

# Orkney

## Naturetrek Tour Report

23rd – 27th May 2021

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Whooper Swan



Great Northern Diver



Curlew Sandpiper



Black-tailed Godwit

Tour report by Stewart Woolley & images by John Chapman



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Tour Participants - Stewart Woolley and Alison Steele (Leaders) with seven Naturetrek clients.

## Day 1

**Sunday 23rd May**

Hopefully someone has packed a can of WD40, to spray this oh so rusty leader! Just about two years have passed since I last led this very tour and at more than one point over the past year or so I genuinely thought I may never lead a tour again, but here we are, Orkney 2021, and seriously champing at the bit to get going!

With varying arrival times for group members, those of us in Kirkwall at our afternoon meeting time soon set off for our first Orcadian wanderings. We ventured just a few miles out of Kirkwall to the Head of Work, a promontory to the North of the town. As we passed the grazing pastures either side of the road, a small number of Oystercatcher and a few Skylark were noted. Parking up, we looked out across the Bay of Carness towards the large salmon cages, where several hundred Common Eider were both feeding and resting on the flotation rings. Heading out towards the point on foot, the bubbling, evocative calls of Curlew and the frantic alarm tones of Oystercatcher were soon heard.

Ahead of us at this point lies the island of Shapinsay, with the imposing nineteenth century Balfour Castle prominent. The deep water entrance channel to Kirkwall Bay called "The String" gave us our first seabirds of the week, with a handful of Shag, one or two Common Guillemot, and a small number of Arctic terns. A single Black Guillemot, locally known as "Tystie" (likely Norse) was seen mid-channel and the menacing shape of a Great Black-backed Gull cruised past on patrol looking for a meal. From out of nowhere, our first Great Skua appeared, such a powerful, deep chested and menacing bird, no doubt an un-nerving sight for would be victims! As we carried on, lots of Meadow Pipits gave good close views and a few Rock Pipits called from the jagged shoreline just below us, a good opportunity to compare these two similar species. Norther Fulmar are everywhere on Orkney, and never fail to impress as the first of our trip effortlessly cruised by on stiff wings; ungainly on land, but absolute masters of the air.

The rocky, weed filled pools along the shoreline gave us a few Turnstone, in stunning summer plumage, a mix of tortoiseshell tones and white, with bright orange legs, often overlooked, but staggeringly beautiful at this time of year. A slight surprise in this habitat, a Common Sandpiper eventually showed well enough for all to see and yet more Rock Pipits alarm called, telling us to move on as they likely had nests nearby. As we ventured a little further on, a cracking dark phased Arctic Skua powered in from the sea and settled on the heather moorland just to our right, and was later joined by a second. These elegant birds with their slender, athletic form are the bane of the local Arctic Terns, but luckily for them, seemed happy enough to just sit and keep an eye on us as we strolled by!

Although we had already seen many Eider, several birds flew by, and group members were impressed with the speed they passed, one of the fastest of all birds in level flight, speeds of nearly sixty mph having been recorded.

As we had some decent, if not very warm weather, we took a few minutes to just sit and see what went by, we were able to watch the social goings on of three Fulmar as they "chatted" to each other about who knows what from the low grass covered stack just in front of us.

Keeping an eye on the time, as it seems to have a habit of disappearing fast here, we turned and slowly headed back to the minibus. "Our" Common Sandpiper gave better views and Alison picked up on a Grey Seal, close inshore, heading purposefully seawards.

A few more Great Skuas, or “Bonxies” passed by overhead and a very inquisitive Meadow Pipit held station right next to us like some kind of radio controlled drone!, a little odd, but it must have known what it was doing!

The Northern spring has so far been one of both extreme wet and dry, but always cold, and this showed by the lack of flowering plants at this usually productive site; a little early maybe, but we did manage to locate a few Common Butterwort, one of our insectivorous species and plenty of silverweed hugged the ground.

With a couple of hours gone, and the promise of a hearty meal ahead we made our way gradually back towards the hotel, detouring around Wideford Hill in the hope of a harrier or Short-eared Owl, alas none today, but plenty of Brown Hares were seen in roadside fields before arriving back in Kirkwall.

So very glad to be “back in the saddle”, we looked forward to our first full day tomorrow, and hopefully some better weather than the forecast would suggest!!

## Day 2

## Monday 24th May

Sadly for us, the weather forecasters got it spot on today! The early risers were greeted with steady drizzle that morphed into steady rain! I suspect that we each were quietly hoping that nobody else would be up for the pre-breakfast jaunt and that we could go back to bed for an hour, but hardy as we are, off we set along the north shore of Scapa Flow as far as the Loch of Korbister, where we turned north and headed through some great habitat of largely unimproved farmland and rough grass, ideal for the endemic Orkney Vole, and hopefully Short-eared Owl, although today's conditions might have something to say about that!

Loch of Korbister gave us plenty of Greylags, Great Black-backed Gull, a few Tufted Duck, a single Red-breasted Merganser and Common Sandpiper that called out of sight from deep cover. The roadside fields held plenty of Curlew, a joy to see and hear in good numbers, a sadly rare phenomenon in many other parts of the U.K. Reaching Finstown we slowly headed back towards Kirkwall passing along the southern shore of the Bay of Firth and were accompanied by one or two Northern Fulmar as they patrolled the low cliff at the roadside, such masters of flight, and who nest in some very unlikely looking spots here on Orkney!

Back in Kirkwall, we had a quick look at the Peedie (Small) Sea, a fresh water lagoon in Kirkwall town centre, reckoned to be the best place to see Long-tailed Duck in winter. Today it held a handful of Tufted Duck and a very dapper looking drake Common Goldeneye.

After breakfast we all set off, once again up to Finstown, and then west toward Stenness and Stromness, Plenty of Brown Hare were noted in roadside fields, along with Oystercatcher and Curlew in good numbers too. A quick stop at the Bridge of Waith, which connects the Loch of Stenness to the sea produced an inquisitive Common Seal, Red-breasted Merganser and a couple of Common Eider.

Our first destination of the day was the cliffs at Yesnaby on the western side of Mainland Orkney. The narrow approach road held a pair of Linnet, calling Sedge Warbler, a Snipe that disappeared at high speed, a few Lapwing and a big surprise in the foul conditions that we now had, a stunning Short-eared Owl, that gave great views as it took off from roadside vegetation as we neared the parking area. Remnants of wartime activities are everywhere on Orkney, and Yesnaby was home to a large anti-aircraft battery built during the last war to help protect the northern entrance to Scapa Flow. As we parked amongst the ruins we braced ourselves for what the weather was about to throw at us! All day!! Walking a little to the south a female Wheatear flashed her white rump and tail as she fed at the pathside.

Our first two of many Great Skuas purposefully patrolled along the jagged red sandstone clifftop and a single Great Black-backed Gull did the same, both no doubt looking for an easy meal! Our main aim here was not to get soaked for nothing, and probably appearing a little mad to any locals, we shuffled along looking at the ground!! (as the sky was certainly not worth looking at today!) and were rewarded with our first views of the diminutive but gorgeous *Primula scottica*, or the Scottish Primrose, standing just a couple of inches tall with up to five pinkish-purple flower heads, each measuring no more than 10 mm across, a rare opportunity to see this coastal specialist that grows here and in a few small areas along the Caithness coast.

As covid regulations mean that many of the larger historical sites now have to be pre-booked, we soon headed just a few miles to the north to Skaill Bay and the world famous Neolithic settlement at Skara Brae. Here we were able to gain a little understanding of life on Orkney 3,100 years BC - evidence would suggest the inhabitants were probably more comfortable here than we were today, with the rain now almost beyond funny!! We went to have a look around the impressive, yet intimate Skaill House, built in the 1620's and to this day in the ownership of the same family. It was the home of William Graham Watt, who in 1850 discovered the ruins of Skara Brae after a great storm exposed the buildings. The house is full of artefacts and the rooms largely unchanged from its time as a family home. Skaill House was both very informative and a welcome temporary refuge, but we soon headed for the vehicles. Several Northern Ravens passed by, attracted by the relatively rich pickings of Skaill Bay and the surrounding sheep fields. As we had a little time to drip dry during our look around the house, we made for our lunch stop at the Loons RSPB hide nearby, which overlooks the extensive reedbed and marshes at the Loch of Isbister. As we sat with a welcome hot drink, Sedge Warblers called and flicked amongst the reeds, a Little Grebe picked sticklebacks from the surface, and both Moorhen and Mute Swan fed in front of us.

As is so often the case, if one just sits and waits, the birds will come, and we were soon rewarded with the very unusual sighting for Orkney of a female Marsh Harrier, which approached to within 50 m of the hide allowing the photographers in the group to get some excellent records. A drake Shoveler, Coot, more Greylags, a Mallard with young and a fly through Sparrowhawk all showed as we ate. Usually a great place for the botanists, the late spring was once again evident. The rafts of Bogbean were only just coming into flower, but the Marsh Marigolds were certainly brightening up a dull day! Tearing ourselves away from the relative comfort of the hide we trundled just a short distance to the sea to see if we could find any Black-tailed Godwits that breed here in very small numbers, and were pleased to find one stunning brick red bird foraging in a field very close to the road.

With no sign of the rain letting up we moved on and made for the heart of neolithic Orkney around Brodgar, passing the famed ring of Brodgar and the huge dig at the Ness, arriving at the Standing stones of Stennes, we found a pair of Goosander on Loch of Stennes and several Common Seals hauled out on rocks close by. Behind us were the huge stones, the tallest of which stands over 6m high, and were thought to have been erected to somehow mirror the surrounding landscape and were used for ceremonial purposes. We walked the thankfully short distance to the Barnhouse bird hide, overlooking the southern end of the Loch of Harray, and were greeted by a mass feeding flock of Swallows, Sand Martins and a couple of House Martins, finding just enough shelter from the wind behind a small copse of willow to find flying insects among the sheep. We stood for a few minutes and were able to study differences between individual birds. Some of the adult male Swallows had a striking reddish wash to the breast and obvious white tail spots, others were much whiter and looked noticeably smaller too.

The loch was relatively quiet with a small herd of Mute Swan in the bay, a Redshank flew in close and a Common Tern settled just in front allowing us to see some of the differences between it and the far more

numerous Arctics. The only other bird of note was a very out of place looking Australian Black Swan, which has been resident on the loch for several years now. Interestingly though, a few of its kind have been travelling to Iceland from the UK with our wintering Whooper Swans, which has allowed the study of the movement of Whoopers, as the birds seem loyal to certain groups.

With the day now wearing on, and the water soaked through to underlayers, we decided to have a slightly early finish and headed back to Kirkwall, arriving at 4pm. We had another quick look at the Peedie Sea, which hosted six Red-breasted Mergansers, the resident Tufties, an assortment of the commoner gulls for comparison, and proving that all birds are worth a second look, the six Mute Swans were actually five and a Whooper! With our day now done, I can honestly say that it was the worst day of weather I have experienced whilst tour leading, with heavy rain and strong wind all day, but we felt we had absolutely made the most of our day out and were pretty pleased with our findings. Parking the vehicles up, a Dunnock sang loud and proud from atop a bush which raised a smile from a very soggy face!

## Day 3

## Tuesday 25th May

Very gingerly peering out of the curtains, I was scared to see if the forecast for today was actually right, Yes! Dry, and with the promise of a gradually improving picture for the rest of the week we had the basis for a good day out!

Today was going to be a bit of an adventure. An early start for all saw us standing on the quayside in Kirkwall a little after 06:30am, waiting to board our ferry for the journey to the island of Westray, one of the Orkney northern isles, that lies around 20 miles from Kirkwall. One of our group, John took a short stroll to the harbour wall and found a smart Great Northern Diver sleeping just a hundred metres or so from us. This bird had retained its winter plumage but was great to see all the same.

Once aboard the “Earl Sigurd” named after one of the Norse earls of Orkney (960 -1014 and killed at the battle of Clontarff in Ireland) we made ourselves comfortable for 1hr 40minute trip north. Just pulling away from the quay, Stewart spotted a large shape in the water very close to the harbour wall, which Alison also got on to. It arched its back a few times and astonishingly turned out to be an adult, or near adult, Minke Whale. This very unusual sighting so close to town was reported to locals immediately and some were on site within 10 minutes but failed to re-locate it.

Heading north into Wide Firth we passed Shapinsay to starboard and the tiny skerries of Grass Holm and Taing, which held decent numbers of Common or Harbour Seals.

The hotel had provided us with breakfast bags for our early start and we soon tucked in to some pretty tasty lemon muffins as the first true sea birds of the day began to appear in small numbers, with a few Black Guillemots, and a couple of Razorbills seen. Two Red-throated Divers disappeared into the distance at high speed as we neared Muckle Green Holm.

The first of the northern isles soon came into view as we neared Eday on the starboard side, with Egilsay, Wyre and the much larger Rousay to port. Continually looking out to sea, our first Puffins appeared, with lots more of the commoner auks too, and a few Great Skuas with their deep broad, chests and powerful flight passed overhead. Another two Red-throated Divers drifted by and our first Gannets headed South. On approach to

Rapness at the far southern end of Westray we cruised slowly by the now uninhabited island of Faray and the smaller, Holm of Faray, where the quiet waters held surprising numbers of Black Guillemot.

Feeling pretty relaxed after our morning “mini cruise”, we set foot on Westray and drove a few miles north to the Loch of Swartmill. Here we soon picked up a few Common Ringed Plover feeding on the near shore and nine sleeping Bar-tailed Godwits on the far bank. A pair of Pintail were a surprise as was a spanking male Ruff, a reddish coloured bird in full summer plumage, that soon headed south and was apparently the first Ruff of this very late spring in the islands, so a nice find! Behind us, a drumming Snipe overhead was a sound not familiar to some of the group, so again, a welcome addition.

The tiny weed filled bay at Skelwick is always worth a look, and today came good! The rocks just off shore held at least 12 Purple Sandpipers and another sleeping wader that looked a little different. As it lifted its head to preen, it gave itself up as a smart, if not full summer-plumaged Curlew Sandpiper. The gorgeous, tortoiseshell patterned Turnstones below our position picked among the weed and a collection of gulls utilising a freshwater outlet from the loch looked worth a scan through, and we were delighted to find a second winter type Iceland Gull among the mixed Common and Herring Gulls. We’d had a pretty decent start to our Westray day, and with the conditions now very much looking settled and much brighter, we slowly made our way to Pierowall, the main village on the island to stock up with lunch items from the village store.

From here we tried a local spot for Corncrake, but birds reported had so far only been noted as “night callers”, so after a stroll to the Loch of Burness through likely looking areas, we settled for a single Whooper Swan, a few Tufted Duck, a singing Sedge Warbler and a Cuckoo that gave a very odd half call, so just a Cuck really!! We soon decided to move on and head towards Noup Head and its impressive cliffs. The road here soon becomes a little “off piste” but the scenery during the very slow trundle is staggering, with huge sea vistas to the north, and the rocky coastline of Aikerness and Papa Westray to the north-east. On approach to the lighthouse, a female Wheatear vanished out of site in the ruins of a wartime building, and a couple of Bonxies stood sentinel on the rough grassland. A Great Black-backed Gull sat tightly on its nest not far from the road, no doubt being watched over by its partner nearby. The lighthouse at Noup was built by David Stevenson in 1898 and was automated in 1964. It has a focal height, (lamp above sea level) of 79 metres and, since 2000, is solar powered.

Just below the lighthouse is a huge slab of rock that is exposed at low tides and on here at least thirty Atlantic Grey Seals were hauled out, with others being washed onto the rocks by the swell.

The rugged cliffs with many overhangs allows for great viewing of the “tenements” and the raucous goings on of a busy colony. Guillemots perched precariously in long rows on the narrowest of ledges, with plenty of bridled birds in their ranks, Razorbills filled some of the safer looking crevices and nooks, Kittiwakes almost seemed to double stack and made plenty of noise and several wild Rock Doves buzzed the cliffs. Now everyone loves a Puffin, and Noup head holds a reasonable number, so we had our fill of this charismatic seabird! The Gannets here are quite a success story. In 2003 the first five Gannet nests were found, having never been recorded breeding here before and it is estimated that there are now some 1,500 pairs using the cliffs at Noup, along with twenty thousand pairs of Kittiwake, and a similar number of Common Guillemot. The upper levels, the grassy tops, hold around 1,200 pairs of Northern Fulmar too. We stood and watched the comings and goings and the interactions between individuals, while other close observers of the colony were the Bonxies and Arctic Skuas that patrol the cliffs with regular sorties, always on the lookout for the weak, young and unprotected.

The local skuas were not the only ones needing to fill their bellies, and with great weather, we sat next to the lighthouse and enjoyed lunch, eventually tearing ourselves away from Noup before we got too comfortable!

The road to Noup passes the impressively built Noltland Castle. Constructed around 1560 by Gilbert Balfour, a member of the new Scottish aristocracy, he was heavily involved in political intrigue at the time and was widely regarded as “pretty unpopular”! The two metre thick walls and the 71 gun ports of the castle go somewhere to show just what a good egg Balfour was! He eventually fled to Sweden and continued his meddling there, ultimately paying the price by being executed for treason in 1576!

With an eye on the clock, we began to head back south towards the ferry, stopping once more at Swartmill, adding Gadwall, Shelduck, and lots of Arctic Terns, whose very short legs compared to a Common were obvious when standing on nearby rocks.

Our last destination on Westray was the castle of Burrian, a low grass covered sea stack just a few kilometres from Rapness. Here we took a short stroll along the secluded and very quiet cliff top, passing swathes of campions and thrift, with lots of Spring Squill adding a soft pale violet tone. Several pairs of Fulmar chatted amongst themselves as we sat overlooking the stack, and waited for the Puffins to come ashore. A little way out in the bay, a raft of about 80 Puffins preened before some returned to their burrows; great to see these birds untroubled by skuas or gulls. Rock Pipits were present here too, both contact calling and in full song flight as well.

The time seems to just vanish on Westray, with so much to see and birds everywhere, but there is only one ferry each way every day, and missing the boat home is not an option, so we made our way back along the path and arrived at Rapness in time for a coffee, and for the guys at Orkney Ferries to sort themselves out, those there will know what I mean!!! John once again went for a pre-departure stroll, and again found us a lovely, this time summer plumaged, Great Northern Diver just off the ferry slip. The trip home was largely quiet, with the briefest sighting of a Black-throated Diver being the only addition to our days tally. Arriving back in Kirkwall close to 7:30 pm we had certainly filled the day and were all well ready for dinner, and some sleep!!

## Day 4

## Wednesday 26th May

After our pretty long day in the field yesterday it was no great surprise that the turnout for our pre-breakfast wander this morning was low! So with just the two leaders, and Paul up front, we set off west, and made for Waulkmill bay, at the far end of the RSPB Hobbister reserve. With the tide in, we looked down over the clear waters of the bay, part of Scapa Flow and found a group of about a dozen Red-breasted Mergansers busily feeding, classically “snorkelling” before submerging en-masse. Several Shag were obviously taking advantage of the same food source, their “Jump-dive” distinctive from the sawbills. A little further across the bay, a heavier, more powerful looking bird gave itself up as a cracking summer plumaged Black-throated Diver, fairly unusual in these parts, and always a real treat to find - I’d struggle to think of a smarter looking bird, anywhere in the world!! (Maybe!)

A few pairs of Fulmar nest on the low cliff below the parking area, and a small group sat and preened on the sea as we reluctantly tore ourselves away, picking up a female Stonechat, Redpoll overhead and a Willow Warbler in roadside scrub before reaching the main road.

Turning North at Kirbister, we very quickly chanced upon a gorgeous Short-eared Owl quartering the rough grassland at Burnside Farm, this bird gave stunning close views, with its piercing yellow eyes burning holes in us! Disappearing out of view behind the farm buildings we moved slowly on, pleased with our find, and soon found ourselves yet again watching one of Orkney’s iconic species, as a male Hen Harrier dropped off the lower slopes



of South Ruskay and headed our way, and as with the owl, we had superb close views of this stunning bird, unbothered by our presence, which sadly, in other parts of the country, continues to be a trait that leaves them vulnerable to persecution. Happily though, here on Orkney, they thrive, free from the pressures of intensive moorland “management”.

The grasslands here also held good numbers of Brown Hare, with several Curlew also noted.

Moving on and into Finstown we managed to find both Green and Goldfinch. So what, one may ask, but these are by no means common on Orkney and a little effort or luck is usually required to find them! Also picked up as we passed through the village, a Collared Dove was on overhead wires - again, not as “omnipresent” as on the mainland. Taking a slightly unplanned detour (wrong turn!), we ended up at Heddle, where this carefully planned excursion gave very brief views of two Cuckoos, that did the classic pretending to be a small raptor trick as they disappeared rapidly out of sight. Retracing our steps and getting back on track, we kept an eye on the clock and made for Kirkwall using the minor road to the south of Wideford Hill. A little way along here Alison picked up on a bird quite some way off that turned into our second Short-eared Owl of the morning. It didn't linger, which was probably a good thing as we made it back just in time for breakfast, having enjoyed a thoroughly productive hour and a half out!

With a vastly improved weather picture compared to earlier in the week, we set off south after breakfast to explore a little of the “southern islands” that together form the eastern edge of Scapa flow. Our first stop was a quick look over the Loch of Ayre at St Mary's village, close to the southern tip of Mainland Orkney. This held several small groups of Red-breasted Merganser, a pair of Mute Swan with seven cygnets and a few Tufted Duck, whilst the reedy margins gave us Reed Bunting and a Sedge Warbler. A busy mixed flock of Sand Martin and Swallow hawked for insects over the loch as we moved on just a very short distance to Graemshall Loch, a couple of kilometres to the east of the village. As mentioned earlier, some species that hardly command a second look elsewhere in Britain are of note on Orkney and one of those is Coot. Although by no means rare, there are only a few sites that are almost (not totally!) guaranteed for this species, so the half dozen here were no surprise. The island held plenty of both Common and Black-headed Gulls, two Grey Herons, Moorhen and Oystercatcher, whilst the more secluded area of open water at the back of the loch gave us a smart Northern Shoveler or two.

From our vantage point overlooking the loch we were also able to look south over Kirk Sound, and the first of the “Churchill Barriers”. The night of the 14<sup>th</sup> October 1939 sticks vividly in the minds of the people of Orkney, and with Naval strategists and historians. Scapa Flow's importance to the war effort (both conflicts) cannot be overstated, as the sanctuary of a deep water, sheltered and very large anchorage this far north was pivotal to the protection of north Atlantic convoys. The Admiralty during the first world war realised that there was a degree of vulnerability to attack from the east, between the southern islands, so “block ships” were deployed, mostly old merchant ships, that were scuttled in the narrow channels to prevent raiders from entering the flow and this worked well enough.... until that night.

Quietly, and under the cover of darkness, the German master submariner, Gunther Prien, expertly guided U47 between the ships blocking Kirk Sound and slipped into the Flow. Just a few kilometres to the north, sitting peacefully at anchor, lay HMS Royal Oak, a Revenge class battleship of WW1 vintage, displacing nearly 30,000 tons. Such a large ship also meant a large crew, and the complement that night comprised of 1,234 men and boys, mostly asleep or on watch. Just after midnight the forward section of the ship was rocked by an explosion, the first of Prien's torpedos had struck the tip of the bow, severing the port anchor chain, another two missed

and the fourth stuck in its launch tube, frustrated by the “failure,” the sub re-loaded, turned, and ran in for a second attack, and sadly for 834 of the ships crew, all three torpedos of the second salvo struck home amidships, causing catastrophic damage, and just thirteen minutes after the first of these hit the ship, she rolled over and sank in 100 feet of water.

The sinking of the “Oak” was a huge hit to moral, and the newspaper headlines across the country struck home with the then First Lord of the Admiralty, Winston Churchill. He ordered that something needed to be done, as the blockships clearly were ineffective, so in May 1940, Balfour Beatty began the construction of the Churchill barriers, using local, British and Irish workers and from 1942, prisoners of war were added to the labour pool. The scale of the operation was impressive, even by today's standards, some 580,000 tons of rock were quarried, 333,000 tons of concrete poured and 66,000 concrete blocks of five and 10 ton weights were cast. The use of prisoners of war in a war effort was illegal, but it was deemed that the barriers were to be used to the benefit of the local population, connecting the islands after the war, so Italian labour it was!!

Enough of the history lesson (for now!) and, back to the birds! Crossing barrier No.1 onto Lamb Holm, then No.2 to Glimps Holm, we stopped at the end of barrier No.3, that connects Glimps Holm to Burray. Weddell Sound can be a good spot for divers, but we didn't really expect to see such a stunning summer plumaged Great Northern Diver so close in, just below our position, as it fed around the wreck of the SS Reginald, one of the still visible first world war block ships. The wreck itself made a good nesting spot for Fulmars, and at least five pairs sat on eggs. A few Arctic Terns fished in the shallows and a single Great Skua passed purposefully overhead.

Continuing on south we next called in at barrier No.4, the final one, completed in May 1945. This barrier is different from the others, as a large sandy beach and foreshore has built up over the years providing a wonderful habitat for nesting birds, none more special than the small colony of Little Terns that now call this home each summer. These smart birds give themselves away by their raucous, scratchy calls and their black bandito masks with yellow bills are very different from other members of the family. A handful of pairs nest here in a roped off area, and it's great to see that the local primary school has adopted these birds as their own, taking a real interest in the special birds on their doorstep!

As well as the terns, we chanced upon a small flock of Sanderling and Dunlin feeding along the waterline, and as we watched, we were able to note how different some of these looked in various stages of summer and winter plumages, from almost brick red right through to cold grey tones, the differing colours even gave us the impression of a variation in size. The drier parts of the beach, Above the tideline, held Ringed Plovers, which nest here in small numbers, so careful not to disturb these, or the feeding waders, we re-traced our steps and made for the north end of the beach for a better look at the terns. From here we stood a hundred metres or so from the colony, and enjoyed prolonged views of some of the terns on the ground. A couple of Bonxies flew by and Alison pointed down at the very distinctive, powdery blueish leaves of an Oysterplant, a specialist of the marine environment and one of Orkney's special plants. As we arrived back at the vehicles, we watched a very smart female Stonechat, trying to tackle a Green-veined White butterfly. She must have had a nest close by, so we moved on and left her in peace.

Our next stop was at Hoxa and the sands of Wright, where there is a small reserve of sorts, with a small loch and patches of scrub with reeded margins, and we decided to go for a short walk, even though the weather had deteriorated a little, and was very much cooler. As we slowly wandered through the trees Lesser Redpoll called ahead and we were lucky to find a nest in the low canopy with a sitting female, something I'd never seen before. Snipe drummed from above the marshy farmland, and a Willow Warbler sang from waterside willows. Back at

the minibus, lunch and hot drinks all round were the order of the day, as more, or possibly the same, Redpolls dropped in to feed among the farmland vegetation.

After lunch, we decided to follow up on a lead from the day before, and head a little further south to Olav's Wood at Bow, a community woodland with a complex network of trails and paths. A female type (young males can look very similar) Golden Oriole had been found there yesterday, so we had a stroll around splitting up to give ourselves the best chance. After a good search through the dense copse, Stewart picked up on a brief call and sight of the bird as it headed skyward before rapidly dropping back into deep cover and out of sight. Thankfully, Louise also got the briefest of glimpses, but hardly crippling views! The woodland also held Goldcrest and Robin, our first of the trip!!

With an eye on the time, and plans for the afternoon, we headed north back as far as Lamb Holm once again for a look around the famous Italian chapel, formed from two Nissen huts and ornately decorated under the guidance of Domenico Chiocchetti, one of the many Italian prisoners of war, who was a painter by trade. The chapel was built and decorated from whatever the men could find. Much of the timber was sourced from the wrecked blockships and the ornate stonework is actually mostly concrete from hand mouldings. The chapel was restored to its original glory in the 1960's by both local people, and some of the original prisoners who returned to carry out the works. It continues to be a place of pilgrimage for the people of Italy, and is a highlight for many who visit these islands.

As we left the chapel a distant Red-throated Diver headed east and out of sight, and several more Arctic Terns fished just below us.

With the weather now much improved, and with legs needing a good stretch, we headed north-east to Deerness, for a walk around Mull Head, the eastern most point of Mainland Orkney. Setting off we had a quick look in the East Denwick plantation, a dense area of scrub that had earlier in the week held Icterine Warbler and Bluethroat. It was quiet today, but we did manage to find a single Northern Marsh Orchid, our one and only of the week, an indication of just how late this spring has been here in the North.

As we moved on through the farmland, the sound of singing Skylark was everywhere, an increasingly rare sound elsewhere in Britain. Oystercatchers too were present in good numbers, and the bubbling call of Curlew could be heard in the distance. The path here took us right along the edge of the heather moorland towards the small lochans of the reserve, and approaching the first pool we immediately found a pair of Red-throated Divers, asleep in open water and a Short-eared Owl was picked up as it headed closer. This bird then gave superb views as it quartered the damp grasslands. Un-seasonally, a single Pink-footed Goose just showed its head and neck through the Juncus, and a little further on, a second pair of divers occupied another pool whilst another Short-eared Owl moved through the moorland. Before we reached the coastal path around the head, we were treated to good close-up views of a pair of Arctic Skuas, sat only 50 metres or so from us. These were a mixed dark and light phase pair; great to see the two together. On Orkney, dark phase birds outnumber light birds four to one, so seeing a smart pale bird was a treat. Another treat here was the number of drumming and calling Snipe present, and we had a decent show of birds making plenty of noise! A little more unusual, given the moorland habitat to the north, was a pair of Canada Geese, present in small numbers on Orkney.

Now just about back at the coastal path around Mull Head, the last small pool held both Teal and Gadwall, as yet another Bonxie passed by looking for a meal. A short diversion to the north led us to a narrow geo, no more than 10 feet across and here we stood and looked down on several active Shag nests, with three growing young

in most of the nests, with the adults bronzy-green sheen catching in the shafts of sunlight. A Rock Pipit called constantly as we left the Shags in peace and made our way slowly back towards the car park.

Hidden from view until right upon it lies “The Gloup”, a collapsed sea cave just a hundred metres from the car park at Mull Head. From here we stood on the viewing platform and looked down to the sea, some 25 metres below. Although calm today, the sea does rush in here and can be a little unnerving! From the vantage point we watched a couple of Black Guillemots on the cliff ledges, with their bright red feet really standing out against the black walls. As time had now very much caught up with us, we headed for the hotel, really pleased with our efforts today! A decent meal beckoned once again, and the promise of another adventure tomorrow.

## Day 5

## Thursday 27th May

Today dawned dull, breezy and cool, but dry at least! So the early risers once again set off west to re-visit the Waulkmill area in the search for owls and raptors. Our first stop was at Waulkmill Bay once again, and we were rewarded with nice views of two Red-throated Divers just below our vantage point, a site at which we had once, in a previous tour, found a remarkable thirteen Red-throats together one morning!

Other birds of note here were a handful of Red-breasted Mergansers, a pair of Stonechat, a single overhead Twite and a cracking Short-eared Owl as we left to move on. We then took our now rather familiar early morning route up through the Kirbister area and once again jammed in on a stunning male Hen Harrier. This bird gave us amazing close up and prolonged views, the yellow of his eyes burning through the dull morning light! Hen Harrier numbers in Orkney are among the densest in the U.K, the availability of suitable habitat, a plentiful food supply, and the lack of pressure from “other interests” combining to really make this an Orkney speciality - such a shame the rest of the U.K cannot follow suit, (yet!)

A little further along the same road we found yet another Short-eared Owl, again giving lovely views.

Breakfast soon beckoned, so we headed back to share our sightings with the rest of the group, who were just delighted for us!!!

After brekky, we set off to explore the northern part of Mainland Orkney. From Finstown we took the minor road past Smoogarth to Norseman, noting a Common Buzzard along the way. This is a species that is present in far lower numbers than on the mainland, and are always noteworthy here. As some of the group had not been out for our early morning jaunts, and had so far not connected with Hen Harriers, we made for the RSPB reserve at Lower Cottasgarth. From the car park here, we strolled along the grassy track, through damp pasture to the Eddie Balfour hide, a very smart converted steading that offers great (and warm!) viewing over the steep heather clad hillside at Dale and the exposed ridgeline of Milldoe. Taking in the wide view, bird sightings were initially fairly quiet, with a pair of Common Kestrel hunting over the moor and a few Ravens along the ridgeline. A wait ensued before two Short-eared Owls put in a brief appearance and a pair of Hen Harriers then appeared from the north, the male bird seen first before the female rose up from the heather to accept a food item in a mid-air food pass, a real treat for all of us! Another highlight of our visit here was a smart looking Moss Carder Bee, (*Bombus muscorum*), a species far less regular in the South, but present in good numbers in the North and West. A large ginger coloured bee, and new for some of the group.

Our next stop was just a few kilometres north at the Broch of Gurness, situated on the small promontory of Aiker Ness. This wonderfully tranquil iron age broch and community gave us the opportunity to at least

understand a little of what daily life must have been like some three thousand years ago. The Broch had a very long period of continuous use and was still settled well into the 5<sup>th</sup> century, and even used periodically into the 9<sup>th</sup> century AD, when a Norse woman was laid to rest with bronze brooches and knives.

From the Broch we could look across Eynhallow sound to the island of Rousay, The narrow sound, just over 1km across at this point is often rich in birdlife as the strong currents here bring plentiful supplies of food on each tide. A count of Black Guillemots here numbered at least 71 birds, with two smart dark phase Arctic Skuas attacking the gathered feeding Arctic Terns. A few Fulmars nest along the low grass topped cliff here affording excellent close views and three passing Great Skuas gave a good comparison to the slimmer, more athletically built Arctics. Other birds using the sound today included several hundred Shags and a small handful of Gannet plunge diving from a very low height of just a couple of metres. The impressive walls of the Broch itself provide a safe home for nesting Starlings, and they could be heard chattering from within the structure.

The Broch of Gurness is almost always a quiet and very atmospheric site to visit, and covid times aside, is off the main coach trip routes, allowing us to have the site almost to ourselves.

Red-throated Diver can often be seen fishing in the waters of the sound, and our next destination was to a diver breeding loch, just a very short distance away at the Burgar Hill hide on the RSPB reserve at Birsay Moors. Opening the windows of the comfortable hide, the pair were found almost immediately, with one bird sitting tight on the nest and the other, likely the male, resting on the small loch, only lifting his head a few brief times to show us the stunning red throat patch, and characteristic high bill carriage which is a good i.d. point, even at distance. Other birds showing here too included Greylag Geese, a single Common Sandpiper and the ever present Bonxies.

With the clock now pushing on towards lunchtime, we carried on north west past the Loch of Swannay, where we counted another 10 great skuas, preening in the fresh water and an adult Great Black-backed Gull feeding rather gruesomely on a lamb carcass at the roadside.

At the very top north-western corner of mainland Orkney lies Birsay Bay, and the Brough of Birsay, which is connected to the mainland by a narrow concrete causeway, accessible only on foot at low tide. We opted to play it safe, and stay firmly on dry land, enjoying the view over the rugged shoreline of the bay. From here we scoped the hauled out Grey and Common Seals, which were pretty vocal, and were able to spot the salient features that tell these two species apart. A few Eiders picked between the exposed rocks and several Red-breasted Mergansers fed a little way off-shore. Closer to where we stood, Common Ringed Plovers and Turnstones worked the high tide weed-line, whilst a small number of Mute Swans and a good assortment of gulls utilised the outlet to the sea of the Boardhouse Burn, a fresh water stream draining the Loch of Boardhouse a little way inland.

All this feeding activity prompted the next stop, The Birsay Bay Tearoom for lunch! The conditions this week had often not been conducive to a pleasant lunch stop, so a decent cuppa, a light lunch and a totally unnecessary slab of cake were in order for all!! One enterprising group member, who shall remain un-named (but you know who you are!) even carved a remarkably realistic model of the Old Man of Hoy from a lump of double espresso cake. It too crumbled, just as the real thing is likely to do in the not too distant future!

Any visit to Birsay Bay passes the impressive, and well preserved ruins of the Earl's Palace, built by Earl Robert Stewart, half brother to Mary Queen of Scots. The palace was a status symbol, constructed as a reminder of the power he possessed, but Robert made a mistake. The inscription above the grand entrance, which strongly

displayed his connections to royalty, contained a Latin syntax error which proclaimed him to be king and not his father. This was later used as evidence of the family's treasonable intentions - I think he should have had a Naturetrek proof reader!!

Interestingly, two of our group had a connection to the sad events of the 5<sup>th</sup> June 1916, which saw the demise of HMS Hampshire, just off Marwick head, a few kilometres to the south of Birsay. On that fateful night, the Devonshire class armoured cruiser slipped out of Scapa Flow heading for Russia on a diplomatic mission, and connected with a German mine which had been laid just that day. The seas claimed 737 of the 749 souls on board including the secretary of state for war, Field Marshall Lord Kitchener, and his entire staff. A memorial to him was erected in 1926 and just a few years ago, in 2016, a wall with names of all those lost that night was unveiled at Marwick head. Our group members were able to find the names of their connection and take photos as a reminder of their visit, which was great!.

The weather had really started to clear, and I can say I have never stood on the cliff top at Marwick in such calm conditions; there was hardly a breath of wind and the aroma of the seabird colony below us drifted up to further stimulate the senses! Now everyone loves a Puffin, and we were once again able to enjoy views of these super wee birds as well as the myriad other ocean going species here, with further sightings of Arctic Skua, Razorbill, Guillemot, Gannet and Kittiwake. The grassy cliff top hid a network of Orkney Vole tunnels, with a huge number of entrances being seen right along the path.

Other than a trip to Hoy, or from the ferry from Scrabster on the Scottish mainland, Marwick Head gives the best view of the real (not baked) Old Man of Hoy, and due to the decent light, we had great views today. The stroll back to the vehicles took us past a carpet of Thrift and Spring Squill, with the sea glistening behind, just lovely!

Whilst walking back I received a message from a fellow leader elsewhere in Scotland that a Corncrake had been heard rasping on Mainland Orkney, and luckily for us, it was only 1 km from where we were! And within five minutes we were listening to this most mysterious of summer visitors. Sadly, by this stage in May, the vegetation is just too tall to expect any sightings of Corncrake, other than maybe a chance of a bird crossing a road or track, but we were delighted to have connected anyway!

As we were so close, we headed once again for the Loons RSPB reserve that we had visited on Monday in shocking conditions and this time we sat in front of the "Listening Wall" and, just for a short time, sat quietly and sucked in the sounds of the marsh in front of us. Curlew, Redshank, Oystercatcher and Lapwing called from the marsh, and drumming Snipe performed aerobatics overhead. The carpets of Marsh Marigold and Bogbean gave a splash of colour from a distance and it really was difficult to finally tear ourselves away, but we had just one special place left to visit today, a place we had been unable to enjoy earlier in the week due to the dramatic weather - the Ring of Brodgar, in the heart of Neolithic Orkney.

Five thousand years of history stood in front of us as we strolled up to the stones, with no-one else around. We could only imagine how impressive the henge must have been when built, 104m in diameter, originally made up of some 60 huge stones (27 remain) and with a ditch carved into bedrock 3m deep and 10m wide. As we looked at the ring, group members pointed south towards Ward Hill on Hoy, the dark skies parted and a swathe of gorgeous evening warm sunlight spread north, eventually reaching us just in time to illuminate the beautiful Short-eared Owl that worked the pasture along the north shore of the Loch Of Stenness. This truly was the perfect way to wrap up our time together on Orkney. The memories formed over just a few days beckon one to visit again, and I'd like to thank the whole group for making this trip so special in such a strange period in all of

our lives. I'd also really like to thank Alison for her help this week. (and for the honey roast almonds!!) Until next time, Stewart.

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## Species Lists

Birds (✓ = recorded but not counted; + = approximate count; h = heard only)

	Common name	Scientific name	May 2021				
			23	24	25	26	27
1	Common Pheasant	<i>Phasianus colchicus</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	
2	Greylag Goose	<i>Anser anser</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
3	Pink-footed Goose	<i>Anser brachyrhynchus</i>				✓	
4	Canada Goose	<i>Branta canadensis</i>				✓	✓
5	Whooper Swan	<i>Cygnus cygnus</i>			✓		
6	Mute Swan	<i>Cygnus olor</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
7	Black Swan (Introduced/Escape)	<i>Cygnus atratus</i>		✓			
8	Common Shelduck	<i>Tadorna tadorna</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
9	Northern Shoveler	<i>Spatula clypeata</i>		✓		✓	✓
10	Gadwall	<i>Mareca strepera</i>			✓	✓	
11	Eurasian Wigeon	<i>Mareca penelope</i>					
12	Mallard	<i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
13	Northern Pintail	<i>Anas acuta</i>			✓		
14	Eurasian Teal	<i>Anas crecca</i>				✓	
15	Tufted Duck	<i>Aythya fuligula</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
16	Common Goldeneye	<i>Bucephala clangula</i>		✓			
17	Common Eider	<i>Somateria mollissima</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
18	Long-tailed Duck	<i>Clangula hyemalis</i>			✓		
19	Common Merganser	<i>Mergus merganser</i>		✓			
20	Red-breasted Merganser	<i>Mergus serrator</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓
21	Red-throated Diver	<i>Gavia stellata</i>			✓	✓	✓
22	Great Northern Diver	<i>Gavia immer</i>			✓	✓	
23	Black-thoated Diver	<i>Gavia arctica</i>		✓			
24	Northern Fulmar	<i>Fulmarus glacialis</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
25	Little Grebe	<i>Tachybaptus ruficollis</i>		✓			
26	Grey Heron	<i>Ardea cinerea</i>				✓	
27	Northern Gannet	<i>Morus bassanus</i>			✓	✓	✓
28	European Shag	<i>Gulosus aristotelis</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
29	Great Cormorant	<i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
30	Hen Harrier	<i>Circus cyaneus</i>				✓	✓
31	Eurasian Sparrowhawk	<i>Accipiter nisus</i>		✓		✓	
32	Common Buzzard	<i>Buteo buteo</i>					✓
33	Common Kestrel	<i>Falco tinnunculus</i>					✓
34	Corncrake	<i>Crex crex</i>					✓
35	Common Moorhen	<i>Gallinula chloropus</i>				✓	
36	Eurasian Coot	<i>Fulica atra</i>		✓		✓	
37	Eurasian Oystercatcher	<i>Haematopus ostralegus</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
38	Northern Lapwing	<i>Vanellus vanellus</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
39	Common Ringed Plover	<i>Charadrius hiaticula</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
40	Common Snipe	<i>Gallinago gallinago</i>		✓		✓	✓
41	Black-tailed Godwit	<i>Limosa limosa</i>		✓			
42	Bar-tailed Godwit	<i>Limosa lapponica</i>			✓		
43	Eurasian Curlew	<i>Numenius arquata</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
44	Common Redshank	<i>Tringa totanus</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
45	Common Sandpiper	<i>Actitis hypoleucos</i>	✓				✓
46	Ruddy Turnstone	<i>Arenaria interpres</i>	✓		✓	✓	✓



	Common name	Scientific name	May 2021				
			23	24	25	26	27
47	Dunlin	<i>Calidris alpina</i>			✓	✓	✓
48	Curlew Sandpiper	<i>Calidris ferruginea</i>			✓		
49	Purple Sandpiper	<i>Calidris maritima</i>			✓		
50	Sanderling	<i>Calidris alba</i>				✓	
51	Ruff	<i>Calidris pugnax</i>			✓		
52	Black-legged Kittiwake	<i>Rissa tridactyla</i>			✓		✓
53	Black-headed Gull	<i>Chroicocephalus ridibundus</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
54	Common Gull	<i>Larus canus</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
55	Great Black-backed Gull	<i>Larus marinus</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
56	European Herring Gull	<i>Larus argentatus</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
57	Iceland Gull	<i>Larus glaucoides</i>			✓		
58	Lesser Black-backed Gull	<i>Larus fuscus</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
59	Sandwich Tern	<i>Thalasseus sandvicensis</i>				✓	
60	Little Tern	<i>Sternula albifrons</i>				✓	
61	Common Tern	<i>Sterna hirundo</i>		✓		✓	
62	Arctic Tern	<i>Sterna paradisaea</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
63	Great Skua	<i>Stercorarius skua</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
64	Arctic Skua	<i>Stercorarius parasiticus</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
65	Common Guillemot	<i>Uria aalge</i>			✓	✓	✓
66	Razorbill	<i>Alca torda</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓
67	Black Guillemot	<i>Cepphus grylle</i>	✓		✓	✓	✓
68	Atlantic Puffin	<i>Fratercula arctica</i>			✓		✓
69	Common Pigeon (Rock Dove)	<i>Columba livia</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
70	Common Wood Pigeon	<i>Columba palumbus</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓
71	Eurasian Collared Dove	<i>Streptopelia decaocto</i>			✓	✓	✓
72	Common Cuckoo	<i>Cuculus canorus</i>				✓	✓
73	Short-eared Owl	<i>Asio flammeus</i>		✓		✓	✓
74	Common Swift	<i>Apus apus</i>				✓	✓
75	Golden Oriole	<i>Oriolus oriolus</i>				✓	
76	Western Jackdaw	<i>Coloeus monedula</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
77	Rook	<i>Corvus frugilegus</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
78	Hooded Crow	<i>Corvus cornix</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓
79	Northern Raven	<i>Corvus corax</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓
80	Eurasian Skylark	<i>Alauda arvensis</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
81	Sand Martin	<i>Riparia riparia</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓
82	Barn Swallow	<i>Hirundo rustica</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
83	Common House Martin	<i>Delichon urbicum</i>		✓	✓		✓
84	Sedge Warbler	<i>Acrocephalus schoenobaenus</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓
85	Willow Warbler	<i>Phylloscopus trochilus</i>				✓	✓
86	Eurasian Wren	<i>Troglodytes troglodytes</i>	✓		✓	✓	✓
87	Goldcrest	<i>Regulus regulus</i>				✓	
88	Common Starling	<i>Sturnus vulgaris</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
89	Common Blackbird	<i>Turdus merula</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓
90	Song Thrush	<i>Turdus philomelos</i>					✓
91	European Robin	<i>Erithacus rubecula</i>				✓	
92	European Stonechat	<i>Saxicola rubicola</i>				✓	✓
93	Northern Wheatear	<i>Oenanthe oenanthe</i>		✓	✓		✓
94	House Sparrow	<i>Passer domesticus</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
95	Dunnock	<i>Prunella modularis</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓
96	Pied Wagtail	<i>Motacilla alba yarrellii</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓

			May 2021				
	Common name	Scientific name	23	24	25	26	27
97	Meadow Pipit	<i>Anthus pratensis</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
98	Eurasian Rock Pipit	<i>Anthus petrosus</i>	✓		✓	✓	✓
99	European Greenfinch	<i>Chloris chloris</i>				✓	
100	European Goldfinch	<i>Carduelis carduelis</i>				✓	✓
101	Common Redpoll	<i>Acanthis cabaret</i>				✓	✓
102	Twite	<i>Linaria flavirostris</i>		✓		✓	✓
103	Common Linnet	<i>Linaria cannabina</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓
104	Common Reed Bunting	<i>Emberiza schoeniclus</i>		✓		✓	✓

## Other species

			May 2021				
	Common name	Scientific name	23	24	25	26	27
	MAMMALS						
1	Rabbit	<i>Oryctolagus cuniculus</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
2	Brown Hare	<i>Lepus capensis</i>	✓	✓		✓	✓
3	Common Seal	<i>Phoca vitulina</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓
4	Grey Seal	<i>Halichoerus grypus</i>	✓		✓		✓
5	Minke Whale	<i>Balaenoptera acutorostrata</i>			✓		
	INVERTEBRATES						
1	Green-veined White	<i>Pieris napi</i>			✓	✓	✓
2	Northern White-tailed Bumblebee	<i>Bombus magnus</i>			✓	✓	✓
3	Moss Carder Bee	<i>Bombus muscorum</i>					✓
4	Jumping Wall Spider sp						✓

## Notable plants

			May 2021				
	Common name	Scientific name	23	24	25	26	27
1	Marsh Marigold	<i>Caltha palustris</i>	✓		✓		✓
2	Meadow Buttercup	<i>Ranunculus acris</i>			✓		
3	Sea Campion	<i>Silene uniflora</i>			✓		✓
4	Red Campion	<i>Silene dioica</i>			✓		
5	Thrift (Sea Pink)	<i>Armeria maritima</i>	✓		✓		✓
6	Cuckooflower	<i>Cardamine pratensis</i>		✓	✓		✓
7	Common Scurvygrass	<i>Cochlearia officinalis</i>			✓		
8	Primrose	<i>Primula vulgaris</i>			✓		
9	Cowslip	<i>Primula veris</i>		✓			✓
10	Scottish Primrose	<i>Primula scotica</i>		✓			
11	Tormentil	<i>Potentilla erecta</i>			✓	✓	
12	Water Avens	<i>Geum rivale</i>					✓
13	Bird's-foot Trefoil	<i>Lotus corniculatus</i>		✓	✓		
14	Sycamore	<i>Acer pseudoplatanus</i>		✓		✓	
15	Bogbean	<i>Menyanthes trifoliata</i>		✓		✓	
16	Oysterplant	<i>Mertensia maritima</i>				✓	
17	Greater Plantain	<i>Plantago major</i>				✓	
18	Lousewort	<i>Pedicularis sylvatica</i>				✓	✓

			May 2021				
	Common name	Scientific name	23	24	25	26	27
19	Common Butterwort	<i>Pinguicula vulgaris</i>				✓	
20	Coltsfoot	<i>Tussilago farfara</i>				✓	
21	Common Cottongrass	<i>Eriophorum angustifolium</i>				✓	
22	Common Reed	<i>Phragmites australis</i>		✓			
23	Spring Squill	<i>Scilla verna</i>			✓		
24	Bluebell	<i>Hyacinthoides non-scripta</i>			✓		
25	Yellow Iris (Yellow Flag)	<i>Iris pseudacorus</i>		✓	✓		
26	Northern Marsh Orchid	<i>Dactylorhiza purpurella</i>				✓	
27	Silverweed	<i>Potentilla anserina</i>	✓				