

Birding in the Era of Coronavirus, STAGE EIGHT, November 2020.

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Stage Eight. National Quarantine, Bird Exodus. November, most birds long since migrated out, the weather generally grey, damp and drab, always of month of gloom in Lithuania - lovely! Add the imposition of a national quarantine to curb the spiralling Covid cases and all the ingredients are there for a pretty gloomy month...but that said it did start in style with a very impressive Ural Owl in Vilnius city centre!

- 2 November. Hello Owl. A rare visit to the city, sitting minding my business in my flat, and so the phone rings 'Are you in Vilnius?'. Well, yes I was, and then the very fortuitous news was relayed...a mere four-minute from my abode there was a Ural Owl sitting in a tree! Well, that was pretty staggering, Ural Owls are not very common in Lithuania, indeed I have only ever seen two before in the country. Pretty sharpish I relocated myself and what a glorious bird, perched high in a birch in a courtyard, tucked up against a building above a car park, one stunning Ural Owl casually peering around as Hooded Crows gave it some grief. A mass twitch by Lithuanian standards, soon eight people or so were amassed to admire this bird. And then some kind gent invited us into the adjacent building where we were able to view the bird from a roof window...classic bird! 3-5 November. Labanoras Blues. Cool, wet and windy, Labanoras was not looking its best! Birding was also not helped by the relatively mild weather keeping my feeders quite quiet. Persuaded myself to wander around, White-backed Woodpecker and Grey-headed Woodpeckers offered promise that my feeding stations might soon pick up, Great Spotted Woodpecker and Middle Spotted Woodpecker already visiting. Woodland overall quiet, late Wrens scoulding here and there, roving flocks of Marsh Tits adding a touch of life. News at a country level not very good - Covid cases sitting at 1000 a day, rate per hundred thousand higher now than, for example, Germany. After doing nothing for three weeks in the run up to a national election, the now outgoing government announced a National Quarantine to come into force from the 7th ..bars, restaurants, recreation facilities to close, group size restrictions, etc. No prohibition on domestic travel, international travel more restrictive ...gulp. 6-13 November. Massive Rise in Covid 19. 1000, 1650, 1970, 2100 the soaring tally of day counts, Lithuania has joined the European league!

- In ever continuing mild weather however, some good birds at Labanoras - one Hazel Grouse (my first of the year at Labanoras), one Kingfisher (my sixth of the autumn), one Rough-legged Buzzard and several Crested Tits, plus the more usual goodies such as Black Woodpecker, Grey-headed Woodpecker and White-backed Woodpecker. In the meadows, unusual for November, also a flock of about 49 Starlings.