



# ROCKJUMPER

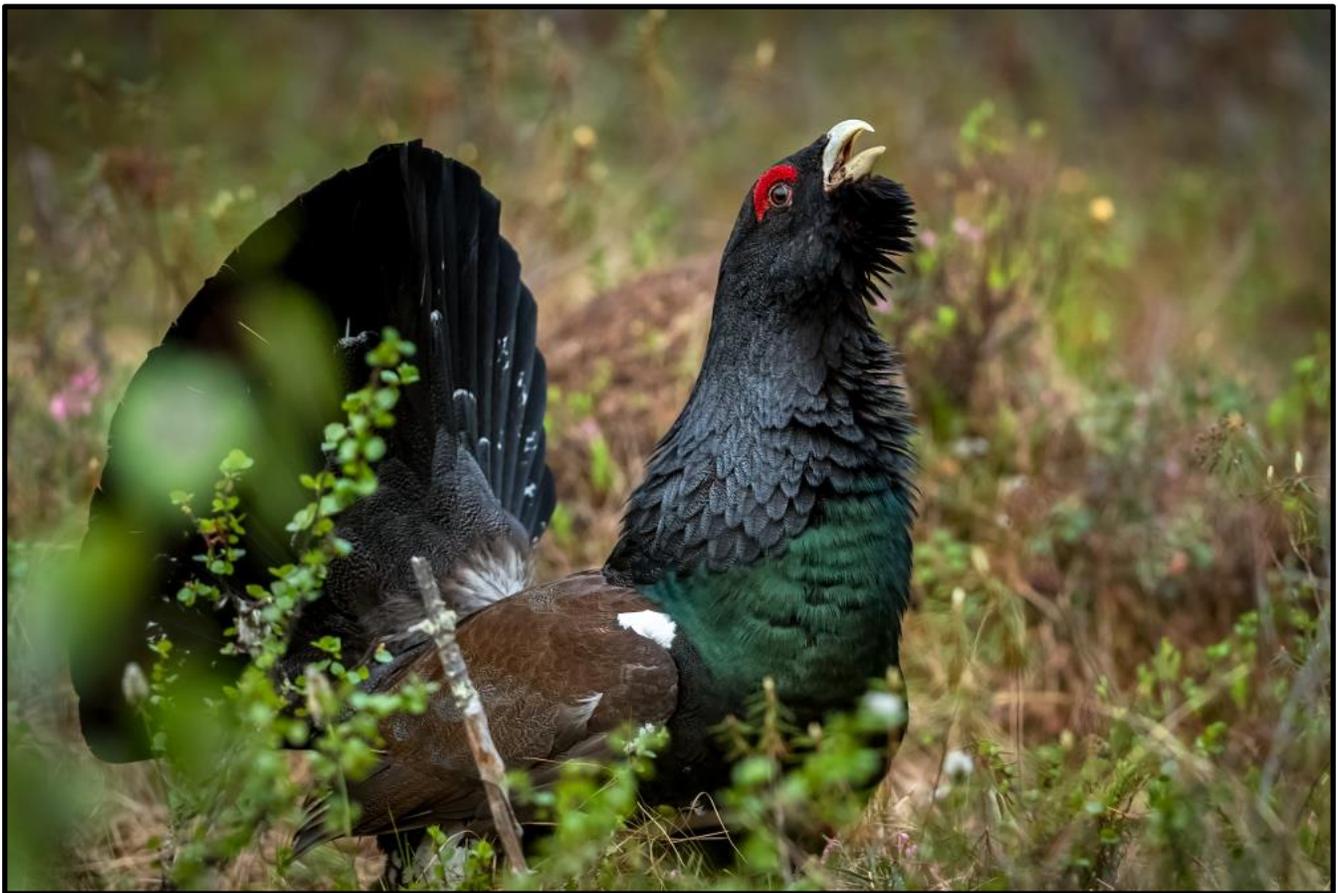
Worldwide Birding Adventures

## **Finland & Norway**

### **Ancient Forests and Fjords**

*26<sup>th</sup> May to 7<sup>th</sup> June 2018 (13 days)*

## **Trip Report**



Western Capercaillie by Steve Richards

**Tour leaders: Nigel Redman and Taru Suninen**

**Trip Report compiled by Nigel Redman**

## Tour Summary

Scandinavia is a classic European birding destination. This year's itinerary combined the boreal forests of Finland with the fjords and tundra of northern Norway (Lapland), with great success. Arriving in what we were informed was the best owl year for 25 years, we wrapped up six species of owls in style in the first two days, and then added the famously unpredictable Snowy Owl in Varanger at the end of the trip. But there was a lot more to the trip than just owls, and our many highlights included three species of divers (loons), five species of grouse, three species of jaegers, amazing male Ruffs displaying in all their finery, King Eider, Smew, Pallid Harrier, big numbers of White-tailed Eagles, many pairs of Common Cranes, Eurasian Dotterel, Red-necked Phalarope, Black Woodpecker, Siberian Jay, Bohemian Waxwing, Pine Grosbeak, Grey-headed Chickadee (Siberian Tit), Lapland Longspur, Little Bunting, and one of the most impressive seabird colonies in all of Europe. But who could forget the sight of the male Capercaillie chasing our intrepid guide across the bog at Kuusamo?



Red-necked Phalarope by Steve Richards

The tour commenced in Oulu and got off to a cracking start. Our first afternoon saw us head south to the Liminka area, where almost the first bird we saw was a pair of Northern Hawk-Owls feeding their two well-grown youngsters in a natural nest in a broken aspen tree right beside the road. We spent some time watching with wonder as two young birds tried to climb out of the nest, posing for us in the bright afternoon sunshine. Eventually we dragged ourselves away, when the young owls had decided to take a rest and the adults had disappeared to hunt. A short distance away, we enjoyed prolonged views of a Boreal Owl in a purpose-built nestbox. Could it get any better than this?! Great views of a Short-eared Owl, both in flight and perched, completed a trio of owls before it was time to look for some other birds. A pair of Ortolan Buntings (now rather rare in Finland) did not perform as well as we would have liked, and a group of 10 male Black Grouse disappeared all too quickly. But many other species did show well, including a good variety of waterfowl, a superb male Hen Harrier, many striking Whinchats, and two races of Western Yellow Wagtail. At the end of the day, a visit to a small pool near Oulu revealed an obliging pair of displaying Terek Sandpipers, a species that is very localised in Finland.



Northern Hawk-Owl by Steve Richards

An early start saw us heading south-east to a remote damp forest, where an unusually early emergence of mosquitoes caused just a little discomfort. Our target bird was Ural Owl, and although we found one quickly, it was very flighty and never stayed long enough for us all to get on to it. Eventually, after an

hour of searching, we finally managed to scope it at length, with time for everyone to get multiple scope views. The supporting cast included Crested and Willow Tits. In the surrounding area, we found several pairs of Common Cranes and a few European Elks (Moose). After breakfast, we headed to Liminka Bay. Here, the observation tower gave good views over the bay, although most birds were rather distant. The well-appointed visitor centre boasted a superb exhibition about the area and its wildlife, as well as serving a good lunch. In the afternoon, we drove around an area of open fields until we located a stunning male Pallid Harrier, and found a breeding Rough-legged Buzzard in the same area. The Sankivaara Golf Course provided excellent ice creams, as well as superb views of a pair of Black Woodpeckers feeding their young in an aspen just metres from the verandah of the clubhouse. Our final stop of the day took us to an old spruce forest, where a magnificent female Great Grey Owl was hunkered down in her nest, her piercing yellow eyes peeping out at us. It was a fitting end to a second action-packed day.

On leaving Oulu, we stopped at a small lake in the town where a pair of Horned Grebes showed well - one bird was on its nest in the lakeside vegetation. Our next stop, not far from Oulu, produced an obliging Eurasian Pygmy Owl. It sat in full view for a considerable length of time. Later we stopped at a vast bog, where a boardwalk and tower platform enabled us to get close to the natural habitat. Birds were not so plentiful here, but we had great views of several pairs of Common Cranes. At our café lunch stop, we found a superb Adder. Just before Kuusamo, we visited the town's rubbish dump. There were not many birds, but a small lake next to it held a good variety of birds, including Green and Wood Sandpipers, Temminck's Stint, Red-necked Phalarope, and Brambling. But the lake in Kuusamo itself was the best stop. In an action-packed hour at the end of the afternoon, we had great views of breeding-plumaged Red-necked Grebes, Black-throated Loons, Common Mergansers, Garganey, Little Gulls, a wonderful male Ruff, an immature White-tailed Eagle, and even a Eurasian Beaver.



Ural Owl by Steve Richards



Brambling by Steve Richards

lake. Our search for Siberian Jay was thwarted by high winds, although a male Black Woodpecker showed well. In the afternoon, we had great views of a White-throated Dipper with a beakful of caddis fly larvae.

Our first morning in the Kuusamo area involved a pre-breakfast drive to look for grouse. Sadly, it was not successful, and a few Mountain Hares was little compensation. A search for Three-toed Woodpecker was also in vain, but at our next site we did manage to find a Grey-headed Chickadee (Siberian Tit) at its nest. We also saw a beautiful female Smew here, and three pairs of stately Velvet Scoters at a nearby

We fared better the following morning, when we quickly found a stunning male Capercaillie, fearlessly strutting his stuff right in front of us. We all had the most amazing views of this rogue individual as he displayed to us, even chasing our guide, Taru. She kept her cool and avoided any injury to herself or to the Capercaillie. Eventually, the latter lost interest and flew up into a small tree where he continued to call excitedly as we retreated from his territory. Nearby, we heard Willow Ptarmigan and Rustic Bunting, but neither were willing to show themselves, although we did all see Eurasian Woodcock as it flew along the road next to the vehicles. It was a great start to another cold and windy day. The rest of the day was spent south of Kuusamo, at a fell called Iivaara. The magnificent spruce forest here held several singing Red-flanked Bluetails, a speciality of eastern Finland, but we only managed glimpses as the birds kept themselves hidden, taking shelter from the winds. Siberian Jay, Bohemian Waxwing, and Red Crossbill were also seen, but only briefly. But we did manage to see two female Capercaillies at the side of the road. In the afternoon, a Hazel Grouse called frequently from the dense Bilberry understorey, but it would not show itself on the ground, and we had to make do with several good flight views.



Western Capercaillie chasing Taru by Nigel Redman

On leaving Kuusamo, we made a short stop for a final look for Willow Ptarmigan, this time successful. We then revisited Oivanki, where the only new bird was a flock of obliging Parrot Crossbills. A short detour took us to the Russian border, where we managed to find a singing Little Bunting and pose for photographs. A stop at the Arctic Circle was also obligatory. In the afternoon we made a stop at Ilmakkaapa, where we added Common Scoter and Merlin to the list. Our final stop of the day was at Kaunispaa, at the top of a high fell. Here we enjoyed great views of two pairs of Eurasian Dotterel and several European Golden Plovers, before carrying on to Ivalo.



Ruff by Steve Richards

From Ivalo we continued northwards, stopping first at a large bog with an impressive tower hide overlooking it. A single Taiga Bean Goose was on the lake, giving good prolonged views. A female Smew was less obliging, flying off soon after she arrived. Nearby, we walked around another bog, where we had views of a Jack Snipe in flight. Our next stop, at a roadside café, proved to be very rewarding. A selection of bird feeders at the back of the café held numerous finches, including Pine Grosbeaks, Bramblings, and Common Redpolls – and all eminently photogenic. Several short roadside stops further north produced a smart male Smew with three females, several Arctic Terns, and a close-range lek of a handful of spanking male Ruffs, all puffed out, flapping their wings and jumping up into the air whenever a female appeared. The males came in a variety of colours, mostly white, black,

and/or rufous, but one male was the uncommon form that mimics a female's plumage. A couple of Bohemian Waxwings flew overhead, but did not stop. After a spectacular lunch in Utsjoki, we headed on to Tana bru (our overnight stop), spending a short time at Tanamunningen Nature Reserve to the north of Tana. The resident Peregrines played hard to get, only appearing just as we were leaving. But while we were waiting, we were treated to great views of several Rough-legged Buzzards, an immature Golden Eagle, and a very smart male Bluethroat.

Leaving Tana, we headed east, following the north shore of Varanger Fjord. We made many stops – some short, some long – including Nesseby, Vadso, and Ekkeroy. Rafts of Common Eiders and Common Mergansers were impressive, and we found good numbers of waders, including Red Knot and Bar-tailed Godwit in full summer plumage. Large numbers of ducks included many Common and Red-breasted Mergansers, Common Eider, and Common and Velvet Scoters. We found lekking Ruffs, displaying in all their finery in order to attract a dowdy female. Arctic Terns were flying around noisily, especially at Vadso and Vardo. The magnificent Black-legged Kittiwake colony at Ekkeroy also held a few Razorbills and Black Guillemots. A random roadside stop produced good views of both Red-throated Pipits and Lapland Longspurs; while another held a few Arctic Redpolls and an obliging Willow Ptarmigan. Skuas included many Arctics, a few Long-tailed and a single dark-morph Pomarine. But perhaps most memorable of all was the large number of White-tailed Eagles that were seen throughout the day, or the pod of Harbour Porpoises that made a discreet appearance.



White-tailed Eagle by Steve Richards



Atlantic Puffin by Steve Richards

We began our stay at Vardo with a short boat trip to Hornoya Island. As we approached the island, we encountered huge rafts of murre (guillemots) on the calm waters, and as we landed we were greeted by rows of European Shags on the coastal rocks. The towering cliffs held tens of thousands of Black-legged Kittiwakes and Common Murres, and the noise was almost deafening. We quickly found smaller numbers of Razorbills, Atlantic Puffins and Thick-billed Murres (Brünnich's Guillemots) amongst the many murre and kittiwakes, and the rest of the morning was spent soaking up this magnificent spectacle. There are few ornithological sights in the world that can rival a major northern-hemisphere seabird colony such as this, and it was a real treat to witness all the frenzied activity here. Returning to Vardo, we visited a small coastal pool where we found a variety of waders, including Sanderlings, Ruddy Turnstones and stints, and an adult Iceland Gull was a bonus. After lunch, we visited the mainland, and in particular

Barvikmyran NR, a vast marshy area with numerous pools. Red-throated Divers and Long-tailed Ducks were numerous on the pools, and there were several Red-necked Phalaropes too, as well as a pair of Greater Scaup. Many Parasitic Jaegers (Arctic Skuas) patrolled the area, and a single Long-tailed Jaeger flew over. Back at the coast, we scanned the seaducks for rarer species in vain, but a Grey Seal dining on a halibut was noteworthy, as was a Northern Minke Whale which made several brief appearances.

Our second day at Vardo was dedicated to driving to Hamningberg. We made many short stops on the way, scanning the coast for seabirds at every opportunity. There were hundreds of Common Mergansers and Long-tailed Ducks on the sea. Several Twite was a new species for the tour, as was Ring Ouzel for most people. A juvenile Rough-legged Buzzard calling persistently from its nest high on a cliff eluded us for a while, and as usual we had many wonderful White-tailed Eagle sightings. When we reached Hamningberg, we quickly found a distant Yellow-billed Loon, and a lone Pomarine Jaeger. After a splendid box lunch, a seawatch produced another, closer Yellow-billed Loon, as well as several more Pomarine and Long-tailed Jaegers. On the way back, we found a Glaucous Gull, several displaying Temminck's Stints, and revisited Barvikmyran, where we had great views of Red-throated Divers, more Red-necked Phalaropes and the same pair of Greater Scaup as yesterday.



Long-tailed Jaegers by Steve Richards

Leaving Vardo, we made our way back westwards along Varanger Fjord. At one of our short stops, we found a superb adult male King Eider, resplendent in his immaculate plumage, and consorting with a few Common Eiders, close inshore. We also birded Vadso and Nesseby again, and made a short stop at Varangerbotn, where we added a Curlew Sandpiper to the list. From Tana bru, we headed north towards



King Eider by Hendrik Reers

Batsfjord. On the high snowy fells, we braved strong winds and brief snowstorms in search of Snow Buntings and Horned Larks – both successful. But the big treat in this inhospitable terrain was a superb male Snowy Owl. He perched on an old post, balancing in the high winds, surveying his surroundings and keeping an eye on us, just long enough for us to all get good scope views. It was our seventh owl of the trip, and a species that is rarely found in Varanger.

Our return to Ivalo was probably the coldest day of the tour. As we drove back over the fell from Batsfjord, the snow was blowing

horizontally across the road. There was also a lot of icy snow on the road from the previous night. We made several short stops, but there was no sign of the Snowy Owl. A distant Rock Ptarmigan put in a brief appearance on the skyline, and several Long-tailed Jaegers were braving the strong winds. Further

on, we had great views of several Lapland Longspurs and a few Horned Larks. The weather improved marginally when we descended to the lowlands, although it was still windy. Leaving Norway, we had lunch at the border in Utsjoki, and made a final attempt in vain on a nearby fell to find a more obliging Rock Ptarmigan. At the Pine Grosbeak café, the numbers of Bramblings and Common Redpolls had increased considerably, and a single male Pine Grosbeak performed well at ultra-close range. Further stops were made in the forest nearby, where we managed reasonable flight views of Bohemian Waxwings.

As we were all departing at lunchtime on the last day, there was time for a final birding excursion. We drove to an area of mature roadside forest just a short distance out of Ivalo. It was slow at first, but a small group of Bohemian Waxwings rather surprisingly responded to the Siberian Jay calls, and we were finally able to get great scope views of these often-elusive gems. There was no response from the jays, though, until a small party of Siberian Jays suddenly appeared in a tall pine. They moved slowly from tree to tree, flying across the road and allowing good scope views before they vanished as silently as they had appeared. Success at the last minute! This was



**Snowy Owl by Hendrik Reers**



**Pine Grosbeak by Steve Richards**

the species that had eluded us until now. We wrapped up the excursion with prolonged looks at a large group of Red Crossbills before heading back to the hotel to pack and depart.

This classic Finland and Norway itinerary had proved to be a great success. We had found almost all of the specialities and had seen most of them very well indeed. The weather had been generally kind – not too snowy, and very little rain, although it was cold and windy in the far north. Our local guide, Taru, had been magnificent, getting us to the sites and onto the birds with ruthless efficiency. Despite the popularity of the owls, none featured in the top three birds of the trip. Top of the list was the Capercaillie (of course), but a surprise second place went to the displaying Ruffs, with the last-minute King Eider picking up third place. This was a tour that will be hard to beat, but who knows what next year will bring.

## Annotated List of Birds Recorded (182 in total: 176 seen, 6 heard)

Nomenclature and taxonomy follows Gill, F. and Donsker, D. (eds). 2018. IOC World Bird List (v 8.1).

**Status codes:** **E** = Endemic, **NE** = Near-endemic, **I** = Introduced

**IUCN codes:** **CR** = Critically endangered, **EN** = Endangered, **VU** = Vulnerable, **EW** = Extinct in the Wild, **NT** = Near Threatened, **DD** = Data Deficient

### Ducks, Geese & Swans *Anatidae*

#### **Greylag Goose**

*Anser anser*

Small numbers at scattered locations including Oulu, Liminka and Varanger.

#### **Taiga Bean Goose**

*Anser fabalis*

A single bird at Mielikkojarvi, near Ivalo, was the only one seen.

#### **Mute Swan**

*Cygnus olor*

Two pairs seen in the Liminka area.

#### **Whooper Swan**

*Cygnus cygnus*

Common throughout, and seen almost every day; often in pairs with a maximum count of 50 at Liminka.

#### **Common Shelduck**

*Tadorna tadorna*

Small numbers seen at Oulu, Liminka, Varanger Fjord and Varangerbotn.

#### **Garganey**

*Spatula querquedula*

A single at Oulu and 2 more at Kuusamo.

#### **Northern Shoveler**

*Spatula clypeata*

Small numbers at Oulu and Liminka.

#### **Eurasian Wigeon**

*Mareca penelope*

Frequent encounters in small numbers.

#### **Mallard**

*Anas platyrhynchos*

Frequent encounters in small numbers.

#### **Northern Pintail**

*Anas acuta*

A single male at Kuusamo and small numbers in Varanger Fjord and at Vardø.

#### **Eurasian Teal**

*Anas crecca*

Frequent encounters in small numbers.

#### **Tufted Duck**

*Aythya fuligula*

Frequent encounters in small numbers.

#### **Greater Scaup**

*Aythya marila*

A distant pair was seen twice on a bog pool near Vardo.

#### **King Eider**

*Somateria spectabilis*

One was seen briefly by one person at Hamningberg, but we all saw the stunning adult male in Varanger Fjord the next day.

#### **Common Eider**

*Somateria mollissima*

Abundant in the Varanger area.

#### **Velvet Scoter (EN)**

*Melanitta fusca*

3 pairs were seen twice on a lake near Kuusamo and another 6 were found on Varanger Fjord.

#### **Common Scoter**

*Melanitta nigra*

A few were seen on small lakes between Kuusamo and Tana, but there were larger flocks on Varanger Fjord and over 100 between Vardo and Hamningberg.

#### **Long-tailed Duck (VU)**

*Clangula hyemalis*

A few on inland lakes in Norway, but over 300 on the sea between Vardo and Hamningberg.

**Common Goldeneye***Bucephala clangula*

Common on lakes in both Finland and Norway, with a peak daily count of 70 in the Kuusamo area.

**Smew***Mergellus albellus*

A single female at Kuusamo and 5 between Ivalo and Tana, including a stunning drake.

**Common Merganser (Goosander)***Mergus merganser*

Common in northern Norway, usually in large flocks, with peak counts of 300 on Varanger Fjord, 150 at Vardø and 1,200 between Vardo and Hamningberg. Most birds were males.

**Red-breasted Merganser***Mergus serrator*

Much less common than the previous species, with small numbers seen most days in the north, and a peak count of 30 between Vardo and Hamningberg.

**Pheasants, Grouse, and Allies Phasianidae****Hazel Grouse***Tetrastes bonasia*

A single bird at Kuusamo proved hard to see well, giving multiple flight views only.

**Western Capercaillie***Tetrao urogallus*

A female at the side of the road near Kuusamo was our first, followed by another that exploded from the forest floor. But the bird of the trip was the displaying male that put on a tremendous show for us all, and even chased Taru out of his territory.

**Black Grouse***Lyrurus tetrrix*

A distant lek of 10 birds was seen in the Lumijoki area, and another single male conveniently perched on top of a tree.

**Rock Ptarmigan***Lagopus muta*

Just a couple of brief sightings along the Batsfjord road.

**Willow Ptarmigan***Lagopus lagopus*

Two birds seen briefly at Kuusamo, then two more seen well at Varanger and another two near Vardo.

**Common Pheasant***Phasianus colchicus*

Seen and heard near the hotel at Oulu.

**Loons Gaviidae****Red-throated Loon***Gavia stellata*

Common in the Varanger area, with a peak day count of 30 birds; most were on small lakes.

**Black-throated Loon***Gavia arctica*

Small numbers at scattered locations, on lakes in the Kuusamo area and on the inner part of Varanger Fjord.

**Yellow-billed Loon (NT)***Gavia adamsii*

Two birds in full summer plumage were found on the sea at Hamningberg.

**Petrels, Shearwaters & Diving Petrels Procellariidae****Northern Fulmar***Fulmarus glacialis*

At least 100 flying along the coast at Hamningberg.

**Grebes Podicipedidae****Red-necked Grebe***Podiceps grisegena*

6 birds showed well at Kuusamo, all on the same lake.

**Great Crested Grebe***Podiceps cristatus*

2 near the hotel at Oulu was the only record.

**Horned Grebe***Podiceps auritus*

A breeding pair on a small lake in the centre of Oulu were typically secretive, but eventually showed well. The nest was just visible in the lakeside vegetation.

**Gannets, Boobies *Sulidae***

**Northern Gannet** *Morus bassanus*  
Several birds were seen at sea from Hamningberg.

**Cormorants and Shags *Phalacrocoracidae***

**European Shag** *Phalacrocorax aristotelis*  
Common in the Vardo area, most notably on Hornoya Island.  
**Great Cormorant** *Phalacrocorax carbo*  
Small numbers in the Liminka area, at Varanger and around Vardo.

**Osprey *Pandionidae***

**Western Osprey** *Pandion haliaetus*  
Two singles in the Kuusamo area.

**Kites, Hawks & Eagles *Accipitridae***

**Golden Eagle** *Aquila chrysaetos*  
One immature was seen well at Tanamunningen, near Tana bru.

**Eurasian Sparrowhawk** *Accipiter nisus*  
One at Liminka was the only record.

**Northern Goshawk** *Accipiter gentilis*  
One bird was seen north of Ivalo on our last full day.

**Western Marsh Harrier** *Circus aeruginosus*  
Just three sightings of single birds, all in Finland.

**Hen Harrier** *Circus cyaneus*  
Two males were seen in the Liminka–Lumijoki area.

**Pallid Harrier (NT)** *Circus macrourus*  
One male was seen near Tyrnava.

**White-tailed Eagle** *Haliaeetus albicilla*  
Just a few sightings in Finland, but rather common in Varanger with a peak daily count of no fewer than 30 birds.

**Rough-legged Buzzard** *Buteo lagopus*  
After a single bird in the Lumijoki area of Finland, this species was seen almost daily in the Varanger–Vardo area. A vocal, well-grown juvenile led us to its nest high up on a cliff near Hamningberg.

**Cranes *Gruidae***

**Common Crane** *Grus grus*  
Frequent sightings of singles and pairs in Finland, but only a single bird was seen in Varanger.

**Oystercatchers *Haematopodidae***

**Eurasian Oystercatcher** *Haematopus ostralegus*  
Several at Oulu and common on the Varanger peninsula.

**Plovers and Lapwings *Charadriidae***

**Northern Lapwing** *Vanellus vanellus*  
Common in the Oulu–Liminka area.

**European Golden Plover** *Pluvialis apricaria*  
Frequent sightings of small numbers at scattered localities.

**Common Ringed Plover** *Charadrius hiaticula*

A few at Oulu and common on the Varanger peninsula.

**Eurasian Dotterel** *Charadrius morinellus*

4 on Kaunispaä fell near Ivalo gave great views.

### Sandpipers and Allies Scolopacidae

**Whimbrel** *Numenius phaeopus*

Singles or pairs at scattered localities.

**Eurasian Curlew (NT)** *Numenius arquata*

Small numbers at several sites in Finland, but only a single bird in Varanger.

**Bar-tailed Godwit** *Limosa lapponica*

Seen most days on the Varanger peninsula, with a peak daily count of 30 birds; many were in fine summer plumage.

**Black-tailed Godwit (NT)** *Limosa limosa*

The only record was a flock of 11 birds at Liminka Bay.

**Ruddy Turnstone** *Arenaria interpres*

Small numbers on most days in the Varanger peninsula.

**Red Knot** *Calidris canutus*

A flock of 25 on Varanger Fjord and 4 more at Vardø.

**Ruff** *Calidris pugnax*

Just a few in Finland, but up to 40 seen daily in Norway. The displays and unique plumages of the fabulous males were a highlight of the trip.

**Curlew Sandpiper** *Calidris ferruginea*

One bird in almost full summer plumage was found at Varangerbotn.

**Temminck's Stint** *Calidris temminckii*

6 birds were found on two lakes in the Kuusamo area, followed by several more sightings on the Varanger peninsula.

**Sanderling** *Calidris alba*

Small numbers were seen on three days on the Varanger peninsula.

**Dunlin** *Calidris alpina*

Commonly encountered on the Varanger peninsula.

**Purple Sandpiper** *Calidris maritima*

Commonly encountered on the Varanger peninsula.

**Little Stint** *Calidris minuta*

After the first at Vardø, another 10 were found between Vardo and Hamningberg.

**Eurasian Woodcock** *Scolopax rusticola*

Just two sightings: one in the Lumijoki area near Oulu, and one near Kuusamo.

**Jack Snipe** *Lymnocyptes minimus*

One was seen briefly near Mielikkojarvi.

**Common Snipe** *Gallinago gallinago*

Singles or pairs were seen on almost every day of the trip.

**Terek Sandpiper** *Xenus cinereus*

2 birds were seen well at Oulu.

**Red-necked Phalarope** *Phalaropus lobatus*

After the first at Kuusamo, we found this species frequently on the Varanger peninsula in small numbers.

**Common Sandpiper** *Actitis hypoleucos*

Just a few sightings, mainly in the Oulu area.

**Green Sandpiper** *Tringa ochropus*

Just a few sightings, mainly in the Kuusamo area.

**Common Redshank** *Tringa totanus*

A few at Oulu and small numbers frequently seen on the Varanger peninsula.

**Wood Sandpiper** *Tringa glareola*

Seen almost every day in Finland at various localities.

**Spotted Redshank** *Tringa erythropus*

One in summer plumage was seen by some at Oulu.

**Common Greenshank** *Tringa nebularia*

Singles at Oulu and Kuusamo.

### Gulls, Terns & Skimmers Laridae

**Black-legged Kittiwake** *Rissa tridactyla*

Common on the Varanger peninsula, most notably at the huge colonies at Ekkeroy and Hornoya.

**Black-headed Gull** *Chroicocephalus ridibundus*

Common encountered in small numbers in Finland, but only a couple of sightings in Varanger.

**Little Gull** *Hydrocoloeus minutus*

10 birds in summer plumage were seen on a lake near Kuusamo.

**Mew Gull (Common Gull)** *Larus canus*

Common throughout and seen every day.

**Great Black-backed Gull** *Larus marinus*

Frequent sightings on the Varanger peninsula.

**Glaucous Gull** *Larus hyperboreus*

One at Vardø and 2 more between Vardo and Hamningberg.

**Iceland Gull** *Larus glaucoides*

A single bird was seen well on a small coastal pool at Vardø.

**European Herring Gull** *Larus argentatus*

Abundant throughout and seen almost every day.

**Lesser Black-backed Gull** *Larus fuscus*

Just a few sightings of singles and pairs.

**Common Tern** *Sterna hirundo*

Frequent sightings in Finland.

**Arctic Tern** *Sterna paradisaea*

Common on the Varanger peninsula with several large colonies encountered.

### Skuas and Jaegers Stercorariidae

**Pomarine Jaeger (Pomarine Skua)** *Stercorarius pomarinus*

11 birds were seen passing along the coast at Hamningberg, and a couple of singles were found in Varanger.

**Parasitic Jaeger (Arctic Skua)** *Stercorarius parasiticus*

Common on the Varanger peninsula and seen daily with a peak count of 40.

**Long-tailed Jaeger (Long-tailed Skua)** *Stercorarius longicaudus*

Several sightings of singles and small groups on the Varanger peninsula. Perhaps the most memorable were the birds on the high fell along the Batsfjord road.

### Auks, Murres, and Puffins Alcidae

**Thick-billed Murre (Brünnich's Guillemot)** *Uria lomvia*

At least 50 were picked out amongst the numerous Common Murres on Hornøya Island.

**Common Murre (Common Guillemot)** *Uria aalge*

Abundant in the Vardo area, most notably at the vast breeding colony on Hornøya Island.

**Razorbill** *Alca torda*

A few at Ekkeroy, but common on and around Hornøya Island.

**Black Guillemot** *Cephus grylle*

Small numbers were frequently encountered on the Varanger peninsula, especially in the Vardo area.

**Atlantic Puffin** *Fratercula arctica*

Around 50 birds were seen well on the cliffs at Hornøya Island.

### Pigeons and Doves *Columbidae*

**Rock Dove** *Columba livia var. domestica*

Small numbers, mainly singles or pairs, seen at scattered localities throughout.

**Common Wood Pigeon** *Columba palumbus*

Seen daily in small numbers in Finland, but none in Norway.

### Cuckoos *Cuculidae*

**Common Cuckoo** *Cuculus canorus*

Seen or heard on several occasions in Finland.

### Owls *Strigidae*

**Snowy Owl** *Bubo scandiacus*

One male was seen perched on a post along the Batsfjord road. This species is notoriously hard to locate in Varanger.

**Ural Owl** *Strix uralensis*

One bird was eventually seen well in forest in the Siikajoki area, near Oulu.

**Great Grey Owl** *Strix nebulosa*

One was seen on its nest on a platform in forest at Sanginjoki, near Oulu.

**Northern Hawk-Owl** *Surnia ulula*

A pair was seen feeding two well-grown youngsters in the nest in the Lumijoki area. Another was found by chance at a roadside stop north of Tana bru.

**Eurasian Pygmy Owl** *Glaucidium passerinum*

One bird showed well in forest near Oulu.

**Boreal Owl** *Aegolius funereus*

One bird was seen in a nestbox in the Lumijoki area.

**Short-eared Owl** *Asio flammeus*

Five singles were seen on four days, all but one in Finland.

### Swifts *Apodidae*

**Common Swift** *Apus apus*

Small numbers seen every day in Finland.

### Woodpeckers *Picidae*

**Great Spotted Woodpecker** *Dendrocopos major*

Several sightings of singles in the Oulu and Kuusamo areas.

**Black Woodpecker** *Dryocopus martius*

A pair was seen at a nest hole, feeding a well-grown youngster, at Sankivaara, and another was seen near Kuusamo.

**Falcons and Caracaras *Falconidae*****Common Kestrel** *Falco tinnunculus*

Just three sightings of single birds.

**Merlin** *Falco columbarius*

One was seen over a bog between Kuusamo and Ivalo and another was seen at Varanger Fjord.

**Peregrine Falcon** *Falco peregrinus*

A pair was seen on cliffs at Tanamunningen.

**Crows, Jays, and Magpies *Corvidae*****Siberian Jay** *Perisoreus infaustus*

A bird that quickly flew across the road near Kuusamo was missed by most, but fortunately a silent group of four birds showed well near Ivalo on our final morning.

**Eurasian Jay** *Garrulus glandarius*

Two seen in the Oulu area on our second day.

**Eurasian Magpie** *Pica pica*

Common throughout and seen every day except one.

**Western Jackdaw** *Coloeus monedula*

Common in the Oulu area.

**Rook** *Corvus frugilegus*

Fairly common in the Oulu area.

**Hooded Crow** *Corvus cornix*

Common throughout and seen every day.

**Northern Raven** *Corvus corax*

Singles or pairs were seen every day except one.

**Waxwings *Bombycillidae*****Bohemian Waxwing** *Bombycilla garrulus*

Small numbers seen on four days, but most were quick flyovers. Several were finally seen well perched on our final morning.

**Tits, Chickadees *Paridae*****European Crested Tit** *Lophophanes cristatus*

Two were seen in the Siikajoki area, near Oulu.

**Willow Tit** *Poecile montanus*

Just three sightings: a pair near Oulu and two singles near Kuusamo.

**Grey-headed Chickadee (Siberian Tit)** *Poecile cinctus*

One bird was seen at a nestbox at Oivanki, near Kuusamo.

**Eurasian Blue Tit** *Cyanistes caeruleus*

The only records were 2 near Oulu and a single near Kuusamo.

**Great Tit** *Parus major*

Small numbers were seen every day in Finland.

**Larks *Alaudidae*****Eurasian Skylark** *Alauda arvensis*

Several in the Oulu area.

**Horned Lark** *Eremophila alpestris*

Several excellent sightings along the Batsfjord road.

Swallows *Hirundinidae*

- Sand Martin** *Riparia riparia*  
Small numbers on most days in Finland.
- Barn Swallow** *Hirundo rustica*  
Commonly seen in small numbers.
- Common House Martin** *Delichon urbicum*  
Just a few seen in Finland.

Leaf warblers and allies *Phylloscopidae*

- Willow Warbler** *Phylloscopus trochilus*  
Abundant and seen every day.
- Common Chiffchaff** *Phylloscopus collybita*  
Just two records in the Oulu area.

Reed warblers and allies *Acrocephalidae*

- Sedge Warbler** *Acrocephalus schoenobaenus*  
Up to 6 birds were seen in the reedbeds at Oulu.

Sylviid Babblers *Sylviidae*

- Garden Warbler** *Sylvia borin*  
Two birds were heard in the Oulu area.
- Lesser Whitethroat** *Sylvia curruca*  
One heard at Siikajoki and another heard between Kuusamo and Ivalo.

Kinglets *Regulidae*

- Goldcrest** *Regulus regulus*  
Just a couple of singles near Kuusamo.

Wrens *Troglodytidae*

- Eurasian Wren** *Troglodytes troglodytes*  
One was heard at Kuusamo.

Starlings *Sturnidae*

- Common Starling** *Sturnus vulgaris*  
Four birds in the Oulu area were the only ones seen.

Thrushes and Allies *Turdidae*

- Ring Ouzel** *Turdus torquatus*  
One bird was seen by one lucky person near Kuusamo, but another was seen by all between Vardo and Hamningberg.
- Common Blackbird** *Turdus merula*  
Several sightings around Oulu, en route to Kuusamo and at Ivalo.
- Fieldfare** *Turdus pilaris*  
Rather common, especially in Finland, and seen every day of the trip.
- Redwing** *Turdus iliacus*  
Less common than Fieldfare, but small numbers were seen on most days.
- Song Thrush** *Turdus philomelos*  
Just a few in the Oulu area and one at Ivalo.

**Mistle Thrush** *Turdus viscivorus*  
Three sightings, in the Oulu area, at Kuusamo and at Ivalo.

**Chats, Old World Flycatchers *Muscicapidae***

**Spotted Flycatcher** *Muscicapa striata*  
Singles or pairs were seen on several occasions in Finland.

**European Robin** *Erithacus rubecula*  
2 were heard in forest near Kuusamo.

**Bluethroat** *Luscinia svecica*  
One showed well at Tanamunningen, and another was found between Vardo and Hamningberg.

**Red-flanked Bluetail** *Tarsiger cyanurus*  
Four birds were heard in the forest at Iivaara near Kuusamo, but only one bird was seen briefly, presumably due to the windy conditions.

**European Pied Flycatcher** *Ficedula hypoleuca*  
Singles or pairs were seen on every day in Finland, but largely absent from northern Norway.

**Common Redstart** *Phoenicurus phoenicurus*  
2 birds near Kuusamo were the only ones seen.

**Whinchat** *Saxicola rubetra*  
Several were seen in the Oulu area, with a few more en route to Kuusamo.

**Northern Wheatear** *Oenanthe oenanthe*  
Frequently seen in small numbers, especially on the Varanger peninsula.

**Dippers *Cinclidae***

**White-throated Dipper** *Cinclus cinclus*  
One was seen at Kayla near Kuusamo.

**Old World Sparrows *Passeridae***

**House Sparrow** *Passer domesticus*  
Seen every day in small numbers in Varanger, but only a few in Finland.

**Eurasian Tree Sparrow** *Passer montanus*  
Small numbers in the Oulu area.

**Accentors *Prunellidae***

**Duncock** *Prunella modularis*  
Singles were recorded twice at Kuusamo.

**Wagtails, Pipits *Motacillidae***

**Western Yellow Wagtail** *Motacilla flava*  
Small numbers at several sites in Finland. Most were nominate *flava*, but several *thunbergi* were also noted.

**White Wagtail** *Motacilla alba*  
Common throughout in small numbers.

**Meadow Pipit** *Anthus pratensis*  
Common on the Varanger peninsula, but only seen once in Finland, at a bog between Oulu and Kuusamo.

**Tree Pipit** *Anthus trivialis*  
Singles or pairs seen on most days in Finland.

**Red-throated Pipit** *Anthus cervinus*

Two seen well by the road at Varanger Fjord, with two more singles on the peninsula,

**Eurasian Rock Pipit***Anthus petrosus*

Two birds were seen on Hornøya Island.

**Finches *Fringillidae*****Common Chaffinch***Fringilla coelebs*

Commonly encountered in the forests in Finland.

**Brambling***Fringilla montifringilla*

Commonly encountered in the forests of Finland, but not around Oulu. The largest number was at the feeders at Neljan Tuulen Tupa.

**Pine Grosbeak***Pinicola enucleator*

Five birds at the feeders at Neljan Tuulen Tupa, and another in the forest near Ivalo on our last morning.

**Eurasian Bullfinch***Pyrrhula pyrrhula*

Several sightings at scattered localities, but mostly in the Kuusamo area.

**Common Rosefinch***Carpodacus erythrinus*

One was heard close to the hotel at Oulu, but could not be located.

**European Greenfinch***Chloris chloris*

Frequent sightings at scattered localities.

**Twite***Linaria flavirostris*

6 were seen between Vardo and Hamningberg.

**Common Redpoll***Acanthis flammea*

Commonly seen and heard throughout, and recorded almost every day. The largest concentration was at the feeders at Neljan Tuulen Tupa.

**Arctic Redpoll***Acanthis hornemanni*

Two small flocks noted at Varanger Fjord.

**Parrot Crossbill***Loxia pytyopsittacus*

A flock of 7 showed well at Oivanki near Kuusamo.

**Red Crossbill***Loxia curvirostra*

The only sightings were 2 at Iivaara near Kuusamo and about 30 near Ivalo on our final morning.

**European Goldfinch***Carduelis carduelis*

3 at Oulu on our first day was the only record.

**Eurasian Siskin***Spinus spinus*

Frequently seen in small numbers in the Kuusamo area.

**Longspurs and Snow Buntings *Calcariidae*****Lapland Longspur***Calcarius lapponicus*

Small numbers seen daily on the Varanger peninsula, with some very close views of some.

**Snow Bunting***Plectrophenax nivalis*

Only encountered along the Batsfjord road, but fairly common there.

**Buntings, New World Sparrows and allies *Emberizidae*****Yellowhammer***Emberiza citrinella*

Several seen in the Oulu area at the beginning of the trip.

**Ortolan Bunting***Emberiza hortulana*

Two birds were found in the Lumijoki area; this species is increasingly scarce now in Finland.

**Little Bunting***Emberiza pusilla*

One singing bird was found at Vuotunki on the Russian border.

**Rustic Bunting***Emberiza rustica*

A single bird was heard at Kuusamo.

**Common Reed Bunting***Emberiza schoeniclus*

Singles or pairs at scattered localities in Finland.

## Annotated List of Mammals Recorded (11 species seen)

**Rabbits, Hares *Leporidae*****European Hare***Lepus europaeus*

2 in the Oulu area and another at Kuusamo.

**Mountain Hare***Lepus timidus*

Frequent sightings of this distinctive species in both countries, notably in the forest in the Kuusamo area and on the beach at Vadso.

**Beavers *Castoridae*****Eurasian Beaver***Castor fiber*

One was seen swimming in a lake near Kuusamo.

**Hamsters, New World Rats and Mice, Voles *Cricetidae*****Muskrat***Ondatra zibethicus*

Singles seen twice in the Kuusamo area.

**Squirrels *Sciuridae*****Eurasian Red Squirrel***Sciurus vulgaris*

Just a handful of sightings at scattered localities.

**Seals *Phocidae*****Grey Seal***Halichoerus grypus*

Several sightings on the Varanger peninsula.

**Porpoises *Phocoenidae*****Harbour Porpoise***Phocoena phocoena*

6 were seen in Varanger Fjord and another between Vardo and Hamningberg.

**Rorquals *Balaenopteridae*****Common Minke Whale***Balaenoptera acutorostrata*

Two singles were seen close to the coast near Vardø and Hamningberg.

**Deer *Cervidae*****Eurasian Elk***Alces alces*

Several were seen in the Oulu area and three more by the roadside further north.

**European Roe Deer***Capreolus capreolus*

A couple of sightings in the Oulu area.

**Reindeer***Rangifer tarandus*

Frequently encountered in both countries and seen most days, but some had collars.

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