

POLAND in Spring ***5th – 13th May 2007***



Hawfinch (all photos - Keith Grant)



Citrine Wagtail



Whinchat



Collared Flycatcher



Thrush Nightingale



Beaver 'dentistry'



Toothwort (Lathraea squamaria)



Sooty Copper



Small Copper



Leaders / Guides:

Keith Grant (*Travelling Naturalist*, UK)
Csaba Lendvai (*Ecotours*, Hungary)
Artur Wiatr (*Biebrza Explorer*, Poland)

Driver:

Krzysztof Jasinski

Group Members:

Stanley & Rita Blake
Sheila Mackay
Graham & Jo Morton
Steve & Sue Place
George & Mary Rippingdale
Graham & Sheila Rodgers
Margery Sifton

Daily Diary:

Saturday 5th May

Arrival

Sunny & warm

We all duly met at Heathrow for our early morning flight to Warsaw and arrived on time to meet up with our guides, Csaba and Artur, and driver Krzys. We stopped on the way for soup and a coffee (or beer in some cases!), and immediately saw a White Stork circling overhead. As we continued eastwards, the large nests of White Storks became more and more regular, either on the tops of buildings or electricity poles. Each nest seemed to have one or both adults in residence, and there were one or two other storks in the fields as we passed. At one point, we saw a distant male Montagu's Harrier low over some fields, and a second bird was noted a little later. We arrived at Bia_owie_a at around 5:30pm where, after settling in and dinner, we took a short walk to the nearby fishing pond on the edge of the Palace Park. A Great Reed Warbler was in full song, and we managed some good views of this large warbler as it skulked in the reed fringe just below us. A rather fine male Common Redstart was singing from one of the gardens we passed, and on the return we heard Lesser Whitethroat in full song. As dusk approached, good numbers of large bats, most probably Serotine, appeared over the pond.

Sunday 6th May

Bia_owie_a

Bright & sunny to start, though cold wind; clouding over with some light drizzle pm

Most of us met up at 7am for a pre-breakfast walk to the fishing pond. We immediately found Hawfinches, both in gardens and along the roadside. The Great Reed Warbler was still in full song, as were both Common and Black Redstarts. Having walked across the bund to the edge of the Palace Park, we found several Wrynecks and briefly heard a Thrush Nightingale. Returning for breakfast at 8am, we were away soon after 9am. The vehicle took us the short distance to the other side of the Palace Park, spotting plenty of Whinchats and a single Great Grey Shrike on the way, before meeting up with Mateus, our guide for our visit to the Strict Reserve. This forms the core of the Bia_owie_a National Park and a wonderful forest, largely untouched by mankind, with trees rising to 45 metres or more. Fallen trees and branches are largely left where they land, and an excellent ground flora can be found. As we walked across the open meadow from where we

parked the vehicle, Mateus explained the history of the area. At the impressive entrance gate to the Strict Reserve, we immediately found a pair of Collared Flycatchers which gave us excellent views. Indeed, Collared Flycatchers appeared regularly all along our walk, so we were surprised to find a single male Pied Flycatcher on territory alongside the boardwalk. A pair of Eurasian Treecreepers were feeding young in a nest built behind some loose bark, and we ate our sandwiches here, sitting on a nearby fallen tree. Whilst Great Spotted Woodpeckers appeared regularly, we found only one Middle Spotted Woodpecker within the forest, with a second bird later flying across the meadow as we returned to the vehicle. We also stopped to view an active nest-hole of Three-toed Woodpecker, waiting here for a quarter hour or so. Just as we were leaving, the male flew in, calling the female off the nest. Unfortunately, only some of our group had good views before an irate Chaffinch chased off the male and the female disappeared back into the hole. We then had a couple of views of her head as she peered out before we had to continue back to the vehicle. We bade farewell to Mateus and returned across the meadow, just as a Lesser Spotted Eagle drifted overhead. The wind was now rising and a light drizzle was threatening so we headed straight for a very welcome hot drink and chocolate biscuits from the vehicle. Returning to the hotel mid-afternoon, we relaxed until our early checklist and dinner at 5.30pm.

The plan was to be away by 6.30 for an evening trip but this had to be cancelled due to the weather. Although a brief clearance encouraged us to walk up to the Palace Park, the rain again set in. The number of Great Reed Warblers had increased to at least six singing males, and apart from the usual Spotted Flycatchers, Fieldfares and both species of Redstart, the only observation of note was a Eurasian Beaver swimming across the fishing pond, dragging a large stick with it.

Monday 7th May**Siemianówka Reservoir, Narew Valley****Foggy early morning, becoming bright and sunny, then clouding over late pm**

Just four of us managed a pre-breakfast walk at 6.30, but what a walk! Several Corncrakes were calling and one was actually seen creeping amongst the vegetation, and excellent views were obtained of an Icterine Warbler in full song and a Thrush Nightingale showing itself right at the top of a tree. The rest of us then met up for a 7.30 breakfast and we were away an hour later. We headed northwards through the forest to explore the Siemianówka Reservoir. Our first stop on the southern shore of this large quite shallow reservoir was a tower hide, enabling us to look across the willow and reed fringe. The relatively few Black Terns were greatly outnumbered by hundreds of White-winged & Whiskered Terns, all in full breeding plumage. An amazing sight as they were continually dipping into the water, circling round and repeating. Ducks included good views of Garganey and Gadwall, with rather more distant views of Tufted Ducks and Pochard. Marsh Harriers were patrolling the reed bed proper right in the distance, and a Bittern was seen briefly flying across, unfortunately dropping back into the reeds before many of us got on to it. We walked along the bund to what looked like a pumping station, and here a lone male Citrine Wagtail had taken up residence. He looked very fine as he perched up on dead thistles in the field, sometimes coming really close to perch on nearby willow scrub. Whinchats were ever-present, a nice male Common Whitethroat, some splendid Blue-headed Wagtails (the continental, nominate form of Yellow Wagtail), and a good-sized flock of Great White Egrets were also seen. After coffee and biscuits, we moved on, stopping again to check out the shoreline. Here, several Siskins were seen flying over as we off-loaded from the vehicle, and Woodlarks were singing overhead. In the distance, amongst the terns, were Little Gulls looking rather splendid in breeding plumage. Then a White-tailed Eagle appeared and drifted across the lake. We walked a short way out along a river bank to obtain nice views of the eagle sitting on a dead tree. Another short drive found us on the northern side of the lake beside a railway line. Even more marsh terns were here, with Greylag Geese, Great White Egrets, Common Redshank and Wood Sandpipers.

Whilst having our sandwiches, a border guard came along (we were only a kilometre or two from the EU border with Belarus) and checked our ID. Time moved on and we needed to head back to the pension, in good time for an early dinner at 5pm.

As the weather was really quite nice, despite a touch of dampness in the air, we headed north-west to the Narew Valley, arriving here just before 7pm. Walking out with Mateus, who had joined us again, we quickly found ourselves on the edge of a bog, with Corncrakes and Cuckoos calling all around. Common Snipe were drumming overhead and then several Great Snipe were found, creeping amongst the vegetation but sometimes sitting up and giving reasonable views through the telescopes. A Grasshopper Warbler was reeling and with a male and two female Montagu's Harriers quartering the bog and a pair of Common Cranes flying in to land on a cultivated field in the distance, it was a magical evening. Several pairs of Lapwings were most upset, presumably they had chicks in the field, and were beating up the Cranes, which had to duck each time. With another group walking out with us and a third group arriving, we were a bit worried that we were disturbing the lek of Great Snipe, so we retired a short distance, hoping still to see any lekking activity or display. However, it was not to be, and with the light failing, we returned to the vehicle, noting a roding Woodcock on the way, and getting back to the pension at around 9.30pm.

Tuesday 8th May

Bia_owie_a

Bright to start, becoming overcast with light drizzle, clearing pm

We had a full house on our pre-breakfast walk and repeated yesterday's route along the road to the bridge and weir where the fishing ponds drain. It was more or less a repeat of yesterday with the Thrush Nightingale showing well (and allowing photographs), the Icterine Warbler also showing well and a male Golden Oriole showing briefly as it flew past us into the back of a thicket and then past again and off. Unfortunately the Corncrakes did not show, though at least three were calling. After a 7.30am breakfast, we were away just as the rain started. The aim today was to explore several parts of the forest, particularly for woodpeckers. The rain stopped briefly for our first stop, and though no woodpeckers showed, a Honey-Buzzard did drift low over the tree tops. We moved on as the rain started again, driving further into the northern part of the forest. With clearing skies, we had coffee in a clearing before walking a forest trail as far as a beaver lake. Here, apart from the beaver's lodge and signs of this species' voracious appetite for tree-felling, we found a Black Woodpecker attending a nest hole and, a little later, a nice male Red-backed Shrike. We returned to the clearing for lunch before driving on again and having another short walk to a picnic site surrounded by spruce. Two small falcons flew over but must remain unidentified, but as we watched over the nearby meadow, we found a pair of Red-backed Shrikes, a Skylark was singing into the teeth of the strong wind, Corncrake calling from across the river and finally a superb Lesser Spotted Eagle drifted across. Our final stop was back near where we started, again finding no woodpeckers but a pair of Nuthatches feeding young in the nest and finally as we returned to the vehicle, a Peregrine circled overhead, quickly being swept away by the wind, and a Common Buzzard drifted low over the tree tops.

We returned in good time for our 6pm dinner, gathering again soon after 7.30 for a short drive, in convoy with a second group, into the forest. Luck was with us as at least three European Bison were on the road ahead of us and wandered into the forest, allowing good views on the road and some rather more limited, though closer, views in the forest alongside. We parked soon after and walked a short distance down a trail where we managed to find Pygmy Owl. This bird was heard calling several times, then flew in to land immediately overhead in some bare branches. This remained here for around twenty minutes, allowing all to view it through the telescopes, albeit in fading light. What an excellent end to our few days at Bia_owie_a.

Wednesday 9th May

Bia_ystok Fishponds, Czechowizna Lake, Goni_dz

Generally overcast, cold, some rain, sunny spells

A few went out again for a pre-breakfast walk down to the river meadows; Snipe, Icterine Warbler and Thrush Nightingale all showed well. We then all gathered for breakfast and bade our farewells to the pension. Having loaded the vehicle, we walked one final time across the causeway, to the museum shop for some final purchases. Great Reed Warbler and Black Redstart showed well and a dark-plumaged Common Buzzard circled over. Walking back, we found a pair of Common Redstarts on the wooden bridge across the fishing pond. A crew from Polish TV had arrived and accompanied us on our journey to Bia_ystok, they were making a film about eco-tourism in Poland. Initially, a short drive brought us to the School of Forestry on the other side of the Palace Park. We walked a short distance down to the football field and scanned the surrounding trees, quickly finding several very nice Golden Orioles. At least three males and a female appeared together in the poplars, ultimately coming quite close and low down in some shrubs bordering the field. A Green Woodpecker flew across, disappearing quickly into the trees, then flew back again. We walked back through the trees, hearing a Grey-headed Woodpecker calling very close. It took us some careful searching to find the bird calling from a nest-hole and we eventually all had good views of the male through the telescopes.

Time of course was getting on so we set off on our drive north-west. With fuel and comfort stops, we arrived at the Bia_ystok Fishponds in time to have coffee and lunch in the rain! Fortunately this eased off as we finished and we were soon walking along the bunds, overlooking the lakes. First bird of note must be the male Penduline Tit making his hanging nest from bulrush fluff. There was a large breeding colony of Black-headed Gulls here, and good numbers of Coot and Great Crested Grebe make use of this 'protective umbrella' to avoid predators. The next lake was mainly covered by bulrush and reeds, and this habitat was ideal for Reed, Sedge and Savi's Warblers, this last named species being seen through the telescopes as it 'reeled' away perched up on a reed stem. Opposite this, we found a nice breeding-plumaged Black Tern perched on a semi-submerged branch. The very large lake at the end of the path held a small flock of Tufted Ducks, two male Pochards and a pair of Goldeneye. Best of all through were the three pairs of breeding-plumaged Red-necked Grebes, looking superb in quite bright conditions, and swimming quite close to us. We returned slowly, speeding up as a further rain squall threatened! The crew filmed one or two interviews whilst the rest of us managed to get better views of the Penduline Tit and his handiwork from the other side of the willow.

Driving on, our next stop was to overlook the Czechowizna Lake, where five White-tailed Eagles were sitting on the far side of a field. It was whilst watching these that a male Ortolan Bunting started singing and we eventually located him on the far side of a roadside tree. We drove on a short distance nearer the lake shore and five eagles, presumably the same five as before, were now sitting in a lone bare tree. Finally, we drove on and arrived in time for dinner at our hotel in Goni_dz. After sorting out our rooms, having dinner and doing the checklist, Artur kindly gave us a short slide presentation about the Biebrza Marshes.

Thursday 10th May

Biebrza Marshes (south)

Variable cloud with sunny spells, cold wind

Our pre-breakfast walk took us up the road from the hotel to try to find the River Warbler which was singing from a clump of bushes on the edge of the village – no luck seeing it despite singing off and on for a half hour. As we returned for breakfast, we scanned the marshes near the hotel, noting small numbers of Ruff and Wood Sandpipers flying around and Corncrakes calling from

the iris and long grass. After breakfast, we headed south along the edge of the marshland, stopping at various tower hides and along the roadside. A party of Ravens circled over us together with a few Lesser Spotted Eagles. Redshank and Snipe were found on their breeding territories, together with Blue-headed Wagtails and Meadow Pipits. At the ruins of one of the fortresses, one of four built originally by the Tsar of Russia, a Great Grey Shrike was seen briefly and as we walked along a boardwalk through the marsh, we noted Savi's Warbler, Bluethroat briefly, and at least two Hobby. Good numbers of White Storks were dropping into what must have been rich feeding conditions in the marsh, and we noted several White-tailed Eagles, one at one point being mobbed by and positively dwarfing a Common Buzzard. An Osprey then flew over. As we were near the National Park Headquarters and Visitor Centre, we had lunch & coffee in the grounds there and managed a quick look round the exhibits. Our final two stops during the afternoon overlooked two absolutely fantastically rich areas of wetland, with thousands of Ruff and other shorebirds. At least 900 Cranes were counted, good numbers of Greylag Geese, several Shoveler, Pintail and Wigeon. Other shorebirds included good numbers of Wood Sandpipers and smaller numbers of breeding-plumaged Black-tailed Godwits, Dunlin, Spotted Redshank, Greenshank, Curlew Sandpipers, and both Little & Temminck's Stints. Terns included all three 'marsh' terns and at least two Little Gulls. Pride of place however must go to the large numbers of Cranes and the superbly plumaged male Ruffs, with all combinations of black, gold, chestnut and white plumes.

Friday 11th May**Biebrza Marshes (mid)****Changeable, some heavy showers, cold wind**

Most of us set our alarms for 3.30am (yes, 3.30am!) to be in the vehicle and away by 4am. We headed north from Goni_dz and just about an hour later we were searching the open fields for our target bird – Black Grouse. With the usual fields empty, we eventually spotted a black shape way in the distance, in a field of white flowers. As we walked towards this, to try to lessen the distance, we found another, this time a lot closer and clearly recognisable as a super male Black Grouse. We watched through the telescopes as he performed his routine, seemingly with no other bird in sight, for more than half an hour. During this time, a Wild Boar, Roe Deer, and Fox all crossed the fields in front of us, and a Red Kite then flew across. We tore ourselves away and headed back for breakfast, stopping occasionally to check roadside trees and rivers. Back near the hotel, we stopped to view a flock of Cranes and Greylag Geese in a roadside field. Amongst these, a smaller goose turned out to be a White-fronted Goose. Meeting everyone else for breakfast, we then headed out to explore the middle section of the National Park. Soon after leaving the hotel, we stopped to scan the marsh and found several Black Storks, and at this moment a Hoopoe flew past. We had to dodge the rain showers, but did find good numbers of Montagu's and Marsh Harriers. Twice we had excellent views of Hobby, and there were several Curlew and Wheatears at various places. A Beaver dam right beside the road was much photographed and a little further on, we spent a long time trying to see the various Corncrakes which were calling nearby – needless to say, we failed! A heavy shower happened to coincide with lunch, so we had our sandwiches in the vehicle, again listening to Corncrakes and watching several harriers flushing large numbers of Ruff, Wood Sandpipers and various ducks. We headed back after lunch, again stopping along the way to check various wet thickets. We returned mid-afternoon to relax or do some gentle birding around the immediate area. A really heavy thunder storm hit us late afternoon, cutting the electricity supply, and forcing us to move the planned BBQ dinner from outside back into the restaurant. As it happened, the weather cleared and we had a beautiful sunny evening, but too late to change our minds back again. After dinner, Artur showed us some more pictures and a short film on Poland's bird life through the seasons.

Saturday 12th May

Biebrza Marshes (north)

Strong wind, cold, clearing for evening

We awoke with a very strong and cold wind blowing, though it was fairly bright. After breakfast, we headed across the centre of the National Park to briefly explore the dune system on the north side. Artur checked us in with the Centre and whilst the vehicle went on ahead, we walked slowly down the track with wet forest on either side. It was remarkably difficult birding in the windy conditions, and the only species of note was a Hoopoe briefly near the Centre itself. As we approached the rehabilitation centre, with its Wild Boar and two young Elk, a woodpecker called and flew across, landing briefly – just another Great Spot! We then reboarded the vehicle and drove on another 5 km, before walking out through this ancient dune system. The sun came out and despite the wind, it became relatively warm. Csaba found probable Lynx tracks in the sand beyond the lookout tower, and as we returned we found a number of butterflies, including Small & Sooty Coppers and Queen of Spain Fritillary, and two Sand Lizards. We confirmed the ID of the butterflies from the various digital photos whilst having our picnic lunch, and as time was really getting on, we headed back to the hotel, stopping only for yet another Hoopoe on the road in front of us before another car disturbed it. We got back to the hotel around 3.45pm, rather later than expected, and reconvened for an early dinner at 5pm.

The weather cleared, the wind dropped and the sun came out. Leaving soon after 6pm, we headed south, stopping to view a most superb Honey-Buzzard sitting at eye level on a roadside branch! An hour later we were walking the short distance out along a boardwalk, across a wet marsh and were literally surrounded by singing Aquatic Warblers! With the sun low in the west, we were soon seeing birds, the rarest breeding warbler in Europe, both performing their song flights and sidling up bulrush or reed stems. Everyone got super views through the telescopes and although somewhere else obviously got some heavy rain judging by the dark clouds and rainbow to the east, our luck held and we had a magical hour as the sun set. An Elk was also spotted beyond a bank of reeds in the distance and both Marsh and Montagu's Harriers gave excellent views as they flew nearby. We returned to the hotel by 9pm.

Sunday 13th April

Departure

Bright and sunny, almost warm without the cold wind!

The weather remained clear for our travel day! We were away soon after 8.30am and headed for a repeat visit to one of the boardwalks nearby. A Bluethroat showed briefly for some but really didn't give the views we hoped for. Several lizards were seen along the boardwalk together with several Northern Damselflies (or Spearhead Bluets as they are now called). We then had to head for Warsaw, stopping en route for coffee and a picnic lunch, and we arrived in good time to check in to our flight home.

Species Lists:

The various species lists below use the following references:

Birds: We use the suggested worldwide English names and systematic order as found in *World Bird Species Checklist: with alternate English & scientific names* (Wells, M.G., 1998).

Also: *Collins Bird Guide* (Svensson, L., Grant, P.J., Mullarney, K. & Zetterström, D., 1999).

Mammals: We use the suggested worldwide English names and systematic order as found in *Mammals of the World, A Checklist* (Duff, A. & Lawson, A., 2004).

Also: *Collins Field Guide: Mammals of Britain & Europe* (Macdonald, D. & Barrett, P., 1993).

Amphibians and Reptiles: *Collins Field Guide: Reptiles & Amphibians of Britain & Europe [second edition]* (Arnold, E.N. & Ovenden, D.W., 2002)

Butterflies: *Butterflies of Europe, New Field Guide & Key* (Lafranchis, T., 2004)

Dragonflies: *Field Guide to the Dragonflies of Britain & Europe* (Dijkstra, K-D.B., 2006)

Alternate names are separated by '/' and optional names are enclosed by '[.]'.

BIRDS - AVES**GREBES - Podicipedidae**

Little Grebe *Tachybaptus ruficollis* : 1 Bialystok Fishponds on 9th is our only record.

Red-necked Grebe *Podiceps grisegena* : 3 pairs Bialystok Fishponds on 9th is our only record.

Great Crested Grebe *Podiceps cristatus* : noted on 2 days with ca12 pairs Siemianowka Reservoir on 7th, several Bialystok Fishponds on 9th.

CORMORANTS - Phalacrocoracidae

Great Cormorant *Phalacrocorax carbo* : noted on 2 days with ca30 Siemianowka Reservoir on 7th, 1 Biebrza Marshes on 10th.

HERONS & BITTERNs - Ardeidae

Grey Heron *Ardea cinerea* : noted on 5 days with several Siemianowka Reservoir on 7th, 1 Bialowieza on 8th, regularly seen on 10th, small numbers on 11th, several en route on 13th; surprisingly scarce.

Great [White] Egret *Ardea alba* : noted on 3 days with an amazing ca40 Siemianowka Reservoir on 7th, 1 Bialowieza on 8th, 3 Biebrza Marshes on 10th.

Eurasian/Great Bittern *Botaurus stellaris* : noted on 3 days with 1 Siemianowka Reservoir on 7th, heard booming Bialystok Fishponds on 9th, booming Biebrza Marshes on 10th.

STORKS - Ciconiidae

Black Stork *Ciconia nigra* : noted on 2 days with 5 on the marsh below the hotel on 11th, 5 on 12th.

White Stork *Ciconia ciconia* : noted each day, with occupied nests commonly seen as we drove.

GEESE, SWANS & DUCKS - Anatidae

Mute Swan *Cygnus olor* : noted on 5 days with 4 Siemianowka Reservoir on 7th, ca30 Biebrza Marshes on 10th, several Biebrza Marshes on 11th & 12th, & en route on 13th.

Greater White-fronted Goose *Anser albifrons* : 1 with Greylags Biebrza Marshes on 11th is our only record.

Greylag Goose *Anser anser* : noted on 3 days with several Siemianowka Reservoir on 7th, ca120 Biebrza Marshes on 10th, ca80 Biebrza Marshes on 11th.

Eurasian Wigeon *Anas penelope* : ca20 Biebrza Marshes on 10th is our only record.

Gadwall *Anas strepera* : noted on 2 days with several Siemianowka Reservoir on 7th, several Biebrza Marshes on 10th.

Mallard *Anas platyrhynchos* : noted each day in small numbers.

Northern Pintail *Anas acuta* : 4 Biebrza Marshes on 10th is our only record.

Garganey *Anas querquedula* : noted on 3 days with 2 males Siemianowka Reservoir on 7th, ca6 Biebrza Marshes on 10th, several Biebrza Marshes on 11th.

Northern Shoveler *Anas clypeata* : ca6 Biebrza Marshes on 10th is our only record.

Common Pochard *Aythya ferina* : noted on 3 days with 2 males Siemianowka Reservoir on 7th, 2 males Bialystok Fishponds on 9th, ca5 Biebrza Marshes on 10th.

Tufted Duck *Aythya fuligula* : noted on 2 days with ca12 Siemianowka Reservoir on 7th, 14 Bialystok Fishponds on 9th.

Common Goldeneye *Bucephala clangula* : a pair Bialystok Fishponds on 9th is our only record.

HAWKS, EAGLES & allies - Accipitridae

Osprey *Pandion haliaetus* : 1 Biebrza Marshes on 10th is our only record.

European Honey-buzzard *Pernis apivorus* : noted on 2 days with 2 Bialowieza on 8th, 1 sitting at eye level on a roadside branch on 12th.

Red Kite *Milvus milvus* : 1 early morning over the grouse lek Biebrza Marshes on 11th is our only record.

White-tailed Eagle *Haliaeetus albicilla* : noted on 3 days with 1 adult Siemianowka Reservoir on 7th, at least 5 Czechowizna Lake on 9th, 3 Biebrza Marshes on 10th.

Montagu's Harrier *Circus pygargus* : noted on 6 days with 2 seen distantly en route on 5th, a male & 2 females Narew Valley on 7th, at least 5 Biebrza Marshes on 10th, at least 10 Biebrza Marshes on 11th, a pair flew past quite close on 12th, several en route on 13th.

[Western] Marsh Harrier *Circus aeruginosus* : noted most days, with at least 8 Siemianowka Reservoir & Narew Valley on 7th, 1 Bialowieza on 8th, several during day on 9th, at least 15 Biebrza Marshes on 10th, at least 16 Biebrza Marshes on 11th, several during day including 2 males on territory in evening on 12th, several en route on 13th.

Common Buzzard *Buteo buteo* : noted each day, with several overhead en route on 5th, several on 6th, 1 Siemianowka Reservoir on 7th, 1 Bialowieza on 8th, 2 during day on 9th, 2 Biebrza Marshes on 10th, 3 Biebrza Marshes on 11th, 1 on 12th, 1 en route on 13th.

Lesser Spotted Eagle *Aquila pomarina* : noted on 5 days with 1 directly overhead Bialowieza on 6th, 2 Siemianowka Reservoir 1 Bialowieza 1 Narew Valley on 7th, 1 Bialowieza on 8th, 2 during day on 9th, ca6 Biebrza Marshes on 10th.

FALCONS & allies - Falconidae

Eurasian Hobby *Falco subbuteo* : noted on 2 days with at least 3 Biebrza Marshes on 10th, at least 3 Biebrza Marshes on 11th.

Peregrine *Falco peregrinus* : 1 Bialowieza on 8th is our only record.

GROUSE, PHEASANTS & allies - Phasianidae

Black Grouse *Lyrurus tetrix* : a male seen well though distantly (probably 2 others even further away) Biebrza Marshes on 11th.

Grey Partridge *Perdix perdix* : noted on 2 days with 4 Biebrza Marshes on 10th, 2 Biebrza Marshes on 11th.

CRANES - Gruidae

Common Crane *Grus grus* : noted on 5 days with 2 Narew Valley on 7th, at least 900 Biebrza Marshes on 10th, small flocks regularly seen on roadside fields on 11th, several on 12th, several en route on 13th.

RAILS, CRAKES & COOTS - Rallidae

Corn Crane *Crex crex* : noted on 6 days with 1 seen & others calling Bialowieza plus several calling Narew Valley on 7th, heard Bialowieza on 8th, heard Biebrza Marshes on 10th - 13th.

Common Moorhen *Gallinula chloropus* : noted on 2 days with 2 near hotel Biebrza Marshes on 11th, 1 below hotel on 12th.

Eurasian/Common Coot *Fulica atra* : noted on 3 days, many at Siemianowka Reservoir on 7th, ca40 Bialystok Fishponds on 9th, regular in small numbers Biebrza Marshes on 10th.

PLOVERS & LAPWINGS - Charadriidae

Northern Lapwing *Vanellus vanellus* : noted most days in small numbers, including 3 pairs beating up a pair of Cranes on 7th.

[Common] **Ringed Plover** *Charadrius hiaticula* : at least 6 Biebrza Marshes on 10th.

SANDPIPERS, SNIPES & allies - Scolopacidae

Black-tailed Godwit *Limosa limosa* : noted on 3 days with ca10 Biebrza Marshes on 10th, several during day on 11th, several in roadside fields on 13th.

Eurasian Curlew *Numenius arquata* : at least 4 either seen or heard 'bubbling' Biebrza Marshes on 11th is our only record.

Spotted Redshank *Tringa erythropus* : ca10 in breeding plumage, Biebrza Marshes, on 10th is our only record.

Common Redshank *Tringa totanus* : noted on 3 days with several Siemianowka Reservoir on 7th, various breeding birds Biebrza Marshes on 10th, several during day on 11th.

Common Greenshank *Tringa nebularia* : at least 15 Biebrza Marshes on 10th is our only record.

Wood Sandpiper *Tringa glareola* : noted on 4 days with several Siemianowka Reservoir on 7th, at least 100 Biebrza Marshes on 10th, small flocks disturbed by harriers on 11th, several on 12th.

Common Sandpiper *Actitis hypoleucos* : noted on 3 days with 3 Bialowieza & 2 Siemianowka Reservoir on 7th, 3 Biebrza Marshes on 10th, 2 Biebrza Marshes on 11th.

Eurasian Woodcock *Scolopax rusticola* : 1 as we returned to the vehicle, Narew Valley, on 7th.

Great Snipe *Gallinago media* : at least 5 seen on ground Narew Valley on 7th; though unfortunately not displaying.

Common Snipe *Gallinago gallinago* : noted on 6 days with 1 Bialowieza plus several in drumming display flight Narew Valley on 7th, 4 Bialowieza on 8th, 2 Bialowieza on 9th, several Biebrza Marshes on 10th, several Biebrza Marshes on 11th, several in roadside fields on 13th.

Little Stint *Calidris minuta* : 2 Biebrza Marshes on 10th.

Temminck's Stint *Calidris temminckii* : ca10 Biebrza Marshes on 10th.

Curlew Sandpiper *Calidris ferruginea* : 2 Biebrza Marshes on 10th.

Dunlin *Calidris alpina* : at least 20 Biebrza Marshes on 10th.

Ruff *Philomachus pugnax* : noted on 2 days with several thousand Biebrza Marshes on 10th, flocks regularly disturbed by harriers on 11th.

GULLS, TERNS & SKIMMERS - Laridae

Black-headed Gull *Larus ridibundus* : noted most days; including large breeding colonies at Siemianowka Reservoir on 7th, and Bialystok Fishponds on 9th.

Little Gull *Larus minutus* : noted on 2 days with good numbers seen distantly Siemianowka Reservoir on 7th, 2 Biebrza Marshes on 10th.

Whiskered Tern *Chlidonias hybrida* : noted on 4 days with several hundred Siemianowka Reservoir on 7th, ca50 Biebrza Marshes on 10th, several Biebrza Marshes on 11th, several on 12th.

White-winged [Black] Tern *Chlidonias leucopterus* : noted on 6 days with several hundred Siemianowka Reservoir on 7th, 2 Bialystok Fishponds on 9th, at least 150 Biebrza Marshes on 10th, flocks regularly passing overhead during day on 11th - 13th.

Black Tern *Chlidonias niger* : noted on 3 days with ca10 Siemianowka Reservoir on 7th, 1 Bialystok Fishponds on 9th, ca10 Biebrza Marshes on 10th.

Common Tern *Sterna hirundo* : noted on 3 days with several Siemianowka Reservoir on 7th, 3 Bialystok Fishponds on 9th, ca10 Biebrza Marshes on 10th.

PIGEONS & DOVES - Columbidae

Rock Dove / Feral Pigeon *Columba livia* : noted most days.

[Common] Wood Pigeon *Columba palumbus* : noted most days.

Eurasian Collared Dove *Streptopelia decaocto* : noted on 6 days in small numbers.

CUCKOOS - Cuculidae

Common Cuckoo *Cuculus canorus* : noted most days, both heard and seen.

OWLS - Strigidae

Eurasian Pygmy Owl *Glaucidium passerinum* : a female seen well at dusk Bialowieza on 8th.

SWIFTS - Apodidae

Common Swift *Apus apus* : noted most days in small numbers.

HOOPOES - Upupidae

Eurasian Hoopoe *Upupa epops* : noted on 4 days with 1 Biebrza Marshes on 10th, 1 near hotel Biebrza Marshes on 11th, 3 during day on 12th, 1 en route on 13th.

WOODPECKERS - Picidae

Eurasian Wryneck *Jynx torquilla* : noted on 4 days, both heard and seen, Bialowieza, 6th - 9th.

Middle Spotted Woodpecker *Dendrocopos medius* : 2 Bialowieza on 6th is our only record.

Great Spotted Woodpecker *Dendrocopos major* : noted on 5 days in small numbers.

Eurasian Three-toed Woodpecker *Picoides tridactylus* : a pair attending a nest-hole Bialowieza on 6th is our only record.

Black Woodpecker *Dryocopus martius* : noted on 3 days with female feeding at nest-hole Bialowieza on 8th, 1 flushed from roadside verge Biebrza Marshes on 11th, another near roadside on 12th.

European Green Woodpecker *Picus viridis* : 1 Bialowieza on 9th is our only record.

Grey-headed Woodpecker *Picus canus* : a male at nest-hole Bialowieza on 9th.

LARKS - Alaudidae

Woodlark *Lullula arborea* : noted on 2 days with 2 singing overhead Siemianowka Reservoir on 7th, 2 on 12th.

Eurasian/Common Skylark *Alauda arvensis* : regularly noted on 6 days, 8th - 13th.

SWALLOWS & MARTINS - Hirundinidae

Sand Martin / Bank Swallow *Riparia riparia* : noted on 3 days with good numbers Bialystok Fishponds on 9th, Biebrza Marshes on 10th & 12th.

Barn Swallow *Hirundo rustica* : noted each day.

[Common] House Martin *Delichon urbicum* : noted most days.

WAGTAILS & PIPITS - Motacillidae

Yellow Wagtail *Motacilla flava* : noted most days in small numbers; these are the nominate race *Motacilla flava flava* which we call **Blue-headed Wagtails**.

Citrine Wagtail *Motacilla citreola* : a stunning male Siemianowka Reservoir on 7th.

White Wagtail *Motacilla alba* : noted each day; these are the nominate race *Motacilla alba alba* found throughout continental Europe.

Tree Pipit *Anthus trivialis* : noted on 3 days with 2 on territory Bialowieza on 6th, 1 Siemianowka Reservoir on 7th, several on territory on 12th.

Meadow Pipit *Anthus pratensis* : noted on 3 days with several Biebrza Marshes on 10th, 11th, & from boardwalk during evening on 12th.

SHRIKES - Laniidae

Great Grey Shrike *Lanius excubitor* : noted on 2 days with 1 Bialowieza on 6th, 1 Biebrza Marshes on 10th.

Red-backed Shrike *Lanius collurio* : noted on 5 days with a male plus a pair Bialowieza on 8th, another male Bialowieza on 9th, several Biebrza Marshes on 10th, at least 4 Biebrza Marshes on 11th, 2 en route on 13th.

WRENS - Troglodytidae

[Winter] Wren *Troglodytes troglodytes* : noted on 2 days with heard singing Bialowieza on 6th, heard on 8th.

THRUSHES - Turdidae

Common Blackbird *Turdus merula* : noted each day.

Fieldfare *Turdus pilaris* : noted each day, this species breeds commonly here.

Song Thrush *Turdus philomelos* : noted each day.

OLD WORLD CHATS - Saxicolidae

European Robin *Erithacus rubecula* : noted on 4 days in Bialowieza area, 6th - 9th.

Thrush Nightingale *Luscinia luscinia* : noted most days; most often heard singing though seen well near the pension at Bialowieza.

Bluethroat *Luscinia svecica* : noted on 2 days with 1 seen briefly plus another singing Biebrza Marshes on 10th, seen briefly again on 13th.

Black Redstart *Phoenicurus ochruros* : noted on 5 days, either near our hotels or on farm buildings.

Common Redstart *Phoenicurus phoenicurus* : noted on 4 days with a pair Bialowieza on 5th, 6th, & 9th, a male outside hotel Biebrza Marshes on 11th.

Whinchat *Saxicola rubetra* : noted most days; with numerous territorial birds wherever we went.

Northern Wheatear *Oenanthe oenanthe* : noted on 3 days with a pair Biebrza Marshes on 10th, at least 5 Biebrza Marshes on 11th, 1 en route on 12th.

OLD WORLD WARBLERS - Sylviidae

Common Grasshopper Warbler *Locustella naevia* : heard 'reeling' on 3 days; Narew Valley on 7th, Biebrza Marshes on 11th & 13th.

River Warbler *Locustella fluviatilis* : 1 singing near our hotel Biebrza Marshes on 10th, unfortunately not seen.

Savi's Warbler *Locustella luscinioides* : noted on 5 days with heard Bialowieza on 7th, seen well Czechowizna Lake on 9th, several singing & seen Biebrza Marshes on 10th, heard 'reeling' Biebrza Marshes on 11th & 13th.

Aquatic Warbler *Acrocephalus paludicola* : at least 20 on territory, many seen very well both in song flight and perched on reeds and bulrushes, on 12th.

Sedge Warbler *Acrocephalus schoenobaenus* : noted on 5 days in suitable habitat.

[Eurasian] Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus scirpaceus* : noted on 2 days with several heard & seen Bialystok Fishponds on 9th, Biebrza Marshes on 10th.

Great Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus arundinaceus* : noted most days wherever there was suitable habitat; seen particularly well at Bialowieza fishing pond.

Icterine Warbler *Hippolais icterina* : noted on 4 days with 1 seen & heard Bialowieza on 7th, male seen well singing Bialowieza on 8th & 9th, at least 1 Biebrza Marshes on 11th.

Willow Warbler *Phylloscopus trochilus* : noted most days; usually heard singing.

Common Chiffchaff *Phylloscopus collybita* : noted most days.

Wood Warbler *Phylloscopus sibilatrix* : noted on 5 days with several seen well and others singing Bialowieza on 6th, noted thereafter on 7th - 9th & 12th.

Blackcap *Sylvia atricapilla* : noted in small numbers on 6 days.

Garden Warbler *Sylvia borin* : noted on 3 days with heard singing en route on 5th, singing Siemianowka Reservoir on 7th, seen & singing on 12th.

Common Whitethroat *Sylvia communis* : noted on 5 days with heard singing en route on 5th, a male Siemianowka Reservoir on 7th, noted thereafter on 10th, 11th, & 13th.

Lesser Whitethroat *Sylvia curruca* : commonly noted each day; seen particularly well around the pension at Bialowieza.

CRESTS & KINGLETS - Regulidae

Goldcrest *Regulus regulus* : heard singing Bialowieza on 6th is our only record.

OLD WORLD FLYCATCHERS - Muscicapidae

Spotted Flycatcher *Muscicapa striata* : noted most days.

[European] Pied Flycatcher *Ficedula hypoleuca* : noted on 2 days with a male Bialowieza on 6th, & another male on 8th.

Collared Flycatcher *Ficedula albicollis* : noted on 3 days with good numbers seen well Bialowieza on 6th, several on 8th & 9th.

PENDULINE TITS - Remizidae

Eurasian Penduline Tit *Remiz pendulinus* : noted on 2 days with at least 3 seen including a pair attending nest Bialystok fishponds on 9th, 1 Biebrza Marshes on 10th.

TITS & CHICKADEES - Paridae

Marsh Tit *Poecile palustris* : noted on 3 days with 1 seen well Bialowieza on 6th, 1 Bialowieza on 9th, 1 Biebrza Marshes on 13th.

Great Tit *Parus major* : noted most days.

Blue Tit *Cyanistes caeruleus* : noted on 5 days.

NUTHATCHES & WALLCREEPER - Sittidae

Eurasian Nuthatch *Sitta europaea* : noted on 2 days with 1 Bialowieza on 6th, pair feeding young in nest on 8th.

TREECREEPERS - Certhiidae

Eurasian Treecreeper *Certhia familiaris* : noted on 3 days with several pairs attending nests Bialowieza on 6th, 1 Bialowieza on 8th, 1 on 12th.

CROWS, JAYS & MAGPIES - Corvidae

Eurasian Jay *Garrulus glandarius* : ones or twos noted most days.

Eurasian Magpie *Pica pica* : noted most days.

Western Jackdaw *Corvus monedula* : noted most days.

Rook *Corvus frugilegus* : noted on 6 days.

Hooded Crow *Corvus cornix* : noted on 5 days with 1 Siemianowka Reservoir on 7th, at least 16 Biebrza Marshes on 10th, ones or twos then on 11th - 13th.

Common Raven *Corvus corax* : noted most days, with several pairs overhead Bialowieza on 6th, 1 en route on 7th, 1 Bialowieza on 8th, at least 26 Biebrza Marshes on 10th, 1 Biebrza Marshes on 11th, 1 on 12th, a pair en route on 13th.

OLD WORLD ORIOLES - Oriolidae

[Eurasian] Golden Oriole *Oriolus oriolus* : noted on 5 days with calls heard Bialowieza on 7th, male seen plus another heard Bialowieza on 8th, 3 males 1 female Bialowieza on 9th, heard on 11th & 12th.

STARLINGS - Sturnidae

Common/European Starling *Sturnus vulgaris* : noted each day.

BUNTINGS, NEW WORLD SPARROWS & allies - Emberizidae

Corn Bunting *Emberiza calandra* : heard singing Bialowieza on 7th is our only record.

Yellowhammer *Emberiza citrinella* : noted most days.

Ortolan Bunting *Emberiza hortulana* : noted on 2 days with a singing male seen well Czechowizna Lake on 9th, another heard singing Biebrza Marshes on 11th.

Common Reed Bunting *Emberiza schoeniclus* : noted on 6 days.

FINCHES & allies - Fringillidae

Common Chaffinch *Fringilla coelebs* : noted each day.

European Serin *Serinus serinus* : noted most days, including a pair at nest in the pension garden at Bialowieza.

European Greenfinch *Carduelis chloris* : noted each day.

Eurasian Siskin *Carduelis spinus* : several Siemianowka Reservoir on 7th is our only record.

European Goldfinch *Carduelis carduelis* : noted most days.

Common Linnet *Carduelis cannabina* : noted most days.

Eurasian Bullfinch *Pyrrhula pyrrhula* : several heard along the shore of Siemianowka Reservoir on 7th is our only record.

Hawfinch *Coccothraustes coccothraustes* : noted on 6 days with excellent views Bialowieza on 6th - 9th, 2 Biebrza Marshes on 10th & 12th.

OLD WORLD SPARROWS & allies - Passeridae

House Sparrow *Passer domesticus* : noted each day.

Eurasian Tree Sparrow *Passer montanus* : noted most days.

MAMMALS - MAMMALIA

BATS - Order: CHIROPTERA

Common Serotine *Eptesicus serotinus* : at least 12 at dusk over Bialowieza fishponds on 5th were probably this species.

CARNIVORES - Order: CARNIVORA

Red Fox *Vulpes vulpes* : noted on 2 days with 1 in field near Bialowieza on 8th, 1 near grouse lek early morning Biebrza Marshes on 11th.

Eurasian Lynx *Lynx lynx* : tracks found in sand dunes on 12th were probably this species.

EVEN-TOED UNGULATES - Order: ARTIODACTYLA

Eurasian Wild Boar *Sus scrofa* : 1 near grouse lek early morning Biebrza Marshes on 11th.

Elk / Moose *Alces alces* : noted on 3 days with at least 7 Biebrza Marshes on 10th, at least 7 Biebrza Marshes on 11th, 1 during evening on 12th.

[Western] Roe Deer *Capreolus capreolus* : noted on 5 days with 1 in roadside field plus at least 4 Narew Valley on 7th, at least 3 Biebrza Marshes on 10th, at least 4 Biebrza Marshes on 11th, 1 during evening on 12th, 1 en route on 13th.

European Bison *Bison bonasus* : noted on 2 days with many hoof prints Siemianowka Reservoir on 7th, 3 crossing road in front of vehicle Bialowieza on 8th.

RODENTS - Order: RODENTIA

Eurasian Red Squirrel *Sciurus vulgaris* : single sightings at Bialowieza on 6th & 8th.

Eurasian Beaver *Castor fiber* : noted on 4 days with 1 seen swimming across Bialowieza fishing pond on 6th, lodge & other signs on 8th, gnawing of boardwalks & felled trees on 10th, a lodge at one site and a dam at another on 11th.

Bank Vole *Clethrionomys glareolus* : many seen & heard within the leaf litter Bialowieza on 6th.

PIKAS, RABBITS & HARES - Order: LAGOMORPHA

Brown/European Hare *Lepus europaeus* : noted on 4 days with 2 Biebrza Marshes on 10th, then several each day on 11th - 13th.

REPTILES - REPTILIA

Sand Lizard *Lacerta agilis* : noted on 2 days with 2 Biebrza Marshes on 12th, several on boardwalk Biebrza Marshes on 13th.

AMPHIBIANS - AMPHIBIA

Fire-bellied Toad *Bombina bombina* : noted on 3 days, heard calling Siemianowka Reservoir on 7th, heard calling on 10th, heard Biebrza Marshes on 13th.

Green Toad *Bufo viridis* : 1 found in hotel grounds on 13th.

Moor Frog *Rana arvalis* : 1 found Narew Valley on 7th.

Marsh Frog *Rana ridibunda* : noted on 2 days with heard Siemianowka Reservoir on 7th, several seen Bialystok fishponds on 9th.

BUTTERFLIES - LEPIDOPTERA

Large White *Pieris brassicae* : noted on 3 days; 10th - 12th.

Small White *Pieris rapae* : noted on 5 days; 6th - 8th, 11th, & 12th.

Green-veined White *Pieris napi* : noted on 6 days; 6th, 8th, 10th - 13th.

Orange-tip *Anthocharis cardamines* : noted on 5 days; 5th, 7th, 10th - 12th.

Brimstone *Gonepteryx rhamni* : noted most days.

Wood White *Leptidea sinapsis* : noted on 2 days; 6th & 12th.

Sooty Copper *Lycaena tityrus* : noted only on 12th.

Small Copper *Lycaena phlaeas* : noted only on 12th.

Holly Blue *Celastrina argiolus* : noted on 3 days; 7th, 10th & 11th.

Map butterfly *Araschnia levana* : noted only on 12th.

Queen of Spain Fritillary *Issoria lathonia* : noted only on 12th.

Small Heath *Coenonympha pamphilus* : noted only on 7th.

Speckled Wood *Pararge aegeria* : noted only on 8th.

DAMSELFLIES & DRAGONFLIES - ODONATA

Spearhead Bluet / Northern Damselfly *Coenagrion hastulatum* : several on boardwalk on 13th.

Downy Emerald *Cordulia aenea* : noted on 3 days; 10th - 12th.

Four-spotted Chaser *Libellula quadrimaculata* : noted only on 8th.

SELECTED PLANTS

Just those we particularly noticed (with thanks to Steve Place)

Asarabaca	<i>Asarum europaeum</i>
Mistletoe	<i>Viscum album</i>
Stitchwort sp.	<i>Stellaria sp.</i>
Marsh Marigold	<i>Caltha palustris</i>
Lesser Celandine	<i>Ranunculus ficaria</i>
Pasque Flower	<i>Pulsatilla vulgaris</i>
Wood Anemone	<i>Anemone nemorosa</i>

Yellow Anemone	<i>Anemone ranunculoides</i>
Hepatica	<i>Hepatica nobilis</i>
Greater Celandine	<i>Chelidonium majus</i>
Garlic Mustard	<i>Alliaria petiolata</i>
Golden Saxifrage sp.	<i>Chrysosplenum sp.</i>
Biting Stonecrop	<i>Sedum acre</i>
Water Avens	<i>Geum rivale</i>
Spring Pea	<i>Lathyrus vernus</i>
Wood-Sorrel	<i>Oxalis acetosella</i>
Mezereum	<i>Daphne mezereum</i>
Wild Pansy	<i>Viola tricolour</i>
Labrador Tea	<i>Ledum palustre</i>
Primrose	<i>Primula vulgaris</i>
Oxlip	<i>Primula elatior</i>
Thrift sp.	<i>Armeria sp.</i>
Bogbean	<i>Menyanthes trifoliata</i>
Woodruff	<i>Galium odoratum</i>
Lungwort	<i>Pulmonaria officinalis</i>
Bugle	<i>Ajuga reptans</i>
Ground Ivy	<i>Glechoma hederacea</i>
Red Deadnettle	<i>Lamium purpureum</i>
Yellow Archangel	<i>Lamiastrum galeobdolon</i>
Wild Thyme	<i>Thymus serpyllum</i>
Toothwort	<i>Lathraea squamaria</i>
Moschatel	<i>Adoxa moschatellina</i>
Butterbur	<i>Petasites hybridus</i>
Water Soldier	<i>Stratiotes aloides</i>
Lily-of-the-Valley	<i>Convallaria majalis</i>
May Lily	<i>Maianthemum bifolium</i>
Ramsons	<i>Allium ursinum</i>
Solomon's Seal sp.	<i>Polygonatum sp.</i>
Herb Paris	<i>Paris quadrifolia</i>
Yellow Iris	<i>Iris pseudacorus</i>

I guess the overall memory of this week was the unseasonably inclement weather – however, by diving into the vehicle to avoid getting too wet and making full use of the dry spells, we have all taken away our own special memories. For me, and probably some of you as well, it was the after-dinner drive when we found the Bison wandering across the road in front of us, followed by that exquisite Pygmy Owl as the light faded, sitting watching us watching it...!. Another highlight which some of you have mentioned was the afternoon spent at the end of a farmer's garden on the edge of the Narew River looking across to the opposite wetland with the massed ranks of hundreds of Cranes, thousands of Ruffs and other shorebirds and the continual movement of hundreds of White-winged and other Terns. For the whole week we seemed never out of earshot of the song of Thrush Nightingale, and other species of note must include the Great Snipe, Citrine Wagtail, Corncrake, Lesser Spotted Eagle, the Honey-Buzzard sitting at eye level on the roadside on the last evening when, right on cue for the Aquatic Warblers, the skies cleared and the sun really shone.

Well done to all of you who made this trip the success it was, and I hope to see you all on another trip, sometime in the not-too-distant future.

Keith Grant, May 2007

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