

HOLIDAY HIGHLIGHTS

ULTIMATE UISTS

3 – 11 JUNE 2022

Guide: Roy Atkins

Guests: Carol Dow, Caroline Cruikshank, Andrew Camps, Mark Philips & Lisa Mobley

Day 1 We all meet up at the Premier Inn west of Inverness, but we are unable to eat here tonight and we soon get on our way to the hotel where we are eating this evening. It turns out to be a great option as the food is absolutely delicious. As we travel back we can't help being amazed how light it still is so late in the evening

Day 2 After breakfast we have a fair drive ahead of us and the ferry is leaving at 14:30 - and we really don't want to miss it so we get going as soon as we can. We follow the side of Loch Ness with stunning views of the loch and perfect weather... blue skies and sunshine and there is hardly any wind so the reflections are beautiful.

We pass the Five Sisters of Kintail and after a brief stop to take photos of Eilean Donan Castle we make another brief stop at Kyle of Lochalsh where we spot a Common Seal in the bay. We cross the bridge to the Isle of Skye and continue north to Uig enjoying spectacular views of the Red Cuillins. We get close views of Hooded Crows as we approach Uig.

Timing is good, as we arrive there with time to enjoy lunch and have a look at the sea where we find a Grey Seal, a few Eiders and a pair of Black Guillemots - but surprisingly little else. Sometimes the weather can be too calm!

Once on the ferry we make our way outside and find somewhere sheltered to watch from and soon we are spotting our first seabirds as we head out of the bay. Gannets are passing by and fishing here and there, and we find flocks of Guillemots and quite a few Puffins. A flock of Arctic Terns passes the ship and here and there are flocks of Kittiwakes. The scenery is spectacular and looking back at Skye we can see the distinctive jagged silhouette of the Black Cuillins.

Scanning up ahead of the ship Mark says he can see some splashes and perhaps it might be dolphins and yay... he is spot on!! As we get closer we enjoy wonderful views of them sometimes jumping out of the water and we soon identify them as Common Dolphins. We soon spot more of them way up ahead and then even more to the south of us, and this group are very active with animals leaping incredibly high out of the water. In total we must have seen at least 50 dolphins. We spot two Great Skuas flying by distantly and later a beautiful pale phase Arctic Skua with a dark phase bird sat on the sea.

As we get closer to the Uists we spot a couple of Razorbills and start seeing more Arctic Terns and a single Common Tern. There are Shags on the rocks and someone points out a White-tailed Eagle high on a ridge but to be honest it is so distant we decide we don't want this to be our first one so we ignore it!

Once on land we start driving slowly towards the hotel. We check one or two lochs for divers with no luck but do see small groups of Greylag Geese - some with tiny goslings. A few small lochs have Tufted Ducks on them and a pair of Mute Swans. One loch also has Shoveler and a male Wigeon. There are Common Gulls and Herring Gulls as we drive and we pass plenty of Hebridean race Starlings... much less spotted than those at home and the immature birds are amazingly dark. We spot at least two Buzzards and a Kestrel.

Along the road to the hotel we enjoy lovely views of Wheatear and a Ringed Plover perched on a large boulder, plus Pied Wagtail and a pair of Ravens. As we approach the hotel we see a Lapwing with small chicks and another Wheatear and are delighted to enjoy some great views of a Cuckoo.

Our evening meal is absolutely superb and the view from the dining room is beautiful... but despite keeping our eyes peeled all we see are gulls and Starlings - but the weather is still beautiful and even at 10 o'clock the sun is up and the sky blue. What a great start!

Day 3

We get a bit of a lie in because it is Sunday and they don't do breakfast until 8:30am... but no-one is complaining. We relax into the holiday and enjoy breakfast watching the Starlings as they feed and mess about on the shed roof outside. After breakfast we are soon on our way north.

We pass a Wheatear along the road, and there are Skylarks and Meadow Pipits everywhere, but we have not gone very far when Caroline shouts, "There's an owl!" We quickly turn and head back to find a wonderful close Short-eared Owl hunting over the moorland beside the road. It lands on fence posts now and then and quarters the ground looking absolutely beautiful, often coming very close - what a fabulous bird!

We drive on towards Balranald and make a stop as we notice there has been a big disturbance of birds in the distance and we wonder if it might be a raptor - it is the kind of disturbance an eagle causes! We can't see anything obvious but we are soon spotting Oystercatchers with chick and Lapwings too and on a loch, not far back from the road, a swan is resting on the shore. Roy suspects a Whooper because of the heavily stained neck and head, but with its head tucked in asleep it is hard to be sure. We spot our first Redshanks and while the distant birds settle down there is still a large flock of Greylag Geese in flight and a flock of ducks that includes Mallard, Wigeon and Shoveler. At last the swan lifts its head and yes... it is indeed a Whooper Swan - a nice find.

Just as we think we have seen everything from this spot Roy hears a gull sounding a bit miffed overhead and looks up to discover a Great Black-backed Gull mobbing an immature White-tailed Eagle!! Wow - what a view - it is absolutely fantastic. It circles overhead apparently not too bothered by the gull which looks pretty small in comparison.

When the eagle finally disappears, we continue on towards the reserve when we suddenly hear a Corncrake that sounds close to the road. We decide to head to the loos before seeing if we can find it, then it is not far to walk back to the spot. We stop to have a look at some Early Marsh Orchids on the way... and we walk down the road spotting Redshanks, a Pheasant, plenty of Lapwings and a few Rock Doves along the way. Back at the spot and we are astonished when the Corncrake comes out of the irises right into the open and calls!! What an astonishing view and the next 45 minutes is amazing with the Corncrake in view for most of the time. It seems remarkably relaxed and not the least bit bothered by our presence - and we take so many photos!! We also hear a sudden burst of Snipe song and it flies in and vanishes into the rushes.

Eventually the Corncrake disappears and we walk back to the van grinning from ear to ear - almost unable to believe our luck. We then drive out to the point where we enjoy lunch overlooking a beautiful beach. What a view! It is like being abroad apart from the chilly breeze... turquoise seas, white beaches and blue skies!! Sat down out of the wind below the dunes it is perfect!

The machair here is a beautiful carpet of flowers with masses of Daises but also lots of Storks-bill, Doves-foot Cranes-bill, Field Pansies, Forget-me-knot, Mouse-ear and other flowers creating a wonderful show and attracting a few bees. There are not many in the cool wind but we do find some big White-tailed Bumble Bees probably of the northern species and also some gorgeous Moss Carder Bees.

As we walk out towards the point we enjoy wonderful views of Sanderlings in breeding plumage on the beach and on the seaweed. With them are plenty of Dunlin and some nice flocks of Ringed Plover, while in the bay we find several Eider and a pair of Shelducks with a raft of tiny Shelducklings! Arctic Terns are flying in off the sea and inland is a colony of squealing Common Gulls. We are delighted when a Corn Bunting flies in and takes a bath in a small pool at the top of the beach - a scarce bird here these days.

At the far end of the headland we scan the sea and spot a few Gannets. You can see the lighthouse on the Monarch Islands, and way out on the horizon we can see St Kilda faintly through the mist.

Back at the vans we drive through the village and check the beach with more of the same waders. On a small loch are more Tufted Ducks, at least four Little Grebes, Mute Swans and a few Mallard. We spot a pair of Linnets as we continue on our way and then further on a Wheatear and a lovely pair of Stonechats.

We follow the road round the coast and then head inland up the famous Committee Road, known for its raptors. It is still glorious sunshine and we wonder if perhaps it is too nice, as to start with there is nothing to see! A few Common Gulls are flying through as if they are following the road but there is nothing else at all.

After some time we are wondering whether to call it a day when suddenly Roy spots a circling raptor... and wow - it's a Golden Eagle and not far away! We then realise there are actually two and mobbing them is a male Hen Harrier! This is more like what we were hoping for and we enjoy wonderful views of these birds in the sunshine - the Golden nape of the eagles almost glowing in the sunshine as they catch the sun. We watch them until they disappear over the horizon and a few moments later another bird appears - an adult White-tailed Eagle! This bird doesn't hang around unfortunately, but it is a good view while it lasts. Next a male Kestrel appears and hovers close by. A Cuckoo flies through and then Roy picks out another male Hen Harrier down below us and we enjoy superb prolonged views as it quarters the hillsides... what a gorgeous bird. In the distance behind it is a Short-eared Owl.

When the harrier finally disappears, we realise we need to get going as time has vanished, so we get on our way and head back to the hotel fortunately not spotting anything more to stop for on the way or we might have been late!

We gather for the checklist and another absolutely wonderful evening meal... and Lisa brilliantly spots a female Hen Harrier flying past outside. After the meal we take a break but pop out again later to see if we can see the sunset. Lisa and Mark walk out to a view point where the rest of us find

them when we arrive - to discover they have seen Twite on the way. We watch the sun go down but the sky is so clear there are no clouds to catch the sunlight - but still - it makes a lovely finish to the day

Day 4

After another great breakfast we head out into a surprisingly midgy world outside. It is warm already and no wind but it is not bad in the sunshine... the midges keeping to the shade. We make a stop at the shop for a few bits and pieces and when we come out we scan the water behind the shop and find several female Eiders with ducklings. They are very cute, and scanning further we find a nice male Red-breasted Merganser and a close Bar-tailed Godwit. There is still something we need to buy so we try the post office before we finally get going with the birding and head round to the well-known Red-necked Phalarope site.

We arrive at the spot and within seconds Roy has spotted one, but by the time everyone is out of the van it has vanished! A slightly worrying 10 minutes passes with no sign then suddenly there it is - and moments later a second! They are both beautiful females with lovely red necks and we think they are very close and enjoy some fantastic scope views - then suddenly there are two more that seem to appear out of nowhere! These are on the closest bit of water they could possibly be on and allow even better good views. The closer birds seem to be a pair with a dowdier male and colourful female. They are simply delightful - so dainty and delicate and they are lovely to watch.

We realise there is a Ruff in the long grass and it flies across the end of the loch and shows briefly on the other side but it isn't a breeding male. Three Buzzards are circling nearby and as we watch one we notice a smaller bird higher up - a Peregrine! There seem to be Lapwings everywhere and a few Redshank but little else of note so when the phalaropes finally disappear into the vegetation for a while we decide to try somewhere else.

Our next stop doesn't really have a name but we know it as Coot Loch. It is just about the only place we know where you can reliably see Coot... so really it is a must!! Within a few minutes of arriving we have found one. The other bird that seems to be here and nowhere else is Gadwall, and we find at least three or four. There are several Shoveler, plenty of Mallards, Tufted Ducks and at least four Little Grebes. A pair of Mute Swans have quite a lot of fluffy cygnets and the Greylags plenty of goslings. There seem to be plenty of Skylarks in the area and they are singing in the background much of the time

From here we head to another spot that we have our own name for - and that is Stinky Bay. There are Eiders here with ducklings and a pair of Shelduck, plus a very distant Red-throated Diver but surprisingly no waders on the seaweed. We scan the bay checking every bird in case the recently seen Surf Scoter is around but there is no sign.

We head next to the airport to use the loos and enjoy a coffee and we chat to a group of golfers who are flying round Scotland playing golf - they leave shortly in their own leer jet! Then from here we head to Culla Bay where we enjoy our lunch sat on the dunes looking over the bay. It is a truly beautiful spot with turquoise seas and blue skies and lovely and warm - amazing! There is a long line of Eiders in the bay and Sand Martins flying round us catching insects amongst the dunes. Moments later Mark spots a Great Northern Diver and we enjoy wonderful scope views of this beautiful summer plumage bird - a real stunner.

After we have eaten, a couple of us start wandering lower down out of the wind looking at the flowers and wondering if any of the rarer bees might be here - and within moments we are thrilled to find not one but two Great Yellow Bumblebees! It is an impressive beastie and rare too, now only found in the far north and west of Scotland within the UK. Many photos are taken as they hang around for ages enjoying the Kidney Vetch flowers... and a Moss Carder Bee flies through too.

Well pleased we move on and drive now round to the northern end of South Uist. We drive a slow road along the coast and on the way get good views of a female Hen Harrier along with a couple of Buzzards. There are plenty of Lapwings and Redshank and we glimpse a Snipe but best of all is a family of Ringed Plovers with lovely fluffy chicks. We drive to the coast and follow the road right to the end where we park by a cemetery and take a short walk. A Corncrake is calling when we arrive but we decide to do the walk first and maybe check it on our return. The beach has mounds of rotting seaweed and it is covered in gulls... almost all Common and Herring Gulls but a small number of immature Great Black-backed and Roy is delighted to find an immature Glaucous Gull - a nice find.

At the end of the track is a large area of machair and we scan from here for terns as sometimes they nest here. There is a large herd of cattle which puts us off walking out there but distantly we can see quite a few Arctic Terns and now and then a Little Tern, with a group of four flying in at one point. A couple fly past very close which is nice. There seems to be nothing else of note other than a few fly-by Linnets so we head back and try for the Corncrake. We can actually hear at least two or three but one is very close and we can tell it is right in front of us in a nettle bed. We wait and watch hopefully but perhaps we used all our Corncrake luck up yesterday as after some time it goes quiet and we get the feeling we are not going to see it in the tall nettles.

Our final destination is the south side of Loch Bi. We follow the road round to the shore and marvel at the massive flock of Mute Swans on the loch. On one side of the causeway there must be a hundred or so while on the other we count roughly two hundred and fifty! That's a lorra swans! There

are lots of Greylags too and many with goslings and we find plenty of ducks. There are Mallards of course, but also plenty of Wigeon, a few Teal and several Shoveler. There are lots of Redshank here and they are clearly nesting in an area of marshy ground where there is flowering Bogbean and Marsh Cinquefoil. We scan carefully and are delighted to find a lovely Redshank chick - very cute. There are a few Dunlin out on the mud which look great through the scope in the sunshine.

Time has flown and we realise we have got to go. We are not far from home here and are soon back in time for a break before our evening meal... marvelling again at how she manages to cook so many options and make it all so fabulous.

Day 5

It is a little cloudier and cooler this morning as we head out after a relaxed breakfast. We spot a Cuckoo as we drive to our boat trip but nothing else of note, and we arrive to find Nick sorting out the boat and Ni who is the 'crew'. Before we head out Nick shows us the map and where he is thinking of going and after a little deliberation he decide we should head down to a Golden Eagle nest he knows of despite the extra time it would take to get there. As we set off we spot a very distant Golden Eagle perched on the top of a hill being mobbed by Hooded Crows that look very small beside it - but you couldn't call it a good view!

To be honest this first part of the trip turns out to be a bit of a waste of time as it takes almost half of our allotted time and sadly there seem to be no Golden Eagles around when we get there. We do pass both Arctic and Common Terns as we travel, a couple of Eiders, a few Shags on the rocks and a Black Guillemot – and of course the scenery is lovely so not all is lost.

We head back towards base, nosing into a large bay where we are told there is a nesting pair of White-tailed Eagles. Oh wow!!! There certainly is, and they are perched beside an enormous nest! One takes flight as we pass by, even though we deliberately don't stop, and flaps lazily over the loch, perching on a hill top nearby while the other watches us pass apparently not concerned at all. They are magnificent birds and both birds appear to be older adults given how pale their heads are. We continue into the loch a little way for a look round and spot a single seals head poking out of the water plus Ravens and Hooded Crows.

As we come back out of the loch Ni takes a couple of Coley from a basket and pumps of a bit of air into them to make them float. As we pass the nest he throws them out the back of the boat and we slow down to watch what happens. The eagle spots them instantly and after a few moments it take off and flies round before dropping down and picking the fish delicately from the surface of the water! It is spectacular to watch and some of us take loads

of photos of the action hoping to get something good! Later Mark shows us the photos he managed to get and they are jaw-droppingly good!! It flies to the top of a mound to eat and we leave it be, and watching it in the distance as we travel on we soon see it return to the nest with its catch... a nice thank you from us for giving us such wonderful views.

Next, we head round to a different headland spotting a nice group of Red Deer along the way, and arrive at a spot where there are some small cliffs with a heronry on them. When you are used to seeing Herons nesting in trees it looks odd - but in some ways it looks less incongruous than nests in trees. There are lots of nests here and several are clearly occupied with birds sat on them but even more exciting, a pair of Peregrines have occupied one of the Heron nests and have three chicks in the nest. One of the adults is perched on the rocks nearby! Wow!! As we pass the rocks the Peregrine spots us and flies round the bay a couple of times as if checking us out before returning to the cliff by the nest allowing some wonderful flight views... a fabulous photo opportunity too and Mark gets yet more fantastic shots. We start heading back towards home and notice the male flies in as we go.

It has been a fabulous boat trip and we head for home feeling well pleased, then go for a coffee in the local café. After rescuing a Moss Carder Bee from an almost certain death on the pavement outside, we head for lunch at a stunning beach on North Uist - passing numerous Wheatears as we drive across Grimsay. Our lunch spot is the sort of place you see on tourism adverts for the Uists... a stunning white sand beach, with the mountains of Harris in the background a turquoise sea and blue skies with a little cloud, and we sit at the edge of the dunes enjoying the view as we munch lunch... just wonderful!

As we scan the scene we find a Great Skua on the edge of the beach and fishing in the bay are at least two Little Terns. Arctic Terns are also flying past and Lisa brilliantly spots a pair of Great Northern Divers, and having got our eye in we find a further two more. A pair of Ravens fly overhead calling and put on a bit of a display.

Fed and watered, we follow a track to a rather damp area of grazed machair where Roy has found Hebridean Orchids in the past. Some books split this from Northern Marsh Orchids as a different species while others class it as a subspecies - but either way it is interesting and worth seeing. It is distinguished by the three lobed lower lip and the very heavily blotched leaves and it doesn't take long for us to find several! After taking pics we have a little wander round being very careful not to tread on anything important and find plenty of Early Marsh Orchids here too and at least one Northern Marsh as well as what may be hybrids. There is Butterwort too and loads of Marsh Marigold as well as other commoner flowers.

Pleased with our success we drive back on the main road pausing here and there to scan the bigger lochs for divers but with no luck. We then decide to try the Loch Eynort road along the south shore. Although known as a good road from which to spot Otters Roy admits he has never seen one here, but hey - you never know your luck. We drive slowly along and spot Red-breasted Mergansers, three groups of Red Deer and a lovely breeding plumage Red-throated Diver. We spot a distant White-tailed Eagle from here and more Ravens - but no Otters. We drive to the end of the road and have a quick scan from here but time is racing away and we need to start heading back - all we add on our return journey being a couple of Song Thrush

We gather before our evening meal to do the checklist and then after a delicious evening meal the exciting moment has arrived for Mark.... it is Cranachan time!!! He asked Isabelle whether she ever made this delicious dessert earlier in the trip and she said she would make it for him... and tonight is the night. He is not alone in having it but is without doubt the most excited... and of course - it totally lives up to expectations.

We have been hoping to see more Short-eared Owls and since they are evening beasts we decide to head back out for a little look at a spot Roy knows. It is a bit of a drive and we get there and take a short walk along a track overlooking a lovely marshy looking area covered in swathes of Cotton Grass. All seems rather quiet and we walk as far as the loch, where we scan the water for divers with no luck - then as we walk back towards the van a Hen Harrier appears flying towards us. It flies out over the Cotton Grass and vanishes, re-appearing and flying off past us providing some nice views. A Buzzard flies in next being mobbed by a pair of Curlew and behind it is a rather distant Short-eared Owl! We are pleased to see it but it is rather distant. A second Buzzard joins the first and mobs it.

We head for home but Alan at the hotel suggested driving towards Loch Bi for Short-eared Owls so we try that direction even though the light is really fading now. We are pleased to find three superb looking male Red Deer with antlers covered in velvet. We reach Loch Bi and decide to give up so we turn and head for home... and there on a fence post is a Short-eared Owl! We are delighted and watch as it takes flight and starts hunting. Suddenly it starts to gain height and then starts mobbing something on a telegraph pole... a Golden Eagle!!! We are absolutely astonished. It is a fabulous view but frustratingly brief as the owl pushes the eagle off before we really get a chance to look at it properly... but wow – what an end to the day.

Day 6

It is more typical of the Uists today... with strong winds as we drive south towards the southern-most part of South Uist. On the way we spot Short-eared Owls... pausing along the main road to watch them hunting and

spotting others flying by more distantly. Soon we have seen three... four... five... six... then we decide to take a side road to see if we can get better views of one hunting over some marshy ground. We watch this one hunting back and forth for ages and just enjoy the moment as they really are such a wonderful bird to watch hunting. Amazingly two more appear in the background taking our total to nine!

From the very southern tip of the island we look over to Barra and the view is simply beautiful. The sea in the channel looks rough and Gannets are diving in for fish. We find a nice spot for a coffee with a lovely view and then decide to drive across the causeway to Eriskay just to say we've been! We drive round to a viewpoint over a beautiful beach and Bay where there are more Gannets and a few Heath Spotted Orchids on the roadside and amazingly Primroses still in flower.

Someone we chatted to earlier in the week said he saw Twite near the cemetery so we drive round and have a short look then decide that the parking area looking out to sea a little further on would be the ideal spot to enjoy our lunch. It is a wonderful view and as we eat, a White-tailed Eagle flies through being mobbed by a Herring Gull. We are surrounded by machair and a pair of Ringed Plover presumably have chick nearby as they watch us carefully surrounded by flowers and creating a delightful scene. A pair of Twite appear and land on the beach below us but unluckily two guys just happen to be walking across the beach at that moment and they fly.

Although the weather is not that conducive for a walk we drive to the well-known 'Archies Garden' - a plantation of mixed trees that have been planted on a headland by a keen forester. On route we pause to enjoy a view of Common Seals in the bay below us as well as Wheatears and Ravens.

We start our walk and there is a real mix of tree species. We identify Sycamore, Oak, Birch, Norway Maple, Alder, Hawthorn, Sitka Spruce and many more as we walk – even the rather lovely looking 'Daisy Bush' which sounds just like it looks – a bush covered in daisy flowers. The trees provide a bit of shelter from the wind and also a different mix of birds we haven't enjoyed all trip as there are so few trees most of the time. We soon add Robin, Goldcrest Willow Warbler, Chaffinch and Blackcap to our list and enjoy a nice selection of ferns and flowers. From one spot we spot a distant Red-throated Diver and there are more Common Seals.

Pleased with our sightings but a little disappointed in the weather we head round to the other side of the loch and drive slowly along the road scanning below us for Otters as this is another good spot... but still no luck. Clearly

this is going to be our bogey species this trip. We do get brief views of Greenshank however as well as Common Sandpiper and more Red-breasted Mergansers.

On our way home we potter round some back roads and check a few lochs but there is nothing of note much until one spot where we find seven Black-tailed Godwits including at least a couple of breeding plumage looking gorgeous. We add one more Short-eared Owl on our way back making 10 sightings today in total - amazing!

Back at base things turn interesting as we learn that the ferry tomorrow is cancelled as it has a fault... and Roy chats with the Speyside Office as we try to work out what to do. We are not overly concerned as something will work out and we soon hear that we have been booked on a different ferry to Mallaig – which in some ways will be great as it will give us views of Eigg, Canna and Rum on the way back... great scenery, as long as the wind doesn't cause any issues!

We finish the day by enjoying our traditional holiday round up – a bit of reminiscing as everyone gets to say what species they particular loved seeing on the holiday, where their favourite place was and tell us about a 'magic moment' from the trip. Going round the group we are not too surprised that certain species score more votes than others. Roy allows more than one species and soon we have a nice list... Red-throated Diver, Short-eared Owl, Peregrine, Golden Eagle and even Great Yellow Bumblebee getting a mention. White-tailed Eagle scores two votes however and with three votes each the amazing breeding plumage Ruff, the Red-necked Phalarope and the Corncrake all come in top... and well deserved too.

Almost everyone chooses a different favourite place. Balranald, the Phalarope spot, the Boat trip, Culla Bay and the view across the Barra all getting a mention - but our wonderful lunch spot in the north was the most popular with two votes.

Magic moments include seeing a close Cuckoo on our arrival, walking up the road and finding lots of wildlife and leaping dolphins from the ferry... but it is the Corncrake calling and wandering about in the open for 45 minutes that scores three votes. It has certainly been a wonderful week and it is lovely to hear what everyone has to say.

Day 7

After an early breakfast we drive south to ferry from Loch Boisdale passing a Short-eared Owl on the way. It is very windy but we are quickly reassured that this isn't a problem and we board the ferry and get on the way towards Mallaig.

It is pretty choppy with a swell at the start but great birding with lots of Gannets, Fulmars and loads of Manx Shearwaters which is a real treat. A group of Common Dolphins is leaping from the waves and we are delighted to spot Storm Petrels with perhaps 10 or more seen by the time it goes quieter later in the journey. There are plenty of Guillemots and a few Razorbills and Puffins and two Black Guillemots as we pass close to Skye. The scenery is stunning as we pass Canna and Rhum and then look over towards Eigg and Muck.

Once off the ferry we drive to a nice picnic spot where we see a few Common Seals in the bay but there is little else of note – but the trees look huge after being out in the land of few trees. Our final stop is at a loch where we are thrilled to find a breeding plumage Black-throated Diver. This is not the most reliable spot for them so it is great that our final bird is such a good find... and makes the trio of breeding plumage UK divers!

After a very good evening meal at the Premier Inn we head to bed, saying farewell to some guests who we won't be seeing in the morning

Day 8

After breakfast it is a trip into town to take people to buses and trains and we say our fond farewells

BIRDS

Mute Swan	Great Skua
Whooper Swan	Arctic Skua
Greylag Goose	Black-headed Gull
Shelduck	Common Gull
Mallard	Herring Gull
Gadwall	Lesser Black-backed Gull
Shoveler	Great Black-backed Gull
Wigeon	Kittiwake
Teal	Glaucous Gull
Tufted Duck	Little Tern
Eider	Common Tern
Red-breasted Merganser	Arctic Tern
Corncrake	Puffin
Red-throated Diver	Black Guillemot
Black-throated Diver	Guillemot
Great Northern Diver	Razorbill
Little Grebe	Rock Dove
Fulmar	Wood Pigeon
Manx Shearwater	Collared Dove
Storm Petrel	Cuckoo
Gannet	Short-eared Owl
Cormorant	Swift
Shag	Skylark
Grey Heron	Swallow
White-tailed Eagle	House Martin
Golden Eagle	Sand Martin
Hen Harrier	Meadow Pipit
Common Buzzard	Pied Wagtail
Kestrel	Dunnock
Peregrine	Robin
Coot	Wheatear
Oystercatcher	Stonechat
Ringed Plover	Song Thrush
Lapwing	Blackbird
Sanderling	Blackcap
Dunlin	Willow Warbler
Common Sandpiper	Goldcrest
Redshank	Wren
Greenshank	Blue Tit (heard)
Black-tailed Godwit	Treecreeper (heard ?)
Bar-tailed Godwit	Hooded Crow
Curlew	Raven
Snipe	Starling
Red-necked Phalarope	House Sparrow
Ruff	Chaffinch

Linnet
Twite
Goldfinch

Greenfinch
Corn Bunting

MAMMALS

Hedgehog
Rabbit
Red Deer

Grey Seal
Common Seal
Common Dolphin

INSECTS

Great Yellow Bumblebee
Moss Carder Bee
White-tailed Bumblebee
Common Carder Bee
Green-veined White

Red Admiral
Four-spotted Chaser
Common Blue Damselfly
Blue-tailed Damselfly

FLOWERS

Early Marsh Orchid
Northern Marsh Orchid
Hebridean Orchid
Heath Spotted Orchid
Great Sundew
Round-leaved Sundew
Marsh Cinquefoil
Bog Bean
Lousewort
Butterwort
Mountain Everlasting

Dactylorhiza incarnata
Dactylorhiza purpurella
Dactylorhiza ebudensis
Dactylorhiza maculata
Drosera anglica
Drosera rotundifolia
Potentilla palustris
Menyanthes trifoliata
Pedicularis sylvatica
Pinguicula vulgaris
Antennaria dioica