

# FINLAND - OWLS



Friday 11<sup>th</sup> May – Monday 14<sup>th</sup> May 2012



Owls have always provided a fascinating subject for birders as they are never easy to find and often not easy to see well. In fact, there is a certain aura about them and that little extra sparkle of magic about this mysterious family. Our short break is designed to break down the barriers of invisibility about owls and give you the opportunity to see some of the most thrilling birds on the planet. The vast taiga forests of central Finland are home to around eight species of owl, as well as some other sought-after specialities which are easier to find here than anywhere else in Europe. With our expert local guide we will be in safe hands as we visit secret sites well off the beaten track in search of some very special birds.

## TARGETS:

- Great Grey Owl
- Northern Hawk Owl
- Pygmy Owl
- Tengmalm's Owl
- Ural Owl
- Eurasian Eagle Owl
- Northern Red-flanked Bluetail
- Siberian Tit
- Siberian Jay
- Hazel Grouse
- Two-barred Crossbill
- Willow Grouse

## Our Tour Itinerary:

### Days 1 - 2 UK – Oulu - 11<sup>th</sup> May

Following our international flights to Oulu we will transfer the short distance to our conveniently situated hotel before setting out on our first birding excursion. The area surrounding Oulu can, in a good vole year, hold eight of Finland's ten species of owl and our local guides know where to find them and have an incredible success rate. The huge Great Grey Owl must rank as one of the most sought-after of this family, so imagine those piercing yellow eyes looking at you from the branches of a dead



tree. At the other end of the scale Europe's smallest owl, the Pygmy, can be whistled out of the tree canopy and often provides stunning views. With Ural, Tengmalm's, Eagle, Long and Short-eared and stunning Hawk Owls, our time here will prove an unforgettable experience. The nearby harbour is famous for its breeding Terek Sandpipers and we can look for these as well a number of other wading species and possibly Caspian Tern. There are also vast areas of peat bogs and these provide important nesting sites for Common Crane, Taiga Bean Goose, Wood and Broad-billed Sandpipers and Jack Snipe. Other species we may see include Eurasian Wryneck, Fieldfare, Red-backed Shrike, Mealy Redpoll and Oortolan Bunting. As it hardly gets dark at this time of year we can listen to the song of Redwings as they proclaim their territories, even at midnight! Nights in Oulu.

### **Day 3 Oulu – Kuusamo**

After some final birding around Oulu we travel north to the small town of Kuusamo and it is here that we will search for those northern species that everyone dreams of seeing. En-route we will visit some lakes and huge marshes where we can find Velvet Scoter amongst others. Amidst the myriad lakes we can see Black-throated and Red-throated Divers, Red-necked Grebe and Little Gull, while on the bogs we have further opportunities to find Jack Snipe and Broad-billed Sandpiper. Amongst the rugged, forested hills we will have to be patient but are usually rewarded with sightings of Golden Eagle, Three-toed and Black Woodpeckers, whilst Capercaillie, Black and Willow Grouse and the notoriously difficult Hazel Grouse will also be sought. It is the special birds we will really be trying to see such as the beautiful Red-flanked Bluetail, whose song may be heard echoing through the old taiga forests. This is where eastern rarities such as Parrot and Two-barred Crossbills, Siberian Jay, Siberian Tit, Greenish Warbler and Little Bunting nest and we hope to find these as well as the more common species such as Smew, Rough-legged Buzzard, Heuglin's Gull, Bohemian Waxwing, Rustic Bunting and Common Rosefinch. Never an easy one to find, we could always come across a superb Pine Grosbeak if we are very lucky. Night at Kuusamo.



### **Day 4 Kuusamo – UK – End of Tour - 14<sup>th</sup> May**

After a final morning's birding we will have to return to Oulu in order to catch our return flights to the UK.

**Leader:** Zoothera leader tba.

**Tour Price: £850.00** – Oulu/Kuusamo

**Airfare: £250.00** – (Approx) UK/UK

**Single supplement:** £110.00      **Deposit:** £200.00

**Group size:** Minimum for tour to go ahead 4 and maximum 7

**Included in cost:** International airfare, accommodation in twin rooms en-suite, all meals including picnic lunches where necessary, all entrance fees to National Parks, transport throughout in minibus, and services of expert local leader.

**Not included:** Insurance, drinks, tips and items of a personal nature.

**Accommodation:** The hotels used during this tour are all of a good standard, with en-suite facilities.

**Tour Code:** This is a standard birding tour with regular birding walks along roads and well marked trails. Although quite often certain owl sites require walking over uneven ground, or fallen trees so a reasonable level of fitness is required. The weather at this time of year is variable so you will need both warm and waterproof clothing.



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