

Ardnamurchan – The Red Deer Rut

Naturetrek Tour Report

29th September – 3rd October
2020

Tour report by Andrew Bray



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Tour participants – Andrew Bray (leader) with six Naturetrek clients

Summary

It was wonderful being on Ardnamurchan with fantastic views of roaring Red Deer stags and their harems. The Pine Martens turned up most nights in front of the accommodation eating their sandwiches and other food put out for them. The group also saw Otters and special birds including both eagles and Red-throated Diver. The food was excellent and filling at the Nature Centre.

Day 1

Tuesday 29th September

The four members of the group were collected from the railway stations in Glasgow and we set off for the west coast. We were rather delayed by a local Covid 19 lockdown with barriers on the streets restricting movement, but after clearing the city we drove alongside Loch Lomond to The Green Welly at Tyndrum where we had a break before driving across Rannoch Moor and down the Glencoe Valley to the Corran Ferry. We had a meal at the Nature Centre which consisted of local venison. It was dark by the time we had a meal and it was back to the Bunkhouse for a good night's sleep, after watching one of the local Pine Martens come to sample the food left out for it.

Day 2

Wednesday 30th September

We left just after 6.30am and headed to Braehouse where we saw a stag then onto Caim Barn and Caim House where more were present. Breakfast was at 9am at the Nature Centre. Then it was a break at the Bunkhouse before we looked for Otters at Glenborrodale Bay and Camas Fearna. We saw an Otter in the shallows jump up in the water a few times and then disappeared around the headland. There was also a Red-throated Diver a lot closer.

We drove to Kilchoan via the Raptor Watch Point and in the bay at Camas Nan Gael we saw where St Columba landed in the 6th century. We had coffee at the Puffin Cafe then drove to the ferry at Mingary Pier where we had lunch. We stopped on the road to look for seals as it was low tide but there were none to be seen today. After lunch we went to Ardnamurchan Point with the 36 metre tall lighthouse built by the Stevenson brothers; not the one who was an author. The sea was unfortunately not conducive to seeing dolphins but there were a few Gannets. We drove back via Windmill Hill where there were three large Red Deer stags and near the track were a party of young stags including four with velvet on their stubs of antler.

After dinner it was back to the Bunkhouse and later on a talk by Niall the owner, which was well received. The Pine Marten paid another visit.

Day 3

Thursday 1st October

Early in the morning we visited Braehouse and Windmill Hill. There were lots of deer about and at Braehouse the males were roaring away. It was hard to drag ourselves away, but breakfast was calling. After some nourishment we headed for Acharacle and the pier where we saw 13 Little Grebe and a local fisherman showed us some photos he had taken earlier.

We then went Tioram Castle where the sun was shining. The tide was still going out and there were lots of birds on the mudflats including Curlew, Oystercatcher and Dunlin. We then had a hot drink in Acharacle Cafe before eating lunch in the hide at Garb Eilean. Afterwards it was on to Stronathian where we turned left before the bridge and visited the Ariundle Forest. We only walked a short distance beyond the bridge looking for Dipper before we turned back to see if we could find the American Black Duck which has lived here for several years. It wasn't in its favoured spot by the church so we looked for Dipper in the river at Stronathian.

We watched Mallard and gulls at sea from a parking place before it was time to go to the Nature Centre for the evening meal and despite the tide being in there were no ripples on the water which might have been a sign of an Otter. No-one fancied the drive to Swordle to look for Wild Cat so after doing the daily log we turned off the lounge lights and waited for the Pine Marten. All we saw were bats and a mouse!

Day 4

Friday 2nd October

This morning we turned left out of the Bunkhouse and went to the top to find Red Deer, Fallow Deer and Pere David's Deer which are here for conservation purposes only. We then spotted a flaw in our plan to drive round to Loch Mudle as the bridge across a river by the Pere David's pen was not great. We went to Glenborrodale Bay instead where we saw a distant dog Otter and another Otter near the RSPB Car Park. Our final stop before breakfast was the Raptor Viewing Point where we saw a White-tailed Eagle and a Golden Eagle, both being some distance away.

After breakfast we headed to Sanna Bay, one of the Times top 10 beaches in UK. It was very windy there and we did not stay too long to search the rock pools as the tide was out but did see a Wheatear. It was the time for a hot drink but the cafe at Kilchoan was closed today! So we had lunch at Mingary Pier. We stopped to view a Buzzard and saw quite a few birds near the ferry point after lunch. It was then off to Swordle where a Viking long ship was excavated complete with a powerful viking. There is an interpretation board at a view point explaining all about the grave site. The views of the islands were fantastic!

On the way back we stopped at Braehouse to photograph the Red Deer which was there. It was then up to Windmill Hill and the Raptor Watch Point which only had a Buzzard. We looked for Otter after parking in the RSPB Car Park but there were none today.

The Pine Marten turned up after 8pm and took all the sandwiches.

Day 5

Saturday 3rd October

Today was our last day and we left after breakfast at . We caught the Corran Ferry and saw two pairs of Eider fly past. We then headed to Inchcree but there were no Red Squirrels unfortunately. Moving on, we only had a comfort stop at the Green Welly and were then off to Glasgow stations before going our separate ways home.

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Species List

Mammals

	Scientific name	Common name	29	30	1	2	3
1	Red Deer	<i>Cervus elaphus</i>		✓	✓	✓	
2	Fallow Deer	<i>Dama dama</i>		✓			
3	Pere David's Deer	<i>Elaphurus davidianus</i>				✓	
4	Pine Marten	<i>Martes martes</i>	2	1		1	
5	River Otter	<i>Lutra lutra</i>		1		2	
6	Harbour (Common) Seal	<i>Phoca vitulina</i>			7		
7	Grey Seal	<i>Phocoena phocoena</i>			18		
8	Bats ssp			✓	✓		
9	Wood Mouse	<i>Apodemus sylvaticus</i>			1		

Birds (✓ = recorded but not counted)

	Common name	Scientific name	September/October 2020				
			29	30	1	2	3
1	Greylag Goose	<i>Anser anser</i>	✓		✓	✓	
2	Canada Goose	<i>Branta canadensis</i>	✓		✓	✓	
3	Mallard	<i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>		4	✓	✓	
4	Common Pochard	<i>Aythya ferina</i>			1		
5	Tufted Duck	<i>Aythya fuligula</i>			8		
6	Common Eider	<i>Somateria mollissima</i>					4
7	Common Pheasant	<i>Phasianus colchicus</i>		20			
8	Red-throated Diver	<i>Gavia stellata</i>		2			
9	Little Grebe	<i>Tachybaptus ruficollis</i>			13	1	
10	Grey Heron	<i>Ardea cinerea</i>		9	✓	✓	
11	Northern Gannet	<i>Morus bassanus</i>		4			
12	European Shag	<i>Phalacrocorax aristotelis</i>			1		

	Common name	Scientific name	September/October 2020				
			29	30	1	2	3
13	Great Cormorant	<i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>		7	✓	✓	
14	Golden Eagle	<i>Aquila chrysaetos</i>				1	
15	White-tailed Eagle	<i>Haliaeetus albicilla</i>				1	
16	Common Buzzard	<i>Buteo buteo</i>		2		3	1
17	Eurasian Oystercatcher	<i>Haematopus ostralegus</i>	✓	✓		✓	
18	Eurasian Curlew	<i>Numenius arquata</i>		1	✓	✓	
19	Whimbrel	<i>Numenius phaeopus</i>			1		
20	Common Redshank	<i>Tringa totanus</i>	1				
21	Dunlin	<i>Calidris alpina</i>			✓		
22	Black-headed Gull	<i>Chroicocephalus ridibundus</i>				3	
23	Common Gull	<i>Larus canus</i>				9	
24	Great Black-backed Gull	<i>Larus marinus</i>	1	✓	✓	✓	
25	European Herring Gull	<i>Larus argentatus</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
26	Lesser Black-backed Gull	<i>Larus fuscus</i>		1			
27	Feral Pigeon	<i>Columba livia 'feral'</i>				✓	
28	Common Wood Pigeon	<i>Columba palumbus</i>		1	✓	✓	
29	Eurasian Collared Dove	<i>Streptopelia decaocto</i>		4			
30	Great Spotted Woodpecker	<i>Dendrocopos major</i>		1			
31	Merlin	<i>Falco columbarius</i>		1		1	
32	Eurasian Jay	<i>Garrulus glandarius</i>			2		1
33	Hooded Crow	<i>Corvus cornix</i>		6	✓	✓	6
34	Northern Raven	<i>Corvus corax</i>		2		2	
35	Coal Tit	<i>Parus ater</i>		✓			
36	Eurasian Blue Tit	<i>Cyanistes caeruleus</i>		✓	✓	✓	
37	Great Tit	<i>Parus major</i>		✓			
38	Long Tailed Tit	<i>Aegithalos caudatus</i>				✓	
39	Eurasian Wren	<i>Troglodytes troglodytes</i>			1	3	
40	Common Starling	<i>Sturnus vulgaris</i>				✓	
41	Mistle Thrush	<i>Turdus viscivorus</i>		1			
42	Common Blackbird	<i>Turdus merula</i>		5	✓	2	✓
43	European Robin	<i>Erithacus rubecula</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓
44	European Stonechat	<i>Saxicola rubicola</i>	1	2		2	
45	Northern Wheatear	<i>Oenanthe oenanthe</i>				1	
46	White-throated Dipper	<i>Cinclus cinclus</i>				1	
47	House Sparrow	<i>Passer domesticus</i>		13		✓	
48	Dunnock	<i>Prunella modularis</i>		3		✓	
49	Pied Wagtail	<i>Motacilla alba yarrellii</i>				3	
50	Meadow Pipit	<i>Anthus pratensis</i>	✓	✓		✓	
51	Eurasian Rock Pipit	<i>Anthus petrosus</i>			2	1	
52	Common Chaffinch	<i>Fringilla coelebs</i>		✓			✓
53	Common Linnet	<i>Linaria cannabina</i>				✓	
54	European Goldfish	<i>Carduelis carduelis</i>				✓	
55	Eurasian Siskin	<i>Spinus spinus</i>			✓		