

Falsterbo ~ Mass Migration

27th – 31st August 2018



A strong wind lashes spray against the windscreen, creating very poor visibility from the famous bridge across the leaden-grey Oresund strait between Denmark and Sweden, but by late afternoon conditions are much improved, allowing an exploration of the Flommen Nature Reserve, where hundreds of Swallows, Martins and low-flying Swifts battle against the wind on their long journey south. Wheatears pose along a fence, while masses of Starlings and Yellow Wagtails rise and fall restlessly out across the water meadows, alongside lagoons dotted with a variety of waders including plenty of Avocets, Lapwings, Dunlin, Spotted Redshank, Snipe, busy Greenshanks, and a single Wood Sandpiper. Other early birds include Hooded Crow, Kestrel, Sparrowhawk, and a very obliging Red-footed Falcon perched on various fence posts, at fairly close range, with other birders looking on from the opposite direction in the same scope view!



By 8am this fine morning we are by the lighthouse at Nabben, Sweden's 'Lands End', with two Sparrowhawks overhead as we alight from the van, and 'shedloads' more of these agile raptors every few minutes throughout the day! Crossing the golf course, we are surrounded by low-flying Swallows, Swifts and calling Tree Pipits, while the first body of water produces another Wood Sandpiper, a Ruff and a Garganey. The lagoon at the end of the track is alive with over eighty Avocets, plus rusty Bar-tailed Godwits, Pintail, Shelduck and Grey Plovers still in full breeding plumage, as well as a couple of Common Sandpipers and Sandwich Terns. A line of around thirty Honey Buzzards approaching from the distant skyline, eventually pass slowly and purposefully overhead and out across the sea towards Denmark, which is just visible on the western horizon. Minutes later, an Osprey and three distant high-flying Nutcrackers vie for our attention, quickly

followed by a Marsh Harrier. Along comes another group of seventy-plus Honey Buzzards, again heading for Denmark, followed by another spectacular 'squadron' of about one hundred, accompanied by a single lower flying Osprey. Moving on, we comb the beach, finding eclipse Eiders and Knot in reddish breeding plumage. Back at the golf course yet more passing Honey Buzzards and Sparrowhawks include a Black Kite and a male Marsh Harrier, with a Spotted Flycatcher, spotted by David, perched in the adjacent pine trees. After lunch in the local café, a circuit of the Flommen golf course produces several Wheatears, a juvenile Whinchat, a juvenile Red-backed Shrike, a female Great Spotted Woodpecker, Willow Warbler and another forty or so Honey Buzzards passing directly overhead, bringing the day's tally to at least 345 Honey Buzzards!



We begin the day at a quarry, hoping to see the resident Eagle Owls, but unlike the previous two visits there are no signs of our quarry, possibly due to busier than normal digger activity below the favoured ledge. Moving on to nearby Lake Krankesjön, I warn the group to look out for large grey birds in the roadside fields, and within a minute John spots a pair of Cranes standing quietly in the very next field! Whilst watching the Cranes, we also spot Tree Sparrows and the first Red Kite of the trip here. Walking through the woods near the lake, we find Spotted and Pied Flycatchers sallying from the same fence, just a few feet apart, while another juvenile Red-backed Shrike and a Yellowhammer show well on nearby dead branches. From a viewpoint at the lake shore, Great White Egret, Common Tern and a single Whooper amongst dozens of Mute Swans are all new for the trip, as four whistling Ospreys circle directly overhead, a Hobby whizzes by at speed, and Red Kite and Marsh Harrier pass sedately by at close range, while a skein of about sixty-five Cranes floats across the treetops along the far shore. Back in the woods, Goldcrest and Siskin are both new, but our main target here is Black Woodpecker, and minutes later we enjoy fabulous, best views ever of both male and female, posing in the scope on various tree trunks and stumps! Meanwhile plum views of a basking Queen of Spain-like Fritillary are an added bonus, followed by Marsh Tit and Nuthatch during a picnic lunch. This afternoon, another watch tower at the south end of the lake produces four more Whooper Swans, a passing Male Marsh Harrier, a hovering Osprey, which swoops down to snatch a fish from the lake, with a majestic adult White-tailed Eagle dropping by to perch in a tree, as a grand finale to another productive day.





With heavy rain forecast for most of today, we decide to head out before breakfast and the onset of the wet weather. Proceedings at the lighthouse are relatively quiet, apart from the usual Sparrowhawks, Swallows, Yellow Wagtails, and a low-flying Osprey. After breakfast a visit to the Ljungen Heath and the large Angsnaset lagoon produces another Whinchat, a couple of Wheatears, plenty of Sandwich Terns, two more Red-backed Shrikes, a Green Sandpiper, a restless flock of eleven Crossbills, and remarkable views of two adult White-tailed Eagles standing shoulder to shoulder in the middle of the heath, as if sitting out the rain while waiting for better weather; not bad for a quiet morning, and a good time to throw in the towel and head back for lunch, and an afternoon at leisure, while watching Red Squirrels scampering to and fro in the hotel garden.

It's our last day and the sun is shining again as we return to the lighthouse hoping to make a century, with 93 species already notched up. A Curlew at the point and a female Common Scoter just offshore are both new for the trip, and we also spot another Whinchat and two more passing Ospreys, while one of the lagoons here produces a nice selection of waders, feeding in close proximity, including Greenshank, Spotted Redshank, Dunlin and Wood and Curlew Sandpipers. Further new sightings include Skylark, Golden Plover, Barnacle Goose, Whitethroat, Goldfinch and Moorhen as well as another close encounter with the juvenile Red-footed Falcon, still posing on the fence posts where we found it on the first day! This rewarding short break, complemented by the finest possible dining, produced 102 species of birds, including stars like White-tailed Eagle, Black Kite, Red-footed Falcon, Crane, Black Woodpecker, Red-backed Shrike, Nutcracker, Crossbill, and of course, all those wonderful Honey Buzzards.

