

Estonia

Arctic migration in the Baltic

Saturday 26 April – Saturday 3 May 2008

by **Tim Earl**

Leaders: Tim Earl and Antero Topp

This was a great trip to witness the Arctic migration of sea-ducks, divers, waders and attendant predators which pass up the Baltic States in spring. The group was great (this is normal with Travelling Naturalist and Limosa tours) getting on well, enjoying each other's company and the wildlife spectacular. The tour was typical with some great birds and mammals seen and a few difficult birds which no amount of trying would produce (how about returning next year?). Highlights are listed below but adding six new species including Red-breasted and Brent Geese, Hoopoe and Great Egret gave the final list a sparkling quality. (That's enough. You've made the point, Tim... Ed).

HIGHLIGHTS

- Wonderful views of Lesser-spotted Woodpecker and the white-headed race of Long-tailed Tit. Later in the tour we watched a pair of Three-toed, one Lesser-spotted and a Great Spotted woodpeckers in the same tree.
- Hundreds of Long-tailed Ducks and Scoters rushing northwards on our seawatch.
- Lots of White-tailed Eagles in the Haapsalu Bay area.
- Thousands of geese on the sea waiting to head north. We thought these would be our last as the tour headed inland but flocks totalling 35,000 around the Väike-Rakke fields where quite breathtaking and unprecedented on our Estonia holidays.
- A Red-breasted Goose (voted bird of the trip) among the 35,000 White-fronts was a brilliant find shortly followed by a Brent Goose, both new to this tour.
- Flocks of geese high above us – perhaps 3,000ft – migrating north.
- The flooded Väike-Rakke fields where geese and waders thronged and we gaped in awe.
- Europe's finest lek of Great Snipe performed wonderfully in short grass this year giving superb views. The scene became quite magical when skeins of geese flew over honking to each other (and us perhaps), Roe Deer stood and watched and a nonchalant Beaver chewed on willow stems. This was *the* highlight of many during the tour.

DAILY DIARY

Saturday 26 April

To Haapsalu, Estonia: Sunny, little westerly breeze, warm 15°C

A field with 500 Barnacle and White-fronted geese, with two Tundra Bean Geese for good measure was a wonderful start to Estonia birding. We would have enjoyed the sight more had time not been short after a delay at the airport as we reduced four missing bags to one by waiting for the next flight from Helsinki. The geese were preceded by a big mixed flock of Lapwings and Golden Plovers and driving on towards Haapsalu we saw Common Cranes in flight, a couple of sparring Buzzards and a nesting White Stork.

The view that greeted us on arrival at the Promenaadi Hotell was breathtaking – a White-tailed Eagle flew across the lagoon opposite and perched on a rock, quite visible from our rooms. This prompted a rush to get the bird on our "bed-lists" before supper (well, mine at least). Great Crested Grebes were courting and a few ducks were visible too as we settled down for a welcome drink and delicious dinner.

Sunday 27 April

Leidissoo Forest and Haapsalu Bay: Sunny, little cloud, light westerly wind 12°C

A good start to the day with some great birds even before breakfast thanks to an early start. We left the hotel at 5am after tea or coffee and were soon deep in the Leidissoo forest reserve where a short walk gave brief views of a Hazel Grouse and Siskin for some. Treecreepers were heard singing and seen.

Driving slowly back out of the reserve we found a lone Blackcock which obligingly flew up and perched in a tree. A pair of the white-headed race of Long-tailed Tit performed beautifully and were admired by all as was a showy male Lesser-spotted Woodpecker which perched obligingly for some time. Leo found us a Pied Flycatcher in the middle of this activity but it was rather overlooked in favour of the other birds.

Breakfast back at the hotel was punctuated by calls for ducks, the most notable of which were three pairs of Scaup in among a flock of Pochard. White-tailed Eagles were again seen.

Our main outing of the day was around Haapsalu Bay starting at the Põgari-Sassi reserve where we scoped the swans, geese and ducks. About 3,000 Barnacle Geese were searched in the hope of finding a Red-fronted Goose but without luck. Bewick's Swans, Greylag and Pintail were new additions to the wildfowl list while Oystercatcher, Ringed Plover and Dunlin were also noted. A Barn Swallow, two Yellow Wagtails and several Wheatears were seen but highlight of the small brown jobs was a Wryneck which perched on a wire for us to admire.

Moving to the Haeska tower where we had a picnic lunch, careful examinations of the flocks produced three Whimbrel among about 20 Curlew, a flock of 20 Smew which were difficult due to the distance and bad light (sunshine off the water), Greenshank, five Little Terns and two showy Ruff in breeding plumage, one white-headed the other black. Two Whooper Swans were preening, perhaps after a migration up from Slimbridge, and a newly-arrived Willow Warbler was singing in the hedges (almost certainly not the bird I heard in Ghana).

Our last stop of the day was at Vönnu pond where Tony got the prize for finding one of the few moorhens in Estonia and a singing Blackcap was admired. We returned to the hotel for free time (spent snoozing, drinking tea or watching Avocets, White-tailed Eagles, ducks, coots and grebes from our room balconies).

Monday 28 April

Dirhami Harbour seawatch and various sites around Haapsalu Bay, evening drive: Sunny, partly hazy with some high cloud cover, cold on the seawatch warming during the day 5°C to 18°C

The day was a pleasant mix of excellent seawatching, exploring Haapsalu Bay and the delights of Silma nature reserve.

Our 5am seawatching session at Dirhami Harbour was terrific with Common Scoters and Long-tailed Ducks dominating the migration. With practice we were able to identify most birds passing between us and the distant island. Red-throated and Black-throated Divers were seen in small numbers and a party of Little Gulls passed through the 'wrong' way – back towards Estonia. Perhaps they were the small group we saw at Lake Silma later in the day. Red-breasted Mergansers, Goldeneyes, Eiders and Velvet (White-winged) Scoters made up the majority of other wildfowl seen.

Land birds were also migrating out. The twitter of passing Siskins could be heard throughout the first hour although few were seen as they were extremely high. A group of about 20 Jackdaws, three Marsh Harriers and a Hen Harrier also went out towards Finland. Two Snow Buntings must have got cold feet (surely not – Ed) as they were seen coming back but the surprise of the morning was a group of three Blue Tits which skipped around in nearby fir trees for a few minutes before plucking up courage and heading off north.

An hour spent in nearby woods produced great views of Black Woodpecker, a displaying Green Sandpiper, singing Wood Lark and a shy Mistle Thrush.

No birding tour is complete without a trip to the local sewage works and those in Haapsalu were haapsalutely terrific for our visit after breakfast. Firstly the breeze disposed of any unwanted niffs pretty efficiently and there were lots of new birds to see and hear. Savi's Warblers were reeling in the nearby reed bed which also contained several Reed Buntings, Bearded Tits (which showed well) and screaming Water Rails. Our first Lesser Whitethroat was rattling nearby while White-tailed Eagles and Sparrowhawks vied

for supremacy in the air (the eagles won by way of sheer numbers). A couple of Yellow Wagtails were seen and a Whinchat advertised its presence by singing from a willow bush.

Moving on to Haapsalu Bay we saw our first Caspian Tern and had views of two drake and a female Smew in good light. Waders performed fly-past displays for us: these included Black-tailed Godwits, Ruff and Spotted Redshanks. Several Goldeneyes were on the water and at least five Marsh Harriers sailed past.

Bitterns were booming when we arrived at the inland Silma Lake, an exciting way to start our lunchtime visit. Climbing the furthest tower we saw a Red-necked Grebe, several Sand Martins and another Caspian Tern. At least three different Bitterns were booming and our first Garganey was picked out of a flock of flying Teals. The second tower produced good views of three Slavonian Grebes (after our picnic and while yours truly was examining the inside of his hat commenting on the same with loud snores). A Penduline Tit was heard calling as we packed up – we found its half-built nest looking like a miniature shopping basket and the bird appeared a few seconds later adding to its construction. A Viviparous Lizard was found at the same time. A Hobby turned up as we were leaving, the start of a short purple patch which included Long-tailed Tit, Montagu's Harrier a Buzzard and another Sparrowhawk.

Our last visit was to a new tower back on Haapsalu Bay, almost opposite the hotel. This accounted for the seven Avocets we saw flying past. Two Crested Tits were seen well as was a pair of Bullfinches looking smart in the bright sunlight. A Willow Tit was singing as we left.

That would have concluded the average day but we decided to go out after dinner and look for Woodcock and Elk. The former performed well and we saw at least five but there was no sign of a Moose (aka Elk). We were pleased that one had been seen by those in the first minibus earlier in the afternoon. It was a pleasant end to a great day, however.

Tuesday 29 April: Sunny, hot 23°C

Wild goose chase and journey to Kabli

A 6am search for overdue Lesser Whitefronted Geese (due in from Greece) yielded plenty of Cranes, mixed flocks of Barnacles and Greater Whitefronts but no Lessers. We consoled ourselves by climbing the Haeska tower for another session with migrant wildfowl and waders. Common and Marsh Sandpipers were new to our lists while the views of Spotted Redshank and Smew were greatly improved. A singing Wood Warbler was the first April bird Antero had seen in Estonia. the wind was cool, however, and we were pleased to return for a hot breakfast.

After loading our cases we set off for Kabli at a gentle pace. Migrating Cranes were evident with one soaring flock of 55 to admire. But it was an over-wintering first-year Rough-legged Buzzard which stole the morning show. It hovered several times before pouncing on prey in the grass only to be set upon itself by marauding Hooded Crows. One persistent nuisance continued chasing the poor bird for several minutes after it resumed hunting.

Our visit to Estonia's only road-side café was a novel experience followed by a meandering tour of the Rumba area looking for a Lesser-spotted Eagle. One was disturbed from a tree and soared for some minutes above us giving excellent views. Terry spotted a couple of Golden Plovers (an ace bit of observation) soon afterwards – these turned into a flock of 27 when we stopped to watch closely. They were a superb sight in full breeding plumage, their gold upperparts shining in the sunlight.

Mt Avaste Soo was our venue for a picnic lunch – something of a joke as Estonia's highest hill is only about 15metres above the surrounding land. Nevertheless, from this lofty height we saw four male Montagu's Harriers quartering the boggy fields. There were quite a few stunning Whinchats in the area, some singing to advertise their presence.

We moved on to the Pärnu golf course which was built on the Audru fields, a staging area for thousands of migrating geese. Although numbers have dropped these days there were still several large flocks of Whitefronts and Barnacles which we sifted through in the vain hope of finding a few Lesser Whitefronted Geese (or even a Red-breasted Goose). Time began to run short and it was with reluctance that we left the wonderful spectacle of so many geese and headed for Kabli and the comfortable Lapanina Hotell.

Wednesday 30 April: Sunny and warm becoming overcast later, 18°C

Nigula Forest, Kabli bird observatory, Häädemeister, Pikla pools

Another 5am start gave us the opportunity to make the most of the wonderful Nigula forest nature reserve where we enjoyed a great pre-breakfast walk.

A singing Wren was the first new bird of the day closely followed by an unsuccessful stop to search for Lesser Spotted Woodpecker which was drumming nearby. A drumming Black Woodpecker was also heard and seen briefly while Leo and I watched a male Pied Flycatcher hawking insects. Wood Pigeons, Wood Warblers, Great Spotted Woodpecker and Treecreepers were all heard with only the warbler being watched. It seemed as if we were jinxed, especially when two Hawfinches and soon after a small flock of Waxwings flew over giving the briefest of views for some.

Things looked up, however, when a Three-toed Woodpecker was found. It flitted across the path and sat pecking around the trunk of an aspen watching us for several seconds before flying off and disappearing into the wood. A Cuckoo opened up, calling quite loudly and bringing smiles to everyone's faces. "The" Cuckoo often has that effect. Our last bird of the walk was a Nuthatch of the pale eastern race *S.e. asiatica*.

A pair of Grey-headed Woodpeckers were found in a logged glade on the way back and performed beautifully, flitting from one tree to the next as we followed them using scopes. Our final stop was with little confidence: Antero and I had found a Black Grouse lek last year but the field had been ploughed, spread with nitrogen and was now sporting a bright green crop of grass. Imagine our delight when three displaying males were found at the bottom of the field. Another Hawfinch flew past and a Wryneck was heard calling (bringing our total of woodpeckers seen or heard in the morning to six species).

There were scores of Long-tailed Ducks on the flat-calm sea and we took the opportunity to scope them before setting off for the morning's outing after breakfast. A walk around the Kabli bird observatory was our first activity: we watched and compared Velvet and Common Scoters on the sea, Goldeneye, Bewick's Swans, two of which had readable leg-rings, and three Gadwall. Two Sandwich Terns were found sitting on a rock.

There was little on the land as we walked around but a male Redstart was found in a garden behind the observatory before we moved off to Häädemeister beach. Here our progress was impeded by a horse behind an electric fence which blocked the path. Luckily, I had a few digestive biscuits which acted as a bribe and a little exercise in horse whispering did the rest and we were allowed through. Sedge and Reed Warblers were singing in the reed beds on the way down to the beach where we found a number of waders and ducks on the sea. A few geese were moving through watched by a White-tailed Eagle but there was little else of note. We returned to the hotel for lunch and a well-earned siesta after all the early morning outings.

Our afternoon outing to the Pikla pools was delayed by reports of a Hoopoe being seen in the hotel grounds. A search produced nothing although Leo and Diana found the bird later in the afternoon. The pools were uncomfortable with overcast conditions and a cool fresh breeze. We managed to see Savi's and Great Reed Warblers, Bearded Tits and a Bittern was booming sporadically. We returned to the hotel for a warm shower before dinner.

Thursday 1 May: Overcast, cool wind 15°C

Soomaa national park, Red-breasted Goose on the brilliant Väike-Rakke fields and Great Snipe lek

What a brilliant day – a Red-breasted Goose seen plus 12 Great Snipe lekking and all on a day spent travelling.

We set off at 8.30am and detoured through the Massiaru Forest in the hope of finding a White-backed Woodpecker – by now most elusive. We failed once again but did see a pair of Three-toed Woodpeckers plus Lesser and Great Spotted all in the same tree. The same clearing had a Green Sandpiper perched on the very top of a spruce and Snipe drumming overhead... what a country this is.

Entering the Soomaa reserve a little later we were greeted by a Lesser Spotted Eagle which soared up above us as another attempt at finding a White-backed Woodpecker was mounted. In fact, we never did see this species so I shall stop recording the many attempts. Lunch at an observation tower was delicious and memorable thanks to three male Montagu's Harriers which quartered the fields in front of us.

Rubbing our eyes did not help... the fields at Väike-Rakke were full of geese – we estimated between 25,000 and 35,000 which made the discovery of a Snow Goose unbelievable... until we realised it was a leucistic White-fronted Goose. Minutes later and Graham made the first of two amazing discoveries, a Red-

breasted Goose among the White-fronts. We were thrilled and excited by the find and watched the bird as it fed hungrily, lifting its head up frequently affording us super views.

Suddenly Graham exclaimed again.

“I’ve got a Brent Goose. Quickly, look!”

The celebrations began again for this species is a true vagrant to Estonia.

Although the discoveries were wonderful, we will not forget the overall sight of thousands of geese covering the fields, flying to and fro, even dropping into the flooded meadows to bathe. It was a thrilling sight all the more exciting for being totally unexpected.

Driving down to the flooded meadows we were able to watch scores of waders in full breeding plumage – Spotted Redshanks, Ruff, Black-tailed Godwits, Wood Sandpipers, Greenshanks and a few Marsh Sandpipers. Behind them were Garganey, Pintail, Wigeon, Shovelers, Tufted Ducks and Goldeneye. It was a brilliant sight and we dragged ourselves away after an hour determined to return tomorrow.

There were other delights in store for today, however. We set off in high spirits after dinner to fields where Europe’s best gathering of Great Snipe meet to lek and mate. The grass was shorter than last year and birds were visible even as we arrived. We had been watching for only a few minutes when a Beaver was spotted nibbling willow saplings growing along a flooded ditch. Roe Deer were in the hedge shadows while Woodcock were roding over the tree tops. Great skeins of geese flew over all the time we were there and we wondered, correctly as it transpired, if the afternoon’s huge flocks were on the move. Whatever, it was an evocative backdrop to the Great Snipe performance. The birds sparred, flashed their white outer tail feathers and, making strange clicking noises they leapt into the air in an attempt to prove supremacy over rivals and impress the females. We watched until our eyeballs nearly burst by which time the light had gone and we returned to the hotel for a celebratory drink.

Friday 2 May: Cold and overcast becoming hot and sunny, 23°C

Aadla marsh, Väike-Rakke fields, Ilmatsalu ponds and Hoilywood

Citrine Wagtails and Black Terns topped the list of birds seen in the Aadla marsh. The wagtails perched and sang for us and their mates – we saw one female – while Black Terns hawked insects from the surface of pools in the centre of the marsh. It was a delightful pre-breakfast excursion, our last of the trip with a lie-in promised for tomorrow, as we watched favourites like Garganey, displaying Wood Sandpipers, singing Sedge Warblers and a couple of Little Gulls. A Bittern was heard booming in the cool morning air.

The adage that you should never repeat a successful event was proved wrong when we returned to the Väike-Rakke fields after breakfast. There were two flocks of geese, at about 8,000 birds large by any standards, but the mass of yesterday’s visitors had gone. We were unable to locate Brent or Red-breasted. A Black Stork drifted across the scene.

Waders on the other hand had increased enormously with new Ruff and Wood Sandpipers arriving as we watched. At 200 or more Ruff and 30 Wood Sandpipers as ‘official’ trip counts (I thought the numbers of both were higher, more like 250 and 100 respectively) but the spectacle was fascinating. Many of the male Ruff were lekking in groups – practising for the time when they will reach breeding grounds much further north. The range of colours was just like the books and their lunging and leaping at and over each other was dramatic. We observed them for what seemed like a few minutes but exceeded an hour. A pair of Willow Tits was located as we left. They were of the pale northern race *P.m. borealis*.

In contrast, the walk around Ilmatsalu ponds was quiet. A few Penduline Tits and a pair of displaying Lesser-spotted Eagles were the highlights although seven Whooper Swans, including a family of six and one with a blue neck-ring, and a male Sparrowhawk were also appreciated. A Great Egret was seen as we left the area.

Some people did not believe we would visit Hollywood... and they were right. Copyright has prevented the Hoilywood café from duplicating the LA sign on their hillside but it looks very close. From our point of view the café gave us a coffee / loo break and the area a chance for more birds. In truth, however, we were ‘birded out’ and the dusty roads were uncomfortable so we returned to the hotel for a shower before dinner.

Saturday 3 May: hot and sunny, 23°C

Back to Tallinn airport and home

It's not over until the fat lady sings, or in our case the Thrush Nightingale which was found as we went along back-roads for the first hour or so of our journey to the airport. A Spotted Flycatcher was seen by Terry and others but the star bird of the day was singing to a group of Estonians who had gathered in a car park to collect rubbish for the day (civic pride we are not used to). Some were interested in our fascination and even more so when told it was the bird featured on their 100-Crown bank-notes. We enjoyed difficult views of the bird through scopes before leaving for the main road and a swift transfer to the airport. Many White Storks nests were seen in the way and my last bird was a singing Lesser Whitethroat in the car park as I returned the minibus.

The journey home was easy (we even saw a Common Gull at 1,000ft on approach to Helsinki airport) and our luggage arrived at Heathrow with us.

ANNOTATED LIST OF SPECIES

The first sighting is given in detail and sites thereafter (if any) unless the record is of extra merit.

BIRDS

PHEASANTS, FOWL & ALLIES			Family Phasianidae
1	Hazel Grouse	<i>Tetrastes bonasia</i>	One seen Leidissoo forest reserve.
2	Western Capercaillie	<i>Tetrao urogallus</i>	One possibly seen by Rita in the Leidissoo forest reserve.
3	Black Grouse	<i>Lyrurus tetrix</i>	One seen Leidissoo forest reserve; three males Nigula forest nature reserve.
4	Grey Partridge	<i>Perdix perdix</i>	One at the Lapanina Hotell; two at the Great Snipe lek.
WILDFOWL			Family Anatidae
5	Bean Goose	<i>Anser fabalis</i>	A few between Tallinn and Haapsalu; Audru fields, Pärnu.
6	Greylag Goose	<i>Anser anser</i>	A few at Põgari-Sassi; common around Haapsalu Bay.
7	Greater White-fronted Goose	<i>Anser albifrons</i>	More than 100 between Tallinn and Haapsalu; hundreds at Põgari-Sassi; Haeska tower; Tahu tower; abundant around Haapsalu Bay.
8	Brant Goose	<i>Branta bernicla</i>	One with more than 25,000 White-fronts in the Väike-Rakke fields.
9	Barnacle Goose	<i>Branta leucopsis</i>	Twenty between Tallinn and Haapsalu; 3,000 at Põgari-Sassi; Haeska tower.
10	Red-breasted Goose	<i>Branta ruficollis</i>	One with more than 25,000 White-fronts in the Väike-Rakke fields.
11	Mute Swan	<i>Cygnus olor</i>	Many from the Promenaadi Hotell, Haapsalu; common around Haapsalu Bay.
12	Tundra Swan	<i>Cygnus columbianus</i>	Two hundred at Põgari-Sassi; common around Haapsalu Bay; two with colour rings at Kabli bird observatory.
13	Whooper Swan	<i>Cygnus cygnus</i>	Two at the Haeska tower; one Dirhami Harbour; seven, one with a neck ring, at the Ilmatsalu ponds.
14	Common Shelduck	<i>Tadorna tadorna</i>	Three at Põgari-Sassi; Dirhami Harbour; Haapsalu Bay.
15	Gadwall	<i>Anas strepera</i>	Two at the Silma nature reserve.
16	Eurasian Wigeon	<i>Anas penelope</i>	A few at the Haeska tower; Dirhami Harbour.
17	Mallard	<i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>	A few daily.
18	Northern Shoveler	<i>Anas clypeata</i>	Two or three at the Haeska tower; 154 on the Väike-Rakke fields.
19	Northern Pintail	<i>Anas acuta</i>	Three at Põgari-Sassi; a few around Haapsalu Bay; many on the Väike-Rakke fields.
20	Garganey	<i>Anas querquedula</i>	A pair at the Silma nature reserve; a few at most sites; at least 25 on the Väike-Rakke fields.

21	Eurasian Teal	<i>Anas crecca</i>	About 40 at the Haeska tower; common around Haapsalu Bay and elsewhere.
22	Common Pochard	<i>Aythya ferina</i>	Twenty from the Promenaadi Hotell, Haapsalu; common around Haapsalu Bay and elsewhere.
23	Tufted Duck	<i>Aythya fuligula</i>	Twenty from the Promenaadi Hotell, Haapsalu; common around Haapsalu Bay and elsewhere.
24	Greater Scaup	<i>Aythya marila</i>	Three pairs and an odd male at the Promenaadi Hotell, Haapsalu.
25	Common Eider	<i>Somateria mollissima</i>	More than 50 at the Dirhami Harbour seawatch.
26	White-winged Scoter	<i>Melanitta deglandi</i>	About 15 at the Dirhami Harbour seawatch.
27	Black Scoter	<i>Melanitta nigra</i>	More than 1,000 at the Dirhami Harbour seawatch.
28	Long-tailed Duck	<i>Clangula hyemalis</i>	More than 2,000 at the Dirhami Harbour seawatch.
29	Common Goldeneye	<i>Bucephala clangula</i>	More than 100 at the Dirhami Harbour seawatch.
30	Smew	<i>Mergellus albellus</i>	A flock of 20 in bad light at the Haeska tower; a few around Haapsalu Bay; 10 in good light at the Haeska tower.
31	Common Merganser	<i>Mergus merganser</i>	Two from the Promenaadi Hotell, Haapsalu; Põgari-Sassi; Dirhami Harbour, Haapsalu Bay.
32	Red-breasted Merganser	<i>Mergus serrator</i>	A few at the Dirhami Harbour seawatch;
	LOONS		Family Gaviidae
33	Red-throated Loon	<i>Gavia stellata</i>	One at the Dirhami Harbour seawatch.
34	Black-throated Loon	<i>Gavia arctica</i>	Five at the Dirhami Harbour seawatch.
	GREBES		Family Podicipedidae
35	Red-necked Grebe	<i>Podiceps grisegena</i>	Two at the Silma nature reserve.
36	Great Crested Grebe	<i>Podiceps cristatus</i>	Common daily at the coast.
37	Horned Grebe	<i>Podiceps auritus</i>	Three at the Silma nature reserve.
	STORKS		Family Ciconiidae
38	Black Stork	<i>Ciconia nigra</i>	One in the Väike-Rakke fields.
39	White Stork	<i>Ciconia ciconia</i>	Common on nests and in the fields.
	HERONS, BITTERNs		Family Ardeidae
40	Eurasian Bittern	<i>Botaurus stellaris</i>	At least three booming at the Silma nature reserve; one booming at the Aadla marsh.
41	Grey Heron	<i>Ardea cinerea</i>	Three between Tallinn and Haapsalu; Haeska tower, common around Haapsalu Bay.
42	Great Egret	<i>Ardea alba</i>	One at the Ilmatsalu ponds.
	CORMORANTS		Family Phalacrocoracidae
43	Great Cormorant	<i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>	One between Tallinn and Haapsalu; Põgari-Sassi; Haeska tower, common around Haapsalu Bay.
	FALCONS, CARACARAS		Family Falconidae
44	Common Kestrel	<i>Falco tinnunculus</i>	One near Dirhami Harbour.
45	Eurasian Hobby	<i>Falco subbuteo</i>	One at the Silma nature reserve.
	KITES, HAWKS, EAGLES		Family Accipitridae
46	Osprey	<i>Pandion haliaetus</i>	One at the Dirhami Harbour seawatch; Haeska tower.
47	White-tailed Eagle	<i>Haliaeetus albicilla</i>	Five from the Promenaadi Hotell, common around Haapsalu Bay: max count 15; one at the Ilmatsalu ponds.
48	Western Marsh Harrier	<i>Circus aeruginosus</i>	One between Tallinn and Haapsalu; Põgari-Sassi; Haeska tower; Silma nature reserve.
49	Northern Harrier	<i>Circus cyaneus</i>	One near the Leidissoo forest reserve;
50	Montagu's Harrier	<i>Circus pygargus</i>	One at the Silma nature reserve; four males at Mt Avaste Soo.
51	Eurasian Sparrowhawk	<i>Accipiter nisus</i>	One at the Silma nature reserve, two displaying and a third bird at the Tahu tower, Haapsalu Bay; male at the Ilmatsalu ponds.
52	Common Buzzard	<i>Buteo buteo</i>	Two between Tallinn and Haapsalu; Haeska tower; Silma nature reserve.

- 53 Rough-legged Buzzard *Buteo lagopus*
 54 Lesser Spotted Eagle *Aquila pomarina*

One first winter bird as we left the Haapsalu area.
 Two distantly, one close in the Rumba area; a pair displaying at the Ilmatsalu ponds.

RAILS, CRAKES, COOTS

- 55 Water Rail *Rallus aquaticus*
 56 Common Moorhen *Gallinula chloropus*
 57 Eurasian Coot *Fulica atra*

Family Rallidae

At least three calling at the Haapsalu sewage ponds.
 One on a nest at the Võnnu pond.
 A few daily at the coast.

CRANES

- 58 Common Crane *Grus grus*

Family Gruidae

Common daily with migration observed as we left the Haapsalu Bay area.

OYSTERCATCHERS

- 59 Eurasian Oystercatcher *Haematopus ostralegus*

Family Haematopidae

A few daily at the coast.

STILTS, AVOCETS

- 60 Pied Avocet *Recurvirostra avosetta*

Family Recurvirostridae

Five from the Promenaadi Hotell.

PLOVERS

- 61 Northern Lapwing *Vanellus vanellus*

Family Charadriidae

A big mixed flock between Tallinn and Haapsalu; common daily.

- 62 European Golden Plover *Pluvialis apricaria*

A big mixed flock between Tallinn and Haapsalu; 27 near Avaste Soo.

- 63 Common Ringed Plover *Charadrius hiaticula*

Three at Põgari-Sassi; Haeska tower.

- 64 Little Ringed Plover *Charadrius dubius*

A pair at the Lapanina Hotell; two at the Ilmatsalu ponds.

SANDPIPERS, SNIPES

- 65 Eurasian Woodcock *Scolopax rusticola*

Family Scolopacidae

Six on our 'moose and woodcock' evening, Silma nature reserve; one at the Great Snipe lek.

- 66 Great Snipe *Gallinago media*

About 12 dancing and croaking at a lek outside Tartu as White-fronted Geese flew over in skeins and a Beaver nibbled on willow branches.

- 67 Common Snipe *Gallinagogallinago*

One heard drumming in the Leidisoo forest reserve; Haeska tower; a few displaying over the Nigula forest.

- 68 Black-tailed Godwit *Limosa limosa*

One at the Haeska tower; Kirimae, Haapsalu Bay; two Väike-Rakke fields.

- 69 Whimbrel *Numenius phaeopus*

Three at the Haeska tower; two in the Väike-Rakke fields.

- 70 Eurasian Curlew *Numenius arquata*

Fairly common at the coast, a few elsewhere.

- 71 Spotted Redshank *Tringa erythropus*

About eight in a fly-past, Kirimäe, Haapsalu Bay; 12 Haeska tower; lots on the Väike-Rakke fields.

- 72 Common Redshank *Tringa totanus*

A few daily at the coast.

- 73 Marsh Sandpiper *Tringa stagnatilis*

One at the Haeska tower, Haapsalu Bay.

- 74 Common Greenshank *Tringa nebularia*

Seven at the Haeska tower; Silma nature reserve; five in the Väike-Rakke fields.

- 75 Green Sandpiper *Tringa ochropus*

One displaying in woods near Dirhami Harbour; two perched in trees in the Nigula forest.

- 76 Wood Sandpiper *Tringa glareola*

More than 30 in the Väike-Rakke fields; several at the Aadla marsh.

- 77 Common Sandpiper *Actitis hypoleucos*

Three at the Haeska tower, three in the Rumba area; one at the Ilmatsalu ponds.

- 78 Dunlin *Calidris alpina*

Two at Põgari-Sassi; Haeska tower.

- 79 Ruff *Philomachus pugnax*

Two at the Haeska tower; about 200 in the Väike-Rakke fields.

GULLS, TERNS

- 80 Mew Gull *Larus canus*

Family Laridae

Common daily.

- 81 Great Black-backed Gull *Larus marinus*

Common daily.

- 82 Herring Gull *Larus argentatus*

Common daily.

- 83 Lesser Black-backed Gull *Larus fuscus*

One *L. f. fuscus* at the Haeska tower, Haapsalu Bay.

84	Common Black-headed Gull	<i>Larus ridibundus</i>	Common daily.
85	Little Gull	<i>Larus minutus</i>	Twenty at the Dirhami Harbour seawatch, eight at the Silma nature reserve; one on a rock at Häädemeister Bay; two at the Aadla marsh.
86	Caspian Tern	<i>Sterna caspia</i>	One at Kirimäe a second at the Silma nature reserve.
87	Sandwich Tern	<i>Sterna sandvicensis</i>	Two at Häädemeister beach.
88	Common Tern	<i>Sterna hirundo</i>	Common daily.
89	Arctic Tern	<i>Sterna paradisaea</i>	Common daily at the coast.
90	Little Tern	<i>Sterna albifrons</i>	Five at the Haeska tower.
91	Black Tern	<i>Chlidonias niger</i>	Twelve at the Aadla marsh.
	PIGEONS, DOVES		Family Columbidae
92	Common Pigeon	<i>Columba livia</i>	Common daily in towns.
93	Stock Dove	<i>Columba oenas</i>	Two in woods near Dirhami Harbour.
94	Common Wood Pigeon	<i>Columba palumbus</i>	A few between Tallinn and Haapsalu; Leidissoo forest reserve.
	KINGFISHERS		Family Alcedinidae
95	Common Kingfisher	<i>Alcedo atthis</i>	One at a river in the Rumba area.
	HOOPOES		Family Upupidae
96	Eurasian Hoopoe	<i>Upupa epops</i>	One Lapanina Hotell.
	WOODPECKERS		Family Picidae
97	Eurasian Wryneck	<i>Jynx torquilla</i>	One seen beautifully at Põgari-Sassi.
98	Lesser Spotted Woodpecker	<i>Dendrocopos minor</i>	One seen in Leidissoo forest reserve.
99	Great Spotted Woodpecker	<i>Dendrocopos major</i>	One heard drumming in Leidissoo forest reserve; several elsewhere.
100	Three-toed Woodpecker	<i>Picoides tridactylus</i>	One in the Nigula Forest; a pair seen wonderfully in the Massiaru forest.
101	Black Woodpecker	<i>Dryocopus martius</i>	One in woods near Dirhami Harbour; four elsewhere.
102	Grey-headed Woodpecker	<i>Picus canus</i>	A pair in the Nigula Forest.
	CROWS, JAYS		Family Corvidae
103	Eurasian Jay	<i>Garrulus glandarius</i>	One between Tallinn and Haapsalu, a few elsewhere.
104	Eurasian Magpie	<i>Pica pica</i>	Common daily.
105	Western Jackdaw	<i>Corvus monedula</i>	Common daily.
106	Rook	<i>Corvus frugilegus</i>	One at the Promenaadi Hotell, Haapsalu; flock of 20 as we left Haapsalu; a few elsewhere.
107	Carrion Crow	<i>Corvus corone</i>	Common daily.
108	Northern Raven	<i>Corvus corax</i>	Common daily.
	WAXWINGS & ALLIES		Family Bombycillidae
109	Bohemian Waxwing	<i>Bombycilla garrulus</i>	Five in flight, Haapsalu Bay, one near Dirhami; eight in the Nigula forest.
	TITS		Family Paridae
110	Willow Tit	<i>Poecile montana</i>	One calling at the Tahu tower, Haapsalu Bay; a pair at the Väike-Rakke fields.
111	European Crested Tit	<i>Lophophanes cristatus</i>	Two at the Tahu Tower, Haapsalu Bay;
112	Great Tit	<i>Parus major</i>	Common daily.
113	Blue Tit	<i>Cyanistes caeruleus</i>	A few in Leidissoo forest reserve; Silma nature reserve; three migrating north on the Dirhami seawatch, a few elsewhere.
	PENDULINE TITS		Family Remizidae
114	Eurasian Penduline Tit	<i>Remiz pendulinus</i>	One building a nest at the Silma nature reserve; at least three at the Ilmatsalu ponds.
	SWALLOWS, MARTINS		Family Hirundinidae
115	Sand Martin	<i>Riparia riparia</i>	Several at the Silma nature reserve.
116	Barn Swallow	<i>Hirundo rustica</i>	A male at Põgari-Sassi, a few daily.

117	Common House Martin	<i>Delichon urbicum</i>	Two at Haapsalu sewage works, a few at the Silma nature reserve.
	BUSHTITS		Family Aegithalidae
118	Long-tailed Bushtit (Tit)	<i>Aegithalos caudatus</i>	Two, of the white-headed race <i>A. c. caudatus</i> , in the Leidissoo forest reserve; Silma nature reserve.
	LARKS		Family Alaudidae
119	Woodlark	<i>Lullula arborea</i>	One heard in the Leidissoo forest reserve; one displaying near Dirhami Harbour; one singing at our 'lunch' stop on the way to the airport.
120	Eurasian Skylark	<i>Alauda arvensis</i>	Common daily.
	OLD WORLD WARBLERS		Family Sylviidae
121	Common Grasshopper Warbler		<i>Locustella naevia</i> One singing at the Aadla marsh.
122	Savi's Warbler	<i>Locustella luscinioides</i>	At least three reeling at the Haapsalu sewage works, four or five at the Silma nature reserve.
123	Great Reed Warbler	<i>Acrocephalus arundinaceus</i>	Several singing at the Pikla pools.
124	Sedge Warbler	<i>Acrocephalus schoenobaenus</i>	One singing at Häädemeister beach; a few at the Aadla marsh.
125	Eurasian Reed Warbler	<i>Acrocephalus scirpaceus</i>	One singing at Häädemeister beach; a few at the Aadla marsh.
126	Willow Warbler	<i>Phylloscopus trochilus</i>	Common daily.
127	Common Chiffchaff	<i>Phylloscopus collybita</i>	Common daily.
128	Wood Warbler	<i>Phylloscopus sibilatrix</i>	One singing at the Haeska tower, Haapsalu Bay; heard or seen daily.
129	Eurasian Blackcap	<i>Sylvia atricapilla</i>	A male at the Vönnu pond; Silma nature reserve; a few elsewhere.
130	Lesser Whitethroat	<i>Sylvia curruca</i>	Common daily.
131	Common Whitethroat	<i>Sylvia communis</i>	Two at the Haapsalu sewage works.
	BABLERS, PARROTBILLS		Family Timaliidae
132	Bearded Reedling	<i>Panurus biarmicus</i>	Four at the Haapsalu sewage works, four or five at the Silma nature reserve; a party at the Pikla ponds.
	GOLDCRESTS, KINGLETS		Family Regulidae
133	Goldcrest	<i>Regulus regulus</i>	Common daily.
	WRENS		Family Troglodytidae
134	Winter Wren	<i>Troglodytes troglodytes</i>	Several singing in the Nigula Forest nature reserve and other forests.
135	Eurasian Nuthatch	<i>Sitta europaea</i>	One in the Nigula Forest nature reserve.
	TREECREEPERS		Family Certhiidae
136	Eurasian Treecreeper	<i>Certhia familiaris</i>	Two in the Leidissoo forest reserve.
	STARLINGS		Family Sturnidae
137	Common Starling	<i>Sturnus vulgaris</i>	Common daily.
	THRUSHES		Family Turdidae
138	Common Blackbird	<i>Turdus merula</i>	Common daily.
139	Fieldfare	<i>Turdus pilaris</i>	Two in woods near Dirhami Harbour; a few elsewhere.
140	Redwing	<i>Turdus iliacus</i>	One on 'moose and woodcock' evening, Silma nature reserve; a few elsewhere.
141	Song Thrush	<i>Turdus philomelos</i>	Common daily.
142	Mistle Thrush	<i>Turdus viscivorus</i>	One in woods near Dirhami Harbour.
	CHATS, OLD WORLD FLYCATCHERS		Family Muscicapidae
143	European Robin	<i>Erithacus rubecula</i>	Common daily.
144	Thrush Nightingale	<i>Luscinia luscinia</i>	One on our way to the airport.
145	Common Redstart	<i>Phoenicurus phoenicurus</i>	A male at Kabli bird observatory.
146	Whinchat	<i>Saxicola rubetra</i>	A few daily.
147	Northern Wheatear	<i>Oenanthe oenanthe</i>	A few daily.
148	Spotted Flycatcher	<i>Muscicapa striata</i>	One just outside Tartu.

149 European PiedFlycatcher *Ficedula hypoleuca*

A male in the Leidissoo forest reserve; one on the way to the airport.

OLD WORLD SPARROWS

150 House Sparrow *Passer domesticus*

Family Passeridae

Common daily.

151 Eurasian Tree Sparrow *Passer montanus*

Three at the Promenaadi Hotell, Haapsalu; a few elsewhere.

ACCENTORS

152 Dunnock *Prunella modularis*

Family Prunellidae

Two atop trees in the Leidissoo forest reserve; a few elsewhere.

WAGTAILS, PIPITS

153 Western Yellow Wagtail *Motacilla flava*

Family Motacillidae

Common, a few daily.

154 Citrine Wagtail *Motacilla citreola*

At least four males and a female at the Aadla marsh.

155 White Wagtail *Motacilla alba*

Common daily.

156 Meadow Pipit *Anthus pratensis*

Fairly common.

157 Tree Pipit *Anthus trivialis*

Common daily.

FINCHES

158 Common Chaffinch *Fringilla coelebs*

Family Fringillidae

Common daily.

159 European Serin *Serinus serinus*

Two or three singing at the Lepadina Hotell, one at Häädemeister beach.

160 European Greenfinch *Carduelis chloris*

One Lepadina Hotell; a few elsewhere.

161 Eurasian Siskin *Carduelis spinus*

One in the Leidissoo forest reserve; lots passing over at the Dirhami seawatch.

162 European Goldfinch *Carduelis carduelis*

A few daily.

163 Common Redpoll *Carduelis flammea*

One in the Leidissoo forest reserve;

164 Common Linnet *Carduelis cannabina*

Three at the Haeska tower; Silma nature reserve; a few elsewhere.

165 Eurasian Bullfinch *Pyrrhula pyrrhula*

A male in the Leidissoo forest reserve; Tahu tower; a few elsewhere.

166 Hawfinch *Coccothraustes coccothraustes*

Two in the Rumba area; two or three in the Nigula forest.

BUNTINGS

167 Yellowhammer *Emberiza citrinella*

Family Emberizidae

Common daily.

168 Common Reed Bunting *Emberiza schoeniclus*

Two or three at the Haapsalu sewage works; a few elsewhere.

169 Snow Bunting *Plectrophenax nivalis*

Two flying over at the Dirhami Harbour seawatch.

MAMMALS

BEAVERS

1 Eurasian Beaver *Castor fiber*

Family Castoridae

One nibbling willow branches at the Great Snipe lek; chewed stumps and branches seen elsewhere.

DOGS & FOXES

2 Red Fox *Vulpes vulpes*

Family Canidae

One or two daily.

OTTERS, WEASELS & BADGERS

3 European Pine Marten *Martes martes*

Family Mustelidae

One ran across the road near the Väike-Rakke fields.

MOONRATS & HEDGEHOGS

4 Western Hedgehog *Erinaceus europaeus*

Family Erinaceidae

One early on a cold morning in Haapsalu; a couple dead in the road.

MOLES & DESMONS

5 European Mole *Talpa europaea*

Family Talpidae

Mole-hills seen commonly.

PIGS

6 Eurasian Wild Boar *Sus scrofa*

Family Suidae

Rootings seen commonly.

DEER

7 Western Roe Deer *Capreolus capreolus*

Family Cervidae

One or two daily, maximum nine on two days.

8 Moose *Alces alces*

One at Haapsalu Bay; scat seen commonly.

REPTILES & AMPHIBIANS

FROGS

Family Ranidae

- | | | |
|------------------------|----------------------------|------------------|
| 1 | Pool frog | Rana lessonae |
| TYPICAL LIZARDS | | |
| 2 | Common (Viviparous) Lizard | Lacerta vivipara |
| TYPICAL SNAKES | | |
| 3 | Grass snake | Natrix natrix |

Heard croaking in pools near Haapsalu Bay; Väike-Rakke fields.
Family Lacertidae
 One at the Silma nature reserve.
Family Colubridae
 Two at Tahu tower, Haapsalu Bay.

FLUTS

- | | | |
|---------------------------------|---------------------|-----------------------|
| WHITES & YELLOWS | | |
| 1 | Small White | Pieris rapae |
| 2 | Green-veined white | Pieris napi |
| 3 | Brimstone | Gonepteryx rhamni |
| BRUSH-FOOTED BUTTERFLIES | | |
| 4 | Camberwell Beauty | Nymphalis antiopa |
| 5 | Large Tortoiseshell | Nymphalis polychloros |
| 6 | Small Tortoiseshell | Aglais urticae |
| 7 | Red Admiral | Vanessa atalanta |

Family Pieridae
 A few in the Rumba area; Soomaa reserve.
 A few Ilmatsalu ponds.
 Common around Haapsalu Bay in good weather.
Family Nymphalidae
 Two at Haapsalu Bay in good weather; four in the woods near Hoilywood.
 Two at Haapsalu Bay in good weather; Soomaa reserve.
 Several at Haapsalu Bay in good weather; Soomaa reserve.
 Two at Haapsalu Bay in good weather; Soomaa reserve.

Tim Earl
Principal Leader, Guernsey, May 2008
tim@naturalist.co.uk
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