

NATIONAL TRUST FOR SCOTLAND MEDIA RELEASE

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Walk on the wild side in Perth's enchanted forest

The National Trust for Scotland has published a spotter's guide for visitors to the Hermitage

The end of lockdown is in sight just as the first green shoots of spring start to emerge. And with the changing of seasons, a whole new world will come to life in Perthshire's hills and woodlands.

To mark UN World Wildlife Day in 2021, the National Trust for Scotland has published a series of spotter's guides for visitors to their nationwide network of properties and wild spaces.

One turns its eye to Perthshire's own enchanted forest, the Hermitage – a place of magical waterfalls and breathtaking views, hidden folies and secret totem poles.

While following the Hermitage's network of paths, walkers are being encouraged to keep a close eye open for some of the many animals and birds who call the woodland sanctuary home.

The Dipper

Small but perfectly formed, this robin-sized bird can be seen darting up and down the burns and rivers in the glen. Its bright white tummy, in contrast to its dark body, often catches the eye first, but keep an ear cocked for its beautiful and distinctive song. The dipper is named after its characteristic bobbing movement when perched on rocks or branches. And, when on the hunt, it has a special skill and can both feed and walk underwater.

Grey heron

One of the Hermitage's most popular residents and a common sight on the river. It's perfect poise and pose, combined with long neck, long legs and long beak make it instantly recognisable. And watch out when they take flight. This is a sight to behold and their wingspan can reach up to 1.9metres. Just be careful if you are walking the forest floor beneath their heronries. Like owls, they regurgitate non-digested fur and bones in pellets – which makes for a lovely surprise package for unsuspecting walkers.

Grey wagtail

Often spied perched by streams and rivers, swishing its tail up and down the Wagtail is easily spotted for the bright yellow patch on its tummy. Its striking black and white tail is much longer than that of its pied and yellow wagtail cousins. You are most likely to spot them in upland areas, although they are more common in the lowlands over winter.

Otter

Keep a constant watch on the River Braan on your walk and you may be fortunate enough to spy a rare treat, one of Perth's elusive otters. They have been spotted swimming – and enjoying a mudslide on the banks. And they are always on the hunt, eating machines who need to fuel for a body perfectly adapted to life on land and in water.

Red squirrel

This red is gradually making a comeback with the National Trust of Scotland working with a range of partners to support native populations and keep their dangerous grey cousins at bay. With the little tufts on their ears, long tails and rich, rusty colour, it's easy to see why visitors are completely entranced by them.

Wood wasp

It's big and sounds a bit scary as it buzzes in flight, but the wood wasp or horntail is harmless to humans. It has large black and yellow stripes around its body. The large 'stinger' is actually an ovipositor, used to inject eggs into pine or other conifer woods. The larvae are incredibly strong eaters and chew their way through the wood to emerge.

If you are thinking of travelling to a National Trust for Scotland property, please check Scottish Government Covid-19 guidelines and restrictions. You can also find out more about the properties at [nts.org.uk](https://www.nts.org.uk)

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Editor's Notes:

The National Trust for Scotland is the charity that celebrates and protects Scotland's heritage. It relies on the support of its members and donors to carry out its important work of caring for the natural and built heritage of Scotland for everyone to enjoy.

From coastlines to castles, art to architecture, wildlife to wildernesses, the National Trust for Scotland exists to protect the national and natural treasures we all love. To plan your visit today, enter your postcode at www.nts.org.uk.

We would be grateful if, when referring to the National Trust for Scotland that our name is not shortened to 'the National Trust'. We are an independent organisation, separate from the National Trust. The National Trust for Scotland is commonly shortened to NTS or 'the Trust'.

