

SPRING BIRDS IN SPEYSIDE



"A real highlight of a spring birds week is our day trip over to the incredible seabird island of Handa. Here thousands of seabirds cram the ledges of the great stack, whilst Great and Arctic Skuas patrol overhead, against a backdrop of seemingly endless mountains and the azure sea below. It really does take your breath away!" Craig Round

Dates Sat 5 - Sat 12 May 2018
Sat 12 - Sat 19 May 2018
Sat 19 - Sat 26 May 2018
Sat 26 May - Sat 2 June 2018

Price £1,150

Deposit £200 **Single Supp** £100

Leaders Two from our Speyside team

Weather Varies from cold to warm and sunny (8°-20°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 4 miles

Our Cairngorms walk is more steep and uneven, but low-level unguided alternatives are available. Walking boots will be needed

Boat Trip Our boat trip to Handa is over sheltered waters and lasts about 15 minutes

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

Insects In June, biting midges occasionally occur on sheltered loch shores

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

Group 12

Just some of what we hope to see:

Black-throated Diver	Crested Tit
Slavonian Grebe	Scottish Crossbill
Fulmar	Dunlin
Golden Eagle	Snipe
Osprey	Curlew
Ptarmigan	Redshank
Black Grouse	Arctic Skua
Goldeneye	Great Skua
Red-breasted Merganser	Black Guillemot
Capercaillie	Pine Marten
Dotterel	Badger
Puffin	Common Seal

Our classic signature week, perfected over 25 years, with all Speyside's special birds at their most active, including Capercaillie and Black Grouse - and time for great mammals too.

- Bird specialities of the ancient Pine Forest of the Highlands of Scotland
- A west coast trip to fabulous Handa Island in north-west Sutherland
- The Moray Firth, alive with seaduck, terns and migrants
- Divers and grebes in spectacular breeding plumage
- A day for mountain birds in the high tops of the Cairngorms
- An evening for Pine Martens and Badgers too, at our baited hide
- Come by train or plane and enjoy the wonders of the Cairngorms National Park

Dinner together on Saturday evening starts the holiday.

2-7 Based in our delightful accommodation in Glen Feshie, we'll start the week with walks in the local area, perhaps along the river or around beautiful lochans surrounded by forest nearby. Ospreys are at local loch-side eyries, plus more at nearby Loch Insh. The RSPB have extensive Reserves here and we'll visit the ancient pines of Abernethy Forest, a remnant of the 'Great Wood of Caledon', in search of dainty Crested Tits and parties of Scottish Crossbill.

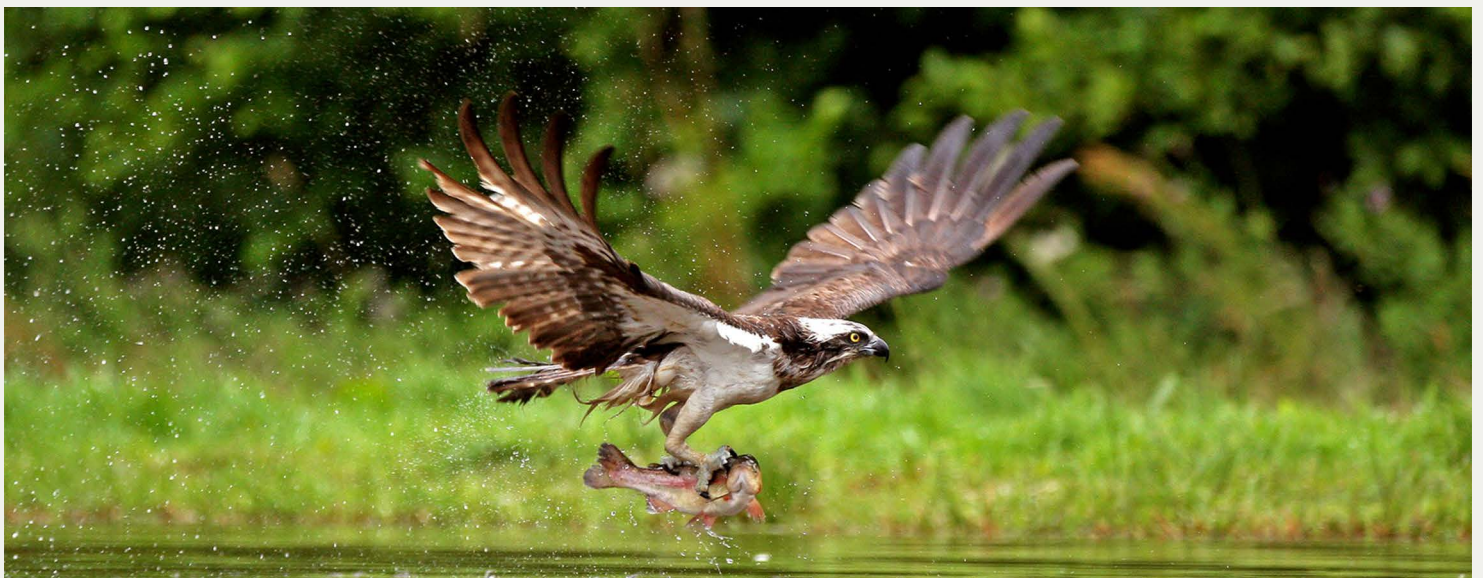
We'll need to check them carefully, as in recent years both Common and Parrot Crossbills have taken up residence in the area. We'll keep alert for wary Capercaillie feeding in the shadows - a clatter of wings often the first sign of their presence. We'll also make a special effort to see

Black Grouse as they 'bubble and coo' at dawn - a fabulous spectacle. Red Squirrels are still abundant in the forest with Redstart, Siskin, Tree Pipit and countless Willow Warblers singing in the clearings.

On one evening we'll visit our baited hide to look for a close encounter with Pine Marten and Badger, with Woodcock roding over the trees. Sparkling forest lochans hold exquisitely plumed Slavonian Grebe - a wonderful chance to see them in their breeding finery. Recently even White-tailed Eagles have begun to nest and we'll look out for these and Golden Eagles too.

The arctic-tundra plateau of the Cairngorms is unique in Britain and, weather permitting, we'll head up on the funicular railway to seek out camouflaged Ptarmigan as they feed quietly amongst the boulders. From mid-May we may encounter beautiful Dotterel too and there is always





"Migration is reaching a peak, with stunning Dotterel returning to the high tops, alongside Ring Ouzel and Ptarmigan. Immaculate Black-throated Divers and Slavonian Grebes are back on lochs, whilst Capercaillie and Black Grouse are lekking and woods are alive with the song of Redstart, Tree Pipit, Cuckoo and Willow Warbler." Craig Round

a chance of Snow Bunting. The River Spey winds its way through the valley with nesting Dipper, Grey Wagtail, Goosander and noisy Common Sandpiper, while Curlew, Redshank, Lapwing, Oystercatcher and Snipe display over marshes in river valleys and around Lochindorb and Insh.

On tranquil waters beautiful Red-throated Divers give their haunting wail and we'll take you to remote glens where Golden Eagle hunt Mountain Hares. We'll search for Raven, Ring Ouzel and Peregrine, with Red Deer on the skyline and even Wild Goats. We may find Hen Harrier, Merlin or Short-eared Owl hunting the open moorland, where we'll hear cackling Red Grouse and the mournful piping of Golden Plover.

Along the coast and tidal bays of the Moray Firth a few Long-tailed Duck and Common or Velvet Scoter may linger with the local Eider. The shingle shores are busy with Arctic, Common and Sandwich Tern and we hope to see fishing Ospreys and perhaps even a Great Northern Diver offshore. Red Kite circle lazily above the rolling farmland of the Black Isle and we'll search out some of the farmland birds found here, such as Tree Sparrow and Yellowhammer. We shall visit a great place to see Bottlenose Dolphins, which may come remarkably close to shore and we hope to see some acrobatics as they hunt fish on the rising tide. The estuary at Udale Bay may have passage waders such as Bar-tailed Godwit and Knot and a few wintering geese may still be lingering.

We'll enjoy a wonderful day travelling through stunning scenery on our way to the far north west

of the Scottish Highlands on our day visit to Handa Island.

We'll pause to look for Black-throated Diver enroute and there is always the chance of Golden Eagle or perhaps a Greenshank, as a small number breed this far north. Black Guillemots bob on the water close to the boat as we make our ten minute crossing, then we walk across the island enjoying fantastic views of nesting Great and Arctic Skuas as we go - the Arctic Skuas often chasing each other in their exhilarating display.

Gannets pass by offshore and we'll look out for Rock Dove, Raven and Twite as well. On the far side of the island, towering cliffs and stacks host a seabird city, with thousands of Guillemots and smaller numbers of Razorbills, Kittiwakes and Fulmars. A few delightful Puffins nest on top of the stack - but don't forget to look back towards the mainland where the scenery ... well it's simply breathtaking!

8 After breakfast we say our farewells.



Outline Itinerary

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

Mark Denman: Crested Tit, Dotterel
Simon Eaves: Crossbill, Puffin
Jane Hope: Black Grouse
Colin Scott: Slavonian Grebe

