

Scottish Highlands

Saturday 2 - Saturday 9 October 2010

Leader: Robin Noble

Sunday 3 October, Aigas

Weather: Sunny

Rangers: Sir John Lister-Kaye, Robin Noble & Ed McHugh

Objective: To explore the Aigas grounds and learn about the Aigas Beaver Demonstration Project

The day began with a presentation by Sir John Lister-Kaye, where he talked about the Magnus House; our superb new education building. This was then followed by a talk entitled the Balmorality Epoch, where Sir John discussed the Highlands from the period after the Battle of Culloden in 1746 through to the Victorian era and up until the present day. After such an exhilarating talk, it was time for a coffee break before Robin continued with his lecture on the Highlands. Robin's lecture covered all aspects of the Highland landscape, breaking many myths and surprising a lot of people about Scotland. The majority of people were unaware that the Highlands were almost totally wooded and that the action of man and grazers has reduced it to the landscape we know today. Robin also mourned the decline of the crofts in the hills, witnessing good working land; great for Corn Bunting and Corncrake, turn into a jungle of Bracken; good for very little. Covering geography, geomorphology, geology, anthropology, history, biology and ecology this lecture gave everyone about the most thorough grounding in Scotland that anyone had ever received.

After the wealth of information we had received we returned to the main house for a buffet lunch, where we relaxed over a lovely bowl of soup and salad. After lunch it was time to stretch our legs and so we decided to take a full tour of the estate. Starting at the main house we followed the path to the nature trail and continuing along the trail we walked up into the plantation. From here we headed up to the loch and the Beaver enclosure, where Alicia and Robin talked about the Beaver's biology and ecology as well as the reasons for its extinction in Scotland, its re-introduction along with the pros and cons this would bring. We also interpreted the actions of the Beavers to discuss the Beaver demonstration project we have here at Aigas.

We then walked around the Loch spotting several Dragonflies and stopping to look at a number of plants and trees. In the Scots Pine plantation Robin found a fascinating plant, St John's Wort (*Hypericum perforatum*), which we were informed, had medicinal properties. If placed in the armpit, where the skin is thinnest, this plant/tranquilliser was thought to cure depression and was used by St Columba, earning the name "St Columba's Armpit Package". After the plantation we headed out onto the moorland where we stopped off in a Hut Circle to discuss Bronze Age life as well as have a look at some geology and learn about the Schist rock in the area. On the way back to Aigas we stopped off at the tree top hide to take in the view, and then carried on down to the house for some afternoon tea.

Species List

Birds

Blue tit
Chaffinch
Coal Tit
Great Tit

Siskin

Fungi

Birch polypore
Hoof fungus

Monday 4 October, Black Isle

Weather: Lovely sunny day and surprisingly mild!

Rangers: Robin Noble & Elsepth Ingelby

Objective: To explore the varied habitats of the Black Isle, focusing particularly on the extensive mudflats and coastal habitats around the peninsula.

Today our destination was the (comparatively) flat and fertile Black Isle, a peninsula composed predominantly of Old Red Sandstone; a relatively young and soft rock that breaks easily into a rich soil. This has led to this area becoming the agricultural heart of the north of Scotland, with large scale production of particularly barley and potatoes, but also oil seed rape, turnips, carrots, oats and wheat.

There are also large areas of forestry plantations on the less fertile areas, and the mix of open fields and forest have made this the perfect site for the first reintroduction of the Red Kite which took place in 1989, at the same time as the Chiltern release. They have taken to the area well, and the Black Isle now boasts the most productive breeding population in Britain. Unfortunately, this has not led to a similar boom in numbers, with little expansion outside of the peninsula itself; this has largely been attributed to continued persecution, by shot and poison, but train and vehicle collisions and electrocution on wires have also undoubtedly played a part.

We 'scored' our first Red Kite early on as we drove onto the peninsula; a lovely view of the bird soaring in rings over the fields looking for carrion, its reddish back and forked tail gleaming in the autumn sunlight. We detoured off the main track to Newall Point which juts into the Cromarty Firth just opposite Invergordon where a number of oil rigs were awaiting repair and restoration work. We picked up a lovely pair of Eider duck and some Red-breasted Merganser, before moving along the shore of Udale Bay. This is a very shallow tidal mudflat, which means that an enormous area of rich, fertile mud is exposed at low tide making this a haven for ducks, waders and geese alike. The tide was high, pushing the birds close to the shore as they waited for the feeding areas to be exposed, allowing us fabulous views of the hundreds of Wigeon congregating here, complete with a flock of Linnet fluttering around the stubble of the field behind us. Further around the bay at the RSPB hide, we were treated to a huge array of birds, from hundreds of Pink-footed Geese to Dunlin, Knot, Black and Bar-tailed Godwit, Lapwing and even a lone Dabchick.

Moving on along the coast we passed several small rafts of Scaup bobbing on the waves. On reaching Cromarty we stopped at the facilities and picked up juvenile Gannets swooping past the little harbour. Parking for lunch looking out between the Suters, two headlands that constrict the entrance of the firth to a narrow, deep channel, Robin told us about the naval history of the firth as we watched Gannets diving off shore. Our next destination was Chanonry Point, a spit that juts out into the Moray Firth which is one of the best places in Europe for seeing Bottle-nosed Dolphins from the shore. It was rather windy, and unfortunately we were unlucky with the dolphins, but we did get views of Guillemot, a very unseasonal Swallow (!) with Ringed Plover and Turnstone along the pebble beach.

With time pressing we started to make our way home; pausing at the lovely wee fishing village of Avoch where an assortment of corvids and gulls crowded the shore. Making our way down to Kessock, we came across a small group of beautifully plumaged (but unfortunately non-native) Red-legged Partridge perched photogenically on a straw bale. Driving along the north shore of the Beauly Firth, the evocative silhouettes of Grey Herons punctuated the shore line as we passed groups of Curlew making the most of the soft soil in the fields. We stopped briefly at Redcastle for a look at the Common Seals before heading back to Aigas for tea and cake.

Species List

Birds

Bar-tailed Godwit
Black-headed Gull
Black-tailed Godwit
Buzzard

Carrion Crow
Chiff Chaff
Common Gull
Cormorant
Curlew
Dabchick (Little Grebe)

Dunlin	Red Kite
Eider	Red-breasted Merganser
Gannet	Red-legged Partridge
Great Black-backed Gull	Redshank
Grey Heron	Ringed Plover
Guillemot	Robin
Herring Gull	Rook
Hooded Crow	Scaup
House Sparrow	Shag
Jackdaw	Starling
Knot	Swallow
Lapwing	Teal
Linnet	Turnstone
Mallard	Wigeon
Oystercatcher	
Pheasant	Mammals
Pied Wagtail	Common Seal
Pink-footed Goose	

Tuesday 5 October, Speyside**Weather: Cloudy with sunny spells****Rangers: Robin Noble & Ed McHugh****Objective:** To explore some of Scotland's most famous habitats in search of wildlife.

We started the off with a long drive south on the A9 all the way to Insh Marshes at the far side of Speyside, right in the heart of the Cairngorms National Park. After a brief stop in Kingussie for a comfort break we headed on to the Marshes. We parked up and walked down to the first hide where two birders informed us that we had just missed a Hen Harrier moments earlier. We sat in the hide and scanned constantly for this Harrier but were not in luck today. We did spot another bird of prey in the distance, which did confuse us for a while until we concluded it must be a Buzzard. As well this we also got good views of some Roe Deer and a Grey Heron. We decided to take a short but steep walk to the next hide. On the way Robin discussed the varieties of trees in the area looking mainly at the Aspen trees and Jamie thought he heard Redpoll but few of us saw them. The other hide didn't offer much in the way of new sightings but it did give us a nice view of the Marshes.

Back at the bus we collected our lunches and sat on the bank with a nice hot drink. Our next destination was eastward to the large Pinewood plantations. We drove there at steady pace looking for wildlife along the quiet roads. Some people saw a Woodpecker, Deer and Buzzards. We stopped off next to the Reindeer Centre where we walked up a hill into a mixed plantation. This gradually changed into a nice pinewood. We kept our eyes peeled for any Cresties but didn't spot any. We all heard the Siskins in the trees and some of us saw them at the top of the trees. On our way back down to the bus we stopped off at the Reindeer Centre where we had a chance to look at these lovely mammals, as well as the Red Squirrels that were around the bird feeders. By this time it was already quite late so we decided to have our cake in the bus while we drove back to Aigas.

Species List**Birds**

Buzzard
Roe Deer
Grey Heron
Mallards
Redpoll
Greater Spotted Woodpecker

Robin
Coal Tit
Great Tit

Mammals

Reindeer
Red Squirrel

Wednesday 6 October, Strathconon

Weather: Beautiful morning turning overcast later in the day

Rangers: Robin Noble & Brenna Boyle

Objective: To enjoy the scenery and wildlife of Strathconon, whilst learning about the history of this area and looking out for Golden Eagles.

Strathconon means ‘Valley of the Wolf’. It is our main site visited to see Golden Eagles and contains three eagle territories. Once home to around 500 people, the residents were evicted during the infamous Highland Clearances of the late 18th – early 19th Centuries. Currently, three large estates span Strathconon, one of which is owned by the son of Kirk Kristiansen, the inventor of Lego!

We began the day with a briefing from Robin in the Library, where he explained how Strathconon lies parallel to the Great Glen Fault and how its formation resulted in a diversion of the water courses within in. We headed out traveling through some lovely farmland and spotting Buzzards on route.

Our first stop was at Loch Meig where we spotted Tufted Ducks and Golden Eye. A large hairy Fox Moth Caterpillar was crawling around between our feet. A Buzzard soared past the opposite bank of the loch, giving us a lovely view.

From here we continued down the scenic strath keeping our eyes peeled for wildlife. We pulled in above the river and got a fleeting view of Dipper. Continuing onwards we reached the remains of a farmhouse which Robin interpreted for us, telling us about how the strath was once well populated.

Our next stop was by the river close to the site of an eagle eyrie which had been used by the resident pair in previous years, but not this year as they choose to use a different eyrie nearby. We had only just departed from the bus when three large raptors were spotted soaring over the hilltops, they were our Golden Eagles! Recognizable by the seemily stretched wings and long “fingers”. Possibly the adult pair with this year’s juvenile, which fledged about 8 weeks previously. We had our lunch and a cuppa at this beautiful spot.

Continuing onwards we were fortunate enough to get another great view of a Dipper and more Golden Eagle views, including one individual perched in a tree on the hillside. This bird was spotted by Jamie whilst we were admiring a Red Breasted Merganser.

At Loch Beinnacharan we listened to the impressive roars of the Red Deer stags and spotted a herd well camouflaged against the hillside beyond the loch. From here we headed slowly back up the strath, spotting on route a stag sitting amongst his harem of at least 22 hinds and youngsters.

The day had another great spectacle in store for us; Red Kites soaring above a field, landing and hunting for worms. We had such great views of these beautiful birds that Brenna was able to record the wings tag combination of one bird to report back to the RSPB who monitor the distribution and success of these birds.

Species List

	Tufted Duck
	Golden Eye
Birds	Mallard
Red Kite	Peregrine
Buzzard	Red-breasted Merganser
Golden Eagle	Raven

Carrion Crow

Hooded Crow

Dipper

Great Spotted Woodpecker

Mammals

Red Deer

Roe Deer

Thursday 7 October, West Coast

Weather: A real mix; some sun, some rain but a stiff breeze

Rangers: Robin Noble & Elspeth Ingleby

Objective: A long excursion out to the West Coast in pursuit of White-tailed Eagles, divers and some fabulous scenery!

We had a long way to go today, so we got in the bus promptly to head out west, and we soon got through the miles with a brief comfort stop at Blackwater River, which also boasts a splendid waterfall. We then continued into the ever more desolate landscape surrounding Loch Glascarnoch, looking up at the impressive bulk of An Teallach ‘the forge’. We pulled in just after Corrieshalloch Gorge for a photo opportunity of the dramatic Loch Broom with its shear valley sides, visible evidence of the changes wrought by glaciers on the landscape, and also our first glimpse of the west coast.

As we headed westwards on the destitution road down Dundonnell gorge to Little Loch Broom, we stopped underneath an impressive cliff face to search for Golden eagles. No eagles today, but a fair look at a small herd of Red Deer relaxing in the sunshine. We continued onwards passing a small herd of Feral Goats and diverted past Dundonnell House where a Red Squirrel reintroduction has been carried out before returning to the main road through Dundonnell to scan for waders on the salt-marsh of little Loch Broom. There were Curlew, Redshank and Oystercatcher prowling around while a motley bunch of gulls dozed on the exposed beach.

We stopped at Gruinard Bay for lunch and for the hope of spotting some Sea Eagles. We first picked up a lone Black-throated Diver, and a beautiful wee Stonechat before Elspeth chatted with a couple of regular birders who had seen two Sea Eagles land on the main island just before our arrival. Gruinard Island, infamous for anthrax testing in 1942, is no longer habitated which makes it the perfect base for the eagles that now often breed there. The views were distant and a little hard to find even through the scopes, but eventually the bird was identified by everyone, including the distinct pale head and luminous yellow beak of the adult when compared to the dark plumage and grey bill of the juvenile. Also spotted was a Great Northern Diver, still more or less in summer plumage, and a Slavonian Grebe in its demure grey and white winter plumage.

A brief stop at another layby overlooking the south side of Gruinard produced fabulous views of Common Seals and a raft of twelve Black-throated Divers, although unfortunately every otter sighting turned out to be drifting seaweed! Another comfort stop in Aultbea produced a sight of a small flock of Golden Plover in flight. Another brief stop at Poolewe produced Scaup before we headed through Gairloch to a wee bay beyond called Shildaig. It was a beautiful afternoon, and the picturesque bay yielded Little Grebe, a couple of high-class Rock Pipits which we decided should be Yacht Pipits (yipits?), curiously straight-billed Curlew and lovely squidgy Lungwort – a type of lichen that is actually fairly rare but likes the Atlantic Oakwood found in this part of Scotland.

Heading back to Gairloch, we stopped for afternoon tea in the delightful Mountain Café, which can probably boast the largest scones in the world! After we had sated ourselves on coffees and cake, broiled in the conservatory (and Elspeth gave herself chocolate poisoning) we had a quick browse of the attached bookshop before started our return journey alongside Loch Maree.

A very quick photo diversion down to the shore of Loch Maree produced only midges which seemed like an omen that we should be on the road again back to Aigas. We spotted a couple of Roe Deer by Kilmorack gallery, before arriving back at Aigas tired but cheerful after a beautiful day.

Species List

Birds

Black-headed Gull
Black-throated Diver
Buzzard
Chaffinch
Common Gull
Cormorant
Curlew
Gannet
Golden Plover
Great Northern Diver
Greenfinch
Grey Heron
Guillemot
Herring Gull
Hooded Crow
House Sparrow
Jackdaw
Kestrel
Little Grebe
Mallard

Oystercatcher
Pied Wagtail
Red Kite
Red-breasted Merganser
Redshank
Ringed Plover
Scaup
Shag
Slavonian Grebe
Stonechat
White-tailed Eagle
Yacht Pipit (or Rock Pipit)

Mammals

Common Seal
Feral Goat
Pipistrelle Bat
Red Deer
Roe Deer

Miscellaneous

Lungwort
Midges

Friday 8 October, Glen Strathfarrar

Weather: Beautiful sunny morning, overcast afternoon

Rangers: Robin Noble & Brenna Boyle

Objective: To enjoy the scenery and wildlife of Glen Strathfarrar, a local beauty spot.

After a briefing from Robin in the library we headed first to the Aigas Gorge. The steep sides have been a nesting place for Peregrine Falcon for 10 years. Although no Peregrines were around today we enjoyed being in such a lovely spot in the glorious weather.

Then it was on to Glen Strathfarrar, a gated glen/strath, which is one of the most beautiful areas in the country, containing some marvelous woodland. Strathfarrar was formally a National Nature Reserve, but its designation was removed when the mysterious 'Mr X', who owns the Glen, had it closed to public vehicles. Upon entering Strathfarrar we immediately saw some Red Deer at the Culligan Deer farm, destined to become Waitrose venison.

We parked at the "Dipper spot" and spotted a fisherman, Robins and Chaffinches. But no Dipper...yet. Continuing our journey up the Glen a Buzzard glided over and a Dipper was spotted perched on a part submerged branch. Whilst admiring the Dipper we also became aware of a mixed flock of Tits on the other side of the bus. The flock contained Long-tailed Tits, Blue Tits, Great Tits and Coal Tits with possibly other small passerines. They were quite hard to get a good look at as they flitted amongst the branches.

A flock of winter thrushes identified as Mistle Thrushes were perched in an old Alder tree and flew onto some low rocks. Further into the glen we came across our first swans of the day, first thought to be a family of Whooper Swans, the appearance of a Mute Swan adult confirmed that they were infact the mixed family; one Whooper and one Mute swan parent and five signet Whites! This unusual pair bred last year also, and in the afternoon we got good views of the two White signets from last year, looking more like Whoopers but with unusual bill markings. Only time will tell if these hybrids can breed. Another four genuine Whooper Swans were also seen today. These Whoopers are themselves unusual as they remain

in Strathfarrar to breed, instead of migrating to Iceland. There are only around 5 breeding pairs of Whooper Swans in the UK!

We had lunch and hot drinks down by the river Farrar and then continued to Loch Monar at the far end of Strathfarrar. Here you really get a sense of wild and remote Scotland. And what better than a sighting of a Golden Eagle soaring past to confirm that feeling of wilderness!

On our return journey we spotted a Feral Goat, showing off a long flowing coat and impressive set of horns. A Kestrel was also seen hovering over the base of the valley. We had a walk down to the river and got another great view of a Dipper bobbing in and out of the water, and also a couple of Red Deer stags, silhouetted against the skyline.

Our last stop of the day was at Erchless Motte; an old Norman Motte and burial place for the important folk of Clan Chisholm. Robin told us about the history of the site, we inspected the gravestones, identified some Dog Lichen and then it was time to head back to Aigas. A great day out to conclude a lovely week.

Species list

Birds

Blue Tit
 Buzzard
 Carrion Crow
 Chaffinch
 Coat Tit
 Dipper
 Golden Eagle
 Great Tit
 Hooded Crow
 Kestrel
 Long-tailed Tit
 Mistle Thrush
 Mute Swan
 Raven (Heard)
 Robin
 Siskin
 Tree Creeper
 Whooper Swan
 Whute Swan!
 Wood Pigeon

Mammals

Feral Goat
 Red Deer
 Roe Deer

COMBINED SPECIES LISTS

BIRDS

Red-legged Partridge

Alectoris rufa

Three Black Isle

Common Pheasant

Phasianus colchicus

Several Black Isle and Speyside

Pink-footed Goose

Anser brachyrhynchus

c400 Udale Bay. A few skeins in flight on Black Isle

Eurasian Wigeon

Anas penelope

c 300 Udale bay and other flocks around Black Isle

Mute Swan

Cygnus olor

Strath (last day) . One paired with Whooper Swan

Whooper Swan	<i>Cygnus cygnus</i>	Strath (last day) One paired with Mute Swan & several young.
Mallard	<i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>	Widespread. Surprisingly large numbers up the glens and straths.
Eurasian (Common) Teal	<i>Anas crecca</i>	Flocks of up to 100 around Black Isle
(Greater) Scaup	<i>Aythya marila</i>	16 females and imms. off Cromarty road. Ad male off west coast
Common Eider	<i>Somateria mollissima</i>	Small flocks noted both coasts
Common Goldeneye	<i>Bucephala clangula</i>	Two Strath Conon
Goosander	<i>Mergus merganser</i>	One Strath Conon
Red-breasted Merganser	<i>Mergus serrator</i>	Small flocks noted both coasts
Black-throated Diver (Loon)	<i>Gavia arctica</i>	Remarkable flock of 13 in partial moult on west coast
Great Northern Diver	<i>Gavia immer</i>	Five west coast included one still in full breeding plumage
Little Grebe	<i>Tachybaptus ruficollis</i>	Black Isle and Insh marshes
Slavonian Grebe	<i>Podiceps auritus</i>	Two west coast
Grey Heron	<i>Ardea cinerea</i>	Widespread. Seen daily
Northern Gannet	<i>Sula bassana</i>	Mainly juvs on east coast including many close ion at Chanonry Point. Both ads and juvs west coast
Great Cormorant	<i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>	Widespread. Seen daily
European Shag	<i>Phalacrocorax aristotelis</i>	Seen both coasts with notable concentrations around fish farms!
Common (Eurasian) Kestrel	<i>Falco tinnunculus</i>	One or two seen most days
Red Kite	<i>Milvus milvus</i>	Three Black Isle; excellent views of 4 near Beaulieu feeding on a stubble field, apparently on earthworms. Singles seen en route other days.
White-tailed Eagle	<i>Haliaeetus albicilla</i>	Two ads and juv seen west coast
Common (Eurasian) Buzzard	<i>Buteo buteo</i>	Widespread. Seen daily
Golden Eagle	<i>Aquila chrysaetos</i>	Six Strath Conon included a remarkable three juvs seen 'sparring' in the air together.
Eurasian Oystercatcher	<i>Haematopus ostralegus</i>	Seen both coasts
(Northern) Lapwing	<i>Vanellus vanellus</i>	Flocks of up to 100 Black Isle coast.
(European) Golden Plover	<i>Pluvialis apricaria</i>	Six flew over Kinlochewe.
(Common) Ringed Plover	<i>Charadrius hiaticula</i>	Small nos both coasts
Black-tailed Godwit	<i>Limosa limosa</i>	c15 Udale Bay
Bar-tailed Godwit	<i>Limosa lapponica</i>	Five Udale Bay
Eurasian Curlew	<i>Numenius arquata</i>	Widespread. Seen daily. Several hundred on Black Isle
Common Redshank	<i>Tringa totanus</i>	Seen both coasts. C100 Udale Bay
(Ruddy) Turnstone	<i>Arenaria interpres</i>	A few Black Isle
Red Knot	<i>Calidris canutus</i>	c10 Udale Bay
Dunlin	<i>Calidris alpina</i>	20 Udale Bay
Common (Mew) Gull	<i>Larus canus</i>	Widespread. Seen daily
Herring Gull	<i>Larus argentatus</i>	Widespread. Seen daily
Great Black-backed Gull	<i>Larus marinus</i>	Widespread. Seen daily
Black-headed Gull	<i>Larus ridibundus</i>	Widespread. Seen daily
Common Guillemot (Murre)	<i>Uria aalge</i>	Seen off Black Isle
Razorbill	<i>Alca torda</i>	Seen off Black Isle
Rock Dove (Feral/Common Pigeon)	<i>Columba livia</i>	Wild-type birds seen west coast
(Common) Wood Pigeon	<i>Columba palumbus</i>	Strangely absent Black Isle (all eaten by kites?). Seen daily thereafter, mostly around plantations.
Eurasian Collared Dove	<i>Streptopelia decaocto</i>	A few Beaulieu and Inverness.
Tawny Owl	<i>Strix aluco</i>	Heard most nights Aigas
Great Spotted Woodpecker	<i>Dendrocopos major</i>	Several seen daily Aigas and plantations.
Eurasian Jay	<i>Garrulus glandarius</i>	Hearing birds screeching at Aigas and in Stach Conon was a great surprise (to Jamie!). These have

Eurasian Jackdaw	<i>Corvus monedula</i>	extended their range northwards dramatically in the last ten years. A quick look at the 1976 atlas shows virtually no records north of the central lowlands. Widespread. Seen daily except on west coast
Rook	<i>Corvus frugilegus</i>	Widespread. Seen daily except on west coast
Hooded Crow	<i>Corvus cornix</i>	Widespread. In the majority in uplands rising to 100% of crows on the west coast
Carrion Crow	<i>Corvus corone</i>	In the majority on east coast, sparser in uplands, and not seen on west coast. Would be interesting to know what factor is deciding the proportions of these two species/forms.
Northern (Common) Raven	<i>Corvus corax</i>	A few Strath Conon and west coast, but oddly scarce – is this a persecuted species?
Coal Tit	<i>Parus ater</i>	Seen daily Aigas and plantations
Great Tit	<i>Parus major</i>	Seen daily Aigas and plantations
Blue Tit	<i>Parus caeruleus</i>	Seen daily Aigas and plantations
Barn Swallow	<i>Hirundo rustica</i>	One at Chanonry Point, 4 th Oct.
Common House Martin	<i>Delichon urbicum</i>	One, 4 th Oct., two 5 th Oct, both near Beauuly
(Eurasian) Sky Lark	<i>Alauda arvensis</i>	Only noted Black Isle, where birds seemed to be passing through.
Common Chiffchaff	<i>Phylloscopus collybita</i>	One at Udale Bay 4 th .
Goldcrest	<i>Regulus regulus</i>	Noted daily Aigas and plantations
(Winter) Wren	<i>Troglodytes troglodytes</i>	A few only each day – was hit hard by the winter cold.
Common (European) Starling	<i>Sturnus vulgaris</i>	Widespread. Seen daily
Common (Eurasian) Blackbird	<i>Turdus merula</i>	A few noted daily Aigas and plantations
Song Thrush	<i>Turdus philomelos</i>	One in west coast oakwoods only.
Mistle Thrush	<i>Turdus viscivorus</i>	Seen daily Aigas
European Robin	<i>Erithacus rubecula</i>	Widespread but thinly spread. Seen daily. like Wren was hit hard by the winter cold.
European Stonechat	<i>Saxicola rubicola</i>	One west coast
House Sparrow	<i>Passer domesticus</i>	Widespread. Seen daily
Hedge Accentor (Dunnock)	<i>Prunella modularis</i>	A few noted daily
Pied Wagtail	<i>Motacilla alba yarrelli</i>	Widespread. Seen daily
Meadow Pipit	<i>Anthus pratensis</i>	Widespread. Seen daily
Rock Pipit	<i>Anthus petrosus</i>	One Chanonry Point, and a few on west coast.
Common Chaffinch	<i>Fringilla coelebs</i>	Noted daily Aigas and plantations
European Greenfinch	<i>Carduelis chloris</i>	Noted daily Aigas and plantations
(Eurasian) Siskin	<i>Carduelis spinus</i>	Noted daily Aigas and plantations
Lesser Redpoll	<i>Carduelis cabaret</i>	Seen Insh Marshes and a few plantations, mostly flying over calling.
Crossbill sp.	<i>Loxia sp.</i>	One flying over Strath Conon
MAMMALS		
Soprano Pipistrelle	<i>Pipistrellus pygmaeus</i>	Many seen from evening 'bat-walk' and subsequent nights at Aigas. One seen in the daylight, west coast. Detecvtors showed them to be this higher-pitched calling species, new for The Travelling Naturalist in the UK
Pine Marten	<i>Martes martes</i>	Seen well on one hide visit, and glimpsed from a night drive
Eurasian Badger	<i>Meles meles</i>	One seen from a night drive
Common Seal	<i>Phoca vitulina</i>	A few both coasts

Red Deer	<i>Cervus elaphus</i>	One of the highlights of the trip was hearing stags roaring, and seeing herds in the straths and on the hills around
Roe Deer	<i>Capreolus capreolus</i>	A few noted on most days
Red Squirrel	<i>Sciurus vulgaris</i>	A few glimpsed early mornings at Aigas, and well seen on Speyside
Brown Hare	<i>Lepus europaeus</i>	One seen Aigas early morning

AMPHIBIANS

Common Toad	<i>Bufo bufo</i>	Several seen around Aigas in the evenings
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BUTTERFLIES

Large White	<i>Pieris brassicae</i>	One Black Isle, 4 th
Peacock	<i>Inachis io</i>	Singles noted daily, 4 th -7 th
Speckled Wood	<i>Pararge aegeria</i>	One Black Isle, 4 th

MOTHS (CAUGHT IN MOTH TRAP)

The Streak
The Satellite
Red-line Quaker
Grey Pine Carpet
Green-brindled Crescent

DRAGONFLIES

Common Hawker	<i>Aeshna juncea</i>	Seen daily, 4 th - 7 th Aigas and elsewhere
Black Darter	<i>Sympetrum danae</i>	Seen on excursions, 5 th & 6 th

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