



Poland: Biebrza Marshes & Bialowieza Forest

27 May - 3 June 2019

Led by Tomasz Jezierczuk & Alice Hunter



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Introduction

This dual-centre wildlife holiday was based in the Biebrza Marshes and Białowieża Forest in the north-east corner of Poland, the latter close to the Belarus border. Our main guide for the trip was Tomasz Jezierczuk, a local with phenomenal knowledge of the area and its diverse fauna and flora.

Our first base in the tiny hamlet of Dobarz in the southern half of the Biebrza Marshes had us excellently positioned for 24 hour wildlife viewing should we be so inclined. With its own wildlife ponds in the grounds and views over both forest and marshland, there were endless interesting things to be seen, heard and photographed, including the potential for large, iconic species such as Moose and Wolf. We would later move to a hotel in the small town of Białowieża itself, within a stone's throw of the UNESCO World Heritage Site for wildlife there, and with excellent wildlife viewing opportunities in abundance locally including the only extant population of European Bison. Both hotels were very traditional, clean and comfortable with excellent food provided to us every morning and evening.

We hoped therefore for good weather and good wildlife sightings in this beautiful, unspoilt corner of Poland. The 4 guests joining Tomasz and our other guide, Alice, were Nigel, Jackie, Russell and Oliver.

Day 1, Monday 27th May

After an early start for most of the group, we met with relative ease at Warsaw Airport where we were greeted by Tomasz, our local guide and Lukasz, our driver for the week. Water purchased and introductions made, we were soon heading out of the city to the North East. Along the way, a few things were spotted from the motorway including White Storks, Buzzards and a single Roe Deer.

We stopped for lunch with just over an hour of the journey under our belts and enjoyed traditional pierogi dumplings in a small restaurant. Oliver spotted a lizard in the carpark on our way out and Tomasz explained that it was more likely to be a Sand Lizard here, but it had scuttled away before a clear identification could be made.

On our way once again, we had a lesson from Tomasz about the large fauna of the country and in particular, the regular placement of green bridges to allow them to cross the motorway safely. He explained that they were already obligatory once the motorway networks had begun to be developed and are therefore a common sight. We certainly passed beneath a number of them. We also spotted a couple more White Storks, one of which was on its nest. We were told we'd see plenty more and probably be bored of them by the end of the holiday as they are so common in Poland, but for now we were pleased to get good clear views albeit at high speed as we passed!

Stop 1. It wasn't long before we were leaving the motorway once more and we had barely been on the side road two minutes when we saw a lovely male Montagu's Harrier quartering low over an arable field beside the road. A short distance further on we pulled onto a gravel track and Tomasz led us to a spot where we could see a Bee Eater colony. There were several birds on the telegraph

wires nearby and we got good views with the help of his scope to see a pair on the far side of a deep quarry.

Having had a good look at the Bee Eaters, we had a wander to take in more of our surroundings. We were parked between fields of Barley and Rye which, unlike many of our British arable crops, held treasures among their stems in the form of azure blue Cornflowers and tiny white Field Pansies. A few butterflies were on the wing, most proving to be Painted Ladies but also Common Blue and Small Heath.

Alkanet was flowering beside the track and we came across a mass of bumbling Rose Chafers busily feeding on a naturalised garden hybrid Iris. The soundtrack to much of this was a mixture of Skylarks trilling overhead, Yellowhammers singing of bread but no cheese, the cronking of a distant Raven pair and a Nightingale Thrush warbling its crystal clear notes over the top of them all. Walking a short distance down the track, Alice suddenly realised that the Goat Willow beside her bore not just one but many Cockchafers and these, plus some very large snails, were admired while a Marsh Warbler sang from the bushes.

Moving on, we stopped the vehicle a few times having spotted lovely things; first for a pair of Common Crane where a female Golden Oriole was calling nearby; then a Great Grey Shrike sitting on the telegraph wires beside the road; another pair of Cranes closer to the road and Grey Partridge.



Cockchafer © Oliver Wright

Stop 2. Our final stop was a particularly wonderful roadside spot where Tomasz managed to pick out Clouded Apollo butterflies on the verge. On clambering out to investigate, we established that there were at least four individuals, and that as well as nectaring on red clover flowers, they were making the most of the sun and basking on the lower leaves of the trees which gave us a good clear view of them. Growing here we also found *Melampyrum nemorosum*, the Wood Cow-wheat which has glorious yellow flowers beneath vibrant purple tipped leaves. There was a patch of Lily of the Valley here too but most of it was sadly going over. A little way up the road Oliver had found *Graphosoma italica*, strikingly striped red and black shield bugs which were favouring the Cow Parsley (*Anthriscus sylvestris*) here. A couple of Chequered Skippers were also found flitting from flower to flower in the dappled light and an Orange Tip skimmed past. An impressive Black Veined Moth also caught our eye and all the while, Chiffchaff, Red-breasted flycatcher and Cuckoo called from the woods around us.

A short drive onwards brought us to our first hotel for the trip and having checked in, most of us were soon out venturing in the grounds where Fire-Bellied Toads called in one pond and hybrid Pool/Marsh Frogs sang in another. Another guest from Germany showed us photos of a Moose he'd seen only moments earlier on the edge of the woodland, but sadly we didn't catch a glimpse. We

did hear and see a few birds though, with Nigel spotting a pair of Red-Backed Shrike, while Woodlark and Hoopoe joined the Cuckoo's chorus and a great many Swallows hawked for insects high above us. A Lapwing flew over and Greenfinch, Linnet and Pied Wagtail were spotted in the gardens.

A good supper awaited us and having settled in, eaten and made plans for the morning, we retired a happy bunch.

Day 2, Tuesday 28th May

Our day began exceedingly early, meeting at 4am to take a dawn drive down the road to look for moose.

Stop 1. Our first attempts were unsuccessful, but we stopped at a high tower viewing point from which we enjoyed the dawn chorus. A Nightingale Thrush remained elusive while singing beautifully nearby; a Common Rosefinch provided us with fleeting views and sweet calls of "Pleased to meet you", and a Red-Backed Shrike was spotted in a treetop on the roadside. A pair of Golden Orioles flitted tantalisingly between the trees but failed to stop for long in one place; a confiding White Wagtail came to investigate us from the safety of the closest Silver Birch, and a Chiffchaff sang with unerring regularity throughout. Blackcap and Blackbird joined the chorus along with Chaffinch, while Grasshopper and Savi's Warblers reeled in the background. Corncrakes rattled, Common Cranes honked and overhead drumming Snipe joined the orchestra. The diversity was astonishing and the lack of any human sounds like traffic or aircraft only added to our sense of wonder.



Moose © Tomasz Jezierczuk

Back in the van to have another look for moose and before long Tomasz suddenly asks Lukasz to stop because he has seen one. It took us all rather a lot longer to locate as it was at quite a distance, but we had seen our first and were suitably impressed. We also noted that a tree stump beside the road showed evidence that Beavers had been in the area. They had begun gnawing it and humans had finished the job with a chainsaw, presumably as a safety precaution owing to its proximity to the road.

Stop 2. Our next stop was a section of boardwalk out to a viewing platform over the marsh. The walk down to the platform was briefly punctuated with pauses to look at flowering Bogbean (*Menyanthes trifoliata*), singing Sedge Warbler and a large Drinker Moth Caterpillar. On reaching the platform, a second Moose at closer quarters held our attention for a short while as it wandered across the reedbed. Several male Snipe drummed overhead while the females called

from a short distance away; Black-Tailed Godwit flew over and males of both Marsh and Montagu's Harriers came past.

Tomasz explained the song of the Aquatic Warbler to us and we listened for some time. They were singing in the distance and we thought that a small bird performing an undulating song flight may have been one, but it was too far away to identify with positivity. A nearer Gasshopper Warbler was much more obliging and gave us fantastic views as it sang from the top of a small bush. As we were about to leave, Alice spotted a Tiger Moth caterpillar and Oliver contorted himself around the fencing to take a hand held focus stacked image of it to great effect.



Oliver © Alice Hunter



Tiger Moth Caterpillar © Oliver Wright

By this point it was trying to rain and so we moved on before it set in too steadily and returned to the guest house for a hearty Polish breakfast. Our hunger satisfied, a quick look around the ponds in the grounds revealed another amphibian to add to the list in the form of a European Tree Frog which we had great views of in a small Alder on the water's edge. The numerous Tree Sparrows were admired and both Linnets and Spotted Flycatcher seen here too while Icterine Warbler called from the woodland nearby.

Stop 3. Setting out for the main part of the day, our first stop was at a section of boardwalk accessed via a small meadow. A brief but light rain shower greeted our arrival and we didn't pause long in the meadow as a result, but the boardwalk area held a number of delights. We made our way to a viewing platform from where we had nice views of a male Reed Bunting singing from the top of a reed. We could also hear Penduline Tit calling here and after a little exploration we found a visible nest just a few yards back the way we had come. It was hanging in the boughs of a Willow tree, halfway constructed with the male bird visiting to continue building work. Tomasz also taught us the call of the Bluethroat as we heard one singing nearby. We had soon located it and over the course of our visit, we watched several.

Cuckoos were calling almost constantly and several made an appearance. A Common Rosefinch sang nearby too, though we failed to see it. A Grey Heron was spotted and several Black Headed Gulls flew over along with a Marsh Harrier. On the smaller scale there were some nice damselflies including White Legged and Azure plus a male Banded Demoiselle. Wood White, Green Veined White and Female Orange Tips were spotted along with a number of Painted Ladies. Oliver delighted in finding and photographing jumping spiders and seeing Ruby Tailed Wasps. There was also a very large Weaver Beetle sitting nicely on the edge of the boardwalk.

Retracing our footsteps through the meadow in drier conditions, we admired a great number of Latticed Heath moths and a Small Heath butterfly plus Thrift, more usually associated with coastal locations, in good flower.

Stop 4. We moved on and had a slightly longer drive round to the Red Bog. After a brief wait, interrupted by a Black Redstart outside the van, Tomasz had collected our permit and we were on our way into the restricted area. We learnt that only five vehicles per day are allowed into this zone and he had had to book some months in advance to secure our place. It was soon apparent why, as this was a beautiful and particularly unspoilt area with patches of virgin forest.

Having parked up in a grassy glade, we enjoyed our packed lunches at the picnic table. Some rather large horseflies buzzed around and seemed a little alarming but in fact none seemed to be biting, much to our relief. A large ground beetle was spotted as we ate which could have been *Carabus granulatus*, but it had scuttled off by the time we had finished and so we didn't get to examine it further.

Suitably replete, we prepared for a walk into the forest. It began with a great swathe of Lily of the Valley on one side of the path and May Lily on the other interspersed with small, delicate white Chickweed Wintergreen. Only a short distance further on, we came across the stunning pink blooms of Bloody Cranesbill in another small clearing and the fluffy seedheads of *Pulsatilla patens*. Back beneath the trees, Solomon's Seal had just gone over.

We soon emerged onto a section of track which consisted of looser sand and was bordered on one side by a high sandy bank and on the other by long grass and the odd small sapling leading to the woodland edge. A Common Clubtail dragonfly was spotted by Tomasz who helpfully focused the scope on it for us to look through, particularly as it was tricky to locate even with binoculars let alone the naked eye.



The track here was sunnier too and several Painted Ladies were seen zipping past at high speed. Northern Dune Tiger Beetles flew ahead of us and occasionally a Sand Lizard darted off the path before we had a chance to take a closer look. Annual Knawel flowered inconspicuously among the lichens on the bank while Tufted Vetch put on a blousier display and Wood Cow-wheat flowered in the grass on the other side of the track. A number of bumblebees were making the most of the available nectar sources, among them Red-Tailed and Buff-Tailed, while Painted Ladies flitted about in the sun.

We soon reached a viewing platform and on climbing the wooden steps to reach it we startled several large sand lizards that had been beneath them. From the top we had fantastic views over the marsh but despite our best efforts we could see very little. The breeze here was a pleasant respite from the heat of the afternoon though and so we were content to sit and watch awhile. A couple of Ravens flew past while both Yellowhammer and Common Whitethroat sang from the Birch trees below. Oliver found a Rose Chafer on the wooden fence but it flew before he could photograph it while Alice came across an Antlion in the sand at the bottom of the stairs.

Returning the way we had come, we noted a few more butterflies than earlier including Common Blue, Small Heath, Brimstone, Pale Clouded Yellow, Chequered Skipper and quite a few Sooty Copper. A Scarce Chaser dragonfly was also seen resting atop a dead plant stem. Cuckoo had been calling almost constantly during our visit and one flew overhead here. Tomasz was also able to point out a very obliging female Sand Lizard on the edge of the track which allowed us all to photograph her and admire her beautiful markings. Having told us that Wolves tend to use the track to patrol their territory, he also explained that the recent rain had washed away any tracks that we might have seen, but he was able to show us an old scat which consisted mostly of fur.

On the way back through the wood a Clouded Apollo was briefly glimpsed, and in the glade beyond we looked for Scarce Heath butterflies but without success. On reaching the minibus we took a moment to rehydrate and relax. During our brief wanderings in doing so, we came across a single Map butterfly and a male Beautiful demoiselle.



Stop 5. When we eventually moved on we drove back towards the guest house and stopped at an area of raised bog which Tomasz described as a Fairytale Forest. It was beautiful with the foamy white flowers of Labrador Tea among vivid green Bog Bilberry leaves and Stiff Clubmoss beneath the Silver Birch trees. We had nice views of a Wood Warbler as we started out and a Tree Pipit called and was eventually located in the top of a Silver Birch a little further round.

In some pools created by old peat cutting activity we found Round leaved Sundew growing alongside Cottongrass and a couple of small Marsh Frogs were spotted among the moss. Several Painted Ladies were chasing one another round the canopy and an Eggar type moth was seen briefly as it flew from the undergrowth. We found a few piles of Moose droppings beside the path too and noted their distinctive shape.

We had heard a thunderstorm building while we walked and at the first few drops of rain we turned back, reaching the van just as the heavens opened. We only had a short drive back to the hotel and the rain only seemed to get heavier as we arrived, so we stayed put for a minute or two in the hope that it would abate. Eventually it did just long enough to grab our things and make a run for it to the cover of the hotel. When we reconvened for dinner later the storm had passed completely and there was barely any sign that it had happened save the odd puddle outside. We enjoyed another hearty meal and having gone through the checklists, took an early night after our dawn start.

Day 3, Wednesday 29th May

The morning dawned cloudy but thankfully not wet.

Stop 1. After breakfast, we set out to the small town of Goniądz where we stopped at a viewing area overlooking the river Biebrza below and the marshland beyond. It was chilly and trying to drizzle, but we weren't dissuaded and our resilience soon paid off. Swifts wheeled overhead, Mute Swans patrolled the river and a Stork on a nest below us stood up to reveal three chicks safely sheltered beneath. We watched the adult birds swap over parental duties and listened to a Great Reed



Warbler calling from somewhere nearby. A White Tailed Eagle put in an appearance and circled slowly in front of us before moving off over the marsh, while a noisy flock of Rooks departed their Rookery for the day. A Common Rosefinch was spotted singing from the very top of a Silver Birch tree by the river but flew before Tomasz could set up the scope. He soon had it trained on a Roe Deer he had spotted in the distance though!

Just as we had decided to move on Nigel spotted a Falcon which sped overhead and disappeared. Despite hurrying back to the best viewing spot we were unable to locate it again to confirm the species but Tomasz thought it was likely either a Hobby or Red Footed Falcon.

Stop 2. We eventually did move on and our next stop was at a Bridge over a smaller river from where we could see a scrape beyond the riverside meadow. A Great White Egret had been spotted in flight only a few moments before we stopped and we were surprised to see five more and a Grey Heron all sharing a ditch! Black Headed Gulls were numerous here and Redshank called around us unseen. Lapwing flew over the scrape giving their "peewit" calls and Ruff were spotted. The meadow here was full of flowering Bistort and a confiding White Wagtail sat on the crash barrier a few feet from us while a Yellowhammer called nearby.

Driving on, we asked if we could stop to photograph Storks in a meadow and duly came across a large non-breeding flock beside the road. Having photographed these we found a similar flock in the next field and several more in almost every one we passed. Tomasz estimated that there must have been nearly 100 in this one village alone!

Another Stork caused us to stop to see what it was carrying - nesting material as it turned out - and just as we were about to move on Tomasz spotted a stunning male Red-Backed Shrike in a sapling right beside us. Oliver carefully opened the door and we were all able to get a great view and photographs of this lovely bird.

Stop 3. Our next stop was in a village right by the river where Tomasz usually sees hundreds of Terns. He explained that this year they had had a very dry spring followed by a very wet week where the water level had risen by over twenty centimetres, and subsequently the Terns' nests were flooded and so they had dispersed. Nevertheless we saw both Whiskered and Black Terns here as well as Black-Tailed Godwit, Redshank and Sand Martins skimming over the water.



Having checked a couple more spots in the village without success we continued to our lunch spot, pausing only briefly to photograph a roadside shrine decked out with ribbons and flowers, one of a great many seen during our trip.

Stop 4. Lunch was at another viewing point overlooking the marsh and we enjoyed our sandwiches with a fantastic panorama in front of us. There was another group of Great White Egret here along with Grey Heron, the ubiquitous White Stork and more Black Terns. There were also several Shovelers, the first duck we had seen other than Mallard. We heard Cranes calling in the distance and a huge flock of seventy five flew over. Tomasz looked and looked for Black Stork but didn't find any. He did spot a Moose however, again at a great distance.

The Rye field beside us was once again full of Cornflowers but also Common Poppies and Scentless Mayweed. *Artemisia absinthium* grew here too and Tomasz enjoyed demonstrating its

delicious scent to the group. Near the edge of the field Alice found a Paper Wasp building a nest on a dry plant stem and this, along with Latticed Heath moths, weevils and various other small critters, became Oliver's photographic subject here.

It was soon time to move on and Tomasz took us to another site to look for Black Storks. We waited in the minibus for a few minutes while he went off to scout it out. He came back shaking his head but we had kept ourselves entertained trying to make out whether a Wood Pigeon was actually a Stock Dove and watching a House Sparrow return to its nest in the bottom of a White Stork's nest.

Driving on we made a brief stop to look at a Crane with two chicks only to find a second, also with two chicks in the distance too.

Stop 5. Only a short way down the same road we stopped again having seen a White Tailed Eagle fly into a nearby tree. It was out of sight for us but we waited and sure enough it soon emerged, only to fly in the opposite direction meaning we didn't get the views we were hoping for. Not to be disappointed though, we found all manner of insect life to look at instead, including a beautiful orange micromoth (*Olethreutes sp.*), a jumping spider, lots of Scorpion flies, several longhorn beetles, a variety of weevils, a Dock Bug, a Yellowtail moth caterpillar and a number of damselflies too. We duly heard Bittern booming in the distance as well and saw a Mute Swan on a nest from the track on the other side of the road.



Stop 6. Tomasz was still hopeful that he could find a Black Stork to show us and so we visited one last stop to look for them. Collared doves flew past and a couple of domestic Guineafowl foraged in the undergrowth on the bank below us but the Storks were still elusive apart from the odd white one. There were the remains of a Second World War bunker here with a memorial which proved interesting though. Tomasz helped to translate the interpretation board which explained that in an extraordinary battle lasting three days, 720 Polish soldiers had held off 42,000 advancing German troops. When the captain realised that they had run out of ammunition he told his men to surrender to the Germans and blew himself up inside the bunker, destroying it in the process.

Stop 7. With this incredible but sobering tale in our thoughts, we climbed back into the vehicle to head to a spot where we would look for Citrine Wagtail. It turned out to be only a short distance up the road from where we had looked at the butterflies on the first afternoon. The Wagtails were not to be seen but we did have nice views of a Montagu's Harrier and a couple of Lapwing. Water Plantain was growing in some of the puddles and a few damselflies were lurking in the undergrowth for Oliver to photograph too. A Common Rosefinch called nearby and Alice located a Thrush Nightingale in the dense undergrowth beside the road, only for it to have moved by the time the group joined her. Instead, Tomasz played their contact call to lure it briefly into view. We also noted a number of branches of a nearby cherry tree covered in cobwebs containing caterpillars of the Orchard Ermine moth.

Stop 8. Our last stop of the day was at the boardwalk we had visited the previous morning. Sedge Warblers were still the most conspicuous residents here, but Meadow Pipits and Snipe were also seen and the Tiger moth caterpillar had hardly moved.

Aquatic Warbler was heard calling in several spots and eventually located very close to the boardwalk allowing us all good views. A few flower buds of Early Marsh Orchid were found, much to Tomasz's surprise as he said they should be in full bloom already by now. Marsh Cinquefoil was also noted in distinctive flower.

Once again we were treated to a delicious three course meal in the evening and having eaten, we retired to start packing up ready to move bases in the morning.



Day 4, Thursday 30th May

We woke to glorious blue skies this morning. Oliver had been out at 3.20am for a hike through the woods to a viewpoint recommended by Tomasz. Over breakfast he told us of a close encounter with Moose, hearing what he thought were howling Wolves and photographing a dew-jewelled Chequered Skipper roosting beside the path. Having eaten, we packed our luggage in the minibus to the sound of a Woodlark singing high overhead.

Stop 1. The first stop of the day was a very short drive away. We took a walk down a track through the Alder Carr and out to the wet meadows and marshland beyond. Our progress was slow as there was so much to see. Oliver began finding jumping spiders to photograph only a short distance in and Scarce Fritillary caterpillars were found munching the undergrowth while a Wood Warbler was spotted in the trees nearby. Painted Lady butterflies zoomed past every few minutes as Willow Warbler, Chiffchaff and Blackcap provided a steady background soundtrack interspersed with Common Rosefinch, Great Tit, Song Thrush, Thrush Nightingale and distant Cranes.

A few interesting plants were noted on our walk. Along with Wood Cow-wheat which is very common here, we found Herb Paris and Twayblades in bloom as well as the bud of a Lesser Butterfly orchid. Leaves of Broad Leaved Helleborine and Lady's Slipper Orchid were also found but although the latter should have been flowering it was not yet. One unusual plant seen was *Asarum europeum* which has very round, glossy leaves and a strange, bell shaped flower at ground level which is pollinated by ants. Both Wood and Water Avens were flowering and Yellow Flag Iris blooms punctuated the pools either side of the track.

Further down the track a couple of Grass Snakes were spotted, one on the track itself which slithered off at our approach and another in the undergrowth to one side. On reaching the observation tower that we had been aiming for, we found that two vehicles which had passed us (to our surprise) were in fact those of wardens/rangers who were repairing the tower and boardwalk there. We went a short distance beyond to a point labelled as the end of the trail so that we could hear one another over the noise of their chainsaw and had a brief break, during which a Swallowtail was spotted flying at high speed just above the rushes in the marsh around

us. Marsh Valerian was flowering here and still more Painted Ladies came in a steady stream overhead.

Turning back, we noted one Alder tree which seemed to have a lot of Cockchafers in the lower branches. On closer inspection each branch all the way up the tree must have held at least a dozen, meaning that this one tree would have had several hundred of these large beetles that are so scarce in Britain these days.



Scarce Heath © Tomasz Jezierczuk

We paused on the way back in a wet meadow full of Bistort, Meadow Thistle, Ragged Robin and Lesser Spearwort and studded with Marsh Orchids. This group of orchids is notoriously difficult to identify to species level, particularly as they hybridise readily, but after some discussion, Tomasz and Alice suggested that these were likely to be the Broad-Leaved Marsh Orchid, *Dactylorhiza majalis*. A Common Toad was also enjoying the meadow and Green Veined White, Peacock and Common Blue joined the Painted Ladies nectaring on the

flowers here. Back on the track, Map, Scarce Heath and Heath Fritillary were spotted as well as both Chequered and Northern Chequered Skippers. A Common Lizard was also seen as it scampered off the path in front of us.

By this time we were a little behind schedule as there had been so much to look at. We made our way steadily back to the road and were met by Lukasz in the minibus. He took us back to our guesthouse one last time for lunch and a quick break before we moved to our second base for the trip in the forest.

Having devoured the soup and potato pancakes at lunch, we loaded the van and set off. The drive took about an hour and we had a brief comfort break just before our main stop for the afternoon where coffee, chocolate and paprika crisps were the order of the day. Having stocked up, we drove the short distance to the Fishponds that Tomasz had told us of.

Stop 2. The first view of the site was a cacophony of Black-Headed Gulls circling above an area thick with rushes. As we made our way along the bank, Great Reed Warbler and Sedge Warbler were singing too and Fire Bellied Toads plus Pool/Marsh Frogs joined the chorus. We could see several Gull chicks on nests and a Little Tern flew overhead. Great Crested Grebe and Red Necked Grebe were both seen and later, both appeared with two chicks each.

It wasn't long before we started to spot dragonflies and damselflies with Red-Eyed Damselfly and Four-Spotted Chaser quickly added to our list. Siberian Winter Damsel along with both Common and Small Bluetail as well as both Variable and Azure Damsels were seen too. A teneral dragonfly was thought to be a Norfolk Hawker while Common Clubtail, Scarce Chaser and Black-Tailed Skimmer were spotted. In the background, Bittern boomed and Cuckoo called incessantly. Oliver was happy to find some Robberflies to photograph and a couple of Small Heath butterflies were seen.

As we walked, Pool/Marsh frogs leapt from the grassy path towards the reeds and a couple of Lizards also scampered out of our way, likely Common Lizards here though none hanging around to be formally identified. Meanwhile on the water, Gadwall, Mallard and lots of Coot were noted

and on a distant part of the furthest pool, a single swan proved to be a Whooper while a Tufted duck was also spotted. Nearer to the bank a Lilypad Whiteface dragonfly was pointed out to us by Tomasz and a little further along the path a teneral Blue Emperor was found hanging vertically on a reed. As we turned onto the last stretch back to the van, a Savi's Warbler reeled and a wounded Gull was found in the middle of the path and carefully circumnavigated.



Lilypad Whiteface © Tomasz Jezierczuk

Stop 3. We made a swift departure for our onward journey as we still had some way to go. Our final stop before reaching the second hotel was in a meadow with a viewing tower where Nigel noticed a Lesser Spotted Eagle atop a branchless Silver Birch trunk. Having made one last detour to check for Bison (but without finding any) we made it to the hotel and checked in. Our evening meal was devoured and we managed a run-through of the checklist before turning in for the night.

Day 5, Friday 31st May

The first morning in Białowieża dawned bright and clear.

Stop 1. After breakfast we took a short drive to a spot outside the village and very close to the Belarus border. Here we walked a track which briefly passed through a meadow where Red-Backed Shrike was seen in the top of a nearby tree while Painted Lady and Small Heath butterflies zipped over the Cow Parsley.

The track then entered the woodland and we were treated to a number of differing forest habitats, beginning with wet woodland. Wild Raspberry, Jack-by-the-Hedge and Greater Celandine were growing by the path while Yellow Flag Iris and Water Violet bloomed from the pools beneath the trees. Alice found tiny Figwort Weevils on the Figwort here which Oliver

photographed. Crested Tit was seen and a Wren was singing loudly out of sight.



Figwort Weevil © Oliver Wright

Walking on, we entered a drier area of mixed forest where Oliver found a Great Spotted Woodpecker nest and shortly afterward, Alice spotted a Green Hairstreak. Broad Leaved Helleborines were found beside the path just coming into bud along with *Asarum europaeum*, white starry flowers of Wood Stitchwort which is less common in the UK and the yellow flowers of Touch-me-mot Balsam. Song Thrush sang from the

trees as we continued.

We soon reached a bridge over the river which gave us picturesque views up and downstream. There were large numbers of Map butterflies on the Cow Parsley here as well as both Banded and Beautiful Demoiselles on the river below. A Blue Tit looked particularly resplendent in the sunshine as it flew across the river at head height.

Crossing to the other side we entered Alder Carr woodland with *Cirsium dissectum* flowering in patches beneath the trees. The Cuckoo which had been calling throughout our walk so far sounded particularly resonant here, almost seeming to echo around us, while Chaffinch and Robin sang from the treetops. Both Collared and Pied Flycatchers were also heard calling but couldn't be located among the leafy canopy.

Moving on, we came to a part of the woodland dominated by Norway Spruce on a raised bog, conditions typical of the Taiga forest of the far north. Here we found Common Spotted Orchids in bud and masses of *Anemone hepatica* leaves, hinting at the purple carpet this woodland enjoys each spring. Here we also heard both Wren and Dunnock singing as well as finding another Great Spotted Woodpecker nest. Tomasz was surprised to hear White Backed Woodpeckers too and we soon had a brief but clear sighting of them as they flew into a clearing in response to him playing their call.

As we came to a junction in the path, we found the telltale signs of Wolves scent marking which Tomasz thought to be a couple of days old. He also pointed out Dentaria, a plant in the cabbage family which produces edible and nutritious dark purple bulbils. At his suggestion, Alice tried one and reported that it tasted rather like raw broccoli but not unpleasant.

Stop 2. We soon reached the end of our walk and were met by Lukasz in the minibus for a short drive to a roadside meadow. Here we spent a short time wandering between flowers of Ragged Robin, Lesser Spearwort and Ox-Eye Daisy looking for butterflies. We had some success with Russell finding a Short Tailed Blue and Alice adding Dingy Skipper to the list along with more Small Heath and Common Blue.

Finding a dry patch where we could comfortably sit, we had a few minutes rest in the sun while Tomasz went in search of fritillaries in an adjoining, wetter meadow. We enjoyed listening to a Great Reed Warbler in a nearby clump of bushes while Oliver photographed a crab spider.



Stop 3. Our afternoon stop was a little drive away where the forest gave way to a chain of lakes, glittering in the afternoon sun. As we were unloading lunch from the van, Nigel spotted a Purple-Shot Copper flitting around. We watched Black Redstart and White Wagtail hopping around in the sun as we ate. Having finished, we set off for a circular walk around one of the lakes.

We had barely begun when we spotted some lovely flowers including dark purple Columbine, Spiked Rampion (in its white form, the pretty Wood Vetch and a single Bird's Nest Orchid behind a nearby bench. Russell also found a lovely Sand Lizard basking on a tree stump.

As we rounded the bend to join the path around the lake a Great Reed Warbler sang from a nearby reed patch. We walked only a few feet onto a small bridge and were surrounded by Dragonflies. Despite the strange looks that the local fishermen were giving us, we studied them as best we could through binoculars, scope and cameras. There were lots of Norfolk Hawkers, Brilliant Emeralds and Four-Spotted Chasers not to mention damselflies. The first part of the walk was going to be slow paced, there was almost too much to take in!

Norfolk Hawker © Alice Hunter



As we moved on, we followed a disused narrow gauge railway line through a shadier patch where the water was behind the trees from us. Another Sand Lizard was spotted on a fallen tree trunk and Painted Lady butterflies were nectaring on Bramble flowers in the dappled shade. Emerging back into the sunlight, we found a spot where several fallen branches in the water were being used as perches by a variety of Dragonflies, including a very obliging Yellow-Spotted Whiteface which allowed us all a good look at it.

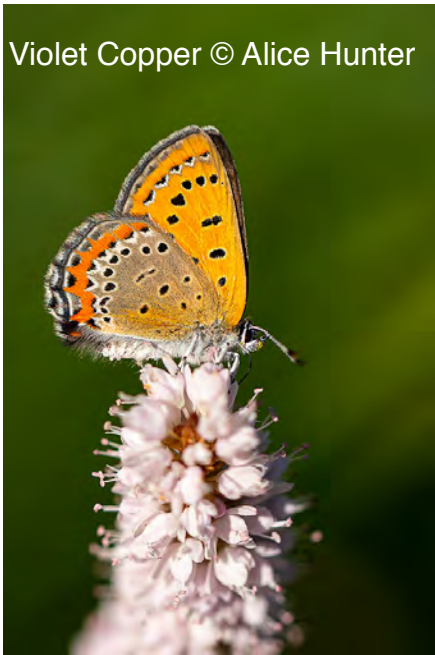
Taking a right turn to follow the edge of the lake, we were now under some large trees, mostly Oak and there was wet woodland on the other side. The sheer number of dragonflies and damselflies was still astonishing as they seemed to occupy every square foot of space on the water's edge. We soon came to another junction from which there was a good open space to view the lake. Behind us, Alice realised that there was another Woodpecker nest in a dead tree, and it turned out to be a Lesser Spotted which allowed us good views as it came to feed the noisy youngsters within.

Just as we were about to move on again, a Great Reed Warbler flew into the reeds only a few feet away and proceeded to sing. After teasing us by moving about several times we eventually all got a decent view of the bird.

We paused again at a sluice gate and marvelled at the number of dragonfly and damselfly exuviae on the structure. There was also a teneral damselfly drying off on the back of the handrail. It looked such an idyllic place and in the heat of the day we joked at the idea of swimming despite the sign warning us not to.

We were nearing the end of our circuit now and the lake edge was a little further from the path but there were several small meadow patches which Tomasz and Alice checked for butterflies. There were few to be seen but the ubiquitous Common Blue and Small Heath were noted.

As we began the last stretch back to the minibus, Tomasz saw a Pine Marten cross the path beyond Jackie and himself but unfortunately was unable to locate it again. He did discover a huge patch of Bird's Nest Orchids under the trees on the last section of path though, perhaps fifty or more nestled inconspicuously in the undergrowth.



Stop 4. As we still had good light and plenty of time, we made one more stop on our way back to the hotel at a meadow full of Bistort. Rose Chafers and Shield Bugs adorned many of the flowers, but we were here to look for butterflies and duly found them. Both Weaver's and Bog Fritillaries were flying around, difficult to distinguish from one another until they settled long enough to look closely at the patterns on their underwings.

Spreading Bellflower flowered in small patches and further into the meadow Tomasz found a lovely area full of both fritillaries and Violet Copper which provided us all with wonderful photographic opportunities. A rather tatty Peacock butterfly was also patrolling the edge of the woodland here adding to our tally for the day.

Having decided that the dawn outing to look for Bison would be the following morning, we retired for an early night after dinner.

Day 6, Saturday 1st June

Our day began incredibly early with coffee in the dining room at 3.15am but with excellent reason; we were heading out on a Bison hunt!

Incredibly, despite the early hour, the light was already growing and the scene that met our eyes as we left the confines of the village was exceptionally beautiful, with mist hanging low over the meadows and Roe Deer grazing in its depths.

We made several loops around various hopeful spots but apart from a couple more Roe Deer and a Fox there were no Bison to be found.

Stop 1. In a change of tactics, Tomasz took us for a walk down one of the many tracks through the forest in the hope that if we couldn't see Bison from the vehicle, maybe we'd find them in the forest on foot.

We paused on our way to investigate insect traps which Tomasz showed us to be full of what he called "stupid males" of the Spruce Bark Beetle, a forestry pest lured into the trap by pheromone scents. It was almost fully light by now and the birds were beginning to wake. We stopped at a crossroads in the track and were given strict instructions to keep scanning in all directions, as Bison could cross the track at any moment and this would be our best chance to see them.

Tomasz had kindly brought a flask to make coffee so that we were alert for our scanning duties and duly handed it round. A cat wandering across the path made for momentary confusion but we couldn't see the intended Bison. Having wandered up and down a short distance in each direction while we kept watch, Tomasz returned to the crossroads only to discover that we had been milling around with signs of the elusive Bison right beneath our feet! He pointed out hoof marks that he explained were fresh since yesterday as they had yet to dry out. We followed the direction of the beast's path into the trees but they disappeared far quicker than we imagined for such a large creature.

In the meantime, Tomasz whistled like a Pygmy Owl in the hopes of drawing one in. It didn't work in that respect, but it did draw attention from all number of small birds including Blackbird, Great Tit, Blue Tit, Marsh Tit and Crested Tit. Alice spotted a Hawfinch in the top branches of a nearby Alder tree and a Greater Spotted Woodpecker nest was located beside the track.

Having waited some time with no joy, we returned to the bus and Lukasz took us back to the hotel with time for a quick nap before breakfast.

Stop 2. Having eaten, we met with our guide for the UNSECO site, Joanna. Despite his excellent knowledge and respect for the countryside around us, we were not allowed to enter the World Heritage site with Tomasz alone and so Joanna would accompany us for the morning. We took the short drive round the perimeter of the Tsar's Palace grounds and got our things together while Tomasz sorted out our official passes.

Joanna was excellent at explaining the history of the area as well as how and why it became a UNESCO site. We began our walk along a sunny track with meadows either side. A Red-Backed Shrike was spotted on the telegraph wires nearby and a Corn Bunting called from the top of a Silver Birch in one of the meadows.

Joanna explained that the meadows went through a period of neglect when it was thought that leaving them unmanaged was more beneficial for the species within, but that this led to a decline in various species. Since then, they have begun to cut them regularly again and the invertebrate and bird life has increased once more and the meadows have become more floristic again. They now supported Marsh Orchids, Spreading Campanula, Bistort, Bloody Cranesbill and a number of other lovely flowers which were being frequented by Small Heaths, Common Blues and Pale Clouded Yellow butterflies.

We soon came to a huge wooden gate signalling our entry into the specially protected area of virgin forest. Passing through, we stepped into a green and tranquil ancient mixed woodland with Oak, Ash, Maple, Douglas Fir, Alder and Hornbeam. Joanna explained the natural succession of the forest and how when one tree dies and falls others will take its place. We stopped to admire a variety of fungi and slime moulds and listen to the bird song around us.

Taking a junction in the path, we paused to watch a pair of Collared Flycatchers at their nest hole



Collared Flycatcher
© Tomasz Jezierczuk

and Joanna explained that in this part of the forest, many more species nest in holes created by woodpeckers because the diversity of the place is such that the woodpecker population is large, and so there are lots of available spots and that they are safer from predation from species like Pine Marten as a result.

Further round, we came to a section of

boardwalk overlooking a patch of Alder Carr and we were shown how the trees here grew differently where it was wetter as they developed a hump shaped structure on which they grew to keep their roots out of the water as much as possible. A Robin was spotted singing from a low branch beside the path a short way further on, and as we came to the next junction Joanna asked us to wait a while because there was a nest she wanted to show us. It was the nest cavity of a Black Woodpecker, the largest of the eight Woodpecker species here, similar in size to a Crow. The hole was just over half way up the trunk of a tree beside the main path and we waited for a while to see if the adult bird would appear. In due course it did and we had great views of the adult feeding its babies, two of which stuck their heads out to take food.

At various points on the walk, we were able to see Woodpecker damage on both fallen logs and standing dead wood. It was interesting to see the different types of foraging behaviour from each species. Joanna showed us how Black Woodpeckers were much more destructive and usually at the base of a standing tree trunk where ants had made a nest in the base; Greater Spotted Woodpeckers tended to take strips off fallen logs to access the beetle grubs and other insects within; while smaller Three-toed Woodpeckers made much smaller, shallower round holes in standing dead trees looking for insects just beneath the bark.

We paused to look at a large patch of Wild Garlic and the strange flowers of Herb Paris. We came across a Badger latrine very close to the path and photographed Fairy Ink Caps (*Coprinellus disseminatus*) growing on a moss covered fallen tree nearby.



Continuing on, we were soon retracing our steps back to the gate through which we had entered. We walked back through the grounds of the Palace and had lunch in a small restaurant next to the National Park Headquarters which has since been built on the site of the main Palace itself.

On our way back to the hotel after lunch we admired the original gate house and stable block, which are still standing. Our afternoon today was free and some chose to explore the little town a bit more while others took time to catch up on a bit of sleep, do some photography or edit images. We reconvened for an early dinner before an evening outing.

Stop 3. Tomasz explained that he wanted to take us to a spot a little further away where he was sure we would find Bison, but we briefly checked a couple of the spots we had visited that morning before leaving the immediate area. We weren't successful and so we drove for a while to the area Tomasz had in mind. We once again took several bumpy tracks to check meadows bordering the forest, but despite our efforts there were no Bison to be seen. Then, as we rounded a corner, Lukasz got a glimpse of a large brown lump in the middle of a field and we turned off the road onto a gravel track to allow us a better view.

Under Tomasz's expert guidance, we got out of the vehicle and walked carefully towards the huge bull, one of the largest in the area, who we named Bruce. We paused when he lifted his head and approached up wind so that he could smell us and not be startled. He wasn't bothered by us in

Bull Bison © Oliver Wright



the slightest and continued grazing before walking nonchalantly across the path we were on and behind a manure heap, promptly disappearing from view despite his bulk. He soon reappeared, but it brought home to us how well these huge animals blend into their surroundings even in more open spaces.

Stop 4. We eventually left him in peace and returned to the minibus buzzing about our experience. On our way back towards Białowieża we pulled into the meadow where Nigel had spotted the Eagle on our

way here. We climbed the observation tower and spent a short while scanning the area with our binoculars. A Roe Deer was spotted grazing in front of us and steadily moved towards us until it was startled by Oliver sneezing. Woodcock and bats flew overhead and Corncrakes rattled their call out of sight.

The stars were just appearing as we descended the tower and Tomasz showed us Jupiter rising above the trees. He got the scope trained on it and we were able to see four moons of Jupiter through it which Oliver also managed to capture using a long lens.

We made one last stop to look for Beaver but Tomasz informed us that there were people drinking by the water and so it wasn't possible this evening. A Red Deer bounded over the road on our homeward journey and we returned to the hotel a tired but very happy bunch having seen our first European Bison.

Day 7, Sunday 2nd June



Our final morning dawned bright and clear and we set out after breakfast to a spot where Tomasz was planning another walk in the forest.

Stop 1. Our first stop was alongside the main track to the walking spot. Tomasz knew of a nesting site of Three-Toed Woodpecker, a species we had yet to see. We were lucky that the adult female came in fairly quickly after our arrival and we had good views of it sticking its head into the cavity to feed the youngsters. We hoped for a male to arrive next and so we waited for some time to see if we could see both. Unfortunately for us it was the female that fed them again next and by this time we had been waiting a while, so we moved on content with our views.

Further along the track, Tomasz told us there was a Northern Goshawk nest and that if we were as quiet as possible so as not to disturb the bird we could go and have a look. The adult bird had already flown when we

reached the site, but there were two chicks visible on the platform of sticks which seemed somewhat precariously placed in the very top of a Norway Spruce tree. Having watched their antics for a while we left them in peace and continued on our drive to our main stop.

Stop 2. It wasn't much further to a large glade where we could park. The meadow in the glade was buzzing with life including some large Robberflies and so Oliver stayed behind to photograph them while the rest of us continued on our walk.

We began down a wide track which had a broad verge on one side yielding an unusual plant, *Thesium ebracteatum* which was tricky to see at first, but once you got your eye in appeared everywhere! It is semi-parasitic on a number of other plants and has the odd feature of producing flowers which appear to be in the centre of the leaf.



Butterflies were flitting up and down the track in the sunshine including Map, Painted Lady, Brimstone and Comma. As we continued on, we noticed a Wren singing loudly from the depths of the woodland alongside both Goldcrest and Firecrest, plus the ever present background call of the cuckoo. We soon emerged onto an old railway bridge where we settled for a while in the sunshine to take in our surroundings.

Golden Orioles called from somewhere nearby and Tomasz tried to whistle them in for a closer view but without success. Both Banded and Beautiful demoiselles danced in the sunlight beneath the bridge. A Kingfisher called on the river below us and a Barred Warbler sang in the undergrowth out of sight. A White Wagtail was very curious and obliging in sitting only a few feet from us as we rested. A Yellowhammer also flew into one of the Willows beside the bridge and sang for a while.

Moving on, Tomasz lured a Thrush Nightingale from a dense scrub thicket out into the open giving us all great views. We took a narrower path into the woodland here and wound our way between the tall Spruce trees. A Black Veined White was spotted flitting through one of the small glades from thistle to thistle and a Great Spotted Woodpecker nest was found near a fork in the path.

We came out onto a raised bank where an enormous observation tower stood overlooking a marshy section. Nigel and Jackie braved the seven storeys to take in the view, while Alice was thrilled to find buds of Martagon Lily and an intriguing crab spider. Another White Wagtail was busy feeding a nest full of young somewhere just out of sight and a Blackcap sang from a nearby willow tree. The sky was darkening though and there was a distant rumble of thunder so Tomasz advised we shouldn't stay long here.

Our walk back to the vehicle took a lovely track winding through the Spruce forest but we didn't slow our pace to take it in as the rain was clearly headed our way. It arrived just as we neared our starting glade and we piled into the bus glad of the shelter from the storm.

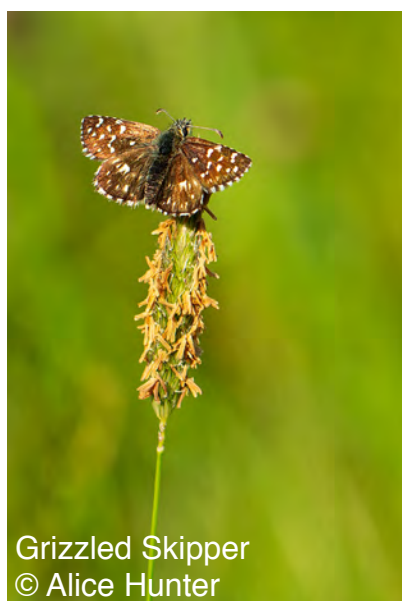
We enjoyed a lovely lunch in a pub in a nearby village where it was insisted that we try the local vodka.

Stop 3. Our final afternoon was bright and sunny after the thunderstorm and we headed to a picturesque spot by a large reservoir to soak it in. The grassy banks here yielded a number of interesting butterflies including Sooty, Small and Large Coppers, the latter in the form of a pristine female which had obviously just emerged.

The reservoir itself was a distant blue line on the horizon but we were overlooking a large marshy area that drained into it and this yielded all number of wonderful bird species including Common, Black and Whiskered Terns, Great White Egret, Marsh Harrier, Snipe and Lapwing plus White Tailed and Greater Spotted Eagles. A Lesser Spotted Woodpecker was seen in a tree beside the water and Swifts and Swallows hawked for insects along with Norfolk Hawker and Common Clubtail. Redshank and Green Sandpiper were heard calling out in the marsh; Yellow Wagtail and Black Redstart were also spotted and a Lesser Whitethroat sang noisily from the scrub beside the embankment. Green Frogs added to the glorious cacophony and a Penduline Tit was found to be building a nest nearby.



Stop 4. Our last stop on the way home was at the meadow we had visited on a couple of occasions previously. Here, there was little to see in the way of larger wildlife but Jackie came across Grizzled Skipper, which was a new butterfly for the list and there were plenty of Small Heaths flitting around too.



Grizzled Skipper
© Alice Hunter

We returned to the hotel to pack before dinner and our final evening meal was accompanied in true Polish style by a bottle of the famous Bison Grass Vodka and one of a Belarusian honey vodka kindly supplied by Tomasz and Lukasz by way of a farewell. There was one last bit of wildlife watching to squeeze in before the morning though and so after dinner we took a short walk into the Palace grounds. Tomasz had his torch with him and as we walked along the path beside the small river he scanned the surface for activity.

It wasn't long before we came across what we were looking for, a young beaver swimming with its head above the surface and its

tail floating out behind it. It didn't seem to be bothered by us in the slightest and so we kept quiet, hoping that it might be brave enough to leave the water and join us on the bank. It passed very close in front of us on several occasions and eventually slipped out of the water among the long grass on the opposite bank. We thought for a moment or two that it had vanished altogether until some loud chewing noises emanated from the vegetation on the far bank. After a while it reappeared and having watched it swim down the river a way, we left it in peace. It was a splendid way to round off the day and we chattered happily about it on our return walk to the hotel.

Day 8, Monday 3rd June

The morning was another bright and sunny one. Oliver and Alice ventured out along a section of railway line for a photographic walk before breakfast and having packed up the vehicles we were just about to set off when a Lesser Spotted Eagle was seen by Nigel, soaring overhead. We had to get on the road though and so we departed Białowieża discussing the highlights of our trip.

Stop 1. Tomasz had one last place in mind to visit on the way to the airport; the Forest Lake we had enjoyed walking around a few days earlier and the road up to it. He called out for Lukasz to stop the van in a sunny patch of the track and got out to investigate some butterflies which he had hoped might be Poplar Admiral. They turned out to be Woodland Brown, another new to the tour species and although not the Admirals we had hoped for, still a beautiful butterfly to see with striking eye spots down the outer edges of the underwings. We spent a few more minutes watching Norfolk Hawkers and Brilliant Emeralds hawking over the pools a little way up the road and Nigel contributed another bird to our list with a pair of Goldeneye that he spotted further out.



The rest of our journey was less eventful in terms of wildlife and we were soon entering Warsaw along the riverside to drop Nigel and Jackie at their hotel on our way to the airport for the rest of our journey home.

Poland 2019 Checklists: Biebrza Marshes & Białowieża Forest			Mon 27th May	Tue s 28th May	Wed 29th May	Thu 30th May	Fri 31s t Ma y	Sat 1st Jun	Sun 2nd Jun	Mon 3rd Jun
Birds			day 1	day 2	day 3	day 4	day 5	day 6	day 7	day 8
28	White-bellied Brent Goose	<i>Branta bernicla</i>								
29	Mallard	<i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓
30	Gadwall	<i>Anas strepera</i>				✓			✓	
31	Northern Pintail	<i>Anas acuta</i>								
32	Northern Shoveler	<i>Anas clypeata</i>			✓					
33	Eurasian Wigeon	<i>Anas penelope</i>								
34	Common Teal	<i>Anas crecca</i>								
35	Garganey	<i>Anas querquedula</i>								
36	Common Pochard	<i>Aythya ferina</i>								
37	Red-crested Pochard	<i>Netta rufina</i>								
38	Ferruginous Duck	<i>Aythya nyroca</i>								
39	Tufted Duck	<i>Aythya fuligula</i>				✓				
40	Common Scoter	<i>Melanitta nigra</i>								
41	Velvet Scoter	<i>Melanitta fusca</i>								
42	Long-tailed Duck	<i>Clangula hyemalis</i>								
43	Common Goldeneye	<i>Bucephala clangula</i>								✓
44	Smew	<i>Mergellus albellus</i>								
45	Goosander	<i>Mergus merganser</i>								
46	Red-breasted Merganser	<i>Mergus serrator</i>								
47	White-tailed Eagle	<i>Haliaeetus albicilla</i>			✓			✓		
48	Osprey	<i>Pandion haliaetus</i>								
49	Golden Eagle	<i>Aquila chrysaetos</i>								
50	Lesser Spotted Eagle	<i>Aquila pomarina</i>		✓		✓				✓
51	Greater Spotted Eagle	<i>Aquila clanga</i>							✓	
52	Short-toed Snake-Eagle	<i>Circaetus gallicus</i>								
53	Booted Eagle	<i>Aquila pennatus</i>								
54	Red Kite	<i>Milvus milvus</i>								
55	Black Kite	<i>Milvus migrans</i>								
56	Marsh-Harrier	<i>Circus aeruginosus</i>		✓	✓	✓			✓	

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Birds			day 1	day 2	day 3	day 4	day 5	day 6	day 7	day 8
144	Stock Dove	<i>Columba oenas</i>								
145	Wood Pigeon	<i>Columba palumbus</i>	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
146	Collared Dove	<i>Streptopelia decaocto</i>	✓		✓					✓
147	Turtle Dove	<i>Streptopelia turtur</i>								
148	Cuckoo	<i>Cuculus canorus</i>	H	✓	H	✓	✓	H	✓	H
149	Tawny Owl	<i>Strix aluco</i>								
150	Eagle Owl	<i>Bubo bubo</i>								
151	Great Grey Owl	<i>Strix nebulosa</i>								
152	Ural Owl	<i>Strix uralensis</i>								
153	Boreal / Tengmalm's Owl	<i>Aegolius funereus</i>								
154	Pygmy Owl	<i>Glaucidium passerinum</i>								
155	Long-eared Owl	<i>Asio otus</i>								
156	Short-eared Owl	<i>Asio flammeus</i>								
157	Barn Owl	<i>Tyto alba</i>								
158	Little Owl	<i>Athene noctua</i>								
159	Nightjar	<i>Caprimulgus europaeus</i>								
160	Swift	<i>Apus apus</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
161	Hoopoe	<i>Upupa epops</i>	H	H	H	✓		✓	H	
162	Kingfisher	<i>Alcedo atthis</i>							H	
163	Bee-eater	<i>Merops apiaster</i>	✓							
164	Roller	<i>Coracias garrulus</i>								
165	Black Woodpecker	<i>Dryocopus martius</i>		H				✓		
166	Green Woodpecker	<i>Picus viridis</i>						✓		
167	Grey-headed Woodpecker	<i>Picus canus</i>								
168	Great Spotted Woodpecker	<i>Dendrocopos major</i>	✓	✓			✓	✓	✓	
169	Syrian Woodpecker	<i>Dendrocopos syriacus</i>								
170	Middle Spotted Woodpecker	<i>Dendrocopos medius</i>						✓		
171	White-backed Woodpecker	<i>Dendrocopos leucotos</i>					✓	✓		
172	Three-toed Woodpecker	<i>Picoides tridactylus</i>						H	✓	

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Birds			day 1	day 2	day 3	day 4	day 5	day 6	day 7	day 8
173	Lesser Spotted Woodpecker	<i>Dendrocopos minor</i>					✓	H	✓	
174	Eurasian Wryneck	<i>Jynx torquilla</i>								
175	Skylark	<i>Alauda arvensis</i>	✓		✓	✓			✓	
176	Crested Lark	<i>Galerida cristata</i>								
177	Woodlark	<i>Lullula arborea</i>	H	H	H	✓			✓	
178	Horned / Shore Lark	<i>Eremophila alpestris</i>								
179	Sand Martin	<i>Riparia riparia</i>	✓		✓				✓	
180	Barn Swallow	<i>Hirundo rustica</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
181	Northern House-Martin	<i>Delichon urbicum</i>	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
182	Tawny Pipit	<i>Anthus campestris</i>								
183	Water Pipit	<i>Anthus spinoletta</i>								
184	Rock Pipit	<i>Anthus petrosus</i>								
185	Meadow Pipit	<i>Anthus pratensis</i>		✓	✓			✓	✓	
186	Tree Pipit	<i>Anthus trivialis</i>		✓				✓	✓	
187	Red-throated Pipit	<i>Anthus cervinus</i>								
188	White Wagtail	<i>Motacilla alba</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
189	Yellow Wagtail	<i>Motacilla flava</i>			✓				✓	
190	Citrine Wagtail	<i>Motacilla citreola</i>								
191	Grey Wagtail	<i>Motacilla cinerea</i>								
192	Wren	<i>Troglodytes troglodytes</i>				✓	✓	✓	✓	
193	White-throated Dipper	<i>Cinclus cinclus</i>								
194	Bohemian Waxwing	<i>Bombycilla garrulus</i>								
195	Hedge Accentor / Dunnock	<i>Prunella modularis</i>					✓			
196	Alpine Accentor	<i>Prunella collaris</i>								
197	European Robin	<i>Erithacus rubecula</i>					H	✓		
198	Common Nightingale	<i>Luscinia megarhynchos</i>								
199	Thrush Nightingale	<i>Luscinia luscinia</i>	H	H	✓	H	H	H	✓	
200	Bluethroat	<i>Luscinia svecica</i>		✓	H	H				

Poland 2019 Checklists: Biebrza Marshes & Białowieża Forest			Mon 27th May	Tue s 28th May	Wed 29th May	Thu 30th May	Fri 31s t Ma y	Sat 1st Jun	Sun 2nd Jun	Mon 3rd Jun
Birds			day 1	day 2	day 3	day 4	day 5	day 6	day 7	day 8
285	Yellowhammer	<i>Emberiza citrinella</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
286	Corn Bunting	<i>Emberiza calandra</i>						✓		

Total: 125 species including Nigel's mystery Falcon on day 3 which has been marked with a ? as we weren't able to tell whether it was a Hobby or Red-Footed Falcon during the millisecond for which it was seen!

Total: 14 species

- * The Tree Frog could have been an Eastern Tree Frog rather than the European Tree Frog, which would make it *Hyla orientalis*. Unfortunately it is impossible to tell from appearance alone as they can only be separated by location or DNA. In this area, the range of both species overlaps.
- * * The frogs in that we saw and heard across much of the trip are “Green Frogs” these are either Pool or Marsh frogs but the two species cannot be separated visually and often hybridise.

Total: 10 species including the Slow Worm photographed by Lukasz in Białowieża.

Poland 2019 Checklists: Biebrza Marshes & Białowieża Forest			Mon 27th May	Tues 28th May	Wed 29th May	Thu 30th May	Fri 31st May	Sat 1st Jun	Sun 2nd Jun	Mon 3rd Jun
Mammals			day 1	day 2	day 3	day 4	day 5	day 6	day 7	day 8
1	European Bison	<i>Bison bonasus</i>						✓		
2	Red Deer	<i>Cervus elaphus</i>				E	E	✓		
3	Roe Deer	<i>Capreolus capreolus</i>	✓	✓	✓			✓	✓	
4	Wild Boar	<i>Sus scrofa</i>								
5	Moose	<i>Alces Alces</i>		✓	✓	✓				
6	European Lynx	<i>Lynx lynx</i>								
7	Wolf	<i>Canis lupus</i>		E		H	E			
8	Red Fox	<i>Vulpes vulpes</i>		✓	✓			✓	✓	
9	Raccoon Dog	<i>Nyctereutes procyonoides</i>								
10	Badger	<i>Meles meles</i>						E	E	
11	Eurasian Otter	<i>Lutra lutra</i>								
12	Pine Marten	<i>Martes martes</i>					✓			
13	Stone / Beech Marten	<i>Martes foina</i>								
14	American Mink	<i>Mustela vison</i>								
15	European Polecat	<i>Mustela putorius</i>								
16	Stoat	<i>Mustela erminea</i>				✓				
17	Weasel	<i>Mustela nivalis</i>								
18	Northern white-breasted hedgehog	<i>Erinaceus roumanicus</i>								
19	European Beaver	<i>Castor fiber</i>		E					✓	
20	Red Squirrel	<i>Sciurus vulgaris</i>	✓							
21	European Hare	<i>Lepus europaeus</i>						✓	✓	
22	Bank Vole	<i>Clethrionomys glareolus</i>						✓		
23	Water Vole	<i>Arvicola terrestris</i>								
24	Striped Field Mouse	<i>Apodemus agrarius</i>								
25	Yellow-necked Mouse	<i>Apodemus flavicollis</i>								
26	Common Shrew	<i>Sorex araneus</i>					✓			

Poland 2019 Checklists: Biebrza Marshes & Białowieża Forest			Mon 27th May	Tues 28th May	Wed 29th May	Thu 30th May	Fri 31st May	Sat 1st Jun	Sun 2nd Jun	Mon 3rd Jun
Reptiles and Amphibians			day 1	day 2	day 3	day 4	day 5	day 6	day 7	day 8
1	Fire-Bellied Toad	<i>Bombina bombina</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			
2	Common Toad	<i>Bufo bufo</i>				✓			✓	
3	Natterjack Toad	<i>Bufo calamita</i>								
4	Green Toad	<i>Bufo viridis</i>						H		
5	European Tree Frog	<i>Hyla arborea</i> *		✓	✓	✓				
6	Common Spadefoot	<i>Pelobates fuscus</i>								
7	Moor Frog	<i>Rana arvalis</i>								
8	Edible Frog	<i>Rana esculenta</i>								
9	Pool Frog	<i>Rana lessonae</i> **	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	
10	Eurasian Marsh Frog	<i>Rana ridibunda</i>								
11	European Common Frog	<i>Rana temporaria</i>				✓		✓		
12	Great Crested Newt	<i>Triturus cristatus</i>								
13	Smooth Newt	<i>Triturus vulgaris</i>								
14	European Pond Terrapin	<i>Emys orbicularis</i>								
15	Slow worm	<i>Anguis fragilis</i>						✓		
16	Sand Lizard	<i>Lacerta agilis</i>		✓			✓			
17	Common Lizard	<i>Zootoca vivipara</i>				✓				
18	Grass Snake	<i>Natrix natrix</i>				✓				
19	Smooth Snake	<i>Coronella austriaca</i>								
20	Adder	<i>Vipera berus</i>								

Poland 2019 Checklists: Biebrza Marshes & Białowieża Forest			Mon 27th May	Tues 28th May	Wed 29th May	Thu 30th May	Fri 31st May	Sat 1st Jun	Sun 2nd Jun	Mo n 3rd Jun
Butterflies			day 1	day 2	day 3	day 4	day 5	day 6	day 7	day 8
	Apollos, Swallowtails	Family Papilionidae								
1	Swallowtail	<i>Papilio machaon</i>				✓				
2	Clouded Apollo	<i>Parnassius mnemosyne</i>	✓	✓		✓				
	Whites and Yellows	Family Pieridae								
3	Black-veined White	<i>Aporia crataegi</i>						✓	✓	

Poland 2019 Checklists: Biebrza Marshes & Białowieża Forest			Mon 27th May	Tues 28th May	Wed 29th May	Thu 30th May	Fri 31st May	Sat 1st Jun	Sun 2nd Jun	Mo n 3rd Jun
Butterflies			day 1	day 2	day 3	day 4	day 5	day 6	day 7	day 8
59	Ringlet	<i>Aphantopus hyperantus</i>								
60	Large Heath	<i>Coenonympha tullia</i>								
61	Small Heath	<i>Coenonympha pamphilus</i>	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	
62	Pearly Heath	<i>Coenonympha arcania</i>								
63	Chestnut Heath	<i>Coenonympha glycerion</i>								
64	Scarce Heath	<i>Coenonympha hero</i>				✓				
65	Speckled Wood	<i>Pararge aegeria</i>		✓		✓	✓	✓		
66	Wall Brown	<i>Lasiommata megera</i>								
67	Northern Wall Brown	<i>Lasiommata petropolitana</i>								
68	Large Wall	<i>Lasiommata maera</i>								
69	Woodland Brown	<i>Lopinga achine</i>								✓
	Skippers	Family Hesperiiidae								
70	Grizzled Skipper	<i>Pyrgus malvae</i>							✓	
71	Large Grizzled Skipper	<i>Pyrgus alveus</i>								
72	Safflower Skipper	<i>Pyrgus carthami</i>								
73	Mallow Skipper	<i>Nymphalis antiopa</i>								
74	Dingy Skipper	<i>Erynnis tages</i>					✓			
75	Chequered Skipper	<i>Carterocephalus palaemon</i>	✓	✓		✓				
76	Northern Chequered Skipper	<i>Carterocephalus silvicola</i>				✓				
77	Essex Skipper	<i>Thymelicus lineola</i>								
78	Small Skipper	<i>Thymelicus sylvestris</i>								
79	Large Skipper	<i>Ochlodes venatus</i>					✓			

Total: 38 species including the caterpillars of the Scarce Fritillary found on Day 4.

Poland 2019 Checklists: Biebrza Marshes & Białowieża Forest			Mon 27th May	Tues 28th May	Wed 29th May	Thu 30th May	Fri 31st May	Sat 1st Jun	Sun 2nd Jun	Mon 3rd Jun
Dragonflies and Damselflies			day 1	day 2	day 3	day 4	day 5	day 6	day 7	day 8
1	Banded Demoiselle	<i>Calopteryx splendens</i>		✓			✓		✓	
2	Beautiful Demoiselle	<i>Calopteryx virgo</i>		✓		✓	✓		✓	
3	Emerald Damselfly	<i>Lestes sponsa</i>				?				
4	Scarce Emerald Damselfly	<i>Lestes dryas</i>				?				
5	Common Winter Damsel	<i>Sympecma fusca</i>								
6	Siberian Winter Damsel	<i>Sympecma pedisca</i>				✓				
7	Common Bluetail	<i>Ischnura elegans</i>		✓		✓				
8	Small Bluetail	<i>Ischnura pumilio</i>				✓				
9	Common Blue Damselfly	<i>Enallagma cyathigerum</i>								
10	Variable Damselfly	<i>Coenagrion pulchellum</i>				✓				
11	Azure Damselfly	<i>Coenagrion puella</i>		✓		✓				
12	Northern Damselfly	<i>Coenagrion hastulatum</i>								
13	Irish Damselfly	<i>Coenagrion lunulatum</i>								
14	Norfolk Damselfly	<i>Coenagrion armatum</i>								
15	Red-eyed Damselfly	<i>Erythromma najas</i>				✓	✓			
16	Large Red Damsel	<i>Pyrrhosoma nymphula</i>								
17	Pygmy Damselfly	<i>Nehalennia speciosa</i>								
18	White-legged Damselfly	<i>Platycnemis pennipes</i>		✓			✓		✓	
19	Southern Migrant Hawker	<i>Aeshna affinis</i>								
20	Norfolk Hawker	<i>Aeshna isoceles</i>				?	✓		✓	✓
21	Bog Hawker	<i>Aeshna subarctica</i>								
22	Blue Emperor	<i>Anax imperator</i>					✓			
23	Lesser Emperor	<i>Anax parthenope</i>								
24	Vagrant Emperor	<i>Anax ephippiger</i>								
25	Hairy Hawker	<i>Brachytron pratense</i>								
26	Common Clubtail	<i>Gomphus vulgatissimus</i>		✓		✓			✓	✓
27	River Clubtail	<i>Gomphus avipes</i>								
28	Downy Emerald	<i>Cordulia aenea</i>		✓						
29	Brilliant Emerald	<i>Somatochlora metallica</i>					✓			✓

Poland 2019 Checklists: Biebrza Marshes & Białowieża Forest			Mon 27th May	Tues 28th May	Wed 29th May	Thu 30th May	Fri 31st May	Sat 1st Jun	Sun 2nd Jun	Mon 3rd Jun
30	Yellow-spotted Emerald	<i>Somatochlora avomaculata</i>								
31	Eurasian Baskettail	<i>Epitheca bimaculata</i>								
32	Four-spotted Chaser	<i>Libellula quadrimaculata</i>				✓	✓			
33	Broad-bodied Chaser	<i>Libellula depressa</i>								
34	Scarce Chaser	<i>Libellula fulva</i>		✓		✓	✓			
35	Black-tailed Skimmer	<i>Orthetrum cancellatum</i>				✓				✓
36	White-tailed Skimmer	<i>Orthetrum albistylum</i>								
37	Small Whiteface	<i>Leucorrhinia dubia</i>								
38	Ruby Whiteface	<i>Leucorrhinia rubicunda</i>								
39	Yellow-spotted Whiteface	<i>Leucorrhinia pectoralis</i>					✓			
40	Dark Whiteface	<i>Leucorrhinia albifrons</i>					✓			
41	Lilypad Whiteface	<i>Leucorrhinia caudalis</i>				✓				
42	Ruddy Darter	<i>Sympetrum sanguineum</i>								
43	Vagrant Darter	<i>Sympetrum vulgatum</i>								

Total: 21 species including the queried Emerald or Scarce Emerald seen fleetingly on day 4.

Notable Plants

F = flowering L = leaf or seedheads only

Dicotyledons

Lesser Spearwort	<i>Ranunculus flammula</i>	F
Columbine	<i>Aquilegia vulgaris</i>	F
Hepatica	<i>Anemone hepatica</i>	L
Eastern Pasqueflower	<i>Pulsatilla patens</i>	L
Common Poppy	<i>Papaver rhoeas</i>	F
Greater Celandine	<i>Chelidonium majus</i>	F
Ragged Robin	<i>Lychnis flos-cuculi</i>	F
Wood Stitchwort	<i>Stellaria nemorum</i>	F
Annual Knawel	<i>Scleranthus annuus</i>	F
Common Bistort	<i>Polygonum bistorta</i>	F
Thrift	<i>Armeria maritima</i>	F
Field Pansy	<i>Viola arvensis</i>	F
Round-leaved Sundew	<i>Drosera rotundifolia</i>	L
Garlic Mustard or Jack-by-the-hedge	<i>Alliaria petiolata</i>	F

Coralroot or Dentaria	<i>Cardamine bulbifera</i>	L
Bog Bilberry	<i>Vaccinium uliginosum</i>	F
Labrador Tea	<i>Rhododendron tomentosum</i>	F
Water Violet	<i>Hottonia palustris</i>	F
Chickweed Wintergreen	<i>Trientalis europaea</i>	F
Wild Raspberry	<i>Rubus idaeus</i>	F
Marsh Cinquefoil	<i>Comarum palustre</i>	F
Water Avens	<i>Geum rivale</i>	F
Wood Avens or Herb Bennet	<i>Geum urbanum</i>	F
Tufted Vetch	<i>Vicia cracca</i>	F
Wood Vetch	<i>Vicia sylvatica</i>	F
Thesium	<i>Thesium ebracteatum</i>	L
Bloody Cranesbill	<i>Geranium sanguineum</i>	F
Touch-me-not Balsam	<i>Impatiens noli-tangere</i>	F
Alkanet	<i>Anchusa officinalis</i>	F
Bogbean	<i>Menyanthes trifoliata</i>	F
Jacob's Ladder	<i>Polemonium caeruleum</i>	F
Great Mullein	<i>Verbascum thapsus</i>	L
Wood Cow-wheat	<i>Melampyrum nemorosum</i>	F
Spreading Bellflower	<i>Campanula patula</i>	F
Spiked Rampion	<i>Phyteuma spicatum</i>	F
Marsh Valerian	<i>Valeriana dioica</i>	F
Ox-Eye Daisy	<i>Leucanthemum vulgare</i>	F
Scentless Mayweed	<i>Tripleurospermum inodorum</i>	F
Wormwood	<i>Artemisia absinthia</i>	L
Meadow Thistle	<i>Cirsium dissectum</i>	F
Cornflower	<i>Centaurea cyanus</i>	F
Asarabacca	<i>Asarum europeum</i>	F

Monocotyledons

Wild Garlic or Ramsons	<i>Allium ursinum</i>	L
Martagon Lily	<i>Lilium martagon</i>	L
Angular Solomon's Seal	<i>Polygonatum odoratum</i>	L
Herb Paris	<i>Paris quadrifolia</i>	F
Lily of the Valley	<i>Convallaria majalis</i>	F
May Lily	<i>Maianthemum bifolium</i>	F
Yellow Flag Iris	<i>Iris pseudacorus</i>	F
Common Spotted Orchid	<i>Dactylorhiza fuchsii</i>	F
Early Marsh Orchid	<i>Dactylorhiza incarnata</i>	F
Broad Leaved Marsh Orchid	<i>Dactylorhiza majalis</i>	F

Common Twayblade	<i>Listera ovata</i>	F
Lesser Butterfly Orchid	<i>Platanthera bifolia</i>	F
Broad Leaved Helleborine	<i>Epipactis helleborine</i>	L
Bird's Nest Orchid	<i>Neottia nidus-avis</i>	F
Lady's Slipper Orchid	<i>Cypripedium calceolus</i>	L
Water Plantain	<i>Alisma plantago-aquatica</i>	L
Stiff Clubmoss	<i>Lycopodium annotinum</i>	L
Cotton grass	<i>Eriophorum sp.</i>	L



Alder Carr Woodland
© Alice Hunter



Bluethroat © Oliver Wright



Bank Vole © Tomasz Jezierczuk



Jupiter & its moons © Oliver Wright



Broad-bodied Chaser © Tomasz Jezierczuk



Black Woodpecker & young
© Alice Hunter

Yellow-spotted Whiteface
© Tomasz Jezierczuk



European Tree Frog © Oliver Wright



Female Large Copper © Alice Hunter

Fire-bellied Toad calling © Tomasz Jezierczuk





Tree Frog © Oliver Wright



Predatory Shield Bug eggs
© Oliver Wright



Jumping Spider © Oliver Wright



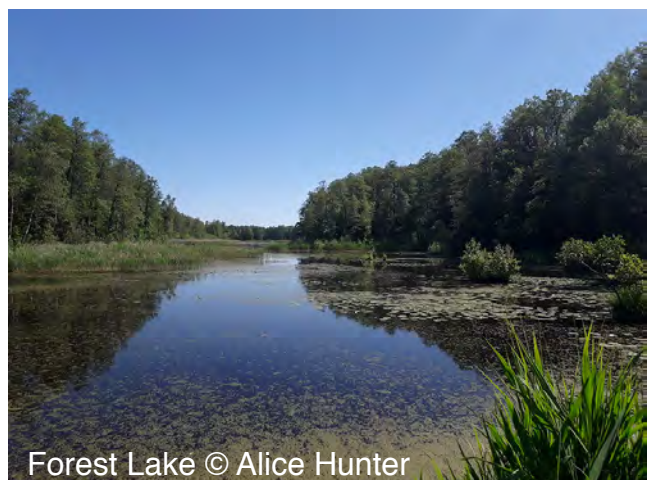
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Latticed Heath Moth © Alice Hunter



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Forest Lake © Alice Hunter



In the forest © Alice Hunter



Pool Frog © Oliver Wright



Map & Heath Fritillary © Tomasz Jezierczuk



Moose © Oliver Wright

Large Red-Eyed Damselfly
© Tomasz Jezierczuk



Chequered Skipper © Oliver Wright



Great Reed Warbler
© Alice Hunter



Weaver Beetle © Oliver Wright



Large Skipper © Tomasz Jezierczuk



Heath Fritillary © Alice Hunter



Crab Spider © Oliver Wright



Jumping Spider © Oliver Wright



Leaf Beetles © Oliver Wright



Heriaeus spider © Oliver Wright



Red-Backed Shrike © Oliver Wright



Red-Backed Shrike © Alice Hunter



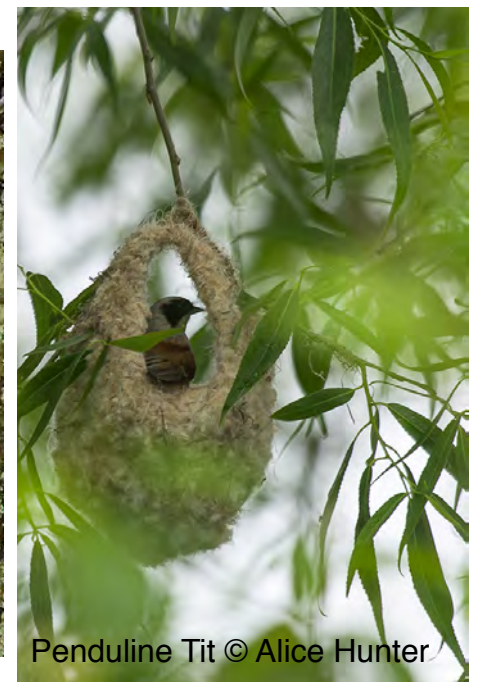
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Labrador Tea © Alice Hunter



Middle-Spotted Woodpecker © Tomasz Jezierczuk



Penduline Tit © Alice Hunter



White-legged Damselfly
© Oliver Wright



Reed Bunting © Alice Hunter



Water Violet © Alice Hunter



Downy Emerald © Oliver Wright



Dor Beetle © Oliver Wright



Białowieża Pony & trap © Alice Hunter

Pond Snail © Oliver Wright



Białowieża Forest © Oliver Wright



Small Heath © Alice Hunter

White Stork nest © Oliver Wright



European Paper Wasp © Oliver Wright





Wood White © Tomasz Jezierczuk



Clouded Apollo © Oliver Wright



Three-toed Woodpecker
© Oliver Wright



Sooty Copper © Alice Hunter



Robber-fly & prey © Oliver Wright



Northern Chequered Skipper © Alice Hunter



Chequered Skipper © Alice Hunter



Water Plantain © Alice Hunter



Drinker Moth Caterpillar © Oliver Wright



Dark Whiteface © Tomasz Jezierczuk



Scrambled Eggs Slime-mould © Tomasz Jezierczuk



Clouded Apollos © Alice Hunter

Scarce Chaser © Alice Hunter



Female Sand Lizard ©Tomasz Jezierczuk

Bog Fritillary © Alice Hunter



Roosting Common Blue © Oliver Wright

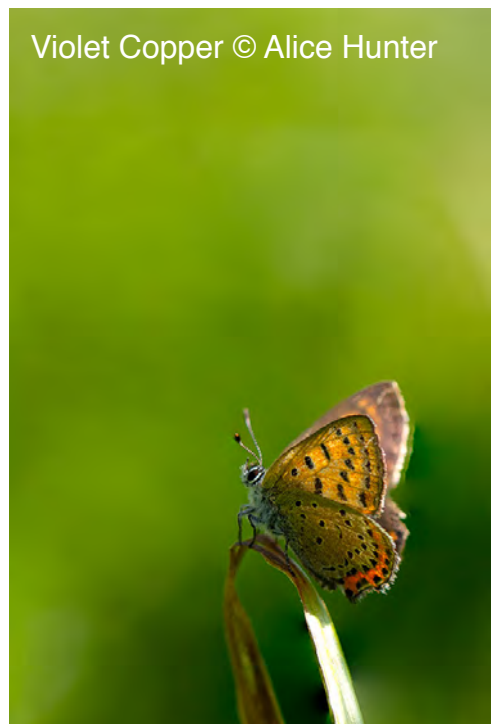


Sawfly larva shedding skin © Alice Hunter



Spreading Bellflower © Alice Hunter

Violet Copper © Alice Hunter



Violet Copper ©Oliver Wright

