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Biebrza Site Guide PDF

PREVIEW

Łukasz Mazurek

Where to watch birds
and large mammals of the Biebrza Marshes

The most comprehensive, practical information you can find,
powered by GPS coordinates, detailed maps and species lists.

WILD POLAND Site Guides

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Contents

Contents 3

Preface 4

Introduction 5
When to visit 5
Getting around 8
What else do you need to know 9
How to use this book 9
Common species in the Biebrza 10

Middle Basin 12
1 Goniądz 13
2 Szafranki 16
3 Wólka Piaseczna 17
4 Brzeziny Kapickie 19
5 Budne 20
6 Osowiec - Białogrądy 21
7 Osowiec Fort II 21
8 Kapice 23
9 Dolistowo 25
10 Kopytkowo 26
11 Mogilnice 26
12 Zabiele 27
13 Karpowicze 29
14 Kuwasy 31
15 Dobra Droga Dike 33
16 Jegrznia Bridge 33
17 Grzędy & Red Bog 34

Southern Basin 36
18 Mścichy 37
19 Biały Grąd 39
20 Okrasin 39
21 Karwowo 39
22 Radziłów to Racibory 40
23 Łoje Awissa 40
24 Chyliny 41
25 Brzostowo 43
26 Mocarze 46
27 Szostaki 47
28 Burzyn 47
29 Rutkowskie 49
30 Sieburczyn 51
31 Wierciszewo 51
32 Ruś 53
33 Wizna Bridge 55
34 Pulwy 56
35 Sand Dunes 57
36 Grądy Woniecko - Maliszewo Meadows 57
37 Grądy Woniecko - Bronowo Meadows 59
38 Wizna Medieval Settlement Fortifications 61
39 Wizna Sewage Treatment Plant 61
40 Bronowo Bridge 61
41 Sulin Dike 63
42 Góra Strękowa Hill 64
43 Giełczyn Meadows 65
44 Zajki Meadows 65
45 Zajki Road 67
46 Czar's Road - Bog Alder Forest 67
47 Długa Luka Boardwalk 69
48 Bagno Ławki Watchtower 69
49 Honczarowska Dike 71
50 Gugny 73
51 Dobarz 75
52 Barwik 75
53 Dobarz - Goniądz Forest 77
54 Raised Bog 78

Extras 79
55 Tykocin 79
56 Pentowo 80
57 Knyszyn Zamek 81
58 Czechowizna - Zygmunta Augusta Lake 82

Bird List 83

Mammal List 89

Index of Maps 89

Index of Places 90

Index of Rare Species 91

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marked trees and posts in the field.

Tickets apply to all visitors aged 7 and above. You can buy them in many bars and shops but best to ask in agro-tourist pensions, hotels and National Park's offices. Groups of more than 7 persons should move around with a National Park licensed guide.

For professional photography outside public roads and marked walking trails a special fee applies and written permission from the Park's authorities is necessary.

What else do you need to know and take with you?

- A good **mosquito** repellent from May onwards is your closest friend. April is usually **mosquito** safe. **Mosquitoes** do not bother locals, good repellent can be difficult to find in rural areas. **Mosquitoes** in Poland are disease free, **ticks** are not so protect your legs and get your repellent if you have a chance. In some years there can be many **ticks**, in others - just a few.
- In June and until August **horse flies** become by far more annoying than **mosquitoes**. There is little you can do against them apart from long sleeves and trousers.
- Wellingtons are useful until June, when it makes more sense to use sandals for marshy trails. Do you need them at all? Probably you could live without them but personally, I prefer not to worry about mud and water and just enjoy the views and wildlife. It also makes you more independent in the field. Sometimes a perfect view is from just 2 feet away which is.. in the mud.
- Take the hat and gloves (wind proof is very useful) until late May. It can also be sweltering hot during the day and quite breezy on occasion.
- Telescope is often your second closest friend after the mozzie spray. A telescope is your chance to see things up closer without disturbing the wild animals. Do not hesitate to take it. And take the heavier tripod if you have a choice so you can enjoy the views even in the wind on a blustery day.
- If you intend to come here in the spring, replay your bird songs and calls CD if you do not feel sure about your identification skills. And take them with you on an mp3 player (just to recheck back in the hotel room, not to lure the bird). Songs and bird calls are how the local guides find birds!
- Coca Cola, Red Bull, chewing gum, chocolate bars are found everywhere here, you can leave those at home. Condoms can be difficult to get in rural areas. And one more thing: there will not be enough time to try all the local beer and vodka varieties.

How to use this book

GPS COORDINATES

53°29'28"N
22°44'01"E

The GPS coordinates given for the individual sites refer to parking spots, viewing towers & platforms or other spots like middle of the bridge or a spot on the side of the road where you can park your car and start the walk or start watching.

GRID NUMBER

C2

The symbol right of the coordinates is the respective grid number from the

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6 Osowiec - Białogrądy

[ohsohvyets - byahwohgrohndyh]

53°30'16"N
22°38'05"E

B2

Great for Geese on migration. Large flocks often feed in the fields and flooded meadows here and rare species can be spotted. A must stop in March and April.

Getting around & things to see

Driving along the road from Białogrądy to Osowiec watch out for **Geese** feeding in the fields. See Middle Basin map on page 12.

7 Osowiec Fort II

[ohsohvyets]

53°29'30"N
22°38'22"E

B2

Many tourists come here for the WWI Russian military forts and the view, but this spot also affords a fantastic location for bird watching. It can be a busy spot in high season but is highly recommended for Bluethroats, Penduline Tits, Savi's Warblers, Beaver activity and Fire-bellied Toads.

Getting around

Leaving your car parked at the poplar trees you wouldn't have to walk far as there are **Bluethroats** breeding around the moat of the fort which are easily seen just from the parking site. Additionally, the moat is home for many **Amphibian** species, including the handsome **Fire-bellied Toad** whose silent booming can be heard from a distance. Another option is to park on the road at the ruins south from the main fort at 53°29'23"N, 22°38'39"E. The advantage of this spot is that you are closer to the old ruins and gain a spectacular view out over the main fortifications.

On the other side of the road there is a watchtower and a boardwalk through the marshes. And even though they are often occupied by loud school groups these spots offer some excellent birding sites and are highly recommended to visit. The boardwalk finishes at the main road so you can either come back to the car park the same way or continue to the other end and either walk back along the asphalt road or have your vehicle transported to this end to pick you up. When you get to the other end you will see another tall watch tower close to some ruins of the forts that you may wish to climb up. However I would rather go in the opposite direction, into the bushes on the other side of the main road in search of **River Warblers, Rosefinches** or even more **Bluethroats** and **Penduline Tits.**

SPECIES LIST

COMMON:
031 **Great Bittern,** *Botaurus stellaris*
085 **Marsh Harrier,** *Circus aeruginosus*
087 **Montagu's Harrier,** *Circus pygargus*
259 **Thrush Nightingale,** *Luscinia luscinia*
261 **Bluethroat,** *Luscinia svecica*
281 **Garden Warbler,** *Sylvia borin*
283 **Lesser Whitethroat,** *Sylvia curruca*
287 **Common Whitethroat,** *Sylvia communis*
295 **Savi's Warbler,** *Locustella luscinioides*
297 **Marsh Warbler,** *Acrocephalus palustris*
321 **Penduline Tit,** *Remiz pendulinus*
327 **Red-backed Shrike,** *Lanius collurio*
329 **Great Grey Shrike,** *Lanius excubitor*
359 **Scarlet Rosefinch,** *Carpodacus erythrinus*

Beaver, *Castor fiber*

ALSO SEEN:
035 **Black Stork,** *Ciconia nigra*
075 **White-tailed Eagle,** *Haliaeetus albicilla*
079 **Lesser Spotted Eagle,** *Aquila pomarina*
091 **Honey Buzzard,** *Pernis apivorus*
093 **Sparrowhawk,** *Accipiter nisus*
093 **Goshawk,** *Accipiter gentilis*
119 **Common Crane,** *Grus grus*
341 **Golden Oriole,** *Oriolus oriolus*

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Things to see

In the bushes around the tower you can see **Bluethroats**. It is actually a very reliable, easily accessible but not fully discovered spot for this species. There are usually a few males singing along the boardwalk, too so it is good to take your time there and you may be rewarded with some good views of them. **Penduline Tits** build their wobbly nests often very close to the boardwalk. Just spend some time following birds with nest material or food and you may see the nest that sometimes is very close but still quite hidden and not that obvious. Bushes along the path are full of *Sylvia* **Warblers** and if you take the first platform to the right just wait for the **Savi's Warblers** to come up the reed stems buzzing. You can also try to spot the latter from the watchtower. Just scan the reeds, they

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the forest there is a bit more space to park your car on the side of the road. There have been **White-backed** and **Grey-headed Woodpeckers** seen in the area quite often and their feeding signs are obvious in the trees.

1.5 km north of there is a quaint house - providing a convenient place to safely park your car or turn around. Leaving your car there and going for a short walk north towards the bridge might be a good idea in April. This habitat is very picturesque in the early spring when the ice melts and vegetation starts peeping through. **Marsh Marigolds** flower in the wetter areas whereas the drier patches are taken by other colourful ground flora. March and April is also the time when you can spot both of the mentioned **Woodpeckers** plus the **Lesser-spotted Woodpecker, Cranes** (in their breeding habitat), **Eagles** prowling overhead or young **Toads** and **Frogs** in the waters.

Driving further north of the house, after about 1 km you should also start to look out for **Elks**. In April they move out from the dry pine forests towards the marshes and wet areas. Hungry after the winter, they often feed on willow buds just at the side of the road. Take your chance and have a dawn patrol there. Meeting an **Elk** face to face is always an unforgettable experience.

After about 1.5 km north of the house you will reach another bridge. On its eastern side there is a **Beaver** lodge and the animals have been seen here occasionally in the early morning. In the water you may see **Common, Moor Frogs** and **Common Toads** and on the bridge itself - **Common (Viviparous) Lizards** later in the year.

Driving north of this point continue looking out for **Elks** in April and May.

***Elks** are a common sighting while on the Czar's Road.*

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49 Honczarowska Dike

[hohnchahrohvskah]

53°18′52″N
22°36′08″E

B3

A 7 km walk with Aquatic Warblers in the evening, Orchids, Butterflies and Elks all likely to be seen.

Getting around

It is a 4 km long mid marsh dike going through different marshy habitats. For about 2 km it goes through forests and willow shrub with a few clearings. Later it opens out into the marsh and at 3.4 km there is a watchtower. You should return the same way.

Things to see

In April and May it is a great spot to see an **Elk** and admire **Beaver** activity. If you are there at dusk or dawn and keep quiet, you may encounter an **Elk** literally face to face. **Black Grouse** are possible at dawn as well. From May till July it is also a great spot for watching **Aquatic Warblers** - many of them sing at dusk just around the watchtower. In May, keep your eyes peeled for **Bluethroats,**

SPECIES LIST

COMMON:
085 **Marsh Harrier,** *Circus aeruginosus*
105 **Black Grouse,** *Tetrao tetrix*
111 **Corncrake,** *Crex crex*
151 **Jack Snipe,** *Lymnocryptes minimus*
151 **Woodcock,** *Scolopax rusticola*
259 **Thrush Nightingale,** *Luscinia luscinia*
291 **Aquatic Warbler,** *Acrocephalus paludicola*
293 **Grasshopper Warbler,** *Locustella naevia*
295 **Savi's Warbler,** *Locustella luscinioides*
295 **River Warbler,** *Locustella fluviatilis*
297 **Marsh Warbler,** *Acrocephalus palustris*
359 **Scarlet Rosefinch,** *Carpodacus erythrinus*

Elk, *Alces Alces*

ALSO SEEN:
079 **Lesser Spotted Eagle,** *Aquila pomarina*
079 **Greater Spotted Eagle,** *Aquila clanga*
087 **Montagu's Harrier,** *Circus pygargus*
119 **Common Crane,** *Grus grus*
261 **Bluethroat,** *Luscinia svecica*
281 **Barred Warbler,** *Sylvia nisoria*

Vast sedge meadows are a stunning landscape and home for hundreds of...

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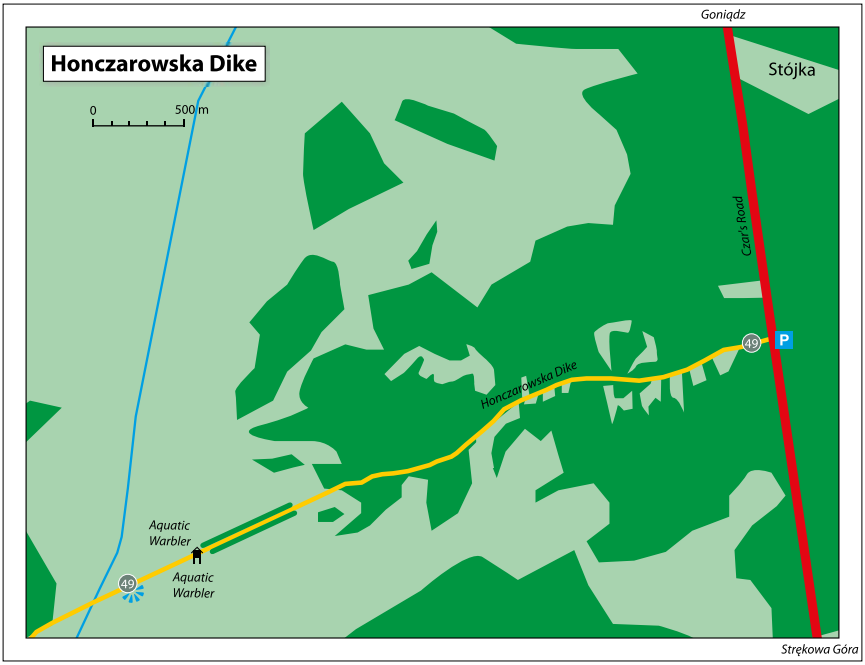

Barred Warblers (and other *Sylvia* **Warblers** also), **River** and **Grasshopper Warblers** and **Rosefinch**. **Birds of Prey** like **Eagles**, **Harriers** and **Short-eared Owl** are about as well. It is a good walk to do in late May and June for the flowers and **Butterflies**. On the sides of the dike you will see the edges of sandy dunes which are the habitat for rare plants like **Siberian Iris, Lady's Slipper** and many other **Orchids**. Some of the rare **Butterflies** to observe here are: **Scarce Fritillary, Scarce Heath** or **Clouded Apollo**.

...Aquatic Warblers that passionately sing perched up at dusk.

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Bird List

The full list of birds of the North-eastern Poland, in systematic order.

Status:

B - breeding

P - passing

V - vagrant

Arrival:

MM-DD format, median date calculated for last several years

W - wintering

BIRD NAMES					
Latin name	**English**	**German**	**Polish**	**Status**	**Arrival**
Gavia stellata	Red-throated Loon	Sterntaucher	Nur rdzawoszyi	P	
Gavia arctica	Arctic Loon	Prachttaucher	Nur czarnoszyi	P	
Gavia immer	Common Loon	Eistaucher	Lodowiec	V	
Tachybaptus ruficollis	Little Grebe	Zwergtaucher	Perkozek	B	W
Podiceps cristatus	Great Crested Grebe	Haubentaucher	Perkoz dwuczuby	B	03-21
Podiceps grisegena	Red-necked Grebe	Rothalstaucher	Perkoz rdzawoszyi	B	04-03
Podiceps auritus	Slavonian Grebe	Ohrentaucher	Perkoz rogaty	P	
Podiceps nigricollis	Black-necked Grebe	Schwarzhalstaucher	Zausznik	B	04-10
Phalacrocorax carbo	Great Cormorant	Kormoran	Kormoran	B	03-10
Phalacrocorax pygmeus	Pygmy Cormorant	Zwergscharbe	Kormoran mały	V	
Pelecanus onocrotalus	Great White Pelican	Rosapelikan	Pelikan różowy	V	
Botaurus stellaris	Great Bittern	Rohrdommel	Bąk	B	03-27
Ixobrychus minutus	Little Bittern	Zwergdommel	Bączek	B	06-02
Nycticorax nycticorax	Night-Heron	Nachtreiher	Ślepowron	P	
Ardeola ralloides	Squacco Heron	Rallenreiher	Czapla modronosa	V	
Egretta garzetta	Little Egret	Seidenreiher	Czapla nadobna	V	
Egretta alba	Great White Egret	Silberreiher	Czapla biała	B	03-26
Ardea cinerea	Grey Heron	Fischreiher	Czapla siwa	B	03-04
Ardea purpurea	Purple Heron	Purpurreiher	Czapla purpurowa	P	
Ciconia nigra	Black Stork	Schwarzstorch	Bocian czarny	B	03-28
Ciconia ciconia	White Stork	Weissstorch	Bocian biały	B	03-15
Plegadis falcinellus	Glossy Ibis	Sichler	Ibis kasztanowaty	V	
Platalea leucorodia	Spoonbill	Löffler	Warzęcha	V	
Phoenicopterus ruber	Greater Flamingo	Flamingo	Czerwonak	V	
Cygnus olor	Mute Swan	Höckerschwan	Łabędź niemy	B	W
Cygnus atratus	Black Swan	Schwarzschwan	Łabędź czarny	V	
Cygnus columbianus	Bewicks Swan	Zwergschwan	Łabędź czarnodzioby	P	03-16
Cygnus cygnus	Whooper Swan	Singschwan	Łabędź krzykliwy	B	W
Anser fabalis	Bean Goose	Saatgans	Gęś zbożowa	P	03-11
Anser brachyrhynchus	Pink-footed Goose	Kurzschnabelgans	Gęś krótkodzioba	P	
Anser albifrons	White-fronted Goose	Blässgans	Gęś białoczelna	P	03-05
Anser erythropus	Lesser White-fronted Goose	Zwerggans	Gęś mała	V	
Anser anser	Greylag Goose	Graugans	Gęgawa	B	02-27
Anser indicus	Bar-headed Goose	Streifengans	Gęś tybetańska	V	
Anser caerulescens	Snow Goose	Schneegans	Śnieżyca	V	
Branta canadensis	Canada Goose	Kanadagans	Bernikla kanadyjska	V	
Branta leucopsis	Barnacle Goose	Weisswangengans	Bernikla białolica	P	
Branta bernicla	Brent Goose	Ringelgans	Bernikla obrożna	V	
Branta ruficollis	Red-breasted Goose	Rothalsgans	Bernikla rdzawoszyja	V	
Tadorna tadorna	Shelduck	Brandgans	Ohar	P	
Aix sponsa	Wood Duck	Brautente	Karolinka	V	
Aix galericulata	Mandarin Duck	Mandarinente	Mandarynka	V	
Anas penelope	Eurasian Wigeon	Pfeifente	Świstun	P, B?	03-10
Anas strepera	Gadwall	Schnatterente	Krakwa	B	03-21
Anas formosa	Baikal Teal	Gluckente	Cyranka bajkalska	V	
Anas crecca	Teal	Krickente	Cyraneczka	B	W
Anas platyrhynchos	Mallard	Stockente	Krzyżówka	B	W
Anas acuta	Pintail	Spiessente	Rożeniec	P, B?	03-10
Anas querquedula	Garganey	Knäkente	Cyranka	B	03-25