



Sea and Coast

Muir is Oirthir

■ Lochalsh

1) Kirkton Bay (B, 1-2km)
Look out for: Otters, wildfowl and waders.
Best time to visit: October - April.
How to get there: Off the A87(T) 3.5 miles before Kyle of Lochalsh, park adjacent to church at NG829272.

2) Broadford Bay (A-B, 0-4km)
“...probably the best birding spot on Skye...” (Skye-Birds.com)
Visit Ashaig, Ardnish and the immediate bay area itself.
Look out for: Otters, seabirds, wildfowl and waders. In the winter, Slavonian grebes, red-throated diver, black-throated diver and great northern diver abound. Common seals haul out on the offshore skerries at Ardnish.
Best time to visit: All year round.
How to get there: Off the A87(T), 8 miles from the Skye Bridge, NG6523.

3) Loch Dunvegan (SAC) (A-B, 0-1 km)
Look out for: Common seals.
Part of the Ascrib, Isay and Dunvegan Special Area of Conservation. Watch from the shore or take a seal boat trip from Dunvegan Castle.
Best time to visit: All year, mid June to mid July for young seals. Mid March to mid October for seal boat trips.
How to get there: 1 mile north of Dunvegan, NG247491.

Other places to watch seals in Skye and Lochalsh:
Plockton (seal boat trips), Elgol (boat trips to Loch Coruisk, Kylerhea Narrows (both grey and common seal).

4) Rubha Hunish (SSSI) (D, 6km)
Look out for: Minke whale, basking shark. Fulmar, shag, razorbill, common guillemot, and kittiwake at the nest.
Best time to visit: June – August.
How to get there: 22 miles north from Portree on the A855, park at Shulista, NG422743 and walk out to NG410761 from where a descent of the cliff is possible. Access to the point involves a scramble down from the cliffs.

5) Neist Point (A-B, 2km)
Look out for: Seabirds including shags, fulmars, guillemots, razorbills, gannets, shearwaters (both Manx and sooty) as well as great and arctic skuas. Cetaceans including minke whale.
Best time to visit: June – August.
How to get there: Travel from Dunvegan through Glendale to Waterstein. Park at road end (NG132478) and follow path to lighthouse.

Other places to visit: Point of Sleat and Dunvegan Head.

Freshwater

Flor-uigse

■ Lochalsh

6) Loch Shiel (B, 0-1 km)
Look out for: Whooper swan, goldeneye, goosander, wigeon, dipper.
Best time to visit: November – March.
How to get there: Park off the A87(T) 0.5 miles from Shiel Bridge at NG942183.

7) Abhainn a’ Ghlinne Bhig (Glen Beag River) (B, 1-2km)
Look out for: Massive sand martin colony (a Species of European Conservation Concern) in a 20m (60ft) high sand cliff. A range of migrant birds including tree pipit, wood warbler and blackcap in the woodlands.
Best time to visit: May – June.
How to get there: From Shiel Bridge travel along the Old Military Road to Glenelg. Turn left 1 mile south at the Eileanreach junction. Stop at NG812175. The sand martin colony is 200m upstream of the road.

8) Mointeach nan Lochainn Dubha (Moorland of the Black Lochs) (SSSI, SAC) (B, 1-2 km)
Look out for: Dragonflies & damselflies. Water plants including white water lily, water lobelia, lesser water plantain and pipewort.
Best time to visit: July – August.
How to get there: Two miles south of Broadford on the A851. Park at the layby at NG683203.

9) Loch Mealt (B, 0.5-1 km)
What to see: Little grebe, tufted duck, goldeneye and occasional pochard, greylag geese and wintering whooper swans. Loch Mealt itself is home to a relict population of Arctic charr.
Best time to visit: November – March.
How to get there: 16 miles north from Portree on the A855. Park at the Kilt Rock car park, NG508655.

10) Loch Suardal (A, 0-1 km)
“a bit of a gem” (Skye-Birds.com)
Look out for: Whooper swan, wigeon, teal, goldeneye, mallard. Rarities noted here include garganey and green winged teal. Only regular Skye site for moorhen.
Best time to visit: October – March.
How to get there: Two miles north of Dunvegan (past Dunvegan Castle).

11) Mill Pond, Portree (A, 0.5 km)
Created around 100 years ago to provide clean water for the Portree Woollen Mill.
Look out for: A fascinating range of aquatic invertebrates. Palmate newts abound as do common frog and toad. Pipistrelle bats, swallows and spotted flycatcher feed over the pond in summer.
Best time to visit: April – July.
How to get there: Off Hedgefield Road, NG473437.

Croft and Farm Land

Fearann Croite is Tuathanais

■ Lochalsh

12) Duirinish/Drumbuie (NTS) (A, 1-4 km)
Look out for: Herb-rich haymeadows.
Best time to visit: June – July.
How to get there: From Duirinish Station (NG777314), follow the footpath across the crofts to Drumbuie.

13) Ullinish – Oronsay (A-B, 2-4km)
Look out for: Orchids including small white, common spotted, heath spotted, northern marsh, fragrant, greater and lesser butterfly.
Best time to visit: June – July.
How to get there: Turn left off the A863 towards Ullinish at NG338384. Turn left 1 mile on and park in a small quarried area (NG322374) at the end of the road. A low tide is essential for the walk out to Oronsay.

14) Trumpan (Waternish) (A, 1-4 km along road)
Look out for: Corncrake.
Best time to visit: May – July.
How to get there: The area around Trumpan Church is a good spot to listen out for this rarest of Scottish birds. Parking is available opposite at NG224612.

Woodland

A’ Choille

■ Lochalsh

15) Coille Mhòr (NTS: SSSI, SAC) (C, 2-3 km)
Look out for: Breeding birds include great spotted woodpecker, tree pipit, redstart, wood warbler, and spotted flycatcher. Otters, pine martens and badger frequent the woods.
Best time to visit: Late April – July.
How to get there: Off the A87(T), two miles from Kyle of Lochalsh. Park at Balmacara Square. 300m on, at Coilemore, take the track on the right hand side at NG807282. The nearby Loch Achaidh na h-Inich (NG808310) is home to a wide range of dragonflies and damselflies and is well worth a visit in July and August.

16) Carr Brae (A, 2-4 km along road)
Look out for: Summer migrants including blackcap, garden warbler wood warbler, tree pipit, redstart as well as resident woodland species including great spotted woodpecker.
Best time to visit: April – July.
How to get there: Off the A87 (T) between Inverinate and Eilean Donan Castle. Park at Dornie and walk along the back road towards Carr Brae (NG887253).

17) Coille Thogavaig (SSSI) (B, 2-3 km)
Look out for: Golden eagles. Summer migrants including redstart and pied flycatcher, resident woodland birds including great spotted woodpecker and tawny owl.
Best time to visit: Late April – July.
How to get there: Turn right off the A851 for Ord. Park by the shore, cross the river and follow road south to entrance to wood around NG614127.

18) Armadale Castle Gardens (A, 1-2km)
Look out for: Woodland birds including chiffchaff, garden warbler, blackcap, and wood warbler.
Best time to visit: Late April – July.
How to get there: ¾ mile north from ferry terminal at Armadale, NG639044.

19) Kinloch-Leitir Fura (SAC) (A, 4-7 km)
Look out for: Adders, slow worms and common lizards. 15 different butterfly species including Scotch argus, green hairstreak, dark green fritillary, small pearl-bordered fritillary and painted lady.
Best time to visit: April – August.
How to get there: Off the A851 near Drumfearn, NG703161.

20) Hallaig Woods (B, 5km)
Look out for: Wildflower-rich native woodland on Jurassic limestone. Mountain avens, dark red helleborine and the rare rock whitebeam present. Holly fern and Wilson’s filmy fern also occur here. Birds include golden eagle, sea eagle, sparrowhawk, tawny owl, spotted and pied flycatcher and redstart.
Best time to visit: April – July.
How to get there: By ferry from Sconser. From Inverarish head east to start of walk at North Fearn (NG594361) then along the cart track to Hallaig.

Mountain and Moorland

Beinn is Mòinteach

■ Lochalsh

21) Morvich, Kintail
The mountains around Kintail are a stronghold for the golden eagle. Contact the NTS Rangers for information on where and when to look.

22) Aros, Portree
At the Aros Centre on the Isle of Skye you can watch superb CCTV footage of the UK’s largest bird of prey - the white-tailed eagle. Depending on the time of year, you may also be able to see footage of a sparrowhawk nest, the homelife of the heron or the antics of a family of tawny owls.

23) Skye Cuillin (SSSI/SPA/SAC)
The 29,490 hectare Cuillins Golden Eagle Special Protection Area supports eight breeding pairs of golden eagle. Scanning the skyline anywhere within this area may reward the visitor with a view of this majestic bird.

24) Camas Malag (SSSI, SAC) (B, 1-2 km)
Part of the Strath Special Area of Conservation - *“one of the most floristically-rich areas of limestone pavements in Scotland”* (JNCC).
Look out for: Carpets of mountain avens. A range of lime-loving wildflowers and ferns amongst the limestone pavement.
Best time to visit: May – June.
How to get there: Four miles south along the B8083 from Broadford, turn left for Kilbride and park when you reach the shore. There is a good exposure of limestone pavement at NG583188.

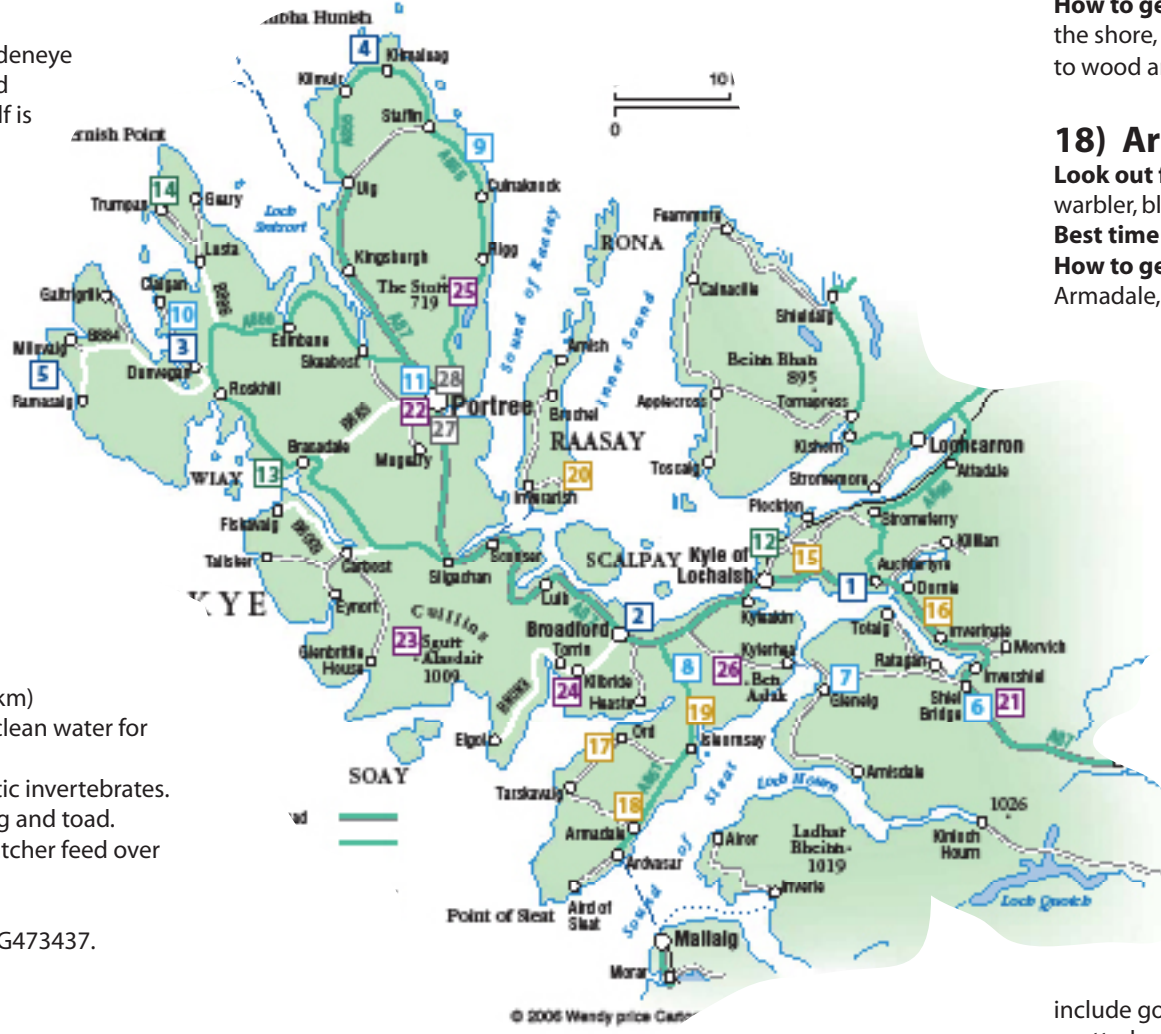
25) The Storr (SSSI, SAC) (C-D, 3-6km)
Look out for: Arctic-alpine plants and high ground birds including raven, ring ouzel and golden eagle. Many interesting plants can be seen at lower levels. Dwarf willow and the rare Iceland purslane can be found towards the Storr summit.
Best time to visit: March – August.
How to get there: 5 miles north of Portree on the A855. There is a good path up from the car park (NG509529).
Warning: Please avoid the area directly below the Storr cliff as it is unstable and liable to collapse.

26) Beinn Aslak (FCS) (D, 4.5 km)
Look out for: Ptarmigan, occasionally snow bunting.
Best time to visit: November – February.
How to get there: Turn off the A87(T) 3 miles past the Skye Bridge towards Kylerhea. Stop 3 miles along this road at NG729217 and follow the forest track up the hill to the south. The summit of Beinn Aslak is 1.2km east from the track end.

27) The Lump (Am Meall) (A, 0.5 km)
The Lump in Portree is worth a visit if only for the busy rookery. The Apothecary’s Tower there is a great place for wildlife watching out over Portree Bay.

28) Leasgeary Wood (A, 1 km) (NG479437)
Leasgeary Wood regularly features tawny owl. Rarer migrants like wood warbler turn up occasionally.

List of abbreviations used:	
SNH	Scottish Natural Heritage
JNCC	Joint Nature Conservation Committee
SAC	Special Area of Conservation
SPA	Special Protection Area
SSSI	Site of Special Scientific Interest
NTS	National Trust for Scotland
FCS	Forestry Commission Scotland



The Built Environment



Henricia oculata starfish on coral beach © James Merryweather



Hazel gloves fungus © James Merryweather



Arctic tern chick © Laurie Campbell



Bog asphodel © Caithness Biodiversity Collection

Cover and inside sunset photos by Shona MacLennan, cover photos by — Design by Roman Martin.

THE VARIETY OF LIFE

BIODIVERSITY

THE HIGHLAND COUNCIL

EUROPEAN UNION

SCOTTISH NATURAL HERITAGE

2006 Programmes, Scottish Natural Heritage and the Highland Council.

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Highland Council Rangers: 01471 822 905

National Trust for Scotland Rangers: 01599 511 231

Balmacara Estate Office: 01599 566 325

Forestry Commission Scotland: 01320 366 322

Scottish Natural Heritage (Portree): 01478 613 329

Tourist Information Offices:

01478 612 137 (Portree)

01599 534276 (Kyle of Lochalsh)

www.visithighlands.com/skye

Habitats

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An introduction to Biodiversity

Biodiversity is short for “biological diversity”, or the variety of plants and animals in the world. We depend on this richness of plants and animals. It has important economic benefits, through farming, fishing, tourism and through the provision of raw materials for medical research for example. Plants and animals are an important part of our cultural heritage, and give us pleasure and enjoyment. Biodiversity also provides us with natural services such as soil creation, biological control of pests and flood prevention.

The range of habitats in Skye and Lochalsh and their importance for species of conservation concern was highlighted by the 2003 Skye and Lochalsh Local Biodiversity Action Plan. For details, see:

www.highlandbiodiversity.com

Sea and Coast

You can experience the marine environment of Skye and Lochalsh from one of the many tour boats in the area. Boats operate from Plockton, Kyle, Armadale, Broadford, Elgol, Portree, Staffin, and Dunvegan. Details are available from the local Tourist Information Offices.

The coastline of Skye and Lochalsh offers many opportunities to get close to marine wildlife too. The exposed headlands which are typical of Skye can be well worth the effort of walking to them.

Freshwater

There is no shortage of fresh water in Skye and Lochalsh. In the summer, red-throated divers breed on many of the area's lochs and lochans. Winter visitors include whooper swan and goldeneye, both from the Icelandic breeding populations. Palmate newts are common here as are the spectacular white water lily. Rare aquatic plants found in the area include pipewort and lesser water plantain.

Croft and Farm Land

Although the conservation value of croft grassland has declined here, some areas are still cut annually for hay for winter feeding of cattle in the traditional manner. These haymeadows benefit from the time that the hay is left to dry out, allowing wildflower seeds to disperse, something that modern silage production does not allow for.

Woodland

The woodlands of the west coast of the highlands have been described as temperate rainforest! A wonderful variety of plants can be found there including rare lichens, orchids such as long-leaved helleborine *Cephalanthera longifolia* and fragile filmy ferns which depend on constant humidity for their survival.

Since the completion of the Skye Bridge, pine martens have become as common in Skye woods as they are in Lochalsh. It is only a matter of time before badgers too will cross the bridge to repopulate territory which they undoubtedly held in past centuries.

Mountain and Moorland

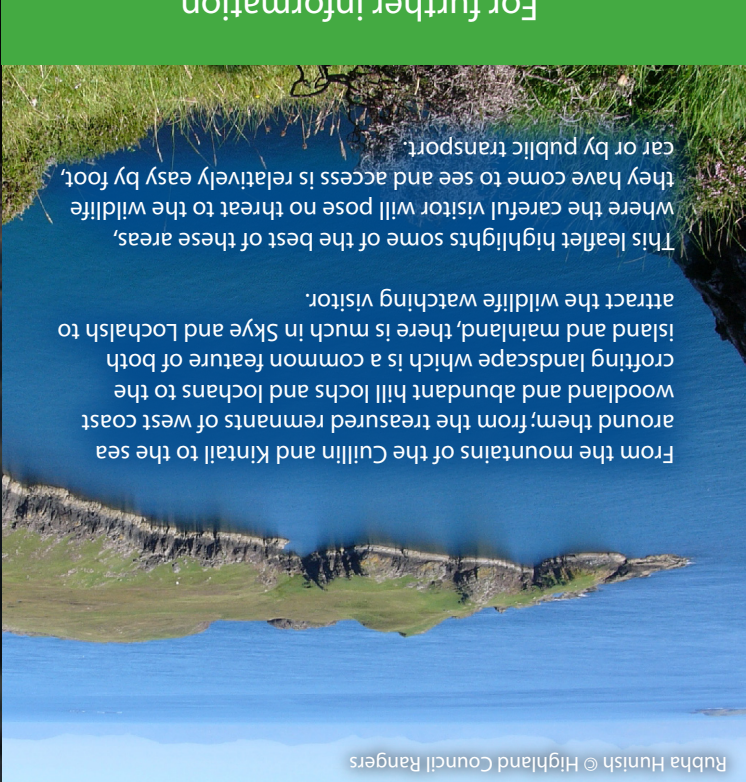
One of the big attractions of Skye and Lochalsh for the wildlife watcher is the likelihood of seeing one, or both, of our native eagles during a visit to the area. The disclosure of too much information could be detrimental to the welfare of these birds so locations of nest sites are not given here.

The Built Environment

One place you are really likely to see otters in Skye and Lochalsh is around the fishing piers of the area. Kyle, Kyleakin, Plockton, Broadford and Portree harbours are all good places to watch.

The woodlands around the towns can be very rewarding for birdwatchers.

For further information



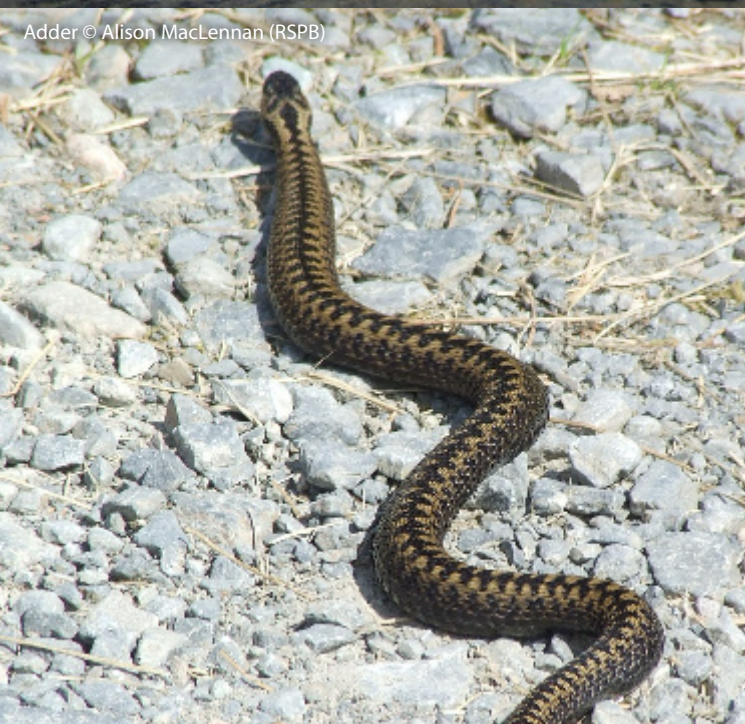
Rubha Hunish © Highland Council Rangers



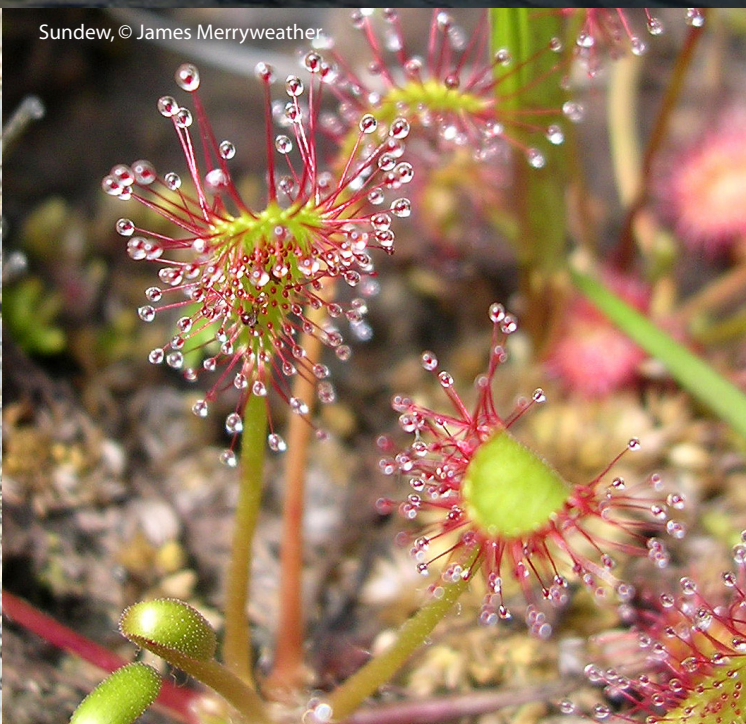
Bottle-nosed dolphin © Bill Cowie, www.isleofrona.co.uk



White-tailed eagle © www.skye-birds.com



Adder © Alison MacLennan (RSPB)



Sundew, © James Merryweather

Wildlife watching tips

Sùil air fiadh-bheatha – comhairle

Tides

Be sure to check the tides before setting out sea-watching. Incoming tides can be particularly rewarding when looking out for otters and cetaceans. High tide is a good time to see waders at roost on off-shore skerries. An exciting range of marine wildlife can be found by searching the tide-line during low spring tides.

Otters

Look out for the distinctive ‘V’ bow-wave when an otter swims at the surface and for the flick of a slender tail as it dives.

Eagles

lolairean

Sea eagle (white-tailed eagle)

The Aros Centre in Portree has an excellent sea eagle exhibition with a live CCTV link to a sea eagle nest. Boat trips to see sea eagles are available from Portree too - information from the Aros Centre.

Golden eagle

The 29,490 hectare Cuillins Special Protection Area comprises a diverse range of habitats including heather moorland, rough grassland, blanket bog, coastal woodland, freshwater lochs and lochans, montane heaths and exposed rock and scree. In total, this area supports eight breeding pairs of golden eagle.

The mountains around Kintail are another stronghold for the golden eagle. Scanning the skyline in this area will often give the watcher a glimpse of this much sought raptor. Contact the NTS Rangers for local information and details of places to visit.

Walk grades

Ìrean nan cuairtean

Visitors to the sites listed should be familiar with the use of an Ordnance Survey (O.S.) map. Start points of most walks are indicated by an O.S. grid reference.

The walks are graded as follows:

A : Easy walking, on established paths.

B : Walking over paths and rough ground at low level – a reasonable level of fitness required.

C : Walking over rough/boggy ground and some hills – a reasonable level of fitness required.

D : Walking through and over mountainous terrain – a good level of fitness required.

“Please remember Know the Code before you go. Enjoy, Respect and Protect.”

For more details: Tel SNH 01738 458545 or www.outdooraccess-scotland.com

Wildlife on the web

www.highlandbiodiversity.com

www.snh.org.uk

www.forestry.gov.uk/scotland

www.skye.co.uk

www.skye-birds.com

www.skyeferns.co.uk

www.otter.org

www.aros.co.uk/skye-sea-eagles.html

www.jmt.org/cons/skye/environ.html#fauna

www.nature-diary.co.uk

A guide to finding wildlife in Skye and Lochalsh

