

Finland

Owls

15–18 May 2015

Participants

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Leaders Antti Vierimaa
and Peter Lansdown



Hazel Grouse (Phil Ayles)

Day 1 The group assembled at Oulu Airport, boarded two minibuses and made the short transfer to our hotel on the shores of Kempele Bay. In the only rain encountered on the tour we explored the hotel grounds, seeing Black-throated Loon (Diver), Garganey, Greater Scaup, Smew, Common Crane and Common Redpoll and hearing Lesser Spotted Woodpecker. After an early dinner we drove to the forests north-east of Oulu and claimed our first northern owls of the tour, a pair of Ural Owls and a Northern Hawk Owl, saw Eurasian Capercaillie, Black Grouse and Hazel Grouse and heard a Northern Goshawk.

Day 2 A very early start enabled us to visit the forests to the north-east, north and south-west of Oulu. Owls were again the priority and we succeeded in seeing a well-grown young Tengmalm's Owl peering at us from the safety of its nest-box and a pair of Great Grey Owls with their young at the nest. Other species seen in the forests and the surrounding fields included White-tailed Eagle, Eurasian Capercaillie, Black Grouse, Hazel Grouse, Common Crane,

Black Woodpecker, Bohemian Waxwing, Willow Tit, Red Crossbill and Rustic Bunting. The hotel grounds produced Garganey, Smew, Osprey, Common Redpoll and a heard-only Great Bittern.

Day 3 We began the day by revisiting the forests to the north-east of Oulu where we were delighted to find Eurasian Pygmy-owl, which completed our quest for the five special northern owls. We also recorded Black Grouse, Hazel Grouse, Common Crane, Black Woodpecker, Willow Tit and Red Crossbill in the same area. We saw Black-throated Diver, Garganey, Smew and Common Redpoll at the hotel and Caspian Tern nearby before we set off on the drive to Kuusamo. The rest of the day was spent in the vicinity of the lake near our new hotel and in the forests to the north of Kuusamo. It was markedly colder here than in the Oulu area with ice-covered lakes and snow in sheltered spots. In addition to a fine pair of Northern Hawk Owls we saw Black Kite, Black Grouse, Eurasian Three-toed Woodpecker, Bohemian Waxwing and Siberian Jay.

Day 4 An early start at the nearby lake rewarded us with Black-throated Diver, Red-necked Grebe, White-tailed Eagle, Black Grouse, Hazel Grouse, Bluethroat and Willow Tit. The forests to the north of Kuusamo produced an adult Tengmalm's Owl as well as Black Grouse, Grey-headed Chickadee (Siberian Tit), Siberian Jay and Red Crossbill. We then drove back to Oulu to catch a flight to Helsinki which connected with our international flight home.

For the statistically-minded, the temperature on our last day started at a chilly 3.5 degrees C and had risen by late morning to 7.0 degrees C, though 18.0 degrees C was predicted for the following day; we drove a total of 1160km; and we recorded 119 species: Black-throated Loon, Great Crested and Red-necked Grebes, Great Bittern, Whooper Swan, Greylag Goose, Common Shelduck, Eurasian Wigeon, Mallard, Gadwall, Northern Pintail, Northern Shoveler, Green-winged Teal, Garganey, Tufted Duck, Greater Scaup, Common Scoter, Common Goldeneye, Smew, Red-breasted and Common Mergansers, Black Kite, Western Marsh-harrier, Eurasian Sparrowhawk, Northern Goshawk, Common Buzzard, White-tailed Eagle, Osprey, Common Kestrel, Eurasian Capercaillie, Black and Hazel Grouse, Common Pheasant, Eurasian Coot, Common Crane, Northern Lapwing, Ruff, Eurasian Curlew, Whimbrel, Common and Spotted Redshanks, Common Greenshank, Wood, Common and Green Sandpipers, Eurasian Woodcock, Common Snipe, Black-headed, Little, Common, Herring, Great Black-backed and Lesser Black-backed Gulls, Little, Caspian, Common and Arctic Terns, Common Wood-pigeon, Rock Dove, Common Cuckoo, Northern Hawk, Ural and Great Grey Owls, Eurasian Pygmy-owl, Tengmalm's Owl, Common Swift, Black, Great Spotted, Lesser Spotted and Eurasian Three-toed Woodpeckers, Sky Lark, Sand Martin, Barn Swallow, Common House-martin, Tree and Meadow Pipits, White and Yellow (Grey-headed) Wagtails, Bohemian Waxwing, Dunnock, European Robin, Bluethroat, Common Redstart, Whinchat, Northern Wheatear, Eurasian Blackbird, Fieldfare, Redwing, Song and Mistle Thrushes, Blackcap, Willow Warbler, Common Chiffchaff, Goldcrest, European Pied Flycatcher, Willow, Great and Eurasian Blue Tits, Grey-headed Chickadee, Eurasian Wren, Siberian and Eurasian Jays, Eurasian Magpie, Eurasian Jackdaw, Common Raven, Hooded Crow, Rook, House Sparrow, Common Chaffinch, Brambling, European Greenfinch, Red Crossbill, Common Redpoll, Eurasian Siskin, Eurasian Goldfinch, Northern Bullfinch, Yellowhammer and Rustic and Reed Buntings. Mammals included Brown and Arctic Hares, Red Squirrel, Musk-rat and the domesticated but free-ranging Reindeer.

Birdfinders will be repeating this popular and exciting tour in May 2016.

Peter Lansdown
Birdfinders