



BIRD-WATCHING IN GAUJA NATIONAL PARK



The Ural Owl (*Strix uralensis*)



The Great Spotted Woodpecker (*Dendrocopos major*)



White-throated dipper (*Cinclus cinclus*)



The Greenish Warbler (*Phylloscopus trochiloides*) Photo: Andris Klepers

WHAT IS INTERESTING ABOUT GAUJA NATIONAL PARK FOR A BIRD-WATCHER?

Bird fauna in Gauja National Park in terms of nature tourism is appreciated both by foreign and local tourists. The **largest nesting** population of **grey wagtail** in Latvia is just one example. Although these are just few pairs, in terms of access and concentration it is the safest place in Latvia to watch this species during the nesting period. The forests of slopes with old deciduous trees attract less common species of **woodpeckers** (white-backed woodpecker, three-toed woodpecker, black woodpecker, middle spotted woodpecker). Relatively often spotted are the elsewhere rare **greenish warbler**, **red-breasted flycatcher** and locally common **hazel grouse**. **Ural owl** has started nesting in the park, and the smallest owl of Latvia – **pygmy owl** – is also seen more often. Many **corn-crakes** and some species of warblers, which are not common in Western Europe (**river warbler**, **Blyth's reed warbler**), are found in the riverside meadows of Gauja. Rivers which are not covered with ice during the winter (Amata, Ieriķupīte, Kumada, Vaive, Cimziņa, Grīviņupīte, Gauja, Brasla, etc.) are home to the wintering **white-throated dippers**. Similarly, **kingfisher** is seen more often than elsewhere on the small rivers and ice-free rivers, oxbow lakes, or larger areas where the springs come out of the earth. Significant habitats are the parks and alleys of former manors attracting much more common and thus easily spotted species of

birds (**woodpeckers**, **tawny owl**). During the migration period, the migratory birds like stopping over at former or present quarries (in Lode, Bāle, Cēsis) and the largest lake of the park – Lake Ungura. Meadows adjoining to the Suda Bog located outside of the reserve area are a significant place where the **cranes gather** in autumn.

BIRD-WATCHING PLACES IN THE VICINITY OF GAUJA NATIONAL PARK

More than 120 **white stork** pairs and at least some **black storks** nest in or close to the National Park. Interesting places for bird-watcher close to the National Park are the Mound Zilaiskalns and its forests of slopes, or forests in the vicinity

of Sietiņezis Cliff (hazel grouse, various species of woodpeckers, including the rare three-toed woodpecker, red-breasted flycatcher), Lielais and Pemma Bogs north of Straupe (species living in bogs), as well as the largest lake of the National Park – Lake Ungura. During the migration period, more rare **gull** species can be found in Daibe Waste Disposal area, where one might be lucky and spot the **white-tailed eagle**, **rare vultures**, and an **eagle-owl** in winter. Middle spotted **woodpecker**, **white-backed woodpecker**, **grey-headed woodpecker** are found in the most popular tourism site – the slope of Turaida Museum Reserve. Canoeing allows for better spotting of rare woodpecker species on the old trees on the riverside, and listen to many singing birds, and meet the kingfisher.

BEST TIME TO WATCH BIRDS

I	Wintering white-throated dippers, nutcrackers				
II					
III		Owls and woodpeckers, hazel grouses, black grouses			
IV			Spring migration, ideal light to take photos of birds		
V				Nesting period and best time to listen to birds singing	
VI				Watching permanent-resident birds	
VII					
VIII					Autumn migration until mid-October
IX					
X					
XI					
XII	Wintering white-throated dippers				

Nature Conservation Agency maintaining most of infrastructure in Gauja NP. If you see something wrong, tell the Agency at **+37164107230**, **+37167509545** or **vidzeme@daba.gov.lv**



Landscape of Āraiši



The Grey Wagtail (*Motacilla cinerea*)



RECOMMENDED BIRD-WATCHING ROUTE

Route.

- Evening walk in the vicinity of hotel "Karlumuiza Country Hotel" (57.24023, 25.21254) – listening to the tawny owl.
- Early morning walk near **Kārļi** (facilitated trails, park, alleys, old orchards with apple-trees). **Bird species***: common rosefinch, red-backed shrike, pygmy owl, grasshopper warbler, meadow pipit, tree pipit, flycatchers, tits, mistle thrush, etc.
- **Veclauči** (57.26149, 25.13721) 3.5 km long hiking trip along **Amata trail** and in the forests near **Zvārte Rock** (Meža māte trail). **Bird species**: red-breasted flycatcher, greenish warbler, grey wagtail, honey buzzard, kingfisher, wren, common treecreeper, European crested tit, traces and places of three-toed woodpecker, hazel grouse, etc.
- **Zvārtes Rock** (57.24601, 25.14279)– **Līgatne Ferry Crossing** (57.25441, 25.04528) Zvārte Rock – Līgatne Ferry Crossing, 14 km. **Bird species**: middle spotted woodpecker, siskin, probably – overflying lesser spotted eagle, common buzzard, etc.
- 10 km, ~2 h **Canoe trip** on the River Gauja from Līgatne Ferry Crossing to the stop downstream of the place where the River Brasla mouths Gauja (57.24576, 24.93038).

The river is wide and deep here – there is a zero risk of falling over. **Bird species**: black woodpecker, white-backed woodpecker, kingfisher, common sandpiper, goosander, golden-eye, lesser spotted woodpecker, Northern long-tailed tit, willow tit, etc.

- **Inciems–Turaida**, 19 km. **Bird species**: middle spotted woodpecker, grey-headed woodpecker, white stork, pied flycatcher. Ķeizarskats and Velnala Cave nature trail of Sigulda. Dainu Garden in Turaida Museum Reserve (57.18306, 24.85060).



Time. Late May, beginning of June.



Difficulty level. Easy–moderate.



Worth knowing! Bird-watching is best combined with a respective accommodation option outside of a town. Early morning walks before a rich breakfast are advantageous – making use of the time between sunrise and 8 a.m. A higher priority should be given to accommodation closer located to old parks. The activity is at one's own risk. Emergency services: 112



Ethics! In watching the birds, keep the "bird interests" first; thus avoid disturbing the standard activities and places of living of birds.



Dress code and tools:

- suitable footwear for walking, canoeing, or cycling;
- suitable and comfortable outdoors clothing;
- water-proof bag to keep your belongings in the canoe;
- binocular, telescope;
- telephoto;
- bird guide and other materials;
- bird guide app on your smartphone: <http://tiny.cc/2be4mx>;
- records of bird songs: www.xeno-canto.org



Enter Gauja mobile application



GooglePlay



AppStore

* These bird species might be probably, not definitely spotted.

SERVICE

! | Sigulda County Tourism Information Centre

Sigulda, Ausekļa Street 6, +371 67971335, info@sigulda.lv, www.tourism.sigulda.lv

Sigulda County Tourism Information Centre "Gūtmaņala",

Sigulda, Turaidas iela 2a, info.gutmanala@sigulda.lv, +371 61303030, www.tourism.sigulda.lv

! | Līgatne Municipality Tourism Information Centre

Līgatne, Sprinģu Street 2, +371 64153169, +371 29189707, info@visitligatne.lv, www.visitligatne.lv

! | Amata Municipality Tourism Information Centre

Kumadas Street 2, Ieriķi, Amata Municipality, +371 64119024, +371 28681083, turisms@and.lv, www.amata.lv

! | Cēsis Tourism Information Centre, Cēsis, Baznīcas Square 1,

+371 28318318, info@cesis.lv, www.visit.cesis.lv

! | Hotel "Karlumuiza Country Hotel",

Kārļi, Drabeši rural territory, Amata Municipality, +371 26165298, info@karlamuiza.lv, www.karlamuiza.lv (catering to be announced in advance)

! | Rehabilitation Center "Līgatne", Skaļupes, Līgatne

rural territory, Līgatne municipality, +371 64161915, +371 26467747, ligatne.info@gmail.com, www.rehcentrsligatne.lv

! | Ziedlejas Bath House, Ziedlejas Gaujmalī, Krimulda county,

+371 26105993, info@ziedlejas.lv, www.ziedlejas.lv

! | Zeit Net Park, Līgatne, Gaujas street 4,

+371 25779944, info@zeit.lv, www.tikluparks.lv