

BIRD PROJECT FLYING HIGH

A Heads Up for Hen Harriers project that aims to conserve the threatened birds of prey is delighted by the success of 2017.

More than 21 estates across Scotland joined the project which saw a bumper 37 young fledged from nests – the highest number ever for the Partnership for Action Against Wildlife Crime Scotland (PAW) Scotland initiative, led by Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH).

Estates have agreed to have cameras installed on their land to monitor nesting hen harriers.

Hen Harrier Species Champion, Mairi Gougeon MSP, said: "Hen harrier conservation is a complex issue. This project has shown the benefits of partnership working."

BOOK OF THE WEEK

Where to Ski in Austria

This is the first in a new series of guidebooks from the Where to Ski and Snowboard stable.

For 20 years, the annual Where to Ski and Snowboard, edited by Chris Gill and Dave Watts, has led the ski resort guide market. Now, the authors have changed course with a collection of smaller resort guides, each dealing with a single country.

There will be guides to Italy and France published next autumn. Switzerland and North America will complete the set in 2019. The books are for beginners

through to experts and offer a wealth of information.

Where to Ski in Austria, priced £11.99, is available online and in bookshops.

GEAR OF THE WEEK

LUXI ski wear range for women Active clothing brand Dare 2b have launched a new LUXI ski wear range for women.

The collection is designed to be practical and good-looking.

The fully technical ski jackets, such as the women's Cultivated Luxe Ski Jacket, have high warmth, low-bulk insulation and waterproof/breathable fabrics to cope with all weather conditions.

There are extra features such as snow-blocking snowskirts, cosy inner stretch cuffs, multiple pockets, faux fur hoods,

cinched in waists, and metallic trims. See www.dare2b.com



FOUR FACTOR

Clockwise from above: Culbin Forest in Morayshire, Loch Ossian in Highlands, view of Arthur's Seat from Edinburgh's Braid Hill, & Mugdock Castle

Time for runners to blaze new trail



FIONA RUSSELL

Glasgow author Susie Allison picks her five favourite winter trail running routes from the 70 contained in an updated edition of her popular **Scottish Trail Running guide**. The guide, for all levels of runners, aims to take people on a journey of discovery that starts in suburbia and crosses every kind of runnable terrain to reach remote glens and far-flung islands

Braid Hills, Edinburgh

Start/finish: Braid Hills

Drive car park

Distance: 3 miles (4.5km)

Terrain: Gravel track & paths

Edinburgh runners are fortunate to have a few off-road running options within the city limits. One of these, a short circuit, starts at the Braid Hills golf course clubhouse.

The route follows a bridleway around the perimeter of the golf course. This generally provides good footing, although it can be muddy in places. A gradual climb leads to a trig point with a panoramic view over the city and surrounding countryside.

Edinburgh Castle and Arthur's Seat, the Bass Rock and North Berwick Law, the Pentlands and the Southern Highland hills can all be seen on a clear winter's day.

Mugdock Country Park, Stirlingshire

Start/finish: Mugdock Country Park Visitor Centre

Distance: 2.5 miles (4km)

Terrain: Gravel, grass paths and tracks

On the north side of Glasgow, Mugdock Country Park offers a large network of easily accessible trails. A straightforward circuit goes around Mugdock Loch and past the ruin of Mugdock Castle, ransacked twice in the 17th century and more recently destroyed by fire in the 1960s.

The main tracks in Mugdock Country Park are surfaced and provide sure footing even in wet winter weather. Start either at the Visitor Centre or run in along the West Highland Way from



REACH YOUR PEAK
Eildon Hills in the Borders

Milngavie, which has train and bus links.

Eildon Hills, Scottish Borders

Start/finish: Pant Well, Bowden

Distance: 6 miles (10km)

Terrain: Trails & earth paths, which can be slippery when wet

When the higher hills are snow covered, the isolated peaks of the Eildon Hills offer an alternative opportunity for that "on top of the world" summit satisfaction feeling. The triple peaks occupy a commanding position in the middle of the Tweed Valley in the Borders.

A range of runs can be constructed over and around these small summits, starting either in Melrose or Bowden.

While some trails are surfaced, smaller earth paths can be muddy and slippery. This run takes in all three tops and on a clear day the view from each is superb.

Culbin Forest, Morayshire

Start/finish: Wellhill.

Distance: 8 miles (12km)

Terrain: Forest tracks, sandy beach

Culbin Forest provides colour and cover at any time of year and especially good for winter

runners. Track junctions are helpfully numbered and waymarked trails lead to a treetop viewing tower.

Culbin is one of Europe's largest sand dunes. The conifers were planted in the 19th century in a successful attempt to stabilise the inhospitable, shifting and un-navigable sands.

Today, Culbin's forest tracks are peaceful places to run, walk or cycle. It's worth running out of the trees to the shore of Findhorn Bay, where brightly painted houses shine in the low rays of the winter sun.

Loch Ossian, Highlands

Start/finish: Corroun Station

Distance: 9 miles (14km)

Terrain: Gravel & stony track

Although remote, this running route is on a flat, straightforward trail. Corroun Station can only be reached on foot or by train but, once there, the Landrover track is easy to find. Staying at the SYHA hostel overnight offers the chance for a dawn run, when the loch's still waters reflect the sky and low sun rays bring out the pink-orange of pines on its small wooded islands.

■ **The Scottish Trail Running 2nd Edition is priced £15.99 from www.pesdapress.com**