

Ardnamurchan - The Red Deer Rut

Naturetrek Tour Report

3 - 7 October 2017

Report compiled by Andrew Bray



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Tour participants: Andrew Bray (leader) with eight Naturetrek clients

Day 1

Tuesday 3rd October

Glasgow, Corran Ferry, Ardnamurchan

We met in Glasgow. The plane from Southampton was delayed so the rest of the group made use of facilities at Glasgow airport. We stopped at the Green Welly and were at ferry on time to load practically straight away. We then drove to the bunkhouse for a later dinner. After dinner the group was briefed on the week and then we watched for Pine Martens. One turned up after dinner and took all the sandwiches, one at a time. The Stag known as One-eye was bellowing and did so every night, all night.

Day 2

Wednesday 4th October

Acharacle, Tioram Castle, Kentra Bay, Garb Eilean

We started at 6.30am, which was to be the norm for the trip. We drove to Caim house but only found a few deer on either side along the road. The Braeside herd was very visible. On way back, we took a diversion up Windmill Hill as three Golden Eagle and a White-tailed Eagle were seen. A Golden Eagle was perched on a rock for the photographers. We headed back for breakfast around 9am which was normal for the trip.

After food we went to Loch Shiel, at Acharacle, seeing Tufted Duck and Little Grebe. It was only a short drive to Tioram Castle. We walked up to entrance as the tide was out and still going out. There were Oystercatcher and Curlew on the beach, as well as gulls. Fortunately, it was not raining, and we had a nice walk from the car park. We stopped to look at bridge from bus at narrowest point of the River Shiel. The Ardnamurchan estate was on the far bank with Loch Shiel estate nearside. We stopped at the Internet Cafe in Acharacle for a comfort break and also a hot drink. Our next stop was not far as we drove on the road crossing the SSSI site to the south of Kentra Bay, with Rock Pipit, Feral Pigeon and lots of House Sparrows. We stopped at the Pines Medical Centre, but we did not see any Red Squirrels as rain was rather hard then.

We drove to Garbh Eilean for lunch, with lots of Harbour (Common) Seals and Grey Seals on the rocks. It was then a long drive back to look at the Red Deer. We stopped at the Bunkhouse for comfort break as it was on the way. In Braeside valley, on left-hand side, there were three sizeable stags. The herd on the right was spread out and the big stag was not interested. We drove down the other valley, with young stags and hinds in Caim farmhouse garden. A White-tailed Eagle was seen floating after Loch Mudle at windmill hill. There were some Red Deer on side of hill by the coll. There were more Red Deer as we drove down to the raptor watch point. On the way back to the bunkhouse there was a Black-throated Diver in Port na Croisg. Early in the evening the peanut butter sandwiches were put out for the Pine Marten, but it only turned up when all but one had gone to bed!

Day 3

Thursday 5th October

Ardnamurchan Lighthouse, Glenmore, Ockle

We had another early morning start to see Red Deer at Caim and Braeside. This morning we visited Ardnamurchan Lighthouse. It was a wild, windy and rainy visit and we were glad of the provided shelter. We did

see diving Gannets and nine Puffins flew past as well as five Bonxies (Great Skuas). The exhibition was good and improved our knowledge of the area. We had lunch outside the Kilchoan community centre, with a meeting going on in the room. At least we were sheltered from the wind and it was dry. We then drove down to the ferry point where nothing was on display. We then drove back past more deer to the Glenmore Natural History Centre and had a hot drink.

We then drove back to where deer had been seen to look at the deer which were scattered across the hills. We then drove up past the bio-fuel power station to the top end of the enormous deer pen, to find lots of Père David's, Fallow and Red Deer. We also saw a big stag with the crown on its horns: very Germanic. We did stop at the biomass factory, but no Dipper was seen.

After dinner we did a night drive to Ockle to look for Wildcat but again dipped, but we did see Red Deer, though. There was a lovely clear view of Loch Sunart with the full moon reflecting on it as we drove back. The Pine Marten turned up for the one remaining sandwich once everyone went to bed. One-eye was very noisy that night and roared by each window!

Day 4

Friday 6th October

Sanna Bay, Kilchoan, Windmill Hill

Once again it was a morning watching Red Deer, but with a reduced number of clients. Some visited Glenborrodale Bay and others had a lie-in. On our drive back, we saw an Otter at Port na Croisg, the only one seen that day. We later drove out to Sanna Bay across the volcanic rings. It is a lovely location and one of the top 10 beaches in UK. The tide was going out and sea rather flat compared to previous days, but there were no fins at sea. It was a cold day but bracing to walk along the beach. We stopped at Kilchoan Community Centre for warming drink. We then did the short drive to the jetty, but all we saw were huge flocks of small birds: mainly Chaffinch and Meadow Pipit, but there were Twite and a Reed Bunting. We tried the end of the road from Kilchoan at Ormsaigberg but again, no fins could be seen.

Lunch was consumed near Caim farmhouse by a cutting to protect us from the wind. Alas there was no Dipper in the river nearby. Our next stop was Windmill Hill, but with no eagles nor Ravens. We did find 10 stags in a herd, which were joined by another 14! It was an amazing sight to see so many stags together and some were very big, as well. Thanks to those who helped take the gate off its hinges and put it back; that was we were told to do! At the raptor watch point there were no eagles, but two Buzzard and some Raven flew in view. Back at Braeside, the big male was not interested in the others and quietly munched and sat down. On the high ground there were more stags and some hinds. At one stage, seven stags were visible near the road junction, plus some bigger ones scattered along the slope. There was some roaring going on, but they ignored the roars from the minibus! We headed back to Glenborrodale Bay but there was no Otter, but we did find quite a few birds. There was no talk from Niall as he was so busy with other clients. The Pine Marten, however, put in a good appearance after dinner; he had already taken a few sandwiches as we ate.

Day 5

Saturday 7th October

Inchree, Glasgow

It was raining at the start and for most of the morning. We made the ferry at 9am despite seeing a seal at Garb Eilean, and at Inchree a Red Squirrel posed by a feeder for the group. Our next stop was the Green Welly, and we beat a load of coaches in. It was then onto Glasgow Airport, across the Erskine Bridge with its road works, and our final stop was at Glasgow Station. Everyone was safely dropped off slightly early.

We saw lots of Red Deer plus seals, Otter, Pine Marten and Red Squirrel. We had fantastic views of the Père David's Deer herd, with their horse-like features. We had close up views of Golden Eagle and we saw a few White-tailed Eagles. We did very well for birds with a total of 63 species. The weather was kind at times, but they do say if you do not like the weather, wait 10 minutes! We ate very well and enjoyed each other's company.

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Species Lists

Mammals (✓=recorded but not counted; H = heard only)

	Common Name	Scientific Name	October				
			3	4	5	6	7
1	Red Deer	<i>Cervus elaphus</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓
2	Fallow Deer	<i>Dama dama</i>			✓		
3	Pine Marten	<i>Martes martes</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	
4	River Otter	<i>Lutra lutra</i>			✓	✓	
5	Red Squirrel	<i>Sciurus vulgaris</i>					✓
6	Harbour (Common) Seal	<i>Phoca vitulina</i>		✓			✓
7	Grey Seal	<i>Halichoerus grypus</i>		✓			

Butterflies

1	Red Admiral	<i>Vanessa atalanta</i>			✓		
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Birds

1	Greylag Goose	<i>Anser anser</i>	✓	✓	41	✓	
2	Canada Goose	<i>Branta canadensis</i>			10	4	
3	Mute Swan	<i>Cygnus olor</i>	✓				
4	Mallard	<i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>		✓	✓	8	
5	Tufted Duck	<i>Aythya fuligula</i>		✓			
6	Common Eider	<i>Somateria mollissima</i>			1		
7	Red-breasted Merganser	<i>Mergus serrator</i>		7	1	1	
8	Red-throated Diver	<i>Gavia stellata</i>				1	
9	Black-throated Diver	<i>Gavia arctica</i>		1			
10	Little Grebe	<i>Tachybaptus ruficollis</i>		3	3	2	
11	Grey Heron	<i>Ardea cinerea</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	
12	Northern Gannet	<i>Morus bassanus</i>			✓	✓	
13	European Shag	<i>Phalacrocorax aristotelis</i>	2	1	2		
14	Great Cormorant	<i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	
15	Golden Eagle	<i>Aquila chrysaetos</i>		3	1		
16	Eurasian Sparrowhawk	<i>Accipiter nisus</i>				1	
17	White-tailed Eagle	<i>Haliaeetus albicilla</i>		2	2		
18	Common Buzzard	<i>Buteo buteo</i>		3	2	4	
19	Eurasian Oystercatcher	<i>Haematopus ostralegus</i>		✓	✓	✓	
20	Eurasian Curlew	<i>Numenius arquata</i>		13	6	2	
21	Common Redshank	<i>Tringa totanus</i>				1	
22	Common Greenshank	<i>Tringa nebularia</i>		3	2	5	
23	Black-headed Gull	<i>Chroicocephalus ridibundus</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
24	Common Gull	<i>Larus canus</i>		2		12	
25	Great Black-backed Gull	<i>Larus marinus</i>		3	✓	✓	
26	European Herring Gull	<i>Larus argentatus</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
27	Great Skua	<i>Stercorarius skua</i>			5		
28	Puffin	<i>Fratercula arctica</i>			9		
29	Feral Pigeon	<i>Columba livia 'feral'</i>	✓	✓		✓	
30	Common Wood Pigeon	<i>Columba palumbus</i>				4	
31	Eurasian Collared Dove	<i>Streptopelia decaocto</i>			4		
32	Great Spotted Woodpecker	<i>Dendrocopos major</i>				1	
33	Common Kestrel	<i>Falco tinnunculus</i>				1	
34	Eurasian Jay	<i>Garrulus glandarius</i>		1		2	2
35	Eurasian Magpie	<i>Pica pica</i>					1

	Common Name	Scientific Name	October				
			3	4	5	6	7
36	Western Jackdaw	<i>Coloeus monedula</i>	✓				✓
37	Hooded Crow	<i>Corvus cornix</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
38	Northern Raven	<i>Corvus corax</i>		20	12	6	
39	Coal Tit	<i>Periparus ater</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓
40	Eurasian Blue Tit	<i>Cyanistes caeruleus</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓
41	Great Tit	<i>Parus major</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓
42	Long-tailed Tit	<i>Aegithalos caudatus</i>		✓			
43	Goldcrest	<i>Regulus regulus</i>				4	
44	Eurasian Wren	<i>Troglodytes troglodytes</i>		2		1	
45	Common Starling	<i>Sturnus vulgaris</i>			✓	✓	
46	Common Blackbird	<i>Turdus merula</i>		1	1	1	
47	Mistle Thrush	<i>Turdus viscivorus</i>		✓	✓	✓	
48	European Robin	<i>Erithacus rubecula</i>		✓	✓	✓	
49	European Stonechat	<i>Saxicola rubicola</i>			6	3	
50	House Sparrow	<i>Passer domesticus</i>		✓			
51	Dunnock	<i>Prunella modularis</i>		1	1	2	
52	Grey Wagtail	<i>Motacilla cinerea</i>			3	3	
53	Pied Wagtail	<i>Motacilla alba yarrellii</i>		1	6	4	
54	Meadow Pipit	<i>Anthus pratensis</i>		✓	✓	✓	
55	Eurasian Rock Pipit	<i>Anthus petrosus</i>		2		✓	
56	Common Chaffinch	<i>Fringilla coelebs</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓
57	Eurasian Bullfinch	<i>Pyrrhula pyrrhula</i>			1		
58	Twite	<i>Linaria flavirostris</i>			12	10	
59	Common Linnet	<i>Linaria cannabina</i>				11	
60	Common Redpoll	<i>Acanthis flammea</i>			5	2	
61	European Goldfinch	<i>Carduelis carduelis</i>	✓			✓	
62	Eurasian Siskin	<i>Spinus spinus</i>			2		
63	Common Reed Bunting	<i>Emberiza schoeniclus</i>				1	