

Holiday Highlights

Estonia Spring

5-12 May 2018

Guides: Julian Sykes and Peeter Vissak

Guests: Sarah Sharland, Carolyn Heathcote, Shirley & Roger Higson, John Bruce, Lynn & Steve Osborne

Day 1: After eventually all meeting up in Frankfurt main airport, with Sarah travelling from Birmingham, John, Shirley and Roger coming in from Manchester and Julian, Carolyn, Lynn and Steve from Heathrow, we set off for Tallinn on time. It is a glorious afternoon as we land and very quickly we are with our Estonian guide Peeter, who has the minibus organised and ready to go. We have an hour's drive east to Rakvere and by now it has been a long day for everyone but we stay awake and alert as we head along the motorway.

This is unquestionably a very rural country as we move through mile upon mile of open farmland, forest and meadow. There are 1000's of geese with predominantly Greater White-fronted, along with plenty of Taiga Bean Geese and several Barnacles amongst the ones seen well. We see a few Common Cranes with Lynn actually spotting one as we landed at Tallinn! There are other birds enroute with lots of Hooded Crows and Rooks, Black-headed and Herring Gulls, a few Lapwing and a very brief look at a male Hen Harrier by Julian and Shirley.

Eventually we reach our hotel in Rakvere and manage to secure some time to unpack and freshen up before going for the evening meal at the excellent Art Café. However, around 10pm we are feeling pretty jaded and with the knowledge of a 5.30am start we are keen to get to bed for a good night's sleep.

Day 2: Our first full day in Estonia and kicking the week off with what could potentially be the most memorable day of the trip – always a risk but we are up for the challenge. It is a 5.30am start and despite a little sleep deprived we are cheerful enough as we exit the hotel to a glorious morning with cloudless blue skies. Roger and Shirley have been up a while already and have enjoyed some of the commoner Estonian breeding birds, with a couple of Fieldfare, several Jackdaws, Chaffinches and Hooded Crows in an adjacent garden area.

We set off out of Rakvere, heading further east towards the extensive Alutaguse Forest, which is about 40 minutes drive east of the town towards the Russian border. As we drive along these very quiet and rural roads (after all it is Sunday morning!) we see from the minibus a couple of Common Cranes, White Stork on a nest and lots of pigeons and corvids plus our first mammal – Roe Deer. Eventually Peeter takes us off the main road and follows more country lanes through great swathes of birch and coniferous woodland, with large cultivated and

grass fields between them. He suddenly stops the minibus and looks into the adjacent field and says "Black Grouse" and there about 100m away is a very handsome male strutting his stuff – superb. In fact there are two individuals on this fallow land and we get some good views. We want to try and get the telescopes on them, so we start to carefully get out but these are skittish game birds and they leave before we have a chance to see them better. It is the first time we all have a chance to stretch our legs from setting off an hour earlier so we are taking advantage of this and bask in the early morning sunlight. There are other things here with Skylarks all around singing plus White Wagtails, Rooks, another Common Crane and a Common Cuckoo calling in the distance. We don't loiter here too long before we continue the drive.

Peeter knows these forest rides extremely well and we are slowly driving them, stopping briefly for more common species until another mammal is seen on the track ahead of us. It is a 'hare-species' and after getting better views we conclude it's definitely a Mountain Hare, which is great. A little further we reach an area of flooded birch and we make another meaningful stop, again getting out and listening to the birdsong all around. Here there is Common Chiffchaff, Willow Warbler, Chaffinch, Goldfinch, Great Tit, Song Thrush and Blackbird vying for top songster and after a few minutes Peeter hears our first 'pecker' with the distinctive call of Grey-headed Woodpecker. It isn't long before we are watching this handsome bird in an adjacent tree, after a little bit of 'hide and seek' behind the branches, in fact Lynn does incredibly well getting in her telescope for everyone. As we are enjoying this Julian (who had been watching a displaying Tree Pipit) sees a large dark shape undulating towards us and shouts "Black Woodpecker" as it alights on a nearby birch trunk near where we are stood! We enjoy great views of Europe's largest woodpecker before it departs and after seeing our first Robins, Wren and Dunnock we do the same thing.

It is now getting towards breakfast time but Peeter has a particular place in mind but this takes a little longer than expected as John spots a female Red-backed Shrike sat in a tree, followed by Peeter seeing a female Capercaillie disappearing into the forest. Thankfully though she is in no rush and we all manage to get a decent view, as this very large grouse-species walks slowly away from the track. A little further we see another 'Blackcock' at the side of the road and a Common Buzzard briefly ply puts in an appearance over the forest. We do now reach our breakfast place, which does actually look like everywhere else we have been so far but we think Peeter likes it here as he camps overnight surveying Capercaillie. It is still a lovely morning and even though we are not adding any new birds to the growing list there are some good butterflies on the wing – mostly Brimstone but also Large Tortoiseshell and Peacock plus some lovely plants particularly Liverleaf, Wood Anemones, Cowslips and Coltsfoot. Once breakfast is finished and we are ready to go again we now climb back into the minibus and set off towards Tudu, another part of the forest where the bear-watching hides are. We are going to the hides but Peeter knows this is a good spot for Pygmy Owl and we stop to make another walk here in the hope of seeing our first owl species. As it is now quite warm it is getting quiet but Sarah spots a small bird investigating a nest

hole, which turns out to be our first Pied Flycatcher of the day. Steve points out a couple of Ravens going over, but we are struggling for the owl sadly.

It is getting towards noon and our appointment with lunch back at the Art Hotel in Rackvere, so we start back to the main road, which is actually not too far away – we must have gone in a huge circle. The journey back to town is quiet, which is no bad thing as most of us are ‘resting our eyes’ after such an early start and being warm in the van. Peeter gets us back to our restaurant a little after midday and we are straight in and using their facilities to freshen up, which helps enormously combat the fatigue. Lunch (like the previous evening’s meal) is excellent and after some hot refreshments and our guides giving us some final advice and instructions on the afternoons events we retire to our hotel for a siesta, which is much-needed with a late night ahead of us. At 3.30pm we reconvene in the hotel reception and head off with our picnic-dinner, first to the supermarket for supplementary snacks and water then back out on the same road as this morning.

We first hook up with another couple who follow us to the entrance to the bear-hide walk, where we are then joined by a car load of French wildlife photographers. We must now ready ourselves for a night in the hide and all that entails. Once ready, we set off along the track to the hide, which is about a kilometre and it’s nice to stretch the legs. This slow easy walk takes a little over 30 minutes, leaving us with plenty of time to get settled before anything is likely to happen. The French and the other English couple have gone next door to their own hide thankfully.

This hide is superb, being kitted out with bunk beds, sleeping bags, dry toilets and views over a small area where fish is put out for the bears. We are all initially seated watching the baited area and enjoying fabulous views of a stunning male Pied Flycatcher, Jay and Chaffinches, which are in front of us. Carolyn is an absolute star as she produces a delicious Banana and Walnut cake that she has made herself and brought from home – just brilliant and we all really enjoy a slice. Obviously the local European Brown Bears are too, as one appears just as we have finished it, with both John and Carolyn whispering “bear coming from the left” and pointing excitedly. This handsome young male is not concerned at all and knows exactly where to go - straight to the food. Over the next 45 minutes we enjoy this animal gorging himself on the dead Salmon, enough to be christened “greedy” by Lynn as he keeps coming back for more. During one return for more, he turns and runs as Sarah now spots a second female animal coming in, which is a similar size but with a distinctive beard and markings. However, it isn’t her who’s scared ‘Greedy’ it’s the huge bull male that’s behind her which is half the size again of these original two – wow. This pair now continue to feast on the fish and we marvel at the males size and strength, it is fantastic. However, they don’t stay around as long as the first and wander off after an acceptable amount of food.

This gives us a rest-bite for a few minutes to 'take-in' this experience – already John is jokingly saying to Julian "how are you going to top this?" Our guide though is staying vigilant, it's still quite light outside and anything could happen with him spotting a smaller shape moving through the trees towards us. It's a Raccoon Dog and something we had been hoping to see and it is putting on a wonderful show as it moves around the open area stopping to look round and showing off its gorgeous features. While this animal is here a fourth Brown Bear appears and it's another young male with the Raccoon Dog keeping an eye on the bear they continue to look for scraps, as most must have gone by now. This bear is not interested in the dog but instead begins to destroy a feeding platform, earning the name 'vandal' from Lynn. It is really fascinating to observe as the light is starting to fade. It is about 10pm when things start to quieten down but not before a second Raccoon Dog appears but this animal doesn't stay long with everything departing as it becomes too dark to see much. We have just had an amazing four hours of almost non-stop excitement and observation of the alpha European predator! Around 10.30pm we start to go to our beds for some sleep, which comes quickly to most of us after such a long and exciting day. For those of us who are the insomniacs we don't get to see anything else but the sound of a nearby Roe Deer barking in the pitch black is an eerie sound. What will tomorrow bring.

Day 3: We wake to yet another glorious morning of cloudless bright blue skies, with us rising at different stages and enjoying the scene from the hide. There is early morning bird activity with the expected Pied Flycatchers, Jay and Chaffinches but Lynn is lucky to photograph a close Crested Tit. John also sees a Willow Tit in the surrounding conifers and there is also a Nuthatch, which is another new addition to the list. By 6.30am it is fairly clear that no mammals will be visiting the area so Peeter suggests we leave earlier than planned and 45 minutes later we are walking slowly back to the minibus.

As always, we are stretched out in a line but manage to hear several new species amongst the dawn chorus with Wood Warbler, Goldcrest Coal and Marsh Tit in full song. When we get back to the van it is lovely to stand a while in the warm sunshine and Shirley does well finding a Marsh Tit in a nearby conifer. We are all pretty desperate to get back to the hotel for breakfast and a freshen up but Peeter would like to try again for Capercaillie along some nearby forest rides. We are certainly not arguing and off we go following the network of tracks through the forest, when Steve says "STOP!" He points out into an area of 'clear-fell' and just about 30m from the bus is a fabulous male Capercaillie – superb. Unfortunately there is another wagon passing close at speed which causes this 'bull-grouse' to fly up and into the nearby conifer plantation but we still see it well.

Flushed with success our thoughts now return to the hotel and off we go towards Rachvere. Back on the main road we are driving along when John calls a halt as he sees a small group of Brown Hares in an adjacent ploughed field, along with a Common Crane. This is then followed by a quick stop to look at a mixed flock of Greater White-front and Barnacle Geese, we arrive back at the hotel at 9am.

We are pretty much asked to have our breakfast immediately as it finishes at 10am, which is fine, followed by plenty of time to freshen up and pack before reconvening for the checklist in reception. By 11.30am we are in a position to leave with all the bags loaded and our first two days of species listed, which highlights what a fantastic start to the holiday we have had. We are now heading south to Tartu, with another short detour to see if we can find some more goose flocks but that sadly does not happen before leaving the Rackvere area.

Soon enough we arrive into Mustvee, which literally translates as Black Water, as we are on the edge of a huge freshwater lake, which forms part of the border with Russia. Our first job here is to have lunch (although we had just had breakfast!) and after a couple of abortive tries we find a café/restaurant that has a limited menu but we all manage to find something.

Once finished we go outside and scan the immediate area finding a few Common Swifts and House Martins amongst the Barn Swallows. There is a stunning Fieldfare here and our photographers take full advantage of this lovely male thrush. Once we are all ready we return to the water's edge having already passed and seen Mute Swans, Great Crested Grebes and lots of Black-headed Gulls nesting. At the water's edge we scan the scene finding these birds again easily with Roger spotting our first Common Coot and Julian a few Northern Shoveler. Further out into the open water there are lots of diving ducks, which through the telescope are clearly Goldeneye and while we are there a couple of Whimbrel fly past calling. With still a bit of a drive left to Tartu we eventually return to the minibus and continue on our way to our next destination.

About 20Km north of Tartu we pull into a car park of the Matsalu Nature Reserve, which is a series of fish ponds that are surrounded by trees and bushes, which are mainly Willow. As we climb out of the minibus Roger spots a Common Tern flying over and in the distance we hear a Yellowhammer singing. Once we are ready to go we head off along a track that dissects the ponds with instructions we need to be back after 1.5 hours to make sure we get to the hotel in reasonable time. We walk slowly and almost immediately we pick out the distinctive song of Great Reed Warbler, finding it on top of some phragmites, which is brilliant. There is also a male Reed Bunting 'chipping' away and on a far pond we find our first pair of Whooper Swans that now breed here.

On we go and Lynn hears a Sedge Warbler that eventually reveals itself with Steve then spotting a handsome male Whinchat and John our first Greater Whitethroat – what a place. A little further Julian hears our target species, the thin call of a Penduline Tit and with limited time we hurry on passing the songs of Eurasian Reed Warbler and Thrush Nightingale. As we reach the area Julian spots a mammal crossing a pond and says "Muskrat" but only a lucky few manage to see it before it disappears. The Penduline Tit is calling more regularly now along a Willow hedge and we conclude there must be a nest nearby. It does not take long before it gives itself up and we all manage to get a very good look at this lovely reedbed passerine. Time is moving on and Peeter says we must start back

to the minibus, which is a shame as we are sure it has much more to offer. The walk back produces many of the same species but we do now see the Yellowhammer, find both Gadwall and Tufted Duck (new for the list) and John points out a small flock of adult Little Gulls overhead, which is superb.

Back at the bus we happily climb aboard and we set off on our final leg of this transfer between hotels. Around 5.30pm we arrive at the accommodation on the edge of the city and quickly get assigned our rooms with instructions to reconvene an hour later for the evening meal.

We go to the restaurant at 6.30pm and enjoy a very nice meal, with some incredibly filled pancakes for dessert but we are on holiday! Following this we have about 30 minutes to get ourselves ready for our final event of this very long day – the Great Snipe lek. It takes about 30 minutes to get there and we arrive at the open flood meadow with another tour group already looking for these rare and secretive waders. It is a lovely scene and quite quickly we are watching Common Snipe displaying above the wet meadow, a food-pass by a pair of Marsh Harriers, Skylarks singing and lots of geese flying over.

After a while one of the other party says they can see a Great Snipe, so we move position but most of us miss this opportunity with just Julian, John and Lynn getting any kind of view, but still not great. However we remain vigilant and as the sun drops behind the horizon we continue to search this area until another person announces there is a Hobby behind, which diverts our attention somewhat to watch this fabulous raptor hawk and eat flying insects on the wing. It is starting to get dark with a Thrush Nightingale in full song in the nearby bushes but remains hidden, when Lynn says "I've just seen a snipe hop up and down!" We get the directions and it is showing but really badly, with the head just visible at distance but we don't give up despite the late hour and the failing light. This bird then starts to move position and over the next 20 minutes we thankfully manage to get a decent telescope view. We are though conscious of our very early start the next day and a little before 10pm we set off back to hopefully a good night's sleep.

Day 4: Despite another 5.30am start we meet again at the hotel reception in good spirits, joking about having a rest after the holiday! It is looking like another fine day with light cloud and lots of sunshine. We drive east from Tartu, stopping briefly to look at a Roe Deer and after about 45 minutes we are on the road dissecting the ancient forest of Jarvselja, which looks fabulous. Peeter stops the minibus opposite the entrance to a boardwalk trail through this fabulous old-growth mixed forest and we prepare ourselves for a walk. A male Pied Flycatcher is singing in the trees above our heads and we have a good look at this very handsome passerine. All around there are birds singing with Chiffchaff, Willow Warbler, Wren, Chaffinch Great and Blue Tits then Julian hears Common Crossbill and we see four birds flying over but they don't stop. We are now ready for the walk.

The boardwalk is in excellent condition and not too slippy, which is what you would expect at this time of year. We walk in single file with more birdsong either side of us, which now includes Wood Warbler, Redwing, Siskin and Thrush Nightingale, most of which remain hidden from our view. We hear the heavy knocking of a woodpecker and suspect it's our main target – Three-toed Woodpecker and endeavour to find the source. Thankfully this doesn't take long and we all enjoying views of not one but a pair of these scarce breeding woodpeckers – fantastic. This is then followed by a Great Spotted joining the scene, along with brief views of Wood Warbler and Nuthatch. The walk continues and we get stretched out as Julian, John, Sarah, Lynn and Steve are behind watching another gorgeous Wood Warbler when Lynn spots a Spotted Flycatcher, followed by us seeing another Three-toed Woodpecker, which is great. Eventually we all reach the end of the boardwalk and Peeter kindly offers to walk back (along the road) for the minibus as it's now time for breakfast. This is most generous and while he's away we see more of the same woodland bird species plus Holly Blue in the warm morning sunshine.

We are all ready for some food and a hot drink and for a short time our focus leaves the wildlife and moves to ourselves (but not for long!). Peeter has also reported hearing another target species – Red-breasted Flycatcher, singing back at where the bus was parked. So we decide to return there once we are ready, but again we split with Carolyn, Steve, Roger and Shirley going with Peeter in the van and the rest of us going on foot. It is another lovely walk seeing much the same species, until we get about half way and John spots another woodpecker that doesn't stop very long and turns out to be another target – White-backed Woodpecker. This is fabulous, but it's within sight of the van and the others that Julian hears the distinctive song of Red-breasted Flycatcher. It is not long before we are getting terrific views of this handsome male bird in pristine spring plumage. We have all joined together now and enjoying this bird when Roger spots a Crested Tit and Carolyn hears the high-pitched song of several Goldcrest – it's all happening here! This is truer still minutes later, as a large bird flies over our heads above the canopy, which John quickly identifies as a Nutcracker, which is incredible. It is time to leave and we only have time for one more site before lunch but we are not complaining.

Back in the van we now set off for the Polva wetlands, which takes about 30 minutes and a chance for us to recharge our batteries a little. We turn off the main road on to metalled tracks that crisscross an area of flood plain, which in parts is difficult to negotiate. Initial views produce a few raptors that are mainly Marsh Harriers and a Common Buzzard but also our first Kestrel and even better Peeter spotting an adult White-tailed Eagle. There are lots of Greater White-fronts here along with Black-headed and Herring Gulls, Lapwing and Whooper Swans but also a couple of Grey Herons, Common Crane and two more (immature) White-tailed Eagles. A little after noon we have to leave and continue back north to Mooste for lunch.

On arrival we are very pleasantly surprised to find a network of restored building surrounded by mature woodland on the edge of a small reed-fringed lake. We are informed this is an old vodka distillery and inside we find remnants of the machinery used and a fabulous chandelier made from around 800 vodka shot glasses. We have some time before lunch so we go for a walk around the grounds, which proves quite productive. We can hear a Thrush Nightingale so we go to look for it and Lynn does incredibly well picking it out singing from a small exposed bare tree. It behaves well as we negotiate the directions and get a good look at this normally shy bird. With this success we continue to wander around the mature scattered trees seeing Chaffinches, Pied Flycatcher, Great and Blue Tits before John finds a Eurasian Treecreeper – another first for the tour. It is really warm now and the butterflies are on the wing with the usual Brimstone, Peacock and Green-veined Whites but also a cracking new one to most of us – Map, which Julian knows and immediately identifies.

Near lunchtime now we head back towards the small lake where we see (and hear) several Sedge Warblers plus House Martins and Swallows hawking insects over the water. However it's really nice to get inside and have a wee rest from the direct sunlight, having our lovely meal in a large, cool hall.

Once lunch is completed and we are satisfactorily full of food and drink we almost immediately leave driving straight through to the wonderful Aardla Wetlands instead of going to the hotel first for a short siesta – good decision. Peeter arrives at one part of these extensive wetlands and we are greeted by the sight of geese flocks everywhere, so we get out of the bus and search through them with our telescopes. They are predominantly White-fronts but it isn't long before Julian has picked out a couple of 'Taiga' Bean Geese amongst them, which is our best view yet. There are a few Ruff also in this area and John sees a Common Snipe fly by. Our target here is Citrine Wagtail and a little further we find their commoner cousin Yellow Wagtails but not our prize. However, this damp grassed area is much more notable for a three figure count of Wood Sandpipers, which is fabulous along with a single Black-tailed Godwit. There are a few new duck species here as we locate Pintail, Eurasian Teal, Shoveler, Gadwall, Mallard and a few Coot. Not a bad start to the afternoon. We drive on along the tracks but generally it is quiet and dry but we do find Whinchat and a few Marsh Harriers as expected but we need to go further towards the main lake. Peeter is keen to do this and after 10 minutes of negotiating this network of metalled roads we find where we need to be, with Carolyn spotting our first handsome drake Garganey flying down the river.

Here we get a chance to get out of the vehicle and an initial scan of the shallow lakes produces a Red-necked Grebe, more Garganey along with other common wildfowl. We now walk for a short distance down one of the tracks and it's not long before Julian stops, listens and starts searching the adjacent field before saying "got it – Citrine Wagtail" There is a gorgeous lemon-headed Summer plumage male calling from the opposite hedge. It is sat right out in the open and not too far away but sadly it flies to the centre of the field before any images can be taken.

We are really pleased, as this is one of our major avian targets of the week. There are still lots to look through, so we walk a little further and focus on the wetlands either side of the track. Julian first spots another grebe, with a handsome Slavonian Grebe, followed by Peeter spotting a pair of Wigeon in the same area. There are lots of other duck species around with Gadwall, Shoveler, Eurasian Teal Mallard and Tufted Duck along with lots of Grey Herons. A Great Egret is spotted flying in to dead tree, closely followed by three more, which is brilliant and while looking at these Julian spots another large bird sat on a fence post. Initially he thinks it's a buzzard but when he sees through the telescope he discovers a large raptor with a long white supercilium, barred underparts and long banded tail – Goshawk! Unfortunately only a couple of us get to see it through the telescope before it drops off the post and out over the far water, creating havoc with the white-fronts and wildfowl, which fly up in disarray. After this we continue searching with a couple of Common Terns and Little Gull flying over along with more good views of Garganey. This has been a fabulous place to visit, being very productive but Julian is keen to leave as we all would like some time before dinner to freshen up.

We are back in good time and have a chance to catch up on things in our rooms before meeting outside in the hotel's beer garden to do the checklist, which is very pleasant. This is followed by Peeter driving us into the city and leading us to where we are having the evening meal – a restaurant associated with the university. We are greeted and led through this historic building to our table in a very grand room, where we enjoy another excellent meal with accompanying drinks. After this, as its starting to get dark, we make a short detour back to the minibus seeing the city's beautiful main square and historic centre. At the river Shirley has an Alan Whicker moment as she sets off across the bridge over the Emalugi River, not knowing we where actually returning to the bus – superb! Once together we set off back to the hotel ready for a good night's sleep and happy in the knowledge we don't have to be ready too early in the morning.

Day 5: Today we have a more relaxed start to the day with a very leisurely 8am breakfast, being ready to leave an hour later. It's another sunny day in Estonia and becoming one of the highlights of the tour, apart from the fact we have mostly packed cold weather clothing! – still we are definitely not complaining. We leave Tartu on time and drive now west across country seeing again large flocks of Greater White-fronted Geese migrating north west to their breeding grounds, which is just spectacular. The roads are quiet (as ever) and we make good progress passing the large inland lake of Vortsjarv towards our first destination of the Soomaa National Park.

We arrive at the parking place in the forest and Peeter instructs us that we are going for a walk along another boardwalk through the forest. Initially we follow a wide track with Wood Warblers singing on either side of us and we manage to get a view of one as it flits through the birch trees. There is a Tree Pipit singing along with Siskins flying overhead and all round the 'chink' of the ubiquitous Chaffinch. We get to the head of the boardwalk in gorgeous sunshine and move

into the shadows of the canopy as we move into the forest. Peeter is hoping to find White-backed Woodpecker, stopping periodically to listen but it is quiet for any kind of woodpecker species. Julian and Steve are towards the back of the line when a Red-breasted Flycatcher sings near the boardwalk. It doesn't take much time before we are watching this beautiful bird hawking insects from one of the low branches. We continue along the path, admiring this ancient forest and the carpets of Wood Anemones, Marsh Marigold and numerous fern species but still no 'peckers'. We are now back at the start of the walk having heard or seen nothing at all, which seems most unusual but these things happen. In the sunshine there are lots of butterflies around and Julian spots something new with a few Green Hairstreaks along with Green-veined White, Brimstone and Map.

Back at the minibus we climb back aboard with a couple of Ravens flying over and drive a little further to the bridge over the Raudma River. This apparently is a good place to observe raptors but apart from a Common Buzzard we don't see any! However, we are kept occupied as we do find a couple of Whinchat, several Yellow and White Wagtails, Fieldfare, Swallows and House Martins. Julian now spots our first new bird of the day with a couple of Mistle Thrush at the back of the meadow. Again it is generally quiet so we opt to move on and head for lunch at a café in Joesuu. As we drive slowly along the metalled road our front three of Peeter, Lynn and Steve spot a raptor ahead and to the left. Stopping to look there is some debate to identification but Julian cannot see it being on the wrong side! It's suggested he gets out and when this happens he announces our first Lesser Spotted Eagle, something we had hoped for at the bridge. Well done to Lynn for trusting her instincts, knowing it was something different to the usual Common Buzzards we have been seeing. We watch this lovely raptor as it soars above us, calling, which is unusual and Julian starts to search the sky. He finds another and it looks like it's a pair establishing their territory after a winter in Africa – what a thrill. These two fabulous aquila eagles slowly move away and so do we as its now well past 1pm and beyond our normal lunchtime.

Soon enough we reach the café/bar and head inside, where we put in our order and enjoy a good wholesome meal. It probably takes longer than anticipated but we are all quite relaxed about this and the itinerary is changed slightly to reflect this. In fact, before heading off we go to the river where Roger spots a Goldfinch, which is new to some of the group. However, we do need to leave as time is moving on and continue west. It is about an hour later when we stop opposite a narrow boardwalk out over a flooded meadow with a 'no entry' sign. In true guide fashion Peeter completely ignores this and strides out over the bouncy planks with the rest of us following behind, careful not to get any more than two people on any one plank. Actually it's really safe and after about 100m we stop and scan finding Common Redshank, Black-tailed Godwit and Lapwing, which all breed on the meadow. A Common Cuckoo is calling in the distance but not revealing itself and at the back of the field a couple of cranes are feeding in the shallow water – it is a fascinating place.

We soon return to the bus and drive on a short distance to a newly built viewing platform that has a really funky design (apparently built by students). We again alight the bus but as we cross the road Shirley nearly steps on a Viviparous Lizard. We check the platform but there is very little to see so decide to again leave but as we do Julian spots a Montagu's Harrier in the distance. We head off to try and locate it but without success sadly. Now we do need to go as we need to get to the hotel. Like all these situations we haven't gone far when Julian asks to stop the van and points out another Montags quartering the adjacent field – superb. This then happens twice more and by the time we get back on to the main road we are way behind schedule but it's not a problem. The drive to Roosta Holiday Village is fairly uneventful, apart from some of us seeing a probable Hazel Grouse fly up from the side of the road and a small flock of Stock Doves just outside Kirimae.

We reach our accommodation just before 7pm and we literally go straight into dinner, which is very nice being a buffet and some welcome choices. Following this we now check-in at reception and get assigned our lovely chalets within the extensive grounds of pine woodland. Peeter and Julian kindly bring our bags with the minibus, as they are spread out a little and allows us to prepare for the evening drive at 8.30pm.

We all manage this fairly easily and we set off right on schedule stopping after about 10 minutes at a small patch of woodland. Here we exit the bus and Peeter shows us a nest box constructed for Ural Owls, but isn't sure if it is occupied! We are waiting around for something to happen when Julian finds a Woodlark singing from the top of a tree and then a Woodcock, which flies through. We decide to leave as there is an hour before its dark and try another area for both the owl and maybe Elk. This is a bit of a waste of time but it gets us out of the cold and we do see a couple of Roe Deer and a possible Elk, but we had sped by before it could be fully identified. So we return to the nest box in the hope something will happen, which actually it does. We get to see several more Woodcock flying over calling and showing very well in the evening light. Then as its getting dark we recognise the distinctive 'churr' of a European Nightjar. Then Julian says "I've found it" and puts the telescope in the 'goatsucker' sat on a horizontal branch. After a while it flies off then we proceed to get flight views around our head, which is superb. We opt to return to our chalets as it's getting fully dark and we are all very tired after another long day, which we do. As we arrive we find the gates locked but the night porter is just a phone call away. Soon enough we are back in the complex and heading to our rooms for a good night's sleep.

Day 6: We have another 8am breakfast and some of us independently do an earlier walk around the grounds, seeing Pied Flycatcher, Whitethroat, Willow Warbler and Yellowhammer amongst other things. We aim to leave at 9am and easily do so, heading towards the town of Hapsalu. The journey starts well with a fabulous pair of Montagu's Harriers at the side of the road, followed by a distant pair of Sparrowhawks, but they soon drift further away out of sight. In the town we stop

to clean the windscreen as it's covered in bugs (sadly something we don't see in the UK these days!) and while Peeter is sorting this, Julian points out a Common Gull nesting on a nearby flat roof – most unusual. Again we set off out of town and drive through to the track leading to the National Park where we stop and get out. Peeter wants to try for White-backed Woodpecker but there is no response but we do see a lovely male Yellowhammer, Common Whitethroat and a brief look at a Common Cuckoo. After just 15 minutes we are back in the bus and continuing though to the Reserve.

At the entrance we see lots of Barnacle and Greater White-fronted Geese along with Lapwings, Skylarks and White Wagtails. We park the vehicle and are treated to 100's of geese taking to the air – what's upset them? It has to be bizarrely a trio of White Storks and a group of 20+ Common Cranes, how unusual. We set off now towards the tower hide stopping to look at more 'Barnies', which are both beautiful and photographable. There is also a couple of Northern Wheatears, Common Redshank and just as we reach the buildings there's a Lesser Whitethroat singing. Sadly this bird departs before we all see it but Julian picks out a cracking Thrush Nightingale sat right out in the open. This is where we tend to separate as some of the photographers stay behind with the nightingale, some straight to the tower platform and some just watch from the veranda at the back of the café, which is just opening. From here we 'scope the bay, initially finding an Oystercatcher, Greenshank and a couple of Ruff. Out in the open water we can see Common Terns, Black-headed Gulls, Great Crested Grebes but also a few Tufted Duck and some cracking Smew. There are at least two White Nuns and five Redheads, which is fabulous.

We now move to the Haeska tower platform, where we find a small group of Ruff in the distance with one in full breeding plumage, which looks fantastic, even at this range. Even further away is an adult White-tailed Eagle sat on a large rock in the water but it's starting to get difficult now with the heat haze. We decide to return to the veranda and enjoy some light refreshments from the café, whilst still searching the area. There is now a gorgeous Swallowtail butterfly that is getting the attention of the paparazzi, along with an equally lovely Map butterfly. It is all pretty relaxed sat there and enjoy the sight of five Great Egrets flying past and our White-tailed Eagle causing havoc with the large Barnacle Goose flock. This is all very pleasant but now Peeter wants us to move on as its getting to lunchtime and he has a special place in mind.

We slowly walk back to the minibus, seeing much the same species and leave this excellent Nature Reserve. The journey is about 30 minutes along the coast before we pull into the grounds of a beautiful guesthouse at Tuulingu. This is another lovely place but it's now 'heat of the day' and we don't expect anything special but out in the fields there are a few Tree Pipits, Yellowhammers and a Yellow Wagtail. However, Peeter mentions the possibility of Wryneck breeding here and minutes later we hear one calling from a nearby hedge. Julian quickly scans the low trees and amazingly finds this wee cryptic plumage woodpecker. It is showing superbly through the telescope but sadly hidden a little to get any decent images

– we are not complaining! We now head indoors to the cool of the shade, which is most welcome and enjoy another wholesome lunch.

Once the meal is over we need to leave as we are planning to visit a couple of places further along the coast. Our first stop is over-looking the beach, where we find lots more waders including Golden and Ringed Plovers, both of which are new to the list. Off-shore we now get better views of Arctic Terns fishing fairly close to the beach, with a few Linnets on the salt marsh. We are finally done searching here when we move on further and at the next place there are just species we have seen previously. Finally we reach the end of the Puise peninsular and spend a little time here, where Lynn finds a couple of Baltic Gulls, Steve our first Greylag Goose and Roger a couple of Greenfinch. There is a bit of a wet meadow here where Julian finds both Orange-tip and Green-veined Whites amongst the stunning Cowslips. It is now mid-afternoon and our thoughts turn to the main event of the day – our Beaver boat trip!

Peeter first has to pick up our evening meals and takes us to the home of his boss Marika, who lives in a lovely complex of an Estonian stately home. While we are waiting for her to finish the food we wander around the parkland gardens seeing Thrush Nightingale and Spotted Flycatcher. Eventually we leave for the extensive Matsalu reedbed. After about 45 minutes we reach the river boathouse and get introduced to our boatman and once we are ready set off out towards the main delta area. It is still warm when we set off and gently we make our way through the reed-fringed channel seeing Marsh Harriers, Eurasian Teal, Sedge Warbler and a pair of Garganey. There are Savi's Warblers reeling everywhere but they remain hidden in the phragmites but soon enough we reach the open area of the water. The wind is causing ripples and it doesn't make it easy but we can see lots of Great Crested Grebes and Tufted Duck on the water. Julian now spots a couple of Black Terns flying past and Steve hears a Bittern booming in the distance – just fantastic. It is now late evening and getting to 'beaver o'clock' so off we go making our way upriver to a bridge crossing.

Here we climb out of the flat-bottomed boat and enjoy our picnic, whilst looking for wildlife and very quickly Peeter says "Elk" pointing out on to marsh across the water. We can see this grand beast in the distance but it's not a brilliant view so most of us climb the adjacent watch tower to get a better look. The timing is right because not only do we get to see the Elk plus a few more but we also now find two pairs of European Beavers swimming across the river. Roger has stayed with Shirley and Carolyn, seeing a Common Sandpiper before also getting good views of these freshwater marine mammals. It is a fantastic end to this portion of the boat trip.

With the sun dipping low in the western sky we start back and initially see lots of waders flying round with Whimbrel, Ruff and Wood Sandpipers amongst the mix. On we go and then Julian shouts (above the engine noise) "beaver -on the left" and we now get brilliant views as now just drift along. Once it disappears we set off again and soon after Peeter says "Corncrake" so it's engines off again.

We can clearly hear it, along with Water Rail and Spotted Crake but none are showing at all but just to hear them is fabulous. We move on again and the sun is setting and we reach a long stretch of water and the scene is terrific, this is then enhanced as Julian gets the engines turned off and we drift along in silence, only the sound of the reedbed – just awesome and a very special moment. However, it is getting late and we still have a drive to the hotel so we need to go. The engines are started and we move quickly back towards the jetty area but one last event is seeing a close Elk, which looks great in the torch beam. Fantastic finale to a fantastic evening. Once back we are quickly into the minibus and head back to base with the prospect of a 5am start.

Day 7: After such a late finish last night we decide not to leave at 5am but instead meet at 8am for a walk to the beach associated with the complex. Lynn has 'hit the ground running' as she has found a Common Redstart and takes us to see it. It doesn't take her long to re-find it and we start our day with a stunning male Common Redstart. Most are here for the walk and off we go now, seeing a lovely male Siskin and Spotted Flycatcher, sadly a singing Red-breasted Flycatcher doesn't appear despite our best efforts. Eventually we reach the Baltic Sea and are greeted by a beautiful white sandy beach on this glorious morning; our luck with the weather has been unbelievable. The birding is not bad here either as offshore we find a large raft of Goldeneye along with a few Long-tailed Ducks but they're a bit distant. There are Goosanders along the shoreline with Black-headed and Herring Gulls before John spots four Cormorants flying north. We are stood enjoying both the weather and the scenery when Julian hears an unfamiliar call looks up and sees a Woodlark flying over us, which pitches in near to where we are stood. It is time now to wander back to the main building for our 9am breakfast, on the way collecting Shirley and Steve who have been entertaining themselves.

After breakfast we have a little time before leaving but soon reconvene at the minibus, setting off for Cape Poosaspea. It doesn't take long to get there and a few kilometres before the parking area Julian says "STOP" as he's seen a couple of Hazel Grouse at the side of the road. Unfortunately we stop too close and some of us cannot see them until they fly up and back into the forest but at least everyone gets some kind of view! We carry on to the car park which is positioned at the tip of the peninsula with a tower and block right at the end. This time we all have our telescopes and start to find some new things for day. There are a few Arctic Terns milling about with the gulls, lots of Long-tailed Ducks including some quite close off the point, Peeter points out a couple of drake Eider and also in the water we spot our first Red-breasted Mergansers of the week. It is still glorious despite a gentle cool breeze and we stay there a couple of hours doing some seabird identification and just enjoying the lovely company. Julian sees a bird way off out to sea that's being mobbed by Herring Gulls and initially suspects a skua, but soon revises this as he realises it's a raptor carrying prey and it's coming towards us. He shouts "Peregrine" pointing out to sea and we all now get on to this bird as it is still being harried and sadly has to drop the prey before it reaches land. It is a fantastic piece of action on this lovely morning. This is then

followed by him finding an immature White-tailed Eagle coming in off the sea and sending the flocks of seaduck in all directions. A little later Lynn spots another over the coniferous forest. Around noon Peeter suggests we leave and drive a couple of forest tracks looking for potentially more game birds.

It's now quite warm and generally quiet as we slowly move through the Scots Pine forest seeing just Chaffinches, Mistle Thrush and Spotted Flycatcher, with Julian getting a brief view of a Marsh Tit. It is suggested we go for a slightly earlier lunch, so Peeter drives round the coast to the Dirhami Fish Café (probably not Steve's first choice restaurant!). It is a lovely place though and we sit out on the veranda overlooking the bay and seeing the cape we had been watching from previously. As we have our lunch we are distracted by birds out on the Baltic Sea with Julian finding a Little Gull amongst the others along with more Goosander, Mute Swans and Arctic Terns. It is lovely just to sit there chatting, enjoying the beautiful weather and the ambient surroundings. However, Peeter suggests we move on as he is keen to try and show us an occupied Osprey's nest at Tanarbjarb Lake.

We arrive after about 30 minutes and ready ourselves for what should be an easy walk. Steve is staying behind so we set off across this peat bog-like landscape that has been ravaged by fire recently. However, it's still quite a wet area despite the recent conditions and soon we are negotiating a stream across our path, which is quite successful. We now look for the nest and find it in the distance but the heat haze is terrible so we decide to go on a little further. This means going through a bit of bog that means getting our feet damp for most of us but sadly Sarah's trainers get saturated, proving a little uncomfortable. At the lake edge we aim our 'scopes' at the nest and this time it's much clearer and we can see the head of an adult Osprey occasionally looking round. We stay here in the shade of the pines, finding Goldeneye and Common Tern on the lake but not much else. After a while we decide to return to the vehicle and in the way we get great views of a Common Cuckoo flying past us at eye level. Back at the stream we are crossing safely until Shirley stumbles and ends up taking an 'early bath'. Thankfully nothing hurt apart from pride and some soggy trousers with Shirley taking it in great spirits. Eventually we get back to Steve at the bus and set off back to our accommodation, arriving a little after 5pm.

With about an hour and a half before dinner Sarah suggests we meet a little earlier for a drink, which is unanimously agreed upon. Around 6.30pm we are meeting at the bar and it's a lovely evening, so we sit outside recalling the week, previous holidays and potential future ones, which is lovely. Half an hour later Peeter invites us to dinner and he very kindly supplies a 'farewell and thank you' drink of cava, which is a really nice gesture. After our buffet dinner we again go back outside and complete the checklist, which takes a while and some discussion as there are three days to navigate. Not an easy task, thankfully Lynn and Carolyn have kept some notes! We finish this just before 9pm, leaving us enough time to grab our jackets and binoculars as we are trying one more time for Ural Owl. We drive up to the same area checking a few areas of 'clear fell', which they like but without success before returning to the nest box site. Here

we get out and spend time looking and listening but we don't hold out much hope. Carolyn hears, then spots a Woodcock and as the light is falling we again the distinctive churr of European Nightjar. It is now nearly 10pm and Julian makes the decision to leave as we have a long travelling day coming up and some rest would be useful. Back at the chalets we say "goodnight" and head off to our individual chalets. It has been another cracking day in this fabulous Baltic State.

Day 8: Breakfast is at 7.45am and some of our early birds have already been out, with Roger walking back down to the beach. Apparently it's pretty quiet, apart from one of the highlights of the week – the memorable sight of geese skeins migrating overhead. Lynn, Carolyn and Julian have also been out with their binoculars and camera around the grounds seeing much the same species as before. Peeter wants to leave by 8.30am and we duly oblige with this departure as we have done all week, setting off for the capital once all the luggage has been packed. It's an easy drive to Tallinn about 100Km away and we safely get there in plenty of time for meeting our city tour guide.

We meet Anastasia by a fabulous Orthodox Church at the entrance to the walled city where she proceeds over the next hour and half to walk us round this incredibly beautiful and historic UNESCO city. At half past noon we reconvene with Peeter, who is ready and waiting to take to the airport, getting there for 1pm. The check-in process is really easy and it isn't long before we are airside and after some lunch take our flight to Frankfurt. Here we say our goodbyes, as we head off to our departure gates with Julian, Carolyn, Steve and Lynn heading to London, Sarah to Birmingham, John, Roger and Shirley to Manchester – so ends another great holiday.

Species of the Trip

John – Brown Bear and Thrush Nightingale
Carolyn – Brown Bear and Thrush Nightingale
Sarah – Brown Bear and Barnacle Geese
Steve – Brown Bear and Woodcock
Lynn – Brown Bear and Woodcock
Roger – Brown Bear and Wryneck
Shirley – Brown Bear and Wryneck
Julian – Brown Bear and 'skeins of geese'

Place of the Trip

John – Beaver boat trip
Carolyn – Jarvselja Primeval Forest
Sarah – Beaver boat trip
Steve – The whole country!
Lynn – Matsalu National Park
Roger – Beaver boat trip
Shirley – Beaver boat trip
Julian – Jarvselja Primeval Forest

Magic Moment

John – Photographing the Thrush Nightingale at Matsalu.
Carolyn – The carpets of Wood Anemones and other flowering plants.
Sarah – Silently listening to the sounds from the river and reedbed.
Steve – Getting off the beaver boat in one piece.
Lynn – Silently listening to the sounds from the river and reedbed.
Roger – Evening visit to see both Woodcock and European Nightjar.
Shirley – All fields full of beautiful Cowslips.
Julian – Finding Citrine Wagtail at the excellent Aardla Wetlands.

BIRDS

Mute Swan	<i>Cygnus olor</i>
Whooper Swan	<i>Cygnus cygnus</i>
Taiga Bean Goose	<i>Anser fabalis</i>
Greater White-fronted Goose	<i>Anser Albifrons</i>
Greylag Goose	<i>Anser anser</i>
Barnacle Goose	<i>Branta leucopsis</i>
Shelduck	<i>Tadorna tadorna</i>
Mallard	<i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>
Gadwall	<i>Anas strepera</i>
Pintail	<i>Anas acuta</i>
Northern Shoveler	<i>Anas clypeata</i>
Wigeon	<i>Anas penelope</i>
Eurasian Teal	<i>Anas crecca</i>
Garganey	<i>Anas querquedula</i>
Tufted Duck	<i>Aythya fuligula</i>
Greater Scaup	<i>Aythya marila</i>
Eider	<i>Somateria mollissima</i>
Goldeneye	<i>Bucephala clangula</i>
Long-tailed Duck	<i>Clangula hyemalis</i>
Smew	<i>Mergellus albellus</i>
Goosander	<i>Mergus merganser</i>
Red-breasted Merganser	<i>Mergus serrator</i>
Capercaillie	<i>Tetrao urogallus</i>
Black Grouse	<i>Tetrao tetrix</i>
Hazel Grouse	<i>Bonasa bonasia</i>
Slavonian Grebe	<i>Podiceps auritus</i>
Great Crested Grebe	<i>Podiceps cristatus</i>
Red-necked Grebe	<i>Podiceps grisegena</i>
Great Cormorant	<i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>
Great Bittern	<i>Botaurus stellaris</i>
Great Egret	<i>Egretta alba</i>
Grey Heron	<i>Ardea cinerea</i>
White Stork	<i>Ciconia ciconia</i>
White-tailed Eagle	<i>Haliaeetus albicilla</i>
Osprey	<i>Pandion haliaetus</i>
Lesser Spotted Eagle	<i>Aquila pomarina</i>
Greater Spotted Eagle	<i>Aquila clanga</i>
Marsh Harrier	<i>Circus aeruginosus</i>
Hen Harrier	<i>Circus cyaneus</i>
Montagu's Harrier	<i>Circus pygargus</i>
Common Buzzard	<i>Buteo buteo</i>
Sparrowhawk	<i>Accipiter nisus</i>
Goshawk	<i>Accipiter gentilis</i>
Kestrel	<i>Falco tinnunculus</i>

Peregrine	<i>Falco peregrinus</i>
Hobby	<i>Falco subbuteo</i>
Water Rail	<i>Rallus aquaticus</i> (heard only)
Spotted Crake	<i>Porzana porzana</i> (heard only)
Corncrake	<i>Crex crex</i> (heard only)
Common Coot	<i>Fulica atra</i>
Common Crane	<i>Grus grus</i>
Oystercatcher	<i>Haematopus ostralegus</i>
Ringed Plover	<i>Charadrius hiaticula</i>
Golden Plover	<i>Pluvialis apricaria</i>
Northern Lapwing	<i>Vanellus vanellus</i>
Wood Sandpiper	<i>Tringa glareola</i>
Green Sandpiper	<i>Tringa ochropus</i>
Common Sandpiper	<i>Actitis hypoleucos</i>
Common Redshank	<i>Tringa totanus</i>
Greenshank	<i>Tringa nebularia</i>
Black-tailed Godwit	<i>Limosa limosa</i>
Curlew	<i>Numenius arquata</i>
Woodcock	<i>Scolopax rusticola</i>
Common Snipe	<i>Gallinago gallinago</i>
Great Snipe	<i>Gallinago media</i>
Ruff	<i>Philomachus pugnax</i>
Black-headed Gull	<i>Larus ridibundus</i>
Common Gull	<i>Larus canus</i>
Baltic Gull	<i>Larus fuscus</i>
Herring Gull	<i>Larus argentatus</i>
Little Gull	<i>Larus minutus</i>
Common Tern	<i>Sterna hirundo</i>
Arctic Tern	<i>Sterna paradisaea</i>
Black Tern	<i>Chlidonias niger</i>
Feral Pigeon	<i>Columba livia</i>
Stock Dove	<i>Columba oenas</i>
Wood Pigeon	<i>Columba palumbus</i>
Common Cuckoo	<i>Cuculus canorus</i>
European Nightjar	<i>Caprimulgus europaeus</i>
Common Swift	<i>Apus apus</i>
Black Woodpecker	<i>Dryocopus martius</i>
Grey-headed Woodpecker	<i>Picus canus</i>
Great Spotted Woodpecker	<i>Dendrocopos major</i>
White-backed Woodpecker	<i>Dendrocopos leucotos</i>
Three-toed Woodpecker	<i>Picoides tridactyla</i>
Wryneck	<i>Jynx torquilla</i>
Skylark	<i>Alauda arvensis</i>
Woodlark	<i>Lullula arborea</i>
Barn Swallow	<i>Hirundo rustica</i>

House Martin	<i>Delichon urbicum</i>
Meadow Pipit	<i>Anthus pratensis</i>
Tree Pipit	<i>Anthus trivialis</i>
White Wagtail	<i>Motacilla alba</i>
Yellow Wagtail	<i>Motacilla flava</i>
Citrine Wagtail	<i>Motacilla citreola</i>
Wren	<i>Troglodytes troglodytes</i>
Dunnock	<i>Prunella modularis</i>
Robin	<i>Erithacus rubecula</i>
Northern Wheatear	<i>Oenanthe oenanthe</i>
Thrush Nightingale	<i>Luscinia luscinia</i>
Common Redstart	<i>Phoenicurus phoenicurus</i>
Whinchat	<i>Saxicola rubetra</i>
Song Thrush	<i>Turdus philomeus</i>
Redwing	<i>Turdus iliacus</i>
Mistle Thrush	<i>Turdus viscivorus</i>
Fieldfare	<i>Turdus pilaris</i>
Blackbird	<i>Turdus merula</i>
Grasshopper Warbler	<i>Locustella naevia</i> (heard only)
Savi's Warbler	<i>Locustella luscinioides</i> (heard only)
Sedge Warbler	<i>Acrocephalus schoenobaenus</i>
Eurasian Reed Warbler	<i>Acrocephalus scirpaceus</i>
Great Reed Warbler	<i>Acrocephalus arundinaceus</i>
Lesser Whitethroat	<i>Sylvia curruca</i>
Greater Whitethroat	<i>Sylvia communis</i>
Wood Warbler	<i>Phylloscopus sibilatrix</i>
Willow Warbler	<i>Phylloscopus trochilus</i>
Chiffchaff	<i>Phylloscopus collybita</i>
Goldcrest	<i>Regulus regulus</i>
Spotted Flycatcher	<i>Muscicapa striata</i>
Red-breasted Flycatcher	<i>Ficedula parva</i>
Pied Flycatcher	<i>Ficedula hypoleuca</i>
Great Tit	<i>Parus major</i>
Blue Tit	<i>Parus caeruleus</i>
Crested Tit	<i>Parus cristatus</i>
Marsh Tit	<i>Parus palustris</i>
Willow Tit	<i>Parus montanus</i>
Penduline Tit	<i>Remiz pendulinus</i>
Nuthatch	<i>Sitta europaea</i>
Eurasian Treecreeper	<i>Certhia familiaris</i>
Red-backed Shrike	<i>Lanius collurio</i>
Magpie	<i>Pica pica</i>
Jay	<i>Garrulus glandarius</i>
Nutcracker	<i>Nucifraga caryocatactes</i>
Jackdaw	<i>Corvus monedula</i>
Rook	<i>Corvus frugilegus</i>

Hooded Crow
Raven
European Starling
House Sparrow
Chaffinch
Linnet
Goldfinch
Greenfinch
Siskin
Bullfinch
Crossbill
Common Rosefinch
Reed Bunting
Yellowhammer

Corvus cornix
Corvus corax
Sturnus vulgaris
Passer domesticus
Fringilla coelebs
Carduelis cannabina
Carduelis carduelis
Carduelis chloris
Carduelis spinus
Pyrrhula pyrrhula
Loxia curvirostra (heard only)
Carpodacus erythrinus
Emberiza schoeniclus
Emberiza citrinella

MAMMALS

Raccoon Dog
Brown Bear
Roe Deer
Elk
Red Squirrel
European Beaver
Brown Hare
Mountain Hare
Muskrat

Nictereutes procyonoides
Ursus arctos
Capreolus capreolus
Alces alces
Sciurus vulgaris
Castor fiber
Lepus europaeus
Lepus timidus
Ondatra zibethicus

REPTILES & AMPHIBIANS

Common Frog
Viviparous Lizard

BUTTERFLIES

Brimstone
Large Tortoiseshell
Peacock
Green-veined White
Map
Holly Blue
Green Hairstreak
Orange-tip
Swallowtail

NOTABLE FLOWERS

Liverleaf
Cowslips
Coltsfoot
Wood Anemone
Bogbeam
Birds-eye Primrose
Pasqueflower
Marsh Marigold