

Code for birders in Shetland

Shetland has traditionally had a relaxed attitude towards access to the countryside. Recent changes in legislation have now given everyone the right of responsible access to the countryside in Scotland, providing they:

Follow the [Scottish Outdoor Access Code](#) and the [Birdwatchers' Code of Conduct](#)

The increasing numbers of birders visiting Shetland, especially in the spring and autumn has inevitably led to a few problems in recent years. These have not always been because birders have done anything wrong. They can arise simply due to other people's perceptions and worries concerning gatherings of birders. Shetland folk are very sociable and are used to everyone talking to each other. If visitors do not say hello or ignore them, this can cause offence.

Here are a few suggestions to help your birding go smoothly:

When birding around gardens:

- Never go into a garden without asking permission.
- Avoid giving the impression that you may be looking in windows
- Most importantly, speak to any residents you see and be polite.
- If you are asked to leave an area adjacent to a garden, please do so.

When birding in the countryside:

- Use gates and stiles where available.
- If there is no alternative other than to cross a fence, step over it. Avoid climbing on fences.
- Walk around crops, not through them. Remember grass when grown for hay or silage is also a crop.
- Avoid disturbing livestock whenever possible, especially when young animals are present.

When gathering at a "twitch":

- Explain to local people what is happening, they are most likely to be interested.
- When parking a car, avoid obstructing roads and access to property.