

Wildlife of North & South Uist – The Outer Hebrides

Naturetrek Tour Report

14th – 22nd May 2022



Sanderling



Corncrake



Otter



Stonechat

Tour report by Stewart Woolley, images by John Hopkins



Naturetrek

Mingledown Barn

Wolf's Lane

Chawton

Alton

Hampshire

GU34 3HJ

UK

T: +44 (0)1962 733051

E: info@naturetrek.co.uk

W: www.naturetrek.co.uk

Tour participants: Simon Woolley (leader) with six Naturetrek clients

Summary

The Outer Hebrides truly define contrast. Calm and rough, light and dark, wet and dry, sand and rock, warm and cold. The huge skies, endless white sand beaches, the vast expanses of moorland and lochans of North Uist and the low lying flower rich meadows of Benbecula and South Uist.

Our time here is spent exploring as much of this staggeringly beautiful remote island chain as we can, we'll venture down the narrow single track roads and find places well off the tourist trail. Our focus will be the rich and varied birdlife of the Hebrides, the plants, mammals and sea life won't feel left out though!

Compound eyes would be handy for birding the Hebrides in spring! White tailed and Golden Eagles high above, Short eared owls, Hen Harrier, skuas and divers over the moorlands, vast feeding flocks of Sanderling, Dunlin, Ringed Plover and Turnstone on the beaches, Corncrake around the croftlands and the shallow lochs of the South giving up sparkling gems such as Red-necked Phalarope and Ruff. We will take the time to sit and watch the birds, to take in the enormity of the landscape and gain an understanding of how life in these islands is ruled by sea and wind.

The Hebridean weather in May can be both meek and mild, and a cruel mistress, often in the same hour, but we will work around this, taking full advantage of the often varied conditions. Strong westerly winds can give us great close views of migrating Pomarine and Long-tailed Skuas, and long days of warm sunshine allow us to walk barefoot on the soft sands looking for waders, Otters and Divers offshore. The near constant breeze largely ensures that the famed "Wee biting beasts" (midges) are not a problem as we travel around. Our week long adventure takes us from Inverness, past loch Ness, up through the peaks of Kintail and over the bridge to Skye, we'll see the jagged Cuillins, Rassay and Rona before reaching the ferry port of Uig, The trip across the Minch may yield Storm Petrel, Manx Shearwater and Minke Whale, while our time on the islands includes visits to Berneray, North and South Uist, Benbecula and Grimsay. Although we always make best use of our time together, the relaxed pace of island life will be reflected in the flexible tour itinerary, with optional early morning excursions and a great boat trip exploring the remote sheltered sea lochs of Eastern North Uist. Well over 100 bird species are possible during the week with some truly memorable sightings too. Please make a brew and have a stroll through the following trip report for a more detailed look into how we got on here in 2022!

Day 1

Saturday 14th May

We are back!! For me as a guide, the Outer Hebrides have an immensely strong pull, and the last couple of years of restrictions left me with a deep yearning for the wild rugged landscapes, and huge skies of the Uists. So, with a great deal of excitement, I collected Jenny from Inverness and we set off towards Skye to meet up with the rest of the group. The weather for the scenic drive up was largely settled with a gentle breeze from the south east and broken cloud. A few Willow Warblers were heard calling from roadside bushes as we headed along the Northern shore of Loch Ness, soon passing the world-famous Urquhart castle and on towards Invermorriston. Here we turned West along Glen Sheil and gradually made for Lochalsh passing the imposing peaks of Kintail and onward to the Skye bridge. Heading for our next pick-up point on Skye, we stopped for a look over a small sea loch just North of Broadford and found a stunning summer plumaged Great Northern Diver, always a treat to see such dapper looking birds! Several Northern Ravens and a couple of Common Buzzards were noted as we

approached Skeabost and our next pick up. Once loaded the short drive up to Uig and the ferry terminal takes just 15 minutes and we soon met up with the rest of our party of six. Extensive works at Uig meant that the rocky beach next to the ferry slip was no more, so we took a very short stroll to a nearby rough meadow and rank reedbed, here we enjoyed the vibrant deep purple of a great display of Northern Marsh Orchids, contrasting well with the rich yellow of a bed of Marsh Marigolds. From our viewpoint we saw several Sedge Warblers, both settled and in their parachuting display flight, Jenny did well to pick up on a gorgeous Whinchat, which didn't linger, but our next find tormented us until we had to head for the ferry. Stewart was mid-sentence saying how he had heard Corncrake here in the past, and as if by prior arrangement, the distinctive rasping of this less than likely looking long distance migrant fired from the deep vegetation, a great start! The bay held just a single Black Guillemot, and a few distant Red-breasted Mergansers.

Once on board the MV Hebrides, we made for the outer deck and soon found ourselves watching a single Golden and two White-tailed Eagles over a nearby ridgeline, what a way to begin our week away!

Soon underway and heading out past the Northern end of Skye in near flat calm conditions several small groups of Common Guillemots and Razorbills passed by and we were pleased to note around a dozen Puffins off our starboard side. With the very calm weather the crossing was pretty quiet birdwise, with a handful of Gannets, three Manx Shearwaters, two Arctic Skuas and a decent number of feeding Arctic Tern being the most noteworthy.

Just under two hours after leaving Uig we entered the sheltered waters of Lochmaddy bay on North Uist in bright hazy sunshine and soon headed for the vehicle deck.

Setting foot on the Uists once more was a great feeling and we soon picked up our first decent birds on the islands, a superb bright Greenland Wheatear posed from the roadside and two in flight Red-throated Divers passed by overhead, the roadside lochans held Tufted Duck, Greylag Geese and a number of Red-breasted Mergansers too.

Heading west out past loch Sgadabagh, we took the small side road to Langass lodge for a short stroll to look over loch Langass, two Blackcaps sang from the small plantation, a Common Buzzard hovered overhead and lots of Green-veined White butterflies danced among the pathside grasses. The loch itself was quiet, with five more mergansers and a single Shelduck being noted.

Our next stop on our way to our hotel was the dead-end road along the Southern shore of Loch Euphort, again pretty quiet, possibly due to the bright sunshine and time of day, but another really smart Wheatear, our first Redshank, a single drake Teal and several Red Deer were seen well by all.

With time now marching on, we gradually made our way back and on south to our hotel and a fantastic, tasty meal and natter about our sightings today and plans for tomorrow.

Day 2

Sunday 15th May

Sunday dawned slightly misty but bright with the promise on long periods of unbroken sunshine throughout the day. Eager to “get amongst it” Stewart was mightily impressed that everyone rose early for a pre-breakfast excursion to experience the dawn chorus outer Hebrides style! As we got ready to leave, one of the first birds to be heard was a singing Sedge Warbler right in front of our digs. Setting off just after 06:00, we drove the short

distance out onto the island of Baleshare, connected to North Uist by a small road causeway. This low lying area of approximately 12 square km is made up mostly of Machair farmland and damp meadows in the interior. Immediately notable was the number of singing Skylark, just everywhere, a real treat compared to mainland UK. Equally impressive here was the variety and density of waders around every corner, it seemed that every croft and field held breeding Lapwing, with chicks of all sizes trotting around after their parents. As we drove on the briefest of calls gave us our first of hopefully many Corncrakes today. Oystercatchers probed the soft ground and we were amazed by the numbers of Dunlin and Common Ringed Plover that fed in a newly cultivated paddock close to the shore. Parking up at the small beachside car park, the sun had begun to “burn” off the early mist, leaving us with a beautiful view of the softly breaking waves along the shore, here we watched a few smallish groups of Sanderlings typically running around right at the waterline, running away from the boiling surf like a child, further along the beach. A super smart migrant Whimbrel dropped in and stood very close to the bus allowing us to see the bold head markings and short stout bill of this species, one that can easily be confused with small male Curlew at greater range. Other mixed wader flocks held Dunlin, Ringed Plover and Turnstone. Just standing and soaking up our surroundings, the time just disappeared and we soon had to start heading back for brekkie at 07:30, a great start for what promised to be a super day on the islands.

After breakfast we set off once again, and headed the short distance South towards Benbecula. The islands of North and South Uist, Benbecula, Grimsay and Berneray are all connected by a network of causeways, and it was from one of these, scanning out over the calm shallow waters of Oitir mhor, that we picked out the distant, but distinctive shape of a Short-eared Owl, flying high and purposefully north. Passing through the main Conurbation of Balivanich, we made our first stop here at “Stinky bay”, named for the pungent aromas that drift ashore from the sometimes huge beds of washed up kelp after big Atlantic storms. Yet more groups of feeding waders were present with lots of Dunlins and Sanderlings foraging for sand flies and hoppers just below our position. Out in the bay a very Smart Great Northern Diver showed well with at least another four, possibly five further out. Superb!

Not far from here we parked up to scan across a small freshwater loch, that is the summertime home of a very special wee bird, right at the far southern edge of its breeding range, we soon found ourselves watching an absolutely gorgeous female Red-necked Phalarope, the intense deep brick red neck patches of this bird simply popped in the bright morning sun. The females are, unusually in the bird world, far more gaudy than the males, again, somewhat oddly, this is because once she lays her eggs, she ups-sticks and leaves the male to incubate and bring up the young. From our vantage point we saw another two Short-eared Owls, a group of fifteen Bar-tailed Godwits, several Shelduck, Wigeon, Gadwall and a lovely looking female Ruff or reeve, just behind us a Snipe drummed very briefly and a single Little Grebe showed distantly. Also present here were a few Arctic Terns setting up home on the tiny grassy islands of the loch. Often the phalaropes can take several attempts to connect with on a visit here, so scoring in the “first half” was a bonus for sure! Reluctantly tearing ourselves away from “our” bird, we slowly set off north, back onto North Uist and up towards the fabled Balranald RSPB reserve. Reaching Bay head at Cladach, we turned off to trundle along the Paibeil loop, a short section of B-road that passes a series of crofts and houses with somewhat unkempt gardens full of nettles and Flag Iris, perfect habitat for Corncrakes. Two males rasped from deep cover but we had no chance of views through the dense vegetation. Still pleased, we carried on and took a detour back on ourselves to view loch sanndaraigh from its eastern shore. Out on the loch a single adult whooper swan was a welcome find, but struggled to compete against the sheer flamboyance of the displaying male Ruff that strutted his stuff to an unimpressed looking female nearby! This bird had a black ruff, with some being white or orange. This bird was a real dandy, but ever

conscious of our potential impacts on what we are watching, we slowly moved away to leave them in peace, wow, just wow!

Getting back to the main event, we turned down the road to Balranald, and within fifty yards found ourselves with adequate, if brief views of another Corncrake, a new bird for some of our group. Once at the reserve we went off road and took the sand track out to the small parking area at Aird an Runair, along this track we were treated to astonishing close views of a cracking Corn Bunting, sat on the ground no more than a few yards away, giving the vans' photographers a great opportunity to capture this increasingly scarce bird in the UK. Aird an Runair is a bulbous promontory famed as a great place to witness the passage of Long-tailed and Pomarine Skuas. Sadly for us, this only happens during a decent strong westerly wind, so, in the prevailing gentle south easterly breeze we enjoyed lunch whilst watching the large feeding wader flocks. From here, yet more divers were seen with a single Red-throated and another three Great Northern Divers adding to our tally.

With lunch done, we decided to stretch our legs a little with a walk right around the point. Following the path marker cairns, we had a great couple of hours, noting a few Wheatears, more divers, Ringed Plovers and the lovely site of a nest of Ravens very close to the path with four nearly fledged young sat watching us! As we neared the end of our walk, a couple of Sand Martins passed overhead as did two Rock Doves. Again, the Corn Bunting sang from a plant stem as we got back to the bus. With the day wearing away, and most of the visitors gone, we spent some time looking for Corncrake once again with another three being heard before our patience paid off with cracking views for all of a male, out in the open and then sitting partially obscured until we had to leave. This once again was a new bird for some of the group, which for me as a guide, is the biggest thrill of guiding and a genuine buzz sets in! Two more crakes were picked up on call and before we called it a (very successful) day and headed back for another tasty meal and natter about our day.

Day 3

Monday 16th May

Yesterday gave us fabulous sunshine virtually from dawn till dusk. Today promised a little bit of a reality check! Much cooler from the get-go with dampness in the air, however, once again everyone was ready at 06:00 for our daily jaunt out before breakfast. Venturing just the short distance up towards Lochmaddy, we very slowly trundled along the main road that cuts through a vast area of lochans and peat bog. This is the perfect habitat for breeding divers and we pretty quickly found our first. A quite distant Black-throated Diver on loch Spadabhagh, a great start. Just a little further on two divers took off again distantly but turned and soon gave themselves up as a pair of Red-throated Diver, with another two minutes later.

The Outer Hebrides are well known as a great place to see Otter, but a little effort or good luck is usually required, so with these in mind we made for the village of Lochmaddy, taking a small single-track lane, parking and walking the short distance to the slightly scary looking pedestrian suspension bridge that spans the seaward end of Loch Houran. The "Bridge closed" barriers had been "Accessed" by locals, but we settled on our side for a scan of the loch and out to sea. Willow Warblers sang from path side bushes and we picked up a couple of distant shapes that turned out to be Grey Seals, A single Raven flew very low away and a smart Lesser Redpoll buzzed overhead before settling in view.

The hour and a half trip out before breakfast always seems to vanish in a second, so we had to set off for the hotel. The road back is often productive, and today was no exception, The tawny brown, ghostly shape of a Short-eared Owl is always a thrill, and the addition of the moorland scenery, the damp mist and stiff breeze

added to the scene as one quartered not far from the road. The short drive back also gave us four Arctic Skuas - one of them being a cracking looking pale bird, the creamy yellows and chocolate velvety brown combination looking so smart.

After breakfast, we all headed back to Lochmaddy, turned North and drove up to Aileodar and along the Loch Portain road. A pair of Stonechat flicked across the road, Grey Heron, several Red-breasted Mergansers and our first Lesser Black-backed Gull of the trip were on Loch Signis.

North Uist has a large population of native Red Deer, and these are special in as far as they are the purest Reds anywhere in the UK, genetically free from Wapiti and Sika Deer blood, and it is therefore illegal to release any deer on the Uists, Our first of many today stood just off the road and slowly moved away not fussed by our approach.

Near the end of the road, we stopped to scan the ridgeline made up of the peaks of Beinn Thacleit and Beinn Croggearraidh - often a good place to see Golden Eagle. None today, but we were delighted to find a ringtail Hen Harrier working the lower slopes beneath our position. Hen Harrier are always a delight to watch and are masters of this type of habitat. Plenty of Northern Wheatears flashed their white upper tails darting away as we approached the Cheesebay area and four Common Cuckoos put on a great display right next to the minibus giving us all a sadly increasingly rare chance to watch this so characterful of species, the local Meadow Pipits being less enamoured with their presence!

Retracing our steps, we then turned north and carried along the North Uist circular road, The weather now had closed in somewhat with the light drizzle turning to rain making viewing a little more of a challenge. The roadside crofts held lots of Lapwings, many with youngsters in tow - great to see! As we stopping for a look over the vast expanse of golden sand that is the low beach of Traigh Bhalaig, three Twite shuffled around on a spoil heap and a Greenshank settled on distant rocks. Greenshank breed here in relatively small numbers, using the damp mosses and lochans of the moorlands as so many other summer visitors do too.

The rain had now begun to fall proper, and this part of the island offers little in the way of protection from the elements, so we decided to head to Malacleit and head a little way along the committee road for a van-based lunch stop. A welcome coffee saw us looking over the large plantation that blankets the slopes of Beinn Rìsearaidh, but the poor conditions yielded just a single Common Buzzard - but we'd be back on a better day!

The southern end of the committee road ends up at the Bayhead area, and as it is just around the corner, a repeat visit to Loch Sanndaraigh was in order to try to catch up with the Ruff we'd seen earlier, and we were duly rewarded with excellent close views as he strutted around, chest all puffed out and a fancy hairdo! The loch held a single Whooper Swan, several Sand Martins and a few Tufted Duck. These are everywhere on the Uists, with hardly a loch that doesn't hold at least one pair.

Since we were so close, and everyone had enjoyed earlier Corncrakes so much, we slowly drove along the rough track past the loch and stopped to listen over some nearby farmland. Three crakes rasped away, tantalisingly close, but staying out of view. Another at Balranald proved much more confiding giving us great views out in the open.

With the day ticking away, we had to travel down to the island of Grimsay for mid-afternoon for a planned boat trip. A very impressive group of around 170 Great Black-backed Gulls gave everyone a chance to look at different ages of this formidable predator, the largest gull species in the world, and in some places, the apex hunter.

Reaching the small fishing harbour of Kallin on Grimsay, we met up with Nick, the owner and skipper of the Lady Anne, our boat for the trip out to explore the sheltered sea lochs around the uninhabited island of Ronay. With a heavy shower now upon us, we set off and were all a little surprised to find out just how shallow the water was around here! But with calm reassurance from our skipper and the water thankfully only coming down, we carried on! A few Grey Herons picked among the weed, and Red-breasted Mergansers were spread along the margins. Two Red-throated Divers flew by with another two found feeding near Cailternis. Common Seals appeared from time to time and there were plenty of Tysties, (Black guillemot) that flew by at serious speed - wings just a whirring blur!

We'd all got a decent soaking during the first half an hour or so of our trip, but the weather had now begun to clear as we headed out into the Minch to round the small island of Flodaigh Mor. Our wee boat bobbed around a little, which was fun for some! Heading for more sheltered waters, a huge adult female White-tailed Eagle sat on the island being mobbed by Herring Gulls, which appeared tiny by comparison. She was suitably unconcerned by their feeble attempts at intimidation!

This bird was part of a breeding pair and we soon felt really privileged to see the active nest on a nearby secluded rock face, the huge female took to the wing and drifted around, keeping her distance and was soon joined by the much bolder male, a good bit smaller than her, but still a massive powerful bird. Nick prepared a single small pollack and, waiting for the male to turn towards us, threw it overboard and moved off a little. The big male passed overhead a few times, always keeping an eye on the prize, and then slowed down, twisted into wind, and dropped down rapidly, grabbing the fish first go. What a sight! An absolutely astonishing creature, with eyes that would look right through you and a bill like no other! Such a treat for us all.

Thinking this wee trip could not get any better was a mistake. Not ten minutes later, we were all watching a pair of full summer plumage Black-throated Divers, is there a smarter bird here in the UK? Don't think so! They are like a throwback to 1930's art deco design, elegance, style, and sophistication by the bucket load! These were the best views any of us had ever had, Stewart included - and he's seen a lot of Black-throated Divers! With our time on the boat nearly done, we headed back into Kallin, thanked Nick and headed back to the hotel for a chat about what we had seen and plans for tomorrow, before sitting down for another super dinner courtesy of Susan and Steve.

Day 4

Tuesday 17th May

Tuesday dawned cool and breezy, with a slight swing of wind direction to almost due south. Our pre-breakfast wandering today was just across the road from the hotel to the ruins of the Trinity temple at Carinish - possibly the oldest university or college in Scotland. The medieval remains are the result of near total destruction after the reformation. Set in a slightly elevated position, the ruins gave us a good vista over the surrounding bay and small islands. As we stood and scanned a small group of Greylag Geese passed by with one being noted as smaller in flight. Relocating them on the ground, we were pleased to see a Pale-bellied Brent Goose, likely from Northern Ireland. A few Common Eider were seen out in the bay as we slowly wandered back along the access path

through deep beds of Flag Iris. Just opposite the hotel, “our” singing Sedge Warbler once again welcomed the new day from his favourite reed perch and a linnet was heard by some of our group.

Setting off south after breakfast, we detoured slightly from plan “A” and made for stinky bay on Benbecula where a Glaucous Gull had been reported the day before. Unfortunately it had moved on, but we sat for a while and enjoyed the comings and goings of the countless mixed waders feeding among the large heaps of rotting seaweed below our position. A Great Northern Diver lingered offshore, adding yet another to our tally this week.

Some species that one would almost take for granted elsewhere in Britain are less than common in the Uists, so we stopped en-route to South Uist for a quick look over Coot Loch - appropriately named as one of the few places out here that both Coot and Moorhen can be seen regularly, we added both and were quite pleased!

Crossing the road causeways that change the lives of every islander in the 1940’s 50’s and 60’s, we reached South Uist and turned along the small road to Carnan before going off road taking to the rough track that skirts the bay here. We braved the blustery and damp condition for a scan over the expanse of sand and mud and found six stunning summer plumaged Grey Plovers and at least 40 Bar-tailed Godwits, Ringed Plover, Dunlin and Redshank fed busily as we took shelter in the bus and carried on toward Aird A Mhachair at the far north west corner of South Uist. Reaching the shore, another large group of mixed small waders picked through the pungent weed piles on the beach, several hundred Dunlins, Sanderlings and Turnstones hoovered up sand flies and hoppers, their constant contact calls, and the noisy squabbling that is the way of the Turnstone, providing the soundtrack! As we prepared to move on, a Corncrake called a few times from a nettle patch beside the graveyard, but we were unable to see it, although it was no doubt just a few yards away. This the experience many have with these mysterious summer visitors.

Ordnance survey sheets of this part of South Uist show, in big red letters, “Danger area”, this must mean birds! So we entered the South Uist ministry of defence missile testing range, It’s ok. We were allowed to do this as long as the red flags were not flying! This huge area of flat mhachair farmland can be crawling with birds at times, but was relatively quiet today with birds of note being several Arctic Terns, four Rock Doves and plenty of Lapwings with young. It was great to see so many Lapwing chicks all over the islands, the mixed extensive farming and large areas of unimproved grasslands being perfect for breeding success. Mid-morning coffee was taken at the missile launch site - Not many can say that! Here we had a great view along the length of the 11km long beach, with not a soul on it! Out to sea we picked up yet another Great Northern Diver, hunting for crabs in the shallows.

Leaving the “range” at Geirinis, we stopped for the now traditional Mute Swan count on Loch Bi. Every year I see if guide and client counts are anything like the same. I think my group this year thought I had gone mad as I began to scope the far shore of this 7km square water, ending up with approximately 250 birds, down on a previous best of 418!

The weather had by this time begun to clear a little with the rain stopped and mist starting to lift, so with this in mind, we made for the viewpoint on Ruabhal, a nearby hill that gives an impressive vista over the top end of South Uist, across Benbecula and the hills of North Uist, with the high peaks of Harris and Skye being visible on a clear day. What is really striking from here is the amount of water in all directions, these islands must be like a

human body - 75% water, with the rest being made up of largely wobbly soft bits with a smattering of hard bits to hold it all together!

A little way further South lies the RSPB reserve of Loch Druidibeag. This great site is the result of cooperation between the RSPB, and the South Uist community and is popular with visitors. Almost as soon as we turned in, a Cuckoo flew along the roadside being aggressively pursued by two persistent Meadow Pipits, that carried on the chase until all three were out of sight. The small plantation at Loch Hamascleit held several singing Willow Warblers and a male Stonechat flicked off a nearby pine.

At the end of the dead end road lies the sheltered bay of Loch Sgioport. This once busy little port gave all tides access to the fleets of Clyde puffers that plied their trade providing a lifeline connection for islanders to the mainland. Goods were moved back and forth to Oban and on down to the Clyde merchants from here for generations and the remains of the harbour infrastructure can still be seen. These days, the only users are visiting pleasure yachts and seabirds seeking shelter from storms. We quickly found a pair of Red-throated Divers, giving us a chance to see the features that identify this species even at distance. A couple of Ravens passed by as we had lunch and a Common Kestrel hovered up high and another Cuckoo was heard calling distantly. Just by the carpark, we found a good number of Heath spotted Orchids in flower and the leaf rosettes of Common Butterwort were all around us - one of the interesting insectivorous plants of the damp moorlands. This area is a great spot for eagle watching on a clear day, but sadly for us today, the surrounding ridgelines were shrouded in cloud, so we cut our losses and headed back to the main road.

Ten kilometres to the South of Druidibeag, lies Loch Ainort, A sea loch this time with incredibly rugged terrain, countless small island and inlets, with large beds of bladder wrack that provide a nursery for many fish species. These in turn naturally bring predators, and our large count of roughly seventy Common, (also known as Harbour) Seals was no surprise. From the parking area at North loch Ainort, we scanned for Otter finding a number of Shelduck, lots of Red-breasted Mergansers and a single Red-throated Diver called from the loch. As we were about to set off for a leisurely walk, a male Peregrine drifted high overhead, Goldcrest sang from the nearby wood and two Cuckoos gave amazing views as they slowly flitted right by us.

The woodland here has been planted up and nurtured by a local enthusiast and now offers an oasis of calm even on a windy day, the fuchsia hedges that edge the path give a heady floral aroma that is a delight!

Looking out from our walk across the seaward end of the loch the briefest glimpses of an Otter were had by a couple of the group, but alas, it didn't show to all as it vanished out of view behind the island of Riosgaigh. The same, or another Red-throated Diver called loudly from the loch and another two flew over us heading for the hills. Very slowly heading back to the minibus, Stewart found part of a large blue eggshell, which we photographed and later identified as coming from a Grey Heron, the plantation next the find site does hold a few heron nests so this added up.

Reaching the bus after an hour or so, we set off West to Bornish and again went off road ending at Rubha Ardvule, the Westernmost point of the Uists and the furthest west point of the UK that can be reached by car! We walked the 1 km or so out to the point passing the tiny brackish Loch Aird a Mhuile, a few Sand Martins buzzed over the loch and several pairs of the omni-present Tufted Duck drifted away as we walked by. From the remains of the WW2 gun emplacement at the point, we looked out to sea finding a small passage of Manx

Shearwaters heading South, with several small groups totalling about 50 birds. These would have been from the large breeding colony on the isle of Rum to the South. Also noted from here were a good number of Gannets (St Kildan birds) Kittiwakes and a small group of seven Purple Sandpipers and a few Turnstones on the rocks.

Today had been pretty busy with a large area covered and some good birds seen. We'd seen how the geography of South Uist is so very different from the northern islands, with a stark contrast between the rocky, mountainous east and the sandy flat west, these being separated by a seam of small freshwater lochs that run the length of south Uist.

We'd largely managed to dodge the worst of any early showers, and with the time marching on, we headed back north for another great meal and a natter.

Day 5

Wednesday 18th May

A near full minibus of early risers set off in dull and slightly damp conditions for a trip to Lochmaddy bay to try and connect with Otter, a species that are plentiful here, but with so much great looking habitat can be a challenge to see well. Leaving the hotel and heading north, we hadn't travelled very far when Jenny found a White-tailed Eagle flying in the direction we were travelling, a good way off the road. A great find on a blustery morning. Turning at Clachan, and again travelling just a short distance, Stewart caught the briefest glimpse of a male Hen Harrier disappearing over a nearby knoll. A Short-eared Owl turned and drifted out of sight as we carried on to the village.

Arriving at Lochmaddy with any early rain now stopped, we parked at Taigh Chearsabha, a superb arts and cultural centre, and walked the short distance to view out over the bay. A Common Sandpiper called as it flew off as we set up the scopes for a good scan of the rocky islands and weed beds. No more than a few minutes had passed when John hit the jackpot finding two fabulous Otters busily feeding and interacting with each other. Going on size, tail length and, to a degree, hunting prowess, they looked to be an adult pair, the dog Otter being huge and very powerful looking with the female having a slighter build and much slimmer head profile. The pair continued to feed and gave occasional views out of the water which was just magic! The bay also held several drake Eider, and a couple of Arctic Terns passed overhead.

Keeping an eye on the time, we eventually had to tear ourselves away and head back to the hotel for breakfast, adding a pair of Arctic Skuas, one dark and a smart pale bird, which are always a delight to see.

After breakfast we all retraced our early steps and headed back towards Lochmaddy, turning north just before the village we headed for Clachan Sands and the simple stunning beach of Traigh Lingeigh. The rough track down to the beach held a nice mix of waders in trackside fields with Lapwings, Ringed Plovers, Dunlins and a pair of Redshanks seen close to the bus. The view from here, in the now brightening skies is gorgeous, the clear blue waters, white sands and gently swaying Marram grass giving an almost tropical look! From here we could see the islands of Lingeigh, Boreray, Berneray and up onto Harris and Lewis beyond.

We had hoped, at this point to move the short distance to look over nearby peaks that can, at times, be good for Golden Eagle, but the weather Gods didn't agree with that plan, giving us a squally shower, enough to encourage us to carry on to the great wee island of Berneray. Soon crossing the causeway onto the island, we made for the Borve mhachair, a vast area of shell sand farmland, mostly unimproved grazing with some cultivated areas,

waders were all around us, Dunlins trotting out of the way of the minibus, and Ringed Plovers bombing around in every direction! Also nice to see was the 120 or so Arctic Terns that sat low to the ground for a bit of protection from the wind. Approaching the parking area near the old burial ground four smart Little Terns scattered, their lemon-yellow bills and black bandito masks quite different from any other UK tern. Wrapping up warm, we set off for a bracing walk around Rubha Bhoisnis, the most south westerly point on Berneray, Jenny's eagle eyes pulled a nice Great Skua out of the bag, its heavy, powerful flight being so menacing looking as it took on all comers! A little further on Stewart found the remains of a sometime dead Little Auk, unusual on this side of the Hebrides, but interesting all the same. Venturing onto the bottom end of west beach, we stood for a short time just taking it all in, the expanse of sand, with not a soul in sight! Great!

You know those times when you have a wildlife encounter that will stick in the memory forever? How about a stroll along a pure white sand beach, the wind blowing the dry sand into almost a low mist effect, then an amazing looking pale coated dog Otter slides down a high sand dune and walks right across the beach in front of everyone, not a care in the world as it goes about its business, That'll do! We stood, slightly dumbstruck as this incredible sighting happened before us! We carried on watching this beautiful animal and could even see it underwater in the face of the rolling, breaking waves. He emerged on nearby rocks a short time later and we really felt so privileged that this beautiful creature had shared some of his day with us.

Carrying on along the beach, a Great Northern Diver fed offshore and a Little Tern floated above the surf briefly. All this feeding activity had made us hungry, so we headed for the minibus and made for the small bistro at the village store where we enjoyed a tasty lunch with lashings of ginger beer (yes, really!)

After we'd eaten, we headed for the village and experienced something none of us had expected, long road delays! The council were surface dressing the only road across the island so we just had to sit and wait, for 45 minutes! Once the works had cleared, we took the minor road to loch Brusda, a large freshwater loch in the middle of the island here Stewart found a single Pink-footed Goose among Greylags but the loch was otherwise quiet today. Now don't tell the office, but Stewart quite likes an occasional off road adventure, so with this in mind we took to an unmade route and parked not far from the north end of West Beach, where we'd seen the Otter earlier. We walked the short distance to the huge ribbon of white sand and just stood, just us, not another human in sight, one of the group decribed this experience as "almost spriritual" and I can totally understand the sentiment. All this beauty, here in the UK. The scenery here is so tranquil that one could leave thinking this landscape is completely benign, the reality that this is not the case soon struck home when walking back to the bus, the local Lapwings took to the air in panic as a cracking Pale morph Arctic Skua bombed over the dunes and took one of its chicks.

Our final destination on this lovely island was a visit to the East Beach, this looks over the sound of Harris and the small uninhabited islands of Ensay and Killigray where the crofters of Berneray oversummer their sheep. From our elevated position we watch four or five Little Terns over the beach and scoped one that had settled some distance away, with legs so short they could hardly be seen.

Keeping an eye on the hour, we reluctantly made our way off the island to commit some time to watching for Golden Eagles nearby and were soon rewarded when Neil found two of the most majestic birds in Britain circling over the slopes Beinn Bhreac and Beinn Mhor on North Uist. "Goldies" have such an aura about them, found in true wild places, untamed and at one with their domain, boy we were lucky to have this encounter!

Heading the scenic way back to the hotel, we once again took the Committee road south from Malacleit, but as the weather had closed in, it proved unproductive this time so we called it a day and settled in for our evening log call and meal. A great day had by all.

Day 6

Thursday 19th May

Thursday started off a little misty and damp but with the promise of better weather later on. Stepping out the front door of the hotel, the resident Sedge Warbler scratched away from the same reed stem as it had done all week and a fly through Cuckoo was seen by those sharp out to the bus. Very impressed that we once again had a full bus, we headed out to explore the local area for a while before breakfast. We drove the short distance to the Langass Lodge Hotel and parked up for a walk up to the Pobull Fhinn stone circle, dating back some 5,000 years. The stones are the source of myth and legend locally and the dramatic setting would certainly add to this. At least two Willow Warblers welcomed the new day as we made our way along the path. It was clear as we walked that there had been significant overnight rain, as the path was a running stream. Reaching the stones, we scanned out over the length of the loch and picked up a few Red-breasted Mergansers, several Red Deer trotted over the distant moorland and four or five Harbour Seals spy hopped and loafed around at the far end of the loch, then bingo! A mother Otter with two cubs! Although quite some distance away, we were happy with our scope views as she fished, and occasionally they popped out onto waterside rocks to eat. Otters in an urban setting or nature reserve are great, but seeing them here, in the wild rugged terrain of the Hebrides is just so special, she was totally unaware of us as she educated her young to the ways of survival. With an hour and a half vanishing fast we set off for breakfast, delighted with the day so far!

We had explored a little of South Uist earlier in the week but had left plenty to see, so once we'd had breakfast, we headed south taking the main road as far as Kildonan. Just outside Carinish we soon found our first Short-eared Owl of the day, these are often seen from the road, as was this bird, one wonders how many there are elsewhere on the islands. A second bird was spotted a short time later, distinctive in being a darker bird than the first. Roadside lochans held plenty of Tufted Duck and Ravens were seen from time to time. Once as far south as we were travelling we took to the small roads that criss-cross the western side of South Uist and very slowly began to explore our way north passing the settlements of Ormacleit and Stoanibrig. With the windows down we heard the now familiar to all sound of at least two calling Corncrake, rasping away from deep cover, we had no chance of seeing either of these in the long lush vegetation. Small pools held a good mix of birds including a pair of Shovelers, three Wigeons and a single Teal. The rough grazing field with damper areas were alive with Lapwings, chicks of varying sizes all over the place! This was magic to see as our Farmland waders are having such a hard time in other parts of the country.

From Staonibrig we took a tiny road to the point at Rubh Aird Mhicheil and wandered around the grassy promontory. We were delighted to find at least five Great Northern Divers offshore, along with two Grey Seals and a few Common Eider.

After a quick coffee stop we carried on and arrived at the Howmore river a short time later. This is really the only river as such on South Uist and on a good still sunny day (this was not one!), a great place to find the rare

Great Yellow Bumblebee. We had to “make do” with yet another calling Corncrake, this bird so close to the road we were sure we would see it. Wrong!

Lunch was taken at Loch Druidibeag. We parked up in a secluded wee spot and after we'd eaten, took a short stroll through the small plantation, fenced off from the deer. Here a wide range plants had the chance to grow free from grazing. A pair of Stonechats with at least four fledged youngsters flicked from bush to bush and a few Willow Warblers sang from deep cover with one bird in full view very close to our position, one forgets just how much noise some of these tiny birds can make at close range!

After our lunch stop we once again crossed the main road and ended up at the beach near Groigearraidh (Grogarry) on the west coast. As with so many other areas visited during the week, we were seemingly surrounded by breeding Lapwings, with a few Redshanks that seem to be much more highly strung than the plovers!

As we pulled up, a single migrant Whimbrel wandered about just in front of us giving great views to all. It flew off briefly but returned as we stood and scanned along the beach and shoreline. Every beach seems to hold feeding small waders and the 200 or so mainly Sanderlings here afforded us the chance to compare individuals and the huge variation in plumage stages. Some of the birds with deep browns on brick reds and others in almost their full grey winter suits!

As stated earlier, Stewart loves to go “off piste” on tour, so we headed on north, this time taking to a set of farmers wheelings over some grazing land and sand trails, eventually ending up at the southern end of the Range. We stopped to watch another sixteen Whimbrels with five more in a nearby field. Otherwise the range was pretty quiet today with just a few Arctic Terns and Lapwings to see.

The beach at Aird held numerous wading birds picking through the enormous piles of weed, but we were unable to find any of the Curlew Sandpipers reported last week. The road home saw us stop for a look over Loch Fada to try for the Garganeys seen briefly the day before, but they must have moved on.

Our final destination today was the dead-end road that winds its way to the island of Flodaigh, a place none of us, including Stewart had visited before. It's always fun to explore new sites and doing this with a group of Naturetrekkers makes it all the more enjoyable! Here we strolled out to Seal Point which is well named as there were Harbour Seals on nearly every island. This looked like prime Otter country so we'll definitely be back. Satisfied with our efforts today we headed back, adding Common Kestrel and Buzzard as we approached the Hotel.

Day 7

Friday 20th May

Friday dawned wet and much colder, and to be honest, without much promise. The regular Sedge Warbler continued to sing from the small reedbed in front of the hotel and a couple of those sharper to the minibus saw a fly by Cuckoo at close range. We have been fortunate this week to have experienced a series of close encounters with this species, one that is struggling further south, but does seem to be doing ok on the Scottish mainland and islands. Plenty to eat, and plenty of Meadow Pipits to bring up the kids!

Setting off a little way south, we made for the tiny island of Grimsay and took the circular road around the island stopping at Kallin half way round. The conditions really were dire as we looked out over the uninhabited island

of Ronay, we did manage to see a few Wheatears, a couple of Shelduck and the odd Red-breasted Merganser as we battled the conditions. Deciding to somewhat cut our losses, we made tracks north and up to the Lochmaddy road. The weather by this time had begun to ease off a little and we were almost immediately rewarded with a cracking male Hen Harrier at the roadside. Turning down the side road to Loch Langass, we all enjoyed great views of this most enigmatic of species as he initially quartered the rough grassland then settled in full view for us all to enjoy. An added bonus was a fly by Cuckoo, with Willow Warblers calling from the nearby plantation. With time slipping by, we reluctantly left the site and headed for breakfast, leaving the Harrier to work the hillside nearby.

With the weather now on the up, and with another good breakfast inside, we went north, our first stop being a repeat visit to loch Sanndaraigh at Paibel on North Uist. Word came through as we approached of a Glaucous Gull on North Uist, on Loch Sanndaraigh! We literally turned the binoculars, looked to the far end of the small water and bingo, the unmistakable bulk and colour of a First winter “Glauc”. If only that could happen with all scarce birds, the job of a guide would be so much easier!

We had planned to go and look for a Wood Sandpiper that had been seen yesterday, but with a few cars on the track at the far end we decided to avoid the crowds and move on.

Just a little way along the road is Balranald, and as we were passing, we thought we’d try and see another Corncrake, but nothing was even calling as we made for the turning area at the end of the road. However, upon our return to the Main road, one started rasping from the same area we’d seen one earlier in the week, and once more we were soon enjoying great scope views of this stonking wee bird. It sat out in the open and called away, before flying a hundred yards or so and out of sight, but carried on calling throughout, pure magic!

With the conditions now very much improved, and visibility approaching excellent, we travelled the kilometre or so to Hosta and the road to the St Kilda viewpoint on Cleitreabhal, Approaching the turnoff, Stewart pulled the van up sharply and, doing his best to subdue any excitement, pointed to the ground, barely six feet from the bus as another Corncrake walked by, seemingly oblivious to our presence. Backing the bus up a little to allow the photographers to get ready, he carried on towards us, stopped right alongside and started calling. Some superb images were captured and smiles all round, priceless!

Our luck seemed to be in, so we headed up the hill for a look over the big plantation nearby. Stewart caught a movement over a nearby ridge and soon locked onto an adult White-tailed Eagle. It disappeared out of sight, but was soon found feeding, at distance, on what looked like either a large gull or Greylag Goose. This was turning into a good afternoons’ birding!

Thinking it was nearly lunchtime, we turned and headed back down the rough road, stopping to watch three Short-eared Owls hunting close by.

At least another two Short-eared Owls were seen well as we rounded the top western corner of North Uist and made for Malacleit and lunch. We sat overlooking the huge expanse of low tide sands at Traigh Bhalaign, as we tucked into crab rolls from a wee roadside trailer set up by two local lasses. Its satisfying giving a small start up a little business where we can!

We really thought we'd had our fill of birds today, but little did we know what was coming! We'd visited the Committee road twice already this week with little success, but with bright sunshine and a stiff breeze, it looked the perfect raptor flying kind of day, and we were right, over the next twenty or so minutes, Two White-tailed Eagles, one Golden Eagle, two male Hen Harriers, one ring-tailed female harrier and another Short-eared Owl were seen over the plantation. This was birding from the top drawer! One sad note was the discovery of what appeared to be a road casualty Otter in a roadside ditch. With so much seen in such a short time, we chanced our arm and made another visit to Loch Sanndaraigh and straight away found the really smart Ruff we'd seen earlier, but with bright sunshine on him, and being very close to the road we were able to see that his black ruffle was in fact a deep gloss purple. This bird was smart, and he knew it!

Much earlier in the day a Wood Sandpiper had been seen on the same loch, but not reported for a few hours, one or two other visitors had not seen it either, so it nice when Stewart picked it up feeding and the back of a small pool. This was a species some of the group had not seen before either.

We had really "cleaned up" over the course of the afternoon, so we decided to finish our trip out a little earlier than on other days and made for the hotel and dinner, which was delayed a little by us watching our seventh "Shorty" of the day!

Day 8

Saturday 21st May

Today was to be our transit day back to the mainland and onward to Inverness, but it's funny how things don't always pan out as expected. We'd heard some discussions about a slight incident at Lochmaddy on Wednesday evening that was now about to give us an extra day here on Uist. The evening sailing by the MV Hebrides had made hard contact with the pier structure and caused more damage to the ship than first thought, resulting in her being withdrawn from service. The double whammy of the South Uist service also down due to mechanical failure meant that our options were very limited. Wanting to avoid multiple connections and silly early starts from other islands, Stewart decided that a sailing as planned, but 24 hours later was the best option.

Given the bonus day, we went to re-visit some of the best birds we'd seen during the week. The weather Gods were also on our side, so before breakfast, we headed straight for Benbecula to see if we could connect with the phalarope from earlier. Arriving on site we soon found this fabulous wee bird working away amongst the Mareestail at the back of a nearby pool. Suddenly, and out of nowhere, a second female dropped in, this bird may have been fresh in as she was much more on edge than the original bird. What a treat!

As well as the phalaropes, several Snipe drummed and gave us good views sat on post tops nearby, while a pair of Dunlins flew up in their unusual song flight, making them look a little like Skylark at distance. Their high-pitched whistling song is so unfamiliar to most.

The time had flown by, so we headed straight back for breakfast. After fuelling up we made for the western side of North Uist and the track to the St Kilda viewpoint, passing by Bayhead on the way we connected with three Short-eared Owls, fantastic! With one giving prolonged views as we nipped into Bayhead store for lunch items. Moving on the 3km or so to Hosta, we soon found "Our" Crake, a noisy bird that seemed unconcerned by his surroundings. Delighted to get such good views again, we were surprised at just how quickly they can move across the ground. Adopting a horizontal body position he weaved through the vegetation to the other side of the field, probably 100 metres or so from where he first appeared, and we had absolutely amazing views from the

track as we looked down from our elevated position from the bus. This great wee bird occasionally stopped and rasped away for a few seconds at a time, a sound so evocative of the Outer Hebrides in spring. A second, more distant bird joined in the chorus as we made for Balranald and a beach walk. Soon turning into the Balranald road, a third bird, one we'd seen a few times earlier in the week called then flew a short distance. Corncrakes, with their slightly dumpy looking bodies and long legs don't give the impression that they would be good aviators, but this birds' fast direct flight surprised us all and its ability to undertake such a long migration to Africa suddenly made sense.

The sun had really begun to shine so we parked up at Aird an Runair and took to the sand for a walk along Traigh Lar. Here we spent some time with a big group of Sanderlings, feeding on the beach. These are such great little birds, not rare, not even scarce, but so engaging, their reflections on the wet sand as the waves receded giving those with cameras some great photo opportunities.

The wind forecast promised a switch around to strong south-westerlies which looked good for some skua passage action, however, the reality was a modest, then gentle SSW breeze which was useless! We did manage to find three Pomarine Skuas bashing north a long way off shore and several Manx Shearwaters headed towards Rum. Gannets passed by in both directions and a few small strings of Common Guillemot hugged the water as the bombed by. The distinctive sound of a Corn Bunting was heard and a single bird was found on fence wire near the end of the beach. As we strolled back for lunch, yet another Great Northern Diver was found off shore, along with a nice Red-throated Diver much closer in. We'd seen so many divers this week we almost lost count, every beach or bay we'd looked at seemed to hold at least one bird, sometimes multiples, folk on a recent Mull trip also said they'd noted big numbers there too.

We sat in the sunshine and took a leisurely lunch, struggling to think of a better place for a picnic, surrounded by waders and the sounds and smells of the sea!

Now our groups are not here to "twitch" rarities, but we are not immune to a "quick nip to see" if something is close by, and with the jungle drums beating, we set off the very short distance to Loch Paibel to try and find the Broad-billed Sandpiper that was found by a visiting birder a day ago. We arrived on site and after a walk to the dunes realised that we would need to be very lucky, the sun was right in our faces and the expanse of sand was shrouded in a deep rippling haze. It was like looking through a bathroom window! We had to content ourselves with the sound of another Corncrake and a ten-minute doze in the glorious weather. I sat here enjoying the view then looked at my "team" all getting a little too comfortable! This would not do! So, with a plan, we soon set off south and drove the twenty minutes or so to Stinky bay on Benbecula where we immediately connected with the immature drake Surf Scoter found just a couple of hours ago. This great looking bird was very close inshore giving superb views. My group had to come to terms with the fact that now they had been for two Rare/scarce birds today, willingly and without objection, they were now "Filthy twitchers!" Job done, mission accomplished!

The short drive back to the hotel gave us another Great Northern Diver and two more Short-eared Owls, we settled in for a chat about our bonus day and to go over travel plans for the morning. Our last meal at Temple view was as tasty as ever and we were grateful for the great weather today as it had now closed in and was raining by the time we ate. All in all, a super day, thanks Calmac, for crashing the ferry!

Day 9

Sunday 22nd May

Having benefitted from an extra “bonus” day here on the Uists, we had to face up to the fact that we did actually have to start heading home today! The weather was once again settled and calm as we set off early making for the ferry terminal at Lochmaddy. The Sedge Warbler continued to sing outside the hotel, just as he had done every day this week, as we boarded the bus for the fifteen minute trip north. We did manage to spot a couple of passing Red-throated Divers flying high above the moors as we made for the boat. Leaving Lochmaddy on time, Stewart picked up the shape of a swimming Otter out in the bay, as we headed out into the Minch in almost flat calm conditions. The trip back to Skye was extremely quiet bird wise, with two Great Skuas “Bonxies” being the highlight, so we took the opportunity to grab some hot food and a coffee and just enjoy the view. Reaching Uig, four of the group headed for their own cars which they’d left last week and the remaining three of us set off for the journey back to Inverness. Seeing as the Uist trip technically was from Inverness to Inverness, we decided we’d make the most of the next few hours and take the scenic route back. Passing through Skye, crossing the bridge and onto Loch Alshe, we then turned north soon after Eilean Donan castle and took the road up through Lochcarron. The weather had closed in somewhat, now being pretty damp and foggy, but we enjoyed the scenery as we eventually made it to Achnasheen station for a comfort stop. Achnasheen train station is somewhat of an oasis, there is a small area of mixed trees around the carpark and nothing much else in the way of cover locally. I stood with the bus as others went inside and heard a slightly unfamiliar song coming from a dense patch of scrub. Off in search, I was somewhat surprised to find a Redwing in full song at the top of a dead tree, at the end of May! Delighted with this find, we all watched this very scarce breeder until it moved off, still singing away.

Just a short distance along the road is a gently sloping hillside with a sparsely planted conifer plantation at the top. Here, a scan with the scope gave us three nice male Black Grouse. What a bonus! The trip back saw us stop near Loch Loichart, at the end of strath Bran for lunch where we added Spotted Flycatcher and Tree Pipit, but failed to find any of the hoped for Wood Warbler. Our journey back to Inverness continued to add a few species to our tally, Swift and Jackdaw being species we might have expected earlier in the week. The Beaully area gave us at least four Red kite and a passing Sparrowhawk was a nice addition.

Reaching Inverness all too soon early afternoon, we said fairwell to each other and began our journeys home.

For me, the Outer Hebrides holds a special place in my heart, and not being able to visit the past couple of years has been very difficult. When I heard that the trip was finally going ahead, I just couldn’t wait and I have to say, I’m so very glad I could share my return with the six of you! I want to say a special thanks to you all for helping to make this week so much fun, for sharing the beauty of the Hebrides, and allowing me to show you some of the places I love. We’d had some truly wonderful wildlife sightings and seen some really special birds too. Harriers, owls, eagles, cranes, phalaropes and divers, the masses of waders, the rugged rocky landscapes of the east and the white sands of the west. We’d seen reer, Otters and seals, and at times, enjoyed some fabulous weather. I do hope you’ll all try and come back again at some point! Thanks again for some great memories. Cheers for now, Stewart.

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Species lists

Birds (H = Heard only)

Common name	Scientific name	May 2022							
		14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21
Greylag Goose	<i>Anser anser</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Brent Goose	<i>Branta bernicla</i>				✓				
Pink Footed Goose	<i>Anser brachyrhynchus</i>					✓			
Mute Swan	<i>Cygnus olor</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Whooper Swan	<i>Cygnus cygnus</i>		✓	✓				✓	
Common Shelduck	<i>Tadorna tadorna</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Eurasian Wigeon	<i>Mareca penelope</i>		✓	✓	✓		✓		✓
Mallard	<i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Northern Shoveler	<i>Spatula clypeata</i>		✓		✓		✓	✓	✓
Eurasian Teal	<i>Anas crecca</i>	✓		✓			✓		
Tufted Duck	<i>Aythya fuligula</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Common Eider	<i>Somateria mollissima</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Surf Scoter	<i>Melanitta perspicillata</i>								✓
Red-breasted Merganser	<i>Mergus serrator</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Red-throated Diver	<i>Gavia stellata</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓		✓
Black-throated Diver	<i>Gavia arctica</i>			✓			✓		
Great Northern Diver	<i>Gavia immer</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓
Manx Shearwater	<i>Puffinus puffinus</i>	✓			✓				
Little Grebe	<i>Tachybaptus ruficollis</i>		✓				✓		✓
Grey Heron	<i>Ardea cinerea</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Northern Gannet	<i>Morus bassanus</i>	✓	✓		✓	✓			✓
European Shag	<i>Phalacrocorax aristotelis</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓
Great Cormorant	<i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓
White-tailed Eagle	<i>Haliaeetus albicilla</i>	✓		✓		✓		✓	
Northern Harrier	<i>Circus cyaneus</i>			✓	✓			✓	
Common Buzzard	<i>Buteo buteo</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Golden Eagle	<i>Aquila chrysaetos</i>	✓				✓		✓	

Common name	Scientific name	May 2022							
		14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21
Common Kestrel	<i>Falco tinnunculus</i>			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Peregrine Falcon	<i>Falco peregrinus</i>				✓				
Corn Crake	<i>Crex crex</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓
Eurasian Coot	<i>Fulica atra</i>				✓				
Eurasian Oystercatcher	<i>Haematopus ostralegus</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Northern Lapwing	<i>Vanellus vanellus</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
European Golden Plover	<i>Pluvialis apricaria</i>		✓	✓			✓	✓	
Grey Plover	<i>Pluvialis squatarola</i>				✓				
Common Ringed Plover	<i>Charadrius hiaticula</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Common Snipe	<i>Gallinago gallinago</i>		✓	✓	✓			✓	✓
Bar-tailed Godwit	<i>Limosa lapponica</i>		✓		✓		✓		
Whimbrel	<i>Numenius phaeopus</i>		✓		✓		✓	✓	
Eurasian Curlew	<i>Numenius arquata</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Common Redshank	<i>Tringa totanus</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Common Greenshank	<i>Tringa nebularia</i>			✓					
Common Sandpiper	<i>Actitis hypoleucos</i>			✓		✓			
Wood sandpiper	<i>Tringa glareola</i>							✓	
Ruddy Turnstone	<i>Arenaria interpres</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Sanderling	<i>Calidris alba</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓
Purple Sandpiper	<i>Calidris maritima</i>				✓				
Dunlin	<i>Calidris alpina</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Red-necked Phalarope	<i>Phalaropus lobatus</i>		✓						✓
Black-legged Kittiwake	<i>Rissa tridactyla</i>	✓			✓				
Black-headed Gull	<i>Chroicocephalus ridibundus</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Common Gull	<i>Larus canus</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Glaucous Gull	<i>Larus hyperboreus</i>								
Great Black-backed Gull	<i>Larus marinus</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
European Herring Gull	<i>Larus argentatus</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Lesser Black-backed Gull	<i>Larus fuscus</i>			✓			✓	✓	✓
Little Tern	<i>Sternula albifrons</i>		✓		✓	✓	✓		✓
Arctic Tern	<i>Sterna paradisaea</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Great Skua	<i>Stercorarius skua</i>					✓			
Pomarine Skua	<i>Stercorarius pomarinus</i>								✓
Arctic Skua	<i>Stercorarius parasiticus</i>	✓		✓		✓			✓
Common Guillemot	<i>Uria aalge</i>	✓							✓
Razorbill	<i>Alca torda</i>	✓							
Black Guillemot	<i>Cephus grylle</i>	✓		✓	✓				
Atlantic Puffin	<i>Fratercula arctica</i>	✓							
Little Auk - Dead	<i>Alle alle</i>							✓	
Common Pigeon (Rock Dove)	<i>Columba livia</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Common Wood Pigeon	<i>Columba palumbus</i>	✓							
Eurasian Collared Dove	<i>Streptopelia decaocto</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Common Cuckoo	<i>Cuculus canorus</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Short-eared Owl	<i>Asio flammeus</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Hooded Crow	<i>Corvus cornix</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Northern Raven	<i>Corvus corax</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Eurasian Skylark	<i>Alauda arvensis</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Sand Martin	<i>Riparia riparia</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Barn Swallow	<i>Hirundo rustica</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Common House Martin	<i>Delichon urbicum</i>	✓				✓		✓	
Goldcrest	<i>Regulus regulus</i>				✓		✓		

Common name	Scientific name	May 2022							
		14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21
Willow Warbler	<i>Phylloscopus trochilus</i>	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Common Chiffchaff	<i>Phylloscopus collybita</i>			✓					
Sedge Warbler	<i>Acrocephalus schoenobaenus</i>	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓
Eurasian Blackcap	<i>Sylvia atricapilla</i>	✓			✓				
Common Whitethroat	<i>Sylvia communis</i>				✓				
Eurasian Wren	<i>Troglodytes troglodytes</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Common Starling	<i>Sturnus vulgaris</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Common Blackbird	<i>Turdus merula</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Song Thrush	<i>Turdus philomelos</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓
European Robin	<i>Erithacus rubecula</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Whinchat	<i>Saxicola rubetra</i>	✓							
European Stonechat	<i>Saxicola rubicola</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Northern Wheatear	<i>Oenanthe oenanthe</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
House Sparrow	<i>Passer domesticus</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Pied Wagtail	<i>Motacilla alba yarrellii</i>	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Meadow Pipit	<i>Anthus pratensis</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Common Chaffinch	<i>Fringilla coelebs</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
European Goldfinch	<i>Carduelis carduelis</i>	✓		✓	✓	✓			
Common Redpoll	<i>Carduelis flammea</i>			✓	✓				
Twite	<i>Carduelis flavirostris</i>			✓	✓				
Common Linnet	<i>Carduelis cannabina</i>		✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Corn Bunting	<i>Emberiza calandra</i>		✓						✓

Mammals

Common name	Scientific name	May 2022							
		14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21
Rabbit	<i>Oryctolagus cuniculus</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Red Deer	<i>Cervus elaphus</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Common Seal	<i>Phoca vitulina</i>			✓	✓	✓	✓		✓
Grey Seal	<i>Halicaeerus grypus</i>		✓	✓			✓		
European Otter	<i>Lutra lutra</i>				✓	✓	✓		

Others

Green-veined White, Large Red Damselfly

Plants

Northern Marsh Orchid
 Marsh Marigold
 Bogbean
 Wild Pansy
 Silverweed
 Thift
 Cuckoo Flower
 Common Butterwort

Heath Spotted Orchid

Lousewort

Birds Foot Trefoil

Tormentil