

Wildlife of North and South Uist - The Outer Hebrides

Naturetrek Tour Report

18 - 25 May 2019



Corn Crane by Pat Leate



White-tailed Eagle by Stewart Woolley



Short-eared Owl by Pat Leate



Ruff by Pat Leate

Report by Stewart Woolley
Images courtesy of Pat Leate & Stewart Woolley



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Summary

The Outer Hebrides is a truly unique environment. The Atlantic, and all that it brings, is ruler here. The softness of the Machair on the west side and the rugged, mountainous east offer stark contrast, but for many of the group, the open, boggy moorland of North Uist gave the most “Hebridean” feel; a seemingly lifeless and bleak environment, but a little time just spent standing, listening, soon begins to reveal the diversity of life here. The sound of Divers calling from a mist-shrouded moorland loch really must be one of the most thought-provoking wildlife experiences the UK has to offer.

Our week was jam-packed full of highlights, including White-tailed and Golden Eagles, Corn Crakes, phalaropes, divers, sea birds and waders. We will no doubt all have a particular stand out species, but for me, the lekking Ruff on Loch Sandaraigh really were special, and although we were only able to view from the bus due to how close we were, it was a treat to be able to see such a spectacular species in full summer dress - such a different beastie to the Autumn migrants were are all more familiar with.

Day 1

Saturday 18th May

A typically highland day greeted us at Inverness railway station for the start of this year’s adventure. A cool, and, at times, damp morning saw us head off south, crossing the Caledonian canal and heading along the northern shore of Loch Ness. Our route to the Isles took us past some of Scotland’s iconic landmarks, with the ruins of Urquhart Castle at Drumnadrochit surely rating up there amongst the most photographed!

Reaching Invermoriston, we turned west, and ventured through Glen Moriston, past Loch Cluanie, Glen Sheil and the high peaks of the five sisters of Kintail, named, as legend says, after the youngest five daughters of an ancient chief, who were apparently immortalised in stone because they had become irreparably grief stricken having failed to marry! (no comment!!)

Edging ever further west, we reached the head of Loch Duich, a sea loch that joins the Kyle of Lochalsh at Eilen Donnan Castle. This wonderful fortification appears on more biscuit tins than any other in Scotland! Originally dating to the eleventh century, built to ward off those pesky Vikings, it was destroyed by the English, who had taken exception to the 48 Spaniards who had taken up residence, and were in the process of establishing an armoury and powder store. The castle lay in ruins for centuries until reconstruction work began in 1911, and was completed in 1930.

We had had a relatively quiet journey so far bird wise, with just a handful of Willow Warblers being noted through the gloom.

Crossing the bridge onto Skye, the weather began to cheer up as we made for the ferry terminal at Uig with more Willow Warbler evident, and plenty of Hooded Crows and a few Ravens seen along the way. Low cloud seemed to shroud nearly every “eagley” ridgeline as we arrived at Uig in plenty of time for lunch.

The bay area at Uig held a smart Great Northern Diver, with another being found soon afterwards, while Red-breasted Merganser, Common Eider, and Shag were also present. A singing Sedge Warbler in roadside bushes and a small display of Northern Marsh Orchids in a nearby meadow gave us a taste of summer!! Just a shame the weather wasn't doing the same!

It was soon time to board the Cal Mac ferry, the Hebrides, for our crossing to Lochmaddy. The sea was virtually flat calm, and not the classically good blowy conditions for a bird-filled trip, although very good numbers of auks were soon being seen, with several Black Guillemot soon after departure, and small groups of mostly Common Guillemot and a few Razorbills in the mix too. A little further out, some reasonably large numbers of Northern Gannet and Kittiwake showed well. This crossing usually gives up a handful of Puffin, but today's crossing saw dozens in small parties alongside the ship - great to see and always popular. A highlight of the voyage was a typically aggressive dark phase Arctic Skua that relentlessly pursued one of the many Arctic Terns that were feeding near the floating weed mats, eventually forcing the victim to disgorge its catch.

It, or another Skua, was seen again as we neared Lochmaddy and North Uist, our "home" for the week.

With only a short drive to the very cosy and comfortable Hammersay House hotel, we checked in, and set off almost immediately to begin our search for wildlife, with a short trip out before dinner.

Just a few kilometres outside the village, we were soon on to our first "throated" divers of the week, with a pair of distant Red-throateds, displaying the classic bill up pose. At least six Red-throats were seen soon after, with birds in flight, and a showy pair close to the road. A minimum of three Black-throateds were also seen in flight, along with another Arctic Skua and a pair of vocal Stonechats.

Happy with our diver encounters, we slowly made for the dead-end road along the Southern shore of the tidal Loch Euphort, this very quiet spot soon allowed us to watch several Red Deer within a few yards of the road, with various ages of animals being noted. Bob's keen eyes soon found a stunning male Hen Harrier, quartering very close to the road, totally at ease in an environment free from persecution. This cracking bird drifted to within yards of the minibus, even allowing us to see its yellow feet without the use of optics!

Conscious of the time, we slowly headed back towards Lochmaddy in the now increasingly wet conditions, thinking our birding was probably done for the day. However, Stewart noted an odd shape on top a small hummock, not far from the road, which turned out to be a fantastic, sub adult Golden Eagle, which stood there briefly before heading south; a great encounter with a great bird, and unexpected in the now pretty foul weather.

With time to finally relax and unpack, we settled in for a lovely meal and a natter about our day, and the prospects for tomorrow!!

Day 2

Sunday 19th May

Continuing overnight rain, clearing by morning, with not a breath of wind allowed an annoying number of the West Coasts famous flying, biting residents to greet the early risers for our pre-breakfast excursion.

Setting off north, we soon found our first Red Deer of the day, with several mixed-age animals just at the edge of Lochmaddy. A Willow Warbler sat atop a nearby pine as we made for the single-track road that skirts the northern shores of Lochs Dheor, Siginis and eventually Loch Portain.

Soon after turning off the “main” road, we had a scan through a number of Mute Swans on Loch Bru, hoping for a straggler Whooper Swan, and were rewarded with a single adult, a bird that had maybe been unfit to travel north, or had just “missed the boat”!

Loch Dheor held Shelduck, Greylag and at least 50 Red-breasted Mergansers, mostly females. A brief but adequate view was had, of a distant Short-eared Owl, working the far shore of Cealasaigh Mor.

The water’s surface was mirror calm, allowing us to easily pick up any disturbances and a few Common Seals potted about, with one in the classic banana pose, hauled out on a tiny islet. Very slowly heading along Loch Portain, we noticed a ripple and wake trail. Seals don’t usually leave these, and sure enough, we were soon all watching an Otter, possibly a small dog, as he fished not far from our position. Several prey items were taken, with what was most likely a Lump sucker, being the only one we could even try to identify! Trying to second guess its next position, he or she did the typical Otter thing and vanished out of sight! Whilst we had been watching this fabulous creature, a bird song, unfamiliar to most, was traced to a very smart Northern Wheatear on nearby wires.

We had spent close on half an hour watching the Otter, so decided to tear ourselves away and carry on towards Cheese Bay, almost immediately stopping for a cracking Short-eared Owl as it hunted just below our position, a species one could never tire of, no matter how many are seen!

With time before breakfast now against us, we had a quick look out from Cheese Bay fish farm, over towards the small islands of Thermatraigh and Bhacasaigh, often a good spot for Great Northern Divers, sheltering from bad weather. It only gave up a couple of Eiders and yet more Mergansers today though. A very brief diversion on the way back to the hotel produced a male Cuckoo as it crossed in front of us.

With a hearty breakfast taken, we all set off south, towards Benbecula and South Uist. The landscape of Benbecula is dramatically different from North Uist, with peat bogs and secluded lochans giving way to an environment sculpted by the sea and wind, Benbecula is a low lying mix of freshwater lochs, sandy farmland along the coastal strip and rough grazing away from the shore.

Stopping for fuel at Balivanich, the main commercial and residential centre of the Uists, a Great Northern Diver was seen in a nearby bay, with a second a little further on, eventually giving us superb views very close inshore. Just south of the village, we pulled up and looked across a cultivated field and were truly impressed by the number of Common Ringed Plover busily feeding away, with around 150 in an area about the size of a football pitch. Several Rock Doves and two passage Whimbrel were also noted.

Benbecula, if for no other reason, is special for the presence of one breeding species in particular, the Red-necked Phalarope, a bird more associated with arctic tundra and the far north of the Shetland Islands. Here, at the extreme southern edge of their breeding range they cling on with just a handful of birds noted most years. Today we struck gold on our first attempt, as we watched three birds, two demure looking males and a very

gaudy female, initially at distance, and eventually at no more than thirty or forty yards, a real treat to see in the now bright sunlight. The supporting cast of drumming Snipe and a briefly rasping Corn Crane, our first of the trip, was not too shabby either!

With shops in the Uists still maintaining sensible Sunday opening hours, we headed back towards Balivanich for provisions. Our route took us past Coot Loch, aptly named as one of the few places this species is seen out here. Little Grebe, Moorhen, Gadwall and a very smart "Islandica" Black-tailed Godwit were also found through the now strong heat haze; quite a change of weather fortunes since the early morning. Lunch was taken overlooking Culla Bay. As we basked, Turnstone, Dunlin, Sanderling and Oystercatcher worked amongst the seaweed, and a passage group of twenty-six Bar-tailed Godwit were purposely heading North. A panicked group of Dunlin made us look skyward, as a rapidly passing male Peregrine was seen by some of the group as it disappeared towards South Uist.

Although tempted to take an extended break in the stunning conditions, we made south again and crossed the causeway onto South Uist, then turned towards Lochdar and the sometimes restricted area called the Range. This is a large area of Machair sand land, used by the military as a missile testing facility, and with the warning flags furled today, we slowly trundled along the rough tracks. The range was very quiet today bird-wise, with a single female Golden Plover being the only noteworthy find. The white sand beach here stretches for some eleven km, and today, as usual, was empty of people!

Soon leaving the range, we stood and looked over the expanse of fresh water at Loch Bi, it has now become somewhat of a "tradition" that at least one client "must" count the mute Swans, and this year's victim, sorry, willing volunteer was Bob, who was accused by Stewart of probably having one or both eyes closed!!!. Around 350 were seen, a little down on previous years. A very distant White-tailed Eagle proved hard to pick up in the bright light, but a brief appearance by a pair of Garganey, just in front of us, was a superb surprise; such smart birds and never expected!

Well satisfied, we made for the viewpoint, next to the radar array on Ruabhal, a nearby hill. On a haze-free day, it is possible to see south to Barra, north to Harris, east to Skye, and, on a very clear day, west to St Kilda. From here, one is able to really see the harshness of this environment, with water in all directions. Literally out of the blue an eagle was spotted, soon proving to be a sub-adult Golden, probably a female going by the large size. She circled for a while, before dropping like a stone, out of sight initially, and eventually giving pretty decent views. Two in two days is a great strike rate!

With time now marching on, we made off North once again, picking up a Short-eared Owl near Clachan, and another, sat near the roadside on the way to Lochmaddy. Two Red-throated Divers and two Arctic Skuas (including a smart pale phase bird) passed overhead before we reached the hotel in time to freshen up for dinner once again, after a superb day with a genuinely quality "menu" of birds served up!

Day 3

Monday 20th May

Monday's early risers were greeted with better weather than the previous couple of mornings, with a forecast of even better later. With just an hour and a half before breakfast, we tracked north, heading for Clachan Sands, an expanse of white sand, that points the way to Berneray and Harris. Our short journey gave us the first of at least

seven Short-eared Owls today, with brief but good views just out of Lochmaddy. Common Cuckoo are just that in the Western Isles in the spring and early summer - common! And we soon saw our first two of the day.

The rough track down towards the beach is edged with areas of largely unimproved grassland, kept short by sheep, and then, denser, lush, wet corners, ideal for breeding waders. We very briefly watched tiny Lapwing chicks, and young Redshank too, as they mirrored the actions of their parents, but we wanted to avoid disturbance, and potentially exposing these youngsters to the nearby Common Gulls, so we moved on and parked up.

It's always good to set foot on the fine white sands of the Outer Hebrides, so we took a very leisurely stroll along the beach. Offshore, several Gannet passed by with a small party of Sanderling ahead of us. Little Tern is a species that is always appreciated, so the two found on the deck just ahead deserved some decent scope views, their delicate shape, small stature and bold "bandit" mask, along with the yellow bill make this tern very distinctive. Not wanting to disturb them, we turned and wandered back to the minibus.

Our drive back "home" was largely quiet bird wise other than a very smart male Hen Harrier just by the village, probably the bird we saw well yesterday.

Our main focus for today was to head for the RSPB reserve at Balranald, so, full of breakfast, we started off anti-clockwise around the top of North Uist. A few Stonechat and Wheatear were noted as we approached the small village of Sollas, and we stopped at the Co-op to stock up with lunch items. A second Short-eared Owl of the day soon showed as did a fly through female Merlin, right outside the shop door!

Carrying on past Loch Olabhat with its Victorian island folly, two Whooper Swans were found feeding in the shallows.

The approach road to Balranald is bordered to the left by the main reserve, with Lochs Sgaraigh and Feitham providing open water, and to the right by small short grass fields with patches of Yellow Flag, and damp, rocky knolls and hollows. This is perfect habitat for the ever popular Corn Crake, a species once common across much of Britain, but now restricted as a breeding bird mainly to the Western Isles. Our first encounter today was a heard-only bird, rasping away in deep cover, soon to be followed by up to four more in a roadside field. Typically elusive at first, we were all soon watching at least three as they played "follow my leader" in the deep grass, with the occasional scrap between males thrown in for good measure. At least one more called a little further away in the same field.

Corn Crake was a new species for some of the group, with others saying they had never had such good views. The photographers amongst us rattled off some pretty decent record shots, before we tore ourselves away to head for the visitor information building. Two or three more Short-eared Owls were seen together over the reserve.

Corn Crake do have a reputation for being shy and skulking, throwing their voices from deep cover and rarely being seen, but nobody told that to the pair that wandered out, not twenty yards from us, into the open and across a grassy track. Those quick enough with the camera took some superb shots, taken in stunning sunlight.

A little further away, a Corn Bunting sang from overhead wires, sounding something like a jangling bunch of keys. This is a species just about hanging on in the Hebrides, and faring even less well on the mainland.

We drove along the sand track to the small parking area at Traigh Lar, passing the machair farmland, rich in plant species, with myriad Wild Pansies, Geraniums and Trefoils in flower; this shell sand farmland will be awash with colour a little later in the summer. We soon found a Great Northern Diver just off shore, as we set off for a walk around the point of Aird an Runair, a route of about 3½ km. The weather now was truly spectacular, gorgeous bright sunshine, a stiff breeze and no prospect of rain on the horizon.

The washed up weed on the beach just below the path held groups of Sanderling, Dunlin and Turnstone as they busily sifted through the weed looking for Sand-flies and Sand-hoppers, totally unconcerned by our presence.

Heading out towards the point we began to pass the ternery. Relatively small numbers of Arctic Tern breed here now, but great views were had. Ringed Plover are almost “omni-present” in the Hebrides in the summer, and usually do not command much attention, but a pair just to our left were stood on guard as their three tiny young trotted about, looking like humbugs on stilts! We usually manage to find a few Purple Sandpiper here, with the exposed, wave-washed rocks being the “normal” place, so finding two on a small fresh water pool just a few yards away was unexpected, but welcome. Rock Pipit, Eider, another diver and more Ringed Plovers were seen as we reached Eilean Trostain, a small island about half way round our walk. Here we stood and watched a small group of Turnstones, admiring their stunning colours and patterns, so different from their winter plumage.

The rest of the walk gave us a single Great Skua, plenty more waders and a handful of Sand Martin, these breeding here, giving the impression of being real pioneers, away from the riverbanks and nature reserves of the mainland!

With everybody now well exercised and in need of sustenance, we completed the circular route and sat for lunch overlooking the glistening blue waters, looking down as far as Barra.

One of “our” Corn Crakes was still showing by the visitor centre as we reluctantly left this stunning spot.

A short detour was taken to the St Kilda viewpoint at Hosta near the summit of Cleitreabhal. So often St Kilda is shrouded in mist, or low cloud and not on view, but the clear conditions today afforded us great views, with Hirta, Boreray and the high sea stacks clearly visible. We could even make out the white mass on the top of Stack Li, which is the huge Gannet colony, not bad from over forty miles away!! Three Red Deer moved away from below our position, clearing the stock fences with very little effort. None of us had that kind of energy as we gradually made our way towards the Committee Road, which heads north-south, very roughly through the middle of North Uist. This can be a good area for raptors, but today, we only managed to find one Short-eared Owl here, a good spot from the back of the bus, as the bird was sat, facing away from us as we drove by!

As it was such a beautiful day, we took a quick trip back to Clachan Sands, this time with those who hadn't made the pre-breakfast visit. The tide was out now and the water was a truly astonishing aquamarine blue - absolutely stunning. Our final flourish was the distant sighting of at least one, or possibly two, Golden Eagles, working the lower slopes of Beinn Bhreac and Beinn Mhor, before rising on thermals, only to be “intercepted” by two more Short-eared Owls!

Our day had been full, tiring, and rewarding, with some great birds, stunning views and the best weather we could have asked for!! Bring on tomorrow.

Day 4

Tuesday 21st May

Tuesday dawned bright and clear after overnight rain, so the early starters set off on foot for a wander along a track near to the hotel. Willow Warbler, Cuckoo, Song Thrush, Greenfinch and Goldfinch all sang a slightly late dawn chorus!

Just a couple of hundred metres from the hotel, a Red Stag was as surprised to see us as we were him; he stood motionless, in the open, thinking we hadn't seen him! A little further along the path, a moment was taken to scan the ridgeline of the high hills to the south of Lochmaddy Bay. A large dark shape looked odd, and proved to be an adult Golden Eagle. He or she sat, fixed to the spot, for the duration of our wee excursion. We had chosen this route in the hope of encountering another early morning Otter, but alas, it was not to be today. We entertained ourselves instead, by crossing the very bouncy suspension footbridge to the secluded promontory of Sponish, where a camera obscura had been built a few years ago, giving us a chance to view Lochmaddy Bay literally from a different angle! A Raven passed by to the north and a Sedge Warbler uttered a weak sub-song from nearby bushes. Slowly heading back to the hotel, we noted the large number of caterpillars on and around the path, these being the larval stage of both the Garden Tiger and the Drinker Moths.

A big surprise, and a real bonus for the trip, came just before breakfast, a knock on my room door and a quick dash upstairs soon confirmed the finding of a female Hawfinch by one of our group, a superb find and very well done. This is a species not recorded by Naturetrek groups on the Hebrides before!

Once we had "breakfasted" and with the prospect of a sunny day once again, we set off north for the road causeway that connects North Uist to Berneray, our "target" for the day. Several Common Cuckoo were noted along the way before we briefly stopped at Loch an Sticir, the site of an ancient settlement, the remains of which are clearly visible. Out of the blue the skies darkened and we were properly surprised to witness a narrow microburst, a column of wind and rain moving at high speed.

Berneray is a truly stunning island, with several gorgeous white shell sand beaches. Our first port of call was to be the Borve Machair, a florally species-rich environment, with extensive agriculture and low stocking rate grazing. The "arable" plots held numbers of both Common Ringed Plover and Dunlin and the song of the Skylark filled the warm air. Parking near the graveyard, we immediately found two dark phase Arctic Skuas and a Great Northern Diver flew west past us.

A slow-paced walk to Rubha Bhoisinis, passing the memorial to Angus Macgaskill, the "the tallest man of the Uists" gave up two Golden Plover and a Wheatear, with more Ringed Plover on the close-cropped sward. With the menacing clouds finally deciding to drift by, we reached the West Beach, 5½ km of white sand, looking north to Harris and beyond. A smart Little Tern fed in the shallows, demonstrating its characteristic fast wing beats and rapid changes of direction - such pretty, delicate birds.

We picked our way along the dune tops to find the return path and slowly made for the minibus, picking up a couple of pairs of Arctic Terns and three more Little Terns.

Our time before lunch was spent exploring around the main settlement, Borgh, and we sat for a while enjoying the hauled out Common Seals, viewed from the designated view point. Two Twites were heard as we took a quick look at some renovated traditional houses, sympathetically restored as holiday lets.

Berneray seemed very quiet today bird-wise, with relatively few birds being noted. Even Loch Bhrusda, a large freshwater lagoon, and usually a “good bet”, lay quiet, with just a party of Greylags, a couple of Redshank and a Common Sandpiper heard piping.

We made for the Ardmaree store, and its wee café, and took a relaxed lunch, before heading for the islands’ East Beach. The tide was fully out with the water’s edge being some distance away, but we could make out small groups of Dunlin, and a larger party of Sanderling, many of which appeared to be in winter plumage. A single Great Northern Diver was just about visible in the Sound of Harris and Gannet were noted in small numbers passing through the sound, the only access to the Minch from the Atlantic without a trip around the top of the Isle of Lewis.

Although the search for birds on Berneray today had been a bit of a struggle, we could not have asked for better weather, and this had maybe had an effect on our birding. A couple of singing male Wheatear were seen as we made for the causeway back onto North Uist.

With a little time before dinner, and back on North Uist, we made for Loch Langass, and took a short stroll to the Pobull Fhinn (Finn’s people) stone circle, the only one on the Uists. The original function of this feature remains largely a mystery as no excavations have been undertaken to date. From here we had great views down the length of Loch Langass, which can be, (not today) a good spot for Otter. With the weather now deteriorating as forecast, we made for the bus, avoiding a soaking and the ravages of midges!!

The short drive back to Lochmaddy produced at least two more Arctic Skuas with a couple of distant divers in flight, likely Red-throated.

The brief weather “event” had cleared by the time we had finished yet another great meal, so we decided we would make full use of the day by heading down to a small promontory close to the ferry slip at Lochmaddy and try once again for Otter, but we had to make do with Cuckoo, Black Guillemot, and a Gannet in the bay. With the light now failing, we made for the hotel and a well-earned rest.

Day 5

Wednesday 22nd May

We ended yesterday in glorious sunshine, and today began with heavy dampness and low cloud, somewhat obscuring distance vision. The itinerary for today’s pre-breakfast excursion was to have a wander around the Langass community woodland, an area of mature, mainly conifers of mixed species such as Lodgepole and Scots Pine. Many of the trees are windblown with pockets of damage that do create an interesting set of habitats.

The woodland provides a good degree of shelter on a day such as today, and we set off, soon stopping for a Short-eared Owl just outside the village.

Upon reaching the woodland, a Common Redpoll buzzed overhead, and several Willow Warblers sang their distinctive descending song.

Never full of birdsong like mainland woods, we focussed our ears to pick out Dunnock, Wren, Robin, Song Thrush, Cuckoo, and Goldcrest.

Some may recall from the early 1980's the celebrity grizzly bear, "Hercules" who travelled the country in the back of an old bus with his ex- wrestler owner, and, whilst on North Uist for filming work, managed to escape and go on the run! Twenty-four days later he was captured by the army, starving and grossly underweight, having not harmed a fly! The North Uist community took him to their hearts and, upon his passing years later, he returned to be laid to rest in these woods. A wonderful life size carving of him stands as a memorial

Bob's sharp eyes picked out a male Hen Harrier on the deck some distance away and two Arctic Skuas moved through too, giving us time to watch them through the scope. The weather had really begun to close in, with increasing damp, so we made for the minibus and the hotel for breakfast.

The short drive back to Lochmaddy produced several Red-throated Divers, flying over distant lochans, and a smart Short-eared Owl close to the road.

As we all set off after breakfast, we were relieved to see that the skies had at last begun to clear a little, offering a little more hope for our prospects for the day.

The "mission" for today was to explore a little further south with a drive down to South Uist. Deciding to head straight for our most southerly point of interest and "bird" as we headed north, we made for the promontory called Rubha Ardvule,

About half way down the western side of South Uist, soon after turning off the "main" road through the islands, we heard the now familiar rasping of a Corn Crake from deep cover. We headed along an unmade track to the parking area and took a gentle stroll to the point. Ardvule is an interesting area with a freshwater pool far out on the promontory and as we made for the point, we passed "Dun Dulan", the remains of an iron-age galleried Broch, that would, when occupied, have offered a strong strategic advantage to its residents.

Two smart summer-plumaged Great Northern Divers were noted close off- shore, with at least one further out and the pool also played host to a small number of Sand Martin and several pairs of Tufted Duck.

Arctic Terns are to be seen all over the Uists at this time of year, and Ardvule held twenty or thirty.

This point is one of two areas in the Uists that are very good for sea watching, with the northerly late spring passage of Skuas being of special interest to many. Two of our group were particularly keen to give the Skuas a go, with a certain degree of time commitment usually required to pick them out. Occasionally, significant "waves" of both Pomarine and Long-tailed Skuas can be seen close in, but distant shapes are the norm, so, wanting to give them the best chance, we agreed to meet up later and left them sea-watching whilst the rest of us headed "inland" to explore some of the more rugged sea lochs on the East side of South Uist.

Feeling a little windblown, we agreed that a quick stop for coffee would be a good idea, so we made for the Kildonan museum and café to warm up.

Our next destination was to upper Loch Ainort, where a dead-end road led us to a stunning spot, overlooking the beautiful sea loch, surrounded by rugged peaks and high ridgelines. As we de-bussed, Sedge Warbler and Common Whitethroat sang below us, and a Common Redpoll passed overhead. The Loch held a minimum of three Red-throated Diver as well as Red-breasted Merganser, Shag and Cormorant. The many small rocky islands played host to dozens of Common Seals, and we were able to watch their antics, including impressive displays of “porpoising”, with several animals breaching clear of the water multiple times.

The north shore here is the site of a super small wooded area, which are few and far between on the Outer Hebrides, the woodland being a mix of both native and non-native species, giving a good mix. Willow Warbler, Goldfinch, Song Thrush, Robin, Blackbird and Chaffinch were noted immediately, with a Common Cuckoo very close, but out of view in the dense foliage. As we walked through the trees, we entered a very sheltered area, and with the sun now shining, began to slightly regret our choice of clothing!! The warm, still conditions allowed us to watch Green-veined Whites, and a brief, single Small Heath Butterfly, along with plenty of Garden Bumblebees and Common Carders.

A very vocal Red-throated Diver below our position, in good light, was the first one we had seen that afforded good views of the red throat patch, often looking black in the more standard grey light, its slightly mournful calling a most evocative sound here. Another flew overhead as we very slowly carried on, with Large Red Damselfly being noted near to small boggy areas that most of us managed to negotiate (you know who you are!!!!) A singing Chiffchaff was more unusual as we reached the bus and a well-earned drink.

From here we nipped back to pick up the Skua watchers, who had sadly been unsuccessful with their quest, noting just a couple of Bonxies and a movement of Manx Shearwater, who breed not too far from here in huge numbers on the Isle of Rum.

Now fully crewed again, we slowly followed the small coastal lanes north passing small lochs and open, rough grassland, surrounded by the song of the Skylark and noting many Meadow Pipit, maybe hundreds, we ended up at the Howmore River where European Teal, of which we had only seen a handful this trip, was seen. This site usually holds one or two Corn Crake, but none today, as we moved on to the RSPB site at Loch Druidibeg, stopping at the roadside to watch a female Hen Harrier working the heather towards the loch.

Druidibeg is a landscape of high peaks, with a freshwater loch, scattered with small vegetated islands and windblown plantations. Here, we stood and scanned the ridges and were soon rewarded with two immature White-tailed Eagles which drifted slowly off to the south giving an appreciation of their size, even from a distance. These were soon replaced by a pair of Golden Eagles, equally far away, but the difference in build and tail length was clear to see. Not wanting to be outdone, Hen Harriers appeared from stage left, with one male and at least one female giving prolonged views over a nearby low hill. It's always great to see Harriers in a place where they are safe, free from the kind of persecution that mainland birds sadly endure.

Chuffed with our sightings, we tore ourselves away and made along the dead-end road to Loch Sgioport, and the old “Clyde Puffer” landing stage, offering good protection from the ravages of the Minch. In the short time we

stood, we saw at least four Red-throated Divers, with several very good close flypasts, while also present were Black Guillemot and Red-breasted Merganser.

Time soon began to catch up with us, so we trundled back to the main road and headed north towards Lochmaddy, pausing only to watch yet another Short-eared Owl and two Red-throated Divers on a roadside loch. The day had been full, and exhausting, so a sit down with a hearty meal was a good way to finish.

Day 6

Thursday 23rd May

The weather that greeted the early risers today did nothing to encourage us. A band of cold and damp had pushed in overnight and made for a pretty unpleasant start. We set off at 06:00, and made for the end of the South Loch Euphort road. The conditions really did not help our cause, with Greylag, (including a road running gosling!), Wheatear, plenty of Red Deer and Common Cuckoo being the most noteworthy.

Returning back towards Lochmaddy, our fortunes changed, as we saw the first of at least six Red-throated Divers. These birds were constantly in the air, taking wide sweeping arcs over the barren moorland and lochs, making their rather odd Greylag Goose like call. Two Short-eared Owls, distant, did not give the stunning close up views which others had, but were great to see all the same. Common Cuckoo is a very numerous species out here and a near constant companion on a day out in the summer, with at least two seen close to the village - always great to see, unless you are a Meadow Pipit!

Setting off after breakfast, we were keen to act on some information regarding lekking Ruff, the energetic display of this oddly flamboyant species in summer dress. Heading for Bayhead, we took the Paibeil loop road, (the site of 2016's Black-billed Cuckoo!). Here, with windows down, we listened for Corn Crake, and managed to pick up a minimum of two in nearby "gardens". Loch Sandaray held six Whooper Swans, Redshank, Snipe, Gadwall and Tufted Duck. Struggling to find the Ruff, we headed along an unclassified lane to the southern end of the loch and hit gold!! Two males, one black-ruffed bird and the other a stunning white bird, puffed out their chests and pushed and shoved each other, trying to impress the single female, a much plainer bird, but with beautiful scaly patterns and a delicate look, reminiscent of a large phalarope.

Our main focus for the day was to head for the island of Grimsay, nestled between North Uist and Benbecula where we would take a boat trip exploring the sheltered sea lochs, so we left Bayhead, and made our way south. Yet another Short-eared Owl was seen as we left North Uist.

The road to the little working harbour at Kallin on Grimsay held several Norther Wheatear and roadside lochans were full of flowering Bogbean and Common Flag Iris, a feature right across the Uists.

Getting suitably attired for the cool conditions, we soon joined our boat, the Lady Anne and her skipper Nick, for a two-hour mini-cruise around the now uninhabited island of Ronay and up into waters that only an experienced local could navigate! A single Common Seal was hauled out on rocks soon after departure, and Red-breasted Merganser, Grey Heron, Shag and Cormorant were all soon noted. Two Red-throated Divers were the appetiser, and we soon feasted on the main course - four gorgeous Black-throated Divers close to our boat as we approached the remote promontory of Liernis. Black-throats are almost impossibly smart in summer dress, with their cryptic mix of black and white stripes and patches, with a velvet smooth grey head and nape.

Another Black-throat soon gave even better views, allowing the photographers in the group to get some decent shots.

With the wind blowing fairly strongly from the north-west, we were in a good position to head out to sea a little, with plenty of shelter from the high peaks around us, so we made out past the island of Flodaigh Mor, where we saw a small herd of Red Deer, which had swum out for the good grazing. Red Deer are excellent swimmers, and it is not unusual here to see them mid-swim, in some pretty deep water. A large shape on the island turned out to be a sub-adult Golden Eagle, which gave us good if brief views, sat on a rock face before moving off, startling the deer and giving us a good idea of just how large they can be, with a wingspan somewhat larger than the deer were long!!

A couple of Great Skua gave close views before another huge shape was noted. Very soon, we all stood in awe of an adult White-tailed Eagle, right over the boat, probably no more than one hundred feet up, its steely eyes looking right through us with an intense stare! A truly unforgettable moment! As this bird moved off a little way, another drifted into view; more cautious of us, it kept to the low ridges and grassy clifftops a little way from our position. Thinking it could not get better, we were speechless as Nick moved us into a sheltered cove, and dropped just one medium-sized Pollack into the water and moved off a little. Within seconds, the male Eagle had spied the fish and made a bee-line for us, turning sharply into wind and dropping, with open talons extended and picked the fish from the surface, no more than forty yards from us! A moment that will surely stick in the memory for years to come!

Wanting to leave these birds in peace, we carried on around Ronay, and took a little time to view a small colony of Shag, with a couple of nesting pairs and birds of varying ages on an exposed rock. Black Guillemot, Gannet, Great Northern Diver and Rock Pipit were also seen, before we found another two White-tails, different birds that Nick had said had been hanging around for a few weeks - possibly a young pair prospecting for a territory. With four White-tailed and a Golden Eagle, the "full set" of divers and numerous sea birds seen, we made our way back into the harbour and enjoyed a lunch of crab and chips in the Namara seafood café. There could have been worse ways to spend a few hours!!

With it now being mid-afternoon, and not far from Benbecula, we once again made for Loch Mor at Griminish, and took some time to look for the Phalaropes we had seen earlier in the week. Struggling initially in the blustery conditions, we eventually were rewarded with very good close up views of a pair, not thirty yards from us, really appreciating that we were watching a truly phenomenal long distance migrant. They then began to mate in the horsetails growing at the water's edge, and we were told by a local birder that this is a very unusual thing to see, as they much prefer the shelter of the deep lush vegetation further out in the loch.

Here we also managed to connect with a Little Egret that had been reported earlier, with a second unreported Egret in attendance too. Little Egret is such a familiar bird to us all these days, but seeing one in the Outer Hebrides is still noteworthy, and is by no means a bird we would expect. Drake Shoveler, Gadwall, Whooper Swan and a pair of Teal were all seen on the loch, with drumming Snipe and Skylark above us. Another, more cooperative Snipe stood on a nearby tussock affording good views, as a few Dunlin moved around too.

With limited parking here, and a few more birders turning up, we set off for the dead-end road to St Peter Port. Sometimes a good bet for close up views of Great Northern Diver, we had to be happy with wonderfully

confiding Red Stags, yards from us, some of which were obviously mature animals, starting to velvet, with other, much younger animals on the side-lines.

Our drive home produced many Northern Wheatear, and a male Hen Harrier near Cladach. The “top road” to Lochmaddy once again gave up Red-throated Diver and “our” Short-eared Owl, before we made it back to the hotel in good time. Today had been a feast of memories for us all, with lekking Ruff, feeding Eagles, Owls, Harriers and many Divers - one of those days that do not come around very often!

Day 7

Friday 24th May

Friday began with a bit of a bite in the air, but it was, at least, dry. Otters had been scarce this week, so we retraced our steps from earlier in the week and made off for the Loch Portain road, where we had been successful previously. The tide was well out, and probably a tad low for good Otter spotting. Red-breasted Merganser were present in almost every inlet, with one part of Loch Dheor holding over 60! Shelduck, Teal, and Greylags with goslings also showed in good numbers.

As we reached Loch Portain, a quick scan along a nearby ridgeline failed to yield much, with just a pair of Stonechats being noted at the roadside. Eventually reaching the end of the road at Tobha-beag, a single Twite called from a nearby field and Common Snipe drummed overhead. Another scan by group members along the same ridge we had looked at a few minutes earlier soon came up trumps. A pair of Golden Eagles stood on rocks on Beinn na Bile, the highest peak here, playing sentry, scanning their territory from the vantage point. Deciding that the birds were settled, we quietly moved the bus closer, halving the distance between us and them. Carefully de-bussing, we all had great views through the scopes, with a new world of wildlife recording being opened up to some with the use of smart phones held up to the scope eyepiece!!!

The two hours before breakfast had flown by, so, reluctantly, we beat a retreat for the hotel, noting another Short-eared Owl as we approached Lochmaddy.

Our time in the Outer Hebrides was drawing to a close, so, with decent weather, we set off anti-clockwise around North Uist for a repeat visit to the RSPB reserve at Balranald, a place we had all enjoyed earlier in the week.

Just outside Lochmaddy, two dark phase Arctic Skuas flew in and stood on heather mounds on the exposed moorland. These birds are a feature of the Outer Hebridean moors in spring, and it was great to see them, as a pair, instead of the usual high speed, aerobatic attacks on unsuspecting Arctic Terns.

Upon reaching Malacliet, we turned South onto the Committee Road, and stopped in a passing place to scan over the large conifer plantation covering the peak of Beinn Risearaidh. We soon picked out a distant ring-tailed Hen Harrier, quickly followed by a male, with another male found, slightly obscured, but a good bit closer. The trees also held Woodpigeon, a species far less numerous here than on the mainland.

Reaching the highest part of the road at the foot of Beinn Amhlasaraigh, a shout of “Grouse” from the back brought us to a halt, and sure enough a male Red Grouse standing motionless in roadside heather, and his partner, a female was found, equally still just a few yards further on, a really good spot from the back of a moving minibus!

The lower altitude moorland below Beinn a Charra gave us great views of another Short-eared Owl as we re-joined the main road around North Uist.

Now, not far from Balranald a diversion from the “Paibeil loop” road took us along a rough sand track to the beach at Rubh Arnal which affords good views South to Kirkibost island, and down onto South Uist. A Corn Bunting sang from a nearby fencepost, and, impressively, about 60 Ravens gathered around some kind of tipping site, with numerous Herring and Great Black-backed Gulls here too. The fields along the track were feeding grounds for many Dunlin and Common Ringed Plovers, with Lapwing, Oystercatcher and Snipe present in good numbers too. A look north along the beach allowed us to pick out a single Whimbrel, with a further three joining it minutes later, before they all set off at speed north, no doubt continuing their migration towards their breeding grounds. The remainder of the loop road gave us three calling Corn Crake as we re-joined the main road.

Balranald is a very special place at this time of year, with the air filled with birdsong; we had seen or heard more Skylark here in a week than most of us do in a year! Driving very slowly along the public road to the reserve, we very soon heard Corn Crake, and managed to record at least another six during this visit with some very good views being had by all!! Such a treat.

With the sun now shining, we reached the parking area at Traigh Lar and took lunch, tucked into the dunes out of the wind. Tempting as it was to just sit and see what drifted by, we wandered along the path to spend some time watching the waders feeding on the beds of washed up weed. Dunlin constantly came and went, and the many Sanderlings, in all stages of plumage, gave us the opportunity to see some very smart summer birds, with a deep brownish-red breast, white underparts and delicately patterned back. Here too, were a handful of really smart Ruddy Turnstone, a bird so often overlooked, but stunning, with a wonderfully rich “tortoiseshell” pattern to the upperparts and a cryptically patterned black and white head and neck, all supported on bright orange legs - quite a sight!

Yet another Corn Bunting sang nearby and we picked out a minimum of three Great Northern Divers out to sea, with another much closer in. A scan way out to sea gave Fulmar, many Northern Gannet, no doubt from the huge colonies on St Kilda, and the briefest, but adequate through the scope views of two Pomarine Skuas as they rapidly went north.

Wandering back to the minibus, two White Wagtails fed on Sand-flies as we took one last look at the feeding waders, oblivious to our presence.

With some facing the prospect of long journeys home tomorrow, we made for Lochmaddy in plenty of time for a visit to the local Arts centre, museum, Exhibition and café called Taigh Chearsabhaigh. We took time to look at the exhibits in the Gallery, which plays host to visiting artists work, and came to the conclusion that this particular artist’s work was maybe a little too subjective for us!!

A small promontory nearby gave us a few minutes to quietly take in the peaceful beauty of the Hebrides. Always hoping for Otter here, we had to make do with Common Eider, Red-breasted Merganser and a single Gannet over the bay.

Wanting to allow enough time to pack, we made for the hotel for a slightly earlier finish, and enjoyed our last meal together.

Day 8

Saturday 25th May

Our last morning together came around all too quickly. We all had an early start today with an 06:30 check in for our sailing back to Uig on Skye. The weather was a little more like what most folk would expect of the West Coast of Scotland! Leaving the hotel, “our” Cuckoo greeted us, as it had done every morning, and the ever-present Willow Warblers around the village sang loudly. Rain and cool conditions prevailed as we boarded the MV Hebrides. Lochmaddy Bay is often a good place to see White-tailed Eagles, but it was hardly a day to watch eagles fly.

Heading out into the Minch, the first half hour or so of the trip was relatively quiet, with just a handful of Guillemot, a few Northern Gannet and an odd Razorbill passing by. A dark phase Arctic Skua sat on the sea not long after leaving the bay.

With some of the group having experienced the delights of a Caledonian Macbrayne breakfast, we settled in for a sea-watching session. Increasing numbers of Auks were noted, with very good counts of Puffin and Razorbill. Gannets passed by in regular groups and Black-legged Kittiwake were seen in their hundreds closer to Skye. Two Manx Shearwaters crossed our wake heading north and Black Guillemot became more apparent as we entered the more sheltered waters south of the island of Fladda.

At just short of two hours, this is the shortest sea crossing to the Hebrides, so we were soon pulling into Uig. We commented on just how different the vegetation appeared around the bay compared to the Uists; much greener and far lusher, the overwhelming influence of the sea on the Outer Hebrides was clear to see. Most of us only get to experience the islands during the fair weather of the summer months, but the harshness of the colder, stormier times sets the spring growth back by at least a month compared to the mainland.

With drizzle persisting we set off down through Skye, stopping for provisions at Broadford. Here, some of us watched two Herring Gulls in a nearby river mouth locked in battle and at one point it was looking like weaker bird might pay the ultimate price, but they eventually separated and flew off.

We did not linger on Skye, and soon crossed the bridge back onto the Kyle of Lochalsh.

The road back towards Loch Ness can be very slow, with a near constant caravan of, well, caravans and campers! We opted to take the northern route back, heading up through Lochcarron and the beautiful lush valleys near Stromeferry. The weather had really not improved much as we made our way up through Strathcarron towards Achnasheen. The valley bottom here is covered in mix of Birch scrub, with isolated pockets of mature Scots Pine, and looked like an area that would be really worth exploring, on a dry day! Just after joining the main road at Achnasheen a shout from the back of the bus made Stewart immediately turn around, and we were all soon watch two smart male Black Grouse in rough grass not far from the road, not a species we had encountered on this tour before!!

Well pleased, and parked in a less than ideal spot we moved on towards Loch Luichart on the river Bran. Again, birch is king with waterside willows obvious too. Here, we stopped at the roadside, a spot we normally use for lunch, but it was just too wet today. Listening in between the passing traffic noise, we picked out Grey Wagtail, Blackcap, Tree Pipit and possibly the trill of a distant Wood Warbler. An added bonus here was a passing Osprey, just a couple of hundred metres away, the second of our trip!

Under a little time pressure today, as onward travel connections had to be made, we soon had to carry on towards Inverness, crossing the very end of the Cromarty firth onto the Black Isle. We managed to pick out at least three Red Kites here as we approached the Kessock bridge, the divide between the Moray and Beaully firths.

Heading into town, we soon reached Inverness railway station, our start and finish point. The week had flown by, as it always does, but what a week it had been. Other parts of Scotland had seen some very poor weather over the previous eight days, but we had been very lucky. The temperature had been lower than the average for the time of year, but we had had dry days throughout, with only a little drizzle to start on some mornings, in fact, we had had some really pleasant relaxed lunch stops out of the wind in bright sunshine.

I'd like to thank you all for such a great week, time spent watching wildlife, and having a laugh too, is very special time, and blimey, we'd had a few laughs this week!! So, until next time, *"tapadh leat agus sinbhal sabhailte."* (Thankyou and safe travels!)

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Species Lists

Birds (✓=recorded but not counted; H = heard only)

	Common name	Scientific name	May							
			18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25
1	Red Grouse	<i>Lagopus lagopus scoticus</i>							*	
2	Black Grouse	<i>Lyrurus tetrix</i>								2
3	Common Pheasant	<i>Phasianus colchicus</i>			*	*				
4	Greylag Goose	<i>Anser anser</i>	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
5	Mute Swan	<i>Cygnus olor</i>	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	
6	Whooper Swan	<i>Cygnus cygnus</i>		2	*		2	*		
7	Common Shelduck	<i>Tadorna tadorna</i>	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
8	Northern Shoveler	<i>Spatula clypeata</i>		*	*		*	*	*	
9	Garganey	<i>Spatula querquedula</i>		*						
10	Eurasian Wigeon	<i>Mareca penelope</i>		1						
11	Mallard	<i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
12	Eurasian Teal	<i>Anas crecca</i>		*			*		*	
13	Common Pochard	<i>Aythya ferina</i>	*							
14	Tufted Duck	<i>Aythya fuligula</i>	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
15	Common Eider	<i>Somateria mollissima</i>	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
16	Red-breasted Merganser	<i>Mergus serrator</i>	*	50+	*	*	*	*	*	*
17	Red-throated Diver	<i>Gavia stellata</i>	6+	2			10	8+		
18	Black-throated Diver	<i>Gavia arctica</i>	3+					5		
19	Great Northern Diver	<i>Gavia immer</i>	4	2+	5+	*	*	*	4+	
20	Northern Fulmar	<i>Fulmarus glacialis</i>	*		*		*		*	*
21	Manx Shearwater	<i>Puffinus puffinus</i>					20+			2
22	Little Grebe	<i>Tachybaptus ruficollis</i>		*	*		*	*	*	
23	Grey Heron	<i>Ardea cinerea</i>	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
24	Little Egret	<i>Egretta garzetta</i>				*				
25	Northern Gannet	<i>Morus bassanus</i>	*		*	*	*	*	*	*
26	European Shag	<i>Phalacrocorax aristotelis</i>	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
27	Great Cormorant	<i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
28	Osprey	<i>Pandion hal</i>	*							*
29	White-tailed Eagle	<i>Haliaeetus albicilla</i>		1		*	2+	4		
30	Red Kite	<i>Milvus milvus</i>								*
31	Hen Harrier	<i>Circus cyaneus</i>	*	2	*		4	1	4	
32	Common Buzzard	<i>Buteo buteo</i>	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
33	Golden Eagle	<i>Aquila chrysaetos</i>	1	*	*		2+	1	2	
34	Common Kestrel	<i>Falco tinnunculus</i>						*		
35	Merlin	<i>Falco columbarius</i>			*					
36	Peregrine Falcon	<i>Falco peregrinus</i>		*						
37	Corn Crane	<i>Crex crex</i>		2	9+		*	*	4+	
38	Common Moorhen	<i>Gallinula chloropus</i>		*	*					
39	Eurasian Coot	<i>Fulica atra</i>		*						
40	Eurasian Oystercatcher	<i>Haematopus ostralegus</i>	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
41	Northern Lapwing	<i>Vanellus vanellus</i>	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
42	European Golden Plover	<i>Pluvialis apricaria</i>		*		2+				
43	Common Ringed Plover	<i>Charadrius hiaticula</i>		*	*	*	*	*	*	*
44	Common Snipe	<i>Gallinago gallinago</i>		*	*		*	*		
45	Black-tailed Godwit	<i>Limosa limosa</i>		*						
46	Bar-tailed Godwit	<i>Limosa lapponica</i>		*						
47	Whimbrel	<i>Numenius phaeopus</i>		2	1				*	

	Common name	Scientific name	May							
			18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25
48	Eurasian Curlew	<i>Numenius arquata</i>	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
49	Common Redshank	<i>Tringa totanus</i>		*	*	*	*	*	*	
50	Common Sandpiper	<i>Actitis hypoleucos</i>		*		*	*	*	*	
51	Ruddy Turnstone	<i>Arenaria interpres</i>		*	*	*	*		*	
52	Knot	<i>Calidris canutus</i>			*					
53	Sanderling	<i>Calidris alba</i>		*	*	*	*		*	
54	Purple Sandpiper	<i>Calidris maritima</i>			3					
55	Dunlin	<i>Calidris alpina</i>		*	*	*	*		*	
56	Ruff	<i>Calidris pugnax</i>						*		
57	Red-necked Phalarope	<i>Phalaropus lobatus</i>		3				2		
58	Black-legged Kittiwake	<i>Rissa tridactyla</i>	*				*		*	*
59	Black-headed Gull	<i>Chroicocephalus ridibundus</i>		*	*	*		*	*	*
60	Common Gull	<i>Larus canus</i>	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
61	Great Black-backed Gull	<i>Larus marinus</i>	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
62	European Herring Gull	<i>Larus argentatus</i>	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
63	Lesser Black-backed Gull	<i>Larus fuscus</i>	*		*	*	*	*	*	
64	Little Tern	<i>Sternula albifrons</i>			*	4+				
65	Arctic Tern	<i>Sterna paradisaea</i>	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
66	Great Skua	<i>Stercorarius skua</i>			*		2	2		
67	Pomarine Skua	<i>Stercorarius pomarinus</i>							2	
68	Arctic Skua	<i>Stercorarius parasiticus</i>	*	2		2+	5+		*	*
69	Common Guillemot	<i>Uria aalge</i>	*				*		*	*
70	Razorbill	<i>Alca torda</i>	*							*
71	Black Guillemot	<i>Cephus grylle</i>	*		*	*	*	*	*	*
72	Atlantic Puffin	<i>Fratercula arctica</i>	*				*			*
73	Common Pigeon (Rock Dove)	<i>Columba livia</i>	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	
74	Common Wood Pigeon	<i>Columba palumbus</i>			*				*	*
75	Eurasian Collared Dove	<i>Streptopelia decaocto</i>	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
76	Common Cuckoo	<i>Cuculus canorus</i>	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
77	Short-eared Owl	<i>Asio flammeus</i>		3+	2+		3+	*	*	
78	Common Swift	<i>Apus apus</i>								*
79	Western Jackdaw	<i>Coloeus monedula</i>								*
80	Hooded Crow	<i>Corvus cornix</i>	*	*	*	50+	*	*	*	*
81	Northern Raven	<i>Corvus corax</i>	*	*	*	*	*	*	70+	
82	Eurasian Skylark	<i>Alauda arvensis</i>	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
83	Sand Martin	<i>Riparia riparia</i>			*	*	*	*	*	*
84	Barn Swallow	<i>Hirundo rustica</i>	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
85	Common House Martin	<i>Delichon urbicum</i>								*
86	Willow Warbler	<i>Phylloscopus trochilus</i>	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	
87	Common Chiffchaff	<i>Phylloscopus collybita</i>					*			*
88	Sedge Warbler	<i>Acrocephalus schoenobaenus</i>	*	*	*	*	*	*		
89	Eurasian Blackcap	<i>Sylvia atricapilla</i>								*
90	Common Whitethroat	<i>Sylvia communis</i>		*			*			
91	Eurasian Wren	<i>Troglodytes troglodytes</i>		*	*	*	*	*	*	*
92	Common Starling	<i>Sturnus vulgaris</i>	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
93	Common Blackbird	<i>Turdus merula</i>	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
94	Song Thrush	<i>Turdus philomelos</i>	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
95	Mistle Thrush	<i>Turdus viscivorus</i>								*
96	European Robin	<i>Erithacus rubecula</i>		*	*	*	*	*	*	*
97	European Stonechat	<i>Saxicola rubicola</i>	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	
98	Northern Wheatear	<i>Oenanthe oenanthe</i>		*	*	*	*	*	*	*

	Common name	Scientific name	May							
			18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25
99	House Sparrow	<i>Passer domesticus</i>	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
100	Dunnock	<i>Prunella modularis</i>	*				*		*	*
101	Pied Wagtail	<i>Motacilla alba yarrellii</i>	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
102	Meadow Pipit	<i>Anthus pratensis</i>	*	*	*	*	*		*	*
103	Tree Pipit	<i>Anthus trivialis</i>								*
104	Eurasian Rock Pipit	<i>Anthus petrosus</i>			*	*		*	*	
105	Common Chaffinch	<i>Fringilla coelebs</i>	*	*	*	*	*	*		*
106	Hawfinch	<i>Coccothraustes coccothraustes</i>				*				
107	European Greenfinch	<i>Carduelis chloris</i>			*	*				*
108	Eurasian Siskin	<i>Carduelis spinus</i>			*		*			
109	European Goldfinch	<i>Carduelis carduelis</i>	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	
110	Common Redpoll	<i>Carduelis flammea</i>				*	*			*
111	Twite	<i>Carduelis flavirostris</i>		*		*			*	
112	Common Linnet	<i>Carduelis cannabina</i>			*					
113	Corn Bunting	<i>Emberiza calandra</i>			4				2+	
114	Common Reed Bunting	<i>Emberiza schoeniclus</i>					*			

Mammals

1	Rabbit	<i>Oryctolagus cuniculus</i>	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
2	Brown Rat	<i>Rattus norvegicus</i>		*		*				
3	Red Deer	<i>Cervus elaphus</i>	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
4	Common Seal	<i>Phoca vitulina</i>		*		*	*	*	*	*
5	Grey Seal	<i>Halicoerus grypus</i>							*	*
8	European Otter	<i>Lutra lutra</i>		*						
9	Porpoise	<i>Phocoena phocoena</i>	*							*

Other Taxa

Green-Veined white, *Pieris napi*

Large Red Damselfly, *Pyrrosoma nymphula*

Moss Carder Bee, *Bombus muscorum*

White-tailed Bumblebee, *Bombus lucorum*

Garden Tiger (larva), *Arctia caja*

Small Tortoiseshell, *Aglais urticae*

Four-Spotted Chaser, *Libellula quadrimaculata*

Common Carder Bee, *Bombus pascuorum*

Scottish biting midge, *Ceratopogonidae* sp.

The Drinker (larva), *Euthrix potatoria*



Black-throated Diver by Stewart Woolley