



# Shetland

Dates: 8<sup>th</sup> – 15<sup>th</sup> June 2019

A visit to Shetland is a must for anyone keen on Scotland and its wildlife with bustling seabird colonies, dramatic scenery and the chance of catching up with Orcas in this exciting archipelago of islands closer to Norway than Mainland Scotland. Having lived in Shetland for 3 years before moving to the Outer Hebrides your guide has an intimate knowledge of the wildlife and the islands' highlights. This trip is timed to make the most of the breeding seabirds and we'll visit colonies at Sumburgh Head, Hermaness and Noss which are thronged with breeding birds at this time of year. We'll also visit Mousa on a night trip which is a real highlight as we make our way to the Iron Age broch in the simmer dim with Storm Petrels whizzing around your ears in the twilight. It's a superb chance to see one of the best wildlife experiences in Scotland. It's not all seabirds too as we'll visit Fetlar with the hope of seeing Red-necked Phalarope and Whimbrel whilst the Keen of Hamar on Unst is home to some very rare plants that should be flowering at this time of year. We'll also look for otters and cetaceans such as Killer Whales with Shetland being the best place in the UK to catch up with these incredible animals.



**Short list of species:** Red-throated Diver, Great Northern Diver, Bonxie, Arctic Skua, Puffin, Black Guillemot, Razorbill, Guillemot, Storm Petrel, Gannet, Fulmar, Red-necked Phalarope, Golden Plover, Dunlin, Whimbrel, Arctic Tern, Eider, European Otter, possible Killer Whale, Harbour Porpoise, Minke Whale, Shetland Mouse-ear amongst many more.

## Itinerary:

Day 1: We'll either meet up in Lerwick (for those coming by ferry) or at Sumburgh airport for those flying in. Once we're all on board we'll make our way north to the most northerly inhabited island of Unst, which will be our base for the next 3 days. The ferry trips between Mainland to Yell and Unst provide us with the opportunity to catch up with sea ducks and divers as well as passing seabirds. There's also the possibility of seeing whales or dolphins with 2018 being an excellent year for sightings of Orcas; so fingers crossed 2019 is a repeat. The ports themselves are some of the best spots to look for otters too so we'll keep an eye out at each stop for these playful creatures.

Day 2: in the morning we'll make our way to Hermaness which supports masses of seabirds including one of the largest Great Skua colonies (or bonxies as they're locally known) in the world. We'll also see all the regular auks, including Puffins and Black Guillemots plus thousands of Gannets on the towering cliffs. The walk around the headland will also provide opportunities to look for cetaceans, Red-throated Divers as well as breeding Golden Plover and Dunlin. Once we've finished at this dramatic location we'll head for the Keen of Hamar and the Serpentine landscape that supports an array of rare plants including the endemic Edmonston's Chickweed. We should also have a bit of time to look for whales and dolphins from one of the headlands on the east side of Unst and to look for any spring migrants that might be lingering such as Red-backed Shrike or Marsh Warbler.



Day 3: Fetlar is our destination today and we'll hopefully be able to catch up with its most famous summer visitor the Red-necked Phalarope. These tiny waders are normally found around the Mires of Funzie and if the weather's calm enough will visit Loch Funzie to feed when they can sometimes be found virtually under your feet. The island also supports plenty of nesting skuas as well as Whimbrel and Red-throated Diver. Otters are often seen around the ferry terminal on Fetlar whilst the crossing to Unst turns up the odd cetacean from time to time including Killer Whales. Other wildlife we may see from the ferry includes Eiders, Great Northern Divers and passing seabirds.

Day 4: We'll say a fond farewell to Unst today and make our way back to Mainland Shetland via Yell. Although superficially a barren looking island, Yell actually has plenty to offer and

we'll make a couple of stops to look for otters and various birds as we make our way to the ferry terminal at Ulsta, which is another good site for otters. Once we're on Mainland Shetland we continue south to our base for the next four nights although we'll fill the afternoon with stops at various sites along the minor roads along the east side of the island which should allow us to catch up with Whooper Swan (a couple of pairs regularly breed), possibly Peregrine and maybe something more unusual such as a lingering White-billed Diver.

Day 5: We'll explore the southern mainland today spending time at Sumburgh Head with the Puffins and other seabirds as well as keeping an eye out to sea, hoping for a passing Orca or Minke Whale. Other sites we'll visit include Loch of Spiggie, Scatness, Pool of Virkie and Loch of Hillwell which should provide us with a nice selection of birds, mammals and plants before what may well be the highlight for most. In the evening we head for Sandwick and the late trip to Mousa to see the Storm Petrels in the "simmer dim" when the sun hardly drops below the horizon. This is a thoroughly enchanting way to spend the evening as petrels whizz past heading for the nesting holes on the boulder beach or amongst the walls of the Iron Age broch, which is the best preserved in the world. To hear the purring calls of Storm Petrels coming from the walls of the 2,000 year old broch in the twilight of the summer night is something you'll not forget in a hurry.

Day 6: This morning we'll make our way to Lerwick to catch a boat trip around the island of Noss. This superb trip takes us right underneath the bustling seabird cliffs an experience not to be missed as Gannets plunge into the sea all around us. Great Skuas often circle around the boat providing the photographers with some excellent opportunities to capture the prolific action. If we're lucky we may also spot whales or dolphins on the two hour trip from Lerwick around Bressay to the cliffs of Noss. Once back in Lerwick we'll take the ferry over to Bressay and explore the island from the lighthouse at Kirkabister Ness to the bay off Setter where otters are a regular feature. We'll also see plenty more seabirds whilst wandering around the island and with a bit of luck maybe a few late migrants at Gorie.

Day 7: We'll visit the dramatic coastline of Eshaness in northwest Mainland today where we'll take a walk amongst the stunning scenery of arches, stacks and blowholes along the cliffs. This also provides us with more opportunities to look for whales and dolphins with all the regular species (White-beaked Dolphin, White-sided Dolphin, Risso's Dolphin, Harbour Porpoise, Orca and Minke Whale) possible. We'll also stop at nearby Urafirth to look for the increasingly rare Oysterplant that still survives in a small pocket here. As we make our way southwards we'll stop at various firths and voes to check for cetaceans and otters. All the time we'll be in touch with the local grapevine so we can react to any exciting sightings as quickly as possible.

Day 8: Our final morning we'll take a trip up to Sumburgh Head once again to see if we can catch up with some whales or dolphins before we make our way back to the airport for connecting flights south. Those that are catching the ferry from Lerwick in the evening will

get much of the day exploring parts of southern Shetland that we haven't visited previously or searching out the latest reports of scarce birds or cetaceans within range of Lerwick.

**Dates:** 8<sup>th</sup> – 15<sup>th</sup> June 2019

**Tour duration:** 7 nights / 8 days on the islands.

**Cost:** £1,400 per person or £1,300 per person for two sharing

Accommodation is provided at two hotels with one in Unst and the second for the remaining part of the week in Mainland Shetland.

All meals are provided with evening meals taken in local hotels. If you have special dietary requirements please let us know when booking.

**Group size:** 8 (maximum)

**Booking:** Please email: [steveduffield70@gmail.com](mailto:steveduffield70@gmail.com)

**Where to meet:** The tour begins and ends in Shetland. If you arrive by plane or as a foot passenger off the ferry we will be there to meet you and take you to your accommodation. If you arrive early and are already in the islands on the first day then you'll be picked up in the morning and we'll explore local habitats and wildlife whilst others arrive during the morning. On the last day we'll continue to search for wildlife until everyone has departed on their various flight / ferry connections.

**Getting to the islands:** Loganair operate regular flights between Glasgow, Edinburgh and Aberdeen to Sumburgh airport in Shetland. Northlink ferries sail from Aberdeen to Lerwick daily.

**Western Isles Wildlife Contact Address:**

7 Carinish, Isle of North Uist, Western Isles, HS6 5HL

**Contact Steve at:**

[steveduffield70@gmail.com](mailto:steveduffield70@gmail.com) or phone 07867 555971 / 01876 580619