

Tour Report Polecats, Martens, Badgers & Bird Photography 11 – 13 April 2025

European badger



Beech marten



European polecat



Pine marten



Compiled by Ben Sutcliffe

Friday 11 April 2025

Day 1:

Edotopia Nature Reserve, Netherlands

Weather was warm with blue skies and light clouds. Highs of 18°C

I met the group at arrivals after arriving on an earlier flight to collect our hire car for the next few days.

We then drove 1 hour 40 minutes to our hotel, Buitengoed Fredeshiem, a beautiful quintessential Dutch-looking accommodation in a very picturesque woodland setting. After settling into our rooms which were simple and functional, but very comfortable, we headed to the restaurant for dinner. The food was excellent and appreciated all around but as the sun was setting, we rushed to our rooms and headed 15 minutes down the road to the hide.

Here, we were greeted by the owners and soon settled into the hide which will become very familiar to us in the coming days.

Not soon after dark we had our first mustelid. A badger emerged before the food had even been put out. A sign of things to come perhaps...?



The rest of the night was filled with brilliant sightings of all four mustelids. Both pine and beech marten made swift appearances, as did the elusive polecat, whilst the badger and a friendly hedgehog allowed for more relaxed photography.

To have all four so quickly in one evening was very unexpected and extremely satisfying.

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Other highlights included a couple of wood mice, a rather scruffy-looking hedgehog, an albino rat and a common frog in the reflection pool. A great start to the weekend.

We headed back to the hotel at midnight to get some rest and prepare for our full day in the hide tomorrow.



Saturday 12 April 2025

Day 2:

Edotopia Nature Reserve, Netherlands

Weather was sunny with blue sky, and no clouds. Highs of 23°C.

Breakfast was served at 8 am at the hotel which meant we got to the hide just after 9 am, in time for the light to start hitting the reflection pool. Perfect timing.

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We were greeted by lots of birds, from starlings to great tits as soon as we got to the hide. Shortly after I put the food out, we had a myriad of species from hawfinch, chaffinch, male and female great spotted woodpecker, jay, yellowhammer, dunnock, robin and blue tit.

Making use of the brilliant dappled light in the forest, I advised the group to under-expose their images allowing for some creative low-key imagery to be achieved, where the shadows are enhanced and the light on the bird is accentuated. This is one of my favourite techniques to use in these conditions as it adds so much drama to the image without the need for overly complicated post-processing.

What a start to the day!

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We stopped for lunch around 12:30 and headed into the local town of Vledder to warm up in the sun and fuel up on some great coffee and food.

We headed back to the hide around 2 pm to fill up our memory cards for a couple more hours. We were treated to yet more brilliant sightings of the birds with the male yellowhammer being a particular highlight.

We then headed back to the hotel to catch up on rest and back up our images. At 6 pm we had dinner at the hotel's restaurant and made our way back to the hide at 8 pm for our final night hide session.

Once again, we didn't have to wait long for our first visitor to arrive. Before the food had even been put out, a polecat paid us a visit. This place was incredible!

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Soon after the food was put out a badger was the first to arrive, staying for a very long time and she didn't even stir when she was joined by a beech marten who ran in, took some food and promptly ran back out again.



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Our patience was rewarded when both beech marten and polecat arrived within a few minutes of each other and stayed long enough for us to grab a couple of images before they rushed off with their prize.

The lovely hedgehog from last night also made an appearance, parading around the reflection pool and nibbling at the food as she went. Another great evening in the hide.

After a lull in activity, we left again around midnight to get some rest before our final day.

Sunday 13 April 2025

Day 3:

Edotopia Nature Reserve, Netherlands

Weather cloudy and drizzly in the morning before clearing up later in the day. Highs of 16°C

We woke up to quite a cloudy and rainy morning. This made us think that perhaps we wouldn't have many photographic opportunities. We had a slow breakfast and headed out just after 9 am for our final hide session of the trip.

Our earlier fears needn't have been felt, as we were welcomed by chaffinch, yellowhammer, starling, hawfinch and a great spotted woodpecker. A bank vole was also a surprise visitor, scampering in to nab a peanut before speeding off into the undergrowth to stash his findings. We spotted him doing this a few times, which allowed us to hold out on a spot where we knew he would go for the peanuts and press the shutter as he lifted his head above the log.



As the light improved, and the drizzle stopped, more birds started to come in. Due to the overcast conditions, the feather details we were able to get were brilliant and made the reflections on the pool a little better. Yellowhammer, jay, hawfinch, male and female bullfinch and a great spotted woodpecker were highlights

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for most of the morning. Magpie was also seen and stayed around long enough for everyone to get some nice images, an often overlooked bird in my opinion.

A particular highlight for me was seeing both a male and female pied flycatcher. This was not a species I was expecting to see on this trip but a very welcome surprise.



At 3 pm we said goodbye to our little hide and started our journey back, making it to the airport just after 5 pm. We managed to grab some well-deserved food, before boarding our flight back to Heathrow in which we discussed the brilliant sightings and images we had captured along the way.

What a great trip with a fantastic group. Here's to many more in the future!

Images by Ben Sutcliffe

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Checklist for Polecats, Martens, Badgers & Bird Photography



	Common Name	Scientific Name	Day 1	Day 2	Day 3
	MAMMALS				
1	European badger	<i>Meles meles</i>	✓	✓	
2	Pine marten	<i>Martes martes</i>	✓	✓	
3	Beech marten	<i>Martes foina</i>	✓	✓	
4	European polecat	<i>Mustela putorius</i>	✓	✓	
5	Wood mouse	<i>Apodemus sylvaticus</i>	✓	✓	
6	Bank vole	<i>Myodes glareolus</i>			✓
7	European brown rat	<i>Rattus norvegicus,</i>	✓	✓	✓
8	European hedgehog	<i>Erinaceus europaeus</i>	✓	✓	
	BIRDS				
1	European starling	<i>Sturnus vulgaris</i>		✓	✓
2	European robin	<i>Erithacus rubecula</i>		✓	✓
3	Great tit	<i>Parus major</i>		✓	✓
4	Blue tit	<i>Cyanistes caeruleus</i>		✓	✓
5	Chaffinch	<i>Fringilla coelebs</i>		✓	✓
6	Greenfinch	<i>Chloris chloris</i>		✓	
7	Hawfinch	<i>Coccothraustes coccothraustes</i>		✓	✓
8	Bullfinch	<i>Pyrrhula pyrrhula</i>		✓	✓
9	Great spotted woodpecker	<i>Dendrocopos major</i>		✓	✓
10	Pied flycatcher	<i>Ficedula hypoleuca</i>			✓
11	Eurasian jay	<i>Garrulus glandarius</i>		✓	✓
12	Song thrush	<i>Turdus philomelos</i>		✓	✓
13	Eurasian blackcap	<i>Sylvia atricapilla</i>		✓	✓
14	Chiffchaff	<i>Phylloscopus collybita</i>		✓	✓
15	Common magpie	<i>Pica pica</i>			✓
16	Yellowhammer	<i>Emberiza citrinella</i>		✓	✓

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