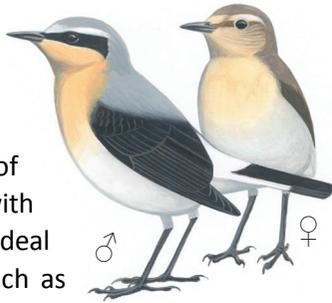


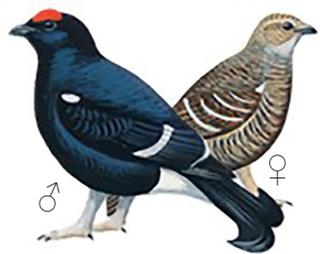
# On the Hills

The land surrounding the Loch is used mainly for traditional sheep farming, and has been for hundreds of years. The steep hill faces with their scree slopes provide ideal nesting habitat for birds such as Wheatears.



Wheatear

The abundant heather moorland on the other hand, offers Red and Black Grouse a source of food and shelter. Male grouse also use the hill's grassy heaths as a stage on which to attract females. This is called a "Lek" and the grouse's distinctive "go, go, Go-away" call can be heard from late April.



Black Grouse

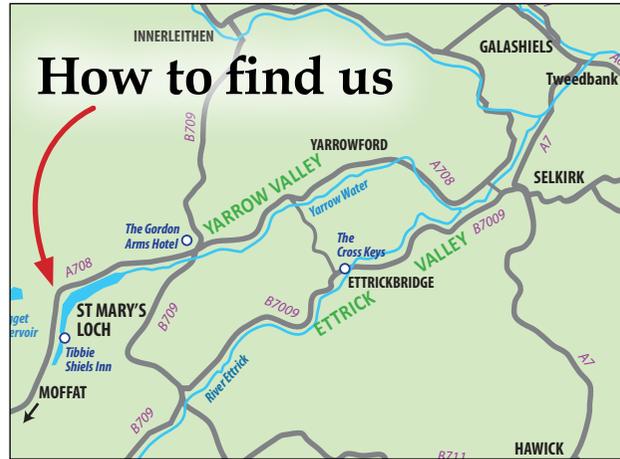


Red Grouse

Also commonly seen on the hills surrounding the Loch is the Buzzard, the UK's most widespread bird of Prey. The buzzard will likely be spotted soaring above the hills, watching for its prey of birds and small mammals. Buzzards are often mistaken for Golden Eagles but can be identified by their "mewing" call and smaller size. Buzzards mate for life and attract a partner with an elaborate mid air display known as the "rollercoaster". Buzzards are highly territorial and may be seen chasing crows and other invaders from their hunting grounds.



Buzzard



St Mary's Loch lies on the A708 at the head of the Yarrow Valley, around 15 miles each from the towns of Moffat, Selkirk and Innerleithen and 35 miles south of Edinburgh.

On your visit to the Loch, please remember to follow the **Scottish Outdoor Access Code**. This includes:

- Keeping dogs under control
- Taking litter home with you
- Leaving gates as they were found
- Not disturbing nesting birds. Oyster catchers nest on the shoreline between the months of April and June. Please give them a wide berth.

For more details visit: [www.outdooraccess-scotland](http://www.outdooraccess-scotland)

For more information about the Loch and the Ettrick and Yarrow Valleys as a whole, please contact:



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or visit:

[www.ettrickandyarrow.co.uk](http://www.ettrickandyarrow.co.uk)

or our facebook page  
"Visit Ettrick and Yarrow" 



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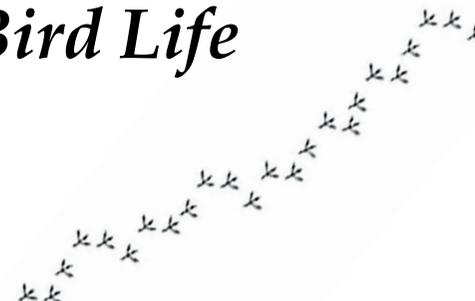
Bird paintings by Alan Pearson, copyrights held by Mike Lambert.  
Leaflet design by Jenny Davidson. Photos by Jenny Davidson & EYCD.

# St Mary's Loch

## The Ring of the Loch



*Bird Life*



# St Mary's Loch

St Mary's Loch is the largest natural Loch in the Scottish Borders and a popular visitor destination, both for its natural beauty and historical value.

The area around the Loch boasts a wide range of habitats including grassland, moorland, wetland, deciduous woodland, ancient scots-pine woodland and conifer plantation as well as the Loch itself and its shoreline.

This array of habitats allows a variety of birds and other wildlife to make the Loch their home. A few of the birds you may encounter on your visit are described in this leaflet, accompanied by paintings generously donated by artist and friend of the Ettrick and Yarrow Valleys, Alan Pearson.

The Ring of the Loch trail is an excellent way to see all the Loch has to offer – both in terms of wildlife and history – while also experiencing the tranquillity and beautiful views of this peaceful and inspiring part of Scotland.

## Enjoy your visit!



If you have any trouble identifying the birds around the Loch, the 'Birds by Colour' app can provide a helping hand.



## On the Loch

The Loch's 650 acres support an abundance of aquatic life. This includes trout and pike as well as amphibians and invertebrates such as dragonflies and diving beetles. This provides an abundance of food for some of the Loch's top predators. The most charismatic of these is the osprey. A summer visitor, from Africa, the osprey feeds on the fish of the Loch, which it dive bombs and catches in its strong talons where backwards pointing barbs provide extra grip.



Osprey



Goldeneye

Alongside the more common mallards, the goldeneye, a diving duck, can be seen diving for aquatic insects.

These birds nest at the top of trees. Their ducklings then jump to the ground but are cushioned by their fluffy feathers.

The heron mainly feeds on the Loch's fish and frogs which it ambushes by extending its neck at lightning speed. The heron is also known to prey on small mammals and birds such as ducklings which it swallows whole.



Grey Heron

As well as birds, look out for otters. Although nocturnal and generally elusive, they have been known to come ashore near the Sailing Club.

Historically, the Loch provided a stronghold for Arctic Charr, their spawning grounds in the narrow channel between the two lochs. Following their reintroduction to the nearby Megget Reservoir, it may only be a matter of time before they colonise the Loch once more.

## On the Shore

The Loch's shoreline is diverse, offering shingle beaches, marshland and jagged rocky areas. A common sight along the shore is the dipper.



Dipper

This plump bird feeds on aquatic invertebrates and is unusual in its ability to walk underwater, where it can hold its breath for up to 30 seconds.

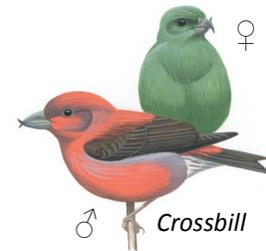


Oystercatcher

Large numbers of oystercatchers can be seen in the summer months. This bird feeds and nests near the shore, catching earthworms with its long pointed beak and laying its well camouflaged eggs in simple nests scratched in grassland or among the shore's pebbles.

## In the woods

The woods on the Loch are home to a wide variety of native trees including willows, alders, ashes and oaks. Most impressive of these are the sturdy Scots Pines which make up most of the ancient March Wood. These provide crossbills with their favourite food, cone seeds, which they extract using their uniquely shaped beaks.



Crossbill



Goldcrest

The wood beside the Cappercleuch Hall also supports a range of bird life. Look out for Europe's smallest bird, the goldcrest, along with more common garden birds such as blue tits and wrens. The woods are also home to mammals such as squirrels, foxes, hedgehogs and roe deer.