



Estonian Nature Tours

Trip	: Estonia in Autumn 2009
Period	: Sat26Sep – Sat03Oct : Sat03Oct – Sat10Oct
Group size	: 16+1 pax
Grading	: Day walks only, for all ages
Accommodation	: Comfortable hotel with private facilities
Food	: Restaurants and local farms
Leader	: Local field ornithologist
Extensions	: Cultural/sightseeing extensions available on request
Organizer / Agent	: Estonian Nature tours, e-mail: info@naturetours.ee

An 8-day holiday focusing on the spectacular bird migration in Western Estonia

- Day 1 Arrive in Tallinn, to Haapsalu
- Day 2 Pöösaspea & Silma
- Day 3 Pöösaspea & Matsalu
- Day 4 Matsalu National Park, to Saaremaa
- Day 5 Saaremaa island, Sörve
- Day 6 Saaremaa island, to Pärnu
- Day 7 Kabli & Soometsa forests
- Day 8 Departure

Highlights

Birds: Golden Eagle, White-tailed Eagle, tens of thousands of Eurasian Cranes, White-fronted Geese and Bean Geese, peak autumn migration of songbirds, waders and waterfowls, Goshawk, Peregrine Falcon, Black Grouse, White-backed Woodpecker, Three-toed Woodpecker, Black Woodpecker, Lesser Spotted Woodpecker, Grey-headed Woodpecker, Yellow-browed Warbler (probably), Nutcracker, Crested Tit, Long-tailed Tit, Bearded Tit, Lapland Bunting etc.

Although not widely discovered yet, Estonia is ideal country for observing one of the most spectacular natural shows – massive bird migration. This smallest and northernmost Baltic country lies on the crossroad of the Eastern Atlantic migratory flyway: Estonia is locked between the Finnish Gulf, eastern coast of Baltic Sea and Lake Peipsi near the Russian border. In this respect, geographically the Estonian waters and coastline are the natural stepping-stones, the most natural flyway between breeding and wintering areas for millions of Arctic waterbirds, making birdwatching in Estonia fabulous at this time of year. But it is not just about non-stop passage: the country's long and indented coastline, shallow and sheltered bays, straits, coastal meadows, marshes, lagoons and over 1000 islands in good natural condition are crucial feeding and stopover sites. And this is not all - the long outstretching peninsulas, spits and narrow straits in coastal sceneries offer not only plenty of good sea-watching opportunities, but also concentrate large numbers of landbirds before their take-off and crossing of the sea.

During the migration season, the crowds of southward-rushing birds, can be seen in incredible numbers: several hundreds of thousands of waterfowl or passerine migrants can be seen passing per day at the best sites at the peak season. As many as one million of waterfowl and nearly three-quarters of passerines are observed per day as top figures. In total, over 50 million of waterbirds are estimated to pass the Estonian coast and marine territories annually. The last week of September is the best time to explore this exiting

performance, as this is the peak time of migration of both water- and landbirds, combined with the most vibrant autumn colours.

1 SAT TALLINN, to Haapsalu

We will pick up you from Tallinn Airport at ... and drive to Haapsalu. After the check-in we will go for some birding at Haeska watch tower. We will move back to Haapsalu at late afternoon and eat our first dinner at Promenaadi Hotel (Roosta Bungalows or Promenaadi Hotel).

2 SUN PÕÕSASPEA & SILMA NATURE RESERVE

We will start from the most North-Easterly point, the Põõsaspea. This small north-stretching spit is situated at the migratory crossroad, where masses of waterbirds coming from the Bothnian and the Finnish Bay direction meet. This place deserves to be mentioned as one of the best places to observe the Arctic waterbird migration. Tens and hundreds of thousands of Long-Tailed Ducks, Common Scoters and Geese species can be seen during the peak of migration. This place is famous for its diver migration: up to a couple of thousand of the Black- and Red-Throated Divers can be seen daily, and the Yellow-billed Diver is frequently seen. Among the rare waterfowl, the Steller's Eiders can be spotted as well. After the nice picnic-lunch at Saare manorhouse, we will visit the Silma Nature reserve and adjacent Haapsalu Town. This region has many shallow sheltered bays, coastal lagoons, marshlands and reedbeds. These areas are dream staging places for numerous waterbirds. It is a special character of the Haapsalu town that from the middle of town and from the our Hotel balcony or coastal promenade the spectacular view over Haapsalu bay can deliver tens of thousands of Goldeneye, Coot, Scaups and Tufted Duck, Wigeon and others. The dinner at the promenade restaurant is often interrupted by sightings of several White-tailed Eagles, Cranes, Swans, waders or other exiting birds flying by (Roosta Bungalows or Promenaadi Hotel).

3 MON LEIDISSOO (VARIKU), PÕÕSASPEA & MATSALU NATIONAL PARK

Today we will travel out in the early morning and enjoy wetlands and heathland forest environment. We hope to be entertained by Black Grouse, whilst other attractions in this area include Capercaillie, Hazel Grouse, Wryneck, and some interesting woodpeckers. After short break and breakfast we will continue our birding at Põõsaspea once again. We will eat our lunch at Promenaadi Hotel and move to the northern shore of Matsalu Bay where we once again visit Haeska watching tower. The record for the highest day list of bird species in Northern Europe was achieved in this region at a similar time of year – more than 100 species by nightfall. We will drive to the Puise peninsula and explore a variety of Põgari-Sassi coastal habitats, then enjoy the fantastic picnic-dinner at Nina farm (Roosta Bungalows or Promenaadi Hotel).

4 TUE MATSALU NATIONAL PARK, to Saaremaa

Following our coastal pursuit for migratory and staging waterbirds we reach the Matsalu National Park. This is the most famous bird area in Estonia, known as one of the most important breeding and stop-over areas for waterfowl and shorebirds in the whole of Northern Europe. Over 40 sq km, this reserve consists of large open floodplains and coastal meadows, riparian and coastal woodlands, river delta and marshlands and shallow Matsalu Bay with 3 th ha of reedbeds, numerous islands and 7 birdwatching towers around it. This makes this reserve wonderful as migratory staging place for vast number of coastal and waterbirds. The Matsalu Bay is typically covered with white spots of about 20 thousand of Whooper and Bewick Swans, tens of thousands of Coot, Goldeneye, Pochard, Wigeon, Teal and waders. Also several thousands of Barnacle, Bean, Graylag and White-fronted Geese harvest

the grass of local meadows and fields and the very rare Lesser White-fronted Geese can be found amongst them. Matsalu area is also well known as an autumn Crane concentration area. As many as 20 thousand birds gathering around the bay and feed in adjacent fields. Following the masses of Cranes flying in on a golden evening or out on a misty morning from their roosting places, is an unforgettable experience. We will move to Saaremaa island on late afternoon and eat our dinner at the hotel (Saaremaa Hotel).

5 WED SAAREMAA ISLAND

This morning we target the Sõrve peninsula and Sääre spit. This is over 50 km long and a narrow peninsula, outstretching south-westerly from the rest of the island. This is the last point before take-off for landbirds and the surrounding open sea and islets are the excellent points for watching seabirds. This is the best place in the country to watch Skuas, Waders, and diving ducks. The Sõrve is famous for its frequent sighting of rare birds and, especially during the autumn migration, the chances are good. Migrant birds of prey can be seen in good numbers, especially Sparrowhawk, Buzzards, Harriers, Falcons but also Lesser Spotted and other Eagles. The migration of passerines at peak times often include enormous numbers. It is an unforgettable experience to follow the passage of hundreds of thousands of Chaffinches, Bramblings and Siskins from the watch point atop an old Soviet military concrete fortification.

In the cape, there are bird stations for ringing and observing the migration and we also pay a visit a station where we have a good chance to see some common or even some eastern rarities in the hand

6 THU SAAREMAA ISLAND, to Pärnu

After the breakfast we will continue our birding at Loode coast and Lõu Bay and also have a short visit to lookout Sõrve bird observatory once again. We come back to the mainland on afternoon and follow the direction of bird migration toward the SW part of the county, the Pärnu area. We will visit old growth coniferous and mixed forest in order to experience the autumn calling season of resident Black, Gray-headed, Three-toed and White-backed Woodpeckers as well as listen the mating calls of Hazel Grouse. (Wesset Villa or Lapanina Hotel).

7 FRI KABLI & SOOMETSA FORESTS

Today we will travel out in early morning and visit the Kabli bird station near the Latvian border. This is our oldest bird station, equipped with huge 18m high Helgoland type bird trap. In the bird station, there is good chance to have a close look at the continental race of Long-tailed Tit, Willow Tit, Crested Tit, Nuthatch and other woodland passerines. In the nighttime, the Ural, Tengmalms, Pygmy and Short-Eared Owls are trapped as well. After a very nice picnic-lunch, we have visit to lookout tower and wooden pathway in the Tolkuse bog. We can enjoy the misty mystery of bog lakes and colourful patterns of peat mosses, which in combination with crane and geese migration under a deep blue sky will summarize up our special northern autumn experiences...

8 SAT To Tallinn

In our way back to Tallinn, we have short visit old grown coniferous and mixed forest once again. We will return to Tallinn by late morning where we have some free time for the old town before having our last lunch together. After the lunch we will drive to the Airport to catch your homeward flight at ...

Read more: www.llk.ee (homepage of Läänemaa Bird Club)

www.eoy.ee (homepage of Estonian Birding Society)
www.estbirder.ee (birders & twitchers site in Estonia)
www.vironlintuseura.fi
www.einst.ee
www.estonica.org

Special Birdfair price: **895 Euro per person**
Single suppl. 170 Euro

Includes:

English-Estonian speaking guide(s) throughout the journey. All meals and coffee-breaks. All local transport. Entrance fees to protected areas and museums. All overnights in shared double:

www.roosta.ee
www.promenaadi.ee
www.saarehotell.ee
www.lepanina.ee
www.wesset.ee

etc. VAT.

Excludes:

Beverages and sauna. International tickets.

CANCELLATIONS

Less than 15 days prior, 50 percent charge of movable cost fee per person. Cancellation on the day of arrival or no-show, full cost applies.

Cordially

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