

Ardnamurchan - The Red Deer Rut

Naturetrek Tour Report

29 September - 3 October 2019



Red Deer Stag



Pere David Deer



Sanna Bay



Red Deer family

Report and photos compiled by Andrew Bray



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Tour participants: Andrew Bray (Leader) with six Naturetrek clients

Day 1

Sunday 29th September

The tour started with the collection of five clients from Glasgow Railway Station and one from the airport. We stopped at a supermarket in Dunbarton to buy some goodies for the trip. We made reasonable time to the Green Welly stop for a break, and some of us even managed a cup of tea and some cake. We drove down Glencoe Valley with superb views and caught the Corran Ferry which was not busy and it departed on time. After a while, we drove on narrow roads with passing places which would become familiar to us over the next few days. We arrived in time for an evening meal and retired to bed.

Day 2

Monday 30th September

We set off this morning at 6.30am and drove to Braeside. There were herds along the road with a big stag. After breakfast at 9am, we went to Loch Shiel at Acharacle, where we saw Little Grebe. We then moved on to Tioram Castle where the tide was going out rapidly and we saw Oystercatcher, Curlew and Ringed Plover. On the way to the castle we had a look from the minibus at the bridge at the narrowest point of the River Shiel. On the far side of the river was the Ardnamurchan estate, with the Loch Shiel estate on the nearside. We went back into Acharacle to the Tioram Cafe before heading out to Kentra Bay where we turned around as the tide had gone out a long way. We stopped at the Pines Medical Centre hoping to find Red Squirrels but we were out of luck today, so next we headed for lunch at Garb Eilean.

Here we found Harbour (Common) Seal which we watched during lunch and it was then a long drive back to see the Red Deer. We stopped at the bunkhouse for a cuppa and a comfort break and then we had stops at Windmill Hill and Braeside. The alpha males were big and strong and although there were lots of other stags about they could not outshine the big Alphas. Some were gearing up for the rut and two did the parallel walk, with one eventually giving up. Close to the bunk house we stopped for a hind and fawn close to the track in the wood for a photo opportunity. We were back in the early evening and put out sandwiches for the Pine Marten. The stag known as One-eye did not disappoint and roared all night. This evening we had a chat from Niall about the Red Deer that was very informative.

Day 3

Tuesday 1st October

We were out again at 6.30am to Braeside and drove down to Achateny. The big alpha male nearby was roaring as he kept his harem close by, and there were some roars from other stags which we couldn't see. After breakfast from 9am to 10am, we headed to Kilchoan. Once in Kilchoan we turned right to head to the lighthouse which is situated on the most westerly point of mainland Britain. The sea was very calm today and we saw a few Gannets flying by and also spotted two Puffins out at sea.

We then drove to Mingary Pier where we had lunch stopping, on the road to see if there were any seals around as it was a very low tide but there were none. It was then on to the Wildlife Centre at Glenmore for another hot drink and a look around the shop. On the way we had several sightings of Golden Eagle, and after lunch we went to the Raptor Watch Point overlooking Camas nan Gaell followed by a trip up Windmill Hill. We then continued to Cairn Barn where Red Deer can be found. We went through the locked gate and took the road

down to Loch Mudle and onto Lochan a Mhadaidh Riabhaich. There we listened to various stags roaring and took a few pictures of deer in the cleared forestry workings.

The one-eyed stag was roaring all night, which he did every night. We also went out to Camas Fearna to look for Wild Cat but saw no eye reflections at all in the torches. The sky was lit up by the stars and all we saw were Pipistrelle Bats. On return a large Pine Marten took some of the sandwiches and a Fox took the sandwiches left on the table.

Day 4

Wednesday 2nd October

This morning we drove to Cairn Barn and parked up with a herd close by. The young stags to the left of the herd were paired up ready for fighting, while the big stag was roaring all the time. We then drove to Braeside with another herd not far from the road. There were stags roaring behind us as well, one of which was very close, although we couldn't see it. After breakfast we drove to Glen Borrodale and saw the very large herd of Fallow Deer. We then drove to the Raptor Watch Point and Windmill Hill before turning right in Kilchoan and heading across the old volcanic rings to Sanna Bay. At Sanna Bay and, in brilliant sunshine and strong wind, we walked to the beach. It is a beautiful sandy beach with nice rock pools on the flat rock.

We had lunch from the back of the minibus and then drove through Kilchoan to Ormsaigbeg to the end of the road, but we did not stay too long as there was little to see. We drove back to Kilchoan for a hot-drink break at the Community Centre before heading to Swordle where a Viking Chief was buried in a long boat. Our final stop was at the Raptor Watch Point where two White-tailed Eagles flew past us in formation. We then went back to Glen Borrodale to see the Pere David Deer as well as Fallow and Red Deer. After dinner a Pine Marten called in about 8:30pm.

Day 5

Thursday 3rd October

We left at 8am to catch the ferry at 9am. We were the 3rd last vehicle on and others were not so lucky. At Inchree just after the ferry we stopped to look for the Red Squirrels which did not put in an appearance. It was a cold day! It was then a drive, via Glencoe and Rannock Moor, to the Green Welly at Tyndrum for a break before continuing to the airport and main railway station where the tour came to an end.

The weather had been perfect with lots of sun every day. We saw otters on the first day and the last birds on Wednesday were the White-tailed Eagles. We saw lots of Red Deer, and were able to watch their rutting behaviour, as well as lots of other wildlife, in the spectacular scenery of this part of Scotland. All in all, a thoroughly enjoyable short break in excellent company

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Species Lists

Mammals (✓=recorded but not counted)

	Scientific name	Common name	September-October 2019				
			29	30	1	2	3
1	Red Deer	<i>Cervus elaphus</i>		✓	✓	✓	
2	Roe Deer	<i>Capreolus capreolus</i>				✓	
3	Fallow Deer	<i>Dama dama</i>			✓	✓	
4	Père David's Deer	<i>Elaphurus davidianus</i>				✓	
5	Pine Marten	<i>Martes martes</i>	1	1	1		
6	River Otter	<i>Lutra lutra</i>		3			
7	Red Fox	<i>Vulpes vulpes</i>			1		
8	Harbour (Common) Seal	<i>Phoca vitulina</i>		✓	1		
9	Pipistrelle ssp				✓		

Birds

1	Greylag Goose	<i>Anser anser</i>		6	✓	✓	
2	Pink-footed Goose	<i>Anser brachyrhynchus</i>		✓			
3	Canada Goose	<i>Branta canadensis</i>			5	✓	
4	Mute Swan	<i>Cygnus olor</i>			3	✓	1
5	Mallard	<i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>		✓	✓	✓	
6	Tufted Duck	<i>Aythya fuligula</i>		2			
7	Common Eider	<i>Somateria mollissima</i>					✓
8	Red-breasted Merganser	<i>Mergus serrator</i>		✓			2
9	Little Grebe	<i>Tachybaptus ruficollis</i>		6	3		
10	Grey Heron	<i>Ardea cinerea</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓
11	Northern Gannet	<i>Morus bassanus</i>			6	✓	
12	European Shag	<i>Phalacrocorax aristotelis</i>			✓		
13	Great Cormorant	<i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	
14	Golden Eagle	<i>Aquila chrysaetos</i>		1	3		
15	Eurasian Sparrowhawk	<i>Accipiter nisus</i>				1	
16	Hen Harrier	<i>Circus cyaneus</i>				1	
17	White-tailed Eagle	<i>Haliaeetus albicilla</i>				2	
18	Common Buzzard	<i>Buteo buteo</i>		5	4	4	
19	Eurasian Oystercatcher	<i>Haematopus ostralegus</i>		✓	✓	✓	
20	European Golden Plover	<i>Pluvialis apricaria</i>			6		
21	Common Ringed Plover	<i>Charadrius hiaticula</i>		6			
22	Eurasian Curlew	<i>Numenius arquata</i>		✓	✓		
23	Common Greenshank	<i>Tringa nebularia</i>			5	1	
24	Ruddy Turnstone	<i>Arenaria interpres</i>		1			
25	Black-headed Gull	<i>Chroicocephalus ridibundus</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓
26	Common Gull	<i>Larus canus</i>		1		4	
27	Great Black-backed Gull	<i>Larus marinus</i>		2	1	✓	✓
28	European Herring Gull	<i>Larus argentatus</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	
29	Lesser Black-backed Gull	<i>Larus fuscus</i>	✓				
30	Common Guillemot	<i>Uria aalge</i>	1				
31	Puffin	<i>Fratercula arctica</i>			2		

	Scientific name	Common name	September-October 2019				
			29	30	1	2	3
32	Feral Pigeon	<i>Columba livia 'feral'</i>		✓		✓	
33	Common Wood Pigeon	<i>Columba palumbus</i>	✓	✓			
34	Great Spotted Woodpecker	<i>Dendrocopos major</i>				1	
35	Common Kestrel	<i>Falco tinnunculus</i>				1	
36	Eurasian Magpie	<i>Pica pica</i>					1
37	Western Jackdaw	<i>Coloeus monedula</i>					✓
38	Hooded Crow	<i>Corvus cornix</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓
39	Northern Raven	<i>Corvus corax</i>		4	✓	6	
40	Coal Tit	<i>Parus ater</i>		✓	✓	✓	
41	Eurasian Blue Tit	<i>Cyanistes caeruleus</i>		✓	✓	✓	
42	Great Tit	<i>Parus major</i>		✓	✓	✓	
43	Common Starling	<i>Sturnus vulgaris</i>			✓	✓	
44	Mistle Thrush	<i>Turdus viscivorus</i>		✓	2	✓	
45	European Robin	<i>Erithacus rubecula</i>		✓	1	2	
46	European Stonechat	<i>Saxicola rubicola</i>			4	3	
47	House Sparrow	<i>Passer domesticus</i>		✓			
48	Pied Wagtail	<i>Motacilla alba yarrellii</i>		✓	✓	✓	
49	Meadow Pipit	<i>Anthus pratensis</i>		✓	✓	✓	
50	Eurasian Rock Pipit	<i>Anthus petrosus</i>		2	2		
51	Common Chaffinch	<i>Fringilla coelebs</i>		✓	✓	✓	
52	Common Linnet	<i>Linaria cannabina</i>			✓		

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