

Estonia in spring

Arctic migration in the Baltic

29 April to 6 May, 2006

Leaders: Tim Earl and Antero Topp

Highlights:

- A total of 105 species seen on our first full day in Estonia. Birds of the day for participants included Lesser Spotted Eagle, Black Grouse, Lesser White-fronted Goose and Grey-headed (Grey-faced) Woodpecker.
- Ruffs in full breeding plumage ranging from black through gold to white neck-feathers.
- Our first Black Grouse perched high in a tree.
- Pygmy Owls mating and a Ural Owl which wanted to join the group.
- Snipe watching the world from tree-top perches – a change of perspective from their winter ground-hugging habit.
- All the harriers – Marsh, Hen and Montagu's – which were such a delight to watch.
- Drawing the hotel curtains and seeing rafts of ducks on a still sea.
- The sounds of Wild Estonia – Lesser Whitethroats, Long-tailed Ducks and Scaup all singing. Sorting them out was so interesting.
- Estonia's peace and quiet – in forests, marshes and across open fields – made everything audible.
- Lesser Spotted Eagles, perched in a tree or searing in pairs, were so majestic.
- A Hazel Grouse which perched on a branch and allowed close views from the vehicles. Capercaillies too were seen along quiet roads.

Daily diary

Saturday 29 April

To Haapsalu, Estonia

A field with 250 White-fronted Geese and a handful of Barnacles was a good start to Estonia birding. True, we had seen a couple of nesting White Storks and a lone Common Crane, but the sight of wildfowl in numbers was a delight.

The flight from Heathrow was uneventful but Tim was worried after learning that many of the cases were not showing up on the aircraft's manifest. Some arrived and were collected in Helsinki as planned, the others had been routed through to Tallinn and we all ended the journey with our correct cases.

The drive to Haapsalu was interesting – as much for the fact that the countryside looked bleak after a long cold winter. Estonia's snow had melted a few days earlier, the grass was still brown and flattened and trees were yet to burst forth. But the weather forecast was good, our first dinner delicious (especially the cream of salmon soup) and we retired early in anticipation of an early start in the morning.

Sunday 30 April

Haapsalu Bay

There are few occasions in Europe when 100 species are seen in a day, but the Haapsalu Bay gave us that distinction today despite difficult birding conditions.

A 5am start saw us searching for Blackcock in the Rõude area but they had been disturbed and none was seen. A walk to investigate drumming nearby failed to find Grey-headed (Grey-faced) Woodpecker but we did get great views of a calling Wryneck, several Tree Sparrows and a singing Redwing.

We checked out a site for Lesser White-fronted Geese and to our delight were rewarded with super views of up to 27 birds, although it was a little difficult to count accurately. Their distinguishing features were clearly seen by us all. An Elk ambled by at some distance but giving good views and it was with reluctance that we left the area to return for breakfast.

A Redstart was singing in the cemetery opposite our hotel after breakfast and an immediate foot-diversion gave good views. A Black Redstart had been heard earlier by those whose

rooms were at the rear of the hotel. Stopping at the town's water treatment plant we were rewarded with great views of two White-tailed Eagles and a super male Marsh Harrier as a couple of Water Rails called in the reed bed nearby.

We set off to explore Haapsalu Bay – our first stop was at a small pond where we enjoyed brilliant views of a pair of Grey-headed (better-named Grey-faced) Woodpeckers, a pair of Pied Flycatchers and a pair of Slavonian Grebes. All the birds were seen well in their most striking breeding plumages, a real ornithological treat.

farm, the barn of which had a steep ramp we could use as a viewing platform. From here most of the common ducks were seen together with hundreds of Bewick's and two Whooper swans. A soaring juvenile White-tailed Eagle put up flocks of birds including about 15 Smew which flew across the bay.

The day was bright and sunny but a stiff easterly wind kept temperatures down and made viewing birds on the choppy sea difficult. We drove to the Haeska tower nearby where Tim was surprised to find a completely new structure had been built. We saw another White-tailed Eagle, hundreds of Pintail, several colourful Ruff and two Spotted Redshanks before leaving to find shelter from the wind.

This was achieved in the Vaike-Rõude woods where we ate lunch after admiring a male Great Spotted Woodpecker. A walk through the wood top a marsh added Robin, Great, Blue and Marsh tits, 10 Taiga Bean Geese and a Green Sandpiper to our ever growing list.

We stopped for a (rather smelly) comfort stop at a café near the Kasari River where a Black Kite was watched as it passed on the stiff wind. This is a national rarity in Estonia – Antero's second and Tim's first for the country.

We ended the day back in Haapsalu where an investigation of the marina area resulted in several common duck species gaining the list along with Arctic and Common terns, Great Crested Grebe and yet another White-tailed Eagle.

We returned to the hotel at 6pm well pleased with our day of record numbers and superb species, most of which were seen well.

Monday 1 May

Arctic-bound sea ducks in the Baltic

Long-tailed Ducks were on the sea and migrating past in their scores when we arrived at Dirhami Harbour at about 5.45am. They were keeping good company with Common and Velvet scoters, Red-breasted Mergansers, Eider, Goldeneye, Mute, Bewick's and Whooper swans representing the wildfowl (although Shelduck, Wigeon, Greylag and Barnacle Geese were also seen during the seawatching session). Red-throated and Black-throated divers were going through in numbers – we saw about 20 of the former out of 60 birds altogether.

It was a sobering thought to realise that this was but a small part of the season's migration which was being held up by the strong easterly winds. Although the spectacles of thousands of birds passing had been denied us we did gain benefit from the fact that each individual bird could be picked out easily allowing for identification and something of a masterclass from the leaders.

Passerines were coming overhead too with small flocks of Siskins, Crossbills and Sky Larks heading north with the occasional Tree Pipit for company.

We were about to pack up and return to the hotel for breakfast when Antero's phone beeped as a message came in: there was a Red-footed falcon in fields on the way back. We piled into the bus (more in anticipation of breakfast than seeing the falcon which must have gone, surely?) and were soon searching for the bird... and there it was on an electricity cable. About 10 are recorded in Estonia each spring but we were still delighted to see the bird.

The main part of our day was spent exploring the Haapsalu Bay nature reserve starting on the far side at an observation tower. A children's tree-house was passed on the way – it was a luxurious affair with a car wing-mirror fitted so that they could see people approaching. Sadly for us, a Blue Tit had found the mirror and was spending its time fighting the reflection, a habit normally associated with Pied Wagtails and Chaffinches.

The first tower we visited soon distracted us from the problem, however, giving great views of Smew, Scaup, Coots and a passing Caspian Tern which delighted us all. Two Little Gulls flew up past us while a little later we saw three Black-tailed Godwits, a pair of Penduline Tits, two Red-necked Grebes, a Garganey and several House Martins.

At least four Bitterns were booming and as we walked down to the second tower hide we heard and then saw a Lesser Whitethroat. What a strange bird... its head and throat were a subtle yellow colour. It had been feeding among willow catkins and the pollen had stained its head.

Those looking for better views of Penduline Tit disturbed a roosting Long-eared Owl which we all saw on the way back to the bus, although some were distracted by a sleeping male Grass Snake.

Lunch was to be in the Uuejõe Forest but as we drove there Antero suddenly pulled up his car.

"I think we have just seen a Wood Lark," he told the bus via a two-way radio. It was by the side of the road and while watching it we noticed a second.

Tim had his customary snooze after lunch but joined in for a successful Crested Tit hunt afterwards. Driving back to the hotel we saw a graceful female Montagu's Harrier, a hen Blackcock, another Wryneck, several Tree Pipits and two White-tailed Eagles.

We stopped again in the Silma nature reserve, this time on the near-bank where we saw 10 Avocets, lots of Coots, three Caspian Terns and another White-tailed Eagle. The latter should have been a fitting end to the day but the leaders decided to go for one of Estonia's great rarities and visited a small pond on the outskirts of Haapsalu. Sadly, the hoped-for Moorhen was not there and we had to be content with a Goosander instead. (Oh! sob, sob... Ed.)

The day had been long but everyone was content and looking forward to a sleep-in the following day. It was not to be. Alarms were set for 4.30am as we wanted to find a Blackcock lek.

Tuesday 2 May

To Haademeeste

Off we set after a 5am cuppa for fields in which Blackcock compete for mates. We made just one stop to listen for Nutcracker (without luck) although Brambling, Crested and Willow tits were heard and or seen. However, by the time we reached the Blackcock it was all over – a female was nonchalantly nibbling aspen buds while two males looked confused in a nearby tree.

Exploring nearby woods we heard the drumming of a Lesser Spotted Woodpecker. It turned out to be made by a female, possibly calling for a mate, so we wished her good luck and continued on our way discussing the great volume of noise such a small bird could make. In contrast, when we found a pair of Black Woodpeckers a few minutes later the noise they made, calling and drumming, seemed proportionate.

Stops were made to watch a Common Snipe perched at the top of a spruce, quite a surreal sight, and a pair of Willow Tits was seen when we went for a short walk in search of Hazel Grouse.

Breakfast back at the hotel was followed by an extremely efficient departure with luggage and picnic. The journey to Haademeeste is only 100 miles or so and we enjoyed a mixed day of birding and sightseeing along the way. Our first stop at likely copse for Ortolans produced two Wrynecks but no buntings.

The Haeska tower on the other hand produced a superb range of Ruffs in breeding plumage which ranged from black through to white although a couple in golden garb were admired the most. There were few other waders but seven Greenshanks and lots of Redshanks were well received. Off the beach were huge numbers of wildfowl including five Garganey, thousands of Pintails and hundreds of Bewick's Swans.

Another tip given to Antero by some Finnish birders saw us stop at a copse on the way out of the reserve where a male White-backed Woodpecker was excavating a nest hole. The bird was being chased around by the local Fieldfares, for some reason.

Our journey south was fascinating for birds and the general countryside. Many of the farms were rustic wooden buildings, most in need of repair, but the villages often had the remains of old Soviet factories, now redundant, dilapidated and grey. The communal housing left much to be desired too and we wondered how ordinary folk's lives would change under the European Union flag.

Ornithologically we saw much of interest: a tractor drilling seed had attracted 60 White Storks and seven Cranes while a female Hen Harrier was spotted as we arrived at the highest spot in western Estonia.

We had lunch nearby, finding a bit of shelter in a narrow overgrown lane where a Wood Warbler was singing and a white-headed form of Long-tailed Tit was seen well. Bird of the day for many was watched soon after when a stunning male Hen Harrier was found quartering a hay-field. The female was seen soon after and some of us were fortunate to see both together.

As we approached Haademeeste a flock of 38 Bean Geese was found. These were examined in great detail – eight were uncommon European Taiga Bean Geese while the rest were the more usual Tundra Bean Geese on their way to Siberia.

The hotel grounds seemed full of birds with lots of finches feeding close to the car park. A Blackcap was singing as were two Serins, one of which was seen well. This was a good end to what had been a super travelling day.

Wednesday 3 May

Voiste ponds and the Nigula forest reserve

Given the choice, what does one watch: a Ural Owl or a pair of Grey-headed Woodpeckers? Answer, if it is in the Nigula Forest you watch both. The decision had to be made during a wonderful afternoon spent in this superb forest, close to the Latvian border when we discovered a Ural Owl sitting next to the path close to us, and a pair of Grey-headed Woodpeckers flew into a tree above our heads. Both stayed long enough for everyone to study them in great detail.

The day started well too. We met at 7am for breakfast and went straight out to the Kabli bird observatory to watch sea ducks and look for migrant land birds. We were greeted by a singing Whinchat which was joined by a Thrush Nightingale after we settled down to do a spot of sea watching. That was rewarding too with close views of Velvet and Common Scoter, all three saw-bills: Smew, Goosander and Red-breasted Merganser, a few Red-throated Divers, Goldeneye, Mute and Bewick's swans.

A Moorhen croaked behind us (I assume this a call... or did it die, Ed?) prompting some laughter as this is an uncommon species for Estonia, and we switched attention to the land birds. Lesser Whitethroat, Wood Warbler and Pied Flycatcher (a drab second-summer male) were all singing and showing well. There was a Little Ringed Plover on the beach and Tree Pipits were performing their display flights in abundance. A flock of 80 Little Terns passed us heading north noisily.

The observatory has a new metal tower, paid for in part by the EEC, and we climbed it in anticipation. Views of the sea ducks were excellent but a pair of Hawfinches which settled in a silver birch did so only for a second or two and few had views.

We moved on to a reed bed outside Haademeeste where a Thrush Nightingale entertained us royally but refused to be seen by anyone. The same almost happened for most of us with a singing Great Reed-warbler, except that Peter managed to see it skulking in the reeds.

We spent ages watching the sea ducks, including five Gadwall and several Garganey while two White-tailed Eagles fed on carrion or prey they had killed. Four Spotted Redshanks were admired and a Little Tern made several dives close to us, each with an extremely loud splash.

Returning to the hotel for lunch we had time to study more sea birds and were rewarded with views of two Red-necked Grebes, Sandwich Terns, and more Garganey.

A well-earned siesta was followed by our trip into the Nigula Forest at 3.30. A hen Capercaillie was spotted by those in the first vehicle who also saw a Hazel Hen (see below), to the frustration of people in the second.

Turning the tables, the first vehicle drove past our Ural Owl which was spotted five metres away by Peter (our hero). We called to the lead vehicle as the bird flew down the track towards them, perching half-way between the two groups. We all enjoyed stunning views as the bird watched us, the forest and then went to sleep. It flew off as we started to move and disappeared into the forest leaving us shaking with excitement.

A Black Woodpecker overtook us and as we stopped to watch it a Cuckoo started calling. It too was found, albeit a long way off, and we enjoyed views of both until... the Ural Owl was spotted again sitting next to the track about 100m ahead. Again we studied it and while doing so a pair of Grey-headed Woodpeckers settled in a tall tree above our head... hence the dilemma.

After another long session spent admiring the owl (the woodpeckers flew off after 10 minutes) it too departed and in jubilant move the vehicles proceeded, by now getting a little late for our supper booked especially for 7pm. We were determined to see the Latvian border and it was while driving close to it that the Hazel Hen was flushed. Nobody really cared after the great birds we had all seen.

We arrived at the hotel at 7.02pm and enjoyed our final supper on the coast before going out to visit the Pikla Pools in search of Bitterns and warblers. The former were booming when we arrived, but did not reveal themselves. A Great Reed-warbler was singing deep in cover – perhaps they do not become showy until after several arrive – but a Savi's Warbler gave good views as it reeled out its song at the top of a stem.

Bearded Tits were around but as it was late in the evening they skulked deep in the reeds so we returned to the hotel with eyes turned skywards in the hope of seeing Woodcocks. The first vehicle scooped prizes again when a Nightjar flew in front of them, followed by two

Woodcocks after they jumped out. The second vehicle arrived to find an excited party but none of the birds. Consolation was taken from at least three calling Grey Partridges. It had been an amazing day by any standards.

Thursday 4 May

Nigula Forest and the Sooma reserve

An early start saw us driving through dense old forest with many fallen trees. Stopping at a likely spot Antero soon heard a Three-toed Woodpecker which put in a brief appearance before disappearing. It continued to drum loudly in the company of a Black Woodpecker which also flew over us and perched briefly. It was followed to our amazement by a White-backed woodpecker male. What a super area of woodland.

The agitated calls of Chaffinches drew our attention to another forest dweller which was calling close by. After quite a search a Pygmy Owl was located high in an aspen and telescopes were trained. It posed beautifully for about five minutes calling continually to our delight but the consternation of small birds, including a Crested Tit. Suddenly, the Pygmy Owl swooped down into a spruce close to us, mated with a second bird we had not noticed and then flew off into the wood. This was our second owl 'Attenborough moment' in two days and we were amazed.

Returning to the hotel we saw another pair of Grey-headed Woodpeckers and a disturbed a Crane which was feeding along the forest tracks. A Weasel was spotted by those in one vehicle as we approached the hotel while Anne found a Red Squirrel in the grounds.

Setting off for Tartu after breakfast, we stopped briefly at a likely spot for Ortolans but none had arrived yet although we were given a fly-past by about 80 Bean Geese.

The Sooma nature reserve is rightly famous and protected and we stayed for a while to do some general birding and eat our picnic. Another pair of Grey-headed Woodpeckers responded to our poor imitations of their whistles and came into a tree near us to investigate. Coal Tit was added to the list of birds seen but we failed to locate a Nutcracker which was heard in the woods.

Our luck continued when a hen Capercaillie was found at the side of the main road through the reserve and we settled down to enjoy the excellent views. Traffic is sparse in this part of Estonia and we were frustrated when second later a truck came up behind us and flushed the bird as it passed. Bah!

Lunch was eaten at a picnic spot but interrupted when a Golden Eagle drifted overhead. It obeyed instructions and circled giving good views before folding its wings and going into a long stoop back the way it had come and with the sun behind it. We could only speculate upon the fate of whatever creature it had seen as it disappeared behind the tree tops. Its eye-sight must have been amazing.

The day's birding was punctuated by sightings of many Brimstone, three Camberwell Beauty and one Peacock butterflies before we arrived in Tartu in time for a spot of birding around the hotel before call-over and dinner.

Friday 5 May

Parnu Aardla marshes, the Russian border and Great Snipe

Great Snipe have white fan-tails and make weird clicking calls. We learned that watching a group of about 12 birds lekking in the falling light of our last evening in Estonia. Woodcock were roding over the distant woods and a pair of Cranes flew over the Great Snipe lek.

It was a fitting end to this super trip in which there had been so many wonderful birds, sights and sounds.

Our last full day was spent exploring the Tartu area starting at 6am in the Parnu Aardla marshes as the sun rose. We watched a female Citrine Wagtail as Black Terns flew over calling and Wood Sandpipers called out their love songs in display flights.

Mist was rising from the pools which added atmosphere (but not clarity) to our observations of Red-necked Grebes and Garganey.

A succession of Ravens crossed the marsh heading for a tip nearby and we followed them along the western edge listening for Thrush Nightingales. A stop was called after Tim heard the song of a Common Rosefinch. Investigation revealed a singing Whinchat which was mimicking the finch. Not so a Sedge Warbler, Lesser Whitethroat and Great Reed-warbler which were adding their lot to the early morning chorus. A Great Spotted Woodpecker added percussion to the orchestral piece before flying over our heads.

We returned to the hotel for breakfast before setting off south towards the Russian border. Stopping at R apina Polder, a nature reserve, we watched thousands of White-fronted Geese Tundra and Taiga bean geese as they gathered before completing their northerly migration.

Lunch was eaten overlooking the Russian border which runs through a great lake. On an island opposite was an unmistakable tower sentry-post on the edge of a village. We watched a Grey Heron land on the island thus starting a Russian bird-list and settled down to our picnic lunches the eating of which was interspersed with a Bittern's booming calls.

Returning to Tartu refreshments and a comfort stop were had at Kärevere before we drove into the forest in search of adventure. For once it came in the form of butterflies rather than birds as we enjoyed views of Brimstones, Peacocks, a male Orange Tip, two Camberwell Beauties, lots of Small Tortoiseshells, a Common Blue and four Maps kindly identified by Richard. Oh! And Tim made a full stop for a Comma.

We set off again after dinner for the Kärevere Fields where Great Snipe were gathering at about 8.30pm. We were able to study the differences in plumage between them and Common Snipe before the light dimmed but there was no sign of their white-tipped tail feathers. As the sun disappeared the birds started calling and later began their strange leaps into the air, many of which seemed in response to lunges by other Great Snipe. Their white tail-tips became a focus of attention and we enjoyed the drama as it unfolded. Their activity ebbed and flowed until we were forced to return to the hotel in the deepening darkness.

It had been a wonderful final evening, especially when two Cranes flew over the lek with a salmon-pink sky behind them. Several Woodcocks were seen roding above distant trees and we retired with wonderful images in mind.

Saturday 6 May

Kärevere Forest and Tallinn airport

Bed seemed wonderful this morning as we delayed getting up until 6.30 for a 7am breakfast. This was followed by a stroll across the road to watch a Thrush Nightingale which had been singing in bushes there since our arrival. It posed beautifully and was much admired. Three Hawfinches settled in trees some distance away but again flew off as the 'scopes were trained on them.

Exploring the area we stopped firstly to watch a small flock which included an immature White-fronted Goose, one Taiga and 11 Tundra Bean Geese. Half a dozen Buzzards were seen before we stopped for the morning's main course – two Lesser Spotted Eagles soared around over a clearing in which we had stopped and gave us excellent views of their identification points. Things became even more exciting when a male Hen Harrier decided to mix it with the eagles and a dog-fight ensued with no clear winner.

A couple of Common Cuckoos were heard during the morning before we set off for the airport. A comfort and coffee stop was made at the Café Hollywood which raised many a smile.

After watching a Lapwing beat up a Sparrowhawk we decided that this was the end of the holiday but not so. A couple of Hobbies flew across the main Tallinn road earning the title of last new species for the trip.

We checked in and enjoyed an uneventful journey home except that Tim said his goodbyes in Helsinki and flew to Istanbul via Amsterdam on another mission (amazingly, the luggage arrived with him).

ANNOTATED LIST OF SPECIES

		BIRDS	
	DIVERS	Gaviiformes	Gaviidae
1	Red-throated diver	<i>Gavia stellata</i> Seen on two days: 20 on the 1st and eight on the 3rd.	
2	Black-throated diver	<i>Gavia arctica</i> Seen on two days: 40 on the 1st and three on the 3rd.	
	GREBES	Podicipediformes	Podicipedidae
3	Red-necked grebe	<i>Podiceps grisegena</i> Pairs seen on the 1st, 3rd and 5th.	
4	Great crested grebe	<i>Podiceps cristatus</i> Seen on four days; maximum of 15 on the 1st.	
5	Slavonian grebe	<i>Podiceps auritus</i> A pair on the 30th and one the next day.	
	CORMORANTS	Pelecaniformes	Phalacrocoracidae
6	Great cormorant	<i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i> Common daily on the coast.	
	HERONS, EGRETS & BITTERNES	Ciconiiformes	Ardeidae
7	Grey heron	<i>Ardea cinerea</i> Common daily on the coast.	
8	Great bittern	<i>Botaurus stellaris</i> Heard booming on three days: 1st (four), 3rd (two and 5th (one).	
	STORKS	Ciconiiformes	Ciconiidae
9	White stork	<i>Ciconia ciconia</i> Common daily, many nests.	
	WILDFOWL	Anseriformes	Anatidae
10	Mute swan	<i>Cygnus olor</i> Abundant on the coast. smaller numbers inland.	
11	Whooper swan	<i>Cygnus cygnus</i> Small numbers seen on four days; maximum 35 on the 1st.	
12	Tundra (Bewick's) swan	<i>Cygnus columbianus</i> Hundreds on the coast daily.	
13	Taiga bean goose	<i>Anser fabalis</i> Small flocks in with White-fronted Geese; max 70 on the 3rd.	
14	Tundra bean goose	<i>Anser rossicus</i> Small numbers in with Tundra Bean Geese; max 10 on the 3rd.	
15	Greater white-fronted goose	<i>Anser albifrons</i> Common to abundant daily on the coast and inland. At least 2,000 in R�pina Polder on the 5th.	
16	Lesser white-fronted goose	<i>Anser erythropus</i> Twenty seven in a flock of White-fronted Geese near the Haeska Tower on the 30th.	
17	Greylag goose	<i>Anser anser</i> Small numbers on four days.	
18	Barnacle goose	<i>Branta leucopsis</i> Small flocks on five days at the coast; maximum 70 on the 2nd.	
19	Common shelduck	<i>Tadorna tadorna</i> A few daily on the coast.	
20	Eurasian wigeon	<i>Anas penelope</i> A few daily on the coast.	
21	Gadwall	<i>Anas strepera</i> Seen on three days; maximum six on the 3rd.	

	FALCONS	Falconiformes	Falconidae
47	Eurasian kestrel	Falco tinnunculus	
		Uncommon, just four seen on three days.	
48	Red-footed falcon	Falco vespertinus	
		A male seen well on the 1st, an extremely early date for this species.	
49	Eurasian hobby	Falco subbuteo	
		Two seen as we drove to the airport on the 6th	
	GROUSE	Galliformes	Tetraonidae
50	Eurasian capercaillie	Tetrao urogallus	
		Two hens seen by the side of the road on the 3rd and 4th.	
51	Black grouse	Tetrao tetrix	
		A total of 12 seen on four days but no lek found.	
52	Hazel grouse	Bonasa bonasia	
		Two hens seen from the bus on the 3rd and 4th.	
	PHEASANTS & PARTRIDGES	Galliformes	Phasianidae
53	Grey partridge	Perdix perdix	
		Heard on the 3rd, pairs seen on the 4th and 5th.	
	CRANES	Gruiformes	Gruidae
54	Common crane	Grus grus	
		Recorded most days.	
	RAILS, GALLINULES & COOTS	Gruiformes	Rallidae
55	Water rail	Rallus aquaticus	
		Recorded most days in appropriate habitat.	
56	Common moorhen	Gallinula chloropus	
		Missed outside Haapsalu but one found in Kabli on the 3rd.	
57	Eurasian coot	Fulica atra	
		About 100 in Haapsalu Bay on the 30th, four on the 5th.	
	OYSTERCATCHERS	Charadriiformes	Haematopodidae
58	Eurasian oystercatcher	Haematopus ostralegus	
		A few daily on the coast.	
	AVOCETS & STILTS	Charadriiformes	Recurvirostridae
59	Pied avocet	Recurvirostra avosetta	
		Two on the 30th, 12 the following day.	
	LAPWINGS & PLOVERS	Charadriiformes	Charadriidae
60	Northern lapwing	Vanellus vanellus	
		Abundant on farmland daily.	
61	Eurasian golden-plover	Pluvialis apricaria	
		Recorded most days; maximum of more than 1,000 in the R�pina Polder on the 5th.	
62	Greater ringed plover	Charadrius hiaticula	
		One on the 30th, four on the 4th.	
63	Little ringed plover	Charadrius dubius	
		Singles on the coast at Kabli on the 3rd and 4th.	
	SANDPIPERS	Charadriiformes	Scolopacidae
64	Eurasian woodcock	Scolopax rusticola	
		Three on the 3rd and six roding over woods close to the Great Snipe lek on the 5th.	
65	Great snipe	Gallinago media	
		About 12 at a lek outside Tartu on the 5th.	
66	Common snipe	Gallinago gallinago	
		Recoded on six days; two seen perched at the very top of spruces seemed quite out of place.	
67	Black-tailed godwit	Limosa limosa	
		Four on the 1st and two on the 5th.	
68	Whimbrel	Numenius phaeopus	
		Singles on the 30th and 5th.	
69	Eurasian curlew	Numenius arquata	
		Recorded most days.	

	OWLS	Strigiformes	Strigidae
94	Ural owl	Strix uralensis	One in the Nigula Forest took up people-watching. It remained in the area for 45 minutes until we drove off giving outstanding views.
95	Eurasian pygmy-owl	Glaucidium passerinum	One which sat calling in the Nigula Forest finally flew down and mated with an unseen female.
96	Northern long-eared owl	Asio otus	One disturbed in a copse in the Silma nature reserve on the 1st.
	NIGHTJARS	Caprimulgiformes	Caprimulgidae
97	Eurasian nightjar	Caprimulgus europaeus	One seen by the first vehicle occupants on the 11th.
	WOODPECKERS	Piciformes	Picidae
98	Eurasian wryneck	Jynx torquilla	Common, seen almost daily.
99	Lesser spotted woodpecker	Dendrocopos minor	Seen on two days, female on the 2nd, male 5th.
100	White-backed woodpecker	Dendrocopos leucotos	Males on the 2nd and 4th.
101	Great spotted woodpecker	Dendrocopos major	Seen on three days.
102	Three-toed woodpecker	Picoides tridactylus	One briefly in the Nigula Forest on the 4th.
103	Black woodpecker	Dryocopus martius	Pairs seen on the 2nd, 3rd and 4th with another bird on the 4th.
104	Grey-headed (-faced) woodpecker	Picus canus	Amazingly, five pairs seen during the holiday.
	LARKS	Passeriformes	Alaudidae
105	Wood lark	Lullula arborea	A few in the Haapsalu area on the 1st.
106	Sky lark	Alauda arvensis	Recorded most days.
	SWALLOWS	Passeriformes	Hirundinidae
107	Barn swallow	Hirundo rustica	Seen in small numbers daily.
108	House martin	Delichon urbica	Common, recorded in numbers daily.
	WAGTAILS & PIPITS	Passeriformes	Motacillidae
109	White wagtail	Motacilla alba	Abundant: biggest gathering 14 on the 1st.
110	Citrine wagtail	Motacilla citreola	One female seen in the Parnu Aardla marsh.
111	Yellow wagtail	Motacilla flava	Only four sightings amounting to 21 birds.
112	Tree pipit	Anthus trivialis	Abundant in woods and forests.
113	Meadow pipit	Anthus pratensis	Recorded most days.
	KINGLETS	Passeriformes	Regulidae
114	Goldcrest	Regulus regulus	A few heard but none seen.
	WRENS	Passeriformes	Troglodytidae
115	Winter wren	Troglodytes troglodytes	Seen and heard in forest and woods.
	ACCENTORS	Passeriformes	Prunellidae
116	Dunnock (Hedge accentor)	Prunella modularis	Strange to watch singing from the tops of trees, a fairly uncommon Estonian bird.

	THRUSHES	Passeriformes	Turdidae
117	Eurasian blackbird	Turdus merula	
		Recorded most days.	
118	Fieldfare	Turdus pilaris	
		Common around settlements.	
119	Redwing	Turdus iliacus	
		A few around habitation.	
120	Song thrush	Turdus philomelos	
		Recorded most days.	
121	Mistle thrush	Turdus viscivorus	
		One singing on the 7th was seen only by a leader.	
	OLD WORLD WARBLERS	Passeriformes	Sylviidae
122	Savi's warbler	Locustella luscinioides	
		One heard reeling on the 3rd was a leader-only bird. ???	
123	Sedge warbler	Acrocephalus schoenobaenus	
		Just one bird at the Parnu Aardla marshes on the 5th.	
124	Great reed-warbler	Acrocephalus arundinaceus	
		Heard and seen on three days.	
125	Willow warbler	Phylloscopus trochilus	
		Abundant.	
126	Common chiffchaff	Phylloscopus collybeta	
		Extremely common.	
127	Wood warbler	Phylloscopus sibilatrix	
		First bird seen on the 1st and then common daily thereafter.	
128	Blackcap	Sylvia atricapilla	
		Only a few seen or heard through the week.	
129	Greater whitethroat	Sylvia communis	
		Males seen on two days towards the end of the holiday.	
130	Lesser whitethroat	Sylvia curruca	
		At least six singing males noted on three days.	
	OLD WORLD FLYCATCHERS	Passeriformes	Muscicapidae
131	European pied flycatcher	Ficedula hypoleuca	
		A pair on the 30th and an immature male holding territory in Kabli on the 3rd.	
132	European robin	Erithacus rubecula	
		Recorded most days.	
133	Thrush nightingale	Luscinia luscinia	
		A few recorded most days.	
134	Black redstart	Phoenicurus ochruros	
		Surprisingly few - singles recorded on three days.	
135	Common redstart	Phoenicurus phoenicurus	
		Two males on the 30th, three birds on the 3rd.	
136	Whinchat	Saxicola rubetra	
		Common, recorded in numbers daily, maximum 15 on the 30th. One on the 5th was mimicing the song of Common Rosefinch.	
137	Northern wheatear	Oenanthe oenanthe	
		Common, recorded in numbers daily, maximum 15 on the 30th.	
	LONG-TAILED TITS	Passeriformes	Aegithalidae
138	Long-tailed tit	Aegithalos caudatus	
		One of the beautiful white-headed northern race on the 2nd.	
	TITS	Passeriformes	Paridae
139	Marsh tit	Poecile palustris	
		One on the 30th, 2 on the 2nd.	
140	Willow tit	Poecile montanus	
		Two pairs on the 2nd., two on the 3rd.	

141	Coal tit	Periparus ater One seen on the 4th.	
142	Crested tit	Lophophanes cristatus Four birds seen on three days.	
143	Great tit	Parus major Common, seen daily.	
144	Blue tit	Cyanistes caeruleus Five birds seen on four days.	
	NUTHATCHES	Passeriformes	Sittidae
145	Eurasian nuthatch	Sitta europaea Most seen in the cemetery at Haapsalu.	
	CREEPERS	Passeriformes	Certhiidae
146	Eurasian treecreeper	Certhia familiaris Singles recorded on the 3rd and 4th.	
	PENDULINE TITS	Passeriformes	Remizidae
147	Eurasian penduline-tit	Remiz pendulinus Two in the Sooma Reserve on the 1st were probably a pair.	
	JAYS & CROWS	Passeriformes	Corvidae
148	Eurasian jay	Garrulus glandarius Recorded most days, eight on migration on the 5th.	
149	Eurasian magpie	Pica pica Common daily.	
150	Eurasian nutcracker	Nucifraga caryocatactes Heard on at least six occasions but characteristically shy. None seen.	
151	Eurasian jackdaw	Corvus monedula Recorded most days.	
152	Rook	Corvus frugilegus Recorded most days.	
153	Hooded crow	Corvus cornix Common daily.	
154	Common raven	Corvus corax Common daily; maximum of 25 or so heading for the Tartu tip on the 5th.	
	STARLINGS	Passeriformes	Sturnidae
155	European starling	Sturnus vulgaris Abundant daily.	
	OLD WORLD SPARROWS	Passeriformes	Passeridae
156	House sparrow	Passer domesticus Not so common: seen on only four days with a maximum of six on the 30th.	
157	Eurasian tree sparrow	Passer montanus Seen on only four days with a maximum of six on the 30th.	
	FINCHES	Passeriformes	Fringillidae
158	Chaffinch	Fringilla coelebs Abundant daily.	
159	Brambling	Fringilla montifringilla Flock of 10 seen at the Lapanina Hotel, Kabli, on the 3rd.	
160	Red crossbill	Loxia curvirostra Seven on the 1st.	
161	European greenfinch	Carduelis chloris Recorded most days.	
162	Eurasian siskin	Carduelis spinus Recorded most days.	
163	European goldfinch	Carduelis carduelis Recorded most days.	
164	Eurasian linnet	Carduelis cannabina Recorded most days.	

165	European serin	Serinus serinus Two singing in the grounds of the Lapanina Hotel, Kabli, daily.
166	Eurasian bullfinch	Pyrrhula pyrrhula Surprisingly common: seen on five gays with a maximum of six on the 30th.
167	Hawfinch	Coccothraustes coccothraustes Recorded most days but difficult to get good views.
	TRUE BUNTINGS	Passeriformes Emberizidae
168	Yellowhammer	Emberiza citrinella Recorded daily.
169	Reed bunting	Emberiza schoeniclus Common in reed beds.

MAMMALS

	RABBITS & HARES	Lagomorpha	Leporidae
1	European hare	Lepus europaeus Seen on three days, maximum three on the 30th.	
	SQUIRRELS	Rodentia	Scuridae
2	Eurasian red squirrel	Sciurus vulgaris One seen at the Lapanina Hotel, Kabli, on the 4th.	
	BEAVERS	Rodentia	Castoridae
3	Eurasian beaver	Castor fiber Many trees seen which had been gnawed by these animals.	
	DOGS & FOXES	Carnivora	Canidae
4	Red fox	Vulpes vulpes Seen on five days, maximum three on the 3rd.	
	OTTERS, WEASELS & BADGERS	Carnivora	Musteli
5	Least weasel	Mustela nivalis One seen near Kabli on the 4th.	
	MOLES	Lipotyphla	Talpida
6	European mole	Talpa europaea Mole hills were abundant.	
	PIGS	Artiodactyla	Suidae
7	Wild boar (Feral pig)	Sus scrofa Rootings seen commonly, especially in forests.	
	DEER	Artiodactyla	Cervidae
8	Western roe deer	Capreolus capreolus Abundant, seen daily; maximum eight on the 30th.	
9	Elk (Moose)	Alces alces Seen on four days with a maximum of four on the 2nd.	

HERPTILES

	FROGS AND TOADS	Ranidae
1	Common pool frog	Rana lessonae Several seen on the 30th.
2	Common toad	Bufo bufo One dying in the road near Haapsalu on the 30th, another found crossing a track on the 5th.
	SNAKES AND LIZARDS	Herpidae
3	Common Grass Snake	Natrix natrix One dying in the road near Haapsalu on the 30th; one in the Silma reserve on the 1st.
4	Viviparous Lizard	Lacerta vivipara A small specimen was found sunning on the path at the Haeska tower on the 2nd.

FLUTS (BUTTERFLIES)

1	Brimstone	Gonepteryx rhamni Common – seen in numbers daily.
2	Common Blue	Polyommatus icarus One seen on the 5th.
3	Camberwell Beauty	Nymphalis antiopa Seen on four days with three on the 4th.
4	Peacock	Inachis io Seen five days; more as the week progressed.
5	Small Tortoiseshell	Aglais urticae Seen on four days with a maximum of 20 on the 5th.
6	Large White	Pieris brassicae Seen only on two days.
7	Orange Tip	Anthocharis cardamines Males seen on two days at the end of the trip.
8	Green-veined White	Pieris napi One on the 3rd and three on the 5th.
9	Map	Arashnia levana Four on the 5th.
10	Comma	Polygonia c-album Six seen on four days.

Tim Earl

Principal Leader

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