

ITINERARY

**FINLAND SPRING:  
Wolverines, Owls, & Wild-Wild Grouse**  
May 15-28, 2022



*The imposing Great Gray Owl is found in the boreal forests of the northern hemisphere. These large owls specialize in feeding on rodents such as voles, and are one of nine owl species that we might find on the tour. Photograph by Finnature.*

We include here information for those interested in the 2022 Field Guides Finland Spring: Wolverines, Owls, & Wild-Wild Grouse tour:

- a general introduction to the tour
- a description of the birding areas to be visited on the tour
- an abbreviated daily itinerary with some indication of the nature of each day's birding outings

Those who register for the tour will be sent this additional material:

- a detailed information bulletin with important logistical information and answers to questions regarding accommodations, air arrangements, clothing, currency, customs and immigration, documents, health precautions, and personal items
- a reference list
- a Field Guides checklist for preparing for and keeping track of the birds we see on the tour
- after the conclusion of the tour, a list of birds seen on the tour

**F**inland is a remarkable nation. A region of farmers, woodsmen, and Sámi reindeer herders for much of its unique history, Finland invested deeply in education after the Second World War. Four generations later, the country enjoys a standard of living ranked among the world's highest. Prosperity has brought world-class arts, cuisine, infrastructure, and tourist facilities—and, importantly, environmental protections that permit wildlife to thrive. These decisions make Finland a marvelous place for birding and wildlife travel: wilderness is everywhere, it seems, but so are the comforts of home.

The return of our Finland Spring tour was inevitable: Finland's lakes, rivers, marshes, bogs, tundra fells, and vast stretches of taiga (boreal forest) are some of the most exciting birding areas in all Europe. Our new, shorter tour will undertake to see as many of Finland's nesting bird species and regular migrants as feasible. And birds abound in this

landscape. Near the Russian border, Finland hosts nesting populations of birds that reach their western limits here: we'll seek out specialties like Jack Snipe, Terek, Broad-billed, Wood, and Green sandpipers, Red-flanked Bluetail, Gray-headed Chickadee (Siberian Tit), Blyth's Reed Warbler, Rustic Bunting, and Brambling. In the uncountable lakes, marshes, and meadows of this lowland country, we'll look and listen for Arctic Loon, Taiga Bean-Goose, Garganey, Velvet Scoter, Smew, Little Gull, Eurasian Woodcock, Great Bittern, Corn Crake, Spotted Crake, Pallid Harrier, Little Gull, Bearded Reedling, Common Grasshopper-Warbler, and Sedge, Marsh, and River warblers. In forested habitats, handsome grouse—Hazel Grouse, Black Grouse, and the behemoth Western Capercaillie—display fervently in springtime, and uncommon woodland birds like Black, White-backed, and Eurasian Three-toed woodpeckers, Eurasian (Spotted) Nutcracker, and Parrot Crossbill are also permanent residents. In more open habitats, Eurafriatic migrants will be returning: Red-breasted Flycatcher, Greenish Warbler, Ortolan Bunting, and many others. Farther north, as the taiga becomes patchy and gives way to tundra fells, subarctic breeders like Temminck's Stint, Eurasian Dotterel (a singular beauty), Little Bunting (need a bit of luck), and Long-tailed Jaeger will be our focus.



*Gray-headed Chickadee is the only parid to breed in both the Old World and the New, but they are more common and easy to see in Europe. These tiny birds are resident in conifer forests of the far north; we'll look for them just south of the Arctic Circle in the Kuusamo area. Photograph by Jari Peltomäki.*

Owls are a thrill to see anywhere, and Finland is home to at least 10 species. In woodlands from the southeastern part of the country to the far northern edge of taiga, we'll search in daylight and twilight hours for Great Gray Owl, Eurasian Pygmy-Owl, Eurasian Eagle-Owl, Ural Owl, Tawny Owl, Boreal (Tengmalm's) Owl, Northern Hawk Owl, Short-eared Owl, and possibly Long-eared Owl, if voles have been plentiful. In recent years, rarer species such as Barred, Booted, and Lanceolated warblers have nested sporadically, and if there are territories near our route, we'll try to work them in. Naturally, we will enjoy more widespread but glorious birds such as Rough-legged Hawk, Great Gray Shrike, Northern Goshawk, Red-necked Grebe, Common Crane, Ruff (in lek mode!), Black-tailed Godwit, Spotted Redshank, Eurasian Wryneck, Red-backed Shrike, White-throated Dipper, Bohemian Waxwing, Thrush Nightingale, Crested Tit, Eurasian Golden Oriole, Reed Bunting, Eurasian Bullfinch, Hawfinch, Common Rosefinch, Red Crossbill, and Pine Grosbeak. Some of these species nest in North America, but the Eurasian subspecies could be recognized as full species in the future, as Great Gray Shrike and Eurasian Three-toed Woodpecker already have been. As on every tour during the height of migration, we'll keep our eyes wide open for scarcer fare like Heuglin's (Siberian) Gull, Lesser White-fronted Goose, or Little Stint. Every bird we see should be in breeding plumage, and some will be displaying, courting, and nesting.

Mammals such as Gray Wolf, Eurasian Brown Bear, Eurasian Lynx, Wolverine, Raccoon Dog, and others haunt the habitats where we bird, and we'd be extraordinarily fortunate to see any of these while simply out birding. To increase our odds of an encounter substantially, we have scheduled several visits to special, well-equipped blinds (hides) used mostly by photographers who hope to encounter these special animals. Specifically, we will visit blinds near Lieksa for Wolverines (wolves and bears also possible) and near Oulanka National Park for bears. And we also include a special

outing by boat onto the freshwater lakes of Linnansaari National Park, where we will look for the rare Saimaa Ringed Seal. And truthfully, we'll take in everything we can: mammals, reptiles, butterflies, flowers. Why not?

Finland is a lovely country, and in its short 104-year history, it has accomplished great things. Even if the birding were not so spectacular, it is a country that merits a visit, to see what hard work and *sisu*—the Finnish word for grit—can accomplish in a short amount of time. You'll be delighted with our time in this friendly country.



*The Eurasian Dotterel is a lovely shorebird that breeds on the tundra. We'll look for these beauties above the Arctic Circle near Ivalo. Photograph by Jari Peltomäki.*

**All participants will be required to confirm they will have completed a full COVID vaccination course at least two weeks prior to the tour (which, for tours departing on or after March 1, 2022, includes a booster).** Having a vaccinated group will greatly diminish but not eliminate the possibility of the group and individual participants being adversely affected by COVID-19. **We are requiring all of our staff guides to be vaccinated, including getting the booster.** Note too, that many travel destinations are or soon will be requiring proof of vaccination for entry to bypass testing delays or quarantine, and that entry requirements for a destination can change at any time. Proof of a booster shot, too, may become a requirement for some travel destinations if they choose to declare that vaccinations do not last indefinitely. And having a booster means your risk is lowered and your travel plans and those of our group are less likely to be disrupted.

*We want to be sure you are on the right tour! Below is a description of the physical requirements of the tour. If you are concerned about the difficulty, please contact us about your concerns. We want to make sure you have a wonderful time with us, so if you are uncomfortable with the requirements, just let us know and we can help you find a better fitting tour! Field Guides will not charge you a change or cancellation fee if you opt out within 10 days of depositing.*

### **Physical requirements of this tour**

- **TRAILS:** Moderate amounts of walking on flat ground (up to 3 miles per day), some of it on paved roads, some on gravel or dirt roads, some on trails that could be soggy in spots. In the north, we will walk one or two uphill trails, and these may have obstacles such as fallen logs. These walks and others are optional.
- **PACE:** Early mornings (breakfasts between 6:00 and 7:00 a.m.), with birding sessions in morning and afternoon. On three days, there will be significant stretches (4-5 hours) of travel time between birding areas.
- **WEATHER:** The weather can be quite varied, so we can expect temperature ranges from 40 to 75 degrees F, with wind that may make the temperature feel even colder. Snow is unlikely except above the Arctic Circle.

- **VEHICLE SEATING:** So that each participant has equal opportunity during our travel, we employ a seat rotation system on all tours. Participants will need to be flexible enough to maneuver to the back of the vehicle on occasion. Those who experience motion sickness will need to bring adequate medication for the duration of the tour, as we are not able to reserve forward seats for medical conditions.
- **BATHROOM BREAKS:** We plan to make regular rest breaks, and many stops will have indoor restrooms; however, in remote areas, it will be necessary to make comfort stops in nature.
- **OPTING OUT:** Where we are staying multiple days in the same lodging, participants can easily opt to sit out a day or sometimes a half-day. This will not be possible on days when we are changing locations.

If you are uncertain about whether this tour is a good match for your abilities, please don't hesitate to contact our office; if they cannot directly answer your queries, they will put you in touch with the guide.

## About the Birding Areas



**Finland** is one of the great birding areas in Europe, and our aim on this tour is to provide abundant evidence of this claim! We have selected five regions well known for their rich avifaunas in various types of wetland, taiga (boreal forest), and tundra (fells). The timing of the tour aligns well with spring migration but also takes into consideration factors such as owl nesting phenology, lekking behavior of grouse, migrating and lekking Ruff flocks, and average arrival time of passerines to the nesting areas. As with all spring tours, both food availability and weather patterns will play a role in determining the pace of migration, the onset of breeding activities, and the timing of peak courtship displays, and so our itinerary mentions several species more than once, as we'll need to adjust our search strategies to the 2021 spring's pace of migration and nesting. Our partners in Finland like these dates well to showcase the riches of the country, for migrants, for nesting birds, and for special mammals. While our intent is to see the greatest diversity of birds and wildlife, we should also have opportunities to observe many species on multiple occasions, to enjoy and "learn" them, photograph them, and to see some of their behaviors. During our visit, we'll experience most of the distinctive regions (districts) of Finland, described in tour order below. These regions include all of the major habitat types in Finland, with the exception of the offshore waters and islands of the Baltic Sea (Åland Archipelago).

**Uusimaa Region (Helsinki area)**—Spring bird migration will be in full swing in the capital area, and we will sample woodlands and wetlands, marshes and meadows during our brief stay here, hoping to see mostly those species we are unlikely to find farther north. Lunch at a charming café next to a birding site at Laajalahti will just hint at the pleasures of the capital

area. For those interested in arranging a city tour before or after the birding tour, the Field Guides office will be happy to help set that up. Helsinki has everything from first-rate museums to tiny ateliers offering wares of the finest craftsmanship. Waterside trails link many attractions. It is a remarkably birdy and beautiful city, especially in May.

**South Savonia Region (Rantasalmi area)**—In the heart of the Finnish Lake District, more than a quarter of South Savonia is covered by freshwater lakes and ponds—tens of thousands of them, in fact. This part of the country is often called “Lakeland,” and Finns flock to this lightly populated area during summer to hike, picnic, canoe, and explore the many uninhabited islands in the lakes. The country’s largest lake, Saimaa, is here, and we’ll venture onto it by boat to look for the Saimaa Ringed Seal, whose population is currently just over 400. May is the best time to see these rare freshwater seals. Ducks, shorebirds, Arctic Loons, grebes, and the uncommon Osprey are often about. A medieval castle nearby, Olavinlinna, is home to a famous opera festival, but we’ll be a bit too early for the arias!

**North Karelia Region (Joensuu area)**—Although we’ll stay overnight in the vibrant university town of Joensuu, North Karelia, which borders Russia in Finland’s southeast, is largely a wilderness area. “If you’re looking for the Finnish soul,” one guidebook reads, “your search starts in Karelia.” Most visitors come here for the skiing, whitewater rafting, or hiking, but we’ll focus on the pristine wetlands that hold waterfowl, cranes, rails, and the magnificent Great Bittern. In adjacent woodlands, we will work on northern owls, Eurasian Nutcracker, and some of the less-common warblers and finches. In North Karelia is also where we spend time in a specially constructed cabin-like blind near Lieksa, with the intention of seeing the elusive Wolverine and perhaps several other carnivores of this wild landscape.

**North Ostrobothnia Region (Oulu area)**—The shores of the Gulf of Bothnia near Oulu brim with birdlife in spring: waterfowl, shorebirds, and raptors. Our focus will be two-fold: on woodland birds such as owls, grouse, and woodpeckers (essentially all of them nest in this area) and on waterbirds and shorebirds associated with the Gulf and the marshes along the edge, especially around Liminganlahti (Liminka Bay). The list of possible species there in May tops 235, but we’ll concentrate mostly on birds we are unlikely to see elsewhere, such as Garganey, Terek Sandpiper, Pallid Harrier, and White-tailed Eagle, as well as on reedbed-nesting or open-country passerines we might have missed in the south.



*Black Grouse are widespread in Finland’s north, and we hope to see multiple birds in our time there.  
Photograph by Jari Peltomäki.*

**Koillismaa Subregion (Kuusamo area)**—The eastern portion of the North Ostrobothnia Region, Koillismaa seems far removed from the bustling tech-based economy in comparatively cosmopolitan Oulu, the regional capital. Here, aside from two small towns, wilderness is king, and the national parks of Oulanka and Hossa are two of Europe’s crown jewels. A million tourists visit here each year, but most come for cross-country skiing, Nordic skiing, and ski-jumping, so we’ll miss the crowds, though we’ll surely see other birders out and about. Koillismaa’s forests offer not just a wealth of grouse, owls, woodpeckers, and northern finches but also species that reach their easternmost outposts in Europe here, such as Red-flanked Bluetail and Jack Snipe. Our first chances for Siberian Jay, Gray-headed Chickadee, and Little Bunting are here, and we’ll also make a strong effort to see Eurasian Brown Bears from a special viewing area one evening.

**Finnish Lapland Region (Ivalo area)**—Covering more than 30% of Finland’s territory, Lapland has less than 3% of the nation’s population, and it is here, above the Arctic Circle, that we’ll see the taiga (boreal forest) gradually give way to marshy muskeg and tundra fells. Nesting waterfowl and shorebirds such as Spotted Redshank, Temminck’s Stint, Ruff, and Broad-billed Sandpiper form part of this area’s attraction, as do predators such as Rough-legged Hawk, Great Gray Shrike, Merlin, and Peregrine Falcon. We’ll relish every bird we see here, the list hopefully also to include Brambling, Hawfinch, Eurasian Bullfinch, Pine Grosbeak, and Common Redpoll (we might have to visit bird feeders to round out the list!). A few Eurasian Dotterels should be newly arrived from wintering areas, and we’ll prioritize searching for this beautiful bird, in the process perhaps also seeing such northerners as Rock Ptarmigan or Long-tailed Jaeger. The reindeer-herding culture of this region is every bit as fascinating as the birdlife, and we’ll duck into Siida (Museum of the Culture of the Sami People) one afternoon to learn more. The sojourn in Lapland should make a fine conclusion to our time in Finland.



*The Arctic Loon is another bird that is primarily a Eurasian resident, but can occasionally be found in the New World. We'll find these northern breeders on lakes throughout our tour. Photograph by Jari Peltomäki.*

## Itinerary for Finland Spring: Wolverines, Owls, & Wild-Wild Grouse

**Day 1, Sun, May 15. Flights depart from the US.** American Airlines/Finnair has typically has a single non-stop flight from New York’s JFK Airport, departing New York at 7:05 p.m. and arriving at 10:10 a.m. or so local time the following day in Helsinki.

**Day 2, Mon, May 16. Arrival in Helsinki; to Espoo.** For those arriving at Helsinki’s international airport this morning on the New York flight, your guide(s) will meet you in the **Arrivals Hall, just outside baggage claim and customs** (your guide will have a **FIELD GUIDES sign** and wear a binocular!). It will take a little time for everyone to clear customs. Once gathered, we’ll pull out binoculars and transfer about 20 km to a birding spot called Laajalahti (Broad Bay), where there is raised structure for studying waterbirds. We will have lunch at a little café here, and then we’ll proceed a short distance (25 km) to our lodgings, the Hotel Nuuksio in verdant Espoo, Finland’s second largest city on the edge of Nuuksio National Park. (The park and hotel take their name from the Sámi word *njukča*, meaning “swan,” Finland’s national bird—and we’re like to see a few here, along with the beautiful Barnacle Goose.) After a break, we’ll enjoy a little afternoon birding near the hotel. **For those already in the area or arriving at a different time, please plan to meet the group at the airport at 10:30 a.m. or at the hotel by 6:00 p.m. for dinner;** our office can supply addresses and directions. Let the office know your plans before today. We’ll take dinner at the hotel, and then if anyone has stamina remaining, we may make an after-dinner excursion to look for several birds that sing into the evening—Thrush Nightingale, Blyth’s Reed Warbler, Marsh Warbler, and possibly River Warbler. Night in Espoo.

**Day 3, Tue, May 17. Birding the capital area; to Rantasalmi.** Helsinki, on the Gulf of Finland, is well placed to receive northward-migrating raptors and passerines, and a fine variety of birds nest in the woodlands and wetlands that abound in the area. A pre-breakfast walk will probably encounter some of the more common birds of the national park woodlands. We'll listen and look for Great, Eurasian Blue, and Willow tits, Great Spotted and Gray-headed woodpeckers, European Robin, Song Thrush, Eurasian Blackbird, European Greenfinch, Eurasian Linnet, and returning migrants such as European Pied Flycatcher, Common Redstart, Eurasian Blackcap, and Lesser Whitethroat. After breakfast, we'll make rounds of mudflats, lakes, and reedbeds, in search of waterfowl, shorebirds, songbirds, and hopefully a few newly arrived migrants. Depending on water levels and the progress of migration, we could well amass a respectable list of waterbirds this morning. We expect a fine diversity of landbirds as well, among them potentially Hooded Crow, White Wagtail, Fieldfare, Great Reed Warbler, Eurasian Reed Warbler, Red-backed Shrike, Icterine Warbler, and probably also Citrine Wagtail and Bearded Reedling. Surprises like European Honey-buzzard are to be hoped for in spring, and we'll listen for word of any rarities found by local birders. After lunch, we'll drive to Rantasalmi, where we will settle into the Hotel Järvisydän to prepare for an outing by boat onto the lake that is home to the rare Saimaa Ringed Seal. Here, in Linnansaari National Park, we'll watch for Arctic Loon (the lovely purple-throated nominate subspecies), Red-necked Grebe, Osprey, and many other waterbirds. Weather permitting, we'll land on one of the park's islands as well. Night in Rantasalmi.

**Day 4, Wed, May 18. To Joensuu.** After breakfast, we'll head toward the North Karelia region of eastern Finland, arriving after lunch at Joensuu, a small city founded by Czar Nicholas I. We'll lodge at the Original Sokos Hotel Kimmel, right on the Pielisjoki River (Joensuu means "river mouth" in Finnish). From Joensuu, we'll make forays into the beautiful countryside this afternoon and the next day. On the Russian border, Värtsilä Valley near Tohmajärvi is marvelous: waterbirds such as Eurasian Bittern, Spotted Crake, and Water Rail nest here, as do Eurasian Woodcock, Eurasian Hobby, Eurasian Golden Oriole, Mistle Thrush, Thrush Nightingale, Common Grasshopper-Warbler, and Blyth's Reed Warbler. By this time in the tour, we will start fine-tuning our searches for species we have not yet encountered, balancing visits between different habitats to see as much species diversity as our time permits, and watching for uncommon and unpredictable birds such as Pink-footed Goose, Red-breasted Flycatcher, and Red-backed Shrike. Night in Joensuu.

**Day 5, Thu, May 19. Joensuu area.** We will be up early to visit forested habitats of the region, ears and eyes open for Rook, Western Jackdaw, Eurasian Nutcracker, Greenish Warbler, Tree Pipit, Eurasian Treecreeper, White-backed and Lesser Spotted woodpeckers, and owls: we'll likely get started on Eurasian Pygmy-Owl and Great Gray, Ural, Boreal owls, all of which nest in this little-birded region. We'll also watch for Eurasian Moose (called "Elk" in the Old World) and the unusual Raccoon Dog. Night in Joensuu.



*The mightiest of the mustelids, Wolverines have a thriving population in Finland along the border with Russia. We hope to see one or more from special cabins built for observing these powerful, playful carnivores.  
Photograph by Jari Peltomäki.*

**Day 6, Fri, May 20. To Lieksa.** From Joensuu, we'll travel to Lieksa via beautiful Koli National Park. In the late nineteenth century, the 1138-foot Koli mountain became a sort of "national landscape" of Finland, a symbol during the National Romantic era that inspired many Finnish artists and poets. We will bird the iconic landscapes at Ukko-Koli and enjoy the Ukko Visitor Center before continuing to Lieksa, where we'll lodge at the humble Hotel Puustelli. After an early dinner, we'll make an exciting excursion to Erä-Eero, a Wolverine watching site set in the remote wilderness near Lieksa. We will spend the evening in a comfortable viewing cabin and hope to encounter this engaging animal. Gray Wolf and Eurasian Brown Bear sometimes appear here, as do twilight-active birds such as Eurasian Woodcock. Those wishing to spend the entire evening in the viewing cabin may do so! They are appointed fairly well for overnight stays. For those wishing to return to rest at the hotel, we'll depart the cabins at 11 p.m. Night in Lieksa.

**Day 7, Sat, May 21. To Oulu.** From Lieksa, we'll drive to Oulu on the Gulf of Bothnia, passing through the picturesque Kainuu district en route. After getting settled at the Finlandia Airport Hotel, we'll begin birding the coastal meadows and marshes. Raptors dot the landscape: White-tailed Eagles, Eurasian Marsh-Harriers, and Northern (Hen) Harriers patrol the gulf shoreline, and Pallid Harrier often nests in the area (Montagu's Harrier is rare). A few pairs of Terek Sandpipers nest near town around the harbor, so we'll be vigilant for them, and to the south, we'll visit Liminganlahti (Liminka Bay), an internationally important wetland reserve where Whooper Swan, Graylag Goose, Garganey, Common Pochard, Tufted Duck, Common and Red-breasted mergansers, Velvet Scoter, Horned Grebe, and Common Crane are often present and likely shorebirds include Spotted Redshank, Black-tailed Godwit, Northern Lapwing, Eurasian Curlew, Common Redshank, Common Greenshank, Common Ringed Plover, and Ruff—all in stunning breeding plumages. Little, Common, Arctic, and Caspian terns forage and gather along the gulf shorelines, and in the reedbeds, Sedge Warblers sing lustily. Open-country species such as Eurasian Skylark, Meadow Pipit, Whinchat, Ortolan Bunting, and Yellowhammer round out the birding, and late, lingering, or vagrant birds might also turn up in this dynamic migratory corridor, so we'll remember to watch for migrants as well as nesting species, keeping Black-bellied Plover, Red Knot, Curlew Sandpiper, Black-tailed Godwit, and Broad-billed Sandpiper especially in mind. Night in Oulu.

**Day 8, Sun, May 22. Oulu.** The area around Oulu is best known for its healthy populations of breeding owls. Their numbers fluctuate, depending on prey abundance, but in most years, Eurasian Pygmy-Owl and the larger Great Gray, Boreal, Ural, and Short-eared owls are present in the vicinity. Eurasian Eagle-Owls also nest but are notoriously shy birds here, and Northern Hawk Owls nest unpredictably, as do Long-eared Owls, absent in most years but present when voles abound. Most of these owl species also nest farther north, so we won't be discouraged if we don't experience a rare "royal flush" of owls during our first week! Eurasian Three-toed and Black woodpeckers and the always fascinating Eurasian Wrynecks inhabit the same woodlands, and we might also encounter a Western Capercaillie, Black Grouse, or even Hazel Grouse here. Eurasian Nutcrackers, Long-tailed and Crested tits, Wood and Garden warblers, Common Rosefinches, and Ortolan Buntings are other enticements to enjoy a full day afield. Night in Oulu.

**Day 9, Mon, May 23. To Kuusamo.** After fine birding days around Oulu, we'll drive eastward this morning to Kuusamo, birding along the way and watching especially for Little Gull and Smew before checking in to the Hotel Scandic Rukahovi. An exciting birding destination, Kuusamo is also renowned for its lovely landscapes. Both boreal and eastern species breed in this region, and we will look for Siberian Jay, Gray-headed Chickadee, Red and Parrot crossbills, and Black and Eurasian Three-toed woodpeckers in the expansive taiga. These vast forests are also excellent grouse habitat, and an evening grouse drive will search for Willow Ptarmigan, Black Grouse, Western Capercaillie, and the even-more-elusive Hazel Grouse. Night in Kuusamo.

**Day 10, Tue, May 24. Kuusamo.** Red-flanked Bluetail is likely to be a bird we seek today, here at the extreme western edge of its range on the forested slopes of Valtavaara or Iivaara. Searching for this species involves one or two steep uphill climbs, the only such walks on this tour. We'll also keep an eye skyward for Golden Eagle, Merlin, and Rough-legged Hawk, all of which breed here. Taiga Bean-Goose, Velvet Scoter, Common Goldeneye, Spotted Redshank, Green and Wood sandpipers, and a few Jack Snipe nest in the mosaic of lakes, bogs, and meadows, and in the woods and edges, we may find Bohemian Waxwing, Gray Wagtail, White-throated Dipper, Rustic and Little buntings, Goldcrest, Brambling, Common Rosefinch, Eurasian Bullfinch, and Eurasian Siskin. In the evening, we'll hope to see Eurasian Brown Bears from special blinds set up for bear viewing. Night in Kuusamo.

**Day 11, Wed, May 25. Kuusamo.** Our schedule today will be flexible, tailored to find the species that have eluded us thus far. In most years, Northern Hawk Owl and Boreal Owl breed in Kuusamo area, and we'll likely still be looking for an owl, a grouse, or even two. Time permitting, we'll also check the town landfill for gulls; Heuglin's or Siberian Gull (*Larus*



*fuscus heuglini*), treated as a distinct species by some authors, is sometimes present here. If luck is with us, we might be able to work in a visit to beautiful Oulanka National Park, famed for its virgin old-growth forest. Night in Kuusamo.

**Day 12, Thu, May 26. To Ivalo!** Today, we'll head north, crossing the Arctic Circle, making birding stops along the way. In the far north of Finland, the short nights do not get very dark, and the coniferous forests give way to landscapes dominated by Mountain Birch and dotted with bogs, whose edges hold nesting Broad-billed Sandpiper, Whimbrel, Spotted Redshank, and Ruff along with the more common Wood Sandpiper. Reed Bunting, Brambling, Western Yellow Wagtail (Gray-headed, subspecies *thunbergi*), Northern Wheatear, and the stunning Bluethroat breed in this stretch as well. This day involves a fair bit of driving, which we'll break with birding and a picnic, and possibly a whistle stop in Pyhä-Luosto National Park, to arrive in the late afternoon for check-in at the Hotel Ivalo. Night in Ivalo.

**Day 13, Fri, May 27.** After breakfast, we'll drive toward the northernmost part of mainland Europe. We'll still be in range of two special (and often shy) Finnish birds—Siberian Jay and Gray-headed Chickadee—and of the erratic and retiring Pine Grosbeak, which can often be found north of the hotel. Great Gray Shrike, Peregrine Falcon, and Rough-legged Hawk sometimes hunt near town as well. As the landscape opens, we'll be looking for the glorious Eurasian Dotterel, European Golden-Plover, Long-tailed Jaeger, Common Redpoll, Eurasian Siskin, and perhaps Rock Ptarmigan or Hoary Redpoll. If we run into groups of Ruff, we'll stop to watch the males, to see if they live up to their old scientific name, *Philomachus pugnax*, "battle-loving fighter." If the spring has been late in arriving to the north, as sometimes happens, we might see flocks of staging geese, which we'll check for Tundra Bean-Goose and perhaps rarer species. Night in Ivalo.

**Day 14, Sat, May 28.** We will be up early to enjoy another fantastic Scandinavian breakfast before heading to the Ivalo airport. Flights usually leave Ivalo in the morning just after 8:00 a.m., and we'll fly as a group to Helsinki. We'll collect our bags, hug (if that's an option!), and then prepare for our international flights.

## About Your Guide

**Eric Hynes** has been fascinated by birds and passionate about birding since he first heard the ghostly wailing of a Common Loon at summer camp in Maine more than 30 years ago. Upon completion of his B.S. at the University of Vermont, where he studied environmental studies and wildlife biology, Eric began a serious endeavor as a bird hobo that lasted more than a decade. His travels ranged across the U.S. with a number of trips to Central America as well. During this quest, Eric did everything from monitoring breeding raptors in the Snake River Canyon, to guiding for two summers in Alaska on St. Paul Island in the Pribilofs, to ground squirrel rustling in Montana, to owl banding and hawk counting in Pennsylvania.

Getting married to Christine helped settle Eric into a fulltime position at Maine Audubon but not until after a birding trip to Panama cleverly disguised as their honeymoon. As the staff naturalist and adult education coordinator, Eric taught numerous bird identification workshops and led field trips locally and abroad for Maine Audubon. His positive energy and infectious enthusiasm for all things wild has drawn many a convert to birding and conservation. Eric served several terms on the Maine Bird Records Committee.

Eric and his family recently relocated to Telluride, Colorado where he focuses on tracking down Gunnison Sage-Grouse and rosy-finches as a scout in-residence for the Colorado Grouse tour.

Visit <https://fieldguides.com/our-staff/> to view complete tour schedules for the guides; just click on their photos.

*"I'd absolutely travel with guide **Eric Hynes** again. He was fabulous. Eric exceeded my expectations in his interest in the entire habitat and the life it supports. Everything on the tour was perfectly organized and executed." D. M., Colorado Grouse*

## Financial Information

**FEE: \$6775 from Helsinki**

**DEPOSIT: \$675 per person**

**FINAL PAYMENT DUE: January 15, 2022**

**SINGLE SUPPLEMENT (Optional\*): \$825**

**LIMIT: 11**

**Special Note: Tour fees may be subject to change due to the global economic effects of COVID-19.**

We have published the itinerary and price for this tour with the understanding that during these uncertain times we are likely to encounter unforeseen changes. Some of our tours may incur higher costs due to increases in currency exchange rate fluctuations or COVID-19 related fees imposed by countries and/or suppliers. Travel and hospitality companies all over the world have been adversely affected by the pandemic, and there is no guarantee that all of the lodging and transportation we have booked for this tour will still be available at the time of departure. We hope to maintain our services as indicated in our itinerary as well as our published tour fee. However, if changes are required we will make every effort to maintain the quality of the itinerary as it is published with the most appropriate substitutions available. Should any necessary changes or other unforeseen causes result in an increase in service rates to us, we reserve the right to pass on those increases in fees to the tour participant.

## Other Things You Need to Know

**TOUR MANAGER:** The manager for this tour is Nicole Cannon. Nicole will be happy to assist you in preparing for the tour. If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to call her! Her direct phone line is 512-900-7792 or you can email her at [ncannon@fieldguides.com](mailto:ncannon@fieldguides.com).

**ACCOMMODATIONS:** Accommodations are all comfortable and modern on this tour. In the daily itinerary above, we have named each lodging specifically, so that participants will be able to explore them online more fully. It is possible that some of the lodging arrangements will change, but in that case, we will use a lodging of similar quality. **\*\*Note\*\*** In Finland, it is not customary to have king/queen beds, or even double beds, in hotel rooms. Instead, the majority of hotels have twin (single) beds that are situated close to each other. Upon request, these beds can be pushed together to create more of a larger "full/king" bed feel. Please advise your tour manager, Nicole, if you want this to be done in your room.

**AIR ARRANGEMENTS:** For those arriving independently of the group, please meet your guide and other participants at 10:30 a.m. in the arrivals hall of the international airport in Helsinki on 16 May (for lunch and midday birding) or else in the lobby of the Hotel Nuuksio in Espoo at 6:00 p.m. We will dine as a group, get acquainted, and go over plans for the coming days. If you do not plan to meet the group at the airport, please let our office know your plans in advance.

Field Guides is a full service travel agency and your tour manager will be happy to assist you with flights to join this tour. Field Guides does not charge a service fee for these services to clients booking a tour. However, we understand that tech-savvy clients often prefer to shop online or that you may wish to use mileage to purchase tickets. Regardless of which method you choose, your tour manager will be happy to provide assistance regarding ticket prices and schedules, along with rental cars and extra hotel nights as needed.

Please be sure to check with your tour manager prior to purchasing your ticket to make sure the flights you have chosen will work well with the tour itinerary and that the tour is sufficiently subscribed to operate. Once purchased, most airline tickets are non-refundable and carry a penalty to change. Field Guides cannot be responsible for these fees. **Also, it is imperative that we receive a copy of your comprehensive flight itinerary—including any and all flights not covered in the tour fee—so that we may track you in the event of missed connections, delays, or other mishaps.**

**LUGGAGE:** Please be aware that many airlines have recently modified their luggage policies and are charging additional fees for checked bags. Updates could easily occur before your departure, so you may wish to contact your airline to verify the policy. Additional charges for bags on any flights, whether these are covered by the tour fee or not, will be the client's responsibility.

**TOUR INCLUSIONS/EXCLUSIONS:** The **tour fee** is **\$6775** for one person in double occupancy\* from Helsinki. It includes all lodging from Day 2 through Day 13, all meals from lunch on Day 2 through breakfast on Day 14, all ground transportation, entrance fees, and the guide services of the tour leader(s). Tipping at group meals and for drivers, porters, and local guides is included in your tour fee and will be handled for the group by your Field Guides leader(s). However, if you would like to recognize your Field Guides leader(s) or any local guide(s) for exceptional service, it is entirely appropriate to tip. We emphasize that such tips are optional and not expected.

The above fee does not include your airfare to and from Helsinki, airport taxes, any checked or carry-on baggage charges imposed by the airlines, any alcoholic beverages, optional tips to local drivers, phone calls, laundry, or other items of a personal nature.

The **single supplement** for the tour is **\$825**. Our tour fees are based on double occupancy; one-half the cost of a double room is priced into the tour fee. The single supplement is calculated by taking the actual cost of a single room and subtracting one-half the cost of a double room (plus any applicable taxes).

\*If you have a trusted friend, relative, or significant other with whom you wish to share a room on tour, please let us know and your tour manager will make that assignment. However, due to recommendations from the CDC, Field Guides is not currently pairing roommates who do not know each other, and the single supplement will apply if you do not have a roommate. As of this writing (January 27, 2022), we are reviewing these CDC recommendations carefully and often and will let you know if that changes.

**TOUR LIMITS:** Our limits are firm and we don't exceed the limit by one to accommodate a couple when only one space remains open. However, on occasion, we will send along a guide in training on a tour. In these cases, one seat in the van or bus will be taken by the guide in training. Our guides will have a rotation system within the vehicle so that clients share the inconvenience equally. We hope this minor inconvenience will be more than offset by the advantages of having another guide along.

**TOUR REGISTRATION:** To register for this tour, please [contact our office](#). Our office will be in touch with you by email by the next business day (Mon-Fri) with instructions on how to complete our new electronic registration form and medical questionnaire. (We are no longer accepting the paper version.)

Please mail your **deposit of \$675** per person, or see our Payment Options at <https://fieldguides.com/payment-options/>. **Full payment** of the tour fee is due 120 days prior to departure, or **by January 15, 2022**. **We will bill you for the final payment at either 120 days or when the tour has reached sufficient subscription to operate, whichever date comes later.**

Please note that if you are traveling on a tour **outside your country of domicile** (for example, outside the US for US residents), we will require **proof of travel insurance**. Since the cost of your trip insurance and airline tickets is generally non-refundable, please do not finalize these purchases until you have received final billing for the tour or have been advised that the tour is sufficiently subscribed to operate by your tour manager.

**SMOKING:** Almost all of our clients prefer a smoke-free environment. If you smoke, please be sensitive to the group and refrain from smoking at meals, in vehicles, and in proximity to the group on trails and elsewhere.

**CANCELLATION POLICY: FOR 2022 TOURS:** Refund of deposit and payment, less \$100 handling fee, will be made if cancellation is received up to 120 days before departure. If cancellation occurs between 119 and 70 days before the departure date, 50% of the tour fee is refundable. Thereafter, all deposits and payments are not refundable and non-transferable. **FOR 2023 TOURS & BEYOND:** Note that beginning in 2023, the 50% refund period will become 179 to 90 days before departure, with no refund thereafter.

Our cancellation policy only applies to payments made to Field Guides for tour (and any services included in those fees). Airline tickets not included in the tour fee and purchased separately often carry penalties for cancellation or change, or are sometimes totally non-refundable. Additionally, if you take out trip insurance the cost of that insurance is not refundable, so it is best to purchase the policy just prior to making full payment for the tour or at the time you purchase airline tickets, depending upon the airline's restrictions.

The right is reserved to cancel any tour prior to departure. In most such cases, full refund will constitute full settlement to the passenger. Note this exception, however: If you have been advised pre-tour that there is a non-refundable portion of your tour fee no matter the reason for Field Guides cancellation of the tour, that portion will not be refunded. The right is reserved to substitute in case of emergency another guide for the original one.

**TRIP CANCELLATION & MEDICAL EMERGENCY INSURANCE:** We strongly recommend you consider purchasing trip cancellation (including medical emergency) insurance to cover your investment in case of injury or illness to you or your family prior to or during a trip. If you are traveling on a tour **outside your country of domicile** (for example, outside the US for US residents), we will **require proof of travel insurance**. Because we must remit early (and substantial) tour deposits to our suppliers, you acknowledge and agree that we will not issue a refund when cancellation occurs within 70 days of departure, and only a partial refund from 70 to 119 days prior to departure (see CANCELLATION POLICY). In addition, the Department of State strongly urges Americans to consult with their medical insurance company prior to traveling abroad to confirm whether their policy applies overseas and if it will cover emergency expenses such as a medical evacuation. US medical insurance plans seldom cover health costs incurred outside the United States unless supplemental coverage is purchased. Furthermore, US Medicare and Medicaid programs do not provide payment for medical services outside the United States.

When making a decision regarding health insurance, Americans should consider that many foreign doctors and hospitals require payment in cash prior to providing service and that a medical evacuation to the United States may cost well in excess of \$50,000. Uninsured travelers who require medical care overseas often face extreme difficulties. When consulting with your insurer prior to your trip, please ascertain whether payment will be made to the overseas healthcare provider or whether you will be reimbursed later for expenses that you incur.

US citizens will receive information from us regarding optional tour cancellation/emergency medical insurance. Our agent, CSA, will insure for trip cancellation and interruption, medical coverage, travel delay, baggage loss and delay, and emergency medical transportation. If you purchase the insurance prior to, or within 24 hours of making final payment for the tour, and cover all non-refundable parts of the trip (including any non-refundable flights and in some cases, other arrangements), pre-existing conditions are covered. You may purchase your CSA policy on-line by visiting our website at <https://fieldguides.com/trip-cancellation-insurance/> and clicking the link to CSA. The CSA webpage also includes a contact number.

**Currently we are unable to offer CSA insurance policies to residents of New York and Hawaii.** We have had clients provide positive feedback after acquiring insurance thru InsureMyTrip (<https://www.insuremytrip.com/>) in the past, and would suggest that company as an alternative. When purchasing insurance with a company other than CSA, you will want to understand whether the timing of your purchase will affect coverage before paying your first deposit. Insurance purchase requirements can vary from company to company, and such requirements could limit your options if you do not look into this until making your final payment for your tour. Please let us know if you have any questions about this.

Please note, once the insurance is purchased it is non-refundable, so please check with your tour manager prior to making the purchase to assure the tour will operate as scheduled. Citizens of other countries are urged to consult their insurance broker.

**RESPONSIBILITY:** For and in consideration of the opportunity to participate in the tour, each tour participant and each parent or legal guardian of a tour participant who is under 18 agrees to release, indemnify, and hold harmless Field Guides Incorporated, its agents, servants, employees, shareholders, officers, directors, attorneys, and contractors as more fully set forth in the Release and Indemnity Agreement on the reverse side of the registration form. Field Guides Incorporated acts only as an agent for the passenger in regard to travel, whether by railroad, motorcar, motorcoach, boat, airplane, or other means, and assumes no liability for injury, damage, loss, accident, delay, or irregularity caused by defect in such vehicles or for any reason whatsoever, including the acts, defaults, or bankruptcies of any company or person engaged in conveying the passenger or in carrying out the arrangements of the tour. You acknowledge and agree that Field Guides Incorporated is not responsible for losses or additional expenses due to delay or changes in air or other services, sickness, weather, strike, war, quarantine, or other causes. The tour participant shall bear all such losses and expenses. Field Guides Incorporated reserves the right to substitute hotels of similar category for those indicated and to make any changes in the itinerary where deemed necessary or caused by changes in air schedules. Field Guides Incorporated reserves the right to decline to accept or to retain any person as a member of any tour. Baggage is at owner's risk entirely.

Participants should be in good health and should consult a physician before undertaking a tour. If you have questions about the physical requirements of a tour, please contact our office for further information. Participants should prepare for the tour by reading the detailed itinerary, the information bulletin, and other pertinent matter provided by Field Guides. Each participant is responsible for bringing appropriate clothing and equipment as recommended in our bulletins.

THE RECEIPT OF YOUR TOUR DEPOSIT SHALL BE DEEMED TO BE CONSENT TO THE ABOVE CONDITIONS. EACH TOUR PARTICIPANT AND EACH PARENT OR LEGAL GUARDIAN OF A TOUR PARTICIPANT WHO IS UNDER 18 SHALL SIGN AND DELIVER THE RELEASE AND INDEMNITY AGREEMENT AT THE TIME OF REGISTRATION.

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Field Guides Incorporated is an equal opportunity service provider.