

Tour Report

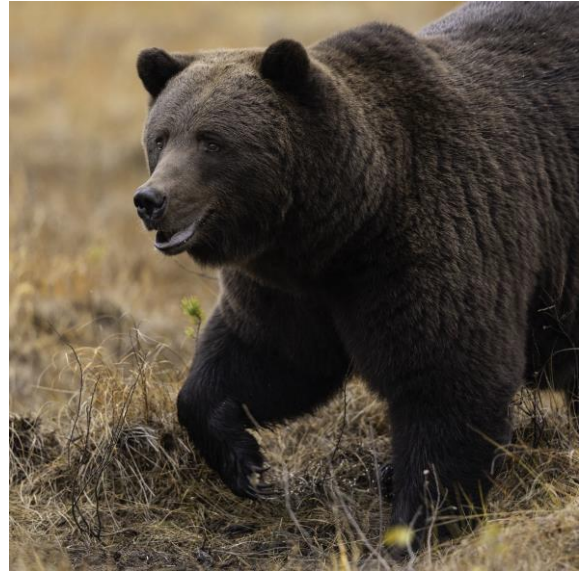
Boreal Predators Photography in Autumn

4 – 9 October 2025

European brown bear



European brown bear



European brown bear



Golden eagle



Compiled by Harry Read

Coming into land over eastern Finland, an endless carpet of deep green boreal forest stretched beneath us in every direction. More than **75 percent** of Finland is cloaked in trees, making it the most forested nation in Europe. We had journeyed here in search of the enigmatic predators and wildlife that roam this vast, mesmerising ecosystem.

Saturday 4 October 2025

Day 1:

The group arrived in the afternoon from our respective locations, beginning our journey to the border zone, from Kajaani Airport to Kuikka Lodge.

Sunday 5 October 2025

Day 2:

Brown Bears & Eagles! Kuikka Lodge.
Bright with sunny spells.

After a long day of travel and a late arrival the previous night, we woke to a landscape bathed in sunshine and views of the lake which surrounds Kuikka lodge in eastern Finland, hidden in the vast expanse of boreal forest. After breakfast, we paused to watch several species feasting on peanuts in anticipation of the approaching winter: crested tit, willow tit, great tit and great-spotted woodpecker all showed exceptionally well. In the birches and Scots pines, three red squirrels leapt above us from branch to branch, venturing down onto the ground and offering close views on several occasions.

After much anticipation and a briefing, it was time for our first session in the photographic hides. From the comfort of a group hide, overlooking a large expanse of swampland bordered by woodland edge, we began scanning, hopeful for creatures to emerge. A small male brown bear was the first big predator to show after a short wait, our attention was drawn to it by the indicative 'cronking' of a sizeable raven flock (around 60), perched in the pines above. The young male bear explored the swamp, his nose pointed to the ground as he foraged busily, before stopping in his tracks and lifting his head. A larger male brown bear wandered out of the forest to where the younger male was feeding, causing it to move away into the swamp. As the larger bear fed on the supplementary meat left out for the predators, ravens and hooded crows began to gather on the ground to feed alongside the bear on any scraps. The commotion caught the attention of some avian predators, as three eagles soared in, one by one in quick succession. They flew from tree to tree, with slow, laboured wing beats and broad wings, almost squared off at the end. Several common magpies joined in with the foraging, along with a lone Eurasian jay. The excitement levels were rising as a third male bear sauntered out into the swamp from the distance. This bear was considerably larger than the previous two and had the appearance of a distinctive collar around his neck, created by a pale ring of fur. This huge male bear was nicknamed 'The priest' by locals. It didn't take long for him to send the smaller male bear packing, as he asserted his dominance in what appeared to be a size-related feeding hierarchy. A beautiful golden eagle also appeared, circling and surveying the swampland for leftovers, before perching nearby in a lofty pine tree. Its sleek shape, rounded wings and white wing flashes helped us to tell it apart from the slightly larger white-tailed eagles.

As these birds and mammals began to melt away into the forest, we waited



Find out more about our [Boreal Predators Photography in Autumn](#) trip or [contact us](#)

01962 302086 sales@wildlifeworldwide.com www.wildlifeworldwide.com



patiently as a calming silence fell over the swamp. With mostly larger male brown bears in the area, we were all taken by complete surprise as three brown bear cubs emerged together! The cubs were likely in their third year and included two darker and one paler individual. These young bears were nervous, regularly stopping to listen and often standing up on their hind paws to get a clearer view out into the open swamp. These bears were now independent from their mother and stayed close to each other for safety, surveying for larger male bears and other possible threats in the shape of predators. The encounter was brief but delightful and we witnessed some very natural behaviours as they picked up on scent from other bears and listened intently, making the occasional signal to each other as they moved through the landscape. As darkness set in, we watched in the half-light as the golden eagle returned to feed, as did the second adult male bear who was pushed out of the area on his first attempt to feed earlier in the evening. We had enjoyed a phenomenal, action-packed first day in eastern Finland.

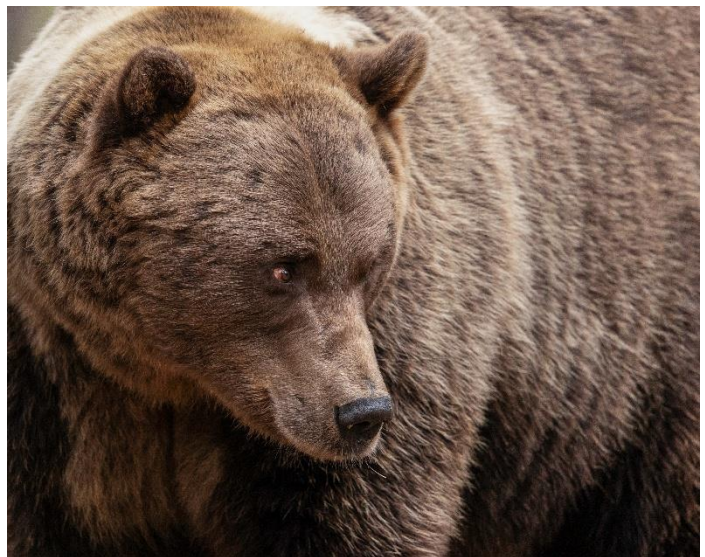
Monday 6 October 2025

Day 3:

Boreal Birds & Reflections. Kuikka Lodge.
Overcast and mild.

Day three began slightly mild and overcast, but we were still excited about the previous night's action. As we enjoyed breakfast, a flock of 18 Bohemian waxwings settled in the pines above the lodge. We watched as they descended onto the rowan tree to pluck off the last of the orange berries, as well as feeding on the bilberries and lingonberries on the ground! On a gentle breeze, the bubbling calls of black grouse could be heard from Kuikka Lodge. A similar assortment of passerines and up to three individual red squirrels were present to photograph at close range, before we prepared for our second evening session in the hides. As a group, we discussed photographic settings, hide photography techniques and animal behaviour to prepare ourselves for our second session.

The group split between swamp hides and lake hides, and at the lake hides, it wasn't long before a familiar dark male brown bear appeared almost immediately, returning twice more during the afternoon and offering increasingly close views for everyone. Images of brown bear reflections were captured from the lake hides, whilst a combination of both contextual environmental images and striking close-up portraits was captured from swamp hides. Ravens, hooded crow, Eurasian jay and common magpies gathered around the feeding site, while a flock of around 120 fieldfare dropped in briefly before heading south in a large, dramatic sweep, chattering as they flew. It was a slightly quieter day overall but was punctuated by repeated brown bear encounters and a steady flow of boreal bird species.



Find out more about our [Boreal Predators Photography in Autumn](#) trip or [contact us](#)

01962 302086 sales@wildlifeworldwide.com www.wildlifeworldwide.com

Tuesday 7 October 2025

Day 4:

Into the forest... Kuikka Lodge.

Overcast with showers.

We were hopeful that our third day might deliver some surprises. After breakfast, we admired four red squirrels chasing each other, often pausing around the feeding station. The squirrels were young and playful. A couple of small redwing flocks flew south overhead, their distinctive 'seeeep' call giving them away. A sizeable flock of 25 common crossbill dropped in above Kuikka very briefly before moving on, whilst goldcrests passed through the trees. A flock of 12 northern race long-tailed tits flitted past the lodge, their plumage pale and their heads completely white.

We all agreed to station ourselves in the birch forest hides on day three, offering a change of scenery. The real drama began before we reached the hides on our short journey over... As we all chatted in the vehicle, our speaking was halted immediately, followed by some sharp gasps as a pale, shaggy creature stopped in its tracks on the road ahead. It turned to look at us for a split second before calmly ghosting into the forest. It was a Eurasian wolf! One of our main target species! From the vehicle, we all watched on and admired this beautiful mammal, our cameras typically packed in the boot. On arrival at the hides, we admired the pristine woodland setting, peppered with old-growth birch trees, adorned with various species of hanging beard lichens.

Moments after setting our camera equipment up, the huge male from night one, known as 'the priest,' emerged in the forest. He was soon joined by an enormous second male brown bear, as the pair fed together for over half an hour, watching each other closely and nervously. As if that wasn't enough, a third huge male followed, creating an extraordinary sequence of dominance and tolerance between bears. These males were desperate to find any available food, consuming as many calories as possible ahead of their imminent hibernation, in a process known as 'hyperphagia.' At times it felt like this bold male bear was close enough to touch! We could hear his deep exhales and subtle grunts as he searched the forest for food. Raven, and all foraged in the forest, allowing for some close portrait images.



After our brief sighting earlier, we were all hopeful that the wolf might return. As the session continued, a few of our group spotted a second, darker Eurasian wolf! This grey-coloured wolf slipped through the forest at speed, distant but unmistakable in the diffused forest light. One keen-eyed member of the group photographed a juvenile northern goshawk, which rounded off one of the most intense and tantalising hide sessions. We had captured some remarkable brown bear portraits and bird images, but both wolf sightings were too fleeting to reward us with any images.

Wednesday 8 October 2025

Day 5:

Boreal Serenity. Kuikka Lodge.

Overcast.

Our final day began with a northern bullfinch overhead and more Bohemian waxwings moving through without dropping in. We were excited after learning that two Eurasian wolves had moved through the area

Find out more about our [Boreal Predators Photography in Autumn](#) trip or [contact us](#)

01962 302086 sales@wildlifeworldwide.com www.wildlifeworldwide.com

the previous night and that they might return for our final hide session. On our short drive over to the hide area, one of the group spotted two mammals by the side of the forest track. Two Eurasian elk were feeding beside a small pond in a marshy valley, their long pale legs and heavy-set dark bodies giving them away. We watched them feeding and slowly melting away into the dense pines; it was time for our final hide session. We all stationed ourselves in the swamp hides and readied ourselves. At this stage in October, the autumnal colours were really coming through, offering some wonderful backdrops. The ground vegetation was a rich orange colour, and the surrounding dominant evergreen species were strewn with vivid yellows, reds and oranges of the deciduous trees soon to shed their leaves. Two huge male brown bears appeared early on, including the individual with the pale fur collar and another dark male, feeding side by side with surprising tolerance. Then, the familiar large dark brown bear sauntered in, sending the other two bears off and out of his way. He found some food and wandered off, much to the delight of the attending ravens and hooded crows who fed on the scraps. Once the swamp was clear, the two big males later reappeared together, and as the light faded, one final brown bear arrived just before 6 pm to close the trip.

As our time in Finland came to an end, we reflected on how special it had been to spend these days immersed in such a remote stretch of boreal wilderness. We had been surrounded by some of Finland's most charismatic species, offering countless photographic opportunities. It had been an exceptional few days of photography and a memorable experience in eastern Finland.

Thursday 9 October 2025

Day 6:

The group departed in the morning from Kuikka Lodge for a transfer to Kuopio Airport.

Sign up to our e-news

Sign up to our e-news to find out more about our tours, events, late availability, offers and tour reports at <https://www.wildlifeworldwide.com/subscribe>



Find out more about our [Boreal Predators Photography in Autumn](#) trip or [contact us](#)

01962 302086 sales@wildlifeworldwide.com www.wildlifeworldwide.com