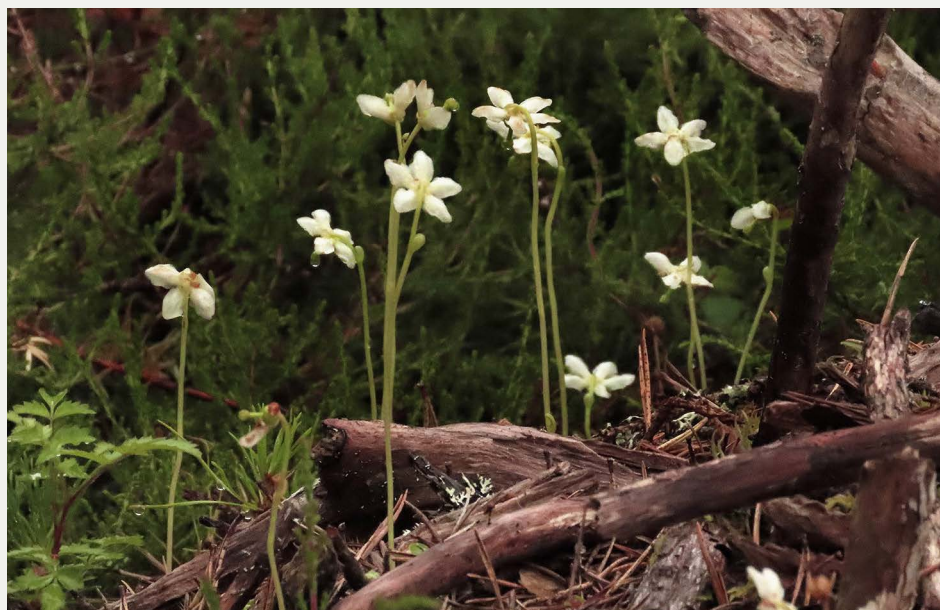


SUMMER WILDLIFE BONANZA



"I love the huge diversity of wildlife in the Highlands with so many species you can't see elsewhere in the UK - and that is what this week is all about. We search for those special species - whether dragonflies, butterflies, flowers or birds - you can't see elsewhere and do our best to show them to you and in most years with great success! A great week for the all-round naturalist" Roy Atkins

Dates Sat 1 - Sat 8 Jul 2023
Price £2,075
Deposit £400 Single Supp £270

Leaders Roy Atkins and Kate Mennie

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 and walking poles may be useful.

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, twin and single rooms all ensuite or with private facilities

Group 12

Just some of what we hope to see:

Northern Emerald	Frog Orchid
White-faced Dart	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	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 Lochan
- Ten 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 a small country house hotel on the edge of the pine forest
- The perfect holiday for the 'all-round' naturalist

Our action-packed week starts with dinner together on Saturday evening, with a chance to discuss the coming days ahead.

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 on the special Highland species of flowers, dragonflies and butterflies, 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

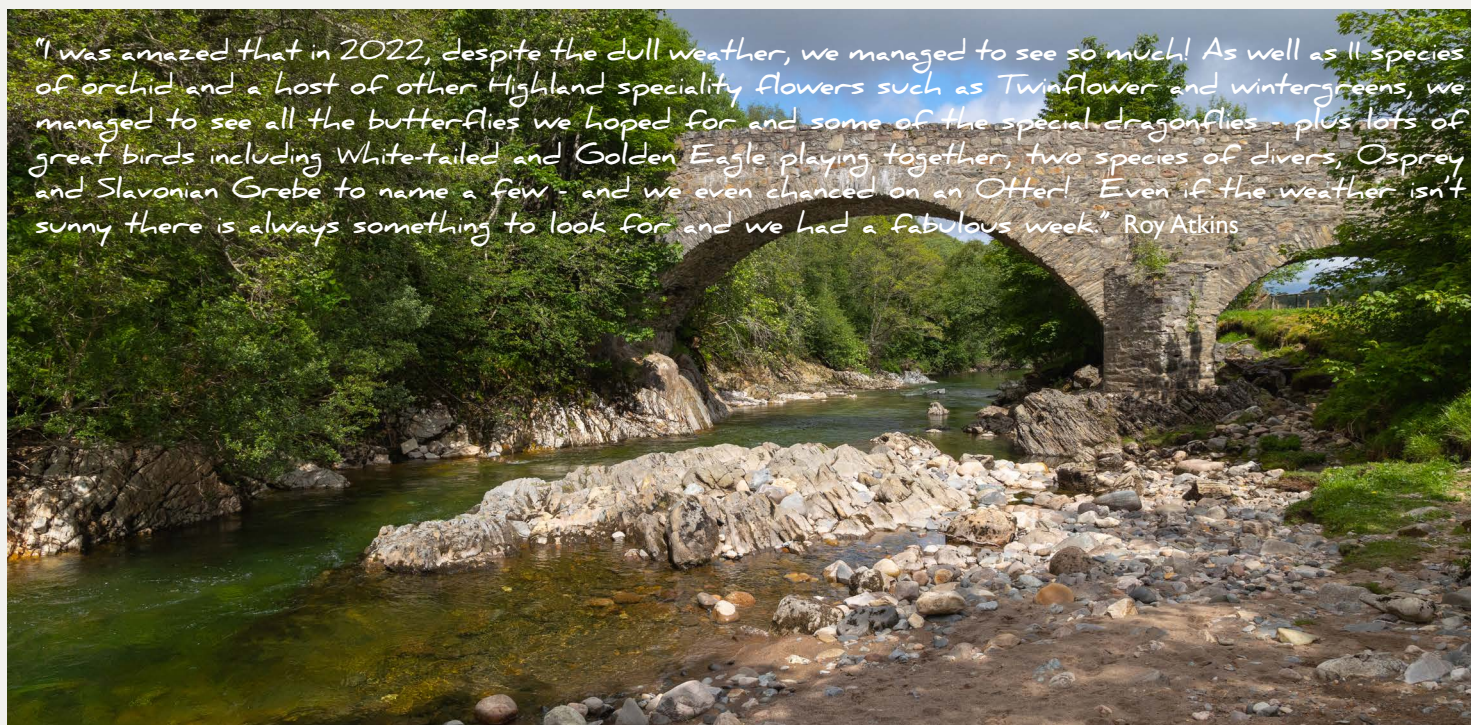


we shall see this week. Common, Intermediate and Serrated-leaved Wintergreen are here too, plus the much rarer One-flowered Wintergreen, while boggy pools hold Common Hawker and Four-spotted Chaser. Orchid meadows host Small White, Greater and Lesser Butterflies, Northern Marsh and Heath Fragrant Orchids 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. Large Heath and Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary 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 crossbill. We shall need to check these carefully as both Common and Parrot Crossbill breed here. We'll also make an evening hide visit, where close up views of Badgers are





"I was amazed that in 2022, despite the dull weather, we managed to see so much! As well as 11 species of orchid and a host of other Highland speciality flowers such as Twinflower and wintergreens, we managed to see all the butterflies we hoped for and some of the special dragonflies - plus lots of great birds including White-tailed and Golden Eagle playing together, two species of divers, Osprey and Slavonian Grebe to name a few - and we even chanced on an Otter! Even if the weather isn't sunny there is always something to look for and we had a fabulous week." Roy Atkins

almost guaranteed but we also have fingers crossed for Pine Martens that sometimes appear.

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 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 Rock Dove, White-tailed Eagle, Golden Eagle, 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 specialities. Great and Round-leaved Sundews trap midges here, as does Butterwort and we'll see other typical moorland species such as Bog Asphodel, Lousewort and Bog Myrtle.

Our route up into the alpine world of the Cairngorms 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.

8 We say our farewells after breakfast on Saturday.



Outline Itinerary

- Day 1** Arrive at our hotel in Dulnain Bridge, in time for dinner and a chat about our plans for the coming week
7 nights at Tigh na Sgiath Country House
- 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

Roy Atkins: One-flowered Wintergreen, Starry Saxifrage, Northern Damselfly, Twin Flower, Golden-ringed Dragonfly, Large Heath
Jane Hope: Avon Bridge

