



**POLAND: SPRING BIRDING IN EUROPE'S ANCIENT
FORESTS AND MARSHES**

02–10 MAY 2027

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Aquatic Warbler is considered globally Vulnerable (*BirdLife International*), and eastern Poland is one of the best places in the world to see it

Overview

In this Poland: Birding Europe's Ancient Forests and Marshes tour, we will visit the best birding locations that Poland has to offer, which we actually rate as some of the best birdwatching in the whole of Europe. During this exciting small group tour, we will explore vast river floodplains with bird-rich marshes, stunning primeval ancient woodlands, and small-scale farmland, all dotted with quaint traditional villages that combine to give the feeling of stepping back in time several hundred years. We will spend time in and around these quiet, charming villages, where the wildlife will be right on our doorstep, adding to the fantastic experience we will have in Poland. We are sure you will love this tour as much as we do!

Poland is one of *the* best countries for birding in Europe, ranking as one of our favorite destinations, and for good reason! Following International Ornithological Congress (IOC) taxonomy (v15.1 in March 2025) the bird list of Poland stands at a whopping 485 species, with a good number of these being highly sought-after by world birders. Poland is the best country in the world for seeing the rare Aquatic Warbler and Great Snipe, along with the possibility of seeing most of Europe's woodpeckers. Throw in the chance to see many of Europe's most iconic mammals, some amazing raptors and owls, gorgeous flycatchers, some very special warblers, as well as some excellent migrants, this destination should be very high on the list of 'must see' places.



*We have a good chance of seeing **European Bison** at Białowieża forest, which supports the world's largest population of this impressive mammal (photo L. Mazurek).*

Our tour will start in Warsaw, in central Poland, before heading east towards the Belarus border. We will explore some of Europe's most remarkable marshland at Biebrza National Park, and then step into the ancient arboreal world of Białowieża Forest, a landscape rich in fascinating natural history and marked by poignant reminders of World War Two. Poland's landscape is a fascinating mosaic of habitats; within a small area we can move from forest, to marsh, across agricultural land, and reach river floodplains, each supporting a distinctive suite of species.



European Bee-eater is a beautiful species we hope to see on this spring birding tour.

After arriving in Warsaw we drive east and begin our tour in the world-famous Biebrza National Park. This extensive area of marshland around the Biebrza River supports nearly 180 breeding species of birds in an average year, offering some truly memorable encounters. Key highlights include **Great Snipe**, **Whiskered Tern**, **White winged Tern**, **Black Stork**, **Greater Spotted Eagle**, **Montagu's Harrier**, **Eurasian Nightjar**, **Eurasian Hoopoe**, **Aquatic Warbler**, and good chances for **Moose (Elk)** and **Eurasian Beaver**.

Spring here is a festival of birdlife, with every reedbed, bush, meadow, and riverbank alive with birdsong. We will target usually secretive warblers such as **Common Grasshopper Warbler**, **Savi's Warbler**, and **River Warbler**, all betraying their presence through their distinctive songs. Biebrza also hosts other striking songbirds, including **Eurasian Penduline Tit**, **Bluethroat**, **Thrush Nightingale**, **Citrine Wagtail**, and **Ortolan Bunting**. Aside from the extensive marshes patches of ancient forest provide excellent opportunities to see **White-backed Woodpecker** and **Black Woodpecker**, two of the many woodpecker species we can find on the tour.

After exploring the open spaces of the marshes, we will move to the ancient wild woodlands of Białowieża Forest National Park, one of the last remaining areas of the primeval forest that once stretched across much of Europe. While in Białowieża we will focus on finding nine of Poland's

woodpeckers, including **Grey-headed Woodpecker** and **Eurasian Three-toed Woodpecker**, along with several beautiful migratory flycatchers, such as the striking **Red-breasted Flycatcher** and **Collared Flycatcher**. Other key species of this magnificent forest include **Hazel Grouse**, **Eurasian Goshawk**, **Eurasian Pygmy Owl**, **Northern Nutcracker**, **Barred Warbler**, **Icterine Warbler**, **Common Firecrest**, and **Hawfinch**.



White-backed Woodpecker is an incredibly range-restricted species in Poland, with populations limited to the extreme south and east of the country.

We will also make special efforts to observe the forest's impressive mammals, including the iconic **European Bison**, **Moose (Elk)**, **Eurasian Beaver**, and **Eurasian Red Squirrel** and, with luck, even **Eurasian Lynx** or **Grey Wolf**. During our stay, we will take a short break from the forest landscapes to visit Siemianówka Reservoir, an excellent area for waterbirds such as **Garganey**, **Great Egret**, **Black Tern**, **Eurasian Bittern**, **Lesser Spotted Eagle**, **White-tailed Eagle**, and **Citrine Wagtail**.

This tour pairs perfectly with our Bulgaria and Romania: Birding The Balkans in Spring tour, which focuses on Europe's high-altitude special such as **Wallcreeper**, before moving on to some of the continent's finest wetlands, including the famous Danube Delta, home to **Dalmatian Pelican** and many more. Combining the two tours offers an opportunity to experience an extraordinary diversity of European birdlife.

Detailed Itinerary (9 days/8 nights)

Day 1. Arrival in Warsaw, transfer to Biebrza Marshes

After your morning arrival at Warsaw Chopin Airport, you will be met by your Birding Ecotours tour leader and expert Polish local bird guide. We will then transfer, in a comfortable minibus, to the town of Goniadz on the border of the Biebrza National Park. This journey will take around two and a half hours, as we drive east across Poland's vast central region. If you would like to arrive before the tour starts, we can recommend and arrange hotels for you in Warsaw. The city has a famous history and is an interesting place to explore, particularly if you have an interest in World War Two.

We plan on leaving Warsaw by mid-morning and arrive in Goniadz early in the afternoon, checking into our accommodation for the next three nights. As this is the first day of the tour you may be tired after your long journey, so we will have an optional afternoon birding session in the nearby marshes. Otherwise you can relax in the wonderful hotel garden, which backs onto the marshes, where you could see **Black Redstart**, **Common Cuckoo**, or **Eurasian Wryneck**. In the evening, we will enjoy a traditional Polish dinner at the hotel as a warm welcome, giving us a chance to discuss the trip and get to know each other ahead of what is sure to be a fantastic tour of the best birdwatching sites in Poland.

Overnight: Dwór Dobarz, or similar, Goniadz



*As we drive around the pretty rural villages of eastern Poland we see plenty of **White Storks** returning to their traditional nest sites. It is an impressive sight and considered lucky if your house is chosen, so the birds are welcomed. We may see some courtship or maybe even some nestlings during our visit, it's a thrilling sight to witness!*

Days 2–3. Birding Biebrza Marshes

We will spend two full days (plus the morning of Day 4) birding the spectacular Biebrza Marshes. We will explore a wide range of habitats and sites here and take in the best birds this huge area has to offer. We will make the most of our time here, exploring a range of habitats and sites across one of Europe's best wetlands. Despite the name, the area is not only about marshes; alongside the extensive wetlands with their boardwalks and viewing towers there are also forests, interesting farmland, and dry sandy heathlands to explore. Some of the key areas we will visit include the famous Goniadz, Długa Luka, and Brzostowo areas. After covering these, we will visit additional sites to look for any species we may have missed.

The most important birds for us in this area of Poland are **Aquatic Warbler** – Europe's rarest songbird, and **Great Snipe**, both highly localized on their European breeding grounds, with Poland among the best places in the world to see them. Our local guides will take us to leks for **Great Snipe** deep in the forested areas of the marshland, where we hope to see the snipe lekking! We will also search for the threatened **Aquatic Warbler**, using boardwalks in a vast marshland area.



Common Firecrest is common in woodlands in Białowieża Forest.

We will explore the area around the village of Goniadz itself, the central point of Biebrza Marshes and a remarkably bird-rich area. Several common species occur here and will be seen at multiple sites, including **White Stork** (they are found nesting in many of the small villages and are an amazing sight), **Black-headed Gull**, **Common Buzzard**, **Eurasian Skylark**, **Barn Swallow**, **Common Chiffchaff**, **Lesser Whitethroat**, **Eurasian Blackcap**, **Western Yellow Wagtail**, **European Goldfinch** and plenty more. The marshes are also home to **Moose (Elk)** and **Eurasian Beaver**, both of which we could encounter almost anywhere within the national park.

We will then move further afield within Biebrza National Park, heading south from Goniadz to explore the area known as Długa Luka. This is one of the park's highlights and is regarded as the best place to see **Aquatic Warbler**. The boardwalk trails should provide excellent views of this species though, like all warblers, they often require patience to get the best views. While here we will also look for **Western Marsh Harrier**, **Eurasian Golden Oriole**, **Eurasian Penduline Tit**, **Barred Warbler**, **Common Grasshopper Warbler**, **Sedge Warbler**, **Savi's Warbler**, **Bluethroat**, **Common Rosefinch**, and at night, **European Nightjar**.



*One good-looking raptor! A male **Montagu's Harrier** hunting over the marshland.*

Another excellent area that we will visit in the southern section of Biebrza Marshes is at Brzostowo. This is a fantastic site for breeding **Common Crane**, waterfowl, shorebirds (waders), and terns, with common species including **Black-necked Grebe**, **Common Crane**, **Ruff**, **Temminck's Stint**, **Little Gull**, **White-winged Tern**, **Whiskered Tern**, **Black Stork**, **White-tailed Eagle**, and **Ortolan Bunting**. There is also a chance of finding rare raptors such as **Lesser Spotted Eagle**, **Greater Spotted Eagle**, **Montagu's Harrier**, and **Eurasian Goshawk**.

This area is not all about the wetland habitats, and we will also explore birch forests within the national park for **Black Woodpecker**, **Grey-headed Woodpecker**, **White-backed Woodpecker**, and **Lesser Spotted Woodpecker**. Here, we may also find songbirds such as **Collared Flycatcher** or **Thrush Nightingale**, while in the grassland areas between the forest patches we have a good chance of finding **European Turtle Dove**, **Great Spotted Eagle**, **Montagu's Harrier**, **Eurasian Hoopoe**, **Great Grey Shrike**, **Red-backed Shrike**, **Whinchat**, **Northern Wheatear**, **Western Yellow Wagtail**, **Citrine Wagtail**, and **Tawny Pipit**. Each evening we will return to our comfortable hotel to enjoy fine Polish food and reflect on the day's highlights.

Overnight (two nights): Dwór Dobarz, or similar, Goniadz

Day 4. Biebrza Marshes to Białowieża via Dojlidy Fishponds

After birding the Biebrza Marshes for the final time we will head southeast for a very different kind of birding. Just a two-hour drive from the mosaic of open marshes, scattered woodland, and rivers of Biebrza lies the ancient primeval Białowieża Forest. We will spend the next few days here in search of some truly special birds and will remain in the forest for the remainder of the tour.

On our way we will stop at the Dojlidy Fishponds on the outskirts of Białystok city, which are excellent for excellent for terns, gulls, waterfowl, and shorebirds (waders). This is a good way to break up our journey, and the site itself is home to some excellent birds including **Red-necked Grebe**, **Black-necked Grebe**, **Little Crake**, **Caspian Gull**, **Eurasian Bittern**, **Eurasian Penduline Tit**, **Bearded Reedling** (Bearded Tit), **Savi's Warbler**, and **Great Reed Warbler**. After finishing at the fishponds we continue to Białowieża, a small village nestled in the heart of the ancient forest that stretches across the Belarus border. Wildlife and birds can sometimes be found right up to our accommodation. This is a highly productive birding area and one of the top forest sites in Europe.



*The vibrant colors of the stunning **Bluethroat** are really impressive.*

Once settled into our accommodation, where we will be based for the next four nights, we will explore the picturesque Białowieża Palace Park in the heart of the village. This beautiful expansive parkland, with ponds, wildflower meadows, and scattered tall trees, is excellent for birds. Common species here include **Eurasian Wryneck**, **Middle Spotted Woodpecker**, **Lesser Spotted Woodpecker**, **Grey-headed Woodpecker**, **Eurasian Golden Oriole**, **Greenish Warbler**, **Great Reed Warbler**, **Marsh Warbler**, **Icterine Warbler**, **European Robin**, **Thrush Nightingale**,

Collared Flycatcher, Common Redstart, Black Redstart, Dunnock, Common Rosefinch, European Serin, and we should see gorgeous **Eurasian Red Squirrels** too.

Overnight: Bojarski Gosciniec, or similar, Narewka

Days 5–8. Birding Białowieża Forest

For the remainder of the tour we will explore the ancient forests of Białowieża. We will have four full days in this remarkable UNESCO Biosphere Reserve, one of the largest and most accessible areas of intact primeval forest in Europe. It holds the largest population of **European Bison**, Europe's largest land mammal and a truly impressive species. This is a must-visit area for any birdwatcher, offering a glimpse of what the true European wilderness once looked like. While here we will target **Hazel Grouse, Corn Crake, and Eurasian Pygmy Owl**, along with a high diversity of woodpeckers (up to nine species are possible here!), flycatchers, warblers, and more. We will also make a special effort to observe the impressive mammals that thrive here, which will involve some very early pre-dawn starts. Species we may encounter include **European Bison, Grey Wolf** (of the European *lupus* subspecies), **Eurasian Lynx, Moose, Eurasian Beaver**, and others.



*We hope to encounter the secretive **Grey Wolf** while exploring the forests of Białowieża (photo L. Mazurek).*

We will spend our days exploring the ancient and beautiful woodlands of Białowieża. The forest provides ideal habitat for two of our top tour targets, **Hazel Grouse** and **Eurasian Pygmy Owl**, while woodpeckers are a major focus, with **Eurasian Three-toed, Middle Spotted, Lesser Spotted, White-backed, Black, and Grey-headed Woodpeckers** all possible. The woodland is alive with a high diversity of songbirds, including **Northern Nutcracker, Coal Tit, Crested Tit,**

Willow Tit, Marsh Tit, Long-tailed Tit (white-headed *caudatus* subspecies), **Wood Warbler, Common Firecrest, European Pied Flycatcher, and Hawfinch**. In more open areas and scrubby edges we will look for **Green Sandpiper, Common Snipe, Black Stork, Montagu's Harrier, Eurasian Hobby, Eurasian Golden Oriole, Icterine Warbler, Collared Flycatcher, and Red-breasted Flycatcher**. Wide meadows and glades are also home to herds of mighty **European Bison**, which we will make a special effort to observe. Białowieża is a highly rewarding area to explore, offering a chance to immerse yourself in one of Europe's last true wildernesses.



*The attractive **Black Stork** can be seen in woodlands in the Białowieża area.*

Small patches of reeds around wet areas should hold singing **Corn Crane, Great Reed Warbler, Marsh Warbler, Common Grasshopper Warbler, River Warbler, and Savi's Warbler**. Some of these species are extremely shy and inconspicuous, while others are more obvious at this time of year. Those species that are setting up breeding territories, after returning from their sub-Saharan wintering grounds in Africa, can be easier to see, and they all have remarkable vocalizations ranging from gorgeous melodic warbles to insect-like trills and scratches.

It is a special feeling being in Białowieża village, the birding here is incredible! The local farming style is like that of a bygone age, very different for anyone more familiar with current western intensive agricultural systems. Small fields are surrounded by dense hedgerows, clumps of scrub, and scattered trees, resulting in an abundance of insects, which in turn provide food for many birds and plenty of enjoyment for us. **White Storks** patrol the fields, but lurking in the same area can be a myriad of other species, and you never know what you might encounter. This is especially true during the spring migration period (our tour takes place in spring) when many birds pass through on their way north to the Arctic taiga and tundra zone. A **Eurasian Wryneck** might appear

right in front of you, or a **Marsh Warbler** might mimic the call of a **European Bee-eater** (which could also be overhead) from a nearby bush!



Red-breasted Flycatcher can be found breeding in the deciduous woodlands in eastern Poland.

One of the real treats while birding in Białowieża is a visit to the Strict Reserve. Entering through the Palace Park, we will walk into a whole other world, an ancient, primeval, and largely untouched forest that once stretched across most of Europe after the last ice age. Białowieża Forest began growing around 11,000 years ago, and this section of the forest has been a primeval wilderness for millennia, even escaping the destruction that affected 25% of the wider forest area during World War Two. Entrance to this reserve is only allowed with a local guide and specific routes must be followed. It is a unique experience and is sure to be one of the tour highlights. Many of the birds we see in the Strict Reserve will be similar to those seen outside but could include **Stock Dove**, **Eurasian Three-toed Woodpecker**, **White-backed Woodpecker**, **Black Woodpecker**, **Eurasian Golden Oriole**, **Eurasian Jay**, **Eurasian Nuthatch**, **Eurasian Treecreeper**, **Fieldfare**, **Redwing**, **Spotted Flycatcher**, **Tree Pipit**, and **Hawfinch**.

We will likely visit the vast Siemianówka Reservoir, which straddles the border with Belarus. This area offers a new birding experience, with habitats including reedbeds, forest patches, and farmland alongside the large waterbody. Over 240 species have been recorded here, the vast majority in spring. Key species we will focus on, including those harder to find elsewhere on the tour, are **Whooper Swan**, **Common Goldeneye**, **Water Rail**, **Spotted Redshank**, **Eurasian Bittern**, **European Honey Buzzard**, **Lesser Spotted Eagle**, **Greater Spotted Eagle**, **Hen Harrier**, **European Green Woodpecker**, and **Red-footed Falcon**, though many other species can be encountered. After our action-packed days exploring the Białowieża Forest and surrounding

area, we will head back to our comfortable guesthouse in Narewka, where we can enjoy traditional Polish food and hospitality.

Overnight (four nights): Bojarski Gosciniec, or similar, Narewka.

Day 9. Białowieża to Warsaw where tour concludes

After four days exploring the primeval forest at Białowieża, we will enjoy one final birding session in this remarkable area before departing for Warsaw, where the tour will conclude in the early afternoon. You can connect with flights home in the late afternoon or early evening, or continue your journey, for example to the Krakow area.

Some people who have birded in this part of Poland with us have been interested to visit the Auschwitz-Birkenau Memorial and Museum.

For those continuing on to our **Bulgaria and Romania: Birding the Balkans in Spring** tour, which complements this itinerary with species such as **Wallcreeper** and **Dalmatian Pelican**, you will fly to Sofia, Bulgaria.

Overnight: Not included



Eurasian Bittern will be one of our targets around the Siemianówka Reservoir.

Please note that the itinerary 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. In addition, we sometimes must use a different international guide from the one advertised due to tour scheduling.

Tour Details

Duration:	9 days / 8 nights
Group size:	5–8
Dates:	02–10 May 2027 02–10 May 2028
Start:	Warsaw Chopin Airport, Warsaw, Poland
End:	Warsaw Chopin Airport, Warsaw, Poland
Prices:	US\$ 5,650 per person sharing – based on 5–8 participants (2027) US\$ 5,950 per person sharing – based on 5–8 participants (2028)
Single supplements:	US\$ 310 (2027) US\$ 350 (2028)

Price includes:

Accommodation based on two sharing (Day 1 until Day 8 as described)
Meals (from lunch on Day 1 until breakfast on day 9)
Drinking water – please bring a refillable water bottle
Expert tour leader
Local bird and wildlife guide fees
Birdwatching site entrance fees (including all national park fees) and travel permits
All ground transport and tolls/taxes while on tour, including airport pick-up and drop-off

Price excludes:

Flights to and from Warsaw Chopin Airport, Warsaw, Poland
Expenditures due to flight cancellations/delays or other causes beyond our control (force majeure)
Airport transfers if you arrive before the tour starts or depart after the tour ends
Visa fees if visa required
Departure tax
Items of a personal nature, e.g. gifts, laundry, internet access, phone calls etc.
Any pre- or post-tour accommodation, meals, or birding/sightseeing excursions
Alcoholic, soft drinks, teas, coffees etc. unless provided as part of a meal package (e.g. with breakfast)
Personal travel insurance
Gratuities (please see our [tipping guidelines blog](#))

Useful information

During our small group Poland: Best of Eastern Europe tour, you will be driven by your guide in a comfortable vehicle. This tour does involve some longer walks but these will mostly be on flat, firm ground.

Polish food and hospitality are superb and all of your accommodation will be well appointed in a traditional style and private bathrooms throughout. We will spend time in and around quiet, charming villages where the wildlife will be right on our doorstep, adding to the fantastic experience we are sure to have in Poland.