



# Central Sweden

Scandinavian Spring

Thursday 12 – Sunday 15 April 2012

(4 days)

*Spend a few days amongst the wild forests and lakes of central Sweden with Capercaillie, Three-toed Woodpecker, and a wonderful selection of owls. Add breeding waders, Cranes and divers, and some superb hotels and food, and you have the ingredients for a hugely enjoyable short break!*



Central Sweden's forests are an outpost of the great belt of 'taiga' forest that stretches in a swathe between the arctic tundra and temperate forests of Eurasia. These woodlands are clearly different to almost anything we have in Britain, and an echo, at least, of the original 'Wildwood' that covered much of Europe before the arrival of man.

And, as befits their wild appearance, these Central Swedish forests are correspondingly rich in wildlife, combining elements of the arctic with central European and alpine wildlife.

To the British visitor, the area will be most reminiscent of Scotland, especially the Caledonian Pine Forest of Speyside, and indeed it boasts several birds that we think of as characteristically Scottish: Crested Tit, Osprey, Black Grouse and both Red- and Black-throated Divers. Scottish Capercaillies were originally introduced from Sweden, which remains one of the best places to see them. But in addition to these can be found many continental species: the small and often elusive Hazel Grouse, the pine-loving Nutcracker, three continental woodpeckers – Black, Grey-headed and Three-toed, and best of all, an excellent concentration of owls, with Pygmy, Tengmalm's, Ural, Great Grey and Eagle Owls all to be looked for. Mammals include the mighty Elk.

We explore the area in the company of the friendly and outgoing local expert Daniel Green, who has designed the following itinerary for us.

## Itinerary

**Day 1:** We take a morning Ryanair flight from London Stansted direct to Västerås, the nearest airport, where Daniel will be waiting to greet us.

We will then head for a small wetland, where several pairs of smart Slavonian Grebes will be seen around their nests, and we may see our first Ospreys. The forests here can be good for woodpeckers, from the huge Black to the tiny Lesser

Spotted Woodpeckers, and Goshawk can occasionally be seen flying over the treetops.

We spend the early evening by a forest clearing, a regular hunting ground of Great Grey Owls, which have started breeding in the area in the last ten years. This is the southernmost breeding population of Great Greys in Sweden and perhaps even Europe. Woodcocks will surely entertain with their roding as we wait to see if the owls perform. *Overnight Salbohedgardens*

**Day 2:** After breakfast (no early start today!) we head for another excellent forest where Hazel Grouse can be found, along with Nutcracker and Capercaillie. Black Woodpeckers can again be looked for. A nearby lake has Black-throated Divers and breeding Osprey, while both Common and Parrot Crossbills and Crested Tits can be found in the pines and spruce forest. Early butterflies include Camberwell Beauty.

We pay a visit to a winter feeding station where Crested, Willow and Marsh Tits still might appear, together with Nuthatches of the white-bellied Scandinavian race. Nutcrackers, Grey-headed Woodpeckers, smart northern Bullfinches, and northern Long-tailed Tits might also turn up.

We continue down to the Black River Valley and its rich wetlands to enjoy good scenic views, a nice outdoor lunch and to look for locally breeding White-tailed Eagles, flocks of Bean Geese, Smew, and other wildfowl.

Raptors like Hen Harrier, Rough-legged Buzzard and Merlin are on passage through the area and winter-visitors like Great Grey Shrike and Golden Eagle might linger on.

One of the highlights of the trip promises to be to accompany a Ural Owl ringing excursion. In April they ring incubating females, giving superb photographic opportunities.

## TRIP DETAILS

**ACCOMMODATION:** On this trip we stay at a comfortable country guesthouse with all rooms en suite.

**PRINCIPAL LEADER:** Daniel Green

**NUMBERS:** Max. 12 clients

**PRICE:** £ 1,195

**Single supp.:** £ 95

**Deposit:** £ 300 per person

The price is per person, and is fully inclusive of scheduled return economy-class flights London-Västerås, airport taxes, accommodation, all meals, minibus transport, incidental tips, and the services of the leaders.

The price excludes travel insurance, optional tip to the local guide, drinks and other personal expenses.

*This trip will be operated in conjunction with Limosa Holidays.*

This evening we'll go in search of Pygmy Owl, which may appear just after sundown to give its short whistling call from the top of a spruce tree at the forest's edge.

*Overnight Salbohedgardens*

**Day 3:** This is also prime woodpecker country, and we are out early for Grey-headed, Black and very local Three-toed Woodpeckers.

We'll also witness the ringing of Tengmalm's Owls, breeding in nestboxes. There is really no other way to get really close views and to photograph these charming little, highly nocturnal owls.

Black-throated Divers, Capercaillie and Goshawk breed in the area, as do Woodlark and Parrot Crossbill.

After an outdoor breakfast, we'll get back for lunch around noon and an afternoon siesta.

We'll then have a relaxed evening excursion around the beautiful wetlands of Svartådalen with drumming Snipes and calling Curlews.

*Overnight Salbohedgardens*

**Day 4:** We head out early this morning to a superb area of forest and lakes. Here we hope to see some of Sweden's choice specialities, including the 'monarch of the woods' – Capercaillie. Black Grouse can also be found, and we hope to see them on a lek. If this was not enough, Cranes breed in the area, and the forests should be resounding to their atmospheric calls.

We head back to Västerås airport for our afternoon flight back to London Stansted.

## What you say:

*We had a wonderful time – thoroughly enjoyed it. Leader's expertise and local knowledge (contacts) was brilliant ... want to go back – that's how good!*

*C & R.S., Leics.*



Great Grey Owl (Photo: Lars Karlsson)