



Natural Angus

A year round guide to viewing the natural wonders of Angus

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January



February



March



April



May



June



July



August



September



October



November



December

ANGUS is an area of ecological contrasts

Remnants of the last ice age the Cairngorm Mountain Range stretch east towards the stunning coastline and North Sea, separated by some of Scotland's most beautiful, rolling, fertile "straths" or valleys. The rivers North and South Esk flow for over 30 miles through the countryside creating a range of wetland habitats, finally arriving at the North Sea where one of Scotland's most unique estuaries, Montrose Basin, can be found. This varied landscape, home to a unique range of habitats, allows some of the UK's most spectacular wildlife species to thrive.

Some of Scotland's most recognisable species such as the red squirrel, scottish wild cat, golden eagle, pine marten, red deer, adder and otter to name but a few can all be found in Angus. Lesser known species perhaps synonymous with the area, often held close to the heart of anyone lucky enough to reside in the area are what makes a visit to Angus to view wildlife memorable.

There is a wealth of biodiversity to be explored in Angus at any time of year. The protection and enjoyment of our unique biodiversity is central to the aims of many local and national organisations and there is always something taking place in which you can take part if you are keen to play a role in protecting Angus's natural heritage.

This publication aims to highlight the wealth of wildlife in the Angus area, the best month to view particular habitats and which species you are most likely to see in each month. Hopefully it will inspire you to explore the Angus area and be a real incentive to come back time and time again.





Grey seals

January



What to look out for...

A new year begins in Angus as the old one left us – bright clear days and a wealth of wildlife to be found in all corners of the region. Wildlife is particularly abundant on the 50 mile stretch of beautiful coastline this month. Estuaries teem with migrant wildfowl - keep an eye out for geese species in their thousands and waders such as golden plover, oystercatcher and curlew.

On rocky headlands take time to explore colourful rockpools, while exploring you may be lucky enough to see a curious grey seal or two. Listen to the sounds of rafts of wildfowl such as wigeon, golden eye, and scoters as they relax on the water between foraging bouts.



Habitat hotspot: Rockpools



Seaweed



Golden Plover



Limpet



Rock Arch, Auchmithie

Did you know?

Rocky shores and rock pools in particular are tiny ecosystems in their own right. Conditions are harsh for inhabitants like sea anemones, starfishes, chitons, crabs seaweeds and mussels as they are exposed to huge waves, strong currents, exposure to midday sun and a range of terrestrial and marine predators. Always put creatures back where you found them and remember to never prise a limpet from its rock as it will never be able to reattach itself and will unfortunately die. See www.open2.net/coast for more information.

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What's on this month

The "RSPB Big Garden Watch" is the world's biggest bird survey, providing a snapshot of UK bird numbers and distribution each winter. See www.rspb.org.uk for more information.



Photo opportunity

Get out your camera and long lens this month and head down to Montrose Basin and the surrounding coastline for some close up shots of waders and wildfowl. See www.swt.org.uk for more information.

One thing to do this month

If out exploring a stretch of coastline this month why not consider adopting your own stretch of beach to look after? See www.adoptabeach.org.uk for more information.



Glen Clova

February



What to look out for...

Snow on the peaks of the many Angus Glens which make up the southern range of the Cairngorms are a glittering jewel waiting to be explored this month. Native Scots pines' reddish bark add a splash of colour and species like alder line upland water ways, adorned with many species of extravagant lichen.

Some of our most spectacular upland birds the raven and golden eagle are displaying for their mates this month and you may just be lucky enough to see these breathtaking, soaring displays.

In upland pine woods keep an eye out for some elusive natives such as the scottish crossbill who may be seen foraging for winter seeds and berries and if very lucky the agile pine marten.



Raven



Scots pine



Pine Marten



Habitat hotspot: Montane



Golden eagle

Did you know?

A 2003 national survey, co-coordinated by the RSPB and raptor study groups across Scotland found that the Scottish Golden Eagle population remains stable and healthy, 442 pairs were located, a slight increase overall on the previous survey in 1992. However, a decline in the eastern Highlands was noted, although there is much suitable habitat on grouse moors remaining unoccupied. The Tayside Raptor Study Group monitor Angus's raptors and help with this crucial conservation work. See www.scottishraptorgroups.org for more information.

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What's on this month

This month sees "National Nest Box Week". Ever built a nest box before? Why not give it a go this year. You can provide homes for species ranging from blue tits to barn owls. See www.bto.org for more information.



Photo opportunity

The peaks of the Angus Glens may be crowned with a layer of shimmering snow at this time of year providing opportunities for some spectacular panoramic shots. See www.angusglens.co.uk for more information.

One thing to do this month

Remember to keep feeding garden birds at this time of year, it's crucial that birds about to breed manage to build up their energy reserves. Why not make your own feeder. See www.rspb.org.uk for more information.

March



What to look out for...

The first hints of spring are visible this month particularly along the river banks of Angus's many water ways. The majestic willow in all its glory with catkins provides one of the first signs of spring. Our two largest rivers the North Esk & South Esk, not to mention many of their tributaries, are home to riparian species such as otters, heron and the hardy dipper. March is a good time of year to spot an otter on the rivers or at a country loch if you rise with the sunrise.

Ponds and burns edged by primrose, lesser celandine and butterbur are now being inspected by frogs and toads that are on the move looking for a safe spot to lay their spawn. Many waterway bird species are establishing their territories this month; look out for grey wagtails and the elusive kingfisher.



Habitat hotspot: Riverbanks, ponds, streams



What's on this month

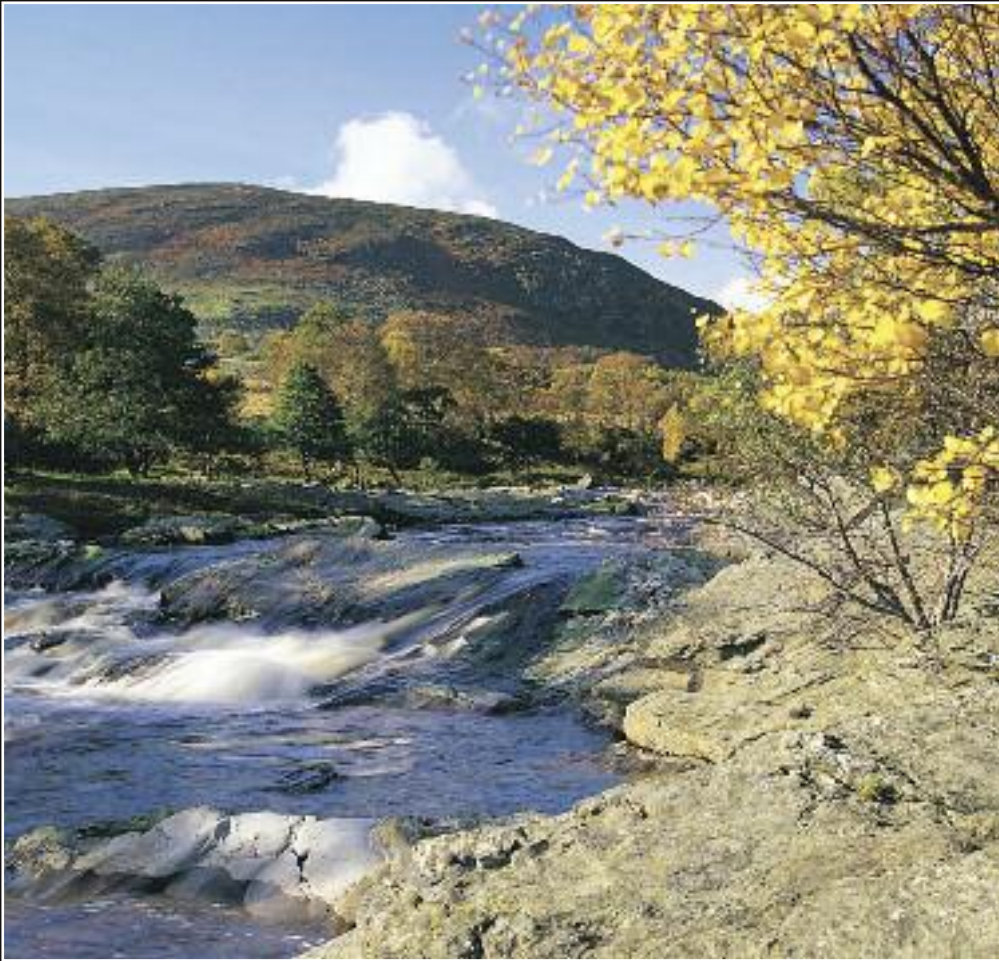
Why not preorder a copy of the Angus Council Rangers service Annual Events programme this month and plan your wildlife activities for the year ahead. See www.angus.gov.uk/sportscountryside for more information.

One thing to do this month

Why not plant wildflowers like clustered bellflower, common knapweed, field scabious and yarrow for butterflies and bees to enjoy later in the summer months. See www.butterflygarden.co.uk for more information.



Kingfisher



River North Esk



Photo opportunity

Why not visit the rivers North or South Esk at various points in their journey to the coast. Varying photo opportunities will be evident high in the glens where they begin their journey, through rural Angus towns like Edzell and Brechin and where they form estuaries at the town of Montrose. See www.fishesks.co.uk for more information about the rivers.

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Did you know?

Angus is home to three beautiful country parks which are open to the public all year round. Crombie Country Park is home to Crombie Loch as well as broadleaf and conifer woodlands. There are a range of activities on site including Ranger-led activities for all ages, orienteering courses and self-guided trails. Monikie Country Park, with its reservoirs, woodland and parkland, is an ideal location for a visit to the countryside. There are many opportunities to enjoy outdoor activities such as water sports, high and low ropes, self-guided trails and angling. Forfar Loch Country Park contains woodland, grassland and wetland habitats. The loch is circled by a 2.5 mile long trail and the park has pitch and putt, crazy golf and angling. See www.angus.gov.uk/sportscountryside for more information.



Dipper



Primrose



Otter



Common frog

April



What to look out for...

Springs arrival is now evident, more so in lowland areas this month. Deciduous woodlands are home to emerging wildflower like wood anemone, which bloom before the canopies form, excluding precious sunlight. On the periphery of these woodlands in large expanses of open ground you may be lucky enough to spy a brown hare, the UK's fastest land animal running at speed or boxing with another hare.

A significant migrant bird species – the osprey returns to our shores this month to breed. They can be seen fishing throughout the summer in the estuary of the River South Esk and on some of our inland lochs.



Habitat hotspot: Deciduous woodland



Brown hare



Wood anemone



Osprey © Scottish Wildlife Trust



Deciduous woodland

Did you know?

Garden ponds are now extremely important habitats for common frogs and many populations in suburban areas depend on them for laying their spawn. Frogs hibernate during the winter in damp places such as under rocks, logs and leaf piles. You can help them in your garden by creating an amphibian home. See www.bbc.co.uk/breathingplaces for more information.

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What's on this month

The BTO's "Waterways Breeding Bird Survey" is the main source of population information about the UK's waterway bird species and begins this month, to participate see www.bto.org for more information.



Photo opportunity

Explore Angus's woodlands as they begin to come to life this month. Remember to explore the edges of these habitats too as where they meet other habitats such as farmland and riverbanks is often where you will encounter many species. See www.taysidebiodiversity.co.uk for more information.

One thing to do this month

Put a bird, bat or small mammal box out in your garden and see what wildlife makes it its home over the summer months. See www.bbc.co.uk/breathingplaces for more information.



Wildcat

May



What to look out for...

Angus's many habitats are extremely productive this month. In the Angus Glens some of the rare plant species they are famous for, are coming into flower. Corrie Fee National Nature Reserve is an excellent place to see purple coltsfoot and purple saxifrage. See www.snh.org.uk for more information. In ancient woodland, oak trees are sustaining large amounts of life in their branches. On the forest floor the elusive wild cat slinks around. A little less discrete is the black grouse. This month, males perform in leks trying to attract amorous females.

Hedgerows are awash with wildlife this month, these wildlife refuges house many nesting bird species and provide resting places and corridors for mammals, birds and invertebrates alike.



Habitat hotspot: Hedgerows



What's on this month

Know much about snails? To become an expert why not take part in "The Great British Snail Hunt" which begins this month, survey your own chosen site. See www.bbc.co.uk/breathingplaces for more information.

One thing to do this month

May is an excellent time to create new habitats to increase biodiversity in your own garden. Try building a small pond or even simpler, a bog garden. See www.bbc.co.uk/breathingplaces for more information.



River South Esk, Glen Clova



Photo opportunity

'Scottish Biodiversity Week' is an annual event held every May. Take a snapshot of local biodiversity and enter it into the Annual Nature Photography Competition. See www.snh.org.uk/biodiversityweek for more information.

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Did you know?

At the very end of May and beginning of June every year the "Angus Glens Walking Festival" takes place. This four day event gives you the choice of up to 24 guided walks throughout the Angus countryside where you can learn all about the geological landscape of the area as well as native animals and plants. See www.angusahead.com/walkingfestival for more information.



Black grouse



Purple saxifrage



Orange tip © Jim Asher



Deil's Heid, Seaton Cliffs, Arbroath

June



What to look out for...

The cliffs of Angus are alive with breeding sea birds at this time of year. Wander along the coast and see guillemots, Kittiwakes, fulmar and the comical puffin all busy at work incubating eggs or feeding young. The cliff habitat is a mass of colour, thrift, sea campion, birds foot trefoil and sea plantain to name but a few adding a riot of colour on cliff top walks.

Inland, the elusive twinflower is in flower high in its Angus Glen home. This species is intertwined with old scots pine forest and finds a refuge high in our hills. The Angus Glens are also home to adders which may be seen basking on rocks to raise their body temperature on glorious sunny days.



Habitat hotspot: Cliffs



What's on this month

The Scottish Wildlife Trust hold an annual "Wildlife Week" this month where activities for all the family are carried out at reserves and visitor centres throughout the country. See www.swt.org.uk for more information.

One thing to do this month

The Sea Watch Foundation have a range of survey's running over the summer months, record any sightings of marine mammals and help keep their records up to date. See www.seawatchfoundation.org.uk for more information.



Adder



Photo opportunity

Seaton Cliffs, Arbroath. Dramatic cliff stacks, sparkling seas, sea birds and swathes of wild flowers, just beautiful! See www.swt.org.uk for more information.

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Did you know?

The adder is Scotland's only poisonous snake and is found in many of the Angus Glens. They are rarely dangerous if not aggravated and can be hard to spot, given their tendency to avoid humans. Adders are identifiable by a dark zigzag on their backs; females are longer, duller in colour and have orange eyes. Good places to look for adders are around large stones and boulders, and on open stretches of heath land. See www.narrs.org.uk for more information.



Roe deer



Twinflower



Puffin



Mute swan and cygnets

John Dempsey www.montroseimages.com

July



What to look out for...

Many birds are on the wing this month and a good place to see small migrants such as sedge warblers and reed bunting are reed bed habitats. Dragon and damselflies also add a splash of colour as they zoom around over waterways.

On the coast terns are busy rearing young. Keep an eye out for the little tern a very rare species that nest on our beaches. Rare orchids and yellow rattle which are found in some coastal areas are only some of the beautiful plant species which attract a range of butterflies and moths.

This is the best time of year to see pipistrelles and daubenton's bats at dusk in a whole range of habitats as evening scented plants and moths are abundant.



Pearl bordered fritillary



Little tern



Yellow rattle



Habitat hotspot: Reed beds



Daubenton's bat

Did you know?

All native UK bats are insect eaters. Their meals are caught and eaten in mid-air and because flying uses up so much energy bats have very big appetites. Our most common species in Angus, the Pipistrelle bat can eat over 3,000 tiny insects in a single night! See www.angus-bats.com for more information about bats in Angus.

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What's on this month

Summer is in full swing. Swifts are only in Angus for 12 weeks, leaving in early August; their numbers are plummeting and we need to know why. Volunteer one hour this month to find where they are in coastal towns. For an online survey form see www.taysidebiodiversity.co.uk for more information.



Photo opportunity

Birds, Birds everywhere! Just about every habitat you can visit in Angus this month is alive with avian species busy feeding their young. Watch seabirds in coastal areas, raptors on the high hills and delicate migrants around reed beds. See www.angusbirding.homestead.com for more information.

One thing to do this month

Recording the wildlife in your garden helps build a picture of the nation's biodiversity. Why not keep an eye out for butterflies in your area this month. Visit www.butterfly-conservation.org for information on species and survey techniques.



Carlingheugh Bay, Auchmithie

August



What to look out for...

August is a great time of year to wander the coast enjoying the vast, calm blue expanse of the North Sea. This is the best month for viewing marine mammals and if you are lucky you may see bottlenose dolphins and minke whales travelling, foraging and socialising off our shores. Out on your walk you may hear the constant chirp of grasshoppers and crickets and encounter them as they bask on pathways.

The members of the swallow and martin family are all gathering in numbers this month in preparation for their migration back to Africa. These elegant aerial species make interesting watching as they dart around at top speed and gossip on overhead wires, a chorus of chirps and tics.



Habitat hotspot: Coast



Grasshopper



Swallows



Bottlenose dolphin © T Norman Tait



Bumble bee

Did you know?

Angus has its very own "Geodiversity Trail" which runs from Arbroath to Auchmithie on the coast. The route the trail follows is part of the Whiting Ness to Ethie Haven Site of Special Scientific Interest. It is home to some spectacular red sandstone rock formations, cliff top vegetation and several important plant and insect species. See www.taysidebiodiversity.co.uk for more information.

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What's on this month

Bumblebees are busy buzzing around this month and the Tayside Biodiversity Partnership need your help in recording the presence, species numbers and distribution of bees at this time of year. Help them to survey and contribute to an important local and national presence data base. See www.taysidebiodiversity.co.uk for more information.



Photo opportunity

The Angus coast is a photographers dream, we have estuaries, wide sandy beaches, cliffs and rocky shores home to a huge range of species. See www.angusahead.com for more information.

One thing to do this month

There are 32 golf courses in Angus to choose from, a mix of links, parkland and heath land courses. Recent changes in management techniques have created courses which are havens for wildlife. An excellent example of this is Carnoustie Golf Links, see www.carnoustiegolflinks.co.uk for more information.

September



What to look out for...

September sees a change in the weather and a shift in the behaviour of our native species, summer has gone and autumn is here. The hilltops are ablaze with heather in full bloom making this an ideal time to explore heath land. Red grouse and ptarmigan are also abundant on higher ground, at times flying low overhead.

One of the most spectacular sights this month is the red deer rut. Stags roar, and if all else fails, clash antlers as they fight it out to become the alpha male securing breeding rights for the season.

Angus is home to two important atlantic salmon and sea trout rivers. Take the time to walk along a river bank where you may see fish jump from the water as they travel up stream.



Habitat hotspot: Heathland



What's on this month

The annual event "National Moth Night" is a celebration of moths and moth recording through the Moths Count project. It is organised by Atropos, the journal for butterfly, moth and dragonfly enthusiasts and Butterfly Conservation, a society dedicated to conserving butterflies, moths and their habitats. Angus is home to many species of moth and astonishingly during the 2007 count at St Cyrus on the northern border of Angus, 81 different species were recorded. See www.butterfly-conservation.org for more information.

One thing to do this month

At this time of year some small insects begin to look for a sheltered, safe spot to over winter. You can help them by building bee boxes and insect shelters. See www.bbc.co.uk/breathingplaces for more information.



Heather



Red grouse



Photo opportunity

For sheer colour intensity whilst the heather is in flower and the chance of seeing our largest land mammal the Red Deer rutting, the Glens of Angus are the place to be. See www.angusglens.co.uk for more information.

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Did you know?

During the last 30 years, numbers of wild Salmon returning from the sea have fallen by more than half making their conservation of the utmost importance. The largest salmon caught in the UK on rod and line was taken by Miss Georgina Ballantyne in the River Tay: it weighed 64lbs (29kg). The Tay, the UK's largest river seems to attract monster salmon; an 1891 report makes claims of a salmon of 70lbs! See www.atlanticsalmontrust.org for more information.



Red deer



Queen's Well



Atlantic Salmon



Pink footed geese over Montrose Basin

John Dempsey www.montroseimages.com

October



What to look out for...

October sees the arrival of shorter days, the drawing in of the evenings and one of our greatest wildlife spectacles. Approximately 30,000 pink footed geese arrive from their arctic summer breeding grounds and fill the skies, particularly in the Montrose area where they roost on the specially protected large tidal basin.

Woodland also creates its own spectacular display this month when native woodland is in its autumnal glory. The contrasting red and green of the scots pine glows in the autumn sunlight and silver birch boast beautiful golden hues.

Colourful fungi seems to spring up everywhere you look this month be it on the ground or high on rotting tree trunks. Remember that some fungi are poisonous or inedible so only pick if you are an expert.



Habitat hotspot: Native pine woodland



What's on this month

If you fancy a very early rise to watch the pink-footed geese of Montrose Basin fly off in numbers of up to 30,000 to feed why not take part in the Montrose Basin Visitor Centre annual 'Goose Breakfast'. This free event (with only a small charge for breakfast, after the flight has ended) is a birdwatchers favourite and enthusiasts travel from far and wide to witness the spectacle. See www.swt.org.uk for more information.

One thing to do this month

At this time of year tidying up the garden may be on your mind. Try to leave your garden untidy. Leaf and log piles are a fantastic place for animals like hedgehogs, toads and frogs to find some shelter over the winter months and seed heads on flowers may provide some winter nutrition. See www.bbc.co.uk/breathingplaces



Native scots pine



Photo opportunity

Woodland of all types all over Angus are awash with autumnal colour this month. Keep an eye out for the beautiful silver birch and spectacular chestnuts. Fungi of all sorts are also evident, especially in woodland areas and provide many photographic opportunities. See www.taysidebiodiversity.co.uk for more information.

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Did you know?

Scotland's climate, woodland and grassland habitats make it one of the most attractive habitats in the world for fungi. Of the 2,500 larger fungi known in the UK, two thirds are found in Scotland and it is estimated that there six times more fungi in the British Isles than flowering plants. The giant puffball can weigh up to 20kg and contain up to 7 trillion spores! See www.britmycolsoc.org.uk for more information.



Silver birch



Pink footed goose



Puffball © T Norman Tait

November



What to look out for...

November may seem an unlikely month to venture far from home to watch wildlife and at this time of year in Angus it is visible on our very doorstep. Take the time to explore a range of urban walking routes incorporating nature and geology and you won't be disappointed.

Rowan trees are in their glory, heavy with fruit. Brambles which stretch for miles along tracks throughout Angus are also laden with fruit, attracting a range of bird and mammal species. In some areas the odd red squirrel will come closer to human populations than you think, searching on the ground for a range of nuts and berries.

When a peregrine falcon ranges near an urban habitat to hunt pigeons or wading birds in coastal areas this is an excellent opportunity to see them flying at breakneck speed.



Habitat hotspot: Urban walks



What's on this month

"National Tree Week" established in 1975, is UK's largest annual tree celebration which launches the start of the winter tree planting season. National Tree Week is a great chance for communities to do something positive for their local treescape and the event inspires more than quarter of a million people to get plant around million trees. See www.treecouncil.org.uk for more information.

One thing to do this month

Why not plant a heritage variety fruit tree species to help increase local biodiversity and save an old species in decline. See www.centralcoreorchardnetwork.co.uk for more information.



Peregrine falcon



Midlinks, Montrose

John Dempsey www.montroseimages.com



Photo opportunity

Keep an eye out for wild berries dotted through out the landscape. Not only do the berries make colourful photo studies they can also attract a range of birds and small mammals for you to snap. See www.bbc.co.uk/breathingplaces for more information.

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Did you know?

There are more than 500 breeding pairs of peregrine falcon in Scotland and in Angus they can be seen around coastal and inland cliffs as they hunt for prey. This species is perhaps known for being the fastest of all animals, when performing a “dive” once it has a target in its sights it can travel at speeds up to 200 miles per hour, perhaps a reason why they were prized as one of the falconer’s favourites. See www.rspb.org.uk for more information.



Red squirrel



Brambles



Chaffinch



Grey heron

December



What to look out for...

Estuaries are the most productive habitat type in Angus and perhaps the country throughout December. Days are short and wading birds such as knot, turnstone and redshank have little time to forage in the estuarine mud, sand and rocky foreshore. This means that there is a concentration of species in large numbers providing a bird watching bonanza. The beautiful eider duck is one to look for as they explore the shallow waters for shellfish and small crabs while nearby, grey heron often make stunning silhouettes as they stand like statues fishing in the shallow estuary waters.

At the other extreme, high in the Angus Glens food is scarce. Snow may lie on the ground and splashes of colour are provided by holly and juniper. If you are lucky you may catch a glimpse of a mountain hare, the hardy native cousin of the brown hare who spectacularly changes its coat to white to gain important winter camouflage.



Habitat hotspot: Estuaries



What's on this month

Lets not forget our feathered friends and other garden visitors this month. Make sure that you have a fresh supply of drinking water available in your garden for birds and small mammals. You can also put out a range of fatty, lard based foods or insect mixtures which native birds adore. See www.rspb.org.uk for more information.

One thing to do this month

Why not shop for some Christmas gifts at a local nature reserve visitors centre. Enjoy a day watching wildlife and buy gifts for loved ones that will contribute towards the local effort to conserve wildlife.



Montrose Basin

John Dempsey www.montroseimages.com



Mountain hare



Holly



Eider duck © John Crichton



Photo opportunity

Ending the year as we began, this really is the time of year to venture out to estuaries teeming with birdlife. The large concentration of bird species means you have ample opportunity to select an individual or whole flocks as subjects in some of the most dramatic lighting conditions possible. See www.swt.org.uk for more information.

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Did you know?

Mountain hare are indigenous to Britain, unlike the rabbit and the brown hare, which were probably introduced by man. Although quite elusive, on grouse moors in the north-east of Scotland, peak population densities of up to 250/km² have been recorded. You imagine the mountain hare to be a solitary species but during periods of snow cover they have been seen gathering on hill slopes, in groups of more than 20, sheltering or feeding where shallow snow permits, scraping to reveal underlying heather. See www.abdn.ac.uk/mammal for more information.



Photo credits

Special thanks to John Dempsey www.montroseimages.com, Scottish Wildlife Trust, Scottish Natural Heritage and VisitScotland Angus & Dundee, for the kind use images.
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March 2009

Planning & Transport
Angus House
Orchardbank Business Park
Forfar DD8 ???

Angus Council Print and Design Unit