

WESTERN FINLAND and SOUTHERN LAPLAND (Based in Oulu 25th May to 4th June 2007)

Mike & Emma Cram and family



Useful links:

<http://virtual.finland.fi/netcomm/news/showarticle.asp?intNWSAID=24856>

http://www.visitfinland.com/ima/main/maps/finland_west_coast_en.pdf

http://www.finnature.fi/index_en.php3

<http://www.kuusamobirds.net/en/main.php>



Days 1 and 2 - 25th & 26th May 2007

We departed from London Heathrow at 1020h on Friday 25th May on what was to be mainly a family holiday, with Emma's parents Tony & Meryl Fry and our children James 6 and Holly 2.

We caught our connection to Oulu from Helsinki by the skin of our teeth thanks to the fiasco that is called British Airways Security at Heathrow, they managed to lose our baggage (Finnair dropped it off to us the following afternoon).

We picked up our upgraded VW Transporter late evening and headed for our Holiday Lodge in **Nallikari**, on **Hietesaari Island** in **Oulu**. We chilled out for the first two days around the lodge and enjoyed the many species that were around and about the campsite, including **Pied Flycatcher**, **Fieldfare**, **Redwing** and **Common Rosefinch** which were singing and nesting just outside the lodge throughout our stay.

Hietesaari was a nice base with so many good animals and birds seen daily on our door step: **Red Squirrel**, **Arctic Hare**, **Whooper Swan**, **Goosander**, **Red-breasted Merganser**, **Ringed Plover**, **Little Ringed Plover**, **Oystercatcher**, **Temminck's Stint**, **Little Gull**, **Little Tern**, **Common Tern**, **White Wagtail**, **Northern Wheatear**, **Mealy Redpoll**, **Siskin**, **Hooded Crow** and **Yellowhammer**.

It was expensive in Finland, food and supplies were 25-50% more than the UK, but the Supermarkets were very good and well stocked. It was always easy to park and the standard of driving out there was easy paced on wide and uncrowded roads. The choice of diesel hire car turned out to be a good one as although unleaded petrol costs the same as the UK the Diesel was actually only about 70p a litre.

Day 3 – 27th May 2007

We took our planned trip to visit the **Arctic Zoo** in **Ranua**. This is a good site and well worth visiting for simultaneous birding and amusing the family! The road trip east and then north via **Pudasjarvi** took about 2 hours. The region is generally flat and the mainly forested scenery interspersed with lakes was pleasant and was enlivened by a single **Moose**, several **Reindeer**, a flyby **Black Grouse** and a **Common Crane**, which was a lifer for Emma.

The children loved the many species within the zoo especially the Polar Bears, Brown Bears, baby Reindeer, Capercaillie and Owls. We later enjoyed the holiday's first of many meals of Reindeer and Salmon in the Café. We did manage to note several wild species there including several stunning **Camberwell Beauty** and **Holly Blue** butterflies, several **Whooper Swan** over, **Great Spotted Woodpecker**, **Redstart**, **Pied Flycatcher**, 2 *borealis* **Willow Tit** and **Common Raven**.

Later at **Hietesaari** an evening walk produced the awesome sight of 70 **Goosander** flying inland and a superb singing male **Common Rosefinch**.

Day 4 – 28th May 2007

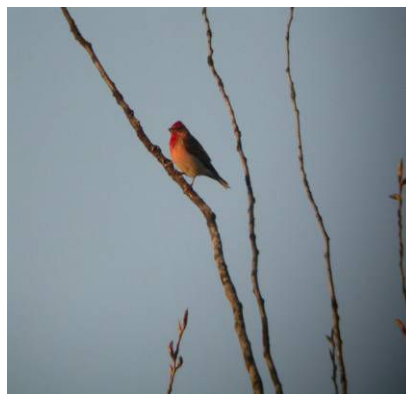
The day was spent loafing around **Nallikari** and **Hietesaari**. An early morning walk for Mike added a very confiding male **Lesser-spotted Woodpecker**, **Cuckoo**, **Yellow Wagtail**, **Garden Warbler**, **Redstart** and **Lesser Whitethroat** to the trip list.



Lesser 'Pecker



Common Redstart



Common Rosefinch

Day 5 – 29th May 2007

We ventured around the **Liminka Bay** area and out along the **Oulunsalo peninsula** to suss out the ferry service to **Hailuoto Island** for later in the trip. We were pleased to find out that the half hour trip was FREE! However we could not cross that afternoon as the remaining boat space was filled by 5 Fire Engines attending an incident on the island.

The visitor centre at **Liminganlahti** near **Virkula** is closed to birders at present. It is currently being used as an education centre. Nevertheless we were able to access the tower hide there, a short 500m or so walk. We shared the hide with a bus load of excitable Finnish children in windy conditions, but managed to see **Greylag Geese**, **Teal**, **Shoveler**, **Pintail**, **Red-breasted Merganser**, **Greenshank**, **Black-tailed Godwit**, **Common Crane**, **Wheatear**, a singing male **Common Rosefinch**, **Sedge Warbler** and **Yellowhammer**. Also noted were **Camberwell Beauty** and **Small Tortoiseshell**.

The ferry port for Hailuoto had a nice little Grilli, where we ate and watched the day go by. Noted were more **Whooper Swan**, **Red-breasted Merganser**, **Arctic** and **Common Terns** and some **Redshank**.

An evening walk down to the Tower hide on **Hietesaari** with some local Finnish birding gen, again failed to produce *Terek Sandpiper*, but drumming and displaying **Common Snipe** and a **Goldeneye** and a gorgeous sunset made up for it.

Day 6 – 30th May 2007

We enjoyed another day of family activities around **Nallikari**. The main highlight was a **Woodcock** seen by Mike.

We set off at 1500h for the 3 hour drive to **Kuusamo** having booked a room in advance in the Sokos Hotel. That was where we had arranged to meet our guide **Olli Lamminsalo** for 0300h the following day. More Reindeer a glass of wine and an early night were in order. A brief walk around the hotel lake yielded a male **Ruff**, 1 **Greenshank** and good numbers of **Goldeneye**, **Little Gull** and **Sand Martin**.

Day 7 – 31st May 2007 - KUUSAMO area

We met with 6 other British birders and squeezed into **Olli's** transporter and via **Pajaarvi** into a network of forest tracks in search of Grouse.

Some Rally style driving that even Evel Knievel would have respected took us within 2km of the **Russian border** which we could see in the distance. We were soon enjoying superb views of **Black Grouse** and **Capercaillie**. There were also fine views of a **Reindeer family**, some **Arctic Hare** plus **Whimbrel** and **Brambling**.

We dipped on *Willow Grouse* and only heard 1 male **Hazel Grouse** in the woods. We then moved on to another clearing where a gorgeous juvenile **Tengmalm's Owl** was waiting to be fed by its parents. **10+ Common Crossbill** were seen there, and then an **Osprey** flew over the bus carrying a fish as we made our way to **Valtavarra Ridge**.



Tengmalm's Owl chick



Pine Grosbeak

We arrived at **Valtavarra** around 0700h and after refreshments and good views of northern race **Bullfinches**, scaled the hundreds of steps to the top to begin searching the thickly forested ridge for **Red-flanked Bluetail**. We could already hear them singing, but only a few of us caught fleeting glimpses of one in flight, but our reward was to lie elsewhere!

Our Purple Patch had begun! We came across a pair of **Pine Grosbeak** quietly feeding on cones in some tree tops!! Alert to the fact that many birders visiting the region do not manage to see them, we were suitably elated. More so after watching the *Grosbeaks* fly to the forest floor and then hop off into the woods! Within half an hour we found a male **Three-toed Woodpecker** excavating a nest hole!

The wind was picking up in the area as the morning passed and we had little luck around the region in finding the elusive *Siberian Jay*, *Rustic Bunting* and *Little Bunting* that were present. However, the morning's guiding was rounded off nicely at a **Siberian Tit** nest site, where excellent prolonged views of a pair feeding young were had by all. Our 8 hours with **Olli** was supposed to end at 1100h, but he took us to a café he knew, where we ate all we could for 6 Euros. He then took us to a place to buy some good detailed maps of the region and spent over an hour marking them with us for difficult to see species.

We left **Kuusamo** with a tinge of sadness wanting to stay on. However, on a high and gorged with lifers at 1345 we headed back to **Oulu**.

We reached **Nallikari** at 1630h where Mike promptly fell asleep after doing all the driving!! Stage 1 of 3 gruelling days was over and we prepared for an early night to meet our guide in **Liminka** for the drive north **in search of Owls**.....

Day 8 – 1st June 2007 - the forested areas north and east of Oulu

We met our FINNATURE guide **Jaakko Juunika** and 4 different British birders at 0200h in the *ABC service station* at **Tupos**. We jumped into the minibus and took the opportunity to sleep for an hour on the journey north to **Karpusso**.

The first bird of the day was a **Common Crane** feeding close to the road in a field near **Oi Jarvi**. Then at 0335h, one of our companions shouted for the bus to stop. He saw a large Owl we'd just driven past. We quickly realised we were looking at a fantastic **Great Grey Owl** sitting out in the open on a post about 75 yards away. We watched it for almost an hour as it hunted on massive wings before catching and eating a vole in front of us. What a bird!



Great Grey Owl



Hawk Owl

We enjoyed 2 lekking **Black Grouse**, **Green Sandpiper**, **Cuckoo**, **Common Rosefinch** and singing **Garden Warbler**, before moving to a nearby site for a known family of **Hawk Owl**. We quickly located a juvenile in the spruce tops, and then enjoyed superb views of another as the adult flew in to feed them.

We moved on to the large lake **Oi Jarvi**, where a resplendent **Black-throated Diver** gave wonderful flyby views along with **Yellow Wagtail** and **Brambling**.

We then visited a few sites on the coast including the beautiful **Kiviniemi** in blue cloudless skies where we saw **Wheatear** and **25 Goosander**. Farmland at **Kello** yielded common species: **Greylags**, **Pintail**, **Lapwing**, **Golden Plover**, **Skylark**, **Meadow Pipit**, an **Ortolan**, but no sign of Dotterel that had recently stopped off there.



The harbour at Kiviniemi



Tengmalm's Owl chick – "Feed me!!"

We tried unsuccessfully at several sites for *Hazel Grouse*, including **Hakenharju**, where a juvenile **Tengmalm's Owl** was looking for its next meal!, then near **Pollokiatstratu** where we saw a female **Pygmy Owl** at a nest box with her 3 young. Also present were several individuals of the northern races of **Bullfinch** and more *borealis* **Willow Tit**.

A flyby female **Cuckoo** brought the day's birding to a close at 1000h at **Tupos** and we headed to the supermarket for supplies and a busy day's play with the children. Emma saw a **Black-throated Diver**, **Little Ringed Plover**, **Temminck's Stint** and **Common Rosefinch** during an evening walk from the coast path at **Hietesaari**.

Day 9 – 2nd June 2007 – The Liminka area, south of Oulu

We drove to **Ketunmaa** and scanned the forest at a known *Eagle Owl* nest site with no luck. Then as we made our way to **Lumijoki**, we spotted **2 Moose** behind some large fencing along the **E8 road**. We again tried unsuccessfully for *Hazel Hen*. Jaakko thought it was too late by now to get them easily as they are most probably on the nest. We made our way deeper into the woods at 0415h to enjoy some woodland species. We heard **Common Crane** whooping nearby, saw **2 Great spotted woodpecker**, **2 Cuckoo**, several singing **Tree Pipit**, **Willow Tit** and **Common Crossbill**. **Common Heath** moths were noted.

Jaakko then warned us to stand well back for obvious reasons from a large nest box just a few feet off the ground, as he moved in to carefully inspect the vicinity. Within minutes we all got views of a massive **Ural Owl** as it flew through the tree canopy and settled in to a tree top in full view for ace scope views! It had obviously eaten recently as its bill was blood-stained.

Apparently a foreign birder had recently been duffed up from behind and badly gouged by a protective adult, meaning the birds very probably feeding young. We moved off at 0620h and drove across the bridge of the pretty **river Sikajoki** to search the nearby forest at **Vartti**.



Ural Owl



Three-toed Woodpecker

We spent the next 3 hours driving through the various tracks and stopping at the various clear-fell areas. This was our **purple patch** for the day with a **Green Hairstreak**, **Green Sandpiper**, drumming **Common Snipe**, 2 lekking **Black Grouse**, a superb drumming male **Black Woodpecker**, a pair of **Three-toed Woodpecker** at their nest hole, singing male **Cuckoo**, 2 **Tree Pipit**, 1 **Spotted Flycatcher**, **Great Grey Shrike**, a pair of **Red-backed Shrike** which vigorously chased the Cuckoo away and 2 singing **Ortolan Bunting**.

We were very lucky to get such good views of these magnificent little Woodpeckers. For Mike along with the Kuusamo male, this lifer completed his set of European woodpeckers! We tried unsuccessfully for *Lesser Spotted Woodpecker* and *Hazel Hen* nearby, but the gnats and mosquitoes were starting to bite with aggression so we moved back to the coast.

At **Raahe** a deep muddy puddle did not deter **Jaakko** who negotiated the obstacle in the van with great maturity exceeding his 24 years! We walked to a tower hide where we watched pairs of Wigeon, Pintail, Merganser, Arctic Tern, common Tern and Red-backed Shrike. It appeared as though no Red-necked Phalarope were lingering here.

This was our last site and we enjoyed the coastal scenery very much. A circling Common Crane was the last bird we saw at 1115h near **Kolastama** as we headed back to the meeting point and said our thanks and farewells.

Later on, a **Hedgehog** interrupted a game of football late evening at **Nallikari** much to the amusement of Holly! Then freshly made burgers in the campsite café were enjoyed and are to be heartily recommended!

Day 10 – 3rd June 2007 – Hailuoto Island

We left the campsite mid-morning and drove along the Oulunsalo peninsula to its tip to catch the 1030 ferry. En route along the **816 road** a **Woodcock** flew up alongside us giving excellent views. The crossing to the island was pleasant and took 25 minutes.

Birds noted around the port areas were much the same as last week, **25+Whooper Swan**, **Shelduck**, **Red-breasted Merganser**, **Curlew**, **White Wagtail** and **Wheatear**.

Our principal target for today, whilst enjoying a family day out, was to try and get **Caspian Tern**. By 1115h we reached **Kirkosalmi marsh** in the south of the island and from the tower hide and almost immediately found a superb bird fishing just yards away!



Caspian Tern at Kirkosalmi on Hailuoto Island

We watched it for half an hour before it appeared to land out of view among the **100+ Little Gull**. We also saw **Great Crested Grebe**, heard booming **Eurasian Bittern** and saw a pair of **Marsh Harrier**, **Coot**, **1 Greenshank**, **1 Garden Warbler**, **Sedge Warbler** and **Willow Warbler**.

We took lunch in a restaurant at the unfortunately named **Sumppu** near **Marjaniemi** at the west of the island and noted **Turnstone**, **Redshank**, numerous **Common** and **Arctic Tern** and **Siskin**. The beach scenery was stunning, a lovely place.

Our return sailing was delayed from 1500 to 1545h. Whilst we waited Mike found a lovely calling **Blue-headed Wagtail** on some rocks. The day was capped off nicely near **Oulunsalo** when **20 Common Crane** flew over **route 815** into some ploughed fields.

Day 11 – 4th June 2007 Homeward Bound

Our final morning was spent around **Nallikari** and we enjoyed the performance of 3 male and 1 female **Common Rosefinch** as they sang and gave very close views around the lodge. Mike also found a Fieldfare nest and we watched the adults feed several large chicks. Also noted were **Holly Blue** and **Green-veined White** butterflies plus a **Herald** moth.

The flight home with the excellent Finn Air was smooth and trouble free. Even the M4 was kind to us and we acclimatised to British birding again with **Red Kite**, **Kestrel**, **Sparrowhawk** and **Buzzard** as we crossed Berkshire and then Wiltshire.

This was really a wonderful family holiday and birding experience for us all. A great way to celebrate Mike's impending 40th and Emma's impending 30th birthdays, both towards the end of June! Who knows when we will return to Finland, but we definitely intend to. More time in the Kuusamo area is definitely recommended.



Mike & James

We logged **120 species** of bird on the trip.
Mike had **8** Lifers, Emma had **16** Lifers.

See the next page for the full lists of all species encountered >>>.

We hope you enjoyed reading our report. We have another version with twice as many photos that runs to about 6MB. If you want a copy, we'd be happy to send it to you. Email us on .mikecram67@btinternet.com

[Mike and Emma Cram](#)

FULL SPECIES LISTS

Birds:

Black-throated Diver	Great Crested Grebe	Great Cormorant
Eurasian Bittern (heard only)	Whooper Swan	Greylag Goose
Mallard	Common Shelduck	Eurasian Teal
Northern Shoveler	Eurasian Wigeon	Northern Pintail
Tufted Duck	Goosander	Red-breasted Merganser
Common Goldeneye	Common Kestrel	Osprey
Marsh Harrier	Capercaillie	Black Grouse
Hazel Hen (heard only)	Common Coot	Common Crane
Eurasian Oystercatcher	Little Ringed Plover	Great Ringed Plover
European Golden Plover	Northern Lapwing	Sanderling
Ruddy Turnstone	Temminck's Stint	Green Sandpiper
Common Sandpiper	Common Redshank	Common Greenshank
Black-tailed Godwit	Eurasian Curlew	Whimbrel
Eurasian Woodcock	Common Snipe	Ruff
Black-headed Gull	Common Gull	Herring Gull
Great Black-backed Gull	Little Gull	Little Tern
Common Tern	Arctic Tern	Caspian Tern
Feral Pigeon	Common Wood Pigeon	Common Cuckoo
Great Grey Owl	Ural Owl	Hawk Owl
Tengmalm's Owl	Pygmy Owl	Common Swift
Black Woodpecker	Great Spotted Woodpecker	Lesser Spotted Woodpecker
Three-toed Woodpecker	Common Skylark	Sand Martin
House Martin	Barn Swallow	Tree Pipit
Meadow Pipit	White Wagtail	Yellow/Blue-h Wagtail
Hedge Accentor	European Robin	Red-flanked Bluetail
Common Redstart	Northern Wheatear	Whinchat
Common Stonechat	Song Thrush	Redwing
Mistle Thrush	Fieldfare	Common Blackbird
Garden Warbler	Lesser Whitethroat	Sedge Warbler
Willow Warbler	Common Chiffchaff	Goldcrest
Spotted Flycatcher	Pied Flycatcher	Great Tit
Blue Tit	Willow Tit	Siberian Tit
Common Treecreeper	Red-backed Shrike	Great Grey Shrike
Black-billed Magpie	Eurasian Jay	Jackdaw
Rook	Hooded Crow	Common Raven
Common Starling	House Sparrow	Common Chaffinch
Brambling	Common Redpoll	European Goldfinch
European Greenfinch	Eurasian Siskin	Common Bullfinch
Pine Grosbeak	Common Crossbill	Common Rosefinch
Reed Bunting	Ortolan Bunting	Yellowhammer

Moths: The Herald, Common Heath

Butterflies: Green-veined White, Holly Blue, Orange Tip,
Camberwell Beauty, Green Hairstreak, Small Tortoiseshell

Mammals: Brown Hare, Arctic Hare, Red Squirrel, Hedgehog, Moose, Reindeer