



BIRDING TOUR SWEDEN: SPRING “LONG WEEKEND” BIRDING ADVENTURE

6 - 9/10 May 2020



Great Grey Owl is one of the key species we search for on this trip

Sweden’s Taiga forests and wetlands around Svartådalén make for fantastic birding in the springtime. The Black River Valley of Västmanland hosts waves of migrating birds that arrive from late April, the number of species increase around the wetlands and in late May, and even the specialty species become common. Sweden in spring truly boasts an abundance of birdlife and photographic opportunities. Our focus for this trip will be on the magnificent owls, woodpeckers, and grouse species easily seen at this time of year.

On our Birding Tour Sweden, a four-day Swedish birding weekend, we will visit fantastic birding locations in the east of the country in avian-rich Svartådalén and the Black River Valley.

We first visit the wetlands around Ängsö Castle, looking for **Slavonian Grebe**, and then the Björnön (Bear Island) area in search of **Icterine Warbler** and **Ortolan Bunting**. Later we will go on a **Great Grey Owl** evening trip.

We will visit Lake Ösjön and the Black River Valley, where will look out for **Black-throated Loon** and perhaps even encounter **Spotted Nutcracker** or **Hazel Grouse**. We will continue along the valley, and in its wetlands we will look out for **Thrush Nightingale** and **Common Rosefinch** as well as birds of prey, including **Eurasian Hobby** and **European Honey Buzzard**.

This tour will also allow us to get close to some of Scandinavia’s owl species when our local guide will take us on a ringing excursion, where we will be able to get involved in the ringing of chicks of **Ural Owl** and **Boreal** (Tengmalm’s) **Owl**, which breed in nest boxes in the area. We will have fantastic photo opportunities and will be contributing to owl conservation. Evening excursions will also be embarked on to see **Eurasian Pygmy Owl** and **Eurasian Eagle-Owl**.

In the woodlands around Svartådalén there will be opportunities to observe **Eurasian Wryneck** and many **Woodpeckers**, including **Eurasian Three-toed**, **Black**, and **Grey-headed**. Other smaller forest specialists to look out for include **Crested** and **Willow Tits**. In the meadows and reedbeds that intersect the beautiful wetlands you will watch out for species like **Grasshopper Warbler**, **Marsh Warbler**, **Spotted Crake**, **Corn Crake**, and **Eurasian Bittern**. In the waterways and wetlands **Black Tern**, **Common Greenshank**, **Little Tern**, **Spotted Redshank**, and **Ruff** will add to an already long bird list.

We will also visit the leks of the territorial **Black Grouse** and possibly see **Western Capercaillie** at sites in the forest. Other species we will watch out for at this time of year are the graceful **Common Crane**, **Wood Sandpiper**, and **Common Cuckoo**, as well as **Western Osprey** hunting over the waterways.

You may also wish to extend your stay by an additional day for a visit to coastal lagoons close to the Baltic Sea for **Caspian Tern**, **Little Gull**, and perhaps the impressive **White-tailed Eagle** and **Montagu’s Harrier** in the scenic Eagle Rock area. Hjälstaviken Nature Reserve in the Uppland region may afford you more good views of large wader flocks and perhaps a **Red-breasted Flycatcher** in the nearby forest.

For however long you decide to visit, one thing is for sure: Sweden will leave a lasting impression on you with its scenic beauty and serenity, and for the fantastic birding encounters you will enjoy.

Itinerary (4 or 5 days/3 or 4 nights)

Day 1. Västerås, Ängsö Castle, and Björnön

On arrival into Västerås Airport, Stockholm, we are met by our local bird expert and taken for a meet-and-greet refreshment stop over **Slavonian Grebe** in a small wetland area near Ängsö Castle. We will also visit adjacent Björnön (Bear Island) in search of **Icterine Warbler**. After the break we set off for an extra detour, especially to look for **Ortolan Bunting**. Before sunset we put ourselves in position to await the **Great Grey Owls** evening hunt. This will be an unforgettable experience that often provides breathtaking views of these stunning and obliging birds. Photographers will relish this experience to capture impressive pictorial memories. As **Eurasian Woodcock** flies to roost and the forest choir of thrushes and **European Robin** begins to silence, vocalizing **Eurasian Pygmy Owls** appear and announce their territory. After remaining to hear the sounds of the night, we head for our overnight stay and dinner.

Overnight: Fläckebo B&B.

Day 2. Lake Ösjön, Black River Valley

After breakfast we head to Lake Ösjön to check out **Black-throated Loon** and possible chance encounters with **Spotted Nutcracker** and **Hazel Grouse**. At this time of year butterflies like **Camberwell Beauty**, **Holly Blue**, and **Green Hairstreak** are also highly active. We will have a short stop along the way to look and listen out for newly-arrived **Thrush Nightingale**. Continuing along the Black River Valley and its rich wetlands we will enjoy the scenery while looking for the locally breeding **White-tailed Eagle**, **European Honey Buzzard**, **Eurasian Hobby**, **Black Tern**, **Western Yellow Wagtail**, and **Common Rosefinch**, as well as wildfowl and waders of several species, depending on the dates.

Our local guide will take the group on a **Ural Owl** ringing excursion, where we will have close encounters with these owls. In April incubating females are ringed, in May it's time to ring the chicks before they leave the nests. This can be an interesting experience, as the parents can often appear, sometimes aggressively and close, but it will present us with a great opportunity for photos as well as making a detour into owl conservation. In the evening after dinner we will head out in search of **Eurasian Pygmy Owl** or **Eurasian Eagle-Owl** on an evening excursion.

Overnight: Fläckebo B&B

Day 3. Svartådalen

Today we will be up early to look for **Eurasian Wryneck** and the several species of **Woodpeckers** that inhabit this area, including **Three-toed**, **Grey-headed**, and **Black**. Our second conservation experience will be to get involved in the ringing process for **Boreal** (Tengmalm's) **Owl**, which breed in nest boxes that have been put out for them. This will be an excellent opportunity to obtain really close views and to photograph these charming little owls. We will also look for the impressive **Black-throated Loon**, **Western Capercaillie**, and **Northern Goshawk**, which also breed in the area, as well as for **Woodlark** and **Parrot Crossbills**. We will have an al fresco Swedish breakfast and will get back for lunch to the B&B

around noon. Here we can have a short walk around the grounds to see what other species are around.

There will be a relaxed evening excursion around the beautiful wetlands of Svartådalén with **Black Tern**, **Little Gull**, and species like the immaculate, summer-plumaged **Spotted Redshank**, **Ruff**, **Common Greenshank**, and more. **Eurasian Bittern**, **Corn Crake**, **Spotted Crake**, and **Grasshopper** and **Marsh Warblers** will all be among the highlights of today's list.

Overnight: Fläckebo B&B.

Day 4. Svartådalén and Grouse lek

This morning we will rise early to go into the forest in search of lekking **Black Grouse** on a large bog. These birds are very territorial at this time of year. Other species common to this area at this time of year include large numbers of graceful **Common Crane**, hunting **Western Osprey**, and waders like **Wood** and **Green Sandpipers**. In the afternoon we will venture out again, this time on the lookout for smaller avian species in the surrounding forest, including **Crested** and **Willow Tits** and **Common Cuckoo**, as well as woodpeckers that appear frequently. Transfer to Västerås Airport and end of services, or overnight at B&B.

Overnight: Fläckebo B&B.

Optional Extra Day 5. Baltic Sea (Coastal Lagoons), Hjälstaviken Nature Reserve

We will visit the coastal lagoons along the Baltic Sea (Uppland), with **Caspian Tern**, **Little Gull**, and several species of waders, as well as the impressive **White-tailed Eagle** and perhaps **Montagu's Harrier**. We will visit the scenic Eagle Rock area and search for **Red-breasted Flycatcher** in the surrounding forest. On the way back we stop at the birding hotspot Hjälstaviken Nature Reserve – a wetland lagoon with **Little Gull** and **Black Tern**. Transfer to Västerås Airport. End of services.

Please note that the itinerary above cannot be guaranteed as it is only a rough guide and can be changed (usually slightly) due to factors such as availability of accommodation, updated information on the state of accommodation, roads, or birding sites, the discretion of the guides and other factors.

Duration: 4/5 days
Limit: 4 - 8
Date: 6-9/10 May 2020
Start: Stockholm
End: Stockholm

Price: £1567 per person sharing based on 6-8 people (4 days)
 £1741 per person sharing based on 4-5 people (4 days)
 £462 additional day (5 days)

Single Supplement: £19 per person per night

Price includes:
 Breakfasts and dinners
 Accommodation

Guiding fees

All transport while on tour (including airport transfers)

Bottled water throughout the tour

Price excludes:

International flights

Airport taxes

Visa fees

Items of a personal nature, e.g. laundry, gifts

Drinks other than bottled water

Personal insurance

Gratuities

Difficulty: The walking effort is mostly easy forest walks, although there may be some steeper coastal paths, so sturdy walking shoes are required.