

Trip Report — Finland in Spring: Forests, Fowl, & Fur 2026

May 14-27, 2026 with Chris Benesh & Kari Engelbarth



Jeff Stacey's exquisite shot of Willow Warbler, whose lovely Canyon Wren-like song was an integral part of the soundscape of this tour.

2026 marked the fourth year of Field Guides return to Finland. Finnature's Kari Engelbarth was tasked with guiding us around this fascinating country of 5.6 million people. Having roughly 48 people per square mile, Finland has the third lowest population density of any European country. Finland is a land of many lakes and vast expanses of coniferous forests, dominated by Scots Pine and Norway Spruce. The principle non-conifers are birches. I found myself frequently mentally comparing the landscape to visually similar ones in North America and contemplating which bird species were ecological replacements for familiar ones found in our northern latitudes.

We got started in Helsinki, the capital of Finland where about a quarter of the country's population is centered. Despite this, Helsinki has a relaxed vibe. Motorists drive the speed limit, litter is rare, and folks seem to have a quiet, reserved contentedness. The birding here was very productive. We visited a marsh, Espoo--Laajalahti Maari, where we saw a wonderful assortment of waders and waterfowl. Eurasian Oystercatcher, Little Ringed Plover, Northern Lapwing, Black-tailed Godwit, Common Redshank, and Temminck's Stint were among the shorebird highlights. Our only Common Pochard was here.



We saw several species of gull on the tour but none as striking as the Little Gull. Photo by Chris Benesh.

The following day was filled with travel as we headed northeast toward the massive inland lakes complex which includes the massive Lake Saimaa. We had a few productive birding stops along the way, but it was a boat trip out of Oravi that was the main event. This trip is geared toward observing Saimaa Seals, a freshwater species formally elevated to full species status in

2025, making it one of the rarest mammals in the world with an estimated population of roughly 500. This species became landlocked geologically and developed adaptations (dentition and skull morphology) to a diet specific to the fishes found in Lake Saimaa. It was these morphological changes, along with genetic drift, that lead to these seals being determined a full species. We had great views of at least four seals, but alas, the trip was also memorable for the rain shower we experienced along the way. Yikes! We finished up the day with a nice sighting of Short-eared Owl on our way to Savonlinna.



Kari took us to a small lake with this stunning Horned Grebe, known in Europe as Slavonian Grebe. Photo by Jeff Stacey.

The next day had a few interesting sightings as well travel toward Joensuu. A roadside stop to check out some Barnacle Geese ended up with brief sightings for some of a pair of Corncrakes. Later in the day, we visited Höytiäisen lintuasema. This charming spot was terrific. Highlights here included Eurasian Three-toed Woodpecker and Red-breasted Flycatcher,

along with Eurasian Wren, Great Spotted Woodpecker, Wood Warbler and others. Our time around Joensuu also included a circuit southeast of the city that took us to some interesting habitats in far eastern Finland, where we encountered massive goose flocks and a smattering of new birds for us, such as Garden Warbler, Black Kite, our first Black Grouse, Northern Wheatear, a couple of Tundra Bean Geese, Common Cuckoos, and more Common Rosefinches.



Our proximity to Russia brought us into the range of several primarily Siberian birds, such as this aptly named Siberian Jay, cousin to the Canada Jay. Photo by Jeff Stacey.

North of Joensuu we visited Koli National Park with its sweeping vistas. A stop at Ahvenisen kiosk featured showy, Red-necked Grebe and Arctic Loon! Then it was on to Lieksa to check in to the hotel there before heading out to the wolverine blind near Eräeero Tmi Eero Kortelainen. This was quite a unique experience for all. The viewing blind featured a sitting room overlooking a large pond, with a secondary room with bunk beds available to anyone needing some sleep. Our vigil continued throughout the night. A

wolverine was spotted around 9:20 in the evening and showed well several times over the next 30-40 minutes. Another one appeared briefly in the early morning hours. We spent a lot of time watching the antics of a Mallard group. A few goodies dropped by, including a Green Sandpiper, Old World cousin to the Solitary Sandpiper. Other sightings included a pair of Common Goldeneye, Great and Lesser Spotted woodpeckers, Mistle Thrush, Tree Pipit and more. Sometime after 8:00 am the next morning we departed the blind and headed back to the hotel to get some more rest before our afternoon drive to the Oulu area. On our way there we stopped to see a couple of wonderful Ural Owls.



We also managed to track down a Gray-headed Chickadee, or perhaps better known as Siberian Tit in the Old World. Photo by Chris Benesh.

The following day we hit a few stops southwest of Oulu and saw some wonderful birds. A juvenile Boreal Owl (called Tengmalm's Owl in Europe) peered back at us from its nest hole, and nearby was a nesting Black Woodpecker. We went to see a nesting Great Gray Owl as well. We braved

some high winds scanning waters with lots of flyby Black-headed Gulls and a few Red-breasted Mergansers, and lots of Great Cormorants. The Liminka-Virkkula bird tower was a great spot for seeing a variety of species. We had some good studies of Ruff here, and Kari picked out a distant roosting Pied Avocet from the masses. At Lumijoki--Varjakka we had our only Spotted Flycatcher of the trip. After dinner that night, some of us headed into Oulu to track down a lonely Terek Sandpiper singing from atop a light standard. We also had great looks at Mountain Hare while there. The next morning, we had some decent birding despite the weather. Highlights included a couple of Gray Partridges, Black-tailed Godwit, and Common Snipe. A few other highlights from the Oulu area included Ortolan Buntings, a stunning Horned Grebe, Common Cuckoo, Gray-headed Woodpecker, and Eurasian Wren. The afternoon was spent driving north to Kuusamo. But we did stop to enjoy a pair of Smew along the way.



Another Siberian bird was this handsome Rustic Bunting photographed by Jeff Stacey.

Our first morning in Kuusamo began with a 3:00 am start. Kari assured us that we would be rewarded by making an early run to search for grouse. It did indeed! We had some Black Grouse, Willow Ptarmigan, and several Western Capercaillie, including a couple of males displaying right on the road. We also had Green and Wood sandpipers, Bohemian Waxwing, Song Thrush, and Willow Tit. We were back by 8:30 for breakfast and a long break before our afternoon birding, checking various wetlands. The following morning, we tracked down some Siberian Jays near Ruka, then had a lovely Rustic Bunting east of there, along with a couple more jays. We took a hike in search of Red-flanked Bluetail but came up empty with that species. But along the way had great views of Bullfinch, Eurasian Siskin, and Willow Tit. That afternoon most of us headed to the bear blind near Kuntijarvi. The bears put in the briefest of appearances, but the birding was quite good. We enjoyed point blank views of Wood Sandpiper and Common Snipe, and a couple of White-tailed Eagles put on a show. Gulls were pretty good too. We had several European Herring Gulls, a few Baltic Gulls (dark subspecies of Lesser Black-backed, sometimes split), and some Common Gulls. A Black Grouse was a nice sight on the way back to our hotel late that evening.



Thanks to the efforts of Finnature, we saw several rarely encountered owl species. This included this juvenile Boreal Owl. European populations are known as Tengmalm's Owl. Photo by Chris Benesh.

Our final morning near Kuusamo was spent tracking down White-throated Dipper and some Goosanders (Old World form of Common Merganser) deserving of full species status. We also caught up with Gray-headed Chickadee (known in Europe as Siberian Tit). A few stops for waterfowl (including Smew) then an otherwise long drive to Ivalo, our base for our final birding time in Finland. Our time in Ivalo began with an ambitious pre-breakfast hike to look for ptarmigan at Kilopaa. The steep trail rises out of the conifers and into tundra. Along the way, we encountered several Willow Ptarmigan, Bluethroat, Meadow Pipit, European Golden-Plover, and ultimately, a male Rock Ptarmigan! The other highlight of the day was a delicious lunch at Neljän Tuulen Tupa. There were some wonderful feeders there, and we had good views of Pine Grosbeak and European Greenfinch along with others. Later in the day we went looking for Dotterel but came away with a few golden plovers. The last birding of the trip was going out in search of Little Bunting. We could hear three different birds, but they gave

just the briefest of views. Then it was time to pack for our flight back to Helsinki and say our farewells to Kari.

I want to thank you all for being such terrific company on this adventure. As it was my first time there, there was a lot of learning on the fly and difficulty answering certain questions. I appreciate your patience with me. A few of you may have heard this news elsewhere in your travels, but I wanted to share a moment of reflection in remembrance of Val Phillips who passed away peacefully earlier this summer. Safe travels to all of you!

Mammals seen on the tour:

European Hare (*Lepus europaeus*)
Mountain Hare (*Lepus timidus*)
European Red Squirrel (*Sciurus vulgaris*)
Red Fox (*Vulpes vulpes*)
Brown Bear (*Ursus arctos*)
Wolverine (*Gulo gulo*)
Saimaa Seal (*Pusa saimensis*)
Moose (*Alces alces*)
Caribou (*Rangifer tarandus*)
Western Roe Deer (*Capreolus capreolus*)

You can see my complete trip report on eBird at this link:

<https://ebird.org/tripreport/522157>

You can see my iNaturalist report of non-avian taxa at this link:

<https://www.inaturalist.org/projects/field-guides-finland-tour-2026>

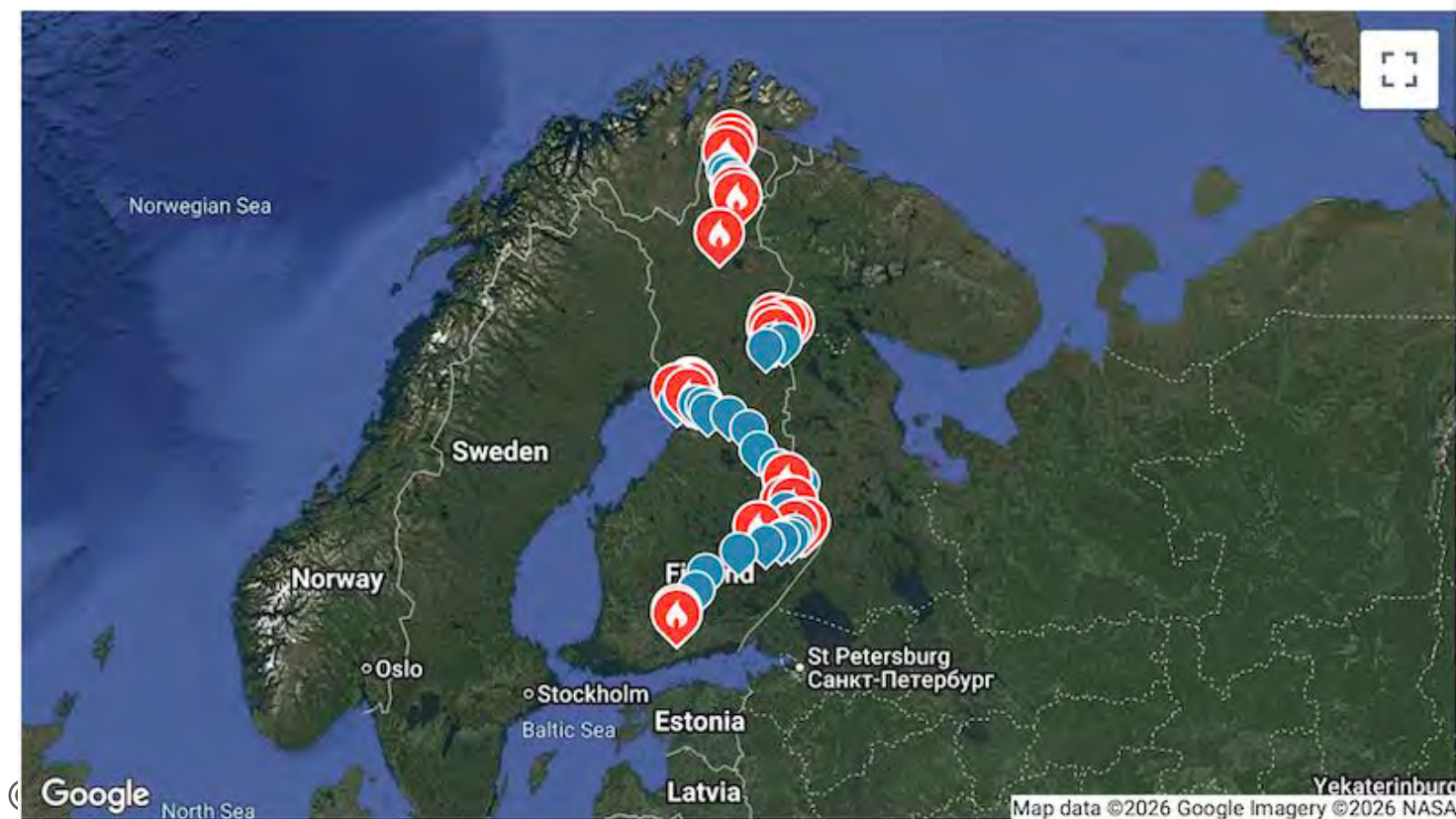
You can download a combined PDF of this page and the eBird report at this link: <https://fieldguides.com/triplists/fin26TRIPLIST.pdf>

-- Chris

Field Guides Birding Tours -- FINLAND, 2026 (with guides Chris Benesh & Kari Engelbarth)



15 – 27 May 2026 (13 days) [Link-only](#)



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 [Chris Benesh](#), [fgi Triplists](#)



For a narrative summary of this tour, including a Field Guides photo gallery and additional...

DATA FOR: **Group (all people)** ▾

 **153**

Species Observed

 **88**

Checklists

 **1**

Species with Photos

Species Observed

[Show all details](#)

41	Graylag Goose	<i>Anser anser</i>	▶  3
6	Greater White-fronted Goose	<i>Anser albifrons</i>	▶  1
4	Tundra Bean-Goose	<i>Anser serrirostris</i>	▶  2
26,063	Barnacle Goose	<i>Branta leucopsis</i>	▶  11
5	Canada Goose	<i>Branta canadensis</i> *	▶  2
5	Mute Swan	<i>Cygnus olor</i>	▶  1
194	Whooper Swan	<i>Cygnus cygnus</i>	▶  18
7	Common Shelduck	<i>Tadorna tadorna</i>	▶  2
5	Northern Shoveler	<i>Spatula clypeata</i>	▶  3

1	Gadwall	<i>Mareca strepera</i>	▶  1
18	Eurasian Wigeon	<i>Mareca penelope</i>	▶  9
186	Mallard	<i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>	▶  11
5	Northern Pintail	<i>Anas acuta</i>	▶  2
9	Green-winged Teal	<i>Anas crecca</i>	▶  6
1	Common Pochard	<i>Aythya ferina</i>	▶  1
82	Tufted Duck	<i>Aythya fuligula</i>	▶  11
2	Greater Scaup	<i>Aythya marila</i>	▶  1
1	Velvet Scoter	<i>Melanitta fusca</i>	▶  1
97	Common Goldeneye	<i>Bucephala clangula</i>	▶  15
10	Smew	<i>Mergellus albellus</i>	▶  6
30	Common Merganser	<i>Mergus merganser</i>	▶  6
8	Red-breasted Merganser	<i>Mergus serrator</i>	▶  6
6	Willow Ptarmigan	<i>Lagopus lagopus</i>	▶  2
1	Rock Ptarmigan	<i>Lagopus muta</i>	▶  1
8	Western Capercaillie	<i>Tetrao urogallus</i>	▶  1
10	Black Grouse	<i>Lyrurus tetrix</i>	▶  5
2	Gray Partridge	<i>Perdix perdix</i>	▶  1
2	Ring-necked Pheasant	<i>Phasianus colchicus</i> *	▶  2
4	Rock Pigeon	<i>Columba livia</i> *	▶  1

1	Stock Dove	<i>Columba oenas</i>	▶  1
27	Common Wood-Pigeon	<i>Columba palumbus</i>	▶  7
7	Common Cuckoo	<i>Cuculus canorus</i>	▶  6
3	Corn Crane	<i>Crex crex</i>	▶  2
2	Eurasian Coot	<i>Fulica atra</i>	▶  1
19	Common Crane	<i>Grus grus</i>	▶  5
1	Pied Avocet	<i>Recurvirostra avosetta</i>	▶  1
7	Eurasian Oystercatcher	<i>Haematopus ostralegus</i>	▶  2
6	European Golden-Plover	<i>Pluvialis apricaria</i>	▶  3
2	Common Ringed Plover	<i>Charadrius hiaticula</i>	▶  1
3	Little Ringed Plover	<i>Thinornis dubius</i>	▶  1
71	Northern Lapwing	<i>Vanellus vanellus</i>	▶  14
2	Eurasian Whimbrel	<i>Numenius phaeopus</i>	▶  2
14	Eurasian Curlew	<i>Numenius arquata</i>	▶  10
1	Bar-tailed Godwit	<i>Limosa lapponica</i>	▶  1
5	Black-tailed Godwit	<i>Limosa limosa</i>	▶  4
3	Eurasian Woodcock	<i>Scolopax rusticola</i>	▶  3
18	Common Snipe	<i>Gallinago gallinago</i>	▶  8
1	Terek Sandpiper	<i>Xenus cinereus</i>	▶  1
11	Common Sandpiper	<i>Actitis hypoleucos</i>	▶  6

3	Green Sandpiper	<i>Tringa ochropus</i>	▶  3
13	Wood Sandpiper	<i>Tringa glareola</i>	▶  5
11	Common Redshank	<i>Tringa totanus</i>	▶  4
5	Common Greenshank	<i>Tringa nebularia</i>	▶  5
9	Ruff	<i>Calidris pugnax</i>	▶  4
3	Temminck's Stint	<i>Calidris temminckii</i>	▶  1
1	Dunlin	<i>Calidris alpina</i>	▶  1
298	Little Gull	<i>Hydrocoloeus minutus</i>	▶  7
477	Black-headed Gull	<i>Chroicocephalus ridibundus</i>	▶  22
75	Common Gull	<i>Larus canus</i>	▶  18
35	European Herring Gull	<i>Larus argentatus</i>	▶  6
10	Lesser Black-backed Gull	<i>Larus fuscus</i>	▶  3
7	Caspian Tern	<i>Hydroprogne caspia</i>	▶  2
10	Arctic Tern	<i>Sterna paradisaea</i>	▶  4
36	Common Tern	<i>Sterna hirundo</i>	▶  14
3	Horned Grebe	<i>Podiceps auritus</i>	▶  2
7	Red-necked Grebe	<i>Podiceps grisegena</i>	▶  3
9	Great Crested Grebe	<i>Podiceps cristatus</i>	▶  3
17	Arctic Loon	<i>Gavia arctica</i>	▶  5
157	Great Cormorant	<i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>	▶  4

1	Great Egret	<i>Ardea alba</i>	▶  1
1	Gray Heron	<i>Ardea cinerea</i>	▶  1
2	Osprey	<i>Pandion haliaetus</i>	▶  2
2	European Honey-buzzard	<i>Pernis apivorus</i>	▶  3  2
1	Eurasian Sparrowhawk	<i>Accipiter nisus</i>	▶  1
4	Western Marsh Harrier	<i>Circus aeruginosus</i>	▶  4
3	Hen Harrier	<i>Circus cyaneus</i>	▶  2
1	Black Kite	<i>Milvus migrans</i>	▶  1
9	White-tailed Eagle	<i>Haliaeetus albicilla</i>	▶  5
1	Rough-legged Hawk	<i>Buteo lagopus</i>	▶  1
1	Common Buzzard	<i>Buteo buteo</i>	▶  1
2	Ural Owl	<i>Strix uralensis</i> Sensitive	▶  2
1	Great Gray Owl	<i>Strix nebulosa</i> Sensitive	▶  1
4	Short-eared Owl	<i>Asio flammeus</i>	▶  3
1	Boreal Owl	<i>Aegolius funereus</i>	▶  1
1	Eurasian Three-toed Woodpecker	<i>Picoides tridactylus</i>	▶  1
9	Great Spotted Woodpecker	<i>Dendrocopos major</i>	▶  8
1	Lesser Spotted Woodpecker	<i>Dryobates minor</i>	▶  1
4	Gray-headed Woodpecker	<i>Picus canus</i>	▶  2
3	Black Woodpecker	<i>Dryocopus martius</i>	▶  2

4	Eurasian Kestrel	<i>Falco tinnunculus</i>	▶  4
1	Eurasian Hobby	<i>Falco subbuteo</i>	▶  1
4	Siberian Jay	<i>Perisoreus infaustus</i>	▶  2
6	Eurasian Magpie	<i>Pica pica</i>	▶  5
52	Eurasian Jackdaw	<i>Coloeus monedula</i>	▶  9
5	Rook	<i>Corvus frugilegus</i>	▶  1
36	Hooded Crow	<i>Corvus cornix</i>	▶  15
12	Common Raven	<i>Corvus corax</i>	▶  8
2	Coal Tit	<i>Parus ater</i>	▶  1
2	Willow Tit	<i>Poecile montanus</i>	▶  2
1	Gray-headed Chickadee	<i>Poecile cinctus</i>	▶  1
16	Eurasian Blue Tit	<i>Cyanistes caeruleus</i>	▶  9
23	Great Tit	<i>Parus major</i>	▶  13
8	Eurasian Skylark	<i>Alauda arvensis</i>	▶  3
12	Sedge Warbler	<i>Acrocephalus schoenobaenus</i>	▶  6
2	Bank Swallow	<i>Riparia riparia</i>	▶  2
67	Barn Swallow	<i>Hirundo rustica</i>	▶  18
2	Western House-Martin	<i>Delichon urbicum</i>	▶  1
1	Wood Warbler	<i>Phylloscopus sibilatrix</i>	▶  1
82	Willow Warbler	<i>Phylloscopus trochilus</i>	▶  33

14	Common Chiffchaff	<i>Phylloscopus collybita</i>	▶  11
2	Garden Warbler	<i>Sylvia borin</i>	▶  2
2	Lesser Whitethroat	<i>Curruca curruca</i>	▶  2
5	Greater Whitethroat	<i>Curruca communis</i>	▶  4
1	Goldcrest	<i>Regulus regulus</i>	▶  1
2	Eurasian Wren	<i>Troglodytes troglodytes</i>	▶  2
1	White-throated Dipper	<i>Cinclus cinclus</i>	▶  1
8	European Starling	<i>Sturnus vulgaris</i>	▶  1
2	Mistle Thrush	<i>Turdus viscivorus</i>	▶  2
6	Song Thrush	<i>Turdus philomelos</i>	▶  5
14	Redwing	<i>Turdus iliacus</i>	▶  7
5	Eurasian Blackbird	<i>Turdus merula</i>	▶  4
13	Fieldfare	<i>Turdus pilaris</i>	▶  6
1	Spotted Flycatcher	<i>Muscicapa striata</i>	▶  1
5	European Robin	<i>Erithacus rubecula</i>	▶  5
2	Thrush Nightingale	<i>Luscinia luscinia</i>	▶  2
3	Bluethroat	<i>Luscinia svecica</i>	▶  2
1	Red-breasted Flycatcher	<i>Ficedula parva</i>	▶  1
22	European Pied Flycatcher	<i>Ficedula hypoleuca</i>	▶  16
1	Common Redstart	<i>Phoenicurus phoenicurus</i>	▶  1

5	Whinchat	<i>Saxicola rubetra</i>	▶  5
1	Northern Wheatear	<i>Oenanthe oenanthe</i>	▶  1
8	Bohemian Waxwing	<i>Bombycilla garrulus</i>	▶  2
2	House Sparrow	<i>Passer domesticus</i>	▶  1
1	Eurasian Tree Sparrow	<i>Passer montanus</i>	▶  1
16	Western Yellow Wagtail	<i>Motacilla flava</i>	▶  4
28	White Wagtail	<i>Motacilla alba</i>	▶  18
4	Meadow Pipit	<i>Anthus pratensis</i>	▶  2
12	Tree Pipit	<i>Anthus trivialis</i>	▶  3
68	Common Chaffinch	<i>Fringilla coelebs</i>	▶  22
14	Brambling	<i>Fringilla montifringilla</i>	▶  12
7	Common Rosefinch	<i>Carpodacus erythrinus</i>	▶  4
1	Pine Grosbeak	<i>Pinicola enucleator</i>	▶  1
7	Eurasian Bullfinch	<i>Pyrrhula pyrrhula</i>	▶  4
7	European Greenfinch	<i>Chloris chloris</i>	▶  3
1	Eurasian Linnet	<i>Linaria cannabina</i>	▶  1
2	Redpoll	<i>Acanthis flammea</i>	▶  2
1	European Goldfinch	<i>Carduelis carduelis</i>	▶  1
17	Eurasian Siskin	<i>Spinus spinus</i>	▶  6
16	Yellowhammer	<i>Emberiza citrinella</i>	▶  8

- 4 **Ortolan Bunting** *Emberiza hortulana* ▶  1
- 20 **Reed Bunting** *Emberiza schoeniclus* ▶  11
- 3 **Little Bunting** *Emberiza pusilla* ▶  1
- 2 **Rustic Bunting** *Emberiza rustica* ▶  2

ADDITIONAL TAXA

- 4 Taiga/Tundra Bean-Goose *Anser fabalis/serrirostris* ▶  1
- 7 Anser sp. *Anser sp.* ▶  1
- 21 scoter sp. *Melanitta sp.* ▶  1
- 8 duck sp. *Anatidae (duck sp.)* ▶  1
- 1 Common/Arctic Tern *Sterna hirundo/paradisaea* ▶  1
- 1 woodpecker sp. *Picidae sp.* ▶  1
- 1 diurnal raptor sp. *Accipitriformes/Falconiformes sp.* ▶  1