

Heatherlea announces short breaks in Scotland from only £445!

After 21 years running mostly full week trips during the main season, we are delighted to announce new short break holidays. 'In difficult times, people want cheaper breaks, and we are here to give them the very best birding in Scotland' says Kevin. You can choose three or four night breaks, which include all food, hotel accommodation and full guiding services. Full details on page 8.

Caper continue to struggle

2012 was another very poor breeding season for Capercaillie, and the birds are becoming increasingly elusive. Many traditional places were devoid of birds this autumn. Our Capercaillie Short Breaks yielded just three individuals (all males, excellent views) plus four 'flybys', even though we were concentrating on the species. All sightings were on our private estate lands. More about Capercaillie inside on page 2

New discounts on Scottish full week holidays

The emphasis is on value, and although our retail prices were to rise on January 1, you can still book at very advantageous rates here in Scotland, see Page 6 inside!

Phil Knott joins the guiding team

We are delighted to welcome former Handa warden Phil Knott to the Heatherlea guiding team. Phil has lots of experience guiding in Scotland and is already very popular with Heatherlea clients and our existing guiding team. Read more on page 9!



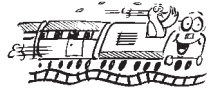
On other pages

See the northern lights!

Last two places on our second departure to Iceland. *See page 15*

Camargue by train sells out, now for Holland!

Holland by train in 2013, *see page 14*



Trinidad definitely ON

Has your Trini trip been cancelled? Ours is definitely on, so find your passport and join Mike in February. *See page 14*

Outer Hebs, Mull, Shetland and Orkney, Scottish Islands latest update! *See page 10*

Old joke fools reader

Who would have thought anyone would fall for it? *Turn to page 17* (on reverse of back page).

Happy New Year to all our readers

THE HEATHERLEA TIMES Editor – Kevin Shaw. Assistant Editor – Emma 'scoop' McBride. Proofreader/Database Editor – Isabel 'copyready' Kirkwood. Hotel Correspondent – Amanda Craik. Tea and sympathy – Caryl Shaw. Office Junior – Sophie 'I'm bored' Young, aged 12. Roving reporters – Ian Ford, Jonny Pott, John Poyner, Dave Pullan. Photo contributors to this issue – Phil Davey, Malcolm Dixon, Ian Ford, Steve Hollands, Lisa Hughes, Cristian Jensen, Josef Leestmans, Neil McIntyre, Alan Petherbridge, Jonny Pott, John Poyner, Dave Pullan, Kevin Shaw, Rob Skinner.

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'The Heatherlea Times' is a free paper which can be circulated to anyone you like, especially those you might want to join on holiday!

FOCUS on - Capercaillie Short Breaks

November 2011



Sadly, 'The Big Grouse' appears to be losing further ground in Scotland, and although these short breaks specifically targeted Capercaillie, we only saw three birds clearly. One superb sighting (on Trip 3) was of a cock bird waking in his roost tree, feeding on pine needles and moving around to show every feather to all our guests as the low sunlight shafted across the clearing to make his plumage shine brightly – fantastic! We had scouted this area the week before and found plenty of fresh Caper droppings, but this was the only bird seen at this spot despite several visits over the two weeks of these short breaks. Just shows how difficult Capercaillie are these

days! We left him in peace as he dropped down to the ground to forage.

In 2012 we will spend more time watching Capercaillie carefully, to maximise our chances of seeing the birds with you. Our unique estate access is already confirmed, and we are in regular discussion with other landowners. We will be aware of any accessible 'rogue' birds which might appear in spring, and of course co-operate with RSPB staff at their caper watches. Your chances should be better with Heatherlea than with most other methods of finding Capercaillie in the wild.

Here are a few of the highlights from our 2011 Short Breaks including many guest comments – it is interesting that Capercaillie had to vie with many other key birds as a highlight! Over the four trips we also saw Golden Eagle, White-tailed Eagle, Black Grouse Crested Tit, Parrot Crossbill, King Eider, Velvet and Common Scoter, Long-tailed Duck, Ross's Goose, tundra Bean Goose, White-fronted Goose (European race), Goshawk, Hen Harrier, Otter, many Red and Roe Deer, spawning Salmon and Red Squirrel. Scotland boring in November? Don't you believe it!

Trip 1

November 5 – 9
Individual Highlights

John: Ten new birds. The highlights were White-tailed Eagle and Golden Eagle.

Nick: Eagles were brilliant and also the King Eider. The weather and a Scotsman who puts butter in porridge.

Jenny: White-tailed Eagle and Golden Eagle in the same frame.

Paul: Crested Tit, such good views, the eagles and the King Eider.

Adele: The Crested Tit and the Eagles.

Shirley: White-tailed Eagle. Excellent weather and food!

Matt: Just one tick – Caper. The herd of deer coming over the hill. The old Scots Pine forest.

Jeff: Eight new birds. White-tailed Eagle was a knockout and Cresty brilliant through the scope. Also the flock of Eiders.

John: Birdwise the King Eider. But the company was really good.

Pam: Caper was really great, so was everything else.

Roberta: Loved going up Strathdearn and the spawning Salmon and the Cresties.

Trip 2

November 8 – 12
Notes from Ian Ford's trip report

Thursday 10 November

'Another early start saw us in the forest again, walking in the mild temperature. We found fresh Caper droppings but no sight of the birds. Parrot Crossbills called overhead but they didn't settle.

We had superb views of cock Red Grouse on the way to a Black Grouse lekking area. Gill spotted the black necks sticking out of the heather and we all saw 10 Blackcock in the end. They occasionally displayed their lyre tails and white under-tail coverts and then flew off. One landed on a pile of sticks and another on fence wire looking very unstable. Paul found a Hooded Crow by the river. After this success we headed to the Moray Firth where the magical light shone on Velvet and Common Scoters, Long-tailed Ducks and Slavonian Grebes. Add a flock of 11 Black-throated Divers with some still in summer plumage and the fact that they were all close inshore, and you can appreciate how stunning this all was.

Moving along the coast we quickly located the drake King Eider that a Heatherlea guide had found last month. This rare bird was with a small raft of Common Eiders that

drifted closer to us and we could see all his new colouring as he comes out of eclipse. A spell of wader watching added more birds to our list, including a Purple Sandpiper and a total of 150 Knot which displayed their flying skills in the strong sunlight. Driving back inland we passed a loch with 6 Whooper Swans and a Peregrine which quickly disappeared.

A drive round the estate at dusk finally gave long views of a cock Capercaillie as he crossed the track in front of us. It was almost dark and he walked sedately down through the vegetation before stopping in a small clearing, then into the trees. What a finale!

Trip 3

November 12 – 16 Individual Highlights

Linda: Velvet Scoter; Iceland Gull; Coal Tit frenzy at Boat of Garten feeders.

Steve: Crested Tit at Boat of Garten feeders; the light at Chanonry Point.

Di: Sunrises; sunsets; Crested Tits.

Alan: Quality of Capercaillie; Long-tailed Duck sighting; power of the Goshawk; Coal Tit landing on camera lens.

Wendy: Great views of Capercaillie and of Crested Tits.

Sheila: Capercaillie and Crestie – great views, especially the King Eider.

Katherine: Coal Tit frenzy; Red Squirrel; Grey Seal in harbour.

Jean: Long-tailed Duck; Red-breasted Merganser and Goosander identification sorted out. King Eider.

Steve: Crested Tit and Crossbill; Scottish Highland scenery and colours/light; Capercaillie.

Jane: Crested Tits at close range showing well. Grey Seal in the harbour.

Trip 4

November 15 – 19 Individual Highlights

Daniel: Otter was good, so were the two Buzzards fighting. Cresties were good as well. Jonny charging after the Treecreeper.

Terry: Crossbills in the distance, the Long-tailed Duck and the way the wind caught their tails. Crestie and the Iceland Gull in the failing light and the way it turned.

John F: The Geese on Carr Road which were firsts, and the Crested Tit.

Kathy: Red-throated Divers in the harbour, the Crossbills and the Crestie.

Margaret: Red-throated Diver so close, the Red Kites, Cresties and Yellowhammers.

Stephen: The Red-throated Divers, Crested Tits, Ross's Goose and Long-tailed Duck.

Mike: Love to see Otters and watching their behaviour, the three Goldies together, never seen Cresties so well, and a tremendous buzz looking through the geese.

Annie: Feeding the Coal Tits from the hand, Cresties and the Grey Seals popping up to look at us, and the Red Grouse.

John R: We have had 13 life ticks within the three days, the best views of Red-throated Divers and my first Bottle-nosed Dolphin.

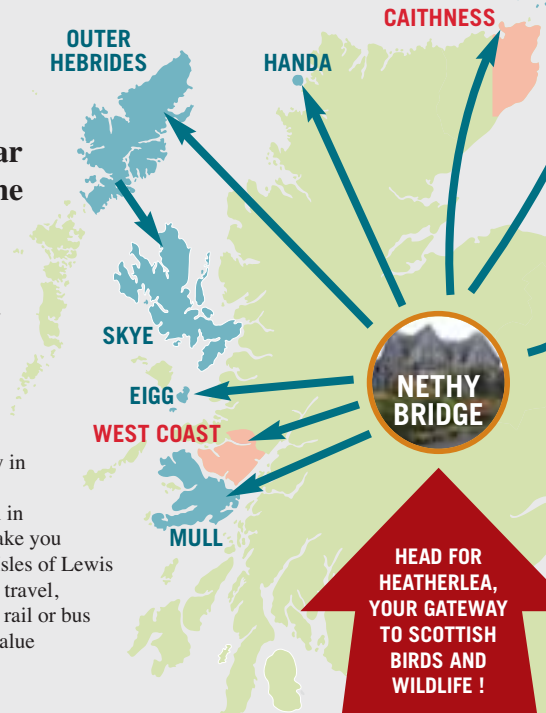
Capercaillie were excellent in spring last year – see the Trip Reports on our website! Just click the link on our homepage, or go directly to <http://www.heatherlea.co.uk/trip-reports.asp> to read about 'How it Happened'!



Mountview Hotel – your gateway to Scottish birds and wildlife

Relax! Once you arrive at our three star hotel in Nethy Bridge we take you to the best birding spots in the Highlands and Islands.

Heatherlea is famous for great guiding and personal care, and our crack guiding team are known far and wide for their birding skills. You may be tempted to 'do it yourself', but don't forget how much extra you will spend on fuel, guided trips, lunches, ferries, wildlife watches and access to reserves. With Heatherlea, everything is included in the price you pay before you join, so there are no extras. You stay in our own AA three star Small Hotel, enjoy meals prepared by Chefs who have earned two rosettes for good food, and travel in large minibuses which are great mobile hides. Our holidays take you from Strathspey to special places as far away as Orkney, the Isles of Lewis and Harris, and Mull, places where wildlife is special, and all travel, accommodation and food is included. We also transfer you to rail or bus links at no extra charge. We think our holidays offer terrific value compared to 'do it yourself' options.



Above all, your holiday includes the services of a Heatherlea Guide, a very valuable asset! Much more than a friend to help you identify birds, or a driver to take you to special places, your Heatherlea Guide plans your entire holiday, from briefing on the first evening to round-up on the last. He organises everything to suit wildlife, weather and your progress through the week, and when not leading Heatherlea trips, is probably busy birding locally and liaising with his Heatherlea colleagues. He knows where the birds have been showing, and the best route to maximise your chances. We think you will see far more wildlife with a Heatherlea Guide than under your own steam, and of course you can relax and enjoy your holiday, as we do the planning.

Ian Ford, John Poyner, Jonny Pott and Dave Pullan have all been with Heatherlea in Scotland for many years, new guide Phil Knott joins in early April, and with Kevin's 22nd season in 2012, our in-house knowledge is unbeatable. Highly skilled birders and real 'people people' who just love to show you the wonderful wildlife of the Scottish Highlands, Join Heatherlea, and discover your gateway to the wildlife of the Highlands!



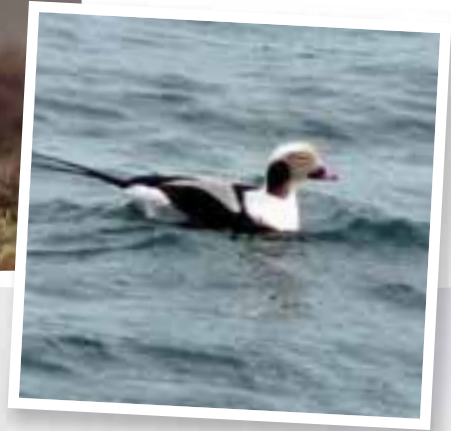
2011 with Heatherlea – ‘how it happened’

Our 2011 Trip Reports are complete, and all 45 are now available as bite-sized chunks on our website. Just click the Crestie link on the front page, then download the one(s) you want to read. The reports are at the back of each ‘Extra Pack’.

If you don’t have internet access, just ask us for the holiday you want and we will send you a copy by post. Some files have

extras, for instance our Natural History download not only features trip reports, but also many pictures of orchids, flowers and moths, plus complete checklists of insects and flora for use in 2012 – a fascinating read!

If you want a hard copy of the entire report ‘2011 with Heatherlea as it happened’, you are welcome to print the whole thing at home, or join us to read the weighty tome in our lounge here at Mountview Hotel!



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2012 FULL-WEEK HOLIDAYS BASED AT MOUNTVIEW HOTEL

SPECIAL OFFER

Our full week holidays unfortunately have to rise in price from 1 January. To offer you the very best, we still have some vacancies at great discounts, and you can **SAVE UP TO £200** by booking the weeks where we have the most space. All discounts are subject to availability, and prices will rise as our hotel fills, so don't delay! £25 discount applies to all weeks for those who have 'Been Before', but is included in any discount of £100 or more. To book ring us on **01479 821248** or email **info@heatherlea.co.uk**

SAVE UP TO £200!

WITH "JANUARY SPECIAL PRICES"

Highland Winter Birding

Feb 18, Feb 25, Mar 3

Wild landscapes and solitude (you won't see many other birders!) are combined with exceptional wildlife on this unique holiday, incorporating the very best in Scottish winter birding. Features an exciting expedition to coastal locations in the very far north.

Price £1045, **UP TO £200 OFF** at 'January special prices' **FROM £845**. No single supplement.

Top 20 Winter

Mar 10, Mar 17

Both eagles, Otter and Pine Marten on the west coast, where early dusk means we watch wildlife at times convenient to ourselves! Ptarmigan, Capercaillie, Black Grouse, Dolphins, Red Squirrel, Mountain Hare, the list is long!

Price £1045, **UP TO £150 OFF** at 'January special prices' **FROM £895**. No single supplement.

Spring into Scotland

Mar 24, Mar 31, Apr 7, Apr 14, Apr 21

Perhaps the ultimate spring wildlife experience in Scotland, including an overnight on the west coast so we can enjoy a full day on Mull! All resident birds are displaying or breeding, winter birds are still here in good numbers, and summer visitors arrive daily. Ever popular!

Price £1045, **UP TO £150 OFF** at 'January special prices' **FROM £895**. No single supplement.

Birding the Highlands in May

Apr 28, May 5, May 12

This gently-paced holiday to see the Scottish specialities without too much travelling. We are based at Mountview



Hotel for a full week of exploration, featuring all the key resident and inland breeding birds. Ideal for 'first-time' birding visitors to Scotland.

Price £1045, **UP TO £100 OFF** at 'January special prices' **FROM £945**. No single supplement.

High Season in the Highlands

May 19, May 26, Jun 2, Jun 9

Glorious Handa Island makes a great day out, and we stay overnight on the west to see White-tailed Eagle the following day. With all the birds settled for the season this is classic birding.

Price £1045, **UP TO £150 OFF** at 'January special prices' **FROM £895**. No single supplement.

Highlands and Orkney

Jun 16, Jun 23

Visit Orkney's key birding places in summer, where breeding Short-eared Owl, Hen Harrier and Black-tailed Godwit are found. Eagles, woodland species and seabirds too on this great trip.

Price £1095, **UP TO £100 OFF** at 'January special prices' **FROM £995**. No single supplement.

Natural History

Jun 30, Jul 7

Birds, mammals, insects and flora on this unique and highly rewarding holiday, aimed squarely at the natural history all-rounder. Many species found only in the north of Scotland (or very rare further south) make this a fascinating holiday. Price £1045, **UP TO £150 OFF** at 'January special prices' **FROM £895**. No single supplement.

Eagles, Divers and Dotterel

Jul 14, Jul 21

The best British birding in July? Both eagles on Mull, Dotterel and Ptarmigan on the tops, divers in breeding plumage inland – great birding!

Price £1045, **UP TO £150 OFF** at 'January special prices' **FROM £895**. No single supplement.

The Top 30

Jul 28, Aug 4, Aug 11

Ever popular, featuring the birds and mammals of a Highland summer. Great fun on the west coast, where Basking Shark are now regular, and Minke Whale, Bottlenosed Dolphin and Common Porpoise add a strong cetacean element. Crammed with birds and other wildlife!

Normal Price £1095, **UP TO £150 OFF** at 'January special prices' **FROM £945**. No single supplement.

Highlands and remotest Aberdeenshire

Aug 18, Aug 25

The gannetry at Troup Head, migration at Ythan Estuary and the unexpected at Loch of Strathbeg make absorbing birding in Aberdeenshire, and our days inland in Strathspey have specialities in mind – a very different holiday! Price £1045, **UP TO £200 OFF** at 'January special prices' **FROM £845**. No single supplement.

Scottish Specials and Autumn Migration

Sept 1, Sept 8, Sept 15

With migration in full swing this holiday can be very exciting; shearwaters, waders, skuas and petrels, plus of course our resident specialities including Caper, Blackcock, Crestie, Ptarmigan, both eagles and more. Includes a ferry trip to the Outer Hebrides - expect the unexpected! Price £1045, **UP TO £150 OFF** at 'January special prices' **FROM £895**. No single supplement.

Scottish Specials and the Outer Limits

Sept 22, Sept 29, Oct 6

Including two nights on the Outer Hebrides, this is an exceptional itinerary which takes you to the 'outer limits' of Scottish birding. On other days we seek all the specialities of the Highlands.

Normal Price £1145, **UP TO £150 OFF** at 'January special prices' **FROM £995**. No single supplement.

The Top 20

Oct 13, Oct 20, Oct 27

An extraordinary holiday for those who love mammals and birds. Both eagles, otters, pine marten and badgers from a warm hide are just some of the highlights. See reports on our website!

Price £1045, **UP TO £150 OFF** at 'January special prices' **FROM £895**. No single supplement.

Capercaillie Short Breaks

Sat Nov 3, Tues Nov 6, Sat Nov 10, Tues Nov 13

Three great birding days with Caper in mind, as we concentrate on the world's biggest grouse. Blackcock, Golden Eagle and Crested Tit are also on the agenda, and winter seawatching can be exceptional too.

Normal Price £520, **'Been Before' price £495**. No single supplement.

Last and First Birds of the Year

Sat 29 Dec 2012 – Sat 5 Jan 2013

Fancy a treat this New Year? Finish your old birdlist with a flourish and make a great start to your new one. Targets include Capercaillie, Black Grouse, Ptarmigan (weather permitting!), Crested Tit and Scottish



Crossbill TWICE. Normal Price £1095, **UP TO £150 OFF** at 'January special prices' **FROM £945**. No single supplement.

Worried about your holiday dates for 2012? Book with us at discount prices, then change your dates without penalty.

Our holidays offer great value, but we know some of you need a little more time before fixing dates. Heatherlea can help. To make things easy in difficult times, we will waive our administration fees. This flexible approach means you can take advantage of our lowest prices, and at a later date change your booking without penalty, should the need arise. Since we are currently offering large discounts, this is a very attractive advantage. As ever with Heatherlea, your low initial deposit is only £100, with the balance payable eight weeks before you travel, and you can change dates without penalty right up to the point where your balance is due.

Don't forget the Heatherlea great value promise;

- we won't change the price of any holiday here at Mountview Hotel once we have confirmed to you in writing (normally within seven days of receipt of your deposit).

- we won't cancel any holiday booked at Mountview Hotel.



NEW! Short breaks in SCOTLAND

**FROM ONLY
£445!**

In difficult times, we know that many of you prefer a short break instead of a full week, so we have launched our new **'Birds of Speyside and beyond'** holidays at very affordable prices. Different dates will be made available through the year, but we begin with two dates in late April and early May, when local specialities will be at their best, summer visitors are arriving, and the last few wintering birds are to be found at the coast – perfect! Come and enjoy the birds of forest, moor, mountain and glen, and though we don't want to spend much time travelling in our minibus, the local coast is a superb habitat we mustn't neglect. Everything is done the Heatherlea way, on a great break which won't break the budget, offering you personal service as a member of a small, exclusive group.



The Birds of Speyside (and beyond!)

Your expert guide will be with you for three days of top quality birding, happy to help you with ID, optics and anything else you need. Brilliant wildlife watching plus accommodation and food at our famous Mountview Hotel - tremendous value!

Targets include Capercaillie, Crested Tit, Scottish (Parrot) Crossbill, Black Grouse, Golden Eagle and more,

including seaduck, waders, divers and Slavonian Grebe in breeding plumage. Obviously our itinerary on such a short holiday is weather dependent, but you can reasonably expect to see 80+ species including many of Scotland's most sought-after birds.

Choose either a three-night break (Sat – Tues)
FOR ONLY £445

or a four-night break (Tues – Sat)
FOR ONLY £495

Heatherlea Newsletters in 2012

We know our printed newsletters are very popular with many of you, and we will continue to produce them. The world is changing rapidly though, and we can respond very quickly to new circumstances with new holidays and special offers. The best way to communicate quickly these days is by email, and we now issue a monthly online eNewsletter, posted on our website and sent directly to our email database.

To see this Newsletter, which may have short-term offers we can't include in printed copies, please email us at info@heatherlea.co.uk saying 'subscribe' and add your postcode and contact telephone number.

PRIZE DRAW

As a thank you to everyone who does this, we will enter you in a holiday draw, featuring five prizes of two-for-one **'BIRDS of SPEYSIDE (and beyond!)**' three-night short breaks from Sat 28 April – Tues 1 May 2012. With a published price of £445pp, this prize is well worth having! Don't forget, to enter you just email us saying 'subscribe' before 31 January, and we will contact the lucky winners on 1 February. It doesn't matter if you already receive our e-newsletter, or if you already have your short-break booked already, we will still enter you for the draw.



Dates and prices

3-day break £445pp no single supplement
Sat 28 April – Tues 1 May

4-day break £495pp no single supplement
Tues 1 – Sat 5 May

DAY 1 Sat or Tues

Arrival, welcome, dinner and briefing. Don't forget our courtesy collection service from Aviemore on Saturday (three night break only).

DAY 2 Sun or Wed

We begin at local 'hotspots' in Caledonian pine forest to see Crested Tit, Scottish (Parrot) Crossbill, Roe Deer and Red Squirrel, before travelling to our own private forested estate for Capercaillie. Osprey will be at traditional sites, and both Red- and Black-throated Diver can be seen in breeding plumage.

DAY 3 Mon or Thurs

An early start (about 6.00am) to see Black Grouse at a traditional lekking site. We visit moorland and glen looking for Golden Eagle, and we should also see Red Grouse, Slavonian Grebe in breeding plumage, and Mountain Hare. With summer visitors arriving and breeding in full swing, today should be filled with good birding!

DAY 4 Tues or Fri

A complete contrast as we visit the Moray Coast, to investigate the spring migration featuring waders, terns, gulls and the last few wintering seaduck. Gannet, auks, Goosander, Eider and much more on this day. Farmland birds may include Corn Bunting, Tree Sparrow, Grey Partridge and Yellowhammer.

The three-night break ends with a roundup around 6pm after our return to Mountview Hotel. The four-night break continues with dinner and a roundup later in the evening.

DAY 5 (four night break only) Sat

Breakfast and depart. Don't forget our courtesy service to transport links in Aviemore.

What's included

- three days birding with Heatherlea, the Scottish mainland's only five-star Wildlife Experience. You will be with one of our expert guides throughout your days in the field.
- three (or four) nights dinner, bed and breakfast at the famous Mountview Hotel in Nethy Bridge, headquarters of Heatherlea.
- all transport costs including fuel, access to reserves and private estates.
- Heatherlea checklist to record your sightings
- packed lunch for each day in the field.
- complimentary transfers from Aviemore transport links on Saturdays
- free loan of top quality Swarovski optics during your stay.

Whats not included

- travel to Nethy Bridge
- personal insurance
- personal expenses including drinks at the bar
- transfers between Nethy Bridge and Aviemore transport links on weekdays

NEWS!

Phil Knott joins Heatherlea

Former Handa Warden Phil Knott joins Heatherlea in April 2012, and we are delighted to welcome him to our crack guiding team. Some of you will already have met Phil this autumn, when he joined us as a guide for a three week period. Phil's calm and caring approach, combined with exceptional knowledge of Scotland and its wildlife, make him a natural for our team, and we know you are going to have great fun with him!



London Wild Bird Watch

London Wetland Centre, SW16

Fri 20 – Sun 22

April 2012

This new Birdfair promises to be a big event, with many leading names already confirmed. Heatherlea are planning to be there, so please come and see us.



SWAROVSKI (SWAROVISION) BINOCULARS – FREE TO USE!

These brand-leading telescopes and binoculars feature razor-sharp clarity and superb image quality. Join us in Nethy Bridge, and you can borrow a pair of binoculars FREE OF CHARGE to use during your stay. We will issue bins before you go birding on the first morning, and you may keep them until you leave Heatherlea. To be sure of your pair, please book in advance. *'An excellent extra service' – VisitScotland*

GO FURTHER! birding holidays to the islands and far west coast. **LATEST UPDATE**

Our famous GO FURTHER! holidays offer carefully designed itineraries to give you the very best wildlife watching on the Scottish islands. There is a wide choice through summer and autumn, and all holidays are run at a leisurely pace, though on Birders' Tours we might move more quickly to efficiently round up rare migrants and vagrants. Transfers from Nethy Bridge are included on most holidays, and your own vehicle may be left safely

parked at Mountview Hotel free of charge to be collected when you return. Travel onwards, or stay an extra night (we can make arrangements for you) and use our morning courtesy bus to Aviemore transport links. As an alternative you can join us at a convenient point closer to our destination. Please note that client numbers on these holidays are always very limited, though we do launch additional departures where possible.



MULL, IONA and the Treshnish Isles

Wed 23 May – Sat 26 May

Price £795 pp. Single supplement £75.

Maximum eight guests.

Now about half full

Mull has more Golden and White-tailed Eagles than anywhere else in Britain, plus Hen Harrier, Raven and a range of northern moorland species. We enjoy a thrilling boat trip to both the Isle of Staffa, where we have enough time to visit Fingal's Cave and also the tiny isle of Lunga, where the 'Puffin experience' is one of the best in the British Isles. We also visit Iona, where fields around the ancient Abbey hold Corncrake. Travel from Nethy Bridge, or take the Oban ferry and we will collect you on Mull.

NEW! ST KILDA and the HEBRIDES

Wed 4 July – Fri 13 July

Price £1995 pp. Shared cabins.

Supp £60 (land only). Maximum ten guests.

Cancellations only – register now for 2013!

SCOTTISH ISLAND ADVENTURE

(by land and ferry)

'In my opinion our best holiday anywhere in the world.'

Ian Ford, Heatherlea Guide

Mon 4 June – Mon 11 June,

Mon 18 June – Mon 25 June

Price £1525 pp. Single supplement £140.

Maximum ten guests.

First week half full,

second week cancellations only.

We board in Oban, and after exploring Coll for Corncrake, Basking Shark and Otter head to Tiree, home to more Corncrake than anywhere else in Britain. En-route to Barra we look for cetaceans and sharks, auks, divers and Gannets, before we travel around the islands of North and South Uist, Berneray, Benbecula and Eriskay, to see Otter, Golden Eagle, White-tailed Eagle, Hen Harrier, Short-eared Owl, Red-necked Phalarope, and more. A wonderful, relaxed celebration of Scottish island wildlife.

SHETLAND and ORKNEY

Sat 23 June – Sun 1 July

Price £1695 pp. Single supplement £160.

Maximum ten guests.

Last couple of places only

On Shetland at Sumburgh we might see Minke Whale, Harbour Porpoise and White-beaked Dolphin. Lochs hold Red-throated Diver, breeding Whimbrel and Curlew, 'real' Rock Dove, Black Guillemot and Shetland Wren. We visit the Storm Petrel colony on Mousa, and take a ferry to Fetlar to see dainty Red-necked Phalarope. At Hermaness, we walk through a huge Great Skua colony to the northernmost cliffs of the British Isles, home to around 140,000 breeding seabirds. We also look for endemic Shetland Mouse-ear, one of the world's rarest plants. After a great few days, we sail to Orkney, where Hen Harrier, Short-eared Owl, Peregrine and Merlin hunt the meadow fringes. We visit the Standing Stones of Stenness, the Ring of Brodgar, the settlement of Skara Brae, Maes Howe, Scapa Flow, the Tomb of the Eagles and the Italian Chapel in a thorough exploration. Meet in Aberdeen or transfer free from Nethy Bridge.

**WEST COAST WILDLIFE**

Tues 26 June – Sat 30 June

Price £795 pp Single supplement £80.

Leader from our resident team. Maximum 7 guests.

Now around half full

Ideal for the natural history all-rounder. Key targets are both eagles, Otter, seabirds and cetaceans, Red Deer, both seals, and a very good chance of Pine Marten. Flora and butterflies, moths and dragonflies, many of which are extremely rare, will be highly rewarding. During three very different days we visit Mull, where eagles bring food to hungry chicks, take a sea trip to spectacular Eigg and Muck, and tour with popular guide Matt Wilson, always a great day in this beautiful, underappreciated part of Scotland. Our groups really feel at home at our comfortable family-run Hotel in Strontian. Transfer free from Nethy Bridge or join on route.

ISLAY and JURA

Sat 27 October – Wed 31 October

Price £895 pp. Single supplement £60. Maximum eight guests plus leader from our resident team.

Spaces at the moment

We visit in autumn to see many thousand Barnacle and Greenland White-fronted Goose. The sight (and noise) is absolutely unforgettable, and our mobile-hide minibus is invaluable! We should also see Chough at very close quarters. Much more rugged than Islay, Jura is rightly renowned for its large population of Red Deer. We also hunt for Otter along the coastline. Excellent birding will include waders, ducks, raptors including Golden Eagle, divers, white-winged gulls and more, plus any rarities which may be around. Travel to Islay from our base in Nethy Bridge, or join us en-route at Oban or Kennacraig.

SCOTTISH BIRDERS' TOURS

Our Scottish Birding Tours really took off in 2010, when clients joined more departures than ever before, and the birding was spectacular. In 2011 things were just as exciting, with White-rumped and Pectoral Sandpiper joining American Golden Plover and Buff-bellied Pipit in the Hebrides. Shetland again produced the unexpected, with Pallid Harrier, Lesser Grey Shrike, Little Bunting and Yellow-browed Warbler on our September trip. North Ronaldsay was excellent, Lesser Kestrel and Citrine Wagtail just two of the great birds seen by Heatherlea in 2011. Some of these holidays are already filling for next year so join us and enjoy great birding as you GO FURTHER! on our Scottish Birders' Tours.

NEW! OUTER HEBRIDES in Spring

Sat 19 May – Fri 25 May, Sat 26 May – Fri 1 June

Price £1145 pp. Single supplement £140.

Maximum eight guests.

First date cancellations only, second date just four places left.

One of our most exciting spring holidays, with six nights on the Outer Hebrides. Everyone who has ever joined us here in May has seen Corncrake, and Red-necked Phalarope are also present. We target rarities, and these can be special – Snowy Owl are almost regular, and possibilities include Buff-breasted Sandpiper, American Wigeon, Gyr Falcon, Rose-coloured Starling, Arctic Redpoll and American Wigeon. Summer-plumaged Great Northern Diver are likely, as are 'real' Rock Dove and Raven. We often see passage of hundreds of Pomarine and Long-tailed Skua – unforgettable! Mountainous parts hold both eagles, and we expect Otters playing on the coastline. Summer-plumaged waders include Whimbrel, both godwits, Dunlin and Sanderling, and perhaps Dotterel. Hen Harrier and Short-eared Owl are present in good numbers. The machair is a special habitat, full of birdsong, and this is a great Scottish birding holiday.

NORTH RONALDSAY and mainland ORKNEY

Sat 15 Sept – Fri 21 Sept

Price £1075 pp. Single supplement £120.

Maximum eight guests.

Nearly full

A wonderful migration hotspot, overlooked and under-explored, always surprising and very rewarding.! In 2011 we saw Buff-bellied Pipit, Lesser Kestrel, Citrine Wagtail, Yellow-browed Warbler, Barred Warbler, Lapland Bunting, Common Rosefinch, Red-backed Shrike, Snow Bunting and Short-toed Lark, plus Sooty and Manx Shearwater, skuas, petrels, divers, gulls, terns, auks and waders. We also enjoy birding around Orkney, visiting the Ring of Brodgar, the delightful Italian Chapel and an optional visit to Skara Brae. A completely different birding holiday and a good alternative to Fair Isle and the Shillies, North Ronaldsay is easy to reach with Heatherlea. Transfer free from Nethy Bridge or join on route.

**SHETLAND**

Sat 22 Sept – Sat 29 Sept, Sat 29 Sept – Sat 6 Oct

Price £1325 pp. Single supplement £140.

Maximum ten guests.

Spaces on both dates

This exciting holiday offers the chance to see a variety of rare and scarce migrants amid spectacular scenery. We stay in three centres, including Sumburgh in the extreme south, Unst, Britain's most northerly island, and two nights in a high quality hotel with a garden great for migrants (you will really love this place), allowing us to spread our wings and locate highly desirable rare birds more easily. We cover all the key locations for autumn migration, and you can expect to add Yell, Bressay, Whalsay, and perhaps Fetlar and the Out Skerries to your British 'island list'! We will also visit the legendary Unst Bus Shelter, where birders leave tips and items matching the décor (we will check this year's colour scheme and take something suitable!). What turns up depends upon the weather, so there are no guarantees, but we'll find our own birds and enjoy others already found as we travel around the islands.

FAIR ISLE

Sat 6 Oct – Fri 12 Oct

Price £995 pp. Shared accommodation only.

Maximum nine guests.

Booking now

Everyone should go to Fair Isle at least once! The island's track record of attracting rare and unusual migrants has no equal in Britain, while its seabird colonies are internationally important, and Fair Isle Wren is a unique island sub-species. Birds can turn up anywhere, and we find and identify our own, and of course liaise with other birders during five full days. We stay at the brand new Observatory Lodge, which offers comfortable en-suite accommodation, and we are pleased to have a limited number of single rooms as part of our 2012 allocation. This holiday can easily be combined with Shetland or the Outer Hebrides, or with a week in Nethy Bridge, so visit Fair Isle with Heatherlea and choose the option which suits you best.

OUTER HEBRIDES in Autumn

Sat 13 Oct – Fri 19 Oct

Price £1195 pp. Single supplement £140. Maximum eight guests.

Just a couple of places left

The Outer Hebrides are now famous for rarities, and this is a real birders' treat as we seek wind-blown rarities at the best time of year. Possibilities are many and varied as we travel the length of the islands from the Butt of Lewis to Barra. Gyr Falcon, Golden and White-tailed Eagle, Merlin, rafts of scoter, Eider, Long-tailed Duck and divers, Hebridean races of several commoner birds including Song Thrush and Wren, searching the thickets around Stornoway or racing down to Barra to spot a bird in someone's garden, the thrills should come thick and fast on this exciting adventure.



2012 Overseas with Heatherlea

A world of choice at very attractive prices!

Our overseas trips continue to be very popular, and many dates are full or filling. We are responding with more departures, by launching spring 2013 dates well in advance, and by offering new destinations with top guides at very competitive prices.

Heatherlea overseas wildlife holidays have a reputation for being less intensive, whilst still producing memorable wildlife sightings for guests, who we consider friends as well as clients. Our realistic approach means we continue to work closely with agents to reduce costs, and pass the benefits on to you.

Please take a close look, and find great holiday content at very attractive prices - wherever you want to go!



FOCUS on - Wallcreeper

The only member of its family in Europe, this delightful bird, 'The Hoopoe of the Rockface!', lives in largely inaccessible places, and its shy habits and brilliant flashes of blood-red in the wing make it one of the most delightful and sought-after birds of all. We find Wallcreeper on several Heatherlea holidays, and you can join us in the Pyrenees in June to see them, or perhaps you prefer Camargue in Feb/March, or even Nepal in 2013! We also have a new holiday to offer, a short break with Wallcreeper top of the 'hit list' at a very attractive price. We expect a lot of interest, so please contact our office and keep in touch as this trip develops. Make a date to join Kevin in early 2013 to see this delightful bird!

NEW!

WALLCREEPER and LAMMERGEIER

Long weekend

Thurs 28 Feb – Mon 4 March 2013 Guide Price £995.

All aboard the Wallcreeper special! A quick dip into Spain to find key specialities. This time of year is ideal for Wallcreeper and Lammergeier at close quarters, as both can be expected at lower altitudes, and views can be exceptional. Common Crane are migrating northwards and eastwards, circling and calling in great number, and the supporting cast also includes Alpine Accentor, Black Woodpecker, Golden Eagle, Egyptian Vulture, Great and Little Bustards and Pin-tailed and Black-bellied Sandgrouse. Here is the report of the first full day of our last visit;

'Today we hope to see two key birds, Lammergeier and Wallcreeper. Perhaps the most important of all birds on the trip, their habitat means we can perhaps see them both in a



Wallcreeper, photo Cristian Jensen

short period, but will our luck be in? It is a sunny day, with a very cold breeze, and our spirits are high as we set off for the hills. Within 15 mins, we see Griffons circling on a thermal – this often means other birds too, and as the buses stop, the cry goes up in each at the same time

'Lammergeier!' There is an adult bird wheeling around right in front of us, and as we pile out to set up scopes, we can see it is carrying something – a bone perhaps? Our luck is most definitely in, and we experience perhaps the ultimate Pyrenean birding experience, as this mighty vulture repeatedly drops its bone to the rocky ground, swooping down to pick at the remains before carrying it aloft again for a repeat performance. We watch for over twenty minutes, noting the orangey-yellow plumage, the black 'moustache', the shape of wings and tail, truly a memorable sight. Breathtaking views, and what a start to our birding day. We tootle happily through the gorge, and stop at a picturesque spot to look for Wallcreeper. Nothing doing, but we chat about 'jizz', and the way this bird appears to be all wings and no tail in flight. A little further down the road, and as we arrive, a tiny bird, all wings and no tail, flies across the gorge. Can we all get onto it? You bet, and soon we are all watching this delightful grey and black bird creep across the rockface, giving regular views of deep red wings as it flicks around. Lovely, and everyone is well pleased.'

2012 Overseas holidays at a glance

For full details please see our website or ask for an Extra Pack

TRINIDAD and TOBAGO

Classic tour based around Asa Wright Centre

Wed 8 Feb – Sun 19 Feb 2012

Our classic itinerary! A full week at the world-renowned Asa Wright Centre, and all the key places including Oilbird Caves, Scarlet Ibis roost and Little Tobago. Want to save £300? See page 15!

EXTREMADURA

Birds of prey, bustards, sandgrouse and brilliant birding

Sat 21 April – Sat 28 April 2012

Some of the best birding in Europe, featuring many rare and endangered species.

HATE FLYING? – HEATHERLEA HOLIDAYS BY TRAIN ARE HERE!



Some of you really hate flying don't you? Our Camargue trip goes this year by Eurostar, and the original departure is full. We are pleased to offer a second holiday to immediately follow the first – leaving Sun Feb 26, returning Sun March 4, already more than half full.

Our next non-flying overseas destination will be **HOLLAND and FLANDERS by train, Saturday 9 February – Saturday 16 February 2013**

Take the Eurostar to Brussels, and join Flanders native Jozef Leestmans as we visit the best places to see geese, including Red-breasted, White-fronted, Lesser White-fronted, Dark-bellied Brent, and 'Tundra' Bean, with Snow Goose a distinct possibility. Seaduck include Smew, and all three egrets, Eurasian Spoonbill and the first returning Black-tailed Godwits should be seen.

Woodlands hold five woodpeckers including Black, and both Middle- and Lesser-spotted. Crested Tit, Firecrest, Great Grey Shrike and Woodlark overwinter. Many raptors include White-tailed Eagle, Marsh and Hen Harrier, Short-eared Owl and rarities perhaps including Rough-legged Buzzard. Other birds of note might include Caspian Gull, Bearded Tit, Bittern, Crested Lark and Serin. Exciting overseas birding, and not too far away on the train!

'HEATHERLEA EXTRA' – ask for more details, now available on our website.

Next by train will be will be **SWITZERLAND**. Please let us know now if you would like advance notice, this holiday is likely to be popular! You can also go to Extremadura by train, please ask for details.

CAMARGUE

Wonderful European winter birding – without flights!



Sun 26 Feb – Sun 4 Mar 2012 now more than half full
Many of our clients prefer not to fly, so we travel with Eurostar. On this holiday only the birds take to the air!

ICELAND IN WINTER

Winter birds and the Aurora Borealis – exclusive small group

Thurs 9 Feb – Mon 13 Feb 2012

Small group on a long weekend in the land of ice and fire. See Gyrfalcon, Harlequin Duck, Barrow's Goldeneye, White-tailed Eagle and more in a very relaxed setting.

MOROCCO

A big birdlist with a real flavour of North Africa!

Sat 17 March – Tues 27 March 2012

An eleven day delight covering the birdlife of desert, mountain, coast and wetland, plus the spectacle of spring migration. One of our most popular holidays

LESVOS

Eastern Mediterranean specialities and migrants

Sat 21 April – Sat 28 April 2012

Sat 28 April – Sat 5 May 2012

A classic destination, Filling fast at very attractive prices. Migration is at a wonderful peak these two weeks.

ESTONIA

Birding the specialities of north-eastern Europe

Sun 29 April – Sun 6 May 2012

Led by one of Eastern Europe's most respected guides, great birding, now filling.

HUNGARY in Spring

Forest specialities and the Hortobagy National Park

Sat 19 May – Sat 26 May 2012

From rare woodpeckers and owls, to raptors, water birds, warblers and more, one of the best bird lists in Europe awaits!

SPAIN – PYRENEES, STEPPES and EBRO DELTA

A rewarding Grand Tour of Spain's eastern birding locations

Sun 3 Jun – Wed 13 Jun 2012

A great exploration at a relaxed pace from the high Pyrenees to the steppes of central Spain and lowlands of the Ebro delta. This gives much wider range of birds than most Spanish birding holidays.



YELLOWSTONE and GRAND TETON Birds, mammals, Old Faithful and more

Mon 16 July – Sun 29 July 2012

See the geyser basins, watch Old Faithful and enjoy a raft trip on the Snake River as we seek Gray Wolf, Black and Grizzly Bear, Elk, Moose, Beaver – an American safari! Birds include Trumpeter Swan, Mountain Bluebird, Lazuli Bunting, and more.

'Apparently a Wolf pack had killed an Elk calf yesterday and now a large Grizzly Bear had taken over the carcass about 150 yards from the road, and we could easily scope that distance. Within a few minutes a skinny blackish Wolf came warily down the hill and across the shingle towards the bear. The bear acted threateningly and the wolf hung back before lying down about 20 yards away.

Meanwhile in the background two Coyotes approached on the far bank and were weighing up their opportunities. One of the Coyotes then started chasing a Badger through the thick scrub only for the tables to turn and we saw the Badger chasing the Coyote. This must have gone on for a while because we saw the Coyote chasing the Badger again a few minutes later higher up the hill. What excitement! Also with starring mammal roles were some Pronghorns up the slope, Bison in



the valley, a Marmot and Uinta Ground Squirrels. Add Elk and Mule Deer earlier and we had seen 10 species of mammal this morning before 8am.' Ian Ford, Heatherlea Trip Report.

ICELAND

'Complete Iceland' – Birds, cetaceans and geology.

Thurs 26 July – Thurs 2 August 2012

A complete tour designed to give you the very best, on an unforgettable and thorough exploration. Want to 'do' Iceland? Look no further! Want to save £300? See above!

SPITSBERGEN

Polar Bear, Walrus and birdlife in the incredible Arctic wilderness

Sat 28 July – Mon 6 Aug 2012 'Antarctic Dream'

Sun 22 July – Tues 31 July 2012 'Plancius'

other dates available, please ask.

NOVA SCOTIA – BAY OF FUNDY

North American bird migration and cetaceans

Sat 18 Aug – Sat 25 Aug 2012

Birding is excellent, and this is one of the best places in the world to see whales; key target is endangered Northern Right Whale, as we take four boat trips.

NEW for 2012!

ANDALUCIA and Northern MOROCCO

Specialities and autumn migration in southern Spain and Morocco

Tues 18 September – Tues 25 September 2012

A great new idea, visiting both sides of the Straits of Gibraltar to watch Europe's most important bird migration.

SPECIAL DEALS WITH HEATHERLEA – your single stop for birding holidays.

Book one of these overseas holidays plus a week at Mountview Hotel, and save a total of £300!



We want to give you more, so here is

another great new idea. Join us overseas in either Trinidad or Iceland, AND also choose any full week at Mountview Hotel in 2012, to save a total of £300!

We have chosen two of our most popular overseas holidays, one in cool northern lands, the other in tropical climes, to give you a good choice. Both are full of birds and other delights, neither are 'intensive' holidays, and your experienced guides will make sure everything is done the Heatherlea way. If either Iceland or Trinidad is on your 'must do' list, this is well worth consideration; great holidays at a very attractive price! Both are filling fast, and if you have already booked in Iceland or Trinnie

then yes, you can take save £300 by booking a second holiday at Mountview.

Availability is naturally limited, and we are only making six places available for each of the two overseas destinations at this special price. For full details ring 01479 821248.

Complete ICELAND Thurs July 26 – Thurs August 2

All the birds, three great whale trips (Blue Whale this year!), and fabulous geology. Our definitive Icelandic experience, led by ever-popular Andy Jones, joined with more than ten clients by our very own Jonny Pott from Scotland. A classic trip!

TRINIDAD & TOBAGO Wed Feb 8 – Sun Feb 19

A great holiday, which we know very well. Top value with seven days at Asa Wright, and all the key places included on both islands. Excellent local guides are joined by Heatherlea favourite Mike Coleman, so expect great birding on this trip, with some lame jokes too!

ECUADOR and GALAPAGOS**Wildlife of Galapagos and birding mainland Ecuador**

Sat 29 September – Sat 6 October 2012

A once-in-a-lifetime holiday to enjoy Ecuador and the incredible Galapagos.

HUNGARY in Autumn**Spectacular Crane migration and absorbing autumn birding**

Sat 29 September – Sat 6 October 2012

A tremendous autumn feast of birds, centring around the spectacular migration of up to 70,000 Common Cranes.

NEW for 2012!**BRAZIL****South American rainforest birding, at a relaxed pace.**

Thurs 25 October – Sat 3 November 2012

On this brand new trip we seek a big list (250 – 300 species) in the Atlantic rainforest, while offering value for money on a relatively short holiday.

BOTSWANA**A short, high quality big game and bird safari**

Fri 30 November – Mon 10 December 2012

A fabulous birding and big game safari with 8 nights in high quality lodges and luxury tented camps amongst the finest in the country. The perfect short safari!

2013 – some holidays in the pipeline!

All itineraries can be seen on our website, or just ask for an Extra Pack. We are now booking these holidays, or register your interest, and we will contact you as holidays begin to fill.

SPAIN Birding and Lynx

Mon 21 Jan – Mon 28 Jan 2013

GAMBIA**African rainforest birding and migration**

Mon 14 Jan – Mon 21 Jan 2013

COSTA RICA**Land of the Quetzal**

Sun 20 Jan – Mon 4 Feb 2013

NEW for 2013!**CUBA****Easy Caribbean birding with Heatherlea favourite**

Mike Coleman

Mar/Apr 2013, more soon!

CAMARGUE**Wonderful European winter birding – without flights!**

Sat 16 Feb – Sat 23 Feb 2013

NEPAL**Birds, mammals and culture – specially designed for the first-time visitor.**

Thurs 28 Feb – Tues 12 March 2013 Prices held! Book now for 2013 and pay no more than our published prices for 2012!

NEW for 2013!**HOLLAND and FLANDERS by train****Eurostar to Brussels then great winter birding**

Sat 9 Feb – Sat 16 Feb 2013

ICELAND IN WINTER**Winter birds and the Aurora Borealis – exclusive small group**

Thurs 21 Feb – Mon 25 Feb 2013

NEW for 2013!**WALLCREEPER and LAMMERGEIER long weekend**

Thurs 28 Feb – Mon 4 March 2013

MOROCCO**A big birdlist with a real flavour of North Africa!**

Sat 16 March – Tues 26 March 2013

ITALY – PO DELTA and VENICE**Great birding, with the option of continuing to Venice**

Sat 23 March – Sat 30 March 2013

LESVOS**Eastern Mediterranean specialities and migrants**

Sat 20 April – Sat 27 April 2013

Sat 27 April – Sat 4 May 2013

EXTREMADURA**Birds of prey, bustards, sandgrouse and brilliant birding**

Sat 20 April – Sat 27 April 2013

POLAND**Birding the specialities of north-eastern Europe**

Sat 4 May – Sat 11 May 2013

HUNGARY in Spring**Forest specialities and the Hortobagy National Park**

Sat 18 May – Sat 25 May 2013

JAPAN**Winter birding**

Late Nov – early Dec 2013

New itinerary under development with leading Asian birder Mark Brazil, who will personally lead our trip. More detail coming soon!