

Birds & Culture in Southern Scandinavia

Aug 29-Sept 12, 2024

Itinerary

Day 1: Thu, August 29 - Arrival into Copenhagen

Group to rendezvous in the late afternoon and evening. We will have dinner at our hotel.

Night in hotel near Copenhagen Kastrup Airport (TBD).

Day 2: Fri, Aug 30 - Transit to Falsterbo

We head east across the Øresund Bridge to Sweden and the city of Malmö. Finished in 2000, the bridge is approximately 5 miles long and is an impressive feat of engineering because it supports two railway tracks beneath a four-lane roadway! After ticket checks and a quick stop in the city, we head south and should arrive on the Falsterbo peninsula by lunchtime.

Depending on the afternoon conditions, we plan to visit Ljungen Heath Reserve (Skanörs Ljung Naturreservat) and Ängsnäset, a rich, coastal lagoon productive for raptors and shorebirds. Species encountered here on past trips include **Eurasian curlew**, plus Wood, Curlew, Common and Green Sandpipers, Little and Temminck's Stints, Greenshank, Spotted Redshank, Ruff, Common Snipe and Northern Lapwing. The reedbeds here should be full of roosting pipits, wagtails and swallows also, and there's always a chance of Spotted Crake, Waterail and Hobby here. ***Night near Falsterbo.***

Days 3-5: Sat, Aug 31 – Mon, Sept 2 - Falsterbo

Flexibility will be the key to success during the three full days on the peninsula. As the larger raptor movements depend on weather conditions, we'll observe several sites daily, but concentrate on the main viewing areas on Ljungen Heath (Skanörs Ljung Naturreservat) on days with expected thermals and a south-westerly airflow that produce both lift and a headwind for the birds to ride. Raptors will be moving, and we'll view a great selection of species, that's guaranteed, but it's these exact conditions that can be very productive and produce thousands of birds.

One of the key reasons for coming early in the season is for a good chance of observing the Honey Buzzard passage. These unique and beautiful birds are heading for tropical Africa, so leave early before insect life disappears from the chilly north. On the move also are Hen Harrier, Marsh Harrier, Eurasian Sparrowhawk & Kestrel, Osprey, Red Kite, Peregrine Falcon, Merlin, Hobby and Montague's Harrier. Falsterbo also acts as a kind of spotting filter for rare Asian vagrants which have strayed into Scandinavia, and then get pulled south with everything else and have included Pallid Harrier, Red-footed Falcon and Steppe Eagle.

There is also the infamous Nabben, an area that lies towards the tip and has a great view looking back across the straits. It's worth a look here in any conditions, but is where you need to be for raptors during periods of south-westerly airflow when birds are pushed directly overhead. Ducks, geese, divers, skuas

and grebes are moving along the coast at this time too, so we'll also keep an eye on the huge, bird rich lagoon at Måkläppen. This area is good for gulls, terns, shorebirds and wildfowl, and can easily be birded from the sea defences. Even the short grass of the nearby golf course is a productive place to see migrants such as northern wheatear, wagtails and pipits. There's also good bird habitat with decently sized trees in the observatory garden which attracts warblers, crests, and tits.

The wetland habitats (saline lagoons, with reedbeds) at Ängsnäset and Skanörs Revlar are good sites for migrant shorebirds and species such as greenshank, green sandpiper, wood sandpiper, curlew sandpiper and little stint are frequent. As it's autumn there's always a possibility of spotting the rarer broad-billed sandpiper, kentish plover or Temminck's stint also. ***Nights near Falsterbo.***

Day 6: Tue, Sept 3 - Transit to Ottenby

We'll leave Falsterbo for Ottenby early, as we plan to search for Black Woodpecker and other woodland specialists en route. The island of Öland is 6-7 hours away, and we should arrive at our final destination for dinner. If time permits, we can birdwatch as we drive down the peninsula before dark. Both the lighthouse and ancient landscape will draw you in immediately, it's very atmospheric. Welcome to Ottenby! ***Night in Morbylanga.***

Days 7-9: Wed, Sept 4 – Fri, Sept 6 - Ottenby

For the next three days, the beautiful village of Morbylanga will be our base to explore the nearby Ottenby World Heritage Site. This island peninsula is an exciting birding location full of passage shorebirds, wildfowl and passerines, and we will encounter many species along the hiking trails that cover endless coastal meadows and rich forests. The area also supports a unique ecosystem that's found nowhere else in the country due to the underlying terraced limestone. Since the Iron Age, man's modifications of this area using grazing animals, has helped create a varied landscape and rich diversity. Some 1,856 ha (~4,500 acres) of the coastal fringes were designated a Ramsar Wetland of International Importance back in 1974, as the surrounding waters provide important feeding resources for shorebirds and wildfowl.

This internationally important site is administered by Naturum Ottenby, who does an excellent job with visitor management and interpretation. There's some great vantage points around the reserve that have hides, so if the weather gets a bit rough, there's always somewhere cozy to seek shelter. The administrative hub is down by the lighthouse and is the location for a museum, exhibition space, restaurant and bookshop. The exhibition is highly recommended with interactive exhibits and a great kids bird art area. Bird news is also quickly disseminated around the peninsula from here if something interesting is found.

The Lange Jan lighthouse at the point is also the location of the world famous Ottenby Bird Observatory, which has been carrying out field research into bird migration since 1946. With some 20,000 birds being processed each year, the work of the observatory is fascinating and we'll take several chances to check out some of their important daily duties. It's a great place to hang out sometimes if you're looking for

some relatively easy birding, as many birds are funneled towards this sheltered garden location on the point. Whatever your energy level or interest, this trip offers time for everyone to explore this classic migration spot. ***Nights in Morbylanga.***

Day 10: Sat, Sept 7 - Transit to Gothenburg

We aim to set off relatively early as we want plenty of opportunities to visit various birding sites en route to the city of Gothenburg in Western Sweden. Target sites will include Store Mosse and the coastal area around Getteron for passage shorebirds which include Avocet, Ruff, Wood Sandpiper, Black-tailed Godwit, Spotted Redshank and Little Stint, plus wildfowl, raptors and loons. We will arrive in plenty of time for dinner and an evening exploration of Gothenburg. ***Night in Gothenburg.***

Day 11: Sun, Sept 8 – Urban Birding & Culture in historic Gothenburg

Today we will aim to be flexible, as we will allow time for sightseeing in the city, but also give ample time to check out the best local spots for birds. The harbor for instance offers some great birding opportunities for species such as Black Guillemot, loons and wildfowl. Delicious seafood, museums, art, restaurants, and also a botanic garden are all available within this great little city. ***Night in Gothenburg.***

Day 12: Mon, Sept 9 - Transit to Denmark's Skagen Peninsula

We say our goodbyes to wonderful Gothenburg early, as we will be booked onto the early ferry (0730) over to Frederikshavn in Denmark to start the final section of our nordic adventure. The ferry crossing, which takes about 3.5 hours, is a great chance to watch seabirds, including the chance of loons, gulls, terns, auks and wildfowl. After arrival, we head straight to our accommodation in the historic little town of Skagen, on the very northern tip of Jutland. We will spend the rest of the day out on Skagen Point and at Flagbakken Hill looking for migrant species. These two sites are hotspots so almost anything is possible at this time of the year. Caspian Gull, Pallid Harrier and Sooty Shearwater have all been seen in recent years. Like all of the migration hotspots we've visited over the last few days, this site is also an exciting place to be and full of expectant energy. ***Night in Skagen.***

Day 13: Tue, Sept 10 - North Zealand (Gribskov and Hellebaek Forests); Transit To Copenhagen

We set off early for the island of Zealand with some birding en route at the Mariager Fjord and on the short ferry ride from Aarhus. We should arrive at the Gribskov Forest at lunchtime and search for migrating raptors within the beech woodlands which include buzzards, harriers, falcons and osprey. This area is also a breeding site for Black Woodpecker, so we will focus on suitable sites and habitat. The rest of the afternoon will be spent at Hellebaek Forest further east along the coast. This is another great raptor site in the fall attracting over 14,000 birds in suitable conditions! We then drive back to Copenhagen for a 2-night stay. ***Night in Copenhagen.***

Day 14: Wed, Sept 11 - Sightseeing in Copenhagen

Our last day of the expedition will be spent in Denmark's capital, Copenhagen. We will be flexible, as the group may have different ideas, but we'll have enough time to stroll through charming Nyhavn, sample

some local cuisine, visit Amalienborg Palace and Tivoli Gardens. We'll enjoy our final dinner of the tour out in the city. ***Night in Copenhagen.***

Day 15: Thu, Sept 12 - Departure

Today we say our goodbyes after breakfast and head back to Copenhagen Airport for our return flights home.