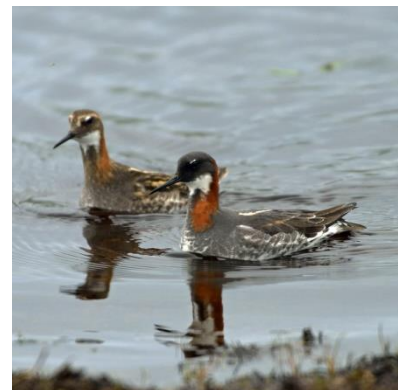




Shetland

Dates: 6th – 13th June 2020



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 that once belonged to Norway. 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 alive with activity at this time of year. We'll also visit Mousa and its Iron Age broch on a night trip to see the return of Britain's smallest seabird, the Storm Petrel. These tiny birds, no larger than a House Martin spend the daytime out at sea, returning under cover of darkness. In June the sun only just drops below the horizon so the twilight; known locally as the 'simmer dim' provides enough light that you can see the shadowy figures return to their burrows. This is a superb and unique chance to see these birds on their breeding grounds and provides one of the best wildlife experiences in Scotland. It's not all seabirds though as we'll visit Fetlar where we'll have a good chance of seeing Red-necked Phalarope and Whimbrel. Late migrant warblers, flycatchers and shrikes heading to northern Europe may also be lingering in any cover that we might come across. On Unst we visit the Keen of Hamar; home to some very rare plants that should be flowering at this time of year including Edmondston's Chickweed, which is endemic to the island. 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.



Itinerary:

Day 1: For those coming on the overnight sailing from Aberdeen on 5th I'll be there to meet you as the boat arrives in Lerwick, early morning. We'll then make our way towards Sumburgh and perhaps stop off at a couple of locations on route depending on what time we need to be at the airport to pick up anyone arriving this way. Once we're all together we'll drop the bags off at Sumburgh Hotel and explore south Mainland including a trip to Sumburgh Head to visit the seabird colonies which of course includes a few Puffins around the lighthouse. Passing seabirds will include Gannets as well as both Arctic and Great Skuas. Being early June there's also the chance of the odd migrant lingering on and if we're really lucky a passing Orca. We'll also take a look at Scatness and Pool of Virkie before heading back to the hotel. In the evening we'll hopefully make a visit to Mousa and take a walk to the broch which holds breeding Storm Petrels.

Day 2: We'll head north after breakfast at the hotel taking the ferry first to Yell and then on to Unst. The ports offer the chance of seeing otters whilst the crossings can provide some nice views of seabirds and Eiders. Once we reach the most northerly isle of Unst we'll make our way to the hotel before exploring the north-east part of the island including Skaw (with the most northerly house in the UK); Norwick and Haroldswick where we'll look for any migrants as well as otters and cetaceans. This far north spring is late and early June is a good time to pick up migrants such as Red-backed Shrike, Marsh Warbler and maybe a splendid Rose-coloured Starling. In the evening we'll also take a walk down to the sheltered waters at Baltasound; just a short distance from the hotel where we have a good chance of picking up otters.

Day 3: This morning we'll make our way to Hermaness via the Keen of Hamar; which is a superb botanical site that at first glance appears as lifeless barren patch of rocky ground. By carefully wandering around we should be able to find at least some of the specialities which include Edmondston's Chickweed, a local endemic flowering plant found by Thomas Edmondston at the tender age of 12. Moving on we'll head to Burrafirth and take a walk

over the moorland to the cliffs at Hermaness. As we walk out along the boardwalk we pass through a scattered colony of Great Skuas (Bonxies) which are very protective of their home patch against any intruders. They don't normally attack if you stay on the path but keep a watchful eye on all visitors. Once we reach the spectacular cliffs we should be able to see Muckle Flugga lighthouse as well as the bustling Gannet colony from Saito – the highest cliffs. If the weather's calm there's also a chance of picking passing whales or dolphins. We'll stop off in Haroldswick on the way back as there's normally a few Harbour Seals close inshore here whilst a nice selection of waders nest between here and Hermaness.

Day 4: We head to the south side of Unst and catch the morning ferry to Fetlar. We'll pick up good numbers of seabirds from the ferry and maybe even a whale or some dolphins. Once we've landed we'll make our way to the eastern side of the island and the Loch of Funzie where we'll be looking for one of Fetlar's prize birds – Red-necked Phalarope. They can be difficult to find in strong winds as they often hide out in thick vegetation although if Funzie doesn't produce any sightings there are a couple of more sheltered lochs where we have a good chance of seeing them. The east side of Fetlar is also home to breeding Whimbrel and we should pick them up relatively easily from the roadside in this area too. Any bit of shelter could harbour some late migrants whilst we'll also keep an eye on the sea in case there are any Minke Whales or dolphins in the area. We'll also have a look for otters in a couple of locations on the western side of the island before heading back to Unst in the early evening.

Day 5: We head south, leaving the northern isles this morning although on route we'll make a couple of stops on Unst; at Westing and Uyeasound before catching the ferry to Yell. Once on Yell we'll have a lunch break somewhere prior to making our way to the ferry port at Ulsta; a good site for otters, if the tides are right. The crossing to Mainland is likely to provide good views of passing seabirds and maybe even a few Harbour Porpoise or dolphins. We make our way back down to Sumburgh at the southern tip of Mainland, although rather than head straight down the main road, we'll venture along some of the minor roads along the east side. We'll take a couple of short stops at various spots to search for wildlife in the Nesting area including Loch of Benston near Catfirth. This should provide us with more chance of seeing cetaceans and maybe even a Peregrine or Merlin.

Day 6: This morning we make our way to Lerwick where we'll join a 2 hour boat trip that'll take us around the southern tip of Bressay and coast of Noss. The powerful rib will allow the skilful skipper to manoeuvre us right under the towering cliffs of this National Nature Reserve which supports a huge colony of Gannets. Masses of Kittiwakes, Fulmars, Razorbills, Guillemot and Puffins all add to the spectacle as Gannets plunge dive around us. Bonxies will be patrolling the cliff edge too, looking for any seabirds carrying food and can often be seen grabbing Gannets by the wing tip as they mug them in mid-air for their last catch. Once back in Lerwick we'll catch the ro-ro ferry across to Bressay where we'll spend the remainder of the day exploring the quiet Voe of Culbingsbrough and taking a walk to the isolated croft at

Gorie, nearby. We should also hopefully have time to head towards the lighthouse at the southern end of the island that lies in a commanding position looking across towards Lerwick and Mainland Shetland.

Day 7: We make our way at the dramatic coastline of Eshaness this morning stopping off at Loch of Tingwall on route. This long, narrow loch can easily be scanned from the roadside and normally holds Tufted Ducks, Red-breasted Merganser, Whooper Swans and Teal. Continuing north we re-join the main road, branching off at Voe towards Brae and on to the far north-west of the island. On route we stop on a storm beach where we should be able to find the increasingly rare Oysterplant in flower before reaching Eshaness itself. To the south lies the superb rock formations known as The Drongs and Dore Holm; the latter being an arch, etched by the sea in a small rocky island. The whole coastline in this area is stunningly shaped by the North Atlantic making a great backdrop whilst we search out Red-throated Diver, Whimbrel and nesting Ringed Plover. If it happens to be calm whilst we're here we've also got the chance of picking up various cetaceans. On the way back we'll call in to the valley at Kergord, which by contrast to other areas supports a significant stand of mature trees. This often provides a temporary home for any wayward migrant birds as well as Shetland's only colony of Rooks.

Day 8: Exactly what we do today depends on what time anyone departing by plane is due to leave. We'll tour around South Mainland this morning taking a short walk at Quendale as well as scoping any wildfowl and waders we can find around Loch of Hillwell and Loch of Spiggie. The latter normally holds a pair of so of breeding Whooper Swans as well as Red-throated Divers and bathing Bonxies. Hillwell although only small often holds a greater variety of wildfowl than its larger neighbour and we should be able to find Wigeon, Teal, Tufted Duck and Coot; here at their only breeding locality in Shetland. Depending on time we'll also explore around Boddam which often holds a few waders whilst nearby Loch of Clumlie often harbours one or two surprises. Once all those departing by air have left we'll make our way slowly towards Lerwick where we'll catch the early evening sailing to Aberdeen.

Short list of species: Whooper Swan, 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, Edmondston's Chickweed amongst many others.

Dates: 6th – 13th June 2020

Tour duration: 7 nights / days

Cost: £1,400 per person (£100 cheaper pp if sharing)

Accommodation is provided in hotels at Sumburgh and Baltasound

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

Where to meet: You'll be met at the ferry port in Lerwick on arrival, or at Sumburgh airport depending on which way you decide to travel to the islands.

Getting to the islands: [Loganair](#) provide flights from various airports in Scotland to Sumburgh; whilst [Northlink](#) run ferries from Aberdeen to Lerwick.

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