

# Sweden's Upland Birds

Naturetrek Tour Report

25 May – 1 June 2016



Male Capercaillie



Red-necked Phalarope



Siberian Jay



Slavonian Grebe

Report and images compiled by Andy Bunten



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Tour participants: Daniel Green & Andy Bunten (leaders) together with 16 Naturetrek clients

## Day 1

Wednesday 25th May

Our flight into Västerås, a town 80 minutes west of Stockholm, was uneventful. We landed around 2.40pm and met Daniel who was awaiting our arrival. We then had a quick break for a delicious sandwich and the first of many cups of coffee as we relaxed by a lake to the accompaniment of Thrush Nightingale and Eurasian Blackcap song, and swooping Common Swifts and Common House Martins.

Suitably refreshed, we drove a short distance to another site where we sat overlooking a lake and more distant woods. This area teemed with birds and we quickly saw lots of waterfowl including Tufted Duck, Common Goldeneye, Eurasian Teal and Greylag and Canada Geese. Among the swirling Black-headed Gulls a few elegant Little Gulls were picked out, and Slavonian Grebes dived around in the foreground. From stage left a majestic huge adult White-tailed Eagle caused consternation among the gulls as it soared over the lake, gradually gaining altitude and disappearing off into the clouds.

Next stop was our hotel at Satra Brunn; beautifully sited among Birch, Aspen and various conifers with European Pied and Spotted Flycatchers calling and feeding among them.

After a wonderful dinner of nettle soup and fish we set off for a Great Grey Owl site near Skultuna. Daniel pre-warned us that this was a bad vole year and his feeling was that the owls had abandoned any nesting attempt and were more mobile and therefore trickier to track down. Notwithstanding, we took up our position on a track with meadow land either side of us and mixed woodland beyond and waited patiently. Tree Pipits and Common Blackbirds sang but no owls appeared. Some of the group walked off along a track and, in their absence, a couple of Swedish birders appeared who informed us that they had seen the owl just the evening before. A number of Eurasian Woodcock flew round the glade and a Roe Deer put in an appearance, but sadly no owl. Eventually we moved on a short distance to try our luck with its small relative, the Pygmy Owl. Almost as soon as we arrived so did the owl, perched high on the top of a conifer peering down on us and calling as it did so. Even at around 10.30pm it was still light enough for everyone to get pretty good views of this fierce, diminutive hunter silhouetted against the late evening sky.

Two other unexpected treats were in store for us as we headed back to our hotel. One was the dark shape of a lumbering Wild Boar in a field which trundled away as we approached it, the other a Ural Owl perched on top of a telegraph pole just in front of the first minibus. By now it was nearly 11.30pm and the light had faded but we still had good views of this bird with its large, round head making it look like a Russian doll as it looked about and then launched itself out into the night.

## Day 2

Thursday 26th May

It was a damp morning as we made our way to breakfast to the accompaniment of Willow Warbler, Common Chaffinch and Spotted Flycatcher. The rain continued as we drove to an amazing area of forest near Halleskögen that had suffered a very severe burn in 2014. Around 140 square kilometres of forest was involved in what was Sweden's biggest forest fire and the result was a huge amount of standing dead and severely scorched trees. We

heard how, very commendably, Sweden's government had decided to buy up a little over half of this area as a nature reserve and allow it to stand and develop back naturally.

This huge stand with many dead spruce is very attractive to woodpeckers, especially Black and Eurasian Three-toed Woodpeckers, and the signs of their feeding work were apparent everywhere. It was the latter that we hoped to see and we went to a known area and waited. Tree Pipits and Woodlark called and flew nearby but no woodpeckers appeared from the surrounding blackened timber. We were literally about to leave when the last two to clamber aboard the minibus heard a drumming. Everyone scrambled back out again and soon we had excellent views of a female Eurasian Three-toed Woodpecker as it flew around us and landed on nearby trees.

Jubilant, we headed off towards another site but as we drove past an area of open river, a Black Woodpecker flew across the road. Again we emerged from our buses and had great views of both male and female Black Woodpecker calling loudly and visiting a nest site where the telescopes could pick out young birds' beaks emerging. It seemed that the very vociferous woodpeckers were calling to their young and perhaps trying to get them to emerge from the safety of the nest hole. While watching the woodpeckers we also heard Wood Warbler singing in the wood behind us, Common Cuckoo calling, European Pied Flycatcher singing, and a Common Crane flew across the road. A good spot to stop!

We were definitely on a roll for woodpeckers so we moved on to a site that Daniel knew could produce Grey-headed Woodpecker. Once fortified with delicious coffee and cinnamon pastries, we quickly heard, and then saw our birds flying around us. As one moved from tree to tree we all had reasonable views of the woodpecker and saw that it was circling around various trees, in one of which was its nest hole. We obviously didn't want to disturb it so smartly moved back into the minibuses and away through more areas of forest interspersed with open glades.

A further stop in a more open area beside the road revealed a pair of very smart Red-backed Shrikes, Whinchat and singing Yellowhammer and Redwing. The Redwing song was of particular interest as it was a new experience for a number of the group and a song we became very accustomed to hearing.

Next we headed to the Farna Ecopark, parked and crept quietly into the forest to see if we could find the Western Capercaillie that frequented this area. We could hear the distinctive wheezing and popping song of a male which was initially hidden behind some thick foliage. We then quickly found that this was a 'rogue' bird and one that had no fear of humans as it steadily advanced towards us, displaying as it came. Daniel advised us to take care and keep a sensible distance from its very sturdy beak. The capercaillie surged towards us, causing a mass retreat from all but Derek who steadfastly remained with only the slender legs of his tripod between him and this very impressive bird. With commendable calmness, Derek gradually moved away and we all melted back into the woodland towards our minibus leaving the testosterone-fuelled bird to continue his lonely vigil. This was an amazing experience for us all and a magnificent bird to see so closely.

Our lunch break was wonderfully positioned in an open hide overlooking a lake where Barn Swallows swooped, Eurasian Teal and Northern Shoveler dabbled and Common Goldeneye dived, while waders including Dunlin picked their way delicately through the sparse vegetation at the back of the pond. It was a lovely site.

We then returned to our hotel to collect our bags before heading towards our next night's stay, but another treat was in store for us as Daniel asked if we'd be interested to meet a pair of volunteers who were going to visit a Ural Owl nest to ring the chicks. Not surprisingly, there was enthusiastic support for this idea.

We met the two volunteers around 5pm and walked the short distance to the nest box. This was a new site and the aggressiveness of the owl was unknown. Sensible precautions were taken and Daniel, clad in a motorbike helmet and protected on his left flank by a large cushion on a pole held by one of the team, climbed up the ladder and carefully removed the two chicks. The rest of the party looked out for the adult owl which didn't put in an appearance, so seemed not to be an aggressive individual. We duly paid homage to two round, blinking chicks while they were swiftly ringed. The female owl, which had in fact been in a nearby tree, appeared but flew a little further off. Slightly distant but wonderfully framed in a group of trees, we all had excellent views of the bird as its young were gently put back into their home.

It was a wonderful conclusion to the day's birding and we reflected on all our great sightings as we drove onward to next hotel, the Green Hotel near Tallberg, with its stunning views over Lake Siljan. We arrived at our spectacularly impressive accommodation about 7.30pm, got washed and had a wonderful meal before sorting out our burgeoning sightings list for the last couple of days and then retiring to our rooms.

## Day 3

Friday 27th May

We began our day with a comprehensive Swedish breakfast before setting off from our hotel shortly after 8am. Our first stop after an hour was for a leg stretch by a dam which gave a chance to chat about the various birds we had seen on the drive: Goosander, Eurasian Hobby, Whooper Swan, Common Crane and Northern Raven.

We continued for another hour and stopped at Särna. We looked across a lake while eating the sandwiches we had made at breakfast time. It proved to be a good site with the ubiquitous Fieldfares 'chacking' around the open areas, and the equally common Willow Warblers singing from nearby stands of trees. Out on the lake there was a Red-throated Diver, Arctic Terns flew overhead, and various waders including Common Greenshank and Wood Sandpiper picked their way around the shores. A Wood Sandpiper came very close indeed, enabling good photographic opportunities. Daniel heard the distant song of Icterine Warbler so we moved across the grass to home in on it. Eventually we tracked it down and it very obligingly gave us all some fantastic views as it continued its varied and wheezy song.

Next stop was Fulufjället National Park and a walk up to Njupesjär, the highest waterfall in Sweden (93 metres high). The footpath was closed along the trail but we only wanted to get to the waterfall site itself. This is a known site for nesting Gyr Falcons, and it was them that we were hoping to see! We slowly meandered our way through the forests and alongside the river up to a viewpoint where we could see a nest and the sitting Gyr Falcon through our telescopes on the cliffs alongside the waterfall. We moved our position to a slightly higher area and, consuming some delicious chocolate chip cookies, watched the nest for some time hoping that perhaps the male would appear with food. Sadly it didn't show. While waiting, a few of the group wandered down to the river and found a White-throated Dipper whizzing up and down the valley, and occasionally perching on a large water-sprayed rock. We left our sitting Gyr Falcon and walked back down the wonderful open wooded habitat to the accompaniment of singing Bramblings, a pair of Willow Tits, calling Eurasian Siskins and darting Spotted Flycatchers, before having yet another excellent lunch on the picnic benches at the park entrance

Then it was back into our minibuses to head north, but keeping alert for anything that may catch our attention. It fairly quickly did as well when we stopped at a lake to see five absolutely beautiful Black-throated Divers sailing serenely past, their markings magnificent and looking as if they'd been freshly painted on just this morning. Later still we passed a wonderful female Western Capercaillie by the roadside, and a quarter of an hour later found a pair of extremely distinguished Velvet Scoters showing brilliantly in the ever improving light, with the scene set by calling Common Greenshank as well.

The weather was improving steadily with temperatures up to around 16<sup>o</sup> C, good visibility and virtually no wind. For this reason Daniel suggested that we visit the Great Snipe lek, despite it having been a long day with a lot of travelling. Needless to say everyone was very keen to do this, so when we arrived at our next hotel where we were going to be staying for the next three nights, we quickly unpacked, had a delicious meal of Reindeer and then, about 9.30pm, headed to the lek site.

We walked up a stretch of boardwalk before crossing the tundra – we were grateful for our wellies! – and settled down on the furry stools to watch the Great Snipe. What a fantastic experience. Almost immediately we could hear their strange clicking sounds, a bit like popping candy, and whistling noises. We watched as the birds began to display – stretching their necks and flicking their wings and tails. Initially the birds were slightly hidden by low vegetation but we shifted position onto some higher ground and got absolutely fantastic views. We estimated there were about six birds in total including one male which regularly came out into the open to 'strut his stuff', pushing his chest out like a cartoon bully in the Popeye programmes. Eventually we felt we'd seen enough of these amazing birds, whose mammoth migration we heard about from Daniel, and we headed home with images of Velvet Scoter, Gyr Falcon and Black-throated Diver swirling around in our tired heads.

## Day 4

Saturday 28th May

Although we'd had a late night, we had plenty we wanted to do today so we set off at 8.30am for the higher tundra. First though we stopped at a lake in the nearby village where various hirundines swept along catching insects, and another couple of Black-throated Divers were seen as well as various different ducks. One of our party was scouring the cliffs behind us and gave a triumphant shout when he saw some gleaming white droppings on a rock. Sure enough when we got the telescopes on the area we first found a nest, and then the head of a Peregrine Falcon popped up as well. A wonderful find by Dave.

Driving up onto the tundra, we stopped at a small lake on which were a few ducks and nine Red-necked Phalaropes. Pulling away from this site, people in the second vehicle heard a snatch of a Bluethroat's song and one person just got a glimpse of the bird. Continuing our journey, we passed more Reindeer (our first had been the day before) and parked next to the sole building on the high plateau at Flatruet, which provided a bit of shelter from the elements for a coffee stop. From here we could see a four displaying Ruff and could hear Common Redshank, Wood Sandpiper, Whimbrel, Common Snipe and European Golden Plover calling. We also saw our first, slightly distant, Willow Ptarmigan flying off against the distant rises.

Daniel thought it best to move a bit further down the valley for the rest of the day and save a longer walk across the tundra for tomorrow in the hope that the weather would be a little kinder. So we dropped down into the village of Ljungdalen where we saw four beautiful Eurasian Bullfinches in a garden. We were hoping we may see

Hawk Owl but on looking around, instead we found a Eurasian Sparrowhawk and a couple of nest boxes which Daniel thought may repay some investigation. After obtaining permission from a nearby house, we scratched around both the nest boxes with no joy and then started on various trees with promising looking holes in them. All proved vacant save the last from which a female Common Goldeneye shot out at top speed.

It was time for lunch but on our drive down, people in the front bus saw around 12 Bohemian Waxwings in a tree. We stopped and got out but very oddly they'd flown off and were nowhere to be seen. This was curious behaviour for these normally confiding and tame birds.

We stopped for lunch by a beautiful small lake in the valley, where we huddled in a shed out of the light rain and watched a pair of Slavonian Grebes on a nest, taking it in turns to sit on the eggs and nest build. Another pair of Slavonian Grebes were elsewhere on the lake, along with Common Goldeneye, lots of very noisy Black-headed Gulls, two Little Gulls, and Common Gulls. Best though were the waders with three Ruff on a small island, leaping and fighting, Common Redshank and very close views of Wood Sandpiper.

After lunch we drifted round the small lake towards a bigger body of water – Strosjön. Here, on the grassland in front of us we were treated to a wonderful lekking display by a group of Ruff: four resplendent males, one with a white ruff, one with black, one with a smart grey one, and finally a very striking cinnamon brown one. Around them five more dowdy females trotted along, doubtless admiring the show being put on for their benefit. Out on the lake there were a group of Common Scoter and a couple of Red-throated Divers, and Dave's sharp eyes picked out a Short-eared Owl drifting around behind various buildings.

Our next site of the day was a river delta where we saw more Red-throated and Black-throated Divers before heading back over the top and retracing our footsteps back to the small lake where we had seen the Red-necked Phalarope and had a brief view of the Bluethroat. Once again the Bluethroat was heard from a bus so we all quickly disembarked to enjoy fabulous views of an actively singing bird that performed wonderfully for us.

Our final calls of the day were firstly to stop at a supermarket to buy some sausage, and then to head off into the woods to use this to try to lure Siberian Jay. Unlike normal birding, we were actively encouraged to chat and make noise as this can tend to attract these curious birds. However on this occasion neither our constant chatter nor the delicious sausage tempted any jays, so we made our way back to our hotel for another delicious meal and the slightly surreal feeling of completing our list while a TV played an episode of *Midsummer Murders* featuring a birdwatching plot.

## Day 5

Sunday 29th May

Although there was low cloud cover when we first arose, it gradually lifted a little and we decided to go back to the tundra to look for various specialities. First though, we returned to our nearby woodland to try again for the Siberian Jay. The sausage was untouched from the day before which didn't give us much encouragement. Although we heard the usual Brambling, European Pied Flycatcher, Redwing and Willow Warbler, we couldn't find a Jay. Red Crossbills flew by and later some perched characteristically in the top of conifer trees, and a Eurasian Nuthatch made an appearance too. We moved to another woodland site and at last we were successful as two jays lurked nearby making lightning strikes to snatch a piece of sausage then fly off to consume it away from prying eyes.

Satisfied, we now retraced yesterday's route going back up onto the tundra. On the way we were treated to a Golden Eagle over a nearby ridge. We could see it was carrying something which photographs revealed to be some nest material – a small conifer branch. A little further on we saw another eagle and, to our delight and astonishment, saw both eagles at their nest. One bird had brought in some prey – it was felt most likely to be a Hare – and the remaining bird was carefully tearing pieces off and apparently delicately feeding a small chick hidden in the deep nest.

By mid-morning we were back at the small building at the Flatruet plateau. While we consumed coffee and delicious little Punsch cakes, we heard calling Dunlin, Common Greenshank and very near Wood Sandpiper. One of target birds then appeared in the shape of five fairly distant Long-tailed Skuas. A Eurasian Sparrowhawk flew low over the road as we donned our wellies and started walking over the very damp tundra. A slight ridge in the mid distance held seven strutting and leaping male Ruff, and European Golden Plovers uttered their exquisitely mournful song as we walked along. Fairly quickly we heard the sweet, lark-like, song of a Lapland Longspur and over the next three-quarters of an hour had some wonderful views of male birds in song flight and perched on the top of low vegetation. Not to be outdone, a Wood Sandpiper also called and landed in low bushes right in front of us. A Long-tailed Skua put in a good show and then a shining male Hen Harrier came floating across the landscape putting up small birds as it glided along and past us.

A little further along we had good close views of a Willow Ptarmigan settled on an un-melted snow patch. Two Common Cranes, slightly distant on the tundra, showed their rusty red backs which comes from smearing mud and iron oxide-rich water onto their plumage for camouflage. As we were making our way back towards the hut for lunch we noticed two Red-necked Phalaropes lurking under some bankside vegetation in a small lochan. We gathered close to try for some photographs and gradually the birds moved through the low fen vegetation and gave some good opportunities for the keen photographers in our party. So absorbed were we with these beautiful birds that we didn't get round to our lunch until 3.45pm!

Afterward lunch we spread out to walk across the tundra in search of Eurasian Dotterel. To begin with we were treated to views of Common Cranes, Whimbrel, Lapland Longspur and Ruff, but no dotterel. Acting on some received information, we then searched an area of vegetation close to the road and suddenly saw a Eurasian Dotterel going through its distraction wing-dragging display, so we knew its nest was nearby. We rapidly retreated and the bird cautiously but quite quickly returned to its nest giving us absolutely fabulous views.

Whilst returning to our hotel we stopped briefly at the lake where we'd seen the Bluethroat earlier and found a few more Red-necked Phalaropes and three Little Gulls, while a Common Redstart sang from the nearby trees.

Back at the hotel we enjoyed another great meal and then, at 9.30pm, we went back out again to see if we could find any owls. Sadly no owls made an appearance but, back at our lake, we saw around 17 Red-necked Phalaropes displaying, spinning and mating; often coming very close and offering very atmospheric photographic opportunities in the late evening light with mist subtly forming around the lake edges. It was a beautiful and mystical sight enhanced by an almost luminous Arctic Tern that swooped and picked at the water surface leaving a trail of ripples in an otherwise glass calm surface. We reluctantly dragged ourselves away from this magical area and drove back to the hotel, finding Willow Ptarmigan, Mountain Hare and even a Eurasian Woodcock along the road edges.



## Day 6

Monday 30th May

We were heading back down south today and the weather looked as if it was going to start hotting up. Our first stop was just near the hotel to see if we could find the Eurasian Wryneck that had been heard the previous evening. We weren't successful in that endeavour but had huge compensation in a great display of 'parachuting' and singing by a Bluethroat.

We went higher to the base of a ski station to see if we could spot any more upland specialities. We saw our usual Brambling, Redwing and Willow Warbler as well as another Mountain Hare but nothing new other than a Eurasian Jay in a line of trees as we sped past.

We stopped a little while later in Tannas and headed up a hill to see if we may be lucky with Hazel Grouse. En route we heard another Icterine Warbler singing and while Sean stayed behind to try to photograph it (successfully it turned out) the rest of us went on a nice little hike up the hill to a house with a fantastic view and with woodland to its rear. Sadly there were no Hazel Grouse, but other woodland birds were singing: Eurasian Wren, Common Blackbird and Tree Pipit, and we also heard our first and only Common Chiffchaff. The sun was well and truly out now and with it butterflies started emerging with Green-veined Whites and Small Tortoiseshells.

We continued southwards with a brief leg-stretch at a bouncing river with a Beaver lodge and some very obvious signs where it had been chewing at a tree. White-throated Dippers were present too and a young bird was hanging out of a nest under the road bridge.

Another couple of hours took us to Nipfjället where we stopped for lunch and our afternoon walk. As we neared our parking place a mottled Rock Ptarmigan posed very nicely for us before flying away behind the buses in a whirr of white wings. We walked across this desolate and beautiful area looking for dotterel and ptarmigan and before too long a Eurasian Dotterel was seen and the agreed signal of crossed arms brought everyone together to see the bird. As before, we moved away from where we assumed it would have its nest so it could get back onto the eggs as soon as possible. A little further on there were a few European Golden Plovers and then another dotterel which circled around us keeping at a fair distance. John meanwhile had found a pair of Rock Ptarmigan – a conspicuously white male and a much more sober female. Characteristically they were quite tame and acting on Sandy's advice, we walked as if going past the birds and they allowed us to get quite close, once more giving the photographers some wonderful opportunities.

We continued on, occasionally stopping at small lakes where we found divers, Common Greenshanks and Wood Sandpipers amongst other usual song birds. We finally arrived at our hotel in Älvdalen around 7.30pm and got ourselves ready for the meal and to complete our lists. While we were waiting for our food, a group of young people dressed as Dalmatians sauntered by and yet another group clambered into a car and drove off. Mystified we asked Daniel about this to be told that it was a tradition in Sweden for students who completed their final school exams to dress up in costumes and celebrate. And why not!

## Day 7

Tuesday 31<sup>st</sup> May

Those who went for a little pre-breakfast walk spotted House Sparrow, Coal Tit and European Goldfinch to add to our bird list. We were packed and on the road bright and early on a beautiful sunny morning, heading south towards Orsa where we stopped at a lake with a short boardwalk and low viewing platform. Coffee, of course, was then followed by searching the lake to see what we could find. A Whinchat had incorporated a morsel of rosefinch song into its own which confused us for a while, and in the same area a pair of lovely Western Yellow Wagtails posed nicely for us. Out on the lake Common Terns flew around an island and there were Mute Swans to add to our normal Whooper Swans, plus a couple Black-throated Divers. A lone Taiga Bean Goose flew past while Sedge Warblers sang in the lovely sunshine. A bird of prey half hidden in some distant reeds puzzled us for a while but was decided to be a Common Buzzard, and a Western Marsh Harrier drifted by at about the same time.

We moved to Lacknas around 11am hoping to indulge in waffles but sadly the restaurant was closed on Mondays and Tuesdays so we had to repair to another nearby hotel and console ourselves with more coffee and some very tasty little cakes.

Knowing that all of the group were keen to see Great Grey Owl, Daniel had obtained some information about a site a little way round the lake where there were some birds. We headed westwards towards this new site and drove around searching out suitable areas in the vicinity of Klockenberg. We parked at a delightful spot where a Grey Wagtail and its young rested by the stream's edge and a White-throated Dipper came and showed itself on a rock in the stream's centre. Butterflies abounded in the wonderful sunshine and we saw Green Hairstreak, Comma, Orange Tip and even a Camberwell Beauty – although this latter wasn't seen by all the group sadly. Dave had wandered off and came back excitedly to announce he'd found a Ural Owl nest site. We all gathered round and could pick up the handsome adult perched in a tree a couple of hundred yards away. Under Daniel's tutorship we advanced towards the nest box keeping a wary eye out for the owl that actually seemed fairly unconcerned. The feeling was that in strong sunlight Ural Owls cannot see so well and are less prone to be aggressive. We had fantastic views of the bird looking down on us before we retreated back for some lunch at our streamside site.

We continued our Great Grey Owl quest but in the end had to abandon it as time was getting on. Our misfortune continued as we visited an Ortolan Bunting site in the Sater area but although a couple of us caught a brief snatch of the bird's song, it didn't make an appearance – unlike the Yellowhammers, which did.

So it was back to the hotel where we'd stayed on our first night at Sarta Brunn; and how different it looked in the bright sunshine with birds singing lustily. Daniel had to leave us for this evening but a colleague of his, Nicolas, came out after our meal and around 8.30pm we headed back to the area around Skultuna – once more on the trail of Great Grey Owl. Our first stop was at a different site from that which we visited on our first day and we spread out to peer into suitable trees and low perches. A sudden whistle from Nicolas had us all sprinting towards him – he'd seen a bird disappearing into near woodland. After a few minutes it appeared and flew across the road to land in some low brushwood. We had reasonable views but the owl then took off and we had fantastic flight views as it flew a hundred yards or so before landing in a tree and giving us all an excellent full frontal. The bird moved around behind a small copse but eventually reappeared and made its way in to the middle of an area of cleared forest and perched on top of a low thin broken pine. We enjoyed amazing views,

and then realised there was a second bird too! Our first owl made a brief flight and pounce but didn't seem to have caught anything and eventually both birds disappeared stage left. Phew – at last success and what success! Nicolas became our instant new best friend.

We briefly visited the site we had been to on the first night where we found a Grasshopper Warbler. There was a Beaver pond nearby so we visited that and Nicolas was amazed when, as we walked the few yards to the little bridge, two Otters appeared and disappeared as quickly as they'd come. A first for Nicolas – let alone us. The Beavers performed wonderfully (we saw at least three) and a Thrush Nightingale serenaded us throughout. We were on a roll now and successive stops at marshy sites around Skultuna produced a booming Eurasian Bittern, calling Water Rail, more singing Grasshopper Warblers, a calling Tawny Owl and a ghostly Long-eared Owl that emerged from deep within a wood and sailed away from us. Coming up to midnight, a brief but very distinctive call of a Spotted Crake and more calling snipe were heard before our final stop where we were treated to the rasp-rasp of a Corn Crake, a mellifluous Thrush Nightingale and a persistent Sedge Warbler. This was a wonderful end to an absolutely perfect evening.

## Day 8

Wednesday 1st June

We enjoyed breakfast and the sun streaming through the trees as Spotted Flycatcher, Garden Warbler and Great Tit went about their daily business. Daniel came to meet us at 8am and we packed out bags onto the buses for the last time before moving off to look at a last few local sites before catching the plane home.

We stopped at a marshy area with a large stand of Birch trees in the distance – a site where it was hoped White-backed Woodpeckers would eventually return, Daniel informed us. Our target here was Common Rosefinch and after hearing one calling for some time it finally appeared on the top of a bush giving us all excellent views through the telescopes.

We moved onward again to a wonderful lake site close to where Daniel has a lovely house. What a place to have as a local patch! We saw around 30 Black Terns, a Western Osprey flew around the lake clearly looking for fish, a Grey Heron stalked about being dive bombed by the terns which also went into a flurry of activity when a largish aquatic mammal, which we took to be an otter, showed briefly near a reedy island. A Eurasian Wryneck flew into a nearby tree and also gave good telescope views as it sat quietly in a low bush. A Eurasian Hobby flew over the far woodlands and our first Great Cormorant (of the *sinensis* race) flew high over the water. We looked for Hawfinch in a known garden site by some woodland and although we found Common Sandpiper, Marsh Tit, Eurasian Tree Sparrow, Eurasian Nuthatch and other nice woodland birds, the Hawfinch remained elusive.

And so back to the wonderful lake near Julpa that we had visited on day one of our trip, for an early lunch and to see what we could finally find there. As before it was alive with birds; Common and Black-headed Gulls were joined by at least one Little Gull, and a Garganey flew past, eventually settling and giving excellent views. Slavonian Grebes dived and as we discussed the difference between them and the Black-necked Grebe, so one of these species duly arrived and swam before a reedy island before vanishing under the water, never to be seen again. Two European Honey Buzzards were seen soaring high over background woodland – one with a chunk of feathers missing from its left wing making it look very odd.

We enjoyed our last lunch and after a minor panic over bus keys, we were back on our way to Västerås airport for our 3pm flight back to the UK where another Naturetrek adventure came to an end.

What an absolutely wonderful week it had been: stunning views of so many special birds and mammals; landscapes and vistas that truly took one's breath away; great company; and marvellous food and accommodation. Thanks to Daniel for being a wonderful guide, and thanks to the group for being such a sharp-eyed and wonderful group of people to be with. I hope we can travel together again someday.

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'Red-spotted' Bluethroat

## Species Lists

Birds (✓=recorded but not counted; H = heard only)

	Common name	Scientific name	May/June								
			25	26	27	28	29	30	31	1	
1	Western Capercaillie	<i>Tetrao urogallus</i>		1	1						
2	Black Grouse	<i>Lyrurus tetrix</i>			H		1				
3	Rock Ptarmigan	<i>Lagopus muta</i>						3			
4	Willow Ptarmigan	<i>Lagopus lagopus</i>				2	7				
5	Taiga Bean Goose	<i>Anser fabalis</i>								1	
6	Greylag Goose	<i>Anser anser</i>	✓	✓	✓					✓	✓
7	Canada Goose	<i>Branta canadensis</i>	✓	✓	✓			✓	✓	✓	✓
8	Mute Swan	<i>Cygnus olor</i>		1						2	
9	Whooper Swan	<i>Cygnus cygnus</i>		2	4	12	2	2	2	2	6
10	Gadwall	<i>Anas strepera</i>	✓							6	1
11	Eurasian Wigeon	<i>Anas penelope</i>	2		H	1	4	2	1	1	1
12	Mallard	<i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>	✓	✓	✓			✓	✓	✓	✓
13	Northern Shoveler	<i>Anas clypeata</i>	✓	4	✓					1	1
14	Garganey	<i>Anas querquedula</i>									1
15	Eurasian Teal	<i>Anas crecca</i>		12		2	4	2	4	4	4
16	Common Pochard	<i>Aythya ferina</i>	2								
17	Tufted Duck	<i>Aythya fuligula</i>	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
18	Velvet Scoter	<i>Melanitta fusca</i>			2		2				
19	Common Scoter	<i>Melanitta nigra</i>			2	20					
20	Common Goldeneye	<i>Bucephala clangula</i>	✓	2	✓	12	4	4	✓	✓	✓
21	Goosander	<i>Mergus merganser</i>			1	4	2	3	1		
22	Red-throated Diver	<i>Gavia stellata</i>			1	3		4			
23	Black-throated Diver	<i>Gavia arctica</i>			5	2	H	2	2		
24	Great Crested Grebe	<i>Podiceps cristatus</i>	2							✓	✓
25	Slavonian Grebe	<i>Podiceps auritus</i>	12+			4					4
26	Black-necked Grebe	<i>Podiceps nigricollis</i>									1
27	Eurasian Bittern	<i>Botaurus stellaris</i>								H	
28	Grey Heron	<i>Ardea cinerea</i>	1	1							1
29	Great Cormorant	<i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>									1
30	Western Osprey	<i>Pandion haliaetus</i>		1							1
31	European Honey Buzzard	<i>Pernis apivorus</i>									2
32	White-tailed Eagle	<i>Haliaeetus albicilla</i>	1								
33	Western Marsh Harrier	<i>Circus aeruginosus</i>	3	2						1	1
34	Hen Harrier	<i>Circus cyaneus</i>					1				
35	Eurasian Sparrowhawk	<i>Accipiter nisus</i>				1	1				
36	Common Buzzard	<i>Buteo buteo</i>	1	2						3	1
37	Golden Eagle	<i>Aquila chrysaetos</i>					3				
38	Common Kestrel	<i>Falco tinnunculus</i>	1	1	2	4	✓	✓	1		
39	Eurasian Hobby	<i>Falco subbuteo</i>		1	1						1
40	Gyr Falcon	<i>Falco rusticolus</i>			1						
41	Peregrine Falcon	<i>Falco peregrinus</i>		1		1					
42	Water Rail	<i>Rallus aquaticus</i>								H	
43	Corn Crane	<i>Crex crex</i>								H	H
44	Spotted Crane	<i>Porzana porzana</i>								H	
45	Eurasian Coot	<i>Fulica atra</i>	✓	✓							✓
46	Common Crane	<i>Grus grus</i>	6	6	2	3	2	2	6	4	4
47	Northern Lapwing	<i>Vanellus vanellus</i>	✓	✓	✓	4				✓	✓

	Common name	Scientific name	May/June							
			25	26	27	28	29	30	31	1
48	European Golden Plover	<i>Pluvialis apricaria</i>				8	8	4		
49	Common Ringed Plover	<i>Charadrius hiaticula</i>		1		3	2			
50	Eurasian Dotterel	<i>Charadrius morinellus</i>					2	2		
51	Eurasian Woodcock	<i>Scolopax rusticola</i>	6		1		1		3	
52	Great Snipe	<i>Gallinago media</i>			6					
53	Common Snipe	<i>Gallinago gallinago</i>	1	3		✓	H	3	1	6
54	Whimbrel	<i>Numenius phaeopus</i>				4	4	4	4	
55	Eurasian Curlew	<i>Numenius arquata</i>			1	1		1		
56	Common Redshank	<i>Tringa totanus</i>	1		3	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
57	Common Greenshank	<i>Tringa nebularia</i>			4	2	1	1		
58	Green Sandpiper	<i>Tringa ochropus</i>			H		H			
59	Wood Sandpiper	<i>Tringa glareola</i>			2	2	2	4	1	
60	Common Sandpiper	<i>Actitis hypoleucos</i>			2	2		2		1
61	Dunlin	<i>Calidris alpina</i>		1		H	1			
62	Ruff	<i>Philomachus pugnax</i>				15	7			
63	Red-necked Phalarope	<i>Phalaropus lobatus</i>				7	21			
64	Black-headed Gull	<i>Chroicocephalus ridibundus</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	10	✓	✓
65	Little Gull	<i>Hydrocoloeus minutus</i>				3	3			1
66	Common Gull	<i>Larus canus</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
67	European Herring Gull	<i>Larus argentatus</i>	✓	✓		1				
68	Common Tern	<i>Sterna hirundo</i>	✓						10	✓
69	Arctic Tern	<i>Sterna paradisaea</i>			8	8	6	7		
70	Black Tern	<i>Chlidonias niger</i>								30
71	Long-tailed Skua	<i>Stercorarius longicaudus</i>					8			
72	Common (Feral) Pigeon	<i>Columba livia 'feral'</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
73	Stock Dove	<i>Columba oenas</i>		2					2	
74	Common Wood Pigeon	<i>Columba palumbus</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
75	Common Cuckoo	<i>Cuculus canorus</i>	H	H	H	1	1	1	H	
76	Tawny Owl	<i>Strix aluco</i>							H	H
77	Ural Owl	<i>Strix uralensis</i>	1	3					1	
78	Great Grey Owl	<i>Strix nebulosa</i>							2	
79	Eurasian Pygmy Owl	<i>Glaucidium passerinum</i>	1							
80	Long-eared Owl	<i>Asio otus</i>							1	
81	Short-eared Owl	<i>Asio flammeus</i>				1				
82	Common Swift	<i>Apus apus</i>	✓	✓	✓	6		6	✓	✓
83	Eurasian Wryneck	<i>Jynx torquilla</i>					H			1
84	Great Spotted Woodpecker	<i>Dendrocopos major</i>	2	1			H	1		1
85	Eurasian Three-toed Woodpecker	<i>Picoides tridactylus</i>		1						
86	Black Woodpecker	<i>Dryocopus martius</i>		3						
87	European Green Woodpecker	<i>Picus viridis</i>								2
88	Grey-headed Woodpecker	<i>Picus canus</i>		2						
89	Red-backed Shrike	<i>Lanius collurio</i>		2						
90	Siberian Jay	<i>Perisoreus infaustus</i>					2			
91	Eurasian Jay	<i>Garrulus glandarius</i>	✓					1		
92	Eurasian Magpie	<i>Pica pica</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
93	Western Jackdaw	<i>Coloeus monedula</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
94	Hooded Crow	<i>Corvus cornix</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
95	Northern Raven	<i>Corvus corax</i>	1	1	4	6	2	2	2	
96	Bohemian Waxwing	<i>Bombycilla garrulus</i>				12				
97	Marsh Tit	<i>Poecile palustris</i>								1
98	Willow Tit	<i>Poecile montanus</i>			2		H			

	Common name	Scientific name	May/June								
			25	26	27	28	29	30	31	1	
99	Coal Tit	<i>Pariparus ater</i>								H	
100	European Crested Tit	<i>Lophophanes cristatus</i>		1							
101	Great Tit	<i>Parus major</i>	✓	✓	✓	4	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
102	Eurasian Blue Tit	<i>Cyanistes caeruleus</i>	✓	✓	✓	2				✓	✓
103	Woodlark	<i>Lullula arborea</i>		3							
104	Eurasian Skylark	<i>Alauda arvensis</i>	✓	✓						✓	✓
105	Sand Martin	<i>Riparia riparia</i>				✓	✓				
106	Barn Swallow	<i>Hirundo rustica</i>	✓	✓	✓	20	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
107	Common House Martin	<i>Delichon urbicum</i>	✓	✓		10				✓	✓
108	Willow Warbler	<i>Phylloscopus trochilus</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
109	Common Chiffchaff	<i>Phylloscopus collybita</i>							H		
110	Wood Warbler	<i>Phylloscopus sibilatrix</i>		H							
111	Sedge Warbler	<i>Acrocephalus schoenobaenus</i>								H	H
112	Eurasian Reed Warbler	<i>Acrocephalus scirpaceus</i>	H								
113	Icterine Warbler	<i>Hippolais icterina</i>			1				1	H	
114	Common Grasshopper Warbler	<i>Locustella naevia</i>								H	H
115	Eurasian Blackcap	<i>Sylvia atricapilla</i>	✓	✓							
116	Garden Warbler	<i>Sylvia borin</i>	H	✓					1	✓	✓
117	Lesser Whitethroat	<i>Sylvia curruca</i>			H	1				H	
118	Common Whitethroat	<i>Sylvia communis</i>								✓	✓
119	Goldcrest	<i>Regulus regulus</i>	H	H	2		1			1	H
120	Eurasian Wren	<i>Troglodytes troglodytes</i>		H					H	H	
121	Eurasian Nuthatch	<i>Sitta europaea</i>					1				1
122	Common Starling	<i>Sturnus vulgaris</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
123	Common Blackbird	<i>Turdus merula</i>	✓	✓						✓	✓
124	Fieldfare	<i>Turdus pilaris</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
125	Redwing	<i>Turdus iliacus</i>	1	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
126	Song Thrush	<i>Turdus philomelos</i>	✓	✓				H	H	H	
127	Mistle Thrush	<i>Turdus viscivorus</i>	✓	✓					1		1
128	European Robin	<i>Erithacus rubecula</i>	✓	✓							1
129	Bluethroat	<i>Luscinia svecica</i>				1			1	H	
130	Thrush Nightingale	<i>Luscinia luscinia</i>	H							H	
131	Common Redstart	<i>Phoenicurus phoenicurus</i>			H			1		H	
132	Whinchat	<i>Saxicola rubetra</i>		4				1		2	1
133	Northern Wheatear	<i>Oenanthe oenanthe</i>			1				2		
134	Spotted Flycatcher	<i>Muscicapa striata</i>	1	2	1	1			1	1	1
135	European Pied Flycatcher	<i>Ficedula hypoleuca</i>	1	1	2	2	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
136	White-throated Dipper	<i>Cinclus cinclus</i>			2	1			2	1	
137	House Sparrow	<i>Passer domesticus</i>		H					1	3	2
138	Eurasian Tree Sparrow	<i>Passer montanus</i>		4						2	1
139	Dunnock	<i>Prunella modularis</i>		1		H			H		
140	Western Yellow Wagtail	<i>Motacilla flava thunbergii</i>			2	8	✓			2	
141	Grey Wagtail	<i>Motacilla cinerea</i>			1					3	
142	White Wagtail	<i>Motacilla alba</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
143	Tree Pipit	<i>Anthus trivialis</i>	✓	✓	✓						
144	Meadow Pipit	<i>Anthus pratensis</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			
145	Common Chaffinch	<i>Fringilla coelebs</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
146	Brambling	<i>Fringilla montifringilla</i>			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
147	European Greenfinch	<i>Chloris chloris</i>	✓	✓	H	✓			1		
148	Eurasian Siskin	<i>Spinus spinus</i>	✓	✓	6	4			6	✓	
149	European Goldfinch	<i>Carduelis carduelis</i>		✓						3	1

	Common name	Scientific name	May/June							
			25	26	27	28	29	30	31	1
150	Common Redpoll	<i>Carduelis flammea</i>			1	6	4	1	H	
151	Common Rosefinch	<i>Carpodacus erythrinus</i>			H					1
152	Red Crossbill	<i>Loxia curvirostra</i>		1			8			
153	Eurasian Bullfinch	<i>Pyrrhula pyrrhula</i>				4	2			
154	Yellowhammer	<i>Emberiza citrinella</i>	✓	✓				H	1	H
155	Ortolan Bunting	<i>Emberiza hortulana</i>							H	
156	Common Reed Bunting	<i>Emberiza schoeniclus</i>	1					H	2	2
157	Lapland Longspur	<i>Calcarius lapponicus</i>					10			

## Mammals

1	Wild boar	<i>Sus scrofa</i>	1							1
2	Brown Hare	<i>Lepus europaeus</i>	✓	✓					1	
3	Roe Deer	<i>Capreolus capreolus</i>	✓	✓		✓		✓	1	
4	Red Fox	<i>Vulpes vulpes</i>		1						
5	Reindeer	<i>Rangifer tarandus</i>			✓	✓	✓	✓		
6	Otter	<i>Lutra lutra</i>							2	
7	Beaver	<i>castor fiber</i>							3	
8	Mountain Hare	<i>Lepus timidus</i>			1	1	4	2		

## Amphibians

1	Frog sp						1		1	
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## Butterflies

1	Green-veined White	<i>Pieris napi</i>						✓	✓	
2	Small White	<i>Pieris rapae</i>						✓	✓	
3	Small Tortoiseshell	<i>Aglais urticae</i>						✓	✓	
4	Brimstone	<i>Gonepteryx rhamni</i>						✓	✓	
5	Green Hairstreak	<i>Callophrys rubi</i>							✓	
6	Holly Blue	<i>Celastrina argiolus</i>							✓	
7	Swallowtail	<i>Papilio machaon</i>							✓	
8	Orange Tip	<i>Anthocharis cardamines</i>							✓	
9	Comma	<i>Polygonia c-album</i>							✓	
10	Peacock	<i>Inachis io</i>							✓	
11	Red Admiral	<i>Vanessa atalanta</i>							✓	
12	Camberwell Beauty	<i>Nymphalis antiopa</i>							✓	
13	Northern Wall	<i>Lasiomnata petropolitana</i>							✓	

## Dragonflies

1	White-Faced Darter	<i>Leucorrhinia dubia</i>								1
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Ruff