

HOLIDAY HIGHLIGHTS

WILD HEBRIDES

22 May – 1 June 2022

Guides: Stuart Housden and Julian Sykes

Guests: Janet & Graham Erskine, Lynn & Steve Osborne, Rosemary & Paul Briffa, Liz & Roger Ackroyd, Sally Hewitt, Andrew Seal, Don Mills

Day 1 Stuart meet's everyone ahead of dinner in our Inverness hotel as Julian has been caught out by train delays and will be late arriving! Our lead guide spends a little time going through our plan for the next day and hands out the daily checklist, SW pen and notebook packages to everyone. The meal is excellent, but it's been a very long day for most of us and quickly after finishing we are heading to our respective rooms for a good night's sleep.

Day 2 We are down for breakfast at 07:30, leaving the hotel an hour later, loading the minibuses and seeing our first Common Swifts and a Red Kite. We first visit ~a local supermarket for provisions. Once ready we now drive away from the city but it's not long before Stuart is turning off to the track down to a little-known loch. We start well on these back roads first seeing a couple of Stock Doves, plus Hooded and Carrion Crows, Woodpigeon, Yellowhammer and a Great Spotted Woodpecker flies across Julian's van. We now stop as we can hear Tree Pipit, and it's soon found singing from a conifer – superb! We decide to pull over, get out and have a better view as Stuart hears the distinctive call of Common Crossbill, seeing a small party in the nearby large conifers. Over the next minutes our attention is divided between these two species along with Chaffinches, Dunnock, Willow Warbler and Chiffchaff. Eventually it's back in the minibuses and on to the loch parking area on this wet and overcast day.

The loch is ahead of us, and we scan the water finding lots of Sand Martins, Mallard and Common Gulls.

Stuart spots what he thinks is our target species and through the scope it's a pair of summer plumage Black-throated Diver, but they are distant. We don our wet weather gear and set off along the track where we start to find some of the same commoner species but also a singing Greater Whitethroat, lovely male Stonechat and several Siskins. We arrive at the loch edge and set up our telescopes, this time getting much better views of the Black-throated Diver pair along with a Red Kite in the distance, which is another good bird for here. We stay a while checking out the rest of the area, seeing a pair of female

Goosanders but there is a Garden Warbler singing behind us so we try our luck with this normally shy species. Amazingly we tie it down to a small Willow and over the next few minutes most of us get some sort of view as it sings from deep inside the tree foliage.

It is now time to return to the minibus as its now starting to rain again but only lightly and we have a lot more to do before heading off to Skye. We get back and set off from this very productive site and now the rain has started in earnest – in fact its battering down! Stuart leads us round the narrow lanes out on to an open area of moorland where we pull into the side of the road and out of the gloom appears an Osprey, which flies through.

Its still raining heavily as he asks if anyone would like to take a walk out to a wee lochan where there are Red-throated Divers and only gets one taker – Lynn. They head off in the murk as the rest of us chat away about the holiday until they return about 20 minutes later. It has actually been a great success as not only have they seen the divers, but also Common Sandpiper and a Greenshank, with the latter being a fantastic record.

On we now go, continuing along the same winding narrow lanes towards the edge of Loch Ness to the famous RSPB reserve of Loch Ruthven. We eventually reach the car park, having stopped for a Northern Wheatear, Oystercatcher and Curlew, thankfully the rain has stopped and its just drizzling as we alight the minibuses. We now walk down the track to the edge of the loch and almost immediately find our target species – Slavonian Grebe. We gather on the small sandy beach looking at this individual in the distance when one swims into view not 30m from where we are standing, showing us its gorgeous plumage beautifully. It really is smiles all round, especially for Stuart and Julian who the previous year had struggled to find one here. We continue to scan the grey waters of the loch and finding no less than eight individuals dotted around, which is fantastic along with several Little Grebes, Eurasian Teal, Tufted Duck and Mallard. It is again time to leave as it nearly time for lunch and our head guide has a picnic spot in mind – fingers crossed the weather will stay fine!

We now drive south along the edge of the legendary Loch Ness down to Fort Augustus where we stop briefly for the public conveniences before continuing to Invermoriston. Here we park and find ourselves a picnic table to have our lunch at, with lots of hirundines hawking insects overhead. We see and hear some of the common woodland species in the adjacent mature trees and over the ridge a pair of Common Buzzards circle round slowly. We still have a long drive out to Skye and once we are all ready we set off again west as the rain starts to fall again. This makes the journey a little less scenic than we had hoped but still Stuart points out some key locations such as the incredible Glen Shiel with the imposing '5 Sisters'.

We have a little time so make a quick stop at the equally impressive Eilean Donan Castle, where we get the obligatory photos of this imposing and historic place. Stuart soon calls us back to the vans and we are off again, and before long over the bridge to Skye. We follow the main road across the island, seeing the Old Man of Storr rising in the distance. The weather has improved, with even a hint of sunshine, as we reach Uig harbour, and a quick scan at the sea loch produces our first Black Guillemot of the tour. We decide to go for a walk around the harbour, which is very productive as there is a lovely summer plumage Great Northern Diver fishing in the bay along with Shelduck, Shag and plenty of Eider.

The Calmac ferry is right on time, and we are soon onboard and positioned out of the wind in the upper deck, Stuart has made this journey several times and advises us on the strategy. The boat leaves the harbour and it's not long before we are seeing our first Gannets, Kittiwakes, Arctic Terns, Puffins, Razorbills and Guillemots. After about an hour it starts to quieten off and it's now quite cold on deck, so we retire to the dining room for our evening meal. Thankfully, the sea state is calm, and we have a very nice meal, before we realise how close we are to North Uist. As we near Lochmaddy we are invited back to our minibuses, and we are prepared to exit the ferry before she docks. Stuart informs us we have about a 40-minute drive to the hotel across some excellent habitat so we prepared and with the weather improving anything could happen.

We exit the ferry and soon leave the town out on to some open peat moorland, and it's not five minutes before Julian see's our first Raven of the holiday. It is a fairly quiet journey, but the second van does get a brief look at a female Hen Harrier hunting over the moorland before arriving at our accommodation for the next four nights. The hotel is quite rural being surrounded by both moorland and farmland along with a few other houses and we are greeted by our lovely hostess, quickly allocating our rooms, with drinks in the dining room planned a short time later. As it's now quite late and it's been a long day, Stuart and Julian now hand out meal forms, talk through some protocols and our plan for the next day. Before long we are all heading to our rooms for a good night's sleep.

Day 3

Breakfast is at 07:45 but Julian has been out at his minibus a wee bit earlier and has already seen some of the local form of Starlings, which are very reminiscent of Spotless Starling found in Southern Europe, plus Common Buzzard, Raven and a Common Snipe displaying. Breakfast is excellent and once we are ready, we convene at the minibuses a little after 9am where we see our first Short-eared Owl hunting over the adjacent moorland. We now drive south crossing over the causeway to Benbecula, seeing our first Mute Swans, Shelduck and a few Eider. We continue for a while before turning off to a small lochan, where we park the vehicles overlooking it. The weather has thankfully cleared today, as we watch from the confines of the van, initially finding

a Wigeon, couple of Gadwall, Little Grebe and Mallard. A few terns are fishing at the top end of the loch with Stuart's group seeing a Common Tern, amongst the Arctic's.

Now our prize appears in the form of a gorgeous female, Red-necked Phalarope (females unusually for birds being the brighter of the pair!) just 50m from where we are parked. This incredibly rare UK breeding wader, now swims around for a while, allowing us all some fantastic looks and even a few photos – we are very privileged and quite understandably already one of the highlights of the tour. We continue watching until she finally disappears into the loch-side vegetation and now make the decision to move on.

We now drive to our next site, which is coastal and has the affectionate name of Stinky Bay, from the smell of the rotting seaweed along the tideline. It is actually a beautiful situation despite the interesting aroma, and it's also very good for birds, particularly waders. However, we have another target here, this time a Nearctic vagrant wildfowl – Surf Scoter. It has been seen offshore here for several days now and amazingly we find it almost immediately, being the only scoter species around helps enormously. We are out of the vans and putting up the telescopes, with Stuart and Julian giving instructions on where to look as it bobs around in the Atlantic Ocean. It is with three Eider, which makes things easier and soon enough we are all looking at it through either a telescope or our own binoculars. Very pleased to have seen this our attention moves to other species here, with both Great Northern Diver and Shelduck in the sea and amongst the seaweed there are lots of waders. The Sanderling are fabulous, now moulting into summer plumage, which is much different to how we normally see them in the UK, there are lots of Dunlin with their distinctive black bellies, Ringed Plover, Curlew and Common Redshank feeding voraciously in the seaweed. We are just about to leave when Stuart spots an Arctic Skua out to sea, and we manage to get a view before it disappears to the north.

It is now time to leave and we now continue to head south over the causeway and on to the next island – South Uist. At the northern end of this island we make our way along a minor road, where we spot our first White-tailed Eagle, followed soon after by another pair as they circle together in the distance. We reach another lovely beach and find the same wader species previously seen in Stinky Bay so soon move back inland to check another good wader site known to Stuart. Sadly it's quiet here, with just Common Sandpiper, Dunlin and Redshank but there are an enormous number of Mute Swans on the large body of open water – so we move on. We now drive out into our first area of machair, which is managed land using the old tried and tested farming habits of crop rotation. Consequently, it means the areas left fallow are allowed to flourish with fabulous flora, which is also excellent for breeding waders, such as Ringed Plover, Lapwing, Oystercatcher and Redshank. We park

the vehicles and make ready for a short walk out into the dunes on this now lovely, warm day. However, nothing really prepares us for the scene that unfolds as we are led along the sandy tracks to the head of this incredible beach. We marvel at the miles of white sand, miles of deep blue sea with nothing beyond, which is absolutely devoid of people – it is a real privilege to be here! We spend some time just enjoying this experience, with a few of us venturing down to the water's edge being totally in awe for the fact we had it to ourselves. It is now heading towards lunchtime and Stuart wants to move on, thankfully he doesn't have to physically drag us away from this wonderful beach.

We are now back in the minibuses and continue south across the island until we can go no further, or we would have got our tyres wet! Its another beautiful sandy bay but this time we are actually looking across to the next Hebridean island, which is Barra. We again sit on the edge of the beach in the sunshine with our picnic lunches, keeping a constant eye on what's passing off-shore. Gannets, Cormorants and Shags are flying through the channel along with a variety of gulls and Arctic Terns, there's a Great Northern Diver fishing in the sea and on the beach we see lots of Sanderling, Dunlin and Turnstone – another great place, made better with a very welcome lunch.

We spend the best part of an hour here and again its hard to drag ourselves away, but Stuart has suggested a walk up through a nearby valley, which sounds very appealing. We soon arrive at this potential migrant trap having a few mature trees and bushes, something in short supply on these islands. It does feel a little quite, but we still enjoy the 'finch-fest' of Lesser Redpoll, Greenfinch, Linnet and Goldfinch as we start walking slowly up the road. We now hear a Cuckoo and manage to get a good view as it flies across the valley, right in front of us. Willow Warblers are singing from the bushes, a male Stonechat acts like a sentinel and a Raven cronks as it heads along the ridgeline. This is another fabulous example of what these islands have to offer. After a while we turn round and start back down the track towards the gardens where we are parked and as we get nearer Julian notices a movement in one of the trackside willows – looks interesting? We know where the bird should be but we are not seeing it until another movement is spotted but still no definite identification, now it pops out and reveals itself as a Spotted Flycatcher. Stuart is delighted as this certainly is a migrant bird and good to see on the island, which makes our visit even more worthwhile.

It's mid-afternoon and we drive back north up through South Uist to our next set of coastal sites on the Atlantic side of the island. We reach the coast and yet another beautiful seaweed strewn, sandy bay, which is the perfect combination for coastal waders and again we are not disappointed by the sheer numbers here, moving north to breed. We see the same species as previous places so Stuart decides to move on, trying to make the best use of the time

we have left today. Although we decide to stop off at a café, which is en-route for refreshments, but sadly its closing but we still make full use of the facilities on offer.

While waiting a few of us hear our first Corncrake coming from an adjacent weedy field and go to investigate. There are in fact three birds making their distinctive rasping call from the deep undergrowth and our chances of seeing one of these are quite slim, so we move on. Back at another bay we go for another short walk again seeing many waders feeding in the seaweed and along the waters edge – it is superb. An adult White-tailed Eagle now appears above a nearby small islet on the edge of the bay and shows fabulously well in the afternoon light. It is now getting time to return to the hotel and as we are slowly making our way along the minor roads we hear another Corncrake. We stop and an intense search of where it's calling from, reveals this incredibly shy and elusive bird. It's our first full day on 'The Uists' and we are watching a Corncrake, which is just superb – being one of the main target species of the trip. In addition to this Liz does incredibly well by spotting our first Common Snipe, skulking in the undergrowth of the same field, a great end to our first day. We are actually now a little later than we had hoped for getting back to the hotel so its full tilt back up through South Uist, across Benbecula on to North Uist, where we get back with thankfully enough time to freshen up before our first evening meal.

Day 4

Breakfast today is at 07:30 but Julian, Steve and Lynn have already been lucky enough to see a handsome male Hen Harrier from their bedroom windows! Breakfast is fantastic and once we are ready, we meet at the minibuses on a day of strong westerly winds and heavy rain showers – oh joy! Today we are driving to the world-famous RSPB reserve of Balranald, which is already fairly busy with tourists stopping at the large camping and caravan site. We pass the visitor centre and drive slowly along the sandy track, through extensive machair to an equally well-known place – Aird an Runair. This promontory is where hardy sea watchers gather in the right conditions to witness the fabulous skua passage of mainly Pomarine and Long-tail.

We park the vans and set up our scopes looking out towards the Monarch Islands and Gannets are passing in good numbers. After a while we spot our first skua, a lovely pale phase bird, which soon disappears behind the rocks, but incredibly reappears flying overland just behind us! We all now get a fabulous view of this avian sea predator as it tries to reorientate itself back towards the Atlantic Ocean. It's not easy to 'keep the faith' sat in a strong onshore wind with the occasional shower to dampen our spirits but we keep going being rewarded with more Arctic Skuas, Arctic Terns, some auks and a couple of Great Northern Divers in the bay. There are lots of Sanderling, Dunlin, Turnstone and Redshank showing very well and amongst them on the seaweed we find a couple of White Wagtails (nominate race) and a Wheatear.

Late morning we decide to go for a short walk out to the point where the Arctic Tern colony is but the conditions make any kind of viewing difficult. The terns are keeping active but also just sat on nearby rocks trying to conserve energy in these high winds. At the point we shelter behind some rocks and again check the sea, with Julian spotting half a dozen birds coming towards us low over the water – Manx Shearwaters. They have been pushed by the wind close inshore and we get a really good look as they 'shear' past the point in the wake of the big waves. This has possibly made the effort of walking out here worthwhile but we're not absolutely sure! It's still been another Hebridean experience.

Back at the buses we drive slowly back through the machair to the RSPB Balranald visitor centre where we use their facilities. The weather has slightly improved and once ready drive slowly away from the reserve but don't get far before making a sudden stop. A pair of Corncrakes are chasing each other and actually cross the road in front of Stuart's minibus, before continuing to chase around in the opposite field – superb. We now continue driving away from Balranald soon getting to a nearby loch, where initial looks reveal a lone Whooper Swan and a Wigeon along the edge. This site can be good for the scarcer 'white-winged' gulls but today it's quite, possibly due to the weather conditions? We drive slowly round, hearing Sedge Warbler in the small phragmites bed before getting on to the minor road.

There are a few Common Redshank, Curlew and Oystercatchers in the roadside fields here so we stop for a view. Stuart sets off again as does Julian but something catches the co-leader's eye, a bird flies up and over the minibus? It's landed nearby and it's a gorgeous summer plumage male Ruff, what a cracker. A quick radio message to Stuart has them turning round and we all enjoy great views of this beautiful wader that we rarely see in this plumage in the UK. Once the obligatory photos have been taken and we are ready, it's off to the next site, another loch surrounded by machair. Here we enjoy our lunch surrounded by the unique and wonderful flora of this habitat, Snipe are seen here too, flying up occasionally and 'drumming' in the sky above – just magical.

After lunch it's back into the minibuses and another short drive, brings us to another machair site, where Stuart wants to do a walk for Little Tern. It's a very pleasant walk across this flat landscape where we see lots of breeding Ringed Plovers, Oystercatchers and Lapwing, in fact we are lucky to find the nest of an Oystercatcher with a few eggs in! Stuart knows this place well and leads us straight out to where the Little Terns are nesting in the distance and within minutes, we are watching these delightful and delicate 'sterna'. These birds have a lot to contest with globally and it's great to see they are nesting successfully in such an open place. We continue now to walk out towards the coast and a small promontory with more beautiful beaches either

side. Julian now spots a group of birds flying low offshore and realises they are skuas, in fact they are all Pomarine Skuas, which is both fantastic and incredible as we watch them head steadily out to sea. Stuart thinks they must have migrated overland to be on the course they are doing, which is also fascinating! It's smiles all round as we walk slowly back to the buses, being quite unexpected at this site.

We get back and soon set off again, driving this time to a completely different habitat - upland moor, and on the way Sally spots another Corncrake running across an adjacent field but sadly this bird disappears too quickly for everyone to see. We now drive out slowly across the moorland stopping at the occasional passing place and initially seeing a couple of Common Buzzards and a Kestrel. We persevere and continue along the road, scanning all the time, when Stuart finds our first gorgeous Short-eared Owl, quartering the area not too far from where we are parked. These birds are a speciality of North Uist but still a great thrill to see, even if expected. We keep watching this individual as it crosses the road in front of us and continues to hunt for voles until we also spot a male Hen Harrier in the distance. We are now following this fantastic raptor illuminated beautifully against a dark background but eventually disappears over a conifer plantation. This is another fitting end to another great day on 'The Uists', despite the testing conditions of strong winds and heavy rain at times. We drive back to the main road and head south to the accommodation where we have plenty of time before meeting to do the checklist and have another wonderful evening meal.

Day 5 Its another awful, testing day, with a forecast of strong winds and rain but we will not be deterred and after breakfast, leave around 08:30. We head over the causeway to Benbecula and then across to South Uist before turning off to peninsular containing a small lochan. We park the minibuses so we can view the sea from them as the weather is currently dire and over the course of the next 90 minutes we see lots of Gannets passing north, Guillemot, Arctic Terns plus Great Northern Diver and plenty of Eider in the sea. On the beach there are literally 100's of Sanderling along with Dunlin, Oystercatchers, Ringed Plover and Turnstone, making for another great spectacle.

When we decide to move on we quickly check the lochan and find a couple of Tufted Duck along with Mallard and Little Grebe. We leave this peninsular and continue south to another coastal site, finding four Whooper Swans in one of the roadside lochs. We take a narrow track through some livestock fields and find Common Redshank, Common Snipe, and a pair of Lapwing looking after their half-grown chicks, which is lovely. Stuart spots a small flock of Greylag Geese in the distance and amongst them finds a Canada Goose which looks like a 'bog-standard' Greater instead of possibly one of the vagrant 'small' Canada Geese that sometimes occur in the UK.

On we head slowly south, turning off to another big sea loch where we drive slowly along its north finding a pair of Red-breasted Mergansers and a Red-throated Diver plus both Common and Grey Seals hauled out on the seaweed-covered rocks. We continue all the way to the end seeing a couple of Common Buzzards over the hillside, Stonechat and several Linnets. We park at the end and decide to go for a walk (taking our picnics) as the weather has now greatly improved. This place is quite well vegetated with some mature coniferous and deciduous trees which produce a few woodland species such as Goldcrest, Robin, Dunnock, Willow Warbler and Lesser Redpoll.

The walk up the hill through the willows is punctuated with stops for Bladderwort and Sundew plus a Moss Carder Bee, one of the speciality bumblebees of the islands. We eventually reach the picnic table Stuart has planned for our lunch stop and settle down with our buttys. It is now when we least need it panic ensues as an adult White-tailed Eagle appears over the ridge line, followed closely by a Merlin speeding past where we are sitting. A Cuckoo call's close by and that now flies over our heads landing briefly in full view of some of us before a Kestrel appears – it has been a crazy half hour! After lunch we ready ourselves to make our way back down towards the car park but on a slightly different route. Stuart now also finds an adult Golden Eagle, high, high in the cloud and its not easy to find. Some of us do manage to connect with it and hopefully that will not be our only view of a Golden Eagle on this tour! The walk back downhill is slightly easier, seeing and hearing much the same things but we do confirm the butterflies we have been seeing are Green-veined Whites and Lynn picks out a group of three Shags sat on distant rocks.

Eventually we get back to the vehicles and set off back to the main road and then head north. It is now late afternoon as Stuart drives us to the aptly named 'Coot Loch' where we park and walk to the edge of this reed-fringed water. We start to search but it appears to be devoid of anything different apart from the usual Mallard, Tufted Duck and Arctic Terns. Don spots a drake Wigeon and now along the far edge Stuart finds what he's searching for – Coot, quickly followed by a second bird, which is brilliant. We have heard on the grapevine that there's a Garganey on a nearby loch and decide to try and find it. We are there parked at the side of the loch soon after this and start by find a couple more Wigeon, female Shoveler, Shelduck and Tufted Duck, but nothing small with an obvious supercilium. Then out from the reeds we spot a smaller duck but it only has an ill-defined line above the eye and much more browner overall – it's a female Garganey. We get some fabulous views as it swims nearby, and this is compounded by two Great Skuas flying right past the minibuses – it is yet another 'end of day' extravaganza! Hopefully the strong winds will abate by tomorrow as its starting to make observation difficult.

Day 6

Breakfast is at the usual time where sadly we learn from Paul that Rosie's not feeling too great and will be staying behind – we all wish them well. Just before 9am we are driving north on a better but windy morning with light showers. Just beyond the turning to Lochmaddy things start to get interesting as we spot a Kestrel hunting over the roadside fields, followed quickly by our first Short-eared Owl of the day, which is very well received. Just as we are about to set off another raptor flies into view and it's a gorgeous male Hen Harrier which is incredibly close to our vehicles. In fact at one point, it is flying over gardens between the road where we are parked and the houses of these gardens – astonishing. This individual flies across the road in front of us and continues to work its way along the roadside fence line for some way before it decides to peel off and out of sight – what a fabulous experience! We now drive on but only for a short while as Stuart has spotted another Short-eared Owl in the adjacent fields, followed quickly by another, with Andrew and Roger spotting two more, making five in quick succession – what is going on? Stuart has a theory that it's been the strong winds and heavy rain hampering their hunting in the upland moors and they have moved down towards the coast where hunting should be easier – seems plausible, especially as we have now seen an amazing nine SEO's before we reach the turn off for Balranald.

As we drive down towards the RSPB reserve Sally again spots a Corncrake running between the iris beds, along with a Northern Wheatear. We stop at one of the roadside lochs where we find a Little Grebe, a few Tufted Duck, Shoveler and a couple of Teal plus around the edge there are the usual Common Snipe, Oystercatcher, Common Redshank and Lapwing. We now drive down to the reserve and continue through to where we were parked previously seeing Stonechat, another Wheatear and a brief view of a pair of Twite as they fly up from the parking area. It's much calmer conditions as we get out of the minibuses and almost immediately spot a couple of fairly close Great Northern Divers fishing in the bay. It's quiet but we still spend the next 90 minutes there, enjoying the passage of Gannets, Shag, Puffins, Guillemots and Razorbills. Arctic Terns are a constant companion as they fly back and forth to their breeding colony further down the peninsular, giving us a chance to get to grips with their distinctive flight. Liz has decided she has done enough seawatching and walks off along the bay to get better views of the wader throng on the seaweed, with good numbers of Sanderling, Ringed Plover, Dunlin and Turnstone, all resplendent in their breeding plumage. Around 11:30 Stuart calls time and we are back in the minibuses, stopping off at the facilities before continuing out of the reserve.

We now head north on the main road soon turning off up into the interior of the island where again we see more Short-eared Owls (now into double figures!), but bizarrely the highlight of this drive is seeing both Curlew and Common Redshank at 'point blank' range which Steve is loving as he can get some terrific images. We climb slowly up the mountain to the viewpoint and

at every turn there is a fantastic vista culminating in one of a potential view out to St Kilda to the west – sadly today there's too much haze! We still really enjoy this place, having our picnic lunches but after a wee while decide it's time to head back down. On the way we find a cracking male Stonechat at the side of the road along with further down an astonishing look at a Common Snipe sat on a fence post just metres from the vehicles. It is brilliant to get such a detailed look at their incredibly cryptic plumage. We now head out of the valley and keep going north on the main road around the top of the island to another loch site known to Stuart. He is conscious that we haven't yet seen one of the Hebrides specialities Golden Eagle and this is a potential site. Initial scans of the ridge produce a Common Buzzard but then another bird appears – adult Golden Eagle! It is low down against the hillside so not easy to pick up, but we all persevere and get some terrific views of this alpha predator now circling over the adjacent hillside. While we are watching this, another adult Golden Eagle appears further away and it's difficult to know who to watch until the second individual first gets mobbed by the Common Buzzard and then a Raven, making for fabulous scene. Eventually this pair of eagles disappear, and we are delighted with the result, especially Stuart and Julian who know how unpredictable finding raptors can be. It is again time to move on, but not before we get another Northern Wheatear, and on the road now there is another three Short-eared Owls hunting over the fields as we drive along.

We marvel at the deep blue of the sea and white sand beaches and a comfort stop is requested at the ferry quay before we continue to the edge of a loch surrounded by machair. Julian not realising the ground is so soft puts the minibus in an awkward position, which causes a little concern but some interesting driving and help from Graham, we find a more suitable parking area. Stuart is taking the rest of the group out on to the machair and we catch them up before they reach the tern colony, which holds both Little and Arctic Terns. We get some great views through the telescope of the Little Terns as the vegetation here isn't as high as the previous site. We don't stay long as it's now late afternoon and we have one more stop to make before heading back to the hotel. We are soon back at the minibuses and driving out towards Lochmaddy when Stuart turns off and parks. It feels like the middle of nowhere but our lead guide knows exactly where he is!

We all walk slowly over a ridge and down towards some farm buildings where Stuart asks us to wait while he goes off to hopefully find what we're here for. He goes off across this area of wet machair where we can already see lots of orchids which look like mainly Northern Marsh but also Early Marsh Orchids and Common Twayblade. Stuart soon returns saying he has been successful and now he leads us in single file to where he has left his coat. He points out another orchid amongst the commoner ones which is a local endemic – Hebridean Orchid, which subtly different to the other marsh orchids and quite delightful. Julian is especially pleased having missed them the previous

year, as they were not out. Once we were ready we exit the field as carefully as we entered (plus the coat!) and walk back to the minibuses. We are now heading to the hotel after a brief stop in Lochmaddy for fuel, getting there in good time for the checklist. Thankfully Paul and Rosie have had a lovely relaxing day around the accommodation and they are also thrilled as we spot one last Short-eared Owl from the dining room – making a group total of 19 birds!!!

Day 7

The wonderful sight of a Short-eared Owl catching a vole before we've even had breakfast is the perfect start to any day. We are having an earlier start anyway as we are leaving today for the second half of this Hebridean adventure on Harris and Lewis to the north. Stuart and Julian make sure the minibuses are ship shape ahead of loading the luggage and after giving our thanks and fond farewells to the proprietors we leave the hotel just before 9am. The journey towards Lochmaddy is punctuated with stops for another couple of Short-eared Owls, Great Northern and Red-throated Divers, which are flying over the extensive moorland. The owl spotting continues as we now strike north including one that's sat on a roadside fence post, looking absolutely majestic. The traffic is lighter than expected and we make good time reaching the ferry port on Berneray slightly ahead of schedule. We have some spare time ahead of our sailing at 10:30 and make full use of the facilities and watch the Black Guillemots, Arctic Terns and gulls around the harbour until we can board.

We make our way to the seating area at the front of the boat and enjoy the crossing on this calm, pleasant day. The crossing produces lots more Black Guillemots, along with small numbers of Guillemot, Great Northern and Red-throated Divers. As we weave our way through the rocky islets we can see Grey and Harbour Seal along with both Great and Arctic Skuas harrying the Arctic Terns as they fish in the clear waters. It is such a lovely peaceful crossing, which is over too quickly as we arrive on to Harris an hour later.

We drive off the ferry and make the short journey in the nearby coastal village of Rodal where we first visit a beautiful 15th century church and graveyard – a lovely and welcome addition to this wildlife holiday. This is then followed by a walk down to the harbour where we get some incredible looks at an Arctic Tern fishing in the clear water only metres from where we are standing. Janet spots a Cormorant which stands out against its much commoner and smaller cousin, the Shag, plus Northern Wheatear and a Common Gull. We continue the slow, loop walk back towards the minibuses where Steve and Don have decided to remain, stopping now to look into a delightful walled garden. This proves to be quite productive as we find a Whitethroat, Blackcap and Willow Warblers along with the resident Dunnock, Robin, Goldfinch and

Wren. Eventually we have returned to the buses, and it is now lunchtime, with a request to drive back down to the harbour and enjoy our lunch there, allowing Steve and Don to see this hidden gem.

Around 13:30 we are ready to leave and now head along the main coast road, loving the incredible scenery and stopping at one of the island's most famous viewpoints overlooking the legendary Luskentyre Beach. It's worth visiting Harris for this alone! We now continue up into the centre where granite-based hills rise either side of the road and stop for a scan of the ridges. Stuart spots a dark shape circling in the distance, which is clearly an adult Golden Eagle and is quickly joined by its mate as there is actually a third higher up and probably encroaching on their territory. We watch for a while as the higher bird drifts away and the pair drop down behind the ridgeline.

Our travelling day continues, and we now make a quick comfort break in Tarbert before heading further north. After a fairly short drive Stuart turns off the main road and takes a narrower, winding track out past an old whaling station, from the 1960's until stopping at a small roadside lochan. There isn't much on the loch but a distinctive call alerts us to a couple of Greenshank in the area which we watch for a couple of minutes before moving on. We now follow the river out towards the coast, stopping at every chance to look for Dipper as it looks very good for them. Sadly, we don't find any.

Soon enough, we get to the beachside car park, where we all get out for a short walk. Stuart spots a couple of Twite as he gets out of the minibus, but they all too quickly disappear but we are rewarded with a pair of Stonechats around the parking area. Once ready we first check the beach but it's quiet apart from a Great Northern Diver fishing in the bay so we keep going up on to the escarpa, an area laden with interesting flora. We now spend some time looking out into the channel, where there are a few Common Seals bobbing about in the water and the occasional Gannet flies by. It is quiet so we walk back slowly to the vehicles on this really warm and pleasant afternoon. We still have to check into the hotel, so the decision is made to head for Tarbert and slowly drive back along the single track stopping for more Common Seals, which are hauled out and any more potential Dipper sites. We reach Tarbert at 17:30, and check into our next accommodation for the remainder of our stay on the Hebs.

Day 8

A pre-breakfast walk is arranged by Stuart, which is attended by Lynn, Andrew, Roger and Liz despite the conditions not being ideal. It is pretty successful checking the trees and bushes a short distance from the hotel seeing a Woodpigeon (local scarcity!), Lesser Redpoll, Willow Warbler and a couple of Stonechats. We all enjoy our first breakfast and arrange to meet at minibuses for 08:30 but Don is starting to feel quite unwell. The decision is made to call the paramedics and rightly we wait until they arrive 45 minutes later.

An assessment is done and thankfully nothing too serious but our friend is convalescing today and we head off, having seen from the car park, Siskin, Greenfinch, Willow Warbler and hear a Cuckoo! We drive north along the main road with Stuart stops to show us the interesting land border between the islands of Harris and Lewis. Eventually we reach the outskirts of Stornaway and turn into a car park where we ready ourselves for a proposed woodland walk by our lead guide. As we alight the vehicles Lynn spots a Sparrowhawk flying over which is great, but it disappears all too quickly.

We cross the road and Paul sees a Grey Wagtail fly up from the path and disappear down to the burn below us. The entrance to the walk is quite productive as we try to refind the Wagtail with Blue Tit, Robin, Blackcap and Willow Warblers in the surrounding mature trees, but sadly no Grey Wagtail or Dipper, which we are here to try and find.

We continue to walk slowly along the path seeing and hearing the commoner woodland species before reaching the burn. Due to the recent rains it's higher than hoped for making our chances of a Dipper much more unlikely. We now follow the track alongside the river where we spot a Cuckoo sat on an overhead telegraph wire plus another Blue Tit. It starts to drizzle and also not wanting to waste time Stuart decides we should make our way slowly back to the buses. As we reach the incline back up to the entrance Julian spots a movement, low down in a tree about 30m away and is convinced it's a flycatcher. We wait patiently for another sign and after a minute or so it pops out and back on to a more open branch, it's a Spotted Flycatcher! We are all enjoying this when Julian now announces he's found a Treecreeper, which is another target we had hoped to see here and for about five minutes we all enjoy these two scarce island species. We carry on up the track seeing another Blackcap, Coal Tit and hearing several Willow Warblers, which is brilliant. Soon enough we are back at the vans and a comfort stop request has been asked for so it's into Stornaway we go.

We stop at the harbour and use their facilities which is taking a while so Julian decides to check the quay for 'white-winged' gulls but can only find the usual Herring, Great, Black-backed, Lesser Black-backed, Common and Black-headed Gulls loafing around. Out in the bay is a Red-throated Diver, but there are two more divers much closer in. Julian walks to the edge of the water and just below are a pair of cracking summer-plumage Black-throated Divers, showing beautifully, especially since the sun has come out. We all really enjoy these gorgeous birds which must be one of the most beautiful avian breeding species in the UK.

Once ready we drive away from the harbour and the town, past the airport on to the Eye Peninsular. We stop at a couple of lochs on our way to the lighthouse seeing the expected Mallard, Tufted Duck, Barn Swallows, House

and Sand Martins, plus Roger points out our first Common Sandpiper of the day. We eventually reach the lighthouse and park as a Great Skua flies past us heading north. We forget for the moment that it's lunchtime and watch the scores of seabirds passing which are mainly Gannets, Fulmar, Razorbill, and Kittiwake, with smaller numbers of Guillemot, Puffin and Shag. Paul does very well finding our only Black Guillemot bobbing around in the water below where we are sat, before our thoughts turn to our picnic lunches. During the next hour we 'tuck in' to our butties whilst continuing to seawatch adding a couple of Arctic Skuas, Great Northern Diver and another Bonxie to the totals. Sadly the very choppy seas are making things difficult for locating cetaceans and even the seabird passage starts to ease, so we set off back towards Stornaway.

At the causeway we stop for a better look at a small group of Red-breasted Mergansers we had seen close inshore on our way out. There is a group of birds further out that don't look like mergansers and Julian hops out to check them with his telescope – they are incredibly more Black-throated Divers and there's 8 of them together! Everyone now jumps out of their respective buses, and we get great views of these birds fishing together. While we are here co-sharing the telescopes we keep searching the bay which reveals a further three Black-throated Divers, a couple of Red-throated Divers and the Red-breasted Mergansers we'd originally stopped for.

After a short time, we set off again and take a minor road round to a small bay on the other side of the causeway but the tide is a long way out. Our chances, of finding waders isn't good but we still decide to go for a walk along the beachside track. It is quiet as anticipated with just a couple of Oystercatchers and a Curlew before we decide to turn back but a close fly-by Great Skua makes the effort even more worthwhile. It is now late afternoon and Julian has heard on the local grapevine that an Iceland Gull has been seen in Stornaway Harbour, so we head back down there parking further round from the ferry terminal. We all jump out of the minibuses and start checking the gulls, which are sat on the piers and building rooves. Julian spots the target larid but it flies out of sight and doesn't reappear, so we gingerly enter a 'no entry' zone and refind it sat on the opposite pier. We quickly get a look at this 'bleached out' first winter Iceland Gull before retreating to a safer position!

We have seen it and are happy with the views, we decide to make full use of the facilities again and drive the short journey to the terminal. While this is going on Julian spots the Iceland Gull again flying over the nearby buildings towards the old harbour. Once ready we head in that direction and park overlooking the marina, where there are lots of gulls around but no sign of the Iceland Gull. Julian gets inspiration and digs out a part-sandwich that has been left and throws it out on to a nearby concrete area. This works a treat as all the gulls come in to feed including it and now it's stood about five metres away

amongst the rest of the birds – so close you don't even need binoculars! This is brilliant and the photographers amongst us have a field day getting some fabulous images of this scarce larid. It is soon time to go, and we make our way south back down to our Tarbert hotel where we meet up with Don who's feeling much better and sad to have missed this day out.

Day 9

After breakfast we are ready to leave by 08:45 with just half a day before we need to be back as we have had the 'green light' for The Shiant's tour. The winds are still currently strong but due to lessen by this afternoon and out of the north, which is good for the sea state. We drive north stopping again at the border between Harris and Lewis as the weather has already improved and Stuart spots a very distant White-tailed Eagle – always a good sign. On we now go further north turning off the main road and parking alongside a loch checking the ridges for raptors. There are a couple of Common Buzzards before Lynn and Paul find another White-tailed Eagle which is much closer but heading away. It's being harassed by a Raven so doesn't stop before flying out of sight over the distant hills.

We now drive on further and turn off down 'Eagle Valley' another one of Stuart's secret sites! As we drive along the single track road slowly there are lots of Meadow Pipits plus the occasional Stonechat and a Cuckoo flies past. We now find a couple of female Red Deer right next to the road before stopping to look at another loch which is connected to the sea much further away. It is great to find a pair of Greenshank here, so we decide to get out of the vehicles for a leg stretch and comfort stop as there are also some derelict buildings – luxury! As we are enjoying the sunshine and small break out of the buses, a pair of adult White-tailed Eagles appear over the hillside. This is then followed by a couple of distant Golden Eagles - just goes to show what a bit of sunshine and lighter winds can produce. Julian walks along a short distance looking at some roadside orchids when he sees a bird sitting in the heather – it's a Merlin. He now turns to shout the rest of us and it flies, heading away and up the valley out of sight, which is really disappointing – c'est la vie!

We now continue down the valley, parking near a bridge over the burn between two lochs. A walk is planned from here but we first scan the ridges and cannot believe to find a pair of Golden Eagles on the crags above our parking place. One bird flies out of sight but the other lands on top of the rock formation and sits majestically in full view. The telescopes are quickly put up and we get fantastic looks at this wonderful avian predator with its golden head gleaming in the sunlight – what a 'magic moment'. Rosie now decides to walk slowly back to the bridge and is absolutely thrilled to find a Dippers there. In fact there is a pair and it's congratulations all round for the finder being one of the potential species everyone's keen to see. We do now go for a short walk but time is against us as we don't want to be late for the boat tour this

afternoon. We do get more views of the goldies, with one being mobbed by a Kestrel which looks minute in comparison. It is back into the minibuses and straight back to Tarbert.

After a short break at our hotel for lunch, we assemble in the foyer before walking around the harbour to where our boat to the Shiant is moored. Angus the skipper and his crew warmly greet us and with a couple of steps we are on board. A brief safety demonstration follows and we all donned life inflatable jackets in case of an emergency. The weather is calm with light winds from the North, ideal sea conditions for our crossing to the Shiant! The Shiant is about eight miles off south Harris in the middle of the Minch and the journey takes around an hour from Tarbert. Soon after we set off the first black guillemots are seen, followed by two Red-throated Divers. Liz picks up a diver in flight which comes almost overhead, it's a Black-throated! Then Stuart spots a Great Northern! We have not yet left Loch Tarbert and we have all three regular divers!

The boat calls in at Scalpay to refuel before we head out under the impressive road bridge that links Scalpay to Harris and Angus opens the throttle and the powerful engines speed us along. After a few minutes the group of four islands that make up the Shiant can be seen in the distance. Stuart picks up a Bonxie, and small groups of auks are on the water, rising as we speed past. Then Stuart shouts Minke Whale and Angus slows the boat and turns towards the large grey back Stuart has seen to the North of us. Fortunately, it surfaces several times and everyone can see its dorsal fin and long curved back entering the water. Another is then seen heading towards the first! As we lose sight of the two great cetaceans there is a blow and a large splash as another whale surfaces! There are at least three whales in this group! Angus informs us these are the first sightings he has had this season, so luck is with us!

Within 15 minutes the islands are now much closer and the rafts of auks on the sea are getting more numerous with puffins scattering ahead of the boat and razorbills and guillemots diving as we approach. We approach a sea stack called Galta Mor which is covered in Puffins, with a few predatory Great Black-backs in attendance. Kittiwakes and Fulmars glide past. Then we proceed along the cliff face of Garbh Eilean a much larger island, Stuart spots a Sea-eagle, and another two join it. Soon there are no fewer than eight Sea-eagles in the air together, an astonishing spectacle! All are sub adult birds aged from one to three years, yet to establish territories but spending the Summer on the islands where food is plentiful.

We round the corner past a natural sea arch and moor in the sheltered village bay for a cup of coffee. All around us thousands of auks, shags and other seabirds are on the sea or in the air, a wonderful spectacle. Above the noise a wren can be heard singing from the nearby boulder field! After soaking up this

wonderful scene we proceed across to Eilean Mhuire and Stuart explains how the islands have been recently cleared of rats by the RSPB and the islands owners, supported by NatureScot and many donors. Bait stations are positioned every 10 metres including up the vertical cliffs all around. A great success as Storm Petrels and Manx Shearwaters are recolonising after an absence of over 100 years.

As we near the cliffs another four Sea-eagles fly up, and one gives a great show sweeping along just in front of us before perching in full view - spectacular! The cliffs here have lots of noisy Kittiwakes and there are hundreds of Puffins loafing on the water affording great photographic opportunities. Sadly, we must start our journey home and we sweep along Eilean an Taighe where Shags and Fulmars are nesting around past the location of the island's small bothy. A couple more bonxies are seen on the top of the cliffs before heading out to the sea stacks where more Puffins nest and then we head off towards Tarbert.

Apart from lots of Gannets the voyage is relaxed until once again Stuart shouts dolphins! They are quite distant but heading our way. Angus slows the boat, and the dolphins catch us up and are soon bow riding alongside the boat. They are Common Dolphins and the hourglass pale side markings are very obvious. They ride almost within touching distance alongside us for about 10 minutes! What an experience. All too soon we are approaching our mooring and Angus cracks open a bottle of whisky and those who wish to enjoy a warming nip as we glide into Tarbert. A great adventure with some unforgettable sightings!

Day 10 Our final full day and a travelling one, so after a very convoluted breakfast we say goodbye to this hotel's staff for all their help and head out to the car park. Julian and Stuart again stack the luggage in the boot, and we are on our way by 08:45, which is brilliant. The drive north is quiet as we see the usual species at the same places visited on previous days. At the junction we turn west towards Callanish now seeing our first Golden Eagle flying low over the extensive moorland. It quickly goes out of sight and we get on our way to the entrance to this wonderful Neolithic site about 30 minutes later. It's busy with tourists as the weather today is lovely and this is arguably Lewis's premier visitor attraction.

We park and head past the facilities (which open at 10am) up the track to the place where these amazing rings of standing stones have been for the past 4500 to 5000 years. It is quite humbling to be in this very spiritual place. After we have done it justice we start to head back down to the visitor centre and café where Julian is stood inviting everyone to a hot drink and cake. This is very welcome indeed and we sit inside, chatting and enjoying these refreshments of various types before heading to use the facilities. It is now late morning and Stuart's plan is to continue on a circular route back across the island

to Stornaway for our afternoon ferry. As we start to get back into the minibuses Julian looks up and there's another Golden Eagle flying directly over the people still outside the vehicle. We set off and head along the main road through Callanish, turning off just after the village out across this extensive peat moor. Golden Plover is the target species as we drive along slowly stopping at every other passing place to scan the terrain. The plovers are proving elusive but we do see two more distant Golden Eagles, Northern Wheatear, Raven and several Skylarks. It's hot in the minibuses and the drive becomes pretty difficult so we decide to give the old harbour a try for the Iceland Gull.

We arrive around 12:30 and spend 30 minutes searching for the bird, without success before moving round to the ferry port where we join the queue to board. We have some time before boarding starts so some of us decide to have our picnic lunches while others leave there's for the crossing later. At the allotted time we drive on to this big vessel, make our way up and out on to the viewing deck, sit in the sunshine with the rest of us having our picnic lunches. The boat leaves Stornaway harbour and steams out into The Minch as we find a couple of Red-throated Divers, Black Guillemots, Fulmar and a Grey Heron heading over the town. We are now getting to open water and we spot a couple of Common Dolphins along with our first Arctic Skua but the crossing is generally quiet not even seeing any Manx Shearwaters. There is a constant stream of auks initially and a few more skuas but we do have a bit of a lull before we reach the Summer Isles and the channel to Ullapool where we find our only Great Northern Diver of the day.

We move through the channel and after a while we are asked to return to our vehicles in readiness for the disembarkation. We dock in Ullapool, and it is not long before we are driving out of the small town west to Inverness in a 'Whacky Races' style journey as the faster performance cars endeavour to get ahead of the slower vehicles such as ours. This journey is also quiet with sightings of Red Deer, plus a couple of Common Buzzards and as we get close to the Black Isle we spot our only Red Kite. We reach our Inverness hotel safely and after a painful wait to check-in we all reconvene for our final meal together. We are all very tired and soon head to our respective rooms for a good night's sleep.

Day 11 This morning we are leaving at different intervals and with having said our "goodbyes" the previous evening it was a quiet departure. Thanks to all for their contributions to this fabulous holiday and 'bon voyage'.

Species of the Trip

Graham	Golden Eagle
Janet	Corncrake
Steve	Iceland Gull
Lynn	Corncrake
Paul	Ruff, Corncrake, Greenfinch
Rosie	Ruff, Golden & White-tailed Eagles
Roger	Red-necked Phalarope
Liz	Red-necked Phalarope
Andrew	Ruff, White-tailed Eagle
Sally	Ruff, Short-eared Owl
Don	Ruff, Red-necked Phalarope
Stuart	Red-necked Phalarope
Julian	Black-throated Diver, Hebridean Orchid

Place of the Trip

Graham	Shiants
Janet	Shiants
Steve	Everywhere
Lynn	The Uists
Paul	Shiants
Rosemary	Shiants
Roger	Callanish
Liz	Shiants
Andrew	Shiants
Sally	Harbour walk at Rodal
Don	Loch Mor
Stuart	Shiants
Julian	Berneray

Magic Moment

Graham	Minke Whale/Common Dolphins on Shiants tour
Janet	Close view of White-tailed Eagle on Shiants
Steve	Being on the Outer Hebrides – great experience
Lynn	Steve getting photos of Dipper Eagle Valley
Paul	Seeing the White-tailed Eagle on the Shiants
Rosie	Finding the Dippers
Roger	Bow-riding Common Dolphins
Liz	Bow-riding Common Dolphins
Andrew	All the Short-eared Owls on the way to Balranald
Sally	Hearing the Cuckoos
Don	All the Short-eared Owls on the way to Balranald
Stuart	Corncrakes fighting near Balranald
Julian	Finding the Ruff, seconds later we would have missed it!

BIRDS

Mute Swan
Whooper Swan
Greylag Goose
Canada Goose
Shelduck
Mallard
Gadwall
Shoveler
Wigeon
Eurasian Teal
Garganey
Tufted Duck
Eider
Goosander
Red-breasted Merganser
Surf Scoter
Pheasant
Red Grouse
Corncrake
Red-throated Diver
Black-throated Diver
Great Northern Diver
Little Grebe
Slavonian Grebe
Fulmar
Manx Shearwater
Gannet
Cormorant
Shag
Grey Heron
White-tailed Eagle
Osprey
Golden Eagle
Hen Harrier
Red Kite
Common Buzzard
Sparrowhawk
Kestrel
Merlin
Coot
Oystercatcher
Ringed Plover
Lapwing
Sanderling

Purple Sandpiper
Turnstone
Dunlin
Common Redshank
Greenshank
Curlew
Common Snipe
Red-necked Phalarope
Ruff
Arctic Skua
Great Skua
Pomarine Skua
Black-headed Gull
Common Gull
Herring Gull
Greater Black-backed Gull
Lesser Black-backed Gull
Kittiwake
Iceland Gull
Little Tern
Arctic Tern
Common Tern
Puffin
Black Guillemot
Guillemot
Razorbill
Rock Dove
Feral Pigeon
Woodpigeon
Stock Dove
Collared Dove
Common Cuckoo
Short-eared Owl
Great Spotted Woodpecker
Green Woodpecker
Common Swift
Skylark
Barn Swallow
House Martin
Sand Martin
Meadow Pipit
Tree Pipit
Rock Pipit
Pied Wagtail

Grey Wagtail
Dipper
Dunnock
Robin
Northern Wheatear
Stonechat
Song Thrush (local form)
Blackbird
Blackcap
Garden Warbler
Whitethroat
Sedge Warbler (heard only)
Willow Warbler
Chiffchaff
Goldcrest (heard only)
Wren
Spotted Flycatcher
Coal Tit
Blue Tit
Great Tit
Treecreeper
Jackdaw
Hooded Crow
Carrion Crow
Rook
Raven
Starling (local form)
House Sparrow
Chaffinch
Linnet
Twite
Lesser Redpoll
Goldfinch
Greenfinch
Siskin
Common Crossbill
Bullfinch
Reed Bunting
Yellowhammer

MAMMALS

Rabbit
Pygmy Shrew
Brown Rat
Red Deer

Otter
Grey Seal
Harbour/Common Seal
Harbour Porpoise
Common Dolphin
Minke Whale

OTHER CRITTERS

White-tailed Bumblebee
Common Carder Bee
Moss Carder Bee
Green-veined White
Large White
Red Admiral
Peacock Butterfly
Small Heath
Drinker Moth caterpillar (thanks to Roger & Liz Ackroyd)

NOTABLE PLANTS (thanks to Sally Hewitt)

Hebridean Orchid
Early Marsh Orchid
Northern Marsh Orchid
Heath Spotted Orchid
Common Twayblade
Birds-foot Trefoil
Red Campion
Sea Campion
Storksbill
Lady's Smock
Silverweed
Sundew
Butterwort
Heath Milkwort
Field Pansy
Marsh Lousewort
Mountain Everlasting
Tomentil
Marsh Marigold
Cotton Grass
Field Pansy
Yellow Flag
Thrift
Scurvy Grass
Wood Sorrel