

**LATVIA**  
**24-30 APRIL 2014**  
**David Collins**

Staying at Usi guest house Kolka - at northern end of the Kolka Peninsula  
With Howard Taffs and Richard Hunt.

**Birds – 144 species**

Mute Swan - Small numbers

Whooper Swan - 1 lingering bird in pasture near Purciems on 25<sup>th</sup>.

White-fronted Goose - Great views of around 500 close to the eastern shore of Lake Engure on 26<sup>th</sup>. Flying low over us in small groups and feeding in the marshy field.

Bean Goose - A flock of 10 'tundra' subspecies in a field near Lake Engure and one 'taiga' subspecies with the White-fronted Geese. 7 of one or other race passing north off Kolka on 26<sup>th</sup>.

Greylag - Small numbers at Lake Engure

Barnacle Goose - At least 50 at Lake Engure and small flocks north past Kolka.

Shelduck - Pairs along the coast.

Mallard - Small numbers except at Lake Engure.

Shoveler - Small flocks passing north at sea at Kolka on 28<sup>th</sup>.

Teal - Small flocks passing offshore at Kolka on several dates.

Pochard - Lake Engure.

Scaup - Small numbers on sea off Kolka on several dates.

Tufted Duck - Lake Enguras and offshore at Kolka.

Eider - Single male south off Kolka on 28<sup>th</sup>.

Common Scoter - Small numbers on sea at Kolka.

Velvet Scoter - 10 flying past Kolka on 26<sup>th</sup>.

Long-tailed Duck - Hundreds on sea off Kolka throughout – display calls could be heard from the house from dawn to dusk. Good views of a small group in the harbour at Roja.

Goldeneye - Small numbers on the sea.

Goosander - Small numbers passing Kolka.

Red-breasted Merganser - Small numbers off Kolka, but more numerous than Goosander.

Capercaillie - Female flushed from roadside in forest near Melnsils one evening, and really close views of a fine male on roadside in forest south of Mazirbe early morning on 29<sup>th</sup>.

Black Grouse - Calls from a lek heard early morning at our favorite forest track west of Melnsils on 27<sup>th</sup>, when we also saw a greyhen on the track. Females flushed from the track in the same area on two separate occasions.

Hazelhen - One seen flying almost vertically up into a tree in the same area of spruce/birch forest where the greyhens were seen. Tail with two thin dark bands and a thick dark outer band, wings finely barred underneath.

Red-throated Diver - A few seen offshore at Kolka

Black-throated Diver - Dozens in full summer plumage flying offshore at Kolka, and a couple of times flying right over the guest house!

Great Crested Grebe - Lake Engure and more or less the only bird on some of the smaller inland lakes.

Red-necked Grebe - One seen in distance at Lake Engure.

Cormorant - Good numbers.

Bittern - Several booming from the 'endless' reedbeds on the eastern shore of Lake Engure.

Great White Heron - Surprisingly numerous. Several on the shore at Mersrags and at Lake Engure. Two flying south past Kolka point on 26<sup>th</sup>.

Grey Heron - Small numbers only.

White Stork - Nests in most villages and also small numbers passing north.

Black Stork - One seen well from the tower at Kolka on 28<sup>th</sup>. Flew in from south but then turned round and flew back the way it had come.

White-tailed Eagle - Seen every day. Impressive close views of several birds from the tower at Kolka, both adult and younger birds.

Osprey - One north over forest on 25<sup>th</sup>. Three north in about 10 minutes at the Kolka tower around mid-morning on 28<sup>th</sup>. No hesitation in flying out over sea.

Golden Eagle - Adult seen briefly over the guest house on 27<sup>th</sup> and one flushed from a drinking pool along a lonely forest track in the western part of the Sliteres National Park later the same day. How amazing!

Lesser Spotted Eagle - At least one seen most days over various parts of the forest, including from the guest house. One perched in a tree near Melnsils on the first day.

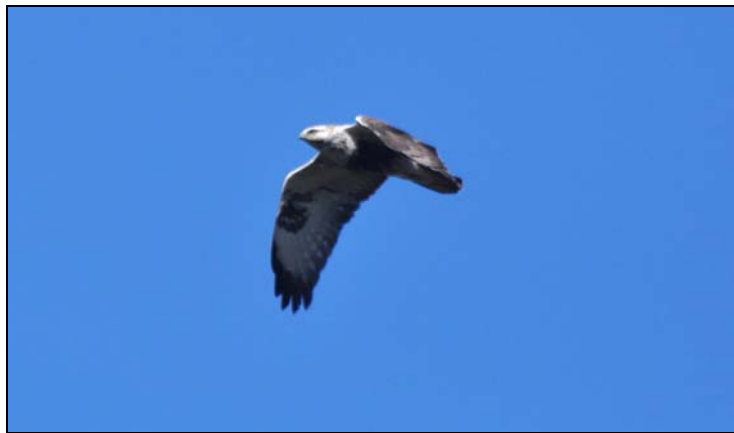
Black Kite - One from the Kolka tower on 26<sup>th</sup>.

Marsh Harrier - Small numbers north over Kolka.

Hen Harrier - Small numbers north over Kolka.

Buzzard - Groups of anything up to 20 were seen flying north each day. They often flew back south rather than crossing. They appeared to be Scandinavian birds and were not Steppe Buzzards. Several very white ones. A few Steppe Buzzards were seen in the forest itself.

Rough-legged Buzzard - Two from tower hide at Kolka on 25<sup>th</sup> and another on 28<sup>th</sup>.



Sparrowhawk - Small numbers of birds passing north each day, heading confidently out to sea.

Goshawk - One north past our guest house at Kolka on 27<sup>th</sup>.

Kestrel - Small numbers only.

Hobby - One over the guest house on 27<sup>th</sup>.

Merlin - One over the village on 24<sup>th</sup>.

Coot - Lake Engure.

Crane - Both breeding pairs and migrants. Flocks of up to 30 flying north each day.



Oystercatcher - A few seen along shores.

Little Ringed Plover - One at Roja harbour area.

Lapwing - Small numbers in fields around Lake Engure etc.

Green Sandpiper - Pairs seen in a few places in the forests. Display song in forest near Kolka at dusk.

Common Sandpiper - A few.

Spotted Redshank - One at Roja harbour on 25<sup>th</sup>.

Greenshank - 7 on beach at Kolka.

Curlew - Small numbers flying north offshore.

Whimbrel - One north past Kolka on 25<sup>th</sup>.

Woodcock - Several roding birds in forest near Melnsils etc.

Snipe - One drumming over forest clearing near Melnsils.

Ruff - Several at Lake Engure.

Black-headed Gull - Seen at several lakes.

Common Gull - A few north over Kolka.

Herring Gull - Common. These birds are slightly darker on the wings and back than ours and are of the subspecies *L.a. argentatus*.

Greater Black-back - Small numbers in various places along the coast.

Little Gull - At least 30 passing Kolka peninsula on 28<sup>th</sup>. Mostly adults.

Sandwich Tern - A few at Roja harbour.

Common/Arctic Tern - Several pairs of Common Terns at Roja harbour. Birds passing Kolka perhaps both species.

Feral Pigeon - A few.

Stock Dove - A few.

Woodpigeon - Hundreds passing north in large flocks every day.

Collared Dove - One pair in Kolka village.

Cuckoo - First birds heard on 26<sup>th</sup>.

Long-eared Owl - One flushed from roost in trees at the guest house at Kolka on 28<sup>th</sup>.

Tawny Owl - One heard in forest near Melnsils.

Hoopoe - One elusive bird around Kolka village from 26<sup>th</sup>.

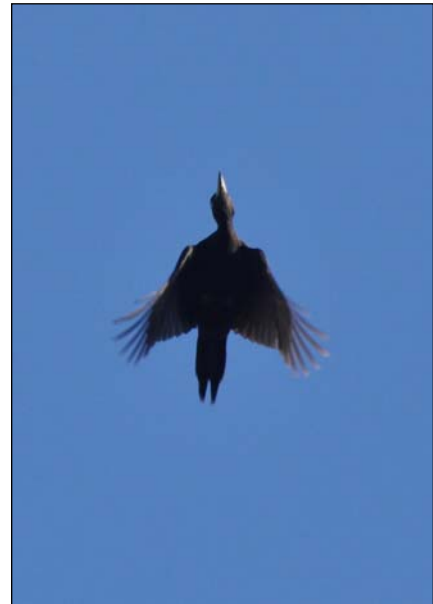
Black Woodpecker (*right*) - Several heard early morning in forests near Melnsils. Responded to tape.

Great Spotted Woodpecker - Drumming in various places in the forest.

Middle Spotted Woodpecker - Male seen very well in parkland near hotel in Riga. 'Song' a bit like Lesser Spotted but notes throbbing and a bit like young Sparrowhawk in quality.

Lesser Spotted Woodpecker - Pair seen really well in forest near Melnsils.

Wryneck - One feeding on the ground close to the car at Mazirbe on 27<sup>th</sup>.



Skylark - Areas with open fields but also a few around guest house at Kolka.

Woodlark - Pair at Kolka guest house and seen/heard in various other places.

Sand Martin - Two from the tower at Kolka on 26<sup>th</sup>.

Swallow - One north at Kolka on 25<sup>th</sup>, then increasingly numerous.

House Martin - Pair arrived at Kolka on 26<sup>th</sup>. Then small numbers of migrants each day.

Meadow Pipit - Small numbers at Kolka only.

Tree Pipit - Good numbers of migrants, including small flock in field at guest house on 25<sup>th</sup>.

White Wagtail - Small numbers seen various places. Up to 8 in the garden at Kolka.

Yellow Wagtail - Three males at the guest house at Kolka on 27<sup>th</sup> included a Grey-headed (Scandinavian) bird (*M.f.thunbergi*) and two Blue-headed. The following day there were also three, but this time all were *thunbergi*.

Waxwing - About 40 in two flocks at Kolka on 25<sup>th</sup>, smaller number on 26<sup>th</sup> and a few on 28<sup>th</sup>. All passed through quickly after brief stop.

Dunnock - A few heard/seen in forests.

Robin - Fairly common.

Redstart - Male at guest house near Kolka throughout.

Black Redstart - At least two pairs in Kolka village, including at ruin opposite entrance to guest house. Some song heard.

Wheatear - Small numbers in fields.

Whinchat - Small numbers, including fine male at guest house.

Song Thrush - Small numbers in forest. Also some migrants.

Redwing - Small flocks of migrants over Kolka.

Mistle Thrush - Surprisingly common. Seen in all open areas within forest.

Fieldfare - Small flocks of migrants at Kolka. Breeding in parkland in Riga.

Blackbird - Fairly common.

Ring Ouzel - Female on the lawn at Kolka guest house on 25<sup>th</sup>. An uncommon bird in Latvia.

Blackcap - First heard on 26<sup>th</sup>. A few thereafter.

Lesser Whitethroat - First heard on 26<sup>th</sup> near Lake Engura. One in bushes at Kolka on 27<sup>th</sup> had gone next day.

Savi's Warbler - One singing in reeds at Lake Engura.

Willow Warbler - One singing in Kolka on 26<sup>th</sup>. Increasingly numerous thereafter.

Chiffchaff - Common in forest.

Wood Warbler - Singing at Lake Engura on 26<sup>th</sup>. Lots in the parkland at Riga.

Goldcrest - Scarce in forest.

Wren - Common.

Great Tit - Common.

Coal Tit - Surprisingly scarce in the forest.

Blue Tit - Scarce in the forest.

Crested Tit - Pair in forest at Kolka. A few others heard, but not common.

Marsh Tit - Fairly common in the forest, at Kolka etc.

Willow Tit - One of the commonest birds in the forest.

Long-tailed Tit - Pair of white-headed northern form in forest near Melnsils.

Penduline Tit - Pair building a nest in a birch tree next to the tower hide at Lake Engure.

Treecreeper - Scarce in forest, also at Lake Engure and in mature deciduous woods at Mazirbe.

Magpie - In farmland but not in forest.

Jay - A few seen/heard.

Jackdaw - Small numbers, including a confiding 'nordic' bird of subspecies *C. monedula soemmerringii* at Mersrags on 24<sup>th</sup>, with prominent white collar.



Rook - Small numbers of migrants.

Hooded Crow - Common.

Carrion Crow - Two birds near Melnsils on recently ploughed land.

Raven - Fairly common.

Starling - Fairly small numbers.

House Sparrow - Around the village etc.

Tree Sparrow - Several, including in Kolka.

Chaffinch - Large numbers of diurnal migrants on 25<sup>th</sup> and 26<sup>th</sup>, when many hundreds passing north. Smaller numbers thereafter.

Brambling - Large numbers flying north with Chaffinches.

Linnet - A few pairs in forest clearings and small numbers migrating through Kolka.

Common Redpoll - Small numbers of migrants passing through Kolka.

Goldfinch - Small numbers only

Greenfinch - Small numbers.

Siskin - Large numbers migrating through Kolka.

Serin - Male singing at Kolka on 27<sup>th</sup>.

Bullfinch - Northern race seen/heard several times.

Hawfinch - One or two over the garden at Usi each morning. Male singing in full view in trees by the Lutheran church. Family feeding young and several others seen/heard in the park in Riga.

Crossbill - Parties of birds seen over guest house at Kolka perhaps migrants. Small numbers also encountered in forest.

Parrot Crossbill - Close views of a very orange male feeding a rather steaky female in forest near Melnsils on 25<sup>th</sup>.



Reed Bunting - Singing at Lake Engure.

Yellowhammer - Not uncommon in areas of farmland. Seen at Kolka.

## **Mammals included**

### **Elk**

Mature bull seen at close range in forest near Mansils.

### **Beaver**

1 seen at suck on small lake just south of Kolka village.

### **Wild Boar**

Brief view of one crossing track in forest near Melnsils.



## Butterflies included

### Camberwell Beauty

Small numbers in a few places, eg. Lake Engure.



### Large Tortoiseshell

Quite common at Kolka, Lake Engure etc.



### Green Hairstreak

Surprisingly numerous in the forests. Evidently uses bilberry etc as food plant.

### Map

Several at a lake near Valdemarpils.

