

Nature Photography Workshops Weeks at Aigas with Laurie Campbell.

Frequently asked questions:

Q: Will there be lots of walking to do as I am concerned about my level of fitness and the amount of photographic equipment I may need to carry?

A: Not much because the pace of each outing is dictated by the abilities of guests and the frequency in which we need to stop to photograph the subjects we come across. Indeed, an important part of the workshop is to encourage guests to see the photographic potential in all manner of subjects in the natural world so there are often times when will be working in a relatively small area for lengthy periods of time. We rarely need to walk as far as a kilometre or so in one go.

Q: How will I know what photographic equipment to take each day?

A: After dinner each evening, an announcement will be made about the location we shall be visiting the following day and the subjects we plan to photograph. This will be confirmed after breakfast each morning at 8.30am in a briefing where advice will be given on what equipment to bring and there will then be time for guests to prepare accordingly before we leave for the day at 9.00am.

Q: I've just purchased a new camera and am not entirely sure how it all works. Will you be able to help?

A: Yes of course, and although Laurie may not have handled the exact model of camera before, all have much the same range of controls that allow it to function as any other camera. We would begin by setting-up your camera to work as simply as possible and ensuring that a small number of key functions are enabled. Regardless of how well you know your camera, do please remember to bring its instruction manual.

Q: After the camera, what is the most important piece of photographic equipment I should bring?

A: Without question, a tripod is essential. If you don't already own one, or are thinking about changing, then choose one that will support the longest, heaviest lens own. For nature photography, it is sometimes important to have a tripod that can be used close to the ground, preferably down to around 30cms. A beanbag is another useful accessory to have in this respect, particularly when working from the wooden hides where it is impractical to set-up a tripod.

Q: What about hides, do I need one of these too?

A: Not necessary, because there are a number of permanent wooden hides that you are free to use on the estate. To photograph pine martens, red squirrels and badgers for example, Laurie will lead organised visits. If you

already own a portable hide or camouflage materials etc, then do feel free to bring these as there are often opportunities to use these on the estate.

Q: Can I bring examples of previous images I've taken for critique?

A: Yes, please do. This is important because it allows Laurie to learn what you are interested in photographing and help identify any areas where you may need help. You may bring prints or digital files that may be viewed on a laptop computer but please limit your selection of previous work to no more than twenty images.

Q: Will there be an opportunity to review my images taken during the workshop?

A: Yes, Friday mornings are set aside for this and everyone will be invited to select fifty of what they consider their best images from the week that Laurie will look at with each guest in one-to-one sessions. A selection of ten will be made and with your permission, included in a presentation featuring the best images taken over the week. This will be screened to all residents at Aigas after dinner by Laurie at the Magnus House later that evening and all photo workshop guests will be given a copy of the presentation as a memento of your visit.

You will of course, receive feedback on your work throughout the week and there will be opportunities in the evenings when no hide visits or other activities are planned to seek more specialised help in addressing any technical problems you may be experiencing.

Q: How much time will be spent working on computers discussing aspects, such as using Photoshop or processing RAW image files etc?

A: As above, specialist technical help is available on some evenings, but no long periods of daytime are devoted to working with images on computers. The emphasis of this fieldwork-based course is to provide instruction on how to obtain the best quality images in-camera, so avoiding spending excessive amounts of time later at a computer. Do please bring a laptop computer if you own one as it will be essential for downloading and reviewing your photographs at the end of each day.

Q: Which species of birds and mammals might I reliably see and photograph on any of these workshops?

A: While it's difficult to promise one hundred percent success for any one species, past experience has shown that few guests leave Aigas without photographs of pine martens, badgers, red deer, feral goats and red squirrels and Scottish wildcats. According to season, dipper, red kite, bottle-nosed dolphins, otter, Eurasian beaver, leaping Atlantic salmon, mountain hare, lekking black grouse and large flocks of migrating geese are all frequently photographed.

Q: What about the weather, and what happens if it rains?

A: So long as you come prepared, rainy weather is never a problem. In really wet and windy weather, we will always aim avoid exposed, open habitats in favour of more sheltered ones such as woodlands. As a standby, indoor tutorials involving the use of close-up and flash photography using the facilities available in the Magnus Education Centre or Crannog meeting spaces.