

## A camper trip from Switzerland via Sweden to Poland and back

Between July 16<sup>th</sup> and August 28<sup>th</sup> 2022 I went to Sweden together with some friends for a 10 day canoe trip on the Harkan river. As I had a course "assessing biodiversity" for my studies in Poland right after the vacations I made a trip directly from Sweden to Poland. This was not a mammalwatching vacation but an outdoor vacation in Sweden and fieldwork for studies in Poland. Nevertheless I saw 31 mammal species and (117 bird species). In total I was able to identify 419 species (plants, insects, birds, reptiles, amphibians and mammals) one could call this a biodiversitywatching trip.

### 1<sup>st</sup> part outdoor vacations Switzerland-Germany-Denmark-Norway-Sweden

With a minivan the journey started on July 16<sup>th</sup>. Until we were in Norway we saw only three mammal species (all from the moving car). **Red Fox** (CH), **Roe Deer** (CH) and **Fallow Deer** (DK). However, on the way to Oslo we saw seven species as roadkills. Red Fox (DE), Raccoon Dog (DK), Stone Marten (DE), Brown-breasted Hedgehog (DK), American Mink (DK), Brown Hare (DK) and Badger (DK).



The excellent companion for almost 5000 kilometers.

When we arrived in Sweden we changed to a canoe in Lit (near Östersund). We paddled, within 10 days, the river Harkan from Rengsfallet, Valsjön to Lit. We saw **Squirrels, Roe Deer, Red Fox, Beaver** and a **Lynx**. We saw the Lynx near Föllinge on the shore of Lake Ockern after dawn. With the thermal imager, I was able to identify the animal as a Lynx at a distance of a little less than 100 meters. When we shone the flashlight on it, it disappeared in the bushes after a few seconds. At the same place we also saw two Great Grey Owls.



Great Grey Owl near Föllinge in Sweden.

After the canoeing vacations I had almost two weeks to get to Białowieża. But first I drove in the other direction to Stekenjokkgruvan in the hope to see a Wolverine, Arctic Fox or Norway Lemming in the mountains of Sweden and Norway. Unfortunately I could find neither Wolverine nor Arctic Fox. I spent two days scanning the vast surroundings. Many birds and beautiful landscape but from the mammals only the **Snow Hare** showed up (and some rodents I could not identify). I continued to Mardsundsbodarna where I spent three nights in an AirBnb. In the surroundings there are very beautiful nature parks like Järvdalen (Järv = Wolverine) or Bastudalen Nature Reserve. There I saw a **Norway Lemming** while hiking. At night I drove along the small forest roads and looked for wildlife with the thermal imager. Various **Moose, Snow Hares, Pine Marten**, and several **Forest Lemmings**, as well as many other rodents that I could not determine. At the roadside in the mowed embankments I was able to see a small rodent every few hundred meters with the thermal imager. To see them with the flashlight and to identify them I found very difficult. I also saw many reindeer without ear tags but Anita Ericson told me in the mammalwatching europe FB group that there are only domesticated Reindeer in this region. Many thanks to Marcus Bergström who recommended me the app Scandops, which shows the most recent observations of big carnivores in Sweden. It's good to get a sense on where to look for them.





Snow Hare, domesticated Reindeer, Red Fox and Roe Deer in the surroundings of Mardsundsbodarna

After that I drove to Stockholm to take the ferry to Gdanzk. On the way to Stockholm I did not see any new mammals. But again some roadkills, including Otter, Badger as well as some *Microtus* sp.. The most notable birds in Sweden were: Little Gull, Great Grey Owl, Siberian Jay, Capercaillie, Hawk Owl, and Long-tailed Skua.



Dead Otter by the side of the road in Strömsund area.



## 2<sup>nd</sup> part summerschool in Białowieża: Poland-Austria-Switzerland

Near Gdansk at Kąty Rybackie I spent the first night, on a walk in the evening I saw Roe Deer, Red Fox and 4 Moose. After that I drove comfortably within four days to Białowieża. In the Mazury region there are a lot of very beautiful nature parks. I was looking more for birds these days and no new mammals were added to the list.



Moose in the Vistla Spit Nature Reserve in Poland

After arriving in Białowieża I stayed at the Geobotanical Station of the University of Warsaw. The aim of the summerschool was to get to know as many species of plants, fungi, grasshoppers and small rodents as possible and learn to identify them. Thanks to the permission of the university we were able to set traps for the rodents. We caught nine species in 10 days. There were **Striped Field Mouse**, **Yellow-necked Mouse**, **Wood Mouse**, **Field Vole**, **Common Vole**, **Root Vole**, **Bank Vole**, **Common Shrew**, **Pygmy Shrew**.



Striped Field Mouse and the very species rich grassland of the Białowieża surroundings



With the thermal imager I was able to observe **Harvest Mouse** a few times at night. Before and after field work I often went to the fields around Białowieża in the morning 04:30 and around 18:30 in the evening. Thereby I could observe **European Bison** (up to 12 ind. in a herd). Three times early in the morning, two times after sunset. In the garden of the Geobotanical Station I could see **Eastern White-breasted Hedgehog** almost every evening. In addition, there were **Red Deer, Beaver, Moose, Wild Boar, Red Fox, Otter, Brown Hare, Badger** and **Red Squirrel**. Several times I heard Wolf howling and saw droppings and tracks. All less than 3 kilometers around the village. Because of the high military presence at the border we students did not walk alone and of course we were controlled by the military personnel. This and the constantly noisy diesel generators of the military camps disturbed the otherwise very beautiful nature in Białowieża. The most noteworthy birds were the Lesser Spotted Eagle and the Tree Toed Woodpecker.



European Bison and Red Deer on the meadows around Białowieża. Wolf scat on a dirt road inside the village. White-breasted Hedgehog and Cirsium rivulare



After the summerschool I drove via Vienna back to Switzerland. In Vienna I stopped to see the **Common Hamster** at the Central Cemetery and the **European Souslik** near Gerasdorf. Within two hours I saw both species and thanks to several trip reports on these species they were very easy to find. Around Vienna I saw dozens of **Brown Hares**.



European Souslik and Common Hamster in Vienna.

## Species List

Common Name	Latin Name	Place
Red Fox	<i>Vulpes vulpes</i>	CH, DE, S, PL, A
Fallow Deer	<i>Dama dama</i>	DK
Roe Deer	<i>Capreolus capreolus</i>	CH, DE, S, PL, A
Eurasian Red Squirrel	<i>Sciurus vulgaris</i>	S, PL, A
Moose	<i>Alces alces</i>	S, PL
Beech Marten	<i>Martes foina</i>	S
Mountain Hare	<i>Lepus timidus</i>	S
Norway Lemming	<i>Lemmus lemmus</i>	S
Eurasian Beaver	<i>Castor fiber</i>	S, PL
Eurasian Lynx	<i>Lynx lynx</i>	S
Wood Lemming	<i>Myopus schisticolor</i>	S
Badger	<i>Meles meles</i>	PL
Pine Marten	<i>Martes martes</i>	S
Brown Hare	<i>Lepus europaeus</i>	PL, A
Eastern Hedgehog	<i>Erinaceus roumanicus</i>	PL
European Bison	<i>Bison bonasus</i>	PL
Red Deer	<i>Cervus elaphus</i>	PL
Wild Boar	<i>Sus scrofa</i>	PL
European Otter	<i>Lutra lutra</i>	PL
Harvest Mouse	<i>Micromys minutus</i>	PL
Striped Field Mouse	<i>Apodemus agrarius</i>	PL
Yellow-necked Mouse	<i>Apodemus flavicollis</i>	PL
Wood Mouse	<i>Apodemus sylvaticus</i>	PL
Field Vole	<i>Microtus agrestis</i>	PL
Common Vole	<i>Microtus arvalis</i>	PL
Root Vole	<i>Microtus oeconomus</i>	PL
Bank Vole	<i>Myodes glareolus</i>	PL
Common Shrew	<i>Sorex araneus</i>	PL
Pygmy Shrew	<i>Sorex minutus</i>	PL
Souslik	<i>Spermophilus citellus</i>	A
Common Hamster	<i>Cricetus cricetus</i>	A