

## May 2013. Classic Spring Times.

Contributed by Jos  
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A good start to the month with a male Collared Flycatcher amongst the incoming migrants, a Muskrat on my land at Labanoras and a pair of Wrynecks in my garden. Other highlights included several Large Tortoiseshells, a number of Hawfinches at my garden feeders and Montagu's Harrier at Labanoras. By mid-month, a bevy of butterflies, including Swallowtails and Short-tailed Blues, along with continuing arrivals of migrants, Honey Buzzards, Red-backed Shrikes and Golden Orioles amongst the collection.

1-2 May. Glory in Black and White. For much of the second half of April, a massive backlog of migrants had been pushing through, the surge quite impressive and the skies a picture of late birds moving north. With the backlog cleared, migration has now slowed to a steady stream, species such as Cuckoos, Whinchats and Common Redstarts all arriving in numbers. On the cusp of the month however, an arrival of Pied Flycatchers across Lithuania brought a few more illustrious cousins hitch-hiking. In the years prior to 2013, Lithuania had recorded a grand total of about six Collared Flycatchers ever. In final days of April and first days of May though, at least five were present, singing males at sites inland and three migrants on the coast. A pleasant walk in one of Vilnius's main park resulted in a grand sighting of one such bird, a male singing and laying claim to territory right over the head of numerous joggers, kids on bicycles and assorted other passers-by. What a cracking bird, probably a first-summer bird due to hints of slight greying on the rear of the neck. Despite the apparent rarity of the species in Lithuania, Collared Flycatchers are responsibly common breeders only a little south of the border in Poland and I suspect the species is widely under-recorded in the south of the country. either way, a very nice bird to start May off, even more so for the Common Redstarts and Wood Warblers also singing alongside. Elsewhere, with sunny days at last in control, a smattering of good butterflies, including several Large Tortoiseshells at Labanoras, livened up the days, as did at least eight Hawfinches at my feeders in Vilnius. 5 May. Day of the Muskrat. Another Red Letter Day at Labanoras. Positively warm, the land basking at 20 C for the first time this year, the rising temperatures attracting in the arrival of a second wave of migrants - Thrush Nightingales, Icterine Warbler, Wood Warbler and Garden Warbler all singing their territories this day. Also a nice male Montagu's Harrier passing through, Tree Pipits in song flight and Lesser Spotted Eagles performing their butterfly displays. Lesser Spotted Woodpecker nesting in the same group of trees as last year. Not for these, the Red Letter Day label however, but instead for a surprise mammal - quietly cruising through the flood forest near one of the beaver lodges, one smart Muskrat, a new mammal for my land (the 20th mammal to be recorded so far). Continuing the mammal theme, quite an impressive collection visiting at night - Roe Deer, Raccoon Dogs, Badgers, Red Fox, Stone Martens ... captured on my night cam, all viewable on the video below: \*\*\* Spring Awakening \*\*\* 9-12 May. Rolling In, Birds and Good Weather. With temperatures soaring to 28 C, oh how pleasant it is in Lithuania these days! And with the sun, the latest migrants to return include Serins and a pair of Wrynecks in my Vilnius garden and a whole bunch of gems to my Labanoras patch - Red-backed Shrikes, Golden Orioles, more Thrush Nightingales and Icterine Warblers, a few Spotted Flycatchers and a bucketload of Common Whitethroats. Also Common Swifts, Wood Warblers, Sedge Warblers and, amongst the abundant Swallows, my first House Martins of the year. To celebrate the arrival of 'real weather', I decided upon an overnight in my cabin ...to which an enormous thunderstorm promptly brewed, lightning bolts illuminating the forest, thunder rumbling all around. Still, t'was most evocative - a Bittern booming in the reeds from within the flood forest, a couple of Beavers cruising the waterways just before dark. Come morning, a Thrush Nightingale belted out its melodies a metre distant and, as the sun rose, quite a collection of butterflies appeared on the wing, Wood Whites, Map Butterflies, Orange Tips and Holly Blues amongst the spoils. Also, located the nest hole of a White-backed Woodpecker and encountered one very strangely tame Short-tailed Field Vole pottering about in the grass - not just a little tame, but totally unfussed by my presence, even allowing me to move a stalk of grass blocking the view for a photograph! 18-19 May. Butterfly Fiesta. Labanoras, basking in the delights of a mini-heatwave, skyward I peered, birding from a comfy chair, coffee in hand. Plenty to help the slurping ... Cranes and White Storks flying over, Marsh Harriers quartering the meadow, a Lesser Spotted Eagle soaring overhead and a couple of Hobbies bombing past, truly a feel of summer now. Also, a bumper crop of last-wave migrants in field and forest - Wrynecks around nestboxes, Golden Orioles in song, a pair of Red-backed Shrikes on a thicket, at least four Corncrakes calling in the meadow, all good stuff. Bird of the day however was a rather more humble visitor, long overdue to make an appearance on my land, one fly-over Common Redshank - common in Lithuania, but never recorded on my land before, this bird was very much the result of chance, I was scanning the skies to the south when I picked it up! Mid-May signals another event in the annual calendar - with good weather, a major upswing in the butterfly season. Having already seen quite a variety over preceding days, the 19th saw me treading my favourite route south of the capital. The result was most splendid, nineteen species (impressive for so early in the season), including Swallowtail, Green Hairstreak, Short-tailed Blue and several very early Pale Clouded Yellows:

- Swallowtail
- Green-veined White
- Orange Tip
- Pale Clouded Yellow
- Brimstone
- Wood White
- Green Hairstreak
- Sooty Copper

- Short-tailed Blue
- Large Tortoiseshell
- Peacock
- Red Admiral
- Map Butterfly
- Heath Fritillary
- Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary
- Weaver's Fritillary
- Small Heath
- Speckled Wood
- Grizzled Skipper
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