

Finland - Just Brown Bears!

Naturetrek Tour Report

27 - 30 June 2008



Report compiled by Kenny Ross (tour participant)
Images by Kenny Ross



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Day 1

Friday 27th June

We had to be at the airport early for our 0530 departure to Helsinki and our onward connection to Oulu. Helsinki is a really nice airport and we had time to plan our airport shopping for the return leg of the trip. An hour's flight over vast expanses of forest and lakes and we were there. On landing there were Common Cranes and in the trees outside the terminal we found Redstarts and White Wagtails and our only Sparrowhawk flew over.

Our trusty guide arrived and we only needed to wait for one more tour participant who was on a later flight from Iltay and then we were off. Sadly it was raining, but spirits were raised by a stop for coffee beside a lake that had Black-throated Divers and the most elusive Chaffinch in the world. Four hours or so later we were at the Wildlife Centre which was new, clean, and friendly...and by now it was sunny.

We had our first meal and then most of us went wandering along the road to see what was there. We all saw Wood Sandpiper and Catriona and Kenny saw their first Rustic Buntings. We decided that we didn't like the look of a nasty dark cloud and opted to return to the Centre.

Day 2

Saturday 28th June

Saturday arrived and it was sunny. In fact we never really saw any bad weather throughout the whole trip! We set off after a hearty breakfast and some birding in the grounds (lots of Bullfinches and Greenfinches, Great spotted Woodpeckers and Red Squirrels).

We spent the rest of the morning visiting various lakes and picked up Common Cranes, Smew, Whooper Swans, and a range of ducks and waders. Back for lunch (moose soup for the non-veggies) and time to get ready for the bear hide.

A short trip in the bus and a thirty minute walk and we were there. We had the new hide to ourselves! The first bears arrived shortly after we did. We then sat and watched more than 20 different bears work their way through the salmon off-cuts that are put out for them. We had this year's cubs (very cute) as well as last year's!

The deposed king of the bears put in an appearance and he was looking battered and worse for wear. For about eight hours all you could hear were the shutters of eight cameras every time a bear did anything interesting!

Of course bears were not all we saw – we were visited by a White-tailed Eagle and a Black Kite (one of less than 30 in Finland) as well as four different gulls. One by one we dropped off to sleep on the bunk beds...

Day 3

Sunday 29th June

We awoke early and set off back to base – all of us happy with our bear sightings. Quick showers and breakfast, and then we had the option of sleep or to go out into the forest. A number of new birds included Redwings and both Common and Parrot Crossbills. The highlight was probably a pair of Siberian Jays that were accidentally found whilst we were unsuccessfully trying to track down a Three-toed Woodpecker.

Back for lunch – and decision time – should we go and see more bears (half the group) or walk along the quieter roads searching for Moose and Reindeer. The bear hide group saw similar numbers of bears although they seemed somewhat more active (more tree climbing). Sadly there were no mammal sightings on the walk, but we did see a lot of Yellow Wagtails and more Wood Sandpipers along with Whinchat and Wheatear.

Day 4

Monday 30th June

Our last day...we said goodbye to the resident squirrels and reindeer, and saw the first Spotted Flycatcher (Pied Flycatchers were nesting on the nest boxes in the Centre). On the journey to the airport we came across a party of female Reindeer (and their calves), and later some Black-throated Divers so we could add these to the trip species list. After a coffee and ice-cream stop we were at Oulu.

Overall this was a fantastic weekend – great photo opportunities, some interesting birds and lots of bears!

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Species Lists

Birds

	Common name	Scientific name	June			
			27	28	29	30
1	Black-throated Diver	<i>Gavia arctica</i>	X	X		X
2	Whooper Swan	<i>Cygnus cygnus</i>	X	X		
3	Eurasian Wigeon	<i>Anas penelope</i>		X		
4	Eurasian Teal	<i>Anas crecca</i>		X	X	
5	Mallard	<i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>		X		
6	Northern Pintail	<i>Anas acuta</i>		X		
7	Tufted Duck	<i>Aythya fuligula</i>		X	X	
8	Smew	<i>Mergellus albellus</i>		X		
9	Common Goldeneye	<i>Bucephala clangula</i>		X		
10	Common Merganser	<i>Mergus merganser</i>		X		
11	European Honey-buzzard	<i>Pernis apivorus</i>			X	
12	Black Kite	<i>Milvus migrans</i>		X	X	
13	White-tailed Eagle	<i>Haliaeetus albicilla</i>		X	X	
14	Eurasian Marsh Harrier	<i>Circus aeruginosus</i>	X			
15	Eurasian Sparrowhawk	<i>Accipiter nisus</i>	X			
16	Ring-necked Pheasant	<i>Phasianus colchicus</i>				X
17	Common Crane	<i>Grus grus</i>	X	X		
18	Northern Lapwing	<i>Vanellus vanellus</i>		X		
19	Eurasian Woodcock	<i>Scolopax rusticola</i>	X			X
20	Common Snipe	<i>Gallinago gallinago</i>		X		
21	Eurasian Curlew	<i>Numenius arquata</i>	X			X
22	Common Greenshank	<i>Tringa nebularia</i>		X		
23	Wood Sandpiper	<i>Tringa glareola</i>	X	X	X	
24	Little Gull	<i>Hydrocoloeus minutus</i>	X			
25	Common Gull	<i>Larus canus</i>	X	X	X	X
26	European Herring Gull	<i>Larus argentatus</i>	X	X	X	
27	Lesser Black-backed (Baltic)Gull	<i>Larus fuscus</i>		X	X	
28	Black-headed Gull	<i>Larus ridibundus</i>	X	X	X	
29	Arctic Tern	<i>Sterna paradisaea</i>		X		
30	Woodpigeon	<i>Columba palumbus</i>	X	X		
31	Common Cuckoo	<i>Cuculus canorus</i>	X	X	X	
32	Common Swift	<i>Apus apus</i>	X	X	X	X
33	Great Spotted Woodpecker	<i>Dendrocopos major</i>	X	X	X	X
34	Barn Swallow	<i>Hirundo rustica</i>	X	X	X	X
35	House Martin	<i>Delichon urbicum</i>	X		X	X
36	White Wagtail	<i>Motacilla alba</i>	X	X	X	X
37	Grey-headed Wagtail	<i>Motacilla flava thunbergi</i>		X	X	
38	Tree Pipit	<i>Anthus trivialis</i>	X	X	X	
39	Meadow Pipit	<i>Anthus pratensis</i>		X		
40	Goldcrest	<i>Regulus regulus</i>			X	
41	Waxwing	<i>Bombycilla garrulus</i>		X		
42	Fieldfare	<i>Turdus pilaris</i>	X	X	X	X
43	Redwing	<i>Turdus iliacus</i>			X	
44	Song Thrush	<i>Turdus philomelos</i>	X	X	X	
45	Mistle Thrush	<i>Turdus viscivorus</i>			X	
46	Willow Warbler	<i>Phylloscopus trochilus</i>		X		
47	Common Chiffchaff	<i>Phylloscopus collybita</i>			X	

	Common name	Scientific name	June			
			27	28	29	30
48	Lesser Whitethroat	<i>Sylvia curruca</i>			X	
49	Spotted Flycatcher	<i>Muscicapa striata</i>				X
50	European Pied Flycatcher	<i>Ficedula hypoleuca</i>		X	X	
51	European Robin	<i>Erithacus rubecula</i>	X		X	
52	Common Redstart	<i>Phoenicurus phoenicurus</i>	X			
53	Whinchat	<i>Saxicola rubetra</i>			X	
54	Northern Wheatear	<i>Oenanthe oenanthe</i>			X	
55	Willow Tit	<i>Poecile montana</i>	X			
56	Great Tit	<i>Parus major</i>		X		
57	Eurasian Blue Tit	<i>Cyanistes caeruleus</i>		X	X	
58	Great Grey Shrike	<i>Lanius excubitor</i>		X		
59	Siberian Jay	<i>Perisoreus infaustus</i>			X	
60	Eurasian Jay	<i>Garrulus glandarius</i>	X	X		
61	Eurasian Magpie	<i>Pica pica</i>	X			X
62	Rook	<i>Corvus frugilegus</i>				X
63	Eurasian Jackdaw	<i>Corvus monedula</i>	X			X
64	Hooded Crow	<i>Corvus cornix</i>	X	X		X
65	Common Raven	<i>Corvus corax</i>	X	X	X	
66	European Starling	<i>Sturnus vulgaris</i>	X			X
67	Chaffinch	<i>Fringilla coelebs</i>		X	X	X
68	Brambling	<i>Fringilla montifringilla</i>		X	X	X
69	Parrot Crossbill	<i>Loxia pytyopsittacus</i>			X	
70	Common Crossbill	<i>Loxia curvirostra</i>			X	
71	European Greenfinch	<i>Carduelis chloris</i>	X	X	X	X
72	Common Redpoll	<i>Carduelis flammea</i>			X	
73	Eurasian Siskin	<i>Carduelis spinus</i>		X	X	X
74	Eurasian Bullfinch	<i>Pyrrhula pyrrhula</i>		X	X	X
75	Rustic Bunting	<i>Emberiza rustica</i>	X		X	

Mammals

1	Brown Bear	<i>Ursus arctos arctos</i>		X	X	
2	Red Squirrel	<i>Sciurus vulgaris</i>	X	X	X	X
3	Reindeer	<i>Rangifer tarandus</i>	X	X	X	X