

## HOLIDAY HIGHLIGHTS

### MULL

3 -10 June 2017

Leader: Craig Round

Guests: Sheila Saunders, Elisabeth England, Karen de Rosa, Richard Beavis, Marie Luke, Sylvia Tempest

**Day 1** After all meeting up at Oban we board the ferry for our afternoon crossing to Mull. Its a sunny and breezy day and during the short crossing we get some good views of Gannets flying by and also diving for fish out in the Sound of Mull and also pick out Guillemot, Shag and a single Arctic Tern, before we land on Mull and head around to the hotel to settle in.

**Day 2** Our first full day on Mull dawns breezy with sunny spells as we head out from the hotel, and make the first stop of the day near Duart Castle where we see a good selection of small birds including Meadow Pipit, Skylark, Siskin, Linnets, Lesser Redpoll, along with several Buzzards, Hooded Crow, Curlew and Lapwing.

Moving on we stop next overlooking Loch Don, and see Oystercatcher, Curlew, Grey Heron and Shelduck out on the estuary here, along with a hearing a Common Whitethroat and Tree Pipit singing. Driving on down to Grasspoint we get nice views of two Stonechats along with a singing male Reed Bunting, Lesser Redpoll and several Buzzards and a Raven over a ridge in the distance.

Our next stop is overlooking Loch Spelve near Inverlussa, and as we scan out a flock of Greylag Geese are panicked into the air as an adult White-tailed Eagle flies over, mobbed by Common Gulls and Curlew! The eagle perches for a while on the shore opposite but soon gets fed up with being constantly mobbed and flies back across the loch and out of sight. Welcome to Mull!

From here we start to drive up through the mountainous pass of Glenmore, and get great views as another adult White-tailed Eagle flies in over the trees behind us being mobbed by two Buzzards that look tiny, dwarfed by the mighty

'Erne'!! A male Cuckoo is also heard calling from the woodland nearby before we move on again to take our lunch at the head of the pass.

During lunch a stunning male Hen harrier glides high right overhead, and the eagles just keep coming as three White-tailed Eagles are seen soaring over the ridge above us and panicking the Red Deer up on the hill! There are also several Tree Pipits and Willow Warblers singing and displaying from the trees here.

Lower down the glen we make another stop to scan out over the hills, and see another two male Hen Harriers in flight, including one male Hen Harrier that flies over carrying prey in its talons before making a mid-air food pass with the female Hen Harrier! Great stuff! Also here we find several Green Hairstreak butterflies including a pair 'in-cop' and also a migrant Painted Lady butterfly.

Dropping down out of the glen, we drive around to Loch Beg where we get some fantastic views of three Otters! We spend some time watching these cracking mammals feeding on small Crabs and Butterfish out in the loch and also clambering around on the rocky shore, and watch the female Otter come ashore, and after grooming for a while fall asleep curled up on the rocks opposite! Whilst watching the Otters here we also pick out another two Golden Eagles soaring over a ridge nearby briefly and another male Hen harrier flies over before we start to make tracks back to the hotel.

### Day 3

Today starts with early rain clearing to some brightness as we head out to explore the NW side of Mull. As we head up the coast we pass two Red-breasted Mergansers and some Canada Geese along the shore before making a stop in Salen, where a Common Crossbill is heard briefly calling in flight. A little further on we take in the views of 13 Common Seals that are hauled out on the rocks just offshore, and we also see Curlew, Oystercatcher, Rock Pipits and Eiders with ducklings here. Driving up into a nearby glen we see several pairs of Stonechats beside the road as well as Lapwings and a Cuckoo is heard calling along with Common Snipe displaying high in the air in the distance, before we head on to Dervaig, passing several Wheatears beside the road.

In Dervaig we stop to scan out over the estuary, seeing Common Sandpipers calling and displaying as well as many Common Gulls and a few Oystercatchers, before we head to the 'Old Byre' nearby to get warmed up and get a hot drink, with a few bonus Sedge Warblers singing next to the car park here!

Our next stop is at Calgary Beach, for lunch on the beach. There are beautiful views out to sea and across Calgary bay here and we also manage to pick out a few female Eiders with ducklings out in the bay.

After lunch we drive further around the coast, through some very dramatic and stunning scenery and make a stop along the coast at Eas Fors, where we take some time enjoying the great views out across Loch Tuath to the islands of Gometra and Ulva, and with some Gannets flying by offshore. We also see several Dippers here and the waterfalls are just incredible, plunging out over the cliff edge to the sea far below.

#### Day 4

Hmmmmm!?! Today dawns wet on Mull, very wet! And sadly it's raining heavily with lots of low cloud over the hills as we head out from the hotel, and drive up the coast. Still we like a challenge! Just outside Salen we spot a smart pair of Red-breasted Mergansers just offshore, along with some Common Seals before we press on through the rain and head towards Dervaig and on to Tobermory. On the way to Tobermory in a brief drier interlude we make a stop next to some small lochans where we get good views of two Red-throated Divers that fly over calling as well as seeing Buzzards, Redpoll, Siskin and hearing Common Crossbill and Cuckoo calling here.

We then drop down into Tobermory where we have some time to do some sightseeing before driving over towards Glengorm for a spot of lunch, sheltered from the worst of the weather.

After lunch we head over towards Loch na Keal to try and find some better weather, and thankfully find its a little drier this side of the island. Stopping to scan out over the loch, Craig picks out a pair of stunning adult White-tailed Eagles that are perched in the trees behind us, allowing us some great views of these huge birds through the scopes. Also whilst here, we pick out two Golden Eagles soaring over the mountains on the other side of the loch.

#### Day 5

Today is a much better day weather wise, and it's sunny and breezy as we head for Iona, winding our way down along the Rhos of Mull and through to the end of the road at Fionnphort where we catch our ferry over to Iona. Landing on the island the scenery is beautiful with the sun out and a vivid turquoise sea to greet us, as we take a walk along the coast through the crofts before cutting across the island to the beach on the far side. As we walk we see two juvenile Wheatears being fed by the parent birds, and soon hear at least three male Corncrakes 'craking' from the fields, luckily we also get a brief view of one of the Corncrakes calling from a meadow next to the road.

We take our lunch overlooking the stunning shell sand beach and looking out to sea, with some Shelduck just offshore along with Eider Ducks, as Sand Martins hawking for insects low over the beach, and a few Gannets go by offshore.

After lunch we walk back towards the abbey where we have some time for a look around the magnificent abbey and grounds before we board the ferry back to Mull, with both Sedge Warbler and a Red Admiral butterfly seen around the village.

## Day 6

Today starts dry, cool and cloudy but with the threat of rain later, as we drive towards Ulva to catch our boat out to the Treshnish Isles. On the way we make a quick stop at Loch na Keal where we get fantastic views through the scopes of the male White-tailed Eagle perched in a tree near the loch. Moving on again we drive around the shore of the loch and take in the magnificent views looking towards Ben More and the Gribun Cliffs before we make another stop near Ulva. Here Craig finds a superb Buzzards nest built onto a nearby crag and we get great views through the scopes of the two downy chicks in the nest being fed by the adult Buzzards several times whilst we are there, we also see a few House Martins hawking insects overhead and some Common seals are hauled out on a distant skerry offshore.

With a boat to catch we leave the Buzzards, and drive the short distance to Ulva ferry to catch our boat the 'Hoy Lass' out to the islands.

As we head out to sea towards the Treshnish Isles we get views out to the islands of Coll, Tiree, Rhum, Eigg, Skye and south to the Paps of Jura, and as we approach Staffa see the first Puffins, Black Guillemots, Guillemots, Shags, and a single Gannet rafting on the water. The sea conditions are fairly calm and the boat manages to cruise a little way into the entrance of Fingals cave before we land on the island and have some time ashore to walk back into the cave to take in its incredible Basalt columns and geology.

Climbing back aboard the boat again we head towards the Dutchmans Cap as a Minke Whale and some Dolphins have been reported by another boat, sadly the cetaceans fail to show, but there are large rafts of Auks on the sea as well as two Great Skuas, as we cruise past the island and over to Lunga.

Landing on Lunga Island we make our way across the boulders onto the shore, and are greeted by a sky full of wheeling Puffins, it really is a seabird city out here! We make our way up the track that leads up to the main Puffin colony at the top of the cliffs, where we take lunch surrounded by masses of Puffins

which are extremely confiding and sometimes too close for photos! Whilst here we watch the Puffins bringing in sand eels for their chicks underground, and it really is a fantastic place to have lunch! There are also Razorbills, Shags, Kittiwakes and Fulmars and occasionally Ravens, Greater Black-backed Gulls, and even a few Great Skuas cruise along the cliff edge spooking all the Puffins and sending them into a vast wheeling flock. Rock Pipits and Wheatears call and flit around behind the cliffs and we can hear the distinctive loud rasping call of two male Corncrakes that are 'craking' nearby! We take some time enjoying the views on this fantastic island, before walking back down to the boat.

Leaving Lunga behind we cruise in around the Carnaburg Islands where we see lots of Shags on the rocks along with several Grey Seals swimming around between the small islands before we head back to Ulva at the end of a great day.

## Day 7

Heavy rain overnight and first thing this morning clears to a cloudy start. Our first stop today is around Loch Don where we see a good selection of small birds around the gardens and shore here including Siskin, Sedge Warbler, Stonechat and Whitethroat. Scanning out across the loch and estuary there are Curlews and Oystercatchers calling as well as two Buzzards perched on telegraph poles and powerlines nearby.

Best of all whilst here, Craig picks out a stunning Short-eared Owl that is perched on a rock on the far side of the loch, and whilst watching the first owl through the scopes another Short-eared Owl gets up and starts flying around hunting low over the ground. We watch the Owls hunting for some time and one gets mobbed by a Common Gull before drifting off and seeming to perch in a tree in the distance.

Driving around to the other side of the loch we manage to pick up the owl again perched in a tree only a short distance away, and giving us some great views before it flies off hunting again. Also whilst here an adult White-tailed Eagle is seen flying in the distance and the 'owlfest' continues as we get views of another three Short-eared Owls, including one being mobbed by a Hooded Crow and another mobbing a female Hen Harrier!!

From here we drive towards Loch Spelve for a hot drink, and see a Red-throated Diver that flies right overhead, as well as a pair of superb Golden Eagles perched up on the crags above us, giving us some pretty epic views through the scopes!

Driving up through Glenmore we make a stop at the top of the glen to take in the views, and see a Golden Eagle soaring in the distance as well as another White-tailed Eagle that soars over carrying prey, before we drop down to the shore of Loch Beg for some lunch in the sun, and with some lovely views down Loch Scridain.

After lunch we drive over towards Loch na Keal. We take in the beautiful view from a highpoint overlooking Loch na Keal and out to the islands of Lunga, Staffa and the Dutchmans cap and even out to Coll and Tiree on the horizon, before following the road along the edge of the loch and under the imposing Gribun Cliffs towering above us.

As we drive we see more Wheatears, Common Sandpipers, Red-breasted Merganser, Oystercatcher and two Twite fly over. On the way back we make another stop along the shore of Loch Beg and pick up the three Otters that we saw earlier in the week again out in the loch, and also clambering around and playing on the rocks giving us some lovely views through the scopes of these great mammals.

The sightings are not quite over though, as on the way back through Glenmore we get some great views of an immature Golden Eagle that soars right overhead! What a day!

## Day 8

Today sadly we have to leave Mull to head back to the mainland, so after loading up the luggage we drive to the ferry terminal at Craignure where we catch our ferry back to Oban at the end of a great trip!

**Species Of The Trip:** Golden Eagle, White-tailed Eagle, Short-eared Owl, Puffin

**Place Of The Trip:** Ulva coast, Mull!, Lunga, Loch na Keal

**Magic Moment:** Hen Harrier food pass, Sea Eagle mobbed by Buzzard and Raven, Thrush/Iona paradox!, Calgary Bay space!, Staffa geology, Golden Eagles

## BIRDS

Red-throated Diver

Little Grebe

Fulmar

Gannet

Cormorant

Shag

Grey Heron

Mute Swan

Greylag Goose

Canada Goose

Shelduck

Mallard

Eider

Red-breasted Merganser

White-tailed Sea Eagle

Hen Harrier

Sparrowhawk

Common Buzzard

Golden Eagle

Kestrel

Pheasant

Corncrake

Oystercatcher

Ringed Plover

Lapwing

Common Snipe

Woodcock

Curlew

Redshank

Greenshank

Common Sandpiper

Great Skua

Black-headed Gull

Common Gull

Herring Gull

Great Black-backed Gull

Kittiwake

Common Tern

Arctic Tern

Black Guillemot

Guillemot

Razorbill

Puffin

Rock Dove

Wood Pigeon

Collared Dove

Cuckoo

Short-eared Owl

Skylark

Swallow

Sand Martin

House Martin

Tree Pipit

Meadow Pipit

Rock Pipit

Pied Wagtail

Grey Wagtail

Dipper

Wren

Dunnock

Robin

Stonechat

Wheatear

Blackbird

Song Thrush

Mistle Thrush

Sedge Warbler

Chiffchaff

Willow Warbler

Goldcrest

Coal Tit

Blue Tit

Jackdaw

Rook

Hooded Crow

Raven

Starling

House Sparrow

Chaffinch

Goldfinch

Siskin

Linnet

Twite  
Lesser Redpoll  
Common Crossbill  
Bullfinch  
Reed Bunting

**TOTAL BIRDS: 87**

**MAMMALS**

Rabbit  
Otter  
Mouse sp  
Pipistrelle Bat  
Red Deer  
Common Seal  
Grey Seal

**BUTTERFLIES/MOTHS**

Green-veined White  
Red Admiral  
Painted lady  
Green Hairstreak  
Emperor Moth  
Angle Shades moth

**ODONATA**

Large Red Damselfly

**TOTAL SPECIES: 101**