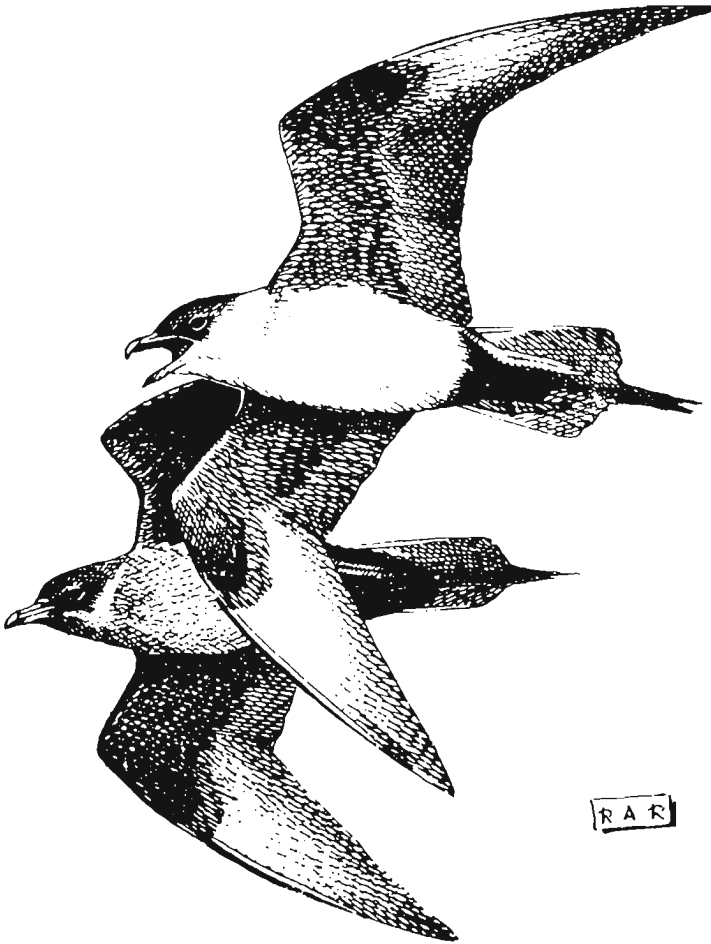


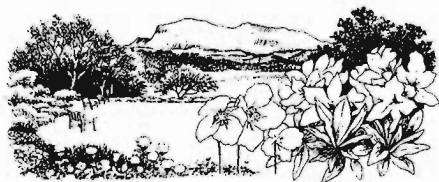
# FAIR ISLE BIRD OBSERVATORY

## Report for 1991



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# Fair Isle Bird Observatory

Report No. 44

1991

*Edited by Paul Harvey & Valerie Thom*

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# Fair Isle Bird Observatory Trust

A company limited by guarantee

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## Chairman's Report

In my report for 1990 I sounded a generally optimistic note and you will no doubt be wondering whether, with the country still in deep recession, I was fully justified. If you go on to read Paul's very detailed report and the state of our finances as presented by John Wood, you must conclude that a healthy future still lies ahead for FIBOT. Yes, visitor-weeks did not come up to the 1990 record level but were nonetheless very creditable given the Gulf war and the state of the economy. Perhaps we should remind ourselves just how far we have come in terms of occupancy levels. The figures for 1971, 1981 and 1991 were 317, 385 and 472. On the financial side our overall indebtedness has been much reduced due mainly to the continuing efforts of David MacLehose on the "re-appeal" front and the very tight rein on the lodge operation exercised so ably by Paul and Elizabeth. So our interest charges for the coming year will be much reduced.

My own experience of the 1991 season also suggests that my optimism is well founded. One might be tempted to think that in 33 years of visiting Fair Isle the experience would hold few surprises, few thrills. Not so! My August trip was by the traditional sea route. On the deck of the St. Clair I encountered three young Spaniards from Barcelona bound for Fair Isle. Their excitement at the prospect was a joy to behold. Next day, standing on the extreme prow of the "Good Shepherd" and looking straight down, I delighted in the spectacle of two White-beaked dolphins keeping perfect station on either side for most of the way across. Emerging from the lodge after the welcoming "post-Good Shepherd" lunch, I was dive-bombed by terns. Never in 33 years had I been so treated within a stone's throw of the observatory. This was the first indication that the sea-birds had staged a dramatic recovery. Later, it was a joy to see Kittiwakes occupying areas of cliff never previously favoured in my experience.

On my second visit in late October I thrilled to the astonishing spectacle of a Great Grey Shrike singling out a tired Short-toed from a whole field of Skylarks and giving chase ending in a mid-air pounce with a flurry of feathers. This scene echoed a similar spectacle when in a previous year I witnessed a Merlin capture a Pectoral Sandpiper after a wild aerial chase.

Ornithological thrills apart, the island itself and its inhabitants still retain much of the old magic. I still find myself taking yet more photographs of those magnificent sea cliffs. It is still possible to order a pullover hand-knitted to a unique Fair Isle pattern having first looked at the sheep grazing outside the croft and selected the colours. I still find it maddeningly difficult to sing in tune with any of the islanders in chapel.

My message, therefore, to all of you who have not been to the isle for a while is to book now for this year and experience all these delights and enjoy the new comfort of the much-refurbished lodge. Friends will have received the 1992 prospectus with the winter newsletter, so I have no need to remind them of the superb value offered, for example, by a week's stay in a single room looking out towards the Sheep Rock with FULL BOARD for only £24 a day, or under £20 if sharing a twin-bedded room.

The Loganair 1992 summer timetable has been published and I am pleased to say that discount fares for a minimum four-night stay at the lodge are again available from Edinburgh and Heathrow to Fair Isle. I myself took advantage of this on my October visit and was agreeably impressed when the girl at the Heathrow check-in had no difficulty in producing Fair Isle FIE luggage tags! However, there are some changes, for this year sees the introduction of Loganair's new Jetstream 31 aircraft on the Edinburgh and Glasgow to Shetland flight with greatly enhanced comfort and taking only 1 hour 25 minutes instead of 2 hours in the droning Twin Otter.

The second change is the use, for this season at least, of Sumburgh instead of Tingwall as the Shetland terminal for the Edinburgh and Glasgow flights. Arising from this, I strongly advocate Saturdays as your choice for flying in or coming away for it is only on that day that Loganair route their small Islander aircraft to stop at Sumburgh and pick up passengers bound for Fair Isle and return out-going passengers on its way back. Timings involve only short waits. Thus it is possible to leave Heathrow on a Saturday at 0900 and land at Fair Isle at 1425. There is still a service from Orkney to Fair Isle but it also only operates on Saturdays. There will still be flights into and out from Fair Isle on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays but they will fly to Tingwall, not stopping at Sumburgh.

I am sure that few of you are any longer in doubt that running Fair Isle bird observatory has changed out of all recognition since the days of the Navy huts and the Tilley lamp. The challenge to-day is in trying to sustain the ideals of George Waterston and Ian Pitman married to the expectations of to-day's visitors. Fortunately we have in Paul and Elizabeth and their assistant staff a highly motivated team ably supported by nine directors plus part-time contribution from Michael Murphy and Sylvia Laing at Regent Terrace. The directors retire, at least for a year, by rotation and at the 1992 February AGM it came the turn of Roy Dennis to stand down and make way for a newcomer. Roy has served the Trust with his inimitable blend of infectious enthusiasm and energy for many years and it was largely at his instigation as warden in 1966 that the new observatory building was proposed and became a reality three years later. In recognition of his many years' contribution in the field of bird protection and conservation Roy was honoured with MBE last spring, soon to be followed by appointment to the board of Scottish Natural Heritage. From this new vantage point he will no doubt still have Fair Isle very much in mind. We extend our heartfelt thanks for his vital support over many years. In his place we welcome Ken Shaw from the RSPB Aberdeen Office. As a regular visitor to Fair Isle and a keen bird man we look forward to his contribution to our work.

The 1992 AGM also marked the end of six years' diligent and devoted service by Valerie Thom as our Honorary Secretary. During that time she undertook a host of behind-the-scenes tasks including editing Annual Reports and Newsletters, overseeing our marketing strategy, interviewing domestic staff and, most recently, master-minding the new display now erected in the lodge shop. There were lots of other un-sung activities which somehow fell to Valerie's care. The Trust owes her an enormous debt. As I write, we are still faced with a dilemma in finding a replacement.

I extend my grateful thanks for the tireless support I have received from my fellow directors. They are very patient. All the FAXES and mobile 'phones in the world still don't make it easy for me to manage Trust business from remotest Surrey. Friends of Fair Isle too have helped in several ways, particularly David Bell in setting up the London meeting once again and showing us his very entertaining video. To our principal benefactors, Highlands & Islands Enterprise and NTS, we again owe a debt of gratitude. Finally, I cannot praise highly enough the help and encouragement we continue to enjoy from "down the island". It is absolutely essential to our well-being.

***Pat Sellar***

## Warden's Report

It has been a year of mixed fortunes for F.I.B.O. From an ornithological standpoint it is pleasing to report that the island's seabirds had a successful breeding season, reversing the trend of recent years. The seabird colonies are undoubtedly one of the major attractions to summer visitors to the Lodge. It is disappointing though to report that the Lodge attracted fewer visitors in 1991, following last year's record breaking season. Although the final figure of 472 visitor-weeks (6.5% less than 1990) has been surpassed only in 1989 and 1990, and is still 23% higher than the average for the period 1980-89, there is little room for complacency. The Gulf War resulted in several American groups cancelling their trips to Fair Isle, but the present economic climate within Britain and the increased transport costs in getting to the island are more significant.

As is usual September proved to be the busiest month but it was pleasing to see a further increase in visitors in August, traditionally a quiet month. The trend towards poorer occupancy in April continued with just 16 visitor weeks! This is not economically viable for the Lodge and as a result we will not open to visitors until the last Monday of April (27th) in 1992.

The Lodge once again played host to visitors of a wide variety of nationalities although as indicated earlier, the number of American visitors was well down. Group visits included the now regular Y.O.C groups in July and August, another group from the Grenoble Bird Club (France) following last year's successful visit, and two parties from regional National Trust for Scotland groups. The cruise ship 'Polaris' made two visits during the year, with Observatory staff laying on guided walks to the seabird colonies, while Rowan Yarns tours made only one visit, in September (all the spring visits being cancelled because of the Gulf War).

Although there was little demand for the wildlife and art courses we had hoped to hold in 1991, the island insights courses again proved very successful. This year, as well as another insight course, a crafts and crofting course is proposed. Full details of both courses can be found in the 1992 brochure.

Once again the John Harrison Memorial Fund allowed four young ornithologists to come and play an active role in the Observatory's work; the recipients were again of a very high quality. 'Official' visits were made by trustees Pat Sellar, Peter Slater, Valerie Thom and John Wood, while Tom and Morag Hart (Directors of Scotsell, through whom we receive several visitors a year) came to witness first hand a 'summer holiday on Fair Isle'.

A high media profile for the Lodge was maintained with a visit from Merete Hall (German BBC) and an article in Birdwatching Magazine. Nick Dymond's book 'The Birds of Fair Isle' was published in December and this should bring the Observatory to the attention of yet more potential customers. During May the Roskile Puffins became the subject of wildlife cameraman Jim Clare's focus. The result, a film entitled 'Puffin Isle's' was produced by Partridge Films late in the year and has been sold to various American broadcasting companies.

Recent years have seen a great increase in the number of day, and short-stay visitors to the Lodge. During the busy summer months it can be difficult for such visitors to glean as much information as they would wish about Observatory work and island life. Partly with this in mind, 1991 saw the production of a display to be housed at the Lodge. The display contains information on the ornithological work carried out by the Observatory, and about island life and social history. It is also hoped that the display will benefit the Lodge in terms of an increase in the number of 'Friends of Fair Isle'. Thanks must be expressed to Valerie Thom for almost single handedly seeing the display material through to its production stage, and to the Nature Conservancy Council for Scotland and the Shetland Amenity Trust for

grant aiding the project. A vote of thanks is also due to John Hunter, Shetland's county librarian who, following a couple of very enjoyable visits to the Observatory, has undertaken to oversee the repair of all the Lodge's library books. None too small a task considering the handling the books have received over the last few years.

Once again we were fortunate in securing the services of some excellent staff. Ann Prior returned for her fourth season on Fair Isle, this time as Catering Manager, successfully maintaining the high standard of cuisine of the last two years. Richard Schofield proved to be a most capable assistant cook, while Hazel 'o' Walker and Fiona Stirling were both hard-working and cheerful domestics. Both Nigel Milius, whom it was great to see back in the kitchen, and Fiona McGloan covered for short periods before Fiona Stirling was available. Ornithological staff comprised Arfon 'I can catch it' Williams as assistant warden and Chris Orsman, who excelled as seabird monitoring officer. Hugh Harrop acted as a volunteer from April-July, inputting data into the Observatory computer among many other jobs, and then took over from Elizabeth as Administration Officer when she went on maternity leave. Steve Votier kindly stepped in at short notice during the busy seabird season when Arfon Williams was recovering from an appendectomy!

The research accommodation was well utilised for the second successive season. The Glasgow University team continued their research into the seabird/sandeel problem with research assistant Howard Towll present for much of the season. Caroline Askew returned, this time as an Aberdeen University MSc student, to study the breeding biology of Kittiwakes. Peter Evans (E.G.I) continued his work on Fair Isle Starlings and Kevin Osborn returned to carry out more work on Razorbills. Paul Eady from Sheffield University also visited to undertake some research into the Fair Isle mouse (see later for a more complete report).

Our own ornithological work was again centred around the J.N.C.C. (ex N.C.C.) seabird monitoring programme. Another large sample of Storm Petrels was ringed and a good number of passerine biometrics were again collected for the B.T.O's Biometric Working Group. Moth trapping was undertaken on a regular basis and resulted in the capture of several species new to Shetland.

One area where ornithological staff seem to be spending an ever increasing amount of time is building/machine repair. 1991 brought what seemed to be an endless series of problems, the most frustrating of which continued to be the boiler. This malfunctioned repeatedly and it proved impossible to get a service engineer to look at it - a reminder that there are some advantages to living in an urban environment! An equally serious problem is the corrosion of all the gate-valves fitted in the new water system at refurbishment, less than three years ago! On a more positive note, all the bedroom carpets were replaced by Proctor flooring in April and the entrance porch and doors, entrance hall, drying room and outside fire escape rails were all painted by Obs. staff during the spring. One very welcome initiative in 1991 was the weekly transport of domestic waste from the Island to Shetland aboard the Good Shepherd.

The demise of the Bedford minibus last September meant that the Observatory was without transport until June. Fortunately though we had our own private car to carry out the Observatory's daily business. An ex-Shalder coach was purchased in June and performed reasonably well until the end of the year.

Many people have helped enormously during the year in a whole variety of ways. Islanders deserving of special thanks are Kenny Stout, who continued to appear in an instant when serious problems arose; Jimmy and Florrie Stout for transporting visitors to and from the airstrip prior to the acquisition of the Shalder bus; Ingrid and Jerry Eunson for both the successful new arrangement at the shop and more general help; Neil Rath for help in matters mechanical; Brian Wilson for advising on various constructional problems; and Stewart and Triona Thomson for tending the Skadan flock. Pat Thomson kindly did the winter bookings while we were away



on holiday. Shetland based help included Malcolm Adamson, who cast his expert eye over the generators, and Chris Donald, Dave Okill and Dave and Kim Suddaby all of whom put various items to boats and planes. Elizabeth and I would also like to say a big thank-you to Valerie Thom, who is due to stand down as Honorary Secretary, for her unflagging help over a whole series of matters connected with the Observatory.

In connection with our ornithological work, particularly the ongoing seabird monitoring scheme, I would like to extend special thanks to Caroline Askew, Jerome Bailly, Mike Jackson, Rachel King, Nigel Milius, Kevin Osborn, Lionel Perret, Eileen Stuart, Howard Towll, Steve Votier, Paul Walton and John Woolley.

Finally Elizabeth and I were most pleased to welcome Sigrid Stout back to look after our children during the busy summer and autumn, and Karen Mansfield kindly undertook the same task before Sigrid arrived.

## **The NTS in 1991**

It is always especially nice to complete a restoration project in a remote area, and when the news came through that the Auld Haa shared the top award from the Association for the Protection of Rural Scotland it was doubly gratifying. In recognising the Auld Haa, the APRS stated that the restoration of the building was one of 'outstanding merit of itself and its respect for the island setting. Its use of materials and colour is an excellent example of what can be done in remote areas'. Fair Isle's very own building contractors, Northmen, were also recognised and 'their work in adverse conditions is meritorious'. Considering not only the adverse weather conditions but the strict specification that the Trust employed for this job, they were certainly worthy of the recognition.

1991 also saw the completion of the new house on Kennaby croft for Ian and Lise Best and their newest and prized possession, young Thomas Inge Best. The house, designed and built to a high standard, will hopefully set the trend for new housing on the island and establish a higher standard of architectural amenity and design throughout the Isle. The Trust are keen to promote good design in the countryside and what better way to do it than showing what can be done.

In last year's report I mentioned that we would be looking for new tenants for the Auld Haa and, after many months of deliberation, interviewing, head scratching and discussion, Derek and Linda Grieve from Kerrera came out tops. At the time of writing, they are now establishing themselves in the Auld Haa and, if all their plans come to fruition, will be undertaking guest accommodation, knitting, woodworking crafts and, hopefully, some Angora rabbit rearing. The Trust and the Fair Islanders welcome this new blood to the island and look forward to a long and happy relationship together.

When I set out last January (1991) to find tenants for the Auld Haa, I never imagined the level of response we would get. We received 69 full applications and, after initial selections, Ann Sinclair and Florrie Stout came down to Edinburgh to assist me with the interviewing process. The response and the experience from the selection give me great confidence that there are undoubtedly plenty suitable candidates for living on Fair Isle awaiting an opportunity to come to the Isle.

As usual, there have been developments on Fair Isle and none more important than the continuing repair programme for the Trust's houses. This programme will be greatly enhanced by the Trust's additional member of staff, Mr Angus Jack, a



*The new Kennaby*

*Photo: A.M. Bennett*

building surveyor, who will be able to assist me with Trust work on Fair Isle and concentrate on building projects in future.

Each year Fair Isle becomes more and more like the mainland, and next time you visit Fair Isle you may have to stand to the side of the road to let Kenny Stout and his refuse collection lorry trundle past, as he goes about the important business of removal of refuse from the various houses around the Isle. This Shetland Islands Council and Community Council initiative is proving its worth and already there is a marked improvement in the overall amenity of the Isle.

Finally, my annual report would never be the same without some mention of the breakwater. I am now brimming over with confidence that the breakwater project will become a reality this year. The project is now on the top of SIC's Roads and Transport budget and the finance has been allocated. The Trust have agreed to the design and have also agreed to sell small pieces of land in the North Haven to Shetland Islands Council. This long awaited facility will provide a sheltered harbour area, a new quay and a dredged area, where a variety of vessels can moor at all states of the tide. I look forward to reporting next year that the opening ceremony and subsequent all night celebration in the hall was an event to remember!

***Alexander M. Bennett***

# **The George Waterston Memorial Centre**

## **— 5 Years on**

When I was asked to write this my first reaction was - 5 years! It seems like only yesterday that we opened, yet I can no longer remember life without the pain and pleasures of involvement in the G.W.M.C.

We were opened in 1986 by Willie Eunson, at that time our oldest inhabitant and a wonderful source of stories (who, sadly, died on Dec. 23rd 1987), and Eileen Thomson, our youngest, - now with seven children her junior on the Isle - this is how life moves on. Alec Stout, a constant source of information and encouragement, who gave a lot of time to the centre and to everyone with an interest in the Isle, died in November 1989 after a brave fight with illness, and we all miss him greatly.

When it was first decided to set up the Auld Schull as a centre displaying Fair Isle's history there were some doubts expressed on the long term viability of the project - I can now admit that I lost sleep over the spectre of a museum whose contents had little of interest and which there was insufficient manpower to run. I had no need to worry. Even before the door was officially opened, the setting up of displays was constantly suspended to show visitors around. Things have not changed. Thanks to local and visitor interest, and by the welcome addition of gifts and loans to the collection and occasional items borrowed from the Shetland Museum and other collections, it has been possible to vary display and exhibition, produce postcards and have the centre manned three days a week all summer, as well as opening at unscheduled times on request for visitors. There are extra hours put in for cruise ships such as the "Polaris" and special visits such as those of Rowan Tours, but it has been possible to maintain the policy of having someone on duty to welcome visitors, to provide a guided tour if requested, and answer relevant questions. We all enjoy the interaction with visitors but, be warned, the answer to the perennial question "What can you possibly find to do with your time on Fair Isle?" is frequently answered through clenched teeth and thoughts of blunt instruments - or even bare hands! All the volunteers who man the museum have different areas of expertise so no two visits are alike. Interests in archaeology, crafts and conservation, shipwrecks, language and legend, genealogy, natural and social history are all covered.

It has now become a prerequisite of grant aid that all museums should be registered. Needless to say the quantity of paperwork required is phenomenal. We are inundated with 'here tofores' and 'thereuntos', clauses and subclauses. Our (perfectly adequate) collection policy has grown from 3/4 of an A4 sheet to a book size missive and without help the registration document itself would have been impossible to produce - none of us have that much spare time, just for a start! However we are very fortunate. As a member of the Shetland Museums Forum we have access to expert practical help and the initial registration document is almost complete. It remains to be seen if the Registration Committee of the Museums and Galleries Commission accept us for provisional registration. We have a lot to do in the way of cataloguing and documentation in the museum itself before we can hope for fully registered status.

The future looks promising. We have started a collection of more modern Fair Isle knitwear, and of locally produced artwork. The level of interest is as high as it was 5 years ago, with a lot of young and able people in our pool of volunteers. Five years on the G.W.M.C. is a definite asset. I know we have a captive audience but they frequently give the impression on a visit to the centre of being completely captivated and they can't all be kidding! I look forward with anticipation to the next 5 years.

*Anne Sinclair*



*Music making in the museum*

*Photo: V.M. Thom*

## **A Broad Horizon**

### **A year of music on Fair Isle**

Any view from the cliff top emphasises that this is a vast ocean that surrounds us, in part explaining why so many visitors ask "what do you find to do...."? My answer is always the same; an island in the middle of the sea acts as a focus of life, instead of limiting culture it can give a freedom as broad as the horizon itself. And so it is with music.

Any outsider could be forgiven for thinking our musical taste would range from the odd pibroch to some desultory hymn singing. They would have had a shock this year. We were very lucky in having had accordion, fiddle, whistle, flute, small pipes, guitar, mandolin, organ, piano, bodhran; English, Scottish, Danish, Norwegian, Faroese, Shetland even Fair Isle music. As the man from Sandness said, "No bad! eh?"

At Lise Sinclair and Ian Best's wedding the band played with their usual verve, (he says blushing). Stewart Thomson drawing on his repertoire of fairly international tunes to keep feet tapping, aided and abetted by son Ewen, with his growing collection, and a few heavy metal numbers courtesy of nephew Inness. It's great to see the next generation taking on and helping to take over. It means we can get offstage and dance!

This was the pattern for the summer dances with some special exceptions. The Danish/Faroese group "Sula Skeir" gave a concert, a chance for their leader Eskjel to return. Their music, a lively mix of Scandinavian tunes and songs, was performed with such spirit as to have the hall ringing. My favourite moment, Eskjel's brother singing an old Danish fisherman's song. Even though I only understood one word in ten (or more), it really touched a chord in me. Truly uplifting.

Jimmy and Edith Stout's Golden Wedding provided us with another memorable evening. Their grandson, Shetland's young musician of the year, Christopher, played a tune specially composed for the occasion by one of Shetland's best fiddlers ever, Arthur Scott Robertson....cor blimey! Who needs the telly!! Much fun and listening, dancing and merrymaking was had by all.

"To the glory of God" read the chapel window, to the expertise of Patrick Ross-Smith went the problems of an ageing stained glass window; to the concert party went the fund raising cry. So we had to make it good! At no expense, all proceeds to the cause, we brought together what can truly be called an amalgam of island music. Starting with traditional, then "traditional" followed by a "normal" dance, ending with what I've always waited for... Fair Isle's first rock concert. A band from the Anderson High School, under the banner "Strange Conspiracy", performed a mixture of goodies, some old, some new, some original. The six piece band already boasted two Fair Islanders, Inge Thomson on accordion and vocals and Inness Thomson on guitar and vocals, with Alan from Lerwick on drums and Peter from Yell on fiddle, guitar, vocals, clean shirt and tea cup!! But two of the group were unable to attend, Brian because of illness and James because of Sweden, so the isle was called on to help out. A girl from the workcamp filled in on vocals; Ewen took over on bass, and you've guessed, yours truly complete with guitar, filled in on the old numbers. To see even the great grandparents bopping was really cool...hey man...hip...who says history doesn't repeat itself!

It doesn't end there. With Christmas on the horizon Cathy organised the choir into its emergent form, drawing us together to celebrate that most wonderful time of the year, the magical mystery of Christ's birth. It took all of Cathy's magic, as a throat infection going the rounds was doing its best to take every voice, mince it up and give it back to its owner in the "Lee Marvin" mode. Visions of us all singing "I was born under a wandering star" must have kept Cathy awake many a long night. But, the occasion proved more than a match and the choir sang, Christmas came, and the year ended with yet another first. The canny bodhran player Patrick teaming up with the band to give a new flavour....for a New Year....What did we find to do.....??

*Neil Thomson*

## **The Observatory Computer**

At the time of the refurbishment three years ago, the Observatory was very fortunate to be awarded a grant by the Carnegie United Kingdom Trust for the purchase of a Zenith computer. This grant has also provided funds to allow us over the past four years to start putting onto the computer some of the data accumulated over the last forty, and to carry out some initial analyses and writing up of results.

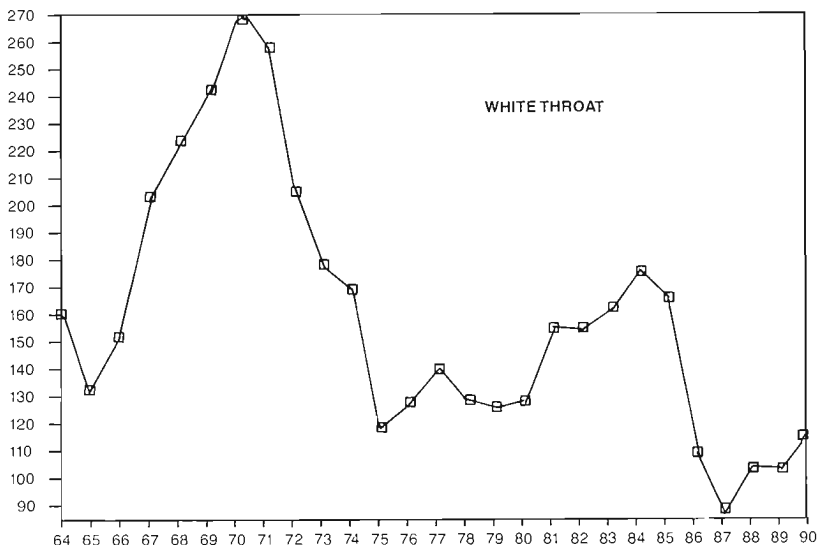
For the first three years of the project data entry was accomplished by students making short visits to the island for the purpose during their summer break; this year we have been lucky to have the services of Hugh Harrop, who spent the whole season on the island and has taken this process forward at a fast rate. In the gaps between his various other activities Nick Riddiford has carried out several analyses and written up some of the results. The computer has also helped with some of Paul Harvey's studies, and it has put us in a position to start cashing in on the gold that the Observatory has been sequestering in the form of all the records of ringing and of daily logs, of breeding birds and of migrants, over many years. Here I shall give a brief account of what has been achieved to date and make some suggestions about what the future may hold.

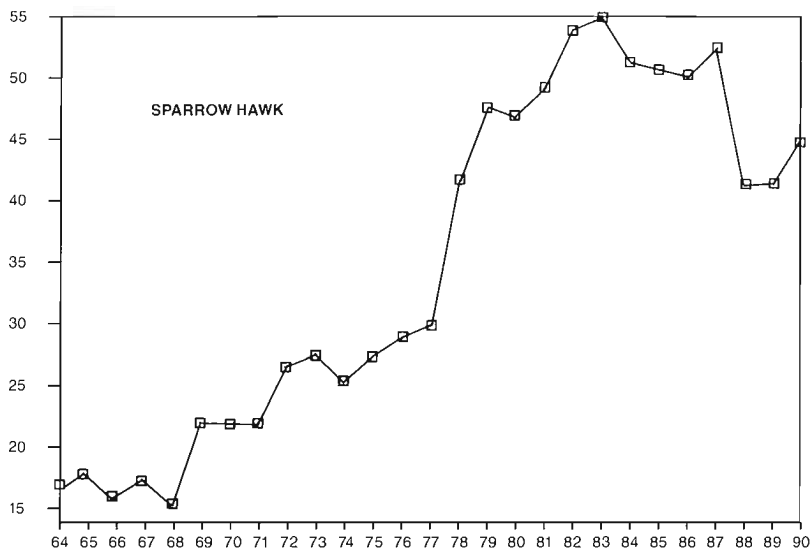
### Data Input and Analysis to Date

Much of the initial data input was on seabirds, including ringing and recovery results for certain species and information derived from the current NCC funded seabird monitoring programme. This year, all the biometric data for 9 seabird species for the past 5 years have been entered. To take one example, this includes information on the site, wing length, weight and date of ringing of 452 Razorbill chicks. Where chicks have been weighed and measured more than once, the different figures are entered with their dates, giving potential for analysis of growth rates. Information on seabird recoveries over a 30 year period has also been put into computer files: examples here are the ringing and recovery dates, ages, and location and method of recovery of 176 Razorbills and 658 Guillemots.

The process of putting data on migrants on the computer was started during 1990, when the main effort of the student helpers was to input the ringing data on Blackbirds. The Observatory rings several hundred of this species per annum, and the age and sex of each is recorded, as well as date, time of day, weight and various measurements. In recent years indices of body condition have also been recorded. All this information for the period 1971-89, as well as details of recoveries, has now been entered into the database. It is planned to use this very large sample to answer various questions concerned with such matters as whether there have been changes in the timing and pattern of migration over the years, whether sexes and age classes differ in the timing of their movements and to investigate relationships between weight and body size and body condition. One interesting question that emerges is how cost-effective the amassing of such huge bodies of data is; would similar conclusions have been possible with the collection of information on many fewer birds?

In 1991, the main effort was to enter a 30-year run of migration census results for 50 species, giving the number of birds recorded on the island for every day during that period. The species selected were those known or thought to have changed their frequency or status during that period. Even just simply getting the computer





to plot the number of "bird days" in each year provides a striking illustration of how the populations of certain species have changed: the decline of the Whitethroat and Corncrake, the rising levels of the Blackcap and of geese, and the recovery of Sparrowhawk numbers, all show through clearly. Some of these plots form part of the new visitor display at the Lodge.

### Future Work

One point to which we are now giving considerable attention is how we can best make use of the computing facility now that the help provided by the grant from the Carnegie Trust has come to an end. The warden and his staff are too busy to spend a great deal of time inputting data and analysing them. However, the Bird Observatory Trust has decided to continue providing some support for such work from its own funds. If the opportunity arises we may also seek further external grants to help with some specific studies. With global change so much to the fore in scientific study, work on data amassed at a site where the effort has been near constant over more than 40 years has great potential importance.

Making the most of these data will be a professional job, and we will have to obtain expert statistical advice. One possibility is that the Observatory may collaborate with suitably qualified individuals, inviting them to visit the island for short periods to work on particular projects concerning our data. I have already mentioned above some of the possibilities for analysis: a first priority is to examine our very large Blackbird sample, and we also hope to carry out equivalent studies on some other species for which we now have data on the computer.

We are very grateful to the Carnegie Trust for the grant which allowed us to purchase the computer and has helped us to make a good start with the data input and analysis. We would welcome enquiries from individuals with the skills and interest to help us make the most of the opportunity for future work that it has given us.

*Peter Slater*

# Miscellany

## **Vignettes;**

I was lucky to have several people willing to draw vignettes for the report and I would like to thank them all.

Phil Bristow; Red-necked Grebe, geese over Sheep Craig, Little Swift and Yellow-browed warbler.

Ian Fisher; Red Kite, Arctic Tern, Little Swift at North Light, Desert Wheatear and Short-toed Lark.

Hugh Harrop; Great Grey Shrike, Leach's Petrel and Killer Whale.

Clare Ross-Smith; Goldcrest, Baird's Sandpiper, Brambling, Arctic Terns, Hobby and Great Tit.

Dave Suddaby; White-fronted Goose, Baillon's Crake, Blackpoll and Buff-breasted Sandpiper.

Marc Thibault; Grey Wagtail.

## **The Fair Isle - Falklands connection.**

Following a very successful season on Fair Isle, Nigel Milius (assistant cook in 1990), spent the 1990/91 winter as a chef in the Falkland Islands. This winter he has gone one better in securing a post with the British Antarctic Survey at Halley Base in the Antarctic. Meanwhile Richard Schofield (assistant cook in 1991) is now working as a chef in the Falkland Islands. I think it's time for a change of career!!

## **Thanks**

The Directors of Fair Isle Bird Observatory Trust acknowledge with gratitude the financial contribution made by British Petroleum towards the cost of this Report.

# Friends of Fair Isle

For the relatively small sum of £10 you can help to ensure the future of Fair Isle Bird Observatory, by becoming a 'Friend of Fair Isle'.

'Friends' are entitled to a copy of the Annual Report and also receive two Newsletters per year, up-dating them on events at the Observatory. The brochure/booking form for the following season is distributed with the winter Newsletter. 'Friends' also benefit by receiving some degree of priority in bookings. This is offered in two forms:

- (1) for the peak September period booking will open for 'Friends' one month before other applicants (in effect bookings by 'Friends' for September 1994 will be accepted from 1 July 1992; general booking opens on 1 August), and
- (2) 'Friends' visiting the Lodge in August will be able to do so at 'low season' rates.

IF YOU ARE NOT ALREADY A 'FRIEND' PLEASE BECOME ONE NOW – AND IF YOU ARE, PERSUADE SOMEONE ELSE TO JOIN. By covenanting your subscription, for a minimum of 4 years, you enable FIBOT, a registered charity, to reclaim the income tax you have already paid, which greatly increases the value to FIBOT at no extra cost to yourself. A membership form is enclosed; enquiries and subscriptions will be welcomed by our Membership Secretary:

**Miss Sylvia Laing, Fair Isle Bird Observatory Trust,  
21 Regent Terrace, Edinburgh EH7 5BT.**



## Ornithology

It is most pleasing to be able to open this section by reporting that Fair Isle's seabirds enjoyed a successful breeding season in 1991. The Arctic Tern population continued to increase and the species enjoyed excellent breeding success, fledging over one chick per pair. Success was good on Shetland too, for the first time since 1983! Kittiwakes and Arctic Skuas experienced a return to near normal breeding success, while Puffins raised more chicks than in any year since monitoring began. An abundance of available, suitable sized, sandeels around Fair Isle was undoubtedly the cause of this change in fortunes, but it is important that we (and more importantly D.A.F.S) do not become complacent. The current ban on sandeel fishing must remain in operation for the foreseeable future.



It was very much a year of mixed fortunes on the migration front. The spring, dominated by northerly and westerly winds, was the worst on record. Numbers of common migrants were very low and there was a paucity of rarities. Only one *Sylvia* warbler occurred in May and only 2 Redstarts were recorded all spring(!) while regular visitors such as Osprey, Golden Oriole and Ortolan failed to make an appearance. In contrast the autumn was memorable. Goose passage was the largest ever, there was a phenomenal fall of thrushes and a whole string of island and national rarities.

A total of 204 species occurred during the year, just one short of the record total. Two species were new to the Island, one from the east, a Little Swift (only the second Scottish record) and one from the west, a Blackpoll Warbler. There were second Island records for Baird's Sandpiper and Baillon's Crake, an unprecedented arrival

of 4 Pechora Pipits, the first Desert Wheatear for over 20 years and the first Buff-breasted Sandpiper for over 10. A remarkable 9 Shorelarks were recorded following their three year absence. Other unusual sightings involved King Eider, Red Kite, American Golden Plover, Pectoral Sandpiper, Snowy Owl, Short-toed Lark (6), Woodlark, Olive-backed Pipit (4), Red-throated Pipit (4), Citrine Wagtail, Siberian Stonechat (5), Lanceolated Warbler (2), Greenish Warbler, Arctic Warbler (2), Radde's Warbler, Arctic Redpoll, Rustic Bunting, Little Bunting (6) and Yellow-breasted Bunting (5).

## Spring Migration

March opened with the wind in the south-east and this augured well for the next few days. A Brent Goose was at South Light on 1st and a Shelduck and Tufted Duck were seen next day. Waders were much in evidence with peak counts of 195 Oystercatcher, 62 Lapwing, 29 Ringed Plover and 18 Dunlin. The 3rd saw the first large arrival of Skylarks, with 380 counted, and an Iceland Gull that was to remain until April. Six Mistle Thrushes arrived next day, and highlights of the following week were 2 Kestrels, a Stonechat and a Waxwing, the latter something of a spring rarity.

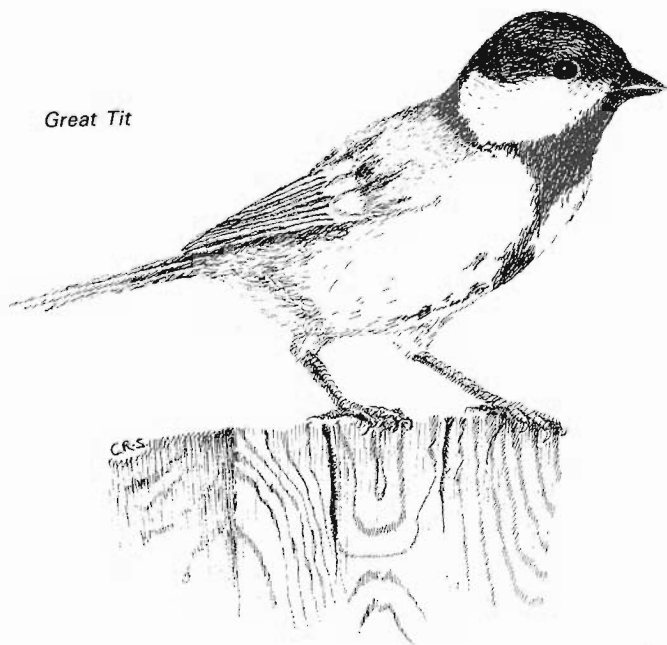
An easterly component to the wind on 12th produced 100 Blackbirds, the largest fall of the spring, along with a Moorhen and an early Bar-tailed Godwit, while the first of several Long-eared Owls was trapped next day. Further south-east wind produced a very early Chiffchaff on 18th keeping company with a Goldcrest and 14 Robins, while on 20th, 2 Wood Pigeons, 35 Meadow Pipits, a Black Redstart and a Stonechat were all new. Jack Snipe, Greenfinch, Peregrine, 3 Jackdaws and a Rook were highlights of 21st and the elusive wintering drake King Eider added a splash of colour on 24th. Three Whooper Swans flew north on 25th when the year's first Wheatear was logged, while the 27th produced the first returning Bonxie and 2 Water Rails.

April started quietly with the wind continuing to blow from the south-west, but a second Iceland Gull appeared on 2nd. The wind backed south-easterly overnight and on 3rd a Long-eared Owl and Siskin were found. Five Linnets and a Stonechat were the stars of 5th while a small arrival occurred on 6th, with 200 Meadow Pipits, 6 Pied and 6 White Wagtails, 10 Goldcrests and a Redpoll logged. The 7th brought a Woodcock, Ring Ousel and 16 Wood Pigeons and belatedly, the first Puffins appeared offshore next day. On 10th the wintering Great Spotted Woodpecker was last seen but even more unusual was a handsome male Goldfinch that took up residence outside the Observatory next day. The wind decreased on 12th and 5 Whooper Swans flew north. Other arrivals included 30 Wheatears and 30 Chaffinch while Grey Wagtail, Swallow and Yellowhammer were all new for the year. The 13th dawned calm and sunny and one lucky individual, on his return from early morning census work, bumped into a Hoopoe feeding on Vaasetter. Despite foregoing breakfast and extensive searching it was not relocated, but despair changed to delight later in the day when Fair Isle's fourth Red Kite was located, being mobbed by an astounding 60 migrant Ravens! A fine summer plumaged Lapland Bunting, 16 Whooper Swans, 75 Fieldfare and the first Arctic Skua of the year were also logged. The wind moved into the north on 15th and remained there for several days bringing migration to a virtual standstill. The only arrivals of note were a Peregrine, Crossbill, Greenfinch and 2 Siskins.

After what seemed an eternity the wind finally moved back into the south-east on 23rd. Next day 130 Wheatears, a Black Redstart, 7 Bramblings, a Redpoll another

Crossbill and the first Whimbrel were found. On 25th Wheatears increased to 180 and Chiffchaffs to 7. The wind backed easterly on 27th and the 28th proved to be the best day of the spring to date. A Little Bunting was unearthed at Pund and a Short-toed Lark was found at Schoolton, while other goodies were a ringtail Hen Harrier, a Greenshank and a Common Sandpiper. A Great Spotted Woodpecker was the highlight of a rather disappointing 29th but the 30th produced an exciting finale to the month. A Great Tit was found at Lower Stoneybrake, but proved frustratingly elusive for several hours, a Goldfinch flew north, a Wryneck was found near the Kirk and 2 Tree Sparrows appeared. A Tree Pipit, 2 Sparrowhawks and 3 Ring Ousels were also logged.

*Great Tit*

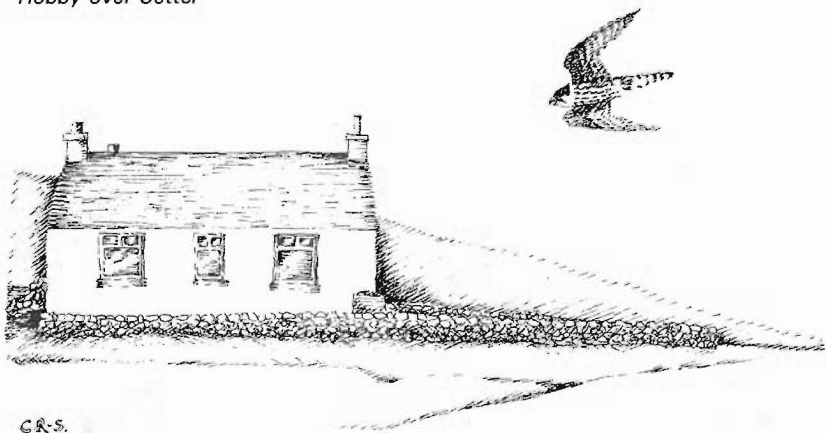


Unfortunately the easterly airflow did not continue into May. An anticyclone became established to the west of the British Isles and persisted to the end of the month, while Scandinavia was dominated by low pressure. Fair Isle was thus subjected to an endless northerly/westerly airstream and May was probably the worst on record. Highlights of the opening day were Grasshopper Warbler, Short-eared Owl and 3 Ring Ousels. A quiet few days followed, enlivened only by a Wryneck and Lapland Bunting on 3rd, a Black-tailed Godwit on 4th and 2 Shoveler on 5th. The 6th brought the only south-east breeze we were to witness during May and along with it came a couple of surprises. A Canada Goose had 'local' observers rushing to South Green where it fed during the morning and an adult Little Gull flew over Field later in the day. A Bullfinch, Grasshopper Warbler and 4 Shelduck were also found. Arctic Tern, House Martin and Sedge Warbler on 7th, and Sand Martin, Whinchat, Redstart and Pied Flycatcher on 8th were all new for the year. Among other arrivals on 8th were 140 Wheatear, 14 Whimbrel, 26 Golden Plover, and 5 Woodcock, while a ringtail Hen Harrier was the star of the 9th.

With the wind now firmly in the west there was little evidence of migration over the next few days although 31 Whimbrel arrived on 11th along with a Grey Wagtail and a Wryneck. The best bird though eluded all birdwatchers, being seen late in the evening by Jerry Stout; a stunning male Snowy Owl sat on the wall running west from Leogh. Despite extensive searching early next day the Owl was not relocated. A Long-eared Owl provided a little compensation on 13th but an unexpected Red-throated Pipit, singing at Springfield on 14th, cheered observers up. The same day produced the year's first Sandwich Terns, two flying north over the Rippack. Ducks provided the highlights on 15th and 16th with a pair of Pintail and Gadwall respectively. On 17th a long awaited Bluethroat sang at Barkland with the second Short-toed Lark of the spring found at Upper Stoneybrake shortly afterwards, while the years first Red-throated Diver flew over calling. The wind went southerly overnight and the following afternoon observers were thrown into confusion by the penetrating calls of Red-throated Pipits at Utra, Boinni Mire and Tarryfield. Fortunately next day two had settled together in the Boinni Mire, both looking different to the earlier Springfield bird. Other highlights of the 18th were 2 Sedge Warblers, 4 Siskins and a Yellowhammer.

The westerly wind increased on 19th-20th becoming gale force on 21st and observers were left wondering whether any sizeable numbers of spring migrants would ever arrive! One lucky individual saw a Red-necked Phalarope at Spritery Hole on 22nd, but it disappeared before anyone else could get there. A male Bluethroat was the highlight on 25th and the first Sylvia warbler of the spring, a Lesser Whitethroat, was found amidst much celebration on 26th! The 28th was a little better with a scattering of common migrants including single Green and 3 Common Sandpipers, 2 Swifts and a Spotted Flycatcher. Still the wind continued to blow from the north-west and the month ended with a female Bluethroat, a Black Redstart and a super male Grey-headed Wagtail on 31st. So May had ended and yet the spring migration had barely started!

Despite continuing northerly winds June began well with a Common Buzzard drifting north, high over the Rippack. Dunlin reached 27 on 2nd and a Snow Bunting brought a smile to the faces of more southern observers on 3rd. The first of 10 Common Rosefinches was found at Midway on 4th when both Long-eared and Short-eared Owls were seen and a female Lapland Bunting frequented the base of Malcolm's Head. The wind moved into the west on 5th but another Rosefinch appeared along with 30 Swallows and the spring's first Whitethroat. Not to be outdone the 6th produced the second Redstart of the year and 80 Swallows were counted! The 7th proved a better day, at last, with Icterine Warbler, Crossbill, 3 Rosefinch, 20 Willow Warblers, 4 Lesser Whitethroats and the first Blackcaps of the spring. The first south-easterly for over a month blew on the 8th and produced immediate results with a female Rustic Bunting at Utra, a Bluethroat, a male Red-backed Shrike, 3 Rosefinch, 2 Cuckoos, the first of the year; and 15 Chiffchaffs. The wind increased and backed easterly on 9th and a good sprinkling of migrants appeared next day. Rosefinches increased to 5 and other finds included Wood Sandpiper, Grey Plover, 2 Turtle Doves and a female Red-backed Shrike. Hirundines were much in evidence with 40 Swallows, 15 House Martins and 2 Sand Martins. On 11th the only Marsh Warbler of the year performed well at Pund, while the 12th produced a new Red-backed Shrike and the spring's only Reed Warbler. A new Icterine Warbler was located on 14th and a Leach's Petrel seen from the Good Shepherd on 15th was a surprise. The next few days produced a series of interesting sightings. A Sandwich Tern frequented South Harbour on 17th, 2 Snow Buntings were seen on 18th and a Quail sang at Upper Stoneybrake during the evening of 19th. The 20th saw two good Fair Isle records, a Hobby that flew over Setter and a fine male Scaup in South Haven.



## Autumn Migration

July produced a few unusual sightings. Quails were heard singing on 2nd and 18th and single Rosefinches appeared on 5th, 12th and 13th. There was a series of unseasonal records of common migrants with Lesser Whitethroat, Whitethroat, Spotted and Pied Flycatcher and Sand Martin all recorded early in the month, presumably late spring migrants following the inclement weather of May. A few Crossbills appeared, with the largest flock recorded numbering 15 on 17th, the same day as a male Red-backed Shrike was a surprise capture in the Plantation.

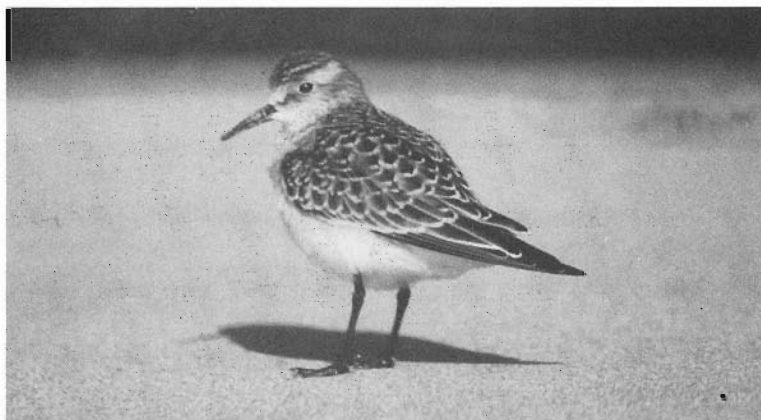
Return migration really got underway in the last ten days of the month. There were 25 Knot on 23rd and 12 Whimbrel a Greenshank and only the third Cuckoo of the year on 25th. A Green Sandpiper was seen on 30th while the last day of the month produced 150 Oystercatcher, 11 Knot, 16 Dunlin, a Ruff and 115 Common Gulls.

Early August was quiet with waders continuing to be the migrants most in evidence. Green Sandpipers increased to 3 on 1st and 4 Ruff, 13 Crossbills and a Long-eared Owl were highlights next day. The 5th saw 130 migrant Common Gulls and 16 Sanderling, and the third 'mid-summer' Black Redstart was recorded on 6th. Apart from 7 Knot on 8th, a Shelduck and Pink-footed Goose on 10th and a Shoveler on 12th, the next week proved uneventful. Things brightened up somewhat on 15th when a super adult summer plumage American Golden Plover was found in the company of its commoner cousins at Kennaby. Unfortunately it flew off south with 3 Golden Plovers shortly afterwards and was not seen again. Next day there was a marked arrival of Wheatears, with 100 counted, and an early Goldcrest. Twelve Cormorants flew south on 17th and 120 Common Gulls were present on 19th.

With a low pressure area moving into England on 21st the wind finally moved out of the west and into the south-east producing an interesting few days. On 22nd waders were much in evidence with 21 Ringed Plover, 75 Golden Plover, 25 Dunlin, 4 Black-tailed and 1 Bar-tailed Godwit and 75 Redshank logged; while passerines were represented by 40 White Wagtails, 180 Wheatears, 250 Meadow Pipits and

best of all, a Barred Warbler. Next day Reed Warbler and Tree Pipit were new, while a Wryneck, 10 each of Garden and Willow Warbler a Sedge Warbler and 2 Pied Flycatchers were found on 24th. Reports of a Phylloscopus warbler sporting wingbars sent observers scurrying to the Gully early on 25th. The culprit was soon identified as a Greenish Warbler which remained into September. Other arrivals included 10 Grey Herons, a Kestrel, 3 Ruff and 20 Swallows. Two Wood Warblers, the first of the year, were the highlights of 26th; while on 27th, 2 Manx and the first Sooty Shearwater of the year were observed at sea and a Rosefinch and an extremely early Lapland Bunting were found ashore. The 28th saw White Wagtails increase to 75 and Ruff to 8, and Turtle Dove and Tree Sparrow were the highlights of 30th. The month ended with a Leach's Petrel seen from the Good Shepherd.

Westerly winds dominated the first half of September but the period was not without interest. On 1st waders included 8 Knot a Jack Snipe and a Green Sandpiper. An early Great Northern Diver and 2 Barred Warblers were the best finds the following day, when Meadow Pits increased to 450 and 45 White Wagtails were counted.



*Baird's Sandpiper*

*Photo: Paul Harvey*

A Rosefinch was the highlight of 3rd. Most people had got as far as the Plantation after breakfast on the 5th, but beat a hasty retreat to North Haven as news of Fair Isle's second ever Baird's Sandpiper spread. Unfortunately it flew off before the 'less fit' observers arrived but was relocated later in the day, when it gave stunning views as it fed on North Haven and Buness. A Red-throated Diver and 42 Golden Plover were also seen. Despite continuing westerly winds a well marked, but rather elusive, Yellow-breasted Bunting had everyone glued to the Pund oat crop on 6th. A first winter Glaucous Gull, a long overdue addition to the year list, was the main attraction of the 7th and the northern theme continued next day when the autumn's first Snow Bunting was encountered. Increases on 8th included Skylarks to 70, and Meadow Pipit to 450, while 26 Teal and 25 Curlew represented good counts.

With a high over Iceland and a low over Scandinavia fresh westerly winds produced a quiet few days, punctuated only by a Long-eared Owl on 10th. Those leaving on the Good Shepherd that day were lucky though, recording 2 Sooty Shearwaters and an adult Long-tailed Skua, while another adult Long-tailed Skua was seen off Buness next day. The high moved east over Fair Isle late on 11th producing light southerly winds and clear skies on 12th. Although observers were hopeful of a better day nobody was prepared for the feast of rarities resulting from this change in the

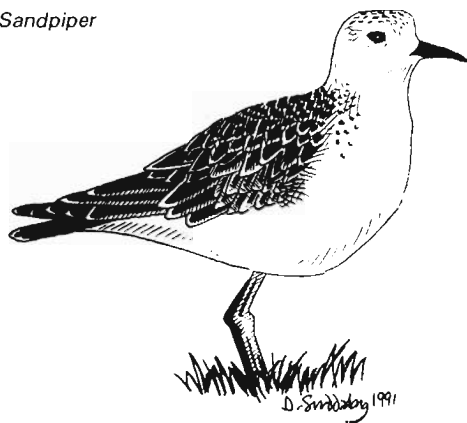
weather. Those that consumed breakfast most quickly were best rewarded finding 2 Arctic Warblers together at the Plantation, and then proceeding to Upper Stoneybrake to find a Yellow-breasted Bunting! Almost immediately a Pechora Pipit was seen below Shirva and panic spread amongst the majority of observers, who were still watching the Arctic Warbler! Unfortunately despite extensive searching the pipit could not be relocated, but by dusk the Yellow-breasted Bunting tally had increased to 3 and 2 Rosefinches and a Reed Warbler had been found. Common migrants were surprisingly scarce though, with just 10 Willow Warblers counted. The wind veered south-west overnight and observers were brought back down to earth with a Water Rail being the most significant find of 13th, a Long-eared Owl of the 14th and an adult Pomarine Skua of the 15th.

A low pressure area had moved into Britain by 16th resulting in a strong south-easterly airflow across the northern North Sea. Heavy rain hampered birding but persistent observers still managed to discover 5 Barred Warblers and 4 Rosefinches. Five Pintail though were perhaps rarer in Fair Isle terms. Even though the wind veered north-west overnight anticipation was high and observers were not to be disappointed. Early morning was quiet but it was soon obvious that birds were arriving. The fifth Yellow-breasted Bunting of the autumn was found at Shirva followed quickly by the discovery of a Yellow-browed Warbler at Kennaby. The bird that had everybody running though was flushed from Upper Stoneybrake during the afternoon, the autumn's second Pechora Pipit. It soon settled in Da Water but gave little more than flight views. Other arrivals were a further Yellow-browed Warbler, a Wryneck, 9 Pied Flycatchers, 8 Whinchats, 3 Tree Pipits, 15 Willow Warblers, 300 Meadow Pipits, a Short-eared Owl and 2 Little Stints. Despite a strong south-west wind on 18th an astonishing third Pechora Pipit was seen briefly near the Double Dyke. Other arrivals included 10 Jack Snipe, and 2 Crossbills. The wind moderated next day when a Bluethroat and a Wood Warbler were the best finds. Four Sooty Shearwaters glided north and the first Pink-foot flock of the autumn (16) moved south. A Yellow-browed Warbler was new on 20th but most attention was focused on a Pechora Pipit giving stunning views at Setter. It was assumed to be the Gilsetter bird of 18th.

The wind backed south-east on 21st and increased to near gale force. An Icterine Warbler skulked at Shirva and Jack Snipe increased to 14. The following day a Red-throated Pipit, that was to remain elusive for the whole of its 7 day stay, was seen or heard at several sites. A late Nightingale was identified at Springfield and raptors featured well, with 2 Kestrels and 2 Peregrines. In the afternoon, observers watching the Setter Pechora left it only to find another just down the road at Field. It or possibly another was also seen at Lower Stoneybrake! On 23rd a ringtail Hen Harrier was on Vaasetter and other notables included Barnacle Goose, Moorhen, 2 Grey Plovers and 6 Lapland Buntings. Most observers remained inside on 24th as a gale force south-westerly wind raged outside, but those that did venture out were rewarded with 200 Pink-feet and 24 Greylag Geese, Grey Wagtail, 2 Black Redstarts and 12 Lapland Buntings. Winds moderated next day and observers were treated to the sight of what proved to be the only Corncrake of the year strutting around the Post Office! Goose passage continued with 85 Pink-feet moving south, while 10 Jack Snipe, 50 Wheatear and 8 Whinchat were counted. Hoini soon became the focus of attention on 26th when a Buff-breasted Sandpiper, initially seen fleetingly over Vaasetter and the School, settled there. However, it was not until several hours later that most observers clinched good views at the Brecks of Busta, where it remained until 28th.

A stunning Citrine Wagtail at Schoolton soon got observers on the move again, while a Rosefinch at Quoy and 25 Lapland Buntings were almost forgotten. Visible migration was also evident with 23 Cormorant, 2 Whooper Swans and 6 Barnacle Geese flying south. Another American wader, this time a Pectoral Sandpiper at Pund,

*Buff-breasted Sandpiper*



competed for attention with a Red-breasted Flycatcher at Midway on 27th, while Skylarks increased to 280 and Lapland Buntings to 30.

A deep depression moved in over the country on 28th producing a switch to north-east winds, 'depression' though, was certainly not an adjective to describe the atmosphere on Fair Isle. A Little Bunting was found at Kennaby but the Meadow Burn soon became the subject of intense scrutiny after reports of a 'small crane' lurking in the reed grass there. The culprit was soon pounced upon and proved to be Fair Isle's second Baillon's Crane. After ringing it was released in the Observatory garden where it gave stunning views as it fed unperturbed by its assembled admirers. News that a Lanceolated Warbler had been found at Bulls Park resulted in a rapid exodus though, leaving the Crane unattended! Indeed some observers due to leave the isle that afternoon arrived at the Bulls Park just as their Loganair plane was landing at the airstrip! There were no regrets though as the warbler fed within a foot of the excited and relieved group. Not to be forgotten were 2 Bluethroats, 3 Barred Warblers, 250 Twite and 430 Meadow Pipits while a Pomarine Skua was seen from the Good Shepherd. Inevitably the 29th was quieter but still produced 4 Yellow-browed Warblers, a Red-breasted Flycatcher, 8 Greenland Whitefronts and a good scattering of common migrants.

The wind remained just east of north and the next day dawned sunny. A few thrushes had arrived; 50 Redwing and 10 Song Thrushes. A Richard's Pipit was found at the School and a Short-toed Lark was seen at Springfield. After lunch 4 Red-breasted Flycatchers, 2 Yellow-browed Warblers, 4 Barred Warblers, 15 each of Blackcap and Chiffchaff, 40 Goldcrests and 9 Bramblings were found; but pride of place went to Fair Isle's first Blackpoll Warbler sunning itself at Busta.

October also opened with a predominantly westerly airstream persisting for the first week. The month opened well with a Grey Phalarope in South Haven and notable arrivals of 17 Jack Snipe and 350 Skylarks. A ringtail Hen Harrier and a Glaucous Gull aroused most excitement next day. The wind increased to near gale force on 3rd seriously hampering birding, with the most interesting find a late Arctic Tern sheltering in North Haven. A Goosander, something of an island rarity, put in a brief appearance on 4th, while visible migration was the main feature of 5th, with 5 Whooper Swans, 6 Pink-feet and 23 Barnacle Geese flying south. An adult Long-tailed Skua put in a pre-breakfast visit to North Haven on 7th, giving late risers a second chance when it was relocated in the Upper Leogh vegetable garden. Attention turned to the sea where 2 Sootys, 2 Storm Petrels and 9 Long-tailed Ducks were logged. Ashore there was a small arrival of 150 Redwing and 12 Blackcaps.



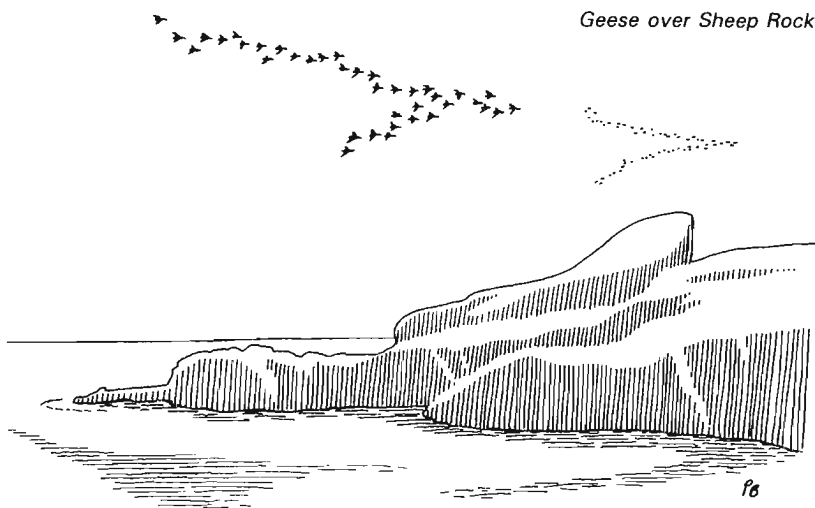
With a low pressure moving into Scotland the wind backed south-east on 8th producing a Little Bunting, 300 Redwing, 60 Bramblings and 6 Reed Buntings. Eyes were now glued to the weather maps as an anticyclone appeared to be building over Northern Europe and Scandinavia. With light north-east winds on 9th migrants were making landfall throughout the day. Good counts included 10 Whooper Swans, 27 Pink-feet and 240 unidentified grey geese, 2 Sparrowhawks, 60 Song Thrush, 1500 Redwings and 120 Bramblings. Rarer finds included a new Short-toed Lark and single Yellow-browed Warbler and Red-breasted Flycatcher. Overnight, excitement was rife, with a south-east wind originating from a long way east accompanied by drizzle. Redwings were heard overhead all night and it was a relief when dawn finally arrived. What a spectacle it proved to be! Vast flocks of Redwings were everywhere, they were calling overhead constantly and the ground was alive with them. The total for the day was estimated at 25000, but there could easily have been four times this number! A Richard's Pipit, the first of 3, was found at Setter and moments later a few observers were giving chase to a small locustella warbler at Pund. Eventually it gave itself up at Upper Stoneybrake, proving to be the second Lanceolated Warbler of the autumn. Shortly after lunch there were rumours of a locustella warbler with white tail tips at the Boinni Mire, but barely had observers got there when a Radde's Warbler was reported skulking in the Meadow Burn. A new Short-toed Lark was found at Upper Stoneybrake, an Olive-backed Pipit at Bulls Park and a Shorelark at Mavers Geo.

The log took longer than usual that evening and the main arrivals read as follows: 70 Greylags, 16 Barnacles, 71 Wigeon, 350 Skylarks, 450 Meadow Pipits, 5 Redstarts, 25000+ Redwings, 500 Song Thrush, 250 Fieldfares, 250 Blackbirds, 8 Ring Ousels, 2 Reed Warblers, 50 Blackcaps, 8 Yellow-browed Warblers, 60 Chiffchaffs, all northern or eastern types, 150 Goldcrests, 20 Chaffinch and 600 Bramblings. Conditions were similar next day but in the afternoon visibility became very poor. Redwings and Song Thrushes were present in similar numbers but Blackbirds increased to 500 and Ring Ousels to 15. There were widespread decreases but 4 Water Rails, 20 Jack Snipe and 20 Reed Buntings were the more notable increases. Best finds though, were a second Shorelark at Easter Lothar, 3 new Little Buntings and another Olive-backed Pipit. On 12th Blackbirds increased to 1000 and there were still 20000 Redwings! Other arrivals included 67 Barnacle Geese, 30 Jack Snipe, 3 Long-eared Owls, and 6 Redstarts. Thrushes were now departing and by 13th Redwings had fallen to 5000, but Long-eared Owls increased to 4 and Robins to 20. The best find though was a Hawfinch at Hjukni Geo. Next day the wind was blowing from the north-west and the fog finally cleared. Geese took full advantage of the following wind and clear conditions and a record 1500 Greylags flew south along with 100 Barnacles and 50 Pink-feet. Grounded migrants included Pintail, Mistle Thrush, and Yellowhammer. A bright immature male Bluethroat frequented Gilsetter and 2 new Shorelarks were on Hoini. The 15th brought 20 Snow Buntings and the third Short-toed Lark of the autumn, teaming up with the first at Utra, but most unusual was a Slavonian Grebe found in South Harbour.

A deep low was now moving to the north of Shetland signalling strong winds and a much needed respite. A quiet few days ensued, enlivened only by 2 Yellowhammers on 16th, a Red-necked Grebe and 2 Glaucous Gulls on 18th and 2 late Swallows on 19th. The 20th saw a moderation in the wind enabling a few birds to be found. A Pintail, 2 Goldeneye, a Little Auk and 4 Linnets were new, but most excitement was generated by the autumn's third Olive-backed Pipit at the airstrip and a new Richard's Pipit. Two further Richard's and 2 Shorelarks had remained to weather the storm. The next day dawned calm and sunny, if cold, and a Spotted Crake found in the Pund ditch caused a stir. It was trapped and ringed and unbelievably another unringed individual was later found crossing the road at Quoy! Three new Shorelarks were on Meoness and 3 White-fronted Geese flew

north. The following few days were dominated by northern species, not surprising in view of a continued north-west wind. Seven Whooper Swans, 11 Goldeneye and 60 Snow Buntings brightened the 22nd, while Great Northern Diver and 118 Little Auks were highlights of 23rd.

The wind moved into the south-east on 25th, it was to stay there for the rest of the month. Immediate results were 250 Blackbirds, 100 Fieldfare, 50 Song Thrushes, 400 Redwings, 2 Lesser Whitethroats, 30 Chiffchaffs and 15 Goldcrests, but the most attractive bird was a Great Grey Shrike busily plucking a Starling at Schoolton. The 26th started quietly and when the shrike decided to eat the Short-toed Lark the isle was devoid of rarities for the first time in over 6 weeks. This soon changed though. Two Siberian Stonechats were found at Field just before lunch

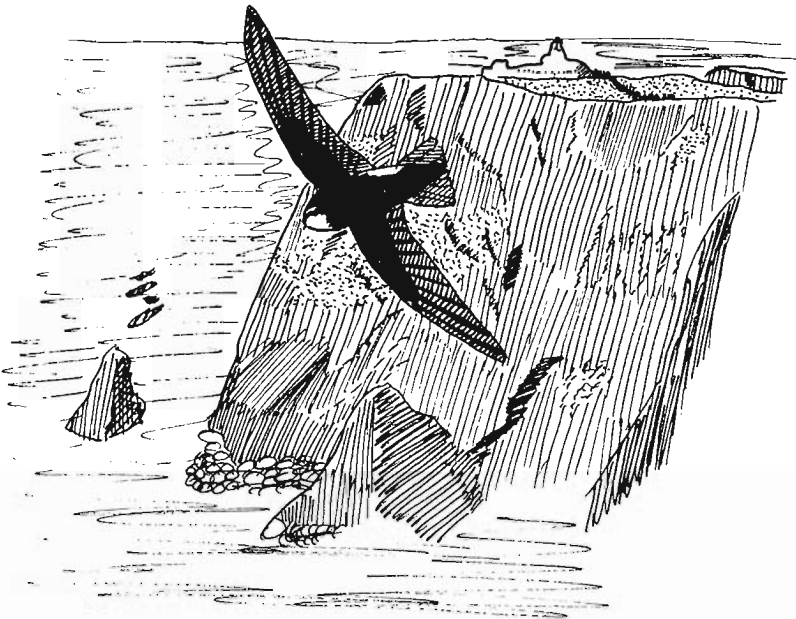


and then avid rugby world cup fans, on route to see England deservedly turn over the Scots, were confronted by a Desert Wheatear in the road at Skerryholm! Unfortunately the bird moved rapidly north-west and after 20 minutes was not seen again. Other arrivals included 6 Long-eared Owls and 3200 Fieldfares. A third Siberian Stonechat and a very late Yellow-browed Warbler were best finds the following day with a supporting cast including 4 Water Rails, 4 Black Redstarts, and late Redstart and Reed Warbler. The wind increased on 28th when highlights included a Spotted Crake - a surprise to an unsuspecting dazler, and 40 Brambling. On 29th, 2500 Fieldfare, 300 Blackbird, and 500 Redwing were logged along with 40 Woodcock and 6 Long-eared Owls. The south-east wind reached force 9 on 30th, but those who ventured out deserved the handsome male Bullfinch and Siberian Stonechat that awaited them.

In contrast to the last day of October the first of November was full of incident. During the morning the autumn's fourth Olive-backed Pipit was found at Pund while other newcomers were 5 Herons, 33 Greylags, 35 Woodcock, a late Wheatear, 300 Blackbirds, 1700 Fieldfare, 1000 Redwings and 5 Bullfinches. The most unexpected event of the autumn however unfolded late in the afternoon at North Light, when

Scotland's second and Shetland's first Little Swift was found cruising around the cliffs. A dawn vigil failed to locate the swift next day, when a Great Northern Diver and yet another Shorelark were the only significant arrivals. A Peregrine, 3 Water Rails and 7 Bullfinches were highlights of 3rd. The next few days were quiet with the most notable sightings being a late Bonxie on 4th, a Waxwing on 8th, yet another Siberian Stonechat, a Shorelark and 4 Little Auks on 9th and another Waxwing on 14th. The 15th saw the autumn's last rarity, in the guise of an Arctic Redpoll, at Midway. It remained next day when 3 Waxwings flew south and a flock of 100 Snow Buntings harboured a late Lapland Bunting.

A strong easterly wind on 18th produced a few interesting arrivals next day with a super Woodlark being the pick of the bunch. The second Great Grey Shrike of the autumn also appeared and 250 Blackbirds, 300 Fieldfare, 50 Redwing, a Chiffchaff and 2 Greenfinches were logged. A few Little Auks, Glaucous Gulls, Long-eared Owls and Waxwings maintained the interest until the end of the month, but a Rosefinch and Swallow on 30th were exceptional. A fitting end to an autumn full of surprises.



*Little Swift at North Light*

## Systematic List

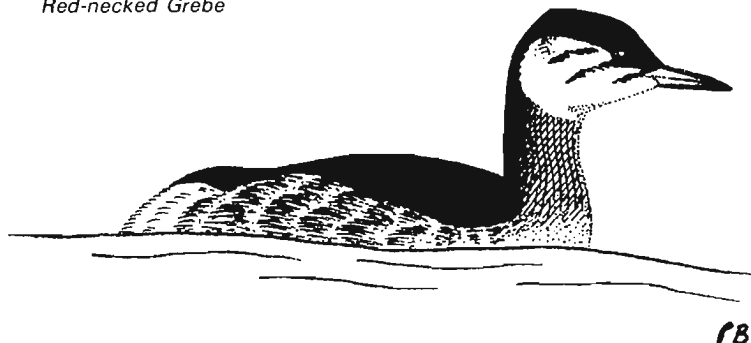
\* Details of all birds preceded by an asterisk are still being considered by the British Birds Rarities Committee.

**RED – THROATED DIVER** *Gavia stellata*. The first on 17th May was followed by singles on 3 dates in June and 3 dates in July. Autumn passage occurred from 5th September-23rd November, with singles on 6 dates in September and 2 on 20th, singles on 6 dates in October and singles on 4 dates in November.

**GREAT NORTHERN DIVER** *Gavia immer*. Another poor showing with singles recorded on 26th January, 2nd & 23rd October and 2nd November.

**RED-NECKED GREBE** *Podiceps grisegena*. A juvenile moulting into first-winter was present from 18th-20th October. Although found in South Haven it spent most of its stay off the Holms. The first record since 1983.

*Red-necked Grebe*



**SLAVONIAN GREBE** *Podiceps auritus*. One in South Harbour on 15th October.

**FULMAR** *Fulmarus glacialis*. Present all year, with 'Blue' Fulmars seen most months. The whole island census located 35213 Apparently Occupied Sites, indicating that the breeding population continues to increase. At monitored plots breeding productivity averaged 0.52 chicks fledged/Apparently Occupied Site, a significant improvement upon last year.

**SOOTY SHEARWATER** *Puffinus griseus*. Records comprised singles seen from the Isle on 27th & 29th August and 2nd September, 1-7 seen from the Isle, or on crossings, on 12 dates 7th-28th September and later singles on 7th, 9th & 17th October.

**MANX SHEARWATER** *Puffinus puffinus*. Singles were seen from the Good Shepherd on 13th June and 20th September, and 2 flew west past the Isle on 27th August. A very poor showing.

**STORM PETREL** *Hydrobates pelagicus*. Regularly recorded in small numbers on crossings from 13th June-23rd September, max. 12 on 20th August. Large numbers were again attracted to tape lures at night but sightings of birds from the Isle during daylight were scarce, with one on 8th August, 4 on 21st & 2 on 23rd September and 2 on 7th October. A juvenile found at Field on 14th October was later released at the North Haven.

**LEACH'S PETREL** *Oceanodroma leucorhoa*. Singles were seen from the Good Shepherd on 15th June and 31st August. An unprecedented number were attracted to tape lures during the summer with 10 individuals trapped between 18th July and 6th August.

**GANNET** *Sula bassana*. Present from at least mid-February. After a period of rapid increase during the 1980's the population now appears to have stabilised with 687 nests counted in 1991. Productivity at monitored nests was 0.52 chicks fledged/nest, only in 1987 was breeding success lower. However a severe NW gale on 21st May resulted in a heavy sea that washed away or led to the desertion of 24 monitored nests. If these sites are excluded from the sample breeding success would be 0.62 chicks/nest.

**CORMORANT** *Phalacrocorax carbo*. An adult present from 6th January to 18th February was joined by a second-year on 2nd. A poor spring passage comprised singles on 31st March, and 18th & 22nd April. Autumn passage occurred between 5th August and 19th October, with 1-6 on 27 dates, 12 on 17th August and 23 on 26th September. An adult was seen regularly from late October until the end of the year.

**SHAG** *Phalacrocorax aristotelis*. Present all year. Many nests were washed out during the NW gale on 21st May. Breeding productivity at the monitoring plot was 1.18 chicks fledged/nest.

**GREY HERON** *Ardea cinerea*. Spring records comprised singles on 5th & 11th May, and on 9 dates in June, with 2 on 20th June. Singles on 10 dates in July preceded almost daily records 1st August-3rd November, with heaviest passage in late August-September when high counts of 10 on 25th August and 9 on 6th September. Thereafter occasional singles until late December.

**WHOOPEE SWAN** *Cygnus cygnus*. Recorded in mid-winter for the second year in succession with 7 on 13th February. Spring records comprised 3 on 25th March and in April, 5 on 12th, 16 on 13th & 3 on 14th. Autumn passage spanned 26th September-12th November with 1-5 recorded on 17 dates and 10 on 9th, 8 on 14th & 7 on 22nd October. Three juveniles remained into December, with 2 still present at the end of the year.

**PINK-FOOTED GOOSE** *Anser brachyrhynchus*. Two from 25th-29th May was the sole spring record. One on 24th July was only the second summer record for the Isle and was followed by others on 10th & 25th August, the latter remaining into September. Autumn passage spanned 19th September-20th October, with main movements of 200+ on 24th and 85 on 25th September and 50 on 14th October. Four remained into November, with 2 still present on 30th.

## White-fronted Geese



**WHITE-FRONTED GOOSE** *Anser albifrons*. A party of 8 of the Greenland race flew north on 29th September and 3, race unknown, flew north on 21st October. The best showing since 1985.

**GREYLAG GOOSE** *Anser anser*. Three present from 18th-29th January continued the recent spate of winter records. Two from 1st-6th May was the sole spring record, but a mid-summer record of 8 on 2nd July was unusual. In autumn 24 on 24th September and 2 on 6th October preceded daily records from 9th October-5th November, with a record 1500 flying south on 14th October. Two remained until late November with a single on 21st-23rd December the only later record.

**CANADA GOOSE** *Branta canadensis*. One at South Green on 6th May was the first since 1987 and only the seventh Island record.

**BARNACLE GOOSE** *Branta leucopsis*. In autumn, one on 23rd and 6 on 28th September preceded daily passage 4th-23rd October, with heaviest movement from 12th-15th when 67, 48, 100+, and 65 recorded respectively. Four remained until 3rd November with a late single on 16th.

**BRENT GOOSE** *Branta bernicla*. An individual of the dark bellied race frequented Muckle Uri Geo from 28th February-6th March.

**SHELDUCK** *Tadorna tadorna*. An above average showing with spring singles on 2nd March and 21st April and 4 on 6th May. Then in autumn, singles on 13th July and 21st July-1st August, 2 on 10th August, 2 on 6th-7th September, one on 12th September-4th October and another on 8th October.

**WIGEON** *Anas penelope*. Recorded in mid-winter for the second year in succession with 1 on 10th-11th February. Singles on 25th April and 13th June were the only spring records. In autumn singles on 4 dates 13th July-1st August preceded almost daily records 25th August-3rd November. Heaviest passage occurred from mid-September to mid-October, with September max. of 17 on 24th & 26th, and October max. of 71 on 10th the highest count since 1975. The only later records were 3 on 8th November and 2 on 5th December.

**GADWALL** *Anas strepera*. A pair were seen at several places around the Island on 16th May. The first since 1988.

**TEAL** *Anas crecca*. Singles on 16th February, and 3rd & 13th March preceded light spring passage with 1-4 on 15 dates 7th April-9th May. In June, singles on 9th & 12th and in July one on 19th. In autumn almost daily from 20th August-21st October, with main movements 26 on 8th and 16 on 22nd September, and 10 on 1st October. In November 12 on 1st and 1-3 on several dates to 30th.

**MALLARD** *Anas platyrhynchos*. A female over-wintered with the domestic ducks at Field and was joined by a male in April. In spring there were daily records of 1-5 from 25th March-26th June, and in autumn recorded daily from 21st August-5th November, with heaviest passage in mid-October, max. of 20 on 22nd. November max. of 7 on 19th with a pair present with the domestic ducks at Field until the end of the year.

**PINTAIL** *Anas acuta*. Records comprised a pair on 15th May, 5 (2 males and 3 females) on 16th September, and single females on 14th & 20th October. Another good showing.

**SHOVELER** *Anas clypeata*. Two on 5th May and an eclipse male on 12th-13th August were the only records. The latter was the first August record since 1983.

**TUFTED DUCK** *Aythya fuligula*. A male on 2nd March was the only spring record and in mid-summer there was one on 5th-8th July. A good autumn showing comprised one on 22nd September, 1-6 daily 26th-30th September and singles on 5 dates 3rd-16th October.

**SCAUP** *Aythya marila*. A male frequented South Haven on 20th-21st June.

**EIDER** *Somateria mollissima*. Present all year, with a max. of 294 on 2nd September. A much lower peak count than in recent years.

**\*KING EIDER** *Somateria spectabilis*. The male first seen in 1988 was present until 24th March.

**LONG-TAILED DUCK** *Clangula hyemalis*. One-3 were recorded on 7 dates in January-March. Spring records comprised 1-4 on 26 dates 3rd April-18th May with 8 on 16th April. There was a marked autumn passage with 1-14 daily from 4th-27th October, followed by regular records of 1-3 until the end of the year.

**COMMON SCOTER** *Melanitta nigra*. Records comprised a female on 30th March, a male off South Light from 26th July-1st August, 8 flying south on 25th August and further singles on 6th October, 22nd November and 5th December.

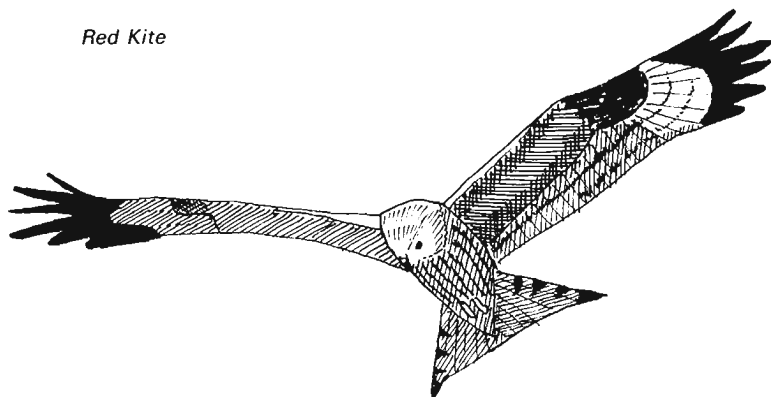
**GOLDENEYE** *Bucephala clangula*. Singles on 11th & 23rd February were the only records in the first half of the year. In autumn there were 1-5 on 9 dates 13th October-11th November, with 11 on 22nd October the highest count since 1963. One from 5th-8th December was the only later record.

**RED-BREASTED MERGANSER** *Mergus serrator*. Singles on 6th-7th January, 18th-20th March, 29th April, 23rd & 25th May, 6th-7th & 15th-16th June. Then in autumn light passage from 14th September-15th November, with September max. of 10 on 23rd; October max. of 8 on 3 dates; and November max. of 5 on 9th. Single males on 5th & 29th were the only December records.

**GOOSANDER** *Mergus merganser*. A redhead in Finniquoy bay for a few minutes on 4th October was the first recorded since 1986.

**RED KITE** *Milvus milvus*. What was thought to be an immature female gave stunning views as it patrolled the Isle from 13th-17th April. The fourth record, previous ones having occurred in 1979, 1984 and 1988.

*Red Kite*



**HEN HARRIER** *Circus cyaneus*. Ringtails were recorded on 28th-29th April, 9th May, 23rd September and 2nd October. The best showing since 1985.

**SPARROWHAWK** *Accipiter nisus*. Recorded in mid-winter for the second year in succession with one on 24th January. Light spring passage occurred from 2nd April-7th June with 1-2 on 21 dates. In autumn there were singles on 25th & 29th September, 8th, 10th & 14th October and 1st, 20th & 29th November, with 2 on 9th October. One on 24th December was unusual.

**BUZZARD** *Buteo buteo*. One flew north on 1st June. The first June record for more than 20 years.

**KESTREL** *Falco tinnunculus*. Singles on 3 dates in January and 2 dates in February may relate to the same over-wintering individual. Spring records comprised 2 on 6th and 1 on 21st March, singles on 9th, 18th & 19th May and 1-2 daily 9th-12th June. In autumn 1-2 recorded on 41 dates 25th July-20th October.



**MERLIN** *Falco columbarius*. There were mid-winter records on 14th & 22nd January. Light spring passage occurred between 25th March-5th June with singles on 16 dates and 2 on 15th May. In autumn one on 15th September preceded almost daily records of 1-2 from 24th September-26th October, after which there were occasional singles until 23rd November.

**HOBBY** *Falco subbuteo*. One on 20th June was the first since 1989.

**PEREGRINE** *Falco peregrinus*. Single females were recorded on 14th, 18th & 22nd January, 8th February, 21st & 23rd March and 17th & 24th-25th April. It seems likely that more than one individual was involved. There then followed an immature male on 8th May and an adult male on 19th June. In autumn there were regular reports of an immature female from 28th August to 24th October and an adult male from 22nd September to 12th November. In December a female was recorded on 9th and a male on 24th & 29th.

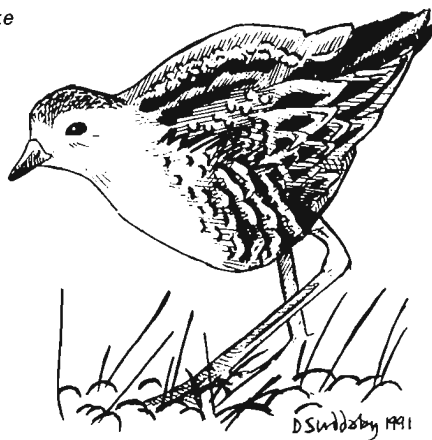
**QUAIL** *Coturnix coturnix*. Males were heard calling on 19th June and 2nd & 18th July.

**WATER RAIL** *Rallus aquaticus*. At least one wintered successfully. In spring there were 2 on 27th March and singles on 6 dates 11th-24th April. In autumn singles on 5 dates 13th-22nd September preceded marked passage 10th-28th October, max. of 4 on 11th & 27th. Three on 3rd November were followed by occasional sightings of 1-2 wintering birds into December.

**SPOTTED CRAKE** *Porzana porzana*. Three individuals, all in October, represents the best showing since 1985. On 21st individuals frequented the Pund ditch and Schoolton ditch and on 28th one was in Gilsetter.

**\*BAILLON'S CRAKE** *Porzana pusilla*. A juvenile seen briefly in the Meadow Burn on 28th September was trapped and then released in the Observatory Garden, where it fed well until inclement weather on 1st October. It was unfortunately found dead on the morning of the 2nd. This was the second record for the Island the first having been shot in 1929.

*Baillon's Crake*



**CORNCRAKE** *Crex crex*. One at Shirva on 25th September was the only record. 1985 is the only other year since the opening of the Observatory when just one individual was recorded.

**MOORHEN** *Gallinula chloropus*. In spring there were singles on 12th & 19th March. Autumn records comprised singles on 6 dates 23rd-30th September and 5 dates 15th-21st October.

**OYSTERCATCHER** *Haematopus ostralegus*. Early singles on 2nd & 21st February preceded the first large arrival of 45 on 26th February. The peak spring count of 195 occurred on 2nd March after which there were daily records until 2nd October. April max. was 180 on 16th and May max. 170 on 27th, the latter comprising non breeders. The breeding population was estimated to be 70 pairs. Autumn passage commenced in early July with heaviest movement in late July-August, July max. of 150 on 31st and August max. of 160 on 12th. Numbers decreased rapidly in late August with a September peak of 25 on 1st-2nd, after which counts were of 10 or less. In October there were 1-2 on 8 dates to 13th and a late single on 21st-22nd.

**RINGED PLOVER** *Charadrius hiaticula*. An early individual on 22nd February preceded daily records from 1st March, with an early spring peak of 29 on 3rd March. The breeding population numbered 18 pairs. Autumn passage occurred from mid-August to 20th October and was heaviest in late August, max. of 40 on 27th. One on 16th November was the only later record.

**\*AMERICAN GOLDEN PLOVER** *Pluvialis dominica*. A superb full summer plumage adult was found with Golden Plovers at Kennaby on 15th August. Unfortunately it flew off south with 3 Golden Plovers soon afterwards. The eighth record for Fair Isle and first since 1988.

**GOLDEN PLOVER** *Pluvialis apricaria*. The first 3 on 13th February were followed by occasional sightings of 1-3 prior to daily records from 2nd April. The main spring passage occurred late April-early May, max. of 26 on 28th April and 8th May. The June max. of 8 on 1st was followed by regular sightings of 1-3 throughout the summer. Almost daily autumn records spanned early August-3rd November with heaviest passage in late August-September. Monthly max. were 75 on 22nd August, 42 on 5th September and 20 on 11th & 14th October.

**GREY PLOVER** *Pluvialis squatarola*. A summer plumage adult on 10th-17th June was only the 12th spring record. In autumn there were 2 on 23rd September with one remaining next day.

**LAPWING** *Vanellus vanellus*. One-5 seen regularly 13th-26th January were the first January records since 1987. The next record was of 6 on 26th February after which recorded regularly. The main spring passage occurred in early March with 62 on 2nd, 60 on 7th and 48 on 14th. There were fewer in April-May, with monthly max. of 28 on 5th April and 18 on 5th May. Eight pairs attempted to breed. Flocks of non-breeders or failed breeders numbered 8 on 8th June and 30 on 8th July. Autumn passage commenced in late July with small numbers in August, max. of 12 on 24th. Heaviest passage occurred in two periods; 17th-25th September, max. of 64 on 22nd, and 10th-17th October, max. of 67 on 11th & 14th. A further movement occurred from 26th October-3rd November, max. of 35 on 28th, after which there were occasional records of up to 7 until 24th November and a late single on 24th December.

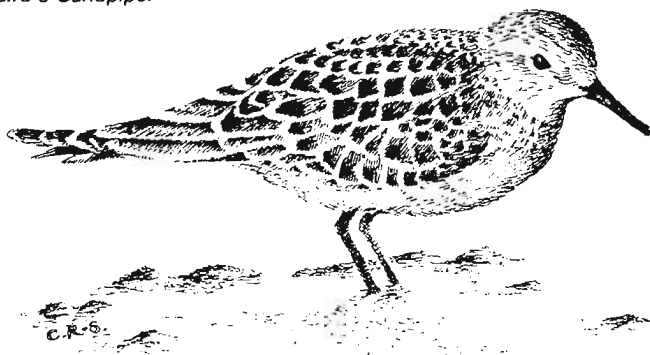
**KNOT** *Calidris canutus*. One on 7th February was only the second winter record for the Isle but there were no spring records for the first time since 1983. July records comprised one on 13th, 25 on 23rd and 11 on 31st. Regular in small numbers in August-September, max. of 9 on 7th September, with one on 1st October the last record.

**SANDERLING** *Calidris alba*. Spring records comprised 3 on 29th May-2nd June, singles on 3 dates 13th-16th and 4 on 17th June. In autumn there were 1-6 daily 20th-31st July, then in August 4 on 2nd, 16 on 5th and 1-2 on 5 dates to end of month. In September there were 1-4 daily 11th-22nd and in October 1 on 2nd and 2 on 4th.

**LITTLE STINT** *Calidris minuta*. All records were in September, with singles on 11th, 16th, 20th & 24th; 2 on 18th & 22nd and 3 on 19th.

**\*BAIRD'S SANDPIPER** *Calidris bairdii*. An obliging juvenile present at North Haven and Buness from 5th-16th September constituted the second Fair Isle record, the first having occurred in 1982.

*Baird's Sandpiper*



**PECTORAL SANDPIPER** *Calidris melanotos*. A juvenile found at Pund on 27th September remained until 1st October by which time it had become established in the North Leogh garden. The first since 1988 and only the third since 1980.

**PURPLE SANDPIPER** *Calidris maritima*. Recorded in all months but with an obvious spring passage.

	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
Monthly max.	7	4	23	22	35	7	1	8	10	15	25	8

**DUNLIN** *Calidris alpina*. Daily records from 1st-8th March, max. of 18 on 6th, were very unusual. Then singles on 8 dates 4th April-8th May preceded daily spring passage 12th May-20th June, with high counts of 40 on 22nd, 30 on 29th and 27 on 2nd. There were occasional sightings of 1-2 in late June-July prior to almost daily autumn passage from 29th July-23rd October, with monthly max. of 16 on 31st July, 25 on 22nd August, 35 on 22nd September and 24 on 8th October. The only later records were of 1-8 on 5 dates until 7th November.

**BUFF-BREASTED SANDPIPER** *Tryngites subruficollis*. A juvenile seen fleetingly at Vaasetter, the school and then Pund on 26th September eventually settled on the Brecks of Busta where it remained until 28th. The seventh Island record and the first since 1980.

**RUFF** *Philomachus pugnax*. One on 29th April was the only spring record. In autumn one on 24th July was followed by daily records of 1-4 from 31st July-5th August, then singles on 9th & 14th August, prior to almost daily records 25th August-21st September, max. of 8 on 28th.

**JACK SNIFE** *Lymnocyrtes minimus*. In late winter/spring there were singles on 8th & 21st February, 21st March and on 8 dates 3rd-30th April. One on 1st September preceded an excellent autumn passage with almost daily records from 12th September-1st November. Main arrivals were 14 on 21st September, 17 on 1st October and 20+ daily from 11th-15th October, with a record count of 30 on 12th. One on 18th November was the only later record.

**SNIFE** *Gallinago gallinago*. Present all year. Spring max. of 40 occurred on 26th April. Marked autumn passage from 13th-25th September with 100+ on 13th & 15th. In October there was a max. of 50 on 3 dates and in November a max. of 35 on 3rd, with numbers much reduced by December.

**WOODCOCK** *Scolopax rusticola*. Mid-winter records comprised 3 on 9th January and singles on 6th & 8th February. A poor spring passage spanned 9th March-20th May, with singles on 9 dates and 5 on 8th May. Mid-summer records on 26th June and 7th July were unusual. Autumn passage was light with one on 29th September, 1-4 on 9 dates 4th-17th October and daily records 19th October-3rd November, max. of 40 on 29th. There were occasional records in late November-December, max. of 15 on 19th November.

**BLACK-TAILED GODWIT** *Limosa limosa*. Another good year. In spring there was one on 4th May. In autumn one on 17th August was followed by 4 on 22nd-23rd August with 3 remaining until 26th and 2 new ones on 28th.

**BAR-TAILED GODWIT** *Limosa lapponica*. There were spring singles on 12th March and 29th-31st May. Autumn records comprised singles on 18th July, 22nd, 24th & 28th August, 1-2 daily 5th-18th September and a late single on 1st-2nd November.

**WHIMBREL** *Numenius phaeopus*. Spring passage spanned 25th April-late June with main passage in May, max. of 31 on 11th. There were 1-3 on scattered dates in June with returning migrants recorded from early July. The highest autumn count was 12 on 25th July, after which there were 1-5 on most days in August and 1-4 daily 1st-7th September. A single on 19th-20th September was the only later record.

**CURLEW** *Numenius arquata*. There were 1-2 on several dates in January-February. Records were more regular from 4th March with a spring max. of 18 on 30th March. Numbers had decreased by mid-April and 6 pairs attempted to breed. First returning autumn migrants were 60 on 15th July with passage continuing in August-September, max. of 25 on 21st August and 8th September. There were fewer towards the end of September with an October max. of 8 on 1st and occasional records of 1-3 in November-December.

**REDSHANK** *Tringa totanus*. Recorded in all months with a mid-winter max. of 70 on 16th January. Spring passage occurred from the end of March with a max. of 75 on 27th. In April there was a max. of 55 on 9th after which numbers declined. In May a max. of 11 on 3rd was followed by scattered records of 1-3 until 14th June. Returning migrants were recorded from early July with numbers increasing in August-September. Main movements were 75 on 22nd August, 55 on 14th September and 60 on 23rd October. Up to 40 were present until the end of December.

**GREENSHANK** *Tringa nebularia*. A below average spring with singles on 28th April, 5th, 8th & 13th May and 14th June. In autumn there were singles on 13 dates 25th July-30th August and 1-2 daily 1st-5th September.

**GREEN SANDPIPER** *Tringa ochropus*. The poorest spring passage for many years comprised just two singles, one on 28th May and another on 4th June. Autumn records comprised singles on 19th & 30th July, 3 on 1st August and then 1-2 on 16 dates to 4th September.

**WOOD SANDPIPER** *Tringa glareola*. One on 10th-11th June was the only record, continuing the run of recent poor years.

**COMMON SANDPIPER** *Actitis hypoleucos*. In spring there were singles on 13 dates 28th April-6th June, with 2 on 20th and 3 on 28th May. Autumn records comprised singles on 15th & 18th July and 1-2 on 15 dates 8th August-2nd September.

**TURNSTONE** *Arenaria interpres*. Recorded in all months.

	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
Monthly max.	200	50	150	230	110	20	31	90	115	175	150	150

**RED-NECKED PHALAROPE** *Phalaropus lobatus*. One seen at Sprittery Hole by one lucky observer on 22nd May was the sixteenth Island record and only the fifth in spring.

**GREY PHALAROPE** *Phalaropus fulicarius*. A first-winter was in South Haven on 1st October. The first since 1989 and only the second year the species has been recorded since 1979.

**POMARINE SKUA** *Stercorarius pomarinus*. There were two records both of light phase adults and both in September. One off North Light on 15th and one from the Good Shepherd on 28th.

**ARCTIC SKUA** *Stercorarius parasiticus*. The first, a dark phase individual, arrived on 13th April, with the first light phase seen on 18th. Numbers increased gradually to 20 by 23rd and 50 by 25th April. The breeding population showed a further decrease with 99 A.O.T.'s located. Fortunately breeding success was reasonable with 0.75 chicks fledged/A.O.T. As a result of successful breeding adults remained longer than in recent years with 1-2 still present on 8th September, after which there were occasional records of 1-3 offshore until 7th October.

**LONG-TAILED SKUA** *Stercorarius longicauda*. Adults were seen from the Good Shepherd on 10th September, off Bunness next day and briefly in South Haven on 7th October.

**GREAT SKUA** *Stercorarius skua*. The first occurred on 27th March with numbers building up thereafter to 10 on 30th, 25 on 3rd April and 50+ by 14th April. The breeding population was estimated at 79 A.O.T.'s with breeding success estimated at 0.70 chicks fledged/A.O.T. Post breeding departure commenced in early September but 20 remained on 9th October with just 1-2 left at the end of the month. One on 4th November was the last record.

**LITTLE GULL** *Larus minutus*. A summer plumage adult flew over the Isle on 6th May. This is only the tenth island record.

**BLACK-HEADED GULL** *Larus ridibundus*. Frequent singles in January-February and 1-6 on 10 dates in March preceded daily records in April-June, max. of 20 on 24th April. There was a marked arrival of returning migrants in mid July with 110 on 12th and 60 on 13th, after which the highest count was 24 on 13th August. There were 1-7 regularly in September-early November and occasional records of 1-3 until 4th December.

**COMMON GULL** *Larus canus*. Up to 5 were seen regularly January-February. Numbers increased gradually in March with the main spring passage occurring in early April, max. of 50 on 12th. Nine pairs attempted to breed but just 2 chicks fledged. Returning migrants appeared from mid-July with 80 on 13th and 115 on 31st. Numbers remained fairly high in August, with 130 on 5th and 140 on 25th, but had decreased by September, max. of 40 on 18th, with fewer still in October, max. of 28 on 30th. Ten on 1st November were followed by occasional reports of 1-5 until late December.

**LESSER BLACK-BACKED GULL** *Larus fuscus*. One on 10th March was the earliest ever. Another on 25th and then 6 on 30th preceded daily records from 5th April. The breeding population was censused at 20 pairs a 9% decrease since the last full census in 1986. Recorded regularly in autumn until 21st September, max. of 40 on 29th August, with 1-2 on 5 dates until 8th October.

**HERRING GULL** *Larus argentatus*. Present all year. A full census revealed 107 breeding pairs, a 59% decrease from the last full census in 1986. The breeding population is now 22% of what it was in 1975! The largest count of birds ashore was 3500 on 18th December.

**ICELAND GULL** *Larus glaucoides*. All sightings occurred in the first half of the year with single first-winters on 23rd January, 1st, 20th & 28th February, and 2 on 8th February. A first-year seen almost daily from 3rd March to 31st May was joined by another from 30th March-2nd April.

**GLAUCOUS GULL** *Larus hyperboreus*. A first-summer moulting into second-winter from 7th-9th September was suprisingly the first of the year. Sightings were more regular from 2nd October with, 1-2 on 12 dates in October, singles on 4 dates in November and 1-7 on 5 dates in December.

**GREAT BLACK-BACKED GULL** *Larus marinus*. Present all year. One hundred and sixty breeding pairs were located during the whole island census, a 41% increase since 1986. The largest count of birds ashore was 1500 on 10th & 18th December.

**KITTIWAKE** *Rissa tridactyla*. There were occasional records offshore in January and birds were present on the cliffs from February. There was a welcome improvement

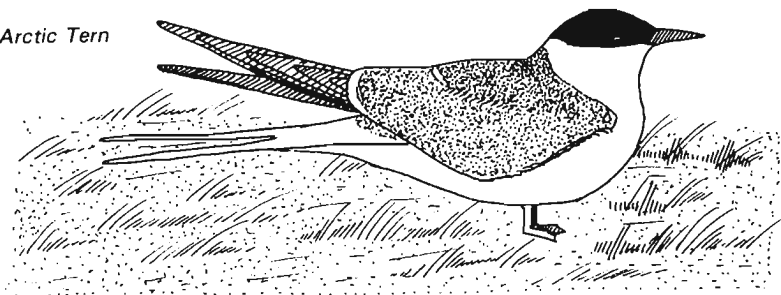
in breeding success after three poor seasons, with 0.9 chicks fledged/nest. Recorded regularly until late October with offshore westerly movements of 260/hr on 11th September, 820/hr on 17th September and 500/hr on 20th October. There were occasional records of 1-5 in November-December.

**SANDWICH TERN** *Sterna sandvicensis*. Two flew north over the Isle on 14th May and one was in South Harbour on 17th June.

**COMMON TERN** *Sterna hirundo*. The first 2 arrived on 13th May far later than in any recent year, with numbers gradually increasing to 17 by 27th May. Ten pairs attempted to breed, 9 on the Stack 'o' North Haven and one near the South Light. Only the latter was successful raising 2 chicks to fledging. Local birds were recorded daily until 13th August after which there were occasional records of 1-4 to the end of the month. September records comprised one on 10th, 2 next day and one on 21st.

**ARCTIC TERN** *Sterna paradisaea*. The first 4 arrived on 7th May, a little later than in recent years. Numbers increased rapidly with 200 on 9th, and 500+ on 19th. The breeding population continued to increase with an estimated 650 pairs spread between colonies at Eas Brecks, Tarryfield and Meoness. Breeding success was excellent with 1.0-1.3 chicks fledged/pair and for the first time ever, flocks of several hundred juvenile terns could be seen just outside the Observatory. Following successful breeding large numbers remained into August, with 300 still present on 12th, but then declined dramatically towards the end of the month. There were occasional records of 1-9 passage birds in September with late singles on 3rd & 4th October.

Arctic Tern



**GUILLEMOT** *Uria aalge*. Present on fine days from at least February. Numbers at the 5 monitored plots all showed significant increases, range 22.5%-65.1%, although much of this increase may be attributed to an increase in attendant non-breeding birds. Breeding success was again good with 0.70 chicks fledged/incubating adult. Most breeders had departed by late July-early August. There were regular sightings in September-October with some offshore movement, max. of 45/hr south on 18th September and 22nd October, and occasional records of 1-5 in November-December.

**RAZORBILL** *Alca torda*. Present from late February. Breeding success at Easter Lother was estimated to be 0.58 chicks/breeding pair. Most breeders had departed by the end of July with singles on just 3 days in August. Sightings were more regular in September-October, max. of 25 on 18th September.

**BLACK GUILLEMOT** *Cephus grylle*. Present all year. Breeding productivity at monitored nests was 0.85 chicks fledged/nest.

**LITTLE AUK** *Alle alle*. In January there were singles on 6th & 31st and 2 on 8th. From late October recorded regularly during seawatches, with moderate passage from 22nd-27th, max. of 118 north in 2 hours on 23rd. There were fewer in November, max. of 18 south/hr on 23rd, but 80 were seen from the Good Shepherd on 10th December.

**PUFFIN** *Fratercula arctica*. For the second year in succession birds arrived far later than normal with the first individuals noted offshore on 8th and ashore on 10th April. Numbers increased rapidly thereafter. Breeding success was the highest recorded since monitoring began with 0.87 chicks fledged/nest at monitored burrows. Over-winter adult mortality (1990/91) was higher than in previous years, coincident with a large wreck around the Northern Isles in January. Most breeders had departed by mid-August with one on 1st October the only late record.

**ROCK DOVE** *Columba livia*. Present throughout the year.

	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
Monthly max.	20	25	18	25	45	30	N/C	35	42	50	25	15

**STOCK DOVE** *Columba oenas*. There was one at Pund on 16th May and one at various sites from 15th-25th September.

**WOOD PIGEON** *Columba palumbus*. One on 8th February and 2 on 20th March preceded daily records 3rd-28th April, max. of 16 on 7th, followed by 1-2 on 11 dates in May and 1-3 daily 6th-10th June. Singles on 19th July and 21st August preceded a poor autumn passage, comprising 1-4 daily 10th-15th October and singles on 28th & 30th October and 23rd-24th November.

**COLLARED DOVE** *Streptopelia decaocto*. Singles on 15th, 16th & 19th April preceded regular records of 1-3 from 28th April-20th June, with 5 on 24th May and 6 on 7th June the only higher counts. In July there were 1-2 on 7 dates and in August singles on 3rd & 8th.

**TURTLE DOVE** *Streptopelia turtur*. A poor year. In spring there were 2 on 10th June followed by singles on 6 dates to 27th June, and in autumn there were singles on 30th August-5th September and 7th-8th October.

**CUCKOO** *Cuculus canorus*. The second poor year in succession saw records restricted to 2 on 8th June and one on 25th-26th July.

**\*SNOWY OWL** *Nyctea scandiaca*. A male was at Lower Leogh briefly during the evening of 11th May. Recorded for the third year in succession.

**LONG-EARED OWL** *Asio otus*. In spring there were singles on 13th, 21st, & 23rd-28th March, 3rd & 5th April, 13th May and 4th June. One from 14th July-2nd August was the first mid-summer record for many years. In autumn, singles on 5 dates 10th September-8th October preceded two periods of heavier passage; 1-4 daily 11th-16th October and 1-6 daily 24th October-4th November, after which there were 1-3 on 7 dates to 27th November.

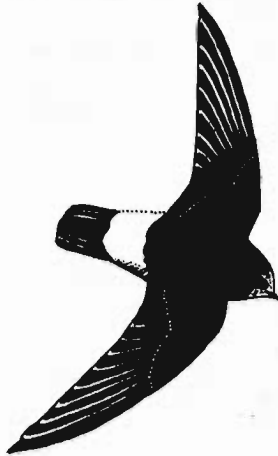


**SHORT-EARED OWL** *Asio flammeus*. One on 21st February was followed by spring singles on 14 dates 30th April-13th June. In autumn there were 1-2 on 15 dates 15th September-15th October, with 3 on 14th. One on 27th October was the only later record. A poor year.

**SWIFT** *Apus apus*. There were scattered records from 28th May-3rd September with sightings on 7 dates in June, 2 dates in July and 7 dates in August. Eighty on 5th July was the only count in excess of 5.

**\*LITTLE SWIFT** *Apus affinis*. One flew around North Light during the late afternoon of 1st November. The first Island record and the second for Scotland.

*Little Swift*



**HOOPOE** *Upupa epops*. One spent just a few minutes on Vaasetter early on the morning of 13th April. The first since 1988.

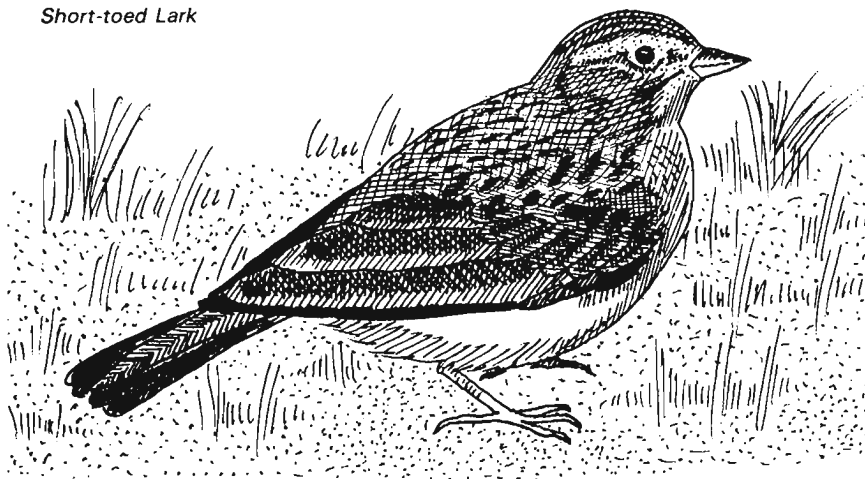
**WRYNECK** *Jynx torquilla*. The third poor year in succession with just five records. Spring singles on 30th April and 3rd & 11th May and autumn singles on 24th August and 17th September.

**GREAT SPOTTED WOODPECKER** *Dendrocopus major*. Following the large irruption in autumn 1990 a female wintered successfully, remaining until 10th March. This is the first record of successful over-wintering on the Island. There was also a male present from 29th April-4th June.

**\*SHORT-TOED LARK** *Calandrella brachydactyla*. The best year since 1980 with 6 records. In spring there were singles at Schoolton on 28th-30th April and at Upper Stoneybrake from 17th-31st May, while in autumn there were singles at Springfield from 30th September-5th October, at Utra then Quoy from 9th-26th October, at Upper Stoneybrake on 10th-11th October and at Quoy from 15th-22nd October.

**WOODLARK** *Lullula arborea*. One frequented the Haa/Springfield/Quoy area from 19th-30th November. The first since 1985.

*Short-toed Lark*



**SKYLARK** *Alauda arvensis*. There were regular sightings of 1-2 in January-February. The first notable spring arrival of 18 occurred on 23rd February and was followed by 35 next day, with the heaviest spring passage occurring in early March, max. of 380 on 3rd. Other large arrivals were 320 on 6th, 250 on 13th and 210 on 30th March. The breeding population was placed in excess of 90 pairs. Autumn passage commenced in late August and was heaviest in late September-early October, with high counts of 280 on 27th-28th September and 350 on 1st & 10th October. Numbers decreased in late October with 25 remaining until mid-November and 12 until mid December.

**SHORELARK** *Eremophila alpestris*. An excellent series of records commenced with one outside the Observatory on 11th October. Another was found at Easter Lothar next day and there were 2 new birds at Hoini on 14th. These remained until 23rd October with another flock of 3 present at Meoness on 21st-22nd. Further singles occurred in November, at Upper Stoneybrake on 2nd and at South Haven on 9th-10th. Nine individuals in one year is even more remarkable considering the species was last seen in 1987.

**SAND MARTIN** *Riparia riparia*. In spring there were singles on 8th & 27th May, and 8th, 12th & 14th June, with 2 on 10th June. There was one mid-summer record on 5th July. Autumn records comprised 2 on 27th August with 1 next day, and one on 5 dates 18th-25th September. A poor year.

**SWALLOW** *Hirundo rustica*. One on 12th April and 4 next day preceded almost daily records 24th April-2nd October. The main spring passage occurred in late May-early June, max. of 100 on 23rd May. There were 80 on 6th June but numbers tailed off after mid June with a July max. of 10 on 27th. Autumn passage was light with a max. of 20 on 22nd & 25th August and 7th September. After mid-September there were fewer than 5 daily with late records of 1-2 on 19th-24th October. One on 30th November was the latest ever by over four weeks.

**HOUSE MARTIN** *Delichon urbica*. In spring there were 1-5 on 12 dates 7th-29th May followed by daily records 5th-23rd June, max. of 15 on 10th-12th. One-2 on 5 dates in July preceded a light autumn passage comprising 1-2 on 6 dates 17th August-29th September.

**RICHARD'S PIPIT** *Anthus novaeseelandiae*. At least five individuals were recorded. One on 30th September-3rd October, then 3 on 10th October with 2 remaining until 20th when another was found. One was still present on 21st.

**\*OLIVE-BACKED PIPIT** *Anthus hodgsoni*. Another good year with four individuals recorded. The first remained near the Plantation from 10th-13th October with another flying between Haa and Leogh from 11th-23rd October. The third was at the Airstrip on 20th October and finally one was at Pund on 1st November.

**TREE PIPIT** *Anthus trivialis*. One of the worst years on record with both the spring and autumn passage practically non-existent. Spring records comprised singles on 13 dates 13th May-22nd June and 2 on 16th June. In autumn there were singles on 23rd August and 9th & 12th September and 1-4 almost daily from 17th September-17th October.

**\*PECHORA PIPIT** *Anthus gustavi*. There were four records all in September. An early individual seen briefly to the south of Shirva on 13th was followed by others at Da Water/Quoy from 17th-22nd, in the Setter/Field area from 18th-24th and at Lower Stoneybrake on 22nd. Four in one year is unprecedented.

**MEADOW PIPIT** *Anthus pratensis*. The first 7 arrived on 18th March after which there were daily records until 11th November. Heaviest spring passage occurred during April with high counts of 200 on 6th and 240 on 9th. The breeding population was estimated at 35 pairs. Autumn passage commenced in mid-August and was heaviest from September-mid October, with main movements of 450 on 2nd & 8th September, 430 on 28th September and 450 on 10th October. By November numbers had declined to 15 with occasional records of 1-4 through December.

**\*RED-THROATED PIPIT** *Anthus cervinus*. Spring records comprised a singing male at Springfield on 14th-16th May and 2 different individuals in Boinni Mire on 18th-23rd May. In autumn there was an extremely elusive individual present from 22nd-28th September. Not since 1975 have 4 been recorded in one year.

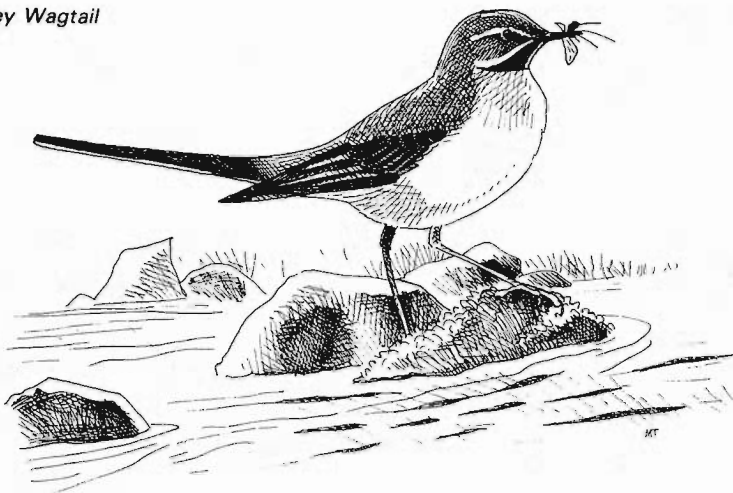
**ROCK PIPIT** *Anthus petrosus*. Present all year with no obvious passage.

**YELLOW WAGTAIL** *Motacilla flava*. There were just 2 spring records, a male of the Grey Headed race *M.f. thunbergi* on 31st May and a male Blue Headed *M.f. flava* on 29th June. Autumn records comprised one on 18th-28th September and one of one of the eastern races on 10th-12th October. This is the worst showing for many years.

**CITRINE WAGTAIL** *Motacilla citreola*. One at Schoolton and then South Harbour on 26th September. Recorded for the seventh year in succession.

**GREY WAGTAIL** *Motacilla cinerea*. In spring there were singles on 12th April, 11th, 15th & 21st May and 14th-17th June and in autumn there were singles on 5th and 8th-14th October.

## Grey Wagtail



**PIED WAGTAIL** *Motacilla alba*. One from 1st-3rd March preceded daily records from 18th, with a spring max. of 12 on 5th April. One pair a Pied x Pied bred near North Haven. Autumn passage spanned 8th August-17th October with the heaviest movement in late August-early September, max. of 75 on 28th August. Numbers had decreased to fewer than 5 daily by early October with occasional records of 1-2 until 29th. All March records related to Pied Wagtails (*M.a.yarelli*) with White Wagtails (*M.a.alba*) predominating at other times.

**WAXWING** *Bombycilla garrulus*. One on 9th March was the first in spring since 1986. In autumn there were singles on 8 dates 8th November-10th December, 2 on 1st December and 3 on 16th November.

**WREN** *Troglodytes troglodytes*. Present all year. Census work revealed 34 singing males. Migrants of the nominate race were recorded on 20th, 21st & 22nd April.

**DUNNOCK** *Prunella modularis*. A poor spring with singles on 14th, 18th & 27th March preceding almost daily records of 1-2 from 30th March-6th June. In autumn there were daily records from 9th-28th October, max. of 15 on 16th, and 1-2 on 3 dates 1st-9th November.

**ROBIN** *Erithacus rubecula*. Three wintered successfully. Light spring passage occurred from early March-17th May, with monthly max. of 14 on 18th March, 5 on 13th April and 4 on 1st May. Mid-summer singles occurred on 15th June and 24th July. In autumn one on 29th September preceded almost daily records from 9th October-5th December with the main passage in mid October, max. of 20 on 13th-14th.

**NIGHTINGALE** *Luscinia megarhynchos*. One near Gaila on 22nd September was only the fourth autumn record.

**BLUETHROAT** *Luscinia svecica*. The second poor spring in succession saw single males on 17th & 24th May and 8th June and a female on 31st May-2nd June.

Autumn records comprised one on 19th and 2 on 28th September and an immature male from 14th-18th October.

**BLACK REDSTART** *Phoenicurus ochruros*. In spring there were singles on 20th March, 13th & 24th April, and 13th, 16th & 31st May. The recent run of mid-summer records continued with singles on 20th June, 15th July and 6th August. In autumn a long staying bird from 18th August-10th September preceded almost daily records of 1-3 from 18th September-14th October. These were followed by 1-2 on 6 dates to 3rd November, with an autumn peak of 4 on 27th October.

**REDSTART** *Phoenicurus phoenicurus*. With records restricted to single males on 8th May and 6th June the spring proved to be the worst ever for the species. Autumn passage spanned 22nd September-17th October, max. of 6 on 12th, with later singles on 27th & 30th October.

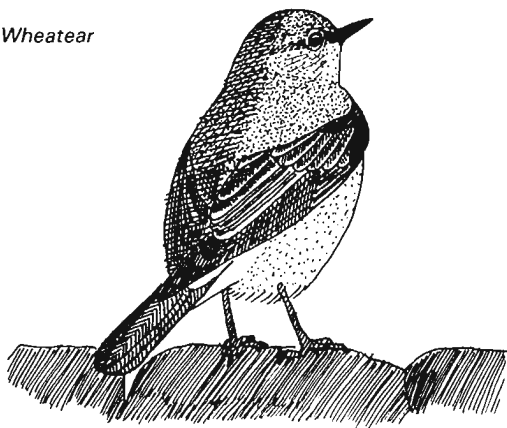
**WHINCHAT** *Saxicola rubetra*. The spring was among the worst on record with singles on only 9 dates 8th May-14th June. Autumn passage spanned 22nd August-14th October and was heaviest from 17th-25th September, max. of 8 on 17th & 25th.

**STONECHAT** *Saxicola torquata*. In spring there were single males on 6th-13th & 20th-21st March and 5th-7th April. All 5 autumn individuals belonged to one of the eastern races *S.t. maura/stejnegeri*, with 2 at Field on 26th October and a new bird near the Plantation next day and further singles on 30th October and 9th November.

**WHEATEAR** *Oenanthe oenanthe*. Singles on 25th & 28th March preceded daily records from 3rd April with the main passage in late April-May, max. of 180 on 26th April. Autumn passage commenced in mid-August and was strongest later in the month, max. of 180 on 22nd. Numbers decreased through September with an October max. of 15 on 4th and only occasional singles after 16th with the last on 1st November.

**DESERT WHEATEAR** *Oenanthe deserti*. A female found at Skerryholm on 26th October quickly moved off in a north westerly direction. The fifth record for Fair Isle and the first since 1970.

*Desert Wheatear*



**RING OUZEL** *Turdus torquatus*. Spring records comprised singles on 7th & 13th April, 1-3 daily 23rd-25th April and 1-3 daily 30th April-9th May followed by 1-2 on 8 dates to 29th May, with a late single on 13th-17th June. All autumn records were in October; with daily passage 10th-17th, max. of 15 on 11th, 3 on 20th and a single on 27th.

**BLACKBIRD** *Turdus merula*. Up to 10 wintered successfully. Spring passage commenced in early March with main arrivals, 100 on 12th and 70 on 25th March. There were fewer in April and in May the max. was 6 on 8th. One on 6th June was the only record for that month. In autumn one on 27th-28th September was followed by daily records from 7th October-December with heavy passage occurring in two periods; 10th-14th October, max 1000 on 12th, and 29th October-1st November, max. of 300 on two dates. There was a further fall of 250 on 19th November. At least 20 were present well into December.

**FIELDFARE** *Turdus pilaris*. Up to 10 remained from 1990. Light spring passage spanned early March-9th May with two main periods of movement, both in April; from 5th-15th, max. of 75 on 13th, and 24th-29th, max. of 27 on 23rd. Singles on 20th May and 1st June were the only later records. In autumn one on 27th July and 1-2 on 9 dates 22nd August-18th September preceded almost daily records from 1st October-December. Heavy passage occurred on 10th-12th October, max. of 250 on 10th, and 25th October-2nd November, max. of 3200 on 26th, with a further fall of 300 on 19th November. At least 40 remained well into December.

**SONG THRUSH** *Turdus philomelos*. There were occasional singles in January-February. Light spring passage occurred from early March to 8th May, with max. of 8 on 13th & 20th March. Singles on 17th & 19th May were the only later records. There was one midsummer record on 23rd July. Recorded daily in autumn from 20th September-3rd November with the heaviest passage from 10th-14th October, max. of 500 on 10th-11th, with 50 on 25th October the next largest fall. Occasional singles were recorded into December.

**REDWING** *Turdus iliacus*. Up to 10 wintered successfully. Light spring passage spanned early March-end April with the largest counts, 35 on 31st March and 50 on 16th & 24th April. In May there were 1-6 most days and in June 1-3 until 14th, with one seen on several dates in early July. There were almost daily autumn records from 17th September-December. A huge movement occurred from 8th-15th October, with 150 on 7th increasing to 300 next day, then 1500 on 9th and in excess of 25000 on 10th-11th; 20000 remained on 12th decreasing to 5000 by 13th. Other sizeable falls involved 600 on 20th October, 1000+ on 1st and 500 on 19th November. Only in 1979 have larger numbers been recorded on the Island.

**MISTLE THRUSH** *Turdus viscivorus*. Spring records comprised 6 on 4th March, with 4 remaining until 8th, and singles on 24th-25th March and 7th & 26th-29th April. One on 14th-15th October was the only autumn record.

**LANCEOLATED WARBLER** *Locustella lanceolata*. There were two records. One found at Bulls Park on 28th September moved to Hjukni Geo next day where it remained until 5th October to become one of the longest stayers on record. Another was at Pund then Upper Stoneybrake on 10th October.

**GRASSHOPPER WARBLER** *Locustella naevia*. The poorest showing for many years with records restricted to singles on 1st & 6th May.

**SEDGE WARBLER** *Acrocephalus schoenobaenus*. Spring records comprised singles on 7th May and 12th June and 2 on 19th-20th May. In autumn singles on 1st, 15th & 24th August preceded daily records of 1-3 from 16th-29th September with a late single on 10th October.

**MARSH WARBLER** *Acrocephalus palustris*. One at Pund on 11th June was the only record. The poorest showing since at least 1979.

**REED WARBLER** *Acrocephalus scirpaceus*. One on 13-14th June was the sole spring record. Autumn records comprised 1-2 daily 23rd-27th August, singles on 30th August, 2nd-7th, 12th & 29th-30th September and 8th October; 2 on 10th October with one remaining until 13th and a late single on 27th October. The latter the latest since 1980.

**ICTERINE WARBLER** *Hippolais icterina*. In spring there were singles on 7th & 14th June, with one on 21st-22nd September the only autumn record.

**BARRED WARBLER** *Sylvia nisoria*. One on 22nd August preceded daily records of 1-3 from 2nd September-2nd October, with 5 on 16th and 4 on 30th September. At least 12 individuals were involved.

**LESSER WHITETHROAT** *Sylvia curruca*. The worst spring for many years saw one on 26th May followed by 1-2 almost daily 5th-17th June, with 4 on 7th, and later singles on 26th June and 2nd-3rd July. Autumn records comprised singles on 26th & 29th August and 1st-6th September, 1-2 daily 17th-23rd September, 1-4 daily 28th September-3rd October and later singles on 5th, 10th & 13th with 2 on 25th October.

**WHITETHROAT** *Sylvia communis*. There were no May records for the first time in at least thirty years. In June there were daily records of 1-4 from 5th-16th and in July there were singles on 2nd & 21st. A meagre autumn passage comprised 1-2 on 18 dates 2nd September-14th October, with 3 on 17th September.

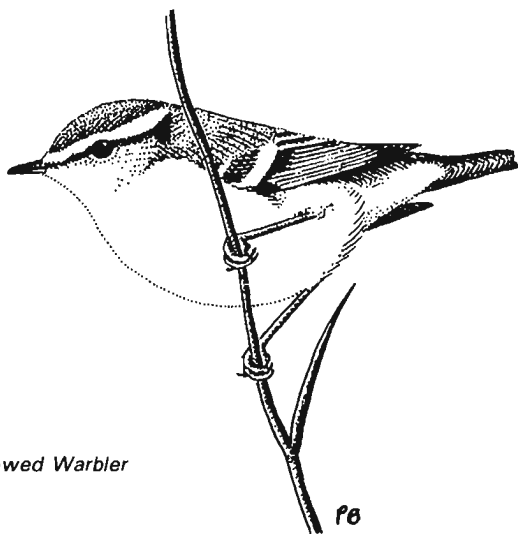
**GARDEN WARBLER** *Sylvia borin*. The worst spring for at least 30 years with just three individuals recorded, on 12th, 24th & 27th June. Autumn passage spanned 19th August-13th October with a max. of 10 on 24th August, otherwise daily counts were of 6 or less. The only later record was of 2 on 21st October.

**BLACKCAP** *Sylvia atricapilla*. In spring there were 1-2 on 7 dates 7th-22nd June. The worst spring showing and the first without a May sighting for at least 30 years. In autumn 1-4 on 12 dates 2nd-29th September and 15 on 30th preceded heavier passage in October, max. of 50 on 10th. Three remained into November with the last sighting on 3rd.

**GREENISH WARBLER** *Phylloscopus trochiloides*. A first-winter remained in the Gully from 25th August-2nd September. After a 5 year absence the species has now been recorded in 4 of the last 5 years.

**ARCTIC WARBLER** *Phylloscopus borealis*. Two first-winters were found at the Plantation on 12th September, one of which later moved to Schoolton. The first multiple occurrence since 1985.

**YELLOW-BROWED WARBLER** *Phylloscopus inornatus*. A good autumn for the species. In September there were 2 on 17th-18th another on 20th and 4 on 29th



*Yellow-browed Warbler*

with 2 remaining on 30th. October records comprised 1 on 9th increasing to 8 on 10th with 3 remaining until 11th and one until 14th. One on 27th-28th was the latest record since 1975.

**RADDE'S WARBLER** *Phylloscopus schwarzi*. One skulking in the Meadow Burn on 10th October was the third record for the Island, the other two having occurred in 1987 and 1988.

**WOOD WARBLER** *Phylloscopus sibilatrix*. The worst year since 1965 with 2 on 26th August and one on 19th September the only records.

**CHIFFCHAFF** *Phylloscopus collybita*. One on 18th March was the earliest since 1973. The next was on 24th March after which seen regularly until 14th June, with two main periods of passage; 24th-30th April, max. of 9 on 26th and 5th-13th June, max. of 15 on 8th. There were occasional singles in late June, July and August prior to almost daily autumn passage from mid-September. Main arrivals were 15 on 30th September, 60 on 10th and 30 on 25th October. The last two falls were comprised wholly of birds of the greyish northern/eastern races. After 2 on 1st November the only later record was of one on 19th November.

**WILLOW WARBLER** *Phylloscopus trochilus*. A poor spring passage with 20 on 7th June the only moderate arrival. Otherwise records of just 1-4 on 28 dates 25th April-26th June. In autumn singles on 5th July and 4th-5th August preceded almost daily records 18th August-16th October with two main periods of passage; 24th-29th August, max. of 10 on two dates and 12th-22nd September, max. of 15 on 17th.

**GOLDCREST** *Regulus regulus*. The main spring passage spanned 18th March-14th April with 1-4 seen on 18 dates and 10 on 6th. There were later singles on 26th-27th April and 9th May. In autumn an early individual on 18th August was the forerunner of a strong passage from 29th September-29th October. There were three main influxes; 29th September-2nd October, max. of 40 on 30th, 10th-15th October, max. of 150 on 10th, and 24th-27th October, max. of 15 on 25th.



**SPOTTED FLYCATCHER** *Muscicapa striata*. A poor spring with one on 28th May followed by regular sightings 6th-25th June, max. of 5 on 11th. There were three singles in July, on 5th, 10th & 13th. Autumn passage was also poor with singles on just two dates, 17th & 30th September. The worst showing for many years

**RED-BREASTED FLYCATCHER** *Ficedula parva*. An above average year with 6 individuals recorded. The first at Midway on 27th September was followed by another on 29th with 4 next day, at Skerryholm, Leogh, South Reeva and Busta Geo, the latter remaining until 2nd October. Another was in the Kennaby/Quoy area from 9th-11th October.

**PIED FLYCATCHER** *Ficedula hypoleuca*. Spring records comprised singles on 8th May, and 7th, 13th & 22nd June, with 2 on 8th June. A midsummer record on 10th July was unusual. In autumn there were 2-3 on 3 dates 24th-27th August, singles on 2nd-3rd & 12th September, then 9 on 17th September decreasing to 5 next day with further singles on 27th & 30th September and 14th October. One of the worst showings since the Observatory was founded.

**GREAT TIT** *Parus major*. One initially seen at Lower Stoneybrake on 30th April eventually settled in the Schoolton area where it was present next day. The first since 1988.

**RED-BACKED SHRIKE** *Lanius collurio*. In spring singles on 8 dates 8th-17th June comprised 3 different males and two females. There was a further female on 24th June and a male on 17th July. One on 30th September was the sole autumn record. The worst showing since 1975.

**GREAT GREY SHRIKE** *Lanius excubitor*. There were two autumn records. One at Schoolton on 25th-26th October and another frequenting the north of the Island from 19th-24th November.

*Great Grey Shrike*



**JACKDAW** *Corvus monedula*. Spring records comprised 1-3 on 5 dates 11th-27th March and singles on 30th April and 14th May. For the second year in succession there were no autumn records.

**ROOK** *Corvus frugilegus*. All records were in spring. In March there was one on 6th and 1-2 on 5 dates 21st-30th, then in April, singles on 5th, 12th & 14th and 2 on 15th & 27th. The first time since 1985 that the species was absent in autumn.

**CARRION CROW** *Corvus corone*. Hooded Crows *C.c.cornix* were noted regularly throughout the year with obvious influxes of 7 on 4th March and 9 on 13th and 8 on 17th April. One pair bred successfully fledged one young, the first successful breeding since 1982. One-2 Carrion Crows *C.c.corone* were present throughout the year with influxes of 7 on 8th May and 18 on 22nd May.

**RAVEN** *Corvus corax*. Present all year. In April migrant flocks numbered 6 on 3rd, 5 on 11th-12th and a stunning record 60+ on 13th. Three pairs attempted to breed, two successfully raising four chicks to fledging. There were occasional migrant flocks of 5-6 in the autumn with 15 on 15th October the most notable influx.

**STARLING** *Sturnus vulgaris*. Present all year with little obvious passage. Spring peak of 800 on 27th March and autumn peak of 750 on 20th October.

**HOUSE SPARROW** *Passer domesticus*. Little data, but present all year. There was a post-breeding count of 96 on 10th September.

**TREE SPARROW** *Passer montanus*. Two on 30th April and one from 30th August-1st September were the only records.

**CHAFFINCH** *Fringilla coelebs*. In spring a male on 8th-15th March was followed by regular records of up to 7 from 5th-30th April, with 30 on 12th the only higher count. One on 16th May was the only later record. Singles on 23rd, 25th & 29th September preceded daily autumn passage 7th October-3rd November, max. of 40 on 11th. Later singles occurred on 16th, 20th & 22nd November and 5th December.

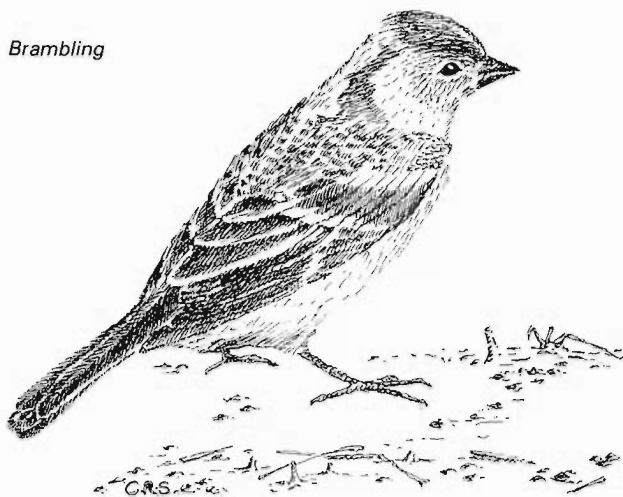
**BRAMBLING** *Fringilla montifringilla*. Light spring passage spanned 13th April-20th May, with a max. of 7 on 24th April and 8th-9th May. Autumn passage spanning 29th September-3rd November was the heaviest for many years. Numbers built up from the 8th October when there were 70, to 120 next day and 600+ on 10th, with 200 still present on 15th. Numbers decreased thereafter with another small arrival of 40 on 28th October. There were occasional records of 1-3 until November 20th.

**GREENFINCH** *Carduelis chloris*. Spring records comprised one on 21st and 2 on 28th March and one almost daily 20th April-31st May with 2 on 29th May. In autumn there were singles on 20th & 23rd September, 1-4 regularly from 10th October-22nd November and one on 1st December.

**GOLDFINCH** *Carduelis carduelis*. There were two records both in April. A male was outside the Observatory on 11th-12th and one flew north on 30th. The first since 1989.

**SISKIN** *Carduelis spinus*. In spring there were 1-4 on 10 widely scattered dates between 3rd April-5th June. A series of early autumn arrivals occurred in July with 1-5 on 8 dates 10th-26th. The next records were in September with 3 on 2nd, 2

*Brambling*



on 3rd & 20th and one on 19th. In October 3 on 2nd and one on 7th preceded daily records from 10th-19th max. of 5 on 11th.

**LINNET** *Carduelis cannabina*. Regular in spring from 5th April-31st May, with an April max. of 5 on 5th & 12th-13th and a May max. of 4 on 17th. Two present from 12th-19th July were the first recorded in that month for over 10 years. All autumn records fell in October, with 1-3 daily from 8th-12th, one on 15th and 4 on 20th.

**TWITE** *Carduelis flavirostris*. Recorded regularly January-February max. of 42 on 6th January. Numbers began to increase in early April with 60 by 17th, but the spring peak of 70 on 17th May was lower than in any recent year. Autumn passage commenced in mid-August with monthly max. of 200 on 22nd August, 280 on 17th September and 220 on 9th October. Numbers tailed off rapidly towards the end of October with a November max. of 80 on 3rd. There were still 10 present in mid-December.

**REDPOLL** *Carduelis flammea*. In spring there were 1-2 on 25 dates 6th April-13th June, with 4 on 3rd June. One on 28th June was the only later record. There were few autumn records with singles on 5 dates 17th-23rd September, 1-3 on 6 dates 7th-25th October and one on 2nd-3rd November. Most individuals belonged to the nominate subspecies but 'lesser' Redpolls (*C.f. cabaret*) were recorded on 7th-8th October and 2nd-3rd November.

**ARCTIC REDPOLL** *Carduelis hornemanni*. One at Schoolton on 15th-16th November was the only record.

**CROSSBILL** *Loxia curvirostra*. There were early males on 20th & 24th April. One-2 on 8 dates 7th June-12th July preceded several small influxes with 7 on 13th, 12 on 15th and 15 on 17th, 21st & 27th July. Thirteen were still present in early August after which there were regular reports of 1-5 until 9th September, with 2 on 18th September the only later record.

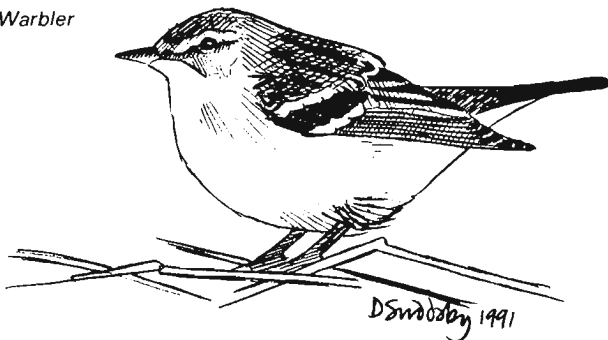
**SCARLET ROSEFINCH** *Carpodacus erythrinus*. In spring there were 1-5 daily 4th-17th June and singles on 26th June and 5th, 12th & 13th July. Autumn records comprised singles on 27th-29th August and 3rd-5th September, 2-4 daily 12th-20th September and 1-3 daily 26th-29th September. One on 30th November was the latest ever. Spring records were thought to involve about 12 individuals and autumn records about 11 individuals.

**BULLFINCH** *Pyrrhula pyrrhula*. A male on 8th May was the only spring record. Following a male on 30th October there was a good series of arrivals in early November. There were 5 (one male and 4 females) on 1st and 7 (3 males and 4 females) on 3rd. Four were still present on 5th and there was a new individual on 8th.

**HAWFINCH** *Coccothraustes coccothraustes*. One in Hjukni Geo on 13th October was the first since 1989. The only previous autumn records were in 1988.

**BLACKPOLL WARBLER** *Dendroica striata*. The first for Fair Isle spent the afternoon of 30th September at Busta.

*Blackpoll Warbler*



**LAPLAND BUNTING** *Calcarius lapponicus*. Spring records comprised a male on 13th April and females on 3rd-5th May and 4th-6th June. The earliest autumn individual for many years appeared on 27th August remaining until 8th September and was joined by another on 2nd-3rd. From 15th September-25th October there were almost daily records with the heaviest passage in late September-early October, max. of 30 on 27th September. One on the 15th-18th November was very late.

**SNOW BUNTING** *Plectrophenax nivalis*. Although some over-wintered a flock of 70 on 21st January were presumably migrating. Light spring passage occurred from mid March-26th April with a max. of 20 on 20th March. In May 3 on 8th was the only record and in June there was a male on 3rd-5th and 1-2 daily 17th-20th. In autumn one on 8th September preceded almost daily records 15th September-December. Monthly max. were 5 on 25th September, 60 on 22nd October, 100 on 16th November and 90 on 5th December.

**YELLOWHAMMER** *Emberiza citrinella*. A poor year. Singles on 12th-13th April and 19th May were the only spring records and one on 14th-15th and 2 on 16th October were the only autumn records.

**\*RUSTIC BUNTING** *Emberiza rustica*. A female stopped briefly at Utra on 8th June.

**LITTLE BUNTING** *Emberiza pusilla*. Recorded for the fourth successive spring with one near Pund on 28th-30th April. There were 5 different individuals in autumn. The first was at Kennaby/Busta on 28th-30th September, another was found at Hjukni Geo on 8th, moving to Schoolton where it was joined by a second individual on 11th. The same day 2 other new arrivals were at Pund. Three remained on 12th and 2 were still present next day with one staying until 17th.

**YELLOW-BREASTED BUNTING** *Emberiza aureola*. There were 5 individuals all in September. One at Pund on 6th. Three were found on 12th, 2 together at Springfield and one at North Shirva, with 2 remaining on 13th and one still present on 15th. A fifth individual was at North Shirva on 17th-20th.

**REED BUNTING** *Emberiza schoeniclus*. Spring records comprised 1-2 on 7 dates 4th-26th March, 1-2 on 12 dates 10th-30th April and 1-4 on 15 dates 3rd-31st May. A male on 10th July was unseasonal. Almost daily autumn passage occurred from 3rd October-3rd November with main passage 10th-15th October, max. of 20 on 11th.

## Up date on British Birds Rarities Committee Decisions 1979-1989

*All records published in the 1990 report have been accepted, except:*

**TWO-BARRED CROSSBILL** *Loxia leucoptera*. Pending, decision awaited.

**YELLOW-HEADED BLACKBIRD** *Xanthocephalus xanthocephalus*. Accepted by BBRC, now being considered by B.O.U records committee.

**1989**

**CITRINE WAGTAIL** *Motacilla citreola* 27th August. Not yet submitted.

**1988**

**BLYTH'S PIPIT** *Anthus godlewski* 13th-22nd October. Decision awaited.

**1983**

**SHORT-TOED LARK** *Calandrella brachydactyla* 2nd-5th October. Now accepted.

**1982**

**CITRINE WAGTAIL** *Motacilla citreola* 13th-15th August. Decision still awaited.

## Ringing Details 1991

8771 individuals of 122 species were ringed in 1991. The highest total since 1983. Monthly ringing totals were

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
0	0	48	157	146	2356	3467	1488	375	693	37	4

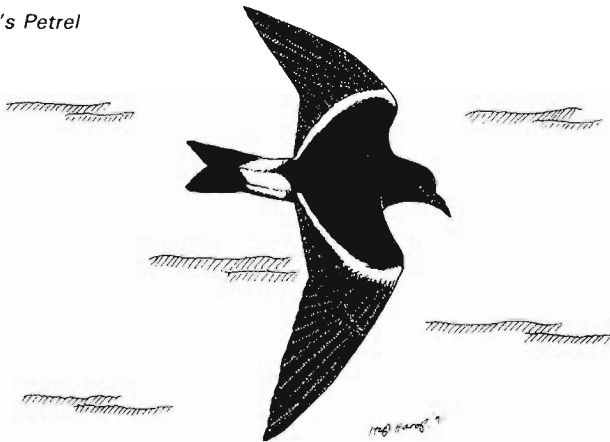
The good summer weather, presence of additional experienced seabird ringers and good seabird breeding success meant that seabird ringing totals were higher than in any year since the inception of the seabird monitoring programme. Over 1000 Guillemots were ringed and the importance of obtaining such a large sample was highlighted following an analysis of all Guillemot recoveries (see publications section). The Arctic Tern population continues to increase and as a result of their excellent breeding success a record total 1024 were ringed. A huge effort was again targeted at Storm Petrels, a record total of 2466 were ringed and over 100 controls were caught! Leach's Petrels appeared to be more numerous than usual with an astonishing 10 ringed, twice the previous best annual total! Other record ringing totals were achieved for Little Auk, Wood Pigeon and Olive-backed Pipit.

Not surprisingly Storm Petrel was the species with the highest ringing total, followed by Guillemot and then Arctic Tern. Others in the top ten were Starling 511, Shag 463, Puffin 321, Razorbill 319, Blackbird 226, Kittiwake 221 and Rock Pipit 203.

Dazzle netting and wader netting, the latter at Muckle Uri Geo, featured prominently during 1991 and resulted in the capture of a good total and variety of waders and wildfowl. Rarely ringed species included Pink-footed Goose (2), Greylag Goose, Wigeon, Mallard, Tufted Duck (2), Long-tailed Duck, Spotted Crake (2), Golden Plover (2), Whimbrel, Little Auk (2), Shorelark (2), Richard's Pipit, Olive-backed Pipit (2) and Greenish Warbler. Three species were additions to the Island ringing list, Shoveler, Baird's Sandpiper and Baillon's Crake.

The traps wintered well with only minor repairs required to most. The Vaadal trap was completely rebuilt during the autumn and new catching boxes were made for the Observatory trap and the Double Dyke north. All traps have now been rebuilt or received a major overhaul in the last 3 years.

*Leach's Petrel*



## Table of Ringing Totals & Recoveries

### a) Species ringed in 1991

	Ringed as		Totals		Recovered	
	Juv/Adult	Pullus	1991	1948-91	1991	1948-91
Fulmar	36	139	175	14311	5	130
Storm Petrel	2466	-	2466	16149	71	425
Leach's Petrel	10	-	10	32	-	-
Gannet	2	19	21	169	2	4
Shag	22	441	463	17980	9	454
Grey Heron	1	-	1	19	-	-
Whooper Swan	3	-	3	33	-	4
Pink-footed Goose	2	-	2	11	-	1
Greylag Goose	1	-	1	20	1	7
Wigeon	1	-	1	15	-	-
Teal	2	-	2	40	-	2
Mallard	1	-	1	10	-	1
Shoveler	1	-	1	1	-	-
Tufted Duck	2	-	2	13	-	-
Eider	5	-	5	132	-	-
Long-tailed Duck	1	-	1	15	-	1
Sparrowhawk	7	-	7	231	-	17
Merlin	1	-	1	172	-	11
Water Rail	7	-	7	261	-	3
Spotted Crake	2	-	2	17	-	-
Baillon's Crake	1	-	1	1	-	-
Moorhen	2	-	2	89	-	3
Oystercatcher	10	18	28	1261	1	62
Ringed Plover	27	1	28	515	-	6
Golden Plover	2	-	2	19	-	-
Lapwing	-	11	11	276	-	3
Knot	4	-	4	83	-	2
Sanderling	1	-	1	89	-	-
Little Stint	2	-	2	71	-	-
Baird's Sandpiper	1	-	1	1	-	-
Purple Sandpiper	3	-	3	150	-	1
Dunlin	22	-	22	462	-	7
Ruff	1	-	1	33	-	1
Jack Snipe	3	-	3	120	-	3
Snipe	10	-	10	345	-	4
Woodcock	7	-	7	325	-	17
Whimbrel	1	-	1	15	-	-
Curlew	5	4	9	103	-	5
Redshank	8	-	8	238	-	2
Common Sandpiper	4	-	4	44	-	1
Turnstone	7	-	7	72	-	-
Arctic Skua	1	73	74	3128	-	44
Great Skua	-	65	65	1080	3	20
Black-headed Gull	1	-	1	37	-	1
Common Gull	-	5	5	168	-	2
Lesser Black-backed Gull	1	17	18	1298	1	30

	Ringed as		Totals		Recovered	
	Juv/Adult	Pullus	1991	1948-91	1991	1948-91
Great Black-backed						
Gull	6	-	6	1922	2	83
Herring Gull	8	21	29	3876	1	86
Kittiwake	132	89	221	5402	-	27
Common Tern	-	3	3	445	1	3
Arctic Tern	-	1024	1024	1332	4	5
Guillemot	47	1048	1095	19930	24	688
Razorbill	68	251	319	5367	7	170
Black Guillemot	4	46	50	1424	-	17
Little Auk	2	-	2	9	-	-
Puffin	198	123	321	10722	2	29
Rock Dove	-	2	2	24	-	-
Wood Pigeon	4	-	4	50	-	2
Collared Dove	15	-	15	210	-	1
Long-eared Owl	10	-	10	198	2	12
Great Spotted						
Woodpecker	1	-	1	24	-	-
Skylark	13	-	13	775	-	3
Shorelark	2	-	2	5	-	-
Swallow	4	-	4	234	-	2
House Martin	4	-	4	148	-	1
Richard's Pipit	1	-	1	10	-	-
Olive-backed Pipit	2	-	2	8	-	-
Tree Pipit	4	-	4	577	-	-
Meadow Pipit	153	-	153	8494	-	44
Rock Pipit	199	4	203	8323	1	27
Grey Wagtail	1	-	1	26	-	1
White Wagtail	5	-	15	541	-	4
Wren	13	-	13	663	-	-
Dunnock	26	-	26	1986	-	6
Robin	35	-	35	6714	-	33
Bluethroat	3	-	3	222	-	2
Black Redstart	4	-	4	127	-	-
Redstart	5	-	5	1520	-	-
Whinchat	1	-	1	548	-	2
Stonechat	1	-	1	53	-	-
Wheatear	188	-	188	14823	-	70
Ring Ousel	6	-	6	447	-	8
Blackbird	226	-	226	19248	3	308
Fieldfare	4	-	4	605	1	1
Song Thrush	44	-	44	2284	-	29
Redwing	195	-	195	7427	1	69
Lanceolated Warbler	1	-	1	24	-	-
Sedge Warbler	2	-	2	371	-	2
Marsh Warbler	1	-	1	80	-	-
Reed Warbler	4	-	4	160	-	1
Icterine Warbler	2	-	2	76	-	-
Barred Warbler	5	-	5	336	-	1
Lesser Whitethroat	6	-	6	538	-	1
Whitethroat	4	-	4	780	-	-
Garden Warbler	15	-	15	2768	-	3



	Ringed as		Totals		Recovered	
	Juv/Adult	Pullus	1991	1948-91	1991	1948-91
Blackcap	49	-	49	3941	-	15
Greenish Warbler	1	-	1	16	-	-
Arctic Warbler	1	-	1	27	-	-
Yellow-browed Warbler	5	-	5	94	-	-
Wood Warbler	2	-	2	87	-	-
Chiffchaff	46	-	46	847	1	2
Willow Warbler	29	-	29	2945	-	5
Goldcrest	27	-	27	1238	-	2
Spotted Flycatcher	7	-	7	547	-	3
Pied Flycatcher	8	-	8	798	1	5
Red-backed Shrike	3	-	3	164	-	-
Great Grey Shrike	1	-	1	108	-	1
Hooded Crow	-	1	1	44	-	-
Starling	252	259	511	21375	3	175
House Sparrow	22	-	22	1305	-	3
Chaffinch	8	-	8	2251	-	11
Brambling	82	-	82	2680	-	12
Greenfinch	3	-	3	156	-	-
Siskin	1	-	1	280	-	1
Linnet	1	-	1	133	-	1
Twite	151	-	151	4745	-	3
Redpoll	5	-	5	571	-	1
Crossbill	1	-	1	455	-	2
Scarlet Rosefinch	8	-	8	116	-	-
Lapland Bunting	1	-	1	43	-	-
Snow Bunting	2	-	2	515	-	3
Reed Bunting	10	-	10	354	-	2
TOTALS (all species ringed 1948-91)	5107	3664	8771	238909	147	3291

**b) Species ringed/recovered 1948-90 but not ringed in 1991 (totals 1948-1990)**

Little Grebe	9/0	Great Crested Grebe	1/0
Red-necked Grebe	1/0	Slavonian Grebe	3/0
Cormorant	7/0	Bean Goose	1/0
White-fronted Goose	3/1	Barnacle Goose	3/0
Shelduck	4/0	Pintail	1/1
Pochard	2/0	Ring-necked Duck	1/0
Scaup	4/0	Velvet Scoter	2/0
Goldeneye	15/1	Red-breasted Merganser	3/0
Goosander	3/1	Hen Harrier	2/0
Goshawk	1/0	Kestrel	43/8
Red-footed Falcon	1/0	Peregrine	6/1
Quail	5/0	Little Crane	1/0
Corncrake	35/2	Coot	13/1
Great Bustard	1/0	Little Ringed Plover	1/0
Dotterel	3/0	Western Sandpiper	1/0
Temminck's Stint	2/0	White-rumped Sandpiper	1/0
Pectoral Sandpiper	5/0	Curlew Sandpiper	5/0
Buff-breasted Sandp.	1/0	Great Snipe	1/0

**b) Species ringed/recovered 1948-90 but not ringed in 1991 (totals 1948-1990)**

Black-tailed Godwit	1/0	Bar-tailed Godwit	9/2
Spotted Redshank	3/0	Greenshank	8/0
Green Sandpiper	40/1	Wood Sandpiper	16/0
Red-necked Phalarope	6/0	Grey Phalarope	3/0
Pomarine Skua	1/0	Iceland Gull	1/0
Glaucous Gull	35/1	Turtle Dove	66/2
Cuckoo	90/1	Snowy Owl	1/1
Short-eared Owl	17/0	Nightjar	3/0
Swift	17/1	Hoopoe	3/0
Wryneck	188/0	Short-toed Lark	7/0
Woodlark	2/0	Sand Martin	8/0
Tawny Pipit	3/0	Pechora Pipit	6/0
Red-throated Pipit	6/0	Yellow Wagtail	10/0
Citrine Wagtail	5/0	Waxwing	36/0
Dipper	12/0	Thrush Nightingale	22/0
Nightingale	24/0	Siberian Rubythroat	1/0
Red-flanked Bluetail	1/0	Pied Wheatear	1/0
Black-eared Wheatear	3/0	Rock Thrush	1/0
Grey-cheeked Thrush	2/0	White's Thrush	1/0
Eye-browed Thrush	1/0	Dusky Thrush	1/0
Black-throated Thrush	1/0	Mistle Thrush	22/1
Pallas's Grasshopper W.	6/0	Grasshopper Warbler	90/0
River Warbler	5/0	Savi's Warbler	2/0
Aquatic Warbler	22/0	Paddyfield Warbler	4/0
Blyth's Reed Warbler	1/0	Great Reed Warbler	6/0
Thick-billed Warbler	1/0	Booted Warbler	6/0
Melodious Warbler	10/0	Subalpine Warbler	21/0
Sardinian Warbler	1/0	Pallas's Warbler	2/0
Radde's Warbler	1/0	Dusky Warbler	4/0
Bonelli's Warbler	1/0	Firecrest	1/0
Red-breasted Flycatcher	48/0	Collared Flycatcher	1/0
Coal Tit	1/0	Blue Tit	2/0
Great Tit	7/0	Treecreeper	1/0
Golden Oriole	6/1	Isabelline Shrike	1/0
Lesser Grey Shrike	6/0	Woodchat Shrike	12/0
Jackdaw	3/0	Rook	5/0
Raven	26/0	Daurian Starling	1/0
Rose-coloured Starling	2/0	Tree Sparrow	97/1
Goldfinch	5/0	Arctic Redpoll	17/0
Two-barred Crossbill	1/0	Parrot Crossbill	37/0
Bullfinch	40/0	Hawfinch	10/0
Tennessee Warbler	2/0	Song Sparrow	3/0
White-crowned Sparrow	1/0	White-throated Sparrow	2/0
Savannah Sparrow	1/0	Pine Bunting	2/0
Oortolan Bunting	18/0	Cretzschmar's Bunting	1/0
Yellowhammer	53/0	Yellow-browed Bunting	1/0
Rustic Bunting	12/1	Little Bunting	25/0
Chestnut Bunting	1/0	Yellow-breasted Bunting	6/0
Pallas's Reed Bunting	2/0	Black-headed Bunting	3/0
Corn Bunting	3/0	Red-headed Bunting	5/0

## Recoveries in 1991

A total of 147 recoveries away from the Isle were reported during the year. Information on these is presented below. 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 / sight record of identifiable colour rings
- vB - breeding where recaptured
- +
- x - 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

Age when ringed: this is given in the EURING code:

- 1 pullus/nestling
- 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
- 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

There were 5 recoveries away from the Isle. Two birds ringed as nestlings were found dead in Holland, one 22 years old and the other 12 years old. Another ringed as a chick in 1978 was found dead in Highland almost 13 years later. Two ringed as adults were found dead in Denmark during 1990, one had been ringed in 1983 the other in 1966!

### STORM PETREL

Forty-one birds were controlled away from the Isle, these are tabulated below.

Sumburgh, Shetland	1	Noss Head, Highland	4
Mousa, Shetland	3	Girdleness, Grampian	2
Lerwick, Shetland	2	Isle of May, Fife	1
Whalsay, Shetland	5	Low Hauxley, Northumberland	1
Yell, Shetland	16	Tynemouth, Tyne & Wear	1
North Ronaldsay, Orkney	6	Nolsoy, FAROES	5
Burray Ness, Orkney	4	Reve Kai, Rogaland, NORWAY	1
South Ronaldsay	13	Runde, More og Romsdal, NORWAY	6

Another 7 to Norway and 5 to the Faroes. Perhaps not suprising with the increase in ringing effort in both countries.

## **GANNET**

1226644	1	18.07.89	Fair Isle
	xF	11.08.90	Baie D'Audierne, Finistere, FRANCE
			47°57'N 4°28'W 1300km S 389 days.

Another ringed as a nestling in 1988 was found dead in Yell in late June 1991. Only the third and fourth recoveries of Fair Isle ringed birds.

## **SHAG**

There were 9 individuals found dead away from the island. Five in Orkney (2 in their first year, 2 in their second year and one in its third year), one in Shetland and one in the North Sea (both in their first year) and one in Highland (in its eighth year). Details of the most unusual movement are given below.

1226955	1	18.07.90	Fair Isle
	xF	06.01.91	Northbay, Barra, Western Isles.
			56°59'N 7°23'W 440km SW 172 days.

## **GREYLAG GOOSE**

5028381	4m	21.10.81	Fair Isle
	+	09.01.91	Stranraer, Dumfries & Galloway
			54°54'N 5°2'W 554km S 3367 days.

## **OYSTERCATCHER**

A juvenile ringed on 06.07.89 was found dead in Strathclyde on 18.08.91.

## **GREAT SKUA**

There were three recoveries away from the Isle, all of birds ringed as chicks. One in its eighth year on Noss, Shetland; one in its first year at Golspie, Highland; and one in its third year at Dorum Sud, Germany.

## **LESSER BLACK-BACKED GULL**

A chick ringed on 08.07.91 was found dead at St Andrews, Fife on 30.09.91.

## **HERRING GULL**

One ringed as a chick in 1986 was found dead at Orphir, Orkney in June 1991.

## **GREAT BLACK-BACKED GULL**

There were two recoveries away from the Isle. One ringed as a chick in 1972 was found dead at Peterhead, Grampian in August 1991. The other was ringed as a first year in July 1984 and found dead at North Roe, Shetland almost three years later.

## **COMMON TERN**

CK97575	1	23.07.73	Fair Isle
	+	13.03.91	Freetown, SIERRA LEONE
			8°30'N 13°17'W 5758km S 6442 days.

Although British ringed Common Terns are recorded regularly from Sierra Leone, this is the furthest recorded movement of a Fair Isle ringed individual.

## ARCTIC TERN

Three individuals ringed as chicks in 1991 (one on 3rd July and 2 on 12th July) were controlled on North Ronaldsay on 10th August. Full details of the most distant recovery is given below.

XR72180	1	28.06.91	Fair Isle
	x	17.09.91	Stanmore, Greater London
			51°36'N 0°19'W 885km S 81 days.

## GUILLEMOT

Recoveries of individuals ringed as nestlings are tabulated below.

	Age at recovery										
	1	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Norway	5		1		1		1		2		
Sweden						1					
Denmark	2										
Germany							1				
England	2				1						
Orkney											1

There were 5 recoveries of birds ringed as adults, 2 in Shetland and 3 in Norway. Details of 3 of the most interesting recoveries are given below.

GJ79583	1	30.06.82	Fair Isle
	+	03.07.90	Incolfshofdi, Skaftafeus, ICELAND
			63°48'N 16°39'W 922km NW 2925 days
GJ79758	1	30.06.82	Fair Isle
	xF	01.01.89	Karlsoy, Troms, NORWAY
			70°5'N 19°55'E 1543km NE 2377 days.
GM79933	8	17.07.69	Fair Isle
	xF	02.02.91	Buelandet Islands, NORWAY
			61°21'N 5°4'E 418km NE 7870 days.

Note the first two were ringed on the same day. GJ79583 may well have been breeding given the capture date and method (killed in pole net). GJ79758 represents the furthest movement, not far short of the North Cape.

As usual most of the Scandinavian recoveries related to birds drowned in fishing nets. Three other birds of an adult age drowned on the same day at the same site as GM79933! - lord knows how many drowned individuals go unrecorded!

## RAZORBILL

Seven were recovered away from the Isle, one each in Shetland, England and Denmark, 2 in Scotland and 2 in Norway.

## PUFFIN

One ringed as a chick in 1984 was found dead in Orkney in January 1991. Another ringed as a chick in 1977 was controlled, probably breeding, on Sule Skerry, Orkney on 24th July 1990.

**LONG-EARED OWL**

GH19156	2f	31.10.88	Fair Isle
	v	09.03.91	Isle of May, Fife 56°11'N 2°23'W 376km S 859 days.
GH19269	2f	03.11.89	Fair Isle
	xF	27.02.91	A1 nr. Lowick Northumberland 55°39'N 1°53'W 432km S 481 days.
GH58960	3f	03.11.88	North Ronaldsay, Orkney
	v	23.11.89	Fair Isle
	x	05.05.89	Mikkebostad, Troms NORWAY 69°0'N 17°24'E 1430km NE 183 days.

Note with GH58960 that the distance travelled and time elapsed is from the date and place of ringing not from Fair Isle.

**BLACKBIRD**

XP28640	3m	17.10.90	Fair Isle
	xF	22.10.91	Kreilfroord, Noord Holland, NETHERLANDS 52°50'N 5°6'E 852km SE 370 days.
XP28500	6f	29.03.88	Fair Isle
	x	13.11.90	Gjerstad, Aust-Agder, NORWAY 58°53'N 9°2'E 610km E 959 days.

Two typical controls. Another, a first-winter female, ringed in October was found dead in Tayside the following January.

**FIELDFARE**

A first-summer female ringed on 1st June 1991 was found dead on North Ronaldsay 15 days later. The first recovery of a Fair Isle ringed Fieldfare.

**REDWING**

RX37949	3	17.10.90	Fair Isle
	x	18.04.91	Djupivogur, Sudur Mila, ICELAND 64°39'N 14°17'W 869km NW 183 days

Our sixth to Iceland.

**CHIFFCHAFF**

One ringed on 24th May 1990 was controlled on North Ronaldsay on 31st May. Only the second recovery of a Fair Isle ringed Chiffchaff.

**PIED FLYCATCHER**

E530981	4m	21.05.89	Fair Isle
	xF	05.06.90	Andal, More og Romsdal, NORWAY 62°52'N 7°35'E 616km E 380 days.

Our previous foreign recoveries were in Norway, Spain and Morocco.

## STARLING

Three individuals were controlled away from the Isle. One at Wick (Highland), one at North Ronaldsay (Orkney) and one at Sandwick (Shetland). It is interesting to note that the Sandwick individual was subsequently retrapped on Fair Isle.

## Controls

Details were received for 145 birds in 1990 which had been ringed elsewhere and controlled or recovered on Fair Isle.

## STORM PETREL

One-hundred and thirty-two birds were controlled on Fair Isle. These were ringed at:

Mousa, Shetland	1	Collieston, Grampian	2
Trondra, Shetland	1	Muchals, Grampian	1
Foula, Shetland	10	Isle of May, Fife	2
Lerwick, Shetland	10	North Rona, Western Isles	1
Whalsay, Shetland	10	St Kilda, Western Isles	3
Mossbank, Shetland	1	Low Hauxley, Northumberland	1
Yell, Shetland	58	Tynemouth Pier, Tyne & Wear	3
North Ronaldsay, Orkney	8	Whitburn, Tyne & Wear	2
Auskerry, Orkney	1	Copeland, Northern Ireland	1
Noss Head, Highland	4	Filey Brigg, North Yorkshire	1
Sandside Head, Highland	1	Flamborough, Humberside	3
Tarbart Ness, Highland	1	Runde, More og Romsdal NORWAY	4

Full details of the longest movements are given below.

2141400	4	12.08.90	Focarrig, Co. Cork, EIRE. 51°26'N 9°30'W
	v	17.07.91	Fair Isle 1027km NE 339 days.

C.E.M.A. Lisboa			
D008703	4	12.06.90	Lagos, Faro, Algarve PORTUGAL. 37°8'N 8°40'W
	v	25.07.90	Fair Isle 2540km N 43 days.

The Portuguese individual was one of the first seven ever ringed in the Iberian peninsula!

## GREY HERON

Kalo			
217436	1	08.05.90	Stubberland, Jylland, DENMARK. 56°25'N 8°57'E
	xF	10.10.90	Fair Isle 712km NW 155 days.

The second ringed Grey Heron to be found on Fair Isle. The first was ringed as a pullus in Norway.

**EIDER**

HW54900	1f	24.07.80	Newburgh, Grampian Region. 57°19'N 2°0'W
	x	08.09.89	Fair Isle 247km N 3333 days.

An exceptional movement for a Scottish bred bird.

**OYSTERCATCHER**

FA07408	3	08.09.83	Wrangle, Lincs. 53°2'N 0°10'E
	xL	14.06.90	Fair Isle 730km N 2471 days.

**DUNLIN**

NR30481	4	22.07.90	Frieston, Lincs 52°55'N 0°4'E
	v	31.05.91	Fair Isle 742km N 313 days.

**ARCTIC SKUA**

Two adults found dead in the breeding colony were both ringed as chicks. One on Foula in 1981 the other on Mousa in 1982.

**GUILLEMOT**

One ringed as a pullus on 19.06.90 near Helmsdale, Highland Region was found dead at North Haven on 01.11.90.

**LONG-EARED OWL**

Helsinki			
H138728	5	17.03.89	Rautalampi, Kuopio, FINLAND 62°44'N 26°44'E
	xF	25.12.89	Fair Isle 1560km W 283 days.

Fair Isle's first foreign ringed individual.

**ROBIN**

Bruxelles			
3226786	3	29.09.89	Wetteren oost-Vlaanderen, BELGIUM 51°0'N 3°53'E
	v	25.04.90	Fair Isle 1009km N 208 days.

Although we have controlled German, Dutch and Danish birds, this is our first from Belgium. Presumably an individual first trapped during its southward migration and then again on its return to the breeding grounds.

**REDWING**

Reykjavik			
839195	4	01.08.87	Halldorsstadir, Thingeyjar, ICELAND 65°27'N 17°25'W
	v	27.10.89	Fair Isle 1041km SE 818 days.
Reykjavik			
840496	3	13.10.89	Kvisker, Oraefi, A-Skaft, ICELAND 63°59'N 16°26'W
	v	27.10.89	Fair Isle 921km SE 14 days.



Although 5 Redwings ringed on Fair Isle have subsequently been found in Iceland only one Icelandic ringed bird had been controlled on Fair Isle, so to get two more on the same day was a real bonus.

#### **BLACKCAP**

Radolfzell

CR95974	2m	19.10.89	Forchheim, Oberfranken, GERMANY 49°44'N 11°4'E
	v	28.10.89	Fair Isle 1357km NW 9 days.

Our second from Germany averaged over 150km a day.

#### **CHIFFCHAFF**

146803	4	04.05.90	Vale Marais, Guernsey, CHANNEL ISLANDS 49°30'N 2°32'W
	v	20.05.90	Fair Isle 1116km N 16 days.

Fair Isle's third foreign ringed Chiffchaff. All three have occurred since 1987!

## **Recent Cetacean Records in Fair Isle Waters**

The seas that surround the Northern Isles are some of the richest areas for Cetaceans in the North East Atlantic. High concentrations of fish and plankton generated by the mixing of the Gulf stream and cooler Scottish waters, and the area's proximity to the continental shelf, a favoured migration route of the great whales, are the two main influencing factors. A minimum of 12 species of cetacea have been recorded from Fair Isle in recent years and perusing whaling statistics from the early part of the century (Berry and Johnston 1980) one can only imagine what might have been seen from Bunness on a calm autumn day.

The following systematic list has been constructed using records collected during the FIBO period, but it must be stressed that cetacean records have only been logged regularly since 1980.

#### **MINKE WHALE** *Balaenoptera acutorostrata*

The first confirmed record was of an individual in Finnikuoy bay on 8th August 1985. Almost annual since with a further 6 records involving 8 individuals, the majority of which have been seen during July. Affectionately known as the Herring Hog in Shetland, it tends to favour inshore waters feeding primarily on small fish and plankton. Formerly fairly common in Shetland waters, stocks were diminished by Norwegian whalers after World War Two.

#### **SPERM WHALE** *Physeter catodon*

A dead individual was seen from the Good Shepherd ca. 7km north of the isle on 25th June 1987 and a pod of six, presumed to be bachelor males, swam south-west past South Light on 18th November 1988. Lone males often migrate into subarctic and arctic waters during the summer months but probably move back out to the Atlantic along the continental shelf.

**NORTHERN BOTTLENOSE WHALE** *Hyperoodon ampullatus*

According to Williamson (1965) one spent the afternoon between Landberg and Goorn. No dates are given.

**CUVIER'S WHALE** *Ziphius cavirostris*

One was stranded at Klingsers Geo during the early part of 1949. Williamson (1965) refers to this individual as a Sowerby's Whale *Mesoplodon bideus* but a note which appears in the Scottish Naturalist (Williamson 1952) states that on examination by the British Museum it was confirmed as a Cuvier's Whale.

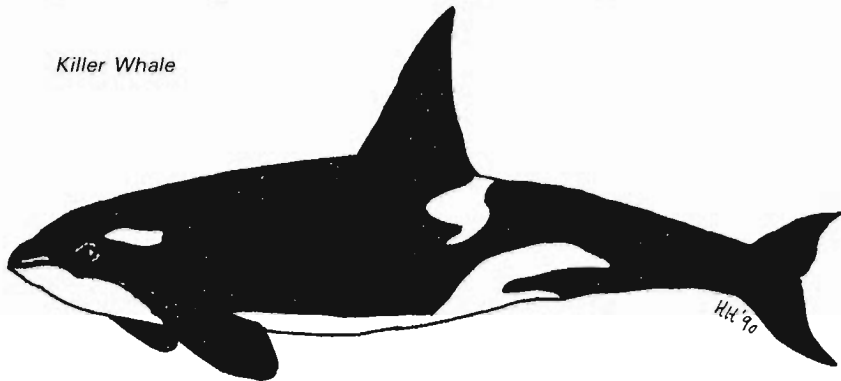
**PILOT WHALE** *Globicephala melaena*

This species is probably the commonest whale in Shetland waters but remains erratic in its occurrence around Fair Isle. The majority of records are in the autumn and winter months, supporting the theory that the species breeds between Shetland and Faroes in early spring. Pod sizes have varied from 3 to 20 individuals but there were a stunning 200+ on the 7th January 1983.

**KILLER WHALE** *Orcinus orca*

There have been 20 records involving a minimum of 65 individuals. Apart from two spring occurrences, all records have been in the autumn and winter. Twelve in October 1974 is the largest pod recorded with most records relating to single males, family parties or groups of females. Overall sex ratios in British and Irish waters (Evans 1988), which includes Fair Isle data, suggests a preponderance of males amongst lone individuals and of females in larger groups, supporting evidence from elsewhere that Killer Whales have a matriarchal social system with males being polygynous, attending a harem of females, living alone or as separate bachelor herds.

*Killer Whale*



**WHITE-BEAKED DOLPHIN** *Lagenorhynchus albirostris*

Seen regularly, especially from the Good Shepherd. The majority of sightings have been in June to September. Schools of up to 20, presumably amalgamating family parties, are occasionally seen, but 50+ on 22nd August is the largest party recorded. One male (and his family) have been present between Fair Isle and Shetland for the last five summers. A distinctive fin marking means he is readily recognised by the crew of the Good Shepherd.

**ATLANTIC WHITE-SIDED DOPHIN** *Lagenorhynchus acutus*

There are just six records involving at least 65 individuals, with a maximum of 40 on 7th September 1960. However, prior to the mid 1980s, when the correct identification criteria became widely known, confusion with the similar White-beaked Dolphin may have occurred. Previously there was a tendency to identify any dolphin with white 'sides' as White-sided.

**BOTTLE-NOSED DOLPHIN** *Tursiops truncatus*

This more southerly species is rare in Shetland waters. It has only been recorded from Fair Isle on one occasion. Two spent 1st-27th August 1956 in Wick 'O' Furse.

**COMMON DOLPHIN** *Delphinus delphis*

There is just one record of this species, on 20th August 1976. It is rare in Northern Waters, most British records coming from the warmer seas off the south and west coasts.

**RISSO'S DOLPHIN** *Grampus griseus*

There are 15 records involving over 100 individuals, all of which have been seen in late summer/autumn. They prefer rocky coasts, near which they feed almost exclusively on small squid. The species is most frequently seen in small groups.

**HARBOUR PORPOISE** *Phocoena phocoena*

The commonest cetacean of the region and the most frequently observed around Fair Isle. Schools of 2 to 12 are seen regularly during the summer months and occasionally in winter. Fifty or more on 5th July 1991 was exceptional.

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Hugh Harrop

## Cetacean records 1991

**MINKE WHALE** *Balaenoptera acutorostrata*

Singletons were seen on 11th & 15th July and on 16th 3 spent the afternoon feeding 3 miles to the east of the Isle. Several trips were made out to the whales in the Observatory zodiac, from which observers were afforded stunning views down to 5 metres. At one stage one animal swam just a few feet under the boat! Another was seen off Meoness on 29th September.

**PILOT WHALE** *Globicephala melaena*

Three were seen from the Good Shepherd on 13th June.

**KILLER WHALE** *Orcinus orca*

A pod of 6 were seen from the Good Shepherd on 4th May. The pod comprised 2 bulls and 4 cows.

**WHITE-BEAKED DOLPHIN** *Lagenorhynchus albirostris*

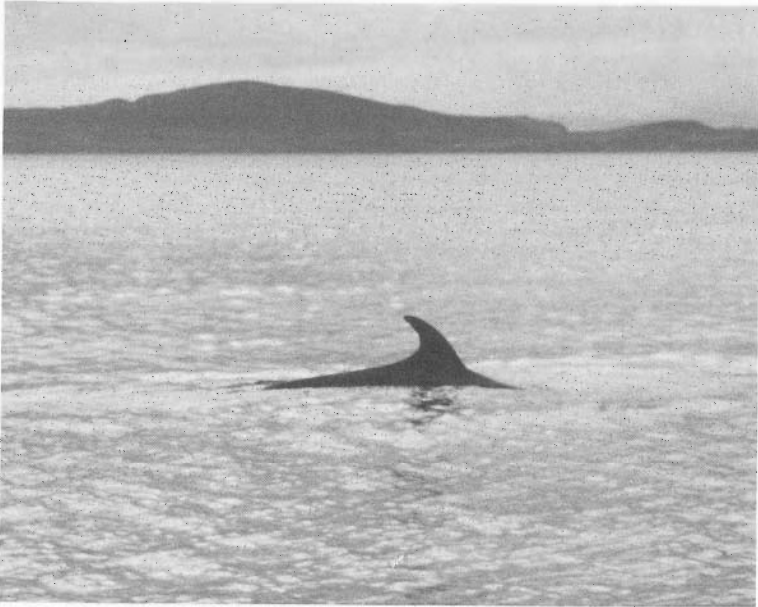
Seen regularly from the Good Shepherd. In July, 2 on 30th; in August, 5 on 10th, 5 on 16th, 4 on 22nd, 6 on 27th and 7 on 31st; in September, 15+ on 3rd, 4 on 7th, 5 on 23rd, 4 on 28th and 29th; in October, 1 on 15th. Records from the isle comprised 2 on 25th July, 7 on 7th September and 1 on 9th September.

**RISSO'S DOLPHIN** *Grampus griseus*

Records from the isle comprised 4 on 5th July, then in September 10 on 4th, 2 on 8th and 3 on 20th. From the Good Shepherd there were 4 on 20th August and 29th September and 1 on 2nd October.

**HARBOUR PORPOISE** *Phocoena phocoena*

Seen in every month from March-October inclusive. Over fifty were seen from the Good Shepherd on 5th July, with a maximum of 12 seen from the isle on 16th July.



*Minke Whale*

*Photo: Paul Harvey*

# Invertebrate Twitching on Fair Isle

While staying at the Observatory (20th-27th July) I spent quite a lot of my time turning over rocks, pieces of wood and many other objects that looked small enough to move. My personal quest was to find as many of the different species of woodlice and harvestmen as the island holds. I also collected a few centipedes and millipedes for later identification by experts.

## Woodlice

I found six species of woodlice. Britain's two commonest species *Oniscus asellus* and *Porcellio scaber* were encountered all over the isle. A third common species *Trichoniscus pusillus* was recorded widely in small numbers. This species is often overlooked due to its small size (up to 5mm) but its reddy-brown colour enables it to be identified easily in the field once you get your eye in. An even smaller species *Trichoniscus pygmaeus* (up to 2.5mm) was collected near the summit of Ward Hill. This species is probably reasonably common around the isle and only awaits the right stone to be lifted.

The last two species are confined to the coast. *Ligia oceanica* (up to 30mm) was found in small numbers on all accessible boulder beaches. By day it hides under rocks and in inaccessible cracks and crevices, but at night can be found in large numbers on rocky substrates. Its large size, and the last segment on the antennae (flagellum) having ten or more distinct sections, easily identifies this animal.

*Trichoniscoides saeroeensis* (up to 4mm) is white, tinged with patches of pale pink/orange and has red eyes. A single male was collected from beneath embedded rocks at the bottom of the Finniquoy Gully. This species, like *T. pygmaeus*, is easily overlooked and may occur in other places around the coast.

*T. saeroeensis* and *T. pygmaeus* are new records for the isle. The former is probably also new for Shetland.

## Harvestmen

Five species of harvestmen were also found. *Nemestoma bimaculatum*, a small black species with two silvery-white spots on its back, was found in small numbers around the island under large pieces of wood. One of its relatives, *Mitostoma chrysomelas* was also found in similar habitats and numbers. This small species can be mistaken for young specimens of larger harvestmen, but a good field character is the way it holds its pedipalps in a triangular shape (viewed from the side). Both of the above species can be found throughout the year, while the following three harvestmen hatch from eggs around early June and die when the cold weather sets in for the winter.

*Mitopus morio* was the commonest harvestman found during my stay. This rather nondescript species can be identified, using a microscope, by the lack of a trident (three strong tubercles where you would expect the "nose" to be) and a ventral spur on the basal segment of its chelicera (pair of pincer-like appendages, just in front of the mouth). The other large species was *Phalangium opilio*, which was found in small numbers around the isle. This animal can be identified by the absence of a trident and the presence of a pair of prominent tubercles, just above the chelicera.

A young specimen of *Oligolophus tridens* was discovered under a piece of wood at South Harbour. It is probably reasonably common on the isle, but matures later in the year than the other species mentioned, so may have been overlooked.

## Centipedes

Three species of centipede were collected. These were identified by Mr A. D. Barber

of the British Myriapod Group. They were *Brachygeophilus truncorum*, *Lithobius melanops* and *Lithobius forficatus*. All were common throughout the isle.

### Millipedes

Only one species was found. This was *Cylindroiulus latestriatus* which was found around most of the isle under rocks and pieces of wood. It was identified by Dick Jones of the British Myriapod Group.

### Conclusion

The above records are only scratching the surface of our knowledge of Fair Isle's invertebrate fauna. More work in the future should lead to the discovery of more species in all four groups.

*Jon Daws, 19 The Portway, Leicester.*

## Fair Isle Moth Highlights, 1991

For the fourth year in five, moth traps were operated on Fair Isle. The Schoolton trap was operated on all suitable nights from 13th June to 15th October and the Observatory trap on many suitable nights from mid-July to 14th October. There were some particularly fine nights for moth activity, reflected in some large captures and in island folk reporting unprecedented numbers in the headlights of cars and coming to lighted windows. Trapping confirmed many of the results of the previous years, particularly regarding the small range of known resident species, their respective abundance and the period of their occurrence. There were, however, some surprises, including an exciting series of moths new to the isle.

The greatest difference from the pattern set in previous years was the length of the season. Whereas before, captures ended rather abruptly in early September, a wide range of species were trapped in the first half of September 1991 including an abundance of Rosy Rustics *Hydraecia micacea* peaking at 51 (at Schoolton) on 8th. Small numbers of Rosy Rustics and Large Yellow Underwings *Noctua pronuba* continued to be trapped most nights to 15th October.

Moths are well known insect migrants, but after four years of trapping we were beginning to wonder whether Fair Isle was too isolated or too far north to host other than a small, unchanging variety of resident species. Such thoughts were dispelled this summer and autumn. Initially, additions to the Fair Isle list came from the Schoolton trap: Large Ear *Amphipoea lucens* on 4th August, Small Wainscot *Photedes pygmina* on 28th August and \*Mouse Moth *Amphipyra tragopoginis* on 1st September (with 5 more from 5th-27th). The Observatory's turn soon followed, with an \*Ear Moth *Amphipoea oculatea* on 3rd September, 2 \*Black Rustics *Aporophylla nigra* on 10th, a \*Red-Green Carpet *Chloroclysta siterata* on 18th September and a Satellite *Eupsilis transversa* on 14th October (a night when the migrants Silver Y *Autographa gamma* and Angle Shades *Phlogophora meticulosa* were trapped at Schoolton). Also new were the micro moths \**Bacira lancealana* trapped at Schoolton on 3rd August and the very attractive little *Dioryctria abietella* caught by Inge Thomson at Quoy on 1st August. Members of the Quoy household were also instrumental in catching Fair Isle's third Bedstraw Hawkmoth *Hyles gallii*



Bedstraw Hawkmoth

Photo: P. Harvey

on 25th July, almost one year to the day after the second, and Fair Isle's first ever confirmed wasp, a drone Norwegian wasp *Dolichovespula norwegica*, caught on 22nd August. The latter now resides at the Royal Scottish Museum, Edinburgh.

Not all newcomers to the trap were firsts for Fair Isle. Middle-barred Minor *Oligia fasciuncula* is abundant in the crofting area, particularly in marshy grassland where it can often be found by day sitting on Marsh Ragwort *Senecio aquaticus* flowers. Yet one at Schoolton on 28th July was the first to be extracted from a trap. Also new to the Schoolton trap, on 28th July was a Twin-spot Carpet *Perizosa didymata*, despite a strong population about 200 metres away among the Meadow Burn's stands of reed-grass *Phalaris arundinacea*. The trapped individual was a member of the Shetland form *P.D.hetlandica*, although among the reed-grass it is considerably outnumbered by the nominate form.

\* We were most fortunate this summer to make contact with Orkney moth expert, Ian Lorimer, who very kindly confirmed or identified those species asterisked above.

Nick Riddiford and Paul Harvey.

## The Origin and Status of the Fair Isle Mouse.

The wood mouse on Fair Isle is much larger and more richly coloured than its mainland neighbour. Unfortunately, being an island population, it is more susceptible to natural and unnatural perturbations in the environment than mainland populations. This places it under greater risk of extinction.

Recent anxiety over the conservation status of the Fair Isle wood mouse has prompted two studies (June/July, 1987 and the present study, September 1991) into its distribution and abundance. In these studies mice were caught in 'mouse friendly' Longworth traps. Trapped mice were weighed, measured, sexed, checked for parasites and individually marked with a unique fur clip pattern before being released. The nightly trap success (No. mice caught X 100/No. traps X No. nights traps set) was 7.8% (29 mice caught in 37 traps, set over 10 days at 13 different sites). This compares favourably with the results obtained during the study of 1987 in which nightly trap success at the same 13 sites was 6.5%. The nightly trap success of both studies is slightly higher than the nightly trap success of two previous studies carried out in the 1950's and early 1960's, in which the Fair Isle mouse population was described as 'small' and 'not large'. Therefore, although small there is no evidence to suggest that the population is in decline.

An additional aspect of this study was to investigate the most likely geographical source of the Fair Isle mouse population. Do they originate from Scandinavia or the British Isles? One method of establishing the most likely place of origin is to compare the parasite fauna of Fair Isle mice with that of mice from both Scandinavia and the British Isles. The prediction being that the island population will share the same parasite species as mice from the putative country of origin. So far our results show that Fair Isle mice share 5 of their 6 parasites with conspecifics from the British Isles and none with those of Scandinavia. This strongly suggests that the mice of Fair Isle originated from the British Isles. Three more species of parasite are currently being identified, the results of which will hopefully shed more light onto the origin of the Fair Isle mouse population.

### Acknowledgements

This project was in collaboration with Dr K. Wilson, University College of North Wales. P.E. was funded by the Louise Hiom Trust, University of Glasgow and Sheffield. K.W. (1987) was supported by the Mammal Society. Finally many thanks to the people of Fair Isle.

*Paul Eady, University of Sheffield.*



## Publications

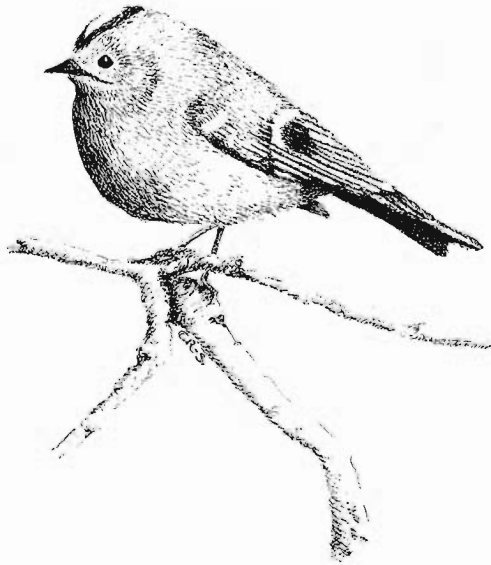
The following were published in 1991 by, or with the assistance of, FIBO staff and facilities.

### Seabirds

- Harvey, P.V. Proctor, R. and Donald, C. 1990. Fair Isle Seabird Monitoring Scheme: 1990. Nature Conservancy Council C.S.D. Report no. 1164.
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- Heubeck, M., Harvey, P.V. and Okill, J.D. Changes in the Shetland Guillemot *Uria aalge* population and the pattern of recoveries of ringed birds 1959-90. *Seabird* 13:3-21.
- Walsh, P.M., Avery, M. and Heubeck, M. Monitoring of seabird numbers and breeding success. In *Britain's Birds in 1989/90: The conservation and monitoring review* pp96-103. Eds Stroud and Glue.

### Identification

- Harrap, S. and Millington, R. Identification Forum: Two-barred Crossbill. *Bird. World* 4:55-59.
- Lansdown, P., Riddiford, N and Knox, A.G. Identification of Arctic Redpolls. *Brit. Birds* 84:41-56.
- Riddiford, N. A field character for identification of Collared Flycatcher: female and non-breeding plumage. *Brit. Birds* 84:19-23.
- Riddiford, Nick. and Harvey, Paul. Pallas' Grasshopper Warbler Identification: Some new field characters. *Bird. World* 4:324-326.



*Goldcrest*

## The weather on Fair Isle in 1991

January	With predominantly south-west winds it was a mild month, though snow lay 2cm deep on the 12th – the year's one and only day of snow cover! It was also a dry (65%) and sunny (159%) month.
February	Another dry but slightly cooler and duller month than average. Anticyclonic conditions – the year's highest pressure of 1042.8mb occurred on the 4th – resulted in frequent south-east winds. The year's lowest air temperature of $-1.6^{\circ}\text{C}$ was recorded on the 11th – following a night when the grass minimum fell to $-5.8^{\circ}\text{C}$ .
March	A very mild month with mean temperatures $1.6^{\circ}\text{C}$ above average. Also dull, wet and, with only one gale, it was calmer than usual.
April	A pleasant month – mild, dry and sunny.
May	A dry month (48%) though frequent north-west winds resulted in cloudy conditions. There were NO south-easterlies!
June	With frequent northerly winds, mean temperatures were $1.0^{\circ}\text{C}$ below normal. Though rather wetter, it was a sunny month and fog was less frequent than usual.
July	A mild, foggy but sunny (131%) month with persistent easterly winds. The year's highest temperature of $20.1^{\circ}\text{C}$ was recorded on the 5th – just $0.1^{\circ}\text{C}$ short of the highest temperature ever recorded on Fair Isle (August 1975). Thunder was reported on three days. This was the only month of 1991 when a ground frost did not occur on Fair Isle.
August	A mild, dry (56.9%) and sunny month. Winds were frequently from a south-westerly direction. A ground frost was recorded on the 25th.
September	Temperatures were about average, but it was another dry and sunny (137%) month with rather less wind than normal.
October	A dry but dull month with 14 days when no sunshine was recorded. The year's lowest pressure of 954mb was recorded on the 17th.
November	A windy, unsettled and rather wet (170%) month – the total of 36.4mm on the 13th made this the year's wettest day, the wettest November day recorded and the third wettest day ever! Thunder was reported on four days. Very active aurora display on 8th.
December	Mild, with frequent southerly winds. Though dry (71%), it was a dull (42%) month with 21 sunless days. The 19th was the year's windiest day with storm force winds gusting to 82 knots.
Year	Overall it was a sunny, dry year with mean temperatures only marginally down on the last two years, making 1991 the third warmest year since 1974. Throughout much of the year pressure was above normal and as a result southerly winds were more frequent across Fair Isle. Aurora were observed on 49 nights. Though the number of days when falling snow was reported was not exceptionally low, the year saw the shortest period of snow cover ever – just one day.

## Meteorological data for Fair Isle 1991

Temperature (° Celsius)	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D	YEAR
Mean	5.0	3.8	6.1	6.3	7.8	8.8	12.6	5.0	10.7	9.1	6.8	6.5	7.4
Maximum	8.9	8.0	9.5	10.1	12.4	13.4	20.1	16.9	15.4	13.0	11.1	10.4	(7.5)
Minimum	-0.2	-1.6	1.5	-0.2	3.7	3.1	6.6	6.2	3.6	1.1	-0.3	-0.4	
<b>Rainfall (millimetres)</b>													
Monthly	65.1	49.4	90.0	44.7	18.9	49.0	53.8	36.6	86.6	82.1	191.5	75.1	842.9
Maximum Daily fall	13.1	18.6	11.5	7.9	3.7	11.3	14.3	6.8	13.4	13.1	36.4	11.9	(910.8)
<b>Sunshine (hours)</b>													
Total	42.5	47.2	85.5	181.8	165.4	197.2	170.1	165.2	158.6	52.6	33.9	6.6	1306.6
Maximum Daily	7.1	7.1	11.3	13.4	13.8	15.9	15.9	12.9	11.2	6.6	4.0	1.6	(1205.9)
<b>Wind speed (knots)</b>													
Mean	16.9	14.7	12.6	16.4	12.6	9.4	8.5	10.5	13.0	16.6	20.4	19.0	14.2
Maximum Gust	61	53	60	52	59	54	38	38	65	69	70	82	(16.2)
<b>Number of days</b>													
Hail	9	14	4	8	1	1	0	0	3	6	13	9	68
Snow/sleet	14	15	5	8	0	2	0	0	2	2	9	7	64
Rain, .1mm	18	19	21	17	12	16	14	19	22	21	29	22	230
Wet, .9mm	12	12	18	14	7	11	12	10	13	15	25	16	165
Ground frost	8	9	3	5	1	2	0	1	2	2	2	4	39
<b>Wind (direction at 09hr)</b>													
North	3	6	2	4	5	5	0	1	5	7	5	2	45
North East	0	0	1	0	1	3	4	0	1	0	0	1	11
East	0	3	2	2	0	4	10	1	0	0	2	0	24
South East	3	9	8	5	0	5	4	3	1	11	1	1	51
South	9	2	6	8	5	0	6	9	4	2	9	11	71
South West	11	4	5	2	3	0	3	9	7	6	5	6	61
West	4	4	4	4	6	6	2	7	6	3	5	6	57
North West	1	0	3	5	10	7	2	1	6	1	3	4	43
Calm	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	2

(Figures in brackets are the average for the period 1974-1990)

# The John Harrison Memorial Fund

This fund gives financial assistance to young birdwatchers aged between 15 and 21, to help defray the costs of a visit to Fair Isle. The fund is administered by a small committee which, in consultation with the Warden, considers all applications in mid-December and makes awards for the following year. **Applications must be submitted by 31st October**; those eligible should write to the Hon. Sec., JHM Fund, 21 Regent Terrace, Edinburgh EH7 5BT.

**Editor's note:** It is regretted that the accounts for the Fair Isle Endowment Fund and the John Harrison Memorial Fund were not available in time for inclusion in this Report.

## Fair Isle Bird Observatory Trust

(A company limited by guarantee)

### Financial Report & Accounts

A summarised form of the Trust's accounts for the year ended 31st October 1991 appear on the following pages. The full statutory accounts and auditors' report, by Coopers & Lybrand Deloitte, can be inspected at 21 Regent Terrace, Edinburgh.

The results of this year are a little disappointing, though it was clear from an early stage that the hostilities in the Gulf and increased air fares, not to mention the recession, were likely to have a damaging effect on visitor numbers. It was therefore pleasing that ultimate visitor weeks showed only a 6½% reduction from the all-time high of 1990.

As has been reported previously, unexpected additional costs in the redevelopment of the Lodge resulted in a substantial shortfall of funds in spite of the generosity of our many benefactors. Since completion of the work the burden of interest charges has fallen on the general income of the Trust and, in this year, these charges more than account for the overall deficiency. Thankfully, due to the continuing efforts of David MacLehose, this shortfall has already been very much reduced and therefore so will be the interest burden for the current year.

Due to an error in allocation of grants and related expenditure between the two years to 31st October 1990 and 1991 a prior year adjustment has been required in the accounts so that, in comparing the overall results for the years concerned, it needs to be borne in mind that the reported surplus for the earlier year must be reduced by the amount of this adjustment. (see statement of accumulated surplus).

The Directors wish to express their gratitude to the following for financial help during the year:

Highlands and Islands Enterprise for further instalments of grant assistance in respect of the redevelopment.

National Trust for Scotland for a further donation.

The Carnegie U.K. Trust for the final instalment of £2,000 of the £10,000 awarded to the Trust for the purchase of a computer installation and towards the costs of preliminary input of ornithological records.

# Income & Expenditure Account for the year ended 31st October 1991

	1991		1990	
	£	£	£	£
HOSTEL CHARGES		59,275		67,700
Less:				
HOSTEL SUPPLIES				
Opening stock	3,857		3,952	
Purchases	<u>22,217</u>		<u>23,581</u>	
	26,074		27,533	
Closing stock	<u>(3,787)</u>		<u>(3,857)</u>	
	22,287		23,676	
DIRECT EXPENSES				
Staff costs	<u>20,734</u>		<u>20,581</u>	
		43,021		44,257
GROSS PROFIT		<u>16,254</u>		<u>23,443</u>
Less:				
OVERHEAD EXPENSES				
Administration	5,834		4,337	
Establishment	14,235		16,663	
Promotion	1,108		432	
Financial and legal	<u>8,160</u>		<u>2,756</u>	
		29,337		24,188
OPERATING DEFICIT		(13,083)		(745)

	1991		1990	
	£	£	£	£
OTHER INCOME				
Grants received	2,643		3,400	
Subscriptions and donations	6,435		5,214	
Investment interest	3,161		2,261	
Deferred grant income release	<u>2,916</u>		<u>2,673</u>	
		15,155		13,548
SURPLUS BEFORE DEPRECIATION		2,072		12,803
Depreciation charge		<u>(13,122)</u>		<u>(13,757)</u>
NET (DEFICIT)/SURPLUS FOR YEAR		(11,050)		(954)

## Statement of Accumulated Surplus

Accumulated Surplus at beginning of year		103,289	95,349
Prior year adjustment		<u>(6,525)</u>	<u>—</u>
As restated		96,764	95,349
Deficit for the Year	(11,050)		(954)
Release from Appeal Reserve	<u>8,821</u>	<u>8,894</u>	
		<u>(2,229)</u>	<u>7,940</u>
		<u>£94,535</u>	<u>£103,289</u>

## Balance Sheet as at 31st October 1991

	1991		1990	
	£	£	£	£
<b>FIXED ASSETS</b>				
Tangible assets		207,132		215,593
Investments		10,548		10,548
<b>CURRENT ASSETS</b>				
Stocks	3,787		3,857	
Debtors	14,460		14,560	
Cash at bank and in hand	<u>6,229</u>		<u>11,412</u>	
	24,476		29,829	
<b>CREDITORS — amounts falling due within one year</b>	<u>(49,370)</u>		<u>(66,727)</u>	
<b>NET CURRENT (LIABILITIES)/ASSETS</b>		<u>(24,894)</u>		<u>(36,898)</u>
<b>Total assets less current liabilities</b>		192,786		189,243
<b>Less: Non current liabilities</b>				
<b>CREDITORS — amounts falling due after more than one year</b>		<u>(10,284)</u>		<u>(23,200)</u>
		<u>£182,502</u>		<u>£166,043</u>
<b>Representing: —</b>				
<b>ACCUMULATED SURPLUS</b>		94,535		103,289
<b>Reserve funds</b>		<u>87,967</u>		<u>62,754</u>
		<u>£182,502</u>		<u>£166,043</u>

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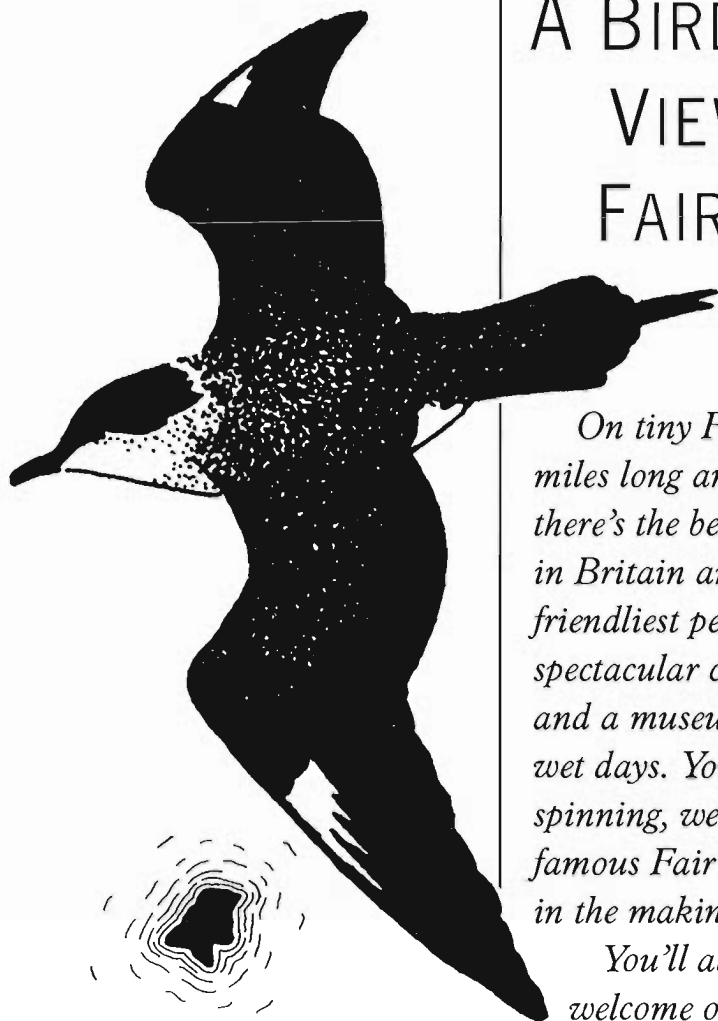
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