

Varanger 2019



Birding and vacation June 24 – July 3, 2019

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Introduction

This summer tour is a repetition of our 2009-tour to Varanger but with another approach. In stead of flying direct to Varanger, we flew to Rovaniemi in Finnish Lapland and did the remaining 500 km to the Norwegian border in a Finnish autocamper. In this way we experienced the vast taiga, which was new for us.

This short report contains notes on our tour with a list of species.

Itinerary

Monday June 24. We arrived late afternoon in Rovaniemi and was picked up by the rental company. After shopping for food, we discovered that the camper leaked water and we had to wait till next morning to get it fixed. Luckily, there was a sauna by a lake that we used.

Tuesday June 25. In rainy weather, we went north by the main road via Sodankylä – Ivalo – Inari towards Neiden in Norway. We camped near Sevettijärvi some 40 km from the border by the shore of one of the thousands of lakes.

Reindeer were common along and on the road, and Cranes were seen in the peatlands. In the lakes were Black-throated Loon and Goldeneye, on the shores Wood-Sandpiper and Common Sandpiper, and in the forest Siberian Jay and Waxwing.



Wednesday June 26. At Neiden, we tried to find Arctic Warbler, but didn't. Enjoyed the many Globeflowers at St. Georg's chapel. We went on to Mikkelsnes, where many birds were seen. Long-tailed Skua breeds there, and Arctic Skua, Black-throated Loon, White-tailed Eagle and Bar-tailed Godwit were seen. At the road-side we found Coral-root Orchid together with Common Butterwort, Moor-King and Dwarf Cornel. The weather was cloudy and windy.

Thursday June 27. Driving from Neiden to Vadsø, we had White-tailed Eagle several times, in all 7 eagles. We visited Varangerbotn Museum, Nesseby Church and Västres Jacobselv. Continued to Ekkerøy. Some sun today.

Friday June 28. Cloudy, strong wind and showers. At Ekkerøy, the Kittiwake colony have collapsed as far as we could see. We counted 3-4000 birds on the water in front of the colony, but very few seem to breed successfully. Predation could be the reason (1 Peregrine Falcon, 4 White-tailed Eagles and several Ravens on the island) but something else may also be the cause (?). Beside Kittiwake some Black Guillemot breed at the bird cliff. Both Long-tailed and Arctic Skua breed here, and on Ekkerøy you find Meadow, Red-throated and Rock Pipit. From the cliff we spotted a single Steller's Eider.

In the evening, we drove to Komagdalen to visit the Varanger National Park. We camped a nice place at Soppavannet near the entrance to the National Park.



Komagdalen

Saturday June 29. Despite the rainy weather and 6-10 degr.C. this was a great place to visit (first time for us). Here, you really get the arctic feeling. In the lakes were Red-throated Loon, Long-tailed Duck, Tufted Duck and Red-necked Phalarope, and around were Short-eared Owl, Ruff, Temminck's Stint, Wood-Sandpiper and Redshank. In shrubs we found Little Bunting, Red-throated Pipit, Bluethroat and Redwing. On open land the Golden Plover, Common Ringed Plover and Lapland Bunting were common, and we had few Horned Lark, Willow Ptarmigan and Rough-legged Buzzard. Long-tailed and Arctic Skua were quite numerous nearer the coast.

Sunday June 30. Cloudy weather, 7-8 degr.C. From the harbour of Vardø, we sailed to Hornøya to visit the great bird-cliff there. It turned out, that the path to the top of the island was blocked by fallen rocks, so the access was limited to the shore-line below the bird cliff. Too bad, but anyway we had good views to most of the bird species.

Common Guillemot counted tens of thousands like last time we were here, but Brünnich's seem to be more scarce than last time. Razorbill, Puffin and Kittiwake were common, and Shag seem to be more numerous this time. Shags had completely taken over the hide/shelter for nesting. White-tailed Eagle harvested from the many nesting seabirds, 9 was sitting on the neighbouring island.

From Vardø we drove to Persfjorden for the night.

Monday July 1. Some sun today. Vesterelv is a good place to watch Temminck's Stint with 3 breeding pairs observed. It is also an important location for moulting Red-breasted and Common Merganser. We did not have time to go to Hamningsberg this time and started our way back towards Finland. We followed the E75 via Tana Bru to Utsjoki and south 35 km to Kevo National Park. Here we took a walk 3-4 km along a path in misty rain. Camped a little further south by a river, where Siberian Jay visited us.

Tuesday July 2. Driving south on E75, shortly before the road to Karasjok, we visited a café: Neljan Tuulen Tupa where they attract Pine Grosbeak, Siberian Tit and others with bird-feeders. From here, we drove more or less straight back to Rovaniemi for our return flight the next day.



Hornøya with some of the 80,000 pairs of seabirds (www.hornoya.no)



Common Guillemot

Practical Information

- Air tickets Copenhagen – Rovaniemi with Finnair and autocamper from McRent, Rovaniemi were booked directly.
- The Crossbill guide-book Finnish Lapland by Dirk Hilbers (2017) was used in planning the trip in Finland and was a great help (except for finding the Kevo trail 35 km south of Utsjoki, not 3,5 km as written on page 157). For Varanger, the Biotope Guide: Birding Varanger (2015) is warmly recommended.
- The weather was generally rather cloudy with rain, temperatures 6-10 C in Varanger and up to 15 C in Finland.
- We used the maps from Statens Kartverk: Veikart Troms og Finnmark, 1:400.000, Michelin 711 National: Scandinavia, Finland 1:1,500,000, and Google Maps for details.
- Handbooks used were Svensson L, Mullarney K and Zetterström D (2012): Fugle I Felten.
- Camera: Nikon D750 with 200-400 mm/f4 + 1,4 converter and Nikon D610 with 24-120 mm/f4.
- Photos from this tour can be seen here: www.natur-foto.dk, click "Rejser".
- Contact: bisschop@post6.tele.dk.



Globe Flower



Cloudberry



Shag



Kittiwake

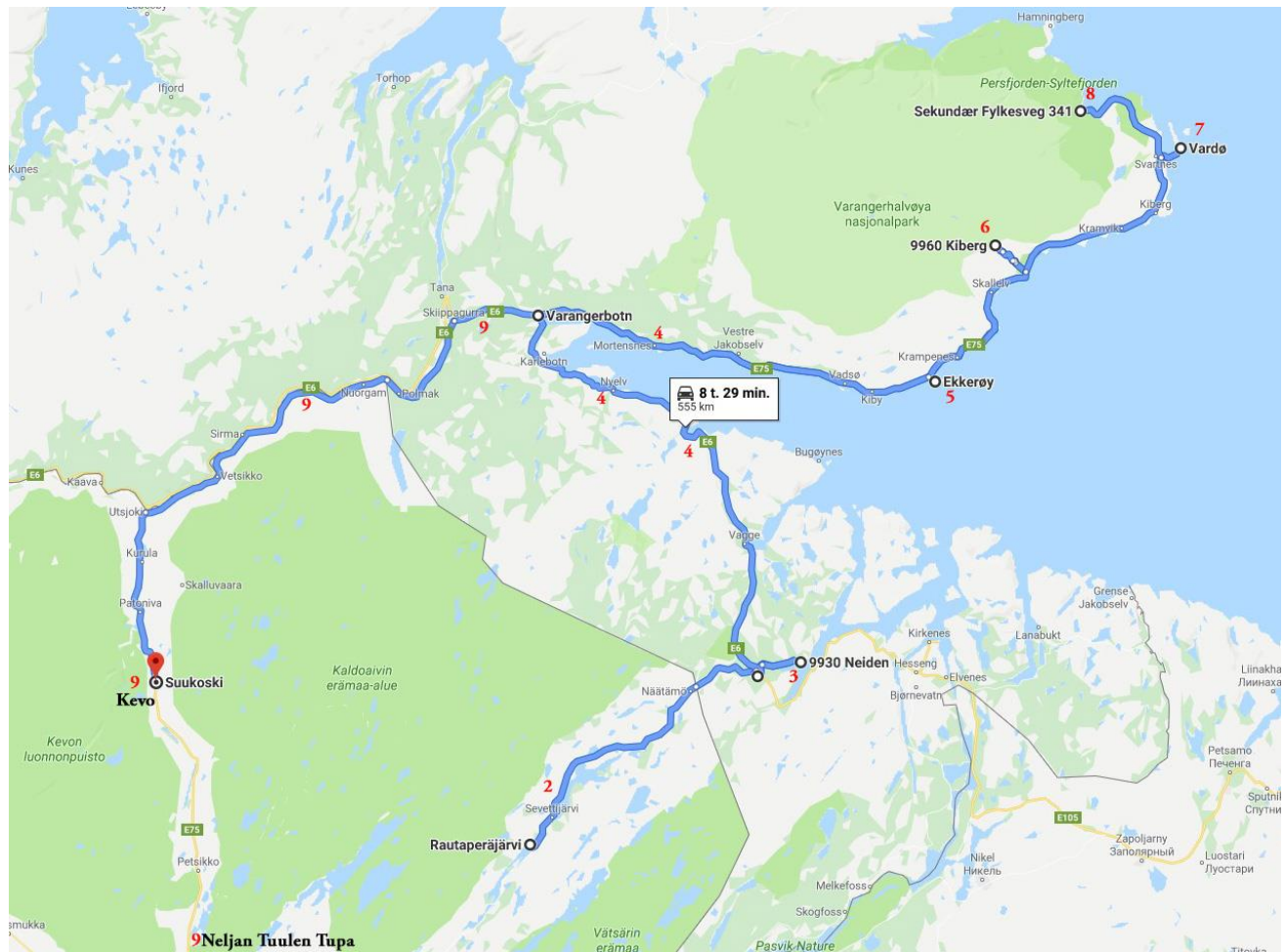


Golden Plover



Lapland Bunting

Species List



The route in Varanger and northern Finland with locations numbered **1 – 9**. Rovaniemi is ca. 360 km south of this map. (Google Maps)

1. Rovaniemi – Inari 25 Jun + 2 Jul.
2. Inari – Border 25-26 Jun.
3. Neiden – Mikkelsnes 26 Jun.
4. Neiden – Vadsø 27 Jun.
5. Ekkerøy 27-28 Jun.
6. Komagdalen 28-29 Jun.
7. Hornøya 30 Jun.
8. Persfjorden, Vesterelv 30 Jun – 1 Jul.
9. Varangerbotn – Kevo – Neljan Tuulen Tupa 1-2 Jul.

Scientific name	English	Dansk	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
<i>Cygnus cygnus</i>	Whooper Swan	Sangsvane									6
<i>Anser fabalis</i>	Bean Goose	Sædgås		2							
<i>Branta leucopsis</i>	Barnacle Goose	Bramgås							x		
<i>Tadorna tadorna</i>	Common Shelduck	Gravand				1					
<i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>	Mallard	Gråand		2							
<i>Anas crecca</i>	Common Teal	Krikand						5			
<i>Aythya fuligula</i>	Tufted Duck	Troldand			x			x			
<i>Bucephala clangula</i>	Common Goldeneye	Hvinand		x							
<i>Clangula hyemalis</i>	Long-tailed Duck	Havlit						3			
<i>Melanitta nigra</i>	Black Scoter	Sortand			20						
<i>Polysticta stelleri</i>	Steller's Eider	Stellersand					1				
<i>Somateria mollissima</i>	Common Eider	Ederfugl					x		x		
<i>Mergus serrator</i>	Red-breasted Merganser	Toppet Skallesluger						4	X	110	
<i>Mergus merganser</i>	Goosander	Stor Skallesluger			x		x		x	120	x
<i>Lagopus lagopus</i>	Willow Ptarmigan	Dalrype						2			
<i>Tetrao tetrix</i>	Black Grouse	Urfugl									1
<i>Cuculus canorus</i>	Common Cuckoo	Gøg			1						
<i>Asio flammeus</i>	Short-eared Owl	Mosehornugle						2			
<i>Columba palumbus</i>	Wood-Pigeon	Ringdue	x								x
<i>Grus grus</i>	Crane	Trane	10								
<i>Actitis hypoleucos</i>	Common Sandpiper	Mudderklire		x							
<i>Arenaria interpres</i>	Ruddy Turnstone	Stenvender					x				
<i>Calidris alpina</i>	Dunlin	Alm. Ryle					x				
<i>Calidris temminckii</i>	Temminck's Stint	Temmincksryle						5		6	
<i>Gallinago gallinago</i>	Common Snipe	Dobbeltbekkasin						1		1	
<i>Limosa lapponica</i>	Bar-tailed Godwit	Lille Kobbersneppe			10						
<i>Numenius phaeopus</i>	Whimbrel	Småspove			1		10	1			
<i>Phalaropus lobatus</i>	Red-necked Phalarope	Odinshane						1			
<i>Philomachus pugnax</i>	Ruff	Brushane					1	1			
<i>Scolopax rusticola</i>	Woodcock	Skovsneppe	x								
<i>Tringa glareola</i>	Wood Sandpiper	Tinksmed		x				3			
<i>Tringa totanus</i>	Redshank	Rødben						5			
<i>Charadrius hiaticula</i>	Ringed Plover	Stor Præstekrave			x			x		x	
<i>Haematopus ostralegus</i>	Oystercatcher	Strandskade			x		x				
<i>Pluvialis apricaria</i>	Golden Plover	Hjejle						x			
<i>Alca torda</i>	Razorbill	Alk							x		
<i>Cephus grylle</i>	Black Guillemot	Tejst			1		x		x		
<i>Fratercula arctica</i>	Puffin	Lunde							x		
<i>Larus canus</i>	Common Gull	Stormmåge			x	x	x				
<i>Larus argentatus</i>	Herring-Gull	Sølvmåge			x	x	x		x	x	
<i>Larus marinus</i>	Great Black-backed Gull	Svartbag			x		x		x	x	
<i>Rissa tridactyla</i>	Black-legged Kittiwake	Ride					x		x		

<i>Stercorarius longicaudus</i>	Long-tailed Skua	Lille Kjove			2		2	30		6	
<i>Stercorarius parasiticus</i>	Arctic Skua	Alm. Kjove			1	1	3	10		2	
<i>Sterna paradisaea</i>	Arctic Tern	Havterne			x				x		
<i>Uria aalge</i>	Common Guillemot	Lomvie							x		
<i>Uria lomvia</i>	Brünnich's Guillemot	Polarlomvie							x		
<i>Buteo lagopus</i>	Rough-legged Buzzard	Fjeldvåge			1			2			x
<i>Circus cyaneus</i>	Hen Harrier	Blå Kærhøg	1								
<i>Haliaeetus albicilla</i>	White-tailed Eagle	Havørn			2	7	4	5	9		
<i>Falco columbarius</i>	Merlin	Dværgfalk									1
<i>Falco peregrinus</i>	Peregrine Falcon	Vandrefalk					1				
<i>Falco tinnunculus</i>	Common Kestrel	Tårnfalk				3					
<i>Phalacrocorax aristotelis</i>	Shag	Topskarv					x		x		
<i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>	Great Cormorant	Storskarv					x				
<i>Gavia arctica</i>	Black-throated Diver	Sortstrubet Lom		4	10						
<i>Gavia stellata</i>	Red-throated Diver	Rødstrubet Lom						x			
<i>Corvus corax</i>	Raven	Ravn					x	2	x		
<i>Corvus cornix</i>	Hooded Crow	Gråkrage			x		x				
<i>Perisoreus infaustus</i>	Siberian Jay	Lavskrige		1							1
<i>Pica pica</i>	Magpie	Husskade	x								
<i>Bombycilla garrulus</i>	Bohemian Waxwing	Silkehale		6							1
<i>Luscinia svecica</i>	Bluethroat	Blåhals			1			x		x	
<i>Phoenicurus phoenicurus</i>	Redstart	Rødstjert			1						
<i>Oenanthe oenanthe</i>	Northern Wheatear	Stenpikker			x		x			x	
<i>Turdus iliacus</i>	Redwing	Vindrossel						x		x	x
<i>Turdus philomelos</i>	Song Thrush	Sangdrossel			x						x
<i>Turdus pilaris</i>	Fieldfare	Sjagger	x		x			x			
<i>Parus major</i>	Great Tit	Musvit									x
<i>Poecile montanus</i>	Willow Tit	Fyrremejse	x	1							
<i>Poecile cinctus</i>	Siberian Tit	Lapmejse									4
<i>Lanius excubitor</i>	Great Grey Shrike	Stor Tornskade		2							
<i>Hirundo rustica</i>	Barn Swallow	Landsvale	x								
<i>Delichon urbica</i>	House Martin	Bysvale	x								
<i>Riparia riparia</i>	Sand Martin	Digesvale			x						
<i>Phylloscopus trochilus</i>	Willow Warbler	Løvsanger		x	x			x			x
<i>Eremophila alpestris</i>	Horned Lark	Bjerglærke						1			
<i>Anthus cervinus</i>	Red-throated Pipit	Rødstrubet Piber					x	x			
<i>Anthus petrosus</i>	Rock Pipit	Skærpiber					x				
<i>Anthus pratensis</i>	Meadow Pipit	Engpiber					x	x		x	
<i>Motacilla alba</i>	White Wagtail	Hvid Vipstjert			x		x			x	
<i>Motacilla flava</i>	Yellow Wagtail	Gul Vipstjert									3
<i>Passer domesticus</i>	House Sparrow	Gråspurv			x		x				x
<i>Fringilla coelebs</i>	Chaffinch	Bogfinke			1						

<i>Fringilla montifringilla</i>	Brambling	Kvækerfinke		x	x						x
<i>Carduelis flammea</i>	Common Redpoll	Gråsiken			x			x			x
<i>Carduelis chloris</i>	Greenfinch	Grønirisk									x
<i>Carduelis spinus</i>	Siskin	Grønsiken									x
<i>Pinicola enucleator</i>	Pine Grosbeak	Krognæb									6
<i>Emberiza schoeniclus</i>	Reed Bunting	Rørspurv			x			x			
<i>Emberiza pusilla</i>	Little Bunting	Dværgværling						1			
<i>Calcarius lapponicus</i>	Lapland Bunting	Laplandsværling						x			