

# Ardnamurchan – The Red Deer Rut

Naturetrek Tour Report

7th -11th October 2020

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Tour participants – Andrew Bray (Leader) with six Naturetrek clients.

## Summary

We had a wonderful time on the Ardnamurchan peninsula, with fantastic views of roaring Red Deer stags. The Pine Martens turned up every single night in front of the lounge windows to feast on the food put out for them. Special birds included great sightings of both eagles (especially the adult Sea-eagle that flew so close above us) and Dipper. The food was excellent and we had a typically Scottish meal on the last night.

### Day 1

Wednesday 7 October

Four people were collected from Glasgow Station. After leaving the city we followed Loch Lomond and stopped at the Green Welly at Tyndrum where we had a comfort break before driving across Rannoch Moor and down the Glencoe Valley to the Corran Ferry. We briefly stopped by the church in Strontian to see if the American Black Duck was around (it has been here for some time) but unfortunately it was not. We had a meal at the Nature Centre which consisted of fish and chips. It was dark by the time we had finished our meal and then it was back to the Bunkhouse. We saw a Badger on the way back and were delighted to be visited by two Pine Martens coming to feed on the sandwiches and other food put out for them. It was then time to call it a night.

### Day 2

Thursday 8 October

We left at 7am and headed to Braehouse where we saw several stags, then moved on to Windmill Hill where more deer were present. We saw more on the drive back and stopped to admire them, meaning that breakfast at the Nature Centre was a little later than planned.

We drove to Kilchoan and on to Ardnamurchan Lighthouse. Here there were Gannets and Cormorants, while the only mammal seen was a Grey Seal. We had a coffee at the cafe by the point, then it was back to Kilchoan and lunch at Mingary Pier where there were lots of Herring Gulls either side of the castle. We headed to the hide near Lochan a Mhidaidh Riabhaich where we saw two White-tailed Sea Eagles and a Golden Eagle.

We returned to Windmill Hill where there were only a few deer, so we continued to the Raptor Watch Point but nothing was really seen well as the Red Deer were far away on Ben Hiant (an old volcano). In the bay by the Raptor Watch Point at Camas Nan Gael we saw the old ruins and the place where St Columba landed in the 6<sup>th</sup> century. We stopped at Camas Fearna where Curlew were present and then it was time to back our way back. After dinner it was back to the Bunkhouse. The Pine Marten paid another visit.

### Day 3

Friday 9 October

Early in the morning we visited Caim. There were lots of deer in the valleys and they were close to the road by the house. All too soon we were heading for Breakfast. After some nourishment we headed for Acharacle and the pier where we saw some Little Grebe and Tufted Duck far out. We then went to Tioram Castle where the tide was just going out but there were few birds and it was very wet under foot. We then had a hot drink at the Acharacle Cafe before eating lunch in the hide at Garbh Eilean where we saw one Grey Seal on the rocks before it slipped into the water. On our way there by the campsite we saw a Dipper which we watched until it was flushed by a Hooded Crow.

Our next stop was Glenborrodale Bay where we looked for Otter without success, but we did see a few birds. We gave up on the Otters and returned to the Bunkhouse for a warm drink before heading to the Nature Centre for a meal. Later that evening the female Pine Marten turned up and Niall, the Bunkhouse owner, gave a talk. During the talk the male Pine Marten turned up as well. We decided to skip the daily log, as by the time Niall finished it was very late.

## Day 4

Saturday 10 October

Early in the morning we went to the top of the pen and saw some Pere David's and Fallow Deer. We then went to Glenborrodale Bay and waited around the table. No Otter showed but there was Mallard, Grey Heron, Cormorants, Little Grebe and of course Herring Gulls. After breakfast we headed to the hide where we only saw Buzzard. It was then time for a coffee in the Puffin Cafe at Kilchoan followed by a drive to across the caldera to Sanna Bay, one of the Times top 10 beaches in UK. The sun shone, showing the bay in the best light but it was quite windy. It was here we saw a flock of Ringed Plover and a Dunlin. The tide was going out so we had a look at some of the rock pools before heading back to the minibus and 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 telling visitors all about the grave site. The views from here were fantastic with Skye very visible. On the way back we stopped at Braehouse to photograph the Red Deer which was there. The stag in the valley was rebuffed by the females. The Raptor Watch Point was next at Camas Nan Gael, then off to the RSPB Car Park where we walked along the road, but still no Otters were seen.

The Pine Marten turned up after 8pm and took all the sandwiches. That evening after 9pm we went on a night drive to Swordle and the stars in the sky were worth a couple of stops. Some of us even saw some shooting stars.

## Day 5

Sunday 11 October

Today was our last day and we left after breakfast at 7.45am. We caught the Corran Ferry and headed to Inchcree but there were no Red Squirrels at this regular haunt, despite us walking a short distance up the path to search for them. We had a 30 minute stop at the Green Welly and then we were off to Glasgow Station where the tour ended.

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## Species List

### Mammals

	Scientific name	Common name	October 2020				
			7	8	9	10	11
1	Red Deer	<i>Cervus elaphus</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	
2	Roe Deer	<i>Capreolus capreolus</i>					2
3	Fallow Deer	<i>Dama dana</i>		2		✓	
4	Pere David's Deer	<i>Elaphurus davidianus</i>				✓	
5	European Badger	<i>Meles meles</i>					
6	Pine Marten	<i>Martes martes</i>	2	2	2	1	
7	Harbour (Common) Seal	<i>Phoca vitulina</i>		✓		✓	
8	Grey Seal	<i>Phocoena phocoena</i>		1	✓		
9	Bats ssp		✓	✓	✓	✓	
10	Wood Mouse	<i>Apodemus sylvaticus</i>		1			
11	Mouse ssp					✓	

### Birds (✓ = recorded but not counted)

	Common name	Scientific name	October 2020				
			7	8	9	10	11
1	Greylag Goose	<i>Anser anser</i>		✓	✓	25	
2	Canada Goose	<i>Branta canadensis</i>		✓	✓	29	
3	Mallard	<i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>	✓		✓	✓	
4	Tufted Duck	<i>Aythya fuligula</i>			✓		
5	Red-breasted Merganser	<i>Mergus serrator</i>			4	1	
6	Common Pheasant	<i>Phasianus colchius</i>		✓			
7	Little Grebe	<i>Tachybaptus ruficollis</i>			✓	✓	
8	Grey Heron	<i>Ardea cinerea</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
9	Northern Gannet	<i>Morus bassanus</i>		6			
10	European Shag	<i>Phalacrocorax aristotelis</i>		✓			
11	Great Cormorant	<i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	
12	Golden Eagle	<i>Aquila chrysaetos</i>		1			

	Common name	Scientific name	October 2020				
			7	8	9	10	11
13	White-tailed Eagle	<i>Haliaeetus albicilla</i>	2	3		1	
14	Common Buzzard	<i>Buteo buteo</i>	1	5	4	4	
15	Eurasian Oystercatcher	<i>Haematopus ostralegus</i>		✓	✓	1	
16	Common Ringed Plover	<i>Charadrius hiaticula</i>				✓	
17	Eurasian Curlew	<i>Numenius arquata</i>		6	2	3	
18	Dunlin	<i>Calidris alpina</i>				1	
19	Black-headed Gull	<i>Chroicocephalus ridibundus</i>					2
20	Common Gull	<i>Larus canus</i>	2		6		
21	Great Black-backed Gull	<i>Larus marinus</i>			1	1	
22	European Herring Gull	<i>Larus argentatus</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
23	Common Guillemot	<i>Uria aalge</i>		1			
24	Common Wood Pigeon	<i>Columba palumbus</i>	✓		✓		
25	Merlin	<i>Falco columbarius</i>	1				
26	Hooded Crow	<i>Corvus cornix</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
27	Northern Raven	<i>Corvus corax</i>		✓	✓	✓	
28	Coal Tit	<i>Pariparus ater</i>	✓		✓	✓	
29	Eurasian Blue Tit	<i>Cyanistes caeruleus</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	
30	Great Tit	<i>Parus major</i>	✓		✓		
31	Eurasian Wren	<i>Troglodytes troglodytes</i>		✓	✓	✓	
32	Common Starling	<i>Sturnus vulgaris</i>		15	✓	✓	
33	Redwing	<i>Turdus iliacus</i>			✓		
34	Common Blackbird	<i>Turdus merula</i>		1	✓	✓	
35	European Robin	<i>Erithacus rubecula</i>		2	✓	✓	
36	European Stonechat	<i>Saxicola rubicola</i>		✓	✓	✓	
37	White-throated Dipper	<i>Cinclus cinclus</i>			1		
38	House Sparrow	<i>Passer domesticus</i>		✓	✓	✓	
39	Dunnock	<i>Prunella modularis</i>	✓		✓	✓	
40	Pied Wagtail	<i>Motacilla alba yarrellii</i>				✓	
41	Meadow Pipit	<i>Anthus pratensis</i>		✓	✓		✓
42	Eurasian Rock Pipit	<i>Anthus petrosus</i>		1	2	2	
43	Common Chaffinch	<i>Fringilla coelebs</i>		✓	✓	✓	
44	European Goldfich	<i>Carduelis carduelis</i>			✓	✓	