

# FAIR ISLE



"Some of last autumn's bird highlights included Icterine and Barred Warblers, Ortolan Bunting, flocks of mobile Lapland Buntings roaming the island, including an incredible flock of 18 swirling overhead, as well as finding a well hidden Wryneck, poking its head out of a hole in one of the islands dry stone walls! Who knows what we'll find this year, I cant wait!" Craig Round

Dates Sat 1 - Sat 8 Sep 2018  
 Price £1,755  
 Deposit £350 Single Supp £50

Leader Craig Round  
 Flights Loganair, scheduled  
 Outbound: Morning Aberdeen-Sumburgh  
 Inbound: Afternoon Sumburgh-Aberdeen  
 Weather Cool to warm, with changeable weather, expect sun and squally showers, may be windy (8°-15°C)  
 Ferries We shall travel from Shetland to Fair Isle by a small ferry with the potential for rough seas. Please be prepared for this.  
 Walking Walking is generally very relaxed and easy, with walks of up to 3-4 miles on roads and rough grassland  
 Meals All included from lunch on Day 1 to breakfast on Day 8  
 Insects Biting insects will not be a problem  
 Accom Comfortable double, twin and single ensuite accommodation. Most rooms are on the first floor.  
 Group 7

A special welcome to the migration stepping stone, with plenty of common migrants and a good chance of something really rare turning up - an addictive island!

- A dot in the seas between Orkney and Shetland
- Plenty of pleasant walks amidst cliffs and crofting land
- The last of the season's lingering seabirds and skuas
- Famous for bird migration and rarities in easterly winds
- Traditional knitwear, local music, crafts and boat building
- All based at the comfortable Bird Observatory
- Fantastic scenery and possibly the Northern Lights

We fly into Sumburgh on Shetland and take the ferry, the 'Good Shepherd' across to Fair Isle, or 'Fridarey' as it was known in old Norse, meaning 'the peaceful isle'. As we leave Shetland, we pass under the towering cliffs of Sumburgh Head, rising up above us, before heading out to sea towards Fair Isle, with the possibility during the ferry crossing of seeing seabirds such as Great and Arctic Skuas, Sooty Shearwater, Fulmar, Gannet, Puffin and also Storm Petrels jinking low over the waves, plus cetaceans such as Minke Whale, Harbour Porpoise or White-beaked Dolphin. As the isle comes into view, we pass close to the shorter North Lighthouse perched on top of the cliffs, before arriving into the shelter of the harbour at North Haven, where we make our way up to the Observatory, with its friendly atmosphere and good food, as we become part of the wider island community for the week.

**2-7** The bird Observatory is superbly positioned and enjoys stunning coastal views across to the seabird cliffs of Sheep Rock and the headland of Bunes, with the beaches of the North and South Havens only a short walk away. Here, close flocks of passage waders such as Knot, Sanderling, Dunlin and Turnstone can be seen busily feeding and roosting on the beaches, whilst the Observatory gardens, vegetable patches and plantation will often hold migrant warblers, pipits, chats and flycatchers at this time year. This allows you to birdwatch from the comfort of the Observatory's lounge, dining room or even your bedroom! The Observatory minibus will take us to the far reaches of the island, but we'll also enjoy plenty of walking and on foot we'll be able to explore every nook and cranny, from seabird cliff, to cultivated garden and crofting land, on this fabulous island.

## Just some of what we hope to see:

Sooty Shearwater	Ortolan Bunting
Storm Petrel	Mealy Redpoll
Wryneck	Lapland Bunting
Citrine Wagtail	Snow Bunting
Richard's Pipit	Short-eared Owl
Olive-backed Pipit	Long-eared Owl
Bluethroat	Merlin
Yellow-browed Warbler	Spotted Flycatcher
Barred Warbler	Pied Flycatcher
Lanceolated Warbler	Redstart
Red-backed Shrike	Ring Ouzel
Great Grey Shrike	Jack Snipe



"Fair Isle is a simply amazing island, where you can witness the miracle of bird migration first hand and get away from the hustle and bustle of modern life. With stunning coastal scenery and cliffs and crofting land that can be alive with birds at this time of year, it really is a magnet to birds on migration and you never know what bird might turn up next! I've been lucky to visit this unique and beautiful island many times over the years, but for me a visit to the magical isle, is always one of the highlights of my birding year!" Craig Round



At dawn we'll have the chance to accompany one of the wardens checking the Heligoland traps, to discover what new migrants may have arrived overnight and we'll be closely involved with the study and ringing of any birds back at the Observatory, allowing us to be able to see them up close in the hand - to be sure not to miss any rarities caught. Fair Isle really is one of the best places to experience the thrill of bird migration in action and if the winds are right, we'll explore the wild and dramatic west cliffs and geo's, as well as the moorland and hill ground in the north of the island, where birds can be found feeding and seeking shelter; dwarfed by the huge cliffs and sea below, as well as the gentler crofting land in the south of the island.

Mixed flocks of waders including Black-tailed Godwit, Ringed Plover, Dunlin, Lapwing, Golden Plover and Ruff can be found feeding in the fields and meadows at this time of year and with the autumn migration reaching its peak, in the right weather and fall conditions, the island can be simply alive with common migrants around every corner, including Tree Pipit, Redstart, Spotted and Pied Flycatcher; Whinchat, Lesser Whitethroat, Whitethroat, Garden Warbler; Blackcap, Sedge and Reed Warbler; and numerous Willow Warbler and Northern Wheatears, or hoped for scarce and rare birds such as Bluethroat, Pallid Harrier; Red-backed Shrike, Wryneck, Common Rosefinch, Ortolan and Lapland Bunting and Citrine Wagtail and warblers such as Marsh, Arctic, Greenish, Booted, Subalpine, Icterine, Savi's and Barred.

With the island grapevine, news of rarities will reach us wherever we are - with the Observatory



minibus flying a red flag on occasion to let everyone on the island know of a mega-rarity! Or we might just find that Lanceolated Warbler, Arctic Warbler, Olive-backed Pipit or Citrine Wagtail ourselves! We are at the mercy of the winds, but in quieter periods, or when no new birds arrive, we shall still have the time to soak up the atmosphere and enjoy the fascinating history, geology and culture of this unique and wonderful island. We'll explore the dramatic and rocky coast and shoreline in the south of the island around the South Harbour and Lighthouse, which often holds more passage waders including Purple Sandpiper, Knot, Turnstone, Sanderling, Redshank, Dunlin, Curlew and Whimbrel, whilst Rock Pipits, Northern Wheatears, White Wagtails and Fair Isle race Wrens can often be found foraging amongst the rocks and seaweed on the beaches, with Eider and Black Guillemots just offshore. We'll also be sure to check some of the island's freshwater pools, marshes and wetlands of Da Water, Easter Lothar and Golden Water, where scarcer waders can sometimes be found, such as Little Stint, Wood Sandpiper, Green Sandpiper, Pectoral and Buff-breasted Sandpiper; along with flocks of newly arrived migrant wildfowl such as Wigeon and Teal and both Common and Jack Snipe. Some lingering seabirds such as Gannets and Fulmars, will still be on ledges on the towering sandstone cliffs in the north, while breeding Great Skuas and maybe some late breeding Arctic Skuas are still present on their territories on the higher moorland.

8 We return by ferry to Sumburgh for our flight back to Aberdeen.



## Outline Itinerary

- Day 1** Fly Aberdeen to Shetland then take the 'Good Shepherd' ferry across to Fair Isle passing Sumburgh Head enroute
- Days 2-7** Birdwatching and wildlife exploration of the island from our base at the comfortable Fair Isle Bird Observatory
- Day 8** Return back to mainland Shetland for our flight back to Aberdeen from Sumburgh

**Craig Round:** Fair Isle Bird Observatory, Bluethroat, Thrush, Nightingale  
**Simon Eaves:** Pied Flycatcher  
**David Kjaer:** Wryneck  
**David Constantine:** Jack Snipe

