

In the first half of August 2019 I spent some days in the area of Kuhmo, Finland, searching for Finnish forest reindeer (*Rangifer tarandus fennicus*). The entry on Wikipedia for these animals reads as follows: “They are distinct from the semi-domesticated mountain reindeer (*Rangifer tarandus tarandus*) in their larger size and preference for dense boreal forest habitat, where they are rarely seen by humans...”

This sums it up pretty well because in the Kuhmo area there are a number of wildlife lodges that attract bear, wolf and wolverine for you. But if you want to find a reindeer you are pretty much on your own and sightings are indeed rare. Nobody could name a promising area because they mostly seem to move around.

The advice given to me by locals and wildlife photographers was to drive through quiet parts of the forest for long distances at slow speeds in the hope of spotting one roadside. Animal spotting from cars is not my favourite activity and so I was looking for alternatives on foot. In a chance conversation one person suggested that I should visit as many patches of old-growth forest as possible and look for them there. This turned out to be a good strategy not only for the reindeer but also for other wildlife (like hazelgrouse and capercaillie). The first indication of potential reindeer presence I encountered were some droppings which looked reasonably fresh. This encouraged me to move more carefully and soon after I saw a female and her calf. They raised their tails when they saw me and produced a call which is presumably a pursuit-deterrence signal and slowly walked away. Interestingly the female soon after returned and inspected me coming closer and closer. The calf followed at a distance and when I accidentally moved a little they disappeared at a fast speed. I returned to the location several times and they seemed to be resident in the area so that I finally managed to take a few photos – admittedly quite poor and from great distance because I wanted to reduce disturbance.

Here are the coordinates if anybody is in the area:
64.112854, 30.363049



