

# Poland's Primeval Forests

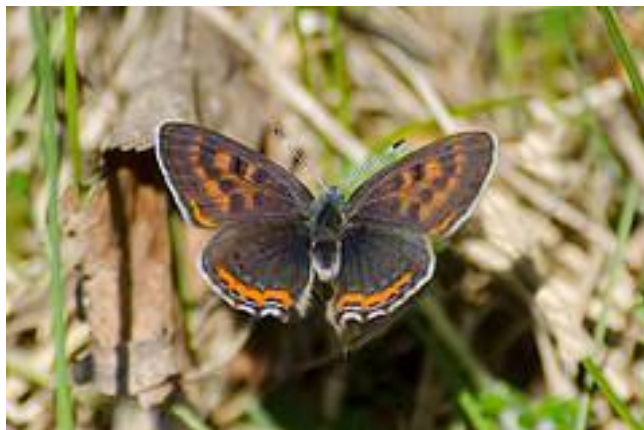
Naturetrek Tour Report

1 – 4 May 2015

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White-backed Woodpecker



Violet Copper



Bialowieza Meadows at sunrise



Black Woodpecker

Report & images compiled by Tim Melling



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Tour Leader:	Tim Melling	Naturetrek ornithologist
	Andrew Petryna	Local guide & naturalist
	Ten clients	

## Day 1

Friday 1st May

### LHR to Warsaw airport to Białoweiza village via Dojlidy Fishponds

We flew from Heathrow to Warsaw and arrived 25 minutes ahead of schedule. Customs, passport control and baggage reclaim were amazingly quick and we met our local guide Andrew and our driver Gregory straight away, and were on the road by 11am. We were at our lunchtime stop at about 12:30 – sausage soup and dumplings.

Another session in the minibus and we started to see lots of White Storks in roadside fields and on nesting poles. We also saw a Montagu's Harrier by the roadside. We arrived at Dojlidy Fishponds by 4pm, unfortunately just as a heavy downpour began (but our only significant rain of the whole trip). Aside from the large Black-headed Gull colony, we were lucky enough to see Red-necked Grebes displaying. Here too we found a Penduline Tit, 20 White-winged Black Terns, two Whiskered Terns, 20 Little Gulls, several Great Reed Warblers and one obliging Savi's Warbler. Also on view were flocks of Ruffs and Green Sandpipers, Marsh Harriers and an adult White-tailed Eagle. The amphibians were good too with chorusing Marsh Frogs and Yellow-bellied Toads. But with another 90 minutes to drive, we reached our fantastic hotel in Białoweiza village at 7pm. Not long after dinner, we were all ready to turn in for the night.

## Day 2

Saturday 2nd May

### Dawn walk in Strict Reserve. Siemianówka reservoir south.

Everyone was up and ready for 4:45am when we headed north of the village to look for Bison. Alas, it was misty but we did see lots of good birds: Cuckoo, Whinchat, Woodlark, Hawfinch. We then headed for the Strict Reserve that had not been worked since 1921. Here we were met by our guide Arek who told us all about the history, flora and fauna. We were greeted by a singing Wood Warbler and it wasn't long before we started to see Collared Flycatchers. We were told that a Pied Flycatcher was a rare sighting but we were a bit blasé about them as, compared with Collared, they are quite common in the UK. We were shown a nest of White-backed Woodpecker and we watched both male and female bringing food back. We also saw a couple of other White-backed Woodpeckers plus great views of a Middle Spotted Woodpeckers. It was then time to return for breakfast at 9am, even though it felt like lunchtime.

After breakfast, we headed out to the reservoir about an hour's drive north of the village, stopping a couple of times en route for some stunning views of Lesser Spotted Eagles. We also stopped along a forest road and found our own nest of a Black Woodpecker. We also heard a Lesser Spotted Woodpecker but only had fleeting glimpses. We then arrived at the lake and immediately saw Hobbies, Marsh Harriers, White-tailed Eagles and the full suite of Marsh Terns. But birds weren't the only things on offer, as we found Sand Lizards, Tree Frogs, Large Tortoiseshell, Map Butterfly, Wood White and Violet Copper. Violet Copper is listed as endangered by the IUCN and is listed as very rare in Poland, so we were extremely lucky to chance upon it. After lunch, we drove round to the north side of the reservoir where we saw Peregrine Falcon, two Cranes and rarest of all, two Greater Spotted Eagles, with Lesser Spotted Eagle and White-tailed Eagle for good measure.

We then returned to the hotel for an early dinner. At 7pm, we set off out into the forest in search of Pygmy Owl and had brilliant prolonged views almost as soon as we arrived. Two white-headed Long-tailed Tits and a Roding Woodcock added to the wonderful day's list. Unfortunately an evening search for Bison proved fruitless.

## Day 3

Sunday 3rd May

### Białoweiza Forest

It was sunny all morning, clouded over in the afternoon with one shower, and there was little breeze. We were up at dawn for another try for Bison and this time we had good luck. We spotted two male Bison straight away and they allowed approach to within about 200m. After this, we went to look for woodpeckers and Sally spotted an Elk, just before it sloped back into the forest. We all managed to see Grey-headed Woodpecker and Middle Spotted Woodpecker before breakfast. At breakfast, we all watched Wrynecks in the garden plus Black Redstarts. After breakfast, it was back in the forest to look for our missing woodpecker; the elusive Three-toed. After a while we managed good close views of both male and female Three-toed Woodpeckers. Soon afterwards, we all saw male and female Lesser Spotted Woodpeckers and another Grey-headed Woodpecker. After this, we had a walk in the local park and saw more Wrynecks, Hawfinches and a Serin. We returned to the hotel for a pancake lunch, then straight back into the forest to look for Nutcracker. We managed to pick up a few extra species like Crested and Marsh Tits, and also had prolonged views of a Nutcracker. We returned to the hotel with big smiles on our faces.

After dinner, we had a short walk to the meadows near the hotel and listened to Corn Crakes calling. Then we drove to the Beaver Meadow and waited until dark. Jamie had a brief sighting but, unfortunately, nobody else did. We did see two Roe Deer and a fox. On the way back a Beech Marten scampered across the road which a few people managed to see.

## Day 4

Monday 4th May

### Pre breakfast walk – Hajnówka - Warsaw airport

Today it was cloudless at dawn, with no breeze, and a slight frost. However, it clouded over by 7am. We were up again for a 5am start and headed north of the village, again to look for Bison. Again, two males were in the meadows but this time they were in full sunshine (once the mists had cleared). They allowed reasonably close approach before wandering back towards the forests, as they tend to do soon after dawn. A Hoopoe was calling and a White Stork was feeding in the fields nearby. We went in search of the Hoopoe, but found a singing male Barred Warbler instead. We then tried the Corn Crake by the hotel and he was still calling, but not showing, with another distant bird heard too. Snipe were calling and drumming nearby and Hawfinches flew around. The Wrynecks showed well by the hotel, as did a Thrush Nightingale, and we even had a flyover Black Kite. Green Sandpipers were migrating too and we must have seen more than fifty, usually in flying flocks. Not bad for pre-breakfast.

We left Wendy and Jamie in Białoweiza as they had another week here, and we set off at 9am and spotted several Montagu's Harriers by the roadside en route. We stopped at one of Andrew's Ortolan sites and spotted a singing male straight away, plus a Black Woodpecker and a Grey Partridge. We continued on to our lunch stop, the same as on the way out, but with a slightly different flavour of soup and dumplings. After lunch, we headed

south to the Bug River near Brok, where some oxbow lakes attracted birds. We saw several good species here including Kingfisher, Garganey, Little Terns, White-winged Black and Black Terns, Cranes, Hobby and Savi's Warbler. We also had a Great Grey Shrike, which flew across the road in front of the van.

We then drove to Warsaw airport and said goodbye to our excellent guide Andrew, and our wonderful driver Gregory. We had enjoyed a fantastic short trip that was filled pre-dawn until dusk with wonderful wildlife sightings.

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European Bison

## Species List

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

	Common name	Scientific name	May			
			1	2	3	4
1	Great Crested Grebe	<i>Podiceps cristatus</i>	8	2		
2	Red-necked Grebe	<i>Podiceps grisegena</i>	8			
3	Black-necked Grebe	<i>Podiceps nigricollis</i>		1		
4	Eurasian Bittern	<i>Botaurus stellaris</i>	H	H		
5	Great White Egret	<i>Ardea alba</i>	1	25		
6	Grey Heron	<i>Ardea cinerea</i>	3	5		1
7	Purple Heron	<i>Ardea purpurea</i>		1		
8	White Stork	<i>Ciconia ciconia</i>	50	15	1	2
9	Mute Swan	<i>Cygnus olor</i>	4	2		2
10	Whooper Swan	<i>Cygnus cygnus</i>		2		
11	Greylag Goose	<i>Anser anser</i>	20	40		
12	Mallard	<i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>	50	20	5	20
13	Gadwall	<i>Anas strepera</i>		4		
14	Northern Shoveler	<i>Anas clypeata</i>	4			
15	Garganey	<i>Anas querquedula</i>				2
16	Tufted Duck	<i>Aythya fuligula</i>	10			
17	Common Pochard	<i>Aythya ferina</i>	5			
18	Greater Scaup	<i>Aythya marila</i>	3			
19	Montagu's Harrier	<i>Circus pygargus</i>	1			10
20	Western Marsh Harrier	<i>Circus aeruginosus</i>	5	20		5
21	Black Kite	<i>Milvus migrans</i>				1
22	Eurasian Sparrowhawk	<i>Accipiter nisus</i>	1	3		1
23	Common Buzzard	<i>Buteo buteo</i>	1	5	1	5
24	White-tailed Eagle	<i>Haliaeetus albicilla</i>	1	8		
25	Lesser Spotted Eagle	<i>Clanga pomarina</i>		5	3	
26	Greater Spotted Eagle	<i>Clanga clanga</i>		2		
27	Common Kestrel	<i>Falco tinnunculus</i>				1
28	Eurasian Hobby	<i>Falco Subbuteo</i>		10		1
29	Peregrine Falcon	<i>Falco peregrinus</i>		1		
30	Hazel Grouse	<i>Tetrastes bonasia</i>			h	
31	Grey Partridge	<i>Perdix perdix</i>				1
32	Common Pheasant	<i>Phasianus colchicus</i>	1			1
33	Corn Crake	<i>Crex crex</i>			2H	2h
34	Common Moorhen	<i>Gallinula chloropus</i>		1		
35	Eurasian Coot	<i>Fulica atra</i>	20	20		
36	Water Rail	<i>Rallus aquaticus</i>	H	H		H
37	Common Crane	<i>Grus grus</i>		2		2
38	Northern Lapwing	<i>Vanellus vanellus</i>	20	5	1	5
39	Ruff	<i>Philomachus pugnax</i>	30	20		
40	Common Sandpiper	<i>Actitis hypoleucos</i>	2		1	
41	Green Sandpiper	<i>Tringa ochropus</i>	20	2	1	50
42	Common Snipe	<i>Gallinago gallinago</i>			2	2
43	Eurasian Woodcock	<i>Scolopax europaeus</i>		1	1	

	Common name	Scientific name	May			
			1	2	3	4
44	Black-headed Gull	<i>Larus ridibundus</i>	✓	✓		2
45	Lesser Black-backed Gull	<i>Larus fuscus fuscus</i>	1			
46	Mew (Common) Gull	<i>Larus canus</i>	2			
47	Little Gull	<i>Larus minutus</i>	15			
48	Common Tern	<i>Sterna hirundo</i>		2		2
49	Little Tern	<i>Sternula albifrons</i>				2
50	Black Tern	<i>Chlidonias niger</i>		50		3
51	White-winged Black Tern	<i>Chlidonias leucopterus</i>	20	50		1
52	Whiskered Tern	<i>Chlidonias hybridus</i>	2	4		
53	Wood Pigeon	<i>Columba palumbus</i>	✓	10	10	10
54	Stock Dove	<i>Columba oenas</i>		1		
55	Rock Dove / Feral Pigeon	<i>Columba livia</i>	✓		20	20
56	Eurasian Collared Dove	<i>Streptopelia decaocto</i>	✓			
57	Common Cuckoo	<i>Cuculus canorus</i>		6	2	5
58	Eurasian Pygmy Owl	<i>Glaucidium passerinum</i>		1		
59	Tawny Owl	<i>Strix aluco</i>		H		
60	Eurasian Hoopoe	<i>Upupa epops</i>				H
61	Eurasian Wryneck	<i>Jynx torquilla</i>			4	4
62	Black Woodpecker	<i>Dryocopus martius</i>		1		1
63	Grey-headed Woodpecker	<i>Picus canus</i>			2	1
64	Middle Spotted Woodpecker	<i>Dendrocopos medius</i>		4	1	
65	Great Spotted Woodpecker	<i>Dendrocopos major</i>		5	5	1
66	White-backed Woodpecker	<i>Dendrocopos leucotos</i>		4		1
67	Lesser Spotted Woodpecker	<i>Dendrocopos minor</i>		1	3	
68	Eurasian Three-toed Woodpecker	<i>Picoides tridactylus</i>			2	
69	Eurasian Skylark	<i>Alauda arvensis</i>	20	5	5	8
70	Woodlark	<i>Lullula arborea</i>		5		
71	Barn Swallow	<i>Hirundo rustica</i>	40	30	20	20
72	Common House Martin	<i>Delichon urbica</i>	4	3		
73	Tree Pipit	<i>Anthus trivialis</i>		1		1
74	White Wagtail	<i>Motacilla alba alba</i>	2	5	2	2
75	Blue-headed (Yellow) Wagtail	<i>Motacilla flava flava</i>	2	2	1	3
76	Eurasian Wren	<i>Troglodytes troglodytes</i>		5	5	
77	Dunnock	<i>Prunella modularis</i>			2	
78	European Robin	<i>Erithacus rubecula</i>		2	5	
79	Thrush Nightingale	<i>Luscinia luscinia</i>	3h	3	3	5
80	Common Redstart	<i>Phoenicurus phoenicurus</i>		2		
81	Black Redstart	<i>Phoenicurus ochruros</i>		2	2	2
82	Whinchat	<i>Saxicola rubetra</i>		15	5	5
83	Common Blackbird	<i>Turdus merula</i>	2	20	20	10
84	Fieldfare	<i>Turdus pilaris</i>	4	2		8
85	Song Thrush	<i>Turdus philomelos</i>	2	10	10	5
86	Mistle Thrush	<i>Turdus viscivorus</i>			2	
87	Savi's Warbler	<i>Locustella luscinioides</i>	1(5h)	2h	2	3
88	Great Reed Warbler	<i>Acrocephalus arundinaceus</i>	10	2	3	3
89	Eurasian Reed Warbler	<i>Acrocephalus scirpaceus</i>	1	1		

	Common name	Scientific name	May			
			1	2	3	4
90	Sedge Warbler	<i>Acrocephalus schoenobaenus</i>	1	1		2
91	Lesser Whitethroat	<i>Sylvia curruca</i>		2	2	2
92	Common Whitethroat	<i>Sylvia communis</i>	1	2		2
93	Eurasian Blackcap	<i>Sylvia atricapilla</i>	1	10	10	5
94	Garden Warbler	<i>Sylvia borin</i>				1
95	Barred Warbler	<i>Sylvia nisoria</i>				1
96	Wood Warbler	<i>Phylloscopus sibilatrix</i>		10	10	2
97	Willow Warbler	<i>Phylloscopus trochilus</i>	1	5		1
98	Common Chiffchaff	<i>Phylloscopus collybita</i>	1	5	5	2
99	Goldcrest	<i>Regulus regulus</i>		5	5	
100	Collared Flycatcher	<i>Ficedula albicollis</i>		15	5	
101	European Pied Flycatcher	<i>Ficedula hypoleuca</i>		1	1	
102	Spotted Flycatcher	<i>Muscicapa striata</i>			1	
103	Eurasian Penduline Tit	<i>Remiz pendulinus</i>	1	1		
104	Marsh Tit	<i>Poecile palustris</i>			1	
105	Willow Tit	<i>Poecile montanus</i>		2	2	
106	European Crested Tit	<i>Lophophanes cristatus</i>			1	
107	Great Tit	<i>Parus major</i>		5	5	5
108	Eurasian Blue Tit	<i>Cyanistes caeruleus</i>		2	2	
109	Northern Coal Tit	<i>Periparus ater ater</i>		1	2	
110	White-headed Long-tailed Tit	<i>Aegithalos caudatus caudatus</i>		2	2	
111	Eurasian Nuthatch	<i>Sitta europaea</i>		20	10	
112	Eurasian Treecreeper	<i>Certhia familiaris</i>		3	5	
113	Great Grey Shrike	<i>Lanius excubitor</i>				1
114	Common Starling	<i>Sturnus vulgaris</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓
115	Golden Oriole	<i>Oriolus oriolus</i>				
116	Eurasian Jay	<i>Garrulus glandarius</i>		5	10	4
117	Spotted Nutcracker	<i>Nucifraga caryocatactes</i>			1	
118	Eurasian Magpie	<i>Pica pica</i>	5	5	5	5
119	Northern Raven	<i>Corvus corax</i>		5	2	2
120	Western Jackdaw	<i>Corvus monedula soemmeringii</i>	✓			✓
121	Hooded Crow	<i>Corvus corone cornix</i>	✓			20
122	Rook	<i>Corvus frugilegus</i>	✓	50		✓
123	Eurasian Tree Sparrow	<i>Passer montanus</i>			1	6
124	House Sparrow	<i>Passer domesticus</i>	2	2	5	2
125	Common Chaffinch	<i>Fringilla coelebs</i>		40	40	20
126	Hawfinch	<i>Coccothraustes coccothraustes</i>		20	20	10
127	European Serin	<i>Serinus serinus</i>			1	
128	Eurasian Siskin	<i>Carduelis spinus</i>				
129	European Greenfinch	<i>Chloris chloris</i>	1	2	10	4
130	European Goldfinch	<i>Carduelis carduelis</i>			10	7
131	Common Linnet	<i>Linaria cannabina</i>		2	2	2
132	Common (Scarlet) Rosefinch	<i>Carpodacus erythrinus</i>		1		
133	Eurasian Bullfinch	<i>Pyrrhula pyrrhula</i>			2	
134	Yellowhammer	<i>Emberiza citronella</i>		5	5	4
135	Ortolan Bunting	<i>Emberiza hortulana</i>				1

	Common name	Scientific name	May			
			1	2	3	4
136	Common Reed Bunting	<i>Emberiza schoeniclus</i>	2	10	2	5

### Mammals

1	Red Fox	<i>Vulpes vulpes</i>			1	
2	Roe Deer	<i>Capreolus capreolus</i>	20		2	10
3	European Bison	<i>Bison bonasus</i>			2	2
4	Red Squirrel	<i>Sciurus vulgaris</i>	1			
5	Brown Hare	<i>Lepus capensis</i>	1			
6	Bank Vole	<i>Clethrionomys glareolus</i>		2		
7	Birch Mouse	<i>Sicista betulina</i>		1		
8	Common Shrew	<i>Sorex araneus</i>		1		
9	Hedgehog	<i>Erinaceus europaeus</i>		1		
10	American Mink	<i>Mustela vison</i>		1		
11	Beech Marten	<i>Martes foina</i>			1	
12	European Beaver	<i>Castor fiber</i>			1	

### Butterflies

Map

Large white

Wood white sp

Violet Copper

Small Tortoiseshell

Large tortoiseshell

Small white

Brimstone

Speckled Wood

Orange-Tip

Green veined white

Peacock

Comma

### Other Taxa

Orange-bellied Toad

Marsh Frog

Sand Lizard

Common Toad

Pool Frog

Common Frog

Striped Tree Frog



Lesser Spotted Eagle