

Breeding birds and late migrants of the Northern Isles

Shetland is closer to Norway than mainland Scotland and these isolated and windswept islands offer some exceptional breeding birds. Our tour is based in two areas, starting at Unst, the most northerly point in the British Isles, and continuing to Mainland where the capital Lerwick is located.

■ Clients should arrive on Shetland on June 10th 2022 or June 9th 2023.

Day 1: Our journey commences in Lerwick and follows a northerly route to Yell, the second largest of the islands. Yell is predominately low lying with tracts of moorland, bogs and lochans. Breeding birds include Red-throated Diver, Red-breasted Merganser, Common Eider and Common Snipe. Unst is reached by crossing Bluemull Sound, where our base is located at Saxa Vord.

Days 2-3: On one day we visit the cliffs of Hermaness which overlook Muckle Flugga and Out Stack, the most northerly points of the British Isles. Walking along the coastal path we should encounter typical breeding birds of Unst including Dunlin, European



Common Rosefinch Photo: Jo Finn

Dates

TOUR A: Saturday June 11th – Saturday June 18th 2022

TOUR B: Saturday June 10th – Saturday June 17th 2023

Leader: Simon McLaughlin

Group Size: 8

Birds: 75–100

Golden Plover Eurasian Whimbrel and Great Skua. Passerines are few but include small numbers of Northern Wheatear and Twite. On reaching the cliffs we witness one of the largest seabird colonies in Britain with substantial numbers of Northern Gannet, Northern Fulmar, Black-legged Kittiwake, Common Guillemot, Razorbill and large populations of Atlantic Puffin. Any patch of sycamores and gardens on Unst often hold late migrants with recent visits recording Marsh and Icterine Warblers and Red-backed Shrike. On another day we visit Fetlar on one of the many inter-island ferries. Fetlar is famous for Red-necked Phalaropes and we should get excellent views of them 'spinning' around on the lochans. Fetlar is also productive for breeding Northern Lapwing, Eurasian Oystercatcher, Eurasian Curlew and Arctic Skua. Along the coast Arctic and Common Terns occur, whilst the open moors and cliffs attract Peregrine Falcon, Merlin and Rock Dove.

Days 4-7: On Day 4 we return south to Mainland using the inter-island ferries which give us a chance of locating summering Great Northern Diver, Long-tailed



Northern Gannets *Photo: Simon Papps*

Duck and colonising Whooper Swans. Sumburgh Head is in the southern sector of Mainland and famous for its many rare bird sightings and seabird passage. Offshore we may find a late Pomarine or Long-tailed Skua. On recent June visits to Mainland we have recorded Eurasian Hobby, Western Osprey, European Honey Buzzard, Iceland and Glaucous Gulls, Common Crane, Common Quail and Black-headed Bunting. There are many areas to visit on Mainland in a compact area, such as Lerwick Harbour where fishing boats attract gulls including Glaucous and the harbour itself is home to Black Guillemots. On one evening we take a boat trip to the island of Moussa and its 2000-year-old brock. As darkness falls the brock comes alive with the churring noise of European Storm Petrels which breed within the walls. The island of Noss is situated off the east coast and is famous for its seabird colonies. The best way to view the birds is by boat which circumnavigates the island to give us excellent views. In addition to the birds at Hermaness we should have close views of European Shag, Great Black-

backed Gull and Northern Raven. In the nooks and crannies of the rocks both Rock Pipit and the endemic subspecies of Eurasian Wren breed.

Day 8: Transfer to the airport and flights south to mainland UK.

Prices

Tour Price: £1795; Tour B: £1895
Single room: £100
Deposit: £200

This holiday is fully inclusive of accommodation, meals, ferry fares, boat trips, complimentary transport and guidance.

Not included: insurance and items of a personal nature. Entry into RSPB reserves if you are a non-member. Additional night and meals before the tour commences