

## January 2013. Feast of Mammals & Woodpeckers.

Contributed by Jos  
Last Updated Thursday, 31 January 2013

A month of rapidly cooling temperatures, nights dropping to minus 20. And with the sub-zero, an impressive collection of birds at my feeders, not least a Hazel Grouse and a grand total of seven species of woodpecker, including Three-toed Woodpecker and five White-backed Woodpeckers. Equally impressive have been the mammals - highlights including a Polecat in the first week, both Stone and Pine Martens on a nightly basis and one Beaver active despite the snow and ice. Also a Yellow-necked Mouse on my feeders.

It was however an unusual month in as much as I spent the entire period focussing on my Labanoras plot, the only additional observations coming from my Vilnius garden. Mammals: Truly captivating at Labanoras during the month. Chiefly recorded via an automated trip camera, the variety and numbers of individuals impressed me no end. First in the line of exciting mammals came with the discovery of a brave/foolhardy Beaver emerging from the ice at the beginning of the month - a few relatively mild days before the temperatures plunged to below minus 20 allowed the animal to gnaw a single hole in the otherwise frozen pools. A risky venture for the Beaver, leaving the animal very vulnerable, it did however make for easy positioning of my camera on the relevant spot. The Beaver duly popped out, but totally unexpected was another mammal that came investigating ... one splendid Polecat, the first I have ever seen on my land! Both the Beaver and Polecat can be seen in the linked video: A Night On the Ice. In the forest and forest edge, almost regardless of where I placed the camera, a bait of apples or fat enticed critters from dusk to dawn, the tops being Stone and Pine Martens almost every night. Apparent from the videos, there are at least three different Pine Martens and two Stone Martens visiting at present, the latter although slightly smaller seeming dominant whenever the two species meet. Quite different behaviour noted too, the Pine Martens readily climbing to fat attached to tree trunks, the Stone Martens purely sticking to apples on the ground. An assortment of shots of these two species viewable in this video: (link to follow) Roe Deer, Red Fox, Wild Boar and, during the day, corvids and Grey-headed Woodpecker, also attracted to the baits provided. Other mammals recorded during the month included Bank Vole, a Yellow-necked Mouse (sharing a peanut feeder with Blue Tits!) and, by tracks only, Elk. Birds: Excellent though the mammal were, the bird mix was also little short of superb - the highlights being a Hazel Grouse on the 19th and a right bonanza of woodpeckers throughout, totals as following:

- Black Woodpecker - two birds present in the swamp zone, the male possibly using the feeders again.
- Three-toed Woodpecker - the wintering male present for the whole month, usually found in its favoured spot.
- Grey-headed Woodpecker - a pair at the feeders daily.
- White-backed Woodpecker - becoming ever more common at the feeders, two males and three females now present.
- Great Spotted Woodpecker - ten to twelve birds visiting the feeders.
- Middle Spotted Woodpecker - three or four birds visiting the feeders.
- Lesser Spotted Woodpecker - occasional male wandering in the forest.

A Bird Log: As an indication of intensity at the feeding station, the below is a log of activity over a sample half hour (26 January, 13.00-13.30): Eight feeders in place: five peanut feeders (F1-F5) in an arc about two to five metres from the cabin; a table with sunflowers and a peanut feeder (T) and a further two peanut feeders (A and B) situated 30 to 60 metres further back. 13.00: Male Grey-headed Woodpecker on F3, moves to A; male Great Spotted Woodpecker on B; four Marsh Tits on table; Jay briefly in. 13.01: Male White-backed Woodpecker on trees adjacent. 13.02: Male Grey-headed Woodpecker displaced by male Great Spotted Woodpecker, moves A to B; male White-backed Woodpecker onto F3; about 25 Great Tits present, five Blue Tits. 13.03: White-backed Woodpecker moves to F2; female Great Spotted Woodpecker onto F3. 13.04: Male Grey-headed Woodpecker returns to A. 13.06: Above three woodpeckers still feeding; a lot of tit activity. 13.08: New male Great Spotted Woodpecker displaces Grey-headed Woodpecker on A, Grey-headed Woodpecker moves to B. 13.09: Jay displaces male Great Spotted Woodpecker; female Great Spotted Woodpecker moves F3 to F2; male White-backed Woodpecker moves to A. 13.10: Male Grey-headed Woodpecker to F3; Marsh Tits now six. 13.11: Male White-backed Woodpecker on trees adjacent to A; male Grey-headed Woodpecker above F4; four Great Spotted Woodpeckers feeding - male on F2, female on F3, female on A, male on B. 13.12: Male Grey-headed Woodpecker to F2; male White-backed Woodpecker to F4. 13.14: All tits flush (spooky due to Sparrowhawk earlier). Existing woodpeckers remain present; new female Great Spotted Woodpecker onto F2; three Jays around feeders A and B. 13.15: Mice rustling in roof of cabin, probably Yellow-necked Mice. 13.17: Black Woodpecker in trees beyond feeders; four Great Spotted Woodpeckers present (one on F2, others in trees), Grey-headed Woodpecker and White-backed Woodpecker still feeding. 13.18: Male Great Spotted Woodpecker displaces Grey-headed Woodpecker, latter moves to F2 for stand off with existing Great Spotted Woodpecker. 13.19: Male White-backed Woodpecker departs feeder to adjacent tree; male Grey-headed Woodpecker moves to A. 13.20: Male White-backed Woodpecker moves to B; male Grey-headed Woodpecker departs. 13.22: White-backed Woodpecker moves to A, Great Spotted Woodpeckers on F3, F4 and B; slight lull in activity amongst Great, Blue and Marsh Tits. 13.24: Jay on bird table, flushing returning tits. 13.25: Willow Tit taking sunflower seeds from ground; male Grey-headed Woodpecker returns to F2, immediately displaced by incoming male White-backed Woodpecker. 13.26: Male Grey-headed Woodpecker flies up to tree above F4; female Grey-headed Woodpecker arrives. Great Spotted Woodpecker displaces male White-backed Woodpecker. 13.28: Two female White-backed Woodpeckers arrive, one to B, one to F4; male White-backed Woodpecker still on F2. 13.29: Five Great Spotted Woodpeckers now present; all three White-backed Woodpeckers around B. 13.30: Male Middle Spotted Woodpecker arrives, immediately feeding on F4; female White-backed Woodpecker moves to F3. Away from Labanoras, action at my Vilnius garden paled somewhat in comparison, but additional species at this locality included both Coal and Crested Tits visiting the feeders, a pair of each. Also one Blackbird continuing to winter and occasional Fieldfares.