



2022 LEARNING WILD

A 5 Day Course with Feral Ponies: Insh

Come and spend 5 days in the spectacular landscape of the Cairngorms National Park. Immerse yourself in the wild lives of the semi feral Konik ponies who roam free on the RSPB Insh Marshes reserve. This small herd are helping to restore the largest floodplain fen in the UK. They thrive on rough forage such as rushes, grasses and reeds. These hardier plants would shade out sensitive habitats without the natural grazing processes and ground disturbance that the ponies provide.

Once a vitally important breeding site for some of our threatened UK bird species like the Curlew, Redshank and Lapwing the landscape is being restored by the impact of the ponies. Since their arrival in 2019 the ponies have opened up new habitat for the unique flora and fauna that was once abundant in this dynamic floodplain eco system.

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...

We invite you to explore thought provoking perspectives on horses, horse welfare, and sustainable horse keeping practices. By 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.

During the week we will visit the Highland Wildlife Park where you will have the chance to learn about the Mongolian wild horses who live there (aka Takhi or Preswalski). This will include meeting these rare and endangered equines and their keepers. There will also be the opportunity to watch the horses being worked with and learn about the concepts behind how and why they are handled. You will also hear lots of information about the breed, their history and their lives in Mongolia. There will be some free time to explore the rest of the park.



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, 3rd July

Arrive and settle in.

Monday, 4th July

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

Tuesday, 5th July

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



Wednesday, 6th July

Behaviour, horse and human.
Rewilding.

Thursday, 7th July

Training and Teaching.
How? Why?

Friday, 8th 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. Marsh land and uneven footing are prevalent so comfortable wellies would be ideal, waterproof walking boots and gaiters would be another option.

TRAVEL

By train - there is a station at Kingussie where we can collect you from and take you to the location. Book your tickets here - [Trainline](#). If you are travelling from London, Crewe or Preston you can have the very special experience of travelling on the [Caledonian Sleeper Train](#).

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

ACCOMMODATION

House

Shared rooms in the self catering [Soillerie House](#) will be available.

Camping

Basic camping in a beautiful native Birch Forest. Outside toilets and showers. There are some good local wild swimming spots where you can go to refresh and invigorate too! Bring your own tent and camping equipment.

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.kingussie.co.uk/places-stay](#)

LOCAL FACILITIES AND MEALS

Kingussie is the local village which has a small supermarket, local shops, cafes and hotels. Meals are not provided but the house has a well equipped kitchen where we can make and share meals. There are also some very nice restaurants and takeaway options for evening meals.

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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. 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

Maximum Participants - 12

Accommodation in Soillerie House - £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 Soillerie House and camping
- Tea, coffee, biscuits

NOT INCLUDED IN THE COURSE COST

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

- Travel to and from Kingussie
- Food and drinks
- Other accommodation

INTINERARY Details

“

A wonderful and unique opportunity to step off the treadmill and take time to reflect on how horses choose to live their lives. This course is a must for anyone with a genuine interest in horses, humans and how we fit together.

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AC - COURSE PARTICIPANT 2021

[BOOK HERE](#)

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
- The LIFE 100% for Nature project, funded by the LIFE programme of the European Union, NatureScot and many other founders and supporters.
- **Plus** many enthusiastic individuals too numerous to mention to whom we are sincerely grateful.

A PERCENTAGE OF THE FEES WILL BE DONATED TO:

- *International Takhi Group (Save the Wild Horse)*

See you soon...

