



Wheatear | Mountain Hare David Gifford

Enjoy a day wildlife watching

Much of the coastline in Nesting, Lunnasting and Delting offers a natural gallery for observing wildlife.

Look out for common and grey seals along the rocky shores. Common seal pups born in June can swim within a few days, unlike the grey seal pups born in October who stay on the beach for a month before entering the sea.

Lochs and streams provide fresh water, essential for coastal otters to wash the salt from their fur. Soft peat banks conceal their holts where otters rest, shelter and breed.

The birdwatching is superb - Gannets, Guillemots, Kittiwakes, Fulmars and Puffins can be seen along the coastline - while migrant birds such as Pied Wagtails, Waxwings, Redwings and various geese alight here in spring and autumn.

Local breeding birds include Red-throated Divers, Arctic Terns, Arctic Skuas, Red-breasted Mergansers, Golden Plovers, Oystercatchers, Rock Pipits, Wheatears and Skylarks.

The high moorland is home to small coveys of Red Grouse and the Mountain Hare, which changes its colour in winter.

Useful information

Getting around Shetland

For general travel information, including bus timetables and car and bike hire, visit shetland.org/getting-around

Museum and visitor information point

The Cabin Museum, Vidlin

Geopark Shetland

Discover geosites across Shetland | shetland.org/geopark

Public toilets

Vidlin | Laxo | Voe | Toft

Post offices

South Nesting | Brae | Mossbank

Shops

South Nesting | Voe | Brae

Fuel

Voe | Brae

EV charging points

chargeplacescotland.org

Leisure centre and swimming pool

Brae | +44 (0)1595 807710

Health centre

Brae | +44 (0)1806 522543

Police

Brae | 101



shetland.org/nesting-lunnasting-delting

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Nesting, Lunnasting and Delting

An area of contrasts



Welcome to Nesting, Lunnasting and Delting

These three districts in central Shetland offer a great variety of scenery and wildlife, from Mountain Hares and Golden Plovers on the high moorland to seals and otters along the sheltered rocky shores. Geographically, bold headlands and islets contrast with the hummocky peninsulas of Nesting and the fjord-like landscape of Dales Voe.

The area also encompasses infrastructure key to the UK energy sector. Sullom Voe Terminal and the Shetland Gas Plant make Shetland one of Europe's largest oil and gas exporters, while the 103 turbine Viking Energy Windfarm also makes the islands a key exporter of renewable energy.

Nesting

Ten miles north of Lerwick, the 'Nesting Loop' side road (B9075) winds through an intricate landscape of sheltered inlets, scattered crofts and bold headlands. There are scenic surprises around every corner, making a pleasant detour from the main A970 road over the moors to Voe.

Catfirth, the site of a naval air station during the First World War, is a fine spot for watching sea ducks and waders. The burns at Catfirth and **Quoys**, both popular with anglers, have relics of the woodland which covered Shetland thousands of years ago – Willows, Rowans and one of the islands' only two surviving Hazel trees.

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↑ Vidlin VisitScotland / Paul Tomkins

Catfirth Haa, now in ruins, was the birthplace of the Shetland poet James Stout Angus. Nearby is the **Quoys**, home of the legendary 19th-century boatbuilder, Dempster Laurenson.

Turning right at the shop, the road leads past the **Loch of Benston** and its wild swans to **Vassa Voe** and on to the promontories of **Gletness** and **Eswick**. Gletness is one of the most picturesque corners of Shetland. The hills are packed with field systems, houses and burial cairns from ancient times, offering wonderful walking. Gletness is also home to a stud of Shetland ponies. If you sit quietly and scan the isles of Gletness with binoculars you may see otters.

The lighthouse at the **Moul of Eswick** has a panoramic view from Whalsay and Skerries to Bressay and Noss. Close by lies the **Hoo Stack** light, warning of the Voder and Climnie reefs in **South Nesting Bay**. The bay has common and grey seals most of the year.

The coast road to **North Nesting** passes a prehistoric **standing stone** at the **Skellister** junction and, a little further on, an ancient settlement and field system below the **Loch of Skellister**.

From **Brettabister** a side road leads to the headland of **Neap**, the starting point for fine coastal walks out to either the **Staney Hog** or **Stavaness** - where Ravens and Puffins nest.

Back on the B9075, the road turns inland from the war memorial at Brettabister and climbs the steep hill of the **Kirk Ward**. For one of the finest views of the islands, stop the car and walk up to the First World War watchtower on top of the hill on your left. This is a good place to see Red Grouse and Mountain Hares.

Over the hill, the hamlet of **Billister** is another favoured spot for sea trout. A walk along the coast to the east brings you to the granite quarry used to build the laird's mansion at Symbister in Whalsay.

The road winds north through **Grunnafirth** and **Dury** leaving the district of Nesting and entering Lunnasting.

↓ Lunna Kirk
VisitScotland / Paul Tomkins



In the days when most cargo and passengers travelled by sea, vessels sailing to Lerwick from the North Isles and the Westside would call at the natural harbour of **West Lunna Voe**, overlooked by **Lunna House**, the 17th-century mansion of the Hunter family. Nearby is a watchtower built by the lairds to spy on tenants fishing offshore – and also to watch out for the Customs. The Hunters, like most Shetland landowners, were smugglers.

Lunna Kirk was built in 1753 on the site of an earlier mausoleum. It was sold by the Church of Scotland to a community group in 2023. Two inscribed slabs from the Hunters of Lunna's tomb are built into the porch of the church.

Lunna is famous as a secret Second World War base for the little fishing boats that smuggled spies, saboteurs, radios, ammunition and explosives into German-occupied Norway and brought back refugees from the Gestapo. The story of these heroic and terrifying voyages, in midwinter darkness, storms and often under enemy fire, is told in *The Shetland Bus* by David Howarth, the British naval officer who ran the operation from Lunna House. There's also a display telling the story of the Shetland Bus at the Scalloway Museum.

Lunna Ness is wonderful walking country, studded with the ruins of croft houses from the Clearances in the 19th century. The area teems with wildlife: in summer there is a constant stream of seabirds passing the headland – while migrant birds alight here in spring and autumn. A thriving but elusive otter population has made part of Lunna Ness a Site of Special Scientific Interest. Much easier to see are common and grey seals hauled out at colonies on the skerries between Lunna Ness and **Lunna Holm** and at the **Skerry of Lunning**.

Not far away are the atmospheric **Stanes of Stofast** – a 2,000-tonne 'glacial erratic' boulder split in two by frost. Like the nearby Lunning peninsula, this is a heavily glaciated landscape with eerily shaped rocks associated with the trows (mischievous spirits) of Shetland folklore.

Delting

The B9071 road from Vidlin rejoins the main A970 at the village of **Voe**, its trees and bushes sheltered among hills at the head of **Olnafirth**. At the pier the attractive cluster of old buildings grew up around the 19th-century merchant firm of T.M. Adie & Sons, involved in fishing, hosiery and tweed. The firm was famous for providing the woollen sweater worn by Edmund Hillary when he summited Everest in 1953. On the north side of Olnafirth, the ruined **Olnafirth Kirk** is the burial place of the Adies, lairds of Voe, and the Gifford lairds of Busta.



↑ Busta [VisitScotland / Paul Tomkins](#)

The road from Voe to the large, modern village of **Brae** follows Olnafirth past shellfish farms and an old whaling station from the 1920s. On the shores of **Busta Voe**, Brae has good facilities, including the North Mainland Leisure Centre, playparks, shops, takeaways, community hall, marina and boating club, and a range of accommodation offerings.

Across the water, the 17th-century **Busta House** is forever associated with the tragedy of 1748, when the laird Thomas Gifford's four sons were drowned while rowing back from Wethersta. Today it operates as one of Shetland's most popular hotels.

Beyond Busta is the island of **Muckle Roe**, linked to the mainland by a bridge. The **Hams of Roe**, a deserted settlement set among spectacular red granite cliffs at the north end of the island, is a favourite destination for walkers. Just outside Brae, on the B9076 to Sullom Voe, a former manse has been converted into the **Voxter Outdoor Centre**. A delightful walk up the **Burn of Valayre** from the **Voxter Quarry** reveals a hidden valley where native trees form part of a Millennium Forest for Scotland project.

Sullom Voe is the longest and most sheltered voe in the islands. Perhaps best known as the site of a nationally-important oil terminal, it is a wonderful place for birdwatching, thanks to strict environmental controls.

At **Firth**, where the road branches off to the **Toft** ferry terminal, for Yell, Unst and Fetlar, the houses overlook ruins across Firths Voe. This former crofting township lost 20 local men in the Delting Fishing Disaster of 1900. A memorial to mark this disaster is located at the junction to **Mossbank**.

Muckle Roe [VisitScotland / Paul Tomkins](#) →

Heading south back to Voe, the A968 climbs the **Hill of Swinister** to reveal a superb view. The headland of **Foraness** is connected to Swinister by a triple ayre – enclosing a lagoon, the **Houb**, a designated Site of Special Scientific Interest, where the tree remnants and pollen found in the submerged peat indicates that large areas of Shetland were once covered by a layer of thick scrub.

There is one more side road before Voe – a steep climb over the **Easter Hill of Dale** brings you to the secluded hamlet of **Collafirth** and a landscape little changed for hundreds of years – less than five miles, as the crow flies, from Sullom Voe Terminal.

