SWEDEN: AUTUMN MIGRATION AT FALSTERBO

TRIP REPORT

7-12 September 2026



The group enjoyed some fantastic views of migrating Honey Buzzards on our 2026 holiday © Christopher Hall

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Leader: Christopher Hall

Introduction

Witnessing the spectacle of visible migration on a grand scale was the focus of this short trip and Falsterbo really delivered with hundreds of Tree Pipits, Yellow Wagtails, Barn Swallows and Sparrowhawks, as well as dozens of Honey Buzzards amongst a total of thirteen different raptors from Merlin to White-tailed Eagle.

Other highlights included super views of drake Common and Velvet Scoters, plus eighteen different species of waders, two White Storks, over thirty Common Cranes, Little and Caspian Gulls, a fly by Black Woodpecker and an unexpected Nutcracker.

On the day inland around Krankesjön, we saw another White-tailed Eagle and more Ospreys, fishing alongside Caspian Terns, while the woods produced several new species including an obliging male Black Woodpecker, which for many, including myself, was judged to be bird of the trip.

Thanks to the good weather, some impressive sightings, a lovely hotel serving excellent meals and a really nice group, it had been a very enjoyable and fruitful trip.

Trip Diary

Day 1: Monday 7th September, morning arrival at Copenhagen airport and afternoon visit to Ljunghusen Nature Reserve

From Copenhagen airport, it is just a 45 minute drive to our hotel in Höllviken, across the impressive Öresund Bridge which links Denmark to Sweden, with border signs part way across and lines of Cormorants along the rocky shore in their thousands!

After lunch in the warm sunshine outside Anna's Bakery, we checked in to the Höllviknäs Hotel and spent the afternoon at the nearby Ljunghusen Nature Reserve, where the first sighting was a Kestrel, quickly followed by Sparrowhawk and Marsh Harrier.

Walking along the shore, with a clear view of the bridge we had crossed earlier, we spotted Pintail, Wigeon, Grey Heron, Great Black-backed Gull and Greenshank just offshore, along with Hooded Crow, a single juvenile fly-by Honey Buzzard, a juvenile Redstart, a male Marsh Harrier and two Wheatears posing on fence posts along this

pleasant stretch of coast. Meanwhile the still air was full of hundreds of dragonflies, but no Hobbies.

Back at the hotel we enjoyed a delicious three course gourmet dinner, followed by an early night after a long day.

Day 2: Tuesday 8th September, Nabben and the Flommens Nature Reserve

This morning, we began at the Falsterbo Lighthouse, Sweden's oldest, built in 1795, with Sparrowhawks galore, which continued throughout the morning, amounting to hundreds by lunchtime!



A migrating Sparrowhawk © Christopher Hall

Another prominent raptor was Honey Buzzard, which we saw in their dozens throughout the morning, often at low level, along with regular Kestrels and Marsh Harriers, in addition to a passing male Hen Harrier and an Osprey, heading purposefully south along the shore.

As we walked slowly towards Nabben at the tip of the Falsterbo Peninsula, Tree Pipits and Yellow Wagtails called incessantly as they passed over in regular small flocks, occasionally dropping down onto the golf course greens, along with smaller numbers of White Wagtails.

Along the way, we also spotted a Black-throated Diver, three Snipe flying south, and a lone Carrion Crow among the much more usual 'Hoodies', with Eiders and Sandwich Terns offshore.

At the lagoon at the end of the peninsula, a variety of waders included Greenshank, Common and Spotted Redshanks, Dunlin, Ruff, Avocet, Lapwing and Ringed, Golden and Grey Plovers, with one still in smart black-bellied breeding plumage.

Wildfowl on the lagoon included a couple of Goldeneye, a few Pintail and a group of Shelduck, as well as Mallard, Shoveler, Teal and Gadwall. Also here, among hundreds of Cormorants, we found a few Herring and Great Black-backed Gulls, plus a couple of bossy Caspian Gulls busy hassling the Herrings.

Moving on from the lagoon, along the beach, we added five Red-breasted Mergansers to our growing list, along with a couple of Oystercatchers and numerous Knot and Bar-tailed Godwits.

After almost four hours of action-packed birding, we got back to the van for a picnic lunch while watching yet more Sparrowhawks gliding by, with a small kettle of Honey Buzzards trying to find a thermal before heading out across the sea to Denmark, while a couple of late Swifts were a surprising addition to the list. What a fantastic morning that was !!

After hot drinks and cake at the nearby golf clubhouse, we spent the afternoon exploring the Flommens Nature Reserve on foot, where a pair of Little Grebes was the first new sighting. Further on, we spotted another Wheatear and then a Whinchat, whereupon a more in depth look produced no less than eleven Whinchats posing on various low perches. On the way back to the clubhouse, further new sightings included a dashing female Merlin, Blue and Great Tits and several Spotted Flycatchers.

We ended the day with a quick look at the vast Ljungen heath which was rather quiet with just a Kestrel and two Honey Buzzards, including a scope view of one perched in a tree.

By the end of the day, we had seen 62 bird species including seven different raptors and twice as many waders. Not bad for a quiet day at Nabben, with only 49 species seen amongst 6,372 birds counted by the local recorders!

Day 3: Wednesday 9th September, Nabben, Angsnaset Nature Reserve and Ljungen Heath

We began the morning with another walk towards Nabben, and just past the lighthouse, we found a ringtail Pallid Harrier patrolling along the grassy shingle ridge parallel with the shore, quickly followed by a second ringtail flying low across the golf course. This had broader wings making it a Hen Harrier, so an excellent start to the day.

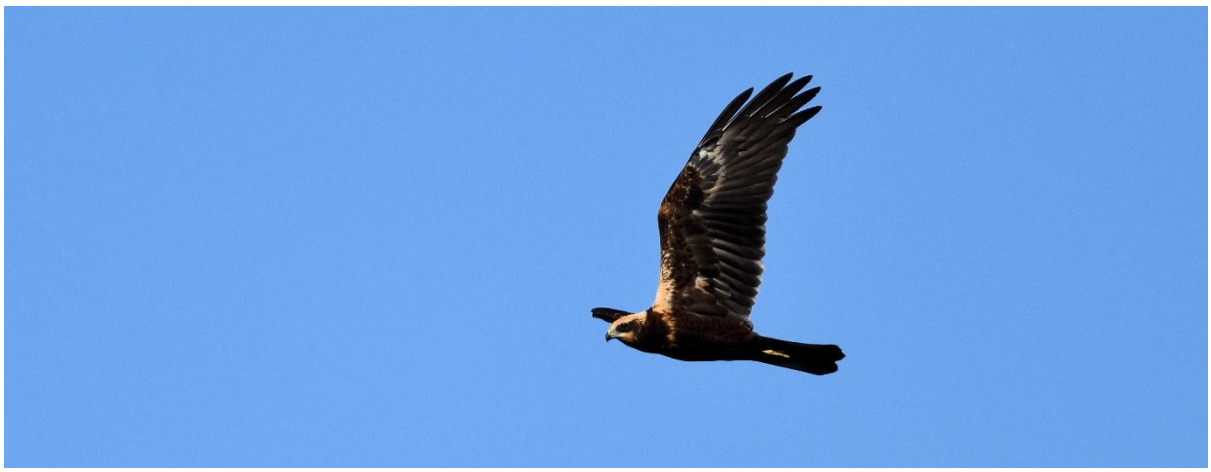
Moving on to Nabben, we found the usual suspects such as the lone Carrion Crow, and at least one of the Caspian Gulls and the three Spotted Redshanks with their Greenshank companion, as well as all the other waders, plus a Curlew which was new for the trip.

With the wind shifted round from the south to the west, it quickly became clear that the usual steady stream of raptors had dried up, so we headed back toward the lighthouse, with a plan for the group to continue north to the golf clubhouse for a hot drink, while I returned to the van to move it to the clubhouse where we would regroup.

Shortly after we split up, I bumped into some Dutch friends who told me that a Nutcracker had just flown across the fairways into the clump of trees around the lighthouse! I thanked them for the news and quickly ran back to catch up with the group and stake out the tree clump in the hope of 'twitching' this 'mega' bird.

After a short wait, we heard its distinctive raucous mechanical call, and it briefly showed in the top of one of the nearby pines before heading back across the fairways. What a successful and unexpected bonus bird for our trip list!

We followed in the 'footsteps' of the Nutcracker, back to the Kolabacken mound, just in case the bird reappeared. From the top of the mound, we watched a steady fly past by a series of raptors including the omnipresent Sparrowhawks, plus Honey and Common Buzzards, Red Kite, Marsh Harrier and a pale grey male Hen Harrier.



Marsh Harrier © Christopher Hall

Gazing into the distance through his binoculars, Mark then said, "if you look above the trees in the distance, there are loads of raptors". Looking in that direction through my bins, I suddenly realised that one of the distant birds was a Nutcracker, with a characteristic short tail and fluttering flight, so I frantically called it out and we did see it for a second time!

During afternoon, we investigated the Angsnaset Nature Reserve, where we soon found our first Hobby of the trip. Out on the lagoon, the plentiful wildfowl included many

Goldeneye, Shoveler, Wigeon and Pintail, with several Sandwich Terns resting on a line of posts in the water. From here, we followed the edge of the heath, spotting a pair of Stonechats and numerous raptors including another Hobby, an Osprey, two White-tailed Eagles, Marsh Harriers, and a steady stream of Common and Honey Buzzards.

Day 4: Thursday 10th September, inland around Krankesjön lake

Heading inland to Krankesjön, a large reed-fringed shallow lake, surrounded by a mixed forest of pine, oak and beech, we had a new set of woodland and water birds to aim for, but particularly Black Woodpecker, Caspian Tern and Common Crane.

Strolling towards the lake through tranquil woods, with fresh signs of Wild Boar foraging along the track, we found a Red Squirrel and the Scandinavian *europaea* race of Nuthatch, with white breast and belly, as well as a pair of Marsh Tits and a Green Woodpecker, but the calling Treecreeper remained aloof and there was not a whiff of a Black Woodpecker.



Osprey © Christopher Hall

The trail led to an observation platform, where we found a pair of Whoopers among all the Mute Swans and counted fifteen Great Egrets and a raft of over 300 Pochards. An Osprey and three Caspian Terns were fishing over the lake, while a low level Marsh Harrier harried a large raft of nervous Coots.

Just as we left the platform, a White-tailed Eagle, dropping from on high, causing a noisy commotion among the hundreds of Greylags, which scattered in all directions. Moving on, we soon found a busy mixed group of Chiffchaffs, Redstarts and Pied and Spotted Flycatchers, but still no sign of a Black Woodpecker.



Two Whooper Swans with Greylag Geese and other wildfowl © Christopher Hall

Next, we drove to a second observation point, arriving just in time to see a family group of three Common Cranes flying over in tight formation. While having lunch here, we also enjoyed watching Osprey, Marsh Harrier and Caspian Tern in great light not far from our viewpoint.

After lunch, we visited the nearby Vomb Nature Reserve, where the wide open meadows produced two more Cranes, a pair of remarkably pale Common Buzzards, with white heads and underparts, plus numerous Kestrels and a herd of over thirty Red Deer, with just one stag bearing an impressive set of antlers.

Come late afternoon, we tried one last time for our target woodpecker in a wood of towering beech trees, where several old specimens had been hacked to pieces by a powerful woodpecker. Bingo, within a minute of our arrival, there it was clinging to the top of one of the well pecked dead tree trunks!

From there, it flew by three times, showing off its starring white eyes and red crown. A grand finale to another great day, with 18 new species added to the bird list.

Day 5: Friday 11th September, Nabben and the Flommens Nature Reserve

It was our last full day in the field and we began, as usual, with a walk across the golf course to Nabben, where a flock of eleven Tree Sparrows and then three Siskins, all heading south, were new for the trip.

Along the first lagoon, there were eight Spotted Redshanks, rather than the usual three, with an accompanying Common Redshank and the usual Greenshank. We also spotted a couple of Sand Martins among the exodus of Barn Swallows, and counted seventeen Avocets on the end lagoon, along with one Common Gull among the usual Black-heads.

Waders included four Knot, about six Grey Plovers, eight Bar-tailed Godwits, numerous Lapwings and Ringed Plovers and about 100 Dunlin, plus a Sanderling and a Wood Sandpiper which were both new for the trip.

The adjacent beach was strangely devoid of the usual congregation of Cormorants, gulls and ducks, but then we noticed an immature White-tailed Eagle standing on the far end of the beach, giving a great view of its dappled plumage in the scope.



Sometimes nicknamed the "flying barn door", White-tailed Eagles are huge with a wingspan of up to eight feet © Christopher Hall

Offshore, we watched Common and Sandwich Terns pass by close in, with a Red-breasted Merganser and a flock of about 200 Common Scoters further out on the breezy sound.

Overhead, we notched up an Osprey, a couple of Red Kites, several Marsh Harriers and Honey Buzzards and the usual Kestrels and Sparrowhawks, but then the excitement rose with the appearance of a distant Lesser Spotted Eagle circling above the lighthouse before drifting west across the sound towards Denmark, which was clearly visible on the other side today. Sadly, no one saw it well enough to tick it, so we let it go at the evening log...



White Stork © Christopher Hall

Two White Storks, circling in search of a thermal, added further excitement, and one of them passed by fairly low and close on its journey south.

Next, a skein of 33 Common Cranes appeared in the distance, and we watched them for several minutes, as they spiralled in search of lift before heading southwest across the sound towards Denmark. It was quite poignant to witness a small part of the amazingly long journeys made by all these birds on their way to distant locations, sometimes as far away as Africa!

On our way back to the lighthouse, we noticed that a Little Stint had joined the Spotted Redshanks, and then a Hobby flew over as we passed the lighthouse.

After lunch on the mound, watching more raptors float by, we had a hot drink at the Flommens golf club and then drove to nearby Skanör for a walk around the northern section of the Flommens Nature Reserve, where we found a Whinchat and at least sixteen Wheatears, as well as sixteen Snipe and several Greenshanks.

Suddenly, lots of waders erupted skyward with the appearance of a hunting Peregrine, and a little further on we bumped into a very confiding Fox, so intent on hunting small prey in the short sward that it completely ignored us, until a small lady with an even smaller dog came along, whereupon it shot off at speed.

Further on still, a flock of about twenty Linnets dropped in, and we finished the walk with a couple of Spotted Flycatchers busy hunting from the same bush.

Day 6: Saturday 12th September, Nabben and Ljungen heath

We began, as usual, with a walk across the golf course to Nabben at 8.28am, with a fly-by Honey Buzzard, and in the next half an hour or so, we had the following sightings:

8:30: a Wheatear on the golf course and two fly-by Sparrowhawks;

8:32: two Yellow Wagtails flew over;

8:35: ten Pintail on the first lagoon;

8:36: another Yellow Wagtail fly-by;

8:38: 'Billy the Starling' on a post, and Swallows galore passing by;

8:40: seven Spotted Redshanks, a Common Redshank and a Greenshank in their usual spot on the other side of the first lagoon;

8:42: a female Marsh Harrier flew past, followed by a Honey Buzzard at 8:45;

8:47: a Carrion Crow on a post along with several nearby Hooded Crows;

8:53: Sandwich Terns heading south along the shore.

8:55: we scoped a raft of Eider at the point and not far offshore;

8:57: a smart drake Common Scoter showed very well even closer in to the shore;

9:05: a group of five drake Velvet Scoters, looking fabulous in perfect light, not far from the shore, along with two females;

9:15: while still watching the Velvet Scoters, Mark spotted a Black Woodpecker in flight, and after disappearing behind the lighthouse, it reappeared and flew all the way from the lighthouse, about half a mile away, right past us, before turning round and flying all the way back to the trees by the lighthouse! What an amazing show;



The distinctive silhouette of a Black Woodpecker © Christopher Hall

9:27: Honey Buzzards started appearing over the golf course from a northeasterly direction and passed overhead in waves on their way southwest across the sound to the Danish coast which was clearly visible about ten miles away. About seventeen passed over in the first wave, followed by three more, then another nine and then another seven, with a Marsh Harrier following their route at 9:30;

9:45: a Caspian Tern passed over the lagoon, where we also found one of the Caspian Gulls we had seen earlier in the trip, as well as an immature Little Gull which was our last new sighting for the trip, making a total of 107 bird species seen.

10:05: another five Honey Buzzards drifted over, and on the way back to the lighthouse, we added a flock of around twenty Siskins and a low flying ringtail Pallid Harrier to the day list.

On our way back to the hotel, we stopped off at Ljungen heath for a brief look while having our last picnic lunch, and in just over half an hour we recorded two Swifts, plus Kestrel, Red Kite, Marsh Harrier, two Ospreys and thirty four Honey Buzzards.

Sadly, it was now time to collect our luggage from the hotel and enjoy another visit to Anna's Bakery before returning across the bridge to Copenhagen airport for our flights home.