

The Best of Scotland

Naturetrek Tour Report

1st – 9th June 2021



Pine Marten



Otter



Puffin



Razorbill

Tour report and images by Andy Bunten



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Summary

Our Best of Scotland trip had the most amazing weather possible. Warm, even hot, sunny and dry. The wonderful weather was mirrored with some fantastic wildlife.

A pair of Otters rolled around and groomed each other only a few yards away from us, Golden Eagles swooped and soared directly overhead and a White-tailed Eagle sat patiently in a tree allowing lengthy views.

A blissful boat trip produced the historic and fascinating Isle of Staffa with, of course, Fingal's Cave and the landing on Lunga (of the Treshnish Isles) had about the best views of Puffins, Razorbills and Guillemots one could ever have, and all in glorious sunshine.

Peaceful and ethereal Iona gave us brief views of a pair of Corncrakes as well as lovely view of the Abbey.

The Cairngorms, with those magical Caledonian pinewoods, exude an atmosphere unlike any other in the UK. Slavonian Grebes, looking almost orange in their finery, decorated small eutrophic lochans, while Black-throated Divers inhabited larger, more impressive, lochs.

Ospreys, Black Grouse, Redstarts, more Golden Eagles, this time tussling with Peregrines, all captivated us during our time there.

Our evening mammal expedition was a unrivalled success with five Badgers and, best of all, fantastically close views of a beautiful Pine Marten.

It certainly was the Best of Scotland.

Day 1

Tuesday 1st June

The day started with a hit of extra adrenaline as a last-minute change of minibus led to some frantic dashing around Edinburgh and some slightly late pick ups at Waverley Station and Edinburgh Airport, but finally we were on our way heading west out of the city.

Our route took us past Stirling and allowed us brief views of Stirling Castle and the site of the Battle of Bannockburn - triumphant sites for Wallace and Bruce.

We made a quick stop at Callander and heard Eurasian Siskins in the conifer trees around the car park and then our drive took us past some wonderful scenery as we passed through the Loch Lomond and the Trossachs National Park.

We drove along sections of Lochs Awe and Etive passing various woodlands where the sounds of Willow Warblers percolated the bus, before arriving into Oban, gateway to the isles, and heading to the ferry terminal.

There we watched smart Black Guillemots and Great Cormorants before boarding the ship and heading towards Mull.

The crossing was a gentle one and we were able to find more Black Guillemots as well as numerous diving Arctic Terns and spectacular snowy-white Northern Gannets.

After arriving into Craignure we had the briefest of drives to get to our hotel where we quickly settled in, had a meeting to discuss our itinerary and then proceeded to the restaurant for the first of some lovely meals.

Day 2

Wednesday 2nd June

Our first full day on Mull dawned sunny, if a little cool first thing, with Willow Warblers and Chiffchaffs singing merrily as a few of the group made an early morning brief trip to the nearby golf club which overlooked a small bay.

Oystercatchers called while they probed the mud and short grass and we saw a pair of very smart Common Mergansers (Goosanders) flying rapidly past. Their cousins, Red-breasted Mergansers, fished quietly by the shore edge.

Also at the loch edge were a group of terns which, through the telescope, clearly showed the thin black trailing edge of the wing which enabled us to be confident they were Arctic Terns.

We had a full range of hirundines with Barn Swallows, Sand and Common House Martins hawking low over the vegetation. Then it was back to the hotel for a substantial breakfast before leaving again on our adventure to Iona.

Our route took us past the tops of Lochs Don and Spelve where we heard the usual song of Willow Warblers but also the less usual trilling of a Grasshopper Warbler. Whitethroats sang their scratchy song, a Red Deer hind peered at us through the vegetation and we found our first seal, a Harbour, in the loch beside our bus.

We drove along the hugely impressive Glen More keeping our eyes open for birds of prey and were soon rewarded with a lovely view of a male Hen Harrier carrying a prey item of some sort as it glided along the nearby ridge. A little later we saw a second Harrier, also a male, floating low over the ground on an island.

We arrived at Fionnphort around 10.40 and had some fun and games finding car parking and even more attempting to pay for parking. We lined up to catch the next ferry which quickly arrived and various birders trudged off telling us, with some gloomy satisfaction, that they'd had neither sight nor sound of Corncrakes.

Ten minutes later we arrived at Iona and headed south along the road following the shore. Doves feeding in the garden showed all the characteristics of 'pure' Rock Doves though it has to be said that some consider all such doves to be partially feral.

More Harbour Seals peered at us as we walked along and a Rock Pipit serenaded us lustily from the pebbly beach.

The fields were full of Rooks and Starlings plunging their beaks into the soft turf and Sedge Warblers sang from clumps of taller vegetation.

Obviously, our key quarry here was Corncrake and we stopped at some likely looking clumps of Iris and sat and waited. Two very nice Wheatears kept us company while we waited but Corncrakes, if present, were remaining shy.

A helpful passer-by told us of birds he'd heard last night so we moved further up the road to more suitable looking fields. More Sedge Warblers sang but no sounds of rasping emerged.

We returned to our first spot and - bingo! We heard the distinctive and wonderful calls of Corncrake. We sat down again and peered with great intent into the yellow flag. These birds are, of course, well known for being extremely elusive but just as we were thinking we'd need to be content with calling birds up flew two together, dropping down into the iris a second or two later. Brief but close views for four members of the group – the others (including the leader) were looking the other way!

Skylarks serenaded us and Linnets twittered as we made our way back down to the ferry terminal and to the local Spar to buy some lunch which we took along to the Abbey and enjoyed a wonderful view as we consumed it. The iris beds here also can hold Corncrake but none were calling while we were here and we had to make do with Oystercatchers, Meadow Pipits and Wheatears.

After lunch we wandered alongside the impressive Abbey before returning to catch the 15.00 ferry back to mainland Mull. European Shags and Northern Gannets were seen on our brief crossing and, on landing, we headed to nearby Fidden Farm. Here there were Common Redshank and Northern Lapwing and we heard a Common Cuckoo calling away in the distance.

We drove back along Loch Scridain stopping occasionally to look for Otters and Eagles but with no luck. There were, however, plenty of Common Sandpipers and Red-breasted Mergansers.

Our route then took us back through Glen More where some roadworkers told us about an Eagle eyrie but we weren't able to spend too much time looking for it and so returned to the hotel seeing Red Deer and Common Shelduck -the latter feeding busily on the muds of Loch Don.

Back to our hotel we had a brief period to shower and change before meeting to do the famous Naturetrek wildlife sightings list and then to the restaurant for our evening meal.

Day 3

Thursday 3rd June

It was a little cooler and cloudier this morning as we had a pre-breakfast walk in the woods around the hotel. Willow Warblers were, of course, singing away and some Lesser Redpolls were flying around calling and one nice male perched nearby showing off its beautiful plumage.

Common and Herring Gulls were plentiful on the shore enabling a good comparison of these gulls – in particular the difference in the 'friendliness' of their faces. A Common Sandpiper perched nearby and we watched as it vigorously saw off a Hooded Crow. Then we headed the short distance back to the hotel with the mountains across the water looking beautiful with the sun streaming through the clouds.

A delicious breakfast later we were off to Loch Na Keal en route to the Ulva ferry and thence for our exciting day out to sea. We drove along the south shore hoping an Otter or two may make an appearance. None did, but we did see a Common Gull chasing off a Northern Raven which had something in its beak. We rather hoped it wasn't a bit of young Common Gull.

Common Ringed Plovers and Common Sandpipers were on the beach when we noticed a boat lurking off the west end of the island of Eorsa. We wondered what it was doing and then realised as a White-tailed Eagle flapped heavily off the shore of the island. It dropped into the water and picked something up before lumbering its way back to the beach. We suspected that the boat had dropped a fish or some such off for it.

Heading back around the Loch we stopped at its head seeing another chase happening – this time a Common Ringed Plover seeing off a Common Gull.

Shortly after 11.00 we were at the Ulva Ferry site where we watched a lovely male Hen Harrier quartering the low peninsula in the bay.

Then it was off with Black Guillemots and Shags and a White-tailed Eagle, hiding away in the conifers, before we got out into the more open sea. Very soon we were at Staffa and riding the waves as we neared the spectacular Fingal's Cave. We hopped off the boat for a brief time to enable us to get closer to the caves and to get to the cliffs where Northern Fulmars gaped at us and Atlantic Puffins lined the edges of the cliffs. We clambered back into the boat under the watchful gaze of European Shags and Common Eiders.

On the way to Lunga, the largest of the Treshnish Isles, we were seeing various auks and gulls and then we spotted a Great Skua, or Bonxie, which initially was flying along with a steady beat before it suddenly took off like an Exocet in hot pursuit of a gull. After a short high-speed chase, the gull abandoned the fish it had been carrying and the Skua twisted round to dive down vertically and grab it in mid-air.

Another bird joined its mate and the two Great Skuas flew low over the sea close to us quickly followed by a Manx Shearwater gliding effortlessly over the white-spumed waves.

More excitement followed as a dark morph Arctic Skua, a streamlined relative of the Bonxie, shot swiftly past us - a wonderful bonus.

As we approached Lunga the sea was covered with Northern Puffins, Razorbills and Common Guillemots – many of them the bridled form. A fabulous sight.

We clambered off the boat and up the footpath in warm, wonderful sunshine. Lunga was a riot of seabirds with sights, sounds and smells utterly overwhelming and wonderful. Northern Puffins lined up in their droves to be photographed and we were only too happy to oblige. At every turn there was a better and better photo-opportunity. Thank heavens for digital cameras!

The paths were also lined with Razorbills and Shags offering still more photographic delights – their plumage shining in the lovely sunshine.

Abundant Bluebells and Primroses added to the magic of this lovely island when one could tear one's eyes off the growling, yammering mass of seabirds.

Further along the track we got to a stack which was the home of the Northern Guillemots and the onomatopoeic Kittiwakes. These species seemed to be trying to outdo each other in creating a sound track of classic cacophony. Marvellous and so atmospheric, in more ways than one.

It is difficult to tear oneself away from this most wonderful of experience but eventually we had to head back down the track to our boat which had moored up at a new position. We re-found our seats and then headed back to mainland Mull; the stiff wind and breaking waves making it a slightly damp experience.

Arriving back at 17.30 we retraced our footsteps from the morning driving along the north shore of Loch Na Keal. We stopped for a while at a car parking area to look for White-tailed Eagles and before long we saw one fly into the conifer woodlands then out again pursued by a Common Buzzard. Then a further White-tailed Eagle came out with two more Common Buzzards in close attendance. The Eagles, with their admirers, soon dropped away behind a ridge and out of sight.

We were slightly later back to our hotel so it was an even quicker turn round to have a brief catch up on our fantastic day and then a leisurely meal to properly digest everything.

Day 4

Friday 4th June

Today was going to be our last full day on Mull so we planned to seek out those species that we hadn't caught up with earlier or wanted better views of.

We had our normal pre-breakfast walk – this time up the track opposite the hotel's entrance and into Scallastle Woods.

There was a lot of small passerine action. Blue Tits and Goldcrests were singing together with the ubiquitous Willow Warblers and a wonderful Tree Pipit which posed well for us on a electricity wire between its parachute song flights. We had another excellent view of a shining red Lesser Redpoll and heard a Common Cuckoo somewhere in the distance.

We drove south and west from the hotel and along the north shore of Loch Spelve before turning to head towards Croggan on Spelve's south shore.

Tree Pipits sang from the beautiful Sessile Oak woods and a Whinchat appeared briefly on a wire fence. A Common Snipe posed for us on top of a telegraph pole – only moving when the cameras came out.

We parked up at the end of the road and surveyed the loch and the hills beyond while listening to the bird calls from the woods around us. Willow Warblers, of course, and Whitethroat were singing and sharp ears picked out the thin call of a Spotted Flycatcher, a bird we subsequently tracked down for good views.

We looked back at the pier where we'd heard Otters had been seen and noticed a number of very static photographers in full camouflage kit. Further investigation revealed a couple of Otters at the end of the pier. We

watched them from a distance when there was a call of Golden Eagle! We turned round to see a huge shape soaring over the other side of the sound pursued by what seemed a tiny bird – a Common Kestrel!

We turned our attention back to the Otters and made our way carefully towards the pier. The Otters had moved onto the rocky shore and we had fantastic views of them as they played and groomed.

We drove slowly back through the larger Sessile Oak woodlands and parked up for a while in the hope of hearing Wood Warbler. It was clearly our day because we'd only been stopped for a minute when we heard that delicious sibilant trill – surely one of the loveliest of our warblers' songs.

We continued on our way to Glen More as we hoped we may be able to find the Golden Eagle site we'd looked for earlier.

Once again our luck was in and we settled down in a layby to wait and watch and hope. Once again we were almost immediately lucky with a majestic eagle sailing in to a ledge along the cliffs. We settled in and had the most wonderful views of two different birds as they came and went to their cliff edge retreat. Generally, they were accompanied by complaining Buzzards or Kestrels! One eagle flew in carrying some nesting material which it dropped and then swooped down to catch again; whether by accident or just showing off it was difficult to tell. We had our lunch watching these fabulous birds before moving back down the valley to Salen where we were met by Dave Sexton, the RSPB Mull Officer, who told us a little about conservation on the island and the White-tailed Eagle reintroduction project.

Our meeting with Dave renewed our already high enthusiasm for the White-tailed Eagles and we moved to Loch Na Keal in search of this huge raptor.

The southern shore proved fruitless but on the northern shore we found our quarry! Perched immobile in a conifer tree we were able to get the telescope out and have prolonged views of an eagle as it stoically ignored the presence of Hooded Crows perched around it. Buzzards were mewling nearby too and in the end our eagle decided it was time to go and, mirroring Antigonus, it exited pursued by a Buzzard.

The last part of our day took us a little further north up the lovely Glen Arnos. We wanted to get back slightly earlier today so we didn't spend long in this very attractive glen but we were able to find some nice male and female Whinchats, a beautiful posing male European Stonechat and, best of all, a male and female Hen Harrier.

Then it was back to our hotel in time for a slightly more leisurely shower before doing our lists and having our last meal at this wonderfully situated hotel.

Another excellent day and a success on all counts – Otters, Golden Eagles and White-tailed Eagles all in the bag.

Day 5

Saturday 5th June

We were leaving Mull today but still had time for a last tour around before catching our ferry so, after a final breakfast, we headed a short way south towards Duart Point.

We parked up at the cemetery and looked across the fields to a group of trees where a couple of massive White-tailed Eagles surveyed the landscape around them. We reluctantly dragged ourselves away from these magnificent birds and drove back through some lovely oak woods where we heard a Wood Warbler trilling away with its beautiful song.

Driving along the south side of Loch Don we parked up at Grass Point car park and surveyed the scene from there. A Common Cuckoo called in the distance, a European Stonechat perched nearby and Mistle Thrushes flew over the road. Distant Common Buzzards soared over the ridge and Lesser Redpolls buzzed overhead.

It was now time, sadly, to leave the island so we moved to the Fishnish Ferry point where we heard Coal Tits calling from the conifer woods nearby before boarding the ferry for the brief trip across to Lochaline.

From here we drove north through the spectacular landscape of Gleann Geal, passed Strontian (famous for being the site where strontium was first isolated) and caught another small ferry at Corran. Here we had good views of Arctic Terns, male Common Eider and a couple of Black Guillemots.

Then it was only a few miles to Fort William where, under the towering presence of a crystal clear Ben Nevis, we stopped for our lunch. From Fort William we headed east and stopped for a brief walk at the national nature reserve of Creag Meagaidh on the banks of Loch Laggan. We took a short and very pleasant circular walk at the reserve where a bird feeding station gave us wonderful views of Lesser Redpoll and Eurasian Siskin as well as Great Tits and Chaffinches. Orange-tip butterflies flitted around the Red Campion and we saw soaring Northern Raven and Buzzards.

Our route then took us through Kingussie to Kinraig and after a while we arrived at a site where we hoped to find some Ospreys. Climbing up a low hill we saw the birds perched in front of us at the top of a tree. We had excellent views and watched as one bird fed on a fish.

Onward again to our hotel in Grantown on Spey where we decamped to our very nice rooms before gathering to do our list of species for the day and the first of some really delicious meals.

Day 6

Sunday 6th June

We had had some fantastic weather during our trip and this morning was no exception. It was absolutely gorgeous with clear blue sky as we set off at 05.30

The reason for our early start was to try to find Black Grouse – birds well known for their early morning Lekking behaviour. We only had a short drive to our site and then we settled down and waited. It was a little late in the season and we knew other groups had drawn a blank but we remained optimistic.

Curlews were making very curious loud calls from the fields behind us – perhaps having found a predatory stoat or some such. Lapwing were calling too and a distant Common Snipe was heard first making its distinctive chipping noise and then the fabulous ‘drumming’.

We were thinking it was time to go when we heard a brief snatch of the characteristic bubbling call of Black Grouse. All of a sudden three Blackcock appeared on the grassy knoll in front of us. They strutted around for about five minutes and then flew off. Success!

Glowing with triumph we returned to our hotel for a genuinely sumptuous breakfast. It was such a nice clear day that we decided to go to the Cairngorms and bask in the hot sun. We hunted in vain for Ring Ouzels by the ski centre although there were Willow Warblers galore constantly serenading us from the low willows.

We took a long, steadily uphill walk hoping we may find a Ptarmigan. Meadow Pipits were everywhere and we disturbed a Common Lizard which scuttled away across the path.

We sat and admired the stunning views while we had our lunch and then started our descent. A distant shape on a rock had a Ptarmigan-like look about it but by the time we got the telescope up the bird had gone. One that got away!

It was then back to the ski lift centre for a refreshing cup of tea (and cake) before we headed to Loch Vaa. Here we saw some Goldeneye and Little Grebes before we moved on to Avielochan where we found more Little Grebes but nothing of more interest.

By now we were nearing the end of a long and lovely day so it was back to the hotel for a really delicious meal, complete our list of sightings and then to flop into bed.

Day 7

Monday 7th June

With the weather as amazing as it was it seemed criminal not to make the most of it so it was up for another 05.30 start for a short drive down to the Abernethy Forest and Loch Garten. The day started well with a Red Squirrel dashing up a tree just outside the hotel.

We parked at Loch Garten and wandered around the woodland hearing Tree Pipits, Great Spotted Woodpecker, Willow Warbler and the thin call of Spotted Flycatcher. One of the group made out the calls of a distant Crested Tit while the rest of us were watching Red Squirrels scamper up trees and listening to a distant Common Cuckoo. Out on the loch there were Common Sandpipers chasing each other around and Tufted Duck, Little Grebe and Goldeneye swam close to the shore.

Driving back we heard the unmistakeable song of a Common Redstart which, after some considerable searching, we found perched high on a Scots Pine. A hind Red Deer was separated from its young fawn which was dashing frantically up and down the fence line. We watched it, helpless, in its distress and then breathed great sighs of relief as it found a hole in the fence and joined its mother.

We returned to the hotel for a wonderful breakfast before heading back north to look for a very special bird indeed. As we drove the roadside vegetation became much more heather dominated and we searched for our first view of Red Grouse. Before long we found an adult with a chick moving around just a few feet away from us.

Then we arrived at the loch we were making for and we set up the telescopes to see if we could find our bird. Common Sandpipers flew and piped, a Cuckoo was calling in the distance and Barn Swallows and Sand Martins flew low over the loch. A quick chat with some passers by caused us to change our position by the loch and then we had success - Black-throated Diver. This beautiful bird was across the water from us but the air was so clear that we had excellent views.

Our next port of call was the Findhorn Valley or Strathdearn. As we drove down this beautiful valley we had a Eurasian Bullfinch fly up in front of the bus and a handful of Red-legged Partridges nipping across the road. We had a few stops as we made our way down with Eurasian Curlews, Common Redshanks and Oystercatchers in the river and adjoining fields. A Eurasian Teal was roosting among the rocks in the river and we found our first Grey Wagtail of the trip bobbing around by the fast-flowing waters.

At our next stop we were treated to a lovely Red Kite soaring overhead while Redpolls called and Barn Swallows and House Martins twisted and turned in pursuit of low flying insects.

We settled into the car park at the end of the valley and almost immediately we found a Peregrine quartering the nearby ridge. We then had a purple patch of raptors – a Red Kite flew over and we heard the Peregrine make a kill. We assumed a Red Grouse. Then a Golden Eagle appeared over the ridge behind us and its presence discombobulated the Peregrine which shot up calling wildly and still holding on to its prey. After giving the Eagle a piece of his mind the Peregrine, plus prey, flew over our heads and into another valley. Finally, a Buzzard appeared, also apparently reacting to the presence of the Eagle.

We lunched in this lovely area and then made our way back along the valley trying to find a bird that had rather peculiarly escaped us so far, White-throated Dipper. We drove slowly alongside the river, occasionally having to tuck in and allow other motorists past, peering into the tumbling waters in the hope of seeing that distinctive black and white rotund shape. At last we were successful and watched a bird for a while as it lurked under the far bank of the river.

As we drove out of the valley our final bird of prey arrived – a Eurasian Sparrowhawk dashing directly over the bus. Then we had an added bonus as a Woodcock sprung up from the roadside vegetation and surged across the road in front of us, its rufous rump very obvious.

Our final stop in the afternoon was to go to the hide at Avielochan in pursuit of Slavonian Grebe. Once again we drew a blank but were amply compensated by excellent views of Eurasian Wigeon, Goldeneye, Little Grebe and around 50 Greylag Geese.

We had an early evening meal as we were leaving again to go to a local mammal watching hide.

The hide was around a half an hour away and we were met by our guide, Eve, who talked to us about the set up here and settled us to wait. Our wait was measured in seconds as a Badger had appeared even as Eve was out putting food out. Badgers were arriving thick and fast as Eve kept up her very informative and interesting commentary. They were only a few feet in front of our hide as they moved around the set devouring the peanut butter and peanuts. In the end we saw five different animals intent on their meals. Other mammals were

interested in this free hand out too with a Wood Mouse appearing from under a log and Field Vole chewing away without a care in the world.

Gradually all the badgers left and we waited in case the star of the show, Pine Marten, made an appearance. We sat patiently for another 15 minutes and then, on cue, a beautiful Pine Marten emerged up a tree trunk and across a log to find the food put out specially for it. Eve pointed out that this was a young female individual and we had wonderfully close views for around 15 minutes as it casually consumed its supper before sinuously making its way back down the tree and away. Fantastic.

It was still quite light as we drove back to our hotel and crept quietly back to our rooms.

Day 8

Tuesday 8th June

Today was our last day in this glorious part of Scotland but we still had a few sites to visit before we started on our journey back down to Edinburgh.

Our first stop was back to Loch Garten to see the Osprey Centre. This year we were told that the birds hadn't been successful with the female bird not returning and so the site becomes vacant with different birds competing for occupancy. Hopefully this will settle down and a successful pair will establish a territory.

On our way to the site we found Wigeon and Lapwing and at the site a Common Redstart was singing from a song post somewhere. Try as we might though we couldn't locate it. Lesser Redpolls were flying and calling overhead as well as Goldcrests, lots of European Siskins and various tit species.

We took the lovely walk alongside Loch Garten to Loch Mallachie hoping we might find Crested Tit but they were proving elusive. We did, however, hear a calling Red Crossbill among the numerous European Siskins. A little family of Coal Tits performed well in front of us feeding low down at the base of the trees.

A Tree Pipit was singing away among the trees and eventually we picked it out and were able to see it and its distinctive song flight. A little further on we also heard the song of a Eurasian Treecreeper and, after much searching, saw the bird as it flew down to the base of a tree before spiralling its way back up again.

We left Garten and as we drove south we had a quick look in a small lochan which appeared in a field. There we caught a glimpse of an orangey bird. Slavonian Grebe! We had at last found the grebe we'd been looking for and spent the next twenty or so minutes looking at this most beautiful of the grebe family. Also in the water were a few Eurasian Wigeon and a nice male Northern Shoveler.

Our journey now took us a little further down to Insh Marshes where we spent a short amount of time having a quick look at this excellent site which also served as our lunch stop.

After this final look at one of the very special parts of Scotland it was time to head off south and we arrived back into Edinburgh around 17.30 to access our comfortable city hotel.

Our last meal together was a great success at a close by and very friendly Italian restaurant and then it was time to retire for the night

Day 9

Wednesday 9th June

On our final day before people caught their various trains and flights home we had some time to explore the delights of Edinburgh and its highly impressive cityscapes, magnificent buildings and fascinating history.

A group of us took a walk up to Castle and viewed the Georgian New Town from its battlements. We wandered down the Royal Mile past the highly interesting Writers Museum where one can learn about Burns, Scott and Stevenson. We saw the pub named after Deacon Brodie considered to be the inspiration for Stevenson's Jekyll and Hyde. Holyrood Castle and parliament are impressive in their own unique ways and we walked past them before returning along the attractive Princes Street Gardens past the Scott Memorial, National Gallery and the famous shops.

Birding never stops of course and we had a good view of a Peregrine as it flew purposefully past us across the distinctive Edinburgh skyline!

Finally, it was time to deliver people to their transport hubs and fond farewells were made with wonderful memories of a great trip to the Best of Scotland

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Species Lists

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

	Common name	Scientific name	June 2021								
			1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1	Canada Goose	<i>Branta canadensis</i>	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓			
2	Greylag Goose	<i>Anser anser</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
3	Mute Swan	<i>Cygnus olor</i>	✓			✓					
4	Common Shelduck	<i>Tadorna tadorna</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓				
5	Northern Shoveler	<i>Spatula clypeata</i>								✓	
6	Eurasian Wigeon	<i>Mareca penelope</i>							✓	✓	
7	Mallard	<i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
8	Eurasian Teal	<i>Anas crecca</i>							✓	✓	
9	Tufted Duck	<i>Aythya fuligula</i>						✓	✓	✓	
10	Common Eider	<i>Somateria mollissima</i>	✓		✓	✓	✓				
11	Goldeneye	<i>Bucephala clangula</i>						3	✓		
12	Common Merganser (Goosander)	<i>Mergus merganser</i>		✓							
13	Red-breasted Merganser	<i>Mergus serrator</i>	✓	✓		✓					
14	Willow Ptarmigan (Red Grouse)	<i>Lagopus lagopus scoticus</i>							✓		
15	Black Grouse	<i>Tetrao tetrix</i>						3			
16	Ptarmigan	<i>Lagopus mutus</i>						?			
17	Red-legged Partridge	<i>Alectoris rufa</i>							8		
18	Common Pheasant	<i>Phasianus colchicus</i>	H	H		H		✓	✓	✓	
19	Black-throated Diver	<i>Gavia arctica</i>							1		
20	Northern Fulmar	<i>Fulmarus glacialis</i>			✓						✓
21	Manx Shearwater	<i>Puffinus puffinus</i>			✓						
22	Little Grebe	<i>Tachybaptus ruficollis</i>						4	6	✓	
23	Slavonian Grebe	<i>Podiceps auritus</i>							2		
24	Grey Heron	<i>Ardea cinerea</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	
25	Northern Gannet	<i>Morus bassanus</i>	✓	✓	✓						

	Common name	Scientific name	June 2021								
			1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
26	European Shag	<i>Phalacrocorax aristotelis</i>		✓	✓	✓					
27	Great Cormorant	<i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>	✓								
28	Golden Eagle	<i>Aquila chrysaetos</i>				3			1		
29	Eurasian Sparrowhawk	<i>Accipiter nisus</i>						1	1		
30	Hen Harrier	<i>Circus cyaneus</i>		✓	✓	2					
31	White-tailed Eagle	<i>Haliaeetus albicilla</i>			4	1	2				
32	Common Buzzard	<i>Buteo buteo</i>		✓	2	✓	6	✓	✓	✓	
33	Osprey	<i>Pandion haliaetus</i>					2				
34	Red Kite	<i>Milvus milvus</i>							2		
35	Corncrake	<i>Crex crex</i>		2							
36	Common Moorhen	<i>Gallinula chloropus</i>						2	1	✓	
37	Eurasian Coot	<i>Fulica atra</i>								✓	
38	Eurasian Oystercatcher	<i>Haematopus ostralegus</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
39	Northern Lapwing	<i>Vanellus vanellus</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
40	Common Ringed Plover	<i>Charadrius hiaticula</i>			✓						
41	Common Snipe	<i>Gallinago gallinago</i>				1		H			
42	Woodcock	<i>Scolopax rusticola</i>							1		
43	Eurasian Curlew	<i>Numenius arquata</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
44	Common Redshank	<i>Tringa totanus</i>		✓							
45	Common Sandpiper	<i>Actitis hypoleucos</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
46	Black-legged Kittiwake	<i>Rissa tridactyla</i>	✓	✓	✓						
47	Black-headed Gull	<i>Chroicocephalus ridibundus</i>	✓	✓			✓	✓	✓	✓	
48	Common Gull	<i>Larus canus</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
49	Great Black-backed Gull	<i>Larus marinus</i>	✓		✓	✓			✓		
50	European Herring Gull	<i>Larus argentatus</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
51	Lesser Black-backed Gull	<i>Larus fuscus graellsii</i>	✓		1						✓
52	Common Tern	<i>Sterna hirundo</i>					✓				
53	Arctic Tern	<i>Sterna paradisaea</i>	✓	✓	✓						

	Common name	Scientific name	June 2021								
			1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
54	Great Skua	<i>Stercorarius skua</i>			2						
55	Arctic Skua	<i>Stercorarius parasiticus</i>			1						
56	Common Guillemot	<i>Uria aalge</i>			✓						
57	Razorbill	<i>Alca torda</i>			✓						
58	Black Guillemot	<i>Cepphus grylle</i>	✓		✓		✓				
59	Atlantic Puffin	<i>Fratercula arctica</i>			✓						
60	Rock Dove	<i>Columba livia</i>		✓	✓						
61	Feral Pigeon	<i>Columba livia 'feral'</i>	✓				✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
62	Common Wood Pigeon	<i>Columba palumbus</i>	✓				✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
63	Eurasian Collared Dove	<i>Streptopelia decaocto</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
64	Common Cuckoo	<i>Cuculus canorus</i>		✓	✓	✓	H	H	H	H	
65	Common Swift	<i>Apus apus</i>	✓				✓	✓	✓	✓	
66	Great Spotted Woodpecker	<i>Dendrocopos major</i>					✓		1	1	
67	Common Kestrel	<i>Falco tinnunculus</i>		✓		✓			1		
68	Peregrine Falcon	<i>Falco peregrinus</i>							1		1
69	Eurasian Jay	<i>Garrulus glandarius</i>							1		
70	Eurasian Magpie	<i>Pica pica</i>	✓	✓						✓	✓
71	Western Jackdaw	<i>Coloeus monedula</i>	✓		✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
72	Rook	<i>Corvus frugilegus</i>		✓	✓			✓	✓	✓	
73	Carrion Crow	<i>Corvus corone</i>	✓					✓	✓	✓	✓
74	Hooded Crow	<i>Corvus cornix</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓	
75	Northern Raven	<i>Corvus corax</i>		✓	1	✓	3				
76	Coal Tit	<i>Parus ater</i>					H	H	✓	✓	
77	Eurasian Blue Tit	<i>Cyanistes caeruleus</i>		✓	H	✓	✓		✓	✓	
78	Great Tit	<i>Parus major</i>		✓		1	✓			✓	
79	Crested Tit	<i>Parus cristatus</i>							H		
80	Eurasian Skylark	<i>Alauda arvensis</i>		✓	H		✓	✓			
81	Sand Martin	<i>Riparia riparia</i>		✓			✓	✓	✓	✓	
82	Barn Swallow	<i>Hirundo rustica</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

	Common name	Scientific name	June 2021								
			1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
83	Common House Martin	<i>Delichon urbicum</i>		✓		✓	✓		✓		
84	Long-tailed Tit	<i>Aegithalos caudatus</i>		✓							
85	Wood Warbler	<i>Phylloscopus sibilatrix</i>				H	H				
86	Willow Warbler	<i>Phylloscopus trochilus</i>	H	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
87	Common Chiffchaff	<i>Phylloscopus collybita</i>		H	H	H	H				
88	Eurasian Blackcap	<i>Sylvia atricapilla</i>		H	H	H	H		H	✓	
89	Common Whitethroat	<i>Curruca communis</i>		H	H	✓	H	H			
90	Grasshopper Warbler	<i>Locustella naevia</i>		H							
91	Goldcrest	<i>Regulus regulus</i>		H		H			H	H	
92	Eurasian Wren	<i>Troglodytes troglodytes</i>		✓	✓	✓	H	H	H	✓	
93	Eurasian Treecreeper	<i>Certhia familiaris</i>								1	
94	Common Starling	<i>Sturnus vulgaris</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
95	Common Blackbird	<i>Turdus merula</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
96	Song Thrush	<i>Turdus philomelos</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
97	Mistle Thrush	<i>Turdus viscivorus</i>				3	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
98	Spotted Flycatcher	<i>Muscicapa striata</i>				1			2		
99	European Robin	<i>Erithacus rubecula</i>		✓	H	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
100	Common Redstart	<i>Phoenicurus phoenicurus</i>							✓	H	
101	Whinchat	<i>Saxicola rubetra</i>				3					
102	European Stonechat	<i>Saxicola rubicola</i>				2	✓				
103	Northern Wheatear	<i>Oenanthe oenanthe</i>		✓	✓	✓					
104	White-throated Dipper	<i>Cinclus cinclus</i>							1		
105	House Sparrow	<i>Passer domesticus</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
106	Dunnock	<i>Prunella modularis</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
107	Grey Wagtail	<i>Motacilla cinerea</i>							1		
108	Pied Wagtail	<i>Motacilla alba yarrellii</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
109	Meadow Pipit	<i>Anthus pratensis</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		
110	Tree Pipit	<i>Anthus trivialis</i>				✓	✓		H	✓	

	Common name	Scientific name	June 2021								
			1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
111	Eurasian Rock Pipit	<i>Anthus petrosus</i>		✓	✓	✓					
112	Common Chaffinch	<i>Fringilla coelebs</i>	H	✓	H	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
113	Eurasian Bullfinch	<i>Pyrrhula pyrrhula</i>							1		
114	European Greenfinch	<i>Chloris chloris</i>							H		
115	Twite	<i>Linaria flavirostris</i>				2					
116	Common Linnet	<i>Linaria cannabina</i>		✓							
117	Common Redpoll	<i>Acanthis cabaret</i>		H	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	H	
118	Red Crossbill	<i>Loxia curvirostra</i>								H	
119	European Goldfinch	<i>Carduelis carduelis</i>		✓		✓	✓	✓			
120	Eurasian Siskin	<i>Spinus spinus</i>	H	✓	H	H	✓	✓	✓	✓	

Mammals

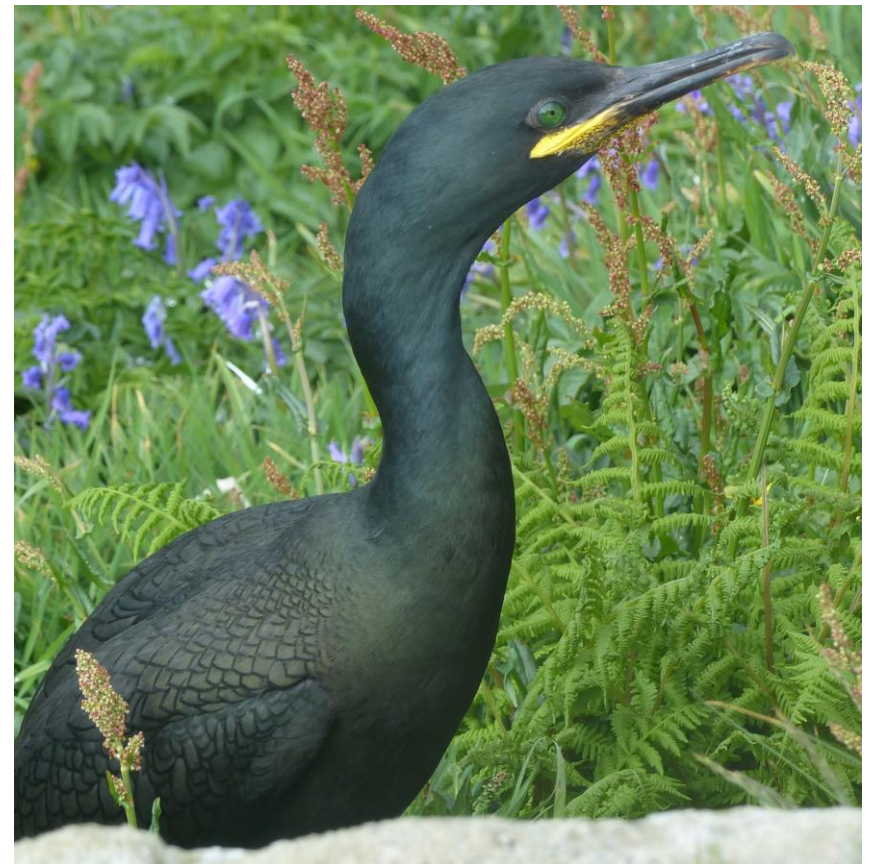
	Mammalian Common name	Scientific name	June 2021								
			1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1	Eurasian Otter	<i>Lutra lutra</i>				2					
2	Pine Marten	<i>Martes martes</i>							1		
3	European Badger	<i>Meles meles</i>							5		
4	Stoat	<i>Mustela erminea</i>					1				
5	European Rabbit	<i>Oryctolagus cuniculus</i>			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
6	Brown Hare	<i>Lepus europaeus</i>					✓	✓	✓		
7	Red Squirrel	<i>Sciurus vulgaris</i>						✓	✓	✓	
8	Water Vole	<i>Arvicola amphibius</i>						1			
9	Field Vole	<i>Microtus agrestis</i>							1		
10	Wood Mouse	<i>Apodemus sylvaticus</i>							1		
11	Roe Deer	<i>Capreolus capreolus</i>						✓	✓		
12	Red Deer	<i>Cervus elaphus</i>		✓		✓	✓	✓	✓		
13	Reindeer	<i>Rangifer tarandus</i>						20			
14	Harbour (Common) Seal	<i>Phoca vitulina</i>		✓		✓					
15	Grey Seal	<i>Halichoerus grypus</i>			✓						

Other species

	Common name	Scientific name	June 2021								
			1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1	Common Lizard	<i>Zootoca vivipara</i>						1			



Red Deer



Shag