

Sweden in Spring

Naturetrek Tour Report

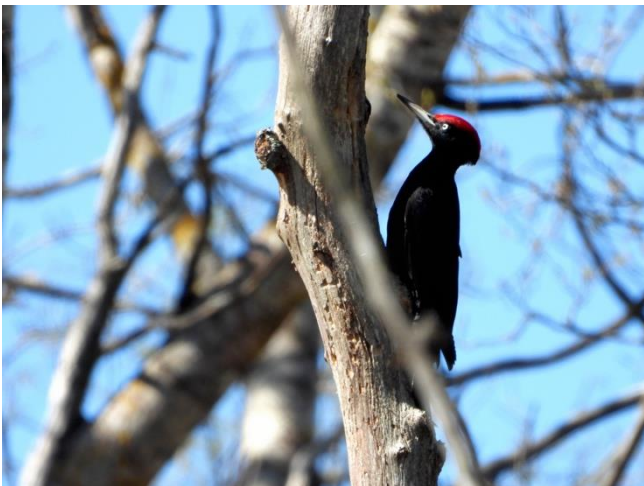
5th – 8th May 2022



Ural Owl by Clive Pickton



Eagle Owl by Richard Bashford



Black Woodpecker by Rex Perham



Black-throated Diver by Clive Pickton

Tour report by Richard Bashford



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Tour participants: Daniel Green and Richard Bashford (leaders) with 14 Naturetrek clients

Day 1

Thursday 5th May

For Richard and ten of the party, our day started early at London's Heathrow airport for our flight to Stockholm's Arlanda airport, arriving on time mid-morning. After picking up our luggage, we met with the last four clients and Daniel our tour leader. Heading out into the warm spring weather we met Goran who was to initially drive one of the two minibuses north. After about 35 minutes drive, we stopped at Hjalstaviken – a wetland reserve teeming with birds. Daniel unloaded the pre-prepared picnic lunch – delicious wraps and cinnamon buns, before we went for a walk towards the water. Our initial excitement of a sighting of a couple of Common Cranes flying was met with a calm smile from Daniel who suggested we may well see more shortly... We saw many Cranes, and geese (including eight lingering White-fronted Geese), an adult White-tailed Eagle putting many of the geese into a panic, an Osprey affording us great views, a range of ducks and perhaps the stars of the show, a range of multicoloured, breeding plumaged Ruffs in the nearby marshes. Many photos were taken! Among the many Common Terns, Rex picked out a small number of Arctic Terns, and we noted many Wood Sandpipers dotted among the wet grassy fields. A fine start!

Onward, we dropped Goran off at his home en route and Richard took over driving duties. We made a brief stop at a feeding station at Elkliden where we saw many Tree Sparrows, Red Squirrel, Nuthatch and Yellowhammer.

We arrived at our forest hotel Satra Brunn just before 5pm and checked in before dinner. Daniel explained that our plan was to eat early and head out on evening safaris, exploring the forest and Black River Valley. By 6.30pm we were in the minibuses once more, noting our first Fieldfares and Redwings, Whinchat, Whooper Swans, Little Gulls, many Wood Sandpipers, Curlew, Greenshank, Goldeneye and two superb Elk just before returning to Satra Brunn. It has been an early start for most of us and it was time for some sleep.

Day 2

Friday 6th May

In the hotel grounds, pre-breakfast birds included Hawfinch, Common Crossbill and Pied Flycatcher. We got on the road with a packed picnic breakfast and lunch and into the nearby Ekopark Öjesjöbrännan. As we left the main road, we flushed a female Capercaillie and then a Black Grouse and then another Capercaillie which kindly remained on the track for about ten seconds. It promised to be another warm sunny day but it was cool in the forest as we had our first walk noting singing Tree Pipits, Lesser Whitethroat, Siskin and a popular Common Snipe sat on a tall tree stump. At our picnic breakfast, we enjoyed a small number of gorgeous and active Green Hairstreaks as the sun rose.

Our next site gave us more of the same with owls and woodpeckers being a little stubborn! We had brief views of Green and Great-spotted Woodpeckers. We visited a friend of Daniels who lived at Ekliden, alongside a large lake. He had heard Grey-headed Woodpecker recently, so this was our main target. His garden and surrounding area were pretty magnificent however. There were summer plumaged Black-throated Divers and recently returned Slavonian Grebes on the water for a start! As many as five pairs of Pied Flycatchers flitted around the garden trees. Here we saw Siskin, Nuthatch, Bullfinch. A very brief Black Woodpecker was seen but no sign of the Grey-headed.

We made our way back to the hotel for a bit of free time before dinner at 5pm. At 6pm, we boarded the minibuses and headed out towards a site Daniel had up his sleeve – a quarry with nesting Eagle Owls. On arrival in the wonderful evening light, we saw a large circa four-week-old chick sitting on the quarry machinery. It was a mass of down, a few flight feathers and two large yellow eyes. Very smart and cute! Ian then played a blinder! He walked to one side and got his binoculars on the adjacent small pines. His frantic hand waving alerted us to the fact he had found an adult. We walked over straight away! With amazing luck, the adult was sitting in full view in perfect light – not one branch in the way – many photos were taken.

Our drive over the next couple of hours, interspersed with a few little walks was nice but other things were hard to find. A few Woodcocks, Red and Fallow Deer and three Wild Boar in the gloom just before we returned to the hotel were the highlights.

Day 3

Saturday 7th May

After two glorious days of sunshine, this morning was forecast as rain. Daniel's plan was to have a breather and sample the buffet breakfast at 8am, rather than a picnic breakfast in the rain. A welcome plan – the fantastic breakfast and slightly later start was a popular choice. However, it was still a little rainy at 9am but quite light. Our forest drive in the Öjesjön Ekopark produced another Capercaillie which perched for a short while, Chiffchaff and Tree Pipit. At the lake, Daniel explained that this is a great site for Black-throated Divers and pointed out the nearby island they nest on. Scanning revealed no divers but at least the light rain was stopping. After a welcome hot drink, we noticed a small group of crossbills which we realised were Parrot Crossbills! Both males and females giving great views. Then, seemingly from nowhere, two completely gorgeous summer plumaged Black-throated Divers appeared offering great views through binoculars but amazing views through the telescopes. They came even closer, hauled up on the island and mated! How lucky were we!

The next stop was Fläcksjön Lake where among a range of waders were three summer plumaged Spotted Redshanks.

We then got on the road for 45 minutes to visit a nest box Daniel and his son had been monitoring. It is one of about 40 Ural Owl boxes but the only one with a nest this year! And in this rather poor year for voles, there was no guarantee the bird would still be on eggs since the last check a week ago. But we agreed this would be worth a try. On entering the forest near Möklinta, Richard managed to slide into the drainage gully and two of the minibus wheels sunk quite deep. It was all quite slow and gradual, but the bus was certainly stuck. Using the walkie talkie, we got Daniel and his son Simon to come to our rescue as the group got out of the minibus. After some discussion, we decided to tow the minibus back using the other minibus. Amazingly this worked first time and we were back on the road within 45 minutes. Thankfully the nest box site was about a minute away and we regrouped to listen to Daniel and Simon talk through the process. Simon would place a ladder next to the nest box, and look inside – he wore a motorcycle helmet while doing this since these are notoriously aggressive birds. As he came down, he gave us a thumbs up. Daniel then climbed the ladder and extracted the adult bird – wow! He then ushered us over to quickly grab some photos while Simon checked the box again. Daniel then walked us over to an open area where he released the bird which fly to a tree in full view, looked at us and called! It then flew through the trees and out of sight. Simon then showed us a little video he had taken of the two chicks!

Now it was picnic lunch time and we all relaxed over an excellent meal in the sunshine.

Our final stop before dinner was Gölja Lake where we noted a good range of species including Slavonian and our first Red-necked Grebes of the trip, as well as a fly by male Montagu's Harrier. We returned to the hotel for a breather before dinner before another minibus safari in the Skultuna forest visiting key sites for owls. Unfortunately our luck was out as expected but it was worth trying. We heard Cuckoo, many Woodcocks and listened to Redwings singing before returning to the hotel.

Day 4

Sunday 8th May

With an early evening flight, we had virtually a full day ahead of us to explore more of this beautiful area. As usual, Daniel had some great plans up his sleeve and we all opted for an early excursion before breakfast back at the hotel. So at 5.30, we met by the minibuses with the usual early morning Hawfinches calling and flying overhead and Wood Warbler singing. Our destination was Öjesjöbrännan Ekopark to visit a Black Grouse lek. Soon after entering the forest, we found one or two perched Black Grouse as well as a perched Red-backed Shrike. Onward to the lek itself, we arrived to see around 20 birds lekking. A few more birds flew in but within a short time, they had all left the lekking area. We could still hear their bubbling call as well as another call much nearer – Wryneck! Actually several Wrynecks including one which perched kindly for us and continued to call. We also saw Curlew land in the lekking area also uttering its bubbling call as it arrived. As we scanned, we also saw our first Wheatears of the trip. It was a pretty magical place to be and a good place to have a cuppa. All too soon, we retraced our steps and enjoyed another fine breakfast at the hotel before packing our bags and loading the minibuses up for the day.

Our first stop was Lake Hällsjön which was filled with birds – Goldeneye and Tufted Ducks as usual, but also a male Pintail and a pair of Garganey. Here too we noted a few Black Terns. As we were watching the terns, we saw an adult White-tailed Eagle fly into its nest. A great site and also another good site for a cuppa – (Daniel really has the catering sorted!)

We then headed off to a nest site near Skultuna where we hoped to see Black Woodpecker. Daniel showed us the nest hole and we got in position. Within a few minutes, the male Black Woodpecker flew in and landed in full view. Before long, it went to the hole and the female flew out and over our heads! Not at all bad!

We opted for our final picnic lunch next to the river at Skultuna Sådamm. As it was now early afternoon, we got on the main road towards the airport. Our plan was to spend some time at a different part of Hjälstaviken. A mid-afternoon coffee stop at Parnassen added a heard only Lesser-spotted Woodpecker but also a great opportunity to photograph Nuthatch and Marsh Tit at a feeding station. Moving on, we reached Fysingen where we said goodbye to Bill and Penny who were catching an earlier flight to Edinburgh. We had another couple of hours so scanned the nearby lake where we saw Little Gulls and distant Slavonian Grebes. Following the boardwalk to the observation tower, we added Sedge and Reed Warbler, Redshank, Sand Martin and Great White Egret to the trip list before Daniel returned to the car park. We did a quick repack (essentially getting the scopes and tripods into our bags), and headed to the airport for 6pm. We said our goodbyes to Daniel who had looked after us so well and shown us so much wildlife in the Black River Valley. Our flight arrived at LHR, slightly ahead of schedule where we said our farewells.

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Species lists

Birds (H = Heard only)

			May 2022			
	Common name	Scientific name	5	6	7	8
1	Black-throated Diver	<i>Gavia arctica</i>	1	3	3	
2	Great Crested Grebe	<i>Podiceps cristatus</i>	30	1	2	✓
3	Red-necked Grebe	<i>Podiceps grisegena</i>			3	
4	Slavonian Grebe	<i>Podiceps auritus</i>		2	2	5
5	Cormorant	<i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>	40			✓
6	Grey Heron	<i>Ardea cinerea</i>	6			
7	Great White Egret	<i>Ardea alba</i>				1
8	Mute Swan	<i>Cygnus olor</i>	1			20
9	Whooper Swan	<i>Cygnus cygnus</i>	20	40	✓	✓
10	Greylag Goose	<i>Anser anser</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓
11	White-fronted Goose	<i>Anser albifrons</i>	8	4		
12	Canada Goose	<i>Branta canadensis</i>	6	4	✓	✓
13	Barnacle Goose	<i>Branta leucopsis</i>	✓			
14	Shoveler	<i>Spatula clypeata</i>	20	1	2	✓
15	Garganey	<i>Spatula querquedula</i>				2
16	Wigeon	<i>Mareca penelope</i>	20	6	10	
17	Gadwall	<i>Mareca strepera</i>	15	10	✓	✓
18	Teal	<i>Anas crecca</i>	25	20	✓	
19	Mallard	<i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>	10	✓	✓	✓
20	Pintail	<i>Anas acuta</i>				1

	Common name	Scientific name	May 2022			
			5	6	7	8
21	Tufted Duck	<i>Aythya fulicula</i>	30	2		✓
22	Goldeneye	<i>Bucephala clangula</i>	3	1	20	✓
23	Sparrowhawk	<i>Accipiter nisus</i>	1	1		
24	Hen Harrier	<i>Circus cyaneus</i>		1		
25	Montagu's Harrier	<i>Circus pygargus</i>			2	
26	Marsh Harrier	<i>Circus aeruginosus</i>	3		1	
27	Common Buzzard	<i>Buteo buteo</i>	8	5	5	✓
28	White-tailed Eagle	<i>Haliaeetus albicilla</i>	1			2
29	Osprey	<i>Pandion haliaetus</i>	1			
30	Kestrel	<i>Falco tinnunculus</i>		1	2	1
31	Capercaillie	<i>Tetrao urogallus</i>		2	1	
32	Black Grouse	<i>Tetrao tetrix</i>		1		25
33	Pheasant	<i>Phasianus colchicus</i>	6			
34	Moorhen	<i>Gallinula chloropus</i>		1	1	
35	Coot	<i>Fulica atra</i>	15		✓	✓
36	Common Crane	<i>Grus grus</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓
37	Little Ringed Plover	<i>Charadrius dubius</i>	2			2
38	Lapwing	<i>Vanellus vanellus</i>	20	✓	✓	✓
39	Ruff	<i>Calidris pugnax</i>	40		✓	✓
40	Common Curlew	<i>Numenius arquata</i>	2	10	2	
41	Redshank	<i>Tringa totanus</i>	3			2
42	Spotted Redshank	<i>Tringa erythropus</i>			4	
43	Greenshank	<i>Tringa nebularia</i>	8		✓	1
44	Green Sandpiper	<i>Tringa ochropus</i>	2		2	
45	Wood Sandpiper	<i>Tringa glareola</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓
46	Common Sandpiper	<i>Actitis hypoleucos</i>	3	1	10	4
47	Common Snipe	<i>Gallinago gallinago</i>	10	1	1	
48	Woodcock	<i>Scolopax rusticola</i>	1	2	1	
49	Little Gull	<i>Hydrocoloeus minutus</i>	10		12	5
50	Black-headed Gull	<i>Chroicocephalus ridibundus</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓
51	Common Gull	<i>Larus canus</i>	10	✓	✓	✓
52	Herring Gull	<i>Larus argentatus</i>	1	3	2	
53	Lesser Black-backed Gull	<i>Larus fuscus</i>	1			
54	Common Tern	<i>Sterna hirundo</i>	✓			✓
55	Arctic Tern	<i>Sterna paradisaea</i>	3		✓	
56	Black Tern	<i>Chilidonias niger</i>				5
57	Woodpigeon	<i>Columba palumbus</i>	10	✓	✓	✓
58	Stock Dove	<i>Columba oenas</i>	6	1	4	
59	Feral Pigeon	<i>Columba livia</i>	✓		✓	✓
60	Cuckoo	<i>Cuculus canorus</i>			H	

	Common name	Scientific name	May 2022			
			5	6	7	8
61	Eagle Owl	<i>Bubo bubo</i>		2		
62	Ural Owl	<i>Strix uralensis</i>			1	
63	Wryneck	<i>Jynx torquilla</i>				4
64	Black Woodpecker	<i>Dryocopus martius</i>		2		2
65	Green Woodpecker	<i>Picus viridis</i>		1	1	H
66	Great Spotted Woodpecker	<i>Dendrocopos major</i>	H	3	5	✓
67	Lesser Spotted Woodpecker	<i>Dryobates minor</i>				H
68	Woodlark	<i>Lullula arborea</i>	1		2	
69	Skylark	<i>Alauda arvensis</i>	4	1	25	✓
70	Swallow	<i>Hirundo rustica</i>	12	5	✓	✓
71	House Martin	<i>Delichon urbicum</i>			1	
72	Sand Martin	<i>Riparia riparia</i>				3
73	Tree Pipit	<i>Anthus trivialis</i>		8	5	✓
74	Meadow Pipit	<i>Anthus pratensis</i>	20	2	✓	
75	White Wagtail	<i>Motacilla alba alba</i>	20	✓	✓	✓
76	Yellow Wagtail	<i>Motacilla flava thunbergii</i>	15			2
77	Grey Wagtail	<i>Motacilla cinerea</i>			1	
78	Wren	<i>Troglodytes troglodytes</i>	H	H	H	H
79	Dunnock	<i>Prunella modularis</i>		H	H	
80	Robin	<i>Erithacus rubecula</i>	H	✓	1	H
81	Redstart	<i>Phoenicurus phoenicurus</i>			1	
82	Whinchat	<i>Saxicola rubetra</i>	6	6		3
83	Northern Wheatear	<i>Oenanthe oenanthe</i>				4
84	Blackbird	<i>Turdus merula</i>	10	✓	✓	✓
85	Fieldfare	<i>Turdus pilaris</i>	15	✓	✓	✓
86	Song Thrush	<i>Turdus philomelos</i>	10	4	✓	✓
87	Redwing	<i>Turdus iliacus</i>	2	1	✓	
88	Mistle Thrush	<i>Turdus viscivorus</i>	2	4	10	✓
89	Sedge Warbler	<i>Acrocephalus schoenobaenus</i>				1+H
90	Reed Warbler	<i>Acrocephalus scirpaceus</i>				H
91	Blackcap	<i>Sylvia atricapilla</i>				H
92	Lesser Whitethroat	<i>Curruca curruca</i>	1	1		
93	Wood Warbler	<i>Phylloscopus sibilatrix</i>		H		H
94	Chiffchaff	<i>Phylloscopus collybita</i>			1	
95	Willow Warbler	<i>Phylloscopus trochilus</i>	H	✓	✓	✓
96	Goldcrest	<i>Regulus regulus</i>	H	2		H
97	Pied Flycatcher	<i>Ficedula hypoleuca</i>	2	10	5	
98	Marsh Tit	<i>Poecile palustris</i>	6	2		
99	Blue Tit	<i>Cyanistes caeruleus</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓
100	Great Tit	<i>Parus major</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓

	Common name	Scientific name	May 2022			
			5	6	7	8
101	Coat Tit	<i>Periparus ater</i>		H	✓	✓
102	Crested Tit	<i>Lophophanes cristatus</i>		1	H	
103	Common Treecreeper	<i>Certhia familiaris</i>	1	2	2	
104	Nuthatch	<i>Sitta europaea</i>	3	4	1	3
105	Red-backed Shrike	<i>Lanius collurio</i>				1
106	Starling	<i>Sturnus vulgaris</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓
107	Jay	<i>Garrulus glandarius</i>	1	1	1	
108	Magpie	<i>Pica pica</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓
109	Jackdaw	<i>Coloeus monedula</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓
110	Raven	<i>Corvus corax</i>	1	2	3	
111	Hooded Crow	<i>Corvus cornix</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓
112	Tree Sparrow	<i>Passer montanus</i>	20	2		
113	House Sparrow	<i>Passer domesticus</i>	4		✓	✓
114	Chaffinch	<i>Fringilla coelebs</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓
115	Hawfinch	<i>Coccothraustes coccothraustes</i>		4	6	4
116	Siskin	<i>Spinus spinus</i>	H	✓	✓	✓
117	Greenfinch	<i>Chloris chloris</i>	H	4	✓	✓
118	Goldfinch	<i>Carduelis carduelis</i>	4	✓	✓	✓
119	Linnet	<i>Linaria cannabina</i>		2		
120	Bullfinch	<i>Pyrrhula pyrrhula</i>	3	1	1	
121	Common Crossbill	<i>Loxia curvirostra</i>		10	✓	
122	Parrot Crossbill	<i>Loxia pytyopsittacus</i>			4	
123	Yellowhammer	<i>Emberiza citrinella</i>	2	2	1	
124	Reed Bunting	<i>Emberiza schoeniclus</i>	4		1	✓

Mammals

Common name	Scientific name	May 2022			
		5	6	7	8
European Hare	<i>Lepus europaeus</i>	3	3	5	✓
Red Fox	<i>Vulpes vulpes</i>	1			
Wild Boar	<i>Sus scrofa</i>		3		
Eurasian Elk	<i>Alces alces</i>	2	2		
European Roe Deer	<i>Capreolus capreolus</i>	14	✓	✓	✓
Red Deer	<i>Cervus elaphus</i>		2	5	2
Fallow Deer	<i>Dama dama</i>		2		
Red Squirrel	<i>Sciurus vulgaris</i>	2	1	1	
European Beaver	<i>Castor fiber</i>	1			
Hedgehog	<i>Erinaceus europaeus</i>		1		

Lepidoptera

Butterflies

Common name	Scientific name
Small Tortoiseshell	<i>Aglais urticae</i>
Brimstone	<i>Gonepteryx rhamni</i>
Peacock	<i>Aglais io</i>
Green-veined White	<i>Pieris napi</i>
Orange-tip	<i>Anthocharis cardamines</i>
Holly Blue	<i>Celastrina argiolus</i>
Comma	<i>Polygonia c-album</i>
Green Hairstreak	<i>Callophrys rubi</i>
Camberwell Beauty	<i>Nymphalis antiopa</i>

Moths

Common name	Scientific name
Early Flat-body	<i>Semioscopis avellanella</i>
Early-tooth Striped	<i>Trichopteryx carpinata</i>
Engrailed	<i>Ectropis crepuscularia</i>
Pine Beauty	<i>Panolis flammea</i>