



The Wheatear on its rocky perch

Mountain Hare still in winter livery

A Location For Wildlife Watching

Much of the coastline offers a natural gallery for observing wildlife, Common and Grey Seals can be seen along the rocky shores. Common Seal pups born in June are able to swim within a few days unlike the Grey Seal pups born in October who stay on the beach for a month prior to 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 or hadds, where Otters rest, shelter and breed.

The birdwatching is superb — Gannet, Guillemot, Kittiwake, Fulmar and Puffin 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 Diver, Mallard, Arctic Tern, Arctic Skua, Merganser, Golden Plover, Oystercatcher, Rock Pipit, Wheatear and Skylark.

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



Blugga (Marsh Marigolds)

Shalder (Oystercatcher)



Constructed in the late 1970s the Sullom Voe Oil Terminal heralded an era of prosperity and change for Shetland

Welcome to Nesting, Lunnasting & Delting

These three districts in central Shetland have 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.

Bold headlands and offlying islets contrast with the superb hummocky peninsulas of North and South Nesting and the dramatic fjord-like landscape of Dales Voe. Just a few miles to the north, Europe’s largest exporting oil terminal is tucked into the shore-side landscape of Sullom Voe.

Every week, millions of barrels of oil from the Brent and Ninian fields are pumped into massive oil tankers bound for refineries world wide and yet, within a few minutes drive from the terminal, you can stand in a secluded valley with an unpolluted pebble beach and trout stream all to yourself.

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.



Lower Voe



Nesting, Lunnasting & Delting



Nesting, Lunnasting & Delting

An area of contrasts

Some Useful Information

Accommodation:	VisitShetland, Lerwick, Tel: 08701 999440
Shops:	South Nesting, Vidlin, Voe, Brae, Firth
Petrol:	South Nesting, Vidlin, Voe, Brae
Public Toilets:	Vidlin, Laxo, Voe, Brae, Toft
Places to eat:	Voe, Brae, Busta, Mossbank
Post Offices:	South Nesting, Brae, Mossbank
Public Telephones:	South Nesting, North Nesting, Vidlin, Laxo, Voe, Brae, Mossbank, Toft
Swimming Pool:	Brae, Tel: 01806 522321
Churches:	South Nesting, North Nesting, Vidlin, Lunna, Voe, Brae, Mossbank, Muckle Roe, Gonfirth
Doctor and Health Centre:	Brae, Tel: 01806 522543
Police Station:	Brae, Tel: 01806 522381



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Relict trees on the banks of the burn at Catfirth



Catfirth

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 the Quoys, both popular with anglers, have relicts of the woodland which covered Shetland thousands of years ago - Willows, Rowans and one of the islands’ only two surviving Hazel trees.



Feeding sheep at Benston

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 *Dratsies* (Otters).

The lighthouse at the Moul of Eswick has a panoramic view from Whalsay and Skerries to Bressay and Noss.

Gletness

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 *Corbies* (Ravens) and *Tammie Nories* (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 on Whalsay. The road winds north through Grunnafirth and Dury leaving the district of Nesting and entering Lunnasting.



Standing stone at Skellister





Vidlin

Lunnasting

A couple of miles north of Dury, the crofting township of Laxo (from Old Norse *lax* meaning salmon) lies on either side of the Laxo Burn, a famous beat for sea trout. From Laxo the ferry sails for Whalsay. In strong south-easterly winds it berths at the village of Vidlin, terminal for the Skerries ferry.

On your left as you drive towards Vidlin you should visit Andy Robertson’s Cabin at the Wirlie. This museum is full to the roof of mementoes, artefacts, photographs and curios from Shetland’s long maritime past. The collection also includes a great deal of war memorabilia.

Vidlin lies on the sheltered Vidlin Voe with a marina for local boats at its head. This settlement has an Iron Age broch buried beside the present Methodist kirk.

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 is the oldest still used in Shetland, built in 1753 on the site of an earlier Mausoleum. Two inscribed slabs from the Hunters of Lunna’s Tomb were built into the porch of the church.



The 18th century kirk at Lunna, with the watchtower on the skyline

Lunna is famous as a secret wartime base for the little fishing boats which 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.

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 (SSSI). Much easier to see are *Selkies* (Common and Grey Seals) hauled out at colonies on the skerries between the ness and Lunna Holm and at the Skerry of Lunning.



The Stanes of Stofast

Not far away are the the mysterious 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 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 old sail loft is now a camping böd. The attractive cluster of old buildings here grew up around the 19th century merchant firm of T.M. Adie & Sons, involved in fishing, hosiery and tweed.

Pre-war Busta



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.



The ruins of the old Olnafirth Kirk

The parish of Delting has changed greatly since the discovery of oil off Shetland, but the district still has many unspoiled and beautiful places. The road from Voe to the large, modern village of Brae follows Olnafirth past modern shellfish farms and an old whaling station from the 1920s. Brae, on the shores of Busta Voe, has good social facilities, including the North Mainland Swimming Pool.

Across the water, the 17th century Busta House is forever associated with the tragedy of 1748, when Thomas Gifford’s four sons were drowned while rowing back from Wethersta. The eldest son had secretly married and his descendants were embroiled in a disputed inheritance - with legal costs which eventually bankrupted the estate.

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 project.

The Hams of Roe



Sullom Voe is the longest and most sheltered voe (sea inlet) in the islands and, thanks to strict environmental controls imposed by Shetland Islands Council and BP, still a wonderful place for birdwatching, despite the huge terminal handling around 40 million tonnes of oil a year.

At Firth, where the road branches off to the Toft terminal for Yell, Unst and Fetlar, the ‘oil boom’ housing estates overlook ruins across Firth Voe. This former crofting township lost 20 local men in the Delting Fishing Disaster of 1900.

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 SSSI 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 the huge tankers and gas flares of the Sullom Voe Terminal.

Ayres of Swinister

