

The Magic of Mull

Naturetrek Tour Report

9th – 15th June 2026



Otter



Snipe



Red-breasted Merganser



Hen Harrier

Tour report by Andy Smith
Photos by Sam Schaack



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Tour participants: Andy Smith (leader) with five Naturetrek clients

Day 1

Tuesday 9th June

After successful pick-ups at both Paisley station and Glasgow airport, we headed off towards Oban, stopping for lunch in Tyndrum and a leg stretch at Glen Lochy. Our ferry left Oban harbour on time, and we were soon enjoying our first proper birding. Black and Common Guillemots, Razorbills, Kittiwakes, Shags, Common and Arctic Terns, and a surprise Arctic Skua were all noted before we docked at Craignure an hour or so later.

Driving to our base at Pennygael, we had our first taste of Mull's beautiful and varied landscapes and saw a few more birds, including a pair of Whinchats, a couple of Buzzards, a few Redpolls and ubiquitous Meadow Pipits, Starlings and Hooded Crows. There were a few Red Deer along the way too (an everyday sighting on the island), plus a trio of Harbour Seals hauled out on the rocks at the head of Loch Spelve.

We arrived at our comfortable accommodation in good time to settle in before dinner and then, in the late evening, some of us took a stroll along the shore, where we enjoyed good views of Oystercatchers, Common Sandpipers, Ringed Plovers, Swallows, House Martins and various other bits and pieces.

Day 2

Wednesday 10th June

Three Great Northern Divers offshore at Pennygael made a good start to the day, and things continued well as we drove out of the village, with both Snipe and Redshank perched atop roadside fence posts. We spotted our first Otter fishing in the shallows just past Craignure, and had good telescope views of an adult White-tailed Eagle at Loch Na Keal. So we were in good shape when we arrived at Ulva ferry, ready to board the boat to Staffa and the Treshnish Isles.

The next six hours or so proved to be a wonderful experience. Staffa, with its stunning geology, exceeded expectations and brought us a lovely close encounter with a pair of Twites. On Lunga, we soaked up the experience of being immersed in the noise, bustle and smell of a big seabird colony, and enjoyed fabulous encounters with Razorbills, Guillemots, Shags, Kittiwakes, Fulmars and lots of wonderful Puffins. A Great Skua, huge and daunting, put in a brief appearance, and other birds on this very beautiful little island included Rock Pipits, Wrens, Rock Doves, Eiders with chicks and another half dozen Twites. Several Grey Seals were noted on some offshore rocks as we cruised through the other Treshnish Isles, and we finished the day in grand style with fine views of another Otter fishing near Ulva ferry. What a great day!

Day 3

Thursday 11th June

After yesterday's sunshine, today brought cloud and rain. Undaunted, we set off to explore the Ross of Mull. Druing a series of stops and short walks around Fionnphort, Knockvologan, Ardalinish and Uisken, we saw a reasonable range of birds, despite the inclement conditions, including Red-breasted Merganser, Shelduck, Redshank, Ringed Plover, Rock Dove, Wheatear, Stonechat, Sand Martin and another two Twites.

Finally, the weather got the better of us, and we returned to the hotel to dry out. By late afternoon, conditions had improved considerably, so we headed out locally and had a fine wee session, with great views of Curlews, Redshanks, Lapwings, Whinchats and Reed Buntings and best of all, a pair of hunting Hen Harriers.

Post dinner, we decided to make the best of the evening and drove down to Ardtun, where we finished the day with further sightings of Hen Harriers (a pair, then a single male), a Kestrel, a Cuckoo, a Mountain Hare, some Harbour Seals and our only Bullfinch of the week.

Day 4

Friday 12th June

Today it was wet in the morning, but drier in the afternoon. We decided to explore the south-east of the island: our first stop was along the north shore of Loch Spelve, where we had lovely views of a drumming Snipe (we could see those outer tail feathers sticking out when it dived) and a female Red-breasted Merganser with five tiny and charming ducklings, which spent part of the time riding on their mother's back. Also here were two Arctic Terns, a Cuckoo and a lone Turnstone.

Next, we took advantage of a break in the weather and walked along the shore at Lochbuie. It was an enjoyable stroll, and along the way we saw Sand Martins, Wheatears, Rock Pipits and, excitingly, two distant Golden Eagles high over a ridge to the north-west. They too were taking advantage of the break in the weather.



Wheatear



Mountain Hare

After lunch at the Old Post Office café, we proceeded around the north shore of Loch Spelve, towards Croggan. This was a beautiful area, and as we drove slowly we came across a pair of Otters fishing in the seaweedy shallows. They stayed around for a good while, and we all enjoyed the most wonderful views of them, first catching and eating small fish and crabs, and then out on the shore.

We finished up with a walk at Croggan itself, where a speckled immature White-tailed Eagle passed low over our heads and flew across the narrows to perch in a dead tree on the opposite shore: a great sighting with which to end the day!

Day 5

Saturday 13th June

It was fiercely windy today with scattered heavy showers: a cold front was passing through. After breakfast, we headed to the north of the island, first to picturesque Calgary Bay where we found some Eiders with chicks and a nice range of flowers on the machair, then to remote Caliach Point, the exposed north-western extremity of the

island. Getting the best out of the brisk wind, we had a super walk here, with dramatic seascapes and lots of Wheatears and Meadow Pipits. We came across Oystercatchers and Lapwings with well-grown chicks, and at the point itself we watched a steady passage of Manx Shearwaters heading south. It was all very bracing and atmospheric, and we got back to the bus feeling that we'd had a bit of an adventure!

We ate lunch back at Calgary, paused for a while to admire the standing stones at Dervaig, then dropped into Tobermory for an hour or so to sample the delights of the town, before heading back to base.

In the evening, the wind dropped, and we took a spin around the north side of Loch Scridain. Here, alongside Skylarks and the regular waders, we enjoyed great views of a male Hen Harrier, a breeding-plumages Great Northern Diver, a Mountain Hare and another Otter.

Day 6

Sunday 14th June

Away after an early breakfast, noting a Cuckoo and a Hen Harrier en route, we were back at Tobermory by 9.00am for our second boat trip of the week. The journey took us out past Ardnamurchan towards Eigg and Muck, and then south towards Coll, before heading back to Tobermory. The best of the wildlife sightings were a dozen or more Harbour Seals hauled out on the rocks near Tobermory harbour, an adult White-tailed Eagle at Ardmore Point, and a mix of seabirds including hundreds of Manx Shearwaters, several Gannets, good numbers of Guillemots, Puffins and Kittiwakes, a few Black Guillemots, and both Arctic and Common Terns.

Once back on shore, we drove around to the north shore of Loch Na Keal to make use of the sunny conditions. It paid off, as we had good sightings of two (possibly three) adult White-tailed Eagles, at least five Great Northern Divers, a few Red-breasted Mergansers and a lovely brood of Common Whitethroats.

We then went for a walk by nearby Loch Baa, a beautiful spot which produced some exciting birding. We found Blue and Coal Tits, a Treecreeper and a Spotted Flycatcher in the woods, and then on and over the crags we enjoyed fantastic prolonged views of a pair of Golden Eagles. Initially one was in the air with an adult White-tailed Eagle, providing a wonderful comparison between the two species. Later, the Golden Eagle was mobbed by a pair of Ravens, a dramatic piece of action which also allowed us to appreciate its size. It was a brilliant session, and we returned to the bus in high spirits.

After dinner, some of us went for a last local walk and finished the day with good sightings of a Hen Harrier, two Dunlins, a couple of Greenshanks and a lovely pink Redpoll.

Day 7

Monday 15th June

We departed from Pennygael straight after breakfast, and took a brief spin out to Grass Point on our way to Craignure, where we saw a Buzzard and two Mountain Hares, and admired the expansive view across to the mainland. Soon enough, we were on the ferry, noting a last few birds (Black Guillemots, Common and Arctic Terns etc.) and then we arrived at Oban and were away again by road. We stopped for lunch in Tyndrum again, and a little later rolled into Paisley, all the happier for our wonderful sojourn on Mull.

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Species lists

Birds (H=heard only)

I=Introduced		June 2026						
Common name	Scientific name	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
Canada Goose - I	<i>Branta canadensis</i>	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	
Greylag Goose	<i>Anser anser</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Mute Swan	<i>Cygnus olor</i>							1
Common Shelduck	<i>Tadorna tadorna</i>			4		1		1
Mallard	<i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Common Eider	<i>Somateria mollissima</i>		30			5		
Goosander	<i>Mergus merganser</i>						8	
Red-breasted Merganser	<i>Mergus serrator</i>			5	8	6	5	
Common Pheasant - I	<i>Phasianus colchicus</i>			1		1		
Common Swift	<i>Apus apus</i>	2						
Common Cuckoo	<i>Cuculus canorus</i>			1	1		2	
Rock Dove	<i>Columba livia</i>	1	10	5	6	10	5	5
Common Wood Pigeon	<i>Columba palumbus</i>	1	1	1		2		2
Eurasian Collared Dove	<i>Streptopelia decaocto</i>			5		1		1
Little Grebe	<i>Tachybaptus ruficollis</i>					7		
Eurasian Oystercatcher	<i>Haematopus ostralegus</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Common Ringed Plover	<i>Charadrius hiaticula</i>	2		5	1		1	
Northern Lapwing	<i>Vanellus vanellus</i>			25	10	15	10	3
Eurasian Curlew	<i>Numenius arquata</i>		3	10	12	5	10	1
Common Snipe	<i>Gallinago gallinago</i>		2	2	2	5	5	
Common Sandpiper	<i>Actitis hypoleucos</i>	3	3	5	10	5	5	1
Common Redshank	<i>Tringa totanus</i>		2	6	8	3	5	
Common Greenshank	<i>Tringa nebularia</i>			1			2	
Ruddy Turnstone	<i>Arenaria interpres</i>				1			
Dunlin	<i>Calidris alpina</i>						2	
Arctic Tern	<i>Sterna paradisaea</i>	✓			2		5+	✓
Common Tern	<i>Sterna hirundo</i>	✓	5				10+	✓
Black-legged Kittiwake	<i>Rissa tridactyla</i>	✓	✓			✓	✓	✓
Black-headed Gull	<i>Chroicocephalus ridibundus</i>				3			
Common Gull	<i>Larus canus</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
European Herring Gull	<i>Larus argentatus</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Great Black-backed Gull	<i>Larus marinus</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Lesser Black-backed Gull	<i>Larus fuscus</i>	✓						✓
Arctic Skua	<i>Stercorarius parasiticus</i>	1						
Great Skua	<i>Stercorarius skua</i>		1					
Atlantic Puffin	<i>Fratercula arctica</i>		✓				6	
Black Guillemot	<i>Cepphus grylle</i>	3	3				12	2
Razorbill	<i>Alca torda</i>	✓	✓			6		
Common Guillemot	<i>Uria aalge</i>	✓	✓				15	2
Great Northern Diver	<i>Gavia immer</i>		3			1	5	
Northern Fulmar	<i>Fulmarus glacialis</i>		✓					
Manx Shearwater	<i>Puffinus puffinus</i>					25	100's	
Northern Gannet	<i>Morus bassanus</i>	1	1	1	1	2	7	
Great Cormorant	<i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>							1
European Shag	<i>Gulosus aristotelis</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Grey Heron	<i>Ardea cinerea</i>	4	2	4	5	5	4	

I=Introduced		June 2026						
Common name	Scientific name	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
Golden Eagle	<i>Aquila chrysaetos</i>				2		2	
Hen Harrier	<i>Circus cyaneus</i>			5		1	3	1
White-tailed Eagle	<i>Haliaeetus albicilla</i>		1		1		4	
Common Buzzard	<i>Buteo buteo</i>	5	4	6	4	7	5	2
Common Kestrel	<i>Falco tinnunculus</i>			1		1	1	1
Eurasian Jay	<i>Garrulus glandarius</i>	1					2	
Eurasian Magpie	<i>Pica pica</i>							1
Western Jackdaw	<i>Coloeus monedula</i>	✓						2
Hooded Crow	<i>Corvus cornix</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Northern Raven	<i>Corvus corax</i>		3	5		2	12	
Coal Tit	<i>Periparus ater</i>					1	3	
Eurasian Blue Tit	<i>Cyanistes caeruleus</i>				1		1	2
Great Tit	<i>Parus major</i>	1	1		4	1		
Eurasian Skylark	<i>Alauda arvensis</i>		1	10	2	5	5	1
Sand Martin	<i>Riparia riparia</i>			15	45	15	5	
Barn Swallow	<i>Hirundo rustica</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Western House Martin	<i>Delichon urbicum</i>	✓	✓	10	5		20	
Willow Warbler	<i>Phylloscopus trochilus</i>	✓	✓	2	5	✓	10	✓
Common Chiffchaff	<i>Phylloscopus collybita</i>			1H				1H
Sedge Warbler	<i>Acrocephalus schoenobaenus</i>			2H				
Eurasian Blackcap	<i>Sylvia atricapilla</i>	1H			1H	1H	1H	1H
Common Whitethroat	<i>Curruca communis</i>	2	2	1	1	5	7	2
Goldcrest	<i>Regulus regulus</i>				1H	1H	2H	
Eurasian Wren	<i>Troglodytes troglodytes</i>	1	3	2	2	2	3	1
Eurasian Treecreeper	<i>Certhia familiaris</i>				1H		1	
Common Starling	<i>Sturnus vulgaris</i>	✓	✓	100+	✓	✓	✓	
Song Thrush	<i>Turdus philomelos</i>	1	1	12	7	10	6	3
Mistle Thrush	<i>Turdus viscivorus</i>		2					
Common Blackbird	<i>Turdus merula</i>	✓	3	6	8	8	3	
Spotted Flycatcher	<i>Muscicapa striata</i>						2	
European Robin	<i>Erithacus rubecula</i>	1		2	2	2	1	1
Whinchat	<i>Saxicola rubetra</i>	2		2		1		
European Stonechat	<i>Saxicola rubicola</i>		1	1	2	2	1	
Northern Wheatear	<i>Oenanthe oenanthe</i>			10	5	12		
House Sparrow	<i>Passer domesticus</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Dunnock	<i>Prunella modularis</i>			1	1	1	1	
Pied Wagtail	<i>Motacilla alba yarrellii</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Meadow Pipit	<i>Anthus pratensis</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
European Rock Pipit	<i>Anthus petrosus</i>		3		2			
Eurasian Chaffinch	<i>Fringilla coelebs</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Eurasian Bullfinch	<i>Pyrrhula pyrrhula</i>			1		1H	1H	
European Greenfinch	<i>Chloris chloris</i>		1	1			1	
Twite	<i>Linaria flavirostris</i>		8	2				
Common Linnet	<i>Linaria cannabina</i>			5		3		
Redpoll	<i>Acanthis flammea</i>	✓	✓	2	1	1	4	2
European Goldfinch	<i>Carduelis carduelis</i>			5	2	2	5	
Eurasian Siskin	<i>Spinus spinus</i>	✓	✓			1	5	3
Yellowhammer	<i>Emberiza citrinella</i>			2H				
Common Reed Bunting	<i>Emberiza schoeniclus</i>	1		3				

Mammals

Common name	Scientific name	June 2026						
		9	10	11	12	13	14	15
European Rabbit	<i>Oryctolagus cuniculus</i>			2		5		
Mountain Hare	<i>Lepus timidus hibernicus</i>			1		1		2
Harbour Porpoise	<i>Phocoena phocoena</i>		1+					
Fallow Deer	<i>Dama dama</i>				1	1		
Red Deer	<i>Cervus elaphus</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Grey Seal	<i>Halichoerus grypus</i>		5				1	
Harbour Seal	<i>Phoca vitulina</i>	5		8			15	1
Eurasian Otter	<i>Lutra lutra</i>		2		2	1	1	