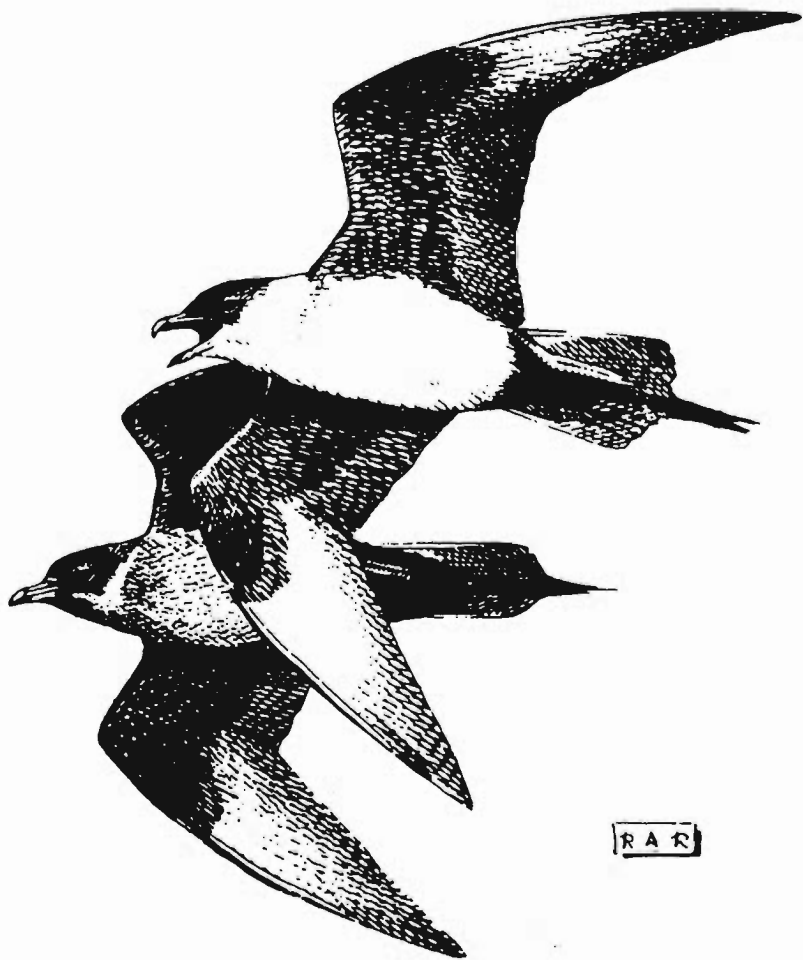


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## Report for 2004





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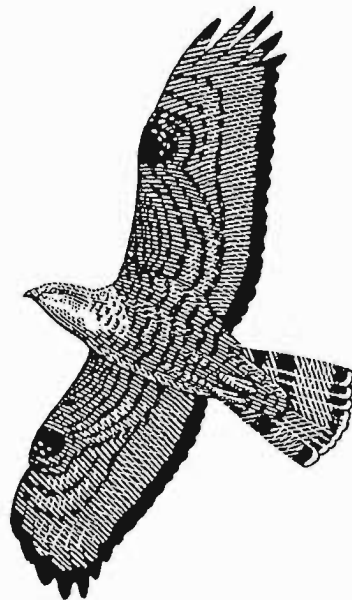
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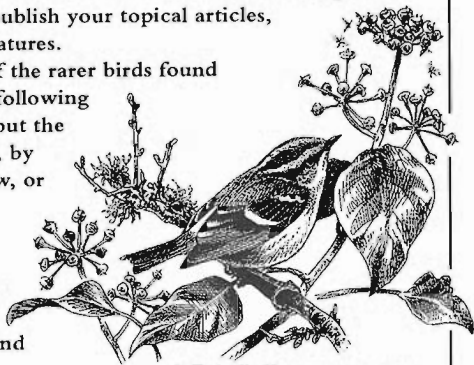
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*Pallas's Warbler* by Mike Langman

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 Tennessee Warbler, Fair Isle, September 1975. G. Walbridge. *BS* 7(3): 119-122.  
 A birds eye view of Fair Isle - some unfinished business. R. Nason. *BS* 7(2): 56-58.  
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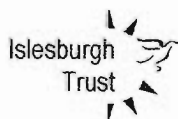
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# Fair Isle Bird Observatory

Report no. 57

2004

*Edited by Deryk Shaw*

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## Chairman's Report

*Roy Dennis*

Summing up the year, I'm struck again by the variety and change over the years at Fair Isle, with each year being special. 2004 was a very good year for the Bird Observatory with a record number of guests. Deryk and Hollie ran a very successful and happy Observatory and the Directors thank them. We also thank many others who helped and supported the Observatory; we are particularly grateful to the late Mrs Ball who remembered us generously in her will. Endowments like this are very important for the Observatory's future.

Nowadays we have our AGM at Fair Isle in late May. It's a chance for the directors to really see and enjoy the running of the Observatory and to renew their acquaintance with island friends as well as to enjoy Fair Isle and its wildlife and scenery. But last May it was different. On my first walk up from the Observatory and along the cliffside road at Dutfield, I was greeted with quietness instead of the clamour of seabirds. The island in May had always been for me a place of flying seabirds, noise and often smell, but this year many of the seabirds were absent. It was eerie and sad.

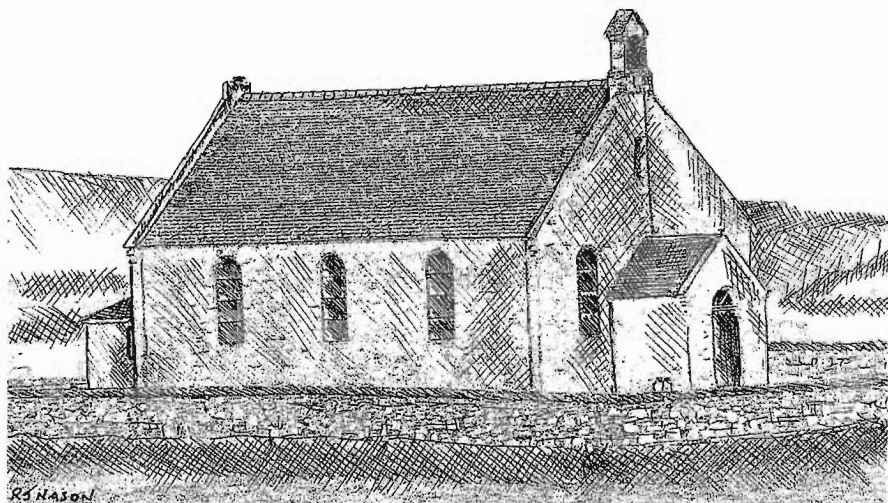
In this report, Deryk has detailed the latest instalment of the seabird studies and I'm afraid it's dismal reading. 2004 goes down as the worst in living memory for Fair Isle's seabirds; the number attempting to breed were at their lowest level for many species and it's incredible to think that the colonics of Guillemot, Razorbill, Kittiwake, Arctic Skua, Arctic and Common Terns failed to rear a single young, and from 96 pairs of Great Skuas only one young flew. Apparently, it was all to do with the failure of Lesser Sandeels, their main diet. There has been much discussion about global warming, changing sea temperatures and currents and changes in the distribution of the fish. But a simple view is that if the sand eels move north, other species should arrive from the south, such as sprats. And where are they?

I can look back to my time as warden in the 1960s when hundreds of fishing boats scoured the seas off Fair Isle and further afield, and I'm afraid that in the last 40 years the North Sea has been over-fished and the ecosystem damaged. I would hope the serious state of affairs in 2004 would see the declaration of a Marine Protected Area around Fair Isle as an immediate first step in the recovery of the seas around this special island.

This annual report reveals that the number of species recorded at Fair Isle last year was lower than recent years. Nevertheless, there were many interesting sightings and great birding days, with the keen birdwatchers revelling in two extremely rare

birds in October both from East Asia, both firsts for Britain. The first was a Chestnut-eared Bunting and second a Rufous-tailed Robin found by our finance director, Mike Wood. What was particularly encouraging was that both birds used sacrificial crops that had been planted on the crofts to encourage birds, flowers and insects. We are extremely grateful to the crofters for supporting this scheme and also to the RSPB and NTS for helping FIBOT with the costs of running it. Sadly I didn't see either of the rarities but courtesy of the excellent bird observatory website I knew about them immediately as I logged on at my daughter's home in Cairns, Australia.

I hope you enjoy reading the latest annual report and that you soon have another chance to visit the Observatory or encourage others to do so. It's certainly an island worth visiting again and again.



*Kirk (Rebecca Nason)*

## Warden & Administrator's Report

*Deryk & Hollie Shaw*

This was our best year yet for visitor numbers (surpassing last year's record) and although overall a poor year for migrants and rarities, two firsts for the Western Palearctic within a week kept Fair Isle top of the birding charts. However, the worst seabird breeding season on record is cause for deep concern.

**Staff:** Rebecca Nason was Seabird Monitoring Officer (SMO) for her second year and Alan Bull was the other Assistant Warden (AW). Both were excellent team members and did a grand job. Our Ranger this year was Claire Bailly who brought a number of good attributes to the job, not least her boundless enthusiasm and energy. In the kitchen and domestic team we had the very capable Lois Smallwood aided by Liz Burnett plus Becki Rosser, Clare Porter, Lynne Henry, Amanda Mitchell, Dorothy Hunter and Adam Rose for varying lengths of time. Lois had to leave in late August and was replaced by Ann Prior for the last two months of the season. It is very hard to find the correct domestic team and we are grateful to those who remain loyal to the Observatory and ourselves, especially when under pressure during busy periods. Finally, but no means lastly, we would like to thank our two childminders we had this year – Janet Gibson (May–July) and Janet McNie (August–October) – both antipodean jewels!!

**Volunteers:** We had two Polish volunteers early in the season and they were a tremendous help with planting a large number of trees this spring and fencing areas as part of our cropping project and we developed a strong friendship with them. It was with great sadness therefore that we learned of the death of one of them (Kuba Mucha) as a result of a climbing accident in Sweden later that summer. Our heartfelt sympathies go out to his family and his best friend, Tomasz Matosz. Additionally, Phil Harris (Rebecca's boyfriend) helped out with a large amount of fencing and trap repairs during his several extended visits!

**Migrants:** A total of 202 species recorded is disappointing by recent years' standards. However compensation was provided by the arrival in October of a Chestnut-eared Bunting and a week later a Rufous-tailed Robin – the latter found by our Finance Director! Both were firsts for the Western Palearctic (from East Asia) and sparked (akin to 2003) another major twitch to Fair Isle. Approximately 120 birders came up from south for the Chestnut-eared Bunting during its six-day stay (15th–20th Oct) but the Rufous-tailed Robin unfortunately was only present for one day (23rd Oct), which meant just a dozen Shetland birders managed to get here in time. Both birds made it into the national press as well as all the usual birding magazines. Other birding highlights of the year included a male Collared Flycatcher in May, adult male Red-flanked Bluetail in September and Lanceolated, Booted and Dusky Warblers in October.

**Seabirds:** Following a terrible breeding season in 2003, things were even worse in 2004. The worst breeding season in living memory with virtually no chicks fledging from the entire island. Guillemot, Razorbill, Arctic Skua, Kittiwake, Common Tern, Arctic Tern all failed completely whilst just a single Great Skua fledged. Gannets were the only species to do well whilst Puffins also fared better than most. Again it is the lack of Lesser Sandeels that is the cause and it was not (as in recent years) just confined to Shetland! The whole of the east coast of Britain suffered, resulting in headline news in national newspapers and television. This shows the value of such long-term monitoring programmes as that carried out on Fair Isle (under contract to JNCC).

**Other research:** As in 2003, we had researchers from Glasgow University here looking at aspects of Great Skua behaviour and body condition of non-breeding birds at club sites. Peter Evans continued his long-term Starling studies.

**Traps:** The traps needed their usual extensive re-wiring in the spring and we have added another catching box and ramp to the Plantation trap but other than that it was just routine maintenance.

**Conservation areas:** We planted a large number of young trees this spring (purchased from Christies of Forres) as well as cuttings provided by Dave Okill in the traps and fenced off areas and gardens down the isle. As usual a lot have died but many have taken and will hopefully provide migrant cover in years to come. Thank you to all islanders who suggested and permitted us areas for planting. The Observatory Plantation meanwhile goes from strength to strength and now looks positively luxurious. The area of Oysterplant (*Maritima mertissima*) at South Light was successfully fenced off to keep it safe from marauding sheep and a count of over 200 plants was made in July. However, the winter storms chewed up and spat the fence out in a tangled pile of wire, posts and concrete and the whole lot had to be replaced again in spring 2005.

**Cropping Project:** We had six areas of “sacrificial” bird crops this year scattered around the isle. A couple of others did not get done due to constraints on Iain Stout’s time but they will hopefully be planted in the future. They were very effective in attracting birds and the crop on the Skadan is where the Chestnut-eared Bunting chose to reside for its entire six-day stay whilst the Rufous-tailed Robin spent some time in the crop at Bull’s Park. However, all the plots attracted large numbers of common migrants (and birdwatchers). Success!! A great many thanks to all the islanders who donated a strip of land towards this project, to RSPB and NTS for financial assistance and to Iain Stout for carrying out the majority of the tractor work. Hopefully we can build on this successful start in years to come!

**Vehicles:** The Zodiac was repaired early in the year and lasted the season but picked up another large gash towards the end, in August. It is approaching ten years old now and a new vessel will become a priority in the next year or two. The boat engines survived with only minor repairs needed. In August, we purchased a people

carrier (Toyota Previa) from Shetland which means that visitors can be transported in comfort. The white transit van meanwhile had to go out to have a broken spring replaced and the sliding door no longer opens. However the engine is still sound and we should get a couple more seasons out of it as a “works van” – which should help conserve the new people carrier. The generators survived the season with no major repairs required and Malcolm Adamson serviced them whenever he was on the isle.

**Building improvements and maintenance:** As part of our continuing improvements to the guest accommodation, rooms 4, 5 & 6 were completely redecorated in January, two complete new shower units have been fitted in the Ladies shower room and these have been a tremendous success. Also, a hairdryer was fitted outside one of the bathrooms, two new sets of bunk-beds were purchased and all bedside strip lights in twin and dormitory accommodation were replaced with twin spotlights. Our ‘Good Shepherd’ bar in the Observatory lounge has been as popular as ever and the extra demand required a new Bar Cooler to be purchased. The hot water tank to the Warden’s flat and AW accommodation had to be replaced in July and then just after the end of the season, the megaflo tank (main Observatory hot water tank) also sprung a leak. Fortunately it was still under guarantee and a new replacement was fitted in time for the 2005 season. Seven new replacement windows were purchased at the end of the season and these were fitted in time for the start of the 2005 season.

**Puffinn use:** We contacted NTS and requested permission to open up the Puffinn as a refreshment stop for our visitors in the autumn. Tea and coffee making facilities, biscuits and a donations tin were set up. This was a hugely popular facility with birders (especially given the poor weather this autumn) and we would like to thank NTS and Linda Grieve (Puffinn caretaker) for their co-operation. The revenue was donated to the Fair Isle Community Association funds.

**Island events:** Every fortnight throughout the summer, the Observatory played host to “Fair Isle Thursday”. An islander delivered a slide-show and talk on an aspect of Fair Isle and this was followed by music and song from the Fair Isle folk group, Fridarey (plus occasional guests). These were a tremendous success and attracted visitors and locals alike and ensured a lively night at the Observatory bar. We also had a number of visits from individuals and groups with an unusual agenda: We were graced *twice* with the presence of a kayaking policeman, Sean Morley, who was attempting to row his way round the entire British coastline (including all islands) in aid of RNLI and Marine Conservation. Malcolm Russell, a magician from Orkney, stayed for several days and performed some incredible tricks to the school children before repeating the show to a packed Observatory. He was on a self-funded mission to perform on every inhabited island in Britain and the leg on Fair Isle was very well received and produced a handsome donation towards his quest. A group of divers from Macclesfield travelled from John

o' Groats on Zodiacs and spent an enjoyable week at the Observatory and exploring the waters surrounding the isle. A band of rowers from Bigton, Shetland crossed the waters between Mainland Shetland and Fair Isle one day in July in a traditional yoa! made by Fair Isle's Ian Best. Just four cruise ships managed to land on Fair Isle this year but their passengers went away happy with the island hospitality and to have been virtually nose to nose with a Puffin.

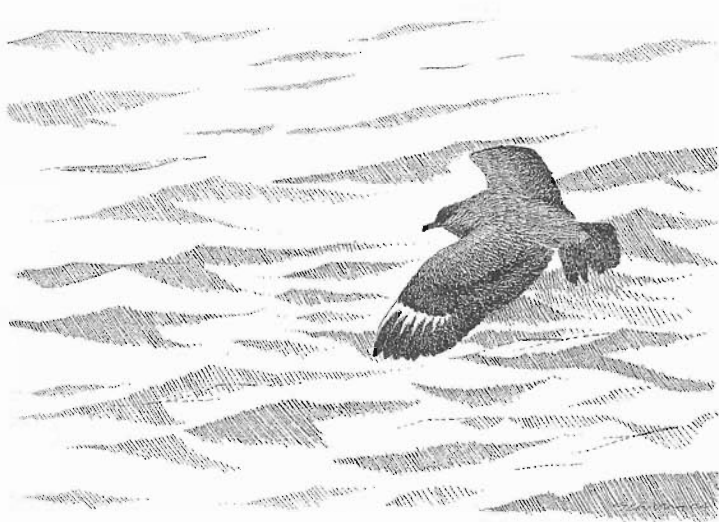
The Fair Isle community is a dynamic and ever-changing one and 2004 saw some new faces and some sad departures. Patrick and Jude Ross-Smith with Jude's two boys, Callum and Duncan, left Burkle in September to take up residence and a new challenge in Mainland Shetland and, a month later, Glen Tyler and Gina Scanlon from Barkland and their two children, Max and Kate, also left for Mainland Shetland. They will all be very sorely missed, but by none more so than ourselves. A new Headteacher, Gilly Harrison, arrived in April with her husband Mark and children Beth, Oliver and Daisy.

Finally, it just remains for us to thank all those individuals and organisations, that we have not already mentioned above, who help to ensure the continued existence and smooth running of Fair Isle Bird Observatory and all that it stands for. When it comes to such matters it is always people like Kenny Stout and Brian Wilson who spring to mind first of all – those people who put in many many hours of hard work on the building and its internal workings (usually with very little notice) to ensure the continued safety and comfort of our guests. However, this building is now really beginning to show its age and the time has come to think seriously about the future – more of this in the next Newsletter! Other maintenance personnel who deserve mention are Malcolm Adamson for his continued care of our diesel generators and help and advice with our power supply, Barry Sinclair for telephone repairs and electrical advice, and Jimmy (James Willem) Stout and Kenny Stout (again) for help with vehicle repairs. The crew of *The Good Shepherd IV* must be thanked for safe delivery of both passengers and cargo. Robert and Fiona Mitchell of Stackhoull Stores are thanked for friendship, advice and supply of all our kitchen supplies. Dave Wheeler supplies us with the all-important daily weather forecast and also maintains our increasingly popular website and we thank him for both. Thanks are also due to Iain Stout for advice and help with fencing matters as well as the aforementioned cropping project. Those islanders who have contributed to this project must be thanked again but all Fair Islanders who allow Observatory staff and visiting birdwatchers to traipse all over their land must be congratulated for their patience and generosity. The FIBOT vice-chair, Dave Okill, has supplied numerous cuttings for our habitat creation scheme over the years and the success of the Observatory Plantation is testament to his efforts. Pat Craib (Hollie's mother) and her friends Howard and Anne Wallace-Simms are to be thanked for their pre-season efforts in helping prepare the Observatory for opening during their

“holiday time”! We thank Loganair for maintaining the vital air link between Fair Isle and Mainland Shetland and doing their utmost to ensure our guests travel safely and on time. Tim and Irene Loseby are our stalwarts at the biggest national bird watching event of the year – the Birdwatching Fair – and their efforts in promoting the Observatory there do not go unappreciated.

A number of organisations must be thanked for their vital financial assistance towards our work. The Joint Nature Conservation Committee (JNCC) and Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH) both give monies, which allows us to carry out the seabird monitoring and Ranger Service respectively. British Trust for Ornithology (BTO) and Shetland Oil Terminal Environmental Advisory Group (SOTEAG) also give small grants towards our work and we thank them also but all sources of funding, be it contracts, grants or personal donations are much appreciated. A special thanks to Alistair Craib (Hollie’s father) who has donated a number of computers and other office appliances to the Observatory over the past few years. On a personal note we would like to thank all the FIBO staff, Fair Islanders and the FIBOT Directors for their continued support.

Finally, all those who have contributed articles, vignettes and photographs to this report must be thanked and also Sarah Gee, who voluntarily gave up many hours of her holiday to proof-read various drafts – we hope you enjoy it and that it encourages you to visit again.



*Great Skua (Ray Scally)*



## The National Trust for Scotland

*Angus Jack*

*Regional Surveyor, National Trust for Scotland*

50 years of partnership between the National Trust for Scotland and Fair Isle was celebrated on Friday 16<sup>th</sup> July when our chairman Roger Wheeler, Chief Executive Robin Pellow and Highlands and Islands Regional office staff attended a wonderful evening of celebration in the hall. It was unfortunate that Fair Isle's oldest resident Jerry Stout was unable to attend following a slight accident earlier that day. It was also a year of double celebration, as Fair Isle became a Fair Trade island, the first in the UK in recognition of more than ten years in supporting fairly traded products such as teas, coffees, chocolate, dried fruits etc.

George Waterston had purchased the island in 1948 having already established the Bird Observatory in former military buildings. In 1954 with a population reduced to 50 and concerned about the future of the island he transferred the ownership to the National Trust for Scotland in the belief that its future would be secured. We hope his wishes have been realised in the present successful partnership that has developed.

Unusually in relation to Trust properties our role on Fair Isle is to provide professional, technical, and financial support and allow the island to 'run itself'. We do not have a property manager and we try to keep our interference in the day to day running of the property to a minimum, preferring to see the islanders make the decisions, which affect their environment and their way of life. We hope this has contributed to the successful cooperation and partnership that exists between the islanders and the Trust.

Housing remains high on the agenda on Fair Isle and our housing improvement programme continued with the completion of two flats at the South Light. Upper Stoneybrek now remains as the only major improvement to be completed and it is scheduled to commence later this year.

Applications from people wanting to live on Fair Isle have dropped dramatically this year and more worryingly most applications are from retired persons. In common with the country in general Fair Isle has an ageing population but the difference on Fair Isle is that those past normal retirement age continue to work with an energy and enthusiasm that would be the envy of many younger folk. Never the less the routine work required to maintain a community such as building trades, boat crews, airfield personnel, carers, utilities staff, school ancillary staff, knitting



etc. are all required to be undertaken by a diminishing number of the 'younger' islanders. It is the national situation in microcosm and just as the country requires young people to support its service industry, Fair Isle is no different.

The NTS Management Plan for Fair Isle had expired in 1998 and changes in the Trust process of management planning had led to a backlog in updating plans. It was agreed that the best option was to continue with the principles of the management plan and in a recent review it was very encouraging to note that most objectives had been completed although within a ten-year time scale rather than the five years originally proposed. The one major area in which we have been unsuccessful to date is that of marine conservation and the NTS will continue, at the highest level, to work towards achieving some form of marine conservation status for the waters around Fair Isle. The decline in seabird breeding success makes this objective a high priority although the problems are exacerbated by global issues outwith our immediate control.

The partnership between the Trust and Fair Isle and the success of Fair Isle as a thriving community is almost entirely due to the determination, hard work and resilience of its population and its future lies in their very safe hands.

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

*J. C. Waine*

Now in its tenth consecutive year, the investigations into the causes of disease and death in wild birds on Fair Isle have built into a valuable database. At the end of 2004, the warden at Fair Isle Bird Observatory sent me forty-eight birds representing twenty-three species from fourteen families (Podicipedidae [1 species], Sulidae [1], Phalacrocoracidae [1], Charadriidae [1], Scolopacidae [2], Laridae [1], Sternidae [1], Alcidae [3], Motacillidae [2], Turdidae [4], Sylviidae [3], Ploceidae [1], Fringillidae [1], Emberizidae [1]) and four orders (Podicipediformes, Pelecaniformes, Charadriiformes and Passeriformes). This year I was able to supplement information from the autopsies with personal observations made during a brief and very enjoyable stay on the island during October.

The species reflect a mix of resident breeding birds and passage migrants. Normally the latter group are more heavily represented but this year the nutritional problems suffered by the breeding birds has been reflected in a much higher proportion of the casualties with young Shags and Common Guillemots particularly badly affected. In addition, the unusual influx of Northern Bullfinch

<i>English Name</i>	<i>Latin Name</i>	<i>Age/Sex</i>	<i>Date Found</i>	<i>Post Mortem Findings</i>
Slavonian Grebe	<i>Podiceps auritus</i>	1st winter F	29/09/04	Starvation primary; pneumonia secondary; urolith
Northern Gannet	<i>Morus bassanus</i>	Adult F	12/09/04	Drowned
European Shag	<i>Phalacrocorax aristotelis</i>	Pullus F	13/07/04	Starvation primary
European Shag	<i>Phalacrocorax aristotelis</i>	Pullus ?	13/07/04	Starvation primary; heart failure
European Shag	<i>Phalacrocorax aristotelis</i>	Pullus ?	13/07/04	Starvation primary
European Shag	<i>Phalacrocorax aristotelis</i>	Pullus F	13/07/04	Starvation primary; air sacculitis
European Shag	<i>Phalacrocorax aristotelis</i>	Pullus ?	13/07/04	Starvation primary
European Shag	<i>Phalacrocorax aristotelis</i>	Pullus F	13/07/04	Starvation primary; gizzard impaction
European Shag	<i>Phalacrocorax aristotelis</i>	Juvenile M	13/07/04	Starvation primary
Northern Lapwing	<i>Vanellus vanellus</i>	Pullus F	12/05/04	Starvation primary
Common Snipe	<i>Gallinago gallinago</i>	Pullus M	unknown	Pneumonia
Common Snipe	<i>Gallinago gallinago</i>	Immature F	05/10/04	Collision injuries
Jack Snipe	<i>Lymnocyrtus minimus</i>	Adult M	29/09/04	Collision injuries
Great Black-backed Gull	<i>Larus marinus</i>	Juvenile M	unknown	Starvation primary
Arctic Tern	<i>Sterna paradisaea</i>	Adult M	19/05/04	Collision injury; shock
Common Guillemot	<i>Uria aalge</i>	1st winter M	06/10/04	Starvation primary
Common Guillemot	<i>Uria aalge</i>	1st winter F	06/10/04	Starvation primary; parasitic ventriculitis
Common Guillemot	<i>Uria aalga</i>	1st winter F	06/10/04	Starvation primary
Common Guillemot	<i>Uria aalga</i>	1st winter F	06/10/04	Starvation primary; collision injuries
Common Guillemot	<i>Uria aalga</i>	1st winter M	06/10/04	Starvation primary; parasitic oesophagitis
Common Guillemot	<i>Uria aalga</i>	1st winter F	06/10/04	Starvation primary; drowned
Black Guillemot	<i>Cephus grylle</i>	1st winter M	12/09/04	Starvation primary
Little Auk	<i>Alle alle</i>	1st winter M	28/10/04	Collision injuries; rta (road traffic accident)
Little Auk	<i>Alle alle</i>	Adult M	29/12/03	Starvation primary; inhalation pneumonia

<i>English Name</i>	<i>Latin Name</i>	<i>Age/Sex</i>	<i>Date Found</i>	<i>Post Mortem Findings</i>
Meadow Pipit	Anthus pratensis	Juvenile F	28/08/04	Starvation primary
Meadow Pipit	Anthus pratensis	Adult M	22/09/04	Collision injuries
Meadow Pipit	Anthus pratensis	Juvenile ?	21/09/04	Starvation primary; migration stress
Meadow Pipit	Anthus pratensis	Immature M	13/09/04	Collision injuries; rta
Meadow Pipit	Anthus pratensis	Adult M	24/09/04	Starvation primary; renal failure; visceral gout
Pied Wagtail	Motacilla alba	Adult M	22/04/04	Collision injuries
European Robin	Erithacus rubecula	Adult M	26/10/04	Predation – Great Grey Shrike
Common Redstart	Phoenicurus phoenicurus	Adult M	14/05/04	Predation – Cat; migration stress
Fieldfare	Turdus pilaris	1st winter F	18/10/04	Collision injuries; predation
Redwing	Turdus iliacus	1st winter M	19/10/04	Collision injuries – window
Redwing	Turdus iliacus	1st winter F	22/10/04	Collision injuries
Common Whitethroat	Sylvia communis	1st winter M	30/04/04	Predation – Cat
Garden Warbler	Sylvia borin	Adult M	09/08/04	Migration stress
Garden Warbler	Sylvia borin	Adult M	30/08/04	Collision injuries
Garden Warbler	Sylvia borin	Adult M	27/08/04	Predation – Cat; compression injuries; tapeworms
Blackcap	Sylvia atricapilla	1st winter M	12/10/04	Migration stress
Blackcap	Sylvia atricapilla	1st winter M	15/10/04	Migration stress
Blackcap	Sylvia atricapilla	Adult M	24/10/04	Migration stress
House Sparrow	Passer domesticus	Adult F	04/07/04	Pyoderma; haemorrhagic enteritis – secondary
Northern Bullfinch	Pyrrhula pyrrhula pyrrhula	Adult M	25/10/04	No diagnosis
Northern Bullfinch	Pyrrhula pyrrhula pyrrhula	Adult M	22/10/04	Collision injuries – rta
Northern Bullfinch	Pyrrhula pyrrhula pyrrhula	1st winter F	22/10/04	Collision injuries – window
Northern Bullfinch	Pyrrhula pyrrhula pyrrhula	1st winter F	26/10/04	Collision injuries – rta
Reed Bunting	Emberiza schoeniclus	Adult F?	31/03/04	No diagnosis

experienced in the autumn is also reflected in the casualty list (see analysis table).

The most common birds were European Shag (seven – all suffering from starvation as well as a smattering of secondary problems), Common Guillemot (six – also all starved), Meadow Pipit (five), Northern Bullfinch (four), and Garden Warbler (three). The most unusual bird was a Slavonian Grebe. This was also a victim of starvation but there was a possibility of gizzard obstruction and urolith (a “stone” formed by the body in the urodeum – the bird’s equivalent of a bladder) predisposing it to ill thrift. Another bird rarely recorded in this survey was a Common Redstart.

Collision injuries, starvation and drowning dominated the causes of death – all attributable in whole or in part to lack of food or weakness after migration. One Meadow Pipit had visceral gout – a product of terminal kidney failure when urates, which should be excreted by the kidneys, are instead deposited on and in the vital organs. A Robin fell victim to an unusual predator – a Great Grey Shrike. A House Sparrow had an unusual and severe skin infection, which caused poor health, and eventually a secondary gut infection, which killed it. In all 21 of the 48 birds had starved, 14 had collision injuries (mainly road accidents or window collision), 5 were depredated, 5 had migration stress, a Gannet had drowned with no apparent

predisposing cause, a Common Snipe had pneumonia, one had a skin infection and one visceral gout. In two cases, no diagnosis was made.

Parasites were found in six birds and these were saved and sent to The Natural History Museum. The brains from twelve birds were posted to the VLA Weybridge as part of routine screening that is being undertaken in migratory birds in the UK for West Nile Virus.

Once again I would like to thank the inhabitants of Fair Isle, the staff of the Observatory and the visitors who have saved these casualties and thus enabled me to continue these researches.



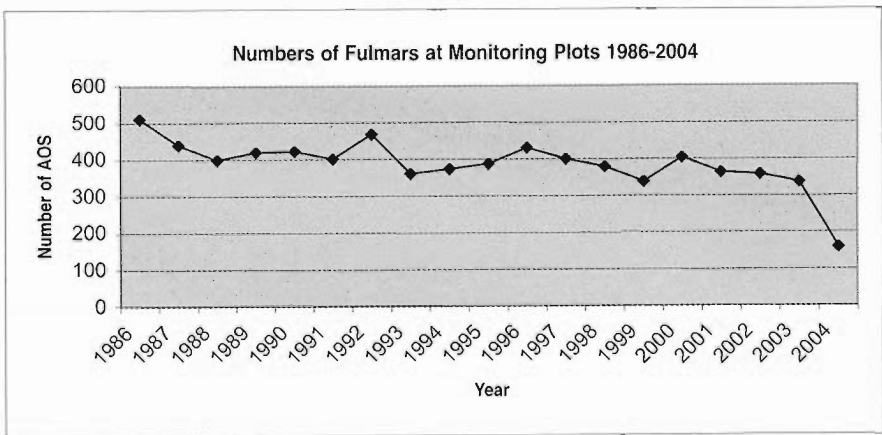
*Northern Wheatear (Ray Scally)*

## Fair Isle's Seabirds in 2004

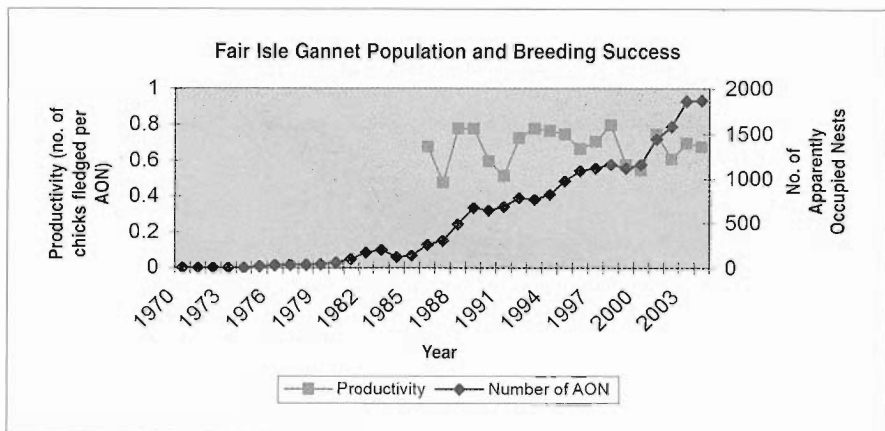
*Deryk Shaw*

**Overview:** The 2004 breeding season will go down as the worst in living memory for Fair Isle's seabirds (Table 2). Numbers of birds attempting to breed were at their lowest levels for many species (Table 1) and very few chicks were seen. Common Guillemot, Razorbill, Black-legged Kittiwake, Arctic Skua, Arctic Tern and Common Tern all failed to fledge any young whilst just a single Great Skua fledged from a pitiful 96 AOT (Apparently Occupied Territories). As in most years of poor productivity, it is a lack of Lesser Sandeel (the staple diet of nearly all seabirds in Shetland) that is at the root of the problem.

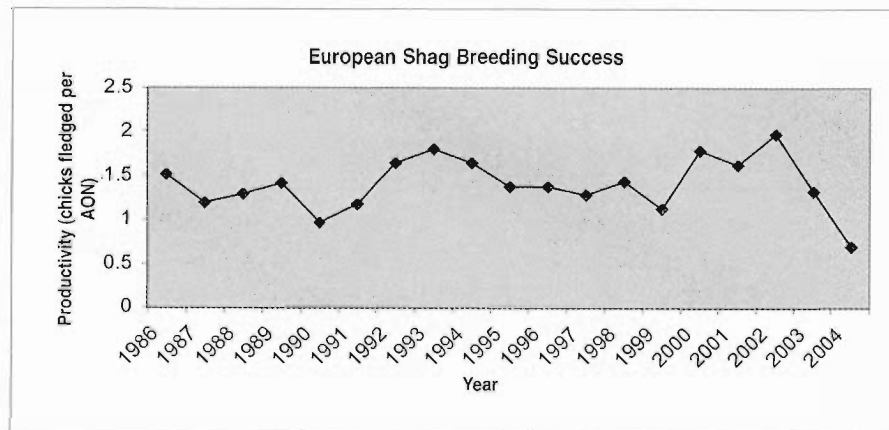
**Northern Fulmar:** The number of breeding birds at monitoring plots decreased by a massive 52.5% compared to 2003 to the lowest number since monitoring began in 1986. Fledging success was however better than last year. A productivity figure of 0.43 chicks fledged per Apparently Occupied Site (AOS) is slightly above the previous ten-year mean of 0.40.



**Northern Gannet:** Gannets first successfully nested on Fair Isle in 1974 (five pairs raised three young) and the population has grown exponentially since. This is the only species to be doing well on Fair Isle in recent years and although the population growth has slowed (an island total of 1868 Apparently Occupied Nests is almost the same as in 2003) breeding success (0.68 chicks fledged per AON) was typically high.

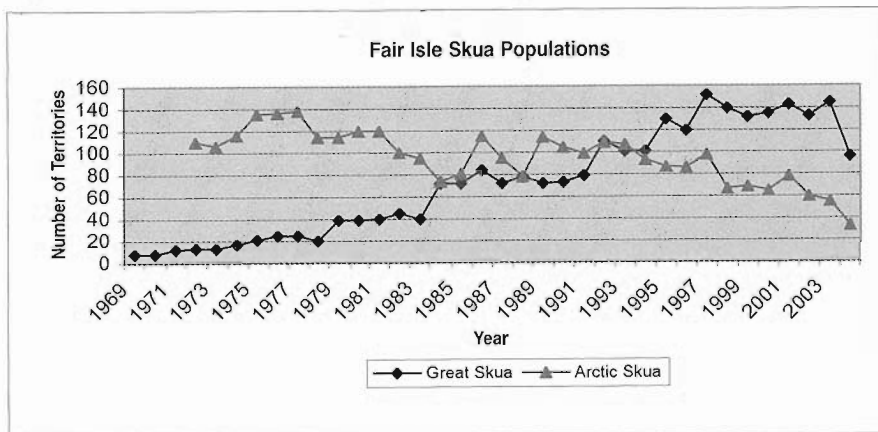


**European Shag:** Numbers of AON (Apparently Occupied Nest) varied at the five monitoring plots compared to 2003 but the overall figure was similar – an encouraging halt in the long-term decline. Numbers at the monitoring plots have declined by 43.8% since 1986. Numbers of AON at the breeding productivity plot in 2004 were however equal to the lowest ever (53 in 2002). Breeding success was extremely disappointing. A productivity of 0.69 chicks fledged per AON is the worst since monitoring began in 1986. Unlike many other species, Shags suffered losses fairly late on when chicks were close to fledging. A large number of chicks (322) were ringed in June/July but weeks later many colonies were littered with dead or dying chicks and many ringed and unringed birds were found washed up on the island's beaches. A productivity figure of 0.69 is therefore perhaps an over-estimate!



**Arctic Skua:** The island population continued its long-term decline in 2004. A total of just 33 AOT (Apparently Occupied Territory) – a massive 40% decrease from 2003 – is the lowest figure since the colony was being established in the 1950s. Only a small number even laid eggs and all were depredated (presumably by Great Skuas). Despite evidence of recruitment from other Shetland colonies, there have been several poor breeding seasons since 1990. Food shortages combined with inter-specific competition from Great Skuas undoubtedly being the reasons behind the slide.

**Great Skua:** Numbers of AOT decreased by 33.8% compared to 2003 to 96 – the lowest number since the 1950s. Although many pairs laid eggs, intra-specific depredation was rife and of the small number of young that hatched most were taken shortly after. Miraculously however, one chick did fledge from Sukka Mire. This is the third season of extremely poor breeding success in a row and must have implications for the future viability of the colony.



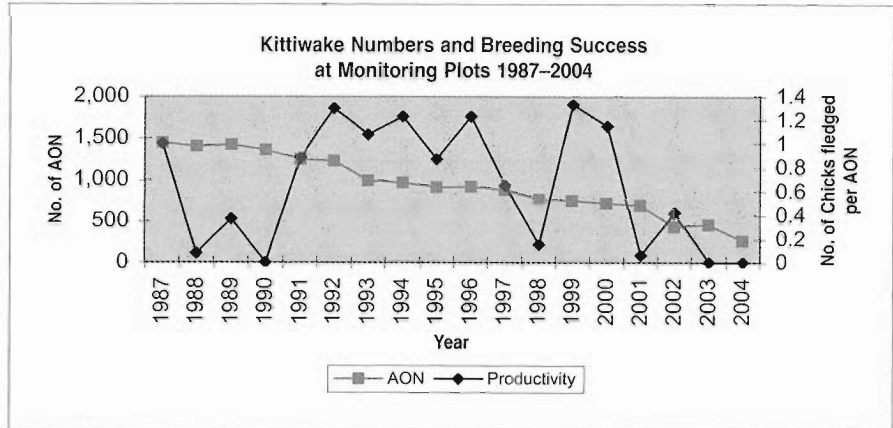
**Mew Gull:** In stark contrast to all the other seabird species, the number of nesting Mew Gulls reached an all-time high in 2004. A total of 13 nests were found (including six on Bunes) and although just two chicks successfully fledged, they were only the 2nd & 3rd to do so in the past four years.

#### Numbers of nests and fledged chicks of Mew Gull

Year	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004
Nests	10	10	7	5	6	5	8	6	8	8	9	5	13
Chicks fledged	0	4	4	3	6	2	3	4	6	0	0	1	2

**Black-legged Kittiwake:** Another disastrous year for this most-troubled species. Numbers of AON at the monitoring plots fell by a massive 40.8%, from 463 in

2003 to just 275 this year. In 2003 50% of pairs managed to lay eggs and 36.5% went on to hatch young – all of which later starved or were depredated. In 2004, although 61.8% of AONs apparently produced eggs, only three (1.09%) hatched chicks – none of which survived beyond a week and all colonies were deserted by mid-July.



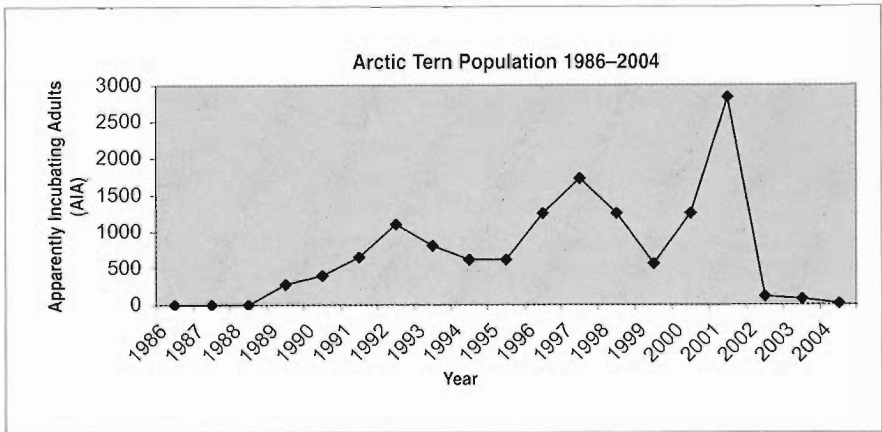
**Common Tern:** Common Terns first nested on Fair Isle in 1970 and annually since 1972, but since a peak of 59 pairs in 1989 there has been a steep decline with just a handful of pairs throughout the 1990s and it has been barely hanging on as a breeding bird since. One pair frequented the Havens for part of the season in 2003, but no nesting attempt was suspected amidst the nearby Arctic Tern colony on Bunness. This was the first time in over 30 years that Common Tern had





not bred. In 2004, although at least one pair of Common Terns was seen regularly in the Havens, they did not, for the second year running, attempt to breed. However, one pair did nest near South Lighthouse and successfully fledged one chick in August!

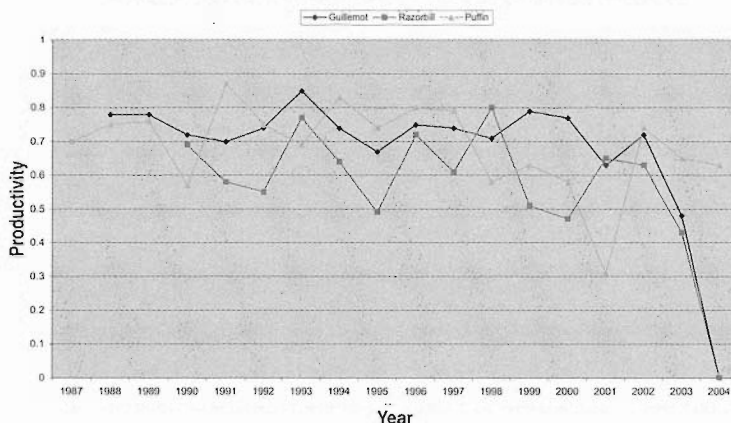
**Arctic Tern:** The Arctic Tern population fluctuates in response to the previous year's breeding season and following three disastrous breeding seasons, Arctic Terns again decreased in 2004. Although numbers peaked at around 300 birds on one day in late May, all other counts during the spring fluctuated daily and were all below 150 birds. A mere 11 AIA (Apparently Incubating Adult), the lowest since 1985 (when the colony was in its infancy) were reported, and only one nest was actually found, a massive decline from the peak count of 2,836 AIA, recorded as recently as 2001. As expected, no chicks fledged and one wonders if any birds will even attempt to settle next year!



**Common Guillemot:** As in 2003 birds were very late to return to ledges and attendance was very sporadic right up until early May. The first eggs were not laid until 13th May. Overall numbers at monitoring plots declined for the 4th year in a row to the lowest ever recorded – a 26% drop from 2003 and less than half the number seen in 1987. The low attendance at colonies meant that birds could not effectively guard against attacks from Herring Gulls and Great Skuas. Eggs were either abandoned or stolen and of the small number that hatched, all starved or were depredated. Ringing trips into colonies were met with depressing scenes. Colonies were almost desolate and the small numbers of chicks that were present were obviously very weak and dying. No chicks were ringed – normally 1500–2000 would be ringed each year! A 100% breeding failure is unprecedented amongst this species, which is normally fairly resilient when all around are failing and is a clear indication of how serious the (lack of) food situation was in 2004.

**Razorbill:** Numbers at the Lericum monitoring plot were only slightly below average and although hatching success at the Easter Lother productivity site was better than it was for Guillemot, the chicks suffered a similar fate and none fledged. Productivity in 2003 was the lowest on record at 0.43 chicks fledged per egg laid and the 1990–2003 average was 0.61. A complete failure to fledge any chicks in 2004 is (as with Guillemot) unprecedented.

**Breeding success of Guillemot, Razorbill and Puffin 1987–2004**



**Atlantic Puffin:** Puffins had a comparatively successful breeding season. An estimated productivity figure of 0.63 is similar to last year (0.65) and only marginally below the previous ten-year mean (0.67). Perhaps the slower growth rate and later fledging, compared to other auks, is beneficial to this species.

**Conclusion:** Another depressing year for Fair Isle’s seabirds (and for Shetland as a whole) and with news that other colonies around the coast of Britain are now experiencing similar problems the future does not look bright.

It would appear that there is an absence of Lesser Sandeels of the correct age class. Only a handful of food samples were collected on Fair Isle in 2004 and, combined with feeding watches and casual observations in the colonies, it was apparent that the Sandeels that were available were very small. Sprats and other gadoids were common food items brought into the colonies by all three of the auk species but Puffins were also seen to be bringing in an unusual number of Snake Pipefish. These are almost unpalatable to young Puffins and were regularly found discarded near the entrance to burrows.

If, as suspected, this is as a result of “Global Warming” – a build-up of ‘greenhouse’ gases (particularly carbon dioxide from burning fossil fuels) resulting in an increase in sea temperature, which is affecting the abundance/content/

distribution of the plankton and therefore Sandeels – then the depressing possibility is that it may already be too late for Fair Isle's/Shetland's/Britain's seabirds. Sadly all we, as ornithologists in the field, can do is keep monitoring the situation and provide the raw facts to try and convince the world's governments that this is a serious issue and something must be done!!

**Table 1: Population trends at annual monitoring plots**

Species	2004	2003	% Δ 03/04	% Δ since 1986*	Comment
Gannet	221	226	-2.2	+78.2	A slowing down of rapid increase since establishing in 1975. Whole island = 1868 AON
Fulmar	160	337	-52.5	-68.6	In rapid decline since peak in 1997
Shag	122	119	+0.84	-43.8	A welcome halt to long-term decline.
Great Skua	96	145	-33.8	+14.3	Lowest number since 1991
Arctic Skua	33	55	-40.0	-71.3	Long-term decline continues
Kittiwake	275	463	-40.6	-81.0**	Another species in free-fall and with poor productivity looks set to continue to fall
Arctic Tern	11	80	-86.3	-86.7	Numbers fluctuate with previous year's breeding success. Peak of 2836 as recent as 2001.
Guillemot	1496	2022	-26.0	-54.4**	Lowest number on record
Razorbill	59	70	-15.7		Only slightly below average
Puffin	40	55	27.3		Appears to be in decline but may perhaps be just gradual abandonment of the lone monitoring plot.

Numbers refer to: Apparently Occupied Nest (AON) for Gannet, Shag, Kittiwake and Puffin; Apparently Occupied Site (AOS) for Fulmar; Apparently Occupied Territory (AOT) for Great and Arctic Skua; Apparently Incubating Adult (AIA) for Arctic Tern; Attendant Adults for Guillemot and Razorbill

\* 1986 was first year of intensive monitoring programme under contract to JNCC (Joint Nature Conservation Committee)

\*\* Guillemot and Kittiwake counts since 1987

\*\*\* Razorbill counts since 1990

**Table 2: Breeding success at annual monitoring plots**

Species	2004	2003	%? 03/04	Mean 1994-2003	Comment
Gannet	0.68	0.70	-2.86	0.69	Can feed on larger fish, not just Sandeel and has large foraging ranges.
Fulmar	0.43	0.37	+16.2	0.40	Huge foraging ranges and not reliant on Sandeel may explain comparative success.
Shag	0.69	1.33	-48.1	1.36	Worst on record and may even be an over-estimate.
Great Skua	0.01	0.05	-80.0	0.73	Last three seasons have been consecutively worst on record.
Arctic Skua	0.00	0.09	-100	0.48	Falling population and poor breeding success. Future looks bleak.
Kittiwake	0.00	0.00	0	0.71	Complete or almost complete failure in 3 of last 4 years
Arctic Tern	0.00	0.00	0	0.27	Complete breeding failure for 4th year in a row
Guillemot	0.00	0.48	-100	0.70	Complete breeding failure is the most devastating result of 2004
Razorbill	0.00	0.43	-100	0.60	Recent seasons have seen extremely poor fledging weights but this year nothing even came close to fledging
Puffin	0.63	0.65	-0.03	0.67	As in 2003 a surprising result – perhaps benefiting from later fledging compared to other auks

Numbers refer to productivity i.e. number of chicks fledged per apparent nesting attempt.

# Meteorological data, Fair Isle 2004

*D. Wheeler*

Temp. (°C)	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC	YEAR
Mean	5.1	4.9	6.1	7.6	9.0	10.4	11.9	13.4	11.6	9.6	7.1	6.6	8.6 (7.6)
Maximum	9.2	10.9	10.3	11.1	17.3	14.5	15.3	19.2	16.2	12.2	11.3	10.8	
Minimum	-4.5	-2.6	2.9	3.2	3.0	5.6	7.8	7.0	6.5	5.2	-0.8	-0.3	
Sea	8.9	8.5	8.1	8.3	9.3	11.2	12.5	14.3	13.0	11.3	10.3	9.5	10.4 (9.2)
<b>Rainfall (mm)</b>													
Monthly	99.0	92.7	53.3	44.0	35.6	64.6	33.7	55.9	69.5	127.6	95.1	90.4	861.2
Maximum Daily Fall	22.8	14.3	6.6	12.0	11.3	17.3	6.8	10.3	11.2	38.2	12.5	10.2	(924.4)
<b>Sunshine (hours)</b>													
Total	36.4	56.6	131.6	139.0	163.1	144.4	167.8	204.9	136.9	66.6	36.0	23.2	1306.5
Maximum Daily	4.6	7.5	10.3	12.6	14.9	12.7	13.8	14.3	11.9	7.5	5.2	3.6	(1220.7)
<b>Wind speed (knots)</b>													
Mean	16.8	16.1	15.2	13.7	12.8	11.3	10.1	13.1	14.5	15.7	16.8	18.9	14.6 (16.0)
Maximum Gust	63	72	62	51	43	37	31	58	63	60	70	68	
<b>Number of days</b>													
Hail	10	11	8	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	7	9	46
Snow/sleet	11	12	7	2	1	0	0	0	0	0	7	6	46
Rain, >0.1mm	31	20	22	20	18	17	17	13	20	29	27	29	263
Wet, >0.9mm	23	16	16	11	10	11	7	9	16	24	17	23	183
Ground Frost	9	11	1	0	2	1	0	0	1	0	7	6	38
Air Frost	2	8	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	2	13
Gale	7	9	3	2	0	0	0	2	3	1	4	11	42
<b>Wind direction at 09h</b>													
North	5	9	4	4	6	6	5	3	0	3	5	1	51
North East	0	1	1	1	3	1	2	6	0	6	0	0	21
East	2	1	0	1	1	1	0	7	0	2	1	0	16
South East	2	0	7	8	5	9	8	7	0	9	2	0	57
South	6	1	7	6	0	2	2	2	2	4	2	3	37
South West	6	6	6	2	3	2	4	0	0	4	4	13	50
West	8	9	3	5	8	6	4	1	0	1	11	9	65
North West	1	2	3	3	2	2	6	5	1	2	3	5	35
Calm	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	3

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

## *MONTHLY SUMMARY*

*Alan Bull*

### **January–March**

The highlight of the winter months was the first-winter Iceland Gull which arrived on 2nd January and could be seen daily in the Havens right up until 25th May. White-winged gulls were generally quite scarce with just two other Iceland Gulls seen and a couple of Glaucous Gulls. January also produced a suite of geese species with an over-wintering Greylag flock of around 50 birds which was joined (at intervals) by Eurasian White-fronted Geese (four birds from 2nd, increasing to 5 on 4th-13th and 6 on 14th), a couple of Pink-footed, a pale-bellied Brent (2nd-7th) and two Bean Geese on 2nd. Other winter wildfowl sightings included small numbers of Wigeon, Teal, Mallard, Long-tailed Duck and Goldeneye. Little Auks were regularly seen offshore and one was even blown into the Obs garden on 30th January! A Merlin was occasionally sighted whilst a male Kestrel was an unusual over-wintering record. Wader counts were dominated by Turnstones with over 100 seen daily, admixed with a few Redshank, Curlew, Purple Sandpipers and a single Oystercatcher. Over-wintering thrushes comprised 20-30 each of Redwing and Blackbird plus a few Fieldfare and Song Thrush. Small passerines included a few Skylarks, Meadow Pipits and Robins, a couple of Chaffinches, an Icelandic Common Redpoll, a handful of Twite and a flock of 50 Snow Buntings. However, heavy snow at the end of January caused the majority of the thrushes to depart.

Early February saw the first true migrants heading north with Ringed Plovers back at South Light on 6th (although an early male arrived on 23rd January) and Oystercatchers and Lapwings from 7th. A male Pied Wagtail on 9th was our earliest ever – the same day that a Slavonian Grebe was spotted in North Haven. Wader numbers began to increase with peaks of 70 Redshank & 210 Turnstone (on 12th) and 110 Common Snipe (28th) whilst Oystercatcher, Lapwing and Ringed Plover trickled through in small numbers. A Long-eared Owl was a surprise find in the Obs Plantation on 15th! Skylarks also began to move towards the end of February but it was in March that passage began to pick up pace . . . Curlews were noted back on territory on 2nd and light south-easterly winds on 4th encouraged 50 Skylarks to pass through along with a Wood Pigeon. Pleasant weather and a good day's birding on 9th produced 140 Skylarks (including the first singing birds) and displaying Lapwings (from 125 counted) as well as a couple of Pied Wagtails and a Rook. A Stonechat arrived on 15th and was followed next day by a Collared Dove, with Mistle Thrush and Reed Bunting on 17th. More birds arrived on 18th when Jackdaw, Goldcrest and Tree Sparrow were added to the ever-increasing year-list and Skylarks exceeded 250. A welcome sight on 21st was the first returning Puffin in Furse – a day when five Stonechats

also arrived. A period of north-westerly winds halted any new arrivals, until a switch to the south-east on 30th had immediate effect. Sparrowhawk, Peregrine, Black Redstart and Linnet were all new additions to the year list and on the final day of March we welcomed our first Wheatears (3) and Great Skua (3), along with Dunnock and Siskin.

## April

April started where March left off with no less than four year-ticks on 1st: Lesser Black-backed Gull, Grey Wagtail, Chiffchaff and Brambling. An influx of Meadow Pipits (40) was also noted and 5 Wheatears and 2 Dunnocks were seen. Two days of south-easterly gales followed, during which a Greenfinch arrived in the garden and once the wind had abated, a large fall of birds occurred. The 4th saw a light south-westerly wind and birds everywhere. Highlights were Hawfinch, Ring Ouzel and Yellowhammer, whilst counts included 146 Meadow Pipits, 23 Pied Wagtails, 14 Dunnocks, 39 Robins, 2 Black Redstarts, 4 Stonechats, 19 Wheatears, 68 Blackbirds, 200 Fieldfare, 23 Song Thrushes, 25 Redwings, 10 Chiffchaffs, 55 Goldcrests, 27 Chaffinches and a few Bramblings and Greenfinches – a busy day! Things then tailed off after that, but Moorhen and Blackcap arrived on 6th and a male Goosander was noted on 10th. A White-tailed Sea Eagle on 12th, flying out to sea off Sheep Rock, being mobbed by the island gulls and Bonxies, was an impressive sight for the lucky finder! Wet and miserable weather followed, with the first Arctic Skua seen on 14th, followed by sunshine on 16th and the first Swallow and Willow Warbler – spring had arrived! 17th was notable for the first influx of Wheatears when 53 were counted, including the first of the large Greenland race *leucorhoa*. Additions to the year-list between 18th and 21st included Pintail (remaining until 17th May and joined by two others on 27th April), Whimbrel, Stock Dove, Sand Martin, Tree Pipit and Grasshopper Warbler. Wheatears exceeded 100 on 22nd and the peak count of the month (137) occurred the following day when a very early Short-toed Lark was found at Naaversgill and a male Redstart was seen at Furse. A Corncrake was heard singing in Boini Mire on 25th, but not thereafter, dashing any hopes of another breeding attempt. A Common Crane flying south on 28th was an impressive sight whilst more year-ticks trickled through, the best being two superb Wrynecks in the south on 30th.

## May

May began well with a female Subalpine Warbler trapped on 1st, shortly before lunch. It was still present and showing well in the Observatory garden the following day. An early male Bluethroat was at Leogh on 3rd and an Arctic Tern flew past South Light – a true sign of a Shetland summer approaching. Gales the following day hampered our census, but a Wryneck was at Midway. As the winds died down on 5th, birds were found and year-ticks included two Yellow Wagtails,

a Garden Warbler and a Lesser Whitethroat. Counts of migrants included a Tufted Duck, Kestrel, Green and Common Sandpipers, Short-eared Owl, a few Swallows and Martins, ten Redstarts and five Ring Ouzels. Glorious weather followed as did more birds . . . a pulse of migrants on 7th included a female Red-backed Shrike at Field, another Wryneck at Midway along with a Lesser Redpoll, a Tree Sparrow at the Observatory and a Common Tern in the Havens. Morning census on 8th produced very little, but an afternoon wander hinted that birds were starting to arrive on the isle. This meant another walk after dinner and final totals included three Wrynecks, five Bluethroats, seven Red-backed Shrikes, 17 Spotted Flycatchers and the year's first Cuckoo – brilliant spring bird-watching on Fair Isle. A host of other common migrants were also seen but, frustratingly, no rarities. This all changed on 9th when a fine male Collared Flycatcher was found in Sma' Trinket Geo. It was the third Fair Isle record following an adult male in May 1998. Most other birds that day passed by fairly unnoticed as we all enjoyed good views of the flycatcher, but a ring-tail Hen Harrier flew north as did 70 Barnacle Geese. The Collared Flycatcher was still present the following day and another arrival of migrants included four Bluethroats, five Red-backed Shrikes, a Cornrake and two bright Wood Warblers. A fine sight on the evening of 11th was an Osprey flying north, being mobbed by some very noisy Oystercatchers. The Collared Flycatcher was also still present. A Rough-legged Buzzard flew north over the hill on 12th but unfortunately it was a tiny speck by the time most observers could get onto it! Later, a Swallow with a seemingly orange rump flashed past the Obs, but as with the raptor, it had soon disappeared north. A windy few days followed and attention switched to sea-watching – a Manx Shearwater flew south on 16th. Things picked up on 17th when another Osprey flew north and a Common Nightingale proved elusive at Leogh whilst a couple of Black-tailed Godwits added a splash of colour to the Oystercatcher flock at Setter. Westerly winds and another quiet few days followed, but a Dotterel was found on Hoini on 21st – by the only two non-birdwatchers staying at the Obs! Amazingly, 23rd produced another rarity – a smart male Subalpine Warbler at Leogh. A Wryneck, female Bluethroat and Turtle Dove were also seen. The winds eventually switched to the south-east on 27th, with immediate effect. A Rosy Starling was seen outside the Observatory just after breakfast and a nice red male Common Rosefinch was found there after lunch. The first 'Fair Isle Thursday' also took place at the Obs. A great evening was rounded off nicely when an Osprey flew north over the Obs! A Golden Oriole at Gaila the following day was a fine sight for the lucky few that saw it, as were the Dotterel and Lapland Bunting on Ward Hill. The Rosy Starling also chose to take up residence on the hill. The down-side to the good weather is the fog that follows. Luckily it only stayed for a day and when it cleared on 30th, more birds had arrived. An Icterine Warbler was at the Chalet and two Marsh Warblers were new, along with a female Bluethroat and three Red-backed Shrikes. The month finished as it started, with a rarity – a smart



Red-throated Pipit was at Furse on 31st. Supporting cast to this were three Marsh Warblers, an Icterine Warbler, a fine male Bluethroat, at least nine Red-backed Shrikes, three Common Rosefinches and another Nightingale.

## June

June carried on where May had finished, with scarce and common migrants aplenty. Eight Red-backed Shrikes remained on 1st with one Common Rosefinch and new birds included a female Bluethroat, five Marsh Warblers and two Icterine Warblers. Other counts included 16 Dunlin, a Sand Martin, 22 Swallows, 16 House Martins, Whinchat, four Sedge Warblers, seven Lesser Whitethroats, four Whitethroats, three Garden Warblers, three Blackcaps, five Chiffchaffs, three Willow Warblers and a Spotted Flycatcher. The 2nd provided a star bird as another Golden Oriole, a green bird, was found at Mopul. Counts of other scarce migrants included two Marsh Warblers, the ringed Icterine Warbler from May, 10 Red-backed Shrikes and two Common Rosefinches (including one of May's ringed birds). Counts of commoner migrants included six Dunlin, two Wood Pigeons, five Collared Doves, five Swift, 41 Swallows, a Robin, the Nightingale, two Sedge Warblers, eight Lesser Whitethroats, four Whitethroats, five Garden Warblers, five Blackcaps, four Chiffchaffs, four Willow Warblers and five Spotted Flycatchers. An extremely wet and miserable 3rd had little promise in the air, but an unexpected Long-eared Owl was at Midway and a new Icterine Warbler was found. A great find in South Harbour on 4th was of a smart male Rustic Bunting amongst the waders on the beach! It had re-located to the Observatory garden the following day where it was heard to sing! A Cuckoo took up residence for a week in the Raevas and seemed to be doing well, catching insects and grubs. Two Long-eared Owls (a male and female) were seen on 6th – they are not normally seen on Fair Isle at this time of year but there were *three* present on 7th as well as a Hobby, Buzzard, Bluethroat, Red-breasted Flycatcher and Common Rosefinch. Two of the Long-eared Owls lingered for at least a week with one still present until the month's end (unfortunately becoming heavily Fulmar-oiled). The 8th was another good day when an Icterine Warbler, another Bluethroat and eight Red-backed Shrikes arrived, but best of all were two Red-necked Phalaropes. Unfortunately they were only seen from *The Good Shepherd IV* by one lucky observer. A cracking and very obliging male Nightjar was found sitting on a rock at Setter on 10th and this eclipsed the adult Hobby, two Black Redstarts, Reed Warbler and Marsh Warbler also found that day. Late migrants were the highlight of 11th when a male Redstart and two Tree Pipits were seen and there was another year-tick on 12th in the form of two Canada Geese in South Harbour (remaining until the month's end). A late burst of migrants on this day included four Tufted Ducks, 15 Collared Doves, House Martin, Blackcap, seven Chiffchaffs and a Spotted Flycatcher. A couple more Marsh Warblers followed on 13th, but a Pink-footed Goose on 14th was most unexpected whilst the Quail the following day was not! Another small pulse of

migrants on 17th included another Marsh Warbler, a Garden Warbler, five Chiffchaffs and a late Willow Warbler. A sea-watch for more year-ticks paid off on 18th as an adult Long-tailed Skua drifted along the east coast of the island. Things quietened off after that as attention turned to seabird monitoring and ringing. However, a phone-call after breakfast on 24th had us racing down the island to see a fine Honey Buzzard floating very slowly north against the strong northerly wind! On the way home, a female Red-backed Shrike was trapped in the Plantation. A south-easterly breeze on 26th heralded the final few scarce migrants of the spring with a Quail, two Red-backed Shrikes, Icterine Warbler and a Common Rosefinch all seen.

## July

July is often the quietest month of the 'season' as seabird monitoring takes full priority. This July was no exception, although things started well with a Common Rosefinch, two Long-eared Owls and an un-seasonal Long-tailed Duck all found on 3rd! The following day, four Crossbills were seen at Naaversgill, but unfortunately these were not the vanguards to another irruption. A Reed Warbler on 8th was a typical mid-summer sighting and autumn passage was evident from 11th as the first migrants started to trickle through with three Grey Herons, eight Redshank, eight Turnstone and two Black-headed Gulls. Another Long-eared Owl was found Fulmar-oiled in Field Ditch on 14th (remaining until 27th) and a Quail was found near Ward Hill (the same site as June's bird). A Reed Bunting on 15th (remaining until September) was a surprise capture in the Plantation as was a Lesser Whitethroat the following day. Eleven Swifts and 17 Lapwings were also noted and the first Storm Petrel ringing session of the year took place during the evening – fifteen birds were trapped. A light south-easterly breeze on 19th inspired a census and migration was evident as counts included 24 Lapwing, two Sanderling, 14 Purple Sandpipers, two Dunlin, two Whimbrel, 56 Redshank, 38 Turnstone, 70 Black-headed Gulls, 50 Common Gulls, 19 Lesser Black-backed Gulls and 25 Swift. As is often the case during the summer months, fog quickly follows the good weather, but surprisingly birds were still found with an un-seasonal (but still welcome) Marsh Harrier in Gilsetter and a more typical Wood Sandpiper on Sprittery Hole – both on 22nd. The Wood Sandpiper was still faithful to the north of the island the following day (until 27th) and another census in good weather produced 231 Oystercatchers, three Golden Plovers, six Sanderling, six Dunlin, 21 Redshank, four Green Sandpiper, Common Sandpiper, 11 Turnstone, 23 Black-headed Gulls and 133 Common Gulls. Bird of the day went to the first-summer Hobby seen on the Rippack – only the third ever summer record for the isle. A Sedge Warbler on 26th was the first migrant warbler of the month (although two or three Chiffchaffs 'summered' on the island) and a Short-eared Owl was near the Observatory on 27th. A Rosy Starling near the school on 30th was the last sighting of note before the fog once again descended...

## August

The fog dominated for the first six days of August which severely hampered census attempts. However, the wind was from the south-east and expectations were high! A Glaucous Gull on 4th was a very odd sighting for the time of year. A small arrival of migrants on 5th included 150 Wheatears, seven Sedge Warblers, a Whitethroat, five Chiffchaffs (including the two 'summering' birds which remained all month) and two Willow Warblers. The following day, the year's first two Barred Warblers were found (one remaining until 7th) along with a Common Rosefinch – but not much else! As the wind veered firmly to the east on 9th and the sky turned blue, an arrival of migrants included 13 Grey Herons, the year's first Greenshank (two), two Ruff, Wood Sandpiper, 580 Common Gulls, six Sand Martins, Fieldfare, two Sedge Warblers, Reed Warbler, two Garden Warblers, five Willow Warblers and a Pied Flycatcher. The wind was still pure east on 10th and a good fall of common migrants included six Ruff, two Sandwich Terns, Cuckoo, two Redstarts, two Whinchats, our earliest autumn Grasshopper Warblers (two), nine Reed Warblers, two Whitethroats, 26 Garden Warblers, six Wood Warblers, 32 Willow Warblers and 28 Pied Flycatchers. A number of scarce migrants also arrived with our earliest autumn Wrynecks (two), two Icterine Warblers, a Barred Warbler and, rather unusually, a Pectoral Sandpiper which remained on Easter Loch Water until 13th. Wrynecks had increased to three birds the following day and Barred Warblers to two and apart from 'hangers-on' from 10th further increases of migrants included 43 Garden Warblers, seven Whitethroats, three Lesser Whitethroats, 36 Willow Warblers and a Spotted Flycatcher. The 12th was a quieter day for common migrants with just those found in the previous days hanging on, including a Wryneck and an Icterine Warbler. However, things soon brightened up as an Aquatic Warbler was found in the Hegri Burn – only our second record in the last ten years! The wind switched round to the north/north-east on 13th (where it was to remain until 19th) and induced another pulse of migrants with a Water Rail, Greenshank, Cuckoo, Redstart, three Whinchats, two Grasshopper Warblers, four Reed Warblers, two Whitethroats, 15 Garden Warblers, two Wood Warblers, 18 Willow Warblers, a Spotted Flycatcher, 15 Pied Flycatchers and scarcity value in the form of three Icterine Warblers and two Red-backed Shrikes. The latter species increased to four birds the next day, but only one Icterine Warbler was found. A Wood Sandpiper, Wryneck, Barred Warbler, nine Reed Warblers, 35 Garden Warblers and 26 Willow Warblers were also found. Another Aquatic Warbler was found on 16th – this one in the Walli Burn area. Other 'new' migrants included a Spotted Crake in Gilsetter, Barred Warbler, Red-backed Shrike, Common Rosefinch, Cuckoo, 35 Swallows, Sand Martin, 300 Meadow Pipits, three Redstarts, 12 Reed Warblers and 13 Garden Warblers. Waders were also on the move with 38 Lapwings, 31 Golden Plovers, 27 Ringed Plovers, three Knot, 19 Dunlin, 24 Snipe, 48 Redshank, two Greenshank and two Green Sandpipers. A quiet few days followed for common migrants, but scarce migrants on 17th

included a Wryneck, two Barred Warblers (one remaining until 19th) and two Red-backed Shrikes (both remaining until 18th and one until 19th). An Icterine Warbler was found on 18th (remaining until 19th) and a further two Barred Warblers and a Red-backed Shrike were seen on 20th. Despite the north-westerly wind, birds were still found on 21st, mainly migrating waders. Forty-five Ringed Plovers, 11 Knot, two Sanderling, 13 Dunlin and 62 Redshank were counted and passerines included three Whinchats, five each of Reed and Garden Warbler, eight Willow Warblers, a Spotted Flycatcher along with an Icterine Warbler and Common Rosefinch. The Rosefinch was still present the next day and a new Barred Warbler was found. The wind switched back to the south-east on 23rd encouraging two Common Rosefinches, a Turtle Dove, 1300 Meadow Pipits, Redstart, 10 Garden Warblers, a Wood Warbler and 20 Willow Warblers to make landfall. Nineteen Storm Petrels were trapped over-night – the highest night total of the year!

The final ‘fall’ of the month occurred on 24th as the wind switched to the east. Census counts included 23 Lapwings, three Little Stints (first of the autumn), 11 Whimbrel, three Greenshank, Short-eared Owl, Tree Pipit, two Redstarts, six Whinchats, Grasshopper Warbler, 36 Garden Warblers, six Chiffchaffs, 66 Willow Warblers, two Wood Warblers and 16 Pied Flycatchers. Mixed in with these were five Wrynecks (increasing to six on 25th), two Barred Warblers and a Common Rosefinch. The remaining week of the month was quiet as westerly winds dominated. However, notable birds included a Red-backed Shrike (25th), five Little Stints (27th), Tree Sparrow (one on 29th, two on 30th) and a Barred Warbler (30th). A good month, just lacking a good rarity which would surely follow in early September . . .

## September

. . . sadly it didn’t as the westerly orientated winds continued throughout the month. The month started well enough with two Barred Warblers and a Common Rosefinch on 1st, falling to one Barred Warbler and rising to two Rosefinches from 2nd-3rd. A Wryneck was seen on 2nd and the following day a Red-backed Shrike was trapped in the Vaadal and a Little Stint was dazzled on Easter Lother Water in the evening. The long-staying Canada Geese remained until 14th. A small arrival of migrants on 5th included three Barred Warblers (remaining until 9th) and four Common Rosefinches. Common migrants included 15 Teal, 54 Golden Plovers, 18 Dunlin, two Tree Pipits, four Lesser Whitethroats, nine Garden Warblers, 16 Willow Warblers and eight Lapland Buntings. A slight breeze of south-easterly wind on 6th-7th failed to produce any of the falls witnessed in August, but scarce migrants included eight Common Rosefinches on 6th, falling to six birds the next day when an Icterine Warbler was found at the shop. Interestingly, this bird was seen to be wearing a ring on its left leg. Things

remained quiet as the wind backed round to the west, but two more Common Rosefinches were found on 9th, rising to three birds on 10th, when two Barred Warblers were found (one remaining until 12th). A Water Rail, Sparrowhawk, Common Sandpiper, Redstart, three Common Whitethroats, two Garden Warblers, eight Willow Warblers and three Goldcrests also provided some interest. Sea-watchers from South Light and the *Good Shepherd* were rewarded on 11th as 15 Storm Petrels, three Sooty Shearwaters and a Manx Shearwater were seen. On land, two Song Thrushes were new as were three Pied Flycatchers, but pride of place went to the two Curlew Sandpipers in Kirki Geo. Two Snow Buntings on Buness the following day were the first of many and numbers soon rose to 31 by 13th. Despite the strong south-westerly winds, 13th was a good day with three Little Stints, a late Arctic Skua, single Sedge, Willow and Wood Warblers, two Pied Flycatchers, a Common Rosefinch, two Wrynecks (remaining until 14th) and two flyover Shoveler! Things were much the same the following day, but the Common Rosefinch was joined by a second bird, a Barred Warbler was in the south, a late Spotted Flycatcher was near the school and 18 Goldcrests were found sheltering in the geos! A Dotterel was a good find on the Swey on 15th and entertained visitors at typically close range until 21st while a Slavonian Grebe in South Harbour showed only briefly to its finder. Small skeins of geese filled the sky on 16th, with 46 Pink-footed and 11 Greylags and on land another Wryneck and Common Rosefinch were bonuses on an otherwise quiet day. Despite good finds of a Corncrake (remaining until the end of the month) and Barred Warbler, 17th was another day for sea-watching with watchers (from both land and sea) notching up a Red-throated Diver, Great Northern Diver, seven Sooty Shearwaters, a Manx Shearwater, 20 Storm Petrels and an adult Pomarine Skua. A very quiet period for migrants followed as the westerly winds persisted, with the only real highlights being a Curlew Sandpiper and Glaucous Gull on 18th and five more Common Rosefinches. Things were looking desperate and talk of 'the worst autumn ever' filled the common room during the evenings. Thankfully the winds dropped to light and variable on 28th and a flyover Black-throated Diver was the first Fair Isle rarity in a long while, stealing the thunder of another Dotterel on Ward Hill. Things were otherwise still quiet though, but 29th had real promise in the air as the wind switched to a light south-easterly. Census was postponed to the afternoon as staff helped out with the gathering of hill sheep, but migration was very evident as thrushes, finches, Jack Snipe and warblers were heard and seen flying over. Expectations were high and we were not disappointed as the afternoon produced good scarce migrants with the year's first Little Bunting, Richard's Pipit, two 'north-western' Redpolls and three Yellow-browed Warblers in the south. The best was saved until last though as a stunning adult male Red-flanked Bluetail was found on the cliffs of North Gunnawark! This bird was found in exactly the same location as the bird in 2003 although was more obliging as it entertained visitors, flicking from rock to rock!

The final day of the month was also full of great expectations, but sadly did not deliver another good rarity. An excellent day's bird-watching however, with similar numbers of thrushes and finches – 85 Fieldfares, 29 Song Thrushes, 75 Redwings, 46 Bramblings, ten Siskins – and scarce migrants that included the previous day's Richard's Pipit, a Quail, two Barred Warblers, four Yellow-browed Warblers, a Red-breasted Flycatcher, the two 'north-western' Redpolls and 20 Jack Snipe. A fine finish to a very slow month.

## October

Thankfully the slow pace of September did not continue through October as the westerly winds disappeared to make way for a fortnight of easterly-orientated winds. At times they were strong, but spirits were high. The opening day of the month saw Wryneck, Bluethroat, Barred Warbler, Common Rosefinch and the year's only Ortolan Bunting found (which remained until 5th) and numbers of migrants were generally high with 64 Wigeon, single Slavonian Grebe and Little Stint, 25 Jack Snipe, four Dunnocks, six Robins, 12 Blackcaps, seven Chiffchaffs, 11 Goldcrests, 60 Brambling, a Greenfinch, 12 Siskin, six Mealy and one '*rostrata*' Redpoll and five Reed Buntings. September's Richard's Pipit remained until 3rd while the Corncrake remained until 5th. Although quiet for common migrants during the next few days, as the wind switched briefly to the south-west, scarce migrants continued to be found, with 2nd producing a Grey Phalarope, Quail, two Bluethroats (remaining until 16th) and two Yellow-browed Warblers (until 3rd). A Spotted Crake found in the Meadow Burn during the afternoon of 4th seemed to be 'bird of the day' until a Lanceolated Warbler was discovered before dark near the Gully. It was trapped and ringed before release into the Observatory garden where it showed briefly on and off to the assembled crowd!

Things did not finish there as the morning trap round of 5th produced a fine Booted Warbler in the Single Dyke trap. Unfortunately this bird did not show very well after release and, apart from three Common Rosefinches, was the only note-worthy bird of the day! Geese were on the move the next day with three White-fronted, 45 Pink-footed, 80 Greylag and 51 Barnacles passing over. On land, things were still quiet, but seven Short-eared Owls, a Grasshopper Warbler, ten Blackcaps, 20 Goldcrests, four Common Rosefinches and a Crossbill were all appreciated. 7th had a similar feeling to the previous day as nine Whooper Swans and four White-fronted Geese passed over, but 51 Song Thrushes on the cliffs and 25 Goldcrests were influxes and the day remained notable for the year's first Waxwing and a late Red-backed Shrike. 8th started well enough with the re-finding of the latter two species and a ring-tail Hen Harrier circling the west cliffs and then later in Gilsetter. Thrushes had increased with counts of 14 Blackbirds, 13 Fieldfares, 30 Song Thrushes and 60 Redwing and further new migrants included a Willow Warbler, Lesser Whitethroat, Garden Warbler, Lesser Redpoll, two Mealy Redpolls,

four '*rostrata/islandica*' Redpolls and, late in the day, a Glaucous Gull in the Havens. Things were quiet on 9th as the wind dropped to almost flat calm and land birds were thin on the ground. Attention turned to cetacean spotting, which produced a Grey Phalarope and, rarer in Fair Isle terms, a Basking Shark off Bunness! The wind picked up from the south-east on 10th and new arrivals included 13 Jack Snipe, three Woodcock, Long-eared Owl, Turtle Dove, three House Martins, four Tree Pipits, Black Redstart, two Common Redstarts, 25 Blackbirds, 19 Fieldfare, 23 Song Thrushes, 82 Redwings, six Blackcaps, nine Brambling and 122 Snow Buntings. A Marsh Warbler and two Yellow-browed Warblers provided rarity interest. The winds increased in strength on 11th, but still from the east/south-east (where it remained for a week) and more migrants were evident, particularly thrushes which filled the hills and heather with calls and chatter. Numbers included 190 Blackbirds, four Ring Ouzels, 190 Fieldfare, 53 Song Thrushes and 400 Redwings. Counts of other migrants included a late Whitethroat, three Garden Warblers, 50 Blackcaps, 24 Chiffchaffs (including 19 '*abietinus/tristis*' types), 62 Goldcrests, a Pied Flycatcher and 115 Bramblings. Scarce migrants included a dark-bellied Brent Goose, three Yellow-browed Warblers, a Great Grey Shrike and six Northern Bullfinches. The winds increased further over the next few days (touching almost gale force at times) and bird-watching became a struggle. However, a Short-toed Lark was found at Naaversgill during the morning of 12th and a Little Bunting was in Hjukni Geo during the afternoon. One Yellow-browed Warbler remained but sadly, the Great Grey Shrike was found dead at Skerryholm. A Corncrake and two Richard's Pipits on 13th were good finds, but an unidentified Bat species seen at the Chapel caused more of a stir! Two more Yellow-browed Warblers, another Little Bunting and 12 Northern Bullfinches were found on 14th, as a Little Gull was found 'surfing' in Dutfield. It later moved to South Harbour where it remained for three days. If we thought the 12 Bullfinches were impressive then we were blown away the next day as 55 were counted! Another high Fair Isle count was that of Waxwings as 40 birds were recorded along the west cliffs! Migrant numbers remained at a low to moderate level as birds remained from the fall of 10th, but a Corncrake was another 'new' bird for the day. Just one Richard's Pipit remained (seen on and off at Setter until 18th), but a mystery Bunting, thought probably to be a Little Bunting, attracted the most attention. The morning census of 16th was quiet in general, but Bullfinches continued to increase in numbers with 115 birds found around the island! The mystery Bunting was still in the Skadan crop and during the afternoon an attempt was made to try and capture it for identification. This was easily done, but for a short while we were still none the wiser. All books to hand were brought out and the bird's identity finally resolved – a Chestnut-eared Bunting! The first British and Western Palearctic record! This obviously attracted a lot of attention from British twitchers and almost a year to the day from last year's record nine planes on the airstrip, a similar number made landfall on the island to 'tick off' this rare Asian

species. Thankfully the Bunting was present until 20th, although most birds had migrated onwards in the good weather, leaving the isle feeling empty and quiet! However, 18th produced a Dusky Warbler in Field Ditch (remaining until 19th) and another 30 Waxwings passed through. Two Collared Doves were found and one of the Bluethroats (the ringed bird) was re-found at Setter, where it was to remain all month. The 20th dawned overcast with a light south-easterly wind and it was evident from the early morning trap-rounds haul of thrushes and Woodcock that a long day was about to begin. The skies were full of thrushes, all passing overhead in large flocks, sometimes as large as 1000 birds and it was often impossible to hear anything other than 'chacks' and 'tsips' of Fieldfare and Redwing flying over! The day will long live in the memory for those present with estimated counts of three Ring Ouzels, 1,200 Blackbirds, 15,000 Fieldfare, 200 Song Thrushes and 7,000 Redwing! Other counts included nine Long-tailed Ducks, Common Scoter, four Water Rails, 40 Woodcock, Wood Pigeon, Long-eared Owl, 90 Waxwings, six Dunnocks, seven Robins, Redstart, a Garden Warbler, 28 Blackcaps, 28 Goldcrests, nine Chiffchaffs, Rook, four Chaffinches, 442 Brambling, eight Greenfinches, five Siskins, 80 Bullfinches, three Mealy Redpolls, five Yellowhammers and five Reed Buntings. An Olive-backed Pipit was found at Naavergill and a possible Arctic Redpoll was discovered with Mealy Redpolls at the school. Heavy rain, low cloud and a strong north-east wind hampered census attempts on 21st, but it was evident that most birds had departed ahead of the bad weather. A Shorelark at Busta was a nice find though! The following day was a calm, sunny day and another pulse of thrushes included 15 Ring Ouzels, 1,500 Blackbirds, 1,300 Fieldfares, 340 Song Thrushes, 1,700 Redwing and a Mistle Thrush. A Slavonian Grebe was in North Haven and a Richard's Pipit was in the Wirvie Burn! Other counts included seven Short-eared Owls, six Waxwings, 39 Robins, a new Bluethroat, two Black Redstarts, two Lesser Whitethroats, 24 Blackcaps, two Jackdaws, 72 Brambling and 56 Bullfinches.

The 23rd was one of those days when you thought 'there must be something good around today'! And there was, as mid-morning a chat was discovered in Bull's Park. Initially thought to be one of the American *Catharus* thrushes, its identity was soon revealed in the afternoon and proved to be another first for Britain and the Western Palaearctic – a Rufous-tailed Robin! Incredibly, this Nightingale-like bird originates from the same area as the Chestnut-eared Bunting and both birds were presumably caught up in similar weather patterns, resulting in their arrival on Fair Isle! There was no sign of the Rufous-tailed Robin the following day, despite much searching, although the skies were clear overnight and it presumably left with everything else! However, a Short-toed Lark was discovered at Busta and a Pallas's Warbler was found in the Gilly Burn (both remaining until 27th). A Little Grebe was found in South Harbour (remaining until 31st) and was rarer on Fair Isle than both the Lark and the Warbler! Late in the day, flocks of Waxwings



and Bullfinches were arriving over the west cliffs, numbering 150 and 94 birds respectively. The morning's census counts of 26th included five Whooper Swans, four Greenland White-fronted Geese, the Slavonian Grebe, ring-tail Hen Harrier, five Merlins, three Water Rails, five Curlew, a first-winter Glaucous Gull, two Wood Pigeons, three Waxwings, 37 Robins, 300 Blackbirds, 270 Fieldfare, 160 Song Thrushes, 550 Redwing, the Lesser Whitethroat, a Garden Warbler, 12 Blackcaps, six Siskin, 110 Bullfinches and seven Lapland Buntings. During the afternoon, two Great Grey Shrikes (one trapped in double dyke and another at Springfield) and a Little Bunting at the Chalet were found. The impressive arrival of Northern Bullfinches hit its peak count on 27th with an estimated 140 birds around the island, the largest flock being 40 birds on the Swey! The following few days of the month were much the same with thrushes, Blackcaps and finches trickling through. The gathering of the hill sheep on 30th coincided with a light south-easterly wind and an arrival of Woodcock. It's always good to cover the moorland areas well when there's Woodcock around and an estimated 200+ birds were seen! Other counts included 40 Wigeon, seven Teal, a Long-tailed Duck, Goosander, two Sparrowhawks, Kestrel, eight Purple Sandpipers, five Jack Snipe, 130 Snipe, two Great Skuas, 24 Wood Pigeons, ten Short-eared Owls, 11 Waxwings, 43 Robins, Black Redstart, two Whinchats, Ring Ouzel, 570 Blackbirds, 500 Fieldfare, 100 Song Thrushes, 630 Redwing, two Lesser Whitethroats, 25 Blackcaps, 11 Chiffchaffs, 22 Goldcrests, the Jackdaw, 39 Brambling, nine Greenfinches, 78 Bullfinches, 80 Snow Buntings, three Yellowhammers and six Reed Buntings.

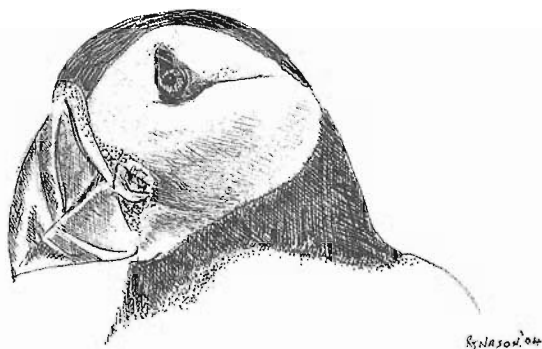
## **November**

The final months of the year are often quieter as staff migrate south and the weather turns wintry. However, the first two weeks of November can be productive as late stragglers head south. Wildfowl were evident and highlights included peak counts of 17 Barnacle Geese (2nd-3rd), six Whooper Swans (25th), 162 Greylag Geese (27th), 18 Wigeon (4th), two Long-tailed Ducks (25th) and five Goldeneye (2nd). However, the undoubted highlight was a fine drake Velvet Scoter in South Harbour on 12th. Two late Slavonian Grebes (7th) were followed by two Great Northern Divers (16th). Occasional sightings of Merlin, Kestrel, Peregrine and Water Rail were made as well as small counts of Snipe, Woodcock, Curlew, Redshank and Turnstone. Two first-winter Glaucous Gulls were seen (2nd and 3rd) and storm-driven Little Auks were found sheltering in the Havens on 2nd, 7th and 30th. Three Long-eared Owls arrived on 4th (two remaining until 5th), but a Great Spotted Woodpecker on 12th was more unusual. October's Bluethroat was last seen on 2nd. Five Waxwings arrived on 3rd (with another on 7th) and the final Whinchat of the year was seen on 9th. Small numbers of Robins (20+) remained throughout along with Blackbirds (230), Fieldfare (120), Song Thrush (50) and Redwing (200), although the number of thrushes slowly dwindled into December. Warblers

included a late Lesser Whitethroat (8th), a handful of *tristis* Chiffchaffs (until 12th) and a Blackcap (16th). Numbers of finches remaining from October included 2-3 Chaffinches, a dozen Brambling and 14 Greenfinches, with no sightings beyond 19th. Northern Bullfinches remained in the Plantation, dwindling from a peak of 37 (1st) to a lone female (28th). Snow Buntings peaked at 180 (3rd) and October's Little Grebe was last seen on 14th.

## December

Casual sightings in the first two weeks of December failed to provide anything unusual, other than light counts of wintering Redshank, Turnstone, Snipe, Purple Sandpiper, thrushes, Robins and Snow Buntings. A Little Auk on 7th and a Wood Pigeon on 13th were the highlights until 30th when an "all white Iceland Gull in the south" was found to be a magnificent, white morph Gyr Falcon! It remained into January 2005 and was a fitting end to another excellent Fair Isle year.



*Puffin (Rebecca Nason)*



*First-winter Rufous-tailed Robin. 23rd October:*

*Hugh Harrop*



*Rufous-tailed Robin – the first record for the Western Palearctic.*

*Rebecca Nason*



*First-winter male Chestnut-eared Bunting, 15th-20th October.*

*Deryk Shaw*



*Chestnut-eared Bunting – the first record for the Western Palearctic*

*Rebecca Nason*





*Male European Nightjar, 10th June.*

*Rebecca Nason*



*Atlantic Puffin with Snake Pipefish, June.*

*Rebecca Nason*



*Common Cuckoo and Meadow Pipit, June.*  
*Rebecca Nason*



*Male Northern Bullfinch, October.*  
*Deryk Shaw*



*Long-eared Owl, October.  
Rebecca Nason*



*Male Bluethroat, June. Rebecca Nason*



*First-summer male Collared  
Flycatcher, 9th-12th May.  
Rebecca Nason*



*First-winter Aquatic Warbler, 12th August.  
Glen Tyler*

## Earliest and Latest Dates of Summer Migrants

*Deryk Shaw*

With 'Climate Change' the big topic of discussion at the moment and a possible change in seasons 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 extreme sighting has also been included. Dates in bold are a new (or equal) record.

Species	Earliest	Earliest in 2004	Latest	Latest in 2004
Quail	30.04.61	15.06	13.10.89	09.10
Osprey	25.04.66	11.05	04.11.35	-
Corncrake	10.04.66	25.04	03.11.77	15.10
Dotterel	25.04.73	21.05	06.11.76	29.09
Whimbrel	15.04.72	18.04	12.12. pre FIBO	23.09
Green Sandpiper	08.04.79	29.04	12.11.70	05.09
Common Sandpiper	05.04.83	24.04	02.11. pre FIBO	04.10
Arctic Skua	04.04.88	14.04	25.10.	13.09
Great Skua	17.03. pre 80	31.03	16.11.	.1.11
LBB Gull	06.03.85	01.04	12.12.57	09.10
Sandwich Tern	30.04.01	18.05	18.09.77	10.08
Common Tern	25.04.83	07.05	18.10.75	17.09
Arctic Tern	No data	26.04	30.10.	15.10
Turtle Dove	23.04.71	23.05	01.11.82	11.10
Cuckoo	17.04.87	08.05	08.10.77	30.08
Swift	29.04.01	15.05	26.10.75	07.09
Wryneck	18.04.81	30.04	17.10.74	01.10
Sand Martin	02.04.89	18.04	19.10.78	16.08
Swallow	31.03.02	16.04	02.11.84	07.10
House Martin	19.04.	25.04	14.11.	11.10
Tree Pipit	14.04. pre 63	21.04	02.11. pre 63	16.10
Red-throated Pipit	08.05.36	31.05	01.11. pre FIBO	-
Yellow Wagtail	25.03.54	05.05	20.11.57	29.09
Pied Wagtail	20.02.03	<b>09.02</b>	17.11.	20.10
Bluethroat	22.03. pre 63	03.05	13.11.83	02.11
Black Redstart	24.02.03	30.03	22.12.86	04.11
Redstart	09.04. pre 63	23.04	11.11.81	22.10
Whinchat	14.04.81	30.04	26.11.90	09.11
Northern Wheatear	13.03. pre 59	31.03	19.11.59	24.10
Ring Ouzel	16.03.88	04.04	19.12. pre FIBO	30.10
Grasshopper Warbler	07.04.02	21.04	23.10.00	15.10
Sedge Warbler	19.04.87	29.04	11.11.75	12.10
Marsh Warbler	22.05.84	30.05	06.10. pre 63	<b>10.10</b>
Reed Warbler	28.04.01	27.05	31.10.80	16.10
Icterine Warbler	13.05.99	30.05	13.10.76	08.09
Subalpine Warbler	20.04.00	01.05	04.10.79	-
Lesser Whitethroat	20.04.	05.05	08.11.	<b>08.11</b>
Whitethroat	11.04. pre 59	30.04	21.10.78	11.10
Garden Warbler	21.04.68	05.05	20.11.76	26.10
Blackcap	04.04.02	06.04	20.12.	16.11
Wood Warbler	14.04.81	09.05	06.10.73	13.09
Chiffchaff	12.03.	01.04	No data	12.11
Willow Warbler	03.04.81	16.04	07.11.84	17.10
Goldcrest	27.02	18.03	19.12.03	06.11
Spotted Flycatcher	20.04.49	08.05	26.10.85	01.10
Pied Flycatcher	21.04.83	30.04	29.10.85	11.10
Red-backed Shrike	04.05.84	07.05	08.11.93	08.10
Common Rosefinch	08.05.77	27.05	30.11.91	11.10
Ortolan Bunting	26.04.64	-	01.11.00	05.10
Rustic Bunting	25.04.80	04.06	08.11.75	-
Little Bunting	04.04.58	-	19.11.75	26.10

# SYSTEMATIC LIST 2004

Deryk Shaw

A total of 206 species was recorded in 2004, including two additions to the island list – Rufous-tailed Robin and Chestnut-eared Bunting, both within a few days of each other in October. They were also new species for the Western Palearctic list! Assuming full acceptance of these by BOURC the Fair Isle list now stands at 364 (Category A) species plus eight other possible additions (*see full checklist 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 2003 for Fair Isle, Shetland as a whole, Scotland and Britain respectively.

+ denotes all records documented

### WHOOPEE SWAN *Cygnus cygnus*

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

Two flying north on 5th March were the only spring records. In autumn, an unidentified swan which flew over on 21st September was most likely this species. This was followed by one on 23rd September and small parties (max. 9) on 13 scattered dates between 2nd October-25th November.



**+ BEAN GOOSE** *Anser fabalis*

***Vagrant; approximately 32 previous records (approx. 75 individuals)***

Two of the race *A. f. rossicus* (Tundra Bean Goose) on 2nd January were the only record. This species has now been recorded in each of the last three years.

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

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

One mingled with the Greylag flock from 2nd January-18th March and was joined by another from 13th-20th January. One from 1st-6th April was the only spring migrant, apart from a late bird on 14th June. A poor autumn passage commenced with 46 on 16th September and was pretty much over by 6th October. Counts exceeded 100 on just three dates with 200 (20th September) and 140 (24th & 26th September). One to five were recorded daily until 4th November with a single lingering until the end of November at least.

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

***Scarce autumn migrant, occasional in spring and mid-winter***

In winter, five (2 ads, 3 juvs) of the Eurasian race *A. a. albifrons* were recorded from 2nd-22nd January. In autumn, there were three (not raced) birds on 6th October, four the following day and four of the Greenland race *A. a. flavirostris* on 26th October.

**GREYLAG GOOSE** *Anser anser*

***Common spring and autumn migrant***

An ever-present winter flock peaked at 77 on 3rd February and had mostly departed by 6th April. Counts of 10-19 were received daily up to 1st May and 1-4 until 28th June. A party of 13 on 14th August were probably locally-bred birds from Orkney or Shetland. Autumn passage commenced on 15th September and counts fluctuated widely, but exceeded 100 on just seven dates up to 1st November (peak of 200 on 23rd October rising to 300 on 24th). Daily counts throughout November were in excess of 100 (peak of 162 on 27th) and fluctuated throughout December (peak of 82 on 22nd).

**+ CANADA GOOSE** *Branta canadensis*

***Rare spring visitor; 21 previous records (34 individuals)***

Recorded for the fourth consecutive year. Two long-stayers frequented the Walli Burn/Meoness area from 12th June-14th September.

**BARNACLE GOOSE** *Branta leucopsis*

***Frequent autumn migrant, occasional in spring***

In spring, a flock of 70 on 9th May is a record count for the season. A single on 25th May was the only other sighting. In autumn, a single from 16th-29th

September was followed by daily sightings from 30th September-3rd November. Counts were mainly between 20-50 with a peak of 80 on 8th October.

**+ 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-7th January whilst another from 11th-15th October was of the dark-bellied race *B. b. bernicla*.

**EURASIAN WIGEON** *Anas penelope*

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

In winter, unusually high numbers were seen during the first week of January, peaking at 18 on 4th. In spring, there were sporadic records of 1-4 from 13th April-22nd May. Autumn passage began on 20th August and sightings were daily until 7th November. Passage was heaviest in October with peaks of 64 (1st & 2nd), 81 (5th), 66 (6th), 47 (12th) and 40 (29th). Finally, a party of six was reported on 21st December.

**EURASIAN TEAL** *Anas crecca*

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

Small numbers were recorded in January with a peak of eight on 3rd. In spring, one on 9th March was not followed until a light passage from 13th April-10th May saw regular counts of 1-2 and a peak of four on 25th. Late birds were seen on 22nd May and 1st & 13th June. Daily autumn passage from 7th August mainly involved single figures, but for peaks of 22 (30th September), 24 (3rd October) and 54 (29th October). Small numbers were recorded into November and December.

**MALLARD** *Anas platyrhynchos*

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

A small number of resident/feral birds makes distinguishing true migrants difficult, but a peak winter count of 16 on 4th January and a peak spring count of 11 on 2nd May suggests passage was light. At least two pairs bred and the first ducklings (a brood of 11) were noted on 9th May. Autumn passage was also negligible, with a peak of 14 noted on 30th September, but small influxes later in the year saw counts of 18 and 22 in December.

**+ NORTHERN PINTAIL** *Anas acuta*

***Scarce spring and autumn migrant***

In spring, there was a ♂ from 18th-23rd April, followed by two ♂ on 26th, rising to three ♂ on 27th, with one remaining until 17th May. In autumn, one frequented Field Pond from 3rd-5th September and another flew around the isle on 3rd October.

+ **NORTHERN SHOVELER** *Anas clypeata*

**Scarce and irregular spring and autumn migrant**

No spring records. Two on 13th September were the only autumn sighting.

+ **TUFTED DUCK** *Aythya fuligula*

**Scarce spring migrant, rare in autumn**

In spring, a ♂ from 6th-15th March preceded counts of 1-3 almost daily from 3rd April-7th May and 1-5 from 31st May-18th June, a slightly better than average showing. A mid-summer record of a male on 23rd July was not unusual. Autumn records comprised irregular sightings of singles between 6th-25th September but for two on 12th and three on 24th. A single on 1st-2nd October was the last.

**COMMON EIDER** *Somateria mollissima*

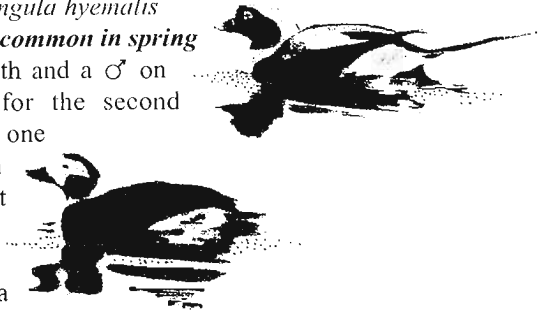
**Resident, breeds in small numbers**

Present offshore all year. The first ducklings were seen on 18th June and several small broods were noted. Overall, numbers continue to fall with the annual post-breeding count in August revealing just 62 birds – less than a fifth of that of August 2002.

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

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

In January, a ♀ was seen on 4th and a ♂ on 10th. No spring records – for the second consecutive year. In summer, one was seen on 4th-5th July. In autumn, birds were seen almost daily throughout October with counts of 1-3 common but also two counts of nine and a maximum of 11 on 16th. Later sightings comprised two on 25th November and two on 7th December.



*Long-tailed Duck (Rebecca Nason)*

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

**Scarce spring, autumn and winter migrant**

A flock of nine on 2nd January was the only record until the autumn when two were noted on 7th October and singles were seen on 17th & 20th October.

+ **VELVET SCOTER** *Melanitta fusca*

**Scarce autumn migrant, rare at other times of year**

A ♂ in South Harbour on 12th November was, typically, the only record.

**COMMON GOLDENEYE** *Bucephala clangula*

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

One or two birds were regularly seen in the Havens or Furze from January until mid-March and again from 4th April-6th May. A ♀ was present from 4th-7th June. Autumn was quite poor, with a single on 13th October followed by counts of five on 30th October & 2nd November and 1-3 on just four further dates in the latter half of November.

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

***Frequent spring and autumn migrant***

Spring records comprised 1-3 from 21st-26th April, 1-4 from 1st-12th May and 1-2 from 27th May-5th June – a typically light and protracted passage. In autumn, birds were seen regularly from 10th September-4th November. Counts were mainly of 1-3 but there were peaks of six on two dates and eight on 26th September.

**+ GOOSANDER** *Mergus merganser*

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

In spring, a ♂ flew over on 10th April and a pair were seen on 12th May. In autumn, there was just a single on 30th October.

**+ COMMON QUAIL** *Coturnix coturnix*

***Scarce spring, summer and autumn migrant; has bred***

Singles were recorded on 15th & 26th June, 14th July, 30th September and 2nd & 9th October.

**RED-THROATED DIVER** *Gavia stellata*

***Regular migrant, mainly late spring and autumn***

In spring, one was in Furze on 13th March and single flyovers were seen on six dates in May, four dates in June and five in July. In autumn, 1-2 were noted flying past at sea on ten dates in September and ten dates in October, up to 19th.

**+ BLACK-THROATED DIVER** *Gavia arctica*

***Vagrant; five previous records (three in autumn)***

One was reported flying over the Observatory on 28th September.

**+ GREAT NORTHERN DIVER** *Gavia immer*

***Scarce autumn migrant, occasional in spring***

One flew past South Light on 20th January. Then none until autumn, when singles were noted on 8th & 17th September, on four dates in October (with two on 16th) and another two on 16th November.

+ **LITTLE GREBE** *Tachybaptus ruficollis*

**Rare autumn migrant; approx. 35 previous records**

One was in South Harbour on 24th October. It was re-found near South Light on 27th October where it was seen daily until 1st November. One in Kirki Geo on 14th November may have been the same.

+ **SLAVONIAN GREBE** *Podiceps auritus*

**Scarce autumn migrant, occasional in spring**

One frequented North Haven on 9th-10th February. In autumn, there were singles on 15th September, 26th-29th September (picked up dead on last date), 1st October and in North Haven from 22nd October-4th November. Finally, two were in Finniquoy Bay on 7th November.

**NORTHERN FULMAR** *Fulmarus glacialis*

**Resident; breeds in large numbers**

Numbers of birds on the monitoring plots fell by a massive 52.5% compared to 2003 – a sudden acceleration in the recent decline. Breeding success was however slightly improved – a productivity of 0.41 is comparable to the previous ten-year average (0.40). Individuals of the ‘blue’ morph were noted on 19th May, 18th September (2), 9th & 10th October.

**SOOTY SHEARWATER** *Puffinus griseus*

**Regular autumn migrant**

One reported from *The Good Shepherd IV* on 11th May was perhaps more likely to have been a Manx Shearwater. In autumn, a single was spotted off South Light on 27th August with two there the following day. Counts of 1-3 were regularly recorded between 11th-25th September, either from South Light and/or *The Good Shepherd IV* crossing, but for a count of seven on 17th September.

+ **MANX SHEARWATER** *Puffinus puffinus*

**Scarce autumn migrant, rare in spring**

One was seen flying south off Buness on 16th May and birds were seen from *The Good Shepherd IV* crossing on 3rd (2), 10th and 29th June. In autumn, one was off South Light on 28th August, another from *The Good Shepherd IV* crossing on 11th September with further birds from South Light on 17th & 18th (2) September.

**EUROPEAN STORM-PETREL** *Hydrobates pelagicus*

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

The first were seen from *The Good Shepherd IV* crossing on 25th & 27th May (2), then none until 16th June when sightings became more regular until late September. Most counts were of small numbers, but 20 were counted on 17th September. Tape-luring outside the Observatory in July & August only produced small numbers in the mist-nets with a maximum of just 19 on 23rd August.

**NORTHERN GANNET** *Morus bassanus*

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

The first birds were noted back on Yellow Head on 16th January but not on the Stacks o' Scroo until 16th February. The island breeding population continues to slowly increase – a total of 1875 AON is just nine more (0.48%) than in 2003 but there are now 23 nests on the south face of Sheep Rock (13 in 2003). Breeding success was about average at 0.68 chicks fledged per AON.

**GREAT CORMORANT** *Phalacrocorax carbo*

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

In winter, small numbers (max. four) were occasionally noted in North Haven or South Harbour up to early March. Three singles in late May were the only later spring records. In autumn, occasional sightings in August became more regular in September and daily throughout October before tailing off to just occasional sightings once again in November and December. Most counts were below five, but peaks in late September and October included 15 (28th September), nine (3rd October) and 11 (6th October).

**EUROPEAN SHAG** *Phalacrocorax aristotelis*

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

Numbers on the population monitoring plots were similar to the previous year, halting a steady decline since 2000, but numbers at the productivity plot were at their equal lowest level. Breeding success was the lowest on record at 0.70 chicks fledged per AON. Most failed at a very late stage with many large chicks found dead in the colonies. Analysis of a sample proved that they had starved – victims of the Sandeel crisis.

**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 a maximum of three singles in April (which may have been just one bird) and four birds in May – including three on 9th. Regular sightings of 1-2 from late June and throughout July (peak of three on 11th & 27th) became daily from 3rd August-10th November, with occasional records until the year's end. Most counts were of 1-5, but periods of heavier passage in August and October saw peaks of 13 on two dates and ten on four dates.

**+ EUROPEAN HONEY-BUZZARD** *Pernis apivorus*

***Vagrant; 42 previous records (43 individuals)***

Recorded in six of the past seven years. Following a blank year in 2003, one was well watched as it drifted over the isle on 24th June.

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

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

The third record in four years. An immature was watched flying south along the east of the isle on 12th April.

+ **EURASIAN MARSH HARRIER** *Circus aeruginosus*

*Rare spring migrant, vagrant in autumn. (32 previous records)*

Recorded for the seventh successive year. A cream-crowned bird was spotted floating over Gilsetter on the unusual date of 22nd July – the first ever record for this month.

+ **HEN HARRIER** *Circus cyaneus*

*Scarce spring and autumn migrant*

In spring, a ♀ went through on 9th May and a ♂ on 29th May. In autumn, a ♀ quartered the north of the isle on 8th October and a ringtail bird on 26th October.

**EURASIAN SPARROWHAWK** *Accipiter nisus*

*Regular spring and autumn migrant*

Spring passage commenced with a ♀ on 30th March and birds were regularly recorded until the last on 28th May. Most were just singles, but two were logged on 6th & 28th May with three on 12th May and an estimated total of about 16 birds. Autumn passage spanned 10th September-6th November and birds were seen almost daily throughout October and early November. Counts of 1-2 were the norm, but three were logged on 3rd October.

+ **COMMON BUZZARD** *Buteo buteo*

*Scarce spring and autumn migrant*

One at Wirvie on 7th June was the only record.

+ **ROUGH-LEGGED BUZZARD**

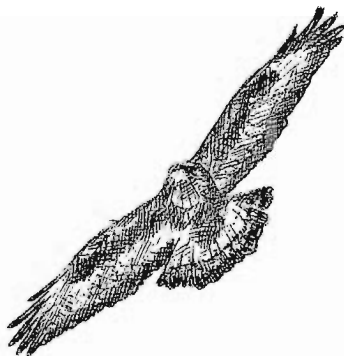
*Buteo lagopus*

*Vagrant; 39 previous records;*

*17 in spring, 22 in autumn (40-41 individuals)*

The first record since 2000 and only the third since 1990. One powered straight through on the afternoon of 12th May.

*Accepted by SBRC*



*Rough-legged Buzzard and Ravens (Rebecca Nason)*

**+ OSPREY** *Pandion haliaetus*

**Rare spring and autumn migrant (74 previous records; 59 in spring, 15 in autumn)**

Three records, all in May: one flew north at 9pm on 11th, another flew north over Bunness just after lunch on 17th and the last flew over the Observatory late evening on 27th.

**COMMON KESTREL** *Falco tinnunculus*

**Regular spring and autumn migrant**

An over-wintering ♂ was seen occasionally in January/February and early March. The first spring migrant was a ♀ on 20th March and 1-2 were reported irregularly until mid-May, with a later ♂ in the first week of June – a total of some ten birds. In autumn, birds were seen regularly from 15th August-17th October. Nearly all counts were of just singles, but three were present from 30th September-5th October. Later singles on 30th October and 2nd November were the last. An autumn total of around 15 birds.

**MERLIN** *Falco columbarius*

**Regular spring and autumn migrant**

In winter, one was seen occasionally in January and February and two on 28th February may have included the first spring migrant. Singles were noted on three scattered dates in March, just once in April and nine dates through May with the last on 6th June. As usual, autumn passage was much heavier, with daily counts of 1-3 throughout September and October into November. Peaks of five birds were counted on 8th September and 26th October. A ♂ and a ♀ were noted occasionally in November/December and into the New Year.

**+ EURASIAN HOBBY** *Falco subbuteo*

**Vagrant; 44 or 45 previous records**

Recorded in seven of the last ten years. An adult was present from 7th-10th June and a first-summer on 23rd July.

**+ GYR FALCON** *Falco rusticolus*

**Vagrant; 12 previous records (13 individuals)**

A first-winter white morph ♂ was reported on 30th December and remained around the south of the isle until 11th January 2005.

*Accepted by BBRC*

**PEREGRINE FALCON** *Falco peregrinus*

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

In spring, singles were noted on 30th March, 8th & 16th-18th April and 17th-20th May. Autumn passage commenced with two on 26th August and birds were seen regularly right through until early November. Mainly singles were involved,



but three were reported on 7th & 18th October. A ♂ on 25th November was the last.

**WATER RAIL** *Rallus aquaticus*

**Regular spring and autumn migrant, occasionally over-winters**

At least two over-wintering birds were seen occasionally in January/February up to 9th March. A single on 9th April and two on 23rd April were the only spring sightings. An early autumn migrant on 13th August was not followed until 10th September. Passage was heaviest in October when sightings were daily and multiple counts were common place, peaking at four on three dates. At least two birds remained into the New Year.

**+ SPOTTED CRAKE** *Porzana porzana*

**Rare migrant, mostly autumn (40 previous records; nine in spring)**

Three records: A juvenile was flushed from Gilsetter on 16th August, an adult from Meadow Burn on 4th October and a juvenile at Quoy on 13th October.

**+ CORN CRAKE** *Crex crex*

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

In spring, one was heard singing on the night of 25th April but not after and another was flushed near Houll on 10th May. In autumn, one flew into a fence at Field on 17th September and was slightly injured. It was released into Gilsetter and was seen regularly until 5th October by which time it seemed to have fully recovered. Additional birds were seen on 2nd October and 13th-15th October.

**+ COMMON MOORHEN** *Gallinula chloropus*

**Scarce spring and autumn migrant**

One on 6th April was the only spring record. In autumn, one took up residence at the Chalet Pond on 13th October and was joined by another on 29th October with both remaining there until the end of the year. Another on 14th October was the only other record.

**+ COMMON COOT** *Fulica atra*

**Rare winter and spring migrant, vagrant in autumn. (80 previous records)**

The fairly fresh remains of one were found in Gilsetter in April.

**+ COMMON CRANE** *Grus grus*

**Vagrant; 15 previous records (22 individuals), mainly in spring**

One flew south over the isle, being chased by Ravens and gulls, on 28th April.

**EURASIAN OYSTERCATCHER** *Haematopus ostralegus*

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

One on 6th January was an increasingly regular winter sighting. Two in North

Haven on 7th February were the first returning birds and 24 on 21st February was the first notable influx. The first birds were noted back on territory on 4th March. Numbers slowly built up during March and peaked at 190 on 18th April. As usual, a summering flock of around 50-60 birds swelled the breeding population (c.40 pairs) until a (maximum) count of 263 on 21st June indicated that the first failed breeders were heading south once more. Numbers tailed off from mid-August and were down to low single figures by the end of the month, throughout September until the last on 24th October.

**RINGED PLOVER** *Charadrius hiaticula*

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

The first returning birds were three on 7th February and birds were back on territory at South Light by 12th. The first notable influx was of 27 birds on 4th March and passage peaked at 35 on 9th March. All other counts were below 25. At least 13 pairs bred. Main autumn passage was confined to the last week of August when numbers peaked at 45 (21st), 61 (23rd), 67 (26th) & 47 (28th). All other counts were below 30 and had dwindled to single figures by 20th September with stragglers until 16th October.

**+ EURASIAN DOTTEREL** *Charadrius morinellus*

***Scarce spring and autumn migrant***

In spring, singles were seen on Hoini on 21st May and Ward Hill on 28th May. Similarly in autumn, juveniles were seen on Swey from 15th-21st September and Ward Hill on 28th-29th September.

**EUROPEAN GOLDEN PLOVER** *Pluvialis apricaria*

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

In winter, singles were seen occasionally (with two on 14th January) until three on 30th March signalled the start of spring passage. Just single figures were noted until 32 on 14th April saw the start of heavier passage, peaking at just 66 on 28th April. Numbers rapidly dwindled after mid-May with stragglers into early June. Sporadic counts of 1-3 were made in late June and July until five on 30th July signalled the start of autumn passage. Main passage, from 5th-30th September saw counts regularly above 30 and peaks of 62 on 12th & 22nd. Numbers tailed off through October until the last on 2nd November.

**+ GREY PLOVER** *Pluvialis squatarola*

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

As is often the case, the only record was of one flying around on 3rd October.

**NORTHERN LAPWING** *Vanellus vanellus*

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

Counts approaching 20 were regularly made in the early part of the year until a

large influx of 125 on 9th March included the returning local breeding birds. All other counts were below 50 and apart from a few stragglers, just the breeding birds remained by the end of the March. Nine pairs bred and the first chicks were noted on 2nd May. Failed breeders began to appear from the end of May and flocks (of 4-30) were regularly seen throughout June and July. Daily autumn passage was from 10th August but numbers never exceeded 25 (except for 38 on 16th) until October when counts of 25-35 were regular with peaks of 42 (2nd) & 46 (22nd). Numbers tailed off in November but small parties continued to pass through until the year's end.

**RED KNOT** *Calidris canutus*

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

In spring, a single on 31st May was the only record. In autumn, birds were seen almost daily from 8th August-30th September, with the last on 3rd October. All counts were below five, but for 11 on 21st August and eight on 29th August.

**SANDERLING** *Calidris alba*

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

In spring, one on 26th April was not followed until another on 22nd May, then 1-3 on six dates between 27th May-6th June. One on 30th June-1st July could have been an early autumn migrant with further sightings of 1-6 from 14th-27th July. Higher numbers in early August peaked at 14 on 4th, before dropping back down to almost daily counts of 1-5 from 11th-28th August, three scattered individuals in September and the last singles on 5th and 14th October.

**LITTLE STINT** *Calidris minuta*

***Irregular autumn migrant; vagrant in spring***

In autumn, 1-3 were seen daily from 24th August-4th September but for a peak count of five on 27th August. Three on 13th September were followed by almost daily singles until 19th September with a later bird on 1st October.

**+ PECTORAL SANDPIPER** *Calidris melanotos*

***Vagrant; 19 previous records (mainly autumn)***

An adult frequented Golden Water and Easter Loch Water from 10th-13th August.

**+ CURLEW SANDPIPER** *Calidris ferruginea*

***Scarce and irregular autumn migrant; vagrant in spring***

Two in Kirki Geo on 11th September were followed by another on 18th-19th September – the best showing since 1999.

**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 of the

rocky shore. Recorded irregularly in the first three months in higher than normal numbers, peaking at 26 on 19th February. Sightings became daily from 7th April-27th May varying from 2-16, with peaks in May of 21 (2nd), 30 (5th) & 22 (19th). Single figures were seen occasionally in July and regularly in August through to the end of the year, but for a maximum count of 28 on 6th August and other peaks of 14 (18th September), 11 (12th November) and 12 (21st December).

**DUNLIN** *Calidris alpina*

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

One on 16th March was not followed until main spring passage saw daily sightings from 4th May-6th June. Passage was heaviest in the period 15th-22nd May when counts exceeded 20 daily and included peaks of 41(16th) & 63 (19th). Small numbers were seen irregularly throughout the remainder of June and July until autumn passage proper commenced in August. Sightings were daily up to mid-October but counts rarely exceeded 20 birds with peaks of 22 (27th August), 28 (13th September) and 23 (20th September). Single figures were the norm after 21st September and sightings were less regular in late October until the last on 3rd November.

**RUFF** *Philomachus pugnax*

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

Recorded almost daily from 5th-30th August, less regularly until 24th September with a later bird on 3rd October. August counts were of 1-5 birds but for six on 10th & ten on 17th and singles in September but for three on 21st.

**JACK SNIBE** *Lymnocyptes minimus*

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

In spring, singles were noted on 2nd & 9th March and 6th April. In autumn, birds were noted from 15th September and were daily from 26th right through October into November. Passage was heaviest from 30th September-6th October when daily counts around 20 were made with a maximum of 25 on 1st October. Outside of this period, single figures were the norm. One on 16th November was the last.

**COMMON SNIBE** *Gallinago gallinago*

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

In winter, around 30-50 were counted in January/February until an influx in late February saw a peak count of 110 on 28th. Numbers rapidly tailed off in March and the first local breeders were heard drumming on 22nd (when the peak spring count of 60 was made). No census of the breeding population was made, but the first eggs were noted in early May and chicks in late May. In autumn, numbers were highest

from mid-September onwards with regular counts of 30-70 and maximums of 130 on 30th October and 100 on 26th November.

**EURASIAN WOODCOCK** *Scolopax rusticola*

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

In winter, singles were noted on 1st & 2nd January, three on 6th January and a single on 27th February. Spring records were confined to singles on 1st & 16th April and 18th May. Autumn passage spanned 1st October-16th November but numbers rarely exceeded 15 except for a large fall of 200+ on 30th October. Finally, one was seen on 7th December.

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

***Scarce spring and autumn migrant***

In spring, two from 17th-21st May and singles on 28th May and 6th June were the only records whilst a single on 30th July was the only autumn sighting.

**WHIMBREL** *Numenius phaeopus*

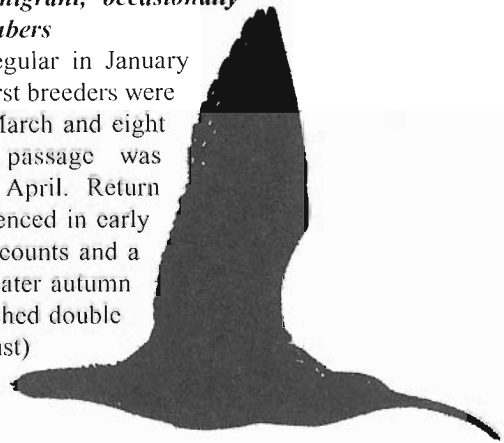
***Frequent spring and autumn migrant***

In spring, a single on 18th April preceded daily sightings from 21st April-12th June and stragglers until 28th June. Passage was mainly in the second half of May with daily counts above ten and peaks of 22 (15th), 25 (18th) & 20 (20th). Autumn passage began on 13th July and there were sporadic sightings of 1-2 birds up to 25th August (but for 11 on 24th August) and later singles on 20th & 23rd September.

**EURASIAN CURLEW** *Numenius arquata*

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

In winter, counts of 4-7 were regular in January rising to 10-13 in February. The first breeders were noted back on territory on 2nd March and eight pairs were mapped. Spring passage was negligible but for 56 on 12th April. Return passage of failed breeders commenced in early June with sporadic single-figure counts and a large peak of 40 birds on 27th. Later autumn counts, although daily, rarely reached double figures (peak of 16 on 9th August) and became sporadic after 11th October. Counts of 1-3 were occasionally made in November and December.



*Curlew (Rebecca Nason)*

**COMMON REDSHANK** *Tringa totanus*

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

Recorded in every month. Winter counts of 20-30 birds were regular in January/February but a cold weather influx produced a count of 70 on 12th February. Numbers rarely exceeded 20 in March/April and had fallen to single figures by May and June. A count of 23 on 4th July signalled the start of return migration. Numbers fluctuated but were regularly between 30-70 throughout August-October, with peak monthly counts of 130 (27th August), 105 (1st September) and 82 (14th October). Lesser numbers were recorded in November/December with a peak of 35 on 11th December.

**COMMON GREENSHANK** *Tringa nebularia*

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

No spring records. In autumn, two on 9th August were followed by almost daily counts of 1-3 (with a maximum of four on 18th) until 2nd September and a later single on 12th September.

**GREEN SANDPIPER** *Tringa ochropus*

***Regular spring and autumn migrant***

Singles from 29th April-2nd May and 5th May were the only spring records. In autumn, four (maximum count) on 23rd July and a single on 28th preceded almost daily counts of 1-3 throughout August until the last on 5th September.

**WOOD SANDPIPER** *Tringa glareola*

***Scarce spring and autumn migrant***

One on Field Pond from 22nd-26th July was followed by singles on 3rd & 9th August and 1-3 from 13th-22nd August.

**COMMON SANDPIPER** *Actitis hypoleucos*

***Frequent spring and autumn migrant***

A light spring passage saw regular counts of 1-4 from 23rd April-26th May. An equally light autumn passage saw irregular reports of birds on 25 dates between 23rd July-4th October. Mainly singles were involved, but two were seen on two dates and four on two dates.

**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	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
87	209	139	149	56	16	38	89	115	160	114	50

**+ RED-NECKED PHALAROPE** *Phalaropus lobatus*

***Vagrant; 18 previous records, involving 20 individuals***

The first since 2000. Two were seen together, swimming alongside *The Good Shepherd IV*, during the crossing on 28th June. A phalarope species reported briefly in North Haven on 7th August was probably this species.

**+ GREY PHALAROPE** *Phalaropus fulicarius*

***Vagrant; 17 previous records, involving 21 individuals***

Recorded for the third successive year. A juvenile was present in the Havens for a couple of hours on 2nd October and another flew north past Bunes on 9th October.

**+ POMARINE SKUA** *Stercorarius pomarinus*

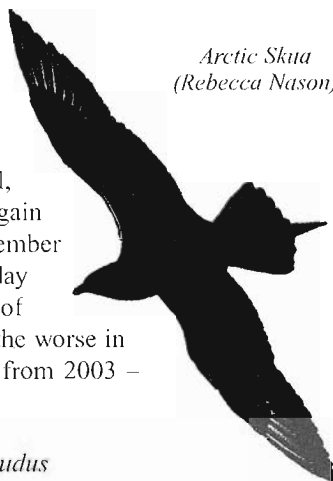
***Rare spring and autumn migrant; at least 55 previous records***

Singles were reported from *The Good Shepherd IV* crossing on 11th & 27th May and 17th September.

**ARCTIC SKUA** *Stercorarius parasiticus*

***Frequent passage migrant; breeds in small numbers***

A dark-morph individual on 14th April was followed by a light-morph and a dark-morph the next day. Birds were ever-present from 22nd April, gradually built up in May and had all departed again by 21st August. Singles over the isle on 12th September and a juvenile from South Light the following day were the only later birds. The long-term decline of the breeding population took a dramatic turn for the worse in 2004 with just 33 AOT found – a 40% decrease from 2003 – and no chicks fledged.



*Arctic Skua*  
(Rebecca Nason)

**+ LONG-TAILED SKUA** *Stercorarius longicaudus*

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

An adult was reported flying north along the coast on 19th June.

**GREAT SKUA** *Stercorarius skua*

***Frequent passage migrant; breeds in moderate numbers***

Three on 31st March were the first and birds were ever present from 4th April–20th October with birds seen offshore until 1st November. As with Arctic Skua, there was a dramatic drop in breeding numbers in 2004 with just 96 AOT being recorded – 33.8% less than in 2003. Most of these failed at the egg or tiny chick stage and just *one* chick reached fledging age.

**+ LITTLE GULL** *Larus minutus*

***Vagrant; 15 previous records (18 individuals)***

Recorded for the third consecutive year. A first-winter lingered in Finnikyoy from 14th-16th October.

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

***Frequent spring and autumn migrant***

Occasional ones or twos were seen in January–March. A light passage from mid-April to mid-June saw mainly single-figure daily counts and peaks of 20 (22nd April), 29 (2nd May), 24 (16th May) and 18 (6th June). Autumn passage commenced in mid-July and large influxes produced counts of 70 & 53 on 19th & 23rd July respectively. Mainly single figures were noted in August–October with peaks of 14 (5th August), 16 (21st September) and 20 (5th October). A single on 31st October was the last.

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

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

Occasional low single figures were noted in the early months until 13 on 30th March signalled the start of spring passage. Daily counts around 15-25 were made throughout April & May but for large peaks of 66 (22nd April), 78 (7th May) and 56 (9th May). A record 13 pairs attempted to breed (including six pairs on Buness) but they only managed to fledge two young. Autumn passage began from mid-July and numbers fluctuated daily but included influxes of 133 (23rd July), 580 (9th August), 87 (24th August), 70 (30th September) and 86 (2nd October). Counts after the first week of October were just single figures (except for 27 on 21st) and two on 4th November were the last.

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

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

Two on 1st April were not followed until a single on 15th and two on 19th saw the start of daily sightings. Passage was most obvious in mid-May when numbers peaked at 40 on 15th but further passage in June saw counts of 28 (5th) and 26 (20th). Six pairs were noted on Buness but just two chicks were present on a ringing trip in early July. Autumn passage was light with a peak of 19 on 19th July and low single figures in August. An adult on 19th-20th September and a 3rd-winter on 9th October were the only later sightings.

**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 but a peak of 1,000 on 25th October was relatively



low. A maximum of 25 pairs bred with the majority on Goorn (12 pairs) and Greenholm (six pairs) – a far cry from the 486 counted in 1975 or even the 262 pairs in 1986. Breeding success was poor with several dead chicks found in the two main colonies.

+ **ICELAND GULL** *Larus glaucoides*

***Scarce migrant in winter and spring***

A first-winter and a second-winter were seen on 8th January, the former remaining right up to 25th May. Others were seen on 2nd March (second-winter) and 15th March (second-summer). No autumn records.

+ **GLAUCOUS GULL** *Larus hyperboreus*

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

Two first-winters on 24th January was the only winter record. A first-summer on 4th August was unusual. In autumn, an early record (a first-winter) on 18th September was followed by different first-winters on 8th, 25th, 26th October and 2nd & 3rd November with an additional adult on 25th October.

**GREAT BLACK-BACKED GULL** *Larus marinus*

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

Present all year. No regular counts were made, but 500 were ashore in high winds on 25th October. A completely leucistic individual was noted on 16th April.

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

***Common autumn passage migrant; breeds in large numbers***

Occasional birds were seen offshore in January/February and in increasing numbers during March, but the first birds were not seen back on ledges until 22nd March. Very few were noted on the cliffs by mid-May and all had departed by mid-July. Numbers of AON at the monitoring plots (273) were almost 60% down compared to 2003 and only 61.8% went on to lay eggs. Just three (1.09%) hatched chicks, none of which survived beyond a week – the second consecutive year that Kittiwakes have completely failed to fledge any young on Fair Isle. Birds were regularly noted offshore, in small numbers, right through the autumn and early winter.

+ **SANDWICH TERN** *Sterna sandvicensis*

***Scarce summer migrant***

One on 18th May and two first-summer on 10th August were, typically, the only records.

### **COMMON TERN** *Sterna hirundo*

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

Birds first arrived back on 7th May and 1-5 were seen right up to late August. Two pairs bred at South Light and one chick fledged on 16th August – the first breeding success since a lone chick fledged in 2001. An adult on 14th September and a juvenile on 17th September were the last records.

### **ARCTIC TERN** *Sterna paradisaea*

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

One on 26th April and two the following day were the first. Ten on 6th May signalled the start of the main arrival, but numbers fluctuated widely and the peak count of 300 on 22nd May was twice that of the next highest count. Just 11 pairs bred and eggs were not noted until 6th June. These all failed at the incubation or very small chick stage. All had departed by early July with passage birds noted occasionally in August and September until the last on 15th October. A tern sp. on 28th October may have been this species.

### **COMMON GUILLEMOT** *Uria aalge*

#### ***Common autumn passage migrant; breeds in large numbers***

Birds were occasionally seen offshore in January/February and birds were ashore from early March however colony attendance was erratic and high attendance not noted until early May. Regular counts in June at the five population monitoring plots were down by an average 26.1% compared to 2003, to the lowest on record. The first egg was not noted at Peitron until 13th May – three weeks later than normal – but with fewer birds in attendance to guard the colonies from attacks by gulls and skuas, just 48.5% of eggs managed to hatch chicks. Very few of these survived longer than a week and only a handful reached two weeks and none fledged – the first complete breeding failure on record. Ringing trips into colonies around the isle found them almost desolate, very quiet and the small number of chicks present were obviously weak and dying. No chicks were ringed – normally 1500-2000 are ringed each year. Colonies were deserted by early July. Small numbers were seen daily offshore from late August until late October and a later bird in the Havens on 30th November.

### **RAZORBILL** *Alca torda*

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

Numbers at the Lericum population plot were down by 16% from the previous year and 11.3% less than the 1997-2003 mean. As with Guillemot, Razorbills suffered a 100% fledging failure. The number of eggs at the Easter Lother monitoring plot was 16.8% less than in 2003 and the lowest since 1999. Although hatching success, at 83.3%, was better than for Guillemot, the end result was the same as no chicks

even came close to fledging – the first complete breeding failure on record. Due to the difficulties birds were having in finding food, only four samples were collected – all of which consisted of very small Lesser Sandeels. Small numbers were seen offshore in September up to mid-October and a later first-winter in the Havens on 3rd November.

## **BLACK GUILLEMOT** *Cepphus grylle*

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

The annual census along the entire east coast of the isle revealed a decrease of 26.8% compared to last year, from 157 in 2003 to 115 this year. The trend since 1987 seems to show large increases every third year, with significant decreases in the two counts between. They have not however recovered from the large decline in 1998.

### **Black Guillemot counts along entire east coast 1987-2004**

Year	'87	'89	'91	'93	'94	'95	'96	'97	'98	'99	'00	'01	'02	'03	'04
Max count	220	286	241	190	240	216	224	254	160	144	173	139	124	157	115
% change	-13.4	-30.0	15.7	21.2	-26.3	10.0	-3.7	-13.4	-37.0	10.0	-20.1	19.7	-10.8	-26.6	-26.8

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

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

Birds were regularly seen offshore in January (maximum count of ten on 8th) and one landed in the Observatory garden during a gale on 30th. In autumn, one offshore on 10th October preceded occasional sightings until the end of the year.

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

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

In spring, one in the Bay of Furse on 21st March was the first and birds were ashore from early April. Atlantic Puffins had an apparently successful breeding season, compared to most species. A productivity of 0.63 is very similar to that of 2003 (0.65) and only a little short of the long-term (1990-2003) mean (0.68). Only small numbers were left by early August and very few by mid-month. Small numbers were occasionally reported offshore or from *The Good Shepherd IV* crossing until late October. Food samples collected from breeding birds and observations during the 24hr feeding watch indicated that very small Lesser Sandeels were the main food item being fed to chicks. The presence of Snake Pipefish among feeds indicates the problems birds were having in finding suitable prey. These are indigestible to chicks and were often found discarded at the entrance to burrows.

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

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

Not regularly censused, but no high numbers were noted.

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

***Scarce spring and autumn migrant***

One on 18th April was the only spring sighting. Similarly, one on 30th September was the only autumn record.

**COMMON WOOD PIGEON** *Columba palumbus*

***Frequent spring and autumn migrant***

In spring, one on 4th March was not followed until another on 30th March preceded almost daily sightings from 4th April-11th June. All counts were of single figures but for 13 on 12th April and 22 on 16th April. A later bird was seen on 26th-27th June. In autumn, almost daily counts of 1-2 from 30th September-27th October preceded an influx during the following week, which peaked at 36 on 1st November. Small numbers were seen until the end of November and one on 13th December was the last.

**EURASIAN COLLARED DOVE** *Streptopelia decaocto*

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

One on 15th March was not followed until another on 11th April and daily sightings from 17th April-30th June. Mainly single figures were involved, but peaks of 15 (14th May) and 21 (11th June) were made. Occasional ones or twos were noted in July and early August, on two dates in September, on 18th October and 22nd-23rd November.

**+ EUROPEAN TURTLE DOVE** *Streptopelia turtur*

***Regular spring and autumn migrant***

One on 23rd-24th May was the sole spring record. In autumn, singles were seen on 23rd August, 1st September and 10th-11th October.

**+ COMMON CUCKOO** *Cuculus canorus*

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

In spring, singles were present on 8th & 16th May and 4th-11th June. In autumn, a long-staying juvenile was present from 10th-30th August.

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

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

One was trapped at the Observatory on 15th February and another on 16th April. In June, one on 3rd rose to three on 7th-8th, with at least one lingering until 3rd July. One from 14th-27th July may have been the same. Another was seen 26th-31st August. In autumn, 1-2 were regularly recorded from 10th October-5th November with three on 4th November.

**SHORT-EARED OWL** *Asio flammeus*

**Regular spring and autumn migrant**

In spring, one on 17th-18th April preceded irregular sightings in May and sporadic singles in June – an estimated total of eight birds. Singles were seen on two dates in July and sporadically throughout August and more regularly in September. Main passage was in October when 1-3 were seen on most days with peaks of seven (6th & 22nd) and a maximum of ten on 30th. Three on 4th November were the last.

**+ EUROPEAN NIGHTJAR** *Caprimulgus europaeus*

**Vagrant; 24 previous records**

Recorded for the third year in a row. A male was well-watched and photographed as it sat motionless on a rock near Setter on 10th June.

**COMMON SWIFT** *Apus apus*

**Frequent spring, summer and autumn migrant**

There were irregular sightings of 1-8 from 15th May-7th September except for higher counts on 16th May (11), 16th July (11) and 19th July (25).

**EURASIAN WRYNECK** *Jynx torquilla*

**Regular spring and autumn migrant**

In spring, two on 30th April were followed by further singles on four dates in May with three on 8th May. In autumn, 1-2 were recorded on 12 dates from 10th August-16th September with five on 24th August, rising to six the following day. Finally, there was one on 1st October giving an autumn total of around a dozen birds.

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

**Scarce spring and autumn migrant**

Singles on 23rd-25th April, 12th and 24th-27th October. As usual the spring record refers to an individual of the ‘reddish’ nominate race *C. b. brachydactyla* from southern Europe whilst the autumn records were attributed to the ‘grey’ eastern race *C. b. longipennis*. Three records constitutes the best showing since 2000.

**SKY LARK** *Alauda arvensis*

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

A single was noted occasionally in January and four birds were present on 4th February. A count of 30 on 28th February signalled the start of spring migration with the first singing birds on 2nd March. Numbers regularly exceeded 100 throughout March (peak of 285 on 25th) and dropped to 50-90 in April – a lighter

passage than in most recent years. Counts of singing males in April/May estimated a maximum of c.50 territories. In autumn, main passage was from mid-September to mid-October when counts were regularly over 100, exceeded 200 on three dates and peaked at 330 on 27th September. Fewer were noted in late October (peak of 85 on 30th) and tailed off to 30 by mid-November and single figures by the end of the month. Four was the maximum December count.

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

***Scarce spring and autumn migrant***

One, seen and heard flying over Busta on 21st October was the sole sighting.

**SAND MARTIN** *Riparia riparia*

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

In spring, 1-3 were irregularly recorded from 18th April-1st June. In autumn there was a very good count of six (second highest autumn count on record) on 9th August with four the following day and a single on 16th.

**BARN SWALLOW** *Hirundo rustica*

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

The first, on 16th April (same date as in 2003), was followed by daily sightings from 20th April-14th June, with stragglers until the end of the month. Passage was heaviest in May with a maximum of 100 on 16th and other peaks on 7th (40), 12th (30) and 30th (42). One pair remained to breed and fledged four young on 5th August. Autumn passage then saw daily sightings up until the last on 7th October but numbers exceeded ten on just six dates, with a peak of 29 on 15th August.

**HOUSE MARTIN** *Delichon urbicum*

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

In spring, the first was on 25th April and sightings were almost daily from 30th April-23rd June. All counts were of single figures but for 20 on 27th May (rising to 23 the following day) and 16 on 2nd June. In autumn, three on 10th October with a single the following day were the only records.

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

***Scarce autumn migrant, vagrant in spring***

One from 30th September-3rd October was followed by two on 13th & 14th October and further singles on 15th-20th & 22nd October.

**+ OLIVE-BACKED PIPIT** *Anthus hodgsoni* (65, 124, 148, 266)

***Rare autumn migrant, vagrant in spring***

One at South Naaversgil on 20th October was the only record.

*Accepted by BBRC*

**TREE PIPIT** *Anthus trivialis*

***Frequent spring and autumn migrant***

In spring, singles on 21st & 25th April preceded nine on 30th April and main passage up to 11th May, with stragglers up to 29th May and two late birds on 11th June. Peak counts were of 25 on 1st May and 29 on 4th. A light autumn passage from 19th August-16th October saw irregular counts of 1-5 and a peak of six on 28th August.

**MEADOW PIPIT** *Anthus pratensis*

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

In winter, up to four were seen in January/February. Spring passage did not commence until 11 on 27th March, with singing and display noted on 30th. Passage was heaviest from 14th April-6th May when daily counts exceeded 100 and peaked at 250 on 2nd May. Autumn passage commenced in mid-August and daily counts of 200-400 were made right up to the end of September, but for a large peak of 1300 on 23rd August, with 1000 the following day and 650 on 25th. Counts remained over 100 up to mid-October before rapidly tailing off until the last on 6th November.

**+ RED-THROATED PIPIT** *Anthus cervinus* (69, 101, 133, 419)

***Rare spring and autumn migrant***

One showed well at Furze on 31st May – the 70th Fair Isle record.

*Accepted by BBRC*

**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 present from 29th April-5th May. First fledged young were noted on 8th June.

**YELLOW WAGTAIL** *Motacilla flava*

***Regular spring and autumn migrant***

A quiet spring saw two males of the British race *M. f. flavissima* on 5th May followed by females on 7th & 9th, a pair on 24th-25th and a male on 26th May. Individuals of the Grey-headed race *M. f. thunbergi* were seen on 10th (2) & 12th May. Additionally, one un-assigned to race was present on 11th May. A maximum total of 11 birds. In autumn, there was just a single, un-assigned to race, on 29th September.

**GREY WAGTAIL** *Motacilla cinerea*

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

In spring, there were sporadic counts of 1-2 birds from 1st April to 4th June – a total of 10-12 birds. Autumn passage consisted of almost daily counts of 1-3 from 30th September-30th October but for a peak of four on 10th October.

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

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

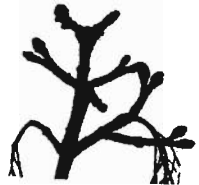
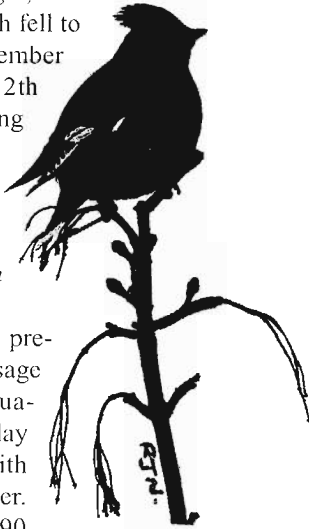
As every year, the first to arrive were Pied Wagtails *M.a.yarrellii* with a single on 9th-13th February being the earliest ever record. This was followed by counts of 1-2 on six dates in March until daily sightings from 30th March. Passage was light and only reached double figures on seven dates, peaking at 17 on 4th April. Passage of White Wagtails *M. a. alba* commenced on 4th April and small numbers (peak of eight) were noted daily until 31st May. Three pairs of Pied Wagtails remained to breed, with the first fledged chicks noted on 3rd June. Autumn passage was from mid-August and was fairly light, with a peak of just 39 on 24th which fell to single figures by mid-September and had petered out by 12th October with the last lingering until 20th October.

## **BOHEMIAN WAXWING**

*Bombycilla garrulus*

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

A single on 7th-8th October preceded the best autumn passage on record. Numbers fluctuated widely from day to day between 15th-31st October with stragglers until 7th November. Peak counts were: 40 (15th), 90 (20th), 150 (24th), 60 (25th) & 45 (27th).



*Waxwing (Rebecca Nason)*

## **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 a minimum of 27 territories – about average, but a drop from the 34 noted in 2003. No noticeable passage was observed, but individuals of the nominate race were noted in October and November – a maximum day count of three and a bird-day total of 18.

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

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

In spring, the first on 31st March was followed by daily sightings up to 22nd April



and stragglers until 15th May and two later sightings on 5th & 8th June. All counts were single figures, but for ten on 10th April and 14 on 4th & 12th April. In autumn, passage was daily from the first on 29th September to the last on 6th November with a peak count of just six on 20th October.

**EUROPEAN ROBIN** *Erithacus rubecula*

***Common spring and autumn migrant***

Small numbers were recorded in January with a maximum of ten on 12th. Most had departed following the snow in early February. Spring migration commenced with 14 on 1st April and peaked at 39 on 4th but had slowed to single figures by 9th. The first week of May saw daily counts of 10-15 before single figures predominated once again (to 20th), with stragglers up to 8th June. Autumn passage, from 25th September, was heaviest in the last week of October when daily counts exceeded 25 and peaked at 43 on 30th. Counts over 20 were regular up to mid-November before tailing off to a handful of birds (five) in December.

**+ COMMON NIGHTINGALE** *Luscinia megarhynchos* (48, 75, 119, NA)

***Rare spring migrant (c.40 previous records), vagrant in autumn (eight records)***

One found at Upper Leogh on 17th May, toured the crofts in the south end until 2nd June – often being flushed from the inside of buildings.

**BLUETHROAT** *Luscinia svecica*

***Regular spring and autumn migrant***

In spring, sightings were from 3rd May-8th June with singles on 13 dates, two on 12th, four on 10th and five (all ♂) on 8th May – an estimated total of 18 birds. In autumn, 1-2 were recorded daily from 1st October-2nd November but included individuals which remained for two and four weeks giving an autumn total of just four or five birds.

**+ RUFOUS-TAILED ROBIN** *Luscinia sibilans* (0,0,0,0)

***Vagrant; no previous Western Palearctic records***

A long-predicted vagrant to Europe and one of a pair of Fair Isle firsts this autumn. A first-winter was found (and trapped) in Johnny Arcus' Park on 23rd October. Unfortunately it did not stay longer – disappointing hundreds of expectant twitchers! (see *Birding World* 17 (10); *Birding Scotland* 7 (4))

*Accepted by BBRC – pending BOURC decision*

**+ RED-FLANKED BLUETAIL** *Tarsiger cyanurus* (4, 9, 14, 33)

***Vagrant; four previous records***

Hot on the heels of the fourth record, at Gunnawark in October 2003, came the fifth – amazingly in the same place. A superb adult ♂ was found mid-afternoon on 29th September. It initially showed very well but became elusive as a crowd gathered at

the top of the cliff, only giving brief views in difficult circumstances. It was not present the following morning.

*Accepted by BBRC*

**BLACK REDSTART** *Phoenicurus ochruros*

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

In spring, a ♂ at South Light on 30th March was followed by 1-2 daily from 4th-11th April and again from 7th-12th May with two on 10th June the only other sightings, giving a total of 12-15 birds. In autumn, early singles on 22nd-24th & 26th August were the only records until 1-2 were occasionally seen from 10th October-4th November – an estimated autumn total of 10-12 birds.

**COMMON REDSTART** *Phoenicurus phoenicurus*

***Frequent spring and autumn migrant***

In spring, a ♂ on 23rd April was followed by a fall of 13 (all ♂) on 30th that had risen to a maximum of 22 (all ♂) the following day. Seventeen on 2nd May included the first ♀ and numbers remained in double figures for the rest of that week, tailing off until 14th. One or two were seen at the end of May and stragglers on 11th & 15th June. Autumn passage commenced on 10th August and 1-3 were reported regularly until 30th. Just two singles followed in September until daily counts of 1-6 from 29th September-11th October and the last on 22nd October.

**WHINCHAT** *Saxicola rubetra*

***Frequent spring and autumn migrant***

In spring, counts of 1-6 were made daily from 30th April-11th May with further sightings of 1-2 from 27th May-7th June and three on 15th June. Autumn migration began on 8th August and sightings were daily right up to 1st November with stragglers until 9th November. All counts were of single figures with a maximum of seven on 30th August.

**STONECHAT** *Saxicola torquata*

***Scarce spring and autumn migrant***

A ♀ on 15th March was followed by five ♂ on 21st and regular counts of 1-4 up to 4th April and singles on most days from 19th April-7th May. Autumn records were typically much less, with singles daily from 27th September-9th October (involving 3-5 birds) and the last on 21st-22nd October.

**NORTHERN WHEATEAR** *Oenanthe oenanthe*

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

The first were three ♂ on 31st March and 17 the following day included the first ♀. Sightings were daily from 4th April but numbers were generally single

figures until 53 on 17th (including the first Greenland Wheatears *O. o. leucorhoa*).

Main passage was from 22nd April-20th May when counts exceeded

100 almost daily

and peaked at 216 on 6th

May. Migration had petered out by

the end of the month with just the breeding

birds remaining and the first fledged chicks

were noted on 11th June. Autumn passage was

heaviest in August when counts exceeded 100

daily (peak of 165 on 10th) until 26th then fell to 30-50 daily until 13th September

(but for 80 on 11th). After this, most counts were below 20 (except for 63 on 20th)

and single figures by 26th September until the last on 24th October.



*Wheatear (Rebecca Nason)*

#### **RING OUZEL** *Turdus torquatus*

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

In spring, a ♂ on 4th April was not followed until regular counts of 1-5 from 18th April-18th May with the last on 27th-28th May. In autumn, all sightings were in October with counts of 1-4 on 18 dates scattered throughout the month and a maximum of 15 on 22nd.

#### **COMMON BLACKBIRD** *Turdus merula*

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

In the first three months, peak counts were 33 on 20th January, 29 on 12th February and 35 on 9th March. All other winter counts were below 20 and often single figures. Similarly in spring, all counts in April were below 20 except for an influx of 68 on 4th with single figures throughout May and stragglers to mid-June. A dishevelled ♀ remained throughout the summer until early October at least. In autumn, one on 13th September was followed by another on 27th and small numbers until an arrival of 190 on 11th October. Numbers fluctuated between 100 – 500 until the end of October, but for peaks of 1200 (20th), 700 (21st) & 1500 (22nd). Daily counts of 100-200 were made throughout November, falling to 30-50 in December.

#### **FIELDFARE** *Turdus pilaris*

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

One or two were recorded in January but departed with the arrival of snow in early February. In spring, two arrived on 22nd March and one was heard singing on 25th. A fall of 200 (peak spring count) on 4th April commenced daily sightings up to 1st May, with stragglers to the end of the month. Counts fluctuated from 15-86 but for

142 on 22nd April. Autumn passage commenced with regular single-figure counts from 9th August-29th September then slightly heavier passage up to mid-October. The bulk of passage was on 20th October when record numbers passed through, often high overhead. A count of 15,000 during census is likely to be a gross underestimate of the numbers heading south that day. Daily counts of several hundred were made up to the end of October before rapidly tailing off after the first week of November. The only December record was of a single on 21st.

**SONG THRUSH** *Turdus philomelos*

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

Low single figures were seen in the first three months (peak of eight on 18th March) until an arrival of thrushes on 4th April included 23 of this species (maximum spring count). Numbers returned to single figures the following day and 13 on 30th April was the only other count above ten. Birds were recorded almost daily up to 17th May and stragglers on three dates to 10th June. In autumn, 1-2 were recorded from 9th-14th September, followed by nine on 29th and 85 on 30th which signalled the start of main passage. The last ten days of October saw regular counts over 100 and peaks of 200 (20th) & 340 (22nd) before tailing off in November with around ten remaining into December.

**REDWING** *Turdus iliacus*

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

Counts up to 36 were made in January but just single figures in February/March. A light spring passage commenced in early April with a maximum count of just 25 on 4th. One to four stragglers were reported throughout May and one on 8th June was the last of the spring. An early autumn migrant was seen on 26th August but was not followed until 27th September. Main passage was in the latter half of October when several hundred were counted daily and a massive peak of at least 7,000 passed through on 20th. The next highest was 1,700 on 22nd October. Daily counts of 100-200 were made in November until numbers tailed off in the last few days of the month to around 30 in December.

**MISTLE THRUSH** *Turdus viscivorus*

***Scarce spring and autumn migrant***

Singles on 17th March, 25th April and 8th May were the only spring sightings. Similarly in autumn, 1-2 were recorded daily from 11th-26th October and a single from 6th November-5th December.

**+ LANCEOLATED WARBLER** *Locustella lanceolata* (67, 82, 86, 102)

***Rare autumn migrant (67 previous records)***

One found in Gilsetter and trapped in the Gully on 4th October was the only record.  
*Accepted by BBRC*

**COMMON GRASSHOPPER WARBLER** *Locustella naevia*

***Regular spring and autumn migrant***

In spring, birds were recorded almost daily from 21st April-11th May (max. four on 30th April & 9th May) and a later single on 28th May – a total of 12-15 birds. In autumn, 1-2 were noted on six dates between 10th-30th August and almost daily from 2nd-15th October – an autumn total of 13-15 birds.

**+ AQUATIC WARBLER** *Acrocephalus paludicola* (34, 40, 49, NA)

***Vagrant; 34 previous records (all in autumn)***

As part of a mini-influx into Shetland, first-winters were trapped at Hegri Burn on 12th August and Walli Burn on 16th August – the first records since 1997.

*Accepted by SBRC*

**SEDGE WARBLER** *Acrocephalus schoenobaenus*

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

In spring, birds were recorded almost daily from 29th April-6th June with a maximum of ten on 8th May. Autumn passage commenced with an early single on 26th July followed by counts from 5th-11th August (max. of seven on 5th), just four singles between 30th August-21st September then 1-2 daily from 1st-12th October.

**+ MARSH WARBLER** *Acrocephalus palustris*

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

In spring, two on 30th May had risen to three the following day and five by 1st June. One or two were then seen most days until 17th June – a spring total of 9-10 birds. Autumn records comprised singles on 11th August and 10th October – our latest ever record.

**EURASIAN REED WARBLER** *Acrocephalus scirpaceus*

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

Similar to 2003, the only spring sightings were singles on 27th May and 10th June. Also, as in 2003, there was a summer sighting, on 8th July. In autumn, birds were recorded daily from 8th August-5th September with a maximum of 12 on 16th August. Finally, singles on 4th, 5th & 13th-14th October were the last.

**+ BOOTED WARBLER** *Hippolais caligata* (10, 27, 34, 91)

***Vagrant; ten previous records (all in autumn)***

A first-winter was trapped in Single Dyke on 5th October – a very late date.

*Accepted by BBRC*

**ICTERINE WARBLER** *Hippolais icterina*

***Scarce spring and autumn migrant***

In spring, singles were recorded on 11 dates between 30th May-28th June, except

for two on 1st June -- a total of six birds. In autumn, two on 10th August rose to three on 13th with singles on a further seven dates up to 8th September -- a total of 6-7 birds.

**BLACKCAP** *Sylvia atricapilla*

***Common spring and autumn migrant***

In spring, a ♂ on 6th-7th April preceded regular sightings from 14th April-12th June, with stragglers up to 29th June. Low single-figure counts were the norm with peaks of 11 & 12 on 7th & 9th May respectively. In autumn, a single on 28th August was the first followed by regular counts of 1-3 from 7th-30th September. Main passage was in October with daily counts above ten and exceeding 20 on ten dates, including peaks of 50 on 11th & 13th. Small numbers (3-6) were recorded in the first week of November and one on 16th November was the last.

**GARDEN WARBLER** *Sylvia borin*

***Frequent spring and autumn migrant***

A typically light spring passage, from 5th May-24th June, saw irregular counts of 1-3 and a peak of five on 2nd June. In autumn, sightings were daily from 9th August-1st October with stragglers up to 26th October. The majority of birds passed through in August with regular double-figure counts and peaks of 26 (10th), 43 (11th), 35 (14th), 36 (24th) & 40 (25th), tailing off to single figures in September.

**BARRED WARBLER** *Sylvia nisoria*

***Regular autumn migrant, vagrant in spring***

One to three were noted almost daily from 6th August-17th September. Two on 30th September, with one remaining until 3rd October, were the only later records -- an estimated total of c.18 birds.

**LESSER WHITETHROAT** *Sylvia curruca*

***Frequent spring and autumn migrant***

In spring, birds were regularly seen from 5th May-12th June, with the last on 20th June. Numbers were generally single figures but for 11 on 8th May, rising to 14 on 9th. One on 16th July was a most unusual summer record. Autumn passage commenced on 11th August and counts of 1-4 were regular up to 30th October but for a peak of nine on 29th September. The last remained until 8th November.

**COMMON WHITETHROAT** *Sylvia communis*

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

Spring passage commenced on 30th April and birds were almost daily until 2nd June, with stragglers up to 29th June. Most counts were below seven but for ten on

8th May, with nine the following day. In autumn, sightings of 1-7 were almost daily from 5th August-12th September with later singles on 20th September and 11th October.

+ **SUBALPINE WARBLER** *Sylvia cantillans* (65, 133, 186, 503)

**Rare spring migrant (63 previous records), vagrant in autumn (two records)**

A ♀ trapped on 1st May was still present the following day. A ♂ was found at Leogh on 23rd May and was seen at various crofts in the south the following day.

*Both accepted by BBRC*

+ **PALLAS'S WARBLER** *Phylloscopus proregulus*

**Vagrant; 34 previous records**

Singles were noted on 24th-25th October and 27th October.

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

**Regular autumn migrant**

Counts of 1-4 were made on 11 dates from 29th September-15th October – a total of around ten birds.

+ **DUSKY WARBLER** *Phylloscopus fuscatus* (11, 39, 58, 273)

**Vagrant; 11 previous records**

A highly mobile individual toured around the Field/Barkland/Chalet area on 18th-19th October.

*Accepted by BBRC*

**WOOD WARBLER** *Phylloscopus sibilatrix*

**Regular spring and autumn migrant**

In spring, 1-2 were noted daily from 9th-13th May. In autumn, six on 10th August were followed by irregular sightings of 1-2 on eight further dates until 29th August and a later single on 13th September.

**COMMON CHIFFCHAFF** *Phylloscopus collybita*

**Frequent spring and autumn migrant**

Spring passage commenced with four on 1st April and birds were noted irregularly until daily passage from 22nd April-19th June. Most counts were of single figures, but there were ten on 4th April and 6th May. Unusually, 3-4 remained right through the summer. Autumn passage commenced on 4th August and sightings were daily right up to 12th November. Single figures were recorded in August and September and heavier passage in October saw peaks of 14 (10th) and 24 (11th). Many birds in October & November were assigned to the eastern races

*P. c. abietinus* and *P. c. tristis* with respective peaks of 18 (11th October) and eight (27th October & 1st November).

**WILLOW WARBLER** *Phylloscopus trochilus*

**Frequent spring and autumn migrant**

In spring, singles on 16th & 18th April preceded daily passage from 21st April-10th June and stragglers regularly until 28th June. Most counts were of single figures but there were peaks of 26 on 30th April, rising to 28 on 1st May, and 15 on 6th May. Autumn passage, from 5th August, saw daily sightings up to 18th September and irregular counts to 10th October, with the last remaining to 17th October. Passage was heaviest in August with peaks of 32 (10th), 35 (11th), 26 (14th), 66 (24th) and 29 (25th).

**GOLDCREST** *Regulus regulus*

**Frequent spring and autumn migrant**

A single on 18th March was not followed until another on 30th March signalled the start of almost daily sightings until 30th April and single stragglers on seven further dates up to 28th May. The majority of birds appeared on 4th April, when 55 were counted. All other counts were less than ten but for 12 on 1st May and 15 on 6th May. In autumn, five on 29th August were the first of daily single-figure counts up to 5th October. Main passage was from 6th-20th October when daily counts exceeded 20 and included peaks of 62 (11th), 60 (16th) & 40 (12th & 17th). Smaller numbers were recorded until 6th November.

**SPOTTED FLYCATCHER** *Muscicapa striata*

**Frequent spring and autumn migrant**

Spring passage commenced with 17 on 8th May, rising to 25 (max. count) the following day, with 15 on 11th tailing off to 16th. Further passage saw daily counts of 1-5 from 23rd May-14th June with stragglers on 22nd June and 1st July. A very light autumn passage saw singles on 11th, 13th & 21st August, 14th September and 1st October.

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

**Scarce autumn migrant, rare in spring**

In spring, one was trapped on 7th June (exactly the same date as the previous year) and in autumn one on 30th September was the only record.

**+ COLLARED FLYCATCHER** *Ficedula albicollis* (2, 8, 14, 25)

**Vagrant; two previous records**

Third record. A first-summer ♂ frequented Sma Trinket Geo from 9th-12th May. Previous records were on 28th May 1998 (adult ♂) and 8th October 1986 (first-winter).

*Accepted by BBRC*



**PIED FLYCATCHER** *Ficedula hypoleuca*

**Frequent spring and autumn migrant**

In spring, 1-5 were recorded daily from 30th April-12th May and singles daily from 25th-31st May, with stragglers on 10th & 17th June. In autumn, a single on 9th August was followed by 28 (max. count) the next day, with still 22 on 11th. Mainly single figures were recorded until the end of the month and scattered sightings of 1-3 throughout September until the last on 11th October.

**+ EURASIAN GOLDEN ORIOLE** *Oriolus oriolus*

**Vagrant; 37 previous records (30 in spring, 7 in autumn)**

First since 2000. One was seen at Skerryholm/Springfield on 28th May and another at Wirvie/Mopul on 2nd June.

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

**Regular spring and autumn migrant**

In spring, a ♀ on 7th May was followed by seven (five ♂) the following day, dwindling to two by 12th. Further passage from 29th May saw birds daily until 10th June, peaking at ten on 2nd June, with scattered singles on a further seven dates until 29th June. A light autumn passage produced 1-4 daily from 13th-20th August and later singles on 25th August, 3rd September and 7th-8th October.

**+ GREAT GREY SHRIKE** *Lanius minor*

**Scarce autumn migrant; rare in spring**

One was at Guidicum on 7th October and it or another was picked up dead at Skerryholm the following day. Two were present on 26th October – one at Springfield and another trapped at Double Dyke – with one remaining until 27th.

**EURASIAN JACKDAW** *Corvus monedula*

**Scarce spring and autumn migrant**

One on 18th March was followed by 1-3 daily from 4th-10th April and a single from 24th-28th April. In autumn, two arrived on 22nd October, with one remaining until 30th.

**ROOK** *Corvus frugilegus*

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

In spring, a single on 9th March was followed by three on 18th (with two on 19th), a single on 4th April and 1-5 from 16th-28th. Finally, there were singles on 1st & 7th May. In autumn, a single from 20th-22nd October was the sole record.

**CARRION CROW** *Corvus corone*

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

An over-wintering bird was seen in the early months and three on 18th March were the first signs of spring passage. Sightings were daily from mid-April to mid-June

and passage was heaviest in May when several double-figure counts were made with peaks of 19 (4th) and 17 (14th). In autumn, singles recorded irregularly from late August-December may have been the same bird, although two were noted on 19th October.

**HOODED CROW** *Corvus cornix*

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

The two or three pairs of resident birds cloud passage, but a very light passage was noted in May, with peaks of 16 (13th) & 12 (19th). As in 2003, no pairs are thought to have bred successfully this year. Peak monthly counts of eight (11th September) and ten (11th 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 occasionally seen in April and May. In autumn, just two singles were noted in September & October.

**COMMON RAVEN** *Corvus corax*

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

In April, parties of seven on 4th, 15 on 6th and seven on 28th disturbed the resident four pairs. The first chicks fledged on 6th May and at least three of the four pairs were successful. In autumn, passage was negligible but three were noted coming in off the sea on 19th August and a flock of 14 was counted on 7th October.

**COMMON STARLING** *Sturnus vulgaris*

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

Present all year. Peak spring count was 500 on 18th April. Following on from the previous year's very successful breeding season, the highest number of nests (115) ever recorded (in the last 25 years) were located around the interior of the isle. Average clutch size was 4.72 with hatching success (86.2%), fledging success (80.8%) and overall breeding success (69.7%) – all about average. No large influxes were noted in autumn.

**+ ROSY STARLING** *Sturnus roseus*

***Rare spring, summer and autumn migrant; 36 previous records (37 individuals)***

A fine male was outside the Observatory on 27th May before relocating to Lower Station, where it remained until 10th June. A first-summer was spotted near the School on 30th July.

**HOUSE SPARROW** *Passer domesticus*

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

Present all year. Counts in April estimated the population at around 75 birds. No autumn counts were made.

**EURASIAN TREE SPARROW** *Passer montanus*

***Scarce spring and autumn migrant***

A good year started with singles on 18th-19th March and on 27th March-5th April. Numbers rose from a single on 7th May to 12 from 9th-13th, with a few lingering until 26th May. In autumn, a single on 29th August was joined by a second bird the following day, with both remaining until 3rd September.

**CHAFFINCH** *Fringilla coelebs*

***Common spring and autumn migrant***

In winter, up to three were noted from early January to early March. A light spring passage commenced on 1st April until 24th April with stragglers up to 20th May, but numbers rarely reached double figures – peaks of just 27 (4th April) and 12 (7th April). Autumn passage was even worse with just single figures noted from 29th September-31st October with 1-2 remaining into November. A single ♂ was seen in December.

**BRAMBLING** *Fringilla montifringilla*

***Common spring and autumn migrant***

A light spring passage, from 1st April-24th May, was mainly concentrated in the last week of April when numbers reached double figures and peaked at 23 on 24th. Autumn passage, from 29th September-4th November (with stragglers up to 18th November), saw numbers fluctuate widely but exceeding 100 on just three dates: 115 (11th October), 442 (20th October) and 120 (21st October).

**EUROPEAN GREENFINCH** *Carduelis chloris*

***Regular spring and autumn migrant***

In spring, 1-3 were recorded on most days from 2nd April-6th May, with four on 7th May. A later single was seen on 19th-20th May – a spring total of 10-13 birds. In autumn, a single from 1st-3rd October preceded daily sightings from 20th October-4th November, peaking at 14 on 2nd November. Four on 8th November were the last.

**+ EUROPEAN GOLDFINCH** *Carduelis carduelis*

***Scarce spring and autumn migrant***

A single on 24th-26th April was followed by a long-staying individual from 29th April-30th May.

**EURASIAN SISKIN** *Carduelis spinus*

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

In spring, irregular sightings of 1-5 were made from 31st March-29th June except for peaks of 14 on 18th April and eight on 11th May. In autumn, a light passage from 29th September-26th October saw single-figure counts on most days and peaks of ten on 30th September rising to 12 on 1st October.

**COMMON LINNET** *Carduelis cannabina*

**Regular spring migrant, scarce in autumn**

In spring, low single figures were noted regularly from 30th March-24th May, with peaks of six (4th April) and eight (28th April). A single on 8th June was the last. In autumn, counts of 1-4 were almost daily from 29th September-24th October but for a maximum of eight on 5th October.

**TWITE** *Carduelis flavirostris*

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

The maximum winter count was 42 on 12th February. Spring passage was hardly discernible with a peak of 41 on 19th April and a few pairs remaining to breed. Autumn numbers were greatest in September when counts exceeded 100 daily and peaked at 230 on 29th. Numbers began to tail off in October (three counts over 100) and the peak November count was just 30 on 16th. Just two were reported in December.

**+ LESSER REDPOLL** *Carduelis cabaret*

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

A single on 7th May was the only spring sighting. In autumn, daily singles from 2nd-9th October may have related to the same individual.

**COMMON REDPOLL** *Carduelis flammea*

**Frequent spring and autumn migrant**

Birds of the Fenno-Scandian race *C. f. flammea* ('Mealy' Redpoll) were recorded as follows: three on 4th April were followed by another three on 16th and 1-4 were counted irregularly up to 6th June, except for eight on 7th May. Later singles were noted on 17th & 29th June, 4th & 7th-15th July. In autumn, 1-3 were noted regularly from 20th September-2nd November with peaks of seven (26th September) and six (1st-2nd October).

Birds of the Greenland (*C. f. rostrata*) or Iceland (*C. f. islandica*) races were identified on 2nd January-9th February (*C. f. islandica*), two on 29th-30th September and four on 8th October.

**+ COMMON CROSSBILL** *Loxia curvirostra*

**Scarce/irruptive late summer/autumn migrant**

In spring, there was a ♂ on 29th April followed by single ♀ on 15th, 19th-21st & 25th May and a juvenile on 26th-27th May. In summer, four on 4th July was the only sighting. Similarly in autumn, singles on 3rd & 6th October may have been the same individual.

**COMMON ROSEFINCH** *Carpodacus erythrinus*

***Regular spring and autumn migrant***

In spring, a fine ♂ was at the Observatory on 27th-28th May, followed by three birds on 31st May with 1-2 daily until 7th June and further singles on 26th June and 3rd July. In autumn, singles on 6th & 16th August and 1-2 from 21st-24th August were followed by almost daily sightings throughout September up to 11th October. Most counts were of 1-3 birds but included eight on 6th September, with six still present the following day.

**COMMON BULLFINCH** *Pyrrhula pyrrhula*

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

As part of a huge national influx of the irruptive nominate race of this species (*P. p. pyrrhula* – known as ‘Northern’ Bullfinch), Fair Isle enjoyed extraordinary numbers in October. Five on 11th October had risen to 12 by 14th and 55 on 15th. Numbers then remained above 50 until the end of the month, including seven counts over 100, peaking at 140 on 27th October. Numbers rapidly dwindled to single figures by the end of the first week of November with stragglers until 28th November. A total of 188 birds were trapped and ringed. The origin of this record influx is unclear but their strange trumpeting calls suggest that these birds were from much further east than previous irruptions to Britain.

**+ HAWFINCH** *Coccothraustes coccothraustes*

***Scarce spring and autumn migrant***

In spring, a ♂ on 4th April was followed by a ♀ on 25th-28th April and further singles on 1st-14th May (with two on 9th) and 17th May.

**LAPLAND LONGSPUR (BUNTING)** *Calcurius lapponicus*

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

Spring records comprised three on 16th April, with a single until 22nd and another on 3rd May. In autumn, singles on 1st & 2nd September preceded daily sightings from 5th September-29th October. Mainly single figures were involved, but double figures were noted on eight dates, with peaks of 16 on 29th September and 14 on 4th October. One on 1st November was the last.

**SNOW BUNTING** *Plectrophenax nivalis*

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

Present all winter with a peak count of 100 on 12th February. Numbers rapidly dwindled to below 25 in March and mainly single figures in April, up to 18th. Later migrants in May comprised singles on 13th, 17th & 20th and two on 23rd. In autumn, two on 12th September were followed by 31 the following day gradually rising to 130 by 20th and peaking at 220 on 21st. Daily counts then fluctuated

widely as birds passed through but there were a further four counts above 100 before the end of the month and four more in October. Numbers regularly exceeded 100 in November but dwindled towards the end of the month. Twenty-two on 14th December was the highest count for the final month.

**YELLOWHAMMER** *Emberiza citrinella*

***Regular spring and autumn migrant***

In spring, there were two on 4th-5th April with one remaining until 10th and another on 16th-18th April. Two more on 7th May and a single on 4th-5th June were the last. Autumn records were slightly better with singles on 12th & 15th October and daily counts of 1-6 from 20th October-1st November and a single on 5th November being the last.

**+ ORTOLAN BUNTING** *Emberiza hortulana*

***Scarce spring and autumn migrant***

A single at Upper Leogh from 1st-5th October was the only record.

**+ RUSTIC BUNTING** *Emberiza rustica* (115, 205, 276, 440)

Scarce spring & autumn migrant; 115 previous records

A ♂ in South Harbour on 4th June had relocated to the Havens the following day.

*Accepted by BBRC*

**+ LITTLE BUNTING** *Emberiza pusilla*

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

One at Meadow Burn on 29th September was followed by singles on 12th, 14th, 16th & 26th October – a total of four birds.

**+ CHESTNUT-EARED BUNTING** *Emberiza fucata* (0, 0, 0, 0)

***Vagrant; no previous Western Palearctic records***

A strange bunting in the Observatory crop at Skadan on 15th October was eventually identified as a first-winter ♂ of this species – the first record for the Western Palearctic and the first of two such mega-rarities this autumn. It remained faithful to this site until 20th, allowing around 120 birders from south to travel up to see it. (*see Birding World 17 (10) and Birding Scotland 7 (4)*)

*Accepted by BBRC – pending BOURC decision*

**REED BUNTING** *Emberiza schoeniclus*

***Frequent spring and autumn migrant***

In spring, singles were noted on 17th, 22nd & 27th March before almost daily sightings from 4th-16th April and 25th April-9th June. Peak count was of nine on



*(Top) Booted Warbler, 5th October.  
Rebecca Nason*



*(Left) Icterine Warbler, 26th June.  
Glen Tyler*



*Female Subalpine Warbler, 1st May.  
Deryk Shaw*



*Common Grasshopper Warbler,  
May. Rebecca Nason*





*(Top) Ortolan Bunting, 1st-5th October.*

*Rebecca Nason*



*(Right) Male Rustic Bunting, 4th-5th June.*

*Rebecca Nason*



*Lapland Bunting, October.*

*Rebecca Nason*



*Red-throated Pipit, 31st May.*

*Deryk Shaw*





*First-winter Rufous-tailed Robin, 23rd October.*



*Rebecca Nason*



*Rufous-tailed Robin – the first record for the Western Palearctic.*  
*Alan Bull*



*Rebecca Nason*



*First-winter male Chestnut-eared Bunting, 15th-20th October.  
Deryk Shaw*



*Rebecca Nason*



*Chestnut-eared Bunting –  
the first record for the  
Western Palearctic.*

*Rebecca Nason*



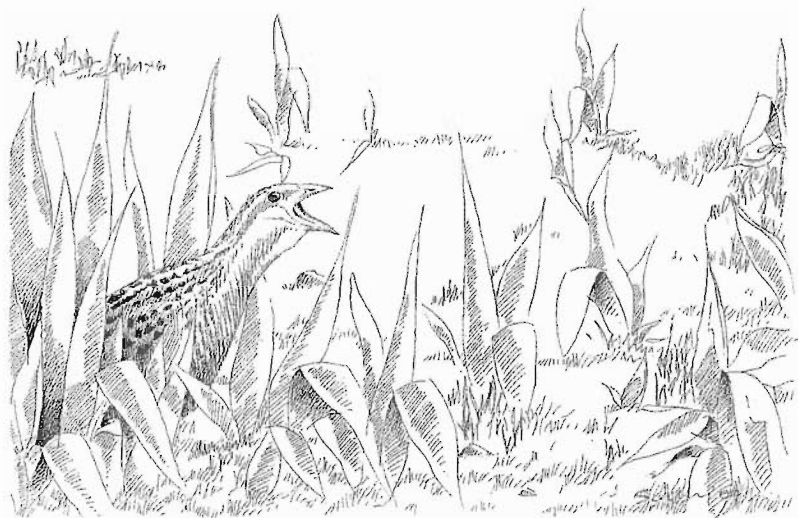
*Sacrificial bird-cover-crop at Skadan – favoured  
by Chestnut-eared Buntings!*

*Deryk Shaw*

7th June. A mid-summer record involved a moulting ♂ from 15th July, which remained until 27th September. Autumn passage consisted of regular low single-figure counts from 30th September-4th November with a peak of six on 30th October.

**ERRATA:**

The record of a Red Kite on 10th April in the 2003 FIBO Report should have read 2nd March



*Corncrake (Ray Scally)*

## Recent Rarity Committee Decisions

*Deryk Shaw*

The following recent (non-) decisions by the relevant adjudicating bodies have been received and have not appeared in previous FIBO Reports:

2001: Black-headed Bunting    adult ♀, Setter 22nd September    No decision

2002: *All records in FIBO 2002 Report accepted except for the following:*

Lanceolated Warbler	Schoolton Ditch, 19th October	Rejected
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2003: *All records in FIBO 2003 Report accepted except for the following:*

Red-throated Pipit	Wirvie, 17th September	Rejected
Lanceolated Warbler	Schoolton Ditch, 8th September	Rejected
Lanceolated Warbler	Charlie's Trees, 11th September	Rejected

## ***RINGING REPORT***

*Alan Bull*

Once again, 2004 was a disastrous breeding season for seabirds with breeding productivity at its lowest recorded for nearly all species, reflecting poor ringing totals for all seabird species. However, a total of 3,710 birds of 108 species were ringed during 2004 (see Table 2). Table 1 gives the ten most commonly ringed species.

*Table 1. The ten most commonly ringed species, with totals, on Fair Isle in 2004: (2003 totals for comparison).*

<b>Species</b>	<b>2004</b>	<b>2003</b>
Starling	519	407
Shag	327	391
Blackbird	304	113
Meadow Pipit	300	153
Whcatear	239	113
Twite	204	173
Bullfinch	188	2
Rock Pipit	147	71
Razorbill	129	674
Blackcap	123	61

As in 2003, there were two additions to the ringing list during 2004. These were a Chestnut-eared Bunting and a Rufous-tailed Robin. Both were also additions to the British and Western Palaeartic lists and arrived within the space of a week in October. The ringing list now stands at an impressive 272 species.

Unusual species ringed during the year included our fourth Barnacle Goose, tenth Booted Warbler, thirteenth Greenshank, sixteenth Mallard and nineteenth Wood Sandpiper and Tufted Duck. Additional to these were other unusual captures of ten Waxwings, two Aquatic Warblers and the first Raven to be ringed on Fair Isle for nearly 20 years.

A record annual total was achieved for Bullfinch with 188 birds ringed, all of the larger Northern race which irrupted in large numbers into the Northern Isles during late autumn. Associated with this movement were large numbers of Waxwings, so it was not surprising that 10 birds were caught, using apples as bait! High annual totals were also achieved for Starling (519), Twite (204), Rock Pipit (147) and Wheatear (239), whilst Sparrowhawk (11) was also above average. Species ringed in low numbers once again included all seabirds as a result of another poor breeding season.



*Table 2. Numbers of birds ringed on Fair Isle and recovered/controlled elsewhere in 2004, together with cumulative totals from 1948*

Species	Ringed as:		Total 2004	Total 1948-04	Recovered/Controlled	
	Juv/Ad	Pullus			2004	1948-04
Whooper Swan	—	—	—	41	—	7
Bean Goose	—	—	—	1	—	—
Pink-footed Goose	—	—	—	14	—	1
White-fronted Goose	—	—	—	3	—	1
Greylag Goose	—	—	—	42	1	9
Barnacle Goose	1	—	1	4	—	—
Shelduck	—	—	—	5	—	—
Wigeon	1	—	1	56	—	4
Teal	—	—	—	73	—	4
Mallard	1	—	1	16	—	1
Pintail	—	—	—	2	—	1
Shoveler	—	—	—	1	—	—
Pochard	—	—	—	3	—	—
Ring-necked Duck	—	—	—	1	—	—
Tufted Duck	1	—	1	19	—	—
Scaup	—	—	—	5	—	—
Eider	1	—	1	169	—	1
Long-tailed Duck	—	—	—	18	—	1
Velvet Scoter	—	—	—	2	—	—
Goldeneye	—	—	—	21	—	1
Red-breasted Merganser	—	—	—	3	—	—
Goosander	—	—	—	3	—	1
Quail	—	—	—	9	—	—
Red-throated Diver	—	—	—	1	—	—
Little Grebe	—	—	—	10	—	—
Great Crested Grebe	—	—	—	1	—	—
Red-necked Grebe	—	—	—	1	—	—
Slavonian Grebe	—	—	—	3	—	—
Fulmar	6	29	35	16816	3	172
Storm Petrel	88	—	88	29887	6	1183
Leach's Petrel	—	—	—	87	1	3
Gannet	2	33	35	444	—	9
Cormorant	—	—	—	7	—	—
Shag	5	322	327	22545	4	559
Grey Heron	1	—	1	21	—	—
Marsh Harrier	—	—	—	1	—	—
Hen Harrier	—	—	—	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>2004</i>	<i>1948-04</i>	<i>2004</i>	<i>1948-04</i>
Goshawk	—	—	—	2	—	—
Sparrowhawk	11	—	11	367	—	24
Kestrel	1	—	1	48	—	8
Red-footed Falcon	—	—	—	1	—	—
Merlin	2	—	2	194	—	12
Peregrine Falcon	—	—	—	6	—	1
Water Rail	7	—	7	322	—	3
Spotted Crake	—	—	—	19	—	—
Little Crake	—	—	—	1	—	—
Baillon's Crake	—	—	—	1	—	—
Corncrake	1	—	1	42	—	2
Moorhen	1	—	1	101	—	3
Coot	—	—	—	15	—	1
Great Bustard	—	—	—	1	—	—
Oystercatcher	—	—	—	1491	1	72
Little Ringed Plover	—	—	—	1	—	—
Ringed Plover	—	3	3	681	—	6
Dotterel	—	—	—	4	—	—
Golden Plover	—	—	—	23	—	—
Grey Plover	—	—	—	1	—	—
Lapwing	—	1	1	340	—	6
Knot	1	—	1	100	—	2
Sanderling	1	—	1	96	—	1
Semi-palmated Sandpiper	—	—	—	1	—	—
Little Stint	2	—	2	123	—	—
Temminck's Stint	—	—	—	2	—	—
White-rumped Sandpiper	—	—	—	1	—	—
Baird's Sandpiper	—	—	—	1	—	—
Pectoral Sandpiper	—	—	—	5	—	—
Curlew Sandpiper	—	—	—	6	—	—
Purple Sandpiper	1	—	1	159	—	1
Dunlin	1	—	1	553	—	7
Buff-breasted Sandpiper	—	—	—	1	—	—
Ruff	—	—	—	41	—	1
Jack Snipe	—	—	—	137	—	3
Common Snipe	6	—	6	476	—	4
Great Snipe	—	—	—	2	—	—
Woodcock	10	—	10	452	1	24
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>2004</i>	<i>1948-04</i>	<i>2004</i>	<i>1948-04</i>
Whimbrel	—	—	—	16	—	—
Curlew	—	—	—	159	—	6
Spotted Redshank	—	—	—	3	—	—
Redshank	3	—	3	282	—	3
Greenshank	1	—	1	13	—	—
Green Sandpiper	1	—	1	57	—	1
Wood Sandpiper	1	—	1	19	—	—
Common Sandpiper	—	—	—	70	—	1
Turnstone	—	—	—	81	—	—
Red-necked Phalarope	—	—	—	5	—	—
Grey Phalarope	—	—	—	3	—	—
Pomarine Skua	—	—	—	1	—	—
Arctic Skua	—	—	—	3857	1	67
Great Skua	3	—	3	2492	—	46
Black-headed Gull	—	—	—	46	—	2
Common Gull	—	2	2	203	—	3
Lesser Black-backed Gull	1	2	3	1437	—	34
Herring Gull	8	25	33	4337	1	96
Iceland Gull	—	—	—	1	—	—
Glaucous Gull	—	—	—	40	—	1
Great Black-backed Gull	1	—	1	2843	1	113
Kittiwake	1	—	1	6979	1	37
Common Tern	—	—	—	481	—	3
Arctic Tern	—	—	—	11266	—	36
Guillemot	13	—	13	35532	10	1052
Razorbill	45	84	129	10607	7	255
Black Guillemot	1	3	4	1635	—	19
Little Auk	—	—	—	13	—	—
Puffin	50	25	75	12955	1	33
Rock Dove	—	—	—	67	—	—
Wood Pigeon	—	—	—	72	—	2
Collared Dove	32	—	32	354	—	6
Turtle Dove	—	—	—	81	—	2
Cuckoo	—	—	—	108	—	1
Scops Owl	—	—	—	1	—	—
Snowy Owl	—	—	—	1	—	1
Long-eared Owl	4	—	4	251	—	13
Short-eared Owl	—	—	—	18	—	—
Nightjar	—	—	—	4	—	—
Swift	—	—	—	17	—	1



<i>Species</i>	<i>Ringed as:</i>		<i>Total 2004</i>	<i>Total 1948-04</i>	<i>Recovered/Controlled</i>	
	<i>Juv/Ad</i>	<i>Pullus</i>			<i>2004</i>	<i>1948-04</i>
Hoopoe	—	—	—	3	—	—
Wryneck	8	—	8	229	—	—
Great Spotted Woodpecker	—	—	—	29	—	—
Short-toed Lark	—	—	—	9	—	—
Woodlark	—	—	—	3	—	—
Skylark	7	—	7	1270	—	3
Shorelark	—	—	—	5	—	—
Sand Martin	—	—	—	8	—	—
Swallow	2	5	7	259	—	2
House Martin	1	—	1	142	—	1
Richard's Pipit	—	—	—	11	—	—
Blyth's Pipit	—	—	—	1	—	—
Tawny Pipit	—	—	—	3	—	—
Olive-backed Pipit	—	—	—	10	—	—
Tree Pipit	5	—	5	652	—	—
Pechora Pipit	—	—	—	9	—	—
Meadow Pipit	299	1	300	10502	—	45
Red-throated Pipit	—	—	—	9	—	—
Rock Pipit	144	4	148	9486	—	29
Yellow Wagtail	—	—	—	10	—	—
Citrine Wagtail	—	—	—	5	—	—
Grey Wagtail	3	—	3	36	—	1
White/Pied Wagtail	28	—	28	742	—	4
Waxwing	10	—	10	49	—	—
Dipper	—	—	—	15	—	—
Wren	8	—	8	880	—	—
Duncock	9	—	9	2551	—	8
Robin	77	—	77	8887	—	40
Thrush Nightingale	—	—	—	33	—	—
Nightingale	1	—	1	30	—	—
Rufous-tailed Robin	1	—	1	1	—	—
Siberian Rubythroat	—	—	—	1	—	—
Bluethroat	3	—	3	283	—	2
Red-flanked Bluetail	—	—	—	2	—	—
Black Redstart	2	—	2	159	—	—
Redstart	14	—	14	1822	—	1
Whinchat	1	—	1	634	—	2
Stonechat	—	—	—	56	—	—
Northern Wheatear	238	1	239	16615	—	74
Pied Wheatear	—	—	—	1	—	—

<i>Species</i>	<i>Ringed as:</i>		<i>Total 2004</i>	<i>Total 1948-04</i>	<i>Recovered/Controlled</i>	
	<i>Juv/Ad</i>	<i>Pulhus</i>			<i>2004</i>	<i>1948-04</i>
Black-cared Wheatear	—	—	—	3	—	—
Rock Thrush	—	—	—	1	—	—
White's Thrush	—	—	—	1	—	—
Hermit Thrush	—	—	—	1	—	—
Grey-checked Thrush	—	—	—	2	—	—
Ring Ouzel	2	—	2	498	—	8
Blackbird	305	—	305	22806	—	330
Eye-browed Thrush	—	—	—	1	—	1
Dusky Thrush	—	—	—	1	—	—
Dark-throated Thrush	—	—	—	1	—	—
Fieldfare	11	—	11	643	—	1
Song Thrush	25	—	25	2981	—	32
Redwing	73	—	73	8920	—	74
Mistle Thrush	—	—	—	22	—	—
Pallas' Grasshopper Warbler	—	—	—	12	—	—
Lanceolated Warbler	1	—	1	35	—	—
Grasshopper Warbler	7	—	7	126	—	—
River Warbler	—	—	—	8	—	—
Savi's Warbler	—	—	—	4	—	—
Aquatic Warbler	2	—	2	24	—	—
Sedge Warbler	12	—	12	489	1	1
Paddyfield Warbler	—	—	—	9	—	1
Blyth's Reed Warbler	—	—	—	10	—	1
Marsh Warbler	6	—	6	131	—	—
Reed Warbler	10	—	10	294	1	1
Great Reed Warbler	—	—	—	6	—	—
Thick-billed Warbler	—	—	—	2	—	—
Olivaceous Warbler	—	—	—	1	—	—
Booted Warbler	1	—	1	10	—	—
Icterine Warbler	3	—	3	104	—	—
Melodious Warbler	—	—	—	12	—	—
Subalpine Warbler	1	—	1	28	—	—
Sardinian Warbler	—	—	—	1	—	—
Barred Warbler	2	—	2	410	—	1
Lesser Whitethroat	25	—	25	744	—	1
Whitethroat	20	—	20	983	—	—
Garden Warbler	58	—	58	3554	—	4
Blackcap	124	—	124	5528	1	25
Greenish Warbler	—	—	—	23	—	—
Arctic Warbler	—	—	—	32	—	—

<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>2004</i>	<i>1948-04</i>	<i>2004</i>	<i>1948-04</i>
Pallas's Warbler	—	—	—	4	—	—
Yellow-browed Warbler	2	—	2	127	—	—
Hume's Warbler	—	—	—	1	—	—
Radde's Warbler	—	—	—	1	—	—
Dusky Warbler	—	—	—	7	—	—
Bonelli's Warbler	—	—	—	1	—	—
Wood Warbler	1	—	1	108	—	—
Chiffchaff	29	—	29	1259	—	5
Willow Warbler	41	—	41	3635	—	7
Golderest	20	—	20	1679	1	3
Firecrest	—	—	—	1	—	—
Brown Flycatcher	—	—	—	1	—	—
Spotted Flycatcher	13	—	13	774	—	3
Red-breasted Flycatcher	1	—	1	58	—	—
Collared Flycatcher	—	—	—	2	—	—
Pied Flycatcher	11	—	11	957	—	—
Coal Tit	—	—	—	1	—	—
Blue Tit	—	—	—	2	—	—
Great Tit	—	—	—	10	—	—
Treecreeper	—	—	—	1	—	—
Golden Oriole	—	—	—	8	—	—
Brown Shrike	—	—	—	1	—	—
Isabelline Shrike	—	—	—	2	—	—
Red-backed Shrike	18	—	18	236	—	—
Lesser Grey Shrike	—	—	—	6	—	—
Great Grey Shrike	1	—	1	115	—	1
Woodchat Shrike	—	—	—	13	—	—
Jackdaw	—	—	—	4	—	—
Rook	—	—	—	7	—	—
Hooded Crow	—	—	—	48	—	—
Raven	1	—	1	27	—	—
Daurian Starling	—	—	—	1	—	—
Starling	254	265	519	26485	—	192
Rose-coloured Starling	—	—	—	3	—	—
House Sparrow	43	4	47	1585	—	3
Tree Sparrow	2	—	2	113	—	1
Chaffinch	9	—	9	2951	—	12
Brambling	118	—	118	3605	—	15
Greenfinch	18	—	18	431	8	23
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>2004</i>	<i>1948-04</i>	<i>2004</i>	<i>1948-04</i>
Siskin	16	—	16	464	—	1
Linnet	7	—	7	162	—	1
Twite	204	—	204	5841	2	10
Lesser Redpoll	—	—	—	28	—	—
Common Redpoll	9	—	9	622	—	6
Arctic Redpoll	—	—	—	20	—	—
Two-barred Crossbill	—	—	—	1	—	—
Common Crossbill	—	—	—	532	—	2
Parrot Crossbill	—	—	—	37	—	—
Pallas's Rosefinch	—	—	—	1	—	—
Common Rosefinch	11	—	11	205	—	1
Bullfinch	188	—	188	297	—	—
Hawfinch	2	—	2	22	1	1
Tennessee Warbler	—	—	—	2	—	—
Savannah Sparrow	—	—	—	2	—	—
Song Sparrow	—	—	—	3	—	—
White-crowned Sparrow	—	—	—	1	—	—
White-throated Sparrow	—	—	—	2	—	—
Lapland Bunting	—	—	—	48	—	—
Snow Bunting	3	—	3	633	—	3
Pine Bunting	—	—	—	2	—	—
Yellowhammer	2	—	2	65	—	—
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	10	—	10	465	—	3
Pallas's Reed Bunting	—	—	—	2	—	—
Chestnut-cared Bunting	1	—	1	1	—	—
Red-headed Bunting	—	—	—	5	—	—
Black-headed Bunting	—	—	—	4	—	—
Corn Bunting	—	—	—	3	—	—
<b>Totals:</b>	<b>2901</b>	<b>809</b>	<b>3710</b>	<b>330438</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>4963</b>

### *Ringed recoveries/controls reported to FIBO during 2004*

A re-trap is a bird ringed and then re-caught alive at the same place of ringing.

A control is a bird ringed by one ringer and then caught alive elsewhere by another ringer.

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

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

#### *Part 1. Birds ringed on Fair Isle and reported elsewhere (Table 2)*

**GREYLAG GOOSE.** A first-year female ringed in October 1998 was found dead at Orphir, Orkney in December 2003 (111 km, SW). The ninth recovery of a Fair Isle ringed Greylag.

**FULMAR.** Three reports received, all of typical northerly movements and all involving birds ringed as chicks. One ringed in July 1981 was caught and eaten at Suduroy, **Faeroes** in March 2004 (327 km, NW); one ringed in August 1986 was found dead on Fetlar, Shetland in March 2004 (127 km, N) and another was caught and eaten at Nolsoy, **Faeroes** in May 2004, having been ringed in July 1996 (367 km, NW).

**STORM PETREL.** Just six birds ringed on Fair Isle were reported elsewhere during 2004 (see Table 3 below).

Table 3. Storm Petrels ringed on Fair Isle and controlled elsewhere; reports received during 2004

<i>Recovery Site</i>	<i>No.</i>	<i>Recovery Site</i>	<i>No.</i>
Sule Skerry, Orkney	1	Handa Island, Highland Region	1
Priest Island, Highland Region	2	At Sea, <b>WEST AFRICA</b>	1
Eilan Hoan, Highland Region	1		

A typical set of records, bar the bird in West Africa -- this bird was found on a ship in January 1999 in a barrel of oil, it was cleaned and then released. It was ringed in August 1993 and had travelled a distance of 5115 km! The more 'usual' movements included a bird ringed in August 2001 and controlled on Sule Skerry, Orkney in July 2003 (165 km, SW); two birds (ringed in July 1986 and August 1991) controlled on Priest Island in July 2004 (285 km, SW); a bird ringed in July

1996 and controlled on Handa Island in July 2004 (241 km, SW) and finally, a bird ringed in August 2001 and controlled in July 2004 at Eilan Hoan (205 km, SW).

**LEACH'S PETREL.** Our third recovery concerned an adult ringed in August 1998 and controlled on Rona, Western Isles in July 2003 (242 km, WSW).

**SHAG.** Four reports, all of birds ringed as chicks and all found dead in Orkney. One ringed in July 2002 was found at Deerness in March 2003 (95 km, SW); another ringed in July 2002 was found in December 2003 on Westray (80 km, SW); one ringed in June 2003 was found on Papa Westray in November 2003 (73 km SW) and one ringed in June 2004 was found in August 2004 on Westray (80 km, SW).

**OYSTERCATCHER.** An adult ringed in August 1982 was controlled in Cromarty Firth, Highland Region in January 1983 (248 km, SSW) and had been previously caught there in November 1982, whilst a chick ringed in June 1994 was controlled in August 2004 on the Eden Estuary, Fife (358 km S). The 1982 bird does not appear in Table 2.

**WOODCOCK.** A first-year ringed in November 2003 was shot three weeks later in Broughshane, Northern Ireland (583 km, SSW).

**ARCTIC SKUA.** A chick ringed in July 1977 was controlled on Papa Westray, Orkney in May 2003 (73 km, W) and now holds the longevity record for this species from BTO-ringing.

**HERRING GULL.** A first-year ringed in August 2003 had its ring number read in the field at Kirkwall, Orkney in October 2003 (98 km, SW).

**GREAT BLACK-BACKED GULL.** A chick ringed in July 1993 had its ring number read in the field at Pas-de-Calais, **France** in October 2003 (999 km, SSE). Interestingly, this bird was also seen at the same site in August 1996, 1997, 1998, September 2000 and August and October 2001. It does not appear in Table 2 as it will have been added to the totals list in past reports. A chick ringed in June 1994 had its ring number read in the field (a week apart) at Peterhead and Fraserburgh, Grampian Region in September 2004 (227 km, S).

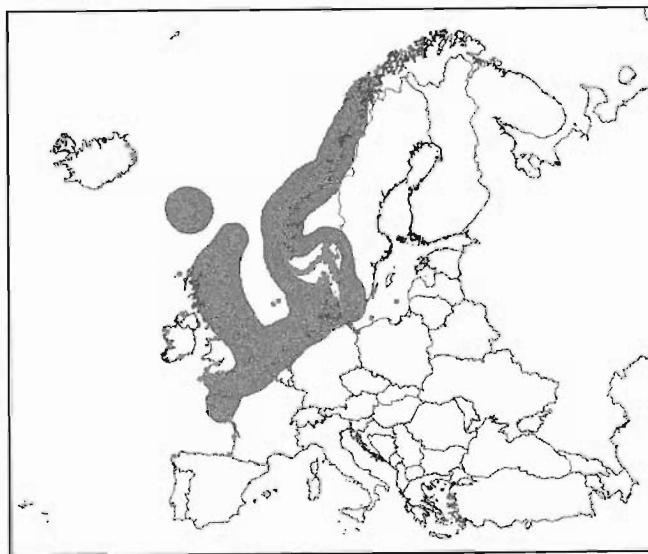
**KITTIWAKE.** An adult ringed in July 1997 was shot in October 2003 near Nuuk, **Greenland** (2671 km, W). Over 250 BTO-ringed Kittiwakes have met a similar fate in Greenland, and this bird was the sixth from Fair Isle.

**GUILLEMOT.** Ten reports received, two of adults: One ringed in June 1982 was found dead on a beach at Sumburgh Head, Shetland in March 2003 (41 km, NE) and the other was ringed in July 2000 and found dead at Nordland, **Norway** in September 2004 (539 km, NE).

Recoveries of chicks, all found dead or dying are summarised below in Table 4.

*Table 4. Guillemot chicks ringed on Fair Isle and recovered elsewhere, reports received during 2004*

<b>Ringling Date</b>	<b>Finding Date</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Distance and Direction</b>
June 1982	February 2004	Jylland, <b>Denmark</b>	655 km, ESE
June 1983	October 1983	Akershus, <b>Norway</b>	697 km, E
July 1983	November 1983	Akershus, <b>Norway</b>	697 km, E
June 1993	August 2004	Hordaland, <b>Norway</b>	392 km, E
June 1993	April 2003	More og Romsdal, <b>Norway</b>	533 km, NE
June 1996	January 2003	West Vlaanderen, <b>Belgium</b>	967 km, SSE
June 1997	December 2003	Terschelling, <b>Netherlands</b>	805 km, SE
June 2003	February 2004	Gironde, <b>France</b>	1658 km, S



The map shows all recoveries of Guillemots ringed on Fair Isle. The dots indicate the finding location, with the contour maps (home range kernels) showing the area where 95% of all birds were found (in green) and where 50% of birds were found (the central area in white). As expected, most birds from Fair Isle are found (mostly in winter) along North Sea coasts, with a concentration of birds along the Norwegian coast. This may reflect increased fishing activity in this area, but does also reflect where these birds are moving to.

**RAZORBILL.** Birds ringed as adults and found dead included one ringed in June 1994 and found in January 2003 at West Vlaanderen, **Belgium** (965 km, SSE) and one ringed in July 2003 and found at Filey Brigg, North Yorkshire in October 2003 (597 km, S). The former bird (and the Guillemot mentioned above) were both casualties of the Tricolor oil spill in the English Channel. This spill killed many thousands of seabirds including over 30 BTO-ringed birds.

Recoveries of chicks, all found dead or dying are summarised below in Table 5.

*Table 5. Razorbill chicks ringed on Fair Isle and recovered elsewhere, reports received during 2004*

<b>Ringling Date</b>	<b>Finding Date</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Distance and Direction</b>
June 2002	January 2003	Ile Grande, <b>France</b>	1181 km, S
June 2002	January 2003	Zeeland, <b>Netherlands</b>	961 km, SSE
July 2002	April 2004	Vlieland, <b>Netherlands</b>	808 km, SEE
June 2003	October 2003	Torremolinos, <b>Spain</b>	2555 km, S
June 2003	December 2003	Knockadoon Head, <b>Cork</b>	935 km, SSW

**PUFFIN.** A chick ringed in June 2003 was found dead on a beach at Jylland, **Denmark** in August 2003 (674 km, ESE).

**SEDGE WARBLER.** Our first control of a Fair Isle ringed bird is of an adult ringed in May 2004 and controlled on North Ronaldsay, Orkney in June 2004 (49 km, WSW).

**REED WARBLER.** A first-year ringed in September 2003 was controlled four days later on Foula, Shetland (71 km, NNW). This is our first control of a Fair Isle ringed Reed Warbler.

**BLACKCAP.** A first-year male ringed in October 2004 was controlled the following day on Foula, Shetland (71 km, NNW).

**GOLDCREST.** An adult male ringed in March 2003 was controlled in October 2003 on North Ronaldsay, Orkney (49 km, WSW). Our third control.

**GREENFINCH.** Eight reports received. A first-year female ringed in October 2002 was controlled in December 2003 at Wick, Highland Region (148 km, SSW). The remaining seven reports concern birds ringed in October 2003 during a large influx of Greenfinches to Fair Isle and found on Orkney. A first-year female was controlled in January 2004 at Kirkwall (98 km, SW); three first-year males were controlled at Kirkwall (one in December 2003, one in January 2004, one in February 2004 – 99 km, SW); an adult female was controlled at Finstown in



February 2004 (103 km, SW). A first-year female was controlled at Finstown in February 2004 (103 km, SW) and then 4 km north at Kirkwall in March 2004 with another first-year female controlled at two sites in Kirkwall in February 2004 (98 km, SW).

**TWITE.** Two first-year birds ringed on the same day in September 2003 were controlled in Orkney in December 2003, one at Deerness (95 km, SSW) and the other at Evie (101 km, WSW)).

**HAWFINCH.** An unusual recovery concerns a bird ringed in April 2004 and found dead five days later on the Loggs Conoc Gas Platform in the North Sea (719 km, SSE).

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

**STORM PETREL.** A chick ringed on Mousa, Shetland in September 2001 was controlled on Fair Isle in July 2004 (56 km, SW).

**RAZORBILL.** A presumably rehabilitated adult ringed in February 2000 at Ljmuiden, **Netherlands**, was controlled in a Fair Isle colony as a breeding bird in June 2003 (874 km, NW).

**BRAMBLING.** Birds controlled in April 2004 included a male ringed in October 2003 at Vlieland, **Netherlands** (807 km, NW), a male ringed in January 2004 at Craigeearn, Grampian Region (262 km, NNE), a male ringed at Brora, Highland Region in March 2004 (217 km, NE) and finally a male ringed in April 2004 on North Ronaldsay, Orkney (49 km, NE). A male ringed at Bridge of Don, Aberdeen in March 2003 was controlled in November 2004 (259 km, N).

**GREENFINCH.** An adult female ringed in Stowmarket, Suffolk in March 2004 was controlled a month later (833 km, NW).

**TWITE.** Two birds, one ringed in January and one ringed in February 2004 at Evie, Orkney were controlled on the same day in April 2004 (101 km, NE).

## A Selection of Rarity Descriptions from 2004

### Aquatic Warbler; 35th for Fair Isle

Deryk Shaw

Circumstances: Both my Assistant Wardens were off the isle on holiday so I was trying to cover the isle on my own! I had censused the North during the morning of 12th August but not had a lot, although the Pectoral Sandpiper was still on Easter Lother. In the afternoon I ventured south. There was still a fair scattering of common warblers around but in lesser numbers than in the previous couple of days. I had just checked Hesti Geo and ventured up the fence to where the Hegri Burn exited Lower Leogh into Utra. I walked along the burn, hoping to kick something out of the rough grassland or ditches in the area. I got my wish when a small, straw-yellow warbler suddenly got up at my feet, flew a few metres and dropped back down into the grass. I suspected immediately it might be an Aquatic Warbler. I crept forward and flushed it again with the same response. Next time it dropped into one of the nearby ditches and I managed to see it on the ground. Cracking! Identity confirmed I phoned the Observatory and a few interested locals and texted the Shetland Grapevine, Birdline Scotland and my two AWs (Ha!). Good views were had by all as it hopped and crept through the grass. As a world biodiversity priority action species, I thought it would be useful to trap and ring it, in the hope it gets controlled somewhere else. This was easily achieved that evening. It was released again in the same area but was not present the following day.

Description from notes taken in field:

General Appearance: A small *Acrocephalus* warbler. Appeared slightly smaller than Sedge Warbler and distinctly paler with pale straw and black striped upperparts and almost plain whitish buff underparts. A striking-looking bird!

Behaviour: Liked to keep low. Flushed at close range and only flew a few yards in a jerky motion before diving back down into the grass. Crept through the grass. Whole behaviour was more like a *Locustella* than an *Acro*.

Head: Long, broad supercilium, orangey-buff in front of eye, paler straw above and behind eye, extending just beyond rear of ear coverts. Lores pale straw. Broad dark-brown (blackish) mark behind eye, more like an oblong spot than an eyestripe. Ear coverts light greyish-buff. Median crown stripe, deep buff above bill, became whitish-straw flecked with black, bordered by broad black lateral crown stripes. Nape buff, almost unmarked. Chin/throat white.

Upperparts: Basically striped pale straw and black mantle – broad pale straw stripe down sides of mantle with equally broad black stripe inside that, followed by another narrower straw stripe and another black stripe in centre. Back and rump less marked, slightly gingerly with narrow dark streaks. Wings not really noted but

for crisp pale straw edgings to black-centred tertials. Rounded tail, narrow, dark brownish grey feathers fringed greyish buff except outer feathers, which were very pale whitish-buff.

Underparts: Throat white. Rest of underparts plain whitish-buff with a few very fine black streaks across breast and down flanks. These were only visible at very close range.

Bare parts: Bill; upper mandible dark grey with a pale extreme tip, lower mandible  $\frac{3}{4}$  pale pink with a dark grey last  $\frac{1}{4}$ . Cutting edge pinkish-yellow. Legs; greyish pink. Eye; blackish (dark brown in hand).

In-hand data:

Ring no. R247656    Age: 3    Wing: 66mm    Weight: 10.2g    Fat: 2    Pec: 2

Status: *A globally threatened species (due to habitat loss) which breeds from Germany to Western Siberia but in isolated pockets. Their wintering grounds are uncertain but those of western populations are believed to be south of the Sahara in western Africa. Fair Isle holds the vast majority of Shetland and Scottish records (36 out of 44 and 54 respectively).*

## **Red-flanked Bluetail; fifth for Fair Isle**

*Deryk Shaw*

Circumstances: I had already covered the North of the isle by lunchtime on 29th September but not had a lot to show for it – the previous day's juvenile Dotterel, some Redwing and Meadow Pipits and a few Snow Buntings but, after weeks of westerlies, the wind had finally switched to the east that morning. This gave me hope and urged me to head North once again – whilst everyone else (as usual) covered the south end! I had picked up the odd new arrival – a couple of Willow Warblers and singles of Common Redstart and Pied Flycatcher – by the time I approached Gunnawark (the last Geo of the census). A couple of Goldcrests were hopping about on the grass at the top of the cliff and dived down as I approached. As I reached the cleft in the cliff at North Gunnawark, a small **blue** bird nipped across the gap and flew round the corner. That made me start! A **BLUE** bird! A Blue Tit was my initial thought as a Treecreeper had been seen on Orkney the previous day. I slowly crept back the way I had come to try and see along the cliff with my heart in my mouth (a Blue Tit would be a good Fair Isle record!). I suddenly spied the bird sitting on a rock face just 6m away. I raised my bins and nearly dropped them when I saw that it was not a Blue Tit but a stonking adult male Red-flanked Bluetail!!! It dived down the cliff and flew further round the corner but I guessed it wouldn't go far. The light was starting to go and I needed to let folks know. Fast! I legged up the hill to get reception and phoned the Obs, Alan Bull

and Rebecca Nason (my two AWs) and texted the Shetland Grapevine. The first (exhausted) people arrived within ten minutes and before long a crowd had gathered. After a tense 20 minutes or so, the bird was relocated and showed on and off for the next hour but always at least 10-20m down the cliff, whilst I kept reminding the crowd, perched on the edge in wellies peering down the cleft with their bins/scope, that it wasn't worth their life!!! It was seen until almost dark but was not present the following morning!

General Appearance: A Robin-sized/shaped bird with cobalt blue upperparts, and a broad orange flank stripe on whitish underparts.

Behaviour: Very active, moving from one gully to the next and back. Kept disappearing. Hopped around flicking wings and tail with occasional sallies into the air after insects.

Head: Crown and whole of face cobalt blue but for a thin short white supercilium from just above bill base to the eye and some white flecks around the eye. Narrow white throat bordered by blue cheeks.

Upperparts: Nape, mantle and back concolourous with crown, being a dark metallic blue, which became very hard to make out as the light faded. Rump/upptail was a lighter, brighter blue – seen when it flicked tail or flew short distances. Rest of tail as mantle. Wings browner than rest of upperparts.

Underparts: White throat offset against dirtier (greyer) white breast and belly. Very obvious broad orange stripe along entire flanks. A finger of blue mantle extended over in front of orange like a shoulder strap. Undertail coverts appeared white.

Bare parts: Bill, legs and eye all dark (black?).

Status: *breeds from north-eastern Europe through northern Eurasia to Japan. Half of the ten Shetland records are from Fair Isle, with five more from elsewhere in Scotland.*

## **Lanceolated Warbler; 68th for Fair Isle**

*Deryk Shaw*

Circumstances: It had been a dismal autumn so far. It was 4th October and we had seen only one BB rarity! I was returning home after yet another slog of the south of the island, checking the heligoland traps on the way back. I had zig-zagged my way through Gilsetter with just a few Common Snipe and one Jack Snipe to show for it and was just approaching the box end of the Gully trap. I kicked a small bird out from under my feet in the wet area beside the burn. It flew round and landed on top of the trap. I raised my bins and quickly ascertained that it was a tiny, short-tailed, streaked *Locustella* – a Lanceolated Warbler! A huge wave of relief

swept over me! The bird stood looking left and right for a minute or so and then dropped down through the wire mesh into the trap. Fantastic! I quickly moved round and drove the trap. The bird was slowly hopping around and calling in the catching cage. I flushed it into the catching box, bagged it and took it back to the Observatory. I hung it up and casually strolled into the Obs lounge, announced I had a Lancie in the Ringing room and quickly returned there ahead of the stampede. After ringing, measuring and a description, it was taken outside and shown to an appreciative audience. I returned it to Gilsetter a few minutes later. It was not seen again.

General Appearance: A small streaky brown warbler with short wings, a short rounded tail and large pink feet.

Behaviour: Flushed out of the grass at my feet. Flew a few yards and landed on top of trap where it stood looking around nervously before dropping through mesh into the trap.

Head: Crown, nape and face mid-brown with thin black shaft streaks. Cheeks slightly plainer. Faint whitish eyering on lower half of eye only.

Upperparts: Mantle/back mid-brown with black central streaks, forming neat black lines. Rump and uppertail coverts similar but shaft streaks not reaching end of feathers and therefore not joining to form lines. Tail darker blackish-brown, short and rounded, feathers fairly pointed. Wings very short and curved, extending just beyond tertials. Wing coverts black-centred with crisp mid-brown fringes of equal width all way round the feathers. Tertials similar but fringes slightly paler, more tan-coloured.

Underparts: Slight yellowish wash to throat and upper breast. Necklace of fine dark grey streaks across breast extending up to form indistinct thin malar. Lower breast and belly whitish, unmarked. Flanks slightly grey-buff with just 2-3 short dark streaks. Undertail coverts washed light buff – longest with whitish tips and shortest with black streaks in centre – not reaching bases or tips of feathers.

Bare parts: Bill; appeared short with dark horn upper mandible, orangey-pink lower mandible. Eye; black. Legs; pink with large pink feet.

Call: A short metallic “peat!” repeated three times a couple of seconds apart whilst being trapped.

In-hand data:

Ring no. OM3707    Wing: 56m    Weight: 11.4g    Fat: 2    Pec: 2

Status: *breeds in Siberia, north China, Korea and Japan but extending into north-eastern Europe in northern Russia. They winter in south-east Asia, as far as northern India to the west and the Philippines to the east. Fair Isle holds the monopoly on this much sought-after vagrant with 68 of the 84 Shetland records. The rest of Britain can lay claim to just 20 or so records.*

## Booted Warbler; 11th for Fair Isle

*Deryk Shaw*

Circumstances: At around 8am on 5th October I was persuading my children to eat their breakfast when the phone rang. It was Rebecca Nason “What would you say if I mentioned *caligata* to you?” “What? Brilliant! Have you trapped it?” She replied they (Martin Culshaw, Phil Harris, RJN and a few Obs guests) had just caught it in Single Dyke and were on their way back to the Obs. She brought the bird to me when they got back and I was praying for it to be a Sykes’s Warbler as I took it out the bag, but alas I had to confirm that I too thought it was a Booted Warbler. It was ringed, measured, a description taken and photographed and released into the Obs Plantation. It immediately flew towards the Havens and was not seen again. It was only later, when reviewing the (digital) photographs on my computer screen that some doubt began to creep in. The bill looked monstrous! Nevertheless, all measurements fitted Booted Warbler and it never once struck me as long-billed or *Acrocephalus*-like in the hand so I was happy that it was a Booted. I put the pics on the FIBO website and later received several e-mails querying the identification. This again made me wonder if I had made some horrendous mistake. I e-mailed some pics to Lars Svensson for comment. He agreed with the identification.

### Description from notes taken in the hand:

General Appearance: A very pale sandy-grey above, white below. Fairly featureless but for a short whitish supercilium and white outer tail feathers.

Head: Rounded shape – more like *Phylloscopus* warbler than *Hippolais*. Crown sandy-grey. Fairly bland face. Lores grey. Dirty white supercilium from just in front of eye to 3-4mm behind eye, more distinct from above eye and flared out behind eye.

Upperparts: Nape, mantle, back, rump uniform sandy-grey. Slightly sandier upper-tail coverts. Wings and tail browner with most feathers having very narrow greyish-white edging. Greater coverts with very slightly darker centres. Outer tail feather edged broader whitish on outer web.

Underparts: White with a hint of a buff tone on upper breast, flanks and undertail coverts.

Bare parts: Bill; upper mandible horn but with a slightly paler band across middle when viewed from above and with a pale (yellowish) extreme tip, lower mandible, pale pink with a darker patch towards tip and a pale (yellowish) extreme tip. Legs; greyish pink. Eye; iris dark brown, narrow whitish eye ring on lower half of eye.

In-hand measurements:

Ring no.OM3708 Wing: 60mm Bill (s): 13.6mm Bill(f): 10.5mm  
Tail: 46mm Tail/wing ratio: 0.766 P2 = P6 Prim.Proj = 20.5mm  
Emarginated: 5th P, slightly 6th P Weight: 9.4g Fat: 2 Pec: 2

Discussion: Although several features fitted Sykes's Warbler, most notably the upper mandible pattern and the fairly plain face (e.g. pale lores and no dark line above supercilium) most other features (flaring supercilium, dark smudge on lower mandible, no white on 5th tail feather) and all measurements fitted Booted Warbler. The apparent 'monster bill' in some of the photos must be something to do with the angle etc and just goes to show that a bird cannot (and should not) be identified on one picture (or any) alone!

Status: *Breeds in eastern Europe from north-west Russia to the Caspian Sea and eastwards to Mongolia and winters in the Indian subcontinent. There have been 29 Shetland records (including Fair Isle) and just another seven elsewhere in Scotland but over 95 in Britain as a whole.*

## **Dusky Warbler; 12th for Fair Isle**

*Mark Newell*

General account: It was the 18th October and due to the continued presence of the Chestnut-eared Bunting and the arrival of several more chartered planes I decided to avoid the southern end where the main focus of activity was centred. Ambling out a while after most of the Observatory folk I drove the traps then continued south methodically working some of the more obscure ditches that I thought might not have been worked yet. With the presence of a mega and continuing good weather conditions the feeling amongst us was there had to be more rarities in the offing. Having covered all the ditches in the southwest section as far as Barkland I only had a selection of Chiffchaff races to show for my efforts. Rather than continuing south, for some inexplicable reason I decided to double back and hoof along Field Ditch, perhaps in a mischievous attempt to find something under the nose of a Mr Evans who had just walked past gabbling into his mobile. First up were a couple *tristis* Chiffs that had been present for several days but then within ten yards of the road another *phylloscopus* warbler shot out, clearly darker, almost the colour of a Cetti's Warbler and giving a hard 'tek' call. It had to be a Radde's or Dusky. It plunged into the vegetation but, with prompting, it shot out again landing in view just long enough to see the head pattern and undertail covert colour. It was a Dusky Warbler, not the hoped for lifer but a Fair Isle tick at the very least.

I was quickly on the phone to Alan Bull, upon whose census route it lay. He confirmed its identity from my description and said he'd be along once he had finished his coverage. Phoning the Observatory I dragged Hollie Shaw away from the Hoovering to once again raise the red flag and gather the island's birders. Within no time Deryk Shaw and numerous others appeared, by which time the warbler had shot off south. It was relocated at Barkland but rarely remained in one place for long – shooting from one patch of cover to the next ditch before being lost completely. It wasn't seen that afternoon but I re-found it the following morning in a ditch west of Barkland where it again became mobile when more than one observer was present.

General appearance: A chunky *phylloscopus* warbler which on first impressions gave the suggestion of Cetti's due to the dark brown upperparts and relatively short tail. Alongside Chiffchaff it looked bigger due to more thickset body and relatively short wings but not longer as it was fairly short tailed. Always on the move, regularly flicking its wings and sometimes flaring its square tail.

Head: Supercilium greyish white, lightest in front of the eye and flaring behind the eye and in most poses appearing to stop quite abruptly, not tapering. Dark-brown eyestripe. Ear coverts grey-brown and very slightly flecked.

Upperparts: Mid-brown with no contrast and marginally darker flight feathers, but no wing bars. Primary projection noticeably shorter than exposed tertial length, if anything even shorter than Chiffchaff.

Underparts: Off-white sullied light grey-brown down the flanks with a slight buffy tinge to the throat. Undertail coverts also greyish white fairly concolourous with the flanks.

Bare Parts: Dark eye quite prominent – looking larger in the face than on Chiffchaff. Bill fairly fine and mid grey in colour with the basal part of the lower mandible paler. Legs orangey-straw.

Call: Called very frequently, especially when first found – a hard 'tek'.

Status: *breeds in Siberia, from the Urals east to the Sea of Okhotsk, south to China and the eastern Himalayas. Winters from Nepal and northern India to southern China and south-east Asia. Prior to the mid-1970s Dusky Warbler was a very rare vagrant to Britain but has occurred much more regularly since and there are now around 280 British records. Ten of the twelve Fair Isle records (and all of the other 28 Shetland records) have been since 1985.*

## **Chestnut-eared Bunting; first for the Western Palearctic**

*Deryk Shaw*

Circumstances: A Little Bunting *Emberiza pusilla* had been seen on 12th & 14th October in the Meadow Burn and what was assumed to be the same bird was



reported by Hywel Maggs again at lunchtime on 15th, in the specially planted bird-cover-crop at the Skadan, but with a comment that “it looked a bit odd”. It appeared to have bold pale mantle straps, a yellowish wash to the sides of the breast and a less than usual head pattern for Little Bunting. I first saw this bird late that afternoon and in the fading light I too thought that it looked a bit odd – its tail was too long, it appeared to lack the black ear covert surround and I thought I saw a chestnut rump (but decided I must have been mistaken). I ran through all the other European buntings but could not find a better fit than Little Bunting. I decided that it must be that species. The ‘long’ tail was perhaps just a trick of the light as was the apparent chestnut rump and I explained the lack of black in the face on perhaps it being very fresh and having buff tips to the feathers concealing the black. However, it was bugging me all that night and so I asked Rebecca Nason (Assistant Warden) next morning to let me know if it was still present on her census of the SW of the island. She reported that it was, so after lunch I decided we should head down for better views. It was being pretty elusive, keeping within the corn and out of the stiff wind, only giving brief flight views when flushed before dropping back down in the crop (usually hovering for a second before it did so), but from the views available it was obviously *not* a Little Bunting. But what was it? It had an Ortolan-esque (*E. hortulana*) look (with greyish nape, pale yellowy-buff sub-moustachial and throat, obvious whitish eye ring and a light orange-brown wash across the underparts) but obvious chestnut ear coverts with a pale spot at the rear, like Little Bunting. It was not being very co-operative and from the views we had we were no nearer the truth, so I decided we should trap it. A net was erected in the crop and the bird gently coaxed into it. Once in the hand the questions really began!! It *did* have a chestnut rump! Yellowhammer *E. citrinella*? Can’t be – no yellow tones and it had a pink lower mandible (which also ruled out Pine Bunting *E. leucocephalos*) but the obvious eye ring (among other features) immediately disqualified some other species with a chestnut rump such as Yellow-breasted *E. aureola* and Chestnut Bunting *E. rutila*. Rustic Bunting *E. rustica* was another possibility but again the distinct eye ring and lack of white wing bars ruled that out too! We really were none the wiser. Back in the ringing room and whilst I quietly proceeded to take a detailed description and some measurements (and tried to ignore the shouts of “Hybrid! It must be a hybrid!” in the background) my two Assistant Wardens (Alan Bull and Rebecca Nason), Mark Newell and Phil Harris consulted relevant literature. Various questions were fired at me about features to check and each reply crossed another species off the list of possibilities. Phil then remembered an article on vagrant eastern buntings by Steve Votier he had been perusing recently in an old copy of Birding World (V14:9) and went off to retrieve it. He returned a few minutes later and slapped it down in front of me. There it was! A rear view photo of a Chestnut-cared Bunting *E. fucata*. “That’s it!” The excitement levels rose! Chestnut-cared Bunting was looked up in the various books to hand. The description, measurements and wing formula all fitted a first-winter

male Chestnut-eared Bunting. We could hardly believe it. We had a first for the Western Palearctic and reading Steve's caption beneath the photo "... Chestnut-eared Buntings breed in northeast China and Korea and are middle to long distance migrants to their wintering grounds in southeast Asia. This species has not been recorded in western Europe, but a bit of blind optimism never hurts! ..." had us leaping round the room! Funnily, Foula was mentioned a few times at this point!!! The news was announced to the patient small crowd assembled outside and broadcast on the local Shetland Grapevine, the Birding Scotland Hotline and to several interested islanders. Photographs were taken before the bird was taken back to the Skadan crop and released. The telephone went red hot and although the Birdguides website had the audacity to label it as an escape on its news pages, around 120 birders made the trip north to see it before it departed on 20th and more would have travelled had it stayed longer.

General Appearance: A medium-sized bunting with typically complicated plumage. Main features were; chestnut ear coverts with a pale buff spot at the rear, an obvious pale buff eye ring, pale buff submoustachial, dark upper breast streaking with a partially hidden chestnut band below and chestnut lower back. Fairly short wings and long tail.

Behaviour: Did not move far on the ground. Very short hops as it fed amongst the oat crop. When disturbed it would fly out of the crop and around the immediate area before dropping back down into the crop, always hovering for a second or two before it dropped. Occasionally perched in the (relative) open on some leaning corn stalks. Kept itself to itself, not really mingling with the Sparrow flock or Bramblings.

Head: Narrow yellowy-brown central crown stripe, bordered by thicker black and brown streaked lateral stripes. Supercilium ginger from bill to eye, wider, greyish yellow-brown behind eye, merging with similar-coloured nape. Grey lores. Distinct cream eye ring. Chestnut ear coverts were slightly paler-centred and with a noticeable pale buff spot at the rear. Broad, creamy buff sub-moustachial ran around lower border of ear coverts. Blackish streaked malar, narrow at bill base but widening to form breast streaking. Chin/throat creamy buff as sub-moustachial.

Upperparts: Nape greyish yellow-brown with just a few darker flecks. Mantle, streaked black on a chestnut background with two broad light greyish-brown braces. Scapulars chestnut with narrow black centres. Lower back/rump chestnut with a few narrow black shaft streaks, more so on lower rump. Upper tail coverts dark brown with black shaft streaks and greyish edges. Central tail blackish centred with light chestnut fringes. Outer tail with much white. Rest of tail blackish with diffuse grey tips. All feathers of equal age and pointed. Primaries dark grey-brown edged chestnut-brown, secondaries edged chestnut. Greater coverts black-centred with broad light chestnut fringes. Median coverts with similar black centres (coming to a point) bordered chestnut fading to buffish-yellow fringing and tip.

Lesser coverts chestnut with narrow black central streaks. Tertiaries black centred with light chestnut edging, fading to almost white fringes and tips. Edging narrow on inner web and broad on outer web.

Underparts: Yellowish-buff wash across chin, throat and upper breast. Narrow blackish streaked malar from lower mandible widening to upper breast forming gorget of streaks across breast. Below this was a narrow chestnut band fading to a broad very light chestnut-yellow band across lower breast. In the hand it could be seen that there was actually a broad chestnut band across lower breast, hidden by light chestnut fringes. Light buff tinged chestnut wash down flanks with a few bold brown streaks. Belly white, unmarked. Undertail coverts light buff tinged chestnut, similar to flanks. Colours of wash to underparts quite hard to decide due to apparent changes with angle and light conditions – appearing buffy at times but yellower at others!

Bare parts: Bill; upper mandible dark horn, lower mandible greyish pink. Culmen straight. Legs; pink. Eye; iris dark brown, eye ring cream, distinct, except for small area at front which was ginger and therefore less obvious.

Call: An explosive 'tzic' similar to Rustic Bunting, often delivered (but not always) when flushed or when coming in to land.

In-hand data:

Ring no. T393095    Wing: 75mm    Weight: 21.1g    Tail: 64mm

Bill(s): 14.8mm    Bill(f): 10.9mm    Primary Projection: 4.8mm

Emarg. 3rd/4th/5th/6thPP    Secondaries-wing tip: 17.0mm    Wing Point: P3/4/5

2ndP=5th/6thP    6thP-tip: 3.1mm    7th P-tip: 7.6mm    8th P-tip: 11.9mm

9th P-tip: 14.4mm    10th P-tip: 16.4mm    Fat score: 1    Pcc.score: 1

Age/Sex: It was aged as a first-winter by the fact it had a retained juvenile alula feather, very pointed tail feathers (although adults of this species do have pointed feathers too) and a dark brown eye (adults have chestnut). It was sexed as a male on wing length and tail length.

Status: *The nominate form, which, on wing length, this bird was considered to be, is the most northerly and migratory. It breeds from Lake Baikal eastwards through northern China to Japan and winters from southern Japan and southern China to northern Thailand and as a long-distance migrant could quite conceivably reach Europe. October 2004 was a good month for eastern vagrants to Europe with Rufous-tailed Robin, Eastern Crowned Warbler, Grey-necked Bunting and record numbers of White's Thrush. On examination this bird had no signs of captivity plus its age, timing and location must also all point to it being a genuine wild vagrant.*

Ref: Clive Byers, Urban Olsson & Jon Curson *Buntings and Sparrow: A guide to the Buntings and North American Sparrows*

## Rufous-tailed Robin; first for the Western Palearctic

*Deryk Shaw*

Circumstances: On the morning of 23rd October, Mike Wood (FIBO director) was strolling south along the road with his wife, Angela, and two little girls, Katie and Emily. A small chat-like bird was hopping along the side of the road at Bull's Park. He thought it most resembled a juvenile European Robin. The only person in sight was Mark Newell and he ran over and asked him if this was possible at this time of year. Mark replied "Errm No!" and they returned to the bird. Mark thought it may be a *Catharus* thrush and by the time I arrived it had been identified as a Veery. I didn't think it was one and thought it looked more like a Hermit Thrush, except that the breast pattern was more like a Veery! Regrettably, my mind had been fixed and I did not consider that it could be anything other than a *Catharus* thrush at this time. I tentatively put the news out on Birdline Scotland and the Shetland Grapevine as a possible Hermit Thrush. The debate continued until lunchtime and it was over lunch that Nick Dymond mentioned that it "looked a bit like a Rufous-tailed Robin but it couldn't be that 'cos they are much smaller, the jizz wasn't right and besides they are from SE Asia". That sent alarm bells ringing!! References for R-t Robin were sought and as I was staring in disbelief at a picture I'd found on the Internet, Alan Bull came in with a similar picture in a copy of Birding World. We were confident that it was indeed a Rufous-tailed Robin but thought we'd best see it in the flesh again to be absolutely sure. Once confirmed, I phoned out the correct identification, including a distorted call to Paul Harvey and the rest of the Shetland crowd who were on board a boat coming to see either a Hermit Thrush or a Veery (but sadly minus Roger Riddington - who didn't fancy four hours of seasickness just for a Hermit Thrush). Once all had seen the bird I decided to trap it to be 110% sure of its identity and to check for signs of captivity. There were none! After ringing, it was released back at the same site where it was watched until dusk. It had been feeding voraciously and was in good condition when examined. It was a clear night and, predictably, it had departed by the morning.

Description from notes taken in the field:

General Appearance: A small chat with plump round body, large beady eye, long pale-pink legs, relatively short tail. Reminiscent of Veery or Hermit Thrush and (to those that have seen them) Siberian Blue Robin. Cold olive-brown upperparts with contrasting rufous rump and tail and dirty buff-white underparts with extensive olive-brown scaling. With nothing alongside to compare it to, the very small size (European Robin-sized) was not immediately apparent to me, although if I had had experience of *Catharus* thrushes I may have noticed it was smaller!?

Behaviour: Kept very close to the dry-stone dyke and often disappeared into it for

spells at a time. Typical chat-like behaviour -- hopping along the ground and suddenly stopping to pick something from the ground. Often raised its tail to about 75 degrees and 'bounced' it down again, with a little 'shiver' at the end.

Head: Crown olive-brown. A short buffish-grey supercilium from bill to the eye. Lores grey-brown. Ear coverts olive-brown with buff flecks giving a mottled appearance. Distinct buff-white eye ring. Whitish sub-moustachial but feathers fringed olive-grey giving scalloped effect and merged with rest of underparts. Faintest of thin dark malar stripes forming a division between sub-moustachial and less scalloped whitish chin/throat.

Upperparts: Mantle, back, scapulars olive-brown as crown. Rump a contrasting lighter brown colour. Tail distinctly rufous, like a Nightingale. This was very obvious in good light or when sun shone, but became quite hard to see as the light faded or when in deep shade. Wings were brown contrasting with mantle. Greater coverts had small buff tips (similar to young European Robin and other chats) except the innermost two, which had been moulted, were more olive and lacked buff tips (seen in the hand). The innermost tertial too had a small buff tip (seen in the hand).

Underparts: Chin whitish (very lightly fringed olive-grey in hand). Throat and breast whitish with heavy olive-grey scalloping (fringes to feathers), lightest on lower breast. Flanks heavily mottled grey, extending onto sides of belly. Central belly and undertail coverts white. Underwing buff-white but with thin olive fringing on some axillaries (seen in hand).

Bare parts: Bill; small pale pink base to lower mandible and gape. Legs; pale pink, quite long. Eye; dark brown iris, grey orbital ring, distinct buff-white eye ring.

Call: A European Robin-like screech when being extracted from the mist-net. Otherwise silent.

Age: It was aged as a first-winter by the unmoulted juvenile greater coverts (all but the innermost two) and pointed tips to the tail feathers. The pale base to the lower mandible may also be a feature.

In-hand data:

Ring no: T393283    Wing: 69mm    Weight: 17.3g    Tail: 50.5mm    2ndP=6th/7th P  
Emarginated: 3rd/4th/5th P    Wingpoint: 4thP (just longer than 3rdP)  
Primary Projection: 17.1mm    Fat: 2+ (on a score of 1-8)  
Pcc: 2+ (on a score of 1-3).

Status: *Rufous-tailed Robin breeds in eastern Asia, from the Taiga across to far eastern Russia and northern Mongolia. It winters in southern China and South East Asia. It has been predicted as a vagrant to Europe. Its range overlaps with a number of East Asian vagrants to Europe this autumn (e.g. multiple White's Thrushes, Chestnut-eared Bunting, Eastern Crowned Warbler, Grey-necked Bunting). On examination in the hand it showed absolutely no signs of captivity (e.g. broken remiges or retrices, abnormal claws or bill).*

# 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 2004. The species name is followed by a code to summarise their status on Fair Isle (see below). The main list includes all birds recorded on Fair Isle from 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. Two new species recorded on Fair Isle during 2004 (Rufous-tailed Robin and Chestnut-eared Bunting) are still awaiting acceptance by the British Ornithologists Union Records Committee (BOURC), but have been included in the main list.

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

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

Long-eared Owl (RM)			Isabelline Wheatear (V)		
Short-eared Owl (RM)			Northern Wheatear (BS, CM)		
European Nightjar (V)			Pied Wheatear (V)		
White-throated Needletail (V)			Black-eared Wheatear (V)		
Common Swift (FM)			Desert Wheatear (V)		
Pallid Swift (V)			Rufous-tailed Rock Thrush (V)		
Alpine Swift (V)			White's Thrush (V)		
Little Swift (V)			Hermit Thrush (V)		
Common Kingfisher (V)			Swainson's Thrush (V)		
European Bee-eater (V)			Grey-checked Thrush (V)		
European Roller (V)			Ring Ouzel (FM)		
Hoopoe (R)			Common Blackbird (CM)		
Eurasian Wryneck (RM)			Eye-browed Thrush (V)		
Great Spotted Woodpecker (S)			Dusky Thrush (V)		
Calandra Lark (V)			Dark-throated Thrush (V)		
Bimaculated Lark (V)			Fieldfare (CM)		
Greater Short-toed Lark (S)			Song Thrush (CM)		
Crested Lark (V)			Redwing (CM)		
Wood Lark (V)			Mistle Thrush (RM)		
Sky Lark (BS, CM)			Pallas's Grasshopper Warbler (V)		
Horned (Shore) Lark (R)			Lanceolated Warbler (R)		
Sand Martin (RM)			Common Grasshopper Warbler (RM)		
Barn Swallow (CM)			River Warbler (V)		
Red-rumped Swallow (V)			Savi's Warbler (V)		
House Martin (FM)			Aquatic Warbler (V)		
Richard's Pipit (S)			Sedge Warbler (FM)		
Blyth's Pipit (V)			Paddyfield Warbler (V)		
Tawny Pipit (V)			Blyth's Reed Warbler (R)		
Olive-backed Pipit (R)			Marsh Warbler (S)		
Tree Pipit (FM)			Eurasian Reed Warbler (RM)		
Pechora Pipit (R)			Great Reed Warbler (V)		
Meadow Pipit (BS, CM)			Thick-billed Warbler (V)		
Red-throated Pipit (R)			Eastern Olivaceous Warbler (V)		
Rock Pipit (BS, FM)			Booted Warbler (V)		
Buff-bellied Pipit (V)			Sykes's Warbler (V)		
Yellow Wagtail (RM)			Icterine Warbler (S)		
Citrine Wagtail (R)			Melodious Warbler (V)		
Grey Wagtail (S)			Blackcap (CM)		
White/Pied Wagtail (BS, FM)			Garden Warbler (FM)		
Bohemian Waxwing (S)			Barred Warbler (RM)		
White-throated Dipper (V)			Lesser Whitethroat (FM)		
Winter Wren (BS, RM)			Common Whitethroat (FM)		
(Duncock) Hedge Accentor (FM)			Dartford Warbler (V)		
Alpine Accentor (V)			Subalpine Warbler (R)		
European Robin (CM)			Sardinian Warbler (V)		
Thrush Nightingale (R)			Greenish Warbler (R)		
Common Nightingale (R)			Arctic Warbler (R)		
Rufous-tailed Robin (V)			Pallas's Leaf Warbler (R)		
Siberian Rubythroat (V)			Yellow-browed Warbler (RM)		
Bluethroat (RM)			Hume's Leaf Warbler (V)		
Red-flanked Bluetail (V)			Radde's Warbler (V)		
Black Redstart (RM)			Dusky Warbler (V)		
Common Redstart (FM)			Western Bonelli's Warbler (V)		
Whinchat (FM)			Wood Warbler (RM)		
Stonechat (S)			Common Chiffchaff (FM)		



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

## Moths on Fair Isle in 2004

Glen Tyler

### Summary

A total of 63 species were recorded in 2004, exactly the same number as last year, although there was no Hawkmoth influx this year, and the poorer summer weather seems to have made emergences of some species a little later (at least, we lacked the early flush of moths that was seen in 2003).

However, several species were added to the Fair Isle list, and a couple to the Shetland List. Our knowledge of the Fair Isle Lepidoptera continues to grow. The highlight of the year was Nick Riddiford's discovery of a fully grown Sword-grass caterpillar, but Pat Thomson's capture of the first Shetland specimen of Dotted Rustic for 50 years also deserves special mention.

Moth recording effort on Fair Isle in 2004 was probably the most intensive that has been undertaken with more or less regular trapping at 4 sites between May and September, and at least some trapping and observer effort outside this period. Over the year (including sugaring nights) there were 262 trap-nights on the isle compared to 179 in 2003. Many useful casual records were obtained from island residents as well as visitors to the observatory.

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

Site	Trap nights											
	Year	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	
All sites	262	1	6	16	25	89	82	29	6	6	2	
Observatory (UV)	59			8	8	19	18	6				
Schoolton (Actinic)	43				1	22	19				1	
Barkland (Actinic)	48	1	5	4		14	13	11				
Lwr Stoneybrek(Actinic)	57			4	13	14	14	12				
Schoolton (sugar)	50				3	16	18		6	6	1	
Barkland (sugar)	5		1			4						

### Systematic List

#### Hepialidae

18 **Map-winged Swift** *Hepialus fusconebulosa* (DeGeer, 1778) Two on 22nd May at the Bird Observatory were soon followed by regular captures and sightings until 3rd August.

### Tineidae

227 **Skin Moth** *Monopis laevigella* (Denis & Schiffermüller, 1775) One trapped at Schoolton on 27th July.

245 **Large Pale Clothes Moth** *Tinea pallescentella* (Stainton, 1851) Only one record, in the Schoolton kitchen on 3rd August.

### Choreutidae

385 **Nettle-tap** *Anthophila fabriciana* (Linn.) Present at Pund in mid-July at least, no records from other nettle patches though.

### Glyphipterigidae

397 **Glyphipterix thrasonella** (Scopoli 1763) One netted in Gilsetter on 3rd July, and another seen at Schoolton on 8th July.

### Plutellinidae

464 **Diamond-back Moth** *Plutella xylostella* (Curtis, 1832) Surprisingly only one record of this usually common species - 11th August at Schoolton.

466 **Rhigognostis senilella** (Zetterstedt 1839) One at Barkland on 20th April, two in July and one in August at Schoolton.

467 **Rhigognostis anulatella** (Curtis 1832). One at Lower Stoneybrek on 3rd February. The only record this year.

### Coleophoridae

581 **Coleophora taeniipennella** (Meyrick 1928). Five caught at Schoolton on 8th July. Feeds on *Juncus*. This species does not appear to have been recorded in Shetland before, nor Orkney.

### Oecophoridae

647 **Brown House-moth** *Hofmannophila pseudospretella* (Stainton, 1849) A scattering of records, between May and October – mostly in houses.

648 **White-shouldered House-moth** *Endrosis sarcitrella* (Linnaeus, 1758). Recorded (mainly indoors) from the end of May to late August. Not uncommon, but certainly fewer records than most years.

### Gelechiidae

811 **Scrobipalpa samadensis** (Pfaffenzeller 1870) One on 17th July at Schoolton.

### Tortricidae

954 **Eupoecilia angustana** (Hubner 1799) Nick Riddiford captured four at Swartz Geo on 11th June. The first records from Fair Isle.

988 **Bilberry Tortrix** *Aphelia viburnana* (Denis & Schiffermüller, 1775). Very common on the hill in late June, not recorded in traps.

1029 *Eana osseana* (Scopoli, 1763) Most common in July. Thirty moth-nights at Schoolton and 13 at the Bird Observatory in the second half of July, with 15 moth-nights at Barkland between 29th July to 4th September. Fairly typical (although quite prolonged) showing.

1030 *Eana penziana* (Thunberg 1791). As usual much more common at the Bird Observatory than further south - 53 moth-nights there between 29th June and 15th August (most in August). One other record – at Schoolton on 21st July. Fair Isle specimens are sub-species *colquhounana*.

1111 *Bactra lancealana* (Hübner, 1799) Four specimens, netted by day, on 8th July at Schoolton.

1148 *Epinotia mercuriana* (Frolich, 1828) One captured North of Boini Mire on 2nd July, the first Fair Isle record.

#### Epermeniidae

478 *Phaulernis fuliguttella* (Zeller 1839) Two on 30th July at Barkland.

#### Pyralidae

1301 *Crambus lathoniellus* (Zincken, 1817) Abundant in July in all types of grassland.

1304 *Agriphila straminea* (Denis & Schiffermüller, 1775) Very common in late June and July, with 10 in the actinic trap at Barkland on 27th July. Last record – 5th August at Schoolton.

1334 *Scoparia ambigualis* (Treitschke 1829) Several records in June (by day) from various locations between Wirvie and the Pund Chalet. One at Schoolton on 2nd July.

1388 *Udea lutealis* (Hübner, 1809) Common in grassland in July and early August. This species is much more common than revealed by traps e.g. ten moth-nights at Schoolton in July and also ten in August.

1395 **Rusty Dot Pearl** *Udea ferrugalis* (Hubner, 1796). One recorded by sugaring at Schoolton on 23rd October – only the 2nd Fair Isle record, the first in September 2002.

#### Pterophoridae

1502 **Plume Moth** *Platyptillia isodactylus* (Zeller) One on 17th July captured in Boini Mire. First record for Fair Isle and Shetland, but this species does occur on Orkney.

#### Geometridae

1723 **Red Carpet** *Xanthorhoe munitata* (Hübner, 1800-09) Similar pattern to last year, appearing late July (23rd July at Stoneybreck, 27th July at Schoolton and Barkland) with last records in early September (6th September at Stoneybreck and 9th September at Barkland). Once again very scarce at the Bird Observatory (one

record only – on 5th August), but many more at croft sites with 12 moth-nights at Schoolton, 15 at Stoneybrek and 48 at Barkland.

1727 **Silverground Carpet** *Xanthorhoe montanata* (Denis & Schiffermüller 1775), Widespread, but under-represented in light traps. Not recorded at the Bird Observatory, with 16 moth nights at the three southern trap sites between 7th July and 15th August.

1728 **Garden Carpet** *Xanthorhoe fluctuata* (Linnaeus, 1758) Appeared nearly a month later than last year (first on 7th May) with 11 moth nights at Stoneybrek and 3 at Barkland in May and June. Late in July and early August a few second generation appeared (e.g. 5 moth-nights at the Observatory). The last was seen on 1st September at Barkland.

1809 **Twin-spot Carpet** *Perizoma didymata* (Linnaeus, 1758) Again one single record in July – on 27th July at Schoolton.

1823 **Netted Pug** *Eupithecia venosata* (Fabricius, 1787) Several seen at Stoneybrek amongst the rock garden on evenings in mid to late June. No records otherwise.

1846 **Narrow-winged Pug** *Eupithecia nanata* (Hubner 1813). One netted during the day on 6th June on the Rippack.

1884 **The Magpie** *Abraxa grossulariata* (Linnaeus, 1758). Another influx in July, now a regular feature around the time of the hill sheep gather. Two on 13th July at Schoolton, at least seven were seen in the field on 19th July and four the next day. No later records and no sign of breeding – yet.

### Noctuidae

2091 **Dark Sword-grass** *Agrotis ipsilon* (Hufnagel, 1766) Fewer records than last year, and all at sugar at Schoolton. One on 11th June, and then another 30th July and one 2nd August. In October there were ten moth-nights and a further 11 in November, the last on the 8th.

2104 **Northern Rustic** *Standfussiana lucerneae* (Linnaeus, 1758). Stoneybrek had the longest flight period (2nd July to 9th September); most moth-nights (222) and highest single night catch (37 on 28th July). Barkland had similar results, but there were far lower totals at the Bird Observatory (88 moth-nights) and Schoolton (42 moth-nights). A very common and widespread species on Fair Isle.

2105 **Dotted Rustic** *Rhyacia simulans* (Hufnagel 1766). One caught at Stoneybrek on 5th September was new to Fair Isle, and the first Shetland record for 50 years.

2107 **Large Yellow Underwing** *Noctua pronuba* (Linnaeus, 1758) Very common resident and migrant. Recorded from 8th July (Bird Observatory) to 16th September (Stoneybrek). Figures from Barkland are typical – 80 moth nights in July (including 32 on 30th), 141 moth-nights in August, and 36 in September. Schoolton had 52 on 5th August on sugar and 46 at light there on 11th August.

2117 **Autumnal Rustic** *Paradiarsa glareosa* (Esper, 1788). Very similar pattern to last year: Far more common at the Bird Observatory than elsewhere (200

moth-nights between 6th August and 6th September, including 117 on 14th August). Far fewer records further from the heather moorland. Only four moth-nights at Barkland (all pale form and all in first week of September), 10 moth-nights at Stoneybrek between 15th August and 6th September and seven at Schoolton – all in August.

2118 **True Lover's Knot** *Lycophotia porphyrea* (Denis & Schiffermüller, 1775). As usual, most common in the North, 96 moth-nights at the Bird Observatory in July and another 39 moth-nights to 14th August. Only a few records from the crofting areas, none at Barkland, two at the end of July at Schoolton and only one at Stoneybrek on the 2nd August.

2120 **Ingrailed Clay** *Diarsia mendica* (Fabricius, 1775). Another of the typical species on the isle, comprising a large proportion of catches in late July and August; 22 moth-nights from 2nd July at Schoolton, 177 in August, including 49 on 13th and a very late example at sugar there on 22nd October. Present at Barkland from 15th July to 9th September (170 moth-nights), at Stoneybrek between 19th July and 16th September (326 moth-nights). As is usual the Bird Observatory recorded the first – on 29th June. There were then 61 moth-nights in July, 65 in August and 2 in September (last on 7th).

2123 **Small Square-spot** *Diarsia rubi* (Vieweg, 1790). Recorded in low numbers at all trap sites. Only two at Stoneybrek, on 7th and 27th July, while at Barkland there were nine moth-nights between 10th and 30th July, and the Bird Observatory recorded one on 6th July, two on 6th and 7th August, and then two on 4th September. The exception was at Schoolton where at sugar there were 58 moth-nights in July (8 individuals on 3rd and 15th). In contrast there were only 10 moth-nights in July from the Schoolton light trap, and one moth-night in August, on 11th.

2126 **Setaceous Hebrew Character** *Xestia c-nigrum* (Linnaeus, 1758). This species appears to be a fairly scarce resident on Fair Isle. One on 13th August at Schoolton was the only record this year.

2133 **Six-striped Rustic** *Xestia sexstrigata* (Haworth). One on 3rd August at the Bird Observatory was the first record for Shetland.

2134 **Square-spot Rustic** *Xestia xanthographa* (Denis & Schiffermüller, 1775). Common or abundant resident. Between 30th July (Bird Observatory and Schoolton) and 12th September (Stoneybrek) this species was regularly captured at light or observed at sugar, but nowhere near as common as last year (when several catches over 100 individuals were recorded). Maximum catch this year was 35 at Barkland on 1st September.

2137 **Great Brocade** *Eurois occulata* (Linnaeus 1758). One was trapped at the Bird Observatory on 3rd August.

2147 **The Shears** *Hada plebeja* (Hufnagel, 1766) No April records this year. At the Bird Observatory there were 34 moth-nights, from 12th May to 11th June. At Stoneybrek there were four in May (from 14th).

- 2171 **Marbled Coronet** *Hadena confusa* (Hufnagel, 1766). Only trapped at the Bird Observatory, first on 11th May, last on 20th June - 12 moth-nights in total. Not as common as last year.
- 2176 **Antler Moth** *Cerapteryx graminis* (Linnaeus, 1758). Common in light-trap catches between 6th July and 13th September. Most captures were at the Bird Observatory where 397 moth-nights in August included 42 individuals on the 10th. Less common in the croft area traps, but still regular. Pattern and abundance was similar to last year.
- 2198 **Smoky Wainscot** *Mythimna impura* (Hübner, 1808). One on 30th July at Schoolton.
- 2229 **Brindled Ochre** *Dasypolia templi* (Thunberg, 1792). One on 27th April at Barkland. In autumn, one at Stoneybrek on 14th September.
- 2241 **Red Sword-grass** *Xylena vetusta* (Hübner, 1813). Three on 1st and two on 6th November at Schoolton, attracted to sugar.
- 2242 **Sword-grass** *Xylena exoleta* (Linnaeus 1758). Nick Riddiford found a fully-grown caterpillar on 24th July at Schoolton. The first real evidence that this UK Biodiversity Action Plan species breeds on Fair Isle, although there has been one spring and one autumn record of adults (both at Schoolton) in previous years.
- 2256 **The Satellite** *Eupsilia transversa* (Hufnagel, 1766). Typically a late autumn species. A good series of records in October included 11 on 22nd October on sugar at Schoolton
- 2262 **The Brick** *Agrochola circumcellaris* (Hufnagel, 1766). Only recorded between 22nd-24th October at Schoolton, with five individuals on the 23rd.
- 2306 **Angle Shades** *Phlogophora meticulosa* (Linnaeus, 1758). Rather few this year. The first was on 13th May at Barkland, the next on 12th June at Schoolton. A small number of autumn records included 10 moth-nights at the Schoolton sugar posts (last on 1st November).
- 2321 **Dark Arches** *Apamea monoglypha* (Hufnagel, 1766). Probably the commonest macro-moth in the crofting areas. The first on 29th June (Bird Observatory and Schoolton) and the last record on 8th September (Barkland). Very common in July and August (e.g. 129 individuals at Schoolton on 29th and 30th July, and 548 moth-nights at the Bird Observatory in August).
- 2329 **The Confused** *Apamea furva* (Cockayne, 1950). As usual a few scattered records between 10th July at Barkland and 2nd September (Stoneybrek). Never more than two individuals at one time, and not recorded at the Bird Observatory trap.
- 2330 **Dusky Brocade** *Apamea remissa* (Hübner, 1809). Regularly trapped at light between 29th June and 25th August, but never more than two at any one time.
- 2343 **Common Rustic** *Mesapamea secalis* (Linnaeus, 1758). One at the Bird Observatory on 6th August, identified by genitalia dissection. Another at Schoolton on 17th August.
- 2340 **Middle-barred Minor** *Oligia fasciuncula* (Haworth, 1809). Often seen

during the day in July – often nectaring on wild angelica, but only trapped a few times.

2441 **Silver Y** *Autographa gamma* (Linnaeus, 1758). Light-traps tend to under-represent this species, but sight records from the Observatory indicate an influx of several hundred (at least) between 8th and 12th August – extreme dates 11th June and 30th October.

2442 **Beautiful Golden Y** *Autographa pulchrina* (Haworth, 1809). One on 28th July at Barkland – a usual showing for this scarce resident.

2361 **Rosy Rustic** *Hydraecia micacea* (Esper, 1789). Common species in late summer, especially in crofting areas. For example, between 30th July and 15th September there were only 27 moth-nights at the Bird Observatory, but 118 moth-nights between 14th August and 14th September at Stoneybrek.

2368 **The Crescent** *Celaena leucostigma* (Hubner 1809). One at Schoolton on 11th August, and another at Stoneybrek on 15th August.

### *Acknowledgements*

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



## Other Wildlife

*Deryk Shaw*

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

Cetaceans are regularly seen during the *Good Shepherd IV* crossing between Grutness and Fair Isle, details of which can be found in the Shetland Sea Mammal Group Annual Report.

Sightings from Fair Isle are listed here:

**Minke Whale** (*Balaenoptera acutorostrata*): A single was spotted off the west coast on 3rd June.

**Killer Whale** (*Orcinus orca*): Just one sighting this year – a pod of at least four was spotted off South Light and, later, just off the north tip of Bunness on 4th July.

**White-beaked Dolphin** (*Lagenorhynchus albirostris*): The only land-based sighting was a pod of ten off Bunness on 18th October.

**Atlantic White-sided Dolphin** (*Lagenorhynchus acutus*): At least 15 were spotted ‘playing’ in the sea off Bunness on 7th September.

**Risso’s Dolphin** (*Grampus griseus*): At least three were seen in Finniequoy on 1st September and one off Bunness on 9th October.

**Dolphin sp.** Seven were reported off the west coast on 22nd August.

**Harbour Porpoise** (*Phocoena phocoena*): A single was seen at South Light on 27th May. There were no more confirmed sightings until September when groups were noted on four dates, with a peak of 11 on 18th. Finally, eight were seen on 10th October.

### **Pinnipeds**

**Grey Seal (*Halichoerus grypus*)**: The annual census of newborn pups carried out every four days from late September to mid-November gave an estimated total of 109 pups born in the geos around the isle. This is less than in recent years – a record 126 were born in 2003 and 124 in 2002.

### **Other sea sightings**

**Basking Shark (*Cetorhinus maximus*)**: One was seen swimming slowly north past Bunness on 9th October – the first confirmed sighting since the 1970s.

### **Summary of Butterflies**

Following two excellent years for butterfly sightings, 2004 was a return to more modest levels. Five species of butterfly were recorded with highlights being four records of Small White, on 26th & 27th May and 11th & 19th June. Peacocks are not recorded often so three sightings in August and two in September were pleasing. Painted Ladies were recorded between 30th May and 21st September with 28 on 10th June the best day count. Red Admirals were noted from 30th May until 17th October with the majority in June. The only Small Tortoiseshell sighting was on 9th September.

A summary of sightings appears in the table below.

Butterfly days in 2004:

Species	May	June	July	August	Sept.	Oct.
Painted Lady ( <i>Vanessa cardui</i> )	1	102	3	1	9	
Red Admiral ( <i>Vanessa atalanta</i> )	1	27		1	9	4
Peacock ( <i>Inachis io</i> )				3	2	
Small Tortoiseshell ( <i>Aglais urticae</i> )						1
Small White ( <i>Pieris rapae</i> )	2	2				

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

**Bats (*Chiroptera*)** are very rare on Fair Isle so a report of one flying around the outside of the Chapel on 13th October was exciting but unfortunately it could not be found later to be specifically identified. **Common Frogs (*Rana temporaria*)** were (as usual) particularly evident in March in the ditches around Pund and Barkland with the first spawn noted on 9th March. A **Common Eel (*Anguilla anguilla*)** was spotted in the Vaadal stream on 10th June. **Shetland Bumblebees (*Bombus muscorum*)** were regularly reported from 7th May and throughout the summer with the last on 16th September. Only the fifth **Dragonfly (*Odonata*)** to be recorded on Fair Isle was seen briefly in Da Water on 6th September but unfortunately it disappeared before it could be properly identified but was thought to be a **Chaser species (*Libellula ssp.*)**.

## **Fair Isle Bird Observatory Trust (FIBOT) Financial Report and Accounts**

*Mike Wood*

A summary of FIBOT's draft accounts for the year ended 31st October 2004 appears on the following pages. The full statutory accounts can be inspected at the Bird Observatory on Fair Isle.

The year ended 31st October 2004 was another excellent year for FIBOT as a business. Although making a profit is not at the top of FIBOT's objectives, it is important to be consistently profitable as this helps other FIBOT objectives to be supported more easily.

The guest numbers in 2004 hit a new record level of 2,567 bed-nights, well above the previous record of 2,365 and our target level of 2,000 bed-nights. It would be unwise to base future plans around this year's figure, but we should be thankful for this period of relative prosperity. Shop income was at a new record high level in response to the wide range of goods available. Bar revenue was similarly at a record high, and the bar has been extremely successful from both business and social viewpoints.

Those readers who visit Fair Isle will be aware of the continuous improvements to the facilities and appearance of the Observatory over the past few years that increase the pleasure of staying 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 high visitor levels and excellent financial performance of recent years. We aim to continue this virtuous circle of improved facilities leading to more visitors, enabling further investment in improved facilities. Our healthy finances also allow us to make some improvements to the island environment in ways that benefit both birds and birdwatchers.

We continue to receive valuable income from the JNCC and Scottish National Heritage for Seabird Monitoring work and the provision of a Fair Isle Ranger Service respectively. This income is vital for the continued financial health of FIBOT and we are working hard to ensure that we continue to fulfil the requirements of these two organisations.

We received several generous donations during the year and, where appropriate, these will be placed in the FIBOT Endowment Fund. In particular, we received a bequest of £10,000 from the estate of Mrs Ball, for which we are very thankful. 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, the financial situation should remain healthy. With continued careful management and prudent control of expenditure, we aim to maintain the right balance between accumulating financial reserves and improving the Observatory. My personal thanks go to Hollie and Deryk for their extremely hard work in making this situation possible.

## Income and Expenditure Report for the year ended 31st October 2004

	2004 £	2003 £
<b>Sales Income</b>		
Hostel Income	72,293	61,659
Shop Sales	7,586	7,059
Bar Income	12,602	11,868
Miscellaneous Hostel Income	1,862	478
	<u>94,343</u>	<u>81,064</u>
<b>Cost of Sales</b>		
Purchases	34,047	34,579
Wages & Salaries	30,897	29,601
	<u>64,944</u>	<u>64,180</u>
<b>Gross Profit</b>	29,399	16,884
<b>Other Income</b>		
Interest Received	3,272	4,073
Deferred Grant Income released	0	1,100
Subscriptions	4,963	4,959
Donations	3,166	3,136
Grants Received	14,543	17,054
Other Income	0	0
	<u>25,944</u>	<u>30,322</u>
	55,343	47,206
<b>Other Expenses</b>		
Administration	6,983	5,287
Establishment	28,436	22,238
Sales & Marketing	5,190	6,325
Financial & Legal	1,333	1,681
Depreciation	11,000	11,000
	<u>52,942</u>	<u>46,531</u>
<b>Surplus/(Deficit) for the year</b>	<u>2,401</u>	<u>675</u>

## Balance Sheet as at 31st October 2004

	31/10/04 £	31/10/03 £
<b>Fixed Assets</b>		
Tangible assets	74,206	84,106
Investments	10,857	10,857
	<u>85,063</u>	<u>94,963</u>
<b>Current Assets</b>		
Stocks	8,910	9,651
Debtors	14,213	9,732
Cash at bank and in hand	83,808	57,746
	<u>106,931</u>	<u>77,129</u>
<b>Creditors: amounts falling due within one year</b>	<u>(8,864)</u>	<u>(11,510)</u>
<b>Net Current Assets/(Liabilities)</b>	<u>98,067</u>	<u>65,619</u>
<b>Total assets less current liabilities</b>	<b>183,130</b>	160,582
<b>Creditors: amounts falling due after more than one year</b>	<u>(0)</u>	<u>(0)</u>
	<b>183,130</b>	160,582
<b>Representing:</b>		
<b>Accumulated Surplus</b>	183,130	160,582
<b>Appeal Reserve</b>	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>
	<u><b>183,130</b></u>	<u>160,582</u>

**Fair Isle Endowment Fund – Accounts for the year ended  
31st October 2004**

<b>Revenue Account</b>	<b>2004</b>	<b>2003</b>
	<b>£</b>	<b>£</b>
Investment Income (Gross)	<b>1,871</b>	1,556
Investment Income (Net)	<b>281</b>	393
Total	<b><u>2,152</u></b>	<u>1,949</u>
Management Fees	<b>294</b>	235
Balance due to FIBOT	<b>1,858</b>	1,714
Total	<b><u>2,152</u></b>	<u>1,949</u>
 <b>Capital Account</b>		
Investments at Market Value		
£2,875 5.5% Treasury Stock 2008/12	<b>2,973</b>	2,936
Unit Trusts (several)	<b>55,636</b>	49,244
Cash at Bank	<b>49,582</b>	47,724
Less Accumulated Income due to FIBOT	<b>(12,036)</b>	(10,178)
Total	<b><u>96,155</u></b>	<u>89,726</u>
 Represented by:		
Balance at beginning of year		
– Dr John Forster Will Trust – Advance	<b>60,000</b>	60,000
– General Fund	<b>29,726</b>	19,639
Unrealised Gain/Loss on Investments	<b>6,429</b>	10,087
Total	<b><u>96,155</u></b>	<u>89,726</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 some 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 2004**

<b>Revenue Account</b>	<b>2004</b>	<b>2003</b>
	<b>£</b>	<b>£</b>
Investment Income – Gross	<b>490</b>	490
Net	<b>9</b>	9
Deposit Interest received	<b>49</b>	47
Total	<b>548</b>	546
	<hr/>	<hr/>
Grants Paid	<b>0</b>	500
Management Expenses	<b>294</b>	0
Balance to Capital Account	<b>254</b>	46
Total	<b>548</b>	546
	<hr/>	<hr/>

**Capital Account**

**Investments at Market Value**

£7,255 6.75% Treasury Stock 2004	<b>7,475</b>	7,444
Mercury 637 British Blue Chip Units	<b>786</b>	676
Cash at bank	<b>1,718</b>	1,464
Total	<b>9,979</b>	9,584
	<hr/>	<hr/>

Represented by:

Balance at beginning of year	<b>9,584</b>	9,691
Balance from Revenue Account	<b>254</b>	46
Realised Gain/Loss on Investments	<b>0</b>	0
Unrealised Gain/Loss on Investments	<b>141</b>	(153)
Total	<b>9,979</b>	9,584

**Mike Wood**  
*Finance Director*

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*For further details contact*

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

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