

ESTONIA , FINLAND AND ARCTIC NORWAY May 22nd to June 11TH 2012 (20 species seen including 3 dead ones)

From May 22nd to June 11th 2012 I birdwatch, herpwatch and mammalwatch in Estonia, Finland and Arctic Norway. Even if the birdwatching was extraordinary (for eg more than 60 gamebirds) I mentioned here only the mammals I saw.

I flew from Paris to Tallinn (Estonia) on May 22nd. I hired a car for my full stay. The weather was sunny and warm. But the mosquitoes a nightmare. If I go back in this country I will go earlier in the year. I mentioned only the main places I visited:

Potsamaa north: footprints of European Badger and Elk

Karavere Slid near Tartu: 7 Wild boars, 1 Red Fox

Aardla(south Tartu): 1 pair Roe deer

Alam Pedja: 1 European Hare

Kürna: 2 Red foxes, 3 Roe deers, 2 European beavers, footprints Raccoon dog

Soomaa national park: 1 female Wild boar and 4 piglets, 3 Elk(including a large male with short antlers) in the evening and 1 the following morning, 5 Mountain hares (in the forest, 1 Beech Marten, 1 Eurasian otter, fresh footprints of Brown bear, 3 Roe deers.

Matsalu national park (Rannaja tower): 1 Red fox, 11 Elks in the evening and 18 the following morning

Tuhu Soo: 1 dead Water shrew, 1 Beech Marten disappearing in a Black woodpecker hole, 1 Raccoon dog by 11 in the morning (in the full sun and less than 10m from me)

Sutlepa: 1 Elk by 5 pm along the road.

On the 28th I caught the ferry from Tallinn(Estonia) to Helsinki (Finland). Then I flew to Oulu where I hired a car travelling first east to Vartiuss, then north, reaching the Varangerfjord (Norway)-and then drove tback to Oulu.

If seeing Elk was easy in Estonia, although I saw a lot of evidence of them I never saw any either in Finland or Norway. The fact there is no night at this time of the year seems to be the main reason. In a former trip in May I saw this species only twice during 3 weeks.

Mountain hares were commonly seen in Finland (including a fully white one in Uro ("mountain" south Ivalo), but rarely in Norway.

Dead Hedge hogs were seen at different places including Oulu.

Vartius-Wild Brown Bear lodge: I stayed 3 nights there. During the first night I saw twice a Wolverine, 3 different Brown bears and a Red Fox. The second night I saw only 1 Brown bear, and the third only the Red Fox. I saw also 1 Stoat (nearly completely white). The manager told me one Wolf was present the night before my stay.

North Vartius: 1 wild Forest Reindeer (male). All the other Reindeers I saw were domesticated ones. Forest Reindeers are rare in Finland.

Varangerfjord (Norway): 4 Red foxes, but no Arctic fox, at least 10 Grey seals south Hamninberg and 3 at Honoya island near Vardö, a lot of dead Norway lemmings, 1 Stoat in a Kittiwake colony.

Kontainen, north Kuusamo: 1 European squirrel.

I wanted to see Flying squirrel and I told it to the manager of Wild Brown Bear (as early of December 2011). He told me there was no problem. But the local guide, very friendly, was reluctant to go there, telling me it was a 1h30mn drive south Vartius and that the chance to see any was slim, even knowing nests.

On the 10th of June I flew from Oulu to Helsinki, and the following day to Paris.