

June 2013. Summer Smalls.

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Off on travels across America at the end of the month, but in the meantime Lithuania basked in a mini-heatwave, daily highs approaching 30 C, plenty of sudden violent thunderstorms and the annual bonanza of breeding birds livening up the countryside. Butterflies, frogs and small mammals too, all in all a good period on the home ground.

1-8 June. Micro Delights. With the purchase of a micro lens, a nice selection of close encounters with the little beasties that lurk upon my land and around, Common, Marsh and Moor Frogs heading the cast, Common Toad also pictured, plus an assortment of butterflies including Painted Ladies and more early Pale Clouded Yellows. On the bird front, migration has now long-ceased, activity at my Labanoras plot all revolving around breeding species - Corncrakes grating away in the meadows, at least two pairs of Red-backed Shrikes and two pairs of Wrynecks on territory, Marsh Warblers and Common Rosefinches now also staking claim to favoured quarters. White Storks feeding chicks these days, a Black Kite wandering over with regularity, one Osprey too. Other odds and sods of note, several Marsh Harriers quartering the meadow, a Snipe flushed from wet sedge and a flock of 11 Mute Swans flying, the latter being the highest count for this species over my land. 15-17 June. Summer Warms Another few days gone by, very much a pattern of summer contentment settling in - Golden Orioles feeding young near my Vilnius garden, Hawfinches and Great Spotted Woodpeckers bringing youngsters to my feeders. Also a White-letter Hairstreak fluttering in to pause a moment in my garden and, up at Labanoras, a bevy of good birds amongst the breeders on territory. Heading the cast, one very vocal Greenish Warbler (second record for my land) zipping around the same area as the breeding Red-breasted Flycatchers, a nice juxtaposition of birds, made even better by the backdrop of nestful of squawking baby Middle Spotted Woodpeckers just adjacent! Other birds of note, the regular Black Kite patrolling the skies, a total of about 30 Black Terns at a breeding colony just adjacent and a reeling River Warbler at dawn. Less expected, one magnificent Elk too, a stately female plodding from the meadows back through regenerating alders to the forest beyond. 20-23 June. Butterflies Ahoy! Gearing up towards the peak butterfly season, numbers and varieties are climbing quite nicely at present, a gentle meander on the 20th through my favoured patch south of the Vilnius notching up a full 35 species, including notables such as both Lesser Marbled Fritillary and Queen of Spain Fritillary, Eastern Bath White and Large Heath, all species with restricted or patchy ranges in Lithuania. Total species count for the day:

- Black-veined White
- Small White
- Green-veined White
- Eastern Bath White
- Wood White
- Pale Clouded Yellow
- Brimstone
- White-letter Hairstreak
- Large Copper
- Scarce Copper
- Purple-shot Copper
- Silver-studded Blue
- Amanda's Blue
- Purple Emperor
- White Admiral
- Large Tortoiseshell
- Small Tortoiseshell
- Painted Lady
- Comma
- Dark Green Fritillary
- High Brown Fritillary
- Queen of Spain Fritillary
- Lesser Marbled Fritillary
- Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary
- Heath Fritillary
- Meadow Brown
- Ringlet
- Large Heath
- Small Heath
- Pearly Heath
- Chestnut Heath
- Large Chequered Skipper
- Essex Skipper
- Small Skipper
- Large Skipper Two days later, a change of habitat and a whole bunch of additional butterflies, including both Purple Emperor and Lesser Purple Emperor, Granville Fritillary, Moorland Clouded Yellow and Reverdin's Blue. Full species list:
- Small White

- Large White
 - Green-veined White
 - Wood White
 - Moorland Clouded Yellow
 - Briimstone
 - Scarce Copper
 - Purple-shot Copper
 - Silver-studded Blue
 - Reverdin's Blue
 - Amanda's Blue
 - Purple Emperor
 - Lesser Purple Emperor
 - White Admiral
 - Red Admiral
 - Large Tortoiseshell
 - Small Tortoiseshell
 - Comma
 - Silver-washed Fritillary
 - High Brown Fritillary
 - Glanville's Fritillary
 - Spotted Fritillary
 - Heath Fritillary
 - Meadow Brown
 - Ringlet
 - Chestnut Heath
 - Large Wall Brown
 - Large Chequered Skipper
 - Essex Skipper
 - Little Skipper
 - Large Skipper
- Also some pretty good birding - two pairs of breeding Great Grey Shrikes on my wanders, a couple of Hoopoes and several Woodlarks. Back in my garden, loads of Hawfinches now bringing young to the feeders too. 27 June Onwards. Road Trip USA, Salton Sea to Arctic Ocean. A one month trip from the deserts of southern California to the tundra of the Arctic coast of Alaska. Full details [HERE](#) .