

NORWAY

FLATANGER

September 20 - 27, 2025

sea eagles | autumn forests | forest birds
| elk | coastal life

7 nights, GBP 3350

Photo: Wenche Dahle



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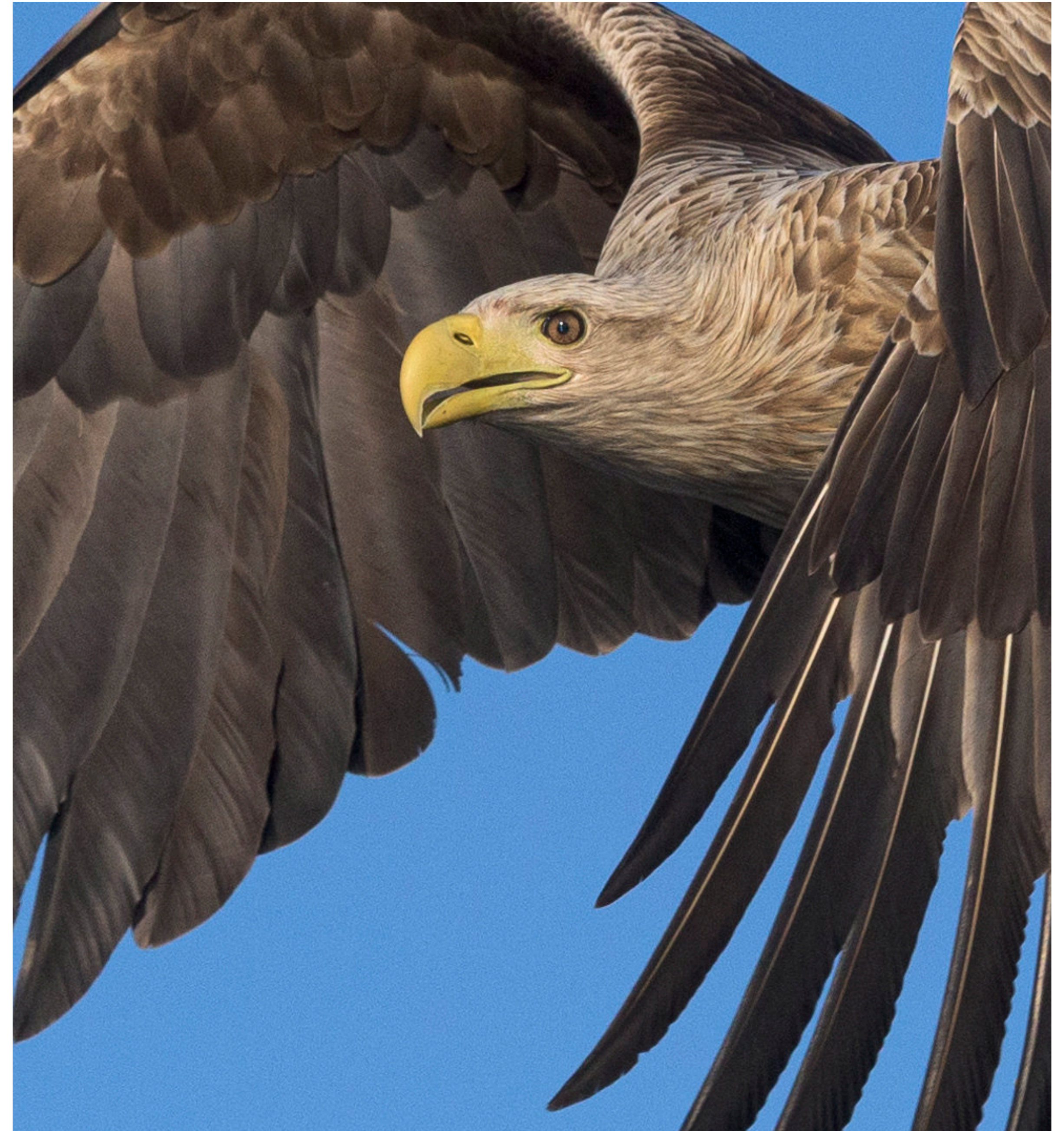
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our formula

FOOD AND PHOTOGRAPHY RETREATS combines a high standard of hospitality with the sharing of professional photographic experience accumulated over 30 years. We create a home-from-home for you in the large comfortable houses we rent for the Retreats, freeing you of the restrictions of hotels. Over the course of the week, this space and our field locations become the settings for learning, sharing and enjoying good food and conversation with like-minded people.

Maybe it helps that we enjoy our work with guests. We take a lot of pleasure in seeing the lights go on in the eyes of someone who realises they have just made something special. Or who has understood a setting properly for the first time. Or whose expression is pure delight as a plate is set down before them.

We enjoy sharing because, in one way or another, it always rewards. We know how ideas go out into the world from our Retreats, grow and develop with other guardians only to return to us later, mature and fully-formed. And how recipes are taken home and meals recreated for the enjoyment of friends and families we will never meet.

We hope you will join us to make some new stories together.



Charlotte and Niall Benvie, your hosts and directors of Food and Photography Retreats Ltd.

the location



Amongst nature photographers, Ole Martin and Wenche Dahle's operation at Flatanger, 3 ½ hours north of Trondheim in central Norway, is considered the best place to photograph sea eagles in Europe. For over 20 years, Ole Martin has fed generations of local birds from the back of his boat and he is as familiar with their habits as they are with his. During two morning and two evening sessions timed to coincide with the best light and sea conditions, he will take us to the best places in the complex of open and shaded fjords to make memorable, action-filled pictures.

The annual elk hunt is a traditional part of rural Norwegian life but doesn't start until after we leave. The males have fully-grown antlers at this time and it's rutting season so we will rely on Ole Martin to guide us to where it is safe to photograph the animals.

I first visited Ole Martin and Wenche in the early- 2000's just as their eagle enterprise was getting off the ground and attracting the attention of the likes of Staffan Widstrand, Brutus Ostling and Vincent Munier. It was where, shooting alongside Vincent, I first witnessed the potential of digital capture (and felt idiotic that I was still using film). I liked Ole Martin and Wenche as people and I liked their part of coastal Norway just as much. Almost 20 years later, nothing has changed.

Lauvsnes is the administrative centre of the Flatanger municipality and where we will be based. It's a prosperous community of fewer than 500 people, with a locally owned salmon farming and processing company, boat builder and ancillary services. Here, the low granite mountains drop abruptly into deep dark fjords alive with cod and mackerel. It's no wonder that the population of sea eagles here is amongst the densest in Europe. Far from seeing them as a problem, as is sometimes the case in Scotland, local farmers regard them more like over-grown gulls. After all, when there is so much tasty fish to catch why bother going after wooly lambs, especially when they live in the forests?

Even at 64 degrees north, the days in late September are still quite long: the sun rises about 07:00 falls below the horizon about 19:30. The wild forest that crowds the lower slopes of the hills - a mixture of Scots pine, birch, willow, aspen and rowan - is busy with hungry birds eager to take advantage of the plentiful supply of peanuts and sunflower seeds provided for them. The red squirrels, dressed for the cold in thick red coats prefer the hazelnuts.

The sea and its influence are ever-present here. It softens the blow of the northern winter and gives an edge to the soft summer air flowing down from the mountains. A satellite view of Flatanger reveals a coastline that looks like it has been shredded into 1400

islands and skerries. Indeed, you need to travel a good distance from Lauvsnes before, eventually, reaching the open Norwegian Sea.

The sea eagles - *havørn* - however, have all they need in the waters around Lauvsnes. Fjords, which are essentially flooded valleys, come in all shapes and sizes here and one in particular offers the possibility of taking backlit photos with a deep black background to show every drop of water falling from an eagle - or herring gull. Regardless of the subject, the spectacle is breathtaking.









IF YOU'RE INTERESTED IN LEARNING one of the particular skills Niall is known for (including field studio photography, "Colour Transects" or "Chocolate Bars"), take an eLearning class before the Retreat and have a chance to practise what you've learned in the field with him. The emphasis of this Retreat is on wildlife action photography and before we head out on the boat for the first time, we will make sure that your camera's autofocus is set up properly.

Here's what we will work on:

- Fishing sea eagles in a variety of locations around Lauvsnes, Flatanger. The birds are attracted by "chumming" with whole fish and dive to pick the fish from the water's surface. Two morning and two late afternoon sessions correspond with good light and periods when the eagles are active
- Elk photography, mostly along the woodland edge
- Red squirrels and a variety of woodland birds, photographed from permanent hides with natural-looking feeding stations. Minimum of two, five-hour sessions
- Landscapes featuring the shore, sea and sky
- An introduction to Wenche's and Niall's particular brands of multiple-exposure photography
- Regular critique sessions - group and private

Our accommodation on this Retreat is in one or two (depending on group size) modern, Scandinavian-style houses 3 km apart in Flatanger. We will take all our meals in the bigger one as well as hold critiques there and you will be transported between the two if we use both.

We can accommodate up to seven guests on this Retreat and there is no single room supplement. While bathrooms are not within the rooms, there is good provision.

Good food is at the heart of our Retreats, from breakfast through to after-dinner chocolates, all made by Charlotte. We take the view that even a good day is made better by the prospect of a lovely meal at the end of it. We eat largely vegetarian food at home but the range broadens to encompass all tastes on Retreat. She uses local ingredients, when they are available, in dishes that are delicious and imaginative without being fussy. Food allergies and intolerances are catered for sensitively when notified in advance on the booking form. Expect to eat well, for breakfast, lunch and dinner. Since we aren't beholden to hotel schedules, we time the meals to fit in around our photography. While we don't provide wine, beer or spirits, you will have the opportunity to buy them en-route from the airport or locally at the well-stocked Spar in Lauvsnes. But be prepared for Norwegian prices!



Price: GBP 3350 per person

starts: 17:00, 20th September, finishes 09:00, 27th September 2025

What's included:

- 7 nights' accommodation at Ole Martin and Wenche Dahle's guest house, Lauvsnes, Flatanger
- All meals during the Retreat from dinner on Saturday 20th September until breakfast on Saturday 27th September, 2025
- Transfers from and to Steinkjer railway station
- All hide and boat fees for the sessions described here
- Transportation during the Retreat.
- Tuition from Niall

What's not included:

- Your travel to and from Steinkjer, from home
- Alcoholic drinks
- Travel insurance
- Additional excursions, eg to fish farm

To book

Visit www.foodandphotographyretreats.com, click on the MAKE A RESERVATION button in the top right, scroll down to read our Terms and Conditions, then complete and send us the booking form below. At that point will you be invoiced for the deposit, amounting to 19% of the total. The balance is due 5 weeks before departure.

Travelling to and from the Retreat

Since guests typically arrive from different parts of the world we will have one pick-up time, at Steinkjer Railway station, mid-afternoon on the 21st September. We will let you know the exact time closer to departure. You can take a train from Trondheim airport to Steinkjer. We aim to return you to the railway station at Steinkjer by mid-day on 28th September. The Retreat starts with dinner on the 21st and finishes after breakfast on the 28th. You may wish to stay in Trondheim the night before the Retreat starts and/or on the night it ends. The journey from and to the airport, if you are driving, takes about 3 ½ hours. The drive between Steinkjer to Lauvsnes takes about 1 hour 20 minutes.

Where we will go

During the Retreat, we will be travelling only a short distance between our accommodation, boats, hides and coastal and



mountain locations, mostly in the vicinity of Lauvsnes. When we find a good location, we likely to return once or twice until we've got the most out of it. Otherwise, we will be working from Ole Martin's boat (for sea eagles), from vehicles for elk or in hides in the forest.

The daily routine

Whatever we are shooting, it tends to look more attractive in the early morning or late evening when low-angled light shows relief and colours better. With dawn at around 07:00 and sunset just after 19:30, we have a lot to fit in. If we go out for a dawn shoot, we will have a snack first then proper breakfast on return. Guided by Ole Martin's advice, we will make our plan for the following day the evening before and announce it at dinner, outlining the weather forecast, the locations and ideas for the next day, drive times, walking distances, where and when we'll eat and what gear you'll probably need. Experience has taught that it's more productive—and satisfactory for you—to have a plan to follow rather than improvising.

We've learned over the years, too, just how much guests value being able to discuss the work they are creating, with Niall and other guests and to this end, we'd urge you to bring a laptop. While the emphasis is on review, Niall will advise on post-production too. We have a follow-up Zoom meeting a couple of

weeks after the Retreat for a final review, to avoid eating into time on the Retreat.

Safety

We take your safety seriously during our Retreats. At locations with known risks—such as drop-offs, tree-roots, muddy shores and embarkation points—we will draw your attention to them before we set out. On the boats, you will be issued with a survival suit and given safety instructions by Ole Martin. Thereafter, you are responsible for your own safety and that of your equipment. We provide guests with a hi.-vis. vest to attach to their camera pack; it makes you, and it, easier to locate. We also issue guests with a two-way radio in order that we may keep in touch in a situation where the group can scatter. This also makes it easier to access help or guidance from Niall. We do not recommend leaving any equipment in our vehicle overnight. We can accommodate various levels of fitness and most walking on this Retreat is at low levels, on trails. Those who want to climb for an overview can do so with a guide.

COVID

At the time of writing April 2024, the threat from COVID has receded. Nevertheless, if there is a resurgence, we will require guests to conform to the statutory guidelines pertaining at the time.

Spending money

If you would like to carry cash (although Norway has long since “gone plastic”), you can withdraw some during the journey from the airport.

Insurance

It is a requirement of booking that guests provide evidence of personal travel insurance to cover cancellation and curtailment, medical and emergency expenses (including repatriation), personal accident, injury and death in addition to loss of/damage to luggage and possessions, personal possessions and flight cancellations/ delays.

Passport and visa requirements

Norway is a member of the Schengen Agreement area and as such, there are no visa requirements for citizens of that area. Visitors from the UK, US, Canada and Australia do not currently require a visitor’s visa but this is under review and you should check before booking. A passport valid for at least six months beyond the length of the stay is required for non-Norwegian visitors and the passport you present must not have been issued more than 10 years before the date of your return. You should also check your insurance in respect of COVID claims.

Language

Norwegian is the native language but English is spoken widely, including by our hosts.

Climate

It’s September so it’s beginning to cool off a bit, especially when we are out on the water and in the early morning. But on sunny days the temperature could rise to 8 or 9 °C. Rain or shine, we have strategies to make interesting work.

Clothing

Prepare for cold weather. You should have: proper walking boots or, ideally, neoprene wellingtons ; waterproof trousers; a waterproof shell; a down jacket or fleece; and thermals. You might not need them but it’s not so easy to buy things locally. A windproof hat and liner and fold-down mitt/ liners combination will keep head and hands warm. It’s a good idea to have a waterproof bag for your pack or the bag that you want to take on the boat. Space is at a premium though, so bring only what you will likely use. You may want something smarter for the evenings. We ask that guests wear slippers or indoor shoes in the accommodation. It’s the Norwegian way, after all.

Equipment

If you are travelling by air (as we will be), you may be concerned about carry-on luggage restrictions. The way round this Niall has used for many years is to pack as much gear as you reasonably can into a photographer's waistcoat. This counts as a garment, not hand luggage, and you can still take your carry-on allowance into the cabin. Equipment you'll need during the Retreat:

- If possible, please bring a laptop with Lightroom/PS, CaptureOne or Affinity Photo
- A telephoto zoom, eg. 100 - 400 mm, is generally better than a fixed telephoto when we are photographing the eagles. A telephoto in the range of 300 - 500 mm is good for the hide work and the elk. For landscapes, a 24 -70 mm or its equivalent is useful and versatile
- You'll need a tripod, especially for work at dusk. Ole Martin provides Arca Swiss compatible gimbals in the hides
- Please pack a head torch, for safety and navigation
- A walking pole or staff is useful in the hills
- Bring all the chargers, cards, batteries and backup media you need, plus appropriate adaptor if you're travelling from outside the EU. Norwegian power sockets deliver 220 volts and accept

the Europlug types C and F

- A polarising filter if you are planning to shoot landscapes (graduated ND filters are largely redundant now)
- Hand warmers—which help to prolong your battery's life. And make your work more comfortable.

About us

After many years leading tours and workshops for other companies at home and abroad, Niall and Charlotte Benvie incorporated Food and Photography Retreats in 2018. Our offer combines the cultivation of your creativity in attractive locations with great hospitality, conversation and food.

Niall has been a professional photographer, writer, designer and guide for 31 years with a massive publication record including seven books and hundreds of articles. He has been involved in founding and running several of the biggest outdoor photographic initiatives of the last 15 years, including Meet Your Neighbours, Wild Wonders of Europe and 2020VISION and is recognised for the innovative nature of his work – and capacity for re-invention.

For 28 years, Charlotte combined a career in the Civil Service with freelance catering and hosting roles before coming to work with husband, Niall. Guests value not only her expertise in the kitchen and dining room but her attention to detail and warmth.

specifics

She has a keen eye for a picture too and can also assist with Lightroom processing. She is a trained chocolatiere and between Retreats sells her work in France.

Contact Niall and Charlotte:

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with the Benvies



**NIALL
BENVIE**
artwork

