

Finland

July 7-12, 2026

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I spent the 4th of July weekend in Madrid, and was looking for a short add-on trip to see wildlife in Europe. Seeing a wolverine has been a top goal of mine for a while now, and I figured this would be a great fit as June-July is peak wolverine watching season at [Era-Eero](#) near Lieska in Finland. Unfortunately, I did not see a wolverine after 3 days in the hides. I probably have the dubious title of being the first mammal watcher on this site to have visited Era-Eero without seeing a wolverine. I did see a few consolation prizes though.

July 7th

I arrived in Helsinki in the early evening. After checking in to my hotel and dinner, I went for a walk around the closed [Kaisaniemi Botanic Garden](#), a few minutes walk from the hotel, where I saw a few **European Hares**. Later at night I drove to [Mustikkamaa](#) island for a very late sunset walk, and saw a **Western Roe Deer**.



European Hare



Western Roe Deer

July 8th

After breakfast, I started the long drive (6+ hours with stops) to Era-Eero. For some reason, I envisioned Finland to be a picturesque country, but the drive was a very monotonous highway drive except for the last 50km or so where you drive on an empty partially paved road through a serene Scandinavian forest. The highlight of the drive was a **Black Grouse** on the side of the road. I finally arrived at Era-Eero in the late afternoon.

A bit about Era-Eero

Era-Eero has been described in previous reports, and is effectively run by Sini who speaks excellent English and is very helpful. It consists of several locations:

- Keljanpuro Lodge / Forest hide: Four photography hides situated in the forest right by the main lodge, overlooking a small forest clearing.
- Uuronlampi / Lake: Four photography hides at ground-level by a lake and two much more comfortable observation hides higher up a hill overlooking the lake. About a 10-minute drive from the lodge.
- Rasku - Karhuniemi: A newer location that wasn't used or offered as an option while I was there.



Photography Hide (Forest)



Observation Hide (Lake)

Baits (mostly rancid pieces of pork and fish) are cached in various locations around the hide, and you wait for carnivores to arrive. According to the log books in the forest and lake hides, in the summer there is a chance of about 70% at any given night for a wolverine. So failing to see one over three nights at the hides was “exceptionally unlucky” as Sini called me.

Each hide session is around 16-17 hours long - from 15:00-16:00 until 08:00 and you are not allowed to leave the hide. There is a bed and dry toilet in each hide. The photography hides are small but have better photography setup as there are openings for the camera with ball-head positions for easy maneuverability. The observation hides are much more spacious with comfortable seats - but observation is through a glass window at an angle.



View from photography hide (Lake)



View from Observation Hide

Given that the hide sessions are so long and that the nearest hotel is a 30 minutes drive away, it makes sense to stay at Era-Eero for a multi-day stay and they provide basic rooms with shared dry toilets and a shared shower pumped from a stream (with a heater). They also provide full board and also a snack box for the hide session. The snack box (a small ham & cheese sandwich, a yogurt and a piece of fruit) was not enough food for me for a 16-hour session, but luckily I brought some snacks with me - which I would highly recommend doing.

There is very little going on during most of the session and almost no interesting bird activity to pass the time while waiting for the protagonists. Cell service is limited around Era-Eero, and there is no functional internet in the hides. So bring a book - or several in case your first book choice turns out to be a dud (I brought a single book with me that was as interesting as watching paint dry).

Now back to the day's events: Other than me, the only guests for the first two nights were two nice British guys. After a briefing, we all went to the forest hide. I was assigned hide #3 and the two guys in hide #2 next to me. There was just enough service for whatsapp messages to go through so we exchanged contacts to notify each other of sightings.

In the first few hours the only visitors to the hides were a flock of **Common Gulls**. It's a bit surreal to see gulls in the middle of the forest, gulping down pieces of bait bigger than their heads. At 18:18 we got our first **Brown Bear** that stuck around for nearly 30 minutes, passing as close as 10 meters from the hide and providing us with the best photo opportunities of the visit.

This was followed by inactivity for seven hours (other than gulls and the occasional [Common Raven](#)), afterwards a second smaller bear arrived for five minutes around 02:00, sweeping the remaining bait. There was no further activity that night.



July 9th

We had breakfast after last night's hide session and saw [Eurasian Red Squirrels](#) that come to the bird feeders by the lodge, afterwards we all went to sleep for 4 hours before lunch and the mandatory briefing before the next session.

This time we all went to the Lake photography hides and again stayed in adjacent hides. The only visitor of note that night was a [Brown Bear](#) - likely bear #2 from the previous night that came and went

between 00:24 and 01:52, systematically picking up every morsel of bait that the gulls missed. There were also some bats flying around the hide.

July 10th

After breakfast, the two British guys left but had a remarkably lucky ride back to Lieska train station with Era as they saw a *Wolverine* crossing the road and a *Western Capercaillie*. I had to settle for some squirrel photos as well as a **Bank Vole** that came for the seeds that fell from the bird feeders, before going to sleep for a few hours before lunch.

During the briefing I was joined by a group guided by Jan Kelchtermans. This is a funny coincidence as I'm scheduled to travel with him to China this coming March to search for Pandas.

This time I stayed in one of the observation hides and Jan's group occupied the photography hides - all at the lake. Jan himself stayed at the forest hide.

This night turned out to be the most interesting one with both a **Brown Bear** and a **Gray Wolf** paying multiple visits. The bear was likely the same bear from the previous two nights, and the wolf was the resident alpha female and was very skittish. The two carnivores were never present simultaneously and took turns showing up between 21:00 until shortly after 00:00. At some point the bear climbed up the hill, and reached within an arm's reach from the observation hide's glass screen.

The night was quiet after that except for a **shrew** scurrying around and taking cover under the hide at around 01:30. Unfortunately the observation was too dark and quick for a species-level ID.



Gray Wolf



Bank Vole



Eurasian Red Squirrel

July 11th

On the way back to the lodge I ran into Jan who stayed by himself at the forest hide, where he saw a wolverine fighting two wolves! Let's just hope we'll have Jan's wolverine-spotting luck and not mine when looking for Pandas in March.

I left Era-Eero after breakfast and a nap and drove to Oravi on Saimaa Lake where I took a sunset boat ride to search for seals. I booked the trip with [Saimaa Holiday Oravi](#) which I can fully recommend. The boat tour took around 3 hours and we saw two introduced **North American Beavers** and a single **Saimaa Seal** lounging on a rock. Peak summer is not the best season for seals, and the guide mentioned they have about 50% success rate at this time of the year as opposed to May-early June when the success rate is nearing 100% with multiple sightings per trip.

The boat tour is highly recommended regardless of seals though - Saimaa lake is a gorgeous place. Just don't forget to bring sunglasses as you'll be sailing facing the sun for quite a bit.



Saimaa Seal



North American Beaver



July 12th

After breakfast I drove to Helsinki for my flight back home, and the only mammal seen was a large vole crossing the road.

Closing thoughts

In total I spent around 50 hours in the hides, which I don't think I was fully prepared for mentally or logistically. However, Era-Eero is a lovely place and probably the best place in the world to see wolverines, so I will be back to complete the task - this time with more snacks and books.

Mammal List

1. European Hare (*Lepus europaeus*)
 2. Western Roe Deer (*Capreolus capreolus*)
 3. Brown Bear (*Ursus arctos*)
 4. Gray Wolf (*Canis lupus*)
 5. Saimaa Seal (*Pusa saimensis*)
 6. Eurasian Red Squirrel (*Sciurus vulgaris*)
 7. Bank Vole (*Clethrionomys glareolus*)
 8. North American Beaver (*Castor canadensis*)
- Plus unidentified shrew, vole, and bat species.



A very polite Eurasian Red Squirrel

Bird List

1. Common Gull
2. European Herring Gull
3. Lesser Black-backed Gull
4. Black-headed Gull
5. Common Tern
6. Eurasian Oystercatcher
7. Common Sandpiper
8. Eurasian Woodcock
9. Fieldfare
10. Song Thrush
11. Eurasian Blackbird
12. Hooded Crow
13. Eurasian Jackdaw
14. Common Raven
15. Eurasian Magpie
16. Eurasian Jay
17. House Sparrow
18. Rustic Bunting
19. Common Chaffinch
20. Eurasian Bullfinch
21. Barn Swallow
22. Great Tit
23. White Wagtail
24. European Starling
25. Common Wood Pigeon
26. Rock Pigeon
27. Mute Swan
28. Whooper Swan
29. Barnacle Goose
30. Mallard
31. Common Swift
32. Common Crane
33. Eurasian Goshawk
34. Eurasian Sparrowhawk
35. Osprey
36. Gray Heron
37. Black Grouse
38. Eurasian Wryneck
39. Merlin

Herps - only saw Viviparous Lizard



Barnacle Goose