

A Marketing Guide for Nature-Based Tourist Businesses in Dumfries & Galloway



**THIS IS AN
INTERACTIVE PDF**



You will find clickable tabs for main sections and many useful website and document links through-out.

Foreword

For almost 10 years now the Southern Uplands Partnership has been bringing together businesses, agencies and wildlife organisations to explore the opportunities for promoting and developing Nature Based Tourism across the South of Scotland. Wild Seasons is the fruit of that sustained effort and is testimony to how, with a guiding hand, the sum of the parts really can be greater than the whole when we work together in pursuit of a common goal. This marketing guide will, we hope, help to further expand that network of co-operation by linking new businesses which value the fantastic landscapes and wildlife that we have in Southern Scotland.

John Thomson

Convenor Southern Uplands Partnership



Introduction

Scotland has an abundant range of wildlife and nature-based tourism in spectacular settings and is seeing a growth in the number of people who come here to enjoy it. **Dumfries & Galloway** is one of the best places to enjoy many aspects of Scottish nature and wildlife – including birds, flowers, mammals, butterflies, geology, landscape and even our dark skies. Visitors can see all of Scotland's 'Big Five' – red squirrel, red deer, harbour seal, otter and golden eagle – right here in **Dumfries & Galloway**. It is also the best place in Scotland to see spectacular flocks of over-wintering geese. In short, there is much to tempt the visitor to the area.

You may not have considered targeting nature-based visitors, but there are some simple steps you can take to attract this ready-made market. With so much nature and wildlife on offer we have created this marketing guide to help and support businesses to attract visitors to the area. This guide will give you practical advice and tips to help you use the fantastic wildlife and nature on your doorstep to help grow your business.

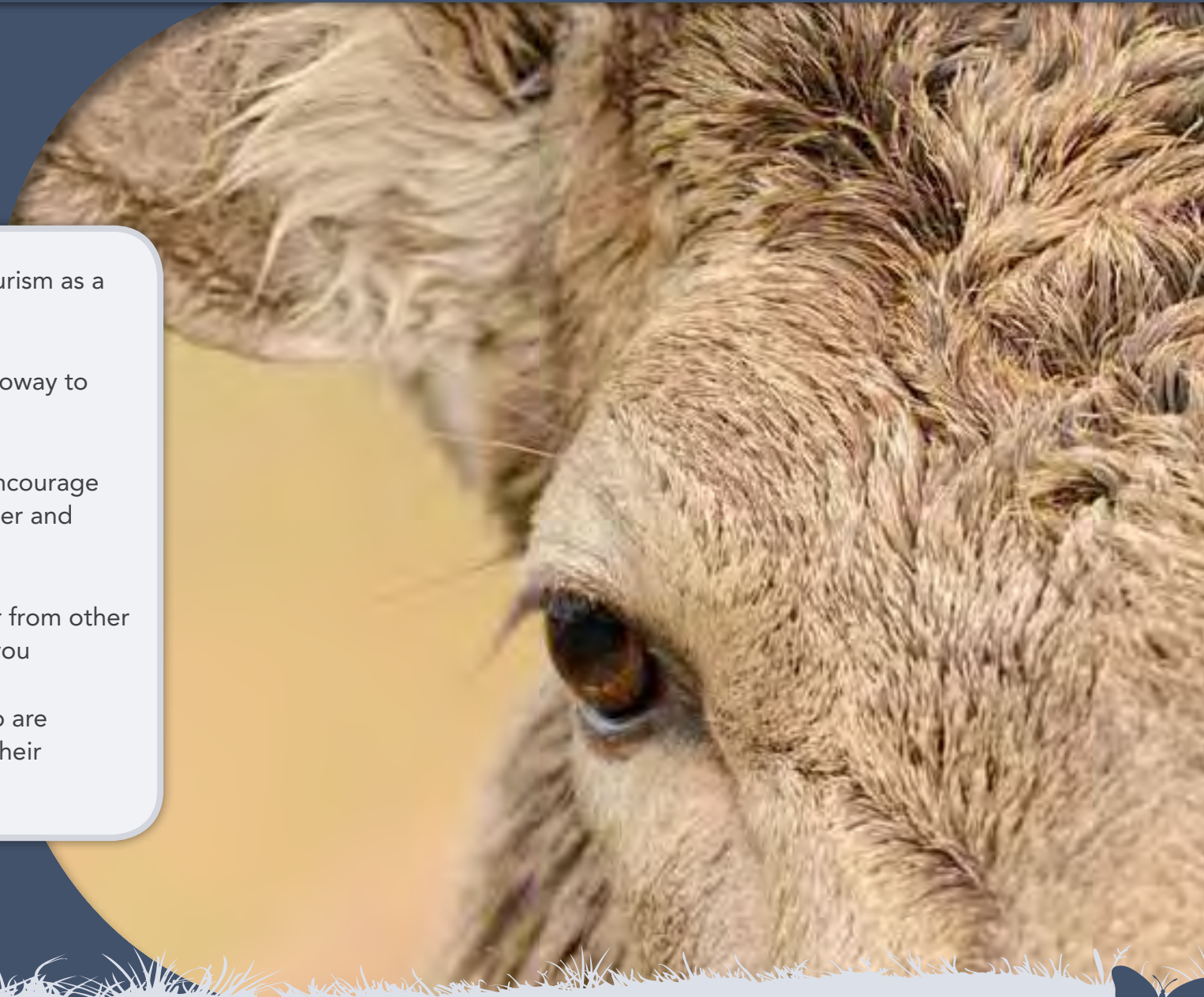
There are three steps you can take to make the most of this tourism sector:



A Marketing Guide for Nature-Based Tourist Businesses in Dumfries & Galloway

Use this guide to

- Understand how to utilise nature-based tourism as a marketing tool for your business
- Understand who comes to Dumfries & Galloway to experience wildlife and nature
- Understand how to use iconic species to encourage visitors to come to your business, stay longer and return in the future
- Understand how to differentiate your offer from other businesses by using nature that is local to you
- Hear from other businesses in the area who are already using the nature opportunities on their doorstep to develop their businesses



Who Are Our Nature-Based Visitors?

According to the [Economic Impact of Wildlife Tourism in Scotland](#) survey there are over a million wildlife trips a year to or within Scotland. This is a significant figure, but it only refers to people who are visiting for the main purpose of viewing wildlife. In reality, there are many more who view wildlife or undertake some nature-based activity as part of a general trip. The opportunity to attract these general visitors to your business is significant. More details on who these visitors are and how to reach them follows.

Altogether wildlife trips produce an annual spend of £276m with visitors from the UK accounting for 5.2% of all trips to Scotland but 7.4% of total visitor spend. These figures represent visitors from the UK and overseas who stay overnight and also those who come on a day trip. The UK market is the most significant for Scotland. The [Economic Impact of Wildlife Tourism in Scotland](#) report indicates that Scotland attracts a diverse mix of visitors interested in nature-based tourism. They are mostly middle-aged, professional and middle-class couples travelling without children who have more time to pursue existing or new interests or experiences. Many of them will be members of the RSPB, the National Trust and other similar organisations.

It's not just about those staying overnight: although they spend less, day visitors are also important.

	Trips	Nights	Spend
Visitors from the UK	630,000	2.8m	£208m
Day Visitors	410,000	n/a	£14m
Visitors from overseas	80,000	0.72m	£54m
Total	1.12m	3.5m	£276m



Title: Canoeists, Loch Ken
Credit: Galloway Activity Centre

Top Tip

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The Wild Seasons initiative exists not only to promote the area but also to support businesses. If you are unsure where to start, then get in contact with them and they will be able to advise you.

So who visits Dumfries & Galloway?

Recent research undertaken by [Destination Dumfries & Galloway](#) suggests that the region has a solid platform on which to encourage nature-based tourism and has identified visitors with an interest in nature-based tourism as:

- Aged mostly 45+, 68% are ABC1
- 28% self-cater, with B&Bs, hotels and guest houses also being popular
- 35% undertake walking/hiking
- 22% visit coastline/beaches
- 17% watch birds/wildlife in summer, and 23% in winter
- 82% think that the area offers opportunities for outdoor activities



Top Tip

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Think about the family market and how wildlife and nature can help you develop what you offer. Also think about how you can engage not only with children but also their parents and keep them interested by offering a range of activities which encourage them to return.

STEP | 1

WHY NATURE-BASED TOURISM IS IMPORTANT

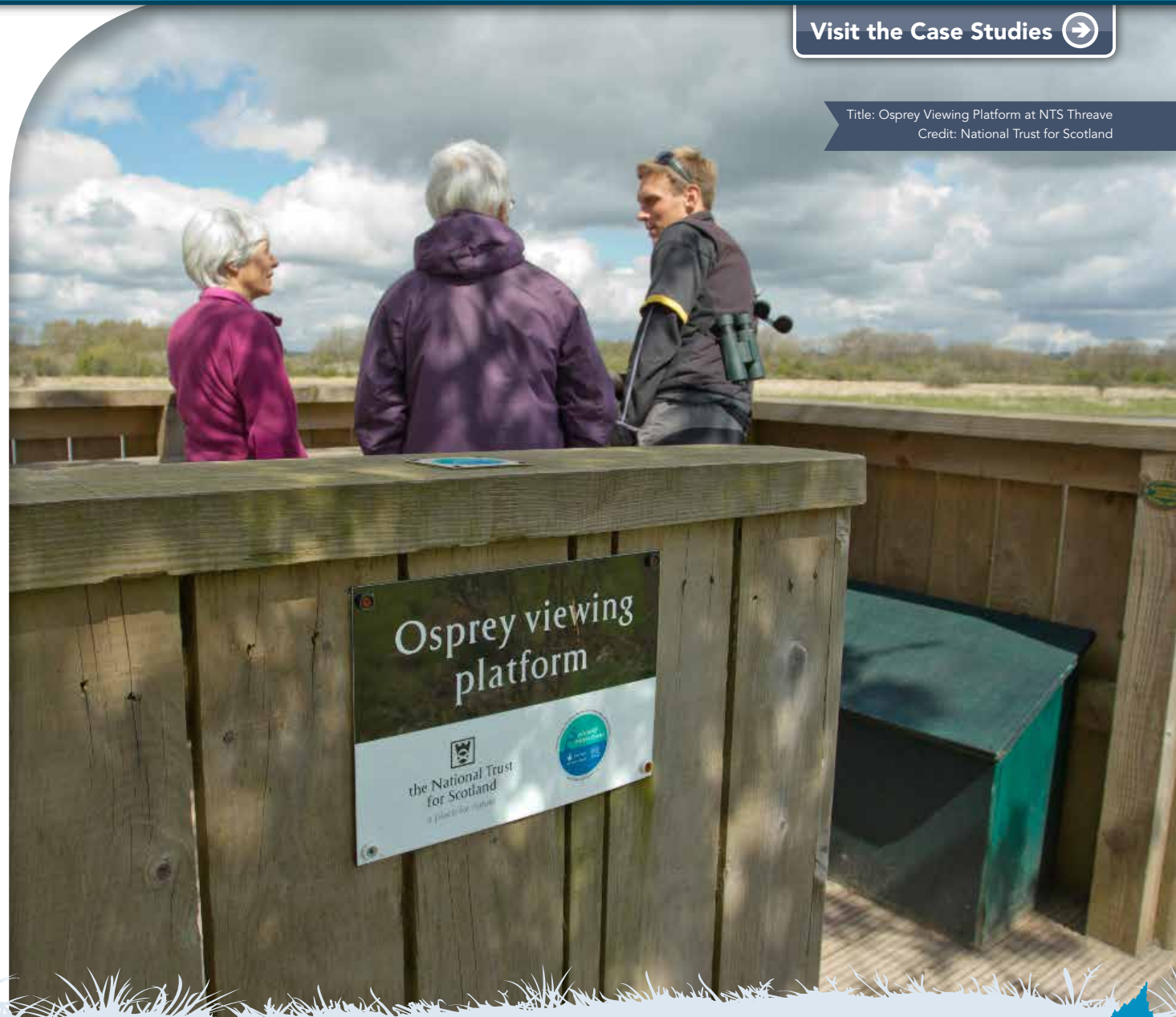
Visit the Case Studies

Title: Osprey Viewing Platform at NTS Threave
Credit: National Trust for Scotland

Wildlife trips tend to peak early in the year with 37% of visitors arriving between April-June with further peaks between July and September. Consider what you offer and whether you have something to package up to attract the wildlife visitor at these times.

No matter where your business is based, there are opportunities to use nature as a promotional tool. Rural tourism businesses in Dumfries & Galloway, and those in the main towns, will have many opportunities for visitors to enjoy the wildlife and scenery around them and there are also some wildlife activity operators in the area. It is worth your while finding out who offers what, and details can be found on the [Wild Seasons](#) website.

Over half of visitors to Scotland cite scenery and landscape as the top reason for visiting – this represents a big market for you to tap into. These visitors will most likely not be serious wildlife watchers but still appreciate stunning views and settings and are looking for something to do in them.



Key factors in the growth of wildlife tourism

Factor	How it is impacting on tourism	What can your business do?
<p>The 'Springwatch factor'</p> <p>In recent years there has been an increase in the number of wildlife and nature programmes, such as <i>Spring/Autumnwatch</i> broadcast on TV and this has had a direct impact on British wildlife tourism.</p> <p>Other programmes such as <i>Countryfile</i> and <i>Landward</i> also help to raise the profile of sites, events and interesting places to visit.</p>	<p>These programmes prompt tourists to visit a wildlife or nature site as part of a holiday. And it works.</p> <p>32% of visitors to Scotland said a TV or radio programme had inspired their trip to a wildlife site.</p>	<p>Keep up-to-date with any local areas or sites that appear on popular shows and recommend them to your visitors. Include information about any TV coverage on your website eg 'as featured in.....'</p> <p>Remember that kids might be visiting so be prepared with ideas to keep them amused. Some ideas can be found here:</p> <p>CBeebies – Green Balloon Club RSPB Kids Section</p>
<p>Staycations on the rise</p> <p>Statistics tell us that many people are choosing to holiday closer to home and they often return for repeat visits.</p>	<p>With 56% of UK visitors saying they watch wildlife more than half the additional visitors could be potential new customers for wildlife experiences.</p>	<p>Consider offering short break deals to encourage visitors who don't have far to travel to come for a break.</p> <p>Many local people don't realise the great wildlife watching opportunities on their doorstep so don't forget about promoting your wildlife watching activities to people living in the local area too.</p> <p>Most come by car, so make sure you tell them about parking facilities on your website.</p> <p>CONTINUED →</p>

Key factors in the growth of wildlife tourism - Continued.

Be environmentally aware

Visitors appreciate businesses taking a responsible approach to the environment and will see it as added value.

Sustainability and responsible tourism is a vital part of protecting our wildlife resource.

Ensure you know the [Scottish Outdoor Access Code](#) and ensure that your visitors are also aware of it and any other local codes.

Encourage your visitors to be mindful of their behaviour towards animals and habitats.

Consider joining the [Green Tourism Business Scheme](#), or simply list what you do to conserve the environment such as recycling, use of low-energy bulbs, minimise laundry, etc and make a feature of this.

Activity plus...

Operators are finding that the number of visitors coming to enjoy wildlife or nature as part of another activity is growing

Visitors who come to cycle, walk or mountain bike may stop or be on the lookout for wildlife so think about what information you can give them to enhance their Scottish outdoor experience.

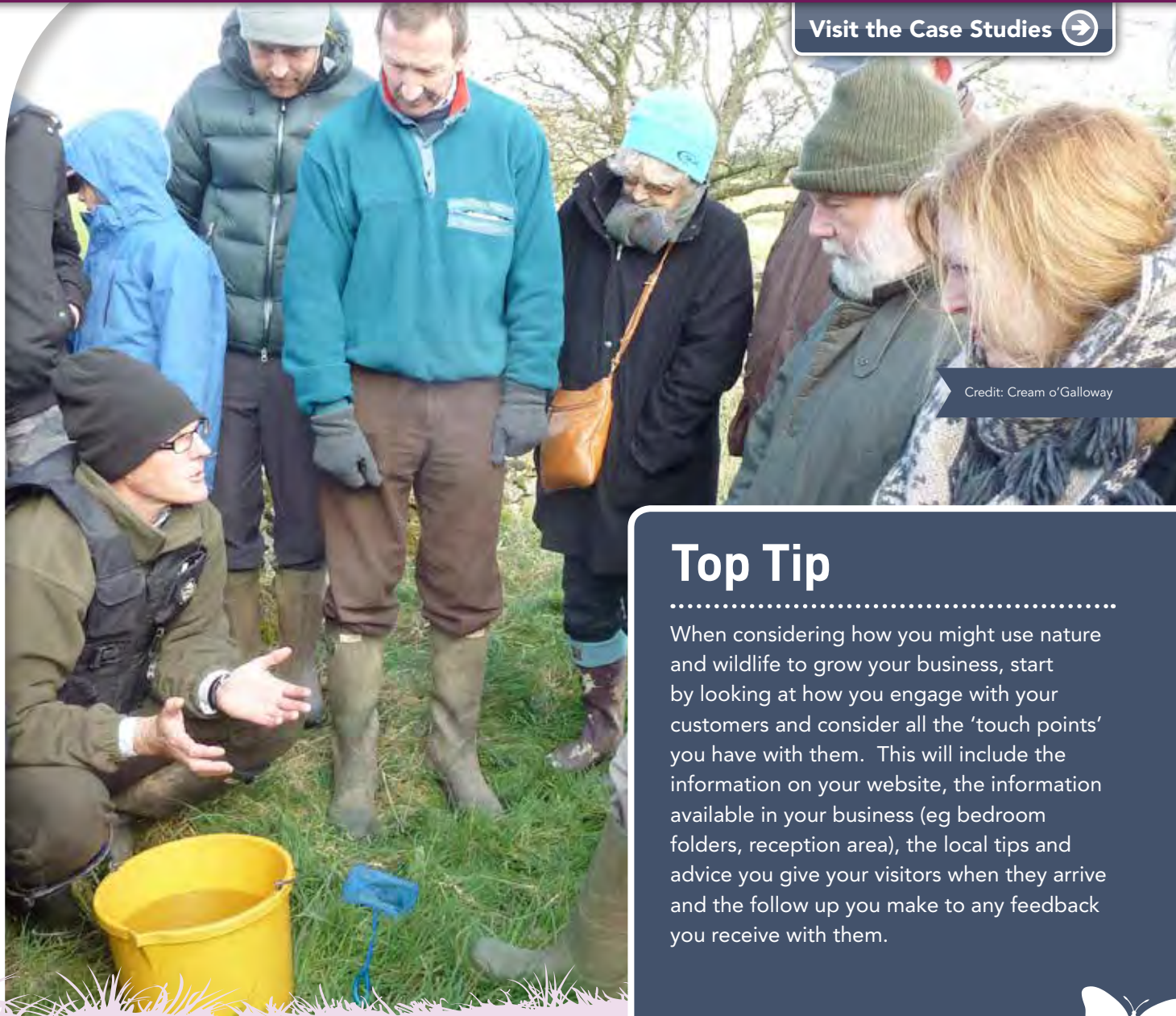
Find out what is going on locally. Could your visitors see wildlife from a bike, horse or kayak, or other means of transport?

Think about what might sit well with nature – arts and crafts, yoga, writing, photography etc and recommend it to visitors.

Do your homework – know the product

Spend time thinking about what you offer and the commitment you can make to attracting visitors who have an interest in nature-based tourism. Take the time to get to know the product on your doorstep. This could be done from your desk by visiting websites to find out what is out there, but also why not get out and explore a bit? A personal recommendation and local knowledge counts for a lot and visitors like to know 'where the locals go'.

Visitors will want to know what they can see, where they can see it and when they can see it. Remember that there is still a lot to see in the winter and research tells us that visitors come all year round to enjoy what we have to offer. The [Wild Seasons](#) website is packed full of useful information on what to see and is split into the different seasons so why not use this as your starting point? Businesses who work with the Wild Seasons initiative ([see page 23](#)) can also get copies of Places to Enjoy Wildlife: A Practical Viewing Guide – this is an ideal resource for you to learn about what there is to see and where and when to see it. You can also refer to it when visitors need more information about where to go and what to see.



Visit the Case Studies

Credit: Cream o'Galloway

Top Tip

When considering how you might use nature and wildlife to grow your business, start by looking at how you engage with your customers and consider all the 'touch points' you have with them. This will include the information on your website, the information available in your business (eg bedroom folders, reception area), the local tips and advice you give your visitors when they arrive and the follow up you make to any feedback you receive with them.



What's on offer?

With over 400 sites of natural interest, do not underestimate the importance of Dumfries & Galloway's wildlife and nature-based attractions as they are of international importance. Some highlights include the following:

- Galloway and Southern Ayrshire UNESCO Biosphere which is the only one in Scotland, one of only 600 biospheres worldwide and reflects a commitment to conserving our rarest and most sensitive wildlife and landscapes whilst also promoting sustainable business opportunities
- At the heart of the biosphere is the Galloway Forest Park, the largest in the UK and home to a vast array of wildlife and recreational opportunities
- The Galloway Red Kite Trail around Loch Ken, where visitors can follow a trail and where over 40,000 visitors have been to the Galloway Red Kite feeding station
- The starling roost at Gretna, which is one of the largest animal 'events' in the world
- The coastline of The Solway Firth is the 6th most important migratory site in Europe and has the 3rd largest intertidal area in the UK containing a range of habitats in which birds can feed
- The world population of Svalbard (Norway) Barnacle geese descend from the Arctic Circle each winter. [See the Wild Goose Chase on the Wild Seasons website.](#)
- The whole of Scotland's population of Natterjack Toads
- One of the largest oak woodlands in the country can be visited at Wood of Cree, and adjacent reserves
- Some of the best Bluebell displays in the country, quite possibly in the world, are to be found in the region such as at Cree Woods, near Newton Stewart
- A wonderful red squirrel population, which is one of the largest in Scotland



Wild Routes

There are more than 400 sites of natural interest in Dumfries and Galloway. Your visitors will want to know which ones to visit. Wild Seasons have created a number of 'wild routes' for visitors to follow. Some of them link up to a number of local attractions, are relatively compact and can be enjoyed in a day or less. Others are themed and cover wider areas, for those planning to spend longer in the region. Find out what 'wild routes' you are on, or near to, and mention them on your website. You can find out more about each route on the [Wild Seasons website](#).

Choose from:

- Curlew Coast (Wigtown Bay and Cree Valley)
- Bird Hide Heaven (Lochmaben to Langholm)
- Merse Magic (Nith Estuary)
- The Flooders Trail (Caerlaverock Area)
- Wild Water of Fleet (Fleet Valley)
- The Wild North (Around Moffat)
- From the Wig to the Mull (The Rhins)
- The Wild Goose Chase (A75 corridor – Caerlaverock to Loch Ryan)

You can also find a series of leaflets on wildlife and nature on the Wild Seasons website. These are available to download so you can add them to your website or have them available for your visitors to browse on arrival.

Visit the Case Studies

Top Tip

Ensure that you network with and chat to other businesses to help raise awareness of what you offer. The more people who know about what you do the more chance there is of growing your business. Consider how you may be able to work with specialist operators.



Knowing your customers – who watches wildlife

It is important to understand the market so that you can attract customers to your business. In this section we look at how the market can be split up and how there are different types of visitor with differing knowledge, and therefore differing needs. There are a number of ways of splitting up the market and below we provide you with further details to help you understand and identify what you can do to attract them.

Like all niche markets, nature tourism has a triangular 'demand curve'.



Eco-extremes are people with a keen, or specialist, interest in some aspect of nature. They spend a lot of their disposable income on equipment and travel. They are less likely to spend time and money in visitor attractions, shops and restaurants. They know their subject and they plan ahead. This means they know exactly what they want to do and where they will visit. They're not much influenced by destination marketing, though they can be attracted to nature friendly accommodation and other providers. Twitchers are an extreme case, even within the eco-extremes; they will drive a considerable distance to see a rare bird, which they have found out about on the internet or through social media. Once they've seen it they'll go home or move on to the next rarity. They represent a smaller, or niche, portion of the market.

Eco-awares are those who have a casual interest in nature. On holiday, or a day trip, they want to experience and learn about nature as one of a number of activities. These might include visiting other types of attraction or site, for example heritage and they will certainly spend more time than the eco-extremes eating and shopping. There are a lot more of them than the eco-extremes and they can be influenced by marketing of nature watching opportunities.

The most numerous are the **eco-unawares**, people who have no interest in the natural world and who are unlikely to respond to a nature tourism experience.

So, whilst there are things you can do to attract the eco-extremes, **the biggest opportunity for tourism businesses lies with the eco-awares.**

Source: Nature Tourism Scoping Study for North East England, 2009, Bowles Green Limited

HOW TO ATTRACT NATURE-BASED TOURISM VISITORS

VisitScotland has undertaken research to help them and you understand your customers. This research has been developed into a segmentation model of the UK market. This model focuses on dividing customers into unique sub groups, or segments, based on a number of factors including their geographical location, their attitudes and behaviour towards Scotland and their method of planning and booking a holiday or short break. Understanding the market in depth means you can ensure any money you spend on marketing reaches customers in the best way.

Four of these segments are loyal to Scotland and regularly visit (they are called 'warm' segments) and two segments are less loyal (called 'cold' segments). Two of the 'warm' segments, detailed below, highlight wildlife as one of the activities they enjoy as a reason for visiting.

More information on VisitScotland's segments can be found [here](#). VisitScotland provides opportunities to work with them to allow you to reach these key target markets.

UK 'warm' market segment	Accommodation preferences	Other activities they will enjoy	Tips for reaching them
Affluent Southern Explorers 45-60 years old, well-off, professional	Independent B&Bs/authentic hotels Off the beaten track Unusual places Self-catering	Mixing with locals Outdoor activities Local events and festivals Walking/nature Golf Culture	Use e-marketing (emails, enewsletters) to promote special offers and events. Provide information and guides to nearby walks and vantage points. Promote your business at local events and festivals.
Younger Domestic Explorers Average age of 42, 1/3 of households have children, above average income	Good value self-catering B&Bs Hotels	Sightseeing and exploring Castles, culture and events Festivals and music Active sports and family attractions	Ensure you have a dynamic website that is easy to navigate. Optimise your business listing on search engines. Collaborate with local events and festivals to offer promotions. Provide information about nearby historical sites and family attractions.

We recognise that it can be difficult to attract new visitors and it may be that you do not work with these [VisitScotland](#) segments. The key thing to note is that wildlife tourism may not be the main reason why these market segments visit Scotland, but there is an above average opportunity to attract them to a wildlife experience during their visit if they are given the right information and encouragement. There is also scope to attract them with offers that include multiple activities, rather than wildlife alone, such as wildlife activities combined with local food and drink experiences. These visitors will also be undertaking general sightseeing and walking. Being able to offer them information, a package or an actual nature based experience enriches your offer and may encourage visitors to choose your business over another.

Remember the biggest opportunity lies in attracting those visitors who, as well as being interested in wildlife and nature, have a wide range of interests and are looking for a variety of things to see and do. These visitors are more likely to be influenced by marketing, information and offers. Visitors who are specifically looking for just a wildlife and nature holiday represent a smaller opportunity as they are a niche market – think about them sitting at the top of the ‘eco’ triangle on [page 12](#). You can still attract these niche, or specialist, visitors but you need to be aware that they have differing needs and there are fewer of them.



Dalry Bird Festival 2012

Top Tip

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If you are interested in exploring overseas markets or working with tour operators then start by speaking to VisitScotland to see what opportunities they can provide. Be prepared to offer different pricing structures and packages if selling direct and through operators.



Title: Bee, Balloch Community Woods
Credit: Creetown Initiative



Wild Friendly Marketing Tips

There are a number of ways in which you can attract visitors to your business. Looking ahead, planning and collaborating are key parts of the process. It can be tricky to plan when you are busy; use any quieter periods you may have to develop and improve what you offer.



How many can you tick off?



Plan ahead.

Look for local events and festivals with which you can make links and for which you can possibly offer packages to promote what you are offering." The [Wild Seasons](#) website is a good place to look for events. Get in touch with any local nature interest groups as they could be a useful source of information and tips.



Give them a reason to visit.

Armed with your new product knowledge on what there is to visit and see nearby consider how best to include this information on your website, adverts and other marketing materials. This could mean including wildlife and nature attractions in a 'things to see and do' section on your website. There is plenty of information on Wild Routes and leaflets to download on [Wild Seasons](#).



Maximise.

How close are you to something of interest? Make sure you maximise your location – if only a few miles from a significant site of natural interest make sure you mention this in your marketing materials.



Make it an experience.

Imagine a beautiful walk in the Dumfries & Galloway countryside. Now imagine that same walk, but with a sighting of a red kite or an osprey soaring past or an otter sliding around on a muddy bank. All of a sudden a walk turns into a memorable experience. They need you to tell them that the opportunity for these types of experiences exists.



Bring it to life.

Tempt them by using good photographs of the key species and sites on offer. Images are available for free use from [Destination Dumfries & Galloway](#) - you can register on site to access them.



Keep track.

Know where your business or bookings come from, and if you are an accommodation provider, take note of your customers' interests – this could be as part of the check in process. This information will help you plan future marketing activity and allow you to build up a relationship with your customers. Remember that it is about identifying what works the best for you and delivers the most visitors. You may need to experiment to see what results you achieve.



☐ **Communicate.**

Using your own knowledge about your business and also accessing support from [Destination Dumfries & Galloway](#) and opportunities from [VisitScotland](#), plan your marketing activity for the year. Identify what works best for you (you may have to experiment and learn) – adverts, online activity, social media, direct mail, e-newsletters etc. Think about what you need to offer and when you need to say it and create a database of your customers so you can communicate with them easily and regularly.

☐ **Review.**

Have a look at other websites as well as your own on a regular basis. Never let your website get out of date as it creates a bad impression and a visitor is just a click away from choosing another business. Remember to ensure that your websites are mobile/tablet friendly.

☐ **Package it up.**

Think about what you currently offer and what you can offer and package accordingly to suit existing and new customers – they may want different things. Remember that your offers can be included on the [Wild Seasons website](#).

☐ **New news.**

If you have something new on offer then make sure you tell people about it. Issue a press release, or work with VisitScotland or other partners to make a noise about it. Don't forget to tell your previous customers if you think it may be of interest to them.

☐ **Collaborate.**

Look around you and see who is doing what. Don't be scared to chat to other businesses to see what opportunities there are to work together or learn from each other. Can you join a local initiative such as the Galloway Red Kite Trail? Attend any tourism networking events and use them as an opportunity to make new contacts and see if you can negotiate discounts at nature attractions for your guests.

☐ **Wild Seasons.**

Make sure you stay in touch with them and take advantage of the support [Wild Seasons](#) offers you including workshops, support materials and the opportunity to put offers on their website. (See the [Further Resources section](#) for more details.)

☐ **Be seasonal.**

The nature calendar is full of great sights throughout the year and there is something to offer visitors all year round. Think about how your business can make the most out of the changing landscape and wildlife. Visitors need new reasons to return so don't be afraid to tell them what is happening and package something up to tempt them to visit.

☐ **Dawn and dusk.**

Many species are often most active in the early morning and late evening and if you promote this effectively you may encourage visitors to stay another night with you.

☐ **Keep in touch.**

Remember that it's not all about getting new visitors, keep in touch with regular visitors and tempt them with special return offers.

☐ **Improve.**

Gather feedback from visitors to help you improve your offer and remember to respond to comments and feedback on review sites like TripAdvisor.



Tweet, tweet.

Social media is a fantastic way to tell visitors what is happening. If new to Twitter, chat to others who are already involved and ask their advice and don't be scared to try. You will be amazed at the opportunities it can provide especially during times of seasonal change in the natural world, or even when there are wildlife programmes being broadcast on TV. If already on Twitter, make the effort to follow those involved in wildlife and nature in the area and build up a relationship with them by retweeting. Facebook also offers great opportunities to reach a wider audience. Consider using blogs to publicise the many wildlife opportunities in your area.

According to a survey by VisitScotland, half of visitors to Scotland shared their experiences online after they returned home, with 41% uploading photos to sites such as Flickr and 29% updating their Facebook status regarding their trip. If new to this area of marketing then it is worth checking out VisitScotland's guide to [social media and online marketing](#).



Subscribe.

Consider subscribing to one of the main wildlife magazines such as *Countryfile*, *BBC Wildlife* or the *RSPB's Birds*, so you can keep up-to-date with what is going on in the world of nature. If you don't want to subscribe then buy a copy from the newsagent every now and then, or have a look at some of the websites detailed in the [Further Help & Resources section](#). You may also decide to advertise in one of these magazines or even produce an insert, but remember to keep track of where your bookings come from so you can tell whether it is worth repeating. Keep a supply of recent issues of the magazines for visitors to browse during their stay. Others to consider include *National Geographic*, *Scottish Wildlife Magazine*, *British Wildlife*, *The Countryman* or *British Birds*.



Bookings.

Online bookings continue to rise with 80% of travellers using the internet as a primary planning method so it is important to keep your website and any online booking systems you may use up-to date with your pricing and availability.

Last minute bookings are increasingly common so it is important to respond quickly and efficiently as this can ease trip planning for visitors and this may help them choose you. Consider offering discounts for early booking.

Remember that you can include any offers or packages on the [Wild Seasons](#) website.

Some of your visitors will be known to you, others will be new but you hope that you can give them a great welcome and a quality experience and that they will return in the future.

Satisfied customers generate repeat business and they will also recommend you to others. They are the cheapest form of marketing so do not lose sight of the need to satisfy your customers.

Differing needs

As we have mentioned earlier in this guide not everyone who visits is equally passionate or knowledgeable about wildlife or nature. A close look at the different levels of nature enthusiasts can help you tailor your products and services.

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Top Tip

Think about your location and what is of interest to visitors nearby. Can you build a relationship with an attraction or wildlife organisation? Consider how you might be able to integrate wildlife and nature into what you already offer.

Level of wildlife interest	Key attributes	What can your business do?
Serious enthusiast	<p>Wildlife watching opportunities have motivated their visit.</p> <p>They may be interested in all types of wildlife, or may be enthusiastic about a specific species.</p> <p>They may go in search of wildlife themselves, rather than use guides or join tours.</p> <p>They will want to learn more about wildlife from experts.</p> <p>They are likely to have their own equipment which may be valuable.</p>	<p>Provide information on local hides and operators offering tailor-made tours.</p> <p>Offer access to or guidance about local guidebooks, wildlife guides, maps etc.</p> <p>Offer hot drinks in a flask for enthusiasts heading out early in the morning or in the evening.</p> <p>Provide lockable storage solutions for their equipment.</p> <p>Make information available about local codes and protected areas and species.</p>
Active interest	<p>Seeing wildlife is an important reason for the visit, but not the only reason.</p> <p>They will often want advice on where to watch, and are more likely to take organised tours.</p> <p>They'll want to find out more about particular species and, if with families, will want an educational element to their activities.</p> <p>They may have their own equipment.</p>	<p>Provide information on local hides and operators offering tailor-made tours.</p> <p>Provide information about shorter day or weekend tours.</p> <p>Provide access to identification guides that they can use in their own time as part of other experiences.</p> <p>Tell them what you do to bring the outdoors to them eg bird feeders outside the breakfast room.</p> <p>CONTINUED →</p>

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Level of wildlife interest	Key attributes	What can your business do?
Passing interest	<p>They will be looking for an authentic Scottish experience, and wildlife could enhance that.</p> <p>They will want wildlife watching to be comfortable and easy, therefore may not realise that animals may be a long distance away or that they may have to wait some time.</p>	<p>Link up with businesses that focus on iconic species such as otters, marine mammals and eagles. Suggest some reliable and accessible photo opportunities.</p> <p>Recommend the nearest woodland or river walk and highlight the wildlife that might be seen – can you lend them binoculars?</p> <p>Help to manage their expectations about the likelihood of seeing particular animals and ensure that they understand disturbance issues about not getting too close.</p>
No interest in wildlife	<p>These visitors are unlikely to watch wildlife but may accompany others who are interested.</p> <p>They may not be excited by the thought of a wildlife trip, but may still enjoy the overall experience, especially if they see something memorable.</p>	<p>Provide information about tours that include wildlife as part of a bigger experience, eg a boat tour.</p> <p>Offer access to equipment and waterproofs if they do not have their own.</p>
Children	<p>They will have varying levels of interest in wildlife, but will enjoy spotting things.</p> <p>They will prefer doing things, rather than just having to listen and keep quiet.</p> <p>Their attention span is likely to be limited.</p>	<p>Could you create activity sheets and checklists highlighting some of the common local wildlife?</p> <p>Recommend activities and trips specifically targeted at families, with shorter trip times and specified minimum ages.</p> <p>Use technology as an interesting way to engage children, eg. can you broadcast a live CCTV stream from your nearest red squirrel feeders to your business or on your website.</p>



More TopTips

How many can you tick off?

- ☐ Remember don't over-promise. Since there is no guarantee of seeing specific wildlife, pay attention to the quality of visitors' overall experience eg. value, service, and other aspects that provide memories and authentic experiences and encounters. Carefully phrase what you say in your marketing materials and to visitors eg. 'a great place to look for otters' rather than 'a great place to see otters'.
- ☐ Help visitors with the practicalities of wildlife watching – from providing maps and guidebooks and giving them good advice about what to wear (or not wear). Maybe have some spare wellies for borrowing.
- ☐ Know who the local guides are in case your visitors want a guided trip. Details of those offering this service can be found on [Wild Seasons](#).

- ☐ It can be a muddy business looking for wildlife and enjoying the natural world so offer facilities for washing and drying muddy clothes. Make them welcome even if they are wearing muddy boots; be wild friendly.
- ☐ If you are an accommodation provider find out how to attract more wildlife to your garden. Try to attract wildlife to an area that guests can easily see, eg from a lounge or a breakfast room. Have a set of binoculars to hand if that would add to the viewing experience and encourage children to get involved. A guide to British birds, or wildlife, would also be useful. Turn a breakfast into a wildlife experience.
- ☐ Encourage comments on wildlife in your visitors' book and use Twitter and Facebook to mention what visitors have seen and experienced.
- ☐ Keep a pin board with details of any local wildlife events or guided walks on offer. Pin the weather forecast next to it so your visitors can plan their stay. Ask if children would like to draw a picture of what they have seen and pin it up for all to admire.

- ☐ Offer packed lunches, and keep your visitors warm by filling flasks if asked. Some may want early or late breakfasts to fit in with their wildlife viewing, so be flexible and accommodate them. It all adds to their experience.
- ☐ Offer to book activities or help with transport arrangements to local wildlife activities. Alternatively speak to local wildlife operators and see if they can pick your guests up.
- ☐ Offering Wi Fi or internet access helps visitors search and book activities while they are staying or to post any wildlife pictures from their day out. This could help raise awareness of your business and attract visitors to the area.
- ☐ Remember to check if you are on a [Wild Route](#) and tell your visitors what they can see along the way. This could turn a day out into a memorable experience.
- ☐ Remember to protect your future prospects by following responsible wildlife watching guidelines, the [Scottish Outdoor Access Code](#) and sustainable business practices.



Weather Watch

There's no such thing as bad weather.....just the wrong clothing. It is worth pointing out to visitors that sunshine is not essential to wildlife watching. Species such as otters can be seen just as easily, or in some cases even more easily, on grey, drizzly days.

Good local knowledge enables you to cater for bad weather. Take the time to find out about sheltered hides, or viewing locations that are sheltered from wind or rain. Sometimes visitors can get up close to lots of species from their car. Try and turn what might have been a damp day into an experience which is more memorable. If the time of year or weather conditions mean midges are out, then advise visitors to be prepared. Finally, don't over-emphasise beautiful blue skies in your marketing. These days are a bonus when we get them, but we may disappoint if we over-promise.

What are you going to do?

☒ How many can you tick off?

- ☐ Understand and commit to how nature-based tourism can work for you
 - Knowing about nature based tourism and the role it can play in your business and committing to targeting this market
 - Wildlife and nature can be used to enhance an adventure or walking trip
 - The possibility of seeing popular species can be used to differentiate your business
 - Remember that there are differing types of visitor with different needs, eg. serious enthusiast, casual enthusiast and families
- ☐ Understand how to attract and look after nature-based visitors
 - Knowing how best to market your business and providing them with a relevant and quality product
 - Use wildlife and the natural world in your marketing, and bring it to life with good images
 - Think about the different seasons and the opportunities these can provide
 - Use social media and wildlife blogs to widen awareness
- ☐ Offer great experiences
 - Helping your visitors access the nature and wildlife in your area, and ensuring that they have a truly memorable experience
 - Gather feedback from visitors to help you improve your offer. Respond to comments on review sites like TripAdvisor.
- ☐ Collaborate to grow your business
 - Explore options to link your business to local initiatives such as the Galloway Red Kite Trail; they can bring new customers
 - Exploring opportunities to work together with other businesses, events and also with Wild Seasons, Destination Dumfries & Galloway and VisitScotland
 - Remember that casual wildlife enthusiasts watch wildlife as just one element of a visit, combined packages with other businesses may help attract them

If you have done all of the above then you are in a great position to develop your business. If you need further support, useful links and information then please visit the [Further Help and Resources section](#).

Visit the Case Studies

FURTHER HELP AND RESOURCES

Wild Seasons

Wild Seasons is a group of countryside professionals, made up of countryside rangers, wardens and countryside staff of various environmental organisations, as well as business owners, in **Dumfries and Galloway**, all of whom are passionate about their bit of the world. They want to share that passion with anyone interested in getting out and about, looking to experience more of the natural resource that the area has to offer. They are also there to support those businesses who are interested in nature-based tourism and provide a range of support materials, advice and workshops.

They have created a **Wild Seasons Charter** for businesses in the area to join and be listed on the Wild Seasons website. The businesses offering accommodation and other visitor facilities on their website:

Support Wild Seasons' aim to promote as widely as possible opportunities for visitors to enjoy the wildlife and natural environment of Dumfries & Galloway.

They promote the Wild Seasons website and help to keep it up to date, and work with countryside organisations to keep abreast of local developments, for example through social media, and encourage visitors to the sites they manage.

Are committed to providing a high quality experience for visitors seeking to enjoy the wildlife and natural environment of Dumfries & Galloway.

They have professional staff who are knowledgeable of local nature-based attractions and wildlife and are sensitive to the needs of wildlife visitors, for example by being accredited as walker/cyclist-friendly or being able to offer maps, guidebooks, binoculars or packed lunches to their guests.

Have due regard for the principle of "sustainable use" of the environment.

They can demonstrate how they apply such principles in practice or can make environmental and/or sustainable tourism policies available for inspection upon request.

To find out more about Wild Seasons, visit their website.

<http://wildseasons.co.uk>



FURTHER HELP AND RESOURCES

Destination Dumfries & Galloway

Destination Dumfries & Galloway's mission is to represent, develop and promote Dumfries and Galloway's tourism industry. They provide support and information and opportunities to network in order to create collaborations, share experiences and debate. For further details on how DD&G can support you visit their [website](http://www.dgtourism4business.co.uk) or contact Stacey Paul on Tel: 01387 702158 or stacey@destinationdg.co.uk.
www.dgtourism4business.co.uk

Tourism Intelligence Scotland

If you are a tourism business in Scotland looking for reliable information and good market intelligence or insights on the latest trends, then Tourism Intelligence Scotland can help you. Tourism Intelligence Scotland has produced a series of Intelligence Guides covering a range of tourism sectors including one for [wildlife](#). They have also produced one titled [Listening to our Visitors](#), which provides practical advice on customer feedback. To find out how they can help your business call 0845 601 2454.
www.tourism-intelligence.co.uk

VisitScotland

VisitScotland has a website to support the tourism industry and it provides market research, business opportunities, advice, toolkits and latest news.
www.visitscotland.org

On their consumer facing website, there is a wildlife section which details what to see and when to see it, species to look out for, wildlife trails and operators.
www.visitscotland.com/about/wildlife/

Visit the Case Studies

Title: Black Guillemots, Mull of Galloway
Credit: Andy Hay, RSPB Scotland

Top Tip

Make the most of your location and ensure you make a feature out of the things you do to conserve the environment; small things can make a difference to the target market. Also give some consideration as to who you might be able to work with to help spread the word about what is on offer in the area; working together can make a small marketing budget go further.

Wild Scotland

Wild Scotland is the Scottish Wildlife and Adventure Tourism Association, comprising wildlife and adventure tourism professionals. Their website has useful information about wildlife, a wildlife watching calendar and useful support materials and advice available for businesses to use.

Joining Wild Scotland could extend your marketing reach and help you improve your product. Also remember to follow/link to them on Twitter and Facebook to keep up-to-date with what is happening in the wildlife tourism sector.
www.wild-scotland.org.uk



FURTHER HELP AND RESOURCES

Forestry Commission Scotland

Find out what wildlife can be viewed in Scotland's forests. The website features a growing number of live webcams and blogs and details where visitors can view specific species.

www.forestry.gov.uk/wildlifescotland

Scottish Wildlife Trust

The SWT are a membership charity that champions nature conservation. Activities include campaigns to save species and also to provide wildlife education for the public. Local groups work on local conservation projects, and also organise walks, talks and other events for the public.

www.scottishwildlifetrust.org.uk

Scottish Natural Heritage

The website has information about Scotland's nature, ideas for enjoying the outdoors, information about national parks, national nature reserves and climate change. There is also information about grant funding for projects.

www.snh.gov.uk

RSPB

The Royal Society for the Protection of Birds' website is an excellent resource, with information about bird identification, how to attract birds to your garden, local events and groups, and ideas for getting children interested in birds, which could help with ideas for family activities.

www.rspb.org.uk/scotland

Butterfly Conservation

This website provides information about species common to Scotland, identification guides and areas you are most likely to see them. You can also take part in their surveys.

www.butterfly-conservation.org

Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust

This site provides details of WWT centres, upcoming events, latest news and details about conservation.

www.wwt.org.uk

Scottish Outdoor Access Code

Make sure you are familiar with the Scottish Outdoor Access Code so you can advise your visitors on what they should know before they set off. No matter who you are when in the countryside you should always take responsibility for your own actions, respect the interests of other people and care for the environment. More advice is available on the SOAC website.

www.outdooraccess-scotland.com

BBC Wildlife and Nature

The BBC website has a section on wildlife and nature which is worth looking at. It also has details and links to the various programmes broadcasted so you can keep up to date with what is happening on the BBC and tune in accordingly.

www.bbc.co.uk/nature/wildlife

Wildlife Extra

Online magazine for people who like watching, conserving or photographing wildlife. Wildlife news, a guide to nature reserves and national parks.

www.wildlifeextra.com

Dumfries and Galloway Council Ranger Service

c/o Countryside Services

Militia House, Dumfries and Galloway Council

English Street, Dumfries, DG1 1DD

Email: rangers@dumgal.gov.uk

Tel: 030 33 33 3000.

CASE STUDIES

CASE STUDY : Galloway Holidays - Working through VisitScotland and flexible packaging

Galloway Holidays has been operating for a number of years now and wildlife and nature often feature as part of their cycling trips; it all adds to the overall Scottish tourism experience as visitors cycle around. With so much wildlife and nature on offer in the area there is a good opportunity for visitors to view osprey nests, spot kingfishers, follow the Galloway Red Kite Trail or visit the Red Deer Range. Galloway Holidays make the most of the seasons to ensure that visitors have the best wildlife experience as part of their trip. The majority of their business comes through their website and they recognise the need to keep it up-to-date and make an effort to improve their website over the quieter months.

It can often be tricky to reach new markets but Galloway Holidays have made good progress in managing to attract more visitors from international markets. They put their success down to a number of things. They have attended VisitScotland Expo, Scotland's premier business to business event, in the past and some good business has been secured from that which has been built on over time. They have also attended a UK inbound operators event organised by VisitScotland where participants take part in a form of business speed dating where both the tour operators/agents and the businesses get an overview of what each needs or can offer. Galloway Holidays have found that events like these are worthwhile as they provide an ideal platform to raise awareness of their product and meet new contacts.

Through this process of working with overseas operators and agents Galloway Holidays have learnt that there is a need to package up tours specific for these agents and price them accordingly to allow for commission. They stress the importance of needing to adopt different pricing structures for selling direct or through agents. The holidays offered through these third parties are often different to those sold direct as sometimes they need to be tailored for different markets, eg if an older market then they may have to offer lower mileage on cycling trips.



CASE STUDIES



CASE STUDY : Cream o' Galloway - Family fun experiences and collaboration with wildlife professionals

Cream o' Galloway has much to offer the visitor to the area. They have also taken the decision to add wildlife tourism to their core business offer. They see it as an excellent opportunity to build long-term relationships with customers, in particular families, who return time and time again to take part in their wildlife events. Their participation makes up just a part of their day, and they enjoy all that Cream o' Galloway has to offer in terms of adventure play and ice cream for the rest of the day.

They recognise the importance of involving the whole family so they do not just run events for the children. Parents are equally fascinated with pond dipping events, or with 'bat night' or 'hedgerow safaris' and are as much involved and excited as the children. Cream o' Galloway find that the wildlife events are where they get time to interact more closely with the families, and as a result they are encouraged to visit again.

Targeting their activities to families means that expert subject knowledge isn't generally required, keeping it simple is much more likely to result in a positive experience. Their main aim is that visitors should have fun; they're there for a sense of discovery, not a school lesson. When it comes to the Cream o' Galloway staff, as a visitor attraction they recruit friendly people: those who prove to be good at explaining things to visitors of all ages, and who exude enthusiasm and have been trained to lead the wildlife events. Some background wildlife knowledge is extremely valuable, but not essential as a starting point.

They also work with other wildlife organisations, such as the RSPB, to run events on the Cream o' Galloway site. This works well for both parties as visitors get a different experience and the partner organisation meets a different, sometimes bigger audience to interact with.

In running wildlife events, Cream o' Galloway has adopted a long term view to engage with their audience and encourage them to return again. In isolation the wildlife events themselves may be more costly than the revenue it has generated for them, simply in terms of staff time, but this longer term view of providing a range of activities and events will ensure that visitors will return in the future.

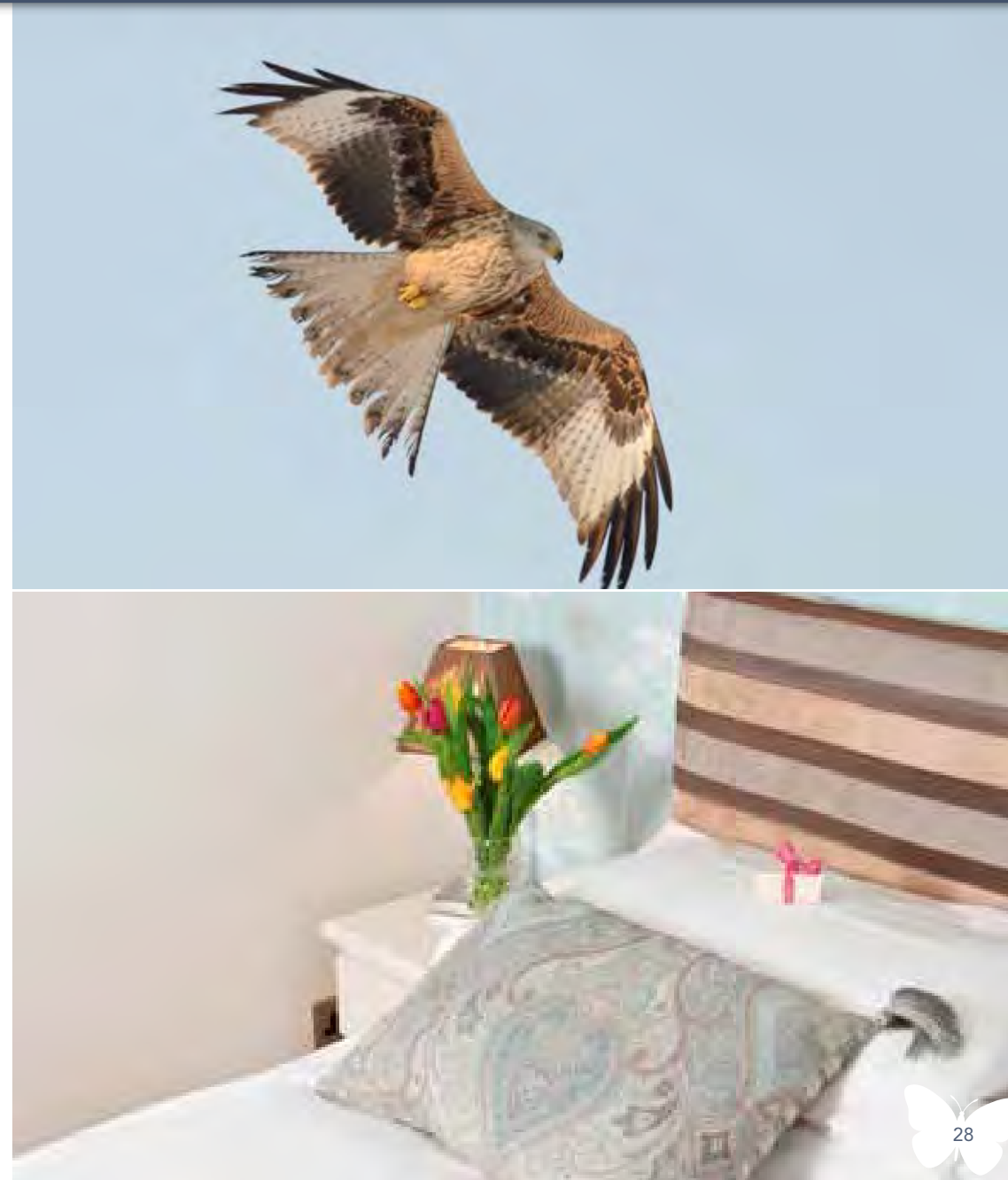
CASE STUDIES

CASE STUDY : Brookford Bed & Breakfast - Comprehensive on-line information and customer feedback

[Brookford B&B](#) recognises the importance that wildlife and nature can play in encouraging visitors to the area. They are committed to using it to help grow their business and already offer reduced rates to visitors to the Wild Autumn Festival. Their website has a good amount of information on what there is to see and do in the area, and it also includes an image of a red kite flying above the B&B thereby reinforcing the opportunities for visitors. All of this will help when potential visitors are making up their mind on where to go and where to stay.

Brookford B&B finds that it is vital that businesses have a dialogue with their visitors through the process of when they are planning their trip to when they book and then when they are on site with you. They have found that investing time chatting with visitors to find out what they are planning to do and how they can help them achieve a memorable experience can pay dividends in customer feedback through the likes of TripAdvisor. Visitors frequently comment on how they appreciate the importance of local knowledge to making their trip a memorable one.

Brookford B&B also makes the most of their own local wildlife by having two bird tables which can be viewed from their dining area; binoculars are also on hand to help visitors make the most of these encounters. The binoculars can also be borrowed for day trips and the B&B can also supply maps which are useful in providing details of good locations and opportunities to look for wildlife. It is not a pre-requisite to have an in-depth or passionate knowledge about wildlife and nature in the area; you just need to know where you can find this information out. Having some knowledge of what there is to see and do is important.



CASE STUDIES



CASE STUDY : Hutton Lodge Bed & Breakfast - Year round appeal of nature and a wildlife friendly establishment

Hutton Lodge is located in close proximity to the WWT Caerlaverock reserve which attracts bird watchers throughout the year and especially in winter during the geese migration spectacle. This provides a year round opportunity to attract visitors to their B&B.

Like other businesses interested in this market, they have installed garden bird feeders which attract a large variety of birds that intrigue their guests. They find that having the bird feeders reinforces their visitors' anticipation of what they will be seeing at the WWT reserve. This will add to their overall experience on their trip.

Hutton Lodge are also planning to incorporate a shallow pond feature in to their garden to provide an added attraction for wildlife. This demonstrates their recognition of the importance of this market and their commitment in providing a relevant and satisfying experience for their visitors.

They have also created a Facebook page to highlight what there is to see and do in the region and have recently included photos of the new WWT hide that offers a comfortable and spacious facility for bird watching. All of this activity helps to reinforce the area as a good destination for visitors attracted to wildlife and nature. They also have a close working relationship with the WWT at Caerlaverock which helps with business referrals.

CASE STUDIES

CASE STUDY : Leeming & Paterson - Wildlife photography and partnerships

Landscape photographers Ted Leeming and Morag Paterson are based in Dumfries and Galloway. Their distinctive, impressionist style of photography has won them much acclaim worldwide.

They run workshops for photographers to hear first-hand from the experts and expand their photography knowledge. The majority of their customers come from the UK and a number also come from overseas. They offer a variety of workshops over the year and some include accommodation, and for others the customers need to book their own accommodation.

In terms of the format of their workshops they usually start with an indoor tutorial at either the hotel or their studio and then spend the rest of the time at venues, which they vary to suit the main subject of the workshop and the weather conditions. They recognise the need to work in partnership with other tourism and wildlife/nature businesses to enhance what they offer their customers. Working with other businesses also helps to raise awareness of what Leeming & Paterson offer as visitors may pick up a leaflet and consider a return visit to the area to undertake a photography workshop. There is an opportunity for accommodation providers in the area to work with specialist operators such as [Leeming & Paterson](#).



CASE STUDIES



CASE STUDY : Barend Holiday Village - Encouraging repeat visits and working with Wild Seasons

Barend Holiday Village is an established destination. It opened 40 years ago and now has over 70 lodges. On-site facilities include an indoor pool, bar and restaurant, children's playground and sauna. Activities available include fishing, golf, riding and cycling. The site is surrounded by woodland and there is a small loch. Red squirrels, badgers and a variety of birds can be found on site.

The business is keen to promote its on-site wildlife and nature in the region to encourage existing visitors to return at other times of the year and to attract new customers. The staff have benefited from the support of Wild Seasons. A major difficulty has been learning enough about nature to be able to promote it to visitors, especially those that already know something, or a lot about it. The staff at Barend have found the content on Wild Seasons to be a useful resource for learning about what there is in the area. Some staff have also attended training courses and familiarisation visits organized by Wild Seasons. They will also use it for ideas to help market the business. Subsequently information on nature, including a large map of nature in Dumfries & Galloway is displayed in their reception. The staff will also use Twitter to promote wildlife activity in the area and events have also been organised such as a Barend Batty bat evening and a Red Squirrel information day with a guest speaker, a project officer, from Saving Scotland's Red Squirrels. Barend Holiday Village are very keen to assist in the conservation of these wonderful creatures, with having so many on site. They are in the process of setting up a Red Squirrel trail walk and hope to install a webcam at the main feeding station outside reception.

The business hopes to continue to work with nature experts to increase staff awareness, confidence and education and to improve the management and interpretation of on-site wildlife. Nature is now a key supporting activity to help the business achieve its main focus of offering good quality accommodation.

CASE STUDIES

CASE STUDY : Gallie Craig Coffee House - Working with local businesses to encourage longer stays

The [Gallie Craig Coffee House](#) is a family run business which sits on a rocky promontory on a headland in the Rhins of Galloway, Scotland's most southerly point. The award-winning environmentally sensitive building is an attraction in itself with its famous turf roof blending in to the landscape. The area remains unspoilt and tranquil and visitors can explore the coastline and wildlife in the area. They can also enjoy the Mull of Galloway lighthouse and the nearby RSPB Nature Reserve which has been designated as a special site of scientific interest. This reserve is one of the RSPB's smallest, yet has an amazing variety of wildlife for visitors to enjoy.

In an area with few tourism businesses and where prolonged bad weather can impact on visitors the Coffee House makes the most of its location. Visitors can take a break from a stroll or from watching wildlife and come in and get some refreshments whilst enjoying the splendid views. Gallie Craig recognise the need to work with the other businesses and organisations in the area so that they all support each other. This informal approach helps to extend the small marketing budget they all have and this in turn hopefully helps to encourage visitors to stay longer in the area. They are in early discussions with the RSPB to explore ways of enhancing the visitor experience by introducing some interpretation signs for the birdlife and flora to be seen at the Coffee House.



A Marketing Guide for Nature-Based Tourist Businesses in Dumfries & Galloway

Wild Seasons
c/o Southern Uplands Partnership
Studio 2
Lindean Mill
Galashiels
TD1 3PE

Email: info@sup.org.uk



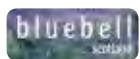
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Images by Lucy Hadley & Iain Wilson unless otherwise stated.



Dalry Bird Festival 2012

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