



# FINLAND & NORWAY

May 29 – June 10, 2025

## TRIP REPORT



# *Finland & Norway 2025*

**May 29 – June 10**

**Trip Leaders: Julian Hough (Sunrise Birding) | Jari Ullakko (Finnature)**

**ALL PHOTOS BY JULIAN HOUGH (Unless indicated)**

## *Highlights:*

Either for rarity value, excellent views or simply a group favorite:

- Eurasian Pygmy Owl
- Western Capercaillie
- Pallid Harrier
- Ural Owl
- Eurasian Dotterel
- Northern Hawk Owl
- Bluethroat
- Rock Ptarmigan
- Pine Grosbeak
- Long-tailed Jaeger
- Little & Rustic Buntings
- Yellow-billed Loon
- Siberian Tit
- Red-throated Pipit
- European Golden Plover
- Red-throated Pipit
- Red-necked Grebe
- Great Grey Owl
- Tengmalm's Owl
- Ruff
- Little Gull
- Common Crane
- Bohemian Waxwing
- Smew
- Willow Ptarmigan
- Thick-billed Murre
- Razorbill
- Arctic Loon
- Hornøya Island Spectacle
- Hamningberg Scenery
- Grey-headed Woodpecker
- Lesser Spotted Woodpecker
- Temminck's Stint
- Black-tailed Godwit
- Red-flanked Bluetail
- Siberian Jay
- White-tailed Eagle
- Atlantic Puffin
- Red-necked Phalarope
- Moose (Elk)
- Mountain Hare
- Reindeer

## *Summary:*

The official tour kicked off with a welcome dinner in Oulu. We spent a few days birding around the hotel with great looks at White-tailed Eagle, Common Rosefinch and Garganey and other common species. With the sun not setting this far north, it allowed some late night exploration of the nearby fields that gave great looks at Eurasian Woodcock, Short-eared Owl and a surprise male Pallid Harrier. The main targets in this area were breeding owls, and with the expert help of local guide Jari and Finnature, we were able to add Great Grey, Pygmy, Tengmalm's, Ural and a hulking Eagle Owl in just a few days! While we missed Terek Sandpiper, we had great success with Ortolan Bunting and wetland species such as Caspian Tern, Spotted Redshank and Marsh Harrier.

After a successful few days in Oulu, we had a travel day to Kuusamo in the eastern part of Finland. Here the patchwork of lakes and forests yielded wheeling flocks of two-toned Little Gulls, Red-necked Grebe, Wood Sandpipers, Bramblings and a surprise stop that yielded a fine male Rustic Bunting and two male Smeews! Woodpeckers were hard to come by, and while we couldn't find any Three-toed or Black Woodpeckers we bumped into a small flock of Parrot Crossbills. Evening excursions to some nearby fields yielded fine looks at several male Black Grouse, and on the drive back, a briefly seen male Capercaillie presented itself to a fortunate few. Roding Woodcocks showed well, as did a nice flock of Taiga Bean Geese. Based in Kuusamo, we managed to easily add Siberian Jay coming into the feeders and after a few hours searching, the entire group managed good looks at Red-flanked Bluetail! Next morning, we started off with a pre-breakfast excursion looking for grouse - namely better views of Capercaillie and Hazel Grouse.

Almost immediately we were able to find two calling Hazel Grouse and, after some dogged fieldwork, most of the group was able to get glimpses of this shy grouse in the shadowy undergrowth. This time in Kuusamo ended our Finland tour on a high and we bade farewell to Penny and Allen before the rest of the group continued on with the Norway tour. It was soon time to start another travel day north to Ivalo. En route, we had a big target bird to knock off. At a ski resort, we explored the fells before nearly tripping over a sitting Dotterel luckily found by Susan - an amazing bird that was appreciated by all of us. We drove through quiet forests, pushing north to our base of Ivalo for a few days. On our first morning, we scored great looks at singing Little and Rustic Buntings as well as fabulous looks at our only Rough-legged Hawk of the trip. An excursion into the forest yielded a nice staked-out Siberian Tit, singing Redwings and an unexpected male Pine Grosbeak.

We left Ivalo heading to our next base on the northern fjord of Båtsfjord. This long drive was punctuated with a few stops that added some shorebirds, namely Temminck's Stint and many Parasitic Jaegers. While crossing the mist-enshrouded barren fells, the birds came fast - Rock and Willow Ptarmigan, Red-necked Phalarope, Long-tailed Jaeger and Eurasian Golden Plover! It was a nice change of scenery from the large swaths of forests we had just left behind. The harbor at Båtsfjord held buildings festooned with breeding Kittiwakes. Common Mergansers, Common Scoters and a some nice close Long-tailed Jaegers frequented the harbor. The following morning saw us returning to some melting snow pools that were alive with an amazing flock of lekking Ruffs, displaying Temminck's Stints and a pair of beautiful Red-throated Loons. Displaying Red-throated Pipits and Lapland Buntings were seen well while Red-necked Phalaropes fed frenetically in the pools. This was a very birdy spot enjoyed by the group, with Arctic Terns and Long-tailed Jaegers often present overhead! It was time to leave and push on towards Vardø, but not before adding three King Eiders and a Snow Bunting. Due to the rugged coastline, we had to double-back south then east through Vadsø, before heading north to Vardø. As evening approached, we had a surprise for our trip. We had some local intel on an area to check for Gyrfalcon. When we got to the area, Jari amazingly saw it perched on top of the ridge, quickly followed by a second, smaller male. Everyone had great looks at these two individuals - a species not guaranteed on any trip!

We arrived in Vardø - the easternmost town in Norway, weary but excited. The view from my room looked out over the harbor where ten days previously, a pink Ross's Gull had set up home. Alas, this individual had not been seen for a week and was presumed long gone. Great food and accommodations in this quaint town made for a great base. The highlight here was our short boat ride to the breeding colony at Hornøya island - an amazing spectacle with thousands of breeding auks such as Puffins, Brunnich's (Thick-billed Murre) and Common Guillemots (Common Murre) and Razorbills all at arm's length. We explored the areas around town finding a female King Eider and then a flock of 12 further north towards Hamningberg. We had several White-tailed Eagles and stellar views of a male Bluethroat. The day ended with a fine summer-plumaged White-billed Diver (Yellow-billed Loon). We left Vardø for our long drive back to Ivalo, stopping for views of a male Smew and Pine Grosbeaks.

The tour officially ended at breakfast but with our flight not being until 10pm, we made one last vaunted assault on the forests for a great bird we thought we had missed. Driving south, with intel in hand, we rolled up at an open boggy forest. After a wait, which involved seeing Great Grey Shrike, Bohemian Waxwing and a distant Golden Eagle, we had several looks at owl species #7 - Northern Hawk Owl! And, if that was not enough, we stopped by the field near the hotel to try for a third time for a vagrant Siberian Stonechat. It was with some luck that the bird had been seen shortly before we arrived and then Jari deftly pulled the bird out thin air by noticing it perched on top of a tall spruce. We adjourned for celebratory pizza and beer before catching our flight back to Helsinki. A successful trip with a great group and some amazing birds and scenery!



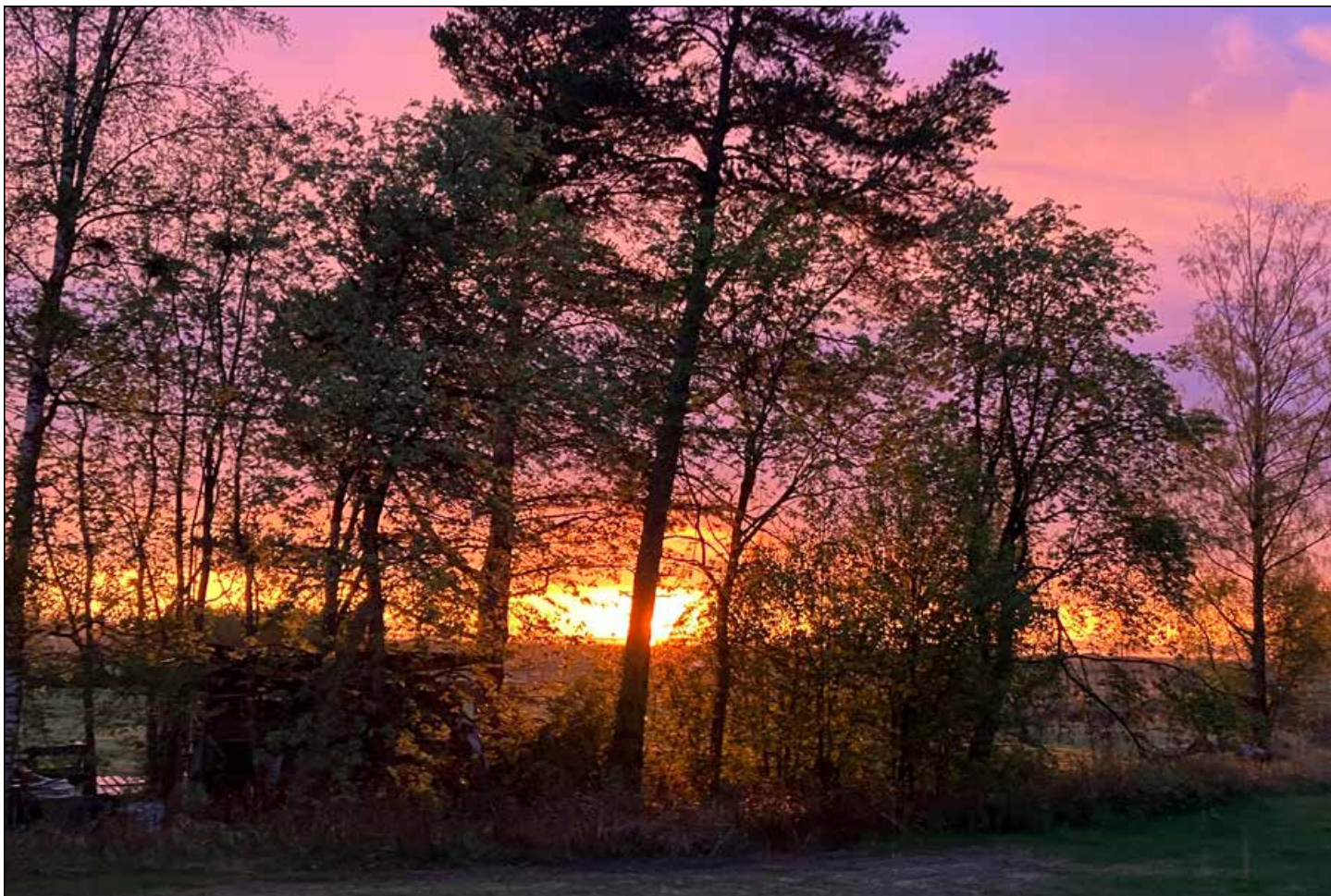


Marsh Harrier and Common Cranes were seen before breakfast from the platform at our Oulu hotel.



View from the platform behind the hotel at Oulu.





In late spring, the sun never sets in Scandinavia. This is the midnight view from our rooms at Oulu.



The Sunrise Birding Group.





Owls are the star attractions in Finland and we scored with 7 species on the trip including this fine Great Gray Owl on the nest and a more wary Eurasian Eagle Owl.



The group taking advantage of a showy Tengmalm's (Boreal) Owl.





Juvenile Tengmalm's Owl.





(Top). Beautiful Finnish forest with thick understory - great Capercaillie and Hazel Grouse habitat.  
(Bottom). Boggy birch forests produced Eurasian Pygmy Owl and Lesser-spotted and Grey-headed Woodpeckers.







The happy group finally connecting with a big target bird - Dotterel!



A dapper-looking Dotterel sitting tight for the crowd of admirers.





Beautiful scenery from the top of the mountain while looking (successfully) for Red-flanked Bluetail.



Another showy target bird for the group was the endemic Siberian Jay.





Red-flanked Bluetail and our intrepid guides, Jari Ullakko (left) and Julian Hough.



We lucked out with the weather except for a few showers when we had to improvise with a piece of corrugated iron for our “Finnish Umbrella”.





Upland fell species showed well including Rock Ptarmigan (left) and stunning Ruffs (right) in breeding plumage.



Great panoramic views over the snow-covered fells south of Båtsfjord, Norway with fantastic views of both Long-tailed and Parasitic Jaegers dashing across the snowy hillsides.





Photo: Frank Mantlik

A couple of the group scanning the flats while picking out Arctic Terns from the Common Terns.







The harbour at Båtsfjord, Norway held Common Mergansers, L-T Jaegers, Kittiwakes and Arctic Terns.



The bays around Hamningberg rewarded us with great views of a flock King Eider and a full summer-plumaged White-billed Diver (Yellow-billed Loon), both difficult species to find this year.





Hornøya Island was an amazing spectacle with thousands of alcids, including great looks at Razorbill (left) and Puffin (right). A highlight of the trip for all of us!







The last day of the tour saw us celebrating some stellar birds to wrap it up: Northern Hawk Owl, Great Grey Shrike, Bohemian Waxwing and Golden Eagle!

*Click Here for Trip Report & Species List (186 species)*

## Sunrise Birding Finland and Norway 2025

29 May – 10 Jun 2025 (13 days)

Link-only

Finland | Norway | Subregions

Julian Hough, Lori Kurlowicz, Nina Tsilikas, Penny Soares, Susan Hubley +1 more...

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