Day 1: Stockholm & Örebro

Upon arrival, a stroll through the Stockholm city centre did not yield many birds, but for us, the common Hooded Crow was still special on day 1 in Sweden. Other than these, Herring, Lesser Black-backed and Black-headed Gulls were present, and White Wagtails were active around the Royal Palace. After a few hours of sightseeing, we took the train to Örebro, some 200 km west of Stockholm. From the train, which runs south of Lake Mälaren, we spotted our first two Cranes of the trip – birds from our Swedish wishlist! – as well as Marsh Harrier, Raven, Hare and Roe Deer. In Örebro, the lake surrounding the castle in the city centre (Örebro Slottet) yielded two noisy Grey Wagtails in the evening light.

Day 2: Bergslagsleden from Annaboda to Amboberget

We headed to Annaboda by bus in the morning, where we started our hiking trip along the Bergslags Trail (Bergslagsleden). Over the course of 5.5 days, we hiked stages 9 till 3 of the trail – heading north from our starting point in Annaboda. The first day we hiked stage 9 and much of stage 8, setting up camp in the woods near Amboberget, a bit south of Ramshyttan. During the whole trip, some bird species were ubiquitous. These include the very common Siskins, the noisy yet elusive Common Crossbills, Wrens, Robins, Goldcrest, Wood Pigeons, Tree Pipsits, Song Thrush, Blackcap and Greater Spotted Woodpecker. We were happy to spot the Scandinavian Nuthatch (Sitta europaea europaea), with white underparts unlike S. europaea caesia which we know back south. A Ringed Plover on migration was resting on a muddy island in Lake Annabosjöarna, and five Teals were flying around Lake Göljan further north along the trail. Honey Buzzards were migrating on this sunny day, we managed to spot five lone migrants that morning. Setting up camp we were welcomed by the first of many Black Woodpeckers we would encounter on the trip. At dusk, two Eurasian Pygmy Owls were calling nearby.

Day 3: Bergslagsleden from Amboberget to Uvberget

Hiking the rest of stage 8 and much of stage 7 today, we stopped for birding and swimming at Lake Damasjön, near Gamla Pershyttan. We encountered our first Arctic Loon there, as well as our first Firecrest in the birches near shore. Bramblings were present too. Ravens were calling and flying over regularly during the day. Some Willow Warblers were calling along the track. Black Woodpecker and Eurasian Pygmy Owl provided the soundtrack in the evening.

Day 4: Bergslagsleden from Uvberget to Sodra Brunnsjön

In Digerberget, two groups of five Honey Buzzards each, flew over, a Sparrowhawk was seen, and at one point, a ‘kettle’ of five Honey Buzzards, two Buzzards and two Ravens formed in the thermals. In Hammarby, we spotted the trip’s only Yellowhammer and a Pied Flycatcher. Järlean river yielded a female Goldeneye and Grey Wagtails. We were amazed by good views of Camberwell Beauties and Silver-washed Fritillaries in an overgrown orchard. Further along the track, a family of two adult and one juvenile Cranes flew right over our heads, and we spotted quite some thrushes on that stage of the hike: the ubiquitous Song Thrush and Blackbirds, but also Fieldfare, Redwing and Mistle Thrush. Mixed flocks of tits in the woods also yielded a group of white-headed caudatus Long-tailed Tits. Nuthatch, Eurasian Treecreepers and Tree Pipsits were often part of these mixed tit flocks (containing Coal, Great, Blue, Crested and Willow Tits). Alcon Blue was a lifer for us, a heathland habitat specialist which is rare in the Low Countries. A Hobby was catching dragonflies in the midday sun along Lake Stora Galsjön. The area of Lake Sodra Brunnsjön yielded a lone Whooper Swan, later joined by a
loudly trumpeting second individual. **Grey Wagtails** and **Ravens** were also present. At night, the now familiar sounds of **Black Woodpecker**, **Arctic Loon** and **Eurasian Pygmy Owl** were all around us.

**Lake Sodra Brunnsjön**

**Day 5: Bergslagsleden from Sodra Brunnsjön to Grännsjön**

During a break at Uskavi, we again spotted **Arctic Loons**, as well as lots of **White Wagtails** and **Tree Pipits**. A **Goldfinch** was singing high up a birch tree, and the largest flock of **Siskins** of the trip (30+) flew over. Further down the track, Grännsjön was a particularly scenic lake. **Arctic Loons** were calling, **Black Woodpecker** and **Eurasian Pygmy Owl** were present too. Despite having seen tracks of **Moose** nearby, we did not manage to see any. A **Roe Deer** was barking in the distance at dusk.

**Lake Grännsjön**
Day 6: Bergslagsleden from Grännsjön to Stora Myggsjön

Early in the morning, we spotted the second (only!) Red Squirrel of the trip. The area between Grännsjön and the small settlement of Nyberget proved to be rewarding in terms of birds. Old forest remnants looked promising, and yielded one of the best species of the trip: a Grey-Headed Woodpecker gave great views along the track. A Cuckoo flew by and Crested and Coal Tits, Crossbills, Bullfinch, Black and Greater Spotted Woodpeckers were present in the woods. Two Red Deer crossed the trail. A large mixed flock of Chaffinch and Brambling was foraging in the trees near Nyberget. On Lake Dammsjön in Nyberget, we got great views of a group of 8 Arctic Loons. A Hobby was hunting Barn Swallows and House Martins over the lake. The western end of Lake Dammsjön yielded an adult White-tailed Eagle. Hiking stage 3, we added an extra loop to take in the Kindla Nature Reserve, a mossy old forest with lots of grouse tracks, yet not live sightings. A lone male Goldeneye was present on the lake west of Röberget. In the lake at Rasbacktjärn, two Grass Snakes were swimming. In late afternoon, the rain set in. Two Arctic Loons were present on Lake Stora Myggsjön.

Day 7: Bergslagsleden from Stora Myggsjön to Stjärnfors, and then on to Kopparberg a Stockholm

Not a lot of birds in the morning drizzle. At Stjärnfors, Grey Wagtails were present, and we heard a last Black Woodpecker on the outskirts of Kopparberg. From the train between Västerås and Stockholm, we spotted a large group of 150+ Cranes in agricultural fields, as well as three Roe Deer. In central Stockholm, we saw the trip’s last Grey Wagtails.

Birdlist of the entire trip (65 species):

1. Grey Heron
2. Barn Swallow
3. Ringed Plover
4. Hooded Crow
5. Pied Flycatcher
6. Tree Pipit
7. Hobby
8. Goldeneye
9. Marsh Harrier
10. Buzzard
11. Canada Goose
12. Eurasian Pygmy Owl
13. Magpie
14. Willow Warbler
15. Eurasian Jay
16. Yellowhammer
17. Goldcrest
18. Bullfinch
19. Grey-headed Woodpecker
20. Greater Spotted Woodpecker
21. Grey Wagtail
22. Mistle Thrush
23. Woodpigeon
24. House Martin
25. House Sparrow
26. Jackdaw
27. Brambling
28. Lesser black-backed Gull
29. Common Cuckoo
30. Black-headed Gull
31. Redwing
32. Crane
33. Fieldfare
34. Red Crossbill
35. Crested Tit
36. Willow Tit
37. Blackbird
38. Arctic Loon
39. Blue Tit
40. Goldfinch
41. Common Raven
42. Eurasian Robin
43. Siskin
44. Sparrowhawk
45. Rock pigeon
46. Mew Gull
47. Eurasian Treecreeper
48. Northern Weather
49. Kestrel
50. Chaffinch
51. Firecrest
52. Honey Buzzard
53. Mallard
54. Whooper Swan
55. Wren
56. Teal
57. Long-tailed tit (ssp. caudatus)
58. White Wagtail
59. Song Thrush
60. White-tailed Eagle
61. Herring Gull
62. Coal Tit
63. Black Woodpecker
64. Blackcap
65. Scandinavian Nuthatch (ssp. Europaea)