>Crex crex</i>
37	Eurasian Moorhen	<i>Gallinula chloropus</i>
38	Eurasian Coot	<i>Fulica atra</i>
Gruidae (Cranes)		
39	Common Crane	<i>Grus grus</i>
Charadriidae (Plovers)		
40	Northern Lapwing	<i>Vanellus vanellus</i>
41	Little Ringed Plover	<i>Charadrius dubius</i>
Scolopacidae (Sandpipers)		
42	Common Sandpiper	<i>Actitis hypoleucos</i>
43	Green Sandpiper	<i>Tringa ochropus</i>
44	Spotted Redshank	<i>Tringa erythropus</i>
45	Common Greenshank	<i>Tringa nebularia</i>
46	Common Redshank	<i>Tringa totanus</i>
47	Black-tailed Godwit	<i>Limosa limosa</i>
48	Ruff	<i>Calidris pugnax</i>
49	Common Snipe	<i>Gallinago gallinago</i>
50	Great Snipe	<i>Gallinago media</i>
51	Eurasian Woodcock	<i>Scolopax rusticola</i>
Laridae (Gulls and Terns)		
52	Black-headed Gull	<i>Chroicocephalus ridibundus</i>
53	Common Tern	<i>Sterna hirundo</i>
54	Little Tern	<i>Sternula albifrons</i>
55	Black Tern	<i>Chlidonias niger</i>
56	White-winged Tern	<i>Chlidonias leucopterus</i>
57	Whiskered Tern	<i>Chlidonias hybrida</i>
Columbidae (Pigeons and Doves)		
58	Rock Pigeon	<i>Columba livia</i>
59	Stock Dove	<i>Columba oenas</i>
60	Common Wood-Pigeon	<i>Columba palumbus</i>
61	Eurasian Collared-Dove	<i>Streptopelia decaocto</i>
Cuculidae (Cuckoos)		
62	Common Cuckoo	<i>Cuculus canorus</i>
Strigidae (True Owls)		
63	Eurasian Pygmy-Owl	<i>Glaucidium passerinum</i>
64	Tawny Owl	<i>Strix aluco</i>
65	Short-eared Owl	<i>Asio flammeus</i>
66	Boreal (Tengmalm's) Owl	<i>Aegolius funereus</i>
Caprimulgidae (Nightjars)		
67	Eurasian Nightjar (H)	<i>Caprimulgus europaeus</i>

	Apodidae (Swifts)	
68	Common Swift	<i>Apus apus</i>
	Meropidae (Bee-eaters)	
69	European Bee-eater	<i>Merops apiaster</i>
	Upupidae (Hoopoes)	
70	Eurasian Hoopoe	<i>Upupa epops</i>
	Picidae (Woodpeckers)	
71	Eurasian Wryneck	<i>Jynx torquilla</i>
72	Lesser Spotted Woodpecker	<i>Dendrocopos minor</i>
73	Middle Spotted Woodpecker	<i>Dendrocopos medius</i>
74	White-backed Woodpecker	<i>Dendrocopos leucotos</i>
75	Great Spotted Woodpecker	<i>Dendrocopos major</i>
76	Syrian Woodpecker	<i>Dendrocopos syriacus</i>
77	Eurasian Three-toed Woodpecker	<i>Picoides tridactylus</i>
78	Black Woodpecker	<i>Dryocopus martius</i>
79	Green Woodpecker	<i>Picus viridis</i>
80	Gray-faced Woodpecker	<i>Picus canus</i>
	Falconidae (Falcons)	
81	Eurasian Kestrel	<i>Falco tinnunculus</i>
82	Red-footed Falcon	<i>Falco vespertinus</i>
83	Peregrine Falcon	<i>Falco peregrinus</i>
	Laniidae (Shrikes)	
84	Red-backed Shrike	<i>Lanius collurio</i>
85	Northern (Great Gray) Shrike	<i>Lanius excubitor</i>
	Oriolidae (Old World Orioles)	
86	Eurasian Golden Oriole	<i>Oriolus oriolus</i>
	Corvidae (Crows, Jays, and Magpies)	
87	Eurasian Jay	<i>Garrulus glandarius</i>
88	Eurasian Magpie	<i>Pica pica</i>
89	Eurasian Jackdaw	<i>Corvus monedula</i>
90	Rook	<i>Corvus frugilegus</i>
91	Hooded Crow	<i>Corvus cornix</i>
92	Common Raven	<i>Corvus corax</i>
	Panuridae	
93	Bearded Reedling	<i>Panurus biarmicus</i>
	Alaudidae (Larks)	
94	Sky Lark	<i>Alauda arvensis</i>
95	Wood Lark	<i>Lullula arborea</i>
	Hirundinidae (Swallows)	
96	Bank Swallow	<i>Riparia riparia</i>
97	Barn Swallow	<i>Hirundo rustica</i>
98	Common House-Martin	<i>Delichon urbicum</i>

	Paridae (Chickadees and Tits)	
99	Willow Tit	<i>Poecile montanus</i>
100	Coal Tit	<i>Periparus ater</i>
101	Crested Tit	<i>Lophophanes cristatus</i>
102	Great Tit	<i>Parus major</i>
103	Eurasian Blue Tit	<i>Cyanistes caeruleus</i>
	Remizidae (Penduline-Tits)	
104	Eurasian Penduline-Tit	<i>Remiz pendulinus</i>
	Aegithalidae (Long-tailed Tit)	
105	Long-tailed Tit (H)	<i>Aegithalos caudatus</i>
	Sittidae (Nuthatches)	
106	Eurasian Nuthatch	<i>Sitta europaea</i>
	Certhiidae (Treecreepers)	
107	Eurasian Treecreeper	<i>Certhia familiaris</i>
	Troglodytidae (Wrens)	
108	Eurasian Wren	<i>Troglodytes troglodytes</i>
	Regulidae (Kinglets)	
109	Goldcrest	<i>Regulus regulus</i>
110	Firecrest	<i>Regulus ignicapilla</i>
	Phylloscopidae (Leaf-Warblers)	
111	Willow Warbler	<i>Phylloscopus trochilus</i>
112	Common Chiffchaff	<i>Phylloscopus collybita</i>
113	Wood Warbler	<i>Phylloscopus sibilatrix</i>
114	Greenish Warbler	<i>Phylloscopus trochiloides</i>
	Acrocephalidae (Reed-Warblers and allies)	
115	Icterine Warbler	<i>Hippolais icterina</i>
116	Aquatic Warbler	<i>Acrocephalus paludicola</i>
117	Sedge Warbler	<i>Acrocephalus schoenobaenus</i>
118	Blyth's Reed-Warbler	<i>Acrocephalus dumetorum</i>
119	Marsh Warbler	<i>Acrocephalus palustris</i>
120	Eurasian Reed-Warbler	<i>Acrocephalus scirpaceus</i>
121	Great Reed-Warbler	<i>Acrocephalus arundinaceus</i>
	Locustellidae (Grassbirds and allies)	
122	Eurasian River-Warbler	<i>Locustella fluviatilis</i>
123	Savi's Warbler	<i>Locustella luscinioides</i>
124	Common Grasshopper-Warbler	<i>Locustella naevia</i>
	Sylviidae (Sylvids)	
125	Blackcap	<i>Sylvia atricapilla</i>
126	Garden Warbler	<i>Sylvia borin</i>
127	Barred Warbler	<i>Sylvia nisoria</i>
128	Lesser Whitethroat	<i>Sylvia corruca</i>
129	Greater Whitethroat	<i>Sylvia communis</i>

	Muscicapidae (Old World Flycatchers)	
130	Spotted Flycatcher	<i>Muscicapa striata</i>
131	European Robin	<i>Erithacus rubecula</i>
132	Thrush Nightingale	<i>Luscinia luscinia</i>
133	Bluethroat	<i>Luscinia svecica</i>
134	European Pied Flycatcher	<i>Ficedula hypoleuca</i>
135	Collared Flycatcher	<i>Ficedula albicollis</i>
136	Red-breasted Flycatcher	<i>Ficedula parva</i>
137	Common Redstart	<i>Phoenicurus phoenicurus</i>
138	Black Redstart	<i>Phoenicurus ochruros</i>
139	Whinchat	<i>Saxicola rubetra</i>
140	European Stonechat	<i>Saxicola rubicola</i>
141	Northern Wheatear	<i>Oenanthe oenanthe</i>
	Turdidae (Thrushes)	
142	Eurasian Blackbird	<i>Turdus merula</i>
143	Fieldfare	<i>Turdus pilaris</i>
144	Song Thrush	<i>Turdus philomelos</i>
145	Mistle Thrush	<i>Turdus viscivorus</i>
	Sturnidae (Starlings)	
146	European Starling	<i>Sturnus vulgaris</i>
	Prunellidae (Accentors)	
147	Dunnock	<i>Prunella modularis</i>
	Motacillidae (Wagtails and Pipits)	
148	Western Yellow Wagtail	<i>Motacilla flava</i>
149	Citrine Wagtail	<i>Motacilla citreola</i>
150	White Wagtail	<i>Motacilla alba</i>
151	Tawny Pipit	<i>Anthus campestris</i>
152	Meadow Pipit	<i>Anthus pratensis</i>
153	Tree Pipit (H)	<i>Anthus trivialis</i>
	Emberizidae (Buntings and Sparrows)	
154	Yellowhammer	<i>Emberiza citrinella</i>
155	Ortolan Bunting	<i>Emberiza hortulana</i>
156	Reed Bunting	<i>Emberiza schoeniclus</i>
157	Corn Bunting	<i>Emberiza calandra</i>
	Fringillidae (Siskins, Crossbills, allies)	
158	Common Chaffinch	<i>Fringilla coelebs</i>
159	Eurasian Bullfinch	<i>Pyrrhula pyrrhula</i>
160	Common Rosefinch	<i>Carpodacus erythrinus</i>
161	European Greenfinch	<i>Chloris chloris</i>
162	Eurasian Siskin	<i>Spinus spinus</i>
163	European Goldfinch	<i>Carduelis carduelis</i>
164	Eurasian Linnet	<i>Carduelis cannabina</i>

165	European Serin	<i>Serinus serinus</i>
166	Hawfinch	<i>Coccothraustes coccothraustes</i>
	Passeridae (Old World Sparrows)	
167	House Sparrow	<i>Passer domesticus</i>
168	Eurasian Tree Sparrow	<i>Passer montanus</i>

Mammal List

1	European Hare	<i>Lepus europaeus</i>
2	Eurasian Red Squirrel	<i>Sciurus vulgaris</i>
3	Eurasian Harvest Mouse	<i>Micromys minutus</i>
4	Red Fox	<i>Vulpes vulpes</i>
5	Northern White-breasted Hedgehog	<i>Erinaceus roumanicus</i>
6	Common Shrew	<i>Sorex araneus</i>
7	Common Noctule	<i>Nyctalus noctula</i>
8	Eurasian Wild Boar	<i>Sus scrofa</i>
9	Western Roe Deer	<i>Capreolus capreolus</i>
10	Moose	<i>Alces alces</i>
11	European Bison	<i>Bison bonasus</i>