

## FINLAND - LIEKSA AREA

16-21 July 2017

*Mattia Altieri*



*Adult male Wolverine at the forest hide*

Wolverine! A mythical mammal that, until recently, was almost impossible to find and see. In the last decade, a new place emerged in south-eastern Finland. It's Era-Eero lodge, a location in a secluded pine and spruce Karelian forest. <http://www.eraeero.com> This year I finally found the time for taking a Wolverine-week holidays.

Era Eero is less than one hour from the town of Lieksa. The owner, Eero Kortelainen, has built hides in two places: simple photography hides in the forest near the main lodge, the best option for very close encounters with Wolverines, and a big hide overlooking a lake (Uuronlampi) and a meadow. In the last place, other big carnivores like Brown Bear and Wolf are more than possible. You should enter in the hide in the afternoon (3 pm) and exit at 8 am.

I was very lucky in having all the places just for myself (that means quiet and silence). I spent two nights in the forest photography hides, and one night in the Uuronlampi hide. In the forest hide the come-and-go of Wolverines assured full fun during all the

time, in the lake hide sometimes I had to wait two or three hours without nothing in view. It was never completely dark.

I was rewarded by many long and close views of **Wolverines** (at least 6 different individuals in the forest hide, coming in view for ca. 20 times, even 2-3 meters from me! Than 2 individuals 4 times at the lake), **Brown Bears** (a big male and a young coming 5 times in the Uuronlampi meadow), and wonderful encounters with **Wolves** (2 individuals, one remaining for good 30' eating the carcass at Uuronlampi, and another more shy that remained a few minutes on the far side of the lake).

Best of all: one **Wolverine** seen during a walk, brief but "natural" view of an adult smelling and running away!

The complete list:

1. WOLVERINE - Forest hide: at least 6 individuals for ca. 20 times, the first coming already at 3.30 pm and the last at 7.00 am. Lake hide: 2 individuals 4 times, in the night. Wonderful!
2. BROWN BEAR - 2 bears at lake hide 4 times, first at 7 pm, last at 4 am
3. WOLF - Lake Uuronlampi hide, the first time one Wolf appeared at 3.30 am, than the couple at 6.00 am. An unexpected bonus!
4. ARCTIC HARE - Twice along the roads
5. RED SQUIRREL - Common near the main lodge
6. CANADIAN BEAVER - Two at Pielinen lake, dam at Patvinsuo NP

Not the best time for birds, but during my morning walks in Patvinsuo NP: White-tailed Eagle, Black Grouse, Black-throated Diver, Arctic Tern, Black Woodpecker, Waxwing and other passerines and ducks.

Era Eero is a great place. It is not a lodge like the African ones. In Era Eero you have no running water, and electricity is irregular. A very traditional lifestyle, with Finnish food in the deep Karelian forest. Thanks to Eero and Heini for their work.

Wolverines seen so well: a dream comes true!



*Young Wolverine at the lake hide*

Ps: Sorry for my bad English!