

SOLWAY



"I cannot wait to return to south west Scotland. It is like the country in miniature; rocky mountains, extensive forest and a spectacular coastline. The majority of Spitsbergen's breeding Barnacle Geese winter here, along with a profusion of other wildfowl, waders and raptors, just fantastic!" Duncan Macdonald

Dates Sat 21 - Sat 28 October 2017
 Price £1,495
 Deposit £250 Single Supp £100

Leader Duncan Macdonald and Roy Atkins

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	White-fronted Goose
Slavonian Grebe	Peregrine
Black Guillemot	Merlin
Hen Harrier	Short-eared Owl
Red Kite	Pintail
Golden Plover	Scaup
Turnstone	Long-tailed Duck
Purple Sandpiper	Barn Owl
Pale-bellied Brent Goose	Red Grouse
Barnacle Goose	Black Grouse
Pink-footed Goose	Crossbill
Whooper Swan	Black-tailed Godwit

A bird-rich winter retreat, with thousands of geese, swans, raptors and waders, plus a fabulous Red Kite feeding station and a unique night-vision experience.

- Six species of goose, including Greenland White-fronted Goose
- Great close up views of Whooper Swans being fed
- Chance of Golden Eagle, Merlin and Goshawk
- Hen Harrier roost and large flocks of Barnacle Geese on coastal marshes
- Night drive with thermal imaging cameras
- Red Kite feeding station giving spectacular views
- Diversity of waders, gulls, ducks, divers, auks, grebes and more at Loch Ryan

I We meet at our hotel in Castle Douglas, with time before dinner to chat about the week ahead.

2-7 At WWT Caerlaverock, 30,000 Barnacle Geese, alongside other species, use the fields every winter and rarities such as Snow Goose have occurred here. The trumpeting of Whooper Swans is a constant soundtrack, but becomes especially loud just before feeding time and as they fly from the feeding pool to roost. 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 Peregrine or Merlin may fly through, sending flocks of birds skywards.

Along the coast the RSPB Reserve at Mersehead is another fabulous spot for wintering wildfowl



with flocks of Wigeon, Teal, Shelduck and Pintail as well as waders. There is a good chance that Hen Harrier and Short-eared Owl are using the area to winter. Nearby Southernness Point is one of the best places to see wintering waders with flocks of Oystercatchers, Dunlin, Bar-tailed Godwits and Grey Plover, while rocky areas host Turnstone and Purple Sandpiper. This is a good place to look for Scaup and there may be flocks of Pintail offshore and perhaps Common Scoter and grebes.

We'll visit Loch Ken and RSPB Ken Dee Marshes, to search for the Greenland White-front, Greylag and Pink-footed Geese that winter here, with Pochard, Little Grebe, Goldeneye and Goosander amongst them. Willow Tit are still here in small numbers, although they can be tricky to find.

Nearby is a Red Kite feeding station and we'll time our visit to see these fantastic aerial birds



"The wildlife just keeps on coming on this trip! We shall visit a Red Kite feeding station, where these birds will pass us at head height; we shall scan the thousands of Barnacle and Pink-footed Geese for maybe something a bit more unusual and we shall even search out the creatures of the night with specialist night-vision equipment." Duncan Macdonald



swooping down for tit-bits of meat and eating on the wing, almost within touching distance. If daylight permits, we'll return to Loch Ken to watch the geese come into roost.

The imposing tower of Threave Castle was built by Archibald the Grim, Lord of Galloway, in the 14th century. 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 ducks including Pintail and Wigeon, while Hen Harrier regularly quarter the ground in search of prey.

Travelling further afield, we go to the sheltered waters of Loch Ryan, which are often teeming with birds. The shoreline may be dotted with waders including Knot, Bar-tailed Godwit, Turnstone, Dunlin and Ringed Plover; alongside feeding Light-bellied Brent Goose. Out on the water are flocks of Eider, with Red-breasted Merganser, Common Scoter and Scaup and we'll look for Slavonian Grebe and divers, plus Black Guillemot and Long-tailed Duck.

Black-necked Grebe used to winter here and occasionally still appear. If we have time we may visit Corsewall Point. Although a little late in the season for seawatching, there is always the chance of a late skua or petrel passing and Gannets are often close to shore. At dusk we'll visit a small Hen Harrier roost, with a good chance of hunting Barn Owl.

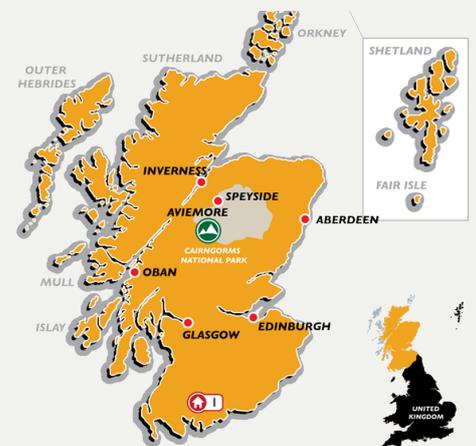
The interior of Dumfries and Galloway is a bit like Scotland in miniature, with expanses of

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 Raven and Peregrine and perhaps Merlin.

Red Grouse can be found where there is heather; while Black Grouse are 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 the first Redwings, Fieldfares and Bramblings may be arriving. 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.

Not all wildlife is active during daylight hours, so we have teamed up with a local company specialising in night-time wildlife viewing using night-vision equipment! We shall head out into the dark, each of us being given our own thermal imaging equipment to use for the evening, to look for nocturnal creatures such as Red and Roe Deer, Fox, Badger, Bats, Hedgehog and owls in this fabulous and unique experience - even Otter is a possibility.

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
- Days 2-7 Wildlife and birdwatching exploration including Caerlaverock WWWT Reserve, Ken-Dee Marshes RSPB Reserve, Cairnsmore of Fleet NNR and Red Kite feeding station. One evening looking for wildlife with night-vision equipment
- Day 8 After breakfast we shall say our farewells

Mark Denman: Whooper Swans
Sally Dowden: Purple Sandpiper
Morag Rea: Red Kites, Barnacle Geese
Chrissie Nicholson: Pink-footed Geese, Goldeneye, Turnstone

