



The newspaper of the Bird Watching and Wildlife Club

The Watcher



October 2011

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



AUTUMN ARRIVALS

As autumn sets in and winter begins to feature in weather reports and local predictions for the ski season, various species settle down at their temporary addresses. Migrants such as Whooper Swans, Greylag and Pink-footed Geese have been arriving over the last month, with numbers set to soar (excuse the pun!) as they continue to head for warmer climates and the food on offer in the UK this season.

RSPB Loch of Strathbeg (BWWC Map Site 37) is a fantastic site to visit this month. There's an abundance of wildfowl and waders on offer, some of which you may not have seen before, as well as the chance to witness the mass movement of thousands of Geese at dawn and dusk (see the *Goosewatch* feature on page 4).



RSPB Insh Marshes (Map Site 14)

has seen the arrival of some Whooper Swans, with many more expected over the next couple of months. Numbers of Greylag Geese will also increase here and Hen Harriers will gather to roost. Redwing and Fieldfare should be spotted soon—keep an eye out for them in **Anagach Woods (Map Site 21)** and at the **Findhorn Valley (Map Site 13)** too.

At this time of year Red and Black-throated Divers and Slavonian

Grebes make the move from inshore lochs to the coast. Good locations to look for them include **Findhorn Bay (Map Site 26)**, **Roseisle (Map Site 27)**, **Burghhead (Map Site 28)**, **Lossiemouth (Map Site 29)** and **Spey Bay (Map Site 32)**. Great Northern Divers could also make an appearance at these sites, along with a variety of waders and seaduck.

Don't Miss!

RUTTING RED DEER

It's time once again for the Highland Red Deer stags to strut their stuff and prove their position as the annual Red Deer Rut gathers momentum. Battling males compete for mating rights and dominant stags may have to face a number of competitors to ensure their harem of hinds remains under control. If you fancy witnessing this wildlife spectacle for yourself you should try visiting **Findhorn Valley (BWWC Map Site 13)**, **Glenlivet Estate (Site 22)**, **Glen Muick (Site 48)** or **Glenshee (Site 49)**. Local company, Glenlivet Wildlife, offer Red Deer Rut Safaris by Land Rover to look for rutting Red Deer and other wildlife—see page 2 for more details.

A TRIP TO UDALE

RSPB Udale Bay (Map Site 6) is the ideal place to spend a couple of hours wader-watching, with the best results to be found two hours either side of high tide. Why not pack a picnic and take a trip up to the bay this month? You're likely to come across Curlew, Redshank, Oystercatcher, Lapwing, Knot, Bar-tailed Godwit, Ruff and Greenshank. Wigeon will no doubt be present—with 5,000 recorded here in previous years. Look out for Scaup and Slavonian Grebe, as well as Hooded Crow and hunting Peregrine Falcon. If you're in the area nearer low tide, you'll get better sightings a little further north at Newhall Point.





One off Events

7th–30th October EXPLORROUTE CAIRNGORM MOUNTAIN: Spend an hour following clues which lead you on a trail around the lower part of the Coire Cas side of the Mountain, close to the Base Station on easy paths. Suitable for all ages—free. **BWWC Map Site 17.**

Sat 8th October 'LIME AND ROCK-ART' WALK 11am–3pm: Join George Grant and John Wombell of NOSAS to learn about the history of lime production around Dulnain Bridge, visiting the site of commercial lime and farm kilns and looking at prehistoric outcrops on Laggan Hill. Walk approx. 3 miles with 100m climb. Free, call (01997)423273 for details. **Near BWWC Map Site 21.**

Sun 9th October WORLD PORRIDGE MAKING CHAMPIONSHIPS 11am–4:30pm: The 18th World Porridge Making Championships attracting competitors from all over the world to compete for the coveted Golden Spurtle Trophy. Great family fun day out, pipe band and stalls. Free, at Carrbridge. **Near BWWC Map Site 20.**

Sun 9th October CAIRNGORM REINDEER CENTRE OPEN DAY 10am–5pm: Come and meet the reindeer and feed them by hand, loads of activities for the kids and sleigh pulling demonstrations through the day. Paddock entry £1pp and discounted visits to the main herd on the hill. **BWWC Map Site 19.**

Wed 12th & Wed 19th October RSPB GUIDED WALK 11am–3:30pm: Find out more about our wild birds in the Highland Wildlife Park as well as the European Cranes, Snowy Owls and Capercaillie. Normal park admission charges apply. **Near BWWC Map Site 14.**

Thurs 13th & Thurs 27th October SEARCH & RESCUE DOG DEMONSTRATION 11:30–12:30pm: Moudy will be showing his skills with handler David Benson at CairnGorm Mountain. The demonstration lasts for approx. 40 minutes. Free, but donations are welcome to Search & Rescue Dog Association Scotland. **BWWC Map Site 17.**

Mon 17th October 'ROAR OF THE REDS' GUIDED WALK 5–7pm: Experience the sights, sounds and smells of the Red Deer rut in Braemar. Easy Walk, bring stout footwear, waterproofs & torch. Free but donations welcome. Booking essential on (01339)880868. **Near BWWC Map Site 50.**

Fri 21st October GRANTOWN SOCIETY TALK 7:30pm: This meeting celebrates the first Masons' gathering in Grantown on October 25th 1811. Expert Geoff Smith will tell something of the brotherhood steeped in mystery. **At The Grant Arms Hotel.**

Mon 24th October 'SCOTTISH CASTLES FROM ABOVE' TALK 7:30–9:30pm: From the seat of a light aircraft Gary Brindle has gathered images of well-known and obscure locations, revealing the beauty, boldness and variety of designs. £5pp, Boat of Garten Community Hall. **BWWC Map Site 20.**

Sat 29th October CAIRNS WALK 10am–4pm: Experience the autumn splendour of Balmoral Woods. A walk linking some of the historical cairns on the Estate, with spectacular views of Deeside. Approx. 6miles with an ascent of 250m. Free but booking essential (01339)755059. **Near BWWC Map Sites 47 & 50.**

Sat 29th October ASTRONOMY NIIGHT 8–10pm: Moray Astronomy Club, in association with Explore Abernethy, invites you to a public observing session. See Jupiter, Nebulae, Star Clusters and Galaxies as well as many other celestial objects. A bad weather backup of Astronomical presentations will take place in the hall. Free, Nethy Bridge Community Centre. **Near BWWC Map Site 21.**

Every Day

WALK @ THE TOP 10:20am, 11am, & 2pm: Take the funicular railway up to the Ptarmigan Station with a CairnGorm Ranger and enjoy a 90 minute guided walk to the summit of CairnGorm Mountain. The route is approx. 2 miles long with a steady ascent of 148m—suitable footwear and waterproofs are essential. Adult £14/Conc £12.50/Child £10 (includes return journey on funicular railway). Book on (01479)861341. **BWWC Map Site 17.**

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.**

Day by Day

▶ TUESDAY

EXPLORE ABERNETHY GUIDED WALK 10am–11:30am: Join a Ranger for a walk through Scots Pine along the River Nethy, looking for wildlife and discovering how people have lived and worked around the forest over centuries. Free but donations welcome. Book on (01479)821565. **Near BWWC Map Site 20.**

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.**

AUTUMN GOLD WALK 2:30pm: Join Glenlivet Wildlife on a walk over Blairfindy Moor, enjoying the autumn colours and looking for wildlife such as Roe Deer, Red Grouse and Mountain Hare. Lasts approx. 3 hours, £10pp. Book on (01807)590241. **BWWC Map Site 22.**



RED DEER RUT SAFARI

A Land Rover safari with Glenlivet Wildlife looking for wildlife around the Braes of Glenlivet (BWWC Map Site 22), including Red Deer as it's rutting season, Mountain and Brown Hare, Red and Black Grouse and birds of prey. Lasts approx. 3½ hours, £30pp. **Various times and dates are available throughout October, please call Glenlivet Wildlife on (01807)590241.**

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.**



▶ 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.**

GUIDED NORTHERN CORRIES WALK 10:30am: Meet a CairnGorm Ranger at the Ranger Base Station for an uphill walk of approx. 2 miles, enjoying the views and learning more about the flora and fauna. Suitable footwear, waterproofs and packed lunch/drinks are essential (lasts approx. 5 hours). Adult £12/Conc. £8/Child £6. Book on (01479)861341. **BWWC Map Site 17.**

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.**

EXPLORE ABERNETHY GUIDED WALK 2pm–4pm: Join a Ranger for a walk through Scots Pine along the River Nethy, looking for wildlife and discovering how people have lived and worked around the forest over centuries. Free but donations welcome. Book on (01479)821565. **Near BWWC Map Site 20.**



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**

STRATHSPEY STEAM RAILWAY

OPEN: Trains run 27th Mar–31st Oct. Call (01479)810725 for timetable. From its base at Aviemore through Boat of Garten and on to Broomhill, the railway takes you on a nostalgic 20 mile round trip along part of the original Highland Railway. The train passes over Moorland, through woodlands and by great sweeps of the



River Spey with the Cairngorm Mountains as a backdrop. Round-trip tickets from £10.50 per adult. **DIRECTIONS:** Aviemore Station: from the B9152, turn into the B970 to Coylumbridge then take the first left onto Dalfaber Rd. Boat of Garten Station: signposted from the A95 between Granttown and Aviemore. Broomhill Station: just off the A95 3.5 miles south of Granttown, on the minor road linking to the B970 and Nethybridge. **NEAR BWWC MAP SITES: 15, 20, 21**

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

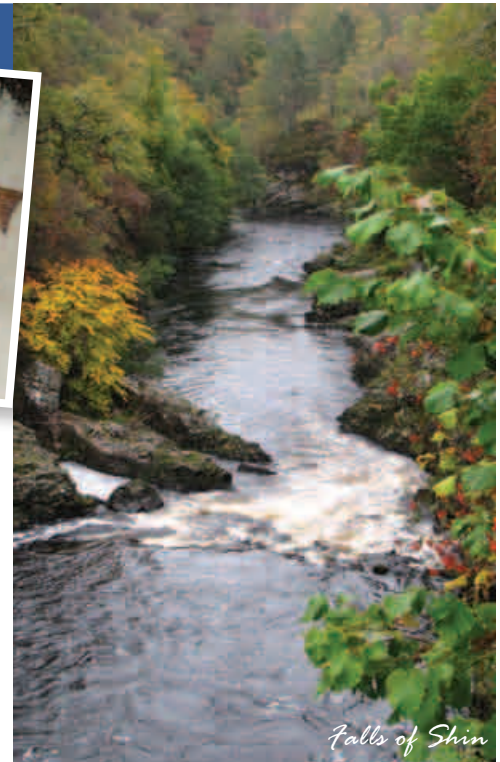
OPEN: Trains run daily 10am–5pm (9am–4pm in winter dependant on weather/daylight hours) and run approx. every 20mins. Take the funicular railway up to the Ptarmigan Station to the viewing terrace (the only outside access if you take the train up), exhibitions, the UK's highest restaurant and shop. £9.75 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**



Falls of Shin

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, ¼ mile 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**



What's on



Goosewatch!



©RSPB/ Duncan Goulter

Thanks to Diana Spencer from RSPB Loch of Strathbeg for this feature about watching Geese and other autumn visitors over the next couple of months:



Bird and wildlife watchers can be a contrary bunch some times, never more so than at this time of year when we're perhaps the only people getting genuinely excited about the onset of autumn and the possibility of strong easterly winds and a light rain. The shorter days and wetter weather (although I'm not sure it can get wetter than it's been this summer) are worth it though, as reserves like **RSPB Loch of Strathbeg** come alive with passing autumn migrants and our returning wintering wildfowl.

Throughout September the wetlands have been home to thousands of waders; Lapwing, Golden Plover, Ruff and Greenshank. Little Stint and Pectoral Sandpiper have been daily sightings, with up to five of the latter mixed in with the Dunlin flock. Baird's, White-rumped and Buff-breasted Sandpiper have all popped up in the past few weeks. Otters are becoming easier

to see at dawn and dusk, and Basking Sharks cruise past our seawatching point in October.

The real stars of the show however are our returning Pink-footed Geese. The reserve has become a haven for these birds and is often their first sight of land and fresh water after leaving Iceland. Goose numbers have climbed from around 3,000 when the RSPB first became involved at Loch of Strathbeg, to peak counts of around 70,000 in a good year. The sight of these huge flocks wheeling over the reserve as they head out to the surrounding fields at first light is one of the greatest wildlife sights in Scotland. Goose numbers will fall slightly during the winter as birds head south to Norfolk or the Ribble estuary, so October and November are the best times to see this astonishing spectacle for yourself.

Goosewatch can be booked by calling **01346 532017** or emailing strathbeg@rspb.org.uk. Goosewatch is free for RSPB members with a £3 suggested donation for non-members. All of the dates are also available at our website www.rspb.org.uk/lochofstrathbeg



©RSPB/ Duncan Goulter

GOOSEWATCH DATES 2011

DAWN

- Wed 5th October 6:15am
- Sat 8th October 6:30am
- Wed 12th October 6:30am
- Sat 15th October 6:30am
- Mon 17th October 6:30am
- Sat 22nd October 6:30am
- Mon 24th October 6:45am
- Wed 26th October 6:45am
- Mon 31st October 6:15am
- Wed 2nd November 6:30am
- Sat 5th November 6:30am
- Wed 9th November 6:30am
- Sat 12th November 6:30am

DUSK

- Sun 2nd October 5:30pm
- Mon 10th October 5:30pm
- Wed 19th October 5:15pm
- Sat 29th October 4:45pm
- Mon 7th November 3:15pm



What's on



Tea Rooms



Scottish wild cat

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–5pm 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.**

INSHRIACH NURSERY—THE POTTING SHED

OPEN: 1st March–31st October, 10am–5pm daily. Selected as one of 'Britain's Top 10 Cake Shops' by the Observer Good Food Guide 2007. Tearoom with viewing gallery overlooking a feeding station for Red Squirrels and various woodland birds. **DIRECTIONS:** Off the B970 between The Polchar and Feshiebridge. **NEAR BWWC MAP SITE: 16.**

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 Coylumbridge 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.**

CRAGGAN OUTDOORS—CLUBHOUSE CAFÉ

OPEN: 10am–4pm daily. Enjoy delicious food and keep an eye on the water outside in case of fishing Ospreys! Short nature trail and bird hide available. **DIRECTIONS:** Off the A95 towards Aviemore, 1mile south of Grantown-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 Grantown-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. Why not take the Water Taxi from the next door Marina to Culbin Forest? Run on request Easter–October: Mon–Sat 9am–5pm, Sun 11am–5pm. £2.50 single/£5 return (01309)690099. **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.



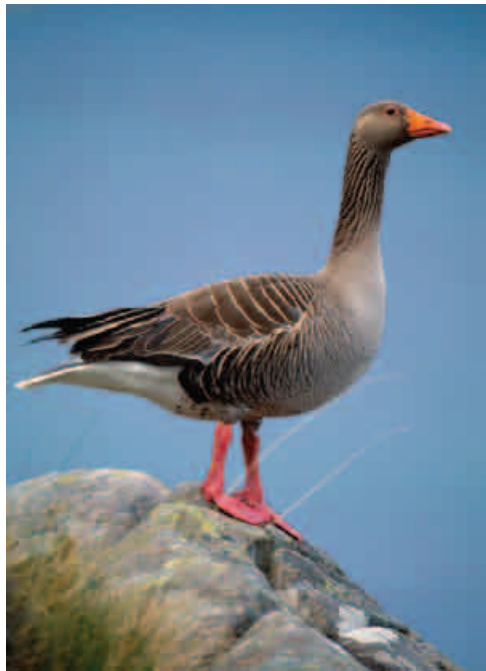
If you want to see what Guests think about the Grant Arms Hotel, why not check out our reviews on Trip Advisor? If you've stayed with us recently and want to share some feedback with those who might be considering a visit, please add your review!



Gordon's Top Tips

*Gordon Hamlett, author of **Best Birdwatching Sites in the Scottish Highlands**, gives readers some advice about watching geese this month:*

In October, I'll be up in Scotland. In December, I'll be over in Lancashire for my Mum's 80th birthday party. The rest of the



time, I'll be at home in North Norfolk. It's a wild goose chase of sorts, but I'm not sure who is chasing who.

October sees the main arrival of Pink-footed Geese into the country. Keep your eyes on the sky and you are sure to see the V-shaped skeins of birds arriving. They often cross the coast at quite high altitudes so it is vital that you use another sense to help find them. Pinks are very vocal birds, and often your first clue to their presence is a series of 'wink-wink' calls. Once you hear the calls, start scanning the skies. Flocks can range in size from twenty or so to several thousand.

Anywhere along the east coast can produce sightings, with birds often stopping off to feed up after their flight from Iceland and Siberia. **Munlochy Bay (BWWC Map Site 8)** and **Udale Bay (Map Site 6)** on the Black Isle often hold good numbers of birds, and the fields along the Moray coast are another good place to check — keep your eyes open if you are going to **Findhorn Bay (Map Site 26)**, **Spey Bay (Map Site 32)** or **Burghead (Map Site 28)**.

By far the best place to see them though is at the RSPB reserve of **Loch of Strathbeg (Map Site 37)** on the Aberdeenshire coast.

Birds arrive here in their tens of thousands and it is well worth checking out their website in the BWWC Club Room to see what's been seen, and what special goose-watching events they have organised.

Once they have refuelled, their next staging post is the Lancashire Mosses. The WWT reserve at Martin Mere is a great place to visit. Then it's off to North Norfolk. We get up to 180,000 birds wintering with us and watching them come in to roost is one of the great wildlife spectacles. It's strange to think that the birds I'll see arriving in October will also be the ones flying over my mum's house and then feeding on my local sugar beet fields.

Other geese are on the move too. Look out for Whitefronts, Barnacle Geese heading towards the west coast and Solway, pale-bellied Brent Geese, and Greylags — genuine wild birds from Iceland rather than the fat, lazy birds hanging round your local country park. Your best chance of a rarity is to find a Snow Goose, usually attached to a flock of Pinkfeet.

What's Coming Up

WINTER'S ON ITS WAY

Over-wintering Geese and Whooper Swans will be easy to spot at various locations in the Highlands and North East Scotland. Ptarmigan and Mountain Hare will have donned their white coats to hide amongst the snow—check any uncovered patches of hillside for these two masters of camouflage! Snow Bunting are regularly seen from the local ski resorts, with Coire Cas at Cairn Gorm Mountain being a real hotspot for them as they take advantage of any lunchtime leftovers! It's the best season to look for Ducks, Divers, Waders and Wildfowl on the coast, as well as Crested Tits in the forests. Red Deer are also easier to spot as they move downhill in search of food. Why not head to the Highlands this year to experience a winter wonderland?

For more information call **(01479)872526** or email info@bwwc.co.uk
Don't forget about our winter **Special Events**—see page 8 for details.



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Follow that Cuckoo

BTO update *Watcher* readers on the progress of the Cuckoos that were satellite tagged this spring:

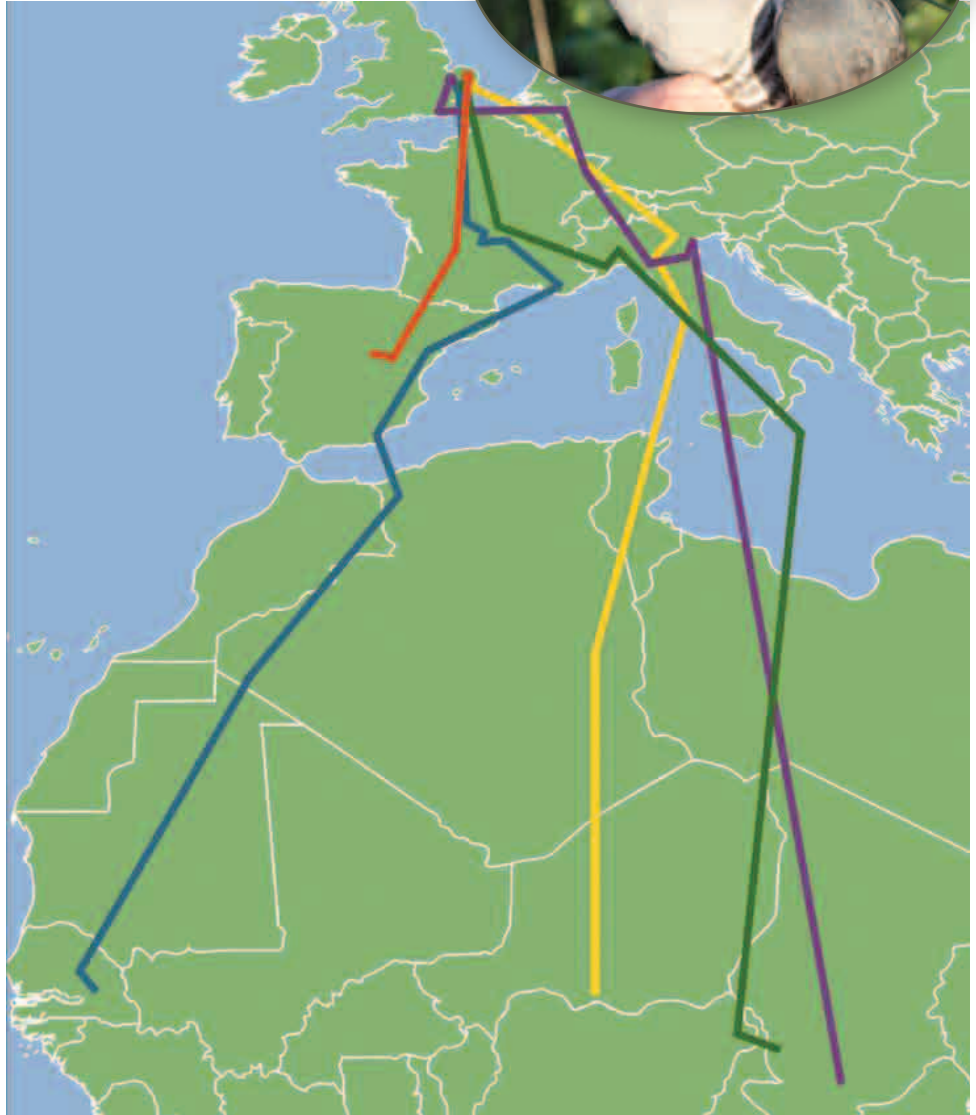


The sound of the Cuckoo is fast disappearing from our countryside and data collected by British Trust for Ornithology volunteers show that this iconic bird has declined by over 50% during the last twenty-five years. The Cuckoo has been well studied during the breeding season here in the UK but there are huge gaps in our knowledge once this bird leaves to spend the winter in Africa. At present we don't even know where British Cuckoos spend the winter in Africa, the only indication being the recovery of a single ringed bird in Cameroon. Knowing where the Cuckoo spends the large part of the year outside Britain is vital if we are to help reverse the decline so, this spring, BTO scientists fitted five Cuckoos with satellite tags.

The project wouldn't have been possible without the support of Essex & Suffolk Water, the BBC Wildlife Fund and both the Bird Watching & Wildlife Club at the Grant Arms Hotel and Carl Zeiss—who both donated prizes for the BTO Raffle and helped BTO to raise £21,000 towards this tracking project. All five birds, Lyster, Kasper, Chris, Martin and Clement were tagged in Norfolk and it is no coincidence that they are all male. Male cuckoos are larger and heavier than the females and well within the weight range to allow the fitting of the five gramme tags.

The first to move was Clement, who left the UK on the incredibly early date of the 5 June, and transmitted from an area around 160km south of Paris — it was thought that our Cuckoos wouldn't leave the UK until at least early July. Nine days later he had settled in wooded hills near Toulon in south-east France, where he was to stay for the next three weeks before heading through Spain and into North Africa. By contrast, Kasper, the next bird to leave, crossed the North Sea from East Anglia and was located in the docks at Antwerp on 13 June, almost directly due east of his ringing location in the Norfolk Broads. From here he headed south along the French/German border and on in to northern Italy. It seems that northern Italy could be an important staging area for British cuckoos, three of our four migrating birds stopped here. Kasper then moved through Italy, crossed the Mediterranean into Algeria and then proceeded to cross the vast Sahara Desert at its widest point.

So far the cuckoos have provided us with two big surprises, the first being their early departure dates from the UK, and the second, the two migration routes through Europe to Africa. It has



This map shows the routes of the five Cuckoos in early August. To see where they are now check out www.bto.org/cuckoos. Inset: Lyster with his satellite tag ©BTO

long been suspected that our cuckoos migrate south-east into Europe, through Italy and a central crossing of the Mediterranean. What was not known was that some of our cuckoos might migrate in a south to south-westerly direction through Spain, crossing the Mediterranean in the west and then migrating down the western edge of the Sahara. Clement is the first British cuckoo ever to be recorded in West Africa. As if to prove that this wasn't just a one off, Lyster took the same route and is still in Mali, West Africa.

For the last month or more, our cuckoos have been languishing in central Africa, taking advantage of the rainy season and the glut of food the rains bring, however, on 23 September, Martin moved south and is now on the edge of the great Congo Rainforest, the second largest rainforest in the world and home to gorillas and forest

elephants. We don't know but this could be his final wintering destination, only time will tell.

There is still a lot more work to be done. In future years, we hope to get a larger sample marked, then we can really say something about where the important stopover sites are, how long birds stay there and how birds move around Africa in winter in relation to the rains there. Next year we plan to mark more birds and are looking at other breeding areas. Why is it that the Cuckoo population in Scotland stable? Is it something to do with the migration routes they take?

You can help support this work by sponsoring one of our five Cuckoos for as little as £10 and you will receive special email updates about their progress. Find out more and follow the Cuckoos at www.bto.org/cuckoos



The newspaper of the Bird Watching and Wildlife Club

The Watcher



Special Events 2011/2012



RED DEER RUT FOCUS

Monday 3rd to Sunday 23rd October 2011

These three weeks in October will have a programme of events focused on the spectacular Red Deer Rut. Every Tuesday throughout this period there'll be a Talk about Red Deer, every Thursday there'll be a BWWC Quiz (swat up on your deer knowledge to ace our wildlife round!) and every Friday you can meet a member of the BWWC Team at Findhorn Valley to look for Red Deer and raptors. You could also add a trip with Glenlivet Wildlife on their Red Deer Rut Safari (£30pp—see www.glenlivet-wildlife.co.uk). **£225pp DB&B (for any 4 nights) or £395 DB&B (for any 7 nights)**

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 trip with Glenlivet Wildlife on their Braes Safari (£30pp—see www.glenlivet-wildlife.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

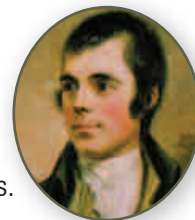
Join us at the Grant Arms for a traditional Scottish Hogmanay. Welcome the New Year with ceilidh dancing and Granttown's famous Street Party! A programme of events with the BWWC Team is also included. **£399pp Full Board (3 nights)**



BURNS WINTER BREAK

Friday 20th to Tuesday 24th January 2012

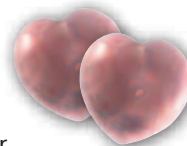
Enjoy a flavour of Burns on this Highland winter break, with a programme of events organised by the BWWC Team and a delicious Burns Supper featuring the traditional haggis and whisky offerings. **£195pp DB&B (4 nights)**



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 | Oct | Nov–Feb | Mar | Apr–May |
|---------------------|------|---------|------|---------|
| 4 NIGHTS – Standard | £225 | £195 | £225 | £365 |
| – Superior | £285 | £255 | £285 | £425 |
| 7 NIGHTS – Standard | £395 | £325 | £395 | £585 |
| – Superior | £500 | £430 | £500 | £690 |

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

