

## Autumn with Birds and Dragonflies in central Sweden

Autumn in the north offers a certain atmosphere. Large numbers of birds gather in the farmland and wetlands. **Cranes** and **Bean Geese** can be counted in 5-digit numbers and Lapland birds like **Bluethroats** and several Raptors follow the migration to the still flourishing wetlands of Central Sweden. At the same time, the pineforests are more quiet, but birds like **Pygmy Owls**, **Nutcrackers**, **Crested Tits** and **Three-toed Woodpeckers** can be found.

Among the Butterflies that are still on their wings, **Camberwell Beauties** are newly hatched and as beautiful as they come, pleasing the cameras.

Early autumn is also a good time for Dragonflies with specialities like for instance two among Europe's least distributed Aeshnids; **Baltic**– and **Green Hawker**.

On this trip we combine Birds and Dragonflies and usually on the same site. We also perform a Moth-night or two hoping for charismatic **Clifden Nonpareils** or **Light Crimson Underwing**.

### DAY 1

Arrival at Västerås airport. Our first excursion goes to Hjälstaviken – a reed-fringed wetland with plenty of birds. Here we look for Europe's rarest Goose – the **Lesser White-fronted Goose**, currently growing slowly in numbers after having been hunted almost to extinction on breeding as well as wintering grounds.

These birds are the offspring of reintroduced and captivity-raised goslings, but still offer unique possibilities of putting your identification skills to the test, not to mention, holding the future of their species.

Hjälstaviken can also offer a challenge in Dragonflies, since it is a good habitat for several Hawkets and Sympetrids.

In the evening we enjoy the sunset by Lake Fläcksjön where hundreds of **Common Cranes** gather to roost. It's a spectacular and loud experience.  
Night in the Black River Valley.

For those interested we do a Moth-night one or two of these nights, selecting an interesting site where a good selection of Moths are likely to appear. **Light Crimson Underwing**, **Herald Moth** and colourful **Clifden Nonpareils** are just a couple of examples on what can be found in late summer.

### DAY 2

On the west edge of the Black River Valley, lies a vast pineforest – Hälleskogen. With plenty of bogs and myres it is an interesting area to explore on a longer walk. Here we look for **Capercaillies** and **Hazel Grouse** and **Azure Hawkets** (*Aeshna caerulea*), can be seen on the wet bogs.

Along – or in fact many times – on the gravel roads **Camberwell Beauties** often appear and this time of the year they are newly hatched and just as fresh as they get. Always challenging for pictures.

We enjoy a picnic lunch by a crystal clear forest lake, also a breeding site for **Black-throated Divers**.

**Nutcrackers** and **Crested**– and **Willow Tits** are attracted by a forest feeding station where we also spend some time.

A look around the wetlands and farmlands of the valley can be rewarding as we especially look for Birds of Prey like **Hen Harrier, Rough-legged Buzzard, Merlin and Peregrine Falcons**.

By the lakes **White-tailed Eagles, Ospreys, Hobbies and Marsh Harriers** are easy to see.

In the evening we go Owling with focus on **Pygmy Owl** – tiny but amazing creatures appearing just before dusk in forest clearings, where also mammal wildlife can be interesting.

Night in the Black River Valley.

### DAY 3

We rise early to seize the best morning activity in the forest – this time in order to find **Three-toed**– and **Black Woodpeckers**. They are attracted by good numbers of dead trees, which is why we go to a newly burnt part of the forest. It might look ugly with black trees and treestumps, but the Woodpeckers like it.

After the picknick breakfast that we enjoy in Färna ekopark together with a walk where **Grey-headed Woodpeckers** breed, we continue our drive westwards in the vast coniferous forestland Bergslagen, where sawmills and steelmanufacturing once contributed to the Swedish war-machine and even helped building the Eiffel tower in Paris. Today this mainly unpopulated area is a great place for wildlife and fishing.

A short stop by a forest lake might produce **Keeled Skimmers** (*Orthetrum coerulescens*) or **Black-throated Divers**.

Our lovely hotel herrgård for the night offers tasty food, good rooms in a tranquil setting and an evening tour in the surroundings will surely offer encounters with the king of the forest – **the Moose**.

Night in Hällefors.

### DAY 4

We enjoy a tasty hotel breakfast and leave for the near Knuthöjds mossen, where **Bog Hawkers** (*Aeshna subarctica*) might appear.

Our next target is the Kvismare valley, a farmland valley once a vast marshland, nowadays – after being drained in the early 1900's – restored to a wetland area.

A patchwork of lakes, marshes and productive farmland, attracting masses of birds – mainly Geese and Cranes, but also raptors and passerines.

Amongst raptors we look for Hen Harriers, Rough-legged Buzzards, Merlins, White-tailed Eagles, Peregrines and Ospreys, whilst **Pallid**– or **Montague's Harriers** are the raisins in the cake to look carefully for.

Among thousands of Geese, the **Taiga Bean Geese** are the most numerous, with up to 20.000 birds, but there are Barnacles, White-fronts and the odd Pinkfeet too. For those who are into intriguing identification problems it will be a challenge to find **Tundra Bean Geese** (*Anser rossicus*) and the odd **Lesser White-fronted Goose**.

If the Crane-evening in Svartådalen was spectacular, to see more than 10 times as many – up to 19.000 Common Cranes roost here in autumn – is of course overwhelming. It is in fact such a great experience that we spend an extra day and night in the area to get optimal conditions for the massive influx of birds. This is of course an event for photography or filmmaking.

Night in Kvismaren

## DAY 5

Early morning for ringing Bluethroats. We head down to the reedbed area by the lakes and will be guided by the Kvismare Bird Observatory staff. Skilled ringers will show us birds in the hand and how they are ringed, weighed and measured before being released. Reed Buntings, Reed– Sedge– and Willow Warblers are the more common species, but what we really want to see is of course the **Bluethroats**. This is the absolute best time of the year for them as they spend a couple of weeks in the rich wetlands of east central Sweden before they start to migrate.

This night we try another viewpoint to enjoy the Crane influx at night. All in order to get optimal chances of good photage and experience of this wonderful event.

Night in Kvismaren

## DAY 6

Another early morning for those who wants a pre-breakfast ringing excursion with **Bluethroats**, Warblers and **Bearded Readlings**.

Departure for Västerås airport.