

PREVIEW

Biebrza Site Guide

Where to watch the birds and large mammals
of the Biebrza Marshes

Łukasz Mazurek



ISBN 978-83-928757-1-0

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

WildPoland Site Guides

IF YOU ONLY SAW WHAT YOU WANTED, YOU PROBABLY MISSED A LOT

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www.wildpoland.com

ISBN 978-83-928757-1-0

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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

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.

53°29'28"N
22°44'01"E

GRID NUMBER

The symbol right of the coordinates is the respective grid number from the recommended map of the Biebrza National Park. We recommend the new purple

C2

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 13.

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

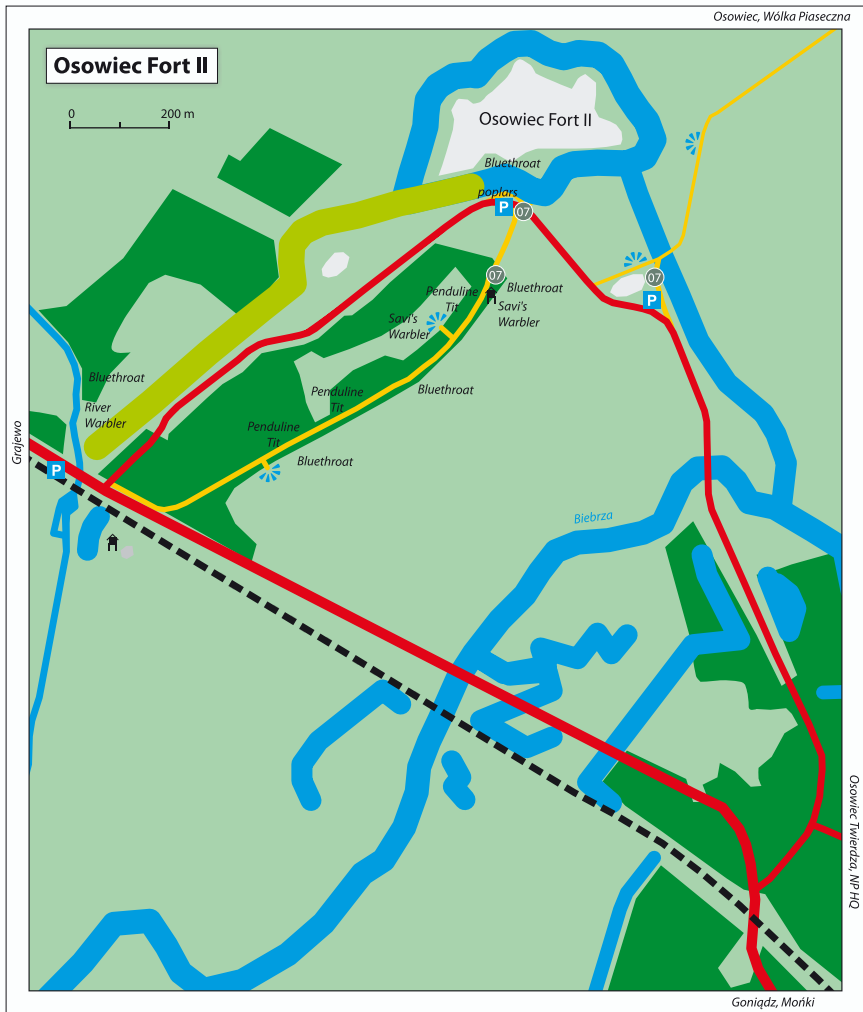
COMMON:

- 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*



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

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.

49 Honczarowska Dike

[hohnchahrohyskah]

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**, *Limnocyrtus 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*

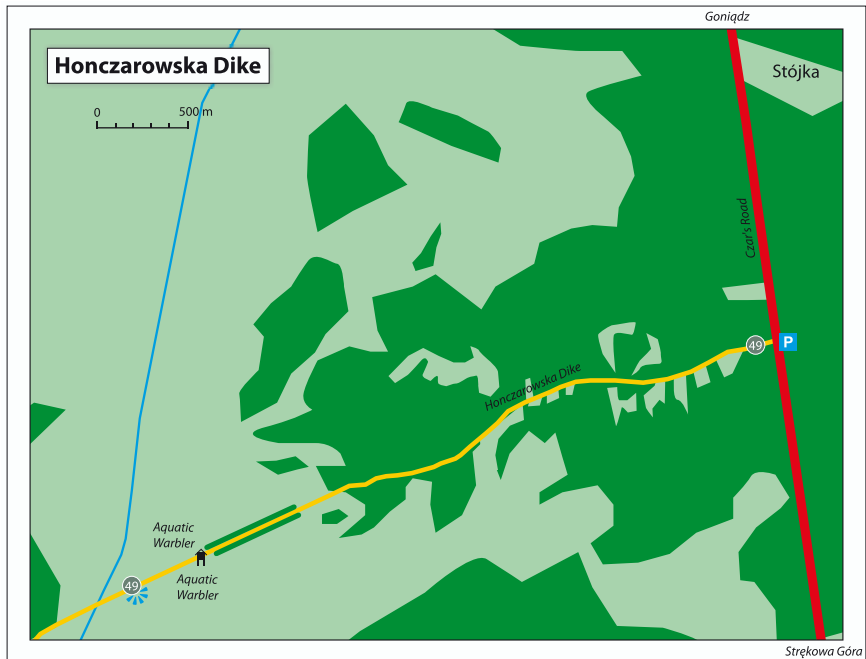
Elk, *Alces Alces*

ALSO SEEN:

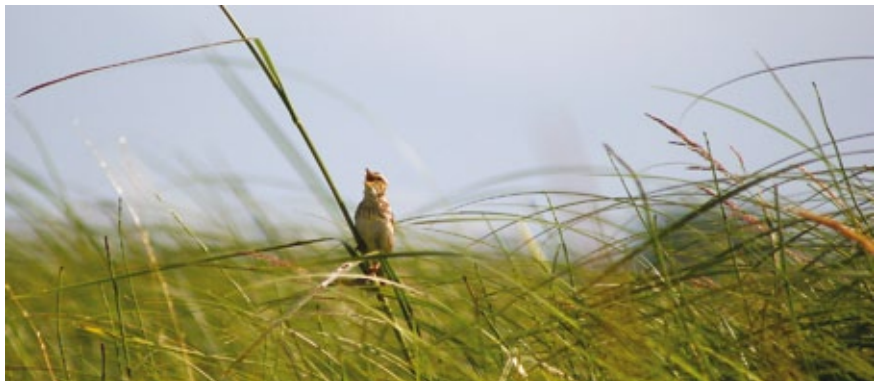
- 079 **Lesser Spotted Eagle**, *Aquila pomarina*
- 079 **Greater Spotted Eagle**, *Aquila clanga*
- 087 **Montagu's Harrier**, *Circus pygargus*
- 119 **Common Crane**, *Grus grus*
- 261 **Bluethroat**, *Luscinia svecica*
- 281 **Barred Warbler**, *Sylvia nisoria*



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



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.

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