

Sweden in Autumn

Naturetrek Tour Report

7 - 11 September 2012



Geese in flight by Jean Silver

Report compiled by Daniel Green
Image courtesy of Jean Silver



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Day 1

Friday 7th September

We arrived at Västerås airport and headed out to a small lake where we enjoyed a good sandwich and some tea and coffee. Some Little Grebes, 4 Greenshanks, a Spotted Redshank, and several Marsh Harriers were seen, also some Teal, Whooper Swans and Greylag Geese. A Camberwell Beauty flew past but disappeared up into the canopies.

Up in the Black River Valley a well-grazed, flooded lakeside had 2 Ruffs among plenty of Yellow Wagtails and more than 100 Lapwings. Along the road towards the hotel the first Crane family with a young one fed in a field and a Great Grey Shrike perched on a dry tree stump. The sunset by Lake Fläcksjön was beautiful and clear. Pintails, Goldeneye and Coots were on the water. Some 150 Cranes flew into the area behind us. Water Rails were heard from the wetland.

Day 2

Saturday 8th September

Crested Tits and Marsh Tits offered good views on the hotel feeders. We went to the nearby forest where another feeding station attracted more birds. First we studied the Willow Tits and how to separate them from the Marsh Tits. Great spotted Woodpecker and several Nuthatches were busy feeding. Goldcrests moved around in the back. A walk down to the road and there came our target bird - the first Nutcracker flew by, and soon another. We walked further to get a better view by a clearing and now we're passed by several Nutcrackers flying back and forth between the wild Hazel stands and the spruce forest where they hide their food (Hazelnuts) for the winter to come. A Lesser Spotted Woodpecker flew past and perched for a short while in a dead tree.

Hjälstaviken was the next destination but we soon had to stop along the road when we spotted a soaring, big, raptor – an adult White-tailed Eagle! As we arrived at Hjälstaviken the sun was shining and we started to scan the big Goose-flock in front of us. At least eight Lesser White-fronted Geese, including two juvenile birds, were soon spotted among the several hundred Barnacle Geese. Down at the watchtower by the lake there was a lot of commotion as thousands of Geese, mostly Greylags and Barnacles, but also a big group of Bean Geese were flying in to the lagoon, or being flushed again and again by repeatedly approaching White-tailed Eagles. Several Common Buzzards, Marsh Harriers and a juvenile Goshawk were also up soaring. From the hide we soon found more Lesser White-fronts (altogether 20 or more) and also a surprising Brent Goose – a very coastal bird and not usually found inland.

The other side of the wetland offers a nice boardwalk through reed beds even if no Bearded Reedlings were seen this time. We had an enjoyable picnic as we found a sunny clearing to have coffee and homemade apple cake. Among plenty of Black-, Ruddy- and Common Darters several Migrant Hawkers are flying around us and perched at close quarters allowing photography. We climbed the rocky hilltop that provides a gorgeous view over the lake, quite different from the hide-view. A Rough-legged Buzzard was soaring above us, and again White-tailed Eagles and Raven.

A front of clouds approached and we hurried back to the van just in time to only get a little showered by the rain. The evening became clear again and the wind dropped just about enough for some 'owling'. On the third stop a Pygmy Owl answered our imitation and came a bit closer until it finally flew in really close over our heads. A bull Moose was just barely visible in the dusk as we drove back to the hotel.

Day 3

Sunday 9th September

It was a cold, slightly frosty morning with degrees below zero for the first time on this latitude. We drive to Färna ekopark and met with the Woodpecker expert Michael Rhönstad. It didn't take long until a Black Woodpecker was calling from across the clearing where we stood and soon it flew our way too, perching in a big Aspen tree, showing its unmistakable profile against the sky. But not only that, another long drumming call was heard; it was a Three-toed Woodpecker! A male was soon spotted on the top of a broken off, dry tree-stump out in the open, a perfect position for us and the bird seemed to think the same. A female was attracted to the scene and a 2nd male too. Within a short time we had no less than three "Three-toes" performing in the clear, calm, sunny morning just in front of us! Some Black Grouse were heard bubbling in the distance, but didn't show.

We drove a little bit further on the forest track, but the next clearing also required a stop. A greenish looking woodpecker just flew across. As we stepped out another Black Woodpecker also flew by, and yet another call drew our attention; that was a Grey-headed Woodpecker calling. After we approached the sound it sat perfectly perched in a tree top in front of us. It was a male, showing its bright red little beret. A little further away a forest lake opens by the track, and scopes were used to scan the surface, no less than five Black-throated Divers were swimming out there, diving repeatedly and approaching a bit to offer good views. All of them were in summer plumage. A short walk into the forest took us to a Beaver lodge, on the side of a flooded area. We called for Hazel Grouse but instead we get a flock of ten gorgeous Long-tailed Tits, really cute birds of the white-headed Scandinavian race. Crested- and Willow Tits were also seen. Lunch was enjoyed at some picnic tables by a lake, we looked for more divers but we had to settle for the five we got. Rufous Vapourer Moths were seen flying around every now and then.

We then went down to the lowlands and to the Kvismare Valley. After check in at our hotel we were using for the next two nights, we tried one of the hides in front of a wetland. It was teeming with birds, hundreds and hundreds of Greylag Geese were repeatedly taking to the air as White-tailed Eagles soared about. Also Cranes moved about in big flocks in the distance. In the lagoon in front of us a Red-necked Grebe and several Slavonian Grebes were found, amongst plentiful common ducks, Pintails, Pochards, Shoveler and Goldeneye. A female Merlin passed by. In the evening we went to another viewpoint where Cranes and Geese were all over the place. It was impossible to grasp a more exact number but we're talking several thousands Cranes flying in to their evening roost!

Day 4

Monday 10th September

We rose early to the sound of Cranes flying out to the surrounding fields in the Kvismare Valley, our B&B is situated in the farmlands just where the Cranes feed and only a minutes' drive from the lakes and wetlands. We were out just after dawn and enjoyed the sound of birds filling the air as we walked along the reed beds. The noise from hundreds or even thousands of Starlings roosting in the reeds, and geese and Cranes passing above us in steady traffic was amazing.

We met up with the ringing team at the Kvismare Bird observatory. Reed Warblers, Sedge Warblers, Reed Buntings and Yellowhammers were being ringed as we watched. Craig Brookes (the local warden – a young guy from Blackpool serving his second season here) got a young male Bluethroat to show us. Only the 2nd Bluethroat here this season so we were lucky. That is unusually few though, normally 30-40 are ringed in autumn around these dates. As we were about to leave the session one of the assistants give us another surprise – a Great Reed Warbler was pulled out of one of the mist-nets. ...not bad for a pre-breakfast excursion, one that really worked up our appetite!

So after a full breakfast at the B&B we headed out again to search the fields for big Crane flocks. We found some but it took a while until we could get reasonably close. The farmlands are full of them! We found a couple of colour-ringed birds that hopefully can be identified down to individual. We also found some Whinchats, plenty of Wheatears, and at Hammarmaden a possible Red-throated Pipit flew over and calling, but not showing more than like a silhouette in the air. There was a well-grazed lakeside meadow with a lot of action. This is where most of the 3-500 Bean Geese and 1,000 Barnacle Geese were standing. A Bar-headed Goose was a surprising find and an aberrant Lapwing that was almost white stood out in the crowd of about a thousand or more Lapwings. All of them took to the wing as an adult male Peregrine soared above for a while. Later a splendid individual sat in a tree and as it flew away it appeared to be a much bigger bird, a female. The Crane flock at this place also showed an aberrant individual, an unusually pale beige Crane with red on the forehead rather than on the top of the head, it almost looked like a hybrid Common X Sandhill Crane! The Peregrine was suddenly replaced by an adult White-tailed Eagle, no two, and then a juvenile...and altogether there were four eagles sitting in front of us, the local pair with this year's brood!

A well hidden, flooded area with mudflats was explored but we only found some Dunlins and a few Common Snipe. A platform hidden further out into the reeds, became a nice place for a picnic lunch and here we had extraordinary close views of a male Lesser Spotted Woodpecker, some Long-tailed Tits, Brambling, plenty of Barn Swallows, a juvenile Red-backed Shrike and a Grass Snake. We returned here for the evening session and along the track saw some Spotted Flycatchers and a close Brambling with plenty of Chaffinch and Willow Warbler. Tonight the sunset was colourful and the influx of Cranes was like a massive eruption. We found ourselves in the middle of thousands of Cranes pouring in over, behind and in front of us - as loud as a concert. Even the normally loudmouthed Water Rails were difficult to hear. The Bird observatory Crane count reached 14,000 Cranes this evening!

A little after dusk a detour to look for owls immediately resulted in a Short-eared Owl sitting in the headlights of the car in front of us, allowing our approach and even some pictures.

Back home at the hotel the moth lamp was lit for the second night and after the roll call over a glass of wine, we went outside to play Tawny Owl calls and yes...it didn't take long until an owl materialised in the bright light of the mercury lamp, it even came back a second time to our astonishment.

Day 5

Tuesday 11th September

A Clifden Nonpareil sat on the canvas in the morning, a couple of other good moth species too; Frosted Orange, Lesser Yellow Underwing, August Thorn, Burnished Brass, Barred Sallow, and Setaceous Hebrew Character, to mention but a few.

We made a short pre-breakfast walk down by the lagoons and reed beds. About 1,000 Starlings landed in a tree, and the stream of Geese and Cranes in the air went on for more than an hour. Another Lesser Spotted Woodpecker showed really well. A Bearded Reedling “goes ping” a couple of times and approached but just to show briefly as it flew past the track through the reeds. The hill we sat on was a nice little viewpoint with some activity around. A dragonfly sitting in the grass proved to be another Migrant Hawker. A last meeting with a good flock of Cranes was had on our final visit in the Kvismare Valley.

After breakfast we stopped at the site Oset, just 15 km away. A couple of mud puddles in a grazed area was lively with waders, some 20-30 Dunlins, some Greenshanks, a Spotted Redshank, a bit further away Ruffs, Ringed Plovers, and among them 5-6 Little Stints that we could walk up to at pretty close range. A surprise was a Pectoral Sandpiper showing among the Ruffs and then walking on it's own – a scarce vagrant here in Sweden.

Since the flight home was a bit later than normal we had time for a trip to the forest habitat of the Black River area, where we could enjoy some more views of Nutcrackers, another Peregrine and also really good views of Camberwell Beauties.

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Species List

Birds (✓ = recorded but not counted; f=female, m=male; H = heard only)

	Common Names	Scientific name	September				
			7	8	9	10	11
1	Black-throated Diver	<i>Gavia arctica</i>			5		
2	Great Crested Grebe	<i>Podiceps cristatus</i>	✓	✓	✓		
3	Red-necked Grebe	<i>Podiceps grisegena</i>			1 juv		
4	Little Grebe	<i>Tachybaptus subruficollis</i>	2		1		
5	Slavonian Grebe	<i>Podiceps auritus</i>			5		
6	Cormorant	<i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	
7	Grey Heron	<i>Ardea cinerea</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	
8	Mute Swan	<i>Cygnus olor</i>		✓	✓	✓	
9	Whooper Swan	<i>Cygnus cygnus</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	
10	Brent goose	<i>Branta bernicla</i>		1			
11	Bar-headed Goose	<i>Anser indicus</i>				1	
12	Bean Goose	<i>Anser fabalis</i>		1.000	100	300	50
13	Lesser White-fronted Goose	<i>Anser erythropus</i>		20+			
14	Greylag Goose	<i>Anser anser</i>	✓	10.000	5.000	5.000	✓
15	Canada Goose	<i>Branta canadensis</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
16	Barnacle Goose	<i>Branta leucopsis</i>		1.000	300	500	✓
17	Wigeon	<i>Anas penelope</i>	✓	✓	200	300	✓
18	Teal	<i>Anas crecca</i>	✓	✓	✓	200	✓
19	Gadwall	<i>Anas strepera</i>		1	12	450	
20	Mallard	<i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
21	Pintail	<i>Anas acuta</i>	2		✓	✓	
22	Shoveler	<i>Anas clypeata</i>			1	✓	
23	Pochard	<i>Aythya ferina</i>			10		
24	Tufted Duck	<i>Aythya fulicula</i>		✓	✓		
25	Goldeneye	<i>Bucephala clangula</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
26	Sparrowhawk	<i>Accipiter nisus</i>		1	1		1
27	Goshawk	<i>Accipiter gentilis</i>		1			
28	Hen Harrier	<i>Circus cyaneus</i>				2	
29	Marsh Harrier	<i>Circus aeruginosus</i>	✓	✓	✓	12+	✓
30	Common Buzzard	<i>Buteo buteo</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
31	Rough-legged Buzzard	<i>Buteo lagopus</i>		1			
32	White-tailed Eagle	<i>Haliaeetus albicilla</i>		4+	4	6+	✓
33	Kestrel	<i>Falco tinnunculus</i>				1	
34	Merlin	<i>Falco columbianus</i>			1 f	1 f	
35	Peregrine	<i>Falco peregrinus</i>				2 ad	1 juv f
36	Black Grouse	<i>Tetrao tetrix</i>			H		
37	Water Rail	<i>Rallus aquaticus</i>	H			H	H
38	Coot	<i>Fulica atra</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
39	Common Crane	<i>Grus grus</i>	200	200	10.000	14.000	✓
40	Ringed Plover	<i>Charadrius hiaticula</i>					5+
41	Golden Plover	<i>Pluvialis apricaria</i>					3

	Common Names	Scientific name	September				
			7	8	9	10	11
42	Lapwing	<i>Vanellus vanellus</i>	✓	✓	✓	1.000+	✓
43	Dunlin	<i>Calidris alpina</i>				4	20+
44	Ruff	<i>Philomachus pugnax</i>	2	6		✓	✓
45	Pectoral Sandpiper	<i>Calidris melanotos</i>					1 juv
46	Common Curlew	<i>Numenius arquata</i>				3	
47	Spotted Redshank	<i>Tringa erythropus</i>	1				2
48	Greenshank	<i>Tringa nebularia</i>	4				2
49	Common Snipe	<i>Gallinago gallinago</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓
50	Little Stint	<i>Calidris minuta</i>					6
51	Black-headed Gull	<i>Larus ridibundus</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
52	Common Gull	<i>Larus canus</i>	✓	✓	✓		✓
53	Herring Gull	<i>Larus argentatus</i>		2			
54	Woodpigeon	<i>Columba palumbus</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
55	Stock Dove	<i>Columba oenas</i>		2		2	✓
56	Feral Pigeon	<i>Columba livia</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
57	Short-eared Owl	<i>Asio flammeus</i>				1	
58	Tawny Owl	<i>Strix aluco</i>				1	
59	Pygmy Owl	<i>Glaucidium passerinum</i>		1			
60	Black Woodpecker	<i>Dryocopus martius</i>			4+		1
61	Green Woodpecker	<i>Picus viridis</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	
62	Grey-headed Woodpecker	<i>Picus canus</i>		1 m			
63	Great Spotted Woodpecker	<i>Dendrocopos major</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
64	Lesser Spotted Woodpecker	<i>Dendrocopos minor</i>		1		1 m	2
65	Three-toed Woodpecker	<i>Picoides tridactylus</i>			3		
66	Skylark	<i>Alauda arvensis</i>	✓	✓		✓	✓
67	Swallow	<i>Hirundo rustica</i>	✓	✓	✓	100:eds	✓
68	Tree Pipit	<i>Anthus trivialis</i>		✓	✓		
69	Meadow Pipit	<i>Anthus pratensis</i>				✓	✓
70	White Wagtail	<i>Motacilla alba alba</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
71	Yellow Wagtail	<i>Motacilla flava thunbergii</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
72	Wren	<i>Troglodytes troglodytes</i>			✓		
73	Dunnock	<i>Prunella modularis</i>		✓	✓		
74	Robin	<i>Erithacus rubecula</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
75	Bluethroat	<i>Luscinia svecica</i>				1 m	
76	Whinchat	<i>Saxicola rubetra</i>				3	
77	Northern Wheatear	<i>Oenanthe oenanthe</i>	✓	✓	✓	20+	✓
78	Blackbird	<i>Turdus merula</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
79	Fieldfare	<i>Turdus pilaris</i>	✓	✓	✓		✓
80	Song Thrush	<i>Turdus philomelos</i>				✓	✓
81	Redwing	<i>Turdus iliacus</i>			✓		
82	Mistle Thrush	<i>Turdus viscivorus</i>			✓		✓
83	Great Reed Warbler	<i>Acrocephalus arundinaceus</i>				1 juv	
84	Sedge Warbler	<i>Acrocephalus schoenobaenus</i>				4	
85	Reed Warbler	<i>Acrocephalus scirpaceus</i>				10	

	Common Names	Scientific name	September				
			7	8	9	10	11
86	Blackcap	<i>Sylvia atricapilla</i>				1	
87	Willow Warbler	<i>Phylloscopus trochilus</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓
88	Goldcrest	<i>Regulus regulus</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓
89	Spotted Flycatcher	<i>Muscicapa striata</i>				2	
90	Marsh Tit	<i>Parus palustris</i>		2		✓	✓
91	Willow Tit	<i>Parus montanus</i>		6+	✓		✓
92	Crested Tit	<i>Parus cristatus</i>		5+	✓		✓
93	Blue Tit	<i>Parus caeruleus</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
94	Great Tit	<i>Parus major</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
95	Coat Tit	<i>Parus ater</i>		✓			✓
96	Long-tailed Tit	<i>Aegithalos caudatus</i>			10	10+	
97	Bearded Reedling	<i>Panurus biarmictus</i>					1
98	Common Treecreeper	<i>Certhia familiaris</i>			1		
99	Nuthatch	<i>Sitta europaea</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
100	Red-backed Shrike	<i>Lanius collurio</i>				1 juv	
101	Great Grey Shrike	<i>Lanius excubitor</i>	1				
102	Starling	<i>Sturnus vulgaris</i>			300	100:eds	1.000+
103	Jay	<i>Garrulus glandarius</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓
104	Nutcracker	<i>Nucifraga caryocatactes</i>		4+			2+
105	Magpie	<i>Pica pica</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
106	Jackdaw	<i>Corvus monedula</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
107	Raven	<i>Corvus corax</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
108	Hooded Crow	<i>Corvus cornix</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
109	Tree Sparrow	<i>Passer montanus</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓
110	Chaffinch	<i>Fringilla coelebs</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
111	Siskin	<i>Carduelis spinus</i>		✓	✓		✓
112	Greenfinch	<i>Carduelis chloris</i>	✓	✓	✓		✓
113	Goldfinch	<i>Carduelis carduelis</i>		✓			✓
114	Linnet	<i>Carduelis cannabina</i>		✓			
115	Bullfinch	<i>Pyrrhula pyrrhula</i>			H		
116	Yellowhammer	<i>Emberiza citrinella</i>		✓		✓	✓
117	Reed Bunting	<i>Emberiza schoeniclus</i>				✓	✓
118	Brambling	<i>Fringilla Montifringilla</i>				✓	✓

Mammals

1	Moose	<i>Alces alces</i>	5				
2	Brown hare	<i>Lepus europaeus</i>					
3	Red Squirrel	<i>Sciurus vulgaris</i>			1		

Butterflies

1	Small White	<i>Pieris rapae</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
2	Camberwell Beauty	<i>Nymphalis antiopa</i>	1			1	3+
3	Small tortoiseshell	<i>Aglais urticae</i>	✓				✓
4	Brimstone	<i>Gonepteryx rhamni</i>				✓	✓

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			7	8	9	10	11
5	Red Admiral	<i>Vanessa atalanta</i>					1
6	Comma	<i>Polygonia c-album</i>					2

Moths

1	Clifden Nonpareil	<i>Catocala fraxin</i>			1	1	1
2	Barred Sallow	<i>Xantia auruga</i>				1	1
3	Burnished Brass	<i>Diachrysia chrysitis</i>				1	1
4	August Thorn	<i>Ennomos quercinaria</i>			6	✓	✓
5	Vapourer	<i>Orgyia antiqua</i>			✓	✓	✓
6	Silver Y	<i>Autographa gamma</i>					
7	Fox Moth	<i>Macrothylacia rubi</i> (caterpillar)					1
8	Goat Moth	<i>Cossus cossus</i> (caterpillar)				1	
9	Straw dot	<i>Rivula sericealis</i>				1	
10	Frosted Orange	<i>Gortyna flavago</i>				1	
11	Lesser Yellow Underwing	<i>Noctua comes</i>				1	
12	Setaceous Hebrew Character	<i>Xestia c-nigrum</i>				1	4
13	Red-green Carpet	<i>Chloroclysta siterata</i>				2	
14	Lunar Yellow Underwing	<i>Noctua orbona</i>				1	

Odonata

1	Migrant Hawker	<i>Aeshna mixta</i>		6+		✓	✓
2	Brown Hawker	<i>Aeshna grandis</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
3	Black Darter	<i>Sympetrum danae</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
4	Ruddy Darter	<i>Sympetrum sanguineum</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
5	Common Darter	<i>Sympetrum striolatum</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓