



Honeyguide

WILDLIFE HOLIDAYS

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Estonia recce 24 June – 1 July 2015

These are our diary, wildlife lists and other notes from a recce visit to Estonia, courtesy of NaTourEst www.natourest.ee, who organise wildlife and activity holidays in Estonia. Participants were Chris Durdin and Ivan Nethercoat from Honeyguide, and our main guide was Rein Kuresoo. While we were in Estonia we also met Triin, Bert and Alf from NaTourEst.

Our recce took us from Tallinn to the large, western island of Saaremaa, then back on the mainland to parts of western Estonia in and around Matsalu National Park, and then east of Tallinn to Lahemaa National Park. The daily diary is in sections to separate these areas.

We concluded that for a Honeyguide holiday we would come earlier in June (that was no surprise – the recce dates were much influenced by other commitments). We also think that to reduce travelling time and for the best mix of birds, flowers and mammals that we should combine western Estonia with Lahemaa National Park. Therefore, the first section of this recce report, covering Saaremaa, is less relevant to the holiday planned for June 2016. It's included partly for completeness but also as Saaremaa has great charm, is botanically rich and could even be a base for a slightly different holiday, such as 'orchids of Estonia'.

Photos in this report were all taken on the recce by Ivan and Chris and there are many more on Flickr and Facebook. Above: erractic boulders on the coast at Käsmu, Lahemaa National Park. Report diary and plant list by Chris, bird notes by Ivan.

DAILY DIARY

24 June – Tallinn and travel to the west

A horribly early start but Stansted was still packed for our 06:45 Ryanair departure, arriving ahead of the official landing time of 11:35 (after a two-hour time change) on the public holiday of midsummer's day. Triin from NaTourEst met us and she took us for a very good lunch in a modern shopping mall, which was much better than it sounds.

Between one o'clock and four o'clock we were in the expert hands of Tallinn tour guide Kertu Liik, who not only gave as much (or little) information about the buildings as we needed but also insights into Estonian political, social and economic matters. Ivan glimpsed a fieldfare in a park before we walked through the old town, taking in the parliament building, two cathedrals (Russian Orthodox and Lutheran constructions), various medieval and Renaissance-style buildings alongside cobbled streets and the pretty Town Hall Square with its open-air cafés. We had time for tea, in a dry and sunny moment between showers, then to take in a superb view over the Old Town (and to note a redstart) and to walk down to the scruffy harbour area. Here there were eiders, nesting sand martins, an Arctic tern and a wheatear.

Triin was there for our four o'clock rendezvous and we headed past the airport to a garage to meet up with NaTourEst's Rein. He was joining us after a day's session with a German tour group, giving us half an hour in hand to buy water, snacks and for loos.



Town Hall Square, Tallinn

SAAREMAA ISLAND

Then it was time for the long drive west, always through countryside, mostly woodland but also meadows, some arable and wooded meadows. At seven o'clock we were able to drive straight onto the ferry that left immediately for the half-hour crossing to Muhu Island and we then stopped for a meal at the aptly-named Muhu Restaurant. Between 8:30 and 10 pm it was more travelling, including across the dam that links Muhu and Saaremaa islands, around which were many tufted ducks, apparently OK in the brackish Baltic. Woodland was a mix of continental type forest, usually with calcareous road verges – so flower-rich – and more northern-style pine. There weren't many birds, to be honest: white stork, a couple of cranes¹, plus a pine marten that ran across a quiet main road. It was light when we arrived at Loona Manor (cloudy skies apart), and is still twilight this far north as I type this at 11:30.

25 June – Sõrve peninsula

A day of many stops. First visit was to nearby Pilguse Manor, another accommodation possibility. The first wildlife halt was a meadow where Rein knew burnt-tip orchid occurs. This orchid, we gather, has an early flowering morph and a late-flowering morph. The one found was probably a late early one, given the late season, if that makes sense. There were also many adder's-tongue ferns.

Second stop was a roadside verge when we spotted pyramidal orchids as we drove, a relatively scarce plant in Estonia. These were one of several orchid species: others were Pugsley's (=narrow-leaved) marsh orchid, fragrant orchid, common spotted orchid, early marsh orchid and twayblade. More striking to the eye was wood cow-wheat *Melampyrum nemorosum*. There was a snatch of Blyth's reed warbler song, but there was a lack of bird song all day due to a combination of the time of year and being a windy day.

¹ Rein told us that September crane flocks and numbers peaked at 17,000 in the 1980s in the final years of the Soviet era. There was more arable then but combine harvesters were of mixed quality leading to dropped grain on which cranes fed. The arable area has since dropped and combines now are more efficient.

Next stop was again limestone grassland right by the sea, with Nottingham catchfly, squinancywort, basil-thyme and an orange-flowered kidney-vetch. Best of all was a patch of the unusual fern moonwort, all in a sparse, open bit of ground. Farther along there was another cow-wheat photo-stop, this time field cow-wheat *Melampyrum arvense*.

At the southern tip of the Sõrve peninsula we met two more naturalists, Bert (NaTourEst guide) and botanist Alf, who stayed with us for the rest of the day. It was ferociously windy here by the lighthouse, looking across a strait towards Kolka Cape in Latvia. There was a mixed flock of eiders and goldeneyes at sea, lots of feeding terns, gulls and cormorants and distant grey seals. Vegetation was dominated by the alien yellow crucifer warty cabbage, plus grass-leaved orache and sea kale. An unusual white umbellifer was pinned down in Alf's flora as *Libanotis montana* – later checks show this is a synonym of *Seseli libanotis*, moon carrot. Souvenir stalls had products made of the local dolomite stone and of juniper wood. It was too cold to eat here so we moved to a strange site combining a military museum and ornithological station (for ringing and migration studies) where we enjoyed a picnic that included a box of smoked flounders.

Moving north again, a difficult-to-find short track through trees took us to the edge of a fen. At the bottom of some steps was a small wooden platform with seats, with access to a small part of the edge of the fen only as it was too soggy to go farther. Nonetheless, there was a recently described marsh orchid, *Dactylorhiza (traunsteineri) russowii*, separated from Pugsley's marsh orchid by a short inflorescence, violet stem and leaves less than 1cm wide (spotted or unspotted, the former in this case). There were also birdseye primrose, sermountain *Laserpitium latifolium*, German asphodel *Tofieldia calyculata*² and, where we'd parked, mountain everlasting and common cow-wheat.



Lady's slipper; wooded meadow with lesser butterfly orchid; wood cow-wheat *Melampyrum nemorosum*

Rein was careful to play down expectations about our next stop, a mix of open woodland and wooded pasture where lady's slipper orchids occur. He'd had past experience of disappointed travellers when they had finished flowering (though perhaps optimistic marketing played a part) and we were here 3-4 weeks after the best time for the species. The wood was brilliant anyway and included lesser butterfly orchid as well as greater. However on this occasion, the season running late came to our advantage. Most of the lady's slippers were over, but many plants in shade still had blooms: some fading, a few pristine. Wow. Moving on, many photos later, the sheets of two-tone cow-wheat were just amazing and crested cow-wheat *Melampyrum cristatum* was our fourth cow-wheat of the day. There were lots of common spotted orchids, herb paris and Siberian hogweed *Heracleum (spondylium) sibiricum*³.

We had an excellent evening meal in KuKuu restaurant overlooking the castle in Kuressaare, the main town of Saaremaa, including local food in the form of Baltic sprats and Baltic herrings.

On returning to my room I removed a tick from my thigh.

26 June – Vilsandi nature reserve

There was a fieldfare on a treetop outside Loona Manor before breakfast, and a spotted flycatcher and a singing garden warbler as we were preparing to leave. We started at Tagamõisa wooded meadow, which was a little tricky to find as scrub had grown in front of its sign. A century ago, much of Saaremaa would have been meadows under standard trees, kept open by hay cutting, but many of these wooded meadows are now disappearing under tree cover, with Tagamõisa an example managed for nature conservation.

² German asphodel is the English name in Fitter, Fitter and Blamey but it's the same plant that we know better as Tofield's asphodel, as named in the Alpine Flowers guide by Grey-Wilson and Blamey. It was one of several plants that Ivan and I had also seen in the French Pyrenees earlier in June, with distribution influenced by altitude in the Pyrenees and latitude in Estonia.

³ The Swedish flora carried by Alf notes this yellow-flowered hogweed as a separate species, but it is more often considered as a subspecies. Many Honeyguiders have seen it in the Dordogne and Lot departments in France.

Three excellent plants in the adjacent woodland were May lily, lesser butterfly orchid and round-leaved wintergreen, and the meadow was the usual colourful mix, especially of yellow rattle and cow-wheat, with pale spikes of alpine bistort a surprise. There were tame black-tailed skimmers, and a wood warbler trilled as we returned to the vehicle.

We made a roadside stop next, where a ditch seemed full of early marsh orchids. On the other side there was access into a fen. The most striking flowers here were several examples of an off-white *ochroleucha* version of early marsh orchid. But the star plant for me was fen orchid: it's a subtle beauty in pale green, a short and very slim orchid, but an exciting find as it occurs near home in a couple of Norfolk fen nature reserves where its precise locations are kept quiet and access isn't normally possible. A 'lifer' for me, and in its way as exciting as lady's slipper orchid, so much so that the white-tailed eagle spotted by others dropped down the priority list.

Having collected our picnic from Loona Manor, next stop was a jetty to pick up a fast boat across the sea to Vilsandi Island nature reserve, boarding as an immature white-tailed eagle came overhead. We – and six others who had booked, including a family from Finland – were met by Andres Aumees for an orchid walk, part of the local Orchid Festival: we were there for three hours between noon and three o'clock. We quickly saw half a dozen of the 15 orchid species on the island: Baltic marsh orchid, early marsh orchid, marsh helleborine, military orchid, greater butterfly orchid and fly orchid, which as the mix of species suggests were in a mix of dry juniper scrub and wet habitats. Here and there we saw wild boar rootings where the animals had dug for orchid tubers to eat. Vilsandi's star species was the white *alba* version of early marsh orchid, much admired and photographed before it was put under a protective cage to fend off the boars. We walked to the house/museum that pays tribute to early protectors of the island's wildlife, father and step-father of Andres, and displays some sad looking stuffed birds. Elsewhere Ivan glimpsed a barred warbler, a grassy meadow had skylarks and meadow pipits, and other plants included dragon's teeth and sea wormwood. A viewpoint over the coastal edge was a chance to see Arctic terns and a few waders, namely greenshanks, redshanks, lapwing and oystercatcher, and red-breasted mergansers along with the more usual tufted ducks, gadwalls and mute swans, freshwater species we often saw on the Baltic Sea edge. A lesser whitethroat was singing, too. The return boat trip took about 12 minutes.



From the left: red helleborine, fen orchid, then three versions of early marsh orchid: typical (though variable) *Dactylorhiza incarnata*, then ssp. *alba* and ssp. *ochroleucha*

After finishing our picnic, we moved on, first making a roadside stop for red helleborines and finding black-veined white butterfly. We spent the afternoon on the adjacent peninsula of Harilaid, though still within the Vilsandi Natural Park. The main area was a windswept coastal lichen heath, with bright patches of thyme and many thousands of seedheads of eastern pasque flowers. A coastal hollow had sea pea, sea holly and *Rosa rugosa* with deep red flowers. The track led into what at first seemed like an unpromising Scots pine plantation, where a painted lady also seemed glad to have protection from the wind. The farther we walked the more botanically rich it got, including lesser twayblades, yet another new orchid for me. But it was the wintergreens that were most remarkable, no less than five species. The showiest were yellow wintergreen plants, and two small ones were not quite in flower: toothed and umbellate wintergreens. The prettiest was one-flowered wintergreen and the oddest the emerging shoots of the saprophytic yellow birdsnest. Adding in this morning's, that was six wintergreen species in one day – quite something. At the far end of the pines was a lagoon, but it was windy and almost birdless so we swiftly returned to the shelter of the pines, then back for dinner at Loona Manor.

27 June – Laidevahe coastal meadows, Muhu Island, Haapsalu and travelling east

Before breakfast at Loona, there was a group of seven cranes in a distant field and a calling cuckoo. We packed and left after breakfast, making quick stops at the village shop (where a black redstart was singing) and for another group of cranes, then onto Kaali meteorite craters, a remarkable landmark and, understandably, a tourist destination. The main crater is essentially a large bowl shape in the landscape, partly filled with water in woodland surroundings, dating from several thousand years ago (the date is disputed). We didn't see the minor, 'collateral' craters.

There was lace for sale, a stall selling dolomite and juniper souvenirs, a shop and loos where a girl collected a modest entry fee of 50 cents. A wryneck showed well if briefly on some grass by the car park. There was more arable in this part of Saaremaa and we stopped to look at cornflower and poppies in a wheat field. Art explained that the cornflower is Estonia's national flower and accounts for the blue band that forms the top third of the national flag.

An area of coastal meadows at Laidevahe nature reserve was our next stop. Here the poverty of the thin soil was shown by the stunted dropwort blooms that dominated the scene, looking towards the Baltic. A more notable flower was spiked speedwell *Veronica spicata*, a rarity in the East Anglian Brecks. Inland from this coastal meadow was wetland over which flew two white-tailed eagles, though not a great deal else on this blustery morning. Rein explained that what we saw was one of three elements he can take a group to here, with one of those a wetland where little gulls and black terns nest, though time didn't permit seeing it all today.

Heading across the dam we were back on Muhu Island and we made a second more touristy stop of the day, to the well preserved, traditional village of Koguva. Traditional Estonian buildings survived the damage of the Soviet era on account of a popular Estonian writer from here who supported the communists, at least at first. Now strict regulations govern building and renovation, and there is a village museum. There were plenty of other visitors today but still some birds around: redstart, long-tailed tits, spotted flycatcher and quick burst of thrush nightingale in song. The large speedwell *Veronica (austriaca) teucrium* grew in showy patches (not a garden escape, said our guides, but I wonder). Down at the village's quayside we had lunch of smoked perch, locally sourced and smoked on site, though it was less than a full meal and they (and their loos) couldn't have coped with a big group. Buildings here were all very swallow-friendly.

WESTERN MAINLAND

We took the ferry back to the mainland to attempt to see as much as we practically could of this area, another option for a group holiday. We started at the wooded meadow at Laelatu, probably the richest anywhere in Estonia and the subject of conservation management and intensive study. There were two students working in the first field, one of whom was cutting vegetation with scissors, more like punishment than study! The umbellifer greater burnet saxifrage *Pimpinella major* was there in dry grassland, another great rarity in East Anglia. Elsewhere here there are lady's slipper orchids, we heard, though we didn't go to see them and they would probably have finished flowering anyway.

We moved onto Haeska islets and coastal meadow in Matsalu National Park. The meadow was a vast, open expanse, leading down to reedbeds and the Baltic shore. The meadows were a rich area for waders and wildfowl despite the far from optimum time of our visit. Most striking were ruffs, several males in colourful breeding plumage. Small flocks of what ordinarily you'd think of as wintering ducks were there, mostly wigeon, some teal and shoveler – presumably a non-breeding population.



Haeska islets and coastal meadow in Matsalu National Park: 'pan' from the tower hide

By the coast a tower hide proved irresistible, and offered panoramic views over the coast and marshes. Various waders moved to and fro, most notably spotted redshanks when many birds were disturbed by a passing hobby. Three white-tailed eagles sat around. Three little gulls flew past, two of which were immatures with distinctive zigzag wing patterns. After descending from the tower we looked in briefly at the café, which looked delightful, and there is accommodation too, though not enough for a group.

Next we called in Altmõisa guesthouse, noting the boardwalk to the coast that starts opposite the accommodation's entrance. The hotel was excellent, and not surprisingly has many bookings already for spring next year. Anna kindly gave us tea and cake. We then drove to Haapsalu, a coastal resort with attractive coloured timber houses, shops, cafés and restaurants. There's also a large public lake, with an artificial island where in among the reeds there seemed to be a small colony of black-headed gulls and common terns. More astonishing were three pairs of Slavonian grebes. Slavonian grebes are thought of as a sensitive species, yet they were making floating nests a few metres off the bank despite fishermen casting among them and group of noisy children in bathing costumes splashing around on a landing stage.



Lake at Haapsalu, with fishermen casting by a Slavonian grebe on a nest

It was eight o'clock when we left for the long drive east. We stopped for a bite at the service station near Tallinn where we'd first met Rein and caught sight of an elk just east of Tallinn – we'd been searching since we'd arrived, for Ivan especially – but it melted away into the forest before Ivan could press his camera shutter. Just after eleven o'clock we reached Palmse Guest House, where a corncrake was calling.

LAHEMAA NATIONAL PARK

28 June – Lahemaa NP, and the bear hide

Breakfast at nine gave a chance to walk around the grounds, a grand country house in style. A female goldeneye had four large chicks on the higher lake and another had three tiny chicks on the lower lake. In the forest were May lily and leaves of wood anemone and wood sorrel, and big pink patches of sticky catchfly on sunny banks near the lakes. A patch of grass and low hedges had fieldfare, mistle thrush, song thrush and blackbird. At breakfast, sitting outside, a female goosander brought a brood of nine tiny chicks to the water: her second brood, said waiter Enn.



The breakfast room and lake at Palmse and one of the female goldeneyes there

The morning's walk was at Oandu Forest Trail, through open, old growth Scots pine and larch. Woodpecker holes and signs of activity were frequent, with Rein pointing out tree damage from white-backed and three-toed, plus a black woodpecker hole. Two weeks earlier the woodpeckers plus red-breasted flycatcher could be easier to track down. The star plant was twinflower, of which there were many patches, sometimes on old tree stumps. The walk took about an hour and a half, with some downs and ups, all on a well marked route with boardwalks in mixed conditions, some under repair, but all easy enough with care on occasions for some obviously rotten planks. There were a few mozzies but not having repellent wasn't a problem.

We had lunch in the Bamboo Garden Chinese Restaurant in Rakvere, which looked up to a castle and a massive statue of a bull that both had visitors on this fine Sunday. The meal was because we knew the evening's food would be more frugal, picked up from a supermarket nearby. We passed a man carrying birch twigs, for flagellation along with a sauna explained Rein, who knew about these healthy matters.

The lunchtime meal and shopping were all preparation for the coming evening and night in NaTourEst's bear hide. We'd heard that the bears were coming quite early, and it was late afternoon as we arrived in the Alutaguse forest area near Piilse village. We had a little time to kill, so pottered along the road: finds included spreading bellflower, scarlet rosefinch and a distant whinchat. At 17:05 we set off with our night-time gear – food and drink, an extra layer of clothing, indoor shoes, plus cameras and binoculars – for a brisk 20 minute walk that took us to the hide in a clearing in a forest of larch and pine. Inside, having managed to bring in only a few mozzies, we made ourselves comfortable. We didn't have long to wait: within the first 15 minutes there were two pied flycatchers, great spotted woodpecker, red squirrel and black-veined white butterfly. The evening log can tell the rest of the story:-

- 17:45 2 raccoon dogs.
- 17:55 a large female wild boar with prominent teats runs around. Raccoon dogs look nervous.
- 18:00 2 smaller wild boars.

18:05 2 smaller raccoon dogs – younger ones?
 18:08 Red squirrel returns.
 18:17 Fox.
 18:28 Vole, close to the hide, species unknown.
 18:32 Brown bear. Moves into the sunshine, Lifts wood to look for food.
 18:42 Bear melts away into the forest.
 18:48 2 turtle doves, coming to drink we think (the water is hidden from view).
 18:50 Raccoon dog walks off with a large fish in its mouth.
 20:28 Bear returns, quick walk around, goes.
 21:20 Wild boars – 10 of them, including 7 stripy piglets.
 22:20 Bear again.
 22:45 2 bears, and they came to the centre of the clearing, closer to the hide.
 23:00 Bed.

It's worth saying that we saw a lot early in the evening in good light, but of course nothing is guaranteed, despite the hidden food that brings in the mammals. It might seem that we could have left in the late evening, but the hide's management is geared to ensuring that bears and other mammals are unaware of people's presence, the key thing being the smell of humans that could cause them to desert the area.



Top: Bear hide, inside the bear hide (NaTourEst) and the view from it.
 Bottom: brown bear, wild boar and fox.



At about 23:00, Rein and I settled down to sleep in sleeping bags on a bunk (there are 10) and Ivan stayed watching until about 12:30.

29 June – Palmse Manor and Lahemaa NP

We woke around 06:00, packed up and walked back to the car. We drove back to the hotel with time for a shower before the usual nine o'clock breakfast. From the breakfast terrace the movement of dozens of locally nesting swifts included a pair using a hole in a tree within easy view of where we sat.

We had a quiet morning: Rein had a nap, and Ivan and I looked around the extensive, National Trust-style gardens and woods. It was a hot morning and damselflies of four species were on the wing, especially large numbers of beautiful demoiselles, one of which was caught by a spotted flycatcher. We looked at the beaver dam that Enn had mentioned yesterday and briefly checked out the exhibition about the distillery that had financed the manor house complex.

A corncrake called as we arrived to look at another hotel, Sagadi Manor, where we had a light lunch. The first afternoon walk was a beaver circuit at Altja, very near yesterday's walk at Oandu. Mozzies were worse by now: shorts and lack of spray were not such a good idea here. It was another well-marked, easy-to-follow trail. We saw the beaver dam and tree damage and spent a while watching wood warblers and flycatchers. There's also a coastal walk and potential lunch stop nearby that we didn't visit.

The second walk started at the pretty coastal village of Käsmu. Rein told us that the local museum provides an excellent overview of its maritime history in a most entertaining way; we didn't experience this but the experience of two guests back at Palmse bears this out.

The area is dominated, visually, by 'erratic boulders': an apt geological term to explain large lumps of granite from Sweden deposited at random by a moving ice sheet. These were in gardens, offshore and in the forest. On offshore boulders there were hooded crows, common gulls, cormorants, Arctic terns and two family parties of goosanders, the chicks here well-grown. In among them were surprisingly large numbers of ducks, mostly diving ducks – goldeneyes, tufted ducks and our first scaups – and red-breasted mergansers as well as the goosanders.

The spruce and pine forest had an excellent trail, following green and white markers, with the erratic boulders adding great charm, unlike the many mozzies. Again there were lots of twinflowers and on a boulder a patch of creeping lady's tresses, though not yet in flower. Back in the village we stopped for tea and ice cream before returning to Palmse for dinner. Ivan and I went for a walk afterwards and had a great view of a scarlet rosefinch, but no beavers showed.

30 June – Lahemaa NP

A sunny start, turning cloudy then rainy. An unproductive morning with some navigational challenges that led to a long and dull walk through a pine forest, but at least helpful for what to rule out of a holiday itinerary. Some highlights included a prolonged view of a female brilliant emerald dragonfly by where we'd parked (though it still took photo examination to confirm it) and at least two species of whiteface dragonflies. A view from a tower hide helped work out where to go to get into an extensive area of taiga, which we did after a lunch of soup or omelette at 'Sportsland'.

The taiga walk started promisingly in Viru bog along a two plank-width boardwalk, though it means walking in single file. Taiga is a type of northern bog, usually (as here) with scattered trees and open pools favoured by breeding waders. Plants here – typical of taiga – were cloudberry, bog rosemary, Labrador tea and dwarf birch. Our destination was going to be another tower hide, which was in sight, but the heavens opened and retreating was the best option.

The rain stopped but we were still dripping wet for a brief visit to a river with a weir and rapids – Nõmmeveski waterfall on Valgejõgi River to be precise, though waterfall rather overstates it – where kingfishers dashed over faster bits and a green sandpiper perched on a branch over a stiller area. Perennial honesty was a notable flower, plus touch-me-not balsam.

We returned to Palmse Guesthouse for dry clothes and ate at Lahemaa Kohvikann restaurant a very short distance along the road. The weather had cleared up by the time we'd eaten and discussed itineraries, so Ivan and I walked back – just ten minutes, including time to listen to corncrakes.



Viru bog

1 July – Tallinn and home

We had breakfast at 8:30, left at 9 and arrived at the airport at 10:15. There we met Bert and went through the conclusions about a future Honeyguide holiday agreed with Rein on the previous evening. At departures it struck us that this is one of the nicest airports we fly from, though we weren't there long as the flight left at noon and was on time for its return home into the UK's heatwave.



May lily; wheatear; one-flowered wintergreen; twinflowers

WILDLIFE LISTS

BIRDS	
Great crested grebe	Several sightings on the coast and at Vilsandi National Park.
Red-necked grebe	Lake on Saaremaa
Slavonian grebe	At least three nesting pairs on the town lake at Haapsalu, very close to shore.
Cormorant	Frequent at sea
Great white egret	10+ from tower hide at Haeska Coastal meadows, Matsalu
Grey heron	Occasional on Saaremaa and Matsalu
White stork	Regular in fields and on roadsides in the eastern part of the mainland
Mute swan	Many, 100+ at Matsalu
Greylag goose	On the coastal peninsula at Saaremaa and Vilsandi
Barnacle goose	Haeska coastal meadows, Matsalu. There are both feral and natural populations in Estonia, with the populations merging.
Shelduck	Vilsandi
Wigeon	Several late stayers at Haeska Coastal meadows, Matsalu
Gadwall	Haeska coastal meadows, Matsalu
Teal	Haeska coastal meadows, Matsalu
Mallard	Small numbers at most wetland sites
Shoveler	Haeska coastal meadows, Matsalu
Tufted duck	Frequent on the less salty Baltic sea
Scaup	At sea with tufted ducks, Käsnu
Eider	At sea from Tallinn and the north east coast
Long-tailed duck	Flock of c 20 at Vilsandi National Park dunes, one on rocks at Saaremaa ferry terminal
Velvet scoter	1 seen briefly at Vilsandi
Goldeneye	At sea and with young at Palmse
Red-breasted merganser	Vilsandi and Käsnu
Goosander	At sea and with young at Palmse and coastal Lahemaa NP
Honey buzzard	Singles throughout the week on Saaremaa and mainland
White-tailed eagle	3 at Laidevahe on Saaremaa and 3 on Haeska Coastal meadows, Matsalu
Marsh harrier	Occasional fly-overs on Saaremaa and one at Laelatu meadows
Sparrowhawk	Recorded once
Buzzard	Seen occasionally, fewer than normal due to bad weather apparently.
Kestrel	1 near Palmse
Hobby	1 on Saaremaa peninsula and 1 at Haeska coastal meadow, Matsalu
Corncrake	Calling at Loona manor and in any suitable meadow in the northeast, especially in fields at Palmse
Coot	Matsalu
Crane	Frequent family parties in fields on Saaremaa, flocks calling early morning. Occasional birds on mainland
Oystercatcher	Saaremaa peninsula
Ringed plover	Lagoons and dunes Vilsandi National Park
Lapwing	Frequent with small flocks over fields on Saaremaa
Dunlin	Laidevahe, Saaremaa
Black-tailed godwit	Haeska coastal meadow
Ruff	Many, with males in fine breeding plumage at Haeska coastal meadows
Common sandpiper	One on the lake at Palmse
Green sandpiper	1 looking very dapper in tree by 'waterfall' river in Lahemaa NP
Spotted redshank	2 black plumaged males flew past tower hide at Haeska coastal meadows, Matsalu
Greenshank	3 on Vilsandi, occasional elsewhere
Wood sandpiper	Laidevahe, Saaremaa
Redshank	Vilsandi
Black-headed gull	Frequent with nesting colonies on Vilsandi and Saaremaa and Matsalu
Little gull	Several from tower hide at Haeska Coastal meadows, Matsalu
Common gull	Frequent, especially on mainland
Lesser black-backed gull	Occasional from Saaremaa, one of Baltic type (<i>fuscus</i>).
Herring gull	Frequent
Caspian tern	1 at Laidevahe, Saaremaa
Sandwich tern	1 on Saaremaa
Common tern	Over castle moat at Kuressaare on Saaremaa and Haapsalu town lake.
Arctic tern	Tallinn, colonies off Saaremaa peninsula especially Vilsandi, pair nesting on an erratic boulder at Käsnu.
Stock dove	Woodland trail in NE
Woodpigeon	Singles throughout the week
Turtle dove	A pair came to drink in front of the bear hide
Collared dove	Loona manor only
Cuckoo	Especially frequent in the NE and calling until early morning in woodland near bear hide
Swift	Frequent. At Palmse, nesting in eaves of buildings but also in woodpecker holes in trees.
Kingfisher	2 sightings, one at 'dragonfly bridge' and one at 'waterfalls'.

Wryneck (Green woodpecker)	On the cut grass from the car park at Kaali and outside the guesthouse at Palmse One possibly heard in pines on the dunes in Vilsandi National park. Not a common bird.
Black woodpecker (White-backed woodpecker)	Frequent evidence and heard on woodland bog walk in NE. Also seen on the webcam while we were in the hide! Tree damage evidence.
Great spotted woodpecker (Three-toed woodpecker)	Frequent. Active in front of bear hide. Lots of bark-stripping evidence
Woodlark Skylark	On felled area on route to woodland bog walk Saaremaa
Sand martin Barn swallow	Frequent. Nesting in low sand bank at the port in Tallinn Frequent
House martin Tree pipit	Frequent, nesting at Palmse With young at Laelatu wooded meadow
Meadow pipit White wagtail	Vilsandi Island, Saaremaa Frequent
Wren Dunnock	Heard occasionally on the mainland in woodland Singing at Palmse
Robin Thrush nightingale	Heard occasionally on the mainland in woodland Heard at Koguva village
Black redstart Redstart	Heard nr Loona Manor, Saaremaa In Tallinn and at Käsmu
Whinchat Wheatear	Vilsandi and road near bear hide Frequent, nesting in gardens at Loona and seemingly on most walls across Estonia
Blackbird Fieldfare	Frequent Our first bird in Tallinn, adult with food in city park and seen across the country
Song thrush Mistle thrush	Seen occasionally, Palmse especially Seen occasionally
Blyth's reed warbler Reed warbler	Heard several times on Saaremaa and mainland Heard on Saaremaa
Icterine warbler Barred warbler	Singing on Saaremaa Vilsandi Island, with red-backed shrike. The two species often associate with each other. Hard to see in late June.
Lesser whitethroat Whitethroat	Vilsandi island and heard at Palmse Several throughout the week
Garden warbler Blackcap	Loona manor and in woodland in the NE Frequent
Wood warbler Chiffchaff	Frequent in the woodlands of the NE Heard fairly frequently all week
Willow warbler Goldcrest	Heard in woodland areas occasionally In the Oundu forest in the NE
Spotted flycatcher Red-breasted flycatcher	Many at Palmse, also seen at Koguva Heard several times in NE woodland
Pied flycatcher Long-tailed tit	3 outside bear hide, pair at Lahme beaver trail Koguva and Lahemaa, the northern race with all white heads
Crested tit Blue tit	Heard Recorded only at Palmse
Great tit Nuthatch	Regular On feeder in bear hide wood
Treecreeper Golden oriole	Heard by Rein at Kaali Heard in bear hide wood
Red-backed shrike Jay	Frequent by roadside in NE, also on Vilsandi Island with barred warbler In the forest areas
Magpie Jackdaw	Widespread Tallinn and elsewhere
Hooded crow Raven	Everywhere Regular fly-overs
Starling House sparrow	Many small post-breeding flocks, especially on Saaremaa Occasional
Tree sparrow Chaffinch	Fairly frequent Everywhere!
Greenfinch Goldfinch	Frequent in parks/gardens Frequent in parks/gardens
Siskin Linnet	Frequent in parks/gardens Frequent
Serin Crossbill	Loona only Heard by Rein at Loona
Scarlet rosefinch Bullfinch	Singing and seen at Palmse, heard in several other areas. Saaremaa
Hawfinch Yellowhammer	Military museum, Saaremaa Fairly frequent on Saaremaa
Reed bunting	Saaremaa

Butterflies

Black-veined white
 Brimstone
 Red admiral
 Painted lady
 Heath fritillary (probably)
 Common blue
 Speckled wood
 Small heath
 Ringlet

Odonata

Brilliant Emerald
 White-faced Darter (Small Whiteface)
 Eastern White-faced Darter (Dark Whiteface)
 Black-tailed Skimmer
 Four-spotted Chaser
 Broad-bodied Chaser
 Beautiful Demoiselle
 Common Blue Damselfly
 Azure Damselfly
 Large Red Damselfly

Other notable invertebrates

Rose chafer
 Hummingbird hawk-moth
 Broad-bordered bee hawk-moth
 Hornet

Reptiles and amphibians

Common frog
 Toad (tadpoles)
 Common lizard

Mammals

Grey seal
 Elk
 Roe deer
 Brown bear
 Fox
 Raccoon dog
 Pine marten
 Red squirrel

PLANTS

Names are mostly taken from *The Wild Flowers of Britain and Northern Europe*
 by R. Fitter, A. Fitter and M. Blamey.

NiF = not in flower

Trees and shrubs

Norway spruce	<i>Picea abies</i>
Scots pine	<i>Pinus sylvestris</i>
Juniper	<i>Juniperus communis</i>
Sallow	<i>Salix</i> sp.
Alder	<i>Alnus glutinosus</i>
Silver birch	<i>Betula pendula</i>
Dwarf birch	<i>Betula nana</i>
Hazel	<i>Corylus avellana</i>
Pedunculate oak	<i>Quercus robur</i>
Norway maple	<i>Acer platanoides</i>
Aspen	<i>Populus tremula</i>
Horse chestnut	<i>Aesculus hippocastanum</i>
Rowan	<i>Sorbus aucuparia</i>
Spindle	<i>Euonymus europaeus</i>

Ferns, Grasses and Sedges

Wall-rue	<i>Asplenium ruta-muraria</i>
Adderstongue fern	<i>Ophioglossum vulgatum</i>
Moonwort	<i>Botrychium lunaria</i>
Male fern	<i>Dryopteris filix-mas</i>
Bracken	<i>Pteridium aquilinum</i>
Common reed	<i>Phragmites australis</i>
Brown bog-rush	<i>Schoenus ferrugineus</i>
Black bog-rush	<i>Schoenus nigricans</i>

Horsetails – Equisetaceae

Water horsetail	<i>Equisetum fluviatile</i>
Field horsetail	<i>Equisetum arvense</i>

Wild flowers**Dock family – Polygonaceae**

Alpine bistort	<i>Polygonum viviparum</i>
Common sorrel	<i>Rumex acetosa</i>
Heath sorrel	<i>Rumex acetosella</i>

Goosefoot family – Chenopodiaceae

Grass-leaved orache	<i>Atriplex littoralis</i>
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Pink family – Caryophyllaceae

Thyme-leaved sandwort	<i>Arenaria serpyllifolia</i>
Maiden pink	<i>Dianthus deltoides</i>
Ragged robin	<i>Lychnis flos-cuculi</i>
Sticky catchfly	<i>Lychnis viscaria</i>
Water chickweed	<i>Myosoton aquaticum</i>
White campion	<i>Silene alba</i>
Red campion	<i>Silene dioica</i>
Nottingham catchfly	<i>Silene nutans</i>

	Water lily family– Nymphaeaceae	
Yellow water lily		<i>Nuphar lutea</i>
	Buttercup family – Ranunculaceae	
Globeflower		<i>Trollius europaeus</i> NiF
Marsh marigold		<i>Caltha palustris</i> NiF
Meadow buttercup		<i>Ranunculus acris</i>
Bulbous buttercup		<i>Ranunculus bulbosus</i>
Creeping buttercup		<i>Ranunculus repens</i>
Wood anemone		<i>Anemone nemorosa</i> NiF
Eastern pasque flower		<i>Pulsatilla patens</i> seedheads
Hepatica		<i>Hepatica nobilis</i> leaves
Common meadow-rue		<i>Thalictrum flavum</i>
	Poppy family – Papaveraceae	
Common poppy		<i>Papaver rhoeas</i>
Greater celandine		<i>Chelidonium majus</i>
	Nettle family – Urticaceae	
Common nettle		<i>Urtica dioica</i>
	Cabbage family – Cruciferae	
Hoary alison		<i>Berteroa incana</i>
Sea kale		<i>Crambe maritima</i>
Warty cabbage		<i>Bunias orientalis</i>
Hoary cress		<i>Cardaria draba</i>
Early (or intermediate) wintercress		<i>Barbarea intermedia</i>
Coralroot bittercress		<i>Cardamine bulbifera</i>
Shepherd's purse		<i>Capsella bursa-pastoris</i>
	Stonecrop family – Crassulaceae	
Biting stonecrop		<i>Sedum acre</i>
White stonecrop		<i>Sedum alba</i>
	Rose family – Rosaceae	
Meadowsweet		<i>Filipendula ulmaria</i>
Dropwort		<i>Filipendula vulgaris</i>
Lady's mantle		<i>Alchemilla vulgaris</i>
Silverweed		<i>Potentilla anserina</i>
Tormentil		<i>Potentilla erecta</i>
Hoary cinquefoil		<i>Potentilla argentea</i>
Wild strawberry		<i>Fragaria viridis</i>
Water avens		<i>Geum rivale</i>
Wood avens		<i>Geum urbanum</i>
Hawthorn		<i>Crataegus monogyna</i>
Dog rose		<i>Rosa canina</i>
'Wrinkled' rose		<i>Rosa rugosa</i>
Cloudberry		<i>Rubus chaemorus</i>
Bramble		<i>Rubus fruticosus</i> agg.
	Pea family – Leguminosae/Fabaceae	
Kidney vetch		<i>Anthyllis vulneraria</i> + ssp. <i>coccinea</i>
Goat's rue		<i>Galega officinalis</i>
Spring vetch		<i>Lathyrus vernus</i> NiF
Meadow vetchling		<i>Lathyrus pratensis</i>
Tufted vetch		<i>Vicia cracca</i>
Bush vetch		<i>Vicia sepium</i>
Smooth tare		<i>Vicia tetraspermum</i>
Wood vetch		<i>Vicia sylvatica</i>
Birdsfoot trefoil		<i>Lotus corniculatus</i>
Black medick		<i>Medicago lupulina</i>
Lucerne (yellow subsp)		<i>Medicago sativa falcate</i>
White melilot		<i>Melilotus albus</i>
Dragon's teeth		<i>Tetragonobulus maritimus</i>
Red clover		<i>Trifolium pratense</i>
White clover		<i>Trifolium repens</i>
Hop trefoil		<i>Trifolium campestre</i>
Large hop trefoil		<i>Trifolium aurum</i>
Haresfoot clover		<i>Trifolium arvense</i>
	Wood-sorrel family – Oxalidaceae	
Wood-sorrel		<i>Oxalis acetosella</i> NiF
	Spurge family – Euphorbiaceae	
Dog's mercury		<i>Mercurialis perennis</i> NiF
	Flax family – Linaceae	
Purging flax		<i>Linum catharticum</i>
	Geranium family – Geraniaceae	
Wood cranesbill		<i>Geranium sylvaticum</i>
Bloody cranesbill		<i>Geranium sanguineum</i>
Herb Robert		<i>Geranium robertianum</i>
Small-flowered cranesbill		<i>Geranium pusillum</i>

Touch-me-not balsam	Balsam family – Balsaminaceae <i>Impatiens noli-tangere</i>
Bitter milkwort	Milkwort family – Polygalaceae <i>Polygala amara</i>
Mezereon	Daphne family – Thymelaeaceae <i>Daphne mezereum</i> in fruit
Gooseberry	Currant family – Grossulariaceae <i>Ribes uva-crispa</i>
Buckthorn	Buckthorn family – Rhamnaceae <i>Rhamnus catharticus</i>
Field pansy	Violet family – Violaceae <i>Viola mirabilis</i> NiF <i>Viola arvensis</i>
Common rock-rose	Rock-rose family – Cistaceae <i>Helianthemum nummularium</i>
Rosebay willowherb	Willowherb family – Onagraceae <i>Epilobium angustifolium</i>
Cow parsley	Carrot family – Apiaceae /Umbelliferae <i>Anthriscus sylvestris</i>
Ground elder	<i>Aegopodium podagraria</i>
Sanicle	<i>Sanicula europea</i>
Greater burnet saxifrage	<i>Pimpinella major</i>
'Siberian' hogweed	<i>Heracleum (spondylium) sibiricum</i>
Angelica	<i>Angelica sylvestris</i>
Milk parsley	<i>Peucedanum palustre</i> NiF
Moon carrot	<i>Libanotis montana (Sesili libanotis)</i>
Masterwort	<i>Laserpitium latifolium</i>
One-flowered wintergreen	Wintergreen family – Pyrolaceae <i>Moneses uniflora</i>
Toothed wintergreen	<i>Orthilia secunda</i>
Round-leaved wintergreen	<i>Pyrola rotundifolia</i>
Yellow wintergreen	<i>Pyrola chlorantha</i>
Umbellate wintergreen	<i>Chimaphila umbellata</i>
Yellow birdsnest	<i>Monotropa hypopitys</i> NiF
Heather (ling)	Heath family – Ericaceae <i>Calluna vulgaris</i> NiF
Bog rosemary	<i>Andromeda posifolia</i>
Bilberry	<i>Vaccinium myrtillus</i>
Bog whortleberry (northern bilberry)	<i>Vaccinium uliginosum</i>
Labrador tea	<i>Ledum palustre</i>
Cowslip	Primrose family – Primulaceae <i>Primula veris</i> NiF
Birdseye primrose	<i>Primula farinosa</i>
Bogbean	Bogbean family – Menyanthaceae <i>Menyanthes trifoliata</i> NiF
Squinancywort	Bedstraw family – Rubiaceae <i>Asperula cynanchica</i>
Hedge bedstraw	<i>Galium aparine</i>
Lady's bedstraw	<i>Galium verum</i>
Northern bedstraw	<i>Galium boreale</i>
Forget-me-not sp.	Borage family – Boraginaceae <i>Myosotis</i> sp.
Purple gromwell	<i>Lithospermum purpureocaeruleum</i>
Self-heal	Labiata family – Lamiaceae/Labiataeae <i>Prunella vulgaris</i>
Basil-thyme	<i>Acinos arvensis</i>
Thyme	<i>Thymus</i> sp.
Spear-leaved skullcap	<i>Scutellaria hastifolia</i>
Skullcap	<i>Scutellaria galericulata</i>
Germander speedwell	Figwort family – Scrophulariaceae <i>Veronica chamaedrys</i>
Wall speedwell	<i>Veronica arvensis</i>
Thyme-leaved speedwell	<i>Veronica serpyllifolia</i>
Spiked speedwell	<i>Veronica spicata</i>
Large speedwell	<i>Veronica (austriaca) teucrium</i>
Ivy-leaved toadflax	<i>Cymbalaria muralis</i>
Common figwort	<i>Scrophularia nodosa</i>
Yellow rattle	<i>Rhinanthus minor</i>
Common cow-wheat	<i>Melampyrum pratense</i>
Small cow-wheat	<i>Melampyrum sylvaticum</i>
Wood cow-wheat	<i>Melampyrum nemorosum</i>
Crested cow-wheat	<i>Melampyrum cristatum</i>
Field cow-wheat	<i>Melampyrum arvense</i>

	Butterwort family – Lentibulariaceae	
Butterwort sp., probably common	<i>Pinguicula vulgaris?</i>	NiF
	Plantain family – Plantaginaceae	
Sea plantain	<i>Plantago maritima</i>	
	Valerian family – Valerianaceae	
Common valerian	<i>Valeriana officinalis</i>	
	Honeysuckle family – Caprifoliaceae	
Twinflower	<i>Linnaea borealis</i>	
Fly honeysuckle	<i>Lonicera xylosteum</i>	
Guelder rose	<i>Viburnum opulus</i>	
	Teasel family – Dipsacaceae	
Field scabious	<i>Knautia arvensis</i>	
	Bellflower family – Campanulaceae	
Clustered bellflower	<i>Campanula glomerata</i>	
Spreading bellflower	<i>Campanula patula</i>	
Harebell	<i>Campanula rotundifolia</i>	
	Daisy family – Compositae	
Mountain everlasting	<i>Antennaria dioica</i>	
Daisy	<i>Bellis perennis</i>	
Yarrow	<i>Achillea millefolium</i>	
Sea wormwood	<i>Artemisia maritima</i>	
Hemp agrimony	<i>Eupatorium cannabinum</i>	
Ox-eye daisy	<i>Leucanthemum vulgare</i>	
Cornflower	<i>Centaurea cyanus</i>	
Cabbage thistle	<i>Cirsium oleraceum</i>	
Marsh thistle	<i>Cirsium palustre</i>	
Melancholy thistle	<i>Cirsium dissectum</i>	
Goatsbeard	<i>Tragopogon pratensis</i>	
Mouse-ear hawkweed	<i>Hieracium pilosella</i>	
	Lily family – Liliaceae	
Lily of the valley	<i>Convallaria majalis</i>	
May lily	<i>Maianthemum bifolium</i>	
German (=Tofield's) asphodel	<i>Tofieldia calyculata</i>	
Angular Solomon's seal	<i>Polygonatum angulatum</i>	
Herb paris	<i>Paris quadrifolia</i>	NiF
Sand leek	<i>Allium scorodoprasum</i>	
	Arum family – Araceae	
Bog arum	<i>Calla palustris</i>	
	Iris family – Iridaceae	
Yellow flag	<i>Iris pseudacorus</i>	
	Orchid family – Orchidaceae	
Lady's slipper	<i>Cypripedium calceolus</i>	
Fly orchid	<i>Ophrys insectifera</i>	
Military orchid	<i>Orchis militaris</i>	
Burnt-tip orchid	<i>Orchis ustulata</i>	
Pyramidal orchid	<i>Anacamptis pyramidalis</i>	
Early marsh orchid	<i>Dactylorhiza incarnata</i>	
	<i>Dactylorhiza incarnata</i> ssp. <i>ochroleuca</i>	
	<i>Dactylorhiza incarnata</i> ssp. <i>alba</i>	
	<i>Dactylorhiza traunsteineri</i>	
	<i>Dactylorhiza (traunsteineri) russowii</i>	
	<i>Dactylorhiza baltica</i>	
	<i>Dactylorhiza fuchsia</i>	
	<i>Gymnadenia conopsea</i>	
	<i>Listera cordata</i>	
	<i>Listera ovata</i>	
	<i>Platanthera chlorantha</i>	
	<i>Platanthera bifolia</i>	
	<i>Cephalanthera rubra</i>	
	<i>Goodyera repens</i> in bud	
	<i>Epipactis palustris</i> in bud	
	<i>Epipactis atrorubens</i> in bud	
	<i>Epipactis helleborine</i> NiF	
	<i>Neottia nidus-avis</i>	
	<i>Liparis loeselii</i>	
Pugsley's (=narrow-leaved) orchid		
Baltic marsh orchid		
Common spotted orchid		
Fragrant orchid		
Lesser twayblade		
Common twayblade		
Greater butterfly orchid		
Lesser butterfly orchid		
Red helleborine		
Creeping lady's tresses		
Marsh helleborine		
Dark red helleborine		
Broad-leaved helleborine		
Birdsnest orchid		
Fen orchid		