

Holiday Highlights

Islay & Speyside

13-23 March 2010

Guides: Steve Willis & Mark Denman

Guests: Margaret & Dick Lewis, Sheila & Paul Smith, Liz & Jean Huxley, Chris Heber-Percy, Barbara Weeks, Dave Thompson, Stan Kenyon

Day 1 Our holiday begins the group arriving at the Steading. The Cairngorms are still very much in the grips of winter - the lochs are frozen and there are massive snow banks all around the Steading!

There are a number of familiar faces in the group and also some newcomers to Speyside Wildlife. Once everyone arrives we sit down to a fine meal, a glass of wine and much discussion about the coming trip.

Day 2 We start the holiday with a drive up to Coignafearn near the top of the River Findhorn. The landscape is shrouded in snow and there is a conspicuous lack of bird activity as we drive along the glen. A few Lapwing and Oystercatcher are seen low down but as we gain height we see more and more snow and less birds! Steve stops his van on the way up to watch one of the local Feral Goats stood up a Birch tree trying to find something good to eat! At the head of the glen we get wrapped up and set ourselves up to have a look for raptors. Mark and Steve have only just started scanning the hilltops when Steve shouts he has not one but two Golden Eagles! They are distant but show well and all the group get onto them. Scopes are set up and some of the group get great views of these magnificent birds in flight. They are covering a lot of ground as they fly around and after a minute or two are out of sight. It's not long at all until Mark shouts eagle again! This time the bird is right overhead and best of all it is being mobbed by a Buzzard so we get a unique opportunity to fully appreciate the size of a Golden Eagle! Mark gets a good look at the plumage and it seems this is a third bird!

We take a walk over to the other side of the glen. Chris is looking back to see if any of the eagles are still in view and instead finds a Raven sitting high on the top of the hill. We also watch a Dipper dash past over the burn - a very hardy bird in this frozen landscape! Red Deer can be seen on the open hill and some are easily found against the snow. This is not the mammal we are after though. Mark and Steve look closely at the slopes ahead of us and find them - Mountain Hare! They are still almost fully white and yet are lying out in open ground amongst the heather! We find three hares close by and spend an enjoyable time watching them.

It's not a day for hanging around in the mountains so we take a quick detour down to the coast. At North Kessock by Inverness Liz finds us a lovely Red Kite. A second bird appears and they effortlessly glide high above us. In the broadleaf trees beside us Dave hears Goldfinch and soon finds them. A few tits are flitting about as well. On the Moray Firth below we find flocks of Scaup whilst Teal and Shelduck feed on the shore. Liz finds a wintering Slavonian Grebe out at sea and soon we have the scopes set up on this beautiful bird. There are waders on the shore too. Dunlin feed at the edge of the water and Paul enjoys great close views of Redshank in the scopes.

Back in snowy Speyside Mark has a treat for us. He recently stumbled across some bird feeders in the pinewoods that were being visited by some very confiding Crested Tits. It's a short walk from the vans and when we get to the feeders things are quiet. There are Blue, Coal, and Great Tit and we hear Treecreeper too. Suddenly the tits are joined by their elusive cousin the Crested Tit! This is a new bird for Paul and Sheila and for many of the group they have only ever had fleeting glimpses. These birds are feeding just feet from us! Dick, Steve, and Mark snap away on their cameras making the most of this rare opportunity. We enjoy the Crested Tit's company for a good while admiring their crests and handsome plumage at close range. Whilst we are in the woods Margaret finds a Great Spotted Woodpecker high up in a nearby birch.

It's been a superb day with lots of great quality views. Stan is delighted to have added five birds to his year list!

Day 3

We have an early start this morning to visit a local Black Grouse lek. This is a new site for even our most experienced Speysiders! It is only a short drive from the Steading and when we get there we find some birds on the site doing the full lek routine. A quick count gives us an impressive 16 birds - one more than either Mark or Steve's previous sightings at this site.

After warming up with a hearty breakfast we then head north up to the Black Isle. Our first port of call is Udale Bay. The tide is high and most of the birds have been pushed right up the beach so are very close. Mark finds Bar-tailed Godwit and Knot roosting on the far shore and everyone enjoys stunning views of Wigeon and Teal in front of us in full sunshine. There are Heron scattered around and some of the group are watching one in particular. It seems to be trying to eat something and after a while lifts it's meal out of the water - it is trying to eat a large toad! It's not a pretty sight so we leave it be.

Margaret and Dick pick up a Linnet on the fence in front of us and we all enjoy hearing Skylark in full song overhead. Another typical farmland bird makes its presence felt with its distinctive song - a Yellowhammer. Joan worked on farms and loves hearing their familiar song.

We move along the shore to look at more open waters. There are distant Red-breasted Merganser, flocks of Scaup and even one or two Slavonian Grebe. As we drive over the Black Isle (neither black or an island) we enjoy watching two Red Kite passing close by the vans. We have our lunch at the village of Rosehearty overlooking the calm bay. Liz suddenly calls she has seen a dolphin and sure enough a mother and calf Bottlenose Dolphin swim quietly around. We manage to get our scopes on them and Joan and Barbara get great views of them as they briefly surface.

More Red Kites appear as we leave the Black Isle to have a look at the Moray Firth at Inverness. Herring and Common Gulls are washing in the rushing tide and Steve finds a little Grebe that is feeding away busily.

Given our early start we make our way back to Speyside for a break before another fine meal at the Steading.

Day 4

The weather looks promising over west today so we get going slightly earlier than normal and set out for Gruinard Bay. It's a beautiful drive through rugged highland scenery before we drop down to sea level on the west. We've barely stopped the vans at our regular vantage point when Liz sees a White-tailed Eagle up the hill behind us. It flies out and over towards Gruinard Island and we clearly see its white tail - it must be an adult bird. As some of us watch this bird go the rest of the group are amazed to see another appear! This too passes high overhead and out onto the island. What a start! The bay is home to dozens of Great Northern Divers in winter and Mark soon has his scope on some of the closer birds. There are also nice wee Black Guillemot below us.

Mark also finds a small flock of Barnacle Geese feeding in a field on the mainland. This is a nice taster for the huge numbers on Islay but sadly it's all Paul and Sheila will see this trip as they can't make the Islay leg.

There is another flurry of activity as another eagle has been spotted. Just as we are about to assume it is one of the Sea Eagles returning it becomes clear it is actually a Golden Eagle! It follows the route taken by the Sea Eagles and passes over the bay to Gruinard Island. The light is excellent and we get a good look at the birds plumage - it is a first year bird. Amazing!

In looking along the shore of the island for any Otter, Mark finds Common Seals hauled out on the rocks. There is also a pair of Slavonian Grebes but not a great view given the distance.

We drive over to Aultbea and from the road Chris sees a flock of Twite. In the short stop we have in the village Mark has a look at the bay and finds yet another Slavonian Grebe but this time much closer. We move down the coast to Poolewe and break for lunch. There are Curlew and Oystercatcher and a few different gulls scattered along the shore. We continue up the coast of Loch Ewe in search of Otter. As hard as we try we can't find any! There are lots of Heron feeding amongst the seaweed. We take a walk on beautiful deserted beach near the end of the road. We find Ringed Plover and at sea a good search reveals a small flock of Black-throated Divers. Unlike the Great Northern Divers we had earlier these were in full breeding plumage and looking very

impressive. A surprising find in a ditch in the car park is masses of frog spawn - a sign of spring! The drive home takes us past Loch Maree and it's unique pine woods.

Day 5

After the driving yesterday we decide to stay more local and explore Strathspey. The day begins with a visit to Tomvaich woods near Grantown-on-Spey. Our aim is to find Capercaillie so we walk quietly and carefully through the woods. There is still some snow on the ground and we find some fresh tracks of very big grouse in these patches - a promising sign! On up the track a little Mark and Steve shout 'CAPER!' as not one but two birds erupt from the heather and fly over the track ahead of us. Everyone gets a brief but clear view of these huge birds as they fly through the woods. We try and scan the trees for them but all the group see is a Roe Deer Steve finds feeding away quietly. Paul and Sheila are excited by their first ever Capercaillie encounter. As we load up the vans to move on Mark and Steve hear Crossbill. They prove elusive but then a female (of indeterminate species!) dashes out of a Pine tree overhead.

We drive on to a wetland by Boat of Garten. It is surprisingly quiet, as is the bird feeder by the car park - still no Red Squirrels! After a quick cuppa we decide to head up to Cairngorm whilst the hill is still clear. The road up the hill is fine and we are all amazed by the depth of snow that has been cleared - in places it feels like driving through a tunnel as the drifts are well over the height of the van! At the top car park we search and search for Ptarmigan on the snowy slopes but it is to no avail. There is no option of walking so all we can do is look from the car park. Whilst we are here though, there are other lovely birds to watch. Some confiding Snow Bunting are feeding in the snow at the edge of the car park and we get great views. Dick snaps away with his camera and gets some nice shots. On the way back down the hill Mark's van get a wonderful look at a Red Grouse comically trying to walk over snow which results in an impression of the nearby skiers!

We break for lunch at Loch Morlich. The majority of the loch is still covered in a thick layer of ice but at the outflow there is open water. In the wee river that drains the loch Steve finds a Dipper asleep on a branch. After a few minutes it wakes up and proceeds to start feeding

in the shallow water below us. We had such great views of Crested Tit at the feeders in Glenmore we decide to go back and hope the tits are still there, and also that the local Red Squirrels may make an appearance. We arrive to find some foresters hard at work with chainsaws roaring as they clear up some fallen trees. We hear Cresties but don't get a look at them. Some beautiful Siskin are a little braver, as are a pair of Long-tailed Tit. Alas still no squirrels!

The RSPB reserve of Loch Insh sits right on the doorstep of the Steading so we visit the Loch and then the wetlands on the way back. There is a little open water around the edge of the loch and here we find many pairs of Goldeneye and also Goosander in full breeding plumage. A large flock of Black-headed Gulls are roosting on the ice and at the edge of the ice a small group of Cormorant loaf around. The wetlands at the other end of the reserve are quite quiet. We hope for Hen Harrier but none appear. It is nice to see Lapwing back on their breeding grounds though. On the far side of the reserve a small group of Whoopers Swans swim into view and with scopes set on them we all get a good look at one of Britain's wildest flock of swans. Movement on the bank opposite us catches our eye and on closer inspection proves to be a Red-legged Partridge running alongside the fence.

After a fine day exploring Speyside we return to the Steading to see what treats our new chef Brian has waiting for us!

Day 6

Today we set out to visit some sites on the Moray coast to the north of Speyside. The journey takes us over some high moorland where we divert to look for Red Grouse. It takes a while to find some but eventually we find some great looking birds very close to the road. Other than the Red Grouse there is little else to see here so we drop down to the coast and begin our search of the sea at the mouth of the Findhorn. The water is very calm and visibility is excellent. There are flocks of Velvet Scoter some way off and they appear to outnumber the Common Scoter. These are great seawatching conditions and the whole group get a good look at these ducks. We also find Long-tailed Duck looking brilliant in their winter plumage. Steve finds a pair of Slavonian Grebe far out but still showing well in the scopes.

Burghead is another promising site for sea ducks and waders so we make our way along the coast and have a break here. There are Eider here and a few more Long-tailed Duck. A couple of King Eider had been seen here in recent weeks but they were not to be found today. Rock Pipit flit along the shore nearby.

We move a short way inland and visit Loch Spynie. This large loch can be good for waterfowl and can also be good for Otter sightings. We get into the hide and take in the view of the loch - it's nice to see a loch not covered in ice! There are good numbers of ducks and swans on the loch but they are all very relaxed so there is not an Otter about. There is excitement on the feeders by the hide when a Red Squirrel appears! We go out and get wonderful views of this charismatic rodent tucking into peanuts. It's great to finally find one and for Sheila this is a major 'tick' to see one so well! Reed Bunting flit around the reeds and we see Wren well - they seem to be very scarce back in Speyside after the extreme winter.

There is another small loch nearby so we make our way there to see what we can find. We arrive at Loch na Bo (Loch of the Cow) to find a flock of Whooper Swans peacefully swimming around. There are large numbers of Wigeon too but they are very flighty and regularly take to the air and swirl around in a tight flock overhead. Mark has another trick up his sleeve here. He disappears for a moment to look further round the loch and re-appears out of breath and simply says 'SMEW'! Our regular guests know this is a very rare bird in Scotland and we rush around to the clearing to take a look. Steve is delighted as he has never seen a Smew before and this is a cracking view! Amongst the Whooper Swans there is one with a neck collar. We make out the code on the collar and Steve takes a note of the number to follow it up and find out more about the bird - *not heard back from BTO yet!!!!*

This is the last day of the Speyside leg of our holiday and sadly Paul and Sheila have to duck out at this point. When we do the list in the evening we quiz them on their favourite species, place and moment of the trip. Sheila decides on raptors in general for her species of the trip, Gruinard Bay for her favourite place and the discovery of the Red Squirrel for her Magic

Moment. Paul was impressed by the Golden Eagles and the Findhorn Valley and for his Magic Moment chooses the Red Grouse that inadvertently skied down the snow.

Day 7

We have an early start this morning for the journey southwest to the Islay ferry. After breakfast and saying our farewells to Paul and Sheila we load up the vans and make our way down the road. Our route takes us through some of Scotland's most iconic landscapes - under Ben Nevis, through Glencoe and over Rannoch Moor. We drive down the side of Loch Fyne and reach the ferry terminal at lunchtime.

We board the ferry then head up onto deck to see what's about. Even whilst we are tied up at the port we find yet another Slavonian Grebe, a Little Grebe, and Great Northern Diver! The Great Northern Diver sightings continue apace as we set off - everywhere you look you can see them! There are a few Guillemot, Razorbill, and Kittiwake at sea, mostly in full summer plumage. Some handsome Black Guillemot are also around. We see some Gannets as we sail along and one in particular gives us a great fly past close to the ferry. The ferry brings us ever closer to Islay and Jura, passing Gigha on the way. The mountains of Jura loom overhead as we turn into the narrow Sound of Islay. We dock at Port Askaig and drive off the ferry.

Steve had promised geese galore from the moment we arrive on Islay and there certainly are geese galore! For the majority of the group, including Mark, this is their first visit to Islay so there is much excitement as we make our way across the island. We see large flocks of Barnacle Geese and White-fronted Geese feeding in the fields but all this is just a taster of things to come. We have a few hours of the afternoon to go birding so we head over to Gruinart Farm, managed by the RSPB. On the way down to the flats we get a great look at a male Hen Harrier that floats effortlessly over the wet fields. Passing by the visitor centre gives us a chance to scan the flats from the hill above. We've picked up a third guide for this leg of the trip, Simon, who loves Islay and has tagged along with us. Simon and Mark work through the big Barnacle Goose flocks on the fields in the hope of a rarity that has been reported recently. Soon enough they find it - a Cackling Goose! This bird looks very

much like a small Canada Goose but (see your Collins Bird Guide 2nd edition!) has now been separated. This vagrant from the high North American Arctic shows well and we can soon make out the features that tell us it the Hutchensii race.

The ponds over the road seem to be full of birds so we head down to the adjacent hide. This is a superb little spot - Shovellers feed in front of us, handsome Pintail upend in the shallows and Teal and Wigeon graze on the grass. Lapwing, Curlew, and Redshank are all over and Liz gets a brief view of a Snipe. Steve asks if anyone would like a look at anything in the scope to which Dave says 'A greenshank would be nice'. Seconds later as Steve looks over the wetlands he finds one! Dave is made up and comes to see. Greenshank are a favourite of Chris's too so he has a look. On the other side of the hide Simon has found a Little Egret. This is a pretty rare bird in Scotland so well worth a look.

Time is marching on so it's time for us to make the short drive over the island to our hotel at Bridgend. We get a warm welcome and then settle down to a magnificent meal. Over coffee we discuss the plan for the next couple of days exploring this amazing island!

Day 8

It's a fine sunny morning so we start the day with a visit to the 'end of the road' on the north east side of the island at Bunnahabhain [boo-na-ha-ven] Distillery. Simon has a feeling it will be promising for a mammal we have missed so far this trip. There have also been reports of an adult Iceland Gull here too. We arrive and begin the search along the rocky shore and the nearby shallow water. We are after Otter and within a minute or two Barbara tells Steve she thinks she has just seen one. She gives us all an explanation of where she last saw it and sure enough moments later up pops an Otter! There is much excitement amongst the group and soon we are all getting fantastic views of the Otter in our bins and scopes. The animal is hunting very industriously and time on the surface is all too brief. In the midst of all this Mark has had a look down to the little jetty by the distillery. Sitting down there is a solitary gull and it is unmistakably an Iceland Gull. Some of the group wander down to take a closer look. The Otter meanwhile continues diving and feeding. Steve watches closely and says to the group how it will have to come to land if it catches anything

big. Sure enough a minute or two later it surfaces with a massive crab and makes a beeline for the shore. Margaret is already over the moon about the sighting so far but it just gets better as the animal runs out onto the rocks and proceeds to demolish the crab about 250 yards from us! Some of the gull enthusiasts have returned in time for frame filling views of a feeding Otter. What a start to the day. Steve then takes a wander down to get a closer look at the gull. He inadvertently flushes the bird but it then flies right over the group's heads and settles on the rocks to polish off the mess left by the Otter! Wonderful!

Our journey onwards takes us back over Gruinart flats. There are continual flocks of feeding Barnacle, White-fronted, and occasional Greylag Geese in the fields as we drive. Liz once again spots a very close Hen Harrier from the van and we stop and admire it as it quarters the fields. We make our way up to Ardnave to see if we can find some Chough. This is a large area of grazed sand dune and is perfect for these charismatic members of the crow family. On the way through the dunes Dave comments how perfect the area looks for Wheatear and decides to stop and see if any have come in. His persistence pays off with a cracking find of a male Wheatear - the first spring migrant for many of us! We walk on for a mile or so and then at last we find a pair of Chough! They are restless and never settle where we can see them well and stay some distance away. We persist for a while but it's far from the only site on the island so we leave them to it. We enjoy lunch in a sheltered spot in the dunes in glorious sunshine. Simon calls from the top of the hill that he has found more Chough. We join him and find two feeding happily in the fields below us.

We move down to the beach at Ardnave to look for more Chough and find them in abundance! There is a large flock of around 30 wheeling around noisily and settling from time to time to feed alongside Jackdaws. We take a stroll down onto the stunning beach at Machir Bay and take in the views. There are Ringed Plover far down the beach and as Steve scans out to sea he calls 'Martin! Flying right!'. A Sand Martin can just be seen flying low over the beach - another year first for all of us! The Chough are up in the fields above the beach so we move up there for a closer look. At the ruined chapel of Kilchoman we watch the flock

continue flying around calling all the while. We get great views of a couple sat on the ruins and also some right beside the vans as we set off. We have to drag some of the group away as the landscape and seascape have captivated them!

On the way home we drive around Loch Gorm. There are huge numbers of Brown Hare in the fields and we see some at very close quarters. We are hoping for more raptors but have to settle for the odd Raven and, of course, huge numbers of geese.

The day is nearing an end but we still have one spectacle to seek out. Our hotel is at the head of Loch Indaal and this is the site of the Barnacle Goose roost. We head down to the saltmarsh and get in position to await the birds. All is quiet and there are almost no geese to be seen. Then all of a sudden an eruption of noise behind reaches a crescendo as a flock of around a thousand pass right overhead and then settle on the mud in front of us. This is just the advanced party - as dusk settles we make out skein after skein moving across the island towards the Loch. Sadly dinner can't wait so we retreat back to the hotel but as we get out of the vans we watch in awe as thousands of birds pass low over the group.

Day 9

Today we aim to explore some key sites on the south of the island. Our first excursion takes us around the Rinns of Islay, the peninsula in the south west. On the way down Loch Indaal we stop to see what we can find on the rocky shore. Steve finds a confiding Purple Sandpiper sat on a rock on the shore and everyone gets the chance to see this sometimes tricky wader. At Portnahaven we take a quick break for coffee whilst sea watching. The seas are pretty rough but it has brought Kittiwakes, auks and gannets in pretty close to shore. We also watch some Grey Seals hauled out on the rocks of the little island in the bay. There is a murmur overhead that gradually gets louder and clearer - a flock of more than 100 Whooper Swans are flying in perfect 'v' formation off the sea. Everything about their flight suggests this is them starting the migration northwards and it seems reasonable to assume they are birds from Ireland given their direction of travel off the sea.

The vast expanses of the Rinns yield a single Hen Harrier sighting and an abundance of Ravens. We stop at a point overlooking a large wild area of moor and hill. There is little other than Meadow Pipit and Skylark to be seen when out of nowhere a female Merlin swoops in! She settles on a rock long enough to get everyone's scopes set and we get a good look at her - a far from typical Merlin sighting! The group take a relaxed walk down the road and are then picked up by the vans after a ten minute head start.

We have to drive up around Loch Indaal to get to our next location and the RSPB's centre at Gruinart makes a convenient stop on the way. There are bird feeders at the edge of the car park and House Sparrows, Chaffinch, Goldfinch and Greenfinch feed busily giving us great views. There are numerous geese scattered across the fields and soon Simon and Mark find the Cackling Goose again. From some way off we watch for birds down on the wetlands by the hide we had visited previously. The usual birds are down there but we also see Gadwall as well. Simon then finds a raptor well beyond the geese. The scale is very hard to determine and the bird is sitting very still. After much speculation it then flies up onto a gate and turns out to be another Merlin!

Our exploration of the southern parts of the island continues with a visit to the Mull of Oa. We drive out over desolate moorland and reach the end of the road. As we get ourselves ready for the short walk we can hear a familiar bird call - there are Twite all around us! They can be very flighty birds and often out of sight but it soon becomes apparent there are around 200! They spend a lot of time settled on the wires and fences and Chris is over the moon at so many of these diminutive but subtly beautiful birds. Having been quite chilly and windy earlier the weather has settled remarkably. As we sit out at the headland above massive sea cliffs there is nearly no wind at all and glorious sunshine. There is little sign of bird life either at sea or on the cliffs but then Liz gives the shout 'EAGLE!' We all look where she directs us and a massive Golden Eagle wheels around the edge of the cliff a mile or so up the coast. It settles on the cliff top and the sun on the bird shows this adult in perfect light! The bird takes to the air again and the group all get a chance to follow its flight in the scopes. We are pretty distracted by this but then Liz asks what the bird is sitting on the top of the hill beyond the area where we are all looking.

Unbelievably it is another Golden Eagle! It takes to the air and it turns out this is a juvenile bird! It is speculation but Steve and Mark wonder if this is the young of the adult female we are watching. Soon they are both airborne and its possible to get them both in the same field of view. Despite all this sunshine and stunning eagle sightings we have to get back to the hotel. We walk back over the moor to the van and the eagles remain in view the entire time. From the van we can see Twite on a fence with Golden Eagles in the background - Chris is in heaven!

After a break at the hotel we go back out at dusk to watch the goose roost. We walk five minutes from the hotel and find ourselves at the salt marsh. It is quiet at first but then as we scan the horizon the sky darkens with a massive flock of many thousands of Barnacle Geese way over Gruinard direction. Most of the geese come in from the other side of the bay but it is still a feast for the eyes and ears to see so many geese at such close quarters.

It is our last day on Islay so we make our way back to the hotel for our final meal on the island.

Day 10

After a fine breakfast we load up the vans and make our way down to Port Charlotte for the ferry homewards. It is a calm sunny crossing and we all reflect on what an amazing time we've had on Islay.

We take a different route home and head up the west side of the Mull of Kintyre bound for Oban. One reason for the alternative route is to look for a couple of rarities that have been reported. A Snow Goose was seen near Lochgilphead but try as we might we don't find it. We stop for a break in Oban where a Ring-billed Gull has been reported, but again we miss it!

It's still some way back to the Steading so we carry on through some magnificent scenery. There is noticeably less snow on the hills than just a few days ago. There is one raptor we have missed so far this holiday but Mark is keen to see if we can find one on the way back. We stop at a crag near Newtonmore and keep an eye out for any movement high above us. It's not long at all before a robust, short tailed raptor dashes in and lands on the cliff - a Peregrine! Mark grabs his scope and we watch the bird

sitting looking out from its perch. Another Peregrine then flies over the cliff and the first bird takes to the air to join it. As they pass high overhead we get a clear view of them both and can easily make out the larger female bird.

We're not far from the Steading now and as we pass ice-free lochs it's great to see the Steading without huge snow drifts around it! We get back with plenty of time to relax and get ourselves settled back into the Steading. Brian has a superb meal for us and then it's time for us to discuss our favourite moments of the trip. Crested Tits are a clear winner for species of the trip, with our many Golden Eagle sightings following. Islay figures highly in the place of the trip and Mull of Oa stands out for many of the group. Finally, Magic Moments vary greatly amongst the group and the Barnacle Goose roost, Gruinard Bay and its eagles, and the Otter sighting are all roughly even. One thing we can all agree on is that it has been a wonderful trip and we are all going home captivated by Islay's magic.

Birds

Red-throated Diver
Black-throated Diver
Great Northern Diver
Little Grebe
Slavonian Grebe
Fulmar
Gannet
Cormorant
Shag
Grey Heron
Little Egret
Mute Swan
Whooper Swan
Pink-footed Goose
Greenland White-fronted Goose
Greylag Goose
Canada Goose
Cackling Goose
Pale-bellied Brent Goose
Barnacle Goose
Shelduck
Wigeon
Teal
Mallard
Gadwall
Pintail
Shoveler
Tufted Duck
Scaup
Eider
Long-tailed Duck
Common Scoter
Velvet Scoter
Goldeneye
Red-breasted Merganser
Goosander
Smew
Red Kite
White-tailed Sea Eagle
Hen Harrier
Sparrowhawk
Common Buzzard
Golden Eagle
Kestrel
Merlin
Peregrine
Red Grouse
Black Grouse
Capercaillie
Red-legged Partridge
Pheasant
Moorhen
Oystercatcher
Ringed Plover
Golden Plover
Lapwing
Knot
Sanderling
Purple Sandpiper
Dunlin
Snipe
Woodcock
Bar-tailed Godwit
Curlew
Redshank
Greenshank
Turnstone
Black-headed Gull
Common Gull
Lesser Black-backed Gull
Herring Gull
Iceland Gull
Glaucous Gull
Great Black-backed Gull
Kittiwake
Guillemot
Razorbill
Black Guillemot
Rock Dove
Woodpigeon
Collared Dove
Tawny Owl

Great Spotted Woodpecker
Skylark
Sand Martin
Meadow Pipit
Rock Pipit
Grey Wagtail
Pied Wagtail
Dipper
Wren
Duncock
Robin
Stonechat
Wheatear
Blackbird
Fieldfare
Redwing
Mistle Thrush
Goldcrest
Long-tailed Tit
Crested Tit
Coal Tit
Blue Tit
Great Tit
Chough
Trecreeper
Jay
Magpie
Jackdaw
Rook
Carrion Crow
Hooded Crow
Raven
Starling
House Sparrow
Chaffinch
Greenfinch
Goldfinch
Siskin
Linnet
Twite
Crossbill spp.
Bullfinch

Snow Bunting
Yellowhammer
Reed Bunting

Total Birds: 127

Mammals

Red Squirrel
Rabbit
Brown Hare
Mountain Hare
Otter
Pipistrelle Bat
Feral Goat
Red Deer
Roe Deer
Sika Deer
Grey Seal
Common Seal
Bottlenose Dolphin

Total Species: 140