

2019 CLASS OPEN FOR APPLICATIONS

WILDLIFE IDENTIFICATION IN THE CAIRNGORMS NATIONAL PARK

Starting in March 2019, this is the third year of this successful, one year course, delivered by Speyside Wildlife and fully accredited by LANTRA.

Do you want to know how to recognise the call of a Crested Tit; tell the difference between a soaring Golden Eagle and a Buzzard; identify the grouse family, or just where to see the iconic species of the National Park? Whether you're thinking of a career as a wildlife tour guide, a countryside ranger, or you're an accommodation provider who would like to add value to your guests' experiences whilst they stay locally, this is the course for you.

For a full course description and application pack please phone 01479 812498 or email enquiries@speysidewildlife.co.uk

Open to all ages, places are limited. Closing date for applications 3 March 2018.

Please contact us if you'd like to speak to one of this year's participants to find out more about their experience.



SPEYSIDE WILDLIFE

"This course has been life and career changing in the long run. I have always had an interest in wildlife and the outdoors but since starting, it had been the first course I have fully committed myself to and learnt a lot from. It will help me in my career path to be a ranger. I have met like-minded people who will remain friends for life."

"The course is well structured, allowing time for teaching, discussion, personal research and shared learning. Weekend meetings have constituted a full day in the classroom followed by a second in the field looking at the practical aspects of the previous day's learning - an excellent combination. We have covered a range of topics, from migration to moult and feathers to falcons and in every conceivable way the teaching has been exemplary. "

Cairngorms Wildlife Identification Course - Factsheet

This course was run for the first time in 2017 and, following its excellent reception, is due to run again from spring 2019.

Over the 12-month course participants attend five study weekends from March-December 2019, with a final exam in April 2020. In addition, in their own time, they will progress and practice their skills learnt, producing their own Field Notebook for assessment. By the end of the course, the participants should be able to correctly identify the major birds and mammals seen and heard in the Cairngorms National Park; know what species are likely to occur in which habitats and at what time of year. They will also have a basic appreciation of what wildlife guiding entails.

Why should I do this course?

If you've always wanted to know what the bird calls are that you hear whilst walking through the Caledonian Pine Forest, or to feel confident that you can tell the difference between a buzzard and an eagle as you scan the hills, then this is the course for you. It can help lead to a fulfilling career sharing this knowledge with others, either as a wildlife tour guide, a ranger, or simply as an accommodation provider who would like to add value to your guests' experiences whilst they are staying with you.

What will I learn?

How to identify the main wildlife found in the Cairngorms National Park by both sight and sound and have confidence to show people these iconic species. You will get to know the best places to find different things, what to look for and will be able to identify what you see. In particular:

- be able to ID the main species of bird and mammal found in the Cairngorms at different times of year, both in theory and practice and be able to explain the main characteristics.
- Will be able to keep good records which build up an effective and reliable bank of information.
- Know how to handle a situation where you can't ID a species with certainty.
- Know the law and be aware of how to watch wildlife responsibly.
- Understand the importance of communicating effectively with guests paying for a guided day out, an employer wanting a survey, etc.

Do I need to be a birdwatcher and have some experience?

No, you don't necessarily need a lot of experience, but you do need a real interest in birds and animals – as you must be prepared for a lot of self-study. There is no quick fix to being able to identify wildlife in the field. This course will not make you an expert overnight, but it will, if you are prepared to put in the work, accelerate that process and help to make it enjoyable and confidence building.

How many people will be on the course?

A maximum of 12, so there is a good ratio of trainers to applicants. The trainers are there to teach you as a group, but will also mentor you as individuals.

Do I get a qualification at the end?

The course is approved by LANTRA (a nationally recognised awarding organisation, specialising in training and qualifications). You will receive a certificate from LANTRA if you are deemed to have satisfied the assessors that you have reached an appropriate standard.

Will I get a job at the end of it?

There are no guarantees, but the skills you develop offer the opportunity to find work in a variety of ways in the great outdoors. Wildlife identification however, is an ongoing process and this course is designed to give you a good base from which to develop skills further into the future.

Is there an age limit?

No age limit.

Fitness

Applicants should be fit enough to deal with some moderate walking, generally on paths, during the field trips.

What happens if I can't attend some of the taught weekends?

The dates are fixed and will set the direction for your whole study process, so missing a weekend will set you back. Attendance however does not form part of the final assessment, so if you demonstrate sufficient knowledge on your final assessed day out, plus having an acceptable standard of field notebook and a good performance in the final knowledge test, you will not necessarily fail the course.

The dates for the 2019 course are:

Introductory weekend	16 th & 17 th March
Spring weekend	13 th & 14 th April
Summer weekend	22 nd & 23 rd June
Autumn weekend	7 th & 8 th September
Winter weekend	30 th Nov & 1 st Dec
Final Assessment	April 2020 (dates tbc)

What is the cost?

£1200+VAT per person. For this you have five weekends of teaching, including field trips (cost of minibus included); advice from the tutors/guides in between times; a field guide and field notebook; access to a closed Facebook page, which is a forum for exchanging information and advice with the guides and the other participants.

Who is doing the training and the exams?

Guides within Speyside Wildlife who are qualified teachers/trainers, with a huge amount of experience running guided wildlife watching holidays all over Scotland and around the world. They are passionate about their subject; love showing people wildlife and are full of stories about their travels and experiences.

Feedback from the First Course

"This course has been life and career changing in the long run. I have always had an interest in wildlife and the outdoors but since starting, it had been the first course I have fully committed myself to and learnt a lot from it will help me in my career path to be a ranger. I have met like-minded people who will remain friends for life and contacts."

"With a very basic knowledge and understanding of wildlife, accompanied by a non-existent knowledge of birds, I undertook this course knowing the only way was up - and what an upward journey it has been!

The course is well structured, allowing time for teaching, discussion, personal research and shared learning. Weekend meetings have constituted a full day in the classroom followed by a second in the field looking at the practical aspects of the previous day's learning - an excellent combination. We have covered a range of topics, from migration to moult and feathers to falcons, and in every conceivable way the teaching has been exemplary.

Our tutors have shared their exceptional knowledge and understanding in such a way that their passion has become my passion - something I never would have believed could happen regarding the subject of birds! In learning alongside other course participants, and sharing regularly through our closed Facebook page, good friendships have been forged and learning has been motivating, challenging and most of all, fun. The teachers on the course have been inspirational, their passion infectious. My life has genuinely been enriched in so many ways by doing this course (and it was pretty good before!) and I now dread the time when I won't be spending evenings discussing the length of a Golden Eagle's tail compared to Buzzard's or listening for hours (my choice) to CDs of birdsong in the car (sorry kids). Thankfully though, the birds will still be there and I now have a far greater appreciation and knowledge of them to continue the fantastic journey that this course has set me on.

I can't recommend the course highly enough and should Speyside Wildlife decide to run a Year 2 I will be at the very front of the queue."

"Wow, it's been a year to remember - Good sized group with excellent trainers and support to learn and appreciate the wonderful wildlife in The Cairngorms. Always wanted to be outdoors enjoying the varied habitats. Our knowledge has come a long way. Looking forward to volunteering in the area. Can't rate the course highly enough. Ta Speyside Wildlife"

Applications and enquiries should be directed to Speyside Wildlife
enquiries@speysidewildlife.co.uk or phone 01479 812498