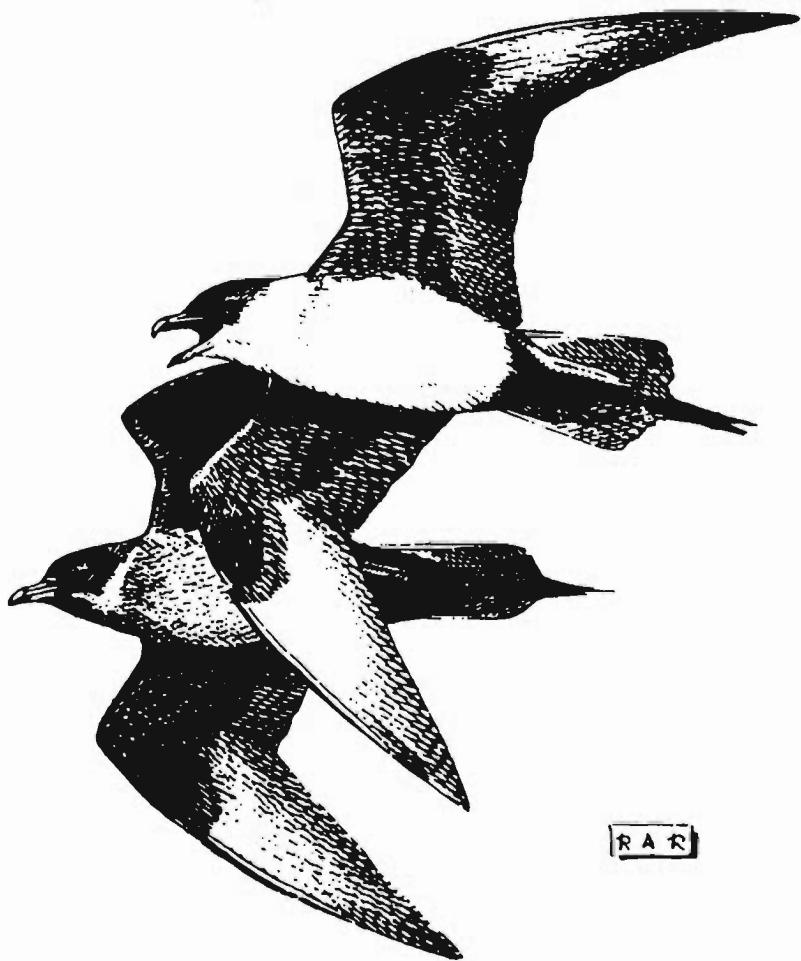


# FAIR ISLE BIRD OBSERVATORY

## Report for 2001





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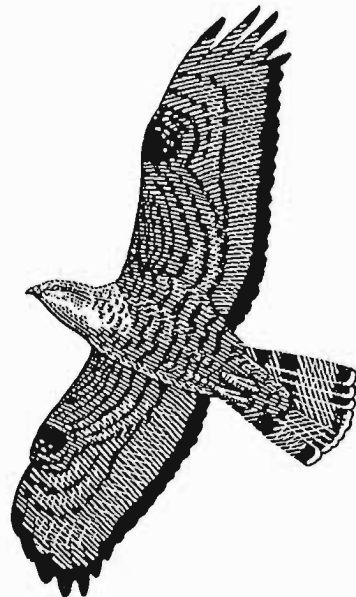
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# Fair Isle Bird Observatory

Report no. 54

2001

*Edited by Deryk and Hollie Shaw*

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## **Chairman's Report**

Roy Dennis

It is a pleasure to introduce the 54th annual report and to record another successful year for the Bird Observatory on Fair Isle. The Board of Directors are again, very pleased that we had such an excellent team on Fair Isle in 2001 led so ably by Hollie and Deryk. The happy atmosphere helps to make visits to the island even more enjoyable.

Visitors to the Observatory increased, as did organised bird-watching groups. This was most encouraging when one remembers that the scourge of foot & mouth disease was raging in England and southern Scotland. We are most grateful to the island crofters who, along with the Observatory staff, were able to work out a sensible plan to encourage visitors to the island, without taking unacceptable risks.

As ever, bird watching on the island held its special delights, with a whole range of rarer Fair Isle species, despite the numbers of common migrants in both spring and autumn being on the low side. Two new species were added to the list in October, namely Pallid Swift and Black-faced Bunting. The latter was also a new species for Scotland.

It was the last year of recording for Seabird 2000 and Fair Isle finished its series of counts of all the seabird species, by censusing Puffin, Kittiwake and Shags. For seabirds though, it was the worst breeding season since 1990, due to the sudden disappearance of Sandeels. The most obviously tragic were the Arctic Terns, which started so well with a record total of 2836 pairs (amazing when I remember my years on Fair Isle in the 1960s when there were none) and yet only four young survived to fly. The only seabirds to prosper were Gannets and Shags, which both increased and had above average success.

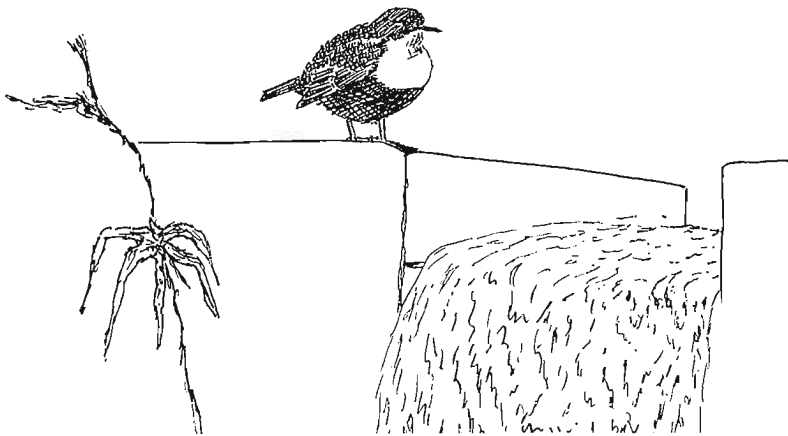
As always, my sincere thanks to the many people who help make the Observatory a success. But to continue to prosper, we need people to visit the island. So if you haven't been to stay in the Bird Observatory for a while, please come and visit us again – if you cannot, then please encourage others to come to Fair Isle. And please remember to recommend the island as a brilliant destination for visitors from other countries, not just to see spectacular Seabirds and rare migrants, but also the opportunity to sample a unique way of life on such a beautiful island.

We are also most grateful to Friends of Fair Isle for their continuing support of the Observatory. Sadly, one of our oldest 'Friends' and a regular visitor, Jack Keiser died during the year. Finally, I'd like to end with special thanks to Mike Wood, our Finance Director, who gives so much of his time for FIBOT.

## Warden's Report

Deryk Shaw

Ornithologically, 2001 will be remembered as a year full of highs and lows. The two new species (including another first for Scotland) added to the island list (which now stands at 359) were the highs, whilst a poor spring passage and an even worse breeding season were obviously depressing lows. A total of 204 species recorded is around the recent average, however this included a long list of quality finds (and also a few glaring omissions). Although overall numbers of common migrants in the Spring were very low, a huge fall of thrushes and Robins at the end of March was memorable whilst four 'White-spotted' Bluethroats (5th-9th FIBO records), three Common Cranes, White-tailed Eagle, only our second ever Ring-billed Gull and Black Tern and second Spring occurrences of Great Snipe and Olive-backed Pipit were the rarity highlights. One of the most discussed sightings of the year concerned a second-summer gull on 22nd April showing several characters of Yellow-legged Gull (*Larus michahellis*). However, with such a difficult species (at this age) to identify and the fact it had one or two features which "did not quite fit" meant that another potential addition to the list could not safely be clinched. Numbers of autumn migrants were little better than the previous Spring, however the year was unforgettable nevertheless. Added to "the usual" – (only on Fair Isle!) – Pechora Pipit, Lanceolated Warblers, Blyth's Reed Warbler, Pallas's Grasshopper Warbler and Yellow-breasted Bunting were; our ninth Dusky Warbler and (the following day) fourth Raddes Warbler whilst the first Pallid Swift for Shetland paused briefly on 2nd October. The best however waited until last – the first Black-faced Bunting for Scotland (and fourth for Britain) was discovered on 20th October at the Haa and remained until 23rd.



*Black-bellied Dipper – Paul French*



The seabirds had (with few exceptions) their worst breeding season since the total failure of 1990! A sudden disappearance of their vital prey, Sandeels, during the critical chick-rearing period meant thousands of young starved to death whilst, of those that did survive, fledging weights were very low – a factor which has implications for their post-fledging survival. As usual in these circumstances it was the surface feeding species which suffered the most; Arctic Terns, despite a record 2,836 pairs choosing to nest this year and many clutches of three eggs laid, raised a paltry four chicks to fledging! The sight of thousands of newly hatched dead chicks littering the colonies was extremely distressing. Kittiwakes too experienced heavy losses with even large, nearly fledged chicks dying in the nest. Both adults of a pair were forced to go looking for food, instead of one remaining to tend the young – a sure sign of grave food-shortages – which leaves the unattended chicks vulnerable to predation by gulls and skuas, thus further compounding the problem. Even the auks, species which generally do alright whilst others are suffering, had a poor season. Puffin breeding success was the lowest on record whilst weights of young Guillemot and Razorbill were extremely low as they left the colonies. There were some successes however; the Gannet population has increased nearly 25% since last year and they had a slightly better than average breeding season. Shags too had a productive year and a whole island census of the breeding population suggested a 17% increase on the last count in 1998. This year was also the last year of counting toward the Seabird 2000 Project, which aims to census the breeding seabird populations of the whole of Britain over the years 1999-2001. This year's target species were Shag, Kittiwake and Puffin.

My ornithological assistants this year were; Hywel Maggs, returning for a second year to organise and carry out the majority of the seabird monitoring – a task he conscientiously and competently fulfilled. Paul French stepped into the vacant assistant warden post this year and fitted in well – so well in fact that I am pleased that he has agreed to return next season. Valuable contributions were also received from Chris Rodger, but it was in his role fronting our SNH-funded Ranger Service that he excelled. His 'seabird walk' became legendary and was the highlight of many of our visitors' stay! His enthusiasm (especially on the football pitch) will be sorely missed!!

Four JHMF recipients – Jeff Knot, Nicholas Andrews, Stuart Piner and Robert Pocklington all made valuable contributions and hopefully gained as much from their stay as we did from them. I know that Stuart and Robert are already making plans to return in 2002! Becki Rosser (a previous JHMF recipient) returned as a domestic volunteer but also helped out with seabird work in her spare time. It's nice to know that the Observatory is in a position to offer these young ornithologists a chance to learn more about the subject, gain valuable work experience and an insight into the (not always fun and glamour) running of an Observatory. The Observatory too wins in that these youngsters often turn out to be the assistant wardens of the future.

Scientific research (other than the work carried out by the Observatory) came from two sources – Dr. Peter Evans returned once again to continue his long-term study on Starlings and Thierry Bouludier & Karen McCoy from the Université Pierre et Marie Curie, Paris gathered some biometric data and blood and tick samples from a sample of several seabird species.

Other researchers included a film crew from Tigress Filming, Bristol who had come to film themselves being attacked by skuas as part of a “Dangerous Animals” feature and a Danish film crew made a programme about remote islands and featured the Observatory.

The planned rebuild of the Plantation trap has had to be put back a further year as permission from the relevant authorities has been slow in forth-coming, but hopefully work can begin next Spring. The New Plantation meanwhile has survived the previous winter well and is looking relatively luxurious. Hopefully it is now well established and can become a major attraction for migrant and resident birds alike – a pair of Common Snipe again nested in there. We have also gained permission to fence off a few small plots of land elsewhere on the isle, which will be planted with shrubs and/or even crops to provide some much-needed habitat for tired migrants. The quantity of crops being grown on the isle these days is much much less than it used to be and if Fair Isle is to remain as the British Mecca for birds and birders alike, then suitably attractive habitat needs to be provided.

On the domestic building and maintenance front it has been an eventful year. In April, the Northmen expertly removed the large (defunct) fireplace in the lounge and replaced it with a small bar, from which we can serve drinks to our guests. It has proved to be extremely popular in its first year and has added to the convivial atmosphere in the lounge. They also removed a similar fireplace in the Warden’s flat which has made an amazing difference to the amount of available space to our (ever-increasing number of) children! We had barely opened for the season before the first (and thankfully only) major plumbing problem occurred. The sewage system blocked and backed up, forming a small pool of slurry outside the lounge window late one May afternoon. Fortunately, help was quick to arrive and I am extremely indebted to Kenny Stout, Ian Best and Paul French for the several hours of very hard work they put in that evening at such short notice, in unpleasant surroundings and mainly by torch and car headlight!! The Northmen later repaired the damage and built a new inspection chamber. Kenny Stout also attended to several other small (but potentially large) plumbing problems throughout the season whilst the Northmen continued with our window replacement programme and fitted four new ones this Spring. The chairs in the dining room received a much-needed face-lift when they were very professionally re-covered by Hollie and her mother (Pat Craib) with more than a little help from Alan Bull! Patrick Ross-Smith reacted to calls for help with the boiler, but thankfully it has not given us much call for concern this year. The generators had a few problems with loss of

power, until (following advice from Malcolm Adamson) we put the batteries on constant charge, but mid-way through the season Engine 1 developed a burst radiator, which leaked into the component parts. This resulted in the whole thing needing to be shipped out, stripped down, cleaned and reconditioned. Thankfully, the one remaining engine successfully saw us through to the end of the season. The Observatory van survived the season without any major problems, however, after just two and a half years on Fair Isle a few signs of rust are already beginning to show. The most obvious new construction (to any returning visitor) will be the new (hopefully) childproof fence around the extended garden outside the flat. This means we can now let our two smallest children outside without fear of them disappearing into Mavers Geo.

It just remains for me to thank all those who have made my third season here so enjoyable and successful: having an amenable and hard-working group of staff (both ornithological and domestic) makes a huge contribution to the smooth-running of operations (and lowering the stress levels of those in charge!). I thank them all and am glad to have found new friends in every one of them. I thank all the Fair-Islanders for their support throughout the year, but a few are worthy of a special mention as without them the Observatory would, quite literally, fall apart! Kenny Stout, Ian Best, the Northmen, Malcolm Adamson and Patrick Ross-Smith have all contributed their own specific areas of expertise to build/repair various parts of the Observatory. Robert and Fiona Mitchell at Stackhoull Stores were a great source of helpful advice, provided the bar for the lounge and of course, all our domestic and kitchen supplies. The crew of the *Good Shepherd IV* and Loganair must be thanked for safe freight and passenger deliveries. Dave Wheeler provided the all-important daily weather forecast and regularly updated our increasingly popular website. Dave Okill was (as every year) a regular source of plant cuttings for the Plantations and he must take some credit for the way the New Plantation is thriving. Ex-warden Paul Harvey is a great source of advice and encouragement and he and his family have become valued friends.

I must also thank those organisations that have provided us with vital financial assistance; Joint Nature Conservation Committee, Scottish Natural Heritage, Shetland Oil Terminal Environmental Advisory Group and British Trust for Ornithology and all those who have contributed vignettes (John Best, Paul French, Richard Kemp) and photos (Hywel Maggs, Craig Round, Reston Kilgour, Dave Tipling) for this report.

Finally, I end on a sad note. We learned this year of the death of one of our oldest, long-term Friends of Fair Isle – Jack Keiser, who died on 25th October after losing his battle against cancer. He was an interesting, kind and generous person and I was privileged to meet him on his final visit to the isle in 1999 where he celebrated his 84th birthday at a party in the island hall.

## Administrator's Report

Hollie Shaw

As 2001 draws to a close, looking back over the last year brings memories of a busy, eventful and very enjoyable season here at the Observatory on Fair Isle. Bednights rose for the third successive season – 410 people stayed with us amounting to 2365 bednights (up 18% from 2000) – a very promising trend (especially considering the uncertainty surrounding the Foot and Mouth crisis) but also essential if the Observatory is to remain financially viable. Bednight numbers were boosted this year by the four, long-staying Malakoff divers who were working on the *Good Shepherd* slipway and were accommodated at the Observatory for all of June and July. We also had three workmen from Shetland Islands Council staying for three weeks in June. These visitors, although extremely welcome, are not visiting Fair Isle as part of a holiday and therefore should not be included when working out the true increase in visitor numbers. Therefore, it is very encouraging to see that even without the divers and workmen, bednights were up by nearly 7% on 2000.

Staffing the Bird Observatory each season is not always easy. Finding the right type of people, and the right combination of personalities can, at times, be a little difficult. However, this year the domestic staff made up one of the best teams we have ever had. The first of the domestic staff to arrive was Rose McCalmont, who's first sight of the Observatory was less than ideal, as the fireplace in the lounge had just been ripped out, building dust was everywhere and the first visitors were due in 10 days! She 'rose' to the challenge however, and had the place cleaned, dusted and sorted in good time. Beverley Howlett returned at the end of April, just before the arrival of the first visitors, but this time as Head Cook. We were then joined by Alan Bull who had been called in at a moments notice to ease the pressure on myself as I neared the end of my third pregnancy. Alan was indispensable as he worked alongside me, ensuring everything was ready for the start of the season and that all went smoothly during the first two months. In early May the kitchen had two new arrivals, firstly with Sue Hutchinson joining us as Assistant Cook and then a few days later Becki Rosser taking on the role of domestic volunteer. No sooner did we have a full complement of staff than I had to leave the island for the imminent birth of the baby. Alan held the fort, not only acting as Administrator but also (when Deryk left the island, once the baby was born) caring for our two boys. We know from experience that juggling full time work and a family is hard enough when they are your own children, but Alan handled his responsibilities with more maturity than his years would suggest and Deryk and I will always be grateful. Our daughter, Raven Vaila Shaw, was born the morning after I left, on 10th May and we all returned home (on the *Good Shepherd*, thanks to the fog) two days later. Having a baby so early in the season was always going to make life difficult, but with the

support of the staff and islanders alike, it was much easier than we anticipated. Alex Wood returned to Fair Isle, once more, in early July, to take on the daunting task of childminder, after completing her degree at Cambridge. Knowing that the children were being looked after, certainly eased the strain considerably and, as in previous seasons, Alex also helped with a multitude of other tasks. Alan left in early August as he set off to Ascension Island to count seabirds and Becki left a few days later, after three months of working as a volunteer and gaining valuable seabird and ringing experience in her time off. Two new arrivals in early August, were in the form of Lois Smallwood as Assistant Cook and Lillian Crawford as General Assistant. The addition of these two lively, energetic and friendly personalities made the kitchen one of the happiest places in the Observatory. Beverley Howlett also left Fair Isle at the end of August to return to Hoy in Orkney and Sue ably stepped into her shoes. For those of us trying to reduce our waistbands, Sue and Lois were no help at all!

The good level of visitor numbers achieved over the last few years is due in no small way to the number of organised groups now visiting the Observatory. In 2001 we welcomed back Ann Smith and her group in April (our first visitors of the season), New Horizons in May, Emu Tours in June, Speyside Wildlife in August and both Travelling Naturalists and Heatherlea Birdwatching in September. Additional to this, Shetland Wildlife brought groups to the Observatory on no less than five occasions. Organised group bookings now account for approximately 20% of our total bednights and are therefore a vital contribution to the future of the Observatory.

The Fair Isle Bird Observatory Trust AGM was held on Fair Isle this May, after several years of being held elsewhere. We were pleased to see so many of the Trustees finding the time to get up here. Roy Dennis, Dave Okill, Peter Evans, Mike Wood, John Wood and Louise Batchelor all stayed varying lengths of time. Bob Elliott was also present at the meeting, as a National Trust for Scotland representative. As in previous years, Peter Evans spent a couple of weeks here continuing his long term study on Starlings.

Traditionally August is a reasonably quiet month at the Observatory and visitor numbers during this month can be very low indeed. However, August offers visitors the chance to visit Fair Isle in decent weather, take part in Island events, such as dances at the Community Hall and generally relax in beautiful, peaceful surroundings. It was for these reasons that we decided to try out a special offer period in August to boost visitor numbers. We hoped to attract people who were holidaying in Shetland during the month and were still undecided about which islands to visit. We also hoped it may encourage more Shetlanders to visit us. We offered a 50% discount on accommodation for three weeks in August and advertised it on the Website, in our brochures and in the Shetland press. The response was very positive and bednights for August alone, were up from 197 in

1999 and just 149 in 2000 to 391 in 2001. Consequently we are planning the same offer for a three week period in August 2002 and a similar offer for a ten day period in October 2002.

Two organised Activity weeks took place at the Bird Observatory this year. Through the Northern Periphery Programme, FIBO and a local eco-tourism company hosted two 'Island Insights' weeks at the end of June and the end of July. These weeks incorporated Fair Isle history, culture, crafts, wildlife and, of course, ornithology. Fair Islanders acted as guides on subjects such as archaeology, weather watching, crofting and wild flowers, while FIBO staff led guided walks on seabirds, migrants and ringing. A total of ten people participated and the feedback from questionnaires was extremely positive and consequently similar weeks are planned for 2002.

The Fair Isle Ranger Service had another successful year, with Chris Rodger as Ranger, who brought enthusiasm, innovation and genuine enjoyment to the post. Guided walks were ever popular and Chris extended the range and number of walks as well as vastly expanding the range of interpretative information available at the Observatory. He also took on the daunting task of writing, rehearsing and performing a play with the local school children as part of the school based Ranger Service work. The play, entitled 'The saga of the Slippery Sandeel' was based on an environmental theme and highlighted the consequences of over-fishing. Performed in front of the whole island, at the end of term concert in July, the hard work of Chris and the children paid off, with a very entertaining and thought provoking performance. In light of the subsequent seabird breeding season here on Fair Isle, the importance of maintaining fish stocks could not have been a more apt subject. Many hours of the Ranger Service in 2001 were employed ensuring precautions against Foot and Mouth Disease were carried out as effectively as possible. When the crisis began back in March 2001 the uncertainty it brought to the tourist element of Fair Isle's economy was so great that a Extraordinary Meeting of the Fair Isle Committee was called to discuss Fair Isle's position. At this meeting the Observatory stated that it wished to remain open but was willing to take whatever steps the Community wanted, to reduce the risk of the disease reaching Fair Isle. The Fair Isle Committee were supportive of this move and precautionary measures were put in place and remained until September 2001. Fair Isle, therefore, remained open to the public (with a few restrictions in place) and visitors continued to enjoy what the island is best at: peaceful surroundings, dramatic scenery and spectacular wildlife.

As part of the Northern Periphery Programme, 17 children and 5 adults from remote areas of Norway visited Fair Isle for 10 days in August 2001. Earlier in the year the older Fair Isle school children had visited Norway as the first part of this exchange. Having so many extra people on the Isle meant everyone had to help

out and the children were divided up amongst the Fair Isle households. The Observatory played host to two of the boys from the group, and all of the children took part in a range of activities, from fishing in rock pools with Nick Riddiford from Schoolton, to playing 'environmental' games outside the Observatory with Chris, to playing sports in the Community Hall.

Fair Isle began raising funds in 2001 for an ambitious musical project planned for next year. The Community has commissioned a piece of Classical Music to be written by Alastair Stout (Nephew of Jimmy Stout, Midway) and the grand premier of the piece is to be performed on Fair Isle in August 2002. Enough funding has now been secured to ensure that the project will go ahead and further local fund-raising will take place throughout the next year.

Fair Isle is a dynamic community and as some families leave others move to the isle. In April 2001 Leslie Holmes moved to the island for 6 months, with her young son Liam. Soon after their departure in October, the isle nurse, Claire Johnston, her husband Andy and their children Callum and Danielle left Fair Isle for North Wales. They were replaced by Katherine Morrison (the new nurse) and her family. We wish all those who left good luck for the future and hope that the new arrivals enjoy a long and happy stay on the Isle. On a sadder note, Fair Isle suffered a great loss this year when Maurice Eunson Stout, (son of Jimmy Stout, Midway and brother of Jimmy Stout, Skerryholm) died in Shetland on November 3rd 2001. Our sincere sympathies go out to his family and all those who were touched by his special character.

As this round up of 2001 draws to an end it is encouraging to witness the Bird Observatory enjoying stability, with visitor numbers at a level that ensure the building can be maintained, sufficient staff can be employed and new ventures can be embarked upon. The success of the Observatory each year, depends upon the dedication of the staff and support of the islanders, Directors and visitors alike. We are immensely grateful, yet again, to everyone who has helped in any way this season and extend our heartfelt thanks to you all. However, with increased overheads, not least of which is the high cost of wages, it is paramount that the Observatory continues to attract funds, whether through the FIBO shop, the new bar, donations, grants, Friend's of Fair Isle, or other activities. There is no doubt however, that the best way to raise revenue is to increase visitor numbers. Unfortunately, with the tragic events in America on September 11th 2001, there is an element of uncertainty regarding visitor numbers for next year and perhaps several years to come. We have already taken a cancellation from one large group, as a direct consequence of people's reluctance to travel. We can only hope that given a little time, confidence will be restored and people will continue to make the journey to Britain's most remote inhabited island.

# The National Trust for Scotland, 2001

Alexander M. Bennett  
*Conservation Manager*

The year gone by has possibly been one of the quietest in recent years with the Trust's activities based solely on its Housing Programme. This belies the serious financial situation that the National Trust for Scotland finds itself in this year, facing a £1.7 million deficit. Clearly the Trust is looking hard at its annual expenditure and Fair Isle faces the same scrutiny as all the other properties in the Trust's care, and as a consequence we were looking to minimise expenditure in all areas. Fortunately the Trust's Housing Programme continues, although funding is becoming evermore difficult to achieve, not only from the Trust's own resources, but also from the Housing Agencies. This continues to put great pressure on our priorities, but I am pleased to report that the Trust has been able to meet its housing priorities on Fair Isle to date, albeit that they are a little more protracted.

Who would have believed it, a Blue house on Fair Isle. 2001 saw a quite dramatic change in the design for new housing on the Isle, with the completion of the new house for Brian and Mary Wilson on Houll. This was a 'new' design with new thinking where we applied environmental principles in terms of heat conservation and, for the first time, the outside appearance of the house moved from being the normal white, to blue. The house was designed by Jim Sutherland, an architect from Scalloway in Shetland, and hopefully reflects a refreshing, innovative approach to housing on the Fair Isle landscape. For the first time the Trust has used timber for the external cladding and believes that this medium is ideal for the application of colour, knowing that colour is a surface treatment and can be changed again to white if necessary. It would appear that this has inspired a couple of other islanders to paint their more traditional houses in more vivid colours and only time, opinion and the weather will decide whether or not this new approach is here to stay.

The plans to renovate the lighthouse accommodation block did, however, fall foul of the funding difficulties and has regrettably been delayed until later in 2002. However, activities at the lighthouse have moved ahead and Clare Scott's now established Fair Isle Silver Company is starting to grow to meet the demand. Clare's innovate silver jewellery reflecting Fair Isle's cultural and natural history has received several accolades already and it is extremely pleasing to note when opening the pages of some of the glossy magazines, there appears an advert for Fair Isle Silver.

2001 was also a frustrating year for the Trust in that the plans for the amalgamation of the two fire services on the isle and at the aerodrome have been delayed with the



continuing difficulties in sourcing an appropriate new fire appliance. It will be based in a new fire station to be built next to the hall, so as to command a more central location. As I write I hear the chassis has been delivered to the Highlands and Islands Fire Brigade works in Inverness, ready for customising for the Fair Isle environment. With a bit of luck we should get delivery by mid summer 2002.

Looking ahead to 2002 and despite all the financial constraints, we are looking to see two new houses built on the island, the renovation of the lighthouse accommodation block and, hopefully, the inauguration of the new fire service. We may even see some new faces in Barkland croft, which has been lying vacant now for 2 years. If nothing else Fair Isle is a good example of moving forward, sometimes in the face of adversity.



*Kirk by John Best*

# Update on Survey of Diseases and Causes of Death in Wild Birds

Jason Waine

For seven years, the staff and visitors of Fair Isle Bird Observatory have been collecting the carcasses of wild bird casualties for post-mortem examination, to try and determine the cause of death and the level and types of disease present in these birds. Specimens found are stored in deep freeze and posted twice a year for autopsy. Routine measurements are taken including overall body length, maximum chordal length, tail length, maximum head length, bill length, maximum bill depth and flexed tarsal. Any rings are noted and the bird is examined externally for plumage state, external injuries, external parasites and any other sign of disease. In any cases where shooting is suspected, the carcass is x-rayed. The body condition is assessed and compared with the findings once the skin has been removed. The skull may be retained for preparation and further examination. The brain is frozen and submitted for viral examination in a Nile Fever Virus survey being conducted by the government. Nile Fever Disease has caused widespread deaths of wild birds in parts of North America, as well as causing illness in people and theoretically could be present in migrant birds visiting this country. The rest of the body is then carefully dissected and any injuries or signs of disease are recorded. Any parasites found are saved and submitted to The Natural History Museum for identification. Tissues are saved from raptors for examination by ITE for background, environmental poisons such as Mercury and insecticides.

Since 1995 Fair Isle Bird Observatory have sent three hundred and thirty-one carcasses representing a significant database. In 2001, ninety nine carcasses (see Table 1) were sent, of which twenty-four were not examined as delays in the post rendered them unfit for autopsy. The remaining seventy-five birds represented 44 species from 23 families and 7 orders. Species most commonly represented were Common Guillemot (10), Blackcap (9), Common Starling (8), Redwing (7), European Shag, Northern Wheatear, Northern Fulmar (all with 4) and Water Rail, Great Skua and Arctic Tern (each with 3). Interesting or unusual species included a Corn Crake, a Brambling, a Ringed Plover, a Jack Snipe, a Common Grasshopper Warbler and a Long-tailed Duck.

## TABLE 1 – Specimens Received Listed by English Name

Of the 99 birds received, 24 were not examined, no diagnosis was made in five cases whilst pathology was found in the remaining seventy birds (see Table 1). Twenty-one birds had primary starvation with another nine having migration stress and starvation: not surprising given Fair Isle's position. Twenty-seven birds had sustained collision injuries. Of these, six were road traffic accidents (rta), two had flown into fences and one possibly into netting. Four had no food inside them and

may well have had low blood sugar which affects judgement. Seven birds had worms, but in only one case was this the cause of death – that of the young Great Skua, which choked on the granuloma formed because of roundworm infestation in the oesophagus (a most unusual case). Eight birds had succumbed to predation: Four of these were Common Starling nestlings that had been attacked by their own parents; three had been killed by cats and one by a raptor. Seven birds had secondary pneumonia and three secondary haemorrhagic enteritis (an acute infection of the intestines). Secondary disease occurs where some other, or primary, factor has weakened the bird and made it more susceptible to infections. Three birds had primary haemorrhagic enteritis and one had primary pneumonia. A Eurasian Oystercatcher had secondary starvation as a result of a beak injury. Two of the European Shags had *Syringophilus* infestation: a small mite that encysts in the muscles. It seems likely that despite a fairly obvious presence, these do not cause their host any harm. There were individual cases showing signs of aggression injuries, drowning, yersiniosis (a severe bacterial infection), loss of an eye, secondary predation, myocarditis (inflammation of the heart muscle probably caused by a parasite) and exposure.

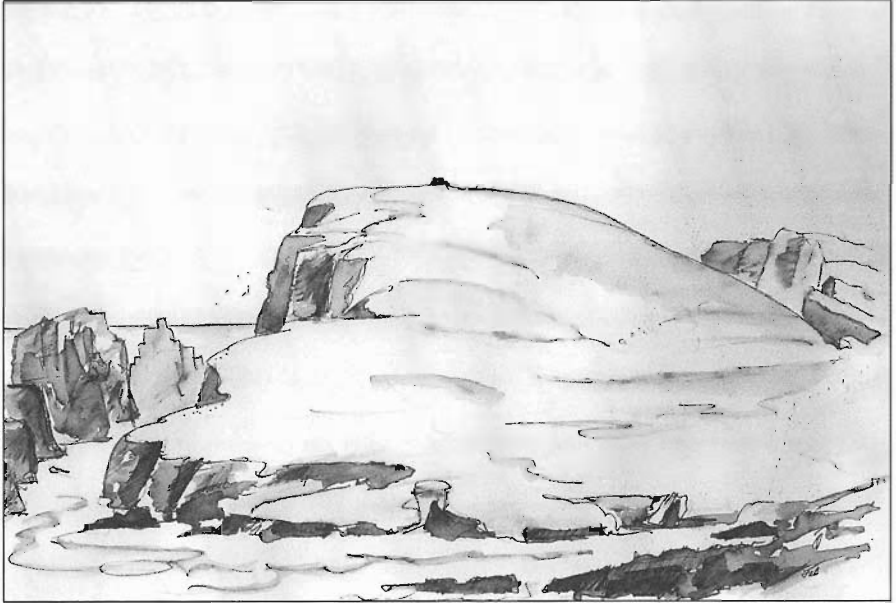
Less common and more interesting cases included two birds with aspergillosis, a fungal infection of the airways that is quite common in captive birds but thought to be rare in wild birds; a suspected case of avian tuberculosis; an injured Herring Gull that also had a tumour of the kidneys; and a Common Guillemot with egg peritonitis, an illness caused by an egg being retained in the uterus instead of being passed. In this case the uterus had ruptured and the egg had broken releasing yolk into the abdomen causing a severe peritonitis. This again is very uncommon in wild birds and is only the second case I have seen in 1200 wild birds autopsied (the other case was a Meadow Pipit that had suffered collision injuries).

<i>Species</i>	<i>Age</i>	<i>Sex</i>	<i>Date found</i>	<i>Cause of death</i>
Arctic Skua	adult	F	16-06-01	collision injuries
Arctic Tern	juv	M	17-07-00	collision injuries – rta; empty guts
Arctic Tern	adult	n/k	20-06-00	pm not performed; found in colony
Arctic Tern	juv	n/k	10-07-00	pm not performed; rta
Atlantic Puffin	adult	n/k	12-06-00	pm not performed; found on beach
Atlantic Puffin	pullus	F	06-07-01	starvation primary; pneumonia secondary
Barn Swallow	juv	M	09-09-00	collision injuries
Black Guillemot	pullus	n/k	09-07-00	pm not performed; found in nest hole Mavers geo
Black Guillemot	pullus	n/k	09-07-00	pm not performed; found in nest hole Mavers geo
Blackcap	imm	F	30-10-00	collision injuries; empty guts
Blackcap	imm	M	26-09-00	collision injuries; empty guts
Blackcap	imm	F	16-09-00	haemorrhagic enteritis
Blackcap	imm	F	23-10-00	migration stress
Blackcap	imm	F	23-10-00	starvation primary

<i>Species</i>	<i>Age</i>	<i>Sex</i>	<i>Date found</i>	<i>Cause of death</i>
Blackcap	adult	M	14-09-00	starvation; collision injury to beak
Blackcap	imm	F	26-09-01	haemorrhagic enteritis
Blackcap	imm	M	03-10-01	migration stress
Blackcap	adult	F	29-09-01	migration stress, starvation, secondary pneumonia
Black-legged Kittiwake	adult	n/k	22-06-00	pm not performed
Black-legged Kittiwake	adult	M	01-06-01	pulmonary lesions (severe throughout): aspergillosis, tb
Bohemian Waxwing	adult	F	01-01	migration stress, starvation, secondary pneumonia
Brambling	adult	M	26-04-01	collision/compression injuries
Chaffinch	adult	M	24-10-00	starvation; exposure
Common Eider	2nd Year	F	26-05-00	pm not performed; ringed 1998
Common Grasshopper Warbler	adult	F	01-05-01	migration stress, secondary haemorrhagic enteritis
Common Guillemot	adult	n/k	no data	pm not performed
Common Guillemot	adult	n/k	no data	pm not performed
Common Guillemot	adult	M	02-11-00	starvation primary
Common Guillemot	adult	n/k	03-12-00	no diagnosis
Common Guillemot	adult	n/k	03-12-00	no diagnosis
Common Guillemot	adult	n/k	03-12-00	no diagnosis
Common Guillemot	imm	F	15-11-00	starvation primary
Common Guillemot	adult	F	13-05-01	egg peritonitis with ruptured uterus
Common Guillemot	adult	?	28-03-01	no diagnosis
Common Guillemot	juv	M?	25-08-01	starvation primary; parasitic gastritis
Common Snipe	adult	M	18-07-00	pulmonary aspergillosis; secondary yersiniosis
Common Snipe	adult	M	20-05-01	collision injuries (wire fence)
Common Starling	juv	n/k	13-06-00	pm not performed
Common Starling	adult	n/k	n/k	pm not performed
Common Starling	juv	F	07-11-00	predation – raptor
Common Starling	juv	M	30-06-01	aggression injuries
Common Starling	pullus	?	03-05-01	predation: rat or infanticide
Common Starling	pullus	?	03-05-01	predation: rat or infanticide
Common Starling	pullus	?	03-05-01	predation: rat or infanticide
Common Starling	pullus	?	03-05-01	predation: rat or infanticide
Common Whitethroat	adult	n/k	28-05-00	pm not performed
Corn Crake	imm	M	29-09-00	predation – cat; secondary pneumonia
Eurasian Curlew	pullus	F	03-07-01	no diagnosis
Eurasian Oystercatcher	adult	n/k	17-03-00	pm not performed; found by road ?rta
Eurasian Oystercatcher	adult	M	13-04-01	beak injury, starvation, secondary haemorrhagic enteritis, drowning
Eurasian Reed Warbler	adult	M	25-09-00	starvation ?primary
Eurasian Reed Warbler	adult	M	23-09-00	starvation; secondary pneumonia
European Shag	adult	n/k	n/k	pm not performed; found dead on beach
European Shag	adult	M	n/k	haemorrhagic enteritis, gizzard worms, syringophilus
European Shag	adult	M	23-08-01	starvation primary, gizzard worms, syringophilus
European Shag	imm	M	15-08-01	starvation primary; parasitic gastritis
Eurasian Siskin	adult	M	25-09-00	starvation primary

<i>Species</i>	<i>Age</i>	<i>Sex</i>	<i>Date found</i>	<i>Cause of death</i>
Great Black-backed Gull	adult	n/k	14-03-00	pm not performed; found washed up
Great Skua	pullus	F	05-07-01	choke from verminous granuloma in larynx. gizzard worms
Great Skua	pullus	M	18-07-00	collision injuries; concussion from blow to head; parasitic gastritis
Great Skua	adult	F	17-07-01	starvation primary; loss of one eye
Great Spotted Woodpecker	adult	n/k	20-06-00	pm not performed; found dead Kenaby wood pile
Great Spotted Woodpecker	imm	F	26-09-01	starvation primary
Hedge Accentor	imm	F	24-10-00	starvation; pneumonia; secondary predation (cat)
Herring Gull	adult	n/k	17-03-00	pm not performed; found dead on hill
Herring Gull	adult	F	17-12-00	nephroma; propatagial injury; ventral abdominal injury; starvation
Jack Snipe	imm	F	20-09-00	collision injuries (fence)
Lesser Whitethroat	imm	F	12-09-01	collision injury (netting)
Little Auk	adult	n/k	no data	pm not performed
Long-tailed Duck	imm	F	no data	starvation primary
Meadow Pipit	juv	n/k	26-06-00	pm not performed
Meadow Pipit	?	?	15-09-01	starvation primary (migration)
Northern Fulmar	adult	n/k	no data	pm not performed
Northern Fulmar	adult	n/k	no data	pm not performed; found dead on beach
Northern Fulmar	imm	F	26-8-01	collision injuries
Northern Fulmar	adult	M	04-01-01	collision injuries – rta
Northern Wheatear	adult	M	16-05-01	collision injuries; migration stress
Northern Wheatear	juv	M	29-09-01	starvation primary; pneumonia secondary
Northern Wheatear	juv	n/k	29-06-00	pm not performed; found dead by road near traps
Northern Wheatear	adult	M	05-09-00	starvation primary (migration stress)
Pied Wagtail	adult	M	03-07-00	pm not performed; found dead near lighthouse
Pied Wagtail	juv	M	21-07-01	starvation primary
Redwing	imm	F	22-10-00	collision injuries
Redwing	adult	M	22-06-01	collision injuries
Redwing	imm	F	22-06-01	collision injuries
Redwing	imm	F	22-06-01	collision injuries
Redwing	imm	F	22-06-01	collision injuries
Redwing	imm	F	02-10-01	collision injuries
Redwing	adult	M	12-04-01	predation – cat; active testes
Reed Bunting	imm	M	21-09-00	predation – cat (early morning)
Ringed Plover	?	?	11-09-01	collision injuries – rta
Sky Lark	imm	M	none	collision injuries
Song Thrush	imm	M	24-10-00	collision injuries (? netting)
Tufted Duck	?	n/k	no data	pm not performed
Water Rail	adult	M	06-11-00	collision injuries – rta
Water Rail	imm	F	07-11-00	collision injuries – rta
Water Rail	adult	M	30-10-00	collision injuries – rta
Willow Warbler	imm	?	18-10-00	starvation; haemorrhagic enteritis; myocarditis (? parasitic)
Winter Wren	adult	M	09-08-01	collision injuries

This research project can only continue with the help and goodwill of visitors and staff at Fair Isle. If any dead birds are discovered, please take them to the Observatory and leave details of where and under what circumstances they were found.



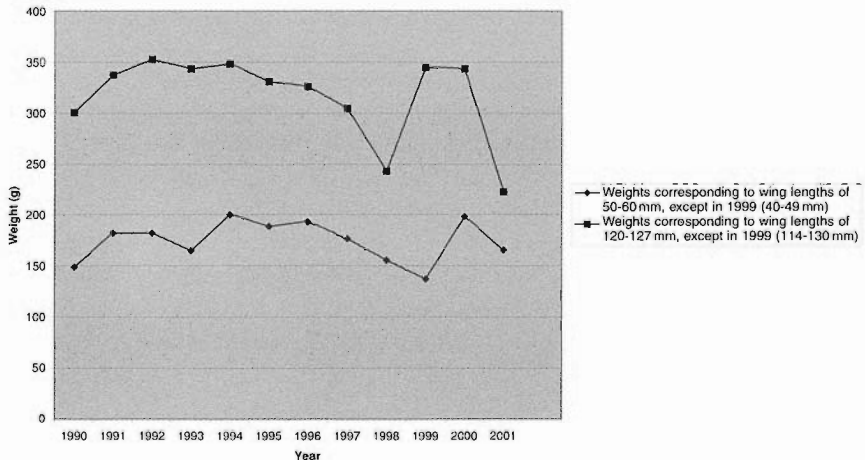
*Malcolm's Head by John Best*

## The 2001 Seabird Season

Deryk Shaw and Hywel Maggs

Many species arrived back in good numbers, with increased breeding populations of Gannets, Great and Arctic Skua and, most significantly, Arctic Terns (2,836 Apparently Incubating Adults represents the highest on record). There appeared to be an ample food supply (namely Sandeels) during the early part of the season, with many full clutches in the tern colonies and no shortage of display items available. The first signs that there may be an apparent problem regarding the food source was noted during Puffin population monitoring in mid-May. The colour-ringed population at Roskilie was practically non-existent, with only 50% of the known population from 2000 being recorded by the end of the season. Initially, Bonxie (Great Skua) presence was thought to be the main reason for the low numbers recorded, with two pairs regularly hunting the colony. Although this undoubtedly affected how long Puffins would spend on the cliff top, it soon became apparent that birds were spending more time at sea, suggesting food items were in short supply. A 20-hour feeding watch in early July revealed a rate of 3.3 feeds per burrow per day, which represents the lowest recorded since monitoring began. Feeding rates during recent years have been usually at least twice as high as the 2001 rate. Food samples collected comprised of a more diverse range of species; although the majority involved sandeels, inshore species such as Lumpfish were also collected. Puffin chicks are known to be able to slow down their development

### Average Weights of Puffin Pulli



**Fig. a:** Average weights of Puffin chicks at different stages of growth. Whereas small chicks (wing length 50-60mm) in 2001 were of average weight, older chicks (wing length 120-127mm) were well below average weight.

in times of low food supply. Adults were therefore still tending under-weight chicks at the end of August, a month later than usual. Pulli weights were the lowest recorded since monitoring began (see fig a) and many starved chicks were found at the mouth of burrows. The overall productivity at monitoring plots was by far the lowest on record (0.31 chicks fledged per active burrow).

Other tell-tale signs that there was a serious food shortage were being seen during mid-June. Groups of Arctic Terns hawked for insects over the moorland and along the Meadow Burn and mortality of chicks was high. Hundreds of dead and dying chicks were seen during ringing excursions into the colonies. By the end of the month the vast majority of terns had failed and the colonies deserted. From the record 2,836 nests, only *four* chicks are thought to have successfully fledged!

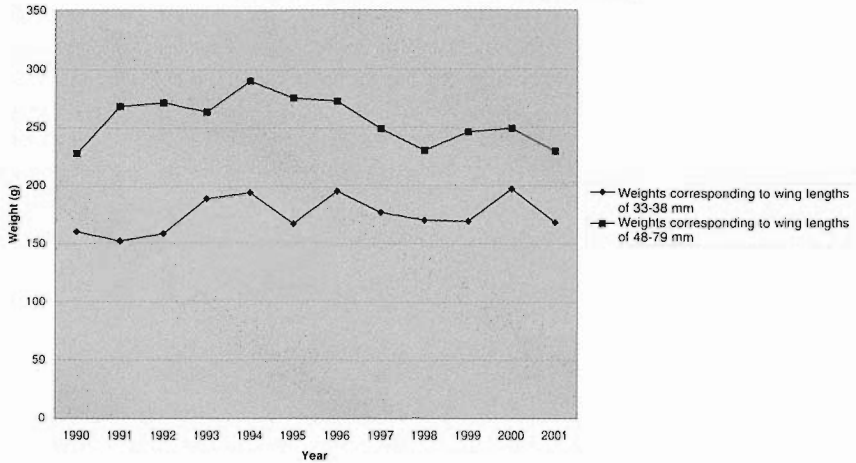
Another species that preferentially feed on sandeels near the surface of the sea are Kittiwakes. A similar story unfolded for this species, experiencing almost total failure. Although many chicks survived through the first two or three weeks, the vast majority died in the nest prior to fledging. Predation was high as adults were leaving unattended chicks for long periods whilst foraging for what little food was available. Only a handful of birds were thought to have fledged from the 8200 pairs that bred on the Isle during 2001.

Even Guillemots fared poorly with very low attendance at colonies and productivity at the two monitoring plots being the lowest ever recorded. A feeding rate of 1.5 feeds per chick per day was well below average, and pulli weights were comparable to the poor productivity years of 1990 and 1998 (see fig. b) Razorbills experienced an apparently above average productivity with 0.65 chicks fledged per egg laid at the Easter Lothar monitoring plot. However, pulli weights were dramatically low, suggesting potential post fledging failure. Weights of Razorbill pulli during 2001 were only marginally higher than those recorded during the crash year of 1990 (see fig. c). Initially growth rates of Razorbill pulli during 2001 were above average, with recorded weight of chicks with wing lengths of 33mm to 42 mm being higher than in previous years (see fig. c). However, appropriate fledging weights were not gained thereafter (the weights of pulli with wing lengths of 73-78 mm being significantly below average). It is thought that this may be due to the apparent disappearance of sandeels in June.

As yet, the reasons for the apparent shortage of Sandeels are not fully understood. The timing of the disappearance of 1-group and older fish and appearance of young 0-group fish is thought to perhaps have played a part. The older fish spend more time buried in the sand and become unavailable to the majority of seabirds and are replaced by the 0-group fish. In recent years it is thought to be the timing and nutritional content of this latter group which has affected the breeding success of seabirds in Shetland as a whole.

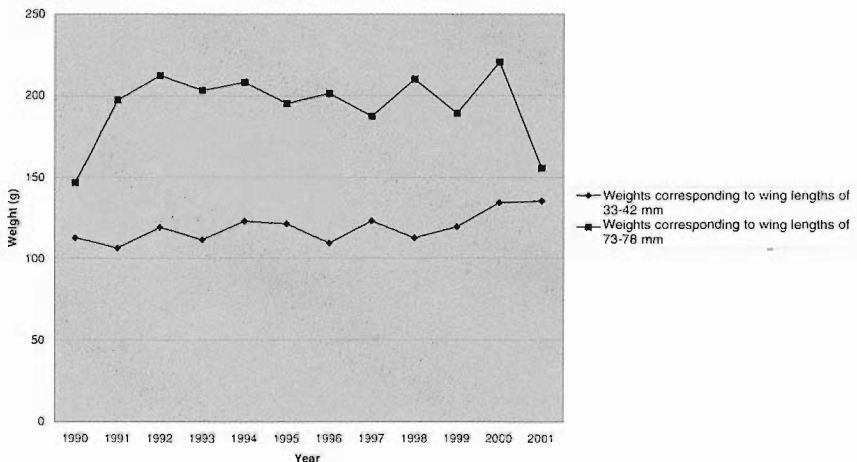


### Average Weights of Guillemot Pulli



**Fig. b:** Average weights of Guillemot pulli at different stages of growth. Small chicks (wing length 33-38 mm) seemed to be holding their own and even slightly better than those in the early '90s, but older chicks closer to fledging (wing length 48-79 mm) had lost ground and had similar weights to birds in 1990 and 1998 (both poor breeding seasons).

### Average Weights of Razorbill Pulli



**Fig. c:** Average weights of Razorbill pulli at different stages of growth. Small chicks (wing length 33-42 mm) in 2001, seemed to be doing well, with above average weights recorded. However, by the time they had reached fledging size (wing length 73-78 mm) they had gained only on average 20g (instead of the expected 70-100g).

Thankfully seabirds are long-lived once they reach maturity and can breed for many many years. They can therefore allow for the occasional poor breeding season without it adversely affecting the population as a whole, however several years of low productivity (especially if consecutive) can have a major effect on future numbers.

Thanks to Martin Heubeck (SOTEAG) for helpful comments on a draft of this report.



*Arctic Terns by John Best*

# **ORNITHOLOGY**

## **MONTHLY SUMMARY**

Paul French and Deryk Shaw

The monthly totals of species recorded were:

<b>Jan</b>	<b>Feb</b>	<b>Mar</b>	<b>Apr</b>	<b>May</b>	<b>Jun</b>	<b>Jul</b>	<b>Aug</b>	<b>Sep</b>	<b>Oct</b>	<b>Nov</b>	<b>Dec</b>
42	44	82	111	138	99	80	102	136	135	64	59

### **January**

As usual, the early part of the year was dominated by westerly winds and hence, there was little of outstanding ornithological interest. A Grey Heron was seen periodically throughout whilst the 'resident' Whooper Swan was briefly joined by another on 30th January. Greylag Geese were ever present, but with a turnover of several small parties and they had two Barnacle Geese with them on 3rd January. Ducks were represented by small numbers of Teal and Mallard, with occasional Goldeneye and Red-breasted Merganser and topped off by a Velvet Scoter, which was first seen in South Harbour on 3rd February, but relocated to Furse where it remained until April. The only raptor was the occasional sighting of a Merlin. Waders were represented by the over-wintering Redshank (c.30), Turnstone (peak of 96) and Snipe, with small numbers of Purple Sandpiper, Woodcock and Jack Snipe. These were joined by small groups of Lapwing from 22nd January and the first Oystercatcher, Ringed Plover and Curlew from early February. A first-winter Glaucous Gull on 2nd February was the only white-winged gull sighting and an obvious highlight, as was a Little Auk on 9th February. The larger auks first returned to their breeding ledges on 16th February. On the passerine front, reasonable numbers of thrushes were seen with occasional, small numbers of Skylark, Chaffinch and Twite, plus single Meadow Pipit and Brambling whilst Robins peaked at ten on 30th January. More unusual were the Waxwing on 3rd January and three Dunnocks and a Rook on 30th.

### **March**

There was little of note early in the month, until wader passage picked up near the end of the first week. A total of 101 Oystercatcher on 5th was a peak count whilst Lapwing reached a maximum of 200 on 11th. The first Golden Plover was noted on 6th when a Jack Snipe was flushed, the first influx of Ringed Plover (ten) was noted and Turnstone peaked at 125. A male Tufted Duck on this date was the first of the year and was followed by six others in the month. Other wildfowl in March included occasional Goldeneye, Red-breasted Merganser, small parties of Teal and Mallard and the first two Wigeon (on 24th). On the gull front, small numbers of Common Gulls were seen throughout and two Black-headed Gulls on 9th, with Kittiwakes back on their ledges the following day. Highlights however, were a

second-winter Iceland Gull on 5th and Glaucous Gulls on 9th, 22nd & 28th. Stonechats were first seen on 8th and were regular from then on, with the first Black Redstart seen on the 15th. Things hotted up in the last few days of the month when three Wheatears appeared on 28th, followed by a fall of several hundred thrushes, 65 Robins and a male Marsh Harrier on 29th. The first Puffin was spotted on 30th March and coincided with a huge fall of migrants on the isle. Only the south of the isle could be censused and counts included two Moorhen, 50 Woodcock, Long-eared Owl, 100 Skylark, 400 Robins, 11 Wheatear, one Ring Ouzel, 2500 Blackbirds, 500 Fieldfare, 650 Song Thrush, 380 Redwing, a Blackcap, 40 Chiffchaff, 73 Chaffinch and three Reed Buntings. Rarities on this day included a female Garganey and three White-spotted Bluethroats. Many birds lingered the following day and were joined by a male Yellowhammer.

## April

With the weather dominated by Atlantic depressions, the weather in April can only be described as changeable! With winds mainly from the south-west for the first week, the main attraction was the large number of thrushes left over from the fall in late March. Counts for the 1st in the southern half of the island were 750 Blackbird, 320 Song Thrush, 270 Redwing, 230 Fieldfare and 150 Robins. The first returning Bonxies (3) were over the airstrip on 1st while the Velvet Scoter continued its stay in Furse. The Ruff at Setter remained from March until 1st and a Sandwich Tern continued its solitary fishing in North Haven until the 3rd. Meanwhile, the continuing saga of the Bluethroats was unfolding in the south. The male White-spotted Bluethroat was last seen in the Walli Burn on 1st. Two males and a female were then discovered in the Meadow Burn on 3rd. The female remained present but elusive until the 6th. With a minimum of four and maximum of six birds, Fair Isle had the lion's share of a nation-wide influx. The first week also provided the first influx of Meadow Pipits (115 on 1st), near daily records of Moorhen (peak of three on 4th and 5th), Bar-tailed Godwit, Wood Pigeon, Grey Wagtail, Black Redstart, Linnet and Reed Bunting. With the wind still firmly in the western quarter, migrants continued to trickle through. An elusive Stock Dove began a protracted stay on 4th; a day which also produced the first Arctic Skua of the year. Two Mistle Thrush and seven Snow Buntings were the highlights of the 5th, with 336 Skylarks also being recorded. Visible migration was in evidence on 6th, with at least 21 Ravens seen, the months peak count of 215 Meadow Pipits noted, Robins increasing to 170, and an influx of 22 Chiffchaff. The east coast Tystie count on the 7th revealed 122 breeding plumaged birds and Lesser Black-backed Gull as an addition to the year list. The April peak of five Black Redstarts also added interest to the day. The early morning trap round on the 8th provided a splash of colour in the unexpected form of a Great Tit in the Plantation. This island rarity did not hang around long enough to be trapped and was not seen after the initial sighting. A day of north-westerly winds on the 10th put Greenshank firmly

on the list as it initiated a three day stay at South Light. A superb summer-plumaged Slavonian Grebe stayed all too briefly in South Haven the next day when a Cormorant was in Finnequoy. With two days of winds containing an easterly element over the 12th and 13th, hopes were high. The best we could manage on the 13th was a Greenfinch and '*littoralis*' Rock Pipit, while a Long-eared Owl managed to avoid capture in the Plantation. On the 14th, the wind swung back to the west, and was to remain in the north and west for the remainder of the week – hopes were not high. All this changed with the discovery of a Black-throated Thrush at the mast. This first spring record for the isle could not be trapped, although good field views led us to believe it was probably an adult female. A quiet week followed, with the thrush being seen at both Furse on 15th and Da Houll on 17th. Also on the 17th, the first three Whimbrel of the year were located at South Light and a large female Sparrowhawk started a four day tour of the island. As the north wind continued and memories of the thrush were fading, an unexpected discovery was of two Common Cranes seen flying over the eastern half of the isle. Departing to the north in the evening, with Shetland in sight, they somewhat eclipsed the other year tick of the day; Collared Dove. The winds switched to moderate and south-easterly over the next few days. The results were encouraging and new birds started to appear every day. Two Sand Martins and a Swallow were joined by four Collared Doves on 21st. The 22nd produced probably the most talked about bird of the month when a second-summer Gull showing some characteristics of Yellow-legged Gull was located amongst '*intermedius*' Lesser Black-backed Gulls at South Light. With Willow Warbler new in on 23rd and Green Sandpiper and Grasshopper Warbler on the 24th, the 25th started out a little bit disappointing. The Tystie census produced 130 breeding plumaged birds, but migration was slow, with only Common Redpoll new in. A midday trap round revealed an influx of late arriving migrants and the afternoon census counted Common Sandpiper, Short-eared Owl, two Wrynecks, Tree Pipit, Hawfinch and an influx of 40 Brambling. On a more depressing note, the Whooper Swan that had been resident on the island since the autumn of 1999 was last seen around this time, having failed in its attempt to breed with a local farmyard goose! After a 180-degree switch in the wind back to north-westerly, the main event of the 26th was the arrival of an elusive Waxwing at Burkle. Bramblings peaked at 120, while the second Grasshopper Warbler of the spring performed down to two metres in the Field Ditch. Fair Isle's earliest ever Reed Warbler showed well on 28th near Hesti Geo, with a House Martin and '*tristis*' type Chiffchaff also new in. A flock of six Waxwings at Field eclipsed the previous single bird. The 29th scored a Common Tern, the equal earliest ever Swift, Wryneck, 1200 Fieldfare, 160 Brambling, 27 Whimbrel, 14 Tree Pipits, 8 Swallows and 12 Wood Pigeons. A fitting finale to a busy final week came on the 30th, when an adult Ring-billed Gull was on Mopul, a mobile Hoopoe toured various sites between Meoness and Dutfield and a Shelduck was discovered near South Harbour.

## May

After south-easterly winds during the last week of April, the first five days of May saw the winds veer south-westerly. Consequently, migrants were in very short supply. The Hoopoe remained from April, while a Blue-headed Wagtail and Sedge Warbler were new on the 1st. The 2nd produced the first Tree Sparrow and Lesser Whitethroat of the year, with four Common Sandpipers, 15 Black-headed Gulls, 20 Wood Pigeon and a Blackcap being the other highlights. There were few other arrivals of note over this early period, although a Stock Dove and Grey Wagtail on 3rd, a Ring Ouzel on 4th and a Wryneck on 5th were seen. The first Arctic Terns arrived back on the 5th, with around 50 over Tarryfield and the months peak of 83 Golden Plover was counted. To widespread relief, the wind backed south-easterly on 6th. The dawn chorus was provided by the en masse arrival of 800 Arctic Terns. The first male Red-spotted Bluethroat of the year showed well on the Hill Dyke and a superb Olive-backed Pipit was discovered feeding around the Plantation. A good spring passage of Lesser Redpolls kicked off on this date with four birds seen. The 7th was notable for the 11 Tree Sparrows that were mobile around the crofts. A male Red-backed Shrike began a nine day stay on 8th, was supplemented by a female on 10th and replaced by a female on 17th. The 8th also produced the first Redstart of the year, and a Common Redpoll was tentatively identified. New in on 9th were Whinchat, Whitethroat, Pied Flycatcher and Jackdaw, with a fresh arrival of two Wrynecks and three Bluethroats on 10th. Wrynecks increased to four on 11th, before the wind switched to the south-west for a day, producing the months best count of 28 Dunlin. The 13th saw north-easterlies set in for four days and southern migrants were notable by their absence. This was more than compensated for by the discovery of a fine Arctic Redpoll near Double Dyke. Other year ticks new in were Pink-footed Goose, the first of several Black-tailed Godwits and two Spotted Flycatchers. Wood Sandpiper and Goldfinch were discovered on the 14th, as was a Canada Goose (which resembled a feral European bird) on Golden Water. An all to brief Stonechat on 15th couldn't compete with a cracking male Rustic Bunting at Easter Lother Water. Cuckoo, a new Goldfinch and four Black-tailed Godwits on 16th were the last migrants before the wind turned to the western quarter for the rest of the month. A Knot on 17th was the only noteworthy bird for the next four days, with numbers of common migrants either very low or non-existent. The mood picked up on 21st when an immature White-tailed Eagle flew low over Brae o' Restensgeo. This was almost certainly the same bird seen a week later on Unst and seen to be wearing a Norwegian colour ring. Also new in were Sanderling, three Sandwich Terns and the months best total of 15 House Martins. Highlights of the 22nd were a mobile Common Crane and a female Subalpine Warbler at Schoolton, with either this or another present until the 30th. New in on 23rd was a singing adult male Common Rosefinch that embarked on a seven day tour of the south, a Wood Warbler and 100 Swallows. Much rarer in Fair Isle terms was the Corn Bunting at Quoy, being the first record since 1994. The 22nd

produced an identification headache in the unlikely form of a Canada Goose on Utra Brecks. Thought to possibly be a '*taverneri* / *parvipes*' intergrade, it seems fairly safe to assume it was a genuine vagrant, given the prevailing winds. A Turtle Dove on 25th and Hawfinch on 27th were the highlights of a quiet few days, until a Great Snipe was discovered on the 29th at Pund. Only the second spring record in the FIBO period, it gave good flight views to the assembled crowd. An Iceland Gull with 68 Lesser Black-backed Gulls on Meoness provided more interest and two Storm Petrels were seen from the *Good Shepherd IV*. The 30th provided the final surprise of an overall disappointing month, when a summer plumaged Black Tern was found in the Arctic Tern colony on Bunes. Only the second ever record for Fair Isle, it stayed around for just 25 minutes. To round off the day, an Osprey soared over the Observatory, a Great Northern Diver was in South Haven and seven Red-breasted Mergansers were scattered around the isle.

## June

June continued in much the same vein as May, with western quarter winds dominating the month and migrants in very short supply. The opening fortnight was fairly desperate and may rate as two of the quietest spring weeks ever. The more interesting records for the first week were two Cuckoos and a Tree Pipit on 1st, Short-eared Owl, Kestrel and 10 Whimbrel on 2nd, Grey Wagtail on 3rd and the two Black-tailed Godwits from May stayed until the 5th. An Osprey drifted over Easter Lother on the 6th, with four Red-breasted Mergansers, four Wood Pigeons, Linnet and the month's only Purple Sandpiper in support. Little of note was then seen until the 10th, when two Sandwich Terns toured the island, a Marsh Warbler was trapped in the Gully and two new Tree Sparrows were found. A female Bluethroat and Wood Sandpiper on the 11th raised hopes, albeit briefly. A Knot on 13th was the highlight of the following two days. The 14th heralded the start of the best week of the Spring. A Marsh Warbler began a three day stay in Schoolton garden, singing during the night. A summer-plumaged Great Northern Diver graced South Haven while a female Red-backed Shrike was mobile in the south. The only Redstart of the month was on the 15th and a Barnacle Goose paused briefly on Meoness. Undoubtedly the best day of the month occurred as soon as there was a hint of easterly in the wind on the 16th. A Rosy Starling proved elusive throughout its two day stay, a male Black-headed Bunting was seen briefly at Taft, and a Red-throated Pipit began a three day stay, singing on the Wirvie Brecks. The 16th was also notable for the four Crossbills seen; the start of an impressive invasion. The closing fortnight saw a return to westerlies: consequently, migrants were virtually absent. Manx Shearwater was added to the year list with 15 seen from the *Good Shepherd IV* on the 20th. The month's only Spotted Flycatcher was found on the 21st, while Crossbills continued to arrive, with 25 on 24th. A Turtle Dove on 25th and Greenshank on 26th were the best "countable" birds of the last few days, but the arrival of a plastic-ring-bearing Waxwing on 28th added a splash of colour.

## July

With the month seemingly dominated by fog, the lack of migrants was compounded by the difficulty in actually seeing them. With the focus of attention for the majority of the month being seabird work, opportunities for counting migrants were few and far between. Nonetheless, some good records were made. The first signs of wader passage were evident on the 1st, when five Whimbrel were seen. The pioneering Crossbills in June rapidly increased from one on the 1st to 110 on the 2nd. Numbers stayed high all month, but peaked at 150 on 12th and 14th. A very black, Black Redstart sent us scuttling to the literature to no avail on the 3rd, while a Bar-tailed Godwit was seen on the 4th. Views of a fly-over 'wing-barred' Crossbill on the 5th resulted in the hoped for Two-barred Crossbill being pinned down in Jivvy Geo. This adult female proved to be very instructive as it spent the following four days on the cliff top, sometimes showing down to five metres. The next day was notable for a bird even rarer than Two-barred Crossbill – a Mute Swan! Originally seen by one disbelieving observer on the Puffin feeding watch as it flew in out of the fog, it was soon relocated the following day and proceeded to put in an extended stay on the isle. A passage of 80 Curlew was also noted on the 6th. The *Good Shepherd IV* provided some good seabird records, kicking off with a Sooty Shearwater and 10 Storm Petrels on the 7th. The noteworthy sight of four fledgling Arctic Terns on the 10th illustrated just how poor this year's breeding success was, with Kittiwakes only just faring better. Crossbills apart, the mid-month period was fairly quiet. Records of note being eight Common Scoter and a Chiffchaff on the 11th, a Manx Shearwater, seven Cormorants and ten Storm Petrels from the *Good Shepherd IV* on the 12th, Grey Heron and Green Sandpiper on the 18th, Lesser Redpoll on the 20th and Greenshank and Cormorant on the 21st. Excitement took an uncharacteristic leap on the 23rd when a Honey Buzzard flapped low over Bunes, before making its way over to Sheep Rock and on to certain people's Fair Isle lists! Seven Manx Shearwaters passed South Light, three Knot, seven Purple Sandpipers and four Common Redpolls were also seen on the 23rd, preceding a final week that saw little in the way of arrivals. A Grey Heron on the 24th, Merlin, Ruff and a '*flava*' wagtail on the 25th, two un-seasonal (and perhaps locally bred?) juvenile Song Thrushes arrived on the 26th, as did 12 Dunlin, 30 Turnstone and *Good Shepherd IV* sightings of six Cormorant and 50 Storm Petrels. Waders continued to draw attention, with 188 Oystercatchers on the 27th and 62 Redshank and a Green Sandpiper on the 28th. The first land-observed Sooty Shearwater was seen on the 29th, along with a Grey Heron and Swift.

## August

With the seabird season coming to a close, attention once again turned to migrants. The opening week saw a ridge of high pressure to the east of Britain, bringing moist south-westerly winds and fog to Fair Isle. Consequently, there were few new arrivals, although an early Barred Warbler accompanied the first Cuckoo of the



autumn on the 5th. A low pressure tracking to the south resulted in easterly winds for a brief period around the 8th and 9th and an Icterine Warbler promptly arrived at Lower Stoneybrek. Crossbills numbered 20, but then gradually dwindled throughout the month. Winds were firmly in the west for the following week, with the only excitement coming from Storm Petrel ringing sessions. Two Leach's Petrels were trapped on 13th, although two Shoveler around South Light on the 15th were a welcome addition to the year list. The much needed change in the weather came on the 18th, as an anticyclone to the east and a low in the south-west approaches produced a south-easterly air stream and even an easterly gale on the 19th. An immediate change in fortune was noted, with the arrival of five Barred Warblers and a Wryneck on the 19th, and a mini-fall of 50 Willow Warblers, 24 Garden Warblers, three Pied Flycatchers and a Scaup providing interest on the 20th. With a fresh south-westerly airflow now in place, an Osprey that drifted south over Ward Hill on the 21st proved that birds were still turning up. As if to reiterate the point, four Reed Warblers and a Barred Warbler were found the following day. A brief period of light south-easterly wind and patchy rain on the 23rd grounded the first two Common Rosefinches of the autumn, along with seven Tree Pipits. An adult male Rosy Starling was found near Barkland on the 25th and afforded excellent views as it fed about five metres from its many admirers. Also new in were further single Barred Warbler and Common Rosefinch, bringing their respective totals to two and three. Cool and showery north-westerly winds from the 26th did not prevent the discovery of two new Barred Warblers and a Grasshopper Warbler was trapped in the Double Dyke. The following two days were quiet with a Turtle Dove on the 27th and a decent count of 29 Cormorants on the 28th being the only new arrivals of note. The Rosy Starling was still performing well, as were the contingent of four Barred Warblers. As the wind backed south-easterly on the 29th, the rain and fog could not hide the superb Yellow-breasted Bunting discovered at Jimmy's Brae. As it began its two day stay in the hostile north, other new arrivals included at least five Common Rosefinch, a Pintail and seven Pied Flycatchers, making for an eventful day. The month's peak count of 205 Twite was also recorded. The 30th was a fitting follow up to the previous day, with an Icterine Warbler putting on a good show at the Auld Haa, a Red-backed Shrike trapped in the Vaadal and Barred Warblers increasing to six. August ended on a high, with the final year tick of the month being a confiding Curlew Sandpiper at Jimmy's Brae on the 31st, while the Barred Warbler count had increased to nine, Common Rosefinches were up to six and Reed Warbler had reached eight.

## September

With a high pressure system seemingly lodged in place over the Atlantic, westerly winds dominated the opening fortnight of the month. Nonetheless, some interesting arrivals occurred. August's leftovers included the Rosy Starling, nine Barred Warblers, seven Common Rosefinches and two Icterine Warblers. An early peak of

86 Redshank arrived with two Sandwich Tern on the 3rd, while a Slavonian Grebe in Finnequoy on the 4th kick started an impressive autumn run for the species. An Icterine Warbler in the Raevas arrived with the months peak count of 390 Meadow Pipits on the 6th. A more lively second week started with a flighty Lapland Bunting and a count of 53 Ringed Plovers on the 7th. A Red-backed Shrike on the 9th and a flock of 12 Grey Herons on the 10th preceded the first, long awaited rarity of the month. A female Black-headed Bunting was found in the Plantation and provided an identification headache until it was trapped and various in-hand features were noted. It proceeded to stay until the 26th. A Wryneck, Red-backed Shrike and two Common Rosefinches were the following days highlights, but we had to wait until the 13th before the first year tick of September was found. This came in the diminutive shape of a Little Stint at Groggy's Cup. A fall of 230 (mainly '*leucorhoa*') Wheatears, the autumns first Goldcrest and a Wryneck were the day's other notable arrivals. A Yellow-browed Warbler on the 14th gave some eastern promise for the third week, but the following few days failed to live up to expectation. A Bluethroat on the 15th with a notable count of 80 Snipe, preceded the first ten Greylag Geese on the 16th. The next fortnight saw an encouraging weather system in place, as high pressure stretched from Scandinavia all the way to Lake Baikal. Variable easterly winds dominated and expectations in the Observatory were running high. The first two Great Spotted Woodpeckers arrived in the north on the 17th, with one of them taking a liking to the old T.V. aerial outside the Observatory! The 18th was a better day, with a Red-breasted Flycatcher trapped in the Plantation and three Yellow-browed Warblers providing the main interest while four Lesser Redpolls and two Common Redpolls kept the identification pundits amused. The first two Richard's Pipits were found together at Leogh and put in an extended appearance from the 19th. An altogether much briefer bird was the Olive-backed Pipit, seen well by one lucky observer on the 20th. The rest of us had to make do with the autumn's first Robin. The 21st was a quiet day, with two Slavonian Grebes and 54 Wigeon, but the 22nd began to restore our faith in easterly winds. Incredibly, a second female Black-headed Bunting was found at Setter. This one day bird did a tour of the south, before giving good views in the Quoy rig. The day's other highlights of nine Yellow-browed Warblers, ringtail Hen Harrier, 65 Snow Buntings, Grey Wagtail and four Red-breasted Mergansers all caused less excitement than an elusive '*Locustella*' in the Shirva garden. Good views eventually proved it to be just a Grasshopper Warbler. The 23rd dawned with an air of expectation, and we were not to be disappointed. A '*Locustella*' flushed from Boini Mire proved to be the much anticipated first Lanceolated Warbler. Sunday lunch was quickly forgotten as it put on a good show around the Stackhoull shed, although this paled into insignificance during the afternoon as it wandered between people's legs, over boots and even over one man's hand! Following hot on the heels of this came the discovery of Fair Isle's fourth Radde's Warbler in Bulls Park. Good views of this chunky '*Phyllosc*' and

true Shetland rarity were had by all. On top of this impressive brace of rarities was a new Barred Warbler, Wood Warbler, five Lapland Buntings, four Common Redpolls and five Great Spotted Woodpeckers. If the 23rd had been good, then the 24th was to prove even better. A second Lanceolated Warbler was found in a ditch at Leogh, but proved more elusive than the previous day's bird. A phone call to the Observatory over lunch alerted us to a Dusky Warbler at Midway. It proved to be a little stunner as it showed well in the thistle patch, calling constantly. This proved to be the first of its 11 day stay on the isle. As if this wasn't enough, a mobile and elusive un-streaked '*acro*' finally gave good views at Springfield. Although it evaded our best efforts to trap it and the emargination on the fourth primary could not be seen in the field, it was confidently identified as a Blyth's Reed Warbler. Other migrants took a back seat, but a count of nine Jack Snipe was noteworthy, as were two new Common Rosefinches and the first Dunnock of the autumn. As the morning of the 25th wore on, it became apparent that there had been a large arrival of Jack Snipe. An impressive 60 were logged that evening; by far the highest count on Fair Isle. Also new in was a Short-toed Lark on Tarryfield, and an increase in Richard's Pipits to six. Ringtail harrier fever gripped the Obs on the 26th, as what proved to be a Hen Harrier made it on to the day list. Four Barred Warblers represented an increase, as did the 19 Chiffchaff. These included two birds showing characters of the Siberian race, '*tristis*'. The first Little Bunting was found at Setter, before promptly disappearing until the following afternoon. The 27th also saw the autumn's first Woodcock, flushed from Burrashield, as six intrepid and visionary birders tried to turn a pale Kestrel into something altogether rarer. Two Stonechats were new in on the 28th, as were a Bluethroat, Red-breasted Flycatcher and three Linnets. Bird of the day however, was the tame Rustic Bunting found in the Raevas. Perhaps it thought it was a Lancey, as it fed unconcerned within one and a half metres of its admiring crowd! The first skeins of geese started to arrive, with 36 Greylags and a Pink-footed Goose being seen. The 29th witnessed at least 320 Barnacle Geese flying around the isle, as Great Spotted Woodpeckers rose to seven and the first decent thrush fall commenced. The month closed with a second Rustic Bunting and an increase in thrushes to 3000 Redwing, 200 Song Thrush, ten Ring Ouzel and a Mistle Thrush. Departing summer migrants consisted of ten Redstarts and a late Little Stint while a Woodcock, Long-eared Owl and 53 Bramblings proved that winter is not too far away. . . .

## October

The month opened with predominately easterly quarter winds and long staying Dusky Warbler and Rustic Bunting still present. Also seen on the 1st were two Little Buntings, three Great Spotted Woodpeckers and five Richard's Pipits. More unusual was the Storm Petrel that flew around inside South Raeva. The 2nd was a day of frustration for most, but elation for the two lucky observers who independently found and identified Shetland's first Pallid Swift hawking the cliffs

at Wester Lothar. Unfortunately for the rest of us, it departed ahead of approaching rain. People searching for the swift also missed out on a full adult Pomarine Skua that flew low south over the Observatory. Literally an armchair tick for those that saw it! Initial compensation for this dip came with the trapping of a Spotted Crake in the plantation on the 3rd. High spirits were restored to the visitors with the discovery of a Pechora Pipit outside the Observatory early on the 4th. The first record since 1998, it showed well in the Havens to all those present. Migration then slowed for a while, as westerly winds dominated the following week's weather. New birds still made it to the isle however, as two 'Greenland' Redpolls were identified on the 5th. The north-western theme continued with 85 Barnacle Geese, 130 Skylark and 130 Twite on the 7th, three Lapland Buntings on the 9th and 11 Whooper Swans, 60 Wigeon and 75 Snow Buntings on the 13th. An Olive-backed Pipit was seen briefly near South Light on the 8th, before it headed off out to sea. A single Yellow-browed Warbler was regularly seen throughout this period, as was a Richard's Pipit and a Little Bunting. With high pressure now established over the continent and a run of depressions coming off the Atlantic, the remainder of the month was dominated by near perfect east, south-east winds. A Hawfinch was a good autumn find on the 14th, but more expected were the Little Bunting and two Richard's Pipits also seen that day. A fall of 7000 Redwing, 650 Blackbird, 440 Fieldfare and 370 Song Thrush on the 15th accompanied a ringtail Hen Harrier. North met south the next day when the first northern Bullfinch of the year was in the north at the same time as a late Swift. A week of rarities followed that rewarded those people astute enough to visit this late in the season. The second Olive-backed Pipit of the month was seen near Pund on the 17th and a flock of ten 'Greenland' White-fronted Geese toured the south of the isle before settling on Sukka Mire. Two Pintail and a late '*flava*' wagtail were the highlights of a quiet 18th, but it was on the 19th that events heated up. The day dawned with dense fog and a mystery bird trapped in the plantation. It proved to be a Nightingale, probably of an eastern origin. Bird of the day however, was a long awaited and much-anticipated Pallas's Grasshopper Warbler. Initially flushed from a boggy area near the plantation, it proved elusive for a while, but eventually gave good field views to all present. The first record since 1998, it was later trapped in the plantation. Due to the finding of these two birds, the isle had not been covered properly and although immensely satisfied with the day's events, there was also a feeling of "what have we missed . . .?" The 20th produced the answer in true Fair Isle style. Typical late autumn arrivals of 23 Woodcock, four Great Spotted Woodpeckers, eight Short-eared and one Long-eared Owl enlivened the day, but things really came alive in the late afternoon when a small dark bunting at the Haa proved to be Scotland's first and Britain's fourth Black-faced Bunting. A Waxwing and '*thunbergi*' Yellow Wagtail accompanied the bunting at the Haa on the 21st as an Olive-backed Pipit was identified at Shirva. The closing ten days of October produced a steady arrival of northern birds, including three Waxwings, 12 northern Bullfinch, 34 Common

Redpolls, 130 Brambling and an increase in Short-eared Owls to ten on the 22nd; 850 Blackbirds and 23 nominate Wrens on the 23rd; Shorelark on the 26th; European White-fronted Goose and 71 Snipe on the 27th and 900 Greylags on the 28th. The fourth Olive-backed Pipit of the month was in the Wirvie on the 26th, but a 'Black-bellied' Dipper managed to evade the Vaadal trap, but not the year list on the 29th. The Warden's gesture of waving to the departing staff on the *Good Shepherd IV* from North Light on the 30th was rewarded with a Great Tit and brought a memorable month to a close.

### **November–December**

The final two months of the season saw not only the departure of the last of the migrants, but also the seasonal staff, resulting in much reduced coverage. Highlights however, were provided by the over-wintering Great Tit at North Light, a second 'Black-bellied' Dipper in the Gully on 13th November – the same day as the star bird of the winter – a White-rumped Sandpiper which was flushed from the pools at the base of Malcolm's Head and a Shore Lark at Shirva the following day. Cormorants were regularly recorded in small numbers in both South Harbour and North Haven and were joined by an over-wintering Grey Heron and occasional sightings of one or two Goldeneye, Long-tailed Duck and Red-breasted Merganser. A red-head Goosander on 29th December was the only sighting of the year. Raptors put in a showing, with occasional Sparrowhawk, Merlin and Peregrine seen whilst small numbers of waders included two unusually late Oystercatcher. Numbers were swelled by an influx on 29th which included 36 Lapwing, 50 Snipe, three Jack Snipe, 50 Redshank, 100 Turnstone and 25 Curlew. One or two Black-headed Gulls were recorded in November and Common Gulls up to the year's end. Two first-winter Iceland Gulls and one Glaucous Gull were seen in December. One of the highlights of the final few weeks was a flock of 100 Little Auks seen from a fishing boat off Sheep Rock. The last bird of the influx of Great Spotted Woodpeckers was seen on 13th November. On the passerine front, small numbers of Robins lingered to the year's end whilst a very pale Dunnock was seen in the Observatory garden on 6th December. Good numbers of the common thrushes were recorded throughout whilst the last Chiffchaff was on 1st November and late Blackcaps were seen on 18th November and 8th December. Finches were represented by seven Chaffinch, two of which lingered into the new year, a Greenfinch on 19th November & 8th December and Goldfinch on 26th & 28th November. Best of all however, were the Arctic Redpolls reported on 12th-13th and 18th (two) December. The only buntings were the flock of Snow Buntings which peaked at 70 on 1st December.

## Earliest and Latest Migrant Dates

Hywel Maggs

With the current interest in the possible effects of ‘global warming’, readers may be interested in the following list of spring and autumn migrant arrival and departure dates.

<b>Species</b>	<b>Earliest</b>	<b>2001</b>	<b>Latest</b>	<b>2001</b>
Osprey	25.04.1966	30.05	04.11.1935	21.08
Quail	30.04.1961	—	13.10.1989	—
Corncrake	10.04.1966	—	03.11.1977	—
Dotterel	25.04.193	—	06.11.1976	—
Whimbrel	15.04.1972	17.04	12.12.1907	22.09
Green Sandpiper	08.04.1979	24.04	12.11.1970	13.09
Common Sandpiper	05.04.1983	25.04	02.11.1908	06.09
Sandwich Tern	30.03.2001	30.03	18.09.1977	03.09
Common Tern	25.04.1983	29.04	18.10.1975	23.08
Turtle Dove	23.04.1971	25.05	01.11.1982	31.08
Cuckoo	17.04.1987	16.05	08.10.1977	09.08
Swift	29.04.2001	29.04	26.10.1975	16.10
Wryneck	18.04.1981	25.04	17.10.1974	13.09
Sand Martin	02.04.1989	21.04	19.10.1978	—
Swallow	03.04.1999	21.04	02.11.1984	22.10
Tree Pipit	14.04.pre 1963	25.04	02.11.pre 1963	09.10
Red-throated Pipit	08.05.1936	16.06	01.11.1908	—
Yellow Wagtail	25.03.1954	01.05	20.11.1957	21.10
Bluthroat	22.03.pre 1963	30.03	13.11.1983	28.09
Redstart	09.04.pre 1963	08.05	11.11.1981	15.10
Whinchat	14.04.1981	09.05	26.11.1990	23.10
Wheatear	13.03.pre 1959	28.03	19.11.1959	28.10
Ring Ouzel	16.03.1988	30.03	19.12.1909	28.10
Sedge Warbler	19.04.1987	01.05	11.11.1975	25.09
Marsh Warbler	22.05.1984	27.05	06.10.pre 1963	—
Reed Warbler	28.04.2001	28.04	31.10.1980	20.10
Icterine Warbler	13.05.1999	—	13.10.1976	06.09
Grasshopper Warbler	12.04.1981	24.04	23.10.2000	02.10
Subalpine Warbler	20.04.2000	22.05	04.10.1979	—
Whitethroat	11.04.pre 1959	09.05	21.10.1978	05.10
Garden Warbler	21.04.1969	22.05	20.11.1976	18.10
Wood Warbler	14.04.1981	23.05	06.10.1973	24.09
Willow Warbler	03.04.1981	23.04	23.11.1927	14.10
Spotted Flycatcher	20.04.1949	13.05	26.10.1985	04.10
Pied Flycatcher	21.04.1983	09.05	29.10.1985	27.09
Red-backed Shrike	04.05.1984	08.05	08.11.1993	13.09
Common Rosefinch	08.05.1977	23.05	30.11.1991	28.09
Ortolan Bunting	26.04.1964	—	01.11.2000	—
Rustic Bunting	25.04.1980	15.05	08.11.1975	07.10
Little Bunting	04.04.1958	—	19.11.1975	22.10

## **SYSTEMATIC LIST 2001**

Deryk Shaw

Some species names in the list have been changed to comply with those of the British Ornithologists Union (BOU). Although most changes are obvious, wherever confusion may be possible, the previous name is included in parentheses. For ease of reading, only those names in the Systematic List have been changed.

### ***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 of the year was a fine summer-plumaged individual in South Harbour on 22nd March, with further singles on 30th March and 28th April. Three pairs and a single were seen between 24th May–10th June. August records concerned a single on 10th and a pair on 28th whilst later in the autumn singles were seen on seven dates between September 12th–October 10th.

### **GREAT NORTHERN DIVER** *Gavia immer*

#### ***Scarce spring and autumn migrant***

Singles were seen flying offshore on May 5th & 30th whilst a superb summer-plumaged bird spent 14th June in South Haven. In autumn singles flew past on September 25th & 27th.

### **SLAVONIAN GREBE** *Podiceps auritus*

#### ***Scarce autumn migrant***

A stunning bird in full breeding dress was observed in South Haven on 11th April. In autumn, a single on 4th September precluded regular sightings of ones or twos between 18th September–5th October, probably involving 6–9 birds in total.

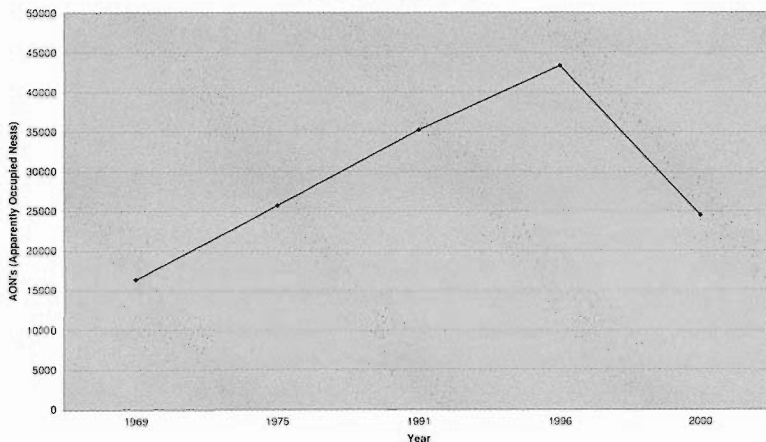
### **NORTHERN FULMAR** *Fulmarus glacialis*

#### ***Resident; breeds in large numbers***

Numbers at monitoring plots continued the long-term decline of this species with

a decrease of 9.9% compared to 2000 thus mirroring the trend throughout the isle as a whole (Fig. 1). Breeding performance was, as with most seabird species, the worst since 1990 – an average of just 0.28 chicks fledged per occupied site. The only significant count of passage birds received was that of 3,000 past Bunes in an hour on 9th September. ‘Blue’ individuals were seen on 5th May (2), 21st August and 26th November. A partial albino was seen at Furse on 6th April.

### Fulmar Population



**Fig. 1:** Fair Isle's Fulmar population has shown a massive decline from the peak numbers in 1997 – possibly due to changes in fishing legislation and practice, meaning there are less discards available for scavenging birds.

### SOOTY SHEARWATER *Puffinus griseus*

#### *Frequent autumn migrant*

A single was seen from the *Good Shepherd IV* on 7th July and one flew past the Isle on 29th July. No further records until the last few days of August when a maximum count of six was made on 31st. Singles were reported on six dates in September whilst three were counted on 11th and four on 21st. Further birds were seen on 1st, 10th and 11th October.

### MANX SHEARWATER *Puffinus puffinus*

#### *Scarce autumn migrant, rare in spring*

A reasonable year with one on 12th July, then seven from South Light on 23rd and further singles on 12th & 16th August and 18th September.

### EUROPEAN STORM-PETREL *Hydrobates pelagicus*

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

Two seen from *The Good Shepherd IV* on 29th May were the first. Small numbers (1-10) were seen from the end of June but it was not until near the end of July that



larger numbers were both seen from *The Good Shepherd IV* and trapped at night near the Observatory. Catches over 100 were made during the first half of August and birds were recorded until 15th September apart from an unusual sighting of a lone individual in South Raeva on 1st October.

#### **LEACH'S STORM-PETREL** *Oceanodroma leucorhoa*

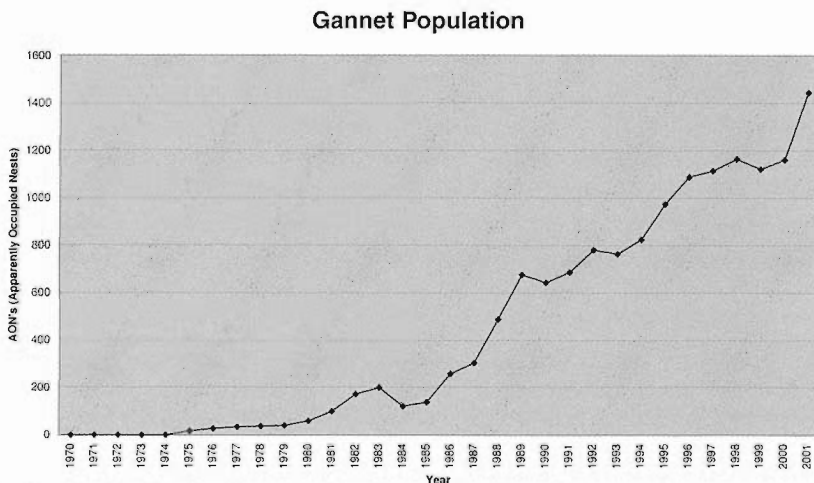
##### ***Scarce migrant, summer and early autumn***

Birds were trapped during European Storm-Petrel netting sessions on 3rd, 4th & 13th (2) August. One was also seen from *The Good Shepherd IV* on 7th August.

#### **NORTHERN GANNET** *Morus bassana*

##### ***Breeds in large numbers, seen offshore all year***

Continuing the expansion of the Fair Isle colony, a count of nests between 12th-16th June, revealed a total of 1,446 nests – a substantial increase of 24.4% on the previous year's count (Fig. 2). Following a single pair in 1999 and four in 2000, five pairs nested on Sheep Rock in 2001. Breeding success at monitoring plots was, following two poor years, back to higher levels. From a total of 173 AONs, 130 chicks were fledged giving a productivity of 0.75 – an average figure.



**Fig. 2:** Graph showing the continued growth of the Fair Isle Gannet population. Gannets are not so affected by the changes in the abundance of Sandeels, as they can feed on a variety of fish species such as Herring and Mackerel.

#### **GREAT CORMORANT** *Phalacrocorax carbo*

##### ***Frequent autumn migrant, less common in winter and spring***

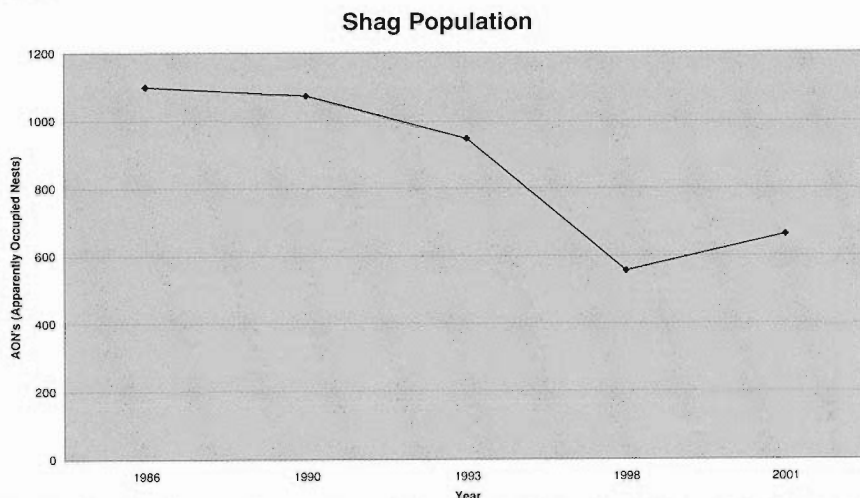
Five singles were recorded during April and four in May. July produced a count of seven from *The Good Shepherd IV* on 12th and six on 26th whilst counts of 1-4

became more regular in August from South Harbour. A marked passage was noted at the end of August with counts of 21 on 25th and 29 on 28th. Small numbers (1-10) were recorded almost daily throughout September and the first half of October with occasional counts of 1-5 until the year's end.

### **EUROPEAN SHAG** *Phalacrocorax aristotelis*

#### ***Resident, breeds in moderate numbers***

An all island census in May and June revealed a total of 663 apparently occupied nests, which is a very welcome 16.9% increase on the last count in 1998 (Fig. 3). After an apparent bumper year in 2000, overall numbers at monitoring plots showed a small decrease of 3.9% although there was considerable variation between sites. Overall breeding success was again particularly high (and one of the few successes of the seabird season) with a mean productivity of 1.63 chicks per nest.



**Fig. 3:** Graph showing the number of Apparently Occupied Nests (AON's) on Fair Isle. The long-term decline seems to have halted in 2001, however, it remains to be seen if this is real or just a temporary blip.

### **GREY HERON** *Ardea cinerea*

#### ***Frequent autumn migrant, less common in winter/spring***

Occasional singles at either end of the year but for two on 13th November. A light spring passage from 29th March involved a maximum of 13 birds up to 7th April, with one lingering until further passage at the end of the month produced another 11 birds in groups of 1-4. Occasional singles were recorded in May. Autumn passage commenced with singles on three dates from 18th July until almost daily counts of 1-4 throughout August and September, except for a peak count of 12 on



*Whinchat, Fair Isle, September 2001.*

*Reston Kilgour*



*Ring Ouzel, trapped, September 2001.*  
*Deryk Shaw*



*Merlin, trapped, September 2001.*  
*Paul French*





*Two-barred Crossbill, Wirvie, July 2001.*

*Hywel Maggs*



*Paul French*



*Paul French*

*Black-faced Bunting, Auld Haa, October 2001.*



*Red-breasted Flycatcher, trapped, September 2001.*

*Paul French*



*Tree Sparrows, trapped, May 2001.*

*Paul French*





*Icterine Warbler, Auld Haa, August 2001.*

*Craig Round*



*Rosy Starling, Barkland, September 2001.*

*Reston Kilgour*

9th & 10th September. Regular sightings of 1-3 birds continued throughout October and probably concerned up to ten birds. Finally, one was recorded on 23rd & 30th December.

**MUTE SWAN** *Cygnus olor*

***Vagrant; five previous records***

An immature bird arrived on the isle on 6th July, however it was obviously underweight and was taken into care on 2nd August and eventually handed over to the RSPCA in Shetland.

**WHOOPEE SWAN** *Cygnus cygnus*

***Frequent autumn migrant, scarce in spring***

The bird which first arrived in 1999 as a juvenile remained into 2001 and was briefly joined by another on 30th January. In spring, it paired with a resident domestic goose. It was later seen mating and guarding this goose as she sat on six eggs in the mire near Barkland. Fortunately, these were infertile and never hatched. The swan departed on the 25th April. The only true spring migrants were five on 22nd March and a single on 21st April. Autumn passage consisted of family parties on nine dates in October, totalling 53 birds, two juveniles from 14th November-8th December and a party of six flying south on 6th December.

**PINK-FOOTED GOOSE** *Anser brachyrhynchus*

***Frequent autumn migrant, scarce in spring***

Typically, spring records were scarce with a single on 13th May followed by a pair two days later. Autumn passage was fairly light, from 28th September-28th October, with counts over ten on just five dates including the maximum count of 41 on 16th October.

**GREATER WHITE-FRONTED GOOSE** *Anser albifrons*

***Scarce autumn migrant***

A party of ten Greenland White-fronts (*A. a. flavirostris*) paused for a short while on 17th October whilst another with Greylags on 27th-28th was thought to be of the European race *A. a. albifrons*.

**GREYLAG GOOSE** *Anser anser*

***Common spring and autumn migrant***

The first three months produced sporadic flocks of 2-14 birds on four dates in January, five in February and three in March. April fared little better with eight parties of 1-11, including groups of six which rested for several days, whilst a few stragglers appeared in May and June. A single bird was seen on 15th July. August produced counts of 1-4 on ten dates. Autumn passage commenced with ten birds on 16th September, then three on 20th-21st, two on 24th and 36 on 28th. Passage

was daily from 3rd-31st October mainly involving counts below 40 but also over 100 on two dates, over 200 on three dates and an impressive 900 on 28th October. Records were regular throughout November and December with birds resting for several days on the isle with monthly maximum counts of 63 on 14th November and 73 on 4th December.

### **CANADA GOOSE** *Branta canadensis*

**Rare spring visitor; fifteen previous records (29 individuals)**



Almost an expected annual visitor now which has been recorded in eight of the last eleven years. One was on Golden Water on 14th-15th May whilst another near Utra on 24th-25th May was of one of the small races and most closely resembled Taverner's Canada Goose (*B. c. taverneri*).

### **BARNACLE GOOSE** *Branta leucopsis*

**Frequent autumn migrant**

A mid-winter record of two on 3rd January.

The only birds of the spring were two on 30th May and a single on 15th June.

*Lesser Canada Goose – Paul French*

Autumn passage commenced at the end of September with a single on 23rd followed by

27 on 28th, 320 on 29th and 230 on 30th. Smaller numbers (<100) were recorded daily until 13th October and then again from 18th until the last of the year on 28th October.

### **COMMON SHELDUCK** *Tadorna tadorna*

**Scarce spring migrant, rare in autumn**

Two records. One was seen flying north on 30th April – exactly the same date as the only spring record of the previous year! In summer one lingered from 31st July-3rd August.

### **EURASIAN WIGEON** *Anas penelope*

**Frequent spring and autumn migrant, scarce in winter**

Singles or pairs were recorded irregularly from 24th March-9th May. A total of some 10-13 birds. A pair, two males and a lone female were recorded in June. A single was seen on the last day of July. Autumn passage commenced on 20th August and was daily to the end of October. Counts were mainly between 10 and 40 with peaks of 54 on 21st September and 60 on 13th October. A pair spent a week on the isle in mid-November and two females were reported on December 29th.



**EURASIAN TEAL** *Anas crecca*

***Frequent spring and autumn migrant, scarce in winter***

Four were seen on 31st January, three on 4th February and eight on 15th. Spring passage was irregular throughout March, April and May involving single figure counts but for peaks of ten on 9th March and 13 on 13th May. Singles were seen on three dates in June, five in July and a party of five on 5th-6th July. Daily autumn passage was from 18th August-28th October involving counts of 5-20 but for peaks of 22 on 20th September, 25 on 29th and 23 on 30th. Finally, one was reported on 28th December.

**MALLARD** *Anas platyrhynchos*

***Frequent spring and autumn migrant; breeds in small numbers***

The resident 'feral' population was boosted by small numbers on two dates in January and three in February apart from a flock of 15 on 9th February. Spring passage was negligible with five on 6th April and seven on 17th the only noticeable counts. Two pairs are thought to have bred and broods of six were seen on 29th May and 18th June. Fledging success was thought to be low. Autumn passage was equally dismal with almost daily counts from mid-August – end October of less than five birds and peaks of 12 on 18th, 21st & 23rd October. Small numbers were seen in November and December.

**NORTHERN PINTAIL** *Anas acuta*

***Scarce spring and autumn migrant***

No spring records. Singles were seen on 29th-30th August, 1st-2nd, 6th & 10th September and a pair on 8th September.

**GARGANEY** *Anas querquedula*

***Vagrant; seven previous records, all in spring***

A female was in the South Harbour vicinity on 30th March.

**NORTHERN SHOVELER** *Anas clypeata*

***Scarce spring and autumn migrant***

Two were seen on 15th August – the first since 1998.

**TUFTED DUCK** *Aythya fuligula*

***Scarce spring migrant, rare in autumn***

In spring, two pairs, two single males and a lone female were recorded between 6th-22nd March whilst in May one pair, up to five lone males and a single female were seen. A single male was recorded from 24th-28th June and another on 18th July. Autumn records were scarce with just singles on 29th August and 4th September.

**GREATER SCAUP** *Aythya marila*

***Rare spring and autumn migrant***

A male on Bunes from 20th-23rd August was the only record.

**COMMON EIDER** *Somateria mollissima*

***Resident, breeds in small numbers***

Present offshore all year. No regular counts made although 160 were off South Light on 9th February and post-breeding counts on 10th August and 5th September put the local population at 240-280. Numbers were swelled in the autumn/winter by birds from further north with flocks approaching 300 at North and South Lights.

**LONG-TAILED DUCK** *Clangula hyemalis*

***Frequent autumn migrant, less common in spring***

Not recorded in spring. In autumn birds appeared regularly from 28th September, mainly in ones and twos but 16 on 22nd October was a marked influx. Occasional pairs were seen up to the year's end.

**BLACK SCOTER (COMMON SCOTER)** *Melanitta nigra*

***Scarce spring, autumn and winter migrant***

Three on 22nd May was the only spring sighting. Mid-summer records concerned a group of eight off South Light on 11th July and a single from 25th-28th July. In October, one on 13th, seven on 14th and two on 23rd were the only records of the autumn.

**VELVET SCOTER** *Melanitta fusca*

***Scarce autumn migrant***

One in South Harbour on 3rd February relocated to Furse where it remained until 14th April. The first record since 1998.

**COMMON GOLDENEYE** *Bucephala clangula*

***Regular winter, spring and autumn migrant***

Three on 4th February were the only records until irregular sightings of pairs or singles in March involving six birds. A female on 29th May was the only other spring occurrence. In autumn there were singles on three dates in the latter half of October and five on the 24th. December produced a lone female in the Havens on 3rd and a pair on 9th.

**RED-BREASTED MERGANSER** *Mergus serrator*

***Frequent spring and autumn migrant***

Singles or pairs recorded irregularly in every month, except August, although more frequent in May (peak of seven on 30th), June (peak of four on 6th) and September (peak of four on 22nd).

**GOOSANDER** *Mergus merganser*

**Rare migrant in winter, spring and late autumn**

A female was seen flying over the isle on 29th December.

**EUROPEAN HONEY BUZZARD** *Pernis apivorus*

**Vagrant; 41 previous records**

One drifted over Bunes and circled over Sheep Rock before departing southwards on 23rd July.

**WHITE-TAILED EAGLE** *Haliaeetus albicilla*

**Vagrant; six previous records (since reintroduction scheme failed in 1969)**

An immature flew north on 21st May but paused for a few moments near Furse. The first since 1998.

**EURASIAN MARSH HARRIER** *Circus aeruginosus*

**Vagrant; 27 previous records**

A male cruised around the isle from 29th-31st March – the second earliest record.

**HEN HARRIER** *Circus cyaneus*

**Scarce spring and autumn migrant**

Ringtails were seen on 22nd September, 26th-27th September and 15th-23rd October.

**EURASIAN SPARROWHAWK** *Accipiter nisus*

**Regular spring and autumn migrant**

One on 31st March was the only record until a female from 17th-20th April precluded regular sightings until the end of May involving a total of approximately ten birds. In autumn, there were singles on 14th & 23rd September followed by regular counts of 1-3 birds in October with a peak of four on 22nd. Singles were seen occasionally into November, the last on 19th.

**OSPREY** *Pandion haliaetus*

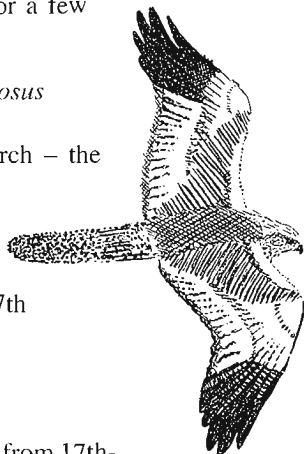
**Rare spring and autumn migrant; 67 previous records**

A typical spring saw birds flying through on 30th May and 6th June. An early autumn bird drifted through on 21st August – the first ever record for that month!

**COMMON KESTREL** *Falco tinnunculus*

**Regular spring and autumn migrant**

A poor spring passage saw two on 30th April, three on 12th May and a further four singles up to 2nd June. Autumn passage concerned almost daily sightings of 1-2 birds from 4th September-27th October but for counts of three on 18th & 27th September.



Marsh Harrier –  
Paul French

**MERLIN** *Falco columbarius*

**Regular spring and autumn migrant**

Occasional singles were seen in January-March. Sightings became more regular in April and early May with two birds on five dates. A female on 28th-29th May was the last of the spring. An immature was seen on 25th July. Autumn passage commenced on 22nd August, was regular through September and daily during the first three weeks of October with stragglers up to mid-November. Counts were of 1-3 but four were recorded on 11th & 13th October rising to five on 15th! At least one bird remained into December.

**PEREGRINE FALCON** *Falco peregrinus*

**Regular spring and autumn migrant; formerly bred**

A male on 31st March was followed by another on 11th-12th April, a female from 20th-22nd and another male on 27th-29th April. Finally, a female was seen on 26th May. Autumn passage commenced in late August but there were just two birds until mid-September when sightings became more regular. Single birds were observed frequently, two on two dates and three on 26th September. Birds were seen regularly up to the middle of November and two different birds were seen in December.

**WATER RAIL** *Rallus aquaticus*

**Regular spring and autumn migrant; occasionally winters**

At least three birds from 2000 stayed well into the new year. The first definite signs of movement was a count of six on 31st March and low single-figure counts were made daily until 3rd May. A light autumn passage saw occasional singles from mid-September then daily counts of 1-4 from mid-October until mid-November. December records were of singles on 21st & 27th.

**SPOTTED CRAKE** *Porzana porzana*

**Rare migrant, mostly autumn; 36 previous records**

One was seen to cross the road in front of the Observatory van on the morning of the 3rd October and was later trapped in the Plantation.

**COMMON MOORHEN** *Gallinula chloropus*

**Scarce spring and autumn migrant**

Spring records of 2-4 were almost daily from 30th March-6th April. In autumn singles were reported on just four dates in October with two on 4th.

**COMMON CRANE** *Grus grus*

**Vagrant; ten previous records (14 individuals)**

Two circled over the isle late afternoon on 20th April, having come from North Ronaldsay, before heading toward Shetland Mainland. This is the earliest record by sixteen days! Another frequented the fields in the south of the isle from 22nd-24th May. Now recorded in four of the last six years.

### **EURASIAN OYSTERCATCHER** *Haematopus ostralegus*

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

Four on 3rd February were the first and an influx of 30 on 14th were the only other records until regular passage in March saw a maximum count of 100 on two dates. Numbers remained close to 100 throughout April and consistently exceeded it towards the end of the month as the local breeders were swelled by passage birds. Migrants continued to move through in May, peaking at 210 on 22nd and tailed off in mid-June to around 70. Approximately 40 pairs bred but success was thought to be low as skuas found their primary food sources scarce and predated more heavily on Oystercatcher pulli. Numbers began to pick up again in late July as birds returned south and peaked in August (maximum of 220 on 3rd) before tailing off in late August to single figures by September. Counts of 1-3 were daily in October until the last on 23rd. Finally, there was an unusual record of two birds on 5th-6th December and possibly the same were reported on 29th.

### **RINGED PLOVER** *Charadrius hiaticula*

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

Singles on 4th & 22nd-24th February were the only records until daily sightings from 1st March. Numbers were generally less than ten until 20 on 17th March, then 37 on 22nd signalled the start of main passage and the return of the local breeders. Counts during April were mainly in the region 15-25 with a peak of 35 on 16th. Occasional small groups of migrants were seen in May (max. nine on 26th) and early June. Twelve territories were found and at least two pairs raised second broods. Returning migrants began to appear from mid-July and birds were seen daily until early October. Counts were generally below 20 throughout August followed by a period of heavier passage in early September when counts peaked at 53 on 7th. Numbers then rapidly tailed off to single figures by mid-September until the last on 9th October except for a late bird on 13th November.

### **EUROPEAN GOLDEN PLOVER** *Pluvialis apricaria*

***Common spring and autumn migrant; has bred***

Single birds on 6th, 10th & 11th March were the first until more regular sightings from 28th March and daily records from 13th April. Counts were generally below 20 until early May saw an influx of 65 on 3rd, rising to 79 the following day and 83 on the 5th but numbers had dwindled to single-figures by the middle of the month and were less frequent by June. Very small numbers were regularly recorded through June, July and early August until 32 on 16th signalled the start of main autumn passage. Daily counts were mainly in double-figures but peaked at just 35 on 19th August and 5th September and had dwindled to just single-figures by October. Small numbers were occasionally recorded in November and singles in December.

**GREY PLOVER** *Pluvialis squatarola*

*Scarce autumn migrant; rare in spring*

One was seen on 3rd & 4th October and possibly the same again on 7th & 8th.

**NORTHERN LAPWING** *Vanellus vanellus*

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

Occasional small numbers were reported in January and February but for an influx of 18 on 15th February. Main passage occurred in early March when 145 on 9th rose to 170 the following day and 200 on 11th. Daily counts, in the region of 10-45, continued right through April with stragglers in May and June. Eight pairs remained to breed but only four fledged juveniles were seen. Autumn migration began in late July but, although birds were seen almost daily, numbers rarely reached double-figures until late October when a maximum of just 35 was counted on 26th. No birds were seen in November whilst two singles were seen in December and a flock of 36 on 28th.

**RED KNOT** *Calidris canutus*

*Frequent autumn migrant, scarce in spring*

The only spring records were a summer-plumaged bird on 17th May and a non-breeder on 13th June. One on 5th July was probably the first autumn migrant then another on 17th before sightings became more regular from 23rd. Counts of 1-5 were daily from 14th August-17th September but for peaks of 8-11 between 31st August-4th September. Finally, there were four birds on 2nd October.

**SANDERLING** *Calidris alba*

*Frequent autumn migrant, less common in spring*

Singles were recorded on 21st, 26th May, 18th June and two on 24th May. Two on 15th July were the first of the autumn followed by two further singles before the month's end. Small numbers were recorded in intermittent spells throughout August and September until the last on 1st October. Six on 20th August is a typical maximum count.

**LITTLE STINT** *Calidris minuta*

*Regular autumn migrant*

Singles were recorded on 13th & 30th September and 3rd October with two on 1st & 4th October.

**WHITE-RUMPED SANDPIPER** *Calidris fuscicollis*

*Vagrant; two previous records*

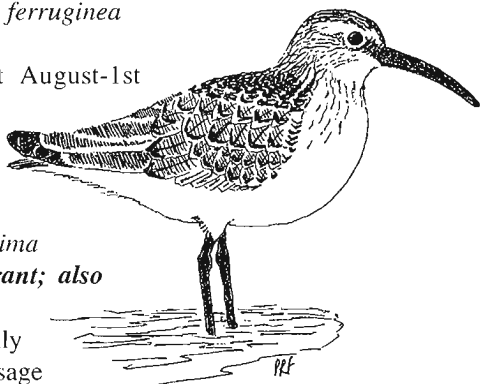
One seen briefly on the pools at the base of Malcolm's Head on 13th November is only the third record – the previous two having been in 1972 & 1980.

*Still under consideration by BBRC*

**CURLEW SANDPIPER** *Calidris ferruginea*

**Scarce autumn migrant**

One at Jimmie's Brae from 31st August-1st September and another in the Havens on 4th September.



**PURPLE SANDPIPER**

*Calidris maritima*

**Frequent spring and autumn migrant; also over-winters**

Five on 4th February were the only noted until three on 11th March. Passage then continued right through to the end of May. Numbers seemingly fluctuated widely on a daily basis, from zero and single-figures to seven counts over 50 and a maximum record spring count of 110 on 21st April. There was a sole June bird, on the 6th. Autumn passage began with singles on 11th & 21st July followed by seven on 23rd until single-figure counts became regular throughout August, September and October, except for a peak count of 25 on 3rd August. Small numbers were occasionally recorded in the final two months and a maximum of 12 on 22nd December.

*Curlew Sandpiper – Paul French*

**DUNLIN** *Calidris alpina*

**Frequent spring and autumn migrant. Has bred**

In spring, counts of 1-4 were daily from 30th March-4th April, then again from 28th April-11th May. Numbers jumped to 28 the following day (peak count) but had fallen to single-figures again by 19th, rising slightly again toward the end of the month and early June. Two singles were recorded in the latter half of June and sporadic counts of 1-2 continued until mid-July, when sightings became almost daily. Single figures were the norm, but for ten on three dates and a peak of 12 on 26th July, until mid-October, plus further singles on 20th-22nd and the last on 28th.

**RUFF** *Philomachus pugnax*

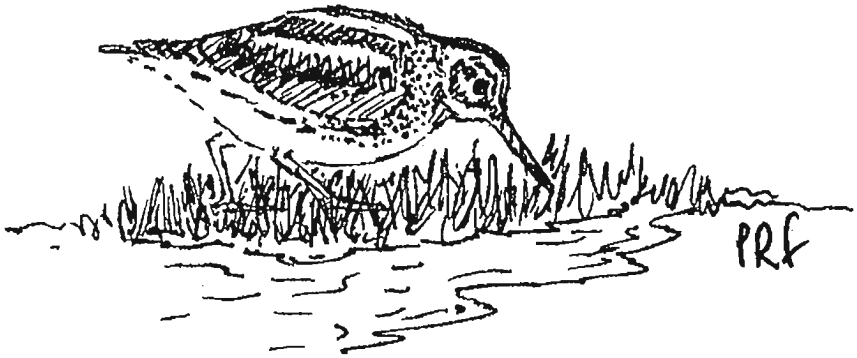
**Frequent autumn migrant, rare in spring**

The only, but earliest ever, spring record was one at Setter from 29th March-1st April. In autumn, one on 25th July was the only record until three between 9th & 13th August. There then followed a period of heavier passage when two on 20th August rose to 28 the next day, with 22 still on the 22nd, falling to five on 23rd but up to nine on 24th. Numbers then tailed off until the last on 6th September.

**JACK SNIPE** *Lymnocyrtus minimus*

***Frequent autumn migrant, less common in winter and spring***

Singles were noted on 31st January and 5th February. In spring, further singles were flushed on three dates in March and five in April. Autumn passage commenced on 16th September involving single-figures until a fall on 25th produced an amazing count of 60 – twice the previous record number! Birds quickly moved on as only 15 were found next day and counts of 5-15 were daily until another small fall on 21st October produced 25 birds. Occasional birds were seen into November and snow near the end of December produced a single on 28th and three the following day.



*Jack Snipe – Paul French*

**COMMON SNIPE** *Gallinago gallinago*

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

Present throughout the year. Spring passage during March and April produced highly fluctuating daily counts and peaks of 45 on 6th March, 64 on 30th March and four counts of 50 in April. The first signs of autumn passage was a count of 60 on 20th August. Counts were generally between 30-60 from then to the end of the year with peaks of 80 on 29th August, 80 on 15th September, 82 on 9th & 84 on 24th October.

**GREAT SNIPE** *Gallinago media*

***Rare autumn migrant***

This almost expected autumn migrant was strangely absent this year. Fortunately however, one had already been seen in spring. Only our second ever spring record was found in the Barkland/Pund area on 29th May.

*Accepted by BBRC*



**EURASIAN WOODCOCK** *Scolopax rusticola*

***Frequent spring and late autumn migrant, occasionally over-winters***

Two singles were reported in late January, five on 5th February with further singles on just five dates until two on 25th March were probably the first spring migrants. Five on 29th March gave no indication as to what was about to happen. A huge fall of thrushes and European Robins on 30th also included at least 50 Eurasian Woodcock in the south alone. However, the sheer number of birds present meant that the north of the isle could not get counted. The actual number of Woodcock present that day may well have been much more. Numbers had dropped to just 17 by the 31st and counts of 1-5 were made on just 13 dates in April, with further singles on four dates in May. The first of the autumn were two early singles on 27th & 30th September. There were no further records until small numbers (1-5) appeared from 14th-18th October. Main passage occurred between 20th-27th October when 23 on 20th rose to 35 the following day, falling to 13 on 22nd before further falls produced 65 on 23rd, 85 on 24th, 38 on 25th, 45 on 26th and 31 on 27th. Numbers then rapidly dropped to single figures and just occasional sightings in the last two months of the year.

**BLACK-TAILED GODWIT** *Limosa limosa*

***Scarce spring and autumn migrant***

Singles on 13th & 22nd May, with four on 16th and 1-2 recorded daily from 24th May-5th June.

**BAR-TAILED GODWIT** *Limosa lapponica*

***Regular autumn migrant, rare in spring***

Spring records were comprised of a long-staying individual from 30th March-22nd April and another from 28th-30th April. In July, singles were seen on 4th, 5th & 23rd and further singles were seen on 5th, 21st & 28th-29th August.

**WHIMBREL** *Numenius phaeopus*

***Frequent spring and autumn migrant***

Spring passage commenced with three birds on 17th April and was daily from 24th April-6th June. Counts were between 2-16 but for a definite peak of 27 on 29th April. Stragglers were recorded on three further dates to 27th June. Five on 1st-2nd July may have been the first of the autumn and singles were recorded on a further nine dates in the month. Regular passage throughout August until the last on 22nd September, saw counts of 1-5 except for an influx of 15 on 5th August.

**EURASIAN CURLEW** *Numenius arquata*

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

Cold weather movements of five on 4th, six on 9th plus a single on 7th February.

Six on 27th February were probably the first spring migrants. Counts of 2-11 were regular throughout March but slightly heavier passage during April saw daily counts above ten and peaks of 22, 35 & 42 (on 22nd). Single figures persisted through May with stragglers into June. Six pairs bred and all but one were successful to hatching at least. A party of nine on 24th June were probably the first returning migrants whilst a notable influx of 80 on 6th July were presumably Shetland birds heading south. Small parties were seen on a further six dates in July whilst daily counts of 3-18 in August included peaks of 35 on 3rd and 23 on 22nd. September saw a return to small numbers whilst October records were sparser still. Five were reported on 13th November whilst cold weather and snow in late December produced two on 27th, seven on 28th & 25 on 29th.

### **COMMON REDSHANK** *Tringa totanus*

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

Around 30 over-wintering birds were noted in January. Passage from early March – late May was heaviest in April but with peaks of just 32 on 5th & 31 on 29th. Occasional ones or twos were noted in June. Return passage began in July and counts of 10-30 were regular with a notable peak of 62 on 28th. Heavier passage in August continued until mid-October with daily counts of 30-70 and three exceptional counts over 100, in August; 150 on 3rd, 200 on 16th & 125 on 25th. A creamy-white leucistic bird was noted in September. Around 35 birds remained throughout the final two months of the year and were boosted to around 50 by a small arrival in late December.

### **COMMON GREENSHANK** *Tringa nebularia*

#### ***Regular autumn migrant, scarce in spring***

A fairly good year. Spring records involved singles on 10th-12th & 29th-30th April, 2nd-8th (with two on 3rd), 17th & 30th May with a late straggler on 26th June. Autumn sightings were on 21st July, 4th (two) and 6th-7th August, followed by daily sightings of 1-5 from 19th August-7th September. Finally, there was a late bird on Easter Lothar on 16th November.

### **GREEN SANDPIPER** *Tringa ochropus*

#### ***Regular spring and autumn migrant***

In spring, singles on 24th & 27th April were the only records. Autumn records were more regular. Singles on 9th, 18th, 26th & 28th July and 4th August were followed by almost daily sightings from 10th August-13th September. Mainly ones and twos were seen but counts of four were made on two dates and five on 20th & 26th August.

### **WOOD SANDPIPER** *Tringa glareola*

#### ***Scarce spring and autumn migrant***

All records were of spring birds. Singles on 14th, 25th-26th May & 11th June.

## COMMON SANDPIPER *Actitis hypoleuca*

### *Frequent spring and autumn migrant*

In spring, the first was on 25th April and sightings were almost daily until 2nd June. Counts were usually of 1-2 but four were recorded on 2nd & 23rd May. In autumn, one on 24th July was the only record until further singles on 7th & 14th August preceded daily sightings from 17th-6th September. Counts were of 1-5 except 15 on 20th August and 10 on 22nd.

## RUDDY 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
96	75	125	117	60	17	35	107	68	115	90	120

## POMARINE SKUA *Stercorarius pomarines*

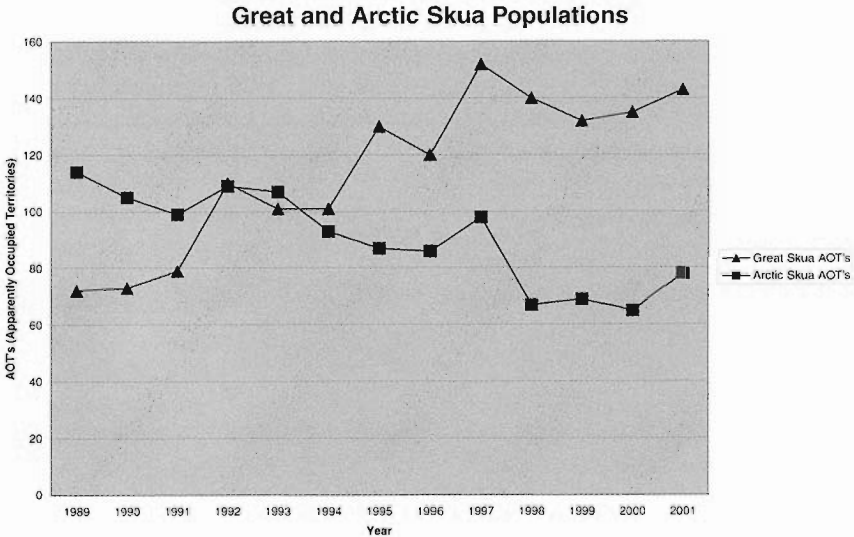
### *Rare spring and autumn migrant*

Two records. An adult flew over the Observatory on 2nd October and one was seen off Meoness on 11th October.

## ARCTIC SKUA *Stercorarius parasiticus*

### *Summer visitor, breeds in small numbers. Frequent passage migrant*

The first was a dark morph bird on 4th April – equalling the earliest ever record, which was followed by a pale morph individual on 8th. The first of the local



**Fig. 4:** Graph showing the relative populations (number of Apparently Occupied Territories) of Great and Arctic Skuas on Fair Isle. The Great Skua population has gradually increased at the expense of its smaller relative.

breeders arrived on 14th, had increased to 35 by the month's end and all had left by 25th August. One or two were reported from South Light until 29th August – a fairly early last date.

There was a 16.7% increase in breeding numbers, from 65 territories in 2000 to 78 in 2001 (Fig. 4). Predictably, given the poor plight of other species, breeding success was very low. Only 13 chicks reached fledging giving a well below average productivity of 0.16.

### **LONG-TAILED SKUA** *Stercorarius longicaudus*

#### ***Rare migrant, spring, summer and autumn***

A second-summer bird was seen at Lower Station on the 5th of July in the company of Arctic Skuas.

### **GREAT SKUA** *Stercorarius skua*

#### ***Summer visitor, breeds in moderate numbers. Frequent passage migrant***

Present from 1st April with numbers low until the middle of the month when 30 on 15th rose to 96 by the end of the month and 130 by mid-May. A census between 30th May-4th June revealed a total of 143 apparently occupied territories – an increase of 5.9% on the 2000 figure (Fig. 4). A total of 94 chicks were thought to have fledged giving a productivity figure of 0.66 which, although slightly below the recent average, must be considered as a successful season compared to most species. Interestingly, of those chicks which had not fledged by mid-August, many were found to have a grossly swollen thigh and a definite limp. Few, if any, of these are thought to have fledged. The majority of birds had left the isle by mid-September with stragglers into early October. Birds were recorded, in small numbers, regularly until 1st November.

### **BLACK-HEADED GULL** *Larus ridibundus*

#### ***Frequent spring and autumn migrant***

Two on 9th March were the first and were not followed until another two on 28th saw the start of spring passage. Single-figure counts were almost daily right up to the end of May with stragglers through June, except for several dates of marked movement; 23 on 29th March, 20 on 21st & 23 on 29th April and 15 on 2nd May. Occasional counts of 1-3 birds were made in July, until 18 on 25th marked the start of autumn passage proper. As in the spring, numbers fluctuated but remained in single figures except for peaks of; 22 on 30th July, 30 on 19th & 14 on 24th August. Sightings became irregular in September before further passage in October saw almost daily records, peaking at ten on 3rd, 14 on 18th & 25 on 27th. Singles were recorded on three dates in November, the last on 29th.

### **MEW (COMMON) GULL** *Larus canus*

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

A single bird in January, three in February and a handful of sightings until 15 on 29th March signalled the start of spring passage. Counts were daily up to the middle of June and highly fluctuating numbers indicated a rapid turnover. Passage was heaviest at the end of May with peaks of 150 on 26th, 120 on 29th and 90 on 1st June. As in 2000, eight pairs bred but failed to rear any chicks to fledging. Small numbers were reported in early July but an influx of 100 on 21st indicated the start of return migration. As with the spring, daily counts fluctuated widely but two periods of heavy passage in August saw counts well over 100 on six dates and peaks of 360 on 3rd, 390 on 19th, 230 on 22nd & 450 on 24th. Numbers had tailed off to near single figures by mid-September and through October but small influxes on 29th September and 18th October brought in 37 and 40 birds respectively. Occasional counts of 1-7 were received to the year's end.

### **RING-BILLED GULL** *Larus delawarensis*

***Vagrant; one previous record***

An adult flying low over North Light towards Mopul on 30th April even called to the lucky observer. This constitutes the second Fair Isle record – the first being a second-winter bird on 12th August 1992.

### **LESSER BLACK-BACKED GULL** *Larus fuscus*

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

The first was not until the comparatively late date of 7th April and there were 16 two days later. The small breeding population (c12 pairs) was swelled by a regular passage of migrants up to the middle of June. Peak numbers were 20 on 28th April, 68 on 29th May, 55 on 30th May and 29 on 11th June. Small numbers of migrants were seen occasionally in July and early August whilst eight on 12th & 22 on 13th August were the first and largest gatherings of the autumn. Counts of 1-4 were daily until the end of the month and occasionally until 10th September. One was reported on 29th September and an adult of the nominate race *L. f. fuscus* was seen the following day. First-winters were reported on four dates in October, the last on 23rd.

### **HERRING GULL** *Larus argentatus*

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

Present throughout the year. Not regularly counted, however numbers were swelled by migrants in the autumn to several hundred and strong winds forced 1,500 ashore on 23rd October and 4th December.

**ICELAND GULL** *Larus glaucooides*

***Scarce migrant, winter and spring***

In contrast to last year, just four birds were recorded in 2001. A second-winter on 5th March, a second-summer on 29th-30th May, a first-winter on 4th-5th December and another on 21st.

**GLAUCOUS GULL** *Larus hyperboreus*

***Regular migrant in spring, late autumn and winter***

First-winters were noted on 2nd February, 9th, 22nd & 28th March and a first-summer on 20th-22nd June. In autumn, a first-winter on 7th-9th October and one on 6th December were the only records.

**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 boosted the numbers with several hundred recorded regularly in the autumn. A maximum count of 600 on two dates in October.

**BLACK-LEGGED KITTIWAKE** *Rissa tridactyla*

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

The first sighting close inshore was on 6th March and birds were back on nesting ledges by 10th. The whole island population was counted again, in June, this year. A total of 8,204 AONs is very similar to last year's 8,175 and is a 29.6% decrease on the 1997 census. Overall numbers at monitoring plots fell by just 2.9%, however they had a disastrous breeding season. Almost three weeks of constant thick fog and a disappearance of sandeels meant that the majority of chicks starved to death in the nest. Others died of exposure or depredation as they were necessarily left unattended for long periods whilst both adults searched for food. A paltry productivity figure of 0.06 chicks per AON is the worst since the complete failure of 1990. All food samples examined were 100% sandeel, emphasising the extent of dependency kittiwakes have on this food source.

**SANDWICH TERN** *Sterna sandvicensis*

***Scarce summer migrant***

Fair Isle's earliest ever record, by five days, was in North Haven from 30th March-3rd April. Three were seen on 21st May and another two on 10th June. In autumn, one flew through on 18th August and two on 3rd September.

**COMMON TERN** *Sterna hirundo*

***Summer visitor, breeds in small numbers***

The first was on 30th April and 1-4 birds (mainly the local breeders) were seen

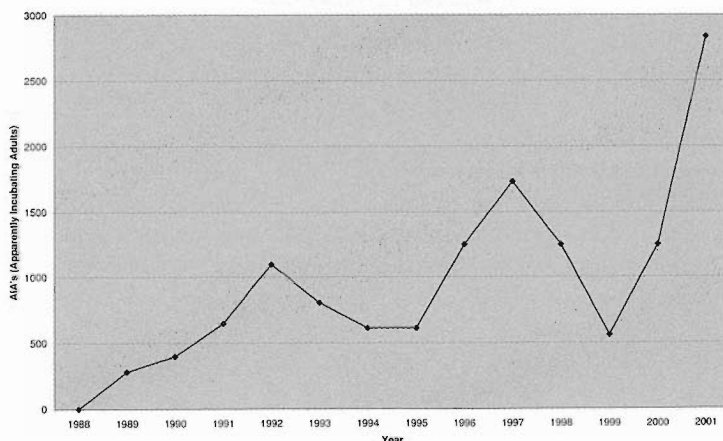
regularly from then on until the end of July. Two pairs nested amidst the Arctic Tern colony on Buness, raising one chick to fledging. Five autumn migrants were seen on 7th August and another on 23rd. Unidentified 'commic' terns were seen on 6th August & 3rd September.

## ARCTIC TERN *Sterna paradisaea*

### *Summer visitor, breeds in large numbers*

Two on 4th May pre-empted the main arrival. Fifty arrived on 5th, rising to 800 on 6th and 1,700 by 15th. A successful breeding season on Fair Isle in 2000 resulted in a record number settling here this year. A total of 2,836 Apparently Incubating Adults represents a 126.7% increase on the 2000 figure (Fig. 5). The core of the population was on Buness and Tarryfield with smaller numbers on Eas Brecks, Horstibrekks and Byerwall and one pair nesting on Meoness. Early indications were for a good breeding season with many nests containing clutches of three eggs. Then, in mid-June, disaster struck! A disappearance of Sandeels coincided with the first wave of hatching, resulting in thousands of young starving to death. Things did not improve and the colonies were almost deserted by the end of the month. Just **four** chicks fledged, from a potential total of 6-8,000. Numbers were down to 25 by mid-July and single figures shortly after. Counts of 1-4 were made almost daily until 6th August. Late migrants were seen on 29th September (three juveniles), 2nd October (two juveniles) and an adult on 11th October.

### Arctic Tern Population

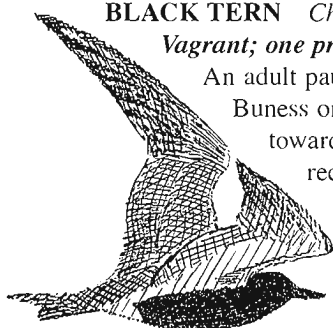


**Fig. 5:** Graph showing the changing fortunes of the Fair Isle Arctic Tern population. Terns are very fickle and are more prone to deserting a colony following a poor breeding season. Hence the dramatic drop in numbers in 1999 after very low breeding success in 1998. It remains to be seen how few of the record 2836 pairs in 2001 will return in 2002.

**BLACK TERN** *Chlidonias niger*

***Vagrant; one previous record***

An adult paused for half an hour amongst the Arctic Terns on Bunness on 30th May, before circling very high and heading toward Shetland Mainland. A long overdue second record – the first was on 6th May 1967.



*Black Tern – Paul French*

**COMMON GUILLEMOT** *Uria aalge*

***Summer visitor, breeds in large numbers.***

***Common autumn passage migrant***

Occasionally noted in the first few weeks of the year but calm weather induced large numbers back on to the breeding ledges on 16th February. The majority had departed by early July and small numbers were seen offshore again in September until mid-October with odd birds recorded until 9th December. A leucistic individual was observed in North Rannigeo in May/June. Numbers at monitoring plots were 22.9% down on 2000 with very few loafing birds present. Productivity was also very poor – a figure of 0.63, whilst seeming high compared to other species, is the lowest on record. Additionally, many unattended chicks were observed at the colonies and weights up to fledging age were significantly below average suggesting that adults were experiencing difficulty in providing sufficient food for their young. This no doubt has repercussions for their post-fledging survival. Analysis of food samples collected showed a wide variety of (less nutritious) prey items were being fed to chicks including Ling and Gadoids – further evidence (if needed) of the lack of favoured (highly calorific) sandeels. See article on page 21.

**RAZORBILL** *Alca torda*

***Summer visitor, breeds in large numbers***

As with Guillemot, the first significant return of breeders were several hundred ashore on 16th February and almost all had left by late July. Small numbers were reported again offshore in the latter half of September and occasionally in early October. Breeding success at the Easter Lothier monitoring site was surprisingly above average. A productivity of 0.65 however does not take into account the fact that all pulli weights were well below average and therefore post-fledging mortality is likely to be high. See article on page 21.

**BLACK GUILLEMOT** *Cephus grylle*

***Resident, breeds in moderate numbers***

Present all year. After a significant increase in the population in 2000 at the SOTEAG monitoring plot, along the entire east coast of the isle, the number in 2001 fell by an almost equal amount, from 173 breeding plumaged birds in 2000



to 139 and was therefore similar to the 1999 figure. The inaccessibility of most nests (just seven nests were found) meant that overall breeding performance could not be accurately judged.

#### **LITTLE AUK** *Alle alle*

##### ***Frequent late autumn/winter visitor***

One was seen from South Light on 9th February. Small numbers were seen on seawatches in the last two months of the year whilst a count of 100+ was reported from a boat just off Sheep Rock on 19th November.

#### **ATLANTIC PUFFIN** *Fratercula arctica*

##### ***Summer visitor, breeds in large numbers***

The first birds ashore were on 30th March and many were seen on 6th April. Another attempt to census the island population was carried out on 5th May, however the non-attendance of birds at the Roskilie colony due to the persistent presence of Great Skuas (and possibly the sandeel shortage) meant that the colour-ringed population there could not be safely used to estimate the proportion of birds ashore. A total head count around the isle produced a figure of 13,488 birds ashore, which is 1,630 (10.8%) less than that of 2000 and 3,898 (22.4%) down on the 1995 count. The total population in 1995 had been estimated at 42,000 birds, which would make the present figure somewhere around 32,600. Breeding success was the lowest on record. Despite the fact that Puffin chicks are capable of slowing down their growth rate in times of low food supply and hence birds were still arriving with fish at the end of August, many fledglings were found starved at the entrance to their burrows. A productivity of 0.31 chicks fledged per occupied burrow is below half the previous ten-year average of 0.73. See article on page 21.

#### **ROCK (DOVE) PIGEON** *Columba livia*

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

Present throughout the year. A count of 16 on 13th October was the highest received.

#### **STOCK (DOVE) PIGEON** *Columba oenas*

##### ***Scarce spring and autumn migrant***

Sightings of singles on seven dates between 4th-19th April may have related to the same individual. Another was present from 29th April-16th May.

#### **COMMON WOOD PIGEON** *Columba palumbus*

##### ***Frequent spring and autumn migrant***

Spring passage, from 28th March-7th June, involved almost daily counts of 1-7 birds and peaks of 12 on 29th April & 20 on 2nd May. One was seen on 1st July.

In autumn one was recorded daily from 23rd September-1st October before main passage in the period 18th-27th October peaked at 11 on 26th. Occasional counts of 1-3 were received in November with the last on 23rd.

**EURASIAN COLLARED DOVE** *Streptopelia decaocto*

***Frequent spring migrant, less common in autumn***

In spring, 1-4 were recorded daily from 20th-25th April before almost daily sightings throughout May until mid-June. Counts were generally below five but peak passage in the last week of May saw numbers reach 12 on four days. Further small arrivals at the end of June and early July peaked at eight on 2nd July. Two were seen on 25th July and one on 27th whilst 1-2 were recorded daily from 4th-12th August and another on 26th. There was a lone bird on 26th September and further singles on 17th & 20th October, the last of the autumn.

**EUROPEAN TURTLE DOVE** *Streptopelia turtur*

***Regular spring and autumn migrant***

Spring produced just two birds; on 25th May and 25th-29th June. Autumn was equally poor with one from 27th-31st August the only record.

**COMMON CUCKOO** *Cuculus canorus*

***Regular spring migrant, scarce in autumn***

A single on 16th-17th May was followed by daily sightings of 1-3 birds from 22nd May-1st June. A typical spring was followed by a typical autumn with an adult from 5th-9th August the only record.

**LONG-EARED OWL** *Asio otus*

***Regular autumn migrant, scarce in spring***

Four spring records; singles on 30th March, 13th-15th April, 30th April and 10th May. Likewise, autumn saw a run of lone individuals with the first on 30th September followed by a very pale bird on 9th-15th October and further singles on 17th, 20th & 27th October.



*Short-eared Owl – Richard Kemp*

**SHORT-EARED OWL**

*Asio flammeus*

***Regular spring and autumn migrant***

Spring occurrences involved singles on 25th April, on six dates in May and the last on 2nd June. In autumn, singles were recorded almost daily from 25th September-1st October then again on 8th, rising to three on 9th, followed by another single on 12th

before a period of heavier passage from 16th-27th October saw daily sightings of 1-6 and peaks of eight and ten. Finally, a bird passed through on 4th December.

### **COMMON SWIFT** *Apus apus*

#### ***Frequent spring, summer and autumn migrant***

One on 29th April equals the earliest ever record but it was not followed until another appeared on 17th May. The third record was not until 18th June and there was another on 20th, five on 25th and two daily from 30th June-4th July. There were no more until one on 25th July, three on 28th and one on 29th. August records concerned one on 15th-17th, four on 21st rising to five next day, followed by daily sightings from 25th August-3rd September peaking at 11 on 28th August. Finally, there was a late bird seen on 16th October.

### **PALLID SWIFT** *Apus pallidus*

#### ***Vagrant; first Fair Isle record***

One spent around two hours flying around close to the cliffs at Wester Lother on the morning of 2nd October, but was unfortunately only seen by two independent observers, before moving off ahead of approaching rain. See article on page 96.

*Still under consideration by BBRC*

### **HOOPOE** *Upupa epops*

#### ***Vagrant; at least 36 previous records***

One found at Klinger's Geo on 30th April moved to Meoness, where it remained until 5th May.

### **EURASIAN WRYNECK** *Jynx torquilla*

#### ***Regular spring and autumn migrant***

An improved spring passage, compared to recent years, saw two on 25th April followed by one on 29th and two next day.

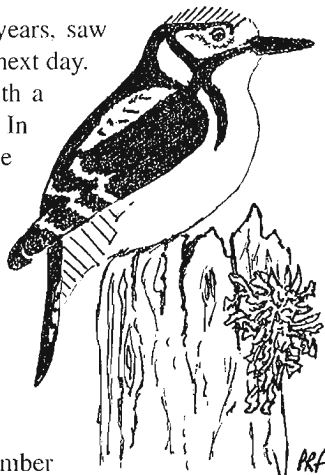
May saw birds recorded on a further six dates, with a maximum of four on 11th, involving 6-9 individuals. In autumn, one on 19th August was followed by two the next day and singles were recorded almost daily until the month's end with further singles on 12th & 13th September. A total of 8-11 birds were involved.

### **GREAT SPOTTED WOODPECKER**

*Dendrocopos major*

#### ***Scarce and irruptive autumn migrant***

A good year with birds recorded daily from 17th September-28th October and a further single on 13th November. Counts of 2-5 were regular in September with a peak of seven on 29th, falling in October to counts of 1-3 and peaks of four on 20th & 24th.



*Great Spotted Woodpecker*  
– Paul French

**GREATER SHORT-TOED LARK** *Calandrella brachydactyla*

***Scarce spring and autumn migrant***

The only record was one showing characteristics of the 'grey' eastern race *C. b. longipennis* near the Plantation from 25th September-4th October.

**SKY LARK** *Alauda arvensis*

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

Present in every month. Small numbers recorded irregularly in the first two months and 60 on 6th March were the first signs of spring passage. Daily counts exceeded 100 towards the end of March and were regularly over 200 in the first half of April, then dropped to around 100 until May saw just the local breeders and stragglers. Peak counts were in April with 340 on 5th, 300 on 6th, 280 on 9th and 370 on 16th. Regular census of singing males revealed approximately 30 territories – a far cry from the 100+ recorded in the 1960's. Autumn passage commenced in mid-September with daily counts over 100 from 13th-28th and peaks of 360 on 20th, 380 on 22nd and 240 on 24th. Less heavy passage continued into October with counts of 50-95 and peaks of 120 on 6th & 130 on 7th, tailing off to counts below 20 in November and single figures in December.

**HORNED (SHORE) LARK** *Eremophila alpestris*

***Rare spring and autumn migrant***

The first blank spring since 1996. One at North Light on 26th October and another at Shirva on 13th November were typical autumn records.

**SAND MARTIN** *Riparia riparia*

***Regular spring migrant, less common in autumn***

The first were two on 21st April and counts of 1-3 were regular until 31st May except for a peak of eight on 27th April. Further singles were seen on 10th & 18th June. There were no autumn records.

**BARN SWALLOW** *Hirundo rustica*

***Common spring and autumn migrant; occasionally breeds***

The first was on 21st April followed by single-figure counts from 23rd-30th April. Daily records of 10-30 were received from 1st-20th May (except for 50 on 12th) followed by three days of heavier passage saw counts of 75, 60 and 100 respectively between 21st-23rd. Daily counts remained between 30-50 until the end of the month and fell to below 20 in June until 21st. Small numbers were seen regularly until mid-July. Autumn passage from 5th August-22nd October was very irregular with counts rarely exceeding four and peaks of 11 on 25th August and nine on 28th September.

**HOUSE MARTIN** *Delichon urbica*

**Frequent spring migrant, uncommon in autumn. Has bred**

In spring, very small numbers were recorded regularly from 28th April whilst main passage in the second half of May produced daily sightings and peaks of just 15 on 21st & 27th. Small numbers (1-5) were recorded on 11 dates in June and a single on 1st-2nd July. One was seen on 27th July with 1-2 on a further seven dates up to 22nd August. October produced daily sightings of 1-2 birds in the first four days and the final sighting of the year on 14th.

**RICHARD'S PIPIT** *Anthus novaeseelandiae*

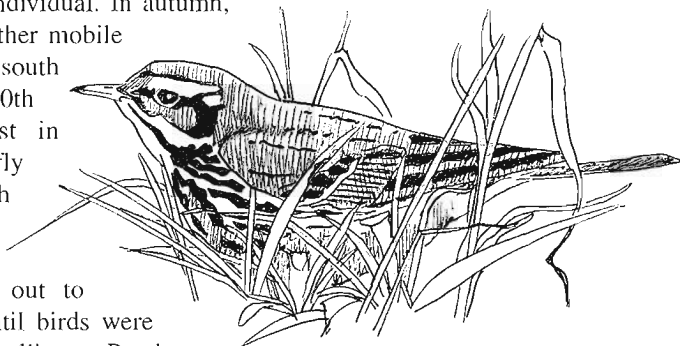
**Scarce autumn migrant**

The most productive period for Richard's Pipit on Fair Isle is in late September-early October and this year was no exception. Birds were seen daily from 19th September-12th October and regularly until 24th October. Some, including small parties of 2-4, spent several days on the isle and counts peaked at six on 25th-26th September. An estimated total of around 12 birds was involved.

**OLIVE-BACKED PIPIT** *Anthus hodgsoni*

**Rare autumn migrant**

Only our second ever spring record was found at the Plantation on 6th May – a superbly bright individual. In autumn, the first was a rather mobile individual in the south of the isle on 20th September whilst in October one briefly at the Haa on 8th flew towards South Light and disappeared out to sea then none until birds were seen flying over calling at Pund on 17th & 21st. One was then found at Shirva on 22nd, where it remained until 25th and the last was near the Kirm O' Scroo, in the north of the isle, on 26th-27th October. At least four individuals but possibly as many as six.



*Olive-backed Pipit – Richard Kemp*

*Spring bird Accepted, autumn birds still under consideration by BBRC*

**TREE PIPIT** *Anthus trivialis*

**Frequent spring and autumn migrant**

The first of the spring was on 25th April and birds were seen almost daily until 1st June with one further bird on 6th. Counts were of 1-4 but for a peak of 14 on 29th

April with eight the following day and six on 1st May. A light autumn passage occurred in two stages, from 17th-28th August (max. seven on 23rd) and 23rd September-9th October (max. six on 25th & 27th).

**PECHORA PIPIT** *Anthus gustavi*

***Rare autumn migrant; at least 40 previous records***

After an absence of two years one was found outside the Observatory on 4th October and was well watched at the Havens later that morning. What was probably the same bird was seen at Shirva that afternoon and again briefly in flight the following day. Finally, it (or another) was flushed from the *Rosa rugosa* at Lower Leogh late on 8th October and flew off calling but was not seen again.

*Still under consideration by BBRC*

**MEADOW PIPIT** *Anthus pratensis*

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

Occasional very small numbers were recorded at each end of the year. Spring passage began in late March and continued until early May. Counts in excess of 100 were frequent but exceeded 200 on just two dates; 215 on 6th April and 210 on 9th. Autumn passage was noted from mid-August-end October. Passage was heaviest from late August-end September when counts were regularly over 200 and peaks of 380 on 29th August, 390 on 6th & 300 on 10th September occurred. Numbers dropped to around 100 in the first half of October and tailed off to around 30 towards the end of the month and low single figures by November.

**RED-THROATED PIPIT** *Anthus cervinus*

***Rare spring and autumn migrant***

A singing male was found at Wirvie on 16th June and remained until 18th.

*Accepted by BBRC*

**ROCK PIPIT** *Anthus petrosus*

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

Present throughout the year. Individuals of the Scandinavian race *A. p. littoralis* were recorded on 6th & 13th April. Censusing this species is notoriously difficult due to its cliff-loving habits, only venturing inland in numbers in strong winds, where they become more visible. However, counts during August and September fluctuated daily between 50 and 110 and dropped to consistently below 50 in October, thus hinting that there was at least some passage although partly this will have been due to the exodus of juveniles from the isle.

## **YELLOW WAGTAIL** *Motacilla flava*

### **Regular spring and autumn migrant**

In spring, the first was an individual of the 'blue-headed' race *M. f. flava* on 1st May followed by counts of 1-2 of the British race *M. f. flavissima* on 3rd-6th. No further records until two of the latter race on 29th May and an unidentified 'fly-over' on 31st. Lastly, there was another British race bird on 17th June. There was a mid-summer sighting on 25th July. In autumn, single unassigned-to-race birds were seen on 27th September, 8th and 18th-19th October with a Grey-headed *M. f. thunbergi* on 21st October and an 'eastern' race bird on 15th-16th October.

## **GREY WAGTAIL** *Motacilla cinerea*

### **Scarce spring and autumn migrant; has bred**

In spring, the first on 29th March was followed by 1-2 daily until 6th April, three on 9th and 1-2 again daily from 16th-25th. Further singles were seen on 3rd, 22nd, 28th-30th May and 3rd-4th June. An early autumn bird on 21st August was not followed until singles on 22nd & 27th September and a run of sightings of 1-2 birds between 15th-28th October.

## **WHITE/PIED WAGTAIL** *Motacilla alba*

### **Frequent spring and autumn migrant; occasional breeder**

The first of the British race *M. a. yarrellii* was on 6th March followed by three on 11th and further singles on 21st & 25th. Passage then became daily until the end of May and was heaviest at the end of April – early May with peaks of 13 on 30th April and 16 on 3rd May. Passage of the north European, Icelandic and Faroese White Wagtail *M. a. alba*, commencing on 29th March and continuing until early June, was slightly lighter with a peak of just ten on 3rd May. Three pairs of British Pied Wagtails are thought to have bred; at North Light, South Light and the Observatory – at least two of which fledged four young each. Autumn passage commenced in early August and peaked in the latter half of that month, tailing off through September until the last on 22nd October. Birds were predominantly White Wagtails with daily counts approaching 80 between 18th-22nd August and near 50 from 23rd-29th but rapidly dropped to single figures by 7th September. Counts of British Pied Wagtails were consistently below ten and reached that figure on just three occasions and exceeded it just once (16 on 3rd August).

## **BOHEMIAN WAXWING** *Bombycilla garrulus*

### **Scarcelirruptive autumn migrant. Rare in spring**

One was seen on 3rd January. Northbound migrants were; a single on 26th April and a party of six two days later. In autumn, one flew over the Auld Haa on 21st October and there were three outside the Observatory the following day.

### **WHITE-THROATED DIPPER** *Cinclus cinclus*

#### **Vagrant; 25 previous records**

The tenth autumn record was one in the Vaadal on 29th October and there was another in the Gully on 13th November. Both were of the nominate Black-bellied race *C. c. cinclus* from northern Europe.

### **WINTER WREN** *Troglodytes troglodytes*

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

Present all year. The annual survey of singing males revealed a minimum of 28 birds holding territory. The population has therefore remained stable during the past four years at 26-30 territories. Some passage was noted in October when birds of the nominate continental race *T. t. troglodytes* were noted on 4th, 20th & 22nd.

### **HEDGE ACCENTOR (DUNNOCK)** *Prunella modularis*

#### ***Frequent spring and autumn migrant. Has bred***

A single on 28th and three on 30th January may have been either over-wintering birds or due to cold weather movements. All departed during the snow in February. Early spring migrants were noted on 6th & 15th March then a light passage from 30th March saw daily counts of 1-7 throughout April (except for a peak of 11 on 6th) and regular sightings of 1-2 in May until the last on 2nd June. Autumn passage was equally poor, from 24th September-6th October and again from 16th-30th October. All counts were of single figures with a peak of just eight on 20th October. Finally, a very pale continental bird appeared in the Observatory garden on 6th December.

### **EUROPEAN ROBIN** *Erithacus rubecula*

#### ***Frequent spring and autumn migrant***

Approximately five over-wintering birds from 2000 were boosted by further arrivals in late January, leading to a count of ten on 30th. Spring passage commenced with small numbers from 6th March until a count of 65 on 29th precluded a huge fall of thrushes and Robins on 30th. The sheer number of birds (and shortage of counters) meant that only the south of the isle was censused, however that area alone produced a count in excess of 400 birds. The actual number on the isle can only be guessed at but it could well have been twice that figure. (The highest recorded spring count has been 900 on 22nd-23rd April 1986). Numbers had dropped to 130 by the following day but there were over 100 in ten of the next fourteen days and counts fluctuated between 5-70 until the end of April, as birds continued to pass through. Single figures were seen daily throughout May until the last of the spring on 8th June. Autumn numbers were much less. Birds were seen daily from 20th September and counts were below 20 until the last week of October. Thirty-six on 22nd rose to 60 the next day (and for the following two days), falling to 16 by 27th but rising to 40 again on 30th. Low single figures were recorded throughout November and December.



**COMMON NIGHTINGALE** *Luscinia megarhynchos*

***Rare spring migrant (34 records); vagrant in autumn (5 previous records)***

The first record since 1996. One trapped in the Plantation on the extraordinarily late date of 19th October was probably of eastern European origin.

**BLUETHROAT** *Luscinia svecica*

***Regular spring and autumn migrant***

In spring, three birds (two males and a female) of the White-spotted subspecies *L. s. cyanecula* were in the Walli Burn on 30th March with one male remaining there until 3rd April. A different pair were then discovered in the Meadow Burn on the latter date and were still present on 4th with the female remaining until 6th. These constitute only the 5th-9th records of this subspecies in the FIBO period, and the first since 1985. Spring passage of Red-spotted Bluethroats *L. s. svecica* commenced with a male on 6th May, followed by two males and a female on 10th. There were a further four lone females before the month's end and another on 11th June.

A poor autumn saw a single at Setter from 15th-21st September with another there on 28th.

**BLACK REDSTART** *Phoenicurus ochurus*

***Regular spring migrant, scarce in autumn***

A male on 15th March was the only spring record until regular counts of 1-3 birds from 29th March-17th April with a peak of five on 7th April. Further passage from 25th April-26th May saw singles on ten dates, two on two dates and three on 27th April. There was a mid-summer record of a male on 3rd July. Autumn records were scarce with sightings of 1-2 birds on six dates between 8th-22nd October involving a total of just seven birds.

**COMMON REDSTART** *Phoenicurus phoenicurus*

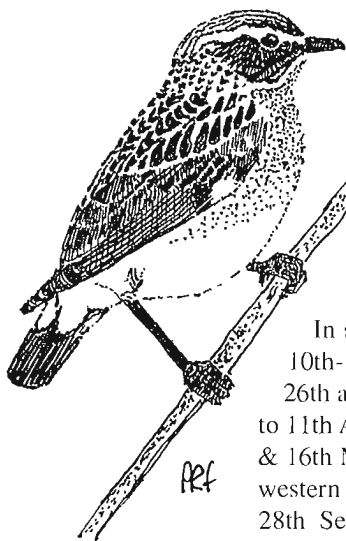
***Frequent spring and autumn migrant***

A very light spring passage saw birds recorded daily from 8th-19th May plus a late straggler on 15th June. Peak count was of just four on 11th & 12th May. One on 24th-25th August was the only record until daily passage from 22nd September-11th October and the last on 15th October. Counts were of 1-6 birds but for a peak of just ten on 30th September.

**WHINCHAT** *Saxicola rubetra*

***Frequent spring and autumn migrant***

As with the previous species a light spring passage from 9th-27th May saw birds recorded almost daily with a peak of just seven on 11th. A late straggler was recorded on 16th-17th June. Autumn sightings were more frequent with birds being



Whinchat – Paul French

recorded daily from 18th August-23rd October. Passage was heaviest in the period 20th-26th August when numbers approached 20 on four days and peaked at 24 on 22nd. All other counts were of single figures but for 13 on 18th & 11 on 22nd September.

**STONECHAT** *Saxicola torquata*  
*Scarce spring and autumn migrant*

In spring, one on 8th March was followed by six on 10th-11th, two on 15th, singles on 21st & 22nd, two on 26th and three on 30th followed by singles on most days to 11th April and further lone birds on 24th April and 15th & 16th May. All sightings referred to birds of either of the western races *S. t. hibernans* / *rubicola*. In autumn, two on 28th September were followed by daily counts of 1-2 between 5th-9th and 14th-21st October but for three on 16th. Finally, there was one on 25th October.

**NORTHERN WHEATEAR** *Oenanthe oenanthe*

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

The first were three (two females and a male) on the typical date of 28th March, which had risen to 11 by the 30th, but all had moved on by 1st April. Passage was then daily from 4th April and slowly built up to peak in late April and the first half of May as the larger Icelandic and Greenland birds *O. o. leucorhoa* also passed through. Counts around 100 were regular but peaked at just 130 on 3rd & 13th May. Migrant numbers remained fairly high (50-90) until early June when only the fifty or so pairs of breeding birds remained. Autumn passage began in early August and numbers exceeded 100 on eight dates in the month including a large peak of 380 on 26th. A quiet spell in early September when numbers rarely exceeded 20 was followed by an influx of *leucorhoa* from 11th-15th when numbers reached 230. Further influxes at the end of the month saw three counts over 100 and numbers remained over 50 in the first week of October before rapidly tailing off to single figures by 13th and the last on 28th.

**RING OUZEL** *Turdus torquatus*

*Frequent spring and autumn migrant*

The first was a lone female amongst the huge fall of thrushes on 30th March but there were no others until 24th April. A light passage saw counts of 1-3 on a further 16 dates to the end of May and a peak of five on 27th April. Autumn

passage was also fairly light with almost daily sightings from 25th September-28th October, mainly of 1-3 birds but a marked peak at the end of September into early October saw two counts of six, one of nine, two of ten and a peak of 19 on 1st October.

**COMMON BLACKBIRD** *Turdus merula*  
*Common spring and autumn migrant. Has bred, small numbers over-winter*

Over-wintering birds and mid-winter arrivals saw numbers reach a peak of 45 on 30th January. Spring passage commenced in early March with counts ranging from 25-80 until a fall of 400 (south end of the isle only) on 29th was a precursor to the huge fall the next day. The isle seemed to be carpeted with thrushes and a census of just the south of the isle produced a count of 2,500 Blackbirds. The total number on the



*Ring Ouzel – Richard Kemp*

isle must have been at least equal to the previous record spring counts of 3,000 (on 31st March 1958 and 6th April 1984) and could have been as many as 5,000. Numbers had fallen to 750 by the following day, to 250 by 3rd April and to 70 by the 4th, before rising again to 145 on 5th and 200 by the 6th. Counts had dropped again below 100 by 9th but remained between 50-90 until 21st April when numbers declined to around 20 and to single figures by 1st May. Low single-figure counts were received daily until 25th May and there were late stragglers on six dates in June, the last on 18th. A very early autumn migrant was seen on 23rd August but there were no others until a trickle of birds from 16th September. Numbers barely reached double figures until a fall of 190 on 14th October signalled the start of main passage. Daily counts of several hundred were made until the end of the month (max. 800 on 20th & 850 on 23rd) and counts remained over 100 until mid-November. Up to 50 were seen well into December and around 20 at the end of the year.

**DARK-THROATED THRUSH** *Turdus ruficollis*  
*Vagrant; six previous records – all in autumn*

One, of the Black-throated race *T. r. atrogularis*, was found at Lower Station on 14th April and was seen at Furse the following day and then at the Houll on 17th. This is the first spring record and was considered to be a first-winter male or an adult female.

*Accepted by BBRC*

## **FIELDFARE** *Turdus pilaris*

### ***Common spring and autumn migrant, often over-winters***

Good numbers (around 50-60) were seen throughout January, falling to around 20 in February. Counts in March fluctuated between 15-40 until the fall on 30th produced a count of 510, from the south of the isle alone, with a similar number the following day falling to 360 on 31st, to 230 on 1st April and 120 by 3rd. Another small fall on 6th brought in 125 then passage was reduced to a trickle (daily counts of 3-34) until a large fall of 1,000 on 28th April rose to 1,200 on 29th. Just 330 remained next day and 150 on 1st May fell to just three on 2nd and 1-3 were seen daily until the last on 17th May. The first of the autumn appeared on 19th August and three or four more singles were seen up to 4th September. Daily passage commenced on 18th September and increased from 29th with counts over 100 on most days up to the 14th October when an arrival of 450 signalled the start of a period of heavy passage. An amazing 4,400 were logged on 15th October and counts remained over 1,000 for a further seven days before tailing off to 150 by the end of the month. Smaller numbers (10-20) were recorded in November and December and a count of 40 on 27th December hinted that birds were still moving through.

## **SONG THRUSH** *Turdus philomelos*

### ***Common spring and autumn migrant; has bred***

Occasional very small numbers were recorded in January but 15 on 30th is a record count for that month. Spring passage began with regular counts of up to 12 from the beginning of March until the tremendous thrush fall at the end of the month produced counts, from the south of the isle only, of 155 on 29th rising to 650 the following day with 620 on 31st and 320 still on 1st April, falling to 170 by the 3rd and 45 on 4th, but further passage saw numbers rising again to 190 on 5th and 170 still on 6th. Numbers dropped rapidly to around 20 by 9th April and single figures by 14th but further small arrivals at the end of the month peaked at 35 on 29th with stragglers into May, the last on 19th. There was a mid-summer record of two birds from 26th-30th July. Autumn passage began with very small numbers from 14th September, slowly building up to 35 on 25th, until a fall of 100 on 29th signalled the start of heavier passage with numbers fluctuating daily between 30-200 until 10th October. A period of quieter passage was then followed by a fall of 370 on 15th October, with 200 next day and numbers remaining above or just below 100 until 26th. Counts dropped to around 40 through to mid-November and gradually tailed off to low single figures by the end of the year.

## **REDWING** *Turdus iliacus*

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

Twenty were recorded on 9th January but 90 on 30th is a very high count for that month (second only to a remarkable 400 on 5th January 1996). As usual spring passage began with small numbers from early March (apart from 45 on 6th) until

the end of the month saw 200 on 29th, 380 on 30th and 420 on 31st. As with other thrush species this was only a fraction of the total number in this impressive fall as only the south of the isle could be censused. Counts remained high into April with 270 on 1st dropping to 130 on 3rd and just 43 by 4th. Numbers then tailed off to single figures by 21st with stragglers throughout May and the last on 11th June. Autumn passage commenced in mid-September, slowly building up to 150 on 27th before a record September fall of 2,000 on 29th rising to 3,000 on 30th. October saw counts of 2,800, 1,500 & 1,500 again in the first three days before falling to 500 on 4th. Then, 100-600 were recorded daily until another large fall on 14th produced a count of 2,000 followed by the peak autumn count of 7,000 on 15th. Numbers between 1,000-2,000 were recorded daily until 25th and several hundreds to the month's end with counts over 100 until mid-November. Further small arrivals gave counts including 80 on 8th December and still 15 at the year's end.

**MISTLE THRUSH** *Turdus viscivorus*

***Scarce spring and autumn migrant***

In spring, one on 10th March was the only record until the large fall of thrushes at the end of the month produced two on 29th, a single on 30th and two on 31st. There were two more on 5th April followed by another two on 24th and one on 25th. Autumn sightings were of singles on 29th & 30th September, two on 7th October with another two on 20th and singles on four dates until the last on 28th October.

**PALLAS'S GRASSHOPPER WARBLER** *Locustella certhiola*

***Rare autumn migrant; 16 previous records***

One was flushed from the wet area in front of the Ringing Hut on 19th October and showed well to those present as it fed in short grass near Setter. It was later trapped in the Plantation. The latest ever record and the first since the four in 1998.

*Accepted by BBRC*

**LANCEOLATED WARBLER** *Locustella lanceolata*

***Rare autumn migrant; 61 previous records***

A very brightly plumaged individual was found in Boini Mire on 23rd September and a second frequented the ditches at Upper Leogh on 24th-25th September. Both were typically obliging individuals, allowing close scrutiny of subtle plumage differences.

*Still under consideration by BBRC*

**COMMON GRASSHOPPER WARBLER** *Locustella naevia*

***Regular spring and autumn migrant***

In spring, one in Meadow Burn on 24th April preceded daily sightings from 26th-1st May with a peak count of four on 29th April. Singles were seen on a further four dates to 22nd May. A poor autumn produced singles on 26th & 31st August, 22nd September and two on 2nd October.

**SEDGE WARBLER** *Acrocephalus schoenobaenus*

***Regular spring migrant, less common in autumn***

One on 1st May was the first, followed by four more singles up to 17th. Daily counts of 3-8 between 21st-27th May were followed by singles on six more dates until the last on 7th June. Typically, numbers were much less in autumn with singles on seven dates between 14th-31st August (apart from two on 15th) and again from 22nd-25th September.

**BLYTH'S REED WARBLER** *Acrocephalus dumetorum*

***Vagrant; 16 or 17 previous records (five spring, 11-12 autumn)***

One, initially seen briefly at Neder Taft, was relocated later at Springfield where it was scrutinised closely (and filmed) but unfortunately eluded attempts to be captured. This is the third year in a row it has been recorded on Fair Isle.

*Still under consideration by BBRC*

**MARSH WARBLER** *Acrocephalus palustris*

***Scarce spring migrant, rare in autumn***

All sightings were in spring. Single birds were recorded on 27th May, 10th, 14th-16th and 18th June.

**EURASIAN REED WARBLER** *Acrocephalus scirpaceus*

***Scarce spring migrant, regular in autumn***

The only bird of the spring, on 28th April, was also our earliest ever record by ten days! In autumn, two singles between 9th-13th August preceded daily sightings from 17th-11th September and sporadic records until 20th October. Counts were mainly of 1-4 but 6-8 were recorded daily from 31st August-3rd September.

**ICTERINE WARBLER** *Hippolais icterina*

***Scarce spring and autumn migrant***

Unusually there were no spring records. In a poor autumn, one frequented Lower Stoneybrek garden from 9th-10th August, another at Auld Haa from 30th August-1st September and a third was in the Raevas from 1st-6th September.

**SUBALPINE WARBLER** *Sylvia cantillans*

***Rare spring migrant; 60 previous records***

One record; a female was found at Schoolton on 22nd May and commuted between there and Shirva until 30th.

*Accepted by BBRC*

**BARRED WARBLER** *Sylvia nisoria***Regular autumn migrant**

The first was one at Schoolton from 5th-13th August then none until five on 19th with birds then recorded daily until the last on 29th September. Counts were mainly of 1-4 but for nine on 31st August with seven still remaining on 4th September. An estimated total of 30-50 birds were involved.

**LESSER WHITETHROAT** *Sylvia curruca***Frequent spring and autumn migrant**

The first was one from 2nd-4th May then main passage, from 9th-18th May, saw birds recorded daily and peaks of six on two dates. There were occasional records until 2nd June and a late straggler on 15th-16th June. Autumn passage was from 22nd August and was regular until the last on 14th October. As usual, small numbers were involved with a peak of seven on 23rd September. Particularly brown birds, possibly of the Siberian race *S. c. blythi*, were seen occasionally and two very pale, apparently short-winged/long-tailed birds showing characteristics of *S. c. halimodendri*, were observed in late September.

**COMMON WHITETHROAT** *Sylvia communis***Frequent spring migrant, less common in autumn**

A very light spring passage saw daily sightings from 9th-16th & 20th-31st May with further singles from 16th-18th June. Very small numbers were observed and six on 22nd May was easily the maximum count. Autumn passage was, typically, even lighter with daily counts of 1-3 from 19th-26th August and 1-2 from 21st-27th September and a later individual on 5th October.

**GARDEN WARBLER** *Sylvia borin***Frequent spring and autumn migrant**

A very poor spring passage saw singles on ten dates between 22nd May-12th June, and a maximum of two on 1st June with further singles on 30th June-2nd July and 13th July. Autumn passage was also light. Singles on 3rd & 6th August were the only birds until daily passage from 15th August-2nd September was followed by a period of occasional sightings until further daily passage from 18th-29th September and then regular very small numbers until the last on 18th October. All counts were of single figures but for ten on 24th August, a peak of 24 the following day, 12 on 26th August, 14 on 25th September & 15 the next day.

**BLACKCAP** *Sylvia atricapilla***Frequent spring and autumn migrant**

As usual spring passage was very light, from 26th April-1st June with a single straggler on 15th June. Regular counts of 1-4 were made and a peak of eight on 16th May. Autumn passage commenced on 20th August but just 1-2 were recorded

on most days until 24th September. Heavier daily passage then commenced and continued until 30th October with numbers ranging from 8-32 but also included counts of 45, two of 50 and a peak of 60 (on 6th October). Finally, there were late birds on 18th November and 8th December.

**YELLOW-BROWED WARBLER** *Phylloscopus inornatus*

**Regular autumn migrant**

The first was trapped in the Plantation on 14th September then birds were recorded daily between 18th-27th September with a peak of nine on 22nd & 23rd. In October, further singles were seen on 4th-5th, 8th and 11th-13th. A minimum of 17 birds in total.

**RADDE'S WARBLER** *Phylloscopus schwartzi*

**Vagrant; three previous records**

The first since 1991 was found feeding along the dyke in Bull's Park on the afternoon of 23rd September.

*Still under consideration by BBRC*

**DUSKY WARBLER** *Phylloscopus fuscatus*

**Vagrant; eight previous records**

One trapped at Midway on 24th September lingered around Setter until 4th October. The first record since 1993 and the earliest by six days.

*Accepted by BBRC*

A brownish *Phylloscopus* warbler with bright legs, seen only briefly on 1st October, must have been either a Dusky or a Raddes.

**WOOD WARBLER** *Phylloscopus sibilatrix*

**Regular spring and autumn migrant**

One on 23rd May was the only spring record whilst in autumn singles on 23rd & 24th September may also have related to just one bird.

**COMMON CHIFFCHAFF** *Phylloscopus collybita*

**Frequent spring and autumn migrant**

In spring, one on 29th March was a forerunner of a large fall (of 40) the following day with 20 still on 31st. Numbers then dropped to single figures until further influxes (of 19 & 22) on 5th & 6th April. Small numbers were recorded daily until 16th April and again from 18th-20th. Larger numbers during the whole of the last week of April ranged from 7-26, the majority of which were assigned to the Scandinavian race *P. c. abietinus* whilst one on 28th appeared to be of the Siberian race *P. c. tristis*. Single figures were recorded almost daily throughout May with stragglers into June – the last being three on 13th. One on 11th July was unusual



but not unheard of. A poor autumn passage did not begin until 17th September and had all but finished by 9th October with a few stragglers until 28th October. All counts were of single figures but for a maximum 21 on 26th September. Many birds from late September onwards showed characteristics of *P. c. abietinus* and several *P. c. tristis* were also seen.

**WILLOW WARBLER** *Phylloscopus trochilus*

**Frequent spring and autumn migrant**

For the second year in succession spring passage was very poor. Counts of 1-7 were recorded almost daily from 23rd April-27th May but for a maximum of 14 on 25th April. Stragglers were recorded on a further seven dates to 18th June. There were mid-summer birds on 30th June-2nd July and a remarkable five on 15th July. Autumn passage commenced on 12th August and was daily until 11th October with the last two on 14th October. Counts were mainly of single figures but for a period of heavier passage from 20th-25th August when daily counts exceeded 20 and peaked at 50 on 20th and 46 on 22nd.

**GOLDCREST** *Regulus regulus*

**Frequent spring and autumn migrant**

In spring, regular passage from 2nd April-3rd May peaked at just seven on 24th. One on 13th September precluded daily autumn passage from 19th September-30th October. Counts were mainly of single figures but also included several peaks of 23 on 29th September, 23 on 1st, 40 on 18th, 20 on 20th and 50 on 22nd October.

**SPOTTED FLYCATCHER** *Muscicapa striata*

**Frequent spring and autumn migrant**

A very brief spring passage was confined to the period 13th-30th May, apart from one later bird on 21st June. Numbers too were low with daily counts of 1-6 and a peak of just eight on 24th May. Autumn passage is always light. Four singles were recorded in the last ten days of August then one on 14th September followed by daily sightings of 1-5 from 21st September-4th October.

**RED-BREASTED FLYCATCHER** *Ficedula parva*

**Scarce autumn migrant, rare in spring**

One trapped in the Plantation on 18th September relocated to Meoness on release and remained there until 25th. Another was in Hjukni Geo on 28th September.

**PIED FLYCATCHER** *Ficedula hypoleuca*

**Frequent spring and autumn migrant**

A very poor spring passage saw birds recorded on eight dates between 9th-27th May (peak of three on 17th) involving a mere 11 birds. Autumn was equally poor with counts of 1-7 from 20th-31st August and 1-4 from 16th-27th September. A total of just 55 bird/days makes this one of the leanest autumns on record.

**GREAT TIT** *Parus major*

**Vagrant; 26 previous records (approx. 39 individuals)**

In spring, one was seen in the Plantation on 8th April. In autumn, singles in South Naavergsil on 22nd October and on Hoini on 24th could perhaps be the same bird. Another was found at North Light on 30th October where it remained into 2002.

**RED-BACKED SHRIKE** *Lanius collurio*

**Regular spring and autumn migrant**

A very poor spring passage saw singles recorded daily between 8th-17th May (but for two on 10th) and again from 15th-18th June, probably involving a total of just six individuals. In autumn, a mere three birds were seen; one trapped on 30th August remained next day and further singles were outside the Observatory on 9th and 12th-13th September.

**EURASIAN JACKDAW** *Corvus monedula*

**Scarce spring and autumn migrant**

Singles were seen on 9th & 16th May.

**ROOK** *Corvus frugilegus*

**Regular spring migrant, less common in autumn**

One was outside the Observatory on 30th January. In spring, one on 26th March was followed by regular sightings throughout April and the last on 3rd May. Mainly singles were involved but counts of four on 3rd, three on 20th and a peak of seven on 21st April were received. A total of approximately 20 individuals. The sole autumn record was of one from 14th-19th November.

**CARRION/HOODED 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**

A very light passage of Hooded Crow *C. c. cornix* was suspected in April and early May with a peak count of nine on 2nd May. Two pairs attempted to breed, one of which successfully fledged four young. Passage of Carrion Crow *C. c. corone* was noted from mid-March with occasional singles seen until daily records of larger numbers from 19th April-16th June. Counts were mainly of single figures but for a period of heavier passage in early May (peaking at 27 on 5th) and a further influx of 15 on 21st May. Occasional hybrids were also noted. At least one Carrion Crow summered on the isle. Autumn passage commenced with frequent sightings of 1-3 Carrion Crows from late August until mid-October with occasional records into November. Passage of Hooded Crows is hard to judge due to the presence of resident birds however nine on 13th October may have included some migrants and 14 on 19th November most certainly did. A hybrid was noted in December.

### **COMMON RAVEN** *Corvus corax*

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

Present all year. Some passage was noted in early April with counts of 21 on 6th & 20 on 7th with still 12 on 10th. Four territorial pairs were noted and the first fledged young were seen on 3rd May. No definite autumn passage was noted as daily counts between 8-12 were probably just the resident birds plus lingering offspring.

### **COMMON STARLING** *Sturnus vulgaris*

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

Not regularly censused due to the large resident population however several hundred were counted daily in April, many of which will have been migrating birds, with 850 on 29th being the highest count. The much-studied breeding population had mixed fortunes. A total of 102 nests, which is the largest number ever found, were scattered around the interior of the isle. Full breeding data was obtained from 73 of them: from 333 eggs laid (mean clutch size 4.6), 294 young hatched (88.3% hatching success) of which 229 (77.9%) were still alive at Day 12 (ringing age). If reaching Day 12 is taken as fledging then overall breeding success (no. fledged/no. of eggs laid) is calculated at 68.8%. This fledging success is lower than average and is probably due to unfavourable (wet) weather at a critical stage of the nestling period. (P.G.H.Evans in litt.).

### **ROSY STARLING** *Sturnus roseus*

***Vagrant; at least 31 previous records involving 32 or more individuals***

With such a large number reaching Britain this year, Fair Isle was bound to receive at least one. An adult was reported at Auld Haa on 16th June and was seen later near the Gully and next day on Ward Hill. Another was found at Barkland on 25th August and must have visited every garden on the isle (except the Observatory) before its departure on 12th September.

*Accepted by BBRC*

### **HOUSE SPARROW** *Passer domesticus*

***Resident, breeds in small numbers***

Present all year. Counts of birds in April revealed a breeding population in the region of 35-50 birds.

### **TREE SPARROW** *Passer montanus*

***Rare migrant spring & autumn. Formerly bred.***

One on 2nd-4th May was followed on the 7th by flocks of eight at Quoy and three at Midway. Then counts of 1-4 between 12th-18th May and 3-4 from 22nd-30th were undoubtedly all different birds. In June there were two on 10th-11th and the last on 16th. A total of at least 24 birds is the best spring passage since 1981.

**CHAFFINCH** *Fringilla coelebs*

***Frequent spring and autumn migrant***

In January, one was seen on 9th then an influx produced ten on 30th. Spring passage commenced with small numbers from early March until the 30th when a fall of 73 birds (by far the largest of the spring) occurred. Numbers had fallen to 27 by 1st April and dwindled to six a week later. Passage continued daily through April with fluctuating counts between 1-21 emphasising the turnover of birds. Counts of 1-5 were regular in May until the last on 5th June. There was a mid-summer sighting on 13th July. Autumn passage from 27th September-30th October saw birds passing through in several small 'waves' with peaks of 25 on 7th, 41 on 16th, 29 on 22nd and 23 on 26th October. Small numbers were recorded periodically in November and December.

**BRAMBLING** *Fringilla montifringilla*

***Common spring and autumn migrant***

A single bird was seen periodically in January. In spring, singles were recorded on 11th, 17th & 22nd April before main passage, concentrated into the period 25th-30th April, saw daily counts around 100 and a peak of 160 on 29th. Counts in May were much lower with 18 on 1st dwindling down to the last two on 17th. Autumn migration commenced with very small numbers from 19th September until 48 on 29th signalled the start of heavier passage. As with Chaffinch, daily counts fluctuated as birds passed through in October in several 'waves' with peaks of 29 on 8th, 170 on 15th, 140 on 16th, 130 on 22nd and 100 on 23rd. The last were 13 on 28th October.

**EUROPEAN GREENFINCH** *Carduelis chloris*

***Regular spring and autumn migrant***

The only spring record was a male on 13th April. In autumn, a party of 11 on 6th October had risen to 13 by 14th, most had left by 12th. Further passage from 18th saw several small parties passing through until the end of the month with a peak of 17 on 22nd. Very occasional singles were recorded in November and the last on 8th December.

**EUROPEAN GOLDFINCH** *Carduelis carduelis*

***Rare spring and autumn migrant***

In spring, singles on 14th-15th May and two on 16th were the only records. Similarly, in autumn there was one on 26th November and two on 28th – the latest ever records.

**EURASIAN SISKIN** *Carduelis spinus*

***Frequent autumn migrant, less common in spring***

Sporadic singles from 1st April were followed by regular passage of single figures from 21st April-24th May, apart from an extraordinary record spring count of 37 on 28th April (the previous highest was 26 on 5th May 1998). Counts of 1-4 were

made on five dates in June and almost daily in the first week of July. A very light autumn passage saw regular single-figure counts from 21st September-26th October and a maximum of just 15 on 16th.

**COMMON LINNET** *Carduelis cannabina*

**Regular spring migrant, more scarce in autumn**

Counts of 1-3 were made regularly from 29th March-13th May with a peak of five on two dates. Occasional sightings of 1-2 were then received until the last on 6th June. In autumn, up to three were recorded daily between 26th-29th September and there was one on 22nd October.

**TWITE** *Carduelis flavirostris*

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

The maximum winter count was 50 on 30th January. Spring passage is hard to judge but was most obvious in the first week of May when numbers peaked at 45 on 5th & 6th. Regular counts of 150-200 were made from late August until late September (with a peak of 260 on 14th) and several counts over 100 until mid-October when numbers dropped below 50 to the years end.

**LESSER REDPOLL** *Carduelis cabaret*

**Scarce migrant in spring, summer and autumn**

In spring, 1-6 were recorded between 6th-17th May. One was trapped on 20th July. In autumn, four were present from 18th-21st September and one from 5th-18th October was often accompanied by an individual of the large Greenland race *C. flammea rostrata* of Common Redpoll.

**COMMON REDPOLL** *Carduelis flammea*

**Frequent spring and autumn migrant**

The first were two Mealy Redpolls *C. f. flammea* on 25th April, then 1-2 from 8th-11th May and another from 25th-27th May. There were further individuals of this race on 23rd June (1), 23rd July (4), 26th July (2), 4th August (1) and 9th-10th August (2). In autumn, 1-4 recorded daily from 18th-28th September and 2nd-18th October, were mainly Mealy Redpoll but also included 2-3 records of the larger Greenland race *C. f. rostrata*. An influx of 34 Mealy Redpoll on 22nd October dwindled away to two by 28th with six more on 30th. Finally, one on 12th-13th December was in the company of an Arctic Redpoll *C. hornemanni*.

**ARCTIC REDPOLL** *Carduelis hornemanni*

**Rare/irruptive autumn migrant. Vagrant in spring. Approx. 84 previous records**

One of the race *C. h. exilipes* associating with three Lesser Redpolls *C. cabaret* from 13th-17th May was trapped in the Plantation on 15th. In December, one was in the Boini Mire/Houll area on 12th-13th and two were reported at Quoy on 18th. Spring bird Accepted by BBRC, autumn birds still under consideration

**TWO-BARRED CROSSBILL** *Loxia leucoptera*

***Vagrant; 16 previous records***

One, probably an adult female, fed with a small group of Common Crossbills on the cliffs at Wirvie on 5th-9th July. The first record since 1990.

*Accepted by BBRC*

**COMMON CROSSBILL** *Loxia curvirostra*

***Scarce/irruptive autumn migrant***

Four on 16th June, then 25 on 24th were the first indications of the influx to follow. Numbers throughout July were between 20-90 and exceeded 100 on four dates (peak of 150 on 14th), tailing off in August until the last on 15th September.

**COMMON ROSEFINCH** *Carpodacus erythrinus*

***Regular spring and autumn migrant***

The only spring record was a superb red male singing outside the Observatory on 23rd May which was later trapped in the Plantation. It remained until 29th May. In autumn, small groups frequented the crops in the south end for several days at a time, from 23rd August until 28th September. The largest gathering was seven birds on 1st-2nd September and a minimum of 14 individuals (all brown) were involved.

**COMMON BULLFINCH** *Pyrrhula pyrrhula*

***Scarce autumn migrant, less regular in spring***

Counts of 1-4 were made on eight dates between 16th-30th October and a peak of 12 on 22nd.

**HAWFINCH** *Coccothraustes coccothraustes*

***Rare spring migrant. Vagrant in autumn. Approx. 61 previous records***

In spring there were singles on 25th April and 27th May. In autumn, one was seen briefly, in flight only, on 14th October.

**LAPLAND LONGSPUR (BUNTING)** *Calcarius lapponicus*

***Frequent autumn migrant, less common in spring***

In spring, singles were seen on 10th & 26th March, 1-2 daily from 3rd-5th April and another on 29th April. Autumn saw singles on 7th-8th September then 1-5 daily from 14th September-2nd October and irregular counts of 1-3 until 17th October.

**SNOW BUNTING** *Plectrophenax nivalis*

***Common spring and autumn migrant; often over-winters***

No birds were recorded in the early months. Passage in spring was very light involving daily single-figure counts from 4th-29th April and sporadically until 31st May. Two on 10th September were the first of the autumn and birds were ever-present from 14th to the year's end. Counts fluctuated markedly, as parties passed through, from single figures to a peak of 75 on 13th October.



*'Tristis' Chiffchaff, trapped, September 2001.*

*Hywel Maggs*



*Dusky Warbler, trapped, September 2001.*

*Paul French*





*Black-headed Bunting, trapped, September 2001.*

*Paul French*



*Common Crossbill, Fair Isle, September 2001.*

*Reston Kilgour*





*Pallas's Grasshopper Warbler, trapped, October 2001.*

*Deryk Shaw*



*Common Nightingale, trapped, October 2001.*

*Paul French*



*Rustic Bunting, Raevas, October 2001.*

*David Tipling/Windrush*



*Spotted Crake, trapped, October 2001.*

*Paul French*

**BLACK-FACED BUNTING** *Emberiza spodocephala*

***Vagrant; first record for Fair Isle***

A probable first-winter male was found at Auld Haa on 20th October where it remained until 24th. Another first for the isle and Scotland and the fourth for Britain. See article in *Birding Scotland* Vol 5:1.

*Accepted by BBRC*

**YELLOWHAMMER** *Emberiza citrinella*

***Regular spring and autumn migrant***

A male on 31st March, a pair on 15th May and a female on 16th-17th May were the only spring records. In autumn singles on 15th & 18th October were followed by six on 20th-25th, dwindling to the last two on 27th.

**RUSTIC BUNTING** *Emberiza rustica*

***Rare spring and autumn migrant***

In spring, a superb male was at Easter Lothar on 15th-16th May. In autumn, a very confiding individual was found at South Raeva on 28th September and remained there until 7th October with another near Pund from 30th September-1st October.

*All accepted by BBRC*

**LITTLE BUNTING** *Emberiza pusilla*

***Scarce autumn migrant; rare in spring***

One on 26th-27th September was followed by two on 1st October and further singles on 4th-6th, 7th, 14th & 22nd October.

**YELLOW-BREASTED BUNTING** *Emberiza aureola*

***Rare autumn migrant***

One at the unusual location of Jimmie's Brae near the west cliffs on 29th-30th August.

*Accepted by BBRC*

**REED BUNTING** *Emberiza schoeniclus*

***Frequent spring and autumn migrant***

A very light spring passage saw 1-4 on most days from 29th March-9th April then none until daily records of 1-8 from 25th April-16th May and the last on 23rd May. In autumn there were counts of 1-6 from 28th September-10th October and again from 16th-27th October, except for ten on 21st and 12 on 24th.

**BLACK-HEADED BUNTING** *Emberiza melanocephala*

***Vagrant; 21 previous records***

The first records since 1992. A male was seen briefly near the Chapel on 16th June. An adult female was found near the Plantation and trapped in the Vaadal on 11th



September and remained in the area until 26th. An almost identical bird was at Setter on 22nd September.

*Spring bird Accepted by BBRC, autumn birds still under consideration*

**CORN BUNTING** *Miliaria calandra*

*Vagrant; formerly bred*

One at Quoy from 23rd-27th May caused much excitement as it is only the third record in over 20 years.

*Corn Bunting – Paul French*

**Escapes:**

**BOHEMIAN WAXWING** *Bombycilla garrulus*

A very confiding individual bearing a plastic leg-tie was around the Observatory from 28th June-8th July and even accepted jam from the hand.



*Sheep Rock by John Best*

## ***FAIR ISLE RINGING REPORT 2001***

Deryk Shaw

A very poor spring passage followed by a disastrous seabird breeding season and a below average autumn migration resulted in a total of just 3,913 birds being ringed (Table 1).

*Table 1. The ten most commonly ringed species, with totals, on Fair Isle in 2001: (2000 totals for comparison).*

<b>Species</b>	<b>2001</b>	<b>2000</b>
Guillemot	571	1105
Blackbird	449	309
Storm Petrel	444	849
Starling	271	173
Razorbill	254	247
Shag	199	252
Robin	191	436
Blackcap	131	237
Great Skua	118	150
Meadow Pipit	114	194

The general lack of birds meant that most species were ringed in less than average numbers although good totals were received for Starling and Common Crossbill.

No new species were added to the ringing list in 2001 however a few noteworthy captures were made; our 19th Spotted Crake, 7th Rook, 12th Pallas's Grasshopper Warbler, 6th Dusky Warbler, 20th Arctic Redpoll and 4th Black-headed Bunting.

*Table 2. Numbers of birds ringed on Fair Isle and recovered/controlled elsewhere in 2001, together with cumulative totals from 1948*

<i>Species</i>	<i>Ringed as:</i>		<i>Total</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>Recovered/Controlled</i>	
	<i>Juv/Ad</i>	<i>Pullus</i>	<i>2001</i>	<i>1948-01</i>	<i>2001</i>	<i>1948-01</i>
Red-throated Diver	–	–	–	1	–	–
Little Grebe	–	–	–	10	–	–
Great Crested Grebe	–	–	–	1	–	–
Red-necked Grebe	–	–	–	1	–	–
Slavonian Grebe	–	–	–	3	–	–
Fulmar	29	33	62	16618	1	164
Storm Petrel	444	–	444	29546	30	1143
Leach's Petrel	2	–	2	83	1	2
Gannet	–	–	–	347	–	9
Cormorant	–	–	–	7	–	–
Shag	5	194	199	21479	4	546
Grey Heron	–	–	–	20	–	–
Whooper Swan	–	–	–	40	1	7
Bean Goose	–	–	–	1	–	–
Pink-footed Goose	–	–	–	13	–	1
White-fronted Goose	–	–	–	3	–	1
Greylag Goose	–	–	–	42	–	8
Barnacle Goose	–	–	–	3	–	–
Shelduck	–	–	–	5	–	–
Wigeon	–	–	–	55	1	4
Teal	–	–	–	70	–	4
Mallard	–	–	–	15	–	1
Pintail	–	–	–	2	–	1
Shoveler	–	–	–	1	–	–
Pochard	–	–	–	3	–	–
Ring-necked Duck	–	–	–	1	–	–
Tufted Duck	–	–	–	18	–	–
Scaup	–	–	–	5	–	–
Eider	2	4	6	166	–	1
Long-tailed Duck	–	–	–	18	–	1
Velvet Scoter	–	–	–	2	–	–
Goldeneye	–	–	–	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>2001</i>	<i>1948-01</i>	<i>2001</i>	<i>1948-01</i>
Sparrowhawk	6	—	6	351	2	24
Kestrel	—	—	—	47	—	8
Red-footed Falcon	—	—	—	1	—	—
Merlin	4	—	4	192	—	12
Peregrine Falcon	—	—	—	6	—	1
Quail	—	—	—	9	—	—
Water Rail	8	—	8	307	—	3
Spotted Crake	1	—	—	19	—	—
Little Crake	—	—	—	1	—	—
Baillon's Crake	—	—	—	1	—	—
Corncrake	—	—	—	40	—	2
Moorhen	—	—	—	97	—	3
Coot	—	—	—	14	—	1
Great Bustard	—	—	—	1	—	—
Oystercatcher	1	9	10	1488	—	69
Little Ringed Plover	—	—	—	1	—	—
Ringed Plover	—	—	—	662	—	6
Dotterel	—	—	—	4	—	—
Golden Plover	—	—	—	23	—	—
Grey Plover	—	—	—	1	—	—
Lapwing	—	4	4	332	—	6
Knot	—	—	—	98	—	2
Sanderling	—	—	—	93	—	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	—	—	—	542	—	7
Buff-breasted Sandpiper	—	—	—	1	—	—
Ruff	—	—	—	41	—	1
Jack Snipe	—	—	—	134	—	3
Common Snipe	3	2	5	452	—	4
Great Snipe	—	—	—	2	—	—
Woodcock	10	—	—	425	1	21
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>2001</i>	<i>1948-01</i>	<i>2001</i>	<i>1948-01</i>
Whimbrel	—	—	—	16	—	—
Curlew	—	2	2	156	—	6
Spotted Redshank	—	—	—	3	—	—
Redshank	1	—	—	277	—	2
Greenshank	—	—	—	12	—	—
Green Sandpiper	—	—	—	56	—	1
Wood Sandpiper	—	—	—	18	—	—
Common Sandpiper	—	—	—	70	—	1
Turnstone	—	—	—	77	—	—
Red-necked Phalarope	—	—	—	5	—	—
Grey Phalarope	—	—	—	3	—	—
Pomarine Skua	—	—	—	1	—	—
Arctic Skua	1	31	32	3792	—	66
Great Skua	—	118	118	2340	6	40
Black-headed Gull	—	—	—	45	—	2
Common Gull	—	2	2	199	—	3
Lesser Black-backed Gull	—	6	6	1427	—	33
Herring Gull	—	20	20	4242	—	93
Iceland Gull	—	—	—	1	—	—
Glaucous Gull	—	—	—	40	—	1
Great Black-backed Gull	—	—	—	2837	3	108
Kittiwake	20	24	44	6897	—	35
Common Tern	—	—	—	481	—	3
Arctic Tern	—	103	103	11255	—	33
Guillemot	23	548	571	33179	25	988
Razorbill	17	237	254	9348	2	227
Black Guillemot	—	8	8	1624	—	19
Little Auk	—	—	—	13	—	—
Puffin	31	57	88	12620	—	31
Rock Dove	—	—	—	67	—	—
Wood Pigeon	2	—	2	71	—	2
Collared Dove	2	—	2	304	—	6
Turtle Dove	1	—	—	81	—	2
Cuckoo	1	—	1	107	—	1
Snowy Owl	—	—	—	1	—	1
Long-eared Owl	1	—	1	243	—	13
Short-eared Owl	—	—	—	17	—	—
Nightjar	—	—	—	4	—	—
Swift	—	—	—	17	—	1
Hoopoe	—	—	—	3	—	—



<i>Species</i>	<i>Ringed as:</i>		<i>Total</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>Recovered/Controlled</i>	
	<i>Juv/Ad</i>	<i>Pullus</i>	<i>2001</i>	<i>1948-01</i>	<i>2001</i>	<i>1948-01</i>
Wryneck	3	—	3	215	—	—
Great Spotted Woodpecker	1	—	1	29	—	—
Short-toed Lark	—	—	—	9	—	—
Woodlark	—	—	—	3	—	—
Skylark	—	—	—	1241	—	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	2	—	2	639	—	—
Pechora Pipit	—	—	—	9	—	—
Meadow Pipit	114	—	114	9948	—	45
Red-throated Pipit	—	—	—	9	—	—
Rock Pipit	39	—	39	9241	—	29
Yellow Wagtail	—	—	—	10	—	—
Citrine Wagtail	—	—	—	5	—	—
Grey Wagtail	1	—	1	31	—	1
White/Pied Wagtail	4	—	4	681	—	4
Waxwing	—	—	—	37	—	—
Dipper	—	—	—	14	—	—
Wren	16	—	16	830	—	—
Duncock	30	—	30	2508	—	7
Robin	191	—	191	8699	—	39
Thrush Nightingale	—	—	—	31	—	—
Nightingale	1	—	1	28	—	—
Siberian Rubythroat	—	—	—	1	—	—
Bluethroat	2	—	2	267	—	2
Red-flanked Bluetail	—	—	—	2	—	—
Black Redstart	2	—	2	155	—	—
Redstart	3	—	3	1796	—	1
Whinchat	2	—	2	626	—	2
Stonechat	—	—	—	56	—	—
Northern Wheatear	113	—	113	16119	1	74
Pied Wheatear	—	—	—	1	—	—
Black-eared Wheatear	—	—	—	3	—	—
Rock Thrush	—	—	—	1	—	—

<i>Species</i>	<i>Ringed as:</i>		<i>Total</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>Recovered/Controlled</i>	
	<i>Juv/Ad</i>	<i>Pullus</i>	<i>2001</i>	<i>1948-01</i>	<i>2001</i>	<i>1948-01</i>
White's Thrush	—	—	—	1	—	—
Hermit Thrush	—	—	—	1	—	—
Grey-cheeked Thrush	—	—	—	2	—	—
Ring Ouzel	4	—	4	488	—	8
Blackbird	449	—	449	22245	—	322
Eye-browed Thrush	—	—	—	1	—	1
Dusky Thrush	—	—	—	1	—	—
Dark-throated Thrush	—	—	—	1	—	—
Fieldfare	5	—	5	630	—	1
Song Thrush	61	—	61	2889	—	32
Redwing	62	—	62	8720	—	73
Mistle Thrush	—	—	—	22	—	—
Pallas' Grasshopper						
Warbler	1	—	1	12	—	—
Lanceolated Warbler	—	—	—	32	—	—
Grasshopper Warbler	4	—	4	117	—	—
River Warbler	—	—	—	7	—	—
Savi's Warbler	—	—	—	3	—	—
Aquatic Warbler	—	—	—	22	—	—
Sedge Warbler	13	—	13	449	—	—
Paddyfield Warbler	—	—	—	9	—	1
Blyth's Reed Warbler	—	—	—	9	—	1
Marsh Warbler	2	—	2	115	—	—
Reed Warbler	7	—	7	259	—	1
Great Reed Warbler	—	—	—	6	—	—
Thick-billed Warbler	—	—	—	1	—	—
Olivaceous Warbler	—	—	—	1	—	—
Booted Warbler	—	—	—	9	—	—
Icterine Warbler	—	—	—	98	—	—
Melodious Warbler	—	—	—	11	—	—
Subalpine Warbler	—	—	—	26	—	—
Sardinian Warbler	—	—	—	1	—	—
Barred Warbler	6	—	6	394	—	1
Lesser Whitethroat	10	—	10	672	—	1
Whitethroat	5	—	5	933	—	—
Garden Warbler	44	—	44	3427	—	4
Blackcap	131	—	131	5272	1	24
Greenish Warbler	—	—	—	23	—	—
Arctic Warbler	—	—	—	32	—	—
Pallas's Warbler	—	—	—	3	—	—

<i>Species</i>	<i>Ringed as:</i>		<i>Total</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>Recovered/Controlled</i>	
	<i>Juv/Ad</i>	<i>Pullus</i>	<i>2001</i>	<i>1948-01</i>	<i>2001</i>	<i>1948-01</i>
Yellow-browed Warbler	4	—	4	118	—	—
Radde's Warbler	—	—	—	1	—	—
Dusky Warbler	1	—	1	6	—	—
Bonelli's Warbler	—	—	—	1	—	—
Wood Warbler	—	—	—	105	—	—
Chiffchaff	36	—	36	1186	—	3
Willow Warbler	32	—	32	3523	—	7
Goldcrest	16	—	16	1595	—	2
Firecrest	—	—	—	1	—	—
Brown Flycatcher	—	—	—	1	—	—
Spotted Flycatcher	4	—	4	739	—	3
Red-breasted Flycatcher	1	—	1	56	—	—
Collared Flycatcher	—	—	—	2?	—	—
Pied Flycatcher	5	—	5	933	—	—
Coal Tit	—	—	—	1	—	—
Blue Tit	—	—	—	2	—	—
Great Tit	—	—	—	10	—	—
Treecreeper	—	—	—	1	—	—
Golden Oriole	—	—	—	8	—	—
Brown Shrike	—	—	—	1	—	—
Isabelline Shrike	—	—	—	2	—	—
Red-backed Shrike	1	—	1	206	—	—
Lesser Grey Shrike	—	—	—	6	—	—
Great Grey Shrike	—	—	—	114	—	1
Woodchat Shrike	—	—	—	13	—	—
Jackdaw	—	—	—	4	—	—
Rook	1	—	—	7	—	—
Hooded/Carrion Crow	—	—	—	48	—	—
Raven	—	—	—	26	—	—
Daurian Starling	—	—	—	1	—	—
Starling	34	237	271	25447	—	192
Rose-coloured Starling	—	—	—	3	—	—
House Sparrow	9	—	9	1474	—	3
Tree Sparrow	9	—	9	110	—	1
Chaffinch	41	—	41	2916	—	11
Brambling	31	—	31	3393	—	14
Greenfinch	15	—	15	269	4	6
Goldfinch	—	—	—	11	—	—
Siskin	7	—	7	408	—	1
Linnet	1	—	1	152	—	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>2001</i>	<i>1948-01</i>	<i>2001</i>	<i>1948-01</i>
Twite	41	—	41	5514	1	6
Lesser Redpoll	2	—	2	2	—	—
Common Redpoll	7	—	7	(634)	—	6
Arctic Redpoll	1	—	1	20	—	—
Two-barred Crossbill	—	—	—	1	—	—
Common Crossbill	28	—	28	487	—	2
Parrot Crossbill	—	—	—	37	—	—
Pallas's Rosefinch	—	—	—	—	—	—
Common Rosefinch	4	—	4	184	—	1
Bullfinch	1	—	1	109	—	—
Hawfinch	—	—	—	18	—	—
Tennessee Warbler	—	—	—	2	—	—
Savannah Sparrow	—	—	—	1	—	—
Song Sparrow	—	—	—	3	—	—
White-crowned Sparrow	—	—	—	1	—	—
White-throated Sparrow	—	—	—	2	—	—
Lapland Bunting	—	—	—	48	—	—
Snow Bunting	—	—	—	630	—	3
Pine Bunting	—	—	—	2	—	—
Yellowhammer	—	—	—	62	—	—
Ortolan Bunting	—	—	—	20	—	—
Cretzschmar's Bunting	—	—	—	1	—	—
Yellow-browed Bunting	—	—	—	1	—	—
Rustic Bunting	—	—	—	17	—	1
Little Bunting	—	—	—	35	—	1
Chestnut Bunting	—	—	—	1	—	—
Yellow-breasted Bunting	—	—	—	6	—	—
Reed Bunting	3	—	3	441	—	3
Pallas's Reed Bunting	—	—	—	2	—	—
Red-headed Bunting	—	—	—	5	—	—
Black-headed Bunting	1	—	1	4	—	—
Corn Bunting	—	—	—	3	—	—
<b>Totals:</b>	<b>2,274</b>	<b>1,639</b>	<b>3,913</b>	<b>318,028</b>	<b>81</b>	<b>4,739</b>

## Ringling recoveries/controls reported to FIBO during 2001.

A re-trap is a bird ringed and then re-caught alive at the same place of ringing. A control is a bird ringed by one ringer and then caught alive elsewhere by another ringer.

A recovery is a bird ringed and then found dead elsewhere. (birds ringed and found dead on the isle are not included in table 2).

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

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

**FULMAR.** Just one recovery reported involving a bird ringed as a chick in August 1968 and found freshly dead, a victim of oil pollution, in Jylland, **DENMARK** (11,979 days, 708 km, ESE).

**STORM PETREL.** A total of 30 individuals ringed on Fair Isle were controlled elsewhere and reported during 2001. These are summarised in the following table:

Table 3. Storm Petrels ringed on Fair Isle and controlled/recovered elsewhere: reports received during 2001.

<i>Recovery Site</i>	<i>No.</i>	<i>Recovery Site</i>	<i>No.</i>
Yell, Shetland	7	Girdle Ness, Grampian	1
Brough Head, Orkney	1	Sanda Island, Strathclyde	1
Auskerry, Orkney	2	Seahouses, Northumberland	1
Priest Island, Highland	1	Sogn og Fjordane, <b>Norway</b>	1
Faraid Head, Highland	1	Nolsoy, <b>Faeroes</b>	4
Eilean nan Ron, Highland	10		

All birds were controlled by other ringers within four years of ringing, with the exception of the following birds. The bird caught on Priest Island had been ringed 23 years previously, the Brough Head control was ringed in 1994, whilst the two Auskerry recoveries were remains found in Great Black-backed Gull pellets. Of note, the bird controlled at Seahouses (441 km, S) had been ringed just four days previously.

**LEACH'S PETREL.** Only our second ever recovery concerns a bird which was ringed on 31st July 2000 and retrapped four days later on North Ronaldsay, Orkney just 50km WSW.

**SHAG.** Four recoveries were reported during 2001, all were ringed as chicks and recovered later. Two were of birds ringed in summer 2001 and recovered in the autumn in Orkney whilst one from the previous year was found a year later on Yell, Shetland. The last concerns a belated report of a chick ringed on 4th July 1961 and recovered exactly 20 years later in the Faeroes (400 km, NW).

**WHOOPEE SWAN.** An adult ringed in November 1965 was reported from Nordur-Mula, **Iceland** (965 km, NW) in June 1967. A long time to wait for our first foreign recovery and only our seventh ever.

**WIGEON.** Hot on the heels of the second and third ever recoveries in 2000, another of the birds ringed in the autumn of 1998 was reported in 2001. A male found freshly shot at Loch of Strathbeg, Grampian Region on 1st November 2000 (775 days, 213 km, S).

**SPARROWHAWK.** A second-year male ringed on 9th May 2000 was controlled 12 days later in Gosforth Park, Tyne & Wear (502 km, S) and then again on 28th April 2001 on North Ronaldsay, Orkney. A first-winter female ringed on 11th October was controlled the following January in Rendall, Orkney (98 km, WSW).

**WOODCOCK.** A juvenile ringed in November 1999 was found freshly dead on 30th December 2000 in Donegal, **Eire** (607 km, SSW).

**GREAT SKUA.** Six foreign recoveries (two Danish, four French) of birds originally ringed on Fair Isle as pulli. One ringed as a chick in July 1988 was found freshly dead in Laeso, **Denmark** in August 1999 (4059 days, 781 km, ESE). Another ringed in August 1996 succumbed to oil pollution in Jylland, **Denmark** in July 2001 (1815 days, 703 km, ESE). Another oil victim concerned one ringed in July 1996 and recovered at Vendee, **France** on 29th December 1999 (1267 days, 1428 km, S) whilst another at the same site on 12th November 2000 was long dead and had been ringed in July 1997 (1208 days, 1448 km, S). One found at Landes, **France** on 2nd January 2001 was apparently a victim of stormy weather. It had been ringed in July 1995 (1997 days, 1767 km, S). Finally, a bird was picked up dying of some internal illness at Manche, **France** on 20th September 2001. It too had been ringed in July 1995 (2270 days, 1117 km, S). In addition, two birds ringed in July 2000 returned to the isle in 2001 only to be cannibalised by the local breeders.

**GREAT BLACK-BACKED GULL.** One ringed as a pullus in July 1993 had its ring read in the field at Fraserburgh Harbour, Grampian in September 2001. Another, ringed as a pullus on the same date as the previous bird, has had its ring read in every August/September since 1996 at Pas-de-Calais, **France** (3016 days, 999 km, SSE). One, ringed as an adult on 4th February 1998 was found tangled in fishing line at sea off Troms, **Norway** on 15th September 2001. It was possibly injured, but released (1319 days, 1569 km, NE).

**GUILLEMOT.** Twenty-five recoveries were received in 2001. All were of birds ringed on the isle as chicks. Table 4 lists the recovery locations of birds ringed as chicks in June 2000 and recovered during the 2000/2001 winter, whilst the text below details birds ringed in previous years and recovered during 2001.

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

<b>Recovery Location</b>	<b>No.</b>	<b>Recovery Location</b>	<b>No.</b>
Norway	9	Faeroes	2
Netherlands	1	France	2

All the Norwegian recoveries were of birds drowned in fishing nets whilst both Faeroese birds were shot. One of the French recoveries was found on a beach whilst the other and the Dutch bird were oil victims.

Recoveries during 2000 of chicks ringed in previous years are listed below:

**Shetland:** One ringed in June 1984 was found washed up on a beach in Culswick on 2nd August 2001 (6246 days, 72 km, N).

**Orkney:** One ringed in June 1999 was recovered from a beach in Bay of Berstane on 13th January 2001 (570 days, 96 km, SW).

**Faeroes:** One ringed as a chick in June 1991 was shot in October 2001 (3753 days, 362 km, NW).

**Norway:** One ringed in June 1999 was washed ashore in More og Romsdal on 30th January 2001 (585 days, 681 km, NE). Two birds from 1992 were recovered in February 2001, one an oil victim found in Rogaland (3171 days, 5624 km, NE) and the other caught in a fishing net at Sogn og Fjordane (3145 days, 450 km, NE).

**Netherlands:** One ringed in June 1999 succumbed to oil and was found at Schiermonnikoog on 29th April 2001 (675 days, 822 km, SE).

**Belgium:** A chick ringed in June 1998 was an oil victim in February 1999 at West-Vlaanderen (231 days, 964 km, SSE).

**France:** One ringed in June 1998 was picked up dead on 20th January 2001 at Morbihan (942 days, 1339 km, S) whilst another ringed at the same time became a casualty of the *Erika* oil spill and was found sick at Morbihan 22nd December 1999. It was later picked up dead at Arnhem, **Netherlands** on 27th February 2000.

**Spain:** A late report of one ringed in June 1997 which was found dead at Coruna on 15th January 1998 (207 days, 1868 km, SSW).

**RAZORBILL.** Just two reports were received. One ringed as a chick in June 1999 became entangled in fishing net and was found dead nr Edinburgh, Lothian Region on 19th May 2001 (694 days, 407 km, SSE). Another ringed in June 2000 was found dead and decapitated at Jylland, **Denmark** on 3rd March 2001 (262 days, 707 km, SE).

**PUFFIN.** Four recoveries – all of birds which had fallen prey to Bonxies on the isle in 2001. One was ringed as an adult in 1993 and the others as pulli in 1994, 1995 & 2001.

**WHEATEAR.** An adult male ringed in September 1999 was found freshly dead (and later eaten by the finder) at Ouarzazate, **Morocco** (573 days, 3156 km, S) – the seventeenth recovery from that country.

**BLACKCAP.** A first-year female was ringed on 19th September 2001 and controlled four days later on Sanday, Orkney (61 km, WSW). Two first-year birds were found dead on the isle in October 2001, just days after ringing whilst another ringed in October 2000 was found freshly dead on the isle in April 2001, presumably on its way back north.

**GREENFINCH.** Our third to sixth Greenfinch reports were all ringed in October 2000 and controlled the following winter in Orkney: one at Rendall in December & January and two at Kirkwall – in January and March 2001 (98 km, SW). The first-year female controlled in January at Kirkwall was then reported from Rogaland, **Norway** on 9th December 2001 (423 days, 473 km, ESE).

**TWITE.** A juvenile ringed on 13th August 2001 was controlled in Deerness, Orkney on 19th November 2001 (98 days, 91 km, SW).

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

**STORM PETREL.** We received details of 23 Storm Petrels controlled on Fair Isle during 2001; six foreign birds and sixteen ringed in the UK.

All were trapped during mist-netting sessions near the Observatory in July and August.

Table 5. Storm Petrels ringed elsewhere and recovered on Fair Isle: reports received during 2001.

<i>Ringling Site</i>	<i>No.</i>	<i>Ringling Site</i>	<i>No.</i>
Yell, Shetland	5	Eilean nan Ron, Highland Region	1
Mousa, Shetland	1	Faraid Head, Highland Region	1
North Ronaldsay, Orkney	4	Isle of May, Fife	1
Brough Head, Orkney	3	Sogn og Fjordane, <b>Norway</b>	3
Eday, Orkney	1	Utsira, Rogaland, <b>Norway</b>	3

Most birds were controlled within three years of ringing except the following: Birds from Yell were ringed in 1995 (two) and 1993 whilst one from Sogn og Fjordane was also ringed in 1993.

**SPARROWHAWK.** A first-year male ringed in Tankerness, Orkney on 5th November 2000 was controlled on 30th April 2001 (176 days, 97 km, NE). Another first-year male from Vestfold, **Norway** was ringed on 10th September 2000 and controlled on 14th October 2000 (34 days, 653 km, W).



**ARCTIC TERN.** One ringed as a chick at Dalsetter, Shetland in 1996 was predated by a cat at Tarryfield on 1st June 2001 (1802 days, 47 km, SSW). One, ringed as a chick in Eysturoy, **Faeroes** in July 1987, was found breeding on Fair Isle in June 1998 and found dead in the Tarryfield colony on 1st July 2001.

**GUILLEMOT.** Just one recovery. An adult ringed in 1983 at Sumburgh, Shetland, the leg of which (with attached ring) was washed up here on 13th August 2001 (2968 days, 40 km, SSW).

**DUNNOCK.** A first-year ringed in Rogaland, **Norway** on 25th September 2000 was controlled on 9th October 2000 (and again on 13th & 16th October 2000) (14 days, 426 km, WNW). Only our sixth foreign control and second from Norway and the thirteenth from that country to be controlled in Britain.

**ROBIN.** One ringed on Foula, Shetland on 5th October 2001 was controlled on Fair Isle five days later (71 km, SSE).

**REED WARBLER.** A first-year ringed on Falsterbo, **Sweden** on 4th August 2000 was controlled on 19th August 2000 (15 days, 978 km, WNW). Our first ever foreign control and an obvious drift migrant. The thirteenth Swedish-ringed Reed Warbler to be controlled in Britain.

**WHITETHROAT.** A male ringed in Rogaland, **Norway** on 12th May 2000 fell victim to a cat on Fair Isle on 28 May 2000 (16 days, 416 km, WNW). Following our first, from Spain in 1999, this is the second foreign-ringed Whitethroat to reach Fair Isle and the fourth from Norway to be controlled in Britain.

**GARDEN WARBLER.** A first-year ringed on Foula, Shetland on 1st October 2001 was picked up freshly dead on 6th October (5 days, 71 km, SSE).

**BLACKCAP.** A first-year male ringed on 19th August 2000 in Brabant, **Belgium** was controlled on 13th September 2000 (25 days, 1034 km, NNW).

**YELLOW-BROWED WARBLER.** A very belated confirmation of our only control. One ringed in Hedmark, **Norway** on 21st September 1990 was recaptured on Fair Isle just five days later (786 km, WNW) and remains the only foreign-ringed bird to be controlled in Britain.

**GREENFINCH.** Another very late report. An adult female ringed in Vest-Agder, **Norway** on 20th October 1988 was controlled a week later (552 km, WNW).

**LINNET.** One ringed as a chick on North Ronaldsay, Orkney in June 2001 was controlled on 27th September 2001 (113 days, 49 km, ENE).

## The first Pallid Swift *Apus pallidus* for Shetland

Deryk Shaw

### Circumstances

The 2nd October 2001 saw me carrying out the daily census of the north of the isle. I had not long received the earth-shattering phone call about the Siberian Blue Robin on North Ronaldsay and was wondering how to handle all the miserable faces when I got back to the Observatory. I arrived at Wester Lothar still cursing, but expecting to find a few birds sheltering from the strong SSE wind. As I stood at the top gazing down the geo (mind still elsewhere really), a few thrushes, including two Ring Ouzels, flew round the corner. Waiting for some further movement, I caught sight of a bird fly into view then back around the corner c30m to my left. "That looked like a Swift" I thought. I waited and a few seconds later it sailed back into view and away again. "It is a Swift and Wow! That's pale". I scrambled towards it as fast as I could, North Ron dispelled from my mind to be replaced with images of Swift spp. Arriving at the site, I saw the bird flying back and forth along the cliff below me, regularly disappearing round the next corner, and returning seconds later. I decided to sit down and observe as the wind was a bit blowy on the top. I racked my brains for specific features of Pallid Swift, as that is what it most closely resembled. Cursing the lack of a phone reception on the west side I watched for about half an hour and took a few notes. After 15 minutes or so I decided then (being the ultra-cautious Warden that I am) that it was (probably) just an aberrant Common Swift and that any pro-Pallid features that I had seen/imagined were due to 1) it flying below me and very close and 2) it being a long time since I'd seen any Swift!!! I proceeded with my census but something was niggling me. I got as far as the Mast and decided to head straight for home and check some literature. A check of some relevant guides and I decided it was worth another look. Although the overall colour looked very good, I was perhaps expecting more contrast than there was (all guides mentioned the word 'subtle'!) and the structural features I had seen (imagined?) were correct! It was starting to rain as I headed back out and as I wasn't sure if the bird would still be present, or if it really was a Pallid and it was very close to lunch time, I decided not to put any news out as yet (a decision I was cursed for and later regretted! – the trials of being a Warden on Fair Isle!?!). Thankfully, the bird was still present but only for a couple of minutes before it headed inland toward Easter Lothar and disappeared. "Damn!". I now thought it was a Pallid Swift and headed back towards Easter Lothar after it. Once in range of a signal from the BT Mast, I received a phone message from Hollie. Jane Reid had (independently) just reported a Pallid Swift at Wester Lothar and as she (Hollie) couldn't contact me she was 'Red Flagging' it. I met Jane with a couple of others on the road as I headed back home. We had a brief discussion about what we'd seen and then decided to return to the Obs for lunch

and compare notes. A full scale search post-lunch, in the rain and gale force SSW wind, proved fruitless. The bird had likely moved away ahead of the front! Later discussions with further reading and photographs confirmed to me that it must have been the first Pallid Swift for Shetland.

### **Overall impression**

A pale Swift – a pale olive-brown colour closer to that of Sand Martin than the blackish colour of Common Swift. Roughly same size as Common Swift but perhaps slightly ‘chunkier’ with slightly broader, blunter wings. Very shallow fork to the tail, especially when spread as it banked to turn – when it almost disappeared. All these features I noted without knowing what to look for and not knowing if they were real or not – due to it being a lone bird and under the circumstances described above.

### **General Colouration**

Generally appeared fairly uniform olive-grey brown though the outer primaries may have been a shade darker and the secondaries a shade lighter, but it was all very subtle! Throat was white and greater coverts had whitish-grey edges.

### **Head**

Light grey-brown with a contrasting small dark eye mask especially obvious when the bird flew close. Chin/throat white grading into sandy underparts. I did not note a paler forehead – but it may have been present!

### **Upperparts**

Generally olive-grey brown but the mantle was perhaps slightly darker than the nape and rump which had a sandier tone to them. The secondaries too were slightly paler, contrasting with the darker brown outer primaries, which were probably the darkest part of the bird (apart from perhaps the eye mask). Greater coverts were thinly edged whitish-grey and this was the only amount of ‘scaling’ noted although more may have been seen, if the light had been brighter!? Retrices were brown, slightly darker than rump, with a shallow fork (noted as being 1/4–1/3 the length of the tail when spread). Spread tail fully whenever it banked to turn.

### **Underparts**

Hardly seen as I was always looking down on the bird. Occasional glimpses as it banked to turn showed them to be sandy-brown apart from the white throat patch. I cannot say if this throat patch was large (compared to Common Swift) because of the reasons already mentioned, but it was certainly noticeable.

## Moth Report

Nick Riddiford

Recording of moths was done less systematically in 2001, so it is difficult to give an overall summary of abundance. However, subjective opinion was that there were rather fewer moths, at least until August and a very slow start to the season. The most notable event of the year was a small series of Magpie Moths *Abraxas grossulariata*. The first was found in Lower Stoneybrek garden on 4th July and several others, perhaps 4 or 5 more, were recorded over the next few weeks. The only previous certain record was of one flying over Schoolton front park in 1999. Another highlight was the capture of a Burnished Brass *Diachsysia chrysis* in the Observatory trap on 12th August (only the second record following the first in July 1997) whilst Lesser Yellow Underwing *Noctua comes* on 23rd August, Mouse Moth *Amphipyra tragopoginis* on 10th September and Autumn Green Carpet *Chloroclysta miata* on 24th September have each been recorded on fewer than 5 previous occasions. All three were attracted to light at Schoolton. Better known migrants included one Dark Sword-grass *Agrotis ipsilon* on 18th August and 4 on 24th, and one Rush Veneer *Nomophila noctuella* on 4th October – again at Schoolton but attracted to sugared posts.

We discovered that not only the adults have a sweet proboscis. On 21st August a Large Yellow Underwing *Noctua pronuba* caterpillar was supping on the Schoolton posts, and an Angle Shades *Phlogophora meticulosa* caterpillar at the same place on 21st September. Another caterpillar was reported by Brian Skinner on 29th August. This one was on the leaves of Magellan Ragwort *Senecio smithii* at the Chalet and proved to be a Yellow Shell *Camptogramma bilineata*. Adults are frequent along grassy cliff tops during the summer but rarely enter light traps (probably because these are not set near to their preferred habitats). Brian informed me that slugs also eat the leaves of the Magellan ragwort. He also showed me insect leaf mines, and a bright orange rust – demonstrating that this showy ragwort, though alien to the northern hemisphere, is not shunned by the natural ecology of the isle.

An interesting experiment was conducted in August by Glen Tyler and Pat Thomson at Lower Stoneybrek, with some assistance from myself at Schoolton. Glen devised a mark-recapture programme based on subtle marking of the upper wing of Dark Arches *Apamea monoglypha* and Ingrailed Clay *Diarsia mendica* with nail varnish. Recapture rates at Lower Stoneybrek suggested strong populations of both species and a considerable turn over of individuals. It was not possible to define the attraction distance of the light trap, but there were no exchanges of marked individuals between Stoneybrek and Schoolton, though less than 500 m apart. The results of this pilot study are being prepared for publication in one of the national entomological journals.

## Other Wildlife

Alan Bull

Records of most forms of wildlife are kept at the Observatory, with all visitors being encouraged to report their sightings at the daily log, or directly to staff members. 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 from 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 the ‘Good Shepherd IV’ during the crossings to and from Shetland). Membership £5, includes Annual Report. Contact Austin Taylor, 44 North Lochside, Lerwick, Shetland ZE1 0PD.

### *Summary of Cetaceans*

As usual, most of the Cetacean sightings from 2001 came from the ‘Good Shepherd IV’ (details of which can be found in the Shetland Sea Mammal Group Report). 2001 can probably be described as an ‘above average’ year for sightings from land. The highlight of the year was undoubtedly a **Hump-backed Whale** seen on 31st August from South Lighthouse. This represents the first land based sighting for Fair Isle. This species can often be seen from Sumburgh Head, Shetland during the summer months and, like most cetaceans, must pass Fair Isle more often and simply go un-noticed. Other sightings for the year included:

**Minke Whale:** 3 were seen on 7th August, representing an excellent day-count.

**Sperm Whale:** One was found in South Felsigeo on the 16th November. This large whale would have been another highlight if it wasn’t for the unfortunate fact that it was dead. It was seen to be drifting north again on the 23rd November.

**Harbour Porpoise:** Small groups were seen between August and September, although the first sighting of the year was of 1 on the 1st June. In August there were 25 on the 7th, 4 on 12th, 7 on 14th, 5 on 16th and 1 on the 29th. In September there were almost daily sightings for the last two weeks of the month with 3 on 11th, 6 on 19th, 2 on 21st, 3 on 22nd, 1 on 23rd, 8 on 25th, 4 on 26th and finally 6 on 27th.

**White-beaked Dolphin:** In August there were 4 on 2nd, 9 on 7th, 4 on 15th, 2 on 16th, 11 on 25th, 4 on 28th, 12 on 31st and finally 8 were seen on the 21st September.

**White-sided Dolphin:** In July one was found dead on the beach at Lericum

**Dolphin sp:** Unidentified dolphins, probably either White-beaked or White-sided were seen on 2nd June, 6 on 8th August and 2 on 12th August.

### ***Summary of Butterflies***

2001 was an average year for sightings of Butterflies. Again sightings were centred around peak bird migration dates and also around spells of good weather! There were a total of 39 sightings or 'butterfly days' which are summarised in the table below:

	May	June	July	August	September
Small Tortoiseshell	1		1	2	
Red Admiral	2	9	12	2	
Painted Lady			3	5	1

The first butterfly of the year was the Small Tortoiseshell on the 20th May. The last sighting of that species was on 6th August. Painted Ladies were recorded between 9th July and 14th September, whilst Red Admirals were recorded between 30th June and 1st August.

### ***Summary of Mammals***

The annual Grey Seal pup census conducted in October and November counted a total of 103 new-born pups in the geos around the island, compared to a count of 97 pups in 2000. Common Seal yearlings and adults were again seen frequently around the South harbour area.

### ***Summary of other sightings***

Other sightings of interest included a Dragonfly sp. seen briefly on 30th August. This is the second Fair Isle record of a dragonfly, with both not being identified through insufficient views for ID. Common Frogs were seen throughout September at various locations around the isle.

## **Fair Isle Bird Observatory Trust (FIBOT)**

### **Financial Report and Accounts for 2001**

A summary of the Trust's accounts for the year ended 31st October 2001 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 2001 was very successful from a financial perspective. The guest numbers were up by 22% on the previous year at 2365 bed-nights, well above our target figure of 2000 bed-nights. Shop income maintained a similar high level to the previous year in response to the increased range of goods available. Any fresh ideas for the shop are always gratefully received. One major development in 2001 was the construction of a very pleasant licensed bar at the Observatory. Whilst this was primarily done to provide better facilities for guests and improve the appearance of the main room, the financial impact was remarkable. Bar revenue and profits trebled compared with the previous year!

Although expenses were higher than expected due to increased staff costs and marketing expenses, we were also able to continue replacing items such as windows, electrical equipment, furniture, mattresses etc., in addition to paying for the new bar and continuing to have a positive cash-flow.

We continue to receive valuable income from the JNCC and Scottish National Heritage for Seabird Monitoring work and the provision of a Fair Isle Ranger Service respectively. This 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.

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. In this context, further progress was made with the Fair Isle Bird Observatory web-site during 2001 with regularly-updated pages covering accommodation, bird news and travel arrangements. Readers are recommended to visit our web-site at [fairislebirdobs.co.uk](http://fairislebirdobs.co.uk) to view progress.

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

The overall financial position remains satisfactory in that we retain reasonable cash balances and investments whilst at the same time continuing to make the Observatory an even more comfortable and pleasant place to stay. With continued careful management and prudent control of expenditure, we will aim to maintain this balance between accumulating financial reserves and improving the ambience of the Observatory.

**Mike Wood**  
*Finance Director*

## Income & Expenditure Account for the year ended 31st October 2001

	2001 £	2000 £
<b>Income</b>		
Hostel Income	70,800	52,810
Shop Sales	6,665	6,203
Bar Income	9,267	3,189
Miscellaneous Hostel Income	2,057	1,545
	<u>88,789</u>	<u>63,747</u>
<b>Cost of Sales</b>		
Purchases	30,66	21,400
Wages & Salaries	33,794	27,121
	<u>64,456</u>	<u>48,521</u>
<b>Gross Profit</b>	24,333	15,226
<b>Other Income</b>		
Interest Received	4,325	4,286
Deferred Grant Income released	2,400	2,400
Subscriptions	5,012	6,968
Donations	2,389	3,481
Grants Received	17,008	15,171
Other Income	0	0
	<u>31,134</u>	<u>32,306</u>
	55,467	47,532
<b>Other Expenses</b>		
Administration	8,387	5,745
Establishment	25,475	19,332
Marketing & Sales	7,601	4,838
Financial & Legal	1,745	1,478
Depreciation	10,125	14,424
	<u>53,333</u>	<u>45,817</u>
<b>Surplus/(Deficit) for the year</b>	<u>2,134</u>	<u>1,715</u>



**Balance Sheet as at 31st October 2001**

	<b>31/10/01</b>	<b>31/10/00</b>
	<b>£</b>	<b>£</b>
<b>Fixed Assets</b>		
Tangible assets	<b>104,814</b>	106,948
Investments	<b>10,857</b>	10,857
	<b>115,671</b>	117,805
<b>Current Assets</b>		
Stocks	<b>7,577</b>	8,525
Debtors	<b>13,432</b>	9,191
Cash at bank and in hand	<b>38,539</b>	37,397
	<b>59,548</b>	55,113
<b>Creditors: amounts falling due within one year</b>	<b>(16,349)</b>	(17,900)
<b>Net Current Assets/(Liabilities)</b>	<b>43,199</b>	37,213
<b>Total assets less current liabilities</b>	<b>158,870</b>	155,018
<b>Creditors: amounts falling due after more than one year</b>	<b>(445)</b>	(2,845)
	<b>158,425</b>	152,173
<b>Representing:</b>		
<b>Accumulated Surplus</b>	<b>151,194</b>	135,865
<b>Appeal Reserve</b>	<b>7,231</b>	16,308
	<b>158,425</b>	152,173

**Fair Isle Endowment Fund –  
Accounts for year to 31st October 2001**

	2001 £	2000 £
<b>Revenue Account</b>		
Investment Income (Gross)	2709	158
Investment Income (Net)	114	187
Tax Refund		32
Total	<u>2823</u>	<u>377</u>
Management Fees	335	294
Balance due to FIBOT	2488	83
Total	<u>2823</u>	<u>377</u>
<b>Capital Account</b>		
Investments at Market Value		
£2,875 5.5% Treasury Stock 2008/12	3048	2956
Unit Trusts (several)	24443	6891
Cash at Bank	44910	4687
Less Accumulated Income due to FIBOT	(6694)	(4675)
Total	<u>65707</u>	<u>9859</u>
Represented by:–		
Balance at beginning of year	9859	9599
Unrealised Gain/Loss on Investments	(4152)	260
Dr John Forster Will Trust – Advance	60000	
Total	<u>65707</u>	<u>9859</u>

## **The John Harrison Memorial Fund**

The John Harrison Memorial Fund provides financial assistance in the form of grants to young birdwatchers between the ages of 15 and 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.

Whilst 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 some data entry on the Observatory computers, migration census work, ringing, trap repairs, visitor assistance and some maintenance work.

It is very unlikely there will be accommodation available for JHMF awardees between the beginning of September and early October.

Application forms can be obtained from the Administrator at Fair Isle Bird Observatory (01595-760258). Completed application forms should be sent to Dr Peter Evans, 11 Jersey Road, Oxford OX4 4RT 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.

**John Harrison Memorial Fund –  
Accounts for the year to 31st October 2001**

	2001 £	2000 £
<b>Revenue Account</b>		
Investment Income – Gross	490	533
– Net	6	14
Deposit Interest received	75	80
Total	<u>571</u>	<u>627</u>
Grants Paid	800	350
Management Expenses	0	309
Balance to Capital Account	(229)	(32)
Total	<u>571</u>	<u>627</u>

**Capital Account**

**Investments at Market Value**

£7255 6.75% Treasury Stock 2004	7752	7624
Mercury 637 British Blue Chip Units	729	863
Cash at bank	1311	1540
Total	<u>9792</u>	<u>10027</u>

Represented by:–

Balance at beginning of year	10027	10366
Balance from Revenue Account	(229)	(32)
Realised Gain/Loss on Investments	0	(75)
Unrealised Gain/Loss on Investments	(6)	(232)
Total	<u>9792</u>	<u>10027</u>

**Mike Wood**  
*Finance Director*

# SUMBURGH HOTEL

With spectacular views over the sea to Fair Isle and situated next to the ancient viking settlement Jarlshof, Sumburgh Hotel enjoys one of the most picturesque locations of any hotel in the British Isles.

Our thirty-two bedrooms are all tastefully decorated and have private facilities, so your complete comfort is assured at all times.

You will find that our two bars and restaurant offer fine wines, excellent cuisine and swift and friendly service.

## **Bar lunches served daily**

Monday–Saturday 12pm to 2pm

Sunday 12.30pm to 2pm

## **Bar suppers**

Nightly 6.30pm to 9.30pm

## **Restaurant**

Nightly 7pm to 9pm (bookings required)



So whenever you decide to visit, however long you decide to stay, we promise you a warm Shetland welcome and a holiday you'll never forget.

## **SUMBURGH – SHETLAND**

Telephone: Sumburgh (01950) 460201 • Fax: (01950) 460394

email: [sumburgh.hotel@zetnet.co.uk](mailto:sumburgh.hotel@zetnet.co.uk)

website: [www.sumburgh-hotel.zetnet.co.uk](http://www.sumburgh-hotel.zetnet.co.uk)



Situated on the south side of Lerwick, overlooking the Knab and 9-hole golf course, free to the public, Glen Orchy House is ideal for bird-watchers, photographers, artists and walkers alike, yet still very close to the town centre.

**For fishing enthusiasts, permits, trout flies, guides and ghillies are all  
available from SIT at the Market Cross, Lerwick**

RAC & AA ♦♦♦♦ STB ★★★ Guesthouse

[www.guesthouselerwick.com](http://www.guesthouselerwick.com)



## The National Trust for Scotland

*Help conserve your heritage and have a great day out  
by visiting these properties in Highlands and Islands Region*

### Historic Sites

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



### Castle

Brodie Castle, 4m W of Forres on A96

### Gardens

Inverewe, 8m NE of Gairloch on A832  
Lochalsh Woodland Garden,  
near Kyle of Lochalsh on A87  
Arduaine Garden, 20m S of Oban on A816  
Crarae Garden, 11m S of Inveraray on A83



### Mountains & Wild Land

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

*For further details contact*

*NTS Highlands and Islands, Balnain House, 40 Huntly Street, Inverness IV3 5HR*

*Tel. No. Inverness 01463 232034*

*website: [www.nts.org.uk](http://www.nts.org.uk)*

# islesburgh ★

## islesburgh community centre

Facilities and activities for families, children, young people and adults.

Cafe open	Monday to Saturday	10.00am-5.00pm
Youth Cafe	Monday to Saturday	6.30pm-10.30pm
	Sunday	7.30pm-10.30pm

School holiday programme for children and young people - a wide variety of arts, crafts, games, sports, trips and events.

## lerwick youth hostel

**Islesburgh House** - Shetland's main Youth Hostel. Open from April to September, it is centrally situated and offers quality accommodation to the budget traveller. Fully accessible for disabled users.

- "Probably the best hostel in the UK!" - *G Laurent, France*
- "An excellent hostel with great facilities" - *J Ashton, New Zealand*
- "Excellent accommodation and friendly, helpful staff" - *D Lambourne, Co. Durham*

**Islesburgh House Cafe** - The award-winning cafe serves a selection of delicious hot and cold foods, vegetarian dishes and healthier options. Open all year round.

Cafe open	Monday to Thursday	11.00am-9.00pm
	Friday and Saturday	11.00am-5.00pm

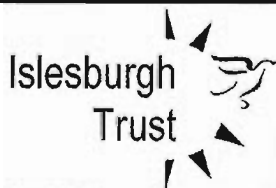
## garrison theatre

Shetland's performing arts venue.

*Local and visiting events throughout the year, with the latest films shown every month.*

**Islesburgh Community Centre**  
**King Harald Street**  
**Lerwick, Shetland**

Tel. 01595 692114 Fax. 01595 696470  
E-mail [islesburgh@zetnet.co.uk](mailto:islesburgh@zetnet.co.uk)





## Notes

## Notes

# Shetland Wildlife

## Fair Isle 2003

*All the wildlife you could ever imagine...with  
Scotland's award-winning eco-professionals!*

### SPRING MIGRATION 17 - 23 MAY

*From Bluethroats to Bonxies & Wrynecks to Red-backed Shrikes –  
plus 250,000 seabirds!*

### FOCUS ON FAIR ISLE 21 - 25 JUNE

*Join top photographers David Tipling & Hugh Harrop for a week  
with seabirds, scenics & wild flowers!*

### ISLAND INSIGHTS 28 JUNE - 5 JULY

*The Ultimate Fair Isle experience combining  
culture, crafts, history & wildlife!*

### AUTUMN MIGRATION

#### 27 SEPTEMBER - 4 OCTOBER

*From Pechora Pipits to Pallas's Grasshoppers  
& Lanceys to Little Buntings!*

*Call now for a  
copy of our latest  
brochure – packed  
with wild ideas*



**Shetland Wildlife, Longhill, Maywick, Shetland ZE2 9JF**  
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**info@shetlandwildlife.co.uk [www.shetlandwildlife.co.uk](http://www.shetlandwildlife.co.uk)**