

A Year in the Life of Snowdonia

Bill Birkett

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This is the seventh of Bill Birkett's prize-winning and widely praised photographic essays which portray, throughout the seasons, his love affair with the wildest and most impressive mountain areas of Britain. Snowdonia, the third largest National Park in Britain, is unsurpassed in its variety of landscape. It ranges through the high rugged mountains around Snowdon to the far-flung high groups of the Rhinogs, Arennigs and Arans, and the mighty Cadair Idris. It stretches some 85 kilometres - from Conwy and its magnificent castle in the north to Aberdovey and its Roman road in the south. Snowdonia attracts over 6 million visitors annually. A leading centre for all who love the natural world and a major recreational area for climbers and walkers, it is not a region of complete wildness: adding to its character are the 27,500 people who live and work there, in the heartland of Welsh-speaking Wales. Some 65 per cent of the inhabitants have Welsh as their first language, and have strong links with other peoples of the Atlantic coast, such as Cornwall, Brittany and the Basque region of Spain. At 1,085 metres, Snowdon is the highest mountain in Wales and higher than any mountain in England; its evocative Welsh name Eryri means 'place of the eagles'. Along with some of the most dramatic and magnificent scenery in Britain, Eryri contains a huge variety of habitats for animals, birds and plants. Between the sea and the mountains the region has 37 kilometres of coastline, with beaches cut by deep estuaries. Above the coast, glacially carved valleys fed by mountain lakes and streams support the remnants of broad-leaved woodlands of oak, ash, rowan and hazel. There are more National Nature Reserves in Eryri than in any other National Park in Britain.



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