

Shetland's Wildlife

Naturetrek Tour Report

12th – 19th June 2026



Great Northern Diver



Frog Orchid



Oysterplant



Gannet

Tour report by Glen Tyler



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Tour participants: Glen Tyler (leader) with seven Naturetrek clients

Day 1

Friday 12th June

The guests all boarded the 7.00pm Northlink ferry from Aberdeen, seeing Eiders and Goosander before leaving the harbour. A couple of Bottlenose Dolphins appeared behind the boat just as the open sea was reached. Thereafter, Gannet and Common Guillemot were seen, before all retired for the night: the crossing to Shetland was smooth.

Day 2

Saturday 13th June

The leader met the group at Lerwick ferry terminal, and bags were packed into the minibus. After picking up lunch items in Lerwick, we travelled down to the hotel to drop the bags. A Greenish Warbler had been reported at nearby Sumburgh Head, so we headed up there for a look, and saw the bird flycatching around some old, lichen covered dykes and small plantations protected by pallets. The bird showed well and all got to see it. The striking supercilium stood out as the most obvious feature. While we watched the warbler, a pair of 'Shetland' Wren were feeding young in a nest in the dyke, and a pair of Meadow Pipits also gathered crane-fly adults and larvae for their hungry brood.

Leaving Sumburgh, we headed north, stopping briefly at Grutness to view a young Great Northern Diver and a small group of Eiders. Wheatears were singing and displaying around us, and the large, dark, Shetland Starlings buzzed to and fro, with many juveniles now on the wing.

Turning off just north of Lerwick, we struck out west. A brief stop at the head of Weisdale Voe between heavy showers provided us with great views of Goosander, Curlew, Redshank and Oystercatcher. A Common Tern was dip-diving up and down in front of us. Further west, we turned off towards West Burrafirth, and after negotiating the twisting road that winds through lochans bedecked with Beaked Sedge and White Water-lily out towards the Papa Stour ferry terminal, we fairly quickly found the breeding-plumaged White-billed Diver that had first been seen in the voe yesterday. It was very active, constantly washing, preening and flapping, and through the telescope the huge, ivory-coloured bill held angled up, and the dark, green-black head with a white collar and checkered back could be seen clearly. Having moved along the road a short distance, we had even closer views of the bird, now no longer preening, but diving and feeding just offshore. Our vantage point was a small cliff backed by a flower-rich marsh with Bog-cotton, Heath Milkwort, Common Lousewort, Spring Squill and Tormential all in flower. A Common Frog hopped out in front of us as we headed back to the van.

Moving further west, we passed the Neolithic site of Scord of Brouster, and reached Sandness. A pair of Arctic Skuas repeatedly chased feeding Arctic Tern across the bay, though they seldom if ever got any reward for their effort. It was a dazzling acrobatic display: the dark plumage and contrasting white primary shafts of the skuas was a great counterpoint to the silver-white plumage of the terns. A short walk around this area brought us a group of summer-plumaged Sanderlings, heading for the high Arctic, a small flock of Turnstones flew by, and a Chiffchaff was singing in some garden willows. Vibrant, deep-purple Northern Marsh Orchids were blooming in the wet meadow, and a few Large White butterflies flitted around the kale yard of a nearby croft.

At Melby, three male Wigeons grazed on the lochside, and a pair of Tufted Ducks foraged in the deeper water. We turned back east and started to retrace our steps. As we headed south, we stopped briefly at Mousa Sound to scan

for cetaceans, but didn't see any. Back at the hotel, there was just time to collect our bags and settle in to our rooms before dinner, after which we completed the log for our busy first day on Shetland.

Day 3

Sunday 14th June

Despite the wind having increased overnight, several members of the group went for an early walk on West Voe beach, where a flock of Sanderlings in their rusty summer plumage were seen, while others went around Sumburgh Farm, where a Linnet was found.

After breakfast, we departed for the north of Mainland, calling by at Sandwick to hear a Quail performing its 'wet my lips' song from the hidden depths of a wet meadow. Clouds of clamouring Redhanks vigorously defended their chicks from passing gulls and a marauding Hooded Crow. We diverted through the Tingwall valley to see a moulting male Mandarin Duck sleeping alongside a ditch with Bogbean in flower. Its orange face shone out from the vegetation, although it was mostly obscured. Water Mint and Meadowsweet were yet to flower, but were growing here in abundance, promising fragrance to come, and a few Northern Marsh Orchids were growing on the roadside verge. On Asta Loch, a male Ring-necked Duck was mingling with an exclusively male flock of Tufted Ducks, allowing a great opportunity for comparison. The group all got great views of the American rarity, and could see the grey wingbar and dusky flanks with a white leading chevron, compared to the more black-and-white pattern of the Tufted Ducks. We paused briefly to view Ting Law Holm, where the Viking parliament was held, and also looked up towards the house of the fictional brother of detective Ruth Calder, from the 'Shetland' TV series.

Sandwater was our next stop, to admire the flora of a calcium-rich flush, including beautiful Early Marsh Orchids, odd-looking Marsh Arrowgrass, and two insectivorous plants: Butterwort and Round-leaved Sundew. Shetland's complex geology means that habitats can change completely in just a few kilometres, and this loch, sitting over a limestone area but with peat hills surrounding it, is typical. A pair of Ringed Plovers led their gangly, two-day old chicks away along the sandy beach.

After passing through the Lang Kames, we checked the famous 'permanent moth-trap' of Voe toilets for moths, but only found a crane-fly species. Outside the toilets, Pignut was growing in the grass, and a Northern White-tailed Bumblebee defied the cold wind to search for nectar.

Lunch was obtained at Brae Co-Op and consumed at Mavis Grind, where the Atlantic Ocean almost meets the North Sea. We were accompanied by a persistent and hungry Common Gull, which finally flew off over the nearby fjord after being offered a crust of bread. Even in the picnic area, the plant-hunting continued, and some fine Heath Spotted Orchids, Changing Forget-me-not, Wild Thyme and Crested Dog's-tail grass were closely examined. After lunch we continued, failed to see any famous faces at the house being filmed for the 'Shetland' TV series as we passed, then dropped in at Hillswick Hall for a traditional Shetland Sunday tea. Regretting having just finished our lunch, we couldn't quite do it justice, but a brave effort saw coffee, tea and home-baked goods consumed before we finally completed our push north, and reached Eshaness Lighthouse to have a blustery walk past Calders Geo. Along the cliffs, we enjoyed the dramatic volcanic scenery, and examined the cliffs for evidence of ancient lava flows. A recently fledged family of Ravens kept up a constant throaty chatter in the echoing geo, accompanied by cackling of many nesting Fulmars.

At nearby Stenness, we watched a mother and very young pup Harbour Seal swimming along the shore, and then Peter spotted an Otter coming ashore to eat a crab. After devouring the crab, it headed off to hunt again, and we soon lost sight of it. An Oysterplant on the adjacent beach was in full flower, protected from the grazing sheep by a small cage. The fleshy blue-green leaves and pinky-blue flowers of this unusual plant were in superb condition. Many immature specimens avoided ovine attention by growing between pebbles and rocks. With more protection, this area could be a mass of Oysterplants, but mature specimens are scarce at present.

A stop at Hillswick allowed us another sighting of an Otter, feeding on Butterfish in the bay, and then it was time to head back south to the Sumburgh Hotel and dinner, before the log and bed, after a varied and exciting day.

Day 4

Monday 15th June

We first took advantage of the tide and headed to the Pool of Virkie to look for waders. A flock of Bar-tailed Godwits appeared to be departing the site as we arrived, but turned around and dropped back in, allowing all to have a good look at them through the telescope. They were accompanied by some Curlews, which provided some comparison of size and colour. We also saw some dapper breeding-plumaged Dunlins with chestnut backs and black belly patches, some Turnstones with brick-orange upperparts, and a few Ringed Plovers. Several Shelducks were feeding around the edge of the pool on the rising tide, and we also logged a distant Red-breasted Merganser and a female Eider with a small brood. Arctic Terns fed, plunge-diving or dipping down to the water surface, and Black-headed Gull tried their own, more robust, versions of the same manoeuvres.

We doubled back to Grutness, where another Common Eider with a very young brood was battling her way out from the beach through the shoreline waves. Up at Sumburgh Head, we got close-up views of Kittiwakes, Fulmars, Razorbills and Common Guillemots, all on nests or loitering on the ledges. Puffins delighted the group, strutting around with bundles of vegetation before disappearing down their nesting burrows, or just standing about among clumps of Sea Pink and Sea Campion in full flower. All the time, auks were whirring by, coming in or out of the colonies, or passing north or south along the coast. The old stone dykes up around the lighthouse were festooned with *Cladonia* lichen and Scots Lovage. Sea Plantain and more clumps of Sea Pink grew at the base, and sometimes out of the walls themselves. After the great views of Puffins, refreshments were called for and the visitor centre café provided just what was required, plus stupendous views.

Making our way back down from the lighthouse, we stopped to watch a pair of Twites feeding on the coastal turf. Their pale bills distinguishing them from Linnets, while the male of the pair showed off its rosy-red rump. We climbed into the minibus once again and headed off to the historic monument of Jarlshof. We took a quick tour through the five thousand years of history laid out at this one amazing site. The changes in complexity, size and shape of housing construction through the millennia was obvious. Brains fed, it was time to get lunch, and a quick stop at the nearby minimarket allowed us to stock up. From there we went on to Loch of Spiggie, where we ate lunch and watched Arctic Terns and Sand Martins swoop around, as a small hatch of mayflies was underway.

A short walk after lunch on the beautiful beach at Scousburgh Sands gave us the chance to view one of Shetland's few Sand Martin colonies. Two nearly-fledged chicks peeked hungrily out of one of the nest holes, while offshore Black Guillemot, Great Northern Diver and Eiders were seen. A Grey Seal bobbed unconcerned some way out, while a Common Tern was hunting closer in, and it or another was back at the Loch of Spiggie hide, allowing a close comparison of the species with Arctic Tern. The bill colour and significant leg-length differences were

obvious. Further round the Loch, we watched a flock of Great Skuas bathing, saw a brood of Whooper Swans with their parents, and also found Teals and Mallards with broods of youngsters. The surrounding fields had just been cut for silage, and Oystercatchers, Curlews and Lesser Black-backed Gulls poked around for tasty tidbits in the short sward. In the next field, the silage was still being wrapped, and a swirling flock of gulls followed the baler: we found Black-headed, Common, Herring and Lesser Black-backed Gulls here. We managed to pick out a first summer Mediterranean Gull among them, which is still quite a rare bird in Shetland. Unfortunately, it didn't stay in view long, but everyone got to see it. The ability to see the other gulls side-by-side and in different plumages was very helpful for those trying to get to grips with this tricky, and often overlooked, group. Back on the road and overlooking Rerwick Beach, we had a bird's-eye view of two Harbour Seals hauled out on the sand.

Finally, we made our way up to St Ninian's Beach for a walk across the world-famous and somewhat iconic tomobolo. At the Chapel, we admired the luck of a young Shetland schoolboy who had uncovered a treasure hoard there, before retracing our steps back across the sand, through the strandline of pink flowered Sea Rocket and the dunes covered in Marram, pausing to get close-up with a ginger, black and yellow Shetland Bumblebee. The sun came out to show the tombolo at its best: a golden band stretched between mainland and island. There was just time for a few photos before we returned to the hotel for dinner. We completed the log over dinner, as we were heading out again that evening.

Three of the group decided not to go on the late-night trip to Mousa to see Storm Petrels, but the five who did enjoyed terrific views of the tiny seabirds returning to their nesting sites in the walls of the Iron Age broch. On what was a near perfect night for the trip, we were entertained by Rodney Smith on the way to the broch with tales of the island and its history. Many petrels were singing their purring, hiccupping song within the walls, and whizzing around us at head height. From the top of the tower, many birds could be seen flying over the boulder beach below through the thermal scope. As the night reached its darkest (or rather least light) phase after midnight, birds fluttered against the broch walls, seeking the cavities where their mates, calling within the dark chamber, awaited their return. We watched several birds at just a metre or so range landing on the side of the broch and squeezing into nest holes to take over incubation duties. In this light, the plumage looked all black apart from the striking white rump patch. Overhead, Snipes were drumming in the Shetland 'simmer dim'. It was a fabulous visual and aural experience all round. The sky was mostly overcast, which was perfect for the petrels to venture back to the island, but to the north, a thin slice of open sky showed the light from the sun just below the horizon: even walking back to the Mousa ferry at 1.00am, there was no need for a torch. We were back at the hotel before 2.00am.

Day 5

Tuesday 16th June

A slightly later breakfast time allowed us to get packed and to check out without rush, before journeying north to Lerwick, to rendezvous with our rescheduled boat trip around the Isle of Noss, one of Shetland's two National Nature Reserves. On the way, we paid a very quick visit to the flower-rich Aith Meadows, where the more traditionally managed hay meadows displayed abundant Common Spotted Orchids, Ragged Robin and Marsh Marigold. Snipes were drumming and chipping, and Redshanks surveyed us nervously from fenceposts, their chicks hidden in the tall grasses and sedges.

With only light winds and blue skies the boat trip to Noss promised to be a real highlight of the holiday. Once kitted out in lifejackets and aboard Shetland Seabird Tours' Ayda Ruby II, we got close-up views of some of Shetland's special seabirds. The first was a Great Skua (or Bonxie), which quickly homed in on the boat to obtain

a free meal of Herring, only to have the first one stolen from it by a Great Black-backed Gull. Next, we slowly trickled past small groups of Puffins and Common Guillemots resting on the water close to the cliffs of Bressay, while Phil the skipper described the birds, their behaviour, and the recent fate of the local populations. We sailed into spectacular caves with Shags and Kittiwakes eyeing us from nesting ledges, then under rock arches and alongside intricately erosion-carved cliffs, providing nest sites for many Razorbills. We were all leaning back and looking up to take in the majestic height of the south coast of Bressay. It was a fabulous sight, and we hadn't even reached the Isle of Noss yet!

We cut across the bay on the south side of Noss and reached the seabird colony on the eastern cliffs. Thousands of Common Guillemots, Gannets and Fulmars filled ledges of the cliffs, from the top down to nearly sea-level. Everywhere there was action: Puffins wheeled overhead, while other birds flew past us, heading out to their feeding grounds. Pairs of Gannets greeted each other with bill-clashing displays, and the noise of the seabirds filled the air. Pulling away from the Noup of Noss, Phil deployed his fish chute, and the Gannet flock followed us, wheeled around, then plunged in beside the boat to retrieve the submerged fish. Great Skuas lurked, trying to steal fish, but it was the Gannets which came away with most. Through the crystal-clear water, we could see the birds streaking down, leaving a stream of bubbles after diving in from height, then 'flying' underwater to reach the fish, before bobbing to the surface with the prize. A few gulps, and the whole Herring was gone. We swung out south of Bressay on the return journey, hoping to spot some cetaceans but, despite the calm seas, we had no luck.

Lunch was taken just north of Lerwick beside Tingwall Loch, where we noted Tufted Ducks, Redshanks and Greylag Geese again. As we botanised around our picnic spot, we discovered three hoverflies, *Rhingia campestris* (Common Snout Hoverfly), *Eristalis intricaria* (Furry Drone Fly) and *Episyrphus balteatus* (Marmalade Hoverfly). Just as we packed up, a click beetle (*Athous subfuscus*) was found: much to the delight the group, it clicked and jumped in the hand, before we replaced it in the vegetation. A short journey to Girlsta followed, during which a female Sparrowhawk was seen. At Girlsta we searched for Red Grouse and Mountain Hare, finding two of the latter and enjoying close and prolonged views of the animals in their summer brown coats. On the blanket bog, many flowers of Heath Milkwort, Common Butterwort and Tormential were noted, plus a Marsh Lousewort and a few Round-leaved Sundews, yet to flower.

We took a short detour to admire Shetland's single remaining native Hazel tree, and scanned South Nesting Bay for cetaceans: we found a Minke Whale, which circled a about, presumably feeding on a fish shoal.

Once on Yell, we dropped in on Mid Yell and added Redpoll and Willow Warbler to our bird list. As we arrived on Unst, news broke of a pod of Orcas offshore from Hermaness, but they had moved away before we had a chance to go a look for them. After settling in at our cabins, we took a walk along the shore at Baltasound. Eiders and Black Guillemots bobbed on the slightly choppy sea, and a Grey Heron fed in the shallows, but we didn't find any new bird species. Meadow Vetchling was just starting to flower along the roadside, along with an eyebright species with tiny, white flowers. As the sky started to cloud over and the wind picked up, we turned in for the night.

Day 6

Wednesday 17th June

The morning started a bit blustery with steady rain, so we had no early walk. We headed off after breakfast to Uyeasound, where we saw a brood of Mute Swans, comprising three pale 'Polish' cygnets and a standard one. A

Red-breasted Merganser was on the loch near Belmont ferry terminal. We caught the ferry over to Fetlar, and hopes were high that we might see Red-necked Phalaropes. Fetlar is a great island for breeding waders, and just from the ferry terminal to Houbie Mires we saw multiple Lapwings, Redshanks, Curlews and Oystercatchers with young. The wind and rain only increased as we scanned Houbie Mires from the minibus. Lapwings and Snipes sheltered from the weather behind tussocks of sedge and horsetail, and presumably the Red-necked Phalarope were doing something similar, as none was on show. Finally, a Red-necked Phalarope was spotted swimming across the open water, and most people got a brief view before it flew back into cover. It was a female with bright red neck sides: it was a delight to see, but we hoped for better views later.

We retreated to the Fetlar Shop and Café to build up strength for the afternoon, and waited for the rain to ease, which it was forecast to do. The wind had dropped by the time we reemerged, although the rain was still falling steadily. We went back to Houbie Mires, and soon a lovely, bright-plumaged female Red-necked Phalarope appeared, and then a second. These two chased each other about the pools, swimming with characteristic rapid and jerky movements. They pecked at emergent stems with their needle-like bills to catch chironomid flies, and even chased a few down in flight. A third bird was also seen briefly. This species which shows sexual role reversal, and the males were probably all incubating or brooding young in the emergent vegetation.

Satisfied with these views, we ventured up to the airstrip to look for Whimbrels on the serpentine heath. We quickly saw one or two, but they soon disappeared into the mist and drizzle. A migrant Spotted Flycatcher was feeding around the old buildings by the airport, and a Golden Plover called on the moorland. Its golden-spangled back and jet-black belly were clearly seen, despite the reduced visibility. A short walk in the lessening rain gave us better views of both Whimbrel and Golden Plover before, in increasingly bright conditions, we drove down towards Funzie. Just before the Loch of Funzie a pair of Red-necked Phalaropes were seen on a small loch, but the presence of a Red-throated Diver meant we did not linger or approach closely. At Funzie Bay, we took a quick look at the Funzie metaconglomerate. These rocks include stretched pebbles, formed by ancient earth movements that deformed the once round pebbles into ovals some ten times their original length.

As we returned to the ferry, we had close views of a Red-throated Diver by the roadside, where its wine-red throat, grey pin-striped nape and upturned chisel bill could be seen. The same pair of Red-necked Phalaropes we had seen on the way down had relocated to a small pool just beside the road, and we were easily able to determine the sex of each bird.

The ferry ride back across Bluemull was calmer, and many Common and Black Guillemots, and a few Gannets and Puffins were seen. A Harbour Porpoise put in a brief appearance off the side of the ferry but we were past it too quick for all to see it. Once back on Unst, we drove through Uyeasound and on to Munness. Two Ruffs, one with a full black ruff and ginger ear tufts, were displaying on a pool by the road. This area also held many other waders, a Greylag Goose flock with many goslings, and a brood of Teals. At Munness, we enjoyed a brief tour of the sixteenth-century castle before returning to the hotel to prepare for dinner. On the drive back, a Merlin dashed across the road in front of the minibus, and on the Baltasound Houb we saw two Turnstones, a Grey Heron and a small group of Eiders.

Day 7

Thursday 18th June

An early morning walk around the voe at Baltasound turned up Red Admiral and *Eristalis tenax* (Common Drone Fly), plus Sea Arrowgrass and a large-flowered eyebright. A Grey Heron was near Baltasound marina again, and a small group of Eiders fed in the voe. Redshanks and Lapwings loudly protested at our presence, warning their chicks to stay in cover. In Halligarth Wood a Chiffchaff was singing, as were a Shetland Wren and a Blackbird.

We first went to the Keen of Hamar. The expanse of serpentine debris immediately alerted us to the fact that we were somewhere special: we spent a couple of hours marvelling at the array of plants growing on this otherworldly landscape. Now familiar species, such as Kidney Vetch and Heath Milkwort, appeared strangely-coloured and distorted, while abundant Mountain Everlasting, cushions of Moss Campion and scattered individuals of Northern Rock-cress and Norwegian Sandwort were all new for the trip. The star of the show was undoubtedly Arctic (Edmonston's) Chickweed. We found many examples of this spectacular little plant in full flower across a wide area of the Keen. Below us, a Whimbrel called, and in the field beside the Keen we found Golden and Ringed Plovers. A few Twites flew over as we bent or knelt looking at the flora. Two Painted Ladies and two Red Admirals flew by, presumably pushed this far north on the gentle southerly winds.

Our next port of call was Hermaness National Nature Reserve. Walking across the blanket bog on the plastic boardwalk, we encountered common species such as Golden Plover, Dunlin and Skylark. Great Skuas have been hugely reduced in numbers here since the bird flu outbreak a few years ago, but we still saw several and had some very close to the boardwalk, which allowed us to see plumage details and their hooked bills close to. Snipes drummed above us as we headed toward the Gannet colony at Saito. The spectacular sight, sound and smell that greeted us as we crested the last rise was memorable. Below us, a swirling mass of Gannets wheeled over the blue sea, while the cliffs were covered with the white dots of ten thousand or so nesting birds. Close to the top, small clubs of non-breeding birds and a few that were nesting were easy to study closely through our binoculars. Between them on the grassy slopes, a smaller number of Fulmars resided, while Puffins peered out from rocky crevices and cracks. On the sea below the Brigantine 'Lady of Avenel' lowered her sails and dropped anchor.

Despite scanning the horizon, we couldn't conjure up any cetaceans. On the return journey, we could see the Gannet colony on the stacks around Muckle Flugga, the northerly point of the UK, where an imposing lighthouse stands. Common Butterwort, Round-leaved Sundew, Crowberry and Bracken were noted, and we also found four fine specimens of the tiny Lesser Twayblade.

Lunch was taken at the Unst Viking Project's longhouse, and we also looked over the Skidbladner, the reconstructed longship that was built to sail from Sweden to America, but ended its journey in Shetland. A Quail sang from the meadows nearby, and a Sandwich Tern flew over Haroldswick Bay, calling harshly.

Our final stop for the day was at Norwick. A short walk up to Valye was accompanied by song from two Chiffchaffs, while in the crop fields Collared Doves and a trio of Tree Sparrows were seen. A quick look on Norwick Beach to admire the astonishing geology, where the oceanic and continental crusts meet, also meant we could add Shag, Kittiwake and Red-throated Diver to the day list.

An evening walk around Baltasound in light rain once again impressed us with the numbers of breeding waders and the diversity of blooming flowers along the roadside. As we returned along the side of Baltasound Voe, a Sea Trout jumped clear of the water, before dropping back in with a dramatic splash.

Day 8

Friday 19th June

Steady rain and fog in the morning cancelled the pre-breakfast walk. We left the hotel at 9.00am and travelled south slowly, stopping to see Dunlins and Eiders at the Baltasound Houb, then Golden and Ringed Plovers at the Lund turn. A few Razorbills, and Common and Black Guillemots were seen from the ferry across to Yell, and then we searched for a Rosy Starling reported recently in north Yell, but without success. Continuing south, we caught the ferry onto Mainland, and then searched the area of Sullom Voe north of Scatsta. Several female Eiders were present, with young broods feeding in the shallows, and a male Red-breasted Merganser, just starting the moult into eclipse plumage, swam offshore. We decided to try and find an Otter, and headed for Ollaberry. A trio of Red-throated Divers were watched interacting close inshore on a large loch as we passed by.

While searching the area, we stopped for lunch on the beach, as the rain had finally stopped. Arctic and Common Terns and a variety of gulls fed offshore. A dark-morph Arctic Skua cruised past, and then a short-lived feeding frenzy attracted Gannets, Shags, Razorbills and Common Guillemots. Nearby, two Harbour Seal bobbed in the choppy water, and an Grey Seal swam further out. A Red Admiral shot past in the brisk wind.

The next location to try was Hillswick, but we had no better luck with Otters there. Leaving Northmavine, we got news of a Honey Buzzard seen flying north nearby, but it eluded us. One final throw of the dice was to head to the Lunna Peninsula, where we saw plenty of Black and Common Guillemots, Razorbills and a few distant Puffins. Just as we were about to head back to Lerwick, an Otter was spotted, chomping on a Butterfish in a small bay. The sighting was brief and the animal soon slipped away, but at least we had achieved our aim and found one on our last day in Shetland.

All the guests were on board the Northlink ferry for departure when news broke of a pod of Orcas passing through Lerwick Harbour. Despite searching for them from the ferry, as it left Lerwick there was no sign. It would have been wonderful to have seen them, but no-one was overly disappointed. We had enjoyed a great week, with a vast array of special wildlife encounters experienced together.

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Species lists

Birds

Common name	Scientific name	June 2026							
		12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19
Greylag Goose	<i>Anser anser</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Mute Swan	<i>Cygnus olor</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Whooper Swan	<i>Cygnus cygnus</i>			✓	✓	✓			
Common Shelduck	<i>Tadorna tadorna</i>				✓				
Mandarin Duck	<i>Aix galericulata</i>			✓					
Eurasian Wigeon	<i>Mareca penelope</i>		✓						
Mallard	<i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>			✓	✓		✓	✓	✓
Eurasian Teal	<i>Anas crecca</i>				✓		✓		
Ring-necked Duck	<i>Aythya collaris</i>			✓					
Tufted Duck	<i>Aythya fuligula</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓			✓
Common Eider	<i>Somateria mollissima</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓
Goosander	<i>Mergus merganser</i>	✓	✓						
Red-breasted Merganser	<i>Mergus serrator</i>			✓	✓		✓	✓	✓
Common Quail	<i>Coturnix coturnix</i>			✓				✓	
Rock Dove	<i>Columba livia</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Common Wood Pigeon	<i>Columba palumbus</i>		✓	✓			✓	✓	
Eurasian Collared Dove	<i>Streptopelia decaocto</i>							✓	
Common Moorhen	<i>Gallinula chloropus</i>				✓				
Great Crested Grebe	<i>Podiceps cristatus</i>		✓						
Eurasian Oystercatcher	<i>Haematopus ostralegus</i>			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
European Golden Plover	<i>Pluvialis apricaria</i>						✓	✓	✓
Common Ringed Plover	<i>Charadrius hiaticula</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Northern Lapwing	<i>Vanellus vanellus</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Eurasian Whimbrel	<i>Numenius phaeopus</i>						✓	✓	
Eurasian Curlew	<i>Numenius arquata</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Bar-tailed Godwit	<i>Limosa lapponica</i>				✓				
Common Snipe	<i>Gallinago gallinago</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Red-necked Phalarope	<i>Phalaropus lobatus</i>						✓		
Common Redshank	<i>Tringa totanus</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Ruddy Turnstone	<i>Arenaria interpres</i>		✓		✓		✓		
Ruff	<i>Calidris pugnax</i>							✓	
Sanderling	<i>Calidris alba</i>		✓	✓					
Dunlin	<i>Calidris alpina</i>			✓	✓		✓	✓	✓
Arctic Tern	<i>Sterna paradisaea</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Common Tern	<i>Sterna hirundo</i>		✓	✓	✓		✓		✓
Sandwich Tern	<i>Thalasseus sandvicensis</i>							✓	
Black-legged Kittiwake	<i>Rissa tridactyla</i>		✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Black-headed Gull	<i>Chroicocephalus ridibundus</i>		✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓
Mediterranean Gull	<i>Ichthyaeetus melanocephalus</i>				✓				
Common Gull	<i>Larus canus</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
European Herring Gull	<i>Larus argentatus</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Great Black-backed Gull	<i>Larus marinus</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Lesser Black-backed Gull	<i>Larus fuscus</i>		✓		✓	✓	✓		✓
Arctic Skua	<i>Stercorarius parasiticus</i>		✓		✓		✓		✓
Great Skua	<i>Stercorarius skua</i>				✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Atlantic Puffin	<i>Fratercula arctica</i>				✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

Common name	Scientific name	June 2026							
		12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19
Black Guillemot	<i>Cephus grylle</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Razorbill	<i>Alca torda</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Common Guillemot	<i>Uria aalge</i>	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Red-throated Diver	<i>Gavia stellata</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Great Northern Diver	<i>Gavia immer</i>		✓	✓	✓				
White-billed Diver	<i>Gavia adamsii</i>		✓						
European Storm Petrel	<i>Hydrobates pelagicus</i>				✓	✓			
Northern Fulmar	<i>Fulmarus glacialis</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Northern Gannet	<i>Morus bassanus</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Great Cormorant	<i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>	✓		✓	✓				
European Shag	<i>Gulosus aristotelis</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Grey Heron	<i>Ardea cinerea</i>				✓		✓	✓	
Eurasian Sparrowhawk	<i>Accipiter nisus</i>					✓			
Merlin	<i>Falco columbarius</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>				✓	✓	✓		✓
Willow Warbler	<i>Phylloscopus trochilus</i>					✓			
Common Chiffchaff	<i>Phylloscopus collybita</i>		✓		✓			✓	
Greenish Warbler	<i>Phylloscopus trochiloides</i>		✓						
Eurasian Wren	<i>Troglodytes troglodytes</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓
Common Starling	<i>Sturnus vulgaris</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Common Blackbird	<i>Turdus merula</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Spotted Flycatcher	<i>Muscicapa striata</i>						✓		
Northern Wheatear	<i>Oenanthe oenanthe</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Eurasian Tree Sparrow	<i>Passer montanus</i>							✓	
House Sparrow	<i>Passer domesticus</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Pied Wagtail	<i>Motacilla alba yarrellii</i>		✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	
Meadow Pipit	<i>Anthus pratensis</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
European Rock Pipit	<i>Anthus petrosus</i>			✓	✓		✓	✓	✓
Twite	<i>Linaria flavirostris</i>				✓			✓	
Common Linnet	<i>Linaria cannabina</i>			✓					
Redpoll	<i>Acanthis flammea</i>					✓			

Mammals

Common name	Scientific name	June 2026							
		12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19
European Rabbit	<i>Oryctolagus cuniculus</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Mountain Hare	<i>Lepus timidus</i>					✓			
Brown Rat	<i>Rattus norvegicus</i>						✓		
Common Minke Whale	<i>Balaenoptera acutorostrata</i>					✓			
Common Bottlenose Dolphin	<i>Tursiops truncatus</i>	✓							
Harbour Porpoise	<i>Phocoena phocoena</i>						✓	✓	
Grey Seal	<i>Halichoerus grypus</i>		✓		✓	✓	✓		✓
Harbour Seal	<i>Phoca vitulina</i>			✓	✓		✓		✓
Eurasian Otter	<i>Lutra lutra</i>			✓					✓

Amphibians & reptiles

Common name	Scientific name	June 2026							
		12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19
Common Frog	<i>Rana temporaria</i>		✓						

Fishes

Common name	Scientific name	June 2026							
		12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19
Coalfish	<i>Pollachius virens</i>				✓				
Brown (Sea) Trout	<i>Salmo trutta morpha trutta</i>							✓	
Butterfish	<i>Pholis gunnellus</i>								✓

Butterflies

Common name	Scientific name	June 2026							
		12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19
Large White	<i>Pieris brassicae</i>		✓			✓		✓	
Painted Lady	<i>Vanessa cardui</i>							✓	
Red Admiral	<i>Vanessa atalanta</i>				✓		✓	✓	✓

Moths

Common name	Scientific name	June 2026							
		12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19
Straw Grass-veneer	<i>Agriphila straminella</i>			✓				✓	
Satyr Pug	<i>Eupithecia satyrata curzonii</i>							✓	
Silver Y	<i>Autographa gamma</i>		✓						

Other insects

Common name	Scientific name	June 2026							
		12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19
Blue-winged Olive Mayfly	<i>Serratella ignita</i>				✓				
Highland Midge	<i>Culicoides impunctatus</i>				✓		✓		
a crane-fly	<i>Tipula</i> sp.			✓					
Marmalade Hoverfly	<i>Episyrphus balteatus</i>						✓		
Common Snout	<i>Rhingia campestris</i>					✓			
Furry Drone Fly	<i>Eristalis intricaria</i>					✓			
Common Drone Fly	<i>Eristalis tenax</i>							✓	
Woodland Red Ant	<i>Myrmica ruginodis</i>							✓	
Northern White-tailed Bumblebee	<i>Bombus magnus</i>			✓	✓		✓	✓	✓
Shetland Bumblebee	<i>Bombus muscorum agricolae</i>				✓			✓	
a click beetle	<i>Athous subfuscus</i>					✓			

Gastropods

Common name	Scientific name	June 2026							
		12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19
Black Slug	<i>Arion ater</i>			✓					
Dusky Slug	<i>Arion (Mesarion) sp.</i>					✓	✓		
Copse Snail	<i>Arianta arbustorum</i>			✓					

Plants

Scientific name	Common name
<i>Blechnum spicant</i>	Hard Fern
<i>Pteridium aquilinum</i>	Bracken
<i>Dryopteris filix-mas</i>	Male Fern
<i>Equisetum fluviatile</i>	Water Horsetail
<i>Polypodium vulgare</i>	Common Polypody
<i>Picea sitchensis</i>	Sitka Spruce
<i>Carex rostrata</i>	Bottle Sedge
<i>Carex nigra</i>	Common Sedge
<i>Eleocharis palustris</i>	Common Spike-rush
<i>Eriophorum angustifolium</i>	Common Cottongrass
<i>Trichophorum cespitosum</i>	Deergrass
<i>Eriophorum vaginatum</i>	Hare's-tail Cottongrass
<i>Schoenoplectus tabernaemontani</i>	Soft-stemmed Club-rush
<i>Iris pseudacorus</i>	Yellow Iris
<i>Luzula campestris</i>	Field Woodrush
<i>Luzula sylvatica</i>	Great Woodrush
<i>Juncus effusus</i>	Soft Rush
<i>Juncus bufonius</i>	Toad Rush
<i>Triglochin palustris</i>	Marsh Arrowgrass
<i>Triglochin maritima</i>	Sea Arrowgrass
<i>Hyacinthoides non-scripta</i>	Bluebell
<i>Scilla verna</i>	Spring Squill
<i>Dactylorhiza fuchsii</i>	Common Spotted-orchid
<i>Dactylorhiza incarnata</i>	Early Marsh-orchid
<i>Dactylorhiza viridis</i>	Frog Orchid
<i>Neottia cordata</i>	Heartleaf Twayblade
<i>Dactylorhiza maculata</i>	Heath Spotted-orchid
<i>Dactylorhiza purpurella</i>	Northern Marsh-orchid
<i>Dactylis glomerata</i>	Cock's-foot
<i>Cynosurus cristatus</i>	Crested Dog's-tail
<i>Lolium perenne</i>	Perennial Ryegrass
<i>Festuca rubra</i>	Red Fescue
<i>Phalaris arundinacea</i>	Reed Canary-grass
<i>Anthoxanthum odoratum</i>	Sweet Vernal-grass
<i>Phleum pratense</i>	Timothy
<i>Holcus lanatus</i>	Yorkshire-fog
<i>Potamogeton polygonifolius</i>	Bog Pondweed
<i>Anthriscus sylvestris</i>	Cow Parsley
<i>Aegopodium podagraria</i>	Ground-elder
<i>Heracleum sphondylium</i>	Hogweed

Scientific name	Common name
<i>Hydrocotyle vulgaris</i>	Marsh Pennywort
<i>Conopodium majus</i>	Pignut
<i>Ligusticum scoticum</i>	Scots Lovage
<i>Hypochaeris radicata</i>	Common Cat's-ear
<i>Senecio vulgaris</i>	Common Groundsel
<i>Cirsium arvense</i>	Creeping Thistle
<i>Bellis perennis</i>	Daisy
<i>Taraxacum officinale</i> agg.	Dandelion
<i>Antennaria dioica</i>	Mountain Everlasting
<i>Sonchus arvensis</i>	Perennial Sow-thistle
<i>Tripleurospermum maritimum</i>	Sea Mayweed
<i>Cirsium vulgare</i>	Spear Thistle
<i>Achillea millefolium</i>	Yarrow
<i>Corylus avellana</i>	Hazel
<i>Myosotis discolor</i>	Changing Forget-me-not
<i>Symphytum officinale</i>	Common Comfrey
<i>Mertensia maritima</i>	Oysterplant
<i>Myosotis scorpioides</i>	Water Forget-me-not
<i>Cochlearia officinalis</i>	Common Scurvygrass
<i>Cardamine pratensis</i>	Cuckooflower
<i>Cakile maritima</i>	Sea Rocket
<i>Cerastium nigrescens</i> var. <i>nigrescens</i>	Arctic (Edmonston's) Mouse-ear
<i>Arenaria norvegica</i>	Arctic Sandwort
<i>Stellaria media</i>	Common Chickweed
<i>Silene acaulis</i>	Moss Campion
<i>Silene flos-cuculi</i>	Ragged-Robin
<i>Silene dioica</i>	Red Campion
<i>Silene uniflora</i>	Sea Campion
<i>Honckenya peploides</i>	Sea Sandwort
<i>Chenopodium album</i>	Fat-hen
<i>Atriplex prostrata</i>	Hastate Orache
<i>Drosera rotundifolia</i>	Round-leaved Sundew
<i>Calluna vulgaris</i>	Heather
<i>Medicago lupulina</i>	Black Medick
<i>Lotus corniculatus</i>	Common Bird's-foot-trefoil
<i>Anthyllis vulneraria</i>	Kidney Vetch
<i>Lupinus</i> sp.	Lupin
<i>Lathyrus pratensis</i>	Meadow Vetchling
<i>Trifolium pratense</i>	Red Clover
<i>Vicia cracca</i>	Tufted Vetch
<i>Trifolium repens</i>	White Clover
<i>Geranium robertianum</i>	Herb-Robert
<i>Thymus praecox</i>	Wild Thyme
<i>Pinguicula vulgaris</i>	Common Butterwort
<i>Menyanthes trifoliata</i>	Bogbean
<i>Nymphaea candida</i>	White Water-lily
<i>Fuchsia magellanica</i>	Hardy Fuchsia
<i>Plantago coronopus</i>	Buck's-horn Plantain
<i>Euphrasia nemorosa</i>	Common Eyebright
<i>Euphrasia</i> sp.	Eyebright
<i>Digitalis purpurea</i>	Foxglove

Scientific name	Common name
<i>Pedicularis sylvatica</i>	Lousewort
<i>Pedicularis palustris</i>	Marsh Lousewort
<i>Mimulus guttatus</i>	Monkeyflower
<i>Plantago lanceolata</i>	Ribwort Plantain
<i>Plantago maritima</i>	Sea Plantain
<i>Veronica serpyllifolia</i>	Thyme-leaved Speedwell
<i>Rhinanthus minor</i>	Yellow-rattle
<i>Hippuris vulgaris</i>	Mare's-tail
<i>Papaver cambricum</i>	Welsh Poppy
<i>Armeria maritima</i>	Thrift (Sea Pink)
<i>Polygala serpyllifolia</i>	Heath Milkwort
<i>Rumex obtusifolius</i>	Broad-leaved Dock
<i>Rumex acetosa</i>	Common Sorrel
<i>Rumex crispus</i>	Curled Dock
<i>Reynoutria japonica</i>	Japanese Knotweed
<i>Claytonia sibirica</i>	Pink Purslane
<i>Ranunculus repens</i>	Creeping Buttercup
<i>Caltha palustris</i>	Marsh-marigold
<i>Ranunculus acris</i>	Meadow Buttercup
<i>Rosa afzeliana</i>	Dog-rose
<i>Salix aurita</i>	Eared Willow
<i>Rosa rugosa</i>	Japanese Rose
<i>Alchemilla sp.</i>	Lady's-mantle
<i>Filipendula ulmaria</i>	Meadowsweet
<i>Sorbus aucuparia</i>	Rowan
<i>Potentilla anserina</i>	Silverweed
<i>Potentilla erecta</i>	Tormentil
<i>Galium aparine</i>	Cleavers
<i>Galium saxatile</i>	Heath Bedstraw
<i>Galium verum</i>	Lady's Bedstraw
<i>Acer pseudoplatanus</i>	Sycamore
<i>Urtica dioica</i>	Common Nettle
<i>Viola riviniana</i>	Common Dog-violet