

Fetlar2013

Birds

Fetlar is renowned among ornithologists and naturalists worldwide for being the home of some of the rarest birds of Britain. The island is Britain's premier site for the beautiful **red-necked phalarope**, and is home for the majority of the UK's breeding population. The island is also home to large populations of some of Shetland's most iconic breeding birds, including the **whimbrel** and **red-throated divers**.

Its unspoilt heathland supports large numbers of upland breeding birds like **golden plover** and **dunlin**, and through the summer months the moorland, hills, and fertile soils of the island are brought to life with the beautiful sights and sounds of the highest densities of breeding wading birds in Shetland. Good numbers of **redshank**, **lapwing**, **curlew**, **snipe**, **oystercatcher** and **ringed plover** are supported by Fetlar's diverse range of habitats.

The hills and heath of the island hold populations of **great skua** and **arctic skua**, although the latter is much less numerous. Around the coast and cliffs of the island, a number of breeding seabirds can be seen, including **storm petrels** and **manx shearwaters** – although the latter is a very scarce breeder. Unusually, **gannets** do not breed on the island, although they can be seen feeding at the shore.

The island has a great many common songbirds, including **skylarks**, **meadow pipits**, **wheatears** and the Shetland subspecies of **wren** and **starling**. Other birds that can be seen on Fetlar include the **hooded crow**, **shag**, and **fulmar**.

Fetlar's dramatic coastline and inland network of spectacular drystone dykes are welcome resting places for birds during their spring and autumn migration, and the island often attracts off-course migratory birds and rare vagrants. Britain's first ever record of **chestnut-sided warbler** was made in Fetlar, as was the second ever recording of **common yellow throat**.

Other rare sightings include the **little swift**, **red-flanked bluetail**, **Isabelline shrike**, **Swainson's thrush**, **hermit thrush**, **lesser scaup**, **pacific golden plover** and **white-throated sparrow**.

Fetlar was once the home to Britain's first and only breeding pair of **snowy owls** during the late 1960s to 1970s. Although the male owl disappeared, the offspring of the pair could be seen on the island until the mid 1990s.

RSPB Nature Reserve

RSPB Mires of Funzie nature reserve, located at the eastern side of the island, is a breeding site for **red-necked phalaropes**. A birdwatching hide overlooks it. As you walk to the reserve from the car park, west of the Loch of Funzie, you will pass the roadside shore of the Loch. Phalaropes sometimes feed here along the water's edge, offering lucky visitors very close views – without disturbing them at their breeding sites. They are Schedule 1 breeding birds protected by law.

Other birds you might see on a visit to the Mires of Funzie include common waders like **snipe**, **redshank** and **curlew**, or ducks such as **teal**, **tufted ducks** and **mallards**.

RSPB Scotland has been studying Fetlar's wildlife since the 1960s. The conservation charity works together with local farmers and crofters to manage land for some of Fetlar's rare or endangered species.

Contact

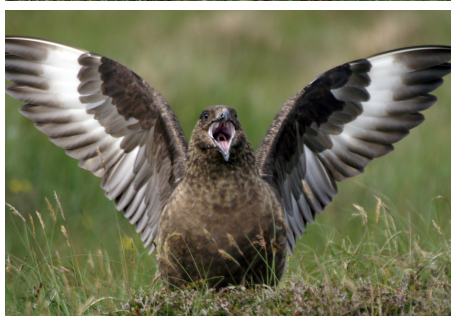
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Top:
A red-throated
diver sits upon a
nest.



Bottom:
A great skua,
also known as a
bonxie,



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