

# ***POLAND in Spring*** ***9<sup>th</sup> – 17<sup>th</sup> May 2009***



*Aquatic Warbler, Biebrza National Park*

*Keith Grant*

**Leaders / Guides:**

Keith Grant (*Travelling Naturalist*)  
Csaba Lendvai (*EcoTours, Hungary*)

**Driver:**

Zsolt

**Daily Diary:**

**Saturday 9th May**

**Arrival, travel to Białowieża**

**Sunny & warm, clear skies but cool overnight**

Now that T5 is in operation, we found Terminal 1 at Heathrow was comfortably quiet when we all met up at the allotted time for our morning flight. Csaba was awaiting our arrival in Warsaw and we were soon on our way to Białowieża. We stopped for a coffee break and to stretch our legs at about halfway and promptly found a pair of Fieldfares nesting nearby and beating up the local Hooded Crows whenever they flew too close. A calling bird from across the road alerted us to a lovely Wryneck sitting out on a bare branch of a mature Poplar. A new bird for some of us, this gave a nice prolonged view through the binoculars, though unfortunately our telescope tripods were still packed in the main luggage. A Whiskered Tern flew along the nearby river and, having resumed our journey, we passed a Hooded Crow mobbing a Marsh Harrier. We arrived at Białowieża just before 7pm in good time to settle in and gather again for dinner and to talk through the week's itinerary.

**Sunday 10th May**

**Białowieża Palace Park & Strict Reserve, Zebra Zubra boardwalk**

**Sunny & warm, becoming overcast & showery towards dusk**

Several people went for a pre-breakfast stroll, noting Black Redstart, Serin and Thrush Nightingale, then as we were gathering at the front of the hotel after breakfast, a Lesser Spotted Eagle drifted across and treated us to an amazing rollercoaster display flight. We were then driven the short distance to the Palace Park where we admired a White Stork on its impressive nest on the chimney stack of the old buildings. Black Redstart and Collared Flycatcher were noted, and our second Wryneck of the trip was found in the mature trees outside the National Park HQ. We took the opportunity to buy maps and postcards from the shop before returning to the vehicle to take us round to the far side of the park. From here we walked across open pasture with superb male Whinchats and several Tree Pipits on territory. Arek, our forest guide, met us here and we entered the Strict Reserve. He imparted a vast knowledge of how the fauna and flora of the forest interacted, and the historical effects of human intervention. Birds here included stunning views of Collared Flycatchers, Wood Warblers, Hawfinch and Middle Spotted Woodpecker. We briefly saw White-backed Woodpecker, but this was chased off by a pugnacious Middle Spot before everyone got on to it. Returning to the vehicle for lunch and coffee, we were pleased to have several views of Camberwell Beauty butterflies, and a Great Grey Shrike appeared on the overhead wires.

We then drove the short distance to the Zebra Zubra boardwalk, finding Icterine Warbler singing by the roadside although the boardwalk and woodland was quiet. We walked slowly back to the hotel for a break before gathering again for checklist and an early dinner. Arek then appeared again and took us into the forest in search of Pygmy Owl. Though we failed with this, we did have roding Woodcock overhead, a nice if brief male Siskin and several Red Deer along the forest tracks. There were also signs of Wild Boar 'diggings' and Bison 'cow-pats'.



Entrance to the Strict Reserve, Bialowieza

Keith Grant



White Stork

Gerald Emery

## Monday 11th May

## Bialowieza Forest

### Overcast at dawn, then mainly sunny

Our pre-breakfast walk took us down to the river and the small road up towards the Palace Park. At the river itself, a Lesser Spotted Woodpecker and two Waxwings were found, though all flew off before everyone got on to them. A Thrush Nightingale was singing vigorously from the trees along the roadside and this showed well for some, but then we were distracted by a singing Icterine Warbler behind us. This again showed well and as we wandered back alongside the river, two Common Terns appeared and several Great Reed Warblers were singing from the narrow reed fringe around the lake.

After breakfast, we loaded up and headed into the forest. Our morning location involved two walks either side of coffee. The forest was quite quiet for some reason, the only species of note before coffee being Crested Tits at great height at the top of the spruce & pines and the ubiquitous Wood Warblers and Blackcaps. An immature White-tailed Eagle floated over the clearing during coffee, and our second walk of the morning took us in the other direction as far as the river. We found signs of Beaver activity in the form of footprints along the river's edge and many felled and stripped trees, including those with tree guards around them! Excited Hawfinch calls from a nearby shrub made us realise that the birds had a nest deep in the heart of the bush and we all had telescope views of the female sitting tight with just her bill, head and eye visible above the nest rim. Back to the vehicle for lunch, with Tree Pipit singing from the tree tops and a Buzzard mewing in the distance.

We then moved on to another site where a short walk brought us to a shallow valley in the forest where beavers had dammed the river and flooded the whole area. The resulting dead trees created an exceptional feeding area for woodpeckers and many Starlings and a couple of Collared Flycatchers were making use of the various holes. We walked along a slight ridge which enabled us to come right alongside one of the dams and have close views of the lodge. There were many Marsh Frogs here and it was while we were relaxing on a fallen log listening to and watching these that a White-backed Woodpecker appeared. We followed this bird back to the main trail and all eventually got good views through the telescopes and binoculars. Some of the group also managed Middle Spotted Woodpecker before catching up with the White-back. We then returned to the vehicle and headed back. After a short break for ice-creams beer etc, we gathered again for checklist and an early dinner, ready for Mateus to guide us to the Great Snipe lek to the north-west of the forest. We walked out on to the bog, which was much dryer this year than last, and very quickly got glimpses of several Great Snipe about 200m distant through the telescopes. Grasshopper Warblers and Corncrakes were also calling and at

one point, two roding Woodcock passed overhead. As the light began to fade, more Great Snipe seemed to appear and we could watch them perform their strange jumping displays, particularly showing off the extensive white in the tails. We eventually walked back to the vehicle as the light failed completely and headed for 'home'.



*Eurasian Hobby*



*part of the flooded forest*



*Grey-headed Woodpecker*

*Keith Grant*

**Tuesday 12th May**

**Siemianówka Reservoir, Bialowieza Forest**

**Rain up till late morning, sunshine & showers thereafter**

One intrepid person braved the weather before breakfast, heading for the main footbridge over the river into the Park. The Common Terns were still present and a nice pair of Common Redstarts were in the trees. After breakfast, we headed off in the vehicle for the Siemianówka Reservoir. It was still raining when we arrived which made things a little uncomfortable scanning out across the reservoir, but all was forgotten as we watched the really impressive number of Whiskered and White-winged Terns. The tower hide gave us some shelter and some additional height, and we had nice views of a male Pochard and pairs of Garganey and Gadwall. Several Marsh Harriers and Great White Egrets were noted, one of the latter in particular flying in quite close. We returned to the vehicle for coffee and biscuits and as the weather began to clear, we returned to the bund. A small party of Cranes flew across in the distance, then the female Citrine Wagtail appeared from out of the grass, perching on the dead thistle heads. A male Whinchat for some reason took great exception to this and we watched spellbound as he really chased her around for the next five minutes or so. Eventually he retired and this allowed her to settle back out of sight into the grass. This prompted a very interesting discussion amongst us as to what was happening, why was the Whinchat so pugnacious and, as the Citrine we were watching was female, where was the male that Csaba saw last week – we will never know.

We then drove right round the reservoir to the northern side and with clearing skies had our sandwiches on the railway looking out over the reservoir on both sides. Parties of Greylag Geese flew in, there were amazing views of the terns and both Blue-headed Wagtail and Great Reed Warbler showed well. At one point we had all three species of hirundines lined up on the wires in front of us, that was until first one Hobby, then two, appeared. Although these were actually catching dragonflies, the swallows and martins all disappeared anyway – obviously not willing to risk becoming part of the menu! We then headed back into the forest, returning to one of the locations we visited yesterday. Here, although still no sign of Hazel Grouse, we did have superb views of both Grey-headed and Black Woodpeckers. We walked a short way along the road, then drove and repeated a short walk, but found only a few Siskins though we could hear what sounded like a sizeable flock of Crossbills. We were going to try a further stop but a short sharp rain storm encouraged us ‘home’.

**Wednesday 13th May**

**Travel to Goni\_dz**

**Mainly sunny, some cloud, chill wind**

We walked around the lake before breakfast. Despite the chilly wind, a Lesser Spotted Woodpecker showed well near the river bridge and a male Red-backed Shrike also appeared nearby. We walked up past the sheds, then round the lake and back along the main path. Great Reed Warblers were singing vigorously and the Common Tern again appeared. After breakfast, we loaded up and headed back into

the forest to stop where a beaver dam had again flooded the woodland. A half hour stop here on the roadside produced excellent views of several Crossbills, Collared & Spotted Flycatchers, Blackcaps and Nuthatch. We then headed off, our next stop being at the old fish ponds near Bialystok. After welcome coffee and biscuits, we walked along the embankment between the various ponds. A large breeding colony of Black-headed Gulls was in full swing, and Tufted Duck, Great Crested Grebes and various Coot were seen. At the far lake, several Red-necked Grebes were found and looked stunning with the sun shining on their richly coloured chests and necks. A Penduline Tit was heard and seen flying past but with the wind under its tail, it immediately disappeared into the reeds.

We had lunch back near the vehicle overlooking the first pool. Here, Great Reed Warblers were vying for our attention with a superb male Marsh Harrier quartering the area almost overhead at times. We again drove on, stopping next near Czechowizna where a lake attracts large numbers of White-tailed Eagles. This year, we saw at least six, with excellent views of an immature sitting at the edge of the forest and a white tailed individual circling in the sunshine. There were several sightings of Marsh Harriers quartering the fields, often being seen off by the breeding Lapwing. Then a male Montagu's Harrier flew across and we saw him coming and going several times. A Black Woodpecker was nesting in one of the roadside trees and we had good views again of the male. We actually saw two males chasing each other before again loading into the vehicle and heading for Goni\_dz. Our final half hour before reaching the hotel was in a tower hide overlooking the marsh. Two Roe Deer caused some discussion, and we also noted drumming Snipe and both Redshank and Black-tailed Godwit. A very distant eagle was probably a Greater Spotted Eagle, but we really needed a much closer view.



*Ruff (Gerald Emery)*



*White-winged Tern (Judith Robinson)*



*Whiskered Tern in flight  
(Keith Grant)*

#### **Thursday 14th May**

**Mainly sunny, cool wind**

#### **Red Marsh**

Before breakfast, we managed to walk as far as the bottom of the garden overlooking the river! Golden Oriole and Thrush Nightingale were singing vigorously but remained invisible. However, Sedge and Savi's Warblers did not, both species showing really well in the telescopes. A pair of Linnets was also nest-building in a small conifer overhanging the pond. After breakfast, we stopped briefly at the National Park HQ for postcards etc, then headed north, first stop being the Dre\_stwo Lake where we immediately flushed a pair of Black Woodpeckers from near the car park as we arrived. Scanning the water, we quickly found many Great Crested Grebes. A short walk back through the pines turned up the woodpeckers again and also many Green Hairstreaks and Speckled Wood butterflies. After coffee, we again walked a short way into the forest, finding a pair of Common Redstarts. We then drove on towards Grz\_dy, stopping for lunch at a bridge over the River Jegrznia. A Barred Warbler played hard to get in a small but isolated willow clump, showing really only as a silhouette. Common Whitethroat and Blue-headed Wagtails were also seen here. At the entrance to the Red Marsh forest reserve, we met up with Andrej and drove and walked out to a fascinating area of ancient sand dunes. Sooty Copper and Small Heath butterflies were found alongside the trail, with nice areas covered with Lily-of-the-Valley and Solomon's Seal in bud and a small patch of Pasque Flowers now going over. Two Common Cranes flew over and announced their presence with bugling calls. Several Sand Lizards were noted alongside

the trail. At the tower hide, a distant Elk was spotted out in the reeds and an even more distant Black Stork was circling over the marsh. Ultimately, a second Black Stork lifted up to join the first. We returned, stopping briefly at the semi-natural bee colony in a pine tree, the rehabilitation enclosures with the two adolescent Elk in residence, although we didn't see the Wild Boar, and finally at the reserve centre itself where several of the primitive-looking Polish horses were kept. A quiet day for birds but very interesting nonetheless.

**Friday 15th May**

**Southern Basin**

**Mainly sunny, light breeze**

We walked up the lane outside the hotel before breakfast. A first-year White-tailed Eagle drifted past the hotel and we found the usual array of warblers and a pair of Spotted Flycatchers. A Common Whitethroat and Black Redstart both showed well around the old concrete bunkers. After breakfast, we headed south to explore the Southern Basin of the National Park. At our first stop on the edge of the marsh we found a Penduline Tit collecting bulrush fluff. In the fields there were also Lapwings, Black-tailed Godwits and Redshank. At a tower hide further out into the marsh, we found ourselves watching good numbers of Whiskered and White-winged Terns. Of the shorebirds, Wood Sandpipers and Ruffs were in the majority though Spotted Redshank and Greenshank were also seen. Our first two Ruffs in particular were splendid males just over the fence from the hide. A distant Black Stork also flew across the marsh. After coffee, we headed for another viewpoint, this time overlooking the main river itself. Here there were many hundreds of 'marsh' terns, plus a good number of pairs of Common Terns and at least two pairs of Little Terns. Immediately in front of us were several Ruff, together with Wood Sandpiper and a single Temminck's Stint. We also spotted Dunlin, Little Stint, Greenshank and Ringed Plover across the river. A small number of Common Cranes were feeding on the marsh in the distance and we had a closer view of a Black Stork flying across. During lunch here, we could see quite a bit of disturbance in the distance, with large flocks of birds getting up and wheeling around. The reason for this became clear a short while later when a Peregrine flew over, lifting everything in front of us. It did a half-hearted stoop at a Ruff, but missed, and then drifted off. With all the waders and terns in the air, we came to realise just how many birds we were watching! Our final two species here were Common Sandpiper and a Little Ringed Plover. We then drove on to another viewpoint, this time on a hillside overlooking the marshes. A pair of Cranes were feeding below us, and there were good numbers of waders, though this time mainly hidden by the taller grasses. A pair of Grey Partridge appeared in the field beside us, as did a rather splendid Blue-headed Wagtail.

We headed back for an early dinner before driving to the Duga Luka boardwalk. With the evening being virtually cloudless and flat calm, we had an excellent 20 minutes or so, watching several Aquatic Warblers singing at the tops of the reeds. One male in particular was quite close and with the sun behind us gave excellent views through the telescopes. Although this was our target species here, what most of us will really remember is the wide open expanse of marsh as the sun went down with Snipe performing their drumming display flights overhead and Curlew and Redshank calling in the background.

**Saturday 16th May**

**Middle Basin**

**Mainly sunny, clouds building during afternoon**

We walked down the lane in front of the hotel before breakfast. An Icterine Warbler was singing and showed well in a large Ash which was still in bud. A Thrush Nightingale was also in residence a little further on and also showed briefly within its Lilac thicket. A pair of Hawfinches flew over and landed again in an Ash tree still in bud, showing briefly before flying on. After breakfast, we drove to the Tsar's fortifications, built by Tsar Alexander as a strategic stronghold to guard one of the few east-west crossings of the Biebrza Marshes. The '2<sup>nd</sup> Fort' boardwalk here provided excellent views of Bluethroat which was first seen perched right at the top of a dead twiggy bush. It then became extremely secretive, only showing briefly at ground level amongst the willows or even more briefly flashing across the boardwalk. Ultimately, it returned to the tops of various twigs and showed well for most of us. We were also impressed with the beaver work along the boardwalk, some planks having to be replaced and some well worn paths crossing under the boards. The fluty calls of Fire-bellied Toads accompanied us all along the walk, and from the viewing areas we particularly noted Great Grey Shrike amongst the

more expected species. After coffee, we returned past Goni\_dz and explored the Middle Basin of the National Park. At one stop by the river we had superb views of up to five Montagu's Harriers, both perched and in flight. Our lunch stop at the roadside enabled us to have further views of Lesser Spotted Eagle, one of which was doing its rollercoaster display flight, and a White Stork nest with a pair in residence bill-clapping and doing some housekeeping. We then found a beaver dam and lodge out in the marshes, despite having very few trees around. Here a male Red-backed Shrike and some superb Blue-headed Wagtails and Whinchats were seen. A Corncrake calling from the riverside, not unsurprisingly, remained unseen. Finally, we headed back to the tower hide near Goni\_dz itself for a final scan across the marshes. I think we could say there was a 'spread of storks' with several drumming Snipe and displaying Black-tailed Godwits. One Snipe in particular was perched on nearby electric wires and looked somewhat incongruous. Parties of White-winged Terns flying overhead completed an excellent week's birding.

### Sunday 17th May

### Departure

#### Overcast, light drizzle over breakfast

We were packed and ready to go immediately following a 7am breakfast. We made good time and stopped for coffee at the roadside. A Pied Flycatcher here and yet another Black Woodpecker was a surprise. With light traffic as we approached Warsaw, we arrived at the airport in good time for our sandwiches and to check in for our flight home.

### Species Lists:

The various species lists below use the following references:

**Birds:** We use the worldwide English names and systematic order as recommended by the I.O.C., and published in *Birds of the World – Recommended English Names* (Gill, F. & Wright, M., 2006.).

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. & Oviden, 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)

**Flowers:** *The Wild Flowers of Britain & Northern Europe* (Fitter, R., Fitter, A. & Blamey, M., 4<sup>th</sup> edn., 1985)

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

## BIRDS - AVES

### GROUSE, PHEASANTS & allies - Phasianidae

**Grey Partridge** *Perdix perdix* : noted on 2 days with a pair Biebrza on 15th, 1 en route on 16th.

### GEESE, SWANS & DUCKS - Anatidae

**Greylag Goose** *Anser anser* : noted on 3 days with at least 40 Siemianowka on 12th, fewer numbers Biebrza

on 15th & 16th.

**Mute Swan** *Cygnus olor* : noted on 6 days.

**Gadwall** *Anas strepera* : several Siemianowka on 12th.

**Eurasian Wigeon** *Anas penelope* : ca.5 Siemianowka on 12th.

**Mallard** *Anas platyrhynchos* : noted most days.

**Northern Shoveler** *Anas clypeata* : a male Biebrza on 15th is our only record.

**Garganey** *Anas querquedula* : noted on 3 days though only a few, with a pair Siemianowka on 12th, up to 3 Biebrza on 15th & 16th.

**Common Pochard** *Aythya ferina* : a male Siemianowka on 12th is our only record.

**Tufted Duck** *Aythya fuligula* : noted on 3 days with a pair Siemianowka on 12th, several Bialystok fishponds on 13th, 2 Biebrza on 15th.

**Common Goldeneye** *Bucephala clangula* : a pair Biebrza on 16th is our only record.

#### GREBES - Podicipedidae

**Red-necked Grebe** *Podiceps grisegena* : 4 Bialystok fishponds on 13th.

**Great Crested Grebe** *Podiceps cristatus* : noted on 3 days with 1 Siemianowka on 12th, several Bialystok fishponds on 13th, at least 25 Drenstwo Lake on 14th.

#### STORKS - Ciconiidae

**Black Stork** *Ciconia nigra* : 2 very distantly at Red Marsh on 14th, 2 singles Biebrza on 15th.

**White Stork** *Ciconia ciconia* : noted each day.

#### HERONS & BITTERNs - Ardeidae

**Eurasian/Great Bittern** *Botaurus stellaris* : booming heard on 4 days, 12th - 15th.

**Grey Heron** *Ardea cinerea* : ones & twos noted on 6 days.

**Great [White] Egret** *Ardea alba* : noted on 2 days with 6 Siemianowka on 12th, several Biebrza on 15th.

#### FALCONS & allies - Falconidae

**Common/Eurasian Kestrel** *Falco tinnunculus* : 1 en route on 9th, 1 Bialystok fishponds on 13th.

**Eurasian Hobby** *Falco subbuteo* : 2 Siemianowka on 12th.

**Peregrine Falcon** *Falco peregrinus* : 1 Biebrza on 15th.

#### HAWKS, EAGLES & allies - Accipitridae

**White-tailed Eagle** *Haliaeetus albicilla* : noted on 3 days with 1 immature Bialowieza on 11th, ca.6 Czechowizna on 13th, 3 Biebrza on 15th.

**[Western] Marsh Harrier** *Circus aeruginosus* : noted regularly away from the forest.

**Hen/Northern Harrier** *Circus cyaneus* : a male en route on 13th is our only record.

**Montagu's Harrier** *Circus pygargus* : noted on 4 days with a male Czechowizna on 13th, a male Red Marsh on 14th, 1 Biebrza on 15th, 2 males & a female in front of the hotel plus 2 males & 3 females Biebrza on 16th.

**Common Buzzard** *Buteo buteo* : ones & twos noted most days.

**Lesser Spotted Eagle** *Aquila pomarina* : noted on 2 days with 1 displaying over Bialowieza on 10th, 2 Biebrza on 16th.

**Greater Spotted Eagle** *Aquila clanga* : 1 very distantly Biebrza on 13th is our only record.

#### RAILS, CRAKES & COOTS - Rallidae

**Corn Crane** *Crex crex* : heard on 5 days both at Bialowieza on 10th - 11th, and Biebrza on 14th - 16th.

**Common Moorhen** *Gallinula chloropus* : 1 near the hotel on 16th is our only record.

**Eurasian/Common Coot** *Fulica atra* : noted on 4 days with several Siemianowka on 12th, Bialystok

fishponds on 13th, several Biebrza on 14th & 15th.

#### CRANES - Gruidae

**Common Crane** *Grus grus* : noted on 4 days with at least 8 Siemianowka on 12th, 2 Red Marsh on 14th, at least 20 Biebrza on 15th, at least 35 Biebrza on 16th.

#### PLOVERS & LAPWINGS - Charadriidae

**Northern Lapwing** *Vanellus vanellus* : noted each day in small numbers, some obviously on nests.

**[Common] Ringed Plover** *Charadrius hiaticula* : 3 Biebrza on 15th.

**Little Ringed Plover** *Charadrius dubius* : 1 Biebrza on 15th.

#### SANDPIPERS, SNIPES & allies - Scolopacidae

**Eurasian Woodcock** *Scolopax rusticola* : noted on 2 days with 1 roding Bialowieza on 10th, 2 roding Bialowieza on 11th.

**Great Snipe** *Gallinago media* : at least 5 displaying Bialowieza on 11th.

**Common Snipe** *Gallinago gallinago* : drumming birds noted on 4 days, Biebrza, 13th - 16th.

**Black-tailed Godwit** *Limosa limosa* : noted on 3 days, Biebrza, 13th, 15th & 16th.

**Eurasian Curlew** *Numenius arquata* : 1 Biebrza on 15th.

**Spotted Redshank** *Tringa erythropus* : 2 in breeding plumage, Biebrza on 15th.

**Common Redshank** *Tringa totanus* : noted on 3 days, heard at Siemianowka on 12th, several at Biebrza on 13th & 15th.

**Common Greenshank** *Tringa nebularia* : several Biebrza on 15th.

**Green Sandpiper** *Tringa ochropus* : noted on 2 days with 1 Siemianowka on 12th, 1 Bialowieza on 13th.

**Wood Sandpiper** *Tringa glareola* : noted on 2 days with several hundred Biebrza on 15th, 1 Biebrza on 16th.

**Common Sandpiper** *Actitis hypoleucos* : 2 Biebrza on 15th.

**Little Stint** *Calidris minuta* : 1 Biebrza on 15th.

**Temminck's Stint** *Calidris temminckii* : 1 Biebrza on 15th.

**Dunlin** *Calidris alpina* : 45, all in breeding plumage, Biebrza on 15th.

**Ruff** *Philomachus pugnax* : noted on 2 days with 1 Siemianowka on 12th, several hundred Biebrza on 15th.

#### GULLS, TERNS & SKIMMERS - Laridae

**Common/Mew Gull** *Larus canus* : singles on 2 days, Bialystok fishponds on 13th, Drenstwo Lake on 14th.

**Black-headed Gull** *Larus ridibundus* : noted on 5 days, including the breeding colony at Bialystok fishponds.

**Common Tern** *Sterna hirundo* : noted on 4 days with 2 Bialowieza on 11th - 13th, 2 Siemianowka on 12th, 1 Bialystok fishponds on 13th, several pairs Biebrza on 15th.

**Little Tern** *Sternula albifrons* : 2 pairs Biebrza on 15th.

**Whiskered Tern** *Chlidonias hybrida* : noted on 3 days with 1 en route on 9th, several hundred Siemianowka on 12th, Biebrza on 15th.

**White-winged [Black] Tern** *Chlidonias leucopterus* : noted on 6 days with several hundred Siemianowka on 12th, and similar numbers Biebrza on 13th - 17th.

**Black Tern** *Chlidonias niger* : noted on 5 days with at least 10 Siemianowka on 12th, then at Biebrza, 2 on 13th, 1 on 14th, several on 15th, 2 on 16th.

#### PIGEONS & DOVES - Columbidae

**Rock Dove / Feral Pigeon** *Columba livia* : noted on 6 days in towns & villages.

**[Common] Wood Pigeon** *Columba palumbus* : noted each day.

**European Turtle Dove** *Streptopelia turtur* : 1 Bialowieza on 11th is our only record.

**Eurasian Collared Dove** *Streptopelia decaocto* : noted on 4 days in towns & villages

#### CUCKOOS - Cuculidae

**Common Cuckoo** *Cuculus canorus* : heard each day, several seen well.

#### SWIFTS - Apodidae

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

#### HOOPOES - Upupidae

**Eurasian Hoopoe** *Upupa epops* : noted on 2 days with 1 heard and another seen Red Marsh on 14th, 1 seen well Biebrza on 16th.

#### WOODPECKERS - Picidae

**Eurasian Wryneck** *Jynx torquilla* : noted on 4 days with 1 en route on 9th, 1 Bialowieza on 10th, heard Goniadz on 14th & 16th.

**Lesser Spotted Woodpecker** *Dendrocopos minor* : noted on 2 days with 1 Bialowieza on 11th & 13th.

**Middle Spotted Woodpecker** *Dendrocopos medius* : noted on 3 days with 2 Bialowieza on 10th, 1 Bialowieza on 11th, 2 Red Marsh on 14th.

**White-backed Woodpecker** *Dendrocopos leucotos* : noted on 2 days with 1 briefly Bialowieza on 10th, 1 seen well Bialowieza on 11th.

**Great Spotted Woodpecker** *Dendrocopos major* : noted on 4 days, Bialowieza 10th-12th, 1 Red Marsh 14th.

**Black Woodpecker** *Dryocopus martius* : noted on 6 days, the first heard distantly en route on 9th, then another heard distantly on 10th, a male seen well Bialowieza on 12th, 2 males & a female Czechowizna on 13th, a pair plus another male Drenstwo Lake on 14th, 2 en route at coffee stop and en route on 17th.

**Grey-headed Woodpecker** *Picus canus* : a female Bialowieza on 12th.

#### SHRIKES - Laniidae

**Red-backed Shrike** *Lanius collurio* : single males on 2 days, Bialowieza on 13th, Biebrza on 16th.

**Great Grey Shrike** *Lanius excubitor* : single birds on 2 days, 1 Bialowieza on 10th, 1 Biebrza on 16th.

#### OLD WORLD ORIOLES - Oriolidae

**[Eurasian] Golden Oriole** *Oriolus oriolus* : noted on 4 days with heard Bialowieza on 10th, a pair seen briefly & others heard Bialowieza on 11th, heard near hotel at Goniadz on 14th & 15th.

#### CROWS, JAYS & MAGPIES - Corvidae

**Eurasian Jay** *Garrulus glandarius* : noted each day.

**Eurasian Magpie** *Pica pica* : noted most days.

**Western Jackdaw** *Corvus monedula* : noted on 6 days.

**Rook** *Corvus frugilegus* : noted on 4 days.

**Hooded Crow** *Corvus cornix* : noted most days.

**Northern/Common Raven** *Corvus corax* : noted on 5 days, both heard & seen overhead, 10th - 14th.

#### WAXWINGS & allies - Bombycillidae

**Bohemian Waxwing** *Bombycilla garrulus* : 2 flew off from mistletoe Bialowieza on 11th. This is our first record ever of Waxwing for this trip.

#### TITS & CHICKADEES - Paridae

**Marsh Tit** *Poecile palustris* : noted on 2 days at Bialowieza on 10th & 11th.

**Coal Tit** *Periparus ater* : 1 Bialowieza on 11th.

**[European] Crested Tit** *Lophophanes cristatus* : 2 Bialowieza on 11th.

**Great Tit** *Parus major* : noted each day.

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

#### PENDULINE TITS - Remizidae

**Eurasian Penduline Tit** *Remiz pendulinus* : noted on 3 days with 1 briefly Bialystok fishponds on 13th, 1 collecting fluff on 15th, heard on 16th.

#### SWALLOWS & MARTINS - Hirundinidae

**Sand Martin / Bank Swallow** *Riparia riparia* : noted on 5 days with several Bialowieza on 10th, Siemianowka on 12th, Bialystok fishponds on 13th, Biebrza on 15th & 16th.

**Barn Swallow** *Hirundo rustica* : noted each day.

**[Common] House Martin** *Delichon urbicum* : noted each day, nesting birds on both hotels.

#### LARKS - Alaudidae

**Woodlark** *Lullula arborea* : heard singing at Red Marsh on 14th, too distant and too brief for any views.

**Eurasian/Common Skylark** *Alauda arvensis* : noted on 4 days, Czechowizna on 13th, Biebrza on 14th-16th.

#### OLD WORLD WARBLERS - Sylviidae

**Common Grasshopper Warbler** *Locustella naevia* : heard reeling at dusk on 2 days, on 11th & 16th.

**Savi's Warbler** *Locustella luscinioides* : noted on 3 days with several seen & heard, Biebrza, 14th - 16th.

**Great Reed Warbler** *Acrocephalus arundinaceus* : noted on 5 days both at Bialowieza and Biebrza.

**Aquatic Warbler** *Acrocephalus paludicola* : at least 4 Biebrza on 15th.

**Sedge Warbler** *Acrocephalus schoenobaenus* : noted on 4 days, at Bialystok fishponds on 13th, Biebrza on 14th - 16th.

**[Eurasian] Reed Warbler** *Acrocephalus scirpaceus* : noted on 4 days, Bialystok fishponds on 13th, Biebrza on 14th - 16th.

**Icterine Warbler** *Hippolais icterina* : singing birds seen on 5 days, in Bialowieza area on 10th, 11th, & 13th, Red Marsh on 14th, Goniadz on 16th.

**Willow Warbler** *Phylloscopus trochilus* : singing birds noted on 5 days, 10th, & 13th - 16th.

**Common Chiffchaff** *Phylloscopus collybita* : singing birds noted most days.

**Wood Warbler** *Phylloscopus sibilatrix* : singing birds noted on 4 days, often with excellent views, on 10th - 12th, & 14th.

**Blackcap** *Sylvia atricapilla* : noted most days.

**Garden Warbler** *Sylvia borin* : singing birds noted on 2 days, 15th & 16th.

**Barred Warbler** *Sylvia nisoria* : at least 1 seen briefly near Red Marsh on 14th is our only record.

**Lesser Whitethroat** *Sylvia curruca* : singing birds noted on 5 days, several seen well.

**Common Whitethroat** *Sylvia communis* : noted on 4 days with 1 Bialowieza on 11th, Biebrza 14th - 16th.

#### CRESTS & KINGLETS - Regulidae

**Goldcrest** *Regulus regulus* : singing birds heard on 3 days, on 11th, 13th, & 14th.

#### WRENS - Troglodytidae

**[Winter] Wren** *Troglodytes troglodytes* : singing birds noted on 3 days, 10th, 11th, & 13th.

#### NUTHATCHES & WALLCREEPER - Sittidae

**Eurasian Nuthatch** *Sitta europaea* : up to 3 noted on 3 days at Bialowieza, 10th, 11th, & 13th.

#### TREECREEPERS - Certhiidae

**Eurasian Treecreeper** *Certhia familiaris* : single birds noted on 3 days, at Bialowieza on 10th & 13th, &

Drenstwo Lake on 14th.

#### STARLINGS - Sturnidae

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

#### THRUSHES - Turdidae

**Common Blackbird** *Turdus merula* : noted each day.

**Fieldfare** *Turdus pilaris* : noted each day, a common nesting bird, fledged young also seen.

**Song Thrush** *Turdus philomelos* : noted on 6 days, 9th - 13th, & 15th.

**Mistle Thrush** *Turdus viscivorus* : noted on 2 days with 1 Bialowieza on 10th, 2 there on 11th.

#### OLD WORLD CHATS & FLYCATCHERS - Muscicapidae

**European Robin** *Erithacus rubecula* : noted in the forest on 3 days.

**Bluethroat** *Luscinia svecica* : a nice male Biebrza on 16th.

**Thrush Nightingale** *Luscinia luscinia* : noted most days, usually heard singing but seen well on occasions.

**Black Redstart** *Phoenicurus ochruros* : noted on 5 days often on the hotel rooftops or nearby.

**Common Redstart** *Phoenicurus phoenicurus* : noted on 3 days with a pair Bialowieza on 12th, a pair Drenstwo Lake on 14th, heard singing on 15th.

**Whinchat** *Saxicola rubetra* : noted on 6 days with superb males particularly noticeable.

**Spotted Flycatcher** *Muscicapa striata* : noted each day.

**[European] Pied Flycatcher** *Ficedula hypoleuca* : noted on 4 days with a male Bialowieza on 10th, a pair Bialowieza on 11th, 1 Biebrza on 16th, 1 at the coffee stop en route on 17th.

**Collared Flycatcher** *Ficedula albicollis* : noted on 3 days with several excellent views Bialowieza on 10th, 2 males on 11th, & 13th.

#### OLD WORLD SPARROWS & allies - Passeridae

**House Sparrow** *Passer domesticus* : noted most days.

**Eurasian Tree Sparrow** *Passer montanus* : noted on 5 days.

#### WAGTAILS & PIPITS - Motacillidae

**Yellow Wagtail** *Motacilla flava* : The **Blue-headed** race *Motacilla flava flava* noted on 5 days.

**Citrine Wagtail** *Motacilla citreola* : a female Siemianowka on 12th is our only record.

**White Wagtail** *Motacilla alba* : noted each day.

**Meadow Pipit** *Anthus pratensis* : noted on 2 days, at Biebrza on 15th & 16th.

**Tree Pipit** *Anthus trivialis* : noted on 3 days at Bialowieza, on 10th - 12th.

#### FINCHES & allies - Fringillidae

**Common Chaffinch** *Fringilla coelebs* : noted most days.

**European Serin** *Serinus serinus* : noted most days.

**European Greenfinch** *Carduelis chloris* : noted most days.

**Eurasian Siskin** *Carduelis spinus* : noted on 5 days in small numbers.

**European Goldfinch** *Carduelis carduelis* : noted most days.

**Common Linnet** *Carduelis cannabina* : noted on 6 days in small numbers.

**Common/Red Crossbill** *Loxia curvirostra* : noted on 3 days at Bialowieza, heard calling on 10th, a flock heard calling but out of sight on 12th, then two males & a female seen well on 13th.

**Hawfinch** *Coccothraustes coccothraustes* : noted most days, including a nest with incubating bird.

#### BUNTINGS, NEW WORLD SPARROWS & allies - Emberizidae

**Yellowhammer** *Emberiza citrinella* : noted most days.

**Common Reed Bunting** *Emberiza schoeniclus* : noted on 5 days with several males Siemianowka on 12th, Bialystok fishponds on 13th, Biebrza on 14th - 16th.

#### MAMMALS - MAMMALIA

##### PIKAS, RABBITS & HARES - Order: LAGOMORPHA

**Brown/European Hare** *Lepus europaeus* : noted on 5 days with 1 Bialowieza on 10th, 1 Siemianowka on 12th, 1 Red Marsh on 14th, 2 Biebrza on 16th, 1 en route on 17th.

##### RODENTS - Order: RODENTIA

**Eurasian Red Squirrel** *Sciurus vulgaris* : 1 Bialowieza on 10th is our only record.

**Eurasian Beaver** *Castor fiber* : fallen & chewed trees noted regularly, a dam & lodge found at two sites.

##### CARNIVORES - Order: CARNIVORA

**Red Fox** *Vulpes vulpes* : 1 seen en route on 9th, another seen Bialystok fishponds on 13th, earth noted at Red Marsh on 14th, 1 seen on the boardwalk on 16th.

##### HEDGEHOGS, MOLES & allies - Order: ERINACEOMORPHA

**European Mole** *Talpa europaea* : mole hills noted regularly.

##### EVEN-TOED UNGULATES - Order: ARTIODACTYLA

**Eurasian Wild Boar** *Sus scrofa* : diggings noted regularly.

**Red Deer** *Cervus elaphus* : noted on 2 days with several at Bialowieza on 10th, 1 en route on 11th.

**[Western] Roe Deer** *Capreolus capreolus* : noted on 2 days with 2 Biebrza on 13th, another there on 15th.

**Elk / Moose** *Alces alces* : 1 at Red Marsh on 14th is our only record, apart from the two ex-orphans in the enclosure at Red Marsh.

**European Bison** *Bison bonasus* : Not seen, but droppings noted on 2 days.

#### REPTILES - REPTILIA

**Sand Lizard** *Lacerta agilis* : several at Red Marsh on 14th.

#### AMPHIBIANS - AMPHIBIA

**Fire-bellied Toad** *Bombina bombina* : heard on 2 days, Bialystok fishponds on 13th & Biebrza on 16th.

**Green Toad** *Bufo viridis* : heard around the hotel at Bialowieza.

**Common/European Tree Frog** *Hyla arborea* : heard around the hotel at Bialowieza

**Common Frog** *Rana temporaria* : 1 at the beaver pond on 11th is our only record.

**Marsh Frog** *Rana ridibunda* : noted regularly in the larger water bodies.

#### BUTTERFLIES - LEPIDOPTERA

**[Common] Swallowtail** *Papilio machaon*

**Large White** *Pieris brassicae*

**Green-veined White** *Pieris napi*

**Orange-tip** *Anthocharis cardamines*

**Brimstone** *Gonepteryx rhamni*

**Green Hairstreak** *Callophrys rubi* : several near Drenstwo Lake on 14th.

**Sooty Copper** *Lycaena tityrus* : several at Red Marsh on 14th.

**Camberwell Beauty** *Nymphalis antiopa* : seen flying over several times, high & fast.

**Peacock** *Inachis io*

**Map butterfly** *Araschnia levana* : several seen & photographed along the boardwalk on 16th.

**Speckled Wood** *Pararge aegeria*

**Small Heath** *Coenonympha pamphilus*

#### **DAMSELFLIES & DRAGONFLIES - ODONATA**

**Beautiful Demoiselle** *Calopteryx virgo* : several (photographed) Biebrza on 16th.

**Common Bluet / Common Blue Damselfly** *Enallagma cyathigerum* : (photographed)

**Large Redeye / Red-eyed Damselfly** *Erythromma najas* : (photographed)

**Common Clubtail / Club-tailed Dragonfly** *Gomphus vulgatissimus* : several (photographed) along the boardwalk, Biebrza on 16th.

**Four-spotted Chaser** *Libellula quadrimaculata* : 1 (photographed) at the beaver pond on 11th.

*And finally .....I must mention that the Midwife Toads that some of you reported hearing were, in fact, Fire-bellied Toads. The Collins Field Guide shows us to be out of range for any of the midwife toad species and does compare the calls of midwife toads with the similar calls of both Fire-bellied and Yellow-bellied Toads. Also, I was very surprised to find the Waxwings still present so late in the spring, but Csaba did say that there had been a large waxwing invasion throughout Eastern Europe last winter.*

*We must thank Csaba for his expertise and for keeping things running to schedule, and particularly Zsolt for his excellent driving and always being there with a helping hand when needed and of course the tea, coffee & munchies! Thanks also to Arek, Mateus & Andrej for their enthusiasm and knowledge.*

*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 2009*