

WILDLIFE BONANZA



"It took me many years to see all these species - in some cases several visits to locations and many hours of searching. This is an easy way to see a fabulous selection of Highland specialities all in one week! If you are a general naturalist keen to see all kinds of wildlife - this is the trip for you!" Roy Atkins

Dates Sat 1 - Sat 8 Jul 2017
 Price £1,095
 Deposit £200 Single Supp £100
 (ensuite rooms only)

Leaders Roy Atkins and Duncan Macdonald
 Weather The weather can vary enormously. During a typical week in this season we would expect mixed sun and showers with temperatures in the range of 10-25°C.
 Walking There'll be some short easy strolls on wide paths but also two longer more strenuous but unrushed walks, including an "at-your-pace" 3 mile round trip walk into the Cairngorms and a walk around the 'yellow route' to Coire Lochan in Glen Affric. Walking boots are recommended.
 Meals All included from dinner on Day 1 to breakfast on Day 8
 Insects Biting midges can occasionally be a nuisance by lochs and shores, especially in the west.
 Accom Double (ensuite), twin (ensuite) and single (ensuite and non ensuite) rooms at our very special, delightfully furnished converted barn, the Steading.
 Group 12

Just some of what we hope to see:

Northern Emerald	Frog Orchid
White-faced Darter	Lesser Twayblade
Northern Damselfly	Globe Flower
Northern Brown Argus	Starry Saxifrage
Large Heath	Dwarf Cornel
Brilliant Emerald	Pine Marten
Azure Hawker	Red Squirrel
Dark-green Fritillary	Golden Eagle
Twinflower	White-tailed Eagle
Common Wintergreen	Black-throated Diver
Serrated-leaved Wintergreen	Crested Tit
Lesser Butterfly Orchid	Scottish Crossbill
Heath Fragrant Orchid	Slavonian Grebe
Small White Orchid	Osprey

The special northern dragonflies, butterflies and wild flowers are our focus, with the chance of some Highland birds and mammals too, on our much requested Highland Full Monty!

- Special and scarce, Highland butterflies and dragonflies
- Walk in Glen Affric to beautiful, dragonfly rich, Coire Loch
- A dozen species of orchid likely, including Small White and Lesser Twayblade
- Relaxed Cairngorm walk for alpine flowers as well as Frog Orchid
- A great list of Scottish birds and mammals too
- Based at our fabulous Steading with our outstanding chefs
- The perfect holiday for the 'all-round' naturalist

Our action-packed week starts with dinner together at the Steading on Saturday evening.

On this week, more than any other, our itinerary is dictated by the weather! If the sun is shining we shall head to lochans and streams for dragonflies and flowery meadows or moorland for butterflies. Some of these species need sunshine to be on the wing, so we may need to grab these times if the forecast is not so good. If it is raining - well the flowers will look fabulous whatever the weather!

2-7 Our focus this week is the special Highland species of dragonflies, butterflies and flowers, so we may start locally visiting ancient Caledonian Pines, where delicate Twinflower spread in patches on the forest floor - their tiny paired flowers are

exquisite and surely one of the most beautiful of the flowers we shall see this week. Common, Intermediate and Serrated-leaved Wintergreen are here too, while boggy pools hold Four-spotted Chaser and Common Hawker, plus rare Northern Damselfly and White-faced Darter. Orchid meadows host Small White, Greater and Lesser Butterfly, Northern Marsh and Heath Fragrant Orchids and we'll search for Lesser Twayblade, always tricky with its habit of growing under the heather! On slopes dotted with Rockrose, we'll hunt for Northern Brown Argus in its full Scottish form - with white dots on the forewings. Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary and Large Heath are on the wing and we'll also run a moth trap whenever we can. The forests provide the chance of Red Squirrel, Crested Tit and Scottish Crossbill, though we shall need to check these carefully as both





"Some of these species are just exquisite! Twinflower with its delightful pinkish bell-like flowers, the tiny but perfect Northern Brown Argus, green-eyed Northern Emerald searching the outer branches of pines for flies, delicate Lesser Twayblade hidden under the heather, dashing blue Azure Hawkers and glistening Brilliant Emerald are all very special and a thrill to see - fingers crossed for some nice sunshine!" Roy Atkins

Common and Parrot Crossbill now breed here too. We'll also make a visit to our mammal hide, with fingers crossed for close up views of Badger and delightful Pine Martens!

The Findhorn Valley provides a chance of Golden Eagle and Mountain Hare, plus Red Deer, Dipper and Peregrine. Mountain Pansy, Stagshorn Clubmoss, Alpine Bistort and Bearberry are likely as we cross the moorland to Loch Ruthven, the stronghold of beautiful Slavonian Grebe, here in colourful breeding plumage. There is always a chance of fishing Osprey here and we may find Water Lobelia – a beautiful plant with submerged leaves and white flowers. If the sun is out we'll make a dash to beautiful Loch Bran, where the rare, metallic green Brilliant Emerald and other dragonflies such as Highland Darter may be on the wing.

We'll spend a whole day walking in beautiful Glen Affric, following a trail that will lead us to a lily-studded lochan where Downy Emerald, Golden-ringed Dragonfly and White-faced Darter can be found, along with some of the more common damselflies. Our walk includes some steeper sections, but we can take it slowly - and one section of wide track holds Common Hawker and sometimes the 'holy grail' of northern dragonflies - Azure Hawker - with slim chances of Highland Darter and Dark-green Fritillary too.

Further west, we'll visit sea lochs where White-tailed Eagle, Golden Eagle, Rock Dove, Black Guillemot and Red-throated and

Black-throated Divers are possible. Common Seals haul out on the rocks, Great Skua cruise over the islands and Arctic Terns breed, but the real focus is Loch Maree, in the heart of Torridon, where we have our best chance to find Azure Hawker and Northern Emerald Dragonflies - two real Highland specialties. Great and Round-leaved Sundews trap midges here, as does Butterwort and we'll see other typical moorland species like Bog Asphodel, Lousewort and Bog Myrtle.

Our route up into the alpine world of the Cairngorm Corries is not too steep and we can stop for rests to enjoy the flowers on the way. We can compare up to six berry-bearing bushes as we walk, including Bog Bilberry, Crowberry, Bearberry and Cloudberry. The beautiful alpine flowers include Starry Saxifrage, Dwarf Cornel, Globe Flower and Trailing Azalea as we gain height. We'll get excited about club-mosses with Fir, Interrupted and Alpine, then as we get higher, we hope to find more alpine flowers, including Alpine Ladies Mantle, Alpine Sawwort, Alpine Meadow Rue, Roseroot and perhaps the rare Alpine Speedwell - with tiny deep blue flowers. We have found patches of Frog Orchid in the past and if we have time to get beyond the large boulders in the corrie, we may even add Moss Campion and Arctic Mouse-ear.

○ We say our farewells after breakfast on Saturday.



Outline Itinerary

- Day 1 Arrive in Glen Feshie in time for an evening meal and a chat about our plans for the coming week. 7 nights at the Steading.
- Days 2-7 Wildlife and birdwatching exploration including Abernethy Forest, the Cairngorms, Loch Maree, Glen Affric and West Coast.
- Day 8 After breakfast we say our farewells and depart.

Roy Atkins: Northern Brown Argus, Twinflower, Northern Emerald, Large Heath
Steve Dudley: Azure Hunter
Colin Scott: Slavonian Grebe
Pierre Vernay: Pine Marten

