

## March 2013. Spring, mega minus in Lithuania & Norway.

Contributed by Jos  
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Temperatures far below zero throughout the month, but some good times regardless, starting with Raccoon Dogs out from hibernation in Lithuania, plus woodpeckers drumming, and a super expedition to find Musk Ox in Norway.

1-3 March. Weather Kicking. March 1st, official start of spring in Lithuania. Nobody told the weather - a raging blizzard to kick the month off, some of the worst road conditions of the past six months, dozens of cars crashing and me getting totally stuck on my land. Despite the high winds and blowing snow, plenty of indications of spring in the shelter of the woodland - displaying White-backed Woodpeckers, drumming Middle Spotted Woodpeckers, Great Tits in song. Not much more seen on the bird front, but Roe Deers padding through the deep snow, Bank Voles at the feeders, Pine Martens still coming in at night and, further hints of a winter about to expire, the first Raccoon Dog of the season emerging from the burrow. Back at my car, things were deteriorating fast - not only was the car sitting up to its axles in snow, but so too was the road vanishing. Snow was horizontal, temperature below zero, it was a battle to just open the car door! Two hours of huff, car shifted all of two metres. Bugger, hiked off and found a tractor to haul me out!. Back in Vilnius, hordes of Siskins also piling down onto my feeders, another feature typical of early spring. Off on travels in the coming days, hopefully some real spring will be waiting for me on return!

8-11 March. Norway, Musk Ox and Snowfields. A mapcap idea to hike to the tops of Norways highest mountains to seek out Musk Ox in winter, an excellent trip as it turned out - two stunning Musk Ox, sparkling snowfields and temperatures that hit minus 28 C! For a full report of this successful trip, [CLICK HERE](#)

16-23 March. Spring Suspended. By rights, as March creeps towards its end, the yodelling of Cranes should be echoing around my land by now, Skylarks passing over in song and even a few early butterflies on the wing. Some hope this year, a blanket of snow still carpets all, night temperatures continuing to dip to chilly lows of minus 16 and an icy wind adding that extra little bite! Heralding a spring soon to come however, some hints of movement. As well as an invasion of Siskins, oodles and oodles appearing at my Vilnius feeders, my first true spring migrants of the year appeared at Labanoras on the 23rd - two rather lost-looking Starlings plodding around on a crust of ice. Also one smart Bullfinch taking sunflower seeds at my feeders and, an action I see almost every winter, a Treecreeper adopting the feeding the station, this individual hopping about on the snow beneath feeders, a most curious behaviour for this species. Also at the feeders, still a right bevy of woodpeckers, six species still present - amongst the highlights, plenty of courtship amongst the several White-backed Woodpeckers and a female Grey-headed Woodpecker popping in with regularity.

Out from hibernation, a Raccoon Dog is now active every night, as are plenty of Roe Deers. All waiting for the snow to melt, spring can not be far away ...or can it, the forecast talks of at least one more sub-zero week!

30-31 March. Snow, Over and Out. Low and behold, more snow! Sure crushed any vague hope of any bonanza of incoming migrants to end the month with. As it was, a few Common Buzzards seemed to be on the move, perhaps a smattering of new thrushes in (singing Blackbird and Fieldfare), but otherwise nothing at all on my travels. Still, can't moan too much, the beauties in the pictures above still gracing my feeders. Roll on April, the doors to spring are just waiting to burst open...