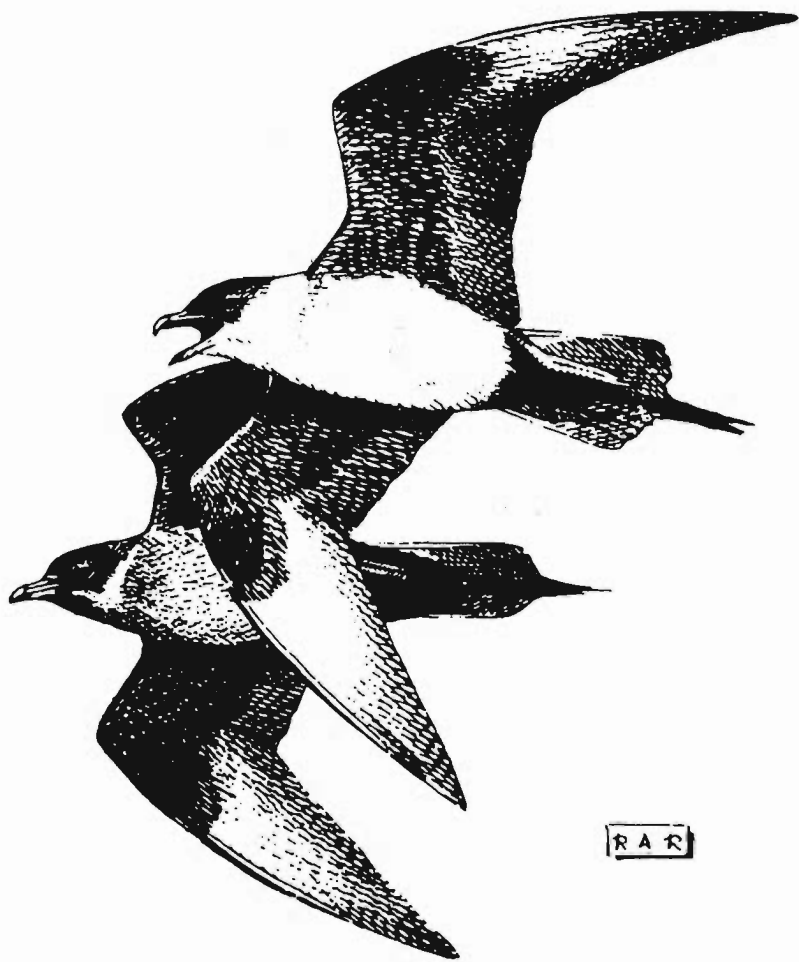


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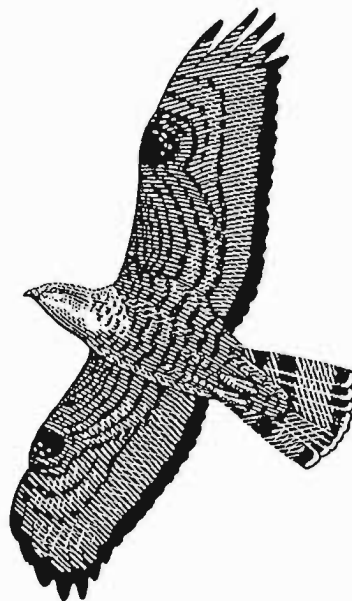
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Class of 99: L-R: Linda Fayers, Hollie Craib, Ann Prior, Lachlan Shaw, Deryk Shaw, Diana de Palacio, Steve Turner, Chas Holt, Alan Bull, Beverley Howlett.



Killer Whales off The Burrian, 21st June '99.

Diana de Palacio



Pectoral Sandpiper, Easter Lothar, 5th Septemer '99.

Alan Bull



Lesser Yellowlegs, Easter Lothar, 2nd May '99.

Alan Bull

Fair Isle Bird Observatory

Report no. 52

1999

Edited by Deryk Shaw and Hollie Craib

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Chairman's Report

Roy Dennis

It is a pleasure to introduce the latest annual report of the Fair Isle Bird Observatory Trust. I hope all Friends of Fair Isle and regular readers find, that once again, we have had a successful and interesting year on the Island. It was again a time of change. Deryk and Hollie took over the running of the Bird Observatory and I went up with them in April to introduce them to Fair Isle and get them installed. They made a wonderful start to their first year on the island and we wish them well for the future. This report details ornithological highlights and the major events of 1999.

Amazingly, Kingfisher was a new bird for Fair Isle and other notable arrivals were Harlequin Duck, Lesser Yellow-legs, Calandra Lark and Yellow-rumped Warbler. Both migration seasons were interesting. Spring falls of common migrants were good, while in autumn there were some classic Fair Isle rarities as well as falls of Great Spotted Woodpecker and Northern Bullfinches from Scandinavia. It was another good year for ringing as well, with 6872 birds of 100 species ringed; again Storm petrels broke the record at 2716 birds. Fourteen Leach's petrels were also ringed, which is interesting and one wonders some day if they are not going to be proved breeding on the Island.

The seabirds had a mixed season. It was the best ever for Kittiwakes but the worst for a decade for both Shag and Gannet. The Arctic Tern colony had halved but at least they produced more young; 150 this year instead of only one last year, but there is still a very worrying and rapid decline in Black Guillemots. This is one of the most distinctive birds of the Fair Isle coastline and it is of concern to us that this rather superb little bird is declining so rapidly. We will need to find out why and see if there is anything that can be done.

Four families on the island celebrated the arrival of babies in 1999, while Jack Keiser (a long-time Friend of Fair Isle) celebrated his 84th birthday during his 14th visit. It is a pleasure to thank everyone who has helped Fair Isle Bird Observatory during the year, both those people who live on Fair Isle and also our Friends of Fair Isle, our visitors and other supporters. Fair Isle Bird Observatory relies on encouraging people to come and stay with us, so we would be delighted to see you return and also for you to encourage others to come to Fair Isle. Both the Island and the Bird Observatory have very interesting websites nowadays, so those of you who have access to the Internet, don't forget to look up the sites and check out the latest happenings on the Island as well as vacancies at the Observatory.

Warden's Report

Deryk Shaw

1999 was a busy, but most enjoyable, first year as warden. A total of 202 species recorded included one addition to the island list – a Kingfisher seen at South Light on 9th September. More memorable however, was the number of quality 'seconds' for the isle: Calandra Lark (16th-17th May), Yellow-rumped Warbler (3rd-5th June) and Harlequin Duck (15th October), and only the third record of Lesser Yellow-legs (1st-4th May). Other good Fair Isle records included only the fifth Black-throated Diver, Little Gull (12th record), and **three each** of Blyth's Reed Warbler, Pectoral Sandpiper, Pallas's Warbler and Great Tit! More predictable, though always appreciated, were Great Snipe, Citrine Wagtail, Paddyfield Warbler, two Lanceolated Warbler, two Yellow-breasted Bunting, four Rustic Bunting and a Little Bunting.

Seabirds, as is often the case, had a mixed breeding season from the best since monitoring began in 1986 for Kittiwakes (productivity 1.33) to the worst since 1990 for Shags (productivity 1.08). Severe storms and big seas at the end of May washed out the majority of Shag nests (and many Gannets). Also, the population at monitoring plots was substantially down (29%) on 1998, which compounded the problem – and hence only 36 chicks were ringed! Fulmar numbers may have peaked, with a further 10% overall drop at monitoring plots (similar to the 1998 decrease). A whole island census of Guillemots put the breeding population at over 39,000, continuing the steady increase of this species. It's close cousin the Razor-bill, on the other hand, seem to be in steady decline with a poor breeding performance – the second lowest since monitoring began. Tysties seem to be in an even worse situation – a whole island count revealed a drop of 26%, from the last count in 1995, to a maximum of 230 birds and the annual east coast census produced only 144 birds – the lowest total ever. It appears to be a problem mirrored in Shetland as a whole but the reasons are as yet unclear. Kittiwakes although having a most welcome productive breeding season are still in decline at monitoring plots. The Arctic Tern population was halved (compared to 1998) to 562 Apparently Incubating Adults, mainly due to the complete failure of the previous breeding season which resulted in many birds deserting the colony this year – a common trait of this fickle species. Breeding performance was improved although still a long way from satisfactory with many chicks disappearing shortly after hatching. Evidence of predation by cats is a worrying sign and I hope it does not get out of hand, as the damage potential is catastrophic. 1999 was the last year of the latest JNCC contract to monitor the seabirds of Fair Isle. The importance of this work, both on a local and national scale, has been recognised and JNCC have already agreed to fund another three seasons work.

A total of just under 7,000 birds ringed is about average, details of which are to be

found elsewhere. A few minor problems with the boat engine meant that it had to be shipped out a couple of times during the season, which reduced the number of some seabird ringing totals.

Due to the absence of a Warden and Administrator over the winter months, Alan Bull was asked to return to the island in December 1998 to act as Administrator until the posts were filled. Steve Turner and Chas Holt, both returning for their second season, joined him in February. The three of them did an admirable job of bridging the gap between resident Wardens and Administrators. Upon our arrival, Steve took on the role of Migration Assistant, and Chas as Seabird Assistant whilst Alan was employed as the Ranger. I am extremely grateful to them all and found their previous experience and knowledge of the isle invaluable as I settled in to the post and tried to familiarise myself with the island. Steve and Alan have since moved on to pastures new whilst Chas will return for a third season in 2000.

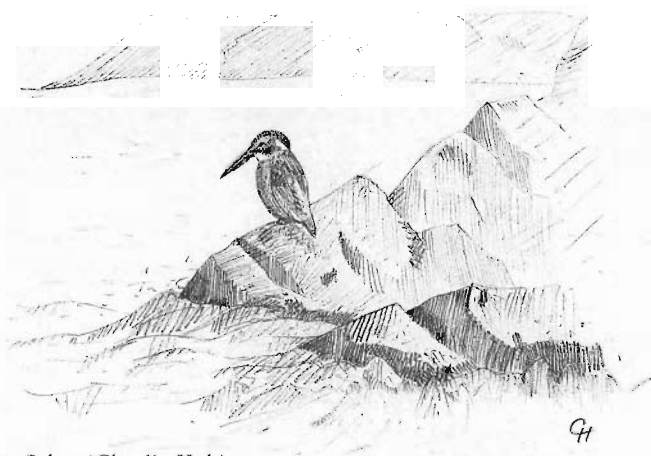
Volunteers this season were: Diana de Palacio, who returned, for a third time, for the whole of the seabird season, and was a most important and hard-working member of the team; Libby Hillhouse from USA and Becki Rosser (our JHMF recipient) both arrived for a few weeks in the summer and gained valuable experience of Bird Observatory work and island life. We have over 50 years worth of migration logs stored in the Assistant Warden office, all on paper, and work has begun to put all this data onto computer so that it is in a more manageable format and can be used in analysis of bird movements and population studies. Amongst other tasks, this is one of the valuable jobs to be carried out by our team of volunteers each year. The importance of all the Observatory records and ringing data was illustrated during the season with several requests for scientific information. These included, Snipe biometrics, Storm Petrel biometrics, passage Ring Ouzel and Dunnock counts and breeding Wheatear numbers. Other than the Observatory migration and seabird monitoring work, the only other research was the long-term Starling study by Peter Evans, who returned to complete a twentieth consecutive breeding season's data collection.

The traps survived the 1998/1999 winter in reasonable condition, with only minor repairs needed. However, the conifers in the Plantation have suffered badly as a result of their severe pruning in 1998 and are now in a sorry state. Replacement of these trees and further restocking is planned for the near future. It is encouraging to see that the New Plantation is progressing well and hopefully with careful management and continued restocking it will become a valuable feature in years to come.

At the end of our first season on Fair Isle, I would like to sincerely thank all those who have helped myself and Hollie get started in our new roles on the Island. It is impossible to thank everyone who has made a contribution to, or helped towards, the running of the Observatory this year but I really am grateful to you all. In particular, however, I would like to thank the following people: Robert and Fiona Mitchell for supplying the Observatory with food, and providing help and advice

when needed. Kenny Stout for his plumbing skills at all times of the day and night! Brian Wilson, John Best and the other Northmen for various jobs carried out over the season and especially for coming up at a moments notice on more than one occasion. Brian Skinner for helping with catering during special events and the supply of pizzas in the autumn! Dave Wheeler for weather news, computer advice and Website creation. Iain Stout for caring for the Skadan flock and preparation of the meat after slaughter. Stewart and Ewen Thompson for their help with the generator and the van. Clare Scott for feeding the children during the Summer Camp. Patrick Ross-Smith for maintenance of the boiler. Kathy Coull for the delicious produce from her garden. Jimmy and Florrie Stout for Good Shepherd services and help with cruiseship visit arrangements. Barry Sinclair for the loan of materials and for fitting the time-delay switches to the freezers. Nick and Elizabeth Riddiford for support and advice. Paddy O'Luanaigh for medical advice for guests. Clare McClymont and Linda Grieve for helping stuff envelopes for the Newsletter dispatch. Paul Harvey and Roger Riddington for their invaluable advice and experience in all aspects of the job. Dave Okill for the many trees and shrubs sent to restock the new and old Plantations. Malcolm Adamson, who once again spent many hours maintaining, painting and generally looking after our generators. Tim and Irene Loseby for another year representing Fair Isle Bird Observatory at the Birwatching Fair. Jack Keiser for his generous donation. JNCC (Joint Nature Conservation Committee), SOTEAG, (Shetland Oil Terminal Environmental Advisory Group), BTO, (British Trust for Ornithology) and SNH (Scottish Natural Heritage), for financial support.

Finally I would like to thank all those who reported bird sightings, cetacean, moth and butterfly records to the daily log and those who have made contributions to this report.



Kingfisher (Charlie Holt)

Administrator's Report

Hollie Craib

As appears to have been the case in most previous years, the end of the season comes around at an alarming pace. 1999 was no exception to this. Having only arrived on the Isle in April, to take up our posts as Warden and Administrator, myself and Deryk (and our son Lachlan), had little time to settle in before our first visitors arrived two weeks later! It is largely due to the efforts of the returning staff that we were able to make the season an enjoyable and successful one.

Roy Dennis flew with us to the Isle on 7th April 1999 and gave us a whistle-stop tour of the local sights and introduced us to as many islanders as possible. Despite having the effect of confusing us over who was who and indeed, who was related to whom, it gave us a great start to our new life and established links with the folk who we were soon to consider our friends.

The Lodge staff this year, as in most years, had a mixture of old and new faces. Linda Fayers returned as General Assistant and her energy, enthusiasm and drive was an example to us all. Ann Prior also returned to once again take up the post of Catering Manager/Cook and produced a never ending supply of delicious food that over the months put a strain on all of our waistbands! Having two members of the team who had worked here before made a considerable difference and I am extremely grateful to both of them for working so hard to ensure the place ran smoothly.

In May we were joined by Pam Findley as the second General Assistant, but only for a brief period. At the beginning of June, Beverley Howlett joined us as Assistant Cook and finally in August Nina Harrison arrived to replace Pam, who had left in June.

The 1999 season was, as usual, busy and eventful. Unfortunately, the welcome increase in bed-nights last year did not continue this season and visitor numbers were down again slightly to 1900. Once again it was felt that the high cost of transport to the Isle was the main factor limiting visitor numbers. It was also brought to our attention that many people were unaware that guests could stay at the Bird Observatory and this was particularly the case with local people from both Shetland and Orkney. It is hoped that word of mouth, local advertising and working with the local tourist boards will improve this situation in 2000. Approximately 370 people stayed with us at the Observatory in 1999, with the vast majority being British but also a number of overseas visitors from as far away as France, Germany, The Netherlands America and Japan. One particularly noteworthy visit was made by Heinz Thurz, the pilot of the Second World War Heinkel plane, which crashed on Fair Isle during the conflict. Heinz stayed with us for a week during May and during that time visited the airstrip on every occasion a plane came into the Isle. It was both fascinating and an honour to meet him.

Organised tour group visits to the Isle continue to increase with eight groups staying this year. As well as the familiar faces of Shetland Wildlife Tours, Speyside

Wildlife and Wildlife Travel, we also hosted The Canyon Explorer's Club from America. Group travel is a very important section of our clientele and through the Fair Isle Ranger Service we hope to increase the number of activities available to these groups as well as other visitors. Special 'Activity Weeks' are also planned for future years. No less than 16 cruiseships were able to land on Fair Isle this year, with the majority taking part in guided walks to see Puffins, Skuas and other seabirds. Day-trips from Orkney also continued with weekly visits during the summer. On these occasions the visitors were brought to the Observatory as part of their guided tour of the island and were given a talk about the monitoring work, whilst enjoying home baked refreshments.

With the help of Dave Wheeler, a new Fair Isle Bird Observatory Website was established this year. This site outlines general information about accommodation and services at the Observatory and has recent bird news and photographs, which are regularly updated. It is hoped that this site will attract new people to come and stay as well as help past visitors keep in touch with happenings and sightings on the Isle. If you wish to browse this site you can find it at: www.fairislebirdobs.co.uk.

The Scottish Tourist Board made an on-the-spot inspection of the Bird Observatory during this season, to grade the building and facilities provided. We were pleased to achieve a Two Star Guesthouse status, gaining maximum points in categories such as 'environment', 'hospitality' and 'tourist information'.

The Fair Isle Ranger Service (part funded by Scottish Natural Heritage) continued to expand and improve this year, with Alan Bull being designated as the Ranger. Through this service we provided, welcome talks, welcome packs and self-guiding leaflets to all visitors. The welcome packs were updated and improved and also included a questionnaire which proved invaluable when assessing the success of the season as a whole. Two new self-guiding leaflets were introduced this year covering the subjects of Geology and Sea Mammals. Several new Fact Sheets were also produced to hand out to visitors during particular activities (e.g. Puffins fact sheets during Puffin Walks and Storm Petrel Fact Sheets during Storm Petrel ringing sessions). A new display for the George Waterston Memorial Centre was also created, ready for the beginning of the 2000 season, detailing the history of ornithology and the Bird Observatory on Fair Isle. A new map detailing every stile on the island, points of particular interest and several suggested walks has been posted in the living room. This map is also useful for highlighting areas to be avoided, such as during the bird breeding season and when crops and silage are being grown on the crofts.

The Ranger visited Fair Isle Primary School on ten occasions to give lessons on the subject of Seabirds. Additionally the entire school stayed at the Observatory for the second annual Summer Camp on the night of 24th July. Two days of fun and noisy activities culminated in a team quiz to test how much they had learned. The

children also enjoyed the chance to see the seabird colonies from the sea, when they were invited to sail around the shores of Fair Isle on the Swan sailing boat.

The Ranger Service will be continuing in 2000 and we hope new ideas involving Islanders, the local school children and visitors will secure the future of the service for years to come.

Maintenance at the Observatory is always a time consuming business and 1999 was no exception. However, we were lucky that on our arrival in April there were no major repair jobs needing to be carried out before we could open for the season. The usual tasks of painting and decorating guest bedrooms and minor repair work were all carried out satisfactorily before the first guests arrived in late April. However, problems with the hot water supply and the showers arose early in the season and continued until the end. Initially the problems were reasonably minor and were soon fixed, resulting in visitors being unaware there were any problems for the majority of the season. However by the autumn the showers were not functioning properly at all, and consequently the showering facilities can only be described as unsatisfactory during by far our busiest period. We would like to thank all the visitors we had staying during this time for their patience and understanding over this matter. We have taken drastic and expensive measures to ensure this problem has now been fixed. Special thanks also go to Bill Beatty and his 'gang' for fixing the leaking pipe in the public toilet. It is amazing what you can do with a bicycle inner tube! During the season three new windows were fitted where the previous ones no longer opened. During the next few years many of the Observatory windows will be replaced by better designed, harder wearing windows, far more suited to the harsh winter environment. The Observatory roof was patched during fine weather in the spring and there were no further problems with the roof during the season. On the kitchen front, the cooker had a long overdue 'service' in September and is now working to full capacity once more. The generators had no major problems this year and with the guidance of Malcolm Adamson, Deryk managed to maintain them and fix them when minor problems occurred. As in every year the Observatory relies on the generosity of individuals like Malcolm, who give up their spare time to help us out. We are extremely grateful for their support.

Towards the end of May, the old red van (which, to be honest, had seen better days) ground to a halt on the way back from the shop, in the pouring rain. This marked the end for this vehicle and it was almost three weeks before its replacement (a lovely white transit – with power steering and a stereo!) arrived on 12th June. During the busy spring period, therefore, we relied on Linda's old Renault 5 to pick up and drop off guests and their luggage to the airstrip and pier. When the plane was full (as is often the case in late May/early June) it took several trips back and forth to safely deposit all our visitors at the Observatory. We are very grateful to Linda for the loan of her car on these occasions and also for its subsequent use, even after the new van had arrived (usually for twitching – which earned it the

name of the twitchmobile). The new van has functioned well in 1999, clocking up almost 2000 miles in that short time and we hope it will serve us well for many more seasons.

This year also saw the return to serving Fair Isle lamb to our guests. Over the past few years, Health and Hygiene rules have meant we were unable to serve up our own isle produced Fair Isle Bird Observatory lamb, because the animals were slaughtered here on the Isle. This was solved in 1999 by sending the lambs out to be slaughtered in Shetland and the meat returned. Visitors can once again enjoy locally produced roast lamb for Sunday Lunch. Sunday lunches also proved popular with Islanders and we were pleased to see many Isle folk booking in for meals at the Observatory during the season. Due to our late arrival, the traditional Easter Sunday Lunch was not held at the Observatory and so to make amends we held a party in May, to which the whole Isle were invited. This party (which was jointly organised by Linda Grieve for her birthday) was the first of a handful of social island gatherings at the Observatory this year.

The spring of 1999 saw the completion of the renovation of Lower Stoneybrek for Pat and Neil and the start of Setter for Iain and Ruth. The School is also being vastly extended and improved to accommodate the growing number of pre-school and school aged children on the Isle.

This year saw a population boom, with four babies born to Fair Isle residents. The first to arrive was Lowri John Best who was born in Shetland on 14th June to Ian and Lise (Kenaby) and followed six weeks later by Melissa Emily Welch, born in Dundee on 5th August, to Phil and Linda (Haa). Another six weeks passed before the Observatory staff made their contribution with Fyntan Merlin Shaw, born to myself and Deryk in Shetland on 17th September. Finally, just 13 days later, Freya Joyce Stout was born in Shetland on 30th September to Cathy and Michael (Barkland). Alex Wood returned as a volunteer in August to help me in the last few weeks of my pregnancy and to cover when I went to Shetland. I cannot thank Alex enough for her support at that time. Along with all these new arrivals, were a few departures from the Isle community. Paddy O'Luanaigh (our resident Nurse and Midwife), his partner Claire and their three boys, Daniel, John and Ruairi left the Isle at the very end of 1999. We will miss them all, not only because Paddy was an excellent Nurse and Midwife, but also because they were our friends.

1999 is now over and it marks the end of not only our first season, but the decade, century and indeed, Millennium. I would like to thank all the Observatory staff who worked so hard all season and were so supportive, even when times were hard. A very big thank you also goes out to the Islanders, who have made us so welcome and helped us with the many problems that occur in a season. Fair Isle Bird Observatory is still going strong after 51 years and with the continued support of visitors, Islanders and dedicated staff, the future for this worthwhile organisation looks bright.



School trip
aboard the 'Swan'
27th September 1999.

The National Trust for Scotland, 1999

Alexander M Bennett

It is always nice to report on a big meaningful project with a successful conclusion as we did recently with the Renewable Energy Scheme, this is now up and running and under the management of the Fair Isle Electricity Company. This wasn't the case last year, however, that's not to say that there is nothing happening. Not so, two major projects are underway, albeit slowly, the house improvement and development programme and the Fair Isle Marine Initiative. The Trust and the Islanders both believe that these projects are crucial to the future security and development of the Isle. The Housing Project will bring with it a long-term secure environment within which to live and work and the marine project will provide sustainability to the marine resource which is vital, not only to the long term viability of the breeding bird populations but also to the livelihoods of the Islanders. Fair Isle is now at the forefront of developing the possibility of a statutory marine reserve in the coastal waters around the Isle. Fair Isle is seen as a pilot project by many but the principal difficulties lie in convincing and persuading central government to provide the national statutory designations in order to make it work and police it correctly. Considerable efforts have been made to date and will continue into the future until such time as Fair Isle can boast a total reserve status for the terrestrial and marine environments.

Fair Isle has enjoyed, for almost fifteen years, the designation as a Council of Europe Diploma holding site. During the year Dr Jo Sultana from Malta was asked to visit Fair Isle by the Council of Europe to assess the possibility of Fair Isle being considered for award of its fourth Diploma. Each Diploma comes with conditions attached to it and clearly the Trust and Fair Isle emphasised the need for Marine Nature Reserve Status. This will be considered by Council of Europe Ministers and it is expected that any conditions attached to a new award will centre on moving towards this designation.

I mentioned housing earlier. After many years of *ad hoc* fundraising for this important project a new partnership approach has now been taken by the Trust and the Fair Isle Housing Forum. This resulted in success in persuading various agencies to join us in trying to deliver this project. Funds will now be available from the Scottish Executive's Rural Challenge Fund, Scottish Homes, Shetland Islands Council and the National Trust for Scotland, which will provide for a three year housing programme which at the time of writing sees the first house renovation, Vaasetter, almost complete. The planning is now well advanced for Quoy and Houll, which are the next on the list. It is hoped that if the programme can be extended to five years with appropriate funding, then this could bring the housing up to standard.

After lengthy negotiations with the Northern Lighthouse Board the Trust finally

secured ownership of the redundant Lighthouse Buildings, the South Light having been automated in April 1998. This now provides the Trust and the Housing Forum the opportunity to renovate the old accommodation block at the South Lighthouse into accommodation and workshops and this will be added into the house renovation programme after Houll. With the acquisition came numerous storage spaces in the form of stores, garages and sheds, which as you would expect the Islanders would have no problem in filling the space. In fact the Trust has had so many applications for these storage spaces we could probably fill them twice over.

As always it is nice to welcome new Fair Islanders and this year was no exception. We have had four births on Fair Isle this year, Fyntan to Deryk Shaw and Hollie Craib at the Lodge, Freya to Michael and Cathy Stout at Barkland, Melissa to Linda Grieve and Phil Welch at the Auld Haa and Lowri to Ian Best and Lise Sinclair at Kenaby. Sadly, Margaret Stout of Barkland has left the Isle to return to Shetland but as you would expect an empty house does not stay empty for long and Michael and Cathy Stout returned to the Isle, albeit briefly, to fill the gap. We have also lost the nurse, Padraig, Claire and their children who left to take up residence in the south of England. Jude Ross-Smith and her two sons Duncan and Callum, join Patrick Ross-Smith at Burkle. I wish all those leaving the Island and those coming to the Isle, very best wishes for their future.

One thing is for sure: Fair Isle is not standing still. If anything, it is growing rapidly with thirteen children in the school this year and the average age dropping, quite against national trends. Long may it continue.

Report on Causes of Death in Wild Birds on Fair Isle for 1999

Jason Waine

As part of a long term study into the causes of death to birds on Fair Isle, staff and visitors to the Observatory continue to collect any corpses for autopsy and testing. These are stored frozen for posting when convenient. As in previous years, the bodies are subjected to a careful examination when biometric measurements are taken and relevant samples are stored for later examination. For example, tissues from raptors and other target species are sent to the Institute for Terrestrial Ecology to be tested for background poisons and parasites are sent to the National History Museum for identification. Recently, we have also been saving tissue samples for DNA research.

Over the past five years, a total of 219 specimens have been examined from Fair Isle, building up a valuable database of information. Unfortunately, this year the freezer broke down losing most of the specimens collected from the first seven months, leaving only 27 birds to be examined. These, however, include 22 species from 16 families and 6 orders. The most unusual specimens were two first year male Barred Warblers, both having suffered migration stress leading to, in one case, starvation and in the other, pneumonia. A Turtle Dove was another unusual specimen, the first I have had to examine. The most common species represented were Northern Wheatear (3), Golden Plover (2) and Great Black-backed Gull (2).

The birds ages were determined by plumage and/or maturity of the gonads. Where possible the ages were recorded using the standard BTO formula (J = juvenile, 3 = first year). Imm = immature, which in this context means that the plumage was mature whilst the gonads were underdeveloped. Where a ring was present, its number was recorded. Only three birds found before August survived the freezer breakdown – two from May (an adult Great Skua and an adult Swallow) and a juvenile Oystercatcher in late July. In seven cases there was no date recorded but most (12) were found in September, with seven of these in a three day spread (28th to 30th). Although the causes of death in these cases were varied, it seems likely that migration stress played a significant part.

There were 19 categories of pathology found, with eight birds showing collision injuries, six having suffered primary starvation, three secondary starvation, three predation (one attributed to Skuas, one to cats and one unknown predator), three with haemorrhagic enteritis (severe intestinal infection), two with gapeworm, two with pneumonia, and two with migration stress. Eight birds had collision injuries, in each case the cause of death, but several of these cases had other pathology. A good example was an immature Common Cuckoo (*Cuculus canorus*), which had suffered collision injuries to the chest causing massive internal haemorrhage. It is unlikely that this bird would have lasted very much longer had it avoided the fatal

collision, as it was starving probably as a result of a gizzard impaction (akin to a fur ball in cats) but possibly just a reflection of its youth and inexperience. It also had signs indicative of a form of avian malaria.

Parasitisms are much more common in younger birds or ones that are already sick – this reflects a poor immune state. An immature Shag (*Phalacrocorax aristotelis*), had multiple parasitisms with nematodes (roundworms) and acanthocephalans (a particularly nasty group of internal parasites), as well as larger numbers of an internal mite (*Syringophylus*), affecting the muscles. However, there was, unusually, one adult bird suffering from primary parasitism – a female Eider Duck (*Somateria mollissima*). This bird had large numbers of roundworms, causing an enteritis (an inflammation of the gut), as well as a heavy burden of tapeworms. This led to secondary starvation and death.

Other interesting cases included an immature female Wheatear (*Oenanthe oenanthe*), which had an infestation of gapeworm (roundworms that inhabit the windpipe and eventually choke the bird), but also had a fungal infection of the air sacs called Aspergillosis; also an adult Meadow Pipit with visceral gout – a metabolic disease caused by kidney failure – rarely seen in wild birds.

Table 1 lists the findings of the autopsies:

Table 1: Post-mortem examination findings

Species	Age	Sex	Date Found	Conclusions
Common Cuckoo	Imm	M	7-8-99	Collision; gizzard impaction; starvation; leucocytozoan
Lesser Black-backed Gull	Adult	M	19-9-99	Collision
Northern Wheatear	3	F	n/k	Collision
Oystercatcher	J	?	22-7-99	Collision
Northern Wheatear	Adult	M	n/k	Collision – window
Turtle Dove	Adult	M	29-9-99	Collision – window
Golden Plover	Adult	M	29-9-99	Collision – rta
Blackcap	Adult	M	19-10-99	Enteritis; pneumonia
Redwing	3	F	28-9-99	Fractured neck
Great Skua	Adult	F	23-5-99	Gapeworm; secondary starvation
Northern Wheatear	Imm	F	19-9-99	Gapeworm; aspergillosis
Robin	Adult	M	22-8-99	Handling shock; adrenomegally
Barn Swallow	Adult	M	29-5-99	Migration stress; enteritis
Barred Warbler	3J	M	n/k	Migration stress; starvation
Common Guillemot	Adult	M	13-8-99	No diagnosis
Common Redshank	Imm	F	9-99	No diagnosis
Eider Duck	Adult	F	n/k	Parasitic enteritis; tapeworms; secondary starvation
Barred Warbler	3J	M	9-99	Pneumonia
Arctic Tern	J	?	10-8-99	Predation

Table 1: Post-mortem examination findings (*continued*)

Species	Age	Sex	Date Found	Conclusions
Chaffinch	3J	M	29-9-99	Predation – cat
Golden Plover	Adult	F	30-9-99	Predation – skua
Great Black-backed Gull	Adult	M	n/k	Starvation; renal failure
Shag	Imm	M	9-9-99	Starvation; syringophylus; roundworms
Arctic Skua	Imm	F	3-9-99	Starvation
Common Gull	3	F	n/k	Starvation
Great Black-backed Gull	J	F?	n/k	Starvation
Meadow Pipit	adult	?	29-9-99	Visceral gout; enteritis

For the fifth year running, I would like to thank the staff and visitors of the Fair Isle Bird Observatory for their help with this project. I also appeal to visitors to Fair Isle to save any bird carcasses they may find and hand them in to the Observatory together with a record of where and when they were found and any details that may be relevant to the cause of death.

Fair Isle Marine Environment and Tourism Initiative and the Northern Periphery Programme

The Fair Isle Marine Environment and Tourism Initiative (FIMETI) is a partnership between the Fair Isle community, Fair Isle Bird Observatory and The National Trust for Scotland, set up in 1996 to seek proper management and protection of the threatened marine area around Fair Isle. The stated objective was:

to increase awareness of the urgent need, and stimulate action and support, for integrated marine resource management of the seas around Fair Isle to ensure that the values and benefits which have sustained the community over many centuries are preserved and, in some cases, reinstated.

And the ultimate goal was stated as:

The establishment of a management regime sympathetic to the long-term needs of the marine environment and its users, most particularly the island community, for whom a healthy, protected marine environment is a social, economic and cultural prerequisite.

In a drive towards this goal, a great deal of information was gathered about Fair Isle's maritime values and assets, leading to a series of proposals for sustainable management in the documents *Managing the Sea for Birds – Fair Isle and adjacent waters* (Riddiford & Thompson 1997) and *Safeguarding Our Heritage – the Fair Isle marine resource: a community proposal for sustainable management* (Riddiford 1999). This was made possible by a grant from the Scottish Office Rural Challenge Scheme. The Rural Challenge grant ran out in March 1999. This did not deter the participants, however, because efforts continued throughout the summer – particularly in relation to tourism and the environment – and in September a further period of grant aid was achieved which will boost FIMETI's efforts until the end of 2001.

Throughout 1999, efforts were made to extend the FIMETI work, in time, funding and scope, by developing a trans-national project through the Northern Periphery Programme. This came to fruition with news, received in September 1999, of our acceptance into the programme. The Northern Periphery Programme is a Finland-Scotland-Sweden-Norway Cooperation co-financed by European Commission ERDF Article 10. The objective of the programme is “to contribute to the improvement of services and value creation in northern areas of Finland, Scotland, Sweden and Norway”. The programme is focused on the development of new knowledge about innovative and well-working solutions for sustainable business activity, service provision and land use/spatial development.” Developing the sustainable management of natural resources is identified as a key factor, along with provision of services, business development and exchange of good practice.

The project accepted by the NPP has the title *Safeguarding Our Heritage*,

community development through sustainable resource management in peripheral areas and will be implemented by a partnership of communities called the *SafeinHerit Network*. The SafeinHerit Network is a partnership of communities and organisations from Scotland, north Norway and Swedish Lapland. The Scandinavian partners are the Nord-Trøndelag County Council (Nord-Trøndelag Fylkeskommune) and Steigen Municipality, Nordland County, in Norway and the community development organisations of Inlandslaget, Vindelälvs kommunerna and SOS-kommunerna in Swedish Lapland. The Fair Isle Marine Environment and Tourism Initiative has taken the lead throughout in the preparation and planning of the project and will manage the implementation period too, with the FIMETI coordinator, Nick Riddiford, acting as SafeinHerit Project Leader. FIMETI continues to be a partnership of the Fair Isle community, Fair Isle Bird Observatory and The National Trust for Scotland.

The Project's main objective is to develop mechanisms for achieving sustainable development within remote rural areas which have both high environmental quality and fragile economies. This will be addressed by providing a forum for investigating and sharing information of the ways in which social, economic, cultural and environmental issues can be more closely integrated; and by involving local communities in the implementation of practical examples and demonstrations.

Our actions and activities will demonstrate to rural communities throughout the Northern Periphery area the benefits which can accrue at social and economic as well as environmental levels from planned sustainable development which integrates, values and enhances the natural and cultural heritage and safeguards this resource for the future. The demonstration elements will include initiatives of direct economic value and benefit to the communities *and* promote activities and actions which can continue after the programme has ended. The issues to be addressed comprise practical measures in the spirit of World-wide international environmental programmes and initiatives such as the Rio convention's Local Agenda 21.

SafeinHerit is taken from the title of our project *Safeguarding Our Heritage*. We recognise that the rich environmental and cultural assets are our Heritage and need to be safeguarded if our communities are to survive and prosper. We want future generations to safely inherit these assets. SafeinHerit becomes a most appropriate short title for our endeavours.

As project leaders, FIMETI will be heavily involved in all aspects of the project. However, the Fair Isle marine issues and objectives will not be forgotten – and indeed the emphasis on sustainable resource management will allow us to compare the benefits of thoughtful management of Fair Isle's terrestrial environment (enshrined in management plans drawn up by the islanders themselves) with the still woefully inadequate measures for the marine area. It is hoped that Government

will respond positively to the SafeinHerit goals. After all, it is pointless developing an international model for sustainable resource management aimed at benefiting peripheral communities if the statutory agencies do not support the measures required to enact sustainable resource management.

Work has already begun to implement the actions and activities outlined in the *Safeguarding Our Heritage* project plan. One of the first of these is to set up a SafeinHerit Network web site. This has been done and the first item on the site describes the project in much greater detail. These details can be found at: **www.SafeinHerit.net**

Further details about the Northern Periphery Programme are given on its web site: **www.scotnordic.com/northernperiphery**

Nick Riddiford
Coordinator, FIMETI
Project Leader, SafeinHerit Network



(Fiona Mitchell)

My Experiences of Fair Isle

Becki Rosser, 17 years

I applied to take part in the 'John Harrison Memorial Fund' for two weeks at Fair Isle Bird Observatory. The trust awarded me the grant, which I was very excited about. I went in August 1999: the start of the migration period and the ending of the breeding season for most birds. After a long journey lasting 25 hours, I finally arrived at Fair Isle, shattered. I received a very warm welcome, a great start to which was going to be a most brilliant two weeks. A fortnight of memories of which I am going to treasure forever.

My first day was finding my feet around the island and that night I was straight into ringing Storm Petrels, not only a ringing first but also a new species for me. An event which was going to be repeated throughout my stay.

Over the next few days my time consisted of census work down in the south of the island, which I enjoyed very much, trap rounds and also fence mending. The next few days were a ringers paradise, Arctic Terns, Storm Petrels and Great Skuas (Bonxies) were in abundance.

The whole island was full of friendly people with spectacular scenery, beautiful birds and computer work. The people of Fair Isle knew you within a couple of days and by the time the weekends came you would be already joining in with the parties and the communal dances.

The days flew by when it was time for me to return home. I was very sad but someone up there answered my prayers, the sea was too rough and the 'Good Shepherd 4' (the Fair Isle boat) was unable to sail. Two more beautiful days and nights was enough for me to have a game of football; the Observatory against the Rest of Fair Isle. That night a slide show from Hollie, a very informative and interesting show about Fair Isle, then more computer work.

I'll never forget my time on Fair Isle, I will miss everything; the wildlife, the scenery, the birds but most of all the friendly people, even the computer work and don't forget the staff of the Observatory.

I know in the very near future I will be back to explore more wonders of the fantastic island.

For everybody who is thinking about applying for the grant, go for it, you will be surprised how easy it is, how much you will learn, what birds you will see and all the memories you will keep with you.

Back in History Before Bird Traps Were Here for Ringing

James A Stout

In 1925 I had the privilege of being asked to accompany Surgeon Rear Admiral J H Stenhouse on his bird quests here. I think it was Stenhouse's second visit when I went with him. The year before he had an abler accomplice – Eagle Clark.

He stayed at the Schoolhouse with the then missionary and schoolteacher. In the Schoolhouse he had the use of a room with a table to do the bird skinning in the evenings. On one end of the table stood the tools; cotton wool and a little bottle of green arsenic paste to paint on to preserve the skins and on the other end of the table he had a different bird bottle – a bottle of 'Grouse' and a packet of Mcvities Digestive Biscuits. I do not think he ever confused the two bottles: he did not paint whiskey to cure the skins!

Cultivation on the island then was a lot different from what it is now. There were no tractors for haulage or land cultivation, and every croft kept an ox for those purposes. The oxen needed upkeep all the time and most crofts also had cows, consequently more crops had to be grown. Therefore as well as the usual potatoes and turnips each croft had, on average, about 2000 hand shorn and bound sheaves to deal with at harvest time. It was along the edges of these growing patches that Stenhouse and I walked, every weekday forenoon for two weeks, looking for what could be found.

One morning I had been down east of Haa early and I had heard, amongst pipits, this strange note, so I went up and called on Stenhouse and he came down and we finally located my bird north of the chapel. We followed it along to where there were stooks of corn before Houl and on one of these stooks, Stenhouse shot the bird. As soon as he had shot it he said that it could be a Pechora.

Stenhouse shot lots of birds, to measure and look at wing formula etc. – particularly Lesser whitethroats, to see which race was using this route most frequently. Stenhouse had three guns; a 12 bore, (which he gave to me), a 28 bore, which he usually carried and a walking stick one, which he rarely used; only once, on the Seventh Day, that I know of, to get a Lanceolated warbler, (north of where Fair Isle Bird Observatory is now).

One day we were going along the edges of a potato patch and we counted 14 Yellow-browed Warblers in that one place and in the next turnip patch we had a Paddyfield Warbler. From the foregoing, it will be realised that the bird cover now is a lot less than it was then and more birds now may roost at the cliffs.

I think Stenhouse had spent a lot of time in the Mediterranean and around Greece during his battleship days and he prophesied about birds that would one day be coming along, such as the Red-flanked Bluetail (which he called a Tarsijer).

Stenhouse was a very pleasant man to be along with and he was a good teacher, often telling me interesting things apart from bird lore.

ORNITHOLOGY

MONTHLY SUMMARY

Charlie Holt & Deryk Shaw

A respectable total of 201 species were recorded in 1999. A Kingfisher in September was the one species new to Fair Isle, although second records of Harlequin Duck, Calandra Lark and Yellow-rumped Warbler were the year's rarity highlights.

The monthly totals of species recorded were:

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
49	45	79	98	141	114	77	108	148	126	65	–

January

January saw few surprises on the bird front in a relatively settled start to the New Year. A Goldeneye, two Robins and a Chaffinch remained from 1998 and wintered through to April, while occasional Red-breasted Merganser, Merlin, Common Gull and Black-headed Gull provided entries for the log. A Wood Pigeon was seen on 2nd, while peaks of 200 Redshanks and 100 Turnstones were noted on 6th. A Grey Heron, 14 Greylags and two Glaucous Gulls featured on 12th, when 5000 Great Black-backed and 1500 Herring Gulls sought shelter on the isle. Two Mistle Thrushes on 22nd provided the highlight of a month which ended with an Iceland Gull and a Little Auk on 25th, a Peregrine and a Glaucous Gull on 27th, and ten Purple Sandpipers and 14 Lapwings on 31st.

February

If January's weather had been relatively tame, then that in February made up for it. Freezing northerly winds and heavy snowfalls from 6th, saw roads blocked by drifts and the Observatory without heating and hot water for several days. Sightings of note early in the month included seven Woodcocks on 2nd, 46 Greylags on 7th, a Jack Snipe and ten Snow Buntings on 8th plus a Little Auk on 9th. Upto two Glaucous and two Iceland Gulls were regular around this time. Following the thaw on 11th-12th, a steady wader passage was evident through to the month's end including 115 Turnstones on 16th, 15 Lapwings on 26th and a peak of 75 Oystercatchers on 25th when a Water Rail and 30 Common Gulls were also seen. Calm conditions on 24th encouraged a widespread arrival of Guillemots and Razorbills ashore; a suggestion that Spring was not too far away.

March

The first two weeks of March saw unsettled weather dominated by Atlantic depressions, during which period, the occasional Grey Heron and Long-tailed

Duck provided the main points of interest. Three Glaucous Gulls and a Little Auk were seen at South Light on 3rd. On 13th however, the wind switched to a south-east orientation with immediate effect. A Coot arrived in North Haven and stayed until April 1st, while a Tufted Duck was on Golden Water and 20 Song Thrushes and 50 Blackbirds appeared. The 14th featured Fair Isle's earliest ever Grey Wagtail, plus White and Pied Wagtails, a Bar-tailed Godwit, 15 Golden Plovers, 50 Lapwings, four Dunlins, 20 Curlews, four Wood Pigeons, two Rooks and a Carrion Crow. Further observations over the next few days included a Dunnock on 16th, two Stonechats, a Mistle Thrush, a Siskin and 30 Ringed Plovers on 17th, and an early Wheatear and a Goldcrest on 18th. A peak of 600 Skylarks on 19th was followed by a Red-throated Diver and a Glaucous Gull on 22nd. The first two Puffins were off Greenholm on 24th when two Bramblings were a further addition to the year list. More Spring arrivals included a Shelduck and a Lesser Black-backed Gull on 26th, plus a Stonechat and the first Bonxie on 27th. The first of two island Tystie censuses yielded 183 summer-plumaged individuals on 28th when the first Chiffchaff was at Charlie's Trees. The 29th produced a Stock Dove, a Kestrel, a Short-eared Owl and a Glaucous Gull, while the month closed with peaks of 150 Oystercatchers, 13 Black-headed Gulls, 15 Goldcrests, an early Scandinavian Rock Pipit, as well as Puffins ashore and daily sightings of Wheatears.

April

The opening days of April saw light south-east winds which encouraged an early arrival of several migrants. The opening day of the month produced the year's first Reed Bunting followed by three Jackdaws next day. The 3rd was most notable for Fair Isle's earliest ever (by a day) Swallow near South Light, while 32 Lapwings, 40 Wheatears, two Black Redstarts and nine Chiffchaffs constituted a marked influx. An early Goldfinch on 5th was joined by a second, an early Willow Warbler and a second Swallow next day, followed by the month's only Collared Dove on 7th. A far more significant arrival on the latter date was that of Deryk and Hollie – the new Warden and Administrator. A Shorelark on Meoness on 11th was the first in an excellent Spring for the species, while a Ring Ouzel and a Scandinavian Rock Pipit also featured that day. Eighty Common Gulls, 33 Song Thrushes and five Rooks were counted on 12th before a period of western-quarter winds with wintry showers ensured a quiet week, punctuated by a Green Sandpiper on 17th and five Shorelarks near the Plantation next day.

The season's second Tystie census yielded 191 breeding individuals on 20th. Easterly winds from this time yielded further small influxes until the month's end, commencing with a Goldfinch and a Yellowhammer on 21st. Notable observations on 22nd included a Coot in Steensi Geo, singles of Black-tailed Godwit, Tufted Duck and Kestrel, as well as 85 Common Gulls, 25 Lesser Black-backed Gulls and 50 Bramblings. The influx continued next day when an Iceland Gull, six Wood Pigeons, 70 Robins, 165 Wheatears, a Tree Pipit, nine Willow Warblers,

three Goldfinches and five Reed Buntings were seen. A number of new arrivals were noted each day thereafter. Two Moorhens and 26 Siskins on 24th were followed by two Whimbrels and four more Shorelarks on Meoness next day. The 28th marked the return of the first Arctic Tern and Redstart, while the final day of the month witnessed an influx of 104 Golden Plovers and 105 Turnstones as well as two Black Redstarts and the first Pied Flycatcher of the year.

May

The arrival of May always raises birders' expectations and the month kicked off in superb style. Following a brief spell of north-west winds, a fine Lesser Yellowlegs was discovered commuting between Golden Water and Easter Lothar Water, where it remained until the 4th. Warm, anticyclonic conditions dominated for the first three weeks and consequently winds rarely lacked an easterly component.

A Buzzard on 2nd increased to a record day count of three, together over Lower Station, next day when the Spring's third Coot was at Dutfield and the first House Martins were seen. The 4th produced a Marsh Harrier at Da Water and a mobile Hoopoe around Hoini, when Common Sandpiper, Long-eared Owl and Whitethroat represented other additions to the year. The ideal conditions yielded an impressive three Short-toed Larks on 5th, comprising one at Shirva and two near Barkland – all of which remained till 8th. A Hen Harrier over Pund, three Common Terns, Whinchat, Sedge Warbler, three Lesser Whitethroats and a Lapland Bunting were all new for the year. After a quiet 6th, a Wood Sandpiper began a three-day stay at Walli Burn on 7th. The following day a further influx of migrants included; a Buzzard, two Cuckoos, 30 Tree Pipits, 15 Redstarts, 40 Willow Warblers, 45 Reed Buntings plus a Wood Warbler and a singing male Bluethroat – which remained at the Observatory till 17th.

With the encouraging airflow still in place, the 9th produced a Pintail, a Pomarine Skua off South Light, Wryneck, Grey-headed Wagtail, Goldfinch and an elusive Nightingale species at Midway. Low cloud and drizzle grounded a record 77 Whimbrel on 10th when a Pochard flew over, while new finds next day included a Corncrake at Pund, a Swift and a total of 20 Whinchats.

Passage stepped up a gear on 12th-13th, though the added spice of an official rarity remained an obvious absentee. The highlights of the 12th were a record trip of ten Dotterels on Brecks o' Busta and a Short-toed Lark at Skerryholm, until 16th, supported by a pair of Gadwall at South Harbour, a Shorelark near the Plantation and a Hen Harrier on the hill. One hundred Barnacle Geese, a Shelduck, 40 Black-headed and 120 Common Gulls also passed through. The following day (13th) was classic Spring birding; a significant arrival of common migrants included the earliest ever Icterine Warbler at Gilly Burn, a male Ortolan at Leogh, plus peaks of 15 Common Sandpipers, a record ten Cuckoos, a Wryneck, 100 Tree Pipits, 25 Redstarts, three Grasshopper Warblers, ten Sedge Warblers, 90 Willow Warblers,

70 Pied Flycatchers, a Goldfinch and 65 Reed Buntings. The Dotterels, Gadwalls and Hen Harrier all remained too.

Save for an unseasonal Ruff and a fly-over Pomarine Skua, a comparatively quiet two days followed as the rarity drought continued. The 16th looked to be continuing in the same vein until . . . Britain's eighth Calandra Lark was discovered on the ploughed rig at Skerryholm in the afternoon, providing one of the high points of the year. The major rarity had arrived on a seemingly quiet day – classic Fair Isle! It roosted at Setter and was still present there at dawn next morning, although it departed soon afterwards. On 17th, a band of unsuccessful would-be admirers had to be content with a Corncrake at Pund and two male Ortolans residing at Quoy. Six Sanderlings and another Goldfinch were new arrivals on 18th, while one of the original Dotterels remained at Leogh. A smart male Rustic Bunting began an eight-day stay at the Observatory on 19th, when the fifth Short-toed Lark of the Spring was at Setter. Also, the first Quail and Red-backed Shrike of the year plus a Red-breasted Merganser, a Wryneck, two Bluethroats and two Icterine Warblers were recorded that day. The 20th marked the last day of the ideal weather conditions and delivered a Red-breasted Flycatcher in the Plantation as well as the first two Reed Warblers and last Shorelark and Snow Bunting of the Spring. Two Pink-footed and 28 Barnacle Geese also passed through that day, to be followed by a Bluethroat on 21st.

The final ten days of the month saw wet and changeable weather, with winds predominantly from the western quarter ensuring a relatively quiet time. There were few arrivals of note during this period before the 27th, when another Nightingale species defied identification, a singing male Lapland Bunting was on Burrashield, four Red-backed Shrikes and an adult Long-tailed Skua were seen. Six Tufted Ducks arrived on 28th. The situation continued to improve on 29th when a Rustic Bunting was at Setter, presumably the same Long-tailed Skua was at Springfield and a Wood Sandpiper plus three Black-tailed Godwits were noted. A Quail, a Grey Plover, twenty Spotted Flycatchers and a Bluethroat were logged on 30th. May closed with the anticipated first Common Rosefinch of the year as well as five Collared Doves and a late Jackdaw. With the wind swinging to the east, would Fair Isle enjoy a productive late Spring period?

June

With light north-easterlies in place, another Common Rosefinch arrived on 1st with the second Rustic Bunting, two Quails, a Bluethroat and a Red-backed Shrike remaining from May. The two days that followed encompassed all of Fair Isle's magical qualities: Under warm, clear skies on 2nd, a singing Blyth's Reed Warbler was found at Barkland prior to lunch, while a Red-throated Pipit was seen at both Quoy and Setter in the afternoon and was reported till 4th. Other arrivals that day included, both Marsh and Reed Warblers, a Grey Wagtail, a Ring Ouzel and 40 Spotted Flycatchers. The 3rd provided a most unexpected splash of colour when a

male Yellow-rumped Warbler was discovered at Smirri Geo; it was to remain for a further two days, latterly favouring the area around Stackhoull. The Blyth's Reed was still at the Observatory, but a Wood Warbler was new. A Sandwich Tern on 4th was an addition for the year, while the Blyth's Reed Warbler had been replaced by a Marsh Warbler at the Observatory and Wood Warblers had increased to two. On 5th, a Rustic Bunting paused briefly at Stackhoull. A drake Goosander which graced South Harbour from 6th to 9th proved to be the only sighting of the year. A Common Rosefinch was seen on 7th, followed by a Pomarine Skua from the 'Good Shepherd' next day, as cool and wet weather began to predominate during the mid month period. The Spring's fourth Rustic Bunting was trapped in the Gully on 9th, remaining till 12th, and a Long-tailed Skua flew past the Observatory on 10th.

A spell of southerly winds induced the arrival of a late Dotterel on 13th and Fair Isle's third ever Spring Curlew Sandpiper, 27 Lapwings, 17 Collared Doves and a Red-backed Shrike next day. A fine adult Hobby and a late Pied Flycatcher were seen next day. A quiet week followed, prior to the onset of dry and warm weather with south-easterly winds in the final week. For most, the non-avian highlight of the year was a pod of nine Killer Whales on the evening of 21st, initially seen from the Observatory dinner table. Two species of scarce raptor were seen; a Honey Buzzard flew out to sea over Gunnawark on 22nd, while two days later an Osprey passed over the Observatory. Crossbills flew over on 22nd and 23rd. A Marsh Warbler on 25th was eclipsed by potentially the rarest bird of the year, a Lesser Whitethroat of the 'Desert' race *margelanica*, trapped at the Observatory – probably the first ever example of its kind in Britain. It remained till 27th, when a Common Rosefinch, Fieldfare and Redwing were also seen. As June gave way to July, the warm weather continued and it became clear that Fair Isle's seabirds were enjoying, on the whole, a more productive season than in the previous year. A census of the island's Guillemot population during the month revealed 39,257 attendant adults.

July

July was dominated by the continued monitoring of the island's seabird populations. The dry and sunny conditions up until the 20th helped to ensure that Kittiwakes experienced their highest breeding productivity since monitoring began in 1986. On the other hand, Shags were to experience their worst breeding success since 1990.

On the migrant front, the first week of the month saw unseasonal Fieldfare, Redwing and Lesser Whitethroat, while a first-summer Hobby was seen on 9th. Return wader passage commenced at this time with a Green Sandpiper on 9th and a Greenshank next day. The Gully attracted a Marsh Warbler on 11th and a Pochard briefly graced Field Pond on 17th. Occasional fly-over Crossbills became a feature of the Summer weeks, while the excellent Goldfinch year continued with a small pulse of birds mid-month, including four on 19th. The traditional tape-luring of

Storm Petrels began mid-month; a record fourteen Leach's Petrels were trapped during this activity and it is thought likely that the species breeds on the island. Less predictable, was the juvenile Black Redstart, also caught during a 'Stormie session', on 29th!

August

Clear, warm skies with a south-east wind on the opening day ensured a bright start to the month; the most notable sighting being a very early Barred Warbler, supported by four Grey Herons, five Teals, two Fieldfares and a Wood Pigeon. The wind retained an easterly component until 8th inducing a small arrival of up to two each of Wood Warbler, Reed Warbler and Whitethroat, as well as an early Garden Warbler on 3rd, a Lesser Redpoll on 8th-9th and a sprinkling of Willow Warblers. Throughout the period, a small but steady passage of waders was evident including single Ruffs on 4th and 6th, before the weather became unsettled until mid-month. The 15th witnessed a fresh small influx including two Barred Warblers and three Reed Warblers, both of which became a daily feature of the log as warm anti-cyclonic conditions set in for several days. A switch in wind to a moderate north-easterly on 18th resulted in an arrival of 70 Willow Warblers, 20 Garden Warblers, an early Grasshopper Warbler and the year's only Little Stint at Field. A week of unproductive north-westerlies followed; the highlights provided by seven Sooty Shearwaters on 19th and four more next day. The number of Willow Warblers gradually dwindled to ten by 24th, when a Common Rosefinch and a Spotted Flycatcher appeared.

The onset of a moderate easterly produced an excellent day's birding on 25th, the highlight of which was an elusive Yellow-breasted Bunting, initially at Hjukni Geo. Equally significant in terms of Fair Isle status was an early Slavonian Grebe in South Harbour. A broad variety of species arrived on the day including five Wigeon, 13 Teal, 45 Ringed Plovers, 90 Golden Plovers, four Bar-tailed Godwits, 90 Redshank, 600 Meadow Pipits and 70 alba Wagtails. A remarkable total of 12 Wood Warblers was supported by 120 Willow Warblers, 18 Garden Warblers, five Pied Flycatchers, four Siskins and 23 Crossbills, while Barred Warblers increased to three and Common Rosefinches to two. A subtle Marsh Warbler trapped at the Observatory remained into September.

New arrivals next day included three Wrynecks, a Red-backed Shrike, three Tree Pipits, two flava Wagtails, five Redstarts, 12 Whinchats and 13 Fieldfares, while Garden Warblers and Reed Warblers increased to 65 and seven respectively. The mobile Yellow-breasted Bunting was relocated, being seen at various localities till 28th.

A quiet 27th was followed next day by Fair Isle's twelfth Little Gull flying past Bunness. While birders searched in vain for the elusive bunting on 29th, a much-predicted Greenish Warbler was trapped in Single Dyke. Barred Warblers reached

a peak of six that day and a Manx Shearwater passed Buness. A small influx of ducks on 30th comprised 20 Wigeon, 11 Teal, a Pintail and three Tufted Ducks, along with a Grasshopper Warbler, 11 Siskins, two Common Rosefinches and the first two Goldcrests but final Wood Warbler of the autumn. The Greenish Warbler was seen briefly on Buness and a Curlew Sandpiper was at North Haven. The month closed with the autumn's first Lapland Bunting on Lerness.

September

The first day of September saw two Sandwich Terns seeking shelter in Hesti Geo as heavy rain and a strong south-westerly made birding difficult. The unsettled, though generally warm, conditions with variable winds predominated until mid-month. August's Marsh Warbler and Red-backed Shrike remained till 2nd and 3rd respectively, while one to three Barred Warblers were seen most days. Upto eight Crossbills could be seen feeding on thrift at Wirvie during the first week, while a Corncrake was seen on 2nd, followed by two Common Rosefinches on 3rd. The westerly airstream delivered the first of three Pectoral Sandpipers to Easter Lothar on 4th-5th while a Pochard was noted till 7th. Excitement on the 5th was centred on Bullock Holes where an Arctic Warbler performed well in the evening. A second Pectoral Sandpiper visited Easter Lothar on 7th weather conditions still in place, nobody would have predicted the dramatic events of the 9th when a new species was added to the Fair Isle list – a Kingfisher, fishing the rock pools at South Light! Seen by only a fortunate few, possibly the same bird was discovered on Shetland several days later. Two Manx Shearwaters and 120 Lesser Black-backed Gulls on 10th were followed by a third Pectoral Sandpiper, frequenting Buness on 11th-14th as the wind switched south-east. New sightings on 12th included a Buzzard, a Corncrake, a Curlew Sandpiper, two Black-tailed Godwits, 950 Meadow Pipits, three Mealy Redpolls, five Lapland Buntings and an Ortolan. An enjoyable 13th followed, with two additions for the year in the shape of a Great Snipe briefly near Troila Geo and a fly-by Golden Oriole at Shirva. A new Common Rosefinch began a fortnight stay and a Grey Wagtail was noted. The first Wryneck of the Autumn was noted on 14th when an Ortolan was seen again. A quiet 15th was followed by an interesting 16th when presumably the same Great Snipe was relocated near Pund, a Hawfinch was trapped at the Plantation, and a Wryneck and a Crossbill performed well. The autumn feel increased again next day with the first Yellow-browed Warbler, plus a Bluethroat, a fly-over Osprey and an influx of 60 Dunlin, eight Common Sandpipers, 12 Redstarts, 20 Whinchats, 20 Garden Warblers, 30 Willow Warblers and 50 Pied Flycatchers on a day which saw the birth of Fyntan Shaw. The 18th witnessed the arrival of the new baby to Fair Isle, along with a Corncrake, three Grasshopper Warblers and probably a different Hawfinch at North Light. A quiet day followed, but crucially the wind switched to a moderate easterly. A Dotterel, a Great Spotted Woodpecker, a Short-eared Owl and a Black Redstart all remained for several days from 20th, before visiting birders' expectations began to be realised next day.

A productive final ten days to the month commenced with a Citrine Wagtail at Pund on a wet 21st when a peak of 11 Reed Warblers was noted. The 22nd witnessed a classic fall of common migrants incorporating 60 Tree Pipits, 200 Robins, 60 Redstarts, 30 Whinchats, 100 Wheatears, ten Whitethroats, 300 Blackcaps, 60 Willow Warblers, 40 Goldcrests, ten Spotted Flycatchers, 40 Chaffinches and 120 Siskins. The highlights were provided by a Paddyfield Warbler trapped in the Gully, a fly-over Red-throated Pipit, a Shorelark, two Red-breasted Flycatchers and two Yellow-browed Warblers. The Paddyfield remained on 23rd but attention then switched to a juvenile Rose-coloured Starling at Tarryfield (which remained on the isle into October), and then to an intriguing flycatcher trapped in the Plantation. This bird showed many characteristics of a first-winter Collared, but was considered to possibly be a Pied-Collared hybrid. Five Black-tailed Godwits and a Linnet posed slightly less of an identification challenge.

A comparatively quiet two days followed as the wind became light and variable, but a second Ortolan joined the original on 24th while two new Barred Warblers, a Common Rosefinch and a late Arctic Skua were unearthed on 25th. Up to 50 Chaffinches, 30 Bramblings and four Crossbills were present at this time. The excitement increased once more on 26th when an 'acro' trapped at the Observatory prior to lunch, proved to be the second Blyth's Reed Warbler of the year. After release, it afforded good views on South Haven beach till 29th. A Buzzard drifted over as the warbler was released. A pronounced arrival of eight Yellow-browed Warblers was the focal point of the 30th when three Red-breasted Flycatchers, a Red-backed Shrike, two Turtle Doves and two Curlew Sandpipers were also new. Remarkably, another Blyth's Reed Warbler was discovered on 28th, this time on the beach at Wirvie. The day also saw an influx of 70 Snow Buntings and 70 Greylags, the first Pink-footed Goose and Long-tailed Duck of the autumn, the capture of a *blythii* Lesser Whitethroat, and the final Barred Warbler of the year. Nine Sooty Shearwaters passed offshore on 29th.

September closed with Fair Isle's fifth Black-throated Diver, three Great Northern Divers and a Slavonian Grebe in the South Light area. The autumn's second Yellow-breasted Bunting near Springfield was more widely appreciated. The Rose-coloured Starling had moved to Meoness while seven Yellow-browed Warblers, a Red-breasted Flycatcher and a Bluethroat were also on show.

October

A series of Atlantic depressions ensured a very unsettled, wet and windy opening half to the month. Consequently, birding highlights were few and far between during the opening fortnight. September's Rose-coloured Starling and Yellow-breasted Bunting were present till 1st, while the Ortolan remained one day longer. Six Sooty Shearwaters were seen offshore between 1st and 3rd. The last Curlew Sandpiper and Ruff were seen on 4th when the first eight Whooper Swans arrived

from the North. An adult Glaucous Gull was noted on 4th and 8th, while a Richard's Pipit at Bull's Park on 6th represented a somewhat belated addition to the year list. Lapland Buntings reached a peak monthly count of ten during which time upto three Yellow-browed Warblers were regular. Twenty-two Pink-footed Geese paused for a day on 11th. A marked arrival of 23 Long-tailed Ducks on 14th could not prepare those lucky enough to be on the isle for what was to be superb late Autumn birding on 15th and 16th, as high pressure over Scandinavia brought drier conditions with an east to south-east wind. The 15th produced the most unexpected prize of the autumn – a Harlequin Duck off South Harbour. One can only assume it left its Arctic waters in the movement involving its long-tailed cousin. An amazing three Pallas's Warblers, a true Fair Isle rarity, lit up the Gully, Leogh and Dronger. The dramatic arrival of quality birds on 15th also included a brief Rustic Bunting, an Ortolan, a Richard's Pipit (till 18th), a Bluethroat, 15 Chiffchaffs including several *tristis* types, a Common Rosefinch, five Goldfinches and the first Bullfinch. A group of 24 Barnacle Geese began a ten-day stay and a count of 23 Mallard was notable, as was the fourth Pochard of the year. However, alongside the rarities, it was the arrival of a dozen Great Spotted Woodpeckers that was most impressive.

The following day was equally eventful with a fall of thrushes rendering the isle alive with at least 3000 Redwings, 2000 Fieldfares, 550 Blackbirds and 50 Song Thrushes. The day's highlight was a typically confiding Lanceolated Warbler near Barkland, with further quality provided by a Little Bunting at Field, a Great Grey Shrike at Da Water, plus a Stock Dove and a Greenland Redpoll. The latter remained with a small group of Mealies till 26th. Goldfinches increased to an exceptional eleven, Bramblings to 50, and the first two returning Goldeneyes had replaced the Harlequin. The Little Bunting was still present on 17th when another Great Grey Shrike spent the day at Lower Station and a second Richard's Pipit was noted. Jack Snipe reached a peak of 16 while 70 Blackcaps, six Ring Ouzels, a Grey Wagtail and the first Greenfinches of the Autumn were noteworthy. The ideal weather conditions delivered new rarities on 18th in the shape of another Lanceolated Warbler, briefly at Midway, and an Arctic Redpoll that joined the Setter Redpoll flock. Two Little Auks were seen from the 'Good Shepherd'. The major event on 19th was the discovery of two Great Tits at Pund and Wirvie, the first records since 1994, while Goldcrests increased to 70 and nine Short-eared Owls resided at Pund. The last two Great Spotted Woodpeckers remained till 21st while a Bullfinch was to be the first of a notable influx over the forthcoming period. A third Great Tit and a second Arctic Redpoll, which remained till 26th, were found next day as four unidentified Crossbills paused on Burrasta. The previous day's Bullfinch had increased to 15. A Shorelark at North Light from 21st into November brought back memories of Spring, as the continuing south-east wind approached gale force.

The difficult conditions resulted in few discoveries of note over the next three days,

before calmer conditions on 25th revealed the presence of 100 Blackcaps, four Sparrowhawks and the year's only Waxwing at Haa. The Short-eared Owl 'flock' at Pund reached a peak of eleven birds. The 26th was a day of obvious bird movement, dominated by 1000 Greylags and 45 Whooper Swans. Bullfinches had built up to an impressive peak of 20, while late migrants included a Moorhen, a Redstart (till 30th), a Wheatear and a Red-breasted Flycatcher. The remainder of October was dominated by Atlantic depressions with strong south-west winds; a Glaucous Gull and a late Bluethroat on 29th providing the highlights.

November

The unsettled conditions that saw out October continued into the first half of November. The opening day saw the last two Dunlins of the year, followed next day by 26 Pink-footed Geese and a Fair Isle record 54 Whooper Swans as the showers turned wintry. Five Greenfinches remained till 5th, while five Goldfinches, with one next day, were the last in an excellent year. The 3rd also produced late Grey Wagtail and Ring Ouzel, 85 Greylags, a Moorhen, and the year's final records of Long-tailed Duck and Reed Bunting. As autumn passage neared a conclusion and coverage became less intensive, so noteworthy sightings were limited. Two White-fronted Geese on 7th represented the final addition to the year list. A Sparrowhawk and a Jack Snipe featured on 8th, while two days later saw the final two Dunnocks, and 260 Snow Buntings. After the final two Blackcaps were seen on 13th, a small influx next day comprised 50 Blackbirds, 30 Fieldfares, 100 Redwings, eight Redpolls and the final Chiffchaff. The boat crossing to Shetland yielded six Little Auks on 17th. The last Bullfinch, a charismatic feature of the late autumn period, was noted on 25th, while November closed with the last Greenfinch sighting of the Millennium.

December

With minimal coverage, there were few sightings of note. A family party of Whooper Swans remained for most of the month, and one juvenile was somehow left behind when they departed, and stayed into the year 2000. Singles of Cormorant, Grey Heron, Golden Plover and Water Rail were seen. Counts of four Curlew, 20 Redshank, 25 Turnstone and two Purple Sandpipers were the coastal wader highlights. A couple of Blackbirds and a Fieldfare braved the elements, and the bird of the month was a Little Auk in North Haven on the final day of the year and the Millennium.

SYSTEMATIC LIST 1999

Deryk Shaw

Status Categories

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

Breeding Categories

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

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

RED-THROATED DIVER *Gavia stellata*

Regular migrant, mainly late spring and autumn

The first sightings were of singles on 22nd and 30th March. Spring records consisted of singles on 27th, 31st May, 8th June and two birds on 14th June. Summer sightings were of one on 3rd July and two on 15th August. There were sporadic autumn records, mainly of singles but three were seen on September 25th and 29th.

BLACK-THROATED DIVER *Gavia arctica*

Vagrant; four previous records

An adult was seen from the South Light on September 30th. Only the fifth island record.

GREAT NORTHERN DIVER *Gavia immer*

Scarce autumn migrant

In spring, one flew over the observatory on June 12th. Autumn records were comprised of four singles between September 27th and October 5th with three on September 30th.

SLAVONIAN GREBE *Podiceps auritus*

Scarce autumn migrant

Two records. The earliest ever autumn record was one in South Harbour on August 25th and there was another there on September 30th.

FULMAR *Fulmarus glacialis*

Resident; breeds in large numbers

Fulmars decreased at monitoring plots for the third successive year. There was a 10% drop in the number of occupied nests from 1998 and productivity was also low at 0.34 chicks fledged per occupied site. Dark phase “blue” fulmars were noted occasionally throughout the year.

SOOTY SHEARWATER *Puffinus griseus*

Frequent autumn migrant

One was seen during the Crossing on July 17th. Seven were reported from Bunes on August 19th. Ones and twos were then seen regularly until October 3rd with a peak of nine on September 29th. The last were two late birds seen on October 22nd from South Light.

MANX SHEARWATER *Puffinus puffinus*

Scarce autumn migrant, rare in spring

One was seen from the Crossing on July 17th. A single on August 29th and two on September 10th, seen on seawatches, were the only other records.

STORM PETREL *Hydrobates pelagicus*

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

Good numbers appeared to be in the Fair Isle area during 1999, resulting in a record number being trapped. The first sightings were, as usual, from the Crossing with 60 on June 8th, 25 on 11th and smaller numbers until July 7th when 200 birds were seen. Mist-netting sessions then started near the observatory and over 1000 had been trapped by the month's end. A further 1500 were ringed in August. Small numbers were trapped in September. The last bird was a sighting on October 13th from the Crossing.

LEACH'S PETREL *Oceanodroma leucorhoa*

Scarce migrant, summer and early autumn

As with the previous species, a record number were trapped in 1999 during Storm Petrel netting sessions. The first were two on July 11th. One individual would fly around the net calling on nearly every Storm Petrel netting session and two-three birds could be seen/heard on many nights with a total of four on 28th and 30th July. The last was during the final netting session on September 24th. A total of 14 birds were trapped and ringed.

GANNET *Sula bassana*

Breeds in large numbers, seen offshore all year

The breeding population continues to grow, although at a slower rate in the last three years. A total of 1,123 occupied nests is only a 0.4% increase on last year and 3% up on 1996 – a small rise compared to an average annual increase of 7.5% in the last ten years as a whole. As in 1997 a pair nested on Sheep Rock. A large number of nests were lost in the May storms resulting in the lowest overall productivity at monitoring plots since 1991. An average of 0.58 chicks fledged per occupied nest. A handful of pairs re-nested, which meant that a few chicks were still in the nest at the end of October.

CORMORANT *Phalacrocorax carbo*

Frequent autumn migrant, less common in winter and spring

Small numbers (1-2) were seen in the Havens and South Harbour during the first five months and again from late October. There was a high summer record of a single on 24th July before autumn passage commenced in mid-August. Peak counts were of 10 on 23rd August and 12 on 15th September.

SHAG *Phalacrocorax aristotelis*

Resident, breeds in moderate numbers

Continuing the long-term decline in the breeding population, the number of occupied nests at the monitoring plots was the lowest ever and a 29% decrease on 1998. Added to this (as with Gannet), the breeding season was hit by the storms towards the end of May, with many nests lost or abandoned, resulting in the poorest breeding performance at the monitoring plots since the height of the sandeel crash in 1990. An average of 1.08 chicks were fledged per nest, compared to an average of 1.4 for the previous ten years. A whole island census of this species will take place in 2000.

GREY HERON *Ardea cinerea*

Frequent autumn migrant, less common in winter/spring

Recorded in every month except July. There were intermittent sightings of singles during the winter at both ends of the year. Spring passage was very light, confined to the last week of April, with a maximum of four on 25th. Autumn sightings were more frequent from 1st August-24th October, with a maximum count of ten in South Harbour on 21st September.

WHOOPEE SWAN *Cygnus cygnus*

Frequent autumn migrant, scarce in spring

Surprisingly there were no spring records. The first of the autumn were eight on the 4th October. There were sightings of single figures on a further six dates during the month and a then record autumn count of 45 on 26th. November

records too were comprised of mainly single figure counts except for a record count of 54 on 2nd. A family party of four stayed into December and a solitary juvenile overwintered.

PINK-FOOTED GOOSE *Anser brachyrhynchus*

Frequent autumn migrant, scarce in spring

A single bird was with Greylags on 22nd April. Two pairs lingered for a week each in May. A very poor autumn passage commenced on 28th September and birds were recorded on just 14 dates (with a total of 71 bird days) until 7th November. Counts exceeded six just twice: 22 on 11th October and 26 on 2nd November.

WHITE-FRONTED GOOSE *Anser albifrons*

Scarce autumn migrant

One record, of two adults of the Greenland race (*Anser albifrons flavirostris*) with Pinkfeet on 7th November.

GREYLAG GOOSE *Anser anser*

Common spring and autumn migrant

The early part of the year saw two birds overwintering from 1998, joined momentarily by two others on 5th January. A party of 12 flew north on 12th January. Forty six arrived on 7th February and eight remained next day. Small numbers (maximum eight) were seen during March and throughout April until 12th May, involving a total of about 25 birds. A solitary bird remained (an island resident from 1995) and was visited by four others on 27th May, eight on 20th June and three from 23rd-26th August. Eight on 20th September were perhaps the first of the autumn migrants followed by 70 on 28th and 170 the next day. Birds were recorded daily throughout October, mainly in tens, however, there were 200 on 9th and a movement of 1,000 on 26th. Flocks passed through on nine dates in November, the largest being 85 on 3rd and the last being 30 on 29th.

BARNACLE GOOSE *Branta leucopsis*

Frequent autumn migrant

Spring passage consisted of 100 on 12th May, 28 on 20th and 36 on 21st. Singles on 2nd, 6th and 8th-11th June probably relate to two birds. Autumn passage commenced with seven flying south on 19th September and 22 the following day. There were no further records until a single arrived on 3rd October, which became 33 on 11th. A party of 24 spent 10 days on the Skadan mid-month and the last was a singleton on 30th October.

SHELDUCK *Tadorna tadorna*

Scarce spring migrant, rare in autumn

The sole records were of singles on 26th March and 12th May.

WIGEON *Anas penelope*

Frequent spring and autumn migrant, scarce in winter

Spring records involved single males on 6th and 9th March, seven on 14th and five on 17th March. The occasional single or pair were seen most days in April until mid-May. There were two June and two July records. The first birds of the autumn were two on 24th August and birds were recorded daily throughout September and October, peaking in late September. Maximum counts were 45 on 25th September when a further 75 flew south and 81 the following day.

TEAL *Anas crecca*

Frequent spring and autumn migrant, scarce in winter

A single bird was recorded in January. Spring passage was from 13th March until 17th June, mainly involving counts of one to five, however, 13 were recorded on 25th April. A party of five were seen on 1st August. Main autumn passage commenced on 15th August with single figure counts until the second week of September with peak counts of 45 on 9th, 40 on 17th, 21st and 24th. Numbers tailed off through October with the last four on 30th.

GADWALL *Anas strepera*

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

A pair spent 12th-13th May on Barkland sewage.

MALLARD *Anas platyrhynchos*

Frequent spring and autumn migrant; breeds in small numbers

A party of nine was recorded on 23rd-25th January. The resident five birds were joined occasionally by similar numbers throughout April. Nesting was again attempted by two pairs and after initial failures, two broods of two and six were fledged. Small numbers were seen throughout the autumn, peaking at 23 on 15th October.

PINTAIL *Anas acuta*

Scarce spring and autumn migrant

A female frequented the South Light area from 9th-12th May. Singles were seen flying north on 30th August and 1st September. A female on 12th September was replaced by a male on 16th until 26th, which was joined by a pair from 19th-25th September.

POCHARD *Aythya ferina*

Rare migrant; 48 previous records (61 individuals)

Four records. A female was seen briefly on Field Pond on 10th May. A male was there on 17th July. A female spent 4th-7th September on Vaadal Reservoir and the final bird was one on 15th October.

TUFTED DUCK *Aythya fuligula*

Scarce spring migrant, rare in autumn

A male was on Field and Chalet ponds 13th-14th March and another male on 22nd April. Early May saw a pair there whilst the end of the month produced a maximum of six birds. There was a midsummer record of a single in early July 2nd-4th. Three birds on 30th August were the only records of the autumn apart from 1-2 near the end of September, last seen on 3rd October.

EIDER *Somateria mollissima*

Resident, breeds in small numbers

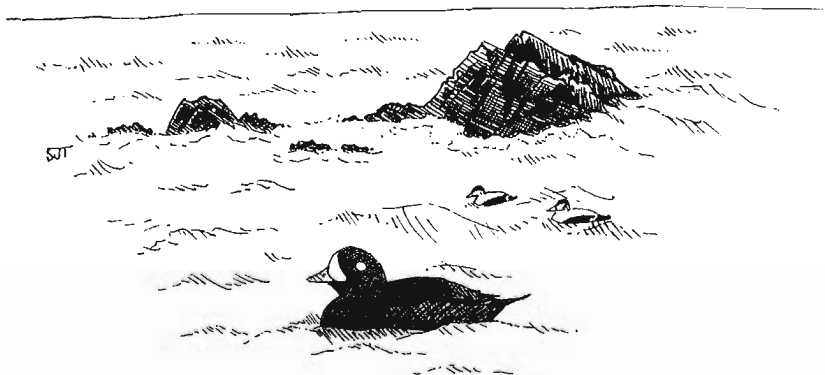
Present offshore all year. A whole island count in late March whilst carrying out the Tystie census gave a total of 340 birds. The first young were a brood of six seen in North Haven on 10th June. Only a handful of other broods were seen whilst several predated nests were found.

HARLEQUIN DUCK *Histrionicus histrionicus*

Vagrant; One previous record

On 15th October a (probable immature) male was seen briefly from Meoness flying away, before it was relocated at South Light later that day off Da Skerry. Unfortunately it did not stay. This is the second record for the isle, the first being a pair which frequented Mavers Geo from 11th January-2nd February 1965.

Accepted by BBRC



Harlequin Duck (Steve Turner)

LONG-TAILED DUCK *Clangula hyemalis*

Frequent autumn migrant, less common in spring

Spring records were of two females on 2nd March, a male on 4th March and single females on 20th March and 19th April. Autumn records were from 28th September and most days in October until the last on 3rd November. Counts were mainly of 1-3 birds, however, 23 were recorded on 14th October, with 19 still present on 16th.

COMMON SCOTER *Melanitta nigra*

Scarce spring, autumn and winter migrant

The only spring records comprised a male in the Havens from 6th-17th May, which was joined by a female on 12th May, and a pair on 9th June. Single males were noted on 28th June and 22nd July.

GOLDENEYE *Bucephala clangula*

Regular winter, spring and autumn migrant

The only records from the early part of the year were of two on January 2nd which were followed by a long staying female which frequented Furse from 2nd February-3rd April. In the autumn, birds were noted from 16th Oct-25th November, mainly of ones or twos, with three on 14th November.

RED-BREASTED MERGANSER *Mergus serrator*

Frequent spring and autumn migrant

Recorded in every month except February and August. Sporadic records of mainly ones and twos, except for five on 3rd October, increasing to seven on 4th October.

GOOSANDER *Mergus merganser*

Rare migrant in winter, spring and late autumn

A male which frequented South Harbour from 6th-9th June was the only record.

HONEY BUZZARD *Pernis apivorus*

Vagrant; 36 previous records

One on 22nd June was flushed off the west cliffs and headed towards Foula. This is the same date as the only record last year.

MARSH HARRIER *Circus aeruginosus*

Vagrant; 25 previous records

A second summer male floated around the isle on 4th May.

HEN HARRIER *Circus cyaneus*

Scarce spring and autumn migrant

A ringtail on 5th May was followed by another on 12th-13th May.

SPARROWHAWK *Accipiter nisus*

Regular spring and autumn migrant

The first of the spring was on 30th March. There were no further records until 20th April and daily passage continued until 16th May, with three on 12th May the maximum count. Autumn passage was in two spells, from 11th-26th September and 16th-26th October (maximum of four on 25th). A late record of a female on 8th November.

BUZZARD *Buteo buteo*

Scarce spring and autumn migrant

A good year involving six or seven birds: one on the 2nd May became a record day count of three together over Ward Hill the following day. Another was seen drifting over Malcolm's Head on 8th May. Autumn records comprised one on 12th –13th September and another on 26th September.

OSPREY *Pandion haliaetus*

Rare spring and autumn migrant; 60 previous records

A typical year. One flew over the Observatory on 24th June and another on 17th September.

KESTREL *Falco tinnunculus*

Regular spring and autumn migrant

Spring passage, involving about 14 birds, was from 29th March-30th June, with a maximum count of three birds on two dates. There was a single mid-summer sighting on 22nd July. Autumn passage comprised daily sightings from 19th August-4th October, with a peak count of five on 18th September, but three and four were seen on several dates.

MERLIN *Falco columbarius*

Regular spring and autumn migrant

Recorded in every month except June and July. Overwintering birds were recorded sporadically through January, February and March, involving perhaps two birds. Birds, (mainly singles), were recorded regularly through April and May, with a maximum count of three birds on two dates. A single on August 9th was the first of the autumn. Birds were seen on eight dates in September and daily in October, peaking at five on 29th October. At least two overwintering birds were seen throughout November and December.

HOBBY *Falco subbuteo*

Vagrant; 36 previous records

An adult on 15th June, sighted near Field, gave excellent views as it sat on a fence post in the evening sunshine. A 1st summer bird on 9th July, which was perhaps seen briefly on 7th flying over the Observatory, is only the second summer record, following one in 1997.

PEREGRINE *Falco peregrinus*

Regular spring and autumn migrant; formerly bred

Sporadic singles seen on a total of just five dates in the first three months, two dates in April and three in May. A male on 11th July and on six dates in August preceded almost daily sightings through September, including three birds on several dates. Occasional singles were seen during October, with the last on 2nd November.

QUAIL *Coturnix coturnix*

Scarce spring and summer visitor; has bred

The first record was one on 19th May with further records of a male singing near Field from 30th May-10th June, which was joined by another on 1st June.

WATER RAIL *Rallus aquaticus*

Regular spring and autumn migrant; occasionally winters

No spring records. Recorded sporadically through September (on six dates) and October (on ten dates), with a maximum of three on 18th October. Two over-wintering birds were seen occasionally during November and December.

CORNCRAKE *Crex crex*

Scarce spring and autumn migrant; formerly bred

In spring a bird frequented the Pund area from 11th-19th May. Autumn records comprised of singles on 2nd, 12-13th and 18th September.

MOORHEN *Gallinula chloropus*

Scarce spring and autumn migrant

Spring records consisted of two on 24th April (one trapped and one which was spectacularly taken by a Bonxie as it flew from the Plantation), and singles on 4th and 6th May. Autumn records comprised one to two birds from 21st October-3rd November.

COOT *Fulica atra*

Rare migrant, autumn, winter and spring

Recorded for the fourth year in succession. In spring one frequented the Havens from 13th March-1st April. One was in Steensi Geo on 22nd April and one on 3rd May was in Dutfield.

OYSTERCATCHER *Haematopus ostralegus*

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

A single was recorded near the end of January and small numbers in early February built up to a maximum monthly count of 75 on 25th. Passage continued through March, April and May with peak monthly counts of 150 on March 30th, 120 on 9th and 30th April and 125 on 2nd May. A number of non-breeders (ranging from 60-80) were present over the summer, in excess to the breeding birds. In autumn, numbers fluctuated around the fifty mark, with a peak of 90 on 8th August, and tailed off toward the end of September until the final bird on 3rd November.

RINGED PLOVER *Charadrius hiaticula*

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

No overwintering birds were noted. The first migrants were nine on 4th March and numbers fluctuated from zero to 39 (on 28th) throughout the rest of March. Birds were seen daily from then on, peaking at 33 on 11th April. About 15 pairs bred. Late passage birds/failed breeders were noted at the end of May/early June with a maximum count of 32 on 30th May. Autumn passage, from mid-August, was unspectacular with a maximum count of 55 on 5th September. Numbers tailed off to single figures by late September and the final bird was seen on 3rd November.

DOTTEREL *Charadrius morinellus*

Scarce spring and autumn migrant

A delightful record trip of ten (five male, five female) spent 12th and 13th May on Brecks o'Busta. Four remained next day and one until 18th May. Another was seen on the airstrip on 13th June. The sole autumn record was of a juvenile, which frequented Burrashield from 20th-26th September.

EURASIAN GOLDEN PLOVER *Pluvialis apricaria*

Common spring and autumn migrant; has bred

Three birds were recorded on 12th January and there were singles on 14th-18th January and 16th February. Spring passage commenced with 15 on 14th March and birds were recorded on a further seven dates until the month's end. Records were almost daily through April and May, peaking at the end of April/early May (maximum 117 on 2nd May). Intermittent single figure counts were received on nine dates in June. The first returning migrants were seven near Pund on 21st July, however records were sparse until 11th August when they became daily, building up to a peak count of 120 a month later (including on 25th August, a bird with white bases to the primaries of both wings). Numbers dwindled from late September until the last on 29th October. A single bird was present from 29th November-2nd December.

GREY PLOVER *Pluvialis squatarola*

Scarce autumn migrant; rare in spring

A single on 30th May was the only spring record. Autumn records fared not much better; a single on 20th September rising to four on 26th and one remaining until 6th October.

LAPWING *Vanellus vanellus*

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

Single figures were counted on 10 days in January/February, except for 14 on 31st January and 15 on 26th February. Flocks of 50 birds on 4th and 14th March

and 30 on 17th March precluded daily counts from 23rd March. Most were of single figures or teens, apart from the maximum count of 62 on 5th April, until only the breeders were left by the end of April. Four pairs bred this year, slightly down on recent years. Late passage birds were noted on several dates in late May, with a maximum count of 15 on 21st. Summer records comprised a flock of 27 on 14th June and single figure counts on five other dates in June/July. Autumn passage was from early August until late October with maximum counts of just 26 on 7th August, 28 on 23rd August and 15th September and 15 on 27th October. The last were two on 3rd November.

KNOT *Calidris canutus*

Frequent autumn migrant, scarce in spring

No spring records. The first of the autumn was on 19th July and one or two were present until the month's end. No further records until mid-August when single figure counts were daily. Passage continued through September, peaking at 28 on 9th and tailing off from mid-September until the last two on 2nd October.

SANDERLING *Calidris alba*

Frequent autumn migrant, less common in spring

Spring records were from 8th-25th May peaking at a record spring count of nine on 19th. Autumn passage began on 14th July with intermittent sightings on a further six dates in the month. Main passage was from the last week in August to mid-September, with maximum counts of ten on 3rd September and nine on 17th September. The final bird was as early as 23rd September.

LITTLE STINT *Calidris minuta*

Regular autumn migrant

In stark contrast to the record numbers seen last year, there was just a lone individual, on 18th August, on the pool near Field.

PECTORAL SANDPIPER *Calidris melanotos*

Vagrant; 14 records of single birds

The 15th-17th records and the first since 1992. One was seen on Easter Lothar from 4th-5th September, whilst one was seen in the south on 7th September. Another frequented Buness from 11th-14th September. All records were considered to be different birds.

CURLEW SANDPIPER *Calidris ferruginea*

Scarce autumn migrant

A winter plumaged individual on 14th June in South Harbour was only the third spring record. Autumn records were from 30th August-4th October involving nine birds.

PURPLE SANDPIPER *Calidris maritima*

Frequent spring and autumn migrant; also over-winters

Recorded throughout the year; peak monthly counts were:

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
10	1	27	25	26	2	30	12	6	8	5	2

DUNLIN *Calidris alpina*

Frequent spring and autumn migrant. Has bred

First spring migrants were four on 14th March. Single figures were noted on a further six dates to the end of April. Records were almost daily through May and the first half of June, mainly of single figure counts, although 11 were counted on 25th May and 14th June. Sporadic records through July before there were daily records once again from August. Numbers slowly increased into September, but counts were still less than 20 until the third week of September when numbers increased substantially. Sixty on 17th reached a maximum of 90 on 22nd. Numbers tailed off rapidly after 29th to single figures once again through October and the last two on 1st November.

RUFF *Philomachus pugnax*

Frequent autumn migrant, rare in spring

Only the 21st spring record was of a female on East Lothar on 15th May. In the autumn, ones or twos were recorded on 11 dates in August. Slightly higher numbers were noted towards the end of September, with a maximum of eight on 25th and the last was one on 4th October.

JACK SNIFE *Lymnocyrtus minimus*

Frequent autumn migrant, less common in winter and spring

Recorded singly each month February-May; There was a mid-winter record on 8th February and spring individuals on 24th March, 29th April and 5th May. The first of the autumn was on 14th September and birds were recorded daily to 27th October.; mainly single figure records except for ten on 21st September, 12 on 27th September and 16 on 17th October. The only late record was of one on 8th November.

COMMON SNIFE *Gallinago gallinago*

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

Present throughout the year. Winter counts were of less than 20. Spring passage was barely noticeable with a maximum of just 31 on 10th April. Autumn figures were also disappointing with a maximum September count of 50 and a count of 80 in October.

GREAT SNIPE *Gallinago media*

Rare autumn migrant

Recorded for the sixth successive year. One was flushed near Troili Geo on 13th September but could not be relocated. What was probably the same bird, was found on 16th in Horsti Brekkers near Pund. It was viewed by many on the ground by the Hill Dyke.

Accepted by BBRC

WOODCOCK *Scolopax rusticola*

Frequent spring and late autumn migrant, occasionally over-winters

One was seen on 27th January and seven were recorded on 2nd February. Sightings were more regular in March, with seven on 13th being the maximum count. Singles were recorded on two dates in April and four in May. The first of the autumn were on 6th October but the main passage in the latter half of the month was very poor with a maximum count of just 16 on 25th.

BLACK-TAILED GODWIT *Limosa limosa*

Scarce spring and autumn migrant

A good run of spring records involving singles on 22nd-23rd, 25th and 30th April and also 2nd, 3rd, 4th-7th May, with a further three together on 29th May. Just two records in autumn: two on 12th September and five on 23rd.

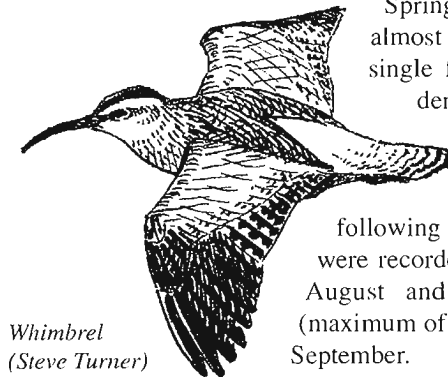
BAR-TAILED GODWIT *Limosa lapponica*

Regular autumn migrant, rare in spring

Following two blank springs, the sole record was of one on 14th March. Autumn sightings started with one on 18th August and they were virtually daily until 3rd October, with peak counts of four on seven dates.

WHIMBREL *Numenius phaeopus*

Frequent spring and autumn migrant



Whimbrel
(Steve Turner)

Spring passage began on the 25th April and was almost daily to 26th June. Counts were mainly of single figures, however, there was an unprecedented passage in the second week of May; an island record count of 77 (including flocks of 36 and 29) was grounded by fog on 10th May, with a further 62 the following day, 47 on 12th and 33 on 13th. Birds were recorded on three dates in July, almost daily in August and the first two weeks of September (maximum of five on three dates). The last was on 20th September.

CURLEW *Numenius arquata*

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

Sightings of four and six birds occurred on two dates in February. Spring passage began mid-March, with 20 on 14th March and 23 on 18th April being the peak counts, but had tailed off by mid-May. Sporadic single figure counts were recorded throughout June and July, briefly boosting the local breeding population, although 16 were seen flying south on 26th June. Peak autumn passage was from mid-August to mid-September, with a maximum count of just 35 on 25th August. Single figures were recorded throughout October and sporadically in November and December.

SPOTTED REDSHANK *Tringa erythropus*

Scarce autumn migrant, rare in spring

The only record was of two on 1st September in the South Harbour area.

REDSHANK *Tringa totanus*

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

Recorded every month. Some record counts were made in January, with 200 on 6th, 150 on 12th and 60 on 13th. Spring passage, however, was unremarkable with peaks of 30 on 26th March and 35 on 10th and 18th April. No breeding was attempted. Autumn passage began from the third week of July and increased markedly from mid-August, peaking at 90 on 25th and 95 on 28th. Numbers dwindled toward the end of September to around 30. Similar numbers through October but influxes on 3rd and 28th swelled the population to over 80. An overwintering population of 20-30 saw the year out.

GREENSHANK *Tringa nebularia*

Regular autumn migrant, scarce in spring

In spring there were singles on 27th April, 11th-13th May and 2-3 from 3rd-10th June. An early autumn bird on 10th July preceded sightings of 1-2 most days in August. The last was one from 21st-28th September.

LESSER YELLOWLEGS *Tringa flavipes*

Vagrant; two previous records

The third record for the isle spent 1st-4th May commuting between Golden Water and Easter Loch. The two previous records were in September 1910 and May 1953.
Accepted by BBRC

GREEN SANDPIPER *Tringa ochropus*

Regular spring and autumn migrant

In spring there was a single from 17th-25th April, before further passage between 7th and 13th May, peaked at three on four dates. There was a late spring/early autumn record on 10th July. Sightings of one or two birds on 17 dates in August peaked at four on 15th. Singles were seen on a further six dates in September with the last on 17th.

WOOD SANDPIPER *Tringa glareola****Scarce spring and autumn migrant***

One frequented the Walli Burn from 7th-9th May, with another at the Chalet on 29th May. No autumn records.

COMMON SANDPIPER *Actitis hypoleuca****Frequent spring and autumn migrant***

Almost daily spring passage was from 4th May-14th June, mainly of one to four birds, but for a definite peak of seven on 12th May and 15 the following day. Sporadic singles on four dates in August preceded the main autumn passage from 9th September. One to two were seen most days until the last on 1st October, except for eight on 17th September.

TURNSTONE *Arenaria interpres****Common winter, spring and autumn migrant***

Recorded in every month. Peak monthly counts:

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
100	115	90	125	45	16	30	80	80	128	100	115

POMARINE SKUA***Scarce spring and autumn migrant***

Three records; one was seen distantly off Malcolm's Head on 9th May and another drifted north over Gilsetter on 15th May. Another was seen from the Crossing on 9th June.

ARCTIC SKUA *Stercorarius parasiticus****Summer visitor, breeds in small numbers. Frequent passage migrant***

The first returning bird was on 13th April, rising to 14 by 26th and 30 by the end of the month. The breeding population was surveyed at 69 occupied territories, a slight increase on last year. Productivity too was much better than last year at 0.64 chicks per territory but still below average. Most had left the island by the end of August with the last on 10th September. One was seen off South Light on 25th September.

LONG-TAILED SKUA *Stercorarius longicaudus****Rare migrant, spring, summer and autumn***

An adult was near the airstrip on 27th May and presumably the same bird was near Springfield on 29th May. A second summer bird drifted north over the Observatory on 10th June.

GREAT SKUA *Stercorarius skua****Summer visitor, breeds in moderate numbers. Frequent passage migrant***

The 1998 count of 79 Apparently Occupied Territories (AOT) was thought to be a very conservative estimate on the true figure of around 140. Present on the isle

from 27th March to 28th October. A total of 132 AOT, though still a very high total, represents a continued decline from the peak of 152 in 1997. Surprisingly, given the apparent abundance of Sandeels (and Kittiwake chicks), the breeding performance was below average at 0.77 chicks fledging per territory.

LITTLE GULL *Larus minutus*

Vagrant; 11 previous records

A juvenile with Kittiwakes, seen from Bunes on 18th August, represents the 12th record for the isle.



Little Gull with Kittiwakes (Steve Turner)

BLACK-HEADED GULL *Larus ridibundus*

Frequent spring and autumn migrant

Up to three were recorded in January. Spring passage spanned mid March to mid May, with peaks of 16 on 10th April, 22 on 11th May and 40 on 12th. Single figure counts on most days in June and early July until autumn passage commenced with an influx of 70 on 17th July (peak count) and 45 on 19th. Numbers dropped to near single figure counts after that except for 22 on 2nd August and 20 the following day. Small numbers were seen almost daily into November.

COMMON GULL *Larus canus*

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

There were sporadic single figure records during the winter months except for an influx of 30 on 25th February. Spring passage was from early April to late May with a peak count of 140 on 11th May, 120 remaining the following day. Six pairs attempted to breed and four young were seen to fledge. Small numbers of non-breeders were logged in June. Autumn passage began in mid-July with marked peaks in early August (max 140 on 2nd) mid August (75 on 13th), early and mid September (100 on 6th and 130 on 18th).

LESSER BLACK-BACKED GULL *Larus fuscus*

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

One on 26th and three on 28th March were the first of the year. Birds were ever present from 7th April. Passage migrants swelled the breeding population, most notably in May, with a peak count of 65 on 11th. Autumn passage from mid August was of single figure counts but for a marked influx of 120 on 10th and 11th September. One on 10th October was the last of the year.

HERRING GULL *Larus argentatus*

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

Present throughout the year. Stormy weather induced influxes of 1500 on 12th January, 1000 on October 21st and 5000 on 25th November.

ICELAND GULL *Larus glaucooides*

Scarce migrant, winter and spring

Recorded on six dates. A first-winter bird on 25th January. An adult on 3rd February was replaced by two first-winters the following day. There was another adult on 26th February and the final first-winter on 23rd April.

GLAUCOUS GULL *Larus hyperboreus*

Regular migrant in spring, late autumn and winter

In the early part of the year, first-winters were recorded once in January, seven times in February (including two on 22nd) and three times in March (two on 3rd). A second-winter was seen on 3rd February. Adults were recorded on two dates in January, one was picked up dead on 28th February, and on 3rd March. In the autumn, adults were recorded on 4th, 8th and 29th October and first-winters on 15th and 20th October.

GREAT BLACK-BACKED GULL *Larus marinus*

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

Recorded throughout the year. Storm blown birds occasionally swelled the numbers. Peak counts included an extraordinarily high count of 5000 on 12th January, 700 on 20th October and 1000 the following day and 1000 on 25th November.

KITTIWAKE *Rissa tridactyla*

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

Recorded twice in January, then not until two on 3rd March marked the return of the breeders. Recorded daily until the end of October. Fine weather and an apparently good Sandeel population, resulted in the best breeding season since monitoring began in 1986. Although breeding numbers at monitoring plots showed a continuation of the long-term decline (1.8% down on 1998), productivity of 1.33

chicks fledged per nest is a welcome change of fortune. Observations of the colour-ringed population at Goorn showed that 39% of adults survived from the previous year – an improvement on 1998, but still worryingly low.

SANDWICH TERN *Sterna sandvicensis*

Scarce summer migrant

One on 4th June, two on 1st September and one from the Crossing on 4th September were the only records.

COMMON TERN *Sterna hirundo*

Summer visitor, breeds in small numbers

Three on 5th May was the first record and sightings were daily from the 9th, with a peak count of seven on 19th May. Three pairs nested, raising at least three chicks to fledging. The last was seen on 22nd August, however, common/arctic terns were recorded until 29th September.

ARCTIC TERN *Sterna paradisaea*

Summer visitor, breeds in large numbers

The first was on 28th April until daily sightings once the breeding birds arrived from the 6th May. The fickle nature of this species meant that, due to the complete failure of the last breeding season, the population was over halved this year at 562 AIA's. Approximately 150 chicks fledged, giving a productivity of 0.27 – an average performance. Initial colonies were at Eas Brecks and Tarryfield, however the wet weather near the end of May and harassment from the local skuas meant that the Eas Brecks colony virtually failed and the birds moved to Buness. A small colony at Horstibekkers also failed at egg or tiny chick stage. The Tarryfield colony were successful as far as hatching but chicks disappeared very soon after. A few dead chicks showed evidence of predation by cats. A few other pairs nested at Byerwall, South Light and Brecks o' Busta. Occasional first-summerers were recorded in the summer months. Post breeding gatherings on Buness and South Light, of locals and birds from further north, peaked at c1000 on 27th July. Numbers rapidly dwindled towards the end of August and the last were two on 12th September.

GUILLEMOT *Uria aalge*

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

Occasional sightings in January but 1000 ashore in calm weather on 24th February signalled the return of the breeders. Virtually all had left by the end of July with occasional small numbers seen on sea watches into October. Sporadic singles were seen offshore to the years end. A whole island census revealed a population of 39,257 attendant adults, an increase of 4.5% on the last count in 1994. However, numbers at monitoring plots decreased by 9.2%

compared to 1998. Breeding success was good, being the highest since 1993 at 0.7 chicks per Apparently Incubating Adult. Feeding rates were higher than the recent average, indicative of a good food supply. Most prey items were Sandeel, however a Norway Pout (usually found in deep ocean waters) was an unusual find.

RAZORBILL *Alca torda*

Summer visitor, breeds in large numbers

As with Guillemot, 500 ashore on 24th February signalled the start of the breeding season. Cliffs were deserted again by the 3rd August. Occasional small numbers were seen offshore thereafter, the last confirmed sighting on 2nd October. Breeding productivity at the Easter Lothar monitoring colony was (in contrast to Guillemot) disappointingly low with an average of 0.51 chicks fledged per occupied site.

BLACK GUILLEMOT *Cepphus grylle*

Resident, breeds in moderate numbers

Present all year. A whole island census gave a suggested maximum total of 230 birds which is a 26% decrease on the last estimate in 1995. The annual east coast North to South Light count revealed a decrease of 10% on the 1998 count, to the lowest since 1986, suggesting the continuation of a worrying trend. With the favoured breeding beaches now deserted, only nine accessible nests were found. These were relatively successful however, fledging on average 1.00 chick per nest.

LITTLE AUK *Alle alle*

Frequent late autumn/winter visitor

One was seen in the Havens on 25th January and another on 26th February. One was spotted on a sea watch from South Light on 3rd March. Two from the Crossing on 19th October and six on 17th November and finally one in the Havens on the last day of the year.

PUFFIN *Fratercula arctica*

Summer visitor, breeds in large numbers

The first birds ashore were on 24th March. Overwinter survival of the Roskilie colony was again good with 77% of colour-ringed birds resighted this year. Breeding performance, although below average at 0.63 chicks fledged per occupied burrow, was an improvement on 1998. Diet was predominantly Sandeel with 96% of all collected samples being of this favoured food. Chick feeding rates by adults on the all day feeding watch at Roskilie were relatively high also, at 6.2 feeds per burrow per day.



Bluethroat, Quoy Midden, 1st October '99.

Brian Clasper



Red-breasted Flycatcher, Hesti Geo, 22nd September '99.

Brian Clasper



*Lesser Whitethroat of one of the 'desert' races (minula/margelanica),
25th June '99.*

Deryk Shaw



*Lesser Whitethroat of one of the
'desert' races (minula/margelanica),
25th June '99.*

Deryk Shaw



*Greenish Warbler trapped in Single
Dyke, 29th August '99.*

Alan Bull



A Ficedula Flycatcher trapped in Plantation, 23rd September '99. It was either an 'abnormal' Collared or a Pied x Collared hybrid.

Alan Bull



Yellow-rumped Warbler, Smirri Geo, 3rd June '99.



Hugh Harrop



Arctic Redpoll, Field, 20th October '99.

Alan Bull



Yellow-breasted Bunting, 30th September '99.

Brian Clasper



Wood Warbler, trapped in the Plantation, August '99.

Deryk Shaw



Blyth's Reed Warbler, trapped, Barkland, 2nd June '99.



Deryk Shaw



Crossbill feeding on thistle, September '99.

Brian Clasper



Blyth's Reed Warbler, South Haven, 27th September '99.

Brian Clasper

ROCK DOVE *Columba livia*

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

Present throughout the year with no counts of note.

STOCK DOVE *Columba oenas*

Scarce spring and autumn migrant

Singles on 29th-30th March and 16th October were the only records.

WOODPIGEON *Columba palumbus*

Frequent spring and autumn migrant

One on 2nd January was unseasonal. The first of the spring was on 4th March and birds were almost daily from 14th March until 8th June. Peak count was nine on 25th May. There were mid summer records on 23rd-24th June and 1st-2nd July, possibly relating to the same individual. Autumn passage was as usual lighter than in the spring with records on just 16 dates in September and October, all counts of 1-5 except for 14 on 20th October.

COLLARED DOVE *Streptopelia decaocto*

Frequent spring migrant, less common in autumn

An individual on 6th April was nearly a month ahead of the next sighting. Main passage was from 14th May-27th June. Counts were of 1-5, except for 17 on 14th June. There were sporadic records through July and August, maximum of five on 15th August, but no records later in the year.

TURTLE DOVE *Streptopelia turtur*

Regular spring and autumn migrant

A light spring passage involved just three birds during 17th-24th May. Autumn was slightly better with three birds in August and two in September, one of which was found dead on 26th.

CUCKOO *Cuculus canorus*

Regular spring migrant, scarce in autumn

Spring passage was from 8th-29th May with daily records of 1-3 birds except for a record count of ten on 13th May. There were two late records in June. There was just one autumn record, of a juvenile from 3rd-6th August.

LONG-EARED OWL *Asio otus*

Regular autumn migrant, scarce in spring

In spring there were singles on just four dates in May. Autumn passage from 15th October to 3rd November involved mainly singles but for three on 17th and two on 19th October.

SHORT-EARED OWL *Asio flammeus*

Regular spring and autumn migrant

Singles on 29th March and 27th April preceded occasional sightings during May and early June, peaking at three on 13th May. Autumn passage occurred in two waves; from 20th-29th September (maximum four on 26th) and 15th-28th October, peaking at eleven roosting near Pund on 25th.

SWIFT *Apus apus*

Frequent spring, summer and autumn migrant

Records comprised 1-3 birds from 11th-15th May, sporadically on six dates in June/July/August and seven dates in September. The last was on 29th September.

HOOPOE *Upupa epops*

Vagrant; at least 34 previous records

One very mobile individual on 4th-5th May, found in Gilly Burn, was followed across Hoini and last seen near Easter Lother.



SJT

Hoopoe (Steve Turner)

KINGFISHER *Alcedo atthis*

Vagrant; no previous records

One, on the 9th September, performed for the lucky few who found it as it fished in a pool near South Light. This first record for the isle, unfortunately disappeared soon after. One seen in Shetland later that month could perhaps have been the same bird.

WRYNECK *Jynx torquilla*

Regular spring and autumn migrant

A very poor year. In spring there were only two on 8th May and singles on the 13th and 19th. Autumn records comprised three on 26th August and singles on 14th and 15th-17th September.

GREAT SPOTTED WOODPECKER *Dendrocopos major*

Rare (and irruptive) migrant, mostly in autumn

In September, one from 20th-24th. An influx on 15th October produced a log count of at least a record equalling 12 birds, with ten remaining next day and still two on 21st.

CALANDRA LARK

Melanocorypha calandra

Vagrant; one previous record

Second confirmed record. One found on the rig at Skerryholm on 16th May, roosted at Setter but departed next morning.

Accepted by BBRC



Calandra Lark
(Steve Turner)

SHORT-TOED LARK *Calandrella brachydactyla*

Scarce spring and autumn migrant

An excellent spring involving five birds. Three differently coloured birds from 5th-7th May with two still present on 8th. A further bird from 12th-16th May and yet another on 19th. By contrast there were no autumn records.

SKYLARK *Alauda arvensis*

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

Present in every month. A handful of birds overwintered. Spring migration started with 80 on 4th March. Main passage during the latter half of March peaked at 600 on 19th and ten counts above 200, with a further smaller passage in mid-April, peaking at 170 on 15th. An unseasonal migrant was seen from the Crossing on 8th June. Main autumn passage from mid-September to mid-October saw eight counts of over 100 and a maximum count of 180 on 5th October.

SHORELARK *Eremophila alpestris*

Rare spring and autumn migrant

A record spring passage saw the first on 11th April on Meoness. A sighting on Malcolm's Head on 14th April could possibly have been the same bird. A party of five was near the Plantation on 18th, followed by four which spent 25th-28th April on Meoness, one remaining to 30th. Further singles on 12th, 14th (a colour-ringed bird from Norfolk) and 20th May brought the spring passage to a close at a minimum of 13 individuals. There were just two autumn records; a single on 22nd September and another from 21st October-3rd November.

SAND MARTIN *Riparia riparia*

Regular spring migrant, less common in autumn

The first was on 26th April. Almost daily sightings from 1st – 11th May of 1-3 birds. No further records until two from 28th-30th May and a single on 12th June. The only autumn record was a single bird from 25th-27th September.

SWALLOW *Hirundo rustica*

Common spring and autumn migrant; occasionally breeds

Fair Isle's earliest ever (by one day) arrived on 3rd April, followed by two on 5th and singles on 6th and 10th. No further records until daily sightings from 23rd April to 30th June, with peaks of 36 on 6th May, 40 on 14th and 19th, 45 on 27th and 40 on 2nd June. Sporadic low single figure counts until 15th July. No breeding was attempted. Autumn passage was very light; seen on just 17 dates from 3rd August until 30th September, peaking at a mere eight on 24th September.

HOUSE MARTIN *Delichon urbica*

Frequent spring migrant, uncommon in autumn. Has bred

In spring, daily counts from 3rd May-18th June (peak of 40 on 30th May) and sporadically until 8th July. Returning migrants were recorded on just 11 dates from 21st August-18th October, all were singles except two on 24th September and 17th October and three on 20th September.

RICHARD'S PIPIT *Anthus novaeseelandiae*

Scarce autumn migrant

Just three birds this year. A single at Bull's Park on 6th October was followed by one on 15th October near Busta, which was joined by another on 17th with one remaining next day.

TREE PIPIT *Anthus trivialis*

Frequent spring and autumn migrant

The first of the spring were on 23rd April, another on 25th and three next day. There were daily sightings from 3rd-30th May, with a definite concentration between 8th and 15th, peaking at 100 on 13th and 65 the following day. The final spring sighting was on 9th June. Autumn passage began on 18th August and was virtually daily from 24th to the last on 20th October. Main passage was in the latter half of September, peaking at 60 on 22nd and 35 next day.

MEADOW PIPIT *Anthus pratensis*

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

Occasional singles in January. Spring passage from 17th March peaked in late April/early May and tailed off immediately after. Peak counts of 200 on three dates. Autumn migration was from mid August with large numbers from late August

to mid-September, peaking at 600 on 25th August, 550 on 31st, 500 on 11th September, 950 on 12th and 700 on 13th. Numbers remained between 100-300 until mid-October, with smaller numbers to the month's end.

RED-THROATED PIPIT *Anthus cervinus*

Rare spring and autumn migrant

One on 2nd June was still present on 4th. In autumn, one was heard in the fog on 22nd September

Both accepted by BBRC

ROCK PIPIT *Anthus petrosus*

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

Present throughout the year. No meaningful counts made. Individuals of the 'littoralis' race noted on 31st March, 11th and 18th April, 14th and 24th May, 1st and 2nd June, probably relate to just three birds, including one paired with a nominate 'petrosus' at Wester Lothar, although breeding was not proven.

YELLOW WAGTAIL *Motacilla flava*

Regular spring and autumn migrant

An early individual on 3rd April was the only record that month. Spring passage was from 6th May-3rd June. Virtually daily sightings were of low single figure counts, and a maximum of just nine on 12th May. 80% of birds were assigned to race, about half of which were British Yellow '*f. flavissima*' and the other half Grey-headed '*f. thunbergi*'. An individual on 9th-12th May was considered to be a Blue-headed *f. flava* x Grey-headed hybrid. Autumn passage was regular from 25th August-26th September, with a peak count of just four on 13th September, the majority of which were not identified to race.

CITRINE WAGTAIL *Motacilla citreola*

Rare autumn migrant

A bird discovered near Pund on a foggy 21st September remained in the area until 24th.

Accepted by BBRC

A highly mobile and vocal grey and white bird on 27th October was either an eastern race Yellow Wagtail or a very late Citrine Wagtail.

GREY WAGTAIL *Motacilla cinerea*

Scarce spring and autumn migrant; has bred

After the earliest ever on 14th March, the only other spring record was a male in the Vaadal from 2nd-8th June. Autumn was equally poor with just three birds; singly on 13th September, 17th-19th October and 3rd November.

WHITE/PIED WAGTAIL *Motacilla alba*

Frequent spring and autumn migrant; occasional breeder

The first records on 14th March comprised one of each race. There were sporadic records (max three) to the month's end. Records were daily from 1st April to 5th June, mainly concentrated in the period mid-April to mid-May. Passage of 'yarrelli' was chiefly during April, with a peak of just six on 23rd-24th April. Passage of 'alba' was slightly heavier and later, peaking during late April to mid-May. There were counts of over ten on five dates and a maximum 13 on 5th and 12th May. There were occasional sightings of each race during June and July until autumn migration got underway from 9th August. A definite concentration from late August to mid-September saw peaks of 75 on three dates and 81 on 7th September. Lighter passage continued through to the end of October, with the last on 29th.

WAXWING *Bombycilla garrulax*

Scarce/irruptive autumn migrant. Rare in spring

One record. A single bird on the roofs of the Haa and Skerryholm on 25th October.

WREN *Troglodytes troglodytes*

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

A census of singing males revealed a further slight decline in the breeding population with 26 territories mapped. No true migrants were noted this year.

DUNNOCK *Prunella modularis*

Frequent spring and autumn migrant. Has bred

Daily spring passage from 16th March-20th May was of low single figure counts – maximum eight on two dates. Autumn passage, of similar numbers, was from 19th September-28th October, with a peak count of ten on two dates. Late stragglers were noted on 9th and 10th November.

ROBIN *Erithacus rubecula*

Frequent spring and autumn migrant

Recorded in every month. Two to three overwintered at each end of the year. Main spring passage was concentrated in the few days 22nd-27th April, peaking at 70 on 23rd. Single figure counts were noted either side of this period from end March-end May. Lone stragglers noted in June, July and August referred to two, possibly injured, individuals. Autumn passage from 16th September-30th October was, similar to spring, mainly concentrated into a few days. The period 21st-27th September saw daily counts of 50-200. Either side of this period counts did not exceed 17.

NIGHTINGALE Spp *Luscinia luscinia/megarhynchos*

Rare spring migrants; vagrants in autumn

A frustrating year. An elusive individual at Midway from 9th-11th May was thought to be a Nightingale, whilst another unidentified bird was seen briefly at Oily Kettles on 21st. What could have been the same bird in the Haa/Skerryholm area on 27th May was, although seen reasonably well, again not confidently identified although most assessors thought Thrush Nightingale was the most likely.

BLUETHROAT *Luscinia svecica*

Regular spring and autumn migrant

A poor year. The first was a long staying male at the Observatory from 8th-22nd May. Other singles were on 19th, 30th-31st, 1st and 2nd June. Autumn was equally poor with singles on 17th September, 30th September-14th October on Quoy midden, 15th October and the last on 29th October. A total of just nine birds.

BLACK REDSTART *Phoenicurus ochurus*

Regular spring migrant, scarce in autumn

The first were two on 2nd April. Occasional sightings of 1-2 birds until 19th May. A surprising record was a recently fledged juvenile trapped in the garage during a Storm Petrel netting session on the night of 29th July. Autumn records of 1-2 on four dates in August, a single from 20th-23rd September and occasional records in the latter half of October.

REDSTART *Phoenicurus phoenicurus*

Frequent spring and autumn migrant

Spring passage from 28th April-13th June was heaviest from 7th-17th May, peaking at 25 on 13th. In autumn a handful of records at the end of August preceded main passage from 14th-30th September, with peak counts of 35 on 21st, 60 on 22nd and 25 on 23rd. A late male from 26th-30th October was the last sighting.

WHINCHAT *Saxicola rubetra*

Frequent spring and autumn migrant

Spring records were from 5th May-2nd June, mainly concentrated in the period 8th-14th May when low double figure counts were the norm, peaking at 19 on 11th. Autumn passage began on 19th August and sightings were daily until 19th October. Single figure or low double figure counts until 17th September, after which daily counts were over 20 until 26th (max 30 on three dates). Numbers dropped to low single figures again from 27th September-19th October.

STONECHAT *Saxicola torquata*

Scarce spring and autumn migrant

In spring, birds of the western races were recorded as follows: two males on 17th March followed by a female on 27th and another on 2nd April. A male with a white rump and collar was reported near the Plantation on 10th May but could not be relocated.

NORTHERN WHEATEAR *Oenanthe oenanthe*

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

The first arrived on 18th March. There were no further sightings until daily records from 30th March. Twenty-five on 2nd April was the first notable influx whilst the last third of April and first half of May saw counts over 100 on the vast majority of days, peaking at 200 on 24th. Autumn passage from mid-August to the end of September produced daily counts in the high tens and in excess of 100 on 13 dates. Single figures were noted daily until 22nd October and the last on 26th October.

RING OUZEL *Turdus torquatus*

Frequent spring and autumn migrant

Spring records commenced on 11th April and sightings of 1-5 were regular until 20th May. There were two additional records in late May and the last of the spring on 2nd June. In autumn, daily records in the latter half of September involved just a handful of birds. Sporadic sightings on seven dates in October included the maximum count of six on 17th.

BLACKBIRD *Turdus merula*

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

Single figure counts through January/February. Spring passage was very poor with highest numbers noted early on (maximum 60 on 14th March). There were low double or single figure counts from late March to late May and sporadic singles through June. There were occasional records (mainly singles) during August, September and early October until a sudden influx of thrushes on 15th October saw counts in excess of 200 daily until 26th, with a peak of 500 on 16th and 17th. Counts below 100 remained into November and single figures into December.

FIELDFARE *Turdus pilaris*

Common spring and autumn migrant, often over-winters

Noted in small numbers in January/February apart from an influx of 40 on 22nd January. There was some passage mid-March with counts of 30-45, then smaller numbers until the last week of April saw peak passage, with a maximum of 220 on

25th. Single figure counts were then daily until the last on 19th May, apart from an influx of 150 on 12th. A lone straggler was seen on 27th June and 1st July. In autumn there were occasional records through August and early September until daily records from 13th September. As with other thrushes, peak passage was from 15th-26th October, with a peak of 2000 on 16th, 1200 remaining next day and several hundred until 26th. Counts dropped to below 100 into November and single figures in December.

SONG THRUSH *Turdus philomelos*

Common spring and autumn migrant; has bred

Two singles were seen in February before spring passage was noted mid-March (peak of 20 on 13th). Further passage from 12th-25th April peaked at 31 on 13th and 26 on 22nd. Single figures were noted daily until 17th May and sporadically until 9th June. Autumn passage from 14th September was in two waves; from 21st-24th September (max 55) and 15th-25th October (max 100 on 17th). Single figures were seen into November.

REDWING *Turdus iliacus*

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

Small numbers noted in January/February/March. Slightly higher counts during April peaked at 35 on 6th and 20 on 23rd. Occasional records (max four) through May and sporadic singles on five dates in June/July. The first of the autumn on 15th September pre-empted the first wave of migrants from 16th-27th, with peaks of 100 on 21st, 150 on 24th and 210 on 27th. Numbers then dropped to below 100 (apart from 250 on 6th October) until a further larger passage, along with other thrushes, occurred from 14th-26th October. An impressive count of 3000 on 16th was reduced to 1800 next day and dwindled to 350 by 21st, before further arrivals took the figure back to 650 on 24th. Numbers dwindled once again to low numbers in November except for a fall of 100 on 14th.

MISTLE THRUSH *Turdus viscivorus*

Scarce spring and autumn migrant

There was an unusual midwinter record of two on 22nd January. One on 17th March preceded occasional records through April and May involving perhaps five or six individuals. Autumn records were confined to three sightings of singles during the big thrush movement of 15th-26th October.

LANCEOLATED WARBLER *Locustella lanceolata*

Rare autumn migrant

Two records. One near Barkland on 16th October and another by Shirva on 18th October.

Both accepted by BBRC

GRASSHOPPER WARBLER *Locustella naevia*

Regular spring and autumn migrant

In spring 1-3 were seen almost daily from 7th-16th May, whilst in autumn a very early record on 18th August was followed by another before the month was out. September records of 1-3 were seen on 11 dates in the month, the last being on 29th.

SEDGE WARBLER *Acrocephalus schoenobaenus*

Regular spring migrant, less common in autumn

Spring records were daily from 5th May-7th June, with counts of 1-6 but for ten on 13th May. Late spring/early autumn singles were noted on 25th June and 11th July. Passage on ten dates in September, peaked at four on 25th.

PADDYFIELD WARBLER *Acrocephalus agricola*

Vagrant, spring and autumn; 14 previous records

After an absence last year, one trapped in the Gully on 22nd September and still present next day, resumed the run of annual records since 1992, bringing the total number of records to 15.

BLYTH'S REED WARBLER *Acrocephalus dumetorum*

Vagrant; 11 or 12 previous records

An excellent year with three records. In spring, a singing male found in Barkland garden on 2nd June was trapped and remained in the Observatory garden for a further day, singing at night. (See *Birding World* Vol 12; 6). In autumn, an exceedingly short-billed individual was caught in the Observatory trap on 26th September and remained in the Havens giving excellent views until 29th, whilst another very different looking individual was found and trapped on the beach at Wirvie on 28th September. There have now been 14 or 15 records, including three in spring.

MARSH WARBLER *Acrocephalus palustris*

Scarce spring migrant, rare in autumn

Spring records comprised 3-4 birds between 2nd and 7th June and further singles on 25th June and 11th July. In autumn a very tricky individual from 25th August-2nd September was initially identified, in the hand, as a Reed Warbler but was re-identified when trapped again the following day.

REED WARBLER *Acrocephalus scirpaceus*

Scarce spring migrant, regular in autumn

Spring records were typically scant, with two on 20th May and singles on 2nd and 4th June. Autumn passage began on 3rd August and sightings were regular until the last on 27th September. Counts were of 1-5 birds except for seven on 26th August and a peak of 11 on 21st September.

ICTERINE WARBLER *Hippolais icterina*

Scarce spring and autumn migrant

Five records. The earliest ever spring record (by five days) was found in the Gilly Burn on 13th May and had moved to South Harbour next day. There were further sightings of two on 19th May, another on 20th and one in the Observatory garden on 4th June. For only the third time in the last twenty years there were no autumn records.

BARRED WARBLER *Sylvia nisoria*

Regular autumn migrant

Typically, all records were from the autumn. One on 1st August, equalling the earliest ever, was the only sighting until daily records from 15th August-20th September and occasional records until 28th September. Most records were of 1-3 birds, with a peak of six on 29th August. Approximately 25 individuals were involved.

LESSER WHITETHROAT *Sylvia curruca*

Frequent spring and autumn migrant

Spring records from 5th May-1st June involved daily single figure counts but for a peak of ten on 19th May. A very pale individual, seen outside the Observatory on 25th June was later trapped and examined. Measurements and plumage characteristics suggested it belonged to one of the eastern 'desert' races (*margelanica/minula*) and a potential first for Britain, (see *Birding World* Vol 12; 7). A bird of the nominate '*curruca*' appeared on 27th June and another on 6th July. Autumn sightings were almost daily from 26th August-21st October, with a peak of just eight on two dates.

WHITETHROAT *Sylvia communis*

Frequent spring migrant, less common in autumn

Spring passage, almost daily from 4th May-4th June, was mainly of single figure counts except for slightly higher numbers in the second week of May, peaking at 15 on 13th. One or two records in early August were the only autumn migrants until 5th September. After this date sightings were daily until 27th September, with a peak of ten on 22nd and 24th. Finally, there was a late individual on 13th October.

GARDEN WARBLER *Sylvia borin*

Frequent spring and autumn migrant

A very light spring passage from 12th May-21st June, peaked at just six on 19th and 31st May. As usual, autumn passage was much heavier, daily from mid-August to the end of September, with stragglers until 25th October. Counts were of 20 or less except for a large fall of 65 on 26th August with 30 present next day.

BLACKCAP *Sylvia atricapilla*

Frequent spring and autumn migrant

As with Garden Warbler, a very light spring passage was followed by a heavy autumn migration. Spring passage was from 22nd April-24th June with a peak of ten on 14th May. Autumn migration from 26th August was of single figures until 15 on 19th September built up to 50 next day, followed by a huge fall of 300 on 22nd(second highest Fair Isle count). Sixty remained, and slowly dwindled away during the remainder of the month, to single figures in October. There was further good passage from 16th-26th October. Daily counts of 30-70 were recorded, with a peak of 100 on 25th.

GREENISH WARBLER *Phylloscopus trochiloides*

Vagrant, mostly autumn; 29 previous records

The first since 1997 was trapped in Single Dyke on 29th August and was seen on Buness the following day.

Accepted by BBRC

ARCTIC WARBLER *Phylloscopus borealis*

Spring vagrant; rare autumn migrant. 66 previous records.

Hot on the heels of the previous species, a very confiding bird was watched in the heather near the Bullock Holes, on the evening of September 5th.

Accepted by BBRC

PALLAS'S WARBLER *Phylloscopus proregulus*

Rare autumn migrant. 23 previous records.

The first records since 1994. Three birds were found on 15th October including one trapped in the Gully, one on the cliffs at Dronger and another on Malcolm's Head.

YELLOW-BROWED WARBLER *Phylloscopus inornatus*

Regular autumn migrant

A good year. The first, in the Plantation, on 17th September remained for another day. Two on 22nd September and singles on 24th and 25th were followed by a fall of eight on 27th. Further arrivals produced daily records until 7th October and sporadic sightings until 19th October. A total of approximately 20 individuals.

WOOD WARBLER *Phylloscopus sibilatrix*

Regular spring and autumn migrant

In spring there was one on 8th May and one on 3rd June, which was joined by another the following day. In autumn the occasional one or two birds from 4th-23rd August were followed by a record autumn count of 12 on 25th (the previous best is seven!), five remained next day and the last stayed until 30th.

CHIFFCHAFF *Phylloscopus collybita*

Frequent spring and autumn migrant

Spring sightings from 28th March to mid-June were virtually daily, with several small arrivals throughout; 11 on 24th April, 16 on 11th May, 12 on 20th May and 20 on 2nd June. Two scruffy-looking individuals remained through the summer. The first autumn arrivals were five on 18th August and counts of 1-4 were daily until 30th September. Further passage in mid-October was of Scandinavian 'abietinus' birds (maximum of 12 on 15th) and a few of the Siberian 'tristis' race (maximum of 3 on 15th). The last was a late 'abietinus' race bird on 13th-14th November.

WILLOW WARBLER *Phylloscopus trochilus*

Frequent spring and autumn migrant

An early arrival on 6th April was two weeks ahead of daily sightings from 21st April-4th June with occasional records to the end of June. Heaviest passage was from 5th-20th May, with several peaks; 35 on 5th, 40 on 8th, 90 on 13th and 25 on 17th. There were 3-4 singles recorded in July. Autumn passage got underway from early August continuing until the end of September and movements were most marked in the latter half of August and again in the third week of September. There were peaks of 70 on 18th, 120 on 25th and 75 on 27th August as well as 60 on 22nd and 30 on 24th September. The last were two on 6th October.

GOLDCREST *Regulus regulus*

Frequent spring and autumn migrant

The first of the spring was on 18th March. Passage was mainly concentrated into the period 26th March-4th April, with a peak of 15 on 31st March. Sporadic records continued until 13th May. Autumn passage involved daily single figure counts from 30th August-18th September followed by a week of heavier passage peaking at 40 on 22nd September. There were then occasional records of 1-3 birds until a period of even heavier movement from 15th-21st October peaked at 70 on 19th. Small numbers continued until the last on 30th October.

SPOTTED FLYCATCHER *Muscicapa striata*

Frequent spring and autumn migrant

In spring there were records most days from 13th May-14th June with peaks of 22 on 20th, 20 on 30th May and 40 on 2nd June. A single bird on 24th August was the only early autumn record, followed by light passage from 16th-28th September which peaked at ten on 22nd.

RED-BREASTED FLYCATCHER *Ficedula parva*

Scarce autumn migrant, rare in spring

A sole spring bird from 20th-21st May was trapped in the Vaadal. Autumn records were as follows; two on 22nd September, one remaining next day, three on 26th and one on 30th September. Finally, there was a lone bird in South Harbour on 26th October.

(COLLARED FLYCATCHER) *Ficedula albicollis*

Vagrant; two previous records

A first-winter female flycatcher trapped in the Plantation on 23rd September showed many of the features of Collared but did not possess the correct 'collar' pattern. It was either an abnormal Collared or possibly a second generation Pied x Collared hybrid. For further details see *Birding World* Vol 13:1

PIED FLYCATCHER *Ficedula hypoleuca*

Frequent spring and autumn migrant

In spring an early male on 30th April was ahead of main passage from 8th May. A large influx occurred on 13th May, when some 70 were logged (there were only four the previous day), with 30 remaining next day and only three by 16th. Occasional one or twos were recorded to the 2nd June. A late male was seen on 15th June. In autumn occasional records of 1-5 were logged from 25th August-15th September. Similarly to spring, main passage was over one or two days; 14 on 16th September rose to 50 on 17th and fell back to 14 next day and just four by 20th. Single figure counts were then made on most days until the last on 10th October.

GREAT TIT *Parus major*

Vagrant; 23 previous records (approx. 35 individuals)

Two on 19th October rose to three next day, including one trapped, with one remaining on 21st. The first records since 1994.

GOLDEN ORIOLE *Oriolus oriolus*

Vagrant; 35 previous records (36 individuals)

One on 13th September did not hang around to be admired. The first record since 1996 and only the seventh autumn record.

RED-BACKED SHRIKE *Lanius collurio*

Regular spring and autumn migrant

In spring, records of 1-2 birds from 19th May-14th June peaked at four on 29th May, involving 11-12 birds in total. Autumn passage was virtually non-existent with just two records; a long staying bird from 26th August-3rd September and another on 27th September.

GREAT GREY SHRIKE *Lanius excubitor*

Scarce spring and autumn migrant

Two records. One in Da Water on 16th October was still present next day when another was found at Lower Station.

JACKDAW *Corvus monedula*

Scarce spring and autumn migrant

Singles on 17th-18th May and 31st May-2nd June were the only records.

ROOK *Corvus frugilegus*

Regular spring migrant, less common in autumn

In spring there were two on 14th March and a further three singles during the rest of the month. April records were more regular, peaking at five on 12th and 23rd. There were three more records in May with the last on 25th. There were no autumn records.

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 were present all year, with 2-3 pairs resident and small numbers of migrants noted in May.

Carrion crows were noted occasionally in March and April, with one bird paired with a Hooded crow. Passage was noted during May and early June, with daily records of 1-10, peaking at 19 on 14th and 16 on 18th May.

RAVEN *Corvus corax*

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

Present all year. Three pairs are thought to have bred, with the first fledged chicks noted on 17th May. Evidence of migration is hard to judge, however, 22 birds on 5th October must have included at least some migrants.

STARLING *Sturnus vulgaris*

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

Present throughout the year and migration noted in late April with 800 on 24th and 300 on 25th. No large movements noted in autumn. Nest occupancy was high but breeding success was not as high as recent years. From 77 monitored nests, 303 eggs were laid, 256 (84.5%) of which hatched and 197 young were thought to have fledged – a productivity of 0.65.

ROSE-COLOURED STARLING *Sturnus roseus*

Vagrant; at least 29 previous records involving 30 or more individuals

A juvenile seen on trap round on 23rd September eventually settled on Meoness and remained until 1st October.

Accepted by BBRC

HOUSE SPARROW *Passer domesticus*

Resident, breeds in small numbers

Present all year. No counts attempted.

CHAFFINCH *Fringilla coelebs*

Frequent spring and autumn migrant

An overwintering male was present until 14th March. Small numbers of migrants, seen daily from mid-March, peaked at 11 on 2nd April and 17 on 27th April and continued until 20th June. Autumn passage from 12th September-31st October, generally of single figure counts, was heaviest from 22nd-26th September, with daily counts of 40-50.

BRAMBLING *Fringilla montifringilla*

Common spring and autumn migrant

In spring there were two on 24th March and sporadic records until 16th April, then daily sightings for a month and the last on 23rd May. Peak passage was near the end of April, with 50 on 22nd, 28 on 24th and 26th and 45 on 27th. In the autumn, daily passage in the latter half of September peaked at 30 on 24th, then further passage from 21st-26th October peaked at 50 on 16th, 60 on 17th and 40 on 26th. The last straggler was on 19th November.

GREENFINCH *Carduelis chloris*

Regular spring and autumn migrant

In spring there were just two records, of single males on 31st March and 24th April. A run of single figure records from 17th October-12th November probably involved no more than 35-40 birds. A single, trapped in the Plantation on 19th November and still present on 29th, was the last of the year.



GOLDFINCH *Carduelis carduelis*

Rare spring and autumn migrant

A record year. 1-3 birds on eight dates in April and four dates in May, probably involved about ten birds. The first ever mid-summer records were of one over the Observatory on 18th July, rising to four in the Observatory garden next day and two on 22nd at South Light. In the autumn, five on 15th October rose to a record count of 11 on thistles at South Light on 16th. Two from 19th-21st October could have been part of the same, however, a single on 30th-31st October and five on 2nd November were new birds. A year total of at least 31 birds is a massive achievement when one considers that the previous accumulated total was of approximately only 55 birds.

Goldfinch (Steve Turner)

SISKIN *Carduelis spinus*

Frequent autumn migrant, less common in spring

One on 17th March was the first of the spring. Records of 1-2 on fourteen dates in April and seven dates in May apart from a flock of 26 on 24th April. Occasional sightings in June and July were again of ones or twos, except for seven on 12th June and four on 19th July. Autumn passage was from the end of August, daily through September, with occasional records in October. Reasonably high numbers in September, peaked at 95 on 13th and 120 on 22nd. The last were six on 20th October.

LINNET *Carduelis cannabina*

Regular spring migrant, more scarce in autumn

After a female on 2nd April and three on 17th, spring passage was almost daily from 22nd April-1st June. Counts of 1-3 peaked at four on 27th April. Autumn records were very scarce, with four single records in the last week of September, probably referring to the same bird and one on 8th October and three on 19th October.

TWITE *Carduelis flavirostris*

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

Recorded throughout the year. Small numbers in January/February started to slowly increase in late March. Light spring passage peaked at just 31 on 23rd April. Autumn passage too, was less than normal, with a maximum count of 150 on 8th October. Counts in excess of ten were made on only twelve dates in September.

REDPOLL *Carduelis flammea*

Frequent spring and autumn migrant

A very light spring passage saw sightings of 1-2 birds on just three dates in April (five birds), four dates in May (three birds) and nine dates in June (one bird). Most were unassigned to race apart from two Lesser 'cabaret' on 10th April and Mealy 'flammea' on 12th-14th May and 2nd-12th June. In summer, a Lesser was trapped on 9th August and two Mealys seen on 23rd. Autumn passage from 12th September-29th October produced regular sightings of 1-5 birds, involving just 20 birds. The majority were Mealy Redpoll but for a long staying Greenland 'rostrata' from 16th-26th October. There was a late record of eight birds flying over the Observatory on 14th November.

ARCTIC REDPOLL *Carduelis hornemanni*

Rare/irruptive autumn migrant. Vagrant in spring; approx 82 previous records.

In October one frequented Field and Setter from 18th-21st October. It was joined by a second on 20th, which remained to 26th. Both were considered to be of the smaller 'exilipes' race.

Both accepted by BBRC

CROSSBILL *Loxia curvirostra*

Scarce/irruptive autumn migrant

Two singles on 22nd and 23rd June were followed in July by flyovers of 1-2 birds on 4th, 12th, 16th, 19th and 22nd. There were two on 1st August, then a break until the 15th, when 23 were recorded. Regular sightings of 1-8 birds from 30th August-5th October, involved perhaps a further 30 birds. Four apparently large crossbills, seen briefly on Burrashield on 20th October could perhaps have been Parrot Crossbill but were not relocated. Two on 26th October rounded off a good year for this species.

COMMON ROSEFINCH *Carpodacus erythrinus*

Regular spring and autumn migrant

A very poor year. In spring one on 31st May was joined by another on 1st June and remained until 2nd. There were further singles on 7th and 27th June. All were brown birds (female/immatures). In autumn 1-2 were recorded on several dates from 24th August-25th September and the last on 15th October. Approximately 13 birds were recorded in the autumn.

BULLFINCH *Pyrrhula pyrrhula*

Scarce autumn migrant, less regular in spring

No spring records was more than made up for by a good autumn passage (the best since the record year of 1994). A female on 15th October was the start of an influx of Northern Bullfinches to the isle. Daily sightings from 19th-31st October involved a definite turnover of birds. One on 19th rose to 15 on 20th, fell again to just one two days later and rose again to seven on 24th and finally to a peak of 20 on 26th. By the end of the month this number had dwindled to one. In November, two on 2nd were lingerers from the October influx, whilst there were late singles on 19th and 25th. A total of at least 45 birds were recorded this year but the true total may have been as many as 100+.

HAWFINCH *Coccothraustes coccothraustes*

Rare spring migrant, vagrant in autumn

Recorded in autumn for only the fourth time. A male was trapped in the Plantation on the foggiest day of the year on 16th September and it or another was seen flying out to sea at North Light on 18th September.

YELLOW-RUMPED WARBLER *Dendroica coronata*

Vagrant; one previous record

The second for the isle and the third in spring for Britain. A male on 3rd June, found in Smirri Geo at the bottom of Utra wall, was remarkably in the same place as the first record on 18th May 1977. It showed well to all present that morning before disappearing for the rest of the day and most of the next. It was relocated on the afternoon of the 4th near the shop and despite becoming very mobile was still present the following day. For further details see *Birding World* Vol 12; 6.

Accepted by BBRC

LAPLAND BUNTING *Calcarius lapponicus*

Frequent autumn migrant, less common in spring

In May there were four individuals between 5th and 27th including one singing on Burrashield. Autumn records spanned 31st August-26th October, with almost daily counts of 1-5 and a peak of ten on 6th October.

SNOW BUNTING *Plectrophenax nivalis*

Common spring and autumn migrant; often over-winters

Sporadic counts of small numbers in the early part of the year, with 20 on 16th January and 26 on 4th March being the only counts over ten. A very light spring passage produced almost daily counts through April, with a maximum of 17 on 20th, until 3rd May. A late male was seen on 20th May. Autumn passage was much heavier. The first was on 12th September and low numbers were noted until the end of September, when 70 birds arrived on 28th. Daily counts in October were from eight to 230, showing the turnover of birds and a further influx of 260 on 10th November was the maximum count. A small flock of about 20 over-wintered.

YELLOWHAMMER *Emberiza citrinella*

Regular spring and autumn migrant

In spring there was one on 21st April, a male on 1st-2nd June and one on 30th June. Autumn records were equally scarce, with 1-2 from 16th-20th October and two on 25th October, which could have been the same.

ORTOLAN BUNTING *Emberiza hortulana*

Scarce spring and autumn migrant

In spring there was a male on 13th May, followed by another on 16th, which remained until 19th feeding on the rig at Quoy. It was joined by another male for the last two days of its stay. Autumn records comprised one at the Haa on 12th September and single records on a further six dates in September with two on 24th, including one trapped. Further singles were noted on three dates in October, with the last on 15th October. Probably only three-four individuals were involved.

RUSTIC BUNTING *Emberiza rustica*

Rare spring and autumn migrant

A good spring run started with a long-staying adult male outside the Observatory from 19th-26th May. One located at Setter on 29th May moved to Field until 1st June. A female near the shop on 5th June moved to Quoy on 6th, and finally the fourth of the spring was a male trapped in the Gully on 9th June, which stayed around the Furse area until 12th.

All were accepted by BBRC

In autumn a probable flew over on 15th October but could not be relocated.

LITTLE BUNTING *Emberiza pusilla*

Scarce autumn migrant; rare in spring

A poor year. The sole record was one near Field from 16th-17th October.

YELLOW-BREASTED BUNTING *Emberiza aureola*

Rare autumn migrant

Two records makes this an average year. One seen briefly in Hjukni Geo on 25th August was relocated near Skerryholm on 26th and remained until 30th. A very mobile individual on 30th September-1st October, found at Busta Geo ranged as far north as the Plantation.

Both accepted by BBRC

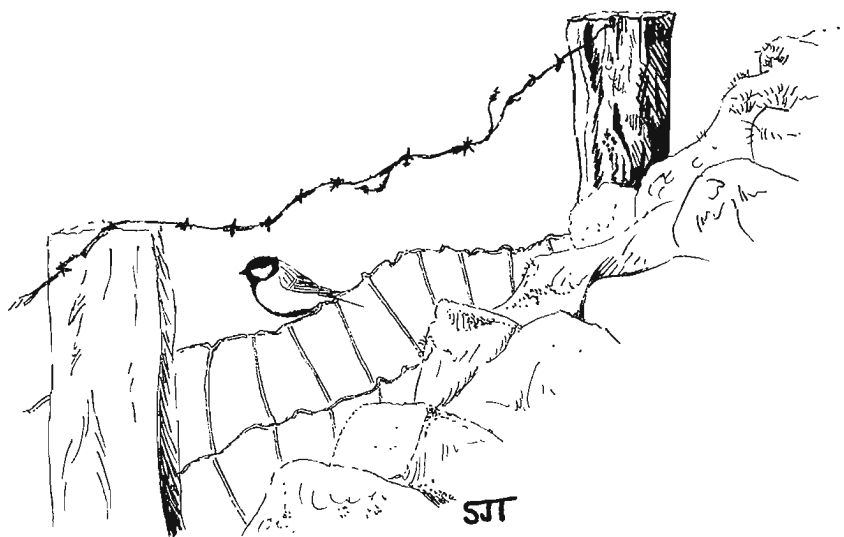
REED BUNTING *Emberiza schoeniclus*

Frequent spring and autumn migrant

Singles on 1st and 11th April preceded a good spring passage with daily records from 22nd April-29th May. Passage was heaviest between 8th-15th May, with peaks of 45 on 8th, 60 on 12th and 65 on 13th. In contrast, autumn passage was very poor with 1-3 from 17th-27th September and 1-5 between 17th October and 4th November.

Update of British Birds Rarities Committee Decisions

None reported in 1999.



Great Tit (Steve Turner)

FAIR ISLE RINGING REPORT 1999

Alan Bull and Deryk Shaw

A total of **6872** birds of 100 species were ringed in 1999, not as high as in 1998, although just as rewarding. The total could be 101 species – a *Ficedula* flycatcher trapped in September was either a Collared (*F. albicollis*) or a Pied x Collared hybrid (*F. hypoleuca* x *F. albicollis*). Table 1 gives the ten most commonly ringed species and, as usual, is dominated by seabirds. Storm Petrel was the most commonly ringed species during 1999, owing to the fact that there were a lot of Petrels around Fair Isle's waters. Readers may notice a change to some of the overall ringing and recovery totals. This is due to a re-check through all records where some mistakes were found to have been made.

Table 1. The ten most commonly ringed species, with totals, on Fair Isle in 1999; (1998 totals in parentheses)

Storm Petrel	2716	(1918)
Guillemot	1415	(2080)
Razorbill	275	(761)
Arctic Tern	255	(460)
Starling	214	(845)
Fulmar	172	(445)
Blackcap	249	(124)
Blackbird	178	(279)
Kittiwake	113	(130)
Robin	106	(403)

As in the previous two years, no new species were ringed during 1999, although the more unusual of birds captured were: Pallas's Warbler (3rd), Blyth's Reed Warbler (6th-7th), Goldfinch (7th-11th), Paddyfield Warbler (9th) and Great Tit (10th). Other rarely ringed species included: Little Auk (13th), Mallard (15th), Tufted Duck (17th), Long-tailed Duck (17th-18th), Hawfinch (16th), Rustic Bunting (17th), Ortolan Bunting (19th) and Goldeneye (20th). Record annual totals were achieved for four species during 1999. These were: Storm Petrel (2716), Leach's Petrel (14), Goldfinch (5) and Long-tailed Duck (2).

Species ringed in above average numbers during 1999 were: Blackcap (249), Chiffchaff (46) and Siskin (35), whilst species ringed in unusually low numbers included Shag (36), Puffin (86), Rock Pipit (39) and Wheatear (51).

Table 2. Numbers of birds ringed and recovered/controlled on Fair Isle in 1999, together with cumulative totals from 1948

Species	Ringed as:		Total 1999	Total 1948-99	Recovered/Controlled	
	Juv/Ad	Pullus			1999	1948-99
Red-throated Diver	–	–	–	1	–	–
Little Grebe	–	–	–	10	–	–
Great Crested Grebe	–	–	–	1	–	–
Red-necked Grebe	–	–	–	1	–	–
Slavonian Grebe	–	–	–	3	–	–
Fulmar	11	161	172	16486	5	162
Storm Petrel	2716	–	2716	28253	100	1025
Leach's Petrel	14	–	14	72	–	1
Gannet	–	–	–	347	–	9
Cormorant	–	–	–	7	–	–
Shag	2	34	36	21028	7	537
Grey Heron	–	–	–	20	–	–
Whooper Swan	1	–	1	39	–	6
Bean Goose	–	–	–	1	–	–
Pink-footed Goose	–	–	–	13	–	1
White-fronted Goose	–	–	–	3	–	1
Greylag Goose	1	–	1	42	–	8
Barnacle Goose	–	–	–	3	–	–
Shelduck	–	–	–	5	–	–
Wigeon	–	–	–	55	–	1
Teal	–	–	–	70	1	4
Mallard	1	–	1	15	–	1
Pintail	–	–	–	2	–	1
Shoveler	–	–	–	1	–	–
Pochard	–	–	–	3	–	–
Ring-necked Duck	–	–	–	1	–	–
Tufted Duck	1	–	1	17	–	–
Scaup	–	–	–	4	–	–
Eider	1	–	1	160	–	1
Long-tailed Duck	2	–	2	18	–	1
Velvet Scoter	–	–	–	2	–	–
Goldeneye	1	–	1	20	–	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>1999</i>	<i>1948-99</i>	<i>1999</i>	<i>1948-99</i>
Sparrowhawk	4	—	4	336	—	21
Kestrel	—	—	—	47	—	8
Red-footed Falcon	—	—	—	1	—	—
Merlin	1	—	1	185	—	12
Peregrine Falcon	—	—	—	6	—	1
Quail	—	—	—	8	—	—
Water Rail	3	—	3	297	—	3
Spotted Crake	—	—	—	18	—	—
Little Crake	—	—	—	1	—	—
Baillon's Crake	—	—	—	1	—	—
Corncrake	—	—	—	39	—	2
Moorhen	2	—	2	97	—	3
Coot	—	—	—	14	—	1
Great Bustard	—	—	—	1	—	—
Oystercatcher	1	9	10	1465	—	68
Little Ringed Plover	—	—	—	1	—	—
Ringed Plover	12	—	12	654	—	6
Dotterel	—	—	—	4	—	—
Golden Plover	—	—	—	23	—	—
Grey Plover	—	—	—	1	—	—
Lapwing	—	2	2	318	—	6
Knot	—	—	—	98	—	2
Sanderling	—	—	—	92	—	1
Western Sandpiper	—	—	—	1	—	—
Little Stint	—	—	—	121	—	—
Temminck's Stint	—	—	—	2	—	—
White-rumped Sandpiper	—	—	—	1	—	—
Baird's Sandpiper	—	—	—	1	—	—
Pectoral Sandpiper	—	—	—	5	—	—
Curlew Sandpiper	—	—	—	6	—	—
Purple Sandpiper	—	—	—	155	—	1
Dunlin	—	—	—	540	—	7
Buff-breasted Sandpiper	—	—	—	1	—	—
Ruff	—	—	—	41	—	1
Jack Snipe	—	—	—	133	—	3
Common Snipe	5	1	6	441	—	4
Great Snipe	—	—	—	2	—	—
Woodcock	7	—	7	403	—	19
Black-tailed Godwit	—	—	—	1	—	—
Bar-tailed Godwit	—	—	—	9	—	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>1999</i>	<i>1948-99</i>	<i>1999</i>	<i>1948-99</i>
Whimbrel	—	—	—	16	—	—
Curlew	—	1	1	148	—	6
Spotted Redshank	—	—	—	3	—	—
Redshank	2	—	2	276	—	2
Greenshank	—	—	—	12	—	—
Green Sandpiper	—	—	—	56	—	1
Wood Sandpiper	—	—	—	18	—	—
Common Sandpiper	1	—	1	68	—	1
Turnstone	—	—	—	77	—	—
Red-necked Phalarope	—	—	—	5	—	—
Grey Phalarope	—	—	—	3	—	—
Pomarine Skua	—	—	—	1	—	—
Arctic Skua	—	42	42	3705	—	65
Great Skua	—	79	79	2072	2	30
Black-headed Gull	—	—	—	45	—	2
Common Gull	—	2	2	191	—	3
Lesser Black-backed Gull	—	4	4	1411	—	32
Herring Gull	—	16	16	4185	—	93
Iceland Gull	—	—	—	1	—	—
Glaucous Gull	—	—	—	39	—	1
Great Black-backed Gull	—	—	—	2836	—	102
Kittiwake	9	104	113	6762	—	35
Common Tern	—	1	1	475	—	3
Arctic Tern	—	255	255	9717	4	31
Guillemot	41	1374	1415	31503	35	930
Razorbill	29	246	275	8847	7	215
Black Guillemot	3	8	11	1600	—	19
Little Auk	1	—	1	13	—	—
Puffin	50	38	88	12397	1	31
Rock Dove	—	—	—	67	—	—
Wood Pigeon	—	—	—	69	—	2
Collared Dove	3	—	3	297	—	5
Turtle Dove	—	—	—	80	—	2
Cuckoo	2	—	2	103	—	1
Snowy Owl	—	—	—	1	—	1
Long-eared Owl	3	—	3	239	—	13
Short-eared Owl	—	—	—	17	—	—
Nightjar	—	—	—	4	—	—
Swift	—	—	—	17	—	1
Hoopoe	—	—	—	3	—	—

<i>Species</i>	<i>Ringed as:</i>		<i>Total 1999</i>	<i>Total 1948-99</i>	<i>Recovered/Controlled</i>	
	<i>Juv/Ad</i>	<i>Pullus</i>			<i>1999</i>	<i>1948-99</i>
Wryneck	2	—	2	209	—	—
Great Spotted Woodpecker	2	—	2	28	—	—
Short-toed Lark	—	—	—	9	—	—
Woodlark	—	—	—	3	—	—
Skylark	—	3	3	1239	—	3
Shorelark	—	—	—	5	—	—
Sand Martin	—	—	—	8	—	—
Swallow	—	—	—	246	—	2
House Martin	—	—	—	141	—	1
Richard's Pipit	—	—	—	10	—	—
Blyth's Pipit	—	—	—	1	—	—
Tawny Pipit	—	—	—	3	—	—
Olive-backed Pipit	—	—	—	9	—	—
Tree Pipit	6	—	6	628	—	—
Pechora Pipit	—	—	—	9	—	—
Meadow Pipit	95	7	102	9640	—	45
Red-throated Pipit	—	—	—	8	—	—
Rock Pipit	39	—	39	9117	—	29
Yellow Wagtail	—	—	—	10	—	—
Citrine Wagtail	—	—	—	5	—	—
Grey Wagtail	1	—	1	29	—	1
White/Pied Wagtail	—	—	—	667	—	4
Waxwing	—	—	—	37	—	—
Dipper	—	—	—	13	—	—
Wren	9	—	9	795	—	—
Dunnock	19	—	19	2362	—	7
Robin	106	—	106	8072	1	37
Thrush Nightingale	—	—	—	31	—	—
Nightingale	—	—	—	27	—	—
Siberian Rubythroat	—	—	—	1	—	—
Bluethroat	2	—	2	260	—	2
Red-flanked Bluetail	—	—	—	2	—	—
Black Redstart	4	—	4	151	—	—
Redstart	19	—	19	1755	—	1
Whinchat	3	—	3	604	—	2
Stonechat	—	—	—	55	—	—
Northern Wheatear	51	—	51	15902	—	73
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>1999</i>	<i>1948-99</i>	<i>1999</i>	<i>1948-99</i>
White's Thrush	—	—	—	1	—	—
Hermit Thrush	—	—	—	1	—	—
Grey-cheeked Thrush	—	—	—	2	—	—
Ring Ouzel	6	—	6	476	—	8
Blackbird	178	—	178	21487	—	321
Eye-browed Thrush	—	—	—	1	—	1
Dusky Thrush	—	—	—	1	—	—
Dark-throated Thrush	—	—	—	1	—	—
Fieldfare	2	—	2	625	—	1
Song Thrush	21	—	21	2763	—	32
Redwing	101	—	101	8511	—	72
Mistle Thrush	—	—	—	22	—	—
Pallas' G'hopper Warbler	—	—	—	11	—	—
Lanceolated Warbler	—	—	—	30	—	—
Grasshopper Warbler	2	—	2	111	—	—
River Warbler	—	—	—	7	—	—
Savi's Warbler	—	—	—	3	—	—
Aquatic Warbler	—	—	—	22	—	—
Sedge Warbler	4	—	4	420	—	—
Paddyfield Warbler	1	—	1	9	—	1
Blyth's Reed Warbler	2	—	2	7	—	1
Marsh Warbler	3	—	3	107	—	—
Reed Warbler	3	—	3	227	—	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	5	—	5	385	—	1
Lesser Whitethroat	15	—	15	651	—	1
Whitethroat	13	—	13	914	—	—
Garden Warbler	63	—	63	3315	—	3
Blackcap	249	—	249	4904	—	20
Greenish Warbler	1	—	1	22	—	—
Arctic Warbler	—	—	—	32	—	—
Pallas's Warbler	1	—	1	3	—	—
Yellow-browed Warbler	4	—	4	114	—	—

<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>1999</i>	<i>1948-99</i>	<i>1999</i>	<i>1948-99</i>
Radde's Warbler	—	—	—	1	—	—
Dusky Warbler	—	—	—	5	—	—
Bonelli's Warbler	—	—	—	1	—	—
Wood Warbler	1	—	1	103	—	—
Chiffchaff	46	—	46	1097	—	3
Willow Warbler	64	—	64	3432	1	7
Goldcrest	22	—	22	1521	—	2
Firecrest	—	—	—	1	—	—
Brown Flycatcher	—	—	—	1	—	—
Spotted Flycatcher	11	—	11	729	—	3
Red-breasted Flycatcher	1	—	1	55	—	—
Collared Flycatcher	1?	—	1?	2?	—	—
Pied Flycatcher	10	—	10	912	—	—
Coal Tit	—	—	—	1	—	—
Blue Tit	—	—	—	2	—	—
Great Tit	1	—	1	10	—	—
Treecreeper	—	—	—	1	—	—
Golden Oriole	—	—	—	8	—	—
Isabelline Shrike	—	—	—	2	—	—
Red-backed Shrike	4	—	4	202	—	—
Lesser Grey Shrike	—	—	—	6	—	—
Great Grey Shrike	—	—	—	112	—	1
Woodchat Shrike	—	—	—	13	—	—
Jackdaw	—	—	—	4	—	—
Rook	—	—	—	6	—	—
Hooded/Carrion Crow	—	—	—	48	—	—
Raven	—	—	—	26	—	—
Daurian Starling	—	—	—	1	—	—
Starling	26	188	214	25003	—	190
Rose-coloured Starling	—	—	—	3	—	—
House Sparrow	5	—	5	1460	—	3
Tree Sparrow	—	—	—	101	—	1
Chaffinch	14	—	14	2818	—	11
Brambling	27	—	27	3292	—	14
Greenfinch	5	—	5	244	—	1
Goldfinch	5	—	5	11	—	—
Siskin	35	—	35	391	—	1
Linnet	—	—	—	149	—	1
Twite	30	—	30	5443	—	5
Redpoll	2	—	2	623	5	6

<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>1999</i>	<i>1948-99</i>	<i>1999</i>	<i>1948-99</i>
Arctic Redpoll	—	—	—	19	—	—
Two-barred Crossbill	—	—	—	1	—	—
Common Crossbill	1	—	1	459	—	2
Parrot Crossbill	—	—	—	37	—	—
Common Rosefinch	2	—	2	177	—	1
Bullfinch	7	—	7	108	—	—
Hawfinch	1	—	1	17	—	—
Tennessee Warbler	—	—	—	2	—	—
Savannah Sparrow	—	—	—	1	—	—
Song Sparrow	—	—	—	3	—	—
White-crowned Sparrow	—	—	—	1	—	—
White-throated Sparrow	—	—	—	2	—	—
Lapland Bunting	—	—	—	47	—	—
Snow Bunting	—	—	—	630	—	3
Pine Bunting	—	—	—	2	—	—
Yellowhammer	2	—	2	60	—	—
Ortolan Bunting	1	—	1	19	—	—
Cretzschmar's Bunting	—	—	—	1	—	—
Yellow-browed Bunting	—	—	—	1	—	—
Rustic Bunting	1	—	1	17	—	1
Little Bunting	—	—	—	33	—	1
Chestnut Bunting	—	—	—	1	—	—
Yellow-breasted Bunting	—	—	—	6	—	—
Reed Bunting	9	—	9	425	—	3
Pallas's Reed Bunting	—	—	—	2	—	—
Red-headed Bunting	—	—	—	5	—	—
Black-headed Bunting	—	—	—	3	—	—
Corn Bunting	—	—	—	3	—	—
Totals:	4297	2575	6872	307189	169	4489

Ringling recoveries/controls reported to FIBO during 1999.

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

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

FULMAR. Five recoveries were reported during 1999, all of which were foreign: a chick ringed in September 1967 was recovered at Handsbossche, Zeewering, **Netherlands**, in February 1999 (11466 days, 849 km, SSE); a chick ringed in September 1968 was recovered at Katwijk, **Netherlands**, in February 1999 (11121 days, 895 km, SSE); an adult ringed in July 1978 was recovered at Syd Lango, **Sweden**, in February 1999 (7321 days, 727 km, ESE) and an adult ringed in June 1987 was recovered at Texel, **Netherlands**, in February 1999 (4265 days, 823 km, SE). Finally, an adult ringed in July 1988 was recovered at Nilland, **Netherlands**, in February 1999 (3874 days, 968 km, SSE). All were found dead.

STORM PETREL. A total of 104 individuals ringed on Fair Isle were controlled elsewhere and reported during 1999. These are summarised in the following table:

Table 3. Storm Petrels ringed on Fair Isle and controlled/recovered elsewhere; reports received during 1999.

Yell, Shetland	26	Treshnish Isles, Strathclyde	3
Whalsay, Shetland	1	Calf of Man, Isle of Man	1
Brough of Birsay, Orkney	9	Ness of Duncansby, John O'Groats	2
Burray, Orkney	2	Gwithian, St.Ives, Cornwall	1
Auskerry, Orkney	6	Klepp, Rogaland, NORWAY	1
Eday, Orkney	2	Lindesnes Fyr, NORWAY	1
North Ronaldsay, Orkney	2	Inishglora, Mayo, EIRE	1
Faraidh Head, Highland Region	4	Ponta de Almadena, PORTUGAL	4
Noss Head, Wick, Highland Region	7	Suduri i Dolum, FAEROES	2
Eilan nan Ron, Highland Region	27	At Sea off WEST AFRICA	1
Burra Firth, Highland Region	1		

Almost all of these birds were controlled by other ringers within the first three years of ringling, with the exception of the following birds: Two of the birds in Auskerry, Orkney were found as remains in Greater Black-backed Gull pellets, one of which was ringed in July 1988. Five of the birds controlled at Eilan nan Ron between 1997 and 1999 were ringed on Fair Isle in 1979, 1988, 1989 (2) and 1990. The bird controlled at Klepp, **Norway** had been ringed just the day before, while the bird on Eday in July 1998, had been ringed on Fair Isle in August 1997 and was controlled on its way back north at **Lisbon** in June 1998 a month before being captured on Eday. The bird at sea off **W.Africa** (5115 km) was recovered in unknown circumstances and was ringed on Fair Isle in 1993.

SHAG. Eight birds were reported during 1999, all of which were ringed as chicks and then found dead as tide line corpses. All birds were ringed in June/July 1998, apart from one from 1997 found dead on Papa Stour in November 1999. Two Shetland recoveries were of birds found at Scalloway in May 1999 and Dales Voe in June 1999. Three Orkney recoveries included one found on North Ronaldsay, one in Whitemill bay and one in the Ness of Orkney; all birds were found in January 1999. The other two recoveries were; one found in January 1999 at Ackergill, Wick (145 km, SSW) and another found in July 1999 at the River Ugie, Peterhead (224 km, S).

TEAL. An adult female ringed on the 7th October 1998 was shot on the 1st October 1999 at Soholt, **Denmark** (955 km, SE).

GREAT SKUA. A chick ringed in July 1995 was found dead at Nessaby, **Norway** (1846 km, NE) in August 1998. A chick ringed in July 1994 was a road casualty on Fetlar in September 1999 (126 km, NNE). Six 'Bonxies' ringed on Fair Isle in previous years were found dead on Fair Isle in 1999.

ARCTIC TERN. Only four recoveries reported in 1999: a chick ringed in July 1996 was found dying during severe weather conditions in October 1998 in Konkouati, Congo, **C. Africa** (822 days, 7153 km, S). The three other recoveries included two birds found dead on the same day at Dalsetter, Shetland having been ringed as chicks in June 1998 and July 1991 (47 km, NNE) and a chick ringed in July 1996 was found dead on Sanday, Orkney (62 km, SW).

GUILLEMOT. 35 reports received during 1999, of birds ringed as chicks; with a further three reports of birds ringed as adults. Table 4 lists the recovery location of birds ringed as chicks in June/July 1998 and recovered during the 1998/1999 winter, whilst the text below details birds ringed in previous years and recovered during 1999. All birds were found dead.

Table 4. Location of Guillemots recovered away from Fair Isle in their first year of life.

Shetland	2	FAEROES	2
nr. Inverness	1	NORWAY	4
Cumbria	1	NETHERLANDS	3
Cornwall	1	ICELAND	1
Lothian	1	DENMARK	2
Handa Island	1	FRANCE	1
nr. Nairn	2		

Recoveries of chicks ringed in previous years are listed below:

Norway: Six recoveries reported. Birds ringed as chicks in June 1992 (2), June 1993, June 1995, June 1996 and June 1997 were recovered in January 1999, having been accidentally caught in fishing nets.

Faeroes: One recovery reported: a chick ringed in June 1997 was found dead on the shore in March 1999 (374 km, NW).

Netherlands: Two recoveries reported: a chick ringed in June 1996 was found dead at Noordsvaarder in March 1999 (804 km, SE) and a chick ringed in June 1997 was found dead at Paal 8 in March 1999 (824 km, SE).

Germany: One recovery reported: a chick ringed in June 1996 was found dead at Juist in April 1999 (836 km, SSE).

Adults recovered during 1999:

Orkney: One recovery: a bird ringed in June 1983 was found dead at Scapa in March 1999 (100 km, SW).

Denmark: Two recoveries: a bird ringed in July 1978 was found dead at Kandestederne in February 1999 (726 km, E) and a bird ringed in June 1983 was found dead at Thyboran in February 1999 (658 km, ESE).

RAZORBILL. Seven reports of dead birds were received, with two UK recoveries: a chick ringed in June 1993 was found dead in Orkney in May 1999 (107 km, SW) and a chick ringed in July 1998 was found dead at Hoswick, Shetland (54 km, NNE). Foreign recoveries included two chicks ringed in June 1998: one found in **Norway** in August 1999 (1154 km, NE) and one in the **Faeroes** in December 1998 (393 km, NW). Adults recovered included one ringed in June 1985 found in Jylland, **Denmark** (728 km, SE) in February 1999, one ringed in June 1998 found in Halland, **Sweden** (921 km, ESE) in March 1999 and one ringed in June 1997 was found dead at Onnesed, **Sweden** in May 1999 (811 km E).

PUFFIN. Only one recovery reported: an adult ringed in July 1996 was found dead near Wick in June 1999 (148 km, SW).

ROBIN. A first-year ringed in September 1998, was taken by a cat in Uusimaa, **Finland** (1432 km, E) in May 1999.

WILLOW WARBLER. A first-year ringed on 2nd September 1998 was recovered by another ringer ten days later at Slevdalsvannet, **Norway** (499 km, E).

REDPOLL. Five birds of the *rostrata/islandica* race ringed on Fair Isle in September 1997, were recovered by another ringer on Unst, Shetland in October 1997.

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

STORM PETREL. In 1999, 81 Storm Petrels were controlled on Fair Isle: 63 UK, 1 Eire, 1 Faeroes, 3 Portugal and 13 from Norway.

All were trapped during regular mist-netting sessions near the Observatory during July, August and September.

Table 5. Storm Petrels ringed elsewhere and recovered on Fair Isle; reports received during 1999.

Yell, Shetland	21	Flamborough Head, Tyne & Wear	1
Mousa Isle, Shetland	2	Tynemouth, Tyne & Wear	1
Lerwick, Shetland	1	Calf of Man, Isle of Man	1
Whalsay, Shetland	2	Filey Brigg, North Yorkshire	1
Brough of Birsay, Orkney	7	Inishglora, Mayo, EIRE	1
North Ronaldsay, Orkney	5	Sudur i Dolum, FAEROES	1
Herston Head, South Ronaldsay	1	Ponta de Almadena, PORTUGAL	3
Auskerry, Orkney	1	Skogsoy, NORWAY	1
Eday, Orkney	1	Hernyken, NORWAY	5
Ness of Gossabrough	1	Lindesnes Fyr, NORWAY	2
Ness of Duncansby, Highland Region	5	Stapnes, Rogaland, NORWAY	1
Noss Head, Highland Region	3	Utsira, NORWAY	2
Eilan nan Ron, Highland Region	5	Reve Kai, Klepp, NORWAY	1
Faraidh Head, Highland Region	2	Runde, Heroy, NORWAY	1
Priest Island, Highland Region	1	Sogn og Fjordane, NORWAY	1

Most birds were ringed between 1995-1998, with the exception of two birds ringed in 1992; at Runde **Norway**, and Sogn og Fjordane **Norway** and controlled in 1994 and 1999 respectively, and a bird ringed in Lerwick, Shetland in 1989, was recaptured in July 1999. The Mousa Isle birds had been ringed as chicks whilst all the others were ringed as adults. The longest distances travelled were from the Portuguese birds, travelling a distance of 2549 km. All three were ringed in June 1998 and recovered on Fair Isle in July 1999.

ROBIN. Two recoveries, both foreign: A first-year ringed in October 1996 at Timenes, **Norway**, was controlled on Fair Isle in October 1998 (580 km, WNW) and an adult ringed in March 1997 at Haskerland, **Netherlands** was controlled on Fair Isle in October 1998 (867 km, NW). Both birds were associated with a large arrival of Robins on the island at the time and a period of continuous south-easterly wind.

GARDEN WARBLER. A first-year ringed at Haarlem, **Netherlands** in September 1998 was found dead on Fair Isle in October 1998 (22 days, 879 km, NW).

WILLOW WARBLER. A chick ringed in May 1999 at Yateley Common, Hampshire was recovered in August 1999 (914 km, NW). This is an interesting recovery because it appears to have migrated North instead of South after fledging.

Other Wildlife

The Observatory keeps records of most forms of wildlife (as well as birds) and all visitors are encouraged to report sightings at the daily log or to the Warden. Cetaceans, butterflies and moths make up the bulk of such sightings. These records are submitted to the relevant organisations in Shetland, which produce the following Annual Reports:

Shetland Entomological Group (includes records of butterflies and moths on Fair Isle). Membership £5, includes Annual Report. Contact Mike Pennington, 9 Daisy Park, Baltasound, Unst, Shetland. Tel: 01957 711307

Shetland Sea Mammal Group (includes records from Fair Isle and also from the 'Good Shepherd' during the Crossings to and from Shetland.) Membership £5, includes Annual Report. Contact Howard Loates, 'Windrill', Exnaboe, Virkie, Shetland ZE3 9JS. Tel: 01950 460648

Summary of Cetaceans in 1999

Deryk Shaw

Cetaceans are frequently seen during the 'Good Shepherd' Crossing and 1999 was no exception, with many sightings of dolphins, porpoises and Minke Whales, plus a single breaching Humped-backed Whale on 8th July. Full details of these and other sightings can be found in the Shetland Sea Mammal Group Report.

A good year was had from Fair Isle itself: A Minke Whale was seen travelling north along the West Coast on 8th June and another was seen on 23rd June. The cetacean highlight of the year (and indeed the overall highlight for many staff and those visitors lucky enough to be on Fair Isle at the time), was a pod of Killer Whales, first seen from the Observatory dinner table, in Mavers Geo. They were followed down the east coast and settled around the Burrian, to be watched by an admiring crowd as they chased and killed seals. At least nine individuals were counted, including a large male and several smaller females and juveniles. Photographs showed it actually to be a recognised pod of ten individuals. A memorable experience. Two Pilot Whales (an adult and a juvenile), were seen off Bunes on 20th September.

Dolphin records comprised a group of six White-sided on 29th July and a single on 8th October; groups of three White-beaked Dolphins on 22nd August, 15th September and 20th September and finally a report of two Rissos Dolphins, also on 20th September. Harbour Porpoises were seen frequently, mainly during August and September and mostly of one to four, however, six were seen on 20th September and thirty on 27th September.

Summary of Butterflies in 1999

Deryk Shaw

The vast majority of butterfly records related to Red Admiral, with the first being five on 27th June, two next day and one on 29th. Further records of two on 3rd July, eight on 7th and a single on 11th were the last until mid-September, except for a single on 3rd-4th August. Four on 13th September increased to eight next day, with ones and twos reported to the months end. By contrast, Painted Lady was only recorded once – one on 30th August was the sole Shetland record. Small Tortoiseshell singles were recorded three times in August and once in September. Peacock were recorded on four dates in August, with a peak of two on 12th. The most unusual record however, was of a White spp. on 11th July.

Fair Isle Moths in 1999

Nick Riddiford

Even by Fair Isle standards, it was a terribly slow start to the “moth season”. The Schoolton trap attracted a single Angle Shades *Phlogophora meticulosa* on 20th May, no moths in June and only a handful before 27th July. Moreover, it was a distinctly abnormal year with some species virtually non-existent and previously dominant species scarce. It seemed that many species had done badly at pre-adult stages during the extended cold spring or perhaps the previous wet winter. One remarkable exception was the Dark Arches *Apamea monoglypha*. It is a common component of July and August captures in Fair Isle traps, but rarely exceeding 10 in any one night. In 1999, it was consistently the most abundant species, often exceeding half the entire catch. In the first six days of August the average nightly Dark Arches catch in the Schoolton trap was 68, with a peak of 105 on 4th. The species was abundant on sugared posts too. These are far greater numbers than recorded before. By contrast, numbers of other species never picked up, the best being 54 Ingrailed Clay *Diarsia mendica* on 24th August.

The lack of quantity was compensated by a series of unusual records. The least anticipated was a Poplar Hawk-moth *Laothoe populi*, whose arrival circumstances were fortuitous. It had been found on a cruise ship which, on 17th June, was unable to land. However, Deryk Shaw and others from the bird observatory went on board and fetched it back. Being released on the isle it needs to be added to the growing list of ship-assisted arrivals. Its true location details are “off the east coast of Scotland at an unknown point between Edinburgh and Fair Isle”. It constitutes the first Fair Isle record, though hardly of “natural” occurrence.

On 4th August I caught a Saltern Ear of the continental race *Amphipoea fucosa fucosa*. This is the second Fair Isle record. The previous one, on 14th August

1997, also showed characteristics of the European nominate race and Barry Goater informed me then that further specimens with the same characteristics would qualify it as a first British record for that form. One in Shetland since, plus the current specimen confirms that supposition. Two Common Rustics *Mesapamea secalis* in the trap, another on moth brew (see below) and Fair Isle's first Holly Tortrix *Rhopobota naevana* were other excitements of a good night's trapping. The last was most appropriate in name and arrival year! Fair Isle's first Lesser Common Rustic *Mesapamea didyma* (□) was trapped on 11th August and another Common or Lesser Common on 16th. A Mouse Moth *Amphipyra tragopoginis* was the highlight of 21st. On 22nd August, Deryk had the bird observatory trap up and running – with spectacular results. The highlight was a Chevron *Eulithis testata*. There appears to be an old record from the Gully – though I do not have the reference. Also in the trap was the tortricid *Acleris aspersana*.

One of the drawbacks of Fair Isle in the autumn, for moth trapping, is the almost constant wind. Placement of light traps becomes tricky and on some nights could lead to the trap rather than the moths migrating. An alternative technique came into its own in September 1999, painting posts with a concoction of sugar, jam and treacle, laced with alcohol. I painted the cocktail on Schoolton garden posts at dusk on 21st September. Within two hours the moth brew had drawn a Red Sword-grass *Xylena vetusta* and a Herald *Scoliopteryx libatrix*. Both were firsts for Fair Isle. The only other moth was another migrant, but more expected – Silver Y *Autographa gamma*. Two hours later the posts supported a second Herald and an Angle Shades. They are all migrants.

The only moth the following evening was another migrant, Fair Isle's second ever Pearly Underwing *Peridroma saucia*. On 29th September there were 4 Angle Shades and the first Fair Isle and Shetland record of the attractive micro *Agonopterix arenella*. Angle Shades is a well known migrant, but can breed this far north – as was confirmed on 5th October when Stewart Thomson, Quoy, showed me a full grown Angle Shades *Phlogophora meticulosa* caterpillar which he had found when taking in the oat stooks. It was clearly seeking a site to overwinter and/or pupate so Stewart put it in the dry and cool of a Quoy outhouse. That evening the sugared posts at Schoolton held 4 Angles Shades, 2 Dark Sword-grasses *Agrotis ipsilon* and Fair Isle's second record of Red Sword-grass *Xylena vetusta*. The only non-migrant was a White-shouldered House Moth *Endrosis sarcitrella*. On 8th October the sugared posts again produced spectacular results. Apart from the now usual Dark Sword-grass *Agrotis ipsilon* and Angle Shades *Phlogophora meticulosa*, the very first post sported what I at first took to be another Red Sword-grass. Indeed, only at the end of my posts tour did I take a closer look and decide I ought to capture it. I could see it was smaller than the last two, not so extensively dark marked and, in torch light, apparently with pale tarsi.

Taking it inside, I was able to confirm it as Sword-grass *Xylena exsoleta*, right down to the diagnostic straw colour hind tarsi. This is the second Fair Isle record, the previous being caught by Elizabeth Riddiford in April six or so years ago. Sword-grass is included in the UK priority moth and butterfly biodiversity action list, because of its status as a scarce and declining species.

It was a case of best and last, the weather and gathering autumn bringing an abrupt end to the Fair Isle moth season. I would like to thank Deryk Shaw for supplying records, Mike Pennington for comments on Shetland status, and Barry Goater and Colin Plant for their valued identification assistance and advice.

Fair Isle Weather in 1999

Dave Wheeler

For Fair Isle this was the third wettest year on record (at least since 1974), total rainfall amounting to 1132.7 mm – 122.5% of the normal 924.4 mm. The two previous wet years were 1979 with 1137.9 mm and 1990 with 1167.9 mm.

The mean annual temperature of 7.9° was just +0.3° above the long-term mean – with six warmer years – 1974, 1989, 1990, 1991, 1992 and 1997.

Fair Isle's total annual sunshine of 1277.9 hours was marginally above average at 104.7%.

For England and Wales it was the warmest year on record with plenty of sunshine, but also frequent thunderstorms and local flooding.

January

The year began as the previous year had ended with another mild, rather sunny month but, unlike the previous December, somewhat drier with rainfall below normal. Much of the month's mildness was due, not to high maxima but to the lack of low minima. While the mean daily maximum temperature for the month was just +0.4° higher than average (5.9°), the mean daily minimum was +0.9° higher than normal (3.2°). This lack of cooling was even more marked at Lerwick where the mean minimum of 2.8° was +1.6° above normal. This is all the more surprising as the increased hours of sunshine suggested less cloud than normal which should have led to marked overnight cooling. This was presumably offset by the predominantly SW'ly winds.

Across England and Wales it was mainly mild, windy and wet, but with some generous sunshine.

January	Rainfall mm		Sunshine hrs/day		Mean Temperature °C	
	Actual	Anomaly %	Actual	Anomaly %	Actual	Anomaly
Fair Isle	87	87	1.16	134	5.2	+0.7
Scotland	228	147	1.13	101	3.3	+0.7
England & Wales	123	148	1.93	123	5.5	+1.9

February

A cold, wet and windy month with sunshine close to normal. The year's highest gust of 85 knots (98 mph), recorded during a W to WNW'ly storm on 4th, was also the Scottish extreme for February – the mean wind speed for the 24 hours averaging 44.7 knots. The 13 days with snow cover at 0900 UTC equalled the highest February (1979) total, but fell somewhat short of the 1981 December value of 18 days with snow lying. The grass minimum temperature fell to minus 4.8° on the 9th above a snow surface while the lowest sea temperature of 6.9° occurred on the

9th. An outbreak of cold arctic air mid-month produced the coldest day of the year on the 16th when the air temperature fell to minus 3.8°.

Generally mild, changeable and windy at times across England and Wales. Sunny and dry away from the west. Sunniest February on record for southeast Scotland.

February	Rainfall mm		Sunshine hrs/day		Mean Temperature °C	
	Actual	Anomaly %	Actual	Anomaly %	Actual	Anomaly
Fair Isle	116	163	2.04	102	3.4	-0.9
Scotland	138	133	2.58	111	3.2	+0.7
England & Wales	50	78	2.85	124	5.0	+1.4

Winter (December-February)

Though the winter was milder than normal it was slightly cooler than those of recent years. With frequent outbreaks of cooler N to NW'ly air, snow fell on more days than we have come to expect over the past few years (41 days compared to the normal of 36.2). Snow cover at 0900 hours was more frequent than usual (20 days against an average of 11.7 days) but never lay for long. A snow depth of 12 cm was recorded on the 11th. Winter rainfall was above normal, as was sunshine! Fair Isle: Rain 313.7 mm (115%), sun 116.5 hrs (114%), mean temperature 4.8° (+0.2°).

March

March used to be renowned as one of the most 'wintry' of months. While it was dominated by low pressure and polar air masses – ingredients that can, on occasions, produce severe weather conditions – this month lived up to its new reputation, providing us with weather that was mostly benign, so spring began with a mild, sunny month with rainfall very close to normal.

Mainly mild and changeable across England and Wales.

March	Rainfall mm		Sunshine hrs/day		Mean Temperature °C	
	Actual	Anomaly %	Actual	Anomaly %	Actual	Anomaly
Fair Isle	85	100	3.95	129	5.5	+0.8
Scotland	126	97	3.50	114	5.0	+1.1
England & Wales	69	100	3.53	103	7.1	+1.7

April

An overall mild month with a hint of spring, but a wintry spell mid-month reminded us of our northerly latitude. The gust of 64 knots (74 mph) recorded on the 21st was the Scottish extreme for April. We also saw rainfall slightly below and sunshine a little above average.

Mostly unsettled and rather wet across England and Wales, rather warm by the month's end.

April	Rainfall mm		Sunshine hrs/day		Mean Temperature °C	
	Actual	Anomaly %	Actual	Anomaly %	Actual	Anomaly
Fair Isle	49	98	5.28	107	6.3	+0.7
Scotland	106	140	4.62	98	7.3	+1.4
England & Wales	75	126	5.23	109	9.1	+1.6

May

Unfortunately, while May was a month of near average temperature and sunshine, it wasn't the most pleasant of spring months. A low, moving east across Faeroe driving fronts through the UK, brought gale to severe gale force SW to W'ly winds and blustery showers to the Northern Isles on the 21st. A frontal system, becoming slow-moving over the Northern Isles, gave 25.4mm of rain between 09h-21h on the 28th making this (with a 24-hour total of 26.6mm) the wettest May day on record. The 36 hours of rain from 21h on the 27th to 09h on the 29th gave 36.8mm (almost equal to the average rainfall for May) and resulted in this being the wettest May on record for Fair Isle.

Mostly warm and changeable across England and Wales, more unsettled in the NW, sunnier and warmer in the SE.

May	Rainfall mm		Sunshine hrs/day		Mean Temperature °C	
	Actual	Anomaly %	Actual	Anomaly %	Actual	Anomaly
Fair Isle	95	243	6.66	105	7.9	+0.3
Scotland	109	136	5.20	89	11.6	+1.7
England & Wales	56	90	5.27	87	12.6	+1.9

Spring (March–May)

Overall, with a mean daily temperature of 6.5°, the spring was a little milder than normal. Greater than average rainfall was, to some extent, offset by slightly higher sunshine figures.

Fair Isle: Rain 229.1 mm (130%), sun 487.6 hrs (110%), mean temperature 6.6° (+0.6°).

June

As spring had ended the summer began wet and – with a high frequency of N to NE'ly winds during the first half of June – rather cool. Sunshine was at a premium early in the month but, with a good number of days with around ten hours sunshine each during the last fortnight, the final total was only about 10% below the June average – unlike Lerwick which saw some 27% less sunshine than normal.

Rather wet across England and Wales. Some very warm days at times.

June	Rainfall mm		Sunshine hrs/day		Mean Temperature °C	
	Actual	Anomaly %	Actual	Anomaly %	Actual	Anomaly
Fair Isle	102	227	5.05	90	9.7	-0.1
Scotland	114	141	4.69	86	11.1	-0.4
England & Wales	82	136	6.44	103	13.4	-0.2

July

Normally the month when the fine weather usually experienced in June breaks down, this year July proved to be a better than average month. In fact, rainfall would have been well below average (possibly making this the driest July on record) but for one very wet day on the 22nd when 16.9 mm of rain fell. While it was a foggy month, most of the fog occurred overnight.

The driest July over England and Wales since 1911. Mostly very warm and sunny – especially in the south. Cooler in the north and northwest.

July	Rainfall mm		Sunshine hrs/day		Mean Temperature °C	
	Actual	Anomaly %	Actual	Anomaly %	Actual	Anomaly
Fair Isle	42	80	4.03	91	11.7	+0.2
Scotland	87.6	95	5.36	116	14.0	+1.1
England & Wales	22.5	37	7.59	128	17.1	+1.7

August

August was another dry, sunny month and, during the first week, rather warm. The longest dry spell of the summer lasted from the 27th July to the 8th August when no measurable rainfall was recorded, with another dry spell from 16th to 24th August. This contrasted strikingly with the dull and wet month experienced in 'The South'. The warmest day of the year occurred on 4th August with a maximum of 18.7°. The highest recorded sea temperature for the year of 13.6° occurred a few days later on 6th.

A very hot start for England and Wales, then mostly rather cool and unsettled.

August	Rainfall mm		Sunshine hrs/day		Mean Temperature °C	
	Actual	Anomaly %	Actual	Anomaly %	Actual	Anomaly
Fair Isle	52	84	6.68	142	12.2	+0.1
Scotland	65.7	60	5.07	116	13.2	+0.5
England & Wales	102	148	5.07	91	16.0	+0.6

Summer (June-August)

A rather wet start to the summer resulted in above average rainfall for the three months, but a good July and August helped produce one of the best summers for a good many years – at least in Northern Scotland! Hours of sunshine were above average although the mean daily temperature – despite some warm days in August – was very little above the long-term mean of 11.1°.

Fair Isle: Rain 195.8 mm (130%), sun 483.6 hrs (107%), mean temperature 11.1° (+0.1°).

September

Autumn began as summer had ended with a mild, dry September, though with slightly less sun than usual. With just one gale reported and a maximum gust of only 51 knots the traditional equinoctial gales failed to make an appearance.

Very warm or hot at first across England and Wales. Generally unsettled with frequent thunderstorms, heavy downpours and local flooding.

September	Rainfall mm		Sunshine hrs/day		Mean Temperature °C	
	Actual	Anomaly %	Actual	Anomaly %	Actual	Anomaly
Fair Isle	72	80	3.73	96	12.2	+1.5
Scotland	173	127	3.55	108	12.8	+2.0
England & Wales	118	157	5.25	119	15.3	+2.0

October

Apart from the first week, October was another mild month. It was also wet and rather dull, mainly cyclonic but with a short settled anticyclonic spell mid-month. Despite it being rather cloudy, the aurora was observed on 6 nights – about twice the average. As auroral activity is dependent on solar activity, its frequency closely follows the same 11-year cycle and – as we are heading to a peak in the cycle – we look forward to seeing much more of the “Merry Dancers” during the next few winters.

Over England and Wales, a mainly anticyclonic month, it was the sunniest October since 1959 and the second sunniest since 1909.

October	Rainfall mm		Sunshine hrs/day		Mean Temperature °C	
	Actual	Anomaly %	Actual	Anomaly %	Actual	Anomaly
Fair Isle	131	121	1.88	81	9.5	+0.6
Scotland	110	70	2.22	92	9.1	+0.7
England & Wales	80	100	4.02	129	10.6	+0.2

November

An intensifying anticyclone drifting north across the UK brought a few days of settled weather to the Northern Isles during the second week of November and the year's highest pressure of 1044.0 mb on the 10th. Despite it being a very mild month it was an introduction to winter, with a snow cover – if only of 1 cm – for much of the 17th when temperatures fell to just below freezing in strong N'ly winds. It was also a windy month with gusts to 78 knots (90 mph) on the 26th – the Scottish extreme for the month – when WSW'ly winds averaged 50 knots (storm force) for several hours during the evening. Winds again gusted to 68 knots on the 30th. Sunshine for the month was below average while rainfall was about normal. The aurora borealis was seen on six nights – twice the average frequency. Mainly mild and dry over England and Wales during the first two weeks. A cold spell mid-month, followed by an unsettled windy and wet – though mostly mild – end to the month.

November	Rainfall mm		Sunshine hrs/day		Mean Temperature °C	
	Actual	Anomaly %	Actual	Anomaly %	Actual	Anomaly
Fair Isle	119	102	0.86	70	7.8	+1.0
Scotland	184	117	1.54	101	6.2	+1.6
England & Wales	64	70	2.50	118	7.6	+1.2

Autumn (September-November)

With a mean daily temperature of 9.8° this was the warmest autumn on record for Fair Isle. Not too wet but very dull and lacking in sunshine.

Fair Isle: Rain 321.6 mm (102%), sun 196.3 hrs (87%), mean temperature 9.9° (+1.1°).

December

The month's weather was dominated by showery airstreams circulating around deep low pressure systems to the north of Scotland. A feature of the month was that, on three occasions, lows that formed just to the west of Scotland developed rapidly as they crossed over or near the country overnight, becoming major storms by the following morning. To end a wet year December surpassed itself – the total rainfall of 183.9 mm resulting in the wettest December on record for Fair Isle. The 22nd was the year's wettest day with a 24-hour total of 29.9 mm. Christmas Day saw the year's lowest pressure, the barometer falling to 943.5 mb – equalling the previous lowest for the Isle recorded on 20th December 1982. It was also a dull, cold month, with the usual wintry spell in the week prior to Christmas.

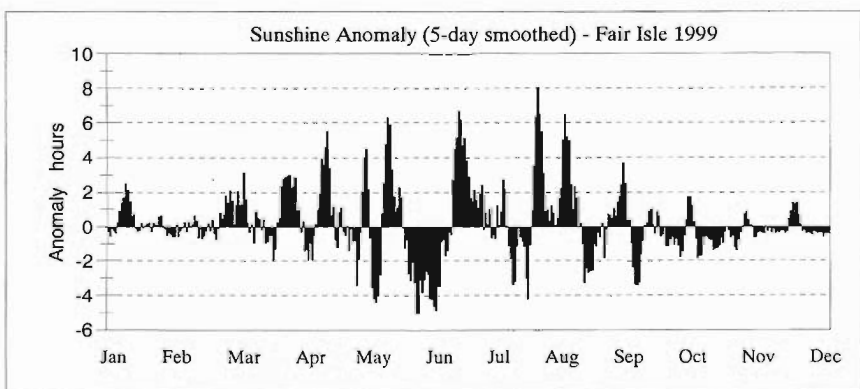
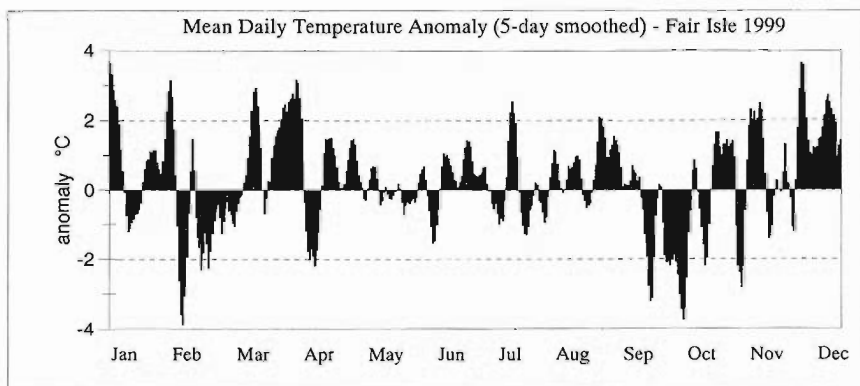
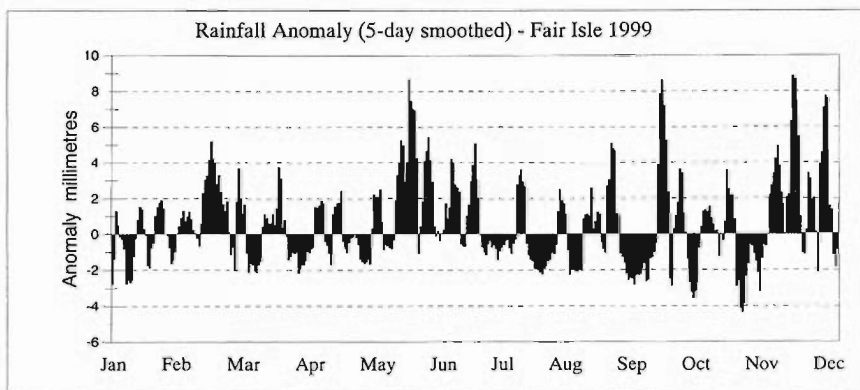
Unsettled with frequent gales and some snow over the north of England. Sunshine well above normal, but very wet with local flooding.

December	Rainfall mm		Sunshine hrs/day		Mean Temperature °C	
	Actual	Anomaly %	Actual	Anomaly %	Actual	Anomaly
Fair Isle	184	172	0.49	87	4.1	-1.1
Scotland	261	175	1.17	131	2.4	-0.9
England & Wales	143	148	2.00	140	4.7	+0.1

Meteorological Data, Fair Isle 1999.

Temp. (°C)	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC	YEAR
Mean	5.2	3.4	5.3	6.3	7.8	9.7	11.6	12.2	12.1	9.5	7.7	4.3	7.9
Maximum	8.7	10.2	9.6	10.8	11.9	14.0	15.1	18.7	15.7	13.0	12.0	10.6	(7.6)
Minimum	0.2	−3.8	0.6	−1.0	2.4	3.8	8.1	7.6	6.2	5.5	−0.4	−3.6	
Rainfall (mm)													
Monthly	86.7	115.6	84.9	48.8	95.4	102.4	41.6	51.8	71.9	131.0	118.7	183.9	1132.7
Maximum daily fall	10.5	11.6	15.7	14.6	26.6	15.2	16.9	13.5	21.7	23.6	17.3	29.9	(924.4)
Sunshine (hours)													
Total	36.0	59.1	122.6	158.4	206.6	151.5	124.9	207.2	112.0	58.4	25.9	15.3	1277.9
Maximum daily	4.5	5.9	9.9	12.5	15.7	16.6	11.7	15.3	11.4	7.2	3.6	3.2	(1220.7)
Wind speed (knots)													
Mean	17.4	21.2	17.1	13.8	13.6	11.9	12.5	10.6	12.3	17.1	18.6	19.6	15.5
Maximum gust	59	85	75	64	57	41	35	38	51	61	78	60	(16.0)
☼ Number of days													
Hail	12	18	6	9	2	0	0	0	0	5	11	21	84
Snow/sleet	11	19	8	8	0	0	0	0	0	1	5	16	68
Rain, > 0.1mm	27	27	23	19	15	21	17	11	17	24	24	30	255
Wet, > 0.9mm	20	24	13	14	10	18	12	8	12	20	18	23	192
Ground frost	6	14	2	6	1	0	0	0	0	0	2	13	44
Wind (direction at 0900)													
North	3	4	4	2	4	6	2	6	0	2	5	5	43
North-east	0	0	0	3	4	5	0	6	1	1	0	2	22
East	0	0	1	7	9	0	4	2	6	5	0	0	34
South-east	4	0	1	3	5	4	7	5	5	5	0	2	41
South	7	6	14	1	5	6	3	4	8	3	4	4	65
South-west	9	5	2	6	2	4	5	2	4	5	7	5	56
West	5	7	7	3	2	3	7	4	4	8	11	7	68
North-west	3	5	2	5	0	2	3	2	2	2	3	6	35
Calm	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1

(Figures in brackets are the mean for the period 1974-1998)



Fair Isle Bird Observatory Trust Financial Report and Accounts for 1999

A summary of the Trust's accounts for the year ended 31st October 1999 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 year ended 31st October 1999 was another successful year for Fair Isle Bird Observatory in every respect, as an immensely enjoyable place to visit, in pure financial terms and in terms of developing the Observatory as a business. Visitor numbers reduced from the high levels in 1998 to the more typical levels of the preceding years. However, excellent work by the staff maintained overall income at a high level whilst reducing the level of expenditure, the effect of which was to maintain the satisfactory financial performance of the previous years.

We received several donations during the year, most notably from the estate of Miss Rosa Dorothy Rogers and also from Jack Keiser who is a regular visitor. We are extremely grateful for these donations and the financial support from the Friends of Fair Isle. We also continue to receive substantial income from the JNCC and Scottish National Heritage for Seabird Monitoring work and the provision of a Fair Isle Ranger Service respectively. The income is vital for the continued financial health of FIBOT and we are working hard to ensure that we continue to fulfil the objectives of these two organisations.

During 1999 we replaced the old Nissan van with a gleaming white Ford Transit. In addition we started work on replacement and refurbishment of some of the windows and doors. We have also incurred additional expenditure in order to satisfy the requirements of Health and Safety and those of our insurers. In 2000 we intend to improve the operation of the showers and continue the program of replacing windows and doors where necessary. There are satisfactory cash reserves at present to undertake this work. Further expenditure on the roof may also be necessary in the near future.

As commented on in previous reports, we have continued to grow the volume of business obtained through organised travel groups. The majority of our visitors will, however, continue to be independent travellers.

A second area of development is our increased use of the Internet as a means of attracting visitors. We plan to increase the amount of information on the Fair Isle Bird Observatory web-site during 2000 with regularly-updated pages covering accommodation vacancies, bird news and travel arrangements. Readers should access our web-site at www.fairislebirdobs.co.uk to view our progress in this area.

Any readers wishing to make a specific or non-specific donation to support the Observatory can be assured it will be gratefully received and used effectively.

At the risk of repeating the conclusion of last year's report, there is much to be

optimistic about and our financial situation remains satisfactory. With continued careful management and prudent control of expenditure, there is no reason why the Observatory should not flourish into the future.

Mike Wood, Finance Director

Income & Expenditure Account for the year ended 31st October 1999

	1999 £	1998 £
Income		
Hostel Income	49,715	53,521
Shop Sales	3,829	3,618
Bar Income	4,073	4,551
Miscellaneous Hostel Income	3,448	2,598
	<u>61,065</u>	<u>64,288</u>
Cost of Sales		
Purchases	21,096	23,453
Wages & Salaries	22,457	24,766
	<u>43,553</u>	<u>48,219</u>
Gross Profit	17,512	16,069
Other Income		
Interest Received	3,965	3,500
Deferred Grant Income released	2,400	2,400
Subscriptions	5,169	4,215
Donations	6,107	17,023
Grants Received	14,853	15,018
Other Income	0	0
	<u>32,494</u>	<u>42,156</u>
	50,006	58,225
Other Expenses		
Administration	10,288	7,382
Establishment	15,352	30,018
Marketing & Sales	5,980	3,340
Financial & Legal	844	1,464
Depreciation	16,726	16,250
	<u>49,190</u>	<u>58,454</u>
Surplus/(Deficit) for the year	816	(229)

Balance Sheet as at 31st October 1999

	31/10/99	31/10/98
	£	£
Fixed Assets		
Tangible assets	121,372	130,998
Investments	10,857	10,857
	<u>132,229</u>	<u>141,855</u>
 Current Assets		
Stocks	5,701	6,949
Debtors	12,826	14,315
Cash at bank and in hand	69,675	61,610
	<u>88,202</u>	<u>82,874</u>
Creditors: amounts falling due within one year	(72,370)	(75,084)
Net Current Assets/(Liabilities)	15,832	7,790
Total assets less current liabilities	148,061	149,645
 Creditors: amounts falling due after more than one year	(8,300)	(10,700)
	<u>139,761</u>	<u>138,945</u>
Representing:		
Accumulated Surplus	114,376	104,483
Appeal Reserve	25,385	34,462
	<u>139,761</u>	<u>138,945</u>

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 who visited Fair Isle three times before he died at the early age of 19.

Grants normally cover only the cost of travel by the most economical means possible to the Observatory and back home. Full travel costs may only be given for visits of two full 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 costs and to offset fuel costs. Awardees are expected to take part in the regular work routine conducted by Observatory staff on a five to six-days-a-week basis. Work hours are normally 0900-1800, but may be longer in the seabird breeding season. Work varies depending on the time of year so you are advised to discuss with the warden any particular interest you may have in ringing, migration or seabird work so you can arrange your visit at the appropriate time. Duties may involve several hours of data entry on the Observatory computers in a day, migration census work, ringing, trap repairs, visitor assistance and some maintenance work.

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 your detailed CV, your phone number and the names, addresses and phone numbers of 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 make a definite booking. Please provide the Administrator with details of your travel arrangements, save all your travel receipts and present them to the Administrator when you arrive. The costs of your travel will then be offset against your bill for accommodation.

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For further details contact

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Tel. No. Inverness 01463 232034

website: www.nts.org.uk

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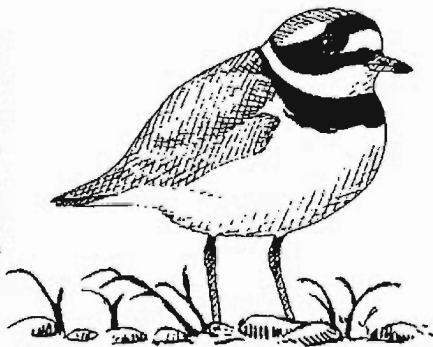


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