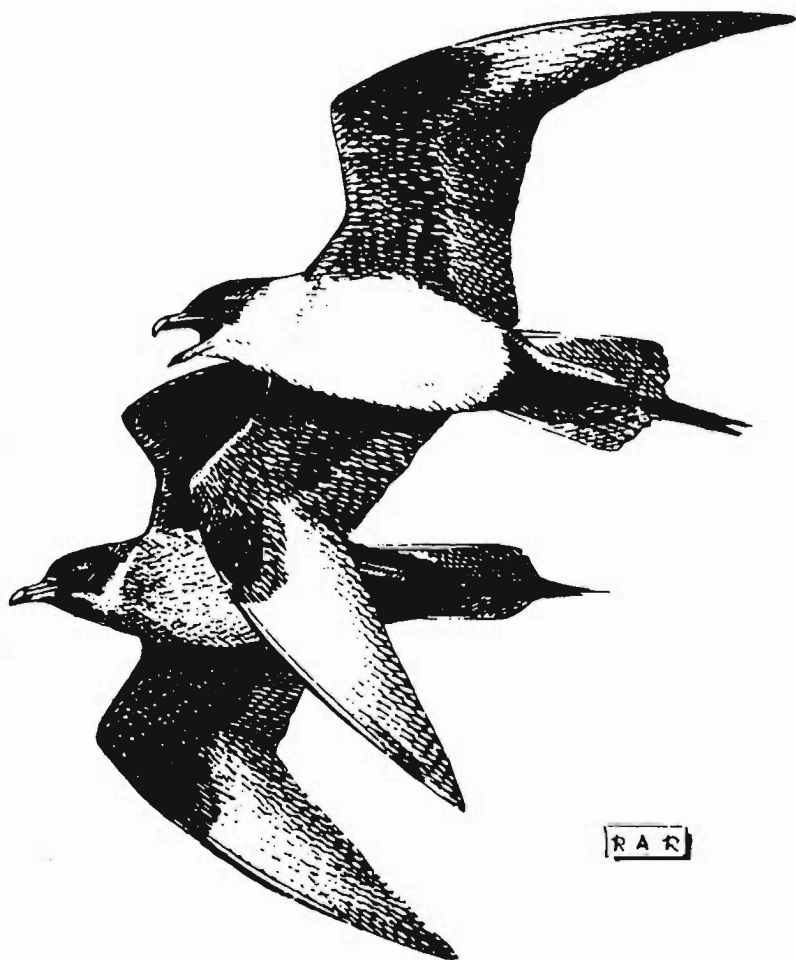


FAIR ISLE BIRD OBSERVATORY

Report for 1996



Fair Isle Bird Observatory

Report no. 49

1996

Edited by Roger Riddington

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Fair Isle Bird Observatory Trust

A company limited by guarantee.

Fair Isle Bird Observatory, Fair Isle, Shetland ZE2 9JU.

Telephone: 01595 760258

email: fairisle.birdobs@zetnet.co.uk

Board of Directors:

Roy Dennis (Chairman)
David Okill (Vice Chairman)
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David MacLehose
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Warden:

Roger Riddington

Administrator:

Wendy Christie
Bird Observatory, Fair Isle, Shetland ZE2 9JU.
Tel. 01595 760258.

Solicitors:

Anderson Strathern
48 Castle Street, Edinburgh EH2 3LX.

Accountants & Auditors:

Coopers & Lybrand, CA
68-73 Queen Street, Edinburgh EH2 4NH.

Bankers:

Bank of Scotland
64 George Street, Edinburgh EH2 2YS.

Chairman's Report

Roy Dennis

1996 was a good year for the Bird Observatory. The seabirds flourished, with above-average breeding success, and record populations of Arctic Terns, Fulmars and Gannets. There was much of interest on the migration front, in both numbers and variety. No new species for the island, but some real excitements, with three Blyth's Reed Warblers, and an amazing recovery of a Paddyfield Warbler ringed in Lithuania.

There was a very fine fall of spring migrants on 18th-21st May, and we were fortuitous to hold the Trust's AGM and a meeting of Directors at the Bird Observatory that weekend. It was vintage Fair Isle birdwatching, with the fall starting around midday Saturday. Tired migrants, especially warblers, chats and flycatchers, landed throughout the afternoon. The evening log recorded 750 Willow Warblers, 175 Tree Pipits, 150 Redstarts, 125 Pied Flycatchers, 75 Whinchats, as well as single Wryneck, Ortolan, Bluethroat and Icterine Warbler. The following days were just as exciting, with seven beautiful Ortolans in spring plumage, together with Great Reed Warbler, Thrush Nightingale and Rustic Bunting on the Monday.

It was also a good year for FIBOT. We had an excellent team running the Observatory on Fair Isle, and we are extremely grateful to Roger and Wendy for



PUND

Andy Smith

their excellent work. We will really miss Wendy in 1997, and wish all the best on her return to Australia. Our financial situation has improved, encouraging a more positive attitude for the future, as we lead up to the 50th Anniversary year in 1998. As ever, we are indebted to the islanders for their friendship and support over the year.

We welcomed the return of David Maclehose at the AGM, and are also most grateful that BBC journalist, Louise Batchelor, agreed to join the Board. After very many years, Pat Sellar retired as a Director and, as I said in last year's report, we are indebted to him for his huge enthusiasm for Fair Isle and his unstinting support for FIBOT. John Wood also stood down at the end of his term of office. John shouldered most of our burdens when we were struggling with debts a few years ago, and it was in no small way that his efforts pulled us through. We are extremely grateful to him for past activities, and the fact that he continues to help us run the Trust.

Finally, I hope you enjoy this report, ably brought together by Roger, and that it encourages you to return to Fair Isle. You never know, you might have a fall of migrants like last May to add to all the other enjoyments of a visit to Fair Isle.

Warden's Report

Roger Riddington

Ornithologically, 1996 proved to be another extremely interesting and rewarding year. It was a good year for quantity, quality and variety of migrants. The total of 205 species recorded during the year ranks high in the Observatory 'league tables', although a below-average last three months prevented a realistic attempt on the 1992 record of 214. That statistic merely emphasises the quality of the first nine months of the year. There were many highlights. Although somewhat lacking in extreme rarities (with no additions to the Fair Isle list) three Blyth's Reed Warblers were particularly notable, exceptional in modern times. The lack of new birds was balanced by a number of species very scarce on Fair Isle: the second Roseate Tern, the third Baird's Sandpiper, the fourth record of Mute Swan, the fifth Goshawk and Savi's Warbler, sixth record of Garganey and seventh of Crane. September produced the magic quartet of Pechora Pipit, Lanceolated and Pallas' Grasshopper Warblers, and Yellow-breasted Bunting, plus three Great Snipes and a Lithuanian-ringed Paddyfield Warbler. The birds of January and February, particularly wild-fowl, broke all sorts of records, as described in a separate article by lighthouse keeper Jim Watt. But perhaps the event of the year was an exceptional fall of common migrants in mid-May, the 18th-21st being the peak time. Several of the main species involved, Grey-headed Wagtail, Tree Pipit, Redstart, Whitethroat, Willow Warbler and Pied Flycatcher, were recorded in numbers greater than any time in the previous 25 years.

Seabirds enjoyed another good season. Sandeels appeared to be plentiful, though not superabundant, throughout the breeding season. All species, with the exception of Black Guillemot, enjoyed near-average or better breeding success. Record population levels were recorded for Fulmar (43300 occupied sites), Gannet (1090 occupied sites) and Arctic Tern (1250 pairs). Shags halted a long-term decline, with the highest numbers at monitoring plots since 1989, and Kittiwakes held their own. High summer was a time for optimism.

Our ornithological work progressed well in 1996. This year was the last of a five-year contract with the Joint Nature Conservation Committee (JNCC) for the seabird monitoring work, but we hope to secure another contract to maintain the continuity of data collection. 1996 was the third year of a Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH) contract to investigate seabird diet of selected species, which this year was expanded to accommodate detailed work on both Great Skuas and Arctic Terns. It is sad that, due to funding difficulties and through no fault of our own, this is likely to be the last year of this contract. At the time of writing, I hope that the JNCC contract may be expanded slightly to continue this work.

1996 was the second and final year of participation in the European Science Foundation (ESF) project looking at the migration of selected passerines from

Europe to Africa. The three year period of fieldwork ended in 1996, and now analysis will begin. This project has given our migration ringing a useful focus over the past two years, and it will be perhaps our greatest challenge in 1997 to replace that focus. I visited the Swedish observatory of Falsterbo and the Swiss ornithological centre at Sempach during the course of the year to participate in ESF meetings.

The Fair Isle Ranger service, operated by FIBOT and funded by SNH, also completed its second year in 1996. This year was, I felt, one of steady rather than spectacular growth, creating a solid foundation from which to expand the project if funding is available. Tentative signs from SNH are positive, and many new initiatives have been discussed with our new contact at SNH regional office in Shetland (ex-warden Paul Harvey), some of which should become reality in 1997.

Other important events in the ornithological calendar in 1996 included the creation of a major new plantation near the Observatory (described in detail in a separate article by vice-chairman David Okill) and the purchase of a new inflatable boat for seabird work, thanks to generous grant aid from The Pilgrim Trust, Scottish Natural Heritage and Shetland Wildlife Fund.

I have had the pleasure of working with excellent people in 1996, all of whom contributed greatly to a memorable season. Mark Newell and Steve Votier were exceptional assistant wardens, and Jane Reid worked as a volunteer in the summer to complete an outstanding team. Two other volunteers worked for shorter periods but made a lasting worthwhile contribution nonetheless: Colin Beale in late summer and Tim Lewis in the autumn. Ian Grier contributed his usual enthusiastic input to our seabird ringing effort. I am extremely grateful to them all.

Sincere thanks are due to a number of individuals and organisations for help and support during the season. Financial support came from JNCC, SNH, British Trust for Ornithology (BTO) and Shetland Oil Terminal Environmental Advisory Group (SOTEAG); also, grant aid for various projects from the Pilgrim Trust, Shetland Wildlife Fund and SNH. Paul Harvey and Andy Douse provided support and guidance with many aspects of the Ranger Service, whilst the contributions of Jim Watt and Nick Riddiford for ornithological records (particularly during the winter) are gratefully acknowledged.

As editor of this report, I am grateful to all contributors, whether in the form of articles (Alexander Bennett, Wendy Christie, Roy Dennis, Mark Newell, David Okill, Jason Waine, Jim Watt, Dave Wheeler and Mike Wood), photos (Dennis Coutts and Steve Votier), vignettes (Ian Fisher, Andy Smith and Steve Votier) or proof readers (Ian Dillon, Peter Evans and David Okill).

Lastly and most importantly, heartfelt thanks to Wendy Christie, who returned to Australia at the end of the 1996-97 winter. Her work and support was crucial to run the Observatory effectively, and our three years together on Fair Isle was a very special time.

Administrator's Report

Wendy Christie

I am always surprised at how quickly the end of the year comes round - we seem to have such a busy season that May disappears and November arrives before we know it! 1996 has been a very enjoyable season for all of us.

Transport costs remain very high for visitors to Fair Isle and this continues to be a cause for deep concern. British Airways and Business Air have both discontinued their services to Shetland now. British Airways' route will be operated by British Regional Airways, and although we have been promised a good service, problems are already apparent. There is now no engineer based in Sumburgh, and this does cause disruption to services when mechanical problems arise. Scheduled and charter flights are now combined, leading to a decrease in the number of available seats. Discounted fares are now very scarce too. Shetland Islands Tourism and Shetland Islands Council are aware of the problems created by these recent changes, and hopefully there will be positive action shortly, to address the problems.

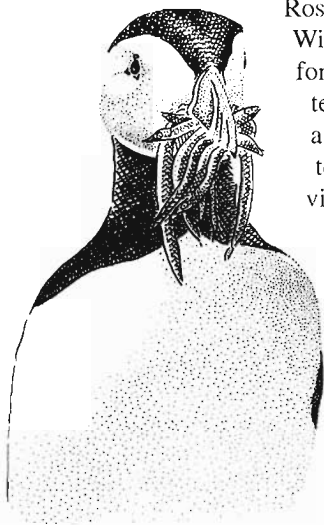
Notwithstanding high transport costs, it is pleasing to report that the number of visitors to the Lodge in 1996 increased by five percent on 1995. Following his visit to Fair Isle during the autumn of 1995, and despite enduring very poor weather and a distinct lack of birds, Dominic Mitchell (editor of Birdwatch magazine) wrote a very positive article about Fair Isle, which has had a good response. We have also had a new brochure printed, which we are distributing to as many outlets as possible. As with every year, we have had visitors from across the globe as well as throughout the UK. Folk travelled from Canada, the USA, Australia, Germany, Norway, the Netherlands, Spain and Italy. We welcomed a good mix of returning friends and faces that were new to the Lodge. Graeme Rowe returned with another group of exuberant Young Ornithologists, Neil Arnold accompanied a group from 'Travelling Naturalists' and Hugh Harrop led a group from Colorado's 'Natural Habitat Holidays'. We also enjoyed visits from most of our Directors this year. Roy Dennis, David Okill, Mike Wood, John Wood and Antony Bryant came in mid-May for a Director's meeting and the AGM, whilst later in the year, Peter Evans and Ian Grier visited and Mike Wood returned with his family. We are pleased to welcome Louise Batchelor and David Maclehose as new members of the Board of Directors.

We have enjoyed a very happy atmosphere at the Lodge this year, and this is largely due to the team working for us throughout the season. Ann Prior returned as cook and did an admirable job keeping appetites satisfied. Elizabeth Malamalatabua assisted Ann very capably, and we thank her for taking over from Ann for a time during the summer when Ann was away with an injured hand, and when Ann left

at the end of September to take up a contract in the Falkland Islands. The domestic team kept the place looking spick and span, and for this we thank Julianne Scott, Lucy Wheeler and Linda Jarvis (who replaced Lucy when she went off to college in August).

This year, we have had less maintenance problems than in previous seasons, which has been a great relief! Following two large plumbing leaks in the early part of the year, Rob Biggar from Sandwick spent several days with us before the season started and made many improvements to our infamous plumbing system. All three hot water cylinders were replaced and several new radiators were fitted to replace damaged old ones. The boiler and generators have run well on the whole, with just minor or routine problems. The roof was patched again in the spring and held watertight for the rest of the season, but the time of replacement may be imminent. We still suffer from several badly-leaking windows, and debate about the solution (replacement versus repair) continues. As usual we owe a great debt of gratitude to many folk for helping us with maintenance and emergency repairs throughout the year, in particular Malcolm Adamson, John Best, Rob Biggar, Bill Murray, Patrick

Ross-Smith, Barry Sinclair, Kenny Stout and Brian Wilson. Grateful thanks are also due to Dave Wheeler for weather and plane information, Iain Stout for tending the Skadan flock, Robert and Fiona Mitchell at Stackhoull for selling us the necessities of life, and to all the islanders for their hospitality to staff and visitors throughout the season.



PUFFIN

Steve Votier

Last but not least, we were greatly saddened to learn of the sudden death of Ian Spence, a regular visitor to the Observatory from Unst (Shetland). Many people who have been here at the same time as Ian will remember his kindness, happy disposition and enthusiastic approach to birdwatching. Ian always had a smile for everyone, and we will miss him. Ian's family have donated a selection of his books to the Observatory, and we plan to create a memorial shelf in the common room library.

The National Trust for Scotland, 1996

Alexander Bennett

Fair Isle is synonymous with the weather, particularly wind, so it seems appropriate that I have spent the last three years planning and developing the new autonomous wind power scheme for the Isle. After many delays, funding problems, sessions back at the drawing board, negotiations on contracts and a few anxious moments wondering if the decision to move the first machine to the island in late November was a mistake, we got the green light to proceed. There appeared to be a weather window around 26 November which Rolls Royce, our suppliers, took. It meant loading the MV Filla in Lerwick at midnight and leaving very early in the morning for Fair Isle. As we left Lerwick Harbour at 1.30 am, I had a great sense of satisfaction, knowing that we were finally underway, but as we left the Sound of Bressay and entered the swells of the North Sea, I really began to wonder whether this expedition was wise. By 6.30 am we arrived, thankfully still in one piece but a little delicate, to be greeted by Barry Sinclair on the pier, anxiously waiting to see his 'new toy'. It was not long before the Isle awakened, curious to see what was going on and soon the pier was full of onlookers desperate to check up on the 'new arrival'. In no time at all and with all hands on deck, the equipment was unloaded and being transported down the Isle on any available four-wheeled vehicle! As the day developed it became clear that there were too many chiefs and not enough Indians, but Murray Somerville, the ever-present Rolls Royce engineer (the cool, calm, collected one amongst us) had a handy knack of pouring oil on troubled waters and sorting everything out. By dusk (3.30 pm!), the Brecks o' Busta were littered with crates, bits of tower, wings, steel cables, muddy ruts and various engineers with skelves from scratching their heads.

When I was little I had a Meccano set and recall making little windmills that hardly worked, never thinking then that some 35 years later I would be building the real thing and would be faced with the task of putting all those pieces together. The next morning, with beautifully-pressed boiler suits, shiny hard hats sporting the Rolls Royce logo, and brimming with enthusiasm, everyone lined up at the new control building to get their instructions and to get on with the task of building the first turbine. Needless to say, despite the planning, the project did not go as smoothly as anticipated, and after many huddles in corners and sessions burning the midnight oil, the turbine was erected by 16 December. Now came the tricky bit, putting all the wires in the correct places. With Murray Somerville's guidance and expertise, Geordie Derek Hogarth quietly and calmly got on with the job of understanding the spaghetti and putting it together into something that would confuse most mortal beings, but to those few gifted individuals who are able to read wiring diagrams, it was like an old master.

By 20 December, with Christmas looming and a grandchild about to arrive, Murray Somerville decided he should head south to Newcastle and postpone commissioning until January. Two weeks later, and after a few days of tying up some loose wires, everything was ready for switch on. Ironically, there was just one problem – no wind! The one commodity Fair Isle is renowned for and usually has in great abundance did not appear, and had not appeared for nearly two weeks. It took another few days before there was enough wind to turn the aerogenerator. Who would have believed it, after all our anxious moments wondering if we would actually get to Fair Isle through the winter weather, that we would be faced with this! However, the weather on Fair Isle is nothing if not variable, and after a few days the wind duly arrived with a vengeance. A few anxious moment, then heaters started to come on all over the island. People were heard to say ‘what’s that funny smell in the house?’ and to realise that the metal cabinet in the corner of the room that had been adorned with books and plants for many months now was starting to get a little hot! So as I sit here in Inverness contemplating this project, its impact and thinking about installing the second machine (which is essentially a replacement of the original aerogenerator, on the Houll) in the spring, I am feeling quietly confident and more than just a little pleased with progress in 1996.

Of course, many other happened in Fair Isle last year. Schoolton croft house was completely refurbished for Nick and Elizabeth Riddiford. Ewen Thomson and Emma Perring have a new croft house on Taft croft. Ian and Lise Best have a new baby daughter, Alice, to join Tom and Hannah, and we welcome Karen Whaley, Dave Lowe and their son Joe to the Isle, where Karen will be carrying on the nursing tradition.

And finally, if you visit Fair Isle and you see people standing on the tops of the cliffs with a kind of distant look, it is not that they are so overwhelmed with the new windmill, it is just that they are probably giving serious contemplation to the many opportunities that a potential Marine Nature Reserve may present to the island. I thought the nightmare of European funding for the windmill was bad, but to bring together so many different interests and agencies, all with their own agendas and visions for a project of this nature, has to be one of the most daunting prospects and challenges to face Fair Isle in recent years.

A New Plantation

David Okill

In the early days of the Fair Isle Bird Observatory, a small group of trees were planted in the mouth of the Vaadal. So, in 1954, the now famous Plantation was established. At the same time, other single trees were planted in the Finnikuoy Gully, together with a thicket of raspberry canes. Since then the trees, consisting of Sitka Spruce and Willows, have grown slowly. They were closely planted and gave each other shelter from the unforgiving wind. Due to reluctance to thin the saplings, and the effects of the weather, the specimens as they are now do not present the best examples of arboriculture, looking like thin dead poles with a halo of green on top.

Over the years, the Plantation has attracted many migrants, both common and rare, and the trap that covers it has proved invaluable for catching roosting owls, thrushes, finches etc. In recent times, there have been various suggestions about establishing a new plantation or extending the old one. In the meantime, on Shetland Mainland, various new plantations have been established, and much has been learnt about which species can best tolerate the cold winds, frosts and salt spray that attacks everything that grows. The importance of shelter and wind-breaks, especially for newly-planted trees, is well-proven.

Closer to the Observatory, small amounts of cover have been planted in the garden and trap, but this cover is often not sufficient hold migrants for any length of time and they quickly move on to pastures new. A new plantation near to the Observatory would help to hold migrants and so make it easier for the Observatory staff to point out different species to visitors. It would also provide a focus for less-able visitors, who may not be able to explore the Isle as thoroughly as fitter folk. The provision of this facility therefore fits in well with objectives of the Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH) Ranger service.

The area most naturally sheltered near to the Observatory is the hollow immediately to the north of the main buildings known as Mavers Cup. This area is easily viewed from the bird room and the lounge windows. So late in 1995, plans were laid down for the establishment of a secure, stock- and rabbit-proof enclosure roughly 20m × 20m in the hollow of Mavers Cup. Grants were applied for, and the not inconsiderable cost of materials for fencing and the purchase of trees was aided by SNH and the Shetland Wildlife Fund. One of the main tasks for staff in the early spring was fencing off the new area, and the secure establishment of dozens of wooden pallets to form wind-breaks. The small trees were purchased from a nursery in the north of Scotland, whilst others were shipped in from Shetland and donations of shrubs and trees came in from as far away as Merseyside. The species planted so far have been those that have been shown to survive best in Mainland,

and consist of Goat Willow, Grey Willow, Alder, Rowan, Elder, Sycamore, Sitka Spruce, Lodgepole Pine, Flowering Currant, Japanese Rose, Fuschia, Veronica, Honey-suckle, Escalonia, Olearia and others.

The spring of 1996 was, it has to be said, probably one of the worst possible for the successful planting of small trees. The weather was generally cold with long dry periods, interspersed by periods of heavy rain and sleet, with almost unceasing strong searing wind. During periods of desiccating winds, the staff were kept busy by daily watering of the planted trees, but inevitably the tender leaves were browned by the gales and many of the small plants did not survive. Notwithstanding the loss of some of the newly-planted trees, on my visit to the island in spring, the sight of Redstarts, flycatchers and warblers (part of the huge fall of 18 May) flicking about and feeding amongst the shelter of the pallets, enforced the hope that the new plantation would eventually be a success. Later in the year, Bluethroat, Lanceolated Warbler, Icterine Warbler and Rustic Bunting were all recorded in the newly enclosed area.

Establishing trees anywhere on Shetland is a long process; it requires persistence, shelter and a great deal of replanting before a reasonable amount of growth is achieved. Therefore, in the spring of 1997, and probably for many springs to come, it will be necessary to replant as much as possible. Further shelter for the growing buds is also desirable, but depends on availability of materials. If anyone has access to unwanted small trees (sycamores, for example, are often weeded out) or to suitable cuttings which could be sent up to the island in late winter or early spring (in any year), please contact the warden. If you are visiting the Isle in spring, any donations of plants or cuttings that you bring with you will be gratefully received, with the sort of hardy species mentioned above being best transplanted.

Footnote. Although the main establishment work was carried out by staff members (Wendy Christie, Mark Newell, Roger Riddington & Steve Votier), FIBOT would like to acknowledge the following extra help: Andy Beattie, Frank Bremner and Bill Gault for help with fencing, Northmen (Fair Isle) for generous donation of pallets and concrete, Patrick Ross-Smith for shelter fencing, Ann Prior for help with planting, and Barry Barnacle, Dave Okill and Jim Watt for donating trees/cuttings. Finally, thanks once again to SNH and SWF for grant aid which enabled the project to be realised.

My Fair Isle Diary for January 1996

Jim Watt

Being stationed at the South Lighthouse gives me the opportunity to indulge in my hobby of bird-watching, as time permits. The winter is normally a very quiet time, but in January 1996 the numbers and variety of birds present were exceptional.

I returned to Fair Isle on 29 December 1995, having been delayed for three days due to the severe Arctic conditions on Shetland, where I live. The iron grip of winter on the continent, and the easterly airflow reaching Shetland during this time, was no doubt a major factor in the arrival of many unexpected species on Fair Isle. My first sighting of note during my one month stint just crept into 1995, and in the light of things to come was quite appropriate: a pair of Tufted Ducks. New Year's Day brought a fine male Goosander, on the pool by Shalstane (which turned out to be the only one of the year) and White-fronted and Greylag Geese were seen, both species being present though the month. On the 3rd, 16 Whooper Swans turned up, and a Coot was seen at Muckle Uri Geo, a stone's throw from the Lighthouse (the latter another scarce Fair Isle bird which proved to be the only one of the year). Thrushes, which had increased from the beginning of the month, were especially numerous on the 4th and 5th, estimated counts being 1500 Fieldfares (a record winter count), 400 Redwings and 60 Blackbirds. A male Pochard kept the wildfowl theme going on the 4th.

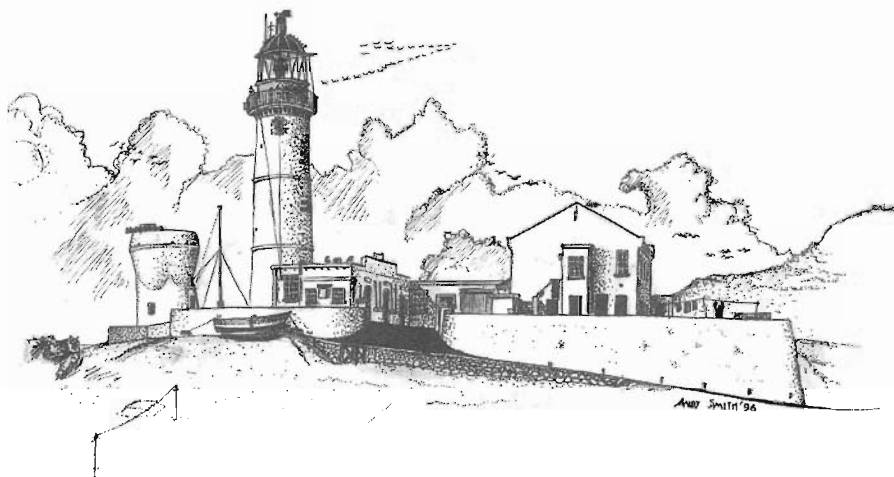
A Long-eared Owl brightened up a dull day on the 6th, but on the 9th, my colleagues came back from maintenance duties at the North Lighthouse with news of "three swans and a brown duck" on Golden Water. Straight after dinner, and in fading light, I went for a quick look. The first thing I saw on approach to the small loch, were three Mute Swans, an adult and two juveniles: a Fair Isle rarity (the fourth record)! A Tufted Duck was also there, and then I saw the "brown duck". In the dull conditions, it looked grotty and nondescript, and I was unsure exactly what it was. It was only when the adult Mute Swan attacked it, and it flew a short distance to the other side of the pond, that I realised it was a Gadwall – another Fair Isle rarity and a new bird for me! Already a red-letter day, I called in at North Haven on the way back to South Light, where I found a Red-throated Diver and a Slavonian Grebe. Two Waxwings were the highlight of the 10th and a Grey Plover, frequenting the Meoness area from the 13th-21st was a winter rarity for the Isle.

On the 19th, three Pochard were on Golden Water – the first record of a 'flock' for Fair Isle – along with the Gadwall. At the south end the same day, the small pool on Head o' Tind (near the South Light) was literally overflowing with wildfowl. Two of the three Mute Swans were there, together with 11 White-fronts, two Greylags, two Mallard, eight Wigeon and a male Shoveler, the latter only the

second mid-winter record for the island. On nearby croft land, five Bean Geese were seen, the first multiple arrival for 15 years or more. The following day, White-front numbers had increased to 31, along with 20 Greylags, 18 Wigeon, three Bean Geese, five Barnacle Geese and a couple of Tufted Ducks.

The 21st arrived, my last day, and still things were happening. The count of White-fronts reached 42, Wigeon reached 32 (a record winter count) and I recorded four Bean Geese, four Pink-feet and nine Barnacle Geese. Pochard increased to five - yet another record count! The icing on the cake however, was a new arrival of Gadwall – two males and a female – and five Waxwings.

The month had provided me with some of the most exciting birdwatching I have ever experienced on the Isle (including my long spell here in the rarity-stuffed 1970's), perhaps because it was all so unexpected. On the down side, there were many fatalities of the severe weather early in the month. In a short stretch of the Walli Burn between January 2nd-4th, I picked up 26 Snipe, a Jack Snipe, a Purple Sandpiper and a Turnstone. Dead Snipe were found and commented upon from most parts of the crofting land.



SOUTH LIGHT

Andy Smith

I should like to take this opportunity to thank Wardens and their staff, both past and present, for all their help and advice over the years. This has resulted in me seeing many rare and interesting birds – but that's another story! Last but not least my thanks go to the Islanders for access to their lands, without which birdwatching would be much more restricted on Fair Isle.

Report on causes of death amongst avian corpses found on Fair Isle, 1995-96

Jason Waine

Between March 1995 and November 1996, 74 corpses collected by visitors and staff at FIBO were sent to me for post-mortem examination. These corpses had been found at various locations on the island, and stored in a deep freeze until dispatch was feasible. Once they had reached me, the bodies were stored once more in a freezer and thawed in small batches prior to being autopsied. Each corpse was allotted a reference number, weighed and measurements taken: (i) body length, the length from bill tip to tail tip whilst held in dorsal recumbancy and stretched with the minimum force necessary to keep the body straight; (ii) maximum chordal length, the length from carpus to the tip of the longest feather with the wing under tension; (iii) tail length, the distance from the insertion of the tail feathers to the tip of the longest retri; (iv) maximum head length, the maximum distance from bill tip to back of the head; (v) culmen length; (vi) maximum bill depth; and (vii) minimum tarsus length, as described in Svensson, 1992. The bodies were then examined thoroughly externally before being subjected to dissection. Any parasites were retained for identification and any unusual lesions for histopathology. In many cases wing(s) and leg(s) were retained for reference purposes and heads were kept in order to prepare the skulls for detailed examination. Reports were made for each individual autopsy and copies sent to the warden at the Bird Observatory, where they are stored for reference. Many of the specimens were in an advanced state of decomposition but useful information could still be gained from these cases.

Of the 74 specimens, 41 species were represented, from eight orders and 20 families. Notable subspecies included three races of Redpoll (*Carduelis f. flammea*, *C. f. rostrata* and *C. f. cabaret*) and the Greenland form of Northern Wheatear, *Oenanthe o. leucorhoa*. The most common species examined were Redpoll (6), Willow Warbler (5), Blackcap (5), Northern Wheatear (4), Little Auk (4) and Dunnock (3). Table 1 shows a list of species examined with a summary of findings.

Common causes of death included collision injuries (25 cases), starvation or migration stress (23 cases) and predation (5 cases). In many instances, haemorrhagic enteritis (an acute infestation of the intestine resulting in excessive bleeding into the bowel and rapid death) was the actual cause of death but was secondary to another problem such as inanition or trauma. Some cases were unusual enough to be notable individually such as the Guillemot which drowned for no apparent reason (a surprisingly common occurrence among waterbirds) and the British Storm Petrel that somehow managed to glue its beak together. One Woodcock sported an abnormally short bill (only 80% of the minimum length for a juvenile's)

whilst an Oystercatcher had a dramatic scissorbill 50% longer than the norm. Several birds had lesions in the heart which could well be parasitic in nature – caused by an avian form of malaria passed on by midges and other biting flies. It would be interesting to follow this up with further investigations but unfortunately, post-mortem degeneration was too advanced for diagnostic tests to be of any use although one tissue sample was sent away for histopathology ‘just in case’ and this confirmed that the lesions were parasitic in origin although the exact identification of the parasite has not been established. A Knot with advanced emaciation had no apparent reason for this state until flukes, harmful parasites, were found living in the air sacs of the bird.

It comes as no surprise that the majority of the starvation cases occur in migrating birds in the spring, particularly in 1996 when they were given such a poor meteorological welcome. However, it was also noted that a high proportion of these birds were males and that their testes were in full breeding condition. Could this added stress on already weakened birds be the deciding factor? In a similar vein, many of the trauma cases occurred in late summer or early autumn, reflecting the numbers of young, inexperienced birds. One of the more pleasing aspects of this review is the low incidence of deaths than can be definitely attributed to human activity. Only one bird had oil and this, a Fieldfare, had apparently stumbled into some fuel oil – a refreshing change from examining large numbers of seabirds polluted with crude oil. The few cases of death during ringing give no cause for concern. None of them had handling injuries and most would have died through hypoglycaemic shock - birds with low blood sugar as a consequence of not having eaten recently can suffer catastrophic results especially when stressed. Some birds also experience fatal rupture of the right atrium of the heart when under stress (the classic example is the pet budgie which dies in the vet’s hands whilst having its nails clipped!). Three birds showed self-inflicted injuries and a fourth died from shock – all associated with being caught in a trap for ringing. Three of these were Dunnocks, and this may reflect a curious behavioural trait of the species.

I would like to thank everyone involved in collecting these specimens and would ask any visitor to the island who finds a dead bird to take it to the staff at the Observatory and fill in a short questionnaire. Brief details of when and where the bird was found and under what circumstances (e.g. near a window, near a road, under the lighthouse etc.) can give considerable help towards making a more definitive diagnosis.

Table 1. Details of corpses examined, with summary of findings.

<i>Species</i>	<i>Age</i>	<i>Sex</i>	<i>Date found</i>	<i>Conclusions</i>
Red-necked Grebe	Adult	M	12.02.96	Blow to back; drowning
Northern Fulmar	Pullus	M	24.07.95	Handling shock
Storm Petrel	Adult	F	23.08.95	Beak glued
Storm Petrel	Adult	F	28.07.96	Predation
Pochard	Adult	M	u/k	Blow to upper body and head
Sparrowhawk	Adult	M	02.05.95	Choke
Oystercatcher	Adult	F	22.04.95	Starvation; collision; deformed beak
Ringed Plover	Pullus	M	u/k	No diagnosis
Knot	Adult	M	19.08.96	Starvation; air sac flukes
Jack Snipe	Adult	F	16.09.95	Leg injury; starvation
Woodcock	Adult	–	u/k	No diagnosis
Woodcock	Adult	–	u/k	Abnormally short bill
Redshank	Adult	M	28.09.95	Collision injuries
Arctic Tern	Adult	F	14.06.96	Starvation; blow to chest
Arctic Tern	Adult	M	15.07.96	Blow to abdomen
Guillemot	Adult	M	28.03.95	Blow to chest
Guillemot	2nd-yr	M	30.09.95	Drowning
Guillemot	Adult	M	02.02.96	Starvation
Black Guillemot	Adult	F	June 96	Starvation
Black Guillemot	Adult	M	u/k	Blow to neck
Little Auk	Adult	–	19.05.95	Starvation; predation
Little Auk	Adult	F	26.04.95	Starvation; collision
Little Auk	Adult	M	25.01.96	Starvation
Little Auk	Adult	M	09.11.96	Collision
Long-eared Owl	Adult	F	u/k	RTA
Wryneck	Adult	F	20.05.96	Haemorrhagic proventriculitis; parasitic cysts
Swift	Adult	F	26.05.96	Starvation; visceral gout; haemorrhagic g.e.
Richard's Pipit	1st-yr	M	14.10.95	Collision injuries
Meadow Pipit	1st-yr	F	15.04.96	Migration starvation
Meadow Pipit	1st-yr	F	03.08.96	Starvation; shock
Meadow Pipit	Adult	M	13.09.96	Predation
Rock Pipit	Juv.	M	14.08.96	Collision – window
Rock Pipit	Juv.	M	21.08.95	Collision – window
Dunnock	–	–	23.04.95	Predation, probably cat
Dunnock	1st-yr	M	21.09.96	Shock
Dunnock	1st-yr	M	20.10.96	Self-inflicted trauma
Dunnock	1st-yr	–	20.10.96	Concussion/self-inflicted trauma
Robin	Adult	M	25.04.95	Hypoglycaemia; shock
Whinchat	Adult	F	23.05.96	Blow to chest; hepatitis; myocarditis
Northern Wheatear	Juv	M	12.07.95	Crush injury
Northern Wheatear	Adult	F	21.05.96	Primary starvation
Northern Wheatear	Adult	M	26.05.96	Starvation; haemorrhagic g. e.; air sac nematode
N. Wheatear (leuc.)	Adult	F	u/k	Collision injuries
Fieldfare	1st-yr	M	u/k	Haemorrhagic enteritis; oiling
Fieldfare	Adult	M	23.10.96	Collision injuries
Song Thrush	1st-yr	F	20.09.95	Collision

<i>Species</i>	<i>Age</i>	<i>Sex</i>	<i>Date found</i>	<i>Conclusions</i>
Song Thrush	1st-yr	F	24.09.96	Predation
Redwing	1st-yr	M	03.11.95	Collision injuries
Marsh Warbler	Adult	F	30.05.96	Predation – cat
Marsh Warbler	Adult	F	u/k	Haemorrhagic nephritis
Garden Warbler	Adult	M	25.05.96	Myocarditis; parasitic air sacculitis
Blackcap	1st-yr	M	26.09.95	Starvation
Blackcap	Adult	M	08.11.95	Starvation/haemorrhagic enteritis
Blackcap	Adult	F	15.10.95	Migration stress/haemorrhagic enteritis
Blackcap	Adult	F	u/k	Migration stress/haemorrhagic enteritis
Blackcap	1st-yr	M	16.10.95	Migration stress/haemorrhagic enteritis
Willow Warbler	Adult	M	23.09.95	Collision; handling shock
Willow Warbler	Adult	M	21.04.96	Myocarditis – ?parasitic
Willow Warbler	Adult	M	22.05.96	Migration starvation
Willow Warbler	Adult	M	23.05.96	No diagnosis
Willow Warbler	Adult	M	24.09.96	No diagnosis
Pied Flycatcher	1st-yr	M	u/k	Starvation; haemorrhagic enteritis
Starling	1st-yr	M	15.05.95	Choke
House Sparrow	Adult	F	24.03.96	No diagnosis
Brambling	Adult	F	19.10.96	Self inflicted trauma
Siskin	Adult	M	23.03.96	Blow to thorax
Twite	1st-yr	M	02.08.96	Starvation; shock
Redpoll	Adult	M	09.05.96	Starvation; shock
Redpoll	Adult	–	u/k	Starvation
Redpoll (rostrata)	1st-yr	M	05.10.96	Shock; oedema
Redpoll (cabaret)	Adult	F	17.10.96	Collision
Redpoll (flammea)	Adult	M	14.05.96	Starvation; shock
Redpoll (flammea)	Adult	M	26.05.96	Collision injuries; starvation
Snow Bunting	1st-yr	F	21.10.96	Collision

ORNITHOLOGY

Monthly Summary

January-February

The highlights of the first three weeks of January are the subject of a separate article elsewhere in this report ('My Fair Isle Diary for January 1996', by Jim Watt). However, a brief resumé of this period is perhaps worthwhile, simply to emphasise what was an exceptional winter. The weather at the end of 1995 and the beginning of 1996 was severe, with arctic cold and predominantly easterly winds. At the start of January, an influx of thrushes noted throughout the Northern Isles produced (Fair Isle) record mid-winter counts of both Fieldfare (1500) and Redwing (400) on the 5th, with relatively high numbers remaining throughout the month. Waxwings were seen in enormous numbers across the UK, and Fair Isle recorded sightings on six dates and a maximum of five individuals on January 21st. Other passerines were in short supply, the best being a Mistle Thrush for most of February and a Bullfinch on January 31st. The year started with a record winter count of Curlews (95 on January 1st), while a Grey Plover on January 13th-21st was only the Isle's second mid-winter record. Occasional sightings of Glaucous Gull and Little Auk added to the variety of birds present.

Notwithstanding the above, the main highlights of the winter were undoubtedly waterfowl, with a veritable bonanza in both species quality and quantity. Single Red-throated Diver and Slavonian Grebe were recorded in January, then up to three Slavonian Grebes at the end of February, but the rarest grebe was a Red-necked, found dead on the tideline on February 19th. Sixteen Whooper Swans on January 3rd were noteworthy, but Mute Swans stole the show: three on January 9th-20th with one to the 24th, the fourth record for Fair Isle. Seven species of geese have been recorded on Fair Isle, and all were recorded in a single day on January 30th. Of the rarer species, there were just single Canada and Brent Geese during this period, but Bean Geese reached eight on January 24th and White-fronted Geese peaked at 42 on January 21st, predominantly of the European race. Ducks too were well-represented at this time, with a record mid-winter count of Wigeon (34 on January 30th), at least four Gadwall (with three on January 21st-February 7th), a Shoveler on January 19th, record numbers of Pochard (with a peak count of five on the January 21st) and the only Goosander of the year on January 1st. The only record of Coot during the year was also in January, with one on the 3rd-6th (although two were found dead later in the winter).

Signs of the approaching spring appeared at the very end of February, with 100 Skylarks on the 25th and 76 Lapwings on the 27th.

March

Remnants of the influx of wildfowl and other waterbirds were present in early March, with single Barnacle and White-fronted Geese, a Pochard on the 1st and three Slavonian Grebes for most of the month. Early spring migrants built up steadily, south-east winds from the 7th bringing 45 Oystercatchers, 130 Lapwings and 340 Skylarks on the 8th. The 10th produced Stock Dove, two Stonechats and Mistle Thrush, with the first Pied Wagtail and Reed Bunting of the year. During the following week there were severe south-east gales but few birds. Winds were lighter on the 18th, and the late afternoon produced one of the star arrivals of the year. Seven sparkling Garganey were discovered in the south end of the island, six drakes and a duck: the sixth record for Fair Isle (with previously only seven individuals seen here); six remained to the 30th. Other finds that day included Moorhen, Iceland Gull and Short-eared Owl. On the 19th, Oystercatchers peaked at 145, Mistle Thrushes increased to nine, then to 16 on the 20th, when there were also two Shelducks. A Long-eared Owl was trapped at the Plantation on the 22nd but a Dipper flying over there was a more unexpected highlight. On the 23rd, the Mistle Thrush count peaked at 20 (the second-highest count for Fair Isle), the Dipper spent the whole day on the Gilly Burn at Hjukni Geo and there were records of Grey Wagtail and Stonechat. The 24th brought two more Stonechats and the first Wheatear of the year. Light north or north-westerly winds ensured a quiet end to the month, with the first Bonxies of the year on the 28th and Puffins on the 30th.

April

Winds were predominantly south-west for the first five days of the month, but almost uninterrupted south-easterlies followed to the 24th. Despite the wind direction, the first three weeks were essentially quiet, with merely a trickle of firsts for the year, and few notable arrivals.

Four Garganey remained on the 3rd and the last two were seen on the 6th. A single Barnacle Goose, Swallow and Ring Ouzel were seen on the 12th, whilst the 13th produced 50 Common Gulls, 300 Skylarks and a Stonechat. On the 15th, 300 Meadow Pipits, a small increase in thrushes, and 45 Bramblings were noted. First records for the year included Arctic Skua and Willow Warbler. A warm southerly on the 19th brought records of Buzzard and Goldfinch, together with Whimbrel, Short-eared Owl and 80 Northern Wheatears. On the 20th, a marked northerly movement of Curlews occurred, a minimum 140 counted, with other arrivals including 70 Common Gulls, six Woodpigeons, 12 Swallows, 120 Northern Wheatears, four Jackdaws and nine Rooks. The highlight of the day, however, was Fair Isle's fifth Goshawk, seen drifting over the Plantation then disappearing out of sight over Ward Hill. Over the next four or five days a steady trickle of spring migrants arrived: an early Sedge Warbler on the 21st, two Waxwings, Stonechat, two Grasshopper Warblers and 45 Bramblings on the 22nd, 160 Northern

Wheatears, three Black Redstarts and an early Pied Flycatcher on the 24th, whilst Bramblings reached a spring peak of 135 on the 25th. On the 26th, a south to south-east wind with rain hampered the whole-island Tystie count but produced one of the best rarities of the spring, a smart first-winter male Citrine Wagtail at Golden Water, and then at Easter Lothar: Fair Isle's first spring record of this species. The following day, the 27th, was memorable largely for the re-appearance of what was assumed to be the same Goshawk seen on the 20th. The enjoyment of a thrilling display above the Plantation, at one point in the company of a Peregrine, was rounded off perfectly by catching the bird at roost in the Plantation later – no doubt to the relief of the 40+ Bramblings that were trying to roost there! Light north or north-east winds at the end of the month held up migrants, although the only Short-toed Lark of the spring turned up near Utra on the 29th and a small flight of hirundines (ten Swallows and five House Martins) made it through on the 30th.

May

A bright, sunny day with a force 3-4 northerly wind on the 1st produced more migrants than expected, with eight Whimbrels, 170 Northern Wheatears, four Lapland Buntings and a Little Bunting trapped in the Vaadal. However, these were almost the last notable arrivals for 2½ weeks, as a run of cold north-westerlies threatened to ruin the month. Typically, a few scarce migrants ensured this spell was not completely devoid of interest. The 4th brought Canada Goose and Iceland Gull, on the 6th a Common Buzzard flew north, the first Wryneck of the year was found on the 8th, a ringtail Hen Harrier was seen briefly on the 9th, and the 10th produced the first Bluethroat, always a hopeful sign. A Rustic Bunting on the 11th was the first real rarity of the month, but the only two half-decent migrants of the following week were a Waxwing on the 14th-15th and an Arctic Redpoll on the 13th-17th: north-bound species for whom the weather in the Northern Isles was clearly cold enough!

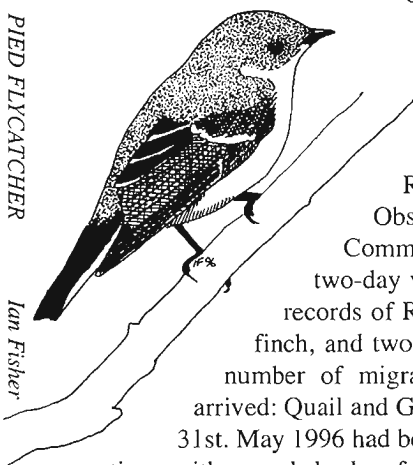
Saturday May 18th started off in line with the previous two weeks, cold and overcast with a fresh north-east wind. That afternoon, however, as the wind freshened to force 4 and veered easterly, saw one of the most dramatic spring falls ever witnessed on the island spread over a matter of a few hours. By evening, the Isle was literally dripping with migrants, and the daily log was particularly special. The main arrivals that day were: Tree Pipit 175, Flava Wagtail 20, Redstart 150, Whinchat 75, Northern Wheatear 225, Whitethroat 75, Willow Warbler 750, Pied Flycatcher 125 and Reed Bunting 50. A little surprisingly, there were no rarities, and even few scarce migrants: just single Wryneck, Bluethroat, Icterine Warbler and Oortolan Bunting. This simply emphasised the enormous numbers of common migrants. For the next four days huge numbers of these common migrants remained on the Isle, though with an undoubted turnover of individuals and fresh arrivals as the wind remained east or south-east. There were too many highlights

to mention each species, but the following examples give a flavour. On the 19th, Reed Buntings increased to 75 and the count of Ortolans reached seven, including several smart males; the daily log count for this species remained at seven until the 24th. The 20th brought the first rarities of this mesmerising spell: Rustic Bunting and Thrush Nightingale (trapped) were perhaps a little predictable, but a Great Reed Warbler in Field Ditch was only the 11th for the Island. Thirty five Common Sandpipers were logged, and other notable counts included 200 Redstarts and 600 Northern Wheatears. The 21st brought the peak spring count of Flava Wagtails (35, including at least 25 splendid Grey-headed Wagtails), Bluethroats (5), Redstarts (220) and Whinchats (100). A fresh wave of Willow Warblers brought the log count back to 600; one of the most abiding memories of this period must be of the flocks of Willow Warblers (often 50 or more) flycatching on the rotting kelp along some of the beaches, particularly at South Harbour and Hjukni Geo – along with the flocks of Common Sandpipers! The 22nd-23rd marked the beginning of the exodus of common migrants, and a change to south-west winds late on the 23rd prompted many to think the best of the month might be over. Not so! The 24th was a magical day, with an Osprey flying south, two Subalpine Warblers, (a female near North Light and a male at Midway), a Common Nightingale on Ward Hill, confirmation

of a tricky Thrush Nightingale when it was trapped at Lower Stoneybreck (it had arrived the previous day and was present until June 1st), a Savi's Warbler at Skerryholm/Haa (present until the 31st), seven Red-backed Shrikes and the third Rustic Bunting of the month, near the Observatory. The highlight of the 25th was a Common Crane, in from mainland Shetland for a two-day visit, whilst the 26th brought the first spring records of Red-breasted Flycatcher and Common Rosefinch, and two Goldfinches. As June approached, with the number of migrants dwindling every day, still new birds arrived: Quail and Glaucous Gull were an unlikely pairing on the 31st. May 1996 had been a month to stay in the memory for a long time, with records broken for many species.

PIED FLYCATCHER

Ian Fisher



June

June opened with south-west winds, generally unproductive, though six Turtle Doves, Goldfinch and a Common Rosefinch were seen on the 1st and hirundine passage on the 2nd recorded 80 Swallows and 30 House Martins. A return to south-east winds on the 3rd brought two Marsh Warblers and the only Golden Oriole of the year (and news of a Caspian Plover on Shetland); nevertheless, the arrival of

the rarest bird of the spring was still a surprise on the 4th: a Blyth's Reed Warbler at the Plantation (present until the 6th). Three Common Rosefinches also appeared on the 4th, another Marsh Warbler on the 5th, and hirundine passage climaxed with 50 House Martins on the 5th, and 100 Swallows on the 6th. The 7th brought Icterine Warbler, Red-backed Shrike and three Common Rosefinches, a new Marsh Warbler appeared on the 8th, and a Red-backed Shrike on the 9th: all fairly standard June fare. South-easterlies on the 11th brought a late Long-eared Owl, and at dusk, a poorly-seen *Acrocephalus* warbler in the Gully that was assumed to be a Marsh Warbler. The following day, Steve Votier set off to count Fulmars, this time with his eyes fully open, and promptly identified his second Blyth's Reed Warbler of the spring! Fulmar counts were abandoned all-round as this remarkable occurrence was digested! Present until the 13th, this was almost but not quite the last notable migrant of the spring: late highlights were the sixth Marsh Warbler of the spring on the 14th, a Quail on the 15th-16th, the fourth Rustic Bunting of the spring on the 16th (a singing male in Sukka Mire), and the third Canada Goose of the year on the 18th-20th

However, despite such pleasant distractions as Blyth's Reed Warblers and Rustic Buntings, June was essentially devoted to seabirds and, as reported elsewhere, most species enjoyed a good summer.

July

July continued the seabird theme, and as usual it was not until the end of the month that early returning migrants, particularly waders, were noted with regularity. However, even during what is typically 'high summer', there were exceptions to this generalisation. A pair of Grey-headed Wagtails, no doubt remnants of the exceptional spring passage, stayed to breed and successfully fledged at least two chicks from a nest on Wirvie Brecks. A Long-tailed Skua joined the 'club' Arctic Skuas on the airstrip briefly on the 5th, and Fair Isle's second Roseate Tern spent three days with Arctic Terns at Tarryfield from the 24th. Other noteworthy migrants included a Bluethroat on the 3rd, Sandwich Terns on the 12th and 18th, and Leach's Petrels trapped on the 19th and 22nd during the routine tape-luring of Storm Petrels.

August

The passage of waders and gulls became more obvious during the early part of August, during weather conditions that were highly variable, though generally low pressure-dominated. On the 5th, 100 Black-headed and 300 Common Gulls were counted, whilst on the 7th a flock of 15 Black-tailed Godwits was exceptional for Fair Isle. One of the best days of wader passage was the 12th, with 130 Oystercatchers, 10 Ruff, 50 Redshank, six Greenshanks, four Green Sandpipers and ten Common Sandpipers, plus a count of 470 Common Gulls. Scarce migrants began

to appear from the 13th, when there were three Red-backed Shrikes, together with sightings of Cuckoo, Tree Pipit, Wood Warbler, Pied Flycatcher, and the first Wood Sandpiper of the year. This trend continued with a Corncrake and two Common Rosefinches on the 14th, together with 80 Alba Wagtails; two Icterine Warblers on the 15th; then a very early juvenile Citrine Wagtail (present until the 25th), and the first Barred Warbler on the 16th.

However, the last ten days of the month produced real migrant quality. A Melodious Warbler was seen at North Haven on the 20th, whilst the 22nd produced only the second (live) Red-necked Grebe since 1983 (present until the 28th, either in North Haven or at Furse), and a Booted Warbler at North Shirva (until the 24th), as well as a count of 400+ Northern Wheatears. The 23rd brought good counts of several waders (67 Ringed Plovers, 17 Ruff, 10 Whimbrels, 40 Curlews), scarce migrants (Wryneck, four Barred Warblers, three Red-backed Shrikes, two Common Rosefinches), and Fair Isle's earliest-ever Yellow-breasted Bunting at North Leogh. The 24th witnessed more waders (85 Ringed Plovers, 80 Curlews and a Dotterel) and a moderate arrival of common migrants – including 20 Whinchats, 300 Northern Wheatears, 10 Reed Warblers, 30 Garden Warblers and 20 Willow Warblers. The quality of the daily log at this time was comparable with the best of many Septembers. Barred Warblers peaked at five on the 25th (when there were also 130 Golden Plovers and two Grasshopper Warblers), Red-backed Shrikes reached five on the 26th, whilst the 29th brought good counts of 100 Ringed Plovers, 525 Meadow Pipits, five Wood Warblers and 45 Willow Warblers.

September

Weather conditions for the first half of the month were variable, but winds were often north-west, ensuring a relatively quiet fortnight. Numbers of common migrants during this period were generally low, although inevitably were spiced with the occasional rarity. The year's second Yellow-breasted Bunting was found at Springfield on the 4th (present until the 5th), whilst the same croft played host to a smart Arctic Warbler on the 8th. The 'standard' early-autumn scarce migrants, such as Wryneck, Barred Warbler, Wood Warbler, Red-backed Shrike and Common Rosefinch were all recorded regularly; also a flock of seven Greenland White-fronted Geese on the 12th-27th and a Corncrake on the 3rd. One of the biggest surprises of the month, since it followed several days of north-westerlies, was a Lanceolated Warbler in Meadow Burn on the 13th (trapped).

The wind finally shifted to the south-east on the 15th, and the effect was almost instantaneous, with Bluethroat, Icterine Warbler and four Yellow-browed Warblers providing much-needed encouragement. The 16th was very quiet, but the 17th produced arguably the most-vaunted Fair Isle 'special', a Pallas' Grasshopper Warbler in the tiny roadside ditch at Quoy! Also new in, a Corncrake, the first Little Stint and Richard's Pipit of the year, 40 Song Thrushes and 25 Pied Flycatchers.

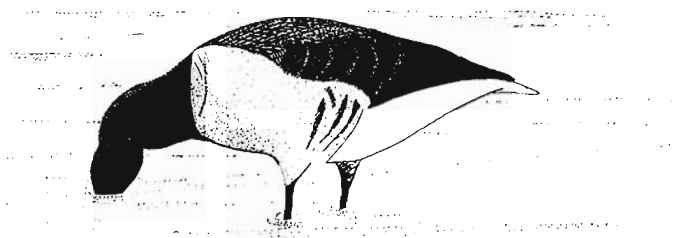
On the 18th, a Great Snipe was found and there were moderate arrivals of a few common species, including 110 Snipe, 15 Dunnocks, 90 Song Thrushes and 20 Blackcaps. The 19th was undoubtedly one of the best days of the autumn. A particularly bright Pechora Pipit was discovered at Wester Lothar in the morning, though it remained elusive that day and most people caught up with it the following day. Then in the late afternoon, a Paddyfield Warbler at Skerryholm was seen to be ringed: when trapped, it was bearing a Lithuanian ring! Other sightings that day included Short-toed Lark and Little Bunting, the only Spotted Redshank of the year, six Yellow-browed Warblers and two Red-breasted Flycatchers. On the 20th, two more Great Snipes were discovered, one of them staying until the 30th and delighting many observers with close views on the ground. Sadly, two of the Great Snipes this autumn were found either moribund or dead. Spotted Crake and Grey Plover generated most interest on the 21st, as a pause in rarity arrivals gave visitors a chance to draw breath.

The 23rd brought a good fall, highlighted by a second Short-toed Lark (joining the first) and two Richard's Pipits, together with counts of three Pochard, nine Jack Snipes, 15 Tree Pipits, 25 Redstarts, 400 Song Thrushes, 75 Redwings, 15 Chiffchaffs and 60 Bramblings. A strong south-south-east wind on the 24th hampered birding, so it was particularly creditable that the Island's third Blyth's Reed Warbler was discovered and identified in the field, in the main Homisdale ditch (later trapped and released in the Plantation). The last six days of the month produced no more rarities, with the wind veering to the south-west. However, numbers of common and scarce migrants continued to arrive. Highlights of the 25th were 50+ Sooty Shearwaters, Corncrake and a Hoopoe on the Rippack, whilst an exceptional movement of Barnacle Geese (estimated at 600) made the 26th memorable. Also seen on the 26th, were Velvet Scoter and the third Little Bunting of the autumn, whilst Short-toed Larks increased to three and Richard's Pipits to four. The dominant theme of the last few days of the month was migrants of north-western origin, species such as Whooper Swan, Merlin, Meadow Pipit, Northern Wheatear and Lapland Bunting being much in evidence.

October

The weather remained westerly for the first eleven days of October, and consequently, migrant composition continued to have a strong north-western theme. On the 1st, Fair Isle's third Baird's Sandpiper was the star attraction, enjoyed by a select few at the base of Malcolm's Head. The following day, it discovered the sanctuary of Easter Lothar and was enjoyed by a much wider audience. The supporting cast of the Baird's on the 1st was Slavonian Grebe, 750 Meadow Pipits and 150 Snow Buntings, with a good count of 20 Lapland Buntings on the 2nd, together with 'long-staying' Short-toed Larks (two 1st-2nd, one to the 7th) and Richard's Pipits (two on the 1st). The following week was disappointingly quiet: 300 Pink-footed Geese on the 3rd, a Richard's Pipit on the 7th, a Brent Goose on

the 8th, four Pochard and 4000 Redwings on the 11th. An impressive variety of species kept observers busy on the 12th, notably 32 Whooper Swans, 1500 Greylag Geese, and 2750 Redwings lingering from the big fall the previous day, together with two Great Northern Divers, Corncrake, Moorhen and Red-breasted Flycatcher. Barnacle Geese were in evidence on the 13th (175 logged), with Velvet Scoter and Glaucous Gull. By the 16th, the wind had been in the south-east for four days, and rarities were turning up throughout the Northern Isles. Expectancy was high therefore, though the rarity drought continued. 210 Barnacle Geese, 300 Common Gulls, 40 Dunnocks, 60 Robins, seven Black Redstarts, 120 Blackbirds, 175 Fieldfares, 300 Song Thrushes, 200 Redwings, 50 Blackcaps together with single Red-backed Shrike and Bullfinch were recorded on the 16th: the components of a wonderful day's birding, lacking only the unexpected. The flavour of the 16th set the scene for the rest of the month, with wildfowl and thrushes dominating the log. Three Richard's Pipits arrived on the 22nd, whilst on the 23rd a good arrival of thrushes numbered 450 Blackbirds, 650 Fieldfares and 1500 Redwings, with the year's first Great Grey Shrike trapped at the Plantation, and 220 Snow Buntings. The 24th was notable for several scarce migrants, including Little Grebe, Hen Harrier, two Stock Doves, Mistle Thrush, Red-breasted Flycatcher and Yellow-browed Warbler, whilst Richard's Pipits increased to five. Another day that epitomised the month: excellent birding, just lacking the extra spice of a rarity.



BRENT GOOSE

Roger Riddington

November-December

Winter set in quickly once November arrived, in contrast to many years when the first week of November at least has produced some thrilling birding. On the 1st, the highlights were typically Novemberish: 'blue' Fulmars and Little Auks past South Light, Goldeneye and Long-tailed Ducks in South Harbour, one Richard's Pipit remained from October and there were sightings of Glaucous Gull, Long-eared Owl and Black Redstart. The 2nd produced a juvenile Pomarine Skua off Bunness,

one of precious few Fair Isle seawatching highlights this year. The rest of the month was rather wintry, bringing little of ornithological note. Isolated sightings of interest occurred as follows: two Slavonian Grebes and two Greenland White-fronted Geese on the 7th, three Northern Bullfinches on the 11th, six Chiffchaffs on the 13th and an influx of Long-eared Owls at the month's end, with at least four roosting at the Plantation for several days, and at least seven individuals involved. Numbers of Snow Buntings were rather higher than recent winters, with a maximum of 300 on the 17th, there were occasional records of Greenland/Iceland Redpolls, and the only Iceland Gull of the autumn was seen on the 30th.

December continued where the end of November left off. On the 4th, a day of heavy rain and a NNE wind gusting to gale force, a massive influx of large gulls appeared on the island seeking shelter. The count of Herring Gulls was 13000, an island record, and a minimum of nine Glaucous Gulls were noted. Occasional sightings of species such as Peregrine, Merlin, Glaucous Gull, Little Auk and Long-eared Owl continued until the end of the year.

SYSTEMATIC LIST 1996

Notes

Status Categories

Vagrant	ten records or less in the past 20 years
Rare	11-40 records in the past 20 years
Scarce	averaging 10 records or less per annum
Regular	averaging 11-40 records per annum
Frequent	averaging 41-500 records per annum
Common	averaging more than 500 records per annum

Breeding Categories

Small Number	on average, less than 100 pairs per annum
Moderate Numbers	on average, 101-1000 pairs per annum
Large Numbers	on average, more than 1000 pairs per annum

Species considered by the British Birds Rarities Committee (BBRC) are followed by a statement as to whether records have been accepted or are under consideration.

RED-THROATED DIVER *Gavia stellata*

Regular migrant, mainly late spring and autumn

In the early part of the year, singles were seen on January 9th-10th and March 14th. Spring records comprised singles on five dates between May 25th and June 17th, with a mid-summer record of one on July 12th.

In autumn, there were sporadic records between September 12th and October 30th; mostly singles, but with five on September 16th and four on 26th.

GREAT NORTHERN DIVER *Gavia immer*

Scarce autumn migrant

Singles were seen on September 15th and 22nd, then on four dates during October, with two on the 12th. Two more records of single birds came from November, the last on the 18th.

LITTLE GREBE *Tachybaptus ruficollis*

Rare migrant, mostly autumn

One was discovered in Linni Geo on October 24th. It moved to Golden Water the following day, where it stayed until the 26th.

RED-NECKED GREBE *Podiceps grisegena*

Vagrant; 19 previous records

A reasonably fresh corpse was picked up on the tideline at North Haven on February 19th. Later in the year, a juvenile was discovered in North Haven on the afternoon of August 22nd. It shuttled between here and the sheltered waters of Furse for the next week, last seen on the 28th. The only other records from the past 15 years are singles seen in 1983 and 1991.

SLAVONIAN GREBE *Podiceps auritus*

Scarce autumn migrant

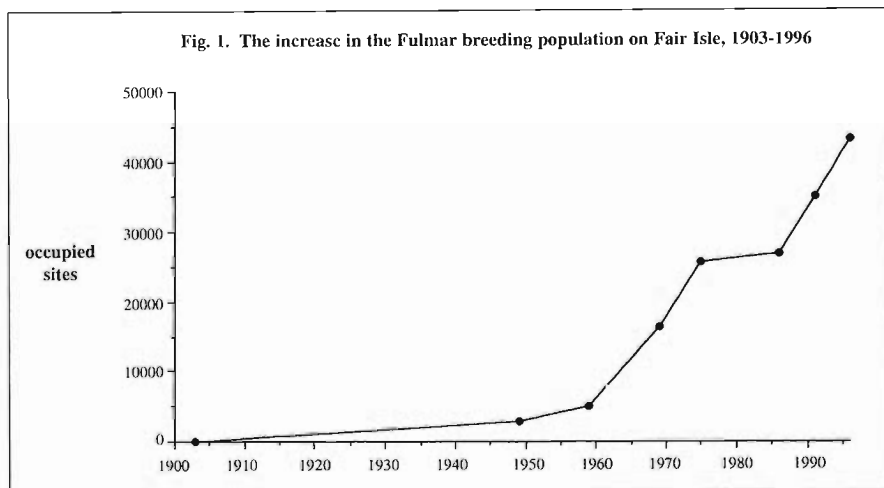
A good year for this species, the first record being in January, with sightings on several dates between January 9th and 22nd. In February, two arrived on the 19th, joined by a third on the 27th. This group lingered in the area between Furse and North Haven for several weeks, and was last seen together on March 20th. Two remained until the 29th, with the last sighting of one on April 1st.

In autumn, one again between North Haven and Furse from October 1st-21st, with two in Furse on November 7th-8th.

FULMAR *Fulmarus glacialis*

Resident; breeds in large numbers

The five-yearly population count was carried out during June 1996. This revealed another large increase (+ 23%) from the last survey, to 43300 apparently occupied sites. The largest increase has occurred on the north and west coasts, where the concentration of breeding birds is most impressive. The increase in the population during this century is shown in the graph below. Fulmars enjoyed a



reasonable breeding season, raising an average of 0.43 chicks per occupied site at monitoring plots.

Dark phase ('Blue') Fulmars were reported occasionally during the autumn, between August 19th and November 18th; mostly just ones and twos, but with six on November 1st.

SOOTY SHEARWATER *Puffinus griseus*

Frequent autumn migrant

One was seen at about halfway on the crossing from Grutness to Fair Isle on June 11th, with another sighting on July 4th. With the exception of a late record from the crossing on October 20th, all other records occurred between August 23rd and September 28th. Sightings were regular in September, with the best counts during this period being 18 in 3½ hours on the 2nd, nine on the 24th, 50+ on the 25th (with average passage rate being nine per hour), and 15 on the 26th.

MANX SHEARWATER *Puffinus puffinus*

Scarce autumn migrant, rare in spring

Three were seen on the crossing of June 22nd. The only other sightings came from the island, one on September 20th and two on the 25th.

STORM PETREL *Hydrobates pelagicus*

Summer visitor, breeds in small numbers but non-breeders common

The first records came from the crossing during early June. Sightings from the boat were regular until late August, whilst seawatching provided occasional September records, and the last of the year – one on October 11th. Tape-luring below the Observatory commenced in mid-July and continued to the end of August, weather permitting. A total of 1021 birds were ringed, well below the eight-year average of 1463 since intensive tape-luring began in 1988.

LEACH'S PETREL *Oceanodroma leucorhoa*

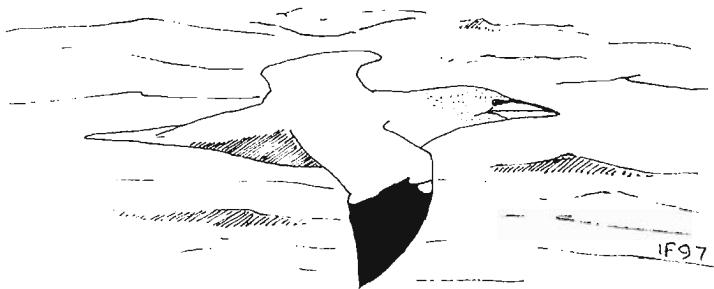
Scarce migrant, summer and early autumn

Singles were trapped at night on July 19th and 23rd.

GANNET *Sula bassana*

Breeds in large numbers, seen offshore all year

The breeding population showed another substantial increase in 1996, reaching 1090 occupied sites, a 13% increase from 1995, and the first year in which the population has exceeded 1000 pairs. An average of 0.67 chicks per occupied site fledged at monitoring plots, similar to the average for the previous ten years.



GANNET

Ian Fisher

CORMORANT *Phalacrocorax carbo*

Frequent autumn migrant, less common in winter and spring

A small wintering 'population' was again recorded regularly in South Harbour, with one or two up to mid-March and one to four again from mid-November. Spring migrants were recorded on three dates in April, then in autumn there were records on several dates from mid-August to the end of October. Maximum counts were just six on August 14th and seven on September 15th.

SHAG *Phalacrocorax aristotelis*

Resident, breeds in moderate numbers

Counts at five population monitoring plots were as high, or higher, than those in the past two years at each plot; the cumulative total was the highest since 1989, thus reversing a six-year decline. Breeding success, at 1.38 chicks fledged per monitored nest, was similar to the average for the past ten years.

GREY HERON *Ardea cinerea*

Frequent autumn migrant, less common in winter/spring

One or two were seen regularly during the winter months. Spring passage was light; there were three on March 19th and four on the 23rd, but otherwise just sporadic singles until mid-June.

Autumn migrants were recorded most days during August-October, with maxima of 17 on August 29th and eight on September 5th.

MUTE SWAN *Cygnus olor*

Vagrant; three previous records

In January, a party of three (an adult and two first-winters) arrived on the 9th and were present until the 20th, with the adult present to the 24th (found dead on the 28th).

WHOOPE SWAN *Cygnus cygnus*

Frequent autumn migrant, scarce in spring

In January, there were 16 on the 3rd, then up to five seen most days until the 22nd. Other records in the first half of the year comprised one on February 13th, two on April 13th, two on April 22nd-23rd, and one on May 8th.

Autumn began with a party of 16 on September 30th, after which there were sightings on seven dates in October, with peaks of 19 on the 10th and 32 on the 12th. In November, five family groups arrived between the 5th and the 13th. Most stayed only a day, but a group of one adult and two first-winter birds stayed until the end of December, joined by a second adult on December 25th.

A colour-ringed adult (with its mate and a single cygnet) was seen on October 10th. This individual was ringed as an adult male on its breeding grounds at Jokuldalur, eastern Iceland in 1988 (65°15'N, 15°01'W). Sightings have been made of it each winter since: twice in Orkney (in November, on its southward migration), but otherwise in Caithness or on the shores of Lough Neagh, Londonderry, Northern Ireland.

BEAN GOOSE *Anser fabalis*

Scarce autumn migrant

There were an unusually large number of records in January and February, the best since the late 1970's. Five were seen on January 19th, and the group was recorded almost daily, reaching a maximum of eight on the 24th. After that, two or three were recorded during January 30th-February 1st, presumably part of the flock of eight seen in late January. However, three on February 19th were probably different to the previous group.

PINK-FOOTED GOOSE *Anser brachyrhynchus*

Frequent autumn migrant, scarce in spring

In January, four were seen on the 21st and eight on the 30th (six remaining to the 31st).

In autumn, the species was seen between September 9th and October 19th. There were two days of sizeable numbers: 115 on September 28th and 300 on October 3rd, with smaller counts of 31 on September 27th, and 26 on the 30th. However, these were the only autumn day-totals of more than ten.

WHITE-FRONTED GOOSE *Anser albifrons*

Scarce autumn migrant

A party of seventeen on January 1st remained from 1995, comprising 14 adults and three first-winters of the nominate race, *A. a. albifrons*. These decreased to 14 by January 3rd and ten by the 8th, but were augmented by fresh arrivals on the 20th, with a count of 38, increasing to 42 on the 21st (composed of 34 *A. a. albifrons*

and eight of the Greenland race, *A. a. flavirostris*). Numbers gradually dwindled through February, with 11 on the 25th being the last flock sighting. An adult of the nominate race remained until March 22nd.

In autumn, a party of seven (one adult and six juveniles of the Greenland race) were present from September 12th-27th, and finally two adults of the Greenland race were seen during November 7th-17th.

GREYLAG GOOSE *Anser anser*

Common spring and autumn migrant

Up to nine were recorded regularly during January, with 20 on the 20th. One to five were seen most days from February until early June, with one bird remaining through the summer for a second year.

The first flock of autumn comprised 25 on September 30th, but the main passage was in October. Overshadowing all other arrivals and equalling the record island count, a marvellous passage on October 12th was estimated at 1500. Six hundred remained on the 13th, 450 on the 14th, and 250+ until the 17th. The other notable influx of that month was 350 on the 28th. Sightings of up to 73 occurred virtually daily in November, of up to 73, and 26 remained throughout December.

CANADA GOOSE *Branta canadensis*

Vagrant; nine previous records (21 individuals)

One of the best years ever, with three records: singles on January 29th-31st (the first winter record), May 4th-13th and June 18th-20th. All were large individuals of British or Scandinavian feral stock.

BARNACLE GOOSE *Branta leucopsis*

Frequent autumn migrant

There were sightings of up to eleven between January 20th and February 7th, presumably relating to the same flock. One remained until March 6th, with two on February 19th-20th. Further spring records occurred in April (one on the 12th and two on the 13th), and in June (with one on the 14th-15th).

Autumn proved to be the best ever for this species. Nine on September 25th preceded large numbers on the 26th with 600 estimated, almost doubling the previous best of 350 on September 25th, 1982. Two hundred remained on the 27th. Sightings were virtually daily until mid-November, with further large arrivals of 175 on October 13th and 210 on the 16th.

Four birds with individually-marked darvic rings were seen in the autumn; all had been ringed in Svalbard, and two adults (a pair) were seen at Caerlaverock, Dumfriesshire, a little over a week after leaving Fair Isle.

BRENT GOOSE *Branta bernicla*

Rare autumn migrant

An adult of the light-bellied race *B. b. hrota* was present from January 24th to February 14th. In autumn, a juvenile of the same race was present from October 8th-26th.

SHELDUCK *Tadorna tadorna*

Scarce spring migrant

In March, one was seen on the 8th and two on the 20th, one remaining to April 8th. The only other record was one on June 13th.

WIGEON *Anas penelope*

Frequent spring and autumn migrant, scarce in winter

There were records on most days throughout January-March, mostly less than ten but with peaks of 32 on January 21st and 34 on the 30th, the largest winter counts on record. Spring passage proper was much less impressive, however, with occasional records of one or two from mid-April until June 21st.

Autumn passage lasted from mid-August to mid-November; sightings were reported most days but with few counts above 15 and a peak of just 22 on September 29th. Sightings of one on four dates in December probably relate to the same female.

GADWALL *Anas strepera*

Rare spring and autumn migrant

In January, one was seen on the 9th-15th, then three (two males and a female) from the 21st to at least February 7th. A female on February 17th-24th was probably one of this party of three seen in late January/early February.

TEAL *Anas crecca*

Frequent spring and autumn migrant, scarce in winter

Up to four were recorded occasionally (eight dates) during January to mid-February. Spring records comprised one on March 9-13th, then regular sightings during April and May (with up to five at the end of April) and a pair on June 10th.

Autumn records were regular from August 8th until mid-November: 13 on September 4th-5th was the peak count. Late records involved one on November 30th and two or three during the last week of December.

MALLARD *Anas platyrhynchos*

Frequent spring and autumn migrant

The resident pair at Field bred successfully this year, hatching six ducklings on August 6th. Three survived the first week, and these made it successfully to the end of the year.

Counts of migrants during spring and autumn were very low, with few days of more than five. The peak count of non-residents for the year was 15 on October 15th.

PINTAIL *Anas acuta*

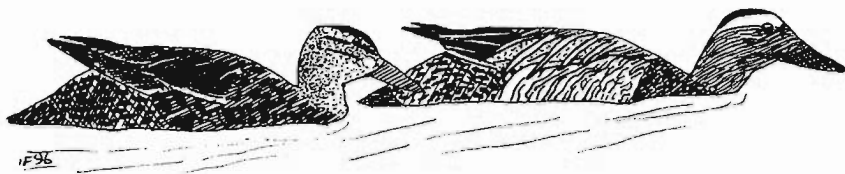
Scarce spring and autumn migrant

There was only one record during the year, a male flying over Vaasetter on September 9th.

GARGANEY *Anas querquedula*

Vagrant; five previous records (seven individuals)

An exceptional flock of seven arrived on March 18th, six immaculate drakes and a duck. They remained around the south end of the island for some time: although one of the males was found predated, there were still six on March 30th. Four remained until April 3rd, with the last two drakes seen on April 6th. This is the highest count for Fair Isle.



GARGANEY

Ian Fisher

SHOVELER *Anas clypeata*

Scarce spring and autumn migrant

There were four records: a male on January 19th (the second winter record for the island), a male on May 25th-27th, a female on September 26th, and a male on October 2nd-4th.

POCHARD *Aythya ferina*

Rare migrant, mostly autumn

Records in the early part of the year comprised a male on January 4th, up to five during January 19th-24th (five on 21st, including three males, is the highest count for the island) and a female on February 28th-March 1st.

Autumn produced two more multiple sightings: three (two males and a female) past South Light on September 23rd, and four (including two males) south off Bunes on October 11th.

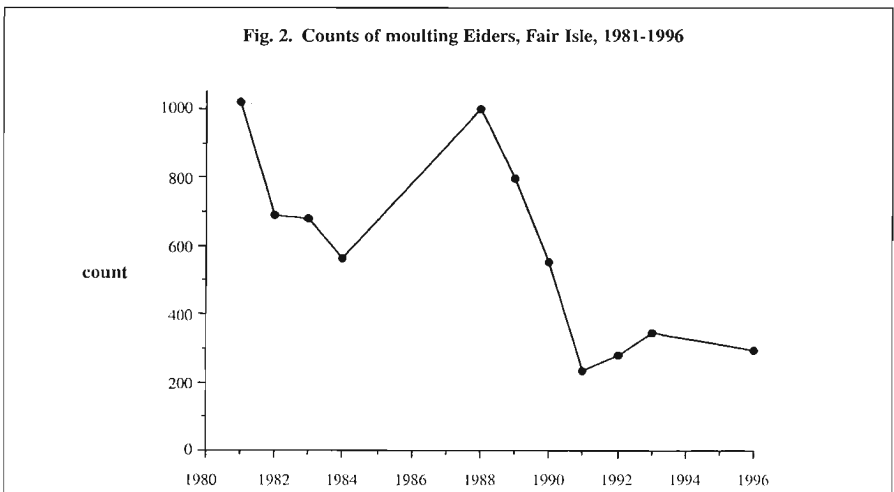
TUFTED DUCK *Aythya fuligula*
Scarce spring migrant, rare in autumn

In January, single males on the 4th and 20th-22nd, then another male on February 13th-17th. In spring, there were records on many dates between April 19th and June 12th, with a peak count of four on June 1st. Approximately 16 individuals were recorded during this period.

In autumn, singles on October 9th-10th, 11th-16th and 19th, then an immature male seen briefly in South Harbour on November 1st which showed characters consistent with a hybrid Tufted Duck x Ring-necked Duck, *A. collaris*. The final record, completing an excellent year, was of a male on November 30th.

EIDER *Somateria mollissima*
Resident, breeds in small numbers

A count of moulting Eiders was undertaken in late August, with 293 counted on August 29th. The decline in Fair Isle Eider numbers during the 1980's-1990's is portrayed in Fig. 2, which is broadly similar to the situation across the rest of Shetland (where numbers have decreased from around 16500 in 1977 to 6200 in 1996). Oil pollution was a major factor in the decline of the Shetland population in the late 1970's, and further oiling incidents, together with increased predation of ducklings and adults by gulls and skuas, may have contributed to mortality during the 1990's (M. Huebeck, Shetland Bird Club newsletter, Spring 1997). The highest count of the year was 475, mostly off South Light, on November 18th. November is typically the month when peak Eider counts are recorded on Fair Isle, which suggests that post-moulting dispersal may in fact swell the Fair Isle population in late autumn.



LONG-TAILED DUCK *Clangula hyemalis*

Frequent autumn migrant, less common in spring

One or two were recorded occasionally from February until mid-May. Autumn passage was poor, with intermittent records of one to three from October 6th until the end of the year, with four on two dates, and a peak of just five on October 28th.

COMMON SCOTER *Melanitta nigra*

Scarce spring, autumn and winter migrant

There were five records: a female on March 31st, a male from April 28th to May 24th, a female on July 5th-13th, a female on November 28th, and a female on December 30th.

VELVET SCOTER *Melanitta fusca*

Scarce autumn migrant

There were two records, both singles past South Light, on September 26th and October 13th respectively.

GOLDENEYE *Bucephala clangula*

Regular winter, spring and autumn migrant

In the early part of the year, one to three were recorded intermittently from January to mid-May (last spring record on May 20th), with sightings most frequently in March when there were four on six dates mid-month.

Followed a male on September 23rd, there were regular records of up to four from October 13th until the year's end.

RED-BREASTED MERGANSER *Mergus serrator*

Frequent spring and autumn migrant

A male on January 24th was the first of the year. Spring records occurred from March 1st to June 2nd, comprising one or two birds on several dates, involving at least 13 individuals.

There were a number of summer records, one or two on several dates from June 30th to August 12th. Autumn records were regular between September 22nd and November 21st. Counts were mostly less than five, but there were seven on October 13th and nine on the 25th (with eight on the 26th). One to three were recorded on several dates between 19th December and the end of the year.

GOOSANDER *Mergus merganser*

Rare migrant in winter, spring and late autumn

One record only, of a drake in South Harbour on January 1st.

HEN HARRIER *Circus cyaneus*

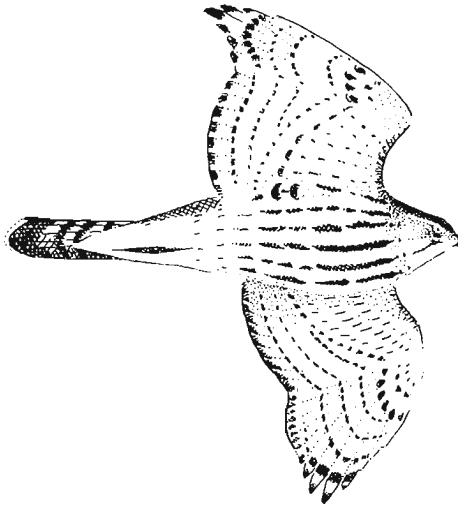
Scarce spring and autumn migrant

In spring, a ringtail was seen on May 9th, and, in autumn, another ringtail seen on October 24th-28th.

GOSHAWK *Accipiter gentilis*

Vagrant; four previous records

A male was seen above the Plantation, then heading north over Ward Hill on April 20th. What was presumed to be the same individual was seen again during the late afternoon of April 27th, again in the vicinity of the Plantation, once in the company of a Peregrine. It was trapped at roost in the Plantation that evening and proved to be a large, first-winter male.



GOSHAWK

Steve Votier

SPARROWHAWK *Accipiter nisus*

Regular spring and autumn migrant

Spring passage was poor, with singles recorded on just seven dates between April 27th and May 29th. Autumn was slightly better, with sightings most days from September 17th-November 5th; mostly of one or two birds, but with three on September 19th-21st and October 29th. Although turnover is generally reckoned to be high for this species, a female ringed on September 18th was trapped again on October 14th.

BUZZARD *Buteo buteo*

Scarce spring and autumn migrant

Just two confirmed records: singles passing over on April 19th (south) and May 6th (north).

OSPREY *Pandion haliaetus*

Rare spring and autumn migrant

One record: of one flying south on May 24th which, like so many of those recorded in spring, didn't linger on the island.

KESTREL *Falco tinnunculus*

Regular spring and autumn migrant

With the exception of two singles in March (3rd and 19th), spring migrants were recorded between April 20th and June 18th; one or two seen on 18 dates.

In autumn, sightings were more frequent, with almost daily records from August 4th to the end of October. Three were recorded on several dates, and it seems likely that some individuals were long-stayers. Singles were recorded on five dates in November/December.

MERLIN *Falco columbarius*

Regular spring and autumn migrant

Records were sporadic through the first half of the year: singles on 20 dates spread evenly until June 4th.

In autumn, sightings were regular from August 30th-November 17th, mostly of one or two, although three were seen on September 30th-October 1st. One or two were seen on ten dates in December.

PEREGRINE *Falco peregrinus*

Regular spring and autumn migrant; formerly bred

One was reported on four dates in February. Later in the spring, one or two were recorded regularly between April 11th and May 23rd, with a late sighting on June 24th.

In the latter part of the year, there were occasional records of one or two from August 9th until the end of the year, with a concentration of records in late September and the first three weeks of October.

QUAIL *Coturnix coturnix*

Scarce spring and summer visitor; has bred

Singles were reported on May 21st, May 31st, June 10th, and June 15th-16th.

WATER RAIL *Rallus aquaticus*

Regular spring and autumn migrant; occasionally winters

An adult was seen on January 1st, but there were no further records until singles on two dates in March (19th and 23rd). One on April 25th was the only other spring record. One or two were recorded occasionally from September 18th until the end of November, with two or three long-staying individuals in the late autumn. Higher counts were three on October 1st and November 10th, and four on September 25th. The only December record was one on the 24th.

SPOTTED CRAKE *Porzana porzana*

Rare spring and autumn migrant

An elusive individual in Gilly Burn and Hjukni Geo on September 21st, reported next day also, was the only record of the year.

CORNCRAKE *Crex crex*

Scarce spring and autumn migrant; formerly bred

In autumn, singles were seen on August 14th, September 3rd, September 17th, on four dates between September 25th-30th (which probably all relate to one individual), and on October 12th. Five records in a year is higher than the recent average.

MOORHEN *Gallinula chloropus*

Scarce spring and autumn migrant

In spring, sightings on many dates between March 18th and May 2nd almost certainly related to just two individuals. The only autumn record was a first-winter trapped on October 12th.

COOT *Fulica atra*

Rare migrant, autumn, winter and spring

One around South Light on January 3rd-6th was the first since 1993. However, two were found dead on the island during the spring.

COMMON CRANE *Grus grus*

Vagrant; six previous records

One seen flying south over the Observatory on the afternoon of May 25th, was seen well at the base of Malcolm's Head, then at the base of Hoini later in the day. It was present the following morning. This may have been the same individual that was seen on Shetland (mostly Unst) between May 1st and 28th.

OYSTERCATCHER *Haematopus ostralegus*

Summer visitor, breeds in small numbers. Also common migrant, spring and autumn

Spring migrants began to arrive in mid-February, with the first on the 20th, and up to 30 by the end of the month. Peak spring counts were recorded during the latter part of April, with 160 on the 25th, and 150 on the 27th-28th.

Breeding numbers were estimated at 74 pairs, better than in the past two years but still below rather than above average for the past 25 years. As usual, there were flocks of failed breeders or non-breeders in late spring through summer, peaking at 95 on June 7th.

In autumn, 130 individuals on August 12th was the only count over 100. Small numbers only were seen after mid-September, with one long-stayer during November, last recorded on the 25th.

RINGED PLOVER *Charadrius hiaticula*

Summer visitor, breeds in small numbers. Also frequent spring and autumn migrant

There were sightings on three dates in January, but daily records from February 20th. The peak spring count was 30 on March 19th. Seventeen pairs bred in 1996, close to the record total of 18.

Autumn passage was heavy in late August and early September, with best counts being 85 on August 24th and 100 on the 29th. One or two individuals of the race *C. h. tundrae* were recorded at this time. There were few records in October and November, the last of the year being on November 12th.

DOTTEREL *Charadrius morinellus*

Scarce spring and autumn migrant

In August, a juvenile was seen on the 24th and two (including an adult) on the 25th; these records were presumed to refer to just two individuals.

EURASIAN GOLDEN PLOVER *Pluvialis apricaria*

Common spring and autumn migrant; has bred

There were records in all months of the year. In spring, regular sightings occurred from early April to early June, with a peak of just 16 on April 24th. In autumn, seen most days during August to October, with peak counts of 130 on August 25th, 100 on September 27th and 122 on September 29th.

GREY PLOVER *Pluvialis squatarola*

Scarce autumn migrant, rare in spring

In January, one seen on four dates between the 13th and 21st presumably related to the same individual: only the second mid-winter record for the island.

In autumn, singles were seen on three dates in August (the first on the 8th), a juvenile stayed from September 20th-October 1st, and one was seen on October 19th.

LAPWING *Vanellus vanellus*

Summer visitor, breeds in small numbers. Also common spring/autumn migrant and regular winter visitor

Small numbers were recorded in the winter months at both ends of the year. In spring, migrants became more obvious towards the end of February, with 76 on the

27th. In March, there were six counts of more than a hundred, 130 on the 8th being the peak count. Numbers in April and May were lower, and seven pairs stayed to breed.

Autumn brought only rather small numbers, with few counts of more than 20; 38 on October 19th was the highest.

KNOT *Calidris canutus*

Frequent autumn migrant, scarce in spring

No records in spring, but regularly seen from August 1st to mid-October, reaching a peak of nine on September 3rd. One on November 3rd was the last of the year.

SANDERLING *Calidris alba*

Frequent autumn migrant, less common in spring

In spring, up to five were seen most days between June 5th and 15th. After one on July 29th, the main autumn passage was in August, building up at the end of the month with a maximum of 15 on the 28th. There were occasional records in September, and one or two between October 22nd-25th.

LITTLE STINT *Calidris minuta*

Regular autumn migrant

Recorded most days between September 17th and October 14th; counts were higher in September, with eight on the 28th being the best.

BAIRD'S SANDPIPER *Calidris bairdii*

Vagrant; two previous records

One was discovered on October 1st, seen rather briefly near the base of Malcolm's Head, where it was identified and aged as a juvenile. It was extremely flighty, and may well have been newly-arrived. Most observers caught up with it the following day, when it eventually settled at Easter Locher water. It was not seen after the 2nd. The third for Fair Isle, following juveniles on September 17th-21st 1982 and September 5th-16th 1991.

Accepted by BBRC

PURPLE SANDPIPER *Calidris maritima*

Frequent spring and autumn migrant; also over-winters

Present throughout the winter months, and during spring and autumn migration. The highest counts were during the winter: 25 on January 6th and 22 on December 3rd. Peak counts in spring were 19 on April 26th and 17 on May 17th. There were no counts in double figures in the autumn.

DUNLIN *Calidris alpina*

Frequent spring and autumn migrant. Has bred

There were sporadic records of up to six during January to April, with regular sightings from mid-May to early June (max. 10 on May 21st-22nd).

Autumn sightings were reported most days from late July until the end of October. Numbers were highest in late August, with 40 on the 20th, and 30 on the 25th-26th and 29th.

RUFF *Philomachus pugnax*

Frequent autumn migrant, rare in spring

One on July 24th-25th was the first of the year. Records were regular during August and the latter part of September/early October. Daily maxima were 16 on August 19th and 23rd. A late bird was seen on October 16th.

JACK SNIFE *Lymnocyptes minimus*

Frequent autumn migrant, less common in winter and spring

There were no records from the early part of the year. Autumn migrants began to appear in September, with the first on the 15th. Sightings were almost daily until the end of October, with a peak of 11 on October 18th. Singles were seen on several dates in November, the last on the 28th.

COMMON SNIFE *Gallinago gallinago*

Breeds in small numbers. Also common spring and autumn migrant, some over-winter

Present throughout the year. Small numbers were recorded during the spring, with a peak of just 40 on March 19th. Approximately 17 males were drumming during the spring census, a sharp fall from last year's 30.

Peak numbers in autumn were 110 on September 18th and 100+ on October 15th.

GREAT SNIFE *Gallinago media*

Rare autumn migrant

The second consecutive year of multiple sightings, with three in mid-September. After one on the 18th-20th (found moribund on the 20th), two new birds were discovered on the 20th, one staying until the 21st (found dead on the 24th), and one until the 30th.

All accepted by BBRC

WOODCOCK *Scolopax rusticola*

Frequent spring and late autumn migrant, occasionally winters

There were occasional records of up to three birds during January to April, most regularly in March, with an unusual late spring sighting on June 26th.

Autumn passage was again poor: sightings were regular only during the latter part of October, and the peak count was just 15 on October 25th.

BLACK-TAILED GODWIT *Limosa limosa*

Scarce spring and autumn migrant

August brought an exceptional run of sightings, with a flock of 15 on the 7th-8th: a record count, beating the previous best of 13 in August 1990. Sightings of one to nine were recorded most days after this until August 29th, presumably involving birds from the original flock of 15.

BAR-TAILED GODWIT *Limosa lapponica*

Regular autumn migrant, rare in spring

There was a single record in spring, of an individual in non-breeding plumage on May 24th.

In autumn, there were two on August 26th, one on September 16th, and one to two from September 28th-October 2nd.

WHIMBREL *Numenius phaeopus*

Frequent spring and autumn migrant

Spring passage brought daily sightings from April 19th until mid-June, with a peak of 11 on May 8th. Occasional sightings occurred during the mid-summer weeks, with returning autumn migrants seen regularly from early August. The highest autumn count was 10+ on August 23rd; sightings were sporadic during September, with the last on the 28th.

CURLEW *Numenius arquata*

Breeds in small numbers. Also frequent spring/autumn migrant, occasionally over-winters

There were records from all months of the year, starting with an exceptional count of 95 on New Year's Day (the highest mid-winter count for the island), no doubt reflecting the cold weather at the end of December 1995. Spring passage was most obvious in late April, with a minimum of 140 flying north on the 20th being the highest count. Eight pairs stayed to breed, the highest number yet recorded on the island.

Autumn passage was at its peak in late August, with 40+ on the 23rd and 80 on the 24th being the highest counts.

SPOTTED REDSHANK *Tringa erythropus*

Scarce autumn migrant, rare in spring

One on September 19th was the only record of the year.

REDSHANK *Tringa totanus*

Common migrant in winter, spring and autumn migrant; has bred

Recorded throughout the year, but with no breeding attempt recorded. The peak spring count was 90 on April 28th, whilst in autumn, there were maxima of 75 on August 13th, and 80 on September 4th.

GREENSHANK *Tringa nebularia*

Regular autumn migrant, scarce in spring

Two were seen in spring: singles on April 17th and May 19th. In autumn, sightings were almost daily between August 6th and September 8th, the peak count being six on August 12th.

GREEN SANDPIPER *Tringa ochropus*

Regular spring and autumn migrant

In spring, singles were recorded on April 21st-25th (with two on the 24th), May 18th-19th (with two on the 20th), and a late one on June 29th.

Most autumn migrants occurred between August 6th and September 11th, with maximum counts of five on August 19th and 21st; after that spell, one on September 22nd proved to be the last of the year.

WOOD SANDPIPER *Tringa glareola*

Scarce spring and autumn migrant

Absent from the spring for the second year in a row, and in autumn there were only two records: single birds on August 13th and 19th-20th.

COMMON SANDPIPER *Actitis hypoleucos*

Frequent spring and autumn migrant

One or two were logged most days from April 28th through the first half of May. A large arrival occurred on May 20th, with 35 counted; counts remained at 35 for two more days before decreasing again as June approached. This is the highest count recorded in spring, and second only to 40 on September 2nd 1988. Late spring sightings involved two on June 15th and singles on June 21st and July 12th.

In autumn, birds were recorded most days in August after the first on the 7th; there were three daily counts of ten (8th, 12th and 14th). Singles were seen on five dates in September, the last on the 25th.

TURNSTONE *Arenaria interpres*

Common winter, spring and autumn migrant

Present in all months of the year, but few records in June or the first half of July. There were just six counts of 100 or more, the best being 125 on October 30th.

POMARINE SKUA *Stercorarius pomarinus*

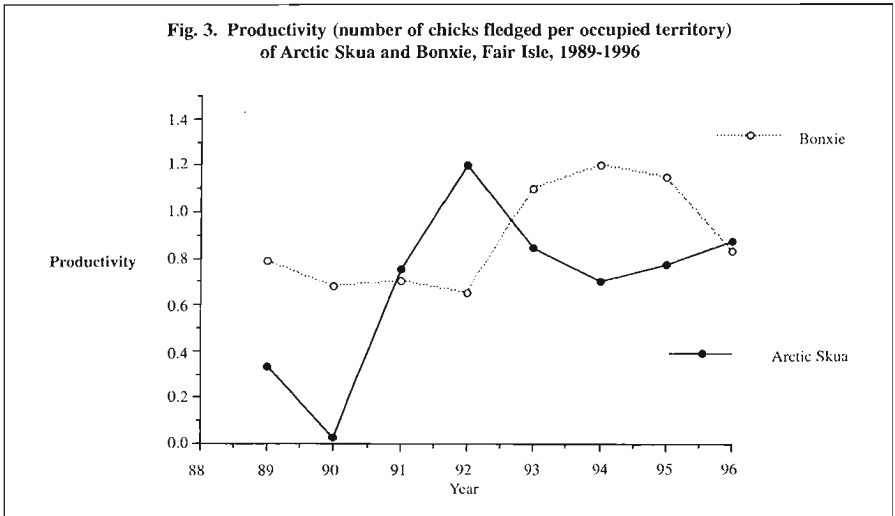
Scarce spring and autumn migrant

A juvenile was observed chasing Kittiwakes off Bunness on November 2nd.

ARCTIC SKUA *Stercorarius parasiticus*

Summer visitor, breeds in small numbers. Frequent passage migrant

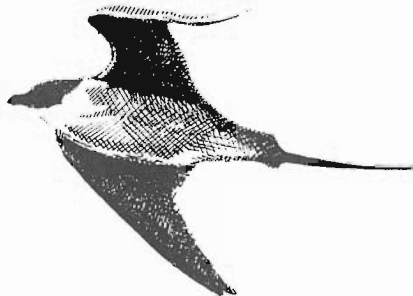
The first sighting of the year was on April 15th, with ten by the 17th. The breeding population remained approximately stable, with 86 occupied territories recorded (one less than in 1995). Breeding success was above average, with about 0.88 chicks fledged per territory (see Fig. 3).



LONG-TAILED SKUA *Stercorarius longicaudus*

Rare migrant, spring, summer and autumn

A sub-adult, probably a second-summer, was seen flying south over Double Dyke on July 5th, then relocated that evening at the airstrip. The first record from the island since 1991.



LONG-TAILED SKUA

Steve Votier

GREAT SKUA *Stercorarius skua*

Summer visitor, breeds in moderate numbers. Frequent passage migrant

The first arrivals were at the end of March, the first on the 28th, with daily sightings thereafter. The last record in autumn was on November 8th.

The breeding population declined slightly from last year, although the count of 120 occupied territories was still the second-highest on record. Breeding success was slightly below the recent average, with 0.83 chicks fledged per territory (see Fig. 3). An analysis of over 600 pellets from breeding territories revealed that fish and bird components of diet were roughly equal (at 47% each), with 5% of diet being rabbit.

BLACK-HEADED GULL *Larus ridibundus*

Frequent spring and autumn migrant

There were irregular sightings of one to five during January-March, but spring passage brought daily sightings between mid-April and mid-June. The highest count was 50 on April 26th, with 40 remaining the following day. There were sporadic records through the mid-summer weeks, before autumn passage brought more-or-less daily sightings through August-October. Peak counts in autumn were 100 on August 5th, and 47 on August 9th.

COMMON GULL *Larus canus*

Summer visitor, breeds in small numbers. Also, common spring and autumn migrant, small numbers in winter

Small numbers were present throughout the winter months – mostly less than ten, though up to 15 in mid-January. Spring passage was heaviest from mid-April to early May, with four counts of 50 or more, including 70 on April 20th. Six pairs nested, and approximately six chicks fledged.

The main autumn passage was in August, with maxima of 300 on the 5th, 200 on the 7th and 470 on the 12th, with a late count of 300 on October 16th.

LESSER BLACK-BACKED GULL *Larus fuscus*

Summer visitor, breeds in small numbers. Also frequent spring and autumn migrant

Three on April 7th were the first of the year, and there were daily records from mid-April until the end of August. Sixteen on September 27th was the highest count of autumn migrants, and an adult on October 20th was the last of the year.

HERRING GULL *Larus argentatus*

Resident, breeds in moderate numbers. Also hard-weather migrant, autumn and winter

Present all year, with several counts of 1000 or more storm-blown birds in autumn.

A huge arrival in a NNE gale on December 4th produced a new record count for the island, with approximately 13000, mostly adults (exceeding the previous record of 10000 in mid-November 1970).

ICELAND GULL *Larus glaucooides*

Scarce migrant, winter and spring

There were just three records in 1996: an adult on March 18th, a first-summer between May 4th-8th, and an immature on November 30th.

GLAUCOUS GULL *Larus hyperboreus*

Regular migrant in spring, late autumn and winter

There were four records in the first half of the year: an immature on January 1st, single adults on February 20th and March 31st, and a first summer from May 31st-June 2nd.

Records were more frequent in late autumn/winter, with singles on 15 dates between October 13th and the end of the year. Two were seen on November 25th and December 7th, and nine on December 4th (four adults, 5 immatures) with a large arrival of Herring Gulls.

GREAT BLACK-BACKED GULL *Larus marinus*

Resident, breeds in moderate numbers. Also hard-weather migrant, autumn and winter

Present throughout the year. A ringing trip to Sheep Rock in late June reported a substantial decrease in nesting pairs, apparently driven out by Fulmars.

The highest counts of storm-blown birds were c. 2000 on December 4th, and c. 1000 on December 7th.

KITTIWAKE *Rissa tridactyla*

Summer visitor, breeds in large numbers. Common autumn passage migrant

Survival over the 1995-96 winter was high, with 86% of colour-ringed individuals returning to nesting ledges on Goorn. Numbers at monitoring plots remained stable in 1996, but enjoyed high breeding success; an average of 1.23 chicks fledged per site is the second highest recorded since seabird monitoring began.

SANDWICH TERN *Sterna sandvicensis*

Scarce summer migrant

Singles were seen on five dates between June 24th and July 18th.

ROSEATE TERN *Sterna dougallii*

Vagrant; one previous record

An adult in worn plumage was discovered in the main Arctic Tern colony at

Tarryfield on July 24th and remained until the 26th. This is the second record for Fair Isle following the first on 12 May 1988; after review, one on 10 June 1993 (published in the 1993 report) was considered not acceptable by Scottish Birds Records Committee.

COMMON TERN *Sterna hirundo*

Summer visitor, breeds in small numbers

Regular records after the first, on May 11th, until mid-August. Five pairs bred this year, raising three or more chicks to fledging stage.

Common/Arctic Terns were seen on three dates in late September, the last being on the 29th.

ARCTIC TERN *Sterna paradisaea*

Summer visitor, breeds in large numbers

Two on April 27th were the first of the year, and there were daily records from May 5th. The population reached another all-time high in 1996, with an estimated 1250 pairs attempting to breed. Most of these were again at the Tarryfield colony, which has now spread north across the airstrip road onto Byerwall. Breeding success was good too, with 900+ chicks fledging. Detailed observations on feeding behaviour revealed that 94% of identified prey items were sandeels. Food was delivered to broods at an average of 1.54 items per hour (range 0.67-3.56), the rate being higher for broods of two (1.99) than for broods of one (1.04).

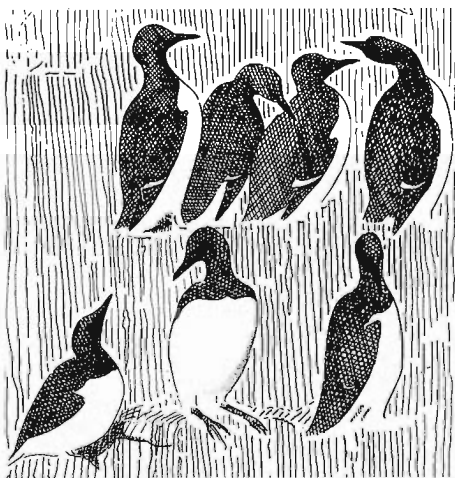
The last confirmed sighting was two on September 17th (but see above for records of Common or Arctic Terns in late September).

GUILLEMOT *Uria aalge*

Summer visitor, breeds in large numbers. Common autumn passage migrant

Numbers at monitoring plots remained stable from 1995. Breeding success was good, with 0.75 chicks per active site fledging, and larger than usual numbers of chicks ringed.

Passage of large auks was recorded regularly during autumn seawatches; the count of 285 in one hour off Bunness on September 23rd was the highest, and at least 75% of these were identified as Guillemots.



GUILLEMOTS

Steve Votier

RAZORBILL *Alca torda*

Summer visitor, breeds in large numbers

Breeding success at Easter Lother was estimated at 0.72 chicks fledged per egg laid: like Guillemot, one of the best years on record since seabird monitoring began.

Most breeders had departed from inshore waters by early August, although sea-watching produced occasional records during autumn and winter.

BLACK GUILLEMOT *Cephus grylle*

Resident, breeds in moderate numbers

Counts of adults in summer plumage in late April suggested the breeding population remained stable in 1996. Breeding success was poor again this year however, with just 17 chicks fledging from 30 monitored sites.

LITTLE AUK *Alle alle*

Frequent late autumn/winter visitor

Three on January 1st were the only records during the first part of the year. Sightings were regular in late October and November, with 29 in 1¼ hours on October 29th and 20 in 1½ hours on November 3rd being the best counts. Occasional sightings continued throughout December.

PUFFIN *Fratercula arctica*

Summer visitor, breeds in large numbers

Over-winter survival was high, with 94% of colour-ringed breeders returning to Roskilie. Breeding success was good, with 0.80 chicks per occupied burrow fledging from Greenholm and Easter Lother. As usual sandeels were the predominant diet component (88%), and the average load weights of samples was high, just over 10g.

ROCK DOVE *Columba livia*

Resident, breeds in small numbers. Frequent spring and autumn migrant

Present throughout the year. The highest counts recorded were 50 on January 31st and 70 on October 23rd.

STOCK DOVE *Columba oenas*

Scarce spring and autumn migrant

In spring, one on March 10th, and in autumn, two on October 24th.

WOODPIGEON *Columba palumbus*

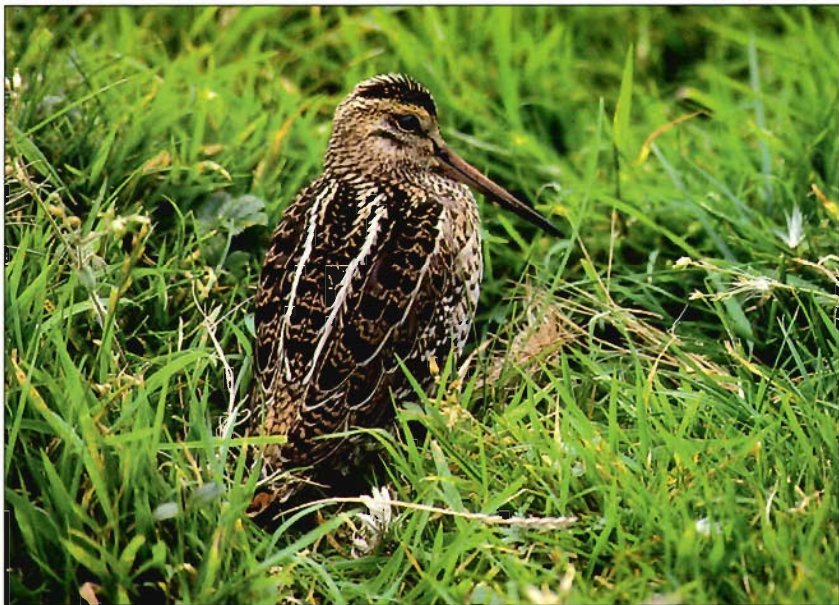
Frequent spring and autumn migrant

In spring, regular sightings from March 21st-June 20th. Most were low single-figure counts, with maxima of nine on April 22nd and eight two days later. By



KILLER WHALES, June 5th

Steve Votier



GREAT SNIPE, September 20th

Dennis Coutts



PECHORA PIPIT, September 20th

Steve Votier



ARCTIC WARBLER, September 8th

Steve Votier



PADDYFIELD WARBLER, September 21st

Roger Riddington



BLYTH'S REED WARBLER, June 12th

Roger Riddington



ICTERINE WARBLER, September 15th

Steve Votier



CHIFFCHAFF (P. c. tristis), December 20th

Roger Riddington

comparison, autumn passage was very poor, with only singles on eight dates between October 13th and November 5th, plus three on October 25th.

COLLARED DOVE *Streptopelia decaocto*

Frequent spring migrant, less common in autumn

Spring passage brought near-daily sightings from April 19th onwards, with a peak of ten on May 30th. Sightings continued throughout July, to mid-August, involving a few long-staying individuals, part of a group of nine recorded on July 3rd-6th. The only record during the rest of the autumn was one on October 20th.

TURTLE DOVE *Streptopelia turtur*

Regular spring and autumn migrant

After one on May 11th, there were almost daily records of one to four from May 21st to June 17th, with six on June 1st being the peak count. One was recorded in mid-summer on July 2nd, whilst in autumn there were singles on August 8th and September 7th.

CUCKOO *Cuculus canorus*

Regular spring migrant, scarce in autumn

In spring, one to three were seen most days from May 18th until June 12th, with a late one on June 30th. In autumn, sightings were confined to August, with one or two on five dates between the 13th and 31st.

LONG-EARED OWL *Asio otus*

Regular autumn migrant, scarce in spring

There were scattered records through the year before the main autumn passage, with singles on January 6th, March 22nd, April 21st, April 26th-28th, June 11th and July 24th.

The autumn was marked by two distinct influxes: October 24th-November 10th, with singles most days but five on October 26th, then November 23rd through to mid-December, when three or four were seen most days and ringing totals showed that at least seven birds were involved.

SHORT-EARED OWL *Asio flammeus*

Regular spring and autumn migrant

In spring, one on March 18th preceded a period from April 16th-May 25th when one or two were seen on 16 dates. One was also seen on June 14th.

In autumn, there was one on September 19th, one between September 24th-29th, then sightings most days from October 14th-26th, including four on the 19th and five on the 25th.

NIGHTJAR *Caprimulgus europaeus*

Vagrant; 21 previous records

One was found dead on Eas Brecks in late July during routine skua monitoring. Although not fresh, it was certainly not more than a few weeks old.

SWIFT *Apus apus*

Frequent spring, summer and autumn migrant

In spring, there were virtually daily records from May 18th-June 16th, with counts of 30 on May 20th-21st, 25 on May 22nd and 25th and 20 on May 26th. After that, there were sightings on 11 dates in July and three in August, when 11 on July 16th was the best count.

HOOPOE *Upupa epops*

Vagrant; at least 32 previous records

On September 25th, one was found on the Rippack, and seen subsequently in the Da Water-Taing area. This was only the second record since 1988.

WRYNECK *Jynx torquilla*

Regular spring and autumn migrant

In spring, there were sightings of one to three on eight dates from May 8th-21st, believed to have involved about nine individuals.

Autumn records comprised sightings of one to three on most days between August 23rd and September 9th (involving about eight or nine individuals) and one on September 17th.

SHORT-TOED LARK *Calandrella brachydactyla*

Scarce spring and autumn migrant

In spring, one was observed west of Skerryholm on April 29th. In autumn, there were daily sightings of one to three from September 19th to October 7th, involving possibly four individuals.

SKYLARK *Alauda arvensis*

Summer visitor, breeds in small numbers. Also common spring/autumn migrant, small numbers over-winter

Present throughout the year, with rarely more than 20 counted in the winter months. The main spring passage was from early March to mid-April, with seven counts of 200 or more and maxima of 340 on March 8th and 300 on April 13th.

Autumn passage was heaviest in late September and October: there were again seven counts of 200 or more, with 270 on October 13th the highest.

SAND MARTIN *Riparia riparia*

Regular spring migrant, less common in autumn

One to five were recorded intermittently in spring, from April 20th-June 7th, with a count of 12 on April 26th. There were singles on three dates in autumn: August 26th and September 25th-26th.

SWALLOW *Hirundo rustica*

Common spring and autumn migrant; occasionally breeds

One on April 12th was the first of the year, and there were virtually daily sightings from April 17th until mid-June. Counts of 50 or more included: 50 on May 24th, 60 on May 30th, then daily counts of 50+ June 2nd-7th, peaking at 100 on the 6th.

Single figure records continued most days through the summer, and a pair attempted to nest in the vicinity of Utra. A juvenile on August 7th may have fledged on the island. Sightings continued most days through September and, less regularly, to October 25th. The peak autumn count was 20 on August 26th.

HOUSE MARTIN *Delichon urbica*

Frequent spring migrant, uncommon in autumn. Has bred

One to five were seen most days during April 24th-May 9th, but after five on the 19th, there was an influx of 70 on May 20th, and 40-45 on May 21st-22nd and 24th. Numbers were typically good in the first ten days of June, with 12-35 daily and 50 on the 4th. The last spring record was on June 20th.

A mid-summer record of two on July 16th preceded a poor autumn with only one or two on four dates, between September 7th-21st.

RICHARD'S PIPIT *Anthus novaeseelandiae*

Scarce autumn migrant

Daily records of one to four from September 17th to October 1st probably involved at least five individuals. During the rest of October, there were singles on the 7th, and 17th-19th, then daily sightings of three to five on the 22nd-26th, two staying to the 28th and one to November 1st. An estimated 12 individuals were recorded this autumn; one of the best year's on record.

TREE PIPIT *Anthus trivialis*

Frequent spring and autumn migrant

Spring passage occurred from April 22nd to June 13th. Day counts were all in single figures until May 18th, when at least 175, possibly as many as 200, were logged; many of these were passing north in small flocks. Counts in excess of 100 (including 150 on the 20th) were recorded for the next four days, with some

turnover of individuals. Numbers steadily dwindled in late May and early June, although three were still 30 on June 2nd.

Autumn was undistinguished by comparison, with a remarkable absence of records in August. In September, one on the 15th heralded virtually daily sightings until October 14th, with a maximum count of 15 on September 22nd-24th.

PECHORA PIPIT *Anthus gustavi*

Rare autumn migrant

A confiding individual was discovered at the top of Wirvie Burn on September 19th, and remained here until the 21st. Recorded for the sixth year in a row.

Accepted by BBRC

MEADOW PIPIT *Anthus pratensis*

Summer visitor, breeds in small numbers. Common spring and autumn migrant

Recorded sporadically in single-figure numbers during March, with 30 on the 31st, a prelude to the main spring passage during April. Counts peaked during mid-April, with 300 on the 15th and 250 on the 17th and 19th. Small numbers of migrants were noted throughout May, in addition to local breeders, although there were 165 such 'extras' on May 14th. No census of the breeding population was attempted.

In autumn, migrants were counted daily from late August through to early November. The following counts represent the more obvious arrivals: 475 on August 30th, with 350 on the 31st; 400 on September 3rd, with 350 on the 4th; 350 on September 29th, rising to 700 on the 30th and 750 on October 1st. Numbers remained high (300+) throughout the first week of October, with a second peak of 525 on the 4th. Single figure numbers were recorded most days during November and sporadically during December.

ROCK PIPIT *Anthus petrosus*

Resident, breeds in small numbers. Also frequent spring and autumn migrant

Present throughout the year. No whole-island counts were made this year.

Individuals showing characters associated with the Scandinavian race, *A. p. littoralis*, were recorded as follows: one at Easter Lothar from April 19th-May 8th and possibly to May 19th, with other singles on April 16th-19th and May 29th.

YELLOW WAGTAIL *Motacilla flava*

Regular spring and autumn migrant

Singles on May 11th and 17th preceded an exceptional influx from May 18th-25th. Daily counts were not less than 15 during this period, and peaked at 35 on the 21st. The previous highest count was just 15 in May 1971! During this eight-day period, the predominance of some stunning Grey-headed Wagtails (*M. f. thunbergi*) was

one of the spring highlights. Of 141 individuals ascribed to race, 126 (89%) were *M. f. thunbergi* (with a peak of 25 on the 21st), eight (6%) were Blue-headed Wagtails (*M. f. flava*) and seven (5%) were Yellow Wagtails (*M. f. flavissima*).

Few migrants were seen in June, but a pair of Grey-headed Wagtails remained through the summer and nested successfully on Wirvie brecks. Four chicks hatched and all apparently fledged on approximately July 17th after a very short time in the nest. Sightings of juveniles were regular during August, though never more than two. Two were last seen on August 26th, with possibly one on September 2nd. This is the second breeding attempt of the species on Fair Isle (following one in 1981), and the first of the race *M. f. thunbergi*.

Sightings of one to two in autumn until September 19th may relate to breeding birds. A late record was one seen on October 28th-30th.

CITRINE WAGTAIL *Motacilla citreola*

Rare autumn migrant

On April 26th, Fair Isle's first spring Citrine Wagtail was found at Golden Water – a smart first-summer male. It remained until the afternoon, and was also seen at nearby Easter Lother water.

In autumn, a juvenile was seen from August 16th-25th at least, at a number of locations around the island. This is now the earliest record for the island (ahead of one on August 17th, 1995).

Both accepted by BBRC

GREY WAGTAIL *Motacilla cinerea*

Scarce spring and autumn migrant; has bred

Spring records comprised the following: in March, singles on 23rd-25th and 28th; one on May 23rd, and one on June 23rd. In autumn, one on September 29th, then singles on five dates between October 19th and 28th (probably involving just two individuals).

PIED WAGTAIL *Motacilla alba*

Frequent spring and autumn migrant; occasional breeder

Recorded sporadically during March from the 10th, with most records of *M. a. yarelli* (Pied Wagtail); there was one record of *M. a. alba* (White Wagtail), on the 24th. Pied Wagtails were recorded virtually daily from early April to mid-June, White Wagtails from mid-April to the end of May. Peak counts were 13 Pieds on April 13th and 12 Whites on May 18th; the combined count peaked at 30 on May 18th. At least three pairs of Pied Wagtails nested successfully during the summer.

Most individuals in autumn were not assigned to race. Counts peaked in August, with 80 on the 14th, 70 on the 17th and 65 on the 29th. Records continued most days through September and October, with the last on October 30th.

WAXWING *Bombycilla garrulus*

Scarce/irruptive autumn migrant

With a massive invasion into Britain during the early part of 1996, it was not surprising that a few were seen on Fair Isle, although the lack of a suitable food source does not encourage birds to remain long. In the early part of the year, one or two were seen on five dates in January and February, with five noted on January 21st. Later on, returning spring birds included two near South Light on April 22nd, and a first-summer female trapped at the Plantation on May 14th, and present the following day.

DIPPER *Cinclus cinclus*

Vagrant; 22 previous records

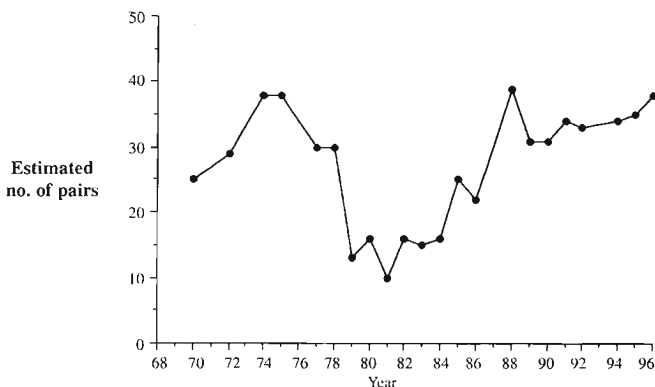
One seen flying over the North Grind on March 22nd spent the following day on the Gilly Burn at Hjukni Geo. It was assigned to the nominate race *C. c. cinclus* (Black-bellied Dipper). This is only the second record since 1986, after one in 1993.

WREN *Troglodytes troglodytes*

Resident, breeds in small numbers. Also scarce spring and autumn migrant (status unclear)

Present throughout the year. The breeding population was censused by counts of singing males. Between 35 and 40 pairs were recorded (probably closer to 40), similar to the 1995 total (see Fig. 4). The population seems to have easily withstood the cold 1995-96 winter, and remains at a high level. There were no confirmed records of migrant Wrens in 1996.

Fig. 4. Estimated number of pairs of breeding Wrens, Fair Isle, 1970-96



DUNNOCK *Prunella modularis*

Frequent spring and autumn migrant. Has bred

There were intermittent records in spring from March 4th to June 4th. The highest count was five on April 15th.

Autumn migrants were recorded from September 18th until November 10th, in greater numbers than for some years. Fifteen on September 18th increased to 40 the following day, and day counts of around 20 were recorded most days until the 28th. A second arrival occurred in mid-October, with 40 on the 16th, followed by counts of 20-30 on most days until the 26th.

ROBIN *Erithacus rubecula*

Frequent spring and autumn migrant

In spring, small numbers occurred most days between March 8th and May 27th, numbers being greatest in mid-April, and peaking at 18 on the 15th.

In autumn, recorded from September 18th, with two main arrival periods: late September (20 on the 23rd, increasing to 30 on the 25th) and mid-October (20 on the 14th, increasing to 60 on the 16th, with a smaller arrival on the 20th when 40 were counted). Up to four remained throughout November and December.

THRUSH NIGHTINGALE *Luscinia luscinia*

Rare spring migrant, vagrant in autumn

One was trapped at the Plantation on May 20th, and another was present between May 23rd and June 1st, ranging from Lower Stoneybreck to Lower Leogh (trapped on the 24th).

Both accepted by BBRC

NIGHTINGALE *Luscinia megarhynchos*

Rare spring migrant, vagrant in autumn

One spent the afternoon at Lower Station on May 24th.

BLUETHROAT *Luscinia svecica*

Regular spring and autumn migrant

Two on May 10th and 12th preceded daily counts from May 18th-27th. Numbers peaked at only five on the 21st, with approximately 15 individuals involved. A late spring/summer record concerned a female on July 3rd. See Fig. 5.

In autumn, one occurred on September 7th-8th, one to three daily between September 15th-27th, one between October 7th-9th and one or two between October 18th-25th giving a total of approximately eight individuals.

Fig. 5. Maximum daily count of Bluethroats in spring, Fair Isle, 1967-96

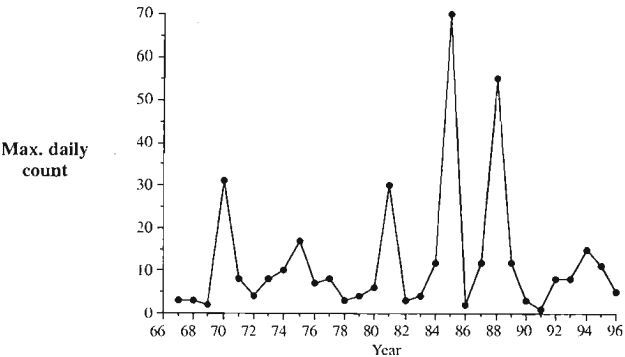


Fig. 6. Maximum daily count of Redstarts in spring, Fair Isle, 1967-96

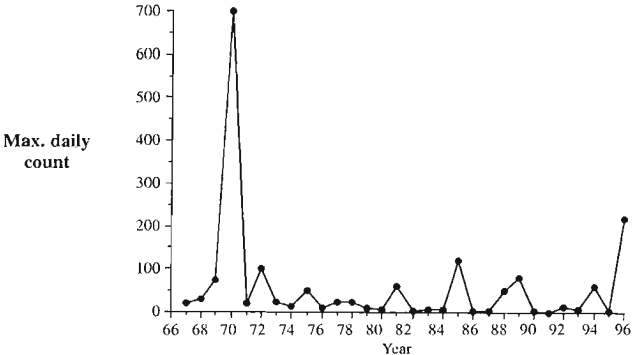
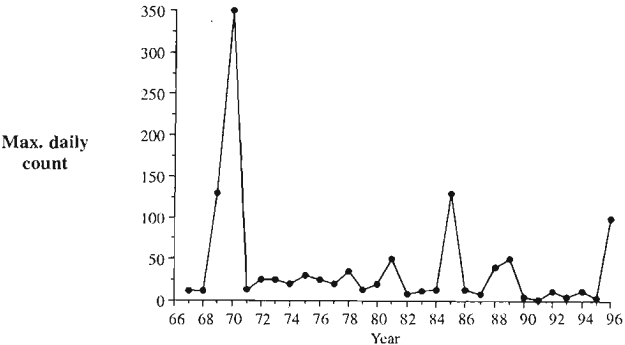


Fig. 7. Maximum daily count of Whinchats in spring, Fair Isle, 1967-96



BLACK REDSTART *Phoenicurus ochruros*

Regular spring migrant, scarce in autumn

In spring, one to three were recorded intermittently from April 22nd to May 25th, with one later on, on July 16th.

In autumn, one or two were reported between September 22nd and 27th, but most records came from the end of October: one to four were seen most days between October 16th and November 1st, with seven on the 16th and five on the 19th.

REDSTART *Phoenicurus phoenicurus*

Frequent spring and autumn migrant

Sporadic records of one to three from April 23rd to May 17th preceded a large arrival on May 18th, with 150 logged. Arrivals continued over the next few days; 150 were again recorded on the 19th before counts increased to 200 on the 20th then 220 on the 21st, the third-largest spring influx on Fair Isle since records began (see Fig. 6). Numbers gradually decreased as June approached, but still with 140 on the 22nd and 120 on the 24th. The species was recorded daily until June 11th, and the last spring record was a female on June 28th.

Autumn records occurred between August 24th and October 23rd, with a concentration in late September, when records were daily, and peaked at 25 on September 23rd.

WHINCHAT *Saxicola rubetra*

Frequent spring and autumn migrant

Spring followed a similar pattern to that of Redstart: sporadic singles occurred from late April (the first on the 24th) until May 17th, followed by a large influx on May 18th, with daily counts of 75 on May 18th-20th and a peak count of 100 on May 21st. Numbers remained high until the 25th, with 35-65 logged daily, then dwindled until the last on June 10th. See Fig. 7.

Autumn counts were more modest, but records were virtually daily from August 7th to October 23rd, the highest numbers in late August with a peak of 20 on the 24th.

STONECHAT *Saxicola torquata*

Scarce spring and autumn migrant

In March, there were two males on the 10th, another on the 23rd, two females on the 24th, and single females on the 25th and 29th. April records included a very bright-plumaged male on the 13th-21st, and a female on the 22nd-27th. The last record of a better-than-average spring was a female on May 23rd-24th. There were no autumn records. All the above refer to individuals of one of the western races, *S. t. rubicola/hibernans*, apart from the male on April 13th-21st, which was left undetermined.

NORTHERN WHEATEAR *Oenanthe oenanthe*

Summer visitor, breeds in small/moderate numbers. Also common spring and autumn migrant

An early male was seen on March 24th, but sightings were not daily until mid-April. Numbers were highest in May with eleven counts of 200 or more, including 600 on the 20th (with 500 on the 21st) and 300 on the 24th. In autumn, numbers were highest at the end of August, with an estimate of 400 on the 22nd and 300+ on three dates. 200 on September 29th was the only notable count in the late autumn, and the last was seen on October 29th.

RING OUZEL *Turdus torquatus*

Frequent spring and autumn migrant

In spring, there were occasional records of one or two from April 12th to June 4th, except for a spell of daily records from May 18th-26th, peaking at ten on the 20th.

In autumn, one to three occurred most days in late September (from the 21st), then near-daily records between October 13th-28th, nine on the 13th being the highest count.

BLACKBIRD *Turdus merula*

Common spring and autumn migrant. Has bred, small numbers over-winter

Up to 30 were counted during the mid-winter months, with 35 on January 5th. Spring migrants were recorded from mid-March, but counts were generally poor, and in fact the largest numbers occurred in March: 55 on the 19th and 45 on the 30th. The last of the spring was on June 11th, although there were midsummer records on July 18th-19th.

Autumn brought occasional single-figure records from late September, with the main passage in late October. There were 11 days in October with counts in excess of 100, with a peak of 450 on the 23rd.

FIELDFARE *Turdus pilaris*

Common spring and autumn migrant, often over-winters

An exceptional influx in early January was recorded throughout the Northern Isles. The peak count on Fair Isle was estimated conservatively at 1500 on the 5th; by far the highest-ever in mid-winter (the previous best was just 250). Up to 250 remained on the island for the first three weeks of the New Year. Spring migration was poor by comparison, with 200 on April 18th being the only notable count. A late spring/summer record involved one on July 1st-2nd.

An early autumn migrant arrived on August 6th, but records were daily for a time at the end of September, and again in mid/late October. It was during the latter period that the only sizeable numbers occurred, with 300 on the 16th, 650 on the 23rd and 330 still present on the 24th. Recorded occasionally throughout November and December, with rarely more than five.

SONG THRUSH *Turdus philomelos*

Common spring and autumn migrant; has bred

Recorded in small numbers from March 8th to June 13th, with a maximum count of just 20 on May 20th-21st. One was seen in summer on July 10th-18th.

Occasional records from August 28th preceded the main autumn passage from mid-September to the end of October. The highest counts were 400 on September 23rd and 300 on October 16th. Sightings occurred on four dates in November, the last being on the 26th.

REDWING *Turdus iliacus*

Common spring and autumn migrant. Has bred and sometimes over-winters

Smaller numbers of Redwings accompanied the influx of Fieldfares in early January, with a peak count of 400 on the 5th, and four other counts of 100 or more in that month. Like Fieldfare, these are the highest mid-winter counts on record (previous best just 75). Spring migrants were recorded in small numbers most days from mid March until early June, with 125 on April 17th-18th the highest count.

One or two were seen in early September before daily counts from mid-month until early November. There were three arrivals of more than a thousand in October: 4000 on the 11th, with still 2750 on the 12th; 2000 on the 16th and 1500 on the 23rd. Counts of 90-100 were made in early November, but 10-30 was the typical daily total from then until the year's end.

MISTLE THRUSH *Turdus viscivorus*

Scarce spring and autumn migrant

Singles were recorded on fifteen dates during February (from the 2nd) and the first half of March, although probably only two or three individuals were involved. However, an exceptional influx occurred in mid-March. Nine on the 19th increased to 16 on the 20th. Counts were lower on the 21st-22nd before a new arrival on the 23rd, with the count numbering 20, 13 of which were still present the following day. This is the second-highest spring count for the island, following 23 on April 4th 1987. One or two were seen on ten dates after the 24th, until the last record of the spring on May 24th.

There were sightings on three dates in autumn: between October 24th and November 1st, with four on October 26th.

PALLAS'S GRASSHOPPER WARBLER *Locustella certhiola*

Vagrant, autumn; nine previous records

One found in the tiny roadside ditch at Quoy on September 17th remained there for the rest of the day.

Accepted by BBRC

LANCEOLATED WARBLER *Locustella lanceolata*

Rare autumn migrant

One was trapped in Meadow Burn on September 13th. A welcome return: the blank year in 1995 was the first since 1983.

Accepted by BBRC

GRASSHOPPER WARBLER *Locustella naevia*

Regular spring and autumn migrant

Two on April 22nd were the first of the year, and singles were seen most days up to the 28th. Other spring records included singles on May 19th-20th and June 11th.

In autumn, one was seen between August 11th-14th, two on August 25th, one on September 7th, then good run in late September, with two or three individuals seen between the 24th and 29th.

SAVI'S WARBLER *Locustella luscinioides*

Vagrant; four previous records (five individuals)

One at Skerryholm/Haa on May 24th remained until May 31st. The fifth record for Fair Isle, the last was in 1993.

SEDGE WARBLER *Acrocephalus schoenobaenus*

Regular spring migrant, less common in autumn

An excellent spring passage. A lone migrant on April 21st preceded a spell with daily counts of up to 12 birds, from May 18th-June 12th. Peak counts were 12 on May 19th and 11 on June 6th.

In autumn, one or two during August 25th-28th, then up to eight seen virtually daily from September 17th to 27th.

PADDYFIELD WARBLER *Acrocephalus agricola*

Vagrant; 11 previous records

One at Skerryholm on September 19th maintained the annual appearance of this species since 1992. This individual was observed to be ringed; it proved to be a first-winter, ringed in Lithuania on September 8th 1996. This must rate as one of the best ringing recoveries during the Observatory's history: the first international recovery involving a Paddyfield Warbler in Britain, and a clue to the migration routes of autumn vagrants to Britain. See *Birding World*, 1996 (9) 388-389 for more details. An interesting footnote to this record is the sighting of a ringed Paddyfield Warbler on Fetlar, Shetland, on October 1st. The 12th record for Fair Isle.

Accepted by BBRC

BLYTH'S REED WARBLER *Acrocephalus dumetorum*

Vagrant; eight or nine previous records

In a remarkable year, there were three records. In spring, one was discovered at the Plantation on June 4th, and remained until the 6th. A second spring individual on June 11th-13th was discovered in the Gully, and was well watched here and at the Plantation. Finally, in autumn, one was found in Homisdale on September 24th. All three were trapped, so that sight identifications could be confirmed (by in-the-hand criteria). With these three, the number of island records increases to 11 or 12, though there have been only two others in the past 50 years. See Birding World, 1996 (9) 221-223 for more details.

All accepted by BBRC

MARSH WARBLER *Acrocephalus palustris*

Scarce spring migrant, rare in autumn

Records occurred on several dates between June 3rd (when there were two) and June 15th, involving five or six individuals in total.

REED WARBLER *Acrocephalus scirpaceus*

Scarce spring migrant, regular in autumn

One on June 3rd was the sole spring record.

In autumn, singles were reported on several days in mid-August (from the 12th), with higher numbers in the last week of the month, and ten logged during 24th-25th. Most records in September came during the last third of the month, with daily records of one to four; the last of the year was one on the 30th.

GREAT REED WARBLER *Acrocephalus arundinaceus*

Vagrant; ten previous records

Recorded for the second year in succession, a very approachable individual was seen in Field Ditch and Charlie's Trees on May 20th. The earliest record for the island.

Accepted by BBRC

BOOTED WARBLER *Hippolais caligata*

Vagrant; nine previous records

One found at North Shirva on the evening of August 22nd stayed until the 24th. Most previous records of Booted Warbler on Fair Isle have occurred in late August/early September.

Accepted by BBRC

ICTERINE WARBLER *Hippolais icterina*

Scarce spring and autumn migrant

There were two spring records, on May 18th and June 7th-8th. Autumn provided a

slightly better showing with two on August 15th (one remaining to the 16th) and singles on August 21st, September 5th, 15th and 16th-18th.

MELODIOUS WARBLER *Hippolais polyglotta*

Vagrant; 11 previous records

One was seen at North Haven during the afternoon of August 20th. The 12th record for the island, the last one being in 1992.

SUBALPINE WARBLER *Sylvia cantillans*

Rare spring migrant

May 24th provided the only records of the year in 1996: a male at Midway and a female at the Kiln o' Skroo.

Accepted by BBRC

BARRED WARBLER *Sylvia nisoria*

Regular autumn migrant

Sightings were reported virtually daily from August 16th to September 27th. Peak counts were five on August 25th and September 16th, with six on September 5th-6th. Approximately 22 individuals were involved.

LESSER WHITETHROAT *Sylvia curruca*

Frequent spring and autumn migrant

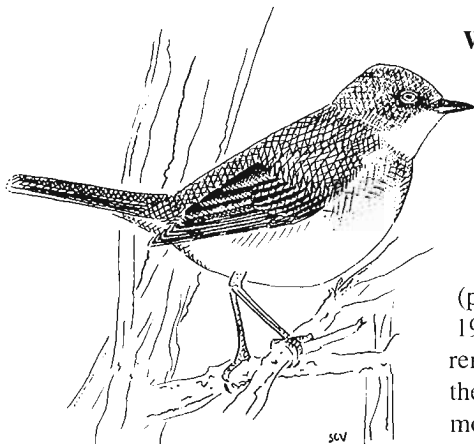
Spring passage was unexceptional, with counts of one to five individuals most days between May 19th and June 10th, and a late straggler on June 26th.

Autumn brought similar numbers, though the passage season was more protracted: one to five were seen between August 24th and September 27th. Late in the season, singles were seen on October 10th and 28th.

WHITETHROAT *Sylvia communis*

Frequent spring migrant, less common in autumn

A record-breaking spring; after one on May 8th-13th, 75 were counted on May 18th, the most ever recorded on Fair Isle (previous best was 60 on May 16th 1960 and May 25th 1967). 70 remained on the 19th, then 15-30 for the next eight days. Daily records, mostly in single figures, continued



WHITETHROAT

Steve Votier

until June 14th, with two late spring records, on June 21st and July 5th.
In autumn, just one or two on 13 dates between August 22nd and September 29th.

GARDEN WARBLER *Sylvia borin*

Frequent spring and autumn migrant

Spring records showed a similar pattern to that of Whitethroats, except with rather lower numbers. After one on May 18th, there were 25 on May 19th-20th, and 20 on the 21st and the 24th. Single-figure numbers were then the norm until the last of the spring on June 10th.

In autumn, the species was recorded virtually daily between August 11th and September 29th; most counts being less than 10, but 30 on August 24th-25th and 20 on August 29th. Two were seen on October 1st, and singles on four more dates in that month, the last being on the 19th.

BLACKCAP *Sylvia atricapilla*

Frequent spring and autumn migrant

During a protracted spring passage, sightings were reported between April 18th and July 1st. Numbers rarely exceeded five, except for the period May 18th-26th, when there were five counts in double figures; 15 on May 20th-21st being the highest.

In autumn, the species was present on an almost daily basis from mid-September to late October. Peak numbers were during September 19th-23rd (with 25-30 each day) and in mid-October (with 50 on the 16th and 20-30 for three subsequent days). Three on November 11th were the last records of the year.

ARCTIC WARBLER *Phylloscopus borealis*

Rare autumn migrant

One at Springfield on September 8th, a typical data for this species on Fair Isle.

Accepted by BBRC

YELLOW-BROWED WARBLER *Phylloscopus inornatus*

Regular autumn migrant

Four on September 15th were the first of the year, and heralded a spell of daily sightings that lasted until the 29th, and involved at least nine individuals, probably more. The peak count was six on September 19th. There was just one record in October, of a single bird on the 25th.

WOOD WARBLER *Phylloscopus sibilatrix*

Regular spring and autumn migrant

In spring, three were seen on May 24th, with a single on the 25th. In autumn, one on August 13th, then records most days from August 28th until September 14th.

Day totals were mostly of one or two, but there were five on August 29th and three on August 30th-31st.

CHIFFCHAFF *Phylloscopus collybita*

Frequent spring and autumn migrant

In spring, there were records most days from April 8th to June 12th, with a late bird on June 27th. There were only two counts of more than five individuals: six on May 6th and eight on May 13th. One bird of the race *P. c. tristis* was trapped on May 22nd.

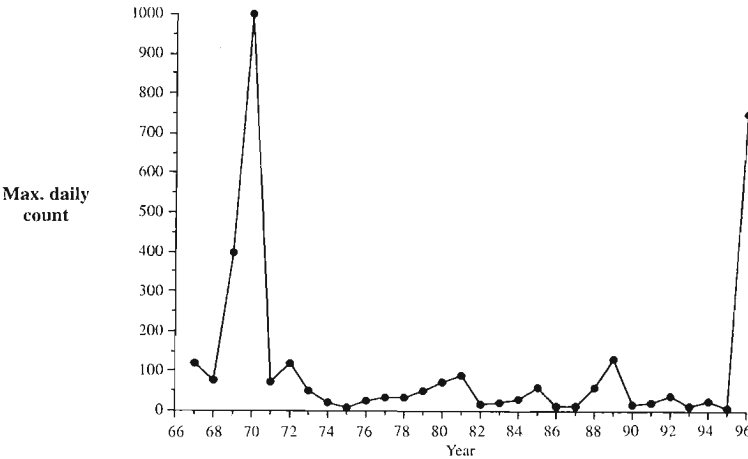
Autumn records occurred daily from September 19th to October 1st, with a peak of 15 on September 23rd. In October, one to three were seen most days in the latter half of the month. A late influx in mid-November involved six on the 13th and three on the 17th, whilst the last of the year was one on December 20th. Individuals of the race *P. c. tristis* were seen on October 26th, November 13th (when there were at least four), November 17th, and December 20th (trapped).

WILLOW WARBLER *Phylloscopus trochilus*

Frequent spring and autumn migrant

The first of the year arrived on April 14th, after which there were up to eight on most days until mid-May. The 'great fall' of May 18th brought massive numbers of Willow Warblers, with an estimated 750 that day. This count ranks as the second-highest for the island, after the 1,000 on May 8th-9th, 1970 (see Fig. 8). Numbers decreased the following day, to 300, but another marked influx on May 21st topped up the log total to 600. Between 250 and 350 remained on the Isle until

Fig. 8. Maximum daily count of Willow Warblers in spring, Fair Isle, 1967-96



the 25th. After that, numbers declined steadily, 25 on June 3rd being the highest count in that month. There was a late spring sighting on July 1st.

In autumn, recorded most days between August 7th and October 5th. The peak counts occurred at the end of August and in early September: 45 on August 29th and 35 on September 5th.

GOLDCREST *Regulus regulus*

Frequent spring and autumn migrant

In spring, there were small numbers in April, the first on the 10th, and the highest count of 15 on the 20th. Records were few and far between in May, with singles on just four dates, the last being on the 21st.

Autumn records occurred between September 17th and November 13th. There were few counts of more than ten: 30 on October 16th, and 20 on October 17th and 19th were the highest.

SPOTTED FLYCATCHER *Muscicapa striata*

Frequent spring and autumn migrant

After singles on May 11th-13th, the large arrival of passerines on May 18th contained few Spotted Flycatchers, with only ten logged. This increased to 20 by May 20th, and double figure counts continued until the 25th. Sightings of up to five were regular during the first half of June, the last being on the 27th.

In autumn, two on August 26th were the first but the majority of records occurred during September 18th-29th, reaching a peak of ten on the 23rd. Singles in October were seen on the 1st and 10th.

RED-BREASTED FLYCATCHER *Ficedula parva*

Scarce autumn migrant, rare in spring

One spring record, at Pund on May 26th. Autumn brought six records, each of single birds: September 18th-19th, 19th-22nd and 29th, then October 12th-13th, 20th and 24th.

PIED FLYCATCHER *Ficedula hypoleuca*

Frequent spring and autumn migrant

In early spring, there were single males on April 24th-26th and May 8th. The next record occurred on May 18th – when 125 were logged! This is the largest recorded spring count, exceeding 120 on May 9th 1970. Numbers remained high until May 25th, with some turnover of birds: there were only 40 recorded on the 20th, but 85 on the 21st. There were regular sightings until June 10th, then a late record of one on June 24th-26th.

Autumn numbers were lower, with mostly single figure counts from August 6th to September 26th. The two best periods of the autumn were at the end of August (with

a peak count of 12 on the 26th) and in mid-September, with 16 on the 15th increasing to 25 on the 17th. One on October 15th was the only record in that month.

GOLDEN ORIOLE *Oriolus oriolus*

Rare migrant, mostly spring

On June 3rd, one was seen flying south over Jimmy's Brae.

RED-BACKED SHRIKE *Lanius collurio*

Regular spring and autumn migrant

In spring, there were daily sightings at the end of May, between the 18th and 26th, reaching a peak of seven on the 24th. At least ten individuals were involved during this period. In June, there was a male on 7th-8th and a female on the 9th.

A single bird on August 13th was the first autumn record, and there were sightings most days from then until September 17th. The peak autumn count was five on August 26th. A long-staying individual extended the span of records in September, and possibly only eight individuals were recorded in early autumn. There was one late-season record, of a single at Gunnawark on October 16th.

GREAT GREY SHRIKE *Lanius excubitor*

Scarce spring and autumn migrant

An adult trapped at the Plantation on October 23rd was then seen near the Observatory on the 24th.

JACKDAW *Corvus monedula*

Scarce spring and autumn migrant

Four were seen on April 20th, one remaining to the 21st. The only other record was a single on May 24th.

ROOK *Corvus frugilegus*

Regular spring migrant, less common in autumn

One or two birds were seen most days from March 25th to April 8th. Sightings were more regular (daily) in the latter half of April, with counts of nine on the 20th, and 17 on the 27th. One or two were seen on five dates in May/June, the last on June 2nd.

Just one individual was recorded in the autumn, from October 28th-November 11th.

CROW *Corvus corone*

Hooded Crow (C. c. cornix) resident, breeds in small numbers; Carrion Crow (C. c. corone) frequent spring migrant, less common in autumn

Hooded Crows (*C. c. cornix*) were present all year. Three on May 7th were the only ones deemed to be migrants.

Carriion Crows (*C. c. corone*) were recorded as follows. In spring, one was seen on February 26th, but all others were between mid-April and early June. There were records most days, usually of less than five individuals, but also 15 on May 7th and eight May 22nd-24th. In autumn, singles were reported from September 13th-16th.

RAVEN *Corvus corax*

Resident, breeds in small numbers. Also regular spring and autumn migrant

Present all year. No census of the breeding population was undertaken. The only migrants recorded were eight moving south on April 20th.

STARLING *Sturnus vulgaris*

Resident, breeds in moderate numbers. Also common spring and autumn migrant

This year, a complete count of all Starling nests on the island was attempted, including those on the cliffs. The survey estimated an island population of 265 pairs. An early breeding season in 1996 was associated with a warm April, and high clutch sizes (mean clutch size was 4.7, the highest recorded since records began in 1980) were similarly associated with damp weather in late April, making more food available. Colder conditions from hatching reduced dramatically the number of chicks and their weights in early broods; in first broods the mean number of viable young per successful nest was only 2.6, with 15% of nests failing. However, late first broods did well and second broods were also productive in 1996.

There were few counts of flocks in spring or autumn, but 400 were noted on March 3rd and 6th.

HOUSE SPARROW *Passer domesticus*

Resident, breeds in small numbers

Present all year. Counts of birds in spring revealed 95 on April 24th, and 124 on May 6th, suggesting that the Island's breeding population may be of the order of 60 pairs.

CHAFFINCH *Fringilla coelebs*

Frequent spring and autumn migrant

Early in the year, there were singles on January 19th, March 3rd-7th and March 20th-30th. One or two were seen most days during April and May, the last on May 25th.

Numbers in autumn were an improvement on a poor spring, with daily counts from September 16th until the end of October. The main arrivals were 45 on September 27th, 35 on September 30th, 25 on October 16th and 31 on October 20th. Small numbers occurred in November, involving never more than five, with the last being on December 3rd.

BRAMBLING *Fringilla montifringilla*

Common spring and autumn migrant

There were sightings of one on three dates in January (possibly the same individual), then a male from March 8th-27th. Typically, spring passage was heaviest in late April, with six counts of 40 or more during the last ten days, and a maximum of 135 on the 25th. Sightings were daily throughout May, but small numbers only (mostly less than ten) were involved.

Most records in autumn were from late September to late October. The main movements were September 23rd-29th (60 on 23rd, building up to 125 on 26th), 90 on October 13th, then October 16th-25th (daily counts of 50 or more, peak 100 on 21st). Occasional stragglers were recorded in November, with a very late bird on December 19th.

GREENFINCH *Carduelis chloris*

Regular spring and autumn migrant

There were no spring records, but a good influx in late October, after the first of the year on October 11th. Records were daily from October 16th-26th, with counts of 18 on the 17th and 21st, and 23 on the 25th. In November, there were one or two on three dates, and a surprising mid-winter record, of a male on December 25th.

GOLDFINCH *Carduelis carduelis*

Rare spring and autumn migrant

Now almost expected as an annual visitor; 1996 was no exception. All records were in spring, with one on April 19th-20th, two on May 26th, plus singles seen on May 28th and June 1st, both of which may involve one of the birds first seen on May 26th.

SISKIN *Carduelis spinus*

Frequent autumn migrant, less common in spring

Spring sightings were reported on just seven dates between March 21st and June 16th, five on May 7th being the highest count.

In autumn, records were daily from September 16th until October 9th. The accuracy of overall counts was hampered greatly by several very mobile flocks, but the highest numbers were estimated to be 130-150 on September 27th-29th. After a count of 70 on October 1st, there were just small numbers (<20) for the rest of the month, the last being seen on October 25th.

LINNET *Carduelis cannabina*

Regular spring migrant, more scarce in autumn

In spring, there were daily records from April 15th until early May, with a peak count of seven on April 27th. One to three were seen intermittently in May and early June, the last on being June 9th.

Autumn records were typically less frequent: two on October 10th and one on October 20th-22nd.

TWITE *Carduelis flavirostris*

Summer visitor, breeds in small numbers. Common spring and autumn migrant, small numbers over-winter

Recorded throughout the year, but only in small numbers during the winter months (up to 15, January-March, and mid-November-December). Daily sightings in spring began in mid-April, but counts were generally low, averaging 30-35, with a peak of just 50 on May 8th. Counts were similarly unremarkable in autumn, with a maximum of 170 on September 10th.

REDPOLL *Carduelis flammea*

Frequent spring and autumn migrant

One to three were recorded occasionally during January and February. The first spring migrants began to appear in mid-March, with a male on the 20th. There were records most days in April and May, though in small numbers: only one count greater than seven, 15 on May 24th. Two on June 8th were the last of the spring. The vast majority of those birds assigned to a particular race in spring were nominate *C. f. flammea*. Singles of the Greenland/Iceland race, *C. f. rostrata/islandica*, were seen on April 20th-21st and 27th.

In autumn, there were records most days from September 23rd until November 27th, with counts of five or less being the norm. Ten on October 23rd was the maximum. Compared to the spring, there were many more records of *C. f. rostrata/islandica* (although a much greater proportion of birds were not assigned to race in autumn), with one or two on 18 dates in October, and two more in November. Lesser Redpolls, *C. f. cabaret*, were identified on three dates in October, with at least three on the 23rd.

ARCTIC REDPOLL *Carduelis hornemanni*

Rare autumn migrant; has occurred mid-winter and spring

One record only, of a dull female or first-summer (probably of the race *C. h. exilipes*), that was observed between May 13th-17th at several locations around the island.

Accepted by BBRC

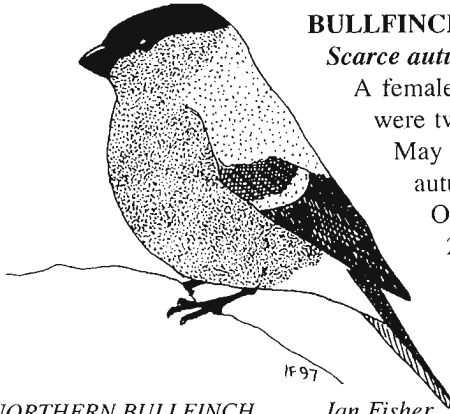
COMMON ROSEFINCH *Carpodacus erithrinus*

Regular spring and autumn migrant

A rather poor spring, at least compared with recent years. There were two on May 26th, one remaining until the 27th, then one to three daily from June 1st-9th. A total of approximately eight individuals were seen.

In autumn, the majority of records occurred between August 14th and September

11th; one or two were recorded most days, with three on September 7th and 9th. In October, there were singles on the 4th-7th, and the 14th. Approximately 20 individuals were involved.



NORTHERN BULLFINCH

BULLFINCH *Pyrrhula pyrrhula*

Scarce autumn migrant, less regular in spring

A female was seen on January 31st, and there were two males on the cliffs near Lericum on May 21st. There was a reasonable series of autumn records, as follows: a female on October 16th; a male from October 19th-25th, joined by a female on the last date; two females on October 28th; a female between November 1st-4th; and finally, three females at the Plantation on November 11th.

Ian Fisher

LAPLAND BUNTING *Calcarius lapponicus*

Frequent autumn migrant, less common in spring

In spring, there were sightings between April 24th and May 20th; on most days, just one or two were reported but there were four on May 1st-2nd, and five on May 5th.

Autumn passage was better than average, with almost daily records from August 30th until November 5th. Peak counts included ten on September 27th, and 20 on October 2nd.

SNOW BUNTING *Plectrophenax nivalis*

Common spring and autumn migrant; often over-winters

Recorded sporadically and in small numbers during the first five months of the year, with a maximum of 35 on January 17th and the last on May 21st. Sightings were virtually daily from September 15th until the year's end. Monthly maxima were 85 on September 29th, 220 on October 23rd, 300 on November 17th, and 120 on December 6th. Peak counts in autumn were the highest since the late 1980's, a trend that was also registered on mainland Shetland.

YELLOWHAMMER *Emberiza citrinella*

Regular spring and autumn migrant

In spring, singles were recorded on seven dates between April 20th and 28th; it is unclear how many individuals were involved, but probably not more than three. All autumn records occurred in October, with one to four birds seen most days during 20th-30th.

ORTOLAN BUNTING *Emberiza hortulana*

Scarce spring and autumn migrant

For the second year in a row, good numbers were recorded during at least one of the migration seasons. In 1996, spring was memorable. A male on May 18th preceded counts of seven for six consecutive days, 19th-24th. Singles were seen on the 25th and 27th-29th; the total number of individuals involved was probably at least ten. In contrast, there were no autumn records at all.

RUSTIC BUNTING *Emberiza rustica*

Rare spring and autumn migrant

Another excellent series of spring records, with a male seen between the Raevas and Setter on May 11-12th; a female at Pund on May 20th; a female at the Observatory on May 24th; and finally, a male in song, seen briefly at Sukka Mire on June 16th. There were no autumn records.

All accepted by BBRC

LITTLE BUNTING *Emberiza pusilla*

Scarce autumn migrant; rare in spring

In spring, one trapped in the Vaadal on May 1st remained until the 6th.

Autumn records were rather scarce, at least by comparison to some recent years: one at Setter/Barkland on September 7th, one at Leogh/Taft on September 19th-22nd, and finally one on September 26th, possibly remaining for two more days.

YELLOW-BREASTED BUNTING *Emberiza aureola*

Rare autumn migrant

One at North Leogh on August 23rd-24th was the earliest ever for the island; a second was seen at Springfield/Haa on September 4th-5th. Two records per annum is about average for recent years.

Both accepted by BBRC

REED BUNTING *Emberiza schoeniclus*

Frequent spring and autumn migrant

After a single bird was seen between March 10th-24th, spring passage proper began in early April, with up to four birds seen most days from the 8th. An exceptional influx in mid-May followed: 50 arrived on the 18th, increasing to 75 on the 19th. At least 50 were recorded daily until the 25th, with 80 on the 23rd being the highest count. Only in 1969 and 1970 have counts exceeded this during the past 50 years. Counts remained in double figures into June (10 on the 1st), the last spring sighting being one on the 8th.

In autumn, passage was recorded between September 23rd and November 5th. Counts showed two distinct arrival periods: in late September (with a maximum of 15 on the 24th) and mid/late October (when on most days between 16th-26th there were counts of 15 or more, the highest being of 35 on the 22nd).

Update of British Birds Rarities Committee Decisions

1993

Roseate Tern	10 June	Reviewed by Scottish Birds Records Committee and now considered unacceptable
Lanceolated Warbler	17 September (Lower Leogh)	Rejected

1995

Serin	3 September	Rejected by Scottish Birds Records Committee
Arctic Redpoll	4-10 November	Accepted
Pine Bunting	29-30 October	Considered hybrid Pine Bunting/Yellowhammer

FAIR ISLE RINGING REPORT 1996

A total of 7726 birds, of 94 species, were ringed in 1996. Typically, seabirds formed a large part of the ringing work of the Observatory, with six species accounting for almost 67% of the total, as illustrated in Table 1.

Table 1. The ten most commonly ringed species, with totals, on Fair Isle in 1996; 1995 totals in parentheses.

Guillemot	1740	(977)
Arctic Tern	1383	(1138)
Storm Petrel	1021	(1152)
Starling	506	(572)
Razorbill	437	(293)
Shag	394	(410)
Puffin	182	(188)
Wheatear	171	(194)
Meadow Pipit	168	(205)
Blackbird	159	(115)

One new species, Red-throated Diver, was ringed by the Observatory in 1996. Notable milestones were also achieved by one or two other species. The rarest species ringed were Goshawk (2nd) and Blyth's Reed Warbler (3rd-5th). Annual ringing total records were equalled for three species: Gannet (36), Little Auk (2) and Collared Dove (24), and for several species (including Arctic Tern, Guillemot, Razorbill, Whitethroat and Reed Bunting), 1996 was a particularly good year, if not record-breaking. However, arguably the ringing highlight of the year was trapping a Lithuanian-ringed Paddyfield Warbler in September – see systematic list entry for details.

After two relatively benign winters, the Heligoland traps took a battering in the winter of 1995-96, and as a result, major reconstruction work occupied a great deal of time in the spring. Some of the larger scale projects included the re-roofing of the entire northern end of the Double Dyke trap, replacing missing roof panels in the Gully, and rebuilding most of the eastern catching funnel of the Plantation trap.

As documented in the Warden's report, 1996 was the second and final year of our participation in the European Science Foundation-funded project on European-African songbird migration. Once again, we submitted biometric data from a selected range of species (principally chats, warblers, flycatchers and shrikes) collected from standardised daily trapping between mid-April and the end of May, and again from late August to mid-October. The possible continuation of this project will depend on further funding. A preliminary report on findings is to be published shortly, and further, more detailed analysis by the lead organisations in the project is scheduled to follow. The project has already been successful in establishing a

methodological framework for collecting data on migrants which seems destined to be widely copied. The standardisation aspect has been much admired, and it is to be hoped that this will guide work here at FIBO for the foreseeable future.



SHAG

Roger Riddington

Table 2. Numbers of birds ringed and recovered/controlled on Fair Isle in 1996, together with cumulative totals from 1948

Species	Ringed as:		Total	Total	Recovered/Controlled	
	Juv/Ad	Pullus	1996	1948-96	1996	1948-96
Red-throated Diver	1	—	1	1	—	—
Little Grebe	—	—	—	10	—	—
Great Crested Grebe	—	—	—	1	—	—
Red-necked Grebe	—	—	—	1	—	—
Slavonian Grebe	—	—	—	3	—	—
Fulmar	7	69	76	15519	3	147
Storm Petrel	1021	—	1021	22563	20	848
Leach's Petrel	2	—	2	43	—	1
Gannet	5	31	36	303	2	7
Cormorant	—	—	—	7	—	—
Shag	22	372	394	20071	6	511
Grey Heron	—	—	—	20	—	—
Whooper Swan	—	—	—	33	—	6
Bean Goose	—	—	—	1	—	—
Pink-footed Goose	—	—	—	11	—	1
White-fronted Goose	—	—	—	3	—	1
Greylag Goose	—	—	—	20	—	7
Barnacle Goose	—	—	—	3	—	—
Shelduck	—	—	—	4	—	—
Wigeon	—	—	—	16	—	1

<i>Species</i>	<i>Ringed as:</i>		<i>Total</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>Recovered/Controlled</i>	
	<i>Juv/Ad</i>	<i>Pullus</i>	<i>1996</i>	<i>1948-96</i>	<i>1996</i>	<i>1948-96</i>
Teal	—	—	—	45	—	2
Mallard	—	—	—	12	—	1
Pintail	—	—	—	1	—	1
Shoveler	—	—	—	1	—	—
Pochard	—	—	—	3	—	—
Ring-necked Duck	—	—	—	1	—	—
Tufted Duck	1	—	1	16	—	—
Scaup	—	—	—	4	—	—
Eider	—	—	—	138	—	1
Long-tailed Duck	—	—	—	15	—	1
Velvet Scoter	—	—	—	2	—	—
Goldeneye	—	—	—	17	—	1
Red-breasted Merganser	—	—	—	3	—	—
Goosander	—	—	—	3	—	1
Marsh Harrier	—	—	—	1	—	—
Hen Harrier	—	—	—	2	—	—
Goshawk	1	—	1	2	—	—
Sparrowhawk	8	—	8	298	—	18
Red-footed Falcon	—	—	—	1	—	—
Kestrel	—	—	—	45	—	8
Merlin	—	—	—	177	—	11
Peregrine	—	—	—	6	—	1
Quail	—	—	—	7	—	—
Water Rail	3	—	3	289	—	3
Spotted Crake	—	—	—	17	—	—
Little Crake	—	—	—	1	—	—
Baillon's Crake	—	—	—	1	—	—
Corncrake	—	—	—	38	—	2
Moorhen	1	—	1	91	—	3
Coot	—	—	—	14	—	1
Great Bustard	—	—	—	1	—	—
Oystercatcher	2	15	17	1366	1	67
Little Ringed Plover	—	—	—	1	—	—
Ringed Plover	3	—	3	556	—	6
Dotterel	—	—	—	4	—	—
Eurasian Golden Plover	—	—	—	20	—	—
Grey Plover	—	—	—	1	—	—
Lapwing	—	—	—		301	6
Knot	—	—	—	89	—	2
Sanderling	—	—	—	90	—	—
Western Sandpiper	—	—	—	1	—	—
Little Stint	—	—	—	74	—	—

<i>Species</i>	<i>Ringed as:</i>		<i>Total</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>Recovered/Controlled</i>	
	<i>Juv/Ad</i>	<i>Pullus</i>	<i>1996</i>	<i>1948-96</i>	<i>1996</i>	<i>1948-96</i>
Temminck's Stint	—	—	—	2	—	—
White-rumped Sandpiper	—	—	—	1	—	—
Baird's Sandpiper	—	—	—	1	—	—
Pectoral Sandpiper	—	—	—	5	—	—
Curlew Sandpiper	—	—	—	5	—	—
Purple Sandpiper	—	—	—	151	—	1
Dunlin	1	—	1	497	—	7
Buff-breasted Sandpiper	—	—	—	1	—	—
Ruff	—	—	—	33	—	1
Jack Snipe	1	—	1	123	—	3
Snipe	3	—	3	386	—	4
Great Snipe	—	—	—	1	—	—
Woodcock	6	—	6	369	—	19
Black-tailed Godwit	—	—	—	1	—	—
Bar-tailed Godwit	—	—	—	9	—	2
Whimbrel	—	—	—	15	—	—
Curlew	—	9	9	126	—	5
Spotted Redshank	—	—	—	3	—	—
Redshank	—	—	—	246	—	2
Greenshank	—	—	—	9	—	—
Green Sandpiper	1	—	1	56	—	1
Wood Sandpiper	—	—	—	17	—	—
Common Sandpiper	—	—	—	49	—	1
Turnstone	1	—	1	73	—	—
Red-necked Phalarope	—	—	—	6	—	—
Grey Phalarope	—	—	—	3	—	—
Pomarine Skua	—	—	—	1	—	—
Arctic Skua	—	40	40	3539	—	65
Great Skua	1	129	130	1754	—	25
Black-headed Gull	—	—	—	45	—	1
Common Gull	—	—	—	181	—	3
Lesser Black-backed Gull	—	15	15	1373	—	30
Herring Gull	—	9	9	4059	—	93
Iceland Gull	—	—	—	1	—	—
Glaucous Gull	—	—	—	35	—	1
Great Black-backed Gull	—	93	93	2749	1	93
Kittiwake	6	124	130	6312	—	35
Common Tern	—	1	1	464	—	3
Arctic Tern	—	1383	1383	6919	1	20
Guillemot	134	1606	1740	25698	24	811
Razorbill	83	354	437	7303	13	194
Black Guillemot	1	17	18	1571	—	19

<i>Species</i>	<i>Ringed as:</i>		<i>Total</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>Recovered/Controlled</i>	
	<i>Juv/Ad</i>	<i>Pullus</i>	<i>1996</i>	<i>1948-96</i>	<i>1996</i>	<i>1948-96</i>
Little Auk	2	—	2	11	—	—
Puffin	81	101	182	11804	—	29
Rock Dove	—	—	—	25	—	—
Woodpigeon	1	—	1	62	—	2
Collared Dove	24	—	24	262	—	3
Turtle Dove	1	—	1	71	—	2
Cuckoo	2	—	2	101	—	1
Snowy Owl	—	—	—	1	—	1
Long-eared Owl	12	—	12	227	—	13
Short-eared Owl	—	—	—	17	—	—
Nightjar	—	—	—	4	—	—
Swift	—	—	—	17	—	1
Hoopoe	—	—	—	3	—	—
Wryneck	1	—	1	199	—	—
Great Spotted Woodpecker	—	—	—	25	—	—
Short-toed Lark	—	—	—	7	—	—
Woodlark	—	—	—	2	—	—
Skylark	—	1	1	803	—	3
Shorelark	—	—	—	5	—	—
Sand Martin	—	—	—	8	—	—
Swallow	1	—	1	240	—	2
House Martin	—	—	—	140	—	1
Richard's Pipit	—	—	—	10	—	—
Blyth's Pipit	—	—	—	1	—	—
Tawny Pipit	—	—	—	3	—	—
Olive-backed Pipit	—	—	—	9	—	—
Tree Pipit	10	—	10	615	—	—
Pechora Pipit	—	—	—	9	—	—
Meadow Pipit	164	4	168	9267	—	45
Red-throated Pipit	—	—	—	7	—	—
Rock Pipit	70	—	70	8888	—	29
Yellow Wagtail	—	—	—	10	—	—
Citrine Wagtail	—	—	—	5	—	—
Grey Wagtail	—	—	—	28	—	1
Pied Wagtail	2	—	2	624	—	4
Waxwing	1	—	1	37	—	—
Dipper	—	—	—	13	—	—
Wren	13	—	13	739	—	—
Dunnock	27	—	27	2162	—	6
Robin	64	—	64	7518	—	36
Thrush Nightingale	2	—	2	26	—	—
Nightingale	—	—	—	27	—	—

<i>Species</i>	<i>Ringed as:</i>		<i>Total</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>Recovered/Controlled</i>	
	<i>Juv/Ad</i>	<i>Pullus</i>	<i>1996</i>	<i>1948-96</i>	<i>1996</i>	<i>1948-96</i>
Siberian Rubythroat	—	—	—	1	—	—
Bluethroat	5	—	5	249	—	2
Red-flanked Bluetail	—	—	—	2	—	—
Black Redstart	2	—	2	140	—	—
Redstart	58	—	58	1701	—	1
Whinchat	9	—	9	576	—	2
Stonechat	—	—	—	54	—	—
Northern Wheatear	171	—	171	15602	—	72
Pied Wheatear	—	—	—	1	—	—
Black-eared Wheatear	—	—	—	3	—	—
Rock Thrush	—	—	—	1	—	—
White's Thrush	—	—	—	1	—	—
Hermit Thrush	—	—	—	1	—	—
Grey-cheeked Thrush	—	—	—	2	—	—
Ring Ouzel	—	—	—	465	—	8
Blackbird	159	—	159	20508	2	317
Eye-browed Thrush	—	—	—	1	—	1
Dusky Thrush	—	—	—	1	—	—
Black-throated Thrush	—	—	—	1	—	—
Fieldfare	4	—	4	618	—	1
Song Thrush	51	—	51	2576	1	30
Redwing	75	—	75	8053	—	71
Mistle Thrush	—	—	—	22	—	—
Pallas' Grasshopper Warbler—	—	—	—	6	—	—
Lanceolated Warbler	1	—	1	26	—	—
Grasshopper Warbler	2	—	2	104	—	—
River Warbler	—	—	—	7	—	—
Savi's Warbler	—	—	—	3	—	—
Aquatic Warbler	—	—	—	22	—	—
Sedge Warbler	9	—	9	401	—	—
Paddyfield Warbler	—	—	—	7	—	—
Blyth's Reed Warbler	3	—	3	5	—	1
Marsh Warbler	4	—	4	98	—	—
Reed Warbler	5	—	5	197	—	1
Great Reed Warbler	—	—	—	6	—	—
Thick-billed Warbler	—	—	—	1	—	—
Olivaceous Warbler	—	—	—	1	—	—
Booted Warbler	—	—	—	7	—	—
Icterine Warbler	1	—	1	91	—	—
Melodious Warbler	—	—	—	11	—	—
Subalpine Warbler	—	—	—	24	—	—
Sardinian Warbler	—	—	—	1	—	—

<i>Species</i>	<i>Ringed as:</i>		<i>Total</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>Recovered/Controlled</i>	
	<i>Juv/Ad</i>	<i>Pullus</i>	<i>1996</i>	<i>1948-96</i>	<i>1996</i>	<i>1948-96</i>
Barred Warbler	3	—	3	365	—	1
Lesser Whitethroat	6	—	6	609	—	1
Whitethroat	38	—	38	878	—	—
Garden Warbler	50	—	50	3124	—	3
Blackcap	63	—	63	4440	—	19
Greenish Warbler	—	—	—	20	—	—
Arctic Warbler	—	—	—	32	—	—
Pallas's Warbler	—	—	—	2	—	—
Yellow-browed Warbler	—	—	—	107	—	—
Radde's Warbler	—	—	—	1	—	—
Dusky Warbler	—	—	—	4	—	—
Bonelli's Warbler	—	—	—	1	—	—
Wood Warbler	3	—	3	101	—	—
Chiffchaff	22	—	22	977	—	3
Willow Warbler	73	—	73	3247	—	6
Goldcrest	10	—	10	1397	—	2
Firecrest	—	—	—	1	—	—
Brown Flycatcher	—	—	—	1	—	—
Spotted Flycatcher	5	—	5	695	—	3
Red-breasted Flycatcher	1	—	1	54	—	—
Collared Flycatcher	—	—	—	1	—	—
Pied Flycatcher	22	—	22	873	—	—
Coal Tit	—	—	—	1	—	—
Blue Tit	—	—	—	2	—	—
Great Tit	—	—	—	9	—	—
Treecreeper	—	—	—	1	—	—
Golden Oriole	—	—	—	8	—	—
Isabelline Shrike	—	—	—	2	—	—
Red-backed Shrike	2	—	2	178	—	—
Lesser Grey Shrike	—	—	—	6	—	—
Great Grey Shrike	1	—	1	111	—	1
Woodchat Shrike	—	—	—	13	—	—
Jackdaw	—	—	—	4	—	—
Rook	—	—	—	5	—	—
Carrion Crow	—	—	—	44	—	—
Raven	—	—	—	26	—	—
Starling	183	323	506	23551	1	186
Daurian Starling	—	—	—	1	—	—
Rose-coloured Starling	—	—	—	3	—	—
House Sparrow	7	—	7	1396	—	3
Tree Sparrow	—	—	—	99	—	1
Chaffinch	16	—	16	2349	—	11

<i>Species</i>	<i>Ringed as:</i>		<i>Total</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>Recovered/Controlled</i>	
	<i>Juv/Ad</i>	<i>Pullus</i>	<i>1996</i>	<i>1948-96</i>	<i>1996</i>	<i>1948-96</i>
Brambling	59	—	59	3007	—	13
Greenfinch	7	—	7	191	—	1
Goldfinch	—	—	—	6	—	—
Siskin	7	—	7	338	—	1
Linnet	—	—	—	139	—	1
Twite	68	—	68	52715	—	5
Redpoll	2	—	2	589	—	1
Arctic Redpoll	—	—	—	19	—	—
Two-barred Crossbill	—	—	—	1	—	—
Crossbill	—	—	—	455	—	2
Parrot Crossbill	—	—	—	37	—	—
Common Rosefinch	4	—	4	145	—	1
Bullfinch	1	—	1	98	—	—
Hawfinch	—	—	—	11	—	—
Tennessee Warbler	—	—	—	2	—	—
Savannah Sparrow	—	—	—	1	—	—
Song Sparrow	—	—	—	3	—	—
White-crowned Sparrow	—	—	—	1	—	—
White-throated Sparrow	—	—	—	2	—	—
Lapland Bunting	—	—	—	45	—	—
Snow Bunting	1	—	1	521	—	3
Pine Bunting	—	—	—	2	—	—
Yellowhammer	1	—	1	55	—	—
Ortolan Bunting	—	—	—	18	—	—
Cretzschmar's Bunting	—	—	—	1	—	—
Yellow-browed Bunting	—	—	—	1	—	—
Rustic Bunting	—	—	—	14	—	1
Little Bunting	1	—	1	33	—	1
Yellow-breasted Bunting	—	—	—	6	—	—
Reed Bunting	22	—	22	402	—	2
Pallas's Reed Bunting	—	—	—	2	—	—
Black-headed Bunting	—	—	—	3	—	—
Corn Bunting	—	—	—	3	—	—
Red-headed Bunting	—	—	—	5	—	—
Chestnut Bunting	—	—	—	1	—	—

Ringed recoveries/controls reported to FIBO during 1996.

Note that due to administrative changes at the BTO, the number of recoveries/controls reported to us was lower than normal in 1996, particularly for some species, e.g. Storm Petrel. The backlog will hopefully be brought up to date in 1997. The co-ordinates of Fair Isle are 59°32'N, 01°37'W.

Part 1. Birds ringed on Fair Isle and reported elsewhere.

FULMAR. Three recoveries were reported during 1996. Two were from the Faroes, one a chick ringed in August 1992, the other ringed as a juvenile on 2 September 1967 and recovered on 6 March 1996, not far short of its 30th birthday. The third individual, an adult ringed in July 1982, was recovered on Texel, Netherlands in June 1996.

STORM PETREL. Twenty individuals ringed on Fair Isle and controlled elsewhere were reported during 1996. These are summarised in the following table:

Table 3. Storm Petrels ringed on Fair Isle and controlled/recovered elsewhere: reports received during 1996.

Yell, Shetland	11	Lunga, Strathclyde, Scotland	1
Auskerry, Orkney	3	Calf of Man (639km, 198°)	2
North Ronaldsay	1	Roaninish, Donegal, Eire (664km, 219°)	1
Eilean Hoan, Highland, Scotland	1		

The recoveries from Eire and the Isle of Man are away from the more regular recovery locations, reflecting an increase in tape-luring sub-adult Storm Petrels at sites right around the coast of the UK. Most of the records were less than five years from ringing to recovery, with the exception of one ringed (as a full-grown bird) in August 1977, and controlled at the Calf of Man in June 1996.

GANNET. Two recoveries were reported in 1996. A chick ringed on 11 July 1991 was found freshly dead at Wester Quarff, Shetland, on 14 June 1996, whilst a chick ringed on 1 July 1994 was retrieved from a fishing net at La Rochelle, Charente Maritime, France on 18 May 1995 (1483 km, 179°, 321 days). In an ailing condition, it responded to care and was released the following day.

SHAG. Six recoveries were reported during 1996, all of birds ringed as chicks. Four were found on Shetland (at Sandness, West Burra, Bressay and Lerwick), one in mainland Scotland (Montrose, Grampian) and one in England (Seahouses, Northumberland; 439km, 180°, 3937 days). The oldest of these was ringed in July 1982, recovered at Sandness in May 1996.

OYSTERCATCHER. One ringed as a chick on 22 June 1980 was controlled on the Nigg Oil Terminal (Cromarty Firth, Highland, Scotland) on 4 January 1996 (247 km, 214°, 5674 days).

GREAT BLACK-BACKED GULL. An adult ringed on 18 July 1987 was recovered on 7 May 1996 at Nigg Bay, Grampian, Aberdeen (270km, 186°, 3216 days).

ARCTIC TERN. One ringed as a chick in June 1992 was found dead during the breeding season on North Rona, Western Isles, Scotland (242 km, 259°, 1483 days). An interesting example of rather long-distance natal dispersal (assuming of course that the bird was breeding, and that it had not returned to Fair Isle to breed during the intervening years, which seems unlikely).

GUILLEMOT. Twenty two reports of birds ringed as chicks were received, which are tabulated below. In addition, birds ringed as adults were reported from More og Romsdal, Norway and Peterhead, Grampian. Causes of death of the 24 birds involved were: caught in fishing nets eight (six from Norway, one each from Iceland and Denmark), shot two (both from the Faroes), oiled one (Lincs), with 13 simply found dead, many lying on the beach and therefore presumably having succumbed to bad weather. Most were recovered in their first five years of life: exceptions were nestlings ringed in 1975 and 1981 and an adult ringed in 1981, all recovered in 1996.

Table 4. Location and age of Guillemot recoveries from Fair Isle: birds ringed as chicks.

Age at recovery (years)	1	2	3	4	4+	Total
Grampian	2					2
Fife	1					1
Highland	2					2
Tayside					1	1
Lothian	1					1
Norfolk	1					1
Lincolnshire		1				1
“Britain”		1				1
Norway	3				3	6
Sweden	2					2
Denmark					1	1
Faroes	2					2
Iceland	1					1

RAZORBILL. Ten reports of birds ringed as nestlings were received during the year, which are tabulated below. In addition, birds ringed as adults were reported from Highland, Humberside and the Netherlands. All were found dead on the tideline with the exception of the adult on Humberside, which was badly oiled and had to be destroyed.

Table 5. Location and age of Razorbill recoveries from Fair Isle: birds ringed as chicks.

Age at recovery (years)	1	2	3	4	4+	Total
Highland		1	1			2
Fife					1	1
Suffolk					1	1
Norfolk		1				1
Netherlands	1			1		2
France	1	1		1		3

BLACKBIRD. One ringed as a first-summer male on 7 April 1995 was found dead near Stornoway, Western Isles, on 5 February 1996 (310km, 241°, 304 days). An adult female ringed on 24 October 1994 was controlled on Helgoland, Germany on 2 April 1996 (830km, 136°, 526 days).

SONG THRUSH. Another thrush to Helgoland, this one rather quicker. A first-winter Song Thrush ringed on 14 October 1995 was controlled four days later on Helgoland (830 km, 136°). This is the first Fair Isle-ringed Song Thrush to be reported in Germany.

STARLING. One ringed as a nestling in June 1993 was found dead at St Ola, Orkney in January 1996.

Part II. Birds ringed elsewhere and recovered/controlled on Fair Isle.

STORM PETREL. Just eight reports were received during the year, all of these being foreign-ringed birds. Seven were from Norway: two from Skogsoy, Oygarden, Hordaland (374km, 252°), two from Utsira, Rogaland (369km, 274°), Krakenes Fyr, Vagsoy, Sogn og Fjordane (454km, 232°), Runde, Heroy, More og Romsdal (506km, 231°) and Kariholta, Kristiansund, More og Romsdal (638km, 231°). The remaining bird was from Nolsoy, Faroes (384km, 135°). The time between ringing and recapture on Fair Isle was less than five years for most of these individual; the Faroese bird was the one exception, ringed in 1987.

SPARROWHAWK. A first-winter ringed on 16 October 1995 at Faversham, Kent, was controlled on Fair Isle on 26 May 1996 (926km, 350°, 223 days).

ARCTIC TERN. A chick ringed on Foula, Shetland, in July 1981, was recovered on Fair Isle in May 1996 (only leg and ring found). Like a similar recovery from Whalsay in 1995, this suggests that Fair Isle colonists are perhaps predominantly from Shetland.

BLACKBIRD. A first-winter female ringed on North Ronaldsay on 3 October 1995 was controlled on Fair Isle the following spring, on 20 April 1996, presumably choosing a similar route north to its southward migration in autumn.

REDWING. A first-winter trapped on North Ronaldsay on 5 May 1996 was controlled on Fair Isle four days later.

WILLOW WARBLER. A juvenile ringed at Rendall, Orkney on 11 September 1995 was controlled on Fair Isle the following spring, on 18 May 1996. Like the above Blackbird, presumably following a familiar route north, though doubtless the Willow Warbler had travelled considerably further to reach its wintering grounds.

REDPOLL. One ringed at Winterset Reservoir, Wakefield, West Yorks., on 16 December 1995, was controlled on Fair Isle on 22 May 1996. It was ringed as a first-winter of the race *C. f. cabaret*.

Other Wildlife

Roger Riddington & Mark Newell

At the Observatory, records are kept of most forms of wildlife (as well as birds), and all visitors are encouraged to report any sightings at the daily log or to the warden. Daily records of butterflies and cetaceans are kept, and moth trapping is carried out at the Observatory on suitable nights during the summer months. In many years, Fair Isle sightings by themselves are rather sparse, but a more accurate picture of events in the Northern Isles can be achieved by reference to the annual reports published by relevant organisations on Shetland (to which Fair Isle reports are always submitted). Sightings from mainland Shetland are always of interest too, and the interested reader is directed to the following:

Shetland Entomological Group (includes records of butterflies and moths on Fair Isle).

Membership costs £5.00, this includes annual report. Contact Mike Pennington, 9 Daisy Park, Baltasound, Unst, Shetland ZE2 9EA. Tel. (01957) 711307.

Shetland Sea Mammal Group (includes records of cetaceans from Fair Isle, and also sightings from the crew of the Good Shepherd, on the crossing to and from Shetland).

Membership costs £5.00, this includes annual report. Contact Howard Loates, 'Windrill', Exnaboe, Virkie, Shetland ZE3 9JS. Tel. (01950) 460648.

Summary of butterflies and moths, 1996.

The entomological highlight of the year was the huge arrival of Silver Y moths that occurred throughout Shetland on August 6th. Although a regular migrant to Fair Isle, this day-flying species literally carpeted the island, with estimates in the region of 1.5 million individuals on this date alone.

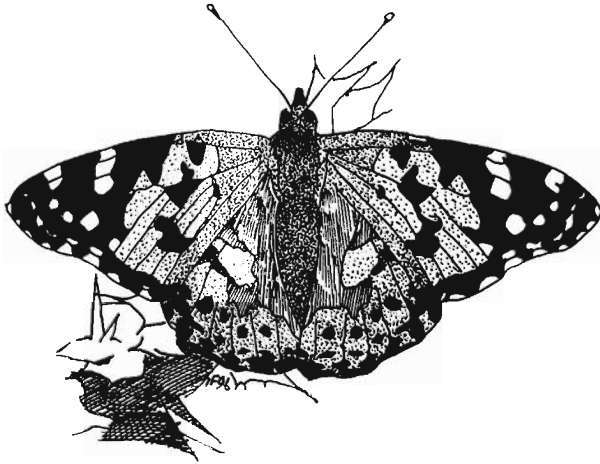
Other notable moth records were the capture of Fair Isle's first Beautiful Golden Y, Lesser Yellow Underwing and *Margaretia sticticalis*, and second ever Black Rustic, all of which were attracted to light traps at Schoolton and the Observatory. A Bedstraw Hawkmoth on the west cliffs on July 5th was a rare sighting for Fair Isle.

More butterflies were recorded in 1996 than in any previous year, although just four species were seen. Over 90% of sightings were of Painted Ladies, the majority of which were recorded in August, particularly on the 13th-14th (thus reflecting the nation-wide influx at this time). Red Admiral and Small Tortoiseshells were again recorded in reasonable numbers, whilst a single Peacock on May 9th continued the annual appearance of this species during the past few years.

Summary of cetaceans, 1996.

As usual, most cetaceans in Fair Isle waters were seen from the Good Shepherd. However, watchers from the Isle were also rewarded with several treats this year, most notably a pod of seven Killer Whales, which stayed close to the island for two days (June 5th-6th), and afforded many people stunning views of these spectacular creatures as they played around close inshore. Minke Whales were reported on three dates in August, 15 White-beaked Dolphins were seen on September 15th, whilst good views of 12+ Risso's Dolphins off Buness were enjoyed by hardy sea-watchers braving rough weather on October 11th. Harbour Porpoises were reported regularly during the autumn, 49 on September 4th being the best count.

Common Seals were often present in South Harbour amongst the commoner Grey Seals (which breed on the north and west coasts of Fair Isle), with a peak count of 19 on 14th August.



PAINTED LADY

Ian Fisher

Fair Isle Weather, 1996

Dave Wheeler

January. Most of the snow that so badly affected Shetland had gone by the 3rd. A blocking high over Scandinavia, together with persistent strong south-easterly winds, resulted in the month being the driest on record for Fair Isle – with less than half the total rainfall of the previous driest January (59.8mm in 1985). Due to the ameliorating effect of the North Sea, Fair Isle did not experience the bitterly cold weather that the easterly winds brought to the rest of the UK, though it did experience a brief cold snap from the 21st to the 26th.

Fair Isle: Rain 26.2%, sun 61.8%, mean temp. +1.3°C, (compared with the 1974-95 average).

UK: Virtually all of Britain was dry and dull. Most areas had mean temperatures close to normal, though the north and west were mild.

February. A dull first half to the month, then a sunny second half as the month reverted to type and displayed typical anticyclonic character. The year's highest pressure, 1039.4 mb, was recorded on the 20th.

Fair Isle: Rain 110.6%, sun 90.5%, mean temp. -0.4°C.

UK: All parts of Britain were quite cold and sunny. Scotland was colder and wetter than normal, with heavy snow in the south-west on the 5th-6th.

March. Since the month was dominated by high pressure – the mean of 1022.2 mb was the highest on record for March – easterly winds were frequent and, with continental origin, the air was often very dry. The monthly mean relative humidity of 79.8% was also a record low. Despite the dry air, sufficient moisture was picked up during the short sea track to bring very cloudy conditions. With recorded sunshine falling well short of even the previous lowest total (72.4 hrs in 1980), this month was the dullest March on record – despite the 46.0 hours sunshine recorded during the last week! The month was dry, with most of the month's rain falling on the 11th, 21.4 mm. Storm force SE winds gusted to 75kt on the 12th and, with the relatively dry conditions, blowing sand was reported in Shetland and Orkney.

Fair Isle: Rain 57.2%, sun 57.0%, mean temp. -0.4°C.

UK: Scotland – like the rest of the UK – was dry, dull and cold.

April. Cold on the 1st, with the overnight grass surface temperature falling to -7.2°C, but apart from a further cold spell from the 11th-14th, it was a mild month, with predominantly SE winds.

Fair Isle: Rain 90.7%, sun 89.8%, mean temp. +0.6°C.

UK: Though mean temperatures overall were a little milder than usual, this disguised a month of contrasts. Wet in the west, very dry in the south-east; dull, wet and mild across much of Scotland.

May. A cold month, with mean overnight temperatures 1.3°C below normal. The first half of the month was sunny and dry, the second half more cloudy and with more rain. Winds were predominantly north-easterly and rainfall was above average for Fair Isle.

Fair Isle: Rain 136.1%, sun 134.2%, mean temp. -0.9°C.

UK: A mild last few days prevented this from being the coldest May on record across much of the UK. Dull and dry in the east and south-east, the rest of England and Wales wetter than normal. Colder than average across Scotland, and generally dry and sunny.

June. The month began reasonably sunny, though with a strong SW airflow across Scotland. The Northern Isles became more cloudy in mid-month, as northerly winds brought a cold spell from the 18th-23rd. The month ended cool and unusually cloudy.

Fair Isle: Rain 72.4%, sun 80.4%, mean temp. +0.3°C.

UK: Temperatures generally close to normal, dry virtually everywhere. Scotland was warm, with above-average sunshine in the south.

July. A cold, wet month, unsettled at the beginning and end. A ground frost (-1.8°C) was reported on the 3rd, and it was only between the 20th-23rd that the mean daily temperatures exceeded the norm. Generally a dull month, though the 18th was the year's sunniest day, with 14.5 hours of sunshine.

Fair Isle: Rain 122%, sun 86.6%, mean temp. -0.6°C.

UK: Cool and drier than normal across most of England and Wales, whilst sunshine totals were generally above average. In Scotland, sunshine and temperatures were close to normal, with most areas apart from the north-west and Northern Isles being dry.

August. A damp, mild and very dull month. With average relative humidity almost 95%, and fog reported on 19 days, it was not surprising that this was the foggiest August recorded on Fair Isle (and the second foggiest month ever). Temperatures on the 19th reached 16.3°C, the warmest day of the year. The last few days of the month hinted at the arrival of summer in Fair Isle, a mere three months late!

Fair Isle: Rain 86.9%, sun 71.6%, mean temp. +0.7°C.

UK: England and Wales had above average sunshine but most areas were wetter than normal. Like the rest of the UK, Scotland was warmer than normal, by around 1°C.

September. Summer finally arrived. A sunny, dry and mild month, with predominantly SE winds.

Fair Isle: Rain 38.1%, sun 129.7%, mean temp. +0.8°C.

UK: Temperatures were close to normal across England and Wales, with below

average rainfall in most areas. Easterly winds predominated over eastern Britain bringing dull weather, but most other regions were sunny. After a reasonably fine summer over all of Scotland except the Northern Isles, the tables were finally turned: the rest of Scotland had an unsettled month with some parts (including Grampian) being exceptionally wet.

October. Mild, wet and dull.

Fair Isle: Rain 125.9%, sun 77.4%, mean temp. +0.8°C.

UK: It was a relatively warm month throughout Britain, dry and sunny in the south-east. Scotland was wetter than normal, but temperatures were mostly close to the average.

November. Notable for a prolonged wintry spell due to a predominantly northerly airstream. Cold, wet and snowy, though surprisingly sunny! The 4th was the wettest day of the year, with 46.2 mm recorded. With snow lying at 0900 on five mornings, this was the 'snowiest' November recorded on Fair Isle. The year's coldest temperatures were recorded on the 19th, minimum air temp. -3.2°C, grass minimum -7.7°C.

Fair Isle: Rain 162.3%, sun 117.8%, mean temp. -1.8°C.

UK: Cold but sunny across the whole of Britain, and a wet month virtually everywhere, especially in the south-east.

December. A wet first half to the month, but dry after that. Apart from a mild spell during the 7th-11th, this was a generally cold, dry and sunny month, with a prevalence of easterly winds.

Fair Isle: Rain 77.9%, sun 181.9%, mean temp. -0.5°C.

UK: A cold month throughout, slightly less so in Scotland. Most of Britain was dry, whilst sunshine totals were above average almost everywhere.

Meteorological Data, Fair Isle 1996.

Temp. (°C)	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC	YEAR
Mean	5.6	3.4	4.1	6.1	6.7	9.9	10.8	12.6	11.2	9.8	4.9	4.7	7.5
Maximum	8.8	8.7	8.6	10.4	12.5	13.1	15.8	16.3	14.9	13.1	12.5	10.0	(7.5)
Minimum	-0.2	-1.0	-0.7	-0.3	0.6	6.3	6.1	9.4	5.5	3.9	-3.2	-1.8	
Rainfall (mm)													
Monthly	27.5	70.7	48.2	44.8	53.2	30.1	61.6	53.2	35.2	133.5	184.7	80.4	823.1
Max. daily fall	5.7	10.9	21.4	6.7	10.5	5.3	11.8	15.5	11.1	13.7	46.2	13.2	(909.2)
Sunshine (hrs)													
Total	16.3	53.2	56.0	134.5	266.1	136.5	122.0	104.9	153.2	56.0	43.3	31.1	1173.1
Max. daily	4.0	7.6	10.8	13.0	14.1	11.3	14.5	12.0	10.9	8.8	4.4	4.5	(1221.4)
Wind Speed (knots)													
Mean	21.7	20.5	17.8	13.8	12.4	12.5	10.7	10.7	13.0	19.3	16.9	14.9	15.4
Max. gust	57	71	75	49	53	48	44	36	49	62	57	56	(16.1)
No. of days													
Hail	11	14	16	2	5	0	0	1	1	5	20	10	85
Snow/sleet	5	18	16	3	8	0	0	0	0	0	18	15	83
Rain, >1mm	18	24	20	15	19	17	19	15	7	27	28	22	231
Wet, >9mm	9	18	9	11	14	9	12	8	6	24	22	16	158
Ground frost	2	8	9	3	7	0	1	0	1	2	10	11	54
Wind (direction at 09.00)													
North	0	4	5	1	9	3	2	4	3	2	6	3	42
North East	1	1	1	2	5	0	0	2	1	1	5	4	23
East	4	3	3	4	2	0	3	5	4	3	3	6	40
South East	18	4	11	11	6	5	3	5	7	6	1	0	77
South	7	5	3	6	2	4	7	7	2	7	3	2	55
South West	1	6	1	5	1	6	1	2	2	4	5	6	40
West	0	4	3	1	2	6	10	2	5	6	3	4	46
North West	0	2	4	0	4	6	5	4	6	2	4	4	41
Calm	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	2

(Figures in brackets are the mean for the period 1974–1995)

Fair Isle Bird Observatory Trust Financial Report and Accounts

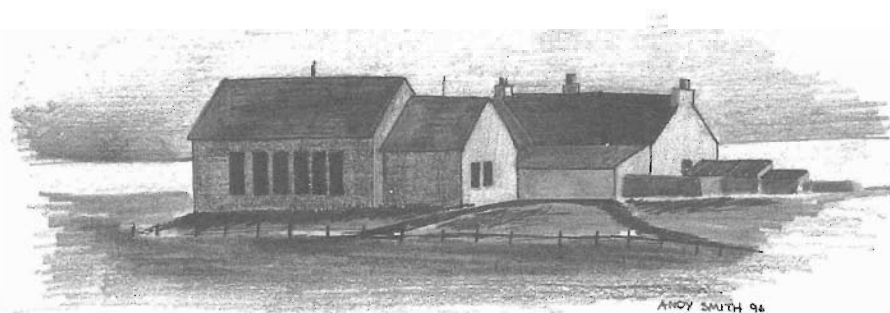
A summary of the Trust's accounts for the year ended 31st October 1996 appears on the following pages. The full statutory accounts and independent accountant's report can be inspected at the Bird Observatory on Fair Isle.

The visitor numbers in 1996 showed a small but welcome increase compared to the two preceding years. The increase, combined with the excellent management of Roger Riddington and Wendy Christie, supported by all the staff, helped continue the improvement in our financial performance.

FIBOT is, of course, still heavily dependent on donations received from Friends of Fair Isle, Charitable Trusts and other benefactors. We are grateful to David Macle-hose, whose unstinting efforts in this respect have been invaluable. It is particularly appropriate to thank the following organisations and individuals for their recent generosity: the Chapman Charitable Trust, Dulverton Trust, Esme Fairbairn Charitable Trust, Pilgrim Trust, A. M. Pilkington Charitable Trust, Scottish Natural Heritage, Shetland Islands Council and Shetland Wildlife Fund. We are also grateful to the Trustees of the late Dr. John Foster for the provision of a significant interest-free loan.

Should any Friend of Fair Isle wishing to make a further donation, either for a specific purpose or non-specifically, this would of course be extremely welcome and should be sent care of the Warden at the Observatory.

Mike Wood, Finance Director.



SCHOOL & COMMUNITY HALL

Andy Smith

Income & expenditure account for the year ended 31 October 1996.

	1996	1995
	£	£
Turnover	54,584	52,911
Cost of sales	46,518	47,124
Gross Profit	8,066	5,787
Net operating expenses	45,525	49,773
Operating deficit	(37,459)	(43,986)
Subscriptions and other income	33,725	39,781
Deficit on ordinary activities – for the year	<u>(3,734)</u>	<u>(4,205)</u>
Statement of accumulated surplus		
Accumulated surplus at 1 November 1995	95,147	90,275
Deficit for the year	(3,734)	(4,205)
Release from appeal reserve	9,077	9,077
	5,343	4,872
Accumulated surplus to 31 October 1996	<u>100,490</u>	<u>95,147</u>

Balance Sheet as at 31 October 1996

	1996 £	1995 £
Fixed assets		
Tangible assets	163,499	174,602
Investments	10,857	10,857
	174,356	185,459
Current assets		
Stocks	6,707	5,546
Debtors	9,218	12,382
Cash at bank and in hand	48,140	32,670
	64,065	50,598
Creditors: amounts falling due within 1 year	(69,815)	(66,434)
Net current liabilities	(5,750)	(15,836)
Total assets less current liabilities	168,606	169,623
Creditors: amounts falling due after more than 1 year	(15,500)	(12,783)
	<u>153,106</u>	<u>156,840</u>
Representing:		
Accumulated surplus	100,490	95,147
Appeal reserve	52,616	61,693
	<u>153,106</u>	<u>156,840</u>

Fair Isle Endowment Fund: accounts for the year to 31st October 1996

	1996	1995
	£	£
REVENUE ACCOUNT		
Investment Income (Gross)	417	338
Investment Income (Net)	132	172
Deposit Interest (Gross)	24	4
Tax Refund	<u>37</u>	<u>73</u>
	<u>610</u>	<u>587</u>
Management Fees	264	282
Balance due to FIBOT	<u>346</u>	<u>305</u>
	<u>610</u>	<u>587</u>
CAPITAL ACCOUNT		
Investments at cost		
£2,593 10% Treasury Conversion Stock 1996	2,749	2,749
£2,875 5.5% Treasury Stock 2008/12	2,497	2,497
Henderson Administration – 960 High Income Units	638	638
	5,884	5,884
Balance at Debit of Capital	(95)	(95)
	<u>5,789</u>	<u>5,789</u>
Represented by:		
Balance at beginning of Year	<u>5,789</u>	<u>5,789</u>

The John Harrison Memorial Fund.

This fund is administered by the Fair Isle Bird Observatory Trust. John Harrison was a young birdwatcher from Norfolk, who visited Fair Isle three times, but whose life was tragically cut short. The fund was established in his memory at the instigation of the late Richard Richardson. Grants are given each year to help young people, between the ages of 15 and 21, with the cost of travel and their stay at the Observatory.

Successful applicants are responsible for making their own travel arrangements and booking at the Observatory, where they must stay for a minimum of one week. They are strongly encouraged to visit during July or August, to experience seabird and/or migration work, and to assist with Observatory work. Application forms are available from the Warden at the Observatory; they must be returned no later than October 31st for consideration in mid-December.

The John Harrison Memorial Fund: accounts for the year to 31st October 1996

	1996	1995
	£	£
REVENUE ACCOUNT		
Interest Received	<u>890</u>	<u>879</u>
Grants Paid	600	400
Transfer to Capital	114	303
Management Expenses	<u>176</u>	<u>176</u>
	<u>890</u>	<u>879</u>
CAPITAL ACCOUNT		
Investments at Cost		
£900 13.25% Treasury Stock 1997	870	870
£1,400 9.5% Treasury Stock 1999	1,435	1,435
£6,400 9% Treasury Conversion Stock	<u>6,411</u>	<u>6,411</u>
	8,716	8,716
Cash	<u>1,361</u>	<u>1,247</u>
	<u>10,077</u>	<u>9,963</u>
Represented by:		
Balance at beginning of year	9,963	9,660
Transfer from Revenue	<u>114</u>	<u>303</u>
	<u>10,077</u>	<u>9,963</u>

NOTES

NOTES

Fly To Fair Isle

Direct flights to Fair Isle from Lerwick (Tingwall).

6 flights per week (November - April) • 7 flights per week (May - October).

Also flights every Saturday from Sumburgh (May - October).

For more details, or to book, telephone 0345 222 111 or 01595 840246.

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Culloden Battlefield, 5m E of Inverness on B9006
Glencoe, 17m S of Fort William on A82
Glenfinnan, 18m W of Fort William on A830
Hugh Miller's Cottage, in Cromarty



Castles

Brodie Castle, 4m W of Forres on A96

Gardens

Inverewe, 8m NE of Gairloch on A832
Lochalsh Woodland Garden, near
Kyle of Lochalsh on A87



Mountains & Wild Land

Glencoe	17m S of Fort William on A82
Kintail	} 16m E of Kyle of Lochalsh on A87
Glomach	
West Affric	
Torridon	9m W of Kinlochewe on A896

For further details contact

Peggie Gordon, Abertaff House, Church St, Inverness IV1 1EU

Tel. No. Inverness 01463 232034

Fair Isle

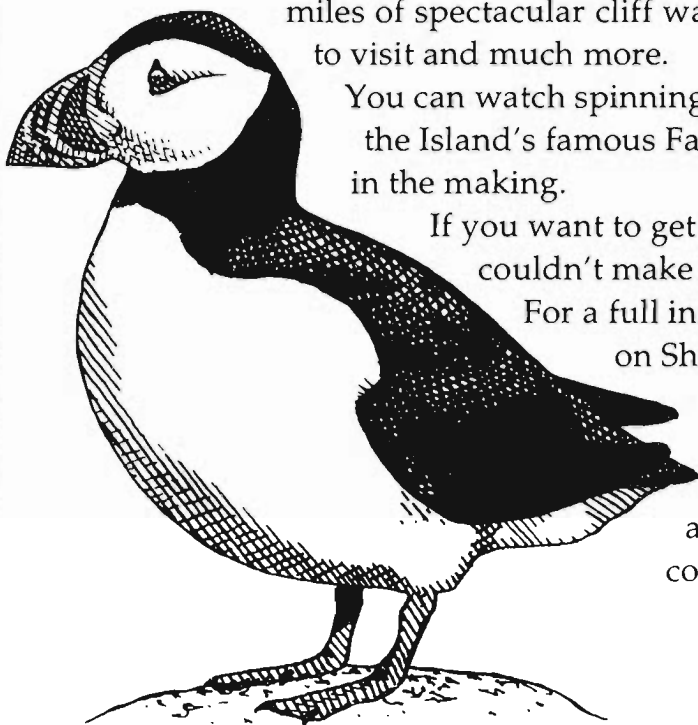
The Island that loves visitors

On Fair Isle - just three miles long by a mile wide - there's some of the best birdwatching in Britain. But as well as the birds, you'll find the friendliest welcome, miles of spectacular cliff walks, a museum to visit and much more.

You can watch spinning, weaving, and the Island's famous Fair Isle knitwear in the making.

If you want to get to nature - you couldn't make a better choice!

For a full information pack on Shetland and Fair Isle including details of travel and accommodation contact:



Shetland Islands Tourism

Market Cross, Lerwick, Shetland, ZE1 0LU

Tel: (015 95) 69 34 34 Fax: (015 95) 69 58 07