

Finland, May 28th 2014 – June 1st 2014

This trip was organized by Jan Kelchtermans from Europe's Big 5, the main target being large carnivores. Wolverine was the most- wanted species for me, but unfortunately we didn't see one... Luckily we had some great views of other nice animals.

Wednesday May 28th 2014

After flying to Helsinki the previous evening, we took a short flight to Kajaani, from where the trip would start. From Kajaani we drove towards Lieksa near the Russian border, to spend the night in a hide where we hoped to see bears and wolves. It didn't take too long before the first **Brown bears** showed up, a mother with 2 cubs. They were very shy, probably because of another bear that passed by a few times during the night (this one was even more shy though).



Female **Brown bear**, near Lieksa.

Thursday May 29th 2014

The first part of the day we were still in the hide watching the **Brown bears**. After we left the hide, we saw some **Eurasian red squirrels** and a **Bank vole** at the feeders of the owners of the hide. The rest of the day was spent in the area, with three **Mountain hares** as the only mammals. In the evening we went to an aspen tree to look at some **Siberian flying squirrels**, and we were very lucky with at least four animals leaving the tree, with one of them giving great views.



Brown bear cubs, near Lieksa.



Siberian flying squirrel, near Lieksa.

Friday May 30th 2014

In the morning some more **Eurasian red squirrels**, after which we drove to the Wolverine-hide. Despite staying up all night, we didn't see any, and nothing else turned up either...



Saturday May 31st 2014

After not seeing the Wolverines the mood in the group was a bit down, but this soon changed once we were on the water in the Linnansaari N.P. to search for seals. It was a beautiful day, and after a while we found a young **Saimaa ringed seal** lying on a rock, giving great views. At least one other was seen swimming too. On the return, a **Common muskrat** swam past the boat.



Saimaa ringed seal, Linnansaari N.P.

Sunday June 1st 2014

Our last day in Finland, and this was to be an owl-day, so not many mammals were seen. On the drive from Linnansaari N.P. to Helsinki we saw another **Mountain hare**, and a roadkill **European badger**, but the highlight was a **Pine marten** crossing the road, a lifer for me!

Mammal list

1. **Brown bear** *Ursus arctos arctos*: a mother and two cubs were seen at a hide near Lieksa. Another very shy young male was present here too.



2. **Saimaa ringed seal** *Pusa hispida saimensis*: at least two were seen from the boat in Linnansaari N.P.



3. **Pine marten** *Martes martes*: one crossed the road on our way to the airport.
4. **European badger** *Meles meles*: one roadkill on our way to Helsinki.
5. **Mountain hare** *Lepus timidus*: seen on several occasions.
6. **Siberian flying squirrel** *Pteromys volans*: four left their hole in a known tree, one of them giving great views.



7. **Eurasian red squirrel** *Sciurus vulgaris*: several were present at the birdfeeders of the owners of the bear-hide.
8. **Bank vole** *Myodes glareolus*: one was present at the birdfeeders of the owners of the bear-hide.
9. **Common muskrat** *Ondatra zibethicus*: one swam past the boat in Linnansaari N.P.