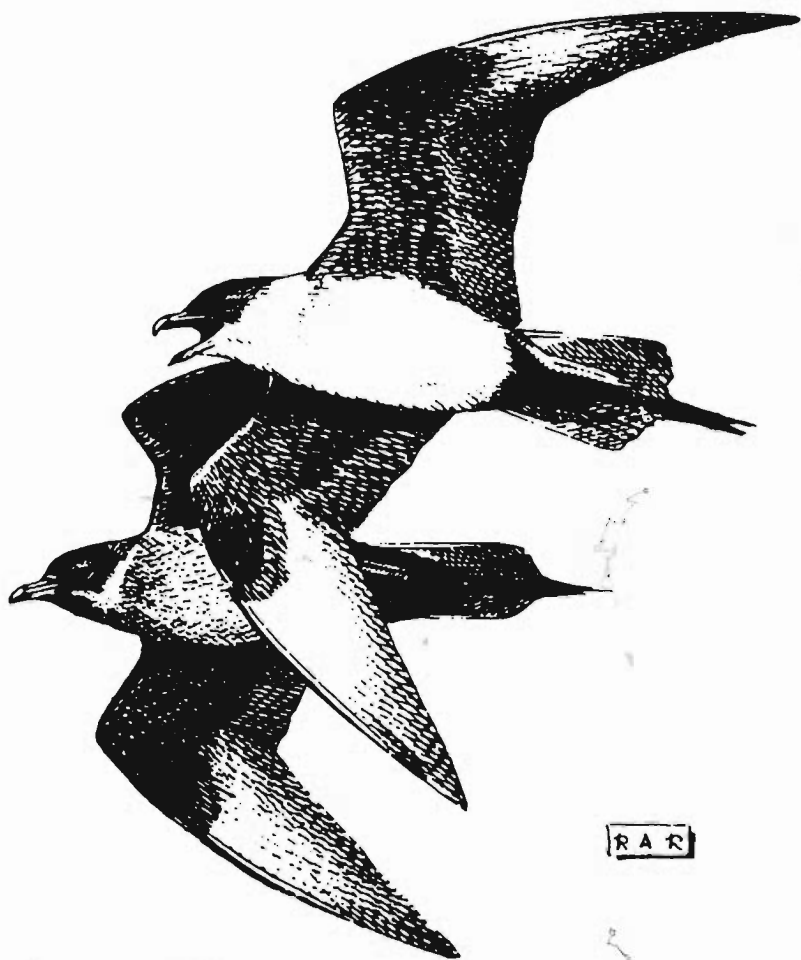
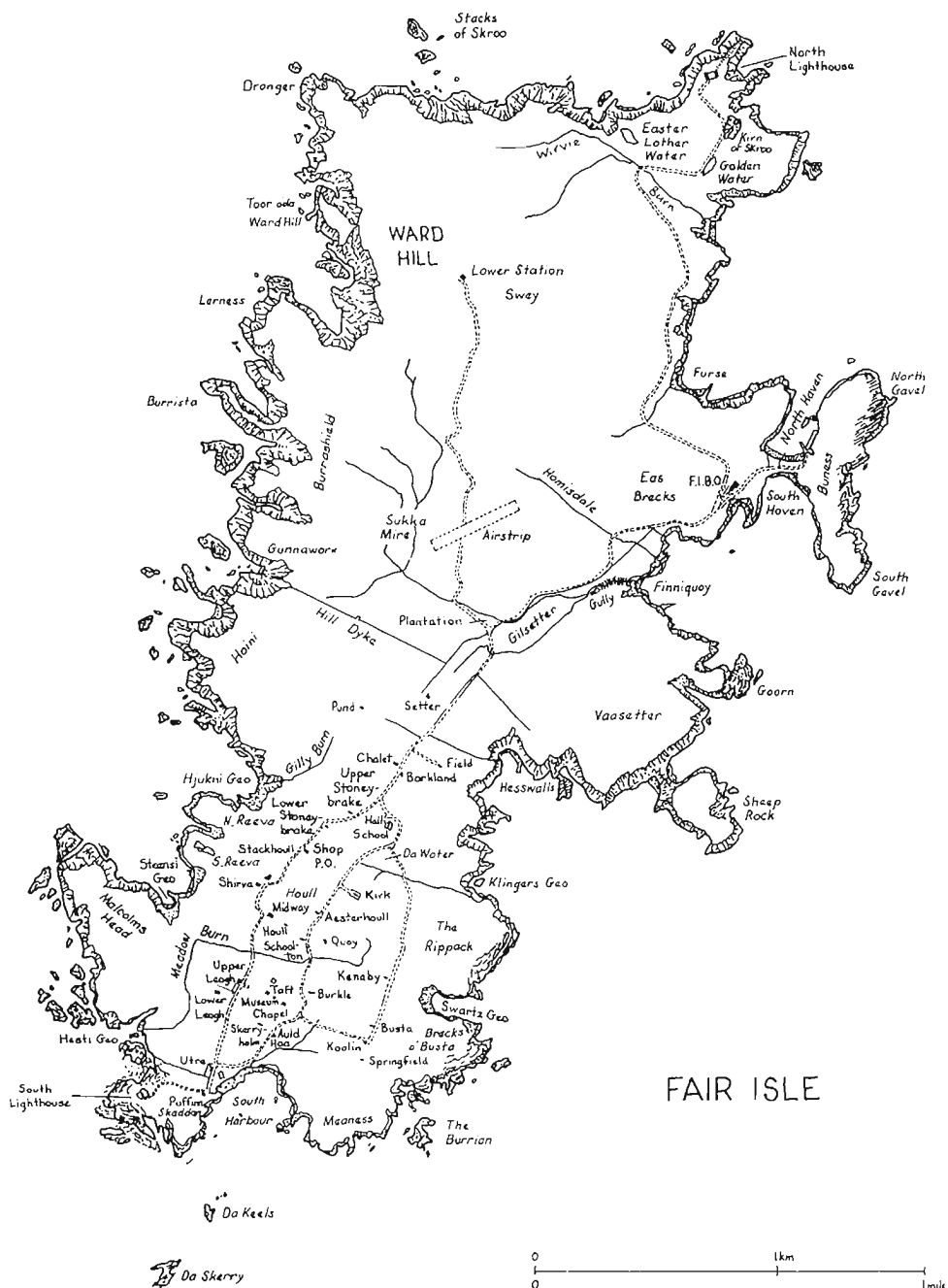


FAIR ISLE BIRD OBSERVATORY

Report for 1998



**50th Anniversary Edition;
August 28th 1948–August 28th 1998**



Fair Isle Bird Observatory

Report no. 51

50th Anniversary Edition August 28th 1948–August 28th 1998

Edited by Paul and Helen Baker

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Chairman's Report

Roy Dennis

This report provides another interesting milestone in the Bird Observatory's history. As ever we had a varied and exciting time with birds; the summer was marred by poor weather for the seabirds but an autumn of real rarities made it a migration to remember for our visitors.

But the most important landmark was the 50th birthday of the Fair Isle Bird Observatory. It is hard to have imagined, all those years ago, that we would still be successfully providing accommodation for visitors and continuing to record and study birds and wildlife of Fair Isle, as well as carrying out George Waterston's aims to help the economy and well-being of the island and its people.

The Observatory marked its anniversary in several ways in 1998. The northern staff meeting of Scottish Natural Heritage took place at the Observatory in May and the trustees arrived in the last days of May to hold the AGM on 1st June, fifty years after Ken and Esther Williamson's arrival on the isle. We had the official celebration on 28th August and in early October the main board of SNH stayed several days at the Observatory and held a very successful meeting with the islanders to discuss the Marine Initiative.

Like all aspects of human life, we had sad times as well and the death of Valerie Thom was one of them. Valerie spent 1955 as an assistant warden on Fair Isle and like many of us began a life-long association with the isle and the islanders. She was a tower of strength to FIBOT and undertook many roles over the years. Her book 'Fair Isle – an Island Saga', published in 1989 is both a masterpiece and a tribute to her love of the isle. She was the most ardent supporter of the Bird Observatory and gave great help, financially and in kind to us when we were in need. We miss her dearly.

Finally, I would like to thank everyone for their help and support over the year, particularly the trustees and the staff. Paul and Helen Baker and the staff at the Observatory had a demanding year with so many extra celebrations on top of the usual work, so to all of them we are especially grateful.

FIBOT Chairman's Speech at the Bird Observatory's 50th Birthday on the 28th August

On behalf of the Trustees and the staff of the Bird Observatory, I welcome you to the Observatory and thank you for coming from near and far to celebrate our 50th birthday. It is a particular pleasure to have Esther Williamson and her son Robin with us, for Esther was the hostess at the first Observatory party.

Fifty years ago on 28th August 1948, a tea party was held down at the old observatory. Thirty six islanders joined George Waterston, Ken and Esther Williamson and the first few visitors for a celebration of the opening of the Observatory. It was a real thank you to Rock Jimmy and his fellow islanders who had toiled to get the old naval huts ready for occupation. Once again this party is a chance for us to say a sincere thank you to the islanders of Fair Isle, past and present, for their help and encouragement over fifty years, and for their valued friendship. We are all delighted that the Bird Observatory is still flourishing after 50 years and it is a happy occasion. But occasions like this, can also be tinged with sadness, for we remember many who we wish were here to see the Bird Observatory reach its 50th birthday. I am thinking especially of George and Irene and the first director Ken Williamson; early stalwarts of the Trust, Ian Pitman and Sir Arthur Duncan; Shetlanders, like Theo Kay and Tom Henderson who helped so much in the early days, and of course many other island friends, who have passed away since 1948. I would like you to join me in a few moments of silence as a mark of respect to them all.

Fair Isle Bird Observatory was the brainchild of one incredible person, George Waterston. George first came from Edinburgh to Fair Isle to study birds as a young man in 1935 and like many others to come, fell under its spell. He returned each year and stayed with George Stout at Field and plans for a Bird Observatory blossomed in his mind.

World War II put paid to visits to Fair Isle and in 1941 George was captured in Crete by the Germans. While in a prisoner of war camp, George continued making the most detailed plans for an Observatory on Fair Isle. In 1943, George was repatriated in a Swedish hospital ship and his first sight of home was the familiar shape of Sheep Rock.

He visited the island in 1944 and a September visit in 1945 with Ian Pitman and Arthur Duncan helped to forge the way ahead. George bought the island in 1948 and by then the naval huts at North Haven had been vacated and acquired for the Observatory. Ken and Esther Williamson arrived on 1st June 1948, moved into the fledgling Observatory on 5th June and Ken wrote in the log by nightfall, the Fair Isle Bird Observatory was securely on its feet as an independent unit. The first visitors, Richard Fitter, Ian Pitman and George arrived on 28th August for the tea party and this is the date we celebrate today.

A feature of the Bird Observatory is the keeping of daily records and logs, and I've checked back through them for happenings on this particular date; there was a Booted Warbler in 1966, an Aquatic Warbler in 1997 and in 1987 it was a red-letter day with a Two-barred Crossbill and a Red-throated Pipit. At other times it is quiet and thoughts turn to other things; three Killer Whales off North Light in 1985 and in 1965 the islanders played football against the British Girls Exploring Society, but I made no mention of the result.

Ken and Esther were followed by Peter and Angela Davis; my wife Marina and I were here from 1963 to 1970 and have many wonderful memories of Fair Isle; then there was Roger and Judy Broad, Iain and Sally Robertson, Nick and Elisabeth Riddiford, Paul Harvey and Elisabeth Eastham, Paddy Jenks, Roger Riddington and Wendy Christie and now Paul and Helen Baker. Over the years they were assisted by a wonderful group who have worked as assistant wardens, cooks and other staff.

The old Observatory was replaced by a new building on the present site which opened on 18th October 1969 and it was renovated and re-opened on 26th August 1989. A succession of dedicated people have given their time, experience and influence to act as trustees over the years and our faithful 'Friends of Fair Isle' have been of immense support.

We have been indebted to many sources of funding and support over the years, I would like to mention a few – the National Trust for Scotland (who took over the island in 1954 from George), Shetland Islands Council, the Highland and Island's Development Board, subsequently Shetland Enterprise, the Dulverton and Pilgrim trusts, the Nature Conservancy and SNH and Shetland Island Tourism. Friends in Shetland have always been there to help in a thousand different ways and so have many regular Fair Isle visitors.

Fair Isle has always been famous for observing bird migration and especially for finding rare and unusual vagrants from around the world. It is a birdwatcher's mecca. 353 species of birds have been identified over the years and 26 species were identified for the first time in Britain on the isle. Over 200 different species are recorded each year, with a peak of 214 in 1992 and amazingly, new species for Fair Isle are regularly found, with the best year being 1961 with seven.

All of us have favourite days to remember, for me the finding of Europe's first Song Sparrow in a heap of rusting barbed wire on Ward Hill on 27th April 1959 was one, but it is the days of great migration which are really exciting. Like, 3rd May 1969, when the island flooded with birds and I wrote in the log that it was the most spectacular day's migration I had witnessed on Fair Isle. By nightfall we had recorded 77 species, with peaks of 1500 Tree Pipits, 500 Bramblings, 400 Willow Warblers, 300 Ring Ouzels as well as 45 Wrynecks and 32 Ortolan Buntings.

The daily recording of migration has been maintained since 1948 and is now the most valuable archive information on bird migration in North-west Europe. Data has been used in many books and publications and the serious side of research into migration started in earnest with Ken Williamson pioneering work on migrational drift. By Peter Davis's time, our knowledge of migration was greatly enhanced by radar studies and even to this day we learn new things about migratory birds, their migrations and populations.

The seabirds have increased during the Observatory's time and three species colonised the island. Common terns in 1970, Gannets in 1975, and Arctic Terns in

1980. In recent decades the study of breeding seabirds and their relationship with the marine environment and fisheries have become a very important part of the Observatory's summer work. Fair Isle is now one of the most important seabird monitoring sites for JNCC and SNH.

Since 1948, 302,000 birds of 265 species have been ringed on Fair Isle. Four thousand one hundred and thirty nine of them have been reported away from the isle and about 500 birds ringed in other places have been found on the isle. I particularly remember a Rustic Bunting we ringed in June 1963 which was found on a Greek island the following October. Last year one of the Arctic Terns was found in South Africa and the oldest bird so far was a Fulmar of 34 years.

About 12,500 visitors from over 30 countries have stayed at the Observatory, many have returned on many occasions, like Jack Keiser with us today, who first came in 1968 and is now a regular. A visit to Fair Isle Bird Observatory has been the spark for many visitors to take a more active interest in birds and nature; it has been a training ground for many professional wildlife people and over the years many young people have studied for school projects, degrees and PHD's on the island's birds.

For many their abiding memories of Fair Isle are not necessarily the birds, it's the islanders. When I look back to my first year in 1959, it's the people and events I remember most warmly. Being offshore with Georgie, Alec and Willie when they caught two monster halibuts or climbing Sheep Rock to help gather the sheep, or a glass of milk and a fresh scone with Edith at Midway or Helen at Busta. Each generation will have similar memories.

George's original plan was to set up a Bird Observatory to study bird migration and the seabirds, to give hospitality, encouragement and training to naturalists and to assist with the economic and social well being of the island. In the late 1950's the future of the communities of the outlying islands of Scotland was not rosy and Fair Isle's population reached a low point of 42 people.

Now the island is buoyant with many young children, and a rich array of traditional and new occupations. We wish you every success and hope that we can continue to bring benefits to the isle. We also endorse your wish to manage the seas around your isle and to harvest them in a sustainable way.

Today we thank you for being our hosts on your island and we are indebted to you for your support and help over the years. In conclusion, I ask all present to toast the health of the Fair Islanders and the Fair Isle Bird Observatory.

Warden and Administrator's Report

Paul and Helen Baker

1998 will be remembered as a special year for Fair Isle with a number of landmark events for the island and its community, and a busy season at the Observatory. March 31st saw the end of an era as the Northern Lighthouse Board completed the automation of lighthouses in Scotland with that of the Fair Isle South Light. Princess Anne, as patron of the NLB, performed the automation which was followed by a tour of island crofts and afternoon refreshments back at the Observatory. This early start to the season meant that much of the usual pre-season maintenance and decoration had to be done by the end of March, as staff and Commissioners of the NLB began to arrive on the 29th to stay for the automation event.

April was quiet with few guests but included a team of divers who spent some time with us whilst replacing the bolts that hold the slipway rails for the "Good Shepherd". Easter Sunday lunch was offered at the Observatory on April 12th and promised to be a busy event with 42 islanders booked, but a rather nasty flu outbreak kept most away on the day. The next event was the area meeting of Scottish Natural Heritage from May 13th–15th, where all the Shetland and Orkney staff came together. It was an important event for the community as they presented the Fair Isle Marine Environment and Tourism Initiative (FIMETI) to SNH during a productive afternoon session. SNH hosted a social evening at the Observatory for the islanders which included a buffet and a slide presentation on St. Kilda by one of the SNH staff.

The 50th anniversary of the arrival to the island of the first warden Kenneth Williamson and his wife, Esther, was June 1st. To mark this occasion the Annual General Meeting and a meeting of the Directors was held on this date at the Observatory.

Late July is normally a quiet time at the Observatory as few visitors come to the isle. To keep up the hectic pace of life, we invited the island's school-aged children to stay with us for two days of environmental activities and fun, from the 28th July. With the help of some parents, Alan Bull and Eileen Thomson, and a menu that included children's favourites like spaghetti, we had an enjoyable but exhausting time.

August saw the long awaited 'official' celebration of the 50th anniversary of the Observatory. The party was held on August 28th, exactly 50 years from the day the island celebrated its opening with an afternoon tea party. We celebrated in style, with virtually all the islanders, a few past wardens, FIBO Directors, special guests and visitors staying on the island at the time attending. Following a speech by the current Chairman and past warden, Roy Dennis, and a short speech by James Stout of Skerryholm, the event was commemorated by the unveiling of a plaque in the lounge by Esther Williamson. A special celebration cake, made by our cook Brian Skinner, was cut by the oldest and youngest members of the community, namely

Jerry Stout of Lower Leogh and Oscar Whaley of North Shirva. Everyone enjoyed a superb buffet and talked the night away! A new Fair Isle Bird Observatory sign with logo, created by Patrick Ross-Smith of Burkle, was added to the front of the building.

Another major event of the year was the commissioning of the new aerogenerator system on September 8th. Lord Sewell, Scottish Office Minister, was to unveil a commemorative seat on the Houll, although this celebration was cancelled due to severe weather. The islanders went ahead with their own tribute to Murray Sommerville, the chief engineer, who was already on the isle. Tribute was also paid to everyone else who has had a role in establishing the two aerogenerators by giving a surprise party in the Hall that evening. The last major event of the year was a two day visit by the Scottish Natural Heritage Board members on October 6th. FIBOT Chairman, Roy Dennis and Observatory staff gave a presentation on the history and role of the Observatory, including the Ranger Service which is part funded by SNH, on the morning of the 7th. This was followed by an afternoon of presentation by the islanders on the Fair Isle Marine Environment and Tourism Initiative (FIMETI). While on the isle, Board members had the chance to see the whole island, visiting the museum and meeting many of the islanders.

Ornithologically, 1998 was also a very busy year with continuation of research commitments, visits by research students and an excellent autumn migration. The new three year seabird monitoring contract (with the Joint Nature Conservation Committee) began in 1998. Unfortunately, Fair Isle's seabirds suffered mixed fortunes. For species that feed close to the surface of the sea, it was the worst breeding season since 1990 (the height of the "sandeel crash"). The Arctic Tern colonies declined from 1,730 pairs in 1997 to 1,249, and produced only one fledgling. Consequently the skuas that parasitised the terns also suffered. Only nine Arctic Skua chicks fledged due in part to depredation by Great Skuas which also suffered from cannibalism, even though the fledging success for Great Skuas was still very good. It does not matter how often you hear of seabird colonies failing through depredation and starvation – it never hits home until it is experienced, and it was very demoralising and disturbing to see the decimation of the tern and Kittiwake breeding colonies. It was not all doom and gloom though with the auks and Shags fledging average numbers of chicks, while Gannets did extremely well and continue their long term trend of increase.

Two research students stayed on Fair Isle in 1998, and used the Observatory as their base. Catherine Gray of Durham University came to study the breeding biology of the Fulmar. Jane Reid now at Glasgow University, returned to the island after her stint as assistant warden in 1997, this time to carry out research on nest attendance by Starlings using the islands well monitored breeding population.

As usual, a great variety of migrants visited the island over the year, providing most of our visitors with outstanding views of those Fair Isle 'specialities' which are

extremely rare in the rest of the UK. One new species – Isabelline Wheatear, was added to the island list in 1998. Sadly, many of the common migrant passerines were very scarce on Fair Isle in spring 1998, hopefully this is not a reflection on the numbers returning from Africa. The variety of species recorded during spring and autumn migration was excellent in general, with the last week of September and first few days of October being every birders dream, with an array of scarce migrants and Fair Isle specialities present. Visiting birdwatchers were highly delighted and many booked their stay for the autumn of 1999 whilst on the island.

A good variety of birds were ringed on Fair Isle in 1998, although the numbers ringed of some seabird species were below average, due to the sandeel shortage. The anniversary year was an opportunity to try out some of the old methods of trapping birds as used in the early days of the Observatory. A variety of birds were trapped using short lengths of mist net, drag netting and a duck trap that was created on Golden Water. Some passerine species that have rarely been caught on Fair Isle were ringed in excellent numbers this year due to the use of whoosh nets (nets thrown over birds on the ground using elastic). The continued use of this technique for species such as Skylark may ultimately help in the research on the alarming national decline of this species.

Bookings at the Lodge showed a welcome increase of 20.6% from 2,014 bednights in 1997 to 2,429 bednights in 1998. We began a more intensive campaign of overseas advertising in 1998 with information on the island and brochures going to observatories in the US, and Europe, as well as international advertising at an “expo” in Belgium. The number of requests for brochures we have received by e-mail is very encouraging and hopefully along with the new web site, will continue to increase our custom. As usual the high cost of travelling to Fair Isle from within the UK continues to be a problem. As in past years, many of our guests found booking flights very difficult due to the poor standard of information made available by British Airways. Toward the end of the year, Shetland Islands Tourism had initiated talks with Loganair, BA and SIT members in an attempt over the next twelve months to improve travel information and options to Shetland and Fair Isle. Loganair have already provisionally agreed to increase the number of stops at Sumburgh, en route to Fair Isle, to connect with flights arriving from the south. Time will tell if the service can be improved but we must remember that while it is easy to criticise both BA and Loganair, they need some positive feedback as well as the negative. Fortunately, tour groups continue to visit the Observatory in increasing numbers and this year we welcomed groups from Shetland Wildlife Tours, Speyside Wildlife, Wildlife Travel, Island Holidays and the Royal Scottish Geographical Society. At the 50th anniversary it is useful to look back at the clientele of the Observatory. We now recognise that less than half of our visitors are keen birders, due in part to the increasing occurrence of ‘Fair Isle Specialities’ elsewhere in the UK. The future of the Observatory depends on our visitors and

consequently we must find new ways to make Fair Isle attractive to non-birders to make the future more secure.

The fourth year of the Ranger Service (part-funded by Scottish Natural Heritage) saw the development of some new projects, as well as the continuation of others. The regular link with the Fair Isle school was maintained by visits to the school plus "field trips", and enhanced by a two day summer camp held at the Observatory where the island children participated in a range of environmental awareness projects. A postcard with the children's drawings of a variety of island seabirds with their local names, was created in a joint venture between the school, the Observatory and Dave Wheeler. The self-guided walk leaflets continued to be very popular with visitors, with over a thousand of each of the three currently available being taken. Day trips from Orkney were initiated by Loganair during which visitors toured the whole island and came to the Observatory for refreshments and an informal chat about the work of the Observatory. Towards the end of the school summer holidays, Loganair were bringing visitors to the island on four days of the week. We continued to maintain good contact with visiting cruise ships and also with islanders over access issues which hopefully will result in the improvement of the network of stiles around the island in time for the autumn migration in 1999. With continued financial support and interest from SNH, the Ranger Service should expand in the future to be able to bring a more structured range of activities to the island's visitors and may help in bringing new visitors to the Observatory.

On the staff front, Brian Skinner returned as Cook for a second year and produced excellent spreads for both the lighthouse automation and for the traditional Easter Sunday lunch for the islanders. Helen cooked on Brian's days off until the arrival of David Carruthers in late June as the Assistant Cook. David showed his skills in preparing a lot of the food for the 50th Anniversary celebration and excelled at sticky toffee pudding which was enjoyed by all. Alan Bull returned for a second year as General Assistant and was invaluable in helping out, particularly while we were understaffed. We received invaluable help from Cathy Stout, Triona Thomson and Eileen Thomson. The second General Assistant position was finally filled in August by the extremely hardworking and dedicated Linda Fayers. At those times when we were short-handed in the kitchen, other staff and both Catherine Gray and Jane Reid all rolled their sleeves up and got stuck into washing-up!

Charlie Holt was the Assistant Warden this year with Steve Turner as Seabird Monitoring Officer. I am extremely grateful to all those staff who willingly put in a lot of unpaid overtime over the season and showed such a selfless dedication to the Observatory. As well as the regular staff we had assistance from many people over the year who helped the Observatory to function well and made valuable contributions. It is gratifying to see that people rally round to help an organisation such as the Observatory and we thank you all for your help, it was much appreciated. The John Harrison Memorial Fund continues to attract young birders

and this year paid travel expenses for five to come to the island and assist with our work. Jeremy Bird, Torcuil Grant, Matthew Harding, Henry Walker and Alex Wood, all worked very hard and experienced new things. I hope they now have a good idea of how a bird observatory works!

Thank you to all the people who have helped with our maintenance problems in 1998, namely Patrick Ross-Smith, the Northmen (John Best and Brian Wilson), Kenny Stout, Dave Lowe, Stuart Thomson, Robert Mitchell, Jimmy Stout, Malcolm Adamson and also David Carruthers for turning his hand to tasks that did not involve cooking! Thanks also to the crew of the Good Shepherd IV for the continued transport of supplies, and Robert and Fiona Mitchell at Stackhoull Stores for excellent service throughout the year. Thanks to Dave Wheeler for weather and plane information, the scanning of the school postcard, help with the web site and various other computer related assistance. We are grateful to Iain Stout for tending to the needs of the Skadan flock throughout the year.

Ornithologically, Jim Watt and Nick Riddiford provided regular contributions to the Observatory log, and drew attention to interesting birds. Nick Riddiford provided the only regular moth trapping data for the isle this year. The experienced help of islanders during the seabird breeding season was invaluable so a big thank you especially to Michael Stout and Brian Wilson for their help. Diana de Palacio arrived in June, initially to work as a General Assistant but unfortunately, was unable to work due to permit difficulties, so became a very important, long-term ornithological volunteer. Together with Lisa O'Neill, they proved invaluable members of our seabird monitoring team, making an extremely valuable contribution to both field and paperwork, and were greatly missed when they had to leave. Our sincere thanks to them both for all their hard work on a voluntary basis. Others who assisted during the seabird season were Ian Grier, Wildlife Travel, Jane Reid, and Northants Bird Club (especially Neil and Eleanor McMahon). Thank you also to the many visitors who are too numerous to mention individually but assisted us in various tasks over the season such as tree planting, bird bag repair, and bird trapping, especially Storm Petrel sessions (I apologise to those who didn't get to see a Leach's Petrel – I did try my best!).

Unfortunately, it is impossible to acknowledge everyone who found an unusual or interesting bird on Fair Isle during 1998, because we had so many visitors and so many interesting birds. Special thanks to those individuals who found birds classed as "National Rarities", which provided particular enjoyment. I thank them all for their contributions. I also thank all those people who drew our attention to the many scarce and common migrants that often proved as exciting to see as the species reviewed by the BBRC, and to everyone who contributed to the logging of the daily migrant census in the evenings.

Thanks also to Roger Riddington for the benefit of his experience and to Paul Harvey and Dave Okill for their help. Thank you to Tim and Irene Loseby who

made an invaluable contribution in promoting the Observatory at the British Birdwatching Fair and helped raise funds by selling merchandise. Special thanks go to those individuals and organisations that provided donations or financial support for the Observatory through aid, grants, or paid contracts. Thanks to Gordon Baker for 400 tree cuttings, bushes, and volunteer work, Valerie Young for donation of storage cabinets and volunteer work, Jill Slee Blackadder, Dave Okill, Roger Riddington, Elaine at SEPA, and the Wood family for tree and shrub cuttings to continue the establishment of the Observatory plantation. Angus Duncan for his Lewis Chessmen, Lewis and Vivian Ross-Smith for comics, Karen, Joe, Oscar and Dave from Shirva for many books and a box of childrens toys, the estate of Valerie Thom, P & O Scottish Ferries Ltd, Barbour Clothing, the Joint Nature Conservation Committee, Scottish Natural Heritage, the Shetland Oil Terminal Environmental Assessment Group, the British Trust for Ornithology, the Shetland Wildlife Trust, and the National Trust for Scotland. I also thank everyone who has contributed to this report: Alexander Bennett, Roy Dennis, Catherine Gray, Charlie Holt, Jason Waine, Dave Wheeler, Mike Wood, and those who provided vignettes (Ian Fisher, Stuart Rivers and Steve Turner), photos (Helen Baker, Brian Clasper, Michael McKee, Stuart Rivers and Simon Stirrup), or proof read the report (Alan Bull, Charlie Holt, Dave Okill and Steve Turner).

So 50 years have gone by, what will the next 50 bring? Hopefully the Observatory will survive for many years to come. This year saw the first computerisation of the daily log, which although still has some teething problems is definitely the way forward. At present we estimate that the census and ringing data collected on paper over the last 49 years, would take up to eight years for one person to sort and computerise. A big concern is that the records in the Observatory are the only copies of the data in existence and so are very vulnerable. Computerisation will allow easy use of data and backup copies to be stored at other locations for safety. Virtually all of the UK's Bird Observatories now computerise data with Fair Isle being one of the last to make this move. Hopefully this will greatly increase the number of scientific publications to come out of the Observatory. We also anticipate a broadening of the range of clientele using the Observatory. The internet may help to make this possible, along with continued development of our web site. The continued existence of the Ranger service and the Seabird Monitoring contracts are vital, not only for the information they provide, but also to provide sufficient funds to secure enough ornithologists to make whole island census counts possible, and provide a reasonable level of service to the public.

The 50th Anniversary year was interesting but very taxing on both of us and will be our only year at the Observatory. We would like to send out a big thank you to all the islanders who made the staff of 1998 feel so welcome and gave us their hospitality and friendship during our time on the island. They are what Fair Isle is really all about.



50TH ANNIVERSARY – Unveiling the Plaque

Dave Wheeler



50TH ANNIVERSARY – Cutting the Cake

Dave Wheeler



PLANTATION – Trap repair

Helen Baker



DUCK TRAP

Helen Baker

The National Trust for Scotland, 1998

Although on the face of it 1998 appeared to be a quiet year, this clearly masked the underlying busyness of the Islanders and the commitment to ongoing projects.

The 10th March saw the welcome return of wind power to the Island with the commissioning of the two aerogenerators, the refurbished 60kw turbine on the Houll and the newly installed 100kw turbine on the Brecks o' Busta. Between them, should there be sufficient wind available, there is more than adequate capacity to meet the island's demand. Although there have been a number of gremlins and glitches in the system, these have been ironed out and we now look forward to a settling down period and getting used to working on wind energy again. . . .

Since 1984 the National Trust for Scotland and the Fair Islanders have been working closely, through the Fair Isle Committee, to work towards autonomous energy production. We have now taken a major step with the commissioning of the system and we are looking forward to the formation of the Fair Isle Electricity Company, which will be wholly owned by the Fair Islanders who will now have a majority say in the new company board. The Trust will present to the Company all the equipment and control buildings, etc, who will then have control of its operation. The Trust will remain a permanent member of the six person board to represent our interests and ongoing commitment to this exciting project. With all the talk about community ownership around these days, it is nice to think that Fair Isle is still leading the field with its forward thinking approach.

Since the construction of the new croft house on Taft there has been a bit of a hiatus in terms of house renovations and new developments, largely due to the serious lack of funding around from the usual agencies. However the Islanders and the Trust, through the Fair Isle Housing Forum, are developing a closer partnership in housing to drive forward a new housing policy and to try and attract funding from other sources. The smart money these days lies with community initiatives and hopefully, all being well, an application to the Rural Challenge Fund, Scottish Homes, Shetland Islands Council and with the Trust's contribution, we are hoping to crack a major housing development programme once and for all.

In September it was hoped that Lord Sewell would officially inaugurate the renewable energy scheme and at the same time launch the Fair Isle Marine Partnership to the wide world. Unfortunately, for the very reasons that make wind power successful on Fair Isle, it was too windy and it caused us to postpone the inauguration. It is a little ironic now that we have a plaque and a tribute and dedication cast in Caithness stone on the Houll, without the official sanction of Lord Sewell. However, he has promised to return to Fair Isle to give the windmills his blessing and has fortunately managed to launch the Marine Partnership in Edinburgh.

Sadly, Ella Henderson, sister of Georgie Stout of Upper Stoneybrek, passed away on 28th April 1998. Ella and her husband John, managed the shop at Stackhoull for a few years in the late 80s. However, we have been fortunate in welcoming to the Island, Jude Ross-Smith with her children Duncan and Calum who will be living with Patrick Ross-Smith at Burkle. Michael and Cathy Stout returned to Fair Isle with Magnus and Jennifer and have settled into Barkland with Georgie Stout, since Margaret has now left Fair Isle and returned to Lerwick in Shetland.

What does the year ahead bring? Well, hopefully with *new* and *old* families coming to live on Fair Isle, with the new invigorated housing programme about to get underway and the holistic approach to the management of the land and the sea, there is hopefully a bright future ahead.

Alexander M Bennett ARICS
Factor (Highland)

Fulmar Research on Fair Isle in 1998

Catherine Gray (Durham University)

The Fulmar is one of the most abundant seabirds in the northern hemisphere, with an estimated 300,000 breeding pairs in the North Sea. Fair Isle has the third largest colony in Britain after St. Kilda and Foula, with approximately 43,000 breeding pairs. Little is still known about the Fulmar's diet and relationship to the marine environment despite its great abundance and potential for impact on fish stocks.

Like most petrels, Fulmars are very long-lived (oldest Fair Isle Fulmar 34 years old, and oldest known bird approximately 50), defer breeding until the age of about 6 to 8 years, and raise only one chick per year. Chicks grow slowly, taking approximately six weeks from hatching to fledging. They store large amounts of fat and reach a peak weight of approximately one and a half times the adult weight approximately a week before fledging. The excess weight is gradually lost by starvation when the chick is abandoned by its parents, until the bird is light enough to fly. A lot of recent research has focused on these characteristics. One explanation for the slow chick growth is that breeding Fulmars are severely limited by the scarcity of food in the marine environment. However, the large fat reserves in chicks would indicate that this is not the case. Other explanations suggest that fat reserves may provide a reliable energy source for the chick when feeding rates vary, or that the diet may be deficient not in energy, but in nutrients essential for growth.

Previous studies have shown broad differences in the diets of Fulmars in different areas, e.g. Foula and St. Kilda. Associated with this, there are differences in foraging trip length and the frequency of chick feeding. I intend to look in more detail at these differences, between years and between colonies. I am also interested in patterns of fat storage in relation to the nutritional quality of food and frequency of feeding.

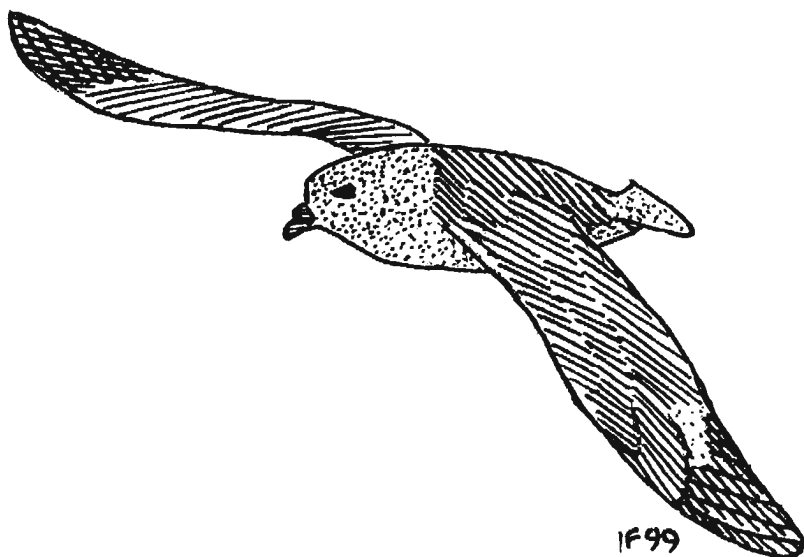
This summer on Fair Isle I was looking at rates of chick growth by weighing and measuring a sample of chicks on the Stack in North Haven, from the age of about 2 weeks (when the chicks are no longer being brooded by their parents), to fledging at about 6 weeks old. I also wanted to know how often and how much the chicks are fed; done by weighing the chicks at 6 hour intervals over periods of 48 hours, and observing the nests to see when parents returned to feed the chicks. The time parents spend at the nest can also be used as an indicator of food supply. If food is plentiful and easy to find, then parents will have more time to spend on the nest, guarding the chick or defending the nest site. Conversely in a poorer year, they should spend more time away from the nest, searching for food.

To study diet, I collected food samples from Fulmar chicks at other sites on the island (a lot of people at the Observatory commented on the smell!). These samples

are now in the freezer in my lab, awaiting analysis. I will be particularly interested in whether or not Fulmars were eating sandeels this season, as an apparent lack of sandeels was thought to be one reason for the poor breeding success of terns and Kittiwakes. Observatory staff indicated that sandeels were also scarce in the diet of the Puffins which fed their chicks mostly on clupeids (herring and sprats) and other small fish. Also of interest is the importance of discarded whitefish from trawlers. Fulmars around Shetland are very successful scavengers around fishing boats, but in other areas discards are much less important, and their diet consists mostly of crustaceans and small juvenile fish.

Similar work was carried out last year on Fair Isle by Richard Phillips (Durham University), and although I still have much analysis to do, 1998 appears to be a poorer year for breeding success. This may be partly due to poor weather when the chicks were newly hatched and a lower frequency of chick provisioning (although the chicks fledged at a similar age and weight in both years). Hopefully you will see the results of this year's work in a future report.

Finally, thanks again to everyone on Fair Isle, whether an islander or a visitor, who made my stay so enjoyable, and special thanks to those of you who helped with my work in any way – it was greatly appreciated!



Blue Fulmar (Ian Fisher)

The Isabelline Wheatear on Fair Isle, 20th to 30th September 1998

Charlie Holt

Fittingly, during the Observatory's 50th Anniversary year, a new species was added to the Fair Isle list. The number of species that have been recorded on the isle now stands at 354. This latest addition, arrived in the shape of an Isabelline Wheatear on Malcolm's Head during the afternoon of the 20th September. It was found by three visiting birdwatchers; Phil and Richard Crockett, and Ian Gordon, staying at Upper Leogh. After making sure of their identification, they alerted other observers on the island and everyone was able to enjoy the bird before dusk. It remained in the same general vicinity, often in view alongside Northern Wheatears, until the 30th September when it was rumoured to have been taken by a Peregrine Falcon.

Isabelline Wheatear breeds in south west Russia, southern Greece and the Middle East, wintering in the Sahel zone of the south Sahara, Arabia and Pakistan. This record constitutes the fifteenth record for Britain and the third for Scotland. The warm southerly winds prevalent at the time assisted in the occurrence of this individual and helped to give the isle a Mediterranean feel with birders even out in their shorts!

Description:

Structure and appearance

Superficially similar to Northern Wheatear, but slightly larger and with a slightly heavier build. This difference in build was attributable to a proportionately larger head and bill, plus a longer legged appearance. Upright stance, and relatively short tail and primary projection. The overall impression was of a very pale, sandy, concolorous wheatear.

Head

Supercilium a pale buffish colour, more clearly defined in front of the eye than behind. Eyestripe dark and prominent between the bill and eye but not present behind, creating a somewhat open-faced expression with pale buff throat and ear coverts, slightly darker behind the eye.

Upperparts

Sandy buff upperparts; crown, nape, mantle and rump, probably best described as a shade 'less bright' than Northern Wheatear. A generally concolorous appearance with a lack of rufous brown tones often present in female and first-winter Northern Wheatears. The lack of contrast between mantle and upperwing was obvious, particularly striking when viewed for the first time.

Upperwing

This pale concoloration of the upperwing was enhanced by broad pale buff fringing to the coverts, particularly on the greater coverts. This generally pale appearance made the prominent blackish alula the focal point of the wing. Primaries, secondaries and tertials were all dark brown with buff fringing, warmest on the first tertial. Primary projection appeared to be slightly shorter than on Northern Wheatear.

Underwing

Axillaries and underwing coverts white, contrasting with Northern Wheatear whose underwing is grey.

Underparts

Underparts off-white to very pale buff; buffest on flanks and upper breast, palest on underbelly. Undertail coverts were off-white.

Bare parts

The bill was black, relatively deep based, and appeared both slightly longer and thicker than on Northern Wheatear. The legs were black and appeared relatively long for a wheatear, contributing to the upright stance.

The eyes were dark.

Fair Isle Heligoland trap renovation and plantation improvements in 1998

Paul Baker

Many of the heligoland traps needed repairs this spring, after severe gales caused moderate to extensive damage to most of the traps over the 1997/98 winter. Extensive repairs were made to the Double Dyke, North Grind, and Hjon Dyke traps, and minor ones to the Gully, Vaadal, Observatory, and Single Dyke traps, occupying much time during the spring. The well-known landmark – the Plantation trap on the Vaadal stream – took up much of our “spare” time in 1998. It was in pretty poor condition, with large tears in the mesh, and badly rotted beams. We did not have enough time in the spring to carry out extensive repairs; therefore much of the summer and early autumn was dedicated to the repair work. Eight of the taller spruces in the trap were dead or dying and needed removal/replacing. After consulting the crofters we decided to remove/trim the eight trees so that some cover would be left for birds. Enough branches were removed to enable saplings planted under the trees to have enough light for growth. The trap itself had fallen into a state of disrepair that allowed birds to escape near the west catching box, and also along the north wall, and several of the beams had almost rotted through. Importantly, the replacement of rotten beams means the trap should not collapse in the near future!

We trimmed and removed the eight tree tops in the spring, then under-planted the inside of the trap with 50 willow cuttings, 5 *Olearia hastii*, and 5 *Rosa rugosa*, interspersed with 25 conifers. Conifers inside the trap were an obvious problem; not only had they grown through the roof of the traps, but also reduced the numbers of warblers trapped (most warblers prefer not to enter a solid wall of conifers). We planted conifers mainly to provide shelter from the wind for the deciduous species. Most should be removed in a few years time, before they choke the deciduous species, although some should be retained along the southern side of the trap to be trained into large bushes to attract conifer-loving species. Management will be required to ensure that these conifers are never allowed to reach the height of the roof. We hope that the deciduous species will grow up and provide cover to draw warblers and other deciduous-loving species.

In August, when there were few migrants around, we stripped all the old wire off the top of the Plantation trap. We then chopped the tops off the live trees inside the trap and removed them with the wire mesh that they had grown through. All rotted roof beams were then removed and replaced. Once the walls were reconstructed, we had the challenging task of placing a roof back on the trap. We used the same method used in the early 1990s which was to stitch all the sections of roof together, roll it up, lie it on the top of the trap, and unroll it while attaching it. Thankfully the

method worked again. It took approximately three weeks of hard work to rebuild the trap, but it was an extremely worthwhile task because the trap generally produces approximately one-third of the birds trapped from the whole Heligoland system. After this work, little should need doing to it for several years. Hopefully the new variety of trees and bushes should be more attractive to passerines in a few years when they have matured. As well as under-planting the Plantation trap, we also planted new *Rosa rugosa*, *Olearia hastii*, and Gorse (*Ulex europeaus*) in the small enclosure in the Gully to increase the area of cover for passerines.

The new plantation by the lounge at the observatory reached its third spring in a sad state with many of the saplings dead, or badly burned by wind and salt. We secured another grant from the Shetland Wildlife Fund and purchased approximately 500 new trees and shrubs, as well as many wooden pallets and fence posts to provide shelter from the wind. We also received donations of many cuttings. Again a mix of conifer and deciduous species were planted, with the conifers and pallets to help provide protection. Several species previously planted (Sycamore, Elder, Rowan, Swedish White-beam) had either failed or were coping poorly with the conditions, so we selected species that are hopefully more hardy in the salty, windblown environment of Fair Isle. In total, 500 willow of several species, all from coastal/windblown areas as well as 40 Gorse, 20 *Olearia hastii*, 30 *Rubus spp.*, 150 *Rosa rugosa*, 50 *Fuschia*, 20 honeysuckle, several Alder (*Alnus glutinosa*) and two *Escallonia macrantha* were planted. Flowering Currant, which should do well in this climate has done very poorly so far because of the particular method of taking and preservation of cuttings until they can be shipped in. A horticulturist advised putting cuttings on a sheet of plastic with a thin layer of damp compost and rolling it up to form a secure bundle. It remains to be seen whether this approach will increase the establishment rate of this species on Fair Isle. The new plantation held a good variety of birds this year, and was still looking good at the end of October. Especially popular with warblers, it also produced regular Twite, Bluethroat, Black Redstart, Whinchat, Northern Wheatear and Red-backed Shrike. Thanks to everyone who was involved in this work for all your contributions, especially volunteers Henry Walker and Matthew Harding for all their time and energy.

Report on causes of death in birds on Fair Isle in 1998

Jason Waine

Members of staff and visitors to Fair Isle Bird Observatory, together with local people, have been collecting the bodies of bird casualties for post-mortem examination almost continuously for eight years. This has allowed me to examine over 280 birds, a figure that is building into a significant database.

Each bird has its date and place of discovery recorded together with any significant details surrounding its acquisition. It is then stored frozen until it can be conveniently dispatched for autopsy. As described in earlier Fair Isle Bird Reports (see 1996), the body is examined externally and a range of biometrics is taken before the internal organs are examined. Any interesting features of the post-mortem are photographed and parasites are saved for future identification at the Natural History Museum, London. Tissues from certain target birds (mainly raptors) are sent to The Institute of Terrestrial Ecology for quantitative analysis for background poisons.

In 1998, eight bodies collected in 1997 and 58 collected during 1998 of 38 species were recovered and sent to me for examination (Table 1). The most commonly recovered birds were Arctic Tern (nine, including eight pulli) Song Thrush (six), Redwing (four) and Great Skua (four). Rarity highlights included an adult female Red-backed Shrike and a first year male Icterine Warbler, both species being a "first" for this study. In addition, another 57 corpses representing 30 species (including an additional 15 species from those sent to me) were examined for obvious signs of cause of death on Fair Isle during 1998 (Table 2). Therefore, a total of 123 bodies were examined representing 54 species.

Table 1. Details of post-mortem findings

<i>Species</i>	<i>Age</i>	<i>Sex</i>	<i>Date Found</i>	<i>Conclusion</i>
Little Grebe	1st-yr	F	10.10.98	Trauma – collision injuries/ pneumonia
Wigeon	Adult	M	25.10.98	Trauma – collision injuries
Golden Plover	1st-yr	M	18.09.98	Trauma – collision; nematodes
Common Snipe	1st-yr	F	23.09.98	Trauma – collision; inanition
Common Snipe	1st-yr	F	24.09.98	Trauma – collision; tapeworms
Common Snipe	Adult	M	18.09.98	Depredation – by cat?
Jack Snipe	Adult	M	27.09.98	Trauma – collision – lighthouse
Jack Snipe	Adult	M	29.09.98	Trauma – collision –lighthouses
Curlew	Adult	F	??.07.98	Trauma – mandibular fracture; starvation; dehydration

Table 1. Details of post-mortem findings (continued)

<i>Species</i>	<i>Age</i>	<i>Sex</i>	<i>Date Found</i>	<i>Conclusion</i>
Dunlin	1st-yr	F	28.09.98	Depredation – by cat
Arctic Skua	Adult	F	12.06.98	Trauma – collision; nematodes
Great Skua	Pullus	M	12.07.98	No diagnosis
Great Skua	Pullus	F	12.07.98	Ruptured intestine
Great Skua	Pullus	?	??.07.98	Trauma – blows to body; nematodes
Great Skua	Adult	F	28.05.98	Shot
Kittiwake	Adult	M	??.07.98	Trauma – fractured skull, depraved appetite, gizzard impaction
Lesser Black-backed Gull	Adult	F	??.07.98	Starvation
Great Black-backed Gull	Adult	M	04.12.97	Oiled
Arctic Tern	Adult	F	??.06.98	Trauma – fractured neck by collision
Arctic Tern	Pulli x 8	?	19.06.98	Exposure
Guillemot	Adult	M	16.10.97	Oiled, enteritis, starvation
Rock Dove	Adult	F	??.05.98	Shot
Nightjar	Adult	?	06.08.97	No diagnosis: oiled by Fulmar?
Skylark	Adult	M	03.03.98	Trauma, collision injuries
Swallow	1st-yr	M	23.09.98	No diagnosis
Meadow Pipit	1st-yr	?	??.09.98	No diagnosis
Meadow Pipit	1st-yr	F	??.09.98	Visceral gout; pneumonia
Dunnock	Adult	F	29.04.98	Trauma – collision injuries
Northern Wheatear	1st-yr	M	25.10.98	Trauma – collision injuries
Redstart	1st-yr	?	28.09.98	No diagnosis
Redwing	1st-yr	F	27.09.98	Trauma – collision injuries
Redwing	Adult	M	14.10.98	Trauma – collision injuries; starvation
Redwing	Adult	M	08.10.98	Trauma – collision injuries
Redwing	1st-yr	M	16.10.97	No diagnosis
Blackbird	1st-yr	F	14.10.97	Trauma – collision with window
Song Thrush	1st-yr	F	29.09.98	Trauma – collision – lighthouse
Song Thrush	Adult	M	??.09.98	Trauma, fractured coracoid
Song Thrush	Adult	M	05.04.98	Trauma – collision injuries
Song Thrush	2nd-yr	F	05.04.98	Trauma – collision injuries
Song Thrush	2nd-yr	F	05.04.98	Trauma – collision injuries
Song Thrush	2nd-yr	F	05.04.98	Trauma – collision injuries
Fieldfare	1st-yr	F	19.10.98	Trauma – collision injuries
Fieldfare	1st-yr	M	17.10.98	Trauma – collision injuries

Table 1. Details of post-mortem findings (continued)

<i>Species</i>	<i>Age</i>	<i>Sex</i>	<i>Date Found</i>	<i>Conclusion</i>
Reed Warbler	Adult	M	29.05.98	No diagnosis
Icterine Warbler	1st-yr	M	07.09.98	Trauma, fractured ribs; pulmonary haemorrhage
Chiffchaff	Adult	M	29.04.98	Depredation – by cat
Willow Warbler	Adult	M	24.04.98	Starvation; haemorrhagic enteritis
Blackcap	Adult	M	01.10.98	Depredation – by cat
Blackcap	Adult	M	??.09.98	Starvation; haemorrhagic enteritis
Blackcap	1st-yr	M	12.10.98	Trauma – collision with window
Pied Flycatcher	1st-yr	F	06.09.98	Starvation; haemorrhagic enteritis
Pied Flycatcher	1st-yr	M	02.09.98	Trauma – collision injuries; enteritis
Red-backed Shrike	Adult	F	18.05.98	Visceral Gout; secondary pneumonia
Twite	Adult	M	01.10.97	Trauma – collision injuries
Bullfinch	Adult	F	22.04.98	Haemorrhagic enteritis
Snow Bunting	2nd-yr	M	29.03.98	No diagnosis
Snow Bunting	2nd-yr	F	21.03.98	Pulmonary haemorrhage
Reed Bunting	2nd-yr	F	24.04.98	Pulmonary haemorrhage by collision

Table 2. Details of corpses examined on Fair Isle, with summary of findings

<i>Species</i>	<i>Age</i>	<i>Sex</i>	<i>Date Found</i>	<i>Conclusion</i>
Storm Petrel	Adult		June, 1998	Depredation – by cat
Storm Petrel	Adult		July, 1998	Depredation – by Gull
Gannet	3rd-yr		31.05.98	Caught in fishing net – starvation
Gannet	Adult		31.05.98	Caught in fishing net – starvation
Shag	Adult	M	06.07.98	Trapped; barbed wire – starvation
Eider	2nd-yr	F	18.02.98	Oiled
Eider	Adult	F	06.03.98	Oiled
Kestrel	1st-yr	F	18.10.98	Oiled
Water Rail	1st-yr	M	08.11.98	Starvation
Oystercatcher	Pullus		June 1998	Depredation – by raptor (Kestrel)
Ringed Plover	2nd-yr	F	April 1998	Depredation – by cat
Lapwing	Adult	M	14.05.98	Trapped in roll of sheep netting – starvation/dehydration
Great Black-backed Gull	Adult		May, 1998	Tangled; fishing line – starvation
Arctic Skua	Adult		June, 1998	Broken Wing – (storm)
Arctic Skua	Pullus		June, 1998	Hit by car
Arctic Skua	Pullus		June, 1998	Hit by car

Table 2. Details of corpses examined on Fair Isle (continued)

<i>Species</i>	<i>Age</i>	<i>Sex</i>	<i>Date Found</i>	<i>Conclusion</i>
Arctic Skua	Pullus		June, 1998	Hit by car
Great Skua	Adult		July, 1998	Shot
Great Skua	Adult		July, 1998	Shot
Great Skua	Adult		July, 1998	Shot
Great Skua	Adult		July, 1998	Shot
Guillemot	Adult		18.02.98	Oiled
Guillemot	Adult		18.02.98	Oiled
Guillemot	Adult		18.02.98	Oiled
Guillemot	Adult		20.03.98	Oiled
Guillemot	Adult		20.03.98	Oiled
Guillemot	Adult		21.03.98	Oiled
Guillemot	Adult		21.03.98	Oiled
Guillemot	Adult		21.03.98	Oiled
Guillemot	Adult		21.03.98	Oiled
Guillemot	Adult		29.03.98	Oiled
Razorbill	Adult		29.03.98	Oiled
Rock Dove	Adult		March, 1998	Shot
Wood Pigeon	Adult		29.03.98	Depredation – by raptor
Skylark	Adult		March, 1998	Depredation – by cat
Skylark	Adult		March, 1998	Depredation – by cat
Swallow	Adult		May, 1998	Depredation – by cat
Meadow Pipit	Adult		June, 1998	Broken wing – (storm)
Wren	?	?	07.07.98	Hit by car
Robin	2nd-yr		June, 1998	Depredation – by raptor
Northern Wheatear	Pulli x 6		June 1998	Drowned
Blackbird	2nd-yr	M	16.04.98	Hit by car
Blackbird	Adult	M	11.11.98	Collision – in trap
Redwing	1st-yr		11.11.98	Collision – in trap
Blackcap		M	October, 1998	Depredation – by cat
Willow Warbler	Adult		September, 1998	Broken wing
Starling	?		Summer 1998	Depredation – by cat
Chaffinch	Adult	F	April, 1998	Depredation – by cat
Chaffinch	2nd-yr	M	April, 1998	Depredation – by cat
Chaffinch	2nd-yr	F	April, 1998	Depredation – by raptor
Chaffinch	Adult	F	April, 1998	Depredation – by raptor
Brambling	2nd-yr	M	April, 1998	Depredation – by cat
Hawfinch	Adult	M	April, 1998	Depredation – by cat

Table 3. Summary of causes of death*Cause of death Number of cases*

Trauma	71/73 cases total
Broken wing	3
Other fractures	4
Depredation by raptor	5
Depredation by gull	1
Depredation by cat	16 or 17
Lighthouse collision	4
Window collision	2
Hit by car	5
Shot	7 or 8
Blows to body	2
Collision with traps from outside or inside	8
Collision with unknown structure	14
Oiled	17 cases total
Crude	16
By Fulmar	1
Starvation	2
Starvation with haemorrhagic enteritis	3
Pulmonary haemorrhage	1
Haemorrhagic enteritis alone	1
Visceral gout; pneumonia	2
Caught in piece of fishing net	2
Caught in barbed wire	1
Caught in sheep netting	1
Caught in fishing line	1
Drowned	6
Exposure	8
No diagnosis	7

As can be seen from Table 3, causes of death were due mainly to a variety of trauma incidents (71 cases). The bulk of these as usual appear to involve birds colliding fatally with man-made structures on the isle, with most probably accounted for by collision with fence wire, lighthouse buildings, and windows. Non-fatal strikes against such structures may also lead to cats and raptors capturing stunned or injured birds.

Small passerines tend to strike windows during the day, but larger passerines such as thrushes, as well as snipe, etc., seem to strike fences more in poor light or at night in windy conditions when they are flying low. Such circumstances led to several thrushes striking the Double Dyke Heligoland trap as they flew over the wall in flocks.

I examined only two oiled birds, although a total of 16 oiled birds were found on the isle during 1998 (see table 2). Fifteen of these, including a Kestrel (a Collared Dove was also oiled but not badly and survived), were covered in crude oil, with the remaining one, a Nightjar, being covered in Fulmar oil. Eight birds had starved to death, seven of these due to migration stress, and the eighth (a Curlew) was caused by a fractured beak rendering the bird unable to feed. Two birds had visceral gout, an acute disease associated with kidney failure. The eight Arctic Tern pulli appeared to have died from exposure during a period of adverse weather conditions, while a brood of Northern Wheatear drowned in their nest in a drainage pipe during heavy rain. In seven cases, no diagnosis was achieved.

Thank you to all the staff of Fair Isle Bird Observatory, visitors, and islanders who collected corpses and have assisted with this project. I would also like to appeal to the islanders, future staff at the Observatory, and visitors to continue to help this project. Please pick up any reasonably fresh, dead birds you find and take them to the warden at the Observatory with full details of where and when they were found. If you cannot take them straight away, please pop in a plastic bag with a label and refrigerate or freeze them depending on when you can get them to the Observatory.

ORNITHOLOGY

A total of 204 species were recorded on Fair Isle during 1998, one of which – Isabelline Wheatear – was an addition to the island list, which now stands at 354 species. Other national rarities and island scarcities included: Bean Goose (2), Honey Buzzard, White-tailed Eagle, Marsh Harrier (2), Osprey (3), Hobby (4), Spotted Crake, Common Crane, Dotterel (14), Great Snipe (2), Sabine's Gull, Short-toed Lark (3), Woodlark, Shorelark (6), Richard's Pipit (7), Pechora Pipit (2), Red-throated Pipit (2), Citrine Wagtail, 'Black-bellied' Dipper, Thrush Nightingale (4), Pallas's Grasshopper Warbler (4), Lanceolated Warbler (5), Melodious Warbler, Subalpine Warbler, Arctic Warbler, Collared Flycatcher, Treecreeper, Arctic Redpoll, Hawfinch (4), Pine Bunting, Rustic Bunting (9), Little Bunting (4), and Yellow-breasted Bunting.

The monthly totals of species recorded on the Isle were:

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
57	50	71	115	142	131	81	88	150	142	66	52

Monthly Summary

Charlie Holt & Paul Baker

January

Few sightings of note. New Year's Day saw 350 Eider offshore along with three Goldeneye and a female Goosander, while six female Common Scoters were seen off South Light on the 19th. White-winged gulls were occasional throughout the month with a single 3rd-winter Iceland Gull from the 4th-5th, a 1st-winter on the 18th, plus three different 1st-winter Glaucous Gulls. Both Great Spotted Woodpecker and Woodlark attempted to overwinter from 1997, as did a Water Rail seen on the 21st. Severe weather produced a Red-throated Diver in North Haven on the 17th and 19th, an adult Whooper Swan on 17th, and three Long-eared Owls on the 18th. A Black Redstart spent the latter part of the month at South Harbour, while a Snow Bunting flock at Koolin peaked at 29 on the 24th.

February

Unsettled, stormy weather on and off throughout the month brought more sightings of white-winged gulls. Again, at least three different 1st-winter Glaucous Gulls were seen, along with a 1st-winter Iceland Gull on the 28th. The Woodlark was last seen on the 1st and the Great Spotted Woodpecker on the 7th, while the Black Redstart remained all month in the South Harbour area. The final week saw a single Pink-footed Goose on 23rd-25th, upto four Goldeneye between 23rd-28th, and a male Red-breasted Merganser on the 27th-28th. Spring passerine

passage got underway with an influx of 40 Skylarks noted on the 21st, increasing to 127 on the 28th. Snow Bunting numbers remained low with a maximum of 13 on the 15th.

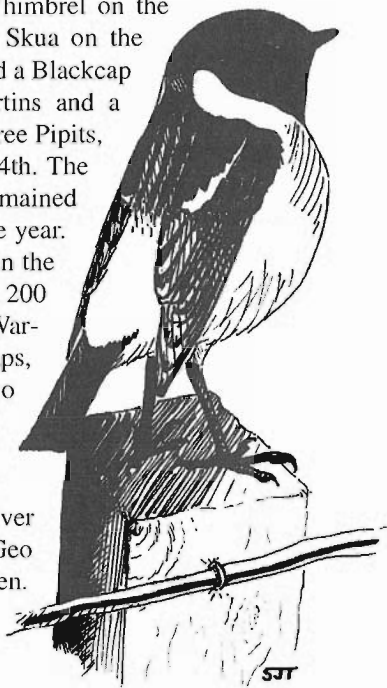
March

Seaduck were represented by up to three Goldeneye, plus occasional Long-tailed Duck and Red-breasted Merganser. At least three Glaucous Gulls were noted; a 1st-winter from the 3rd-10th, 2nd-winter from the 9th-12th and an adult on the 8th. A notable 340 Skylarks at the beginning of the month had dropped to 80 by the 8th. A Linnet on the 6th, a Dunlin and a Jack Snipe on the 7th, a Stonechat between 12th-15th, and a Goldcrest on the 16th were of interest. Another immature Glaucous Gull at South Light from the 22nd-26th was joined by a 2nd-winter Iceland Gull on the 24th. After six Whooper Swans on the 22nd and four more on the 24th, a small arrival of migrants in the final week of the month hinted at the arrival of spring. The first Northern Wheatear of the year was near North Light on the 24th, followed by a Black Redstart on the 25th and 27th, a Chiffchaff on the 29th, a Stonechat and a Yellowhammer on the 30th, and a Sparrowhawk and a Grey Wagtail on the 31st. The first Great Skua and Puffin both arrived on cue on the 29th.

April

Wind from the eastern quarter during the first twelve days of April produced an impressive influx of Scandinavian bound thrushes and finches. Prior to the major movement, Black Redstart, Water Rail and Jackdaw all featured on the 2nd. The 5th produced an early Yellow Wagtail and the only Gadwall of the year, while an immature male Marsh Harrier (the second earliest spring record) toured the Isle on the 6th when 17 Ring Ouzels were also present. A large fall and general movement of migrants occurred on the 7th including 740 Common Gulls, 300 Song Thrushes, 100 Blackbirds, 240 Fieldfares, 260 Redwings, 75 Dunnocks, 170 Robins, 250 Chaffinches and 39 Greenfinches, plus Moorhen, Jack Snipe, three Black Redstarts and three Hawfinches. One of the latter remained in the Observatory garden until the 13th, often viewable from the dinner table! The highlight of the 7th however, was a foreign ringed Black-bellied Dipper at Hjukni Geo. It remained on the Isle until the 17th. Further influxes over the next few days included 21 Wood Pigeons, six Mistle Thrushes, six Yellowhammers and a Bullfinch on the 8th, plus 770 Song Thrushes on the 9th. Upto six Common Scoters joined the Eider flock off South Light until the 19th, with a pair remaining until the 27th. Upto 300 Chaffinches were on the Isle during this time. On the 15th, a male Chaffinch showing characteristics of the *africana* race was found in the Observatory garden where it remained until May 1st. A strong south-easterly on the 23rd yielded 400 Fieldfares plus several Yellowhammers and Reed Buntings. Spring migrants continued to trickle through, particularly towards the

month's end. Notable arrivals included a Whimbrel on the 17th; 46 Goldcrests on the 18th; an Arctic Skua on the 19th; 65 Northern Wheatears, a Stonechat, and a Blackcap on the 21st; a Swallow, seven House Martins and a Grasshopper Warbler on the 22nd; and five Tree Pipits, two Redstarts and a Sedge Warbler on the 24th. The 26th produced a Common Buzzard that remained until the 28th, plus the first Arctic Tern of the year. A small-scale arrival after south-east winds on the 28th included a Turtle Dove, three Whinchats, 200 Northern Wheatears, three Grasshopper Warblers, three Lesser Whitethroats, six Blackcaps, 27 Willow Warblers, a Pied Flycatcher and two Jackdaws. Three Goosanders flew past South Harbour on the 29th. The final day of the month started with an early morning Tystie census during which three Dotterels flew over Burrashield, a Coot was discovered in Hesti Geo and a Sandwich Tern was seen in North Haven. Later in the day, a male Stonechat found near Meadow Burn showed characteristics of one of the eastern races, while nearby a frustrating large pipit at Quoy was possibly a Blyth's.



Stonechat (Steve Turner)

May

A strong north westerly airstream in the first week resulted in no major falls of migrants. The opening day of the month saw an early Wood Warbler in Kirki Geo. Three Goosanders and two Red-breasted Mergansers were noted on the 2nd, while the Coot remained from April. A sub-adult White-tailed Eagle flew north over Hill Dyke on the 3rd heading for Shetland where one, presumably the same, had been wintering. Finches featured during the north-west winds; a 'Greenland' Redpoll on the 4th was followed by 26 Siskins and a Goldfinch on the 5th. The latter was joined by a second bird next day, one of which remained until the 11th. On the 8th an Osprey flew over the East cliffs, and a Hawfinch was seen at Shirva (later found dead at Neder Taft). On the 9th, the wind veered east with mist and rain, heralding an arrival of spring migrants, which began with the first two Red-spotted Bluethroats of the year in the UK. Also on the 9th, 17 Tree Pipits and four Whinchats were seen, and 28 Barnacle Geese touched down in the mist. A bright and sunny 10th produced the first of four Thrush Nightingales which remained until the 15th. However, a record count of nine Dotterels on Ward Hill was probably more noteworthy for Fair Isle. Associated with these highlights

were five Common Sandpipers, 20 White Wagtails, 230 Northern Wheatears, a Wood Warbler, 21 Siskins and 13 Reed Buntings. The 11th produced 17 Whimbrels, four Grasshopper Warblers and Fair Isle's second ever spring Richard's Pipit which remained in the Lerness area until the 13th. A second Thrush Nightingale spent the afternoon at Stackhoull on the 12th, while a female Scaup began a two week stay in South Harbour, and the first two Red-backed Shrikes were seen. The shrike count increased to five next day, joined by a Hobby, six Swifts, seven Whitethroats, 20 Chiffchaffs and a Wood Sandpiper that remained at Setter until the 16th when joined by another. Wigeon and Teal began to trickle through in small numbers. On the 14th a Quail was found within the confines of North Light, the Hobby remained at Malcolm's Head and Red-backed Shrikes increased to seven. Up to two Quail were regularly recorded in the Barkland area until the 23rd. A Corncrake was at North Light on the 15th, a Common Rosefinch was seen at the Observatory, a Lapland Bunting at Busta and five Bluethroats were also present. Single Corncrake were recorded daily until the 19th with probably two birds involved. After an Osprey over the Gully on the 16th, new arrivals on the 17th included an adult male Common Rosefinch that stayed until the 22nd with a dull female or immature male at Barkland, nine Sedge Warblers and five 'Mealy' Redpolls. On the 23rd a Wryneck was found at Burkle and Common Rosefinches increased to three. Corvid migration included at least 20 Carrion and 15 Hooded Crows. Spring migration then virtually ceased for a week as a run of Atlantic depressions produced winds from a westerly direction. Even so, new birds were still found on the 20th including a Dotterel and the first Tree Sparrow since 1995 which stayed until the 23rd. The Dotterel remained near the School into June. A male Subalpine Warbler was seen briefly beside the road at Furse on the 22nd, following a short spell of southerly winds. A small influx of waders on the 25th included a Knot, three Sanderlings and 19 Purple Sandpipers. A Black-tailed Godwit resided with Oystercatchers beside Gilly Burn for four days from the 26th, and a Lapland Bunting was seen on Ward Hill. High pressure over Iceland gave rise to north-easterly winds on the 27th producing a Wryneck, an adult Long-tailed Skua flying north over the Isle, and a Shorelark beside Golden Water. One of the highlights of the year was the discovery of a superb adult male Collared Flycatcher in Linni Geo on the 28th. The second record for Fair Isle, it remained on the south-facing slope all day and showed well to all. The supporting cast that day included an Icterine Warbler (until the 30th), a second Wryneck, six Bluethroats, four Red-backed Shrikes and three Common Rosefinches. Red-backed Shrikes increased to seven next day, joined by a Marsh Warbler and an adult Common Crane. The Common Crane was first seen near North Light and eventually settled in the Meoness/Walli Burn area where it stayed into June. The final day of the month saw slight increases in the numbers of common migrants with five Redstarts, 11 Lesser Whitethroats, and 14 Spotted Flycatchers present.

June

The weather at the start of June continued where May left off with variable winds generally from the easterly quarter. The 1st saw the third Thrush Nightingale of the spring trapped in the Gully. It remained on the Isle until the 23rd but proved very elusive. The 1st also saw the continued presence of two Bluethroats, two Red-backed Shrikes, a Common Rosefinch, plus two Black Redstarts and three Rooks. After two days of little change, the 4th produced some interesting sightings of non-passerines. These included six Cormorants, two Pintail, a first-summer Hobby, an adult Glaucous Gull at South Light, a Pomarine Skua over Field, two Canada Geese beside Walli Burn, plus a late Barnacle Goose and a Woodcock. Next day, an easterly breeze with drizzle yielded a fourth Thrush Nightingale, seen briefly in the Kirn O' Scroo. The Canada Geese were up to three (remaining until the 8th), an Icterine Warbler appeared (also until the 8th), a Great Northern Diver was off South Light, and 13 Collared Doves, four Ring Ouzels and 23 Spotted Flycatchers were seen. In the evening, a Red-throated Pipit at Setter was relocated near Double Dyke where it remained until the 12th. The 6th produced a Grey-headed Wagtail, 50 Swallows, and the end of a run of Red-backed Shrikes. A Storm Petrel off Bunness on the 7th was notable, while a late Ortolan Bunting at North Light on the 8th represented the only spring record. The same day, the second Shorelark of the year appeared on Malcolm's Head, and a Great Northern Diver, a Crossbill, ten Whimbrels, five unseasonal Black Redstarts and the final spring sighting of Bluethroat were logged. As the weather changed to unsettled westerly airstreams the flow of migrants dried up, and drizzle and thick fog patches became prevalent from mid-month. The Dotterel and Common Crane from May remained until the 11th and 12th respectively. A Quail from the 12th-14th, a Marsh Warbler on the 13th, an adult Hobby on the 15th, and a late male Red-backed Shrike from the 17th-18th were the highlights of a quiet period, when attention switched to seabird work. A male Tufted Duck on the 15th remained until the 21st, joined by a second bird from the 20th-21st. The 22nd saw some new arrivals with a Marsh Warbler, a Common Rosefinch, and a Honey Buzzard drifting north over Da Houll. Unseasonal sightings were a feature of the 23rd with single Ring Ouzel, Blackbird, Fieldfare, Song Thrush, and Stock Dove. Both Marsh and Reed Warblers were trapped on the 26th, while a Quail near Upper Stoneybrek remained till the month's end as did a male Tufted Duck from the 28th when two Pintail were seen on Golden Water.

July

Low cloud and mist resulted in sunshine being the rarity of the month. The male Tufted Duck from June remained until the 3rd when it was joined by three others, while the singing Quail was last heard on the 11th. A feature of this period was the continual presence of Red-breasted Mergansers in the Havens, peaking at five on the 12th. Unseasonal common migrants included Blackcap on the 1st, Spotted

Flycatcher on the 3rd, Fieldfare on the 4th, Ring Ouzel from 4th-6th, Reed Warbler from 9th-18th with another on the 12th, while a Swift on the 10th was an early autumn returnee. Several sightings of a Short-eared Owl, often near the Airstrip, probably relate to one summering bird. A small movement of gulls on the 9th included 21 Black-headed and 23 Common. The 15th produced a Common Rosefinch briefly at the Plantation, but more unusual was a Whooper Swan which was seen until the 22nd, even loafing on Landberg. From mid-month onwards, the return wader passage became evident with peak counts including six Golden Plovers on the 11th, six Sanderlings on the 23rd, up to three Green Sandpipers from the 28th, four Ruff on the 30th, and a Bar-tailed Godwit on the 31st. Regular tape luring of Storm Petrels from mid-month resulted in the capture of eight Leach's Petrels, including three on the 27th.

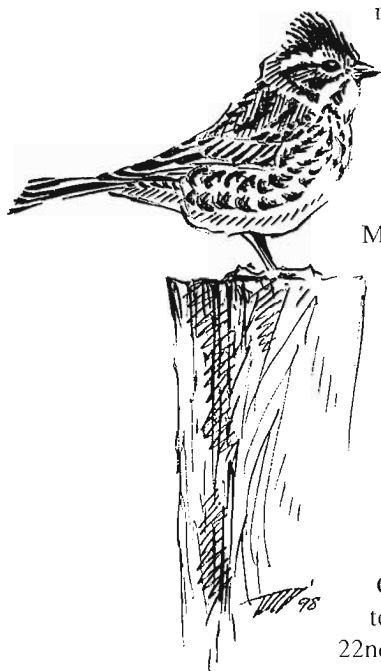
August

The unsettled Summer continued into August with predominantly westerly air-streams holding up any thoughts of true autumn migration, until the very end of the month when high pressure over Scandinavia from the 29th yielded a period of easterly winds. Continued 'Stormie' sessions produced four more Leach's Petrels on the 9th, 27th, 28th, and 30th while a Red-breasted Merganser from July remained until the 3rd. During the first half of the month, waders provided the main focus of attention; a Bar-tailed Godwit beside Walli Burn from the 5th-10th, and a Grey Plover in South Haven on the 6th being the highlights. The 13th was a day of evident passage with the arrival of eight Ruff, 12 Purple Sandpipers, seven Sanderlings and eight Knot. In addition, at least 2000 Common Gulls had gathered at the south end of the Isle. The first true hint of passerine migration was noted on the 15th with a Barred Warbler (until the 21st), 24 'Alba' Wagtails and a Whinchat. A Wood Sandpiper was reported at Golden Water on the 16th, while a Goldcrest on the 18th was an early autumn migrant. A Sooty Shearwater passed South Light on the 27th. Another Barred Warbler on the 23rd was followed by three more on the 29th, when an Arctic Warbler was found at the Sheep Cru, a Bar-tailed Godwit was at Field, and Twite reached 130. On the 30th, the Arctic Warbler was relocated at Springfield, and new arrivals included a Wryneck, six Common Rosefinches (four at Quoy), a Wood Warbler, three Tree Pipits, three Sedge Warblers, four Garden Warblers, 25 Willow Warblers, a Goldcrest and two Pied Flycatchers. Next day a Cuckoo arrived, but just two Common Rosefinches and single Barred and Wood Warblers remained. However, two Little Stints on Skadan were a taste of things to come.

September

The easterly airflow from the end of August continued through the first week of September; consequently expectations were high. The 1st saw a notable four Pintail, and single Cuckoo, Wryneck, Red-backed Shrike and further Barred Warblers and Common Rosefinches. New birds next day included two Curlew

Sandpipers at North Haven and two Bluethroats at Shirva, a precursor to the first major arrival of migrants on the 3rd. An unusually productive census of the north had already yielded a Red-breasted Flycatcher and an Icterine Warbler on the sheltered west cliffs, when a Great Snipe was seen briefly at Groggy's Cup. Further south, there was an Icterine Warbler at Leogh, a Corncrake at Pund, an Ortolan Bunting at Springfield, six Wrynecks, two Barred Warblers and a Grass-hopper Warbler. Island totals of 32 Whinchats, 200 Northern Wheatears, 50 Willow Warblers, and 64 Pied Flycatchers were also counted. Seventy Teal was notable but more impressive was the influx of raptors with up to 26 Kestrels (including one group of fourteen) and six Sparrowhawks. Waders featured too; 44 Little Stints were the first true sign of an excellent passage to come, while 14 Common Sandpipers, seven Greenshank, and a Wood Sandpiper were logged. To complete an excellent day, a well-marked 1st-winter Citrine Wagtail was found in the Malcolm's Head area in the evening. There were generally fewer passerines to be seen on a misty 4th, though a second Ortolan Bunting joined the original at Quoy, and a third, an adult male, was briefly at the Plantation. Two Red-breasted Flycatchers were briefly at Pund. Little Stints increased to 55. A bright and sunny 5th increased the tempo once again with the year's only Yellow-breasted Bunting at Da Water; it remained until the 11th spending much of its time at Shirva. An adult Hobby hunted over Gilsetter with upto 70 Swifts, while Ruff increased to an impressive 60. A notable fall of passerines included 260 Northern Wheatears, 70 Willow Warblers, 55 Pied Flycatchers, 35 Garden Warblers, 25 Redstarts, and 16 Spotted Flycatchers. Three Ortolan Buntings were now viewable at Quoy. A frustrating spell of fog set in for the next four days resulting in few changes on the bird front save for a gradual exodus of migrants. A Red-backed Shrike at Lower Leogh from the 6th-12th, plus occasional Ortolan Bunting, Wryneck and Common Rosefinch from the original influx remained, while single Fieldfare and Redwing appeared on the 8th, when an Icterine Warbler was found dead at the Observatory. An Osprey flew north over the east cliffs on the 10th, and seven Curlew Sandpipers that day were noteworthy. This mid-month period saw unsettled conditions with reported Sabine's Gull and Leach's Petrel, plus two Manx and seven Sooty Shearwaters noted offshore between the 8th-16th as attention switched to seawatching. Twenty-eight Ravens passed through on the 12th as a cold northerly airstream began to yield associated northern species. Snow Buntings became particularly conspicuous, building up to a maximum of 680 on the 17th, while Lapland Buntings also became a daily feature of the log. Shorelarks were noted on the 12th, and from the 17th-20th, a 'Greenland' Redpoll frequented Quoy from the 16th-18th, and up to four Merlins were seen. Single Bluethroat and Common Rosefinch became resident at Shirva, while two Turtle Doves frequented Haa until the 24th. A Curlew Sandpiper on the 12th and a Spotted Redshank on the 13th were both to remain into October. As the wind switched to a southerly orientation on the 18th, a Great Snipe was found in Boini Mire. Presumably this was the bird



Rustic Bunting
(Tom Whiley)

reported nearby three days previously and it remained on the Isle until October 6th. Common Rosefinches increased to three, and Jack Snipe began to arrive. The Shirva Bluethroat was joined by another on the 19th, with both remaining until the end of the month, as did a Moorhen at Gilsetter, while a Richard's Pipit at Malcolm's Head began a run of sightings of that species. September 20th saw the start of an exceptional period for the Isle. Fittingly, in the year of the Observatory's 50th anniversary a new species was added to the Fair Isle list – an Isabelline Wheatear, which remained on Malcolm's Head until the 30th when it was rumoured to have been taken by a Peregrine. New additions to the supporting cast included a Melodious Warbler at Busta, a Dotterel on Ward Hill, an Ortolan Bunting, a Corncrake, and the Common Rosefinch flock at Skerryholm increased to an impressive seven. Little movement on the 22nd and 23rd was "the calm before the storm" as a prolonged period of south-east to east winds from the 24th initiated an exceptional run of rarities. That day saw a Pechora Pipit begin a three day stay in ditches at Quoy, and two Rustic Buntings settled at Skerryholm in the afternoon. Upto 50 Song Thrushes and 25 Siskins were evident, while a Great Northern Diver, a Wood Sandpiper, and a Yellow-browed Warbler added spice. More of the same on the 25th yielded a further three Rustic Buntings joining the original two, a probable Red-throated Pipit briefly near the Observatory, a Little Bunting at Leogh, and five Yellow-browed Warblers. A Shoveler opposite Barkland remained until the 27th. Continued easterlies with clear skies produced a further "Fair Isle speciality" on the 26th in the form of a Lanceolated Warbler in a ditch between Kenaby and Quoy, while the sixth Rustic and second Little Buntings appeared. Two Wrynecks, three Richard's Pipits, a Bluethroat, three Yellow-browed Warblers, and two Common Rosefinches were also found. The weather on the 27th deteriorated, with thick mist and rain, but still produced a second Lanceolated Warbler, this time at Burkle, plus small influxes of 18 Jack Snipe, 65 Common Snipe, 150 Swallows, 30 Redstarts, seven Reed Warblers, and 30 Goldcrests. A Grey Wagtail and a Stock Dove were also of note. At least six Rustic Buntings remained including a group of five regularly at Haa and Skerryholm. Large scale movement was evident on the 28th; an influx of thrushes included at least 400 Song Thrushes and 750 Redwings plus scattered Ring Ouzels and Fieldfares, while 266 Barnacle and 45

Pink-footed Geese were also logged. Twenty-eight Grey Herons and 36 Turnstones frequented the South Harbour area. Four Grey Plovers represented a good day total for Fair Isle. Incredibly, a third Lanceolated Warbler was discovered on the 29th; a very well-marked individual at Pund. Ironically, a drake Pochard at South Light until the 30th created almost as much excitement, while nearby a Wryneck began a three day stay at Hesti Geo. September concluded on a high with the arrival of a Pallas's Grasshopper Warbler at the base of Malcolm's Head as the wind strengthened. A Marsh Harrier over Wirvie and Vaasetter may have been that which was to appear on Shetland. A Red-backed Shrike at Shirva was also new. The Great Snipe, six Rustic Buntings, Little Bunting, Curlew Sandpiper, Wood Sandpiper, three Little Stints, and Stock Dove all saw the month out. Expectations for October were high . . .

October

. . . and it did not prove disappointing. The first week continued with south-east winds and variable cloud cover. The 1st proved to be one of the best days of the year. Hot on the heels of the first, another Pallas's Grasshopper Warbler was discovered, sheltering amongst pallets in the Havens. However, the star bird in terms of Fair Isle rarity was a Treecreeper on the cliffs at Easter Lothar, only the seventh recorded on the Isle. Two Short-toed Larks at Quoy and another at Pund were also new finds before lunchtime. The quality was maintained in the afternoon with a Pechora and a Red-throated Pipit in the same field at Shirva, forming quite a line-up with the Great Snipe, five Rustic Buntings, Little Bunting, Red-backed Shrike and Bluethroat remaining from September. A large arrival on the 2nd included at least 1500 Redwings, 200 Robins, 160 Goldcrests, 40 Reed Buntings, and 28 Wood Pigeons, with three Tree Sparrows (two remaining throughout the month), two Stock Doves and two Mistle Thrushes also of interest. The Pallas's Grasshopper Warbler, two Short-toed Larks and both Shirva pipits were still present along with a probable Citrine Wagtail, briefly at Quoy. New non-passerines included Common Buzzard (until the 11th), eight Red-breasted Mergansers, and two 1st-winter Glaucous Gulls. On the 3rd, the third Pallas's Grasshopper Warbler in four days was found, equalling the record number in any one year on Fair Isle. It remained in Boini Mire until the 6th. Other highlights of the 3rd, a bright day with a moderate south-easterly, were a Spotted Crake trapped in the Plantation, a Shorelark on Malcolm's Head, two Bluethroats, and two Richard's Pipits. Eighteen Greylag Geese was the first sizeable flock of the autumn. However, two taiga Bean Geese on Meoness until the 9th were the first on the Isle since 1996. A probable Marsh Warbler was also seen at Haa. The opening week of the month saw a gradual exodus of Rustic Buntings, but birds which were considered 'new' appeared on the 5th and 6th, both of which remained for eight days. With the wind backing easterly on the 5th, a fourth Lanceolated Warbler was discovered – in the Meadow Burn area an Ortolan Bunting was at Skerryholm

(until the 9th) and an influx of owls comprised one Long-eared and six Short-eared. The first Goldeneye of the winter period was on Field Pond. With the wind remaining easterly, the 6th produced the record-breaking fifth Lanceolated Warbler, trapped in the Plantation and then released at the Observatory where it remained until the 10th. The two Short-toed Larks remained either at Quoy or Shirva, while the Pallas's Grasshopper Warbler and Pechora Pipit were still at Boini Mire and Shirva respectively. The exodus of Rustic Buntings left the two more recent arrivals at Haa. A bright and crisp 7th saw some new discoveries, the most notable of which was an Arctic Redpoll at Gilsetter in the afternoon. Both the Pallas's Grasshopper Warbler and the Pechora Pipit had disappeared overnight to be replaced by a Barred Warbler at Haa and Little Buntings at Gilly Burn and Field, plus single Yellow-browed Warbler and Black Redstart. On the 8th a female Pine Bunting was discovered on stubble at Skerryholm, and remained until the 11th either there or at Kenaby. With attention focussed on the bunting, a brief sighting of the record-breaking fourth Pallas's Grasshopper Warbler near Setter, did not raise too many eyebrows. Unfortunately, it could not be relocated. Seaduck began to feature at this time with a Goosander in North Haven on the 8th, a Velvet Scoter past South Harbour on the 9th, plus regular sightings of up to four Long-tailed Ducks. The 10th saw a large movement of geese comprising 88 Pink-foot and 279 Greylags and the only Little Grebe of the year picked up dead in North Haven. A Yellow-browed Warbler remained at Upper Leogh until the 11th, while a seawatch from Buness on the 12th yielded an early Little Auk, and an exodus of thrushes was apparent that day. New thrushes on the 13th included 720 Redwings, while an elusive Little Bunting could still be seen near Gilly Burn. Unsettled north to north westerly winds predominated with frequent hail showers at this time. A Shorelark at the Observatory on the 14th completed an excellent year for this species, while 18 Whooper Swans were the first of the autumn. A Bluethroat at Lower Stoneybrek remained until the 21st, while a late Little Stint, a Redstart and a 'Mealy' Redpoll also featured that day. The unsettled, wintry conditions continued to be responsible for the sightings of most interest over the next few days with 1st-winter Iceland and Glaucous Gulls on the 17th, and the first Waxwing of the autumn in the UK on the 18th. Initially at North Light, it reappeared briefly in the Observatory garden. South-easterly breezes on the 20th and 21st yielded the first two Yellowhammers of the autumn and thrush passage consisting of at least 3000 Redwings and 1200 Fieldfares. The final few days of the month were highly unsettled with strong winds predominantly from the west, although a switch to the south-east on the 24th produced four Little Auks past South Light with another the following day, along with an immature Glaucous Gull past Buness. One Short-toed Lark remained with Skylarks at Shirva until the 25th. Another Waxwing appeared briefly in the Observatory garden on the 29th, while a Goldeneye was regularly noted in the Furse area. Two Tree Sparrows remained at both the Observatory and Utra until the end of the month.

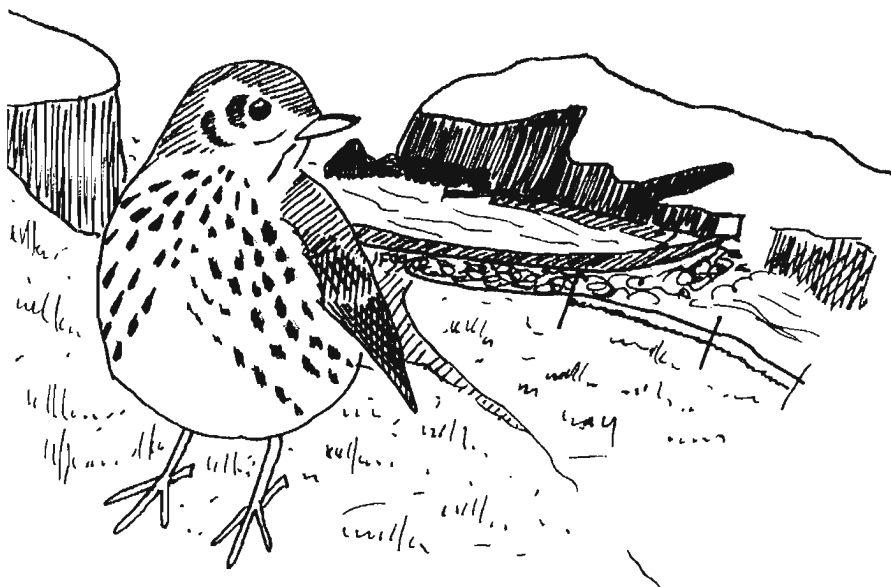
November

The start of the month saw the continued presence of two Tree Sparrows at the Observatory along with a scattering of Chaffinches, Bramblings and Snow Buntings. A single Goldeneye continued to frequent the north of the Isle. Eleven Bonxies on the 1st was the final double figure count of the year. A light, but freshening easterly breeze late on the 2nd produced two Goldcrests. Next day, a Great Grey Shrike (the 204th species for the year), was located near the Double Dyke and an arrival of four Water Rails was noted. The Great Grey Shrike had moved to Neder Taft on the 4th when a varied arrival included two Whooper Swans, three Wigeon, two Jack Snipe, two Blackcaps, four Chiffchaffs, three Goldcrests and 58 Snow Buntings. A general exodus took place on the 5th, although a Long-eared Owl, five Wood Pigeons and a Yellowhammer (until the 8th) were new arrivals, while Redwings increased to 37 and Snow Buntings to 73. The 6th produced a Long-tailed Duck, a Sparrowhawk, a Merlin (until 7th), a Water Rail (last seen on the 8th), one Wood Pigeon, and two Long-eared Owls (one until the 7th) in the Plantation, while Snow Buntings peaked at 100. The last Blackcap of the autumn was in the Gully and a Long-eared Owl in the Plantation trap on the 10th, when the weather began to deteriorate once again. Gale force winds on the 10th and 11th brought large numbers of gulls seeking shelter on the Isle, including 1500 Herring Gulls and 600 Great Black-backed Gulls. A Jack Snipe was at Barkland on the 12th and a Water Rail at Pund on the 14th, when the last Oystercatcher was seen. A Merlin, a Rook (until the 18th), and a Grey Wagtail in the Gully were the highlights of the 15th, when 50 Snow Buntings remained near Koolin (until the 18th). The last Chiffchaff of the year was seen on the 17th, while the Goldeneye continued to be seen. The 18th produced several sightings of interest, namely two Little Auks off South Light, a Black-tailed Godwit, a Black Redstart and 100 Blackbirds. Fifty Redwings, 25 Fieldfares, and one Water Rail were seen on the 19th when Blackbird numbers had halved. Strong winds on the 26th brought 1200 Herring Gulls, and the third lone Waxwing of the year flew over Kenaby.

December

The year ended quietly after such a busy autumn. Peregrine, Common Snipe, Redshank, Turnstone, Skylark, Robin, Blackbird, Redwing, Chaffinch and Fieldfare were seen almost daily, the highlights during the first half of the month being a Long-eared Owl on the 10th, five Wigeon on the 11th, and a Teal (seen occasionally until the 24th). Single Merlin, Goldeneye and Song Thrush were seen on several dates starting from the 13th. Glaucous Gulls began to feature from mid month with a 1st-winter on the 12th-14th and 17th, a 2nd-winter on the 13th and 27th, and an adult on the 14th. The 14th also produced a late Dunlin and another Peregrine. Gale force winds on the 17th brought 2500 Herring Gulls and 700 Great Black-backed Gulls to the Isle, followed by two Common Scoters from the

18th-19th. A Little Auk and a 2nd-winter Iceland Gull were seen on the 20th, with two more Little Auks on the 21st when a drake Velvet Scoter and Red-breasted Merganser were in North Haven. Red-breasted Mergansers increased to two drakes and a duck on the 22nd, while a Redpoll was seen next day. The final week of an exciting year saw things continue in much the same vein, the highlights provided by two Water Rails, a Woodcock on the 27th and up to 30 Snow Buntings.



Song Thrush (Ian Fisher)

SYSTEMATIC LIST 1998

Paul and Helen Baker

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.

The Fair Isle List now stands at 354 species with the addition of Isabelline Wheatear in 1998. Please contact the Observatory for details of “The Birds of Fair Isle” by Nick Dymond.

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RED-THROATED DIVER *Gavia stellata*

Regular migrant, mainly late spring and autumn

January provided the first record; a single on the 14th, 17th, and 19th. Spring passage produced ten sightings on nine days between May 10th–June 14th.

Autumn passage began and peaked on September 23rd with 20 seen during sea-watches, followed by one on the 27th, and two on the 28th. Further singles were seen on October 5th and 16th.

GREAT NORTHERN DIVER *Gavia immer*

Scarce autumn migrant

In spring, a single bird was seen in South Harbour on June 5th and 8th.

The only record of the autumn was one seen heading south over the Observatory on 24th September.

LITTLE GREBE *Tachybaptus ruficollis*

Rare migrant, mostly autumn; c. 33 previous records

The only record of the year was a first-year bird, picked up freshly dead on North Haven pier on October 10th.

FULMAR *Fulmarus glacialis*

Resident; breeds in large numbers

A total island census in 1996 found approximately 43,300 breeding pairs on Fair Isle. Again, this species declined in our monitoring plots in 1998, following a small decrease in 1997. The number of occupied nests in 1998 was 5.25% less than in 1997. An average of only 0.33 young fledged per nest, which is the lowest since 1990. Dark phase or “blue” Fulmars were seen on several occasions during September.

SOOTY SHEARWATER *Puffinus griseus*

Frequent autumn migrant

In a poor autumn due to relatively little time spent seawatching, the first record was a single on August 27th. Two on September 8th were followed by daily sightings from the 12th-16th, with a maximum count of three on the 16th. The final record was one on the 20th.

MANX SHEARWATER *Puffinus puffinus*

Scarce autumn migrant, rare in spring

Following the exceptional numbers recorded during the previous year, 1998 saw a return to normality. The first bird was on July 25th, followed by singles on August 6th, September 11th and 15th.

STORM PETREL *Hydrobates pelagicus*

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

A single was seen off Bunness on June 7th. During the summer months, several were regularly seen from the “Good Shepherd IV” during the crossing between Fair Isle and Shetland. Birds were also seen at the colony in the Kirm O’ Skroo and in the area around South Light. Petrel trapping sessions were more popular than ever with the public in 1998; 1786 birds were trapped in 47 nights during the main trapping season. A further 132 were trapped during eight short sessions during September, the last being three on the 21st.

LEACH’S PETREL *Oceanodroma leucorhoa*

Scarce migrant, summer and early autumn

An excellent year with 17 records. Twelve were trapped on ten nights during Storm Petrel tape-luring sessions: singles on July 18th, 19th, 22nd, 25th, three on 26th, singles on 28th, August 9th, 27th, 28th, and 29th. Singles were seen flying around the mist nets, but not trapped on July 19th and 29th, August 6th, and 8th.

One was reported off South Light on September 15th. This is the 5th record of Leach's Petrel during seawatches from Fair Isle (excluding records from the Shetland crossing).

GANNET *Morus bassanus*

Breeds in large numbers, seen offshore all year

The island population continued to expand in 1998, with an increase of 4.5% to 1,166 apparently occupied nests at the usual colonies in the north-west of the island. None nested on Sheep Rock although one bird was present. Breeding success was good, with an average of 0.80 chicks fledged per nest.

CORMORANT *Phalacrocorax carbo*

Frequent autumn migrant, less common in winter and spring

Recorded in all months, with a peak spring count of six on June 4th, and peak autumn count of nine on September 12th.

SHAG *Phalacrocorax aristotelis*

Resident, breeds in moderate numbers

In 1998 an all island count of apparently occupied nests found only 567 active nests, a decline of 40.1% since the last all island count in 1993. This suggests a continuation in the long term trend of decline for this species. Fledging success was better than the recent average, with 1.44 chicks fledged per nest in 1998, compared to 1.29 in 1997 and an average of 1.39 for the previous ten years. Sandeels were again the predominant component of Shag diet.

GREY HERON *Ardea cinerea*

Frequent autumn migrant, less common in winter/spring

Seen in every month except June. In spring, most records were in April, with two on several occasions.

In autumn, recorded almost daily during August, September, and the first two weeks of October. The peak autumn count was on September 28th when 28 birds frequented the South Harbour area.

WHOOPEE SWAN *Cygnus cygnus*

Frequent autumn migrant, scarce in spring

Following an adult at Utra in poor weather conditions on January 17th, six adults flew past the Observatory on March 22nd, and four more were on Easter Lother Water on the 24th. An unusual record was a lone adult just starting primary moult which arrived offshore on July 15th, and spent the next six days feeding around the isle.

Autumn passage began on October 14th when a flock of 18 was noted. Regular sightings followed, the last two being recorded on November 4th.

BEAN GOOSE *Anser fabalis*

Scarce visitor; approximately 28 previous records

A pair of taiga Bean Geese arrived on October 4th and remained until the 9th, spending most of their time on the Skadan or Meoness. Recorded for the third year in four, after a blank since 1983.

PINK-FOOTED GOOSE *Anser brachyrhynchus*

Frequent autumn migrant, scarce in spring

A single from February 23rd-25th, and six that joined the resident Greylag from May 28th-June 5th were the only spring records.

In autumn, recorded almost daily between September 12th and October 29th, with peaks of 136 on September 22nd and 155 on 23rd. Counts in excess of 30 were made on five dates in September and seven dates in October. Three were seen on several dates during November.

GREYLAG GOOSE *Anser anser*

Common spring and autumn migrant

Upto 30 present during January included four over-wintering birds from 1997. Four to six were present through February until April 17th with occasional birds swelling the flock to a maximum of nine. From April 19th to May 8th, three were usually present, but only a single male remained after this date and over-summered. The first autumn migrants were three on September 11th, with occasional sightings throughout the rest of the month. Birds were seen daily throughout October. Passage began in earnest on 2nd with nine birds, followed by peaks of 279 on 10th and 105 on 17th. Numbers fluctuated in November with a maximum of 35 on 5th. Only four were seen on two dates in December of which two remained into 1999.

CANADA GOOSE *Branta canadensis*

Rare visitor in spring; thirteen previous records: 12 of them in spring (25 individuals)

Now almost an annual visitor, having been seen in six of the last seven years. Two were seen on June 4th and a possible third bird heard, which was confirmed on the 5th when three were seen together. They remained until June 8th.

BARNACLE GOOSE *Branta leucopsis*

Frequent autumn migrant, less common in spring

In spring, a flock of 28 were seen on May 9th, of which one remained next day. A single bird then arrived on May 27th, remaining until June 4th.

In autumn, passage began in full force at the end of September with maxima of 268 on 25th, 200 on 28th and 265 on 30th. Few birds were seen in October, the maximum being 80 on 3rd. Six on the 15th represented the final record of the year.

WIGEON *Anas penelope*

Frequent spring and autumn migrant, scarce in winter

There were scattered records throughout the spring. Two from April 6th-18th, a male on the 25th-26th, and a female on the 28th, were followed by a male from May 3rd-5th and two pairs on the 12th-13th, one of which was still present next day. The last bird of the spring was a male from May 18th-22nd. An unseasonal female was on the isle from July 7th-9th.

Autumn passage began with three birds on August 15th followed by occasional birds during the rest of the month. September was the peak month for passage with 18 birds arriving on the 1st, increasing to 50 on the 2nd. Birds were then seen daily until October 7th with a peak of 46 on the 4th. Small numbers were seen intermittently until November 25th.

GADWALL *Anas strepera*

Rare spring and autumn migrant; 32 previous records (51 individuals)

A female was seen near Pund on April 5th. The first since 1996.

TEAL *Anas crecca*

Frequent spring and autumn migrant, scarce in winter

One recorded on January 1st began an excellent year for this species. Spring passage started in April with a peak count of ten on April 7th, and continued until May 25th. In summer, two were seen on the 5th and 7th July, with a single bird on the 10th and 11th.

Autumn passage began with two on August 5th, and lasted until October 25th. September was the peak month for passage with daily sightings including a peak of 70 on the 3rd. In addition, a single was seen on six dates in December.

MALLARD *Anas platyrhynchos*

Frequent spring and autumn migrant; breeds in small numbers

With the recruitment from the 1997 breeding season, the resident flock on the island now seems to stand at two drakes and three ducks. They formed one pair and one trio for the 1998 breeding season, and were accompanied by one pair of migrants that nested, failed, and then moved on. Two nests were found of 15 and 11 eggs, while the behaviour of the other two females suggested that they also nested. Six eggs hatched from the 15, but all the ducklings succumbed due either to exposure to poor weather or predation by Grey Heron. Only two ducklings hatched from the second nest and neither were seen again.

Few migrants were seen. Peaks of migrant birds included six on February 4th, and three on several days in May.

In the autumn, a handful of migrants were seen almost daily in September and October, with a peak count of 12 on October 5th. Three migrants were still present through to the end of December.

PINTAIL *Anas acuta*

Scarce spring and autumn migrant

Spring records comprised pairs on May 1st and 3rd, plus June 4th and 28th.

In the autumn, four arrived on September 1st, including a first-year female which remained until the 3rd. It was followed by an eclipse plumaged drake on the 5th, another female on the 7th, and a male on the 8th. The final sighting involved a female on the 17th.

SHOVELER *Anas clypeata*

Scarce spring and autumn migrant

A female was found opposite Barkland on September 25th and stayed until the 28th. It or another was reported on October 2nd and two more on the 4th.

POCHARD *Aythya ferina*

Rare migrant; 47 previous records (60 individuals)

A drake was seen in the South Light area on September 29th and 30th.

TUFTED DUCK *Aythya fuligula*

Scarce spring migrant, rare in autumn

Two males and one female were seen on May 19th, followed by a drake from June 15th-21st that was joined by another drake from the 20th-21st. A drake which arrived on June 29th stayed until July 1st, and four more were seen on the 3rd – possibly failed local breeders.

In autumn, a male was seen on September 28th, and a female was on Field Pond on the 29th, followed by two on October 1st that were joined by further two on the 2nd.

SCAUP *Aythya marila*

Rare spring and autumn migrant

A female remained in South Harbour from May 12th-26th. The third record since 1994, following two in 1997.

EIDER *Somateria mollissima*

Resident, breeds in small numbers

Present offshore all year. Peak counts were 350 on January 1st, 200 on March 2nd, 363 on April 19th, 350 on September 20th, and 300 on November 17th. Many breeding birds failed to rear young to fledging, with the main factors being: nests washed out, nests robbed of eggs and down, predation of chicks by Great Skua and also poor weather conditions in late June and early July.

LONG-TAILED DUCK *Clangula hyemalis*

Frequent autumn migrant, less common in spring

Four records during the spring period. Single females were recorded on March 22nd and 31st, and April 9th-10th, and one male was seen occasionally from May 27th to June 3rd.

In autumn, most records were in October: one on the 11th, four on the 12th, with two remaining until the 13th, two on the 16th, three on the 17th, two on the 18th, and one male from the 20th-24th. The last bird recorded was a female on November 6th.

COMMON SCOTER *Melanitta nigra*

Scarce spring, autumn and winter migrant

The majority of birds were seen just west of South Light. Six females were there on January 19th, and five on the 24th. Three on March 22nd, heralded the spring migration. Records were almost daily from April 8th-28th due to a long staying flock that peaked at six. A single female present from May 15th-23rd was joined by a second on the 20th. A female was seen on May 31st and June 1st, followed by two females from June 5th-11th and a pair on the 18th.

There were only three records in autumn: a single bird on September 3rd and two on December 18th and 19th.

VELVET SCOTER *Melanitta fusca*

Scarce autumn migrant

Three records. A female was briefly off Landberg on September 29th, a single was seen off South Harbour on October 9th, and a male graced North Haven on December 21st.

GOLDENEYE *Bucephala clangula*

Regular winter, spring and autumn migrant

Small numbers were frequently seen between January and April with a maximum of four on February 23rd, although records were most frequent during March and April. The last spring record was on April 17th.

In autumn, the first record was on October 5th followed by a peak count of three on the 6th. A lone bird frequented the north of the island throughout much of November and December.

RED-BREASTED MERGANSER *Mergus serrator*

Frequent spring and autumn migrant

Sporadic records in all months except November. In summer, recorded almost daily throughout July, with up to five birds moulting in the Havens. Most records involved between one and three birds, although eight were seen on October 2nd.

GOOSANDER *Mergus merganser*

Rare migrant in winter, spring and late autumn

Recorded annually since 1991. The first bird of the year was present from January 1st-3rd, followed by three redheads on April 29th, with probably the same birds on May 3rd.

In autumn, one redhead was seen at North Haven on October 8th and again on the 12th.

HONEY BUZZARD *Pernis apivorus*

Scarce visitor; 35 previous records

One over the Houll on June 22nd was the first record since 1995.

WHITE-TAILED EAGLE *Haliaeetus albicilla*

Vagrant; five previous records since re-introduction attempt failed in 1969

A sub-adult was seen on May 3rd flying north along the west cliffs before heading out to sea. This was presumably the individual which had wintered on Shetland.

MARSH HARRIER *Circus aeruginosus*

Rare visitor; 23 previous records

A second-summer male near Upper Leogh, and later in Gilsetter, on April 6th represents the second earliest record for the isle.

In autumn, an immature was seen on September 30th in the Wirvie Burn area, and later over Vaasetter.

HEN HARRIER *Circus cyaneus*

Scarce spring and autumn migrant

A male on Ward Hill on May 21st was the only record.

SPARROWHAWK *Accipiter nisus*

Regular spring and autumn migrant

A good year for Sparrowhawk passage with birds seen in every month from March to November. The first was a female on March 31st, followed by one or two almost daily through to the end of April with a peak of four on the 25th. Passage slowed, but then picked up again on May 11th with birds recorded daily until early June. The last spring migrant was on June 12th. In the summer, one was seen on July 28th.

Autumn passage started with a single on August 23rd, followed by daily sightings from September 1st-October 5th, with peak counts of six on September 3rd and 9th. A large female on November 6th was the last of the year.

COMMON BUZZARD *Buteo buteo*

Scarce spring and autumn migrant

In spring, one was seen on April 26th, 28th, and 30th, with a second bird on May 10th.

In autumn, one arrived on October 2nd and was seen occasionally until the 11th.

OSPREY *Pandion haliaetus*

Rare spring and autumn migrant; 58 previous records

Two records in spring. Singles over the east cliffs on May 8th and the Gully on the 16th.

A single in autumn, over the east cliffs on September 10th.

KESTREL *Falco tinnunculus*

Regular spring and autumn migrant

A female from April 16th-19th was followed by a male on May 2nd, and records of single birds on nine days through June. Singles were also seen on July 7th and 15th. An outstanding autumn passage commenced with one on August 27th followed by daily sightings until October 7th. Peak counts were 16, possibly 26, (including a single flock of 14 birds) on September 3rd, and 19 on 5th, with double figure counts on another seven dates. The final sighting of the year involved a male present from October 17th-18th that appeared oiled and in poor condition.

MERLIN *Falco columbarius*

Regular spring and autumn migrant

Single birds were recorded sporadically from January to June, with the final spring record on June 4th.

The first autumn birds were on September 5th followed by daily sightings until October 27th, with a peak of four on September 12th. None were seen in November, but there were sightings of single birds on three dates in December, with the last on the 20th.

HOBBY *Falco subbuteo*

Rare visitor; 32 previous records

An excellent year with four records, three of which were in spring. An adult was seen in the south on May 13th and 14th, followed by a first-summer at Gunnawark on June 4th, and a further adult on the 15th.

The single autumn record involved an adult with Swifts over Gilsetter on September 5th.

PEREGRINE *Falco peregrinus*

Regular spring and autumn migrant; formerly bred

Sporadic records throughout the year, with the majority of spring records in April (on 11 days), and the majority of autumn records in September (18 days) and October (15 days). A maximum of two birds were seen on a number of dates, and some birds appeared to be long-staying individuals.

QUAIL *Coturnix coturnix*

Scarce spring and summer visitor; has bred

A good year for this species began with one within the boundary wall at North Light on May 14th, while two calling males and at least one female were present between Barkland and Pund on the 16th. Another female was found in Homisdale on the 17th and a male was seen near South Light from the 29th-30th. Although breeding was not confirmed, a calling male remained in the Quoy area from early June until July 11th.

WATER RAIL *Rallus aquaticus*

Regular spring and autumn migrant; occasionally winters

An over-wintering ringed bird, was at the Plantation on January 21st and seen again on February 4th. Another trapped in the Gully on April 6th, was the only migrant of the spring.

Autumn passage began with one at Quoy on September 19th, followed by regular sightings of up to two birds until 13th October. At least four arrived during easterly winds on 3rd November, and these birds were probably responsible for occasional sightings until the 19th. The final sighting of the year involved two on December 24th, one of which remained into 1999.

SPOTTED CRAKE *Porzana porzana*

Rare migrant, mostly autumn; 34 previous records

A first-year individual was trapped in the Plantation on October 3rd. After release in Gilsetter, it remained faithful to this area until the 5th.

In addition, an unidentified crake, possibly this species, was reported at Shirva on September 16th.

CORNCRAKE *Crex crex*

Scarce spring and autumn migrant; formerly bred

In spring, first recorded on May 15th near North Light, followed by sightings of single birds over the next four days. Two individuals were thought to be involved, with one frequenting the Gully and Byerwall for three days.

In autumn, one at Pund on September 3rd, was followed by one reported there on the 7th. One flushed by a dog in Bull's Park on the 20th and one at the Double Dyke trap on the 22nd, are likely to have related to the same individual.

MOORHEN *Gallinula chloropus*

Scarce spring and autumn migrant

Singles on April 7th and 24th were the only records of the spring.

Four autumn records. A long staying immature bird in the Gilsetter area, between September 19th-October 6th was eventually trapped in the Gully. Further records comprised singletons in Meadow Burn on September 27th, at Barkland on October 10th and the Plantation on the 21st to 24th.

COOT *Fulica atra*

Rare migrant, autumn, winter and spring; 59 previous records

One found in Hesti Geo on April 30th remained until May 1st and represents the only record of the year.

COMMON CRANE *Grus grus*

Vagrant; nine previous records (thirteen individuals)

An adult, first found near Golden Water on May 29th, frequented the south end of the isle until June 12th. It favoured the Walli Burn to Meoness area for much of its stay. Recorded for the third consecutive year.

OYSTERCATCHER *Haematopus ostralegus*

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

Recorded in every month from February to November. After the first on February 4th, monthly peaks comprised 91 on February 26th, 83 on March 24th, 150 on April 30th and 226 on May 10th. Daily counts in excess of 100 birds were made on 24 days in May, while 109 still present on June 3rd were a mix of breeding birds, late migrants and approximately 35 non-breeding birds that formed a loafing flock at Barkland.

The number of breeding pairs was estimated at 33, with most pairs nesting north of the Hill Dyke. Nest depredation by Raven, Hooded Crow and Great Skua was high, as was chick mortality, with skuas accounting for most losses. Kestrel was also seen to be responsible for chick loss. Approximately 28 young fledged from an estimated 100+ eggs.

Autumn passage birds swelled the ranks of the island breeders in August. Autumn peak monthly counts were 200 on August 12th, 35 on September 3rd, four on October 1st and 3rd, with the last bird of the year seen on November 4th.

RINGED PLOVER *Charadrius hiaticula*

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

Recorded from January to October. A single bird seen from January 9th-12th was joined by a second on the 12th. There were several sightings of single birds in early February before the 18th when sightings became almost daily, as spring passage got underway and breeding birds returned. The peak spring count of passage birds was 25 on March 11th. Sixteen pairs attempted to breed: six pairs failed at the egg stage, and two others lost all their young. At least 10 young fledged.

In autumn, 13 on August 27th were the first notable sign of passage, with double figure counts seen after this until September 18th, peaking at 54 on the 8th. Small numbers were seen on most dates in early October, with the last two on the 15th.

DOTTEREL *Charadrius morinellus*

Scarce spring and autumn migrant

An excellent year. In spring, three flew over Burrashield on April 30th, followed by a Fair Isle record-breaking 'trip' of nine birds on the Svey near Lower Station

on May 10th. A more unusual record was a long staying, aberrantly plumaged male which frequented the area between the School and the Kirk from May 20th-June 11th. This bird had a damaged lower mandible that meant it gaped permanently, which may account for its faded first-summer plumage, and long stay.

In autumn, a single on Ward Hill on September 20th was the only record.

GOLDEN PLOVER *Pluvialis apricaria*

Common spring and autumn migrant; has bred

Recorded from February to November. The first record of the year was a single bird on February 7th, followed by sporadic sightings until April 6th when the main spring passage commenced. Sightings became almost daily until June 8th, until the last of the spring was seen on June 19th. Peak monthly counts were: four on March 8th, 30 on April 25th, 42 on May 3rd-4th and three on June 5th-6th.

In autumn, passage began in July with sporadic records from the 3rd and continued until the final sighting on October 7th. Peak monthly counts were: eight on July 11th, 17 on August 12th, 108 on September 23rd and 107 on October 2nd. The sole winter record comprised a single on December 12th.

GREY PLOVER *Pluvialis squatarola*

Scarce autumn migrant, rare in spring

No spring records. One on August 6th was followed by singles on September 14th, 16th, 24th-26th, three on 27th, four on 28th, with two remaining on the 29th. One was also recorded on October 1st-5th, with two on the 6th.

LAPWING *Vanellus vanellus*

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

Recorded throughout the year. Two on January 2nd and one on the 9th were followed by six records in February including 13 on the 10th. Peak passage was during March when 42 were recorded on the 3rd and 12th. Light passage continued as breeding birds set up territory, with peak monthly counts of 27 on April 8th and 25 on May 22nd. By June only breeding birds remained, but a flock of five passage birds flew north over the isle on June 25th. Five pairs nested this year: one on Vaasetter, one at Pund, and three at Setter. All clutches contained four eggs and one pair relaid having failed the first time. The first clutch hatched on May 18th, and at least four young fledged.

The first four autumn migrants were seen on July 9th, by which time the breeding birds had left the isle. A count of six on July 21st was followed by occasional sightings through August peaking at six on the 20th. During September and October, sightings were almost daily with peak counts of 23 on September 5th and 33 on October 5th before passage tailed off on the 8th. Fifteen were seen on November 23rd, and one to three on several dates in December.

KNOT *Calidris canutus*

Frequent autumn migrant, scarce in spring

Two spring records of single birds on May 11th and 25th.

Autumn passage commenced with one on July 27th, followed by daily records from August 10th-September 28th. Monthly counts comprised maxima of 21 on August 24th and 30 on September 9th. A single October bird on the 15th was the last of the year.

SANDERLING *Calidris alba*

Frequent autumn migrant, less common in spring

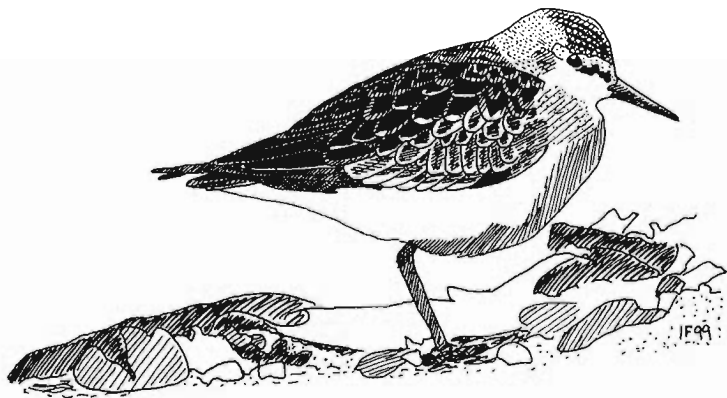
Singles were recorded in North Haven on May 16th and 19th, followed by three from the 25th-27th. Further singles were seen on June 3rd and 6th.

Autumn birds began arriving in July with two on the 22nd, increasing to six on 23rd, with one remaining until the 24th. There were records on eight days in August (peak count seven on the 13th), and on nine days in September (maximum three) until the 18th. Three October records featured one on October 2nd-5th, joined by another on the latter date, with the last of the year on the 10th-11th.

LITTLE STINT *Calidris minuta*

Regular autumn migrant

Two on August 31st were the heralds of a fantastic autumn for this species, with over 1000 recorded in the UK as a whole; indicative of a productive breeding season in the Siberian tundra. Fair Isle recorded birds throughout September: 14 on the 1st, 20 on the 2nd, 44 on the 3rd, 55 on the 4th, 40 on the 5th, 27 on the 6th, 30 on the 7th, 32 on the 8th, 50 on the 9th, 28 on the 10th, 19 on the 11th, four on the 12th, and six from the 13th-15th. Most records after this date relate to a scattering of individuals left over from the main passage; these were joined



Little Stint (Ian Fisher)

occasionally by one or two late arrivals. The final records of the year involved a single on October 7th, with possibly the same bird erratically between 13th-20th. By intensive ringing effort (all birds trapped were first-years), it was found that the high numbers present during early September were due to a rapid turnover of birds, rather than just a build-up. Consequently, it is estimated that between 150-200 birds were involved in this exceptional passage.

CURLEW SANDPIPER *Calidris ferruginea*

Scarce autumn migrant

Four autumn records, involving eleven individuals. Two were seen on the Skadan on September 2nd with one remaining until the 3rd. Seven were then noted on 10th, including a group of five on Dronger. A single first-year bird on the 12th remained on the Skadan until October 7th. An additional bird was near Busta on September 26th.

PURPLE SANDPIPER *Calidris maritima*

Frequent spring and autumn migrant; also over-winters

Small numbers recorded in every month. Sightings were most frequent during April and May with peak counts of 38 on April 29th and 30 on May 5th.

There were fewer records in the autumn, when peak counts reached 15 on August 18th, 11 on September 20th and 15 on December 26th.

DUNLIN *Calidris alpina*

Frequent spring and autumn migrant. Has bred

Recorded from March to October. First seen on March 7th, with sporadic sightings producing five more birds in the month. Only five more birds were seen during April. Peak passage occurred from early May to mid June, with daily sightings and a peak count of 14 on May 26th. At least 10 birds were seen during July in sporadic sightings of ones and twos.

August saw a return to almost daily sightings although small numbers were involved, while the main passage began at the start of September and continued into early October. Peak counts were 41 on September 3rd and 29 on October 4th. The last bird of the year was seen on December 14th.

RUFF *Philomachus pugnax*

Frequent autumn migrant, rare in spring

Four near Johnny's Peats on July 30th were the first for the year, with two remaining until August 2nd. Singles on the August 5th and 10th were followed by a superb run of sightings in this highly productive year, beginning with eight on the 13th and a peak count of 16 on the 20th. Although passage slowed later in August, a second wave began at the start of September with nine on the 1st, 25 on the 2nd, 43 on the 3rd, 27 on the 4th, 60 on the 5th, 36 on the 6th, 31 on the 7th, 49 on the

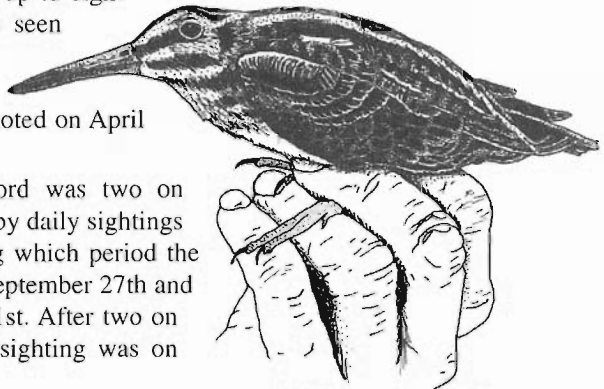
8th, and 22 on the 9th. Flocks of up to 13 birds were sighted daily for the rest of the month and into early October, with passage tailing off on the 5th, although the last bird was not seen until the 17th.

JACK SNIPE *Lymnocyptes minimus*

Frequent autumn migrant, less common in winter and spring

An excellent spring, with up to eight individuals. Singles were seen on March 7th and 9th, followed by four on the 27th. Further birds were noted on April 4th and 9th-13th.

In autumn, the first record was two on September 14th followed by daily sightings until October 20th, during which period the peak counts were 18 on September 27th and 30th, and 30 on October 1st. After two on November 4th, the final sighting was on the 12th.



Jack Snipe (Stuart Rivers)

COMMON SNIPE *Gallinago gallinago*

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

Present all year in small numbers, swelled by migrants in spring and autumn. Approximately 21-24 displaying males were recorded during the breeding season, mostly north of the Hill Dyke. Spring migration was noticeable only in April, with a peak count of 56 on the 5th. Autumn passage took place throughout September (peak count 84 on the 4th) and into October (peak count 95 on the 5th) until 21st (50 counted). Ten were seen on November 24th, and 12 on December 5th.

GREAT SNIPE *Gallinago media*

Rare autumn migrant; 32 previous records (at least 33 individuals)

Two records; recorded for the fifth successive year. One briefly at Groggy's Cup near Sukki Mire on September 3rd, was followed by a second in the Boini Mire to Quoy area from September 15th to October 6th where it was widely appreciated. Unfortunately, around the 27th, it sustained a cut to its lower back after striking barbed wire, but appeared to have made a full recovery on the date it was last noted.

Both accepted by BBRC

WOODCOCK *Scolopax rusticola*

Frequent spring and late autumn migrant, occasionally over-winters

Singles were seen on January 2nd, February 1st and 18th. Spring passage began in the last week of March with sightings of nine birds on four dates, followed by sightings on 15 dates in April. The peak count was nine on April 7th while one on the 26th was the last of the spring, until an unseasonal individual was trapped in the Gully on June 4th.

A poor autumn involved sightings from September 20th, comprising 36 records with peaks of just five on October 2nd and 21st; a far cry from the three figure days in 1997. One islander commented that it was the worst autumn for Woodcock on the isle for a very long time.

BLACK-TAILED GODWIT *Limosa limosa*

Scarce spring and autumn migrant

One bird from May 26th-29th was the only spring record. In autumn, two were together from August 8th-11th and one of these was then seen occasionally until the 20th. A single was also seen on November 17th, representing the latest ever record for Fair Isle.

BAR-TAILED GODWIT *Limosa lapponica*

Regular autumn migrant, rare in spring

No spring records. Singles were seen on July 8th and 31st, August 5th-10th and 29th. There were also several records of singles in September, on 3rd-9th, 12th, 15th-16th and 27th.

WHIMBREL *Numenius phaeopus*

Frequent spring and autumn migrant

In spring, the first was seen on April 17th. Sightings became almost daily from April 21st-June 12th. There were counts of ten or more birds on six days, including a peak count of 17 on May 11th. The last spring birds were two on June 14th.

Autumn passage was light, with occasional records from July 6th. Up to four were seen daily from September 1st-14th, after which singles were recorded on four dates with the final sighting on the 30th.

CURLEW *Numenius arquata*

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

Present throughout the year, with occasional sightings in all non-passage months. Spring migration began in March with daily sightings through to early June, the majority passing through in April and May. Peak monthly counts were: 11 on March 29th, 111 on April 23rd, and 23 on May 9th.

Five pairs nested in 1998, continuing the downward trend from eight in 1996. Two nests were at Setter and singles at Sukki Mire, Vaasetter, and Gilsetter. All five pairs hatched young and at least eight young fledged.

A flock of 24 birds heading south on June 29th were early returning migrants, possibly failed Shetland breeders. The local breeders had dispersed by the end of July, and autumn passage produced daily sightings from August to early October, with one to three recorded on most days. Peak counts were 18 on July 28th, 47 on August 13th, 12 on September 15th and ten on October 4th.

SPOTTED REDSHANK *Tringa erythropus*

Scarce autumn migrant, rare in spring

The only record of the year was a long staying individual seen daily from September 11th to October 7th. Initially seen in the south of the island it quickly settled into a routine of foraging in Gilsetter, Sukki Mire, on Bunes and Field Pond. It became very sick in late September, but appeared to have recovered by early October.

REDSHANK *Tringa totanus*

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

Present throughout the year. Peak spring passage was during March and April, and in autumn from September to October, with over 20 birds recorded on most days. Peak counts in each month were: 55 on January 2nd, 68 on February 25th and 26th, 40 on March 7th, 96 on April 2nd, 11 on May 1st, 3 on several dates in June, 35 on July 10th, 60 on August 14th, 53 on September 18th, 46 on October 12th, 40 on November 25th, and 43 on December 20th. A male set up territory in Sukki Mire and displayed occasionally through late May and early June, but failed to attract a mate.

GREENSHANK *Tringa nebularia*

Regular autumn migrant, scarce in spring

In April there were records of one or two birds on fourteen dates from the 8th, with a similar situation in May involving sightings on 13 days, with the last sighting on the 22nd.

Recorded in autumn from July 22nd to September 21st, with maxima of six on August on 11th and 13th.

GREEN SANDPIPER *Tringa ochropus*

Regular spring and autumn migrant

Scarce in spring, singles seen on May 8th and 17th.

Autumn passage was more productive and began on July 28th when a peak of three was noted. The last sighting was on September 9th.

WOOD SANDPIPER *Tringa glareola*

Scarce spring and autumn migrant

A productive year, with at least six individuals recorded. In spring, two were seen at Setter feeding in a muddy pool. The first arrived on May 13th and remained until the 16th when a second individual joined it.

In autumn, there were singles on August 16th, September 3rd and 24th. A first-year stayed in the Walli Burn area from September 27th to October 2nd. Another first-year bird was seen at Field Pond on September 30th.

COMMON SANDPIPER *Actitis hypoleucos*

Frequent spring and autumn migrant

In spring, singles were first recorded on April 19th and 23rd. After five on May 10th, one to three were recorded on many dates until June 1st.

In autumn, recorded from July 10th to October 2nd. The majority were noted in September with maxima of 14 on 3rd and 15 on the 5th, three of which remained into October.

TURNSTONE *Arenaria interpres*

Common winter, spring and autumn migrant

Recorded throughout the year, with lower numbers during June and July. Peak counts were: 120 on January 4th and 10th, 150 on February 7th, 120 on March 7th, 69 on April 24th, 37 on May 11th, 14 on June 1st, 19 on July 15th, 51 on August 4th, 45 on September 30th, 100 on October 25th and November 25th, and 115 on December 20th.

POMARINE SKUA *Stercorarius pomarinus*

Scarce spring and autumn migrant

A second-summer bird flew over Field on June 4th.

ARCTIC SKUA *Stercorarius parasiticus*

Summer visitor, breeds in small numbers. Frequent passage migrant

A dark phase bird on April 19th was the first of the year. Eleven displaying birds over Eas Brecks on the 20th signalled the return and gradual build-up of the breeding population. Sixty-seven territories were occupied in 1998 (down by 31.6% on the 98 territories in 1997). A general shortage of food and high levels of depredation of Arctic Skua chicks by Great Skuas resulted in only nine young fledging; a productivity rate of 0.13 chicks per occupied territory – the worst year since 1990. After the majority had left the isle by mid August, occasional singles were noted until the last on September 21st.

LONG-TAILED SKUA *Stercorarius longicaudus*

Scarce migrant, spring, summer and autumn

An adult was seen flying north over the isle on May 27th and a juvenile was reported on September 20th.

GREAT SKUA *Catharacta skua*

Summer visitor, breeds in moderate numbers. Frequent passage migrant

The first sighting was on March 29th, followed by occasional sightings until April 7th when the breeding population began to take up territory. The number of occupied territories was much lower in 1998 at 79 than the record 152 territories in 1997, a decline of 48%. A number of adults were found dead during the breeding season and several chicks had died from severe blows to their bodies. Although there were severe food shortages in 1998 that led to cannibalism of chicks, an average 1.00 chicks per occupied territory were raised to fledging, compared to only 0.76 in 1997 and an average of 0.89 over the previous eight years. The last bird of the year was noted on November 4th.

SABINE'S GULL *Larus sabini*

Vagrant; three previous records

An adult was reported off North Light on September 14th. The first record since 1982, and only the fourth record for the isle.

BLACK-HEADED GULL *Larus ridibundus*

Frequent spring and autumn migrant

In January, five on the 14th dwindled to one by the 18th, which were followed by only one record in February on the 21st. In March, a maximum of seven on the 23rd was noted. Daily records of birds on spring passage started on April 5th and continued until mid June. Peak counts were 15 on April 26th and 28th, May 9th, 15th, and 28th and 17 on June 11th.

Recorded in small numbers throughout the autumn, with peaks of 39 on July 22nd, 30 on August 15th, and six on September 25th and 27th. Occasional sightings of up to three were reported during October. One was seen on November 19th, followed by four on December 24th.

COMMON GULL *Larus canus*

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

Recorded every month, the majority seen during spring and autumn migration. In spring, a heavy passage became noticeable in late March through to early June, with monthly peaks of 24 on March 22nd and 25th, 736 on April 7th, 68 on May 1st and 35 on June 2nd. Eight pairs attempted to nest build, but only five pairs laid eggs (as in 1997) and only three young fledged (0.6 chicks per egg-laying pair) due to depredation by Great Skuas.

Autumn passage built up from mid July. After 260 on August 9th, an exceptional 2000 were present on 13th, before returning to more usual numbers such as monthly peaks of 161 on September 1st and 17 on October 21st.

LESSER BLACK-BACKED GULL *Larus fuscus*

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

Four on March 26th were the first of the year, after which breeding birds were regularly seen. The breeding population now stands at approximately 17 pairs, predominantly on the South Gavel of Buness, plus several pairs at Goorn. Approximately ten young fledged while exposure and starvation seemed to be major causes of chick death. Small numbers of passage birds were seen from August onwards, until the last sighting on October 25th.

HERRING GULL *Larus argentatus*

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

Present throughout the year. Several large flocks of migrants and storm-blown birds were recorded, such as 200 on May 28th, 700 on October 25th, 1500 on November 11th, 1200 on the 26th and 2500 on December 17th. The breeding population was mainly split between the South Gavel of Buness, Goorn and Greenholm. Only 26-30 young fledged, with exposure and starvation the main problem, as with Lesser-black Backed Gulls.

ICELAND GULL *Larus glaucoides*

Scarce migrant, winter and spring

Four records early in the year. A 3rd-winter was in South Harbour on January 4th-5th, followed by a 1st-winter there on the 18th. This may have been the dead 1st-winter washed up in Maver's Geo a few days later. Another 1st-winter on February 28th was followed by a 2nd-winter on March 24th.

In autumn, a 1st-winter was seen on October 17th and a 2nd-winter on December 20th.

GLAUCOUS GULL *Larus hyperboreus*

Regular migrant in spring, late autumn and winter

There were seven records involving three 1st-winter birds in January. Sightings on twelve days in February again involved at least three single 1st-winters, mainly on Vaasetter and in the Havens. In March, sightings on twelve days included three 1st-winters again, plus an adult on the 8th, and a 2nd-winter on March 9th, 11th, and 12th. A 2nd-summer on April 15th and an adult on June 4th were the last spring sightings.

In the autumn a probable adult was seen on September 26th. Two 1st-winters were on Buness on October 2nd, with one remaining until the 4th, and singles seen on the 6th and 17th-18th. A 2nd-winter on October 25th was the last record until December when single 1st-winters were seen on the 12th-14th and 17th, a 2nd-winter on the 13th and 27th and an adult on the 14th.

GREAT BLACK-BACKED GULL *Larus marinus*

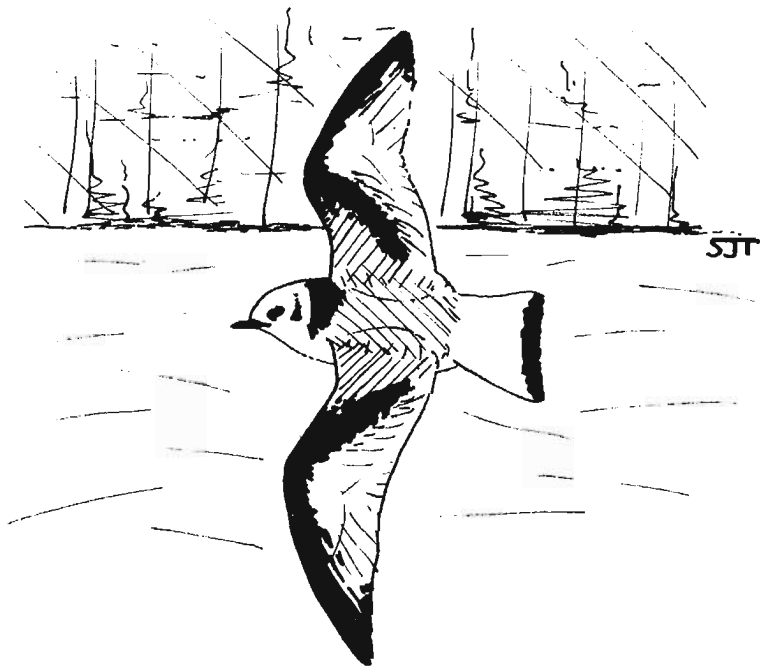
Resident, breeds in moderate numbers. Also hard-weather migrant, autumn and winter

Present throughout the year. Storm-blown birds swelled the local population in the autumn, with the largest counts being 300 on October 25th, 2500 on November 9th, 600 on November 11th, and 700 on December 17th, although counts of over 100 were made in most months. The main breeding colony was on Sheep Rock, although two pairs nested on Greenholm. Few chicks fledged as with the other gulls.

KITTIWAKE *Rissa tridactyla*

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

One on January 4th was followed by another on the 14th. There was also a single seen on February 14th. Recorded daily from March until September 10th, with occasional records until October 25th.



Kittiwake (Steve Turner)

A whole-island census of Kittiwakes in 1997 estimated the breeding population at 11,650 pairs. Over-winter survival of colour-ringed adults at the Goorn colony was appalling, with only 22.9% of those known to be alive in 1997 returning in spring 1998. Counts in study plots in 1998 indicate that the population continues to

decline – 13.6% down from 1997. This has not been helped by the almost total breeding failure on the isle in 1998, plus the predation pressure exerted by Great Skuas on both adult and young Kittiwakes. 1998 was the worst year since 1990 for Kittiwake breeding success. Only 0.15 chicks fledged per active nest due to a lack of sandeels. This shortage caused direct starvation plus the death of chicks by exposure/depredation, because both parent birds were having to leave the chicks unattended for extended periods to look for food. All food samples examined consisted entirely of sandeels, showing the heavy dependence on this species even when scarce.

SANDWICH TERN *Sterna sandvicensis*

Scarce summer migrant

An excellent year, with singles on April 30th, May 15th and 21st and two on the 23rd. Further records in June comprised four on the 2nd and singles on the 3rd, 6th, 14th and 23rd.

COMMON TERN *Sterna hirundo*

Summer visitor, breeds in small numbers

The first arrived on May 6th and the small breeding population was present on the isle until July 18th. Only three pairs may have attempted to breed (one on Buness, and two at South Light), a 57.1% decline from 1997, all of which failed, accounting for the early departure. The peak count was nine on May 19th.

Up to five birds on autumn passage were sighted in the Furse area daily between September 2nd-11th, and two late 1st-years were present on September 27th and 28th.

ARCTIC TERN *Sterna paradisaea*

Summer visitor, breeds in large numbers

One flew over the isle on April 26th and another on the 30th. Breeding birds began to arrive on May 2nd when one was seen over Tarryfield, followed by 12 on the 2nd, increasing to 40 on the 3rd, 100 on the 6th and 600 on the 9th. The colonies on the isle continued to fill until 1249 apparently incubating adults (AIAs) were present in late May. This was a 27.8% decline from the record 1730 AIAs in 1997. Disturbance by air traffic when the birds first arrived resulted in a change in the distribution and sizes of colonies this year, with a completely new colony formed on South Park, drastic increases at Eas Brecks, Setter, Sukki Mire, and South Light, and declines in the Buness and especially Tarryfield colonies. Unfortunately, as with other surface feeding species the tern colonies were doomed to failure through lack of food for chicks, that caused the total collapse of most colonies by the third week of June. Eas Brecks and South Light colonies lasted a little longer having started incubation a little later, but collapsed before the end of June and most birds left the isle soon after. One chick did fledge at South Light putting this disastrous season on a par with 1990 – a return to the days of the sandeel crash.

Many ringed adult birds were observed in the colonies and 92 ringed adult Arctic Terns were trapped in 1998. One, bearing a Danish ring, was ringed as a chick in the Faeroes in 1987. The other 91 had all been ringed on Fair Isle as chicks over the last 15 years, while surprisingly no Shetland ringed birds were trapped. This suggests that although the colonies may have originally been established by Shetland birds, these may have returned to Shetland in subsequent years. It appears that the Fair Isle colonies are now maintained by recruitment of birds reared on Fair Isle.

Autumn passage brought one on July 28th and two on the 30th and a scattering of sightings throughout August, peaking at six on the 4th. Fourteen were seen on September 2nd, followed by five on the 4th, two on the 5th, one on 8th-9th, and the last two birds of the year on the 10th.

GUILLEMOT *Uria aalge*

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

The last complete island census was in 1994 and found approximately 37,600 pairs (an increase of 16.2% from the 1989 census).

Recorded on calm days during January, with 1200 on the cliffs at Pietron on the 24th. The breeding population was back on the cliffs from mid March and began egg laying in May. Most of the breeding population had left the colonies by mid to late July. Occasional sightings occurred from then on into October, after which most sightings related to storm-driven individuals. Following an increase at monitoring plots in 1997, counts decreased by 1.75%. Breeding success was slightly lower than the average 0.75, at 0.71 chicks reared per incubating adult. Typically, sandeels were the main component of chick diet in 1998, representing 98.8% of fish in collected samples.

RAZORBILL *Alca torda*

Summer visitor, breeds in large numbers

A census in 1998 found approximately 3,300 individual Razorbill at the start of the breeding season, a decline of 20.2% since the last census in 1993. After initial sightings at the end of March, birds returned to the colonies (mostly on boulder beaches) from mid April. Breeding success at the Easter Lothar colony was estimated to be 0.80 chicks fledged per occupied site, an above average productivity for this site. Sandeels formed 100% of the food brought to young. Following a similar breeding cycle to the Guillemots, most had departed for the open sea by mid to late July.

BLACK GUILLEMOT *Cephus grylle*

Resident, breeds in moderate numbers

The annual east coast census for breeding birds from North Light to South Light took place in April. The maximum count of 160 was 37% less than the 1997 count of 254. A whole island count in conjunction with the Razorbill census in 1998

produced only 206 birds in total. Consequently, it can be deduced from this data that the drop in numbers in 1998 is not simply due to a redistribution of birds. Breeding success at twelve monitored nests was reasonably good in 1998, with an average of 0.69 chicks fledged per active nest; an encouraging figure after only 0.43 in 1997. Almost all sites in the south-east failed, whilst those further north were mostly successful. Exposure to poor weather conditions was known to be responsible for the death of several broods.

LITTLE AUK *Alle alle*

Frequent late autumn/winter visitor

One on January 13th represented the only record for the first winter period. Later in the year, records comprised one off Bunness on October 12th, four past South Light on the 24th, one on the 25th, two on November 18th, one on December 20th, and two on the 21st.

PUFFIN *Fratercula arctica*

Summer visitor, breeds in large numbers

The total island population was estimated at 42,000 in 1995 (42,500 in 1989). The first record of the year was on March 29th and breeding birds began to arrive at the colonies from the start of April. Most breeding birds left Fair Isle waters by late July, with large flocks of non-breeding birds seen in the last week of July. A few late young did not fledge until early-mid August, with the last adult seen bringing food to a burrow on August 18th. Seawatching produced occasional records in mid September, with the last on the 17th.

Colour-ringed adults from the Roskilie colony survived the 1997-98 winter well, with 80% of those seen in previous years returning in 1998, although occasional birds were killed by Great Skua during the breeding season. Breeding success in 1998 was poor, with monitored burrows on Greenholm and at Easter Lothar fledging 0.58 chicks per occupied burrow, well below the 0.79 in 1997 and the mean of 0.75 over the previous ten years. Food samples showed that around 18.7% were sandeels, and 76.1% were gadoids (predominantly haddock, whiting or saithe). This markedly lower percentage of sandeels points to a shortage at the beginning of July.

ROCK DOVE *Columba livia*

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

Present throughout the year. The maximum count was 45 on May 7th.

STOCK DOVE *Columba oenas*

Scarce spring and autumn migrant

After a single on January 29th, spring birds were seen on April 15th-16th and June 23rd.

In autumn, frequent records may have been due to just two birds: one from September 23rd-29th, one on October 1st, joined by another from the 2nd-6th, one on the 7th and 9th, two on the 13th-14th, one on the 16th and two on the 17th.

WOOD PIGEON *Columba palumbus*

Frequent spring and autumn migrant

A single on March 11th was the first for the year, followed by occasional records during the rest of the month. Sightings were daily during April and May, mostly in the Setter area. There were also two records in June; two on the 13th, and one on the 24th. Peak counts were four on March 24th, 21 on April 8th, and five on May 6th.

In autumn, singles were seen on July 3rd and 23rd, August 27th, and September 20th, and 26th-28th before the main passage started in October. Daily sightings in October until the 25th included double figure counts on 19 days and a peak record of 37 on the 4th. Five on November 5th and one on the 6th were the last sightings of the year.

COLLARED DOVE *Streptopelia decaocto*

Frequent spring migrant, less common in autumn

One seen on April 8th was followed by almost daily sightings through to July 18th. Peak counts were nine on April 26th, 11 on May 8th and 22nd, 13 on June 5th, and eight on July 10th.

There were occasional sightings of two over-summering birds from July 11th-August 13th. Two on August 31st were followed by singles on September 2nd, 22nd-25th, October 6th, 9th, and November 15th.

TURTLE DOVE *Streptopelia turtur*

Regular spring and autumn migrant

In spring, one was seen on April 28th. A series of sightings followed: singles on May 2nd, 7th-8th, 19th-20th, 22nd-26th, and two on May 29th. One from 30th-June 2nd, was possibly the same bird as that seen from June 4th-9th. Singles were also recorded on June 11th, 14th and 17th.

In autumn, records on 19 days of up to three between September 9th-29th may all have been of the same birds. A further individual appeared on October 6th.

CUCKOO *Cuculus canorus*

Regular spring migrant, scarce in autumn

Spring records comprised one on May 13th, two on the 15th, and one on June 6th.

In autumn, a first-year from August 31st to September 2nd was the only record.

LONG-EARED OWL *Asio otus*

Regular autumn migrant, scarce in spring

A severe snowstorm on January 17th forced one to shelter in the Plantation, and was joined by two more the next day. Singles on February 2nd, 18th, and April 9th-10th, and 18th were also in the Plantation. The last bird of the spring was on May 6th.

In autumn, one or two were recorded from October 1st to 10th, while further singles featured on November 7th and 10th, and December 10th.

SHORT-EARED OWL *Asio flammeus*

Regular spring and autumn migrant

There were occasional records of up to six single birds between April 5th-June 12th. During July, sightings on 2nd, 5th-6th, and 21st probably relate to one individual.

Autumn brought singles on August 7th-9th, 19th, followed by daily sightings over the first seven days of October with a peak count of six on the 5th, and four other sightings of single birds until the 17th. The last record of the year was on November 3rd.

SWIFT *Apus apus*

Frequent spring, summer and autumn migrant

Two on May 11th and 12th were the first of the spring, followed by six on the 13th, and one on the 30th. More were seen in June with almost daily sightings, peaking at 14 on the 20th.

The first autumn record was one on the 3rd July, with one or two birds seen daily from the 22nd -September 13th, peaking at five on July 27th, six on August 3rd, and an exceptional 70 on September 5th. The last bird of the year was on October 3rd.

WRYNECK *Jynx torquilla*

Regular spring and autumn migrant

In spring, four were seen: singles on May 18th-19th and 27th, two on the 28th, and a single on June 1st.

Autumn passage started with one on August 30th, followed by daily records until September 9th, with a peak of six birds on September 3rd. The next records comprised two on the 26th, one on the 29th, and the final bird of the autumn at Hesti Geo from October 3rd-5th.

GREAT SPOTTED WOODPECKER *Dendrocopos major*

Rare (and irruptive) migrant, mostly in autumn

The first-year male present from August 1997 remained until at least February 7th. This is the second record of an overwintering bird on the isle. It subsisted largely on animal fat and scraps put out by crofters. Remains of what were presumably this bird were found by a crofter during February, some time after it was last seen alive.

SHORT-TOED LARK *Calandrella brachydactyla*

Scarce spring and autumn migrant

A reasonable year with two, probably three, individuals in the autumn. All arrived on October 1st, one being found at Pund and two in the Quoy to Shirva area. The latter birds were caught during Skylark trapping sessions at bait. The Quoy bird remained until October 7th and that at Shirva until the 25th.

WOODLARK *Lullula arborea*

Vagrant in recent years; about 42 records since 1948, though formerly more numerous

The first individual recorded since 1993 arrived on November 10th 1997 and remained until February 1st. It was often seen feeding on the seeds of thistles and other weeds on the Skadan and at Utra. It occasionally moved as far as Busta, where it was struck by a Merlin in the third week of January and escaped by hiding in a stone wall.

SKYLARK *Alauda arvensis*

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

Present throughout the year in small numbers outside the migration periods. After ten on January 1st, spring migrants began to pass through in February, with 30 on the 18th, 50 on the 25th, 95 on the 27th, and 127 on the 28th. Low numbers on days between these counts such as 13 on the 26th indicate the continual turnover of birds during this period. Poor weather over the next few days resulted in a further build-up, reaching a maximum of 340 on March 2nd and daily counts in excess of 100 until the 8th. Counts of over 100 were also achieved between the 22nd-28th, and on six occasions during the continued good passage during April when a peak of 133 was achieved on the 21st. Migration tailed off during May, approximately 24 migrants being seen on the 7th. Approximately 35 males displayed over territories in 1998, 25 of them north of the Hill Dyke.

In autumn, light passage in early September was followed by seven counts of over 100 between the 12th-21st, peaking at 210 on the 18th. Continued passage produced 120 on the 27th, and counts between 70-140 during the first 12 days of October before numbers gradually dropped to 16 wintering birds on November 11th and only six by December 23rd.

SHORELARK *Eremophila alpestris*

Scarce spring and autumn migrant

Following the record passage in 1997, two were seen in spring. One at Golden Water on May 27th, was followed by another on Malcolm's Head on June 8th which moved to Lower Stoneybrek next day.

Four birds in autumn. One was seen on Bunes on September 12th followed by a mobile individual on 17th-20th. Another was found on Malcolm's Head on October 3rd, moving to Meoness on the 4th, while the last bird of the year was near the Observatory on the 14th.

SAND MARTIN *Riparia riparia*

Regular spring migrant, less common in autumn

One on April 27th was followed by five on the 28th and one on the 29th. After occasional sightings in early May, birds were seen almost daily from mid May to mid June.

Three on June 29th were either exceptionally late spring migrants or early autumn migrants. A single on July 11th-14th was joined by two others on the 12th. One to three were seen between August 7th-12th, with singles on the 15th, 17th, and September 20th-21st. The last birds of the year were four on the 25th that dwindled to one on the 30th.

SWALLOW *Hirundo rustica*

Common spring and autumn migrant; occasionally breeds

A single on April 22nd began a run of almost daily sightings through to June 26th. Peak counts were 20 on April 28th, 75 on May 10th and 50 on June 6th. Two pairs attempted to breed and a male set up territory at Field. One pair built a nest in the garage at Stackhoull but gave up when they lined the nest, while a second pair nested in the garage at Shirva, laid four eggs, and reared three young.

Autumn passage started with six on August 28th followed by small numbers until September 24th when 30 were seen, after which larger numbers became more frequent. A peak of 150 were seen over Vaasetter on the 28th, and early October saw the last 16 passage birds heading south on the 1st, followed by the island breeders by the 10th.

HOUSE MARTIN *Delichon urbica*

Frequent spring migrant, uncommon in autumn. Has bred

Seven on April 22nd were followed by daily sightings of upto three until the end of the month. There were regular sightings from early May until mid June. Peak counts were 15 on May 16th and June 8th. Two were also seen on June 25th, and one on the 26th. There were four summer records during July, one on the 1st, two on the 13th, one on the 14th and one on the 30th.

Autumn records started with nine on September 5th and featured sightings on a further 20 days until the final two birds of the year on October 5th.

RICHARD'S PIPIT *Anthus novaeseelandiae*

Scarce autumn migrant

The second ever spring record of this species on Fair Isle was on May 11th on Lerness, where the bird stayed until the 13th. It may possibly have been seen near Field later that day.

At least six different birds were seen during the autumn. One on September 19th on Malcolm's Head was the first, followed by three on the 25th, and two on most days until October 3rd when four were seen. Two remained next day, and one until the 5th.

TREE PIPIT *Anthus trivialis*

Frequent spring and autumn migrant

In spring, low numbers were recorded almost daily from April 24th until May 24th, with occasional sightings until June 14th. Peak counts were six on April 28th and 30th and 20 on May 11th.

In autumn, three on August 30th were the first returning birds followed by daily passage through to October 7th. Peak counts were 18 on September 6th and 20 on October 1st. The last record of the year was on October 14th.

PECHORA PIPIT *Anthus gustavi*

Rare autumn migrant; at least 38 previous records

Two records; the eighth successive year of recording. A relatively poorly marked individual was found in the Meadow Burn area on September 24th before settling at Quoy where it remained until the 26th. It favoured a roadside ditch and was seen to go to roost in the Quoy garage. A second, much brighter individual was found at Shirva on October 1st, often seen feeding amongst short pasture. It remained until the 6th.

Both accepted by BBRC

MEADOW PIPIT *Anthus pratensis*

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

One recorded on January 7th and three on February 19th were the only records before spring migration began on March 16th. Spring passage peaked in late April and early May, with peak counts of 240 on 19th, 26th and 30th April. Passage tailed off in early June and approximately 40 pairs remained to breed.

Over 100 seen on August 19th may have largely been due to the sudden movement of adults and young birds off the hill ground down to better feeding areas on the croft land and coastal areas. Numbers were soon swelled by passage birds, peaking at 240 on August 26th-30th. This pattern continued through September with counts generally close to 200, including a maximum of 250 on the 5th. Counts on six of the first 12 days of October exceeded 100, as passage tailed off towards mid month. After two singles during November, one remained throughout December.

RED-THROATED PIPIT *Anthus cervinus*

Scarce spring and autumn migrant; 75 previous records

In the spring, a male was found on June 5th at Setter, before moving to the vicinity of the Double Dyke where it was trapped on the 8th. It remained in that area until the 12th where it sang and displayed to Meadow Pipits.

After two unconfirmed reports in September, one was found at Shirva on October 1st and was still present in that area next day.

Both accepted by BBRC

ROCK PIPIT *Anthus petrosus*

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

Present throughout the year in low numbers. Peak counts during the migration periods were poor; maxima being 85 on both April 30th and September 14th. For the second consecutive year, there were no records of Scandinavian Rock Pipits (*A. p. littoralis*).

YELLOW WAGTAIL *Motacilla flava*

Regular spring and autumn migrant

An average spring passage produced regular sightings between April 4th-June 11th. Yellow Wagtails *M. f. flavissima* were identified on 24 dates during spring, involving possibly 17 individuals between April 4th-May 30th. There were also records of up to nine *flava* birds not identified to race between April 26th and June 9th.

A male Blue-headed Wagtail *M. f. flava* was seen on May 2nd, followed by singles on 13th-14th, June 6th, and 11th. A single Grey-headed Wagtail *M. f. thunbergi* was seen on June 6th-7th.

Autumn passage was noted between August 16th-October 22nd. Yellow Wagtails *M. f. flavissima* were identified on 16 dates during autumn, involving possibly ten individuals between August 16th-October 7th. However, the majority of birds were not assignable to race, with a maximum of four on August 31st.

CITRINE WAGTAIL *Motacilla citreola*

Rare autumn migrant; 35 previous records

A well marked first-winter was present on Malcolm's Head late in the day on September 3rd. Mirroring the steady increase of records throughout the UK, the last blank year was way back in 1984.

Accepted by BBRC

GREY WAGTAIL *Motacilla cinerea*

Scarce spring and autumn migrant; has bred

The first spring record was one on March 31st in the Gully, which was followed by six individuals on twelve dates in April and a female on May 20th.

In autumn, singles were present from September 27th-28th and October 1st-3rd, followed by two on the 5th. The final record of the year was a single in the Gully on November 15th.



ISABELLINE WHEATEAR

Michael McKee



RUSTIC BUNTING

Michael McKee



PECHORA PIPIT

Brian Clasper



GREAT SNIPE

Simon Stirrup



COMMON ROSEFINCH

Paul Baker



HAWFINCH

Paul Baker



GLAUCOUS GULL

Paul Baker



PALLAS'S GRASSHOPPER WARBLER
Paul Baker



COMMON SNIPE CHICK *Paul Baker*



SHORT-TOED LARK

Helen Baker



YELLOW-BROWED WARBLER

Paul Baker



LANCEOLATED WARBLER

Paul Baker



GREAT SKUA CHICKS

Paul Baker

WHITE/PIED WAGTAIL *Motacilla alba*

Frequent spring and autumn migrant; occasional breeder

A Pied Wagtail (*M. a. yarelli*) on March 16th was the first record of the year, followed by several towards the end of the month. Daily counts of less than ten were regular from April 5th-June 26th. The first White Wagtail (*M. a. alba*) was recorded on April 4th, with occasional sightings until the 17th when they became daily through to late May, with a peak count of 20 on the 10th. Occasional records followed until June 1st, when the last migrant White Wagtails were seen. A single bird remained after this as part of a mixed race pair that nested twice at North Haven, failing the first time, but successfully fledging three young from the second nest. Autumn passage commenced on August 13th and peaked from mid month through to mid September and comprised mostly juvenile White Wagtails. Peak counts were 24 on August 15th and 44 on September 3rd. From mid September, there were single figure counts on many days until October 10th, followed by singles on 16th-18th and 20th-21st.

WAXWING *Bombycilla garrulus*

Scarce/irruptive autumn migrant, rare in spring

Three autumn records. One at North Light on October 18th was later seen in the Observatory garden before heading south. Another was seen briefly at the Observatory on October 27th, while a third bird flew over Kenaby on November 26th.

DIPPER *Cinclus cinclus*

Vagrant; 23 previous records

On April 7th one of the nominate race *C. c. cinclus* (Black-bellied Dipper), bearing a foreign ring, was found in Hjukni Geo. It remained on the isle until the 17th; using the Gilly Burn and Hjukni Geo until the 10th, before being relocated in the Gully on the 15th-16th. It was last seen in Hesti Geo on the 17th. Only two of the Dippers recorded on the isle have been brown-bellied birds, the last in 1971.

WREN *Troglodytes troglodytes*

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

Present all year in small numbers. The annual count of singing males found 29 territories, a decline from the estimate of 37-40 for 1997.

DUNNOCK *Prunella modularis*

Frequent spring and autumn migrant. Has bred

First seen on March 11th, before a heavy spring passage between March 29th-June 15th. Double figure counts were reported on most days from April 6th-30th, and occasionally in May. Peak monthly counts were 81 on April 8th and 20 on May 11th. Ringing illustrated the rapid turnover of birds each day.

Autumn passage was also heavy. A series of daily sightings began with three on September 27th. Peak passage was during the first week of October when 100 were recorded on the 4th, followed by a gradual exodus until the final sighting on the 31st.

ROBIN *Erithacus rubecula*

Frequent spring and autumn migrant

Two were seen on January 9th and 15th and one on the 17th. Severe weather forced these birds to move away with no further sightings until one on March 24th, followed by daily sightings through to early June. Peak migration was from April 6th-20th, with 100+ present on 6th-12th, including a peak of 170 on the 7th. Double figure counts were recorded from April 13th-29th and again rapid turnover of birds through the main migration was illustrated by ringing. Small numbers continued to pass through until late May and after two on June 2nd, one was seen on the 3rd. Another arrived on June 22nd and remained until July 9th.

Autumn passage was also very good and began on September 2nd with occasional birds seen until the first big influx of 70 on the 27th. High double figure counts followed until October 2nd when large numbers began to pass through with 190 on this date, 300 on the 3rd, declining to 210 on the 4th and 175 on the 5th-7th, after which followed a return to double figure counts until mid month and single figure counts thereafter. Small numbers continued to be present through November and December, with up to three wintering.

THRUSH NIGHTINGALE *Luscinia luscinia*

Rare spring migrant, vagrant in autumn; 38 previous records

Four spring records represents the best year since four in 1989. An adult was trapped in the Single Dyke on May 10th, and remained near the Observatory until the 15th. A second bird, a first-summer, was found in the garden at Stackhoull during the afternoon on the 12th. A third was found on June 1st in the Gully and was trapped there later that day. A first-summer bird, it was a long stayer and was resighted on June 14th near Malcolm's Head and then reappeared in the trapping area on 22nd-23rd. While this bird was touring the isle, a fourth individual was seen briefly in the Kirn O' Skroo on June 5th and was aged as another first-summer.

All accepted by BBRC

BLUETHROAT *Luscinia svecica*

Regular spring and autumn migrant

At least 15 individuals were seen during the spring. A male and a female were seen on May 9th, the latter staying until the 11th. Another male arrived on the 14th and was joined by four more (three males) on the 15th, with a further female on the 17th. No more were seen until two females arrived on the 27th, joined by two males and two more females the next day. Two or three were then seen until June 2nd when only a single male remained. The last spring bird was a female from June 4th-8th.

At least seven were seen over the autumn. After two on September 2nd-3rd, one at Midway on the 16th became a long stayer and moved into the crop at Shirva from the 17th to October 5th. A different bird at Upper Stoneybrek on September 18th may have been a second bird which frequented Shirva from the 19th-21st. On the 29th-30th one was seen at Pund and another at Kenaby. One or two were seen over the first six days of October, with birds at both Upper Leogh and Stackhoull on the 6th representing the final sightings of the year.

BLACK REDSTART *Phoenicurus ochruros*

Regular spring migrant, scarce in autumn

An unseasonal singleton from January 23rd-February 28th was seen regularly at South Harbour, occasionally moving as far as South Light. The first spring passage bird was on March 8th, followed by one on the 27th. Occasional records involving at least six individuals in April were followed by another six birds during May and up to eight during early June, with the last one on the 18th.

Autumn passage was extremely poor with one on October 7th, followed by a single on November 18th.

REDSTART *Phoenicurus phoenicurus*

Frequent spring and autumn migrant

In spring, first seen on April 23rd, with seven birds recorded by the end of the month. Poor passage during May produced only another 10 birds over ten dates for the month, followed by five birds over six days in June, with the final record on the 12th.

Autumn migration was far more productive. After the first sightings on September 1st, recorded almost every day until October 12th. Double figure counts were noted on September 4th-7th, 25th-October 5th, with peak counts of 25 on September 5th, 30 on 27th and 20 on October 3rd. The final record of the year was one on October 16th.

WHINCHAT *Saxicola rubetra*

Frequent spring and autumn migrant

In spring, three on April 28th and four on the 30th were the first records. Small numbers were recorded on 19 days during May and on the first 12 days of June. The peak count was 10 on June 2nd, with a final sighting on the 12th.

One on August 14th-15th was the first of the autumn until two on the 31st. Passage picked up thereafter and birds were recorded daily until October 7th. Passage was most evident during the first two weeks of September with double figure counts on most dates and a peak count of 50 on the 5th. Few birds were seen after October 7th, the last two being noted on the 17th.

STONECHAT *Saxicola torquata*

Scarce spring and autumn migrant

In spring, single females of one of the western races were recorded on March 12th-15th and 30th, April 7th, and a male on the 21st.

These were followed by a male showing characteristics of one of the eastern races (*S. t. maura/stejnegeri*) in the Meadow Burn area on April 30th. *

**Not accepted by BBRC*

ISABELLINE WHEATEAR *Oenanthe isabellina*

Vagrant; first for Fair Isle

An exciting discovery on Malcolm's Head late in the day on September 20th. It generally showed well enabling many observers to appreciate the subtle differences between this species and Northern Wheatear. This first for the isle and 15th for the UK, remained until at least September 30th.

Accepted by BBRC

NORTHERN WHEATEAR *Oenanthe oenanthe*

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

The first spring record was on March 24th, followed by two on April 5th, after which sightings became daily from April 7th. Peak counts were 200 on April 28th and 230 on May 10th, and 100+ were counted on 18 other dates between April 26th-May 21st. Approximately 50 pairs remained on the isle to breed, although it was not a very productive year with many nests in burrows being flooded out.

Early autumn was marked by the gradual dwindling of numbers as the breeding population left the isle, before the first migrants started to pass through from mid August. Migration gathered pace during late August to early September, with peak counts of 100 on August 31st and 260 on September 5th. Double figure counts over the first ten days of October were followed by regular smaller numbers until the last bird on the 27th.

RING OUZEL *Turdus torquatus*

Frequent spring and autumn migrant

Four on April 5th started a run of daily records lasting into early May, with a peak count of 17 on 6th April. After occasional records throughout the remainder of May, birds were noted on four dates in June. One male was present in the summer from July 4th-6th.

In autumn, passage started with seven birds on September 25th followed by daily sightings until October 5th. The peak count was 31 on October 2nd and four on the 22nd proved to be the final birds of the year. In view of the unprecedented numbers recorded in southern Britain, more might have been expected.

BLACKBIRD *Turdus merula*

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

Present in small numbers throughout January and February with a peak count of 70 on January 31st. Spring passage was poor with small numbers from March 23rd and moderate passage from April 5th-25th, peaking at 184 on April 17th. One to three birds were recorded on most days from June 5th-12th and a single female was seen on June 23rd.

Autumn passage was generally poor with small numbers recorded in September, followed by peak counts in October of 34 on the 6th, 100 on the 21st and 120 on the 22nd. Up to ten over-wintering birds were recorded daily throughout November and December.

FIELDFARE *Turdus pilaris*

Common spring and autumn migrant, often over-winters

Winter movement was most evident in January with 40 arriving on January 1st, 20 on the 7th and 11th and 25 on the 15th increasing to 95 on the 17th. One to five individuals were present on several days from January 18th until April 2nd, with flocks of 13 on March 3rd and 27th. A steady spring passage began with a flock of 51 arriving on April 4th, with subsequent peak counts of 230 on April 7th and 360 on April 22nd increasing to 660 by the 25th. Seventy on May 4th was the final sizeable spring count, after which small numbers remained on the isle until May 16th. Occasional summer records included singles on June 22nd, 25th and 27th and July 4th; all probably relating to the same individual.

After a single on September 8th-9th, the first notable counts were 30 on the 26th and 29 on the 29th, after which very few were present until mid October. A major fall occurred on the 21st comprising over 1200 birds, but numbers had dropped to 400 by the next day and remained at this level until the 25th. Flocks of 150 on October 27th and 140 on November 7th were the only other influxes of note. Thirty on November 21st were followed by low numbers throughout December.

SONG THRUSH *Turdus philomelos*

Common spring and autumn migrant; has bred

Up to two birds were recorded on 23 days during January, February and March. April witnessed the main spring passage with birds recorded throughout. Passage was very good with counts of 300 on the 5th, 600 on the 7th, 800 on the 9th, 650 on the 12th and 550 on the 17th. Small numbers were recorded on 26 days in May and June.

Autumn passage was also good. A trickle of birds began from September 5th but passage began in earnest on September 24th with an influx of 50 birds which built up to 400 by the 28th. Numbers dwindled to 100 on September 30th, but the first major fall of the autumn produced a count of 570 on October 1st. This was followed

by two smaller falls over the next two days increasing the island total to 950 on October 2nd and 1300 on the 3rd. The loss of half this number by the 4th, was followed by a gradual decline until only 100 birds were present on the 10th and 11th. From October 12th daily counts fluctuated from 1-50 and four birds on the 27th were followed by only singles on November 17th and on five dates in December.

REDWING *Turdus iliacus*

Common spring and autumn migrant; has bred and sometimes over-winters

Winter passage mirrored that of Fieldfare, with 25 present on January 1st, five on the 7th, and 15 on the 15th increasing to 20 on the 16th and 17th. Single birds were recorded on just four dates from January 20th until March 23rd, when two birds were present. A single bird on March 26th heralded a moderate spring passage involving 250 on April 5th-7th. After a gradual exodus, a small influx of 85 was noted on the 22nd. Between 10-40 birds were recorded daily until May 1st, after which upto six were regular until June 12th.

In autumn a single bird was recorded on September 8th and 9th, followed by daily sightings from September 24th, with good peak passage in October. About 550 birds on September 28th was the first main arrival, followed by 1550 on October 2nd, bringing the daily count to 2100. A count of 850 on the 3rd declined steadily to 500 on the 9th, and then another fall of 400 occurred on the 11th followed by over 600 on 13th and 400 on the 17th. By October 20th, the daily count was just 70 but an overnight fall of nearly 3000 Redwings plus 1200 Fieldfares made October 21st one of those spectacular Fair Isle days. Passage quietened around the 28th with upto 50 birds daily until November 19th and up to ten on most days during December.

MISTLE THRUSH *Turdus viscivorus*

Scarce spring and autumn migrant

One on January 1st was probably the bird present from December 4th 1997. Spring records were confined to an excellent April with regular sightings of at least 19 individuals. A peak of six was noted on April 8th.

In autumn, there were sightings of one or two birds on seven dates between October 2nd-12th.

PALLAS'S GRASSHOPPER WARBLER *Locustella certhiola*

Rare autumn visitor; 12 previous records

Another excellent autumn for this species, and the second consecutive year with multiple records on the isle. The first showed well on September 30th at Lower Leogh near the base of Malcolm's Head. The second bird was found near South Haven on October 1st and was the most well marked individual of the autumn, with the white tertial tips clearly visible in the field and the tail tips very pronounced

too. The third was found in Boini Mire on the 3rd where it remained until the 7th. A poorly marked individual, it spent much time skulking and was often difficult to locate. A further individual was seen near Pund on the 8th. All were first-year birds, and represent the 23rd-26th records for the UK. The previous most recorded was three in October 1988.

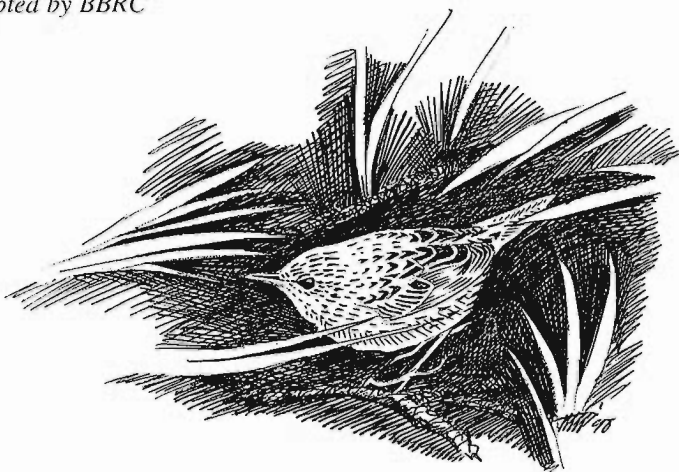
All accepted by BBRC

LANCEOLATED WARBLER *Locustella lanceolata*

Rare autumn migrant; 50 previous records

The first of an unprecedented five of this almost annual species, was found on the morning of September 26th between Kenaby and Quoy, quickly followed by another on 27th at Burkle. The third, a particularly well marked individual, was found at Pund on September 29th. October 5th produced a fresh plumaged bird at Meadow Burn, followed by a fifth bird next day, trapped in the Plantation. It was released at the Observatory where it remained until the 10th. Trapping of four of the five greatly helped in the identification of different individuals. Thirty have now been ringed on Fair Isle. Eventually, a recovery may indicate if these birds are part of the recent expansion of the breeding range west of the Urals to the Baltic Sea.

All accepted by BBRC



Lanceolated Warbler (Tom Whiley)

GRASSHOPPER WARBLER *Locustella naevia*

Regular spring and autumn migrant

In spring, singles on April 22nd-23rd and 25th-27th, followed by three birds present on April 28th, two on 29th and one on 30th. Two on May 9th had increased to four by the 11th, one remaining until 18th. The last spring bird was a single on May 29th-30th.

In autumn, the first singles were on September 3rd-5th and 21st-23rd. Two birds were present on September 24th-25th and one remained on 26th. A single bird on September 30th was possibly one of two on October 2nd, which were joined by a third individual on 3rd with one remaining until 5th.

SEDGE WARBLER *Acrocephalus schoenobaenus*

Regular spring migrant, less common in autumn

Spring passage spanned April 24th to June 11th, with low single-figure counts on several dates, including a peak of nine on May 17th.

In autumn, one to four were regular between August 30th-September 10th and September 28th-October 7th.

MARSH WARBLER *Acrocephalus palustris*

Scarce spring migrant, rare in autumn

Four typical spring records; singles on May 29th, June 13th (trapped), June 22nd-23rd, and June 26th (trapped).

REED WARBLER *Acrocephalus scirpaceus*

Scarce spring migrant, regular in autumn

Four spring/summer birds recorded; singles on May 19th-21st, June 9th-12th, June 26th-July 11th, and July 12th-18th.

Autumn passage began on September 1st. Birds were present on a daily basis until October 7th, with peak counts of six on September 4th, seven on the 27th, ten on October 2nd and nine on the 4th.

ICTERINE WARBLER *Hippolais icterina*

Scarce spring and autumn migrant

Two spring records, with singles on May 28th-30th and June 5th-8th.

A very poor autumn began with two birds on September 3rd, one of which remained next day. One found freshly dead at the Observatory on September 8th was thought to have hit a window.

MELODIOUS WARBLER *Hippolais polyglotta*

Vagrant; 13 previous records

A single bird was at Busta and Kenaby on September 21st. The fourth record since 1981 of a species more usually associated with the south coast of Britain.

SUBALPINE WARBLER *Sylvia cantillans*

Rare spring migrant; 54 previous records

A disappointing spring, with a single record of a male seen briefly near Furse on May 22nd. Recorded for the seventh year in a row.

Accepted by BBRC

BARRED WARBLER *Sylvia nisoria*

Vagrant in spring, regular autumn migrant

All records were in autumn, with the first on August 15th-21st. Another was seen on the 23rd, followed by three on the 29th-30th, one on the 31st and three on September 1st with two remaining until the 3rd. Another on the 4th-6th was joined by a second on the 5th. Singles on the 19th and 21st were followed by two on the 28th and by the final bird of the year on October 7th at the Haa. Approximately 15 individuals were seen during the autumn.

LESSER WHITETHROAT *Sylvia curruca*

Frequent spring and autumn migrant

In a poor spring for *Sylvia* warblers, the first was noted on April 25th. Records were almost daily until June 18th with peak counts of nine on May 15th, 11 on the 29th and six from June 5th-8th.

The first of the autumn on August 30th was followed by regular records until October 11th, with a maximum of six on September 27th.

WHITETHROAT *Sylvia communis*

Frequent spring migrant, less common in autumn

A poor spring passage with the first two birds arriving on April 30th. Daily records of 1-7 birds from May 8th-20th, then less frequently until June 15th with seven on June 1st.

In autumn, recorded in single figures regularly from September 2nd-13th with a peak of seven on September 10th. Singles on the 17th and 21st were followed by a poor but more regular passage from the 25th-October 4th, with a maximum of four on October 3rd.

GARDEN WARBLER *Sylvia borin*

Frequent spring and autumn migrant

In spring, a poor but regular passage was noted from May 13th-June 18th, with peak counts of 12 on May 29th and 15 on June 6th. A single on July 10th was unseasonal.

Autumn passage began relatively early with a single on August 10th-11th, and was moderate through to October 7th with a peak of 35 on September 5th

BLACKCAP *Sylvia atricapilla*

Frequent spring and autumn migrant

A single male on April 21st was the first of the spring followed by infrequent passage through to May 9th and daily records of up to six birds until May 19th. After this, two on the 22nd was the only record until a small peak of moderate passage from May 28th-June 9th, with a maximum of 13 on May 31st. Singles were recorded infrequently throughout the remainder of June and the last spring record was of a single on July 1st.

A regular but relatively poor autumn passage got underway with a single bird on September 3rd. A period of five days from September 25th-29th gave daily records of 16-25 birds and was followed by another good migration period from October 1st-7th with a maximum daily count of 40 on the 2nd. Small numbers passed through irregularly until November 10th, including seven on October 24th.

ARCTIC WARBLER *Phylloscopus borealis*

Spring vagrant, rare autumn migrant; 65 previous records

A first-winter between Setter and the Plantation on the slightly early date of August 29th, was relocated at Springfield the next day. A welcome return after none in 1997.

Accepted by BBRC

YELLOW-BROWED WARBLER *Phylloscopus inornatus*

Regular autumn migrant

After one on September 23rd-24th, five were scattered around the south end of the isle on the 25th. Two to five were recorded daily until the end of the month, while October produced two on the 4th, one on the 5th and 7th and the last one on the 10th-11th. Probably 12 individuals involved.

WOOD WARBLER *Phylloscopus sibilatrix*

Regular spring and autumn migrant

A poor year. Two spring records involving singles on May 1st (the second earliest for the isle) and 10th.

Only one bird seen in autumn, on August 30th-31st.

CHIFFCHAFF *Phylloscopus colybita*

Frequent spring and autumn migrant

A single bird on the 29th was the only March record and regular passage did not begin until April 5th with the arrival of two birds. Single figure counts were then almost daily until June 9th with peaks of eight on April 24th and 30th. Two birds appeared on June 12th before the final record of spring on June 22nd. One individual recorded on April 15th-16th was assigned to the eastern race *P. c. abietinus*.

One to two birds were recorded from August 8th-14th but no further autumn passage occurred until August 29th after which records were almost daily until October 21st, with a notable influx of 20 birds on October 2nd and a maximum daily count of 30 on October 6th. Four birds arrived on November 3rd, one remaining until the 5th.

WILLOW WARBLER *Phylloscopus trochilus*

Frequent spring and autumn migrant

An early bird on April 20th was the first of a regular but poor spring migration. Records were almost daily through to June 14th with peaks of 27 on April 28th and 20 on May 13th. One or two late individuals were recorded intermittently up until July 11th.

Early autumn passage was poor with infrequent records of up to seven birds from August 5th-28th. More substantial, although moderate, passage began on August 29th with the arrival of 18 birds and several small falls gave notable daily counts of 46 on September 3rd, 70 on the 5th, and 35 on the 10th and 25th. Passage petered out with the last two birds departing on October 7th.

GOLDCREST *Regulus regulus*

Frequent spring and autumn migrant

In spring, the first record was a single bird on March 16th-17th, followed by another single on 22nd. A light passage got underway from March 25th, with peak counts of 15 on March 29th, 14 on April 7th, 46 on the 18th and 15 on the 24th. From May 15th, there were infrequent sightings with the last bird noted on June 14th.

Autumn passage commenced with a single on August 18th. Very small numbers were then recorded daily from August 30th-September 18th, when a new wave of light passage began. Peak counts in September were 30 on 27th and 44 on the 30th. A fall on October 2nd produced a daily count of 160, increasing to 220 on the 4th. A count of 42 on October 7th marked the end of this period of passage, after which small numbers were recorded infrequently until November 3rd.

SPOTTED FLYCATCHER *Muscicapa striata*

Frequent spring and autumn migrant

Spring sightings were daily from May 12th-21st with the peak count a mere six. Further daily sightings between May 28th and June 15th, including a maximum of 23 on June 5th. Singles were recorded on June 18th and June 29th-July 3rd.

Five birds on September 3rd marked the beginning of the autumn passage with daily records through to October 10th, with the final sighting on the 13th. A count of 16 on September 5th was the highest of the autumn.

RED-BREASTED FLYCATCHER *Ficedula parva*

Scarce autumn migrant, rare in spring

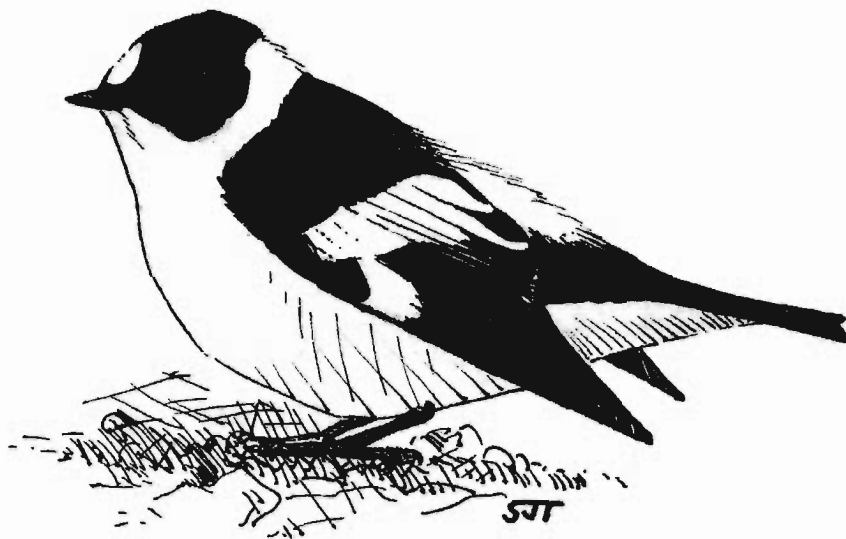
Another poor year. No spring records, and in autumn one on September 3rd on the west cliffs, two at Pund on the 4th, and one on the 24th.

COLLARED FLYCATCHER *Ficedula albicollis*

Vagrant; one previous record

A superb adult male was found mid morning on May 28th on the south facing cliff in Linni Geo. It represents the second record for the isle following a first-winter trapped in October 1986, and proved to be one of the highlights of the year.

Accepted by BBRC



Collared Flycatcher (Steve Turner)

PIED FLYCATCHER *Ficedula hypoleuca*

Frequent spring and autumn migrant

In spring, a female on April 28th was followed by sightings on just seven dates between May 15th and June 14th, with a peak count of three on June 8th.

Autumn passage was more productive. After two on August 30th, almost daily sightings followed until the final record on October 5th. Peak passage was during the first week of September, with maxima of 64 on the 3rd and 55 on the 5th.

TREECREEPER *Certhia familiaris*

Vagrant; six previous records

A nominate, continental race bird was on the cliffs at Easter Lothar on October 1st. The first record since 1993.

RED-BACKED SHRIKE *Lanius collurio*

Regular spring and autumn migrant

Two on May 12th were the first of the spring, followed by daily sightings of long staying birds until the 22nd. On May 13th, five were present including three males, increasing to seven next day. Four more arrived on the 28th, increasing to seven on the 29th-30th, declining to three on the 31st, followed by daily records until June 8th. A male was present at the Observatory on June 20th-21st. Possibly 18 individuals were involved.

Autumn juveniles were at Midway on September 1st, followed by a long staying individual from the 6th-12th, one on the 25th, and one on September 30th-October 3rd.

GREAT GREY SHRIKE *Lanius excubitor*

Scarce spring and autumn migrant

The only record concerned a first-year of the nominate race trapped in the Double Dyke on November 3rd. It was still present next day when it was last seen near Neder Taft.

JACKDAW *Corvus monedula*

Scarce spring and autumn migrant

In spring, the first was on April 1st-2nd, with another on the 5th, and two on the 9th, 28th, and 30th, one of which was still present next day. Singles on May 15th and 18th were followed by two on June 9th, which proved to be the final record of the year.

ROOK *Corvus frugilegus*

Regular spring migrant, less common in autumn

In spring, one on March 25th-26th was followed by sightings of one to three on 14 days during April. May records comprised singles on 6th and 9th, and three on the 17th, of which one was still present on 22nd.

The only autumn record was a single at Upper Stoneybrek on November 15th-18th.

HOODED/CARRION 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. There were several records of small numbers of migrants, with peak of 15 on May 8th-9th. Three resident pairs successfully bred.

Carrion Crows (*C. c. corone*) were frequently recorded through the spring. Between one to five were recorded on nine dates in April, while May produced double figure counts on five days peaking at 40 on the 8th. The final bird of the spring was noted on June 7th.

In the autumn, two on September 7th, and singles from 21st, 23rd-24th and 30th were followed by further individuals on October 6th and 20th and December 14th.

RAVEN *Corvus corax*

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

Present all year. In spring, peak numbers inclusive of resident birds were 12 on March 27th, 14 on April 11th, and ten on several occasions during May. Three pairs attempted to breed, although only one pair was successful and fledged three young. The peak autumn count was 28 on September 12th.

STARLING *Sturnus vulgaris*

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

There were no days with particularly heavy passage in spring or autumn, a count of 520 on April 26th was the largest of the year. At least 200 pairs bred (including cliff nesting birds). Fledging success was good for first broods, but second broods did not appear to fare as well.

HOUSE SPARROW *Passer domesticus*

Resident, breeds in small numbers

Present all year. The peak count during the spring was a disappointing 85 on April 25th.

The highest autumn count was 165 on September 22nd, with most birds forming a large flock centred between Houll and Schoolton. A five year study of adult survivorship was initiated this year as part of the nationwide BTO Rates of Adult Survival Project.

TREE SPARROW *Passer montanus*

Scarce spring and autumn migrant. Formerly bred in small numbers until 1972

A single spring bird was present from May 20th to 23rd, whilst a hybrid House x Tree Sparrow was seen on May 27th (the first hybrid since 1988).

The first autumn record concerned three birds on October 2nd. Two birds were seen on most days from then until November 18th, becoming regular visitors to

food at the Observatory, but counts of four were recorded on October 20th and 24th when two others were seen near the Puff-inn at the south end of the isle.



Tree Sparrow
(Stuart Rivers)

CHAFFINCH *Fringilla coelebs*

Frequent spring and autumn migrant

An excellent spring passage began on March 26th. The first notable influx occurred on April 6th with 90 birds, followed by several more smaller groups on 7th giving rise to the maximum spring count of 250. Daily counts remained high until the beginning of May when only 10-20 birds were still present. Several were present daily until May 25th, after which 1-3 were seen from June 4th-9th and two new birds appeared on June 12th. A highlight of the good spring passage was the arrival of an adult male showing characteristics of the North African race *F. c. africana* on April 15th. After being trapped on the 16th to determine exact racial identity, it remained around the Observatory until April 30th.*

In contrast, the autumn was relatively poor. A single bird on September 10th was the only record early in the month. Main passage began with 15 on September 24th, increasing to 32 on 25th, and continuing until October 7th with maximum monthly counts of 45 on both September 30th and October 5th. Upto 15 birds were then recorded almost daily until November 7th, and a single male was seen throughout December.

* *Still under consideration by BBRC*

BRAMBLING *Fringilla montifringilla*

Common spring and autumn migrant

A moderate spring passage. Infrequent records of single birds from March 27th to April 1st were followed by an influx of nine birds on April 4th, increasing to 31 on April 6th, thus mirroring the main Chaffinch movements. Birds were recorded daily until May 20th with small influxes leading to counts of 38 on April 9th, 37 on 24th, 40 on 28th and 49 on 30th. Singles on May 29th and June 6th were the final records of the spring.

An early record of one on September 8th was the precursor of a good autumn passage which continued on September 25th with eight birds. A fall of 70 on October 1st increased to 108 next day, after which small numbers were recorded daily until October 19th. An arrival on October 21st produced the highest autumn count of 160, but most had departed by the month's end, leaving a late straggler until November 7th.

GREENFINCH *Carduelis chloris*

Regular spring and autumn migrant

An excellent spring passage began on April 4th, building to a record spring day count of 39 on April 6th. Birds from this first influx remained until 10th. Another small influx in mid April yielded a peak of 18 on April 13th. Small numbers were then recorded almost daily until May 8th and thereafter one or two birds were recorded infrequently until June 13th.

In stark contrast, the sole records in autumn concerned the arrival of five seen on October 1st, all of which had departed by the 4th.

GOLDFINCH *Carduelis carduelis*

Rare spring and autumn migrant; 33 previous records (approximately 52 individuals)

Recorded for the eighth successive year. An elusive individual first seen near Quoy on May 5th remained in the south of the isle until the 11th, while a second bird was at Golden Water and the Observatory on the 6th and 7th.

SISKIN *Carduelis spinus*

Frequent autumn migrant, less common in spring

Four birds on April 7th and a single from April 11th-13th were the first records of the spring, followed by daily records of small numbers from April 19th-May 26th. The peak spring passage was during the first two weeks in May with a maximum daily count of 26 on the 5th. One or two birds were recorded infrequently until June 22nd.

Autumn passage was slightly heavier than in spring. Occasional singles were recorded from September 9th-22nd, whereupon passage became steady until October 7th with a maximum of 45 on September 27th. One to four birds were recorded on several days from October 9th-24th.

LINNET *Carduelis cannabina*

Regular spring migrant, scarce in autumn

Singles were recorded on March 6th and 25th, followed by five different birds present from April 6th-9th. Occasional records of one to two birds from April 14th-21st were followed by daily sightings until May 20th, with a maximum count of six on April 26th. Up to two were seen intermittently in June, the last sighting being a single on 29th.

Autumn passage was typically poor with singles on October 4th-6th, 17th-18th and 22nd being the only records.

TWITE *Carduelis flavirostris*

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

Present throughout the year in small numbers. Approximately 15 pairs bred. Passage in both spring and autumn was very poor, with a peak spring count of 43 on May 6th, and an autumn peak of 252 on September 12th. Counts in excess of 100 were made on 21 days during September.

REDPOLL *Carduelis flammea*

Frequent spring and autumn migrant

Recorded from April 17th to October 25th. Recorded on 16 dates during May and eight dates in June, with peak counts of six on May 9th and June 30th-July 1st. A series of sporadic sightings during the summer months involved singles on July 8th and 31st, two on the 29th, plus singles on five dates in early August.

The autumn saw one or two individuals recorded daily from September 12th–29th. Four records of single birds rounded off the year: three in October (16th, 22nd, and 25th) and one on December 23rd. Most were assigned to race; all those specifically identified were Mealy Redpoll *C. f. flammea*, apart from one Lesser Redpoll *C. f. cabaret* on May 13th, and one Greenland Redpoll *C. f. rostrata* between Quoy and Midway from September 16th–18th.

ARCTIC REDPOLL *Carduelis hornemanni*

Rare/irruptive autumn migrant; 81 previous records

A frosty female or first-winter, probably of the race *hornemanni*, in Gilsetter on the afternoon of October 7th was the only record of the year.

Accepted by BBRC

COMMON CROSSBILL *Loxia curvirostra*

Scarcelirruptive autumn migrant

A female trapped in the Plantation on June 8th, followed by single fly-overs on July 10th and 21st were the only records of the year.

COMMON ROSEFINCH *Carpodacus erythrinus*

Regular spring and autumn migrant

A first-summer male was found singing outside the Observatory on May 15th and remained until the 16th. On the 17th, a red adult male singing in the Plantation, was joined by two brown birds from May 18th–20th, remaining with one of these until May 23rd. Three brown birds were sighted on May 28th and a single brown bird was present from June 1st–2nd. Records of single brown birds were made on June 22nd–24th and July 15th. Spring and summer sightings probably involved eight different individuals.

Autumn passage began on August 28th with the arrival of a single brown bird which was joined by five others on 30th. Up to three of these birds remained and were seen most days until September 9th, with possibly the last of them staying until the 12th. A new influx from September 16th produced a maximum daily count of seven brown birds in one flock at Skerryholm on 20th, the last of these birds probably stayed until 26th. A minimum of 13 different individuals was involved in the autumn passage, but the actual number may have been as high as 19 assuming some turnover of birds.

BULLFINCH *Pyrrhula pyrrhula*

Scarce autumn migrant, irregular in spring

Two spring records. A male on Lerness on April 8th, and a female in the Plantation on the 22nd which was emaciated and later died. No autumn records. As usual, both were ‘Northern Bullfinches’ *P. p. pyrrhula* – the large, nominate race from the continent.

HAWFINCH *Coccothraustes coccothraustes*

Rare spring migrant, vagrant in autumn; 50 previous records

Another excellent spring. Three females were present on April 7th and 8th; up to two being seen at both the Plantation and Neder Taft and one at Kenaby. Two remained on the isle until the 12th and one until the 13th. An elusive male seen at Shirva on May 8th, was killed by a cat on the 10th.

LAPLAND BUNTING *Calcarius lapponicus*

Frequent autumn migrant, less common in spring

A poor spring with just two different birds, both females, on May 15th-16th and May 26th.

Autumn numbers were good with a group of three birds on September 12th representing the first of the autumn. Thereafter, recorded almost daily until October 12th with a maximum count of 23 on October 4th. A single bird on October 20th was the last of the year.

SNOW BUNTING *Plectrophenax nivalis*

Common spring and autumn migrant; often over-winters

Small flocks were present from January to March with a count of 29 on January 24th representing the largest winter flock before spring passage got underway in mid March. The highest spring count was 61 on March 29th, with small numbers seen until April 26th. A single bird was recorded on May 28th and another from June 6th-8th.

Autumn passage was heavy with large numbers of birds passing through from mid September to mid October with smaller numbers to mid November. Maximum daily totals included 450 on September 16th, rising to 680 on 17th, with further counts of 200 on September 30th, 200 on October 2nd and 300 on October 4th.

PINE BUNTING *Emberiza leucocephalos*

Vagrant; six previous records (not including the hybrid in 1995)

A female appeared in the stubble at Skerryholm on October 8th and remained in the area until the 11th, spending most of its time either at Skerryholm or Kenaby. An obliging bird, it showed well at times, frequently perching on fences. The last record was in November 1994.

Accepted by BBRC

YELLOWHAMMER *Emberiza citrinella*

Regular spring and autumn migrant

A good spring with at least 17 individuals recorded. One at Taft on March 30th was the first of the year, followed by four on April 7th, joined by two more the next day.

Three or four were seen over the next four days, but only two remained on the 13th. Four more were seen on the 15th, with three remaining until the 16th. Between one and three were seen over eight more dates before the end of the month. May brought only a single record of a male from the 13th-16th.

Only three autumn records; singles on October 20th and 21st and November 4th-7th.

ORTOLAN BUNTING *Emberiza hortulana*

Scarce spring and autumn migrant

A female near North Light on June 8th was the only spring record.

A good autumn with six records. The first was a single at Koolin on September 3rd, which settled at Quoy with two others there on the 4th, on which date an adult male was seen briefly at the Plantation. Two remained at Quoy on the 5th and 6th, with one present from 7th until the 12th. Further singles were seen on September 20th and October 5th, the latter remaining at Skerryholm until the 9th.

RUSTIC BUNTING *Emberiza rustica*

Rare spring and autumn migrant; 89 previous records (at least 98 individuals)

No spring records, but a record autumn passage involving at least seven, probably nine, individuals. The first two arrived on September 24th and settled at Skerryholm, where they were joined by three more the next day and a sixth bird on the 26th. Five or six were then seen through to October 3rd, dwindling to three on the 4th-5th and two on the 6th. Two were then seen on the 9th, with singles on the 10th-11th at the Puff-inn and 13th at Skerryholm.

Nine individuals accepted by BBRC

LITTLE BUNTING *Emberiza pusilla*

Scarce autumn migrant; rare in spring

No spring records. At least three, probably four birds, were seen during the autumn. One at Upper Leogh on September 25th, was joined by a second individual next day at Springfield. On the 28th another was seen at the Sheep Cru and this may have been the same bird present at North Haven from the 30th until October 5th. Sightings at Taft on October 5th, Hjukni Geo on the 7th, Gilly Burn on 12th-13th and 17th, and at Setter on the 18th probably refer to another.

YELLOW-BREASTED BUNTING *Emberiza aureola*

Scarce autumn migrant; 91 previous records (at least 100 individuals)

A very bright, but elusive immature at Da Water on September 5th eventually settled in the oats at Shirva, and remained in that area until the 11th. The poorest showing since the blank year of 1993.

Accepted by BBRC

REED BUNTING *Emberiza schoeniclus*

Frequent spring and autumn migrant

Recorded almost daily from April 5th-May 21st, with a maximum spring count of 13 on May 10th. One or two were then present daily from May 28th-June 4th and a single was seen on June 11th.

A good autumn passage began on September 25th with daily records until October 12th with a maximum count of 62 on October 5th. One or two individuals were present from October 16th-21st.

Update of British Birds Rarities Committee Decisions

None reported in 1998.

FAIR ISLE RINGING REPORT 1998

Paul Baker

1998 was a rewarding year for ringing on Fair Isle, with a total of 11,965 birds ringed of 125 species, bringing the grand total for 50 years of ringing on Fair Isle to 300,317 birds ringed of 265 species. The use of whoosh nets, a duck trap, dazzling and the mist-netting of waders, contributed significantly to the total number of birds ringed (*See table 1*).

More effort was put into Storm Petrel trapping in 1998, with Leach's Petrels trapped on 10 out of 47 tape-luring sessions. Approximately 280-visitor attendances were recorded, and most visitors had the opportunity to ring at least one bird. Storm Petrel trapping is an important PR activity that ringing on Fair Isle offers, allowing the public to learn more about them.

Table 1. The ten most commonly ringed species, with totals, on Fair Isle in 1998; (1997 totals in parentheses)

Guillemot	2080	(2310)
Storm-petrel	1918	(1056)
Razorbill	761	(508)
Starling	835	(403)
Shag	629	(292)
Arctic Tern	460	(2083)
Fulmar	445	(350)
Chaffinch	430	(25)
Skylark	425	(8)
Robin	403	(207)

No new species were ringed in 1998, although a number of species that are rarely caught on Fair Isle were trapped: Pink-footed Goose (12th & 13th ringed), Wigeon (17-55th), Mallard (13th & 14th), Pintail (2nd), Quail (8th), Spotted Crake (18th), Curlew Sandpiper (6th), Great Snipe (2nd), Whimbrel (16th), Greenshank (12th), Wood Sandpiper (18th), Short-toed Lark (8th & 9th), Woodlark (3rd), Red-throated Pipit (8th), Pallas's Grasshopper Warbler (9th-11th), Rook (6th), Hawfinch (15th & 16th), and Rustic Bunting (15th).

Record annual ringing totals were achieved for 21 species: Leach's Petrel (12), Greylag Goose (21), Wigeon (39), Teal (24), Eider (21), Oystercatcher (77), Ringed Plover (77), Knot (8), Little Stint (47), Common Snipe (41), Curlew (18), Razorbill (761), Rock Dove (42), Short-toed Lark (2), Skylark (425), Dunnock (159), Pallas's Grasshopper Warbler (3), Lanceolated Warbler (4), Chaffinch (430), Greenfinch (38), and Snow Bunting (106).

Several species were ringed in unusually low numbers in 1998: Gannet (3), Kittiwake (130), Common Tern (2), Arctic Tern (460), and Twite (15) being the most notable.

Table 2. Numbers of birds ringed and recovered/controlled on Fair Isle in 1998, together with cumulative totals from 1948

<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>1998</i>	<i>1948-98</i>	<i>1998</i>	<i>1948-98</i>
Red-throated Diver	—	—	—	1	—	—
Little Grebe	—	—	—	10	—	—
Great Crested Grebe	—	—	—	1	—	—
Red-necked Grebe	—	—	—	1	—	—
Slavonian Grebe	—	—	—	3	—	—
Fulmar	77	368	445	16314	—	151
Storm Petrel	1918	—	1918	25537	83	956
Leach's Petrel	12	—	12	58	—	1
Gannet	1	2	3	347	—	7
Cormorant	—	—	—	7	—	—
Shag	50	579	629	20992	1	522
Grey Heron	—	—	—	20	—	—
Whooper Swan	5	—	5	38	1	7
Bean Goose	—	—	—	1	—	—
Pink-footed Goose	2	—	2	13	—	1
White-fronted Goose	—	—	—	3	—	1
Greylag Goose	21	—	21	41	2	9
Barnacle Goose	—	—	—	3	—	—
Shelduck	—	—	—	5	—	—
Wigeon	39	—	39	55	1	2
Teal	24	—	24	70	—	2
Mallard	2	—	2	14	—	1
Pintail	1	—	1	2	—	1
Shoveler	—	—	—	1	—	—
Pochard	—	—	—	3	—	—
Ring-necked Duck	—	—	—	1	—	—
Tufted Duck	—	—	—	16	—	—
Scaup	—	—	—	4	—	—
Eider	20	1	21	159	—	1
Long-tailed Duck	—	—	—	16	—	1
Velvet Scoter	—	—	—	2	—	—
Goldeneye	1	—	1	19	—	1
Red-breasted Merganser	—	—	—	3	—	—
Goosander	—	—	—	3	—	1
Marsh Harrier	—	—	—	1	—	—
Hen Harrier	—	—	—	2	—	—
Goshawk	—	—	—	2	—	—

<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>1998</i>	<i>1948-98</i>	<i>1998</i>	<i>1948-98</i>
Sparrowhawk	21	—	21	332	1	20
Kestrel	2	—	2	47	—	8
Red-footed Falcon	—	—	—	1	—	—
Merlin	5	—	5	184	1	13
Peregrine Falcon	—	—	—	6	—	1
Quail	1	—	1	8	—	—
Water Rail	4	—	4	294	—	3
Spotted Crake	1	—	1	18	—	—
Little Crake	—	—	—	1	—	—
Baillon's Crake	—	—	—	1	—	—
Corncrake	1	—	1	39	—	2
Moorhen	3	—	3	95	—	3
Coot	—	—	—	14	—	1
Great Bustard	—	—	—	1	—	—
Oystercatcher	36	41	77	1455	2	70
Little Ringed Plover	—	—	—	1	—	—
Ringed Plover	46	31	77	642	—	6
Dotterel	—	—	—	4	—	—
Golden Plover	3	—	3	23	—	—
Grey Plover	—	—	—	1	—	—
Lapwing	—	13	13	316	—	6
Knot	8	—	8	98	—	2
Sanderling	—	—	—	92	—	1
Western Sandpiper	—	—	—	1	—	—
Little Stint	47	—	47	121	—	—
Temminck's Stint	—	—	—	2	—	—
White-rumped Sandpiper	—	—	—	1	—	—
Baird's Sandpiper	—	—	—	1	—	—
Pectoral Sandpiper	—	—	—	5	—	—
Curlew Sandpiper	1	—	1	6	—	—
Purple Sandpiper	3	—	3	155	—	1
Dunlin	37	—	37	540	—	7
Buff-breasted Sandpiper	—	—	—	1	—	—
Ruff	8	—	8	41	—	1
Jack Snipe	8	—	8	133	—	3
Common Snipe	37	4	41	435	—	4
Great Snipe	1	—	1	2	—	—
Woodcock	12	—	12	396	—	19
Black-tailed Godwit	—	—	—	1	—	—
Bar-tailed Godwit	—	—	—	9	—	2

<i>Species</i>	<i>Ringed as:</i>		<i>Total</i> <i>1998</i>	<i>Total</i> <i>1948-98</i>	<i>Recovered/Controlled</i>	
	<i>Juv/Ad</i>	<i>Pullus</i>			<i>1998</i>	<i>1948-98</i>
Whimbrel	1	—	1	16	—	—
Curlew	7	11	18	147	1	7
Spotted Redshank	—	—	—	3	—	—
Redshank	19	—	19	274	—	2
Greenshank	1	—	1	12	—	—
Green Sandpiper	—	—	—	56	—	1
Wood Sandpiper	1	—	1	18	—	—
Common Sandpiper	—	—	—	67	—	1
Turnstone	4	—	4	77	—	—
Red-necked Phalarope	—	—	—	5	—	—
Grey Phalarope	—	—	—	3	—	—
Pomarine Skua	—	—	—	1	—	—
Arctic Skua	14	54	68	3663	1	66
Great Skua	4	123	127	1993	—	27
Black-headed Gull	—	—	—	45	—	2
Common Gull	1	6	7	189	—	3
Lesser Black-backed Gull	—	23	23	1407	—	31
Herring Gull	50	39	89	4169	—	93
Iceland Gull	—	—	—	1	—	—
Glaucous Gull	3	—	3	39	—	1
Great Black-backed Gull	75	—	75	2836	—	96
Kittiwake	43	87	130	6649	2	37
Common Tern	2	—	2	474	—	3
Arctic Tern	373	87	460	9462	2	22
Guillemot	141	1939	2080	30088	—	826
Razorbill	141	620	761	8572	—	201
Black Guillemot	1	7	8	1589	—	19
Little Auk	—	—	—	12	—	—
Puffin	174	97	271	12309	—	29
Rock Dove	42	—	42	67	2	2
Wood Pigeon	5	—	5	69	1	3
Collared Dove	14	—	14	294	—	3
Turtle Dove	1	—	1	80	—	2
Cuckoo	—	—	—	101	—	1
Snowy Owl	—	—	—	1	—	1
Long-eared Owl	6	—	6	236	—	13
Short-eared Owl	—	—	—	17	—	—
Nightjar	—	—	—	4	—	—
Swift	—	—	—	17	—	1
Hoopoe	—	—	—	3	—	—

<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>1998</i>	<i>1948-98</i>	<i>1998</i>	<i>1948-98</i>
Wryneck	3	—	3	207	—	—
Great Spotted Woodpecker	—	—	—	26	—	—
Short-toed Lark	2	—	2	9	—	—
Woodlark	1	—	1	3	—	—
Skylark	418	7	425	1236	1	4
Shorelark	—	—	—	5	—	—
Sand Martin	—	—	—	8	—	—
Swallow	—	3	3	246	1	3
House Martin	1	—	1	141	—	1
Richard's Pipit	—	—	—	10	—	—
Blyth's Pipit	—	—	—	1	—	—
Tawny Pipit	—	—	—	3	—	—
Olive-backed Pipit	—	—	—	9	—	—
Tree Pipit	2	—	2	622	—	—
Pechora Pipit	—	—	—	9	—	—
Meadow Pipit	89	50	139	9538	—	45
Red-throated Pipit	1	—	1	8	—	—
Rock Pipit	62	17	79	9078	—	29
Yellow Wagtail	—	—	—	10	—	—
Citrine Wagtail	—	—	—	5	—	—
Grey Wagtail	—	—	—	28	—	1
White/Pied Wagtail	14	—	14	667	—	4
Waxwing	—	—	—	37	—	—
Dipper	—	—	—	13	—	—
Wren	31	—	31	786	—	—
Dunnock	159	—	159	2343	—	6
Robin	403	—	403	7966	3	39
Thrush Nightingale	2	—	2	31	—	—
Nightingale	—	—	—	27	—	—
Siberian Rubythroat	—	—	—	1	—	—
Bluethroat	6	—	6	258	—	2
Red-flanked Bluetail	—	—	—	2	—	—
Black Redstart	2	—	2	147	—	—
Redstart	23	—	23	1736	—	1
Whinchat	12	—	12	601	—	2
Stonechat	—	—	—	55	—	—
Northern Wheatear	111	—	111	15851	1	74
Pied Wheatear	—	—	—	1	—	—
Black-eared Wheatear	—	—	—	3	—	—
Rock Thrush	—	—	—	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>1998</i>	<i>1948-98</i>	<i>1998</i>	<i>1948-98</i>
White's Thrush	—	—	—	1	—	—
Hermit Thrush	—	—	—	1	—	—
Grey-cheeked Thrush	—	—	—	2	—	—
Ring Ouzel	2	—	2	470	—	8
Blackbird	279	—	279	21309	—	317
Eye-browed Thrush	—	—	—	1	—	1
Dusky Thrush	—	—	—	1	—	—
Dark-throated Thrush	—	—	—	1	—	—
Fieldfare	4	—	4	623	—	1
Song Thrush	146	—	146	2742	—	31
Redwing	206	—	206	8410	—	71
Mistle Thrush	—	—	—	22	—	—
Pallas' Grasshopper Warbler	3	—	3	11	—	—
Lanceolated Warbler	4	—	4	30	—	—
Grasshopper Warbler	3	—	3	109	—	—
River Warbler	—	—	—	7	—	—
Savi's Warbler	—	—	—	3	—	—
Aquatic Warbler	—	—	—	22	—	—
Sedge Warbler	9	—	9	416	—	—
Paddyfield Warbler	—	—	—	8	—	1
Blyth's Reed Warbler	—	—	—	5	—	1
Marsh Warbler	2	—	2	104	—	—
Reed Warbler	12	—	12	224	—	1
Great Reed Warbler	—	—	—	6	—	—
Thick-billed Warbler	—	—	—	1	—	—
Olivaceous Warbler	—	—	—	1	—	—
Booted Warbler	—	—	—	7	—	—
Icterine Warbler	—	—	—	97	—	—
Melodious Warbler	—	—	—	11	—	—
Subalpine Warbler	—	—	—	25	—	—
Sardinian Warbler	—	—	—	1	—	—
Barred Warbler	3	—	3	380	—	1
Lesser Whitethroat	15	—	15	636	—	1
Whitethroat	11	—	11	901	—	—
Garden Warbler	41	—	41	3252	—	3
Blackcap	124	—	124	4655	2	21
Greenish Warbler	—	—	—	21	—	—
Arctic Warbler	—	—	—	32	—	—
Pallas's Warbler	—	—	—	2	—	—
Yellow-browed Warbler	2	—	2	110	—	—

<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>1998</i>	<i>1948-98</i>	<i>1998</i>	<i>1948-98</i>
Radde's Warbler	—	—	—	1	—	—
Dusky Warbler	—	—	—	5	—	—
Bonelli's Warbler	—	—	—	1	—	—
Wood Warbler	1	—	1	102	—	—
Chiffchaff	38	—	38	1051	—	3
Willow Warbler	72	—	72	3368	2	8
Goldcrest	80	—	80	1499	—	2
Firecrest	—	—	—	1	—	—
Brown Flycatcher	—	—	—	1	—	—
Spotted Flycatcher	14	—	14	718	—	3
Red-breasted Flycatcher	—	—	—	54	—	—
Collared Flycatcher	—	—	—	1	—	—
Pied Flycatcher	14	—	14	902	—	—
Coal Tit	—	—	—	1	—	—
Blue Tit	—	—	—	2	—	—
Great Tit	—	—	—	9	—	—
Treecreeper	—	—	—	1	—	—
Golden Oriole	—	—	—	8	—	—
Isabelline Shrike	—	—	—	2	—	—
Red-backed Shrike	5	—	5	198	1	1
Lesser Grey Shrike	—	—	—	6	—	—
Great Grey Shrike	1	—	1	112	—	1
Woodchat Shrike	—	—	—	13	—	—
Jackdaw	—	—	—	4	—	—
Rook	1	—	1	6	—	—
Hooded/Carrion Crow	—	—	—	48	—	—
Raven	—	—	—	26	—	—
Daurian Starling	—	—	—	1	—	—
Starling	536	299	835	24789	4	191
Rose-coloured Starling	—	—	—	3	—	—
House Sparrow	49	—	49	1455	—	3
Tree Sparrow	2	—	2	101	—	1
Chaffinch	430	—	430	2804	3	14
Brambling	208	—	208	3265	2	15
Greenfinch	38	—	38	239	4	5
Goldfinch	—	—	—	6	—	—
Siskin	11	—	11	356	1	2
Linnet	8	—	8	149	—	1
Twite	15	—	15	5413	—	5
Redpoll	7	—	7	621	—	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>1998</i>	<i>1948-98</i>	<i>1998</i>	<i>1948-98</i>
Arctic Redpoll	—	—	—	19	—	—
Two-barred Crossbill	—	—	—	1	—	—
Common Crossbill	1	—	1	458	—	2
Parrot Crossbill	—	—	—	37	—	—
Common Rosefinch	10	—	10	175	—	1
Bullfinch	—	—	—	101	—	—
Hawfinch	2	—	2	16	—	—
Tennessee Warbler	—	—	—	2	—	—
Savannah Sparrow	—	—	—	1	—	—
Song Sparrow	—	—	—	3	—	—
White-crowned Sparrow	—	—	—	1	—	—
White-throated Sparrow	—	—	—	2	—	—
Lapland Bunting	2	—	2	47	—	—
Snow Bunting	106	—	106	630	1	4
Pine Bunting	—	—	—	2	—	—
Yellowhammer	2	—	2	58	—	—
Ortolan Bunting	—	—	—	18	—	—
Cretzschmar's Bunting	—	—	—	1	—	—
Yellow-browed Bunting	—	—	—	1	—	—
Rustic Bunting	1	—	1	15	—	1
Little Bunting	—	—	—	33	—	1
Chestnut Bunting	—	—	—	1	—	—
Yellow-breasted Bunting	—	—	—	6	—	—
Reed Bunting	14	—	14	416	2	5
Pallas's Reed Bunting	—	—	—	2	—	—
Red-headed Bunting	—	—	—	5	—	—
Black-headed Bunting	—	—	—	3	—	—
Corn Bunting	—	—	—	3	—	—
Totals:	7457	4508	11965	300317	129	4270

Ringed recoveries/controls reported to FIBO during 1998.

The co-ordinates of Fair Isle are 59°32'N, 01°37'W.

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

FULMAR. Six recoveries reported during 1998. Only one UK recovery: A chick ringed on August 5th 1997 was found dead on the beach at Kilmory Glen, Highland, on February 17th 1998 (390 km, SW).

Five international recoveries: An adult ringed on July 10th 1978 was found dead at Styd Lango Stromstad, **Sweden**, on July 26th 1998 (727 km, E); An adult ringed on July 4th 1984 was found dead at Pas-de-Calais, **France**, on February 26th 1998 (977 km, SSE); a chick ringed on August 10th 1984 was killed at Vidhareidhi, Vidoy, **Faeroes**, on August 16th 1997 (412 km, NW); a chick ringed on July 26th 1982 was shot over the **North Sea** on July 19th 1997 (260 km, SE) and the ring handed in in Denmark; a chick ringed on August 2nd 1962 was found dead (oiled) at Noord-Holland, the **Netherlands**, on February 4th 1998 (866 km, SSE). This last bird is now the oldest known Fair Isle bird at just under 36 years. The BTO longevity record in 1996 was 40 years.

STORM PETREL. 52 individuals ringed on Fair Isle and controlled elsewhere were reported during 1998. These are summarised in the following table:

Table 3. Storm Petrels ringed on Fair Isle and controlled/recovered elsewhere: reports received during 1998.

Foula, Shetland, Scotland	1	Eilean nan Ron, Highland, Scotland	25
Yell, Shetland, Scotland	8	Faraidh Head, Highland, Scotland	2
North Ronaldsay, Orkney, Scotland	4	Tynemouth, Tyne & Wear, England	1
South Ronaldsay, Orkney, Scotland	3	Tullagh, Donegal, EIRE	1
Brough of Birsay, Orkney, Scotland	8	Nolsoy, FAEROES	3
Burray, Orkney, Scotland	1	Sandoy, FAEROES	4
John O' Groats, Highlands, Scotland	2	Selekaien, Rogaland, NORWAY	1
Noss Head, Highland Region, Scotland	2	at sea, off NAMIBIA, AFRICA	1

These reports included ten birds older than four years; seven controlled at Eilean nan Ron, Highland region in 1997 and 1998 were ringed on Fair Isle in 1970, 1988, 1990, 1991, and 1993, one at John O' Groats in 1998 was ringed in 1993 on Fair Isle, two on Nolsoy, Faeroes in 1997 were ringed in 1981, and 1991 on Fair Isle, while three ringed on Fair Isle in late July/early August 1998 were trapped on Sandoy, Faeroes a few days later. The bird controlled in Norway was trapped one day after being ringed on Fair Isle. A pretty typical distribution of controls, all captured by other ringers, except for the exceptional recovery of a bird ringed in 1970 and recovered in 1983 (4871 days later) on a ship off **Namibia** at 24°34'S, 13°0'E. An incredible 9548 km south of Shetland.

GANNET. Two recoveries. A chick ringed on July 18th 1994 was found dead at Baleshare, North Uist, Western Isles, Scotland, on November 23rd 1998 (402 km, SW). Also, a chick ringed on July 18th 1996 was found dead at Moliets, Landes, **France**, on April 25th 1998 (1743 km, S).

SHAG. Nine recoveries were reported during 1998, all of birds ringed as chicks. Five were found in Shetland at Scatness, Silwick, Sumburgh, Basta Voe, and Yell, with four in Orkney at Orphir, Deerness, and two on North Ronaldsay. Seven were less than three years old. However, the bird found on Yell was ringed in 1985, and found in 1996; while one of those found on North Ronaldsay was ringed in 1979 and found dead in 1998.

GREYLAG GOOSE. An individual ringed on October 18th 1998 at Easter Lother Water was shot at Loch Watten, Wick, Highland, Region on January 6th 1999 (148 km, SW).

TEAL. A first year male ringed on September 4th 1997 was shot at Burton Pidsea, Humberside, on January 4th 1998 (649 km, S).

SPARROWHAWK. A first-summer male ringed on May 16th 1997 was controlled at North Ronaldsay Bird Observatory, Orkney, on May 30th 1997 (49 km, WSW). An adult male ringed on October 19th 1988 was found dead at Gjovik, Opland, **Norway**, on April 25th 1995 (696 km, E).

GREAT SKUA. A chick ringed on July 25th 1995 was found dead near Terrington, Norfolk, on June 30th 1998 (758 km, S). Five adult birds previously ringed on Fair Isle were found dead on Fair Isle during 1998.

LESSER BLACK-BACKED GULL. A chick ringed on July 15th 1985 was found dead at Inganess Bay, St Ola, Orkney, on August 14th 1998 (97 km, SW).

GREAT BLACK-BACKED GULL. Six reported in 1998: three UK recoveries. An adult ringed on July 18th 1987 was found dead on Foula, Shetland, on April 3rd 1998 (71km, NNW). An adult ringed on July 18th 1987 was found dead at Newark, Deerness, Orkney, on August 8th 1998 (93 km, SW). The ring from a chick ringed on June 28th 1995 was found at Loch Fleet, Highland region, on April 25th 1998 (227 km, SW).

Two chicks ringed on July 12th 1993 were both seen alive at Le Portel and Boulogne sur Mer, in the Pas-de-Calais region, **France** (1002 km, SSE): one on August 11th (and again on 25th) 1997, with the other on September 22nd 1998. A third bird was ringed on June 28th 1995 and seen on August 17th and 20th 1997 at Hanstholm Havn, Thy, Jylland, **Denmark**, (654 km, ESE).

ARCTIC TERN. Seven recoveries reported in 1998. Three birds ringed as chicks on Fair Isle on July 2nd 1997 were controlled on North Ronaldsay, Orkney, on August 2nd-3rd of the same year, and a fourth was found dead there on the 2nd (46 km, WSW). One local recovery: a bird ringed as a chick on June 30th 1992 on Fair Isle was found dead beside an Arctic Skua nest on June 14th 1998.

There were two international recoveries: One ringed as a chick on July 2nd 1997 was caught on fishing line by accident at Point das Salinas, **Angola, Africa**, on September 15th 1997 (8151 km, S). A chick ringed on July 1st 1996 was captured for food on December 15th 1996, and the ring used as jewellery in **Natal, South Africa** (10468 km, SSE).

GUILLEMOT. 69 reports received during 1998, of birds ringed as chicks.

Scotland: Ten recoveries. Most birds were found dead within three years of having been ringed. Five were found dead in the Highland Region, two in the Lothian Region, one in the Western Isles and another at Stenness, Orkney.

England: One recovery. One ringed in 1996 was found dead at Walney Island, Cumbria on January 22nd 1998.

Ireland: Two ringed in 1997 were recovered in the same year: one on November 18th at Youghal, Cork, and the other was found dead at Rossnowlagh, Donegal on December 29th.

Norway: 26 recoveries reported. Twenty-two birds were found dead within six years of having been ringed with the exception of three: One ringed in 1983 was found dead in 1996; while two birds ringed as adults were recovered: one ringed in 1981 was found dead in 1997, and one ringed in 1983 was found in 1997. The oldest recovery reported during the year was a chick ringed in 1977 that was found dying in 1998.

Faeroes: Eight recoveries between 362-449 km (NW) from Fair Isle: birds ringed between 1987-1998 (seven as chicks and one adult) were reported shot during 1997-1998.

Sweden: Eleven recoveries upto 1131 km (E) from Fair Isle: birds ringed between 1981-1998 (all as chicks), though only two were older than three years at recovery.

Denmark: Four recoveries upto 825 km (ESE) from Fair Isle: all ringed as chicks between 1993-1997.

Netherlands: Three recoveries approximately 840 km (SSE) from Fair Isle: Two chicks and one adult ringed in 1997 were found dead in 1998.

Germany: Two recoveries: A chick ringed on June 24th 1997 at Norderney, Ostfriesische Inseln, on March 24th 1998 (841 km, SE). A chick ringed on June 24th 1998 was found dead near Dagebull, Schleswig-Holstein, on October 31st 1998 (821 km, SE).

Poland: A chick ringed on June 26th 1997 was caught in a fishing net in the Baltic Sea off Poland on January 20th 1998 (1202 km, ESE).

Summary of causes of death of 69 birds: 32 caught in fishing nets (21 from Norway, eight from Sweden, Denmark one, Poland one, Scotland one), nine shot (Norway one, Faeroes eight), five oiled (Sweden, Denmark, Netherlands, Germany, Ireland), 21 found dead, or in unknown circumstances (Norway three, Sweden two, Denmark two, Netherlands two, Germany one, Scotland eight, England two, Ireland one), and two found sick (one in Scotland, and one in Norway).

RAZORBILL. Seven reports of dead or dying birds were received. Two UK recoveries: A chick ringed on July 5th 1996 was found dead on the beach at Port Ballantrae, Antrim, Northern Ireland, on January 20th 1998 (564 km, SSW). An adult ringed on June 22nd 1984 was found oiled at Littlestone, Kent, on February 21st 1998 (964 km, S).

Five international recoveries: Four ringed as chicks in June 1996 were found dead at: Granja, Minho, **Portugal**, on January 14th 1998 (2115 km, SSW); Korshage, Rorvig, Sjaelland, **Denmark**, on February 15th 1998 (887 km, ESE); Tregunc, Finistere, **France**, on March 9th 1997 (1306 km, S); Evjesund, Oslo Fjord, Ostfold, **Norway**, on March 9th 1997 (695 km, E). The fifth bird was ringed as a chick in July 1990, and was caught in a fishing net off Bondedypet, Arendal, Aust-Agder, **Norway**, on January 25th 1991 (614 km, E).

PUFFIN. Only one recovery reported during 1998: A chick ringed on July 9th 1983 was found dead on Sule Skerry, Orkney, on June 22nd 1998 (165 km, WSW).

ROCK DOVE. Two ringed early in the spring of 1998 were recovered on the island within six weeks, and are the only two recoveries of this species on Fair Isle.

COLLARED DOVE. An adult ringed on June 6th 1996 was controlled at Holland, North Ronaldsay, Orkney on the same day (49 km, WSW)! The ring from an adult ringed on April 29th 1995 was found at Voxter, Shetland, on October 10th 1998 (98 km, N).

DUNNOCK. An adult ringed on Fair Isle on April 8th 1998 was controlled at Valestrandsfossen, Osteroy, Hordaland, **Norway** on September 13th (410 km, ENE).

COMMON BLACKBIRD. Four reported during 1998. An adult female ringed on March 18th 1997 was found dead at Stocksfield, Northumberland, on January 11th 1998 (511 km, S). Two first-winters ringed during a large fall on October 27th 1997 were controlled in Highland Region: a male at Inkstack, Barrock, on February 20th 1998 (140 km, SW), and a female at Culloden, on April 22nd 1998 (271 km, SW). A first-winter female ringed on November 8th 1997 was a road casualty found dead on the Isle of Lewis, Western Isles, on November 26th 1997 (291 km, WSW).

SONG THRUSH. A first-summer ringed on March 27th 1998 was controlled at Queenamidda, Rendall, Orkney, on April 25th 1998 (98 km, WSW).

REDWING. A first-winter ringed on October 15th 1997 was found dead at Fascadale, Highland Region, on February 23rd 1998 (404 km, SW).

BLACKCAP. An adult female ringed on June 20th 1997 was controlled at Grimston, Humberside, on September 20th 1997 (644 km, S).

STARLING. No international reports. A chick ringed on June 7th 1997 was controlled at Broadhaven, Wick, Highland Region, on November 30th 1997 (148 km, SW), and a juvenile ringed on September 19th 1998 was also controlled at Broadhaven on December 5th. One ringed as a chick on June 2nd 1990 was found dead at Sumburgh, Shetland, on September 29th 1997.

BRAMBLING. An adult male ringed on October 18th 1997 was controlled at Evanton, Ross-shire, Highland Region, on January 24th 1998 (260 km, SW), and then six days later at Dingwall, Highland Region, on January 30th 1998 (269 km, SW).

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

STORM PETREL. In 1998, 83 European Storm-petrels were controlled on Fair Isle: 66 UK, 13 **Norway**, 3 **Portugal**, and 1 from **Denmark**. All were trapped during regular mist-netting sessions near the Observatory during July, August and September.

Table 4. Storm Petrel controls/recoveries on Fair Isle; reports received during 1998.

Yell, Shetland, Scotland	15	North Ronaldsay, Orkney, Scotland	8
Mousa, Shetland, Scotland	5	South Ronaldsay, Orkney, Scotland	1
Foula, Shetland, Scotland	2	Brough of Bursay, Orkney, Scotland	10
Whalsay, Shetland, Scotland	3	The Wing, Orkney, Scotland	1
Eilean nan Ron, Highland Region, Scotland	1	Eday, Orkney, Scotland	2
Faraidh Head, Highland Region, Scotland	2	Lewis, Western Isles, Scotland	1
Fife Ness, Fife, Scotland	1	Copeland, Northern Ireland	1
Hernyken Rost, Nordland, NORWAY	2	Utsira, Rogaland, NORWAY	1
Selekaien, Klepp, Rogaland, NORWAY	2	Skogsoy, Hordaland, NORWAY	2
Vagsoy, Sogn og Fjordane, NORWAY	2	Faro, PORTUGAL	3
Great Skellig, Co. Kerry, EIRE	2		

Most birds were ringed between 1995-1998, although one of the birds from Whalsay had been ringed in 1983 and a second in 1991. One from Copeland had been ringed in 1984. Four of the five Mousa birds were ringed as chicks: two in 1994, one in 1995, and one in 1996. The longest distance controls were: two birds ringed at Great Skellig, Co. Kerry, **EIRE**; (1026 km, NNE), two birds ringed in Hernyken, Rost, Nordland, **Norway**; (1101 km, SW), and the three birds from Faro, **Portugal**; (2549 km NNE), ringed on spring passage on 25th, 29th and 30th June 1998 as they headed north, were trapped on 26th, 30th, and 21st of July respectively.

SHAG. One local recovery of an adult ringed in 1993 found dead in North Haven in February 1998.

WHOOPER SWAN. An adult male bird bearing the darvic ring number 9UD has an interesting history and shows the kind of information that ringing can generate. It was ringed as an adult at the Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust reserve at Caerlaverock on the north shore of the Solway Firth on December 10th 1997, and remained in the Caerlaverock area until March 31st 1998 when it presumably departed for the breeding grounds. On October 24th 1998 '9UD' was controlled at Sprittery Hole (approx. 520 km, NE). It was with five other adults and two juveniles, and 15 days later on November 8th it arrived back at Caerlaverock with seven other swans. Finally, to complete this interesting history it was re-trapped at Caerlaverock on February 2nd 1999 in the annual swan roundup.

GREYLAG GOOSE. An adult with a darvic neck collar in a flock of 200 on Fair Isle on October 17th 1998 was ringed in central **Iceland** in July 1998 (approx. 1200 km, ESE).

SPARROWHAWK. A first-summer male ringed at Holland, North Ronaldsay, Orkney, on May 16th 1997 was controlled on Fair Isle on May 22nd 1997 (49 km, ENE). A first-winter female ringed in 1998 in **Norway** was controlled on Fair Isle on September 10th 1998.

MERLIN. Two birds ringed as chicks on Shetland were controlled on Fair Isle: ringed in July 1997 and July 1998, and controlled on September 18th 1997 and September 12th 1998 respectively (approx. 50-70 km, SSW).

ARCTIC TERN. A bird bearing a Danish ring was trapped on June 14th 1998 while breeding on Fair Isle. It was ringed as a chick in 1987 in the Faeroes.

GUILLEMOT. A chick ringed on July 2nd 1986 on Foula, Shetland, was controlled on June 28th 1997 (71 km, ESE).

SKYLARK. An adult ringed on March 24th 1996 at Trolla Vatn, North Ronaldsay, Orkney was controlled on March 5th 1998 at Neder Taft (46 km, ENE).

NORTHERN WHEATEAR. A very odd recovery. A ring was found in the Observatory lounge when we were cleaning up at the end of the season in 1998. It had been put on a Northern Wheatear chick on the isle of Bardsey, Wales, on June 9th 1991 (779 km, NNE). We cannot say how the ring got to Fair Isle – whether a member of the public found it on the isle, or brought it with them and lost it, so the British Trust for Ornithology cannot process the details as a true recovery between the isles.

BLACKBIRD. A first-summer female ringed on April 29th 1997 at Holland, North Ronaldsay, Orkney, was controlled on May 2nd 1997 (49 km, ENE).

SONG THRUSH. A first-summer female ringed on April 29th 1997 at Holland, North Ronaldsay, Orkney, was controlled on May 2nd 1997 (49 km, ENE).

REDWING. An adult ringed on April 17th 1997 at Holland, North Ronaldsay, Orkney, was controlled on April 25th 1997 (49 km, ENE).

PADDYFIELD WARBLER. A first-winter ringed at Ventes Ragas, Silute, **Lithuania** (1441 km WNW), on September 8th 1996, was controlled on Fair Isle on September 19th 1996. Only 22 Paddyfield Warblers have ever been ringed in the UK and this bird is the first ringed Paddyfield Warbler ever controlled in this country.

BLACKCAP. A first-winter female ringed on September 1st 1997 at Herne, **Belgium**, was controlled on September 27th 1997 (1043 km, NNW).

WILLOW WARBLER. An adult ringed on September 6th 1997 near North Somercotes, Lincolnshire was controlled in the Gully on May 16th 1998 (685 km, N).

STARLING. One ringed at Broadhaven, Wick, Highland Region on February 26th 1994 and then controlled on Fair Isle, was controlled back in Wick on December 6th 1998, illustrating dispersal, then a return to the natal site.

BRAMBLING. A first-summer male ringed on February 2nd 1998 at The Riding, Hexham, Northumberland, was controlled at Neder Taft on April 5th 1998 (506 km, N).

GREENFINCH. A first-summer female ringed on April 4th 1998 at Garboldisham, Norfolk, was controlled later the same month (730 km, NNW).

A bird with a Stavanger, **Norway** ring was controlled on April 5th 1998 (details not yet received), and was joined next day by a first summer female bearing a Stavanger, **Norway**, ring which had been ringed on October 29th 1997 at Ronekilen, Mandal, Vest-Agder, **Norway** (544 km, WNW). An adult male ringed at Beclers, Hainaut, **Belgium** on January 29th 1997 was also controlled at the Observatory on April 6th 1998 (1043 km, WNW).

SISKIN. An adult male ringed on April 5th 1998 at Kingsley, Staffordshire, was controlled at the Observatory on May 7th 1998 (724 km, N).

SNOW BUNTING. A first-summer female ringed on January 24th 1998 at Salthouse, Norfolk, was controlled on March 25th 1998 (751 km, NNW).

REED BUNTING. A first-winter female bearing a Stavanger, **Norway**, ring was controlled in the Vaadal on October 4th 1998.

Whoosh netting on Fair Isle

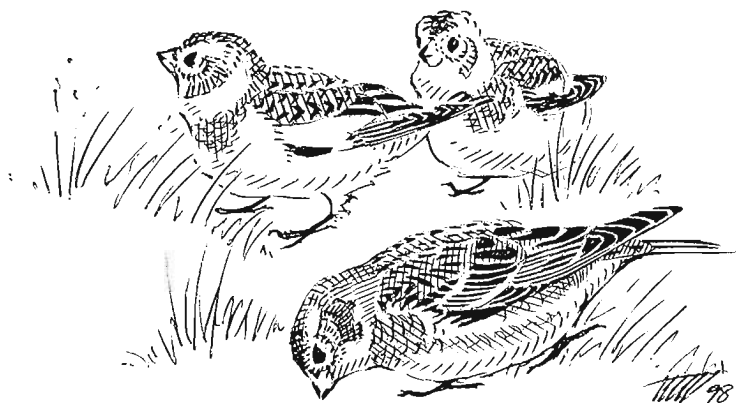
Paul Baker

When I first visited Fair Isle in the autumn of 1997 I noticed that although the Observatory had existed for 50 years very few birds of certain common species had been trapped, notably Skylarks and Snow Buntings. Many of the Skylarks captured in the past at the Observatory had been in small cage traps baited with grain on croft land. This is a labour intensive method which traps few birds and can cause much disturbance. Whoosh netting is a recognised technique for trapping birds and involves throwing an area of net over birds on the ground using elastic. I brought three whoosh nets to the island and began baiting for Skylarks in March 1998 on bare earth on the crofts at Neder Taft and Koolin. I also baited for House Sparrows at Setter as part of a BTO project on annual survival. The bait used was pin-head oats (from Grampian Oat Products), although I later baited with rolled oats (from a livestock food supplier) just as effectively and at half the price. In the spring, birds were duped into getting used to a "set net" by laying out a "dummy" net, elastic and poles, which were then replaced with the real thing when catches were wanted. Larks found the food within three days and as their migration progressed at least 500 Skylarks fed at the three sites. The beauty of this technique is that the ringer has total control over the numbers of birds captured and the birds can be left feeding undisturbed on the bait between catches. Skylark is a Red Data book species and their numbers have fallen nationally by 50% over the last 25 years so they are an important species to study. The information gleaned so far from this work has shown that males reach Fair Isle before most females in the spring, and that early arriving birds of both sexes tend to be larger than average. Some individuals are very grey, probably of the fenno-scandinavian and eastern races. Later arrivals were smaller and warmer brown in colour, and a higher proportion were female. Quite a few Skylarks were trapped more than once (approximately 8-10%), and on average remained on the island for at least four days while they built up muscle and fat reserves. The only control concerned a bird that had been ringed two years previously on North Ronaldsay. An intensive study on Fair Isle would be very worthwhile and might provide important information to aid conservation of this species.

Towards the end of the Skylark passage, Snow Buntings started to reach the island, with a total of about 180 passing through during the spring. Over 100 were trapped including a colour-ringed bird from Norfolk. Again there were differences in the migration strategies of different sexes and races with most early birds being female, and of the race *insulae*, while later birds included some of the race *nivalis* heading for either Greenland or fenno-scandinavia. The baited sites also began to attract other species because little other food was available on the island and a few early Linnets, Chaffinches, and Bramblings were trapped. On March 7th a large fall of finches

occurred comprised mainly of Chaffinches and Bramblings, but also with a few Greenfinches and Hawfinches mixed in. Over the next three weeks, we trapped approximately 300 Chaffinches, 80 Bramblings, five Greenfinches and two Hawfinches at the baited sites (as well as many of the commoner finches in the Heligoland traps). A large number of Rock Doves, a Collared Dove and a Rook were also trapped at the Neder Taft site. Starlings came to the bait in small numbers and we succeeded in colour ringing a number of birds for Peter Evans' project on this species.

After spring migration our attention turned to other species and one of the whoosh nets was cut in half to make two smaller nets for trapping skuas, with some degree of success. In late summer the nets were used to trap a variety of waders including Little Stint, Dunlin, Ruff, Knot, and Redshank, as well as a Teal! In early September, bait sites were established at Shirva, Koolin, and Quoy to try to trap more Skylarks. Unfortunately, Starlings discovered the food and kept a large number of larks off the bait. Consequently, many Starlings were trapped and ringed during this autumn period. Colour rings were put on known resident birds. Approximately 275 Starlings were trapped in eight catches, with approximately 40% apparently resident. Many of the juveniles left the island by the end of the first week in October, so only time will tell if they are true migrants or were local birds dispersing for the winter (one was controlled at Broadhaven, Highland Region on December 5th 1998). Trapping the Starlings also put them off feeding on the bait, so a few small catches of Skylarks (approximately 30 birds trapped) were made in early October when two Short-toed Larks were also trapped. A total of 1404 birds were captured using these nets in approximately 150 hours. This illustrates the considerable efficiency of this technique in trapping and studying species that are rarely caught in Heligoland traps or mist nets; and the consequent potential for a long term project. Heligoland traps produced approximately 630 birds over the same period for similar time and effort.



Snow Buntings (Tom Whitley)

The Fair Isle Duck Trap

Paul Baker

Few ducks have been trapped on Fair Isle during the 50 years of the Observatory's existence. This came as a great surprise to me considering that ducks have very few options about where to feed on the isle. Of the common species seen on the isle, only 10 Mallard, 16 Wigeon and 46 Teal had been trapped between 1948-1997; even so, some excellent recoveries have been reported over the years. Wildfowl are an excellent group of birds for generating recovery information with rates of return of over 25% for some quarry species.

Traditionally, the lighthouse staff assisted the Observatory at the north end of the isle by running a system of walk-in traps for waders, but this is no longer an option. Good passage numbers of dabbling ducks during the first few days of September 1998 encouraged me to create a duck trap. I chose Golden Water as the place to put it because it was sheltered, full of weed and seemed to be the preferred foraging place for ducks at the north end of the isle. The trap was a very simple design, consisting of two rectangular frames of mesh tied together so it stood erect like a tent, with a funnel at one end through which ducks entered the trap. The trap was constructed in approximately five hours with assistance from Helen Baker and Ian Cowgill. It was positioned in the pond to face north. I baited it with grain and placed a small island inside for ducks to rest on. No ducks were trapped for several days even though birds were using the pond. A further influx of ducks followed and I made my first capture: a Wigeon and two Teal on the 18th.

Catches were not daily by any means, but gradually over the next six weeks I trapped 36 Wigeon and 12 Teal. Trapping showed that the Wigeon present on the isle towards the end of September to mid October consisted mainly of a long staying flock. Most catches were made at night, with the trap being checked in the early morning and again before dark. Birds became used to the trap attracting other ducks in and were often retrapped. Mallard fed in the entrance but would not enter the trap, while both Goldeneye and Tufted Duck showed no interest in the bait. At the end of November, when all the Observatory staff were away from the isle, the trap was lifted out of Golden Water for safety.

Other Wildlife on Fair Isle in 1998

Paul Baker

As well as the main function of bird migration monitoring, Fair Isle Bird Observatory has a tradition of recording sightings of whales and dolphins (Cetaceae), butterflies and moths (Lepidoptera) and seals (Pineidae). All visitors are encouraged to report any sightings at the daily log. Daily records of butterflies and cetaceans are kept, and moth trapping is usually carried out at the Observatory on suitable nights during the summer months. In many years there may be few sightings at Fair Isle, but they are still valuable and are always submitted to a variety of organisations in Shetland that collate data from throughout the Northern Isles. They help to provide a broader picture of the occurrence of these animals in Shetland. The Shetland Entomological and Sea Mammal groups welcome new members, and both produce excellent annual reports that can be obtained from the following addresses:

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. Tel. (01957) 711307.

Shetland Sea Mammal Group (includes records of cetaceans from Fair Isle, and also the records 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 butterfly and moth records

1998 was exceptional for the lack of butterflies with only 22 "butterfly days" recorded compared to at least 214 "butterfly days" in 1997. Three species were recorded in 1998, predominantly **Red Admiral** (*Vanessa atalanta*) as in 1997, with sightings in May (one on 16th), June (two on June 8th), September (three between 3rd-29th), and October (ten between 2nd-5th). A single **Painted Lady** (*Cynthia cardui*) was seen on May 16th and 17th. **Small Tortoiseshell** (*Aglais urticae*) were recorded on four occasions between August 15th and October 3rd.

No moth trapping took place at the Observatory this year due to the failure not only of the equipment, but also of the replacement equipment when it arrived. A few moths were seen during petrel trapping and are noted below along with records from Nick Riddiford who ran his moth trapping program at Schoolton, where the use of a mercury vapor lamp and sugaring produced the following notable records.

Macro Moths:

Map-winged Swift (*Hepialus fusconebulosa*)

One trapped on July 29th

Red Carpet (*Xanthorhoe munitata*)

Recorded on 11 out of 22 trap-nights during August (max 4 on the 12th-13th), and singles on September 18th and 24th.

Silver-ground Carpet (*Xanthorhoe montanata*)

One on July 11th

Garden Carpet (*Xanthorhoe fluctuata*)

Singles on August 10th and 30th

The Magpie (*Abraxas grossulariata*)

One on July 16th was the first for Fair Isle, and only the second for Shetland.

Bedstraw Hawk-moth (*Hyles gallii*)

A fresh individual on August 2nd.

Dark Sword-grass (*Agrotis ipsilon*)

Sugaring produced one on September 24th

Northern Rustic (*Standfussiana lucerneae*)

Recorded on 9 out of 12 trap-nights during July (max nine on the 29th), and 18 out of 22 trap-nights during August (max 11 on the 7th).

Large Yellow Underwing (*Noctua pronuba*)

One on July 25th and three on the 29th, Also on 14 out of 22 trap-nights during August (max three on the 12th), and on 3 out of 19 trap-nights in September (max three on the 3rd).

Autumnal Rustic (*Paradiarsia glareosa*)

One on August 30th.

True Lover's Knot (*Lycophotia porphyrea*)

Singles on July 11th and 29th, and August 12th.

Ingrailed Clay (*Diarsia mendica*)

Recorded on: 11 out of 12 trap-nights during July (max two on the 11th), 21 out of 22 trap-nights during August (double figure counts on ten nights, with a max of 34 on the 27th), 16 out of 19 trap-nights during September (peak catch of 13 on the 5th).

Small Square-spot (*Diarsia rubi*)

Two on July 11th, and singles on 27th and 28th.

Square-spot Rustic (*Xestia xanthographa*)

One on July 28th, 15 out of 22 trap-nights during August (max 17 on the 30th), and 14 out of 19 trap-nights plus sugaring in September (max nine on the 5th and 10th).

The Shears (*Hada nana*)

Two on May 28th and one on the 30th, followed by two on June 13th.

Marbled Coronet (*Hadena confusa*)

One on June 8th.

Antler Moth (*Cerapteryx graminis*)

One on July 15th, three on the 18th, and two on the 29th. also on 14 out of 22 trap-nights during August (max four on the 12th, 18th, and 27th).

Smoky Wainscot (*Mythimna impura*)

One on July 27th represents the second record for Fair Isle.

The Brick (*Agrochola circellaris*)

None attracted to light, but sugaring produced two on September 17th, one on the 18th, and three on the 25th.

Angle Shades (*Phlogophora meticulosa*)

One on May 15th, then sugaring produced a small run of moths every night between September 21st-October 7th (max two on three evenings).

Dark Arches (*Apamea monoglypha*)

One on June 28th, followed by catches on 12 out of 12 trap-nights in July (peak catch of 44 on the 29th), also on 20 out of 22 trap-nights in August (max 12 on the 7th), and one record in September on the 17th. Also common around the observatory during August, with several attracted to lights during petrel trapping.

The Confused (*Apamea furva*)

One on July 27th

Dusky Brocade (*Apamea remissa*)

One on July 27th.

Rosy Rustic (*Hydraecia micacea*)

Recorded in low numbers on 13 out of 22 trap-nights in August (peak catch eight on the 30th). Also on 14 out of 19 trap-nights plus sugaring during September (max eight on the 10th and 21st).

Pale Mottled Willow (*Caradrina clavipalpis*)

One on August 8th.

Silver Y (*Autographa gamma*)

In June: five on the 8th, three on the 28th, and one on the 29th. Two on July 11th and September 24th. Singles on September 12th, 25th, and 29th.

Micro-moths:

A few micro-moths were also identified:

Diamond-backed Moth (*Plutella xylostella*): Singles on June 28th, July 21st and August 29th.

White-shouldered House Moth (*Endrosis sarcitrella*): One on July 27th.

Udea lutealis: One on August 8th and 19th.

Eana osseana: Recorded on 6 out of 22 trap-nights during August, peaking at three on the 12th.

Halesus radiatus: Singles on August 13th, 16th, and 28th, and four on the 29th.

Eucosma cana: One on August 16th

Eana penziana colqhounana: Singles on August 25th and 27th.

Rhigognostis senilella: Singles on September 17th, 18th, and 21st.

Summary of cetacean sightings

A good variety of cetaceans were seen from Fair Isle in 1998. Dolphins were often seen from the “Good Shepherd IV” on its regular trips to Shetland. However, whale sightings from the boat were disappointingly low which suggests a general scarcity of whales in the waters around Fair Isle in 1998.

Dolphins:

Killer Whale (*Orcinus orca*): again the highlight of the year for many, with two sightings of one or more pods close to the island. Three, including a large male on June 21st, were seen just offshore at Roskilie, a pod of eight were off South Light on June 22nd, and a single Orca was seen briefly off Finnequoy on June 25th. A pod were also seen off South Harbour in late July where they were observed for about half an hour chasing and eating seals.

Atlantic Bottlenosed Dolphin (*Tursiops truncatus*): Two seen on September 18th.

Risso’s Dolphin (*Grampus griseus*): one on 30th August in South Harbour.

White-sided Dolphin (*Lagenorhynchus acutus*): six on 4th June, and two on 29th August with the ten Harbour Porpoise.

White-beaked Dolphin (*Lagenorhynchus albirostris*): twelve on June 4th, and ten on September 14th from Bunness were the only records from Fair Isle.

Harbour Porpoise (*Phocoena phocoena*): five on 26th August, ten on the 29th, and three on 30th, Three were also present from the 15th-16th September, three unidentified porpoise on the 17th were probably Harbour Porpoise, and a further six unidentified porpoise were seen on the 21st.

Whales:

Single **Minke Whale** (*Balaenoptera acutorostrata*) were recorded from the island on June 4th and 14th, and September 14th and 15th.

Summary of sightings of pinnipeds

Common Seal (*Phoca vitulina*) were frequently seen although only in small numbers and almost exclusively in South Harbour where they usually hauled out on the beach at high tide. The maximum count was 22 on May 5th.

Atlantic Grey Seal (*Halichoerus grypus*) was the most common species around the island and the only breeding species. A count of Grey Seal pups in October produced a total of 86 compared to 125 in 1997. A similar decline in the number of pups between 1997 and 1998 was also found in Shetland indicating widespread lower production.

Fair Isle Weather in 1998

Dave Wheeler

January

A very mild month with a mean daily temperature of 5.5EC, though January 1989 was warmer (mean of 6.9EC). The first half of the month was decidedly warm, with the highest January temperature ever measured on Fair Isle recorded on the 11th (11.1EC – previous highest was 10.7EC in 1989). The mean daily sea temperature of 9.0EC was the highest recorded in January (1990 was the former warmest at 8.6EC). Winds during the month were noticeably lighter than usual and frequently in the SW'ly quadrant (66.7%). However, just after mid-month a brief spell of strong to gale force N to NE'ly winds did bring a spell of bitterly cold weather with heavy snow showers and drifting of the lying snow.

Fair Isle: Rain 95.4%, sun 132.6%, mean temperature anomaly +1.1EC.

UK: Rain 124%, sun 120%, mean temperature anomaly +1.5EC.

Very mild and wet right across most of Britain at first, less mild and drier later. Mean temperature anomaly +0.5E to +1.0EC. Sunny in southwest Scotland, but dull in the east.

February

Exceptionally wet, very mild and rather dull. This was the warmest February on Fair Isle since records began in 1974, despite a very cold start with a blast of Arctic air bringing a record minimum temperature of –5.6EC on the 2nd, with up to 6cm of lying snow. The end of the month was also cold when Arctic air returned. Above average sea temperatures and Arctic air resulted in thunderstorms on the 27th and a further snow cover on the morning of the 28th. The mean sea temperature of 1.7EC above the normal 6.5EC – is the highest February figure recorded. On 23 out of 28 days winds were between south and west in direction at 0900.

Fair Isle: Rain 218.1%, sun 55.5%, mean temperature anomaly +2.2EC.

UK: Rain 29%, sun 131%, mean temperature anomaly +3.4EC.

Very mild – the fourth successive mild month across Britain. Taking Scotland as a whole, this was the warmest winter month on record. As a result of clear conditions over England and Wales the highest daily mean temperatures were north of the Border.

March

The month began bitterly cold with frequent snow showers and a strong N'ly airstream across the Northern Isles. Strong E'ly winds with heavy snow and sleet resulted in a more or less continuous snow cover for the first six days that was 5 cm deep by the 6th. After the 12th persistent above average temperatures resulted in a mild or very mild second half to the month.

Fair Isle: Rain 108.2%, sun 88.0%, mean temperature anomaly +0.8EC.

UK: Rain 40%, sun 110%, mean temperature anomaly +1.9EC.

Mild, with temperature anomaly generally +1.0E to +2.0EC. Rainfall generally near normal but wetter over Wales, western and northeastern England. Sunshine was generally below average.

April

A cool first half with the mean daily temperatures falling to 2E to 3EC below normal from the 10th to 15th was followed by a milder than usual second half resulted in the mean temperature for the month as a whole being just below normal. A dry month but for a short wet spell from the 20th–24th, with 14.8 mm of rain falling on the 23rd. Sunshine was well above average, the only “dull” periods being the 3rd–6th and 22nd–24th. The mean pressure of 1005.4 mb was the lowest recorded for any April since 1974. Fair Isle reported the lowest daytime maximum temperature in the UK on the 6th, 21st, 25th and 27th not because the isle was particularly cold, but because the rest of the country was rather mild! In fact the 25th was our second warmest day of the month (9.8EC).

Fair Isle: Rain 91.0%, sun 125.5%, mean temperature anomaly –0.3EC.

UK: Rain 222%, sun 94%, mean temperature anomaly –0.2EC.

Mostly cool, cloudy, and wet, although northwest Scotland and the Northern Isles were sunny with near average rainfall.

May

Shetland as a whole was much sunnier than usual. Fair Isle, due to several foggy spells, was only a little sunnier than normal. Like the rest of Scotland, Fair Isle was warmer than normal, with the mean daily temperature almost approaching the highest May value of 8.7EC (1992). The period from the 15th to the 18th was particularly warm with the maximum temperature reaching 12.7EC. Rainfall in the Northern Isles was well below average and as a consequence of the high temperatures further south, sea and coastal fog proved troublesome at times.

Fair Isle: Rain 50.4%, sun 105.7%, mean temperature anomaly +1.0EC.

UK: Rain 40%, sun 110%, mean temperature anomaly +1.9EC.

Quite warm across Britain, especially in the south, but dull in the west, and wet in Northeast England. In Scotland sunshine values were near average and it was also drier than normal, although the Edinburgh area and the eastern Borders were wetter than average (around 150%). On the 13th at Kinlochewe, a maximum of 28.3EC – the highest temperature of the month was recorded. This figure is not too far short of the 29.0EC recorded in Edinburgh on 14th May 1992 – the highest May temperature of this century anywhere in Scotland.

June

A surprisingly sunny month, considering that it was also cool and very wet! The month began with high pressure over Iceland and low pressure over England and the southern North Sea maintaining a cool but mainly dry and sunny northeast to northerly airstream across Shetland. A developing depression over England produced near gale northeasterly winds and heavy rain on the 7th, before a weak ridge of high pressure brought a return of the light north to northeasterly winds. A developing Atlantic low tracking east across the UK gave heavy rain on the 9th and as it deepened to the east of Shetland – northerly gales gusting to 52 kt on the 10th. On the same day, Lerwick recorded its coldest June day on record with a maximum of just 6.8EC. Fair Isle was a little warmer with a maximum of 7.4EC (our lowest June maximum temperature was 5.6EC recorded in 1975). The third week of the month saw the return of high pressure over Iceland, producing dry and sunny conditions with light NE to NW'ly winds. By the 20th a slow-moving low in the Atlantic produced warm and moist southerly winds across the British Isles. A low developing in the airstream drifted north over Scotland, bringing severe thunderstorms with hail to Shetland on the 21st. Low pressure in the Atlantic continued to dominate the weather for most of the remainder of the month with moist S to SE'ly winds with drizzle, hill and coastal fog. During the last few days of the month the low drifted east into the North Sea to give cool N'ly winds with showers.

Fair Isle: Rain 197.2%, sun 131.7%, mean temperature anomaly -0.3EC.

UK: Rain 192%, sun 80%, mean temperature anomaly -0.1EC.

Mean temperatures were quite close to normal, however fairly frequent cloudy conditions in the south resulted in below normal maximum and above normal minimum values. It was sunny in northern and Northwest Scotland. Wet across most of the UK with rainfall totals between 150% and 200% of normal.

July

The month started reasonably fine with a large anticyclone to the south of Iceland and a northeasterly airstream across Scotland. As the high declined, frontal systems affected the north from time to time but otherwise there were sunny periods and showers in a fairly light westerly airstream. On the 12th, a depression moving northeast across the Borders, pushed active fronts with heavy rain, making it the wettest day of the year across Scotland as a whole. After a few days of north-westerly winds with showers, another depression with active fronts brought further heavy rain north across Scotland on the 19th making this the second wettest day of the year in Scotland. This time the low moving north and west of Scotland resulted in mild southerly winds with a maximum of 24EC at Inverness on the 20th. The next few days saw a return to bright and showery conditions. A depression slowing near to Scotland brought a cloudy end to the month.

Fair Isle: Rain 171.1%, sun 70.8%, mean temperature anomaly -0.5°C .

UK: Rain 85%, sun 82%, mean temperature anomaly -0.4°C .

Mean temperatures generally around 1.0°C below normal. Sunshine totals were below average, especially in western Scotland, and rainfall above average except in central eastern England.

August

With high pressure centred over Scotland the first ten days of the month were reasonably bright, although there were some wet days as frontal systems skirted round the top of the high. During the 9th the high transferred into the North Sea introducing a southeasterly airflow. While this did result in drier and warmer conditions for much of Scotland, low cloud and coastal fog proved troublesome in the Northern Isles. After mid month, as a mobile westerly airstream becoming established unsettled and for the most part fog-free conditions prevailed. After the 21st, as winds veered into the northwest it became quite cool with temperatures as much as 3°C below average despite a week of sunny days. A trough on the 28th backed the wind southeasterly to give a foggy end to the month.

Fair Isle: Rain 123.3%, sun 73.9%, mean temperature anomaly -0.9°C .

UK: Rain 62%, sun 109%, mean temperature anomaly $+0.1^{\circ}\text{C}$.

Despite the first hot spell of the summer early in August, overall the mean temperature for the month was just $+0.5^{\circ}\text{C}$ above normal. In the extreme south the warm weather did hang on until the end of the month. Sunshine values across the British Isles were highest in the southwest and lowest in the northeast, ranging from 120% to 80% of normal. Rainfall values ranged from 150% of normal over western Scotland to 50% in the south and southeast.

September

This month was mild, dry, and dull, although summer attempted to make a rather belated appearance. Persistent SE'ly winds during the first ten days brought mainly cloudy conditions and temperatures slightly above average. Cooler conditions followed and NW'ly winds with showers spread down across the British Isles. Lighter winds resulted in a cold night, with the temperature on the grass falling to -1.2°C by the morning of the 12th. After mid-month, with E'ly winds off Scandinavia and a short sea-track, the Northern Isles saw a warm, dry, and sunny spell. The temperature rose to 18°C on the 21st, not only the warmest day of the year but also the warmest September day, and the 8th highest temperature ever recorded on Fair Isle. The milder conditions lasted until the end of the month, although the warm, sunny conditions soon came to an end, as the high slipped away into Eastern Europe and winds again settled into the SE as low pressure moved

towards Biscay. A cold front, moving down from the north and becoming slow moving across Fair Isle, became a rather troublesome warm front as low pressure over the southwest fed moist air northwards resulting in the month's wettest day on the 27th.

Fair Isle: Rain 60.0%, sun 69.5%, mean temperature anomaly +0.8EC.

UK: Rain 113%, sun 97%, mean temperature anomaly +1.1EC.

Rather warm across Britain with mean temperatures around 1.0EC above average. Rainfall was below average across northwest England, western and northern Scotland and above average in the southeast. Across Scotland temperatures were typically 1.5EC above average. With winds often from a southeasterly quarter the eastern coast suffered from low cloud, but the west was drier and brighter with less than 50% average rainfall. Tiree recorded its driest September since 1933. On the 21st the temperature reached 27EC at Aboyne and 23EC at Kirkwall and Colonsay.

October

Colder and wetter than normal, with the number of hours of sunshine slightly below those in the rest of Shetland. Snow and/or sleet reported on 9 days (previous October highest value 6 days in 1993). Hail reported on 15 days (previous October highest value 13 days in 1983).

Fair Isle: Rain 138.5%, sun 100.5%, mean temperature anomaly -0.8EC.

UK: Rain 163%, sun 104%, mean temperature anomaly +0.2EC.

A similar story across Scotland as a whole: generally wet with flooding, but also record hours of sunshine. Several frosty nights resulted in mean monthly temperatures falling to 1.5EC to 2EC below average in some inland districts. Rainfall was between 150% to 200% above average over most of the country. Temperatures were close to normal in the south of Britain where it was also dull and wet.

November

Slightly cooler and wetter than average, but with hours of sunshine well above normal. Shetland as a whole was also sunny, with Lerwick recording almost twice the normal monthly sunshine and having its sunniest November on record. The remnants of ex-hurricane "Mitch", tracking northeast past Scotland, brought gale to severe gale force SE'ly winds across Shetland on the 8th. A temporary easing to lighter SW'ly winds early on the 9th allowed temperatures to rise overnight to the month's maximum of 11.0EC. However, W'ly winds soon increased reaching storm force over exposed parts of Shetland and gusting to 66 kt on Fair Isle, as the depression continued north past Shetland and on across the Faeroes.

Fair Isle: Rain 122.9%, sun 144.9%, mean temperature anomaly -0.4EC .

UK: Rain 90%, sun 123%, mean temperature anomaly -0.4EC .

Rather cold all over Britain, with mean temperatures typically -0.5E to -1.0EC below average. Rainfall across most areas varied between 100% and 125% above normal. Sunshine was generally between 100% and 140% of average, with the lowest values down the central spine of the country.

December

A sunny, but slightly wetter than normal month. Despite it also being mild, snow was more frequent than usual due to spells of northerly winds, with 5 cm of lying snow, and drifts up to 50 cm on the 4th. Mid-month was particularly mild with the temperature reaching 15.8EC at Kinloss on the 14th. Fair Isle fared somewhat better than the rest of Shetland, where it was a very windy and wet month with Lerwick reporting 14 gale days – twice the expected number. Fair Isle recorded the usual number of gale days (9), although the mean monthly wind speed (20.4 kt) was a little higher than the average (19.5 kt).

Fair Isle: Rain 107.6%, sun 121.6%, mean temperature anomaly $+0.6\text{EC}$.

UK: Rain 89%, sun 92%, mean temperature anomaly $+0.6\text{EC}$.

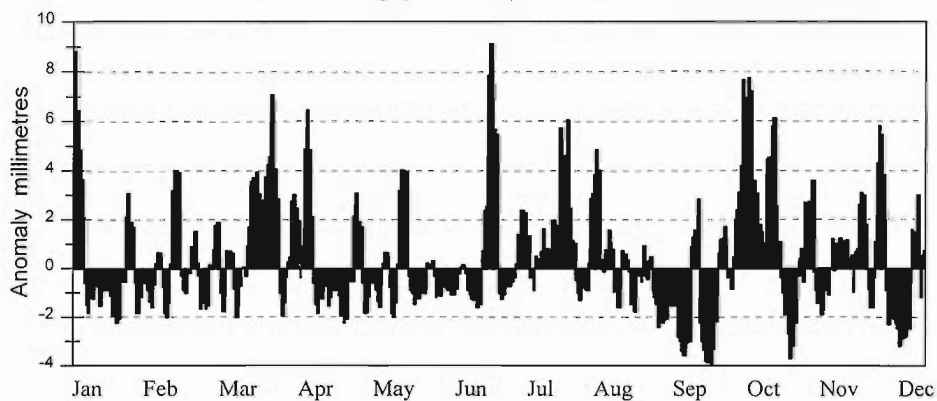
Mean temperatures were above average over the whole of the British Isles by around $+0.5\text{E}$ to $+1.3\text{EC}$. Sunshine was between 100% and 120% for most areas, with western districts of Scotland, England and Wales around 80%. Rainfall was generally above average, with up to 125% in the southeast and 150% for the Western Isles, but southeast Scotland and northeast England was dry with just 50%. In Scotland the month was also windy, the outstanding event undoubtedly the “Boxing Day” storm, which brought a deep depression of 950 mb tracking northeast across the middle of Scotland. Though deep, it was not record-breaking in December 1982, for instance, the pressure at Stornoway fell to 938 mb. The strongest winds were on the southern flank of the low, with the highest gust of 109 mph reported from Shotts and Blackford Hill in Edinburgh recording 107 mph. The 93 mph gust measured at Glasgow Airport was more typical of lower elevations. At most locations in Central Scotland, this was the most severe gale since the “Glasgow hurricane” of 1968, the maximum gusts of which were some 10 mph higher than those in the Boxing Day storm.

Meteorological Data, Fair Isle 1997.

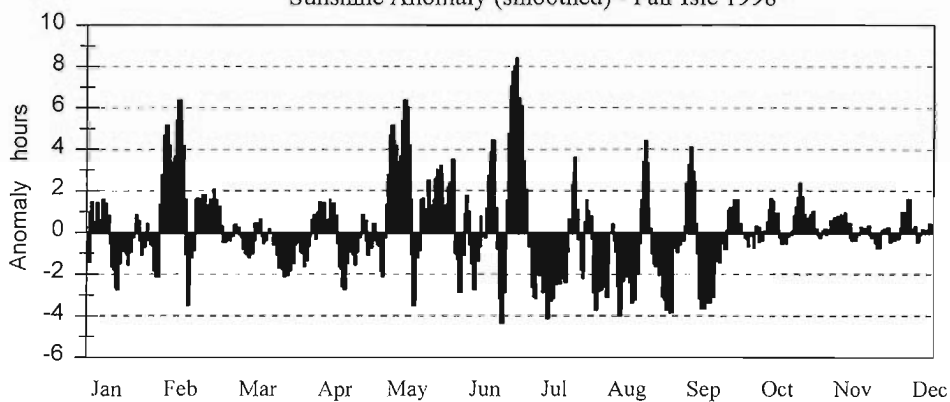
Temp. (°C)	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC	YEAR
Mean	5.5	6.3	5.3	5.3	8.5	9.4	11.0	11.1	11.4	8.0	6.3	5.9	7.8
Maximum	11.1	10.1	10.8	10.3	12.7	15.2	14.2	14.8	18.0	13.0	11.0	11.3	(7.6)
Minimum	-2.2	-5.6	-4.0	-1.2	4.0	3.4	7.0	6.5	3.7	1.7	0.6	-3.3	
Rainfall (mm)													
Monthly	97.0	139.5	91.5	45.5	19.8	84.3	88.3	75.8	53.6	149.4	143.6	111.4	1099.6
Max. daily fall	10.5	17.2	15.0	14.8	4.4	27.5	22.4	18.6	18.9	31.7	22.2	12.4	(916.1)
Sunshine (hours)													
Total	34.3	32.6	83.6	186.0	209.0	223.7	97.0	107.6	81.1	72.3	53.5	21.4	1202.1
Max. daily	4.6	6.1	7.3	13.6	16.5	13.5	11.2	10.8	7.0	5.0	3.5	4.6	(1218.1)
Wind speed (knots)													
Mean	16.9	19.8	16.6	15.3	11.4	11.3	11.7	11.9	12.1	18.0	16.8	20.4	15.2
Max. gust	65	67	59	63	40	52	38	41	43	61	66	63	(16.1)
Number of days													
Hail	4	9	8	10	1	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	69
Snow/sleet	7	8	11	11	0	0	0	0	0	9	8	11	65
Rain, > 0.1mm	23	27	25	16	12	15	20	23	19	25	27	27	259
Wet, > 0.9mm	20	24	16	10	8	9	15	12	11	21	22	26	194
Ground frost	6	3	10	8	0	1	0	0	1	1	8	7	45
Wind (direction at 0900)													
North	4	3	3	8	4	6	5	3	3	3	4	5	51
North-east	1	1	1	4	3	6	1	0	3	1	1	0	22
East	1	0	1	6	4	3	3	0	5	2	3	0	28
South-east	2	0	1	8	1	5	6	7	9	4	5	4	52
South	9	4	7	3	2	2	1	3	4	3	8	6	52
South-west	8	8	4	1	4	0	2	5	1	4	3	12	52
West	3	11	9	0	10	4	7	7	3	6	5	3	68
North-west	3	1	5	0	3	3	6	6	2	8	1	1	39
Calm	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1

(Figures in brackets are the mean for the period 1974-1997)

Rainfall Anomaly (smoothed) - Fair Isle 1998



Sunshine Anomaly (smoothed) - Fair Isle 1998



Fair Isle Bird Observatory Trust Financial Report and Accounts for 1998

A summary of the Trust's accounts for the year ended 31st October 1998 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 1998 were some 14% higher compared to the previous year. Several factors contributed to this encouraging result such as the 50th Anniversary celebrations, a significant increase in bulk booking by tour groups, the excellent bird-watching and associated publicity in September 1997 etc. This increase in visitor levels had a very beneficial effect on our financial performance as can be seen in the figures. Advance bookings for 1999 are already at an encouragingly high level, so prospective visitors should ring Hollie Craib on 01595-760258 as soon as possible.

Although the Balance Sheet is reasonably healthy, it is likely that significant expenditure will be necessary over the next few years to maintain the Observatory buildings and equipment, particularly the roof and windows and replacing the van. We continue to rely in part on donations to help fund such expenditure and should any reader wish to make a further donation of any size, either for a specific purpose or non-specifically, this would be extremely welcome. It should be sent care of The Warden, Fair Isle Bird Observatory. This year we were particularly grateful for a legacy from the estate of Valerie Thom, who played such an important role in sustaining the development of the Observatory. Any Friends of Fair Isle whose New Year resolutions included making a Will may also wish to consider leaving a bequest to FIBOT.

Mike Wood, Finance Director

Income & Expenditure Account for the year ended 31st October 1998

	1998	1997
	£	£
Trading Income	64,288	58,520
Cost of Sales	(48,219)	(48,937)
Gross Trading Profit	16,069	9,583
Net Operating Expenses	(60,203)	(46,390)
Operating Deficit	(44,134)	(36,807)
Subscriptions & Other Income	46,230	27,514
Profit/(Loss) for the year	2,096	(9,293)

Statement of Accumulated Surplus

Accumulated Surplus b/fwd	100,274	100,490
Profit/(Loss) for the year	2,096	(9,293)
Release from Appeal Reserve	9,077	9,077
Accumulated Surplus c/fwd	111,447	100,274

Balance Sheet as at 31st October 1998

	<u>31/10/98</u>	<u>31/10/97</u>
Fixed Assets		
Tangible Assets	130,998	147,248
Investments	10,857	10,857
	141,855	158,105
Current Assets		
Stocks	9,443	6,169
Debtors	14,315	12,718
Cash at bank and in hand	70,929	51,745
	94,687	70,632
Creditors; amounts due within in 1 year	(75,084)	(74,879)
Net Current Liabilities	19,603	(4,247)
Total Assets less Current Liabilities	161,458	153,858
Creditors; due after more than 1 year	(3,414)	(10,045)
Net Assets	158,044	143,813

The John Harrison Memorial Fund

The John Harrison Memorial Fund provides financial assistance in the form of small grants to young birdwatchers between the ages of 15-21 to enable them to visit Fair Isle and take part in the daily work schedule of the Observatory. It was established in 1968 by Richard Richardson in memory of John Harrison of Hunstanton, Norfolk who visited the island three times before he died at 19 years old.

Grants cover only the cost of travel by the cheapest means possible from your home to the Observatory and back. Full travel costs may be given only for visits of two weeks or longer. While at the Observatory awardees are required to pay £10 per day to cover the cost of three meals a day, bed linen and towels, laundry facilities and to offset fuel costs. Awardees are expected to take part in the regular work routine conducted by the ornithological staff on a five to six days a week basis. Work hours are usually 0900-1800, but in the seabird breeding season may be longer. Work varies depending on the time of year, so you are advised to contact the warden if you have a particular interest such as ringing or migration work, so that you can arrange your visit at the most appropriate time. No accommodation is available between 7th September-7th October. Duties may involve several hours of data entry on computers per day, migration censusing, ringing, trap repairs, visitor liaison and occasional maintenance tasks.

Application forms can be obtained from the Administrator at Fair Isle Bird Observatory (please send an SAE). Completed application forms should be sent to Dr Peter Evans, 70 Stratford Street, Oxford, OX4 1SW, along with a detailed CV (including your phone number), and names, addresses, and phone numbers for two referees.

Dr Evans will notify you if your application is successful, and you should then check the availability of accommodation with the Administrator at the Observatory and reserve your bed. Please provide the Administrator with details of your travel, and don't forget to save all travel receipts and present them to the Administrator when you arrive. Cost of travel will be offset against your bill for accommodation.

New worden Deryk Shaw

NOTES

The National Trust for Scotland

*Help conserve your heritage and have a great day out
by visiting these properties in Highland region*

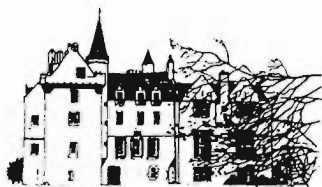
Historic Sites

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

Glomach

West Affric

Torriddon

} 16m E of Kyle of Lochalsh on A87

9m W of Kinlochewe on A896

For further details contact

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

Tel. No. Inverness 01463 232034