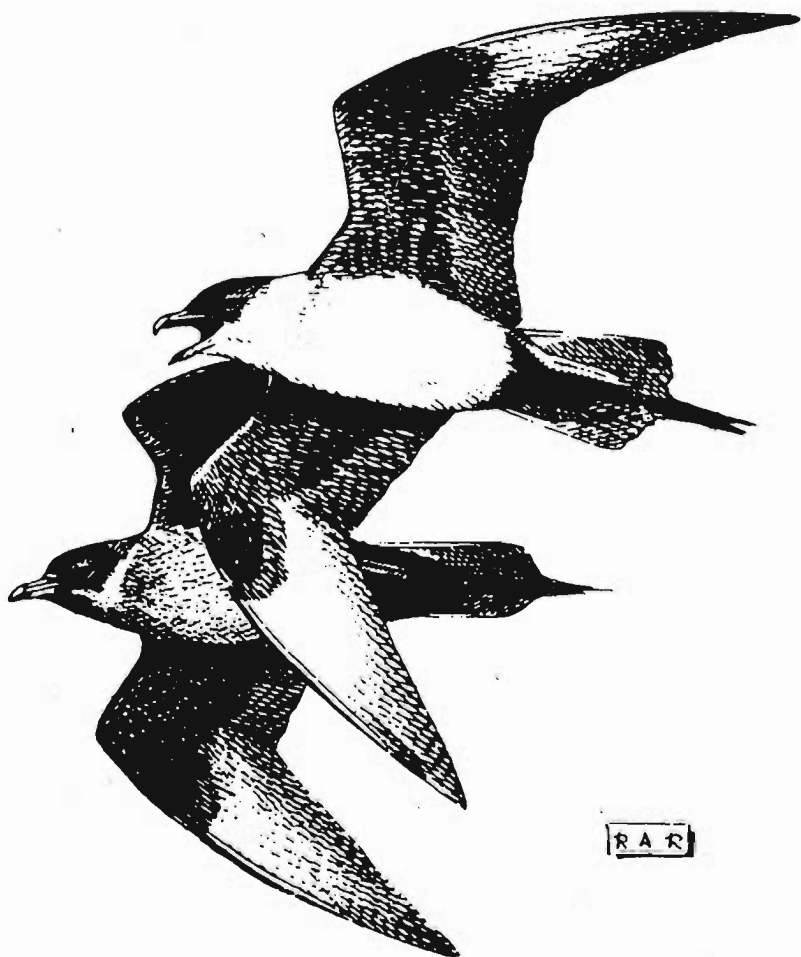


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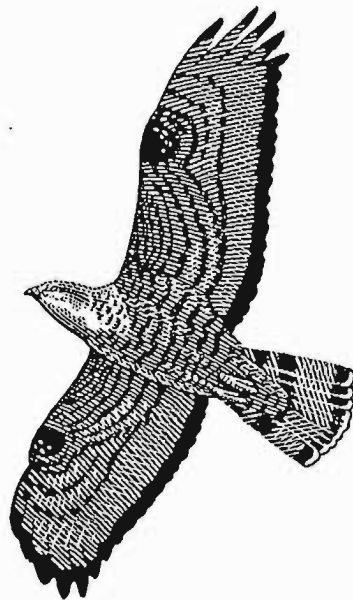
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mid Feb-Oct	Wed,Fri	1500	1525	LOG556	1535	1600	LOG557
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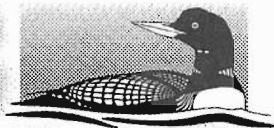
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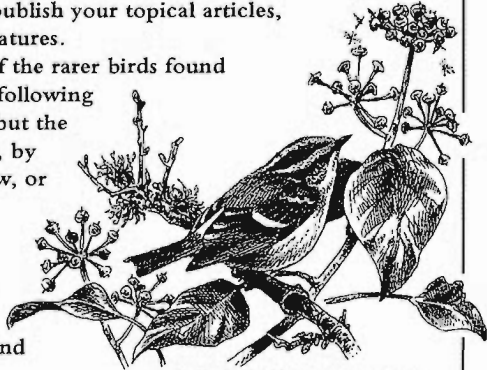
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- Fair Isle Bird Observatory - the history. H. & D. Shaw. *BS* 4(2): 60-65.
- The Calandra Lark on Fair Isle, May 1999. S. Turner. *BS* 2(4): 185-86.
- Siberian Rubythroat - the second for Fair Isle. A. Bull. *BS* 6(4): 181-182.
- Siberian Rubythroats in Shetland. D. Coultts. *BS* 5(1): 33-34.
- Isabelline Wheatear on Fair Isle, 20th September 1998. J. Gordon, P. & R. Crockett. *BS* 2(1): 40-42.
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- Black-faced Bunting on Fair Isle - a first for Scotland. P. French. *BS* 5(1): 37-38.
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- Britain's first Spring Thick-billed Warbler. A. Bull. *BS* 6(3): back cover.
- Blackburnian Warbler, Fair Isle, 7th October 1988. J. Willmott. *BS* 6(1): 1-2.
- Collared Flycatcher, Fair Isle, October 1986. M. Pennington. *BS* 4(1): 39-41.
- Savannah Sparrow, Fair Isle, September 1987. P. Ellis. *BS* 6(2).
- Savannah Sparrow - the second for Fair Isle. D. N. Shaw. *BS* 6(4): 178-180.
- Blyth's Reed Warbler, Fair Isle, September 1996. P. Harvey & K. Shaw. *BS* 2(1): 14-17.
- Do You Still Need - Lanceolated Warbler? A. Murray & K. Osborn. *BS* 2(3): 100-101.
- Do You Still Need - Pechora Pipit? K. Osborn. *BS* 1(4): 163.

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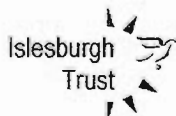
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Fair Isle Bird Observatory

Report no. 56

2003

Edited by Deryk Shaw

CONTENTS

Chairman's Report	Roy Dennis	7
Warden and Administrator's Report	Deryk & Hollie Shaw	9
National Trust for Scotland Report	Alexander Bennett	17
Investigations into causes of death and disease states in casualty birds on Fair Isle	Jason Waine	20
Dispersal and arrival of Arctic Skuas	Sarah Davis	23
Variations in Bonxie ecology across Shetland colonies	Steve Votier	25
Has anyone seen 100 species in a day on Fair Isle?	Roy Dennis	27
Weather Statistics	Dave Wheeler	29

ORNITHOLOGY

Monthly Summary	Deryk Shaw & Torcuil Grant	30
Earliest and Latest Migrant Dates	Alan Bull	41
Systematic List	Deryk Shaw	42
Ringling Report	Alan Bull	87
A Selection of Rarity Descriptions	Deryk Shaw	100
Changes to the Fair Isle List	Deryk Shaw	114
Systematic Checklist of the Birds of Fair Isle	Alan Bull	117
Moth Report	Glen Tyler	121
Other Wildlife	Alan Bull	128
Financial Report & Accounts	Mike Wood	130
Fair Isle Endowment Fund	Mike Wood	134
The John Harrison Memorial Fund	Mike Wood	135

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Chairman's Report for 2003

Roy Dennis MBE

It is a pleasure to record another very successful year for birds, bird-watching, visitors and the bird observatory. I was fortunate to visit the island both in spring and autumn and I recommend a stay at the Observatory as among the very best bird-watching anywhere in Britain. As well as that it is a most friendly, welcoming and beautiful island. So please do come and join us again on the island.

For migratory birds, it was a classic year with a total of 215 species; only one behind the all-time record set in 1992. Amazingly there were two new species for the island, a Scop's Owl in the spring and a Hume's Warbler in November. As fellow Chairmen have said over the last 50 years "How can Fair Isle possibly record new species" and yet we still do. It is still one of those special places and we never know what will turn up next. The autumn will be remembered for mid-October when there was Britain's third Savannah Sparrow feeding in the garden at Taft, a lost migrant from North America, and then from the other extreme, a Siberian Rubythroat from Asia skulking around the Kirk. Incredibly, these were second records for Fair Isle but they resulted in the most amazing arrival of twitchers. Over the few days' excitement, 150 birdwatchers from all over Britain, 29 planes and 3 boats got to the island – Fair Isle's crowded airstrip held 6 planes at one stage.

As well as that there was just a marvellous array of other species. White-rumped and Semi-palmated Sandpipers, Red Kite and White-tailed Eagle, American Golden Plover and Dusky Warbler, and good numbers of Fair Isle specialities such as Lanceolated Warbler, Olive-backed Pipit and Citrine Wagtail. It really is the place to come and see some of these very scarce migrants. So if you have friends who have never been to Fair Isle, bring them with you next time you visit.

Yet, despite the joys of watching and studying migrant birds it was sadly once again, an extremely poor breeding season for seabirds. Most had very poor success, while Kittiwake and Arctic Tern failed completely, and even the Great and Arctic Skuas, a speciality of the Fair Isle's moorland, fledged only five and seven chicks respectively. The problem seems to be the extreme shortage of Sandeels in Fair Isle waters. The only species to buck the trend was Gannet, with them now breeding on Sheep Rock. What a marvellous sight that will be in the future from the Observatory. Our seabird research becomes ever more important, but the sad state of the marine environment is very worrying.

Major trap repairs were carried out. It is hard work keeping the Heligoland traps operational, so we were very grateful to receive a donation for trap work and the

establishment of small clumps of native trees, from the trust of one of our founders, Archie Bryson. Our efforts to work with the crofters to restore traditional crops are moving forward and we hope that changes will be noticeable in 2004. These will not only provide resting and feeding places for migrant birds, but will also improve the bird-watching.

My one great disappointment is that the seas around Fair Isle are still not a Marine Reserve. This is most disappointing in view of the failure of the Fair Isle's internationally important seabird colonies. Finally, it is with pleasure that the directors thank Deryk and Hollie for once again running an extremely successful and happy Observatory and our thanks also to the excellent staff who supported them.



Looking north along the east coast from Rippack to Sheep Rock.

Warden & Administrator's Report

Deryk & Hollie Shaw

Another good year for visitors and a fantastic year for rare birds, but few common migrants and a disastrous seabird breeding season.

A total of 215 bird species recorded is even better than last year (210) and only one behind the all-time record set in 1992! New species to the isle were Scops Owl and the first Shetland record of Hume's Warbler, but the year will probably be remembered more for Britain's third Savannah Sparrow and fourth British records of Thick-billed Warbler and Siberian Rubythroat. Incredibly, all of these were just seconds for Fair Isle!! The fact that both the Savannah Sparrow and Siberian Rubythroat were present on the isle at the same time resulted in Fair Isle's biggest ever twitch, involving an estimated 150 birders, 29 planes and three boats! The Observatory "tick tin" collected £900 that week!

Apart from these star birds, we had our third records of White-rumped Sandpiper, Semi-palmated Sandpiper and White-throated Sparrow, fourth Red-flanked Bluetail, fifth Radde's Warbler, sixth Red Kite, seventh Savi's Warbler (of the eastern race '*fusca*' – the first for Britain), eighth Black-throated Thrush, ninth American Golden Plover, tenth White-tailed Eagle and eleventh Dusky Warbler. More expected rarities included four Lanceolated Warblers, three each of Olive-backed Pipit and Citrine Wagtail, two each of Blyth's Reed Warbler, Subalpine Warbler, Arctic Redpoll and Rustic Bunting and single Pechora, Red-throated Pipit, Thrush Nightingale, Paddyfield Warbler, Arctic Warbler, Lesser Grey Shrike and Yellow-breasted Bunting.

Unfortunately as good as the birding was, the seabird breeding season was equally as bad. Most species had their worst or near worst productivity figures on record. Kittiwakes and Arctic Terns failed completely whilst Arctic and Great Skuas fledged just five and seven chicks respectively. Guillemot attendance at the colonies was the lowest on record and feeding rates and chick weights were also extremely poor. Yet again it appears that there was a serious shortage of Sandeels in Fair Isle waters. News that the ban on Sandeel fishing along the east coast of Britain is to be extended for a further year is to be welcomed, however the bigger picture is extremely worrying. The latest theory is that the changes in the earth's atmosphere is altering sea temperatures and ocean currents and thus affecting the routes and timing of migrating fish (and birds). It may be that Sandeels are responding to such changes by moving elsewhere or are appearing at different times, but Fair Isle's seabirds cannot due to the constraints of needing a fixed piece of land to breed. On the other (rather optimistic) hand this whole episode may in

fact just be a natural cycle of events and the birds (and fish) may return to former levels in time. Further research into sea temperature and oceanography and its effect on fish numbers and migration patterns is needed. It is also vital that the detailed monitoring of seabird numbers, breeding success and diet carried out on Fair Isle and elsewhere (under the umbrella of the JNCC's Seabird Monitoring Programme) is continued so that we at least have the facts at hand to help try and explain the trends and any possible solution that may be forthcoming. The only silver lining is that the Gannet population continues to rise, by 17.7% to 1,866 AON this year, including 13 nests on Sheep Rock!

We had good teams on both the ornithological and domestic fronts this year and the general atmosphere at the Observatory was excellent! As in every year, the Observatory could not function without the support of the hard working team of seasonal staff. This year was no exception and our grateful thanks goes out to each and every staff member. Rebecca Nason was seabird assistant and her enthusiasm, bubbly personality and conscientious approach to the seabird work meant that we had no hesitation in offering her the post again for 2004. Torcuil Grant was migration assistant and although he did a great job and enjoyed his season, felt that he wanted to do something different next year. Alan Bull was the Ranger for the second year in a row but as always helped out with a number of facets to running the Observatory and he will return once again in 2004 – as the other Assistant Warden. On the domestic side, Lois Smallwood ensured that copious amounts of delicious food and laughter were delivered at regular intervals from the kitchen. She was assisted by Rosalind Seeley, until September and once again by Becki Rosser throughout. 2003 was Becky's third season as General Assistant and she has been a loyal member of staff during that time. She is moving on to pastures new in 2004 and we wish her well in her ventures. Ann Prior also returned to command the kitchen during the very busy autumn period. Becky Tonge filled in (at short notice) as General Assistant for the first two months, then was replaced by another returning face – Sue Hutchison – for the remainder of the season. Added to all these hard-working people we also had a succession of equally busy childminders. Each childminder stayed about seven weeks but this was purely due to circumstances and was (we hope!?) in no way anything to do with the behaviour of our children. Debbie Hard, Ruth Cleeves, Miranda Mowat and Janet Gibson all did stints at looking after the Shaw brood and each brought their own unique talents to the post and we feel the children have blossomed under the different influences. On a very sad note, Lillian Crawford was also due to return as a General Assistant in August, but the cancer she thought she had beaten suddenly returned and, in November, tragically overcame her. We will miss her kindness, energy and cheerful outlook on life.

We also had three JHMF volunteers in 2003; Simon Boswell was here for a total of **twelve** weeks and helped out enormously and I'm sure he will return again some

time in the future. Shai Agmon from Israel and Javier Martinez from Spain were each here for shorter periods but both went away with fond memories of their time on Fair Isle. The usually hectic seabird ringing phase in late June/early July was made easier by not only the shortage of birds to ring but by having Ian Grier, Richard Pike and Roger Riddington – three highly experienced seabird ringers – also present.

Fair Isle (and the Observatory) is a fantastic place to carry out research and this year we had Sarah Davis from Glasgow University here in June, trapping and colour-ringing adult Arctic Skuas as part of her PhD studies on Foula and a five-man team, also from Glasgow, studying various aspects of Great Skua breeding biology and morphology. Additionally, Linda Wilson from CEH (with help from Mark Newell – a ‘weel kent face’ around here) descended a few cliffs in August to collect seabird ticks as part of a world-wide study into Great Island Virus. FIBOT is keen to encourage research on Fair Isle and have set up a scholarship fund to promote this and with excellent facilities at the Observatory it offers splendid opportunities for budding PhD or MSc students to carry out a wide range of projects on not just birds but on animals, plants or insects amid beautiful surroundings and excellent accommodation. Interested parties should contact the Observatory with a proposal.

Part of our research involves trapping migrant birds in Heligoland traps, the maintenance of which takes a large amount of time and money. The traps needed their usual extensive re-wiring and repairing this spring and we have extended the roof of the Vaadal trap. The cost of these repairs is not cheap and this year we tried out a cheaper alternative – an artificial nylon mesh, which takes a bit of work to get taught and into the correct shape and cannot be used at sheep height (they either chew it or get horns stuck and rip it), but if it lasts longer than one or two years then it may be worth persevering with.

We also planted a lot of cuttings in the traps and sheltered areas (that have been specifically fenced off for this purpose) down the isle. The dry summer meant that the majority sadly died but some did take and we will persevere and plant more next spring.

Additional habitat will be provided in 2004 with the commencement of an exciting new initiative involving FIBO, Fair Islanders, RSPB, NTS (and hopefully others soon) to reverse the decline in the amount of crops grown on the isle. A number of new areas will be fenced and sown with a variety of crops, primarily for the benefit of birds . . . and their watchers!

It was another good year for visitors to the Lodge with bednights reaching 2272

and although this is slightly down on the last two years, it is still well above the target figure of 2000 bednights. Interestingly, it was our quietest September since we have been here, with just 506 bednights in the month compared to over 600 in each of the four years before that. Similarly, July was also quieter than in previous years. June, August and October were all busier than average however, enabling us to more than meet our target. Keeping track of bednight trends is useful as well as interesting and helps with planning of any special offers or extra marketing that may be needed. Understanding why the trends fluctuate so much is not so easy, indeed early indications show that 2004 may have the busiest September and July in the last six years! The half price August and October offers were both a great success in 2003, with 435 bednights in August (compared to an average of just 173 in the two years prior to the introduction of this offer). Similarly, bednights in October reached 312 – doubling the bednights of the same month in 1999, 2000 and 2001. A total of 423 people stayed with us at the Observatory in 2003. The vast majority of these visitors were independent travellers, but we were also visited by organised groups from Shetland Wildlife for three, weeklong stays. Disappointingly, no other commercial Travel Companies made a visit to the isle in 2003, although Ann Smith's lively party of 13 friends in August was a welcome sight. We are very grateful to the companies who go to the effort of organising trips to Fair Isle and consequently we do our best to provide these groups with an interesting, relaxing and hassle-free holiday. It is encouraging to see that four groups are due to visit in 2004, in addition to the three Shetland Wildlife visits. We were also visited by several of the FIBOT Directors to coincide with the FIBOT AGM that took place on the isle on 1st June. Mike Wood and his family, Dave Okill, Roy Dennis, Louise Batchelor, Roger Riddington, John Wood, Tim Loseby and his wife Irene and Peter Evans all took time out of their busy working lives to visit the Observatory over the weekend of the AGM. Three Directors made a weeklong holiday out of their visit, whilst Peter Evans stayed two weeks to continue his long-term Starling study. Fiona Mitchell, from Stackhoull Stores on Fair Isle, also attended the FIBOT AGM as a newly appointed Director. Fiona has for many years been a source of support and advice for us and we hope this will continue with her appointment to the FIBOT Board. The support from the FIBOT Directors is vital for the Warden and Administrator to be able to run the Observatory effectively and we are very grateful for all their efforts.

Although accommodation for visitors is by far the main source of revenue for the Observatory, other means of raising funds are always being sought. Cruiseship visits are one way that the Observatory can make a little extra money and publicise itself at the same time. In 2003, only nine Cruiseships managed to land on Fair Isle, bringing a total of just 330 visitors. Although less than in recent years, these passengers are taken on guided walks and purchase items from the FIBO stall at the Community Hall, all of which raises revenue. The FIBO shop reached record

sales and the revenue from the FIBO bar was almost equal to the high of 2002. It is hoped that these levels of income can be maintained in future years.

Money raised from any source will help continue the modest ‘refurbishment’ of the guest bedrooms, which started in 2003. In order to adhere to Scottish Tourist Board standards, two rooms were completely redecorated and new fittings such as mirrors, towel rails and lighting were installed. After approval from the Tourist Board during the annual inspection it was agreed that all the bedrooms would be ‘upgraded’ in this manner and it is hoped four more rooms will be complete by the start of the 2004 season. Additional to these measures, all aspects of the Observatory accommodation are steadily being improved and upgraded, from kitchen equipment to improved bathroom facilities. With continued high levels of visitors we will be able to maintain this trend in future years.

The Fair Isle Ranger Service continued to provide guided walks, leaflets, factsheets and information boards for all visitors to Fair Isle as well as building and maintaining stiles around the island. The work with the local schoolchildren was based around the summer-term school project of ‘Birds’ and the Ranger and Administrator visited the school on ten occasions to complete this project. In addition to this, the booklet ‘Fair Isle – Our Island’, written and illustrated by the children as part of the Ranger Service in 2002, was printed and is now available to buy in the FIBO shop or by mail order. Visiting schools also benefited from the Ranger Service. In early May, children (and their teachers) from primary schools in Papa Westray and Eday, sailed to Fair Isle on The Swan. Then in June, an event organised by the Anderson High School in Lerwick – the ‘Global Classroom’ – saw ten teenage international students visit Fair Isle for two days, as part of a two-week long visit to Shetland by 100 overseas students. In both cases, as well as joining in with local events, these young people were taken on guided walks and given an informal illustrated talk about the work of the Observatory. In the spring of 2003, in conjunction with Shetland Islands Tourism, and Shetland Islands Council, FIBO established one of ten ‘Neighbourhood Information Points’ within Shetland. This unit provides a vast array of leaflets and information about other areas to visit and things to do within Shetland and has proved very popular with our visitors.

Music has always played a major part in the social scene on Fair Isle and 2003 was no exception to this. In May, one of the island groups, ‘Fridarey’, launched their new CD, ‘Across the Waters’ to coincide with the Shetland Folk Festival. Later in the same month, Raman Mundair, the Shetland Arts Trust Writer in Residence, visited Fair Isle for a few days and on the evening of 28th May, recited some of her thought provoking poetry to a full house at the Observatory. Just a few days later the world famous fiddler, Aly Bain and his counterpart, Phil Cunningham performed to a packed Community Hall as part of their world tour. Continuing

from the success of 2002, FIBO again hosted 'Fair Isle Thursdays' every other Thursday during May, June, July and August. These evenings proved to be just as successful as last year, with a slideshow from an islander, followed by live music and/or singing from Fair Isle musicians, drawing large numbers of people (islanders and visitors alike) to the Observatory each fortnight. Added to this were the usual but no less enjoyable Fair Isle Dances to complete an eventful and musical summer.

A Garden Party was held at Stackhoull on 29th June to celebrate the tenth anniversary of Robert and Fiona Mitchell working and living at Stackhoull Stores. Whilst some residents stay on Fair Isle long-term, others live here for a shorter time and in 2003 we saw the departure of two families: the island nurse, Katherine Morrison, her husband Ian and their two children, Angus and Helen left the island early in the summer and then the school teacher, Jessie McCaffrey and her husband Dennis departed in the autumn. After a succession of relief nurses, Amy Bikerstaff replaced Katherine as the Fair Isle nurse and she, her husband Paul and their eleven-year-old daughter, Star, moved to the isle in September. Gina Scanlan (Barkland) took over the reigns as Fair Isle primary acting Headteacher after Jessie left and we are anticipating the arrival of the new permanent Headteacher and her family in the spring of 2004. A 'reshuffle' of current residents followed the completion of the South Lighthouse Flats. Clare Scott and her three children, Lewis, Rachel and Vivian moved into one flat, whilst Triona and Stewart Thomson's son, Ian and his partner Lisa moved into the other. With Clare Scott moving house, this gave June and Stanley Ross-Smith the opportunity to move into the now empty Taft. Nedertaft, meanwhile, had been waiting for permanent tenants since the departure of Emma Perring and Ewen Thomson in 2002. Linda Grieve and Philip Welch and their two daughters, Erin and Melissa moved from Auld Haa to take over the croft at Nedertaft. Kenny Stout also 'relocated' to the Chalet while he awaits the renovation of Upper Stoneybrek. Towards the end of the season Kenny and Sue (FIBO General Assistant), announced their engagement and so instead of leaving the isle at the end of the season we were delighted that Sue only moved down the road to the Chalet. Finally, a new addition to the Fair Isle population came in the form of another baby at the Observatory. After a very frustrating two-week wait in Aberdeen, Hollie eventually gave birth (6 days late), to a healthy 8lb 3oz baby boy on 11th September. With the migration season by now well underway, Deryk really needed to be back on Fair Isle and so Mum, Dad and baby all travelled home to Fair Isle the next day, to be greeted by almost the entire population of the island at the airstrip. He was named Ythan Deklan Shaw, after the river Ythan, the estuary of which was just across the road from the friends we were staying with in Aberdeen. Having a baby whilst running the Observatory is not easy (and we should know!) so special thanks are due to all those who helped out to relieve the pressure before and after the baby was born. From members of

staff, to friends on the isle and of course members of our family we are extremely grateful for all your help and support.

The Observatory van is probably the most multi-purpose vehicle on the island and after five seasons it is showing signs of wear. Also, it is a less than ideal way of transporting our guests to and from the airstrip or up and down the isle. Consequently, the decision has been made to purchase a vehicle more suited to this purpose and this should be arriving early in the 2004 season. The van shall be retained for other 'dirtier' work and as a cargo vessel.

On the maintenance side, the generators ran reasonably well this season, thanks to Malcolm Adamson looking after them whenever he came in. The radiator on Number 2 again needed replacing but otherwise it was just routine maintenance. The main water pump, which supplies heating and hot water to the entire Lodge, failed right at the start of the season and had to be replaced. This replacement then also failed in late-September, during our busiest (and wettest) time. Fortunately, the pump to the staff accommodation was still working so we were able to dry guest's wet clothing and boots in the Warden's flat for four days until another new pump arrived. Thanks for help in this situation must be due to the Northmen, Patrick Ross-smith and Kenny Stout and also to those guests present on both occasions for bearing with us.

FIBOT could not function without the help of a huge number of folk other than those who are employed here and each and every one of them receives our grateful thanks. This list is in no particular order and sincere apologies are due to any we have inadvertently left out: those with building, plumbing and electrical know-how are always first to mind and so the Northmen (Brian Wilson, John Best and Bill Murray), Kenny Stout and Patrick Ross-Smith must be thanked for help in a number of 'crises' but the whole island community is to be thanked for their solid support of FIBO and their willingness to lend a hand in times of need. Those islanders who are also the crew of *The Good Shepherd IV* must be thanked for careful handling of both our freight and our guests – some in more need of it than others! Robert and Fiona Mitchell at Stackhoull Stores are a great source of friendly advice and encouragement – aside from being the source of all our nutritional supplies. Dave Wheeler is not only our source of the much-anticipated daily weather forecast but also maintains our increasingly popular website and his services are gratefully received. Stewart Thomson of Shirva and Tom Best of Kenaby designed and produced our new weather vane outside the Observatory, which has deflected some of the round of questions about the wind direction at breakfast each day. Thanks also to Iain Stout for tending to the Skadan flock and for advice and help with fencing. Off-isle, Loganair are appreciated for maintaining the *vital* air link between Fair Isle and the rest of the world, Dave Okill is to be

thanked for a continuous supply of cuttings towards our efforts to create habitat for migrants and Paul Harvey and Roger Riddington for their friendship, support and advice. Dave Okill must also be congratulated for receiving an award from the BTO. The Jubilee Medal is awarded to only one or two people a year and Dave was honoured in recognition of his services to ornithology in Shetland, including as vice-chair of FIBOT. Tim and Irene Loseby are our British Birdwatching Fair stalwarts who put in many voluntary hours work promoting the Observatory at this huge national event and this is much appreciated.

Thanks are also due to a number of organisations who provide us with grant aid or paid contracts; Joint Nature Conservation Committee (JNCC), Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH), Shetland Oil Terminal Environmental Advisory Group (SOTEAG), British Trust for Ornithology (BTO) and to all those who have given donations (large or small) to the Observatory funds. We are also grateful to Franklyn Perring MBE, who died in August 2003, and his family, for the donation of floral ID books for the library. Franklyn visited Fair Isle many times and was an expert in the field of botany as well as co-founder of the non-profit making travel company Wildlife Travel. He visited FIBO with groups on several occasions and his enthusiasm and enormous knowledge will be missed. A generous donation from the trust of Archie Bryson, one of the co-founders of FIBOT, funded a substantial amount of this year's trap repairs and tree planting.

It just remains to thank all those who have contributed to this report whether in the form of articles (Roy Dennis, Sarah Davis, Steve Votier, Jason Waine, Dave Wheeler, Alan Bull, Glen Tyler, Torcuil Grant and Mike Wood), photographs (Rebecca Nason, Hugh Harrop, Alan Bull, Craig Round, Chris Batty, Lee Gregory, Glen Tyler, Harry Scott and Lachlan Shaw) or vignettes (Rebecca Nason, Paul Baxter, Stuart Sexton, Steve Turner, Fiona Mitchell and John Best) and an extra thanks to Alan Bull for help with proof-reading.

We have enjoyed this, our fifth season on Fair Isle and thank all the directors, staff and Fair-islanders for their continued support – we are already looking forward to the next one. We would love to see you here.



A brief year in the life of the Trust

Alexander Bennett

Conservation Manager, Highlands & Islands

Last year I reported that the National Trust for Scotland were facing one of the most serious financial times in their history and were having to make big cuts in its expenditure and seek additional ways to raise revenue in order to address the situation. A year on and things are looking up, the deficit has been reduced to approx £500 000 and the organisation is a little slimmer and fitter with some fairly bright prospects ahead. This hasn't come without some pain but let's hope that it is for the long-term sustainability of the organisation. The knock on effect of a healthier Trust will be more pro-activity on the ground with more conservation activities. Fair Isle will clearly benefit from that.

Despite the financial constraints the year saw some of the busiest and most active times since I joined the Trust in 1979. Work in the pipeline is varied and geared towards revenue generation to support the conservation work of the Trust. The Trust identified the top twelve properties for development of which we have three in Highlands & Islands: Culloden, of which you will hear a bit more later, Inverewe Garden and Glencoe. These were identified as the properties most able to help address the revenue generation opportunities and able to absorb development without compromising the Trust's conservation aims.

First, a positive note that affects Fair Isle is the appointment of Florrie Stout, Skerryholm, to the Council of the Trust. Florrie will be able to bring the Fair Isle dimension straight to the Trust's ruling body. Not that it was oblivious previously but it is always good to get that local interest represented on such a body. I have no doubt that Florrie will be able to reciprocate back to Fair Isle about the wide diversity of interests that the Trust is faced with on a daily basis.

An issue that is increasing in the conscience of the nation is 'Renewable Energy'. It is difficult not to be aware of it these days as there are so many proposals for new wind farms. Something that Fair Isle is all too well aware of and can proudly boast that it was there at the start with the first commercially operated acro-generation scheme in the UK, if not Europe. Not that all wind farm schemes are good and the Trust's *Renewable Energy Policy* states that each scheme will be judged on its merits, how it affects the local environment and what is the benefit to those communities affected by it. On that principle the Trust objected, along with 819 others, to the proposed Sheildaig Hydro Electric Scheme in one Scotland's few

remaining ‘Wild Land’ areas in Wester Ross. It adjoined the Trust’s Torridon Estate, one of the most outstanding landscapes in Britain and Europe. Fortunately, The Scottish Executive supported the objections and rejected the scheme. This was after one abortive Public Inquiry and many hours of meetings and lobbying to make the case against it. On the whole, alternative energy is a good thing but not if it compromises the natural qualities and landscape that make Scotland special. This was such a case, with huge intrusions in a sensitive landscape and minimal benefit to the local economy. The Trust is proud that we stood up against it, confident that we spoke from experience.

Another area that Fair Isle can boast its influence is in the area of housing in remote and rural communities. The Trust and the Fair Housing Forum has developed a Housing Policy in conjunction with Shetland Islands Council to the envy on many other communities. This work is now helping us to develop a similar policy for Iona where we are working with the Iona Housing Partnership to develop policies for sustainable housing. The principle difference being that on Iona the Trust owns only five houses whereas on Fair Isle they own about twenty. The problem on Iona is that there is very little land available for housing outwith agriculture and crofting for new housing and whilst there is a demand for ‘affordable’ housing this is difficult to achieve. However, with the Trust’s experience hopefully a solution can be found through Partnership with the local community.

Islands do tend to figure highly in our work within the Highlands & Islands, not least of which is St Kilda. Like Fair Isle, very remote, but unlike Fair Isle in that its population was evacuated in 1930. The Trust acquired the island group two years after Fair Isle in 1956 when the RAF were looking to set up a radar tracking station to support the missile testing and evaluation range in South Uist. The Trust were gifted the islands by the then owner the fifth Marquis of Bute. Just in the nick of time to stop the RAF demolishing the cottages in Village Street for road building. Today things are very different; the Trust has just entered into a new twenty-five year lease of some small areas of land to allow the MoD to continue their work. However, this time round we have taken the opportunity to think ahead to a time when the MoD no longer requires a presence on the island. The new lease, direct from the Trust this time instead of SNH, has made provision for an ‘Exit Strategy’ for full reinstatement of the island on their departure and agreement under the terms of the new Management Plan to manage their interests to agreed Conservation Principles. To this end the MoD will provide the Trust with an endowment for the reinstatement and eventual safeguarding the islands cultural and natural environments. In addition, the Trust has been granted Approved Body status to manage the newly re-designated National Nature Reserve. And finally, on top of everything else the Trust has put the island forward for dual World Heritage Site status. WHIS status was granted in 1986 for the nature environment but now it is

hoped that this can be extended to include its very significant cultural heritage. If successful, it will become one of a very elite group properties around the world. The result should be known by July 2004.

The diversity of tasks facing the Trust changes as regularly as the seasons. The priority at the moment is a major redevelopment of the visitor facilities at Culloden Battlefield. Culloden is the site of the last pitched battle fought on the British mainland and the Trust is fortunate in that it owns much of the battlefield and so can deliver its conservation and an opportunity to present the story in an engaging and effective manner. The visitors today are ever more sophisticated and demanding and it is incumbent on the Trust to present the story fairly to both sides and to dispel some of the misconceptions that it was a conflict between Scotland and England. Quite the opposite, it was a deep struggle between the government of the day, the House of Hanover and the Jacobite supporters of the House of Stuart under the illustrious Bonnie Prince Charlie, the pretender to the throne. The present facilities are tired and need of serious investment so the Trust has decided to look afresh at the whole operation and start again. This opens up a huge opportunity to do something of a 'World Class' nature and, with a similar approach being taken at Bannockburn, it may be that this will be a chance for Scotland to say that now that we have achieved governance we can raise the nationhood stakes and be the exporter to the world of all that is Scottish again. More to follow.

With the recent changes of staff in the Trust there are some new faces on the scene. Bob Elliot, Countryside Manager, has moved onto Loch Lomond National Park and has been replaced by Stephen Wiseman, a Senior Ranger in the Trust and with a lot of experience in working in education and with communities. John Ross, Land Agent left to go into private practice and has been ably replaced by John Hepburn Wright, who will take up a number of the land and crofting issues that need to be addressed to underpin the development of a community such as Fair Isle.

Who said life was dull. We don't have time!



Report on Investigations into Causes of Death & Disease States in Casualty Birds Found on Fair Isle

J.C.Waine

As part of an ongoing project investigating the causes of death in wild birds and assessing disease states, I have been performing post-mortem examinations on wild bird casualties found on Fair Isle since 1995, during which time 396 specimens have been examined. In 2003 the warden of the Fair Isle Observatory sent me 28 birds for analysis comprising 23 species from 14 families and 6 orders. There were no species represented in any number with the commonest being 2 specimens each of Common Quail, Water Rail, Common Guillemot, Skylark, and Northern Wheatear. Of particular general interest were the two Quail that were found dead four days apart. One was a male and the other a female and both were in full breeding state with the female on the point of lay. This is conclusive (if tragic) proof that Quail are still breeding on Fair Isle. Also of general interest was the Bluethroat – an unusual species.

<i>Species</i>	<i>Date found</i>	<i>Age</i>	<i>Sex</i>	<i>Conclusions</i>
Northern Gannet	25/04/2003	Ad.	F	starvation primary; drowned
Velvet Scoter	06/12/2003	1st W	F	starvation primary; haemorrhagic ventriculitis secondary
Common Quail	07/06/2003	Ad.	M	collision injuries; breeding bird
Common Quail	03/06/2003	Ad.	F	collision injuries; breeding bird
Water Rail	19/11/2003	Ad.	F	starvation primary; haemorrhagic gastroenteritis; parasitic enteritis
Water Rail	11/10/2003	Juv.	F	collision injuries
Common Snipe	23/05/2003	Ad.	F	egg peritonitis; breeding bird
Red Knot	22/09/2003	1st W	M	starvation primary
Great Skua	19/06/2003	Ad.	M	shot
Great Black-backed Gull	no data	Ad.	F	collision injuries
Black-headed Gull	17/07/2003	Juv.	F	collision injuries; starvation secondary
Little Auk	28/10/2003	1st W	F	starvation primary
Common Guillemot	28/10/2003	Ad.	M	starvation primary
Common Guillemot	06/12/2003	Imm.	F	starvation primary; oesophageal nematodes
Long-eared Owl	08/05/2003	Ad.	M	starvation primary; renal failure secondary; tapeworms
Sky Lark	10/04/2003	Ad.	F	predation ?merlin
Sky Lark	05/03/2003	Ad.	M	predation cat
Rock Pipit	21/09/2003	Ad.	M	collision injuries
Meadow Pipit	24/09/2003	1st W	?M	starvation primary; beak injury; haemorrhagic enteritis secondary
Bohemian Waxwing	30/10/2003	Imm.	M	predation cat; starvation primary (migration)
European Robin	01/05/2003	Ad.	F	no diagnosis
Bluethroat	18/10/2003	1st W	F	collision injuries rta; syngamiasis; starvation secondary

<i>Species</i>	<i>Date found</i>	<i>Age</i>	<i>Sex</i>	<i>Conclusions</i>
Northern Wheatear	07/05/2003	Ad.	M	collision injuries
Northern Wheatear	31/05/2003	Ad.	F	starvation primary (migration stress); pneumonia secondary
Redwing	15/10/2003	1st W	M	predation cat
Hawfinch	11/12/2002	Ad.	F	predation cat; starvation primary
Common Crossbill	09/04/2003	Ad.	M	migration stress
Snow Bunting	11/04/2003	Ad.	M	starvation primary

When received, each bird is weighed and biometric measurements taken. The carcass is then examined externally for signs of injury or disease before being dissected for internal examination. Samples are taken from the relevant target species for analysis by ITE for background poisons and, currently, brains are being sent to The Avian Virology Unit at Weybridge to be examined for the presence of West Nile Fever – a mosquito-spread viral disease which is of great health significance to humans as well as to a variety of birds and which is now spreading from the tropics further north. Any parasites are collected and sent to The Natural History Museum, London for identification. In some circumstances, tissue samples are retained for further laboratory tests or for DNA processing. The results of these investigations are then added to a database of wild-bird deaths numbering over 1400 autopsies.

Analysis of the 28 casualties presented this year shows 11 birds having died from primary starvation i.e. lack of food causing the poor nutritional state rather than some other disease process stopping the bird from eating. There were also another two having signs of primary starvation although this wasn't the cause of death. 8 birds died from collision injuries – mostly road accident injuries. 5 birds had been predated (4 by cats and one possibly by a Merlin). One bird had egg peritonitis (a disease caused either by a blockage in the uterus or by an egg being damaged whilst still inside the bird), one was shot, one had migration stress and one had no diagnosis made.

<i>Species</i>	<i>Date found</i>	<i>Age</i>	<i>Sex</i>	<i>Conclusions</i>
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Great Black-backed Gull	no data	Ad.	F	collision injuries
Rock Pipit	21/09/2003	Ad.	M	collision injuries
Northern Wheatear	07/05/2003	Ad.	M	collision injuries
Bluethroat	18/10/2003	1st W	F	collision injuries rta; syngamiasis; starvation secondary
Common Quail	07/06/2003	Ad.	M	collision injuries; breeding bird
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Common Snipe	23/05/2003	Ad.	F	egg peritonitis; breeding bird
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Sky Lark	10/04/2003	Ad.	F	predation ?merlin

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Red Knot	22/09/2003	1st W	M	starvation primary
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Long-eared Owl	08/05/2003	Ad.	M	starvation primary; renal failure secondary; tapeworms

Of the secondary findings, parasitism featured commonly with four birds having significant parasite levels. These parasites include tapeworms, roundworms and gapeworm (syngamiasis – a disease caused by a worm that infests the windpipe causing breathing difficulties). A particularly unusual form occurred in one of the Water Rails with several tapeworms encysted in the wall of the small intestine and in one of these cysts the worm had broken through and was emerging. Other secondary problems included severe intestinal infections as well as one bird with a haemorrhagic infection of the gizzard (ventriculitis).

The continuation of this project depends entirely on people collecting any dead birds found on the Island and taking them to the staff at the Observatory. If visitors find any specimens I would be very grateful if they would do this and tell the staff where the bird was found and if there were any special circumstances (e.g. hit by car).

Finally, I would like to thank the staff at the Observatory for their continued help and support as well as thanking all those people who have saved casualties for me in the past.

Dispersal and survival of Arctic Skuas

Sarah Davis

Arctic Skuas are currently in decline in Fair Isle and throughout Shetland (see figure 1). Arctic Skua productivity has also been very poor over the last few years (see figure 1) and, unfortunately, in 2003 on Fair Isle it declined further to 0.07 (only 4 chicks fledged from 55 territories). Hatching success, however, remains quite good, and most of the breeding failures result from starvation of chicks or depredation by Great Skuas. As part of my PhD at Glasgow University I have been studying Arctic Skua populations in an attempt to discover possible reasons for this decline. Most of my fieldwork for this has been carried out on Foula but during the 2003 breeding season I visited Fair Isle and Papa Westray to compare different colonies and to investigate dispersal between colonies.

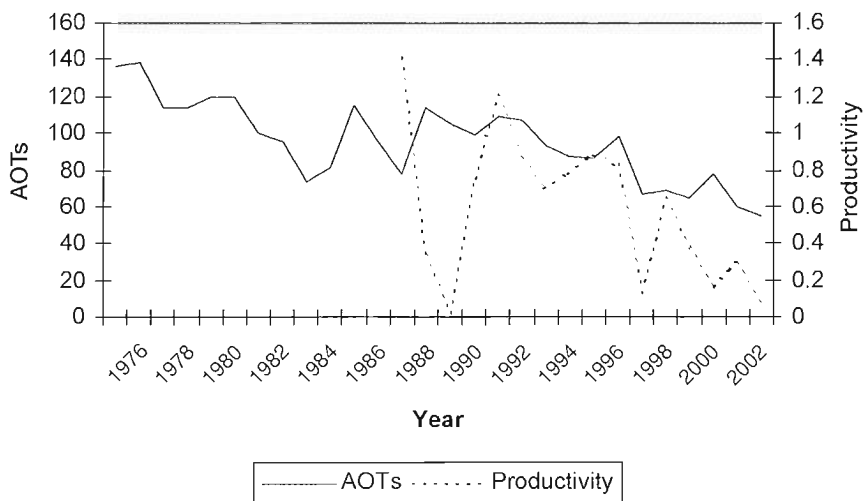


Figure 1. Decline in number of Arctic Skua apparently occupied territories (AOTs) and productivity (mean number of chicks fledged per AOT) on Fair Isle.

My fieldwork consisted of trapping incubating adult Arctic Skuas to ring and colour ring the birds and take biometric and condition measurements. There were 55 apparently occupied territories found and of these birds 25% were pale phase, 33% dark phase and 42% intermediate phase. The birds were caught on the nest during incubation using a remote controlled spring trap. The eggs are removed from the nest and replaced with dummy eggs so that they do not get damaged during trapping and the trap is placed on the nest and then camouflaged with vegetation. When the bird returns to the nest and sits back on the eggs the spring

trap is released and the bird is caught in a net. All the trapped birds returned immediately after release to their territory, and hatching success of trapped birds was no different from that of other pairs.

34 adult Arctic Skuas were caught during fieldwork on Fair Isle. Ten of these birds had been ringed as chicks allowing us to gather information on their age and origin. Two birds had been chicks on Fair Isle, two were from Papa Stour, one from Mousa and five were from Foula. The age range of the controlled birds was 6–22 years. For the last ten years chicks on Foula have been given a single colour ring to code for the year that it hatched. This allows Foula birds to be recognised when they recruit to other colonies and their age to be known. Two of the Foula birds caught in 2003 had these colour rings on. There was another bird breeding on Fair Isle in 2003 that had a green colour ring on its left leg, indicating that it was a chick on Foula in 1998, but that bird was not trapped. There was also another 1997 Foula bird and a 2000 Foula bird seen spending time around the airstrip, although they were not defending territories. Therefore it looks as though a fairly large proportion of the Arctic Skuas recruiting to Fair Isle were raised on Foula. Previous research found many chicks reared on Fair Isle recruited into the Foula breeding population. This high rate of emigration of young birds means that probably all Shetland colonies of Arctic Skuas are interconnected and will be influenced by changes in productivity.

A four-ring individual colour ring combination was put on each of the 34 birds caught. There is a colour-ringing scheme like this on Foula, which has been running for 11 years, where approximately 90% of the breeding Arctic Skuas have individual combinations. This allows birds to be recognised and followed over many years, providing accurate survival information for the colony. Due to the decline of this species another colour-ringed population would allow monitoring of their survival on a wider scale and hopefully provide a clearer view of the reasons for this decline. As with all long-lived species like this, small changes in adult survival will have relatively large effects on the population size and so is an important parameter to monitor.

Variations in Bonxie Ecology across Shetland Colonies

Steve Votier

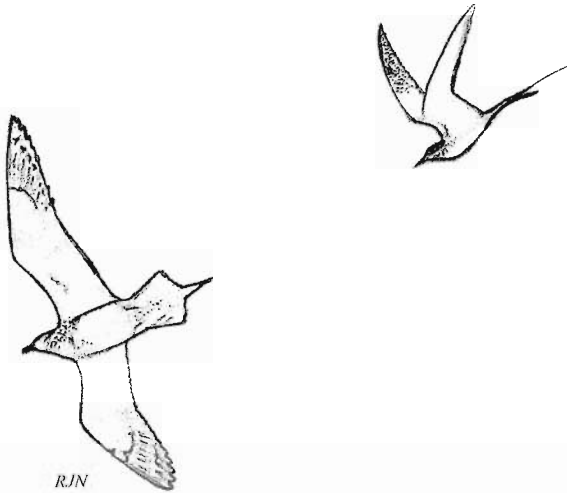
Although the Great Skua or ‘Bonxie’ population on Foula is one of the most well studied groups of birds in the world, there has been relatively little work studying these fascinating birds in the rest of Shetland. During the summer of 2003 I was joined by the Bonxie hit-squad, a crack team of researchers from the University of Glasgow and Queen’s University in Belfast (Stuart Bearhop, Pep Arcos and John Clarke), to study Great Skuas breeding across Shetland. Our aim was to compare the ecology of Bonxies breeding at four very different sized colonies; Fair Isle (145 pairs), Fetlar (593 pairs), Hermaness (726 pairs) and Foula (c 2,300 pairs). Seabird workers have shown in the past that the size of seabird colonies can have a profound influence on seabird ecology. We wanted to compare Bonxies at these different sized colonies to see whether the breeding ecology of this top predator differed in relation to colony size.

After spending May and June on Foula, we flew into Fair Isle on the 27th June for six days. This was followed by four days on Hermaness and three days on Fetlar respectively. After some very long days on damp hillsides we managed to trap 106 breeding adult Bonxies on the nest (including 20 on Fair Isle) using a range of different whoosh nets and clap nets, as well as some good old-fashioned “plucking from the sky” methods. Once caught, we took a range of biometrics (wing, head & bill, tarsus, sternum, weight) as well as a small sample of blood. Back at the laboratory we spun the blood sample and used the separated portions for sexing, to measure the volume of the red blood cells (which tells us about the general health of the bird) and froze a sample for later analysis of stable isotope composition (which reveals details of what the birds have been eating). As well as trapping birds we collected pellets and regurgitates to identify the types of food they were feeding upon and conducted detailed observations of the amount of time spent foraging. Using these data we can compare the body condition (weight corrected for body size, the amount of stored pectoral muscle protein and the blood condition measure), foraging effort and diet of Bonxies breeding at four different-sized Shetland colonies.

Although the results from this study are only preliminary, we have found a number of interesting trends. In general Bonxies on Foula were in much poorer condition than at any other colony we studied in Shetland. There was also a tendency for the Fair Isle Bonxies to be in much better condition than at all of the other colonies we studied. Foula holds the largest colony of Bonxies in the world and we predict that competition would be intense. It would appear that birds are finding life particularly tough here, which may explain in part why the population has shown a

slight decline in recent years. Conversely the Fair Isle Bonxies are increasing in number, which is probably related to their better body condition compared with other colonies in Shetland. Colony size also appears to affect the diet of Bonxies; the proportion of bird remains found in the diet was very much higher at small compared with large colonies. However, the amount of time spent foraging did not vary among different colonies. Nonetheless, colony size appears to be having a profound effect on a number of aspects of Bonxie ecology.

After the disastrous breeding season throughout Shetland during 2003 it was interesting to note that Bonxies were similarly affected. If sandeel availability continues to decline, or at the least remain extremely unpredictable, seabirds in Shetland may experience some hard times in the future. The brief findings of our study shown here reveal that for one seabird at least, the ability to cope may be quite different in various parts of these seabird-rich islands.



Arctic Skua and Arctic Tern

Has anyone seen 100 species in a day on Fair Isle?

Roy Dennis

Birding on Fair Isle during a big migration fall can be fantastic. One of my visits, in 1998 – FIBO's 50th anniversary year – occurred during one of those purple patches for migrants on the island. I arrived on Saturday 3rd October and was met at the airstrip by Helen Baker with a freshly caught Spotted crane from the Vaadal! After putting my rucksac in the van, I walked straight down to Boini Mire to look for and finally find the Pallas's grasshopper warbler. I had great views of the skulking little bird in the long grass in front of the Shop – a new UK lifer for me, although I had seen them in Siberia. Before going back to observatory, I saw the lovely streaky Pechora pipit below Midway as well as 2 Richard's pipits, 2 Rustic buntings, a Short-toed lark and a Bluethroat. Listening to the log that evening, it was clear that there was both quantity and quality on the island.

Next morning, I was up before dawn and watched the sun rise over low grey clouds on the horizon from the North Light. Song thrushes, Redwings and Ring ouzels flying up from my path showed that most of the fall was still present. A short seawatch at the lighthouse gave me Gannet, Fulmar, Guillemot and Razorbill. My walk to Easter Lothar Water gave me 23 Wigeon, with Black guillemots and Eiders on the sea, and the route back was a pleasant mix of species with a Chiffchaff above the observatory being my 41st species before breakfast.

Afterwards, a trip to the havens produced Red-breasted merganser and I watched a freshly caught Yellow-browed warbler being ringed at the Observatory. The morning's walk to the south via the slopes of Vaasetter gave me 11 Lapland buntings, 38 Golden plovers and some Ruffs at Barkland. There was a Bluethroat in the Shirva garden and the Pechora pipit in the meadow below. The varied goose flock comprised 2 Greylags, 2 Pinkfeet, 9 Barnacles and 2 Bean geese. There was such a variety of species on the island that at lunchtime, back at the Obs, I thought I'd try for a hundred species.

I was back down the island again to search the eastern side to Meoness. Purple sandpipers there were my 88th species, and soon I had also seen Shorelark, Wryneck and Rustic bunting. By the end of a tiring day's walking but a brilliant day's birding, I was **just four species short of the hundred**. The log that evening showed that I had **missed 12 species** and no one had found the skulking Pallas's grasshopper warbler – which was seen again the following day.

The year's record is 216 species in 1992 and over a hundred species have been recorded on a good number of days but has anyone personally seen 100 species in a day on Fair Isle? If only I had not stopped on several occasions to have tea with

island friends, and if I had commandeered the Observatory van for the afternoon, I may have got those missing four species? Maybe I saw a hundred species in a day when I was warden in the 1960s but I cannot remember. It would be interesting to know the best day's tally – it's probably close to 120 species, which is amazing for such a small island – but that's Fair Isle!

So next time there's a really good fall, give it a try.

The species I saw were: gannet, fulmar, cormorant, shag, grey heron, wigeon, mallard, teal, red-breasted merganser, eider duck, greylag, pinkfooted, barnacle & bean goose, sparrowhawk, merlin, kestrel, oystercatcher, golden plover, grey plover, ringed plover, lapwing, snipe, jack snipe, curlew, redshank, spotted redshank, purple sandpiper, dunlin, curlew sandpiper, little stint, sanderling, ruff, turnstone, great black-backed gull, herring gull, common gull, black-headed gull, great skua, kittiwake, guillemot, razorbill, tystie, wood pigeon, rock dove, stock dove, wryneck, skylark, swallow, short-toed lark, shorelark, rock pipit, pied wagtail, yellow wagtail, richard's pipit, rock pipit, meadow pipit, tree pipit, pechora pipit, wren, fieldfare, blackbird, ring ouzel, redwing, song thrush, robin, bluethroat, wheatear, whinchat, redstart, reed warbler, grasshopper warbler, sedge warbler, garden warbler, blackcap, lesser whitethroat, willow warbler, chiffchaff, yellow-browed warbler, goldcrest, pied flycatcher, spotted flycatcher, dunnoek, raven, hooded crow, starling, chaffinch, brambling, siskin, twite, linnet, rustic bunting, reed bunting, snow bunting, lapland bunting and tree sparrow. **A total of 96 species.**

The species I missed: shoveler, peregrine, water rail, spotted crake, moorhen, woodcock, glaucous gull, short-eared owl, house martin, mistle thrush, whitethroat and little bunting – **12 species.**

The species everyone missed: pallas's grasshopper warbler!

Fair Isle total for 4th October 1998 was 109 species!

Meteorological data, Fair Isle 2003

D. Wheeler

Temp. (°C)	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC	YEAR
Mean	5.2	5.3	6.8	7.5	8.7	11.7	13.9	13.7	12.0	8.3	8.6	5.9	9.0
Maximum	10.3	8.8	10.1	11.2	13.4	14.7	19.9	18.2	16.1	13.2	13.0	10.5	(7.6)
Minimum	-2.9	0.1	2.9	2.0	2.6	7.9	10.3	9.8	4.6	2.6	1.2	-2.2	
Rainfall (mm)													
Monthly	146.8	33.8	54.8	31.9	45.0	44.1	14.4	40.1	104.4	92.6	81.5	91.5	780.9
Maximum Daily Fall	22.8	11.3	11.4	8.4	8.6	19.6	3.1	11.7	16.0	9.9	17.0	17.0	(924.4)
Sunshine (hours)													
Total	33.9	76.4	115.7	178.0	210.2	153.6	190.4	180.2	135.1	104.3	58.3	23.0	1459.1
Maximum Daily	5.8	8.2	9.5	13.3	13.7	13.4	16.1	14.3	11.8	7.9	6.1	3.3	(1223.5)
Wind speed (knots)													
Mean	18.8	18.4	14.3	11.8	12.4	10.0	12.1	10.9	12.2	17.5	18.1	18.5	14.6
Maximum Gust	67	56	62	51	53	44	33	43	51	62	69	82	(16.0)
Number of days													
Hail	9	5	3	2	2	0	0	0	1	12	1	8	43
Snow/sleet	8	4	1	2	1	0	0	0	0	7	1	10	34
Rain, >0.1mm	26	11	16	12	14	17	14	15	22	24	20	26	217
Wet, >0.9mm	23	7	11	5	10	9	5	9	20	23	14	22	158
Ground frost	8	6	3	1	1	0	0	0	2	2	4	12	39
Wind (direction at 0900)													
North	6	1	0	1	2	0	2	9	3	2	0	4	30
North East	3	0	0	4	2	2	2	1	0	5	1	3	23
East	1	0	0	6	7	2	1	1	2	2	2	3	27
South East	1	11	5	13	6	11	9	5	5	3	7	0	76
South	4	6	13	0	5	4	5	3	5	3	9	2	59
South West	5	6	8	1	4	3	5	2	7	1	7	8	57
West	8	1	3	3	4	5	5	7	5	9	3	6	59
North West	2	3	2	2	1	2	2	3	3	6	0	3	29
Calm	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	2	5

(Figures in brackets are the average for the period 1974-2000)

ORNITHOLOGY

MONTHLY SUMMARY

Deryk Shaw and Torcuil Grant

Monthly totals of species recorded:

Month	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
No. species	50	58	78	115	135	111	76	91	145	150	95	51

January

The Taiga Bean Goose from October 2002 remained with its three Pink-footed cousins, until they all departed together on 27th. Two over-wintering Long-eared Owls in the Gully regularly foiled attempts to catch them. Other highlights included a Waxwing on 20th, when six Common Redpolls and a rare winter sighting of two Knot were also noted. Good numbers of thrushes remained, with peak counts of 37 Blackbirds, 65 Fieldfare, 40 Redwing and 16 Song Thrushes. Twenty-seven Skylarks and six Meadow Pipits were also good January counts whilst a Kestrel, a Woodcock and a Dunlin were also seen. Peak wader counts included 27 Lapwings, four Curlew, 70 Snipe, 35 Redshank and 162 Turnstone. A Puffin in the Havens on 23rd was most unusual whilst a Red-throated Diver on 28th was unprecedented. The month ended with a Brambling in the Observatory garden.

February

Gannets were noted back on Yellow Head on 1st (but not the larger Stacks o' Scroo until 22nd) whilst a Wigeon on 3rd was an addition to the year list. A Dunnock in the Gully on 5th was a surprise, but two Glaucous Gulls were more expected. Two Oystercatchers in the Havens on 9th were the first returning migrants whilst two Canada Geese the next day may have been the same two that were present in December 2002. The first Ringed Plover was noted the following day, rising to four by 12th whilst 14 Oystercatchers on 13th was a major influx. A Golden Plover and a Knot on 15th joined 23 Lapwing and eight Curlews in the notebook. A quiet few days followed (but Lapwings and Oystercatchers trickled through) until the 20th produced two more year ticks – a Rook by the School and a Pied Wagtail at the Gully. Mild weather and south-easterly winds produced a Black Redstart and two early Stonechats on 24th, rising to an amazing seven the following day, with sightings of Teal, Pied Wagtail and Chaffinch also. The month ended with a Wood Pigeon (27th) and peak counts of 36 Lapwing, 14 Ringed Plover, 30 Oystercatcher, 180 Turnstone and 60 Skylark.

March

The month opened with an Iceland Gull and the two Canada Geese again at

Easter Lother, but these were eclipsed by the Common Buzzard which also arrived on 1st. The 2nd was the best day of the spring so far, when a Hawfinch appeared in the Observatory garden, a pale-bellied Brent Goose and five Black-headed Gulls were in the south, along with four Mistle Thrushes and a Reed Bunting. The day was rounded off by a Red Kite drifting over the island! Added to these year ticks were the Common Buzzard again and counts of 130 Lapwings, 24 Ringed Plovers, 45 Oystercatchers, 48 Wood Pigeons (a spring record), 150 Skylarks and five Stonechats. A Woodlark joined the melee the following day – remaining until 12th. Lapwings peaked at 147 and Skylarks tipped 500 on 5th with Brent Goose, Buzzard and Hawfinch all still present. A Coot on Field Pond (until 17th), the rediscovery of the Woodlark at Field midden and the first frog spawn of the year, in Pund Ditch, were the highlights of the 6th. A quieter few days ensued with Greenfinch & Peregrine (on 8th) the only additions to the year list and a peak count of 640 Skylarks, including the first singing birds (on 12th). A warm sunny 16th tempted two more year ticks – a Goldcrest at Barkland and a Chiffchaff at the Chapel. The odd Chaffinch began to arrive and a Siskin appeared on the garden nut-feeder on 19th. The 22nd was noteworthy for the first returning Bonxies – spring had arrived!! Four Whooper Swans were also seen heading north. Two Crossbills the following day were our earliest ever and a Chiffchaff and 12 Golderests were noted on 24th. Two Long-eared Owls on 25th were not as noteworthy as the Short-eared Owl – a welcome year tick! The 26th produced a Bonxie, a Crossbill, a Reed Bunting and a Lapland Bunting – the latter bird being another year tick. The month ended fairly quietly with a Canada Goose, eight Siskin and a Woodcock of note, but the first Lesser Black-backed Gull (29th) and Wheatear (30th) of the year ensured the year list continued to grow.

April

The beginning of the month was still distinctly wintry although more returning Bonxies were noted on the 1st along with a Peregrine, Water Rail, good numbers of Turnstone (137), Skylarks (206) and 32 Snow Buntings. The next few days were almost bereft of notable sightings until the 5th produced the first Jack Snipe, though more of interest was the flock of 27 Ravens passing through on the 6th. Things picked up on the 8th when the first Sand Martin and Ring Ouzel were seen along with 3 Stock Doves, 25 Wood Pigeons and 17 Pied Wagtails. A larger fall took place on the 9th with the second earliest Green Sandpiper, together with good numbers of other waders including monthly highs of Oystercatcher (153), Snipe (140), Redshank (41) and Lapwing (53). Passerines included 250 Meadow Pipits, 80 Blackbirds, 10 Chiffchaffs and handfuls of Siskin, Greenfinch and Crossbill. On the 10th a call from North Ronaldsay informed us of an immature White-tailed Eagle heading our way. Very shortly afterwards it was seen panting majestically past Malcolm's Head towards Ward Hill where a brief attempt to land was thwarted

by Ravens. It then soared high over the isle before disappearing to the north, later to be seen at Sumburgh Head.

Of particular interest on the 11th was more raptor migration with 4 Sparrowhawks flying north from North Light, but a pair of summer plumaged Lapland Buntings was equally enjoyable. Up to thirty Goldcrests were present on the 13th while the first Blackcap of the spring was spotted at Double Dyke on the 15th – it was seen to be wearing a ring, so it was trapped and found to be of Belgian origin! Another stunning male Lapland Bunting (present to 21st) was also located. Spring took a further turn for the better when the first Swallows appeared on the 16th though not to be outdone by Arctic Skua next day and a high monthly total of 171 Wheatears. More new birds appeared on the 20th with Grasshopper Warbler and a male Marsh Harrier. South-easterlies prevailed for the next few days but the best on the 22nd was a flock of 11 Linnets and a Long-eared Owl. A definite influx occurred on the 23rd with a suite of new birds including an early Garden Warbler, Redstart, a peak count of 4 Black Redstarts, a Sedge Warbler, Whitethroat, 14 Willow Warblers, 650 Fieldfares and a Glaucous Gull.

While repairing Single and Hjon Dyke traps on the 24th an adult Spotted Crake was flushed from the nearby ditches – the earliest ever record by ten days. The 24th was another good migrant day with the first Tree Pipit and peaks of Ring Ouzel (24), Bramblings (102) and Meadow Pipits (271) while another Green Sandpiper was found in the Meadow Burn and a female Hawfinch was trapped in the Plantation. A much appreciated Wryneck was caught on the 26th but more of note was the only Short-toed Lark of the spring, in the Midway rig – heard and seen from the van while out looking for “an interesting kestrel”. Hardly elusive amongst the still short grass, a Corncrake, unfortunately the only one of the spring, on 28th – 29th was a welcome sight. Other migrants included 35 Swallows, 19 Carrion Crows, 10 Collared Doves and another Glaucous Gull. But for some relatively high counts of waders, the last two days of the month were remarkably quiet. Sixty-four Golden Plover and 3 Greenshank marked the 29th, Bonxies reaching a monthly maximum of some 85 birds (30th) and Arctic Skuas following suit with 16.

May

Despite good spells of easterly winds, falls and indeed numbers of birds were generally low throughout the month. Hanging on from April was a Snow Bunting but it had departed by the 2nd. Present also were 10 Chiffchaffs, Pied Flycatcher, Black Redstart, Cormorant and 2 Goldeneye. A Coot appeared on the 2nd in Hesti Geo, the second and last of the year and was still present on the 3rd. The day was also good for thrushes with peaks of Fieldfare (69), Blackbirds (25) and Ring Ouzel (5) as well as Robins (12) and Turnstone (66). A Common Nightingale was discovered in Hjukni Geo on the 4th and a Wood Warbler was also found, the first

of six during the period. The change in wind direction on the 5th was the precursor for the best arrival of birds during the month. Along with the first two Lesser Whitethroats were 5 Sedge Warblers, 5 Black Redstarts, 4 Common Redstarts, 6 each of Whinchat and Linnet, 27 Wood Pigeons, 2 Long-eared Owls, 6 Whimbrel and 70 Swallows, though the rarest bird of the day was, surprisingly, a Goldfinch.

The first Quail of the year at the Haa and a Rook, the only one of the month, appeared with 13 Willow Warblers and 4 'Mealy' Redpolls on the 7th. Fewer than a dozen Sanderling and 26 Purple Sandpipers were seen on the 8th. A stunning spring Little Bunting was then found on the road near Setter on the 9th while the 10th revealed the first of only two Reed Warblers, 6 Whimbrel and a Pomarine Skua south past Buness. A light southerly on the 11th encouraged the first of three Cuckoos and a pair of Tree Sparrows at the Obs with a Turtle Dove next day and a Stonchat also. Despite a south-westerly, a Nightjar was seen briefly at the relatively unlikely place of Wester Lothar on the 13th. Oystercatchers peaked at 209 on the 14th while the 15th saw a Buzzard sail over the Obs with another Pomarine Skua past Buness and a maximum count of only 250 Arctic Terns.

Traditionally, mega rarities normally appear towards the end of May or in early June, so it was with some astonishment that Glen Tyler of Barkland, in the early hours of the 16th, trapped Britain and Shetland's fourth (and Fair Isle's second) Thick-billed Warbler in the Vadaal. This was also the first spring record of the species in Europe, although it would be logical to assume it had arrived in Western Europe the previous autumn. Other birds of note found that day included a Red-throated Pipit at Shirva, 2 Bluethroats at Setter, a male Red-backed Shrike (which was trapped) and 8 Blackcaps. Strong winds, fog and rain meant that the 17th was much quieter although the Thick-billed Warbler and Red-throated Pipit were still present; the former being seen very briefly in the Meadow Burn. However, new birds duly appeared on the 18th, with a female Dotterel on Ward Hill and an unusual spring Great Northern Diver off South Light. On the 19th, a Wryneck showed in Hesti Geo, but rarer was the flock of 4 Goldfinches. Another Wryneck was discovered on the 20th at Setter, along with a singing Quail and the last Purple Sandpipers. Migration continued apace on the 21st, the change in wind to south-west managing to produce a small fall including a '*littoralis*' Rock Pipit, 6 Red-backed Shrikes, another two Bluethroats and 11 Willow Warblers, but the prize for best bird of the day went to the female Subalpine Warbler around the Plantation and Sheep Cru. The wind backed to the east next day and, apart from a Quail seen disappearing into Hesswalls, little else was discovered. The 23rd however, saw a Common Rosefinch (remaining to 31st) at Skerryholm as well as 16 House Martins and 4 Swifts, but all were outdone by a stunning male Rustic Bunting found at Aesterhoull. It remained in the vicinity throughout the day and at one point was even heard singing.

Flushed from near the Puffinn on the 24th, another Quail was, for once, seen by more than just its finder while an Icterine Warbler at the Observatory, a Bluethroat and 4 Bar-tailed Godwits were also seen. A clean-out of the ringing room proved to be fortuitous on the 25th as, after emptying the results of this from the van into the skip in North Haven, a skulking Thrush Nightingale was discovered. However, it was almost outdone by a sighting of a Long-tailed Skua over the island mid-afternoon though not by another Icterine Warbler, also on 25th. The next couple of days were much quieter (apart from a count of 51 Swallows on 26th) in part, no doubt, to south-westerly winds, but a return to south-east on the 28th saw another Common Rosefinch, Bluethroat and Turtle Dove as well as an unusual spring record of a Pectoral Sandpiper at Easter Lother Water. A further two Dotterel were also found, this time on Burrashield but unfortunately, like the first, remained for only a short while. Capturing a Whitethroat on the morning trap round revealed a surprise twist on the 29th as, when releasing it from the ringing room window, another male Rustic Bunting was spotted in the Observatory Plantation! A Wood Warbler highlighted the 30th with yet another (the 6th of the month) on the 31st but competing ably was an Icterine Warbler with 8 Spotted Flycatchers, 2 Jackdaws and another Turtle Dove also present on 31st.

June

The first days of June are often the most anticipated of the year and with the Thick-billed Warbler in mid-May, anticipation was very high indeed – especially with favourable south-easterly winds for much of the first two weeks. A Common Rosefinch, Turtle Dove (present until the 6th), a '*flava*' Wagtail, 2 Jackdaws, a peak of 16 House Martins and a late Woodcock opened the month. An Icterine Warbler was the highlight of the 2nd while on the 3rd, a Merlin and Peregrine, 33 Swallows, 2 Common Sandpipers and a Quail (found dead) were all eclipsed by the second Subalpine Warbler of the spring (another female), found at Lower Leogh, present until the 6th. Further rarities duly obliged... a Lesser Grey Shrike at the Kirk late in the afternoon of the 5th was the first in 10 years although up to 20 have been recorded in the FIBO period. Also present were 2 Red-backed Shrikes, a late Tree Pipit, 7 Garden Warblers and 2 Storm Petrels (from the *Good Shepherd IV*).

A good spring find was a Red-breasted Flycatcher on the west cliffs on the 7th with another Red-backed Shrike also. The 9th proved to be no less memorable than the 5th, the south-east section of the island again figuring, but with a bird from a slightly different direction. A White-throated Sparrow, the third record for Fair Isle, was found behind Schoolton. It showed well, even singing, but disappeared in the afternoon. Following a quiet few days with the last Willow Warbler on 10th, a welcome sight on the 13th was of an Osprey flying north – the only one of the year – while yet another Quail was found. The 15th produced an unusual sight at the

sheep cru – a rather attractive Long-tailed Rosefinch that stayed until the 21st. Sporting a yellow colour-ring and missing a foot there was little question over its origins! Schoolton next day was the location of the only Marsh Warbler of the spring with, conversely, a Blackbird and Redwing the last of the spring. A flock of 8 Common Scoters were also spotted off North Light. With spring and census tailing off, the last ten days of the month were rather quiet, many birds, particularly warblers making their last visits before the autumn. The 18th saw a lone Barnacle Goose and Goldfinch, a gap in notable sightings then followed before a Sparrowhawk and Green Sandpiper (21st), another Quail on 22nd and a late second-summer Glaucous Gull on the 24th. Swifts peaked at 13 (25th), with a Bar-tailed Godwit on the 27th and the first Storm Petrels were trapped next day. Seeing out the month was another gull – a second-summer Iceland on the 29th although the first autumn wader passage was also observed, some 23 Curlew the most noteworthy.

July

With seabirds taking priority, monitoring of migration (what relatively little there is at this time of year) took a definite back seat. Even so, observations were made, mostly involving waders. Curlew figured first with 25 on 3rd, with the only significant passerine being a Common Rosefinch. The 5th saw a peak of Oystercatchers (150), Redshank (40) and Turnstone (35) with a Red-throated Diver, a Reed Warbler and another Common Rosefinch also noted that day. Purple Sandpipers were still around (6th) as were a handful of Golden Plover and the first Black-tailed Godwit of the year. A Tufted Duck and 4 Collared Doves were the highlight of the 7th while rounding up of sheep on 9th fortunately managed to produce more than just bad tempers; a Sandwich Tern was spotted flying south past the Airstrip. A lull followed for the next week or so with only a Woodcock (11th), a Grey Wagtail and Crossbill (12th) although an early-morning trap round produced the earliest autumn record of Icterine Warbler (18th). Much of the standing water on the island was rapidly drying up by now but Field Pond featured the year's only Wood Sandpiper on the 23rd – remaining in the general area until the 26th. Gull numbers started to build up and it was while birding in the south of the island on the 28th that a second-summer Little Gull – only the 15th island record – was found amongst a flock of some 80 Black-headed Gulls. Though an excellent find it was not to prepare us for what appeared two days later . . . a pre-lunch trap round on 30th (on the way home from a disappointing "Skua-sweep") yielded the surprise of the year; a Scops Owl in the Plantation – amazingly the first record for the island! The unusual date pointed to this possibly being the same bird as the one seen on Unst in the spring and if so, it was presumably trying to head south to its normal range. Also that day were 51 Redshank, 23 Lapwing, 20 Dunlin, 6 Greenshank and a Ruff. Gulls saw out the month, Common Gull numbers peaking at 250 on the 31st with 15 Lesser Black-backed Gulls also.

August

With such an end to July could August live up to expectations? Waders and gulls were still present in reasonable numbers although were not the sole focus. Black-headed Gulls (65), 3 Swift, 2 Black Redstarts, a Linnet and Common Rosefinch in Furse – the first of only three – were all on the 1st with 260 Common Gulls, 137 Oystercatchers and 4 Ruff present on the 2nd. Whimbrel were observed intermittently throughout, a peak of just 3 on the 3rd. The 4th saw 4 Manx Shearwaters and the first of 2 Leach's Petrels were trapped while 7 Crossbills were the most seen in any one day during the month. A quiet spell followed with nothing more than a Wood Pigeon (5th), until the first Barred Warbler appeared on the 8th and birds were seen on most dates up to the end of the month – with a maximum of three on 20th and 26th. Two Black-tailed Godwits and 3 Green Sandpipers appeared on the 10th to be replaced by a Reed Warbler, 2 Sedge Warblers and 5 Garden Warblers next day. An excellent find in Udi Geo at South Harbour was of a Semi-palmated Sandpiper on the 13th, only the third record after the second in 1992. Other waders also featured with Turnstone (85), Dunlin (39) and Curlew (24) all notable. Few of the usual hoped for August rarities turned up and even common migrants were low in numbers including Wheatear – a peak of just 145 on 15th. Sanderlings and Purple Sandpipers peaked on the 14th – at 15 and 36 respectively. The 18th brought the first Fieldfare and Whitethroat of the autumn along with a Common Redpoll. A Tree Pipit and Redstart were new on the 20th, together with 3 Reed Warblers. Seabirds marked the 21st as a 'blue' Fulmar, 2 Sooty and 4 Manx Shearwaters were all seen from the *Good Shepherd IV* while land-based counts featured 45 Kittiwakes and 23 Lesser Black-backed Gulls. Migration started to pick up towards the month's end although a Saker Falcon (complete with bell's and Jesse's) on the 24th was somewhat unexpected, but the better weather also brought in a Marsh Warbler, Bar-tailed Godwit, Common Sandpiper, 2 Pied Flycatchers, 2 Lesser Whitethroats and 5 Garden Warblers. It was with relatively little surprise next day that a Common Nightingale was found, although the location, the garage at Quoy, (where it was also trapped) was a bit unorthodox. A good passage of 15 Cormorants and 24 Grey Herons occurred on 25th as well as 6 Whinchat. The last few days remained quiet, another 'blue' Fulmar, seen from the *Good Shepherd IV* and a Wryneck were the best on the 30th.

September

A slow start to the month, but mild conditions encouraged a Marsh Warbler (4th) and a long-staying Ortolan Bunting (5th to 18th), accompanied by a Turtle Dove – both the only sightings of the autumn (the Ortolan the only one of the year). The first 'BB' rarity waited until the 7th, when a Citrine Wagtail gave fairly brief but excellent views on Field Pond. The only Yellow-breasted Bunting of the year also appeared that day, giving even briefer views, but remained on the island until the following day. The 8th also saw another early arrival date for Lanceolated Warbler;

the first of four or five seen during the month. Also that day were 3 Barred Warblers, (the highest single day count of the month), a Pomarine Skua and a Spotted Redshank. Two Wrynecks were the feature of the 9th but had to compete with an amazing capture of 40 Twite in the Vadaal trap. South-easterlies followed bringing in 3 Yellow-browed Warblers and a Blyth's Reed Warbler, which was trapped in the Plantation on the way out to SW census. Released into 'the Obs Plantation' it remained until the 17th. A Bluethroat then appeared on the 12th along with a peak day count of 5 Common Rosefinches. A Corncrake was a welcome sight (13th) as was a Pectoral Sandpiper, another Bluethroat and 12 Lapland Buntings on the 15th. A possible fly-over Red-throated Pipit was then heard (but not seen) on the 17th in the north of the island. The 19th produced a Taiga Bean Goose in the Parks and this was seen intermittently up until the 28th. A further 2 Corncrakes were also new in, as was a Spotted Crake near the Chapel.

Migration certainly turned a corner towards the third week, as is so often the case and although numbers of migrants were still low, the range of species was by no means disappointing. The 20th dawned with a south-easterly though the highlights of the day waited until the afternoon to show. These were a Citrine Wagtail, 4 Red-breasted Flycatchers, 8 Yellow-browed Warblers, a Bluethroat and an extremely confiding Arctic Warbler – on the dyke between Lower Leogh and Utra. Much of the same was still present the following day, but a Lanceolated Warbler was found below Midway and showed well to those who arrived quickly. Geese started to fly over from the 14th, Pink-footed Goose peaking at 240 (17th) and Greylag just 25 (26th). Chaffinch and Brambling appeared simultaneously on the 20th, counts in low double figures. A stunning Arctic Redpoll (21st) at South Light delighted many though rarer was a Grey Phalarope in North Haven – astonishingly only the second to be seen here in the last 12 years. A Little Bunting was also found but was elusive for many trying to relocate it. Unfortunately, the next few days were almost bird-less (except for the monthly peak of 25 Lapland Buntings on the 25th and 2 early Little Auks) thanks to strong to gale force north and south-westerly winds, with heavy rain not far behind.

A Slavonian Grebe was added to the year list on the 27th – spotted before breakfast in Finnequoy. Winds shifted round to the east again on the 28th bringing an influx of migrants and a second Blyth's Reed Warbler – located in Gunnawark – as well as another Lanceolated Warbler, which showed superbly in Gilly Burn with further Red-breasted Flycatchers (2) and Yellow-browed Warblers (11) also seen. Yet another 'Lancey', the last of the year, was discovered in the Gilly Burn (29th) with an additional Citrine Wagtail (the third of the year) also that day. Incredibly the Gilly Burn was the focus again – and to another *Locustella* – on the 30th. However, this one was un-streaked and with a mist-net deployed it was quickly caught and, just as quickly, identified as a Savi's Warbler! Probably an eastern race bird

(*L.l.fusca*), this was only the 6th record for the island as well as the only autumn record for Shetland and the first of this race for Britain. Supporting cast included a peak of 15 Yellow-browed Warblers, another Little Bunting and a Long-tailed Duck – a fitting end to the month.

October

If September had been good, then October was outstanding! The month opened with light westerly winds, which became frequently strong north-westerlies from 4th until 11th. Two Marsh Warblers on 1st (one to 4th) were a surprise so late in the year, when a female Velvet Scoter was added to the year list. Eight Yellow-browed Warblers and the Little Bunting remained from the previous day but two Wrynecks were new in, as were two Bluethroats, three Common Rosefinches and the year's second Grey Plover. Things got 'rarer' the following day when an Arctic Redpoll was discovered on Vatnagard – clinging to the heather in the strong north-west wind – and rarer still a couple of days later with a Pechora Pipit beginning an extended stay at Quoy on 5th. Several days of strong westerly winds and blustery showers then set in, which severely hampered birding, but they did eventually pay off when a White-rumped Sandpiper arrived on 10th for a couple of days – only the third Fair Isle record. A Glaucous Gull and six Little Auks reminded us that the year was nearing its end! A Corncrake was flushed in Sukka Mire on 12th and the wind finally switched to the south-east – with almost immediate results. The next few days (13th-17th) must go down as one of the best ever periods for rare birds on Fair Isle. A fall of thrushes, Blackcaps, Goldcrests and finches on 13th also had a smattering of rarities admixed – with the 'crests came a few Yellow-browed Warblers (4) and three Pallas's Warblers (the first of at least seven this autumn), but pride of place went to a Radde's Warbler – watched for a few minutes by the FIBO Warden in the Kirm o' Scroo. This however was just a taster of what was to come . . . more thrushes arrived on 14th accompanied by more Blackcaps, with four Richard's Pipits, six Yellow-browed Warblers, two Pallas's Warblers, a late Barred Warbler and a Paddyfield Warbler (on the cliffs at Lerness). All were overshadowed however by the discovery of Britain's third (and Fair Isle's second) Savannah Sparrow at Neder Taft. This bird sparked off Fair Isle's biggest ever twitch and an unforgettable few days. The Pechora Pipit (perhaps wisely) chose this day to depart! The 15th was dominated by planes arriving from all corners of Britain (including Scilly Isles) to twitch the Savannah Sparrow. The 16th was the most frustrating day of the year. It commenced with a mad rush around after a putative Brown Shrike, which turned out to be just a Red-backed – but the only one of the entire autumn! A short time later, a Red-flanked Bluetail was discovered at the top of Hill Dyke but only showed briefly to its finder before disappearing along the west cliffs. Similarly (and almost simultaneously), a Black-throated Thrush at Hjukni was enjoyed solely by its two finders before it too disappeared. The majority of people had to be content with more views of the obliging Savannah

Sparrow at Neder Taft, two Pallas's Warblers and the first Waxwing of the autumn to arrive in Britain. The 17th October will live long in the memories of all those on the isle that day. At 11 am, a first-winter female Siberian Rubythroat was discovered near Utra. This mystical bird, near the very top of every birder's "most wanted list", caused great excitement and panic as it led birders on a merry dance around the south of the isle. Many birders arriving on the isle to twitch the Savannah Sparrow were unaware of the finding and were greeted with the joyous news that there were now TWO 'megas' on the magic isle!! The two star birds were at one point just 50 yards apart – at Leogh and Neder Taft. It really was a case of East meets West!! Both birds remained until 19th, allowing an estimated 150 birders to twitch them and raising £900 in the tick box! At one point there was a record six planes on the Fair Isle airstrip. Other sightings in this period included ten Yellow-browed Warblers and two Bluethroats on 17th with the four Richard's Pipits dropping to three on 19th and the arrival of an 'eastern' Yellow Wagtail (until 28th). After such euphoria, things quietened down a little in the last ten days of the month but it still contained a few surprises. A Dusky warbler was trapped in the Plantation on 22nd when ten Waxwings, three 'northern' Bullfinches and 50 Woodcock were also logged. The following day produced an Olive-backed Pipit at Shirva (remaining until 6th November), another Pallas's Warbler and a Goldfinch, but the limelight was stolen by the report of a Little Grebe on Golden Water – the first since a tide-line corpse in 1998! Another Olive-backed Pipit was seen briefly on Hoili on 24th when a Corncrake was discovered at Lower Stoneybrek. The final week saw little new of note as the wind switched to a cool north-westerly and Greylag Geese, Whooper Swans, Little Auks and Snow Buntings brought a distinctly wintry feel, but two Red-breasted Flycatchers on 26th joined the long-staying pipits and a few Blackcaps and Chiffchaffs hinted that autumn was perhaps not quite over . . .

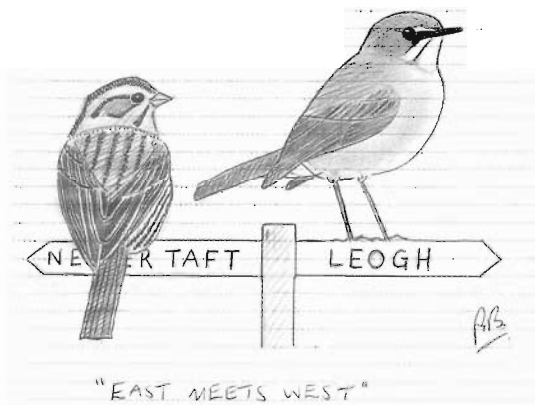
November

The month opened with a light north-easterly wind producing a late Bonxie, two Long-eared Owls, two Bullfinches, a late Lesser Whitethroat and a Waxwing. This switched to a south-easterly on 3rd, which brought another Olive-backed Pipit (trapped in the Gully) and a juvenile American Golden Plover – our ninth record and first since 1991. It was first located on the Rippack but was later seen at Field, Setter and in the Parks before it departed on 10th. Another Bonxie on 6th was the last of the year and the long-staying Olive-backed Pipit also departed, but the remaining Richard's Pipit lingered for a further day. Thrushes continued to pass through in good numbers up to the middle of the month, with a smattering of finches and (mainly *tristis*) Chiffchaffs throughout. A male Redstart on 9th was the second latest ever. Six Dunnocks on 13th was quite a high count for the date, but the surprise find of the day was the first Hume's Warbler for Shetland at Midway. It was trapped that afternoon and remained in the Observatory Plantation long enough the following day for the Shetland twitchers to tick it. A count of 45

Meadow Pipits, five Yellowhammers, two more 'northern' Bullfinches, a Short-eared Owl and a Black Redstart were the supporting cast to a fine Wood Lark on 15th. The 17th produced the year's highest count of Snow Bunting (520) but was more memorable for *another* Hume's Warbler – at Upper Leogh/Neder Taft (until 23rd) and a Pallas's Warbler at Barkland. The remainder of the month was dominated by cool winds and wintry showers and was most notable for some late migrants – Oystercatcher on 22nd and Chiffchaff and Goldcrest on 27th but included a Slavonian Grebe (16th-21st), a Goosander (22nd), Waxwing (21st), Glaucous Gull (24th-25th) and the final addition to the year list – a Eurasian White-fronted Goose on 30th.

December

The final month of an outstanding year could not live up to those preceding it, but then it was never expected to! The Eurasian White-fronted Goose remained with the flock of 50 Greylags and one Pink-footed Goose until 13th. A Goosander on 3rd was only the third record of the year whilst a male Kestrel, seen frequently throughout, attempted to over-winter. Small numbers of Lapwings lingered into the New Year and the odd over-wintering Water Rail was spotted. Six Curlews on 17th were a good count and a Moorhen was found on the same day. Occasional Iceland and Glaucous Gulls were seen and the odd Little Auk in the Havens. Thrushes (mainly Blackbirds and Redwings) were present in reasonable numbers throughout, including a few Song Thrushes. Small passerines were few (apart from Starling and Rock Pipit) but a handful of Skylarks and Meadow Pipits saw the year out whilst a male Blackcap on 3rd was late, but not as late as the Chiffchaff on 17th and Goldcrest on 19th. A few Chaffinches lingered to 12th at least and two Common Redpolls were seen on 27th. Snow Buntings were present throughout, but in fewer numbers than in the previous month, with a peak of just 120 on 26th.



Taken from the FIBO Chatty Log 17th Oct 2003

Earliest and Latest Arrival Dates of Migrants

Alan Bull

With winters becoming much milder it is interesting to compare arrival and departure dates of spring and autumn migrants with those of previous years. Where available, the year of the particular sighting has also been included.

Species	Earliest ever	Earliest in 2003	Latest ever	Latest in 2003
Quail	30.04.61	07.05	13.10.89	-
Osprey	25.04.66	13.06	04.11.35	-
Corncrake	10.04.66	28.04	03.11.77	27.10
Dotterel	25.04.73	18.05	06.11.76	-
Whimbrel	15.04.72	16.04	12.12. pre FIBO	14.09
Green Sandpiper	08.04.79	09.04	12.11.70	24.08
Common Sandpiper	05.04.83	19.04	02.11. pre FIBO	28.09
Arctic Skua	04.04.88	17.04	25.10.	24.09
Great Skua	17.03. pre 80	22.03	16.11.	06.11
LBB Gull	06.03.85	29.03	12.12.57	27.09
Sandwich Tern	30.04.01	06.06	18.09.77	11.09
Common Tern	25.04.83	28.04	18.10.75	19.08
Arctic Tern	No data	07.05	30.10.	26.09
Turtle Dove	23.04.71	12.05	01.11.82	05.09
Cuckoo	17.04.87	11.05	08.10.77	-
Swift	29.04.01	18.05	26.10.75	08.09
Wryneck	18.04.81	26.04	17.10.74	01.10
Sand Martin	02.04.89	08.04	19.10.78	14.09
Swallow	31.03.02	16.04	02.11.84	02.10
House Martin	19.04.	25.04	14.11.	03.09
Tree Pipit	14.04. pre 63	24.04	02.11. pre 63	20.10
Red-throated Pipit	08.05.36	16.05	01.11. pre FIBO	17.09
Yellow Wagtail	25.03.54	11.05	20.11.57	28.10
Pied Wagtail	20.02.03	20.02	17.11.	27.10
Bluethroat	22.03. pre 63	16.05	13.11.83	18.10
Black Redstart	24.02.03	24.02	22.12.86	15.11
Redstart	09.04. pre 63	23.04	11.11.81	09.11
Whinchat	14.04.81	25.04	26.11.90	23.10
Northern Wheatear	13.03. pre 59	30.03	19.11.59	21.10
Ring Ouzel	16.03.88	08.04	19.12. pre FIBO	22.10
Grasshopper Warbler	07.04.02	20.04	23.10.00	23.10
Sedge Warbler	19.04.87	23.04	11.11.75	15.09
Marsh Warbler	22.05.84	16.06	06.10. pre 63	04.10
Reed Warbler	28.04.01	10.05	31.10.80	30.09
Icterine Warbler	13.05.99	24.05	13.10.76	05.07
Subalpine Warbler	20.04.00	21.05	04.10.79	-
Lesser Whitethroat	20.04.	05.05	08.11.	01.11
Whitethroat	11.04. pre 59	23.04	21.10.78	06.10
Garden Warbler	21.04.68	23.04	20.11.76	17.10
Blackcap	04.04.02	15.04	20.12.	03.12
Wood Warbler	14.04.81	04.05	06.10.73	20.09
Chiffchaff	12.03.	16.03	No data	17.12
Willow Warbler	03.04.81	14.04	07.11.84	13.10
Goldcrest	27.02	16.03	19.12.03	19.12
Spotted Flycatcher	20.04.49	04.05	26.10.85	03.10
Pied Flycatcher	21.04.83	01.05	29.10.85	13.10
Red-backed Shrike	04.05.84	16.05	08.11.93	16.10
Common Rosefinch	08.05.77	23.05	30.11.91	05.10
Ortolan Bunting	26.04.64	-	01.11.00	18.09
Rustic Bunting	25.04.80	23.05	08.11.75	-
Little Bunting	04.04.58	09.05	19.11.75	01.10

SYSTEMATIC LIST 2003

Deryk Shaw

An impressive total of 215 species (plus two escapes) was recorded in 2003, including two additions to the island list – a Scops Owl in July and Hume's Warbler (2) in November. This is possibly a record year list as, although 216 species were claimed for 1992, this included Asian Brown Flycatcher (currently on Category D) and an un-identified Bonelli's Warbler species. The Fair Isle list now stands at 362 species in Categories A-C plus eight other possible additions (*see full list at rear of report*).

Notes

Nomenclature – the species order and some names have been changed to comply with recent changes to the official British list by the British Ornithologists Union (BOU). Most changes are obvious, but wherever confusion may be possible, the previous name is included in parentheses.

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

The numbers in parentheses after the names of those species considered by British Birds Rarities Committee (BBRC) are the totals up to the end of 2002 for Fair Isle, Shetland as a whole, Scotland and Britain respectively.

WHOOPER SWAN *Cygnus cygnus*

Frequent autumn migrant, scarce in spring

In spring, four on 22nd March were followed by another four on 9th April, two on 15th and a single on 25th with the last, an adult, on 9th May. Autumn passage was mainly in October, commencing with 13 on 3rd followed by family parties each day until 7th, a lost juvenile 8th-17th (found dead on latter date), four on 15th, six on 23rd, seven 27th-28th and then 50 on 29th. Two on 4th November was the only later sighting.

+ BEAN GOOSE *Anser fabalis*

Vagrant; approximately 30 previous records (approx. 73 individuals)

An individual of the race *fabalis* (Taiga Bean Goose) which arrived on 1st October 2002 remained until 27th January. Another, of the same race, arrived on 19th September and remained until 28th.

PINK-FOOTED GOOSE *Anser brachyrhynchus*

Frequent autumn migrant, scarce in spring

Two remained (with the Bean Goose) from 2002 until they all departed on 27th January. In spring, a single on 10th-11th April was the sole record until 1-3 were recorded daily from 13th-30th May (3-5 individuals). Autumn passage commenced with nine on 15th September. The bulk of passage occurred on 17th when 240 were counted, followed by smaller peaks of 40 on 20th and 80 on 22nd September. Stragglers and lingering birds (1-3) were recorded until 23rd October. Finally, a single was present from 11th-19th December.

+ GREATER WHITE-FRONTED GOOSE *Anser albifrons*

Scarce autumn migrant, occasional in spring and mid-winter

An adult of the Eurasian race *A.a.albifrons* arrived on 30th November and remained until 13th December.

GREYLAG GOOSE *Anser anser*

Common spring and autumn migrant

Small family parties (totalling 15-20 birds) were present throughout January but most departed in February. A very light spring passage saw 1-8 recorded almost daily from 5th April-19th May (including some lingering birds) – a total of around 40 birds. Parties of seven on 12th August followed by five from 16th-24th August were probably from the Shetland breeding population. Autumn passage commenced with eight on 14th September and birds were ever present from 20th until the year's end. Peak counts were all in October with 128 on 4th, 150 on 9th and 300 on 31st.

+ CANADA GOOSE *Branta canadensis*

Rare spring visitor; eighteen previous records (33 individuals)

Recorded in ten out of the last thirteen years. Two frequented Easter Lothar from 10th-11th February and two on Easter Lothar on 1st-2nd March may have been the same (following a period of absence), whilst another was present on Lerness and Dronger from 28th March-14th April.

BARNACLE GOOSE *Branta leucopsis*

Frequent autumn migrant, occasional in spring

Spring sightings comprised one on 11th and two on 21st May and singles on 18th

& 21st June. In autumn, one on 22nd September was a forerunner of almost daily records from 1st-23rd October. Counts were less than 20 but for 51 on 3rd, 140 on 5th, 42 on 11th, 84 on 13th and 46 on 18th.

+ BRENT GOOSE *Branta bernicla*

Rare autumn migrant, occasional in spring and winter

One of the pale-bellied race *B.b.hrota* was present from 2nd-12th March.

EURASIAN WIGEON *Anas penelope*

Frequent spring and autumn migrant, scarce in winter

One was seen on 3rd February. In spring, two pairs and a party of five were seen in March with another two on 4th April and a single on 9th. A pair was present from 7th-15th May and three from 12th-17th June. Autumn sightings commenced on 18th August and birds were seen almost daily until the last on 22nd November. Passage was heaviest around the third week of September when numbers peaked at 38 on 17th and 44 on 22nd.

EURASIAN TEAL *Anas crecca*

Frequent spring and autumn migrant, scarce in winter

Seven on 22nd February were the first of the year and small numbers were recorded almost daily until the end of April with a maximum of ten on 9th April. Counts of 1-3 were made on three dates in May and two in June. No further records until one on 29th July, then small numbers were reported regularly during August and daily in September and October with peaks of 21 on 20th September and 14 on 1st & 3rd October. Small numbers continued to be seen regularly throughout November, with the last on 30th.

MALLARD *Anas platyrhynchos*

Frequent spring and autumn migrant; has bred

A small number of feral birds resident on the isle mean that the distinction between genuine migrants and resident birds is difficult, but irregular counts of 1-7 birds in the spring suggests that passage was very light. At least two pairs bred with broods of six and ten noted – the former failed whilst the latter, miraculously, all fledged. Numbers in autumn were also low with peaks in October of 20 on 22nd, 20 on 25th and 13 on 27th.

+ NORTHERN PINTAIL *Anas acuta*

Scarce spring and autumn migrant

Singles on 11th-13th & 25th September were the only records.

+ COMMON POCHARD *Aythya ferina*

Rare migrant; 52 previous records (65 individuals)

A ♂ on 10th November was the first since 1999.

+ TUFTED DUCK *Aythya fuligula*

Scarce spring migrant, rare in autumn

A pair on 19th April, two on 26th May, single ♂s on 8th June & 7th July and four on 9th October – a typical showing.

+ GREATER SCAUP *Aythya marila*

Rare spring and autumn migrant

Singles on 9th September and 10th-12th October – a typical showing.

COMMON EIDER *Somateria mollissima*

Resident, breeds in small numbers

Present offshore all year. No formal counts were made but casual observations would suggest that numbers have fallen since last year – no large flocks (50+) were noted in summer or winter.

LONG-TAILED DUCK *Clangula hyemalis*

Frequent autumn migrant, less common in spring

No spring records. In autumn there was a ♂ on 30th September before regular counts of 1-6 from 4th-28th October but including a peak of 15 on 19th. Finally, one or two were noted on four dates in November.

+ BLACK (COMMON) SCOTER *Melanitta nigra*

Scarce spring, autumn and winter migrant

The only spring record concerned a flock of eight off North Light on 16th June. In autumn, a single on 10th September was followed by a party of four on 21st and one at South Light from 11th-22nd November.

+ VELVET SCOTER *Melanitta fusca*

Scarce autumn migrant, rare at other times of year

A ♀ flew past Bunness on 1st October and another was found dead in the Havens on 6th December.

COMMON GOLDENEYE *Bucephala clangula*

Regular winter, spring and autumn migrant

One to three birds were regularly seen in the Havens or Furse from late January until early May. In autumn, 1-2 birds were seen irregularly from 14th October-25th November but for peaks of five on 22nd October and seven on 10th November. Finally, there was one in South Harbour on 28th December.

RED-BREASTED MERGANSER *Mergus serrator*

Frequent spring and autumn migrant

A ♂ frequented the Havens on 24th February. Counts of 1-2 were made on three

dates in late April, two in May, two in June and two in July. In autumn, 1-2 were seen daily from 15th-25th September, then on ten irregular dates in October (and a peak of four on 21st) and two dates in November.

+ GOOSANDER *Mergus merganser*

Rare migrant in winter, spring and late autumn

Singles were seen on 21st October, 22nd November and 3rd December.

+ COMMON QUAIL *Coturnix coturnix*

Scarce spring, summer and autumn migrant; has bred

In May, singles were flushed from near Haa on 7th, Lower Stoneybrek on 20th, Hesswalls on 22nd and the Puffin on 24th. In June, birds were picked up dead on 3rd & 7th and further individuals were flushed on 13th, 16th and 22nd. The dead birds were sent for analysis and found to be a ♂ and a ♀, both in breeding condition – the female on the point of laying and therefore the first confirmed breeding attempt since 1981.

RED-THROATED DIVER *Gavia stellata*

Regular migrant, mainly late spring and autumn

One frequented North Haven from 28th January-3rd February. In spring one in North Haven on 2nd April was the first followed by 1-2 on 11 dates from 23rd April-6th June. Later singles were seen on 30th June and 5th July. In autumn, birds were recorded regularly between 15th September and 7th October with a maximum count of four on 17th September.

+ GREAT NORTHERN DIVER *Gavia immer*

Scarce autumn migrant, occasional in spring

One was off South Light on 18th May. Two flew past on 26th August then none until two on 6th October, another two on 19th and singles on 21st & 26th October.

+ LITTLE GREBE *Tachybaptus ruficollis*

Rare autumn migrant; approx. 34 previous records

The first record since 1998; one visited Golden Water on 23rd October.

+ SLAVONIAN GREBE *Podiceps auritus*

Scarce autumn migrant, occasional in spring

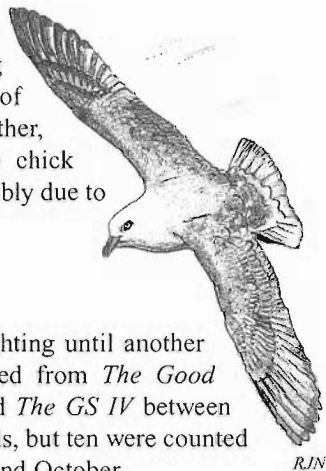
One on 27th September was not followed until two at South Light on 20th October, two at Furse the following day (staying until 24th) then one in North Haven from 16th-21st November.

NORTHERN FULMAR *Fulmarus glacialis*

Resident; breeds in large numbers

Numbers of AOS continued to decline at monitoring plots, by 5.9% compared to 2002 but there was much variation between plots and there may be just a

redistribution of birds around the isle. An overall productivity of 0.37 at the five monitored breeding sites is a comparatively poor figure. However, four of the five sites averaged a respectable 0.45 whilst the other, at North Haven, almost failed completely – one chick fledging from 30 AOS (a productivity of 0.03), probably due to depredation by Bonxies.



SOOTY SHEARWATER *Puffinus griseus*

Regular autumn migrant

One off South Light on 26th July was the only sighting until another there on 21st August (when one was also reported from *The Good Shepherd IV*). Then a run of records from land and *The GS IV* between 14th and 24th September involved mainly single birds, but ten were counted on 17th and five on 18th. Finally, one was seen on 2nd October.

+ MANX SHEARWATER *Puffinus puffinus*

Scarce autumn migrant, rare in spring

One was reported from *The Good Shepherd IV* on 13th May and another on 22nd July. In August, two were seen on 2nd, four the next day, three on 19th and four on 21st and the last on 18th September. A Shearwater spp on 6th October was probably this species.

EUROPEAN STORM-PETREL *Hydrobates pelagicus*

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

The first were two seen from *The Good Shepherd IV* on 5th June. Birds were then regularly seen in small numbers from *The GS IV* until late September and birds were seen ashore during trapping sessions in July and August. Trapping was less successful than in most years with a maximum of just 21 trapped in any one night. The last birds to be seen were off South Light on 6th October and a juvenile at Wirvie on 9th November.

+ LEACH'S STORM-PETREL *Oceanodroma leucorhoa*

Scarce migrant, summer and early autumn

Singles were trapped during 'Stormie sessions' on 4th & 16th August and others were reported from *The Good Shepherd IV* on 21st August and 17th September.

NORTHERN GANNET *Morus bassanus*

Breeds in large numbers, seen offshore all year

First birds were noted back on Yellow Head on 1st February and on the Stacks o' Scroo on 22nd. The breeding population continues to rise; a whole island total of 1,866 AON is a 17.7% increase from 2002, including 13 nests on Sheep Rock. Productivity, at 0.70, is equal to the recent ten-year average.

GREAT CORMORANT *Phalacrocorax carbo*

Frequent autumn migrant, less common in winter and spring

Recorded in every month except April. Ones or twos were seen occasionally in the first three months. Singles were seen on just six dates between 1st May-20th August. A light passage then commenced with 1-4 counted almost daily until the year's end, but for peaks of 15 on 25th August and 24 on 8th September.



EUROPEAN SHAG

Phalacrocorax aristotelis

Resident, breeds in moderate numbers

A whole island census revealed 732 AON – an increase of 10.4% since 2001. Shags were at their lowest ebb in 1998 when they had fallen to 567 AON (a massive 40.1% decline since the previous survey in 1993), so it is encouraging that they have increased in each of the two counts since. (Fig 1 pop graph) The distribution of birds around the isle since 1993 has shown that there have been slight increases along most of the east and south coasts but heavy declines in the north and west. A breeding productivity of 1.33 at the monitoring plot was disappointing and some way below the recent ten-year average of 1.55.

GREY HERON *Ardea cinerea*

Frequent autumn migrant, less common in winter/spring

Recorded in every month. An over-wintering individual was seen during the early months. A very light spring passage saw three singles in April (with two on 23rd), four singles in May (and a maximum of four on 5th) and two in early June. Wandering summer birds were noted in late June and irregularly in July. A clear autumn passage commenced from 7th August until late October. All counts were of single figures (usually below five) but for 11 on 24th August, rising to 24 the following day. One or two occasionally seen throughout November and December may have actually been over-wintering individuals.

+ RED KITE *Milvus milvus*

Vagrant; five previous records (three in spring)

One floated straight through on the morning of 10th April – the first since 1993.



Savannah Sparrow, 14th-19th October



Hugh Harrop



First-winter female Siberian Rubythroat, 17th-19th October: left; Hugh Harrop, right; Lee Gregory, inset; Chris Butty.





Long-eared Owl, February
Deryk Shaw



Pectoral Sandpiper, 20th September
Rebecca Nason



Scops Owl, 30th July Deryk Shaw



Wryneck, 9th September Craig Round

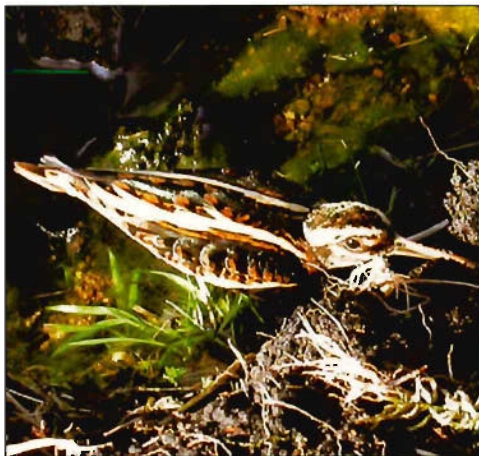


Scaup, 9th September

Craig Round



*Juv. American Golden Plover,
3rd-8th November Glen Tyler*



Jack Snipe, 16th October

Deryk Shaw



*First-winter Knot, 6th September
Craig Round*



*First-winter Ruff, 31st August
Craig Round*



*Adult Semi-palmated Sandpiper, 13th
August Alan Bull*



*First-winter White-rumped Sandpiper,
10th-11th October Harry Scott*



Thick-billed Warbler, 16th-17th May
Deryk Shaw



Thick-billed Warbler *Hugh Harrop*



Rustic Bunting, 24th May
Rebecca Nason



Male White-throated Sparrow, 9th June
Rebecca Nason



Little Bunting, 10th May
Rebecca Nason



Citrine Wagtail, 29th September Rebecca Nason



Pechora Pipit, 4th-14th October
Hugh Harrop



Pechora Pipit, 4th-14th October
Rebecca Nason



Common Rosefinch, September
Hugh Harrop



Pink-footed Goose, October
Rebecca Nason



Leach's Petrel, 18th August

Alan Bull



Great Skua, June *Rebecca Nason*



'Taiga' Bean Goose, 19th-28th
September *Hugh Harrop*



Arctic Skua, May *Rebecca Nason*



Male Red-backed Shrike, 16th May
Rebecca Nason

+ WHITE-TAILED EAGLE *Haliaeetus albicilla*

Vagrant since 1900; nine previous records (excluding Fair Isle re-introduction scheme) – only two prior to re-introduction scheme on Rhum. Formerly bred.

An immature bird was watched coming in, low over the sea from North Ronaldsay, at Malcolm's Head on 10th April (a journey time of 50 minutes). It wasted little time in gaining height over the island before departing north once more and was seen to come in at Sumburgh Head 50 minutes later.

+ EURASIAN MARSH HARRIER *Circus aeruginosus*

Rare spring migrant, vagrant in autumn. (31 previous records)

Recorded for the sixth successive year. A fine adult ♂ quartered the isle on 20th April.

+ HEN HARRIER *Circus cyaneus*

Scarce spring and autumn migrant

A ringtail on 1st June was the only sighting.

EURASIAN SPARROWHAWK *Accipiter nisus*

Regular spring and autumn migrant

Spring passage commenced with an astonishing five on 11th April and then singles were seen most days until the end of the month and others on six dates until 20th May. A later ♂ was seen on 21st-22nd June. Autumn sightings were relatively scarce with one on 29th September followed by records from 13th-23rd October including a maximum of three on 16th. A ♂ on 7th November was the only later sighting.

+ COMMON BUZZARD *Buteo buteo*

Scarce spring and autumn migrant

One was present in the north of the isle from 1st-5th March and another flew over the Observatory on 15th May.

+ OSPREY *Pandion haliaetus*

Rare spring and autumn migrant (73 previous records; 58 in spring, 15 in autumn)

A poor year by recent standards; one quietly drifted through on 13th June and was only noticed from North Light – heading for Mainland Shetland.

COMMON KESTREL *Falco tinnunculus*

Regular spring and autumn migrant

One was occasionally seen from 20th January-5th February. Spring passage recorded singles on seven dates in March, two in April, seven in May and four in June – an estimated total of 11 birds. In autumn, single birds were recorded irregularly from 23rd August until sightings from 11th September saw 1-3 birds daily until the end of October and a single ♂ up to the end of the year.

MERLIN *Falco columbarius*

Regular spring and autumn migrant

One was seen occasionally in February. A very light spring passage saw a ♀ from 7th-9th May, another on 26th May with further singles on 3rd, 7th-8th and 21st June. In autumn, two on 16th September were the first followed by a single from 22nd-25th September then regular sightings of 1-2 birds in October (max of three on 11th) up to 8th November. Finally, one was present from 1st-3rd December.

PEREGRINE FALCON *Falco peregrinus*

Regular spring and autumn migrant; formerly bred

In spring, one on 8th March was the sole record until singles on 11 dates between 1st April-13th May, involving five or six birds and further singles on 3rd and 8th June. In autumn, single birds were noted on 4th, 11th & 19th-27th September, regularly throughout October and on 1st & 16th November – a total of 6-8 birds.

WATER RAIL *Rallus aquaticus*

Regular spring and autumn migrant, occasionally over-winters

No records in the first three months. In spring, singles on just four dates in April and two on 13th May were the only sightings. In autumn, birds were noted irregularly from 9th September until daily sightings throughout October and irregularly in November and December. Counts were mainly of 1-2 birds but three were seen on four dates, four on 18th November and a peak of six on 1st October.

+ SPOTTED CRAKE *Porzana porzana*

Rare migrant, mostly autumn (38 previous records; eight in spring)

The ninth, but second successive, spring record concerned one in Gilsetter from 24th-26th April – the earliest spring record. In autumn, one frequented a ditch at Burkle on 19th September.

+ CORN CRAKE *Crex crex*

Scarce spring and autumn migrant; formerly bred

One which strolled around Lower Stoneybrek garden on the relatively early date of 28th April was the only spring record. In autumn, birds were flushed on 13th-14th, 18th & 19th (2) September and on 12th & 24th-27th October.

COMMON MOORHEN *Gallinula chloropus*

Scarce spring and autumn migrant

In spring, singles were recorded on 13th, 25th-28th April and 3rd-4th, 15th, 18th & 20th May – a total of five birds. Autumn records comprised one on 4th September then none until another on 9th October and irregular counts of 1-2 birds from 23rd October-18th November. Finally, one was noted from 17th-19th December.

+ COMMON COOT *Fulica atra*

Rare winter and spring migrant, vagrant in autumn. (78 previous records)

One was on Field Pond 6th-17th March and another frequented Hesti Geo on 2nd-3rd May.

EURASIAN OYSTERCATCHER *Haematopus ostralegus*

Common spring and autumn migrant; breeds in small numbers

At least one of the two from December 2002 remained into January 2003 and was last seen on 20th. Spring passage commenced with two on 5th February and 14 on 13th – the first notable influx. Numbers fluctuated widely as birds passed through in March (with a peak of 96 on 28th) and regularly exceeded 100 in April, as the local breeding birds were temporarily joined by migrants, resulting in peaks of 153 on 9th, 194 on 29th and a maximum of 250 on 24th. A breeding population of around 40 pairs were counted – consistent with recent years. A count of 209 on 14th May must have included some late migrants. A non-breeding flock of around 60 birds frequented the south end of the isle in June and July, being occasionally swelled by late migrants, failed breeders and fledged juveniles – peaking at 150 on 5th July. Numbers began to fall from early August and had dwindled to single figures by the end of the month. Small numbers continued to be counted daily until the last bird on 21st November.

RINGED PLOVER *Charadrius hiaticula*

Frequent spring and autumn migrant; breeds in small numbers

The first returning birds were four on 12th February, with 14 on 25th being the first notable influx. Small numbers trickled through in March and April with peaks of 29 on two dates, barely increasing the breeding population of around 11 or 12 pairs. Return passage commenced in late July and, apart from an early peak of 44 on 8th August, the bulk of passage was from 19th August-16th September when numbers were regularly over 25 and included peaks of 59 (28th) & 49 (31st) in August and 45 on 10th September. Numbers then rapidly dwindled to single figures until the last on 10th October, apart from a late bird on 8th November.

+ EURASIAN DOTTEREL *Charadrius morinellus*

Scarce spring and autumn migrant

A ♀ was on Ward Hill on 18th May and two birds were on Burrashield on 28th May.

+ AMERICAN GOLDEN PLOVER *Pluvialis dominica* (8, 20, 60, 231)

Vagrant; eight previous records (all in autumn)

The ninth record and first since 1991. A juvenile, found on the Rippack on 3rd November remained on the isle until 8th, during which time it was also seen on Brecks o' Busta, South Park, at Field and at Setter.

EUROPEAN GOLDEN PLOVER *Pluvialis apricaria*

Common spring and autumn migrant; has bred

One was seen on 15th February with two on 17th and another on 5th March. Spring passage commenced with four on 25th March and single figures were noted until 30 on 8th April signalled the commencement of heavier passage. Numbers regularly exceeded 20 until the end of the month and included peaks of 53 (17th), 51 (24th) & 64 (29th). Numbers rapidly tailed off in May with stragglers in June. Four were seen on 6th July and a single on 18th before six on 29th saw the start of autumn passage and daily sightings until 29th October. Mainly single-figures were noted in August and passage was heaviest in September, but with a peak of just 65 on 15th. Finally, two stragglers were noted on 7th November.

+ GREY PLOVER *Pluvialis squatarola*

Scarce autumn migrant, rare in spring

One flew over on 30th July and another was present from 1st-2nd October.

NORTHERN LAPWING *Vanellus vanellus*

Frequent spring and autumn migrant; breeds in small numbers

A flock of 27 on 20th January were the first noted. There were no further records until regular sightings from 11th February. Numbers peaked in early March with three counts over 100 (max. of 147 on 5th). Much smaller numbers (10-33) were recorded from mid-March to mid-April. Nine pairs are thought to have bred. Small parties of failed/non-breeders were regularly recorded in June. Autumn migration commenced at the end of July and was heaviest in August, but numbers were generally low (a maximum of just 41 on 9th). However, birds continued to pass through and counts of 5-25 were made almost daily right up to the end of the year.

RED KNOT *Calidris canutus*

Regular autumn migrant, scarce in spring

Rare winter records involved two birds on 20th January and a single on 12th-13th February. In spring, singles on 2nd-3rd & 8th April were the only sightings. Return passage began with singles on 17th, 25th & 29th July before regular counts of 1-6 in August and September but for peaks of 12 on 19th August and eight on 9th September. Finally, one on 4th October was the last.

SANDERLING *Calidris alba*

Regular autumn migrant, less common in spring

In spring, one on 15th April was relatively early and was not followed until three on 8th May. There were a further 1-2 on five dates in May and 2-5 daily during the first five days of June. Four on 15th July were the first returning migrants and single figures were seen almost daily from 24th July-2nd September but for peak counts of 15 on 14th & ten on 26th August. Later singles appeared on 8th-11th & 21st-22nd September and 5th October, whilst three on 6th October were the last.

+ **SEMI-PALMATED SANDPIPER** *Calidris pusilla* (2, 4, 20, 71)

Vagrant; two previous records

Third Fair Isle record; an adult spent 13th August feeding in Kirki Geo – the same site as the very first record for Scotland (27th May-3rd June 1956). The second Scottish record was at Field on 13th-15th May 1992.

+ **WHITE-RUMPED SANDPIPER** *Calidris fuscicollis* (2, 8, 64, 365)

Vagrant; two previous records

Third Fair Isle record; a small wader, initially seen briefly near Haa on 10th October, then again near the school later that morning (where it was identified) eventually settled at Barkland. It was viewed by all present (c10 people) and aged as a first-winter. It was seen briefly near Setter the following day. Previous records were: on Landberg 28th November-2nd December 1972 and at Leestat 7th-8th October 1980.

+ **PECTORAL SANDPIPER** *Calidris melanotos*

Vagrant; 17 previous records (mainly autumn)

A summer-plumaged adult was seen twice for short periods on Easter Lothar on 28th May – only the third spring record. A juvenile frequented the ditches at Barkland from 15th-22nd September but was also occasionally seen at Setter and Sukka Mire.

PURPLE SANDPIPER *Calidris maritima*

Frequent spring and autumn migrant, also over-winters

A difficult species to census due to its love of the extreme seaward edge on the rocky shore. Small numbers were occasionally seen in January-March (peak counts of ten on 15th February and 11 on 27th March). Main passage was in April and early May when some obvious peaks occurred; 38 (16th), 68 (18th) & 34 (29th) in April and 33 on 3rd May. Seven on 20th May were the last of the spring. Small numbers began to re-appear from 5th July and birds were seen irregularly until mid-September, then almost daily until the end of November. Most counts were of single figures but higher numbers were recorded on 13th (28) & 14th (36) August, 21st (35) September 16th (26) & 21st (28) October and 1st (20) & 6th (17) November.

DUNLIN *Calidris alpina*

Frequent spring and autumn migrant; has bred

Recorded in every month except December. A single bird was seen in January and February. In spring, an early period of passage from 5th-8th March saw a peak count of 17 on 5th. Main passage was from end-April to early June with single figures recorded daily and stragglers until 23rd June. Return passage almost merged with late spring migration as the first autumn migrants appeared from 5th July. Single figures were seen irregularly until daily passage was noted from 24th

July-7th October. Passage was heaviest in August when peak counts of 28 (7th), 38 (10th), 22 (12th) & 39 (13th) were made but had fallen to single figures by 26th and through September. Stragglers were seen on 16th & 22nd-25th October and 27th-30th November.

RUFF *Philomachus pugnax*

Regular autumn migrant, rare in spring

An irregular light passage, from 30th July-4th October, saw one in July, two on 1st August (rising to five the next day), another two on 6th followed by singles on 8th & 16th August and on ten dates in September/early October – an estimated total of 14-19 birds.

JACK SNIBE *Lymnocyptes minimus*

Frequent autumn migrant, less common in winter and spring

In spring, singles were flushed on 5th, 8th & 15th April with two on 7th. Autumn birds were noted from 9th September and were seen daily from 20th September-3rd November. Most counts were of single figures but good counts were also made in September of 30 (29th) & 20 (30th) and in October of 21 (14th) & 14 (15th). Occasional singles were found to the year's end.

COMMON SNIBE *Gallinago gallinago*

Common spring and autumn migrant, some over-winter; breeds in small numbers



Good numbers appear to have over-wintered with counts of 90 on 20th January and 125 on 3rd February. Spring counts were highest in the period late March-mid April when counts of 40-80 were regular and exceeded 100 on five dates (max. of 140 on 9th April). No breeding census was attempted. Autumn numbers began to build up from early September and counts in the region of 30-50 were daily into December but for an obvious influx of 100 on 15th October.

EURASIAN WOODCOCK *Scolopax rusticola*

Frequent spring and late autumn migrant, occasionally over-winters

One on 20th January was the only winter sighting. In spring, there were sporadic singles on 16 dates from 5th March-1st June. One on 11th July was an unusual mid-summer record. Autumn passage began on 7th October and was almost daily from 13th October-15th November with occasional birds to the end of November. Most

counts were of single figures but there were influxes in October of 20 (15th) & 50 (22nd) and 12 on 15th November.

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

Scarce spring and autumn migrant

A single on 6th July and two on 10th August were the only records.

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

Regular autumn migrant, rare in spring

Spring records were of singles on 23rd-26th May with four on 24th. Further singles were seen on 27th June, 28th July and 24th August.

WHIMBREL *Numenius phaeopus*

Frequent spring and autumn migrant

In spring, singles on 16th & 19th April preceded daily sightings from 21st April-31st May with stragglers on a further seven dates to 24th June. All counts were of 1-6 but for 16 on 24th April. In autumn, intermittent sightings of 1-2 birds were made from 5th July-14th September except for three on 3rd August.

EURASIAN CURLEW *Numenius arquata*

Frequent spring and autumn migrant, occasionally over-winters; breeds in small numbers

Four were seen on 20th January and occasional single-figure counts were made in February and early March until the local breeding birds had all arrived by mid-March. A light spring passage peaked in early April when 37 were counted on 5th. Eight pairs attempted to breed. A count of 23 on 29th June signalled the start of return migration and sporadic parties were seen in July, including the peak autumn count of 25 on 3rd and 20 on 18th. Mainly single figures were seen throughout August (but for 24 on 13th) and 1-5 daily in September until mid-November. Finally, a party of six were seen on 17th December.

+ **SPOTTED REDSHANK** *Tringa erythropus*

Scarce autumn migrant, rare in spring

One on 8th-9th September was the only record.

COMMON REDSHANK *Tringa totanus*

Common migrant in winter, spring and autumn; has bred

Recorded in every month. Numbers fluctuated in the early part of the year and 60 on 14th February was the highest winter count. Main spring passage was from late March-late April with counts generally in the region of 20-30 and a peak of 41 on 9th April. Single figures were counted in early May and 1-2 regularly until the end of June, when four on 30th signalled the start of return migration. Numbers

fluctuated widely in July (peak of 51 on 30th) and passage was heaviest in August with peaks of 115 (3rd) & 179 (19th). Counts of 20-40 were daily throughout September until the end of November. Small numbers remained in December.

COMMON GREENSHANK *Tringa nebularia*

Regular autumn migrant, scarce in spring

In spring, birds were seen on 12th, 19th, 23rd, 24th & 29th (3) April, 17th-19th (2) May and 8th June. In autumn, six on 30th July were the first (and the maximum count), dwindling to one by 5th-11th August. Two on 18th August were followed by singles on a further nine dates until the last on 30th September.

GREEN SANDPIPER *Tringa ochropus*

Regular spring and autumn migrant

In spring, singles were seen on 9th & 24th-25th April, 5th, 18th, 19th & 21st May and 21st June. Autumn records were entirely within August with singles on 11 dates and three on 10th.

+ WOOD SANDPIPER *Tringa glareola*

Scarce spring and autumn migrant

One on Field Pond from 23rd-26th July was the only record.

COMMON SANDPIPER *Actitis hypoleuca*

Frequent spring and autumn migrant

A very light spring passage from 19th April-13th June saw regular counts of 1-2 and three on 7th May. A negligible autumn migration recorded just three birds; singles on 19th & 24th August and 28th September – the worst autumn since 1955.

RUDDY TURNSTONE *Arenaria interpres*

Common winter, spring and autumn migrant

Recorded in every month. Peak monthly counts as follows;

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
162	132	230	137	66	19	35	85	94	158	111	37

+ GREY PHALAROPE *Phalaropus fulicarius*

Vagrant; sixteen previous records, involving twenty individuals

Recorded for the second successive year. A juvenile was present in the Havens for a couple of hours on 22nd September.

+ POMARINE SKUA *Stercorarius pomarinus*

Rare spring and autumn migrant; at least 51 previous records

Singles were seen off Bunes on 10th & 15th May and 8th September with another seen from *The Good Shepherd IV* on 14th September.

ARCTIC SKUA *Stercorarius parasiticus*

Frequent passage migrant; breeds in small numbers

A dark morph individual on 17th April was the first and seven the following day included the first pale morph bird. Sixteen arrived on 20th and numbers built up slowly into May and all had departed by mid-August. A few were seen intermittently offshore until the last on 24th September.

The breeding population continues to decline; a total of 55 AOT is 8.3% down on the previous year and half the number of ten years ago, despite evidence of immigration from other colonies in Shetland. They are now at their lowest level since the 1950s. Several poor breeding seasons since the late 1990s as a result of food shortages, combined with inter-specific competition with Bonxies, is undoubtedly behind the slide. There seems to be no let-up however as the dwindling colony produced just five chicks to fledging (a productivity of 0.09) – the worst performance since 1990 (Fig. 1). One Bonxie nest was found surrounded by the shells of no less than 18 Arctic Skua eggs – probably a significant proportion of those laid!

+ LONG-TAILED SKUA *Stercorarius longicauda*

Rare spring, summer and autumn migrant

One floated over the isle on 25th May.

GREAT SKUA *Stercorarius skua*

Frequent passage migrant; breeds in moderate numbers

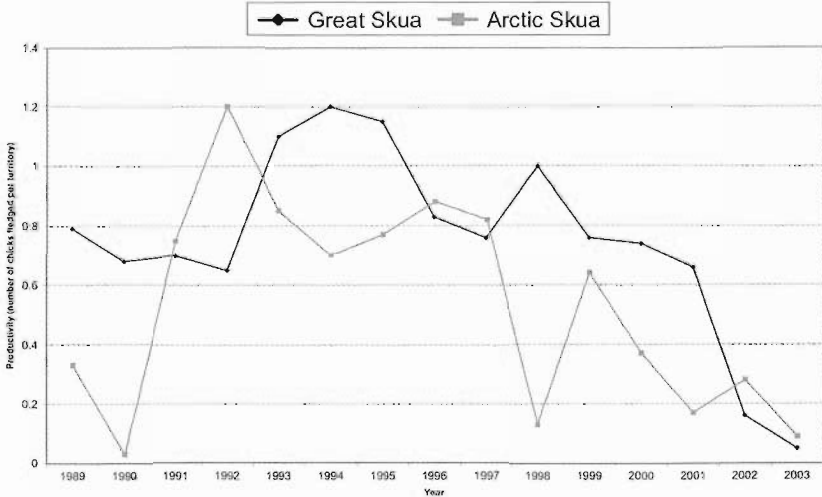


Figure 1: Breeding success of Great and Arctic Skuas 1989-2003. Great Skuas showed a fairly constant success rate throughout the 1990s, whilst Arctic Skuas were hard hit in years of low sandeel availability (1990 & 1998), but recent years have seen a steep decline in the productivity of both species. Notice how closely linked is the productivity of Arctic Skua with that of Arctic Tern in Fig. 2.

Two on 22nd March were the first and birds were ever present from 31st March-21st October with stragglers until 6th November. The number of AOT increased (by 9% from 2002) to 145 – the second highest ever, but productivity was the lowest since recording began. Although (in contrast to 2002) the vast majority of pairs laid eggs, just seven chicks fledged – a productivity of just 0.05 (the 2002 productivity figure of 0.16 was the previous lowest on record). Since 1989 and prior to 2002, Bonxies had averaged 0.85 chicks fledged per AOT, so the results of the past two years are startlingly poor (Fig. 1).

+ LITTLE GULL *Larus minutus*

Vagrant; fifteen previous records (17 individuals)

A second-summer was with Black-headed Gulls in the south of the isle on 28th July – the first record for this month.

BLACK-HEADED GULL *Larus ridibundus*

Frequent spring and autumn migrant

In spring, sporadic single figures were seen from early March until slightly heavier passage from mid-April saw daily counts peaking at 26 on 28th then single figures throughout May, but for a good count of 60 on 4th. Numbers waned in the latter half of June to sporadic ones or twos before they picked up again from mid-July; a count of 13 on 11th included the first juvenile and numbers increased to 46 on 15th. It was then fairly quiet until an influx of 87 on 28th July and good numbers (20-70) for the following week. Single figures dominated for the remainder of August with just sporadic counts of 1-3 in September before daily single figures in October and occasionally in November – the last on 27th.

MEW (COMMON) GULL *Larus canus*

Common spring and autumn migrant; breeds in small numbers

Seven were seen on 20th January with occasional single figures in February and regularly in early March. Spring passage was from late March to early June. Most counts were below 30 but there were several larger influxes; 142 on 9th & 48 on 28th April and 49 on 10th, 66 on 19th & 65 on 26th May. Just five pairs are thought to have attempted breeding (none of which were on Bycwall) and one chick fledged from a nest in the Parks – the first for three years. Autumn migrants began to appear from mid-July with large flocks in the last week of July and in early August. Counts exceeded 200 on six dates, with 270 on 1st August the maximum count. Numbers declined to less than 20 from late August through to mid-November but for influxes of 27 on 20th September, 89 on 13th October and 26 on 9th November. Three on 30th November were the last noted.

LESSER BLACK-BACKED GULL *Larus fuscus*

Frequent spring and autumn migrant; breeds in small numbers

One on 29th March and four the next day were the first and birds were ever-present

from 4th April. Passage peaked in May with 40 (5th), 31 (19th) and 54 (31st) the maximum counts. Individuals resembling one of the dark races *L.f.intermedius* or *L.f.fuscus* were seen on 9th, 22nd (4) & 26th April. Breeding success was poor with just two young ringed from three pairs on Bunes. The first autumn migrants were noted at the end of July and single figures throughout August (but for 16 on 2nd and 23 on 1st). September records comprised 16 (15th), one (17th), 11 (18th), two (19th) and one (26th) with two on 27th being the last.

HERRING GULL *Larus argentatus*

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

Present throughout the year. Numbers were swelled when stormy weather caused birds to seek shelter on the isle. Peak counts were in November with 1,000 (2nd), 1,200 (9th) and 2,000 (27th). A maximum of 20 pairs bred with the majority on Goorn (seven pairs) and Greenholm (six pairs) – a far cry from the 486 counted in 1975 or even the 262 pairs in 1986.

+ ICELAND GULL *Larus glaucoides*

Scarce migrant in winter and spring

A second-winter on 1st March and a second-summer on 29th June were the only spring records. Autumn records comprised a first-winter on 24th & 26th September and different adults on 4th & 6th-8th October. Finally, a first-winter was seen on 24th December.

+ GLAUCOUS GULL *Larus hyperboreus*

Regular migrant in spring, late autumn and winter

An adult and a second-winter were seen regularly in February and a first-winter and a second-winter in March. In April, a first-summer was seen on 23rd and a second-summer on 28th. A second-summer passed through on 24th June. Later in the year, first-winters were present on 10th-11th & 19th-20th October, 24th-25th November and 13th December whilst an adult was seen on 9th November.

GREAT BLACK-BACKED GULL *Larus marinus*

Resident, breeds in small numbers. Also hard-weather migrant, autumn and winter
Present all year. No significant counts made.

BLACK-LEGGED KITTIWAKE *Rissa tridactyla*

Common autumn passage migrant; breeds in large numbers

Occasional birds were seen offshore in January/February and the first birds were seen back on ledges on 12th March. There was a small, but very welcome, overall increase (+5%) at monitoring plots from the record low levels of 2002 – although numbers were still only half those of 1996 and a third of 1990. However, they had a disastrous breeding season with complete failure at all ten monitoring plots (Fig. 2).

Birds were nearly two weeks late to commence nest building. As much as 13% of pairs failed to complete a nest and of those that did a similar percentage failed to lay any eggs. A further 50% of AON then failed at the incubation stage with nests being robbed by gulls and skuas or simply being deserted. Just 36.5% of AON managed to hatch eggs, but the vast majority of young died at a young age. Some died in the nest (presumably starved) and several chicks were observed being taken by Bonxies, sometimes whilst the adult was still present at the nest! Four chicks at one site came close to fledging before these too were predated. Birds were regularly seen offshore until mid-October with just occasional sightings thereafter.

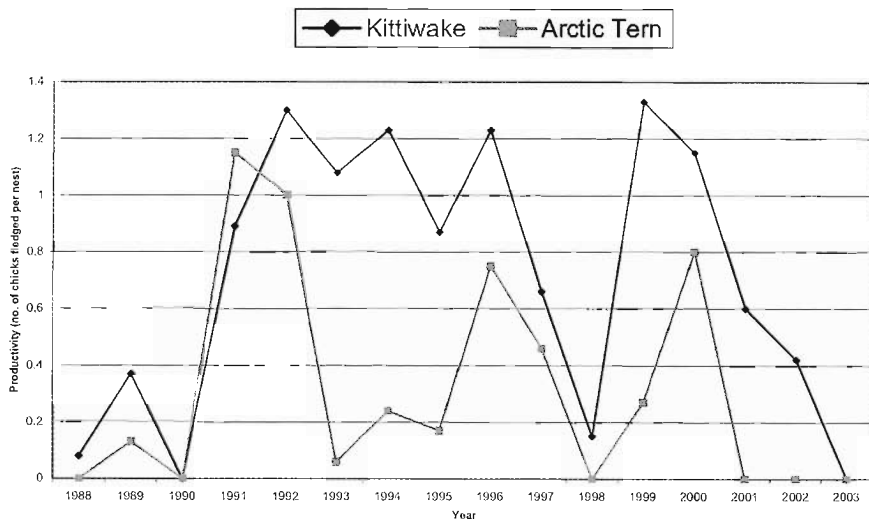


Figure 2: Breeding productivity of Black-legged Kittiwake and Arctic Tern on Fair Isle 1988-2003. The fortunes of these two species follow a similar trend as they are both entirely dependent on Sandeels and can only feed within the top few inches of the surface of the sea. They are therefore most vulnerable to changes in the availability of their prey.

+ **SANDWICH TERN** *Sterna sandvicensis*

Scarce summer migrant

Two on 6th June and singles on 9th July and 11th September were the only records.

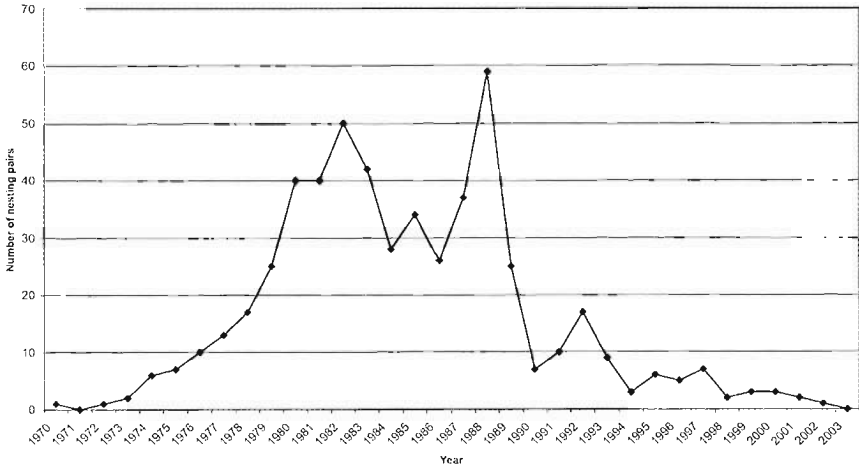
COMMON TERN *Sterna hirundo*

Summer visitor, breeds in small numbers

One at South Light on 28th April was the first and 1-4 were seen regularly in North Haven throughout May and early June. Common Terns first nested on Fair Isle in 1970 and annually since 1972, but since a peak of 59 pairs in 1989 there has been a steep decline with just a handful of pairs throughout the 1990s and it has been barely hanging on as a breeding bird since.

Although one pair frequented the Havens for part of the season in 2003, no nesting attempt was suspected amidst the nearby Arctic Tern colony on Bunes – the first time in over 30 years that Common Tern has not bred (Fig. 3). Two were seen on 25th July and an adult and a juvenile on 19th August.

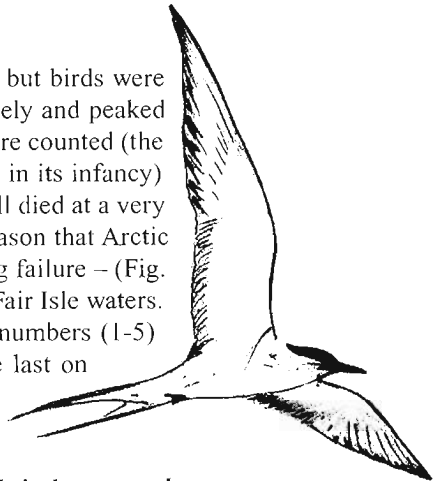
Figure 3: The Rise and Fall of the Fair Isle Common Tern Population



ARCTIC TERN *Sterna paradisaea*

Summer visitor, breeds in large numbers

Nine on 7th May were the first to arrive, but birds were not lingering and numbers fluctuated widely and peaked at just 260 in late May. A mere 80 AIA were counted (the lowest since 1985 – when the colony was in its infancy) and although a few chicks hatched, they all died at a very young age. This is the third successive season that Arctic Terns have experienced complete breeding failure – (Fig. 2) entirely due to the lack of Sandeels in Fair Isle waters. All had departed by mid-July and small numbers (1-5) were occasionally seen offshore until the last on 26th September.



R.J.N

COMMON GUILLEMOT *Uria aalge*

Common autumn passage migrant; breeds in large numbers

Birds were occasionally seen offshore in January/February and large numbers from early March, but only small numbers were ashore by mid-March and the first eggs were not seen until 3rd May – almost two weeks late! Attendance at plots was the lowest since 1990 (a previous disastrous year) and productivity (0.48)

was easily the lowest on record. Since monitoring began in 1988 and prior to this season, Guillemots had averaged 0.74 chicks fledged per AIA at the two monitored plots (Fig. 4). With fewer birds in attendance to guard the colony, gulls and skuas were finding it relatively easy to steal eggs and chicks. Guillemots are usually fairly resilient and are relatively successful even when other species are doing badly, so this is perhaps an indication of just how poor a season 2003 was. There were several signs that adults were having difficulties finding enough fish for their young: a high incidence of unattended chicks at the plots – both adults being forced to search for food rather than one remaining to guard the chick; a low feeding rate during feeding watches; low weights of chicks during ringing trips into colonies and the overall number of chicks ringed was only a third of the normal figure.

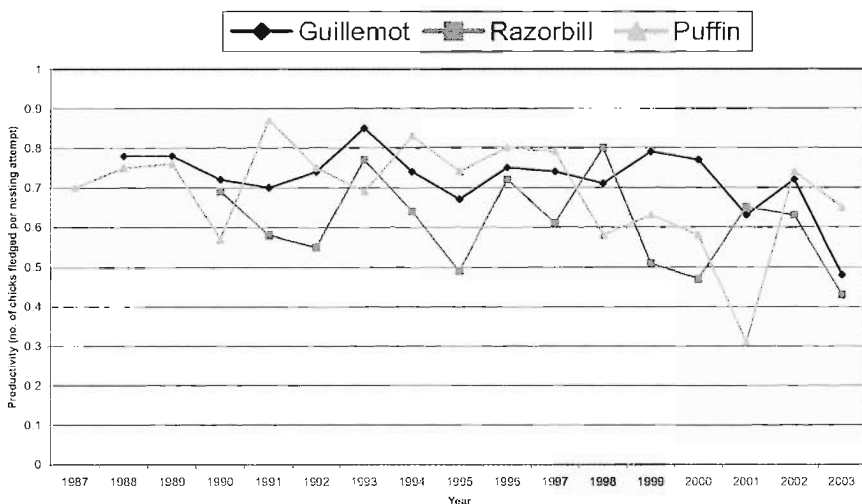


Figure 4: Breeding productivity of Guillemot, Razorbill and Puffin. During the early 1990's, when other seabirds were experiencing difficulties, the auks were less affected but in 2003 even these species had a very poor breeding season.

RAZORBILL *Alca torda*

Summer visitor, breeds in large numbers

Numbers at the Lericum monitoring plot were very similar to that of the previous year – the overall mean count has remained fairly constant each year since 1997. As with Guillemot, Razorbills too experienced their worst breeding season on record (Fig. 4). Productivity at the Easter Lother monitoring site was estimated at 0.43 chicks fledged per egg laid – a 36.8% decrease from 2002. Since monitoring began at this site in 1990, average productivity up to 2002 had been 0.62 (range 0.49-0.80). Fledging weights of chicks were also very low, which has implications for their post-fledging survival. Small numbers were seen offshore in September and early October.

BLACK GUILLEMOT *Cepphus grylle*

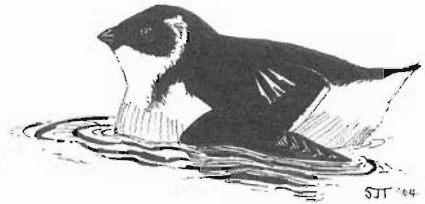
Resident, breeds in moderate numbers

The annual census along the entire east coast of the isle revealed a rise of 26.6% compared to last year, from a count of 124 breeding plumaged adults in 2002 to a total of 157 in 2003. The trend since 1987 seems to show large increases every third year, with significant decreases in the two counts between. (Table of counts). They have not however recovered from the large decline in 1998 and the overall trend since then seems to be one of gradual decline.

LITTLE AUK *Alle alle*

Frequent late autumn/winter visitor

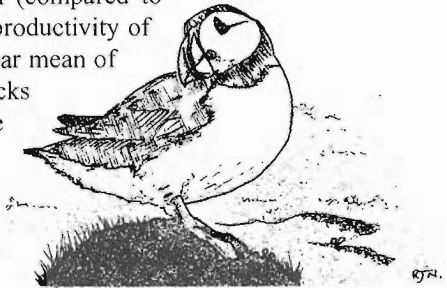
Two were seen off South Light on 25th September and small numbers (1-6) were regularly seen in October and occasionally until the year's end.



ATLANTIC PUFFIN *Fratercula arctica*

Summer visitor, breeds in large numbers

One in North Haven on 23rd January was most unusual. In spring, the first birds were not noted offshore until 3rd April with the first few ashore on 5th. Puffins had an apparently successful breeding season (compared to the other auk species) with an estimated productivity of 0.65, which is close to the previous ten-year mean of 0.67 (Fig. 4). Provisioning rates of chicks during feeding watches were however the lowest on record whilst analysis of food samples showed that just 14.8% of fish were (rather small) Lesser Sandeels whilst 66.5% were Sprats and 18.7% were Gadoids – the second consecutive year that Sprats (rather than Sandeels) have dominated food samples. Small numbers were occasionally seen on sea-watches or from *The Good Shepherd IV* in August, September and up to mid-October.



ROCK PIGEON (DOVE) *Columba livia*

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

In spring, most counts were below 15 but peaks of 34 (18th April) and 20 (21st May) were made. In autumn, 45 on 11th October was the highest count.

+ STOCK PIGEON (DOVE) *Columba oenas*

Scarce spring and autumn migrant

A good year. In spring, two on 5th March had increased to three on 12th (remaining

to 25th) and another three were seen on 8th April with two the following day. In autumn, there were singles on 22nd-23rd October and 3rd-5th November.

COMMON WOOD PIGEON *Columba palumbus*

Frequent spring and autumn migrant

A single on 27th February preceded a record spring count of 48 on 2nd March with numbers dwindling to 12 by 14th with 1-2 others before the end of the month. Further good passage resulted in daily counts of 10-27 from 7th April-12th May and 1-4 until 30th May with regular sightings of 1-5 until 29th June. Singles were seen on 25th July, 5th August, 27th Sept and 1st October before almost daily sightings of 1-6 from 7th October-30th November, apart from 21 on 13th October (falling to 11 on 14th) and nine on 11th November. Finally, singles on 6th & 20th December may have been the same bird.

EURASIAN COLLARED DOVE *Streptopelia decaocto*

Frequent spring migrant, less common in autumn

One on 7th April and 1-2 from 13th-15th preceded regular counts of 1-6 from 22nd April-23rd May (but for ten on 28th April) and 1-12 from 26th May-30th June (apart from a maximum of 19 on 13th June) and 1-4 sporadically in July and early August. The only later records were of 1-2 daily from 12th-19th October.

+ EUROPEAN TURTLE DOVE *Streptopelia turtur*

Regular spring and autumn migrant

In spring, there were singles on 12th, 24th-27th May and 31st May-6th June. One on 5th September was the sole autumn sighting.

+ COMMON CUCKOO *Cuculus canorus*

Regular spring migrant, scarce in autumn

Singles on 11th, 21st & 29th May were the only records.

+ EURASIAN SCOPS OWL *Otus scops* **(0, 9, 25, 92)**

Vagrant; no previous records

First for Fair Isle; one discovered in the Plantation late morning on 31st July was trapped, ringed and admired by the whole island before being released back into the Plantation. It was thought to be a ♂ and was not seen subsequently. It certainly brightened up a quiet summer's day and just proves the old adage that on Fair Isle anything can turn up at any time!

LONG-EARED OWL *Asio otus*

Regular autumn migrant, scarce in spring

Two arrived in January and remained until 24th February (one to 5th March). 1-2 were seen from 24th-26th March then singles almost daily from 18th April-8th May

(including one from 22nd April-4th May) with two on 5th. Later singles were found on 21st May and 7th June, resulting in a spring total of ten birds. In autumn, 1-2 were seen irregularly on just nine dates from 13th October-30th November. An autumn total of ten birds also.

SHORT-EARED OWL *Asio flammeus*

Regular spring and autumn migrant

In spring, one on 25th March was followed by singles on four dates in April and regularly in May until 12th June, with two on 18th & 21st May. In autumn, 1-2 were seen regularly from 15th-30th September, 1-6 from 13th-23rd October and later singles on 28th October, 2nd & 15th November.

+ EUROPEAN NIGHTJAR *Caprimulgus europaeus*

Vagrant; 23 previous records

Recorded for the second year in a row. One was flushed from the top of Wester Lothar on 13th May but dived down the cliff and was not seen again.

COMMON SWIFT *Apus apus*

Frequent spring, summer and autumn migrant

There were irregular sightings of 1-5 birds from 18th May-8th September except for 13 on 25th June.

+ EURASIAN WRYNECK *Jynx torquilla*

Regular spring and autumn migrant

In spring, one was trapped on 26th April and there were further singles on 19th & 20th May. In autumn, there was one on 30th August followed by two on 9th-10th September and another two on 1st October.

+ GREATER SHORT-TOED LARK *Calandrella brachydactyla*

Scarce spring and autumn migrant

As in 2002, there was just one record – a single at Shirva on 26th April.

+ WOOD LARK *Lullula arborea*

Vagrant; 48 previous records since 1948 (22 spring, 26 autumn). (Formerly more numerous)

One frequented the Barkland/Field area from 3rd-12th March and another was around the Puffinn from 15th-22nd November. These are only the 3rd-4th records in the past ten years and the first in spring since 1985.

SKY LARK *Alauda arvensis*

Common spring and autumn migrant, small numbers over-winter; breeds in small numbers

A count of 27 on 20th January were the first noted. Similar numbers were

observed until mid-February when birds started to move – reaching 60 on 27th. Heavy passage during the first half of March saw daily counts of 200-400 and a maximum of 640 on 12th (when the first singing birds were noted) and numbers remained almost consistently above 100 (with two counts over 200) until the end of April. Counts of singing males in May estimated the breeding population at 35-40 pairs – a slight increase on the previous year but overall fairly stable since 1998 at least. Main autumn passage was from mid-September-mid-October when counts exceeded 100 daily and were over 200 on four dates (peak of 240 on 27th September). Numbers remained around 50-70 until the end of October then 15-40 in November and just a handful stayed into December.

SAND MARTIN *Riparia riparia*

Regular spring migrant, less common in autumn

In spring, there were irregular sightings of 1-3 birds from 8th April-27th June and a maximum count of five on 7th May. In autumn, 1-2 on five dates in August were followed by just one more, on 14th September.

BARN SWALLOW *Hirundo rustica*

Common spring and autumn migrant; occasionally breeds

In spring, our first was not until 16th April and birds were daily until mid-June with stragglers to the end of the month. Heaviest passage was in May, with peaks of 40 (4th), 70 (5th), 46 (11th), 40 (23rd) & 51 (26th). One pair remained to breed and fledged four young on 9th August, from a nest at Upper Stoneybrek. Small numbers passed through irregularly in August and September (peak of 16 on 1st September) and the last on 2nd October.

HOUSE MARTIN *Delichon urbica*

Frequent spring and autumn migrant; has bred

In spring, singles on 25th & 27th April preceded almost daily counts of 2-12 through May until 17th June and peaks of 15 on 29th May and 16 on 23rd May & 1st June. Singles were seen on a further three dates in June and two in July before three on 6th August and one on 9th preceded 1-4 daily from 25th August-3rd September.

+ RICHARD'S PIPIT *Anthus novaeseelandiae*

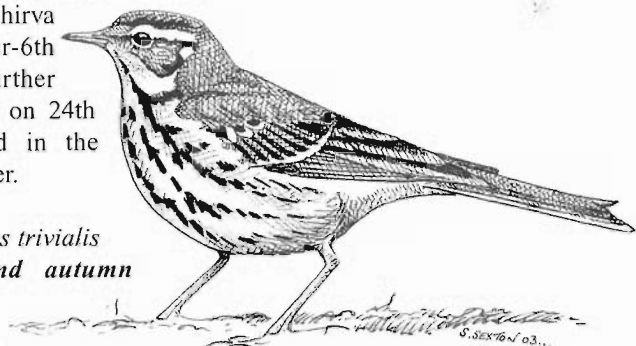
Scarce autumn migrant, vagrant in spring

Four from 13th-18th October had dwindled to one by 24th, which was joined by another on 27th. Both remained until 3rd November, with one to the 7th.

+ OLIVE-BACKED PIPIT *Anthus hodgsoni* (62, 115, 138, 249)

Rare autumn migrant, vagrant in spring

One was present at Shirva from 23rd October-6th November and further singles were at Hoili on 24th October and trapped in the Gully on 3rd November.



TREE PIPIT *Anthus trivialis*

Frequent spring and autumn migrant

In spring, the first was on 24th April and birds were daily until 27th May with one later, on 5th June. Counts varied from 1-15 (indicating a turnover of birds) and with peaks of 23 (5th-6th May) & 29 (9th May). A poor autumn saw sporadic singles on four dates in August (from 13th), more regular counts of 1-2 in September (but for three on 24th) and October, until the last on 20th.

+ PECHORA PIPIT *Anthus gustavi* (39, 53, 55, 72)

Rare autumn migrant

One frequented Schoolton Ditch and the rig at Quoy from 5th-14th October – the 40th Fair Isle record.

MEADOW PIPIT *Anthus pratensis*

Common spring and autumn migrant; breeds in small numbers

The first arrivals were on 17th March but main passage did not get underway until 23rd and there were daily counts in excess of 40 birds from 26th. Two waves of heavier passage saw counts exceed 100 daily from 4th-8th April (peak of 250 on 7th) and on most days from 21st April-4th May (max 164 on 3rd). Just the breeding birds remained by mid-May. Autumn passage commenced in mid-August and peak passage, from 23rd August-18th September, saw daily counts in excess of 200 birds and over 300 on seven dates (max. of 320 on 30th August). Counts remained above 100 (and over 200 on three dates) until 6th October before tailing off towards the end of the month with small numbers into November and stragglers in December.

+ RED-THROATED PIPIT *Anthus cervinus* (68, 100, 131, 423)

Rare spring and autumn migrant

A fine ♂ frequented the fields south of Shirva on 16th-17th May and a possible was heard only at Wirvie on 17th September.

ROCK PIPIT *Anthus petrosus*

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

Present all year and no counts attempted. An individual of the Scandinavian race *A.p.littoralis* was identified on 21st May.

YELLOW WAGTAIL *Motacilla flava*

Regular spring and autumn migrant

A quiet spring saw one of the Blue-headed race *M.f.flava* on 11th May, followed by others on 19th & 22nd, with individuals of the British race *M.f.flavissima* on 23rd May and of the Grey-headed race *M.f.thunbergi* on 31st. Additionally, birds un-assigned to race were present on 18th (2), 19th, 21st (2) & 28th May and 1st June. A total of 12 birds. In autumn, there were just singles un-assigned to race on 1st & 11th September and a grey and white individual of one of the eastern races from 19th-28th October.

+ CITRINE WAGTAIL *Motacilla citreola* (45, 73, 90, 146)

Rare autumn migrant, vagrant in spring

Single first-winter birds were present on 7th, 20th & 29th-30th September.

GREY WAGTAIL *Motacilla cinerea*

Scarce spring and autumn migrant; has bred

In spring, the first was on 9th-14th April with further birds on six dates in May (including two on 24th) and two in June (last on 8th). One was seen on 12th July. In autumn, the first was on 23rd September and counts of 1-3 were made almost daily from 27th September-6th November.

WHITE/PIED WAGTAIL *Motacilla alba*

Frequent spring and autumn migrant; occasional breeder

As every year, the first to arrive were Pied Wagtails *M.a.yarrellii* with singles on 20th & 25th February followed by another on 11th March, four the next day, others on 18th & 22nd and birds were seen daily from 25th March. Passage was fairly light with double-figure counts on ten dates (max. of 17 on 8th April) until 10th May. White Wagtails *M.a.alba* were first seen on 26th-27th March but not again until daily sightings from 17th April-20th May and stragglers sporadically until 25th June. Passage was mainly in the period 26th April-10th May when peak counts of 13, 14 & 17 were received. Three pairs of Pied Wagtails remained to breed and the first young fledged on 11th June. Autumn passage began in early August, with main movements from mid-August to mid-September, but numbers peaked at just 34 (22nd August) and 40 (4th September). The last was seen on 27th October.

BOHEMIAN WAXWING *Bombycilla garrulax*

Scarce/irruptive autumn migrant, rare in spring

One was present on 20th January. In autumn, the first in Britain arrived on 16th

October followed by another on 20th, rising to ten on 22nd and 12 the following day. A single on 24th October was followed by six on 26th, then 1-2 daily from 31st October-3rd November. Finally, there was one on 21st November.

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 noted that, following a disappointing year in 2002 (21 territories found), numbers had risen sharply in 2003 to an estimated 34 territories. From a peak of c52 territories (in 1964-65) and a low of ten territories (in 1981) the population rose to 30-35 during the 1990's, peaking at 37-40 in 1997, before falling to 29 in 1998 and has recently stabilised at a lower level of 26-30 territories. The increase in 2003 therefore is possibly due to the relatively mild previous winter. Migrant individuals of the nominate race *T.t.troglodytes* were regularly recorded in April and early May (peak of three on 16th April) and occasionally from mid-September to early November (peak of three on 3rd November).

HEDGE ACCENTOR (DUNNOCK) *Prunella modularis*

Frequent spring and autumn migrant; has bred

Unusual February sightings of singles in the Gully on 5th and Barkland on 12th may have referred to the same individual. In March, 1-2 were seen daily from 5th-23rd involving 3-4 birds. Main spring passage was from 9th April-13th May with daily counts of 1-6 and a peak of seven on 10th April. A light autumn passage, from 20th September saw 1-6 daily until 29th October (but for a max. of nine on 27th September) and later birds on 8th-9th & six on 13th November.

EUROPEAN ROBIN *Erithacus rubecula*

Common spring and autumn migrant

Up to five over-wintering birds were counted in January/February. A very light spring passage saw 1-8 recorded daily from late March-10th May, with occasional stragglers until 11th June. Peak passage was in late April to early May when counts of 20 (23rd), 13 (26th) & 12 (3rd) were made. In autumn, 1-3 were counted regularly from 4th September until heavier passage from 14th October-16th November saw numbers regularly fluctuate from 10-30 and with peaks of 35 on three dates. Up to ten were recorded regularly into December.

+ THRUSH NIGHTINGALE *Luscinia luscinia* (46, 62, 90, 147)

Rare spring migrant (42 previous records), vagrant in autumn (four records)

One was found in the Havens on the evening of 25th May and was trapped there the following day.

+ **COMMON NIGHTINGALE** *Luscinia megarinchos* (46, 73, NA, NA)

Rare spring migrant (39 previous records), vagrant in autumn (seven records)

One was in Hjukni Geo on 4th May and another was found in the byre at Quoy on 25th August.

+ **SIBERIAN RUBYTHROAT** *Luscinia calliope* (1, 2, 2, 3)

Vagrant; one previous record

A first-winter ♀ was found at Utra on the morning of 17th October. It sparked Fair Isle's biggest ever twitch and was highly mobile around the south end of the isle until the 19th. This was Fair Isle's second and only Britain's fourth record (see *Birding World* 16 (10): 427-428 and *Birding Scotland* 6 (4): 181-182). Previous Fair Isle record (first British record) was a first-winter ♂ from 9th-11th October 1975.

BLUETHROAT *Luscinia svecica*

Regular spring and autumn migrant

A fairly disappointing spring saw just 1-2 recorded on five dates from 16th-30th May – a total of just seven birds. In autumn, 1-2 were recorded from 12th-15th September, then 1-3 daily from 20th September-1st October and later birds on 17th (2) & 18th October – an estimated total of eight or nine birds.



+ **RED-FLANKED BLUETAIL** *Tarsiger cyanurus* (3, 7, 11, 29)

Vagrant; three previous records

One was seen briefly at Gunnawark by one lucky observer on 16th October before it headed over Burrashield and was lost – the fourth record and first for ten years (previous records; 29th-30th September 1981, 21st September 1984 & 16th September 1993).

BLACK REDSTART *Phoenicurus ochurus*

Regular spring migrant, scarce in autumn

One on 24th February was unusual. In spring, birds were recorded daily from 17th-26th April (peak of four on 23rd) followed by a single on 1st May and four on 5th – a total of 12 birds. Autumn passage was protracted but numbers were typically few. Two on 1st August were followed by singles on 4th & 21st August, 4th-5th September and 27th September-8th October. Then 1-3 were seen daily from 11th-18th October and finally a male on 15th November – an estimated autumn total of 12-14 birds.

COMMON REDSTART *Phoenicurus phoenicurus*

Frequent spring and autumn migrant

A light spring passage saw a ♂ at North Light on 23rd April, followed by regular counts of 1-4 from 5th-29th May and later singles on 10th & 12th June. In autumn, 1-2 were recorded sporadically (20 dates) from 20th August-23rd October and a peak of four on 17th October. Finally, a ♂ was at Barkland on 9th November.

WHINCHAT *Saxicola rubetra*

Frequent spring and autumn migrant

In spring, a ♂ on 25th April was followed by almost daily sightings of 1-3 from 3rd-31st May but for a peak of six on 5th and five the next day. Autumn passage commenced on 13th August and counts of 1-6 were made almost daily until the last on 23rd October.

STONECHAT *Saxicola torquata*

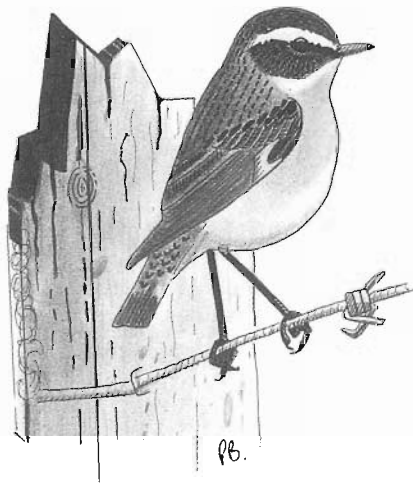
Scarce spring and autumn migrant

An excellent spring saw two on 24th February, rising to seven the following day, then 1-6 recorded almost daily until 27th March with further singles on 16th-18th & 24th April and 12th & 15th May. By contrast, autumn produced just a single on 19th-20th September.

NORTHERN WHEATEAR *Oenanthe oenanthe*

Common spring and autumn migrant; breeds in small/moderate numbers

The first, on 30th March, was followed by three on 2nd April, one on 4th and birds were daily from 6th April. Counts over 50 were received from 15th April and maximums of 144 & 171, on 16th & 17th April respectively. The first Greenland Wheatears *O.o.leucorhoa* were noted on 25th April and passage of



this race swelled numbers in May, producing four counts over 100 (peak of 114 on 15th) during the first half of the month. Only the breeding birds were left by late May. Autumn passage commenced in late July and daily counts over 100 in the first half of August peaked at 145 on 15th. Numbers then dropped to 50-90 daily until 26th August (but for 115 on 24th), then 15-40 until 21st September (except for an influx of 90 on 16th, with 70 on 17th) and below 20 from 22nd September and single figures from 5th October, until the last on 21st October.

RING OUZEL *Turdus torquatus*

Frequent spring and autumn migrant



In spring, a ♂ on 8th April was followed by five on 13th and 1-5 regularly until 5th May, except for a fall of 17 on 23rd April which rose to 22 the following day and was down to eight by 25th. Occasional ones or twos were seen until 26th May and a late ♂ on 12th June. In autumn, 1-2 were seen on most days from 21st-29th September then none until four on 13th October, peaked at seven on 14th and dwindled to two by 18th. A ♂ on 22nd October was the last.

COMMON BLACKBIRD *Turdus merula*

Common spring and autumn migrant, small numbers over-winter; has bred

Counts of 30-40 in January/February were occasionally boosted by cold weather movements, reaching a peak of 60 on 5th February. Some passage in early March saw numbers reach 90 on 5th and counts of 20-50 were daily until the last week, when numbers dropped to single figures. Counts remained below 20 throughout April but for a period of heavier passage from 8th-12th, which saw numbers reach 80 on 9th. Small numbers (1-4) were seen throughout May and stragglers until 16th June. A ♂ on 10th July was not unusual and further singles were seen on four dates in August. Singles on 1st & 8th September were not followed until 1-4 daily from 28th September-11th October. There then followed a period of heavy passage from 13th-23rd October, which saw almost daily counts over 100, over 200 on three dates and peaking at 300 on 15th. Further passage in November saw a further six counts over 100, including 260 (11th), 270 (13th) & 150 (30th). Good numbers (30-60) were recorded well into December.

DARK-THROATED THRUSH *Turdus ruficollis*
(7, 19, 24, 51)

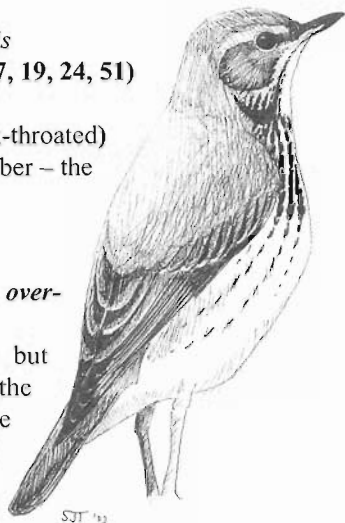
Vagrant; seven previous records (six in autumn)

A first-winter ♀ of the race *T. r. atrogularis* (Black-throated) was seen, only briefly, at Hjukni Geo on 16th October – the first autumn record since 1994.

FIELDFARE *Turdus pilaris*

Common spring and autumn migrant, often over-winters

Almost ever present during January/February but numbers fluctuated widely as birds responded to the weather – a count of 65 on 20th January was the highest made. Single figures were recorded irregularly in March and April until a large fall on 23rd April resulted in a count of 650, falling to 350 the following day, rising to 450 on 25th with 300 on 26th. Just 34 remained by 27th and 61(28th) & 69 (3rd May) were the last significant counts, with stragglers (1-5) until 20th May. Singles arrived on 18th & 24th August and 1-6 were seen almost daily from 5th September-8th October. As in spring, main autumn passage commenced with a fall of 180 on 13th October, with 900 the following day, rising to 1,000 on 15th falling to 600 the next day and dwindling to 120 by 19th. Counts remained above 50 daily (over 100 on four dates) until 15th November with smaller numbers (< 20) into December.



SONG THRUSH *Turdus philomelos*

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

Unusually high numbers were seen in January/February; at least 15 were counted regularly, 30 on two dates and 35 on 27th February. Daily counts in March and April were below 20 with just 1-3 irregularly in May and stragglers until 17th June. In summer, single birds were regularly seen from 22nd July-8th September. Autumn passage commenced in mid-September but just single-figure counts were received daily until 50 on 13th October signalled the start of some heavier passage. Numbers remained over 50 until 22nd October, with peaks of 90 (15th) & 70 (22nd), then fluctuated between 5-30 until December when single figures became the norm.

REDWING *Turdus iliacus*

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

Counts of 10-40 were made throughout January/February/early March. A light spring passage saw birds trickle through from the end of March, with peaks in April of 33 (6th), 43 (8th) & 45 (25th) and stragglers throughout May until 16th June.

Autumn passage commenced from 11th September but counts were mainly single figures until a fall of 205 on 3rd October. Main passage was from 11th October-3rd November when numbers exceeded 100 daily and peaked at 1,000 on 14th, falling to 450 on 15th. Passage continued up to mid-November with two counts over 200 and a further two counts above 100. Counts of 25-50 were received until the year's end.

MISTLE THRUSH *Turdus viscivorus*

Scarce spring and autumn migrant

In spring, 1-4 were seen from 2nd-8th March, culminating in a flock of five on 9th and a single on 14th with later birds on 21st-23rd (2) & 27th April. In autumn, one on 23rd-24th September was followed by sporadic singles or doubles on eight dates from 11th October-25th November.

+ LANCEOLATED WARBLER *Locustella lanceolata* (64, 78, 80, 96)

Rare autumn migrant (64 previous records)

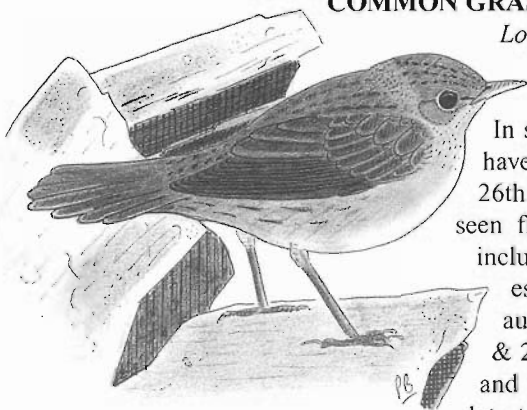
Five records – all in September. The first was seen, briefly but well, in Schoolton Ditch on 8th, the second reported from Charlie's trees on 11th, then a flighty individual at Meadow Burn on 21st frustrated the 40 or so birders trying to see it – even more so when it miraculously disappeared into the grass! Those people still present on 28th were however rewarded with a classic individual, which showed extremely well as it scurried along the Gilly Burn and this was followed by another, the fifth of the autumn, at Pund the next day.

COMMON GRASSHOPPER WARBLER

Locustella naevia

Regular spring and autumn migrant

In spring, one on 20th April may still have been present on 25th, with two on 26th. In May, singles were regularly seen from 1st-19th, with two on 8th – including a reeling bird at Barkland – an estimated spring total of 11 birds. In autumn, singles were found on 25th & 27th August, 5th & 30th September and 17th-23rd October – equalling the latest ever record.



+ SAVI'S WARBLER *Locustella luscinioides* (5, 7, 7, NA)

Vagrant; five previous records (six individuals) – all in spring

One was trapped in the Gilly Burn on 30th September. It was thought, from

plumage tones and patterns, to be of the eastern race *L.l.fusca* – the first autumn record of Savi's Warbler for Scotland and the first British record of this race.

SEDGE WARBLER *Acrocephalus schoenobaenus*

Regular spring migrant, less common in autumn

In spring, the first from 23rd-30th April was followed by almost daily counts of 1-5 from 5th May-8th June and a straggler on 15th June. Autumn records comprised singles daily from 7th-12th August (but for two on 11th) and further singles on eight dates up to 15th September.

+ PADDYFIELD WARBLER *Acrocephalus agricola* (15, 18, 23, 48)

Vagrant; autumn (12 previous records) and spring (3 previous records)

One was watched for a few minutes on the cliffs at Lerness on 14th October – the latest ever record by ten days.

+ BLYTH'S REED WARBLER *Acrocephalus dumetorum* (18, 24, 34, 56)

Vagrant; autumn (13 previous records) and spring (5 previous records)

One, trapped on 11th September, remained until 17th and another was watched at close quarters at Gunnawark on 28th September.

+ MARSH WARBLER *Acrocephalus palustris*

Scarce spring migrant, rare in autumn

The sole spring record was of one at Schoolton on 16th June. A good autumn saw singles on 24th August, 4th-5th September and two on the late date of 1st October, with one remaining until 4th.

EURASIAN REED WARBLER *Acrocephalus scirpaceus*

Scarce spring migrant, regular in autumn

In spring, singles on 10th & 26th May were the only records. One on 5th July was a rare summer sighting. In autumn, singles on 11th & 13th August were followed by 1-3 daily from 19th-29th August, 1-2 from 6th-10th September and singles on 17th, 28th & 30th September.

+ THICK-BILLED WARBLER *Acrocephalus aedon* (1, 3, 3, 3)

Vagrant; one previous record

The bird of the spring. One trapped early morning on 16th May was released into the Observatory Plantation where it remained all day. It was seen again briefly, in atrocious weather conditions, near Midway the following morning but could not be relocated later. This constituted the fourth British and Shetland record and fifth for Europe, but first in spring. Previous Fair Isle record; 6th October 1955 – first for Britain and Europe.

+ ICTERINE WARBLER *Hippolais icterina*

Scarce spring and autumn migrant

Only recorded in spring; one on 24th May became two the following day with others on 31st May, 2nd June and 5th July.

+ SUBALPINE WARBLER *Sylvia cantillans* (63, 128, 179, 493)

Rare spring migrant (61 previous records), vagrant in autumn (two records)

A ♀ was at the Sheep Cru and Plantation on 21st May and possibly the same bird at Schoolton the following day. Another ♀ was at Leogh on 3rd June and at Midway on 6th.

BARRED WARBLER *Sylvia nisoria*

Regular autumn migrant, vagrant in spring

One on 8th August preceded almost daily counts of 1-3 from 18th August-30th September and a later bird on 14th October – an estimated 20-25 birds.

LESSER WHITETHROAT *Sylvia curruca*

Frequent spring and autumn migrant

In spring, two on 5th May were followed by almost daily sightings of 1-3 from 12th-24th May (with a peak of four on 21st) and 1-2 almost daily from 1st-8th June. In autumn, two on 24th August preceded almost daily sightings until 18th October. Most counts were of 1-4 and eight on 28th September was the maximum. Finally, there was a late straggler on 1st November.

COMMON WHITETHROAT *Sylvia communis*

Frequent spring migrant, less common in autumn

Spring passage saw almost daily counts of 1-4 from 23rd April-31st May and stragglers on four dates up to 26th June. Autumn passage recorded 1-3 daily from 18th-24th August and regularly from 1st September-6th October.

GARDEN WARBLER *Sylvia borin*

Frequent spring and autumn migrant

In spring, an early bird on 23rd April was followed by further birds on 4th, 6th, & 12th (2) May before daily counts from 17th-31st May and 5th-9th June. Just very small numbers (1-5) were seen with a peak of seven on 5th June. Autumn passage, from 1st August-3rd October saw almost daily counts of 1-5 and a maximum of ten on 8th September. Finally, one on 17th October was the last.

BLACKCAP *Sylvia atricapilla*

Common spring and autumn migrant

In spring, the first was a ♂ sporting a Belgian ring on 15th April. A ♂ on 25th April, then three further singles up to 3rd May, preceded five on 5th May and

birds were then daily until 6th June. As usual, numbers were very low (1-5) with peaks of eight on 16th May and seven 26th-27th May. In autumn, 1-7 were recorded daily from 8th September-12th October (apart from 12 on 1st October), then a period of heavier passage saw 20 on 13th rising to 35 on 14th, with 25 the following day and dwindling to nine by 20th. Another fall on 23rd October recorded 25 birds and small numbers were then seen until 22nd November and a late ♂ on 3rd December.

+ **ARCTIC WARBLER** *Phylloscopus borealis* (71, 125, 156, 250)
Rare autumn migrant (67 previous records), vagrant in spring/summer (four records)

A very showy individual was well watched, as it fed voraciously, near Lower Leogh on the afternoon of 20th September.

+ **PALLAS'S WARBLER** *Phylloscopus proregulus*
Vagrant; 27 previous records

An excellent autumn saw 2-3 daily from 13th-16th October (five birds) and further singles on 23rd October and 17th November.

YELLOW-BROWED WARBLER *Phylloscopus inornatus*
Regular autumn migrant

An excellent autumn. Three on 11th-12th September (with one to 14th) were followed by daily sightings from 19th September-8th October and again from 13th-28th October. Small influxes saw peak counts of 8 (20th), 11 (28th) & 15 (30th) in September and 7 (15th) & 10 (17th) in October. An estimated total of 48-55 individuals is a record total (previous best is 33 in 1967).

+ **HUME'S WARBLER** *Phylloscopus humei* (0, 0, 5, 49)
Vagrant; no previous records

One, found (and trapped) at Midway on 13th November, remained until 14th and another was at Upper Leogh from 17th-23rd November – the first and third records for Shetland (one was found on Bressay in between).

+ **RADDE'S WARBLER** *Phylloscopus schwartzi* (4, 23, 46, 240)
Vagrant; four previous records

One was watched for a few minutes at the Kirn o' Scroo on 13th October.

+ **DUSKY WARBLER** *Phylloscopus fuscatus* (10, 34, 52, 249)
Vagrant; ten previous records

One was trapped in the Plantation on 22nd October.

WOOD WARBLER *Phylloscopus sibilatrix*

Regular spring and autumn migrant

Spring records were all in May, with singles on seven dates from 4th-31st. In autumn, one on 26th August was followed by another on 7th September and 1-4 daily from 15th-20th September.

COMMON CHIFFCHAFF *Phylloscopus collybita*

Frequent spring and autumn migrant

In spring, early singles were seen on 16th & 24th-25th March followed by another on 5th-6th April, two on 8th and ten on 9th. Sightings became daily from 13th April-25th May, with stragglers up to 25th June. Most counts were below five but seven were recorded on three dates, eight once and ten on 1st May. Many (especially in April) resembled the Scandinavian race *P.c.abietinus*. In autumn, one on 2nd September was followed by two on 11th and then daily sightings (of 1-5) from 16th September-1st October. Further passage from, 6th October-18th November, saw slightly larger numbers and peaks in October of 12 (16th, 22nd, 26th) & 13 (20th). Almost all birds up to mid-October were of the nominate race *P.c.collybita* whilst the majority in late October and November were thought to be of the Siberian race *P.c.tristis* (max. eight on 20th October) with a few *P.c.abietinus* (max four on 1st November). Finally, single Scandinavian race birds were seen on 27th November and 17th December.

WILLOW WARBLER *Phylloscopus trochilus*

Frequent spring and autumn migrant

In spring, the first was on 14th April and five on 16th signalled the start of daily passage up to 21st May, with regular stragglers until 10th June. Mainly single-figure counts were involved with peaks of 14 (23rd) & 12 (26th) in April and 12 (5th), 13 (7th) & 11(21st) in May. In autumn, passage was daily from 1st August-13th October, with stragglers until 19th October. Mainly low single figures were involved but heavier passage in late August and early September saw almost daily double-figure counts and peaks of 16 (27th August) and 20 (8th September).

GOLDCREST *Regulus regulus*

Frequent spring and autumn migrant

A single on 16th March preceded regular passage from 22nd March-27th April and stragglers on 3rd-4th & 16th May. Most passed through in the period 8th-15th April with peaks of 25, 27 & 30 (13th). In autumn, counts of 4-18 were daily from 4th September-9th October, then five days (13th-17th) of heavier passage saw daily counts over 100 (peak 180 on 13th), with still 30-70 daily until 24th. Numbers then rapidly dwindled to single figures by November, until 17th, with a later bird on 27th and a most unusual record on 19th December – the latest ever!

SPOTTED FLYCATCHER *Muscicapa striata*

Frequent spring and autumn migrant

Spring passage commenced with three on 4th May and birds were almost daily from 15th May-12th June, with stragglers up to 26th June. Numbers were small, with just single figures recorded, except for 14 on 5th June and 15 on 7th. As usual, autumn numbers were even less with singles on 4th & 9th September followed by 1-3 daily from 20th September-3rd October.

+ RED-BREASTED FLYCATCHER *Ficedula parva*

Scarce autumn migrant, rare in spring

One in South Naaversgil on 7th June was the first spring record since 1999. In autumn, there were four on 20th September (with two on 21st), then two on 28th, a single on 13th October and finally two on 26th October.

PIED FLYCATCHER *Ficedula hypoleuca*

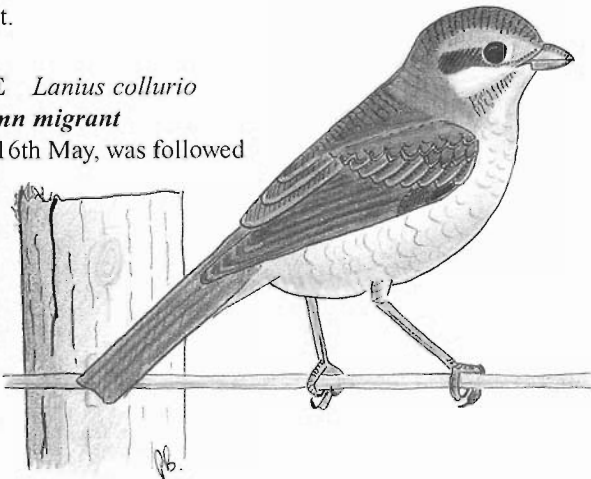
Frequent spring and autumn migrant

A light spring passage saw a ♂ on 1st May followed by irregular sightings of 1-2 until 23rd May and a straggler on 5th June – no more than 12-15 birds in total. Autumn passage commenced with 1-2 from 23rd-27th August then almost daily sightings from 5th September-1st October. All counts were just single figures but for 11 on 9th and 19 on 11th September. Finally, two on 13th October were the last.

RED-BACKED SHRIKE *Lanius collurio*

Regular spring and autumn migrant

In spring, a ♂ trapped on 16th May, was followed by counts of 2-5 almost daily until 31st (with a peak of six on 21st) and 1-2 daily from 5th-9th June – an estimated total of 16-20 birds. In autumn, a juvenile trapped on the rather late date of 16th October was the only record.



+ LESSER GREY SHRIKE *Lanius minor* (19, 38, 58, 160)

Vagrant; 19 previous records (12 in spring, 7 in autumn)

One found at the Kirk on the afternoon of 5th June was the first since 1993. The one previous to that was back in 1984!

EURASIAN JACKDAW *Corvus monedula*

Scarce spring and autumn migrant

A light passage in the last week of April (involving at least 15 birds) peaked at eight birds on 25th, then 1-2 daily from 23rd May-1st June.

ROOK *Corvus frugilegus*

Regular spring migrant, less common in autumn

In spring, one on 20th February was followed by 1-2 almost daily from 1st-12th March then later birds on 9th (2) & 28th (3) April and 7th May. One on 20th October was the sole autumn sighting.

CARRION CROW *Corvus corone*

Frequent spring migrant, less common in autumn

One on 20th January may have been over-wintering. Sightings of 1-3 were regular in March and April until daily passage from 25th April-31st May saw regular counts over ten and peaks of 25 (5th & 9th May) & 20 (30th May). Counts of 1-4 were regular in June and a single, paired with a Hooded Crow, was seen occasionally in July. In autumn, 1-3 were seen daily from early August-mid-October, with a peak of five on 21st September. A single remained into November, with possibly the same bird still in December.

HOODED CROW *Corvus cornix*

Resident, breeds in small numbers

The two or three pairs of resident birds cloud passage but a peak spring count of just nine birds (on two dates) suggests that it was negligible.

No pairs are thought to have bred successfully this year.

Peak monthly counts of nine (15th September) and ten (9th October) suggest that autumn passage was also very light.

(HYBRID CARRION X HOODED CROW)

Corvus corone x cornix

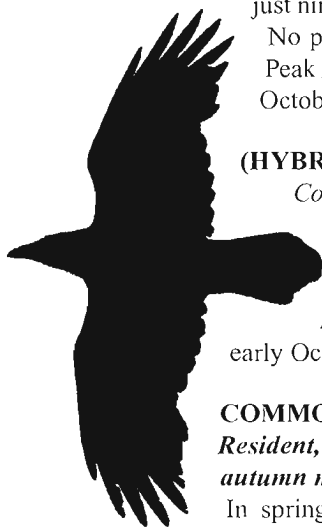
Frequent spring & autumn migrant

In spring, 1-2 were irregularly seen in April and May. In autumn, 1-2 were frequently recorded in August/September with slightly more (up to four) in early October.

COMMON RAVEN *Corvus corax*

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

In spring, the resident birds (three pairs) were boosted by some passage in April and early May, with regular counts



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around ten and peaks of 27 (6th April), 17 (10th April) & 18 (3rd May). No significant autumn passage was observed.

STARLING *Sturnus vulgaris*

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

Present all year. Peak spring count was 600 on 25th April. Starlings had a successful breeding season and although hatching success (89%) was about average, fledging success (94%) and overall breeding success (84%) were very high. No large influxes were noted in autumn.

HOUSE SPARROW *Passer domesticus*

Resident, breeds in small numbers

Present all year. Counts in April estimated the population at around 80 birds. No autumn counts were made.

+ EURASIAN TREE SPARROW *Passer montanus*

Scarce spring and autumn migrant

Two on 11th-12th May (one to 13th) were the only record.

CHAFFINCH *Fringilla coelebs*

Common spring and autumn migrant

In winter, two were seen regularly in January/February. Spring passage commenced on 16th March and 1-5 were recorded almost daily until 5th May (but for a peak of eight on 16th April) with stragglers on 16th & 18th May and 23rd June. Autumn passage commenced with five on 20th September and sightings were daily until mid-November. Most counts were below eight with peaks of 15 on 23rd September and 10 (15th), 12 (19th) & 25 (29th) in October. Finally, 1-3 were occasionally recorded in early December – the last on 12th.

BRAMBLING *Fringilla montifringilla*

Common spring and autumn migrant

One on 31st January was most unusual. Spring passage, from 4th April-8th May (with a straggler 16th-19th May), was mainly concentrated in the period 23rd April-5th May when counts averaged 30-50 daily but for a peak of 102 on 24th April. Mainly just single figures were recorded outside these dates. Autumn passage, from 20th September-1st November (with stragglers up to 20th November) involved almost daily counts of 5-30 but also several larger influxes; 45 (28th September) and 120 (13th), 60 (14th), 56 (17th), 70 (22nd) & 55 (23rd) in October.

EUROPEAN GREENFINCH *Carduelis chloris*

Regular spring and autumn migrant

The earliest ever spring record on 8th-10th March was followed by other early birds, on 25th (2) & 27th March. In April, a single on 3rd, three on 9th and 1-2 from

22nd-28th preceded singles on 1st, 3rd & 19th May. In autumn, four on 12th October preceded daily counts of 25-55 from 13th-21st, but for a peak of 80 on 16th. Smaller numbers (7-17) were seen until 25th October with stragglers (1-3) regularly until 6th November and a late bird on 23rd November.

+ EUROPEAN GOLDFINCH *Carduelis carduelis*

Scarce spring and autumn migrant

In spring, a single on 5th-6th May, four on 19th May and one from 18th-19th June - a record spring total of six birds. By contrast, one from 23rd-25th October was the only autumn record.

EURASIAN SISKIN *Carduelis spinus*

Frequent autumn migrant, less common in spring

A good spring passage saw birds recorded daily from 19th March-14th April, regularly from 18th April-4th May and daily again from 6th-31st May. Counts were mainly of low single figures but included peaks of 11 (29th March), 12 (1st April) & 15 (9th April). Singles on 8th & 11th June were the last of the spring. Autumn passage commenced on 6th September and was daily until 18th October with just one later bird, on 3rd November. Mainly low single-figure counts were involved except during 14th-20th September when numbers peaked at 16 on 17th-18th.

COMMON LINNET *Carduelis cannabina*

Regular spring migrant, scarce in autumn

In spring, there were irregular counts of 1-4 birds from 8th April-2nd June except for peaks of 11 (22nd April), 8 (24th April) & 6 (5th May). In autumn, seven on 30th September preceded a single on 2nd October and seven more on 5th. There were no more until 1-3 regularly from 17th-30th October and two late singles on 17th & 27th November.

TWITE *Carduelis flavirostris*

Common spring and autumn migrant, small numbers over-winter; breeds in small numbers

The maximum winter count was 33 on 12th February. Spring passage is hard to judge in this species but regular counts of 25-45 from late March to late May (peak of 57 on 13th April) suggest there may have been some light passage. Numbers dropped to around 20 in early June. Numbers began to build up from early August and were over 100 almost daily from mid-month until late October. Numbers peaked in early September with four counts over 200 and a maximum 300 on 5th. Up to 50 were counted in November and small numbers (up to ten) in December.

+ LESSER REDPOLL *Carduelis cabaret*

Scarce migrant in spring, summer and autumn

One on 15th-21st September, two on 12th October and another on 15th-16th October were the only confirmed sightings.

COMMON REDPOLL *Carduelis flammea*

Frequent spring and autumn migrant

Birds of the Fenno-Scandian race *C.f.flammea* ('Mealy' Redpoll) were recorded as follows: six on 20th January and a single on 15th February were unusual winter records. In spring, 1-4 were recorded regularly from 17th April-11th June. A few unidentified Redpolls in May were probably also 'Mealy' Redpolls whilst one on 28th July could have been either a 'Mealy' or a Lesser Redpoll. One was seen on 18th August. In autumn, there were occasional counts of 1-3 from 7th-20th September and 2-6 daily from 9th-17th October and sporadic ones or twos up to 22nd November. Finally, two were reported on 27th December.

Individuals of the Greenland (*C.f.rostrata*) or Iceland (*C.f.islandica*) race were identified on 26th-28th September, 14th, 16th & 26th October and 7th-8th (2), 17th & 22nd (2) November.

+ ARCTIC REDPOLL *Carduelis hornemanni*

Rare autumn migrant, vagrant in spring

Singles of the nominate race *C.h.hornemanni* (Hornemann's Redpoll) were found at South Light from 22nd-27th September and on Vatnagard on 2nd-3rd October.

COMMON CROSSBILL *Loxia curvirostra*

Scarce/irruptive late summer/autumn migrant

Recorded in every month from March to October. In spring, two on 23rd March were the earliest ever, with one on 26th. In April, one present from 1st-15th was joined by another on 13th and five on 14th. There were no further birds until daily sightings (of 1-4) from 22nd May-14th June (with a peak of six on 14th) and 1-2 on five further dates up to 27th June. Singles on 12th & 28th July preceded occasional counts of 1-7 from 2nd-20th August and of 1-4 from 20th-28th September. Finally, singles were seen on 12th & 22nd October.

COMMON ROSEFINCH *Carpodacus erythrinus*

Regular spring and autumn migrant

In spring, one on 23rd May was followed by singles daily from 27th May-2nd June (but for two on 28th), on 13th June, 22nd-30th June and 3rd & 5th July. One on 1st August was a very early autumn migrant. Two on 26th-27th August were then followed by counts of 1-5 daily from 5th-20th September and 1-3 daily from 26th September-5th October.

COMMON BULLFINCH *Pyrrhula pyrrhula*

Scarce autumn migrant, less regular in spring

Three on 22nd October were followed by sporadic counts of 1-2 until 16th November – a total of 11 birds.

+ **HAWFINCH** *Coccothraustes coccothraustes*

Scarce spring and autumn migrant

In spring, a ♂ from 2nd-5th March is the earliest ever record, with further singles on 18th & 24th April.

+ **SAVANNAH SPARROW** *Passerculus sandwichensis* (1, 1, 1, 2)

Vagrant; one previous record

A report of a “funny Little Bunting” at Neder Taft on 14th October was identified as the second Fair Isle, third British and fourth Western Palearctic record of this North American bunting. It remained faithful to the garden (no doubt encouraged by the seed put out for it) until 19th October, allowing an estimated 150 people to twitch it and thousands of excellent photos to be taken (see *Birding World* 16 (10): 423-427 and *Birding Scotland* 6 (4): 178-180). It was thought to be of one of the North-eastern races *Ps.labradorensis* or *Ps.oblitus*. Previous British records; Portland, Dorset 11th-16th April 1982, Fair Isle 30th September-1st October 1987.

+ **WHITE-THROATED SPARROW** *Zonotrichia albicollis* (2, 9, 12, 24)

Vagrant; two previous records

Third record: a singing ♂ was found at Schoolton on the morning of 9th June – remaining in the area until lunchtime. Previous records were 13th May 1966 & 17th June 1978

LAPLAND LONGSPUR (BUNTING) *Calcarius lapponicus*

Frequent autumn migrant, less common in spring

In spring, a ♂ on 26th March was followed by sightings in April on 11th (2), 15th & 18th-21st. Autumn passage commenced on 6th September and birds were seen daily from 9th September-20th October and regularly until 3rd November. Numbers were highest in September with high single-figure counts and peaks of 12 (15th & 17th), 10 (21st), 15 (25th) & 11 (27th).

SNOW BUNTING *Plectrophenax nivalis*

Common spring and autumn migrant, often over-winters

The peak count in January/February was 94 on 20th January. Numbers dwindled to below 30 by mid-March and just single figures in early April, with stragglers until 1st May. Six on 18th September were the first of the autumn and 100 the following day was the highest count for that month. Numbers fluctuated daily (from 11-150)

throughout October as birds passed through, but heaviest passage was in November when numbers regularly exceeded 200 and peaked at 520 on 16th. Peak December count was 120 on 26th.

YELLOWHAMMER *Emberiza citrinella*

Regular spring and autumn migrant

No spring records – possibly the first blank spring on record. Small numbers were recorded in autumn with regular singles from 14th October-17th November but for peaks of 3 (11th) & 5 (15th) in November.

+ ORTOLAN BUNTING *Emberiza hortulana*

Scarce spring and autumn migrant

Singles in Gilsetter from 5th-7th & 12th-18th September may have referred to the same individual.

+ RUSTIC BUNTING *Emberiza rustica* (113, 202, 270, 444)

Scarce spring & autumn migrant; 113 previous records

Cracking ♂'s were seen at Boini Mire/Aesterhoull on 23rd May and at the Observatory on 29th May.

+ LITTLE BUNTING *Emberiza pusilla*

Scarce autumn migrant, rare in spring

In spring, one was at Setter on 9th May. In autumn, a single was at Auld Haa from 22nd-26th September and another was at Walli Burn from 30th September-1st October.

+ YELLOW-BREASTED BUNTING *Emberiza aureola* (102, 146, 174, 218)

Rare autumn migrant

One was found in the crop at Busta on 7th September and was seen again briefly the following day.

REED BUNTING *Emberiza schoeniclus*

Frequent spring and autumn migrant

In spring, 1-2 were seen irregularly from 2nd-26th March. Main passage, from 8th April-23rd May, saw regular counts of 1-3, occasionally up to five and peaks of seven (4th May) rising to 11 on 5th May. In autumn, 1-3 were regularly recorded from 20th September-1st November with peaks of six (14th & 17th October) & eight (15th October).

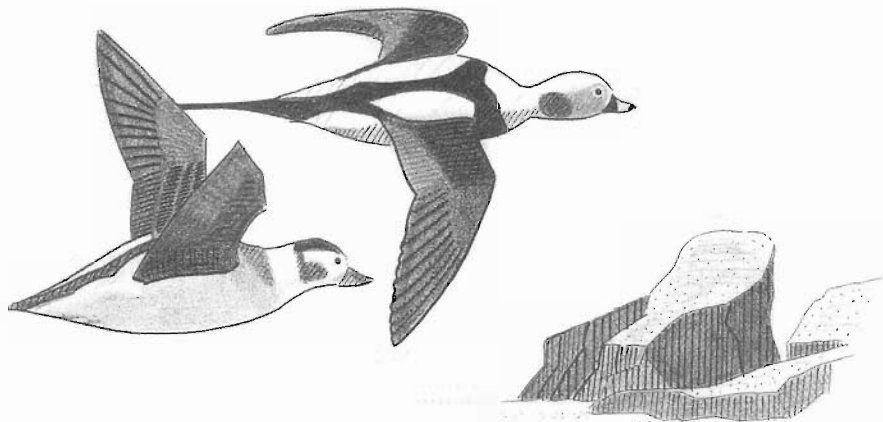
Escapes:

SAKER FALCON *Falco cherrug*

One bearing bells and jesses was present on 24th-25th August and a large falcon thought to be this bird was seen occasionally from 17th-22nd October.

LONG-TAILED ROSEFINCH *Uragus sibiricus*

A ♀ or first-summer ♂ bearing a yellow colour-ring was present at the Sheep Cru and the Observatory from 15th-21st June.



PAB

RINGING REPORT

Alan Bull

Despite another poor breeding productivity for Seabirds, reflected in low totals for some species, a total of 4,277 birds of 108 species were ringed during 2003 (see Table 2). Table 1 gives the ten most commonly ringed species. The harsh winter months meant that routine repair work was carried out on a few traps during the spring to see us through the season. As in previous seasons, a number of catching methods were used during the year and 'dazzling' once again proved effective.

Table 1. The ten most commonly ringed species, with totals, on Fair Isle in 2003; (2002 totals for comparison).

Species	2003	2002
Guillemot	780	1560
Razorbill	674	456
Starling	407	112
Shag	391	348
Twite	173	50
Meadow Pipit	153	101
Puffin	121	139
Storm Petrel	120	133
Blackbird	113	143
Wheatear	113	144

There were two additions to the ringing list in 2003. A Scops Owl, trapped in the Plantation in July and a Hume's Warbler, trapped at Midway in November. Both were also new species to Fair Isle. The ringing list now stands at 270 species.

Scarcely ringed species included a Thick-billed Warbler and Savannah Sparrow (both second records), Pallas's Warbler (4th), Savi's Warbler (4th), Dusky Warbler (7th), Blyth's Reed Warbler (10th), Olive-backed Pipit (10th), Richard's Pipit (11th), Coot (15th) and Hawfinch (20th).

A record annual total was achieved for Gannets (61 ringed) and the number of Twite ringed (173) was well above average. Species ringed in low numbers included Arctic Skua (31), Kittiwake (14), Arctic Tern (10) and Song Thrush (19)

Table 2. Numbers of birds ringed on Fair Isle and recovered/controlled elsewhere in 2003, 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>2003</i>	<i>1948-03</i>	<i>2003</i>	<i>1948-03</i>
Red-throated Diver	—	—	—	1	—	—
Little Grebe	—	—	—	10	—	—
Great Crested Grebe	—	—	—	1	—	—
Red-necked Grebe	—	—	—	1	—	—
Slavonian Grebe	—	—	—	3	—	—
Fulmar	30	56	86	16781	2	169
Storm Petrel	120	—	120	29799	13	1177
Leach's Petrel	2	—	2	87	—	2
Gannet	12	49	61	409	—	9
Cormorant	—	—	—	7	—	—
Shag	14	377	391	22218	6	555
Grey Heron	—	—	—	20	—	—
Whooper Swan	1	—	1	41	—	7
Bean Goose	—	—	—	1	—	—
Pink-footed Goose	—	—	—	14	—	1
White-fronted Goose	—	—	—	3	—	1
Greylag Goose	—	—	—	42	—	8
Barnacle Goose	—	—	—	3	—	—
Shelduck	—	—	—	5	—	—
Wigeon	—	—	—	55	—	4
Teal	1	—	1	73	—	4
Mallard	—	—	—	15	—	1
Pintail	—	—	—	2	—	1
Shoveler	—	—	—	1	—	—
Pochard	—	—	—	3	—	—
Ring-necked Duck	—	—	—	1	—	—
Tufted Duck	—	—	—	18	—	—
Scaup	—	—	—	5	—	—
Eider	2	—	2	168	—	1
Long-tailed Duck	—	—	—	18	—	1
Velvet Scoter	—	—	—	2	—	—
Goldeneye	1	—	1	21	—	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>2003</i>	<i>1948-03</i>	<i>2003</i>	<i>1948-03</i>
Sparrowhawk	2	—	2	356	—	24
Kestrel	—	—	—	47	—	8
Red-footed Falcon	—	—	—	1	—	—
Merlin	—	—	—	192	—	12
Peregrine Falcon	—	—	—	6	—	1
Quail	—	—	—	9	—	—
Water Rail	6	—	6	315	—	3
Spotted Crake	—	—	—	19	—	—
Little Crake	—	—	—	1	—	—
Baillon's Crake	—	—	—	1	—	—
Corncrake	1	—	1	41	—	2
Moorhen	2	—	2	100	—	3
Coot	1	—	1	15	—	1
Great Bustard	—	—	—	1	—	—
Oystercatcher	—	2	2	1491	1	71
Little Ringed Plover	—	—	—	1	—	—
Ringed Plover	9	7	16	678	—	6
Dotterel	—	—	—	4	—	—
Golden Plover	—	—	—	23	—	—
Grey Plover	—	—	—	1	—	—
Lapwing	—	5	5	339	—	6
Knot	1	—	1	99	—	2
Sanderling	2	—	2	95	—	1
Semi-palmated 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	—	—	—	158	—	1
Dunlin	10	—	10	552	—	7
Buff-breasted Sandpiper	—	—	—	1	—	—
Ruff	—	—	—	41	—	1
Jack Snipe	—	—	—	137	—	3
Common Snipe	9	—	9	470	—	4
Great Snipe	—	—	—	2	—	—
Woodcock	7	—	7	442	1	23
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>2003</i>	<i>1948-03</i>	<i>2003</i>	<i>1948-03</i>
Whimbrel	—	—	—	16	—	—
Curlew	—	3	3	159	—	6
Spotted Redshank	—	—	—	3	—	—
Redshank	1	—	1	279	—	3
Greenshank	—	—	—	12	—	—
Green Sandpiper	—	—	—	56	—	1
Wood Sandpiper	—	—	—	18	—	—
Common Sandpiper	—	—	—	70	—	1
Turnstone	4	—	4	81	—	—
Red-necked Phalarope	—	—	—	5	—	—
Grey Phalarope	—	—	—	3	—	—
Pomarine Skua	—	—	—	1	—	—
Arctic Skua	24	7	31	3857	—	66
Great Skua	10	65	75	2489	4	46
Black-headed Gull	1	—	1	46	—	2
Common Gull	1	1	2	201	—	3
Lesser Black-backed Gull	—	2	2	1434	—	34
Herring Gull	11	25	36	4304	—	95
Iceland Gull	—	—	—	1	—	—
Glaucous Gull	—	—	—	40	—	1
Great Black-backed Gull	5	—	5	2842	2	112
Kittiwake	13	1	14	6978	—	36
Common Tern	—	—	—	481	—	3
Arctic Tern	—	10	10	11266	3	36
Guillemot	81	699	780	35519	28	1042
Razorbill	105	569	674	10478	19	248
Black Guillemot	—	4	4	1631	—	19
Little Auk	—	—	—	13	—	—
Puffin	72	49	121	12880	—	32
Rock Dove	—	—	—	67	—	—
Wood Pigeon	1	—	1	72	—	2
Collared Dove	5	—	5	322	—	6
Turtle Dove	—	—	—	81	—	2
Cuckoo	—	—	—	108	—	1
Scops Owl	1	—	1	1	—	—
Snowy Owl	—	—	—	1	—	1
Long-eared Owl	2	—	2	247	—	13
Short-eared Owl	—	—	—	18	—	—
Nightjar	—	—	—	4	—	—
Swift	—	—	—	17	—	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>2003</i>	<i>1948-03</i>	<i>2003</i>	<i>1948-03</i>
Hoopoe	—	—	—	3	—	—
Wryneck	2	—	2	221	—	—
Great Spotted Woodpecker	—	—	—	29	—	—
Short-toed Lark	—	—	—	9	—	—
Woodlark	—	—	—	3	—	—
Skylark	4	3	7	1263	—	3
Shorelark	—	—	—	5	—	—
Sand Martin	—	—	—	8	—	—
Swallow	1	4	5	252	—	2
House Martin	—	—	—	141	—	1
Richard's Pipit	1	—	1	11	—	—
Blyth's Pipit	—	—	—	1	—	—
Tawny Pipit	—	—	—	3	—	—
Olive-backed Pipit	1	—	1	10	—	—
Tree Pipit	7	—	7	647	—	—
Pechora Pipit	—	—	—	9	—	—
Meadow Pipit	145	8	153	10202	—	45
Red-throated Pipit	—	—	—	9	—	—
Rock Pipit	71	—	71	9338	—	29
Yellow Wagtail	—	—	—	10	—	—
Citrine Wagtail	—	—	—	5	—	—
Grey Wagtail	2	—	2	33	—	1
White/Pied Wagtail	18	—	18	714	—	4
Waxwing	2	—	2	39	—	—
Dipper	—	—	—	15	—	—
Wren	17	—	17	872	—	—
Dunnoek	14	—	14	2542	1	8
Robin	51	—	51	8810	—	40
Thrush Nightingale	1	—	1	33	—	—
Nightingale	1	—	1	29	—	—
Siberian Rubythroat	—	—	—	1	—	—
Bluethroat	4	—	4	280	—	2
Red-flanked Bluetail	—	—	—	2	—	—
Black Redstart	1	—	1	157	—	—
Redstart	5	—	5	1808	—	1
Whinchat	1	—	1	633	—	2
Stonechat	—	—	—	56	—	—
Northern Wheatear	113	—	113	16376	—	74
Pied Wheatear	—	—	—	1	—	—
Black-eared Wheatear	—	—	—	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>2003</i>	<i>1948-03</i>	<i>2003</i>	<i>1948-03</i>
Rock Thrush	—	—	—	1	—	—
White's Thrush	—	—	—	1	—	—
Hermit Thrush	—	—	—	1	—	—
Grey-cheeked Thrush	—	—	—	2	—	—
Ring Ouzel	3	—	3	496	—	8
Blackbird	113	—	113	22501	5	330
Eye-browed Thrush	—	—	—	1	—	1
Dusky Thrush	—	—	—	1	—	—
Dark-throated Thrush	—	—	—	1	—	—
Fieldfare	1	—	1	632	—	1
Song Thrush	19	—	19	2956	—	32
Redwing	66	—	66	8847	—	74
Mistle Thrush	—	—	—	22	—	—
Pallas' Grasshopper						
Warbler	—	—	—	12	—	—
Lanceolated Warbler	—	—	—	34	—	—
Grasshopper Warbler	1	—	1	119	—	—
River Warbler	—	—	—	8	—	—
Savi's Warbler	1	—	1	4	—	—
Aquatic Warbler	—	—	—	22	—	—
Sedge Warbler	9	—	9	477	—	—
Paddyfield Warbler	—	—	—	9	—	1
Blyth's Reed Warbler	1	—	1	10	—	1
Marsh Warbler	3	—	3	125	—	—
Reed Warbler	8	—	8	284	—	—
Great Reed Warbler	—	—	—	6	—	—
Thick-billed Warbler	1	—	1	2	—	—
Olivaceous Warbler	—	—	—	1	—	—
Booted Warbler	—	—	—	9	—	—
Icterine Warbler	2	—	2	101	—	—
Melodious Warbler	—	—	—	12	—	—
Subalpine Warbler	—	—	—	27	—	—
Sardinian Warbler	—	—	—	1	—	—
Barred Warbler	3	—	3	408	—	1
Lesser Whitethroat	15	—	15	719	—	1
Whitethroat	11	—	11	963	—	—
Garden Warbler	22	—	22	3496	—	4
Blackcap	61	—	61	5404	—	24
Greenish Warbler	—	—	—	23	—	—
Arctic Warbler	—	—	—	32	—	—

<i>Species</i>	<i>Ringed as:</i>		<i>Total 2003</i>	<i>Total 1948-03</i>	<i>Recovered/Controlled</i>	
	<i>Juv/Ad</i>	<i>Pullus</i>			<i>2003</i>	<i>1948-03</i>
Pallas's Warbler	1	—	1	4	—	—
Yellow-browed Warbler	7	—	7	125	—	—
Hume's Warbler	1	—	1	1	—	—
Radde's Warbler	—	—	—	1	—	—
Dusky Warbler	1	—	1	7	—	—
Bonelli's Warbler	—	—	—	1	—	—
Wood Warbler	1	—	1	107	—	—
Chiffchaff	23	—	23	1230	2	5
Willow Warbler	36	—	36	3594	—	7
Goldcrest	51	—	51	1659	—	2
Firecrest	—	—	—	1	—	—
Brown Flycatcher	—	—	—	1	—	—
Spotted Flycatcher	11	—	11	761	—	3
Red-breasted Flycatcher	1	—	1	57	—	—
Collared Flycatcher	—	—	—	2	—	—
Pied Flycatcher	4	—	4	946	—	—
Coal Tit	—	—	—	1	—	—
Blue Tit	—	—	—	2	—	—
Great Tit	—	—	—	10	—	—
Treecreeper	—	—	—	1	—	—
Golden Oriole	—	—	—	8	—	—
Brown Shrike	—	—	—	1	—	—
Isabelline Shrike	—	—	—	2	—	—
Red-backed Shrike	8	—	8	218	—	—
Lesser Grey Shrike	—	—	—	6	—	—
Great Grey Shrike	—	—	—	114	—	1
Woodchat Shrike	—	—	—	13	—	—
Jackdaw	—	—	—	4	—	—
Rook	—	—	—	7	—	—
Hooded Crow	—	—	—	48	—	—
Raven	—	—	—	26	—	—
Daurian Starling	—	—	—	1	—	—
Starling	127	280	407	25966	—	192
Rose-coloured Starling	—	—	—	3	—	—
House Sparrow	51	—	51	1538	—	3
Tree Sparrow	—	—	—	111	—	1
Chaffinch	9	—	9	2942	—	12
Brambling	48	—	48	3487	—	15
Greenfinch	25	—	25	413	8	15
Goldfinch	—	—	—	11	—	—

<i>Species</i>	<i>Ringed as:</i>		<i>Total</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>Recovered/Controlled</i>	
	<i>Juv/Ad</i>	<i>Pullus</i>	<i>2003</i>	<i>1948-03</i>	<i>2003</i>	<i>1948-03</i>
Siskin	34	—	34	448	—	1
Linnet	3	—	3	155	—	1
Twite	173	—	173	5737	2	8
Lesser Redpoll	—	—	—	28	—	—
Common Redpoll	5	—	5	613	—	6
Arctic Redpoll	—	—	—	20	—	—
Two-barred Crossbill	—	—	—	1	—	—
Common Crossbill	4	—	4	532	—	2
Parrot Crossbill	—	—	—	37	—	—
Pallas's Rosefinch	—	—	—	1	—	—
Common Rosefinch	6	—	6	194	—	1
Bullfinch	2	—	2	111	—	—
Hawfinch	1	—	1	20	—	—
Tennessee Warbler	—	—	—	2	—	—
Savannah Sparrow	1	—	1	2	—	—
Song Sparrow	—	—	—	3	—	—
White-crowned Sparrow	—	—	—	1	—	—
White-throated Sparrow	—	—	—	2	—	—
Lapland Bunting	—	—	—	48	—	—
Snow Bunting	—	—	—	630	—	3
Pine Bunting	—	—	—	2	—	—
Yellowhammer	—	—	—	63	—	—
Ortolan Bunting	—	—	—	20	—	—
Cretzschmar's Bunting	—	—	—	1	—	—
Yellow-browed Bunting	—	—	—	1	—	—
Rustic Bunting	—	—	—	17	—	1
Little Bunting	—	—	—	35	—	1
Chestnut Bunting	—	—	—	2	—	—
Yellow-breasted Bunting	—	—	—	6	—	—
Reed Bunting	5	—	5	455	—	3
Pallas's Reed Bunting	—	—	—	2	—	—
Red-headed Bunting	—	—	—	5	—	—
Black-headed Bunting	—	—	—	4	—	—
Corn Bunting	—	—	—	3	—	—
Totals:	2051	2226	4277	326728	97	4911

Ringed recoveries/controls reported to FIBO during 2003

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 I. Birds ringed on Fair Isle and reported elsewhere (Table 2)

FULMAR. Two recoveries were reported. The strange discovery of a ring in a museum in the **Faeroes** in April 2003 had originally been placed on a chick in July 1986 (433km WNW). A bird ringed as a chick in July 1994 was found dead at Sylt, **Germany** in July 2003 (790km, SE).

STORM PETREL. Thirteen birds ringed on Fair Isle were reported elsewhere during 2003 (see Table 3 below). A typical set of reports.

Table 3. Storm Petrels ringed on Fair Isle and controlled elsewhere; reports received during 2003

<i>Recovery Site</i>	<i>No.</i>	<i>Recovery Site</i>	<i>No.</i>
Brough of Mousa, Shetland	1	Priest Island, Highland Region	2
Brough of Birsay, Orkney	1	Skogsoy, NORWAY	1
Eilan nan Ron, Highland Region	4	Klepp, NORWAY	3
Eilan Hoan, Highland Region	1		

One of the Eilan nan Ron birds was ringed in August 1989 and controlled in July 2003 (190km, SW) whilst another was ringed in July 1991 and also controlled in July 2003. The Eilan Hoan bird was ringed in July 1991 and controlled in June 2003 (205km, SW). The same bird was also caught at that site in 1996, 1999, 2001 and 2002!

SHAG. Six reports of dead birds were received (all ringed as chicks) and all but one were found on Shetland! One ringed in July 1980 was found at Lerwick in December 2002 (71km, NE); one ringed in June 1992 was found at Yell in July 2003 (135km, NE); one ringed in July 1996 was found at Whalsay in March 2001 (98km, NE); one ringed in June 2000 was found off Whalsay in May 2001 (99km, NE) and one ringed in June 2002 was found at Trondra in March 2003 (68km, NE). The only report away from Shetland was of a bird ringed in July 2002 and found near Thurso, Highland Region in January 2003.

OYSTERCATCHER. An adult ringed in March 1998 was controlled at Annan, Dumfries and Galloway in August 2003 (517km, SSW).

WOODCOCK. An adult ringed in November 2002 was found dead as a result of cold weather at Flixton, Suffolk in January 2003 (813km, SSE).

GREAT SKUA. All reports received concerned birds ringed as chicks and then subsequently found dead. One ringed in July 1989 was found on Sanday, Orkney in July 2003 (62km, SW); one ringed in July 1997 was found at Dunnet, Highland Region in August 2003 (144km, SSW); another ringed in July 1997 was found at Cloughe, Kerry, **Eire** in May 2003 (988km, SSW) and finally one ringed in July 1999 was found in June 2003 at Esturoy, **Faeroes** (424km, WNW). A chick ringed in July 1991 was found dead on the isle in July 2002. Only 50 BTO-ringed Great Skua have ever been found in the Faeroes, with three movements from the Faeroes.

GREAT BLACK-BACKED GULL. A chick ringed in June 1992 was found dead near Knaresborough, North Yorkshire in April 2003 (613km, S) and a chick ringed in July 1993 was found injured (and later died) near Huntly, Grampian Region in November 2003 (243km, SSW).

ARCTIC TERN. Three birds ringed as chicks (in July 1995, July 1996 and June 2000) were found in Auskerry, Orkney in July 2003 (77km, SW).

GUILLEMOT. Details of 28 birds were received during 2003. These are summarised in the text below.

Shetland: An adult ringed in June 1984 was found dead in February 2003 at Garderhouse (77km, N).

Orkney: An adult ringed in June 1980 was found dead in February 2003 at Rousay (86km, SW); a chick ringed in June 1986 was found dead in March 2003 on Sanday (55km, SW) and finally an adult ringed in June 1996 was found dead at St.Ola in February 2003 (100km, SW).

Highland Region: A chick ringed in June 2000 was found dead in January 2003 near Kinlochbervie (230km, SW) and a chick ringed in July 1992 was also found dead, on the Isle of Canna in July 2003 (399km, SW).

Fife Region: Two chicks, ringed in July 2002, were both found dead: one at Kinghorn in November 2002 (394km, S) and one at Fife Ness in January 2003 (368km, S).

Norway: Fifteen birds were reported, with most found dead in fishing nets. 95% of Guillemots recovered (with known cause of death) in the north Atlantic are found in fishing nets. All but one were ringed as chicks. The only adult reported was a



Waxwing, 3rd November
Alan Bull



Brambling, 20th September *Rebecca Nason*



Common Crossbill, 1st April
Deryk Shaw



Corn Crake, 29th April *Rebecca Nason*



Fieldfare, September *Hugh Harrop*



Fair Isle Wren, May *Hugh Harrop*



Skylark brood, 8th July *Alan Bull*



*Savi's Warbler of eastern race
'fusca', 30th September*
Rebecca Nason



Blyth's Reed Warbler, 11th-17th September
Craig Round



Lanceolated Warbler, 28th September
Rebecca Nason



Adult Marsh Warbler, 1st October
Hugh Harrop



Lanceolated Warbler, 28th September
Hugh Harrop



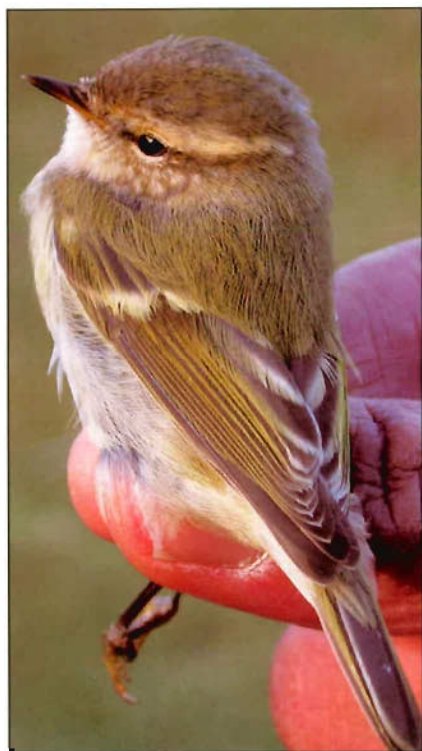
*First-winter Marsh Warbler, 1st-4th
October*
Hugh Harrop



Dusky Warbler, 22nd October
Lachlan Shaw



Arctic Warbler, 21st September
Rebecca Nason



Hume's Warbler, 13th-14th November
Deryk Shaw



Yellow-browed Warbler, 30th September
Rebecca Nason



Red Sword-grass Glen Tyler



Convulvulus Hawkmoth

Glen Tyler



Red Carpet

Glen Tyler



Bedstraw Hawkmoth

Alan Bull



Beautiful Golden Y

Glen Tyler



Large Ear

Glen Tyler



Magpie Moth

Glen Tyler

bird ringed in June 1983 and found at Visnes in March 2003 (389km, E). A chick ringed in June 1992 was found in February 2003, at Sandnes (425km, E). One ringed in June 1996 was found at Bergen in February 2003 (394km, E). Chicks ringed in June 1997 were found at Smola in April 2002 (674km, NE), Ha, Rogaland in March 2003 (435km, E) and Florø in February 2003 (433km, E). A chick ringed in June 1998 was found in March 2002 at Smola (675km, E) and one ringed in June 2000 was found at Hitra (719km, E) in December 2001. Seven chicks, ringed in June/July 2002 were found between September and December 2002, all in fishing nets at sea between 380km and 727km, east.

Denmark: Three chicks, ringed in June/July 2002 were found: one at Pandrup in October 2002 (700km, ESE), one at Oresund in November 2002 (939km, ESE) and one at Fyn, also in November 2002 (886km, SE).

Germany: Two chicks, ringed in June 1998 were both found in February 1999: one at Nordstrand (847km, SE) and one at Eiderdam (864km, SE).

RAZORBILL. Several reports this year – all of birds found dead. An adult ringed in July 1990 was a victim of the Tricolor oil spill and was found near Calais, **France** in February 2003 (952km, S). One of 16 ringed Razorbills found following the spill. A chick ringed in June 1992 was found in fishing nets at Mecklenburg, **Germany** in November 1996 (1003km, SE). A chick ringed in June 1995 was found in June 2003 at Sjaelland, **Denmark** (825km, SE). A chick ringed in June 1997 was found at Lysekil, **Sweden** in February 2003 (764km, E). Adults ringed in June 1998 were recovered in Nord, **France** in January 2003 (978km, SSE) and September 2003 at Torsby, **Sweden** (790km, E) while chicks ringed in June 1998 were found in Manche, **France** (1093km, S) and Strand, **Netherlands** (882km, SE) in Jan/Feb 2003. A chick ringed in June 1999 was found at Nord, **France** in February 2003 (979km, SSE) and a chick ringed in June 2000 was also found in February 2003 but at Zeeland, **Netherlands** (935km, SE).

Birds ringed in June/July 2002 and recovered the following winter included:

England: one found dead in a river at Bodinnick, Cornwall (1040km, SSW).

Eire: one found on a beach at Hook Head, Wexford (887km, SW).

France: one at Manche with other oiled seabirds (1174km, S).

Spain: one at Marbella, Malaga (2570km, S); one at Oviedo (1801km, S); and one at Ibiza (2293km, S).

Netherlands: one at Ameland (807km, SE) and one at Renesse, Zeeland (930km, SE).

Sweden: one found dead on a beach at Bastad (919km, ESE).

PUFFIN. An adult ringed in July 1996 was found dead on the isle in July 2002.

DUNNOCK. A first-year bird ringed on 15th October 2002 was controlled fifteen days later at Farsund, **Norway** (498km, E). This is only the eighth report of a Fair Isle ringed Dunnock, and only the sixth BTO-ringed Dunnock to be found in Norway. One of these was also a Fair Isle bird ringed in 1998.

BLACKBIRD. An adult male ringed in October 2001 was controlled at Orsta, **Norway** in October 2003 (527km, NE). A first-year male, also ringed in October 2001 was controlled in July 2003 at Hareid, **Norway** (516km, NE). A first-year male ringed in November 2001 was seen at St Margaret's Hope, Orkney in February 2003 (114km, SW). A first-year female ringed in October 2002 was found dead at Daliburgh, Western Isles in January 2003 (425km, SW) and finally, an adult female ringed in November 2002 hit a window in Cambridge in December 2002 (822km, S).

CHIFFCHAFF. Our fourth and fifth controls: one ringed on 9th April 2003 was controlled on Foula, Shetland the next day (71km, NW) and one ringed on 24th April 2003 was controlled five days later at Nólsoy, **Faeroes** (387km, WNW). The latter is the first record of a British ringed Chiffchaff in the Faeroes. Over the period 23 April to 15 May 2003, 11 Chiff Chaff were ringed on Nólsoy, which is impressive considering only 155 have ever been ringed on the Faeroe Islands.

TWITE. Our seventh and eight controls and both found at Evie, Orkney (100km, SW) in November 2002. One was ringed in July 2002 and the other in September of the same year.

GREENFINCH. Eight reports represents an excellent year as the previous cumulative figure was only seven! An excellent passage in October 2002 resulted in record numbers being ringed so it comes as little surprise that birds have been found elsewhere on migration. Three birds were controlled at Wick, Highland Region (148km, SSW) – two in December 2002 and one in March 2003. Three birds went to Crantit House, Kirkwall, Orkney (98km, SW) – one in December 2002, one in April 2003 and one bird found in November 2002 which was later re-caught at Lynn, Kirkwall, Orkney in January 2003. Another was caught in January 2003 at Rendall, Orkney (98km, SW). Finally, an adult male was found in January 2003 at Ballachraggan, Highland Region (244km, SW).

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

ARCTIC SKUA. A researcher present on the isle in June 2003 trapped a number of breeding adults. Eight of these had been ringed elsewhere; five on Foula (in

1986, 1993, 1994, 1995 & 1997), two on Papa Stour (in 1981 & 1983) and Mousa (in 1993). All had been ringed as pulli.

GREAT SKUA. Several breeding adults were trapped on the isle in 2003 as part of a study. Two had been ringed as chicks on Foula, Shetland, in July 1987 & July 1994 (71km, SE) and another had been ringed at Spiggie, Shetland in July 1993. Additionally, a chick ringed on Foula in July 1990 was found dead on the isle in July 2002.

BLACKBIRD. A first-year male ringed at Kragero, **Norway** in August 2001 was controlled on the isle in October 2001 (644km, W).

BLACKCAP. A first-year male ringed in September 2001 at Herselt, **Belgium** was controlled in April 2003 (1028km, NW).

CHIFFCHAFF. An adult ringed in May 2003 on Foula, Shetland was controlled a month later (71km, SE). This bird would have over-shot its intended destination and was presumably caught on Fair Isle whilst trying to re-orientate itself.

WILLOW WARBLER. An adult ringed at Nólsoy, **Faeroes** on 19th May 2003 was controlled six days later (387km, SE). This was one of the record number of Willow Warblers and Chiffchaffs which made it to Faeroes this spring and, having re-orientated itself, was heading south again. Only 125 Willow Warblers have ever been ringed on Faeroes and this is the second recovery.

LINNET. A typical recovery: a first-year ringed in August 2001 at North Ronaldsay, Orkney was controlled on the isle in April 2003 (49km, NE).



A Selection of Rarity Descriptions from 2003

American Golden Plover; ninth for Fair Isle

Deryk Shaw

Circumstances: The 3rd November was a pleasant day and I was censusing the SE of the isle. There were a few thrushes around and I had already found an Olive-backed Pipit in the Gully (it was later trapped there). I was crossing the Rippack by Kenaby when I spied a wader 30m in front of me. It looked like a Golden Plover but raising my bins I saw that it was rather grey “Oooh, Lesser Goldie” I thought. I edged closer and after better views decided that it was probably an American Golden Plover. It then flew towards Busta and landed. I phoned Alan Bull, who was censusing SW, and he made some (jealous) comment about me having a good morning. By the time he arrived I was sure it was a Yank Goldie and AJB agreed. I called the Obs and asked Hollie to bring a scope and my digicam but whilst waiting it flew a long way. We refound it on the Parks later and over the next few days it ranged around the south of the isle usually alone, but occasionally fed with Turnstones, until it departed on 10th November.

General Appearance: A greyish plover, slightly slimmer than European Golden Plover and with slightly longer legs – though difficult to judge accurately without one for comparison – and attenuated rear end owing to long wings (3-4cm extending beyond tail). Long wings were even more noticeable in flight giving it an almost falcon-like impression.

Head: Rounded. Crown greyish. Fairly white supercilium – whiter when not in sun – (but not the dirty yellowish colour of European Goldie – and therefore more noticeable) from above eye rearwards and ghosting around rear edge of ear coverts where it was much less white, more grey. Lores pale off-white at base of bill (perhaps extending a little onto forehead) and on closer views a dark crescent mark could be seen just in front of the eye. Ear coverts a greyish buff with a very noticeable dark spot – the darkest part of face.

Upperparts: Nape greyish yellow-brown. Mantle and back fairly grey, more finely marked (and therefore less distinctly ‘spangled’) than EGP. Rump appeared slightly more “golden” than rest of upperparts. Extent of “gold” in plumage varied with the light – more extensive (though nowhere near as much as on EGP or even Pacific) in the low winter sunshine (which gives everything a golden hue) but very grey looking in cloudy conditions. Primaries were more grey-brown looking.

Underparts: Chin whitish. Greyish buff wash, fading on lower belly. Closer views showed that the breast was actually faintly striated. Underwing wholly dusky grey.

Bare parts: Legs; Fairly long. Bluish-grey at distance, duller lead grey close up. Bill; Black, longer and slightly finer than EGP – but difficult to judge without direct comparison. Eye; black.

Call: Rising high-pitched “Kluee . . . kluee” with emphasis on first syllable. Usually uttered just as it took off.

White-rumped Sandpiper; third for Fair Isle

Harry Scott

Circumstances: I had headed to the south of the island after breakfast on 10th October, in the hope of photographing the Pechora Pipit at Meadow Burn – I failed miserably. I had continued south, eventually ending up at Haa around 11.00 hrs. As I scanned the fields with my bins, I picked up a group of three Skylark feeding in a grassy field about 30 metres away. With them was a bird that I quickly identified as a small pale, grey and white sandpiper. It appeared to be the same size as the Skylarks, and showed the typical lengthy winged appearance of an American sandpiper. With this in mind, I started to unpack and set up my scope, but when I viewed with the scope, there was no sign of the bird, just the Skylarks had remained.

After spending half an hour searching the area, I came across Hywel Maggs and Paul Baxter and informed them of what I had seen. We spent a further half hour covering ground before we started to head back north for lunch. As we walked up the hill towards School, we had started to spread out (the other two took the direct route, while I followed the road round the east side of the school). As I came around the school building, I noted a small wader flying directly towards me before it landed by a small pool right next to the road, only 15 metres in front of me. As I raised my bins, I was instantly aware that it was the same wader as before, but within seconds of landing it took off, flying away from me, and the penny dropped – I had great views of its broad white horse-shoe shaped rump – it was a White-rumped Sandpiper! I ran around the corner calling out “White-rumped Sand” to the others and found Simon Aspinall and Oliver Wardman getting on to the bird flying away, he nodded his confirmation and we watched the bird till it landed in a field 200 metres away. News was put out and while everyone gathered I was able to get a few distant record shots in the long grass as we watched the bird for about half an hour before we had to leave for lunch. Straight after lunch, I returned in the hope of getting some better photographs. We re-located the bird within 15 metres of the road but it took off before I was able to get my camera on to it. The next day while I watched two Lapland Buntings on the road just north of Setter I could see a wader fly up and land on the road right behind them, it was the White-rumped Sandpiper again! This time its right wing was held very low, and again I tried to get my camera/scope on to it, but within seconds of landing, it was off again, and was never seen again as far as I’m aware. As it turned out, a second White-rumped Sandpiper was found on Unst (Shetland) that day but it was unfortunately hit by a car.

Overall impression: My initial impression was that the bird appeared surprisingly similar in size to the associating Skylark, and showed primaries that extended beyond its tail. It had a clean white belly and a generally fresh grey coloured plumage above with elements of rust colouration on its scapulars and possible some of the flight feathers. It had quite a strong white supercilium and the impression of subtle white braces on its back. The bill appeared shorted than that of Dunlin and its legs were dark/black. In flight it had an obvious white rump.

Upperparts: Its back and wings appeared fresh, pale grey and white scalloped plumage, interspersed with occasional rust coloured mantle, scapular, primary and secondary feathers. An obvious white supercilium and dark crown gave the bird a capped appearance, while below the eye-line it was mottled and off-white in colour around its ear-coverts. In flight, it showed obvious, but off-white, wing bars but the eye was always drawn to its very obvious pure white rump which was broadly squarish in shape with a curved top and bottom which were clearly separated from the birds dark tail and lower back.

Underparts: Vent and belly were pure white which subtly blended into light grey mottling on its upper breast which in turn led to a clean white throat.

Bare parts: Legs appeared shorter than Dunlin and were dark/black as was its shortish, slightly down-curved bill.

Eurasian Scops Owl; first for Fair Isle

Simon Boswell

Circumstances: Deryk Shaw, Rebecca Nason, Rebecca Rosser and I set off on the morning of the 30th of July to complete a skua sweep of the northern end of Fair Isle. After a disappointing morning with a lot more dead skua chicks found than live ones, downhearted, we began to head back to the observatory for lunch. Deryk asked me to take a slightly different route back so I could check the traps on the way home.

On arrival at the plantation I noticed a few sparrows in the small willows and skirted round to try and encourage them into the trap. Managing to do this I caught a glimpse of a slightly larger bird flying through the willows to the back of the trap. Not knowing what it was I climbed over the fence and headed towards the catching box. A small cryptically plumaged bird suddenly became apparent on the grass at the left-hand side of the trap, next to the mesh. I thought it might have been a Snipe or Woodcock. However it was the wrong colour and as I got closer I saw to my absolute amazement that it was a small owl! A few seconds later I was close enough to pick up on some of the features, it was tiny and had large ear tufts. Realising the importance of the record I didn't try and flush the bird into the catching box and got

it into the ringers grip as it was climbing the mesh fence. I immediately realised what I had suspected, the bird in my hand was a Scop's Owl!! At this point my heart really started to pound even more so when the bird turned and stared at me with its piercing yellow eyes. Bagging the bird up I concentrated on getting it back to the obs as quickly as possible not just to process it quickly but also to show everyone else!

I headed back down the road with the bird safely in the bag and alerted the others to what I had; they couldn't believe it, what a little beauty! We walked briskly back to the obs and ringed the bird, showed everyone that was staying at the obs and also a few locals that were interested. Deryk then drove back to the plantation and let the owl go back into the willows. It was seen later that afternoon by Rebecca Nason and I but a watch at dusk did not produce the owl and it was not present on the trap round the next morning.

Siberian Rubythroat; second for Fair Isle & fourth for Britain

Alan Bull

Circumstances: I was fortunate enough to be on the SW census of the island on 17th October but hadn't really noted much along the west cliffs other than a few thrushes and Goldcrests. As I made my way up towards Midway along my census route, I passed Utra and noted a Whooper Swan near the side of the road. As I approached the swan I flushed a small to medium sized passerine from beside a pile of rocks, which flew into a nearby sheep pen. I followed it and was able to view the bird through a pallet, but it was facing away from me and all I could manage to see through a gap was a brown bird with a supercilium. My immediate thought was of Bluethroat (one had been seen that morning) and with that it flew out and landed face on in the middle of the road. I could not believe my eyes, here in the middle of the road was a dream find – a SIBERIAN RUBYTHROAT! The bird flew into the nearby cemetery and I looked around for other birders. An Observatory visitor was coming down the road and I shouted “***** Rubythroat”. I scrambled for my phone and started frantically making phone-calls to the Observatory etc, all with the same words I had previously shouted. The next ten minutes were a nightmare as we all searched for the bird and I scribbled down my notes. Luckily I re-found the Rubythroat hopping along a wall behind Utra, but as before it disappeared very quickly. Fortunately as the group gathered, the bird was re-located in South Harbour. More people arrived, including lots of islanders and I had to leave the scene to pick up some ‘Sparrow twitchers’ from the Airstrip. It was very mobile around the south of the island, eventually settling at the Kirk – an area it favoured until the 19th. It could not be found on the 20th.

General appearance: A small to medium sized passerine, possibly as large as a Nightingale. It could be very elusive, but when seen well it often had its tail cocked right up in the air, hopping along the base of stone dykes. It was a very plain brown bird, relieved only by the white supercilium and white throat, with a thin dark malar stripe. It was aged as a first-year due to the presence of thorns or tips on the old, un-moulted greater coverts and sexed as a female due to the lack of any obvious red on the throat.

Upperparts: The upperparts were a brown colour, with more rufous/gingery tones on the wings – this was very obvious in certain light conditions. The nape/mantle often appeared slightly greyer than the back, but again this depended on the light conditions. The tail was brown and well rounded, cocked most of the time when the bird was at rest. Pale, gingery tips to the un-moulted greater coverts were noted (see above) suggesting the bird was a first-year.

Head: The head was as the upperparts – brown. White/off-white supercilium ran from the bill to just behind the eye. Lores were dark.

Underparts: The whole of the underparts (excluding throat) were a buffy colour and, as the upperparts, differed in ‘strength’ depending on the light (sometimes they could look darker or paler!). The throat was off white/white with a thin dark malar stripe and a slightly buff-white sub-moustachial.

Bare parts: Bill: dark. Eye: dark. Legs: long-legged appearance, especially when alert. The legs, on my first view, were really noticeably pink, but on some views they appeared dark pinky-horn.

Call: It was not heard to call.

Savi's Warbler of the race '*fusca*'; the first for Britain

Deryk Shaw

Circumstances: Nick Green phoned the Obs early afternoon on 30th September and reported a large unstreaked Locustella in the Gilly Burn – the site of a Lanceolated Warbler two days previous! I informed the crowd, who were just getting ready to head out again post-lunch and said that because of the logistics of getting so many people to the bird and the uncertainty of the ID (at present) that I would trap the bird and bring it back to the Obs for everyone to see. I then headed down in the Obs van with Alan Bull and a few Obs guests armed with a mist-net. Nick Green, Pete Walsh and Keith Holland were on site and informed me where the bird was last seen. We erected the net then went to look for it. I flushed it from the stream and it flew a few yards before landing. My first impressions were from the rear and from the plain cold earth-brown upperparts I thought it was a River Warbler (a logical conclusion given the views and the date!) but, as it shuffled around, the undertail coverts appeared quite plain buff. It then turned and I still

expected to see a finely streaked breast, but no! It was plain! “Christ! I think it’s a Savis!” I murmured – not quite believing it (I’d only ever seen a couple of River and one Savis). As I approached, it flew downstream and into the waiting net. I retrieved it and turned it over. “It’s a Savis!” I yelled to the expectant watching and waiting few. The Obs was phoned with the news and the bird brought back. After ringing and photographing, it was returned to the Gilly Burn where it remained for the rest of the day but could not be found the following morning.

The following description is a combination of notes taken in the field and in the hand:

General Appearance: A large plain warbler with a long, broad rounded tail, cold earth-brown upperparts, buffish-white underparts, greyish buff flanks and bulky pale buff undertail coverts.

Head: Crown earth-brown. Slightly warmer ear coverts. Faint greyish lores and very faint grey eyestripe behind eye. Thin white eyering on lower half of eye only.

Upperparts: Wholly plain cold earth-brown. Slightly paler alula and edge to wing.

Underparts: Off-white throat. Pale grey-buff wash across breast forming breast band. Flanks noticeably grey-buff. Belly white. Undertail coverts long and bulky, grey-buff with whitish crescent-shaped tips.

Bare parts: Bill; upper mandible – very dark horn basal 1/3rd and distal 1/3rd, paler middle 1/3rd. Lower mandible – pale pink base grading to a dark smudged tip. Yellow gape. Eye; dark. Legs; greyish-pink.

Discussion: The upperpart colouration (cold earth brown – lacking in any rufous tones), grey-buff flanks and pale tips to undertail coverts points to this bird being of the eastern race *fusca*. The recent weather patterns and arrival of other eastern european birds lends weight to this theory.

Thick-billed Warbler; second for Fair Isle & fourth for Shetland/Britain

Alan Bull

Circumstances: I think these are probably widely known circumstances, but following a lunar eclipse, Glen Tyler was checking plant species in the Plantation when he saw an unfamiliar large warbler in the Vaadal trap. As he is a trainee ringer, he quickly trapped the bird and brought it back to the Observatory. He knocked on my door with news of a ‘probable’ Great Reed Warbler and I was quickly dressed and in the ringing room. I took the bird out of the bird bag (still trying to wake up) and quickly thought ‘great’! However, something wasn’t right! I have no experience of Great Reed Warbler and commented to Glen that the bird didn’t look like a large Reed Warbler, but more like a juvenile Rosy Starling! That only meant one thing, but surely not in May?! I measured the wing and found it to be too short

for Great Reed (Glen and I were getting quietly excited by now), but I needed to be sure before waking everyone up! The clinching feature was the length of the second primary (Svensson) and it was equal to the 7th/8th primary. Our suspicions were confirmed – a Thick-billed Warbler was in my hand! I woke Deryk followed shortly by the rest of the Observatory staff and guests and the news was put on Bird-line. It showed for the day (delighting twitchers) and was seen briefly the next day in the south of the island looking a bit be-draggled!

General appearance: The bird looked like a juvenile Rosy Starling in some ways! It was obviously a large, chunky warbler with a long, rounded tail.

Upperparts: The upperparts were a concolorous greyish-olive colour, except for the rump, which was slightly sandier in colour. The tail was long and rounded. It was slightly browner with faint pale tips to all feathers and edged pale greyish. Wing feathers were greyish-brown, edged greyish-olive! The alula was slightly darker.

Head: The head was as upperparts, greyish-olive. The crown had more of a brownish cast and the lores and ear-coverts were slightly more greyish-white.

Underparts: Chin and throat white. Breast, flanks and under-tail coverts had a slight yellowish wash. Well demarcated between white throat and yellowish breast. Belly white. Under-wing coverts were pale buff.

Bare parts: Bill: stout! Horn upper, pink lower. Legs: blue-grey. Iris: brown. Eye-ring: greenish-grey.

Call: If the bird did call in the hand I did not hear it over the happy expletives!

In-hand measurements: Wing: 82mm. Wing-point: 4th primary. Second primary = 7th/8th. Emarginated: 3rd/4th (slightly on 5th). 1st PP < tip: 9.1mm. Tail: 90mm. Bill (skull): 19.5mm. Bill depth (at nostril): 4.2mm

Blyth's Reed Warbler; twentieth for Fair Isle

Deryk Shaw

Circumstances: I had confirmed a suspected Lanceolated warbler in the Gilly Burn earlier that afternoon and had decided to head to Setter then up the Hill Dyke to the west cliffs. Arriving at Gunnawark, I could hear a few Goldcrests flitting about. I sat down and peered over the edge. I found a Yellow-browed Warbler with the half a dozen crests feeding in the gully and they were working their way to the top of the cliff. An overhang obscured my view, so I just waited for the birds to work their way up the last few yards to the top. Suddenly a medium-sized warbler appeared at the top. From the split-second view I had before it dived back down the cliff, I saw that it had a clear white throat, demarcated from slightly greyer underparts and a rufous wing panel “Whitethroat!” I thought but then when it dived down it looked rather grey and I didn’t see any white outer tail feathers! “Interesting – definitely worth a second

look!” Luckily, I located it again some 20m down the cliff sitting face-on in a little cleft. From the head shape, I could see that not only was it not a Whitethroat but not even a Sylvia! Its sloping forehead and protruding bill pointed to *Acrocephalus* or *Hippolais*. It then began to shuffle around in the vegetation and I could see that it was indeed rather grey and very uniform with short wings. As I watched it, it eventually (after 15 mins or so) worked its way back to the top allowing me a close (c6m) view but again for just a few seconds before it dived down again. Whilst trying to re-locate it, I saw AJB appear over the top of Hoini and waved him over. “Really weird acro in here!” I exclaimed. A minute or so later I re-found it close to where it had disappeared to before and shouted AJB over. He peered over the cliff and said “Are you sure it’s an acro – looks like a Garden Warbler” for which he received a disdainful clout to the back of the head! The bird was actively feeding again and making its way back to the top. We settled down in a suitable vantagepoint and waited. A few minutes later, it arrived and sat at the top looking around, then flew a few metres up the hill-side before returning to the top of the cliff. We sat, noting the features before simultaneously shouting out “Blyth’s Reed!!”. After 2-3 mins it darted back down the gully! AJB stayed with the bird whilst I ran up the hill to get a mobile reception and phone the news out. It was watched until almost dark but unfortunately never came back up the cliff.

General Appearance: A very cold grey very plain *Acrocephalus* warbler, lacking the warmth of Eurasian Reed Warbler but did seem to have a warm panel (rufous edges to secondaries) on the wings. Slightly rounder head than Reed Warbler (but still with a fairly shallow sloping forehead) and a ‘spiky’ bill. Short wings – primary projection about half exposed tertial length.

Behaviour: Shuffled around in the vegetation (fairly short grassy with the odd umbellifer plant) down the cliff with occasional sallies into the air as it worked its way to the top. On the grass at the top it appeared to chase a few insects by running along the ground interspersed with short flights.

Head: Generally appeared rounder than Eurasian Reed. Off-white supercilium from base of bill was noticeable to the eye extending slightly behind eye (where it was narrower and less distinct).

Upperparts: Rump concolourous with back/mantle/crown – very plain and uniform cold grey, lacking in any warmth (closer in colour to Garden Warbler than any other species I have seen but reminiscent of the Blyths Reeds trapped in May 2000 and at Springfield in September 2001). Although I was almost certain it was an *Acrocephalus*, the apparent greyness of the bird meant that the possibility of Olivaceous or Syke’s Warbler (I haven’t seen either of them – maybe next year?) still had to be ruled out. I therefore paid particular attention to the tail to be sure of its shape and to be certain there was no white – it was uniformly grey-brown, slightly rounded. The wings were browner than the upperparts and the secondaries

had rufous edging which, in certain light (and combined with an obvious white throat) even gave the impression of Common Whitethroat!!

Underparts: Clean white throat, clearly demarcated from rest of underparts (adding to the Common Whitethroat impression!) which were cold grey-white, slightly greyer along the flanks. There was no yellowish or buff tones visible.

Bare parts: Bill; fairly long and slim giving a 'spiky' appearance. Upper mandible-dark horn. Lower mandible-pink with a dark grey smudge near the tip. Legs; pinky-grey. Eye; dark.

Note: this bird is still under consideration by BBRC.

Paddyfield Warbler; sixteenth for Fair Isle

Paul Baxter

Circumstances: The 14th October dawned windy, and with the wind from the south-east, it felt good for birds. I was on north census, probably my least favoured census plot (there is an awful lot of walking up and down hills – including Ward Hill!) but it does give an opportunity to visit some parts of the island that are definitely underwatched. Harry Scott joined me that morning and, after breakfast, we headed north towards North Light. There was obviously a new arrival of migrants on the island, with lots of thrushes and crests on the cliffs to the north of the Obs. At North Light we enjoyed superb views of Pallas's and Yellow-browed Warblers on the cliff top. We eventually pulled ourselves away from the 'sprite show' and headed towards the west cliffs, past Easter Lother Water and up Ward Hill. We spent fifteen minutes or so at each of the gullies on the west cliffs and eventually arrived at Lerness.

It was clear that many migrants were sheltering on the west cliffs, which was one of the few areas on the island that was sheltered. At Lerness, we enjoyed fantastic views of crests, another Yellow-browed Warbler and several Blackcaps, just by lying on our fronts and looking onto the cliff faces below and opposite. A small warbler appeared on the cliff face opposite, next to a Blackcap, approx 30 feet away, and both Harry and I instantaneously got onto the bird (amazing given the size of the cliff face!). It was a small, rather non-descript warbler with a good supercilium and a darker crown. After about 10 seconds of watching the bird I said to Harry that I was sure it was a Paddyfield Warbler. At this stage the bird moved further up the cliff, towards the cliff edge. I sprinted round the back of it and appeared on the opposite side, hoping to get a better view of the bird. I found it straight away, feeding along the eroded edge of the cliff face and the short grass on top. The views were down to c.20 feet, which enabled my previous views to be confirmed – it was a Paddyfield Warbler. After about a minute of watching it, it flew away from me, past the other observers and onto the cliffs, never to be seen again.

Size and shape: Difficult to judge on the cliffs, but it was slightly smaller than the

nearby Blackcap, and not as bulky as that species. The short wings and longish tail gave the bird a very distinct shape.

Head: The head pattern was the most outstanding feature of the plumage. The supercilium was very obvious, reaching from the bill base to behind the eye and the length of the ear coverts, off white in colour (similar in colour to the throat). Approx. same width over length. Dark eye stripe same length as supercilium. The supercilium was bordered above by a broad, darker edge, which from a distance gave the bird a darker crowned appearance. The ear coverts same colour as mantle and appeared rather isolated. The shape of the head was slightly peaked.

Upperparts: Overall, a pale brown colour (not as pale as Booted Warbler, but a touch lighter than Reed Warbler), with a paler, ginger rump, which showed well in flight. The wings were the same colour as the mantle, but with contrasting tertials (much darker) and darker primary tips, of which the projection was very short (approx. five tips visible). The primary projection was less than half of the exposed tertial length. The darker alula also contrasted on the wing. The greater coverts lacked any pale edges. The tail was rather long, and was often held in a slightly upright manner and flicked as it hopped amongst the rocks, similar in fashion to a small sylvia. Noticeably long in flight, colouration similar to upperparts.

Underparts: The throat was off-white and the underparts tinged a buffy colour, paler off white on the undertail coverts.

Bare Parts: Legs quite strong looking, dark grey in colour. Bill rather short for an *acro*, with dark grey upper mandible and tip, with yellowish remaining lower mandible.

N.B. *After a slightly mad celebratory jump about on the clifftop, we phoned in the news to Deryk (Shaw). Never has a Paddyfield Warbler in Britain been so quickly demoted. "Forget the warbler; get your arses down to Neder Taft, we've got an american sparrow, probably Savannah . . ."*

Hume's Warbler; the first for Shetland

Deryk Shaw

Circumstances: I had slogged the north of the isle in the morning (as I needed to count the seal pups) but had not seen a lot. However as the weather was so pleasant I decided to skip lunch and continue around the south of the isle to try and cover as much ground as possible. I reached Midway at around 1245hrs and immediately found a very grey '*tristis*' Chiffchaff in the garden – the bird of the day so far. I then noticed another small bird amongst the seeded cabbage stalks. Raising my bins I saw that it was another *phylloscopus* warbler with a grey head and a buffish white supercilium. "Another *tristis* Chiff" I thought, but then I noticed it had a distinct wing-bar (too much for a *tristis* Chiff) and white tips to the tertials. These features and its small size pointed to it being a Yellow-browed warbler, however the overall

dull green-grey colouring and relatively uniform plumage (as opposed to the normal contrasty black, white, green and yellow of 'normal' Yellow-browed) made me think that it was in fact probably a Hume's Warbler. "Ya beauty! Fair Isle strikes again!!" It was fairly mobile around the garden and adjacent area of rough ground, but I patiently followed it trying to get all the details I could. After about ten minutes the bird conveniently called. I did not recognise the call as Yellow-browed. "It must be a Hume's". My mobile then rang. It was Lachlan (my ten-year-old son) saying he had seen a black and white bird in North Haven and could it be a Little Auk? I replied that it could well be and could he get mum to come and pick me up from Midway. I wanted to come home and check the calls of Hume's Warbler on tape. It wasn't a perfect match to the tape I had (Krister Mild's *Soviet Bird Songs*) but fairly similar, however even if it had not called I was satisfied on the plumage details I had seen that it was a Hume's Warbler. I phoned a few interested islanders and put the news out on the Shetland Grapevine before heading back down to Midway with a mist-net – being a first for the county, it was best to be 110% sure! I picked up Glen Tyler on the way and half an hour later we trapped the bird. I processed it back at the Obs, photographed and released it into the Obs Plantation where it remained until the next morning when it was successfully twitched by the clock-watching Shetland crowd on a "flying visit".

The following description is mainly based on notes taken in the field but also with reference to brief notes taken whilst the bird was in the hand:

General Appearance: A tiny *phylloscopus* warbler, grey-green upperparts with a noticeable dirty white supercilium and wingbar – closer in appearance to Greenish Warbler than Yellow-browed. Also had a tiny barely noticeable duller median covert bar and white edges and tips to tertials. Very active.

Head: Greenish-grey (greyest part of bird). Faint greyish central crown stripe. Fairly plain face but for a long dirty buffish-white supercilium (buffiest over eye), which just about met over the bill and narrowed at the rear as it ventured toward the nape. A grey eyestripe was darkest in front of eye and quite indistinct behind eye. The eyestripe did not stand out as it does on Yellow-browed. Ear coverts grey-green with a few flecks of dirty white (mottled).

Upperparts: Grey-green to varying levels – nape greyest (as crown) and rump brighter green. Intensity of green varied with light and distance/angle of view but rarely looked as bright as bright as Yellow-browed except on edges to flight feathers. Flight feathers were not as dark as on Yellow-browed (grey as opposed to blackish-grey). Greater coverts were broadly tipped yellowish-white forming a long very distinct wing bar but it almost lacked the very dark (blackish) grey bases to the secondaries so obvious in Yellow-browed and forms a second dark wing-bar below the greater covert bar. Similarly, the tertials were not so contrasty as on Yellow-browed. Although grey centred they were not the blackish-grey of Yellow-browed and were edged whitish on lower half, fringed greenish and broadly tipped

white. A very indistinct short median covert bar was shorter but more noticeable on left wing (one feather tipped yellowish-white) than right wing (three feathers tipped yellowish-green). Wings therefore appeared fairly uniform but for greater covert bar and tertial tips giving the impression of a “normal” wing-barred *phyllosc.* (Greenish, Arctic or Sibe Chiff) as opposed to the contrasty impression of Yellow-browed.

Underparts: Wholly dirty greyish-white. Faint yellow flecks could be seen in the hand but in the field it just looked white, washed grey.

Bare parts: Eye; dark. Bill; upper mandible – dark horn, lower mandible – proximal 40% dirty yellow, distal 60% dark. Legs; dark horn, soles of feet dirty yellow.

Call: Fairly silent but occasionally heard a short fairly harsh rising “dswee”, usually uttered twice in succession. Not as clear as the calls on the tape and therefore nothing like the loud long clear call of Yellow-browed. Most distinctive thing was how short the call was but the harsh quality was very surprising!

In-hand data: Ring number: 0M3632; Wing: 53mm; Weight: 5.4g; Fat: 2; Pec; 2; 2nd P = 7th/8th

Savannah Sparrow; second for Fair Isle & third for Britain

Deryk Shaw

Circumstances: The north of Scotland had been battered by west or north-west winds since the start of October as a series of lows crossed the Atlantic. Westerly winds are never the favoured sort on Fair Isle, especially in autumn when south-easterlies off a high pressure extending as far east as possible is what everyone is praying for. However, news of a whole host of American goodies turning up in Iceland, Ireland and Barra (!) gave hope that maybe we could land a Yankee warbler of our own. A White-rumped Sandpiper on 10th, although only the third for the isle, was not quite what we were hoping for. The wind then went and switched to south-east on 12th – dashing all our dreams!! The weather charts however looked quite good so all our thoughts were soon concentrating on prospects from the east . . . Four Richard’s Pipits, three Pallas’s Warblers and a Raddes Warbler all arrived on the 13th so, with the south-easterly continuing, all was looking good for something good as I ventured out on 14th. Although there had obviously been an arrival of thrushes overnight, by half way through my SW census the best I could muster was a Yellow-browed Warbler and the first Woodcocks of the autumn. I had reached Hesti Geo when my mobile phone rang – it was Alan Bull “John (Walmsley) from Schoolton has reported a funny Little Bunting at Neder Taft. Are you anywhere near to go and check it out?” I replied in the affirmative and headed over to the said croft. One other person (Tony Quinn) was already there and they both gave me a similar description “It looks like a Little Bunting but doesn’t have a Chestnut face”. The bird then appeared in front of us and I knew as soon as I saw

it that it wasn't a Little Bunting – "It's definitely not a Little Bunting..." I informed my two expectant companions. It was indeed about Little Bunting size but appeared to be streaked and striped all over and unlike any bunting I could think of "I think it's an American Sparrow" I exclaimed. The excitement rose and we began waving over nearby birders and I began phoning others. A small crowd had soon gathered and it was agreed that it was indeed an American Sparrow but other than eliminating a few obvious species, nobody could provide a definitive answer. I phoned the Obs and requested Alan Bull got his arse . . . and the Sibley Guide down here!

Almost every birder on the isle was present now but where were Harry Scott and Paul Baxter? Nobody could get hold of them . . . but just then a mobile rang. It was an ecstatic Harry with the news that he and Paul had just been watching a Paddyfield Warbler on the cliffs at Lerness. "Very good Harry. We're watching an American Sparrow at Neder Taft" was the equally ecstatic response. Harry and Paul were soon legging it southwards!!!

The Sibley guide arrived but, whilst Savannah Sparrow then seemed most likely, conclusive proof was lacking. The bird did not appear to have any yellow in the supercilium and the breast streaking looked to be black (whereas it was brown in the book). Lunchtime was upon us and the bird appeared settled in the garden so rather than incur the wrath of the kitchen it was decided to retire to the Obs for food and seek some more information. Lunch was wolfed down and more books and even the internet consulted. The upshot of which was that Savannah Sparrow was still my favoured candidate, however more views were required and we may have to trap it. Back at the site, John and the bird were still present. A mist-net was quickly erected and telescopes and cameras honed in on the bird, which was feeding in the garden with the House Sparrows and Greenfinches. The light was better and scope views, but especially digital photographs, showed that it did indeed have a narrow band of yellow in the fore-supercilium and the breast feathers actually had blackish centres, bordered with brown, fringed white. The identity confirmed, I phoned the news out and contemplated the ensuing scramble to twitch it! As luck would have it the bird then landed in front of the mist-net and was easily trapped. It was processed at the Obs and released back in the Neder Taft garden, where I put some seed to tempt it to stay.

It remained faithful to the Neder Taft garden until it departed on the 19th and was successfully twitched by over 150 people as part of Fair Isle's biggest ever twitch! Those arriving on the 17th were greeted with the news as they got off their planes that there was now also a Siberian Rubythroat present!!! Others who were quicker off the mark and saw the bird on the 15th, then saw it again a few days later when they came back in for the Siberian Rubythroat – some even travelling from Scillies and back TWICE!!! Madness!

General Appearance: A small bunting-like bird, about the size of Little Bunting with an extremely short tail, which was especially evident in flight. Very streaky/stripy.

Behaviour: Although it fed with the House Sparrows and Greenfinches on the seed put out for it, it was very much a loner. It would fly away and return on its own some time later. Despite its small size it regularly threatened the other birds when feeding – drooping its wings, holding them out slightly and lowering its head and charging with its beak open. Whilst feeding it would regularly scratch the surface with its ‘large’ pink feet like a chicken. When alarmed it would occasionally raise its crown – giving a peaked appearance like a Rustic Bunting.

Head: Streaky brown/black with thin off-white median crown stripe. Greyish supercilium (widest just behind eye) could be seen (in reasonable light and good views) to have a narrow band of yellow along lower edge of fore-supercilium, extending over the eye (where it stained top of eyering). Lores plain greyish. Thin blackish-brown eyestripe was barely noticeable in front of eye. It broke the eyering at rear and then extended backwards and flared out from lower edge, drooping slightly at rear of ear coverts. Ear coverts greyish buff-brown varying according to light. Moustachial from base of bill was thin at base but thicker as it travelled along lower edge of ear coverts and curled upwards at rear edge of ear coverts – but not joining eyestripe! A broad whitish submoustachial followed same path as moustachial and was buffier at rear. A streaky brownish-black malar spread out to form breast streaking. Eyering was creamy on lower half, yellower on top half and was bisected at rear by eyestripe.

Upperparts: Streaky-bunting pattern with dark centred feathers edged greyish brown. Two narrow whitish mantle stripes. Wing feathers similarly dark (blackish) centred with brown (chestnut) fringes. Tail brown with paler greyish outer feathers, which were edged creamy white.

Underparts: Whitish ground colour (slightly buffier on breast) with blackish-brown streaking across whole of breast and along flanks (where it was brighter, more rufous). Feathers actually had black centres, edged with brown and fringed white, which is why in dull conditions the streaking appeared black but was browner in better light. Lowest feathers on breast had upside down “V” markings (chevrons). Belly unmarked white. Undertail coverts essentially white but with 2-3 thin dark streaks.

Bare parts: Bill; pointed, straight culmen, dark horn upper, pinkish lower with dark tip, pink cutting edge. Legs; dark pink. Eye; dark brown

Call: A clear ‘tsip tsip’ usually uttered on arrival and departure from the favoured area.

In-hand data: Ring no. P777890 Age: 1st W – freshness of primaries/pointed tail; Emarginations: P 3/4/5/6; 2ndP = P4/5; Wing point = P3; Wing = 72mm; Bill (f) = 11.3mm; Bill(s) = 13.2mm; Tail = 50mm; Weight = 17.0g; Fat = 1; Pec = 1.

Changes to the Fair Isle List

Deryk Shaw

The progress in bird taxonomy in recent years has resulted in several former sub-species being given full species status. As a result the Fair Isle list has a few additions whilst recent reviews by BBRC (of pre-1958 records in particular) and SBCRC has resulted in a number of published records being classed as 'unsafe' and are therefore removed from the Fair Isle totals. Also, the separation of the British and Irish lists has resulted in a change of status of certain Fair Isle records. All these amendments follow:

Black-throated Diver (*Gavia arctica*): The first record (26th October 1935) is now considered unsafe. There have been five accepted records.

Baikal Teal (*Anas formosa*): The identity of the sole record (24th September-7th October 1954) is now considered unsafe. *Baikal Teal is therefore removed from the Fair Isle list.*

King Eider (*Somateria spectabilis*): A reanalysis of records has resulted in single males in June 1974, April 1975 and the two in 1989 as all being treated as different individuals. There have been approx 15 records involving 11 individuals.

Velvet Scoter (*Melanitta fusca*): Single on 29th September 1998 now considered unsafe.

Collared Pratincole (*Glareola pratincola*): The individuals reported in May 1934 and May 1935 were not supported by further evidence and must now be considered as Pratincole spp. Therefore, just one record of Collared Pratincole remains (2nd June 1971).

American Golden Plover (*Pluvialis dominica*): One on 14th-15th September 1956 has been declared the first British record.

Western Sandpiper (*Calidris maura*): The sole record, 27th May-3rd June 1956 (trapped on 29th May) is currently under review by BBRC as it may in fact be the first Scottish (second British) record of Semi-palmated Sandpiper (*Calidris pusilla*). *Western Sandpiper is therefore (temporarily?) removed from the Fair Isle list.*

Sabine's Gull (*Larus sabini*): The records from 1979, 1982 and 1998 are no longer considered acceptable. Therefore now only one record still stands (5th September 1977).

Red-rumped Swallow (*Hirundo daurica*): Some discrepancy has arisen over the very first record (three on 2nd June 1905) which may in fact have been just a lone bird.

Richard's Pipit (*Anthus novaeseelandiae*): Early autumn birds on 17th-25th August 1953 and 19th-25th August 1953 are now no longer acceptable. Also, those on 21st May 1964 and 19th August 1969 had no supporting descriptions and must be considered unsafe. Singles on 11th-13th May 1998 and 11th-17th May 2002 are the only accepted spring records.

Blyth's Pipit (*Anthus godlewskii*): The individual from 13th-22nd October 1988, now accepted as the first British record this century.

Pechora Pipit (*Anthus gustavi*): A review of pre-1958 records has resulted in a number of 'unsafe' records which must be removed from the total; 2-3 extras on 27th October 1930, late August 1931, late September 1931, 28th August 1935, 2nd October 1951. The number of pre-1970 records is just nine, with 31 since – a total of 40 records.

Red-throated Pipit (*Anthus cervinus*): A single on 22nd October 1957 and six on 8th May 1936 have been rejected. There have been 69 accepted records.

Yellow Wagtail (*Motacilla flava*): The record of Black-headed Wagtail (*M.f.feldegg*) on 3rd-8th May 1974 has been rejected by both BOURC and BBRC, along with several other Shetland records. Thus, the one on Fair Isle from 7th-8th May 1970 is the only surviving Shetland record of this race.

Thrush Nightingale (*Luscinia luscinia*): One on 27th May 2002 was not accepted by BBRC. There have been 43 spring and 4 autumn records accepted.

Common Nightingale (*Luscinia megarhynchos*): One found dead on 30th October 1971 has been confirmed as the first British record of Central Asian race *L.m.hafizi*.

Black-eared Wheatear (*Oenanthe hispanica*): A 1st W male from 8th-13th November 1951 is now considered no longer acceptable. There have been five records accepted – three probable *O.h.hispanica* and two *O.h.melanoleuca*.

Black Wheatear (*Oenanthe leucura*): Both records (28th-30th September 1912 & 19th October 1953) are now considered unacceptable. *Black Wheatear* is therefore removed from the Fair Isle list.

Pallas's Grasshopper Warbler (*Locustella certhiola*): One on 8th-9th October 1949 has been declared first British record. There have been 17 records.

Lanceolated Warbler (*Locustella lanceolata*): The only spring record (4th May 1953) is now considered unacceptable. There have been 68 autumn records.

Sykes's Warbler (*Hippolais rama*): Singles on 29th-31st August 1959 & 20th-27th August 1977 have been declared the first British records of this recent split. These are the only Fair Isle records.

Arctic Warbler (*Phylloscopus borealis*): A reference to five or six in autumn 1931 was actually just a single bird. There have been 72 records.

Willow Warbler (*Phylloscopus trochilus*): The sight record for 23rd-27th November 1927 must be considered doubtful.

Willow Tit (*Parus montanus*): The only record, (3rd November 1935 – in the company of three Blue Tits) is now considered unsafe. *Willow Tit is therefore removed from the Fair Isle list.*

Southern Grey Shrike (*Lanius meridionalis*): The two records (21st September 1956 & 17th-18th October 1964) have been confirmed as the first British records of this recent species. Both (as are all British records) are considered to be of the Central Asian race *L.m.pallidirostris*, known as Steppe Grey Shrike.

Carrion/Hooded Crow (*Corvus corone/cornix*): These are now considered as two different species.

Redpoll (*Carduelis flammea*): The several races have been assigned to the following two species: the British race (*Carduelis cabaret*) has been classed as a separate species known as **Lesser Redpoll** whilst the races *C.f.flammea* (mealy Redpoll), *C.f.islandica* (Icelandic Redpoll) and *C.f.rostrata* (Greenland Redpoll) remain lumped under the name **Common Redpoll**.

Therefore up to the end of 2003, there are **362 species** in Categories A-C on the Fair Isle List plus **five** in Category D (Saker Falcon, Daurian Starling, Asian Brown Flycatcher, Chestnut Bunting and Red-headed Bunting), **two** others which perhaps should be in Category D (Wood Duck and Yellow-headed Blackbird) plus **one** extinct (Great Auk) = **370 species**.

Systematic Checklist of the Birds of Fair Isle

Alan Bull

The table below is a checklist of the birds of Fair Isle up to the end of 2003. The species name is followed by a code to summarise their status on Fair Isle (see below). The species order and all names are those complying with recent changes made by the BOU (British Ornithologists Union). The main list is all birds recorded on Fair Isle in Categories A-C of the British List. Five species in Category D, two Category D candidates and presumed escapes (Category E) are also included in lists at the end.

Status Categories

Vagrant (V)	ten records or less in the past 20 years
Rare (R)	11-40 records in the past 20 years
Scarce (S)	averaging 10 records or less per annum
Regular Migrant (RM)	averaging 11-40 records per annum
Frequent Migrant (FM)	averaging 41-500 records per annum
Common Migrant (CM)	averaging more than 500 records per annum

Breeding Categories (B, followed by:)

Small Numbers (S)	on average, less than 100 pairs per annum
Moderate Numbers (M)	on average, 101-1000 pairs per annum
Large Numbers (L)	on average, more than 1000 pairs per annum

Mute Swan (V)	Red-throated Diver (RM)
Bewick's Swan (V)	Black-throated Diver (V)
Whooper Swan (FM)	Great Northern Diver (S)
Bean Goose (V)	Yellow-billed Diver (V)
Pink-footed Goose (FM)	Little Grebe (R)
Greater White-fronted Goose (S)	Great Crested Grebe (V)
Greylag Goose (CM)	Red-necked Grebe (V)
Canada Goose (R)	Slavonian Grebe (S)
Barnacle Goose (FM)	Black-browed Albatross (V)
Brent Goose (R)	Northern Fulmar (BL, CM)
Common Shelduck (S)	Cory's Shearwater (V)
Eurasian Wigeon (FM)	Great Shearwater (V)
American Wigeon (V)	Sooty Shearwater (FM)
Gadwall (R)	Manx Shearwater (S)
Eurasian Teal (FM)	European Storm-petrel (BS, FM)
Mallard (BS, FM)	Leach's Storm-petrel (RM)
Northern Pintail (S)	Northern Gannet (BL, CM)
Garganey (V)	Great Cormorant (FM)
Northern Shoveler (S)	European Shag (BM, CM)
Common Pochard (R)	Little Bittern (V)
Ring-necked Duck (V)	Grey Heron (FM)
Tufted Duck (S)	Purple Heron (V)
Greater Scaup (S)	White Stork (V)
Common Eider (BS, FM)	European Honey Buzzard (R)
King Eider (V)	Red Kite (V)
Steller's Eider (V)	White-tailed Eagle (V)
Harlequin Duck (V)	Eurasian Marsh Harrier (R)
Long-tailed Duck (FM)	Hen Harrier (S)
Black (Common) Scoter (S)	Pallid Harrier (V)
Velvet Scoter (S)	Montagu's Harrier (V)
Common Goldeneye (RM)	Northern Goshawk (V)
Sniew (V)	Eurasian Sparrowhawk (RM)
Red-breasted Merganser (FM)	Common Buzzard (S)
Goosander (S)	Rough-legged Buzzard (V)
Common Quail (S)	Golden Eagle (V)
Osprey (S)	Upland Sandpiper (V)

Lesser Kestrel (V)				Spotted Redshank (S)			
Common Kestrel (RM)				Common Redshank (CM)			
American Kestrel (V)				Common Greenshank (RM)			
Red-footed Falcon (V)				Lesser Yellowlegs (V)			
Merlin (RM)				Solitary Sandpiper (V)			
Hobby (R)				Green Sandpiper (RM)			
Gyr Falcon (V)				Wood Sandpiper (S)			
Peregrine Falcon (RM)				Common Sandpiper (FM)			
Water Rail (RM)				Spotted Sandpiper (V)			
Spotted Crake (R)				Ruddy Turnstone (CM)			
Little Crake (V)				Red-necked Phalarope (V)			
Baillon's Crake (V)				Grey Phalarope (V)			
Corn Crake (S)				Pomarine Skua (S)			
Common Moorhen (S)				Arctic Skua (BS, FM)			
Common Coot (R)				Long-tailed Skua (R)			
Common Crane (V)				Great Skua (BM, FM)			
Sandhill Crane (V)				Mediterranean Gull (V)			
Little Bustard (V)				Laughing Gull (V)			
Great Bustard (V)				Little Gull (V)			
Eurasian Oystercatcher (BS, FM)				Sabine's Gull (V)			
Pied Avocet (V)				Black-headed Gull (FM)			
Stone-curlew (V)				Ring-billed Gull (V)			
Collared Pratincole (V)				Mew (Common) Gull (BS, FM)			
Black-winged Pratincole (V)				Lesser Black-backed Gull (BS, FM)			
Little Ringed Plover (V)				Herring Gull (BS, CM)			
Ringed Plover (BS, FM)				Iceland Gull (S)			
Kentish Plover (V)				Glaucous Gull (RM)			
Eurasian Dotterel (S)				Great Black-backed Gull (BS, CM)			
American Golden Plover (V)				Black-legged Kittiwake (BM, CM)			
Pacific Golden Plover (V)				Ivory Gull (V)			
European Golden Plover (CM)				Gull-billed Tern (V)			
Grey Plover (S)				Caspian Tern (V)			
Northern Lapwing (BS, FM)				Sandwich Tern (S)			
Red Knot (FM)				Roseate Tern (V)			
Sanderling (FM)				Common Tern (BS, RM)			
Semipalmated Sandpiper (V)				Arctic Tern (BL, FM)			
Red-necked Stint (V)				Black Tern (V)			
Little Stint (RM)				White-winged Tern (V)			
Temminck's Stint (V)				Common Guillemot (BL, CM)			
White-rumped Sandpiper (V)				Brunnich's Guillemot (V)			
Baird's Sandpiper (V)				Razorbill (BL, FM)			
Pectoral Sandpiper (V)				Black Guillemot (BM)			
Curlew Sandpiper (S)				Little Auk (FM)			
Purple Sandpiper (FM)				Atlantic Puffin (BL, CM)			
Dunlin (FM)				Pallas's Sandgrouse (V)			
Buff-breasted Sandpiper (V)				Rock Pigeon (BS, FM)			
Ruff (RM)				Stock Pigeon (S)			
Jack Snipe (FM)				Common Wood Pigeon (FM)			
Common Snipe (BS, CM)				Eurasian Collared Dove (FM)			
Great Snipe (R)				European Turtle Dove (S)			
Long-billed Dowitcher (V)				Oriental Turtle Dove (V)			
Eurasian Woodcock (FM)				Common Cuckoo (RM)			
Black-tailed Godwit (S)				Barn Owl (V)			
Bar-tailed Godwit (RM)				Scops Owl (V)			
Whimbrel (FM)				Snowy Owl (V)			
Eurasian Curlew (BS, FM)				Long-eared Owl (RM)			
Short-eared Owl (RM)				Rock Thrush (V)			
European Nightjar (V)				White's Thrush (V)			
White-throated Needletail (V)				Hermit Thrush (V)			
Common Swift (FM)				Swainson's Thrush (V)			

Pallid Swift (V)			Grey-cheeked Thrush (V)		
Alpine Swift (V)			Ring Ouzel (FM)		
Little Swift (V)			Common Blackbird (CM)		
Common Kingfisher (V)			Eye-browed Thrush (V)		
European Bee-eater (V)			Dusky Thrush (V)		
European Roller (V)			Black-throated Thrush (V)		
Hoopoe (R)			Fieldfare (CM)		
Eurasian Wryneck (RM)			Song Thrush (CM)		
Great-spotted Woodpecker (S)			Redwing (CM)		
Calandra Lark (V)			Mistle Thrush (S)		
Bimaculated Lark (V)			Pallas's Grasshopper Warbler (V)		
Greater Short-toed Lark (S)			Lanceolated Warbler (R)		
Crested Lark (V)			Comm. Grasshopper Wbler (RM)		
Wood Lark (V)			River Warbler (V)		
Sky Lark (BS, CM)			Savi's Warbler (V)		
Horned (Shore) Lark (R)			Aquatic Warbler (V)		
Sand Martin (RM)			Sedge Warbler (RM)		
Barn Swallow (CM)			Paddyfield Warbler (V)		
Red-rumped Swallow (V)			Blyth's Reed Warbler (R)		
House Martin (FM)			Marsh Warbler (RM)		
Richard's Pipit (S)			Eurasian Reed Warbler (RM)		
Blyth's Pipit (V)			Great Reed Warbler (V)		
Tawny Pipit (V)			Thick-billed Warbler (V)		
Olive-backed Pipit (R)			Eastern Olivaceous Warbler (V)		
Tree Pipit (FM)			Booted Warbler (V)		
Pechora Pipit (R)			Sykes's Warbler (V)		
Meadow Pipit (BS, CM)			Icterine Warbler (S)		
Red-throated Pipit (R)			Melodious Warbler (V)		
Rock Pipit (BS, FM)			Dartford Warbler (V)		
Buff-bellied Pipit (V)			Subalpine Warbler (R)		
Yellow Wagtail (RM)			Sardinian Warbler (V)		
Citrine Wagtail (R)			Barred Warbler (RM)		
Grey Wagtail (S)			Lesser Whitethroat (FM)		
White/Pied Wagtail (BS, FM)			Common Whitethroat (FM)		
Bohemian Waxwing (S)			Garden Warbler (FM)		
White-throated Dipper (V)			Blackcap (CM)		
Winter Wren (BS, S)			Greenish Warbler (R)		
Hedge Accentor (Dunnoch) (FM)			Arctic Warbler (R)		
Alpine Accentor (V)			Pallas's Leaf Warbler (V)		
European Robin (FM)			Yellow-browed Warbler (RM)		
Thrush Nightingale (R)			Hume's Warbler (V)		
Common Nightingale (R)			Radde's Warbler (V)		
Siberian Rubythroat (V)			Dusky Warbler (V)		
Bluethroat (RM)			Western Bonelli's Warbler (V)		
Red-flanked Bluetail (V)			Wood Warbler (RM)		
Black Redstart (RM)			Common Chiffchaff (FM)		
Common Redstart (FM)			Willow Warbler (CM)		
Whinchat (FM)			Goldcrest (FM)		
Stonechat (S)			Firecrest (V)		
Isabelline Wheatear (V)			Spotted Flycatcher (FM)		
Northern Wheatear (BS, CM)			Red-breasted Flycatcher (S)		
Pied Wheatear (V)			Collared Flycatcher (V)		
Black-eared Wheatear (V)			Pied Flycatcher (FM)		
Desert Wheatear (V)			Coal Tit (V)		
Blue Tit (V)			Pallas's Reed Bunting (V)		
Great Tit (R)			Black-headed Bunting (V)		
Eurasian Treecreeper (V)			Corn Bunting (V)		
Eurasian Golden Oriole (V)			Bobolink (V)		
Brown Shrike (V)			Baltimore Oriole (V)		
Isabelline Shrike (V)					

Red-backed Shrike (RM)							
Lesser Grey Shrike (V)							
Great Grey Shrike (S)							
Woodchat Shrike (V)							
Black-billed Magpie (V)							
Eurasian Jackdaw (S)							
Rook (RM)							
Hooded Crow (BS, RM)							
Carriion Crow (FM)							
Common Raven (BS,RM)					CATEGORY D		
Common Starling (BM,FM)					Saker Falcon (V)		
Rosy Starling (V)					Asian Brown Flycatcher (V)		
House Sparrow (BS)					Daurian Starling (V)		
Eurasian Tree Sparrow (R)					Chestnut Bunting (V)		
Chaffinch (FM)					Red-headed Bunting (V)		
Brambling (FM)							
European Serin (V)							
European Greenfinch (RM)							
European Goldfinch (R)							
Eurasian Siskin (FM)							
Common Linnet (RM)							
Twite (BS, FM)					CATEGORY D candidates		
Lesser Redpoll (S)					Wood Duck (V)		
Common Redpoll (FM)					Yellow-headed Blackbird (V)		
Arctic Redpoll (R)							
Two-barred Crossbill (V)					CATEGORY E		
Common Crossbill (RM)					Black Swan		
Parrot Crossbill (V)					Bar-headed Goose		
Common Rosefinch (RM)					Lanner Falcon		
Common Bullfinch (S)					White-shouldered Starling		
Hawfinch (R)					House Finch		
Tennessee Warbler (V)					Pallas's Rosefinch		
Blackburnian Warbler (V)					Long-tailed Rosefinch		
Yellow-rumped Warbler (V)					Yellow-billed Grosbeak		
Blackpoll Warbler (V)					Black-headed Grosbeak		
Savannah Sparrow (V)					Indigo Bunting		
Song Sparrow (V)					Lazuli Bunting		
White-crowned Sparrow (V)					Painted Bunting		
White-throated Sparrow (V)					Varied Bunting		
Lapland Bunting (FM)							
Snow Bunting (CM)							
Black-faced Bunting (V)							
Pine Bunting (V)							
Yellowhammer (RM)							
Ortolan Bunting (S)							
Cretzschmar's Bunting (V)							
Yellow-browed Bunting (V)							
Rustic Bunting (S)							
Little Bunting (S)							
Yellow-breasted Bunting (R)							
Reed Bunting (FM)							

Moths on Fair Isle in 2003

Glen Tyler

The year was notable for a relatively high number of spring records of moths, as well as 4 additions to the Fair Isle list and 2 new species for Shetland plus several other interesting records. A total of 63 species were recorded during the year. In line with many mothing sites in the UK we shared in the influx of *Convulvulus* Hawk-moths in the autumn, and both Bedstraw Hawk-moth and Hummingbird Hawk-moth were seen during the summer.

Moth recording effort on Fair Isle in 2003 was similar to that of 2002. More or less regular trapping took place at four sites around the isle, from the Bird Observatory in the North, where a UV lamp was run throughout the season, to Schoolton in the south where sugaring of fenceposts was carried out, mainly in September. A Heath actinic trap was run at Barkland and Stoneybrek in the centre of the island, with a few nights trapping also at the Vaadal. Casual records are regularly obtained from island residents as well as visitors to the observatory.

Table 1 shows the trapping effort at each site during the year

Trap nights

Site	Year	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov
All sites	179	5	16	17	18	40	30	46	5	2
Observatory	53		7	5	7	11	16	7		
Schoolton	26					2	2	19	3	
Barkland	63	5	9	9	7	17	1	12		1
Lwr Stoneybrek	17					8	9			
Vaadal	5		1	2	2					
Barkland (sugar)	15			2	2			8	2	1

Systematic List

Hepialidae

18 **Map-winged Swift** *Hepialus fusconebulosa* (DeGeer, 1778) First on 2nd June at Lower Stoneybrek. 15 trap records in June at the Observatory were followed by 6 in July and one on the 6th August. Far fewer trapped at Barkland or Stoneybrek – 8 trap records between 2nd June and 19th July. Although the species is fairly frequently seen at dusk it is relatively rare in light traps.

Tineidae

227 **Skin Moth** *Monopis laevigella* ([Denis & Schifferrmüller], 1775) Occasionally encountered in houses and outbuildings, but not recorded at traps.

245 **Large Pale Clothes Moth** *Tinea pallescentterella* (Stainton, 1851) Found fairly frequently around houses (between May and September), but only rarely in light traps.

Choreutidae

Nettle-tap *Anthophila fabriciana* (Linn.) On 5th July there were around 50 individuals on the nettles at Pund.

418 **Apple Fruit Moth** *Argyresthia conjugella* (Zeller, 1839) One at Schoolton on 26th June. There seems to be only one previous Shetland record, in July 1996.

Plutellinidae

464 **Diamond-back Moth** *Plutella xylostella* (Curtis, 1832) Few records this year with no significant influx noted. First recorded at Barkland on 24th May, then two records in June, another two at light in July. A small number of records in September amounted to 10 moth-nights at Barkland (last on the 29th), and a single field record from the Observatory on 9th September

467 **Rhigognostis annulatella** (Curtis, 1832) One at light Barkland 29th March may be the first winter record for Shetland. A few other records in July.

Acrolepiinae

473 **Leek Moth** *Acrolepiopsis assectella* (Zeller, 1839). One found at Schoolton on 15th June (Det. Mark Young) thought to be only the second record for Scotland, usually associated with onion culture.

647 **Brown House-moth** *Hofmannophila pseudospretella* (Stainton, 1849) Recorded a few times in houses between March and October.

648 **White-shouldered House-moth** *Endrosis sarcitrella* (Linnaeus, 1758). Not rare in houses, but seldom recorded at light and sugar. First 'outdoors' record on 23rd May at Barkland, the last there on 12th November

Tortricidae

988 **Bilberry Tortrix** *Aphelia viburnana* ([Denis & Schifferrmüller], 1775). Very common on the hill and in suitable habitats around the croftland (e.g. around the Kirk) mainly in July, but unrecorded at traps.

1029 **Eana osseana** (Scopoli, 1763) Most in the north (52 moth nights in July and 17 in August at the Observatory), while in the south only a few trap records – 2 at Stoneybrek in July and at Barkland in August (3).

1030 **Eana penziana** (). Only recorded at the Observatory where there were 22 moth nights between the 5th and 17th August.

1062a **Acleris stettinensis** (Leraut). One on 3rd September, originally identified as *A. emargana* was reidentified by Mark Young following dissection. First record for

Shetland, although appears to be a northern species and previous records of *emargana* from Shetland may prove to be *stettinensis*.

1111 **Bactra lancealana** (Hübner, 1799) One seen on the School Brae on 29th June was the only record.

Pyralidae

1301 **Crambus lathoniellus** (Zincken, 1817) This species is very common in grassland in early June, for example 57 individuals recorded in a 2m wide, 150m long transect through semi-improved grazing at Barkland on 6th June.

1304 **Agriphila straminella** ([Denis & Schiffermüller], 1775) Common in late June and July.

1388 **Udea lutealis** (Hübner, 1809) First recorded at Shirva during the day on 3rd July. Common in grassland in July.

1398 **Rush Veneer** *Nomophila noctuella* ([Denis & Schiffermüller], 1775) A few autumn records of this renowned migrant – all in September and indicating a small influx between the 8th and 9th. First recorded 6th September at Barkland, 10 moth-nights at Schoolton in September, up to 5 seen around the Observatory early in the month, and two at light there on the 8th. Last record on sugar at Barkland 29th September.

Geometridae

1723 **Red Carpet** *Xanthorhoe munitata* (Hübner, 1800-09) Scarce at the Observatory (2 records in July), but more at southern sites with 9 moth nights at Stoneybrek in July, and 21 at Barkland (max 11 on 30th), with another 4 moth-nights in early August (last on the 4th).

1727 **Silver-ground Carpet** *Xanthorhoe montanata* ([Denis & Schiffermüller] 1775), Recorded between 5th July (Barkland) and 11th August (Stoneybrek). – a total of 7 moth-nights. Otherwise one at Schoolton on the 29th July, and one at the Observatory on 5th August. This species is more common than these records suggest and is regularly seen on the wing on July evenings.

1728 **Garden Carpet** *Xanthorhoe fluctuata* (Linnaeus, 1758) First on 9th April at the Observatory, with a small number of records between mid April and early June at all sites (maximum 8 at the Observatory on 20th May), then 8 moth-nights in late July and August in the south and 9 at the Observatory, indicating a successful second generation.

1742 **Yellow Shell** *Camptogramma bilineata* (Linnaeus, 1758) One at Finnequoy in July on 13th.

1777 **July Highflyer** *Hydriomena furcata* (Thunberg, 1784) One recorded at the observatory in July.

1809 **Twin-spot Carpet** *Perizoma didymata* (Linnaeus, 1758) One at Barkland on the 17th July was the only record.

1823 **Netted Pug** *Eupithecia venosata* (Fabricius, 1787) Several seen at

Stoneybrek amongst the rock garden on evening of 6th June, and one caught at Barkland on 4th June. Presumably this species is very common on the cliffs where its food plant (sea campion) is abundant.

1862 **Double-striped Pug** *Gymnoscelis rufifasciata* (Haworth, 1809) One caught at a lighted window at the bird observatory by Craig Round on 9th September proved to be the first for Shetland, although the species is known from Orkney.

1884 **The Magpie** *Abraxas grossulariata* (Linnaeus, 1758). All records came at the beginning of July, with 10 or 11 reported from sites between Quoy and the Observatory from 6th to 9th. Several other sightings followed over the next week, with possibly 15 individuals involved.

Sphingidae

1972 **Convolvulus Hawk-moth** *Agrius convolvuli* (Linnaeus, 1758) The nationally recorded influx of these moths certainly reached Shetland, with more records on Fair Isle this year than the previous total. The first individual arrived on 6th August in the actinic trap at Stoneybrek, there were then several day-time records around the isle between the 13th and 28th, at the same time up to three appeared together feeding on Honeysuckle in the Stoneybrek garden in the evenings. In September one was seen at Busta on the 7th while one visited Nastursium flowers at Barkland on the 12th. Possibly up to 10 individuals involved.

1984 **Hummingbird Hawk-moth** *Macroglossum stellatarum* (Linnaeus, 1758). One in the Stoneybrek garden on 24th and 25th June was followed by another at Lericum on 26th. A third was noted in the Observatory garden on 14th September.

1987 **Bedstraw Hawk-moth** *Hyles gallii* (Rottensburg, 1775). Two were caught at the Observatory in July on the 16th and 18th, and another on 9th August.

Noctuidae

2091 **Dark Sword-grass** *Agrotis ipsilon* (Hufnagel, 1766) Sugaring is much more effective compared to light traps at detecting this migratory species – the majority of records were at sugar, especially at Schoolton where up to 38 individuals were recorded in September between 5th and 30th. There were still good numbers into October with 5 remaining until the 17th. Barkland records stretched from 8th September to 17th October, with a maximum of 8 on the 29th September. At the Observatory one was in the trap on 8th September and one on the 10th.

2104 **Northern Rustic** *Standfussiana lucerneae* (Linnaeus, 1758). Recorded between 13th July (Barkland) and 10th September (also Barkland). Not recorded at Schoolton, but common at Stoneybrek, Barkland and the Observatory throughout late July, August and early September. Maximum count 27 at Stoneybrek on 21st July and 21 there on 8th August.

2107 **Large Yellow Underwing** *Noctua pronuba* (Linnaeus, 1758) A regular species in light traps from mid July (first at Barkland on 13th) – although 2 were seen in the field on 7th. Last record 20th September at Barkland, and maximum single count 15 at Stoneybrek on 8th August.

2117 **Autumnal Rustic** *Paradiarsa glareosa* (Esper, 1788). Common in August and early September with a total of 201 moth-nights at the Observatory (including 75 individuals on the 9th August). Fewer records further south (away from the hill) – 16 at Barkland, 24 at Stoneybrek and 1 at Schoolton.

2118 **True Lover's Knot** *Lycophotia porphyrea* ([Denis & Schiffermüller], 1775). This species is abundant on the hill, and so after the first on 29th June there were then 185 moth-nights in July at the Observatory, followed by a further 9 in early August. Fewer records from the croft sites – 1 at Barkland (19th July) and another at Stoneybrek (26th July).

2120 **Ingrailed Clay** *Diarsia mendica* (Fabricius, 1775). Very common species on the isle, mainly in late July and August. At the Observatory there were a few records at the end of June, then 149 moth-nights in July and 128 moth-nights in August. The last was recorded on 6th September. In the croft areas there was a slightly different pattern. The first was recorded on 9th July at Barkland, with regular, but not large, catches into September (except 87 at Stoneybrek on 8th August). Last record at Schoolton on 20th September.

2123 **Small Square-spot** *Diarsia rubi* (Vieweg, 1790). Tending to be on the wing earlier than *D. mendica*, First at Barkland on 29th June, then regular small numbers until late July (including 7 at Schoolton on 30th). An isolated record of two, fresh, individuals at Barkland on 20th September. A totally different pattern at the Observatory where mainly recorded in August (23 moth-nights), with a late record on 6th September.

2126 **Setaceous Hebrew Character** *Xestia c-nigrum* (Linnaeus, 1758). Two on 12th September at Schoolton, one at the Observatory on the same date and another there on 16th September were the only records.

2134 **Square-spot Rustic** *Xestia xanthographa* ([Denis & Schiffermüller], 1775). One of the commonest moths on the island. Noted from 18th July at both the Observatory and at Barkland, with 458 moth-nights in August at the Observatory and catches of over 100 individuals in a night at Barkland (110 on 23rd August) and at Stoneybrek (109 on 24th). Last recorded on 20th September at Schoolton.

2147 **The Shears** *Hada plebeja* (Hufnagel, 1766) A few spring records, the first on 17th April at Barkland and the Observatory. Then at Barkland there were 8 moth nights in the last week of May, and a few early June records. The Observatory recorded one in May one in mid June, and one 6th September.

2160 **Bright-line Brown-eye** *Lacanobia oleracea* (Linnaeus, 1758) After the first Fair Isle record last year there were several more this year. There were three trapped at the Observatory on 17th, 19th and 23rd July, one on 19th July at Barkland, and another on 4th September at Schoolton

2171 **Marbled Coronet** *Hadena confusa* (Hufnagel, 1766). First on 23rd April at Barkland, then 6 moth-nights in May. 12 moth-nights in May at the Observatory (including 5 individuals on 20th) and 1 record on 15th June – the last record of the year.

2176 **Antler Moth** *Cerapteryx graminis* (Linnaeus, 1758). Another very common species on Fair Isle, often the most common in light traps during its flight period (7th July to 9th September this year). At the Observatory there were 232 moth-nights in July, 443 in August (including 94 on the 5th) and 8 in September, with the last record on the 9th. Numbers were much smaller at the southern sites, never more than 20 in any one night.

2190 **Hebrew Character** *Orthosia gothica* (Linnaeus, 1758). One at Barkland on 21st March was a first record for Fair Isle. This species is common on mainland Shetland.

2198 **Smoky Wainscot** *Mythimna impura* (Hübner, 1808). One at the Observatory on 18th July and another at Stoneybrek on 8th August – fairly typical for this species.

2229 **Brindled Ochre** *Dasypolia templi* (Thunberg, 1792). Two September records at Barkland (9th and 27th).

2241 **Red Sword-grass** *Xylena vetusta* (Hübner, 1813). A fairly good showing for this impressive migrant – mostly to sugar, and involving long stays by the same individuals. Up to two at once 8th-30th September at Schoolton, followed by two later records on 11th October (1) and 17th October (3), possibly 5 or 6 individuals. Meanwhile a single moth was regularly present at sugared posts at Barkland from 8th to 14th September.

2256 **The Satellite** *Eupsilia transversa* (Hufnagel, 1766). One at sugar at Barkland on 12th November was the only record this year.

2262 **The Brick** *Agrochola circumcellaris* (Hufnagel, 1766). Several records of singles at Barkland between 8th and 12th September, probably only 1 or 2 moths involved. Also 1 at Schoolton on 30th September.

2306 **Angle Shades** *Phlogophora meticulosa* (Linnaeus, 1758). No major influx of this species. Records from 8th August (Stoneybrek) to 1st October (Schoolton), but usually only one or two moths per night, although 12 were found on the sugar at Schoolton on 12th September.

2321 **Dark Arches** *Apamea monoglypha* (Hufnagel, 1766). A common species on Fair Isle. First recorded on 29th June at Barkland, then regularly found in traps with 92 moth-nights in July and 43 in August at the Observatory. 156 moth-nights at Stoneybrek in July and 143 in August (including 55 on 4th). Last record 1st September at Stoneybrek.

2329 **The Confused** *Apamea furva* (Cockayne, 1950). Regular in small numbers 13th July to 8th August at Barkland and Stoneybrek (maximum 3 on 29th July), and two records from the Observatory on 18th July and 6th August.

2330 **Dusky Brocade** *Apamea remissa* (Hübner, 1809). Regular at all trap sites between 29th June (Schoolton) and 12th August (Observatory), but never in any numbers.

2340 **Middle-barred Minor** *Oligia fasciuncula* (Haworth, 1809). More regularly seen during day than captured in light traps. A widespread species recorded

between 17th July (Barkland) and 23rd July (Observatory), but certainly under-represented.

2343 **Common Rustic** *Mesapamea secalis* (Linnaeus, 1758). Two trapped 18th July at the Observatory, then another on 4th August, while on the same day two were recorded at Stoneybrek. Lastly there was another on 8th August at Stoneybrek.

2343a **Lesser Common Rustic** *Mesapamea didyma* (Esper, 1788). One trapped and identified by genitalia at Stoneybrek on 4th August.

2350 **Small Wainscot** *Photedes pygmina* (Haworth, 1809). One trapped at Stoneybrek on 1st September, while three were recorded at the Observatory on 26th & 27th August and 4th September. This species is fairly common on Mainland Shetland, although Fair Isle had the first Shetland record (in 1955).

2353 **Flounced Rustic** *Luperina testacea* ([Denis & Schiffermüller], 1775). One trapped at the Observatory on 16th August was new for Fair Isle and only the second for Shetland.

2357 **Large Ear** *Amphipoea lucens* (Freyer, 1845). Two ear moths trapped at the Observatory on 4th and 7th August were both found to be this species.

2361 **Rosy Rustic** *Hydraecia micacea* (Esper, 1789). Very common species in the crofting areas; 69 moth-nights at the Observatory, 42 at Schoolton, 150 at Stoneybrek and 67 at Barkland in August. Fewer records after the end of August with 18 at Barkland (to 20th September) and 6 moth-nights at the Observatory in September (to the 15th).

2441 **Silver Y** *Autographa gamma* (Linnaeus, 1758). No huge influx, but (after one on 20th May at Barkland) regularly recorded between 5th June and 28th September – mostly field records. One late record on 7th October at Barkland.

2442 **Beautiful Golden Y** *Autographa pulchrina* (Haworth, 1809). One on 26th July at Stoneybrek.

Acknowledgements

Many thanks to all the visitors and islanders that passed records to the Observatory, and of course to the regular recorders Nick Riddiford and Pat Thomson. Also thanks to Mark Young for help with identification of some of the microlepidoptera.

Other Wildlife

Alan Bull

Records of most forms of wildlife are kept at the Observatory and visitors are encouraged to report their sightings to a member of staff. Cetaceans, butterflies and moths make up the bulk of these 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

Despite an equal amount of observer effort, there were fewer cetacean sightings during 2003 than in previous seasons. Similar numbers were reported from both land and from the 'Good Shepherd IV' (details of *Good Shepherd* sightings can be found in the Shetland Sea Mammal Group Report).

A shortage of food in Shetland waters is thought to be the reason behind this decline. However, it is interesting to note that despite the fact that they feed on almost the same food, the number of Harbour Porpoise sightings seems to be stable.

Cetacean sightings from Fair Isle in 2003:

Minke Whale (*Balaenoptera acutorostrata*): Singles were seen on the 18th and 20th September.

Harbour Porpoise (*Phocoena phocoena*): Another good year for sightings of this species. The first of the year was a single animal off South Light on 14th May. A long period of absence followed before one on 5th July, five on 7th August and one on 24th August. Sightings in September comprised four on 8th, 18 on 18th, eight on 19th, one on 27th and five on 30th. The last sightings of the year were three on 1st October followed the next day by a group of eleven.

White-beaked Dolphin (*Lagenorhynchus albirostris*): In September, three were seen on the 8th, followed by 8+ on 14th, one on 26th, three off South Light on 28th and the final sighting of the year of 15 on 1st October.

Risso's Dolphin (*Grampus griseus*): Three on 15th September were followed by a single on 21st and four on the 30th. A group of eight were seen on 1st October with another two on the 2nd.

Summary of other Mammals

The annual census of Atlantic **Grey Seal** pups, conducted regularly in October and November, found that although cows were over a week late to start pupping in 2003, compared to 2002, the overall number of pups born was very similar. A record 126 pups were born in the geos around the island, compared to 124 pups in 2002 (and the previous record of 125 in 1997). A count of Seals in selected geos on 9th April produced 25 **Common Seals** (*Phoca vitulina*) and 174 **Atlantic Grey Seals** (*Halichoerus grypus*), with one of the latter bearing an orange tag in its right flipper and an orange and yellow marker on its head.

Summary of Butterflies

Following the record year in 2002, which produced 1772 sightings or ‘butterfly days’, 2003 was another excellent year with a total of 528 sightings around the isle. The highlight was undoubtedly a **Large White** (*Pieris brassicae*) on 1st September, which was the first confirmed sighting on the isle since 1990. A White butterfly sp. seen on 7th June was not positively identified and does not appear in the table below.

Butterfly days during 2003:

	June	July	August	September	October
Painted Lady (<i>Vanessa cardui</i>)	197	18	57	97	4
Red Admiral (<i>Vanessa atalanta</i>)	43	1	18	85	
Small Tortoiseshell (<i>Aglais urticae</i>)			4	3	
Large White (<i>Pieris brassicae</i>)				1	

The first butterfly of the year was, as normal, a **Painted Lady** on 1st June. The last sighting of that species was on 17th October – a late record and probably due to the spell of good weather at the end of the season. **Red Admirals** were recorded between 3rd June and 28th September. **Small Tortoiseshells** were recorded between 4th August and 8th September.

Summary of other sightings

Sightings of **Hover Flies** and **Lacewings** were regular through the summer months, but no formal counts or trapping was conducted to establish what species were occurring. **Shetland Bumblebees** (*Bombus muscorum*) were more regular during the summer and it was of no surprise when a nest was found below the school. **Common Frogs** were once again seen during the year and the first spawn was noted in Pund ditch on 6th March. A large amount of spawn was laid in the ditches near Pund but, either due to pollution or disease, it all failed to hatch. Another dry summer in 2003 would also have hampered any increase in the population.

Fair Isle Bird Observatory Trust (FIBOT) Financial Report and Accounts for 2003

Mike Wood

A summary of FIBOT's draft accounts for the year ended 31st October 2003 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 2003 was another very successful year in every respect. The guest numbers were again at a high level of 2,272 bed-nights, similar to the previous year's total of 2,321 and well above our target level of 2,000 bed-nights. Shop income was at a new high level in response to the wider range of goods available. Any fresh ideas for the shop are always gratefully received. Bar revenue continued at the high levels of the two previous years and the bar has been extremely successful from both business and social viewpoints.

Those readers who visit Fair Isle on a regular or occasional basis will be very aware of the continuous improvements to the facilities and appearance of the Observatory over the past few years that make it a real pleasure to stay there. We are able to achieve that through a combination of hard work by Hollie, Deryk and their staff, generous help from islanders, and the consistently high visitor levels and excellent financial performance of the last five years. We will aim to continue this virtuous circle of improved facilities leading to more visitors, leading in turn to further investment in improved facilities. Our healthy finances allow us, in addition, to make some improvements to the island environment in ways that help both birds and birdwatchers.

We continue to receive valuable income from the JNCC and Scottish Natural 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.

We received several generous donations during the year and, where appropriate, some of these have been placed in the FIBOT Endowment Fund. Any readers wishing to make a specific or non-specific donation to support the Observatory can be assured it would 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. So long as we continue to improve the facilities of the Observatory sensibly and operate comfortably within our cash flow without taking the future for granted, the financial situation should remain healthy. 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. My personal thanks go to Hollie and Deryk for their extremely hard work in making this healthy situation possible.



JCB

Income and Expenditure Report for the year ended 31st October 2003

	2003 £	2002 £
Income		
Hostel Income	61,659	70,578
Shop Sales	7,059	6,541
Bar Income	11,868	12,578
Miscellaneous Hostel Income	478	2,246
	<u>81,064</u>	<u>91,943</u>
Cost of Sales		
Purchases	34,579	31,184
Wages & Salaries	29,601	30,104
	<u>64,180</u>	<u>61,288</u>
Gross Profit	16,884	30,655
Other Income		
Interest Received	4,073	4,040
Deferred Grant Income released	1,100	2,400
Subscriptions	4,959	5,415
Donations	3,136	4,093
Grants Received	17,054	16,580
Other Income	0	0
	<u>30,322</u>	<u>32,528</u>
	47,206	63,183
Other Expenses		
Administration	5,287	7,616
Establishment	22,238	25,900
Sales & Marketing	6,325	7,530
Financial & Legal	1,681	5,512
Depreciation	11,000	12,125
	<u>46,531</u>	<u>58,683</u>
Surplus/(Deficit) for the year	<u>675</u>	<u>4,500</u>

Balance Sheet as at 31st October 2003

	31/10/03	31/10/02
	£	£
Fixed Assets		
Tangible assets	84,106	92,689
Investments	10,857	10,857
	<u>94,963</u>	<u>103,546</u>
Current Assets		
Stocks	9,651	8,530
Debtors	9,732	10,412
Cash at bank and in hand	57,746	64,222
	<u>77,129</u>	<u>83,164</u>
Creditors: amounts falling due within one year	(11,510)	(15,702)
Net Current Assets/(Liabilities)	<u>65,619</u>	<u>57,462</u>
Total assets less current liabilities	160,582	161,008
Creditors: amounts falling due after more than one year	(0)	(1,100)
	<u>160,582</u>	<u>159,908</u>
Representing:		
Accumulated Surplus	160,582	159,908
Appeal Reserve	0	0
	<u>160,582</u>	<u>159,908</u>

**Fair Isle Endowment Fund – Accounts for the year ended
31st October 2003**

	46,531	58,683
Revenue Account	2003	2002
	£	£
Investment Income (Gross)	1,556	1,698
Investment Income (Net)	393	395
Total	<u>1,949</u>	<u>2,093</u>
Management Fees	235	335
Balance due to FIBOT	1,714	1,758
Total	<u>1,949</u>	<u>2,093</u>
Capital Account		
Investments at Market Value		
£2,875 5.5% Treasury Stock 2008/12	2,936	3,035
Unit Trusts (several)	49,244	34,208
Cash at Bank	47,724	40,860
Less Accumulated Income due to FIBOT	(10,178)	(8,464)
Total	<u>89,726</u>	<u>69,639</u>
Represented by:–		
Balance at beginning of year		
– Dr John Forster Will Trust – Advance	60,000	60,000
– General Fund	19,639	5,707
Unrealised Gain/Loss on Investments	10,087	(6,068)
Donations received for General Fund		10,000
Total	<u>89,726</u>	<u>69,639</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 16 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 substantial 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 maintenance work.

It is 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, 70 Stratford Street, Oxford OX4 1SW along with your detailed CV, your phone number and the names, addresses and phone numbers of two referees.

Dr Evans will notify you if your application is successful and you should then check the availability of accommodation with the Administrator at the Observatory and make a definite booking. Please provide the Administrator with details of your travel arrangements, save all your travel receipts and present them to the Administrator when you arrive. The costs of your travel will then be offset against your bill for accommodation.

**John Harrison Memorial Fund – Accounts for the year ended
31st October 2003**

Total	89,726	69,639
Revenue Account	2003	2002
	£	£
Investment Income – Gross	490	490
Net	9	9
Deposit Interest received	47	58
Total	546	557
Grants Paid	500	450
Management Expenses	0	0
Balance to Capital Account	46	(107)
Total	546	557
Capital Account		
Investments at Market Value		
£7,255 6.75% Treasury Stock 2004	7,444	7,672
Mercury 637 British Blue Chip Units	676	601
Cash at bank	1,464	1,418
Total	9,584	9,691
Represented by:–		
Balance at beginning of year	9,691	9,792
Balance from Revenue Account	46	107
Realised Gain/Loss on Investments	0	0
Unrealised Gain/Loss on Investments	(153)	(208)
Total	9,584	9,691

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.

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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)



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email: sumburgh.hotel@zetnet.co.uk

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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

West Affric

Torridon

16m E of Kyle of Lochalsh on A87

9m W of Kinlochewe on A896

For further details contact

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

Tel. No. Inverness 01463 232034

website: www.nts.org.uk



Iron Age broch, storm petrels and harbour seals in Mousa



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For further information about trips to Mousa telephone Tom Jamieson at 01950 431367 or visit his WEB site www.mousaboattrips.co.uk. (Ten percent discount for RSPB members).

For further details, contact the RSPB Shetland Office, East House, Sumburgh Head Lighthouse, Virkie, Shetland, ZE3 9JN. Tel: 01950 460800

***Interested in birding?
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NOTES

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