

Flora & Fauna

Glenveagh National Park is teeming with a diverse wildlife. The abundance and diversity of plant species found in Glenveagh is the lifeblood of the park and it sustains the wildlife that call Glenveagh home.

Amphibians, Reptiles & Aquatics

The smooth newt (*Lissotriton vulgaris*) and common frog (*Rana temporaria*) are two of the common amphibian species found in Glenveagh. The common lizard (*Lacerta vivipara*), Ireland's only native reptile, can also be found within the National Park.

The freshwater pearl mussel (*Margaritifera margaritifera*) is a large filter-feeding bivalve, which is found in near-pristine freshwater habitats. A listed species under Annex II and V of the EU Habitats Directive, they are capable of surviving for up to 140 years, making them Ireland's longest living animal. Significant numbers of freshwater pearl mussels have been recorded in the Glaskeelan and Owencarrow rivers within the park. Substantial numbers have also been recorded in the Leannan River, whose upper catchment area falls within the boundaries of Glenveagh.

Most of the park's lakes hold brown trout (*Salmo trutta* subsp. *fario*), salmonoid fish and eels. Lough Veagh has modest runs of salmon (*Salmo salar*) and sea trout (*Salmo trutta* subsp. *trutta*) as well as stocks of arctic charr (*Salvelinus alpinus*). Like salmon, the charr is seagoing in arctic and sub-arctic regions, but in western Europe it is confined to freshwater lakes where it has remained since the ice age. The 'land-locked' charr requires cold and unpolluted water and with such a commodity now scarce in western Europe, it has become seriously endangered. Charr populations isolated in different lakes over the past 10,000 years have evolved slight differences. Recent findings suggest that Glenveagh charr are significantly smaller than those in nearby Dunlewy Lake.

Birds

The diversity of habitats in Glenveagh National Park is reflected in its wide range of bird species. This includes resident species as well as migrants, which spend only part of the year in the southwest of the country. Others have been recorded on passage during the spring and autumn migrations and a few are vagrants, possibly blown off-course during winter storms.

One of the main predators in this upland region is the peregrine falcon (*Falco peregrinus*), which ranges widely in search of food, particularly wood pigeons. Peregrines nest on the cliffs choosing inaccessible nesting ledges and favouring south-facing cliffs for warmth and light. Every suitable cliff is occupied annually by a pair, though it is difficult to pinpoint their eyries on the cliff faces.

Another apex predator that frequents Glenveagh is the golden eagle (*Aquila chrysaetos*). Reintroduced to Ireland in 2001 after an absence of over 100 years, the first golden eagles were released in Glenveagh. While we cannot confirm any eagles currently nest in the park, there are several that regularly forage the main valley for their next meal. Other predators that are regularly observed in Glenveagh include merlin, sparrowhawk, and kestrel.

The woodlands of Glenveagh are home to an abundance of bird species. Among these is the wood warbler (*Phylloscopus sibilatrix*), a rare bird in Ireland but an annual visitor to Glenveagh. Arriving in mid-May, the male claims his territory and advertises to females by singing vigorously. The best way to locate one is to listen for its unique descending trill likened to the spinning of a coin on a plate. A variety of other migrant birds, including the spotted flycatcher (*Muscicapa striata*) and chiffchaff (*Phylloscopus collybita*) also arrive from Africa in mid-May, in time to exploit the summer abundance of insect life.

Other woodland birds of note include the colourful jay (*Garrulus glandarius*), the scarcer treecreeper (*Certhia familiaris*) as well as residents such as the chaffinch (*Fringilla coelebs*), song thrush (*Turdus philomelos*) and robin (*Erithacus rubecula*). Some typical pinewood bird species including crossbill (*Loxia curvirostra*), siskin (*Carduelis spinus*), goldcrest (*Regulus regulus*) and coal tit (*Parus ater*) can be seen throughout the many conifers in the main valley of Glenveagh.

Waterfowl are of major interest in Glenveagh and highlight the northern or Scottish connection. Visitors include the red-throated diver (*Gavia stellata*), which is increasing in numbers in Scotland and spreading southwards. Lough Veagh has long been the haunt of the red-throated diver and it nests in small numbers in the vicinity of Glenveagh, which is its only Irish breeding centre. The divers feed in nearby coastal waters, and divers calling as they fly in from the sea to their nesting areas are an evocative feature of summer mornings in Glenveagh.

The rare goosander (*Mergus merganser*) has not been observed in Glenveagh for several years, however, we are looking to build on the excellent work by our colleagues in the Wicklow Mountains National Park to entice this elusive but delightful species back to Glenveagh. Please check out our current and upcoming projects page for more details.

The blanket bog and heath habitat that covers the vast majority of Glenveagh is home to a number of bird species including skylarks, red grouse, curlew and snipe. However, no bird captures the character of the uplands more evocatively than the golden plover (*Pluvialis apricaria*). Its sweet, melancholy call follows the hill walker as the bird watches from a stone or peat hummock. As a breeding bird, this beautiful plover is now quite rare in Ireland, where it is confined to the north and west.

Mammals

There is an abundance of terrestrial mammals to be found throughout Glenveagh.

RED DEER (*Cervus elaphus*)

The red deer is Glenveagh's most notable and largest animal. While red deer are native to Ireland, the Glenveagh herd was supplemented in the 17th century by introduced stock from Scotland. This herd, which historically has been enclosed by the deer fence that is still visible along the original boundary of the estate, remains completely wild and as with most wild animals can be difficult to approach. While the deer can be found in nearly all areas of Glenveagh, the majority are to be found in the upland areas of the park. The best time for watching red deer is during the mating season or 'rut' which takes place each year between mid-September and mid-November. Please keep an eye on our upcoming events page for our 'Rut Walks'. This guided walk by park staff provides the perfect opportunity to hear the distinctive call of the stags during the rut season.

IRISH HARE (*Lepus timidus hibernicus*)

The upland regions of Glenveagh are also home to the Irish hare. This hardy mammal can survive on a diet of mountain grasses and sedges. It is a race of arctic mountain hare, but unlike the race found in Scotland, its coat seldom turns white in winter.

BATS

Several species of bat are found in Glenveagh. Emerging from hibernation in spring, they often roost in old buildings and the woodlands in Glenveagh, making the most of insect prey which becomes abundant on warm nights.

COMMON PIPISTRELLE (*Pipistrellus pipistrellus*) & SOPRANO PIPISTRELLE (*Pipistrellus pygmaeus*)

The common pipistrelle and the soprano pipistrelle are Ireland's two smallest bat species, weighing no more than around 5 grams. They feed largely on mosquitos, small moths and midges, and can consume approximately 3,000 insects per night. Pipistrelles regularly roost in both the Visitor Centre and Glenveagh Castle, preferring to occupy confined spaces such as behind hanging tiles and soffit boards or between roofing felt and roof tiles, rather than the main attic space.

DAUBENTON'S BAT (*Myotis daubentonii*)

While a number of bat species feed over lakes and rivers, none has such a close association with water as the Daubenton's bat or 'water bat'. This species is easily recognisable by its low, level flight above the surface of slow-moving rivers and lakes searching for caddisflies, mayflies and midges. It may even scoop prey from the water surface using its big feet. Daubenton's bats roost under stone bridges, in ruins, canal tunnels, trees and damp caves.

LEISLER'S BAT (*Nyctalus leisleri*)

The Leisler's bat is Ireland's largest bat species and can be found roosting in the buildings and woodland areas of Glenveagh. It is one of the first bats to emerge at night and can be observed soon after sunset flying over open spaces such as parks and fields. The Leisler's bat is distinguishable by its flight altitude; it is found flying at much greater heights than the other Irish species, from where it can dive on its prey (usually midges, crane flies, or beetles). Bat Nights have become a regular (and popular) feature of the summer calendar in Glenveagh. A brief presentation is followed by a short, guided night-time walk with bat detectors. Please see our upcoming events page for further details.

OTTERS (*Lutra lutra*)

While being a largely secretive species, can be found in the main valley of Glenveagh. They have been regularly observed in rivers both above and below Lough Veagh.

BADGERS (*Meles meles*) & FOXES (*Vulpes vulpes*)

These are both important predators in the Glenveagh ecosystem. While sightings can be elusive, both can be observed in the woodlands and on the open heath. Both species are opportunistic hunters and will take a wide variety of foods ranging from worms in the spring to blackberries in the autumn. Glenveagh is also home to stoats (*Mustela erminea hibernica*) and pine martens (*Martes martes*), rarely seen but often captured on wildlife cameras by staff.