

Finland

Owls

19–22 May 2015

Participants

Derek Barber

Michael and Mary Hooper

Paul Housley

Owen and Monica Marks

Ewan McLachlan

Andrew Robertson

Robin Stride

Carole Thompson

Roy Williams

Martin Wolinski



Siberian Jay

Leaders Ari Latja and Peter Lansdown

Day 1 The group met at Oulu Airport and made the short transfer to our hotel on the shores of Kempele Bay. The excellent hotel grounds produced Garganey and Common Redpoll but it was our excursion to the forests to the north-east of Oulu that kick-started our search for the five special northern owls. Here we quickly located a well-grown young Tengmalm's Owl, which gazed out at us from its nest-box, followed by an adult Eurasian Pygmy-owl and then an adult Ural Owl. Also seen in the same area were Common Crane, Short-eared Owl and Black Woodpecker.

Day 2 Today more time was devoted to birding in the hotel grounds, where Black-throated Diver, Garganey, Greater Scaup, Smew, Northern Goshawk, Willow Tit and Common Redpoll were seen and Great Bittern and Spotted Crake were heard. A short visit to Oulu itself gave us Slavonian Grebe and Bluethroat before we headed to the forests lying to the south-west of Oulu. In the only heavy rain of the tour we watched a Great Grey Owl and its two young on the nest and also saw Black Grouse and Eurasian Three-toed Woodpecker. Next we returned to the forests north-east of Oulu, where we saw another Ural Owl and its young on the nest and completed our quest for the five special northern owls by seeing Northern Hawk Owl. We arrived at the nest-site to discover that ringers were in the process of climbing the nest-tree to ring the young: this meant that we had prolonged views of the two adults; watched at some distance as six youngsters were ringed and returned safely to the nest; and enjoyed studying one young bird when one of the ringers kindly brought it to us for a close look. Other species seen in and around the forests included White-tailed Eagle, Merlin, Hazel Grouse, Common Crane, Black Woodpecker and Red Crossbill.

Day 3 The hotel grounds produced Black-throated Diver, Garganey, Greater Scaup, Common Redpoll and heard-only Great Bittern and Spotted Crake before we set off for Kuusamo. The remainder of the day was spent in the forests

north of Kuusamo, where we saw an adult Tengmalm's Owl peering out from its nest-box as well as Velvet Scoter, Smew, White-tailed Eagle, Willow Grouse, Eurasian Capercaillie, Black Grouse, Hazel Grouse, Common Crane, Black Woodpecker, Willow Tit, Grey-headed Chickadee (Siberian Tit), Siberian Jay, Red Crossbill and Parrot Crossbill.

Day 4 At and around the lake adjacent to Kuusamo we found Black-throated Diver, Red-necked Grebe, Smew, Willow Grouse, a male Eurasian Capercaillie strutting its stuff on the forest floor and Common Crane. We returned to the forests north of Kuusamo for the rest of the morning, seeing Velvet Scoter, Black Grouse, Black Woodpecker, Siberian Jay and Common Redpoll, before driving back to Oulu to catch a flight to Helsinki which connected with our international flight home.

For the statistically-minded, we drove a total of 1150km; and we recorded 122 species: Red-throated and Black-throated Divers, Great Crested, Red-necked and Slavonian Grebes, Great Cormorant, Great Bittern, Whooper Swan, Greylag Goose, Common Shelduck, Eurasian Wigeon, Mallard, Gadwall, Northern Pintail, Northern Shoveler, Green-winged Teal, Garganey, Tufted Duck, Greater Scaup, Common and Velvet Scoters, Common Goldeneye, Smew, Red-breasted and Common Mergansers, Hen Harrier, Western Marsh-harrier, Eurasian Sparrowhawk, Northern Goshawk, White-tailed Eagle, Common Kestrel, Merlin, Willow Grouse, Eurasian Capercaillie, Black and Hazel Grouse, Common Pheasant, Spotted Crake, Eurasian Coot, Common Crane, Greater Ringed Plover, Northern Lapwing, Dunlin, Ruff, Eurasian Curlew, Black-tailed Godwit, Common Redshank, Common Greenshank, Wood, Common and Green Sandpipers, Eurasian Woodcock, Common Snipe, Black-headed, Little, Common, Herring and Lesser Black-backed Gulls, Little, Common and Arctic Terns, Common Wood-pigeon, Rock and Stock Doves, Common Cuckoo, Short-eared, Northern Hawk, Ural and Great Grey Owls, Eurasian Pygmy-owl, Tengmalm's Owl, Common Swift, Black, Great Spotted and Eurasian Three-toed Woodpeckers, Sky Lark, Barn Swallow, Common House- martin, Tree Pipit, White and Yellow (Grey-headed) Wagtails, Dunnock, European Robin, Bluethroat, Common Redstart, Whinchat, Northern Wheatear, Eurasian Blackbird, Fieldfare, Redwing, Song and Mistle Thrushes, Sedge Warbler, Common Whitethroat, Blackcap, Willow Warbler, Common Chiffchaff, Goldcrest, European Pied Flycatcher, Willow, Siberian, Great and Eurasian Blue Tits, Common Starling, Siberian Jay, Eurasian Magpie, Eurasian Jackdaw, Common Raven, Hooded Crow, Rook, House Sparrow, Common Chaffinch, Brambling, European Greenfinch, Red and Parrot Crossbills, Common Redpoll, Eurasian Siskin, Eurasian Linnet, Northern Bullfinch, Yellowhammer and Reed Buntings. Mammals included Mountain Hare, Red Squirrel, Musk-rat and the domesticated but free-ranging Reindeer.

Birdfinders will be repeating this popular and exciting tour in May 2016.