



The newspaper of the Bird Watching and Wildlife Club

The Watcher

November 2011



NEWS...NEWS...NEWS...NEWS...NEWS...NEWS...



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WINTER WILDLIFE

Although bitterly cold and spectacularly snowy, the previous two winters were generous in their wildlife offerings. As winter sets in again we're all crossing our fingers that it'll be a milder one than we've experienced for the last couple of years, albeit with the same abundance of wildlife.

CairnGorm Mountain and Glenmore Forest Park (BWWC Map Sites 17 & 19)

are two great sites to visit this month (although you may have to share this area with snow sports enthusiasts if the season is good!) in search of wildlife. The scenery here is stunning, whether you admire the reflection of the mountains in Loch Morlich from Glenmore, or the vista from the top of CairnGorm. To do the latter – unless you fancy the hike up – the only option is to take the funicular railway and appreciate the outlook from the Ptarmigan Station's viewing platform or restaurant (where you can also enjoy a delicious hot chocolate!). You should look out for Snow Bunting at the car park at Coire Cas and



©Greg Morgan

Ptarmigan and Mountain Hare (in their white winter camouflage) as you make your way uphill. Around Glenmore you can explore the numerous trails looking for Crested Tit, Common, Scottish and Parrot Crossbills, Siskin, Roe Deer, Red and Black Grouse and Red Squirrel.

Don't Miss!



A GAGGLE OF GEESE

RSPB Loch of Strathbeg (BWWC Map Site 37) is certainly the best site to visit in terms of the magnitude of Pink-footed Geese you can encounter at this time of year—counts at the beginning of October recorded around 60,000! The RSPB are still running their **Goosewatch** sessions on the following dates:

Wed 2nd November 6:30am

Sat 5th November 6:30am

Wed 9th November 6:30am

Sat 12th November 6:30am

Mon 7th November 3:15pm

Dawn and dusk are the best times to view the Geese setting off to feed in the morning or returning to roost in the evening. Strathbeg is home to other winter visitors too, with nearly 500 Whooper Swans and 300 Barnacle Geese making it their temporary home.

FEATHERS AND FINS ON THE FIRTH

At this time of year you can't beat a day out exploring the Moray Firth. You can enjoy beautiful beaches, wandering in search of a variety of wildlife. Waders such as Curlew, Redshank, Oystercatcher, Lapwing, Knot, Dunlin, Turnstone and Bar-tailed Godwit are plentiful. Wigeon, Scaup, Slavonian Grebe, Eider, Long-tailed Duck, divers and scoters could also be encountered. Why not pack a picnic and spend a day by the sea? Don't forget to look out for Bottlenose Dolphins, Common and Grey Seals too.



One off Events

Wed 2nd November GOOSE WATCH 6:30am:

Join the RSPB staff as they count the 60,000+ Pink-footed Geese, as well as Whooper Swans, Greylag Geese and other waders and waterfowl. **BWWC Map Site 37.**

Wed 2nd November 'POLAR BEARS' TALK 7:30pm:

Douglas Richardson from the Highland Wildlife Park will be speaking on Polar bears in the Highlands. In aid of Kiwoko Hospital, Uganda. Cairngorm Christian Centre, Kincaig. **Near BWWC Map Site 14.**

Fri 4th November 'MY FAMILY AND 50 OTHER ANIMALS' TALK 6pm:

Best-selling nature author Dominic Couzens talks about his family's quest to see 50 different species of mammal in Britain within one year. Dominic recounts the peaks and troughs of his search for everything from Weasels to Edible Dormice and Killer Whales to Wallabies. Free. Grant Arms Hotel. **BWWC Map Site 21.**

Sat 5th November GOOSE WATCH 6:30am:

Join the RSPB staff as they count the 60,000+ Pink-footed Geese, as well as Whooper Swans, Greylag Geese and other waders and waterfowl. **BWWC Map Site 37.**

Sat 5th November BONFIRE AND FIREWORKS 6pm:

Firework Display starts at 6.30pm. Enjoy the fireworks along with a selection of hot food, snacks, toffee apples plus hot and cold drinks. Entry is free but donation buckets at the gate. Boat of Garten. **BWWC Map Site 20.**

Mon 7th November GOOSE WATCH 3:15pm:

Join the RSPB staff as they count the 60,000+ Pink-footed Geese, as well as Whooper Swans, Greylag Geese and other waders and waterfowl. **BWWC Map Site 37.**

Mon 7th November 'JUST TAKE THE CHILDREN TOO!' TALK 7:30pm:

This talk explores some of the challenges of travelling with children, whether skiing with a baby or sailing with a teenager. But it



focuses in particular on three periods of sabbatical leave which allowed more extensive travel, including one on which a 5 and an 8 year old were taken out of school for three months and the family travelled round the world together. £5pp. Boat of Garten Community Hall. **BWWC Map Site 20.**

Wed 9th November GOOSE WATCH 6:30am:

Join the RSPB staff as they count the 60,000+ Pink-footed Geese, as well as Whooper Swans, Greylag Geese and other waders and waterfowl. **BWWC Map Site 37.**

Sat 12th November GOOSE WATCH 6:30am:

Join the RSPB staff as they count the 60,000+ Pink-footed Geese, as well as Whooper Swans, Greylag Geese and other waders and waterfowl. **BWWC Map Site 37.**

Sat 12th November THREE LOCHS WALK 10am-5pm:

Visit Loch Muick, the Dubh Loch and Loch Buidhe all in one spectacular mountain day. A rough mountain walk, across heather moorland. Hill walking gear and a good level of fitness required. Distance: 9Kms (5.5 miles) ascent 300m. Booking essential on (01339)755059. £5pp. Meet at Spittal of Glen Muick Visitor Centre. **BWWC Map Site 48.**

Wed 16th November 'WILDLIFE OF ANTARCTICA' TALK 6pm:

Dr Graham Lenton is an ecologist, avid traveller and wildlife photographer who has published many articles on natural history. This talk focuses on the birds and wildlife of Antarctica. Graham describes a pre-visit to Argentina, Falkland Islands and the remote island of South Georgia with its enormous king penguin colonies, then on to the Antarctic peninsula with its blue icebergs, marine mammals and more penguins. Free. Grant Arms Hotel. **BWWC Map Site 21.**

Fri 18th November 'LOGIE: A MODERN HISTORY' TALK 7:30pm:

As part of the Grantown Society talk series, Alasdair Laing will give an insight into the extent of Logie estate, its beauty, history and romance as well as the challenges of running such a business in the 21st century. Grant Arms Hotel. **BWWC Map Site 21.**

Mon 21st November 'THE MODERN SHOOTING ESTATE' TALK 7:30pm:

An illustrated talk by Frank Law describing the workings of Strathspey Estate today. £4pp. Grantown Museum. **BWWC Map Site 21.**

Sun 27th November THE BRAES SAFARI 12:30pm:

A Land Rover safari with Glenlivet Wildlife across the braes of the Glenlivet Estate looking for Red & Roe Deer, Red & Black Grouse, Mountain & Brown Hare, as well as birds of prey. Lasts 3.5-4.5 hours, £25pp, book on (01807)590241. **BWWC Map Site 22.**

Mon 28th November 'RIBBON OF WILDERNESS' TALK 7:30pm:

This illustrated talk by Peter Wright is an account of a long walk, following the watershed or the 'spine of Scotland' from the Scottish Border to the north coast; one man, one journey and 1,200km of rock, mountain, bog, moor and forest. £5pp. Boat of Garten Community Hall. **BWWC Map Site 20.**

Every Day

REINDEER HILL VISIT 11am: A short walk on Cairngorm Mountain to see and feed Britain's only wild Reindeer herd. Adult £10/Conc £7.50/Child 6-16yrs £5/Child 0-5yrs free. Book on (01479)861228. **BWWC Map Site 17.**

EVENING WILDLIFE WATCH (start time dusk dependant): Look for Badger, Pine Marten and other evening wildlife from Speyside Wildlife's comfortable hide. Book on www.speysidewildlife.co.uk (£18pp) or (01479)812345 (£20pp). **Near BWWC Map Site 16.**



Day by Day

► TUESDAY

ROTHIEMURCHUS EXPERIENCE SAFARI 10am:

Join a Ranger to learn about life on the Estate, lasts approx. 3 hours, £30pp. Book on (01479)812345. **Near BWWC Map Site 18.**

'HAIRY COO' SAFARI 11am:

Join the Rothiemurchus Rangers for a walk to meet our Hairy Highland Cows. Lasts approx. 1 hour, £8pp. Book on (01479)812345. **Near BWWC Map Site 18.**

► WEDNESDAY

ROTHIEMURCHUS EXPERIENCE SAFARI 10am:

Join a Ranger to learn about life on the Estate, lasts approx. 3 hours, £30pp. Book on (01479)812345. **Near BWWC Map Site 18.**

HIGHLAND LADY SAFARI 11am:

Explore the Rothiemurchus Estate by Land Rover and step back in time to estate life in the early 1800s, lasts approx. 2 hours, £20pp. Book on (01479)812345. **Near BWWC Map Site 18.**

► THURSDAY

ROTHIEMURCHUS EXPERIENCE SAFARI 10am:

Join a Ranger to learn about life on the Estate, lasts approx. 3 hours, £30pp. Book on (01479)812345. **Near BWWC Map Site 18.**

RED SQUIRREL SAFARI 11am:

Join the Rothiemurchus Rangers for a walk to watch Red Squirrels. Last's approx. 1 hour, £8pp. Book on (01479)812345. **Near BWWC Map Site 18.**

► FRIDAY

ROTHIEMURCHUS EXPERIENCE SAFARI 10am:

Join a Ranger to learn about life on the Estate, lasts approx. 3 hours, £30pp. Book on (01479)812345. **Near BWWC Map Site 18.**

► SUNDAY

ROTHIEMURCHUS EXPERIENCE SAFARI 10am:

Join a Ranger to learn about life on the Estate, lasts approx. 3 hours, £30pp. Book on (01479)812345. **Near BWWC Map Site 18.**



What to do if it's Wet

If the weather's not so great for wildlife watching, there are plenty of other things to do in the North East of Scotland. Granttown-on-Spey is close to many visitor attractions and there's something for everyone to enjoy. For those in search of a wee dram, remember that the Grant Arms Hotel is close to the World's only Malt Whisky Trail!

FALLS OF SHIN VISITOR CENTRE

OPEN: Daily Jun–Sep 9:30am–5pm / Oct–May 10am–5pm (Phone for Jan–Feb opening hours). Views of the forest from the restaurant, viewing platform to watch the Atlantic Salmon leap, forest walks and gift shop. **DIRECTIONS:** Off B864, via A836 between Bonar Bridge and Lairg. **NEAR BWWC MAP SITES: 1, 2**

INVERNESS MUSEUM

OPEN: Mon–Sat 10am–5pm. Explore Scottish history and discover how the Highlands are linked with the rest of the world. Exhibitions, art gallery and coffee shop. Parking available nearby, free entry. **DIRECTIONS:** Castle Wynd (off B861/B862), Inverness city centre. **NEAR BWWC MAP SITE: 11**

LOCH NESS EXHIBITION CENTRE

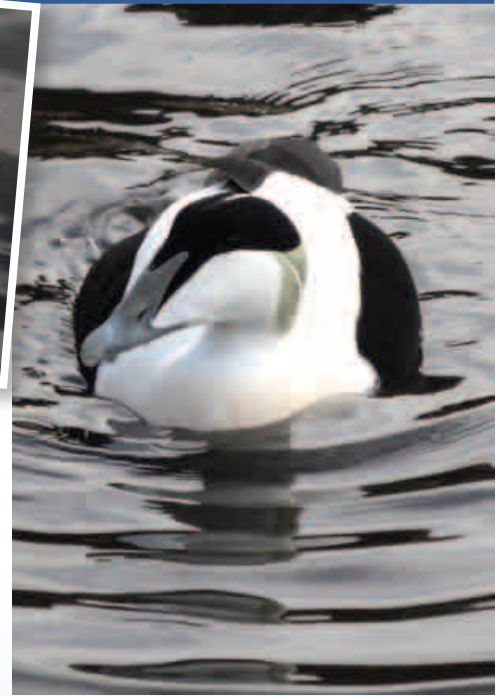
OPEN: Daily Nov–Jan 10am–3:30pm / Feb–May 9:30am–5pm / Jun–Sep 9am–6pm / Oct 9:30am–5pm. Learn about the history of the famous monster by exploring Scotland's geological past, its folklore and the various research projects carried out on the loch. £6.50 Adult/£5.50 Conc./£4.50 Child. **DIRECTIONS:** On the A82 at Drumadrochit. **NEAR BWWC MAP SITE: 12**

TOMATIN WHISKY DISTILLERY VISITOR CENTRE

OPEN: Mon–Sat 10am–5pm, Sun 12pm–4:30pm. Tours available Mon–Fri £3pp or experience the Whisky Presentation and Tasting Tour for £30pp (booking advisable for tours). Visitor Centre with DVD presentation and sample of 12yr single malt and gift shop open daily. **DIRECTIONS:** Just off the A9 at Tomatin. **NEAR BWWC MAP SITES: 12, 13**

HIGHLAND WILDLIFE PARK

OPEN: Daily Apr–Oct 10am–5pm / Jul–Aug 10am–6pm / Nov–Mar 10am–4pm (last



entry 1hr before closing). Experience Scottish wildlife as well as international endangered animals of mountains and tundra. Gift shop and coffee shop on site. £13.50 Adult/£11.50 Conc./£10 Child. **DIRECTIONS:** Turn off A9 (south) onto B9152 and through Kincaig. **NEAR BWWC MAP SITES: 14, 15, 16, 18**

GLENMORE FOREST PARK VISITOR CENTRE

OPEN: Daily 9am–5pm. Presentations and exhibition about the native pinewoods. Forest Shop, café and walks to enjoy if there's a dry spell! Free entry. **DIRECTIONS:** Opposite Glenmore Caravan Site, east end of Loch Morlich. **NEAR BWWC MAP SITES: 16, 17, 18, 19**

CAIRNGORM FUNICULAR RAILWAY

OPEN: Trains run daily 10am–5pm (9am–4pm in winter dependant on weather/daylight hours) and run approx. every 20mins. Take the funicular railway up to the Ptarmigan Station to the viewing terrace (the only outside access if you take the train up), exhibitions, the UK's highest restaurant and shop. £9.75 Adult/£8.45 Conc./£6.15 Child. You can also walk up and buy a downhill ticket: £7.00 Adult/£6.15 Conc./£4.50 Child. **DIRECTIONS:** Runs from Base Station at Coire Cas—turn left off the B970 at Coylumbridge. **NEAR BWWC MAP SITES: 16, 17, 18, 19**

GRANTOWN MUSEUM

OPEN: 1st Mar–23rd Dec, Mon–Sat 10am–4pm. The museum tells the story of Granttown since its beginnings in 1765. Temporary exhibitions are also a regular feature. £2 Adults/£1 Conc./Under 10s free. **DIRECTIONS:** Burnfield Avenue, Granttown—around the corner from the Grant Arms Hotel. **BWWC MAP SITE: 21**

SPEYSIDE HEATHER VISITOR CENTRE

OPEN: Mon–Sat 9am–5:30pm / Sun 10am–5pm (Phone for Jan–Feb opening hours). Experience 21 different ways to enjoy a cloutie dumpling in the restaurant! Exhibitions, wildlife viewing stations, gift shop, boutique, art gallery, garden centre and antiques shop. Free entry. **DIRECTIONS:** Skye of Curr—just off the A95 between Aviemore and Granttown-On-Spey. **NEAR BWWC MAP SITES: 20, 21**

SPEYSIDE COOPERAGE

OPEN: Mon–Fri 9am–4pm. Discover the ancient art of coopering and the lifecycle of a whisky cask. See skilled coopers at work, try for yourself with mini casks and enjoy the gift/coffee shop. £3.30 Adult/£2.70 Conc./£2 Child. **DIRECTIONS:** On the A941, ¼mile south of Craigellachie. **NEAR BWWC MAP SITE: 22**

FORT GEORGE

OPEN: Daily Apr–Sep 9:30am–5:30pm/Oct–Mar 9:30am–4:30pm (last entry 45min before closing). Active 18th Century military base. Take an audio tour, visit the museum, arms collection, barrack rooms and walk more than a mile of ramparts (keeping a lookout for seals, dolphins and birdlife at sea). £6.70 Adult/£5.40 Conc./£4 Child. **DIRECTIONS:** North of Ardersier on the B9006. **NEAR BWWC MAP SITE: 24**

CULLODEN BATTLEFIELD VISITOR CENTRE

OPEN: Daily Apr–Oct 9am–6pm / Nov–Mar 10am–4pm (phone for post Xmas & Jan opening hours). Visit the restored battlefield and learn about the last hand-to-hand battle fought on British soil with interactive exhibitions and displays. Hire of a battlefield tour PDA included. £10 Adult/£7.50 Conc./£2.80 Child. **DIRECTIONS:** Off the A9 (north) on the B851. **NEAR BWWC MAP SITE: 24**

MACDUFF MARINE AQUARIUM

OPEN: Daily 10am–5pm (last entry 4:15pm). Features the marine life found in the Moray Firth, exhibits lead you from the coast to the underwater kelp reef. £5.65 Adults/£3.50 Conc./£2.80 Child. **DIRECTIONS:** On High Shore in Macduff, east of Macduff harbour. **NEAR BWWC MAP SITES: 34, 35**





Walks Walks Walks



©Brenda Smith

View from Utsi Bridge

CRAIGELLACHIE RESERVE: A mix of rocky outcrops and birch woodland, Craigellachie Reserve is home to Peregrine Falcons. A walk around the lower hillside takes you past a pond where you may see Goldeneye. A walk up the hill to the viewpoint rewards you with stunning views across Strathspey on a clear day. **BWWC Map Site 15.**

LOCH AN EILEIN: Walk around this beautiful loch on the Rothiemurchus Estate and admire the ruined castle on the island in the middle. Try to catch a glimpse of Crested Tit, Scottish and Parrot Crossbill, Redstart, Wood Warbler, Tree Pipit and fishing Osprey in summer. **BWWC Map Site 16.**

GLENMORE FOREST PARK: Look for Red Squirrel, Crested Tit, Redstart and Scottish Crossbill along the forest trails. Or take a wander around Loch Morlich to try and spot Sand Martin, Swallow, Red-throated Diver and Osprey in the summertime. Views of the snow-capped Cairngorms from the shores of Loch Morlich in winter are incredible. **BWWC Map Site 19.**

LOCH GARTEN & ABERNETHY: Wander around Loch Garten and Loch Mallachie looking for Goldeneye, Wigeon, Common Sandpiper and Otters. Watch for Osprey fishing in summer and Greylag Geese, Pink-footed Geese and Whooper Swans in winter. Crested Tit, nesting Swift, Capercaillie, Scottish and Parrot Crossbill, Black Grouse and Red Squirrel can often be

seen on a walk around Abernethy Forest. **BWWC Map Site 20.**

ANAGACH WOODS: Just a short stroll from the Grant Arms Hotel in Grantown-on-Spey, these woods boast Capercaillie, Crested Tit, Scottish Crossbill, Buzzard, Great Spotted Woodpecker, Roe Deer and Red Squirrel. Wander by the River Spey to look for Grey Wagtail, Dipper and Common Sandpiper. Also keep a look out for Osprey in summer. **BWWC Map Site 21.**

VIEWPOINT WALK: A 3 mile round walk from the Grant Arms Hotel in Grantown-on-Spey, this walk results in some spectacular views of the Cairngorms, the Lairig Ghru Pass and the Cromdale Hills on a clear day. You might encounter Buzzard soaring overhead or Red Squirrel and Roe Deer feeding in the woodland. **BWWC Map Site 21.**

SPEYSIDE WAY: Start this walk from Grantown itself or one of many points across the 80mile trail. Look for birdlife, Red Squirrel and Roe Deer amongst the trees or Water Voles and Otters at the edge of the River Spey. Why not stop at one of the whisky distilleries en route for some refreshment? **Start from BWWC Map Site 21 or 32.**

GLENLIVET ESTATE: Try spotting Blackcaps and Sand Martin in summer, and Waxwing and Snow Bunting in winter. Red and Black Grouse, Short-eared Owl, Merlin, Kestrel, Dipper, Red and Roe Deer, Mountain and Brown Hare and Red Squirrel

are all resident here. Spectacular viewpoints are encountered on certain trails, with 11 waymarked routes to choose from. **BWWC Map Site 22.**

CULBIN FOREST: Look for Crested Tit, Crossbill, Treecreeper, Redpoll, Sparrowhawk, Dunnock, Bullfinch and Mistle Thrush. You could climb the tower and enjoy the magnificent views across the Moray Firth, or walk out to Culbin Sands to look for Waders, resident Common and Grey Seals and Ospreys in summertime. **BWWC Map Site 25.**

ROSEISLE FOREST: Walking through the trees in Roseisle you may encounter Treecreeper, Great Tit, Goldcrest, Crested Tit and Crossbill. Keep a look out for Red Squirrel too. Follow a sandy trail down to the beach and watch for Common, Velvet and Surf Scoter, Long-tailed Duck and various Waders, Divers and Grebes. **BWWC Map Site 27.**

Various routes and length of walk are available in many locations around the Grant Arms Hotel—leaflets and information can be obtained from BWWC staff.

Following the success of our Wildlife & Walking Break this September, we'll be running another one in 2012 to coincide with the **Tomintoul & Glenlivet Walking Festival** (www.tgwf.co.uk) from Thursday 6th to Monday 10th September. See next month's *Watcher* for details!





What's on



Tea Rooms



ROSEMARKIE—CROFTERS BISTRO

OPEN: 11am (12:30pm on Sundays)—3pm daily. Overlooking Rosemarkie Bay and the Moray Firth with a range of fresh food (soups, sandwiches or larger meals available 12–3pm) and a take-away menu if you fancy sitting down at the beach. **DIRECTIONS:** Marine Terrace Rosemarkie, off the A832. **NEAR BWWC MAP SITES:** 6, 7, 8.

FOULIS FERRY—STOREHOUSE OF FOULIS

OPEN: Mon–Sat 9am–6pm, Sunday 10am–5pm. Within visitor centre with wildlife/history exhibitions and scenic views over Cromarty Firth. **DIRECTIONS:** On A9 Northbound, after Cromarty Firth Bridge. **NEAR BWWC MAP SITES:** 6, 9, 10.

NORTH KESSOCK—WHITE COTTAGE TEAROOM

OPEN: Summer 10am–7pm, Winter 10am–4pm daily. Overlooking the Kessock Channel, this is home to dolphins, seals, otters and birds. **DIRECTIONS:** Main Street North Kessock, off the A9 Northbound, after Kessock Bridge. **NEAR BWWC MAP SITES:** 7, 8, 11.

LOCH INSH WATER SPORTS CENTRE—THE BOATHOUSE RESTAURANT

OPEN: 10am–8pm daily (Phone for winter opening hours). The restaurant has a sheltered balcony and overlooks the wildlife-rich Loch Insh. Wildlife Boat Tours available, book on (01540)651272. **DIRECTIONS:** South of Kincaig, near junction for B970. **NEAR BWWC MAP SITE:** 14.

AVIEMORE—THE MOUNTAIN CAFÉ

OPEN: 8:30am–pm daily. Situated above the Cairngorm Mountain Sports shop, this café is a favourite with the locals and the BWWC Team for its selection of fresh homemade meals and cakes (gluten, dairy & wheat free options available), as well as good views of the Cairngorms. **DIRECTIONS:** Grampian Road (B9152) Aviemore—opposite 'pay & display' car park. **NEAR BWWC MAP SITE:** 15.

GLENMORE—GLENMORE CAFÉ

OPEN: 8:30am–4:30pm daily (evening meals served during Summer). On the shore of Loch Morlich and frequently visited by Red Squirrels and an array of birdlife including Crested Tits. There's also a chance of spotting one of the elusive local Pine Martens! Check out their squirrel & bird camera at: www.sledges.co.uk **DIRECTIONS:** On the Ski Road from Coylumbidge to Cairngorm Mountain. **NEAR BWWC MAP SITES:** 17, 19.

CAIRNGORM MOUNTAIN—PTARMIGAN RESTAURANT & THE CAS BAR

OPEN: Summer 10am–5pm daily, Winter 9am–4pm daily (dependant on daylight hours). 'Ptarmigan': spectacular views and chance to spot Ptarmigan and Mountain Hare. 'Cas Bar': a cosy place close to the Mountain Garden, try looking for Ring Ouzel in summer. **DIRECTIONS:** 'Ptarmigan': Walk up or take the funicular railway. 'Cas Bar': At the Base Station. **NEAR BWWC MAP SITES:** 17, 19.

REVACK ESTATE—REVACK RESTAURANT

OPEN: 10am–5pm daily. Set in 350 acres, with an abundance of wildlife, 10miles of walking trails and a gift shop. **DIRECTIONS:** Off the B970 between Speybridge and Nethy Bridge. **NEAR BWWC MAP SITES:** 20, 21.

Don't forget you can always order a packed lunch from the Hotel if you're off out for the day. We offer a range of sandwiches, soups and hot drinks—just order at Reception the evening before you'd like your lunch to be ready.



CRAGGAN OUTDOORS—CLUBHOUSE CAFÉ

OPEN: 10am–4pm daily. Enjoy delicious hot food and keep an eye on the water outside for a variety of wildlife. Short nature trail and bird hide available. **DIRECTIONS:** Off the A95 towards Aviemore, 1 mile south of Granttown-on-Spey. **NEAR BWWC MAP SITE:** 21.

LOGIE STEADING—LOGIE STEADING CAFÉ

OPEN: Jan–Mar 10:30am–5pm Friday–Sunday, Apr–Dec 10:30am–5pm daily. Enjoy fresh food and home baking, explore the River Findhorn Walk & Heritage Centre, Book Shop, Farm & Garden Shop or take a wander by the river in search of wildlife. **DIRECTIONS:** On B9007, off the A940 between Granttown-On-Spey and Forres. **NEAR BWWC MAP SITE:** 23.

FINDHORN BAY—THE CAPTAIN'S TABLE

OPEN: Summer 10am–5pm daily, Winter 10am–4pm daily. Enjoy a wonderful view of the bay. Enjoy a wonderful view of the bay whilst watching for various waders and waterfowl and even a seal hauled out on the sandbar. **DIRECTIONS:** At the harbour, following one-way system of the B9011 in Findhorn. **NEAR BWWC MAP SITES:** 25, 26, 27, 28.

BALLATER—BROWN SUGAR CAFÉ

OPEN: 10am–5pm daily. A good range of soups, sandwiches and daily lunch specials as well as delicious cakes, a chocolate cabinet and small gift selection. Outdoor seating is also available. **DIRECTIONS:** 8 Bridge Street, Ballater (A93). **NEAR BWWC MAP SITES:** 46, 47, 48.

These tearooms can be accessed on foot from the Grant Arms Hotel—either option would involve a round trip of approx. 2 hours walking, with great scenery and wildlife watching opportunities en route.



If you want to see what Guests think about the Grant Arms Hotel, why not check out our reviews on Trip Advisor? If you've stayed with us recently and want to share some feedback with those who might be considering a visit, please add your review!



Gordon's Top Tips

As we head into winter Gordon Hamlett, author of **Best Birdwatching Sites in the Scottish Highlands**, gives us some tips on evening wildlife encounters and seasonal visitors.

Just because the nights are drawing in, doesn't mean that you have stop birding early. Just use your ears instead of your eyes. The obvious example is to go an 'owl prow', listening for Tawny Owls in **Anagach Woods (BWWC Map Site 21)** behind the Hotel. If you are feeling really adventurous, take out a torch and try to spot one. They don't really go 'tu whit, tu whoo', it is more of a drawn out 'hooooo...hoo hoo hoooo', which is the male calling. Both male and female birds also give a sharp 'kee-vick' call.

If you are near the edge of a wood towards dusk, you might see the silhouette of a Woodcock flying out of the woods to feed on insects and worms on adjoining fields. These strange birds look like a cross between a Snipe and a giant moth. Slightly larger and dumpier than a Snipe, they also have a long, straight bill, but it is angled more towards the ground rather than sticking straight out. The wing tips are noticeably round rather than pointed, and it is this feature that gives them a moth-like appearance.



If the night is clear, it is always worth going outside for five minutes to listen for Redwings. This is slightly tricky, because, as we get older, we lose the ability to hear the high pitched 'seeep' calls; Goldcrests and Treecreepers cause similar problems. If you can still hear the high notes, Redwings call regularly as they migrate. If you are really lucky and the moon is full, you might see tiny silhouettes flying across the surface of the moon.

Tens of thousands of Redwings will have been arriving since October. Check out any trees with berries on, though you are just as likely to see flocks of birds grubbing for insects on ploughed fields or flying through a wood. Not much larger than a Starling, Redwings look a lot like Song Thrushes, but they have a lovely creamy stripe over the

eye, and brick-red patches on the flanks and underwings.

They often form mixed flocks with their cousins, the much larger Fieldfares. These birds are about the size of a Mistle Thrush, with a grey head and rump, coupled with a chestnut back and wings. They are noisy birds and you will find it hard to miss their 'chack, chack, chack' calls.

Redwings and Fieldfares migrate across the North Sea from Scandinavia and are known as 'winter thrushes'. This is something of a misnomer as other thrushes also arrive to winter here. Blackbirds, Song Thrushes and Mistle Thrushes all have their numbers swelled by continental visitors. A small, but increasing number of Redwings stay to breed, usually north of the Great Glen, but Fieldfares are only sporadic breeders.

BWWC PHOTOGRAPHY COMPETITION

There is still time to enter your photos in the **BWWC 2011 Photography Competition!**

There are three categories: **Best Bird**, **Best Landscape** and **Best Wildlife** photograph. Photos must have been taken by Grant Arms Hotel Guests during their stay with us this year. So if you've enjoyed a holiday with us recently, or are planning a trip before the end of the year, why not enter some of your holiday snaps? If you're chosen as the **Overall Winner** you'll win a **4 day stay for two at the Grant Arms**. If you're one of the two lucky **Runners-up** you'll win a **£150 voucher** towards a future stay here at the Hotel. Please see our website for full terms and conditions of entry: www.bwbc.co.uk/photography-competition.php



Roseisle Forest

©David Tolliday—Winner of 2010 Best Landscape Category



What's Coming Up

We're fortunate here in the Highlands that there is an abundance of wildlife all year round. As the scenery changes with the seasons, so too does our list of sightings. The BWWC Team is often asked 'when's the best time to visit?' and our answer is always 'it depends on what you want to see'. For a quick guide, see the 'Key Species' below, which will let you know which months are good options for spotting some of the Speyside specialities. If the information below still leaves you with questions please feel free to give the BWWC Team a ring or drop us an email – we're always happy to help:

SPRING

KEY SPECIES: Capercaillie, Black Grouse & Crossbills.

March: A chance to see Ptarmigan and Mountain Hare still in their winter camouflage as the mountains begin to lose their snowy covers. Bird song increases as the breeding season begins for most but young Crossbills may already have flown the nest.

April & May: Black Grouse and Capercaillie will be lekking at this time—you can visit RSPB Caperwatch at Loch Garten from 1st April-mid May or book a Black Grouse Watch with Glenlivet Wildlife (www.glenlivet-wildlife.co.uk). Slavonian Grebe and Divers will have moved inland to breed, whilst the local woodlands come alive with the activities of nesting birds.



SUMMER

KEY SPECIES: Osprey, Slavonian Grebe and Black and Red-throated Divers.

June, July & August: The best time for Bottlenose Dolphin watching, either from land or sea (see www.dolphinspace.org for local boat trip operators). Nearby Osprey and Peregrine pairs will hopefully be rearing their chicks. Butterflies and Dragonflies should be easy to spot and orchids and wild flowers will add colour to the summer scenery. Lapwings, Oystercatchers and Curlew have moved to moorland to raise their young. Thousands of Seabirds will be breeding at the coast, whilst Divers and Grebes reside on inshore lochs. A great time to spot summer migrants like Willow, Grasshopper and Wood Warblers, Spotted Flycatcher and Redstart.

AUTUMN

KEY SPECIES: Golden Eagle, Red Deer and Red Squirrel.

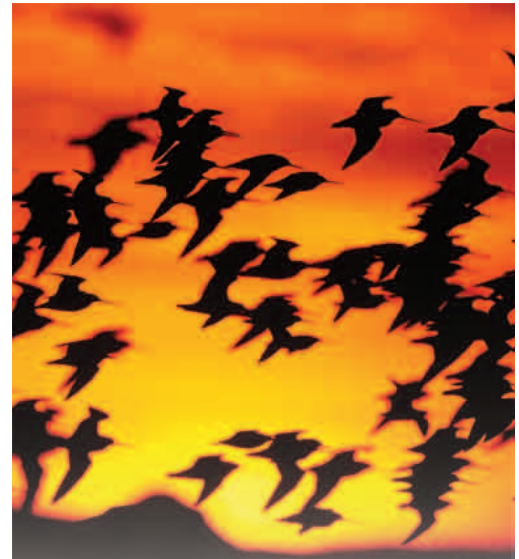
September: Still a good month for Dolphins, Divers and Grebes, as well as being a great time to view Salmon leaping. The landscape takes on a purple tinge as the heather blooms and it's a great month to test your fungi identification skills! Red Squirrel and Roe Deer forage for food supplies before the colder weather sets in.

October & November: The best two months to experience the autumn colours and a good time for Golden Eagle and raptor watching at Findhorn Valley. Waders & Seaduck are plentiful at the coast and over-wintering Geese move in. The annual Red Deer rut should not be missed—you can book a Red Deer rut safari with Glenlivet Wildlife (www.glenlivet-wildlife.co.uk).

WINTER

KEY SPECIES: Ptarmigan, Mountain Hare and Crested Tit.

December, January & February: Over-wintering Geese and Whooper Swans will be easy to spot. Ptarmigan and Mountain Hare have donned white coats to hide amongst the snow, whilst Snow Bunting are regularly seen around the local ski resorts. A great month to look for Ducks, Divers, Waders and Wildfowl on the coast. In the forests it's the best time to look for Crested Tits, especially around feeders, as well as noisy Crossbills looking to attract mates. Red Deer are easier to spot as they move downhill in search of food. Head to the Highlands to experience a winter wonderland.



BWWC Affiliate Scheme

Not only is the Grant Arms Hotel the **perfect venue for birdwatching, wildlife or walking Club Visits**—we'll **donate £10 to your Club funds** each time one of your club/group members stays with us! All your Club needs to do to take advantage of the **BWWC Affiliate Scheme** is to ensure your Club leader/treasurer provides us with the Club name, postal address, telephone number and email address. When Club members book a stay with us, they should say that they are a member of your Club and wish to take advantage of the BWWC Affiliate Scheme—then we will credit your Club with £10 on your departure from the Hotel! This applies whether Club members stay at the Grant Arms by themselves or as part of a Club group. To keep administration simple, we will send a cheque payable to the Club at the end of each year. Also, remember that we offer Special Group Rates if you aim to bring 10 or more Club members!

To make a booking or to discuss the possibility of a Club visit, please contact our Reservations Team on **(01479)872526** or email bookings@bwwc.co.uk.

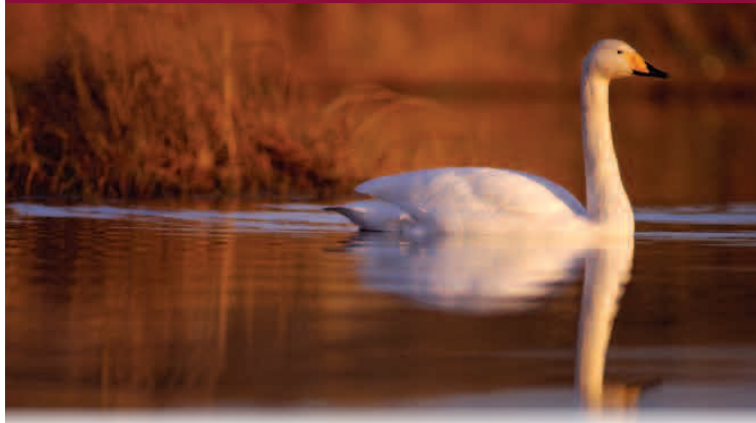


The newspaper of the Bird Watching and Wildlife Club

The Watcher



Special Events 2011/2012



WINTER WILDLIFE FOCUS

Monday 7th to Sunday 27th November 2011

These three weeks in November will have a programme of events focused on the winter wildlife of the Highlands. Every Tuesday throughout this period there'll be a Talk about local specialty species, every Thursday there'll be a BWWC Quiz (there'll be a winter feel to our wildlife round!) and every Friday you can meet a member of the BWWC Team at Insh Marshes to look for the likes of Hen Harrier and Whooper Swans. You could also add a safari with Highland Wildlife and Birdwatch Safaris to spot some winter wildlife (www.highlandwildlifesafaris.co.uk). **£195pp DB&B (for any 4 nights) or £325 DB&B (for any 7 nights)**

CHRISTMAS IN WONDERLAND

Friday 23rd December to Tuesday 27th December 2011

Enjoy Christmas in Wonderland this year with a traditional Christmas Lunch and full festive programme of events with the BWWC Team. **£399pp Full Board (4 nights)**



HOGMANAY IN THE HIGHLANDS

Saturday 31st December to Tuesday 3rd January 2012

Join us at the Grant Arms for a traditional Scottish Hogmanay. Welcome the New Year with ceilidh dancing and Granttown's famous Street Party! A programme of events with the BWWC Team is also included. **£399pp Full Board (3 nights)**



BURNS WINTER BREAK

Friday 20th to Tuesday 24th January 2012

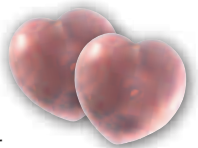
Enjoy a flavour of Burns on this Highland winter break, with a programme of events organised by the BWWC Team and a delicious Burns Supper featuring the traditional haggis and whisky offerings. **£195pp DB&B (4 nights)**



VALENTINE'S BREAK

Friday 10th to Tuesday 14th February 2012

Join us at the Grant Arms for a Valentine's vacation to explore the stunning scenery and wealth of winter wildlife. A romantic Valentine's Dinner and programme of events from the BWWC Team is included. **£195pp DB&B (4 nights)**



SPECIAL EASTER BREAK

**Thursday 5th to Monday 9th April 2012
or Friday 6th to Tuesday 10th April 2012**

Combine an Easter break and some springtime wildlife spotting with the help of the BWWC Team's programme of events. Enjoy an Easter Gala Dinner and our Easter Egg Hunt with a difference! **£225pp DB&B (4 nights)**



FOR MORE DETAILS ABOUT OUR SPECIAL EVENTS PLEASE SEE THE BWWC WEBSITE www.bwwc.co.uk

Special Event prices quoted are for Standard Rooms. Additional nights can be added to any Special Event subject to room availability should you wish to extend your stay—please ask when booking.

STANDARD TARIFF — 2011/2012

	DB&B	Nov–Feb	Mar	Apr–May	Jun–Sep
4 NIGHTS	– Standard	£195	£225	£365	£345
	– Superior	£255	£285	£425	£405
7 NIGHTS	– Standard	£325	£395	£585	£545
	– Superior	£430	£500	£690	£650

Price per person. Excludes Christmas, New Year and other Special Events.

Other lengths of stay are also available—please contact us for prices.

Single, Twin, Double & Family Rooms available. Four Poster Room supplement £25ppn.

Special Rates for Clubs, Tours and Conferences. Terms and conditions apply

TO BOOK CALL 01479 872526

www.bwwc.co.uk or email bookings@bwwc.co.uk

Grant Arms Hotel, 25 The Square, Granttown-on-Spey, PH26 3HF

