

# FAIR ISLE



"Approaching the immense west cliffs on Fair Isle always takes your breath away. Seeing migrant chats, warblers and flycatchers dwarfed by the huge cliffs, is one of the unique sights of this magic isle at migration time!" Craig Round

Dates Sat 31 Aug - Sat 7 Sep 2019  
 Price £1,825  
 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 lunch 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

## Just some of what we hope to see:

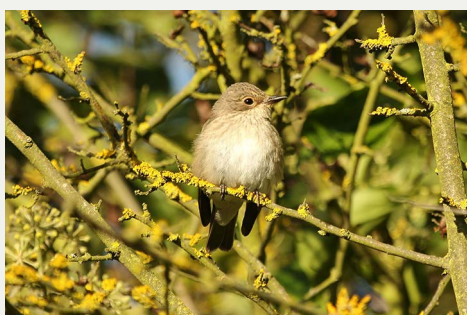
Sooty Shearwater	Ortolan Bunting
Storm Petrel	Mealy Redpoll
Wryneck	Lapland Bunting
Citrine Wagtail	Snow Bunting
Richard's Pipit	Short-eared Owl
Olive-backed Pipit	Long-eared Owl
Bluethroat	Merlin
Yellow-browed Warbler	Spotted Flycatcher
Barred Warbler	Pied Flycatcher
Lanceolated Warbler	Redstart
Red-backed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

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'.

Leaving Shetland behind, we pass under the imposing cliffs of Sumburgh Head, before heading out to sea towards Fair Isle some 25 miles to the south, with the possibility of seabirds such as Great and Arctic Skuas, Sooty Shearwater, Fulmar, Gannet, Puffin and 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 North Lighthouse perched on top of the cliffs, arriving into the shelter of the harbour at North Haven, then make our way up to the Observatory, where we become part of the wider island community for the week.



**2-7** The Observatory 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, flocks of passage waders such as Knot, Sanderling, Dunlin and Turnstone can be seen feeding, whilst the Observatory gardens, vegetable patches and plantation will often hold migrant warblers, pipits, chats and flycatchers. This allows you to birdwatch from the comfort of the Observatory's lounge, dining room or even your bedroom! Their minibus will take us to the far reaches of the island, but we'll also enjoy plenty of walking, so be able to explore every nook and cranny, from seabird cliff, to cultivated garden and crofting land.

At dawn we can accompany one of the wardens checking the Heligoland traps, such as the famous



"Always one of the highlights of my birding year, Fair Isle is one of 'the' best places to witness bird migration at first hand. It can be a magnet for birds from all points of the compass at migration time and every day as you set out from the Observatory, there's always a sense of excitement, as you never really know what incredible birds might turn up! As well as the avian riches, it's a place where you really can leave the hustle and bustle of modern life behind, a unique island, rich in history, with stunning coastal scenery and simply fantastic wildlife!" Craig Round



Gully and Double-dyke, to discover which migrants may have arrived and we'll be closely involved with the study and ringing of any birds back at base, allowing us the privilege of seeing these incredible migrants up-close in the hand - and be sure not to miss any rarities caught.

Fair Isle is one of 'the' best places to experience the thrill of bird migration and if the winds are right, we'll explore the gardens and crofts in the gentler south of the island, as well as the wild and dramatic west cliffs, with their numerous sea stacks and the moorland and hill ground in the north. On the sheer cliffs of the north and west, migrants can be found seeking the smallest patches of shelter, such as the stands of Angelica.

The meadows and fields can hold feeding waders, including Black-tailed Godwit, Ringed Plover, Dunlin, Lapwing, Golden Plover and Ruff and with migration reaching its peak, in the right weather, the island can be alive with common migrants around every corner; birds dotting the top of every dry-stone wall and fence line! Regular migrants include 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, plus hoped for rarities 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's grapevine, news of rarities will reach us anywhere - the Observatory minibus fly's a red flag to let everyone on the island know of a mega-rarity! Or we might just find that Arctic Warbler, Greenish Warbler or Citrine Wagtail ourselves! We are at the mercy of the winds, but in quieter periods, we shall soak up the atmosphere and enjoy the fascinating history, geology and culture of this wonderful island. The rocky coast around the South Harbour and Lighthouse often holds passage waders including Purple Sandpiper, Knot, Turnstone, Sanderling, Redshank, Dunlin and Curlew, whilst Rock Pipits, Northern Wheatears, White Wagtails and Fair Isle race Wrens can be found foraging amongst the seaweed on the beaches, with small flocks of Eider and Black Guillemots just offshore.

We'll also check some of the island's freshwater pools, marshes and wetlands, 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 Wigeon and Teal and both Common and Jack Snipe. Some lingering Gannets and Fulmars may still be on ledges on the towering sandstone cliffs in the north, while breeding Great Skuas and maybe 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:** Jack Snipe, Bird Observatory, Barred Warbler

**Roy Cowley:** Spotted Flycatcher

**Ian Smith:** Lapland Bunting

**Simon Eaves:** Pied Flycatcher

**David Kjaer:** Wryneck

