

*Finland  
&  
Norway*



*6th - 13th March  
2024*

## Introduction

---

Seeing Steller's and King Eiders in large numbers on the Varanger Peninsula in Norway, and seeing them really well, has been a wish for the both of us for such a long time. Then, a decade ago (!), we came across an excellent trip report from the area, made by Bradnum and Lethbridge (2012). In addition to Varanger, they had also visited a place in Northern Finland where brilliant observations of Pine Grosbeaks, Siberian Jays and Siberian Tits are virtually guaranteed, and that obviously only whetted our appetite for a northern winter adventure even further. So did the bird-cliffs of Hornøya, and the chance of seeing northern lights, and when we fairly recently saw another lovely trip report, with some outstanding photos, by Ugarte and Martinez (2022) we were finally ready to act. Actually, we were planning a Lynx-watching trip to Estonia, with a bigger private group, at the time, and an extension to Northern Scandinavia was an absolute no-brainer, even if it meant not going at the very best time. With the possibility of seeing a range of great northern bird and mammal species in their beautiful Finish and Norwegian winter habitats, we were really looking forward to going, and though we didn't see "everything", and the weather could have been better (and worse, for sure), we had an excellent trip before joining the rest of the group in Tallinn. Since planning and executing such a trip is even pretty straightforward, we have no reservations about recommending it highly to everyone, and in particular to anyone enjoying photography - nudge, nudge ;o).

It's now difficult to understand why we didn't make this trip years ago, but it probably has to do with it being such an easy area to visit for us, a true "we-can-always-do-it-next-year" kind of place, when other, more exotic, destinations have been on the table, which is kind of foolish, really.

If you have any questions regarding our trip, please don't hesitate to contact either Stig on [sej@primoris.dk](mailto:sej@primoris.dk) or Jon on [jon.lehmsberg@gmail.com](mailto:jon.lehmsberg@gmail.com)

## Travel arrangements

---

**Flights:** As always we used [www.momondo.dk](http://www.momondo.dk) as the search engine for finding our flights, and not surprisingly we ended up going mostly with Finnair. Initially the flights were perfectly scheduled to fit our itinerary, but unfortunately our outbound morning flight from Copenhagen to Helsinki was cancelled. Since the other morning flight left only very limited time to change in Helsinki, we decided to fly out the evening before instead, thus costing us an overnight stay in Helsinki. Apart from that, all flights (Copenhagen - Helsinki, Helsinki - Ivalo, Ivalo - Helsinki and Helsinki - Tallinn) were on time, and so was the last leg of the trip from Tallinn to Copenhagen with airBaltic.

**Accommodation:** The extra night in Helsinki was spent at the **Scandic Helsinki Aviacongress** a few kilometres from the airport. It was much cheaper, but still 130 Euro (room/night) including breakfast, than staying at the airport hotels and the shuttle service worked well, though we only used it one way, since we walked to the airport in the morning. The hotel was just fine and the breakfast was brilliant.

We booked it through [www.booking.com](http://www.booking.com) like most of the other accommodation on the trip, the only exception being Båtsfjord Hotell which we booked on [www.hotels.com](http://www.hotels.com). We stayed one night at **Neljän Tuulen Tupa** twice, which was also nice, and has a distinct Nordic feel to the rooms. A good breakfast was included in the very reasonable price of 90 Euro (room/night), and they also served a decent dinner for us on both nights. If you let them know in advance, there's a chance of getting a room facing the "garden" where the birds are fed. In Norway we had booked two nights at the **Båtsfjord Hotell**, but since they had started renovating it, we stayed at the **Polar Hotell** instead. We paid 114 Euro (room/night) including breakfast, and the room was fine, though the beds were rather narrow. Finally,

our three nights in Vadsø was spent in the **Scandic Vadsø** hotel where we paid 100 Euro (night/room) for a very nice and newly refurbished room, including an excellent breakfast. The hotel is located centrally in Vadsø, within easy walking distance of a big supermarket and the town's few restaurants.

**Car hire and driving:** Ivalo Airport is quite small and there aren't a lot of different companies operating there. We hired our car, a brand new Peugeot 308SW, at Europcar and paid 656 Euro for 7 days, including the cross country fee and "Premium Protection Package". We did entertain the idea of renting a 4X4, but after reading that roads are being cleared often and well, and seeing the price of a 4X4, we decided against it, and went for a compact car instead. We never regretted that decision, and after all, if local people are able to get by with a normal saloon car, why shouldn't we.

There are a few very important things to bear in mind when hiring, and driving, a car in the areas we visited in northern Scandinavia:

**!! The car has to be equipped with studded tires !!**

It's not a "good to have", it's an absolute "need to have". Ours did, and we appreciated it throughout the trip, when the road surface wasn't just snow, but rather pure ice, which was most of the time, actually. A car with studded tires can travel at normal speeds even in such difficult conditions. Having only normal winter tyres would have made for some scary driving and severe delays... - at best. So, if your hire car isn't equipped with studded tires, we strongly recommend that you refuse to accept it.

**!! In bad weather, check road condition before venturing out on some roads !!**

Some roads become impassable in heavy snow (and wind), which can result in them being closed for ordinary traffic. Instead driving them is done in columns following a snowplough. Since these columns depart at fixed times, hours apart, it can wreak havoc on your itinerary, and it's therefore important to know in advance. Road 891 to Båtsfjord was the one road on our itinerary, we knew is regularly restricted in that way, but luckily the weather was fairly calm during our visit there. We did, however, experience a bit of snow and wind on one of the occasions when we were driving the road, and even then it was easy to see, how it can quickly become invisible and impassable.

You can read more about driving in column and departure times on:

[www.vegvesen.no/trafikkinformasjon/langs-veien/drift-og-vedlikehold-av-vei/fjelloverganger/](http://www.vegvesen.no/trafikkinformasjon/langs-veien/drift-og-vedlikehold-av-vei/fjelloverganger/) ,

and there's a good map of current road conditions on the same site here:

[www.vegvesen.no/trafikk/fjelloverganger](http://www.vegvesen.no/trafikk/fjelloverganger) . The links are in Norwegian, but the map is pretty self-explanatory, and Google Translate should help with the rest. Oh, and by the way, it's the driver of the snowplough who decides if your car is equipped to go in the column, and if it doesn't have studded tires, well...!

**!! Take care when pulling off the road !!**

The risk of getting stuck if you pull off the road is big, since snow is often deep as soon as you leave the cleared parts. So if you stop to check out a bird or take a landscape photo, either check the snow where you intend to put your car, or simply stay on the road if possible. Traffic is very light in almost all places anyway, and if visibility is good, and you put on the car's hazard lights, it shouldn't be a problem - that's what we did, anyway.

**Boat trips and hides:** To visit the bird cliffs at Hornøya, you have to make a 10 minute boat ride from Vardø Harbour. The return tickets cost 600 N.kr. (50 Euro) and are sold from the harbour office which is located at Kaigata 26A (GPS: 70.374535, 31.103767). More information can be found on: [www.hornoya.com](http://www.hornoya.com) , and even if the website doesn't seem to be updated regularly, the information still seems to be accurate.

The only other time we went out by boat was when we were brought to the floating bird hides in Båtsfjord Harbour, and the ensuing cruise around the harbour and inner fjord. We hadn't even started looking into our options in Båtsfjord, when Rainer Hanssen contacted us, asking if we were interested

in visiting the hides. Apparently he's the owner/manager of Båtsfjord Hotell (and the Polar Hotell, it seems), and it didn't take long from the moment we booked a room there, till we received the mail from him. For people not staying in one of these two places, it might be necessary to reach out yourself, which can be done on: [booking@baatsfjord.com](mailto:booking@baatsfjord.com). It was our experience that he wasn't always quick to answer, but he excused it with server problems at the time. Apart from that, we found him to be a nice and straightforward guy, who was more than willing to share his knowledge about the area, giving tips about both birds, mammals and other subjects. He also offers activities in the summer months, and has plans for making photohides for Mountain Hare and ptarmigans too - a true entrepreneur.



**Pine Grosbeak - Neljän Tuulen Tupa.**

The morning in the hide went very well. We were fitted with a "survival suit" the night before, and picked up early in the morning, since he endeavours to bring people out to the hide when it's still dark, if possible, thus causing as little disturbance to the birds as possible. It's a very short boat ride to the hides, and we were there at 4:40 AM, staying for approximately 5½ hours, before doing the cruise to see ducks in flight, Grey Seals up close, some of the breeding Black-legged Kittiwakes and whatever else we could find. It was possible to both lie down and sit comfortably in the hide, since it was well carpeted and equipped with a few chairs. There were also bean bags for camera support and a small toilet, and we brought a packed breakfast, so all needs were met. All in all a smooth operation and a truly great experience to see the ducks so close, and at eyelevel. For people travelling on a shoestring, it's still possible to see the birds well without going out to the hides, but for people interested in taking pictures, we strongly recommend spending a morning in a hide - you won't regret it! For more information check the 2024 pricelist below, and have a look at: [www.baatsfjord.com](http://www.baatsfjord.com) - the website seems to be in Norwegian only, which is a bit weird since many (most?) of the guests coming to see the eiders are foreign.

**Prices Wildlife Winter 2024 ( Prices in Norwegian Kroners )**

**Floating Hide + boat ( 5 - 6 hours in hide + 45 min boat trip for flight shots )**

Including coffee / tea / cocoa

The shelters have 8 photo spots, and a camping toilet.

Guides 50%

1 - 6 people	1850.-
6 +	1550.-
Floating Hide without boat trip	1250.-
Boat trip	950.-

**Floating Hide with gangway 6 places (Max 6 hours)**

This is a shelter that is attached to land where you can enter without being transported by boat. This is perfect to use after you have been in hiding if you want a few extra hours in the afternoon. This can be combined with a boat trip if desired.

Also a good option for those who find it a bit heavy to get on and off the boat.

Hide	990.-
Boat trip	850.-
Afternoon hours if available	250.-

**Planned completion by 2024**

**Floating shelter with underwater photo opportunities**

This is a hide where you have the opportunity to take pictures on the surface and under water. The glass goes under water about 40 cm. There are 8 places in the hide.

1 - 6 people	1850.-
6 +	1550.-

Only 2 of these spaces are for underwater images.

Here you can order available underwater options. + NOK 250.- per person

**Wildlife hide with the possibility of photos of small birds, grouse, hare.**

This shelter is located approximately 10 minutes by car from the hotel.

Perfect for use after you have been in a floating hide if you want a few extra hours, with slightly different options, or you can leave before it gets light and get the "blue" hour.

Information about this will come as soon as we are ready.

Room prices include breakfast or a breakfast box for eating in the hide or when you are on a trip.

Hotels	Smarthotel	Royal Hotel
Single	990.-	1150.-
Double	1250.-	1450.-
Rorbu (2 bedrooms + loft, 5 beds)	2000.-	
Rorbu (1 room, 3 beds)	1750.-	
Apartment (2 rooms, 3 beds)	2000.-	

Lunch with coffee and something sweet 189.-

Dinner with coffee and dessert 345.-

Lunch & Dinner we try focus on local food and dishes

---

## Resources

---

As so often before, [www.cloudbirders.com](http://www.cloudbirders.com) was a brilliant source for trip reports while planning. There are several good reports there written by independent travellers, which are almost always the most useful ones. [www.eBird.org](http://www.eBird.org) is a great site for checking out places (hotspots), as well as new and old records of individual species, and on this trip we also used the local [www.artsobservasjoner.no](http://www.artsobservasjoner.no) for searching recent records from Norway. We never figured out the Finish equivalent [www.tiira.fi](http://www.tiira.fi), though, but it didn't really matter much, since we didn't have time for twitching there anyway. In addition to the websites mentioned above, a great one for inspiration and information about this particular region is [www.varanger.net](http://www.varanger.net) - a must read.

Regarding nature books covering Europe, there are a lot of field guides to choose from. When it comes to birds there probably are none better than the "Collins Bird Guide" (Svensson et.al.), which also comes as an app - we brought both. We didn't take a mammal field guide, since we expected not to find anything we couldn't readily identify ourselves, but there are several good ones to choose from. Because of the many good trip reports and websites, we also didn't bring a site guide for this trip. However, "A Birdwatcher's Guide to Norway" (Tveit) looks like a good option, and like most other nature books it can be found on [www.nhbs.com](http://www.nhbs.com).

Speaking about things we didn't bring, we didn't take a map either. Usually, we like to bring one along, but in this instance, we figured that MAPS.ME and Google Maps would do the trick, and they did.

---

## Timing

---

We didn't spend much time discussing the timing of this tour, since it was, as mentioned elsewhere, an extension to an already planned Lynx tour to Estonia. Really, the only question was whether to do the extension before or after the Lynx tour, and since we were both committed elsewhere after the main trip, a pre-tour extension was the only option.

However, we were okay with that, even if going a week, or indeed a few weeks, later, would surely be better. When it comes to birds and mammals, it probably wouldn't have mattered very much, though some bird species get more vocally active by the end of the month, and in the beginning of April, where chances of seeing White-billed Diver also increase. However, the later you go the longer the days become, of course, and even a few weeks can make quite a difference this time of year - in March the days get approximately 1 hour longer each week.

---

## Weather

---

First and foremost, it was unseasonably mild during pretty much the entire trip. Daytime temperatures only varied slightly between -5 and 5 degrees Celsius throughout, except on the first and last mornings where it was considerably colder with -9 and -17°C respectively. The constant change between frost and thaw meant that in many places roads and pavements/paths were very icy indeed!

The first morning in Helsinki was the only time we saw completely clear skies. On the rest of the trip it was either partly cloudy or completely overcast, and we had a few, mostly light, snow showers every day, except on the 10<sup>th</sup> where the showers were rain or sleet.

The 10<sup>th</sup> was also the only day when wind was a problem with a strong breeze in the middle of the day, while the rest of the time it was okay, ranging between calm and a moderate breeze. Visibility was excellent throughout.

As everyone knows, the weather is crucially important when going birding, and this is especially true on a trip like this. Not only for the usual reasons, but also because strong winds or heavy snowfall can result in cancelled ferries and closed roads, and thus disturb the itinerary severely. We therefore checked the weather forecasts carefully throughout our trip, and as usual they were fairly good without being completely right. It's often said that the local weather forecast are the most precise, and the local forecast in this case would be the one found on [www.yr.no](http://www.yr.no). In addition to the conditions mentioned, overcast skies at night also present a challenge for those wanting to see northern lights, of course. However, having a chance of seeing northern lights isn't only about clear skies, but also the amount of solar wind activity which isn't constant. Sadly the amount of solar activity was low during our stay, and we only saw a faint whitish and pale green northern light on one night. As with the weather, there are websites forecasting the chances of northern light, like this one: [www.norway-lights.com](http://www.norway-lights.com).



King Eider - Båtsfjord Harbour.

---

### Miscellaneous

As Danes, we didn't have to concern ourselves with some of the practical things we usually have to consider when travelling. No **visa** was necessary and we only needed our **passport** because we travelled by plane (otherwise Nordic citizens can visit the other Nordic countries without carrying a passport).

Electricity wasn't a problem either since both **voltage** (220V) and **plugs** (C or F) are the same as in Denmark and much of mainland Europe. We didn't have to buy a local **SIM card** either, since our subscription covered most of Europe, and mobile coverage was surprisingly good throughout the trip,

even in sparsely populated areas. It was nice not to have to think about these things, but it might be issues to consider for some non-European/non-EU visitors. **Language** wasn't a problem either since English was spoken to some extent everywhere we went.

There are a couple of practical differences between Norway and Finland which are good to have in mind when visiting both countries:

One is the fact that the two countries lie in different **time zones** - Norway follows Central European Time (UTC +1) while Finland uses Eastern European Time (UTC +2).

The other is **currency**, where Norway still have their own (Norwegian kroner), since they are not an EU member state. Finland is, and they therefore use the Euro. In both countries credit cards are widely accepted, and we paid for everything that way, thus never having to withdraw/exchange money.

When travelling in areas like this, **health and safety** isn't much of an issue. Of course, driving is always a danger, especially if your car isn't equipped with studded tires (see above), but even if it is, you can still be caught out if the weather is bad. No doubt, the best advice is not to drive when conditions are bad, but if you do, be prepared so that you can survive for many hours in a cold car if you get stuck.

Icy surfaces isn't just a problem when driving. During our trip, pavements and paths were also extremely slippery in many places. The easy solution for this is to bring/buy studded boots or ice cleats to slip over your regular boots - they usually do the trick. Another challenge when it comes to walking is deep snow. It makes off-piste walking without snowshoes or skis virtually impossible in most places, and it can be extremely difficult to spot places with soft and deep snow, so please be careful.

Local wildlife is pretty harmless this time of year, and it was a joy to travel northern Scandinavia without being constantly attacked by hordes of vicious mosquitos!



**Steller's Eider - Båtsfjord Harbour.**



## Sites visited

---

**Neljän Tuulen Tupa (Finland):** What a fantastic place! Finding your way there from Ivalo Airport couldn't be much easier either. We just drove 3 kilometres down the only road leaving the airport, until reaching the T-junction where it met road E75. There we took a left turn and stayed on the E75 for another 83 kilometres until the site came up on our left side (GPS: 69.182427, 27.214255). The trip takes about an hour, and if you want to stock up on supplies, you'll be passing several supermarkets on the way in both Ivalo and Inari. Accommodation is equally easy to find since the hotel and the birding site is literally the same place. They feed the birds in several spots around the main building, so you have a choice of going outside, or seeing the birds from the comfort of your room (some rooms, anyway) or the restaurant. It's quite something to see Pine Grosbeaks just a couple of metres away while eating a lovely breakfast!

It's also possible to walk down the small, rather steep, road to the right (north) of the main building, where the first house to the left also serves as a bird hide. Pine Grosbeaks and Common Redpolls were very common visitors to the feeding places, and we also had several Siberian Tits, Siberian Jays, Arctic Redpolls and Eurasian Red Squirrels, as well as a few Eurasian Bullfinches and Willow Tits. Birds are seen incredibly well and it's an absolute heaven for photographers.

Northern Three-toed Woodpecker can also be seen here at times, and it's no doubt worth checking out the surrounding forests for grouses, owls, woodpeckers etc. later in spring. We can't recommend this place highly enough, and we reckon it's an absolute must if you're in the vicinity anyway.

**Northern Varanger Peninsula (Norway):** Our main destination on the northern part of the Varanger Peninsula was the small town of **Båtsfjord**, where floating bird hides in the harbour (see details above) make it possible to get fantastic sea-level views of Steller's and King Eiders. The experience was absolutely amazing and fulfilled even our wildest eider-dreams. It was still dark when we were sailed the very short trip to the hide, but as soon as the boat left, birds started to come in to rest near the hide. In the beginning it was mostly Long-tailed Ducks and a few King Eiders, but gradually more and more King Eiders arrived, as well as a few Common Eiders, and after a while the first Steller's Eiders put in an appearance too. For the next couple of hours, we were treated to brilliant views of all 3 eider-species and the ever-present Long-tailed Ducks, and we even saw a couple of Grey Seals, flocks of gulls and Purple Sandpipers, and an Stoat in its beautiful winter coat, before we were being picked up by the boat. The ensuing cruise around the harbour and inner fjord produced good flight views of all the ducks and several Black Guillemots, as well as great views of the Grey Seals, before returning to the hotel. Of course, we checked the rest of the harbour ourselves as well, hoping for some interesting gulls, but apart from a few Glaucous Gulls we only found more of the species already mentioned. We also made several stops around the small estuary at the innermost part of the fjord, finding the only Goosander of the trip, both species of cormorant, more Grey Seals, a Red Fox and more flocks of gulls.

The road to Båtsfjord crosses **Båtsfjordfjellet** (The Båtsfjord Massif) which is covered in snow this time of year and thus not a great place for birds. We did however find Rock Ptarmigan in their lovely winter plumage on several occasions, and they seem to be quite common here. More of a surprise was a Norway Lemming found by the road. It appeared to be in good condition, and it was very nice to see this attractive rodent so well.

A 31 kilometre drive down Road 891 from Båtsfjord there's a T-junction where Road 890 leads north towards Kongsfjord and Berlevåg. After the floating bird hide experience in the morning, we spent the rest of that day driving these two roads making several stops along the way. **Kongsfjord Harbour** was almost bird-free, so we quickly proceeded north. We had hoped to find some White-tailed Eagles along the way, and maybe seeing some whales at sea, but succeeded in neither. The harbour in **Berlevåg** (the most northerly point on our trip) was much better than Kongsfjord, but with pretty much the same species that we had already seen well in Båtsfjord. A pair of Common Goldeneyes at the estuary south of town were new, though, and the only ones on the entire trip. Looking at a map, Berlevåg seems to

have great potential for turning up interesting gulls, but again we had to settle for the common species, which was a bit disappointing. On the way back, we stopped at **Sandfjordstranden** (GPS: 70.738974, 29.253819), where the shrubbery along the river is supposed to be a good place to see Moose. We tried walking a bit up the valley, but soon found the conditions impossible without skis or snowshoes. We were in luck, however, because after returning to the main road, we spotted a Moose walking up the mountainside on the other side of the river. It was soon followed by another, and another, and another so that at one point we could see all four animals at the same time, which was great.

**Southern Varanger Peninsula (Norway):** We visited several sites while travelling along the entire southern coast of the Varanger Peninsula between Varangerbotn and Vardø. Our first and last stop was at **Varangerbotn**, where we checked out the area a few kilometres south of town, where a number of Northern Hawk-Owls had been reported. On our first visit there, we quickly found a single bird and our last visit turned up an additional two birds. We didn't see much else in this area except for a few Arctic and Common Redpolls and a Red Fox. On our last visit we proceeded a bit further south to **Karlebotn** to see if any White-tailed Eagles were around. We didn't find any, but 4 Eurasian Wigeon were the only ones of the trip, and we also came across a Moose carcass - Moose is supposedly rather common in the area south of Varangerbotn.

Next up, when following the E75 coast road east, was Nesseby which we didn't visit on the way out, but rather on the way back. The landscape around **Nesseby Church** is quite scenic, and we saw lots of Purple Sandpipers feeding along the coast here, but no Snow Buntings which are usually around. Not much else was seen either, and even the small harbour only held a few gulls and a couple of Red-breasted Mergansers. Speaking of "not much around", **Vestre Jakobselv** also didn't offer much in the way of birds. To be honest, we didn't have much information about this area, and ended up parking the car in the outskirts of town (GPS: 70.125317, 29.329576), from where we continued on foot. Very few birds were around indeed, and the constant traffic of snow scooters didn't help either. Our best record from this area was a group of Bohemian Waxwings which was seen feeding in some gardens when we drove back to the main road.

Approximately 50 kilometres after leaving Varangerbotn, we reached **Vadsø** which is the largest town on the peninsula, and also the place we had chosen as the base for our stay. The harbour here can be good for eiders, and we did indeed find all three species, though we didn't see them as well as in other places. Since there's an active fishing port here, numbers of gulls can also be good, but there weren't many around when we were there. We spend one morning taking a walk on the eastern part of **Store Vadsøya**, the small (even is "Store" means big) island connected to Vadsø via a bridge. This was the only place we found Purple Sandpipers away from the shore, and there were quite a lot of them feeding on snow-free patches on the ground. The other reason for visiting this area was to look for Mountain Hare, which turned out to be easy to find here.

Proceeding east from Vadsø, we soon passed the exit to the airport, and after another 10 kilometres we turned right towards Ekkerøy. We parked the car east of the small village (GPS: 70.071381, 30.107476) and took a short walk east to the cliffs from there. Black-legged Kittiwake breeds in good numbers here, but hadn't yet occupied territories. Lots were seen at sea, though, and we also found a few Razorbills, Common and Black Guillemots, some European Shags and fair numbers of ducks. Two pairs of raucous Northern Ravens were also seen well here, but again we were surprised not to find any White-tailed Eagles. Our next stop going east on the E75 was **Kiberg Harbour** which produced some nice Steller's Eiders and a couple of young Glaucous Gulls. King Eiders and lots of Common Eiders were seen on the sea near the harbour, and a Grey Seal also put in an appearance. The last site before Vardø was **Svartness Harbour** which lies just across the narrow strait from Vardø. Birds were much the same as in Kiberg Harbour, but we saw the Steller's Eiders very well here, and found the largest number of Glaucous Gulls. An active fishing port, the eastern location and nearby open sea makes this a place with good potential for more interesting gull species. The area around the airport is supposedly good for Willow Ptarmigans, but we didn't come across any there.

**Vardø** is the easternmost town in Norway, but more importantly, it's the gateway to the small island of **Hornøya** where we really wanted to visit the bird-cliffs. We had conflicting information about whether the boat service was operating this early in the year, but much to our joy it did. Another concern of ours was that our visit was too early for the Atlantic Puffins to have arrived, but again it turned out that we had no reason to worry. Apparently, the puffins arrive increasingly early every year because of the climate change, so for once that worked in our favour. We took the earliest boat (8:30AM) across to the island, and spent almost 6 hours there before returning in the middle of the afternoon. It was a great spectacle to see the seabird colony and we had excellent views of Razorbill, Brünnich's and Common Guillemot, Atlantic Puffin and European Shag. The weather wasn't exactly perfect with lots of snow showers, but at least it was fairly calm, and photographic opportunities were great none the less.

We didn't see the hoped for Gyr Falcon on the island, but even so we really enjoyed our visit there.

From the shed, there's a path leading around the south side of the island and up to the lighthouse.

Unless you really want to see the lighthouse, there's no reason to waste your time going all the way, since the conditions can be treacherous with waist deep snow at places, There weren't any birds on the east side either, and our advice would be to stay on the westside where there're lots to see. If windy weather prevents the ferry to cross, the island can still be seen from the northeastern tip of Vardø where there's a shelter designed for just that purpose (GPS: 70.379744, 31.118878). We didn't bird any other parts of Vardø, but did visit the **Steilneset Memorial Site** which was quite interesting. The nearby fortress of **Vardøhus** might also be worth a visit, but we didn't have the time.

Apart from the sites mentioned above, pretty much anywhere along the coast can be worth a stop to scan the sea. Sea ducks, divers and alcids are always a possibility, and so are mammals like European Otter, Orca and White-beaked Dolphin. We found our only Red-throated Diver, White-tailed Eagle, European Otter and European Roe Deer of the trip, at random places along the coast, so check as often as possible, especially if the wind is calm.

We didn't go to the **Pasvik Valley** south of **Kirkenes** on the southern side of the Varanger Fjord, even if it's no doubt an interesting place. It was a little out of the way for our itinerary, though, and the main reason for going there would be to see some of the species, like Pine Grosbeak and Siberian Tit, we expected to see in other places. However, you could easily make an alternative itinerary to ours, flying to Kirkenes instead of Ivalo, thus dropping Finland completely, but we think it would be a crying shame to miss out on Neljän Tuulen Tupla!



**Båtsfjordfjellet.**

## Day-to-day lists.

---

Bird taxonomy follow the "IOC World Bird List" (version 11.2), though with a few different names, where we feel the IOC has gone to American. On mammals we follow Wilson and Reeder's "Mammal Species of the World", but with some input from the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species which is more up to date.

Abbreviations used: ad = adult ; imm = immature , m = male ; f = female ; h = heard only.

### 6/3.

Helsinki 7.20 - 9.45.

Eurasian Magpie 27 , Western Jackdaw 45 , Hooded Crow 17 , Great Spotted Woodpecker 1m+1f , Black Woodpecker 1f , Eurasian Blue Tit 4 , Great Tit 9 , Common Blackbird 1m , Fieldfare 4 , House Sparrow 13.

Ivalo > Neljän Tuulen Tupa 13.50 - 15.05.

Western Capercaillie 1f , Eurasian Magpie 3 , Hooded Crow 4 , White-throated Dipper 1.

Neljän Tuulen Tupa 15.05 - 17.10.

Siberian Jay 4 , Siberian Tit 8 , European Magpie 1 , Willow Tit 2 , Great Tit 4 , House Sparrow 9 , Pine Grosbeak 30 , Eurasian Bullfinch h+1f , European Greenfinch 7 , Common Redpoll 20 , Arctic Redpoll 4.

### 7/3.

Neljän Tuulen Tupa 6.45 - 11.50.

Siberian Jay 8 , Eurasian Magpie 2 , Hooded Crow 2 , Northern Raven 2 , Siberian Tit 4 , Willow Tit 1 , Great Tit 6 , House Sparrow 12 , Pine Grosbeak 35 , Eurasian Bullfinch 2m+1f , European Greenfinch 6 , Common Redpoll 55 , Arctic Redpoll 9.  
Eurasian Red Squirrel 3.

Neljän Tuulen Tupa > Båtsfjord 11.50 - 14.45.

Willow Ptarmigan 2 , Mallard 42 , Long-tailed Duck 1m , Black Guillemot 1 , Northern Hawk-Owl 1 , Eurasian Magpie 16 , Hooded Crow 23 , Northern Raven 6 , House Sparrow 9 , European Greenfinch 2 , Common Redpoll 4.

Båtsfjord 14.45 - 16.00.

Mallard 4m+4f , King Eider 50m+35f , Common Eider 11m+8f , Long-tailed Duck 21m+15f , Goosander 1m , Red-breasted Merganser 1m+1f , Purple Sandpiper 92 , Black-legged Kittiwake 175 , Great Black-backed Gull 6ad , European Herring Gull 45 , Black Guillemot 16 , Great Cormorant 5 , European Shag 13 , Hooded Crow 7 , House Sparrow 4.  
Grey Seal 6.

### 8/3.

Båtsfjord 4.40 - 10.50.

Mallard 6m+6f , Steller's Eider 36 , King Eider 82 , Common Eider 205 , Long-tailed Duck 85 ,  
Goosander 1m , Red-breasted Merganser 3m+2f , Purple Sandpiper 43 , Black-legged Kittiwake 220 ,  
Great Black-backed Gull 7ad , Glaucous Gull 1ad+2-3imm , European Herring Gull 250 ,  
Common Guillemot 1 , Black Guillemot 27 , Great Cormorant 23 , European Shag 4 , Hooded Crow 16 ,  
Northern Raven 2.  
Grey Seal 4 , Stoat 1.

Båtsfjord - Berlevåg 11.15 - 12.35 & 12.35 - 14.15.

Mallard 1m+1f , King Eider 13m+9f , Common Eider 340 , Long-tailed Duck 21 ,  
Red-breasted Merganser 7m+6f , Rock Ptarmigan 5 , Purple Sandpiper 24 , Black-legged Kittiwake 125 ,  
Great Black-backed Gull 17ad , European Herring Gull 400 , Black Guillemot 26 , Great Cormorant 14 ,  
European Shag 95 , Hooded Crow 4 , Northern Raven 1.  
Moose 4.

Berlevåg 12.35 - 14.15.

Mallard 3m+3f , Steller's Eider 4m+1f , King Eider 48 , Common Eider 65 , Long-tailed Duck 32 ,  
Common Goldeneye 1m+1f , Black-legged Kittiwake 280 , Great Black-backed Gull 4ad ,  
European Herring Gull 140 , Black Guillemot 1 , Great Cormorant 3 , European Shag 14 ,  
Hooded Crow 22.  
Grey Seal 2.

### 9/3.

Båtsfjord 6.00 - 9.15.

Mallard 2m+2f , Steller's Eider 24m+17f , King Eider 64 , Common Eider 185 , Long-tailed Duck 27 ,  
Goosander 1m , Red-breasted Merganser 1m+1f , Purple Sandpiper 65 , Black-legged Kittiwake 285 ,  
Great Black-backed Gull 8 , Glaucous Gull 2imm , European Herring Gull 110 , Common Guillemot 1 ,  
Black Guillemot 19 , Great Cormorant 3 , European Shag 2 , Eurasian Magpie 2 , Hooded Crow 4 ,  
House Sparrow 6 , European Greenfinch 12.  
Red Fox 1 , Grey Seal 3.

Båtsfjord > Kongsfjord > Varangerbotn 9.15 - 12.45.

Mallard 1m+1f , Rock Ptarmigan 3 , Purple Sandpiper 17 , Black-legged Kittiwake 85 ,  
Great Black-backed Gull 8 , European Herring Gull 25 , Black Guillemot 3 , Northern Hawk-Owl 4 ,  
Eurasian Magpie 6 , Hooded Crow 21 , Northern Raven 5 , House Sparrow 13 , European Greenfinch 4.  
Norway Lemming 1.

Varangerbotn > Vadsø 12.45 - 16.25.

Mallard 1m+1f , Long-tailed Duck 2m+1f , Red-breasted Merganser 5m+4f , Purple Sandpiper 4 ,  
Black-legged Kittiwake 20 , Great Black-backed Gull 9 , European Herring Gull 195 , Black Guillemot 4 ,  
Northern Hawk-Owl 1 , Eurasian Magpie 5 , Hooded Crow 18 , Northern Raven 4 ,  
Bohemian Waxwing 26 , House Sparrow 20 , Eurasian Bullfinch h , European Greenfinch 7 ,



**Long-tailed Duck, Atlantic Puffin, Steller's Eiders,  
Northern Hawk-Owl and Pine Grosbeak.**

Common Redpoll 2 , Arctic Redpoll 2.  
Red Fox 1 , Grey Seal 2.  
[Reindeer 2].

### 10/3.

Vadsø 5.50 - 9.10.

Mallard 1m+1f , Steller's Eider 8m+5f , King Eider 4m+2f , Common Eider 23m+16f ,  
Purple Sandpiper 95 , Black-legged Kittiwake 60 , Great Black-backed Gull 11 ,  
European Herring Gull 75 , Black Guillemot 8 , Great Cormorant 16 , European Shag 3 ,  
Eurasian Magpie 2 , Hooded Crow 19 , Great Tit 1 , House Sparrow 7 ,  
European Greenfinch 65.  
Mountain Hare 12.

Vadsø - Vardø 10.10 - 16.40.

Mallard 4m+4f , Steller's Eider 5m+3f , Common Eider 165 , Common Scoter 7m+4f ,  
Long-tailed Duck 2m+1f , Purple Sandpiper 11 , Black-legged Kittiwake 75 , Great Black-backed Gull 6 ,  
European Herring Gull 45 , Black Guillemot 9 , Red-throated Diver 1 , Great Cormorant 2 ,  
European Shag 3 , Hooded Crow 5 , Northern Raven 2 , European Greenfinch 2.  
European Otter 1.  
[Reindeer 26].

Ekkerøy 10.35 - 11.25.

King Eider 165 , Common Eider 13m+11f , Long-tailed Duck 13m+8f , Purple Sandpiper 43 ,  
Black-legged Kittiwake 1600 , Great Black-backed Gull 5 , European Herring Gull 18 ,  
Common Guillemot 7 , Razorbill 4 , Common Guillemot/Razorbill 19 , Black Guillemot 2 ,  
Great Cormorant 3 , European Shag 19 , Northern Raven 4 , House Sparrow 4 , European Greenfinch 3.

Kiberg Harbour 12.05 - 13.05.

Steller's Eider 32m+19f , King Eider 14m+9f , Common Eider 650 , Long-tailed Duck 23 ,  
Purple Sandpiper 6 , Black-legged Kittiwake 200 , Great Black-backed Gull 4 , Glaucous Gull 2imm ,  
European Herring Gull 80 , Black Guillemot 9 , Great Cormorant 2 , European Shag 11 ,  
House Sparrow 20.  
Grey Seal 1.

Vardø 13.20 - 14.30.

King Eider 65m+50f , Common Eider 435 , Long-tailed Duck 36 , Purple Sandpiper 8 ,  
Black-legged Kittiwake 350 , Great Black-backed Gull 6 , Glaucous Gull 1ad+2imm ,  
European Herring Gull 250 , Common Guillemot 45 , Black Guillemot 9 , Atlantic Puffin 65 ,  
alcid sp. 4000 , Great Cormorant 4 , European Shag 110 , House Sparrow 5.

Svartness Harbour 14.35 - 14.55.

Steller's Eider 16m+7f , Common Eider 19m+17f , Long-tailed Duck 26 , Purple Sandpiper 3 ,  
Black-legged Kittiwake 45 , Great Black-backed Gull 14 , Glaucous Gull 1ad+3imm ,

European Herring Gull 80, Great Cormorant 1, European Shag 2.  
Grey Seal 3.

### 11/3.

Vadsø - Vardø 7.10 - 8.30 & 14.25 - 16.00.

Mallard 1m+1f, Steller's Eider 72m+69f, King Eider 1m, Common Eider 865, Velvet Scoter 17, Common Scoter 72, Long-tailed Duck 43, Red-breasted Merganser 22, Purple Sandpiper 39, Black-legged Kittiwake 140, Great Black-backed Gull 38, European Herring Gull 160, Black Guillemot 16, Great Cormorant 6, European Shag 27, White-tailed Eagle 1ad, Eurasian Magpie 1, Hooded Crow 9, Bohemian Waxwing 23, House Sparrow 21, European Greenfinch 12.  
Grey Seal 4, European Roe Deer 2.  
[Reindeer 14].

Vardø & Hornøya 8.30 - 14.20.

King Eider 110, Common Eider 235, Long-tailed Duck 7m+6f, Purple Sandpiper 16, Black-legged Kittiwake 850, Great Black-backed Gull 13, European Herring Gull 310, Brünnich's Guillemot 45+, Common Guillemot 20.000+, Razorbill 3.000+, Black Guillemot 9, Atlantic Puffin 180, Great Cormorant 4, European Shag 340, Hooded Crow 3, Northern Raven 2, House Sparrow 4.

Svartness Harbour 14.25 - 14.35.

Steller's Eider 16m+11f, Common Eider 11m+8f, Long-tailed Duck 42, Purple Sandpiper 4, Black-legged Kittiwake 30, Great Black-backed Gull 7, Glaucous Gull 1ad+3imm, European Herring Gull 60, Great Cormorant 1.  
Grey Seal 2.

Mountain Hare 1 - Ekkerøy > Vadsø.

### 12/3.

Vadsø 6.05 - 6.50.

Mallard 6m+5f, Steller's Eider 17m+15f, King Eider 1m, Common Eider 75, Common Scoter 19, Long-tailed Duck 27, Red-breasted Merganser 1m+1f, Purple Sandpiper 16, Black-legged Kittiwake 360, Great Black-backed Gull 6, European Herring Gull 35, Black Guillemot 2, Great Cormorant 1, Hooded Crow 21, Northern Raven 2, Great Tit 2, House Sparrow 35, European Greenfinch 55.  
White-beaked Dolphin 20+.

Vadsø > Varangerbotn and Karlebotn 7.40 - 10.00.

Eurasian Wigeon 3m+1f, Mallard 9m+7f, Common Eider 95, Long-tailed Duck 9m+7f, Red-breasted Merganser 27, Purple Sandpiper 386, Black-legged Kittiwake 90,



Great Black-backed Gull 11 , European Herring Gull 65 , Black Guillemot 3 , Great Cormorant 2 , Northern Hawk-Owl 3 , Eurasian Magpie 5 , Hooded Crow 17 , Northern Raven 1 , House Sparrow 12 , European Greenfinch 8 , Common Redpoll 4.  
Moose 1 (dead).

Varangerbotn > Neljän Tuulen Tupa 10.00 - 13.40.

Northern Goshawk 1f , Northern Hawk-Owl 3 , Eurasian Magpie 4 , Hooded Crow 17 , Northern Raven 3 , House Sparrow 4 , Eurasian Bullfinch 1m+1f , European Greenfinch 3.  
[Reindeer 1].

Neljän Tuulen Tupa 13.40 - 15.30.

Siberian Jay 4 , Eurasian Magpie h , Hooded Crow 2 , Northern Raven 2 , Siberian Tit 2 , Willow Tit 1 , Great Tit 2 , House Sparrow 6 , Pine Grosbeak 40 , Eurasian Bullfinch 2m+1f , Common Redpoll 40 , Arctic Redpoll 2.

### 13/3.

Neljän Tuulen Tupa 6.05 - 11.45.

Siberian Jay 4 , Eurasian Jay 1 , Eurasian Magpie 1 , Hooded Crow 1 , Siberian Tit 1 , Great Tit 3 , House Sparrow 8 , Pine Grosbeak 45 , Eurasian Bullfinch 1m , Common Redpoll 45 , Arctic Redpoll 4.  
Eurasian Red Squirrel 4.  
[Reindeer 4].

Neljän Tuulen Tupa - Ivalo Airport 11.45 - 12.50.

Eurasian Magpie 1 , Great Tit 1.  
[Reindeer 3].



**Purple Sandpiper - Store Vadsøya.**

## Birds.

### **Eurasian Wigeon** (*Mareca penelope*)

12/3 3m+1f Karlebotn.

### **Mallard** (*Anas platyrhynchos*)

Common, but mostly in small numbers, along the coast. Highest count was 42 at inner Tanafjord on 7<sup>th</sup> March.

### **Steller's Eider** (*Polysticta stelleri*)

Seen in fair but not overwhelming numbers on the Varanger Peninsula. Most were seen in harbours, but also along the coast, and seeing them exceptionally well from the hides in Båtsfjord Harbour was, of course, a fantastic experience.

### **King Eider** (*Somateria spectabilis*)

As Steller's Eider but slightly more numerous.

### **Common Eider** (*Somateria mollissima*)

Very common and widespread along the Varanger coast.

### **Velvet Scoter** (*Melanitta fusca*)

11/3 17 Ekkerøy - Kiberg.

### **Common Scoter** (*Melanitta nigra*)

10/3 7m+4f Ekkerøy - Kiberg.

11/3 72 Ekkerøy - Kiberg.

12/3 19 Vadsø.

A more dedicated sea-watch, in calmer conditions, would surely reveal (much) larger numbers of both this species and the other sea-ducks.

### **Long-tailed Duck** (*Clangula hyemalis*)

Common and widespread along the Varanger coast, and often seen well in the harbours.

### **Common Goldeneye** (*Bucephala clangula*)

8/3 1m+1f Berlevåg.

### **Goosander** (*Mergus merganser*)

7-9/3 1m Båtsfjord.

The same very rosy male seen at the inner fjord.

### **Red-breasted Merganser** (*Mergus serrator*)

Fairly common along the Varanger coast.

### **Willow Ptarmigan** (*Lagopus lagopus*)

7/3 2 Neljän Tuulen Tupa.

Flew across the main road a couple of kilometres north of the hotel when we headed to the Varanger Peninsula.

### **Rock Ptarmigan** (*Lagopus muta*)

8+9/3 5+3 Båtsfjordfjellet.

Seen very well near the road (891), while driving between Båtsfjord and the junction (891 x 890) where you can turn north towards Kongsfjord and Berlevåg.

### **Western Capercaillie** (*Tetrao urogallus*)

6/3 1f Ivalo > Neljän Tuulen Tupa.

Flew across the main road (approximate GPS coordinates: 69.001498, 26.983818) and landed in the top of a tree, where it perched for a minute or so, before disappearing into the forest.

### **Purple Sandpiper** (*Calidris maritima*)

Very common along the Varanger coast. Highest numbers were seen at Nesseby Church where almost 300 birds were feeding at the mudflats at low tide on 12<sup>th</sup> March.

### **Black-legged Kittiwake** (*Rissa tridactyla*)

Abundant along the Varanger coast. Breeding on buildings in most harbours and on the cliffs on Hornøya. Highest numbers were seen at Ekkerøy on 10<sup>th</sup> March, though none seemed to be breeding there yet.

### **Great Black-backed Gull** (*Larus marinus*)

Widespread in fair numbers at Varanger.

**Glaucous Gull** (*Larus hyperboreus*)

8+9/3 1ad+2imm Båtsfjord.

10/3 2imm Kiberg.

10/3 1ad+2imm Vardø.

10+11/3 1ad+3imm Svartness Harbour.

It was somewhat surprising and disappointing not to find any Iceland Gulls, or anything rarer, despite going through all gulls with a fine-tooth comb.

**European Herring Gull** (*Larus argentatus*)

Abundant on the Varanger Peninsula.

**Brünnich's Guillemot** (*Uria lomvia*)

11/3 45+ Hornøya.

Seemed to prefer nesting quite low. When scanning the bird cliffs with lots of guillemots, the birds lowest down were often Brünnich's and we hardly found any higher up.

**Common Guillemot** (*Uria aalge*)

8+9/3 1 Båtsfjord.

10/3 7 Ekkerøy.

10/3 45 Vardø.

11/3 20.000+ Hornøya.

**Razorbill** (*Alca torda*)

10/3 4 Ekkerøy.

11/3 3000+ Hornøya.

**Black Guillemot** (*Cepphus grylle*)

Common and widespread along the coast.

**Atlantic Puffin** (*Fratercula arctica*)

10/3 65 Vardø.

11/3 180 Hornøya.

We were thrilled that the Puffins had already arrived on Hornøya in fair numbers. Birds were seen mostly at the grassy areas on top of the cliffs, but also very well along the path (stairs) where it starts to climb for real at the southernmost point of the cliffs, and at the bottom of the cliffs immediately to the left (north) of the shed where the boat docks.

**Red-throated Diver** (*Gavia stellata*)

10/3 1 Ekkerøy - Skallelv.

Lying fairly close to shore and thus seen pretty well.

**Great Cormorant** (*Phalacrocorax carbo*)

Widespread along the coast on Varanger, though not particularly numerous.

**European Shag** (*Gulosus aristotelis*)

Common along the Varanger coast with highest count on Hornøya where 340 were seen on 11<sup>th</sup> March. A lovely species when seen up close.

**Northern Goshawk** (*Accipiter gentilis*)

12/3 1f Utsjoki > Neljän Tuulen Tupa.

**White-tailed Eagle** (*Haliaeetus albicilla*)

11/3 1ad 6km S of Skallelv.

It was quite a surprise not to find more White-tailed Eagles which should be fairly common along the south coast of the Varanger Peninsula.

**Northern Hawk-Owl** (*Surnia ulula*)

7/3 1 Neljän Tuulen Tupa > Utsjoki.

9/3 4 Tanaelv N of Tana Bru.

9+12/3 1+3 Varangerbotn.

12/3 2 Tanaelv between Tana Bru and Utsjoki.

12/3 1 Utsjoki > Neljän Tuulen Tupa.

While the number of White-tailed Eagles was disappointing, the number of Northern Hawk-Owls was just the opposite. We're not sure if this is what you can expect to find with a bit of effort on a trip like this, or if it was just a good year for the species.

The birds on the 7<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> are not the same.

**Great Spotted Woodpecker** (*Dendrocopos major*)

6/3 1m+1f S of Helsinki Airport.

**Black Woodpecker** (*Dryocopus martius*)

6/3 1f S of Helsinki Airport.



**Siberian Jay and Siberian Tit - Neljän Tuulen Tupa.**



**Siberian Jay** (*Perisoreus infaustus*)  
6+7/3 4+8 Neljän Tuulen Tupa.  
12+13/73 4+4 Neljän Tuulen Tupa.  
An understated beauty and very charming.

**Eurasian Jay** (*Garrulus glandarius*)  
13/3 1 Neljän Tuulen Tupa.

**Eurasian Magpie** (*Pica pica*)  
Fairly common and widespread, though almost exclusively near human settlements.

**Western Jackdaw** (*Coloeus monedula*)  
6/3 45 S of Helsinki Airport.

**Hooded Crow** (*Corvus cornix*)  
Common and widespread.

**Northern Raven** (*Corvus corax*)  
Widespread in small numbers.

**Bohemian Waxwing** (*Bombycilla garrulus*)  
9/3 26 Vestre Jakobselv.  
11/3 23 Vadsø.

**Siberian Tit** (*Poecile cinctus*)  
6+7/3 8+4 Neljän Tuulen Tupa.  
12+13/3 2+1 Neljän Tuulen Tupa.  
Great views also of this lovely tit, which fed on both seeds and fat.

**Willow Tit** (*Poecile montanus*)  
6+7/3 2+1 Neljän Tuulen Tupa.  
12/3 1 Neljän Tuulen Tupa.

**Eurasian Blue Tit** (*Cyanistes caeruleus*)  
6/3 4 S of Helsinki Airport.

**Great Tit** (*Parus major*)  
6/3 9 S of Helsinki Airport.  
6+7/3 4+6 Neljän Tuulen Tupa.  
10+12/3 1+2 Vadsø.  
12+13/3 2+3 Neljän Tuulen Tupa.  
13/3 1 Neljän Tuulen Tupa > Ivalo.

**Common Blackbird** (*Turdus merula*)  
6/3 1m S of Helsinki Airport.

**Fieldfare** (*Turdus pilaris*)  
6/3 4 S of Helsinki Airport.

**White-throated Dipper** (*Cinclus cinclus*)  
6/3 1 Ivalo > Inari.

**House Sparrow** (*Passer domesticus*)  
Common near human settlements.

**Pine Grosbeak** (*Pinicola enucleator*)  
6+7/3 30+35 Neljän Tuulen Tupa.  
12+13/3 40+45 Neljän Tuulen Tupa.  
Certainly one of the highlights of the trip. Apart from seeing them extremely well, we could hear them calling constantly, and even had a few birds singing.

**Eurasian Bullfinch** (*Pyrrhula pyrrhula*)  
6+7/3 1+3 Neljän Tuulen Tupa.  
9+12/3 h+2 Varangerbotn.  
12+13/3 3+1 Neljän Tuulen Tupa.

**European Greenfinch** (*Chloris chloris*)  
Fairly common and widespread.

**Common Redpoll** (*Acanthis flammea*)  
6+7/3 20+55 Neljän Tuulen Tupa.  
7/3 4 Tana Bru > Båtsfjord.  
9+13/3 2+4 Varangerbotn.  
12+13/3 40+45 Neljän Tuulen Tupa.  
Numbers include a few Common/Arctic Redpolls. Most of the Arctic Redpolls were quite distinct, but some birds were really difficult to identify with certainty. Anyway, it might not really matter since the three species will soon be lumped into one, apparently.

**Arctic Redpoll** (*Acanthis hornemanni*)  
6+7/3 4+9 Neljän Tuulen Tupa.  
9/3 2 Varangerbotn.  
12+13/3 2+4 Neljän Tuulen Tupa.

## Mammals.

### **Eurasian Red Squirrel** (*Sciurus vulgaris*)

7+13/3 3+4 Neljän Tuulen Tupa.

### **Norway Lemming** (*Lemmus lemmus*)

9/3 1 Båtsfjordfjellet.

### **Mountain Hare** (*Lepus timidus*)

10/3 12 Vadsø.

11/3 1 Ekkerøy > Vadsø.

### **Red Fox** (*Vulpes vulpes*)

9/3 1 Båtsfjord.

9/3 1 Varangerbotn.

### **Grey Seal** (*Halichoerus grypus*)

Rather common along the Varanger coast, but mainly seen in harbours.

### **European Otter** (*Lutra lutra*)

10/3 Skallelv > Ekkerøy.

(GPS: 70.1278216, 30.3055172).

Seen shortly before sunset, in the snow by the side of the road, before running uphill.

### **Stoat** (*Mustela erminea*)

8/3 1 Båtsfjord.

Seen well from the floating hides.

### **Moose** (*Alces alces*)

8/3 4 Sandfjordstranden.

12/3 1 (dead) Karlebotn.

### **European Roe Deer** (*Capreolus capreolus*)

11/3 2 Vadsø > Skallelv.

A bit of a surprise this far north.

### **White-beaked Dolphin** (*Lagenorhynchus albirostris*)

12/3 20+ Vadsø.

A pod travelling at high speed into the fjord.

### **[Reindeer** (*Rangifer tarandus*)]

Fairly common and widespread.

These are domesticated animals who roam free.



Norway Lemming - Båtsfjordfjellet.