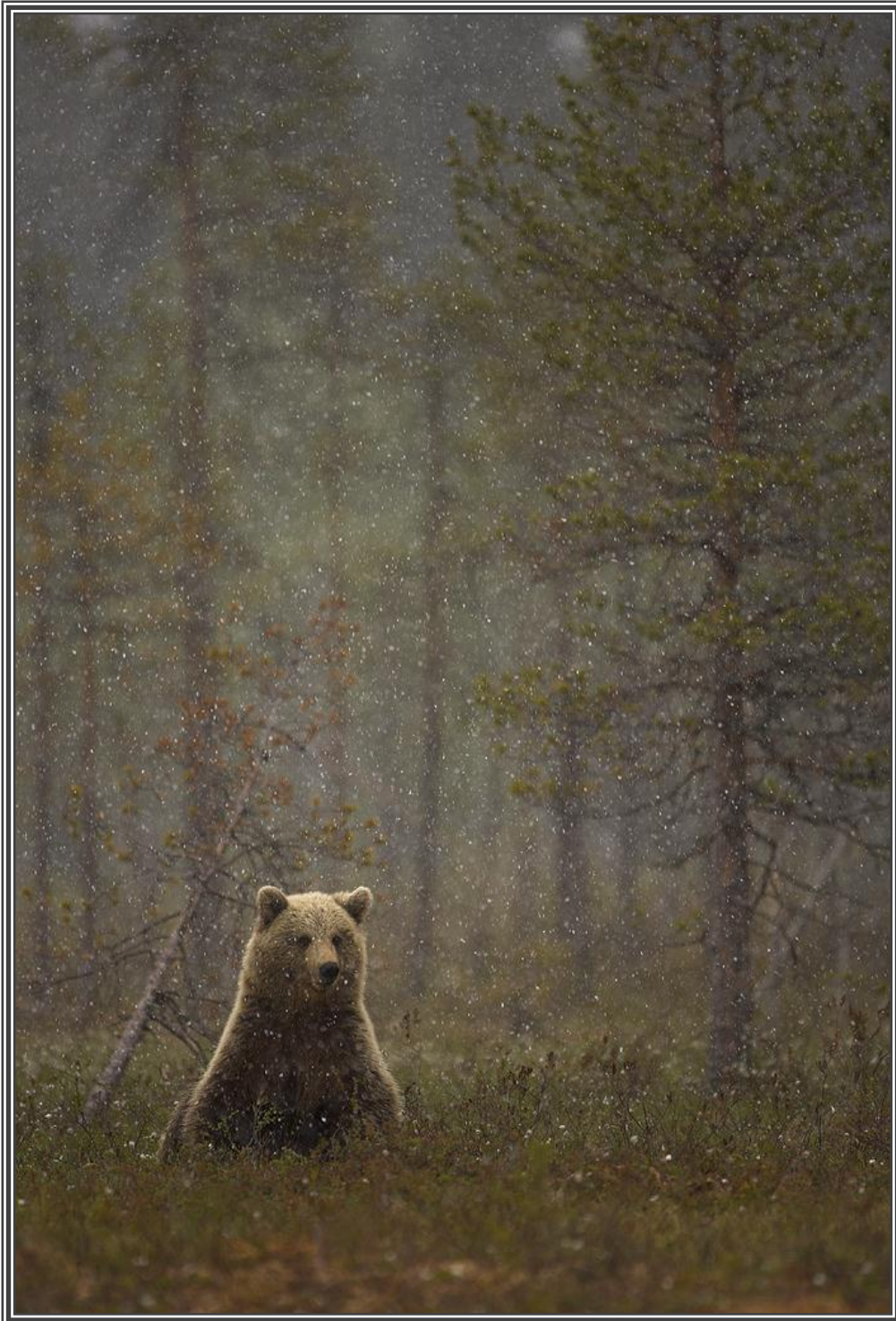




**Wild Brown Bears - 11<sup>th</sup> to 16<sup>th</sup> June 2012**



## Itinerary

### Tour Leader: Edwin Kats

**Day 1:** Travel to Kajaani airport in Finland (we will advise you on our flight recommendations) where we will be met by our Finnish host for the 2-3 hour transfer to Martinsekosen which will be our base for the duration of the trip. We'll arrive too late for any hide based photography for the bears this evening.



**Day 2:** Our body clocks will take some adjusting as it will be light for 24 hours and after the long day travelling the day before I suggest you use this spare day to relax, ready for our first nights encounter with the bears. Breakfast and lunch will be served at certain times and I will advice once there. Dinner is around 3.30pm and then we get ready for the short journey to the bear hides. We have exclusive use of 3, 2 man hides for the bears and each hide offers completely different images so a good mix is what we are looking for. I will be able to spend one night with each of you in the hides so I will be able to pass

on my knowledge throughout the evening. The forest hide is set in the pine trees and the activity lasts all night long here as this is the first port of call for many of the bears, it is a beautiful setting and with a bit of luck young cubs will be around and they make great shots when they climb the trees to escape the large males. The swamp hide can also attract females with young cubs and the setting again is beautiful especially if the bears stand in the cotton grass. At one point three years ago I had 14 bears feeding in this large expanse of swamp. The pond hide is a fantastic location and on still evenings you can get reflections as the bears are fed around the edges of the pond, although the activity was good in the first part of the evening it did tail off during the second part, so hopefully the bears will be more active in the early mornings now that this hide is more established.

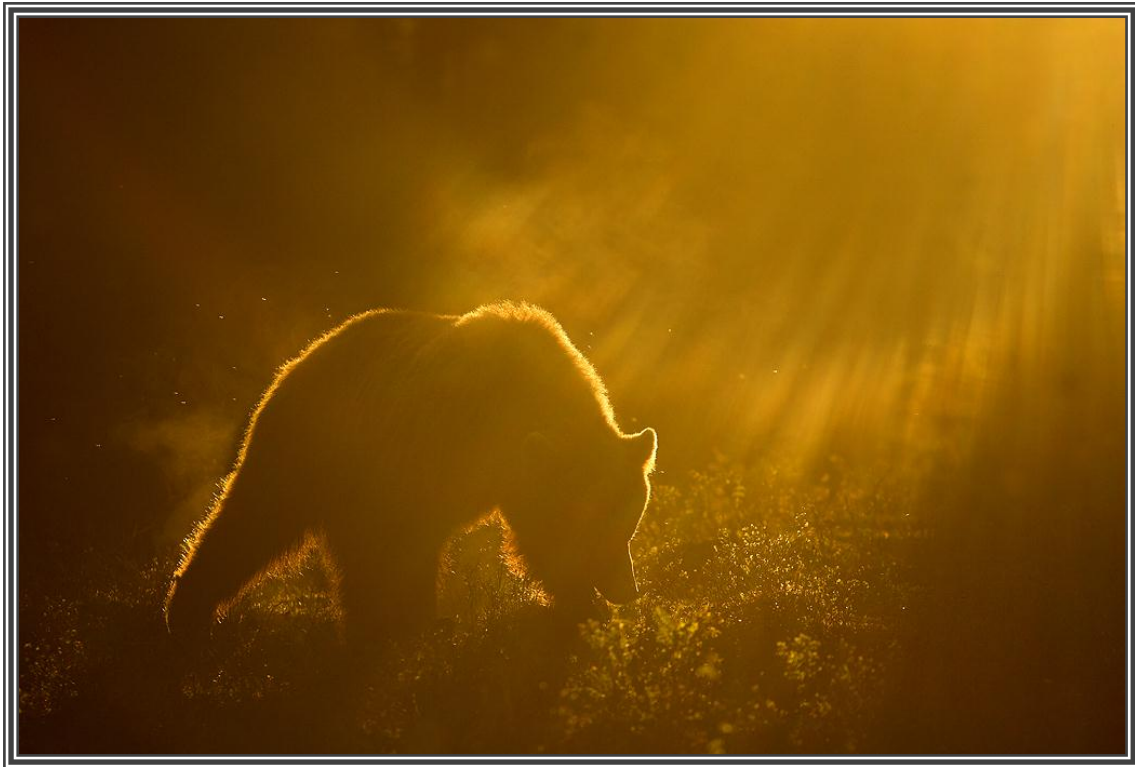


**Day 3/4/5:** Each evening follows the same routine and after dinner we transfer to our chosen hide for the night's photography. We have to be in the hides by 5.00pm so by now we will be well into our routine. I have not decided who goes in what hide yet and will make this decision once I have spoken to Jani our Finnish host. You will spend 1 night in each of the 3 hides and then the other night will be in 1 hide you have already been in. We will sort this out when we are there. Complicated but I want to make sure you all get in the 3 different hides. At the end of each night we will be escorted from the hides at 7.30am and back to our base for a deserved breakfast. It can be very tiring as the first thing you want to do is download your images and make sure they are safe and of course have a quick look. I recommend that you take a portable downloader into the hide as when you get a quiet period this vital work can be done then. You can have a couple of hours with the bird feeding station if you

want it is your choice. I want to have an image review each day; it can be tiring during the day so if you want to opt out of these you can again it is your choice.



**Day 6:** After our final night in the hide we'll have time to shower and breakfast before returning to Kajaani airport for our flights home.



### **What to Bring**

Our accommodation is clean and comfortable with all bedding and towels provided so you simply need to bring yourself. If you have any special dietary requirements – please let me know if there's anything you can't/won't eat in advance!! In terms of clothing you'll obviously need plenty of warm and weather proof clothing. The vast majority of your time will be in the hides but the weather is unpredictable in Northern Finland and it could be cold. You won't need serious arctic gear for this trip but the following are very much recommended - a good pair of strong waterproof walking boots, good waterproof overtrousers. For the top half it's very much a question of having several layers – like a thermal type vest, t-shirt, thin jumper, fleece and then a waterproof coat with a spare jumper or 2 at hand as well, dependent on how the night goes - you'll know your own cold thresholds but it really is a question of building it up in layers. A good hat and some fingerless mittens/gloves are ideal, sleeping bags are provided in the hides and at quite times you can snatch a couple of hours sleep. We are provided with coffee and sandwiches but you may want to take along chocolate bars or biscuits to nibble on through the long night because you are in the hides for 14 hours. Once you are in the hides there is no going out to the toilet so be prepared to use a small bucket. The weather is difficult to predict at this time of the year it could be cold or it could be very warm, if the latter then you must look into buying some good mosquito repellent, most good camping stores sell good stuff nowadays and also the mosquito nets/hats can be very useful as well. We might be lucky and escape the mozzies but you are in a northern boreal forest and they can be a bit of a pest at peak times!!

In terms of camera kit you'll need the longest lens you have (300mm or 500mm + convertor would be my recommendation/choice) and then some supplementary lenses for other opportunities such as a 24-70mm for landscapes and definitely an intermediate zoom (70-200 or 100-400) so that you don't miss anything. You'll get the chance to decide what you want/need each evening so you won't be burdening yourself with it all of the time either but the distances to the hides are not great. Regarding camera support for the hides beanbags are provided. The beanbags are OK but not the best, if you want to take your own along then you must bare in mind your airline weight allowance. Tripods are not ideal in the hides because of the space they take up but there are superb devices to attach your tripod head to the shelf, so make sure you can detach your tripod head if you want to use these. Tripods though do come in handy if you want to work on the small bird feeding station. Bring plenty of compact flash cards with you as well because if you get a good evening you will take a lot of images.



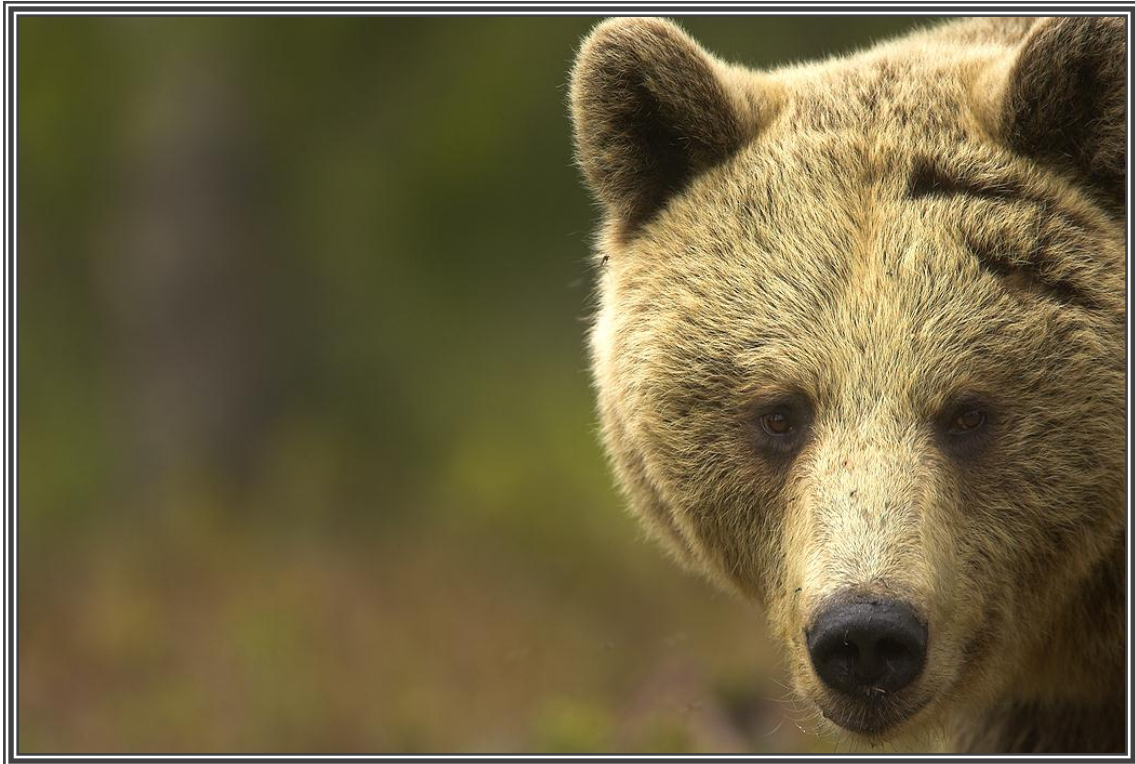
During the days we will have a chance to critique and look at individuals work if you so wish so feel free to bring anything you'd like to share on either a laptop or memory pen/CD. If you have any questions or concerns during the trip please ask, I am here to help.

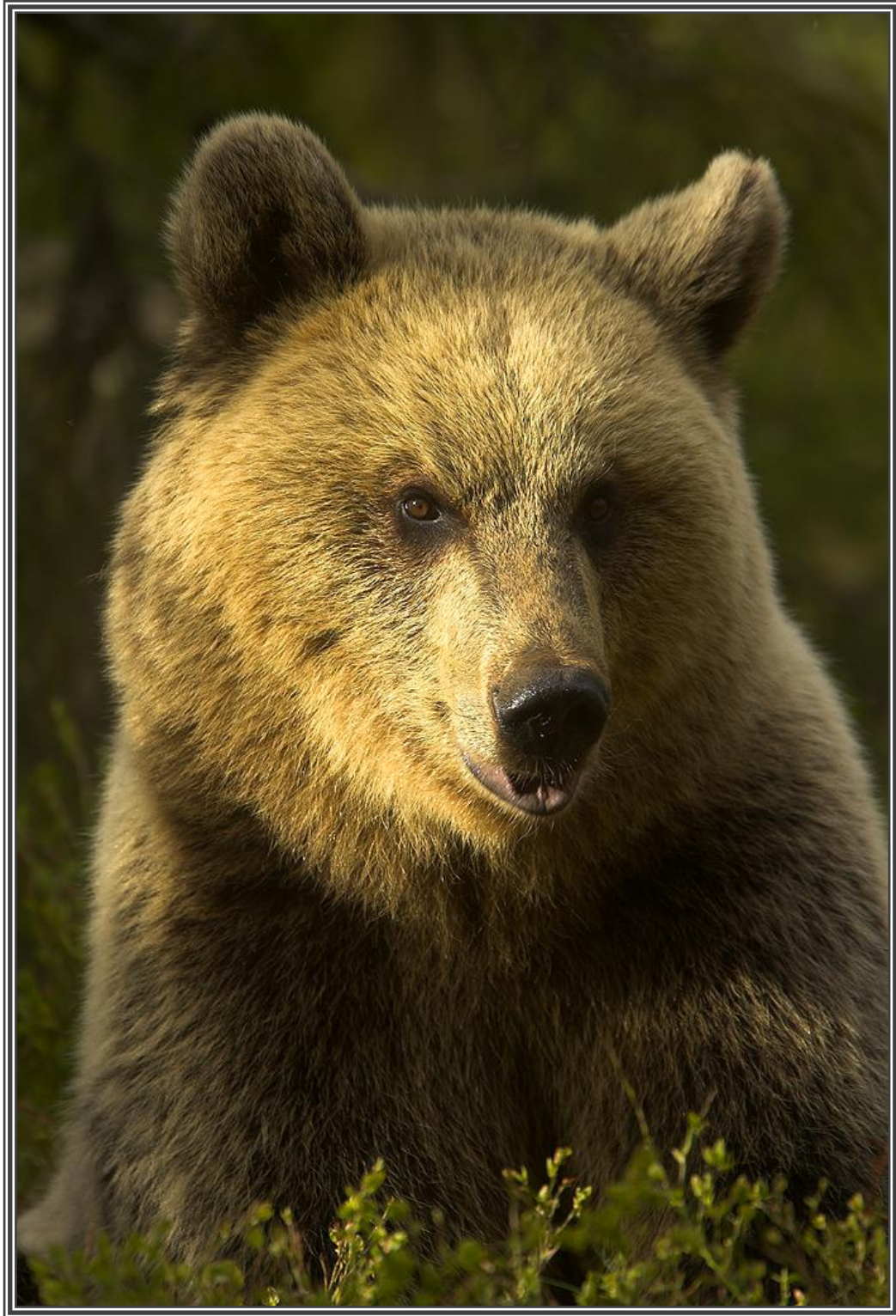
My contact number in the build up to and for the duration of the trip is 00 31639 617687. My email address is [edwinkats@hetnet.nl](mailto:edwinkats@hetnet.nl)

Please don't hesitate to contact me even if you think it is a minor question I am here to help.

This will be my 3<sup>rd</sup> season photographing bears and every night I have been in the hides it has been completely different, you're guaranteed bears, that is for sure and you are in for a remarkable experience. To witness Europe's top predator at such close quarters is amazing and one the greatest spectacles to photograph.

*Edwin*





Registered Office:  
4 Deer Park Drive, Newport, Shropshire TF10 7HB  
Tel: 01952 411436  
E-Mail: [sales@natures-images.co.uk](mailto:sales@natures-images.co.uk)  
[www.natures-images.co.uk](http://www.natures-images.co.uk)  
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