



WildWings

Poland in Spring - Birds & Mammals

Client quote: 'Yeezhior was faultless, superb..we had a wonderful week' T.L. May 2011

Set in far north eastern Poland we travel 'back in time' for some of the finest birding in Europe. After over ten years of operating our famous bird festival in this bird-rich area, rising prices, especially since Poland joined the EU, have meant a more conventional bird tour offers better birding value for your money. We have now upgraded this holiday to a small group, two-centre which now includes guided birding throughout with our top local guide.

Bialowieza Forest is justly renowned as the finest remaining virgin lowland forest in Europe. The primeval core of the forest is a magical place, dominated by enormous oaks, limes, poplars, hornbeams, pines and spruces. The oldest trees are truly ancient, believed to be over 600 years old, and the tallest are over 50 metres high. Here, and in the adjacent forest, marshes, lakes and fields, speciality birds include all nine north European woodpeckers, most notably Black, Three-toed and White-backed plus many other exciting birds such as White-tailed and Lesser Spotted Eagles, (Greater Spotted Eagle in 2007), Goshawk, five breeding species of grebe, Whiskered and White-winged Black Terns, Crane, Black Stork, Hazelhen, Corncrake, Hoopoe, Roller, Golden Oriole, Nutcracker, Red-backed and Great Grey Shrikes, Thrush Nightingale, Great Reed Warbler, River Warbler, Icterine Warbler, Barred Warbler, Red-breasted and Collared Flycatchers, Citrine Wagtail, Penduline Tit, Hawfinch and Common Rosefinch. We have been able to see all nine north European woodpecker species on every previous WildWings Polish trip including 2011. Early morning is by far the best time to see most birds, but Pygmy and Tengmalm's Owls can be heard at dusk, indeed we are often lucky and see a Pygmy Owl at least one evening during the week. Lake Siemianowka is only a few miles away by road and will be one of the included excursions. Highlights include breeding White-tailed Eagles, Common Cranes, Whiskered Terns, Caspian Gulls and Citrine Wagtails. Some of the included excursions will have an early start, some later in the day as they will finish at or after dusk. We will also visit a Great Snipe lek one evening.

The famous Biebrza and Narew Marshes are some of the best in northeast Europe and are where we spend the second part of this holiday. Aquatic Warbler is undoubtedly the star bird we shall seek but will represent the tip of an avian iceberg. Other birds we can expect include more eagles, Montagu's and Marsh Harriers, Hobby, Cranes, White and Black Storks, Garganey, White-winged Black and Whiskered Terns, Black-tailed Godwits, Little Gull, Bee-eater, Hoopoe, Savi's Warbler, Blue-headed Wagtail,

Fieldfare, Tawny Pipit, Ortolan Bunting, Woodlark, Bluethroat plus passage waders such as Little and Temminck's Stints.

Mammals including European Beaver, European Bison, Otter, Pine Marten, Red Squirrel, Wild Boar, Moose (Elk), Red & Roe Deer, Badger, Lynx (once) and Wolf (thrice) have all been seen on our previous Polish trips. Dawn and dusk is best for mammal viewing. Both Bison and Wild Boar were seen in 2011.

The Hotels:

Bialowieza (Forest) We now use a 'wooden', more local style property with big rooms, a restaurant serving good food, and bar. All rooms have private facilities and free early morning tea and coffee is included. Lifts serve the upper two floors. Beware the singing Thrush Nightingales and Corncrakes outside your window – they may keep you awake! Walk out of your room and within yards enjoy birds such as Wryneck, Red-backed Shrike, White Stork, Barred, River and Marsh Warblers, Grey-headed Woodpecker, Montagu's Harrier, Black Redstart, Hawfinch and Common Rosefinch, most of which will be singing. Walk just a couple of hundred yards down the road to look for Beavers and Otters. Head into the adjacent forest and the bird and mammal list is even more mouth watering.

Goniadz (Marshes). Another modern hotel, all rooms with private facilities. Set by the banks of the River Biebrza itself, with views over part of the marshes. Great birding in the hotel's gardens and by looking out over the river. The property also 'suffers' from Thrush Nightingales in the grounds.

Primeval forest, unspoilt marshlands, and a farming community practising low intensive agriculture all combine to ensure a holiday filled with birds, butterflies and great plants, many of which we will find to be common here but are rare or have disappeared completely from other parts of Europe including the U.K. Small wonder the Polish Bird Festival was one of our most popular holidays, with well over five hundred people having enjoyed the event over the years. Join Jezior for a really great full week's birding.

Holiday Information

Dates: 12th – 20th May 2012
Leaders: Tomasz (Jezior) Jezierczuk.
Cost: The basic cost is £1199 per person sharing a twin room
Single supp: £149 per person.
Deposit: £250 per person
Group size: Maximum 7.
Dates 2013: 11th – 19th May 2013
Register for £50 per person (refundable)

Price includes: Return economy class flights London -Warsaw*, all airport taxes, transfers to and from hotels, accommodation on a half board basis (breakfast and evening meal) in twin-bedded rooms with private facilities, services of WildWing leader, birding excursions as itinerary, pre-tour information pack including a day by day bird and mammal checklist. * Regional UK airport departures may be available for a supplement.

Price excludes: Travel insurance, lunches, drinks, tips to local guide and bus driver (suggest £40pp) and items of a personal nature.

Birds - number of species expected (approx.): 180

Itinerary

Day 1: Morning flight from London to Warsaw. Transfer to forest hotel, dinner after arrival.

Days 2-6: Five full days in which we will thoroughly enjoy the birds, mammals, plants and other wildlife of Bialowieza Forest and surrounding area. Each day we will have an included birding excursion by minibus.

Day 7: We will move to the marshes, today, birding all the way, and stay for two nights. We will spend the rest of our time in Poland exploring this rich region, including breeding Aquatic Warblers and a traditional punt trip along a quiet backwater.

Day 8 : Full day birding the marshes area.

Day 9: Transfer in the morning back to Warsaw for our late afternoon flight back to London.