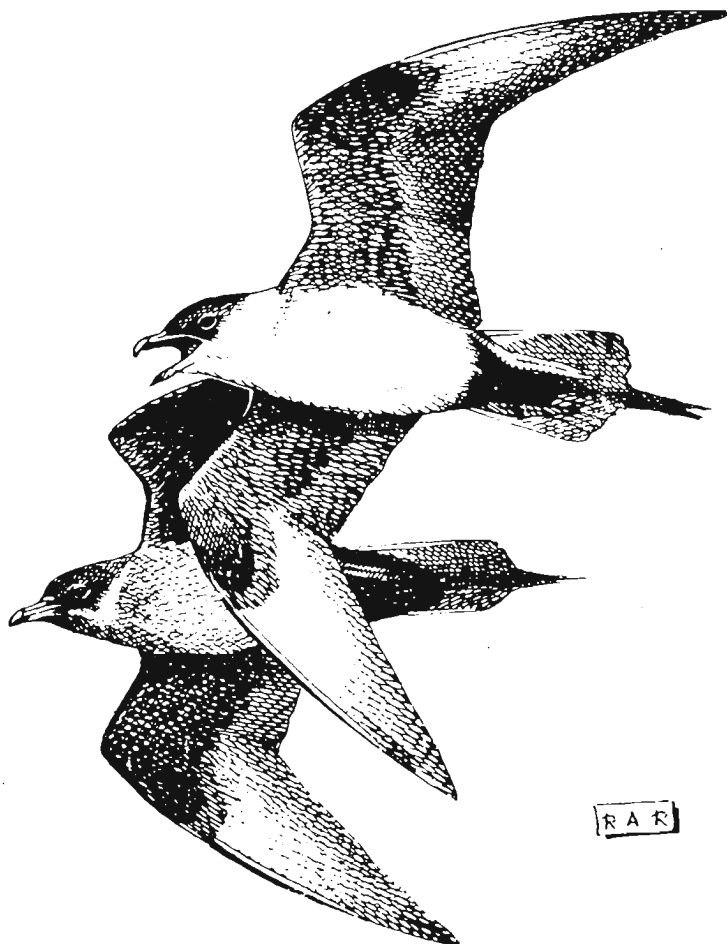


# FAIR ISLE BIRD OBSERVATORY

## Report for 1986



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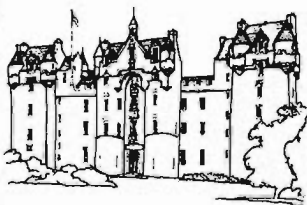
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# Fair Isle Bird Observatory

Report No. 39

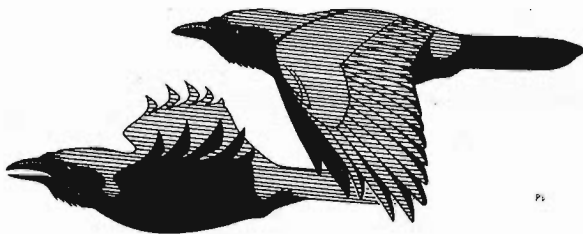
1986

*Edited by Nick Riddiford, Assisted by Valerie Thom*

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# FAIR ISLE BIRD OBSERVATORY

## Chairman's Report

The constitution changes outlined in last year's Report have now been completed. The new operational status has effectively altered little the long established proceedings at FIBOT. The changeover consumed great energies of a few people in FIBOT and has resulted in a small loss in the financial year to 31 October 1986. I am confident, however, that the future of FIBOT is now on a sound basis.

It is particularly satisfying to be able to confirm the trend in increasing the number of visitors staying at FIBOT. To be up by 30% is a remarkable achievement in a year when tourism apparently suffered in the UK. Nick and Elizabeth and your staff, on behalf of all members, thank you — keep up the good works. It is encouraging to record also that the Nature Conservancy Council have just confirmed their contract with FIBOT for a further two years to monitor sea-bird activity on the island. This recognition of our ornithological facilities is rewarding.

I hope FIBOT will continue and develop its welcome to young people to visit and enjoy the island. To complement the successful John Harrison Memorial grants, the Ian Pitman Fund, run by the National Trust for Scotland, is providing extra resources to enable studies at FIBOT to be undertaken, especially by young people.

Last year the Highlands and Islands Development Board, Shetland Islands Council, the Shetlands Amenity Trust, the Pilgrim Trust, the Dulverton Trust and the Countryside Commission for Scotland all made significant grants to assist us with the improvements to the roof and the provision of a new vehicle. All this assistance is very much appreciated and is essential if the ideals and aspirations of the original Trustees are to be maintained and adapted to the world of the 1990s. We are planning further major improvements to the building over the next few years. We would like to include research accommodation and enhance the bedroom and kitchen facilities. We have already started in a small way, as all visitors in 1987 will recognise.

The directors of FIBOT are keen to encourage new faces onto the Board. Equally we are always ready to learn of new ideas that will allow the excellent resources at FIBOT to be developed to their full potential. Do please write to me with any proposals. They will all be welcomed and considered.

This report promises to interest island lovers as much as ornithologists. The Editor, *alias* the Warden, received many favourable comments on last year's Report, which included articles on island life. This year, as you will read, Fair Isle has entered the European scene, taking prime position.

FIBOT needs visitors and members to be able to maintain, let alone expand, our role in ornithological circles and make a valuable contribution to the economy of Fair Isle. Please invite, cajole or sponsor (through your company), more visitors, especially the young and keen ornithologists. Pat Webster, our Membership Secretary, will respond to all correspondence sent to 21 Regent Terrace. Can each of us please try and enlist the support of a new member this year so that we enter our 40th Jubilee year with over 1,000 members. If you joined you must have wanted to maintain a contact with FIBOT, that others will equally appreciate. Enjoy your time on Fair Isle this year.

*D. MacLehose*

## Warden's Report

Last year I reported at some length the efforts that were going into halting the downward trend in visitors. These efforts are beginning to pay dividends. The 1986 total of 414 visitor/weeks represents a 33.5% increase over 1985 figures and was the highest since 1977. 1987 bookings are already very promising.

There were some initial problems in obtaining suitable staff. However, we were fortunate to secure the services in April of Karin Fleming who set a high standard as Cook throughout the season; and were grateful to Mary Stewart who stepped in at very short notice as Assistant Cook in mid summer in a temporary capacity and to Caroline Vawdrey who filled that post from late summer. Annabel Campbell held the position of Assistant Cook in early spring. A succession of helpers assisted on the domestic side or provided holiday cover for cooks during the year: Julie Shearer, Clare Ditchburn, Ann Prior and, from the island, Cathy Stout (who may be more familiar to FIBO visitors as Cathy Falkner, 1985 Assistant Cook) and Mairi Thomson who helped for varying periods. Our thanks to them all.

On the ornithological side we started the season with Mike Pennington and Andrew Whittaker as Assistants with the ever willing Dave Bird replacing Andrew (who left for a new job) in July. Kevin Osborn ably filled the newly created post of Seabird Monitoring Officer during the summer. I would also like to mention Thierry Boulinier and Nick Dymond whose help on a voluntary basis when we were short-staffed was much appreciated.

There has never been any problem in attracting visitors for the peak spring and autumn migration periods. Our aim was thus to increase the numbers at other, off-peak times. The result in 1986 was the highest ever number of visitor/weeks for October, one of the highest ever for June and above average numbers in July. The August total was the highest for 8 years though still a little below the 1970's average. Some of this increase was generated by stimulating activity or group holidays: a Ringing Course, two YOC courses, RSPB members groups, specialist holiday groups from home and abroad. The YOC courses will run again in 1987. One of the avowed objectives of FIBOT as defined at the very start was to train young ornithologists and it seems fitting that FIBOT in its reconstituted form has not only retained but extended this role. As usual visitors came from home and abroad. There was a marked increase in both. Visitors from the United States (23) again headed the overseas list. There was also a welcome increase in Scandinavian visitors (a reflection on improved travel connections to Shetland): 6 from Denmark, 5 from Norway, 5 from Sweden. Other foreign visitors hailed from France (6), Canada (5), Ireland (5), Australia (3), Spain (3), Austria (2) and South Africa (1). The two Austrians and three of the French were recipients of John Harrison Memorial Fund awards. Three other recipients were British. Visitor/weeks supplied by workers and researchers accounted for only 4% of the 1986 total emphasising our current reliance on 'the interested amateur' in occupying our accommodation.

Ensuring the future success of the Observatory is a team effort and we were supported by visits from Directors David MacLehose, Donald Erskine, Dave Okill, Prof. Peter Slater and Valerie Thom. The Observatory's ornithological aims have come under great scrutiny and objectives sought which bear relevance to the requirements of the day. Fruitful discussions were held both on and off the isle, but we are most grateful to Peter Slater, Dr Jeremy Greenwood, Dr Mike Harris, Dr Mike Pienkowski and Mark Tasker for their involvement on Fair Isle with various aspects of our ornithological work. Though they are no longer strictly

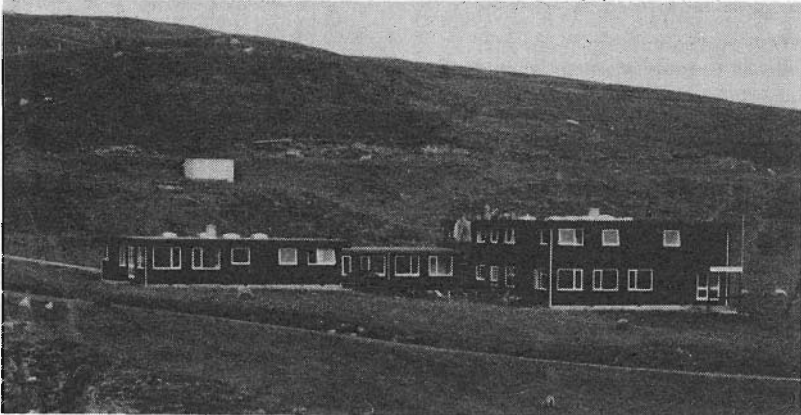


involved with the management of FIBOT it was a pleasure to welcome The Rt. Hon. the Earl of Wemyss and March and John Arnott, particularly as they had come for that splendid occasion of the presentation of the prestigious European Diploma to the people of Fair Isle. Lord Wemyss officially opened the George Waterston Memorial Centre on the same glorious June day. We were also pleased to welcome European Diploma representatives Messrs Priestman and Galliano of the Council of Europe, and Bill Prior of the Countryside Commission for Scotland.

Other visitors during the year included Ian MacCarthy of the RSPB film unit, Roar Solheim from Norwegian radio accompanied by Viggo Ree, a freelance Norwegian ornithologist, artist and writer, and Brian Jackman and Richard Dudley-Smith of *The Sunday Times*. An article about Fair Isle, written by Jackman with photographs by Dudley-Smith, appeared in *The Sunday Times* in June. Solheim's visit resulted in a series of programmes being broadcast on Norwegian radio, while Ree and Solheim have produced a number of articles in Norwegian journals. Ian MacCarthy used Fair Isle to take underground shots of breeding Puffins. This footage, plus as a bonus a sequence featuring the Fair Isle white Puffin, can be seen in the forthcoming RSPB film *Puffins in Shetland*. Maintaining the RSPB theme, it was a pleasure to welcome YOC organiser Peter Holden and RSPB education officer Mike Hodgson as leaders of the YOC courses.

Fair Isle and the Observatory were again featured on television. In April the first in a series of programmes celebrating the National Trust for Scotland, *Held in Trust* presented by Diana Rigg on Channel 4, featured Fair Isle while Bill Oddie's *Favourite Walk* was repeated on BBC 1. Judging from comments received, more and more people are discovering that Fair Isle bird news appears weekly on BBC Ceefax's *Country Diary*. The comment 'Fair Isle was once again the place to be this week', which appeared on more than one occasion, summed up what was an outstanding ornithological year for us, and kept us in the eyes and minds of the birdwatcher.

Our active pursuance of promotion for the Observatory was spearheaded by my wife, Elizabeth. With help from the Highlands and Islands Development Board and the Shetland Tourist Organisation we were able to extend our advertising and media coverage at home and abroad. One major factor was the move by Loganair, prompted by ourselves and the HIBD, towards the early



Improvements and replacement of the entire roof area took place during the summer. (Photo — Viggo Ree).

announcement of services for the coming year. This allows visitors to book from November of the previous year instead of, as was the case in the past, from April of the year in question. This facility has been repeated for 1987 with Loganair again accepting early bookings. Another major improvement involving Loganair was the introduction of a Saturday service to and from Orkney, starting on 10th May 1986 and continuing to October. This additional service was underwritten by the HIDB, so we were delighted (though not surprised) that it proved popular without detracting from the current services to and from Shetland. The Orkney service is to go ahead again on Saturdays in 1987 and is likely to be even better patronised as more become aware of its existence. We are extremely grateful to the HIDB and Loganair for this very worthwhile new venture.

We, too, improved our service by earlier publication of accommodation details for the coming year and by the establishment of cost-cutting deals for families and YOC members visiting at off-peak periods. These were all set out in much more informative and useful information and facilities leaflets drawn up by Elizabeth. We received much improved promotion through the Shetland Tourist Organisation (thanks to the good offices of Maurice Mullan) which included package travel arrangements for those who required that facility, organised by *Scotsell*. Some aspects of promotion can be costly so Elizabeth decided to offset some of that cost by introducing a line of Fair Isle Bird Observatory T-shirts and sweatshirts complete with the FIBO skua logo. The response to this was far greater than anticipated and the initial order sold out within days of arrival. The shirts remain very much in demand and we already have a good number of proud owners besporting the name Fair Isle Bird Observatory in many parts of the World — a subtle form of publicity.

Active promotion has not only paid dividends for 1986 but is stimulating bookings for 1987 and 1988, including visits planned by groups from the prestigious Point Reyes Bird Observatory in California and from Utsira in Norway.

Finally, for those who still consider that arrival by aeroplane is cheating, there is the welcome news that Good Shepherd IV now plies between Fair Isle and Grutness. Introduced to the crossing on 24th May 1986, it is a larger boat than its predecessor. It has been designed for passenger comfort (including reclining seats) and does the trip approximately 30 minutes quicker.

The major event of the year on the domestic front was the replacement of the Observatory roofs. This work was carried out by the Northmen Ltd., starting in May and continuing in-between frequent bouts of rain into July. In addition to water tight roofs we also gained new and more suitable sky lights. The work on the roofs only highlighted some of the other problems the building is now facing. Most notable of these is water penetration between weatherboard sections and window fitting surrounds. A whole series of other problems reflecting the wear and tear the 17-year-old building has experienced kept us busy throughout the year — for instance constant difficulties with shower adjustments, toilet cistern failures, and drainage. Interior fittings, too, were increasingly showing their age and we were suffering from lack of storage and work space. We took advantage of the expertise of architect Ron Galloway, visiting to oversee the roof work, to review the whole gamut of building and ancillary problems. I prepared a detailed schedule of these problems while David MacLehose initiated an inspection by civil engineer, John Hawley. Following this inspection, and the ensuing findings, David returned with Ron Galloway in early October and measures were discussed regarding both the refurbishment of the interior and methods to ensure the long-term survival of the building. It was felt that the need to take such steps gave the opportunity not just to replace or refurbish but to include some much sought after improve-

ments, to the benefit of visitors and the work of the Observatory. This programme of improvements is outlined in the Chairman's Report.

One improvement which has already occurred was the purchase of a Bedford minibus to replace the virtually defunct Landrover. Looking very smart in its red livery and with *Fair Isle Bird Observatory* and logo emblazoned on its side, it arrived on 30th April complete with trailer and roofrack. With a minimum of 5 planes and 2 boats to meet each week it quickly proved its worth for the purpose intended, to ferry visitors and luggage to and from airstrip or pier — far more convenient than its predecessor and, as a bonus, far more economical on petrol consumption. Only time will tell whether it is sturdy enough to stand up to the rigours of Fair Isle.



*The new vehicle, a very smart red Bedford minibus, arrived in April. (Photo — Nick Riddiford).*

Towards the beginning of the year three storage heaters and a heat exchanger were installed to make more efficient use of our generating power and to reduce the amount the diesel-thirsty main burner used. At the end of the year both generators underwent a major overhaul.

The two main ornithological developments in 1986 were the setting up of a Research and Education Advisory Committee and the introduction of an intensive Seabird Monitoring Scheme. The former was an empirical and the latter a practical response to our desire to maintain a high ornithological profile nationally and internationally and to ensure that the bird study component of the Observatory's work continues to be relevant in the 1980's. The Seabird Monitoring Scheme was funded by the Nature Conservancy Council and fieldwork started in April, following initial discussions with and advice from Dr Mike Harris and Dr Sarah Wanless. Kevin Osborn was contracted as Seabird

Monitoring Officer from late May to mid September. The major objectives of the Scheme are, for as many seabird species as possible, to monitor population changes, chick productivity and growth, food brought to chicks, and annual adult survival rates as detected by colour-ringing. In addition the entire island population of all seabirds was censused and the Scheme makes provision for up-dates on a 5-year basis for all species. The island seabird population census also formed our contribution to the National *Seabird Register*. The Seabird Monitoring Scheme, the island census and the work of the Research and Education Advisory Committee are described elsewhere in this report.

There were no new outside researchers in 1986 but Dr Peter Evans continued his long-term Starling genetics study and Adrian del-Nevo completed the second year of his doctoral investigation into Fair Isle Guillemot breeding biology and feeding ecology.

It has been very encouraging to see the resurgence of visitors to Fair Isle in 1986. Fair Isle is an exciting place for researcher, birdwatcher and general visitor alike. The special atmosphere engendered by the Observatory tempts many of our visitors to return again and again. Some of our visitors are more regular migrants to the isle than the birds they come to see. A steady flow of visitors has ensured the existence of the Observatory over the years and we can look to a rosy future at the present level of renewed interest in the isle. To our visitors, both newcomers and regulars, we say welcome to 'the island that likes to be visited'.

*Nick Riddiford*



*The educational role of the Observatory extends to all age groups. (Photo — Viggo Ree).*

## Research and Education at the Observatory

As part of the reorganisation of the Trust, the Directors set up a Research and Education Advisory Committee which I have agreed to chair. A number of individuals with first hand experience of the island, of education and of research (as well as various combinations of the three!) have been asked to sit on it and, I am glad to say, all have accepted. Their names are listed elsewhere in this report. The aim of this committee is to advise the Warden and the Directors about all matters concerned with research and education, in the hope that the Bird Observatory can perform the most useful possible role in these areas.

Of course, all bird observatories are, to some degree, involved in both fields. The training of ringers and observers in identification and field skills, though informal, is certainly a useful educational enterprise. As far as research is concerned, the part that the bird observatories play in the ringing scheme makes an important contribution to this work. These activities have, at Fair Isle, been supplemented by occasional courses and by more direct involvement in research by the Warden, to the limited extent that his other duties allowed. In earlier (and easier) times Ken Williamson carried out his pioneering studies of drift migration on the island, and Peter Davis collaborated in a detailed study of the genetics and breeding biology of Arctic Skuas. Today it is not so easy for the Warden to find time for such work, yet the standing of the bird observatory as a leading international centre for ornithology depends upon it. We hope, therefore, to find ways of encouraging use of both the island and the bird observatory for various enterprises relevant to research and education.

As far as education is concerned, various ideas for groups and organisations that might be interested in bringing courses to the observatory have been floated and some of these are being investigated. It is not always easy to fit parties in, but there is certainly scope for various educational courses on the island, if these can be arranged. Indeed, things were going well in this respect even before the committee was set up, for example with a ringing course that Nick Riddiford ran in 1985 and two courses for Young Ornithologists' Club members run by the RSPB in 1986.

On the research front, the big development in 1986 has been the involvement of the bird observatory in the NCC funded national seabird monitoring programme, for which the island is one of only four sites in the country. This holds exciting prospects for the future and ensures that the seabird work of the observatory is compatible with that elsewhere and so of maximum value. The work involved is considerable, but it is certainly not time wasted.

All the bird observatory staff have been involved with this seabird work to a greater or lesser extent. With the many other demands on their time, there is little scope for them to take part in other research projects. However, we are all agreed that the island has immense potential for many different sorts of work: the shortage is more of manpower than of ideas. Over the years a small but steady stream of visiting research workers has carried out studies on the island, such as those currently being made by Peter Evans on Starlings and Adrian del Nevo on Guillemots. There is scope for more work by visiting scientists and we are anxious to encourage this, both for its own sake and because of the interest and stimulus that such people provide to both staff and visitors at the observatory. It is obviously essential that such research workers stay at the observatory, but this has not always been possible in the past, both because of the expense involved in staying for long periods and because fieldwork schedules seldom fit in with the bird observatory routine. We hope that it may

prove possible to solve this problem, if funds can be raised for a self-catering extension to the observatory, specifically geared for research workers. We will then be in a position to encourage work on the island more actively, with the knowledge that there is plenty to attract fieldworkers to the island, and that they can stay there relatively cheaply without having to be heavily subsidised by the Trust.

One final change we hope to achieve, if a grant can be obtained, is to install a computer at the observatory. This will obviously be invaluable for keeping management records and for word-processing, as well as for its capacity to store ornithological information and for its research potential. The observatory has a large backlog of data, collected over nearly 40 years, yet little used. This offers potential for studies of various sorts at the observatory in addition to all the fieldwork opportunities that exist.

The research and education advisory committee is there to help those who would like to work or run courses at the observatory. It is planned that it should vet all proposals that are put forward in these areas. In addition, we would certainly welcome suggestions from those who are interested in its aims.

*P. J. B. Slater*



*Mavers Geo to North Restensgeo, one of the census areas for the Seabird Monitoring Scheme. (Photo — Viggo Ree).*

## Fair Isle 1986

It is now just over a year since I took over the National Trust's day to day management of Fair Isle from Richard Seligman. My first year has certainly been hectic and I feel that this has been very beneficial, in giving me an excellent initiation into Fair Isle life.

Much has happened this year, which should be recorded as being notable in the history of Fair Isle. The most significant event was the award of the Council of Europe diploma to the island, on 19th June. In accepting this award on behalf of Fair Isle, from Signor Galiano and John Priestman of the Council of Europe, James William Stout said that 'most people have to do something special to be eligible for special recognition, but we on Fair Isle have received this European

diploma for doing nothing special, only carrying on our way of life as normal. So we, in effect, have received this diploma for doing nothing'. I feel this summed up the reasons behind the decision to award the diploma to Fair Isle.

Just prior to the presentation of the European diploma, Lord Wemyss asked the oldest inhabitant, William Eunson, and the youngest, Eileen Thomson, to open the George Waterston Memorial Centre. The Centre was the culmination of a number of people's enthusiasm to interpret the island's past, and it is therefore a fitting memorial to a great man, who had the foresight to try and secure the future of Fair Isle. Since it opened over 1,000 people have signed the Visitors' Book, and this is testament to the quality of the museum and the enthusiasm put into its setting up.

It is also fitting that, in this outstanding year, the other notable event was the provision of a new mailboat, The Good Shepherd IV, to replace The Good Shepherd III. The new boat has the benefit of all that modern technology can supply to assist with navigation and seamanship, and is proving to be very popular, with both crew and passengers. I wish the crew and all who sail with her fine sailing for many years to come.

Stackhoull Stores has recently undergone major rehabilitation works by the local contractors, Northmen. The shop now has a much improved sales area, with additional display and storage, and the building now incorporates a public toilet, which is available for the use of shop patrons or visitors to the island. Unfortunately, just prior to the work commencing in the shop, Ella Henderson, the wife of the shop proprietor, John Henderson, had a bad fall and broke her leg. We all wish Ella a speedy recovery and hope that the disruption caused by the work has not been too much of an inconvenience.

Since the Trust took ownership of Fair Isle, some 32 years ago, much has been done to improve the houses, and the time has now come to commence a new programme of improvements, to bring some of those houses up to modern day standards. The Trust will therefore be hoping to allocate a figure each year in its budgets for this work. Also included in the Trust's capital programme for 1987 will be the restoration of Auld Haa, the only listed building on Fair Isle. We hope to make it ready for an incoming family, but, unfortunately, this house has no arable land along with it, other than a large garden, and any family wishing to settle there will have to have a form of employment which does not rely on the land. The Trust's Highland Members' Centre, along with a number of other benefactors, have already donated towards the cost of this restoration scheme, for which the Trust is extremely grateful.

On the initiative of the Fair Islanders, the Trust was asked to prepare a Management Plan for the island, and a subcommittee has been formed as the liaison body with the Trust for the preparation of the plan. The Management Plan will be a useful tool, which will possibly help to attract funds for essential projects for the future, e.g. the breakwater, which is a condition of the Council of Europe diploma. It should convince the statutory authorities and grant giving bodies that the Trust and the Fair Islanders are thinking not just on a day to day basis, but to the long-term management of the island.

Unfortunately, just when we thought the aerogenerator was settling down after its initial teething troubles, disaster struck in March. There was a major fault in the gearbox, which resulted in complete breakdown. After lengthy negotiations, both with the manufacturers and the insurance company, it was decided to replace the gearbox with an uprated model, which should be better placed to withstand the rigours of the harsh Fair Isle weather. After many months of hard work by Barry Sinclair and his team, the gearbox was finally recommissioned in October and, despite some small teething troubles, the machine is working very efficiently. I would like to take this opportunity of thanking Murray Somerville of International Research and Development, Bill

Stevenson and Arthur Donaldson of the NSHEB for all their assistance in getting the generator back into operation.

A warm welcome is extended to Liz and Rob Cook and their two children, Sarah and Alison, who have come to live in North Shirlva. Liz has taken over from Betty Best as nurse, and I would like to add a personal note of thanks, as well as the Trust's thanks, to Betty for all she has done to keep Fair Isle in good health over the years. Luckily for Fair Isle, Betty is not leaving the island but is now settling down to everyday life at Utra. It was also good to see her son, Ian, back on Fair Isle during the summer with some of the fruits of his labours as an apprentice boat builder in Norway.

After lengthy negotiations with Shetland Islands Council and the Shetland Knitwear Trades Association, it has finally been agreed that the Fair Isle Knitting Co-operative should have its own registered trademark. The designs have been approved and are now available for use on all Fair Isle knitting and woven goods manufactured on the island. I am sure that this will strengthen the hand of the Co-operative in the very competitive woollen markets throughout the world.

Communications by air and sea are a key issue in the success and future of an island such as Fair Isle, and it is heartening to note that the return feeder service, operated by Loganair and grant aided by the HIDB, between Shetland and Orkney via Fair Isle last summer, was well patronised and was felt to be a success by all who used it. Because of this success, Loganair will operate the service again in 1987 from 9th May to 10th October.

With such limited experience of Fair Isle, one thing which I have quickly discovered is that the Fair Islanders certainly have the knack of putting on good social events. I had the privilege of attending two dances during the year, which I thoroughly enjoyed. However, I believe that the social occasion of the year was the marriage of Michael Stout of Vaassetter to Cathy Falkner of Surrey on 26th July. They were certainly blessed with good weather and, needless to say with the event lasting two days, everyone had a good time. We all wish Cathy and Michael every happiness in their life together on Fair Isle.

The tenancy of Barkland croft has been assigned to Alec Stout's son, Kenneth, and he is hoping to continue the good management of the croft under Alec's watchful eye.

Finally, in 1987 it will be some 25 years since the volunteer work camps set up by Alec Warwick in 1962, ably assisted by Stewart Thomson, started to undertake the repair and restoration work of many of the houses and buildings on Fair Isle. It would therefore be fitting that this should be commemorated in some way, and the Trust plans to complete the upgrading of the Puffin Hostel in order to mark this event. The Trust and, I am sure, the Fair Islanders join with me in expressing their gratitude to those volunteers, who have taken part in this successful scheme over the years.

*A. M. Bennett*



## Fair Isle in a European Context

The award of the prestigious European Diploma highlights the fact that, though one of Europe's more isolated outposts, Fair Isle's cultural and natural heritage is recognised throughout the continent. We have asked Bill Prior to tell us more about the diploma, while Viggo Ree, Roar Solheim and Thierry Boulinier have written about what Fair Isle means to them. Bill Prior, secretary of the *Countryside Commission for Scotland*, was instrumental in bringing to the attention of the Council of Europe the suitability of Fair Isle for a Diploma. He was present on the Isle for the Award ceremony. Viggo Ree and Roar Solheim are well-known Norwegian broadcasters, writers and ornithologists. Viggo is also one of Europe's most talented wildlife artists. Collectors of Norwegian bird stamps will already have seen his work and his art will obtain a wider British exposure with the publication of *Birds of the Western Palearctic* vol. V, for which he is a commissioned artist. Thierry Boulinier is a product of the John Harrison Memorial Fund which continues to play a vital role in encouraging young ornithologists. It is extremely pleasing to see that recipients in recent years have included youngsters from abroad including, in the case of Thierry, from France — a country without the long tradition of ornithology which we in Britain take for granted.

### Twelve Gold Stars for Fair Isle

Over the years, Fair Isle has had its share of first sightings and 1986 has been no exception. This first, however, is rather different, being the award of the Council of Europe's Diploma to the National Trust for Scotland and the islanders. The award has been made in recognition of the ways in which the islanders and the National Trust for Scotland have integrated their lifestyle with the conservation of the island's landscape and wildlife.

The Council of Europe is made up of 21 member states, spanning the continent from Turkey to Iceland and Portugal to Sweden. Since the diploma was instituted in 1966 it had been awarded only sparingly. Fair Isle is the 25th area to be recognised in this way, with earlier awards going to protected areas such as the Camargue Nature Reserve in France, the Muddus National Park in Sweden and the Kuscenneti National Park in Turkey. Other sites in the United Kingdom which have been awarded the diploma are the Peak District National Park, the Minsmere Nature Reserve, the Beinn Eighe Nature Reserve and the Purbeck Heritage Coast.

The European Diploma is awarded for a set term of five years, but may be renewed. In the case of Fair Isle this means that the Council of Europe will review the award in 1990 and will look to be satisfied that the islanders, the National Trust for Scotland, the local authority and central government agencies have all done their bit to maintain the island way of life and to conserve its heritage. In particular, the Council of Europe calls for efforts to be made to improve the anchorage in North Haven by the provision of a breakwater and for the provision of better ship connections between Fair Isle and the main island of Shetland. In addition, the diploma was made conditional on the conservation of the island habitat for its wildlife interest, but balanced this with a condition to ensure that crofting interests should not be unnecessarily constrained by extension of the existing SSSI. Suggestions were made for the completion of the George Waterston Memorial Centre and for improvements to be made at the National Trust for Scotland work camp. The conservation of artefacts, such as one of the

former water mills and a kiln, was identified as being desirable, as was the restoration of traditional stone walls.

All of this represents a great challenge but, as readers of this report will know, the 'Good Shepherd IV' is already in service and the islanders have opened the George Waterston Memorial Centre this year. The opening was performed on 18th June by Willie Eunson and Eileen Thomson, the oldest and youngest inhabitants of the island. The Centre is a remarkable example of what can be achieved by a small community to conserve and tell the story of island life.

The opening of the George Waterston Memorial Centre took place on the same day that the council of Europe Diploma was awarded. In the best tradition of the public service, the award ceremony actually took place in duplicate. The presentation was made first of all in the King's Diningroom, one of the major State apartments of Edinburgh Castle, in the presence of many mainland friends of Fair Isle. At this event, which took the form of a government reception hosted by Mr Allan Stewart, MP, Minister for Industry and Education at the Scottish Office, Mr John Priestman, Clerk to the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, presented the diploma jointly to the Earl of Wemyss and March, as President of the National Trust for Scotland, and James William Stout, as representative of the Fair Isle Community.

Once the diploma had been presented, it was hastily returned to Mr Priestman who then flew direct to Fair Isle with Lord Wemyss and James William Stout in time for them to be present at the opening of the George Waterston Centre in the presence of practically the entire island community and a number of guests from Shetland and the mainland. Thereafter, everyone adjourned to the Community Hall where the diploma was once again presented by Mr Priestman to Lord Wemyss and to James William Stout. In the best of all Fair Isle traditions, this was followed by tea and a party which few who were present are ever likely to forget.

The diploma will be kept permanently on Fair Isle which is now entitled to use the Council of Europe's symbol of 12 golden stars in a circle against a blue sky, representing the union of the peoples of Europe. The number of stars is said to be the symbol of perfection.

Now, about that breakwater . . .

*W. B. Prior*



## Scandinavian eyes on Fair Isle

In June 1986 we were most generously invited by Shetland Tourist Organisation to partake in a one-week ornithological tour of Shetland. The last few days were spent on Fair Isle, better known as 'the adventure island in the west' among Norwegian birdwatchers. Throughout our travels in Shetland we had the most splendid weather conditions, and this gave us the opportunity to get a brilliant first view of the famous island from the air before landing.

After being welcomed by Nick, whom we both knew from earlier years, we had a short sightseeing tour of the island before arriving at the observatory. Fair Isle is quite different from the islands along the western Norwegian coast, being much higher and flatter. The lack of woods gave a good ornithological feeling that you never achieve on for instance Utsira, where the locals have planted nearly 100,000 sitka spruce trees!

Late June is, of course, not the best period for a great number of migrants. However, we were positively surprised at what we found. We both knew that the island had some good bird cliffs, but that Fair Isle was such a terrific seabird locality was something we had not dreamed about in advance. The numerous Bonxies, too, are impressive for a Norwegian. We also enjoyed watching the large numbers of Rabbits and Grey Seals, especially the latter. Norwegian seal management is very restrictive, and the authorities keep the total population at only about 3,000 individuals. In fact, a most satisfactory experience to find oneself at a place where nobody hunted seals or caught seabirds illegally for food during the breeding season!

Norwegian bird observatories are very few, and they are poorly run. Most activities occur periodically depending on finances and manning. It was therefore very impressive to notice how professionally and well organised the observatory on Fair Isle is operated. Not only scientifically, but the positive and friendly attitude towards the visitors, and the arrangements for their interests and desires, were most admirable. Here the Norwegians have a lot to learn!

Sitting on the Smyril Line boat back to Bergen, we summarized our impressions after some splendid days, full of adventures; Fair Isle is like a mixture between Røst and Utsira, but even better! Even though we have many species in common, the island has a series of qualities that we do not find in our country. The observatory ought to be an attractive travel objective not only for specialist birdwatchers and photographers, but to anyone interested in flora and fauna more generally. For those involved in bird observatory management and administration or nature study in connection with education, the island is an incredible locality for gaining new ideas.

*Viggo Ree and Roar Solheim*

## From Brittany to Fair Isle

It was on the coast of Brittany that I first saw seabirds. From then on, I have always been dreaming of them, and looking for books and journals about them. In 1983, aged 15, I was able to go to Shetland to watch and photograph these birds in their environment. During this stay I went round the Shetland Islands but I did not have enough time to visit Fair Isle. From the scientific literature I knew that Fair Isle was one of the main places for the study of migration and also that some important seabird work was carried out there. I applied and got a grant given by the *John Harrison Memorial Fund* for young naturalists who want to visit Fair Isle. So in summer 1984 I came back to Shetland and was very pleased with my stay on Fair Isle. I was very impressed by the activities and by the hearty atmosphere of the observatory, by the isle and its birds.

Having had the opportunity to publish an article about the Fair Isle Bird Observatory in the French journal *Le Courrier de la Nature*, I was happy to see that French people became very interested. Indeed the article persuaded several French people to stay at the observatory during summer 1986, some of them with the help of the *John Harrison Memorial Fund*.

Last summer I returned to Fair Isle for two weeks as part of the bird observatory team monitoring the seabirds.

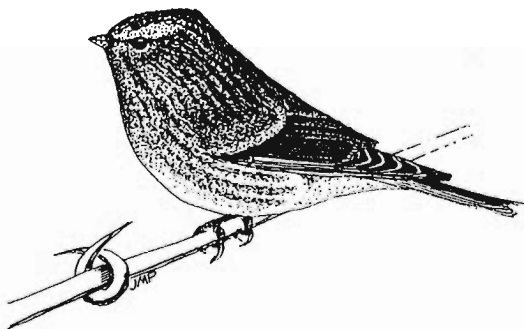
One of the features which makes Fair Isle a special place for me is that it appears as a little island lost between Mainland Shetland and Orkney, with its spectacular cliffs and important seabird colonies. Fair Isle is also a special place because it is right on the Scandinavian migration routes. In particular for French seabird enthusiasts, Fair Isle gives the opportunity to discover the shy and discrete Tystie, and also the Arctic Skua and the Bonxie, which in France can only be seen on migration. Being a kind of paradise for those who like nature, sea and birds, Fair Isle presents an especially nice aspect of the extraordinary Shetland Islands, contrasting with the roughness of Foula, the wilderness of Hermaness. . . .

But I believe that Fair Isle is really the ornithologist's paradise because, in addition to its natural attributes, there are many services and facilities offered by the observatory. Indeed, the observatory not only gives the opportunity to stay in a bird sanctuary for a few days in very comfortable conditions (especially remarkable food!), but one can also find there a hearty atmosphere instilled by the observatory team which shares with the visitors its knowledge of the isle and of its birds. The opportunity visitors have to participate in the work of the observatory (in tasks such as ringing), the slide shows, the ornithological library, the possibility of meeting other ornithologists from various countries . . . allows the visitor to have a most interesting and pleasant stay. I only regret that in France it is not possible to find such a place, combining a natural site of highest quality and the means to receive in so fine a manner amateur and professional visitors.

*Thierry Boulonier*

#### **Reference**

Boulonier, T. L'observatoire ornithologique de l'île Fair. *Le Courrier de la Nature* 97: 22-28.



## A View from The Isle

Our theme this year is communications, an apt subject in a year when the *Good Shepherd IV* came into service and Loganair introduced a Saturday flight to Orkney. Though entitled a view *from* the Isle, two of this year's authors are from outside the Isle. Nevertheless, Pat Sellar and Roger Jones are well known for their connections with Fair Isle and we are most grateful to them for their contributions. Jimmy Stout and Barry Sinclair are, of course, two of the Island stalwarts and ideally suited to write about their respective subjects. All the pieces make excellent reading as well as providing a fascinating record of change, and the community's adaptability to it.

### The Good Shepherds

When *Good Shepherd IV* was launched from Millars Yard, St Monans, Fife, in February 1986 she became the fourth vessel to operate the service from Fair Isle to the mainland of Shetland, i.e. based in Fair Isle and having an Island crew.

So let us go back to 1920: four men had returned to the Isle from the Great War and were desperately in need of some means of earning their living. They had seen a former lifeboat lying at Stromness, in the Orkneys. Her name was *Good Shepherd*. She was purchased and brought to Fair Isle by Willie Stout of Taft and his three sons, Tom, Jimmy and Dodie, and brothers Willie Stout of Lower Stoneybrake and George Stout of Field. Their intention was to fish with the vessel, but this had limited success and the venture was breaking up when the Post Office persuaded them to sign a contract to run the mail service from Grutness in Shetland. Thus the service began.

The boat itself was 42' long with 2 petrol engines. She was a good seaboat for her time but totally lacking in engine power and reliability, although this was improved when a 50hp Gleniffer Petrol/Paraffin engine was fitted. Even then, however, the outward journey to Shetland was often made in a following wind with the return journey being days later and taking anything up to 5 or 6 hours. Her end was unfortunate, however, as she was wrecked in North Haven after having survived the greatest storm in living memory anchored in Grutness Voe for two weeks, the first week with her crew aboard. That was January 1937 and the next boat was already being built at Hird & McKenzie's yard at Buckie.

*Silver Spray*, soon to be re-named *Good Shepherd II*, arrived at Fair Isle in May 1937 with the same crew as purchased her predecessor, although skipper Willie retired immediately to be replaced by Willie of Lower Stoneybrake and then, when he retired at the outbreak of war, by Jimmy Stout of Rock Cottage. Also at the outbreak of war Fieldy retired and Tom and Dodie Stout left the boat and took up Home Guard duties. For the war years the boat was run by four men: Jimmy, his brothers Jerry and Sandy, and Fieldy's son, Jimmy of Midway.

*Good Shepherd II* was 48' long and had a 60hp Petrol/Paraffin Kelvin engine. This was replaced in 1955 by a 88hp Diesel engine. Although second-hand, this engine greatly improved the boat. The small wheelhouse and lifeboat on the stern were exchanged in 1968 for a wheelhouse and passenger deckhouse and inflatable liferaft, and like this she continued in service until 1972.

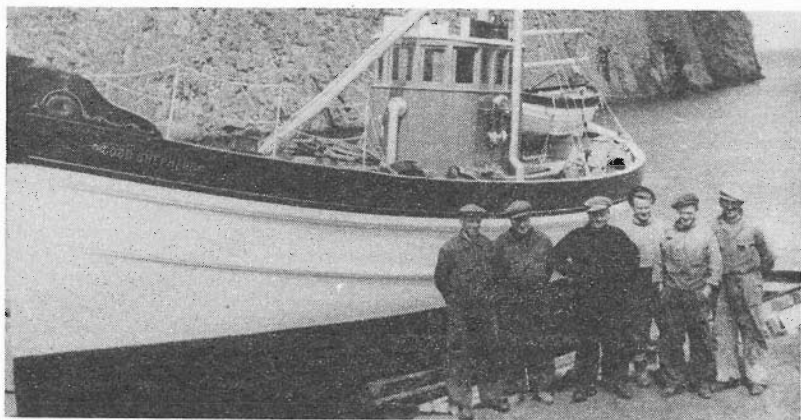
By this time there had been many crew changes: Dodie and Sandy had both retired, after skipping the boat, and Jerry Leogh was now skipper. Willie Stout of Houll and Ted Bancroft of Old Haa had both been crew but had left the Isle, and Jimmy Wilson had served as crew for a while. So the crew which in 1972 took over *Good Shepherd III* was Jerry, Jimmy of Midway, brothers Alec and George Stout, Tommy Stout of Busta and Jim Stout of Skerryholm. *Good*



*The Fair Isle mailboats. Above, Good Shepherd I; opposite, upper, Good Shepherd II (photos courtesy Alec Stout). Opposite, middle, Good Shepherd III; lower, Good Shepherd IV (photos — Dave Wheeler). The crew beside the Good Shepherd II, from left to right: Sandy Stout (Taft), Tom Stout (Houll), George Stout Snr. (Upper Stoneybrake), Alec Stout (Barkland), Willie Stout (Houll) & Jimmy Stout (Midway).*

*Shepherd II* was sold to Swansea and her replacement was a slightly smaller second-hand steel trawler from Brixham. The Shetland Islands Council, who for some time had financed the service, suggested this boat as a replacement. George Stout saw her and passed her as suitable; and so she was, as she served the Isle well for the next 14 years although, not being purpose built, she was never ideal for passengers or cargo. Number III was powered by a 200hp Volvo Diesel, giving her ample power. So, for the first time, the duration of the journey was less dependent on weather conditions.

Important factors in the development of the service were the shore improvements financed by the Shetland County Council, later to become the Shetland Islands Council. The old hand winch, which took many men an hour to haul the boat, was replaced in 1950 by a diesel engine and winch. The old flitboats became redundant in 1958 when the new pier was completed, and in 1981 a new slipway was constructed on the outside of the pier. This was the chief prelude to getting a new vessel, as there was no way that any larger craft could be handled safely on to a cradle in the middle of North Haven beach.



So, in May 1986, *Good Shepherd IV* arrived, having been financed by the SIC with the help of a European development grant, and having a four-man crew employed as direct part-time employees of the council. Again the personnel had changed: Jerry had retired, Jimmy Midway had been skipper and retired, Tommy Stout had left the Isle and Alec Stout had been forced to retire due to ill-health. So now the crew comprises George Stout as skipper, Jim Stout, Barry Sinclair and Neil Thomson, with Alec Stout's son Mike as relief crewman. *Good Shepherd III* was sold to the Council and now operates the ferry service to Papa Stour.

*Good Shepherd IV* is 60' overall length, making her a much larger and abler vessel than has ever been on the service. She is powered, like her predecessor, by a Volvo engine of 360hp and a Lister Generator supplying 240 volts throughout the vessel. The Hiab crane can take 2 ton lifts into her spacious hold and her total carrying capacity is in excess of 30 tons. Passenger accommodation is of a high standard with comfortable reclining seats in the spacious accommodation. So far she has met with general approval. Let us hope that she serves Fair Isle like her predecessors, each one meeting the requirements of the time — but times, like boats change.

AMEN!

James W. Stout

## A Brief History of Aviation on Fair Isle

It was in April 1931 that Captain E. E. Fresson, great pioneer of British aviation, first rolled to a bumpy stop in his single-engine Gipsy Moth in a field beside the Balfour hospital, Kirkwall. His first fare-paying passengers were conveyed from Wick to Kirkwall in an Avro 504 in August the same year. He opened the official scheduled service between Inverness and Orkney in May 1933 using his new twin-engine G.A. Monospar. In October the same year he was relieved to spot Fair Isle for the first time en route to making the first land-plane arrival in Shetland. Hoping for a field near Lerwick he was forced to choose one on Bressay. However, it took a long time to woo Shetlanders away from sea travel and it was another three years before he extended his regular service that far North. Fair Isle began playing its first and important role in aviation — an essential pick-up point en route to check drift in the days before radio navigation aids. Heading South, if you missed Fair Isle you were liable to miss the whole of Orkney and that still holds good today for adventurous pilots in the more primitive kinds of light aircraft!

On a second flight to Shetland, on 17th October 1933, Fresson was tempted to take a closer look at Fair Isle with a view to possibly making a landing there sometime in the future. He dropped down low and spotted an area near the South Light. He did a dummy run, observed 'perhaps a bit rough', and decided to return one day by steamer and look it over.

Coming off the 'St Magnus' by flit boat in Summer 1936 (the norm in those days), he finally chose a field on Meoness 'precariously situated some 200ft above the sea with cliffs surrounding three-quarters of the perimeter'. It had all the makings of a dramatic first landing and so it turned out to be. It was Coronation Day, 13th May 1937, when he approached those cliffs in Monospar G-ABVH. They loomed dead ahead when suddenly the aircraft was pulled downwards as if by an unseen hand. He saw he wasn't going to make it, opened up full power and banked away violently just in time to avert a head-on crash. A vicious down-draught was lying in wait, so next time round he came in with much more height in hand and pulled off a nice first landing just 50ft into the field. The little Monospar was at once surrounded by excited islanders, most of whom had never seen an aeroplane before. After being fêted at a special



Coronation tea, Fresson took off, circled the island and dived at the crowd, scattering them in all directions.

But the Monospar was too small to use as an ambulance. Fresson wanted to try the Meoness field with the larger De Havilland Dragon. So it was on 11th November that same year when the famous Dragon G-ACIT made the second landing and all went well.

It took the war to trigger off the first real search for a proper landing-strip site. The Navy wanted a radar scanner in the area and thought Fair Isle would make an ideal location. Fresson was asked to do a recce and take Admiral Somerville with him. They duly landed at Meoness on 10th January 1940 and it was while toiling up Ward Hill in the interests of the radar station that Sukka Mire first revealed its potentiality. But it was not until 30th June 1945 that the new strip, even then only partially completed by the Navy, was used for the first time. Fresson came in with the now venerable Dragon and Major Neven Spence on an electioneering visit.

However, it mustn't be imagined that no aviation activity took place between 1940 and 1945. There was indeed another landing, but sadly a tragic one. On the morning of 17th January 1941 Leutnant Karl Heinz Thurz and four crew members fired up their Heinkel 111-H2 for another tedious met. 'recce', their 25th, from Oldenburg near Bremen. The aircraft, resplendent with met. squadron shield painted, ironically, with blue sea, island and lighthouse, kept low above the waves on approaching Shetland to underfly radar. But thickening snow showers forced Thurz to take her up to 6,000ft. Through a hole in the cloud he looked down and just saw Fair Isle passing below. A moment later radio operator Wohlfart shouted 'fighters!' Then bullets from the first of two Hurricanes ripped into the fuselage. Thurz peeled off sharply to port, stuffing the nose hard down. Bullets from the second Hurricane only met the starboard wing. He avoided the third attack and reached the cover of a cosy cloud. Any thoughts of making it back to Norway were soon dispelled when black smoke began to pour from the starboard engine, the landing wheels flopped down and the flaps failed. Thurz' only option was to make for Fair Isle and he put the Heinkel into a dive at 315 mph and crash landed on Vaassetter. The 'plane burst into flames. Thurz and two crew members survived, although injured; the other two were killed instantly. Thurz served a long period in prison camps in England and Canada returning to his devastated home in Cologne 6 years later. There is no truth in the sometimes-quoted story that the survivors were somehow spirited away to a nearby croft and eventually picked up by a U-boat. Had they been, they might not be here today to tell the tale. The Hurricanes came from No. 3 Squadron based at Sumburgh.

From 1969 on, the airstrip came to be used regularly for charter flights by Loganair using Pilatus-Britten-Norman 'Islander' aircraft. In 1973, with money raised by the National Trust for Scotland topped up with grants from the HIDB and The Royal Bank of Scotland (owners of Loganair), the strip was greatly improved. It was made wider, longer and given a more stable surface. A passenger terminal, in the shape of a small hut, was also erected. No mention of the strip can be made without stressing its complete dependence on a major contribution from the Fair Islanders themselves. In particular, Stewart Thomson senior has for many years acted as fire officer and general manager. It is him one has to contact by telephone in advance if arriving in one's own 'plane as a private pilot.

It was exactly that which I myself had to do in March 1975 when flying in with a vintage Stinson 'Voyager'. This subsequently provided some entertainment when, with Brendan O'Brien piloting, we flipped over onto our back when taking off. The Stinson then spent most of that Summer residing in the observatory garage. Flipping over onto her back was a trait that she was to

demonstrate once again some years later but fortunately not on a remote island!

In 1976 Loganair began regular scheduled flights, once weekly in winter, twice in summer. The operation has been conducted with exemplary friendliness and efficiency and nowadays makes a very fundamental contribution to the well-being of the island. Indeed it has been possible to leave Brighton early in the morning and be in time for a late lunch at the observatory. Alan Whitfield as Senior Pilot became a well known and much respected figure on the island, as have his successors Ian Ray and Malcolm Bray.

The future of aviation on Fair Isle looks secure and with one of the islanders now taking flying lessons who knows what excitement lies in store? As for the past, Dragon G-ACIT can be seen immaculately preserved at the National War Museum, Duxford; the Stinson still flying at Barton near Manchester; and the Heinkel, a mere shadow of her former self, still stuck on Vaassetter.

*Pat Sellar*

Sources:

'Air Road to the Isles' E. E. Fresson pub. David Rendel 1967

Karl Heinz Thurz. pers. comm.

Loganair Limited. pers. comm.

Air Historical Branch 5 (RAF) per Karl Heinz Thurz.

## **Fair Isle's Recent Telephone Systems**

Twenty five years ago the telephone exchange was in the old post office at Shirva, now called the workshop. My first visit to Fair Isle, in 1963, was to move the switchboard up to the new post office in the house. The signalling system will appear quaint by today's standards. To call the operator, the customer had to turn a handle, which dropped an indicator and rang a buzzer. Another feature was a box of dry batteries for speech purposes. Although very primitive, in some ways it was superior to the advanced tech. telephones. The operator, Annie Thomson, was used as an information service. She would know where the nurse was, when the boat left, and many other items of common interest.

There were only two outside lines, by submarine cable: one to Kirkwall, the other to Lerwick. In the evenings, half the phones were plugged into the Kirkwall line, the rest on the Lerwick one. Each customer had to count the number of rings to find out if the call was for them. Not until 1972 was the service improved by the installation of a six-channel radio link, in the cable hut at North Haven. This initially doubled the outside lines to four.

Three years later saw the demise of the magneto switchboard when an automatic exchange was fitted into the old wartime generator building at North Haven. These engines had powered the repeater equipment for the now redundant submarine cables. The era of the personal touch of the operator had come to an end.

1975 also saw big changes in the communications field. The wartime generator building on Ward Hill was renovated to house a joint BBC/ITV/British Telecom radio station. A quarry site above the Observatory became the new generating station with three diesels giving 24 hour electricity.

Fair Isle was now a main link in the telephone traffic from Scotland, Shetland, Faroes and Iceland, with 960 channels. Digital equipment was commissioned in 1986 to add a further 960 channels, a far cry from only two outside lines a little over a decade ago. Even so, I suspect a decade from now even greater advances will be made.

*Barry Sinclair*

## The Mast on The Hill, Fair Isle

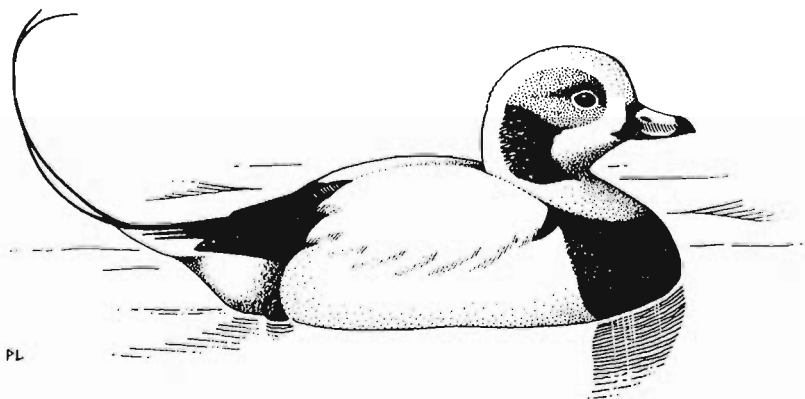
The extension of television services to Shetland necessitated, due to the distance between Orkney and Shetland, an intermediate 'link' station. Fair Isle is ideally situated for such a purpose. Television microwave links are limited to effectively optical 'line of sight' propagation, so a tower had to be built that could 'see' both the source station on Orkney (called Keelylang Hill) and the main television station for the Shetland Isles, located on the island of Bressay.

The site of the link station, chosen in close collaboration with local interested groups, was that of an ex wartime naval radar station. Before conversion the building was derelict, and whilst building work was the responsibility of the Independent Broadcasting Authority, the project was jointly funded between the IBA, the BBC and what was then the Post Office, all of whom install and operate their own electronic equipment. The tower is 150ft high and has been designed to support up to 14 dish type aerials, but up to the present only 5 have been installed, the remainder to be added if traffic density over microwave links increases significantly. The tower steelwork weighs over 32 tons, and is specified to withstand a fully loaded wind speed of 158 miles per hour for a three second gust.

The transmitter equipment used by the IBA on Fair Isle is designed for totally unattended operation, and employs the latest technology for reliability and automatic operation. Engineering teams based near Aberdeen pay routine visits to the site about once every 6 months to check performance and operation of standby equipment. Telemetry equipment continually monitors equipment status, the information being fed back to the IBA Regional Operations Centre near Glasgow. Remote control of the Fair Isle Station is also possible using this telemetry, but normally the micro-computer is in command!

The IBA engineers gratefully acknowledge the warm welcome they always receive when visiting Fair Isle, and without the assistance of the residents we would not be able to provide television to Shetland.

*Roger Jones*



## The Weather on Fair Isle in 1986

<b>January</b>	Wet, windy and cool with above average sunshine. The month's maximum of 7°C on the 10th was the lowest January maximum on record.
<b>February</b>	Cold, with persistent easterly winds. The year's lowest temperature of -2.8°C occurred on the 21st. Very dry with rainfall only 33% of normal. With 170% of normal sunshine this was the sunniest February on record.
<b>March</b>	Though windy, cold and unsettled elsewhere in the United Kingdom, it was dry, sunny and mild in Fair Isle, with frequent southerly winds.
<b>April</b>	Dry and sunny, but the coldest April on record for Fair Isle. Cold, wet and cloudy elsewhere in the United Kingdom.
<b>May</b>	Cool, dull and very wet with 228% of normal rainfall, making this the wettest May on record. A mild start gave a daily maximum in excess of 10°C for the first time this year on the 1st. However, during the month the daily mean temperature did not rise above 10°C.
<b>June</b>	Temperature and sunshine were above average, rainfall a little below average. A pleasant month. The year's highest temperature of 16.1°C was recorded on the 26th.
<b>July</b>	A sunny month, but a very wet day on the 31st (25.1mm, the year's wettest day) made it also the wettest July on record. With 16.3 hours the 12th was the sunniest day of the year.
<b>August</b>	Though rainfall was above average, persistent northerly winds reduced the number of sea fogs, making this the sunniest August on record.
<b>September</b>	Cool, wet but again sunny. This was the coldest September on record.
<b>October</b>	Continuing wet, but once again sunny, with temperatures a little above average.
<b>November</b>	The month was mild, wet and dull.
<b>December</b>	Temperatures were average but the month was very wet. It was the sixth successive month with above average rainfall and the year's wettest month. In the last 122 days rain fell on 112.

*D. Wheeler*

(Pressure on space unfortunately prevents inclusion this year of the detailed data provided by Dave Wheeler.)

# Ornithology

Fair Isle excelled once again in 1986. A minimum of 206 species were reported of which at least 5 were new to the isle: Spotted Sandpiper, Chestnut Bunting, American Wigeon, Bobolink and Collared Flycatcher. The large falcon present in late autumn may possibly prove to be a sixth.

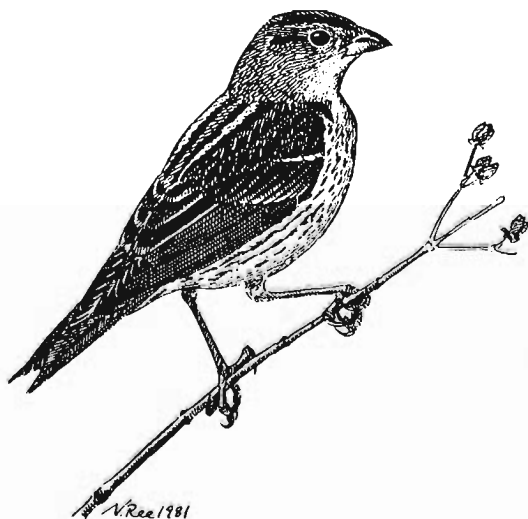
The monthly totals of species recorded were:

J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	C
52	46	78	96	139	101	72	93	133	131	65	30

Events that stand out in an outstanding year all round include a largest ever spring thrush and Robin fall in April, flocks of Ring Ouzels and Long-eared Owls spring and autumn, summer rarities into July, a resident completely white Puffin in June and July, a massive increase in breeding and summering Gannets and Arctic Terns, House Martins breeding for the first time in 40 years, a run of autumn rarities well into November, an American Wigeon wearing a Washington DC, USA, ring and latest ever records for Red-backed Shrike, Dotterel and Black Redstart.

Another major event which occupied much of the summer was the Seabird Monitoring Scheme, a new venture described more fully later in the report.

National and/or island rarities not mentioned above included Little Grebe, Canada Goose, Great Shearwater, Brent Goose (2), White-tailed Eagle, Gyrfalcon, Spotted Crane, Red-necked Phalarope, Long-tailed Skua (2), Snowy Owl, Olive-backed Pipit, Pechora Pipit, Citrine Wagtail, Thrush Nightingale, Pallas's Grasshopper Warbler, Lanceolated Warbler, Savi's Warbler, Goldfinch (4), Two-barred Crossbill, Yellow-breasted Bunting (6) and Black-headed Bunting.



# Monthly Highlights

## January-February

The beginning of 1986 will be remembered for a remarkably calm period of weather, certainly for Fair Isle's standards. With respect to birds there were a number of unusual and interesting records.

There were some surprises in store early in January. A Waxwing appeared on 6th, with another next day. 2 or 3 Long-eared Owls roosted either in the Plantation or the Gully. Perhaps the most out of season migrant was a Yellowhammer which turned up in the Shirva yard on 15th. A Coot, first seen at Utra on 8th, reappeared the following day in a small ditch at Quoy. A few Long-tailed Ducks were seen as well as a good series of Glaucous Gulls, and 2 Iceland Gulls at Finniequoy. A flock of up to 40 Curlews roamed the undisturbed fields in the south of the isle throughout the month, while good numbers of Turnstones showed a liking for the Houll. 2 Whooper Swans at Stoneybreck on 14th were seen again at Utra Park and on the hill. One took up residence on Golden Water where it remained for the rest of the winter.

February was a month of dry, fairly calm, sunny weather, with the wind direction predominantly in the eastern sector. Bird of the month was undoubtedly a fine grey phase Gyr Falcon which circled over the Houll before heading off east to Hesswalls. 11 Common Scoters off Da Skerries at South Light on 5th were keeping company with 100 Eiders. The 7th saw an influx of Snow Buntings, the usual 20 at Quoy increasing to 100 and a further 75 flying over Taft. Waders returning included a Golden Plover on 10th, 2 Oystercatchers at South Light on 12th and 2 Lapwings also on that latter date. A handsome male Goosander spent 16th to 28th in South Harbour. On 22nd a Little Auk flew past South Light while 300 Kittiwakes sat on the South Light rocks. More Guillemots and Razorbills were present at the end of the month, with 400-500 Guillemots ashore on their nesting ledges near Kirn o Skroo. Finally, a male Merlin flying over Gilsetter on 27th and a different individual on 28th ended an interesting month.

## March

Traditionally a month of the first major spring movements, March 1986 was no exception with some strong movements, particularly in the early and middle parts of the month. The Skylark passage was the heaviest on record.

14 Common Scoters were found off North Light on 2nd. There was a Peregrine at Quoy the same day. 3 Ringed Plovers at South Light on 6th were new for the year. Also on the rocks were 30 Oystercatchers, 100 Turnstones and 12 Purple Sandpipers. On 9th a Rook flew past Shirva. Next day it was wandering round the fields at Barkland.

The massive Skylark movement became apparent on 8th when 150 were present. Their numbers had swollen to 675 by 11th before peaking at 750 the following day. Other species were also present in numbers on 12th, most notably 195 Lapwings, 140 Oystercatchers and 36 Snow Buntings. Some of the last were fine plumaged males. A Mistle Thrush and 3 Wigeon were new on 13th. Sadly the resident Whooper Swan on Golden Water, which had been ailing for some time, died on 14th. That day a Shelduck, 3 Mistle Thrushes and the spring peak of 220 Lapwings were counted.

The 17th was an interesting day, producing Lapland Bunting at Quoy and a Little Auk off Buness. New for the year were Brambling, Woodpigeon and 12 Meadow Piptits. A Long-eared Owl just evaded capture at Finniequoy on 18th. A weak Coot, picked up in Meadow Burn on 20th, was held in care until it gained weight and strength, then released on Golden Water on 26th. The first Grey Wagtail of the year was located in Mavers Geo on 24th. On 25th there were 75

Blackbirds and a Red-breasted Merganser. A Dipper in Wirvie Burn on 26th was of the Black-bellied morph.

It was a slow start for arrivals of Fair Isle summer residents, but the year's first Bonxie appeared on the hill on 28th. On 31st there was an influx of 18 Ravens on a pre-breeding movement, along with 3 Rooks. An Iceland Gull flew past the Observatory and a Black Redstart was seen at Hoini.

## April

Northerly winds and a series of depressions tracking across southern Britain kept early April very quiet, but a trickle of migrants from mid-month became a veritable flood by the end.

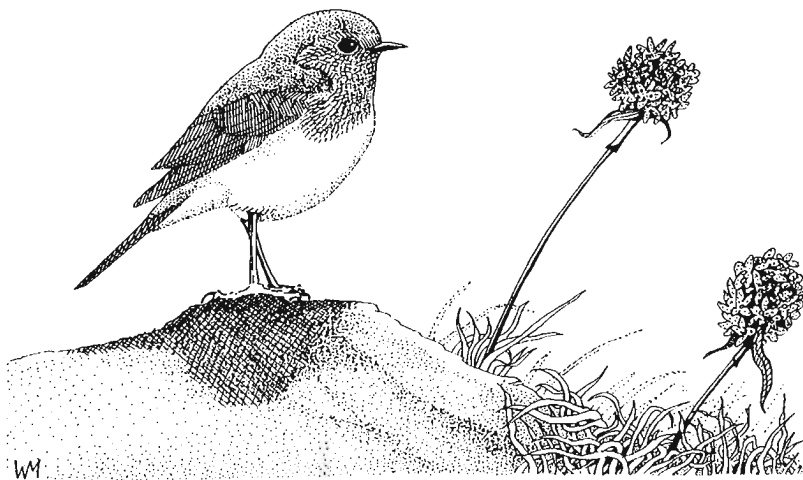
Linnet and Greylag Goose were new for the year on 1st, when there were 2 Shelducks in South Harbour. However, apart from 2 Linnets on 3rd, 2 Rooks and an increase to 250 Oystercatchers on 5th, and the first Yellowhammer of the spring on 6th, there were few new arrivals over the next few days. A break in the weather on 7th brought, at last, the first 4 Wheatears of the year — probably the latest arrival date ever. A Long-eared Owl and 3 Shelduck were also present on 7th while on the 8th Yellowhammers had increased to 3, 70 Turnstones marked an influx and single Woodcock and Mallard were the first of the month.

The next week was also rather quiet. The spring's first Brambling and Reed Bunting were seen on 9th, a Siskin and a flock of 20 Ravens on 10th and the first Grey Plover of the year on 11th. The 12th saw frantic activity on the sea with auks (mainly Razorbills) moving north at 4,000 per hour off South Light in the morning, but at a slower rate off Bunes in the afternoon when the first 2 Porpoises of the year were sighted. An easterly wind on 13th brought nothing more than the year's first Greenfinch, but the next day brought 60 Common Gulls, 30 Lapwings, 9 Woodcock, the first Robins (4) of the month and the first 2 Dunnocks of the year. Some small increases on 15th were associated with the arrival of 5 Ring Ouzels and a Short-eared Owl.

95 Song Thrushes on 16th were the first significant arrival of the month, with 26 Dunnocks, 22 Robins, 14 *alba* Wagtails, 5 Mistle Thrushes and the first Moorhen of the year among other arrivals. 14 Ring Ouzels, 22 Woodpigeons, 32 Chaffinches and 140 Song Thrushes were the principal increases on 17th, augmented the next day by the first Chiffchaff, a Jack Snipe and 3 Porpoises. The 19th was a similar day but enlivened by the capture of a male Hawfinch in the Plantation.

Grim weather on 20th meant few birds seen but anticipation was high as a south-easterly gale was blowing. Indeed, hopes were realised on 21st-23rd in the guise of one of the largest spring falls on record, birds continuing to arrive throughout the three days. Although not the most numerous bird, the main feature of the fall was Robins. A total of 900 on 22nd and 23rd beat the previous all-time record by 50%! Over 300 ringed, and relatively few retrapped, indicated the high turnover of birds over the three days. Record spring counts were also established for Song Thrush (1,150), Brambling (725) and Long-eared Owl (7 — previous best just 2), while 20 Redpolls equalled last April's record total.

Other principal components of the fall were 1,850 Blackbirds, 1,280 Fieldfares, 610 Starlings, 500 Redwings, 400 Common Gulls and 250 Chaffinches, while some of the other more notable counts included 50 Ring Ouzels, 50 Woodcock, 10 Mistle Thrushes and 4 Sparrowhawks. More unusual birds on 21st included a Great Grey Shrike which remained until 23rd, and the first Whimbrels (3), Blackcap and Arctic Skua of the year. On 22nd a flock of 3 Hawfinches at Setter constituted the first multiple record for that species. At least one remained until 25th. On 22nd there was also a female Great Spotted Woodpecker which stayed until 25th, only the 13th spring record. Green



Sandpiper was new for the year on 22nd, while 2 Gadwall were in South Harbour on 23rd.

A slight break in the cloud on the evening of 23rd saw birds streaming north to leave the island, and numbers in the last week of April, while still impressive, gradually declined. New birds still arrived however. A Little Grebe from 24th to 27th was only the 14th record for the island while 5 Short-eared Owls on 24th was the spring maximum. 33 Woodpigeons and 5 Siskins were the only increases on 25th although, for example, 700 Robins and 500 Blackbirds still remained. There was a second influx of Fieldfares, reaching 165 on 27th when 105 Wheatears, 2 Greylag Geese and the first 2 Dunlin of the month were also seen. 2 early Common Terns, 3 Jackdaws, 3 Collared Doves and a Common Sandpiper were all new for the year on 29th and a first-summer Iceland Gull was noted. The month was rounded off by the first Willow Warbler on 30th.

## May

After the excellent springs of the last two years, and the excitement of late April, May came as something of a disappointment this year. Although new arrivals occurred almost daily there were no major falls and few major rarities. Despite all this, however, an addition to the Fair Isle list was found and there were a couple of island rarities.

Inevitably, there was a constant supply of firsts for the year over the first few days: Lesser Whitethroat and Swallow on 1st, Whinchat on 2nd, Grasshopper Warbler, House Martin (2) on 4th. The 2nd was also enlivened by a superb pair of Lapland Buntings and 7 Linnets. A Corncrake was the highlight of 3rd when an island rarity, Coot, appeared on North Haven and remained until 15th. 2 Lesser Redpolls were seen on 4th.

A small arrival on 5th included a Short-toed Lark at Skerryholm which stayed until 11th, plus the first Wryneck, Red-backed Shrike, Yellow Wagtail, Tufted Duck and Redstarts (2) of the year. Another Grasshopper Warbler, 10 Whinchats and 140 Wheatears arrived. The 6th was quiet but, despite NW winds,



there were further arrivals on 7th. These included 50 Barnacle Geese, 60 Brambling, 55 Fieldfare, 20 Whimbrel, 4 Red-backed Shrikes, 4 Greylags, 2 Grasshopper Warblers and the first Whitethroat and Sand Martin. A Red-breasted Flycatcher on 8th was the earliest ever by nine days. It was joined by the year's first 2 Bluethroats — a count that was to remain the spring maximum, in stark contrast to 1985. A male Goosander was an unexpected arrival on 9th, along with the first Turtle Dove and Pied Flycatcher, 10 Hooded Crows, 7 Rooks, 5 Red-backed Shrikes, Sparrowhawk and the first Kestrel since March. Bird of the day on 10th was an adult Long-tailed Skua seen briefly over Gilsetter. Other birds noted included a Jackdaw and a motley flock of Carrion and Hooded Crows.

The first Wood Warbler and Spotted Flycatcher on 11th were joined by another Corncrake and the first Merlin and 5 Common Scoters of the month. Further Grasshopper Warblers on 11th and 12th added to an excellent spring for the species. The latter date also saw the first Green Sandpiper and Long-tailed Ducks (3) of the month. The first Greenshank of the year was the highlight of 13th and an equally quiet day on 14th was brightened by a male Dotterel on Ward Hill and (separate) male and female Snow Buntings, giving a distinctly montane air to the proceedings. An elusive (and grey-headed!) Rustic Bunting around the Houll on 15th led a small influx which also included a male Ortolan, Black-tailed Godwit, Bluethroat, Iceland Gull, 2 Glaucous Gulls, 5 Whitethroats, 5 Ring Ouzels, 40 Swallows and 40 Tree Pipits. One bird eclipsed all others on 16th — a female Snowy Owl which even delayed the evening meal as the cooks threatened to go on strike until they had seen it. Fortunately they did! A male Scaup in South Harbour on 17th was rarer in Fair Isle terms, while single Pied Flycatcher and Wood Warbler were only the second records of the year.

South-easterlies on 18th produced nothing more than the first Cormorant of the month, while a Great Northern Diver and a Black Redstart the next day joined a Goldfinch which looked like being the rarest bird of the month! This was rectified on 20th when a full summer plumaged Spotted Sandpiper in South Harbour became the first of the year's additions to the Fair Isle list. The same day also saw the first Swifts (2), a male Grey-headed Wagtail (the first non-Yellow *flava* of the spring) and 210 Oystercatchers.

Another island rarity on 21st was a Canada Goose — only the fourth Fair Isle record. Other birds included a female Ortolan and the first Pintail and Cuckoo of the year. On 22nd the first Bluethroat for a week appeared, a sign of the poor spring for that species. The 23rd saw an Osprey flying down the island, a male Ortolan, the first Red-backed Shrike for ten days, 9 Jackdaws and a spring peak of 20 Collared Doves. Avian highlights of 24th were spring peaks of 200 Swallows, 14 Sedge Warblers and 7 Whitethroats. These were eclipsed, however, by non-avian events — the (belated) arrival of the new Good Shepherd and a school of 5 Killer Whales off Bunness in the evening. The 25th typified the last week — little of note. A male Ortolan, a male Bluethroat and the spring's only Wood Sandpiper were the highlights of 26th, while the next day's Knot was little compensation for the failure to find a possible Lesser Grey Shrike. A spring peak of 150 House Martins on 28th was followed by 2 Sandwich Terns and a male Blue-headed Wagtail on 29th. The 30th was so quiet that 2 Chiffchaffs were the highlights. 2 new Red-backed Shrikes and a male Grey-headed Wagtail rounded off an unfulfilling month on 31st.

## June

June continued the late spring pattern of no big arrivals, but there was a good selection of interesting birds, especially in the middle of the month, including yet another new bird for Fair Isle.

The first few days of June were very quiet, with just a couple of lingering Red-backed Shrikes. However, on 3rd there was the first of a good series of Marsh Warblers, the spring peak of 7 Turtle Doves (culminating a good spring for that species), 25 Black-headed Gulls, 3 Garden Warblers and a Black Redstart. A Marsh Warbler was present on 4th. NW gales on 5th forced 4,000 Gannets ashore on Dronger. The first Scarlet Rosefinch was seen on 6th, along with 3 Willow Warblers and another Marsh Warbler. A Savi's Warbler trapped in the Vaadal on 7th was only the third Scottish record, and the third for Fair Isle. The same day also produced the first 2 Manx Shearwaters and a Storm Petrel on the crossing as well as an adult Pomarine Skua. 2 late Barnacle Geese and the second Black-tailed Godwit of the spring were present on 8th, and another Marsh Warbler on 9th. The next day there were 2 Marsh Warblers, a late Sparrowhawk and 4 Sandwich Terns.

Leading the way on 11th was an adult female Golden Oriole trapped in the Vaadal. A Nightingale, 2 male Crossbills, 8 Spotted Flycatchers, 2 Marsh Warblers and the latest ever Goldeneye were also seen. 5 Sand Martins and a Great Northern Diver were new on 12th, and Nightingale and Crossbill were noted. Another new Marsh Warbler arrived on 13th, when a late Brambling was present. The discovery of a white Puffin at Copper Geo was the event of 14th; it remained throughout the summer. Another Crossbill was also recorded. The 15th saw the bird of the spring, a first summer male Chestnut Bunting discovered outside the observatory. A new bird for Fair Isle and potentially the second for Britain if it is accepted as a vagrant rather than an escape (there is, after all, an autumn record in Norway). Only slightly less unusual was a red male Scarlet Rosefinch at Schoolton the next day. It was only the fourth occurrence of a red male for Fair Isle and the first for ten years. The Chestnut Bunting was still present, and another new Marsh Warbler was trapped. The few 'bunting-twitchers' who arrived on 17th were a day too late and had to be content with a Pomarine Skua on the crossing and the red Rosefinch, a female Grey-headed Wagtail and 3 male Crossbills on the isle. 2 Red-breasted Mergansers on 18th were very late, while a Whimbrel may have constituted the first migrant of the autumn!

The 19th was a memorable day. A superb male Rustic Bunting was trapped, the latest ever Whooper Swan was in South Harbour, the George Waterston Memorial Museum was opened and Fair Isle received the European Diploma. The Rustic Bunting was joined by another Marsh Warbler, 3 Redpolls and 4 Crossbills the next day, while on 21st it was accompanied by the only Stock Dove of the year, and a male Bluethroat in song at Furse. New arrivals continued right into the last week of the month, including a late Fieldfare on 22nd, a Short-eared Owl in off the sea on 23rd, another new Marsh Warbler (about the eighth of the month) and an immature male Scarlet Rosefinch on 24th, and the latest ever spring Whinchat on 29th. Most time, however, was dedicated to counting the island's seabirds from land and sea. Other breeding birds included White Wagtails at Hoilie, while Turnstones held territory briefly in the north.

## July

Although a quiet month for migration, July usually has its surprises. This year was no exception. As usual migration counts took second place in our activities to seabird studies, often in weather that was not as kind as we might have wished. This summer saw a marked shift in emphasis with the commencement of a carefully planned programme of seabird monitoring. Most heartening developments amongst our seabirds were increases in breeding Gannets and Arctic Terns.

A Black Redstart on 1st was an unseasonal migrant and acted as a precursor to the events of 3rd when the only passerine migrants present were a Wood

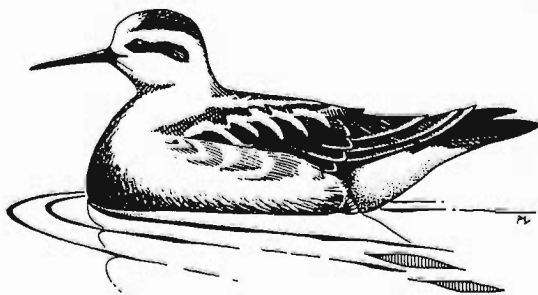
Warbler, a Crossbill, a male Subalpine Warbler and a male Black-headed Bunting! Evidence of wader passage came on 4th when 17 Curlew, 15 Turnstone and 3 Dunlin were seen along with 5 Teal. A Turnstone held territory in the south. The same day a Minke Whale was seen 'breaching' off North Haven. An unseasonal Whitethroat on 5th was joined by the first butterfly of the year, a Painted Lady. The year's first Reed Warbler was a surprise on 8th, while other passerine arrivals included a Robin (which stayed to moult) and a Crossbill on 13th, and a Chaffinch on 14th. Wader passage continued: there were 21 Redshanks on 14th, 21 Dunlin and the first 4 Sanderlings on 17th, and the first Ruff of the year on 18th.

The discovery of a House Martin's nest at the Kirk on 21st was one of the events of the month, constituting the first breeding record since 1946! An influx of small gulls comprised 50 Common and 20 Black-headed. A male Long-tailed Duck in North Haven on 22nd was another in a series of unseasonal records. A female Killer Whale was seen on 25th and 29th, and the sea provided further excitement on 27th when 'thousands' of Fulmars, 20 Storm Petrels, an adult Pomarine Skua and a Sooty Shearwater were watched following a fishing boat. Otherwise the month ended quietly with the only migrants a few waders, including the first Green Sandpiper of the autumn on 28th.

## August

With the wind predominantly in the west, migration was noticeably slow at times. However, a number of interesting species appeared, including Aquatic Warbler, Thrush Nightingale, Red-necked Phalarope, Spotted Crake and 2 Leach's Petrels.

In the first ten days of August wading birds were much in evidence. On 1st there were 3 Green Sandpipers, 6 Common Sandpipers and a Ruff. By 7th Green Sandpipers had increased to 10 while 3 Greenshanks had made an appearance. Single Wood Sandpipers were also noted, with 2 together at Sukka Mire on 4th. A Grey Plover was on Buness for four days from 9th. 48 Curlew were seen on 15th, the majority migrating south over the isle. On several nights a number of Storm Petrels were trapped on North Haven beach with the aid of a tape lure. There were some outstanding captures including a Storm Petrel which had been ringed 20 years previously and single Leach's Petrels on 4th and 10th.



A small arrival of migrants occurred on 14th, the most notable of which were a Spotted Crane seen twice in the Meadow Burn area, a Scarlet Rosefinch at Setter and a Barred Warbler at the Observatory. An Icterine Warbler appeared on 14th and another on 19th when 35 Garden, 26 Willow and 4 Barred Warblers were also present. On 20th a Thrush Nightingale was discovered at Quoy. Normally considered a spring visitor, it was only the second Fair Isle autumn record. Further passerine arrivals occurred on 26th and 27th. First for the autumn were Spotted Flycatcher, Tree Pipit and 2 Wrynecks. An *Acrocephalus* warbler caught at the Plantation turned out to be a Marsh Warbler. Another was seen in Hjukni Geo. They comprised the first autumn records since 1979. An almost totally white Wheatear was seen on 23rd and again on 28th (where was it hiding in the interim?). The nesting attempt by the House Martins culminated in the successful fledging of 4 young which on 30th spent the day flying round the Kirk and adjoining fields.

The month ended well for one lucky observer who had the pleasure of seeing a Red-necked Phalarope on Easter Lothar Water on 31st.

## September

Despite a dearth of easterlies for most of the month, many of the regular rarities turned up and a few more besides. There were two new birds for the isle, both of Nearctic origin, and two particularly spectacular Asiatic visitors as well.

There could not have been a better start to the month: a fine, and very tame, male Two-barred Crossbill, which was found on the Skadan. It afforded excellent views as it fed on thrift seed heads. The autumn's only Ortolan Bunting occurred on 2nd as did the first of many Lapland Buntings during the course of the month. 2 Sooty Shearwaters on 4th were followed by 4 on 6th. Its rarer counterpart, the Great Shearwater, passed close to shore off Bunness on 11th. The first of the now expected series of Little Buntings arrived on 8th and stayed until 12th. It spent its time in the vicinity of the North Haven buildings. A wagtail was briefly heard and seen on 9th. After much searching it was finally tracked down the next day to Walli Burn, where many people had the pleasure of seeing a Citrine Wagtail. The bird settled down to spend the next few days in the Leogh area. The Little Bunting and Citrine Wagtail were still present on 12th when they were joined by an Arctic Warbler at Setter. This was another vagrant which settled in for a lengthy stay.

If one bird dominated the month it was Yellow-breasted Bunting: at least five were seen during September, the first on 14th-16th, another (perhaps two more) on 16th, a third on 21st, a fourth on 23rd-27th, and a fifth on 27th-28th. They were mostly very flighty, flitting from one oat crop to another to defy the anxious birders. Patience was rewarded eventually, however, for all observers. A fairly quiet period from 15th to 20th nevertheless saw the arrival of the first Pink-footed Geese and Snow Buntings of the autumn, and a Pomarine Skua kept the seawatchers happy.

On 21st all attention was on a small nondescript duck on Field pool. Sharp eyed birders considered that they had seen white axillaries, a characteristic of American Wigeon. Fired by the fact that it also bore a ring we set out to trap it and sure enough found that it was indeed an American Wigeon sporting a United States bird band. The American Wigeon, a first record for Fair Isle, stayed on the isle for the rest of the month and astonished everyone by its tameness, allowing approach to within a few metres — a bonus for the photographers.

From mid month Scarlet Rosefinches had gradually built up their number to a peak of 7 on 24th. The first Yellow-browed Warbler appeared at Springfield on 25th. Numbers rose to 4 the following day and an amazing 14 or more on 27th. The 26th was one of those magical Fair Isle days, with very few birds but two major rarities. In the morning a Pallas's Grasshopper Warbler was watched

working its way along the Leogh ditch, in which it was later trapped. At about the same time an *Acrocephalus* warbler was glimpsed at Quoy. It did not show itself well but prompted further investigation in the afternoon, when it was identified as a Paddyfield Warbler, the first autumn record since 1953. The Paddyfield Warbler stayed at Quoy for a week, eventually allowing much better views. The Pallas's Grasshopper Warbler did not tarry, and was not seen again after 26th.

Short-toed Lark, Richard's Pipit and Long-eared Owl were new for the autumn on 27th, and a Dotterel was located on Vaassetter the next day. A sparkling month for rarities ended in frustration for some when a Bobolink, another first for Fair Isle, put in a brief appearance on 29th. This bird of Nearctic origin was tracked down to Springfield but was extremely flighty and most observers were treated to the infuriating sight of it climbing high into the sky before heading south towards Orkney, then north in the direction of Shetland.

## October

The month continued the 1986 autumn pattern — few easterlies, few large falls but a steady run of rarities. These included another addition to the Fair Isle list, bringing the year's tally to an incredible five!

For those who only glimpsed it earlier there could not have been a more satisfying sight to start the month than that of the Bobolink, rediscovered at Field on the morning of 1st. A Bluethroat and a Collared Dove were the only new arrivals, although American Wigeon and Paddyfield Warbler were among September birds still in residence. They were last seen on 3rd and 4th respectively. The Bobolink remained until 2nd when the only Corncrake of the autumn was recorded. The first of the month's Short-toed Larks was found on 3rd when geese and swans made their first major appearance of the autumn. The next day 300 Greylags invaded the isle. A White-fronted Goose was with them. Also present were a Dotterel, a Red-backed Shrike and, at last, the first Fieldfare of the autumn. A major influx of 1,500 Redwings, 600 Bramblings and 200 Song Thrushes on 5th brought with them the autumn's second Little Bunting and another Yellow-breasted Bunting — to take the total of the last species to 6. The bird remained until 7th and in so doing became the latest occurrence on record. A Great Grey Shrike and 2 Mistle Thrushes on 6th were the most notable arrivals while it was a case of 'yesterday's birds' on 7th, including the long-staying Richard's Pipit.

The 8th was another special Fair Isle day. South-easterlies brought notable counts of 2,300 Redwings and 45 Ring Ouzels. The morning's star bird was a Lanceolated Warbler at Leogh, which at one stage entered the antique road roller and, on exit, used a human arm as a perch! In the afternoon a flycatcher trapped in the Double Dyke proved to be a Collared Flycatcher — a first for Fair Isle and only the second autumn record for Britain. A Little Stint on 9th was the first of the year, while a Spotted Redshank and 2 Mealy Redpolls were the first of the autumn. 3 Bluethroats comprised the highest count of the year. The only other increase involved Song Thrushes, censused at 320. A near complete set of Fair Isle 'specialities' was rounded off with a Pechora Pipit at Springfield on 10th. In Fair Isle terms a Stonechat was rarer, for it was of the European race — unusual in autumn. A few arrivals on 11th included a juvenile Long-tailed Skua, a new Little Bunting, a Scarlet Rosefinch and the autumn's only 2 Greenfinches.

After a quiet day on 12th arrivals on 13th included a second Great Grey Shrike joining the one already present, 2 Tree Pits, 250 Bramblings and 1125 Redwings. A male Parrot Crossbill paused all too briefly at the Plantation. 2 pale-bellied Brent Geese in North Haven were the highlight of 14th when there were 1900 Redwings, 80 Blackbirds, the autumn peak count of 825 Eider, and a new Red-backed Shrike. The autumn's only Jackdaw arrived on 15th. After a few days when sizable Fulmar movements provided the only offshore interest the

sea took centre stage on 16th when an unusually late big day of Sooty Shearwater passage occurred — 70 in total being seen in five hours of watching. 36 Whooper Swans comprised the peak count in what was proving a good autumn for that species. It remained quiet on land over the next few days: a Carrion Crow on 17th, a Glaucous Gull and a Lesser Redpoll on 18th, and increases to 180 Blackbirds and 80 Snow Buntings on 19th being the most significant occurrences.

2 Redpolls in the Observatory garden on the morning of 20th included one showing many of the characteristics of Arctic Redpoll which, infuriatingly, had to be registered as a '*pallascens*' intermediate. The first Black Redstart of the autumn was also seen. On 21st Rustic and Little Buntings were found keeping company at Skerryholm — an amazing coincidence as one of each were together there last year. A fifth Little Bunting for the autumn was at Field the next day, when a ringtail Hen Harrier was seen, and it was finally established that 2 Short-toed Larks were on the island. A large falcon on 23rd caused all sorts of identification problems but eventually possibilities were narrowed down to either Saker or Saker X Lanner hybrid. Another Little Stint on 24th was the only arrival that day but 80 Fieldfares on 25th were joined by a late Turtle Dove and 3 Goldfinches.

The last week was quiet. There was a late flurry of 24 Blackcaps on 26th and a lingering Oystercatcher on 28th, as well as a very late Red-backed Shrike which stayed into November. On 30th the large falcon took malevolent pleasure in harassing gull flocks which totalled 7000 Herring, 1500 Great Black-backed and single Glaucous and Iceland Gulls.

## November-December

As usual birds became progressively scarcer as the end of the year approached. However, with the occasional brief spell of south-easterlies breaking the pattern of wet and windy westerlies, the run of rarities that had established itself from August continued, and there was also a marked mid November influx of Long-eared Owls. Thrushes again failed to materialise in any numbers.

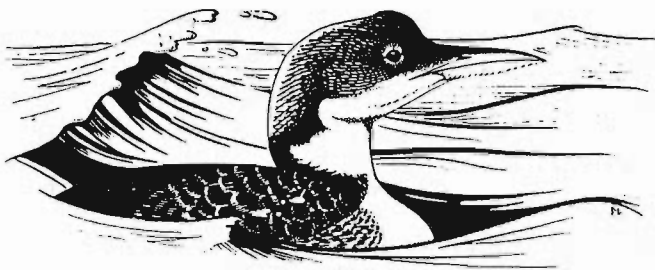
An Olive-backed Pipit at Stoneybrake and a Grey Wagtail at Mavers Geo on 1st could not have been a better start to November. There was an influx on 2nd of 350 Snow Buntings and 40 Greylag Geese followed by 100 Woodcocks next day. There were late migrants in the guise of a Red-backed Shrike which lingered to 4th and a Greenshank on 7th. The year's only Red-throated Pipit was seen briefly on 6th. 11 Whooper Swans flew over on 10th. The following day Snow Bunting numbers reached 420, good numbers remaining into December. The large falcon, also staying into December, must have been grateful for their presence.

A brief spell of SE winds on 14th brought Fair Isle's third ever Dusky Warbler to our attention. A Long-eared Owl was also present, the first of an influx involving at least 8 individuals during the next week. 3 Northern Bullfinches and a Mistle Thrush on 15th were also part of this little arrival, which was capped the following day by a sub-adult White-tailed Eagle flushed from Swarts Geo. Late November was uneventful but this was to change on 3rd December when a Dotterel, the latest ever on Fair Isle, was found by Jimmy Wilson on the Rippack. Another latest ever, by nearly a month, was a Collared Dove on 8th. A juvenile Moorhen and a male Sparrowhawk were seen on 9th and there were new Robins on 14th and 15th. On 22nd December a female type Black Redstart was frequenting the quarry at the Single Dyke — yet another latest ever. A Waxwing at Houll on 31st was a splendid end to an excellent year.

## Systematic List

*\*Details of all birds preceded by an asterisk are still being considered by the British Birds Rarities Committee.*

**Red-throated Diver** *Gavia stellata*. In spring there were singles on 3rd, 6th, 23rd & 26th May, 2 on 29th May, 1 on 4th and 2 on 5th June. 2 flew over on 14th July. Autumn records comprised singles on 11th August and 3rd & 15th September, 1-2 on 25th-27th September, one on 6th and one on 14th-19th October.



**Great Northern Diver** *Gavia immer*. Singles were seen on 19th May, 12th June & 26th September. A small southerly passage in mid October involved 2 on 14th, one on 15th, 2 on 16th and one on 17th.

**Diver species** *Gavia*. Unidentified divers were seen on 4th & 28th September and 2nd October.

**Little Grebe** *Tachybaptus ruficollis*. One on the sea on 24th April eventually settled on Golden Water where it stayed to 27th.

**Fulmar** *Fulmarus glacialis*. Present all year. A total island census in June and July gave a count of 26,995 occupied sites. 'Blue' Fulmars were seen regularly throughout the year, and particularly in mid September when peak of 11 (3 Light morph, 5 Dark morph, 3 Double Dark morph) recorded on 12th.

**Sooty Shearwater** *Puffinus griseus*. The first of the year was off North Light on 27th July. Singles seen on Crossing on 16th & 23rd August. Seen regularly from land and on the *Good Shepherd* crossing from 27th August-21st October, maximum 4 except 5 on 15th and exceptional 70 on 16th October.

**Manx Shearwater** *Puffinus puffinus*. On the Crossing 3 were seen on 31st May and 2 on 7th June. The only one from land occurred on 9th August.

**Storm Petrel** *Hydrobates pelagicus*. First seen on the Crossing of 7th June and regular thereafter. On land adults heard calling from rocks in June and July at Kinn o Skroo and North Bunes, but no calls at other known sites suggested poor breeding activity. Ashore at night throughout the summer. 4 noted offshore on 25th September and one on 1st October. Last 2 noted on Crossing of 7th October.

**Leach's Petrel** *Oceanodroma leucorhoa*. One trapped on 5th and another on 10th August, both trapped in the early hours on North Haven beach.

**Gannet** *Sula bassana*. Recorded regularly from 12th January. 14 offshore at Dronger on 4th February. 200 ashore on 3rd April and a record 4000 ashore on 5th June. 258 nests constituted an island record at nearly double the 1985 total. Still 360 adults and a few unfledged young ashore on 26th September but rapid departures thereafter and only small numbers noted occasionally after 24th October.

**Cormorant** *Phalacrocorax carbo*. One on 7th-8th and 15th January. An adult on 27th-28th March, with 2 on 29th March followed by singles on 8th, 10th, 12th-13th, 28th-29th April and 18th May. 3 occurred on 25th and 2 on 26th May, with one on 7th June. In autumn there was daily passage 31st August-26th September, maximum 14 on 16th September, with later records 5 on 4th, and 1-2 on 12th-17th October.

**Shag** *Phalacrocorax aristotelis*. Present all year. Total island census: 1099 nests.

**Grey Heron** *Ardea cinerea*. One on 11th-12th January was the only winter record. In spring singles (perhaps only one individual) were noted regularly 21st March-18th April. Later singles on six scattered dates 27th April-22nd May. The only July records were singles on 12th, 22nd & 28th. Generally scarce in autumn: 1-4 noted most days 8th-30th August, up to 7 on 10th-16th September, 1-3 daily from 23rd-30th September, and singles on twelve dates 1st-26th October. One occurred on 14th November.

**Whooper Swan** *Cygnus cygnus*. There were 2 on 14th January, one remaining on Golden Water until 13th March when it died. One unexpected adult in South Harbour on 19th June was still there the following day. A better than average autumn passage started with 6 on 3rd and 4 on 4th & 6th October. Up to 9 were noted almost daily 14th-22nd October, with larger influxes of 36 on 16th and 20 on 22nd October. 1-4 were noted most days 23rd October-14th November and 2 on 30th December.

**Pink-footed Goose**. *Anser brachyrhynchus*. One on 14th-15th September preceded almost daily passage 22nd September-22nd October. Largest numbers were in September, maxima 86 on 23rd, 55 on 24th and 139 on 29th. October maximum was 37 on 3rd.

**White-fronted Goose**. *Anser albifrons*. One on 4th October was the only record.

**Greylag Goose**. *Anser anser*. The only spring records were one on 1st April, 2 on 27th April-2nd May, 4 on 7th May and one on 9th-13th May. Strong autumn passage started with 54 on 3rd October and the autumn peak of 300 on 4th. Good numbers were then noted daily to 23rd (including 95 on 9th, 100 on 15th) and smaller numbers virtually daily to 15th November. A light second wave occurred 1st-3rd November with counts of 25, 40 & 21 respectively.

**Grey Goose** species *Anser*. Unidentified grey geese were seen on 30th March (1), 17th April (3), 11th & 19th September (1) and 3rd October (40).

**Canada Goose** *Branta canadensis*. One on 21st May was only the 4th Fair Isle record.

**Barnacle Goose** *Branta leucopsis*. In spring 50 appeared on 7th May and 2 on 8th June. 4 on 24th-25th September were forerunners of daily autumn occurrence 3rd-18th October. Maxima were 26 on 5th and 32 on 8th.

**Brent Goose** *Branta bernicla*. 2 individuals of the pale-bellied race *B.b. hrota* set down in North Haven on 14th October.



**Shelduck** *Tadorna tadorna*. In the early part of the year there were singles on 20th February & 14th March. In April there was a pair on 1st-2nd, a female on 6th, 3 on 7th and one on 26th. A pair on 19th May, were the last of the spring, and the year.

**Wigeon** *Anas penelope*. 1-3 on six dates 13th-30th March were exceeded by counts of 9 on 21st and 10 on 27th. In April there were 4 on 24th and one on 25th. There was 1-4 daily 3rd-14th May, 4 on 25th and 2 on 26th-28th May. Early autumn singles occurred on six dates 19th August-1st September. 1-4 were noted most days 10th September-9th October, with 14 on 5th October, 1-2 on three dates 16th-27th October, and 16 on 24th October.

**\*American Wigeon** *Anas americana*. A first-year male spent 21st September-3rd October on Field pool. It was trapped on 21st and found to be wearing a Washington DC, USA, ring.

**Gadwall** *Anas strepera*. A pair on 23rd April.

**Teal** *Anas crecca*. The sole winter record was 2 on 1st January. One on 2nd March preceded 1-7 daily 10th-21st March. Another wave of daily passage, 1-2 from 21st April to 11th May was followed by 2 on 26th & 31st May, 3rd & 8th June and one on 20th June. 5 mid-summer birds (4 males) occurred on 4th July. 2 on 30th July announced autumn passage. 1-6 were noted on 17 dates 4th August-5th September, then 1-9 virtually daily 3rd September-24th October.

**Mallard** *Anas platyrhynchos*. A female was noted on several occasions 3rd February-8th March, then 1-4 occasionally 16th March-11th May. There were 5 on 14th May and 1-3 on 9 dates 1st-25th June. A female on 25th July preceded generally thin autumn passage: 1-3 on 14 dates 4th-29th August; 1-3 on 9 dates 11th-28th September, with 6 on 18th; 1-6 most days 4th October-4th November. the only reasonable numbers were 19 on 5th and 16 on 24th October. 3 were seen on 13th November and 3 on 29th December.

**Pintail** *Anas acuta*. One female on 21st May and one on 8th October were the only records.

**Shoveler** *Anas clypeata*. One on 23rd September was the only record.

**Tufted Duck** *Aythya fuligula*. There was a male on 5th-13th May, another male on 21st-24th, male on 27th and male on 30th May. The only autumn record comprised one on 12th September.

**Scaup** *Aythya marila*. A male on 17th May was the only record.

**Eider** *Somateria mollissima*. Present all year. Maxima were 574 on 26th March and 825 on 14th October.

**Long-tailed Duck** *Clangula hyemalis*. Recorded regularly January-late April, maximum 20 on 23rd January. 3 stayed 12th-19th May and one to 28th May. There were two unexpected summer records — a pair on 5th and an adult summer male on 22nd July. In autumn there were early singles on 19th & 28th September and 3 on 4th October, followed by daily occurrence 10th-28th October. Maxima were 12 on 11th & 23rd, 14 on 24th October. Later records were 2 on 31st October, 10th & 12th November.

**Common Scoter** *Melanitta nigra*. There was a female on 23rd January. 9 on 31st January, increased to 11 on 5th-6th February and 14 on 2nd March. Up to 12 noted regularly thereafter to 9th April and 1-3 to 24th April. 5 appeared on 11th May, 6 on 15th and one on 17th May. The only autumn records were one on 11th and 2 on 14th October.

**Velvet Scoter** *Melanitta fusca*. A male was seen on 21st January.

**Goldeneye** *Bucephala clangula*. Spring records were all early, comprising a female on most days 23rd February-16th March and 3 females on 17th March. In stark contrast a female on 11th June was the latest spring occurrence ever. In autumn, one on 8th-9th October preceded daily records 12th-18th October, maximum 7 on 14th.

**Red-breasted Merganser** *Mergus serrator*. Spring records were scattered: a male on 25th & 29th March, one on 24th & 27th April and 1st May, 1-3 daily 6th-14th May and one on 19th May. A pair was present 18th-20th June and a female on 3rd July. Early autumn singles on 10th, 24th-25th & 29th September preceded 1-4 occasionally 4th-7th October and 11 on 11th October. Singles were seen on 1st-4th November.

**Goosander** *Mergus merganser*. A male was noted in February on 16th, 19th, 22nd & 28th. There was a spring male on 9th May.

**\*White-tailed Eagle** *Haliaeetus albicilla*. A sub-adult was flushed from Swarts Geo on 16th November.

**Hen Harrier** *Circus cyaneus*. A 'ringtail' on 22nd October was the only record.

**Sparrowhawk** *Accipiter nisus*. In spring there was one on 28th-31st March, 1-4 on 9 dates 8th-25th April and singles on 5 dates 4th-10th May. A late female occurred on 10th June. A rather poor autumn passage comprised singles on 26th August, 1st-3rd, 17th-18th & 27th-28th September, one on 14th, 2 on 19th and 1 on 21st-24th October. A male occurred on 9th December.

**Osprey** *Pandion haliaetus*. One flew up the isle on 23rd May.

**Kestrel** *Falco tinnunculus*. In January there was a female on 2nd and 1 on 28th. At least 1 female was present 8th-27th March. Singles were noted most days 9th May-30th June (including one long-stay female), with 2 on 4th June. Autumn passage started with one on 9th & 11th August, then 1-2 most days 23rd August-24th September. Later singles were noted on 3rd, 19th, 22nd & 26th-28th October.

**Merlin** *Falco columbarius*. There was one on 15th January, a male on 27th-28th February and 1-2 on 7th-17th March. 1-2 were noted on 5 dates 15th-27th April, and singles on seven scattered dates in May to 28th. Noted virtually daily in autumn from 11th August with 1-2 present and up to 4 between 15th October and 6th November. One was seen on 29th December.

**\*Falcon species** *Falco*. A large falcon, present from 23rd October to at least 3rd December, awaits confirmation of its identity, but was either a Saker or a Saker x Lanner hybrid. Subsequent scrutiny of British Museum (Tring) skins suggested that the bird was probably a first-winter Saker. It was not ringed.

**\*Gyr Falcon** *Falco rusticolus*. A grey phase individual was seen on 20th February.

**Peregrine** *Falco peregrinus*. One was seen on five dates 6th-28th January. There was one on 2nd March, a male on 14th-23rd March and 2 on 27th March. 1-2 were noted on 6 dates 4th-16th April. An immature male was seen on 30th April and an immature on 13th May. Early autumn singles on 15th, 20th & 23rd-24th August preceded 1-2 on 14 dates 3rd-30th September and on 14 dates 2nd-26th October.

**Water Rail** *Rallus aquaticus*. At least one wintered, seen on a few dates in January, February and to 15th March. Single migrants appeared on 1st, 9th and 25th-26th April. The earliest autumn bird was seen on 29th September with

further singles noted on 4th, 8th, 15th, 18th-19th & 21st October, 6th & 10th November.

**Spotted Crake** *Porzana porzana*. One on 14th August was the only record.

**Corncrake** *Crex crex*. There were spring singles on 3rd & 11th May, and one autumn bird on 2nd October.

**Moorhen** *Gallinula chloropus*. All spring records encompassed the period 16th April-14th May when 1-3 most days and 4 on 23rd April. In autumn singles were recorded on 27th-28th October & 11th November. One was at Field on 9th-17th December.

**Coot** *Fulica atra*. An exceptional series of records. There was one on 7th-8th January, one on 27th February and one from 17th-26th March. A further individual in North Haven on 3rd May stayed until 15th May.

**Oystercatcher** *Haematopus ostralegus*. First noted on 12th February (2) building to 12 on 28th February, 50 on 9th March and 140 on 12th March. There were indications of through-passage in early April, eg 250 on 5th, 225 on 6th April. The breeding population was censused at 92 pairs. Post-breeding numbers remained above 100 until 17th August declining rapidly to 36 on 18th, 12 on 30th August, 1-12 in September and 1-3 daily 1st-12th October. The only later records were singles on 17th & 28th October.

**Ringed Plover** *Charadrius hiaticula*. The first 3 appeared on 6th March, reaching 12 on 11th. The spring peak was 16 on 22nd May. 10 pairs bred. Through-passage in autumn was indicated by peaks of 43 on 17th August and 20-25 daily from 27th August-8th September. Thereafter rapid decreases to 2 by 1st October and one to the last date, 17th October.

**Dotterel** *Charadrius morinellus*. A tame male graced Ward Hill on 14th May. Autumn singles were seen on 28th September and 4th October. One on 3rd December was the latest ever on Fair Isle.

**Golden Plover** *Pluvialis apricaria*. Early singles on 10th & 25th February preceded 2-8 daily 10th-18th March. 1-2 were noted occasionally 23rd March-15th April. The only reasonable passage of the spring occurred on 21st-23rd April when 11, 14 & 12 present. Up to 7 noted most days 24th April-21st May. Singles were seen on 30th May, on 5 dates in June and 3 dates in early July. One on 30th July announced more regular occurrence. 1-9 were recorded most days 3rd August-1st September, rather more daily 3rd September-22nd October, maxima 46 on 13th September, 30 on 19th October. Late singles were noted on 24th & 27th October and 1st-2nd & 4th November.

**Grey Plover** *Pluvialis squatarola*. One on 11th April was the only spring record. In autumn, there were singles on 30th July, 9th & 12th August.

**Lapwing** *Vanellus vanellus*. Up to 3 were seen in early January and mid February. Spring passage started with 4 on 4th March. Strongest passage spanned 8th-21st March when 100+ most days and 220 on 14th-15th. Smaller numbers daily thereafter. 7 pairs bred, but probably only 2 young fledged and breeding population departed by 3rd July. 1-4 on 3 scattered dates 8th-25th July. A small daily passage 1st-15th August peaked at 21 on 5th & 8th. 1-5 were seen on 10 dates, 21st August-11th September. Noted daily 16th September-27th October, particularly 27th September-15th October when 20+ daily and 40 on 5th October. 2-9 were recorded occasionally 31st October-13th November.

**Knot** *Calidris canutus*. The only spring record was one on 27th-28th May. Autumn migration started with single adults on 22nd & 30th July, then small numbers regularly to 10th October, maximum 9 on 4th August.

**Sanderling** *Calidris alba*. One on 9th June was the only spring record. 4 on 17th July were the first of virtually daily occurrence to 1st August, maximum 7 on 29th July. Later singles occurred on 12 dates 17th August-21st September, with 2 on 20th September.

**Little Stint** *Calidris minuta*. There were just two records, singles being seen on 9th & 24th October.

**Purple Sandpiper** *Calidris maritima*. Seen regularly January-7th March, maximum 30 on 14th January, and virtually daily 11th March-3rd June. Highest numbers were maintained from 3rd-12th May, maximum 40 on 11th. A single on 16th July was the first of the autumn. Further singles on 22nd, 27th July & 1st-5th August. Very scarce then until October with up to 6 on 16 widely scattered dates. Noted most days from 1st October, maximum 11 on 5th October.

**Dunlin** *Calidris alpina*. Up to 3 were seen occasionally in January and one on 3rd February. Up to 7 noted on 11 dates 11th-30th March and 2 on 27th April preceded daily occurrence 2nd May-13th June, maximum 11 on 22nd May. There was no evidence of breeding though singles were seen on 24th & 30th June. Post-breeding arrivals were regular in July from 4th, with July maxima 21 on 17th and 16 on 18th. 1-6 noted almost daily 2nd August-21st September, with later records one on 27th September-3rd October and 3 on 5th October.

**Ruff** *Philomachus pugnax*. A male on 18th July was the first of the year. Strongest autumn passage 1st-18th August, maximum 15 on 7th. Later singles were recorded on 22nd-24th & 30th August, 15th-16th & 19th September, and 4 on 1st September.

**Jack Snipe** *Limnocryptes minimus*. There was one on 26th January. In spring there were singles on 13th & 31st March, 18th April & 7th May. One on 31st August was the forerunner of virtually daily passage 13th September-27th October, peak 5 on 24th September. After main passage there were records of 3 on 2nd & 7th and one on 13th November & 22nd December.

**Snipe** *Gallinago gallinago*. January records comprised 8 on 8th and one on 16th. In February there were 3 on 4th & 22nd. Seen virtually daily from 7th March with no obvious marked passage. 19 on 24th April was the spring peak. The breeding population was censused at 25 drumming birds. The species was rather scarce in August and autumn numbers were generally low except for 100 on 24th September.

**Woodcock** *Scolopax rusticola*. 1-2 noted occasionally in January and to 9th February. 1-5 recorded most days 14th-29th March, 1-9 on four dates 8th-14th April preceded the only marked spring passage 18th-30th April when seen daily, including 20 on 21st, 50 on 22nd and 40 on 23rd. The only later spring migrant was one on 10th May. October passage was meagre: 1-5 on 15 dates from 5th and 8 on 27th. A major arrival of 100 occurred on 3rd November with 1-5 recorded occasionally thereafter throughout November, and a further influx of 40 on 14th.

**Black-tailed Godwit** *Limosa limosa*. There was an Icelandic race bird on 15th May and one on 8th June.

**Bar-tailed Godwit** *Limosa lapponica*. Very scarce: the only records were singles on 3rd August and 5th September.

**Curlew** *Numenius arquata*. There was a good wintering population, peaking at 35 on 29th January. Most departed by mid February, prior to March arrivals of local breeders. The only obvious through-passage occurred on 24th April (48) and 9th May (25). The breeding population continued to prosper and 6 pairs

bred. Post-breeding movements started as early as 4th and 6th July when 21 and 24 counted. Another surge started with 25 on 31st July. 80 on 16th was the August peak, but far fewer were recorded from 21st August, with September peak only 10, on 8th, and October peak 5, on 9th. Small numbers lingered to 12th November, with one on 15th December.

**Whimbrel** *Numenius phaeopus*. 3 on 21st April announced virtually daily passage to 12th June — small numbers except 20 on 7th May. Up to 6 noted on 9 dates 18th June-10th July. 2 on 28th July announced a very meagre passage: 1-4 on 18 well scattered dates 1st August-21st September, with 10 on 18th and 14 on 27th August the only higher counts.

**Spotted Redshank** *Tringa erythropus*. One on 2nd September and one on 9th October were the only records.

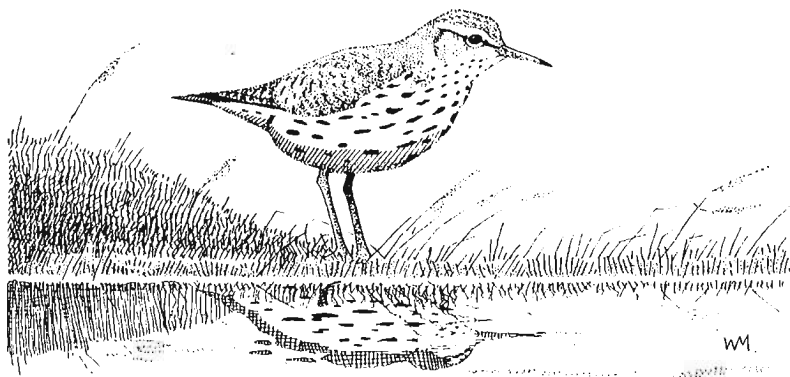
**Redshank** *Tringa totanus*. About 15 wintered. There was a small influx on 12th-14th March (21, 21, 20), otherwise smaller numbers daily to 28th May. Singles on 6 dates 3rd-20th June were followed by almost daily occurrence from 1st July. The July maximum was 21 on 14th. The largest influxes were in August, peaks 35 on 21st and 42 on 25th. The September maximum was 26 on 2nd and the October maximum 40 on 15th. Up to 30 were noted in November.

**Greenshank** *Tringa nebularia*. A very poor spring passage comprised singles on 13th, 15th & 24th May. 1-4 were seen daily in August from 7th-23rd. Singles were noted on 26th August and 1st-6th September. 2 on 7th September culminated the autumn passage with the exception of one very late bird on 7th November.

**Green Sandpiper** *Tringa ochropus*. Very scarce in spring: there were singles on 22nd-23rd April and 12th May. Much more frequent in autumn, with virtually daily records 28th July-11th September. Strongest passage 1st-20th August when up to 7, and 10 on 7th.

**Wood Sandpiper** *Tringa glareola*. One on 26th May was the only spring record. In autumn, there was one on 3rd, 2 on 4th and singles on 8th, 14th-15th, 18th-21st August and 10th September — a good showing.

**Common Sandpiper** *Actites hypoleucos*. In spring there was one on 29th April, 1-3 almost daily 4th-31st May and singles on 7th-8th. Autumn passage spanned 1st-30th August when 1-7 almost daily, and 9 on 8th-9th.



**\*Spotted Sandpiper** *Actites macularia*. A superb summer plumaged individual on the seaweed at Leestat on 20th May was a first record for Fair Isle.

**Turnstone** *Arenaria interpres*. About 200 wintered, up to 150 remaining until late March. There were generally fewer from April, except 120 on 21st April, 93 on 25th and 80 on 29th April. Still 35 on 9th June but only small numbers during summer until 21 on 27th July. Singing birds displayed at two sites. Autumn arrivals occurred from August, with early maxima 50 on 3rd August, 95 on 2nd and 120 on 20th September. From October frequently 100+, including 165 on 12th, 155 on 19th and 160 on 27th October and 150 on 11th November. 300 were counted on 29th December.

**Red-necked Phalarope** *Phalaropus lobatus*. A juvenile on Easter Lothar on 31st August was only the 13th Fair Isle record and the first for seven years.

**Pomarine Skua** *Stercorarius pomarinus*. On the *Good Shepherd* crossing an adult was seen on 7th June and a sub-adult on 17th July. There was an adult light phase over Bunes on 15th July and an adult light phase off North Light on 27th July. One was seen from the isle on 20th September and one on the Crossing of 30th September.

**Arctic Skua** *Stercorarius parasiticus*. The first arrival, a dark phase bird on 21st April was rapidly followed by others, most having arrived by mid May. 115 pairs held territory and there was a non-breeding club of about 20. Rapid departures in August led to only 10 on 31st and to the last on 13th September, with the exception of a late bird on 25th September.

**Long-tailed Skua** *Stercorarius longicaudus*. There were two definite records: over Vaassetter on 10th May and a juvenile on the Rippack on 11th October.

**Bonxie** *Stercorarius skua*. There was one on 28th March but further arrivals were very slow, with 2 on 5th April rising to 15 on 11th and 50 on 25th April. Breeding birds were mostly established by mid May. 84 pairs held territory and the bachelor club peaked at 54 — much lower than in recent years. Post-breeding departures were slow with 110 still present on 31st August, 40 on 27th September and 20 on 4th October. Up to 7 remained to late October with the last noted on 30th October.

**Black-headed Gull** *Larus ridibundus*. One on 4th January. Spring passage started with 6 on 10th March, thence most days to 2nd April, maximum 12 on 14th & 16th March. One on 13th April preceded almost daily occurrence 19th April-27th June. Strongest passage was 41 on 21st, 30 on 22nd April. There were further small waves of passage on 29th April (25), 11th May (22), 3rd June (25) and 13th June (20). There were 1-2 on six dates 1st-12th July. Daily post-breeding occurrence from 15th July. July peak 35 on 22nd, August peak 35 on 1st. Noted most days thereafter to 30th October but only small numbers after 16th August, maximum 12 on 3rd September.

**Common Gull** *Larus canus*. January records comprised 4 on 1st, 10 on 13th & 31st. Spring arrivals started with 4 on 10th March after which present daily. No more than 20 per day until 50 on 19th April. Heavy passage followed with 400 on 21st, 350 on 22nd and 67 on 23rd April. Moderate numbers in May peaked at 85 on 26th. 12 pairs bred, one 'pair' comprising a male paired with two females sharing a nest. The first notable post-breeding influx was 50 on 21st July. Moderate numbers were present daily to 13th November with major arrivals 300 on 7th August, 200 on 14th August, 82 on 5th and 80 on 8th October.

**Lesser Black-backed Gull** *Larus fuscus*. 1-4 were seen regularly from 13th March to mid April but main arrivals were not until May. 22 pairs bred. Post-breeding

departures were complete by 27th August, though later migrants were observed on 7th, 13th, 20th-21st, 23rd & 29th September.

**Herring Gull** *Larus argentatus*. Present all year. 2000 were ashore on 14th January, 1500 on 16th and 1750 on 22nd January. 400 on 12th was the February peak. No large numbers ashore in spring and summer. The breeding population was censused at 262 pairs. 7000 were ashore on 30th October with 3000 next day and 2000 on 7th & 10th November.

**Iceland Gull** *Larus glaucoideus*. In January there was a first-winter on 16th and an adult on 19th. Later records comprised an adult on 31st March, a first-summer on 29th April and one on 15th May. An adult on 30th October was the first of the winter.

**Glaucous Gull** *Larus hyperboreus*. 1-2 individuals were seen regularly throughout January, February and March, and 3 (2 adults and a second-winter) on 25th February. There was a first-winter on 11th April and 1st May and 2 on 15th May. Autumn first-years were noted on 10th, 18th & 30th-31st October, 1st, 4th, & 11th-12th November.

**Great Black-backed Gull** *Larus marinus*. Present all year. 1000 were ashore on 14th January. The breeding population was censused at 113 pairs. 1100 were ashore on 25th October.

**Kittiwake** *Rissa tridactyla*. Present on ledges from at least early March. A complete island census produced a count of 19,072 occupied nests. Breeding departures occurred in late July and August but larger than average numbers were offshore throughout the autumn, including 350 on 11th September and 700 on 15th October.

**Sandwich Tern** *Sterna sandvicensis*. 2 on 29th May and 4 on 10th June were the only records.

**Common Tern** *Sterna hirundo*. 2 on 29th April were followed by one on 1st May and main arrivals between 3rd & 16th May. There were 80 on 21st, 23rd & 24th May but only 26 pairs held territory and 23 pairs bred. It was a late season, some chicks not fledging until August. Departures too were delayed with 30 still present on 4th September, decreasing rapidly to 8 on 7th and the last one on 9th September.

**Arctic Tern** *Sterna paradisaea*. There were 2 on 4th May and one next day. None occurred then until one on 12th May and, though rising to 24 on 26th May, there were only 4 on 28th. A sudden influx in June with continued arrivals into July (probably of failed breeders from other islands) boosted the Buness colonies to the extent that 83 pairs proceeded at least as far as egg stage — a ten fold increase on 1985's record total. Another pair bred successfully at Muckle Uri Geo. Post-breeding departures occurred from mid August until the last 7 on 25th August. Later through-migrants comprised 2 on 31st August, 4 on 2nd, 2 on 3rd, one on 7th & 28th September.

**Guillemot** *Uria aalge*. Seen occasionally ashore in January and February. Well established by March. A complete island census in June gave a total of 33,607 individuals within colonies plus an additional 1574 loafers. The majority of chicks fledged as usual in the first half of July but the season was more spread out than usual with a few chicks not fledging until the second week of August. The species was totally absent in the second half of August and scarce in September and early October. Seen regularly from 9th October, with maximum 73 on 17th October.

**Razorbill** *Alca torda*. First noted on 18th February; well established by 7th March. 3882 individuals counted within colonies plus an additional 68 loafers. Post-breeding departures complete by 5th August with 1-2 seen on ten dates 10th August-24th September and 2-7 on four dates 12th-17th October. 2 were noted on 12th November.

**Black Guillemot** *Cephus grylle*. Present all year. A complete island census in early April totalled 367 summer plumaged birds and 16 in winter or transitional plumage.

**Little Auk** *Alle alle*. Singles were seen on 22nd February and 17th March. 4 were seen on the Crossing on 1st November and one from Bunes on 12th November.

**Puffin** *Fratercula arctica*. First seen on 27th March when 20 appeared. 70 were present on 30th March and large numbers by 8th April. The breeding population was censused in late April, based on counts of birds attending burrows, wheeling or sitting on the sea in the last two daylight hours of the day, 20,224 individuals were counted. A white bird was present at Copper Geo from 14th June to late July. It was a very late season: 100 were still ashore on 20th August and birds noted daily to 7th September. 2 on 15th and one on 17th September and 2 on 14th-15th October were later records.

**Rock Dove** *Columba livia*. Present all year. Spring peak 45 on 15th May. Autumn peak 75 on 8th November.

**Stock Dove** *Columba oenas*. One on 21st June was the only record.

**Woodpigeon** *Columba palumbus*. One from 17th-27th March increased to 6 on 28th March and 7 next day, this group remaining in gradually decreasing numbers to 8th April. There was a series of arrivals after mid April starting with 22 on 17th. 30 were present on 23rd, 36 on 26th and 33 on 29th April. Up to 17 noted daily 30th April-17th June. Scattered singles in autumn comprised observations on 12th August, 11th & 25th September, and on twelve dates 5th-25th October.

**Collared Dove** *Streptopelia decaocto*. 1-3 seen most days 29th April-15th May. Stronger daily passage 17th May-17th June, maxima 16 on 20th-21st May, 20 on 23rd May, 14 on 14th June. 1-5 were seen occasionally 23rd June-20th July and 6 on 26th June & 16th July. 1-3 were noted on twenty dates 1st August-8th September, and one on 1st October. One on 8th December was the latest ever by 29 days.

**Turtle Dove** *Streptopelia turtur*. One from 9th-16th May preceded a daily passage of strong proportions for Fair Isle, 19th May-16th June — maximum 6 on 28th May, 7 on 3rd June. 1-2 were present 22nd-27th June. Much scarcer in autumn, records comprising singles on 18th-20th, 25th & 30th September, 1st & 25th October.

**Cuckoo** *Cuculus canorus*. One arrived on 21st May, 2 were present next day and 3 on 23rd, remaining to 25th May. One on 26th May-3rd June ended the main spring passage, but a female on 24th June was still present on 25th. There was none in autumn.

**\*Snowy Owl** *Nyctea scandiaca*. An adult female at Vaassetter on 16th May was the first for four years.

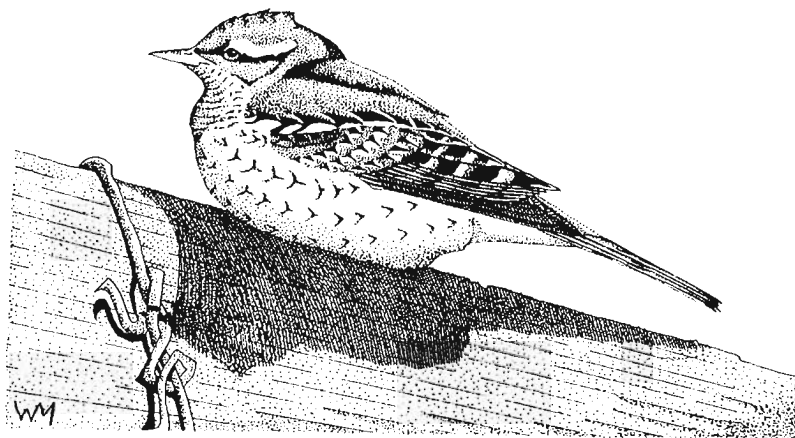
**Long-eared Owl** *Asio otus*. 2 individuals seen on 5th-6th, 12th, 16th & 19th January and one on 23rd January presaged one of the best spring passages ever. There was an early migrant on 18th-19th March, another on 7th-8th April



and a period of daily occurrence 18th April-1st May. Singles were seen on all days except 2 on 17th-18th, 4 on 22nd and a spring record 7 on 23rd April. One on 20th May was followed by a badly Fulmar-oiled individual on 21st, which was taken into care but sadly died. Early autumn passage was extremely meagre, the only records being singles on 27th September & 9th October. A late influx in November spanned the period 14th-24th November when 1-3 seen daily and at least 9 individuals involved.

**Short-eared Owl** *Asio flammeus*. Singles were seen regularly (on 23 dates) 15th April-8th June, and 5 on 24th April. A late single occurred on 23rd June. In autumn there was one on 13th-14th September, 1-3 most days 2nd-18th October, one on 25th October and one on 21st November.

**Swift** *Apus apus*. Records were typically scarce and scattered. 1-3 were seen on four dates, 20th-26th May. In June there were 1-3 on six dates, 10th-24th, plus 9 on 16th and 30 on 26th. In July 1-5 were noted on twelve dates, 4th-28th. August records spanned 5th-25th when 1-6 seen on 13 dates, and 9 on 16th.



**Wryneck** *Jynx torquilla*. The poorest spring on record: one on 5th May being the sole occurrence. It was hardly commoner in autumn: 2 on 26th-27th August with one remaining next day and one on 15th September were the only records.

**Great Spotted Woodpecker** *Dendrocopos major*. A female on 22nd-25th April was the first spring record this decade.

**\*Short-toed Lark** *Calandrella brachydactyla*. A bright reddish individual at Skerryholm on 5th May stayed to 11th. There were at least 4, all greyish individuals, in autumn: one on 27th September, one on 3rd-15th October, one from 17th October being joined on 20th by another. They eventually met up at Field where one stayed to at least 24th and one to 31st October.

**Skylark** *Alauda arvensis*. About 5 wintered. First spring arrivals 7th March, when 35, with 150 present next day, 675 on 11th and a spring record 750 on 12th-14th March. Despite departures, elevated totals were a feature of the rest of the month (eg 225 on 26th March). The April peak was 100 on 19th. The breeding population was censused at 106 pairs. Autumn numbers built slowly in September until 350 arrivals on 22nd September. Numbers remained at 100+ until 19th October decreasing to 40 on 31st October, 10 on 7th November and the last 2 on 18th November.

**Sand Martin** *Riparia riparia*. A slightly better showing than in recent years: early singles on 7th & 9th and 2 on 15th May preceded 1-3 daily 21st May-7th June. 4 appeared on 11th June with 5 next day, 4 on 13th and one on 14th June. 4 occurred on 26th July, with 2 on 9th, 3 on 11th and 2 on 12th-13th August.

**Swallow** *Hirundo rustica*. In spring, recorded daily 1st May-4th July. Heaviest passage occurred 14th May-3rd June when generally 20+, and 80 on 23rd, 200 on 24th May. Another resurgence occurred mid June, with 60 on 12th and 50 on 13th. One bird was noted on 7th July. Autumn records were few and scattered. 1-4 were seen on six dates 6th-23rd August, 1-2 on 10th-14th September, one on 30th September and 3 on 10th-13th October.

**House Martin** *Delichon urbica*. 2 on 3rd May, one on 6th-7th and 5 on 9th preceded daily occurrence 11th May-4th July. Strongest passage spanned 11th May-4th June, including 50 on 24th and 150 on 28th May. There was a small resurgence of 25 on 12th and 20 on 13th June. In July 1-2 were seen occasionally, then regularly following the discovery on 21st of a nest in the Kirk — the first breeding record since 1946. 4 fledged with 2 surviving at least into September, being last seen on 16th September. The only late records were 2 on 9th and 1-2 on 12th-17th October.

**Richard's Pipit** *Anthus novaeseelandiae*. There was probably only one individual contributing to sightings on 27th-30th September, 3rd, 7th and 9th-10th October.

**\*Olive-backed Pipit** *Anthus hodgsoni*. One was at Lower Stoneybrake on 1st November.

**Tree Pipit** *Anthus trivialis*. One on 3rd May, then daily 8th May-6th June. Generally low numbers but 40 on 15th, 15 on 16th May. A meagre and scattered autumn passage spanned 27th August-13th October when recorded on 23 dates. The peak was only 4, on 2nd September.

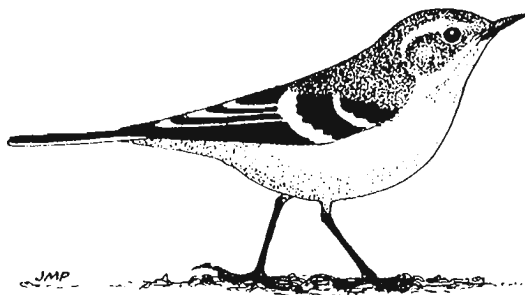
**\*Pechora Pipit** *Anthus gustavi*. Recorded for the second consecutive year. One spent much of the day at Springfield on 10th October.

**Meadow Pipit** *Anthus pratensis*. 12 on 17th March were the first of the year. Numbers remained low until 90 on 19th, 100 on 21st April, part of the strongest spring passage, 19th-30th April. The breeding population was censused at 29 pairs. Autumn passage became evident in August but heaviest passage was throughout September, generally 100+ and peaks of 350 on 22nd & 24th. October peak was 120 on 10th. Rapid decreases occurred from mid October to 10 by 30th. 30 arrived on 1st November but fewer later with none after 21st November.

**\*Red-throated Pipit** *Anthus cervinus*. One seen briefly on 6th November was the only record.

**Rock Pipit** *Anthus spinoletta*. About 30 wintered. There were major arrivals in March, maximum 110 on 28th. There was no evidence of through-passage. There was no breeding census. The only sign of through-passage in autumn was 200 on 24th September.

**Yellow Wagtail** *Motacilla flava*. 1-4 noted most days, 5th-31st May. All sub-specifically identified birds from 5th-19th May were British Yellow *M.f. flavissima*, maximum 3 on 8th & 10th. Single male Grey-headed *M.f. thunbergi* were seen on 20th & 31st with a probable female on 23rd & 26th. A male Blue-headed *M.f. flava* was present on 29th May. There was a probable female Grey-headed on 17th-18th June. In autumn there was one on 11th-12th September, one on 23rd and one on 24th-26th September. The only autumn bird identified to race was the one on 23rd.



**\*Citrine Wagtail** *Motacilla citreola*. Recorded for the second successive year. One spent 9th-18th September mainly in the Leogh area.

**Grey Wagtail** *Motacilla cinerea*. Singles on 24th & 26th-27th March were the only spring records and singles on 11th September & 1st November the only ones in autumn.

**Pied Wagtail** *Motacilla alba*. 1-3 recorded most days 16th March-4th April and 9th April were almost exclusively of the Pied race *M.a.yarrelli*. The main White Wagtail *M.a.alba* passage spanned 13th April-23rd May, maxima 14 on 23rd-24th April, 12 on 8th May. There were 3 Pied on 15th and 4 on 16th April, otherwise singles on 25th April, 12th-13th, 15th & 27th May. One pair of White Wagtails bred. Autumn through-passage by White Wagtails spanned 16th August-13th October, with heaviest movements in late August and early September. Peak counts were 25 on 26th & 28th August and 24 on 5th September. Single Pied Wagtails were seen on 24th & 26th September.

**Waxwing** *Bombycilla garrulus*. One on 6th-7th January, 2 on 21st April and one on 31st December were the only records.

**Dipper** *Cinclus cinclus*. The recent trend of early spring records continues, a Black-bellied individual being found in the Wirvie stream on 26th March.

**Wren** *Troglodytes troglodytes*. Present all year. No obvious signs of spring passage but a bird trapped on 17th May showed characteristics of the mainland Shetland race *T.t.zetlandicus*. A census of the breeding population resulted in a count of 22 singing males. There was no evidence of autumn passage.

**Dunnock** *Prunella modularis*. Main spring passage spanned 14th April-16th May, with maxima 50 on 22nd April, 45 on 26th April and 25 on 9th May. Late migrants occurred on 13 scattered dates, 20th May-24th June, maximum 3 on 20th May. Scarce in autumn, comprising 6 on 27th September, 1-3 on 28th September-4th October, one on 10th October, 1-2 on 16th-19th and one on 23rd October.

**Robin** *Erithacus rubecula*. One on 26th February preceded 1-3 daily 16th-31st March. None then until daily occurrence 14th April to August. Main passage period 14th April-13th May. Passage was exceptionally heavy 21st April-3rd May, particularly 350 on 21st, 900 on 22nd-23rd, 750 on 24th and 700 on 25th April. One bird summered in the Plantation and another at Midway — both being crippled individuals. Both were present to late August and one to mid September. A very poor autumn passage spanned 24th September-4th November when 1-4 noted on 27 dates. One was present 13th-21st November, and singles on 14th and 15th December.

**\*Thrush Nightingale** *Luscinia luscinia*. One at Quoy on 20th August was only the second Fair Isle autumn record.

**Nightingale** *Luscinia megarhynchos*. One on 11th-13th June was the only record.

**Bluethroat** *Luscinia svecica*. In stark contrast to 1985 the species was very scarce in spring. 1-2 males were seen on 8th-10th and 15th-16th May, 1-2 females on 22nd-29th May with a male on 26th. In June there was a male on 21st. All males were of the Red-spotted race *L. s. svecica*. Autumn records comprised females on 11th & 16th September, one on 27th September, singles on 1st-2nd & 6th-7th October, 3 on 9th, 2 on 10th and one on 11th October.

**Black Redstart** *Phoenicurus ochruros*. In spring there was one on 31st March, 1-3 on 21st-24th April, 3 on 30th April, 2 on 5th May, one on 7th-9th, 3 on 15th and singles on 16th, 19th & 21st May, and a female plumaged bird on 3rd-4th June. There was a surprise mid summer occurrence on 1st-2nd July. Autumn records comprised one on 20th October, 2 on 14th, one on 17th and one on 20th November. One on 22nd December was the latest ever by eight days. It was still present on 29th.

**Redstart** *Phoenicurus phoenicurus*. Very scarce in spring: 1-2 were seen on nine dates 5th-28th May and a female on 9th June. In autumn there was a female on 10th August, 1-2 on 26th-29th August, 2 on 11th September and 1-3 daily 26th September-17th October with 5 on 28th September. A late bird was present on 25th-26th October.

**Whinchat** *Saxicola rubetra*. Recorded daily 2nd-28th May. Small numbers throughout, maxima 12 on 9th, 14 on 10th, 13 on 11th May. A very late male appeared on 29th June. Early singles on 4th-5th & 8th August preceded virtually daily occurrence 14th August-13th October. Numbers were low throughout, maximum 11 on 16th August.

**Stonechat** *Saxicola torquata*. A male of one of the European races on 10th October was the only record.

**Wheatear** *Oenanthe oenanthe*. Spring arrivals were exceptionally late. 4 on 7th April with 2 next day were followed by 3 on 12th and daily occurrence from 14th April. The first female arrived on 15th. The first reasonable arrival was 32 on 22nd April with 65 on 24th, 105 on 27th and 100 on 29th April. Strong passage in May to 23rd peaked at 140 on 5th. Larger Wheatears *O. o. leucorrhoa* were noted most days, 3rd May-12th June, maximum 10 on 18th May. The breeding population was censused at 93 pairs. Autumn passage was heaviest in August, peak 275 on 10th. September peak was 70 on 2nd and October peak 30 on 1st. The majority of birds after mid September were members of the larger northern race. Recorded daily until the last 3 on 23rd October.

**Ring Ouzel** *Turdus torquatus*. An exceptional spring passage with 5 males on 15th April. There were 9 next day and 20 on 18th April. Further influxes led to 25 on 21st and 50 on 22nd April, with 45 on 23rd. Numbers decreased rapidly thereafter to 4 on 29th and one on 30th April. A small series of later migrants occurred 3rd-9th, 12th-13th & 15th May, maximum 5 on 15th May. Autumn passage was good, too: a male on 18th September preceded daily arrivals 5th-21st October, particularly 6th-9th when 40, 25, 45 and 35 present. Late singles were seen on 25th & 27th-28th October.

**Blackbird** *Turdus merula*. About 20 wintered. Migrants started to appear in March, max. 95 on 26th March. There were generally low numbers 1st-20th April, max. 70 on 1st. A very heavy passage, unleashed by 750 on 21st April,

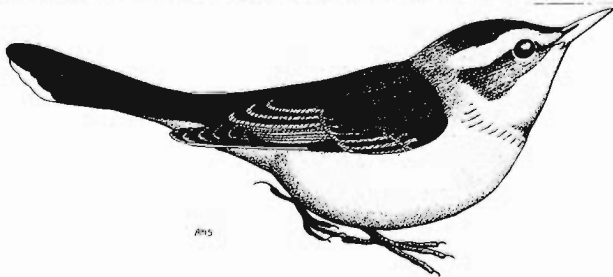
peaked at 1250 on 22nd, 1850 on 23rd April. 550 remained next day, declining to 100 on 30th April and 15 on 1st May. Up to 15 noted daily in May to 18th and 1-3 most days thereafter to 27th May. Singles were noted on 4th, 11th-12th, 14th & 16th June. 1-2 were seen on seven widely scattered dates 2nd-28th September but daily occurrence did not start until 5th October. Autumn passage generally meagre but 140-180 daily 19th-22nd October. November peak was 45 on 18th.

**Fieldfare** *Turdus pilaris*. Up to 35 present in January and February. Spring passage was initially poor (maximum 46 on 26th March) until 600 on 21st April, 800 on 22nd and 1280 on 23rd. Only 70 remained on 24th April but further arrivals peaked at 165 on 27th. Small numbers recorded daily 30th April-19th May, 55 on 7th, 30 on 8th May being the only secondary influx. Late migrants were 3 on 24th May, singles most days 2nd 12th June and one on 22nd June. Autumn passage did not start until 4th October. 1-15 noted daily then until 80 on 25th, 170 on 27th rising to poor autumn peak of 280 on 28th October. Recorded daily in November to 23rd, with peaks 40 on 1st, 15th & 18th. 1-2 noted occasionally, 3rd-11th December.

**Song Thrush** *Turdus philomelos*. Singles on 15th January, 19th & 28th February and 7th March preceded daily passage 11th-31st March, maximum 18 on 17th. In April there were 2 on 3rd and 3 on 7th & 9th prior to daily occurrence 15th April-17th May. the bulk of passage spanned 16th-30th April, starting with 95 on 16th, 160 on 18th, 165 on 21st, 850 on 22nd and a record 1150 on 23rd April. 400 next day declined to 140 on 26th, 70 on 29th and 15 on 30th. Late migrants were 1-2 on 22nd-25th May. One summer bird was present 16th June-5th July. In autumn one on 11th September and 1-10 most days 16th September-2nd October preceded daily occurrence 5th October-3rd November.

**Redwing** *Turdus iliacus*. 1-3 were seen occasionally January-early March. Seen daily 14th March-13th May. There was a small concentration 18th-26th March, peak 38 on 24th, 57 on 25th. Major passage was confined to 21st-29th April, particularly 21st-25th when 300, 500, 600, 130 and 110 counted. Late singles occurred on 20th-21st & 25th May. Autumn passage was well below average. 1-8 recorded virtually daily 16th-26th September were followed by 100 on 27th September. Main influxes occurred 5th October-1st November when maxima 1500 on 5th, 2300 on 8th, 1700 on 9th, 1900 on 14th. Only small numbers noted in November and December.

**Mistle Thrush** *Turdus viscivorus*. An early wave of passage, 10th-19th March involved at least 3 individuals. There was one on 1st April, then a relatively strong passage 13th-24th April, including 6 on 18th, 10 on 21st and 6 on 24th. One on 1st May was the only other spring record. Very scarce in autumn, 2 on 6th and one on 7th October and one on 14th November being the only records.



**\*Pallas's Grasshopper Warbler** *Locustella certhiola*. One trapped at Leogh on 26th September was the 5th Fair Isle record.

**\*Lanceolated Warbler** *Locustella lanceolata*. A first-winter bird was trapped at Leogh on 8th October.

**Grasshopper Warbler** *Locustella naevia*. In spring singles were seen on 3rd, 5th, 11th & 12th May with 2 on 7th & 13th May — at least 4 individuals were involved. There was one in autumn, on 17th September.

**Savi's Warbler** *Locustella luscinioides*. One trapped in the Vaadal on 7th June was only the third Fair Isle record.

**Aquatic Warbler** *Acrocephalus paludicola*. One was in a ditch at Da Water on 7th August.

**Sedge Warbler** *Acrocephalus schoenobaenus*. One on 4th May was followed by daily records 8th-31st May. 1-2 initially gave way to 7 on 18th. At least 4 recorded daily to 29th, including an exceptional influx of 10 on 23rd, 14 on 24th and 11 on 25th. Late singles were seen on 9th, 12th-13th & 15th-16th June. Autumn singles occurred on 12th & 27th August, 23rd-26th & 28th-30th September and 5th October.

**\*Paddyfield Warbler** *Acrocephalus agricola*. One trapped at Quoy on 26th September remained there to 4th October. Fourth Fair Isle record, and first in autumn for 23 years.

**Marsh Warbler** *Acrocephalus palustris*. All records were in June. There were singles on 3rd, 4th, 6th, 8th, 12th, 16th-17th & 24th-25th and 2 on 10th-11th, 13th & 20th — at least 8 individuals involved. Although normally rare in autumn there were 3, possibly 4 records. One trapped and one unringed at Hjukni Geo on 27th August with the latter remaining to 28th, the same or another at the Haa on 30th August and another on 10th September.

**Reed Warbler** *Acrocephalus scirpaceus*. One on the unusual date of 8th July was the first of the year. There were singles on 4th-5th & 7th August, 2 on 15th and 3 on 16th August, 1-2 on 25th August-4th September and singles on 11th & 23rd September.

**Icterine Warbler** *Hippolais icterina*. A poor year. There was none in spring. In August there were singles on 14th-16th and 19th. One trapped on 25th September was still present next day.

**\*Subalpine Warbler** *Sylvia cantillans*. A fine adult male was trapped at Field on the mid summer date of 3rd July.

**Barred Warbler** *Sylvia nisoria*. Passage was mainly encompassed in two waves. Virtually daily occurrence 14th August-4th September peaked at 4 on 19th August. One on 11th September preceded a second wave of daily passage 20th September-1st October, maximum 3 on 23rd September.

**Lesser Whitethroat** *Sylvia curruca*. Spring passage took the form of two waves: daily 1st-15th May, maximum 7 on 8th; and 1-2 most days 22nd May-11th June. A single on 14th-15th August was the forerunner of a small daily passage 11th September-7th October, maximum 4 on 27th September. 2 late birds appeared on 12th October.

**Whitethroat** *Sylvia communis*. In spring small numbers most days 7th May-1st June, maxima 5 on 15th, 7 on 24th May. A male was present on 16th-17th June and one on 5th-6th July. Extremely scarce in autumn with the only records singles on 14th, 26th & 28th-30th August, 16th, 18th & 21st September.

**Garden Warbler** *Sylvia borin*. Exceptionally scarce in spring: singles were seen on 22nd & 27th May, 2 on 28th May, one on 2nd June, 3 on 3rd and 1-2 on seven dates, 7th-21st June. Autumn passage spanned 7th August-19th October. Most regular and strongest passage in mid August, maxima 18 on 14th, 35 on 16th, 15 on 17th. September maximum 10 on 27th. Recorded on eight dates 1st-19th October, maximum 3 on 1st & 5th.

**Blackcap** *Sylvia atricapilla*. A male on 21st April and a female on 5th May preceded 1-2 most days 12th-30th May, with peak of 5 on 13th. A second wave in June provided almost daily records 7th-26th, maximum 5 on 7th. Early autumn singles on 26th, 29th August & 2nd September were followed by virtually daily records 23rd September-9th November — small numbers except 12-15 on 8th-10th October and 16 on 26th October. Later singles comprised a male on 13th & 18th November.

**\*Arctic Warbler** *Phylloscopus borealis*. One at Setter on 12th-18th September was the only record.

**Yellow-browed Warbler** *Phylloscopus inornatus*. One on 25th September and 4 next day were the vanguard of a fine arrival of 14 on 27th. 10 remained next day declining to 5 on 1st and one on 2nd October. More arrivals 4th-11th October peaked at 4 on 8th-10th.

**\*Dusky Warbler** *Phylloscopus fuscatus*. One trapped in the Gully on 14th November was the third Fair Isle record and the first in November.

**Wood Warbler** *Phylloscopus sibilatrix*. All spring records were in May — singles on 11th, 17th & 22nd, 2 on 23rd and one on 24th. The first ever in early July occurred 3rd-5th. Autumn passage spanned 19th August-1st September when 1-2 most days and 3 on 26th August.

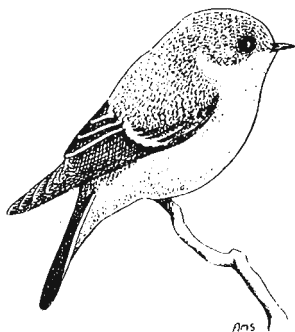
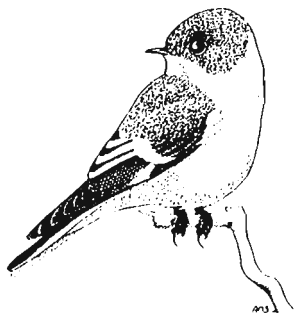
**Chiffchaff** *Phylloscopus collybita*. A rather sparse spring passage spanned 18th April-15th June, maxima 13 on 23rd April, 7 on 9th May. Autumn records were scattered and few. In August there were 1-2 on eight dates 14th-30th, with 7 on 26th. 1-4 were noted on 13 dates 12th-29th September and 1-3 on twelve dates 1st-28th October. In November there were 4 on 1st and one on 2nd.

**Willow Warbler** *Phylloscopus trochilus*. Recorded daily 30th April-8th June in small numbers, maxima 10 on 8th, 14 on 11th May. 1-3 on ten dates, 12th-27th June. Singles occurred on 2nd-3rd & 9th August. Recorded daily 11th August-15th October. Strongest passage was 26th-30th August, maximum 50 on 28th, and 23rd September-1st October, maximum 40 on 23rd September.

**Goldcrest** *Regulus regulus*. In early spring there were singles on 18th & 28th March, 2 on 30th March-2nd April, and one on 3rd April. Main passage occurred 15th April-5th May, 1-2 except 22nd-26th April when 10, 7, 7, 6 and 9 respectively. A late single appeared on 11th-12th May. A rather small autumn passage started with 4 on 26th and one on 27th-29th September. 3 on 5th October increased to 12 on 8th and 10 next day. 1-6 were noted on nine dates 15th-31st October.

**Spotted Flycatcher** *Muscicapa striata*. One on 11th May preceded records most days 18th May-25th June. Numbers were low, maxima being 8 on 11th, 6 on 12th and 5 on 13th June. Very few in autumn: singles were noted on 27th-28th August, 11th-14th, 24th & 26th-28th September and 5th-7th October, while 2 on 23rd September was the autumn peak count.

**Red-breasted Flycatcher** *Ficedula parva*. A female trapped on 8th May stayed until 10th.



**\*Collared Flycatcher** *Ficedula albicollis*. A first-year trapped on 8th October will be, if accepted, an addition to the Fair Isle list.

**Pied Flycatcher** *Ficedula hypoleuca*. There was no repeat of the spring 1985 influx: a female on 9th May and a male on 17th May being the only records. There were rather more in autumn, spanning the period 9th August-21st October. The only numbers were 6 on 27th and 11 on 28th August. Otherwise 1-4 were seen on 13 dates 9th August-2nd September, 1-3 on six dates 11th-28th September, and singles on seven dates 1st-21st October.

**Golden Oriole** *Oriolus oriolus*. One trapped on 11th June was the only record.

**Red-backed Shrike** *Lanius collurio*. The main spring influx was the earliest ever: a male on 5th-6th May increased to 4 on 7th and 5 on 9th, decreasing again to 3 on 11th-13th. A male on 23rd May was followed by 2 males on 31st May, a male on 2nd-3rd June and a male and a female on 6th-8th June, the female remaining to 9th. In autumn there was one on 26th September, one from 3rd October which was joined by a second on 15th, one remaining to 4th November, thus becoming the latest ever on Fair Isle.

**Great Grey Shrike** *Lanius excubitor*. One on 21st-23rd April was the only spring record. One from 6th-13th October was joined on the last date by a second.

**Jackdaw** *Corvus monedula*. Very scarce, spring records comprising 3 on 29th April and one on 10th & 23rd May. One on 15th-21st October was the only autumn record.

**Rook** *Corvus frugilegus*. Spring records were extremely scattered. One on 9th-18th March and 3 on 31st March were followed by 2 on 5th & 7th April, one on 17th-18th April, 1-4 from 23rd April-5th May, 7 on 9th May, singles on 12th-14th & 25th May and 2 on 29th May. The solitary autumn record comprised 2 on 2nd September.

**Carrion Crow** *Corvus corone*. Hooded Crows *C.c. cornix* were noted occasionally in January-February and daily March-21st June. 10 on 9th May constituted the only pronounced passage. Migrant Carrion Crows *C.c. corone* were noted most days 19th April-12th June with strongest passage in May, maximum 11 on 17th. 2 pairs of Hoodies held territory but no young were produced and the adults disappeared after 15th July. 2 were seen on 3rd & 16th August, then 2 arrived on 3rd September increasing to 5 on 29th September. Up to 5 Hoodies remained thereafter but no passage was noted, though a Carrion Crow appeared on 27th-21st October.



**Raven** *Corvus corax*. Present all year. Occasional incursions by migrants occurred in spring, most notably 18 on 31st March & 4th April, 25 on 10th and 18 on 14th April. 5 pairs held territory but only 4 pairs bred with only moderate success. The only sign of autumn passage was 19 on 23rd September.

**Starling** *Sturnus vulgaris*. Present all year. Through-migration was noted in March, peak 590 on 16th, and late April — particularly 21st-23rd when 450, 610 & 650 respectively. No census of breeding population. Peak mid summer count was 400 on 20th July. Autumn passage was not particularly marked, peaks being 530 on 13th August, 465 on 13th September and 440 on 28th October.

**House Sparrow** *Passer domesticus*. Present all year. About 75 survived the winter. The autumn population peaked at 220 on 22nd September.

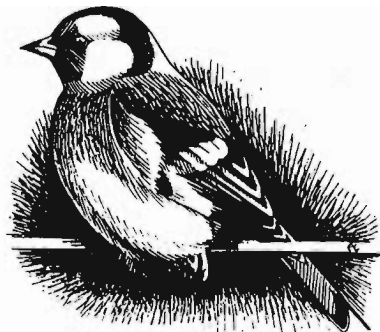
**House X Tree Sparrow** *Passer domesticus x montanus*. A bird showing characteristics of both species was seen on 28th September.

**Chaffinch** *Fringilla coelebs*. 1-2 were noted on three dates in January and three dates in February. Daily passage 10th March-28th May — low numbers except 16th April-1st May when generally 20+ and 75 on 21st, 250 on 22nd, 65 on 23rd and 70 on 24th April. A single male was present 1st-17th June, 2 appeared on 4th July, and a male on 7th & 14th-18th July. One on 13th-23rd September announced daily passage 27th September-5th November when up to 12, and 20 on 14th October. One occurred on 11th November.

**Brambling** *Fringilla montifringilla*. In spring, one on 17th and 2 on 24th March preceded 1-2 on 9th-20th April. Major passage occurred 21st April-1st May: 500 on 21st, increased to 600 on 22nd and 725 on 23rd. 350 on 24th increased to 450 on 25th declining to 90 on 28th and 45 by 30th April. Recorded daily in May to 23rd in low numbers except 60 on 7th. A female on 13th was the only June record. A good autumn passage started with 15 on 23rd September. Up to 20 daily until 600 arrived on 5th October declining to 90 on 11th-12th. Further arrivals contributed to peaks of 250 on 13th, 150 on 19th and 145 on 20th October. General departures led to 40 on 25th October and the last 2 on 2nd November. A late female was present 12th-23rd November.

**Greenfinch** *Carduelis chloris*. In spring there were 1-5 virtually daily, 13th-30th April, with 8 on 24th April; and singles on five dates 3rd-14th May, with 2 on 7th May. 2 on 11th October was the only autumn record.

**Goldfinch** *Carduelis carduelis*. A male on 19th-20th May was the 5th spring record, while 3 on 25th-26th October was only the 7th record in autumn.



**Siskin** *Carduelis spinus*. There were early spring singles on 19th March & 10th April, followed by 3 on 23rd April rising to 6 on 26th. 2 on 28th April preceded 1-2 most days 1st-7th May, singles on 23rd & 28th and 2 on 29th May. In June there were 2 on 3rd & 8th and one on 10th-11th. A meagre autumn passage comprised 1-6 most days 30th September-26th October and 12 on 24th October.

**Linnet** *Carduelis cannabina*. A female on 1st and 2 males on 3rd April preceded a prolonged spring passage 18th April-30th May when 1-5 noted virtually daily and 7 on 2nd May. Autumn records comprised singles on 11th & 18th September and 5th-6th October, and 4 on 10th October.

**Twite** *Carduelis flavirostris*. Up to 15 were noted regularly in January and February, with 50 on 31st January and 40 on 11th February. There were steady arrivals in March, including 75 on 12th, 80 on 27th. The breeding population was not censused owing to inaccessibility of nest sites. However, the population remains strong and good numbers of young fledged. Good autumn numbers were at their highest in September and early October, maxima 255 on 10th, 250 on 23rd and 370 on 27th September. 110 still present on 24th October but rapid decline to 40 by 11th November and up to 10 occasionally thereafter.

**Redpoll** *Carduelis flammea*. Mealy Redpolls *C.f.flammea* were seen on 12th January (1) and 31st January-4th February — maximum 11 on 4th February. 2 were noted on 9th and 4 on 27th-28th March. In April there were 2-3 on 3rd-5th, one on 10th and daily records from 21st to 30th, maximum 20 on 23rd. 1-2 were seen most days 2nd May-1st June, with 8 on 9th, 6 on 10th & 5 on 11th-12th May. All records in April and the majority in May were Mealy Redpolls, but 1-3 Lesser *C.f.cabaret* were observed on 4th-12th, 22nd-23rd & 28th May. Late records were a Lesser on 8th June, 3 not identified to race on 20th and one on 21st June. The few autumn records comprised one on 13th September, 1-6 most days 9th October-2nd November, 2 on 14th and one on 24th November. Most were Meals but a Lesser occurred on 18th October & 14th November and an Icelandic on 30th October.

**Redpoll species** *Carduelis*. One showing many characters of Arctic Redpoll, 20th-25th October, was trapped on 20th and found to be 'intermediate' between Arctic and Mealy. A second 'intermediate' was seen on 21st-23rd October.

**\*Two-barred Crossbill** *Loxia leucoptera*. A stunning male was trapped on the Skadan on 1st September.

**Crossbill** *Loxia curvirostra*. There was a small influx of adult males in June: 2 appeared on 11th, one remaining to 15th. 3 on 17th-20th rose to 4 on 21st. In July there was a male on 3rd-4th, a female on 5th and an immature male on 13th.

**\*Parrot Crossbill** *Loxia pytyopsittacus*. A male was found sitting in the Plantation on 13th October.

**Scarlet Rosefinch** *Carpodacus erythrurus*. One of the poorest springs for many years. One on 6th June was the year's first. Surprisingly in such a scarce spring one on 16th-18th June was a stunning adult male — only the third 'red' individual in the observatory's existence. A singing first-summer male was present on 24th June. In contrast to spring, the species was abundant in autumn. One was seen on 14th August and an adult female next day. There were 2 on 24th & 26th August, one remaining to 30th, one on 8th September and 1-2 on 13th-18th September. 2 on 21st were the prelude to an influx rising to an amazing 7 on 24th September, declining to 2 on 1st October and one on 3rd. One on 11th October was the only later record.

**Bullfinch** *Pyrrhula pyrrhula*. 3 (2 males + 1 female) on 15th and one on 21st November were probably all of the northern race *P.p. major*.

**Hawfinch** *Coccothraustes coccothraustes*. There was an unprecedented influx in late April. One was trapped on 19th; there were 3 together at Setter on 22nd, one remaining to 25th.

**Lapland Bunting** *Calcarius lapponicus*. An early single on 17th March preceded by nearly two months a small second wave: this comprised 2 (male + female) on 2nd-3rd May, a female on 4th, a male on 7th and a male on 16th May. Autumn passage spanned 2nd September-27th October when small numbers present virtually daily, maxima 8 on 11th, 9 on 14th September and 8 on 7th October.

**Snow Bunting** *Plectrophenax nivalis*. About 30 wintered. There was a very early influx of 70 on 7th February. There were good numbers throughout March, including 62 on 14th. Departures accelerated in April from 19 on 6th to one on 13th-17th. A later single occurred on 24th April and 2 (male + female) on 14th May. In autumn one on 3rd and 2 on 10th September preceded daily occurrence from 13th September. The September peak was only 42, on 17th. 120 arrived on 1st October but generally less than 50 until largest influxes in November. 130 on 1st and 350 on 2nd November were followed by 400 on 11th. 100 were still present on 29th November with moderate numbers remaining throughout December.

**Yellowhammer** *Emberiza citrinella*. There was one winter record: a single on 15th January. There were two small waves in spring: 1-4 on 6th-15th April and 1-3 on 21st April-7th May. A late single was seen on 12th May. None was recorded in autumn.

**Ortolan Bunting** *Emberiza hortulana*. All spring records were in May: there was a male on 15th, a female on 21st, a male on 23rd and a male on 26th-28th. One on 2nd September was the only autumn record.

**\*Rustic Bunting** *Emberiza rustica*. There were two spring records, a female on 15th May and a male on 19th-21st June. There was one in autumn, on 21st-22nd October.

**\*Little Bunting** *Emberiza pusilla*. There were five records, all in autumn: one on 8th-13th September, one on 5th-9th October, one on 11th October, one on 21st-25th October and one on 22nd-24th October.

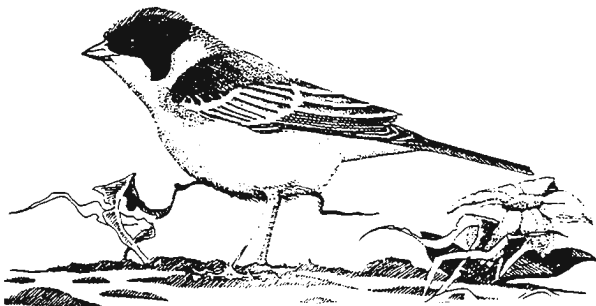
**\*Chestnut Bunting** *Emberiza rutila*. A first-summer male outside the Observatory on 15th June stayed to 16th. If accepted as a genuine vagrant this will be a second British record and the first for Fair Isle.

**\*Yellow-breasted Bunting** *Emberiza aureola*. It was an excellent autumn, with six records: singles on 14th-16th September, 16th September, 21st September, 23rd-27th September, 27th-28th September, & 5th-7th October. The last became the latest on record.

**Reed Bunting** *Emberiza schoeniclus*. There was a winter male on 4th January. In spring, early singles on 21st March, 9th-10th & 17th April were followed by main passage by 21st April-23rd May. Heaviest arrivals occurred 21st-28th April, including 36 on 23rd, 18 on 24th and 17 on 26th. The May maximum was 7 on 8th. 1-3 on 27th-30th September preceded stronger daily passage 5th-29th October. Largest numbers occurred 5th-15th October when 10+ daily and 30 on 6th & 9th. A late bird was seen on 2nd November.

**\*Black-headed Bunting** *Emberiza melanocephala*. A fine male turned up on the surprise date of 3rd July.

**\*Bobolink** *Dolichonyx oryzivorus*. One from 29th September to 2nd October was a first record for Fair Isle and only the second for Scotland.



## Up-Date on British Birds Rarities Committee Decisions, 1982-85

### 1982

**Gyr Falcon** *Falco rusticolus*. 12th April, accepted.

### 1984

**Arctic Redpoll** *Carduelis hornemanni*. All 25 in the influx of 19th October to 23rd November accepted (cf FIBO Report for 1984).

### 1985

**King Eider** *Somateria spectabilis*. 22nd & 25th May, accepted; 22nd June, pended.

**Arctic Warbler** *Phylloscopus borealis*. 3rd September & 11th September; both pended.

**Daurian Starling** *Sturnus sturninus*. 7th-28th May, decision awaited.

**Arctic Redpoll** *Carduelis hornemanni*. 3rd-9th May, accepted; 14th May, accepted as probably the same bird as 3rd-9th May; 25th-26th May, pended.

**Little Bunting** *Emberiza pusilla*. All accepted except birds of 23rd-25th September & 23rd-26th October which have been pended.

**Yellow-breasted Bunting** *Emberiza aureola*. 9th September, accepted; one bird, 13th-17th September, accepted. Please note that the entry of 2 birds on 13th September (FIBO Report for 1985) is an error. The corrected entry should read: "Two records, all at typical autumn dates, namely one on 9th and one on 13th-17th September."

*All other 1985 records submitted to BBRC were accepted.*

## Ringling Details 1986

6560 birds of 117 species were ringed in 1986. Three additions to the list, Collared Flycatcher, Two-barred Crossbill and Chestnut Bunting, brought the grand total of species ringed to 249.

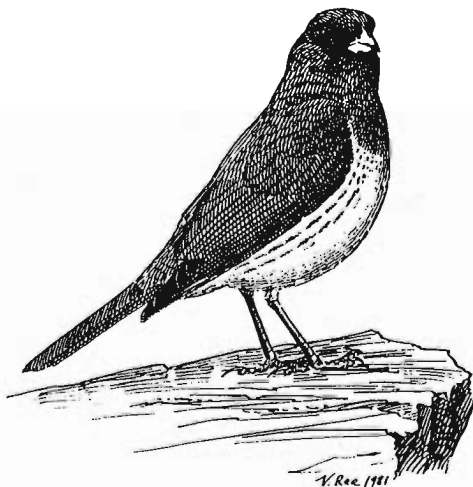
The monthly ringing totals were:

J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
—	—	101	1178	281	1298	2058	894	210	493	47	—

Virtually all the traps received attention during the year. Some would have benefited from major structural overhaul but other demands on our time left us no option but to undertake temporary patching. Despite the state of the traps April captures reached a record level, evidence of the huge thrush and Robin passage from mid month. A well attended ringing course in the first fortnight of July helped us with our seabird totals though these were lower than in most recent years, partly due to a most inclement summer and partly due to the demands of the Seabird Monitoring programme. Seabird totals will, henceforth, largely reflect our priorities within that programme.

The top ten species ringed were Guillemot 1247, Blackbird 567, Storm Petrel 495, Shag 493, Robin 486, Starling 404, Kittiwake 309, Fulmar 247, Brambling 247 and Wheatear 166. The Robin total was the highest ever. The Arctic Tern total was almost double last year's high, hardly surprising in view of the dramatic increase in breeding numbers. There were record ringing totals, too, for Eider, Black-headed Gull and Scarlet Rosefinch. Rarely ringed species included Little Grebe, Leach's Petrel (2), Mallard, Coot, Black-bellied Dipper (for the fourth consecutive year), Pallas's Grasshopper Warbler, Savi's Warbler, Paddyfield Warbler, Subalpine Warbler, Dusky Warbler, Golden Oriole, Hawfinch, Lapland Bunting and Rustic Bunting.

It is a pleasure to express our thanks to the BTO, NCC and SOTEAG for assistance with ring expenses, particularly for seabirds.



## Recoveries in 1986

147 recoveries were reported during the year. The more interesting ones are given in full below. The others are presented in tabular or summary form. The international code of symbols denoting method of recovery and age is used:

Manner of recovery:

- v — caught or trapped by man and released with ring
- vv — ring number read in the field, or sight record of identifiable colour rings
- vB — breeding where recaptured
- + — shot or killed by man
- x — found dead or dying
- xF — found freshly dead or dying
- xL — found dead (not recent)
- ( ) — caught or trapped alive and not released, or released without ring
- /?/ — manner of recovery unknown

Date of recovery: where this is unknown, the date of the reporting letter is given in parentheses.

Age when ringed: this is given in the EURING code, based mainly on calendar years. Interpretation is as follows:

- 1 pullus (= nestling or chick)
- 2 fully grown, year of hatching unknown
- 3 hatched during calendar year of ringing
- 4 hatched before calendar year, but exact year unknown
- 5 hatched during previous calendar year
- 6 hatched before previous calendar year, but exact year unknown
- 7 definitely hatched two years before year of ringing
- 8 hatched three or more calendar years before year of ringing
- J the suffix 'J' denotes bird still in juvenile plumage

Sex: m = male; f = female

The co-ordinates of Fair Isle are 59°32'N 1°37'W

### Fulmar

Recoveries comprised a first-year found in January in NW France, a fourth-year in Denmark, a fifth-year in the Faroes (both in March) and a four-year-old in Sweden in June.

### Storm Petrel

	Ringed on Fair Isle	Controlled on Fair Isle
Yell (Shetland)	17	2
The Noup (Shetland)		1
North Ronaldsay (Orkney)		3
Sule Skerry (Orkney)		1
Auskerry (Orkney)	1	2
Holborn Head (Highland)	1	
Strathay Point (Highland)	1	

More evidence of the summer wanderings by Storm Petrels. Most of the Fair Isle birds visiting Yell were trapped there in late August or September, rather later than the normal July recoveries there. This was due to a later timed visit by

Storm Petrel specialist, Dr Jim Fowler of Leicester Polytechnic, and it should be borne in mind that the above table — and ones produced in earlier reports — reflect Storm Petrel ring activity, thus weighting recoveries towards certain areas in some years.

### Shag

Birds ringed as nestlings were recovered in Fife (1st year), Grampian (two 1st years, one 19th year), Highland (1st year and 5th year), Orkney (1st year and 3rd year) and Shetland (five 1st years, one 4th year). Birds ringed as adults were recovered in Grampian, Shetland and Norway. Very few Shags venture as far afield as Norway. The full details are:

1163104	6f	31.07.82	<i>Fair Isle</i>
	x	(22.03.86)	Misund, More og Romsdal, NORWAY
			62°41'N 6°41'E 566 km NE drowned in fishing net

### Sparrowhawk

EK66956	5f	22.04.86	<i>Fair Isle</i>
	v	24.04.86	75 km ENE of Muckle Flugga Light, At Sea, NORTH SEA
			61°30'N 0°30'E 247 km NNE
	v	28.04.86	North Roe, North Mainland, Shetland
			60°35'N 1°19'W 118 km N

An eventful week for this migrant. After leaving Fair Isle it came aboard a ship ENE of the northern tip of Shetland where it was held overnight before being sent on its way just 4km off Muckle Flugga. It next came to grief three days later when it was found tangled in, and was extricated from, garden netting at North Roe!

### Kestrel

EK66945	3m	07.08.85	<i>Fair Isle</i>
	xL	24.04.86	Hooking, Papa Westray, Orkney
			59°21'N 2°54'W 75 km WSW

### Oystercatcher

AT67619	1	27.06.61	<i>Fair Isle</i>
	v	31.12.85	Fort George, Highland, SCOTLAND
			57°36'N 4°3'W 257 km SSW
FV73683	1	17.07.81	<i>Fair Isle</i>
	+	22.11.81	Portonovo, Pontevedra, SPAIN
			42°26'N 8°38'W 1960 km SSW

Note the age of AT67619, and it was released alive, unlike the one from Spain which was shot.

### Woodcock

EK66434	5	13.04.85	<i>Fair Isle</i>
	+	09.07.86	Landon, Jamtland, SWEDEN
			62°34'N 14°16'E 951 km ENE

Presumably recovered on or near its breeding grounds.

### Great Skua

HW91146	1	14.07.84	<i>Fair Isle</i>
	xF	27.07.86	North-east of Unst, NORTH SEA
			61°0'N 0°30'E 200 km NE

This bird was a victim of its own greed, taking bait and fish hook from a long line.

**Herring Gull**

GJ95977      8      09.11.85      *Fair Isle*  
                  xF      20.12.85      Maasvlakte, Oostvoorne, Zuid-Holland,  
    NETHERLANDS  
    51°55'N 4°2'E 917 km SSE

There were also two recoveries of Fair Isle ringed nestlings, one in its second winter in Merseyside and one in its fifth summer in Shetland.

**Guillemot**

The following tables indicate the wide ranging areas reached by Fair Isle Guillemots:

**RINGED AS NESTLINGS**

	Age in years at recovery							
	less than 1	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Within Britain:								
Shetland				1				
Highland		1	1					
Western Isles			1					
Grampian			1					
Tayside		1						
Central		1						
Fife		3	1					
Lothian		1	1					
NE England		4		1				
E England		2						
Kent		1						
SW England						1	1	
Abroad:								
Faroes		1	1					
Norway		12	1	3			1	
Sweden		2						1
Baltic Sea			1					
Denmark		4	2					
West Germany		2						
Netherlands		2				1		
French Atlantic Coast			1					
Eire				2				

**RINGED AS ADULTS**

	No. of years after ringing												
	less than 1	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	13	15	19		
Shetland								1					
Orkney										1			
Fife						1							
Northumberland			1										
Durham									1				
Norway		1			1						1		

A typical scatter. The recent trend for recoveries from the Faroes at the northern edge and Eire and West France at the south-western edge of the non-breeding range continues. Some of our oldest Guillemots ever were reported during the year. One Norwegian recovery, a bird meeting its end drowned in a fishing net, will have been over 20 years of age as it was already an adult when ringed.



### Razorbill

Birds of known age were recovered in their first winter in Northumberland, Netherlands, Isle of Wight, Dorset and the French Channel Coast, in their second winter in Denmark and Morocco, in its third winter in West Germany and fourth winter on the French Atlantic Coast. Birds ringed as adults were recovered from Border (Scotland) and NW France. The Moroccan recovery is given in full:

M46440	1	28.06.84	<i>Fair Isle</i>
	x	14.01.86	Agadir, MOROCCO
			30°30'N 9°40'W 3283 km S

### Meadow Pipit

C047673	3	14.10.85	<i>Fair Isle</i>
	x	02.05.86	Stadrill Rig, 100 miles off Aberdeen, NORTH SEA
			57°45'N 0°30'E 233 km SSE

Recovered 'at sea' on a North Sea oil platform.

### Rock Pipit

2280737	3J	01.08.85	<i>Fair Isle</i>
	xF	21.11.85	St Mary's, Holm, Orkney
			58°54'N 2°55'W 102 km SW

### Robin

C046750	4	30.04.85	<i>Fair Isle</i>
	x	19.01.86	Much Hoole, Preston, Lancashire, ENGLAND
			53°42'N 2°48'W 652 km S

### Wheatear

C047418	3	25.08.85	<i>Fair Isle</i>
	( )	(07.10.86)	Near Einzoren, Al Hoceima, MOROCCO
			35°10'N 3°50'W 2712 km S

Trapped and taken into captivity on the northern (Mediterranean) coast of Morocco.

### Blackbird

XXK68040	3f	18.10.82	<i>Fair Isle</i>
	/?/	01.08.85	Scoughall, North Berwick, Lothian, SCOTLAND
			56°3'N 2°37'W 391 km S
XP08733	3m	26.10.85	<i>Fair Isle</i>
	xF	05.06.86	Hareid, More og Romsdal, NORWAY
			62°22'N 6°1'E 518 km NE

XXK68040 seems to have been recovered at a strange date (assuming it to have been north-west European in origin) but the finding circumstances were 'ring only' so the bird may have perished some considerable time before the ring was found.

### Song Thrush

NX95352	3	23.09.85	<i>Fair Isle</i>
	v	19.10.85	Schiermonnikoog, NETHERLANDS
			53°29'N 6°12'E 825 km SE

A fascinating same-autumn south-easterly movement from one well-known migration site to another necessitating a 'reversed' North Sea crossing.

**Redwing**

NX95140	3	09.10.84	<i>Fair Isle</i>
	v	26.04.86	Nether Button, Holm, Orkney 58°55'N 2°56'W 101 km SW
NX95212	3	22.10.84	<i>Fair Isle</i>
	x	(15.05.86)	Bayble, Isle of Lewis, Western Isles 58°11'N 6°14'W 305 km WSW

**Starling**

A series of recoveries of birds of known age indicates some short-distance dispersal from Fair Isle for the winter months. First-winter recoveries came from Shetland, Orkney and Wick (Highland) while one turned up at Beatrice Alpha oil platform in the northern North Sea. There were two second-winter and one fourth-winter recoveries from Wick and a sixth-winter in Orkney.

**Controls**

Details were received for 15 birds in 1986 which had been ringed elsewhere and found on Fair Isle. Reference is made in this report to an American Wigeon wearing a USA ring. Ringing details have not yet been received for that individual and thus will appear in a later report. Details for the other birds are as follows:

**Barnacle Goose**

5 Barnacle Geese wearing colour bands had the lettering on these bands read in late September and early October. Information so far received from The Wildfowl Trust indicates that DFH Yellow seen on 10th October had been ringed as a yearling male in SPITSBERGEN in July 1977. The Wildfowl Trust have received records of it each year since, including 3 times at Caerlaverock in south-west SCOTLAND, where it turned up on 12th October this year, only two days after its Fair Isle sighting. KRZ Yellow, seen on Fair Isle on 10th October, was ringed as an adult male at Caerlaverock on 11th January 1978. Another bird, for which we were only able to read two of the three letters — P(?)P — was ringed in SPITSBERGEN in July or August 1986.

**Merlin**

DS58624	1	27.07.85	<i>Laxford, Sutherland, Highland</i> 58°22'N 5°1'W
	vf	28.08.85	Fair Isle 234 km NE

A control from mainland Scotland for a change. Other recent controls have been Shetland bred individuals.

#### Dunlin

BX21165	3	18.09.82	<i>Eden Estuary, Leuchars, Fife</i> 56°23'N 2°49'W
	v	20.05.86	Fair Isle 357 km N

We were trying to catch a Spotted Sandpiper really, so this was an unexpected bonus!

#### Great Skua

HW69377	1	08.07.77	<i>Foula, Shetland</i> 60°8'N 2°5'W
	x	12.07.86	Fair Isle 72 km SSE

There have now been 34 Great Skuas ringed elsewhere and recovered during the breeding season on Fair Isle (26 from Foula), yet only one Fair Isle bred individual recovered elsewhere in summer, evidence that the growing Fair Isle colony is being stimulated by recruitment from other areas.

#### Lesser Black-backed Gull

Stavanger

444227	1	17.07.82	<i>Storekjoer, Sola, Rogaland, NORWAY</i> 58°53'N 5°26'E
			Fair Isle 407 km W

Evidence of Scandinavian race birds reaching Fair Isle (a few are observed, too, every year resembling the race *L.f.intermedius*).

#### Herring Gull

YZ2964	1	13.07.82	<i>Craighleith, Lothian</i> 56°4'N 2°43'W
	xL	04.07.86	Fair Isle 391 km N

#### Great Black-backed Gull

HT06179	1	20.06.85	<i>St Ninians Isle, Shetland</i> 59°58'N 1°21'W
	xL	14.05.86	Fair Isle 50 km SSW

#### Dunnoek

B381968	4	28.04.86	<i>Whalsay, Shetland</i> 60°21'N 0°58'W
	v5	08.05.86	Fair Isle 98 km SSW

An interesting example of short-distance spring wandering within the islands, probably by a Scandinavian individual still on its return migration.

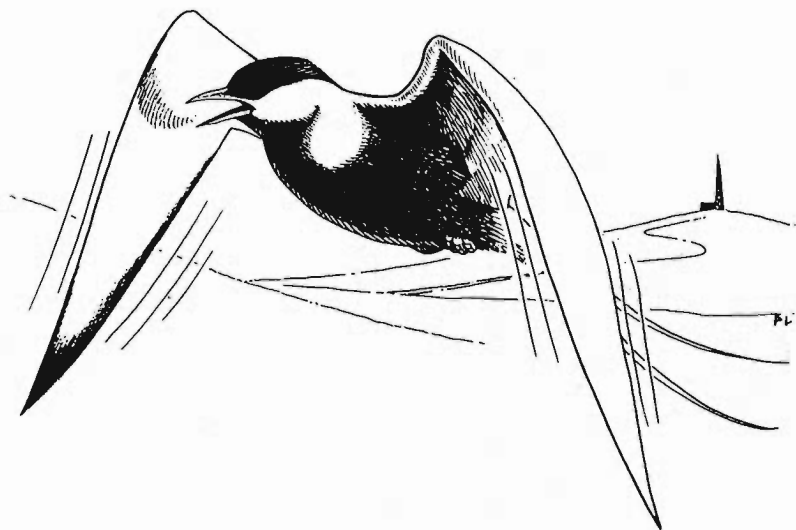
#### Robin

Arnhem

A794703	5	05.04.86	<i>Oranjezon, Vrouwenpolder, Zeeland, NETHERLANDS</i> 51°34'N 3°34'E
	v	22.04.86	Fair Isle 943 km NNW

A classic example of a drift migrant. Its heading of NNW was probably a bearing error of at least 40° from its intended migration route to central Europe or Scandinavia. The strong SE winds and unsettled weather over the North Sea during and prior to its arrival on Fair Isle were probably the major factor in its misorientated movement.





## **The Seabird Monitoring Scheme**

Increasingly over the years seabird studies have become a focal point of the Observatory's summer time ornithological activity. The directions that this activity has taken have been determined partly by requests for information by organisations or individuals and partly by the interests of visitors and staff. It was a natural progression, then, that an integrated programme should be introduced which channelled the seabird work into a coherent whole and which tackled some of today's important ornithological issues.

We were fortunate that our wish to streamline our operations coincided with a new Nature Conservancy Council initiative to identify and support seabird sites suitable for long-term monitoring. Through the good offices of Dr Mike Harris (particularly), Dr Sarah Wanless and Dr Mike Pienkowski, a plan of work was established and money made available from the NCC for the project, including the funds to employ a Seabird Monitoring Officer during the summer to administer the fieldwork. Kevin Osborn, a past FIBO Assistant, was contracted in that position.

The major objectives of the scheme are:

- (a) to update the status of all common seabird species breeding on Fair Isle;
- (b) for as many species as possible, to monitor population changes;
- (c) for as many species as possible, to monitor chick production and growth;
- (d) for as many species as possible, to monitor adult survival;
- (e) for as many species as possible, to collect samples of food from chicks.

A plan of work to achieve these objectives has been designed and the results of the first summer's fieldwork have been sent to the NCC. The results of the total island census are given below. We gratefully acknowledge the help received from the Nature Conservancy Council in the establishment and support of this exciting new scheme.

### Total Island Census:

The following table gives the 1986 results, their 1975 equivalent and the percentage change between the two counts.

	1986	1975	% change
Fulmar	26,995 sites	26,000	up 4%
Gannet	258 nests	8	up 3225%
Shag	1,098 nests	1,491	down 26%
Arctic Skua	115 pairs	135	down 15%
Bonxie	84 pairs	21	up 400%
Common Gull	12 pairs	2	up 600%
Lesser Black-backed Gull	22 pairs	46	down 52%
Herring Gull	262 pairs	486	down 46%
Great Black-backed Gull	113 pairs	141	down 20%
Kittiwake	19,064 nests	17,000	up 12%
Common Tern	26 pairs	7	up 371%
Arctic Tern	83 nests	0	colonised 1980
Guillemot	35,181 ind.	19,200	up 83%
Razorbill	3,950 ind.	2,500	up 58%
Tystie	367 ind.	360	up 2%
Puffin	20,224 ind.	no count	

## A Meniscus Midge (Diptera: Dixidae) on Fair Isle

On 2nd September 1986 I collected a sample of fourth instar meniscus midge larvae from a stagnant pool immediately below the gully trap. These aptly-named aquatic insect larvae live in the surface film where it is in contact with surface vegetation, and were collected by lowering a sandwich box into the water so that the surface film rushed through the vegetation into the box, dragging the larvae with it.

The larvae were maintained as instructed by Disney (1975) and 5 pupated within 48 hours. Three emerged as adults 3 days later and were mounted on microscope slides for identification. They were all female *Dixella martinii* Peus.

*D. martinii* is one of 14 British species in the family Dixidae, and is widespread throughout Britain. It is, however, the only species known to occur in Shetland (Fowler 1984) and has been recorded on Foula (Biological Records Centre). It is of interest to know that this weakly-flying midge has also established a population on Fair Isle.

Disney, R. H. L. (1975). A key to the British Dixidae, *Scient. Publs. Freshwat. biol. Ass.*, 31: 1-78.

Fowler, J. A. (1984). The status of *Dixella martinii* (Dipt., Dixidae) in Shetland, *Entomol. mon. Mag.* 120: 114.

J. A. Fowler, School of Life Sciences, Leicester Polytechnic

## Additions to the Fair Isle Fungi List

Dr Roy Watling of the Royal Botanic Garden, Edinburgh, has provided some more records resulting from his visit with Bobby Tulloch on 6th-7th September 1985. These additional records include a 'first for Britain', normally a prerogative of the birds on Fair Isle! Details of Dr Watling's visit and his finds, to which these records should be added, were published in the *1985 FIBO Report*, pages 83-4.

### Additions

Leptonia atomarginata	Ward Hill
Russula medullata (S. Kühner)	Ward Hill — <i>new record for Britain</i> (This is not <i>R. medullata</i> of the original author)
Russula alpina	Ward Hill
Russula norvegica	Ward Hill
Russula pascua	by Church
Russula persicina	Ward Hill
Clitocybe pseudoclausilis	Buness
Entoloma helodes	Buness

## Cetacean records in 1986

Interest in Cetaceans continues to grow and this is resulting in more being seen, and a greater ability by observers in identifying them. Sightings are as follows:

**Minke Whale** *Balaenoptera acutorostrata*. One breached 3 times about 1,000m off North Haven on 4th July.

**Porpoise** *Phocoena phocoena*. From the isle: 2 swimming north off Buness on 12th April, 3 off South Light on 18th April, 2 in North Haven on 10th June, 2 swimming south off Buness on 20th August, one off Buness on 12th September with 2 there on 15th September and one on 11th October, and 4 off Buness on 10th November. On the crossing: 2 were seen on 1st and on 29th July.

**Killer Whale** *Orcinus orca*. Another good year. 5 swam off Buness on 24th May. An adult female swimming east off Da Nizz on 25th July, an adult female 12km off Fair Isle on the crossing of 29th July, one on crossing of 9th August and a female off Buness on 12th September could potentially all refer to the same relatively sedentary individual.

**White-beaked Dolphin** *Lagenorhynchus albirostris*. 2 off North Gavel on 5th August, about 12 off South Light on 25th August, 3 south off Buness and one off Meoness on 21st September.

**White-sided Dolphin** *Lagenorhynchus acutus*. A school of 4 were remarkably close to shore at Shalstane on 25th August.

**Unidentified Dolphins**: 2 were seen on the crossing of 12th July and one on crossing of 16th September. There was one off Meoness on 30th August, 4 off North Light on 14th September (considered probably to be White-beaked) and one off South Light on 24th September.

# Miscellany

## Congratulations

The social event of the year was undoubtedly the marriage of Michael Stout, son of Alec and Margaret at Barkland, to Cathy Falkner. Cathy first came to the isle as a voluntary help at the Observatory in 1984 and in 1985 she returned as assistant cook. She now turns her attentions to running Setter croft with Michael, but she has not lost all contact with the Observatory — for she has been assisting us with domestic duties on a part-time basis during our busy periods. We extend our warmest congratulations and best wishes to Cathy and Michael in their new life together.

## Other staff news

We were pleased to welcome two previous assistants, returning to the isle as energetic and able tour group leaders. *James Dickson* (1982) was in charge of the American-based McHugh group in early June, while *Tony Williams* (1978) led a Caledonian Wildlife visit in September. We were delighted, too, to hear that *Gena Scanlan* (assistant cook 1982) has been appointed to a very interesting post: researcher for *Greenpeace* into the past and present status and distribution of Cetaceans around British coasts.

## Flowers

The botanical highlight of a super summer for flowers was undoubtedly the expansion in numbers and sites for the Northern Marsh Orchid *Dactylorhiza purpurella*. Traditionally restricted to about 30 flower spikes just east of the School, it suddenly appeared in ungrazed meadows below Schoolton and Shirva. A total of 228 flower spikes were counted on 16th July, including 150 at Meadow Burn (in a meadow left fallow after years of cattle and sheep grazing). The prize for the most magnificent spike went to one a foot high at Shirva.

## FIBO Sweatshirts and T Shirts

Good quality T shirts and sweatshirts, decorated with the Fair Isle Bird Observatory logo, are now available in a variety of sizes and colours. Details and order forms can be obtained from Liz Riddiford, Fair Isle Bird Observatory, Fair Isle, Shetland. Tel. 035 12 258.

## Vignettes

No fewer than five artists have been kind enough to supply vignettes for this report. Two of them featured before: Paul Leonard (Great Grey Shrike, Arctic Tern, Great Northern Diver, Goldfinch, Long-tailed Duck, Red-necked Phalarope); and Bill Morton (Sooty Shearwater, Spotted Sandpiper, Snowy Owl, Wryneck, Robin, Black-headed Bunting). Three artists, all of them recent visitors to the isle, make their FIBO report debut: Mike Pinder (Citrine Wagtail, Twite); Viggo Ree (Song Thrush, Chestnut Bunting, Bobolink); and Andy Stoddart (Pied Flycatcher, Collared Flycatcher, Pallas's Grasshopper Warbler). We thank them all for their lively artwork.

## Sale of Vignette Originals

Following the success of last year when Paul Leonard's originals were offered for sale we are pleased to announce that Paul has again generously agreed to



offer his 1986 vignettes for sale, with a substantial proportion of the sale being donated to Fair Isle funds. In addition Bill Morton has offered the same arrangement. Thus, the 6 Paul Leonard and 6 Bill Morton vignette originals are available on a 'first come, first served' basis at £10 each, available from FIBO, Fair Isle, Shetland.

## Acknowledgements

So many people helped us in so many ways during 1986 that it would take several pages of text to thank them all. Thus, I would like to offer an 'all-inclusive' thank you to all the islanders, visitors, friends and benefactors without whose help and assistance Fair Isle Bird Observatory would not have functioned as effectively as it does.

## Publications

The following were published in 1986 by or with the assistance of FIBO staff and facilities.

### Migration

Baker, K. Observatory News. *BTO News* 145 (July-August 1986): 10.

Baker, K. Observatory News. *BTO News* 147 (November-December): 4.

Hirschfeld, E. Rufous Turtle Dove in Europe. *Dutch Birding* 8: 77-84.

Norman, W. and Norman, S. C. Spring movements of Willow Warblers ringed in the British Isles. *Ringed & Migration* 7: 75-84.

### Faunistics

Ewins, P. J., Dymond, J. N., and Marquiss, M. The distribution and diet of Ravens *Corvus corax* in Shetland. *Bird Study* 33: 110-116.

Lack, P. (ed.). *The Atlas of Wintering Birds in Britain and Ireland*. Poyser, Calton.

Sitters, H. P. Woodlarks in Britain, 1968-83. *British Birds* 79: 105-116.

Spencer, R. (compiler). Rare breeding birds in the United Kingdom in 1984. *British Birds* 79: 470-495.

Thom, V. M. *Birds in Scotland*. T. & A. D. Poyser, Calton.

### Seabirds

Murray, S. and Wanless, S. The status of the Gannet in Scotland 1984-85. *Scottish Birds* 14: 74-85.

Riddiford, N. Seabird Register — Fair Isle. *Seabird Group Newsletter* 46 (September 1986): 7-8.

Teixeira, A. M. Razorbill *Alca torda* losses in Portuguese nets. *Seabird* 9: 11-14.

Wanless, S., Murray, S. and Harris, M. Gannets — a boom in numbers and distribution. *BTO News* 145 (July-August 1986): 8-9.

### Information and Publicity Articles

Ree, V. and Solheim, R. Fair Isle — Eventyrøya I Vest (adventure/fairy-tale island in the west). *Oriolus* 15 (2): 5-10.

Riddiford, E. European Diploma for Fair Isle. *Scottish Bird News* 3 (September 1986): 1.

Solheim, R. and Ree, V. Shetland — Et fuglerike for folk som vil fare! (Shetland — a bird kingdom for people who wish to travel) *KornKraka* 16: 87-95.

## Book Reviews

**Birds in Scotland** by Valerie M Thom; T. and A. D. Poyser, Calton, 1986. Price £24.

This is the most significant book to be published on Scottish ornithology for a long, long time; indeed, arguably, since its two volume predecessor *The Birds of Scotland* by Baxter and Rintoul was published over 30 years previously. That earlier work was itself a momentous publication but the present author had far more material at her disposal and the book is correspondingly more detailed. About 80% of *Birds in Scotland* comprises a complete systematic list of all species recorded in Scotland, varying from a brief paragraph with dates for extreme rarities to a page or more of very detailed information on distribution (including accompanying map), habitats, breeding, population fluctuations and numbers, movements and seasonal fluctuations, recoveries, and potential pressures or threats to future survival for more widely observed species (as for instance Oystercatcher). This systematic list alone provides a remarkable bank of information but the book is further enhanced by a series of 11 introductory chapters dealing with Scotland's avifauna and geography, major habitats, developments in bird study, protection and conservation, recent changes in status and distribution, and the methodology and terms of reference for the species accounts. Each makes fascinating and very informative reading.

*Birds in Scotland* now supersedes all others as *the* reference book for Scotland and anyone interested in Scottish ornithology will want to own a copy. If that is not incentive enough, the production is from the House of Poyser (a name synonymous with attractive, high quality bird books), the text is punctuated throughout with references to Fair Isle from rarities to migratory movements and breeding data, and the book was written by our very own Valerie Thom, long time Trustee and now a Director of FIBOT! It is an outstanding piece of work for which Valerie is to be heartily congratulated.

**Statistics for Ornithologists** by Jim Fowler and Louis Cohen; BTO Guide 22. Price £10.

If there is one thing which separates the scientist from the keen amateur in ornithology, it is that forbidding word 'statistics'. Many useful ornithological contributions by amateurs have faltered at this seemingly insurmountable barrier and I have been asked on a number of occasions if I could recommend a book that would not only explain how to use them but also what they meant, which tests should be applied and how they should be adapted to an ornithological context (it is extremely difficult for non-mathematicians to convert the marbles or matchsticks of conventional 'stats' books to Blue Tits or Bluetails for instance).

Here at last is the guide to statistics that we have all been waiting for. It is written for ornithologists by ornithologists (Jim Fowler is very actively involved with seabird research in Shetland). They have been selective in the statistical techniques they present, choosing those most applicable to the ornithological situation, they proceed step by step in very straightforward English, explaining the techniques and concepts involved in a way that requires no previous knowledge of statistics, and they use actual ornithological examples (eg numbers of nest boxes occupied by Blue Tits, Great Tits, Tree Sparrows and Nuthatches). Psychologically, the appearance of familiar bird names and situations goes a long way to neutralising the frightening appearance of unfamiliar symbols and formulae and, coupled with the careful structuring of the guide, helps to nurse the reader towards achieving at the very least an understanding of the statistical tests which appear in many of our regular bird journals. The authors make the point that the 'best way to learn statistics is to apply them'. This is true, but one needs to know what it all means, how to start, and how to apply it. This guide fulfils those needs.

# The Fair Isle Experience

## A summer visit by two JHMF recipients.

“Unique” is an adjective which we used frequently during our stay on Fair Isle in early August 1986, yet it is perhaps this special quality which, for many people, makes a visit to FIBO a dream and, like all the best dreams, apparently unattainable. Our visit came as a natural progression from several weekends at South Walney Bird Observatory and from visits further afield to Portland Bill and Spurn Point. We felt the urge to delve deeper into the observatory network to gain wider experience. It seemed there would be no better place for this than Britain’s foremost bird observatory.

Naturally the attraction of Fair Isle’s remarkable birdlife was strong. We looked forward to the seabird colonies and hoped to see some interesting migrants, the lifeblood of any bird observatory.

After making enquiries about FIBO we heard about the **John Harrison Memorial Fund** and its specific aim of assisting young people to visit Fair Isle. Encouraged by this we determined to turn our dream into reality and applied to the Fund. We were delighted to receive grants which amounted to one third of the total cost of our trip. Owing to the restrictions of our holiday dates we booked for a week in early August, a little too soon for the full swing of passerine migration but nevertheless a time when waders would already be on the move and the chance of a surprise or two.

On arrival the tone was immediately set by Nick’s friendly welcome, complete with a pot of tea and biscuits, followed by a brief introductory talk in the evening. Throughout our stay we were impressed by the attitude of the staff, who can only be described as a friendly bunch who went out of their way to ensure that we got the most out of our all too brief visit. We will always remember Kevin waking us up at 3 a.m. to show us a Leach’s Petrel, the first to be caught for four years.

The accommodation was excellent. The visitors’ rooms with their fantastic views of the sea and Sheep Rock, are spacious and comfortable and the large lounge area has an extensive library. We gathered in the lounge each evening, clutching hot drinks and home bakes, to compile the daily log.

The food was plentiful and appetising, prepared by the willing and imaginative cooks. Meals ranged from haggis through carrot and orange soup to knickerbocker glories! However, FIBO is not a hotel and visitors are required to help with the washing up rota. This does not take long and the jovial atmosphere adds to the enjoyment of the whole experience.

One aspect of Fair Isle life which was particularly striking was the warm and welcoming nature of the islanders. When we met the local people during our walks, we were always greeted with a wave and a friendly word. Indeed we had only been on Fair Isle for two days when we were invited to a wedding celebration together with the entire population! This gave us an opportunity to sample Fair Isle’s night life, a mixture of traditional dancing and a plentiful supply of refreshments.

Fair Isle is simply beautiful. An air of peace prevails, especially in the more remote corners where Gannets nest on the stacks and Bonxies patrol the moorland. The cliff scenery is magnificent and was enhanced for us by Fair Isle’s sunniest August on record. It is pure myth that the weather is often dank and dismal. The Isle seems to have its own weather, often different to mainland Shetland, and we certainly enjoyed a glorious week.

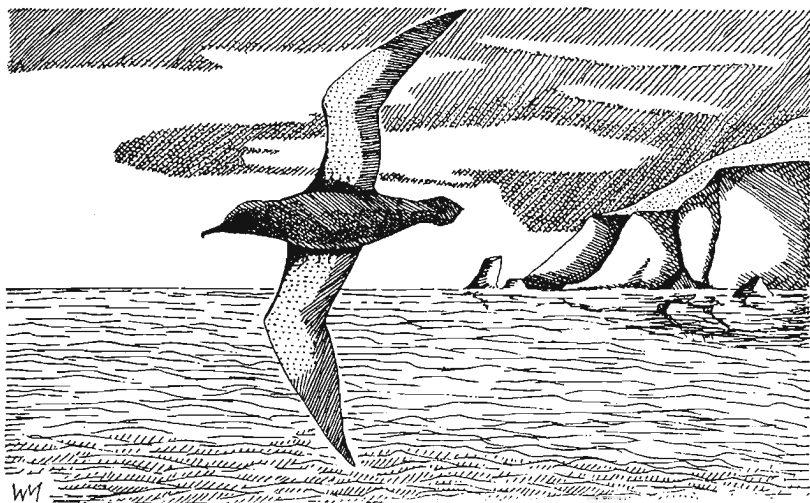
Fair Isle would be well worth visiting for the reasons above but its birds put the issue beyond doubt. To be surrounded by breeding species such as Great and Arctic Skuas, Twite, Raven, Gannet and Black Guillemot was a novel experience for 'southerners' such as ourselves, and migrants, although not yet numerous, were certainly in evidence. Birds such as Green Sandpiper, Garden Warbler, Greenshank and Ruff were regularly noted and others such as Pied Flycatcher, Redstart, Merlin and Wood Sandpiper also turned up. A more exciting find was an Aquatic Warbler, glimpsed briefly as it skulked in a ditch. These are only a selection of what we saw, for the truth of the matter is that anything can turn up and part of the thrill of a FIBO holiday is its unpredictability!

We feel that by being based at and actually being a part of FIBO we gained more than we would have on an individual birding holiday. The scientific value of its work was brought home to us by incidents such as the controlling, during a midnight mist-netting session, of a Storm Petrel ringed as a fledgling only two miles away at the other end of the island in 1966.

Inevitably the influence of the staff and other birders more experienced than ourselves improved our identification skills and, in our efforts to contribute to the daily log, we learnt about counting and censusing techniques and introduced more method into our birding.

Finally, to return to our first point, the Fair Isle experience is indeed unique and we both benefited greatly from it. We would like to thank the John Harrison Memorial Fund trustees and the staff at FIBO for enabling us to undertake such a worthwhile venture.

*Christabel and James Walsh*



# The John Harrison Memorial Fund

## Administering Committee:

Mr B. Grewcock (Organiser); Major A. D. Peirse-Duncombe (Hon. Secretary); Mr D. S. Erskine; Mr D. MacLehose.

This special fund was set up to help young people to visit Fair Isle. It was instituted in 1968 by the late Richard Richardson in memory of John Harrison of Hunstanton in Norfolk. John, a very keen birdwatcher, had visited Fair Isle three times before he died at the early age of 19.

The Fund gives financial assistance to young birdwatchers aged between 15 and 21, to help defray the cost of accommodation and travel. PLEASE ENCOURAGE YOUNG PEOPLE to use the Fund to visit Fair Isle — all applications should be sent to the Hon. Secretary, JHMF, 21 Regent Terrace, Edinburgh EH7 5BT.

It is essential that the fund be continually increased so that more people can be offered financial help to visit Fair Isle. Please send your contributions to:

**The Hon. Treasurer  
Fair Isle Bird Observatory  
21 Regent Terrace  
Edinburgh EH7 5BT**

Application for assistance from the John Harrison Memorial Fund, to visit Fair Isle **must be received by 31st October.**

**To: The Hon. Secretary, John Harrison Memorial Fund,  
21 Regent Terrace, Edinburgh EH7 5BT.**

Name ..... Date of Birth .....

Address .....

.....

Interests .....

.....

.....

Why do you want to visit Fair Isle? .....

.....

.....

Estimate of travel costs .....

Please enclose letters supporting your application from two referees, such as a school teacher and a senior naturalist, with whom you are well acquainted: these should be on one sheet of paper.

# Treasurer's Report at 31st October 1986

## 1. Introduction

The Trust has become a company limited by guarantee. The Trustees are now directors; former "friends" of Fair Isle are now members. At this time of change it is perhaps a good time to remind members of the structure of the various charities. They comprise:

## 2. The Fair Isle Bird Observatory (A company limited by guarantee)

This is the vehicle through which the ornithological activities are carried on. This company's assets are the Observatory itself, a vehicle and various items of equipment which are necessary to enable ornithologists to learn more about the birds which visit the island. The company's income is derived from four main sources:

- Members' subscriptions and donations
- Profit from providing board and lodging
- Investment income
- Income from Fair Isle Endowment Trust

The contributions from these "profit centres" are used to fund

- (i) the cost of ornithological research on Fair Isle
- (ii) the cost of producing the annual report *and*
- (iii) the provision of future maintenance expenditure on the Observatory building.

## 3. Fair Isle Endowment Trust

This is a charity whose specific aims are to promote ornithology on Fair Isle. As the accounts show, it has investments, the income from which is remitted to The Fair Isle Bird Observatory Trust.

## 4. The John Harrison Memorial Fund

This is a charity, the income from which is specifically used to subsidise the costs of young people visiting Fair Isle.

## 5. Development programme

The company is embarking on a costly development programme to improve the Observatory and Hostel. Donations and assistance for these works are always welcomed by the directors and they are particularly grateful to the following organisations who have been able to assist the Trust during this financial year:

- Highlands and Islands Development Board
- Countryside Commission for Scotland
- Shetland Islands Council
- Shetlands Amenity Trust
- The Pilgrim Trust
- The Dulverton Trust

## 6. Accounts for the year to 31st October 1986

The accounts for the three entities are set out on the next three pages:

**The Fair Isle Bird Observatory Trust**  
Accounts for the Year to 31st October 1986

	1986 £	1985 £
<b>Income and Expenditure account</b>		
Ornithology surplus/(loss) .....	(175)	(847)
Gross profit from hostel .....	19,708	14,228
	<u>19,533</u>	<u>13,381</u>
Interest received .....	3,153	3,294
	<u>22,686</u>	<u>16,675</u>
Contribution to fixed overheads .....		
Fixed overheads		
Administration .....	(3,809)	(3,947)
Establishment .....	(12,181)	(10,774)
Finance and legal .....	(2,961)	(1,733)
	<u>3,735</u>	<u>221</u>
Depreciation provision .....	(4,751)	(1,884)
	<u>(1,016)</u>	<u>(1,663)</u>
Reconstruction costs .....	(1,490)	—
	<u>£(2,506)</u>	<u>£(1,663)</u>
<b>Balance Sheet at 31st December 1986</b>		
Tangible fixed assets .....	£78,622	£65,546
Investments .....	10,548	10,548
Net current assets .....	18,476	20,204
Deferred grants .....	(16,283)	(—)
Provision for future expenditure .....	(7,541)	(10,541)
	<u>£83,822</u>	<u>£85,757</u>
Represented by:		
Retained profits .....	83,251	85,757
Reserve funds .....	571	—
	<u>£83,822</u>	<u>£85,757</u>

Note: The above accounts for The Fair Isle Bird Observatory Trust comprise a consolidation in a simplified form of the accounts for the unincorporated trust for the period from 1st November 1985 to 31st March 1986 and the accounts for the company for the period from incorporation to 31 October 1986. The Treasurer's accounts are based on full accounts for each of the two separate entities, which have been examined by our auditors, Coopers & Lybrand, who have reported on each of the individual sets of accounts.

A full set of accounts for each entity may be obtained from Trust headquarters.

**Fair Isle Endowment Trust**  
**Accounts for the Year ended 31st October 1986**

	1986 £	1985 £
<b>Income and Expenditure account</b>		
Investment income received .....	454 (gross)	444
Tax refund received .....	107	105
	<hr/> 561	<hr/> 549
Less Management Fees .....	(35)	(33)
Remittances to The Fair Isle Bird Observatory Trust .....	(526)	(516)
	<hr/> £NIL	<hr/> £NIL
<b>Balance Sheet at 31st October 1986</b>		
Investments at cost (Note 1)		
8 1/4% Treasury Loan 1986/90, £2,400 loan .....	2,114	2,114
10% Treasury Stock 1992, £2,750 stock .....	2,500	2,500
Henderson Administration, 960 High Income Units .....	638	638
	<hr/> 5,252	<hr/> 5,252
Debtors — tax refund due .....	NIL	NIL
Heritable Property		
21 Regent Terrace (Transferred to SOC at cost) .....	NIL	3,050
Cash Balance .....	1	1
	<hr/> £5,253	<hr/> £8,303
<b>Total Assets .....</b>		
Represented by:		
Balance brought forward .....	8,303	8,303
Transfer at cost of 21 Regent Terrace to SOC .....	3,050	NIL
Surplus/(deficiency) for the year .....	NIL	NIL
	<hr/> £5,253	<hr/> £8,303
<b>Balance carried forward 31.10.1986 .....</b>		

Note (1): The transfer of 21 Regent Terrace to the Property Endowment Trust of the Scottish Ornithologists Club occurred on 31st October 1986 and was unanimously approved by the Trustees of the Fair Isle Bird Observatory Trust. In exchange for this, the Fair Isle Bird Observatory Trust have been granted office space and facilities (limited to a single room) on a permanent basis.



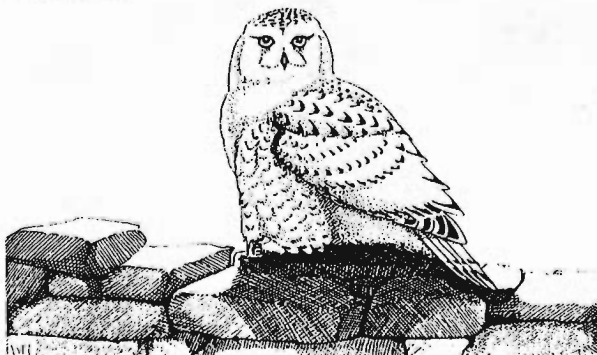
**John Harrison Memorial Fund**  
**Accounts for the Year ended 31st October 1986**

	1986 £	1985 £
<b>Income and Expenditure account</b>		
Richard Richardson's executry —		
royalties.....	—	26
Interest received.....	731	734
Donations.....	—	12
	<hr/> 731	<hr/> 772
Less Management expenses .....	(40)	(33)
Grants paid (Note 1)	(860)	(480)
	<hr/>	<hr/>
Surplus/(deficiency) for the year.....	(169)	259
	<hr/>	<hr/>

**Balance Sheet at 31st October 1986**

Investments at cost		
£6,400 9% Treasury Loan 1994.....	5,362	5,362
£900 13 1/4% Treasury Stock 1997.....	870	870
£350 9 1/2% Treasury Stock 1999.....	340	340
	<hr/> 6,572	<hr/> 6,572
Cash .....	89	259
	<hr/>	<hr/>
Total assets .....	£6,661	£6,831
	<hr/>	<hr/>
Represented by:		
Reserves brought forward .....	6,830	6,571
Surplus/(deficiency) for the year.....	(169)	259
	<hr/>	<hr/>
Reserves carried forward 31.10.1986 .....	£6,661	£6,830
	<hr/>	<hr/>

Note (1): Grants are paid to young people visiting Fair Isle thereby subsidising the cost of their visit.





SHETLAND'S LEADING  
RENTAL FLEET

## Fair Isle by air or sea

Our reception facilities at:

TINGWALL (*Loganair flights*) and  
SUMBURGH (*Grutness ferry*) can  
handle your transport requirements

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*Self-Drive Hire : Taxis : Mini Coaches  
to meet YOU by prior arrangement*

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Telephone:

**LERWICK 2855**



# Bring your Bins to Twitch a Goody or dance Sheep Hill with us

On tiny Fair Isle, three miles long and a mile wide there's the best birdwatching in Britain and some of the friendliest people. Miles of spectacular cliff walking, and a museum to visit on wet days. You can watch spinning, weaving and the famous Fair Isle knitwear in the making. In the evening you can socialise in the new Community Hall. You'll always find a welcome on Fair Isle



**Bins** — binoculars

**Twitch** — come and see

**Goody** — very unusual bird

**Sheep Hill** — children's dance named after the annual sheep round-up



## FAIR ISLE

### The Island that loves visitors

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Shetland Tourist Organisation, Information Centre, Market Cross, Lerwick, Shetland ZE1 0LU.  
Telephone (0595) 3434 (24-hour service) Telex 75119 Shilto G

# Small enough to be local... ..big enough for $\frac{1}{4}$ million people.

Although we flew over 250,000 passengers last year we still fly the small local routes which we started with 25 years ago.

Now we're big enough to offer services associated with bigger international airlines on all our flights because we really do care.



**FLIGHTS TO FAIR ISLE  
FROM EDINBURGH VIA  
KIRKWALL AND LERWICK.**

CONNECTING FLIGHTS FROM  
EDINBURGH TO LONDON  
HEATHROW VIA BRITISH MIDLAND.



# LOGANAIR

## Scotland's Airline

Ask your travel agent or phone Gott 246,  
Kirkwall 2420 or Glasgow 041-889 3181.