



2022 LEARNING WILD

A 5 Day Course with Feral Ponies: Eriskay

Come and spend 5 days immersed in the wild lives of semi feral Eriskay ponies who roam free on the beautiful island of Eriskay in the Outer Hebrides. This special place has been home to ponies for a multitude of years and their history is closely intertwined with the lives and Gaelic culture of the islanders. Eriskay ponies are among the last surviving remnants of the original native ponies of the Western Isles of Scotland.

These ponies are perfectly adapted to the harsh conditions of the Atlantic Seaboard and navigate the challenging terrain with agility and grace. For many generations they were invaluable to the island inhabitants who used them to carry pannier baskets of peat for winter fuel and seaweed from the shore to fertilise the land and they continue to be an important part of Island life. Because their connection to the island and its people is still kept alive we have the incredible opportunity of looking at equine culture, human culture and the coexistence of the two.

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.

Share the experience and enthusiasm for the observational study of feral ponies with **Bonny Mealand** who is passionate about enabling others to experience the richness of this perspective.

In addition to our guides there will be local experts and representatives from relevant organisations.



You're invited...

This course invites you to explore thought provoking perspectives on horses, horse welfare, and sustainable horse keeping 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 learning will be a mix of guided lessons, discussions and individual and/or group observations. We will examine how best to implement what we learn from our studies to enhance the health and well-being of domestic horses.



INTINERARY

This is an outline of the structure of the week. The delivery of the course will be determined by where the ponies are in the landscape and the weather.

Sunday, 26th June

Arrive and settle in.

Monday, 27th June

Orientation. Environment - ecology, conservation, history and culture.

Tuesday, 28th June

The art of observation. Equine evolution, physical and behavioural. Putting together a simple ethogram.



Wednesday, 29th June

Behaviour, horse and human.
Rewilding.

Thursday, 30th June

Training and Teaching.
How? Why?

Friday, 1st July

Summing up. What we have learned and how we can best implement this to improve the lives of equines.

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 retained Firefighter, Somatic Yoga and Mindfulness Teacher and BHS Welfare Advisor.

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 footwear. The terrain on the Island 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. (Well worth the effort when you see the view from the top!).

TRAVEL

By Car - this is the most practical option to reach this remote location. Lift sharing between participants will be encouraged. The journey will include a ferry crossing.

By Ferry - you can choose to leave from either Oban, Mallaig or Uig on the Isle of Skye to travel across to the island. Booking months in advance is vital as the ferry's are very busy at this time of year. If you need advice about planning your trip please contact Bonny who has years of experience in organising ferry logistics.

By train - There is a steam train (Hogwarts express) to the harbour town of Mallaig via Fort William, from where you can catch a ferry to the Isle of Uist.

ACCOMMODATION

House

Rooms in the self catering house *Aird na Huan* will be available. The house enjoys a commanding position overlooking the North Atlantic with the natural world (and ponies!) on your doorstep. If you would prefer to book your own accommodation this is a helpful web site. This is a very busy season so book early to avoid disappointment.

www.visitouterhebrides.co.uk/our-islands/uist/accommodation/eriskay

Camping

A short drive across the causeway onto South Uist is the fully equipped Campsite. Bring your own tent and camping equipment.

Kilbride Campsite

INTINERARY Details

LOCAL FACILITIES AND MEALS

Meals are not provided but the house has a well equipped kitchen where we can make and share meals. We will have access to a local shop which also sells takeaway meals and very good coffee. The island pub is Am Politician which serves generous portions of delicious food.

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.

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

COURSE COST

Maximum Participants - 12

Accommodation in Aird na Huan - **£850pp**

Camping/other accommodation - **£700pp**

Charity, student, researcher and low income concessions available.

Reduced price if both courses are booked together.

Early bird rates and payment plans available. All details on the booking page.

INCLUDED IN THE COURSE COST

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

- All the educational teaching and materials
- Accommodation in Aird na Huan and camping
- Tea, coffee, biscuits

INTINERARY Details

NOT INCLUDED IN THE COURSE COST

The following costs are not included in the price of the workshop:

- Travel to and from the Isle of Eriskay
- Food and drinks
- Other accommodation

“

The time on the hills was also something really special with the wonderful views and peaceful Eriskay ponies ambling about for us to admire.

P. Dumas-Ekin - COURSE PARTICIPANT 2021

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[BOOK HERE](#)



Brought to you by **The MiMer Centre** and **Touching Wild**

INTINERARY Details

COVID

Current guidelines for the local areas will be followed.

THIS COURSE IS MADE POSSIBLE BY:

- Collaboration between MiMer Centre Equine - Human Education and Research and Touching Wild with Bonny Mealand
- Comann Each nan Eilean - The Original Eriskay Pony Society
- **Plus** many enthusiastic individuals too 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

See you soon...

