‘Restless Natives’

Orkney International Science Festival Photography Competition

Category: Best image of a native species currently under threat by the non-native, invasive stoat.

Facilitated and judged by the Orkney Native Wildlife Project

(The stoat: non-native and invasive to Orkney)

Stoats are a mustelid and are non-native and invasive to Orkney. They are a huge threat to the native wildlife of Orkney by preying on various species of ground-nesting birds and their eggs, such as curlews and oystercatchers. They also prey on the Orkney vole, which is a unique species of vole found only on Orkney and is a primary food source for hen harries and short-eared owls, meaning their survival is also threatened. Species of birds that you would find on coastlines and cliffs such as guillemots and gannets are at high risk too. Stoats are incredibly agile predators, can travel up to 40km a day, and can swim up to 5km – which means they can travel between islands.

For this category of the Orkney International Science Festival Photography Competition, we at the Orkney Native Wildlife Project would like contestants to focus on the incredible, beautiful and sometimes rare wildlife we are lucky enough to live with here on Orkney – but *specifically*, those which are currently under threat by the invasive, non-native stoat.

And remember, heading out to try and get a snap of these amazing species doesn’t mean you necessarily have to go further than you have the means of – neither does it mean you need to have the best quality camera! Anyone can enter, no matter their ability or experience. We are looking for exciting images and we would like to see your creativity, so go wild!

It may be a shot from your kitchen window, from the bus or ferry, in and around your town or village, along your nearest coastline, or simply on your favourite walk/route. We want this competition to remind us of all the incredible wildlife, which is right on our doorsteps, and now sadly under threat. So, below are some visual examples to get you thinking. Good luck!

Rules:

- **U16s only can compete.**
- **1 image per person.**
- **Must be a native species threatened by stoats.**
- **Phone camera images are accepted.**
- **Same due dates as OISF competition apply**

Prizes:

- **Prizes for 1st, 2nd and 3rd**
- **Rarest Species Award**
- **Provided by ONWP**

Judging:

- **Prizes allocated by ONWP panel**
- **All entries acknowledged**
- **Judging panel have photography expertise**

Any questions about the competition, species identification, habitats, photography, anything at all, please do not hesitate to email Clyde.Williamson@RSPB.ORG.UK

Curlew: ground nesting, often seen in fields, marshlands, shorelines, and frequently from X1 Kirkwall – Stromness bus. Very distinctive beaks.

Oystercatcher: ground nesting, often seen in fields, coasts and beaches. You will hear these before you see them.

Short-Eared Owl: often seen in farmyards, fields, moors, what wooded areas we have, and especially the foot-track taking you up Wideford Hill from Muddisdale, Kirkwall - early morning best.

Guillemot: Mostly found either on coastlines, nesting on cliff faces, or on the water – feeding on fish. Likely to be seen at Brough of Birsay.

Orkney Vole: a rare species of vole only found on Orkney. Quite hard to find, often in remote grasslands, moors and wetlands, heathery hillsides. They make obvious spiral tunnels in the grass, along fence lines.

Gannet: like the Guillemot, mostly found on coasts and nesting on cliff faces. Usually diving for fish, an amazing spectacle. Often seen from many of the local ferries, or even just when looking out from a pier.

Hen Harrier: an elusive bird of prey, often seen in remote, scarcely populated areas. Maybe on a fence post, scanning for voles, or hovering in the thermals high above hillsides and fields.