



LEARNING WILD

An 8 Day Course with Feral Ponies

Come and spend 8 days immersed in the wild lives of semi feral horses and ponies. We will be situated in the spectacular land and seascape of the Cairngorms National park and the Outer Hebrides. The guides are professional trainers, teachers and researchers in the field of horse-human interactions. This is a chance to explore, expand, and enrich our understanding of horses and the horse-human relationship.

This course is an opportunity to observe and learn from horses living life with minimal human interference, so are free to exhibit behaviour that aligns closely to their evolutionary roots. Through educational observations and discussions we can explore different perspectives on equine behaviour, welfare and horse/human connections. We will delve into what sustainable horse keeping means for the horse, the environment and our role within them.

We will examine how best to implement what we learn from our studies to enhance the health and well-being of domestic horses.

Join **Dr. Emily Kieson** as she conducts research in the social lives of horses and explores applications to domestic equine welfare and developing stronger friendships with our own horses.

Expand your theoretical horizons with **Katarina Lundgren** through discussions on intersubjectivity, the equine perspective, and learning from horses in order to live in connection and congruency.

Deepen your understanding of what whole horse health and well being really means with **Bonny Mealand**, because she has learnt so much from the observational study of feral horses Bonny is passionate about enabling others to experience the richness of this perspective.

In addition to our guides, every excursion will involve local experts and representatives from organisations.



You're invited...

This is an opportunity that invites you to explore new perspectives on horses, horse welfare, and sustainable practices. By engaging with local communities, learning from experienced experts and through educational observation and discussions we can explore more about horses, our perceptions of them and how they choose to live when they have the freedom to do so.

The first three days will be immersive observations of free living ponies. We will be based at the RSPB reserve of Insh Marshes This beautiful and environmentally sensitive area is home to multiple species of birds, invertebrates and small mammals, as well as the 13 semi feral Konik ponies. The learning will be a mix of guided lessons, discussions and individual and/or group observations.



Some of the topics to be explored:

- Observing and studying feral ponies in a natural setting
- The art of observation
- How do horses behave when they have choice?
- What is natural behaviour?
- Do we perceive them clearly?
- The positives and negatives of anthropomorphism
- Equine evolution - physical and behavioural
- Putting together a simple ethogram
- How to define equine welfare, which then leads to well informed choices
- Ponies, people, land - The importance of their interconnectedness
- Discovering the local ecology, wildlife and cultures with resident experts
- What ponies can do for the land - regenerative grazing
- The possibilities for peaceful coexistence
- And so much more.....



INTINERARY

Sunday, 22nd August

Arrive at Kingussie in the Cairngorms National Park

Pitch your tent and settle in.

Monday, 23rd August

Orientation, getting our bearings. Learning about the wildlife, ecology and history of the reserve. Discussions about what participants would like from the course. Learning about the role of the ponies in this environment and what we can learn through watching them. The art of observation.

Meeting the ponies!



Tuesday, 24th
August &
Wednesday,
25th August

Two days structured around the wishes of the participants, where the ponies are in the landscape and the weather.

**Observations,
learning and
discussions.**



Thursday, 26th August

A day of visiting the Highland Wildlife Park. You will have the chance to learn about and meet the Mongolian wild horses who live at the park (aka Takhi or Preswalski). Your day will include meeting the keepers who care for these rare and endangered equines, listening to their experiences and learning about how they incorporate high welfare standards into the horses daily lives. You will hear lots of information about the breed, their history and their lives in Mongolia. You will also have some free time to explore the rest of the park.

Friday, 27th August

Travel by minibus to the small harbour town of Mallaig. From here we will catch a ferry to the Isle of Uist (South) the crossing takes 3 hours so plenty of time for bird and marine mammal watching. If we're really lucky there will still be some basking sharks around. Once on the island we will travel by minibus down to a campsite and set up our camp for the next few days.





Saturday, 28th August & Sunday, 29th August

These two days will be spent observing free Eriskays ponies living on the small island from which they take their name. We will be introduced to the breed, its history and the pony culture that has existed on the island for many generations. We will have the pleasure of being shown around the island by some of its residents who also are instrumental in promoting and caring for this breed.

Monday, 30th August

A free day to explore.



Tuesday, 31st August

An early start to catch the ferry from Lochboisdale terminal arriving in Mallaig at 10.20am. You will then be taken to Fort William from where you can travel home.

Your Guides



Emily Kieson (*Research Director, MiMer Centre*) holds a PhD in Comparative Psychology, a MS in Psychology, and a graduate degree in Equine Science. Her research focuses on equine behavioral psychology, equine welfare, and horse-human interactions as they apply to both horse owners and equine-assisted activities and learning programs. Her current research focuses on equine affiliative behaviors to study how horses create and maintain social bonds and how those can overlap with human affiliative behaviors to create authentic lasting friendships between horses and humans. She also has a passion for supporting sustainable systems of horse management and husbandry that promote physical and psychological welfare of the horse while simultaneously supporting sustainable ecosystem practices on small and large scales (for both feral and domestic equids).



Katarina Lundgren is the director of Mimer, a growth facilitator, project leader, certified trauma sensitive mindfulness instructor and a cognitive scientist offering various equine assisted interventions. Katarina travels globally and educates people on equines, equine welfare, equine-human interaction, how to work with equines in therapy and learning programs, trauma sensitive mindfulness, and stress and trauma. Her passion is researching and spreading knowledge and to advocate for better and more accessible trauma sensitive and informed services, as well as better equine welfare, based on thorough understanding of the horse.

Katarina is cross disciplinary in mind and heart, forever curious and expressive.

Find out more about her and Mimer's equine-human work on www.mimercentre.org



Bonny Mealand qualified as an *Equine Podiatrist* in 2005 and has been committed to understanding, implementing and promoting a whole horse approach to health and well-being ever since. Bonny specialises in working with wild and feral equines by building trust and helping them learn to be handled in a low stress way. A short clip of Bonny working with some Przewalski horses can be viewed here - [BBC Inside the Zoo](#). Bonny is committed to constantly learning as much about and from equines as possible. Believing that it is possible to define what a life of quality looks like at both a species and individual level. She then uses this perspective to implement a high standard of welfare into their domesticated lives. She is also a Somatic Yoga and Mindfulness Teacher.

To learn more about Bonny, her work, experience and ethos please click here - [Touching Wild](#)

She is also the UK representative of the world renown Equine ethologist - [Lucy Rees](#).

INTINERARY Details

TERRAIN GRADING

Moderate to hard. As we will be exploring the environments inhabited by the ponies challenging terrain may be encountered so a reasonable level of fitness is suggested as well as appropriate footware. Marsh land and uneven footing will be common at our first destination. The terrain on the Isle of Eriskay is uneven and steep in some places and also incorporates boggy ground. The ponies live on a 185.6m hill called Beinn Sgrithean so prepare for some steep climbs whilst looking for them.

TRAVEL

By train - there is a station at Kingussie where we can collect you from and take you to the location.
www.thetrainline.com

By Bus - there is a bus stop in Kingussie where we can collect you from and take you to the location
www.citylink.co.uk

By Air - there are airports at Glasgow, Edinburgh and Inverness. All of which have bus and train links to Kingussie.

By Car - Postcode - PH21 1NT

Once you arrive at Kingussie we will have a minibus available to take us to local destinations and then on to the Outer Isles.

LOCAL FACILITIES AND MEALS

In both locations we will have access to small supermarkets, local shops and cafes. Meals are not provided but the minibus will take you to stock up on provisions regularly and we will visit some of the really nice local restaurants and takeaways for evening meals.

ACCOMMODATION

Insh Marshes

Basic camping in a native Birch Forest. Bring your own tent and camping equipment if you need equipment please let us know and we will do our best to help. Toilets available but no showering facilities. We will making daily trips to the local wild swimming spots to refresh and invigorate ourselves!

If you would prefer to book your own accommodation here is a helpful web site. This is a very busy season so book as soon as possible. www.kingussie.co.uk/places-stay

INTINERARY Details

South Uist

Fully equipped Campsite with a cafe

<https://kilbride-campsite.business.site>

Bring your own tent and camping equipment, if you need equipment please let us know and we will do our best to help.

FOOD

Tea, coffee and biscuits provided all other meals to be arranged by the participants themselves.

WEATHER AND THE HIGHLAND MIDGE

At this time of year, the weather can range from warm sunshine to wet and windy. We may get very mixed conditions on the same day! You should therefore bring a mixture of clothing including warm fleeces, jackets, hats and gloves. Waterproof walking boots and gaiters will be a necessity for both locations. Good quality waterproofs are highly recommended!

During the right conditions the Highland midge can be a menace. Midge hoods and many types of repellent are available to buy locally.

COURSE COST

£980 (Maximum Participants - 12)

INCLUDED IN THE COURSE COST

The following costs are included in the price of the workshop:

- All the educational teaching and materials
- Camping accommodation (not equipment)
- Tea, coffee, biscuits
- Ferry tickets
- Travel in minibus
- Entry into the Highland Wildlife Park

INTINERARY Details

NOT INCLUDED IN THE COURSE COST

The following costs are included in the price of the workshop:

- Travel to Kingussie and from Fort William
- Food and drinks
- Camping equipment

BOOK HERE

<https://mimer-centre-school.teachable.com/p/learning-wild>

COVID

Current guidelines for the local areas will be followed.



INTINERARY Details

THIS COURSE IS MADE POSSIBLE BY:

- Collaboration between MiMer Centre Equine - Human Education and Research and Touching Wild with Bonny Mealand
- RSPB Scotland - Insh Marshes
- RZSS Highland Wildlife Park
- Life Programme
- Natura 2000
- Nature Scot
- Comann Each nan Eilean - The Original Eriskay Pony Society
- **Plus** many enthusiastic individuals to numerous to mention to whom we are sincerely grateful.

A PERCENTAGE OF THE FEES WILL BE DONATED TO:

- Comann Each nan Eilean - The Original Eriskay Pony Society
- The Hustai Reserve in Mongolia

See you
soon...

