

# Go Slow ... in Sweden

Naturetrek Tour Report

16 - 21 May 2018

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Report compiled by Daniel Green

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Tour participants: Daniel Green (leader) with seven Naturetrek clients

## Day 1

Wednesday 16th May

The group arrived at Västerås airport in hot weather. Although the plane had been delayed there was still some time for birding before dinner. We stopped at a garden with some feeding stations, but just two Greenfinches were present, and a Green Woodpecker flew by. We transferred to our accommodation, Sättra Brunn, a nice park-like area with scattered, red, wooden buildings.

We enjoyed an early dinner before heading back out in the field to try for Great Grey Owl in the evening. We saw several roding Woodcocks and lots of Siskins were calling. Roe Deer and Brown Hares also seen this evening. We did not see any owls, but we have no need to worry; with several days, we should have good chances to see all the target birds.

## Day 2

Thursday 17th May

The group enjoyed a delicious breakfast buffet at Sättra Brunn, to sustain us for a day's birding in the beautiful Swedish countryside.

Our first birding stop was at Lake Fläcksjön, where a small raft of seven or eight Common Scoters and a couple of Little Gulls were seen in the distance. A Thrush Nightingale was singing from some willows near the lake. We enjoyed the harsh and slightly different song but left it for closer examination at another time, as we needed to catch the best of the morning activity in the pine forest further west. A pair of Cranes were walking really close by in a field along the winding gravel road; a nice male Whinchat was perched on a fence and later a group of eight Cranes were seen too.

We took a walk in Fermansbo Urskog, an old-growth forest with an area exposed by the large forest fire 2014. This is one of the areas where we search for Three-toed Woodpecker. We saw a lot of traces of them on tree-trunks, but not the bird, unfortunately. However, it was a nice walk though through an interesting habitat. We decided to have lunch by Lake Fläcksjön and the site where the Odendisa stone, an ancient Viking-era runestone, is on display on the site where it was actually found. During the picnic a Hobby flew by just above us.

Our next activity was taking part of ringing Ural Owls. It has not been a very good year for owls in the area and for Ural Owls it has been all-time low with only five occupied nest boxes - out of 50. However, our ringer knew exactly where to go and soon a female was carefully pulled out of a nest box. The good news was that she had already got two chicks in the box, ready to be ringed. The normal brood size is two to four youngsters. A pair of Black Woodpeckers proved to be breeding in a tree nearby and offered really good views, and a Kestrel soared above.

After that highlight, we took a pleasant coffee break before returning to the hotel. The afternoon and evening offered leisure time to explore and enjoy the spa facilities and the local area.

## Day 3

Friday 18th May

After another delicious breakfast, we were picked up again by Daniel. Two Yellow Wagtails of the northern race *thunbergii* showed well in a meadow with cows by the roadside. We drove further west today, on a winding gravel road through forest and open patches of clear fells. A bird on a stump made us stop; at first thought to be a shrike, it soon proved to be a Wryneck! Surprise! Soon after, a Common Snipe appeared on another post.

We arrived at an area called Färna Ekopark, got out of the minibus and started to walk along a track. A Pygmy Owl was calling in broad daylight and, after a bit of forest walking, we finally located the bird perched up in a sun-exposed, lichen-clad Spruce tree top. There it sat for a long time and preened, while we admired it in telescopes in brilliant light. A Black Woodpecker emerged from a nesting hole that we walked by and flew by a couple of times. A Wren sang strongly nearby.

Another felling area a bit down the road is even more productive; a pair of Red-backed Shrikes, singing Woodlark and Yellowhammer, and calling Crossbills. We drove along forest tracks for a while and finally got out to walk through some nice habitat. We looked and listened, first nothing, then we could hear the clunking and clicking calls from a displaying Capercaillie! And suddenly there he stood in full splendour at the forest edge, partly behind branches and hard to see in the shadow of the trees. That changed however, after a while, when he walked out on the road! We tried to get away from him at a respectful distance, so we could enjoy his display more in tranquility. That worked well because he repeatedly made little jumps up in the air with single strong wing-beats, a truly amazing performance. After that amazing encounter we enjoy a coffee-break with little cinnamon buns.

The next target was Tengmalm's Owl, also called Boreal Owl. A nest was staked out, but we were not sure if the bird would still be there. When we approached, although we were still at a distance, a face was visible in the hole. It was a young one! The owlet had all-brown plumage and was almost ready to fledge. What a cutie! We got a good bunch of pictures of the curious bird before it decided to go back inside its nesting hole. We stopped by a big lake to look for divers. Rightly so, because we found two Red-throated and two Black-throated Divers, all in good summer plumage. On top of that, we also saw three Common Scoters (a male and two females). On the way back, a Green Woodpecker flew up along the road again.

Tonight, we had the second (optional) evening excursion and the target was, of course, Great Grey Owl. This time we set off in good time (having missed it only by a few minutes on the first evening) after another superb but early dinner. We didn't have to wait long until what was assumed to be the male of the local breeding pair, showed up. We could then enjoy him for quite some time as he moved between perches in the open grass area in front of us. A stunning creature and clearly one of the highlights of the trip!

## Day 4

Saturday 19th May

This morning we headed south to go birdwatching by the wetland Asköviken outside Västerås. A White-tailed Eagle was causing commotion when it soared above the wetland. Several Marsh Harriers were also seen. A flooded field was attracting some birds; as we approached, a pair of Little Ringed Plovers were showing in the first puddle and soon a male Ruff in summer plumage landed very close to us - beautiful! We could hear the piercing calls of Little Gulls and when we were in proper position on a little embankment, we could enjoy more

than 50 Little Gulls in the near water, about a dozen or so are second-year birds, but the rest were stunning adults in summer plumage, several with a pink flush on the breast. Marvellous birds! Above this little wetland we were also happy to see Black Terns patrolling and really close as well, we didn't even need binoculars to see them well. A bit further out was a good selection of dabbling ducks with Teal, Wigeon, Shovelers, Gadwalls and two male Garganeys. Among a bunch of Greylag Geese there were also two Barnacles. A little more fine-tuning with the telescope was required to find a small group of three Ringed Plovers (arctic birds stopping over on migration) and a tiny Temminck's Stint, amongst 10 or more Ruffs and reeves. There were also a few Wood Sandpipers and Common Redshank in the puddles here.

By the ditch behind us a Sedge Warbler was singing loudly and a Yellow Wagtail of the (nominate) *flava* race was sitting on a post. We walked the boardwalk out towards a hide closer to the reedbeds, but there was not as much to see there. However, as we left to walk back, a part of the Crane flock we saw on arrival was coming back above in nice formations.

We drove over to the east side of town and out to an island with some deciduous forest. We had received recent reports of a Red-breasted Flycatcher here and we even decided to skip the coffee break to focus on the bird first. There were a lot of mosquitoes in this forest, and Wood Warblers seemed to be singing everywhere, Pied Flycatchers as well. A familiar song is heard twice, but the bird didn't present itself. We stood a long time waiting, with no result, till we decided to go for the coffee after all and then come back. John decided to stay. But we don't get more than 100 metres before we heard the typical RBF-tune again. Like our leader described, it is a good mix between Chiffchaff and Willow Warbler. This time it was much louder and in a different place (was it another bird?). We soon located this one and got excellent scope views of it. We ran to fetch John from the first spot and everybody got to see it really well. A Treecreeper also paid a short but ever-so-close visit to us.

Lunch was very welcome after this excellent morning session. Over lunch a Hawfinch flew by, showing to at least some of the participants. On the way back to the hotel, a last stop out in the farmland produce two Dotterels on a farmed field. They were not very close but still very nice birds to see. Later we found out there was a bit of a downfall of Dotterels this day, with several flocks in the neighboring counties as well.

The group enjoyed a free 'Go-Slow afternoon' and relaxed evening without any excursions.

## Day 5

Sunday 20th May

We woke to another sunny day and we started with the challenge of seeing Thrush Nightingale. That didn't work at all, but in the process, we found an Icterine Warbler that had the courtesy to sit still and exposed for a long while, singing from the depth of his heart. A Common Rosefinch was heard as well; we moved out to the road to get views but after some more calls were heard, it stopped singing and did not show at all. A Lesser Spotted Woodpecker came flying towards us, in its undulating flight, and had the good taste to even land in a treetop and stay for a while, so we could see it well in the scopes. It called and drummed too. By a little bridge a Grasshopper Warbler was singing and then Thrush Nightingales were heard from the bushes. A Cuckoo calling added atmosphere to the morning.

We tried Daniel's garden for Rosefinch, but there were only a couple of Goldfinches by the feeder. We went further down towards the lake and even though there was plenty of Rosefinch habitat, we failed to locate one. Two Whinchats showed close in a Juniper and a smart Comma butterfly spreads out in another Juniper, even

closer. We stopped at a barn where the lake (Fläcksjön) is viewable. A dozen Black Terns flew around over the marsh, and a Marsh Harrier too. House Martins and Barn Swallows and even a couple of Swifts were up in the air above us, a Hobby was seen briefly. The lake produced some Goldeneye and a male Garganey.

We had seen a patch of forest flooded by Beavers with some resulting dead spruce trees, so we decided to go there to search for Woodpeckers. None were showing, but we got excellent views and pictures of a Broad-bodied Chaser, chasing around a Four-spotted Chaser. We had lunch by a forest lake where the wind made the surface too rippled for divers. As we drove away, a pair of Red-backed Shrikes appeared close by and especially the male, perched up well for some time. An occupied Osprey nest, with both birds present, was a nice finale to this excursion. Then it was time for a lazy afternoon in the sun.

After dinner we headed out for another evening excursion. First, we went back to where we heard Thrush Nightingale and Rosefinch this morning. They were singing again, and we got close but fleeting glimpses of the Nightingale and, after a while, we also located the Rosefinch, a nice red male in stunning plumage, singing from the top of a willow. Lovely! We cruised along the lakes and river enjoying the landscape; a Kestrel, some Cranes, a few ducks and Lapwings were seen. We stopped at an old railway bridge that is a known viewpoint for Beaver watching. A Water Rail was calling frequently from the wetland in front. A Beaver was soon found, standing on the riverside a bit upstream from us. For a while it showed really well, but then it slid down into the water and disappeared. We decided to take a short walk to come closer and yes, there it was again, back on the bank giving excellent views. Skylarks were singing, and the sunset is beautiful. When we got back on the bridge, another beaver was swimming right towards us and even gnawed on some branches right below the bridge we were standing on.

## Day 6

## Monday 2st May

Robin, Blackcap, Pied Flycatcher, Willow Warbler and Garden Warbler were singing around the hotel reception as we checked out and packed our bags to go. The idea was to go to a site for Ortolan Bunting but that didn't give anything, so we drove to a lake where some more birds were on the menu. A Cuckoo was seen flying by: a species that has been noted every day of the trip except the first. A Northern Wheatear was just one out of three.

The view was good from a wooden platform. It didn't take us long to locate the first pair of Slavonian Grebes. We could also enjoy the lovely calls and views of a small colony of 20 or so Little Gulls, some birds flying by at closer range quite frequently. A Wood Sandpiper was standing on an islet in the lake, Common Terns and Black-headed Gulls were breeding all over. We decided that was enough for the moment: time to relax and have lunch before we used our telescopes more. After a bite and a drink, we felt better, and we could now see that the Coots and Goldeneyes also have company of five Gadwalls, a male Pochard, a male Garganey, a Black-necked Grebe and some other lovely birds. Several pairs of Cranes were visible around the wetland, a Marsh Harrier was patrolling the sky, Pied Flycatcher was singing right behind us and probably was occupying the nest box right in view. A last stop in a garden didn't produce much, but Pheasant and a Nuthatch could be added to the list.

Sadly, we then had to return to Västerås airport for our flights home, after a fascinating and relaxing time Going Slow in Sweden.

## Species Lists

Birds (✓=recorded but not counted; H = heard only; M = male; f = female; juv = juvenile; AD = adult)

	Common name	Scientific name	May					
			16	17	18	19	20	21
1	Black-throated Diver	<i>Gavia arctica</i>			2			
2	Red-throated Diver	<i>Gavia stellata</i>			2			
3	Great Crested Grebe	<i>Podiceps cristatus</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓	
4	Black-necked Grebe	<i>Podiceps nigricollis</i>						1
5	Slavonian Grebe	<i>Podiceps auritus</i>						4
6	Great Cormorant	<i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>		✓				
7	Eurasian Bittern	<i>Botaurus stellaris</i>			H			
8	Grey Heron	<i>Ardea cinerea</i>					✓	
9	Whooper Swan	<i>Cygnus cygnus</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
10	Greylag Goose	<i>Anser anser</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
11	Canada Goose	<i>Branta canadensis</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
12	Barnacle Goose	<i>Branta bernicla</i>					2	2
13	Eurasian Wigeon	<i>Mareca penelope</i>					✓	
14	Eurasian Teal	<i>Anas crecca</i>					✓	
15	Garganey	<i>Spatula querquedula</i>				2 m	1 m	1 m
16	Gadwall	<i>Mareca strepera</i>		1 m		✓	✓	5
17	Mallard	<i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
18	Northern Shoveler	<i>Spatula clypeata</i>		1m		✓		
19	Common Pochard	<i>Aythya ferina</i>						1 m
20	Common Goldeneye	<i>Bucephala clangula</i>		✓			✓	✓
21	Common Scoter	<i>Melanitta nigra</i>		7	3			
22	Western Marsh Harrier	<i>Circus aeruginosus</i>		1 m	✓	✓	✓	✓
23	Common Buzzard	<i>Buteo buteo</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
24	White-tailed Eagle	<i>Haliaeetus albicilla</i>					1 AD	
25	Western Osprey	<i>Pandion haliaetus</i>					2	
26	Common Kestrel	<i>Falco tinnunculus</i>		1+1		2		✓
27	Eurasian Hobby	<i>Falco subbuteo</i>		1 m			1	
28	Western Capercaillie	<i>Tetrao urogallus</i>			1 m			
29	Common Pheasant	<i>Phasianus colchicus</i>						✓
30	Eurasian Coot	<i>Fulica atra</i>				✓	✓	✓
31	Common Crane	<i>Grus grus</i>		12	✓	60	✓	✓
32	Little Ringed Plover	<i>Charadrius dubius</i>				2		
33	Common Ringed Plover	<i>Charadrius hiaticula</i>				3		
34	Eurasian Dotterel	<i>Charadrius morinellus</i>				2 ad		
35	Northern Lapwing	<i>Vanellus vanellus</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
36	Temminck's Stint	<i>Calidris temminckii</i>				1		
37	Ruff	<i>Philomachus pugnax</i>				✓		
38	Common Redshank	<i>Tringa totanus</i>				✓	✓	
39	Green Sandpiper	<i>Tringa ochropus</i>			H			
40	Wood Sandpiper	<i>Tringa glareola</i>				✓		✓
41	Common Sandpiper	<i>Actitis hypoleucos</i>			✓		✓	
42	Common Snipe	<i>Gallinago gallinago</i>			✓	✓	✓	✓
43	Woodcock	<i>Scolopax rusticola</i>	✓	✓	✓			✓
44	Little Gull	<i>Hydrocoloeus minutus</i>		2		50		20
45	Black-headed Gull	<i>Chroicocephalus ridibundus</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
46	Common (Mew) Gull	<i>Larus canus</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
47	European Herring Gull	<i>Larus argentatus</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

	Common name	Scientific name	May					
			16	17	18	19	20	21
48	Common Tern	<i>Sterna hirundo</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
49	Black Tern	<i>Chlidonias niger</i>					10	12
50	Common Wood Pigeon	<i>Columba palumbus</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
51	Stock Dove	<i>Columba oenas</i>					1 AD	
52	Rock Dove (Feral Pigeon)	<i>Columba livia</i>	✓			✓		✓
53	Common Cuckoo	<i>Cuculus canorus</i>		H	H	H	H	H+1
54	Ural Owl	<i>Strix uralensis</i>		1 f				
55	Great Grey Owl	<i>Strix nebulosa</i>			1 m			
56	Pygmy Owl	<i>Glaucidium passerinum</i>			1 m			
57	Boreal or Tengmalm´s Owl	<i>Aegolius funereus</i>			1 juv			
58	Common Swift	<i>Apus apus</i>		1	✓	✓	✓	✓
59	Eurasian Wryneck	<i>Jynx torquilla</i>			1			
60	Black Woodpecker	<i>Dryocopus martius</i>		2	2			
61	Green Woodpecker	<i>Picus viridis</i>		1	1			
62	Great Spotted Woodpecker	<i>Dendrocopos major</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓	
63	Lesser Spotted Woodpecker	<i>Dryobates minor</i>						1 m
64	Woodlark	<i>Lullula arborea</i>			H			
65	Eurasian Skylark	<i>Alauda arvensis</i>		H	✓	✓	✓	✓
66	Barn Swallow	<i>Hirundo rustica</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
67	Common House Martin	<i>Delichon urbica</i>			✓	✓	✓	✓
68	Tree Pipit	<i>Anthus trivialis</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
69	Meadow Pipit	<i>Anthus pratensis</i>			✓			
70	White Wagtail	<i>Motacilla alba alba</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
71	Blue-headed Yellow Wagtail	<i>Motacilla flava flava</i>				✓		
	Grey-headed Yellow Wagtail	<i>Motacilla flava thunbergii</i>			✓			
72	Eurasian Wren	<i>Troglodytes troglodytes</i>			✓	✓		
73	European Robin	<i>Erithacus rubecula</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
74	Thrush Nightingale	<i>Luscinia luscinia</i>			H	H	H	H+1
75	Common Redstart	<i>Phoenicurus phoenicurus</i>			H			
76	Whinchat	<i>Saxicola rubetra</i>		1 m	✓	✓	✓	
77	Northern Wheatear	<i>Oenanthe oenanthe</i>		2	✓			1
78	Red-breasted Flycatcher	<i>Ficedula parva</i>				1 m		
79	Common Blackbird	<i>Turdus merula</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
80	Fieldfare	<i>Turdus pilaris</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
81	Song Thrush	<i>Turdus philomelos</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
82	Redwing	<i>Turdus iliacus</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
83	Mistle Thrush	<i>Turdus viscivorus</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
84	Grasshopper Warbler	<i>Locustella naevia</i>					H	
85	Sedge Warbler	<i>Acrocephalus schoenobaenus</i>			✓	✓	✓	✓
86	Eurasian Reed Warbler	<i>Acrocephalus scirpaceus</i>				✓		
87	Icterine Warbler	<i>Hippolais icterina</i>					1	
88	Garden Warbler	<i>Sylvia borin</i>	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓
89	Eurasian Blackcap	<i>Sylvia atricapilla</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
90	Lesser Whitethroat	<i>Sylvia curruca</i>	H	H	✓	✓	✓	✓
91	Common Whitethroat	<i>Sylvia communis</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
92	Wood Warbler	<i>Phylloscopus sibilatrix</i>	H		H	✓	H	✓
93	Willow Warbler	<i>Phylloscopus trochilus</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
94	Goldcrest	<i>Regulus regulus</i>		H	H	H	H	
95	Spotted Flycatcher	<i>Muscicapa striata</i>	1		1	1	1	✓
96	Pied Flycatcher	<i>Ficedula hypoleuca</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
97	Marsh Tit	<i>Parus palustris</i>		H		1		✓

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			16	17	18	19	20	21
98	Eurasian Blue Tit	<i>Parus caeruleus</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓	
99	Great Tit	<i>Parus major</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
100	Eurasian Treecreeper	<i>Certhia familiaris</i>			1	1		
101	Eurasian Nuthatch	<i>Sitta europaea</i>		✓		✓	✓	1
102	Red-backed Shrike	<i>Lanius collurio</i>			2		2	
103	Common Starling	<i>Sturnus vulgaris</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
104	Eurasian Jay	<i>Garrulus glandarius</i>					1	
105	Eurasian Magpie	<i>Pica pica</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
106	Western Jackdaw	<i>Corvus monedula</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
107	Northern Raven	<i>Corvus corax</i>		1			1	✓
108	Hooded Crow	<i>Corvus cornix</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
109	Eurasian Tree Sparrow	<i>Passer montanus</i>		✓			✓	✓
110	House Sparrow	<i>Passer domesticus</i>		✓		✓	✓	✓
111	Common Chaffinch	<i>Fringilla coelebs</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
112	Hawfinch	<i>Coccothraustes coccothraustes</i>				1		
113	Eurasian Siskin	<i>Spinus spinus</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
114	European Greenfinch	<i>Chloris chloris</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
115	European Goldfinch	<i>Carduelis carduelis</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
116	Common Linnet	<i>Linaria cannabina</i>				✓	✓	✓
117	Common Rosefinch	<i>Carpodacus erythrinus</i>					✓	
118	Eurasian Bullfinch	<i>Pyrrhula pyrrhula</i>	2	2	✓			
119	Red Crossbill	<i>Loxia curvirostra</i>			1		H	
120	Yellowhammer	<i>Emberiza citrinella</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
121	Reed Bunting	<i>Emberiza schoeniclus</i>		✓		✓	✓	✓
122	Brambling	<i>Fringilla montifringilla</i>		H				

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