Eagles, Mountains and Highland Specialities 16-22 April 2027



Crested Tit by Mark Leitch

This tour is designed to experience the spectacular wildlife and landscapes of the Scottish Highlands during spring. From rugged mountain ranges and ancient pine forests to open moorland and lochs, the Highlands provide an exceptional setting for some of Scotland's most iconic wildlife.

The tour focuses on some of the region's most sought-after species, including White-tailed and Golden Eagles, Osprey, Black Grouse, Ptarmigan, Crested Tit, and Parrot and Scottish Crossbills. Combined with breathtaking scenery, ancient Caledonian forests and the chance to explore some of Scotland's wildest landscapes, this promises an unforgettable Highland wildlife experience.

Recent years have also produced notable rarities including Black Scoter, White-winged Scoter, Surf Scoter, Snowy Owl, Ross's Goose and Lesser Scaup. With the unpredictability of spring, anything can show up!

Itinerary

Join us for an exciting spring wildlife tour through the Scottish Highlands, exploring a range of spectacular landscapes in search of the region's most iconic birds and mammals. We'll visit ancient Caledonian pine forests, open moorland, mountain slopes and lochs, targeting specialities such as Crested Tit, Black Grouse and Ptarmigan, while keeping watch for Golden and White-tailed Eagles soaring overhead. We'll also explore suitable sites for Osprey and other spring migrants, making the most of the season's increasing activity. With a flexible itinerary shaped by local conditions and recent sightings, we'll keep an eye out for unexpected rarities too, adding an extra sense of excitement to our exploration of this remarkable part of Scotland.

Accommodation will be at the 3* Coylumbridge Resort Hotel, located in Aviemore and set in a 30-ha woodland estate, for six nights.

Day 1: Arrival
Location: Coylumbridge Resort Hotel, Aviemore
Our Highland adventure begins at the Coylumbridge Resort Hotel in Aviemore, where we meet our guide at midday and look ahead to the week's birding. After introductions, we'll head out to a nearby site for our first taste of the Highlands, making the most of the afternoon to get our eyes on the local birdlife. We'll then return to the hotel to settle in and enjoy our first evening meal together. Throughout the tour, we'll stay in touch with the BirdGuides Sightings team, allowing us to respond to news of rarities and scarce species whenever the opportunity arises.

Day 2: Black Isle and Dornoch area
We'll head east to explore the coast around the Black Isle and Dornoch, where sheltered bays, beaches and open sea offer a different perspective on Highland birdlife. Some winter visitors may still be lingering, so we'll look out for Slavonian Grebe, Long-tailed Duck and scoters, while scanning offshore for signs of spring movement. Northern Gannets and Northern Fulmars may be passing through, adding to the variety of seabirds to watch for along this scenic stretch of coastline.

Day 3: Cairngorms
Today takes us into the spectacular landscapes of the Cairngorms National Park, where ancient pinewoods and high mountain terrain provide the setting for some of Scotland's most distinctive birds. Among the trees, we'll search for Crested Tit, crossbills and other woodland passerines, and keep watch for Osprey hunting over the lochs. Higher up, we'll explore the uplands in search of grouse and, if we're fortunate, Eurasian Dotterel. We'll also look carefully among the rocky boulder fields for Ptarmigan, whose subtle plumage can make this sought-after mountain specialist wonderfully elusive.

Day 4: Aberdeenshire
One of the tour's standout experiences awaits as we travel to the Aberdeenshire coast and board a boat to search for White-billed Diver. These rare Arctic visitors are the focus of our time at sea, and we'll scan the waves carefully for birds moving along the coast on their spring migration. Other divers and seabirds may also make an appearance, adding to the excitement of exploring this stretch of the North Sea from the water.

Day 5: Gairloch and west coast
We'll head west to Gairloch and the rugged west coast, where sea, shoreline and land meet beneath dramatic Highland scenery. Summer breeders such as Grasshopper Warbler should have arrived, and there is the chance of migrants moving through the area. The skies will be worth watching too, as

eagles and other raptors may pass overhead, while the coast offers opportunities to spot Kittiwakes, Black Guillemots and divers.

Day 6: Strathconon and Findhorn Valley
Our exploration of Strathconon and Findhorn Valley brings another chance to experience the Highlands' remarkable wildlife and wide-open landscapes. We'll scan the water for divers and grebes, while keeping an eye out for Eurasian Otters. Inland, the moors and valleys offer opportunities to see Red Deer and the well-camouflaged Mountain Hare. We'll also watch the skies for Golden and White-tailed Eagles and search the heather for Red Grouse and the graceful Hen Harrier quartering the moorland.

Day 7: Local sites and departure
We'll make the most of our final morning with a flexible visit to a nearby site or a return to one of the week's key locations, depending on recent sightings and the species still on our wishlist. We'll check BirdGuides for news of rarities or other notable birds, giving us one last opportunity to seek out something special before the tour draws to a close. We'll say our goodbyes at approximately 2 pm.

Pricing

Our Highlands birding tour offers exceptional value, with the price covering comfortable accommodation, ground transportation, entrance fees to all scheduled sites and reserves, and the expertise of an experienced birding guide.

Priced at £2,149 per person, a single supplement is an additional £250.

A non-refundable deposit of 20% of the total trip price, per person, is required to secure the booking. The final balance is due 60 days before the tour start date.

Included in the price:

- Accommodation throughout the tour at Coylumbridge Resort Hotel;
- All evening meals from Day 1 to Day 6, and also breakfast from Day 2 through to Day 7;
- Ground transportation during the tour (minibus);
- Boat trip to see White-billed Diver;
- Services of an experienced birding guide;
- Entrance fees to all scheduled sites and reserves.

Not included:

- International flights to and from the UK;
- Visa fees, if applicable;
- Travel insurance;
- Beverages and lunch;
- Optional activities not specified in the itinerary.

Trip Information

Tour leader
This tour is run exclusively for BirdGuides Travel by WildSpace. Your tour leader will be Matt Eade.

Group size
Eight, plus tour leader.

Minimum participants
This tour requires a minimum of five confirmed participants. If we do not have the minimum required number of participants, we reserve the right to cancel this tour. We will notify you not less than 30 days before the start of the tour should this be necessary.

Recommended items
- Binoculars;
- Telescope;
- Camera and waterproof camera cover;
- Water bottle and fridge bag for lunches on the go;
- Walking poles;
- Comfortable walking shoes;
- Warm and waterproof clothing as the weather can be unpredictable.

Is this tour for me?
- Areas can be uneven underfoot;
- We will be walking on average 2-5 miles per day with plenty of breaks;
- The hotel is adaptable and ground floor rooms can be requested;
- The hotel can adapt to dietary requirements however cannot guarantee the absence of any allergens due to them being prepared in a kitchen containing allergens.
- BirdGuides Travel tours are unsuitable for persons under the age of 16 years old. Please talk to us before booking your trip should you require further information.

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