

Chapel, village and lazy beds, Rona  
Eaglais bheag, baile agus leannagan, Ronaigh

The Reserve lies 45 miles northwest of Cape Wrath in Sutherland (and the same distance northeast of the Butt of Lewis) and is just visible on the horizon on clear days. It can only be reached by private boat charter.



A large print version of this leaflet is available from SNH

Gheibhear an tuilleadh fiosrachaidh bho: Scottish Natural Heritage / Dualchas Nàdair na h-Alba Stilligarry, Isle of South Uist HS8 5RS Tel / Fon: 01870 620238

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Rona and Sula Sgeir National Nature Reserve  
Tèarmann Nàdair Nàiseanta Rònaigh agus Sulaisgeir



'In the Lap of Wild Ocean'  
'An cois a' chuain'



## Building on the past

ceithir teaghlaichean a bhith a' fuireach ann. Bha dara leth nan taighean fon talamh airson gun seasadh tad ri stoirmean a' gheamhraidh. B' e seo a' choimhearsnachd a b' iomallaidhe ann am Breatain agus dh'fhàg na daoine mu dheireadh ann an 1844. Chan eil for-uisge ann an Sulaigh agus chan eil mòran a' fas ann. Mar sin, cha robh daoine riagh a' fuireach ann.

It seems that Rona's first inhabitant was a Celtic monk named St Roman. Some 1200 years ago he sought solitude in a beehive-shaped cell of stone slabs, covered in turf. In medieval times a small rectangular chapel was added to Roman's cell. The holed cross has been moved to Ness, Lewis for safe-keeping. The best-preserved house on Rona is referred to as the 'Mansie', but was actually restored to a liveable state by two men from Ness in 1884. Malcolm Macdonald and Murdoch Mackay both died during their first winter and are buried beside the chapel.

Sula Sgeir has five bothies, made of overlapping slabs and they are still used by men from Ness during their annual gannet hunt. There is also a small medieval temple, its roof now collapsed. Bith e coltach gur e manach Ceilteach, dom' ainm Rònan, a' chiad b' ainn Rònan, a' chiad duine a bha a' fuireach ann an Rònaigh. Bho chionn timcheall air 1200 bliadhna, bha e beò ann Cannet hunters' bothies, Sula Sgeir Bothain sealgair nan guga

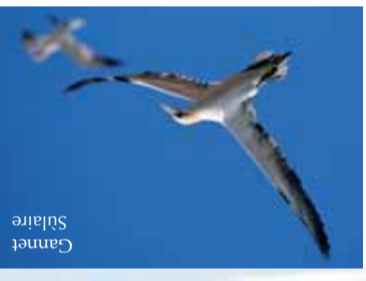


Nessmen's Graves, Rona Clach-chinn na Nisich, Ronaigh

## Rona and Sula Sgeir

NATIONAL NATURE RESERVE

The Atlantic coast of Britain is particularly well-off for islands. Packed with seabirds, Rona and Sula Sgeir are the most northwesterly of all. They cannot match the majesty and scale of St Kilda, but for all who have visited them, they have an appeal far in excess of their size. Together they form the most remote and least-visited National Nature Reserve in Britain.



Gannet Sulaire



TÈARMANN NÀDAIR NÀISEANTA

## Rònaigh agus Sulaisgeir

Tha mòran eileanan far cladach a' Chuain Siar ann am Breatainn. 'S e Rònaigh agus Sulaisgeir as fhaide chun an iar thuath agus tha iad loma-làn eòin-mhara. Chan eil iad càil coltach ri Hìort a thaobh mòrachd is àireamhan ach, do dhaoine a thadhail orra, tha tarraing annta a tha fada air thoiseach air am meud. Seo an t-Ionad Tèarmann Nàdair as iomallaiche agus as lugha de luchd-tadhail ann am Breatainn.

'O these endless little isles! And of all little isles this Ronay! . . . not to see thee, lying clad with soft verdure, and in thine awful solitude, afar off in the lap of wild ocean – not to see thee with the carnal eye, will be to have seen nothing!' T S Muir (1885)

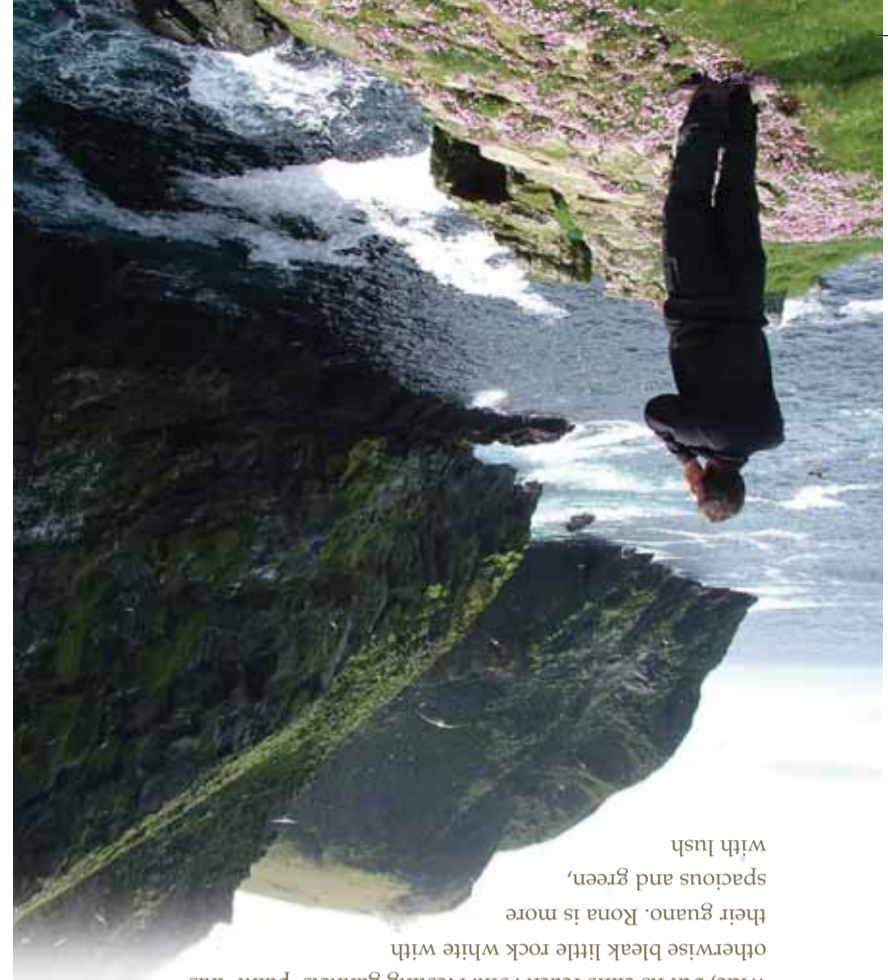
## 'Inhabit and manurit'

The Ronaigh 65 cil. (45 mile) a-muigh sa chuan agus chan eil ach 1.5m sa chuid as àirde dheith. Tha Sula Sgeir fìthead cilemeatair (12 mhilè) chun an iar dheas. Tha mu chillemeatair a dh'fhaid ann. Chan eil barrachd air 150 m a leud ann sa chuid as leatha dheith, ach tha e 75m a dh'àirde sna bearraidhean. Tha a' chreag seo gail le salchar nan sulairean. Tha Rònaigh nas motha agus nas guirme le talamh-ionaitraidh math air na leòidean sa cheann a deas. Tha na bearraidhean air a bheil a' chuid as motha dhe na h-eòin-mhara air a' cheann a tuath.

'Towards the north northeast from Lewis . . . lies a little ile callit Ronay . . . inhabit and manurit be simple people . . . abundance of come groves on it by delving onlie, abundance of clover gerse for sheipe.' Dean Monro 1549

pasture clothing its southern slopes, and the highest and most densely-populated seabird cliffs on its north side.

Rona lies 65 km (45 miles) out to sea and is only 1.5m at its highest point. Twenty kilometres (12 miles) to the southwest lies Sula Sgeir, about a kilometre long. It is nowhere more than 150m wide, but its cliffs reach 75m. Nesting gannets 'paint' this otherwise bleak little rock white with their guano. Rona is more spacious and green, with lush



Below: Toa Rona from Ceodha a' Siobh Ceann a tuath Rònaigh bho Ceodha a' Siobh

## 'this Ronay'

Below: Toa Rona from Ceodha a' Siobh Ceann a tuath Rònaigh bho Ceodha a' Siobh

Sula Sgeir, Scephull and village from Toa Rona Sulaisgeir, Sgeapull agus am baile bho ceann a tuath Rònaigh



## Brushing a wing tip Fuaim na h-oidhche

Fulmars (and starlings) occupy the ruins in summer, but the deserted buildings really come alive at night, when noisy Leach's and storm petrels return to their nest burrows. Rona and Sula Sgeir are two of only a handful of places along the fringes of Britain where the rare and protected Leach's petrel breeds. They ride out the winter far offshore, yet – like many seabirds – they can live for a remarkable length of time. One Leach's petrel was first ringed on Rona in 1972 and was still nesting there 30 years later! The tiny storm petrel is more widespread in Britain, but on Rona it is only numerous around the storm beach at Fianuis.



Leach's petrel

Tha fulmairean (agus druidean) anns na tobhtaichean as t-samhradh, ach 's ann air an oidhche a tha na togalaichean fàs dha-rìreabh beòthail nuair a bhios na gobhlain-mhara agus na luaireagan a' tilleadh gu na tuill neadachaidh aca agus a' dèanamh fuaim gu leòr. Tha an gobhlain-mara tearc agus fo dhion agus chan eil mòran àitichean eile ann am Breatainn a bharrachd air Rònaigh is Sùlaisgeir sa bheil e a' gintinn. Bidh iad a' cur seachad a' gheamhraidh fada a-muigh aig muir ach, an dèidh sin, cleas iomadh eun-mara eile, faodaidh iad a bhith beò gu aois mhòir. Chaidh bann a chur air aon gobhlain-mara airson a' chiad turas ann an Rònaigh ann an 1972 agus bha e fhathast a' neadachadh ann 30 bliadhna ann dèidh sin! Tha an gobhlain-mara beag nas pailte ann am Breatainn ach, ann an Rònaigh, chan eil e pailte ach timcheall na tràghad ann am Fianais.

## Full of wild fowl A' cur thairis le eòin-mhara

Rona is home to a variety of other seabirds, with some – like the auks (razorbills, guillemots and puffins) – in considerable numbers. But perhaps the most obvious of Rona's residents are the great black-backed gulls: nearly a thousand pairs nest all over the island. Surrounded and totally outnumbered are 20 brave pairs of great skua or bonxie.

Around 10,000 pairs of gannet nest on Sula Sgeir. Despite a licensed annual harvest of 2000 fledglings (called 'gugas') by men from Ness, the breeding numbers have remained stable for many decades. Gugas are a delicacy in Lewis and the hunt has been a local tradition for hundreds of years.



Puffin  
Buthaid

Tha iomadh seòrsa eun-mara eile ann an Rònaigh agus tha cuid dhiubh mar an fheadhainn a bhuineas dhan ghearra-bhall (coltraichean, eun dubh an sgadain, agus buthaidean) – gu math pailte. Ach 's dòcha gur e an fharspach as motha a chì duine dhen h-uile h-eun ann an Rònaigh: tha faisg air mìle paidhir a' neadachadh air feadh an eilein. Nam meadhan tha dìreach 20 paidhir tapaidh de dh'fhasgaidhean mòra.

Tha mu 10,000 paidhir sùlairean a' neadachadh ann an Sùlaisgeir. A dh'aindeoin 's gu bheil cead aig na Nisich 2000 guga (sùlaire òg) a ghlacadh gach foghar, tha an àireamh air a bhith stèidheil bho chionn bhliadhnaichean. Tha muinntir Leodhais uabhasach dèidheil air a' ghuga agus tha e air a bhith na chleachdadh aca fad cheudan bliadhna a bhith gan glacadh.

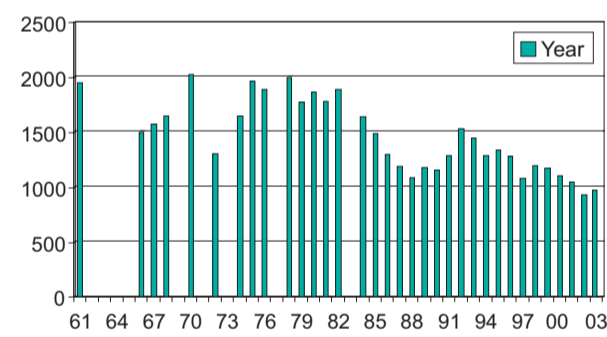
## Seal appeal Ròin

Up to 100 sheep graze on Rona but other than whales and dolphins offshore, the only other mammal is the grey seal. Several hundred remain around the island all year but many more congregate to breed in the autumn. The flat peninsulas of Fianuis and Sceapull see about 1000 pups born each year, nearly half the number being born 25 years ago. The seals have been the subject of an important long-term population study with many animals in the colony individually marked for behavioural research. Some of these return to breed year after year, and at other times have been seen in Orkney, Norway or far out in the Atlantic.



Atlantic grey seals on Rona  
Ròin glas a' Chuan Siar, air Rònaigh

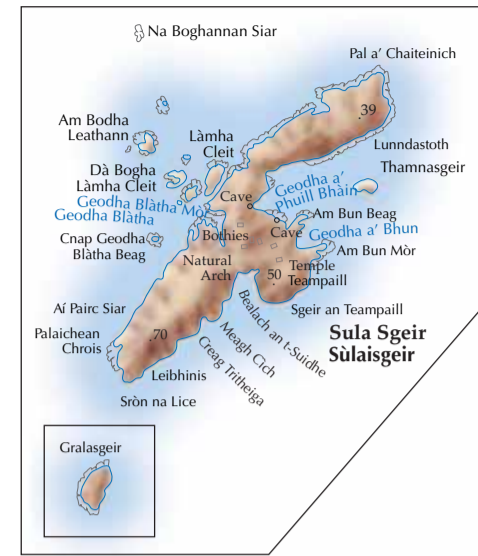
Numbers of grey seals born on Rona each year



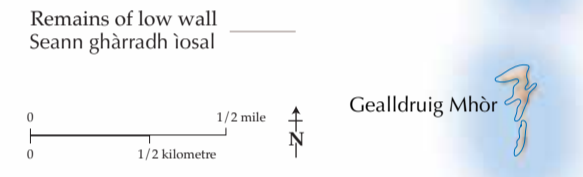
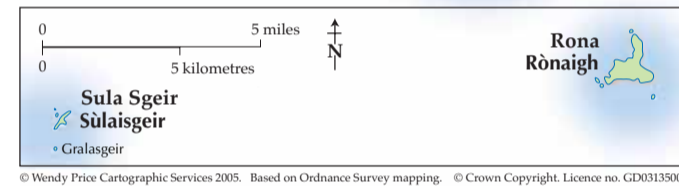
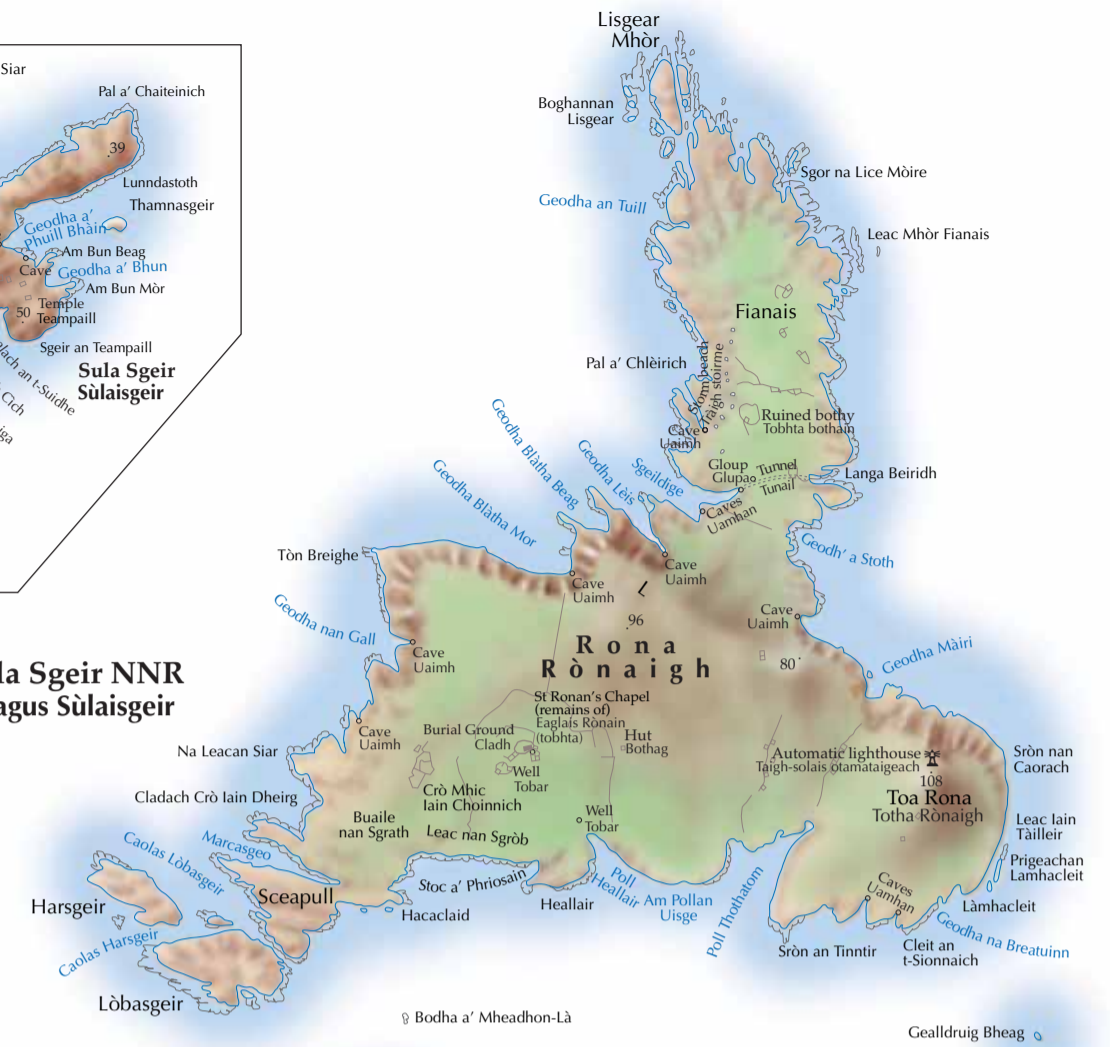
Tha suas ri 100 caora ag ionaltradh ann an Rònaigh ach a bharrachd air mucan-mara is leumadairean a-mach bho thìr, chan eil mamail eile ann ach an ròin glas. Tha corra cheud dhiubh a' fuireach mu chuairt an eilein fad na bliadhna ach bidh mòran a bharrachd a' cruinneachadh san fhoghar airson gintinn. Tha mu 1000 cuilean gam breith air rudhachan còmhnard Fhianais agus Sgeapull gach bliadhna, faisg air dara leth an àireimh a bha gam breith bho chionn 25 bliadhna. Gach bliadhna, thathar air a bhith a' dèanamh rannsachadh cuideachd, chaidh iomadh beathach a chomharrachadh airson rannsachadh a dhèanamh air mar a tha iad gan giùlan fhèin. Tha cuid dhiubh sin a' tilleadh bliadhna an dèidh bliadhna agus chaidh am faicinn uaireannan ann an Arcaibh, Nirribhidh no fada a-muigh sa Chuan Siar.

## Toughing it out Lusan làidir

Plant cover is influenced by wind and salt spray, and by the activities of seals and seabirds. Sula Sgeir is bare of soil and all that can grow are thrift, mayweed, orache, scurvy grass, pineapple weed, sea spurrey, meadow grass and some lichens. On the other hand, some 50 species of flowering plant occur on Rona, including the curious small adder's tongue fern. The rocks are patterned with a lush growth of lichen, especially where bird guano builds up, and no fewer than 87 species have been recorded. Rona also



Rona and Sula Sgeir NNR  
TNN Rònaigh agus Sùlaisgeir



has 51 types of marine algae, 16 of them occurring on Sula Sgeir too.

Tha a' ghaoth agus cobhar na mara, a bharrachd air na tha ròin is na h-eòin-mhara, a' toirt buaidh air na lusan a tha a' fàs. Chan eil iùir ann an Sùlaisgeir agus chan fhàs ann ach brisgean-tràghad, buidheag Bealltainn, ceathramhan-caorach, carran, buidheag shearb, corran mara, miad-fheur agus cuid de sheòrsachan còinnich. Air an làimh eile, tha mu 50 lus le dìthean ann an Rònaigh, lus na nathrach nam measg. Tha crotal a' fàs air na creagan, gu h-àraidh far a bheil salchar eòin a' cruinneachadh, agus chaidh 87 seòrsa a chlàradh. A bharrachd air an sin, tha 51 seòrsa de lionnach ann an Rònaigh agus tha 16 dhiubh ann an Sùlaisgeir cuideachd.



Adder's tongue Fern  
Lus na nathrach

## Visiting the islands A' tadhal air na h-eileanan

You may be able to charter a boat from Lewis or the mainland, but the islands are too remote for day visits. Good weather is essential, as there are no secure or sheltered anchorages on either island, and landing on the wet, slippery rocks is difficult.

Going ashore on Sula Sgeir can cause huge disturbance to the nesting seabirds. Rona's gulls and skuas will dive-bomb intruders, and seals – even the pups – will bite. Entering the seabird colonies can expose them to gull predation, while puffin burrows might collapse underfoot injuring both people and birds. It is also illegal to dig into the Scheduled Monuments or to disturb the petrels nesting in them.

Please contact SNH in advance if you intend visiting and take a reserve supply of food in case bad weather stops you leaving. High winds are frequent and often violent, whilst the rocks, sheer cliffs and steep slopes can be very dangerous.

C'S dòcha gum faigheadh tu bàta air chùmhnannt à Leodhas no tìr-mòr ach tha na h-eileanan ro iomallach airson a dhol ann airson an latha. Feumaidh sìde mhath a bhith ann oir chan eil laimrig fhasgach air fear seach fear dhe na h-eileanan agus tha e gu math doirbh a dhol air tìr air na creagan fliucha, sleamhainn.

Faodaidh daoine dragh mòr a chur air eòin a tha a' neadachadh agus bidh fulmairean a tha a' neadachadh a' spùtadh a-mach seòrsa de dh'ola le samh uabhasach air daoine agus bidh ròin – fiù 's na cuilein – a' bideadh! Ma thèid thu a mheasg àitean-tuineachaidh nan eòin-mhara, dh'fhaodadh faoileagan ionnsaigh a thoirt ort agus dh'fhaodadh tuill bhuthaidean briseadh fo chuideam do chois agus thu fhèin agus eòin a leòn. Tha e cuideachd an aghaidh an lagh a bhith a' cladhach anns na Carraigean Clàraichte no dragh a chur air na luairagan a tha a' neadachadh anna.

Cuir fios gu Dualchas Nàdair na h-Alba ro làimh ma tha thu am beachd tadhal agus thoir leat biadh gu leòr gun fhios nach tig droch shìde 's nach fhaigh thu às. Tha gaoth mhòr ann gu math tric agus faodaidh na creagan, na bearraidhean agus na leòidean casa a bhith glè chunnartach.



Thrift  
Neònean-cladaich