

Birds of Prey



Common buzzard

Often confused with an eagle despite it being considerably smaller, the common buzzard is the most common bird of prey in the UK and thus probably the easiest to spot. The bird is of a brown colour in order to better camouflage itself, you can recognise it by its wingspan of over a metre.

*Which tour are you most likely to see this species?
Loch Ness, Glencoe & the Highlands*

Golden eagle

The second largest bird of prey in the UK, you will recognise it by its large broad wings and longer tail and by the way it holds its wings in a shallow 'V' shape.

*Which tour are you most likely to see this species?
Isle of Skye, The Highlands & Loch Ness*



Goshawk

Its bright red/orange eyes and white eyebrows make this large hawk easily recognisable, with its large legs, talons and broad wingspan it excels at hunting prey.

*Which tour are you most likely to see this species?
Eilean Donan, Loch Ness & the North West Highlands*

Kestrel

Once abundant and easy to spot, the kestrels numbers have dwindled but you still have a good chance of spotting them, even in the city on occasion. You will spot them by their pointed wings and long tails.

*Which tour are you most likely to see this species?
Oban, Glencoe & West Highland Castles*



If you spot any of these birds, feel free to bring it to the attention of your Driver-Guide



Hen harrier

The males and females of the species vary in colour; males tend to be a pale grey colour whilst females are brown with spots of white near its tail, which is long and barbed. You may notice that these birds fly low, and that their wing are held in a 'V' shape when they do so.

*Which tour are you most likely to see this species?
Eilean Donan, Loch Ness & North West Highlands*

Merlin

At first glance the merlin may look like a small kestrel, but there are points where you will notice the difference. The merlin's wings are broad and short pointed which allows them to be incredibly agile in flight. They tend have grey/blue upper bodied with a speckled breast, as well as a brown tail.

*Which tour are you most likely to see this species?
Loch Ness, Inverness & the Highlands*



Osprey

This fishing bird of prey can be recognised by its long wing span and a reverse 'W' shaped outline. It also has light underparts and dark patches about midway along its wings. You may see them carrying fish back to their young around lochs.

*Which tour are you most likely to see this species?
Loch Ness, Glencoe & the Highlands*

Red kite

As the name suggests, this species of bird can be identified by its reddish-brown colour and a deep forked tail, it also has a large wingspan reaching almost 2 metres. Though it is an efficient predator it mainly seeks out the easier road kill by roadsides.

*Which tour are you most likely to see this species?
Highland Whisky, Woodland & Braveheart*



If you spot any of these birds, feel free to bring it to the attention of your Driver-Guide



White tailed eagle (sea eagle)

This eagle is the largest bird of prey in the UK and can be recognised by its pale head, broad rectangular wings that can span around 2 and a half metres and, when stationary, stands about a metre tall.

*Which tour are you most likely to see this species?
Isle of Skye, The Highlands & Loch Ness*

Barn owl

This owl is easy to recognise thanks to its heart shaped face, pure white body and brown back and wings. It is abundant in the UK so if you keep your eyes peeled this one may be easier to spot than others.

*Which tour are you most likely to see this species?
Highland Whisky, Woodland & Braveheart*



Long Eared Owl

This owl may appear long and thin but is of a medium size, normally a brown shade with darker brown streaks throughout and orange eyes. The long ears are not in fact ears though but head feathers that raise when shocked so you really shouldn't see this.

*Which tour are you most likely to see this species?
Loch Ness, Glencoe & the Highlands*

Short-eared owl

With short ears and a medium sized build, you will most likely spot these owls hunting during the day as they tend to prefer open areas where their prey of small mammals is plentiful.

*Which tour are you most likely to see this species?
Oban, Glencoe & West Highland Castles*



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Tawny Owl

The prominent feature of the Tawny Owl is its dark eyes and its rounded head, with the body being reddish brown with dark spots near the face. It tends to hunt in the same area, not travelling far and is fairly widespread in Scotland.

Which tour are you most likely to see this species?
Oban, Glencoe & West Highland Castles

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Inland Birds



Red grouse

The easiest and most common grouse, you will spot it by its chestnut brown body and white feathered legs and short tail.

*Which tour are you most likely to see this species?
Highland Whisky, Woodland & Braveheart*

Black grouse

There is quite a difference between the look of the males and females; the males tend to have a black plumage and a red 'eyebrow' wattle, whilst the females tend to be brown or grey.

*Which tour are you most likely to see this species?
Loch Ness, Glencoe & the Highlands*



Capercaillie

The largest and hardest to spot of the grouse species, the male looks black though it does have shades of blue on its throat, with green on the wings and the obvious red 'eyebrows'. The females tend to be mainly brown with a touch of white and black and are much smaller than the males.

*Which tour are you most likely to see this species?
Loch Ness, Inverness & the Highlands*

Ptarmigan

This gamebird takes on a stark new look in winter as opposed to summer; in the winter the bird is completely white except for its tail and eyes which remain black. In the summer they are a mix of brown, grey, and black with patches of white.

*Which tour are you most likely to see this species?
Highland Whisky, Woodland & Braveheart*



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Crested tit

The colour of this bird is mainly grey/green upper parts with a white breast, if you spot it baring its wing then there is a distinguishing black & white crest on the wings.

*Which tour are you most likely to see this species?
Isle of Skye, The Highlands & Loch Ness*

Scottish crossbill

A substantial difference can be seen between the males and females – the males are crimson pink with grey wings whilst the females tend to be olive with splashes of yellow. You will recognise them from their large heads and a prominent beak.

Which tour are you most likely to see this species?

Loch Ness, Glencoe & the Highlands



Dotterel

The distinctive yellow eyebrow is how you will recognise this bird, with its chestnut breast and primarily grey feathers. Uncharacteristically the females are more brightly coloured than the males.

*Which tour are you most likely to see this species?
Loch Ness, Glencoe & the Highlands*

Great spotted woodpecker

Commonly found to be clinging to tree trunks or branches, you may well hear it before you see it. It can be recognised by its distinctive black and white colours and the males have a red patch on the back of the head.

*Which tour are you most likely to see this species?
Rosslyn Chapel, Scottish Borders & Glenkinchie Distillery*



If you spot any of these birds, feel free to bring it to the attention of your Driver-Guide



Snow bunting

Large birds with snowy plumages, they tend to have white heads with black spots through their body and wings in the summer whilst in winter they will have a sandier colour.

*Which tour are you most likely to see this species?
Loch Ness, Inverness & the Highlands*

Lapwing

From a distance this bird will look black and white but when closer you will notice stark greens and red on the back and wings.

*Which tour are you most likely to see this species?
Isle of Skye, The Highlands & Loch Ness*



Chough

Although it looks very much like the common crow, this bird has a red bill and legs that identify its difference from the species.

*Which tour are you most likely to see this species?
Eilean Donan, Loch Ness & the North West Highlands*

Rook

Another member of the crow family; at a distance it is seen as black but as you get closer you will see blue tones on its feathers as well as a bit of bare skin round the beak.

*Which tour are you most likely to see this species?
Eilean Donan, Loch Ness & the North West Highlands*



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Ducks, Geese, Grebes & Swans



Eider duck

The fastest flying duck in the UK, and the heaviest, it is commonly seen on the coast where it hunts for food.

*Which tour are you most likely to see this species?
Oban, Glencoe & West Highland Castles*

Goldeneye

The males of this species are black and white with a greenish/black head whilst the females tend to be grey with a dark brown head with yellow eyes.

Which tour are you most likely to see this species?

Eilean Donan, Loch Ness & the North West Highlands



Goosander

These ducks use their long serrated bills to dive for fish, it favourites being salmon and trout, usually seen flying in flocks.

*Which tour are you most likely to see this species?
Isle of Skye, The Highlands & Loch Ness*

Greylag goose

The largest and biggest of the wild geese, although it's easy to spot geese near ponds in the city, the highlands showcase wild geese who are not so use to human contact.

*Which tour are you most likely to see this species?
Loch Ness, Glencoe & the Highlands*



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Red breasted merganser

You can spot the male by its red/orange breast and green head which uses its long serrated bill to catch its prey, similar to the Goosander.

*Which tour are you most likely to see this species?
Eilean Donan, Loch Ness & the North West Highlands*

Slavonian grebe

Recognisable by its golden ear tufts, with white cheeks, not commonly seen though due to its small population in the UK.

*Which tour are you most likely to see this species?
Loch Ness, Inverness & the Highlands*



Whooper swan

This swan is quite large with a long thin neck and black legs, with a patch of yellow on its black bill, normally seen around winter time.

*Which tour are you most likely to see this species?
Loch Lomond, the Trossachs National Park & Stirling Castle*

Wigeon

The male of this species has a chestnut head and neck with a yellow forehead, pink breast and grey body with a white belly.

*Which tour are you most likely to see this species?
Loch Ness, Inverness & the Highlands*



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Waders & River Birds



Curlew

The largest of the wading birds and easy to recognise due to its long curved bill, brown upper body and long legs.

Which tour are you most likely to see this species?

West Highland Lochs, Mountains & Castles

Dipper

A small but stocky bird with white on its throat and breast, it received its name due to its behaviour of dipping in and out of the water when searching for food.

Which tour are you most likely to see this species?

Highland Whisky, Woodland & Braveheart



Grey heron

The largest heron you are likely to spot in Europe; you will recognise it by its neck which is either stretched out or bent over its chest when not looking for food.

Which tour are you most likely to see this species?

Rosslyn Chapel, Scottish Borders & Glenkinchie Distillery

Kingfisher

Very difficult to spot but you'll definitely know if you see one, bright blue and orange colours with both the male and female being very similar.

Which tour are you most likely to see this species?

Rosslyn Chapel, Scottish Borders & Glenkinchie Distillery



If you spot any of these birds, feel free to bring it to the attention of your Driver-Guide



Goosander oystercatcher

This bird is instantly recognisable due to its red beak, red around the eyes and red legs. It is mainly black with a white underbelly, whilst it flies you may notice a white bar on the wing.

Which tour are you most likely to see this species?

West Highland Lochs, Mountains & Castles

If you spot any of these birds, feel free to bring it to the attention of your Driver-Guide

Seabirds



Arctic skua

You will spot the two long feathers along the middle of the tail with white patches along its wings, though it is dark coloured as a whole.

*Which tour are you most likely to see this species?
Isle of Skye, The Highlands & Loch Ness*

Arctic tern

Noticeable by its long tail streamers and usually appearing white with a black cap, its shape often reminds spotters of swallows, hence its local name of 'sea swallow'.

Which tour are you most likely to see this species?

St. Andrews & the Fishing Villages of Fife



Black guillemot

This bird is very easy to identify due to its black and white plumage and bright red feet, usually found on its own or in a pair.

*Which tour are you most likely to see this species?
St. Andrews & the Fishing Villages of Fife*

Gannet

These birds range from large to very large with their pointed wings and pointed bill, largely white with spots of black on their wings.

*Which tour are you most likely to see this species?
Oban, Glencoe & West Highland Castles*



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Great skua

You may spot this bird harassing other species for their food, as it likes to get a meal without the effort. They tend to be dark coloured birds with flashes of white in their wings.

Which tour are you most likely to see this species?

Isle of Skye, The Highlands & Loch Ness

Guillemot

Easy to spot due to their large numbers, they are dark brown and white in colour with a white stripe behind its back.

Which tour are you most likely to see this species?

Isle of Skye, The Highlands & Loch Ness



Manx shearwater

This bird has long straight slim wings, black above and white below, which helps it make rapid stiff-winged flaps with intervals of gliding close to the surface of the water.

Which tour are you most likely to see this species?

Loch Ness, Glencoe & the Highlands



Puffin

One of the most distinctive birds in Scotland, with its distinctive black and white colours and rainbow coloured bill.

Which tour are you most likely to see this species?

St. Andrews & the Fishing Villages of Fife



If you spot any of these birds, feel free to bring it to the attention of your Driver-Guide



Razorbill

Another bird that is black above and white below, its thick black beak is its most distinct identifiable features.

Which tour are you most likely to see this species?

Oban, Glencoe & West Highland Castles

Storm petrel

This bird is all black except for a white rump, and can be spotted fluttering over the water with its wings held in a 'V' shape.

Which tour are you most likely to see this species?

Isle of Skye, The Highlands & Loch Ness



If you spot any of these birds, feel free to bring it to the attention of your Driver-Guide