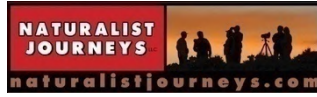


# Finland & Norway: Birding and Nature

## June 4-16, 2025 | Trip Report | by Gerard Gorman



**With Gerard Gorman, local guide Riku, and Bob, Kelly, Catherine, Fred, Christa, Robert, Peter, and Brenda**



Our latest Naturalist Journey's tour to Finland and Norway was a marvelous adventure. We travelled from the Taiga Forest belt in Finland, north into legendary Lapland and then up to the Arctic Tundra and the coast of the Barents Sea. The landscapes we traversed were often stunning and the habitats we visited were typically diverse and rich. Bird highlights included Ruff and Temminck's Stints displaying, singing Bluethroats, "Siberian" species such as Rustic and Little, Buntings, Grey-headed Chickadee, Red-flanked Bluetail and Siberian Jay. We did very well for owls, with six species seen and five woodpeckers spotted, too. And then there was Hornøya Island, an absolute seabird paradise and bird photographer's dream. We ate and drank well, too, usually sampling local specialties, and everyone we met in both countries was kind and helpful. All in all, this was a trip to warmly remember.

### **Wed., June 4. Arrivals | Kempele Bay | Night Oulu**

We had all arrived in Finland on different days but this evening we met up at our hotel in Oulu at 7.30pm for a welcome drink and introductions. We then had our first dinner together and earlier some of us walked in the hotel grounds and to the birdwatching tower behind the hotel that overlooks Kempele Bay, an inlet of the Bay of Bothnia. Being so far north, it was still light. We saw Whooper Swans (Finland's national bird), Graylag Geese, Northern Shovelers, Green-winged Teals, Tufted Ducks, a male Ring-necked Pheasant, Great Crested Grebes, Eurasian Coots, Northern Lapwings, Eurasian Curlews, Common Snipe in flight display, singing and displaying



Sedge Warblers, Common, Herring and Black-headed Gulls, White Wagtails, Redwings, Fieldfares, and many more. We were in a wonderful location and were able to enjoy a relaxing and ideal start to our Fenno-Scandic adventure.

## **Thurs., June 5. Kempele Bay | Siikajoki | Korvenkylä | Liminka Bay | Night Oulu**

Before breakfast some of us went behind our hotel to scan the bay, seeing a range of ducks and dozens of Great Crested Grebes, some displaying to each other, Common Rosefinch and Reed Bunting. Common Swifts were swirling and screeching in the sky about the hotel. Today would be, above all, one of owls. After a good breakfast headed towards the settlement of Siikajoki and then drove a forest road for a couple of miles: our objective was to find Great Gray Owl. With good local knowledge we took a trail for a few minutes and were soon watching a huge mother and an owlet on her nest. We kept a respectable distance, keeping quiet, and the owl simply ignored. After this incredible start we walked the forest road for a while seeing three closely related “little green jobs”: Chiffchaff and Wood and Willow Warblers. Two Bohemian Waxwings briefly showed and then the call of a Eurasian Goshawk suddenly came from deep within the forest. After a few minutes the bird, a female, flew through the trees: another excellent observation. Moving on towards Korvenkylä we saw many Fieldfares, Jackdaws, Rooks and Hooded Crows and most fields hosted displaying Eurasian Curlews and pairs of Whooper Swans. Parties of Common Cranes occasionally flew overhead. Near Mäkikylä we had our next owl encounter: a huge Eurasian Eagle Owl perched in a pine tree in a roadside wood. Next, we visited the Liminka Bay Visitor Centre, first taking a trail to an observation platform. Here, we had close views of a pair of Garganey and also saw Reed Bunting, Northern Lapwings, Black-tailed Godwits, Western Marsh Harrier and Common, Black-headed and European Herring Gulls. We had lunch in the centre, and as it was raining, took a “time-out” to browse the souvenir shop and look at its impressive exhibition of the area’s birds. As we left a fine male Yellowhammer was singing his “little bit of bread and no cheese” song. In the afternoon we drove north of Oulu to Martinniemi, our target being another owl species. We parked up by a tranquil and walked a boggy trail for some minutes to a nest box. And there she was, a Boreal Owl! This bird had been a major objective for several of

our group, and it certainly did not disappoint. Other birds here included Song Thrush, European Robin and after persevering we saw two Garden Warblers which had tried their best to elude us.

## **Fri., June 6. Laitakangus | Ojala | Soso | Tuppu | Mökkikylä | Night Oulu**

Our first stop this morning was at a rural house near Laitakangus which has bird feeders in its yard. Here we got first-rate views of a Great Spotted Woodpecker, a European Pied Flycatcher, Great, Willow, Coal and Eurasian



Blue Tits, many Eurasian Siskins, European Greenfinch, and several male Eurasian Bullfinches in stunning red plumage. This was a perfect place for those with cameras to get good shots. Then it was time to leave as we had another owl to search for. We drove along a gravel road through an open area of bog and forest near Ojala to a site where we knew Ural Owls were using a nest box. We parked up and located the tree with the box, which was placed fairly low down and visible from the road. Two well-grown fluffy chicks could be seen, but the adults were absent. We patiently waited a while and after a time the female appeared, perching in a tree from where she surveyed the scene. Once we had all had satisfactory views we moved on, leaving this magnificent mother to get on with raising her young. Next, we visited a small lake near Soso where a Common Goldeneye with five ducklings and two Horned Grebes sporting striking breeding plumage were highlights. Near Tuppu, a pond which seemed to be used for bathing, had two Little Ringed Plovers, a Common Sandpiper and two White Wagtails on its sandy “beach” and three Crested Tits were seen in the adjacent pine wood. After lunch we trekked into a boggy forest (Finland is full of boggy forests!) near Mökkikylä. We saw two new woodpecker species here, Lesser Spotted (Europe’s smallest picid) and a male Gray-headed that posed nicely. Other birds here included Common Redstart, Tree Pipit and Redwing. We also saw a Brown Hare today (the size of which surprised some) and another Red Squirrel. After another successful day we returned to our hotel in good time for dinner. Before we retired for the night, our kind hosts offered us all a “farewell” shot of traditional blueberry vodka.

## **Sat., June 7. Murto | Pudasjärvi | Lake Koitijärvi | Kuusamo-Vihtasalmi | Night Kuusamo**

We checked out and began our journey eastwards to our next base in Kuusamo, a small city that lies close to the border with Russia and is a famed Finnish birding area as it lies among vast forests dotted with bogs and lakes. However, we did not head straight there but took our time making several birding stops. First, we continued our exploration of the Oulu area, often seeing more Eurasian Curlews and Northern Lapwings in the farm fields we passed but also a hunting Short-eared Owl. It is no exaggeration to say that we were doing well for owls! At quiet suburban spot near the small town of Murto a real highlight was a Eurasian Wryneck. This bird is a woodpecker but not at all typical of that family: for example, it is unable to excavate its own nesting cavities. Other birds here were Song Thrush, Eurasian Tree Sparrow, Common Chaffinch, and Spotted Flycatcher. A little further on we stopped in farmland seeing Whinchat, Eurasian Skylarks and two Ortolan Buntings; a lovely looking little bird that is sadly declining across Europe. We pushed on, to the north-east, taking road 20, stopping for lunch in Pudasjärvi. We soon started to see our first Caribou (known in Europe as Reindeer) and we would see many more in the coming days. We passed numerous lakes, of all shapes and sizes: at times, the scenery was stunning. At Lake Koitijärvi we stopped and saw two Arctic Loons, Common Gulls, and another Common Sandpiper. Upon arrival in Kuusamo we visited the Vihtasalmi Bird Watching Tower but just before



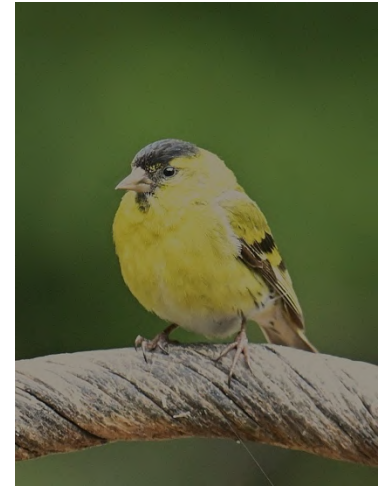
getting there we came upon a pair of Willow Grouse scurrying through a trackside woodland: brilliant urban birding! From the birdwatching tower we had great views of many wetland species. There were many ducks, both Little and Black-headed Gulls, some in flight and some on nests, and at least six smart-looking, Red-necked Grebes. It was a great end to another marvelous day. We checked into our hotel on the edge of town, after being greeted by a Mountain Hare (also sometimes called *Tundra Hare*) complete with its white “snowshoes,” in the parking lot. We met for a buffet dinner at 7pm and later ran through our day’s list of wildlife sightings.

## **Sun., June 8. Konttainen | Käylänkoski Rapids | Lake Likaperä | Jyrkänkoski | Lake Vuotunki | Night Kuusamo**

This morning, we visited Konttainen, a well-known birding site just to the north of Kuusamo. As we departed we saw that our hotel-based Mountain Hare had been joined by another, and groups of Caribou/Reindeer were even grazing within the city limits. The local birding club have feeders by the Konttainen parking lot which attracted Eurasian Siskins, Bramblings, Eurasian Bullfinches, Willow and Great Tits, a Great Spotted Woodpecker and squabbling Red Squirrels, all taking advantage of the nuts and seeds. A Common Cuckoo was heard and then flew over us and a flock of Red Crossbills shot by. Some of us hiked up a trail, with the objective of trying to find Red-flanked Bluetail, a specialty here. Others stayed by the feeders, preferring to take photographs of the confiding birds. The bluetail was briefly heard, but not seen, and a Siberian Jay appeared, too. Our next destination was a very picturesque spot, the Käylänkoski Rapids, where we saw Whooper Swans, Common Goldeneyes, Red-breasted Mergansers, two Spotted Flycatchers and many Western House-Martins swooping over the river. At Lake Likaperä we found another Arctic Loon and Red-necked Grebe. Just before the settlement of Jyrkänkoski we quickly pulled over to watch a flock of over thirty Taiga Bean-Geese and around twenty Whooper Swans in a water-logged field. This was a really good view of the geese, which can often be hard to find and wary. A little further on first a Green Sandpiper and then a Black Woodpecker flew over the road. Lake Vuotunki proved to be exceptional, especially as we were able to watch the birds there from a convenient birdwatching tower. There were dozens of ducks, Eurasian Wigeons, Tufted Ducks and two Smew, another bird that was high on the want-list of our group. Shorebirds included Northern Lapwing, Common Snipe, Eurasian Curlew, Wood Sandpipers and Common Greenshanks. There were also various songbirds in the surrounding trees. Just as we were about to leave over a hundred Taiga Bean-Geese flew in. We drove back to Kuusamo after a day that had started slowly but ended filled with birds.

## **Mon., June 9. Lake Toranki | Tuovila | Konttainen | Night Kuusamo**

After breakfast we visited Lake Toranki, in the south of Kuusamo. On an easy and pleasant walk, we found Brambling, Pied Flycatcher and four species of buntings: Reed, Rustic, Little and Yellowhammer. Rustic and Little



Buntings were two more key species that everyone wanted to see as they are mainly found in the Taiga Forest belt of Eurasia, particularly in Russia, and difficult to see elsewhere in Europe. The lake itself had an exceptional group of a dozen Arctic Loons, some in full breeding plumage. From a birdwatching tower at the other side of the lake we saw many of the ducks, grebes, terns, and gulls that we were now becoming familiar with and also got panoramic views of the outstanding surrounding landscape. After lunch we drove towards the village of Tuovila and hiked a trail up a small hill. Birds found included Redwing, Tree Pipit, two more Rustic Buntings and, as almost always, singing Willow Warblers. But the main reason we had come here was to search for Red-flanked Bluetail, another Taiga species that had so escaped us. It was fairly quiet in the birch dominated forest but then we heard an “unusual” call and then, at last, we saw this special little species. Subsequent conversations with other birders in the area revealed that most had not found any Red-flanked Bluetails this year, so we can in retrospect be proud of ourselves. We decided to return to Konttinen as yesterday only one Siberian Jay was seen there and not by everyone. Today was different, as five of these gregarious birds showed well as well as two very feisty Red Squirrels once again quarreling over food. On the journey back to our accommodation a handsome Red Fox by the roadside was a new mammal for our trip. In the evening, we went through our checklist of sightings: we all agreed that it had been another superb day.

## **Tues., June 10. Kuusamo | Lake Rääpyslampi | into Lapland | Arctic Circle | Kemijärvi | Sodankylä | Ilmakkijärvi | Saarisselkä Kaunispää | Night Ivalo**

Today we would continue to the north, into Lapland and beyond the Arctic Circle. But as usual, we did load up our vehicles and simply “hit the road” but take our time and visit various birding sites. Just outside Kuusamo we checked a few nest boxes and in one soon found what we were looking for, a pair of Gray-headed Chickadees, another bird that is mainly found across Siberia (indeed, it is known as Siberian Tit in Europe). Despite this species also occurring in parts of Alaska and northwest Canada it was a “lifer” for almost everyone as few had ventured to the remote areas where it can be seen. Our next stop was at Lake Rääpyslampi to watch a raft of 22 Velvet Scoters. We went north on road 5 and before long soon crossed into Lapland. This famed region is the home of the Sami people, who call it Sápmi, and many Reindeer! At Suomi we pulled over right on the Arctic Circle, took photos and tasted a shot of cloudberry liquor (not those driving I might add) to celebrate reaching/this geographic location. The cloudberry liquor was so popular that several late bought bottles of it to take home. We had a “comfort stop” in the town of Kemijärvi and then continued northwards. This was really a land of lakes and many of them held Arctic Loons, Common Mergansers, Common Goldeneyes, and the like. We had lunch in Sodankylä; the place was full of locals (Finns really like their lunch-time buffets). At the Ilmakkijärvi bog we saw White-tailed Eagle, Osprey, and a displaying Meadow Pipit. Further north we turned onto a gravel road and drove for a few miles through a remote area of forested bog. We had once again received a birding tip from



a local contact: this was a place for Northern Hawk Owl. This owl, like many of its relatives, fluctuates in number from year to year and 2025 was not a good one, so we thought we would try it. We scanned the trees tops and finally, almost when we thought of calling it a day, Riku spotted one atop a distant snag. Not close, but we all had decent views through our telescopes. Another owling triumph! Other birds here included Common Cuckoo and a pair of Western Yellow Wagtails. We visited one more site before reaching our next hotel in Inari, the ski resort at Saariselkä Kaunisää, which was quiet as it was the skiing off-season. Our objective here was to see another key Arctic bird, the Eurasian Dotterel. We scanned the tundra habitat and found an individual crouched down, most likely a male on a nest (this is one of those species in which males undertake most of the parental duties. We checked into our wonderfully comfortable hotel, right on the bank of the river in Ivalo, at 6pm and dined an hour later after what had been another highly productive day.

## **Wed., June 11. Ivalo | Neljän Tuulen Tupa | Skalluvaara | Nuorgam | into Norway | Høyholmen-Tanafjorden | Varangerhalvøya National Park | Night Båtsfjord**

We checked out and began our drive towards Norway. We stopped at the renowned Neljän Tuulen Tupa, “Four Winds Inn,” near Kaamanen where, besides drinks and snacks, the bird feeders were hosting Bramblings, Eurasian Bullfinches, European Greenfinches and, as was often the case when nuts and seeds were on offer, a Red Squirrel. The lake behind the inn had Velvet Scoter, Northern Pintail and Common Goldeneyes using nest boxes. Just south of Utsjoki we drove up to the Skalluvaara “reindeer separation area,” a place where these animals are herded together and processed. As we arrived at the top of the hill, we saw a young Moose which seemed to be confused when it came upon the camp’s fence. Though a run-down place with delapidated buildings Skalluvaara proved to be a good birding spot. There were six Red-necked Phalaropes, Tufted Ducks and Green-winged Teals on a small pond and three Ruff, a European Golden-Plover and a Common Ringed Plover, all in summer plumage, on the bank. The Ruff sporting their outrageous plumage proved extremely popular. As we left the area we were forced to stop when someone spotted a small bird on a fence. We tumbled out of our vans,

and saw two Bluethroats, yet another species that had been high on the want list of many in our group. The males in this part of Europe are the red-spotted nominate subspecies (in southern Europe they have a white-spot in their blue bib. We had lunch in Nuorgam, just before the border with Norway and then crossed the frontier without fuss; there were no checks, indeed it seemed that there was nobody there. We were now in a new country, with a new language, though here, as in Finland almost everyone speaks good English. Our first birding stop in Norway was at Høyholmen-Tanafjorden, where the River Tana broadens into a fjord before finally entering the Barents Sea. We had crossed the Arctic Circle some days ago but now it really felt that we were in



the Arctic proper. There were dozens of Common Eiders and Common Mergansers and a few Black Guillemots and Great Cormorants on the water and noisy Eurasian Oystercatchers on the shore. We saw our first Great Black-backed Gulls and Parasitic Jaegers, too. But, arguably, best of all were the Temminck's Stints that performed their delightful, fluttering, flight displays right around us and above our heads. Magical. When we were not occupied with the fantastic birds, we spotted a couple of Gray Seals in the fjord, too. Time was flying, so we had to move on. We followed road 890 and then 891, a stunningly scenic route over the tundra through the Varangerhalvøya National Park towards our next base in the fishing port of Båtsfjord. As we went, we recorded more European Golden Plovers, Ruff and some new trip species, Red-throated Loon, Rough-legged Hawk and Long-tailed Jaegers. We arrived at our destination in the late afternoon, the port, right by our quaint guesthouse, was alive with gulls, especially Black-legged Kittiwakes. Dinner was in a nearby restaurant where we were served the locally caught fish.

## **Thurs., June 12. Båtsfjord | Varangerhalvøya Fells | Kongsfjord | Night Båtsfjord**

Today we started our birding right in Båtsfjord itself. There were 100s of pairs of Black-legged Kittiwakes nesting on buildings, on walls, window ledges even on air-conditioning units. The harbor had Common, European Herring and huge Great Black-backed Gulls, Arctic Terns, and Black Guillemots. On the edge of town, a bay was full of ducks, Tufted and Long-tailed Ducks and many Common Eiders and Common Mergansers. There were a couple of Common Ringed Plovers and Eurasian Oystercatchers that were constantly flying around and calling loudly. Then two small birds flew in, around us, before landing on the bank of an inlet: White-throated Dippers! We had searched for this species in Finland but had no luck and now two were almost at our feet. We enjoyed a fabulous few minutes with these and the other birds. We returned to the tundra fells of the Varangerhalvøya National Park which began just outside town. Some lakes were still frozen, others thawing out and some open and snow lying in patches, but it was not too cold, spring had arrived. There were two Greater Scaup, several Long-tailed Ducks and a dozen Red-necked Phalaropes on Lake Adamsatnet. Everywhere we stopped there were European Golden Plovers, Common Ringed Plovers, the ever-popular Temminck's Stints, and we also found a few Little Stints. We had repeated views of lekking Ruff, some with black heads, some white, some rufous, others golden: we never had enough of that. Smaller bodies of water had pairs of Red-throated Loons and occasionally Whooper Swans. On many occasions we could compare Long-tailed and Parasitic Jaegers, not always straightforward as Parasitic has a pale color morph that can suggest Long-tailed. Bluethroats seemed to have just arrived as the males were active, often singing from patches of vegetation. Other passerines, Horned Lark and Lapland Longspur, were new trip birds. As we continued to explore, we started to find Rock Ptarmigans,



some still in mostly white winter plumage, others in a transitional phase, and White-tailed Eagles in flight or perched on rocks. We visited the old fishing village of Kongsfjord, a picturesque place with a charming bakery, café and wildlife art gallery and shop, where we enjoyed a break. There were more nesting Black-legged Kittiwakes in the settlement, Arctic Terns, and various ducks in the sheltered harbor. Although we were far north (about four hundred miles north of the Arctic Circle) but still came upon a few House Sparrows, Willow Warblers and White Wagtails – remarkable birds all. We returned to base at around 5pm and had dinner in the same local restaurant, most once again having the locally caught fish. As we did each evening, we ran through our checklist together and then, as we had done on several other days, thought “How on earth are we going to follow that?”

### **Fri., June 13. Båtsfjord | Varangerhalvøya Fells | Varangerfjord | Nesseby | Vadsø | Ekkerøya | Night Vardø**

After two nights in Båtsfjord we moved on after breakfast towards our second base in Norway, Vardø. These two fishing ports are both located on the Barents Sea coast but there is no road that connects them; hence we took the road over the fells once more. We saw many of the ducks and shorebirds that inhabited the tundra and its wetlands but also a few new things. We took a track up a fell and soon halted when a pair of Rock Ptarmigan were spotted. The male, almost all white, was ridiculously “tame,” allowing close approach, as many Arctic-dwelling birds often do, probably because he was intent of keeping close to his mate. We also saw a Whimbrel here and a little further on then another awesome bird, a Purple Sandpiper, that also allowed close views. Our day had started well! We then followed the north shore of Varangerfjord, another spectacular route. We stopped at Nesseby, where there is a sheltered bay and an old church. A Eurasian Oystercatcher had decided to nest in the graveyard here and took exception to people visiting it, flying nosily around. The bay held a dozen Graylag Goose, Eurasian Wigeon, Green-winged Teal, Common Eiders, Common Redshank, Common Greenshank and our first Bar-tailed Godwits, some males in smart rufous breeding plumage. There was a good selection of gulls and several White-tailed Eagles, too. In fact, from now on we would regularly see this huge bird of prey along the coast. Nesseby was such a great place that we decided to stay and eat our boxed lunches here. At Vadsø we saw more ducks, gulls, and shorebirds, including more Bar-tailed Godwits. Next, at Ekkerøya we visited a colony of Black-legged Kittiwakes, hundreds nesting on the cliffs, and there were rafts of Common Murres and Razorbills on the sea. We saw our first Rock Pipit, too, which was pestered by a Northern Wheatear. We made one last stop to scan a cliff for Gyrfalcon, but we only had brief views of one adult that swooped rapidly by. Vardø is actually on an island but is accessed via a road tunnel of about 1.8 miles long (9480 feet/2890 metres) that passes under the sea. Our comfortable hotel was situated right by the harbor and so once again, we would not have to go far to see birds.



## **Sat., June 14. Vardø | Persfjorden | Hamningberg | Hornøya Island | Night Vardø**

Our first stop today was at the southern tip of the island from where we scanned the sea. It was windy and cold, though we could not really complain as we had been truly fortunate with the weather so far. We reminded ourselves where we were, high in the Arctic, at the northeast tip of Norway, with nothing but the wild Barents Sea, which is part of the Arctic Sea, all around. Great Cormorants, European Shags, and numerous gulls were flying around and there were hundreds of Common Eiders bobbing up and down on the sea. But the highlight was six King Eiders, including impressive drakes, a great find. We went back through the tunnel to the mainland and took the road north from Svartnes to Persfjorden. The bog and lake dotted tundra on this route was home to Whooper Swans, various ducks and shorebirds, Red-throated Loons, Arctic Terns, Parasitic Jaegers of both color morphs, pale and dark, and Lapland Longspur. The sea bay at Persfjord had rafts of Common Eiders, Long-tailed Ducks, Common and Red-breasted Mergansers and Common Scoters. We had travelled on many scenic routes during our trip but the narrow road from Persfjorden to Hamningberg was really something, as it weaved through intriguing rock formations and afforded stunning views across the sea. A White-tailed Eagle, in flight or perched on a boulder, was seen every mile or so. The remote hamlet of Hamningberg was probably once a thriving fishing port but is now mostly a collection of summer holiday homes. In this picturesque location we had close views of a male Red-throated Pipit, as well as Rock Pipit, Redwing, Fieldfare and Northern Wheatear. It was now time to head back to Vardø for lunch but on the way, we occasionally stopped to look for another thrush species, one that we had not yet encountered. At our second stop we found one, a male Ring Ouzel. After lunch we walked to the harbor just behind our hotel and took the short boat ride to Hornøya Island. As we approached the island, we had a taste of what was to come as thousands of birds were on the water and in the air. Nevertheless, it is hard to describe the avian scene that greeted us when we landed on the island. The place was thronging with thousands of nesting seabirds: European Shags, Atlantic Puffins, Razorbills, Common Murres, Thick-billed Murres and, of course, Black-legged Kittiwakes. The shags and murres were often literally under our feet and not perturbed at all. It was impossible not to get close-up photographs. Some of our group stayed mostly by the landing stage as there was much to see right there, for instance a big bull Gray Seal often cruised up and down just off the island. Others took a trail around the island to the lighthouse, adding Barnacle Goose to our trip list. We spent about three hours on the island before returning to Vardø by the same boat, in awe at what we had experienced. Quite simply, Hornøya Island and its birds is an unforgettable experience. After dinner we went through our checklist and then announced our plans for tomorrow when we would head back south to Finland.

## **Sun., June 15. Vardø | Varangerfjord | into Finland | Neljän Tuulen Tupa | Night Ivalo**

We left Vardø after breakfast and began our drive back to Finland. We retraced our steps, first going through the tunnel and then following the Varangerfjord road. We checked the small harbor at Kiberg, another charming fishing hamlet where there is a “Kittiwake hotel,” a series of shelves erected to provide nesting places. We stopped again at the Gyrfalcon site. There was no sign of the adults but from a safe distance we did see two quite large chicks in a cliff nest through our telescopes. Other birds seen as we went along were six Tundra Bean Geese, a few Meadow and Red-throated Pipits and a couple of Hoary Redpolls. Interestingly, we saw fewer White-tailed Eagles on this route today than we did when we took it previously. Some stretches of the coast has roosting gull flocks of many hundred each, mostly European Herring Gulls but also Common, Lesser Black-backed, and Great Black-backed. We crossed into Finland at Polmak (once again, it was decidedly laid back with no checks) and had a boxed lunch near Nuorgam. In the early afternoon we stopped again for a break at Neljän Tuulen Tupa, the “Four Winds Inn.” This time, almost the first bird we saw on the main feeder was a male Pine Grosbeak! In addition, a Great Spotted Woodpecker and a couple of Red Squirrels put in appearances. We arrived in Ivalo just after 5pm and had dinner at 7pm. Before retiring for the night, we completed our checklist together and spoke about the plans for tomorrow, our final day, when we would fly to Helsinki and onwards.

## **Mon., June 16. To Ivalo Airport**

This was our final day and after a good buffet breakfast we drove the short way to Ivalo Airport. Check-in was smooth, the staff and security personnel friendly and we were soon on our way to Helsinki. As we waited in the departure area, I asked everyone to list two things: their favorite bird of the trip and a favorite “other thing”, such as an event, a place, a habitat. The choices were as follows:

- Fred. Temminck's Stint and the tundra fell habitats.
- Catherine. Bluethroat and the Båtsfjord hotel.
- Brenda. Boreal Owl and the hike to the Red-flanked Bluetail.
- Peter. Boreal Owl and wearing wellies in the bog.
- Bob. Ural Owl and the tundra scenery.
- Kelly. Wryneck and the Arctic scenery.
- Christa. Ural Owl and the tundra fells.
- Robert. Temminck's Stint and the rocky Norway coastline.

Everyone made great selections, illustrating how delightfully diverse things were on our journey. Finally, I would like to sincerely thank everyone who participated in this latest Naturalist Journeys tour to Finland and Norway.

*Photos: Group (Gerard Gorman - GG), Great Spotted Woodpecker (GG), Boreal Owl (GG), Fieldfare (GG), Pied Flycatcher (GG), Eurasian Bullfinch (GG), Red Squirrel (GG), Birches in the Taiga (GG), A woodpecker "anvil" (Catherine Cummins - CC), Reindeer (GG), Eurasian Siskin (GG), Common Gull (CC), Razorbill (GG), Café in Arctic Norway (CC), Atlantic Puffins (GG), Troll Garden (GG), Common Murre colony (GG)*