

# The Lynx Effect

**Estonia – 9<sup>th</sup> 16<sup>th</sup> Feb 2024**

# Introduction

I had tried to see Lynx twice before in Poland and Estonia with targeted trips but have been to many areas where lynx are present but had never seen them.

I flew with [Wizzair](#) from Luton to Tallinn, I stayed at the Mercure Tallinn by the airport the night before and after the [Wise birding](#) Lynx tour.

The tour was led by Tarko Valker [@birdinghaapsalu](#) and the Lynx guide was Martin Piispea [@piispea](#).

We were based in the Lahemaa National Park staying at the Sagadi mõis hotel. Food was Ok, far too much fish and did not like the Black garlic ice cream!



# Friday 9<sup>th</sup> February

I arrived late morning in Tallinn and dropped my bags at the hotel and took a bus into the old town for a wander round mainly to see the tourist sights (I had been before).

It was bitterly cold about  $-10^{\circ}\text{C}$  in town with lots of snow on the ground. It was quiet in town but I had a nice encounter with a **Goshawk** that had just caught a **feral pigeon** and it landed on the church roof allowing a reasonable approach to get some photos with my phone.

I had something to eat and a few beers and headed back to the hotel.





# Saturday 10<sup>th</sup> February

There were 4 of us on the tour and we were picked up at 9.30 and headed a little west to see if the Hawk Owl was still present, but we could not find it during a brief search that did produce a **white tailed eagle**.

We drove east to Lahemaa National Park and took a walk round one of the forest tracks **Crested and willow tit** of note. Next was a walk round a local manor house gardens but there was little about, but our hotel gardens proved more productive the feeders had marsh tit and nuthatch but the prize was a **Pygmy Owl**, which showed very well. We settled into the hotel had something to eat and headed out for the night.

It was very cold on the night drive down to -17°C and this did not help sightings with only **Brown and Mountain hares** and the odd **fox** spotted.



# Sunday 11<sup>th</sup> February



It was cold -9°C and quite windy as we headed out after breakfast, some brief **Hazel grouse** of note as we made it to the coast. The sea was frozen for miles apart from the northernmost tip of the whole of Estonia.

Here the sea was ice free a little way out from the shore and with the scope we spotted large numbers of duck. Mainly goosander, with smaller numbers of **goldeneye, smew and long tailed ducks**.

The strong wind made it bitterly cold and after a while we had to retreat back to the van. We had some lunch made a couple of stops without any birds of note before heading back to the hotel. I took a walk round the grounds but it was pretty much the same birds as the previous day. The wind had dropped a bit for the night drive but it was still cold. There were more animals about then the previous night including a **pine marten** and a couple of nice **Ural owls**, but still no sign of a lynx.



# Monday 12<sup>th</sup> February

The morning was spent in the forest but we were frustrated by not seeing our target bird species only seeing the common species and a few roe deer. We had some lunch then had a wander round some forest areas but again not much doing. The night drive was at -7°C but little wind which was ideal for a good night and we had lots of mammals mostly **hares, roe deer and foxes** but eventually Martin spotted a **Lynx** with the thermal imager. It was tricky to see in dense woodland but eventually it came closer and we could spotlight it as it moved through the trees. It crossed the road in front of us and we moved to another road in anticipation of it crossing that which it did giving us all a nice view. We managed to find a roosting **hazel grouse** and a **bank vole** feeding high up in a tree.





# Tuesday 13<sup>th</sup> February



This morning we changed our birding away from the forest and headed to a large urban park in Rakvere. The pond was filled with **Mallards** but had two handsome drake **Goldeneyes**. There were feeders in the gardens adjacent to the park and these were attracting lots of birds **greenfinch, brambling, bullfinch, tree sparrows** etc. A brief **waxwing** and a **middle spotted woodpecker** were of note.

Next we headed just out of town to a small lake where we had a great white egret, grey heron and little grebe. Lunch was had in a café in town where we had a Shrove Tuesday traditional cream bun. **Feral pigeons** alerted us to a flyover **goshawk, rooks** had started rebuilding their nests in the centre of town. We headed back to the hotel for a break and dinner.

It was still cold for the night drive -4°C mammal activity was good but mostly **hares** and **foxes** although some brief views of **raccoon dogs** made for some variety.



# Wednesday 14<sup>th</sup> February

Our first stop was in the heart of the forest looking for **Spotted nutcracker** and one duly graced us with its presence. We tried for woodpeckers in several of the local parks and riverside areas without any luck but back in the hotel garden we managed to find a **white backed woodpecker** that showed quite nicely.

Our last night drive and it was only -1°C and calm, starting well before dark we had several **foxes** along with lots of **roe deer** which were nice to see in daylight.

After some food we headed back out, there was plenty of mammal activity including a couple of **raccoon dogs** and a very nice **Ural owl**. We headed back to the hotel stopping suddenly, Martin had a **Lynx** and so did Tarvo but a different one. Again, they were in woodland and tricky too see but eventually we managed a view to see one sitting behind a rock and managed some good views and photos if a little tricky with vegetation light etc. The second **Lynx** was further back and likely a youngster with its mother the one we could see. We headed off and came back but they were not moving so that was it and we went back to the hotel.





# Thursday 15<sup>th</sup> February

After breakfast we packed up headed off, first to last night Lynx site, they had gone but we could see their tracks and they had come to the road where we were to investigate.

We headed to Tallinn, making a detour to look for the Hawk Owl again. Still no sign, but a **white tailed eagle** and a **buzzard** of note.

In Tallinn we had some lunch and another cream bun, then to the airport, one went on a flight and the rest of us went to the hotel for an overnight stay.

I went to a bar for a few celebratory beers and a few of us met up for a couple of beers in the hotel that evening, to finish off a top trip.



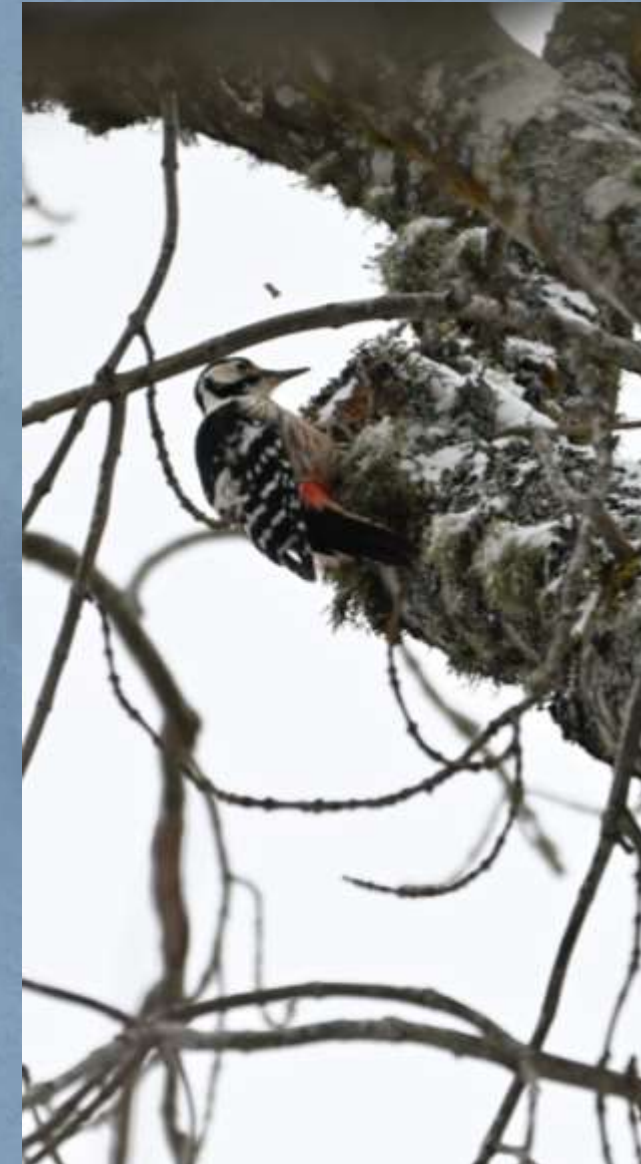
# Friday 16th February

After a leisurely breakfast I walked to the airport, (**hooded crow, house sparrow** spotted) then flew back to Luton.



# Birds - 47

Mute Swan	Mallard	Long Tailed Duck
Goldeneye	Smew	Goosander
Hazel Grouse	Black Grouse	Feral Pigeon
Common Gull	Herring Gull	Grey Heron
Sparrowhawk	Goshawk	White Tailed Eagle
Buzzard	Pygmy Owl	Ural Owl
Middle Spotted Woodpecker	Great Spotted Woodpecker	White Backed Woodpecker
Great Grey Shrike	Jay	Magpie
Spotted Nutcracker	Jackdaw	Rook
Hooded Crow	Raven	Waxwing
Crested Tit	Marsh Tit	Willow Tit
Blue Tit	Great Tit	Nuthatch
Treecreeper	Blackbird	Fieldfare
Tree Sparrow	House Sparrow	Brambling
Bullfinch ( )	Greenfinch	Little Grebe
Great White Egret	Grey Partridge	



# Mammals - 8

Eurasian Lynx	Raccoon Dog	Roe Deer
Bank Vole	Red Fox	Mountain Hare
Brown Hare	Pine Marten	

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