

SPEYSIDE 24/7



"A Slavonian Grebe comes out of the reeds followed by another. The sun is shining and we are looking at one of the most colourful birds of the week. I just can't get enough of them."
John Grierson

Dates Sat 28 Apr - Sat 5 May 2018

Price £1,125

Deposit £200 Single Supp £100

Leaders Two from our Speyside team

Weather Varies from cold to warm and sunny (8°-15°C), with less rainfall than much of Scotland but snow possible in the mountains

Walking Most walks are 1-2 miles on wide sandy tracks, although there is the possibility of a forest walk of up to 5 miles

We can now take groups on to the Cairngorms plateau from the funicular railway summit to see Ptarmigan, therefore it may be necessary to take a walk on paths over uneven and occasionally undulating rocky terrain. Low-level unguided alternatives are available. Walking boots will be needed on the holiday

Meals All included from dinner on Day 1 to breakfast on Day 8

Insects Not a problem at this time of year

Accom Double, twin and single ensuite rooms at the Steading in Glenfeshie

Group 12

Just some of what we hope to see:

Golden Eagle	Bar-tailed Godwit
Kestrel	Curlew
White-tailed Eagle	Redshank
Osprey	Sandwich Tern
Crested Tit	Black Guillemot
Capercaillie	Dipper
Black Grouse	Velvet Scoter
Black-throated Diver	Long-tailed Duck
Red-throated Diver	Pine Marten
Slavonian Grebe	Red Squirrel
Scottish Crossbill	Mountain Hare
Oystercatcher	Red Deer
Golden Plover	Bottlenose Dolphin
Lapwing	Harbour Porpoise
Dunlin	Badger

Twenty four of the best birds, seven of the best mammals - all in one action-packed week - around the mountains and forests of Speyside, plus the West Coast of Scotland.

- Kick off your wildlife quest for 2018 in style with the Highland specialities
- See 7 - and more - of the most sought-after Scottish mammals
- A spotlight night drive and dusk hide visits for elusive species
- 24 premier birds that can take years to catch up with in any other place
- Displaying eagles and Black Grouse, in forest and on moor
- On the Moray Firth and Black Isle coast - divers, seaduck, terns and dolphins
- Includes a West Coast trip for White-tailed Eagle

Our action-packed week starts with dinner together on Saturday evening, followed by a chat about the coming week.

2-7 From our base in Glen Feshie there is plenty to see close to home and we may start with a walk down the river or visit the beautiful Caledonian Pine forest nearby.

Here, amongst the ancient pines, we shall search out delightful Crested Tit and parties of Scottish Crossbill - which we'll need to check carefully, as both Common and Parrot Crossbills have also nested in the area in recent years.

Redstarts, Tree Pipits, Siskins and countless Willow Warblers are singing in the forest clearings and Cuckoos call from the wooded slopes. Red Squirrels scamper through the branches and we'll visit our own baited hide for fabulous close

up views of Pine Martens and Badgers, with Woodcock roding above the trees and the chance of Red and Roe Deer as we walk in.

Nearby lochans hold beautiful Slavonian Grebes, showing golden plumes in their breeding finery and this is a great time of year to see displaying Golden Eagle or Osprey, the latter just returning to nests, including a pair close to the Steading. In recent years a pair of White-tailed Eagles has taken up residence locally, so you never know your luck!

Capercaillie are now steadily declining, so we shan't make a special early morning visit to seek them out, but visit areas later in the day. We'll look for Black Grouse however, as they 'bubble and coo,' a wonderful sight and guaranteed to create an appetite for a full cooked breakfast back at our superb Steading accommodation.





"We visit the Black Isle, interestingly not black and not an island and watch Bottlenose Dolphins chasing and catching salmon at close quarters. It has to be the best land-based viewing point for dolphins in Europe." John Grierson

The Black Isle and Moray Coast still have a few of the Long-tailed Duck, Scaup and both Common and Velvet Scoters, that winter here amongst the Eiders and other seaduck. We'll visit Udale Bay, where passage waders may include Bar-tailed Godwit, Knot and more.

Flocks of wintering geese may include large flocks of Pink-footed Geese, still lingering before they head north and there may be hundreds of Wigeon, with Teal and other ducks, including a few Pintail. Flocks of Golden Plover feed in nearby fields and we'll look out for farmland birds such as Tree Sparrow and Yellowhammer.

We shall make a special effort to see the resident group of Bottlenose Dolphins at a headland on the Black Isle, where they can often come remarkably close to shore, as they hunt fish moving in on the rising tide - with luck perhaps we'll see some acrobatics!

One night we'll head out with spotlights in search of mammals and owls - we've found Pine Martens, Roe Deer and plenty of Brown Hares this way, plus Tawny Owls and we've even been lucky and seen Long-eared Owl in the past.

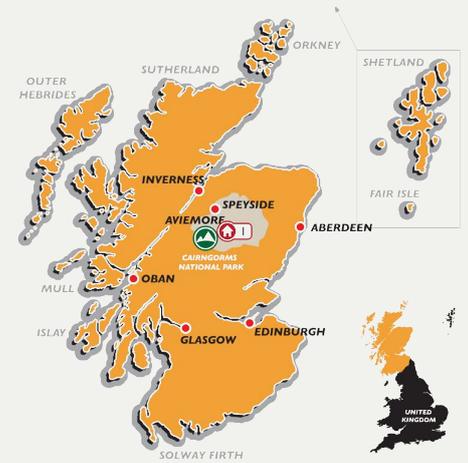
We have our own places to find camouflaged Mountain Hare, as Red Deer watch us from the skyline - and we shall keep an eye on the sky for hunting Golden Eagle or Peregrine. Raven pass overhead and we hope for Hen Harrier, Merlin or Short-eared Owl hunting over the moorland where cackling Red Grouse display.

Weather permitting we'll venture onto the arctic tundra of Cairngorm in search of Ptarmigan amongst the skiers - easy now we have special permission to go out on to the mountain at the top, so can use the Funicular Railway to get there!

We'll have a wonderful day amidst the dramatic mountain peaks and shores of the West Coast. As we drive west the scenery becomes more and more impressive and the beach at Mellon Udrigle is beautiful and so peaceful. It is a great chance to see flocks of Great Northern and Black-throated Divers in breeding plumage just offshore, before they move to their nesting sites.

Wild Rock Doves nest on the cliffs and we'll look out for Ravens, Twite and Black Guillemot, plus Common Seals loafing on the rocks. Along the seaweed strewn shoreline, we'll search for Otters as they hunt for butterfish and crabs, while another big target here is the resident White-tailed Eagles - huge and impressive as they soar over Scottish Islands. So much to see - it'll be a busy week!

○ On our final day, we say our farewells after breakfast.



Outline Itinerary

- Day 1** Arrive in Glen Feshie in time for an evening meal and a chat about what we shall do for the coming week. 7 nights at the Steading
- Days 2-7** Wildlife and birdwatching exploration including Abernethy Forest, Dava Moor, the Cairngorms, the Moray Firth and West Coast
- Day 8** After breakfast we say our farewells

Simon Eaves: Slavonian Grebe, Osprey
Julian Sykes: Bottlenose Dolphin
Mike Hems: Pine Marten
Jane Hope: Crested Tit, Red Squirrel
Mary Braddock: Capercaillie

