

# SPEYSIDE WILDLIFE

Est. 1991

Bird and Wildlife Watching Holidays in the UK and Overseas **2024**





# 2024 holiday schedule

This is our 2024 schedule at a glance. Details of each holiday or experience are given in full here; just start turning the pages to find the destination that suits you. In addition, all holidays are on our website, where you'll also find photographs and feedback from guests who have been with us on previous trips. A "Holiday Highlights" trip report can be downloaded from each holiday details web page. To ask about any of these, or for any other queries, don't hesitate to email us on [enquiries@speysidewildlife.co.uk](mailto:enquiries@speysidewildlife.co.uk) or phone us on +44 (0) 1479 812498.



Black-winged Stilt, Cyprus

## Scotland

27 Mar-3 Apr	Islay and Jura at Easter	pg 28
27 Apr-4 May	Speyside 24/7	pg 38
3-11 May	The Islands of the Outer Hebrides	pg 46
18-28 May	Wild Hebrides	pg 48
27 May-5 Jun	Canna and Corncrakes	pg 50
31 May-8 Jun	The Ultimate Uists	pg 52
2-14 Jun	A Hebridean Odyssey	pg 54
8-17 Jun	Mull and Kintyre	pg 58
13-23 Jun	St Kilda	pg 60
29 Jun-6 Jul	Shetland	pg 62
24 Aug-2 Sep	An Orkney Odyssey	pg 80
31 Aug-7 Sep	Raptors of the Highlands	pg 82
5-12 Oct	Alladale	pg 88
26 Oct-2 Nov	Forth 'n' Fife	pg 94
2-9 Nov	Solway Firth	pg 96

## England and Wales

3-10 Feb	North Norfolk	pg 18
11-18 May	North Wales	pg 44
29 Jun-6 Jul	The Channel Islands	pg 64
6-13 Jul	Yorkshire in Summer	pg 66
13-20 Jul	The Farn Islands	pg 68
17-24 Aug	Cornwall	pg 74
5-12 Oct	East Yorkshire	pg 90
7-14 Oct	Isles of Scilly	pg 92
9-15 Nov	Northumberland in Winter	pg 98

## Asia

16 Jul-2 Aug	Mongolia	pg 70
--------------	----------	-------

## The Americas

24 Feb-10 Mar	Costa Rica	pg 20
1-16 Apr	Texas Eclipse	pg 30
8-22 Jun	Alaska	pg 56
17 Aug-1 Sep	Amazon Cruise	pg 72
24 Aug-1 Sep	Nova Scotia	pg 78
7-21 Sep	British Columbia, Canada	pg 84
23 Nov-4 Dec	New Mexico	pg 100

## Europe

21-28 Jan	Andujar Lynx, Spain	pg 16
10-17 Mar	Gallocanta and Ebro Delta, Spain	pg 22
21-26 Mar	Finland Aurora	pg 24
23-30 Mar	Spanish Birds and Botany	pg 26
11-20 Apr	Tarifa and Doñana, Spain	pg 32
14-21 Apr	Valencia, Spain	pg 34
19-26 Apr	Croatia	pg 36
4-11 May	Corsica, France	pg 40
4-11 May	The Pyrenees, Spain	pg 42
25 Aug-3 Sep	Cantabria, Spain	pg 76
6-13 Oct	Öland Sweden	pg 86

## Other wildlife watching experiences

All year	Evening Mammal Watching Hide	pg 9
Summer months	Badger Photography Hide	pg 10
All year	Wildlife Identification Courses	pg 11
All year	Day Trips in the Cairngorms	pg 12
All year	Tailormade Tours to Suit You	pg 14

# WHAT MAKES A SPEYSIDE WILDLIFE HOLIDAY

When we started in 1991, running trips and holidays in Speyside in the Scottish Highlands, designated as the Cairngorms National Park in 2003, in recognition of how special this area is, we never dreamed that we would now be running holidays around the world from the Arctic to the Antarctic. Our ethos however remains the same, to deliver fun-filled holidays, packed with wildlife and our destinations have always been determined by this and by where you want to go next.

We pride ourselves on our high level of personal attention and won't race around in pursuit of big lists. We keep to small group sizes (normally 12), so whether you are a beginner or more experienced, young or old, we are happy to take the time, so you can enjoy the wildlife to the full. Our guides are experienced and their enthusiasm infectious, always ensuring that you see the wildlife and always happy to explain what you are looking at, whilst our dedicated office team makes sure everything runs smoothly from the beginning to the end of your holiday.

*"Why would we choose anyone else! Speyside Wildlife tours are pitched perfectly for us in terms of level of comfort and level of birding. Your record has been consistently outstanding, so you are always our first choice for nature travel." Alison Cawley and John Scotford*



Guests during 'Canna and Corncrakes', Ailie Brown

## Fully Inclusive

Our holidays are just that - holidays. We'll fit in as many exciting and interesting activities as we can, but still give you completely relaxed enjoyment. You'll find little if any extra spending money is needed, as our holidays are all-inclusive - the price you see is the final price you pay and covers accommodation, meals, transport, boat and ferry costs and flights, as detailed with each destination.

Not included are travel insurance, visas, personal telephone calls, drinks etc. at the accommodation and items of a personal nature.

## Typical Days Out

We generally breakfast about 8am to make the most of the morning's bird and wildlife activity, but often arrange optional pre-breakfast excursions. In tropical areas we'll start earlier to avoid the midday heat, but don't be frightened to lie-in - it is your holiday after all! We eat out during the day or take a picnic lunch in the field and, at the end of the day, return to freshen up before dinner, where we all eat together.

*"We choose Speyside Wildlife because of the quality of the leaders and the level of care on holidays, plus the level of service offered by the office team. Thought is given to the itinerary, with good accommodation and we have the knowledge that everything possible will be done to take care of the group." Brenda and Peter Wilson*

## OUR CUSTOMER SERVICE PROMISE:

*To share outstanding fun-filled wildlife experiences, where you are always treated as an individual, not one of a crowd.*

Relaxing afterwards, we'll run through the day's wildlife sightings and highlights, or perhaps arrange an optional dusk excursion.

We try and fit in as much gentle walking as we can during our days out. There may be more rigorous walks occasionally, but wherever possible we shall offer a less strenuous option. You'll require a moderate degree of fitness, but no more than average.

People find our holidays fun and informal, with guests, including both beginners and those more expert, adding to their experience. On each trip, we get a real mixture of singles and couples, spanning a range of age and ability. Our easy-going guides will make sure that your holiday is fun to be on.

## Where We Stay

Wildlife watching often takes place in beautiful remote regions with beautiful remote accommodation to match. These places are often unique. We try and find the most friendly, rural, good quality, family-run accommodation with ensuite facilities. We blaze a trail by finding some terrific hotels away from the run of the mill tourist fare, places of character that others don't use. For us, great food and comfortable accommodation, with wildlife watching near at hand, are all vital ingredients for a successful holiday.

*"Good knowledgeable guides who care about the guests and try to ensure you see everything, plus the organisation as a whole is very good."*

Val Lambert

*"The guides were great as usual; very knowledgeable and great fun. We were kept fully informed about everything."*

Marilyn Davidson



Tiger, India, Julian Sykes

## Easy To Get To

If you're holidaying with us in the Cairngorms, Inverness airport is only a 1hr 30min flight from London and we can arrange an airport pick-up for you for a small charge. If you prefer to travel by train, we can collect you free of charge from Aviemore train station at 4:30pm, 6:30pm or 7:30pm and of course we'll return you to the station on departure.

All our holidays around Scotland start in the Cairngorms, Inverness, Aberdeen, Oban or Glasgow and we'll give you details of the meeting points for each. Again, if you prefer to travel by train, they all have stations and there are flights to Inverness, Aberdeen and Glasgow.

If you're joining us on an overseas holiday, a map of the airport or train station, together with a meeting point and time, will be sent to you prior to the start of the holiday.

## Photography

Our holidays are aimed at providing a great wildlife watching experience. While they are not designed as photography holidays, many guests do take the opportunity to capture wonderful photographs to add to their enjoyment (and often the enjoyment of other guests). Most of the pictures in this brochure have been taken by guests or guides and we are pleased to be able to use these to illustrate "what you see is what you get" - our guides really do have the knack of finding birds and animals.



XXXX, Bhutan, Maggie Buckell



James Glover, Puffin, The Farnes

## HOW TO BOOK

Bookings can be made via our website where you can check availability, book and pay online. Please contact our team if you require a manual booking form. Full terms and conditions are also available online, along with details of each holiday.

Please feel free to call or email us and we'll be happy to advise you of the spaces remaining on your chosen holiday. We can also send you a "Holiday Highlights" trip report. These are also available on the website.

Whether booking online or sending in a booking form, payments for holidays can be made by all of the major credit and debit cards shown below via PayPal or by bank transfer or cheque.

**Phone** +44 (0) 1479 812498  
**Email** enquiries@speysidewildlife.co.uk  
**Web** www.speysidewildlife.co.uk  
**Post** Wester Camerorie  
Ballieward  
Grantown on Spey  
Cairngorms National Park  
PH26 3PR  
Scotland



# MEET OUR GUIDES

*"Roy was brilliant as always - professional, patient and friendly. Always making sure everyone had a chance to see everything, but enabling people to opt out when they needed a break."*  
Costa Rica 2023, Elaine and Colin George



## Roy Atkins

We've known Roy for over 25 years. He's a great all-round naturalist and years' of experience in the world of teaching have made him a great people person. Our guests travel with him again and again to far-flung places such as Costa Rica, Tanzania, the Pantanal and British Columbia. His sense of fun and knowledge of birds, plants and animals make him a very popular leader.

## Darren Rees

Darren is a great birder and quite simply fun to be with. He has led countless groups for us in Arizona, Texas, California, South Africa and Namibia. This year he will be taking guests to Colorado, Finland and Norway, Namibia and Spitsbergen. He is also a talented artist: 'Bird Impressions' is his acclaimed collection of bird paintings and his latest book 'Ice Bound' follows his exploits in Antarctica'.



*"Darren was superb as usual - always kept us informed of daily plans and activities. He has a great knowledge of the area and hotspots to potentially spot target species."*  
Yellowstone Spring 2023, Jayne Behenna

*"Simon was the only guide and was enthusiastic and informative. He went to great lengths to ensure that we all had good views of the birds, mammals and plants."*  
Outer Hebrides 2023, Susan Bradbury



## Simon Eaves

Simon is one of Speyside's keenest birdwatchers. He knows as much as anyone about the wildlife of the Scottish Highlands and has a real interest in scarce birds, mammals and identification challenges - with him as your guide you'll learn a huge amount about Speyside. That doesn't stop him taking guests further afield for us however; to places such as Tarifa/Doñana and the Isles of Scilly.

## Craig Round

Craig loves Speyside and the Scottish Islands and has led tours in Scotland for 25 years, taking our guests regularly to Mull, Shetland, Fair Isle and the Outer Hebrides. He has a great combination of field naturalist skills, outgoing personality and incredibly sharp eyes; along with an astonishing knowledge of birds, mammals and insects.



*"The guiding was excellent. Craig took us to fantastic places to see a variety of birds and was very knowledgeable. He was also good fun to be with."*  
Outer Hebrides 2023, Margaret Glasgow

*"Duncan was brilliant. Very well informed, on the ball, patient at all times and tried to make sure everyone saw everything."*  
Sue and Mike Jenkins 2019



## Duncan Macdonald

With 20 years' experience leading wildlife watching groups in the Highlands. He has a background in environmental education and conservation, which gives him great guiding skills, as well as knowledge of a wide range of birds, mammals, butterflies and bugs! Duncan is one of our trainers for our wildlife identification courses along with Roy.

## Stuart Housden

Stuart started birding at the age of seven, becoming a regular at Dungeness from nine onwards, ringing migrants and exploring southern England. His passion for birds and nature led to a 41-year career with the RSPB, 23 years as Director of the organisation in Scotland - few people know Scotland as well as Stuart! He has birded in over 50 countries around the world.



*"Stuart could not have put more effort into ensuring that we had a great holiday and that we saw all of the birds."*  
Lynne and John Tidmarsh 2021

*"Julian was amazing - excellent knowledge and experience of the region and species. We were briefed the evening before where we were going and what we might see."*

Andujar Lynx 2023, Yvonne Hamblin



## Julian Sykes

A native Yorkshireman, Julian now divides his time between there and Spain, so is the perfect guide to take you on our Andujar, Extremadura and Pyrenees holidays. Not that this stops him from leading tours to British Columbia, NE India and Wrangel Island. He has a lifelong interest in wildlife and his friendly outgoing nature makes him a very popular guide and ideal member of the team.

## Sally Nowell

Sally has travelled extensively to pursue her interest in wildlife watching, particularly birds, and has been based in Speyside for the last 23 years, so has an excellent knowledge of Highland wildlife. Sally is a keen walker and loves to try and get off the beaten track to discover the hidden corners of the Highlands. She co-leads a number of our Scottish holidays.



*"Real pleasure to travel with Sally again. She is great company, an excellent wildlife spotter and never stops working for the group."*

Canna and Corncrakes 2023,  
Lynne and John Tidmarsh

*"We did a Cairngorms Guided Day Out with Ailie and she was great. All the while she dropped interesting little bits of naturalist knowledge which we then remembered for the other days."*

Trip Advisor Review, Sept 2023



## Ailie Brown

Ailie studied Zoology at Aberdeen University before interning at Wicken Fen National Nature Reserve as a Grazing warden. Ailie has a great interest in bird watching and identifying wildflowers and butterflies too! Ailie leads on the administration of our Guided Days Out as well as guiding our local guests in the Cairngorms during their days out.

## David Hull

David has a background in education and his roles as a wildlife guide and conservationist benefit from his enthusiasm for teaching and lifelong learning. He enjoys sharing his knowledge of Scottish plants, birds, mammals and butterflies during our Day Guides and he also guides our Evening Mammal Watching and Badger Photography experiences.



*"A big "thank you" for my very memorable day out on the Cairngorms. I really appreciate the huge effort you went to, to ensure that we had a successful day."*

Tracy Solman, 2023

*"Harris was a brilliant guide pointing out not only information about the Badgers and Pine Martens but also information about plants and the night sky on our way to our car!"*

Trip Advisor Review, Sept 2023



## Harris Brooker

Harris is a well-rounded naturalist with a wide interest in nature and a particular passion for wildlife, botany and astronomy. He is our Evening Mammal Hide guide, based near Aviemore and you will also find him supporting our Wildlife Identification Courses and Guided Day Out.

## Tim Drew

With 30 years' experience behind him, Tim is a passionate ornithologist and a keen all-round naturalist who was born with 'binoculars around his neck'. He enjoys nothing more than exploring places in search of birds, butterflies and all other beasties and sharing his knowledge with others. He has a soft spot for the Scottish Highlands and Islands but has also travelled widely throughout Europe and Asia.



*"Tim was very knowledgeable and quite happy to spend time explaining to less-experienced guests what they were seeing, the finer points of identification and back ground knowledge."*

Orkney Odyssey 2023, Nicky Lovely

*"Jane was an excellent guide. She was flexible enough to take into account the weather (where possible) and recent sightings."*

Cyprus 2023, Joyce and Tony Sawford



## Jane Atkins

Jane started her time with us as a guest, often joining her husband Roy on trips he was leading. Over the years, she has guided holidays within the UK including the Cairngorms and Norfolk and also to British Columbia, Spain and Cyprus. Now she has retired from her job with the Environment Agency she has time to lead more trips in the future - such as Corsica and Oland in 2024.

# MEET OUR OTHER "EXPERTS"

Our guides are the expert birders and naturalists who lead the tours, but behind them stands the invisible group of other "experts", who are just as essential in making sure that every holiday runs smoothly and guests have a great time. They include the people who plan, research and organise the individual holidays; who arrange the logistics, provide the information, deal with queries and keep the show on the road.

*"This is my sixth trip with you and I return because I know I will reliably have the type of holiday I like best, as a nature-loving traveller."*  
Andrew Dodd 2019



## Sally Dowden

Sally owns Speyside Wildlife and is still very much hands on in the organisation. Responsible for the smooth running and complex logistics of the business, she recently instigated a wildlife identification course, designed to fill the lack of 'on the ground' identification skills in the Cairngorms, which is run by two of our wildlife tour guides.

## Lisa Gunn

Lisa has been with us for eighteen years now and is responsible for all the accounting and systems management. Along with the daily accounting processes, company pensions, wages, budgets, contribution schedules and VAT, she organises the logistics of both our wildlife watching hides, all of which help to keep her busier than ever!



*"We are so looking forward to tomorrow evening and would like to say a big thank you for your help. It has put our mind at ease. Wonderful!"*  
Lesley Smith 2021

*"We enquired about the possibility of a Rio extension, plus the Htaipu Dam, and Tania came up trumps with a customised itinerary."*  
Liz & Nigel Matthews 2023



## Tania Pedersen

Tania is one of the voices you'll hear when you call our office. She deals with all aspects of administration to ensure you have all the information you need for your holiday, organising all our overseas trips, dealing with the complex logistics of the long-haul destinations, while still finding time to manage the European destinations.

## Susanne McCafferty

Susanne has been with us for over seventeen years. Born and bred in Speyside, she deals with all aspects of a selection of our Scottish and UK holidays, such as Orkney, Wales, the Scillies, Northumberland, the Outer Hebrides and Mull, as well as organising the day guiding in the Cairngorms and further afield.



*"Susanne's kind, faithful and efficient communication has been a blessing, without her I rather doubt my dreams of participation in this lovely experience could've come to fruition!"* Mollie Dodd 2017

*"I just wanted to email to say thank you so much for all your help, kindness, and support with the filming last week and over the last few months in the build-up."* Hello Halo TV, 2021



## Cath Wright

Cath leads on our marketing, deals with our design work and website and organises our presentations to bird clubs and exhibitions at birding fairs, plus our own events up and down the country. Her background in hospitality and marketing, means she is best placed to organise your tailor-made itineraries for individuals and larger groups too.



Yellowstone Spring, Darren Rees

# EVENING MAMMAL WATCHING



*"Along with two of Britain's most elusive mammals - the Badger and the Pine Marten, we can also see Wood Mouse, Bank Vole, deer and a variety of birds. Our hide gives the opportunity to see our nocturnal mammals up close in their natural habitat."*

Harris Brooker

Come and enjoy our comfortable hide on the edge of the Caledonian Pine Forest in the Cairngorms for Badger and Pine Marten plus Roe Deer, Red Deer and more.

- Comfortable hide in the Cairngorms National Park, with easy access
- We regularly see Badgers at close quarters
- Pine Marten also visit
- The animals come right up to the windows
- You'll be accompanied throughout by our friendly, expert guide
- Hire exclusively and have the hide to yourselves
- Badger photography hide also available for exclusive hire

Cost	£25.00 per adult, if booked online (£30.00 if booked manually via our office) £10.00 per child 8-14yrs, if booked online (£15.00 if booked manually via our office) Not suitable for children under 8yrs
Exclusive Use	£250.00 per evening, if booked online (£300.00 if booked manually via our office)
Opening Times	Nightly from Easter to October on an exclusive basis or as part of a group. From November to Easter on a request basis only for exclusive use or parties of 2 people or more. Pre-booking is essential. Start times vary with the seasons. In summer we don't start until 9:00pm, in winter we meet around 6:00pm
Group Size	Maximum 12 people in the hide
Insects	Biting midges possible during summer
Walking	There is a short walk, less than 5 minutes on a wide track from the meeting point to the hide
Access	The hide is accessible to wheelchairs, and has lowered sections of windows for viewing. Please get in touch if you would like more information about access to the hide.
Clothing	Warm, non-rusting, subdued outdoor clothing and walking boots or shoes. Advice on the "how to do it" of wildlife watching is provided on booking
Location	The hide is a short journey from Aviemore. A meeting point map and meeting times are provided on booking.
Toilets	Please be aware there are no toilet facilities whilst in the hide so apologies, no comfort breaks during the evening.
Photos	The viewing windows do not open, so there are only some incidental photographic opportunities.

Terry Lee: Pine Marten, Jane Hope: Badger

For a memorable wildlife encounter, spend an evening with our knowledgeable guide and watch the nocturnal creatures that visit our warm and comfortable, baited hide in the heart of the Cairngorms National Park. Your guide will meet you just before dusk, at our location just outside Aviemore and walk with you down the wide track to the hide.

Once there, they'll explain the habits and life cycles of the Badgers and Pine Martens that are the most frequently anticipated night-time visitors, while you relax and await their appearance. Whilst the animals are free and untamed and appear when they wish, understanding their nocturnal habits every night has ensured reliable sightings. Every evening provides a new experience and exciting close encounters with our precious native mammal species. Roe Deer and Red Deer may be seen whilst it's still light, but the visits by Badgers and Pine Martens will usually only occur at dusk.

The hide has been designed to give the maximum viewing area possible for all guests, without fear of disturbance to the nocturnal visitors and we have outside spotlights, allowing the animals to be seen clearly from the large picture windows without interference on the darker evenings. There is a lower section of window for wheelchair users and those needing to be seated lower down rather

than on the bar stools. Our infra-red cameras give advance notice of whatever animals are moving about in the forest around us and our microphone will pick up their sounds as they feed. The animals will come to the viewing area at different times in an evening, but we expect that to occur within the 2-3 hours you will be in the hide.

The viewing windows do not open, so there are only some incidental photographic opportunities. Please note that flash photography is not permitted at any time and please turn any camera functions to mute so that electronic noises do not disturb the animals. We have a photographic hide on site for 1-2 people, which can be booked on an exclusive basis for Badger Photography and the main wildlife viewing hide can also be booked on an exclusive basis if you wish to bring your own group for the evening.



# SUMMER BADGER PHOTOGRAPHY HIDE



*"Sitting in the peace of a summer's evening, sunlight coming through the trees, with a family of badgers only a few feet away, snuffling and grunting as they search for food, is a real delight."*

Cost	£150
Exclusive Use	Only one booking per night, ideally for one person, but can accommodate two.
What to Expect	Your booking confirmation will give extra handy hints about the evening so that you can maximise the enjoyment from your visit.
Times	Nightly during the summer months, to start approximately one hour before dusk. The animals are around for a maximum of three hours. The actual meeting time will be given on confirmation of booking.
Location	A meeting point map and timings are provided on confirmation of booking.
Toilets	Please be aware there are no toilet facilities whilst in the hide so apologies, no comfort breaks during the evening.
Transport	The hide is a short journey from Aviemore. Your meeting point map, provided on confirmation of your booking, will give taxis the precise location.
Access	There is a short walk, less than 5 minutes on a wide track and then a downhill path, from the meeting point to the hide. Please remember to bring a torch, as the walk back to your car may be in the dark.
Clothing	Warm, non-rustling, subdued outdoor clothing and walking shoes are preferable. Advice on the "how to do it" for this hide's location, is provided on confirmation of booking.
Insects	Can occur during the summer months, but not a problem when in the hide.

Jane Hope: Badgers

Our hide is dedicated to photographing badgers under natural conditions. During the summer months the nights are short, enabling you to photograph animals in daylight.

- Ideal for single photographer use, although hide can accommodate two people
- Photos are all in natural daylight in the summer months
- Hide is halfway down a woodland hill, so many shots potentially at eye-level
- Also potential for backlit pictures from the end of the hide facing the sunset
- Scrim netting is provided with slits for lenses
- Shelf and screw fitting for tripod head incorporated
- Our guide will meet you and walk you to the hide location

Our Badger photography hide is located a short distance from Aviemore in the Cairngorms National Park within a peaceful woodland setting. This allows you to photograph and watch these timid creatures from a respectful distance, as they forage the woodland floor and interact with each other in the early evening light.

The hide is bookable on an exclusive basis for an evening. No artificial light is provided, so higher ISOs are needed because of the woodland shade. The consequence of this will depend on the camera being used, but some examples of pictures taken are shown in the website gallery, with the lens/speed/aperture details given on a selection. Flash cannot be used under any circumstances. Tripods can be used, but they are not ideal. We advise the use of beanbags, or you can transfer your tripod head to a screw provided in the shelf.

Scrim netting is provided with slits for lenses. You will be very close to the badgers, so it is essential to be very quiet, although there is carpet on the floor to deaden sound. It is also important to wear non-rustling clothing. A fleece is ideal and much better than a waterproof jacket. The usual advice applies about wearing hats and gloves to make you less visible; even with scrim net. If a low sun is shining directly into the hide, any movement will be noticeable to the Badgers.

Our guide will meet you at the appointed time and walk you to the hide and ensure you are settled, before leaving you for the evening.



# WILDLIFE IDENTIFICATION COURSES



*"The diversity of environments we visited on the bird watching day meant that we got to see a wide range of habitats and species. Great to be able to put some of the techniques learned in the classroom day into practice."*

George Blacksell

Wildlife Identification Qualification 2023

*"It's always a special bonus on the course to be able to enjoy the classroom location - a truly wonderful place especially when the sun shines. There are plenty of birds to see and hear. It will remain one of the highlights of the whole event for me - a privilege to spend time there and it enhances the course experience."*

Elaine George

Wildlife Identification Qualification 2023

*"All staff are incredibly enthusiastic and it helps to learn something when people are passionate about it."*

Rosemarie Patterson, Raptors MC 2023

*"Duncan and Simon were professional and helped folk with different levels of knowledge and experience. Nothing was too much trouble."*

Alistair Bertram, Waders MC 2023

Images: Jane Hope



If you've always wanted to know what the bird calls are that you hear whilst out walking, or to feel confident that you can tell the difference between a buzzard and an eagle as you scan the hills, then our Wildlife Identification courses are for you.

We teach you the 'how to do it' of wildlife identification, to work things out for yourself, either by sight or sound, whilst you're out and about.

You may wish to join for personal career development, at the start of your career as a wildlife tour guide or just for your own enjoyment and complete beginners are welcome. Our year round schedule includes:

## 12-Month Wildlife Identification Qualification

### Who is it for?

- Anyone who wants to start the process towards becoming a wildlife guide.
- Anyone who wishes to improve their skills and knowledge, of bird and mammal identification.
- People who would like to work in the natural environment where identification skills would help.
- People who want to know what they are seeing and hearing when they are out and about.

### What does it cover?

- Learn to recognize birds by sight and sound - focusing on the birds we may see and hear in the Cairngorms National Park (but useful anywhere in the UK).
- How to recognise the trickier to identify mammal species.
- We teach the 'how to do it' of wildlife identification, so you can work things out for yourself when you're out spotting wildlife.

### The course structure:

- 12 months - covering all seasons, plumage, migration, songs and calls.
- We get together on five weekends - each with a day in the 'classroom' and a day putting what we learned into practice in the field.
- The course is accredited by LANTRA so

you will receive a certificate for successfully completing the course assessment.

- We focus on the trickier groups everyone struggles with - waders, warblers, raptors and plenty of other identification challenges.

## 2-Day Masterclasses

### Which groups of birds?

- Raptors - all the UK's raptors including eagles, buzzards, harriers, hawks, falcons, osprey, Red Kite and owls.
- Waders - all the UK's waders, from Curlew down to Little Stint.
- Wildfowl and Waterbirds - swans, geese and ducks, plus grebes, cormorant and shag, divers and auks.
- Bird songs and calls - we focus on the most likely songs you will hear; plus give hints and tips on how to learn bird songs and calls.

### What is covered?

- Compare and contrast the various members of groups to help you identify them for yourself with useful tips and hints.
- We focus on the species found around the Cairngorms National Park but also mention other species around the UK.
- Plumage and other useful features such as behaviour; size and shape, how they fly, calls, habitat, what time of year to see them and direct comparisons of trickier to tell apart species and groups.

### The course structure:

- We spend one day in the 'classroom' and one in the field putting what we learned into practice..

All our courses are based within the Cairngorms National Park, in a forest setting near Aviemore.

Further details can be found online at [www.wildlifeidcourses.co.uk](http://www.wildlifeidcourses.co.uk)

# DAY TRIPS IN THE CAIRNGORMS



*"Your day can be completely tailored to the species and areas you hope to see. Or let us decide and we'll take you to the special nooks and crannies that we know, for the best the Cairngorms has to offer. This is a great way to get to know the area and discover what makes Speyside so special!"*  
Ailie Brown

Dates	To suit you, subject to guide availability and preferred itinerary. Our website will show which days are available
Guides	We have local guides who know the wildlife of the Cairngorms and around Scotland, so can tailor the day to highlight your interests
Cost	£225 standard day if booked online (£275 if booked manually via our office) £295 extended day if booked online (£350 if booked manually via our office)
Included	Wildlife guide on an exclusive basis for you and up to 6 guests. Transport for the day in comfortable 8-seater minibus or car
Packages	Tailor-made packages, including meals, accommodation etc. can be arranged to suit your budget - just ask and we'll be delighted to put a quote together for you
Insects	Midges and ticks in the spring/summer
Weather	Weather varies from cold to warm and sunny (-5°-25°C), with less rainfall than much of Scotland but snow possible in the mountains
Walking	Most walks will be on wide sandy tracks, except in the Cairngorm Mountains, where terrain is more steep and uneven, so walking boots are essential. Your guide will discuss walking options with you beforehand

## Just some of what you could see:

Red-throated Diver	Golden Plover
Black-throated Diver	Dipper
Slavonian Grebe	Ring Ouzel
Golden Eagle	Cuckoo
White-tailed Eagle	Crested Tit
Osprey	Scottish Crossbill
Merlin	Snow Bunting
Peregrine	Red Squirrel
Hen Harrier	Mountain Hare
Ptarmigan	Otter
Black Grouse	Red Deer
Red Grouse	Roe Deer
Dotterel	Bottlenose Dolphin

**Simon Eaves:** Crossbill, **Colin Scott:** Ptarmigan  
**Jane Hope:** Crested Tit, Lochindorb  
**Duncan Macdonald:** Redshank

The Cairngorms National Park is home to some of our most iconic species of wildlife. Our expert guides know the area intimately and can help you find the species you'd most like to see.

- Our expert guides have a wealth of knowledge about the wildlife of Scotland
- Book your own private guide and comfortable minibus for up to seven guests
- Target the species you want to see in the Cairngorms National Park and wider area
- Collection from your local accommodation or meeting place of your choice
- Combine this with an evening wildlife watching for Badger and Pine Marten
- Ideal for families, small groups, couples or individuals
- Perfect gift for birthdays, anniversaries, retirement etc.

The Cairngorms National Park is home to some of our most iconic but elusive species of wildlife. Finding them in this vast and spectacular landscape can be a real challenge, especially if you have limited time or are unfamiliar with the area. Our expert local guides know the area intimately, so can take you to the best locations to help you find the species you'd most like to see. Your guide will use their experience and field skills, including listening to bird calls and recognising animal tracks and signs, to help you find and identify species. They can tell you about behaviour and general biology of the species that you find in the Highlands.

We can provide an itinerary that matches your specific wildlife wishes. Alternatively, if you'd just like to see a diverse range of Highland species, then leave that to us. On the day, we'll judge the weather and decide where the wildlife can be found. In our comfortable 8-seater minibuses, we'll take you through different habitats to find the best wildlife. The day can include as much, or as little walking as you'd like.

Two or three days before your day out, your guide will contact you to discuss what you'd like to see and any specific requests that you may have. They'll also agree a start time with you and the best place to meet. This may be from your accommodation in the Grantown-Aviemore-Kingussie area, but it

may be elsewhere, depending on the itinerary you decide upon. Standard days out last around eight hours (normally 9am-5pm) and Extended Days around 10 hours.

To help you choose the best day, we've given you our suggested itineraries, showing the different habitats you could visit and some of the species that can be found there. These are our favourites, but if you'd like to do something different, or do a combination of different itineraries, then please email us or discuss it with your guide when they get in touch with you.

If you're staying outwith the Spey Valley, we can organise an exclusive day out, subject to mileage and guide availability and give you a specific price.



*"Each season has something special to offer. We may come across Black Grouse during a spring morning, or search for Dotterel on the mountain tops during the summer months. During autumn we watch roaring rutting Stags in Highland Glens and winter is a great season to see foraging Crested Tits in our Pine Forests."* Ailie Brown



**Our Cairngorms National Park** - If you've never been before and you want to see what makes this place special, from the landscape, to the wildlife, then just leave it to us. We know all the nooks and crannies in the Cairngorms and the best time of year to visit them. We'll make sure we target the Scottish specialities and leave more than enough room to drink in the scenery and marvel at the landscape. Golden Eagles in the glens, Red Deer on the hills, Ptarmigan on the mountains and Crested Tits in the forests; we can decide what's best for you.

**Pine Forest** - Visit the ancient Caledonian Pine Forest for Crested Tit, Scottish Crossbill and maybe even the chance of the elusive Capercaillie. Mammals may include Red Squirrel and Roe Deer. This itinerary involves a degree of walking on good tracks and trails through the forest. Wildlife can be found year round, but the best seasons can be autumn, winter and spring.

**Woodland Walks** - Local woods provide tranquil locations to look and listen for Wood Warbler, Pied Flycatcher and other woodland birds in the spring. Ospreys are regularly seen throughout the spring/summer. This itinerary does require a reasonable degree of fitness. The best time to visit for migrant birds is from late April through to August.

**Highland Glen** - Visit a spectacular local glen for Golden Eagle, White-tailed Eagle, Peregrine, Merlin, Ring Ouzel, Red Deer, Mountain Hare and Red Kite. We drive through spectacular scenery into the heart of the mountains and then take a low level walk further into the glen on good gravel



tracks. A broad range of wildlife, including the eagles, can be found all year. The Red Deer rut takes place from late September through October.

**Cairngorm Mountains** - To search for Ptarmigan, Snow Bunting, Dotterel and Ring Ouzel we have to walk into the Corries. The walk is on paths, but does require suitable clothing and walking shoes or boots, as the terrain is uneven. Wildlife can be seen on the higher tops year-round. Ptarmigan, Snow Bunting and Mountain Hare are present all year; Ring Ouzels arrive from mid-March onwards and Dotterel are present from May until early August.

**Moorland and Moray Firth** - Early morning in the spring is the time to see Black Grouse in the foothills on the vast open moorlands. We scan windswept lochs for divers, Merlin, Peregrine, Red Kite and Red Grouse, before heading to the Moray coast for Osprey (during the summer), seaduck (winter), waders and terns. Dependent on tide times, there's a chance of Bottlenose Dolphin. Divers can be found on freshwater lochs during the breeding season from April through to the end of September, when they relocate to the coast and winter on the sea. The winter months on the Moray coast can be excellent for seaduck.

**The Black Isle** - Just north of Inverness lies the Black Isle, almost surrounded by water and visited by large numbers of waders, ducks and geese as autumn approaches and through the winter. Peregrine Falcons may dash through sending birds skyward - all viewable from a large comfortable hide. Scaup, Long-tailed Duck, divers and grebes



spend the winter here and in autumn passing skuas and auks add to the excitement as we visit one of the best vantage points for Bottlenose Dolphins in the UK.

**All Abilities Cairngorms National Park** - This tailored day will ensure where possible, that everyone in your group can experience the scenery and wildlife that our National Park has to offer. We shall visit places that require little walking or are suitable for wheelchair access to help you experience wildlife in comfort. It may mean some of the day involves more travelling by vehicle than other itineraries, but some short walks or lookout hides will be utilised and the guide will structure the day to best suit your needs. The wildlife you experience may include Dippers, Red Squirrel, raptor species such as Red Kite and eagles, grouse and Roe and Red Deer.

### Capercaillie Policy

Capercaillie can be found in the forests of the Cairngorms National Park, but they are, for whatever reason, a declining species that are easily disturbed. We minimise any disturbance at crucial times to help protect the birds, by adhering to the following policies:

We won't take guests into the Pine Forest before 9.00am during the lekking period (1 March - 31 May).

When going into Capercaillie habitat, we always stay on marked tracks and paths and never go looking off these.

When there is an alpha male (also known as a 'rogue' bird) in the area we won't go to see this bird. They are part of the lek, so we would be 'knowingly' disturbing them.

We suggest looking for Capercaillie through the autumn and winter months, when the birds can be easier to find. We won't be disturbing them then and young birds will have fledged and dispersed into the forests.

# BESPOKE TRIPS TO SUIT YOU



*"Many thanks for arranging everything for us. The accommodation was absolutely great and our guided day with Kate and Hollie was brilliant. Our evening visit to the Mammal Hide was brilliant too – all so impressive and our guide Eve, was a mine of information. Again our thanks and we look forward to more holidays with Speyside."*  
 Mary and David Penton,  
 Cairngorms bespoke holiday, 2021

**Dates** To suit you, subject to guide availability. We can advise on the best times of year to go to specific destinations, what can be seen at different times of year and where in the world is best for the wildlife you want to see

All our holiday itineraries within the UK and overseas can be organised for private groups, with optional extensions and different levels of accommodation and meals available for most destinations

**Guides** We have a pool of guides, each with specific knowledge and interests, covering birds, mammals, cetaceans, plants and insects, who have guided around Scotland and Overseas

**Cost** All tailor-made tours are individually priced according to the number of guests and your specific requirements

**Included** Your package can include any of the following: flights; ferries; trains; guides; accommodation; transport; meals; and any activities or entrance fees.

We make all the arrangements, so you are left just to enjoy yourselves

**Info** All necessary information regarding travel, walking, weather, insects, meals, clothing and accommodation will be provided in advance of the holiday, together with an appropriate species list, notebooks and pens

**Duncan Macdonald:** Guests in Extremadura  
**Perry Fairman:** Arriving on Handa  
**Simon Eaves:** Slavonian Grebe  
**Jane Hope:** Road over the Cairngorms, Red Squirrel, Crested Tit  
**Colin Scott:** Ptarmigan

For bird clubs, tour operators, or just good friends!  
 Take the hassle out of your group trip and let us arrange all the details, in Scotland or Overseas, any time of the year.

- Design your own holiday the way you want it - anywhere you want it!
- Guiding, accommodation, meals, transport etc. can all be taken care of
- Birds, mammals, plants and insects can all be included
- Our guides have a wealth of knowledge in Scotland and around the world
- A range of accommodation to suit the size of your group
- Combine wildlife watching with culture and heritage
- Take the hassle out of the organisation and let us arrange it for you

Bird Clubs, groups of families or friends, school parties and tour operators come to us to organise private tours for them. Sometimes it's a specific itinerary based on what they'd like to see, sometimes they rely on us to design a tour. Either way, they want us to take the hassle out of organising their holiday, so they can concentrate on enjoying the wildlife. We know the best places to go and wonderful places to stay, that are perfectly placed to enjoy the scenery and wildlife - and they know they will be well looked after by our excellent guides.

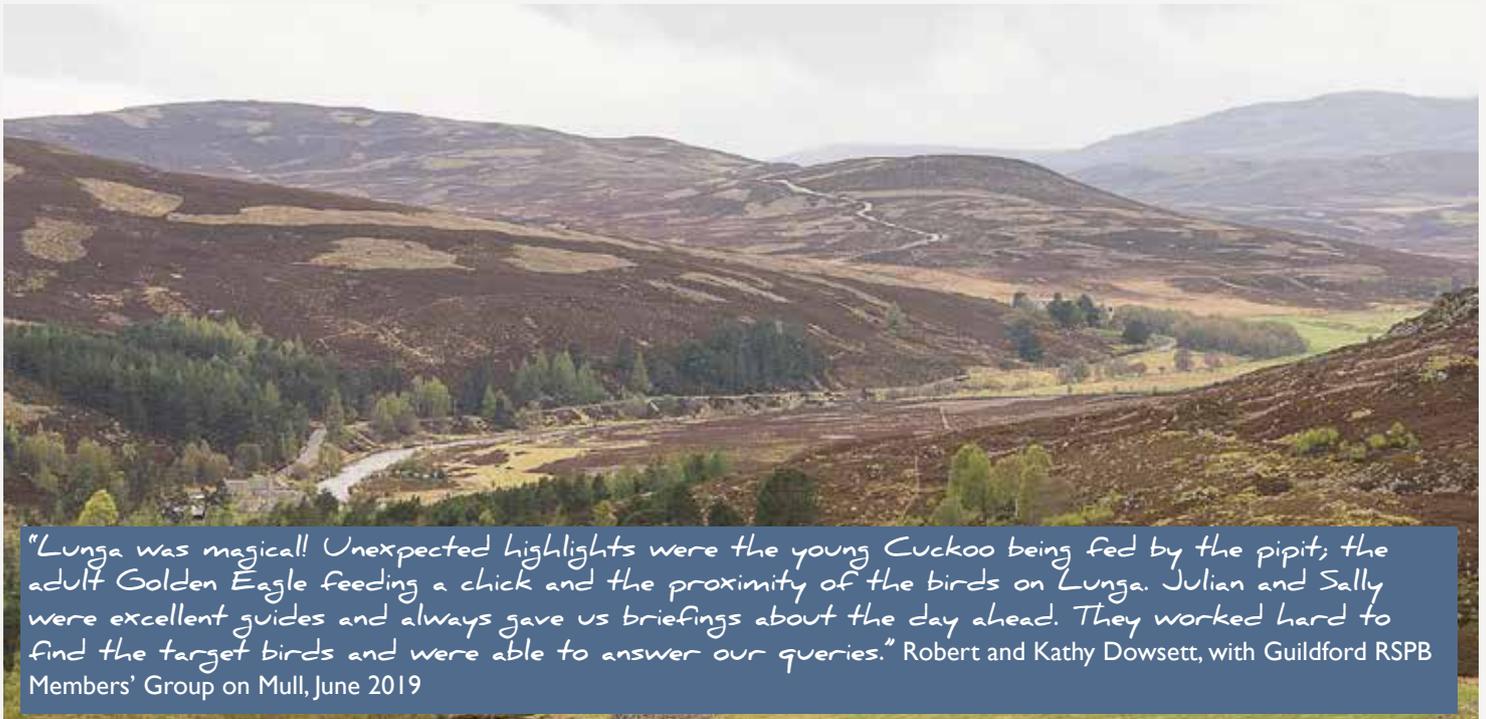
Within Scotland, enjoy the spectacular mountains, moorlands and pine forests of the Cairngorms National Park, looking for all the grouse species, plus Dotterel, Ptarmigan, Scottish Crossbill and Crested Tit, together with mammals such as Red and Roe Deer, Red Squirrel and Pine Marten; experience the majesty of the seacliffs on Shetland for auks,

Puffins and Gannets, combined with cetacean watching from land and sea and the night-time experience of Storm Petrels churring on Mousa; walk through the Machair of the Outer Hebrides, alive with the sounds of breeding waders and the distinctive call of the Corncrake, then sea-watch for Long-tailed and Pomarine Skuas on their spring passage.

Sample the delights of intimate seabird encounters on the islands off Mull, whilst looking for Golden and White-tailed Eagles, the latter at their highest breeding density in Europe, or combine island birdwatching for residents and migrants on the Orkney Isles, with the astounding prehistoric archaeology that the archipelago has in spades.

Why not combine some fantastic birding in Speyside with all the special birds and other wildlife this area has to offer with a few days on Mull, the





*"Lunga was magical! Unexpected highlights were the young Cuckoo being fed by the pipit; the adult Golden Eagle feeding a chick and the proximity of the birds on Lunga. Julian and Sally were excellent guides and always gave us briefings about the day ahead. They worked hard to find the target birds and were able to answer our queries." Robert and Kathy Dowsett, with Guildford RSPB Members' Group on Mull, June 2019*

Outer Hebrides or another part of the Highlands such as Sutherland - you might use our website with the selection of Scottish holidays listed there for inspiration!

Further afield, we can easily organise trips to Europe. Spain has so many possibilities; experience the hospitality of our long-standing beautiful hotel base in Extremadura, knowing that you'll be looking for all five Spanish eagle species, Great and Little Bustards, Roller, Hoopoe, Black-winged Kite and Eagle Owl; watch Lammergeiers and Griffon Vultures high over the Pyrenees with Wallcreeper, Citril Finch and Alpine Accentor in stunning scenery, or perhaps visit the Cota Doñana, or go in search of rare Iberian Lynx.

Other parts of Europe are equally enticing. You could chill out on a floating hotel in the Danube Delta, whilst searching for rare reedbed birds skulking in the shallows; or head to Hungary for superb birding with Imperial Eagle, Saker and tens of thousands of Common Cranes - or visit photographic hides to see birds such as Bee-eater; Roller; Hoopoe, Hawfinch and fabulous Red-footed Falcon, up close and personal! If you like islands, a visit to Corsica for endemic Corsican Nuthatch and Corsican Finch could be for you; or Cyprus for exciting east Mediterranean migration, or even Oland off the east coast of Sweden, with massive numbers of geese, cranes and raptors heading south in autumn might suit.

Why not go for something more exotic? Marvel at the majesty of Yellowstone National Park, home



to Gray Wolf, Bison, Black and Grizzly Bears and a host of birds - all of which could be new to you. Arizona, Texas, California and Vancouver Island where bears, Orcas and Humpback are amongst the spectacular scenery and are all possible, as well as India, South America and other destinations.

Let us know where you want to go and how many of you are travelling together; when you want to go; what type of accommodation you'd like; what other activities you'd like to include in your holiday experience and we'll do the rest. Or if you want to make it even easier, just ask us for our recommendations, based on our years' of experience and we'll put together the ideal holiday for you.

Our professional guides will take you through beautiful landscapes to show you the finest wildlife. We can find appropriate accommodation close to good birdwatching experiences. Wherever it is, our guides will seek out the wildlife you want to see and take you around in comfortable minibuses or cars as appropriate.

We don't race around after big lists, preferring to enjoy the wildlife that we find, so ensuring your holiday is filled with 'magic moments' to bring home with you. We know that the quality of the accommodation and food and the chance to relax at the end of the day and relive the wonderful wildlife moments from the day, are just as important to you as the wildlife you'll see. The possibilities are endless; exciting birdwatching experiences await.



*"The structure and pace of the holiday were perfect for me. I have never been on a birding holiday before and I don't think I could manage anything too intense. This holiday was a really good balance." Penny Blake*



*"There were many highlights on the holiday. I had never seen a Golden Eagle and we were lucky enough to watch a Golden Eagle feeding its chick. We also saw them soaring overhead. The White-tailed Eagles were magnificent, flying over the landscape with such ease. The visit to Lunga was my real highlight as the Puffins stole my heart. To be able to sit with them and watch them going about their daily lives was such a privilege." Rob Cooke, with Guildford RSPB Members' Group on Mull, June 2019*

# LYNX AND LAMMERGEIER



*"On this tour we hope to see one of the rarest mammals in the world - the gorgeous Iberian Lynx. Due to some hard work by the conservationists, their numbers are increasing and our chances are good, as this is the best time to visit."*  
Julian Sykes

Dates Sun 21 - Sun 28 Jan 2024  
Price £2,525  
Deposit £500 Single Supp £150

Leader Julian Sykes

Flights EasyJet, scheduled, Speedy Boarding and extra legroom included  
Outbound: Morning, Gatwick-Malaga  
Inbound: Afternoon, Malaga-Gatwick

Weather Probably a mixture of sun and showers (0°-15°C), warmer in lowland areas but can be very cold in the mountains whilst looking for wildlife.  
We could also encounter snow

Walking There will be some short walks up to 3km on good tracks and paths, which could be slightly more difficult in the mountains

Meals All included from lunch on Day 1 to lunch on Day 8

Insects Biting insects are not usually a problem

Accom Twin and single rooms all ensuite

Group 7

## Just some of what we hope to see:

Iberian Lynx	Golden Eagle
Otter	Goshawk
Wild Boar	Stone Curlew
Mouflon	Little Owl
Spanish Ibex	Great Bustard
Red Squirrel	Pin-tailed Sandgrouse
Iberian Hare	Black-bellied Sandgrouse
Daubenton's Bat	Iberian Green
White-headed Duck	Woodpecker
Black-necked Grebe	Black Wheatear
Greater Flamingo	Blue Rock Thrush
Lammergeier	Iberian Magpie
Black Vulture	Hawfinch
Spanish Imperial Eagle	Rock Bunting

## Andalucia holds some of Spain's best kept secrets - Iberian Lynx, one of the world's most endangered cats and an increasing number of Lammergeier

- Perfectly placed accommodation with beautiful grounds
- Spanish Imperial Eagle, Golden Eagle, Black Vulture
- Sierra de Cazorla for Lammergeier, Spanish Ibex and Red Squirrel
- Iberian Magpie, Hawfinch, Hoopoe, Firecrest
- Otter, Mouflon, bats, Boar and Iberian Hare
- Beautiful scenery with remnants of true Mediterranean Forest
- Steppe species on the open fields of Castilla La Mancha

After our morning flight to Malaga, we drive north to the Laguna de Fuente de Piedra, where we shall spend some time looking at this huge saline lake. Greater Flamingos feed in the shallow waters and occasionally, the rare Lesser Flamingo can be found amongst their much commoner cousins. Other species that could be found include Shelduck, Marsh Harrier, Avocet, Stone Curlew and Water Pipit. We shall enjoy lunch overlooking open fields and hope to see our first Crested Larks, Spotless Starlings and maybe a wandering Hen Harrier.

Moving north towards Córdoba we should see our first White Storks and Red Kites, with a brief view of the famous mosque La Mesquita as we pass the city.

We continue driving to our charming hotel on the edge of the Sierra de Andujar Natural Park, where our rooms overlook fantastic gardens, with a small

onsite bird hide. Birds around the hotel include Azure-winged Magpie, Crested Tit and Short-toed Treecreeper. This afternoon, if time allows, we might make our first visit to one of the viewing areas in the hope of finding an Iberian Lynx.

**2-7** Most of our days will be spent in the Sierra de Andujar, a contrasting region with some of the best representations of Mediterranean Forest still surviving in Europe. It forms part of the Sierra Morena Mountains and has a landscape of hills and mountains formed from granite, quartz and slate, which is bordered by the Jandula and Yeguas rivers. This Natural Park is home to the elusive and highly endangered Iberian Lynx, of which only 400 or so remain in the wild in Spain and Portugal.

We shall spend early mornings and late afternoons searching for this secretive animal from strategic points around the Park, with lots more to attract



"This week in Andalucia might be targeting Iberian Lynx, but that is just one part of a potentially fantastic week of some truly wonderful wildlife. We'll also enjoy spending time searching for other mammals, birds, reptiles, amphibians, butterflies and even flowers, which are starting to emerge with spring around the corner. It is almost 20 years since I first visited and I still get a buzz of excitement planning our next return!" Julian Sykes



our attention. There are plenty of other mammals with herds of Red and Fallow Deer; the distinctive Mouflon, Wild Boar and bats at their roost.

We shall also hope to see Iberian Magpies, Short-toed Treecreepers, Firecrests, Nuthatches and Crested Tits amongst the scattered Holm and Cork Oaks, with Iberian Green Woodpeckers revealing themselves with their raucous call. We should find pairs of Little Owl on this beautiful granite landscape across the valleys and hills.

This Natural Park is also home to the magnificent Spanish Imperial Eagle and many other sought after birds of prey, including Golden Eagle, Black Vulture and Goshawk. The tranquil Rio Jandula is punctuated by a series of reservoirs, with their dramatic dam walls, which attract Blue Rock Thrush, Rock Bunting, Black Redstart, Crag Martin and Red-billed Chough. The river is home to Kingfisher, Grey Wagtail and Grey Heron, with always the possibility of Otters playing and fishing in this quiet spiritual location.

We also plan to have a couple of days away from Lynx-watching with a focus on a completely different target species – the magnificent Lammergeier, plus steppe species. To the east is the wonderful Sierra de Cazorla, with its extensive coniferous forest and limestone massifs. Lammergeier can be found drifting along these incredible mountain ridges, along with the much commoner Griffon Vulture. This place is home to a good population of Spanish Ibex, Red Squirrel and Red Fox, all of which can be difficult in Andujar.

To the north of the Reserve is the region of Castilla La Mancha and its extensive and productive agricultural lands. This area is home to steppe species such as bustards, sandgrouse, larks and raptors - we shall enjoy a day driving these tracks hoping to find these unique birds.

8 After breakfast we'll sadly load the minibus and make our way back towards Malaga, possibly visiting a lagoon enroute for White-headed Duck and Black-necked Grebe.

Eventually we shall reach the Malaga coastline. With sufficient time, we should see Mediterranean and Western Yellow-legged Gull, Gannet and possibly Common Scoter offshore, with possibly Booted Eagle over a nearby Nature Reserve. We head to the airport and our flight home.



### Outline Itinerary

- Day 1 Fly from Gatwick to Malaga and transfer to our base on the edge of the Sierra de Andujar Natural Park, stopping enroute at Laguna de Fuente de Piedra  
7 nights at La Caracola Hotel Rural
- Days 2-7 Birdwatching and wildlife exploration, mostly in the Sierra de Andujar, with days out in the Sierra de Cazorla for Lammergeier and Castilla La Mancha for steppe species
- Day 8 Transfer to Malaga for our flight back to the UK, with maybe time at the Rio Guadalhorce rivermouth

Julian Sykes: Lynx, Sierra de Cazorla, Firecrest  
 Stephen Kourik: Azure-winged Magpie  
 Robin Martin: Great Spotted Cuckoo, Iberian Ibex  
 Stephen Batt: Lammergeier



# NORTH NORFOLK



"Perhaps my greatest memory of my last trip here is of an enormous flock of Pink-footed Geese flying in and landing at Holkham... there must have been tens of thousands of them and the noise was incredible. It is spectacles like this that are as memorable as seeing something unusual - if not more so!"  
Roy Atkins

Dates Sat 3 - Sat 10 Feb 2024  
Price £2,395  
Deposit £450 Single Supp £150

Leaders Roy and Jane Atkins

Weather Norfolk in winter can be unpredictable. It might be lovely with plenty of sunshine - but can also be very cold indeed, if there is a northerly wind! There is always a chance of rain so bring waterproofs and warm clothes just in case. Likely temperatures 0° - 12°C

Walking Short walks on easy terrain. Walking boots or strong shoes are recommended however, as some paths may be uneven or muddy

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

Photos There can be some good incidental photographic opportunities

Insects Biting insects will not be a problem

Accom Double, twin and single rooms all ensuite

Group 12

## Just some of what we hope to see:

Common Crane	Barn Owl
Merlin	Little Owl
Taiga Bean Goose	Red-throated Diver
White-fronted Goose	Slavonian Grebe
Whooper Swans	Long-tailed Duck
Bewick's Swans	Velvet Scoter
Egyptian Goose	Shorelark
Brent Geese	Cetti's Warbler
Bittern	Bearded Tit
Avocet	Brambling
Spotted Redshank	Hawfinch
Black-tailed Godwit	Water Pipit
Hen Harrier	Snow Bunting
Marsh Harrier	Rarities
Peregrine	Chinese Water Deer

Norfolk has exceptional birding at any time of year – but winter can be especially good with thousands of geese plus swans, waders, raptors, local specialities and the chance of something rare too!

- Famous sites such as Titchwell, Cley, Holkham and Welney make for a fabulous week
- Large flocks of geese with chance of scarcer species amongst them
- Resident Barn Owl, Common Cranes, Hawfinch and chance of Bearded Tit and Bittern
- Staying at delightful Briarfields Hotel - a warm welcome with great food close to Titchwell
- Fingers crossed for scarce birds - Shorelark, Rough-legged Buzzard, Water Pipit
- Feeding time at Welney - ducks, geese and swans with Bewick's Swan here in February
- Marsh Harriers galore and chance of Hen Harrier, Short-eared Owl, Peregrine and Merlin

Dinner together on Saturday evening starts the holiday followed by a chat about the coming week.

**2-7** Norfolk is rightly acclaimed as one of the best birding areas in the United Kingdom, with fabulous birding all year round. In winter it is simply fantastic, with exciting goose flocks, waders, raptors and specialities such as Common Cranes, Hawfinch, Chinese Water Deer, Shorelark, Egyptian Goose, plus chances of Bittern and Bearded Tits.

Most of the north Norfolk coast is either Reserves or great habitat for birds, with Titchwell and Cley two of the best-known sites. Their shallow lagoons host a nice mix of waders and wildfowl while the surrounding reedbeds hold Bittern, Bearded Tit and Cetti's Warbler - though they

can prove hard to see! Marsh Harriers winter in good numbers and raptors such as Hen Harrier, Peregrine, Merlin and Short-eared Owl are also possible, while ghost-like Barn Owls are resident and can sometimes be seen from the hotel! Both sites may attract wintering Ruff, Spotted Redshank, Snipe and Avocet, with a chance of Jack Snipe or Water Pipit in the margins or Water Rail lurking in the ditches. Brent Geese can be a lovely feature of these Reserves and we'll hope for a wintering Black Brant or even a Red-breasted Goose amongst them.

The beach at Titchwell may have a small flock of Snow Buntings and if not, Holkham Beach may prove more reliable with the chance of Shorelark here too. We'll scan the sea for Red-throated Divers and Red-breasted Merganser, with slimmer



"There are many species in Norfolk that I see so rarely elsewhere in the UK, so I am really hoping we can find them again this time - species such as Shorelark, Common Crane, Hawfinch or perhaps a Bean Goose or a rare gull. I always love seeing so many Marsh Harriers and I am hoping the Barn Owl may still be in the field by the hotel. There is always something exciting!" Roy Atkins



chances of Slavonian Grebe, Long-tailed Duck or scoters. Nearby, Holkham may have enormous flocks of Pink-footed Geese and perhaps White-fronted Geese and we'll watch out for Great White Egret and Grey Partridge - a scarce bird these days!

On one day we shall head south east to Buckenham Marshes where strange looking Chinese Water Deer can be seen, the males with tusks that look out of place on a delicate deer. We may visit Strumpshaw Fen if Bearded Tit or Bittern have been showing recently and check birding information to find out where Common Cranes have been seen, though their whereabouts can prove unpredictable. Even if we fail to see them in the fields we should see them coming to roost at Stubb Mill, where up to 40 or so Marsh Harriers and perhaps other raptors such as Hen Harrier or Merlin may also come to roost and Red Deer and Muntjac come out to feed as the light fades.

The woodlands and scattered trees of Lynford Arboretum are famous for their resident Hawfinches and we'll try not to become too distracted by the Nuthatch, Marsh Tit, Bramblings and Yellowhammers that may be around the feeding area. Exotic conifers hold elusive Firecrest and there is a slim chance of crossbill while Tree Creeper, Long-tailed Tit, winter thrushes and Green and Great Spotted Woodpeckers are also here.

Welney WWT Reserve with its heated hide can be wonderful on a cold winter's day. Masses of

Wigeon, Teal, Shoveler and Pintail winter, along with up to a thousand Pochard! Thousands of Whooper and Bewick's Swans feed out on the fields - but there are often a few on the Reserve so we hope to see both. Feeding time is a lot of fun with Pochard and other ducks scrambling for the seed along with small numbers of swans. Black-tailed Godwit can be numerous, while other likely waders include Ruff, Dunlin, Avocet and flocks of Golden Plover. This is our best site for Cattle Egret and Great White Egret are also regular.

Masses of waders can be on The Wash at Snettisham with Knot, Dunlin, Bar-tailed Godwit and other waders providing quite a show as the tide comes in. A high spring tide creates a spectacular show when birds wheel round in massive flocks, but even if the tides are lower the number and variety of waders make for a fabulous visit - and on the gravel pits there may be Goldeneye, Red-breasted Merganser, Grebes and waders too.

Depending on recent sightings there are so many other sites we could visit. In February, Glaucous or Iceland Gulls are possible, there may be rare geese such as Red-breasted or Snow Goose, or perhaps a Great Northern Diver or Rough-legged Buzzard. An exceptionally rare Eastern Yellow Wagtail spent the winter here recently, so who knows what may turn up. Keep your fingers crossed for something exciting!

8 After breakfast on Saturday morning we say our farewells.



### Outline Itinerary

- Day 1 Arrive for a 7 night stay at Briarfields Hotel, Titchwell
- Days 2-7 Wildlife and birdwatching exploration of the North Norfolk coast, Welney, the Broads and other sites
- Day 8 Depart after breakfast

**James Stevens:** Shorelark  
**Frances & David Perry:** Snettisham Mixed Flock, Brent Geese, Little Egret and Redshank, Wells  
**Roy Atkins:** Common Crane, Spotted Redshank



# COSTA RICA



*"The sheer diversity of what we see in Costa Rica is incredible... not just a wealth of birds - but frogs, lizards, butterflies, sloths, monkeys and more, all adding to the excitement. With towering trees covered in epiphytes above our heads we watch Leaf-cutter Ants at our feet and it is simply magical." Roy Atkins*

Dates Sat 24 Feb - Sun 10 Mar 2024  
 Price £7,465  
 Deposit £1,490 Single Supp £850

Leaders Roy Atkins and Paco Madrigal  
 Flights British Airways scheduled  
 Outbound: Morning, Gatwick-San José  
 Inbound: Overnight, San José-Gatwick  
 Possible transit stop out and back

Weather It's the dry season, but there could be occasional showers (or prolonged downpours) in humid rainforests. Can be cool in the mountains and cloud forest, hot on the coast (12°-35°C)

Walking Generally easy level paths, up to two miles at a slow pace. There may be occasional uphill sections and some steps. Although distances are short you will be standing and scanning for periods of time

Meals All included from dinner on Day 1 to lunch on Day 15  
 Delicious local food at hotels and restaurants, some buffets, some menus. Rice and beans (the national dish) available everywhere, but not compulsory  
 Cool drinks and tropical fruit provided

Insects On occasion biting insects can be a nuisance - bring repellent

Accom Twin and single rooms all ensuite  
 Group 12

## Just some of what we hope to see:

Great Tinamou	Long-tailed
Great Curassow	Silky-Flycatcher
Sungrebe	Great Potoo
Swallow-tailed Kite	Snowy Cotinga
Scarlet Macaw	Hummingbirds galore
Spectacled Owl	White-nosed Coati
Resplendent Quetzal	Three species of Monkey
Keel-billed Toucan	Two species of Sloth

## Approachable Central America, Costa Rica is a very friendly bite-size chunk of exotic rainforest adventure.....without the rough edges!

- Friendly, safe country with 5% of the earth's entire species
- Around 400 bird species likely and a huge variety of other wildlife to see
- Resplendent Quetzal, Sungrebe, hummingbirds, toucans and macaws
- Sloths, howler monkeys, reptiles, amphibians and Arenal Volcano
- Idyllic lodges and hotels you won't want to leave
- The very best guides who'll make it extra-special
- Itinerary perfected by years of experience - from the high cloud forest to Tortuguero!

1 Arriving in the afternoon we'll overnight near San José.

2-3 After some exciting pre-breakfast birding in the hotel gardens, we journey to Tortuguero NP by boat. Our lodge has beautiful gardens with trogons, toucans and oropendolas and the sea just yards away. We travel in covered boats to explore the labyrinth of waterways in this atmospheric Reserve, a wonderfully relaxing way to see the birds and mammals. The forests are teeming with wildlife including Sungrebe, Greenand-Rufous and American Pygmy Kingfishers, Green Ibis and enormous Blue Morpho butterflies. We may see all three species of monkeys and both sloth species! Mixed flocks of toucans call noisily, parrots screech overhead and we've seen fabulous raptors here, such as Swallow-tailed and Grey-headed Kites.

4-6 The forested grounds of Selva Verde Lodge in the Caribbean lowland rainforest of Sarapiquí, host skulking forest-dwellers such as wrens, jacamars, ant-tanagers, woodcreepers and Antbirds. Nearby La Selva Biological Station is a must-visit site, where lowland tropical forest, swamp pasture, rivers and creeks support an outstanding abundance of wildlife. More than 420 bird species have been recorded here, 500 butterflies, 55 snakes and 120 species of mammals! This is where your Tinamou dreams may come true, since three species are here and we hope for trogons, caciques, Rufous and Broad-billed Motmots, Snowy Cotinga and impressive Great Green Macaw. We may find peccaries, agoutis, sloths and monkeys too!

7-8 Arenal is one of Costa Rica's active volcanoes and though it has gone rather



"I have been to Costa Rica around twenty times now and still get so excited every time I return. This is a place so full of life you can go back again and again and never get tired of the wonderful wildlife there. Add to that the pleasure of working with Paco - our local guide and one of the best guides anywhere - and the whole experience is such a pleasure, why would you not want to return!" Roy Atkins



quiet lately, views from our accommodation are still very impressive. Trails through the surrounding forests host Crimson-collared Tanager, Long-billed Gnatwren, Spotted Antbird, White Hawk, Great Curassow and three species of toucan. Feeders here attract colourful tanagers, woodpeckers, honeycreepers and oropendolas, plus remarkably tame White-nosed Coatis, a delightful relation of the Raccoon, with a tail like a lemur! This is a fabulous place for hummingbirds, with seven species or more likely,

**9** Dry tropical forests of the Guanacaste area hold special species such as Mantled Howler Monkey, Turquoise-browed Motmot, White-throated Magpie-Jay, plus orioles found nowhere else in Costa Rica. Our lodge overlooks the Gulf of Nicoya with Black-headed Trogon, Yellow-naped Parrot and a good chance of Pacific Screech Owl near our rustic cabins. Nearby salt pans can be alive with shorebirds, including North American species such as Wilson's Plover, Willet, Stilt Sandpiper and with luck, Long-billed Curlew. Sometimes Black Skimmers are here amongst the terns and we may look for local specialities such as White-lored Gnatcatcher or Banded Wren.

**10-11** We'll visit some salt pans with a host of waders, before travelling down to Tarcoles on the Pacific coast. Carara Biological Reserve, where humid tropical forest meets drier lowlands, has broad, bird-rich forest trails that are captivating at dawn, with antbirds, parrots, pigeons, warblers and four species of trogon. We'll search for Royal Flycatcher, Orange-collared and Long-tailed Manakins, while vivid Scarlet Macaws fly over our hotel and the grounds hold orioles, tanagers,



antshrikes, woodcreepers, buntings, seedeaters and toucans, perhaps including Fiery-billed Aracari.

Our boat trip on the Tarcoles River is a relaxed way to watch enormous numbers of herons, egrets, frigatebirds, pelicans and shorebirds, including Roseate Spoonbill, Boat-billed Heron and kingfishers, with American Crocodiles basking on the shore. We'll look for mangrove specialities such as 'Mangrove' Black Hawk, Mangrove Warbler and Mangrove Vireo in the mangroves..... well obviously!

**12-13** We head into misty cloudforest with new birds everywhere! Slaty Flowerpiercer, Long-tailed Silky-Flycatcher, Yellow-thighed Finch, Spangle-cheeked Tanager, Flame-throated Warbler and Fiery-throated Hummingbird to name but a few. The river near the hotel has Torrent Tyrannulet, the feeders attract Flame-colored Tanager and Acorn Woodpeckers and hummingbirds here include Volcano, Scintillant Stripe-tailed and Fiery-throated. This is also where we hope to find one of the most exciting birds of the trip - the Resplendent Quetzal - an absolutely stunning bird and often voted in the top ten most beautiful birds in the world!

**14** After more birding around the trails and feeders plus the excellent entrance road, we may head up to search for Volcano Junco in the high Paramo, before heading back to our hotel near San Jose.

**15-16** We may have time for morning birding before we head to the airport and our flight back home, arriving in London on Day 16.



### Outline Itinerary

- Day 1 Fly to San José  
1 night Hotel Bougainvillea, Heredia
- Days 2-3 Transfer to Tortuguero National Park  
2 nights Laguna Lodge
- Days 4-6 Transfer to Sarapiquí  
3 nights Selva Verde Lodge
- Days 7-8 Transfer to Arenal  
2 nights Arenal Observatory Lodge
- Day 9 Transfer to Guanacaste, birding at Solimar  
1 night La Ensenada Lodge
- Days 10-11 Transfer to Carara National Park area  
2 nights Hotel Villa Lapas, Tarcoles
- Days 12-13 Birdwatching and wildlife at Finca Mirador de Quetzals  
2 nights Savegre Hotel
- Day 14 Easy day travelling back to San José  
1 night Hotel Bougainvillea, Heredia
- Days 15-16 Transfer to the airport for our flight arriving in the UK on the morning of Day 16

**Roy Atkins:** Resplendent Quetzal, Tortuguero, Sungrebe, Arenal Volcano, Two-toed Sloth  
**Simon Eaves:** Violet Sabrewing

# GALLOCANTA AND EBRO DELTA



*"The sight and sound of thousands of Common Cranes leaving their morning roost is something to behold and Gallocanta Lake is arguably the best place in Spain to experience it. This is one of the little-known jewels of Spanish nature in winter."* Julian Sykes

Dates Sun 10 - Sun 17 Mar 2024  
 Price £2,935  
 Deposit £585 Single Supp £400

Leader Julian Sykes  
 Flights British Airways, scheduled  
 Outbound: Morning, Heathrow-Valencia  
 Inbound: Afternoon, Valencia-Heathrow  
 Weather Usually mild and pleasant at this time of year with temperatures around 10°-20°C and little rain, but can be unpredictable and sometimes can be colder and windy  
 Walking Some short walks on good tracks and boardwalks with some stonier tracks in the mountains  
 Meals All included from lunch on Day 1 to lunch on Day 8  
 Traditional Spanish fare  
 Insects May be a few in places, so bring repellent  
 Accom Twin and single rooms all ensuite  
 Group 7

## Just some of what we hope to see:

Black-necked Grebe	Slender-billed Gull
Glossy Ibis	Caspian Tern
Greater Flamingo	Black-bellied Sandgrouse
Squacco Heron	Great Spotted Cuckoo
Griffon Vulture	Hoopoe
Booted Eagle	Dupont's Lark
Golden Eagle	Calandra Lark
Hen Harrier	Bluethroat
Merlin	Moustached Warbler
Purple Swamphen	Savi's Warbler
Little Bustard	Rock Sparrow
Audouin's Gull	Spanish Ibis

## Escape from the British weather for some spectacular birding in the wetlands, mountains and steppes of Aragon and Catalonia.

- Sight and sounds of Common Cranes in huge flocks
- Hen Harriers, Black-bellied Sandgrouse and possibly Dupont's Lark
- Fabulous Spanish two centre accommodation
- Ebro Delta - home to thousands of wintering wetland birds
- Glossy Ibis, Great White Egret, Greater Flamingo and waders
- Moustached Warbler, Bluethroat, Kingfisher and Penduline Tit
- Visit incredible karst limestone mountains for Spanish Ibis

**1-3** We arrive into Valencia and immediately head inland towards the historic region of Aragon and our well situated hotel near Laguna de Gallocanta.

This journey takes us through some interesting landscapes that few visitors get to see, being off the main tourist routes, along with a good chance of our first Griffon Vulture, Red and (possibly) an early returning Black Kite.

As dusk starts to fall we shall witness the arrival of thousands of roosting Common Cranes, an amazing sight rarely seen and never forgotten. However, the next morning could be even better, as we shall be up early for a pre-breakfast return visit, to again see the incredible sight and sound of the Common Cranes leaving their roost on the lagoon, to spend the day feeding in the surrounding agricultural fields.

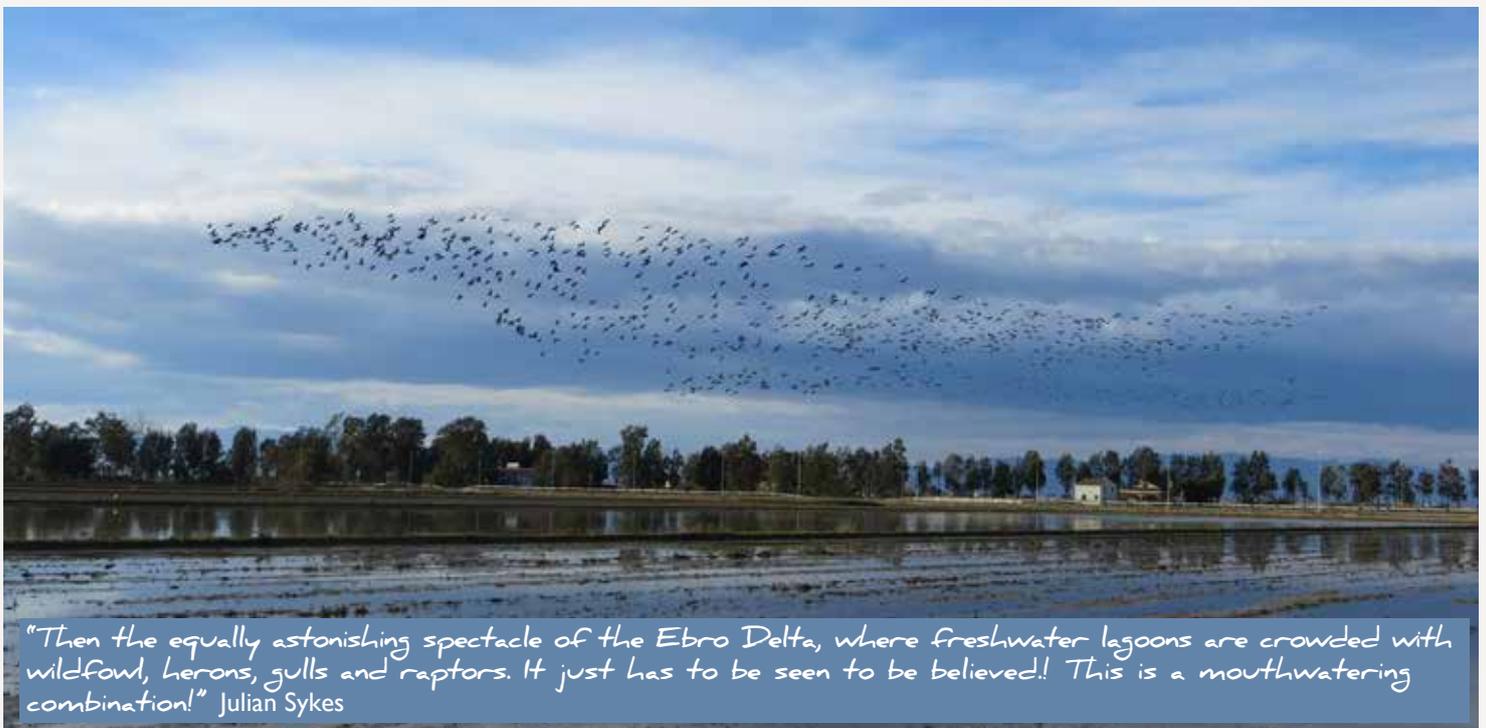


After breakfast we set off out to explore the pseudo-steppes that surround the lake, slowly driving the tracks and quiet lanes hoping to find Great and Little Bustard, Black-bellied Sandgrouse, Griffon Vulture, Red Kite, Raven, Rock and Tree Sparrows and Calandra and Thekla Larks.

The following full day in this area will also be focused on one of the more difficult Spanish birds - Dupont's Lark. If we are very lucky we shall almost certainly hear and possibly see 'El Diablo', which breed here and can be quite active at this time of year!

We shall also visit the hides and watchpoints surrounding the lake and checking it for wildfowl, Marsh and Hen Harriers, or a patrolling Merlin. The last hour of daylight will again be spent watching the huge flocks of Common Cranes coming in





*"Then the equally astonishing spectacle of the Ebro Delta, where freshwater lagoons are crowded with wildfowl, herons, gulls and raptors. It just has to be seen to be believed!! This is a mouthwatering combination!" Julian Sykes*

to roost from the surrounding fields - a magical experience to end the day with.

**4-7** Today we leave Aragon and head east towards the Mediterranean coastline and the world famous Ebro Delta, a transfer of around three hours. However inevitable stops enroute will mean we won't arrive at our accommodation until mid-afternoon, where we unpack for our four night stay in this wonderful single storey hotel, on the edge of the Ebro's vast network of rice fields.

This is Iberia's second largest wetland, where thousands of birds spend the winter. Much of our time will be spent visiting the platforms, hides and boardwalks which allow excellent views over the extensive phragmites beds, which hold secretive Great Bittern, Purple and Squacco Herons, Water Rail, and Bearded and Penduline Tit.

We'll scan the shallow lagoons for Greater Flamingo, Avocet, Caspian Tern, Slender-billed Gull and Audouin's and wintering waders such as Kentish Plover, Little Stint and Black-winged Stilt. Kingfishers speed along the irrigation channels, while Bluethroats can be found along the muddy tracks.

Cetti's Warblers announce their presence with explosive calls and we shall watch scores of Marsh Harriers coming in to roost. The extensive rice fields can create a 'feeding frenzy' of egrets, herons and gulls, as the tractors turn the rich dark earth in preparation for the year's harvest.

We shall visit the limestone massif of Ports, the mountain chain that used to form the natural border between Catalonia, Valencia and Aragon. The mountains, rivers and woods are home to many Iberian species such as Griffon Vulture, Golden and Bonelli's Eagle, Goshawk, Thekla Lark, Crag Martin, Blue Rock Thrush, Dartford Warbler, Sardinian Warbler, Red-billed Chough, Nuthatch, Crested Tit and Rock and Cirl Bunting.

This time of year brings the slight possibility of Alpine Accentor and several mammal species are also present, including the endemic Spanish Ibex, Red Squirrel and Iberian Hare.

**8** This morning we shall finally leave the Ebro Delta returning to Valencia and if time allows, visit one of the local wetlands that surround Spain's third largest city. This could be quite productive with an outside chance of a couple of local specialities such as Red-knobbed Coot and Marbled Duck.

In plenty of time we shall drive the short journey to the airport for our flight back to the UK.



### Outline Itinerary

- Days 1-3** Fly to Valencia and transfer to our accommodation, which has a lookout facing the lake. Birding Laguna de Gallocanta and its surroundings  
3 nights Mirador El Silo
- Days 4-7** We travel to the world famous Ebro Delta. Birding the wetlands, mountains and steppes of southern Catalonia  
4 nights Delta Hotel
- Day 8** Return to Valencia for our flight back to London

**Roy Atkins:** Greater Flamingos, Bonelli's Eagle, Common Cranes  
**Cath Wright:** Flock of Glossy Ibis  
**Julian Sykes:** Purple Heron, Great White Egret  
**Sally Dowden:** Purple Swamphen



# FINLAND AURORA



"I truly hope we get to see a good show of the northern lights, as it can be just wonderful! I have seen them in the UK, but never as amazing as those I have seen in Finland, where glowing green beams of light dance in the sky. There are no guarantees, but our chances are good!" Roy Atkins

Dates Thu 21 - Tue 26 Mar 2024

Price £3,345

Deposit £665 Single Supp £300

Leaders Roy Atkins and local guides

Flights Finnair, scheduled  
Outbound: Morning, Heathrow-Rovaniemi  
Inbound: Afternoon, Rovaniemi-Heathrow  
(outbound and inbound via Helsinki)

Weather Temperatures will be very cold, -15° to -2°C, with some snow, but clear skies more likely than at other times of year. Thermal overalls and boots will be provided for the duration of your stay and we shall provide you with a list of what to take to ensure you stay warm whatever the weather

Walking Deep snow makes walking away from roads and cleared tracks impossible, but snowshoes will be provided for our walks in the nearby forest. We shall be able to explore on nearby trails and roads and behind the hotel is a trail around a small lake, a good place to watch out for the Aurora at night

Meals All included from dinner on Day 1 to dinner on Day 6

Insects Will not be a problem

Accom Double, twin and single rooms all ensuite

Group 12

## Just some of what we hope to see:

Siberian Jay	Greenfinch
Raven	Willow Grouse
Great Tit	Crossbill
Willow Tit	Arctic Redpoll
Red Squirrel	Pine Grosbeak
Hooded Crow	Siberian Tit
'Northern' Bullfinch	Arctic Hare

Richard Grosney: Aurora  
Mary Braddock: Willow Grouse, Siberian Jay, Siberian Tit  
Roy Atkins: Reindeer, Arctic and Mealy Redpolls, Red Squirrel

With the sun's activity around its peak, chances of seeing the Northern Lights are high – and we'll have a lot of fun during the day with our activities and birding walks too!

- Good chance of the Northern Lights
- Siberian Jay, Willow Grouse, Pine Grosbeak and Siberian Tit all possible
- Snowshoe walk in nearby forest with great views - both by day and night
- Amethyst mine with stunning views of snowy landscape - dig your own
- Up close with Reindeer - including a short sleigh ride!
- Comfortable hotel with a good viewing area nearby
- Warm clothing provided for the duration of your stay

**1-5** Just north of the Arctic Circle is the little village of Luosto, where we shall be based for this short but exciting trip.

It is a great location for viewing the Northern Lights, as there is a better chance of clear skies here than say Iceland or coastal Norway. Obviously there are no guarantees, we have had cloud on many days here, but we feel this site increases the chances of seeing an aurora - surely the main aim of this trip!

To add to our chances, we keep an eye on our aurora app and websites, showing the sun's activity and where the aurora is at that moment.

A frozen lake behind the hotel makes a great viewpoint and we can light a fire in a shelter nearby to keep warm while we wait, which makes it very pleasant even if the temperatures are well below

freezing. The activity of the sun follows an eleven year cycle due to peak in 2025, so this increases our chances of a sighting in 2024 considerably. Fingers and toes crossed!

Bird life is very quiet at this time of year, with deep snow and temperatures constantly below freezing, but warm clothing is provided for the duration of our stay and snowshoes for our walks in the nearby forest.

We'll search for the few birds that remain all winter and amongst the familiar species such as Great Tit, Magpie and Raven, we hope to find species such as Arctic Redpoll, Pine Grosbeak or Siberian Tit. Willow Tit is likely and will be of the clean looking and greyer continental race and with luck we may see a pure white Willow Grouse on our snowshoe forest walk.



*"Even without the Northern Lights, we think we have created a fun-filled holiday with plenty to do to entertain us. The wildlife is thin on the ground, but what is here can be very special and in pristine plumage too - looking their best. Thick snow adds to the wintery feel and trees are covered in snow - it is quite magical." Roy Atkins*



Siberian Jay can be found in the forest too and if we take a break on our walk and light a fire for a coffee and a snack it is likely they will find us! They can be remarkably tame.

Feeders in the gardens of the village attract Red Squirrels, also of the continental race, which is greyer in winter and has amazing ear tufts - far more extreme than any in the UK. Arctic Hare footprints are everywhere - but they are a real challenge to find amongst the pristine snow.

In March there is actually plenty of daylight and with so few birds we include some fun activities to fill our time. One day we'll take a snowmobile pulled sleigh ride to Europe's only remaining Amethyst mine on Lampivaara Fell. After an interesting talk about the mine we get to search for our own piece of Amethyst - free to take home as long as it isn't too big! Culturally, Reindeer are very important and we'll learn about their relationship with the people here when we visit a 'Reindeer Park' to see them up close. We also get the chance for a Reindeer pulled sleigh ride through the forest, which is a surprisingly pleasant way to travel, with the chance of spotting northern race Bullfinches, which are bulkier looking and a brighter red than their UK counterparts.

Snowshoes are a great way to walk through the forest here and are much easier to use than you might imagine. We'll try this in daylight on our first day and, for those who wish to, use them again to walk at night to a viewpoint on the hillside from where we can look for the Northern Lights - a

wonderful experience. We'll enjoy a presentation about the myths, ancient beliefs and science behind the aurora on one evening too and hear live radio signals from space.

There is also free time on some of the afternoons to enjoy the hotel's facilities, as it seems a shame not to enjoy the swimming pool or the spa and if we have been up late at night watching the Northern Lights we may want a little time to catch up on sleep.

There is also a free day on which we may take another walk or book onto other available activities that are provided locally, such as an exhilarating husky-pulled sleigh ride, or perhaps ice fishing or having a go on a snowmobile - all of which have proved popular on past trips (these are an additional cost payable locally).

**6** On our final day we transfer back to the airport for our flight home, watching out for any last minute birds as we travel - we have seen Black Grouse from the road and once a White-tailed Eagle - so you never know!



### Outline Itinerary

- Day 1 Fly to Rovaniemi, via Helsinki and transfer to our hotel  
5 nights Hotel Luosto Tunturi
- Day 2 Snowshoe hike in National Park, evening dinner at Wilderness Kota
- Day 3 Visit to Amethyst mine by sleigh ride plus an evening talk - 'Introduction to the Northern Lights'
- Day 4 Reindeer safari by bus including sleigh ride and visit to Pyhä Nature Centre for lunch. Evening aurora hunting on snowshoes
- Day 5 Free day. Possibly a walk around the village plus a chance to try activities such as ice fishing, husky sleigh ride etc, to be booked and paid there
- Day 6 Fly back to UK, via Helsinki



# SPANISH BIRDS AND BOTANY



"Botany and particularly the orchids are something I have a great interest in, but not the experience. However, in my good friend Martin Kelsey we have one of the most knowledgeable people on all things in this beautiful place. He is also a fantastic person to be around and learn from, always going the extra mile." Julian Sykes

Dates Sat 23 - Sat 30 Mar 2024  
 Price £2,295  
 Deposit £455 Single Supp £200

Leaders Martin Kelsey and Julian Sykes  
 Flights EasyJet, scheduled, Speedy Boarding and extra legroom included  
 Outbound: Morning, Gatwick-Madrid  
 Inbound: Afternoon, Madrid-Gatwick  
 Other UK airports may be available  
 Weather Variable in spring, a mixture of sun and showers (12°-25°C)  
 – can be cool on the plains  
 Walking Generally on level firm ground, less than a mile and at an easy pace. There will be some paths with steeper gradients  
 Meals All included from lunch on Day 1 to lunch on Day 8. Simple, interesting Spanish fare at the hotel and at local restaurants  
 Insects Unlikely to be a problem  
 Accom Double, twin and single rooms all ensuite  
 Group 12

## Just some of what we hope to see:

Black Vulture	Black Wheatear
Spanish Imperial Eagle	Iberian Grey Shrike
Bonelli's Eagle	Spectacled Warbler
Short-toed Eagle	Penduline Tit
Lesser Kestrel	Pink Butterfly Orchid
Black-winged Kite	Bumblebee Orchid
Scops Owl	Sawfly Orchid
Azure-winged Magpie	Mirror Orchid
Great Bustard	Yellow Bee Orchid
Little Bustard	Naked Man Orchid
Black Stork	Spanish Festoon
Black-bellied Sandgrouse	Large Tortoiseshell
Pin-tailed Sandgrouse	Provence Hairstreak
Western Swamphen	Nettle-tree Butterfly
Red-rumped Swallow	Stripeless Tree Frog

A relaxed holiday for the general naturalist, taking in plenty of the wonderful birdlife of Extremadura, but also some of the special orchids, other flowers and butterflies too.

- Many of the wonderful birds this well-known birding destination has to offer
- Spanish Imperial Eagle, Black-winged Kite, Azure-winged Magpie
- Great Bustards performing their 'foam-bath' display
- Stunning orchids such as Mirror, Naked Man, Sawfly, Champagne and Pink Butterfly
- Visit to raptor central - Monfragüe with eagles, Black Vulture and perhaps Eagle Owl
- Black Wheatear, Black-bellied and Pin-tailed Sandgrouse, Little Bustard and more
- Early butterflies - Spanish Festoon, Cleopatra, Provence Hairstreak and Nettle-tree

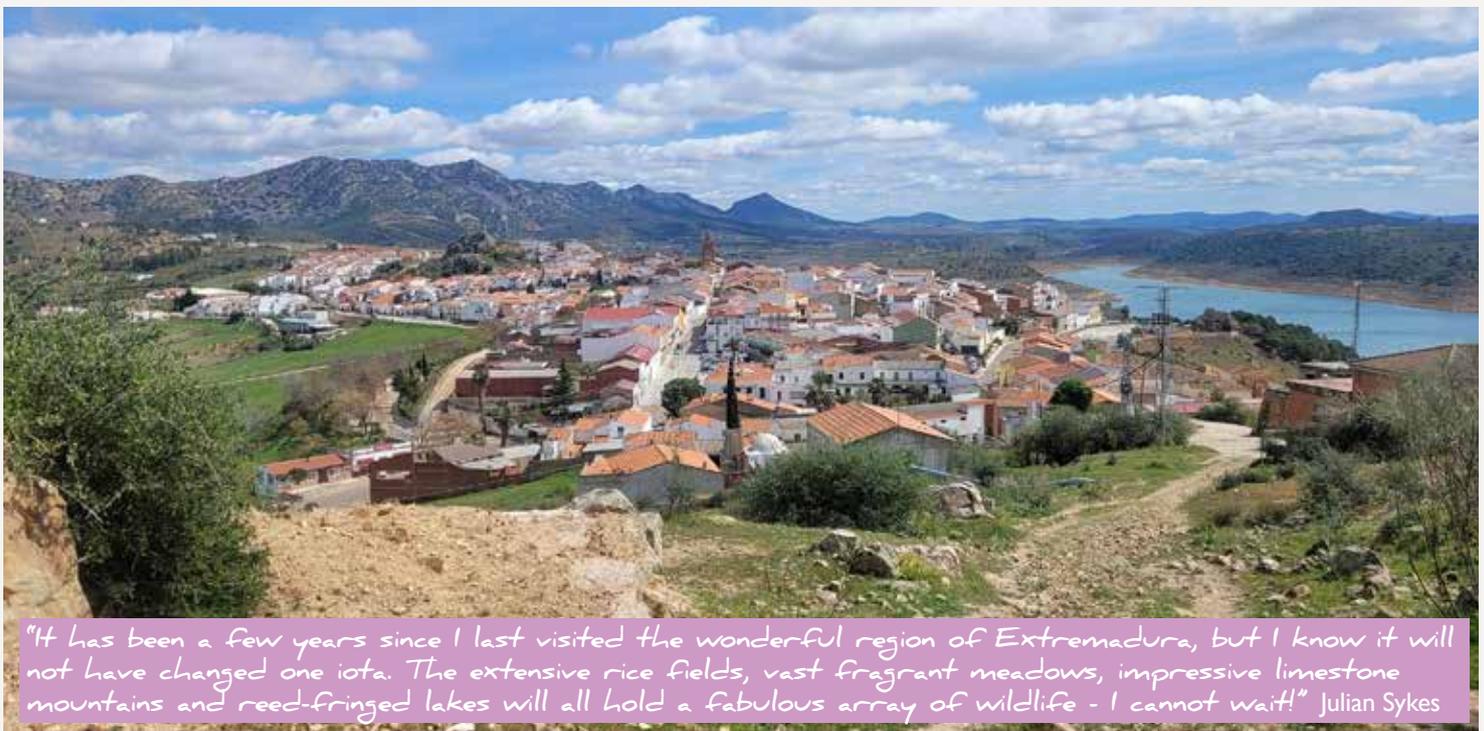
After our flight to Madrid, we travel to our base at Hotel Rural Soterraña, Madroñera. This charming, traditional style accommodation is the perfect base to explore the Extremadura region and our hosts will be very welcoming. Birding near the hotel and nearby lanes will provide plenty to enjoy, with White Stork, Black Kite, Hoopoe, Sardinian Warbler, Iberian Grey Shrike and immaculate Azure-winged Magpies, plus the chance of Scops Owl calling at night.

**2-7** The coming week will include some wonderful birding, in sites we know well from our birdwatching breaks here - but we also explore new territory where, as well as great birding, we shall look out for a selection of fabulous orchids and butterflies.

Our exact itinerary will depend on the weather, but we may start around Alange and Mérida, where a walk beside the Alange Reservoir may produce Black Wheatear, Rock Bunting and Alpine Swift. Rocky slopes nearby are worth a look as several exciting orchids can be found here, including Woodcock, Conical, Pink Butterfly and if we are lucky, the first Bumblebee Orchids.

At nearby Sierra de Utrera large numbers of Lusitanian Fritillaries should be in flower, as well as Yellow Anemones and Champagne Orchids. It is a good site for Spanish Festoon butterflies and we'll visit the longest Roman Bridge in the world - in the centre of Mérida. Birding from this 2000 year old structure should yield species such as Penduline Tit, Little Bittern and Western Swamphen.





*"It has been a few years since I last visited the wonderful region of Extremadura, but I know it will not have changed one iota. The extensive rice fields, vast fragrant meadows, impressive limestone mountains and reed-fringed lakes will all hold a fabulous array of wildlife - I cannot wait!" Julian Sykes*

The plains near Trujillo are famous for their steppe species of birds and this is the time when aristocratic Great Bustards perform their spectacular displays, as huge males turn themselves inside out in an attempt to attract a mate! Smaller Little Bustards, which prefer blowing raspberries and nodding their heads to attract their mates, will still be in winter groups. Pin-tailed and Black-bellied Sandgrouse, Montagu's Harrier, Calandra and Crested Larks and with luck Stone Curlews are here and, in mid March, spring flowers such as Barbary Nut Iris and Hoop Petticoat Narcissus are in flower. Butterflies such as Green-striped White and Western Dappled White should be easy to find.

Birds of prey are a big part of the wildlife spectacle and both kites and vultures seem to be always on the wing. Monfragüe National Park is one of Europe's finest raptor hot-spots and its mix of wooded hillsides and deep rocky gorges is home to all five species of Spanish eagles: powerful Golden; smaller Booted; hovering Short-toed; scarce Bonelli's and the endangered Spanish Imperial.

Both Black and Griffon Vultures nest here, while overhead may be Egyptian Vulture, Peregrine and the unusual Black Stork. Smaller birds such as Crag Martin, Hawfinch, Blue Rock Thrush, Black Redstart, Subalpine Warbler and Rock Bunting occur and butterflies could include Nettle-tree and Chapman's Green Hairstreak. We may be able to see some prehistoric cave paintings here too.

South of Trujillo is an area near Zafra rich in orchids. We should find colonies of Giant Orchids still in

flower (they start in late January) as well as Hill Orchid, growing in old limestone quarry workings. To the east, following a drovers' trail, we shall find colonies of Sombre Orchids and if we are lucky the very similar "bilunulata", treated by some as a separate species. The area also has Conical and delightful Pink-butterfly Orchids and we hope to find Provence Hairstreak on the wing.

Extremadura has large areas of rice-cultivation - good habitat for passage waders, while small populations of Red Avadavat and Common Waxbill work the field margins. A walk in a dehesa here is always productive for a variety of wildlife, such as Sawfly Orchid and the possibility of early Tongue Orchids. Birding can be excellent, with chances of Black-winged Kite, nesting storks and Spanish Sparrows. The Arrocampo Reservoir is the most important single site in Extremadura for breeding herons and egrets and is also rich in other reedbed species, such as Savi's Warbler; Western Swamphen and Penduline Tit. Close by is the most important site for orchids in the north of Extremadura, with large colonies of Naked Man Orchid, Champagne Orchid and Ophrys species such as Mirror, Yellow Bee, Woodcock and Sawfly. A total of 18 taxa of orchids grow here and we shall visit the impressive Orchid Information Centre at the edge of the Almaraz town.

⊗ Time allowing, we'll birdwatch on the final morning before returning to Madrid for our flight back to the UK.



**Outline Itinerary**

- Day 1 Fly to Madrid  
3 hour transfer to Madroñera  
7 nights Hotel Rural Soterraña
- Days 2-7 We explore the steppes, woodlands, wetlands and mountain regions of one of Spain's premier wildlife locations, including Monfragüe National Park, Embalse de Arrocampo and Caceres Plain, in search of birds, orchids, butterflies and other wildlife
- Day 8 Transfer to Madrid for our flight to Gatwick

**Stephen Batt:** Black Stork, Woodchat Shrike  
**Martin Kelsey:** Sawfly Orchid, Spanish Festoon Butterfly  
**Kate Mennie:** Alange, Mirror Orchid, Great Bustard



# ISLAY AND JURA AT EASTER



*"Though famed for their winter geese flocks, Islay and Jura's remote and windswept landscapes are a haven for mammals and raptors and, of course, the wonderful population of Chough which will doubtless charm us all."*  
Sally Nowell

Dates Wed 27 Mar - Wed 3 Apr 2024  
Price £2,595  
Deposit £500 Single Supp £400

Leaders Sally Nowell and Ailie Brown

Weather Spring in the Hebrides can be anything from gloriously calm and sunny to quite cool, wet and windy, with weather quickly changeable. Come prepared for everything from cool, rainy and breezy through to dry, warm and sunny weather (0-15°C)

Walking Mainly short walks on good tracks, with longer coastal walks on rougher ground. Lightweight walking shoes and boots are advisable. You may also wish to bring walking poles

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

Insects Unlikely to be a problem at this time of year

Accom Double, twin and single ensuite

Group 12

## Just some of what we hope to see:

Barnacle Goose	Oystercatcher
Greenland White-fronted Goose	Shoveler
'Wild' Canada Goose	Wigeon
Pink-footed Goose	Teal
Greylag Goose	Pintail
Pale-bellied Brent Goose	Redshank
Chough	Snipe
Golden Eagle	Golden Plover
White-tailed Eagle	Whooper Swan
Great Northern Diver	Red-billed Chough
Black-throated Diver	Scaup
Hen Harrier	Twite
Peregrine	Rock Dove
Merlin	Otter
Black Guillemot	Red Deer
Lapwing	Grey and Common Seals

## Easter on the "Queen of the Hebrides" for spectacular goose flocks, exciting raptors, masses of Red Deer, Otter and Chough plus the wild, wilderness of Jura

- Spectacular flocks of Barnacle and Greenland White-fronted Geese
- Raptors including Golden Eagle, Hen Harrier, Peregrine and Merlin
- Spectacular coastal scenery including the dramatic Oa peninsula
- Wild Jura for Red Deer, both eagles and good chance of Otter
- Famous whisky with a distillery tour
- Discover and explore Islay's abundance of historical sites
- Divers, Black Guillemot, Chough and skies full of birds

We shall meet in Glasgow and begin our journey towards the Mull of Kintyre and Kennacraig. Passing the picturesque shores of Loch Lomond, we shall arrive in Lochgilphead in time to check into the Grey Gull Hotel overlooking Loch Gilp and enjoy our first dinner together.

**2-6** As we wait to board the ferry, from the harbour we shall scan for Black Guillemot, seals and gull species. The two-hour ferry journey will give us time to search the seas for Great Northern Diver; cetaceans and seabirds such as Gannet and possibly even a Great Skua, before we arrive at the Bowmore Hotel, our base for the next five nights.

Islay is justly famous for its spectacular flocks of wintering geese, with huge numbers of Barnacle Geese and the largest concentration of Greenland White-fronted Geese in the UK. We shall spend time around RSPB Loch Gruinart to enjoy this

spectacle, picking out Pink-footed and Greylag Geese as well as Pale-bellied Brent Geese amongst them. Scarcer species of goose are frequently found here and we'll keep an eye open for Snow Goose, or vagrant North American Canada Goose, that are regular here and considered to be genuine wild birds. We might even find recently split Lesser Canada Goose, also known as Cackling Goose, which are considerably smaller, being not much bigger than a Brent Goose! Flocks of Lapwing and Golden Plover add to the show, along with Curlew and Oystercatcher and Brown Hares are common. Many of the pools hold duck including Shoveler, Wigeon, Teal and Pintail, as well as Redshank and Snipe, with perhaps the first migrant waders heading north.

In the dunes of Machir Bay and at Ardnave Point, Red-billed Chough are the stars, as this species has a very limited distribution in Scotland, so



*"Wrap up warm and cosy and brace yourselves for a spectacular week of wonderful whisky and wild winter birding on the glorious bird rich islands of Islay and Jura. Days of birding here stay long in the memory; these islands have an atmosphere all of their own!"* Sally Nowell



we'll spend time tracking them down. More large groups of geese are likely at Loch Gorm, as well as flocks of Whooper Swan and a variety of ducks and waders. We'll be on the constant alert for Hen Harrier, Merlin and possibly Golden Eagle here too!

The rugged Rhinns of Islay lie on the remote southwest of the island, where Golden Eagle, Chough, Twite and Rock Dove can be encountered. The little river beside our hotel is a regular spot for Dipper and we shall scan Loch Indaal for all three species of diver, especially Great Northern Diver, which gather here in spring before their migration north. Black Guillemot, Red-breasted Merganser, Scaup, Eider and Long-tailed Duck are possible and there is the chance of both Glaucous and Iceland Gull. The evening goose roost at Bridgend can be very special, as thousands of noisy birds drop in against the backdrop of the setting sun - a wonderful experience.

The windswept and wild Oa Peninsula, in the south of the island is a magical place. Owned by the RSPB, this can be another good raptor location with Peregrine, Hen Harrier, Merlin, Short-eared Owl and Golden Eagle all possible, as we walk out to the southern-most point of the island. On a clear day Rathlin Island and the north coast of Northern Ireland seem very close. We should find Stonechat, Skylark and maybe even a returning Wheatear.

Islay was the beating heart of the medieval Lordship of the Isles and the island retains some

fabulous Celtic crosses and warrior grave slabs. The south coast road is a great place to enjoy some of this rich history, as well as sampling Islay's most famous export - whisky! We shall take a tour of one of Islay's famous brands. This southern coast is very good for both Common and Grey Seal as well as Otter.

One day will be spent on the neighbouring island of Jura, where the single track road hugs the rugged and attractive coastline, offering memorable views and excellent chances to find Otter, as well as both species of seal. The landscape here is dominated by the three peaks known as the Paps of Jura and the island is home to over 6,000 Red Deer - but only 200 humans! This wild island is also good for raptors, with Merlin, Hen Harrier and possible Golden Eagle and offers our best chance of White-tailed Eagle.

**7-8** After breakfast we shall spend our final hours on Islay checking the bay for divers as we take the ferry back to the mainland. On our journey towards Loch Fyne for our final night, we shall explore some coastal areas in Kintyre and maybe take a woodland wander. We shall arrive at our hotel on Loch Fyne as darkness falls to enjoy a relaxed evening with our final meal together and relive our highlights of the trip.

The next morning we shall continue our travels back through stunning landscape to Glasgow, where we say our farewells.



### Outline Itinerary

- Day 1** Meet in Glasgow and drive to Inverary  
1 night Grey Gull Hotel, Lochgilphead
- Days 2-6** Travel to Kennacraig for the 2 hour ferry to Islay. Walking and birding on Islay with a day on Jura  
5 nights at Bowmore Hotel, Islay
- Days 7-8** After breakfast we take the ferry back to Kennacraig and travel to Inverary, then travel back to Glasgow the following morning.  
1 night Grey Gull Hotel, Lochgilphead

**Simon Eaves:** Red-billed Chough, Loch Gruinart  
**Ian Tulloch:** Barnacle Geese, Distillery, Linnets  
**Jane Hope:** Otter, Snipe



# TEXAS ECLIPSE



*"Migration along the Gulf Coast comes with a riot of colour: bright orioles and tanagers can spot the canopy with vivid orange and scarlet; gem-like warblers can light up the bushes with exquisite patterns of black, white, blue and yellow."*

Darren Rees

Dates Mon 1 - Tue 16 Apr 2024  
 Price £6,255  
 Deposit £1,250 Single Supp £850

Leaders Darren Rees and Roy Atkins  
 Flights British Airways, scheduled  
 Outbound: Morning, Heathrow–Houston  
 Inbound: Overnight, Houston–Heathrow  
 Weather Warm and sunny with the outside chance of showers (20°-30°C)  
 Walking 1-2 miles on easy tracks  
 Light footwear recommended  
 Meals All included from dinner on Day 1 to lunch on Day 15  
 Insects Biting insects will be encountered in coastal woodlands, so bring repellent  
 Accom Twin and single rooms all ensuite  
 Gulfway Motel, basic but perfect location  
 Group 12

## Just some of what we hope to see:

Total Eclipse of the Sun!	Vermilion Flycatcher
American Bittern	Great Kiskadee
Roseate Spoonbill	Scissor-tailed Flycatcher
Zone-tailed Hawk	Brown Jay
White-tailed Hawk	Black-capped Vireo
Aplomado Falcon	Golden-cheeked Warbler
Whooping Crane	Worm-eating Warbler
American Avocet	Hooded Warbler
Upland Sandpiper	Kentucky Warbler
Buff-breasted Sandpiper	Blue Grosbeak
Greater Roadrunner	Painted Bunting
Elf Owl	Audubon's Oriole
Buff-bellied Hummingbird	Altamira Oriole
Ringed Kingfisher	Brazilian Free-tailed Bat
Green Kingfisher	American Alligator

## Birding the Big State to coincide with a full solar eclipse - a big tour, a big bird list and the big astronomical event of the year!

- A six-centre tour of this vibrant and vast state
- Observe the solar eclipse in the scenic hill country
- Pelicans, skimmers and shorebirds galore
- Mexican exotics in the Lower Rio Grande
- Colourful migrant warblers, tanagers and orioles
- 10 million Brazilian Free-tailed Bats!
- Legendary Texan hospitality, 300 species of birds up for grabs!

**1-2** Driving three hours from Houston, with a break for roadside birds such as Eastern Meadowlark, Great-tailed Grackle and the incomparable Scissor-tailed Flycatcher; our first base is Rockport. A handful of Whooping Cranes linger into April at Aransas National Wildlife Refuge and our boat trip through this vast marsh, to see this globally rare bird, will also introduce us to ducks, shorebirds, pelicans, egrets, herons, Royal Terns, Black Skimmer and hopefully Bottlenose Dolphins.

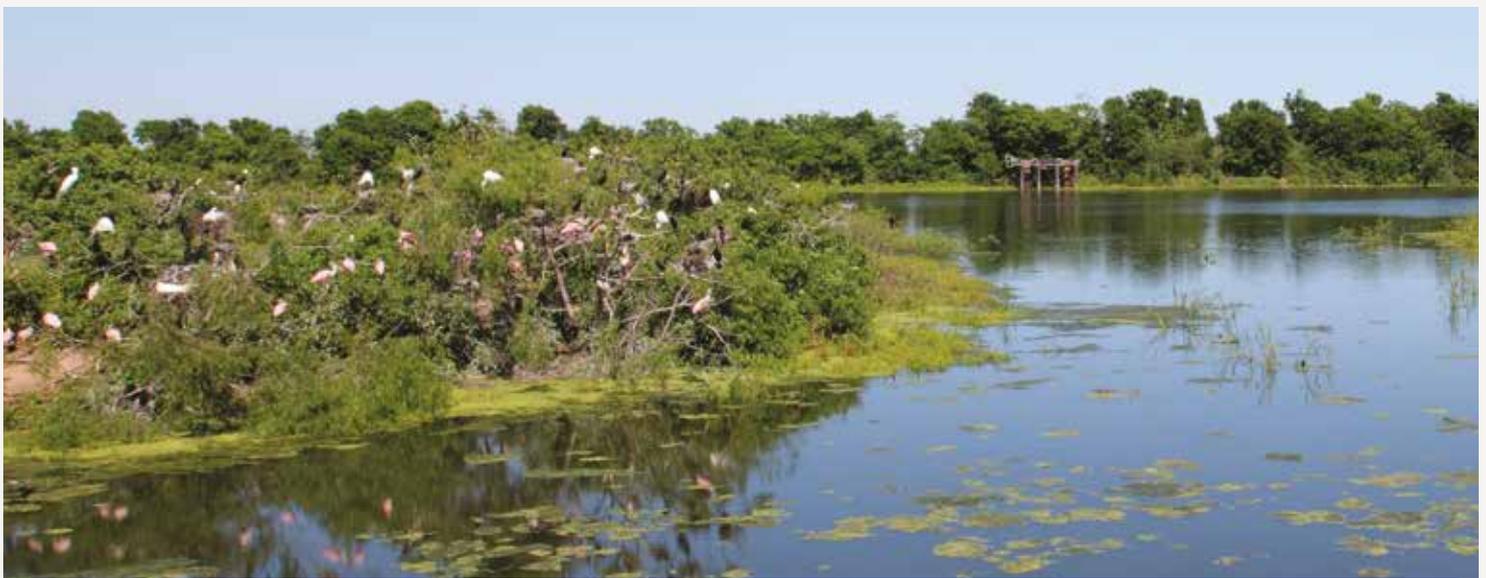
Cinnamon Teal, Ringed Kingfishers, Altamira Oriole, Couch's Kingbird, Tropical Parula and Buff-bellied Hummingbird. Migrant hawks use the Rio Grande corridor as a roost and the morning sun can trigger hundreds of Broad-winged Hawks and Mississippi Kites taking to the air - we'll hope for Gray Hawk and Hook-billed Kite too. An evening visit might yield Elf Owls, whistling Paraques and churning Lesser Nighthawks – Bobcat last time!

**3-6** Further south, with White-tailed and Harris Hawks on the way, we have three days to explore the bird-rich Lower Rio Grande from our base at McAllen. Mexico is just across the river and the species list has an exotic feel, with Great Kiskadee, Green Jay, Plain Chachalaca and spectacular Aplomado Falcon. The lush woods and pools of Santa Anna and Bentsen State Park are a haven for

Around Zapata, at Falcon Dam and Chapeno, there are more Rio Grande specialities, including Audubon's Oriole, White-Collared Seedeater and Brown Jay.

**7-9** Heading north into scenic hill country we shall choose our spot to witness the unique spectacle of a total solar eclipse (on day 8). We'll provide suitable glasses to view this incredible sight and hope for clear skies so we can witness





*"People describe viewing the solar eclipse as jaw-dropping and astonishing - the sun behind the moon, seeing shafts of light beaming out into the dark and solar flares like little flames all around the edge. Even the stars come out! I can see why people get hooked on wanting to see more and I can't wait to witness it for myself."* Darren Rees

the 'diamond ring' and hopefully solar flares as day turns to night! This really is a thrilling experience and a likely highlight of the trip.

In addition, we've three days looking at different species more typical of the arid southwest, such as Canyon Towhee, Verdin, Black-tailed Gnatcatcher and the incomparable Roadrunner (Meep! Meep!). The feeding stations at Neal's Lodges are always busy with wrens, hummingbirds, sparrows and thrashers; whilst a walk along the River Frio may produce Yellow-breasted Chat, Yellow-throated Warbler, Black Phoebe or elusive Green Kingfisher. Endemic and much-prized Golden-cheeked Warbler and Black-capped Vireo inhabit the stands of walnut and juniper at Lost Maples State Park and easy trails may yield Zone-tailed Hawk, Wilson's Warbler, Blue Grosbeak and stunning Scott's Oriole.

Our evening visit to the Rio Frio bat cave should be another trip highlight. Each spring bats return from their winter grounds in Central America to roost in the limestone caves of the Texan hill country. The sight of ten million or more Brazilian Free-tailed Bats emerging into the dusk like billowing clouds of smoke, running the gauntlet of Red-tailed and Swainson's Hawks, is truly memorable.

**10-14** Our transfer towards the Gulf Coast, is broken with a stay at Sealy. Around Attwater Refuge fields can hold big numbers of Upland and Buff-breasted Sandpipers and a drive around the Reserve is always fruitful, with ducks, waders and charismatic American Bison! At beautiful Brazos Bend, Anhinga and Black-bellied

Whistling Duck perch in trees festooned with Spanish moss, whilst American Bittern, Yellow-crowned Night Heron and dazzling Prothonotary Warblers are all on show. Watch out for alligators!

Arriving at our base on the Gulf Coast we've so many birds to see: at High Island, waves of migrant warblers, vireos, orioles and tanagers arrive at the only trees within the surrounding flat marshes. Boy Scout Woods and Smith Oaks are havens attracting warblers galore – Black-and-white, Yellow-rumped, Parula and Blue-winged, with another 20 species possible! Rose-breasted Grosbeak, Scarlet Tanager, Indigo Bunting and Orchard Oriole add their own riot of colour; whilst shy Worm-eating, Kentucky and Hooded Warblers skulk below. East lies another migrant trap at Sabine Woods and this small woodland can hold a bewildering array of birds: Waterthrushes, Painted Bunting, or Summer Tanager for anyone?

Along the coastal marshes water-loving birds provide a constant backdrop (and photographer's dream). Busy local heronries support Great, Snowy and Cattle Egrets, Tri-coloured and Little Blue Heron and charismatic Roseate Spoonbill; and at the famous Bolivar Flats, you'll be astonished by thousands of American Avocet, plus White Pelicans, Black Skimmers, Royal Terns, American Oystercatcher, five species of plover and sandpipers galore! Join us and see the wonder of bird migration in Texas for yourself.

**15-16** The last morning is a relaxed affair checking the migrants at High Island, before we leave for our flight back to the UK, arriving on Day 16.



### Outline Itinerary

- Days 1-2 Fly to Houston, 3 hour transfer, plus next day boat trip in Aransas Bay  
2 nights The Inn at Fulton Harbor
- Days 3-5 Birding enroute to McAllen  
Two full days exploring Lower Rio Grande at Santa Ana NWR, Bentsen State Park, Laguna Atascosa NWR  
3 nights Alamo Inn
- Day 6 Drive to Zapata 1 night Best Western
- Days 7-9 Transfer to scenic hill country  
Two full days birding, including Lost Maples State Park and evening visit to Rio Frio bat cave  
3 nights Neal's Lodges
- Day 10 Transfer east, 1 night Holiday Inn Sealy
- Days 11-14 Transfer to High Island via Attwater NWR and Brazos Bend State Park  
Three full days exploring Boy Scout Woods, Smith Oaks, Anahuac NWR, Bolivar Flats, Sabine Woods  
4 nights Gulfway Motel
- Days 15-16 Transfer to Houston for overnight flight back to UK, arriving Day 16

Darren Rees: Aplomado Falcon  
Frances and David Perry: Green Jay, Heronry, Yellow-throated Warbler  
Jane Hope: Solar Eclipse  
Roy Atkins: Vermilion Flycatcher



# TARIFA AND DOÑANA



"The experience of bird migration is wonderful wherever you are, but this southern coastline of Spain really encapsulates the phenomenon of migration. From soaring raptors, to flocks of noisy Bee-eaters moving north to their breeding grounds, you really feel surrounded by it all here."

Simon Eaves

Dates Thu 11 - Sat 20 Apr 2024  
 Price £3,335  
 Deposit £650 Single Supp £250

Leaders Simon Eaves and Manuel Morales  
 Flights EasyJet, scheduled, Speedy Boarding and extra legroom included  
 Outbound: Afternoon, Gatwick-Seville  
 Inbound: Afternoon, Seville-Gatwick  
 Weather Variable in spring, a mixture of sun and showers (15°-30°C)  
 Walking There will be some short walks up to 2km, with plenty of breaks  
 Meals All included from lunch on Day 1 to lunch on Day 10  
 Lunches will mostly be picnics, with some taken at local restaurants  
 Insects Biting insects may occasionally be a nuisance, so bring repellent  
 Accom Twin and single rooms all ensuite  
 Group 12

## Just some of what we hope to see:

Spanish Imperial Eagle	Northern Bald Ibis
Short-toed Eagle	Squacco Heron
Bonelli's Eagle	Glossy Ibis
Booted Eagle	Purple Heron
Osprey	Little Bittern
Black-winged Kite	Night Heron
Egyptian Vulture	Great Reed Warbler
Little Owl	Gull-billed Tern
Black Stork	Caspian Tern
Marbled Teal	Collared Pratincole
White-headed Duck	Stone Curlew
Purple Swamphen	Little Bustard
Red-knobbed Coot	European Bee-eater
Slender-billed Gull	Little Swift
Little Tern	

Tarifa is one of Western Europe's premier migration watch points for both raptors and songbirds, whilst Doñana National Park is host to a myriad of birdlife and even a small population of Iberian Lynx.

- Montagu's and Marsh Harriers, Little Owl, Calandra Lark, Zitting Cisticola, Little Bustard
- Egyptian and Griffon Vulture, Booted Eagle, Short-toed Eagle and Spanish Imperial Eagle
- Glossy Ibis, Little Swift, Lesser Crested Tern, Caspian Tern and Red-knobbed Coot
- Many migrating songbirds including Bee-eaters, Red-rumped Swallows, Alpine Swifts
- Best places to watch birds, Iberian Lynx and wildlife in Western Andalucía
- Private access to the countryside of rice fields, wild Olive trees and pastureland
- Small typical local hotels, in great birding locations with fine Spanish fare

We fly from Gatwick to Seville, arriving in the evening and then drive south to our base for the next five days, a quiet hotel close to Los Lances Beach in Tarifa. If time allows, we can stop enroute to birdwatch.

**2-6** Our time here will be split between the best viewpoints for raptor migration and the private areas around Tarifa for Spanish specialities such as Glossy Ibis, Little Bustard, Little Swift, Red-knobbed Coot and Spanish Imperial Eagle. Our first short walk however will be along Los Lances beach for waders, terns and gulls, before setting off for our first raptor viewpoint.

We shall choose the best of these between Tarifa, Algeciras and Sierra de la Plata depending on the weather. Anything is possible, but our target species will be Egyptian and Griffon Vulture, Booted Eagle,



Short-toed Eagle, Black Stork, Black Kite, Bee-eater, Alpine Swift and passerines. Lunch each day will be either a picnic, or a small taverna lunch. A cliff walk will also give us the chance of more passerines and can be amazing for vultures and other raptors.

Our guide Manuel has public and private access to the areas of rice fields, wild olive trees and pasture around the wetlands of La Janda, so we shall spend a full day here looking for Montagu's and Marsh Harriers, Little Owl, Calandra Lark, Zitting Cisticola and Turtle Dove.

We shall explore the countryside very close to the hotel, to search for localised species such as Crag Martin, Black-eared Wheatear, Hoopoe and Red-rumped Swallow. We'll have a local walk in Tarifa and its surroundings, with the chance of Common Bulbul, Lesser Kestrel and more raptor migration!



"It was really apparent last year that the wetlands of Doñana are not just about the wonderful sights of the breeding waterbirds, but also just as lovely are the sounds of the wetlands, with the almost constant songs of Cetti's Warblers and Nightingales everywhere." Simon Eaves



A site close to Barbate holds a small Bald Ibis colony, so we shall spend time here and on the nearby coastal marshes, before moving out into the Medina Sidonia countryside. Access to private land will give further chances of Spanish Imperial Eagle, plus Collared Pratincole, Osprey, Short-toed Lark, Woodchat Shrike, Little Tern, Stone Curlew, Little Owl, Little Bustard, Cuckoo and many passerines including Nightingale and Melodious Warbler.

We'll drive up into the Ojen Valley to Los Alcornocales (Cork Oak Forest) Natural Park, before taking a short walk through El Tiradero Stream for passerines, butterflies and flowers. We'll visit the Barbate reservoir for Osprey and the Lesser Kestrel colony in Alcalá de los Gazules. Target species will include Bonelli's Eagle, Short-toed Eagle, Short-toed Treecreeper, Lesser Kestrel, Osprey, orchids, Iberian Chiffchaff, Thekla Lark and other migrant and breeding passerines.

**7** Today we transfer to Doñana. At our first lakeside stop, there will be a good chance of Red-knobbed Coot and waterfowl such as White-headed Duck, Marbled Teal and Greater Flamingo. At Chipiona harbour, La Jara (Rockrose) beach, the El Colorado lakes and Bonanza marshes, we'll look for Little Swift, Lesser Crested Tern, Caspian Tern, Common Tern, Little Tern, Kentish Plover and Bar-tailed Godwit. Heading towards Doñana National Park, we shall visit Corta Olivillos for herons and waterfowl, then cross the Guadalquivir River by boat to get to El Rocío, our base for the next three nights.



**8-10** The marshes of Doñana National Park, the Guadiamar River, the plains and Dehesa de Abajo Lake, will bring many highlights over the next couple of days, such as Squacco, Purple and Night Heron, Glossy Ibis, Little Bittern, Great Reed Warbler; Garganey, Ferruginous Duck, Marbled Teal, Black-necked Grebe, Bee-eater, Spoonbill, Red-crested Pochard, Lesser Kestrel, Hoopoe and Cuckoo and we'll spend our first day exploring these areas, finishing in the afternoon at La Dehesa de Abajo Lake, leaving us time to go out in the evening for a short walk to look for Iberian Lynx.

We'll have a second chance for Iberian Lynx the next day on an early morning walk close to the hotel, with the chance of raptors and passerines as well. The rest of the morning will be spent around the El Rocío marshes and La Rocina pinewood and lakes. The afternoon we'll be in and around El Acebuche (Wild Olive Tree) Visitor Centre and Lakes, the best places for Iberian Magpie. Other birds can include Crested Tit, Lesser Spotted Woodpecker, Iberian Chiffchaff, Garganey, Golden Oriole, Dartford Warbler, Bee-eater, Woodchat Shrike, Tree Sparrow, Booted Eagle and Marsh Harrier.

The last morning will be spent birdwatching if time allows, before making our way back to Seville for an evening flight to Gatwick.



### Outline Itinerary

- Day 1 Fly Gatwick to Seville and transfer to our hotel on Los Lances Beach near Tarifa  
6 nights Hotel la Codorniz
- Days 2-6 Exploration of migration hotspots around Tarifa, together with private access to bird-rich areas inland such as La Janda, the Ojen Valley and the estuaries and marshes around Medina Sidonia
- Day 7 Transfer to Doñana National Park via Chipiona Harbour, El Colorado lakes and Bonanza marshes, plus a crossing of the Guadalquivir River  
3 nights El Cazadero Real
- Days 8-9 Exploration of Doñana including the Guadiamar River and Dehesa de Abajo Lake, plus early morning and late evening watching for Iberian Lynx
- Day 10 Travel back to Seville for flight back to Gatwick

Manuel Morales: Little Swift, European Bee-eater, Short-toed Snake Eagle, Tarifa view  
Simon Eaves: White-headed Duck, Bald Ibis

# VALENCIA



*"Having lived in this region for well over 10 years, I love exploring and finding its wonderful and diverse wildlife, which offers so much. In recent years the Valencian government has invested in creating habitats and reserves – Pau and I will relish sharing these places and their inhabitants on this fabulous tour."* Julian Sykes

Dates Sun 14 - Sun 21 April 2024  
 Price £2,465  
 Deposit £490 Single Supp £235

Leaders Julian Sykes and Pau Lucio  
 Flights EasyJet, scheduled, Speedy Boarding and extra legroom included  
 Outbound: Morning, Gatwick-Valencia  
 Inbound: Afternoon, Valencia-Gatwick  
 Weather Probably a temperature range of around 10°- 25°C and there is always a possibility of rain showers plus mornings and evenings will be cooler  
 Walking There will be some short easy walks on level paths, slightly rockier and steeper in the mountains  
 Meals All included from lunch on Day 1 to lunch on Day 8  
 Insects Could be a problem in the wetter marsh areas and occasionally in the mountains, so bring repellent  
 Accom Twin and single rooms all ensuite  
 Casa Babel is a fabulous hotel in the small town of Villalonga, nestled under the La Safor mountains  
 Group 12

A wonderful diverse and exciting tour to a region of Spain not normally associated with wildlife tourism. It has so much to offer, with coastal wetlands, inland plains, saltpans and more.

- Be surprised by the quality and diversity of this fabulous region
- Coastal wetlands for Red-knobbed Coot and Marbled and White-headed Duck
- A chance to join a local ringing group as they monitor migrant species
- Inland plains for bustards, sandgrouse, larks and raptors
- Karst limestone valleys for orchids, butterflies and Bee-eaters
- Expansive reedbeds with Moustached, Great Reed and Savi's Warblers
- A fabulous local hotel, which serves delicious Spanish cuisine!

After landing at Valencia Airport, we drive south to Villalonga and check into our traditional 19th century hotel, where your comfortable room for the week will be waiting. If time allows, we may visit a nearby marsh for an easy walk to see any breeding or migrant species that may be around. We shall be looking for Little and Cattle Egrets, Glossy Ibis, Squacco, Grey and Purple Herons and possibly Marsh Harrier.

We continue south towards Denia and wind our way up to the very scenic Cabo de San Antoni, where we spend the remainder of the afternoon. This headland can be quite productive, with the likelihood of Pallid Swift, Blue Rock Thrush, Black Wheatear, Raven and possibly Peregrine Falcon. We shall also spend some time looking out to sea as there's always the chance of a passing Scopoli's Shearwater or Bottlenose Dolphin.

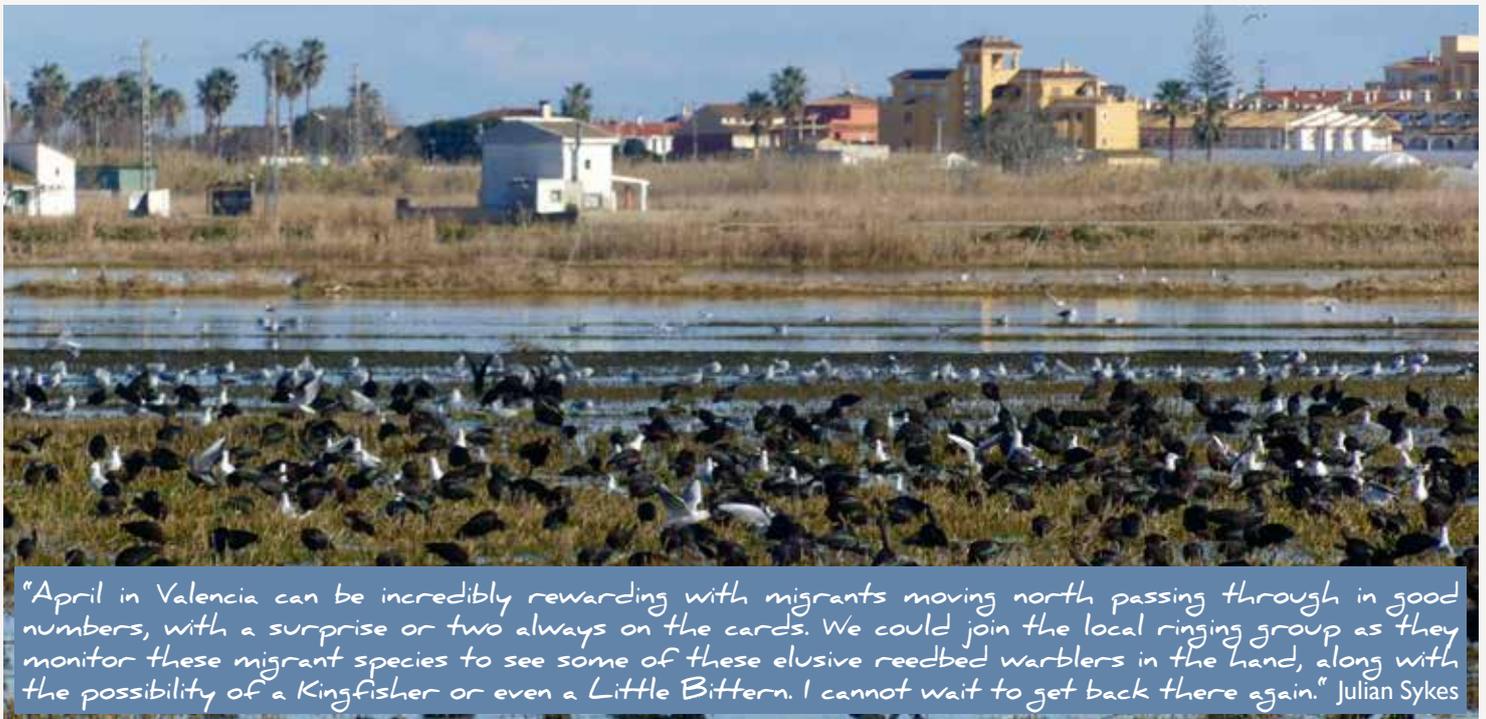
**2-7** Our week may begin with a pre-breakfast visit to a local reedbed looking for the resident Moustached Warblers, along with Savi's, Eurasian Reed and Great Reed Warblers plus plenty more. After breakfast we head to the coast, looking for Balearic Shearwater's, Mediterranean and Yellow-legged Gulls, Gannets and Sandwich Terns.

One day we head south towards the Alicante area, looking for its resident and breeding speciality species. We start at the 'Clot de Galvany' - a seasonal wetland with breeding White-headed Ducks, Purple Swamphens, Iberian Green Woodpeckers, Little Owl, Southern Grey Shrike and Dartford and Sardinian Warblers. Then it's on to the 'Santa Pola Salinas'. This large area

## Just some of what we hope to see:

Marbled Duck	Collared Pratincole
White-headed Duck	Slender-billed Gull
Greater Flamingo	Audouin's Gull
Bonelli's Eagle	Whiskered Tern
Montagu's Harrier	Great Spotted Cuckoo
Red-knobbed Coot	Roller
Purple Swamphen	Black Wheatear
Great Bustard	Moustached Warbler
Black-bellied Sandgrouse	Melodious Warbler
Pin-tailed Sandgrouse	Golden Oriole





"April in Valencia can be incredibly rewarding with migrants moving north passing through in good numbers, with a surprise or two always on the cards. We could join the local ringing group as they monitor these migrant species to see some of these elusive reedbed warblers in the hand, along with the possibility of a Kingfisher or even a Little Bittern. I cannot wait to get back there again." Julian Sykes

of commercial salt pans holds several thousand Greater Flamingos, various species of gulls and terns, waders and wildfowl all year round. We'll then drive into the nearby Creviente hills, looking for Bonelli's Eagles with young, along with Black Wheatear, Blue Rock Thrush, Alpine Swift, Crag Martin, Thekla Larks and Red-billed Cough. After lunch we'll visit arguably the 'Valenciana Comunitat's' premier bird Reserve - 'El Hondo'. As well as some of the above species it also has breeding Red-knobbed Coot, Roller, Montagu's Harrier, Collared Pratincole and the gorgeous Marbled Duck.

One day we have a relaxed start, with a drive up into the mountains through the gorgeous Vall de Gallinera, hopefully seeing its resident pair of Golden Eagles, plus Crag Martin, Red-rumped Swallow, Golden Oriole, Wryneck, Cirl Bunting and Woodchat Shrike. We continue to the hills behind Alcoy, where we hope to see Griffon Vultures at close quarters and possibly Woodlark and Thekla Lark, Crested, Coal and Great Tit, Raven, Rock Bunting, Blue Rock Thrush and crossbills. This area is superb for orchids and butterflies, with potentials for Woodcock, Pyramidal and Yellow Bee Orchids plus Spanish Festoon, Adonis Blue, Southern Scarce Swallowtail and Spanish Marbled White.

We shall head north towards Valencia, to visit the wetland sites of the Albufera de Valencia. We drive to the extensive rice fields that surround Spain's second largest coastal freshwater lake - Albufera d'Valencia, where we hope to find many species

of heron and egret, plus Little, Common and Whiskered Terns, Little Ringed Plovers, Audouin's and Lesser Black-backed Gulls and Black-winged Stilts. We travel through Palomar (the home of Paella) and visit the small but excellent Reserve of Raco d'Olla. Here we shall enjoy near point blank views of nesting gulls and terns, including gorgeous pink Slender-billed Gulls doing their bizarre display. At this small Reserve there is always a chance of something rarer such as Elegant Tern, which has bred here for the past 12 years! The rest of the afternoon will be spent around the ricefields and coastline of this area before returning to Villalonga.

One day will be in total contrast to the others, with an early breakfast and drive into Castilla La Mancha. We head straight for the Albacete region, where our target species are Great and Little Bustard, Black-bellied and Pin-tailed Sandgrouse, Stone Curlew, Calandra, Crested and Short toed Larks and Rock and Tree Sparrows. Apart from our target species there is always a chance of other classic species during the breeding season such as Great Spotted Cuckoo, Black-eared and Northern Wheatear, Red and Black Kite, Common Buzzard, Marsh and Montagu's Harrier and the scarce Lesser Kestrel. This area is fantastic all year round, in Spring there are various flooded fields, which hold good numbers of birds making for a great day out.

8 This morning, after another leisurely breakfast we shall drive back to Valencia airport for our flight home.



### Outline Itinerary

- Day 1 Arrive at Valencia Airport, transfer to our hotel in Villalonga, afternoon visit to local Reserve  
7 nights Hotel Casa Babel
- Days 2-7 Varied daily itineraries visiting wetland sites along the Mediterranean coast both north and south; inland to Castilla La Mancha and an expansive steppe area; exploration of dramatic karst limestone valleys full of cherry and almond groves; plus seawatching
- Day 8 After breakfast we travel back to Valencia airport for our flight home

**Julian Sykes:** White-headed Duck, landscape, Great Bustard  
**Roy Atkins:** Calandra Lark  
**Robin Mace:** Savi's Warbler  
**Pau Lucio:** Spanish Festoon, Yellow Bee Orchid



# CROATIA



*"Everyone I know who has visited Croatia says they love it, the food, the scenery, the sea, the people, but nobody ever mentions the birds?? It's packed with great birds, just take a look at this itinerary - what a combination, fabulous location and fabulous birds, I can't wait!"*  
Sally Nowell

Dates Fri 19 - Fri 26 Apr 2024  
Price £3,165  
Deposit £625 Single Supp £250

Leaders Sally Nowell and Ecotours guide  
Flights British Airways, scheduled  
Outbound: Morning, Heathrow-Zagreb  
Inbound: Afternoon, Zagreb-Heathrow  
Weather Likely to be very pleasant and warm with temperatures ranging from 15°- 25°C. This is spring of course so there is always the chance of wind and rain, bring waterproofs just in case, as well as suntan lotion!  
Walking 2-3 miles on a variety of tracks, some of which may be steepish in places and may be rocky and uneven  
Meals All included from lunch on Day 1 to lunch on Day 8  
Insects Unlikely to be a problem but bring insect repellent just in case  
Accom Twin and single rooms all ensuite  
Group 12

## Just some of what we hope to see:

Rock Partridge	Black-headed Bunting
Griffon Vulture	Black-eared Wheatear
Short-toed Eagle	Lesser Grey Shrike
Lesser Spotted Eagle	Eastern Orphean
Montagu's Harrier	Warbler
White-winged Tern	Alpine Swift
Western Rock Nuthatch	Squacco Heron
Sombre Tit	Scops Owl
Eastern Subalpine	Pygmy Cormorant
Warbler	Calandra Lark
Collared Flycatcher	Rock Bunting
River Warbler	Plus many butterflies
Penduline Tit	and interesting reptiles
Golden Oriole	

## Exploration of the Dalmatian Coast and ragged limestone hills and the beautiful turquoise lakes and cascades of Plitvice, for a great selection of birds, butterflies and reptiles.

- Paklenica National Park with a fabulous range of Mediterranean birds
- Visit the island of Cres with its oak forest and colony of Griffon Vultures
- Western Rock Nuthatch, Collared Flycatcher and Eastern Orphean Warbler
- Stunning Plitvice National Park with turquoise lakes and beautiful cascades
- Western and eastern Mediterranean bird species can both be seen
- Wide selection of butterflies, dragonflies and reptiles - perhaps a Two-tailed Pasha!
- Rock Partridge, Little Bittern, Black Stork, Lesser Spotted Eagle and so much more

1 After arriving in Zagreb we drive to Istria and the lovely village of Lovran on the Adriatic coast - and if time permits, we'll drive up to Mount Ucka for fantastic views over the Istrian Peninsula and possibly some hill-top raptors. In clear weather you can see the whole peninsula and even as far as Venice!

2 A morning ferry takes us to Cres, the second largest island in the Adriatic, where Rock Bunting, Red-backed Shrike, Black-eared Wheatear and Tawny Pipit inhabit the rocky slopes. Leaving the main road, we'll visit the Griffon Vulture rehabilitation centre, which is situated in the scenic village of Beli. About 30 pairs of these magnificent raptors nest on the island and we shall surely see them soaring overhead as we explore. Mediterranean oak forest here holds Hawfinch and Subalpine, Sardinian and Melodious Warbler; while

Honey Buzzard and Short-toed Eagle soar above the trees. We may spot smart Dalmatian Wall Lizard and colourful Dalmatian Algyroides here too!

3-4 We travel south along the Dalmatian Coast under the high Velebit Mountain range to our next destination, the lovely valley of the River Gacka. A great selection of typical Mediterranean birds are found here, including Bee-eater, Hoopoe, Woodlark, Golden Oriole and Red-backed and Lesser Grey Shrike among the small farmlands and meadows. Returning to the coast we reach Paklenica National Park with its two monumental canyons, the second largest European preserve of Austrian fir, old beech forests and steep cliffs. A walk in the Park provides a chance for Western Rock Nuthatch, Eastern Orphean and Black-eared Wheatear and Eastern Subalpine Warbler; with a slim chance of Sombre Tit.





*"This holiday takes us to a short-haul destination that offers some really excellent birding in a variety of habitats. We take you to some beautiful locations, off the traditional tourist routes, into the heart of real Croatia. How brilliant is that!" Sally Nowell*

A further full day in the Park allows us to visit both gorges, where the cliffs are home to Peregrine Falcon, Alpine Swift, Rock Dove, Crag Martin, Western Rock Nuthatch and Blue Rock Thrush. Wryneck nest in old orchards and we'll look for Eastern Orphea and Eastern Subalpine Warbler in the shrubs. Scops Owl is often heard in the evening and one night we shall try to find one for you. This is also a wonderful place for butterflies, with many interesting species such as Southern Comma, Cleopatra, Balkan Marbled White, Nettle-tree, Eastern Festoon and many blues, hairsteaks, coppers and fritillaries - but the crème-de-la-crème would be Two-tailed Pasha, if we can find one!

**5** We drive southeast to Lake Vrana, the biggest freshwater lake in Croatia. The lake is fringed with reeds, providing home to Pygmy Cormorant, Purple Heron, occasionally Glossy Ibis, Whiskered Tern, Cetti's Warbler, Zitting Cisticola and Bearded and Penduline Tits. We'll check the adjacent farmlands for Montagu's Harrier, Calandra Lark and Spanish Sparrow, with perhaps Black-headed Buntings in nearby orchards if they have arrived.

In the afternoon we visit the extremely rocky world of Pag Island, connected by a long bridge to the mainland. Among the rocky hillsides we can find many small fertile valleys with rich meadows and pastures holding Short-toed Eagle, Montagu's Harrier, Red-backed and Woodchat Shrikes, Tawny Pipit, Spanish Sparrow, Eastern Olivaceous, Eastern Orphea, Sardinian and Subalpine Warblers,



Black-eared Wheatear and Cirl Bunting. The island is one of the best places to see Rock Partridge. They are often seen calling from the small walls bordering the pastures everywhere on the island. Freshwater lakes on the island often attract Glossy Ibis, Little and Great Egret, Purple and Squacco Heron, plus migrating marsh terns including White-winged Tern and perhaps Yellow Wagtails of various races and other migrants such as Whinchat or Honey Buzzard.

**6** We head north to Plitvice Waterfalls surrounded by lush beech forests, with 16 turquoise-blue lakes interconnected by beautiful cascades. Due to their unique evolution and beauty, Plitvice Lakes are on the UNESCO World Heritage List. We are more like normal tourists today, but we'll still look out for a few birds as we wander the trails, with perhaps a Collared Flycatcher or Black Woodpecker possible.

**7** The valley of the River Sava, with its oxbows, wet meadows and forests, is a protected area called Lonjsko Polje. The beautiful lowland landscape is dotted with small villages and the forests and wetlands may add a handful of interesting species to our list, with birds such as Great Egret, Night Heron, Little Bittern, Spoonbill, Black Stork, Ferruginous Duck, White-tailed and Lesser Spotted Eagle, Black Kite, marsh terns, Grey-headed and Middle-spotted Woodpecker, River Warbler, Penduline Tit and Golden Oriole found here.

**8** After a morning birding we head to Zagreb to catch our flight back home.



### Outline Itinerary

- Days 1-2** Fly to Zagreb then travel to Istria and Lovran on the Adriatic Sea, then a full day exploring Cres, the second largest of the Adriatic Islands  
2 nights Villa Laurel, Lovran
- Days 3-5** We travel down the Dalmatian Coast then spend more than a full day in Paklenica National Park. The following day we visit Lake Vrana, the biggest lake in Croatia and spend an afternoon on Pag Island  
3 nights Hotel Rajna, Starigrad Paklenica
- Days 6-7** We head to Plitvice National Park with turquoise lakes and cascades, followed by a day in the River Sava valley  
2 nights Tradicije Cigoc, Čigoč
- Day 8** After a morning birding, transfer to Zagreb for our flight home

**Balazs Szigeti:** Bee-eater, Black-eared Wheatear, Plitvice Lakes  
**Simon Eaves:** Little Bittern  
**Stephen Batt:** Griffon Vulture  
**Robin Mace:** Lesser Spotted Eagle



*"It's a week of wild places, wonderful wildlife and beautiful scenery. If you'd like to discover some of the fantastic birds and mammals the Highlands has to offer, this holiday is the one for you."*

Ailie Brown

Dates Sat 27 Apr - Sat 4 May 2024  
 Price £2,295  
 Deposit £400 Single Supp £250

Leader Ailie Brown

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

Our Cairngorm walk is more steep and uneven, but low-level unguided alternatives are available. Walking boots will be needed and walking poles may be helpful

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 rooms all ensuite or with private facilities

Group 7

## Just some of what we hope to see:

Golden Eagle	Golden Plover
White-tailed Eagle	Rock Dove
Osprey	Crested Tit
Red Kite	Redstart
Peregrine	Dipper
Great Northern Diver	Ring Ouzel
Black-throated Diver	Raven
Red-throated Diver	crossbill
Slavonian Grebe	Pine Marten
Velvet Scoter	Mountain Hare
Long-tailed Duck	Otter
Black Grouse	Red Deer
Ptarmigan	European Beaver
Red Grouse	Red Squirrel
Black Guillemot	Bottlenose Dolphin
Purple Sandpiper	

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 year's wildlife quest in style with the Highland specialities
- See 7 - and more - of the most sought-after Scottish mammals
- Dusk visits to our hide for Pine Marten and Badger
- 24 premier birds including Golden Eagle, Crested Tit, crossbills and Black Grouse
- West Coast day for White-tailed Eagle, Black Guillemot, Otter and much more
- On the Moray Firth and Black Isle coast - divers, seaduck, terns and dolphins
- Visit to Tayside to see European Beaver at dusk

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 Dulnain Bridge, near Grantown-on-Spey there is plenty to see close to home and we may start with a walk down the river or visit the beautiful pine forest nearby. Here, amongst the ancient pines, we shall search out delightful Crested Tit and parties of crossbill - which we'll need to check carefully, as Common, Scottish and Parrot Crossbills have nested in the area in recent years - though identification can be a serious challenge.

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 Badgers and hopefully Pine Martens too, with a chance of Woodcock roding above the trees. An early start one morning takes us to see Black Grouse as they strut, bubble and flutter at each other. It is a wonderful sight to see this behaviour.

Nearby lochans hold beautiful Slavonian Grebes, with golden plumes in their breeding finery. This is a great time of year to see displaying Golden Eagle or Osprey, the latter just returning to nests and in recent years sightings of White-tailed Eagles have increased locally.

The Black Isle and Moray Coast have a few of the Long-tailed Duck, Scaup and perhaps Common and Velvet Scoters that winter here amongst the Eiders, while Purple Sandpiper may be on





*"The base for our holiday is right in the centre of the Cairngorms National Park, giving us the opportunity to explore the surrounding area with ease. The adventure continues to the far reaches of the Highlands in search of White-tailed Eagles, Otters, dolphins and more." Ailie Brown*

rockier coasts. We'll visit Udale Bay, where passage waders may include Knot, Bar-tailed Godwit and more. Flocks of wintering geese may include Pink-footed, still lingering before they head north and there may be hundreds of Wigeon with Teal and other duck, 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'll 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 evening we have the exciting chance to see Scotland's newest mammal - European Beaver. Introduced into Tayside they are doing well and are showing regularly at certain sites. We shall learn how they are affecting the landscape and hopefully get to see one or two as they come out to feed at dusk. Using a bat detector we shall see what species are flitting around the trees - Pipistrelle is most likely but other species such as Daubenton's are possible too.

We have places to search for camouflaged Mountain Hare, as Red Deer watch us from the skyline - and we shall keep an eye on the sky for hunting Golden Eagle, Red Kite or Peregrine. Raven pass overhead and Dipper breed in the fast flowing rivers, Wheatear have arrived on the slopes and we hope for Hen Harrier or Red Grouse displaying.



Weather permitting we'll venture into the Cairngorms, accessing the top of the mountain by the Funicular Railway, or alternatively use lower-level paths to search for Ptarmigan and other wildlife that can be seen on the mountain slopes, with chances of newly arrived Ring Ouzel near the base station.

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 Great Northern, Red-throated 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, Hooded Crow, 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 are the resident White-tailed Eagles - huge and impressive as they soar over Scottish Islands. With so much to see - it'll be a busy week!

**8** We say our farewells after breakfast.



### Outline Itinerary

- Day 1 Arrive in Dulnain Bridge in time for an evening meal and a chat about what we shall do for the coming week. 7 nights at Tigh na Sgiath Hotel, Dulnain Bridge
- Days 2-7 Wildlife and birdwatching exploration including Abernethy Forest, Dava Moor, Loch of the Lowes, the Cairngorms, the Moray Firth and West Coast
- Day 8 After breakfast we say our farewells

**Jane Hope:** Slavonian Grebe, River Spey, Black Grouse, Crested Tit, Goldeneye, Pine Marten, Red Squirrel



# CORSICA



"This is a relaxed paced trip with a few key birds, but plenty of time to find them - which allows more time to enjoy the wonderful scenery, the flowers, butterflies and anything else we happen to come across - it is a beautiful island, so we don't want to rush it!" Roy Atkins

Dates Sat 4 - Sat 11 May 2024  
 Price £3,295  
 Deposit £655 Single Supp £500

Leaders Roy and Jane Atkins  
 Flights EasyJet, scheduled, Speedy Boarding and extra legroom included  
 Outbound: Morning, Gatwick-Bastia  
 Inbound: Morning, Bastia-Gatwick  
 Weather Unpredictable and though probably pleasant and sunny, showers are likely and these can be heavy or even prolonged. Strong winds are possible and it will be colder in the mountains, especially early morning and in the evening. Warmer lower down and on the coast, 5° - 25°C  
 Walking Generally short distances on good level tracks, but we may have some longer walks up to a mile and in the hills these may be on slopes - all taken at a slow pace  
 Meals All included from lunch on Day 1 to breakfast on Day 8  
 Insects There may be a few mosquitoes so bring repellent  
 Accom Twin and single rooms all ensuite  
 Group 12

## Just some of what we hope to see:

Corsican Nuthatch	Alpine Swift
Corsican Finch	Crossbill (Corsican race)
Marmorata's Warbler	Red-crested Pochard
Moltoni's Warbler	Squacco Heron
Mediterranean Flycatcher	Alpine Chough
Scopoli's Shearwater	Bee-eater
Yelkouan Shearwater	Crag Martin
Lammergeier	Sardinian Warbler
Golden Eagle	Firecrest
Hobby	Cirl Bunting
Honey Buzzard	Tawny Pipit
Audouin's Gull	Water Pipit
Blue Rock Thrush	Woodlark
Woodchat Shrike	orchids
(badius race)	migrants

We search for endemic Corsican Nuthatch, Corsican Finch and other island specialities as we enjoy the beautiful scenery - with the chance of migrants, endemic butterflies and beautiful flowers.

- Corsican Nuthatch and Corsican Finch in beautiful mountain valleys
- Stunning mountain scenery and beautiful coastline
- Marmorata's and Moltoni's Warbler, Italian Sparrow and Mediterranean Flycatcher
- Orchids and other beautiful flowers, it's not known as the 'Scented Isle' for nothing!
- Scopoli's and Yelkouan Shearwaters from headlands
- Bee-eater, Woodlark, Hobby, Cirl Bunting, Audouin's Gull, Alpine Chough and more
- Chance of migrants including warblers, flycatchers, chats and shrikes

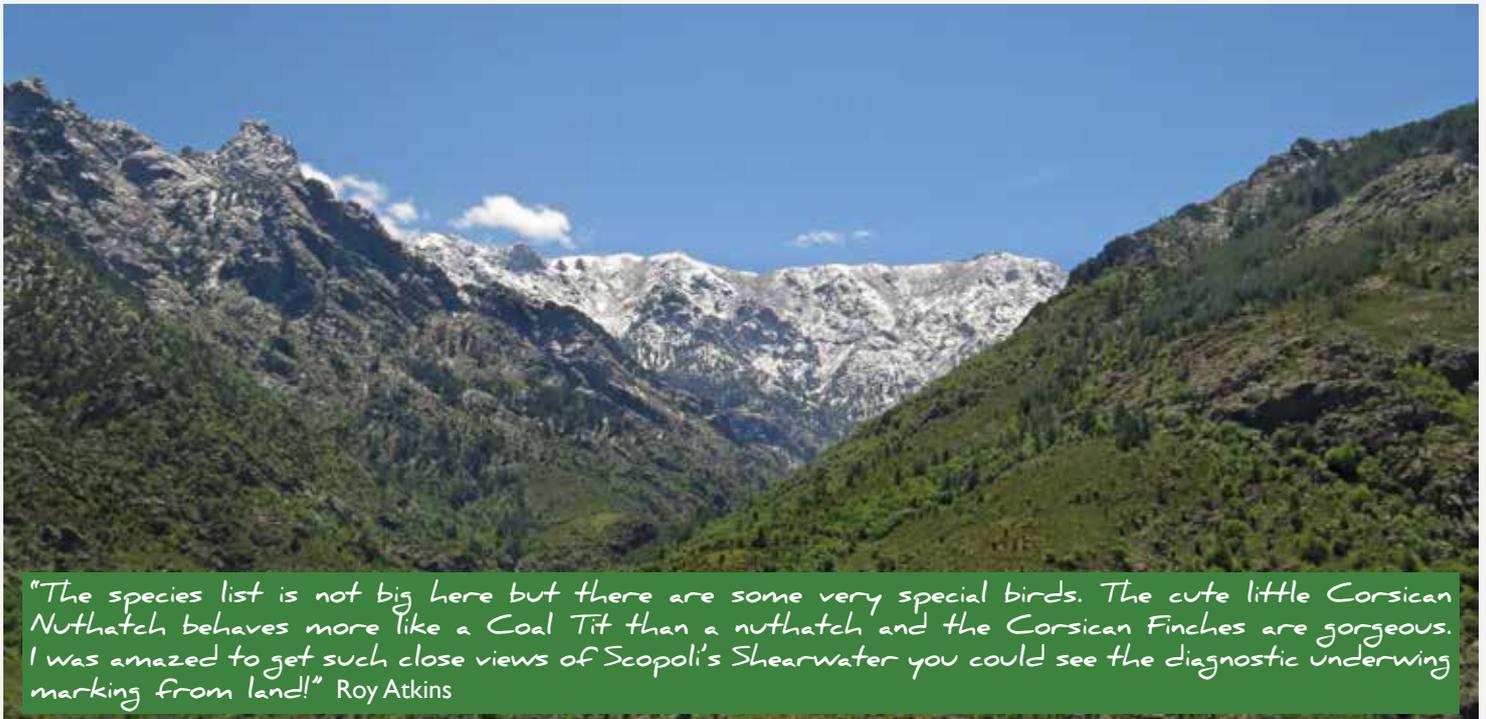
Our flight takes us to Bastia, from where we'll enjoy our first taste of the island as we travel to our hotel in the Restonica Valley. It is a beautiful, mountainous island with a short list of exciting birds including endemics, resident species and migrants. This is the perfect place to be based as we explore the more mountainous interior of the island, with stands of Corsican Pine nearby to search for Corsican Nuthatches and a rushing river with Dippers and Grey Wagtails beside the hotel.

**2-4** From our base near the centre of the island we'll explore the rugged mountains and valleys, taking winding roads that weave through spectacular scenery with flowers everywhere! We'll travel into the Restonica and Asco Valleys - both great sites to start our search for the most sought-after species on the island - Corsican Nuthatch. Found in the higher Corsican Pines, they can be elusive, but we'll surely find one

eventually and can look out for plenty of other species whilst we explore. This area has Corsican Finch and a host of higher altitude species such as Alpine Chough, Alpine Swift, Crag Martin, Golden Eagle, Water Pipit, Blue Rock Thrush, Firecrest, Cirl Bunting, Red Kite and with luck even Lammergeier is possible - though much harder to find these days as numbers have declined dramatically. The roads are winding, but will be worth it for the birds and superb views.

If the weather is sunny we hope for butterflies and there are good chances of some endemic species such as Corsican Swallowtail, Corsican Wall Brown and Corsican Dappled White around the beautiful flowers. Delightful Tyrrhenian Wall Lizards with blue spots and tails scurry over the rocks and we'll keep an eye open for elusive Mouflon. Some of the more common birds also have endemic Corsican races - Jay, Coal Tit, Crossbill and Great Spotted Woodpecker and birds such as Long-tailed Tit and





*"The species list is not big here but there are some very special birds. The cute little Corsican Nuthatch behaves more like a Coal Tit than a nuthatch and the Corsican Finches are gorgeous. I was amazed to get such close views of Scopoli's Shearwater you could see the diagnostic underwing marking from land!" Roy Atkins*

Goldfinch look quite different to ours being local race birds too. We hope to find Woodchat Shrike of the race badius, with less white in the wings and a thicker bill, a potential future split and Tawny Pipit, Woodlark and Cirl Buntings are likely in the lower valleys, with the chance of migrants too.

**5-7** We move on to our second hotel, down by the coast and closer to the best wetland sites and the Cap Corse Peninsula. Here we can explore different habitats, including the Etang de Biguglia, where we'll search for Red-crested Pochard, Audouin's Gull, herons and egrets including with luck, Squacco and Purple Heron and Great Egret. We may find Greater Flamingos on coastal lakes, migrant Hobbies and Red-footed Falcon. Scrubby areas around the coast hold Zitting Cisticola and may have migrants such as Whinchat and Wheatear. We'll be scolded by Sardinian Warblers and serenaded by Nightingales as we watch Bee-eaters and Red Kites.

There are flowers everywhere including various orchids, with two or more species of Tongue Orchid possible, including the spectacular Heart-flowered Tongue Orchid and perhaps flowering Violet Limodore.

Heading out to the end of Cap Corse we pass through little villages as we travel and may stop for coffee with Spotless Starling, masses of Swifts overhead and Italian Sparrows, now considered a true species in their own right. We'll also look out for Mediterranean Flycatcher - the new split from Spotted Flycatcher, with a less streaked plumage and if there are migrants passing through we may

be able to compare them with migrant Spotted Flycatchers.

As migrants work their way north before leaving the island, they can be funnelled down valleys towards the tip of Cap Corse and any suitable woodland or scrub can have interesting birds if the weather is right. Yellow Wagtails of various races, shrikes, chats and flycatchers are all possible, as well as scarcer warblers such as Icterine and Wood Warbler. There are also the two resident 'scrubby' warblers - the near endemic Marmora's and Moltoni's. The first is now split from the Balearic Warbler of Mallorca and Moltoni's is split from Subalpine Warbler, with a very limited range indeed.

From the end of the Cap we'll gaze out to sea, where amongst the many Yellow-legged Gulls we hope for passing shearwaters, with both Scopoli's and Yelkouan Shearwaters likely. Suitable weather may bring flocks of migrating Honey Buzzards or even waders and egrets.

**8** We travel to the airport for our flight back to the UK.



### Outline Itinerary

- Day 1** Fly from London to Bastia then drive to our hotel in the Restonica Valley  
4 nights Hotel Arena
- Days 2-4** Exploration of the mountainous centre of the island and if weather is poor perhaps some of the coast too
- Days 5-7** Move to our lovely hotel on Cap Corse, to explore the wetlands and northern peninsula  
3 nights at Hotel Castel Brando
- Day 8** Flight back from Bastia to London

**Mary Braddock:** Corsican Nuthatch  
**Roy Atkins:** Asco Valley, Corsican Finch, Moltoni's Warbler, Heart-flowered Serapias, Audouin's Gull, Tyrrhenian Wall Lizard



# PYRENEES



*"If you like raptors then this is the trip for you, with incredible views of Lammergeier in the past, plus astonishing numbers of Griffon Vultures. Red and Black Kites are everywhere, Honey Buzzards may be passing through in numbers and up to four species of eagle are possible! Keep your eyes on the skies!"*  
Julian Sykes

Dates Sat 4 - Sat 11 May 2024  
Price £2,495  
Deposit £495 Single Supp £200

Leaders Julian Sykes and Darren Rees

Flights EasyJet, scheduled, Speedy Boarding and extra legroom included  
Outbound: Morning, Gatwick-Barcelona  
Inbound: Afternoon, Barcelona-Gatwick

Weather Probably a mixture of sun and showers (10°-25°C), warmer in lowland area and can be cool in the mountains

Walking There'll be some short easy walks on level paths, with one mountain walk climbing gradually over 1½ miles, including some stony terrain

Meals All included from lunch on Day 1 to lunch on Day 8  
Simple traditional Pyrenean fare

Insects Biting insects are not usually a problem but bring repellent just in case

Accom Double, twin and single rooms all ensuite

Group 12

## Just some of what we hope to see:

Lammergeier	Orphea Warbler
Wallcreeper	Western Bonelli's Warbler
Alpine Accentor	Ortolan Bunting
Alpine Chough	Alpine Marmot
Rock Thrush	Southern Chamois
Citril Finch	Black-eared Wheatear
Black Woodpecker	Blue Rock Thrush
Short-toed Eagle	Rock Bunting
Booted Eagle	Subalpine Warbler
Scops Owl	Rock Sparrow
Golden Oriole	Woodchat Shrike
Black Wheatear	Red-backed Shrike

We've one of the best Spanish Pyrenees holidays around - after over 30 visits we would say that, but check out the great things we see before booking anywhere else.

- Stunning hotel in the heart of the Hecho Valley
- Lammergeier in the air, Wallcreeper on nearby cliffs
- We've perfected a hit-list of all the very best birds
- Mountain day with Alpine Accentor, Alpine Chough and Citril Finch
- Lowland day with Black Wheatear, Bee-eater, Blue Rock Thrush and more
- Incredible raptor list of over 15 species, plus owling trip
- Mammals, butterflies and alpine flowers too

Touching down at Barcelona, we can hardly wait to get to our hotel amidst meadows, forest and 2,000 metre mountain peaks dotted with snow. Eventually we arrive at our stunning hotel high in the Hecho Valley, where it's possible to see Lammergeiers from the garden, along with Firecrest, Garden Warbler and Crested Tit!

**2-7** At the first opportunity we head to a walkers' refuge in the mountains, where we hope to find Citril Finches picking seeds off the teasels. Then a walk through the stunning beech forest to a sheer cliff face, looking for our Holy Grail, the elusive crimson-winged jewel - Wallcreeper! Lunch will be taken looking out over some of the most stunning views in the region, along with a chance of finding a Golden Eagle, or even Southern Chamois grazing on the distant crags.



It's a short drive to the Upper Hecho, where the remains of winter snows decorate the higher valley alpine meadows. Here, swirls of tumbling Alpine and Red-billed Chough can be seen and we're always watching out for Lammergeier, Griffon Vultures and Short-toed Eagle. Small herds of Southern Chamois graze high up on the herb rich slopes, where Trumpet Gentian, Elder-flowered Orchid and Pyrenean Snowbell bloom. The limestone outcrops are home to Alpine Marmots, giving their shrill whistles and looking like shaggy carpets!

Driving to high alpine passes, the snowline is our quest and in such places, around the fabulous stunted krummholtz forest, there'll be Crossbill and Ring Ouzel. It is higher still where we shall be particularly seeking out specialised birds such as Alpine Accentor and Citril Finch, as we wander



*"Birding in the Pyrenees is always stunning - the locations for birds such as Wallcreeper, Citril Finch, Alpine Accentor and Alpine Chough are breath-taking, with snow-capped peaks and impressive vistas all around. Add to that delightful alpine flowers and butterflies and the occasional Alpine Marmot or Chamois and you won't know whether to look up at the skies, out to the mountains, or down by your feet!" Julian Sykes*



through delightful alpine meadows of flowers - all a short walk from the road.

We'll show you vivid lowland colours too, where Bee-eater, Hoopoe and Golden Oriole, add vibrant tones to the poplars and cornfields of the River Aragon and staple birds include Cirl Bunting, Spotless Starling, Crested Lark and Serin. Red and Black Kite are constantly in the skies - they become so familiar that you begin to hardly notice them, but look out for the occasional Booted Eagle amongst them.

Some of the farmland meadows and arid escarpments have Rock Sparrow, Tawny Pipit and Woodchat Shrike, whilst in lush areas Nightingale sing from damp scrub and Cetti's Warbler can be heard too. With Black-veined White and Scarce Swallowtail amongst the masses of butterflies on the wing, it's a little overwhelming after the sparse alpine meadows!

Griffon Vultures sail around San Juan de la Peña cliffs - sometimes so close that we can hear the wind whistling through their enormous flight feathers. Here, ancient monasteries peer out from the pines, where Short-toed Treecreeper, Crested Tit and Firecrest forage, with always the chance of a clarion-calling Black Woodpecker. In these beautiful mixed forests we'll search for these dramatic birds and Honey Buzzard may be on the wing, Common Crossbill can be found and Western Bonelli's Warbler sing.

We're close here to Riglos, a tiny white village at the foot of towering puddingstone pillars of

rock, where Blue Rock Thrush and Egyptian and Griffon Vultures nest amidst the rock climbers. We shall visit empty villages, where the surrounding scrubland holds Subalpine, Dartford and Melodious Warblers. Nightingale song fills the air; plus Western Orphean Warbler, Rock Thrush and Ortolan Bunting are all possible.

More warblers can be found at the impressive Castillo de Loarre, birthplace of Catherine of Aragon, with Western Subalpine, Melodious, Sardinian and even Spectacled all possible, in the scrub that covers the rock on which the castle sits.

Add to this an optional night drive to see Scop's Owl, European Nightjar and a good chance of hearing Midwife Toad and Soprano's Pipestrelle from the roadside. Even the journey back to the hotel could produce a mammal or two.

**O** We make the journey back to Barcelona and, depending on flight times, we may fit in some birding enroute, which might produce a surprise or two.



### Outline Itinerary

- Day 1 Fly to Barcelona, 3½-hour transfer to our charming hotel in the Hecho Valley 7 nights at Hotel Uson
- Days 2-7 Birdwatching and wildlife exploration of the mountains and woodlands of the local area, plus scrub of San Juan de la Peña and Riglos  
Optional night drive for Scop's Owl and European Nightjar
- Day 8 Transfer to Barcelona for our flight to the UK

**Simon Eaves:** Wallcreeper  
**James Shooter:** Landscape, Citril Finch  
**Roy Atkins:** Trumpet Gentian, Alpine Marmot  
**Mark Denman:** Griffon Vultures  
**Julian Sykes:** Alpine Accentor



# NORTH WALES



*"I really love the hotel and the little village of Betws-y-Coed on this trip and with Dippers and Grey Wagtails along the river there, it feels like you're really in the heart of the National Park."*  
Simon Eaves

Dates Sat 11 - Sat 18 May 2024  
Price £2,125  
Deposit £400 Single Supp £350

Leaders Simon Eaves and Darren Rees  
Weather The weather will be mixed (10°-20°C). Expect sun and showers, with gusty wind on exposed headlands  
Walking Varied, from wide forest tracks, to clifftop paths. Walking boots are recommended  
Meals All included from dinner on Day 1 to breakfast on Day 8  
Insects Not anticipated this early in the season  
Accom Double, twin and single rooms all ensuite  
Group 12

## Just some of what we hope to see:

Chough	Guillemot
Hen Harrier	Razorbill
Peregrine	Puffin
Red Kite	Great Egret
Osprey	Avocet
Arctic Tern	Black-tailed Godwit
Black Grouse	Dipper
Redstart	Lesser Whitethroat
Pied Flycatcher	Whinchat
Wood Warbler	Black Guillemot
Ring Ouzel	Red Squirrel

Come and explore the rugged mountains, wild moorlands, 'hanging oak' woods and busy seabird colonies of North Wales - all from our base in beautiful Snowdonia

- Anglesey for tern colonies, plus South Stack for Choughs, Puffins and seabirds
- Welsh 'hanging oaks' at Ynys-hir for Wood Warbler, Redstart and Pied Flycatcher
- Based in beautiful Snowdonia National Park
- Classic upland species: Dipper, Ring Ouzel, Peregrine, Wheatear
- Traditional stronghold of Red Kites - plus new kids on the block - Ospreys!
- Dee Estuary for wetland and shore birds
- Chance of sky-dancing Hen Harriers on the Ruabon Moors

**I** We meet at our hotel in Betws-y-Coed, in the heart of Snowdonia National Park, where Dipper, Grey Wagtail, Goosander and Common Sandpiper can be seen on the river just over the road. The scenic woodland walks close by may yield Treecreeper, Great Spotted Woodpecker, Jay, Nuthatch and assorted tits. Snowdonia is an ancient land of wild mountains and wooded valleys; of rocky cwms and tumbling streams, with a bird list that spans woodland and montane species.

**2-7** We may start our exploration of North Wales on Anglesey. The RSPB's South Stack Reserve offers spectacular cliff scenery and we'll get great views of the seabird colonies, with masses of Guillemots and Razorbills and a few delightful Puffins, as well as Fulmar, Peregrines,

Ravens and sought-after Chough. Adders are also a possibility here, as we enjoy the coastal flowers such as Thrift, Sea Campion and the lovely Spring Squill.

Elsewhere on Anglesey, at Cemlyn Bay we'll enjoy the comings and goings of the tern colonies, busy with Sandwich, Common and Arctic Terns - Roseate is a rare bird here now, but you never know your luck - we've also seen Mediterranean Gulls on our visits. We'll follow in the footsteps of famous artist Charles Tunnicliffe at the delightful Cefni estuary, looking for Whimbrel and Black-tailed Godwits and at nearby Newborough Warren we hope to see cheeky Red Squirrels.

One day will be spent on the Dee Estuary, one of the UK's premier birding locations for wetland and shorebirds and we'll spend time exploring its



*"The range of habitats in North Wales is really something special, from the lush green woodlands to the varied coastal habitats and the upland hills, it all adds up to an interesting diversity of wildlife."*  
 Simon Eaves



marshes, busy with Avocet, Lapwing and Redshank, plus wildfowl such as Shoveler, Teal and Gadwall. In May we've been lucky with Garganey, Spoonbill and Wood Sandpiper and Great Egrets seem to be making this their home these days. On our round-up of the north shore we'll also visit Gronant beach, the site of Wales' only Little Tern colony.

We'll need an early morning start when we drive to the Ruabon Moors to watch Black Grouse, with the males vying with each other in the hope of attracting the females. These and other moors such as Migneint, also support populations of Red Grouse, Curlew, Skylark, Wheatear, Stonechat and Merlin.

Perhaps our greatest prize though, will be a glimpse of Hen Harriers, that still cling on as a rare breeder in Wales and we shall spend time scanning hunting areas and if very lucky, may even see them performing their spectacular sky-dancing.

The rugged slopes of the Ogwen valley and Aber Falls are home to Ring Ouzels, as well as rare breeding Twite and at the Conwy estuary, there are more wetland birds to be found, so expect Oystercatcher, Ringed Plover, Shelduck and Red-breasted Merganser amongst many others. Nearby, the distinctive headland of the Great Orme is always worth a visit for its resident Choughs (and feral goats) and seabird ledges and there's always the possibility of an unusual migrant – maybe a Whinchat or Yellow Wagtail?



We'll have a long day to the southern perimeter of Snowdonia and the Dyfi estuary. The RSPB's Ynys-hir Reserve has a picturesque mix of woodland and saltmarsh, with birds such as Pied Flycatcher, Wood Warbler and Redstart, as well as waders and wildfowl including Little Egret, Lapwing, Snipe, Redshank and Teal.

Ospreys now breed nearby too, a wonderful addition to the list of birds of prey, that includes Buzzard, Sparrowhawk, Kestrel and for many people the most Welsh of birds, the Red Kite. The Kite's tale is one of conservation success, with re-introduced birds now seen across the UK. However, we'll take time to look for some of the original population that have always called Mid-Wales their home. What better sight than this elegant red-tailed raptor soaring over the 'hanging oaks' of Wales.

**8** After breakfast we bid our fond farewells to this delightful area.



### Outline Itinerary

- Day 1 Arrive Betws-y-Coed.  
7 nights at The Royal Oak Hotel
- Days 2-7 An exploration of North Wales to include South Stack and Newbrough on Anglesey, the Dee Estuary and its marshes, Conwy valley and estuary, moors of north east Wales, plus the RSPB's Ynys-hir Reserve
- Day 8 Depart after breakfast

**Steve Culllum:** Black Grouse  
**Chris Piper:** Snowdon, Common Blue, Sedge Warbler  
**Colin Scott:** Dipper  
**Roy Atkins:** Pied Flycatcher, Red Kite  
**Mary Braddock:** Hen Harrier



# THE OUTER HEBRIDES



*"The Outer Hebrides are simply breathtaking, with ever-changing light and huge skies, stunning seascapes and miles of deserted sandy beaches, it's a place I look forward to returning to time and again. A timeless place where you can really get away from it all."*  
Craig Round

**Dates** Fri 3 - Sat 11 May 2024  
**Price** £2,495  
**Deposit** £450    **Single Supp** £400

**Leaders** Craig Round and Sally Nowell

**Weather** Though usually quite dry, these islands can experience all the seasons during one trip and can be windy (5°-20°C)

**Walking** Coastal walks on uneven terrain of up to 2 miles. Walking boots recommended with trainers suitable on some occasions. Collapsible/telescopic walking poles could be useful for this trip.

**Meals** All included from dinner on Day 1 to breakfast on Day 9

**Insects** Biting insects are unlikely to be a problem

**Accom** Double, twin and single rooms all ensuite

**Group** 10

## Just some of what we hope to see:

Corncrake	Black Guillemot
Golden Eagle	Rock Dove
Hen Harrier	Eider
Merlin	Arctic Skua
Short-eared Owl	Great Skua
White-tailed Eagle	Pomarine Skua
Peregrine	Long-tailed Skua
Long-tailed Duck	Manx Shearwater
Great Northern Diver	Red-necked Phalarope
Red-throated Diver	Greylag Goose
Great Northern Diver	Greenshank
Whooper Swan	Golden Plover
Whimbrel	Otter
Purple Sandpiper	Grey Seal
Arctic Tern	Common Seal
Little Tern	Dolphins

**Craig Round:** Corncrake  
**David and Franky Perry:** Wader Flock, Short-eared Owl  
**Christine Maughan:** White-tailed Eagle  
**David King:** Curlew, Golden Plover, Great Northern Diver

Corncrakes rasp from fields and Snipe drum overhead, in a watery landscape that the modern world has passed by, on these timeless low-lying islands at Britain's Atlantic edge.

- Successful Corncrake watching every time, on over 45 trips!
- Nesting waders in farmland that's vanished elsewhere
- Mile after mile of unspoilt white beaches and azure seas
- Wonderful for raptors, rare skuas and Short-eared Owl
- Summer plumage Great Northern and other divers
- White-tailed Eagle, Dotterel, Pomarine Skua and Otter
- With our own two expert guides to the Western Isles

**1-2** We overnight on Friday in Inverness, to give us an early start for our journey down through the Great Glen and across the Isle of Skye to Uig, before catching a ferry to Lochmaddy on North Uist.

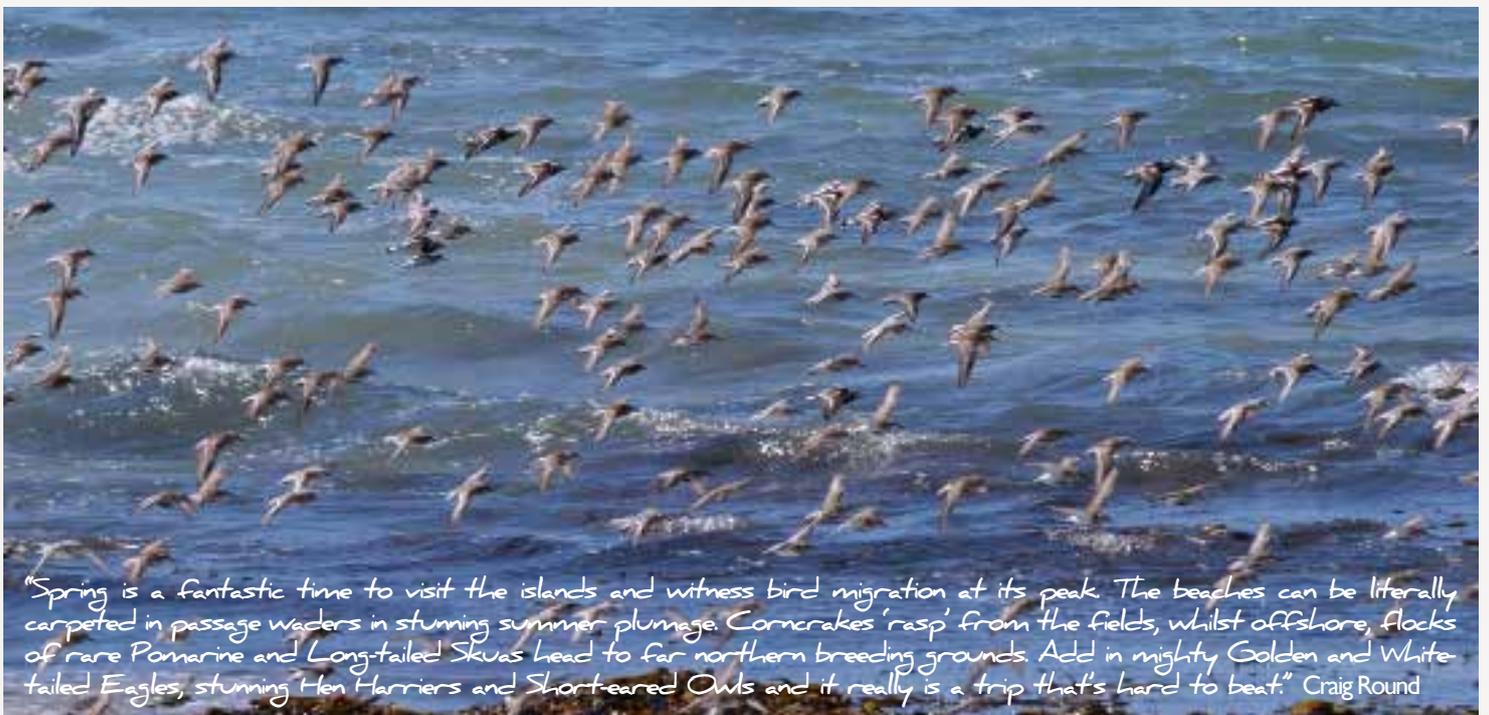
The crossing gives us a chance to do some sea-watching, with a great diversity of seabirds to be seen as we make our way across the Minch, including Arctic Tern, Puffin, Guillemot, Razorbill, Kittiwake, Gannet, Great and Arctic Skuas, Manx Shearwaters and various cetaceans, even before we reach the islands! Arriving on North Uist the bustle of modern life seems far away.

**3-7** The Uists are one of the last strongholds for one of Britain's rarest breeding birds, the Corncrake and newly

arrived territorial males can be seen before the vegetation grows tall, as they give their incredible rasping calls from open cover. Here too Twite feed, Skylark sing and Corn Bunting still give their jangling songs from rusty fences.

Cultivated 'machair' at Stilligarry and Rubha Ardvule, sown with oats and potatoes, is alive with waders in the spring, all vigorously displaying, including numerous Lapwing, Oystercatcher, Redshank, Ringed Plover and Dunlin. Beautiful freshwater lochs stud the landscape. All have beds of sedge and flowering bogbean and Flag Iris alive with nesting Shoveler, Tufted Duck, Wigeon, Curlew and Redshank. A few elusive Red-necked Phalaropes arrive in mid-May and birding is always full of surprises - perhaps a summering Whooper





Swan, or displaying Ruff or Wood Sandpiper:

Around the beautiful, unspoilt shell sand beaches and tidal bays, Common, Arctic and Little Tern can be seen. They also hold large numbers of passage waders bound for the Arctic. Most are in stunning summer plumage at this time of year and include Whimbrel, Dunlin, Sanderling and Purple Sandpiper; whilst closer scrutiny may reveal a hidden gem such as Curlew Sandpiper or Little Stint!

On rocky headlands there are Black Guillemot, Shag and Rock Dove, with Red-breasted Merganser, Eider, Long-tailed Duck and Great Northern Diver offshore - the latter in breeding plumage. There's a healthy Otter population and we regularly see them, plus Grey and Common Seals and dolphin species.

Optional early morning sea-watching from Aird an Runair is renowned, but dependent on weather, for the passage of rare Pomarine and Long-tailed Skuas, plus Manx Shearwater, Gannet and Arctic and Great Skua. We have also recorded other unusual migrants including Snowy Owl, Great White Egret, Glaucous and Iceland Gull, Woodchat Shrike, Garganey, Golden Oriole, Subalpine Warbler, Grey-headed Wagtail, Hoopoe and Dotterel - the latter almost annually.

Eastward, the land sweeps up from sea level to moors, peaty pools and soaring mountains. Red-throated Divers give their mournful wail

and truly wild Greylag Geese nest at Loch Druidibeg, joined by Common Sandpipers and Greenshank.

The islanders stack peats to dry, where Dunlin and Golden Plover display alongside Red Grouse and Wheatear. Golden Eagle, Buzzard, Peregrine and Raven soar together over the dramatic hills. Hen Harrier, Merlin and Short-eared Owl commonly hunt the wild moors and we have a very good chance of seeing that most magnificent of predators, White-tailed Eagle.

**8-9** Our last morning gives us a chance to once more experience the sights and sounds of the 'machair' and wonderful coastline, before catching a midday ferry back to Skye and making our way back to Inverness for our final overnight stay.

On Saturday morning, after breakfast, we say our goodbyes.

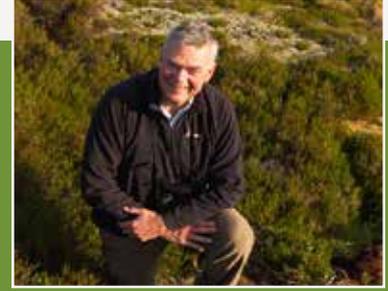


### Outline Itinerary

- Day 1 Meet in Inverness for overnight stay  
1 night at Premier Inn
- Day 2 Travel down the Great Glen and across Skye before catching ferry to Lochmaddy and making the short journey to our hotel  
6 nights at Orasay Inn
- Days 3-7 Birdwatching and wildlife exploration around North and South Uist and Benbecula
- Day 8 After morning birdwatching, we catch a ferry from Lochmaddy to Uig, journey back across Skye and make our way back to Inverness  
1 night at Premier Inn
- Day 9 After breakfast we say our goodbyes



# WILD HEBRIDES



*"We shall explore off the beaten track through remote moorlands where Short-eared Owls glide past and Golden Plovers call plaintively. Our trip to the Shiant Islands with its huge seabird colonies overwhelms the senses, it is a privilege to visit such an awe-inspiring place. This is the Western Isles in all its glory!"*  
Stuart Housden OBE

**Dates** Sat 18 - Tue 28 May 2024

**Price** £3,395

**Deposit** £600    **Single Supp** £500

**Leaders** Stuart Housden OBE and Julian Sykes

**Weather** Though usually quite dry, these islands can experience all the seasons during one trip and can be windy (5°-20°C)

**Walking** Coastal walks on uneven terrain of up to three miles - walking boots recommended, but trainers or even sandals suitable on some occasions. Collapsible/telescopic walking poles could be useful for this trip

**Boat Trip** Our boat trip to the Shiant Isles lasts around 4 hours

**Meals** All included from dinner on Day 1 to breakfast on Day 11

**Insects** Biting insects unlikely to be a problem

**Accom** Double, twin and single rooms all ensuite

**Group** 11

## Just some of what we hope to see:

Corncrake	Arctic Tern
Red-necked Phalarope	Arctic Skua
Golden Eagle	Great Skua
Hen Harrier	Pomarine Skua
Merlin	Long-tailed Skua
Short-eared Owl	Manx Shearwater
White-tailed Eagle	Black Guillemot
Great Northern Diver	Puffin
Black-throated Diver	Twite
Red-throated Diver	Golden Plover
Whimbrel	Hebridean Orchid
Little Tern	Otter

This holiday has been designed by Stuart, who spent 23 years as Director of RSPB Scotland. His extensive knowledge of these islands and understanding of the conservation stories here, is exceptional.

- We visit North and South Uist, Benbecula, Berneray, Harris and Lewis
- A chartered boat to the Shiant Islands, 80,000 Puffins with close viewing of seabirds
- Corncrake and Red-necked Phalarope - excellent chance of these elusive birds
- Peak time for skua and wader migration with Long-tailed and Pomarine possible
- Otters, three species of diver, Hen Harrier and Golden and White-tailed Eagles
- Beautiful machair flora, including the endemic Hebridean Orchid
- Standing stones of Callanish and other historic sites

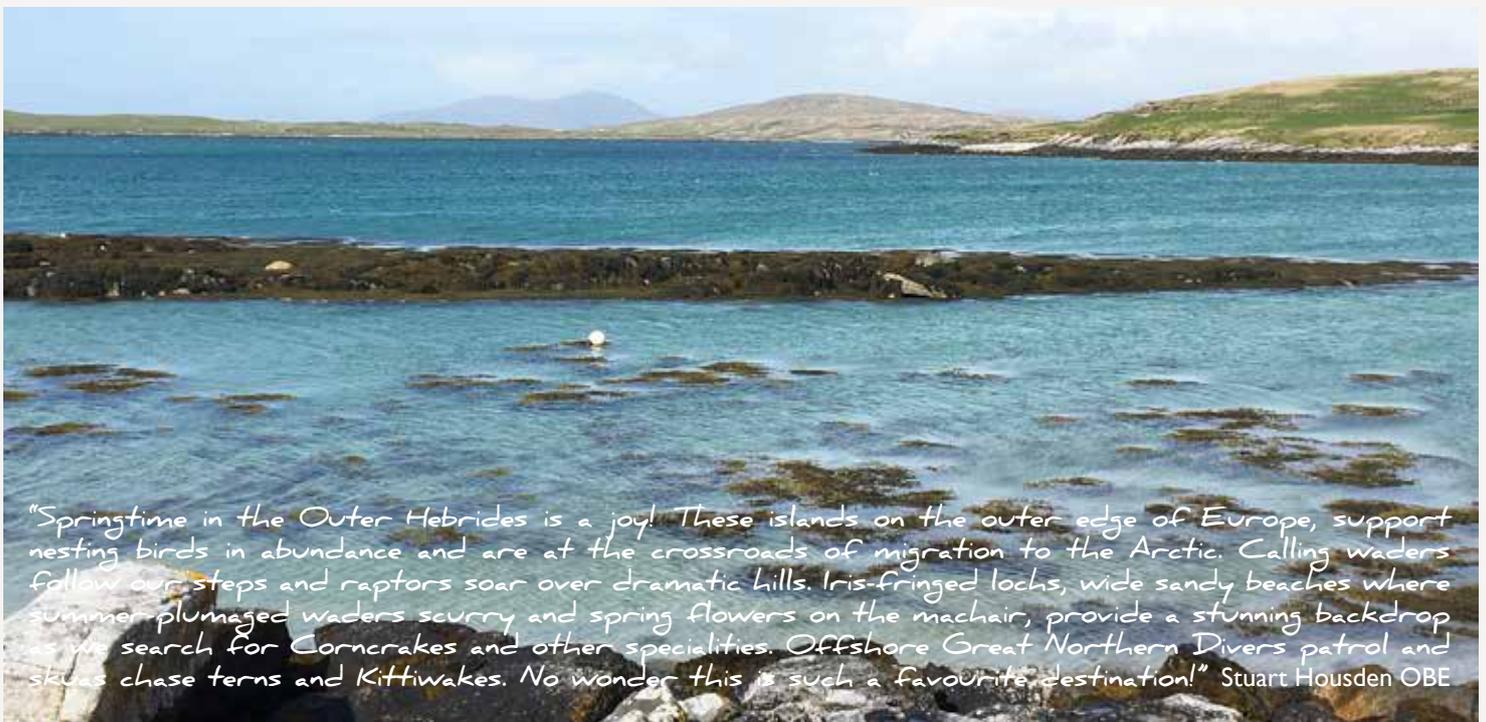
**1-2** We overnight in Inverness, to give us an early start for our journey through the Great Glen and across the Isle of Skye to Uig and the ferry to Lochmaddy on North Uist. Arctic Tern, Puffin, Guillemot, Razorbill, Kittiwake, Gannet, Great and Arctic Skuas, Manx Shearwater and with luck even cetaceans are possible from the ferry. Arriving on North Uist the bustle of modern life seems far behind us as we head to our hotel.

**3-6** Stuart has visited these islands many times in his role with RSPB Scotland and we are thrilled to have him lead our Wild Hebrides trip - his expert knowledge and experience of the islands and their conservation issues adding enormously to the holiday. Our exploration will start in the south with

shallow lochs, rocky headlands, dunes and our first machair - a beautiful habitat with stunning flora including the endemic Hebridean Orchid, with purple flowers and heavily blotched purple leaves. The wealth of flowers may attract Moss Carder and Great Yellow Bumble Bee, a rare species confined to the very north and west of Scotland.

Migration is still in full swing and late parties of Whimbrel or Black-tailed Godwits enroute to Iceland can drop in anywhere, while tidal strands have summer plumaged Sanderling and Turnstones. At 'stinky bay', with rotting seaweed on the foreshore, many waders occur and divers and seaduck are sometimes just offshore. We shall scan for Red-necked Phalarope at a reliable site, while keeping an eye open for Hen Harrier





*"Springtime in the Outer Hebrides is a joy! These islands on the outer edge of Europe, support nesting birds in abundance and are at the crossroads of migration to the Arctic. Calling waders follow our steps and raptors soar over dramatic hills. Iris-fringed lochs, wide sandy beaches where summer-plumaged waders scurry and spring flowers on the machair, provide a stunning backdrop as we search for Corncrakes and other specialities. Offshore Great Northern Divers patrol and skuas chase terns and Kittiwakes. No wonder this is such a favourite destination!"* Stuart Housden OBE

and Golden Eagle, with Otter possible whenever we are on the coast.

The RSPB Reserve at Balranald provides a chance of Corncrake calling from the iris beds and we'll work on getting good views. Twite feed, Skylark sing overhead, Corn Bunting still give their jangling song and summer plumaged waders are on the beach. Sea-watching from Aird an Runair is renowned but weather dependent, so north-westerlies may bring passage skuas, including rare Pomarine and Long-tailed. Breeding waders are everywhere including Lapwing, Oystercatcher, Snipe, Ringed Plover and Dunlin. We shall search for Purple Sandpipers and other rarities on the headlands and beaches.

We shall visit remote areas of dunes and machair where Arctic and Little Terns nest on sandy fields, waders display overhead and we have a chance of finding Twite, Corn Bunting and wild Rock Doves. Optional early morning walks will be offered on some days to experience this special location.

**7-9** We head, via Berneray, to the ferry across to Harris with its rugged and forbidding mountains. A healthy population of Golden Eagle means we'll keep our eyes peeled wherever we travel. Time permitting we'll visit Rodel and its beautiful 15th century church built for the chiefs of Clan Macleod. It has fine statues and we'll check the surrounding area for migrants. The machair at Northton can be alive with waders and has nesting Little Terns. This is one of the last areas for Corncrake on Harris and they often call from crofters' gardens!



We shall enjoy an exclusive boat trip to the Shiant Isles, eight miles off Harris in the middle of the Minch. This truly spectacular experience will be an adventure to remember! The islands support over 100,000 pairs of seabirds, including 10% of all the UK's Puffins! We shall work hard to get good views of the seabirds and may see Manx Shearwaters, seals and perhaps dolphins. There were six White-tailed Eagle present in 2021! We shall get stunningly close to rafts of Puffins and other auks allowing fantastic photography opportunities.

Harris is conjoined to Lewis, but the habitat is very different and we'll drive up through moorland to the Standing Stones of Callanish - world famous and a stunning example of a circle and cruciform arrangement, with almost 50 standing stones. If time permits we may visit Dun Carloway, one of the best iron age brochs in Scotland and Loch na Muilne RSPB Reserve nearby. On our final full day we shall explore the mountains and moorlands in search of eagles and more, with a visit to the Butt of Lewis.

**10-11** Today we say goodbye to these wonderful islands, but if our ferry schedule allows we shall visit Tiumpán Head, east of Stornoway to scan for cetaceans and seabirds before making our way back across the Minch, then on to Inverness, birding as we go, for our last night together before going our separate ways.



### Outline Itinerary

- Day 1** Meet up in Inverness for overnight stay. - 1 night Premier Inn
- Day 2** Travel down the Great Glen and across Skye, before catching ferry to Lochmaddy and making the short journey to our hotel. 5 nights at Orasay Inn.
- Days 3-6** Birdwatching, botany and wildlife exploration of North and South Uist and Benbecula in search of Corncrake, waders, seabirds and raptors.
- Days 7-9** Take ferry to Harris and Lewis birding these two very different islands. We shall also take a half day boat trip to the Shiant Isles and visit Callanish Standing Stones and Dun Carloway Broch. 3 nights Hotel Hebrides in Tarbert
- Day 10** Travel back to Inverness. 1 night Premier Inn
- Day 11** Depart after breakfast

**Mark Philips:** Red-necked Phalarope  
**Kate Mennie:** Port na Long, Otter, Puffin  
**James Glover:** Red-throated Diver  
**Stuart Housden:** Callanish Standing Stones  
**Christine Maughan:** White-tailed Eagle and Buzzard

# CANNA AND CORNCRAKES



"Well this holiday is just packed full of Scottish highlights, from the remote island of Canna to the bustling fishing town of Mallaig, from the ancient Celtic rainforest to silver sands, turquoise seas and rocky shorelines, from magnificent mountains to wide open seascapes, all offering up some of Scotland's most thrilling wildlife" Sally Nowell

Dates Mon 27 - Wed 5 June 2024

Price £3,795

Deposit £650 Single Supp £600

Leaders Sally Nowell and Ailie Brown

Weather Though usually quite dry, these islands can experience all the seasons during one trip and can be windy (5°-20°C)

Walking Coastal walks on uneven terrain of up to three miles - walking boots recommended, but trainers or even sandals suitable on some occasions. Collapsible/telescopic walking poles could be useful

Boat Trips Be prepared for all weathers on our boat trips. Waterproof clothes including gloves are recommended. As a precaution, you may wish to bring seasickness medication with you. Toilet onboard

Meals All included from dinner on Day 1 to breakfast on Day 10

Insects Biting insects can be a problem at this time of year in certain conditions, so come prepared with insect repellent

Accom Double, twin and single rooms all ensuite

Group 10

## Just some of what we hope to see:

White-tailed Eagle	Wood Warbler
Golden Eagle	Redstart
Hen Harrier	Cuckoo
Short-eared Owl	Whinchat
Great Northern Diver	Otter
Red-throated Diver	Red Deer
Slavonian Grebe	Minke Whale
Black Guillemot	
Puffin	
Manx Shearwater	
Gannet	
Great Skua	
Arctic Skua	

This is a great springtime holiday, which takes us to some of Scotland's best wildlife-watching locations, at one of the best times of year.

- We shall spend time along Britain's best Otter-spotting coastlines
- Visit some of the richest areas for eagles in the country
- Spend a night on Iona listening and looking for Corncrake
- Visit the remote island of Canna for seabird colonies
- Explore hidden areas of Scotland only accessible by sea
- Visit the Celtic rainforest looking for Wood Warblers and Redstart
- Stay in comfortable hotels with great food and local produce

1 After your journey to Inverness we shall meet at our hotel to hear about the week ahead and enjoy our first meal together.

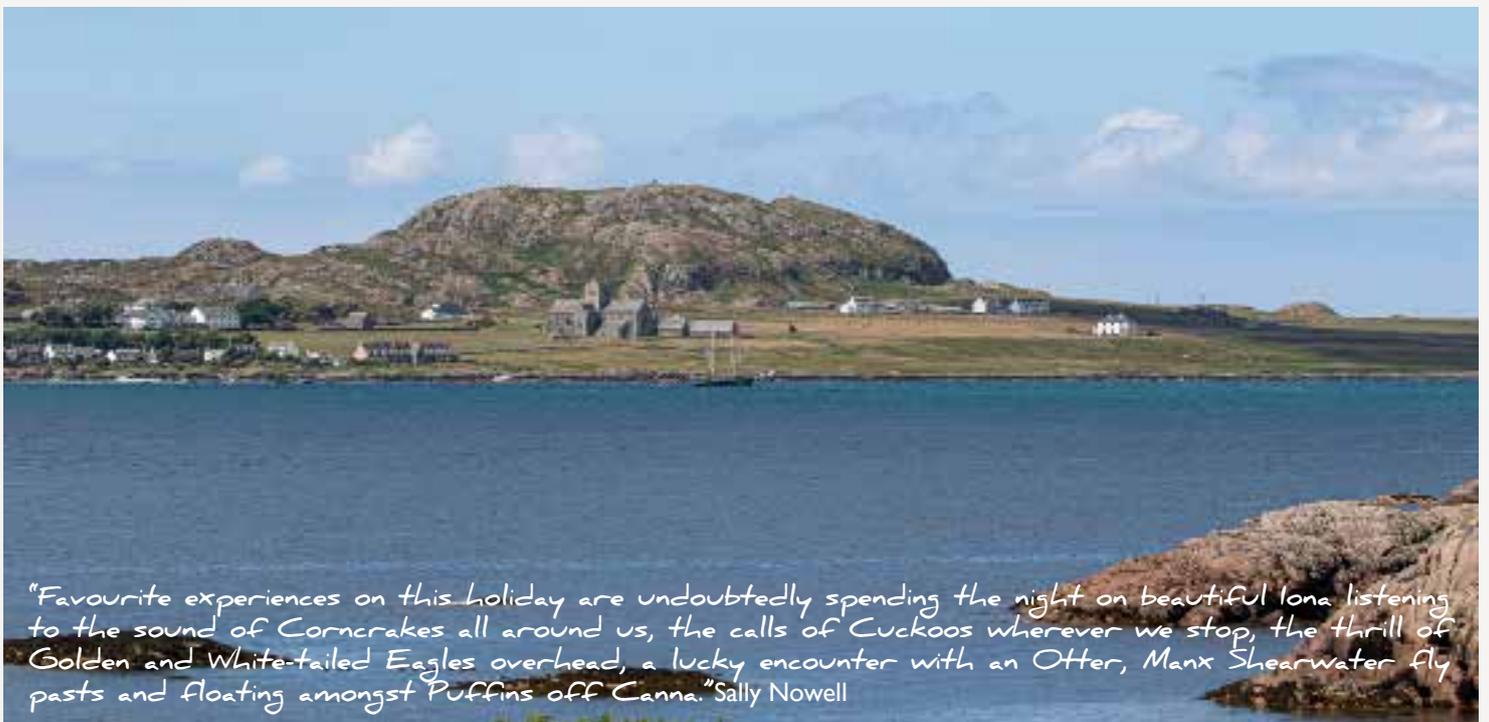
2-4 After breakfast we shall make our way to Oban where we catch the ferry to the beautiful wildlife-rich island of Mull, looking out for cetaceans as we cross. Over the next two days we shall spend time in the wild mountainous areas specifically looking for Golden and White-tailed Eagles, but of course hoping for Short-eared Owls and Hen Harrier that frequent the area. If we are lucky we might catch a glimpse of a Merlin flashing across the sky.

We shall drive through some magnificent scenery lit up at this time of year with the fresh greens in the woodlands and on the hillsides.

The rocky shores of the island are home to a variety of waders and we shall be bumping into Common Sandpiper, Redshank, Lapwing, Curlew and Ringed Plover all at the height of their breeding season. We shall also be looking for Red-throated and Great Northern Divers that frequent the calmer bays and sea lochs. Out to sea we can expect feeding Gannets and Kittiwakes. As we creep along the narrow roads beside the sea lochs our eyes will be on the look out for Otters. Mull has to be the best place in the UK to watch these wonderful mammals.

5 Today is a time for a bit of relaxation. We shall be leaving our base on Mull and making our way to Iona, where we spend most of the day exploring the island on foot, in the hope of seeing and hearing the elusive Corncrake. With a bit of





*"Favourite experiences on this holiday are undoubtedly spending the night on beautiful Iona listening to the sound of Corncrakes all around us, the calls of Cuckoos wherever we stop, the thrill of Golden and White-tailed Eagles overhead, a lucky encounter with an Otter, Manx Shearwater fly pasts and floating amongst Puffins off Canna." Sally Nowell*

free time you may wish to visit the Abbey or simply visit one of the beautiful beaches on the island, home to Turnstones, Ringed Plover and it's often a good place to see Eider Duck. Tonight we have a special treat and will be staying on Iona to really soak up the atmosphere of this tranquil and special place. At night the sound of the Corncrake echos around this stunning island, an experience not to be missed, so an evening walk is a must.

**6** We shall depart our hotel and make our way back across Mull and on to the mainland, but as is so often the case, our travel days involve lots of wildlife watching too. We cross the remote wilderness of the Morvern Peninsula and then return to the coastline once again watching for Otters and other sealife. Today we shall visit remnants of the spectacular Celtic rainforest. Ancient Oak trees that drip with mosses and lichens are a sight in themselves, but here we shall be in search of our colourful spring songsters, Redstart and Wood Warbler. A stunning drive takes us north to the Sound of Arisaig and finally we arrive at our hotel in the delightful fishing town of Mallaig, which shall be our base for the next three nights.

**7-8** Today we shall be going out to the fantastic island of Canna. This will be a fabulous trip to the remote soaring seacliffs, which at this time will be covered in noisy seabirds. 20,000 birds are known to breed here. We expect to see Puffin, Razorbill, Guillemot and Shags on the cliffs and should catch sight of Arctic and Great Skua. On the water there is always a chance of Manx



Shearwater or a Storm Petrel. Our comfortable private charter is the Orca III. We shall be looked after by her experienced crew as we head out on our seaward adventure. They know this area well and may find other interesting coves to explore enroute. It's always good to be on the look out for cetaceans; Bottlenose Dolphin, Harbour Porpoise and Risso's Dolphin are present year round and if we are lucky Minke Whales and Orca can also be seen.

Today we shall again spend time onboard Orca III. Days on the boat give us a great opportunity to get to inaccessible areas and to see some breathtaking views of Scotland, as well as increasing our chances of seeing cetaceans. We may cruise around Eigg, Rum and Skye, or visit some of the sheltered inland sealochs, looking for local wildlife such as White-tailed and Golden Eagle. From the sea we have access to areas that are more remote and seldom visited and can get spectacular and unexpected views of the local wildlife.

**9** We shall leave the west coast today and make our way back to Inverness where our adventure sadly ends. Despite the fact that this is a travelling day there is more spectacular wildlife watching to be had along our route. We go back up the Caledonian Canal and then take a quieter route stopping at RSPB Loch Ruthven looking for magnificent Slavonian Grebe. Arriving in Inverness, if time allows, we shall take a walk along the canal looking for Kingfisher before our final meal together.

**10** After breakfast we shall say our goodbyes and depart Inverness.



### Outline Itinerary

- Day 1** Meet up in Inverness for overnight stay. - 1 night Premier Inn
- Days 2-4** Journey through stunning scenery, before catching the ferry to Mull 3 nights at Isle of Mull Hotel
- Day 5** Short ferry over to Iona to explore the island 1 night St Columba Hotel, Iona
- Day 6** Ferry back to the mainland following the coastline to the beautiful Ardnamurchan Peninsula, wildlife watching enroute 3 nights West Highland Hotel, Mallaig
- Days 7-8** Boat trips out to the fantastic island of Canna, plus Eigg, Rum, Skye and more
- Day 9** Travel back to Inverness birding enroute 1 night Premier Inn
- Day 10** Depart after breakfast

**Steve Batt:** Corncrake  
**Jane Hope:** Iona, Otter  
**Sally Nowell:** Redstart, Oak Woodlands  
**Rob Martin:** White-tailed Eagle

# ULTIMATE UISTS



*"The Uists are so rewarding, a Corncrake creeping out of cover to give its rasping song, or a group of summer-plumaged Black-tailed Godwits resting by a loch where Wigeon and Teal display. Watching Little Terns nesting on sandy fields and the sun catching the nape of an adult Golden Eagle. These are magical experiences and I hope you can share some with me on the Uists in 2023."* Stuart Housden OBE

Dates Fri 31 May - Sat 8 Jun 2024  
 Price TBC  
 Deposit TBC Single Supp TBC

Leader Stuart Housden OBE

Weather Though usually quite dry, these islands can experience all the seasons during one trip and can be windy (5°-20°C)

Walking Coastal walks on uneven terrain of up to three miles - walking boots recommended, but trainers or even sandals suitable on some occasions. Collapsible/telescopic walking poles could be useful for this trip

Boat Trip Our boat trip around Grimsay lasts 2 hours

Meals All included from dinner on Day 1 to breakfast on Day 9

Insects Biting insects unlikely to be a problem at this time of year

Accom Double, twin and single rooms all ensuite

Group 7

## Just some of what we hope to see

Corncrake	Pomarine Skua
Red-necked Phalarope	Long-tailed Skua
Golden Eagle	Manx Shearwater
Hen Harrier	Black Guillemot
Merlin	Black-tailed Godwit
Short-eared Owl	Wheatear
White-tailed Eagle	Stonechat
Great Northern Diver	Redpoll
Black-throated Diver	Puffin
Red-throated Diver	Storm Petrel
Whimbrel	Twite
Little Tern	Golden Plover
Arctic Tern	Hebridean Orchid
Arctic Skua	Harbour Seal
Great Skua	Otter

This tour has been created by Stuart, who first visited the islands in 1978. As the former Director of RSPB Scotland his knowledge of the Uists and their conservation is exceptional.

- We visit North and South Uist, Benbecula and Berneray
- A chartered boat trip affords close views of skuas, raptors, Harbour and Grey Seals
- Corncrake and Red-necked Phalarope - we shall search for these elusive rarities
- Visit scenic Loch Druidibeg, looking for Short-eared Owls, waders and raptors
- Walk through beautiful machair flora hoping for the rare Great Yellow Bumblebee
- We shall keep a watchful eye open for Otters and Golden and White-tailed Eagles
- Visit the RSPB Balranald Reserve for waders, duck, Twite, Corncrake and Corn Bunting

**1-2** We meet for dinner in Inverness and set off next morning for our journey through the Great Glen, across the Isle of Skye to Uig, where we board the ferry to Lochmaddy. On the crossing we shall go on deck to search for Puffins, Razorbills, Gannets and Manx Shearwater. With luck, we may see Common Dolphins and even a Storm Petrel. After docking we make our way to our hotel nearby.

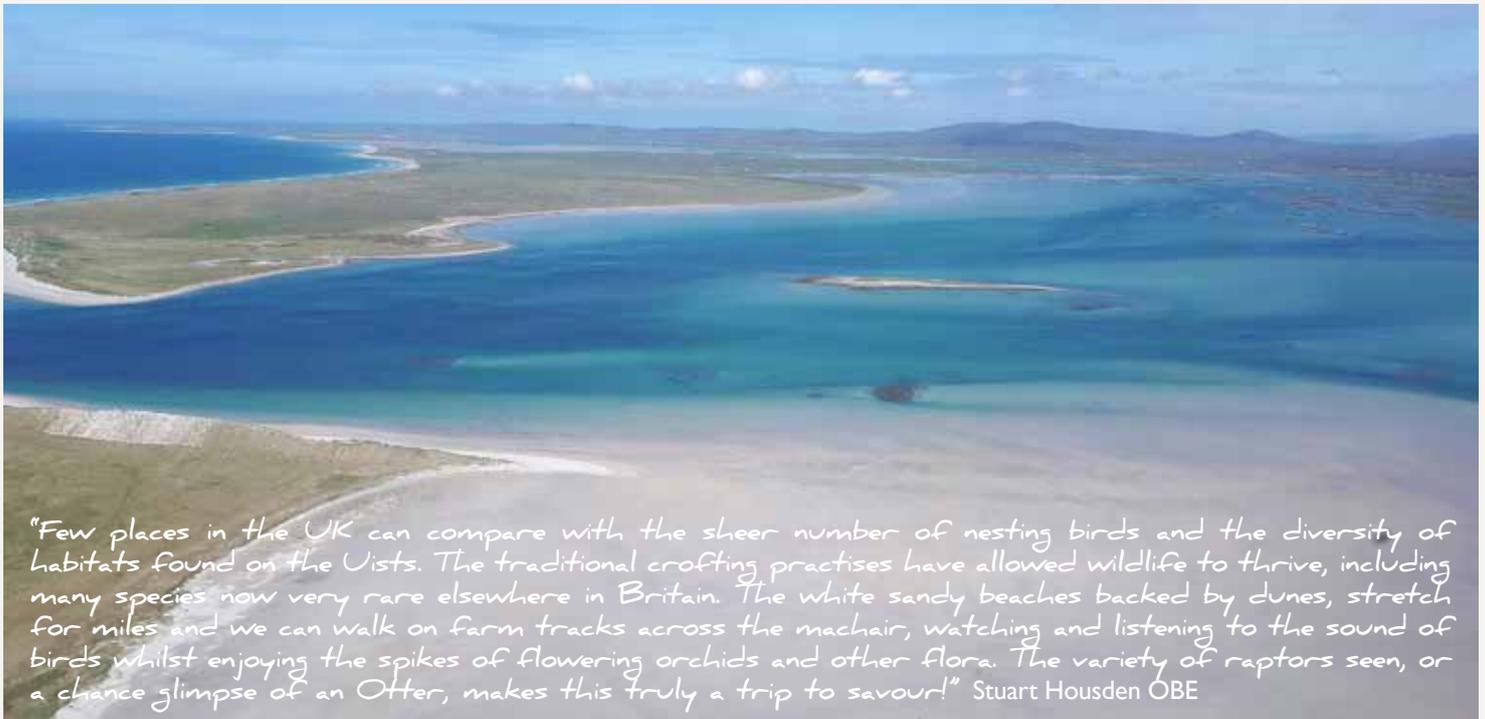
**3-7** At this time of year the days are long, dawn breaks at 04.25 and the sun sets at 22.30! We shall pace ourselves to enjoy the mornings when birds are active and take a more relaxed approach in the afternoons. Optional walks before breakfast will be offered on some mornings.

Making full use of Stuart's expert knowledge our exploration starts in the south, where shallow lochs

fringed by Yellow Flag Iris and rocky headlands emerge from beautiful stretches of shell-sand beaches. Behind the dunes that face the Atlantic is the machair, a sandy grassland rich in wildflowers used by crofters to grow crops and raise cattle. The stunning flora includes deep purple Northern Marsh Orchids, the wine red Early Marsh Orchids and a succession of colourful pansies, clovers and Corn Marigolds. These flowers attract Moss Carder Bumblebees and with luck the Great Yellow Bumblebee, now confined to the far north of Scotland. The machair is alive with Skylarks and calling waders and we shall search shallow lochs for Snipe, Teal, Shoveler and Wigeon.

Migrant birds are still passing offshore, with summer plumaged waders and sometimes skuas heading up to the Tundra! We shall look for lingering Great Northern Divers and Whimbrel, or Black-tailed





*"Few places in the UK can compare with the sheer number of nesting birds and the diversity of habitats found on the Uists. The traditional crofting practises have allowed wildlife to thrive, including many species now very rare elsewhere in Britain. The white sandy beaches backed by dunes, stretch for miles and we can walk on farm tracks across the machair, watching and listening to the sound of birds whilst enjoying the spikes of flowering orchids and other flora. The variety of raptors seen, or a chance glimpse of an Otter, makes this truly a trip to savour!"* Stuart Housden OBE

Godwits bound for Iceland, which may drop into the fields. Otters are widespread and with luck we may see one during our visits to coasts or lochs.

Along Loch Eynort the efforts of one landowner has transformed the north side of the loch. Native woodland has been planted and the shelter offers a home to warblers and Redpolls and the occasional rare migrant. There is an excellent area to picnic, where we watch for divers, Harbour Seals and sometimes Otter. The ridge lines of the mountains form a wonderful backdrop and we shall scan for Golden and White-tailed Eagles! Another highlight is Loch Druidibeg, where the local community and RSPB have a Reserve good for moorland birds, including Short-eared Owls.

By special arrangement we shall take a chartered boat around the island of Grimsay, exploring the channels and islands where seals haul out and terns breed. The boat allows close views of eiders, mergansers and even Black Guillemots. With luck, we shall find Black-throated and Red-throated Divers and hopefully catch a glimpse of a White-tailed or Golden Eagle!

With care we look for the Red-necked Phalarope, which in some years nests here. There are only 30-40 pairs in the UK and this tiny population winters in the seas off Ecuador! This dainty wader swims confidently and it's the more dowdy male which incubates the eggs.

Our attention now switches to North Uist and Berneray, which have lovely Machair and rolling moorland where Hen Harriers, Short-eared Owls,

and sometimes Merlin can be seen. There are excellent viewpoints to scan for these species, with Stonechats and Wheatears to keep us entertained. Cuckoos often fly across the moorland searching for Meadow Pipit nests. The moorland is visited by hunting eagles, often mobbed by Ravens and other raptors!

The RSPB Reserve at Balranald has ideal habitat for Corncrakes. This area is also the best place for Corn Buntings and Twite. In the fields we may see young Ringed Plover chicks following their parents. Little and Arctic Terns nest nearby and we should see them diving for fish just offshore.

We shall identify the three species of Marsh Orchids found on the Uists. The deep wine red of the Early Marsh, contrasts with the purple Northern Marsh. Hebridean Orchid which has a smaller flower spike and deep black or brown blotches on its spear-shaped leaves and is found nowhere else in the world!

If time permits we shall visit Berneray for a walk beside Loch Bhrusda which can be good for waders, wildfowl and nesting terns.

**8-9** Today we catch our ferry. For those who wish to look for seabirds and cetaceans, we shall go on deck and watch the mountains on Skye get close, as we journey across the Minch. Then it's a steady drive to Inverness. The woodlands seem so vivid after the near treeless landscape we have left! Then it's back to our hotel for dinner. After breakfast the next morning we say our farewells.



### Outline Itinerary

- Day 1 Meet up in Inverness for overnight stay. 1 night Premier Inn
- Day 2 Travel down the Great Glen and across Skye, before catching ferry to Lochmaddy and making our way to our hotel. 6 nights at Hamersay Hotel, Lochmaddy
- Days 3-7 Birdwatching, botany and wildlife exploration of North and South Uist, Benbecula and Berneray.
- Day 8 Travel back to Inverness. 1 night Premier Inn
- Day 9 Depart after breakfast.

**Steve Batt:** Short-eared Owl  
**Stuart Housden:** Uists from the Air  
**Colin Scott:** Great Skua **Craig Round:** Machair Flowers  
**David King:** Red-necked Phalarope  
**Kate Mennie:** Otter **David Penton:** Arctic Skua



# A HEBRIDEAN ODYSSEY



"With incredible wildlife such as Hen Harriers, Short-eared Owls, Corncrakes, Golden and White-tailed Eagles, Otters, thousands of stunning passage and breeding waders, along with simply breathtaking scenery, even after over 20 years of visiting these wonderful islands, every visit is still a thrill. I can't wait to get back out there." Craig Round

Dates Sun 2 - Fri 14 Jun 2024  
 Price £3,475  
 Deposit £600 Single Supp £450

Leaders Craig Round and Simon Eaves  
 Walking Coastal walks on uneven terrain of up to two miles. Walking boots recommended with trainers suitable on some occasions. Collapsible or telescopic walking poles could be useful  
 Weather Though usually quite dry, these islands can experience all the seasons during one trip and can be windy (5°-20°C)  
 Insects Biting insects are not usually a problem but bring repellent just in case  
 Meals All included from dinner on Day 1 to breakfast on Day 13  
 Accom Double, twin, single rooms all ensuite

## Just some of what we hope to see:

Corncrake	Rock Dove
Golden Eagle	Arctic Skua
White-tailed Eagle	Great Skua
Hen Harrier	Manx Shearwater
Merlin	Storm Petrel
Short-eared Owl	Red-necked Phalarope
Peregrine	Greenshank
Great Northern Diver	Golden Plover
Red-throated Diver	Red Grouse
Black-throated Diver	Corn Bunting
Eider	Twite
Whimbrel	Otter
Arctic Tern	Grey and Common Seals
Little Tern	dolphins and whales
Black Guillemot	Basking Shark

Jane Hope: Otter  
 Alan Daniells: Harris Beach  
 Stuart Housden: Callanish, Red-necked Phalarope  
 Craig Round: Hen Harrier  
 Mark Phillips: Short-eared Owl  
 Steve Batt: Ruff

A journey through magical isles on the edge of the Atlantic. A diverse landscape of vast white beaches, rugged mountains, fertile machair and huge seascapes.

- Raptor watching with both eagles, Hen Harrier, Short-eared Owl, Merlin and Peregrine
- Summer-plumaged divers, including Red-throated and Great Northern
- Unspoilt and deserted white sand beaches with shallow crystal clear waters
- Unique machair habitat in bloom, full of nesting waders and birds
- Excellent chance of Corncrake amidst lush vegetation
- Otters plus the chance of cetaceans and Basking Shark
- World famous Callanish Standing Stones and ancient Dun Carloway Broch

Our adventure begins with a meal together in Inverness and a run through the trip itinerary.

**2-3** We head southwest, through Lochaber, past Ben Nevis, to the port town of Oban where we shall catch our ferry to Barra.

Our journey to the Outer Hebrides takes us through the Sound of Mull and across the southern Minch. There's a sense of anticipation as we gather on deck for some sea-watching - auks, Gannets, skuas, shearwaters and divers are likely, plus a chance of Storm Petrel and cetaceans on the crossing.

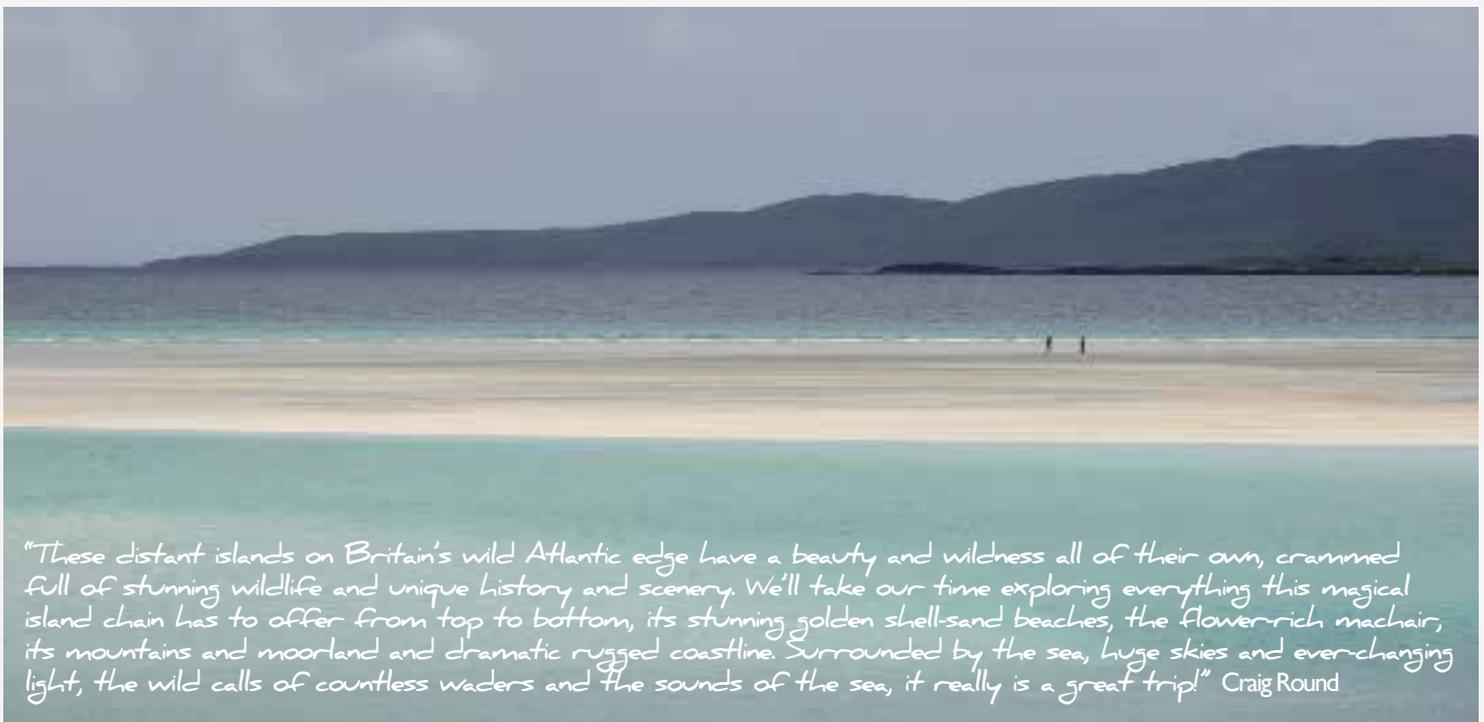
Barra and its adjoining island Vattersay are gentle islands and we start our Hebridean adventure among the white sands and croft lands looking for

Golden and White-tailed Eagles and Corncrake near the internationally famous airport, where planes land on the beach of Traigh Mor!

**4-7** We leave Barra and take the short crossing to Eriskay, connected by causeway to South Uist. We shall explore North Uist, Benbecula, South Uist and Eriskay from our wonderful hotel. Birds seem to be everywhere and we shall visit the unique machair, alive with waders, Corn Bunting, Skylark and Twite.

The RSPB Reserve at Balranald is a gem and gives us our best chance of Corncrake, calling from the iris beds. The Uists are wonderful for raptors and the chance of eagles is ever present, with Short-eared Owls and Hen Harriers quartering the peatlands, often seen from the hotel!





*"These distant islands on Britain's wild Atlantic edge have a beauty and wildness all of their own, crammed full of stunning wildlife and unique history and scenery. We'll take our time exploring everything this magical island chain has to offer from top to bottom, its stunning golden shell-sand beaches, the flower-rich machair, its mountains and moorland and dramatic rugged coastline. Surrounded by the sea, huge skies and ever-changing light, the wild calls of countless waders and the sounds of the sea, it really is a great trip!" Craig Round*

The beaches and shallow bays of the west coast are fished by Common, Arctic and Little Terns, Great Northern Divers and a very healthy Otter population. Red-necked Phalaropes breed here and there is always the chance of finding a rarity. We've recorded Snowy Owl, Woodchat Shrike and Subalpine Warbler on previous trips - anything is possible!

**8-11** We'll spend four days exploring the islands of Lewis and Harris - two very different islands with wide expanses of peat moor, wild coastlines and incredible bare-rock scenery. Some of our most iconic raptors hunt these vast landscapes and we shall follow the Hebridean Bird of Prey Trail for Golden and White-tailed Eagles, Hen Harrier, Short-eared Owls, Merlin, Kestrel and Peregrine.

We shall explore the wild Atlantic edge along the northwestern coast of Lewis up to the Butt of Lewis. This windswept and spectacular place is one of the best locations in the UK for sea-watching for both birds and cetaceans.

Though not common, Minke Whale, Common or even Risso's Dolphin and other species are possible. The shallow lochs of the west coast are a refuge for wildfowl, waders and scarce migrants with the possibility of a vagrant American Wader if we're lucky. The sea lochs and beaches of the rugged south west coast of Lewis are a wild, remote and under-watched habitat for Otters, eagles and divers, including Red-throated and Great Northern and we should find Cuckoo and Twite here.

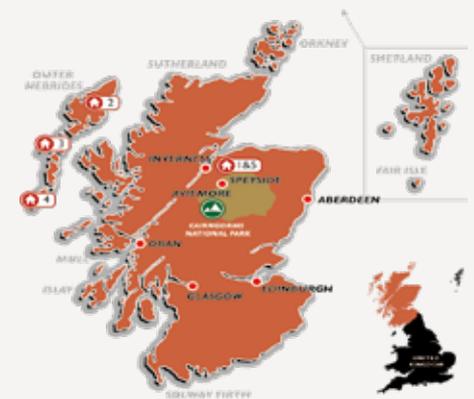


The Standing Stones of Callanish are archaeologically world famous and a stunning example of a circle and cruciform arrangement with almost 50 still standing. Walking amongst them ignites the imagination. We shall also visit Dun Carloway, one of the best-preserved Iron Age brochs in Scotland.

Harris is conjoined to Lewis, but the habitat and feel is very different. The north is a rugged mountainous moonscape, whereas the west coast has open machair and vast spectacular and deserted beaches. We shall walk on one of the world's great beaches at Luskentyre, which is simply stunning and a superb location for Golden Eagles. We shall visit North Harris Eagle observatory, with a good chance of Merlin too, which regularly nest close by.

**12** The ferry from Stornoway across the fertile waters of The Minch to Ullapool provides more chances of Minke Whale, Basking Shark and seabirds - then from Ullapool we head back to Inverness for our evening meal and to reflect on our adventure.

**13** After breakfast on Friday we say our fond farewells.



Outline Itinerary	
Day 1	Meet in Inverness for overnight stay 1 night at Premier Inn
Days 2-3	Travel south west to Oban to catch the ferry to Barra Birding and wildlife exploration of Barra 2 nights at Castlebay Hotel
Days 4-7	Ferry crossing from Barra to Eriskay Birding and wildlife exploration on Berneray, North Uist, Benbecula, South Uist and Eriskay. 4 nights at Orasay Inn
Days 8-11	Ferry to Leverburgh. Birding and wildlife exploration around Lewis and Harris 4 nights at Caladh Hotel
Day 12	Ferry crossing from Stornoway to Ullapool then journey back to Inverness. 1 night at Premier Inn
Day 13	After breakfast we say our farewells



# ALASKA



"I can't wait to return! Alaska conjures images of a true northern wilderness, with the highest of peaks and wildest of landscapes, and wildlife to match – Caribou, Moose, wolves and we've added a boat trip to watch the famed Alaskan coastal Brown Bears. This should be a very special trip."  
Darren Rees

Dates Sat 8 - Sat 22 Jun 2024  
(mainland Alaska)  
Price £8,450  
Deposit £1,690 Single Supp £1,750

St Paul Island in the Pribilofs extension:

Dates Fri 21 - Wed 26 Jun 2024  
Extension price £4,500  
Extension deposit £630  
Extension single supp £350

Leaders Darren Rees and David Wimpfheimer

Flights British Airways/Alaskan Air, scheduled  
Outbound: Afternoon, Heathrow-Anchorage  
Inbound: Overnight, Anchorage-Heathrow  
(outbound and inbound via a US stop)  
local airline for Anchorage-St Paul return

Weather Unpredictable throughout due to the nature of the geography. In mountains and mainland coast, warm and pleasant, to hot and sunny. The Pribilof Islands can be foggy and windy (10° at night, max 30°C daytime)

Walking Mixture of leisurely trails and longer walks along well-marked paths

Meals All included from dinner on Day 1 to lunch on Day 14 (excl. Pribilofs) or Day 18 (incl. Pribilofs)

Insects Biting insects may be a nuisance, except on the Pribilof Islands, so bring repellent

Accom Twin and single rooms all ensuite

Group 12 (minimum of 6 guests required for St Paul Pribilof Island visit to go ahead)

## Just some of what we hope to see:

Black Bear	Rock Ptarmigan
Grizzly Bear	White-winged Crossbill
Moose	Pine Grosbeak
Caribou	Smith's Longspur
Gray Wolf	Northern Fur Seal (P)
Sea Otter	Steller's Sealion
Humpback Whale	Blue Arctic Fox (P)
Orca	Red-legged Kittiwake (P)
Dall's Porpoise	Crested Auklet (P)
Bald Eagle	Least Auklet (P)
Gyrfalcon	Parakeet Auklet (P)
Long-tailed Jaeger	Horned Puffin (P)
Northern Hawk Owl	Tufted Puffin (P)

A wilderness and landscape like no other and a holiday to match – Denali, Kenai and the Pribilof Islands for bears, wolves, whales, fur seals and Pacific seabird colonies.

- Denali, the highest American peak, with Grizzlies, Wolves and Caribou
- Northern Hawk Owl, Long-tailed Jaeger and Gyrfalcon
- Coastal bear-watching at Chinitna
- Two boat trips for Humpback Whales, Orcas and Dall's Porpoise
- Sea Otters at spectacular Kenai Fjords National Park
- The remote St Paul Island in the Pribilofs for Tufted Puffins and Crested Auklets
- The Pribilofs, the 'Galapagos of the North', home to fur seals and seabirds

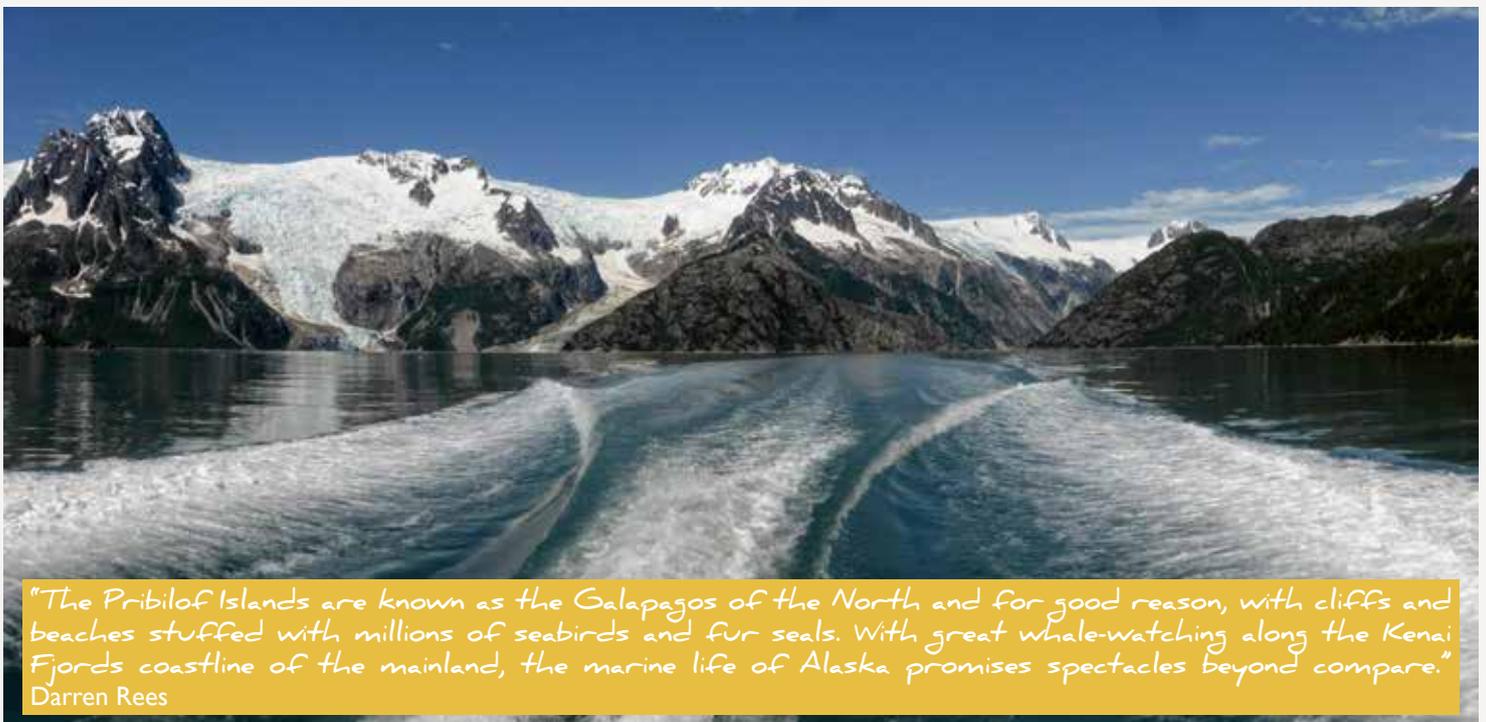
**1-2** We fly to Anchorage via a US stop, for our first two nights here. Nearby Parks and waterways offer an introduction to Alaskan birding with Bald Eagles, Red-necked Grebes, Alder Flycatchers and Pacific Loons. We'll explore several habitats looking for Hudsonian Godwit, Wilson's Snipe, American Three-toed Woodpecker, Boreal Chickadee and Bohemian Waxwings.

**3** We travel north into the boreal forest, an expanse of spruce, willow and birch that harbours extensive terrestrial and wetland habitats for huge numbers of nesting passerines and waders. We'll meet many Alaskan birds: Lesser Sandhill Cranes, Blackpoll Warbler and Pine Grosbeaks are all possible. Driving over Broad Pass in the mighty Alaska Range we descend to Denali NP arriving at our lodging in late afternoon for the first of three nights near the Park.

**4-5** We have two full days of adventure in Denali NP. With no vehicular traffic to worry about, our shuttle bus takes us through some of the most extraordinary scenery in North America, in the shadow of the continent's highest peak. Some of our target species will be Willow Ptarmigan, Hawk Owl, Gyrfalcon, Northern Shrike, Snow Bunting and Arctic Warbler. This is no ordinary shuttle bus, as it stops for just about anything we want to look at and there's a wide selection of mammals present including Arctic Ground Squirrel, Grizzly Bear, Gray Wolf, Moose, Dall's Sheep and Caribou.

**6-7** The remote Denali Highway takes us east through a mosaic of spruce bogs and ponds, willow riparian and dry tundra. Target species include American Golden Plover; Common Redpoll, Long-tailed Duck and Golden-crowned, Fox and Tree Sparrow. From our base we'll look for Long-tailed Jaegers and Smith's Longspurs.





*"The Pribilof Islands are known as the Galapagos of the North and for good reason, with cliffs and beaches stuffed with millions of seabirds and fur seals. With great whale-watching along the Kenai Fjords coastline of the mainland, the marine life of Alaska promises spectacles beyond compare."*  
Darren Rees

**8** Our continuing wilderness loop takes us by the Wrangell-Saint Elias Range whose snowy peaks exceed 14,000ft. In the forest here our targets will be interior breeding species such as Spruce Grouse, Gray Jay and White-winged Crossbill. We'll overnight at Sheep Mountain Lodge – last time we saw Boreal Owl here!

**9-10** The long road to Homer; our next base for two nights, takes us along the coast through Chugach National Forest to the beautiful Kenai Peninsula. From Homer; our all-day boat trip takes us across Cook Inlet to Chinitna Bay in the spectacular Lake Clark National Park, home to coastal Brown Bears. With local guides we should find these charismatic animals combing the shore, foraging for food in the most dramatic setting.

**11-12** We continue our exploration of the Kenai Peninsula enroute to Seward. The coastline of Kenai Fjords NP is home to some of the most pristine, rugged, breathtaking glacial vistas in North America. Dall's Sheep are often seen on the cliffs above the road as well as the more elusive Mountain Goat. Islands busy with birds and mammals await us on our full-day boat trip from Seward along the Gulf of Alaska. Alcids rule the day as we watch for Horned and Tufted Puffins, Kittlitz's and Ancient Murrelet, Thick-billed Murre and Parakeet Auklet. We'll head towards the Chiswell Islands where thousands of nesting Black-legged Kittiwakes have painted the islands white. Marine mammals include Sea Otter; Harbor Seal, Steller's Sealion, Pacific White-sided Dolphin, Orca, Humpback Whale and Harbour and Dall's Porpoise.



**13-14** After birding around Seward, we'll take a leisurely pace back to Anchorage for the night, stopping at any habitat that offers the last chance for a missing species. Favourite stops between Seward and Anchorage may add that last Barrow's Goldeneye, Hudsonian Godwit or Rusty Blackbird to our list. The following day those who are returning to the UK depart in the evening, via a US stop, arriving in the UK on day 15.

For those going to St. Paul, one of the Pribilof Islands - the famed 'Galapagos of the North', they depart in the afternoon. Our naturalist tour starts immediately upon arrival, with local species that include Pacific Wren, Rock Sandpiper, Red-faced Cormorant, Gray-crowned Rosy Finch, Lapland Longspur and 'Blue' Arctic Fox. St. Paul is the largest of the Aleut communities and our base for the next three nights.

**15-16** We have two full days to visit the teeming seabird colonies and Fur Seal rookeries of St Paul – they have to be seen to be believed! Rugged cliffs are stuffed with hundreds of thousands of Horned and Tufted Puffins, Common and Thick-billed Murres, Parakeet and Least and Crested Auklets. This is also one of the few places on the planet to view Red-legged Kittiwake. We shall also visit blinds (hides) and viewing areas that allow access to the incredible Northern Fur Seal colonies, one of the greatest gatherings of mammals on earth!

**17-19** We fly back to Anchorage for our final evening in Alaska. The next day we leave Anchorage for our return to the UK, via a US stop and an overnight flight.



### Outline Itinerary

- Days 1-2 Fly to Anchorage, via a US stop  
2 nights Coast Inn Lake Hood
- Days 3-5 Drive north to the Alaska Range.  
Exploration of Denali NP  
3 nights McKinley Creekside Cabins
- Days 6-7 Drive east to explore the Denali  
Highway - 2 nights Maclaren Lodge
- Day 8 Continued drive through Alaskan  
wilderness - 1 night Sheep Mountain
- Days 9-10 Drive to Homer on Kenai Peninsula.  
First boat trip, bear-watching at  
Chinitna Bay - 2 nights Driftwood Inn
- Days 11-12 Drive to Seward for second boat trip  
exploring Kenai Fjords NP  
2 nights Hotel Edgewater
- Day 13 Return to Anchorage - 1 night Coast Inn
- Days 14-16 Fly to UK, land Day 15. Or fly to St  
Paul for exploration of Pribilofs  
3 nights King Eider Hotel
- Days 17-19 Fly to Anchorage - 1 night Coast Inn  
Fly back to UK, via a US stop, arriving  
Day 19

**Bear Viewing Alaska:** Brown Bears  
Steven Kourik: Orca      Darren Rees: Arctic Fox  
Terence Lee: Kenai NP, Tufted Puffin, Crested Auklets

# MULL AND KINTYRE



"I love accommodation that not only provides good meals and rooms, but also gives opportunities to enjoy wildlife locally and both the Kintyre and Mull hotels provide this. In recent visits we have seen three species of diver, Harbour Porpoise, Otter, Osprey and Red Deer from these two locations, enhancing an already wildliferich tour." Julian Sykes

Dates Sat 8 - Mon 17 June 2024

Price £3,195

Deposit £600 Single Supp £730

Leaders Julian Sykes and Ailie Brown

Weather Mixture of sun and showers, but cooler on boat trips and in the mountains (10° - 25°C)

Walking Most walks are 1-2 miles on wide sandy tracks, although there is the possibility of a forest walk of up to 4 miles. Walks on Lunga and Staffa, although approx only 1 mile long, are more challenging and only suitable for those with good mobility and balance. Walking boots will be needed.

Boat Trips Our boat trip to Lunga lasts 6 hours, including 3 hours onshore. Our trip to Iona is a short 10 min ferry ride.

Meals All included from dinner on Day 1 to breakfast on Day 10.

Insects Biting midges will be encountered.

Accom Grey Gull Hotel, Isle of Mull Hotel and the Loch Lomond Arms - double, twin and single rooms all ensuite.

Group 12

## Just some of what we hope to see:

Red-throated Diver	Great Skua
Great Northern Diver	Arctic Tern
Corncrake	Storm Petrel
Osprey	Whinchat
White-tailed Eagle	Common Redstart
Golden Eagle	Wood Warbler
Hen Harrier	Tree Pipit
Short-eared Owl	Raven
Peregrine	Common Seal
Common Sandpiper	Common Dolphin
Greenshank	Otter
Dunlin	Red Deer

## Under-rated Argyll, with hidden corners and evidence of Beaver, through the majesty of Mull, with its high density of eagles, to the bonnie banks of Loch Lomond!

- See both Golden and White-tailed Eagles amongst stunning scenery
- Look for Otters along beautiful rocky shores
- Possibility of Corncrake, Great Northern Diver and Wood Warbler
- Explore wild remote areas in search of rich and varied wildlife
- Set sail for the amazing basalt columns of Staffa enroute to Lunga
- See Puffins closer than you can ever imagine
- Waterside hotels in three charming locations

I We meet up in Glasgow and head off through Argyll to the west coast and our base for the next three nights in the lochside town of Lochgilphead, arriving in time for dinner.

2-3 Over the next two full days we shall enjoy some of the fantastic wildlife on offer in Argyll & Bute. One day we'll travel south to the wonderful Kintyre Peninsula, visiting the Sound of Gigha, Campbeltown Loch and the famous Machrihanish Bird Observatory. On our journey we hope to find breeding seabirds along the coast, Red-throated Divers, waders and wildfowl, plus we'll stop along the famous Mull of Kintyre.

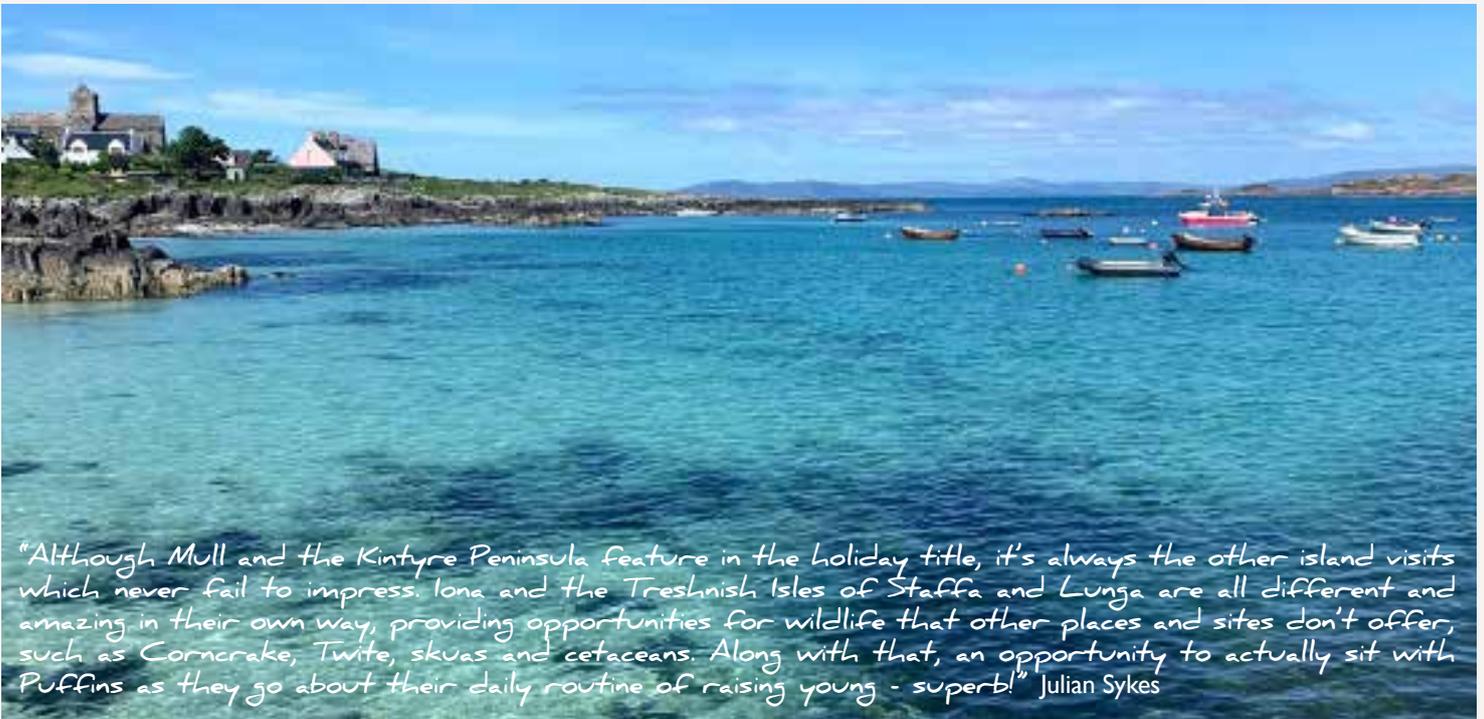
The next day we shall head inland, stopping at Taynish NNR for classic woodland species such as Wood Warbler, Common Redstart and Tree Pipit, plus a chance of Marsh Fritillary, if the weather's

kind. We shall visit the Crinan Canal area for Osprey, Whinchat and possibly Cuckoo. Depending on conditions we shall visit Knapdale and walk the Beaver Trail, where we shall see evidence of these secretive aquatic mammals. We shall be making an evening visit for Grasshopper Warbler, Tawny Owl and bats, so you never know your luck.

4-8 We'll travel slowly up the west coast, stopping at inlets and coastal woodlands, then take the ferry from Oban to Craignure and our shoreside hotel base for the next five nights. Gannets and gulls fly by the picture windows or from the sun deck and nearby, the grounds are sprinkled with orchids and play host to a variety of woodland species.

The mighty White-tailed Eagle is a real highlight here, together with majestic Golden Eagle, both





*"Although Mull and the Kintyre Peninsula feature in the holiday title, it's always the other island visits which never fail to impress. Iona and the Treshnish Isles of Staffa and Lunga are all different and amazing in their own way, providing opportunities for wildlife that other places and sites don't offer, such as Corncrake, Twite, skuas and cetaceans. Along with that, an opportunity to actually sit with Puffins as they go about their daily routine of raising young - superb!" Julian Sykes*

busy feeding young now. Mull is probably 'the' best place in Britain to see eagles. With around 16 pairs of White-tailed Eagles and 24 pairs of Golden Eagles, the island's breeding birds are at their highest density anywhere in Europe.

Nearby, piping Common Sandpipers, fledged Wheatear and noisy 'kleeping' Oystercatcher are on weedy shores, where Common Seals haul out, with mottled drake Eider and resting Red-throated Divers offshore. Birch and oak woodland can hold Redstart, Tree Pipit and Wood Warbler, as well as Sparrowhawk overhead. Here and in moorland glens, are some of our favourite places to see Golden Eagle, whilst Merlin nest in the boggy upland glens. Estuaries have waders such as Greenshank, Bar-tailed Godwit and Dunlin, whilst offshore the myriad skerries hold noisy Common Gull and Common and Arctic Terns. Peaty burns by freshwater lochs are home to Dipper and Grey Wagtail, whilst coniferous woodland has Siskin and sometimes Common Crossbill.

A short distance away on rugged shorelines, we have often been lucky with fine views of Otters; engaging animals, as easy to see here as anywhere in Scotland. As we watch, Hooded Crow pick along the shore. Red-breasted Merganser and the occasional Black-throated Diver occur, whilst Kestrel, Raven and Peregrine patrol the forbidding basalt cliffs. In the dramatic folds of inland glens, Hen Harrier and Short-eared Owl hunt over the moorland and young coniferous plantations, where Whitethroat give their scratchy song.



Journeying along the croft land on the Ross of Mull, Buzzards adorn every telegraph pole and we'll take the short passenger ferry to the beautiful white sandy beaches and azure blue seas of Iona. The white cottages and famous Abbey are surrounded by tall hay meadows, where good numbers of calling Corncrake reside, but can be difficult to see at this time of year, whilst Rock Dove and Twite are more obvious.

A trip highlight will be our boat journey to the seabird spectacle of the Treshnish Isles. We'll be alert to any possible cetaceans and seabirds as we sail. We shall see Black Guillemot, Great Skua, Fulmar and possibly Storm Petrel on the crossing. We take in the island of Staffa and the basalt columns of 'Fingal's Cave', before landing on the incredible island of Lunga. We have several hours to wander right amongst Puffins that greet us, whilst green-eyed Shag squawk their disapproval and an incredible throng of Guillemot and Razorbill roar in a cacophony, Fulmar cackle, Kittiwake cries echo up from narrow chasms and Arctic Skuas patrol offshore, amongst the flocks of wheeling seabirds ... it's a wonderful place.

**9-10** Tearing ourselves away from Mull, we'll travel inland through Glencoe and over Rannoch Moor, to our final base on the banks of Loch Lomond for our last night. The next morning we'll return everyone to Glasgow where we say our farewells..



### Outline Itinerary

- Day 1 Arrive in Glasgow, travel West to Lochgilhead  
3 nights at Grey Gull Hotel
- Days 2-3 Wildlife and birdwatching exploration throughout Argyll & Bute
- Day 4 Journey through stunning scenery, before catching the ferry to Mull  
5 nights at Isle of Mull Hotel
- Days 5-8 Wildlife and birdwatching exploration on Mull, including a boat trip to the Treshnish Isles
- Day 9 Ferry back to the mainland then drive to Loch Lomond birdwatching enroute  
1 night at the Loch Lomond Arms Hotel
- Day 10 Leave Loch Lomond for Glasgow

Colin Scott: White-tailed Eagle,  
Maggie and John Tester: Iona, Black Guillemot,  
On the Treshnish Isles  
Louise and John Sykes: Puffin, Razorbill

# ST KILDA



*"St Kilda has been recognised as one of the world's special places, being one of only 35 World Heritage sites. I think it is going to feel a complete privilege to be there."*  
Sally Nowell

Dates Thu 13 - Sun 23 Jun 2024  
Price £4,580  
Deposit £900 Single Supp £0

Leader Sally Nowell

Walking On land, easy walks of 2-5 miles. Walking boots essential. On board, trainers, waterproof sandals or deck shoes are ideal

Weather From flat calm, hot & sunny, to choppy, wet & windy (12°-20°C)

Onboard Be prepared for all weathers. Waterproof clothes including gloves are recommended. As a precaution, you may wish to bring seasickness medication with you.

Insects Biting insects may be encountered on some islands, please bring repellent

Meals All included from dinner on Day 1 to breakfast on Day 11

Good quality, freshly prepared food, great home baking ... and plenty of it!

Accom Elizabeth G – 2 Double and 2 Twin ensuite cabins

Group 8

## Just some of what we hope to see:

Golden Eagle	Eider
White-tailed Eagle	Rock Dove
Great Northern Diver	Raven
Arctic Tern	Hooded Crow
Little Tern	Short-eared Owl
Great Skua	St Kilda Wren
Arctic Skua	Hen Harrier
Manx Shearwater	Peregrine
Storm Petrel	Greenshank
Leach's Petrel	Twite
Black Guillemot	Minke Whale
Puffin	Harbour Porpoise
Gannet	Common Dolphin
Guillemot	(Risso's Dolphin)
Razorbill	(Basking Shark)
Kittiwake	Common Seal
Fulmar	Grey Seal
Shag	Otter

As the most remote part of the UK, St Kilda holds a certain magic and mystery. We'll explore these plus some of the enchanting hidden treasures and wildlife of the islands of the Hebrides

- A memorable journey through the Hebrides aiming for St Kilda
- Visit the remote UNESCO Reserve and World Heritage Site of St Kilda
- Expect encounters with whales, dolphins and Otters enroute
- Golden and White-tailed Eagles and seabirds including Puffins, skuas and petrels
- Land on deserted beaches and remote islands
- Enjoy delicious food, a friendly crew and 'go-where-we-want'
- Spend a week onboard the comfortable Elizabeth G!

We meet in Oban where our boat and crew will be waiting for us. We are sure to be buzzing with excitement about the week ahead and will be keen to get our feet on the deck of the Elizabeth G.

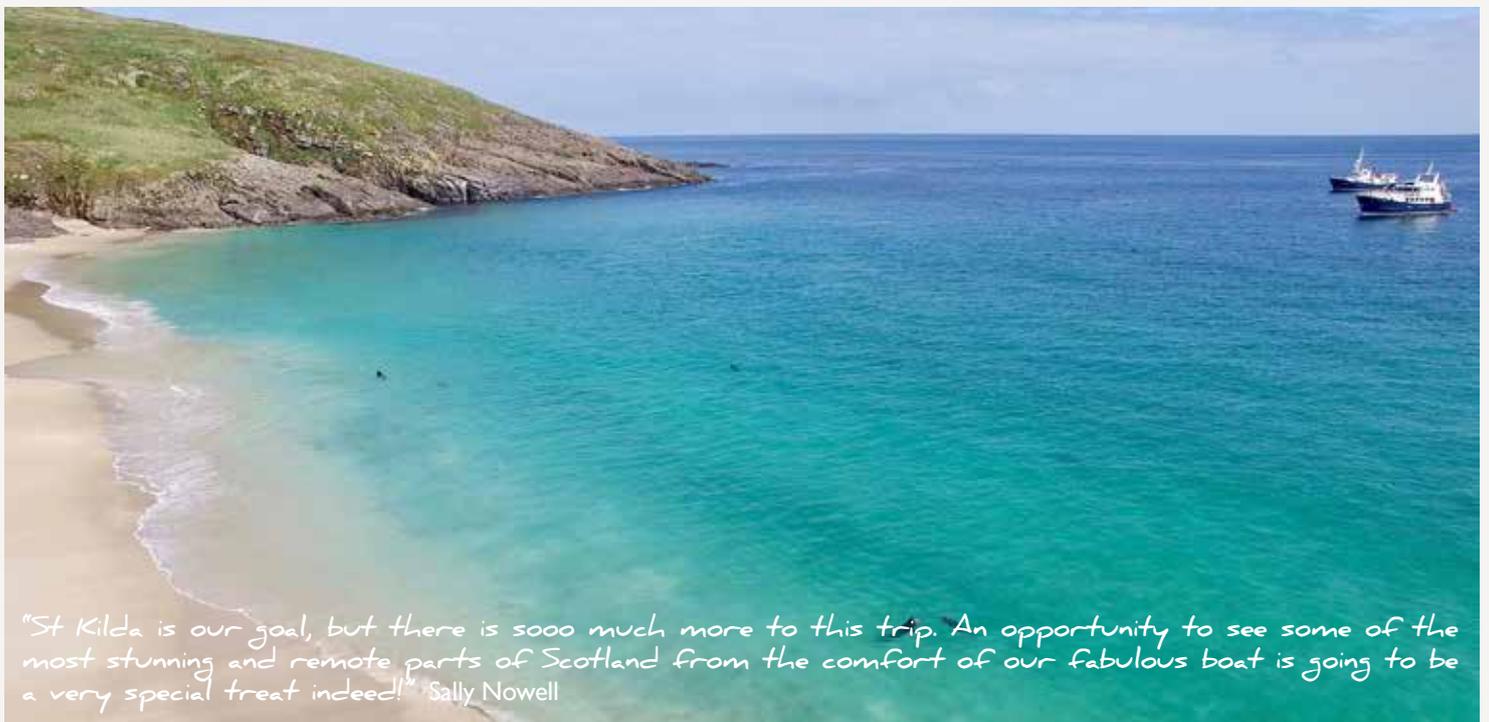
The first sight of our home for the next few days is sure to be a thrill, as we settle into our surroundings which will become very familiar as the week progresses. After a safety briefing and introduction to the crew and Elizabeth G we'll set sail. Elizabeth G is a converted 23m ice-class boat, with spacious, comfortable guest cabins, a huge deck-level saloon and wonderful wildlife watching decks - she's perfect for our exploration. She is large enough to navigate these waters yet small enough to glide unnoticed into the remotest lochs. Once or twice a day we'll land on islands, using our zodiac and spend nights moored in sheltered sea lochs, enjoying first class dinners.



As we cruise out of Oban harbour we shall be looking for Black Guillemot and with luck Otter; which can be seen here along the shore. Initially we'll cruise up the Sound of Mull. This area can be excellent for dolphin spotting so on deck we'll be looking out for Common and Bottlenose Dolphin along with Harbour Porpoise. This is also a great area for White-tailed Eagles, who will be on the hunt as they will be busy feeding young. We'll find a sheltered anchorage to overnight and enjoy our first meal onboard.

**2-10** Our weather-dependent itinerary is at the discretion of our experienced skipper. Beyond the Ardnamurchan peninsula we shall traverse seas that host dolphins and whales, to reach the stunning Inner Hebridean island of Canna. As we approach we shall start to see evidence of the fantastic birdlife that this island hosts during the breeding season. Birds will be out on the water feeding but the cliffs will also be full of auks,





*"St Kilda is our goal, but there is sooo much more to this trip. An opportunity to see some of the most stunning and remote parts of Scotland from the comfort of our fabulous boat is going to be a very special treat indeed!" Sally Nowell*

Kittiwakes and Puffins. Our eyes will be on the skies too, as both Golden and White-tailed Eagles are present in this area. As we cruise the shorelines, we shall be looking for Otters and Eider and with luck we should see Red-throated Divers offshore.

We hope to see swathes of Manx Shearwaters and hopefully the tiny Storm Petrel dancing on the water surface. Great Skuas may accompany our journey to the Outer Hebrides, where sparkling sea and sand appear to merge. The islands are home to some wonderful wildlife and as we explore parts of Harris and North and South Uist, we shall be listening for the sound of Corncrake calling from the iris beds. Around the rugged coasts we'll look for cliff nesting raptors such as Peregrine Falcon and White-tailed Eagle. There is always the chance of Short-eared Owls and Hen Harrier where the land lies low. Arctic and Little Terns may fly close to the boat and fish delicately in the shallows around the sandy bays. On shore the wildflowers of the Hebrides, known as Machair, should be in full bloom and are always a feast for the eyes. We might feel we are in a tropical paradise as the beaches we can access with our boat are as pristine and picture perfect as you can imagine. Bays of turquoise waters and white shell sand will take our breath away.

When the sea conditions allow, we'll cross the open water between North Uist and St Kilda, spending as much time there as possible. The crossing to St Kilda takes about eight hours and is rarely calm, so we have to choose our time carefully. One hundred miles west of mainland Scotland, St Kilda is a wild and spectacular place, a UNESCO Reserve and World Heritage Site, it is home to over one million seabirds. The cacophony of

bird sound on the cliffs of Hirta, the largest of the islands, is amazing and at Conachair are the highest seacliffs in Britain at over 430 metres tall!

We'll anchor in Village Bay where the village ruins call to mind voices of this vanished community and now play host to St Kilda races of Wren and Field Mouse. This is the only place we can land in the St Kilda archipelago; here we will really feel the impact of the history of the islands.

Soay is circled by steep cliffs and gives its name to its dark coated, wild Sheep. Cloud swirls around Boreay, a mass of impregnable jagged black volcanic rocks and just offshore the monolithic pillars of Stac Armin and Stac Lee tower above us. Here Gannets fall from the sky and plunge into the fish-rich waters. We are truly at 'the Islands on the edge of the World'. On St Kilda is the UK's largest Storm Petrel colony and there is also a small population of breeding Leach's Petrel.

Our time will pass all too quickly and we'll have to make the return crossing to North Uist, through the Sound of Harris and perhaps along the coast of Coll, Tiree or Skye, depending on what time we have remaining.

Eventually we return to Oban, where the bustle of modern life is a world away from the natural wonders that we'll have left behind. After breakfast we shall say our farewells after what will have undoubtedly been a trip of a lifetime.



### Outline Itinerary

**Day 1** Arrive in Oban and board our home for the coming days. Cruise up the Sound of Mull and anchor for the night 10 nights on Elizabeth G

**Days 2-10** Birdwatching and wildlife exploration around the Hebridian Islands and when weather permits, cross the exposed open water between North Uist and St Kilda

**Day 11** After breakfast we say our farewells

---

**Hebrides Cruises:** St Kilda Village Bay, Beach at Minuglay, Elizabeth G  
**Chris Gomersall:** Common Dolphin  
**Stef Lauer:** St Kilda Village  
**Christine Maughan:** Manx Shearwater  
**Jane Hope:** Razorbills



# THE SHETLAND ISLES



"Shetland is an incredible place and this holiday takes us from the southern tip of Sumburgh Head right up to the far north of Unst. The wildlife is just stunning at this time of year, with some of the rarest and finest wildlife spectacles to be seen anywhere in Britain."  
Craig Round

Dates Sat 29 Jun - Sat 6 Jul 2024  
Price £2,795  
Deposit £500 Single Supp £300

Leaders Craig Round and Tim Drew  
Flights Loganair, scheduled  
Outbound: Midday, Aberdeen-Sumburgh  
Inbound: Afternoon, Sumburgh-Aberdeen  
Weather During a typical week we expect mixed sun and showers, with temperatures in the range 10-20°C  
Walking Walking is generally very relaxed and easy, but on at least two of the days we may take walks of up to 3-4 miles on rough grassland and small coastal paths  
Meals All included from lunch on Day 1 to lunch on Day 8  
Insects Biting insects are not a problem  
Accom Double, twin and single ensuite rooms  
Group 12

**Craig Round:** Red-necked Phalarope  
**Robin Martin:** Storm Petrel, Puffin, Great Skua, Otter  
**Jane Hope:** Noss  
**Tim Drew:** Gannets

## Just some of what we hope to see:

Red-necked Phalarope	Dunlin
Whimbrel	Golden Plover
Storm Petrel	Twite
Red-throated Diver	Rock Dove
Great Northern Diver	Raven
Long-tailed Duck	Twite
Whooper Swan	Otter
Great Skua	Minke Whale
Arctic Skua	White-beaked Dolphin
Gannet	White-sided Dolphin
Puffin	Orca
Black Guillemot	Harbour Porpoise
Common Tern	Harbour Seal
Arctic Tern	Grey Seal

## Just 6° south of the Arctic Circle - far northern isles and world-class wildlife, huge seabird colonies and delightful Red-necked Phalaropes, at the Simmer Dim.

- Islands at the 'Simmer Dim' when the sun barely sets
- Easy flight to Shetland rather than the 14-hour ferry
- Mousa's Storm Petrels, Fetlar's Red-necked Phalaropes
- The spectacular seabird cities of Noss, Hermaness and Sumburgh
- Otters and offshore whales and dolphins
- Regular rarities and summering scarce breeders
- Closer to Norway than to mainland Scotland

**I** Flying from Aberdeen, we arrive in Shetland and drive north over Mainland to our delightful hotel in Hillswick.

**2-4** On our visit to Shetland's most northerly island Unst, we'll walk across the moorland to the wild and dramatic cliffs of Hermaness, where the skies are full of soaring and displaying Great Skuas (in Shetland called Bonxies, meaning 'dumpy bird'). Breeding Snipe, Dunlin and Meadow Pipit display overhead and the plaintive call of Golden Plover can be heard. Unst also supports Wheatear, Twite and Whimbrel.

As we reach the vast seabird cliffs and gannetry at Saito, the sight that greets you really does take your breath away! A blizzard of Gannets ride the updrafts and swirl in vast flocks below you, as Fulmars and Great Skuas glide past. Puffins emerge from their burrows and scurry around

our feet, as we look out to the remote Muckle Flugga lighthouse and the small rocky island of 'Oootsta' or Out Stack – after which there is no more Britain!

On our regular short ferry crossings between islands, Gannets can be seen diving for fish in synchronised teams and the small harbours are a favourite haunt of Otters. Marauding Arctic Skuas harry passing Arctic Terns, as Puffins, Guillemots and Razorbills stream through the narrow sounds on feeding flights between the islands. We shall be alert to the sight of any fins breaking the surface, betraying a Harbour Porpoise close inshore, or maybe even Orcas!

Another inter-island boat journey takes us to Fetlar, so named from the Viking for 'fat or fertile land' and the fourth largest island in the Shetland Isles. It is a stronghold for stunning and rare Red-necked





*"Shetland's dramatic seacliffs throng with thousands of seabirds in summer and we get to see them from both land and sea. Visiting the towering cliffs of Noss on our boat charter, surrounded by a blizzard of thousands of birds, is a real assault on the senses. We also take another boat trip at night to the island of Mousa to watch Storm Petrels arrive at their nests in the walls of the ancient Broch. It's a magical experience and always a highlight of any trip to Shetland." Craig Round*

Phalaropes, as they delicately spin on small lochans, picking tiny insects from the waterside stones. Fetlar is also a great place to see and hear the weird wailing courtship cries of Red-throated Divers, which at this time of year may have young.

Arctic Skua, Golden Plover, Dunlin, Ringed Plover and Whimbrel, or 'peerie whap' in Shetland meaning small Curlew, can also be seen on the tundra-like heath of Fetlar and their 'rippling' calls can be heard across the island, whilst the colourful flower-filled meadows support Lapwing, Oystercatcher, Curlew, Snipe and Redshank.

A trip highlight for many is our dusk visit to the island of Mousa. Once inside the tower of the 2,000-year-old Iron Age Broch, we are enveloped in silence, until the rhythmic 'churring' of Storm Petrels amongst the stones brings these ancient walls alive, a moment of real 'Shetland magic'! It's a real privilege to watch these tiny ocean-going seabirds flying in low over the sea, to return to their nest sites in the walls of the Broch and as the last fiery glow of the 'simmer dim' lights up the horizon, they swirl like bats around our heads in ever greater numbers, before fluttering in to land.

North Shetland, renowned for Otters, is one of the UK's premier locations for this elusive mammal and we have been lucky with fine views. Along the shores we see Red-breasted Merganser and Eider (or Dunter) and further inland, coastal species nest everywhere, including Arctic Skuas (Skootie Alan) and Fulmar (Maalies), we shall really be learning our Shetland bird names!



**5-7** Leaving the north and its many islands and skerries behind us, we venture south to our hotel at the southern end of Shetland, close to the dramatic Viking settlement of Jarlshoff and Iron Age settlement of Old Scatness and only a short stroll away from the coast.

Great Northern Diver and Long-tailed Duck all over-summer here, along with a few pairs of Whooper Swans that now breed. We'll also see Arctic Terns, Arctic and Great Skuas, Rock Dove, Twite, Raven and perhaps Peregrine.

Also close by are the superb seabird cliffs of Sumburgh Head, which can also be a great place to look for passing cetaceans and over the years we've seen White-beaked and White-sided Dolphins and watched Humpback, Minke Whale and predatory Orcas!

The island of Noss is one of the finest seabird islands in Europe. On our boat trip around the island, we'll cruise right under the sheer seabird cliffs of the Noup, dwarfing our boat and towering some 590ft above us, it's a truly awesome sight and sound! These are the largest cliffs on Shetland's east coast and home to almost 9,000 pairs of Gannet alone! The great seabird city also holds Guillemot, Razorbill, Kittiwake, Fulmar, Shag and we'll see the delightful Black Guillemot (Tystie).

**8** We may have some time to birdwatch on the final morning, before our flight back to Aberdeen.



### Outline Itinerary

- Day 1** Fly into Sumburgh and travel north to our north Mainland base at Hillswick 4 nights St Magnus Bay Hotel
- Days 2-4** Exploration of Unst, including the wild cliffs of Hermaness and the small island of Fetlar, as well as north Mainland and a night visit to Mousa
- Day 5** Travel south to our base on the south Mainland 3 nights Sumburgh Hotel
- Days 6-7** Birdwatching and wildlife exploration of south Mainland, including a visit to Noss, Sumburgh Head and the Viking settlement of Jarlshoff
- Day 8** Depending on our flight time, we may be able to spend the morning bird and wildlife watching, before catching our flight back to Aberdeen



# CHANNEL ISLANDS DISCOVERY



*"I have to say that the Channel Islands look like heaven. The thought of a relaxed holiday wandering around wildflower meadows looking out over turquoise sea in search of butterflies and birds sounds like bliss."*  
Sally Nowell

Dates Sat 29 June - Sat 6 July 2024  
Price £3,250  
Deposit £650 Single Supp £400

Leader Sally Nowell

Weather At this time of year the weather is usually very mild. Expect temperatures in the range of 13°C-20°C, but we need to be prepared for cooler weather when out at sea with the potential for the odd shower

Walking There may be some walking on rocky terrain, but will take this at a leisurely pace. Some walks will be on narrow paths along cliff tops and walks will not exceed 3 miles

Boat Trips We shall be taking 3 boat trips on small ferries

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

Insects Biting insects should not be a problem

Accom Double, twin and single rooms all ensuite

Group 6

## Just some of what we hope to see:

Puffin	Marsh Harrier
Gannet	Barn Owl
Dartford Warbler	Firecrest
Zitting Cisticola	Bottlenose Dolphin
Short-toed Treecreeper	Yellow Horned Poppy
Bearded Tit	Sea Holly
Yellow Wagtail	Alderney Sea Lavender
Cirl Bunting	Common Dolphin
'Blonde' Hedgehog	Peregrine Falcon
Glanville Fritillary	Whinchat
Jersey Tiger Moth	Razorbill
Privet Hawk Moth	Green Hairstreak
Hummingbird Hawkmoth	Silver-studded Blue
Manx Shearwater	Strawberry Sea Anemone
Balearic Shearwater	Snakelocks Sea Anemone
Mediterranean Gull	

The Channel Islands have a surprising amount of wonderful fauna and flora tucked away amongst some of Britain's most beautiful coastal scenery.

- Visit four of the Channel Islands - Sark, Alderney, Herm and Guernsey
- A relaxed wildlife-filled 'summer holiday'
- Discover why moth trapping is so addictive!
- A new destination to discover and explore
- Lose yourself in an afternoon of 'rock pooling'
- A mix of flora and fauna
- Boat trip to spectacular offshore seabird colonies

We meet in London and catch our short flight to Guernsey and settle in to our comfortable hotel. We may have time to explore the local area on foot before our first evening in the Channel Islands.

**2-3** After a leisurely breakfast we shall start to explore. Guernsey has a number of interesting birding locations, so we shall take short drives around the island and wander along the cliff top paths and beautiful sandy beaches, for the sight of seabirds along the way. There are several small hides, but most of our birding will be along the cliff paths and from our vehicle.

We shall be looking for local flora too and hopefully enjoying some warm sea breezes as we relax into the Channel Islands' pace of life. For a touch of nostalgia we shall do some 'rock pooling'. The marine life around Guernsey is amazing and you will be entranced by the

variety of life we find in the tidal pools; anything from five different species of crab to the incredible Snakelocks and Strawberry Anemone.

**4** Today we take a short ferry ride to Sark looking out for cetaceans enroute. Sark is a beautiful unspoilt island where vehicles are not permitted. We shall be picked up here by our horsedrawn carriage which will take us on an island tour. We'll stretch our legs on the coastal paths and take time to soak up the special tranquil atmosphere here.

In the small community we may stop for afternoon tea and visit some of the village shops which help support the local community. Sark takes us back in time to an era when farming was done on a very small scale; a reflection of this is the plethora of wildflowers and therefore of insect life. In particular, on Sark we hope to catch up with a number of butterfly species, including





*"There is a surprising amount of varied wildlife on the Channel Islands; lots to discover whether you love your birds, plants or insects and there's even a Blonde Hedgehog for mammal lovers!!" Sally Nowell*

Silver-studded Blue and Green Hairstreak. Today will be taken at a leisurely pace to explore this tranquil island and enjoy its beautiful coastline

**5** Another short ferry ride takes us to the tiny island of Herm. Herm is less than a square mile of glorious natural beauty; you will feel as if we have transported you to the Caribbean! We can walk around this island paradise in a couple of hours, but we shall find plenty of places to linger. From the white shell beaches and turquoise waters we shall wander along the easy paths looking for wildflowers, butterflies and day-flying moths.

Herm has its own colony of Puffins who often drift close to shore. On the nearby island of Jetho, Manx Shearwaters nest, so we shall also be hoping to see these masters of the sky shearing over the waves. As we walk we'll be keeping an eye out to sea for a glimpse of local cetaceans; Common, Bottlenose and Risso's Dolphin can all be seen from here. For some this is the perfect place to take a dip in the safe bays around the island.

After our day on Herm we return to Guernsey where we take the short flight to Alderney, our base for the next three nights.

**6-7** On Alderney we shall be joined by local naturalist John Horton who will wow us with his knowledge, not only of the local wildlife, but also about the fascinating local history.

In the evening we shall go looking for the bizarre Blonde Hedgehog and hope to see resident Barn Owl. We shall also be introduced to 'Moth Trapping'. For those who haven't been involved

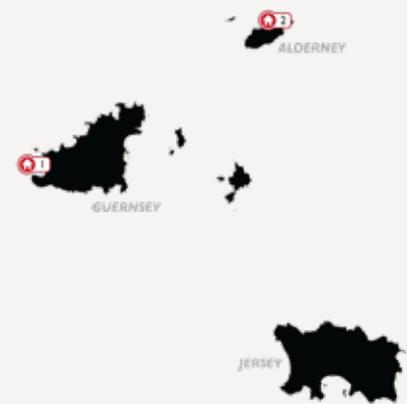


in this before beware, it is quite addictive and we hope to find some of the spectacular moths to be found in this part of the world, including the Cream-spot Tiger and Small Elephant Hawk-moth.

During the day we shall take walks around the island to some of the unspoilt beaches. Our local guide will be keen to share his knowledge of past events and how they have impacted on Alderney and the Channel Islands, as well as helping us search out the natural treasures that abound. There is some fabulous fauna and flora to be found here; particularly we shall be seeking out the handsome Dartford Warbler and Glanville Fritillary butterfly.

A highlight of our holiday will surely be our boat trip out on the turquoise waters around Alderney. This unspoilt area is great for marine life, but also an excellent feeding area for seabirds and seals. Our boat trip will get us up close and personal with the resident seabirds including Puffin, Shag, Guillemot, Gannet and Razorbill and with luck we might spot resident Bottlenose Dolphins and Grey Seals.

**8** After breakfast we leave Alderney to take our return flight to London.



### Outline Itinerary

- Day 1** Arrive at our comfortable hotel in Guernsey  
4 nights The Imperial Hotel, Guernsey
- Days 2-3** Exploration of Guernsey's cliff top paths and beautiful beaches, with a spot of rock pooling
- Day 4** Visit the island of Sark. Take in the sights by horse drawn carriage and maybe take afternoon tea or enjoy leisurely walks
- Day 5** Visit the tiny Caribbean-like island of Herm for flora and fauna and its own colony of Puffins. In the evening we shall take the short flight to Alderney, our base for the next 3 nights  
3 nights Braye Hotel, Alderney
- Days 6-7** Joined by local naturalist John Horton who will share his knowledge of the local wildlife and history, then look for Blonde Hedgehog in the evening. Also a fantastic boat trip around the shores of Alderney.
- Day 8** Fly back to London after breakfast

**Simon Eaves:** Dartford Warbler  
**Steve Down:** Guernsey Coast, Yellow Horned Poppy  
**Jean-Pol Grandmont:** Jersey Tiger Moth  
**Steve Osborne:** Firecrest  
**John Horton:** Blonde Hedgehog

# YORKSHIRE IN SUMMER



*"Our Yorkshire summer holiday is all about the simple pleasure of venturing into some of the county's most beautiful countryside, finding quiet locations and seeking out special flora and fauna. I'd come on this holiday even if I wasn't guiding it!"*  
Julian Sykes

Dates Sat 6 - Sat 13 Jul 2024  
Price £2,450  
Deposit £450 Single Supp £530

Leaders Julian Sykes & Ailie Brown

Weather The weather can be changeable, but in the main the temperature should not be below 15 °C and it can be warm or even hot.

Please be prepared, however, for wet and windy weather as well

Walking Mostly easy walking on level paths up to 3 miles, with perhaps a little more if rarities require it

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

Insects Could be a problem on occasion at this time of year

Accom Double, twin and single rooms all ensuite

Group 12

## Just some of what we hope to see:

Gannet	Golden Plover
Fulmar	Lapwing
Puffin	Red Grouse
Guillemot	Yellowhammer
Razorbill	Skylark
Red Kite	Corn Bunting
Honey Buzzard	Tree Sparrow
Peregrine Falcon	Bearded Tit
Hobby	Cetti's Warbler
Turtle Dove	Water Rail
Avocet	Bittern
Barn Owl	Spoonbill
Tawny Owl	
Little Owl	
Curlew	

Many folk don't quite know what wildlife diversity Yorkshire has to offer, so we'll take you into its hidden forests, along the magnificent coastline and into the heart of the Yorkshire Wolds.

- Just being in Yorkshire!
- Varied habitats, coast, grassland, reedbeds, forest and moorland
- Comfortable accommodation and great food
- Possibility of Honey Buzzard, Turtle Dove, Bittern, Bearded Tit
- Visit Bempton RSPB seabird cliffs at the peak of activity
- Experience wildlife through the eyes of artist Robert Fuller
- A relaxed holiday exploring the Yorkshire Nature Triangle

We arrive at our hotel near the delightful village of Little Weighton for the next three nights, having met at York Station.

Yorkshire is fast becoming one of the best wildlife watching destinations in the country, with the focus on a 'Nature Triangle', which offers some of the best of British wildlife, in particular birding.

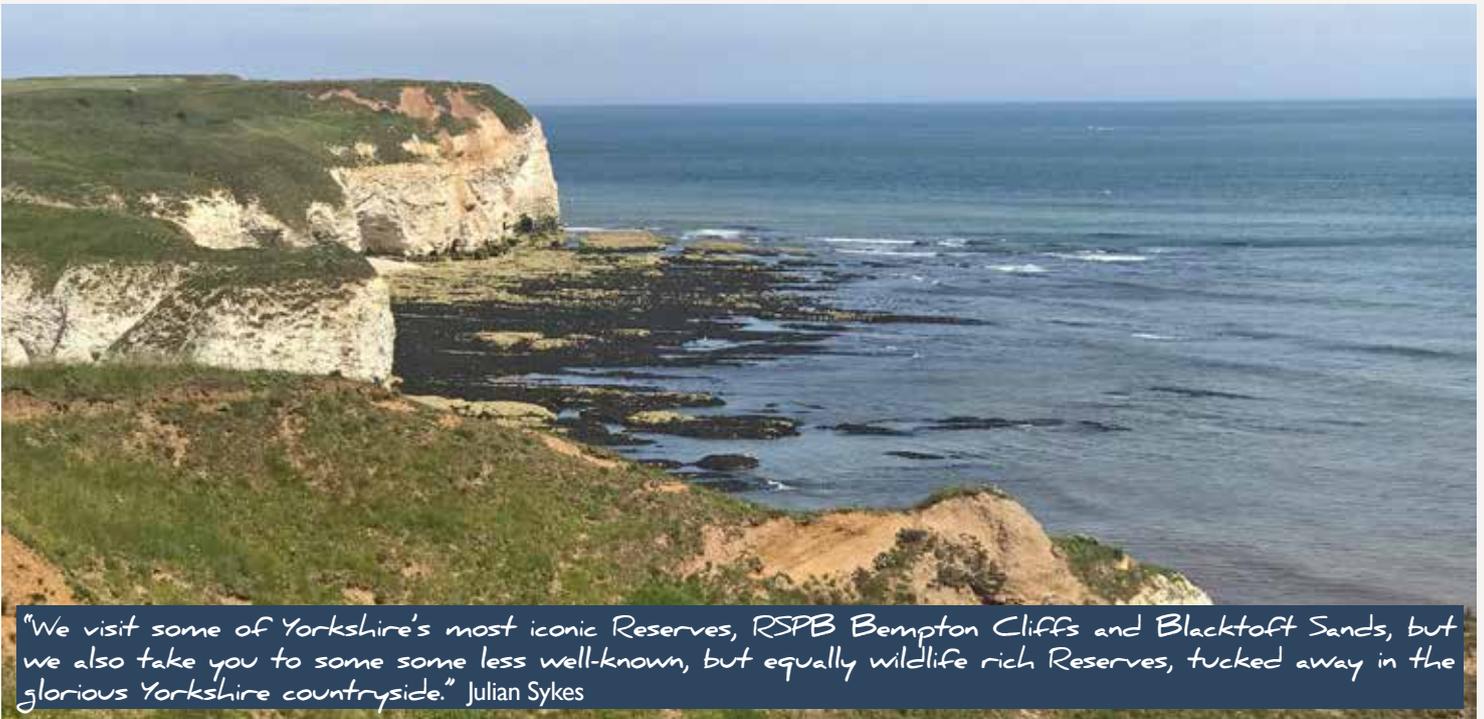
We shall be exploring a wide variety of habitats in the week ahead, some superb woodlands and the beautiful North Yorkshire Moors and wetlands with extensive reedbeds, along coastal cliffs and estuaries.

**2-3** The Wolds are an exceptionally beautiful area and home to soaring Red Kites, Peregrine, Corn Bunting and other grassland birds. Barn Owls frequent some of these valleys too, so as we enjoy the gentle rolling landscape captured in David Hockney's paintings of this area, we shall be scanning the hillsides and hedgerows for

these silent and efficient hunters. Along the quiet country lanes and disused railway tracks now reclaimed by nature, we shall be looking out for farmland bird species and butterflies such as the stunning Marbled White, flitting amongst the native plants typical of chalky soils, including numerous orchid species.

From our base here we shall visit RSPB Blacktoft Sands Reserve, a premier wetland with lagoons where Avocet nest on the islands and we'll look out for waders such as the stunning Spotted Redshank. Here there are vast reedbeds with large numbers of breeding Marsh Harriers, so we hope to get some great views of these fabulous birds. Bittern also breed here, so with luck we may spot one amongst the reeds or even get a 'fly past'. We make a special effort to see the elusive Bearded Tit and may glimpse Water Rail along the reed edges. This area is also a favoured hunting ground for Barn Owl.





*"We visit some of Yorkshire's most iconic Reserves, RSPB Bempton Cliffs and Blacktoft Sands, but we also take you to some some less well-known, but equally wildlife rich Reserves, tucked away in the glorious Yorkshire countryside." Julian Sykes*

North Cave Wetlands is just one of over 100 Reserves managed by the Yorkshire Wildlife Trust and continues to be developed out of a sand and gravel quarry. With some fantastic and innovative hides, it now hosts a large population of delightful breeding Avocets, but it also provides some varied habitats for warblers, ducks and grassland species. With luck we might catch sight of a Hobby feeding on the plentiful dragonfly population, or Water Vole feeding quietly in the waterways.

We shall explore the town of Beverley and its magnificent Minster, an amazing feat of construction dating back to 1250 AD.

**4-7** We transfer to our comfortable hotel overlooking the magnificent sweep of Filey Bay and Brigg in time for dinner.

Enroute we'll visit Robert Fuller's famous art gallery and fantastic wildlife garden. Robert appears on various TV programmes and happily shares his boundless enthusiasm, knowledge and commitment to his local area, its birds and mammals, some of whom we may well get to observe.

From our base in Filey this is a great time of year to visit the soaring cliffs of the East Yorkshire coast and a highlight of this holiday is undoubtedly our visit to Bempton.

We'll view it from the clifftops, host to Europe's largest mainland population of Gannets, which can number over 20,000 in spring and summer; so be prepared to be amazed when we get eyeball to eyeball views of Gannets hanging in the wind!



As well as Gannets we expect to see significant numbers of Razorbills, Guillemots, Fulmar; Kittiwake and Puffin and in the scrub and grasslands Whitethroats and Tree Sparrows are often also present. Other coastal sites we may visit include Flamborough Head and Hornsea Mere.

If weather permits we may take a boat trip out from Bridlington to view Bempton cliffs from below.

We shall also explore the glorious tapestry landscape of the North Yorkshire Moors. In this moorland landscape we shall be looking for Red Grouse, Golden Plover, Curlew and Lapwing.

In the vast forests we shall look for Honey Buzzard and Turtle Dove, all tricky species to catch up with, but in scenery such as this the hunt can be part of the pleasure. We shall also be making an evening visit to forested areas looking and listening for Nightjar.

**8** After breakfast we shall transfer back to York station where we say our farewells.



### Outline Itinerary

- Day 1** Arrive at York Station. For those arriving by car, vehicles can be left at the long stay car park for the week. Transfer to Little Weighton 3 nights Rowley Manor Hotel
- Days 2-3** Visit Blacktoft Sands and North Cave Wetlands, as well as the Yorkshire Wolds and the historic town of Beverley.
- Days 4-7** Transfer to our coastal location hotel. Explore East Yorkshire area. Visit Bempton Cliffs, Flamborough Head and the North Yorkshire Moors, plus Dalby and Cropton Forest. 4 nights at White Lodge Hotel, Filey
- Day 8** After breakfast we travel back to York station where we say our farewells.  
  
Make your way home, or if you wish, extend your holiday with a weekend in this beautiful city

**Chris Piper:** Gannets, Yorkshire Coast, Whitethroat, Marsh Harrier  
**Sally Nowell:** Puffin  
**John Robinson:** Marbled White

# THE FARNE ISLANDS



*"The sheer numbers of nesting Puffins, Guillemots, Razorbills, Kittiwakes and Shags is simply astonishing, with every ledge and crevice being taken by one of these gorgeous seabirds. We slowly cruise around the islands seeing this wonderful spectacle, along with 'hauled out' Grey Seals. These cities and rookeries are such an incredible experience, one we tend to take for granted in Northumberland - unsurprising as the Farnes and Coquet Island have it by the bucket load!" Julian Sykes*

Dates Sat 13 - Sat 20 Jul 2024  
 Price £2,595  
 Deposit £450 Single Supp £420

Leaders Julian Sykes and Ailie Brown

Weather Variable, with a good chance of sunshine, (10°-20°C) but on the boat trips waterproofs, warm clothing and walking boots are needed

Walking Walks of up to two miles, mainly on level tracks around Reserves

Boat Trips Our trip to the Farne Islands lasts 4.5 hrs, The trip to Coquet Island lasts 2 hrs & North Sea RHIB tour lasts 4 hrs. This trip can be over choppy seas

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

Insects Could be a problem, especially on the inland day

Accom Double, twin and single rooms all ensuite

Group 10

## Just some of what we hope to see:

Common Scoter	Little Tern
Manx Shearwater	auks
Spoonbill	Rock Pipit
Osprey	Dipper
Red Kite	Willow Tit
Goshawk	Common Crossbill
Avocet	Bottlenose Dolphin
Spotted Redshank	Grey Seal
Black-tailed Godwit	Dark Green Fritillary
Great Skua	Lindisfarne Helliborine
Little Gull	Pyramidal Orchid
Arctic Tern	
Roseate Tern	

Fabulous summer birdwatching, as we explore the coastlines, forests and moorlands of this corner of historic Northumberland, based around the famous Farne Islands.

- Boat tours around the Inner and Outer Farne Islands, experiencing a seabird spectacle
- The famous Kielder Forest for Red Squirrel, Osprey and Common Crossbill
- A day on Holy Island for birds, butterflies and botany
- Beautiful coastline with long sandy beaches, jagged rocks and migrant waders
- Superb RHIB tour into the North Sea for seabirds and cetaceans
- A trip out to Coquet Island to see breeding Roseate Terns and Grey Seals
- Staying in a wonderful hotel in the shadow of the iconic Bamburgh Castle

We are based in the beautiful, coastal town of Bamburgh, in the shadow of its famous historic castle, perfectly placed to explore the wonderful scenery and fantastic wildlife of this fabulous north east county. This quaint hotel is noted for its excellent local and wholesome cuisine, with portions to satisfy the keenest of appetites. If time allows we might get a chance to venture out locally for a short time at Monks House Pool or Stag Rocks, to kickstart our daily checklist.

**2-7** This is a full and diverse week, where a certain amount of flexibility is required, due to the uncertainty of the weather and wildlife on offer, with a possibility of scarce and rare migrants. Our lovely hotel is within easy reach of the North Sea and an easy walk along the many coastal paths can produce Northern Wheatear, Linnet, singing Reed Bunting and possibly Yellow Wagtail. Offshore we shall find Eider, or the local 'Cuddy Ducks' (after

St Cuthbert's) loafing around the bays, along with Red-breasted Merganser, Cormorant, Guillemot and possibly Common Scoter. South of Bamburgh is Newton by the Sea, where a stop overlooking the North Sea can produce a Little Tern fishing in the beautiful bay, along with more potential seaduck. There are a couple of excellent pools here that are always worthy of investigation, as migrant waders tend to make a stop here on their journey south.

Our longest drive is further south to an area close to Newcastle Airport, where we search for two key species – Red Kite and Willow Tit. We shall spend the day around here visiting some productive local Reserves, which will also produce some of the commoner species found in the county.

Thousands of seabirds breed in Northumberland and we'll enjoy special boat trips to see them astonishingly close up. A trip around the Farne



"The crossing starts well, with a fairly close flyby Gannet, followed by our first auks flying low past the boat. There's a commotion and our attention is quickly diverted to a small pod of Bottlenose Dolphins playing and leaping out of the water. I cannot help pinching myself, all this in the opening 20 minutes of the tour! Then it's our first Puffins, lots swimming right next to the boat. As we get closer to the sea cliffs there are literally 1000's of birds. The sight, sound and smell are an arrest to the senses - flippin heck it's good!" Julian Sykes



Islands needs no introduction and will be one of the highlights of the week. Our boat-based tours here includes trips around both the Inner and Outer Farne Islands, where we shall see birds at incredibly close range - expect Kittiwakes, Guillemots, Razorbills, Puffins, Shags and Eider within feet of you - a photographer's dream!

Arctic, Sandwich and Common Terns all nest here, along with inquisitive Grey Seals, which lift their heads out of the water as we pass. A second boat trip takes us around RSPB Coquet Island where 90% of the UK's Roseate Terns breed. It's a great opportunity to see this scarce breeding species fishing and loafing around on the rocks adjacent to their nesting boxes.

The target of our third boat trip is to glimpse one of the small groups of White-beaked Dolphins in these waters. This little known cetacean spends its summer along the Northumberland coastline, feeding in the fish-rich waters and trying to avoid their larger cousins who they see as a threat. This 10m RHIB tour takes us out into deeper water and as a consequence we have a chance to see Gannets fishing, Great Skua and possibly Manx Shearwater.

One day (or at least part of it!) we shall be crossing the causeway over to Holy Island, which is tide dependant. This is primarily for one of the rarest plants in the UK - Lindisfarne Hellaborine, which is endemic to this beautiful island. The unique sandy soil is also home to other species such as Marsh Hellaborine, Northern Marsh and Common Spotted Orchids with a chance of Coralroot too.



The rest of our time will be spent wandering around the island looking for scarce butterflies and birds in this special place.

Our coastal hopscotch day is punctuated with visits to the pools and wetlands just inland from Druridge Bay. Reed and Sedge Warblers sing from the extensive phragmites bed, along with the more difficult Grasshopper Warbler. We hope to encounter the UK's most northerly breeding Avocets at one of the Reserves, along with Common Snipe, Redshank, Dunlin and Green Sandpiper. There are usually a few surprises, with Little Gull, Mediterranean Gull or Spoonbill being distinct possibilities.

One day we drive inland to the mighty Kielder Water – a huge reservoir that's surrounded by coniferous forest. Due to the construction of platforms, it offers the chance of finding the nest of an Osprey and if our luck is in, one fishing in the lake itself. A stop enroute could also produce Grey Wagtail on the river and we shall also be keeping an eye out for game birds on the drive across the moorland. Typical pine forest species all breed in Kielder and we shall look for Common Crossbill and Red Squirrel in this vast forest - there's always a chance of finding a Goshawk here too.

8 After our last 'full English' breakfast we say our fond farewells and conclude this 'canny' visit to the north east.



### Outline Itinerary

**Day 1** We meet at Newcastle train station or The Victoria Hotel, Bamburgh for a 7 night stay

**Days 2-7** Exploration of the coast, forest and moorland, including three boat trips around The Farne Islands and Lindisfarne, the Farnes Deeps and Coquet Island

**Day 8** We say our farewells and depart after breakfast

---

**Lesley Gadsden:** Puffins  
**Tim Drew:** Inner Farnes  
**Mark Denman:** Kittewake and Sandwich Tern  
**James Glover:** Roseate Tern, Snipe  
**Simon Eaves:** Guillemot  
**Chrissie Nicholson:** Common Seal



# MONGOLIA



*"Mongolia is one of those mythical places I have always dreamed of visiting, with Pallas's Cat and Snow Leopard. I think this is going to be an experience of a lifetime!"*  
Sally Nowell

**Dates** Tue 16 Jul - Fri 2 Aug 2024

**Price** £9,975

**Deposit** £1,995 **Single Supp** £650

**Leaders** Sally Nowell and Ecotours guide

**Flights** Korean Airlines, scheduled  
Outbound: Overnight, Heathrow-Ulaanbaatar  
Inbound: Overnight, Ulaanbaatar-Heathrow  
(outbound and inbound via Seoul)  
Internal: Ulaanbaatar-Khovd-Ulaanbaatar

**Weather** Generally warm or hot during the day, but it can be chilly at night and in the early mornings. Cold weather can be expected at higher altitudes and rain is possible any time. Day temperatures 15-25°C, while night-time temperatures in the mountains can drop significantly

**Walking** From short easy walks to more moderate in the mountains. While looking for Snow Leopard there may be long periods of waiting and scanning. We shall try to limit the walking by using 4x4s to get as close as possible, depending on the terrain (often rough) however, medium distance walking on uneven, rocky terrain may be encountered

**Meals** All included from dinner on Day 2 to lunch on Day 17

**Insects** Mosquitoes can be a nuisance, so bring repellent

**Accom** Twin and single rooms/yurts/chalets, ensuite at hotels and Steppe Nomads Camp chalets, shared facilities at Snow Leopard camp

**Group** 12

## Just some of what we hope to see:

Snow Leopard	Steppe Eagle
Pallas's Cat	Lammergeier
Mongolian Gazelle	Long-eared Owl
Saiga Antelope	Eurasian Eagle Owl
Steppe Polecat	Long-tailed Rosefinch
Corsac Fox	Azure Tit
Pallas's Sandgrouse	White-naped Crane
Altai Snowcock	Demoiselle Crane
Guldenstadt's Redstart	Swan Goose
Amur Falcon	Bar-headed Goose

An array of sumptuous wildlife in a spectacular country full of surprises and experiences you will never forget, but the sight of a Snow Leopard is surely one of those 'stand out' moments.

- Chance to see Snow Leopard without lengthy high-altitude trekking
- A holiday that takes you in search of the elusive and endangered Pallas's Cat
- Experience some of Mongolia's unique culture
- Overnight in traditional comfortable furnished gers
- Visit some of Mongolia's most spectacular National Parks
- Track down mammals you are unlikely to see anywhere else in the world
- A fabulous list of some stunning birds, including three crane species

**1-3** We have an overnight flight to Seoul, where we stay for one night. On Day 3 we fly to Ulaanbaatar, where after checking into our hotel we'll go birding beside the Tuul River in search of Azure-winged Magpie, Long-tailed Rosefinch, Azure Tit and White-capped Penduline Tit. We also hope for Black-eared Kites and Amur Falcons.

**4-9** We fly to Khovd and then drive to our remote camp. The camp, in the foothills of the Jargalant Mountains, overlooks semi-desert to a huge lake. Facilities are shared and basic, but our local team will provide everything we need with separate facilities for men and women and a generator providing hot water.

For the next five days our target is the elusive Snow Leopard. Walking is variable and may be on rocky, uneven or steep terrain, so basic fitness is required, however, many observation points can

be reached by 4X4 vehicle, or a short walk on almost flat terrain.

We'll scan key areas where animals regularly hunt. We may need patience, but there are always things to enjoy - soaring raptors, playful Siberian Marmots, Siberian Ibex, Altai Snowcocks and the stunning Guldenstadt's Redstart. At night we'll take torches to search for several species of delightful Jerboas.

In the adjacent wetlands we look for Pallas's Sandgrouse, Dalmatian Pelican, Whiskered and Gull-billed Terns, Red-crested Pochard and Citrine Wagtail. Henderson's Ground Jay will be one of our main targets in the semi-desert area around the camp.

**10** We leave our camp and drive to Khovd, stopping on the way along the shores of Khar-Us Lake for ducks, gulls and migrating waders in the shallow bays and marshy areas.



*"With an impressive mammal list that holds both Snow Leopard and Pallas's Cat and a bird list that holds three crane species, Goldenstadt's Redstart, Altai Snowcock and Pallas's Sandgouse - this is a real treasure trove of wildlife delights." Sally Nowell*



We shall arrive in Ulaanbaatar in the evening and then spend the night in a comfortable hotel in the capital.

**11** We leave in the morning and drive east, stopping at small lakes enroute searching for Mongolian Lark, Horned Lark, Pere David's Snowfinch, Upland Buzzard, Steppe Eagle, Golden Eagle, Demoiselle Crane, Ruddy Shelduck, Mongolian Gull, White-naped Crane, terns and shorebirds. We'll overnight in a hotel in Chinggis town.

**12** Today we visit Toson Hulstai Nature Reserve, which is home to tens of thousands of Mongolian Gazelles. There will be many raptors around us, including Upland Buzzard, Steppe Eagle, Cinereous Vulture, Saker Falcon, Amur Falcon, Asian and Mongolian Short-toed Lark and Mongolian Lark. Richard's and Blyth's Pipits are also found in the steppe grasslands.

**13** The village where we are staying has trees and shrubs which are rare in the vast steppe region. These attract many species such as Long-eared Owl, Eurasian Hoopoe and Oriental Turtle Dove. After breakfast, we head to Khar-Yamaat Reserve looking for mammals. The rocky outcrops are home to several families of the rare and beautiful Pallas's Cat and we hope to find them during the day close to their den.

**14-15** Today we start driving west to Gun Galuut Nature Reserve, home to a strong population of Pallas's Cat and Argali Sheep. We'll scan the rocky outcrops in the mornings and late afternoons for the cats hunting



for Brandt's Voles, their favourite prey. Argalis are usually seen in small groups grazing on the mountainside and with some driving and scanning we should be able to find them.

We shall explore the river near our campsite for migratory songbirds, including Pallas's Grasshopper and Pallas's Two-barred Warbler. Lakes here hold Baikal Teal, Falcated Duck, Grey-headed Lapwing and Grey-tailed Tattler. White-naped Cranes nest in the marshes and we should find them in family groups, along with other crane species including Common and the daintier Demoiselle. The lakes attract five species of tern and we may see Bar-headed and Swan Goose, Ruddy Shelducks, Garganey and "Siberian" White-winged (Stejneger's) Scoter. As we drive across the steppe we shall look for Asian Short-toed, Horned and Mongolian Lark, Isabelline and Northern Wheatear and Richard's and Blyth's Pipit. We'll particularly be on the lookout for the striking Pere David's Snowfinch that inhabits the steppes.

**16** Leaving this magical place in the morning, we'll visit Terelj National Park's spectacular rock formations, home to Lammergeier, Eastern Buzzard and a good selection of woodland birds. In the afternoon we drive back to Ulaanbaatar.

**17-18** We travel to the airport for our flight to Seoul, where we have another overnight stay, before our flight back to London.



### Outline Itinerary

- Days 1-3** Overnight flight to Seoul, for a hotel stay, then fly to Ulaanbaatar for a night  
1 night BW Incheon Airport, Seoul  
1 night Corporate Hotel, Ulaanbaatar
- Days 4-9** Fly to Khovd and transfer to remote ger camp for Snow Leopard, Saiga, Ibex and birds  
6 nights Snow Leopard camp
- Day 10** Fly back to Ulaanbaatar  
1 night Corporate Hotel
- Day 11** Drive to Chinggis town  
1 night Khanburged Hotel
- Days 12-13** Visit Toson Khulstai Reserve and Khar-Yamaat Reserve - 2 nights  
Bayan Gurem Resort, Tumentsogt
- Days 14-15** Drive to our ger camp at Gun Galuut, where we stay in chalets  
2 nights Steppe Nomads Camp
- Days 16-18** Fly to Ulaanbaatar for a hotel stay, Fly to Seoul for a hotel stay, then fly home, arriving in UK on day 18  
1 night Corporate Hotel, Ulaanbaatar  
1 night BW Incheon Airport, Seoul

**Milan Vogirn:** Pallas's Cat  
**Attila Steiner:** Yurts, Snow Leopard, Argali Sheep, Demoiselle Cranes  
**John Oates:** Amur Falcon

# AMAZON RIVER CRUISE



"As well as an exciting list of birds it is the mammals that excite me too and none more than the Amazon River Dolphin. I have never seen them and the thought that we may get to see them well is especially thrilling. We have good chances of Tucuxi - another river dolphin - too."  
Roy Atkins

**Dates** Sat 17 Aug - Sun 1 Sep 2024

**Price** £7,235

**Deposit** £1,445 **Single Supp** £1,995

**Leaders** Roy Atkins and local guides

**Flights** British Airways, scheduled  
Outbound: Overnight, Heathrow-Sao Paulo  
Inbound: Overnight, Sao Paulo-Heathrow  
Internal, Latam: Sao Paulo-Manaus return

**Weather** Likely to be warm to hot, with temps in high 20s to mid 30s, but cooler at night. It is the dry season and this is the driest month, but there is always a chance of a shower, so waterproofs are essential

**Walking** Excursions are by vehicle, boat and on foot. During the cruise part of the tour we often use motor canoes for quite a lot of the time. We'll not always land during excursions, but where landing is an option, walks are at a gentle pace on easy terrain. A few of the places that we plan to visit don't have forest trails

**Health** A good level of fitness and agility is required to get in and out of the canoes and for the forest walks. Please take advice from your local travel clinic/doctor on recommended vaccinations

**Meals** All included from lunch on Day 2 to lunch on Day 15

**Insects** There may be biting insects in some areas, so repellent is essential

**Accom** Twin and single rooms/cabins all ensuite. Cabins onboard Iracema have twin bunks

**Group** 16

## Just some of what we hope to see:

Amazon River Dolphin	Guianan Cock-of-the-rock
Giant Otter	Hoatzin
10+ monkey species	Blue-and-yellow Macaw
Tucuxi River Dolphin	Bare-necked Fruitcrow
Three sloth species	Capuchinbird
Amazonian Umbrellabird	Wire-tailed Manakin
Pompadour Cotinga	White-throated Toucan

## Amazon River Dolphins and chance of Giant Otter, Tucuxi, lots of monkeys, sloths, plus lekking Cock-of-the-rock and an exciting range of birds as we cruise deep into the Amazon

- Cruising on the Amazon River and exploring tributaries from motorised canoes
- Excellent chance of close encounters with Amazon River Dolphin
- Visits to a Cock-of-the-rock lek - an astonishing sight, with other great birds nearby
- Good chance of Tucuxi, Giant Otter and an amazing selection of monkeys
- Amazonian Umbrellabird, Capuchinbird, Pompadour Cotinga, Hoatzin and more
- Landings on several days to explore the forest and islands on foot
- Comfortable boat, the Iracema, with air-conditioned and ensuite cabins

**1-3** We travel to Manaus, via Sao Paulo, where we stay for two nights. If time permits we'll start our bird list with species such as White-throated Toucan, Black-necked Araçari, Black Nunbird, Yellow-rumped Cacique and Little Chachalaca. There are mammals here too such as Three-toed Sloth and Red-rumped Agouti, as well as our first monkeys - perhaps Pied Tamarin or the strange-looking Golden-faced Saki.

An early start takes us to the outskirts of Manaus and the Ducke Reserve. Ideally, we want to be there at first light to view across the tree tops from a 42m high canopy tower! A great range of birds are possible including Caica Parrot, Blue-headed Parrot and Red-bellied Macaw, plus toucans and mixed flocks of tanagers, including Turquoise Tanager. After a late breakfast we drive to our next lodge with the lure of an active Guianan Cock-of-the-rock lek!



We'll pay our first visit this afternoon and after sunset, we may try for some nocturnal mammals, owls and potoos around the lodge.

**4** After a second visit to the lek, we'll search for other birds such as Black-spotted Barbet, Bronzy Jacamar, White-lored Euphonia and both Guianan Red and Purple-breasted Cotingas, as well as Golden-handed Tamarin - a black monkey with orange hands and feet! After lunch we head back to Manaus, where we board our vessel for the main part of the holiday - 9 days exploring the River Amazon by boat and on foot. Still docked in Manaus this evening we can relax and watch flocks of parrots fly to roost from the deck of our boat.

**5-13** Our itinerary onboard the boat is dependent on weather and water levels, so the following is what we hope to do over





*"Imagine cruising down the river watching out for dolphins, the occasional parrot or toucan flying overhead, investigating narrow channels and islands by motorised canoes and making landings on forested islands to see wonderful birds and spotting monkeys in the trees - it just sounds idyllic!"*  
Roy Atkins

our time cruising the Amazon River. Our captain is experienced in knowing the best places to go under whatever conditions, so we are in good hands. We may change the order of the sites or swap some for places not mentioned, as we need to be flexible to make the most of our time. We'll cruise deep into the Amazon Rainforest, where the habitat is always either Varzea Forest, which is flooded annually, or Terra Firme Forest which is never flooded. Sometimes we may be far from shore as the river is very wide, but our main goal is to explore the Amazon's tributaries and islands, where we'll be surrounded by lush vegetation. For this, we'll use motor canoes, which are open-topped with wooden benches and back supports. We'll be able to watch wildlife and take photos as we explore the numerous streams and islands. Wherever possible, we'll disembark for short walks for birding and to explore this enchanted forest. These are some of the places we hope to get to...

We shall likely sail eastward to explore Janauacá and the Solimoes River. Glossy Antshrike, Hoatzin, Little Cuckoo, Yellow-browed Tody-flycatcher and Sunbittern are possible and we hope to see monkeys such as Golden-backed Squirrel-Monkey and Large-headed (Brown) Capuchin.

The Río Negro heads northwest of Manaus to the mouth of Acajutuba River and it is here we'll have our best chances to see Amazon River Dolphin. Interactions between the dolphins and humans started here some 25 years ago and a very curious pod often come very close, but be aware nothing is guaranteed.



We'll look out for Green-and-rufous Kingfisher, Black-chinned Antbird and many other species, before moving on to explore the Anavilhanas Archipelago. Here we'll look for Rusty-backed Spinetail, Black-crested Antshrike, Tropical Gnatcatcher, Varzea Schiffornis and delightful Wire-tailed Manakin to name a few and we should keep our eyes open for Giant Otter and Tucuxi Dolphins.

We hope to explore Jaú National Park, one of the largest protected areas in Brazil, with dense rainforest habitat providing chances of Ivory-billed Aracari, Black Caracara, Pompadour Cotinga, Bronzy Jacamar, Black-fronted Nunbird, Long-billed Woodcreeper, Undulated Tinamou, Agami Heron, Festive Amazon and plenty more.

Novo Airão, also along the Negro River, provides a real possibility of Amazonian Umbrellabird, as well as Pied Puffbird, Ash-breasted Antbird, Klages's Antwren, Crane Hawk and Grey-headed Kite. We'll hope to walk some Terra Firme Forest trails near the Ariáú River, where we'll look for birds such as Green Oropendola, Musician Wren, Amazonian Pygmy Owl, Yellow-billed Jacamar and the strange looking Capuchinbird, plus a host of other species such as macaws, hummingbirds, toucans, tanagers and more chances of dolphins.

**14-16** We disembark in Manaus for our afternoon flight to Sao Paulo, where we overnight. Day 15 is a relaxed start, before our flight to London, arriving on Day 16.



### Outline Itinerary

- Days 1-3** Overnight flight to Sao Paulo, then onward flight to Manaus where we stay for two nights. Visit Ducke Reserve and a Cock-of-the-rock lek  
1 night Tropical Executive Hotel  
1 night Pousada Aldeia Mari Mari
- Day 4** After a second lek visit we board our comfortable boat - 10 nights Iracema
- Days 5-13** The boat itinerary will be flexible as it is weather/water-level dependent, but we hope to visit the following areas. Eastward out of Manaus, to Janauacá and the Solimoes River. The mouth of Acajutuba River, for Amazon River Dolphin, then on to the Anavilhanas Archipelago. The protected area of Jaú NP then on to Novo Airão for forest walks near the Ariáú River. We use motor canoes for excursions to explore the tributaries and islands, with some landings where possible
- Days 14-16** Disembark in Manaus then an afternoon flight to Sao Paulo for an overnight stay, before our flight back to the UK, arriving Day 16

**Roy Atkins:** Cock-of-the-rock  
**Trogon Tours:** Iracema boat, Scale-backed Antbird, Wire-tailed Manakin  
**Norton Defeis:** Amazon River Dolphin  
**Thomas Divileck:** Capuchinbird

# CANTABRIA



*"Despite a high density of Iberian Wolves here, they can be very difficult to see, being naturally shy and distrusting, following decades of persecution. Quietly waiting for this elusive mammal at dawn and dusk can be very rewarding, as young leave the den and spend time playing with their siblings, under the watchful eye of their mother – just incredible." Julian Sykes*

Dates Sun 18 - Tues 27 Aug 2024  
 Price TBC  
 Deposit TBC Single Supp £TBC

Leader Julian Sykes  
 Flights Vueling, scheduled,  
 Outbound: Morning, Gatwick-Bilbao  
 Inbound: Evening, Bilbao-Gatwick  
 Weather Probably a mixture of sun and showers (15°-30°C), warmer in lowland areas and on coast, but will be cooler in the mountains and on the boat trip  
 Walking There will be some short easy walks on level paths, but some of the watchpoints can involve steep walks up uneven tracks through vegetation  
 Health A decent level of fitness is recommended but not essential  
 Meals All included from lunch on Day 1 to lunch on Day 10  
 Insects Biting insects are not usually a problem but repellent may be useful  
 Accom Twin and single rooms all ensuite  
 Group 7

## Just some of what we hope to see:

Cantabrian Brown Bear	Short-toed Eagle
Iberian Wolf	Long-tailed Skua
European Wildcat	Sabine's Gull
Wild Boar	Black Tern
Southern Chamois	Black Woodpecker
Snow Vole	Snowfinch
Spoonbill	Alpine Chough
European Storm Petrel	Rufous-tailed
Great Shearwater	Rock Thrush
Cory's Shearwater	Iberian Chiffchaff
Lammergeier	Red-backed Shrike
Egyptian Vulture	Wallcreeper
Honey Buzzard	Alpine Accentor
Golden Eagle	

Julian Sykes: Cantabrian Brown Bear, European Wildcat, Iberian Wolf, Sabine's Gull, Chamois  
 Gaye Henson: Collado de Llesba  
 Tim Drew: Wallcreeper

## A wonderful opportunity to combine the fantastic wildlife and scenery of the Cantabrian Mountains and the coastline of the Asturias Costa Verde.

- Rare mammals of Europe - Iberian Wolf and Cantabrian Brown Bear
- Good chance of European Wildcat in the meadows
- High mountains for Wallcreeper, Alpine Chough and Alpine Accentor
- Breathtaking scenery in the Cantabrian Mountains
- Full day at sea chumming for seabirds from Gijon
- Spanish Ibx, Southern Chamois, Snow Vole, Red Deer
- Lots of seabirds – petrels, shearwaters, skuas, terns, gulls

Fly to Bilbao and drive straight along the coast, stopping off at the excellent Santona Marshes briefly to kick off the tour checklist with Cattle and Little Egrets, Spoonbill, Curlew, Western Yellow-legged Gull, Dunlin and Ringed Plovers. With a bit of luck, we might even find Whimbrel, Ruff and Little Stint, making their way back south for winter.

We continue to our accommodation in Boca de Hurgano, on the edge of the Picos de Europa National Park. Late afternoon, we shall make our first local excursion looking for either Iberian Wolf or European Wildcat, which in reality takes a lot of patience and luck. However, we shall be in the best position to encounter one of these elusive mammals, due to our local guides local knowledge, which is invaluable.



**2-4** The next three days will be spent primarily searching for the Iberian Wolves at dawn and dusk, as this is the time when they are most active during daylight hours. The Sierra de Riano forms part of the Cordillera Cantábrica, which holds most of Spain's 3000+ wolves, a marked and welcome increase since the estimated lows of the 1970's.

During our time watching and waiting we should also see other mammals including Fox, Wild Boar and Red and Roe Deer, some of the wolves known prey.

Off-road vehicles will be used to access the remote areas and local knowledge of their dens will be invaluable. Although seeing these beautiful canines will be our main priority, we shall also utilise the main daylight hours for other wildlife excursions, looking for Southern Chamois, Spanish





*"If you want to see quality seabirds up close and personal then a pelagic tour from NW Spain is an ideal opportunity. We can get fantastic views of Great and Cory's Shearwaters together – being able to explain their differences is very special. I love seeing tiny European Storm Petrels, feeding on the chum surrounded by their larger cousins, but the sight of a gorgeous Sabine's Gull is an absolute delight." Julian Sykes*

Ibex and rare Broom Hare, found only in these mountains.

One day we shall drive back into the Picos de Europa National Park, where we shall take the 600m cable car ascent up to Fuente De, looking for scarce montane breeding wildlife such as Wallcreeper, Snowfinch, Alpine Accentor and Snow Vole. If we are really lucky a Lammergeier might be seen amongst the much commoner Griffon Vultures.

**5-7** After another morning visit to one of the watchpoints for either wolf or wildcat, we shall return to the accommodation, collect our luggage and head off west along the edge of the mountains.

Enroute we stop for lunch and a welcome rest in the heat of the day. We shall then continue the drive to Pola de Somiedo, where we shall spend the next three nights at a fabulous rural hotel, in the heart of the Cantabrian Brown Bear country.

The next two full days we shall drive and walk through this incredibly scenic mountain range in search of Cantabrian Bears, which is a sub-species of the much wider-spread Brown Bear, that occurs in Northern hemisphere. Unfortunately, through hunting and habitat destruction, they were reduced to very low numbers in Spain but are now making a fantastic recovery. These mountains are a stronghold for the species and we have a good chance of spotting one on these vegetated scree slopes feeding on Hazel and Buckthorn.

These fabulous karst limestone mountains are also home to Southern Chamois, Red and Roe Deer, which we should find as we scan for bears. This is a very special place with wonderful natural beauty, plus some fantastic birds such as Golden Eagle, Honey Buzzard, Red-backed Shrike and Rufous-tailed Rock-thrush.

**8-9** After a final look for Cantabrian Brown Bear, we leave the mountains and drive north back to the 'Costa Verde', where we shall make our way to the estuary town of Villaviciosa. We are only a few miles from Gijon where we spend our final full day in NW Spain, which is on a boat in the North Atlantic. Specialist charters have been sailing out into these waters for several years now, with excellent results attracting seabirds. This pelagic will offer fantastic photographic opportunities, with shearwaters, petrels, skuas and other seabirds feeding at the back of the boat – making for a day to remember and a fantastic finale to the holiday.

**10** Depending on the time of the return flight, we may have a chance for a stop at one of the coastal wetland sites enroute to Bilbao Airport. A great way to end the holiday.



#### Outline Itinerary

- Day 1 Fly from Gatwick to Bilbao and transfer to our hotel in Boca de Huergano  
4 nights Hotel Tierra de la Reina
- Days 2-4 Three full days in the Cantabrian Mountains searching for Iberian Wolf and European Wildcat
- Day 5 Transfer to Pola de Somiedo for 3 nights Hotel Castillo de Alba
- Days 6-7 Two full days searching for Cantabrian Brown Bear near Villablino
- Day 8 Transfer to our hotel in Villaviciosa 2 nights ???
- Day 9 Full day pelagic trip on board our boat from Gijon
- Day 10 Transfer to Bilbao for our evening flight home, stopping enroute if time allows



# NOVA SCOTIA



*"The ideal combo for the perfect week watching wildlife? Try a morning with the bright warblers, vireos and flycatchers on Brier Island, followed by an afternoon in the company of truly awesome Humpbacks in the Bay of Fundy. You can't beat it!"*  
Darren Rees

Dates Sat 24 Aug - Sun 1 Sep 2024  
Price £4,495  
Deposit £895 Single Supp £400

Leaders Darren Rees and one from our team  
Flights Air Canada, scheduled  
Outbound: Morning, Heathrow-Halifax  
Inbound: Overnight, Halifax-Heathrow  
Possible transit stop for inbound  
Weather Warm and sunny with a chance of showers  
Cooler on boats  
May experience coastal fog (15°-25°C)  
Walking 1-2 miles on easy tracks  
Light footwear recommended  
Meals All included from dinner on Day 1 to dinner on Day 8  
Insects A few biting insects may be encountered, so bring repellent  
Accom Twin and single rooms all ensuite  
Group 10

## Just some of what we hope to see:

Humpback Whale	Ruby-throated Hummingbird
Northern Right Whale	Boreal Chickadee
Fin Whale	Red-breasted Nuthatch
Minke Whale	Cedar Waxwing
White-sided Dolphin	Red-eyed Vireo
Great Shearwater	Northern Parula
Sooty Shearwater	Black-throated Green Warbler
Wilson's Storm Petrel	Black-and-white Warbler
Bald Eagle	Blackburnian Warbler
Hooded Merganser	American Redstart
Killdeer	Ovenbird
Semi-palmated Sandpiper	Common Yellowthroat
Least Sandpiper	Northern Waterthrush
Short-billed Dowitcher	Eastern Chipmunk
Red-necked Phalarope	Beaver
Grey Phalarope	
Belted Kingfisher	

## Get close-up with Humpback Whales, plus a chance of rare Northern Right Whales. Great migrant birds, with flocks of shearwaters, petrels and phalaropes.

- Big whales close-up from short, sheltered boat trips
- Humpback, Fin and Northern Right Whales
- Fantastic migrant warblers, flycatchers and raptors
- Flocks of shearwaters, phalaropes and petrels
- Wild boreal forests running down to beautiful rocky shores
- Canada's Eastern Maritimes, only six hours away
- Small group, at a quiet shoreline lodge, on magical Brier Island

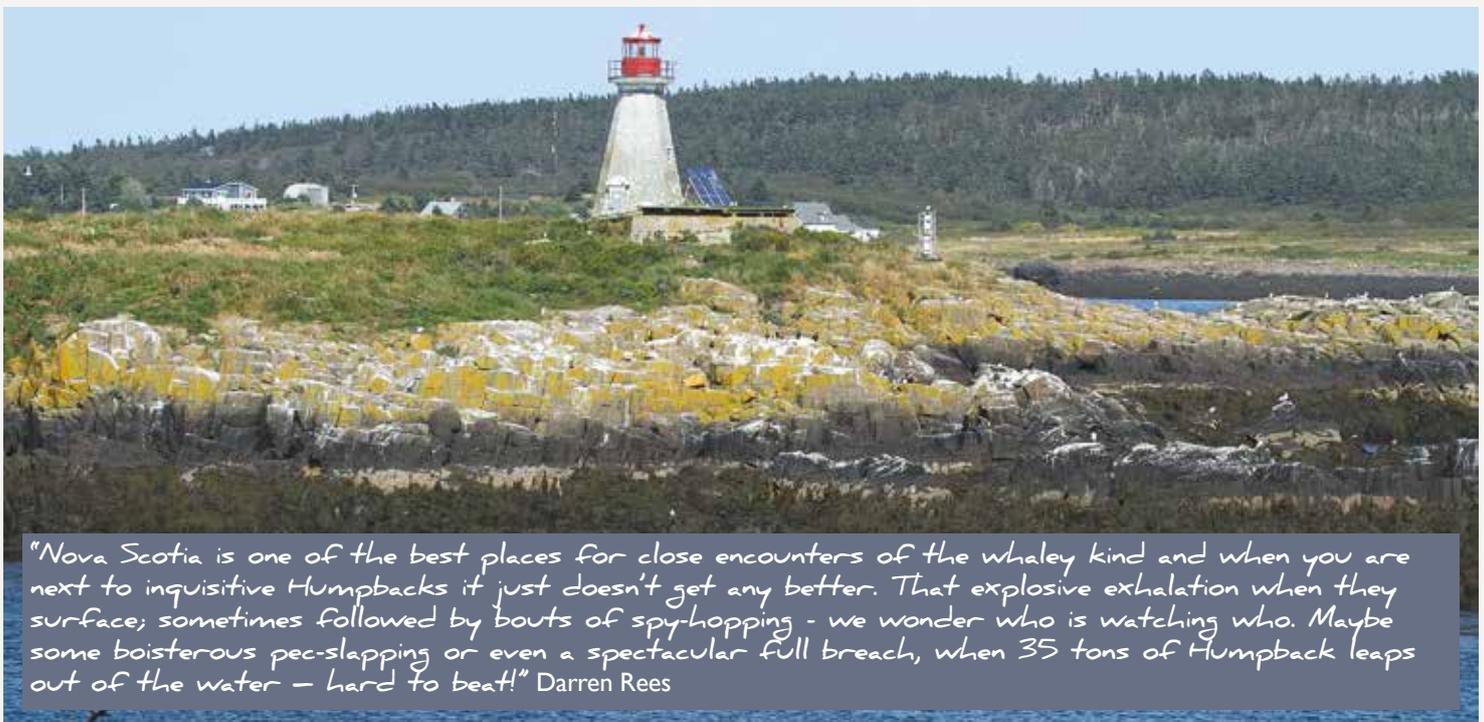
Arriving in Halifax mid-afternoon, we drive two-and-a-half hours south and west to delightful Digby, for an early evening meal overlooking the water. Afterwards we take two short ferry rides to arrive at our base for the week, the charming Brier Island.

We'll take three boat trips from Brier Island to see these magnificent mammals, two half-day trips and one longer 'survey' trip. The sea is likely to be calm, though boat trips are always weather dependent and we'll get close to big numbers of seabirds along with the great whales!

2-7 The small islands that poke from the mainland into the rich Bay of Fundy are truly magical and captivating. Beautiful spruce forests roll down to a rocky shore, marked with quiet bays and sleepy fishing ports. A delightful landscape of painted clapperboard houses; bright, bold lighthouses; wooden jetties with stacks of drying lobster pots and oh, foghorns. These sheltered waters see the rise and fall of the greatest tides on earth. Plankton, fish and sand lance in abundance, bring whales close to the shore – we've even seen them from the hotel!

Minke Whales, up to 30-foot long, are generally the most fleet and unobtrusive, but Fin Whales - at 70-foot the second longest whale - are sleek, with a tall blow and a back that seems to roll on forever. Humpbacks are the star performers as they regularly raise their tail flukes when they dive. They are curious animals and often approach the boat spy-hopping when we wonder who is watching who. They also often pound the surface with their huge white pectoral fins or, if we are fortunate, launch their 35 tons clear of the water! Sometimes acrobatic White-sided Dolphins come





*"Nova Scotia is one of the best places for close encounters of the whale kind and when you are next to inquisitive Humpbacks it just doesn't get any better. That explosive exhalation when they surface; sometimes followed by bouts of spy-hopping - we wonder who is watching who. Maybe some boisterous pec-slapping or even a spectacular full breach, when 35 tons of Humpback leaps out of the water - hard to beat!" Darren Rees*

around the boat, but it will be enigmatic Northern Right Whales that we'll celebrate most over and we'll take a full day boat trip to look for them. These are listed as critically endangered whales, with only around 300 individuals remaining in the world and we've enjoyed wonderful views in the past - fingers crossed.

Ocean-going seabirds will also be a big feature and we can expect close views of large numbers of Great, Sooty and some Manx Shearwaters. Wilson's Petrels patter their feet over the surface and great flocks of thousands of Red-necked and Grey Phalaropes pick delicately on mats of weed.

On Brier Island, we'll see some great bird migration. It's a bottleneck for dazzling migrating warbler flocks that may hold Yellow-rumped, Black-throated Green, Blackburnian, Magnolia, Canada, Parula, Chestnut-sided and more - we'll join our friends at the nearby banding (ringing) station and see some in the hand. There may be a variety of those confusing American flycatchers, plus Purple Finch and Eastern Kingbird. At Pond Cove, the stunted spruce forest sweeps out around the bay, where Common Eider and Black Guillemot loaf, whilst mighty Bald Eagle sweep low overhead. Least Sandpipers and Semi-palmated Plovers scurry along the seaweed and on marshy pools we may find Short-billed Dowitcher and White-rumped Sandpiper. Migrant Monarch butterflies drift by, Great Blue Heron stand in the shallows and Pine Siskins twitter in the trees.

The southern end of Long Island has weed-strewn bays that hold Solitary, Spotted and Semi-palmated



Sandpipers and both Greater and Lesser Yellowlegs. Noisy Blue Jays may accompany us on our walk along the Balancing Rock Trail to the misty coast and mobile flocks of warblers may include Northern Parula, American Redstart and Black-and-white, plus Black-capped Chickadee and Red-breasted Nuthatch. Elsewhere, in the lichen encrusted tamarack and spruce forests, we may see some of the specialties such as Boreal Chickadees and Gray Jays, with Palm Warbler and Hermit Thrush in the supporting cast.

Locally we can explore for more landbirds on Digby Neck. Each day we'll take the quiet roads and little ferries that link the islands. There can be a steady movement of southward bound raptors: Turkey Vulture teeter on raised wings, Osprey flap by and small spirals of hawks include Broad-winged and Sharp-shinned, with Goshawk, Merlin and American Kestrel amongst them. Belted Kingfisher, Spotted Sandpiper and Hooded Merganser are on local ponds, whilst Ruby-throated Hummingbird, American Goldfinch and Dark-eyed Junco inhabit nearby gardens. There are also Eastern Chipmunk and we've enjoyed views of lodge-building Beavers.

**8-9** We reluctantly leave Brier, travelling first to Annapolis Royal, where a well-landscaped wetland Reserve always turns up a new selection of birds: there's bright red Cardinals, beautiful Cedar Waxwing and ducks including Blue-winged Teal, Hooded Merganser, Ruddy, Wood and Ring-necked. Finally, we arrive at Halifax for our evening flight, arriving back in the morning of Day 9.



### Outline Itinerary

- Day 1** Fly London to Halifax arriving mid-afternoon. Drive 2.5 hours to Digby for early evening meal. Final 1.5 hour transfer to base at Brier Island - 7 nights Brier Island Lodge
- Day 2** First boat trip out from Brier Island
- Day 3** Exploration of Brier Island including Northlight and Pond Cove areas
- Days 4-7** Flexible four days with further birding hikes; second full day boat trip in Bay of Fundy; one day exploration of Long Island (Boar's Light and Balancing Rock); third boat trip (half day) from Brier Island
- Days 8-9** Transfer day with birding stop at Annapolis Royal Marsh, arriving Halifax late afternoon for evening flight, arriving UK morning of Day 9

**Roy Cowley:** Humpback Whale, Bald Eagle, Greater Shearwater, Peter's Island Lighthouse, Mega Nova boat  
**Roy Atkins:** Semi-palmated and Least Sandpipers

# CORNWALL



*"The CBWPS Reserves are invaluable for birdlife, producing lots of quality species. It is also a thrill to walk the coastal paths, with incredible views out over the mighty Atlantic. Cornwall is a unique part of the UK and I cannot wait to return in 2024!"*  
Julian Sykes

Dates Fri 30 Aug - Fri 6 Sep 2024  
Price TBC  
Deposit TBC Single Supp TBC

Leaders Julian Sykes and Sally Nowell

Weather August/September in Cornwall can vary enormously, from warm sunny days to wet and windy, with the latter sometimes being the more preferable! Temperatures should remain good, with a range from 15-25°C

Walking Mostly easy walking on level ground up to two miles, but there is potential for some inclines/declines in the valleys - all on good roads, paths or tracks

Boat Trip 4 hour boat trip into the Atlantic, onboard a comfortable 10m catamaran, which has a toilet onboard

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

Insects Biting insects are unlikely to be a problem

Accom Double, twin and single rooms all ensuite

Group 12

## Just some of what we hope to see:

Cory's Shearwater	Great Skua
Sooty Shearwater	Mediterranean Gull
Balearic Shearwater	Sandwich Tern
European Storm Petrel	Firecrest
Cattle Egret	Wryneck
Osprey	Melodious Warbler
Buff-breasted Sandpiper	Pied Flycatcher
Pectoral Sandpiper	Red-backed Shrike
Curlew Sandpiper	Red-billed Chough
Little Stint	Harbour Porpoise
Spotted Redshank	Common Dolphin
Arctic Skua	Bluefin Tuna

Seabirds passing iconic rocky headlands, waders feeding in estuaries and reservoirs, migrants making landfall in beautiful, wooded valleys and cetaceans offshore, says it all.

- Pendeen and Porthgarra for seabird passage
- Red-billed Choughs on the Lizard and headlands
- Day trip to the Isles of Scilly
- Waders at Hayle, Stithians and Marazion
- Visit the iconic Land's End and its valleys
- Chance of scarce migrants making landfall
- Fabulous Penzance hotel with sea views

We arrive at our comfortable, family-run hotel overlooking the beautiful Penzance Bay, only minutes from the train station. If timings and the weather are favourable, we shall make a short late afternoon walk to a nearby public park, with well-maintained gardens. This is home to the unusual Un-armed Stick Insect, plus some birdlife, with Firecrest a possibility along with the commoner UK species.

Our hotel overlooks Mounts Bay and from our rooms it is possible to see Turnstone, Ringed Plover and Oystercatcher. We'll always keep an eye out in the bay, as we should also see our first Gannets, gulls and auks.

**2-7** Penzance is a fabulous place to be based for this Cornish adventure, with a road network in all directions. We shall be keeping an eye on the weather and the local

information services to ensure we make the most of the week, but we shall also visit most of the iconic sites.

Pendeen, Porthgarra and the Island at St Ives, are a few of the famous seawatching points in southwest Cornwall and we aim to make a few visits. In the right conditions, passage Manx Shearwaters are joined by their rarer cousins – Balearic, Sooty and possibly Cory's Shearwaters. Arctic and Great Skuas can be seen chasing Kittiwakes and terns, plus there is the chance of Pomerine Skua, Sabine's Gull, European Storm Petrel and Grey Phalarope, if we are lucky.

September is also synonymous with wader passage in the UK and we shall visit the coastal sites of Hayle Estuary and Marazion Beach, along with the inland reservoirs of Drift and Stithians, to try and find a good mix.



"It was like a mill pond as we left Penzance Harbour on the Scillonian heading for St Mary's and the signs were good for seeing seabirds and cetaceans. We started with Harbour Porpoise and then Common Dolphins followed the boat. Shearwaters appeared with Manx, Balearic and a Sooty initially, but as we passed the famous Runnel Stone buoy, we were treated to good numbers of both Cory's and Great Shearwaters which was fantastic. Having made this sea journey many times in my life this was by far the best ever!" Julian Sykes



Along with the expected commoner species we also hope to see Wood and Curlew Sandpiper, Little Stint, Spotted Redshank and Whimbrel, with the outside possibility of Jack Snipe and Pectoral Sandpiper. It will be great fun looking through the flocks of birds, honing our identification skills in a 'wader masterclass'.

This holiday though is not just about sea and shorebirds, as it is also getting to peak migration time for land birds too and time will be spent wandering the tracks and paths around the headland. Either side of the famous Land's End are gorgeous, vegetated valleys leading down to the sea, with the most notable being Nanquidno and Kenidjack, amongst several more.

These can be migrant traps for passerines making landfall, or feeding up to continue south towards Africa. Annually something 'mega' turns up, but we at least hope to find a Wryneck, Black Redstart or Melodious Warbler amongst the commoner pipits, warblers, flycatchers, wheatears and wagtails.

For one full day, we shall take to the sea for an exciting day tour to St. Mary's, Isles of Scilly. This could certainly prove to be one of the highlights of the week, as we hope for not only seabirds on the Scillonian crossing but also cetaceans such as Harbour Porpoise and Common Dolphin. We should also encounter lots of gulls, terns, Gannets and auks, but hopefully some shearwaters and petrels giving us a completely different perspective, as they fly past the boat. We have a few hours on the Scillies largest island – St Mary's and our choice

of destination will depend on what species have been seen during the last few days.

A day will be spent driving to The Lizard Peninsula to see the famous 'Cornish Choughs', which returned as a breeding species to the county in 2002 after a 50 year absence. Lizard Point is the most southerly part of the UK and as a consequence can also attract its fair share of migrant birds on their passage south. From the village we shall head slowly out to the famous Lizard Point, looking out for wildlife and maybe sampling the local ice cream. Once there, hopefully the Red-billed Choughs will be amongst the other corvids and we get to see them wheeling around making their distinctive calls.

Although there is going to be a focus on all things wildlife, we shall also endeavour to call in on some of Cornwall's premier tourist sites such as Land's End, Sennan Cove and the Minack Theatre. We shall have a wonderful week in this equally wonderful southwest corner of Britain.

8 After breakfast and one last look out into Penzance Bay we shall leave this lovely welcoming hotel and say our farewells to each other, before heading home.



### Outline Itinerary

- Day 1 Meet at our Penzance hotel where we shall spend the next week 7 nights at the Queens Hotel
- Days 2-7 Explore the sites of SW Cornwall. Some mornings and evenings spent watching for passage seabirds, with the rest of the time visiting iconic birdwatching sites. One day we'll take a sea crossing for cetaceans and possibly Bluefin Tuna
- Day 8 After breakfast we say our farewells

**Julian Sykes:** Buff-breasted Sandpiper, Penzance Sunset, Red-billed Chough, Greater Shearwater, Southern Migrant Hawker  
**Simon Eaves:** Common Dolphin  
**Catriona Urquhart:** The Lizard



# AN ORKNEY ODYSSEY



"Thousands of years of human history are all around you on a visit to Orkney, as well as a wealth of wildlife to look for and a myriad of stunning landscapes and seascapes to explore. Last year we stood outside a 5,000 year Neolithic tomb on the shores of Loch of Stenness; at the same time an Otter was out on the loch just yards away from us diving for fish!" Craig Round

Dates Sat 21 - Mon 30 Sept 2024  
 Price £2,965  
 Deposit £550 Single Supp £400

Leaders Craig Round and Tim Drew

Weather The weather can vary enormously. During a typical week in this season we would expect mixed sun and showers with temperatures of 10-20°C. It may be cooler round the coast and though we could see unbroken sunshine and settled weather, Orkney can also be wet and windy. Bring layers and water proofs and sunscreen too!

Walking Walking will generally be very relaxed and easy. Walking boots essential

Meals All included from dinner on Day 1 to breakfast on Day 10

Insects Biting insects should not be a problem

Accom Double, twin and single ensuite rooms

Group 12

## Just some of what we hope to see:

Hen Harrier	Bar-tailed Godwit
White-tailed Eagle	Ruff
Short-eared Owl	Gannet
Merlin	Rock Dove
Great Skua	Twite
Arctic Skua	common and maybe
Manx Shearwater	rarer autumn migrants
Sooty Shearwater	Otters
Red-throated Diver	dolphins
Black Guillemot	Minke Whale
Eider	Harbour Porpoise
Golden Plover	seals
Sanderling	
Black-tailed Godwit	

We have extended our classic Orkney trip, with the extra days and extra islands of Hoy and Westray, adding to the wonderful selection of birding and archaeological sites we'll visit.

- Skara Brae, Ring of Brodgar, Maes Howe
- The Island of Hoy - plus Scapa Flow Museum
- Visit to Westray where Gannets may still be present on spectacular Noup Head
- Broch of Gurness - Iron Age broch village
- Autumn migration - perhaps a Wryneck, Red-backed Shrike or something rarer!
- Short-eared Owl, Hen Harrier, Red-throated Divers and skuas - and maybe Otters
- The Loons RSPB Reserve, Yesnaby Cliffs and, if time permits, the Brough of Birsay

**1** We meet in Inverness in time for dinner in our overnight hotel, giving us time to chat about the coming exciting trip.

**2** From Inverness, we follow the coast road north to our ferry from Scrabster to Orkney. We'll look out for Sandwich and Arctic Terns fishing offshore, plus colourful Eiders and with luck Long-tailed Ducks or scoters. We may be lucky enough to see Red Kite circling above the rich farmland of Easter Ross.

The crossing, on a large modern, fully equipped ferry, takes us across The Pentland Firth, famous for its tidal race and its wildlife and we'll look out for cetaceans, Storm Petrel, Manx Shearwater; skuas and dolphins with Sooty Shearwater and Grey Phalarope possible at this time of year.

The ferry passes the impressive cliffs of Hoy and we shall get a view of the Old Man. We land at the picturesque harbour of Stromness, where the great author George Mackay-Brown lived.

**3-8** The landscape of Orkney has broad coastal vistas, interspersed with ancient archaeological wonders set amidst the genteel farmland, which characterises inland Orkney. The pastures are home to Brown Hare, Hen Harrier and Short-eared Owl, which quarter the moors and meadows looking for Orkney Vole. Autumn migration is just beginning, so there's a good chance of migrants, especially waders and seabirds, but anything is possible!

Any visit to Orkney would not be complete without including the many astonishing archaeological



"Autumn on Orkney is a great time to visit, when you can literally see the season changing right before your eyes as the autumn bird migration through these magical islands really gets underway. We'll visit a number of wonderful wildlife rich islands including Hoy, Westray and Egilsay, as well as Mainland and South Ronaldsay and also take in some of the finest archaeological sites anywhere in Europe, such as Skara Brae, Maeshowe and the incredible and atmospheric standing stone circles of the Ring of Brodgar and Stenness." Craig Round



treasures the islands are so famous for: Several are exceptional, including Maes Howe - a Neolithic chambered cairn and passage grave built around 2800BC and still in excellent condition. Perhaps the most famous is Skara Brae - Europe's most complete Neolithic village, consisting of eight clustered houses, occupied around 3180 to 2500BC.

We shall also visit the Ring of Brodgar, Stones of Stenness and the lesser known Broch of Gurness, an Iron Age broch village situated in the north of mainland Orkney. The farmland around these sites is ideal hunting ground for Hen Harrier, Merlin and Short-eared Owl and the Loch of Stenness is often home to Otters and Red-throated Divers.

We may go sightseeing in the UK's most northerly city - Kirkwall and its smaller neighbour Stromness and visit the museum and Cathedral with time to wander round the shops. For whisky aficionados there is the chance to take a tour round the northern island's only distillery.

On another day we shall take the ferry over to the island of Westray, where we'll spend time enjoying lovely scenery and search for migrants. At the northern tip is Noup Head, which in summer has a spectacular Gannet colony on the impressive cliffs and there are likely to still be some birds here, though perhaps not in the big numbers of summer.

There is a half hour ferry crossing to Hoy, Orkney's most 'mountainous' island, and we shall cross with the minibus - with eyes to the skies for the



possibility of Great Skua, or gigantic White-tailed Eagle which now breeds on Hoy.

The newly refurbished Scapa Flow Museum, dedicated to the history of Scapa Flow during the two world wars, is worth visiting and we'll make the half mile walk out to the Dwarfie Stone, a megalithic chambered tomb carved from a titanic block of old red sandstone.

Time permitting, there is plenty more to show you - and we hope to include the impressive Yesnaby Cliffs, The Loons RSPB Reserve, where birding can be excellent, the last unrestored 'firehoose' in northern Europe at Kirkbuster Museum and head out over the causeway to the Brough of Birsay - a fascinating island, with so much to see, with both wildlife and archaeology.

**9** As our time on the islands comes to an end, we scan for birds and dolphins once again as we take the ferry back to Scrabster, then drive to Inverness for an evening meal together at the Premier Inn.

**10** After breakfast we say our farewells.



## Outline Itinerary

- Day 1 Gather in Inverness for dinner  
1 night at Premier Inn
- Day 2 Travel from Inverness to Scrabster through Easter Ross, taking the ferry to Orkney we then settle in to our hotel at Harry  
7 nights at Merkister Hotel
- Days 3-8 Exploration of the islands of this exciting archipelago - including mainland Orkney, Hoy and Westray for excellent birding and visits to a wide selection of archaeological sites
- Day 9 Ferry back to Scrabster across the Pentland Firth, then drive back to Inverness  
1 night at Premier Inn
- Day 10 After breakfast we say farewell

Colin Scott: Arctic Skua  
Roy Atkins: Ring of Brodgar, Skara Brae  
Mary Braddock: Black Guillemot  
Ian Tulloch: Golden Plover  
Chrissie Nicholson: Old Man of Hoy

# RAPTORS OF THE HIGHLANDS



*"September is a fabulous time of year to look for raptors. All the young birds have fledged and adults are freed of their parenting duties, so lots of chances to see some truly magnificent birds."*  
Sally Nowell

Dates Sat 31 Aug - Sat 7 Sep 2024  
Price £2,650  
Deposit £500 Single Supp £500

Leader Sally Nowell

Weather Mixture of sunshine and showers (5°-20°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. Bring repellent

Accom Double, twin and single rooms all ensuite

Boat trip The boat trip off Mull will be in relatively sheltered waters

Group 6

## Just some of what we hope to see:

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

The Cairngorms National Park and the Isle of Mull provide fabulous opportunities to see iconic raptors against the stunning scenery of wild 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
- Local Ospreys are busy feeding up before their long migratory journeys
- Hen Harriers and Short-eared Owls quartering open moorlands
- Peregrine and maybe even the elusive Merlin on their hunting grounds
- Evening drive to look for Tawny and Barn Owls

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'll meet together at our hotel and over the course of the evening discuss the week ahead

**2-3** 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 12 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 sometimes they can be seen mobbing massive eagles that soar above the skylines. Goshawk and Red Kite are also possible and Ospreys can be seen fishing the river. The scenery in the upper reaches is spectacular and it is a truly wild place.

We shall take you to other parts of the Cairngorms National Park, known to be good areas for raptor watching, to maximise our chances of getting great views of these splendid birds, but we shall also be looking for our other resident wildlife including the delightful Red Squirrel.

We shall visit the RSPB's Reserve at Abernethy which consists of ancient pine forest, open moorland and high mountain plateau. Here we





*"I know this holiday is about raptors but there is so much more besides, glorious scenery in some of my favourite locations, hunting for Otters on Mull, hoping for cetaceans at sea and watching for Cresties in the fabulous Abernethy Forest." Sally Nowell*

shall keep our eyes peeled for Crested Tit and Crossbill as well as scouring the skylines for raptors including Goshawk and Golden Eagles. We shall also see some of the extensive habitat restoration work that is being done, some of which will hopefully contribute to the recovery of the spectacular Capercaillie, once numerous in this magnificent and atmospheric forest.

Abernethy forest is a magical place at this time of year, as the autumn colours begin to be revealed and where we often find a wealth of fungi and late flowering plants.

One evening we shall venture out in search of owls. Tawny and Barn Owls are both possible. 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 Island of Mull. Our journey will take us past Loch Laggan, before passing beneath the towering bulk of Ben Nevis to Fort William. We continue south, along Loch Linnhe to the harbour town of Oban from where we shall catch our ferry. We shall be watching the sea for passing seabirds, hopefully Gannets and if we are lucky this crossing often produces some cetaceans, so there is always the chance of Harbour Porpoise or Common Dolphin.

Once on Mull we shall explore the best the island has to offer. The scenery on Mull is spectacular, with high mountains, sea cliffs, rocky shore and estuary. Mull is famous for raptors, particularly both species of eagle, with one of the highest breeding densities of eagles anywhere in Europe.



Golden Eagles and White-tailed Eagles could turn up anywhere, but we know some great locations and have enjoyed remarkably close views regularly. We shall explore the dramatic cliffs at Gribun for Peregrine and Raven, while through the moorlands and estuary edge we hope to encounter Hen Harrier, Merlin and Short-eared Owl. As well as raptors, Mull has a large population of Otters and we shall scan the sea lochs for these endearing mammals, where Common and Grey Seals haul themselves out onto the rocks.

One of the highlights of our stay on Mull 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 Mull we take a smaller ferry to the Morvern peninsula. This is a little visited part of the Highlands and we could easily encounter more eagles as we make our way through rugged country to Loch Sunart and the Corran Ferry. We shall arrive back in Speyside in time for our evening meal and a look back over the week.

**8** After breakfast on Saturday we say our farewells.



## Outline Itinerary

- Day 1 Arrive in the Cairngorms National Park  
3 nights at Tigh na Sgiath Country House
- Days 2-3 Search for raptors and other wildlife in Speyside, including Strathdearn and Abernethy Forest
- Day 4 Travel to Mull via Fort William and the ferry from Oban, birding and looking for raptors enroute  
3 nights at Isle of Mull Hotel
- Days 5-6 Search for raptors and wildlife amidst stunning scenery on Mull, including the Gribun Cliffs and a boat trip for White-tailed Eagle
- Day 7 Travel back to the Cairngorms, via Ardnamurchan and the Corran Ferry  
1 night at Tigh na Sgiath Country House
- Day 8 Depart after breakfast

Rob Martin: White-tailed Eagle  
Jane Hope: Evening at Loch na Keal, Goshawk  
Kate Mennie: Merlin  
Steve Batt: Short-eared Owl  
Ian Callender: Tawny Owl

# BRITISH COLUMBIA



"British Columbia has the winning combination of stunning landscapes and spectacular wildlife. Forest clad mountains, tumbling into the ocean and a network of channels, inlets and fjords to explore, we'll be searching for Orcas, Humpbacks, Gray Whales, Sea Otters and bears – come and join us!"  
Darren Rees

Dates Sat 7 - Sat 21 Sept 2024  
Price £7,625  
Deposit £1,525 Single Supp £1,250

Leaders Darren Rees and Julian Sykes  
Flights Air Canada, scheduled  
Outbound: Morning, Heathrow-Vancouver  
Inbound: Overnight, Vancouver-Heathrow  
Weather It varies across the island, with wetter conditions in the west around Tofino and Zeballos, drier on the east coast. Expect some rain (we sometimes have rain for a whole day or more) and fog is possible in the west, but generally warm and sunny with mild conditions (14°-22°C)  
Walking There'll be some short easy walks on wide tracks in the forest, in some places with lots of steps. Nothing steep or strenuous, but a reasonable degree of fitness is required  
Meals All included from dinner on Day 1 to lunch on Day 14  
Insects Biting insects are generally not a problem on Vancouver Island, but repellent is a good idea just in case  
Boat trips Boats vary from larger boats with indoor seating areas that can hold over 50 people, to smaller uncovered boats with no facilities. Sometimes the groups may be split between two boats each with a guide. All boats are excellent  
Accom Double, twin and single rooms all ensuite  
Group 10

## Just some of what we hope to see:

Grizzly Bear	Humpback Whale
Dall's Porpoise	Heermann's Gull
Black Bear	Orca
Black Oystercatcher	Rhinoceros Auklet
Sea Otter	Gray Whale
Black Turnstone	Marbled Murrelet

On Canada's rugged west coast, Vancouver Island awaits – brimming with bears, birds, whales and more, as they seize the autumn bounty before the winter closes in.

- Boat trips in search of Orcas, Humpbacks and Gray Whales
- Grizzly Bears hunting salmon on spawning grounds
- Dall's Porpoise, Steller's Sea Lions plus, with luck, Pacific White-sided Dolphin
- Black Bear, Beaver, Sea Otter and chance of Raccoon
- West Coast special birds including shorebirds, seabirds, divers and scoters
- Beautiful Pacific Rim Rainforest and famous Long Beach
- Stunning scenery of lakes, fjords and forests, amidst towering mountains

**1-2** Arriving in Vancouver we transfer to our hotel in Delta. The following day we enjoy a full day at George C. Reifel Bird Sanctuary, where Sandhill Crane, Wood Duck, dowitchers and yellowlegs, Red-winged Blackbird, Northern Harrier and Lincoln's Sparrow are all possible. It is a fabulous and very productive place alive with great birds. We may also take a walk along Boundary Bay, looking for more shorebirds in an area that can be good for other birds too - this may prove to be the most bird-rich day of the entire trip and a great start.

**3-5** After checking the bays enroute to the Nanaimo ferry, we board the ferry and check the jetties for Black Turnstone and with luck, Surf-bird. We'll watch out for wildlife on the crossing then have a long drive north to our ocean front lodge overlooking Johnstone Strait. The grounds

are a haven for wildlife and we have watched Black Bears turning rocks on the shore here and, with luck, other mammals such as River Otter and American Mink. We can relax, or wander in search of White-crowned and Fox Sparrows, warblers and woodpeckers in the surrounding woodland.

We have a boat ride into rich waters covered in gulls, Common and Pigeon Guillemots, Rhinoceros Auklets and dainty Red-necked Phalaropes. Watched by tree top Bald Eagles, this is our best chance for Orcas and we hope to encounter resident groups at close quarters! Dall's Porpoise and Steller's Sea Lions are here too and we hope for Pacific White-sided Dolphins. Even if we don't see Orcas, we'll be thrilled by great sightings of Humpback Whales! Another day will be spent locally in search of more wildlife and visiting Telegraph Cove - a picturesque village on the seafront nearby, with some nice shops and



*"Highlights from previous trips include Orcas surfing the wake of our boat, breaching Humpbacks, cavorting White-side Dolphins and bear families feasting on salmon – I can't wait to return and add more amazing wildlife encounters!" Darren Rees*



a wildlife museum and the chance of Black-tailed Deer or perhaps even Elk enroute.

**6** We move on to Zeballos on a scenic west coast inlet, an old Gold-rush village. An oasis of gardens and deciduous trees and bushes surrounded by a sea of conifers, it can draw in migrants and we have seen Cedar Waxwing, Western Tanager, Pacific-slope Flycatcher, Varied Thrush and warblers such as Wilson's, Townsend, Black-and-Grey and Yellow-rumped are possible. It is a chance to feel you are on the remote west side of the island and provides a chance to see Beavers on a nearby pond.

**7-9** After breakfast we head for Campbell River, a great area for birding, with shorebirds, Harlequin Duck, Bonaparte's Gull, grebes and divers, plus Red-breasted Sapsucker in the trees. We'll also visit the sub-alpine forest of Mount Washington in search of tame Gray Jay, Ruby-crowned Kinglet, woodpeckers, tanagers and more.

There is lots to see, but we'll tear ourselves away because there's the lure of Grizzly Bears! We'll have a full-day, heading across by boat to a picturesque inlet, where guides will take us to purpose-built viewing platforms. We hope for great close-up views as the bears walk the banks, or down the middle of the river, scanning the water for any hint of a fish to chase - then it's a mad dash, with the occasional bear even being successful!



**10-12** It is a long and spectacular drive to Tofino on the west coast and we'll break the journey to enjoy the astonishing trees of Cathedral Grove and visit a beautiful river to watch Chinook Salmon migrate upstream and leap the falls! From our hotel in Tofino we'll visit Pacific Rim National Park - lush temperate rainforest, with cushions of moss on branches of towering Hemlocks, vast beaches and the ocean stretching off as far as the eye can see.

The forest can be quiet, with Pacific Wren, Steller's Jay and Chestnut-backed Chickadees often the only birds, but still worth the visit. Beaches may hold flocks of Western Sandpipers, while offshore are Red-necked Grebes, Surf Scoter, Pacific Loons and Marbled Murrelet.

We have two exciting boat trips here! We'll head into Clayoquot Sound for Gray Whales, or Humpbacks if the Gray Whales have left, plus huge Steller's Sea Lions. The following day we'll search for Sea Otters, hoping for close-up views and some great birding too. Amidst the maze of rocky islets, there'll be Brandt's and Pelagic Cormorants, Heermann's Gull, Rhinoceros Auklet and Pigeon Guillemots, Black Oystercatcher and maybe Wandering Tattler.

**13-15** We head back to Vancouver, where we overnight in Delta again. On the following day we may have time for another visit to Boundary Bay, before dragging ourselves away for our flight home in the afternoon, arriving in London on Day 15.



### Outline Itinerary

- Days 1-2 Fly to Vancouver. Full day birding local area and George C. Reifel Bird Sanctuary  
2 nights Tsawwassen Inn
- Days 3-5 Ferry to Vancouver Island, then drive towards Port McNeill and our hotel overlooking Johnstone Strait  
Boat trip to look for Orca  
3 nights Hidden Cove Lodge
- Day 6 Drive to Zeballos on west coast to explore the coastal forest and inlets  
1 night Cedars Inn
- Days 7-9 Drive to Campbell River, then birding local area and a full-day boat trip to Grizzly Bear fishing grounds  
3 nights Painter's Lodge
- Days 10-12 Transfer to Tofino on the west coast, with two boat trips and a walk in the Pacific Rim Rainforest  
3 nights Tofino Resort
- Day 13 Return to Vancouver  
1 night Tsawwassen Inn
- Days 14-15 Birding Boundary Bay before flight back to London in afternoon, arriving in London on Day 15

**Stephen Batt:** Grizzly Bear, Stellers' Sea Lions, Rhinoceros Auklet  
**Julian Sykes:** Orca  
**Christine Maughan:** Humpback Whale, Sea Otters



*"Oland can be an amazing place to witness migration in action and, depending on wind direction, it can be quiet - or incredible! It is real 'birding' and all very exciting, as we have no idea what the day might bring!"*  
Roy Atkins

Dates Sun 06 - Sun 13 Oct 2024  
Price £2,985  
Deposit £595 Single Supp £320

Leaders Roy Atkins and Jane Atkins  
Flights Scandinavian Airlines, scheduled  
Outbound: Morning, Heathrow-Kalmar (via Stockholm)  
Inbound: Afternoon, Kalmar-Heathrow (via Stockholm)  
Weather Expect a mixture of sun and showers, with cool winds (0°-20°C)  
Walking 2-3 miles on wide tracks, which may be muddy after rain  
Meals All included from dinner on Day 1 to lunch on Day 8  
Insects Unlikely to be a problem  
Accom Twin and single rooms all ensuite  
Group 12

### Just some of what we hope to see:

Whooper Swan	Hooded Crow
Common Crane	Eider
Avocet	Robins!
Bearded Tit	Goldcrests!
Barnacle Goose	Tree Sparrow
Bean Goose	White-tailed Eagle
Red-breasted Goose	Hen Harrier
Eiders!	Rough-legged Buzzard
Little Stint	Goshawk
Long-tailed Tit	Yellow-browed Warbler
(White-headed race)	Pallas's Warbler
Caspian Gull	Brambling
Northern Grey Shrike	Twite
Long-eared Owl	Red-breasted Flycatcher
Black Woodpecker	Elk

## Autumn migration at its best; masses of cranes, geese, seaduck and raptors, enormous numbers of Goldcrests, Robins and other common migrants.

- Ottenby Bird Observatory at peak migration - Goldcrests everywhere
- Raptors including Rough-legged Buzzard, Goshawk and White-tailed Eagle
- Chance of rarities such as Gyrfalcon and Pallas's and Dusky Warbler
- Huge Barnacle Goose flocks with chance of Red-breasted Goose
- Spectacular Common Crane migration
- Chance to see ringing demonstration and stunning lighthouse top view
- Relaxed pace birding, with most sites close at hand and lots to see!

After our flight to Kalmar, via Stockholm, we then drive the short distance over the bridge to Öland and our delightful hotel at Gammalsby.

**2-7** Wooden windmills and burial mounds dot the charming open landscape of this remarkably flat island. We stay just a short distance from the famous Bird Observatory at Ottenby, set in meadows, scrub and heathland, surrounded by low boulder beaches and coastal bays. We need to check everything as we drive down to the lighthouse, as birds can be passing through in large numbers. In the right conditions the trees and bushes can be alive with Brambling, Chaffinch, Tree Sparrow, Twite, Redpoll and Siskin. Woodpigeon and Stock Dove pass overhead and flocks of Golden Plover dot the fields. All around the lighthouse and even around our feet, tiny Goldcrest flutter in the weedy plants. Blackcaps, Chiffchaffs,

Treecreepers, Robins and thrushes are all heading south and gather for a final feed before heading out to sea - perhaps joined in the Sycamores by scarce Pallas's or Yellow-browed Warbler and we've seen Red-breasted and Collared Flycatchers here. The Observatory staff make regular checks of the mist-nets and will bring out anything special to show any birders nearby. We'll also visit the Observatory to watch the ringing in action and learn about the research and results of many years of work here, one of the oldest bird ringing stations in the world.

The coast can be dotted with ducks of several species, along with shorebirds and Brent Geese, sometimes with Black Brant amongst them. The fields can hold big flocks of migrant Barnacle Geese, with occasionally other species such as Bean and White-fronted Goose. Common Cranes add to the spectacle, often in their thousands and



"I am really excited about leading this trip with Roy, it will be my first visit and I love the thought of seeing so many birds on the move. Sometimes there are thousands of Goldcrests - other times masses of raptors passing through - or enormous movements of geese and seaduck. I would also love to see big flocks of cranes which should be passing through." Jane Atkins



we frequently hear them passing over our hotel at the start of the day as they head out to feed. The trees around the lighthouse may hold Long-eared or with luck, even a Tengmalm's Owl and Great Grey Shrike perch in the bushes nearby.

The number of birds can be astonishing - over a thousand Goldcrests have been ringed in one day! Swedish birders excitedly scan all that goes by and there is a tremendous sense of anticipation. If the winds turn to the east, then our thoughts will turn to Richard's Pipit and Pallas's, Radde's and Dusky Warblers. If the winds blow from the north, then we'll be thinking of larger, more spectacular birds - we've seen Snowy Owl, Hawk Owl and Gyrfalcon in previous years.

We'll check other hotspots along the coast - places such as Seby Badet and Stenåsa Badet, where taller trees attract migrants such as flycatchers. The Swedish Ornithological Society runs a shop and Visitor Centre here. Who knows what we shall find and a lot of the pleasure is in looking with excited anticipation. We shall also keep in touch with news of any rarities on the island, as we would not want to miss something special!

Wherever we are on the island, small clusters of Rough-legged Buzzard drift lazily south, along with Goshawk, Sparrowhawk, Hen Harrier and in recent years the occasional Pallid Harrier! Wandering immature Golden Eagle can pop up over the trees and White-tailed Eagles patrol the coast or follow the geese.

At Sandvik, we'll check the waders for anything



unusual amongst the Dunlin, Knot and other species - we've seen Buff-breasted Sandpiper here! More waders are at Bejershamsvik, with a chance of Bearded Tit in the reeds here too. Peregrines menace the waders and offshore, tremendous numbers of Eider may be on the move, 10,000 a day have been recorded. Long-tailed Duck, Red-breasted Merganser, Scaup, Common Scoter and even King Eider are possible, Black and Red-throated Diver pass south and there may be Arctic and Pomarine Skuas if conditions are right.

On the grazing meadows at Kastlosa and Eckelsudde there may be thousands of Barnacle Geese and smaller numbers of Greylag and White-fronted Geese, with the chance of Bean Goose too. It is always worth a careful check as vagrant Red-breasted Goose is always a possibility.

There are dense woods, small ponds and clearings near the Observatory, which have roving flocks of Goldcrest that are worth checking through, as an elusive Pallas's Warbler just might be amongst them! We'll look for Black Woodpeckers in the pines, where passing Nutcracker or Parrot Crossbills sometimes turn up and deciduous woodlands have Scandinavian race Nuthatch, Bullfinch and lovely white-headed Long-tailed Tit. A few Elk (or Moose) inhabit Öland and we may make an early start one morning to search for them too.

8 After a morning's birding we catch an afternoon flight home.



### Outline Itinerary

- Day 1 Fly to Kalmar via Stockholm and transfer to Gammalsby 7 nights Gammalsbygarden Inn
- Days 2-7 Birdwatching and wildlife exploration including visits to the Ottenby Bird Observatory. Bird ringing and mist netting opportunities
- Day 8 Transfer to Kalmar for our flight back to the UK, via Stockholm

**Mark Denman:** Long-tailed Tits, Goldcrest  
**Roy Atkins:** Gyr Falcon, Common Cranes, White-tailed Eagle, Barnacle Geese  
**Mary Braddock:** Great Grey Shrike



# ALLADALE WILDERNESS RESERVE



*"On our Alladale holiday we have access to some fabulous and very varied habitats, to watch wildlife at a time when our winter visitors, including huge numbers of waders and wildfowl, are returning."*  
Sally Nowell

Dates Sat 5 - Sat 12 Oct 2024  
Price £3,425  
Deposit £685 Single Supp £275

Leader Sally Nowell and an Alladale Ranger

Weather During a typical week in autumn we would expect to experience mixed sun and showers, with temperatures in the range 5-25°C. It can be wet and windy or we can be lucky and have lovely warm weather, warm layers including an effective waterproof jacket and trousers are advised. Hats and gloves are also recommended

Walking We shall take regular but short walks, generally on easy tracks over even ground, but occasionally on rougher paths of between 1-5 miles. Walking boots are strongly recommended. Bring walking poles if you think these would be helpful

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

Insects Unlikely to be a problem at this time of year

Accom Double, twin and single rooms all ensuite

Group 9

## Just some of what we hope to see:

White-tailed Eagle	Black Guillemot
Golden Eagle	Gannet
Hen Harrier	Great Skua
Peregrine	Snow Bunting
Black-throated Diver	Pomarine Skua
Red-throated Diver	Arctic Skua
Slavonian Grebe	Bottlenose Dolphin
Whooper Swan	Grey Seal
Long-tailed Duck	Otter
Common Scoter	Red Deer
Scaup	Red Squirrel

This is a privileged experience you will never forget. An autumn spectacular in the remote Northern Highlands, to immerse ourselves in the some of the best wildlife Scotland has to offer.

- Stay in the midst of the Red Deer rut
- Based in Alladale Wilderness Reserve
- Luxurious accommodation at remote Alladale Lodge
- Visit the Moray, Cromarty and Dornoch Firths
- Great opportunities for Golden and White-tailed Eagles
- Experience true wilderness, with no sound or light pollution
- Visit the fascinating Scottish Wildcat Project

1 After your journey to Inverness we shall meet at our hotel to talk about the week ahead and enjoy our first meal together.

2 After breakfast we make our way to a local Reserve along the banks of the Moray Firth, looking for Kingfisher; Water Rail, resident waders and seaduck. We shall also be looking out for Otter and Bottlenose Dolphin. Depending on the tide times we shall move on to Chanony Point, surely one of the best places in the UK to see dolphins feeding. Here we have the largest Bottlenose Dolphins in the world; they frequently come in close to shore as the tide rises, to catch salmon as they move up the Firth.

We shall have lunch enroute and then in late afternoon will start to make our way to the fabulous Alladale Lodge, where we shall be spending our next five nights.

We arrive at Alladale in time to acquaint ourselves with our accommodation and settle in, before enjoying a meal in our splendid dining room. Depending on the weather; we shall sit outside one night around the open fire, listening to the bellow of the Red Deer stags and enjoying the otherwise silent night. On clear nights we should have spectacular skies with no light pollution for miles.

3 This is a real escape into the depths of the remoter part of the Scottish Highlands and the hills in autumn can look quite magical.

On our first morning after breakfast, we shall be taken by the Alladale team out by Land Rover onto the Reserve. We shall hear about the innovative approach to land management and restoration taking place on this spectacular piece of land. Once a hunting Estate, now this 100 square kilometre Wilderness Reserve is ours to explore.



"Alladale Lodge is an idyllic setting for our holiday in the far north of Scotland. Not only do we enjoy this beautiful Estate - famous for its Rewilding initiatives - in all its autumn glory, we also have the chance to witness the evocative Red Deer Rut. In addition, the mountains, moorland, lochs, estuaries and sandy beaches all hold their own delights, from eagles to Otters, Dippers to divers. I can't wait to return; we always find something new!" Sally Nowell



We shall lunch out on the Estate and have a chance to hear about the Scottish Wildcat Project, run by the Royal Zoological Society but supported by Alladale. This captive breeding programme to establish a viable population of Scottish Wildcat, includes two male and two female cats and with luck, some kittens may be around at this time of year as well.

Depending on the weather, we shall sit outside one night around the open fire, hoping to hear the bellow of the Red Deer stags and enjoying the otherwise silent night.

Along with hundreds of deer, also resident in beautiful Glen Mor are Golden Eagle and White-tailed Eagles are regular visitors.

**4-6** Over the next days we shall be visiting some of the best local birding hotspots. In October we stand good chances of some excellent seawatching, with possible Manx and Sooty Shearwater, Pomarine Skua, Red and Black-throated Diver and Slavonian Grebe. In the shelter of the firths wintering ducks may have arrived, such as Long-tailed Duck and Common Scoter.

Geese will also be arriving from further north, so we'll hope for large numbers of Pink-footed and Greylag Geese and with luck even rarities such as Snow Goose can turn up. Whooper Swans will be arriving, as well as other winter visitors such as Brambling, Redwing and Fieldfare.

We shall visit Udale Bay and Loch Fleet, where large numbers of Eider gather; also Tarbet Ness

and some of the small coastal towns along the wild Sutherland coasts. Often at this time of year Snow Bunting can be found along the shores and we may stand chances of early Glaucous and Iceland Gull amongst the mixed gull flocks.

Over on the west coast a spectacular drive will take us into Otter and White-tailed Eagle territory. Eyes will be on the skies and water's edge as we head towards Ullapool and Gruinard Bay. Great Northern Divers and Black Guillemot in their beautiful winter plumage can be present here.

We shall also spend more time on the Reserve, this time on foot, again looking and listening for Red Deer in combat on the high-sided valleys, where we might see Black Grouse. Red Deer can be remarkably trusting at Alladale and they too come around the building. Red Squirrels frequent the feeders outside the Lodge, giving some great photo opportunities. If time allows we may visit the delightful town of Dornoch and its ancient Cathedral.

**7** Sadly we'll be leaving Alladale this morning, after breakfast. We'll visit the famous Glenmorangie Distillery and then continue our birding, with some fabulous stops. We'll be looking for our winter wildfowl and visiting waders, hoping for large numbers of Wigeon and Pintail, along with Whooper Swans and Golden Plover. We shall be reluctant to leave 'the field' today but we'll finally return to our hotel in North Kessock, in time for dinner.

**8** After breakfast we shall say our goodbyes and depart.



### Outline Itinerary

- Day 1 Meet at our hotel in time for dinner  
1 night North Kessock Hotel
- Day 2 Visit local Inverness Reserve and on to the Black Isle, before heading to Alladale  
5 nights Alladale Lodge, Sutherland
- Day 3 Spend time exploring Alladale Reserve by Land Rover
- Days 4-6 Explore the Sutherland and north west coast wildlife watching
- Day 7 Leave Alladale travelling to Inverness, via Glenmorangie Distillery  
1 night North Kessock Hotel
- Day 8 We say our farewells

**Roy Atkins:** Dipper **Jane Hope:** White-tailed Eagle  
**Mary Braddock:** Red Squirrel  
**Pete Helme:** Wildcat  
**Sally Nowell:** Alladale Lodge, Drawing Room  
**Pauline Greenhalgh:** Red Deer



# EAST YORKSHIRE



"This is a wonderful opportunity to place yourselves at the heart of some of the best migration hotspots on Britain's north-east coast in October, arguably the peak time for wintering, passage and scarce migrants. Be it passerines, seabirds or waders, there is always an air of anticipation visiting these famous sites!" Julian Sykes

Dates Sat 5 - Sat 12 Oct 2024  
 Price £2,195  
 Deposit £400 Single Supp £350

Leaders Julian Sykes and Ailie Brown

Weather Can be extremely variable at this time of year, so come prepared for everything from rain and wind, to calm autumnal sunshine!

Walking Mostly easy walking on level paths up to 3 miles, with perhaps a little more if rarities require it!

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

Insects Unlikely to be a problem at this time of year

Accom Double, twin and single rooms all ensuite  
 A transfer to the hotel can be arranged from York train station

Group 12

## Just some of what we hope to see:

Brambling	Water Rail
Winter thrushes	Red-throated Diver
Redstart	Pink-footed Goose
Bearded Tit	Velvet Scoter
Marsh Harrier	Scarce migrants such as..
Sooty Shearwater	Yellow-browed Warbler
Pomarine Skua	Red-Backed Shrike
Little Gull	Ring Ouzel
Jack Snipe	Rose-coloured Starling
Spotted Redshank	Firecrest
Black Redstart	Wryneck
Barn Owl	Lapland Bunting
Little Owl	Red-breasted Flycatcher
Short-eared Owl	
Woodcock	

An excellent chance to visit birding hotspots and witness the autumn migration. Thousands of birds on the move - from waders and warblers, to pipits, thrushes and seabirds - and rarities too!

- Visit Yorkshire's autumn migration hotspots - Spurn, Flamborough and Filey
- Visit key Yorkshire birding sites such as Blacktoft Sands and Bempton Cliffs
- Yellow-browed Warbler, Red-Backed Shrike, Red-Breasted Flycatcher and Wryneck
- Visit Wildlife Artist Robert Fuller's gallery in the stunning Yorkshire Wolds
- See ringing first hand at a Spurn Bird Observatory demonstration
- Take a 4x4 trip to the end of famous Spurn Point
- Great accommodation and Yorkshire hospitality with birding on the doorstep!

We meet up at our hotel in time for dinner and a chance to discuss the coming week. Our 'well-placed' accommodation means that most of the sites we shall visit are an hour or less away.

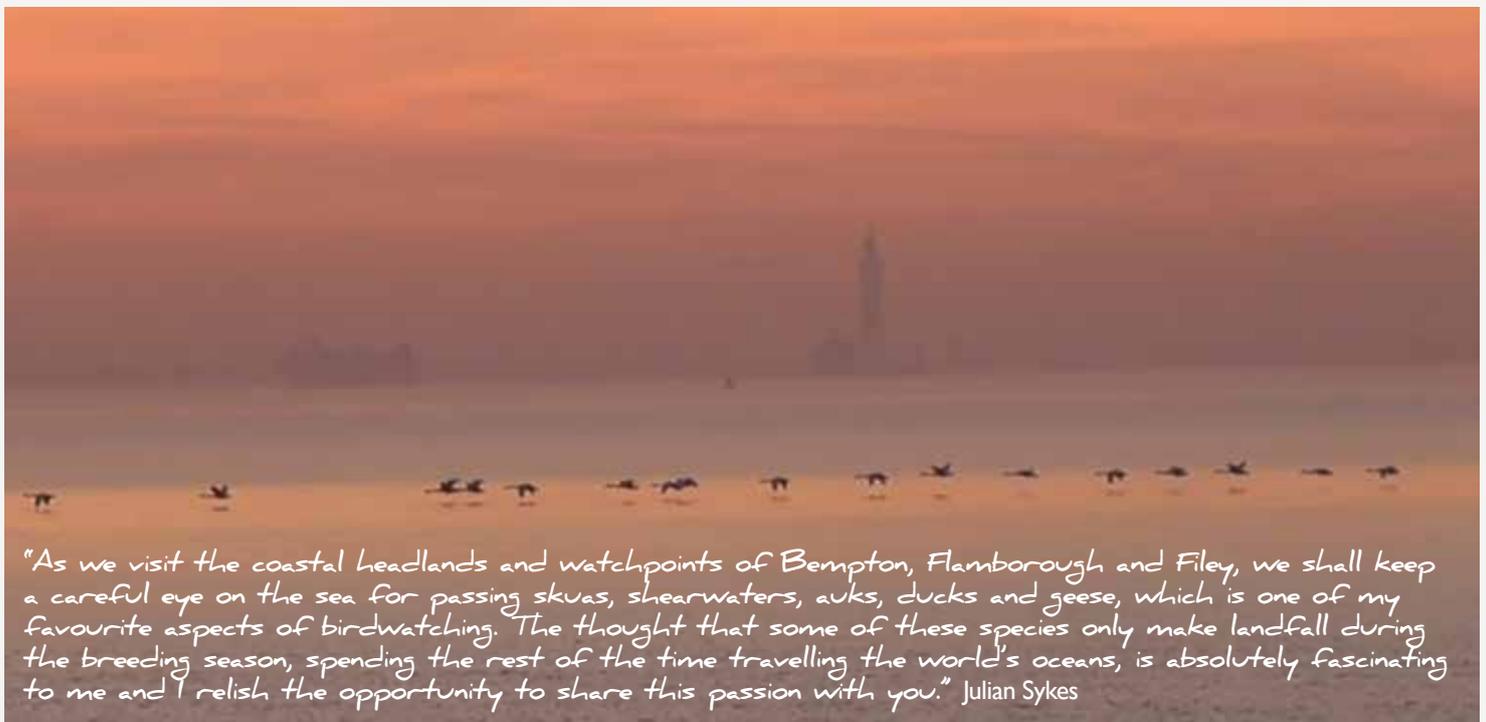
**2-7** The Yorkshire coast at this time of year is a thrilling place!! Thousands of birds are on the move and to witness this mass migration as birds head south along the coast is a wonderful experience. We have timed this trip to enjoy migration in action, with common migrants still passing through in good numbers, but also the chance of something a bit rarer - or with luck - very rare indeed!!

East Yorkshire has become renowned as the place to witness autumn migration and has several sites from which to experience this massive annual movement of birds. Spurn Point is perhaps the most famous - its unusual shape acting as a funnel,

which concentrates birds as they move towards the point. Whilst this can be weather dependent, the birding here can be astonishing, with large numbers of common migrants such as pipits, thrushes, finches, Robins and Goldcrests and often plenty of scarcer species too, with double figure numbers of Yellow-browed Warblers and the chance of species such as Richard's Pipit, Firecrest, Wryneck, Shorelark, Lapland Bunting and more. What is more, we shall get an insight into how research on migration is carried out and see birds in the hand, with a ringing demonstration at Spurn Bird Observatory.

We shall also cast our eyes seawards as, at this time of year, Filey Brigg and Flamborough Head provide excellent seawatching opportunities. We'll look out for Manx and Sooty Shearwaters, Arctic, Long-tailed and Pomarine Skuas, divers and flocks of seaduck and geese. Like Spurn, these





*"As we visit the coastal headlands and watchpoints of Bempton, Flamborough and Filey, we shall keep a careful eye on the sea for passing skuas, shearwaters, auks, ducks and geese, which is one of my favourite aspects of birdwatching. The thought that some of these species only make landfall during the breeding season, spending the rest of the time travelling the world's oceans, is absolutely fascinating to me and I relish the opportunity to share this passion with you." Julian Sykes*

sites can also be the first landfall for high numbers of birds, with thrushes and Bramblings coming in off the sea and all three sites have had more than their fair share of national rarities.

Each day we shall be keeping an eye on 'what's about' and will be in touch with local birders, so plans may alter rapidly if something very special is found. Anything can turn up, but some years are incredible, such as 2016 when Siberian Accentor; White's Thrush, Eastern Crowned Warbler; Isabelline Wheatear and Black-browed Albatross were exceptional finds. We can't promise the same rarities necessarily, but we can promise an exciting time searching for the unexpected, with the opportunity to polish our skills when it comes to our less familiar warblers, whilst looking out for gems including Pallas's and Dusky Warbler.

Yorkshire has some fabulous Reserves and habitats, wetlands, cliffs, forest, coast and estuarine marsh. We'll visit Blacktoft Sands, where the wetlands and reedbeds are superb at this time of year. Wader passage will include common species such as Dunlin, but should also include Spotted Redshank, Greenshank, Black-tailed Godwit and Ruff. Marsh Harriers hunt over the reeds, where 'pinging' flocks of Bearded Tits can be seen and if we are very lucky, perhaps a Water Rail or Bittern will appear.

At Bempton Cliffs, the huge seabird colonies will have departed, but some of the thousands of Gannets that nest here will still be present at this time of year. This spectacular place can also

provide the chance to see migration and amongst the common migrants, we'll be on the lookout for shrikes, flycatchers, or scarcer warblers. We shall also introduce you to some newer and less well known, but equally impressive, birding hot spots on our daily outings.

East Yorkshire is a varied county, with rich agricultural land providing ideal feeding grounds for large numbers of Lapwing and Golden Plover. The subtly rolling hills of the Yorkshire Wolds, providing habitat for Barn Owls, Skylarks, Red Kite and Brown Hare, feature in a lot of David Hockney's recent work.

We plan to visit Robert Fuller's wildlife art gallery and get a 'behind the scenes' tour of some of the ingenious ways he spies on his local wildlife. His paintings sell all over the world and his trademark, highly-detailed images, have been adopted by the RSPB and the National Trust.

**8** After breakfast on our final day we say our farewells. You may wish to extend your holiday by spending time in one of Yorkshire's historic towns or explore further up Yorkshire's east coast, to places such as Whitby and Robin Hood's Bay.



### Outline Itinerary

**Day 1** Meet at our hotel in time for our evening meal  
7 nights at Rowley Manor Hotel

**Days 2-7** Exploration of the migration hotspots of Spurn Point, Flamborough Head, Filey Brigg and Bempton Cliffs. We'll also seawatch from headlands and visit Blacktoft Sands for wetland and reedbed birds, plus visit the Yorkshire Wolds and the Robert Fuller Art Gallery

**Day 8** After breakfast we say our farewells

**David Petts:** Barred Warbler, Bearded Reedling

**Frank Moffat:** East Yorkshire

**Julian Sykes:** Ringing Talk, Redshank and Ruff, Tawny Owl

**Roy Cowley:** Gannet



# ISLES OF SCILLY



"I really enjoy experiencing the tail end of the autumn migration on the Scilly Isles, with the last of the summer migrants of the year still lingering and the unpredictable excitement of a rare bird turning up." Simon Eaves

Dates Mon 7 - Mon 14 Oct 2024  
 Price TBC  
 Deposit TBC Single Supp TBC

Leaders Simon Eaves and Craig Round  
 Ferry Penzance to St Mary's

Weather The weather can vary enormously in the autumn. The Isles of Scilly can be wet and windy, however we may also expect some warm weather as well! During a typical week in this season we would expect to experience mixed sun and showers, with temperatures in the range 10-25°C

Walking We shall be on foot most of the day making medium length walks between stops on easy paths and roads over even ground, but on occasion we may walk on slightly rough coastal paths. We shall cover an overall distance of about 3 to 4 miles during the day. Walking boots are recommended on wet days, with trainers being fine when the weather is dry. Don't bring wellingtons – it's unlikely to be muddy and in most places they are unsuitable. Collapsible telescopic/walking poles could be useful for this trip

Boat Trips We shall take short boat trips to the smaller islands from St Mary's

Meals All included from lunch on Day 1 to lunch on Day 8

Insects Biting insects are unlikely to be a problem

Accom Double, twin and single rooms all ensuite

Group 12

Just some of what we hope to see:

Manx Shearwater	Firecrest
Balearic Shearwater	Wryneck
Buff-breasted Sandpiper	Rose-coloured Starling
Jack Snipe	Common Rosefinch
Short-toed Lark	Lapland Bunting
Red-breasted Flycatcher	Plus rarities!!
Yellow-browed Warbler	

Famous for scarce birds, we return to this scattering of tranquil islands on the south west limit of Britain, at the best time of year for the greatest variety of migrants to turn up!

- Scarce bird migrants from all points of the compass
- Walking quiet lanes amidst sub-tropical plants
- Dazzling seascapes and a patchwork of little fields
- Following up all the latest news each day
- Inter-island boat trips
- All from a small hotel on the main island of St Mary's
- Excellent local knowledge from our guides

We meet together in Penzance at the harbour before taking the ferry out to Scilly. Birds and wildlife will be apparent from the moment we leave the bay, with several species of seabird on the 28 mile crossing to the islands. Gannets and Fulmars cruise the open waters, along with a really good chance of seeing the rare Balearic Shearwater, which move into these British waters in late summer. Common Dolphins are increasingly common here and we hope to have some good sightings from the ship. Landing on St Mary's we can walk the short distance to our island hotel. The rest of the first day we are likely to explore the main island of St Mary's, with its diverse habitats of woodland, farmland and coastal trails.

**2-7** The islands have recorded over 400 species during their birding history, having a reputation as being a must visit place for all British birders. Autumn migration will be in full swing

as we arrive, with the last of the common species passing through such as Redstarts, Chiffchaffs, Wheatears, with swallows and martins still occurring at this time of year. Along with these common migrants and depending on the preceding weather and wind directions, we can hope for rarities. If transatlantic low pressure sweeps in we may see something arrive from America, whilst easterly winds may produce birds from Europe such as Wryneck and Bluethroat. In the right conditions, eastern rarities from even further afield in Asia such as Yellow-browed Warbler and Dusky Warbler can appear. It's impossible to give a firm itinerary - let's just say that our guides will take you to where the best birds are! Migrants can turn up anywhere; on the south pointing Peninnis Head, on grassy airfields, golf courses, sheltered coves and the shelter belts which protect the bulb fields - and indeed on any of the islands. Any boat trips we need



*"There's always a nice feeling of an island pace of life here and leading the holiday on foot and using no vehicles other than the little inter-island boats really enhances this island atmosphere."*  
 Simon Eaves



to make are included in the holiday. This is prime time for scarce birds such as Short-toed Lark, Wryneck and Red-backed Shrike, but expect the unexpected, as Scilly is famed for attracting vagrant waders, ducks, warblers, pipits and even birds of prey from all corners of the compass, which rarely occur elsewhere in the UK. Anything can turn up - in 2019 some birds we saw included Wryneck, Red-eyed Vireo, Red-backed Shrike, Short-toed Lark, Red-throated Pipit (among other things.)

During our trip we shall alternate between exploring the main island of St Mary's, with days out to visit two or three of the other inhabited islands using the colourful little inter-island boats. Even St Mary's is only 2.5 by 1.75 miles, so exploring on foot is easy, wandering between the different habitats of tiny bulb fields sheltered by tall pitted hedges, maritime heath and boggy moorland, with muddy freshwater pools, rocky headlands and sandy coves that pepper the coastline. The unique mild maritime climate has created a fascinating landscape, with special plants adapted to this environment

The Scillies are made up of around 150 islands with just five of the largest islands being inhabited. All of these five offshore islands are distinctly different in character and habitat. We shall almost certainly visit Tresco, the second largest, which is famed for its exotic Abbey Gardens created in 1834 around the remains of the 12th century St Nicholas Priory. Its sweeping sandy beaches and rocky tidal bays attract waders, gulls and terns and the dense vegetation and wooded areas provide shelter and feeding for common migrants and rarities



alike, as they pause to refuel on their long journeys. The Great Pool almost divides the whole island, offering the chance of some wildfowl, with regular rarities such as Ring-necked Duck and Spotted Crake turning up in some years. St Agnes, the most south-westerly of the inhabited islands, is in the prime position for first landfall of any transatlantic migrants, so it is another island we are likely to visit. It has a rugged southern coastline and more sheltered bays in the north. Its narrow winding lanes and tiny fields give it a totally different feel to the other islands and with Wingletang Down - an area of open scrub and gorse which stretches down to the Atlantic coast, it's an island of contrasts in a tiny area.

Rare birds can turn up on any of the other islands, with visiting birders searching all over. We shall try to see as many as we can, so depending on where the birds are found, we may visit St Martin's, a long thin island with beautiful white sandy beaches, downland and a small farming community. Alternatively, we may visit Bryher, which shelters Tresco from the Atlantic and is home to Hell Bay, where there is nothing between us and the eastern seaboard of America!

**8** We can spend the morning birding, then after lunch we board our ferry for the sea crossing back to Penzance, with a chance of more seabirds and cetaceans on the way.



### Outline Itinerary

- Day 1** Ferry from Penzance to St Mary's and transfer to hotel.  
7 nights at St Mary's Hall Hotel
- Days 2-7** Normally 3 days spent exploring the different parts of St Mary's, the main island and 3 day trips to other islands, usually Tresco, St Agnes and Bryher, but the occurrence of unusual birds will determine the exact itinerary
- Day 8** Return ferry to Penzance

**Simon Eaves:** Subalpine Warbler, Red-eyed Vireo, View from St Martin's

**Steve Osborne:** Cattle Egrets, Firecrest

**David Constantine:** Yellow-browed Warbler, Jack Snipe



# FORTH 'N' FIFE



*"There is always something new to see and experience in Fife, Lothian or Perth and Kinross in October; it's always different, as it's the weather and wind direction that bring in the wildlife."*  
Julian Sykes

Dates Sat 26 Oct - Sat 2 Nov 2024  
Price £1,995  
Deposit £350 Single Supp £300

Leader Julian Sykes

Weather Can be extremely variable at this time of year, so come prepared for everything from cold, rain and wind to calm autumnal sunshine!

Walking Mostly easy walking on level paths up to 2 miles, or perhaps a little more if rarities require it! We may be on our feet for a lot of the day even if not walking far

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

Insects Unlikely to be a problem at this time of year

Accom Double, twin and single ensuite rooms

Group 7

## Just some of what we hope to see:

Red-throated Diver	Spotted Redshank
Great Northern Diver	Black-tailed Godwit
Slavonian Grebe	Whimbrel
Red-necked Grebe	Great Skua
Manx Shearwater	Arctic Skua
Whooper Swan	Mediterranean Gull
Taiga Bean Goose	Little Gull
Brent Goose	Short-eared Owl
Velvet Scoter	Yellow-browed Warbler
Surf Scoter	Barred Warbler
Long-tailed Duck	Firecrest
White-tailed Eagle	Twite
Golden Eagle	Corn Bunting
Marsh Harrier	Snow Bunting
Red Kite	Lapland Bunting
Peregrine	European Beaver
Red Grouse	Red Squirrel
Black Grouse	
Purple Sandpiper	
Greenshank	

Fife, Lothian and Perthshire can be incredibly rewarding, as a constant stream of winter migrants arrive from the north, along with a chance of something special amongst them.

- Cross the mighty Forth Road Bridge to Musselburgh Lagoons
- Big flocks of scoter offshore plus divers, grebes and skuas
- Looking for European Beaver at the Loch of the Lowes Reserve
- Good chance of the rare wintering Taiga Bean Geese
- Possibilities of Yellow-browed Warbler, Lapland Bunting and Ring Ouzel
- Black Grouse, Golden Eagle, Peregrine in the Perthshire mountains
- Visit the famous Kelpies and St Andrews' coastline

We meet in Edinburgh and head to our comfortable accommodation in Kinross, situated on the edge of Loch Leven, which hosts 15,000+ roosting Pink-footed Geese during winter. It is wonderful to wake up and see and hear them each day flying out to feed in the nearby agricultural fields.

**2-7** Like the rest of the British east coast at this time of year, this is a thrilling and unpredictable experience, which can be very weather and wind dependent!! Thousands of birds are on the move and to witness this mass migration as birds head south along the coast is a wonderful sight.

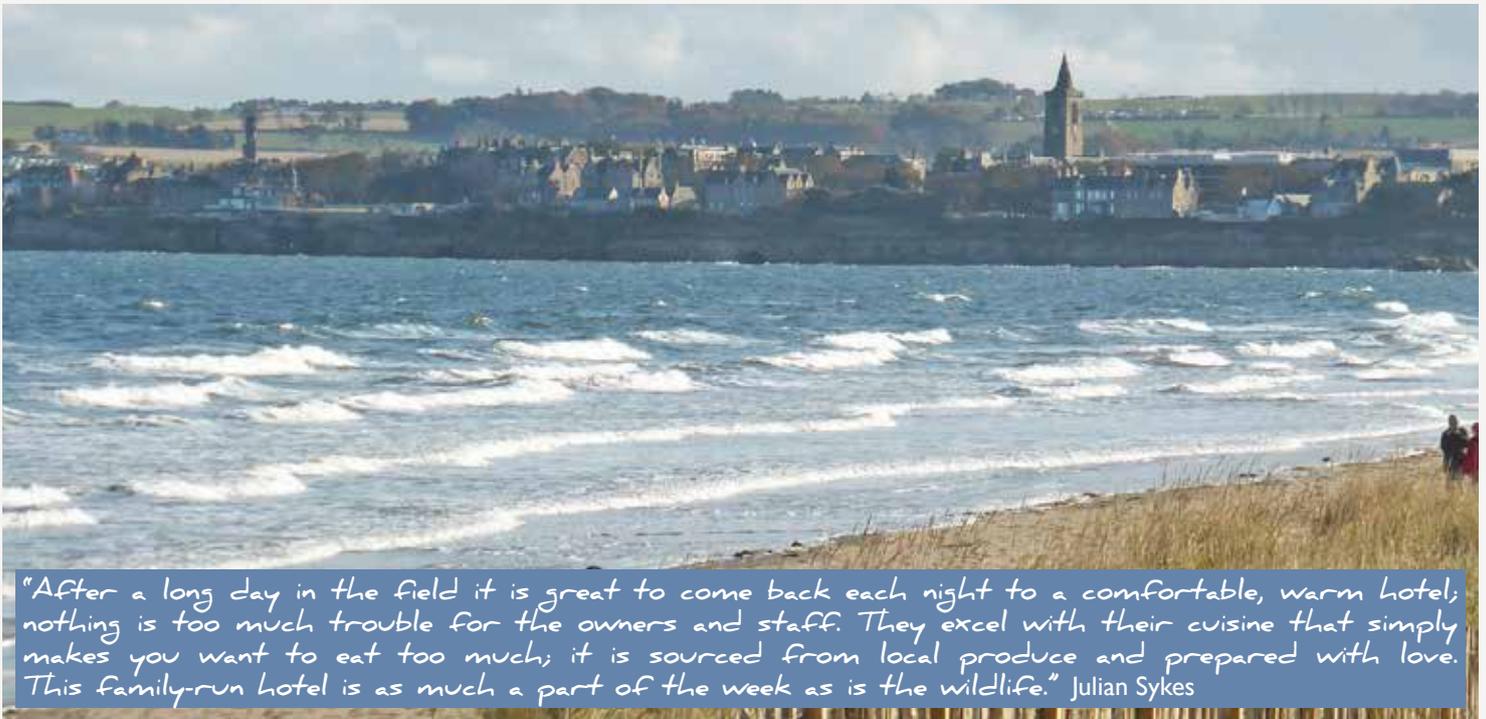
We have timed this trip to enjoy visible migration in action, with the commoner wintering species still migrating in good numbers, along with the

chance of something a bit rarer making landfall. Pipits, thrushes and finches are sometimes joined by scarcer birds, with a good possibility of Yellow-browed and Barred Warblers, along with Brambling, Firecrest and Snow and Lapland Buntings. We could literally see (and hear) birds dropping out of the sky, making landfall on Scotland's east coast.

We shall cast our eyes seawards from the comfort of a hide at Fife Ness and nearby car park, as both provide excellent opportunities to view passage seabirds; looking out for auks, skuas, duck, geese and even passerines.

There will be passage gulls and terns, with a few Little Gulls amongst the 100's of Kittiwakes moving south. Red-throated Divers should also be making their way along the North Sea coast, sometimes





*"After a long day in the field it is great to come back each night to a comfortable, warm hotel; nothing is too much trouble for the owners and staff. They excel with their cuisine that simply makes you want to eat too much; it is sourced from local produce and prepared with love. This family-run hotel is as much a part of the week as is the wildlife." Julian Sykes*

in good numbers, with a possibility of a Great Northern Diver as well.

The historic home of golf - St Andrews, needs no introduction and can be very productive, as a walk along the rocky shoreline could produce Purple Sandpiper, Turnstone and Rock Pipits. Nearby is the Eden Estuary and at the large comfortable hide it is possible to see groups of regular wintering waders, along with the possibility of a Curlew Sandpiper or Little Stint.

We cross the Forth Road Bridge to East Lothian, where we visit the wonderful Musselburgh Lagoons, which can be excellent at this time of year. Waders will include Bar-tailed Godwit, Dunlin, Redshank and Curlew, but there's always a chance of a Jack Snipe or Spotted Redshank. From the seawall we shall search through the Velvet Scoter; hoping to find a Surf Scoter that winter here annually, along with Slavonian Grebe and possibly Red-necked Grebe.

One day will be spent searching the Carron Valley for the wintering flock of Taiga Bean Geese, which is not always easy and local information is always useful. This will be combined with possibly visits to high tide roosts at Kinneil and Skinflats, where it's possible to see 100's of waders such as Black-tailed Godwit, Common Redshank, Golden Plover and Dunlin.

In 2018 we were lucky enough to find a drake Ferruginous Duck at this latter site, so you never know your luck.



No trip to this part of the Central Belt would be complete without calling in on one of Scotland's newest landmarks - The Kelpies, which could actually be one of the unexpected highlights of this tour.

In contrast, one day we'll cross the Tay River over to Perthshire, where we shall spend some time between Dunkeld and Crieff looking for raptors. With a bit of good luck and decent weather conditions, we have a possibility of finding Golden Eagle, Red Kite and Peregrine, which would be fantastic! We shall also be on the lookout for both Black and Red Grouse, Grey Partridge and Dipper; which also reside in this area

Late afternoon we shall move on to the Loch of the Lowes SWT Reserve, where we'll stay until dusk, in the hope of seeing one of the European Beavers that grace this wonderful site, along with possibly Red Squirrel.

8 After our last wonderful breakfast we shall say our "goodbyes" and head home, or back to Edinburgh. Hopefully we shall get one final fly past from the overwintering Pink-feet.



### Outline Itinerary

- Day 1 Meet in Edinburgh and transfer to our hotel  
7 nights at Kirklands Hotel, Kinross
- Days 2-7 From our base in Kinross we shall cover the migration hotspot of Fife Ness, the historic town of St Andrews and the adjacent Eden Estuary. We'll explore the Perthshire mountains for raptors and grouse, plus an evening visit for European Beaver. We shall cross the Forth River to Musselburgh Lagoons and Dalgety Bay
- Day 8 Travel back to Edinburgh

**Mark Denman:** Long-tailed Duck  
**Sue Ripley:** St Andrews  
**Julian Sykes:** Pink-footed Geese, Taiga Bean Geese, Velvet Scoter  
**Morag Rea:** Kelpies, Forth Bridges



# SOLWAY FIRTH



*"The Red Kite feeding station is sure to thrill, as hundreds of birds fill the sky and then dazzle us with their acrobatic prowess in the air."*

Sally Nowell

Dates Sat 2 Nov - Sat 9 Nov 2024

Price £2,095

Deposit £400 Single Supp £200

Leaders Sally Nowell and Ailie Brown

Weather The weather can vary enormously at this time of year. Typically we can expect a mixture of sunshine and showers with temperatures in the range 0-15°C. Some sites are exposed, so wind will be a factor

Walking We shall walk on a variety of wide and narrow paths, generally in good condition. Some walking will be on boardwalk and some will be on rough coastline. Walking boots are recommended

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

Insects Not a problem

Accom A comfortable former Coaching Inn offering double, twin and single rooms all ensuite

Group 12

## Just some of what we hope to see:

Red-throated Diver	Short-eared Owl
Slavonian Grebe	Pintail
Black Guillemot	Scaup
Hen Harrier	Long-tailed Duck
Red Kite	Barn Owl
Golden Plover	Willow Tit
Turnstone	Crossbill
Purple Sandpiper	Black-tailed Godwit
Pale-bellied Brent Goose	Roe Deer
Barnacle Goose	Red Squirrel
Pink-footed Goose	
Whooper Swan	
White-fronted Goose	
Goosander	
Peregrine	
Merlin	

## A bird-rich winter retreat, with thousands of geese, swans, raptors and waders, plus a fabulous Red Kite feeding station in this beautiful, historic, but often ignored part of Scotland

- Six species of goose, including Greenland White-fronted Goose
- Great close up views of Whooper Swans being fed
- Chance of Golden Eagle, Merlin, Hen Harrier and Goshawk
- Visit to Threave Castle, plus look at Caerlaverock Castle and Sweetheart Abbey
- Impressive flocks of Barnacle and Pink-footed Geese on coastal marshes
- Red Kite feeding station giving spectacular views
- Diversity of waders, gulls, ducks, divers, auks, grebes and more at Loch Ryan

We meet at our hotel in Castle Douglas, with time before dinner to chat about the week ahead.

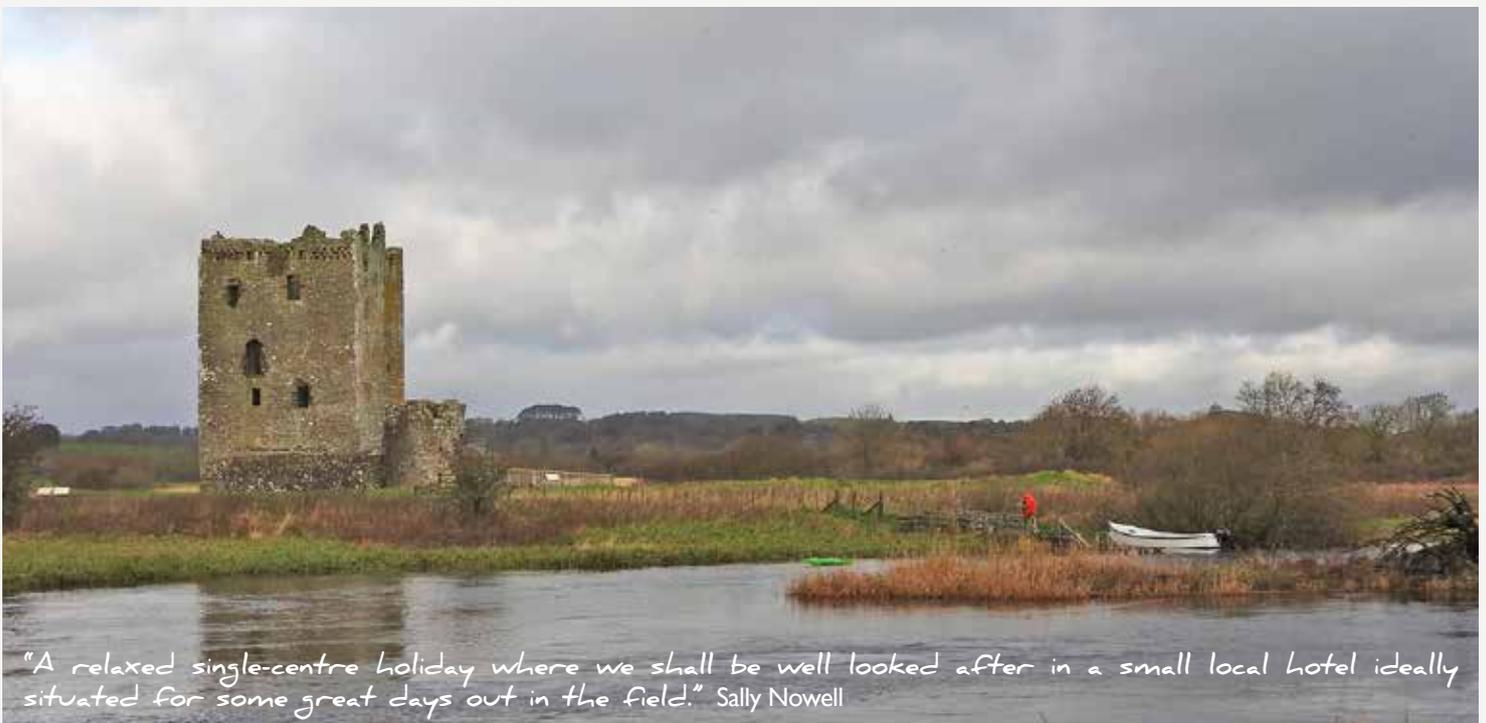
**2-7** The Solway now hosts approximately 40,000 wintering Barnacle Geese - the entire Svalbard population!! This astonishing number is all the more remarkable when you realise numbers crashed to just 400 in the 1940s, before WWI bought land at Caerlaverock, instigating the start of their recovery. We hope to see several thousand on our visit to this iconic Reserve, alongside other species such as Greylag, Pink-footed and perhaps even rarities such as Snow Goose, that have occurred here.

The trumpeting of Whooper Swans is a constant soundtrack, but becomes especially loud just before feeding time and as they fly in to the

feeding pool - expect ridiculously close views! In the hides we'll get good views of duck such as Pintail, Gadwall, Wigeon, Teal and maybe even Green-winged Teal, which has returned for several winters. Waders include Golden Plover, Lapwing, Oystercatcher and Black-tailed Godwit and distant flocks of Knot and Dunlin on the coast, where Peregrine, Hen Harrier or Merlin may fly through.

Along the coast, the RSPB Reserve at Mersehead is another fabulous spot for wintering wildfowl, with flocks of Wigeon, Teal, Shoveler, Shelduck and Pintail and more fabulous flocks of Barnacle and Pink-footed Geese. Perhaps we'll find one of the small number of leucistic Barnacle Geese here - almost white, but with faint markings just visible. There is a good chance that Hen Harrier or Short-eared Owl are using the area to winter. Nearby coastal areas such as Southernness Point





*"A relaxed single-centre holiday where we shall be well looked after in a small local hotel ideally situated for some great days out in the field."* Sally Nowell

and Carsthorpe Bay, can be a good sites to see wintering waders, with flocks of Oystercatchers, Dunlin, Bar-tailed Godwits and Grey Plover; while rocky areas host Turnstone and a few Purple Sandpiper. This is a good place to look for Scaup and there may be flocks of Pintail offshore and perhaps a few Common Scoter. We may pop in at Sweetheart Abbey and hear of its rather lovely story.

We'll visit Loch Ken and RSPB Ken Dee Marshes, to search for the small number of Greenland White-fronted Geese that winter here. This is one of the few places where Willow Tit are still doing well, perhaps coming to the feeders, while Red Kites soar overhead. Nearby is a Red Kite feeding station and we'll time our visit to see these fantastic aerial birds swooping down for tit-bits of meat and eating on the wing, almost within touching distance.

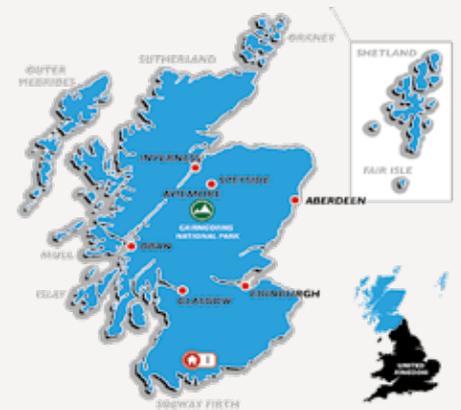
Nearby, the imposing tower of Threave Castle was built by Archibald the Grim, Lord of Galloway, in the 14th century. Peregrines now nest on the tower and stay on territory all winter, while the neighbouring Nature Reserve is a wonderful location to look for wintering Pink-footed, Greylag and Greenland White-fronted Geese. There should be a variety of duck, including Pintail and Wigeon, while Hen Harrier regularly quarter the ground in search of prey.

Travelling further afield, the sheltered waters of Loch Ryan may be teeming with birds. Waders include Dunlin, Redshank, Ringed Plover and

Turnstone alongside feeding Light-bellied Brent Geese. This is one of the best sites for Scaup and we'll check through them for Eider; Red-breasted Merganser and Common Scoter. Red-throated Diver and Slavonian and Great Crested Grebes winter here, plus Black Guillemot and small numbers of Long-tailed Duck. Black-necked Grebe used to winter and occasionally still appear. If we have time, we may visit Corsewall Point, where Gannets are often close to shore. We may also visit West Freugh for more chances of Greenland White-fronted Geese and the chance of Hen Harrier or Barn Owl coming to roost if we can time it right.

The interior of Dumfries and Galloway is a bit like Scotland in miniature, with expanses of rolling, rugged hills, forests and moorland. We shall visit sites with high hills where, if luck is with us, we may see Golden Eagle soaring and there should be Ravens galore and perhaps Peregrine or Merlin, but Red and Black Grouse have become much harder to find here these days. Red Deer may still be rutting and we'll listen out for their loud roaring. The extensive forestry has Common Crossbill, Siskin, Redpoll and Redwings, Fieldfares and Bramblings will have arrived from the north. Buzzards are a common sight and we shall keep a sharp eye out for soaring Goshawk, while marvelling at the drama of this beautiful, historical landscape.

8 After breakfast we'll say our farewells before setting off on our journeys home.



**Outline Itinerary**

**Day 1** Arrive in Castle Douglas in time for our evening meal, followed by a chat about our plans for the coming week. 7 nights Kings Arms Hotel, Castle Douglas

**Days 2-7** Wildlife and birdwatching exploration including Caerlaverock WWT Reserve, Ken-Dee Marshes RSPB Reserve, Cairnmore of Fleet NNR and Red Kite feeding station

**Day 8** After breakfast we shall say our farewells

---

**Jane Hope:** Red Kites  
**Duncan Macdonald:** Threave Castle, Peregrine, Mixed water and duck flock  
**Morag Rea:** Caerlaverock  
**Ian Tulloch:** Whooper Swans  
**Chrissie Nicholson:** Pale-bellied Brent Geese



# WINTER IN NORTHUMBERLAND



*"I absolutely love reacquainting myself with Northumberland at this time of year; it's remarkably unpredictable in what we might find. In the right conditions we can experience the mass arrival of wintering species such as geese, waders, gulls and thrushes, with a chance of something unusual amongst them." Julian Sykes*

Dates Sat 9 - Fri 15 Nov 2024  
 Price TBC  
 Deposit TBC Single Supp TBC

Leaders Julian Sykes and Darren Rees

Weather Hard to predict and likely to be variable with chance of some sunshine, but may also be cold and wet (8°-15°C) bring waterproofs and good boots.

Walking Walks of up to two miles on mainly level tracks, though perhaps a little more strenuous on the moorland day

Meals All included from dinner on Day 1 to breakfast on Day 7

Insects Unlikely to be a problem at this time of year

Accom Double, twin and single ensuite rooms

Group 10

## Just some of what we hope to see:

Red-throated Diver	Bar-tailed Godwit
Slavonian Grebe	Black-tailed Godwit
Whooper Swan	Dunlin
Pale-bellied Brent Goose	Common Redshank
Pink-footed Goose	Ringed Plover
Barnacle Goose	Golden Plover
Pintail	Short-eared Owl
Eider	Dipper
Long-tailed Duck	Grey Wagtail
Velvet Scoter	Rock Pipit
Common Scoter	Siberian Chiffchaff
Goosander	Willow Tit
Little Egret	Common Crossbill
Hen Harrier	Siskin
Red Kite	Lesser Redpoll
Merlin	Snow Bunting
Peregrine	Lapland Bunting
Water Rail	Red Squirrel
Purple Sandpiper	Grey Seal
Turnstone	

Fabulous birdwatching and stunning scenery as we explore the coastlines, forests and moorlands of this corner of historic north-east England, including Lindisfarne and Kielder Forest.

- Flocks of winter thrushes arriving from Scandinavia
- Kielder Forest for Red Squirrel, Dipper, Common Crossbill
- Beautiful coastline with long sandy beaches and rocky headlands
- Full day on Holy Island with chance of scarce migrants
- Impressive numbers of ducks, geese and waders on estuaries
- Inland to Redesdale to hang out at Winter's Gibbet
- Largest Pale-bellied Brent Goose flock in the UK

Meeting up at our lovely hotel in Bamburgh, we shall hopefully have time to take a short drive along the coast, where we can kick start our holiday with a variety of gulls loafing on the beach, with Eider and possibly some waders, such as Purple Sandpiper, Turnstone and Oystercatcher around the rocks. We shall return to the hotel in good time to freshen up ahead of our first evening meal together.

2-6 With long sandy beaches, rocky headlands and historic sites such as Lindisfarne Priory, Dunstanburgh and Bamburgh Castles, the Northumberland coastline is a wonderful area to explore - but for the birdwatcher it is even more so! From key locations we shall scan the sea for Red-throated Divers, Slavonian and Red-necked Grebes, Long-tailed Ducks and

hope for a few Velvet Scoter amongst the large flocks of Common Scoter that annually winter here. As we walk the white, windswept beaches and saltmarsh, we shall look for Snow Buntings or something scarcer such as Lapland Bunting or Shorelark.

Druridge Bay is famous for a network of wetland Reserves, with hides overlooking freshwater pools along this long stretch of coastline - all home to flocks of Wigeon, Teal, Pintail and Shoveler, along with other wildfowl. In the shallow pools, waders roost at high tide such as Bar-tailed and Black-tailed Godwits, Knot, Dunlin, Common Redshank and Grey and Ringed Plovers. Flocks of Golden Plover and Curlew are usually found in nearby fields, along with Greylag Geese plus Pink-footed and Whooper Swans, all the time on the lookout



*"Northumberland has always had a reputation for fantastic historic castles, rugged coastline and huge numbers of nesting seabirds. It is not so wellknown for the small numbers of dolphin and porpoise offshore, superb coastal wetlands and extensive coniferous forests - it's a cliché, but this county does have it all in winter."* Julian Sykes



for a Greenland White-fronted or Barnacle Goose in amongst them, arriving from the north.

We spend a day heading inland where, with luck, we might chance upon a Merlin speeding past, or a Hen Harrier quartering the extensive Cheviot moorland or, with luck, a Short-eared Owl hunting for voles. We shall make a short detour to the edge of Redesdale to look at the imposing Winter's Gibbet, keeping an eye out for Goshawk that breed in these extensive forests. We shall also check the fast-flowing rivers and streams for Dipper, Grey Wagtail and Goosander, which reside here all year round.

Around Kielder Water the vast coniferous forest is home to Common Crossbill, Siskin, Lesser Redpoll and many more species, along with a special mammal – Red Squirrel. Feeding stations have been created to attract these very beautiful animals and we hope for good views of these normally shy creatures, along with the possibility of Bank Vole.

One full day will be spent on Holy Island in the shadow of the wonderful and iconic Lindisfarne Priory, which is worth the visit alone. Here, huge flocks of waders follow the rising and retreating tide, with plovers, godwits, redshank and curlew probing the newly exposed mud. Gorgeous and diminutive Pale-bellied Brent Geese spend their winter here, in one of the largest wintering flocks in the UK, so finding some shouldn't be a struggle. Purple Sandpiper and Rock Pipits feed actively on the seaweed strewn, rocky shore at high tide, but



it's the chance of something unusual which is the attraction.

In recent years, rarities such as Red-flanked Bluetail, Brown Shrike, Pallas's and Dusky Warblers and Brown Shrike have been found, along with Siberian and Yellow-browed Warblers. We could experience huge numbers of winter thrushes passing through and a sea-watch may produce a passing skua or scarce diver.

The holy relics of St Cuthbert were buried in the Priory and pilgrims still come to pay homage to his memory. It is because of him that laws protect the local Eiders for their down, resulting in the name St Cuthbert's Ducks or Cuddy Ducks, as many Northumbrians still know them today. We shall find a few offshore, plus Long-tailed Ducks and Common Scoter.

Depending on what is around, we may venture south back to Newcastle, where we shall visit the resident Red Kites at Rowlands Gill and then a couple of wetland sites near the airport for primarily Willow Tit, along with the commoner wildfowl and waterbirds.

**7** Our final morning will be relaxed and after our final hearty breakfast we say our fond farewells to this beautiful corner of Northumberland.



### Outline Itinerary

- Day 1 We meet in Bamburgh or Newcastle station. 6 nights at The Victoria Hotel, Bamburgh
- Days 2-6 Exploration of the coast north and south of Bamburgh, the forest and moorland of Redesdale, including time around Kielder Water. Full day on Holy Island and possibly south to Newcastle
- Day 7 We depart after breakfast

**Simon Eaves:** Eiders  
**Morag Rea:** Warkwork Castle, Bamburgh Castle  
**Julian Sykes:** Little Egret  
**Mike Shaw:** Golden Plover  
**Duncan Macdonald:** Long-tailed Duck  
**Chrissie Nicholson:** Pale-bellied Brent Geese



# NEW MEXICO



*"I'll never forget the sight and sound of the dawn exodus of geese from Bosque Del Apache – an explosion of clattering white wings and frantic honking as tens of thousands of Snow Geese simultaneously erupts into the early morning desert sky."*  
Darren Rees

Dates Sat 23 Nov - Wed 4 Dec 2024  
Price £5,595  
Deposit £1,110 Single Supp £900

Leaders Darren Rees and Simon Eaves

Flights British Airways/American Airlines scheduled  
Outbound: Morning, Heathrow-Albuquerque  
Inbound: Overnight, Albuquerque-Heathrow  
(outbound and inbound via a US stop)

Weather Variable in winter. At Sandia Crest snow is likely, so temperatures can vary between -5° to 20°C. Mostly sunny elsewhere, though early mornings cool. Layers recommended

Walking 2-3 miles easy walking on well maintained trails, though snow likely at Sandia Crest.  
Walking boots recommended

Meals All included from dinner on Day 1 to lunch on Day 11

Insects It is unlikely that biting insects will be a problem, but we do advise you take repellent if you are at all susceptible

Accom Twin and single rooms all ensuite

Group 12

## Just some of what we hope to see:

Snow Goose	Steller's Jay
Ross's Goose	Williamson's Sapsucker
Sandhill Crane	Western Bluebird
Greater Roadrunner	Juniper Titmouse
Burrowing Owl	White-breasted Nuthatch
Phainopepla	Canyon Towhee
Pyrrhuloxia	Canyon Wren
Black-chinned Sparrow	Rock Wren
Rosy Finch (all 3 species)	Crissal Thrasher
Three-toed Woodpecker	Tassle-eared Squirrel
Townsend's Solitaire	Coyote
Cactus Wren	Collared Peccary

Wonderful New Mexico, with stunning snow-capped mountains and arid desert scenery, plus staggering numbers of wintering cranes and geese at the famous Bosque Del Apache.

- Tens of thousands of Sandhill Cranes and Snow Geese
- Four nights next to Bosque Del Apache National Wildlife Refuge
- Incredible wildfowl numbers and eagles at Elephant Butte
- Desert wrens, sparrows and roadrunner
- High altitude rarities: all three species of rosy finch
- Spectacular White Sands National Monument
- Winter birding at its best

**1-3** We arrive in Albuquerque and have a short transfer to our first base for three nights, close to the Rio Grande. Nearby is the delightful Rio Grande Nature Center, a great place for our introduction to the birdlife of New Mexico. The visitor centre looks out over ponds filled with ducks, geese and turtles (we saw Porcupine last time!) Ring-necked Duck, Cinnamon Teal, Hooded Merganser, Green-winged Teal and delightful Wood Duck will start the list and wooded riverside trails lead to Northern Flicker, Brown Creeper, White-breasted Nuthatch and Black Phoebe.

At Petroglyph National Monument we'll admire the rock carvings from New Mexico's indigenous people, as well as revelling in the desert landscape, with birds such as Rock Wren, Canyon Towhee and maybe our first Greater Roadrunner (Meep! Meep!)



Next, we'll explore the heights of Sandia Crest that rise above the desert to a summit of over 10,000 feet. Its slopes are covered in extensive pine forests, home to Steller's Jay, Mountain Chickadee, Red-breasted Nuthatch, Williamson's Sapsucker and rare Three-toed Woodpecker. At the summit, much-prized rosy finches attend feeders (with Tassle-eared Squirrels) and we'll hope for all three species: Brown-capped, Black and Gray-crowned.

**4-6** We travel south to Bosque del Apache National Wildlife Refuge, a highlight of our holiday. Based at nearby Socorro, we'll schedule early morning and late afternoon visits to the refuge, to witness a true wildlife spectacle: tens of thousands of Snow Geese and Sandhill Cranes fly to and from their roosts, to a cacophony of clattering wings, honking and bugling!





*"The evenings along the Rio Grande are special. The sun colours the sky behind the blue desert mountain ridges and rasping bugle calls herald the arrival of Sandhill Cranes, as flocks fly in to join the assembled masses gathered in pools, sparkling in the last light of the day." Darren Rees*

Smaller Ross's Snow Geese mingle with the flocks and other waterfowl include Bufflehead, Canvasback, Lesser Scaup and Canada Geese. Raptors are attracted to the area and we'll look out for Cooper's Hawk, Red-tailed Hawk, Bald Eagle, American Kestrel, Merlin, Northern Harrier and striking Ferruginous Hawk. As the light fades Coyote, Collared Peccary and Great Horned Owls stir!

In the Magdalena Mountains, west of Socorro, we'll search open areas for smart Pronghorn Antelopes and Golden Eagles. Higher, in wooded areas, we'll look for Acorn Woodpeckers, Red-naped Sapsucker, Golden-crowned Kinglets, Western Scrub Jay, Juniper Titmouse and Red Crossbill.

**7-9** Leaving Socorro we drive south to Las Cruces, via Elephant Butte, the largest lake in New Mexico. Staggering numbers of duck winter here, with tens of thousands of American Wigeon, Redhead, Pintail and American Coot, attracting groups of Bald Eagles. We'll have fun separating Western and Clark's Grebes and we should also find White-fronted Geese, Neotropic Cormorants, Ring-billed Gulls, Ruddy Duck and Great Blue Heron.

Patches of scrub close to the dam hold Black-throated Sparrow, Verdin, White-winged Dove, and Pyrrhuloxia. Further south, at Percha, we'll search for other species of the arid regions: Scaled Quail, Crissal Thrasher, Phainopepla and Western Bluebird are present.



From Las Cruces we'll explore the woods, thickets and fields of Mesilla Valley. Wintering birds such as American Pipit, Loggerhead Shrike and Green-tailed Towhee join local Burrowing Owls to enjoy the winter sun.

Dominating the eastern skyline are the imposing Organ Mountains and at Dripping Springs, residents include Ladder-backed Woodpecker, Cactus, Canyon and Rock Wren, plus Black-tailed Gnatcatcher - there are Mountain Lions too! Winter sparrows include Rufous-crowned, Sage and Black-chinned.

Crossing the Tularosa Basin we reach one of the most dramatic landscapes in the world and another highlight. Snow-capped mountains surround the arid basin of White Sands National Monument - a photographer's paradise, with the juxtaposition of white dunes, rugged peaks and blue skies. Birds will be small players on a grand stage, but we'll look out for soaring Chihuahuan Raven, Golden Eagle and Prairie Falcon.

**10-12** Leaving Las Cruces we return north, birding enroute, to Socorro and a final evening visit to Bosque del Apache for a farewell to the spectacular crane and geese flocks. Well, we can't get enough of them! After a last morning birdwatching, we travel to Albuquerque for our return flight, arriving UK on the morning of Day 12.



### Outline Itinerary

- Day 1 Arrive Albuquerque and transfer to hotel  
3 nights Casas de Suenos
- Days 2-3 Birding at Rio Grande Nature Center, Petroglyph National Monument and Sandia Crest
- Day 4 Transfer south, with birding stops, to Socorro  
3 nights Best Western, Socorro
- Days 5-6 Visits to Bosque Del Apache National Wildlife Refuge and the Magdalena Mountains
- Day 7 Travel south with birding stops at Elephant Butte Lake  
3 nights Holiday Inn, Las Cruces
- Days 8-9 Explore Organ Mountains, Mesilla Valley and White Sands National Monument
- Day 10 Travel north to Socorro for final evening at Bosque del Apache  
1 night Best Western, Socorro
- Days 11-12 Birding in morning, with return flight from Albuquerque in the afternoon.  
Arrive UK Day 12

**Terence Lee:** Snow Geese, Sandhill Cranes, Roadrunner, White Sands, Coyote  
**Mark Denman:** Pyrrhuloxia

# OUR TERMS AND CONDITIONS

Please take a few minutes to read the following, that often gets overlooked. We pride ourselves on safeguarding not only you on your holidays, but also your payments made to us. In return, we have to comply with certain legal requirements, that means we need some information from you. All this is designed to take the worry and hassle out of your holidays with us.

1. A reservation is made once a booking form, together with deposit, has been received from you and confirmed in writing by us or; when booking through our website, you receive your booking confirmation by email. Provisional reservations may be made by telephone or email, as long as a completed booking form follows within 10 days. For reservations within 10 weeks prior to the commencement of the holiday a completed booking form and full payment must follow within 48 hours of a provisional booking.

2. The balance must be paid not less than 10 weeks prior to the commencement of the holiday. For some holidays the balance due date may be more than 10 weeks before commencement, if we are obliged to confirm final details prior to that point with our agents. The date the balance is payable will be advised by Speyside Wildlife when we confirm your booking. Unless notice of cancellation is received from you prior to the balance payment date, balance monies will remain due and payable.

3. If you book a place in a twin ensuite we shall endeavour to find you a fellow guest to take the other place. If we fail to do so, we shall contact you before the balance is due on the holiday, to let you know how much the single supplement would be to have the room to yourself and keep the booking. If you don't want to pay the supplement, you may cancel your booking and your deposit will be returned.

4. No increase will be made to the prices in respect of these holidays. The price you see is the maximum price you will pay. Speyside Wildlife holidays are fully inclusive of meals, accommodation, transport and entrance fees as detailed. Not included are travel insurance and items of a personal nature. Where guests incur expenditure for telephone calls, drinks etc, this bill must be settled by you, prior to departure. Last minute discounts may be available through the office. Any change in price in respect of these will be detailed on an individual basis, prior to your booking being made.

5. If you cancel a booking the deposit is non-refundable. If you cancel any holiday after the balance due date, all balance monies will be forfeit. Once balance monies have been paid, rather than cancelling, you are at liberty to transfer your booking to another person, provided sufficient notice is given to us and it is possible for us to make the substitution. In this event any transfer costs arising must be borne by you. In addition, you are at liberty to transfer an existing booking to another holiday within the same year; any time up to four weeks prior to the balance monies being due on your existing booking. Again any transfer costs must be borne by you. An administration charge of £50 will be levied on each and any transfer.

6. Speyside Wildlife will do everything possible to ensure that your holiday runs as described. In the unlikely event this is not possible we shall advise you at the earliest opportunity of any significant alterations. Any alterations so made will be of a similar quality to those described. We shall take responsibility should the services detailed in the holiday descriptions not be of a suitable standard. We shall also take responsibility for any acts or omissions by ourselves which result in any loss or injury to you. We cannot however take responsibility for any loss or injury resulting from any act or omission by persons over whom we have no control. No responsibility can be held by Speyside Wildlife for any holiday altered or cancelled due to reasons beyond our control, under circumstances which could not be avoided and where alternative arrangements cannot be made. We do, however, reserve the right to cancel any holiday up to 10 weeks prior to departure, should insufficient reservations have been made. In this instance all monies paid will be refunded in full.

7. In the event of Speyside Wildlife cancelling your holiday prior to commencement all monies will be returned promptly to you in full. If however, in the unlikely event that your holiday is curtailed once it has started, due to circumstances completely beyond our control, we shall return you to the UK and cover any expenses incurred in making that return, but we cannot be responsible for any additional expenses incurred by you, nor are we responsible for the return of any monies for the period of curtailment and so are unable to make any refunds, or pay any compensation for that period. Please therefore ensure you have adequate travel insurance in place to cover any such eventuality.

Speyside Wildlife cannot be responsible for any loss or damage to personal items, or for personal accident or injury. Guests are therefore strongly recommended to take out personal insurance against cancellation charges and other losses or injury. To this end, we have arranged suitable cover. If you wish this to apply, please contact Arthur J Gallagher of Fort William on 01397 705 858. Clients booked on flight-based holidays must have sufficient personal cover prior to travel. If you do not wish to use our insurer, then a copy of the policy you take out must be provided to us.

8. If you have a complaint, would you please notify us as soon as possible in order that the matter can be dealt with promptly.

9. Speyside Wildlife complies with GDPR May 2018. All personal details on our mailing list are held securely on computer. These are automatically deleted after 3 years if no booking is made. Guest information is kept on the following basis: Standing data such as address/email/passport details/dietary/health/annual insurance information etc. will be held on an ongoing basis, unless you ask us to delete any or all of this. Transitory information, such as holiday emergency contacts/single trip insurance details etc. will be deleted once your holiday/experience has finished. No information will be passed to a third party, except our Ground Agents (as applicable). If you object to your details being stored, please inform us and we shall remove them.

10. All clients booked on a non-UK holiday must be in possession of a valid passport. Full details of requirements for a specific holiday will be sent when we confirm your booking.

11. Speyside Wildlife complies with the requirements set out in Statutory Instrument 2018 No 634 'The Package Travel and Linked Travel Arrangements Regulations 2018'. All non-ATOL holiday deposit and balance payments made, are secured by way of a Trust Account administered by Masson Cairns & Co, 36 High Street, Grantown-on-Spey, Cairngorms National Park, PH26 3EQ.

12. Speyside Wildlife also holds an ATOL (Air Travel Organisers Licence) No 4259, issued by the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) in the name of Suzanne Dowden trading as Speyside Wildlife. All our flight-inclusive holidays are financially protected by the ATOL scheme. When you pay you will be supplied with an ATOL Certificate. Please ask for it and check to ensure that everything you booked (flights, hotels and other services) is listed on it. If flight timings are not yet confirmable with the airline, the flights section will state TBC. For more information about financial protection and the ATOL Certificate go to: [www.atol.org.uk/ATOL\\_certificate](http://www.atol.org.uk/ATOL_certificate). (Civil Aviation Authority ATOL Standard Term 1.1).



Lesley Gadsden, Puffins, The Farnes

A photograph of a squirrel sitting on a tree branch, looking up. The squirrel is light brown with a white belly and a bushy tail. It is perched on a thick, moss-covered branch of a pine tree. The background shows more pine branches and a clear blue sky. The lighting is warm, suggesting late afternoon or early morning.

### CIVIL AVIATION AUTHORITY ATOL STANDARD TERMS

When you buy an ATOL protected flight or flight inclusive holiday from us you will receive an ATOL Certificate. This lists what is financially protected, where you can get information on what this means for you and who to contact if things go wrong. (Civil Aviation Authority ATOL Standard Term 1.5)

We, or the suppliers identified on your ATOL Certificate, will provide you with the services listed on the ATOL Certificate (or a suitable alternative). In some cases, where neither we nor the supplier are able to do so for reasons of insolvency, an alternative ATOL holder may provide you with the services you have bought, or a suitable alternative (at no extra cost to you). You agree to accept that in those circumstances the alternative ATOL holder will perform those obligations and you agree to pay any money outstanding to be paid by you under your contract to that alternative ATOL holder. However you also agree that in some cases it will not be possible to appoint an alternative ATOL holder, in which case you will be entitled to make a claim under the ATOL scheme (or your credit card issuer where applicable). (Civil Aviation Authority ATOL Standard Term 1.7A)

If we, or the suppliers identified on your ATOL certificate, are unable to provide the services listed (or a suitable alternative, through an alternative ATOL holder or otherwise) for reasons of insolvency, the Trustees of the Air Travel Trust may make a payment to (or confer a benefit on) you under the ATOL scheme. You agree that in return for such a payment or benefit, you assign absolutely to those Trustees any claims which you have or may have arising out of or relating to the non-provision of the services, including any claims against us (CAA), the travel agent (tour operator), or your credit card issuer where applicable. You also agree that any such claims may be re-assigned to another body, if that other body has paid sums you have claimed under the ATOL scheme. (Civil Aviation Authority Standard Term 1.7B)



enquiries@speysidewildlife.co.uk  
+44 (0)1479 812498  
www.speysidewildlife.co.uk



Front Cover - Roy Atkins: Laughing Falcon  
Inside Covers - J Roberts: Red and Green Macaw  
Jane Hope: Red Squirrel  
Back cover - Jean Brown: Scarlet Macaws  
Tony Cummins: Roller  
Mark Philips: Short-eared Owl  
Patricia Frochoux: Orca  
Simon Eaves: Flamingo

