

Switzerland, Liechtenstein, Austria & Germany

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From 1 to 3 August 2003 I undertook a short trip to Switzerland. From the trip a short summary. Without the guiding of my personal mr Guide (Jan Bisschop) and his site descriptions all this wasn't possible big thanks to him! Also big thanks to Mathias Ritschard for his help in writing down some sites.

1 August

Drove around 12:00 u away from work at Deurne, and went over the border from Germany at Venlo and drove at the A 61 via Mönchen-Gladback, Erfttal (A1, A 61, E31), Hockenheim (A6, E50), Wallsdorf (A5, E 35), to Rheinfelden (A3, E60) en then to Zurich (679 km in total). During driving only a **Red Kite** and at a parking spot I located a **Honey Buzzard!** At Jan Bisschop his place (Langenwiesestrasse at Zurich-Oerlikon) we located soon a flock of no less then 30 **Alpine Swifts** (maybe the released Dutch Bird of last year from Wageningen was flying between them?).

And there were celebrations at Zurich of an sort of independence day! Some fire crackers continued until strict 12 o'clock and then everyone went to bed, as correct as Swiss people are. And we were just relaxed drinking the nice cool well-earned Swiss beer, and celebrating the new species to be seen tomorrow already!

2 August

We went up at 7 u and after hearing and seeing a group of 25 **Alpine Swifts** seeing flying around and had a breakfast we left Zurich at 8 u. Also recording **Black Redstart**, **Serin** and few other first in Switzerland species for me. We drove via Luzern to Andermatt and from there up to the Furkapass (Zurich to here \pm 130 km). During driving we recorded several **Rock Martins** and a thirth-year **Golden Eagle**. At the highest point of the Fukapass at 2431 m we recorded near the hotel/restaurant on the left hand side a nice **Snow Finch** who was feeding on the opposite of the restaurant between some small houses and it was feeding his young! A bit further we had a coffee at a restaurant at Gletsch near the Rhonegletcher. Also several **Water Pipits** at both locations and at the last one a **Grey Wagtail**. Also a **Common Chaffinch** was busy in his attempt to become Switzerland highest ever recorded finch!

From the Furkapass we drove to Leuk to get some other goodies (\pm 100+ km). From Leuk we took the road to the village Erschmatt, after about 4 km form Leuk you will pass the Feschelbach Gorge. From the bridge (or the old stone bridge adjacent to the road) we looked down into the gorge to see a fantastic **Wallcreeper** (very low just above the water edge on a steep wall just above it straight under the bridge) and few **Crag Martins** where also flying around. On our way up we noted few **Rock Buntings**. From here we continued from the Wallcreeper spot to the village Erschmatt. We followed the signs all the way to Jetzinen. In Jetzinen we continued the ongoing road for about 2 km's until you find yourself in "Untere Fasilalp". This place is not indicated by signs, so ask local people for precise directions, it's just before an sort of parking spot near some houses. The last part is by the way gravel! The **Citril Finches** can be found in the fields around the houses at Oben Fasilalp. We recorded them (2) just past the ski-lift (chair-lift) ends in some trees. The **Citril Finches** normally perch regularly on the lift wire and on the barbwire, but they didn't do it. Also we recorded few birds at the parking spot. I almost stepped on a **Black grouse** there while climbing the

steep rocks. Also recorded here where 2 adult and one first year **Golden Eagle**, **Common Crossbill**, **Raven**, **Rock Martins**, **Nutcrackers**, a female **Rock Thrush**, **Water pipits** and few **Common Buzzards**. Also the streams here with butterflies and dragonflies and fantastic flora are worth looking at! Many Marmots here!

Because everything went well so far we tried a other spot at Sion (50 km from Leuk). We drove to Conthey, just west of Sion in Wallis, and turned to the north, up to the village Erde. We continued, and crossed Aven and we followed the road into the Dérborence valley. We drove the whole length of this road trough this savage and very beautiful valley, which is really worth visiting! The road is tight and the slopes are very steep, drive carefully (and many blind curves and tunnels can be found while driving, real scary...). At the end of the valley there are some houses and a restaurant (the restaurant is signposted as a T-junction to the right). We drove to the restaurant (near a reservoir) and scanned from here the massive mountains in the front and left and right of us, also we drove at the T-junction a bit to left at the T-junction and scanned uphill everything again. We recorded an adult **Lammergeier** here and several flocks of **Alpine Choughs**. Also recorded here a **Chamois** (few) and **Ibex** (1) here.

You could also drive as far as you are permitted to, and then continue for some minutes on foot along the broad track, which turns slightly to the right. Soon you'll see a huge rock face on your left hand, which are probably several hundred metres high and very long. The Coughs breed in that rock face. It is quite distant from the track, but you'll be able to pick out the red-billed ones from the yellow-billed with your scope. This is the only spot in Switzerland where Cough is possible! But we dipped them because the distant was to far to get a positive ID!

From here we drove back to Zurich not before consulting the local McDonalds at Sion! (Drove about 520 km today!). Around 11 we where enjoying the calling **Alpine Swifts** and a cool beer again at Jan's apartment!

3 August

After a short night sleep we drove around 8 u to Bucks and after a small detour via Schaan at the Kingdom of Liechtenstein (only **House Martin**, **Goldfinch** and **Barn Swallow** recorded) we arrived at the spot. During driving recorded a few trip species and our only Swiss **Red Kite** this trip.

At the spot mentioned below we recorded **Hazelhen**, **Three-toed Woodpecker** (very nice a close 2 birds), **Black Woodpecker**, **Willow Tit**, **Nutcrackers** and several other birds. Alos there where small chances in seeing Pygmy Owl and Capercaillie but we missed as we expected! Also a fly over **Citril Finch** when we left the forested area!

At the Reindelta at Bregenz we recorded a hybrid flock of **Long-tailed Tits**, juvenile **Night heron**, a juvenile **Mediterranean Gull**, 100+ **Yellow-legged Gulls**, 2 **Caspian Gulls**, 1 adult **Herring Gull**, a adult **Lesser Black-backed Gull**, few **Common** and **Black-headed Gulls**, a single **Dunlin**, **Wood Sandpiper**, **Ruff**, **Common Redshank**, **Common Ringed Plovers** and several other species.

Via Bregenz, Ulm, Stuttgart, Karsruhe, Koblenz, Monchengladbach to Venlo and back around 11 o'clock after we left Austria at 3 o'clock!

Site description to the Hazelhen spot!

Underneath there is a description of the spot Obertoggenburg, a realible spot for Hazelhen, Three-toed Woodpecker and when you're lucky Pygmy owl (although owling at nigh should produce them and not by sight during the day) Jan recorded Hazelhen on 4 of 5 visits, Three-toed Woodpecker on 3 of 5 visits and Pygmy Owl at one visit during the day! Also realiable spot for Black Woodpecker and Ring Ounzel (alpestris ssp).

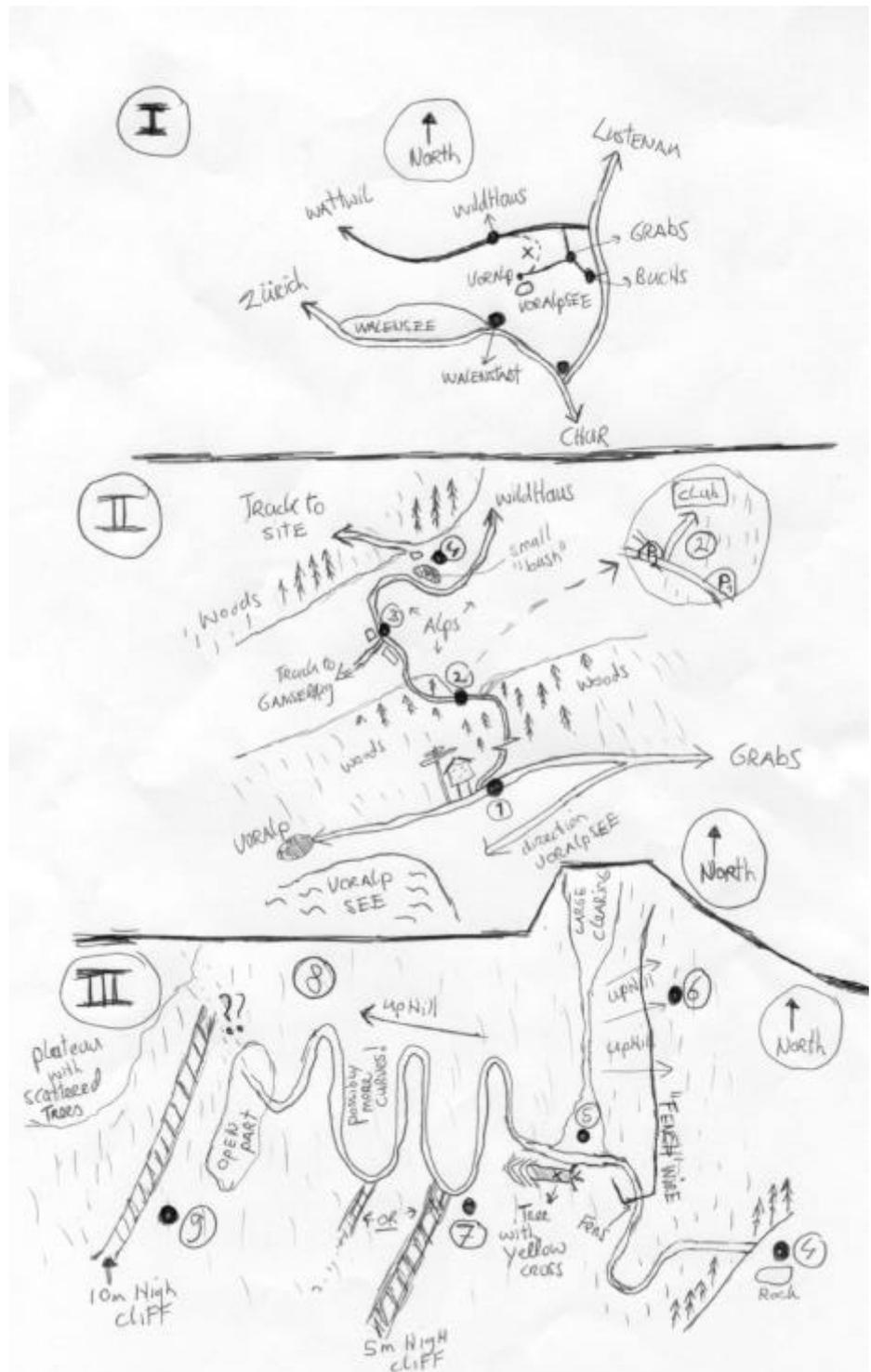
The whole area on map III is in principle good for Hazelhen, you have to walk a lot around to increase you're chances (it's a hard area to walk around, be carefull!). At point 8 on map III you have the better chances for Three-toed Woodpecker and good chance for Hazelhen too. While entering the forest at the point of the photograph in this report you have the better chances for Black Woodpeckers and tits!

Map I:

Drive to Voralp/Voralpsee and parc the car there somewhere, continue by walking.

Map II:

It's about a 1-hour walk from the Voralpsee to the spot. There is a road from Voralp to Wildhaus (dotted line on the map) it starts at point 1 in map II. At the start of the road there is a sign with "Berggasthaus Voralp" and "ski-haus Gamperfin". The road is officially forbidden to acces by car (there is a sign for this here). However, I think it's not a big problem to go to point 2 (in Map II) by car, most birders do it without any problem. In that case you can parc the car at the first parking lot (P1) few tens of metes before the junction to "ski-haus Gamperfin" and "ski-club Grabseberg". Continue to the sign "Hinter Witi, 1380m" (point 3 at Map II). There is a house and a stable



here. Continue from point 3 in the direction Wildhaus for about 150 meter, until you have a small isolated bush on your left hand (the bush on the attached picture "obertoggentrack.jpg", indicated by white arrow). Behind the bush a clear track starts into the woods (point 4 at Map II).

Map III:

Follow the track for about 200-300meter uphill. Just after passing a small fence, you go left to a clearing of about 20x20 meters in the forest (point 5 in Map III). You can go north from here to a large clearing that start about 200 meter further. Inmediatly right (east) of the tract we flushed a Hazelhen. You can also go uphill to point 6 (over the fence) and search the woods on top of the hill (very suitable habitat!). From point 5 you can also follow the track to the west. The path is still obvious at this point and there is a large yellow cross on one of the



tree on your left hand. The path goes uphill with strongly curved bends. In the first or second curve a 5m high rocky cliff starts (see map, point 7) this is where Jan also flushed Hazelhen. Continue the tract for about 10 minutes untill the track seems to dissappear (I am not sure whether this is really the case...). The area to the north of the track (point 8) is also good for Hazelhen and we recorded Three-toed Woopecker over here. This is where Jan once flushed a group of 10 birds (when you walk around

(obertoggentrack.jpg)

here in the woods you will encounter some nesting boxes for owls in trees). From the open part of the forest (near point 8) you have a nice view to the east into the Rhine valley. At point 9 I have Jan had the Pygmy Owl (however only once in his 5 visits here...). Also he has lured Three-toed woodpecker here by knocking on a tree with a pocket knife. It is the area inmediately east of the obvious 10m high rocky cliff (about 100m south of the track).

Species List

A = Austria

G = Germany

L = Liechtenstein

S = Switzerland

* = new species

** = new taxa

1. Great-crested Grebe (A)
2. Great Cormorant (A)
3. Night Heron (A)
4. Mute Swan (A)
5. Mallard (A)
6. Red-crested Pochard (A)
7. Tufted Duck (A)
8. Goosander (A)
9. Honey Buzzard (G)
10. Red Kite (G, S)

11. Bearded Vulture (S)
12. Eurasian Sparrowhawk (G, S)
13. Common Buzzard (G, S)
14. Golden Eagle (S)
15. European Kestrel(S)
16. Black Grouse(S)
17. * Hazelhen(S)
18. Common Coot (A)
19. Common Ringed Plover(A)
20. Dunlin(A)
21. Ruff(A)
22. Common Redshank(A)
23. Wood Sandpiper(A)
24. Common sandpiper(A)
25. Mediterranean Gull(A)
26. Yellowlegged Gull(A)
27. Caspian Gull(A)
28. Black-headed Gull(A)
29. Hering Gull(A)
30. Lesser Black-backed Gull(A)
31. Common tern(A)
32. Black tern(A)
33. Wood Pigeon(S)
34. Turtle Dove(S)
35. Common Swift(S)
36. Alpine Swift(S)
37. Green Woodpecker(S)
38. Black woodpecker(S)
39. ** Three-toed Woodpecker (S)
40. Great spotted Woodpecker (S)
41. House Martin
42. Rock Martin(S)
43. Barn Swallow
44. Water Pipit(S)
45. Yellow Wagtail
46. White Wagtail
47. Grey Wagtail(S)
48. Wren(S)
49. Robin(S)
50. Black Redstart(S)
51. Northern Wheatear(S)
52. Rock Trush(S)
53. Blackbird(S)
54. Mistle Trush(S)
55. Blackcap(S)
56. Willow Warbler(S)
57. Goldcrest(S)
58. Long-tailed Tit (A)
59. Coal Tit(S)
60. Marsh Tit(S)

61. Willow Tit(S)
62. Crested Tit(S)
63. Blue Tit(S)
64. Great Tit(S)
65. Nuthatch(S)
66. Wallcreeper(S)
67. Short-toed Treecreeper(S)
68. Jay(S)
69. Nutcracker (S)
70. Alpine Cough (S)
71. Jackdaw (S, A)
72. Carrion Crow (S)
73. Hooded Crow (S)
74. Raven (S)
75. Starling (A, L, S)
76. House Sparrow (G, A, L, S)
77. Snow Finch (S)
78. Common Chaffinch (S)
79. Serin (S, L, A)
80. Citril Finch (S)
81. Common Goldfinch (S, A, L)
82. Bullfinch (S)
83. Lesser Redpoll (S, A)
84. Linnet (S)
85. Crossbill (S)
86. Rock Bunting (S)
87. Reed Bunting (A)

Mammals observed

1. Red Deer *Cervus elaphus*
2. Red Squirrel *Sciurus vulgaris*
3. Marmot *Marmota marmota*
4. Chamois *Rupicapra rupicapra*
5. Ibex *Capra ibex*