RAPTORS OF THE HIGHLANDS

"Nature is red in tooth and claw and birds of prey have always fascinated me. The Highlands are simply amazing for watching raptors against wild scenery. We'll be taking our time on this trip to find raptors and look at them in detail. It's going to be a great week celebrating birds of prey."
Simon Pawsey

Dates	Sat 26 Aug - Sat 2 Sep 2017
Price	£1,445
Deposit	£250 Single Supp £150
Leaders	Simon Pawsey and Simon Eaves
Weather	Mixture of sunshine and showers (15°-25°C). It could be cooler on the boat trip
Walking	Walks will be up to five miles on relatively flat gravel and forest tracks
Meals	All included from dinner on Day 1 to breakfast on Day 8
Insects	It is coming to the end of midge season but it can still be warm, so they may be a nuisance
Accom	The Steading - double and twin ensuite, single ensuite and non ensuite
	Dunorin Hotel - double, twin and single rooms all ensuite
Boat trip	The boat trip off Skye will be in relatively sheltered waters
Group	12

Just some of what we hope to see:

Golden Eagle	Great Northern Diver
White-tailed Eagle	Red-throated Diver
Goshawk	Black-throated Diver
Sparrowhawk	Black Guillemot
Peregrine	Razorbill
Merlin	Guillemot
Kestrel	Gannet
Osprey	Twite
Red Kite	Dipper
Hen Harrier	Hooded Crow
Short-eared Owl	Rock Dove
Long-eared Owl	Mountain Hare
Barn Owl	Otter
Tawny Owl	Red and Roe Deer
Crossbill	Grey Seal
Crested Tit	Cetaceans

The Cairngorms National Park and the Isle of Skye provide fabulous opportunities to see iconic raptors against a backdrop of mountains, moorland and ancient forest.

- Golden and White-tailed Eagles in stunning mountain and island locations
- A boat trip to see White-tailed Eagles up close
- Secretive Goshawks in ancient Caledonian Pine Forests
- Ospreys breeding on our doorstep and fishing in local lochs
- Hen Harriers and Short-eared Owls quartering open moorlands
- Peregrine and Merlin hunting and dashing after their prey
- Evening trips to look for Long-eared, Tawny and Barn Owls

1 Dinner together on Saturday evening is followed by coffee and a run through of the week's itinerary.

2-3 The Cairngorms National Park is a spectacular land of mountains, bleak windswept moorlands and ancient forests, one of the best places in the UK to watch our iconic raptors.

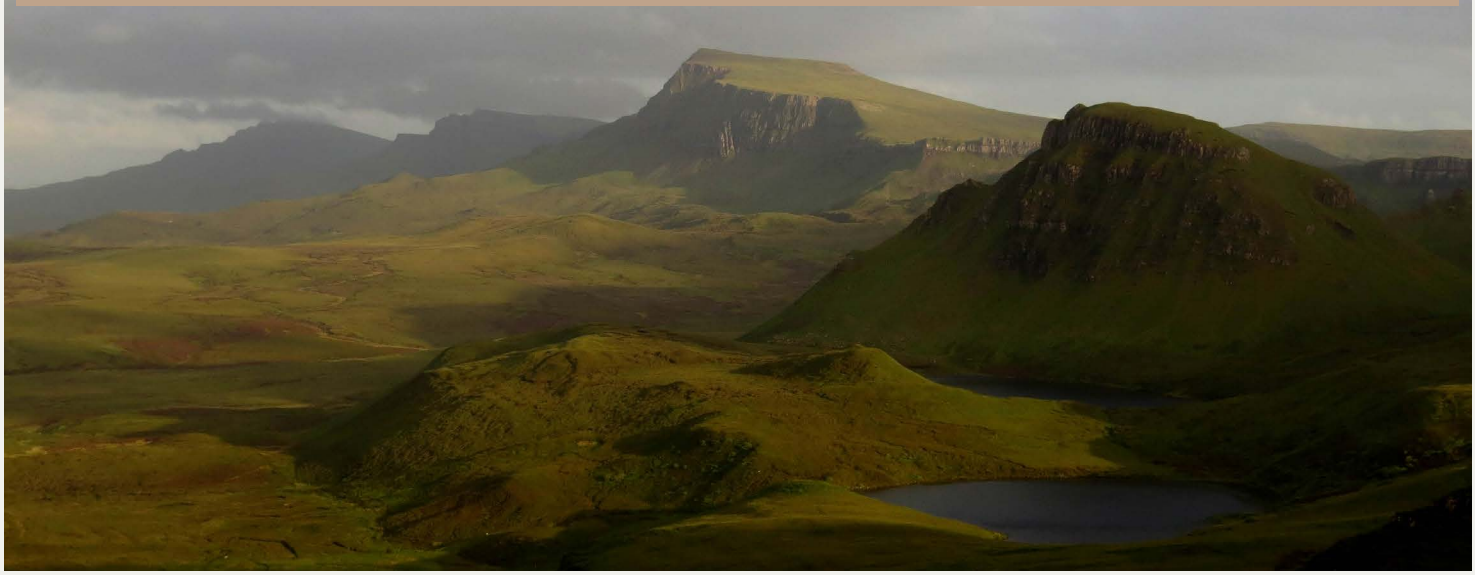
We may start with a full day in Strathdearn, which follows the River Findhorn deep into the Monadhliath Mountains. Here, a wealth of different habitats from woodlands to moorland and exposed mountains, provide habitat for up to twelve species of raptor, including Golden and White-tailed Eagle, Goshawk, Peregrine, Merlin, Osprey, Hen Harrier and Red Kite.

Weather permitting, we shall walk into the mountains on flat gravel tracks and explore the upper reaches of the glen on foot, which can be outstanding for Golden and White-tailed Eagles. Merlin and Peregrine also hunt here and it's not unusual to watch fierce little Merlins mobbing massive eagles. Goshawk and Red Kite are possible and Ospreys regularly fish the river. The scenery in the upper reaches is spectacular and it is a truly wild place.

The RSPB's Reserve at Abernethy consists of ancient pine forest, open moorland and high mountain plateau. This is our best opportunity of finding the elusive 'ghost of the forest' - the Northern Goshawk. We shall keep our eyes peeled for this secretive and elusive raptor during our full day spent in Abernethy Forest exploring remote areas, where there are also chances for Capercaillie, as well as crossbills and Crested Tit.

The area is also good for eagles with Golden and White-tailed hunting over the Reserve. Abernethy

"Skye is magical - unrivalled scenery and iconic landforms. From the formidable Black Cuillins rising like Tolkein's Mordor, to the Quirang and The Old Man of Storr, there's something about Skye which fires the imagination and gets under the skin. This is the realm of eagles, with a great supporting cast!" Simon Pawsey



is an exceptional habitat and if we explore the quieter areas of the forest it just might reveal its secrets to us.

In the evening, we shall venture out in search of owls. Long-eared, Tawny and Barn Owls are all possible and Short-eared Owls can be found quartering the moors. The days are long at this time of the year, giving us a good chance of finding owls as the sun sets.

4-6 After breakfast we shall leave for the west coast and the Isle of Skye. We shall journey through Glen Shiel and over the Ratagan Pass, before we descend to Glenelg to catch the famous turntable ferry to Kylerhea on Skye. From the ferry we may see our first island Sea Eagles and Otter are always possible.

Once on Skye we shall explore the quieter parts of the island, including the Waternish and Trotternish peninsulas. The scenery on Skye is spectacular and unrivalled in the UK and Trotternish has some of the most iconic geological landmarks in Britain.

We shall search for Golden Eagles around the Quirang and the Old Man of Storr and on the rocky coastlines look for Otters. Hen Harrier, Merlin and Short-eared Owls are rare breeders, but will be target species for us here, however there is so much more to Skye and we can hope to see Great Northern and Red-throated Divers and breeding waders before they depart for wintering grounds. Passerine species include Skylark, Twite and Linnet and as Skye is relatively under-watched who knows what we might turn up!

One of the highlights of our stay on Skye will be an exclusive trip on a comfortable boat to look for White-tailed Eagles. They can be seen very close from the boat and we may see the birds gliding in to pick fish off the surface, potentially giving great photo opportunities. We may also encounter dolphins and other marine animals and birds.

7 On our return from Skye we shall cross the Skye Bridge. Weather permitting, we shall take the Bealach na Ba alpine pass through the spectacular mountains of the Applecross Peninsula and then weave our way through Torridon, stopping at Beinn Eighe NNR, a rugged landscape and another chance to find Golden Eagle as well as other species of raptor. We shall arrive back at The Steading in time for our evening meal, followed by coffee and a look back over the week with a dram or two!

8 After breakfast on Saturday we say our farewells.

Outline Itinerary

Day 1	Arrive at Glen Feshie 3 nights at The Steading
Days 2-3	Search for raptors and other wildlife in Speyside including Strathdearn and Abernethy Forest
Day 4	Travel to the Isle of Skye via Glenelg and Kylerhea Ferry, birding and looking for raptors enroute 3 nights at Dunorin Hotel
Days 5-6	Search for raptors and wildlife amidst stunning scenery on Skye, including Waternish and Trottermish peninsulas and a boat trip for White-tailed Eagle
Day 7	Travel back to Glen Feshie, via the Bealach na Ba Pass and Torridon 1 night at The Steading
Day 8	Depart after breakfast

Roy Atkins: White-tailed Eagle, Isle of Skye
Duncan Macdonald: Short-eared Owl
Simon Eaves: Osprey
Craig Round: Otter
Mary Braddock: Golden Eagle