

Tour Report

Poland – Primeval Forests & Marshes

6 – 13 May 2019

Bee-eater



Corncrake



Lesser-spotted eagle



Pygmy owl



Compiled by Andrzej Petryna

Tour Leader: Andrzej Petryna with 8 participants

Our trip covered an area in the north-east part of Poland called Podlasie region, which has one of the last European remnants of natural forest – the Białowieża Forest, and one of the largest European wetland areas – the Biebrza Marshes. This year's dry and early spring shortened the migration period at the Biebrza Marshes, because the flooded areas convenient for waders dried out much earlier than usual. This weather also brought some changes to the Białowieża Forest – because of drying meadows around the villages adjacent to the forest, the European bison stayed in more attractive feeding places deep in the woods.

Day 1: Arrive in Białowieża; the Białowieża Forest

Monday 6 May 2019

Weather: clouds 50/50; 12°C; rain in the afternoon

After collecting all participants, we headed north-east towards the Białowieża Forest, spotting some urban birds (such as jackdaw, hooded crow and blackbird) as we travelled. After a short lunch break en route, we left the main express road and drove through the pleasant countryside, past small villages, numerous white stork nests along the road and a mosaic of crop fields and managed forests. Apart from white storks, some common buzzard, grey partridge, starling and numerous corvids were spotted from the bus, while in one of the villages we stopped for a while to observe ortolan bunting. After reaching Białowieża village and getting comfortable in our rooms, we still had enough time for a short walk around the impressive 19th century park surrounding our hotel. After dinner it started raining, so we stayed in the hotel discussing our plans for the coming days in the Białowieża Forest.

Day 2: The Białowieża Forest

Tuesday 7 May 2019

Weather: cloudy; 10-15°C

We started at dawn in order to check the favourite bison places around the Białowieża Forest. To start with, we found fresh footprints and droppings of bison and elk, but none were to be seen. Instead we spotted a few roe deer and had very good views of a singing male red-breasted flycatcher. After breakfast we moved to the northern part of the forest, where we saw three-toed and grey-headed woodpecker, barred warbler and crested tit. During sunny moments we watched some interesting butterfly activity – including green hairstreak, small copper, European map and comma. After an early dinner we drove to the Narew River valley to visit a great snipe lek. During an atmospheric evening at a wet meadow with grasshopper warbler, common snipe and corncrake singing and calling in the background, we spotted about three great snipe males displaying at the lek. On the way back we noticed few woodcocks flying along the forest track.

Day 3: The Białowieża Forest

Wednesday 8 May 2019

Weather: full sunshine; 20°C

After 'dawn patrol', followed by a hearty breakfast, we visited the core area of Białowieża National Park – the Strict Reserve, established in 1921. Due to the high content of deadwood in all of the Strict Reserve's habitats, this area is the most valuable part of Białowieża Forest and has a tremendous level of biodiversity. During a three-hour walk with the local Białowieża Forest guide we observed several interesting species of birds, such as black woodpecker, white-backed and middle spotted woodpecker, collared flycatcher and hawfinch, while on the way out of the reserve we spotted a lesser spotted eagle soaring over the meadow. After lunch we walked along Narewka River valley rewarded with nice sightings of kingfisher, Savi's warbler and watervole. At the meadows near the river we also met Polish horses, the descendants of extinct wild tarpan, nowadays used as 'living lawnmowers' in nature reserves. In the evening we again set off to the

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forest, this time aiming for a pygmy owl, which we saw successfully after a short wait near its breeding territory.

Day 4: The Białowieża Forest

Thursday 9 May 2019

Weather: sunny; 20°C

An early morning walk in the forest brought more fresh footprints of bison and a small herd of red deer. After breakfast we picked another forest trail and visited a nesting territory of white-backed woodpecker, and enjoyed stunning views of adult white-backs feeding young. Black woodpecker, lesser-spotted woodpecker, green sandpiper and redshank were also seen around, as well as some speckled wood butterflies. After lunch part of the group visited the park's Natural Museum, while the rest of participants spent their time on a leisurely walk near Narewka River, visiting afterwards the 19th century train station with a small collection of the steam engines at the outskirts of the Białowieża village. At the meadows near the station, marsh and Montagu's harrier were spotted. In the evening we all went for a last walk in Białowieża Forest, where several woodcocks were our last wildlife highlight in the Primeval woodland.

Day 5: Transfer to the Biebrza Marshes

Friday 10 May 2019

Weather: sky overcast with low cumulus clouds; 20°C; strong wind in the afternoon

After an optional early morning walk in the Palace Park and breakfast back at the hotel, we transferred north-east towards the Biebrza Marshes with two planned stops: Siemianówka reservoir in the north part of Białowieża Forest, and Dojlidy fishponds at the edge of Białystok, the capital city of Podlasie region. While Siemianówka reservoir was a very good site for birds of prey and marsh terns (two greater spotted eagles, lesser spotted eagle, white-tailed eagle, marsh and Montagu's harrier, white-winged terns, whiskered and black terns), at the next stop at Dojlidy fishponds we added to our list a red-necked grebe, great reed warbler, black stork and penduline tit on its distinctive nest. In such windy weather only few blue emperor and common winter damselfly were spotted. We reached our hotel, an old manor house situated at the edge of the marshes, early in the afternoon. After some leisure time and dinner, we eventually drove towards one of main rivers in the area, where we took a boat trip at dusk to look for beavers. During the hour-long cruise, we saw several beavers feeding and swimming near the banks of the river, as well as one American mink at the water's edge. It was a long, intense day and everyone looked forward to the well deserved rest.

Day 6: The Biebrza Marshes

Saturday 11 May 2019

Weather: sunny; 7°C in the early morning; 23°C in the afternoon

After a pre-breakfast walk and a hearty breakfast at the hotel, we drove to the main part of the marshes – a large open area of fens in the southern part – we saw citrine wagtail and Montagu's harrier, and heard an aquatic warbler. We also spotted two elks in the distance. We then continued our trip to the middle part of the marshes. In small marshy area near the old Biebrza riverbed we managed to get a short glimpse of little crane, and much better views of bluethroat and penduline tit. On the way back, with cranes and hoopoes in the field, we stopped at the Biebrza river bank, a very good site for waders – wood sandpiper, spotted redshank, black-tailed godwit jack snipe and ruff were spotted there, as well as marsh, common and little terns. Again we finished our day late in the evening.

Day 7: The Biebrza Marshes

Sunday 12 May 2019

Weather: sunny; about 20°C

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After an early morning walk near our hotel we drove back to the open marshes. This time we had aquatic warbler in view, along with citrine wagtail and Montagu's harrier. We were luckier with elk this time, as we saw two of them much closer to us than the previous time. We then stopped in the area of raised bog, to see original plants connected with this habitat such as Labrador tea, bog billberry, sandew and sphagnum moss. We also visited an alder bog forest, where black and lesser spotted woodpeckers were seen. As it was our last full day at the marshes, we decided to spend the afternoon in the same place at the river bank that we visited yesterday – the only site wet enough for seeing waders and marsh terns. After dinner at our hotel, we had an optional evening walk near our accommodation.

Day 8: Transfer to Warsaw airport

Monday 13 May 2019

Weather: sunny; 25°C

Because of the late departure from WAW airport, we didn't have to rush back to Warsaw, and so we decided to spend few more hours in the marshes. After an early morning walk and breakfast we left the hotel and stopped by the Narew River for a relaxing walk. An adult male common rosefinch was spotted, a first observation for the year. We also stopped at a sandpit where there was a breeding colony of bee-eaters, and about 10 birds were seen (also a first for the year). It was the last such interesting highlight of our tour. After a three-hour transfer our trip has finished at Warsaw Airport.

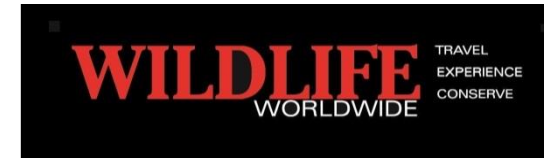
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Checklist



	Common Name	Scientific Name	Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Day 4	Day 5	Day 6	Day 7	Day 8
	BIRDS	AVES								
1	Great Crested Grebe	<i>Podiceps cristatus</i>					✓			
2	Red-necked Grebe	<i>Podiceps grisegena</i>					✓			
3	Great Cormorant	<i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>					✓			
4	Great / Eurasian Bittern	<i>Botaurus stellaris</i>					H			
5	Great White Egret	<i>Egretta alba</i>			✓		✓	✓		
6	Grey Heron	<i>Ardea cinerea</i>					✓	✓	✓	✓
7	White Stork	<i>Ciconia ciconia</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
8	Black Stork	<i>Ciconia nigra</i>					✓			
9	Mute Swan	<i>Cygnus olor</i>					✓	✓	✓	✓
10	Whooper Swan	<i>Cygnus cygnus</i>				✓	✓			
11	Greylag Goose	<i>Anser anser</i>				✓	✓		✓	
12	Mallard	<i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
13	Gadwall	<i>Anas strepera</i>					✓			

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14	Garganey	<i>Anas querquedula</i>					✓			
15	Common Pochard	<i>Aythya ferina</i>					✓			
16	Tufted Duck	<i>Aythya fuligula</i>					✓			
17	Common goldeneye	<i>Bucephala clangula</i>					✓			
18	White-tailed eagle	<i>Haliaeetus albicilla</i>					✓		✓	
19	Lesser spotted eagle	<i>Aquila pomarina</i>					✓			
20	Greater spotted eagle	<i>Aquila clanga</i>			✓		✓			
21	Marsh-harrier	<i>Circus aeruginosus</i>				✓	✓	✓	✓	
22	Montagu's harrier	<i>Circus pygargus</i>				✓	✓	✓	✓	
23	Common buzzard	<i>Buteo buteo</i>	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
24	Sparrowhawk	<i>Accipiter nisus</i>							✓	
25	Common / Eurasian kestrel	<i>Falco tinnunculus</i>					✓			
26	Grey partridge	<i>Perdix perdix</i>	✓						✓	✓
27	Common quail	<i>Coturnix coturnix</i>			H					
28	Corncrake	<i>Crex crex</i>		H	✓			H	H	
29	Little crane	<i>Porzana parva</i>						✓		
30	Common moorhen	<i>Gallinula chloropus</i>								✓
31	Common / Eurasian coot	<i>Fulica atra</i>				✓	✓	✓	✓	

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32	Common crane	<i>Grus grus</i>				✓	✓	✓	✓	
33	Little ringed plover	<i>Charadrius dubius</i>							✓	
34	Northern lapwing	<i>Vanellus vanellus</i>					✓	✓	✓	
35	Dunlin	<i>Calidris alpina</i>					✓		✓	
36	Temminck's stint	<i>Calidris temminckii</i>							✓	
37	Wood sandpiper	<i>Tringa glareola</i>					✓		✓	
38	Green sandpiper	<i>Tringa ochropus</i>				✓				
39	Common sandpiper	<i>Actitis hypoleucos</i>			✓					
40	Common redshank	<i>Tringa totanus</i>				✓	✓			✓
41	Spotted redshank	<i>Tringa erythropus</i>					✓			
42	Common greenshank	<i>Tringa nebularia</i>								✓
43	Black-tailed godwit	<i>Limosa limosa</i>					✓			✓
44	Eurasian woodcock	<i>Scolopax rusticola</i>		✓						
45	Great snipe	<i>Gallinago media</i>		✓						
46	Common snipe	<i>Gallinago gallinago</i>		✓			✓		✓	
47	Jack snipe	<i>Lymnocyptes minimus</i>					✓			
48	Ruff	<i>Philomachus pugnax</i>					✓		✓	
49	Black-headed gull	<i>Larus ridibundus</i>	✓				✓	✓	✓	✓

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50	European herring gull	<i>Larus argentatus</i>	✓							
51	Little tern	<i>Sternula albifrons</i>						✓		
52	Common tern	<i>Sterna hirundo</i>						✓	✓	
53	Black tern	<i>Chlidonias niger</i>				✓	✓	✓	✓	
54	White-winged tern	<i>Chlidonias leucopterus</i>				✓	✓	✓	✓	
55	Whiskered tern	<i>Chlidonias hybrida</i>				✓	✓	✓	✓	
56	Feral pigeon	<i>Columba livia feral</i>	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
57	Wood pigeon	<i>Columba palumbus</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		
58	Collared dove	<i>Streptopelia decaocto</i>				✓	✓	✓	✓	
59	Cuckoo	<i>Cuculus canorus</i>		✓	✓		H	H	H	
60	Tawny owl	<i>Strix aluco</i>			H					
61	Pygmy-owl	<i>Glaucidium passerinum</i>			✓					
62	Swift	<i>Apus apus</i>					✓	✓	✓	✓
63	Hoopoe	<i>Upupa epops</i>						✓	✓	
64	Kingfisher	<i>Alcedo atthis</i>			✓	✓				
65	Bee-eater	<i>Merops apiaster</i>								✓
66	Black woodpecker	<i>Dryocopus martius</i>			✓	✓			✓	✓
67	Grey-headed woodpecker	<i>Picus canus</i>		✓	✓					

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68	Great spotted woodpecker	<i>Dendrocopos major</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			
69	Middle spotted woodpecker	<i>Dendrocopos medius</i>			✓					
70	White-backed woodpecker	<i>Dendrocopos leucotos</i>			✓	✓				
71	Three-toed woodpecker	<i>Picoides tridactylus</i>		✓						
72	Lesser spotted woodpecker	<i>Dendrocopos minor</i>				✓			✓	
73	Eurasian wryneck	<i>Jynx torquilla</i>		✓	✓					
74	Skylark	<i>Alauda arvensis</i>	✓		H			✓	✓	✓
75	Woodlark	<i>Lullula arborea</i>						✓		
76	Sand martin / Bank swallow	<i>Riparia riparia</i>							✓	✓
77	Barn swallow	<i>Hirundo rustica</i>		✓			✓	✓	✓	✓
78	Northern house-martin	<i>Delichon urbicum</i>	✓	✓			✓	✓	✓	✓
79	Meadow pipit	<i>Anthus pratensis</i>						✓	✓	
80	White wagtail	<i>Motacilla alba</i>		✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓
81	Yellow wagtail	<i>Motacilla flava</i>						✓		
82	Citrine wagtail	<i>Motacilla citreola</i>						✓	✓	
83	Wren	<i>Troglodytes troglodytes</i>			H					
84	European robin	<i>Erithacus rubecula</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓			
85	Thrush nightingale	<i>Luscinia luscinia</i>				H	H	H	H	H

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86	Bluethroat	<i>Luscinia svecica</i>						✓		
87	Common redstart	<i>Phoenicurus phoenicurus</i>					✓	✓		H
88	Black redstart	<i>Phoenicurus ochruros</i>	✓	✓	✓				✓	✓
89	Northern wheatear	<i>Oenanthe oenanthe</i>							✓	
90	Whinchat	<i>Saxicola rubetra</i>		✓	✓		✓		✓	
91	Song thrush	<i>Turdus philomelos</i>			✓		✓	✓		
92	Fieldfare	<i>Turdus pilaris</i>			✓			✓	✓	✓
93	Blackbird	<i>Turdus merula</i>	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓
94	Barred warbler	<i>Sylvia nisoria</i>		✓						
95	Blackcap	<i>Sylvia atricapilla</i>		✓	✓		✓	✓		
96	Lesser whitethroat	<i>Sylvia curruca</i>						✓		✓
97	Common whitethroat	<i>Sylvia communis</i>						✓	✓	✓
98	Sedge warbler	<i>Acrocephalus schoenobaenus</i>						✓	✓	
99	Aquatic warbler	<i>Acrocephalus paludicola</i>						H	✓	
100	Grasshopper-warbler	<i>Locustella naevia</i>		H						
101	Savi's warbler	<i>Locustella luscinioides</i>			H	✓		✓		
102	Reed-warbler	<i>Acrocephalus scirpaceus</i>					✓			
103	Marsh warbler	<i>Acrocephalus palustris</i>					✓			

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104	Great reed-warbler	<i>Acrocephalus arundinaceus</i>					✓	✓	H	H
105	Icterine warbler	<i>Hippolais icterina</i>				✓			H	
106	Willow warbler	<i>Phylloscopus trochilus</i>		✓			✓	✓	✓	
107	Wood warbler	<i>Phylloscopus sibilatrix</i>		✓	✓				✓	
108	Chiffchaff	<i>Phylloscopus collybita</i>		H			✓	✓	✓	✓
109	Goldcrest	<i>Regulus regulus</i>					✓			
110	Spotted flycatcher	<i>Muscicapa striata</i>		✓		✓	✓			
111	Red-breasted flycatcher	<i>Ficedula parva</i>		✓						
112	Collared flycatcher	<i>Ficedula albicollis</i>			✓					
113	Great tit	<i>Parus major</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
114	Coal tit	<i>Parus ater</i>		H						
115	Blue tit	<i>Cyanistes caeruleus</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	
116	Crested tit	<i>Lophophanes cristatus</i>		✓						
117	Willow tit	<i>Poecile montanus</i>				✓				
118	Marsh tit	<i>Poecile palustris</i>					✓			
119	Long-tailed tit	<i>Aegithalos caudatus</i>					✓		✓	
120	Bearded tit / Reedling	<i>Panurus biarmicus</i>					H			
121	Penduline tit	<i>Remiz pendulinus</i>				✓	✓			

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122	Nuthatch	<i>Sitta europaea</i>		✓	✓	✓				
123	Treecreeper	<i>Certhia familiaris</i>				✓				
124	Red-backed shrike	<i>Lanius collurio</i>		✓						
125	Magpie	<i>Pica pica</i>	✓	✓			✓	✓	✓	
126	Jay	<i>Garrulus glandarius</i>						✓	✓	
127	Jackdaw	<i>Corvus monedula</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
128	Rook	<i>Corvus frugilegus</i>	✓						✓	
129	Hooded crow	<i>Corvus cornix</i>	✓					✓	✓	✓
130	Raven	<i>Corvus corax</i>	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	
131	Starling	<i>Sturnus vulgaris</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
132	Eurasian golden-oriole	<i>Oriolus oriolus</i>		H				✓		✓
133	House sparrow	<i>Passer domesticus</i>	✓				✓	✓		✓
134	Tree-sparrow	<i>Passer montanus</i>					✓	✓		✓
135	Chaffinch	<i>Fringilla coelebs</i>	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓		✓
136	Linnet	<i>Carduelis cannabina</i>						✓		✓
137	Goldfinch	<i>Carduelis carduelis</i>					✓		✓	
138	Greenfinch	<i>Carduelis chloris</i>					✓	H	✓	
139	Siskin	<i>Carduelis spinus</i>							✓	

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140	Serin	<i>Serinus serinus</i>			✓					✓
141	Bullfinch	<i>Pyrrhula pyrrhula</i>					✓			
142	Hawfinch	<i>Coccothraustes coccothraustes</i>			✓					
143	Common crossbill	<i>Loxia curvirostra</i>				H				
144	Common/Scarlet rosefinch	<i>Carpodacus erythrinus</i>								✓
145	Reed bunting	<i>Emberiza schoeniclus</i>			H		✓	✓		✓
146	Ortolan bunting	<i>Emberiza hortulana</i>	H							
147	Yellowhammer	<i>Emberiza citrinella</i>	✓					✓	✓	✓
148	Corn bunting	<i>Emberiza calandra</i>	✓		✓			✓		
	Butterflies									
1	Small skipper	<i>Thymelicus sylvestris</i>								✓
2	Green hairstreak	<i>Callophrys rubi</i>		✓						
3	Small blue	<i>Cupido minimus</i>			✓					
4	Small copper	<i>Lycaena phlaeas</i>		✓						✓
5	Peacock	<i>Aglais io</i>		✓	✓			✓		
6	Small tortoiseshell	<i>Aglais urticae</i>			✓		✓			
7	European map	<i>Araschnia levana</i>		✓	✓					✓
8	Speckled wood	<i>Pararge aegeria</i>				✓				
9	Comma	<i>Polygonia c-album</i>		✓						

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10	Red admiral	<i>Vanessa atalanta</i>					✓			
11	Painted lady	<i>Vanessa cardui</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
12	Orange tip	<i>Anthocharis cardamines</i>		✓	✓				✓	
13	Brimstone	<i>Gonepteryx rhamni</i>			✓			✓	✓	
14	Large white	<i>Pieris brassicae</i>				✓				
15	Green-veined white	<i>Pieris napi</i>		✓	✓			✓		
16	Small white	<i>Pieris rapae</i>				✓				
Moths										
1	Clouded border	<i>Lomaspilis marginata</i>							✓	
2	Argent and sable	<i>Rheumaptera hastata</i>							✓	
Dragonflies										
1	Splendid demoiselle	<i>Calopteryx splendens</i>			✓	✓				
2	Beautiful demoiselle	<i>Calopteryx virgo</i>			✓	✓				
3	Common winter damselfly	<i>Sympecma fusca</i>					✓			
4	Blue featherleg	<i>Platycnemis pennipes</i>					✓			
5	Blue emperor	<i>Anax imperator</i>					✓			
6	Brilliant emerald	<i>Somatochlora metallica</i>					✓			
MAMMALS		MAMMALIA								
1	European bison	<i>Bison Bonasus</i>		✓	✓	✓				

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2	Red deer	<i>Cervus elaphus</i>		✓		✓		✓		
3	Roe deer	<i>Capreolus capreolus</i>		✓					✓	
4	Elk	<i>Alces alces</i>		✓				✓	✓	
5	Red fox	<i>Vulpes vulpes</i>			✓				✓	
6	American mink	<i>Mustela vison</i>					✓			
7	European beaver	<i>Castor fiber</i>					✓			
8	Red squirrel	<i>Sciurus vulgaris</i>			✓					
9	European hare	<i>Lepus europaeus</i>		✓						
10	Water vole	<i>Arvicola terrestris</i>			✓			✓	✓	✓

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