**Lochs and Ponds**

White Loch, Glenwhan pond, Purgatory Burn, Water of Trool near Calkins, Loch Dee, Daer Reservoir, Earshaig ponds, St. Mary’s Loch, Thirlstane pond and Watch Water reservoir.

The edges of lochs and ponds, especially those with emergent vegetation, can be very rich in plants and insects. In early spring, Yellow Iris begins to form dense beds of leaves; its bright yellow flowers appear in June and July. Water Crowfoot grows in shallow water and wet mud; its small white buttercup-like flowers can be seen throughout the summer.

Golden-ringed Dragonflies (up to 10 cm long and the largest in Britain) are regularly seen in a few locations for a short period in summer. Coot, Moorhen, Tufted Duck and MALLARD may build their nests and hatch their young amongst the vegetation in and around lochs and ponds. Common Gulls breed at Daer reservoir.

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**Rivers and Streams**


Chapel LAW, Glenlivet

Brown Trout are resident in almost all the burns and Salmon and Sea Trout come up the rivers to spawn. Perhaps the most characteristic bird of the upper reaches is the Dipper, so called because it is always bobbing up and down on rocks and boulders, or because it walks upstream under water seeking insects, particularly Caddis Fly larvae. Dippers build their domed mossy nests under bridges or in wet shady banks. Another bird often associated with hill streams is the Grey Wagtail, which has a grey back but its underside is a bright lemon yellow. Sand Martins nest along the banks of some rivers and in summer can often be seen, along with Swallows, feeding on insects above the water. They can usually be seen on the sections of the Tweed between Galashiels and Melrose. Other birds that you may see include Kingfisher and Grey Heron. Ospreys have recently started to breed in the Southern Uplands, especially around St. Mary’s Loch and in the Tweed Valley. Otter are also active on most of our rivers and lochs so you may be lucky and catch a glimpse of one, though they are mostly nocturnal.

On the steeper ravines, in places inaccessible to grazing animals, Rowan trees thrive producing masses of bright red berries in autumn.

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**Coniferous Woodland**

Glenwhan Forest, Craigairn Fell, Galloway Forest Park, Greskine Forest, Garroch Forest, Potburn, Blackhouse, Traquair Forest, Yair Forest, Abbey St. Bathans and Peninnishiel.

Parts of the Way pass through large areas of coniferous plantation - mostly Sitka Spruce. This tree was introduced to Britain from the west coast of North America, by David Douglas in 1831. It was planted here in large numbers after World War I when the Forestry Commission was set up to increase the production of workable timber. It is now the dominant tree in the forests of southern Scotland, planted by private forestry companies as well as by Forestry Commission Scotland.

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Glen Trool

The land chosen for this kind of forestry is often open moorland or hill land. Before planting, the land is deep ploughed or mounded - to drain it and to expose bare earth. After planting, the ground is fertilized and kept free of weeds until the young trees are established.

The open landscape gradually gives way to blanket forest cover over a number of years. Harvesting - often clear felling - takes place after 40-45 years.

**Birds in commercial forestry**

The habitats within a coniferous forest and the number of species of birds can vary dramatically according to the age and height of the trees and the density of the canopy.

- Plantations are fenced to protect young trees from browsing animals. This allows a good growth of grass and heather which, for the first few years, provides cover and food for a number of small mammals.
HEATHER MOORLAND

Wanlockhead area, Lowther Hills, Blakemuir, Minchmoor, and the Lammermuir Hills.

On some areas of open moorland the heather is actively managed for the benefit of the resident population of Red Grouse. Red Grouse are native to Scotland but numbers can be maintained at an artificially high level by burning off patches of heather in early spring so that each year there are plenty of young shoots for the birds to feed on. The burnt strips are kept small because grouse do not like feeding in exposed situations far from cover. The older, larger heather gives them the shelter that they need and provides nest sites. Breeding success depends upon the food supply available for the hens prior to egg laying and the weather when the chicks are small.

This management also benefits other birds that breed on the moorland such as Snipe and Curlew, which haunt the wetter areas, and Golden Plover, Skylark and Meadow Pipit on the drier parts. Raptors such as Merlin, Short-eared Owl and Hen Harrier are also present all year round and may occasionally be seen hunting for small birds and mammals. On a few hills there are Black Grouse as well as Ring ouzel though they are both becoming much scarcer than they used to be.

Another creature that you may come upon is the Blue or Mountain Hare. In the summer these animals are light brown with a white tail and black tips to their ears. During the winter they turn white, for camouflage, except for the tips of the ears that remain black. Often nature catches them out, as in winters with little snow they are very conspicuous. In some parts of the country the Stoat also turns white (Ermine) in the winter, except for the tip of the tail. When it is in its brown summer colour, the black tip to the tail is the best way to distinguish it from its close relative, the smaller Weasel. Adders are present on many of the moors and Foxes can sometimes be seen hunting in the hills during daylight hours. In May look out for the male Emperor Moth, a conspicuous large day-flying moth in search of the more nocturnal females.

SHEEPWALK/WHITE HILL

Kilhern, Derry, Waterside, Upper Scar Glen, Ullieside, Ettrick Head, Rismohn, Glenlude Hill and from Brown Knowe to Yair Forest.

Sheep on the hills are predominantly Scottish Blackface or Cheviots but other breeds and crossbred sheep may be seen here and there along the Way.

Early in the year Ravens build large stick nests either on precipitous cliff faces or in tall isolated trees. They depend upon carrion for survival and have increased locally in recent years.

From late March to April the first Wheatears arrive in the hills after spending the winter in Africa. They can be recognized by their conspicuous white rumps, easily seen as they flit from boulder to boulder or perch upon the dykes. The most numerous species in these grasslands are Sky Lark and Meadow Pipit.

(coniferous woodland continued)

Red Grouse, Black Grouse, Short-eared Owls, Meadow Pipits, Sky Larks, Whinchat and Grasshopper Warblers.

• As the trees grow and the grassland begins to disappear, so birds like Meadow Pipits and Sky Larks are replaced by Chaffinches, Wrens, Willow Warblers, Redpolls and thrushes.

• Older and taller trees (say 10 - 20m high) have a different population - Goldcrests, Common Crossbills, Siskins and Coal Tits are dominant species. Goshawks and a few pairs of Osprey are now nesting in the forests of the Tweed Valley.

• Some species such as Sparrowhawk, Robin and Chaffinch may occur at all stages of forest development.

Other wildlife in commercial forestry

In the western part of the Way, look out for Red Deer, Roe Deer and Feral Goats, the deer being seen most frequently early in the morning and at dusk. Red Squirrels can sometimes be seen in the more mature plantations. In the central and eastern parts of the Way you may see Sika Deer and Roe Deer and east of Yair, Grey Squirrels. Penmanshiel Forest is an especially good place to spot Slow Worm and Common Lizard.

When the trees become more mature they start to bear cones which provide seeds for Red Squirrels and flocks of Siskins and Common Crossbills. If the trees are thinned, light will penetrate through to the ground and plants begin to grow again. The woodland edge where habitats merge usually has the most wildlife.
WILDLIFE IN SOUTHERN SCOTLAND

The Southern Upland Way traverses most of the major habitat types represented in southern Scotland. In the west, near Portpatrick, the route heads along the coastal cliffs before turning inland and thereafter it passes through farmland, parkland, broadleaved and coniferous woodland, as well as open moorland and sheepwalk or whitehill (areas of open grassland, usually at higher altitudes). The Way skirts ponds and lochs, weaves along small upland burns, follows forest tracks and ancient drove roads, passes ruined castles and crosses over exposed hill summits. Eventually the North Sea is reached near Cockburnspath and once again coastal wildlife is evident.

COASTAL CLIFFS

Portpatrick to Kilartrigstan. Pease Dean to Cove Harbour. From April through to June, the pink flowers of Thrift (or Sea Pink) make a marvellous show upon the cliff tops. Another plant associated with the short grazed turf is Spring Squirrel, which may be recognised by its blue flowers and narrow curly leaves.

At different times of year you will find a wide variety of wild flowers, so many that it is worthwhile taking a small field guide with you to help identify the different species.

On sunny days in July and August the Grayling Butterfly may be seen on the rocky slopes, but they are well camouflaged when at rest. The Common Blue is much more conspicuous.

Out at sea, the most conspicuous seabirds are the Gannets, flying to and from their breeding cliffs, sometimes plunging into the water after fish. Gannets in the south-west nest on Ailsa Craig or Scar Rocks; those in the east on the Bass Rock. Eider, our largest duck species, can be seen on the water diving for mussels and other shellfish. Dunlin, Turnstone, Redshank, Ringed Plover and other waders feed along the shoreline, especially during the autumn and winter months.

For those with an interest, the rock pools at low tide are teaming with marine life: crabs, small fish and other marine animals can be found there. From the cliff tops, if you are lucky, you may see Common Porpoises, a Basking Shark or even a whale.

FARMLAND

Stranraer-Castle Kennedy area, Dalry area, Sanquhar, Moffat, Yair Bridge to Lauder and Longformacus to Cockburnspath.

Low ground farming in south-west Scotland is dominated by the dairy industry. Here, as elsewhere in Britain, the predominant milk cows are Holstein/Friesians but look out for the Belted Galloway, an uncommon distinctive local breed kept for its beef and dairy value. The more numerous black or dun-coloured Galloway Cattle are a different breed reared exclusively for beef production.

Sheep are grazed mainly on the less productive ground at higher elevations. The Way rarely passes through intensively farmed arable land except in some sections of the Scottish Borders, e.g Wanent Walls, near Lauder and Whitburn and Blackburn, between Abbey St. Bathans and Cockburnspath.

In grassland and arable areas you will find Grey Partridge and Red Legged Partridge. Sky Lark, Goldfinch, Yellowhammer, Meadow Pipit, Wood Pigeon and Pied Wagtail to mention just a few birds. Along the hedgerows you can spot Dunnock, Wren and Bullfinch. In autumn, flocks of Fieldfare and Redwing are feeding in the fields and on the berries of Rowan and Hawthorn. Adder, Slow Worm and Common Lizard may be seen, especially on warm sunny days in spring.
Biodiversity – The variety of life. The maintenance and enhancement of this unique and special resource is being addressed by a broad partnership of individuals and organizations in Dumfries & Galloway and The Scottish Borders. Biodiversity Action Plans, which aim to ensure biodiversity SURVIVES for future generations to enjoy, have been produced by both Local Authorities.

The route of the Southern Upland Way will introduce you to a rich diversity of wildlife and habitats otherwise known as Broadleaved Woodland.

The Southern Upland Way wends its way from coast to coast across the hills of the Southern Uplands. Additional SUW leaflets in this series include Discover Scotland’s most challenging Trail (inc. general information and accommodation list), Archaeology, Geology, Place Names, and Killing Times (Covenanter History).

Cree Valley Community Woodlands at Water of Minnoch, Caldons, Dumcrieff, Abbey St Bathans and Pease Dean.

Though less extensive than the coniferous forests the broadleaved woods have a greater variety of plants, birds and insects. This is because they mainly consist of native species upon which large numbers of native insects thrive. Moreover, because the trees cast only light patchy shade a variety of plants and shrubs will grow beneath them providing food and shelter for insects and birds. Carpets of Bluebells and Wood Anemones appear in some places in early spring.

Buzzards may nest in the woods but they usually hunt elsewhere in more open areas, feeding on Rabbits and various species of small rodents. Summer migrants in the oak woods include Pied Flycatcher and Spotted Flycatcher, Redstart and Chiffchaff; some beech and oak woods have Wood Warbler.

The western part of southern Scotland is one of the last remaining strongholds in Britain for the Red Squirrel. They do best in coniferous forests but can be more easily seen in mixed or broadleaved woodland. In the east, the introduced Grey Squirrel predominates.

Leaflets and further information about walking the Southern Upland Way can be obtained from:

Dumfries and Galloway Council Ranger Service, Militia House, English Street, Dumfries DG1 2HR or Scottish Borders Council Ranger Service, Harestanes Visitor Centre, Ancrum, Jedburgh TD8 6UQ

Official website for up to date information: www.dumgal.gov.uk/southernuplandway