

Norway's Varanger Fjord

Naturetrek Tour Report

17th – 21st March 2026



Brünnich's Guillemot



Pine Grosbeak



Steller's Eiders



Siberian Tit

Tour report by Pirita Latja
Photos by Phil Birch



Naturetrek Mingledown Barn Wolf's Lane Chawton Alton Hampshire GU34 3HJ UK

T: +44 (0)1962 733051

E: info@naturetrek.co.uk

W: www.naturetrek.co.uk

Tour participants: Pirita Latja (leader) with seven Naturetrek clients

Day 1

Tuesday 17th March

The group arrived at Ivalo airport and met the local guide, Pirita. We enjoyed a welcome dinner at Hotel Ivalo.

Day 2

Wednesday 18th March

Today we had a long drive north. In the morning, we tried a traditional Capercaillie lek site, but there were no sightings as the weather was very warm and windy.

A stop at the bird cafe in Kaamanen produced all the wishlist birds: a delightful number of Pine Grosbeaks singing away, a pair of Siberian Jays and a Siberian Tit on feeders, a couple of Willow Tits, and Red Squirrels. A Brambling and a Redpoll were seen briefly too, as well as Greenfinches and some House Sparrows.

Heading towards the border and lunch, we had a lone Snow Bunting along the road. Otherwise, scanning did not bring us any new birds. After lunch in Nuorgam, we crossed the Norwegian border and soon arrived to the western end of Varangerfjord. At our very first stop, we had a male King Eider, a little way offshore. However, it was nice to enjoy our first views! Long-tailed Ducks, Black Guillemots, our first Purple Sandpipers and Mallards were spotted as well.

We continued towards Vardö, making stops along the fjord. In Vadsö, we first found a pair of Common Eiders, and not long afterwards, a small flock of Steller's Eiders. Long-tailed Ducks and a bigger flock of about thirty Common Eiders were seen as well, and we had a Goosander and Red-breasted Merganser.

During the rest of the drive to Vardö, we admired the pink evening sky and some Kittiwakes along the shore.

Day 3

Thursday 19th March

We did an early morning excursion on Vardö island, looking for Willow Grouse, but we had no luck. Scanning the sea produced a few Common Eider and Mallards: we headed back to the hotel for breakfast.

Our visit to Hornøya island just off Vardö was wonderful: the experience is overwhelming every time. Thousands of arctic seabirds had already arrived, and we had excellent views of Brünnich's and Common Guillemots, Razorbills, Puffins, Shags and Kittiwakes. The signs of avian flu in the Kittiwake population were evident: there were many empty nests on the cliffs.

We also saw Herring Gulls, the odd Glaucous Gull and Ravens on the island. It was strange that no White-tailed Eagles were seen!

After lunch at the hotel, we explored nearby harbour areas on the mainland, and had marvellous close views of Steller's Eider! As we drove over the short highland road back towards Vadsö, we scanned for Ptarmigan and Arctic Fox, but unfortunately with no luck. In Kiberg harbour, we scanned the sea for White-billed Diver, but were only able to spot one Steller's Eider in the harbour. We also spotted a big raft of eiders out at sea, but were

not able to find a good viewing site, and the birds were far from shore. There must have been around three or four thousand birds in total, mostly Common Eiders, but also King Eiders.

We returned to the hotel for a lovely evening meal.

Day 4

Friday 20th March

Today we retraced our steps to Ivalo. First, we spent some time in Vardö, finding a closer viewing point for the big raft of eiders offshore. Everyone was able to see the King Eiders among the Common Eiders this time. Kiberg harbour had eight Steller's Eiders this time. Along the road, we managed to find a Willow Grouse among the scrub, and had good views.



'Bridled' Common Guillemot



Purple Sandpiper



Siberian Jay



Willow Grouse

Soon it was time to say goodbyes to Varanger Fjord, and continue back to Finland. We once again enjoyed lunch in Nuorgam at the border, and had a photo stop in Utsjoki at the bridge. We made another stop at the bird café in Kaamanen, having further views of Siberian Jay, Siberian Tit and Pine Grosbeak. We also checked a Capercaillie tip on the way to Ivalo, but none was seen. After the long drive, we arrived safely to Ivalo for our last night.

Day 5

Saturday 21st March

After breakfast, we departed for Ivalo airport and said our farewells!

Receive our e-newsletter

Join the Naturetrek email list and be the first to hear about new tours, additional departures and new dates, tour reports and special offers.

naturetrek.co.uk/e-newsletter-signup

Scan to
sign up!



Social Media

We're social! Follow us on Instagram, Facebook, Bluesky and X and be the first to hear about the launch of new tours, offers, exciting sightings and photos from our recently returned holidays.



[instagram.com/naturetrek_wildlife_holidays](https://www.instagram.com/naturetrek_wildlife_holidays)



[facebook.com/naturetrekwildlifeholidays](https://www.facebook.com/naturetrekwildlifeholidays)



naturetrek.bsky.social



x.com/naturetrektours (formerly Twitter)

Species lists

Birds (H=heard only)

I=Introduced	Common name	Scientific name	March 2026			
			18	19	20	21
	Greylag Goose	<i>Anser anser</i>			✓	
	Mallard	<i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>	✓	✓	✓	
	Steller's Eider	<i>Polysticta stelleri</i>	✓	✓	✓	
	King Eider	<i>Somateria spectabilis</i>	✓	✓	✓	
	Common Eider	<i>Somateria mollissima</i>	✓	✓	✓	
	Long-tailed Duck	<i>Clangula hyemalis</i>	✓	✓	✓	
	Goosander	<i>Mergus merganser</i>	✓			
	Red-breasted Merganser	<i>Mergus serrator</i>	✓	✓	✓	
	Willow Ptarmigan	<i>Lagopus lagopus</i>			✓	
	Rock Dove - I	<i>Columba livia</i>	✓	✓	✓	
	Purple Sandpiper	<i>Calidris maritima</i>	✓	✓	✓	
	Black-legged Kittiwake	<i>Rissa tridactyla</i>	✓	✓	✓	
	European Herring Gull	<i>Larus argentatus</i>	✓	✓	✓	
	Great Black-backed Gull	<i>Larus marinus</i>	✓	✓	✓	
	Glaucous Gull	<i>Larus hyperboreus</i>		✓	✓	
	Atlantic Puffin	<i>Fratercula arctica</i>		✓		
	Black Guillemot	<i>Cepphus grylle</i>	✓	✓	✓	
	Razorbill	<i>Alca torda</i>		✓		
	Brunnich's Guillemot	<i>Uria lomvia</i>		✓		
	Common Guillemot	<i>Uria aalge</i>		✓		
	Great Cormorant	<i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>		✓	✓	
	European Shag	<i>Gulosus aristotelis</i>		✓		
	White-tailed Eagle	<i>Haliaeetus albicilla</i>	✓			
	Siberian Jay	<i>Perisoreus infaustus</i>	✓		✓	
	Eurasian Magpie	<i>Pica pica</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Carrion Crow	<i>Corvus corone</i>	✓	✓	✓	
	Northern Raven	<i>Corvus corax</i>	✓	✓	✓	
	Bohemian Waxwing	<i>Bombycilla garrulus</i>	✓			
	Siberian Tit	<i>Poecile cinctus</i>	✓		✓	
	Willow Tit	<i>Poecile montanus</i>	✓		✓	
	Eurasian Blue Tit	<i>Cyanistes caeruleus</i>	✓			
	Great Tit	<i>Parus major</i>	✓		✓	
	House Sparrow	<i>Passer domesticus</i>	✓	✓	✓	
	Brambling	<i>Fringilla montifringilla</i>	✓		✓	
	Pine Grosbeak	<i>Pinicola enucleator</i>	✓		✓	
	Eurasian Bullfinch	<i>Pyrrhula pyrrhula</i>	✓		✓	
	European Greenfinch	<i>Chloris chloris</i>	✓	✓	✓	
	Redpoll	<i>Acanthis flammea</i>	✓			
	Snow Bunting	<i>Plectrophenax nivalis</i>	✓			

Mammals

I=Introduced		March 2026			
Common name	Scientific name	18	19	20	21
Eurasian Red Squirrel	<i>Sciurus vulgaris</i>	✓		✓	
Reindeer - I	<i>Rangifer tarandus</i>	✓		✓	
Grey Seal	<i>Halichoerus grypus</i>	✓			
Eurasian Otter	<i>Lutra lutra</i>		✓		