

= Skye =

Skye , or the Isle of Skye (/ ska? / ; Scottish Gaelic : An t @-@ Eilean Sgitheanach or Eilean a ' Cheò) , is the largest and most northerly major island in the Inner Hebrides of Scotland . The island 's peninsulas radiate from a mountainous centre dominated by the Cuillins , the rocky slopes of which provide some of the most dramatic mountain scenery in the country . Although it has been suggested that the Gaelic Sgitheanach describes a winged shape there is no definitive agreement as to the name 's origins .

The island has been occupied since the Mesolithic period and its history includes a time of Norse rule and a long period of domination by Clan MacLeod and Clan Donald . The 18th @-@ century Jacobite risings led to the breaking up of the clan system and subsequent Clearances that replaced entire communities with sheep farms , some of which also involved forced emigrations to distant lands . Resident numbers declined from over 20 @,@ 000 in the early 19th century to just under 9 @,@ 000 by the closing decade of the 20th century . Skye 's population increased by 4 per cent between 1991 and 2001 . About a third of the residents were Gaelic speakers in 2001 , and although their numbers are in decline this aspect of island culture remains important .

The main industries are tourism , agriculture , fishing and forestry . Skye is part of the Highland Council local government area . The island 's largest settlement is Portree , known for its picturesque harbour . There are links to various nearby islands by ferry and , since 1995 , to the mainland by a road bridge . The climate is mild , wet and windy . The abundant wildlife includes the golden eagle , red deer and Atlantic salmon . The local flora is dominated by heather moor , and there are nationally important invertebrate populations on the surrounding sea bed . Skye has provided the locations for various novels and feature films and is celebrated in poetry and song .

= = Etymology = =

The first written references to the island are Roman sources such as the Ravenna Cosmography , which refers to Scitis and Scetis , which can be found on a map by Ptolemy . One possible derivation comes from skitis , an early Celtic word for winged , which may describe how the island 's peninsulas radiate out from a mountainous centre . Subsequent Gaelic- , Norse- and English @-@ speaking peoples have influenced the history of Skye ; the relationships between their names for the island are not straightforward . Various etymologies have been proposed , such as the " winged isle " or " the notched isle " but no definitive solution has been found to date and the placename may be from an earlier , non @-@ Gaelic language .

In the Norse sagas Skye is called Skíð , for example in the Hákonar saga Hákonarsonar and a skaldic poem in the Heimskringla from c . 1230 contains a line that translates as " the hunger battle @-@ birds were filled in Skye with blood of foemen killed " . The island was also referred to by the Norse as Skuy (misty isle) , Skýey or Skuyö (isle of cloud) . The traditional Gaelic name is An t @-@ Eilean Sgitheanach (the island of Skye) , An t @-@ Eilean Sgiathanach being a more recent and less common spelling . In 1549 Donald Munro , High Dean of the Isles , wrote of " Sky " : " This Ile is callit Ellan Skiannach in Irish , that is to say in English the wyngit Ile , be reason it has many wyngis and pointis lyand furth fra it , throw the dividing of thir foirsaid Lochis . " but the meaning of this Gaelic name is unclear .

Eilean a ' Cheò , which means island of the mist (a translation of the Norse name) , is a poetic Gaelic name for the island .

= = Geography = =

At 1 @,@ 656 square kilometres (639 sq mi) , Skye is the second @-@ largest island in Scotland after Lewis and Harris . The coastline of Skye is a series of peninsulas and bays radiating out from a centre dominated by the Cuillin hills (Gaelic : An Cuiltheann) . Malcolm Slessor suggested that its shape " sticks out of the west coast of northern Scotland like a lobster 's claw ready to snap at the fish bone of Harris and Lewis " and W. H. Murray , commenting on its irregular coastline , stated that

" Skye is sixty miles [100 km] long , but what might be its breadth is beyond the ingenuity of man to state " . Martin Martin , a native of the island , reported on it at length in a 1703 publication . His geological observations included a note that :

There are marcasites black and white , resembling silver ore , near the village Sattle : there are likewise in the same place several stones , which in bigness , shape , & c . , resemble nutmegs , and many rivulets here afford variegated stones of all colours . The Applesglen near Loch @-@ Fallart has agate growing in it of different sizes and colours ; some are green on the outside , some are of a pale sky colour , and they all strike fire as well as flint : I have one of them by me , which for shape and bigness is proper for a sword handle . Stones of a purple colour flow down the rivulets here after great rains .

The Black Cuillin , which are mainly composed of basalt and gabbro , include twelve Munros and provide some of the most dramatic and challenging mountain terrain in Scotland . The ascent of Sgùrr a ' Ghreadaidh is one of the longest rock climbs in Britain and the Inaccessible Pinnacle is the only peak in Scotland that requires technical climbing skills to reach the summit . These hills make demands of the hill walker that exceed any others found in Scotland and a full traverse of the Cuillin ridge may take 15 ? 20 hours . The Red Hills (Gaelic : Am Binnean Dearg) to the south are also known as the Red Cuillin . They are mainly composed of granite that has weathered into more rounded hills with many long scree slopes on their flanks . The highest point of these hills is Glamaig , one of only two Corbetts on Skye .

The northern peninsula of Trotternish is underlain by basalt , which provides relatively rich soils and a variety of unusual rock features . The Kilt Rock is named after the tartan @-@ like patterns in the 105 metres (344 ft) cliffs . The Quiraing is a spectacular series of rock pinnacles on the eastern side of the main spine of the peninsula and further south is the rock pillar of the Old Man of Storr .

Beyond Loch Snizort to the west of Trotternish is the Waternish peninsula , which ends in Ardmere Point 's double rock arch . Duirinish is separated from Waternish by Loch Dunvegan , which contains the island of Isay . The loch is ringed by sea cliffs that reach 295 metres (967 ft) at Waterstein Head . Oolitic loam provides good arable land in the main valley . Lochs Bracadale and Harport and the island of Wiay lie between Duirinish and Minginish , which includes the narrower defiles of Talisker and Glen Brittle and whose beaches are formed from black basaltic sands . Strathaird is a relatively small peninsula close to the Cuillin hills with only a few crofting communities , the island of Soay lies offshore . The bedrock of Sleat in the south is Torridonian sandstone , which produces poor soils and boggy ground , although its lower elevations and relatively sheltered eastern shores enable a lush growth of hedgerows and crops . The islands of Raasay , Rona , Scalpay and Pabay all lie to the north and east between Skye and the mainland .

= = = Towns and villages = = =

Portree in the north at the base of Trotternish is the largest settlement (estimated population 2 @, @ 264 in 2011) and is the main service centre on the island . Broadford , the location of the island 's only airstrip , is on the east side of the island and Dunvegan in the north @-@ west is well known for its castle and the nearby Three Chimneys restaurant . The 18th @-@ century Stein Inn on the Waternish coast is the oldest pub on Skye . Kyleakin is linked to Kyle of Lochalsh on the mainland by the Skye Bridge , which spans the narrows of Loch Alsh . Uig , the port for ferries to the Outer Hebrides , is on the west of the Trotternish peninsula and Edinbane is between Dunvegan and Portree . Much of the rest of the population lives in crofting townships scattered around the coastline .

= = = Climate = = =

The influence of the Atlantic Ocean and the Gulf Stream create a mild oceanic climate . Temperatures are generally cool , averaging 6 @. @ 5 ° C (43 @. @ 7 ° F) in January and 15 @. @ 4 ° C (59 @. @ 7 ° F) in July at Duntulm in Trotternish . Snow seldom lies at sea level and frosts are less frequent than on the mainland . Winds are a limiting factor for vegetation . South @-@

westerlies are the most common and speeds of 128 km / h (80 mph) have been recorded . High winds are especially likely on the exposed coasts of Trotternish and Waternish . In common with most islands of the west coast of Scotland , rainfall is generally high at 1 @, @ 500 ? 2 @, @ 000 mm (59 ? 79 in) per annum and the elevated Cuillin are wetter still . Variations can be considerable , with the north tending to be drier than the south . Broadford , for example , averages more than 2 @, @ 870 mm (113 in) of rain per annum . Trotternish typically has 200 hours of bright sunshine in May , the sunniest month . On 28 December 2015 , the temperature reached 15 ° C , beating the previous December record of 12 @. @ 9 ° C , set in 2013 . On 9 May 2016 , a temperature of 26 @. @ 7 ° C (80 @. @ 1 ° F) was recorded at Lusa in the south @-@ east of the island .

= = History = =

= = = Prehistory = = =

A Mesolithic hunter @-@ gatherer site dating to the 7th millennium BC at An Corran in Staffin is one of the oldest archaeological sites in Scotland . Its occupation is probably linked to that of the rock shelter at Sand , Applecross , on the mainland coast of Wester Ross where tools made of a mudstone from An Corran have been found . Surveys of the area between the two shores of the Inner Sound and Sound of Raasay have revealed 33 sites with potentially Mesolithic deposits . Finds of bloodstone microliths on the foreshore at Orbst on the west coast of the island near Dunvegan also suggest Mesolithic occupation . These tools probably originate from the nearby island of Rum .

Rubha an Dùnain , an uninhabited peninsula to the south of the Cuillin , has a variety of archaeological sites dating from the Neolithic onwards . There is a 2nd or 3rd millennium BC chambered cairn , an Iron Age promontory fort and the remains of other prehistoric settlement dating from the Bronze Age nearby . Loch na h @-@ Airde on the peninsula is linked to the sea by an artificial " Viking " canal that may date from the later period of Norse settlement . Dun Ringill is a ruined Iron Age hill fort on the Strathaird peninsula , which was further fortified in the Middle Ages and may have become the seat of Clan MacKinnon .

= = = Early history = = =

The late Iron Age inhabitants of the northern and western Hebrides were probably Pictish , although the historical record is sparse . Three Pictish symbol stones have been found on Skye and a fourth on Raasay . More is known of the kingdom of Dál Riata to the south ; Adomnán 's life of Columba , written shortly before 697 , portrays the saint visiting Skye (where he baptised a pagan leader using an interpreter) and Adomnán himself is thought to have been familiar with the island . The Irish annals record a number of events on Skye in the later 7th and early 8th centuries ? mainly concerning the struggles between rival dynasties that formed the background to the Old Irish language romance Scéla Cano meic Gartnáin .

The Norse held sway throughout the Hebrides from the 9th century until after the Treaty of Perth in 1266 . However , apart from placenames , little remains of their presence on Skye in the written or archaeological record . Apart from the name " Skye " itself , all pre @-@ Norse placenames seem to have been obliterated by the Scandinavian settlers . Viking heritage is claimed by Clan MacLeod and Norse tradition is celebrated in the winter fire festival at Dunvegan , during which a replica Viking long boat is set alight .

= = = Clans and Scottish rule = = =

The most powerful clans on Skye in the post ? Norse period were Clan MacLeod , originally based in Trotternish , and Clan Macdonald of Sleat . Following the disintegration of the Lordship of the Isles , the Mackinnons also emerged as an independent clan , whose substantial landholdings in

Skye were centred on Strathaird . Clan MacNeacail also have a long association with Trotternish , and in the 16th century many of the MacInnes clan moved to Sleat . The MacDonalds of South Uist were bitter rivals of the MacLeods , and an attempt by the former to murder church @-@ goers at Trumpan in retaliation for a previous massacre on Eigg , resulted in the Battle of the Spilling Dyke of 1578 .

After the failure of the Jacobite rebellion of 1745 , Flora MacDonald became famous for rescuing Prince Charles Edward Stuart from the Hanoverian troops . Although she was born on South Uist her story is strongly associated with their escape via Skye and she is buried at Kilmuir in Trotternish . Samuel Johnson and James Boswell 's visit to Skye in 1773 and their meeting with Flora MacDonald in Kilmuir is recorded in Boswell 's The Journal of a Tour to the Hebrides . Boswell wrote , " To see Dr. Samuel Johnson , the great champion of the English Tories , salute Miss Flora MacDonald in the isle of Sky , [sic] was a striking sight ; for though somewhat congenial in their notions , it was very improbable they should meet here " . Johnson 's words that Flora MacDonald was " A name that will be mentioned in history , and if courage and fidelity be virtues , mentioned with honour " are written on her gravestone . After this rebellion the clan system was broken up and Skye became a series of landed estates .

Of the island in general , Johnson observed :

I never was in any house of the islands , where I did not find books in more languages than one , if I staid long enough to want them , except one from which the family was removed . Literature is not neglected by the higher rank of the Hebrideans . It need not , I suppose , be mentioned , that in countries so little frequented as the islands , there are no houses where travellers are entertained for money . He that wanders about these wilds , either procures recommendations to those whose habitations lie near his way , or , when night and weariness come upon him , takes the chance of general hospitality . If he finds only a cottage he can expect little more than shelter ; for the cottagers have little more for themselves but if his good fortune brings him to the residence of a gentleman , he will be glad of a storm to prolong his stay . There is , however , one inn by the sea @-@ side at Sconsor , in Sky , where the post @-@ office is kept .

Skye has a rich heritage of ancient monuments from this period . Dunvegan Castle has been the seat of Clan MacLeod since the 13th century . It contains the Fairy Flag and is reputed to have been inhabited by a single family for longer than any other house in Scotland . The 18th @-@ century Armadale Castle , once home of Clan Donald of Sleat , was abandoned as a residence in 1925 but now hosts the Clan Donald Centre . Nearby are the ruins of two more MacDonald strongholds , Knock Castle , and Dunscaith Castle , the legendary home of warrior woman , martial arts instructor (and , according to some sources , Queen) Scáthach . Caisteal Maol , built in the late 15th century near Kyleakin and once a seat of Clan MacKinnon , is another ruin .

= = = Clearances = = =

In the late 18th century the harvesting of kelp became a significant activity but from 1822 on cheap imports led to a collapse of this industry throughout the Hebrides . During the 19th century , the inhabitants of Skye were also devastated by famine and Clearances . Thirty thousand people were evicted between 1840 and 1880 alone , many of them forced to emigrate to the New World . For example , the settlement of Lorgill on the west coast of Duirinish was cleared on 4 August 1830 . Every crofter under the age of seventy was removed and placed on board the Midlothian on threat of imprisonment , with those over that age being sent to the poorhouse . The " Battle of the Braes " involved a demonstration against a lack of access to land and the serving of eviction notices . The incident involved numerous crofters and about 50 police officers . This event was instrumental in the creation of the Napier Commission , which reported in 1884 on the situation in the Highlands . Disturbances continued until the passing of the 1886 Crofters ' Act and on one occasion 400 marines were deployed on Skye to maintain order . The ruins of cleared villages can still be seen at Lorgill , Boreraig and Suisnish in Strath Swordale , and Tusdale on Minginish .

= = = Overview of population trends = = =

As with many Scottish islands , Skye 's population peaked in the 19th century and then declined under the impact of the Clearances and the military losses in the First World War . From the 19th century until 1975 Skye was part of the county of Inverness @-@ shire but the crofting economy languished and according to Slessor , " Generations of UK governments have treated the island people contemptuously . " a charge that has been levelled at both Labour and Conservative administrations ' policies in the Highlands and Islands . By 1971 the population was less than a third of its peak recorded figure in 1841 . However , the number of residents then grew by over 28 per cent in the thirty years to 2001 .

The changing relationship between the residents and the land is evidenced by Robert Carruthers 's remark circa 1852 that , " There is now a village in Portree containing three hundred inhabitants . " Even if this estimate is inexact the population of the island 's largest settlement has probably increased sixfold or more since then . During the period the total number of island residents has declined by 50 per cent or more .

The island @-@ wide population increase of 4 per cent between 1991 and 2001 occurred against the background of an overall reduction in Scottish island populations of 3 per cent for the same period . By 2011 the population had risen a further 8 @. @ 4 % to 10 @, @ 008 with Scottish island populations as a whole growing by 4 % to 103 @, @ 702 .

= = = Gaelic = = =

Historically , Skye was overwhelmingly Gaelic @-@ speaking , but this changed between 1921 and 2001 . In both the 1901 and 1921 censuses , all Skye parishes were more than 75 per cent Gaelic @-@ speaking . By 1971 , only Kilmuir parish had more than three quarters Gaelic speakers while the rest of Skye ranged between 50 and 74 per cent . At that time , Kilmuir was the only area outside the Western Isles that had such a high proportion of Gaelic speakers . In the 2001 census Kilmuir had just under half Gaelic speakers , and overall , Skye had 31 per cent , distributed unevenly . The strongest Gaelic areas were in the north and south @-@ west of the island , including Staffin at 61 per cent . The weakest areas were in the west and east (e.g. Luib 23 per cent and Kylerhea 19 per cent) . Other areas on Skye ranged between 48 per cent and 25 per cent .

= = Government and politics = =

In terms of local government , from 1975 to 1996 , Skye , along with the neighbouring mainland area of Lochalsh , constituted a local government district within the Highland administrative area . In 1996 the district was included into the unitary Highland Council , (Comhairle na Gàidhealtachd) based in Inverness and formed one of the new council 's area committees . Following the 2007 elections , Skye now forms a four @-@ member ward called " Eilean a ' Cheò " ; it is currently represented by two independents , one Scottish National Party , and one Liberal Democrat councillor .

Skye is in the Highlands electoral region and comprises a part of the Ross , Skye and Inverness West constituency of the Scottish Parliament , which elects one member under the first past the post basis to represent it . Currently this is David Thompson for the SNP . In addition , Skye forms part of the wider Ross , Skye and Lochaber constituency , which elects one member to the House of Commons in Westminster . The present Member of Parliament is Ian Blackford of the Scottish National Party , who took office after the SNP 's sweep in the General Election of 2015 . Prior to this , Charles Kennedy , a Liberal Democrat , had represented the area since the 1983 general election .

= = Economy = =

The largest employer on the island and its environs is the public sector , which accounts for about a third of the total workforce , principally in administration , education and health . The second largest

employer in the area is the distribution , hotels and restaurants sector , highlighting the importance of tourism . Key attractions include Dunvegan Castle , the Clan Donald Visitor Centre , and The Aros Experience arts and exhibition centre in Portree . There are about a dozen large landowners on Skye , the largest being the public sector , with the Scottish Government owning most of the northern part of the island . Glendale is a community @-@ owned estate in Duirinish and the Sleat Community Trust , the local development trust , is active in various regeneration projects .

Small firms dominate employment in the private sector . The Talisker Distillery , which produces a single malt whisky , is beside Loch Harport on the west coast of the island . Three other whiskies ? Mac na Mara (" son of the sea ") , Tè Bheag nan Eilean (" wee dram of the isles ") and Poit Dhubh (" black pot ") ? are produced by blender Pràban na Linne (" smugglers den by the Sound of Sleat ") , based at Eilean Iarmain . These are marketed using predominantly Gaelic @-@ language labels . There is also an established software presence on Skye , with Portree @-@ based Sitekit having expanded in recent years .

Crofting is still important , but although there are about 2 @,@ 000 crofts on Skye only 100 or so are large enough to enable a crofter to earn a livelihood entirely from the land . Cod and herring stocks have declined but commercial fishing remains important , especially fish farming of salmon and shellfish such as scampi . The west coast of Scotland has a considerable renewable energy potential and the Isle of Skye Renewables Co @-@ op has recently bought a stake in the Ben Aketil wind farm near Dunvegan . There is a thriving arts and crafts sector .

The unemployment rate in the area tends to be higher than in the Highlands as a whole , and is seasonal in nature , in part due to the impact of tourism . The population is growing and in common with many other scenic rural areas in Scotland , significant increases are expected in the percentage of the population aged 45 to 64 years .

= = Transport = =

Skye is linked to the mainland by the Skye Bridge , while ferries sail from Armadale on the island to Mallaig , and from Kylerhea to Glenelg . Ferries also run from Uig to Tarbert on Harris and Lochmaddy on North Uist , and from Sconser to Raasay .

The Skye Bridge opened in 1995 under a private finance initiative and the high tolls charged (£ 5 @.@ 70 each way for summer visitors) met with widespread opposition , spearheaded by the pressure group SKAT (Skye and Kyle Against Tolls) . On 21 December 2004 it was announced that the Scottish Executive had purchased the bridge from its owners and the tolls were immediately removed .

Bus services run to Inverness and Glasgow , and there are local services on the island , mainly starting from Portree or Broadford . Train services run from Kyle of Lochalsh at the mainland end of the Skye Bridge to Inverness , as well as from Glasgow to Mallaig from where the ferry can be caught to Armadale .

The Isle of Skye Airfield at Ashaig , near Broadford , is used by private aircraft and occasionally by NHS Highland and the Scottish Ambulance Service for transferring patients to hospitals on the mainland .

The A87 trunk road traverses the island from the Skye Bridge to Uig , linking most of the major settlements . Many of the island 's roads have been widened in the past forty years although there are still substantial sections of single track road .

= = Culture , media and the arts = =

Students of Scottish Gaelic travel from all over the world to attend Sabhal Mòr Ostaig , the Scottish Gaelic college based near Kilmore in Sleat . In addition to members of the Church of Scotland and a smaller number of Roman Catholics many residents of Skye belong to the Free Church of Scotland , known for its strict observance of the Sabbath .

Skye has a strong folk music tradition , although in recent years dance and rock music have been growing in popularity on the island . Gaelic folk rock band Runrig started in Skye and former singer

Donnie Munro still works on the island . Runrig 's second single and a concert staple is entitled Skye , the lyrics being partly in English and partly in Gaelic and they have released other songs such as " Nightfall on Marsco " that were inspired by the island . Celtic fusion band the Peatbog Faeries are based on Skye . Jethro Tull singer Ian Anderson owned an estate at Strathaird on Skye at one time . Several Tull songs are written about Skye , including Dun Ringil , Broadford Bazaar , and Acres Wild (which contains the lines " Come with me to the Winged Isle , / Northern father 's western child ... " in reference to the island itself) . The Isle of Skye Music Festival featured sets from The Fun Lovin ' Criminals and Sparks , but collapsed in 2007 . Electronic musician Mylo was born on Skye .

The poet Sorley MacLean , a native of the Isle of Raasay , which lies off the island 's east coast , lived much of his life on Skye . The island has been immortalised in the traditional song " The Skye Boat Song " and is the notional setting for the novel To the Lighthouse by Virginia Woolf , although the Skye of the novel bears little relation to the real island . John Buchan 's descriptions of Skye , as featured in his Richard Hannay novel Mr Standfast , are more true to life . I Diari di Rubha Hunis is a 2004 Italian language work of non @-@ fiction by Davide Sapienza . The international bestseller , The Ice Twins , by S K Tremayne , published around the world in 2015 @-@ 2016 , is set in southern Skye , especially around the settlement and islands of Isleornsay .

Skye has been used as a location for a number of feature films . The Ashaig aerodrome was used for the opening scenes of the 1980 film Flash Gordon . Stardust , released in 2007 and starring Robert De Niro and Michelle Pfeiffer , featured scenes near Uig , Loch Coruisk and the Quiraing . Another 2007 film , Seachd : The Inaccessible Pinnacle , was shot almost entirely in various locations on the island . Some of the opening scenes in Ridley Scott 's 2012 feature film Prometheus were shot at the Old Man of Storr . In 1973 The Highlands and Islands - a Royal Tour , a documentary about Prince Charles 's visit to the Highlands and Islands , directed by Oscar Marzaroli , was shot partly on Skye .

The West Highland Free Press is published at Broadford . This weekly newspaper takes as its motto " An Tir , an Cànan ' s na Daoine " (" The Land , the Language and the People ") , which reflects its radical , campaigning priorities . The Free Press was founded in 1972 and circulates in Skye , Wester Ross and the Outer Hebrides . Shinty is a popular sport played throughout the island and Portree @-@ based Skye Camanachd won the Camanachd Cup in 1990 .

= = Wildlife = =

The Hebrides generally lack the biodiversity of mainland Britain , but like most of the larger islands , Skye still has a wide variety of species . Observing the abundance of game birds Martin wrote :

There is plenty of land and water fowl in this isle - as hawks , eagles of two kinds (the one grey and of a larger size , the other much less and black , but more destructive to young cattle) , black cock , heath @-@ hen , plovers , pigeons , wild geese , ptarmigan , and cranes . Of this latter sort I have seen sixty on the shore in a flock together . The sea fowls are malls of all kinds - coulteneb , guillemot , sea cormorant , & c . The natives observe that the latter , if perfectly black , makes no good broth , nor is its flesh worth eating ; but that a cormorant , which hath any white feathers or down , makes good broth , and the flesh of it is good food ; and the broth is usually drunk by nurses to increase their milk .

Similarly , Samuel Johnson noted that :

At the tables where a stranger is received , neither plenty nor delicacy is wanting . A tract of land so thinly inhabited , must have much wild @-@ fowl ; and I scarcely remember to have seen a dinner without them . The moor @-@ game is every where to be had . That the sea abounds with fish , needs not be told , for it supplies a great part of Europe . The Isle of Sky has stags and roebucks , but no hares . They sell very numerous droves of oxen yearly to England , and therefore cannot be supposed to want beef at home . Sheep and goats are in great numbers , and they have the common domestic fowls . "

In the modern era avian life includes the corncrake , red @-@ throated diver , kittiwake , tystie , Atlantic puffin , goldeneye and golden eagle . The eggs of the last breeding pair of white @-@ tailed sea eagle in the UK were taken by an egg collector on Skye in 1916 but the species has recently

been re introduced . The chough last bred on the island in 1900 . Mountain hare (apparently absent in the 18th century) and rabbit are now abundant and preyed upon by wild cat and pine marten . The rich fresh water streams contain brown trout , Atlantic salmon and water shrew . Offshore the edible crab and edible oyster are also found , the latter especially in the Sound of Scalpay . There are nationally important horse mussel and brittlestar beds in the sea lochs and in 2012 a bed of 100 million flame shells was found during a survey of Loch Alsh . Grey Seals can be seen off the Southern coast .

Heather moor containing ling , bell heather , cross leaved heath , bog myrtle and fescues is everywhere abundant . The high Black Cuillins weather too slowly to produce a soil that sustains a rich plant life , but each of the main peninsulas has an individual flora . The basalt underpinnings of Trotternish produce a diversity of Arctic and alpine plants including alpine pearlwort and mossy cyphal . The low lying fields of Waternish contain corn marigold and corn spurry . The sea cliffs of Duirinish boast mountain avens and fir clubmoss . Minginish produces fairy flax , cats ear and black bog rush . There is a fine example of Brachypodium rich ash woodland at Tokavaig in Sleat incorporating silver birch , hazel , bird cherry , and hawthorn .

The local Biodiversity Action Plan recommends land management measures to control the spread of ragwort and bracken and identifies four non native , invasive species as threatening native biodiversity : Japanese knotweed , rhododendron , New Zealand flatworm and mink . It also identifies problems of over grazing resulting in the impoverishment of moorland and upland habitats and a loss of native woodland , caused by the large numbers of red deer and sheep .