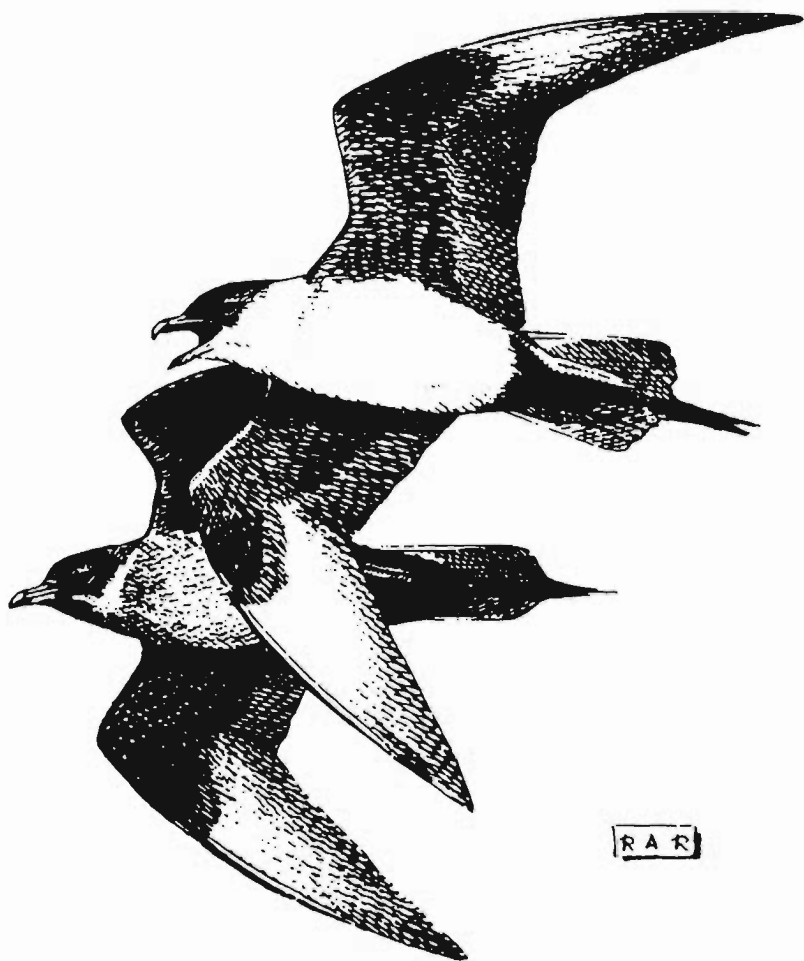


# FAIR ISLE BIRD OBSERVATORY

## Report for 2006





***Topical, lively, informative and in full colour***

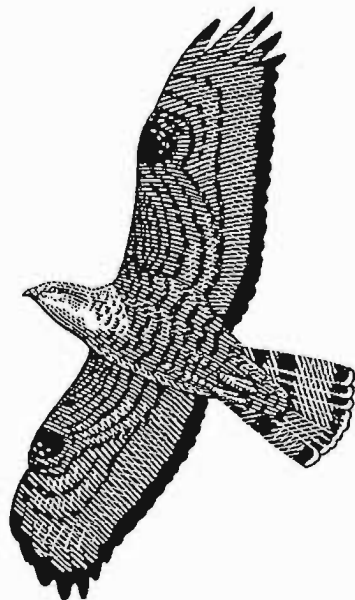
# **BIRDING WORLD**

***Europe's premier monthly magazine for  
keen birders***

**★ Identification ★ News ★ Rarities  
★ Conservation ★ Britain & Abroad**

*"at the top of the market for serious birders" – BTO News*  
*"essential reading" – American Birding*

**Write now for a FREE sample issue  
or visit [www.birdingworld.co.uk](http://www.birdingworld.co.uk)**



***Birding World, Stonerunner, Coast Road, Cley next the sea, Holt, Norfolk NR25 7RZ***  
Email: [sales@birdingworld.co.uk](mailto:sales@birdingworld.co.uk)

# Shetland



## SEDUCE YOUR SOUL

### TAKE A DEEP BREATH. OPEN YOUR EYES.

Prepare for a voyage of discovery, exploration and soulful inspiration. Revive, rebalance and stimulate your senses.

Contact us now on +44 (0) 8701 999 440 for your free copy of **The Guide** and to plan your Shetland holiday.

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



# Fair Isle Bird Observatory

Report no. 59

2006

*Edited by Deryk Shaw*

## CONTENTS

Chairman's Report	Roy Dennis	5
Warden and Administrator's Report	Deryk & Hollie Shaw	7
Gordon Barnes – an appreciation	Nick Riddiford	13
The Months on Fair Isle	Gordon Barnes	15
Fair Isle Weather in 2006	Dave Wheeler	22
Meteorological Data	Dave Wheeler	30
Report on investigations into causes of death and disease states in casualty birds 2005 & 2006	J.C. Waine	31
Monthly Summary	Mark Warren & Deryk Shaw	37
First & Last Dates for Summer Migrants	Deryk Shaw & Alan Bull	52
Systematic List	Paul Baxter, Alan Bull & Deryk Shaw	53
Recent Rarity Committee Decisions	Deryk Shaw	102
Ringing Report	Paul Baxter	103
Seabirds on Fair Isle in 2006	Deryk Shaw	118
Spatial variation in the productivity and post-fledging survival of the Fair Isle Starling population	Graeme Cook	121
Fair Isle's Favourite Geodytes	Simon & Richard Aspinall	128
Lepidoptera on Fair Isle in 2006	Nick Riddiford	133
Other Wildlife	Deryk Shaw	143
The JHMF Experience	Richard Else	146
The John Harrison Memorial Fund	Peter Evans	149
Financial Report & Accounts	Mike Wood	150
Systematic Checklist of the Birds of Fair Isle	Alan Bull & Deryk Shaw	154

*Published by Fair Isle Bird Observatory Trust, Fair Isle Bird Observatory,  
Fair Isle, Shetland ZE2 9JU.*

*Printed by C. H. Healey, Unit 10, The Sterling Complex, Farthing Road,  
Ipswich, Suffolk IP1 5AP.*

Published in 2007

# Fair Isle Bird Observatory Trust

A Company limited by guarantee.

Fair Isle Bird Observatory, Fair Isle, Shetland ZE2 9JU.

Telephone: 01595 760 258

Fax: 01595 760 258

E-mail: [fairisle.birdobs@zetnet.co.uk](mailto:fairisle.birdobs@zetnet.co.uk)

Observatory Website: [www.fairislebirdobs.co.uk](http://www.fairislebirdobs.co.uk)

Fair Isle Website: [www.fairisle.org.uk](http://www.fairisle.org.uk)

## Board of Directors:

Roy Dennis (Chairman)  
David Okill (Vice Chairman)  
Mike Wood (Finance Director)  
Louise Batchelor  
Peter Evans  
Jane Reid  
Chris Cox  
Tim Loseby  
Roger Riddington  
Fiona Mitchell  
Alexander Lindsay (Co-opted)  
Pete Ellis

## Warden:

Deryk Shaw

## Administrator:

Hollie Shaw  
Bird Observatory, Fair Isle, Shetland ZE2 9JU.  
Tel. 01595 760 258.

## Solicitors:

Anderson Strathern  
48 Castle Street, Edinburgh EH2 3LX.

## Bankers:

Bank of Scotland  
38 St Andrew Square, Edinburgh EH2 2YR.

## Chairman's Report for 2006

*Roy Dennis.*

The Bird Observatory had another successful season with a very good number of guests, although autumn use by bird-watchers is not as strong as it used to be or ought to be. Nowadays, rarity enthusiasts prefer to be on the mainland, pagers in hand, ready to chase new-found birds. How much sweeter, though, to search Fair Isle for your own new bird for Britain, so do come and have another try.

204 species were identified on the island during the year; a North American Black Duck being the only addition to the Fair Isle list, with other notable rarities including Scops Owl in the spring and Blyth's Pipit, White-rumped Sandpiper, two Lanceolated Warblers and four Olive-backed Pipits during the autumn migration. As ever, the daily log recorded the numbers and dates of bird migrants at Fair Isle, a continuous record over nearly sixty years and a real treasure of data.

Seabirds have become a major part of the Observatory's scientific work and our very long run of continuous data makes the Fair Isle contribution to UK seabird monitoring very important. The work is financially supported by JNCC and we intend to increase our involvement with seabird studies and conservation in future years.

The Fair Isle seabirds had a much better year than of late, with a record population of Great Skuas as well as more than 800 pairs of Arctic Terns. Most species had better breeding success than in recent years, but they had to feed on various species of fish, including non-nutritious Pipefish, instead of their preferred diet of Sandeels. I saw the progress of the seabird season first hand, as I visited the island twice while presenting a BBC2 film on seabirds and their conservation. It was sad to see the problems facing seabirds around Britain. Everywhere I visited, from West Wales to Shetland, reminded me of our failure to secure Protected Marine Status for the seas around Fair Isle. Surely it's time, given the damage done by over-fishing, that major areas of Britain's seas were declared marine protected areas? I was also struck by the importance of long term monitoring, the need for enhanced conservation and, over several weeks of unbroken sunshine and calm seas, the sheer beauty and impressiveness of our seabird colonies.

The Trustees held their AGM on the island in May and once again we were all struck by the happy atmosphere and efficient management achieved at the Observatory by Deryk and Hollie. We thank them and all our other staff, as well as the many others who help and support the Observatory. We took further steps towards building a new Bird Observatory and by the time this report is published,

we will be further down the line to replacing our building on the island. It will be an efficient, eco-friendly and attractive building, built on the same site as our present Observatory.

I hope you enjoy reading our latest Annual Report and that you soon have another chance to visit the Observatory or encourage others to do so. Fair Isle is certainly an island worth visiting again and again.



## Warden & Administrator's Report

*Deryk & Hollie Shaw*

It was another successful year with large numbers of visitors, a better breeding season than of late for the seabirds, a good selection of rare migrants and lots of media interest!

Acquiring a suite of suitable personnel to run the Observatory effectively is probably the hardest objective we face each season as not only do staff have to cope with the hard work involved but they must also adapt to remote island life and the close micro-community of the Observatory. The majority of people we employ do fit in perfectly but for one or two it is not what they expected or can cope with and this puts added pressure on the rest of the team. This year was no exception and was possibly the most stressful year of management we have faced. We are therefore extremely grateful to those staff members (the vast majority) who went that extra mile to ensure the smooth running of the Observatory during those periods when the atmosphere was strained and when we were left short-staffed. Our new chef Phil Bell was a complete star, not only for his excellent culinary skills but for his loyalty and we are thankful that he will return in 2007. Julie Lane arrived to support Phil as Assistant Cook and Bronwyn Waddell came as General Assistant alongside the familiar face of Becki Rosser. Unfortunately both Julie and Bronwyn left half way through the season and after a period of serious staff shortages we welcomed Julie Nelson as Assistant Cook and Jean Manning as General Assistant. It was hoped that these changes would see us through to the end of the season, but that was not to be, and Julie left us after only a few weeks. Finding yet another Assistant Cook at this late stage was unlikely so Hollie took over the role of cooking on Phil's days off and we took on Mareth Edwards as an extra General Assistant. The charismatic Thana Chandran returned to childmind for the Shaw brood after volunteering for a couple of weeks in 2005 and kept the children happy and occupied for 6 months.

On the ornithological side of things we had support from Mark Warren, returning for a second year and newcomer Will Miles. Both worked very hard and effectively and we are grateful for their efforts. They also gained some valuable experience and Mark is now trying to set up a Bird Observatory/Ringing Station near his home at Lands End, Cornwall whilst Will has gone on to start a PhD with Glasgow University, working with Leach's Petrels on St Kilda! The Ranger this year was Phil Knott, a JHMF grant recipient in 2005 and the experience he gained here has enabled him to secure a permanent Ranger post in Inverness-shire. Before Phil's departure in August, Rory Tallack returned to act as Ranger to the end of the season. We are grateful to him for taking on most of the report writing and record-

keeping that goes with this position. JHMF volunteers this year were James Bradley, Josep Rost and Richard Else. All three were excellent volunteers, learnt a great deal and gained some valuable work experience whilst also helping us out. You can read about Richard's experiences later in this report.

Research students also added to the team for varying lengths of time. The long-term Starling studies continue. Regulars Dr Peter Evans and Dr Jane Reid with Dr Mark Whittingham, bringing students Jeroen Minderman, Graeme Cook and Daisy Brickhill, each working on various aspects of Fair Isle Starling ecology. Meanwhile American student Andrew Stowe stopped with us for two weeks in late summer as he followed migrating Arctic Terns, from their breeding grounds in the Arctic to their wintering grounds in the Antarctic.

The seabirds had a better breeding season than in recent years with record numbers of Bonxies present and Arctic Terns fledging the first chicks for six years! It was by no means a good season though. A deficit of Sandeels was noted and with large numbers of Pipefish being fed to chicks it meant that chicks were, once again, fledging in sub-optimal condition – a factor that may have implications for their future survival. A full summary can be found elsewhere in the pages of this publication.

As in every year, there were some quality migrant birds to be found. A total of 209 species was logged this year, including one addition to the island list – a male American Black Duck in early November. Spring highlights included colourful birds such as male King Eider and European Bee-eater plus our second Eurasian Scops Owl. The first record of this small owl came as recently as 2003, so to get a second so soon was a great surprise! An elusive singing River Warbler, a male Red-throated Pipit, a female Subalpine Warbler and two smart male Ortolans were other joys but the sight of three Ospreys soaring over the isle together was the star highlight for some. Early autumn produced Melodious and two Greenish Warblers plus a Woodchat Shrike in August, followed by September records of two Olive-backed Pipit, Pechora Pipit, Citrine Wagtail, two Lanceolated Warbler, Aquatic Warbler, Woodchat Shrike and Yellow-breasted Bunting. Then, October gave us a White-rumped Sandpiper, two more Olive-backed Pipits, Blyth's Pipit, Red-throated Pipit, a late Thrush Nightingale, Arctic Redpoll and Rustic Bunting.

Our sacrificial crop planting for birds initiative continues to progress. We had a dozen plots in 2006 and the numbers of migrants to be found in them compared to other habitats is proof of their attractiveness to birds. We are grateful to all the islanders who participate in this scheme and especially to Iain Stout of Setter, who carries out much of the tractor-work.

Our new wader scrape at Utra, which was initiated in 2005, was completed in 2006 and was very popular with migrating geese, ducks and waders. It hosted its first 'rarity' in October – a White-rumped Sandpiper – and has won a Shetland Environmental Award!

Although not quite as high as the record achieved in 2005, the Observatory experienced another busy year for guests with 2610 bed-nights. As well as providing full-board accommodation for the majority of visitors to the island, the Observatory has become a regular venue for isle events. Our fortnightly 'Fair Isle Thursday' slideshow and music evenings were as popular as ever with a full house on many occasions. Our thanks go to all the musicians involved and those who presented slideshows for supporting the events all season. The FIBOT AGM was held on the island in early June and it was heartening to see so many Directors make the journey to be here for that weekend. Roy Dennis, Dave Okill, Mike Wood, Roger Riddington, Chris Cox, Jane Reid, Louise Batchelor, Pete Ellis and Fiona Mitchell were all able to attend on the day, and with Peter Evans and Tim Loseby visiting the isle in the days just prior to the meeting, it resulted in a full contingent of Directors contributing their support and advice to the running of the Observatory. Tour groups continue to be a significant part of the total visitor numbers and this year we welcomed Island Holidays, Shetland Field Studies Group and The Travelling Naturalists for one trip each, Limosa for two and Shetland Wildlife for three trips. Organised groups are well established and it is encouraging to see so many each year, but also the groups led on a more informal basis are just as important. Ann Smith returned once again with her group of energetic friends and Shetland Field Studies group visited for a few days in July. Mention must also be made of the many long-term returning visitors, many of whom are now such familiar faces it is like welcoming friends. Additional to guests staying with us we had ten cruiseships visit the isle during 2006. Varying in passenger numbers from 40 to 110 people, these ships provide an additional source of income for all those wishing to sell goods and crafts as well as providing employment for other islanders involved in transportation of passengers and providing refreshments. The economic benefit from the ships is obvious but the indirect benefits, such as the chance to meet new people and the potential for passengers to return for a longer time is not forgotten. 2006 was the last year (at least for the time-being) that we will be offering discounts during both August and October. Thanks to these offers, both of these months have now become popular and busy whilst in the past they were extremely quiet. In 2007 we will run the August offer for the last time, for just 10 days.

After more than 35 years of service Loganair bowed out of the Shetland inter-island flight provision in the summer of 2006 and the service was taken over by Direct Flight, flying a plane owned by Shetland Island Council. The handover took place

on 1st August and went remarkably smoothly, with mostly the same staff as before, the same schedule and same contact numbers.

The Ranger Service continued to be extremely popular with visitors, with particular emphasis on cetacean watches this season. Phil Knott carried out a great deal of work on the FIBO website and the work with the schoolchildren focused on the creation of the Eco-School wildlife garden. Some of the benefits to visitors of the Ranger Service are well established, such as, guided walks, leaflets, slideshows and lifts to the museum and craft outlets. However, there are many aspects of the service that are new or not as obvious, such as the provision and maintenance of stiles around the island, the 'shuttle service' for birders in the autumn, and also the tea and coffee facilities at the Puffin during the autumn. Additionally, the Ranger Service is responsible for monitoring Atlantic Grey Seals, the Oysterplant and Fair Isle Wrens. This service is continually developing in response to the changing demands and needs of visitors and the attempt to come up with innovative and interesting new elements. Thanks must be given to all islanders who have supported the service in any way this year, from allowing us to build stiles on their crofts, to showing visitors crafts and workshops and of course for allowing visitors to cross their land. Thanks also go to the National Trust for Scotland for permitting use of the Puffin as a tea and coffee stop for birders in the autumn.

Fair Isle was the venue for the wedding of Rebekah Warner (our childminder in 2002) and Joe Burrell, who met on the isle that year when Joe was on an NTS Workcamp. It was a very small private affair, with just Becki and Hollie as witnesses, Deryk as photographer and Dave Wheeler as Registrar. The 'ceremony' took place at Field and was the first 'civil wedding' on the island. We wish them many years of happiness together.

We are always looking at ways to improve facilities for visitors within the constraints of the Observatory finances, and this year we replaced all the living room chairs. This has made the lounge much brighter and smarter, as well as more comfortable. The standard of accommodation is now at a stage where it cannot be improved upon significantly without a large amount of capital expenditure. With the imminent construction of a new building this would be foolish, but it is encouraging that we maintain, without difficulty, our two-star guesthouse status. One brand new facility was Wi-Fi internet access for staff and visitors to the Observatory. Thanks must go to Alistair Craib (Hollie's father) who generously donated all the necessary equipment and installed it himself when he visited us at the end of the 2005 season. The facility has been extremely popular with visitors using the Observatory laptop or their own laptops to check e-mail and look at the Internet.

2006 seems to have been the year for Film Crews on the island. A French film crew from MC4 Productions visited the island in early May to film Puffin breeding behaviour as part of their film for french cinema entitled '*Animals in Love*'. The BBC Natural History Unit also visited several times from May to July to film a '*Natural World*' programme entitled '*Saving Our Seabirds*'. FIBO Chairman Roy Dennis presents the film and he followed the seabird breeding season from beginning to end at several sites in Britain but with its main focus on Fair Isle. The BBC's Alan Titchmarsh visited the island for a day in early July to film the energetic nest-defence by skuas as part of a '*Natural Britain*' series. Finally, moving away from birds, the BBC series '*Coast*' visited to film and interview islanders about life on Fair Isle. Several national newspaper and magazine journalists also dropped in to interview people on various aspects of island life, including the current seabird crisis and the island's long struggle for marine protection.

Fair Isle is a very dynamic community and island life does not suit everyone forever but there are always people out there who would like to give it a try. Therefore the isle said a sad farewell to some whilst welcoming new residents to the community. Clare Scott (Taft) left in the summer to live in Lerwick, and Gillian Harrison and her children, Daisy, Oliver and Beth left just before Christmas, also settling in mainland Shetland. However, others started a new life on the island with Angela and Darren Wiseman and their four children, Mark, Marie, Amber and Robyn moving in to Burkle in August and Americans Tommy Hyndman and Liz Musser and their son Henry moving into the Auld Haa in November. Both of these households have set up as bed and breakfast establishments on the isle and we wish them happiness and success.

As every year, the successful running of the Observatory is reliant on more than just those who live and work here. The whole island community must be thanked for their unwavering support of FIBOT but one or two deserve extra mention for their efforts. The maintenance men are always first on our list and so Kenny Stout and Brian Wilson are owed our personal (as well as FIBOT) gratitude for fixing those sudden plumbing and building problems we encounter from time to time. Likewise, we are very grateful to Hollie's parents (Pat & Alistair Craib) and their friends (Anne & Howard Wallace-Simms) for their several days of (free!) hard work in April, helping us prepare for opening each season.

Robert & Fiona Mitchell at Stackhoull Stores do their utmost to ensure we have sufficient kitchen supplies and their efforts are much appreciated. Our transport links are vital to the viability of FIBOT and so the crew of the *Good Shepherd IV* and Loganair/Direct Flight are to be thanked for the safe delivery of our guests. In this technological age, the FIBO website is getting more and more hits and many

thanks must go to Dave Wheeler for maintaining this with regular updates and changes. The British Birdwatching Fair at Rutland is the largest event of its kind in Europe and Tim & Irene Loseby are to be thanked for manning our stall there and publicising our 'product'. Our generators have run pretty smoothly this season and this is mainly due to Shetland engineer Malcolm Adamson who services them for us free of charge whenever he is on the isle and this is very much appreciated.

Thanks are also due to those organisations who part-fund various aspects of our work: Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH) again funded our Ranger Service and they also provided grants towards the purchase of a new inflatable Zodiac, required for our seabird work and another towards a digital projector for our presentations. Joint Nature Conservation Committee (JNCC) grant-aids our seabird research whilst British Trust for Ornithology (BTO) and Shetland Oil Terminal Environmental Advisory Group (SOTEAG) also provide small grants toward our ringing expenses. All sources of funding large or small are very much appreciated and we thank all contributors.

On a personal note we would like to thank all our staff, the FIBOT Directors and Fair Islanders for their continued support of ourselves in our role.

Finally, it just remains to thank all who have contributed to this report whether in the form of articles, photos or vignettes and, last but not least, thanks to Alan Bull for help with proof-reading. We hope you enjoy reading it and it encourages you to visit!

## Gordon Barnes – an appreciation

*Nick Riddiford*

Aficionados of Fair Isle and its birds during the 1960s and 1970s will be saddened to learn of the death of Gordon Barnes on 2nd March 2006. Gordon's first experience of the isle was as assistant to Peter Davis at the Bird Observatory during the 1960 and 1961 seasons. He subsequently took on the vacant tenancy at Setter, moving into the croft in early 1962. Gordon met Perry, the lady of his life, that summer. She was on a Fair Isle workcamp and four years later they were married. Perry joined Gordon at Setter where they threw themselves enthusiastically into island life, and in particular the crofting and knitwear. The birds were not forgotten. Gordon kept a sharp eye open as he went about his agricultural activities and at North Light, where he worked half-time as an auxiliary keeper. He built a Heligoland trap in a corner of Setter garden and made available one of the outbuildings, a missen hut which had once been a naval shore station and then part of the original bird Observatory at North Haven, for ringing purposes. The Setter trap became part of the "trap round" for bird Observatory staff as well as allowing Gordon to keep his hand in when time allowed.

The "ringing station" was restricted to a short section of work bench. The rest of the hut was largely taken up with Fair Isle artifacts collected by Gordon and Perry. Agricultural implements sat alongside traditional furniture and, above, an impressive wooden beam running the length of the hut sported a continuous set of swatches – knitted by Perry as a record of all the Fair Isle patterns she had been able to ascertain. Gordon and Perry appreciated the heritage value of such items and set out to ensure that they would not disappear from memory, or from the isle. Visitors were welcomed to view this collection, and the modest "Setter Museum" notice on the door was there for people to locate it. The Setter Museum laid the foundation for the current George Waterston Centre and Museum and a number of the items – including the magnificent swatch compilation – can now be seen there.

I came to the Bird Observatory as assistant in 1973 and we quickly became good friends. Gordon and Perry were very good to me, and we shared another interest – the Fair Isle flora. Conversations about birds quickly moved on to flowers and we inspired each other to seek and find, or rediscover, a series of interesting species. On my departure from the isle, Gordon and Perry presented me with the book, "Shakespeare's Flowers", which still takes pride of place in my library.

In 1975, Gordon, Perry and children Alan and John left the isle to start a new life in South Wales. A small farm there led to a larger farm in Devon. The natural world continued to be to the fore in Gordon's life. I kept tabs on their progress through

mutual friends and, later, through renewed contact. Polecats in South Wales and rare orchids in Devon were some of the highlights. Gordon was very proud of the SSSI on his Devon farm, and the contribution he made to conserving the denizens of that farm, rare butterflies and flowers, through thoughtful management.

1973 seems like yesterday, but it was not until 32 years later, in spring 2005 that I had the good fortune to meet Gordon and Perry again face to face. A chance meeting in the Albufera Natural Park, Mallorca, where Gordon was holding court to a cluster of birdwatchers on the bridge over the canal, led to a delightful evening together. Gordon, Perry and I spent a couple of happy hours reminiscing and generally enjoying each other's company. Neither seemed to have changed a bit!

Gordon was a total enthusiast, sharp, competitive but always willing to share his knowledge, experiences and observations. Stories of his exploits were legendary: capturing a Goshawk which buried its talons into him then, with neither willing to let go of the other(!), staggering to the Observatory to see the bird ringed and both of them "released"; a terrifying drive to North Light in atrocious weather conditions when his car left the road and rolled, with Gordon helpless inside, to come to rest at the cliff edge; rushing out to save rare thrushes from predation by a Peregrine which flew along the Setter dyke with clockwork precision every 3 p.m.; promising the British rarities committee, which apparently doubted Gordon's ability to see Great Snipe with such regularity, that he would shoot the next one . . . and send it to them *second-class*! Gordon was ahead of his time, Great Snipe are now a near annual occurrence. Gordon's way of attracting attention was to whistle with his fingers. On one occasion he trapped a Red-backed Shrike and, seeing two birdwatchers on the road, he whistled them over. The shrike, held in the same hand, simultaneously buried its beak into the quick of his nose. Anyone who has been pecked on the fingers by a shrike will realize how painful even that can be!

Gordon left a lasting impression on all who knew him. I feel privileged to have known him, and grateful for all the encouragement he gave me. I was so glad that we were able to meet up again before his untimely death, and to spend a lovely evening with him and his equally lovely wife Perry.

*Gordon Barnes, 1934-2006*

*AW, Bird Observatory, 1960 & 1961*

*Tenant, Setter: 1961 to 1975*



# The Months on Fair Isle

Gordon Barnes

**Editor's Note:** Gordon was in the habit of jotting down observations and events whilst on wintertime watch at North Lighthouse. In this piece of writing, Gordon concentrates on the year 1970 but intersperses it with general comments from his other years on Fair Isle. Gordon's stream of consciousness manner of writing, parsimonious in the use of commas and full stops, has the somewhat staccato short-hand style of the note-taker. Gordon names a few birds which are not on the official Fair Isle list. Extenuating circumstances, such as the brevity of the observation, single observer records and the extreme rarity of the bird, may have contributed to their non acceptance by the British rarities committee. I have done some light editing (mainly for punctuation) to smooth the account, but have left other elements undisturbed. It is a fascinating snap-shot in time and a personal account of a naturalist crofter's life on Fair Isle.

[Edited by Nick Riddiford]

## January

The only good thing about January is the long awaited lengthening days. It is a cold month with hail, snow and frost. Gale and storm force winds occur, far too often delaying the sailing of the *Good Shepherd IV* on her usual Tuesday run to Shetland. There are nice sights of the Northern Lights or Merry Dancers as the islanders call them: there is no greater sight to watch shafts of green and bluish light chasing each other from the northern horizon, suddenly to disappear and reappear in a different place. An old islander once told me that south-east winds always follow a show of Northern lights. I have found this to be true almost every time. On the 6th last year was one of those rare nights, calm, freezing and a good display. By the 8th the wind went to the SE. This is the best direction for birds, be it caused by a depression or anticyclone, even during the winter a SE can be relied upon to bring some birds to Fair Isle. On the 8th it was the turn of a nice adult male Gyr Falcon that spent the day with us, and on the 10th a most unusual and unexpected bird to see was a young female Great Bustard, moving to the west to escape the severe wintry weather the continent was having. Snow soon followed it here and it would certainly have died if it hadn't been caught and fed on cabbages and mice for two months. Other birds that arrived with the SE wind were Fieldfares, Glaucous Gulls, Robin, Kestrel, Woodcock and Skylark.

SE winds are not only good for birds but are the best winds for driftwood and any time of day you can see lone figures searching the tide-line for useful wood and often net and rope. Hesswalls and South Haven are the favourite hunting grounds. The hill sheep are there too, eating the juicy seaweed the sea brings in.

Croft work is the tending of the animals indoors. Most don't start feeding the ewes regularly till next month, only if the snow is too deep for them to get a bite of the hay-like grass. There are ditches to be dug and others to clean out on good days.

Further SE gales on the 18th and 19th brought another far eastern vagrant, this time a nice adult male Siberian Thrush, a new bird for Fair Isle's list and only the second for Britain, a bird a little smaller than a Blackbird with a blackish head, very long eyestripe, neck and back slatey blue, belly white – one of the best birds it has been my good luck to see.

Another such day was in 1965. I went to the banks to try my luck at driftwood but to my surprise found something better than a plank, net or rope: a male and female Harlequin Duck. They stayed from 11th till 2nd February and could be seen diving into the breaking water round the rocks in the South Haven. They were very tame and one day I was only five yards from them. I was probably the first human they had seen.

## **February**

February is much the same as the last month. The days are now getting noticeably longer. Instead of light at 10 a.m. and dark at 4 p.m., there is almost an hour's difference each end. Some years this is the worst month for snow and gales, as was the last, with heavy snow showers and gale force winds in the middle of the month making the roads impassable with drifts – though it normally does not last long.

The usual bad weather movements of birds, another Gyr Falcon, this time a big female. I have now seen three Gyrs and all were different plumage phases. End of the month sees the return of Skylarks and on nice days odd ones can be heard singing briefly. The land is very brown now and the home sheep are fed twice a day. The rattle of a bucket or the sight of you starts a chorus of baaing; some are now getting quite heavy with lamb. I usually strip and overhaul my tractor this month, ready for the coming spring work. But until the arrival of the other tractor she had to be on stand-by for hauling supplies from the boat to the shop, when the snow made it impossible for the lorry.

## **March**

Days are now quite reasonably long and some days calm and sunny, making you think spring is not far away. But at almost 60 latitude this is not so. Some years we get the most snow and frost this month.

There is a noticeable movement of birds: Skylarks, Oystercatchers, Lapwing, Rooks, Curlews, Ravens. Our resident Ravens can be seen carrying sticks, Skylarks singing every day now.

The odd Daisy shows itself and the first Coltsfoot can be seen in Utra garden in the second half of the month. Hill sheep tend to go down the cliffs for the new young grass. The home sheep are very hungry and it pays to feed them well from now on making for bigger lambs and more milk.

More birds arrive at the end of the month: Stonechat, Wood Pigeon, Meadow Pipit, Snow Buntings. Fine views of the Bennet's comet.

## **April**

A sign of spring now, although some days quite wintry. Usually a lot of easterly and SE wind this month. Quite a few birds on the move. The first Bonxie arrives, Puffins ashore on nice days from the second week. Migrants are Chaffinch, Brambling, Blackbirds, Snow Buntings, Redwing, Fieldfare, Goldeneye, Long-tailed Duck, many Skylarks and Meadow Pipits; Kittiwakes calling in their geos.

Ewes at home start lambing this month, and the hill ones nearer the end of the month. Cows also calve this month. The land work commences with ploughing and planting potatoes and later in the month the oats. More Daisies flowering and it's a joy to see the first Violet. The hill ewes occasionally go down the cliff for that's the first place the new grass grows. Sometimes a cliff rescue has to take place and sometimes the lamb gets knocked off the steep banks by its mother. The Raven now has young in the nest and becomes very bold, kills new-born lambs – usually the first born of twins. Even the ewes are not safe from the huge black bill.

## **May**

To my mind this is the best month. There can be quite nasty snow and hail showers during the first week, but when the sun does break through it is quite warm, grass can be seen to be growing and by the middle of the month there is enough to turn the cows out. It is great to see them out. They don't seem to know what to do first, run round to stretch their legs, rub an itchy part on a post or fight each other. It takes a little time for them to find out that from now on they will have to get their own food.

A look in the barn and yard and it's plain to see that it's quite empty and the grass growing has just come in time. It takes a lot to feed seven beasts for six months. The now large midden has to be removed and spread over the land. Some was put under the potatoes, the rest ready for the next turnip crop.

May is a wonderful month for the birdwatcher. Cliffs are alive with Puffins, Fulmars, Kittiwakes, Razorbills and Guillemots and the Arctic Skuas have arrived on the hill and can be seen chasing each other off their territories. Most of the eggs will be laid this month. Migrant birds arrive in sometimes large numbers, more so

after a SE blow. Such a day was the 8th. A rare Thrush Nightingale was caught, Black-headed Wagtail, a new sub-species for me, was seen – a nice handsome male – two Dotterel, many common birds: Swallow, Whinchat, Blackcap, Robin, Willow Warblers, Wheatears, Reed Buntings, Redpoll, Twite, Whimbrel, odd Black Redstarts, Bluethroat, Sedge Warbler, Grasshopper Warbler. By the 9th the island was simply alive with birds; can't remember seeing so many. It was a nice sunny day. Everywhere there were Redstarts, even trying to find cover in a house plant, lovely male Bluethroats in the most unexpected places, even Wrynecks seemed at home in the warm sunshine – usually, large numbers of these selective feeders die here. Another Thrush Nightingale was caught and by the end of the month four more were seen, doubling the whole British total.

This month several flowers appear: sky blue Squills, yellow Primrose down the cliff at Wirvie and round the well at Schoolton; Daisies are everywhere. The lambs are getting quite strong now that their mothers are getting good grass. Some ewes cast their wool, mostly ones that have lost their lamb. The *Good Shepherd IV* starts her twice weekly trip and some years we get the National Trust cruises.

## June

Where the last month was the best month for birdwatchers to see the rare birds in full summer dress, this is the month for the botanist. Everywhere you look there are flowers. Squill in blue carpets on the small hillocks, Thrift down the cliffs and, far inland up the north end, one or two rare white clumps of Thrift; Lady Smock in the marshes along with Kingcup, Spotted Orchid and a few Marsh Orchid. Ragged Robin comes into flower later in the month along with Rose-root on the west cliffs, Even the barrenest place has a flower, the delicate flowered Thyme grows on the airstrip and road sides, Mountain Everlasting and Milkwort in the short Heather. In the bog grow the Butterwort with its leaves outstretched ready to close on a small insect. Very rare birds sometimes arrive this month: a nice male Rock Thrush thrilled those that saw it early on 30th, Subalpine Warblers are another June rarity and once a Purple Heron.

Sometimes we get butterflies and like the birds usually after a SE wind. Ones I have seen are Painted Lady, Red Admiral, Large Cabbage White and Small Tortoiseshell, and once a large red-bodied Dragonfly. Craneflies are hatching out and make good feeding for the nestling House Sparrows and Wheatears. In the walls, the young Starlings make a lot of noise waiting the return of their parents with leather-jacket grubs.

Sheep shearing starts with the home sheep and later in the month the hill ones. Turnips are planted and by now the corn has covered the ground. These last few years it has been a dry month and nearly everyone has a water shortage in the springs.

## July

This is quite often a foggy month, it's sometimes quite a relief to get some moisture of any kind – at least it gives the leaves a drink.

We also get rare birds this month. Three Bee-eaters in 1969 stayed for almost a week. The sea birds are all busy carrying fish to hungry young and towards the end of the month you can hear the Guillemots calling the young from the cliff edges. They then swim off together for the young to finish fledging at sea.

Hay-making commences and sometimes the frequent showers make it difficult. Turnips are singled, potatoes weeded for the last time and then ridged up. The oats have made rapid progress with the long days and are now in ear.

Small flocks of Curlew make an appearance, probably ones that have bred successfully and non-breeders; also Common Gulls – sometimes in large numbers up to 2000. The flower pattern changes: Scabious takes the place of Squill; Yellow Ragwort becomes very common; also White Clover. Patches of Sorrel make the ground red.

## August

August is a pleasant month, sunny and windy. The hay is shaken out of the coles on a nice windy morning and then in the afternoon carted to the yard and built into a rick. Heather is in full bloom along with Scabious. Gentian can be found near the road at Stoneybrake and along the roadsides the delicate Shetland Thyme. The oats are showing a tinge of yellow near the roots. Turnips are now touching each other across the rows and make rapid growth this month.

The rare but small Barred Warbler arrives during the second and third week. This large grey warbler seems to like the standing corn and nettle patches at Pund. A nice male Bee-eater was seen in 1970. Sometimes quite large flocks of Swifts spend the day hawking insects over the island. Common and Black-headed Gulls roam the grass in the evening. The Sooty Shearwater can be seen in small numbers from the *Good Shepherd IV*, and from North and South lighthouses – and occasionally Manx, Cory's and Great Shearwaters. This is probably the best month to see the Storm Petrel at night round the cliff edges. By the end of the month you can easily see migration is taking place, mostly waders but small birds also. Young Wheatears are by far the commonest, along with White Wagtails, Meadow Pipits and sometimes rarities like Aquatic Warbler, Greenish Warbler, Icterine Warbler and Scarlet Grosbeak.

By now all the seabird young have fledged and left, the Fulmars being the last. The Crowberries are ripe on the hill and the Wheatears stain the bird bags and catching boxes purple with their droppings. The Arctic Skua also seems to enjoy them and

would need a large number to satisfy it, where a quick chase of a full Kittiwake would soon fill it. The drake Eiders are now out of eclipse plumage and join the females with no ducklings.

## **September**

This is the month for the birdwatcher, 100 and more species can be seen easily this month. With rarities like Arctic Warbler, Booted Warbler, Citrine Wagtail, Richard's Pipit, Osprey, Ortolan Bunting, Yellow-breasted Bunting, Bonelli's Warbler, Wryneck, Woodchat Shrike, Little Stint and Great Grey Shrike.

Most of the oats have now turned a lovely golden yellow. Some is still cut with the scythe and tied with a twisted straw band, but most is cut with a binder – that is, if it's not flattened by an early gale. The sheaves soon dry out of sap and ready to cart to the yards in a week or ten days. The small round pointed 'stacks look a picture in each croft yard, all netted and tied down with rope ready for the gales that come so suddenly. The stubble is a good feeding place for the Skylarks and Snow Buntings and an occasional Lapland Bunting and Red-throated Pipit. Young Merlins can be seen chasing small birds with little success although they must catch some.

The lambs are sent on the *Good Shepherd IV*, usually on the Tuesday trip to catch the St Clair from Lerwick. Up to 70 can be managed. The grass has stopped growing and the cows crop off the rougher grass in the marshes. Flowers all slowly disappearing, but the hardy Daisy is still plentiful here.

There are large numbers of birds at the lighthouses at night. The weather is usually bad, south-east wind, fog and rain. Some nights many are killed, the rays of the light are thick and yellow and the birds can be seen flying through it like large snowflakes. All species appear to be white, you can only tell the sorts by the calls and when they land on the surrounding cat walk – which would be better named as bird walk. Redwings and Starlings predominate, but I have recorded over 20 species.

The cows are indoors now. Flowers are nearly all gone, the occasional Daisy and Ragwort survive in a sheltered spot.

## **October**

Once again this is the month for the birdwatcher. Anything could turn up, be it of American or Continental origin. The 5th was a great day with the arrival of an Upland Plover, a new bird for Fair Isle's growing list and new for almost all the birdwatchers. Other good birds in recent years are Eye-browed Thrush, Lanceolated Warbler, Needle-tailed Swift, Pechora Pipit, Great Snipe, Steppe Shrike, Dusky Warbler, Dusky Thrush, Arctic Redpoll. Sometimes large flocks of Blackbirds appear about the middle of the month along with Redwing, Fieldfare,

Robin and Woodcock. In recent years, grey geese have been quite common, mostly Greylags. Family parties of Whooper Swans can be seen, also Barnacle Geese.

The days are getting quite short and gales and rain occur far too often. The *Good Shepherd IV* is now on her winter once-weekly sailing. The last of the lambs are caught on the hill. The ewes are dipped and counted. Home sheep are also dipped. The gales have swept off the leaves of the turnips and soon the rabbits make a mess of the roots. They are pulled up and stored for the winter.

## **November**

Birds trickle in on SE winds all the month, often with rarities. The ones I have seen are Great Black-headed Gull, another new bird for Fair Isle's list in 1969 (an adult in winter plumage), Dotterel, Richard's Pipit, Little Bunting and, this year, a nice male Desert Wheatear – the 4th record for Fair Isle, last one on November 18th 1940. Some days during gales we get large numbers of gulls resting on land, mostly Herring and Great Black-backed Gulls with a few Glaucous and Iceland Gulls and an occasional Pomarine Skua.

This is a damp month with frequent gales. The days are now getting short. The ram is put to the home ewes in the first week. Only the hardy little Daisy flowers this month. The grass has now taken on its winter colour of greyish brown, a different looking island to the green lush one most people see during the summer months. The ditches and burns are all full and the waterfall at Finnequoy is often a wonderful sight, sometimes even better with a Dipper feeding in the tumbling brown water.

## **December**

December always seems the longest month with the daylight hours only 6 hours on the shortest day. It is a cold month with quite a bit of rain and usually one gale a week with just a quiet spell in between them to let the *Good Shepherd IV* make her trip.

Quite a few birds occasionally arrive with bad weather, mostly gulls and thrushes. This year a nice adult Ivory Gull arrived on the 29th along with 12 Glaucous Gulls. Little Auks can sometimes be found inland after a severe storm.

Fair Isle nearly always has a white Christmas but on Christmas Day this is soon forgotten when everyone meets at the hall for a big family-like party, games for the young, dancing for the others. Father Christmas arrives in early evening to the delight of the children: each is called in turn for a nice parcel.

Written at Setter and the North Lighthouse, 1970.

# Fair Isle Weather in 2006

*Dave Wheeler*

Across northern Scotland as a whole, 2006 was rather similar to 2005 – milder and wetter than normal. However, at just above average, it was a slightly sunnier year.

At a local level Fair Isle fared slightly better as – though sunshine was a similar amount above average – our rainfall was average, making us drier than the rest of Scotland.

Fair Isle was also milder than normal, though slightly less so than Scotland as a whole. After an indication last year of a slow-down in the rise of sea surface temperatures around the Isle – with the value for 2005 the lowest for four years – 2006 reversed this trend.

Year	Rainfall mm		Sunshine hours for year		Mean Temperature °C	
	Actual	% 1961-90	Actual	% 1961-90	Actual	diff 1961-90
Fair Isle	922.3	100	1330.4	109	8.6	+1.0
Scotland	1651.5	112	1300.5	110	8.3	+1.3
England & Wales	929.3	103	1623.6	114	10.5	+1.5

## January

**Anticyclonic and very dry in many areas across the UK. Mild in northern Scotland.**

Scandinavian high pressure dominated the first ten days of the month. However, with pressure low over the Atlantic, this resulted in prevailing and strong S'yly winds bringing generally cloudy conditions with some rain, as weather systems came up against the blocking high pressure. The next twelve-day period saw much more unsettled conditions as the high relaxed and Shetland fell under the influence of vigorous, deep Atlantic depressions tracking northeast between Scotland and Iceland. The last week saw high pressure again taking control. This time – developing over Faeroe and slipping south across the UK – the anticyclone brought a fine, settled and mostly dry spell to end the month. Despite having 19 overcast days, sunshine totals were well above the January average.

January	Rainfall mm		Sunshine hours for year		Mean Temperature °C	
	Actual	% 1961-90	Actual	% 1961-90	Actual	diff 1961-90
Fair Isle	53.7	54	38.8	143	6.4	+1.9
Scotland	109.1	70	34.4	99	3.3	+1.3
England & Wales	35.0	39	51.0	105	4.0	+0.6



## February

**Some cold days. A generally dry month, warmer than average in northern areas of the UK.**

Within the first few days, high pressure covering the British Isles at the start of February became centred near the western English Channel, with a mild westerly airflow over Scotland. The anticyclone then shifted to mid-Atlantic for the start of the second week before returning to cover the country during the next few days, bringing strong N'ly winds to Shetland. A milder, unsettled spell began just before mid-month, as the high pressure retreated into Europe and SW'ly winds again covered Shetland. Low pressure then became slow-moving near the Faeroes, bringing a period of heavy showers. During the third week the low pressure extended to cover Scotland, giving lighter winds. High pressure – building to the north-west of Scotland – then moved towards Greenland, with a cold end to the month as strong N'ly winds brought Arctic air south.

February	Rainfall mm		Sunshine hours for year		Mean Temperature °C	
	Actual	% 1961-90	Actual	% 1961-90	Actual	diff 1961-90
Fair Isle	65.8	93	54.1	94	5.2	+1.0
Scotland	85.2	81	63.6	99	3.0	+1.0
England & Wales	56.3	87	68.3	104	3.6	+0.2

## Winter (December – February)

Dry with near-average temperatures across England and Wales and, mainly due to a sunny December, with sunshine totals slightly above normal. Scotland was also dry but not quite so sunny and here mild. Fair Isle mild, sunny and dry.

	Rainfall mm		Sunshine hours for year		Mean Temperature °C	
	Actual	% 1961-90	Actual	% 1961-90	Actual	diff 1961-90
Fair Isle	198.0	71	113.1	110	4.6	+1.4
Scotland	292.6	70	128.4	100	3.4	+1.1
England & Wales	160.0	64	176.3	111	4.0	+0.3

## March

**A cold month almost everywhere with some heavy snowfalls in northern Britain.**

With several outbreaks of Arctic air occurring during the month, this was the coldest March in Shetland since 1969, and, on Fair Isle, equal coldest since records began there in 1974. In the period from 1931 up to and including 1969 there were just six years with a colder March, the coldest being 1947 – with a mean daily temperature of just 0.3° Celsius! High pressure to the west linking with the East Greenland high – together with low pressure over Scandinavia – brought a cold

Arctic airflow during the first six days of the month. The next three days saw high pressure transfer east into Scandinavia, with a complex area of low pressure forming over the northeast Atlantic pushing fronts across the Northern Isles in a milder S to SE'ly airflow. Mid-month saw the S or SE'ly airflow easing as the high over Scandinavia migrated slowly westwards over the Northern Isles, before linking with the East Greenland high to give another short period of cold N'ly winds. High pressure then moved north, with a complex area of low pressure – developing to the southwest of the UK – moving slowly northeast over the British Isles during the last week of March, with high pressure beginning to build southeast across Iceland towards Shetland during the last two days.

March	Rainfall mm		Sunshine hours for year		Mean Temperature °C	
	Actual	% 1961-90	Actual	% 1961-90	Actual	diff 1961-90
Fair Isle	67.8	80	103.6	108	3.2	-1.4
Scotland	137.0	107	72.4	78	2.5	-1.0
England & Wales	93.5	128	97.4	93	4.6	-0.6

## April

**Wet in northwest Scotland, very dry in parts of the east. A sunny month in most areas.**

West or north-westerly winds, circulating around low pressure to the north of Shetland, were the main feature of April's weather. The first third of the month was particularly cold, with snow falling to low levels. Conditions were generally unsettled but mostly showery, and the absence of slow-moving fronts and warm, humid air masses meant that sunshine totals were well above average. During the last fifteen days of the month Shetland featured as the sunniest location in the UK on eight occasions.

April	Rainfall mm		Sunshine hours for year		Mean Temperature °C	
	Actual	% 1961-90	Actual	% 1961-90	Actual	diff 1961-90
Fair Isle	62.8	126	206.5	139	5.6	+0.0
Scotland	107.9	134	171.2	125	5.7	+0.2
England & Wales	46.0	76	160.4	112	8.3	+0.9

## May

**A very sunny month in the north but wet, especially so in the south. Generally mild but near-average temperatures in the north.**

After an unsettled few days at the beginning, high pressure over Scandinavia was in control for much of the first half of the month. Low pressure then settled across the British Isles and surrounding waters, bringing changeable conditions until the last couple of days. Shetland however – situated between lows – fared better than

most areas. As the month closed, high pressure again became the dominant feature, this time centred over the Atlantic. In Shetland a mild spell during the second week – offset by a cool N'y spell mid-month – resulted in near-average temperatures. While rainfall was also near average, sunshine was well above normal across Shetland, with Lerwick recording 75.6 hours of sunshine in the 6-day period 21st-26th.

May	Rainfall mm		Sunshine hours for year		Mean Temperature °C	
	Actual	% 1961-90	Actual	% 1961-90	Actual	diff 1961-90
Fair Isle	51.0	123	261.9	132	7.7	+0.1
Scotland	117.0	136	190.6	115	8.8	+0.5
England & Wales	109.5	173	173.1	93	11.8	+1.2

### Spring (March – May)

Fair Isle – and the remainder of the Northern Isles – experienced a cold though sunny spring with near-average rainfall. The remainder of Scotland was wet, not quite as sunny, and with near-average temperatures. Further south England and Wales were wet with near-average sunshine and temperatures a little above average.

	Rainfall mm		Sunshine hours for month		Mean Temperature °C	
	Actual	% 1961-90	Actual	% 1961-90	Actual	diff 1961-90
Fair Isle	181.6	103	572.0	129	5.5	-0.4
Scotland	361.9	122	434.2	110	5.7	-0.1
England & Wales	249.0	127	430.9	99	8.2	+0.5

### June

**A little warmer but also duller and wetter than usual in the north. Elsewhere very warm, dry and sunny.**

The Northern Isles saw relatively settled conditions for much of the first half of the month as an anticyclone drifted slowly northeast across the UK into Scandinavia. Though much of Scotland enjoyed warm, mainly dry and sunny weather, Shetland was less fortunate with sea fog, low cloud and mist at times. The second half of the month – with cyclonic conditions prevailing – brought unsettled and sometimes windy conditions, although the month did end less unsettled as high pressure once again built northeast across Scotland.

June	Rainfall mm		Sunshine hours for month		Mean Temperature °C	
	Actual	% 1961-90	Actual	% 1961-90	Actual	diff 1961-90
Fair Isle	55.5	123	160.1	95	10.3	+0.6
Scotland	74.9	87	176.5	110	12.7	+1.6
England & Wales	25.6	40	229.7	124	15.5	+2.0

## July

**Hottest and sunniest July on record in many areas with persistent warmth and generally dry conditions. Fair Isle warm, wet, foggy and yet also sunny.**

July was dominated by anticyclones and warm air masses, with unsettled conditions limited to the second week and the last few days.

July	Rainfall mm		Sunshine hours for month		Mean Temperature °C	
	Actual	% 1961-90	Actual	% 1961-90	Actual	diff 1961-90
Fair Isle	38.5	75	159.7	117	13.3	+1.9
Scotland	70.5	74	195.4	138	15.6	+3.1
England & Wales	43.1	69	287.6	157	19.1	+3.7

## August

**A warm, dull but relatively dry month with a prevailing NW'ly airflow.**

Mean sea-level pressure was below normal over most of Europe and above normal over much of the northern Atlantic – resulting in a remarkably high frequency of north-westerly winds – higher than in any other August in over 130 years of records. With low pressure never too far away from Shetland, unsettled conditions prevailed throughout much of the month. However, as most of the precipitation fell as showers, amounts of rain were – with a couple of exceptions – not large. With winds, circulating around low pressure, often from a cloudy N'ly quarter, sunshine was below average. However Shetland fared better than most as – across the UK as a whole – it was the dullest August since 1986 and, not far to the south, Kirkwall was very dull with just 61 hours sunshine.

August	Rainfall mm		Sunshine hours for month		Mean Temperature °C	
	Actual	% 1961-90	Actual	% 1961-90	Actual	diff 1961-90
Fair Isle	61.5	101	120.6	81	12.9	+1.0
Scotland	96.6	83	116.5	86	13.3	+0.8
England & Wales	90.2	118	151.4	88	15.9	+0.7

## Summer (June – August)

Despite a drop in mean temperatures between July and August, much of mainland Britain saw a warm or very warm, dry and sunny summer. The Northern Isles not quite so warm with near-average sunshine and rainfall. However moist S'ly winds often brought misty or foggy conditions.

	Rainfall mm		Sunshine hours for month		Mean Temperature °C	
	Actual	% 1961-90	Actual	% 1961-90	Actual	diff 1961-90
Fair Isle	155.5	99	440.4	97	12.2	+1.2
Scotland	242.0	81	488.4	112	13.9	+1.8
England & Wales	158.8	78	668.6	124	16.8	+2.1

## September

**An exceptionally warm month across the UK but – though dry – a persistent SE'ly airflow bringing dull and foggy conditions to the Northern Isles.**

This was the warmest September recorded at Lerwick for 76 years. Across the whole of the UK mean temperatures were exceptionally above average, with all district and regional climate areas having their warmest September. The Central England Temperature equalled the previous record for this month, established in 1729. Rainfall was generally below average across the UK, with Northern Ireland being one of the wettest areas compared to the average. Sunshine was above average across the majority of the UK, although well below average across Shetland.

In contrast to August, September was an abnormally 'southerly' month. It was generally settled until mid-month, with mainly anticyclonic conditions, but for the remainder of the month conditions became more cyclonic.

September	Rainfall mm		Sunshine hours for month		Mean Temperature °C	
	Actual	% 1961-90	Actual	% 1961-90	Actual	diff 1961-90
Fair Isle	50.5	57	73.9	63	12.6	+2.0
Scotland	149.2	103	112.2	114	13.3	+2.8
England & Wales	74.9	96	157.5	119	16.3	+3.2

## October

**A cyclonic month, with the Northern Isles experiencing summer, autumn and winter.**

The first week of October saw cyclonic conditions. An anticyclonic spell followed mid-month, bringing less unsettled conditions. The first three weeks of the month were mild, with frequent S or SE'ly winds. The last week was again cyclonic, but this time – with more vigorous lows passing closer – Shetland experienced some very wet days and winds also tended to be from a colder N'ly.

October	Rainfall mm		Sunshine hours for month		Mean Temperature °C	
	Actual	% 1961-90	Actual	% 1961-90	Actual	diff 1961-90
Fair Isle	150.1	138	79.5	111	10.4	+1.5
Scotland	195.9	123	69.2	94	9.9	+1.9
England & Wales	117.7	136	95.6	99	12.6	+2.5

## November

**Across much of the UK a generally mild, wet and sunny end to an unusually warm autumn. In the north windy, wet & mild.**

The weather during the first week of November was reasonably settled with a NW'ly airflow backing SW'ly, as an anticyclone to the west of Scotland drifted southeast across southern areas of the UK into central Europe. Thereafter the remainder of the month was very unsettled and cyclonic, as a sequence of very deep Atlantic lows tracked northeast close to – or over – Shetland. As a result it was a windy month with rainfall a third above normal. Despite every day bar one officially being classified as 'wet', sunshine was marginally above average!

November	Rainfall mm		Sunshine hours for month		Mean Temperature °C	
	Actual	% 1961-90	Actual	% 1961-90	Actual	diff 1961-90
Fair Isle	124.5	107	42.1	115	8.0	+1.2
Scotland	244.3	155	54.4	113	6.1	+1.8
England & Wales	110.9	121	99.3	156	7.8	+1.7

### **Autumn (September – November)**

This was the warmest autumn on record across the UK (since 1659 for Central England) and also generally wetter and sunnier than average. For the Northern Isles a mild, foggy, dull autumn with near-average rainfall.

	Rainfall mm		Sunshine hours for month		Mean Temperature °C	
	Actual	% 1961-90	Actual	% 1961-90	Actual	diff 1961-90
Fair Isle	325.1	103	195.5	87	10.3	+1.5
Scotland	583.3	126	240.1	109	9.8	+2.2
England & Wales	302.0	118	355.2	121	12.2	+2.4

### **December**

**Very mild, generally wet – except in eastern areas of the UK – and sunny except in the west.**

During much of December temperatures were well above normal. While average maximum temperatures were 1.6° Celsius higher than usual, the real 'warmth' of the month was apparent at night, with the average minimum temperature 3.1° Celsius above average. In fact Lerwick experienced its highest temperature of December overnight. Frosts were notable only by their virtual absence.

The mild temperatures were due an unusually persistent SW'ly airflow, resulting either from the intense anticyclone that covered the UK for some ten days before and over the Christmas period, or the depressions tracking northeast between Scotland and Iceland at the beginning and end of the month. On Fair Isle, wind directions were from a SW'ly quarter 9 days out of 10, resulting in the warmest December since 1974 when records began. This was not quite the case for Lerwick, where December 1934 had a mean temperature of 6.6° Celsius. It might be interesting to note – while January and March 1935 were also mild – that

February was very cold. The spring of that year also saw lower than average temperatures.

While December 2006 was a wetter than average month for Shetland, it was also a little sunnier. However Fair Isle – still having a wetter than normal month – had almost 170% of the expected December sunshine compared to Lerwick’s 105%. Further south was even sunnier with Kirkwall drier than usual and also enjoying – as did Aberdeen – almost twice the normal December sunshine!

December	Rainfall mm		Sunshine hours for month		Mean Temperature °C	
	Actual	% 1961-90	Actual	% 1961-90	Actual	diff 1961-90
Fair Isle	140.7	132	29.6	168	7.3	+2.1
Scotland	269.9	173	39.8	134	4.3	+1.5
Scotland	128.3	134	49.6	111	6.1	+1.8

Meteorological Data, Fair Isle 2006

D. Wheeler

Temp. (°C)	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC	YEAR	1974–2000
Mean	6.4	5.2	3.2	5.6	7.7	10.3	13.3	12.9	12.6	10.4	8.0	7.3	8.6	7.6
Maximum	10.3	9.2	7.7	9.9	13.6	14.8	19.9	16.7	15.8	14.3	12.5	11.6		
Minimum	1.0	-2.3	-4.5	-0.3	1.3	5.1	8.0	8.5	8.1	2.7	2.2	1.7		
Sea	8.9	8.8	7.6	7.6	8.8	10.3	13.0	13.9	13.2	12.6	10.7	9.8	10.4	9.2
Rainfall (mm)														
Monthly	53.7	65.8	67.8	62.8	51.0	55.5	38.5	61.5	50.5	150.1	124.5	140.7	922.3	924.4
Maximum Daily Fall	12.7	13.8	23.2	11.4	9.5	16.7	6.8	18.3	10.1	29.8	15.6	21.4		
Sunshine (hours)														
Total	38.8	54.1	103.6	206.5	261.9	160.1	159.7	120.6	73.9	79.5	42.1	29.6	1330.4	1223.5
Maximum Daily	6.8	8.4	10.7	13.5	14.9	14.5	14.1	12.2	10.7	8.9	5.5	3.9		
Wind speed (knots)														
Mean	15.7	13.6	14.5	13.6	10.8	8.3	7.2	9.3	8.5	13.6	18.9	16.7	12.6	16.0
Maximum Gust	52	49	53	58	44	37	34	41	43	67	56	61		
Number of days														
Hail	4	5	9	12	2	0	0	0	0	2	12	7	53	79.0
Snow/sleet	2	5	14	11	4	0	0	0	0	1	4	5	46	65.5
Rain, >0.1mm	18	17	23	22	18	13	15	16	17	21	27	24	231	242.3
Wet, >0.9mm	14	13	18	17	10	11	13	9	10	17	22	19	173	175.9
Ground frost	3	5	16	6	3	0	0	0	0	0	1	2	36	59.9
Air frost	0	5	10	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	17	18.0
Gale	5	0	3	1	0	0	0	0	0	2	6	7	24	56.5
Wind (direction at 0900)														
North	2	5	7	3	2	1	1	7	1	4	2	1	36	42.3
North East	0	4	2	0	4	2	2	3	2	6	0	0	25	22.1
East	1	1	9	3	7	1	4	0	2	4	1	1	34	34.7
South East	2	4	4	1	4	6	7	4	12	6	2	3	55	50.0
South	13	4	4	6	3	8	5	2	5	7	6	5	68	60.0
South West	7	4	0	4	2	5	6	4	3	1	6	13	55	51.3
West	5	2	1	9	3	6	3	7	4	2	9	6	57	62.5
North West	0	2	3	4	6	1	1	4	1	1	4	2	29	37.1
Calm	1	2	1	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	6	5.5



# **Report on investigations into causes of death & disease states in casualty birds found on Fair Isle 2005 & 2006**

*J.C. Waine*

This report details the post-mortem findings of casualties sent from Fair Isle for the years 2005 and 2006. These corpses are sent as part of an ongoing investigation into disease states and causes of death in wild birds, which is now in its twelfth year at Fair Isle.

A brief history for each bird (where and when it was found and any special circumstances which may relate to its death) is recorded. A standard set of biometric data is taken and the corpse examined externally for plumage abnormalities, parasites, injuries and any other unusual signs. A full post-mortem is then carried out and any relevant samples are taken for further laboratory tests. All parasites are collected and sent to the Natural History Museum, London for cataloguing.

In 2005 and 2006 a total of 97 birds suitable for autopsy were received from Fair Isle (Table 1). These included representatives from 32 species coming from 17 families and five orders. One family, Phalacrocoracidae, represented the Pelecaniformes with one individual from one species: a European Shag. The Anseriformes had one family Anatidae with three individuals from two species: a Scaup and two Long-tailed Ducks. Gruiformes: one family, Rallidae, with one individual from one species: a Water Rail. Charadriiformes contained five families: Haematopodidae (one individual from one species – the Eurasian Oystercatcher), Scolopacidae (one individual from each of two species – a Eurasian Curlew and a Ruddy Turnstone), Stercorariidae (a single Great Skua), Laridae (one Great Black-backed Gull and one Black-headed Gull) and Alcidae (two Little Auks, one Atlantic Puffin, four Razorbills and twenty-one Common Guillemots). There were individuals from nine families of the Passeriformes: Alaudidae (two Skylarks), Hirundinidae (one each of a Barn Swallow and a House Martin), Motacillidae (three Meadow Pipits and an albus White Wagtail), Prunellidae (one Dunnock), Turdidae (five species: three Northern Wheatears, one Song Thrush, twenty-five Redwings, one Fieldfare, and two Common Blackbirds), Sylviidae (three species: six Blackcaps, one Willow Warbler and five Goldcrests), Sturnidae (two Common Starlings at least one of which was of the local race *Zetlandicus*), Fringillidae (two species: one Chaffinch and one Eurasian Siskin) and a single Reed Bunting from the Emberizidae.

In addition to these birds, thirty-three pulli, mainly Alcids and Arctic Terns, were sent but for various reasons were unsuitable for post-mortem examination.

Redwings were the most common species presented with twenty-five specimens – all having died as a result of collision injuries and all but one of which (an individual that had collided with a fence) had been found at one or other of the lighthouses. This in itself is not surprising of a night-migrating bird but what was of particular interest was that all individuals were immature. This is a statistically significant result. Does this mean that adults learn to avoid lights or do they have different migrational patterns from younger birds? It was also interesting that all the lighthouse casualties had empty, or near-empty, gastrointestinal tracts (stomach and intestines) despite being in very good physical condition with ample fat reserves and well developed muscles. Although this is to be expected with night migration does it also make flying easier with an empty gut making for a lighter load?

Common Guillemots were also strongly represented with twenty-one individuals. Of these a disproportionate number were immature with only four adults compared to seventeen first winter or juvenile birds. All of the young birds had died from primary starvation whilst only two of the adults had starved. A steadily increasing number of young, starving guillemots, unfortunately underlines the difficulties this species is having in the area over recent years. A review of the last 12 years shows the following numbers of Guillemot found in each year 1995: 2; 1996: 1; 1997: 1; 1998 0; 1999: 1; 2000: 5; 2001: 3; 2002: 3; 2004: 6; 2005: 11; 2006 10

Collision injuries were the commonest cause of death accounting for 37 cases (38%) whilst primary starvation accounted for 34 birds (35%). Other causes of death include five with predation and five or six with migration stress. One case of particular interest was the single, first winter Ruddy Turnstone that had died from avian tuberculosis. In six cases, no diagnosis was made.

A number of (mainly young) birds were suffering from parasitic infestations. Generally, these are of little health significance, although in birds with a poor nutritional status they may make the difference between survival and death. However, the Skylark, a second year bird, had an enteric, parasitic infestation that was the main contributory factor to its death.

Once again I would like to thank the staff and friends of the Fair Isle Bird Observatory for their help and co-operation with this project.

**Table: Detail of corpses examined, with summary of findings**

<b>English Name</b>	<b>Latin Name</b>	<b>Age/Sex</b>	<b>Date Found</b>	<b>Post-mortem Findings</b>
Greater Scaup	<i>Aythya marila</i>	immature F	18-Oct-05	starvation – primary; drowning
Long-tailed Duck	<i>Clangula hyemalis</i>	immature M	13-Oct-05	starvation; drowning; possible renal disease
Long-tailed Duck	<i>Clangula hyemalis</i>	1st winter F	21-Oct-06	starvation – primary
European Shag	<i>Phalacrocorax aristotelis</i>	immature M	23-Jul-06	starvation – primary; parasitic gastritis
Water Rail	<i>Rallus aquaticus</i>	adult M	12-Feb-06	collision injuries
Eurasian Oystercatcher	<i>Haematopus ostralegus</i>	adult M	20-Sep-05	starvation – primary
Eurasian Curlew	<i>Numenius arquata</i>	immature M	28-Oct-06	collision injuries – light
Ruddy Turnstone	<i>Arenaria interpres</i>	1st winter F	31-Oct-05	avian tb; confirmed by laboratory
Great Skua	<i>Stercorarius skua</i>	adult M	17-May-06	collision injuries
Black-headed Gull	<i>Larus ridibundus</i>	adult F	30-Mar-06	starvation – primary
Greater Black-backed Gull	<i>Larus marinus</i>	juvenile F	16-Sep-06	starvation – primary
Common Guillemot	<i>Uria aalge</i>	adult M	19-Jan-05	starvation – secondary to enteropathy
Common Guillemot	<i>Uria aalge</i>	adult M	17-Mar-05	collision injuries
Common Guillemot	<i>Uria aalge</i>	immature M	29-Sep-05	starvation – primary
Common Guillemot	<i>Uria aalge</i>	immature F	03-Oct-05	starvation – primary; parasitic gastritis
Common Guillemot	<i>Uria aalge</i>	immature M	05-Oct-05	starvation – primary; parasitic gastritis
Common Guillemot	<i>Uria aalge</i>	juvenile F	05-Oct-05	starvation – primary; parasitic gastritis
Common Guillemot	<i>Uria aalge</i>	1st winter F	10-Oct-05	starvation – primary; parasitic gastritis
Common Guillemot	<i>Uria aalge</i>	adult M	21-Oct-05	starvation – primary
Common Guillemot	<i>Uria aalge</i>	immature M	21-Oct-05	starvation – primary; drowning; parasitic gastritis
Common Guillemot	<i>Uria aalge</i>	immature M	31-Oct-05	starvation – primary; drowning; parasitic gastritis
Common Guillemot	<i>Uria aalge</i>	immature F	31-Oct-05	starvation – primary; verminous oesophagitis; constipation; urolith
Common Guillemot	<i>Uria aalge</i>	1st winter	29-Sep-06	starvation – primary
Common Guillemot	<i>Uria aalge</i>	juvenile F	29-Sep-06	starvation – primary; oesophageal nematodes

English Name	Latin Name	Age/Sex	Date Found	Post-mortem Findings
Common Guillemot	<i>Uria aalge</i>	1st winter F	02-Oct-06	starvation – primary
Common Guillemot	<i>Uria aalge</i>	1st winter F	02-Oct-06	starvation – primary
Common Guillemot	<i>Uria aalge</i>	1st winter M	02-Oct-06	starvation – primary; faecolith causing obstruction
Common Guillemot	<i>Uria aalge</i>	1st winter	02-Oct-06	starvation – primary; oesophageal nematodes
Common Guillemot	<i>Uria aalge</i>	1st winter F	02-Oct-06	starvation – primary; oesophageal nematodes
Common Guillemot	<i>Uria aalge</i>	1st winter F	02-Oct-06	starvation – primary; oesophageal nematodes
Common Guillemot	<i>Uria aalge</i>	adult F	04-Oct-06	starvation – primary; collision injuries
Common Guillemot	<i>Uria aalge</i>	immature M	–	starvation – primary; renal failure, oesophageal nematodes
Razorbill	<i>Alca torda</i>	pullus F	19-Jul-05	starvation – primary, pneumonia
Razorbill	<i>Alca torda</i>	pullus M	19-Jul-05	exposure, pneumonia
Razorbill	<i>Alca torda</i>	pullus F	19-Jul-05	starvation – primary, pneumonia
Razorbill	<i>Alca torda</i>	1st winter	04-Sep-06	no diagnosis
Little Auk	<i>Alle alle</i>	juvenile F	21-Oct-06	starvation – primary; predation
Little Auk	<i>Alle alle</i>	juvenile F	22-Oct-06	starvation – primary
Atlantic Puffin	<i>Fratercula arctica</i>	adult F	21-Oct-05	predation (Bonxie), starvation, renal failure, drowning
Skylark	<i>Alauda arvensis</i>	immature F	21-Oct-05	starvation – primary; secondary pneumonia
Skylark	<i>Alauda arvensis</i>	5 F	14-Apr-06	parasitic enteritis; secondary starvation
Barn Swallow	<i>Hirundo rustica</i>	adult M	29-May-06	? Migration stress
House Martin	<i>Delichon urbicum</i>	adult M	10-May-05	collision injuries – window
Meadow Pipit	<i>Anthus pratensis</i>	immature M	20-Aug-05	septicaemia
Meadow Pipit	<i>Anthus pratensis</i>	immature F	25-Sep-05	no diagnosis (migration stress)
Meadow Pipit	<i>Anthus pratensis</i>	1st winter M	23-Oct-05	starvation – primary/migration stress; secondary enteritis
White Wagtail	<i>Motacilla alba alba</i>	adult	13-Jun-06	injuries – collision or predation

English Name	Latin Name	Age/Sex	Date Found	Post-mortem Findings
Dunnock	<i>Prunella modularis</i>	adult F	16-May-06	collision injuries
Northern Wheatear	<i>Oenanthe oenanthe</i>	juvenile	08-Jul-05	injuries – collision or predation
Northern Wheatear	<i>Oenanthe oenanthe</i>	1st winter F	20-Oct-05	starvation – primary; migration stress
Northern Wheatear	<i>Oenanthe oenanthe</i>	adult M	11-May-06	migration stress; starvation
Common Blackbird	<i>Turdus merula</i>	adult M	02-Apr-06	predation – cat
Common Blackbird	<i>Turdus merula</i>	1st winter F	27-Oct-06	collision injuries
Fieldfare	<i>Turdus pilaris</i>	1st winter M	29-Oct-06	collision injuries – light
Song Thrush	<i>Turdus philomelos</i>	1st winter M	21-Oct-05	collision injuries – window
Redwing	<i>Turdus iliacus</i>	immature F	08-Oct-05	collision injuries – lighthouse
Redwing	<i>Turdus iliacus</i>	immature F	08-Oct-05	collision injuries – lighthouse
Redwing	<i>Turdus iliacus</i>	immature M	08-Oct-05	collision injuries – lighthouse
Redwing	<i>Turdus iliacus</i>	immature F	08-Oct-05	collision injuries – lighthouse
Redwing	<i>Turdus iliacus</i>	immature F	08-Oct-05	collision injuries – lighthouse
Redwing	<i>Turdus iliacus</i>	immature M	08-Oct-05	collision injuries – lighthouse
Redwing	<i>Turdus iliacus</i>	immature M	08-Oct-05	collision injuries – lighthouse
Redwing	<i>Turdus iliacus</i>	immature F	08-Oct-05	collision injuries – lighthouse
Redwing	<i>Turdus iliacus</i>	immature F	17-Oct-05	collision injuries – lighthouse
Redwing	<i>Turdus iliacus</i>	1st winter F	11-Oct-06	collision injuries – lighthouse
Redwing	<i>Turdus iliacus</i>	1st winter F	16-Oct-06	collision injuries
Redwing	<i>Turdus iliacus</i>	1st winter M	18-Oct-06	collision injuries – fence
Redwing	<i>Turdus iliacus</i>	juvenile F	18-Oct-06	collision injuries – lighthouse
Redwing	<i>Turdus iliacus</i>	juvenile F	18-Oct-06	collision injuries – lighthouse
Redwing	<i>Turdus iliacus</i>	1st winter F	20-Oct-06	collision injuries – lighthouse
Redwing	<i>Turdus iliacus</i>	1st winter M	20-Oct-06	collision injuries – lighthouse
Redwing	<i>Turdus iliacus</i>	juvenile F	20-Oct-06	collision injuries – lighthouse
Redwing	<i>Turdus iliacus</i>	1st winter F	20-Oct-06	collision injuries – lighthouse

English Name	Latin Name	Age/Sex	Date Found	Post-mortem Findings
Redwing	<i>Turdus iliacus</i>	1st winter M	20-Oct-06	collision injuries – lighthouse
Redwing	<i>Turdus iliacus</i>	juvenile F	20-Oct-06	collision injuries – lighthouse
Redwing	<i>Turdus iliacus</i>	juvenile F	20-Oct-06	collision injuries – lighthouse
Redwing	<i>Turdus iliacus</i>	1st winter F	20-Oct-06	collision injuries – lighthouse
Redwing	<i>Turdus iliacus</i>	juvenile F	25-Oct-06	collision injuries – lighthouse
Redwing	<i>Turdus iliacus</i>	juvenile F	28-Oct-06	collision injuries – lighthouse
Redwing	<i>Turdus iliacus</i>	1st winter M	31-Oct-06	collision injuries – lighthouse
Blackcap	<i>Sylvia atricapilla</i>	1st winter F	21-Sep-05	starvation – primary; tapeworms
Blackcap	<i>Sylvia atricapilla</i>	1st winter M	15-Oct-05	starvation – primary; haemorrhagic enteritis
Blackcap	<i>Sylvia atricapilla</i>	1st winter F	06-Oct-06	starvation – primary; secondary haemorrhagic enteritis
Blackcap	<i>Sylvia atricapilla</i>	1st winter F	14-Oct-06	predation – cat
Blackcap	<i>Sylvia atricapilla</i>	?	24-Oct-06	migration stress
Blackcap	<i>Sylvia atricapilla</i>	1st winter M	31-Oct-06	migration stress; secondary haemorrhagic enteritis
Willow Warbler	<i>Phylloscopus trochilus</i>	immature F	21-Aug-06	no diagnosis
Goldcrest	<i>Regulus regulus</i>	adult F	02-Apr-05	predation – cat; shock
Goldcrest	<i>Regulus regulus</i>	adult M	10-Oct-05	collision injuries
Goldcrest	<i>Regulus regulus</i>	?	16-Oct-05	no diagnosis
Goldcrest	<i>Regulus regulus</i>	adult M	21-Oct-05	no diagnosis
Goldcrest	<i>Regulus regulus</i>	?	23-Oct-05	no diagnosis
Common Starling	<i>Sturnus vulgaris zetlandicus</i>	1st winter F	12-Oct-05	predation
Common Starling	<i>Sturnus vulgaris zetlandicus</i>	adult M	24-Oct-05	peritonitis; poss fb penetration
Chaffinch	<i>Fringilla coelebs</i>	adult M	04-Apr-06	collision – injuries
Eurasian Siskin	<i>Carduelis spinus</i>	adult M	20-Oct-05	migration stress
Reed Bunting	<i>Emberiza schoeniclus</i>	1st winter F	17-Oct-05	collision – injuries

## MONTHLY SUMMARY

*Mark Warren & Deryk Shaw*

### January

Traditionally a dark, wet and windy month with little of ornithological interest. The wintering goose flock peaked at 63 Greylag Geese and was joined by two Pink-feet on 26th. A lone adult Whooper Swan lingered throughout. Small numbers of Mallard, Teal and Wigeon were also noted throughout whilst Red-breasted Mergansers, Long-tailed Ducks and Goldeneyes were seen occasionally and a Goosander on 8th. A Great Northern Diver was spotted (21st-22nd) and a Slavonian Grebe (15th-16th). Peak wader counts were 41 Lapwing, 60 Redshank, 100 Turnstone and 80 Common Snipe with Woodcock, Jack Snipe, Dunlin and Purple Sandpipers also noted and the first returning Oystercatchers (26th). Raptors were represented by Kestrel, Merlin, Peregrine and a Long-eared Owl. Highlights were provided by a second-winter Glaucous Gull on 2nd and a first-winter on 13th in a disappointing month for 'white-wingers'. A 'small' Canada Goose on 9th did not stay long enough to be identified to race. A Common Buzzard arrived on 29th. Passerine highlights included a few Skylarks and (unusually) Meadow Pipits, a handful of Robins plus thrushes, including unusually high numbers of Fieldfares (190 on 26th) and a Mistle Thrush (17th). A Chaffinch, two Mealy Redpolls and a good flock of 72 Twite were also noted.

### February

A Woodcock on 2nd was the only record for the month and the only worthwhile sighting during the first week. The Buzzard from the end of January re-appeared on the 9th and remained throughout, but was only seen three times in all. A Goldeneye was in the Havens on 10th and the first Pied Wagtail of the year was in the Observatory garden two days later. 'White-winged' Gulls were the order of the day on the 17th, with four each of Iceland and Glaucous. Twenty-seven Purple Sandpipers were also seen, as was yet another Goldeneye and the first Ringed Plover of the year. Seven 'Ringos' were found next day and a steady increase in Oystercatchers was noted, peaking at 38. The 19th was the best birding day of the month with two Whooper Swans heading north over the Island while the Greylag Goose herd, which had been present throughout, was joined by some new members and increased to 107 birds. Also of note were five Teal, a drake Red-breasted Merganser, four Jack Snipe, 100 Snipe, the years first Wood Pigeon, the only four Snow Buntings of the month on Ward Hill and a peak Thrush count of 27 Blackbird, 200 Fieldfare, 80 Redwing and eight Song Thrush. A male Peregrine arrived on 20th and set about tormenting the Waders and there was a Rook on the 22nd. Skylarks feeding on grain in the Observatory garden increased to 25 by 23rd and an un-seasonal Mealy Redpoll joined them on the 24th. The final few days of

the month were uneventful, with the first Kittiwake on the 27th barely deserving a mention.

## **March**

With persistent heavy snowfall and strong winds during the early part of the month, birdable days were few and far between. The Buzzard from February lingered until mid- month and it wasn't until the 8th that another raptor arrived, this time a Hen Harrier. The first Skylarks were singing and Greylag Geese numbers remained stable at 92 individuals. The following day, a pair of Merlin bolted around the Island and a few Kittiwakes and Guillemots ashore reminded us that spring wasn't that far away. A first-winter Iceland Gull on the 13th was the first for nearly a month, while the expected mid-March Stonechat (a female), arrived on cue on 14th. A Peregrine and Kestrel arrived on 15th along with a second Stonechat and two Mistle Thrushes, while the Lapwing flock increased to 119. A Short-eared Owl was seen on 17th and there were two Rook the next day. Another week of snowfall and birds cleared out once more, however Lapwings were noted displaying from 19th and arrivals included a Sparrowhawk on 22nd and Wood Pigeon and Yellowhammer on the 23rd. A change to wet and windy weather from the South-west cleared the snow and produced a few birds which included a Little Grebe sheltering in South Harbour on the 24th, Oystercatchers increasing to 125, four Woodcock and 100 Blackbirds. As usual in gale force winds, Gulls figured with single Iceland and Glaucous noted on the 25th among the roosting '*Larid*' on Vaassetter.

With the wind swinging around to the East overnight, the next few days were something special as few birds turned into thousands in a matter of hours! From first light on 26th it was pretty obvious there was a huge fall taking place with the half a dozen bird bags taken on trap-round clearly not enough as there were birds everywhere and the traps were full of Thrushes and Finches! With limited coverage (there were only two staff present on the Island) all totals can only really be treated as estimates, as who knows what was missed. There were record spring counts of 163 Black-headed Gulls, 1500 Song and 26 Mistle Thrush, while the two Sandwich Terns in the Havens were the earliest Island record by a month! Three Grey Heron, 39 Ringed and 40 Golden Plover, 192 Lapwing, 65 Purple Sandpiper, 185 Turnstone, 42 Wood Pigeon, 700 Skylark, six White Wagtail, seven Dunnock, 20 Robin, 720 Blackbird, 42 Fieldfare, 75 Redwing, 220 Chaffinch, three Brambling, a single Greenfinch, 60 Snow Bunting and four Yellowhammer were all counted. Add to this three Iceland and two Glaucous Gulls and the years first rarity; a Black-bellied Dipper in the Vaadal and you have a pretty memorable, if slightly chaotic days birding. More records were broken the next day as birds continued to pile in. The Black-headed Gull record was smashed again as they increased to 330 and Wood Pigeons were up to 110. Chiffchaff and Goldcrest were both added to the



year list and amazingly, a third Sandwich Tern appeared in the Havens. Totals that day were of eight Grey Heron, 205 Lapwing, 36 Dunlin, 143 Snipe, 16 Woodcock, three Stock Dove, three Grey Wagtail, 75 Robin, 1200 Blackbird, 660 Song Thrush, 130 Chaffinch and single Knot, Black Redstart and Linnet. An 'Iceland' type Gull resembling a Kumliens was also seen briefly a couple of times, first at South Light and then on Vaasetter, but frustratingly flew off North before confirmation.

A quieter day followed on the 28th as numbers for most species dropped dramatically, with the exceptions of Lapwing which were now up to 418 and Woodcock to 26. The Wood Pigeon record went again on the 29th as numbers increased to 144 and a Crossbill flew over Barkland. An even more impressive fly-by the next day was the adult drake King Eider which passed by the south end of the Island mid-morning. Seen only by the fortunate Warden, this was the first record for the Isle since a long-staying individual in 1991. Less spectacular arrivals that day were the first Great Skua on the Hill and a flock of 40 Puffins in Finniquoy Bay. The 31st was a fine spring-like day producing plenty more migrants including a Red-throated Diver, Sand Martin, 75 Robin, 35 Goldcrest, 10 Hooded and single Carrion Crow, five Raven and a fine male Lapland Bunting near the Vaadal trap.

## April

On the whole, April was a quiet month with migration taking a while to get underway. There were plenty of leftovers from the March falls still on the Island on the 1st, but the only significant new arrival was a Waxwing at the Plantation. Another hefty fall the following day swelled Thrush numbers once more, with an impressive 2200 Blackbird, 670 Fieldfare and 1000 Redwing. Fifty Robin were also counted and we finally recorded our first Wheatear of the spring. The majority of birds had cleared out by the next day, but three Lapland Buntings were in Bulls Park and a pair of Peregrines were seen displaying to each other over the west cliffs – fuelling hopes of a breeding attempt. Reasonable numbers of birds remained over the following week, but the winds turned westerly and there were fewer new arrivals. A Buzzard on the 6th and eight Ravens on the 8th were the pick of the sightings during this time. A Long-tailed Duck on the 10th was followed next day by another year tick – a Sanderling in South Harbour. A Hawfinch at Barkland on 12th was the first highlight for a while, with a walk into the wet areas of the Island revealing two Jack Snipe and 109 Common Snipe. The 13th produced the highest count of Turnstone (258) and the first sizeable arrival of Wheatears (17). A Goldfinch on 14th was the first of four spring records of what is now a much more frequently encountered bird. 'Quacks' were the highlights of a generally dull day on 15th with two each of Shelduck and Tufted Duck.

Spring really arrived on 16th, with our first Swallow and 44 Wheatears counted. It wasn't until 19th we received our first Willow Warbler and a Ring Ouzel was also

new for the year. Tree Pipit and Siskin were the year ticks the following day. Favourable weather conditions on 21st produced the first Whimbrel, Arctic Skua and Blackcap of the year and good counts of 29 Song Thrush, 25 Chiffchaff, 14 Willow Warbler and 23 Goldcrest. A Moorhen trapped in the Gully on 23rd lingered at the Observatory well into May and a few Geese passed over, with six Barnacle and ten Pink-footed recorded. The North was the place to be on the 24th with a Grasshopper Warbler on the cliff-top at Lericum and House Martin around the lighthouse. However, best of all were three Shorelark seen briefly on the Airstrip. A Green Sandpiper was a year tick on 25th, with another addition the following day – a Redstart at Wirvie. There was early morning excitement on the 27th when Hollie found a female Great Tit on the peanut feeders in the Obs garden! A pair of Pintail in Da Water and single Common Sandpiper and Arctic Tern in North Haven was the highlight of the 28th and a second Great Tit was trapped at Barkland the following day. The month ended with a scattering of common Warblers and a male Bullfinch in Hjukni Geo.

## May

Unlike the previous year, May 2006 was distinctly lacking in rarities although it was perhaps one of the better seasons for common and scarce migrants with some good counts and heavy falls. The first day of the new month saw spring migration step up a gear with eight Tree Pipits, four Redstarts, three Whitethroats, five Blackcaps and a Pied Flycatcher all recorded. Five Rooks and singles of Sedge Warbler and Tree Sparrow on 2nd were a further sign that birds were continuing to arrive. There had been a continuous build up of 'Corvids' during the latter half of April and early May, numbers peaking on 3rd at 34 Carrion and eight Hooded Crows. An un-seasonal, but typically tame male Crossbill toured the Island during this time and the 4th was a busy day with a large arrival of migrants. Census produced an early Turtle Dove at Wester Lother three Long and two Short-eared Owls, 17 Tree Pipits, the first two Yellow Wagtails of the year, six Black Redstarts, four Whinchats, 191 Wheatears (mainly '*leuchorea*'), nine Ring Ouzels, four Lesser Whitethroats, 15 Chiffchaff, 39 Willow Warblers, three Spotted, two Pied Flycatchers and a Lesser Redpoll. Three Dotterel on the moor near Dronger on 5th were a pleasant surprise for their finder, although they couldn't be re-found later when looked for. A Wood Sandpiper in Da Water was much more obliging, remaining on the Island until 8th. A Short-toed Lark initially found at Leogh on 6th, re-located to the South Light football pitch next day where it was to remain until 11th. The first two Garden Warblers of the year were also found and another Shelduck was in South Harbour. The first Bluethroat in Da Water on 7th preceded a major arrival of migrants on the 8th. An exciting, yet frustrating day with migrants arriving throughout, it was hard to concentrate on census. Some impressive totals were reached with eight Common Sandpipers, eight Sand Martins, 94 Swallows, 24 House Martins, 23 Tree Pipits, 35 Redstarts, three Reed

Warblers 15 each of Common and Lesser Whitethroats, 40 Willow Warblers, 17 Pied Flycatchers and 18 Reed Buntings. Oddities included a Waxwing, six Bluethroats, Wood Warbler, two male Red-backed Shrikes, a male Ortolan and a Corn Bunting. The frustration arrived when a mobile Large Pipit sp. on the slopes at Dronger could not be 'nailed', especially as Tawny seemed to be the best fit! Following this, a male Stonechat found late in the day near the School showed most of the features of the Siberian race '*maura*', but the identification could not be clinched (despite many attempts) as the diagnostic under-wing colouration was not seen and Common Stonechat of the race '*rubicola*' could not be ruled out.

Most birds from the fall had moved on by the following morning, although there were now three male Red-backed Shrikes and a Quail was new for the year. With almost continuous easterlies, it was no surprise that new birds arrived on the 10th as old ones moved on. A Hawfinch was in the dense cover at Schoolton, five Dotterel were on the summit of Ward Hill and the first Cuckoo of the year was at Gunnawark. Also of note were a Jack Snipe, Wood Sandpiper, Turtle Dove, 27 House Martin, eight Black Redstart, 11 Whinchat, 145 Wheatear, 22 Whitethroat, 11 Blackcap, Willow Warblers back up to 40 and Spotted Flycatcher to ten. A Red-throated Pipit performed well early on 11th in the North Park and Gilsetter area and supporting cast included the first Wryneck of the spring around South Harbour, two Barnacle Geese, male Hen Harrier and a Lapland Bunting. The next day produced yet another year tick – this time in the form of a Shoveler on the Chalet pond. Another Wryneck was on the west cliffs on 13th and the second Short-toed Lark of the year was at Wirvie, remaining until 16th. A fine sight on 14th was of three Ospreys heading north together. A few quieter days followed but were quickly forgotten when after lunch on 16th the second Scops Owl for Fair Isle was trapped in the Gully. Admired by birders and islanders alike, the encounter was all too brief as upon release it flew down into Mavers Geo not to be seen again. With the wind back in the east, a repeat afternoon census revealed little, but for two Green Sandpipers and a Red-backed Shrike. Forty-seven Barnacle Geese were on Bunness for a few days from 17th and more migrant passerines arrived with totals of five Common Sandpipers, 90 Swallow, 48 House Martins, 30 Tree Pipits and 11 Whinchats. However, the highlight was a male Marsh Harrier which passed through in the evening. Birders on the *Good Shepherd IV* produced a Storm Petrel on 19th, with an Icterine Warbler and two un-seasonal Fieldfares the pick of birds on land. A male Red-backed Shrike on 20th was the best bird for a few days, until yet another Short-toed Lark was glimpsed briefly on the Midway rig on 23rd. The following day, a second male Ortolan of the spring was on the cliffs at Wester Lother, a Bluethroat frequented the Homisdale burns and a late Stonechat was at Schoolton. An adult Long-tailed Skua was harassed by the local Arctics and driven down into Furse early on 25th before heading off North and the spring's highest count of Oystercatchers was made of 189.

The final week continued to produce the occasional good bird, with a Short-toed Lark on the Upper Stoneybrek rig on 26th. Remaining until 30th this was perhaps the individual seen briefly three days previously. Singles of Bluethroat (27th-31st) and Red-backed Shrike (28th-31st) were logged, along with the months only Common Rosefinch (30th-31st). A female Marsh Harrier lingered on the Rippack for a few days from 28th, while a sea-watch from Buness on 30th was surprisingly productive, with two adult Pomarine Skuas and two Manx Shearwaters.

## June

The first few days of the month were quiet with the onset of light westerly winds and sea-bird work taking priority, but a Barnacle Goose found loitering on Greenholm during a routine check of the Puffins on the 1st was unusual and a new female Red-backed Shrike was seen on 2nd. A superb sub-adult Long-tailed Skua, which lingered for an hour at Johnny's Peats on the evening of 4th was well received, as was the Osprey that toured the Isle late evening the following day. Light easterly winds on 6th dropped in a few more birds, the highlight being a female Subalpine Warbler discovered near Hesti Geo in the afternoon. Meanwhile, a male Red-backed Shrike at Field Ditch, complete with white primary patch, caused some debate as to how far east it had perhaps originated. A Common Rosefinch was also seen and a few more hirundines were noted, with 30 Swallows and 12 House Martins, while the Collared Dove flock reached 14 birds – the highest count of the spring. A Sandwich Tern was in the Buness Arctic Tern colony on 8th and a Grey-headed Wagtail flew over. A Marsh Warbler (11th), signalled the start of a few good days birding, with the few birders on the island turning up a Short-toed Lark on the Rippack, Icterine Warbler at the Observatory and two Rosefinches the following day. Two Marsh Warblers were found on the 13th and there was yet another male Red-backed Shrike. An un-seasonal Redwing was seen on the 14th, but perhaps the strangest sighting of the month was the male Bullfinch that spent a few days around the Plantation.

There was frustration aplenty during the evening of the 15th when a River Warbler was sound-recorded at Schoolton, then promptly stopped singing and failed to show once a crowd had assembled. Alarm clocks were set for an early morning stakeout of the Schoolton Rosa bushes, but once again there was no joy. However, a brief Common Nightingale at Shirva provided a little consolation for one observer and a Hobby was found in the vicinity of Boini Mire, with a singing Water Rail at the same site that evening. Numbers of Lesser Black-backed Gulls were increasing throughout the month and peaked with 149 on the 17th, although the prolonged passage into early July would suggest many more passed through the Isle. The month continued to produce a few un-seasonal migrants which included a record flock of 26 Canada Geese, which settled in the Leogh arca from 18th and a first-summer Iceland Gull with the Gulls in the South for a few days from 20th.

By far the brightest bird of the spring was the Bee-Eater which performed brilliantly at Dutfield on 22nd, having been seen first near Pund. Possibly on the Isle since 20th, this stunning bird was the first Island record since 1982! A new Marsh Warbler was at Barkland the same day. A Dark-bellied Brent Goose with the Gulls on Meoness for two days from 24th was another unusual summer sighting and as the month drew to a close there were no significant sightings as our attention turned to Seabird work.

## July

The 1st was unexpectedly lively with a Tree Sparrow outside the Observatory and Short-eared Owl at Pund. A Rosefinch trapped at Barkland the following day added to the early summer scarcities whilst an adult Glaucous Gull passing over the centre of the Island was more of a surprise. There was a Sandwich Tern the same day along with a fly-by Red-throated Diver. A Storm Petrel ringing session at the Kirn O'Skroo on the 4th resulted in eight birds being trapped and ringed. There were a couple of Crossbill sightings (two on 9th and four on 12th), but as last year, no 'invasion'. Two Swifts were noted at Wester Lothar during a seabird ringing drop on the 10th and a Chaffinch was trapped the following day. A few Waders were on the move from the third week with two Bar-tailed Godwits on the 20th and counts of 78 Turnstone and 30 Redshank on 23rd, with single figure totals of Knot, Sanderling and Dunlin. The first Green Sandpiper of the autumn was seen on the 24th, with a second bird present the next day. A Leach's Petrel trapped overnight on 25th during a routine 'Stormie' session was the first of three caught. Another 'capture' that day was an un-seasonal Quail found by one of the local cats! Waders continued to figure with a good count of 31 Sanderling on 29th reflecting an influx of the species into Shetland. There were 18 Lapwing and a Greenshank the same day while an immature Peregrine was seen all over the Island. Singles of Willow and Garden Warblers on the last couple of days of the month were a hopeful sign that autumn passerine passage was about to start.

## August

The month started slowly to say the least, with a Woodpigeon on the 3rd the surprising highlight of the first few days. A return to census the following day could only produce a fly-by Red-throated Diver. A few *hirundines* were on the move on the 5th with 15 Swallows and a single House Martin logged. The following day, there were six Willow Warblers scattered around the Isle and a Common Sandpiper, while 179 Oystercatchers represented the highest count of the autumn. The first surprise of the month was an exceptionally early Woodcock around the trapping area from 8th, with a Ruff on the 10th more predictable. An arrival of passerines the next day included singles of Marsh, Icterine and Barred Warbler along with 200 Wheatears and 20 Willow Warblers, followed by the first Rosefinch of the autumn on 12th. There was a Reed Warbler on the 13th and a

Wood Warbler was trapped on the 14th while two Crossbills flew over. It was a good autumn for '*Locustella's*' with the first on 15th, which was only ever going to be a Grasshopper Warbler so early in the autumn. Two Greenshank, a Cuckoo, 130 Wheatears and three Wood Warblers were the pick of the new arrivals on the 17th. The 140 Storm Petrels trapped and ringed at South Light that night was the highest total of the year by quite some distance. The 18th started off quietly, despite a moderate easterly wind, with the morning census producing little. It soon developed into one of the most exciting days of the autumn as, during the early part off the afternoon while weeding some newly planted crops in the south, Garden and Willow Warblers seemed to be appearing everywhere. It was perhaps not surprising when a Greenish Warbler was found mid-afternoon at Field and less than an hour later a juvenile Woodchat Shrike, the first since 1992, was located on the fences at Gorsons Geo. Bodies were scrambled and a frantic search of the south of the Isle after tea produced minimum counts of four Barred, 25 Garden and 100 Willow Warblers before dark, although the actual totals were probably much higher. A foggy morning on 19th meant census was pushed back to the afternoon when visibility improved. There was clearly still a lot around with birds arriving in showery conditions. Two Wrynecks were found, along with a Red-backed Shrike and a Red-breasted Flycatcher was on the West cliffs. The Woodchat remained and upon closer inspection appeared to show many features of the middle-eastern race '*niloticus*', potentially only the second British record following a similar looking bird on Shetland in 2003. Totals for the day were a single Common and three Green Sandpipers, four Whinchats, 200 Wheatears, five Barred, 80 Garden, 160 Willow, eight Wood Warblers and five Pied Flycatchers. A record flock of 19 Black-tailed Godwits was the highlight of the 20th, a day of extensive Wader movement with 18 Whimbrel, ten Curlew and three each of Greenshank and Green Sandpiper. Passerine numbers were a little lower as birds moved on, but there were still 125 Willow and 60 Garden Warblers plus two Grasshopper Warblers and two Red-backed Shrikes. With westerly winds set in, 11 Grey Herons and three Swifts on 21st, and 23 Teal on 22nd were the best those days had to offer as common migrant numbers dwindled further. It wasn't until the 25th when we received another flurry of birds as easterly winds kicked in once more. Birds arrived throughout the day with a typically brief Corncrake in Schoolton Ditch and Marsh Warbler at Hesti Geo and later at Skerryholm. Scarce migrant numbers were bolstered slightly with five Wrynecks, six Barred Warblers and four Rosefinch (all trapped). An evening stroll revealed more new birds, with a Red-backed Shrike on the Rippack and the autumn's second Greenish Warbler at Upper Stoneybrek just before dark.

Not much to report the following day but an afternoon census on 27th produced another rare bird for the Island, a Melodious Warbler at Setter- only our 14th record of this much more regular south coast migrant. A second Marsh Warbler appeared

in the Walli Burn, there was another Red-backed Shrike and Rosefinch numbers increased to six. A Common Buzzard on the 28th wasn't really the rare raptor we had all hoped for and as the weather turned blustery sea-watching took precedence over the following two days with four Sooty Shearwaters seen on the 29th and five Sooty and a single Manx the next day. A small arrival of 20 or so Willow Warblers on the 31st were a fitting end to a month in which this species dominated with over 100 birds trapped and ringed.

## September

A few 'hangers on' from August seen on the 1st were the Melodious Warbler, just one Barred Warbler, a Red-backed Shrike and three Rosefinch. New arrivals were limited to three Whimbrel and three Spotted Flycatchers, while a Common Redpoll in the North was the first of the autumn. As a light easterly air-stream returned from the 2nd, new birds were found. Our second Woodchat Shrike of the year arrived at Quoy, where it was to remain until 13th, while five Barred Warblers was obviously an increase. Also present were a Tree Sparrow and Lesser Redpoll while three Sooty Shearwaters were seen on the sea. A flyover Citrine Wagtail, first seen at Shirva late evening of the 3rd led everyone on a merry dance for a few days but was eventually pinned down at Da Water and then near the Observatory, where it lingered until 12th. There were two Wrynecks the same day, plus a House Martin and two Reed Warblers, but more impressive by far was the now 12-strong flock of Tree Sparrows at Utra! Difficult conditions followed as blustery South-westerly winds kicked in, so a look at the sea on 4th was just about the only birding possibility. Six Sooty and a single Manx Shearwater were little reward for plenty of effort. Light Northerlies and sunshine were surprisingly productive on the 7th with different Oortolans on the cliffs at Klingers Geo (until the following day) and Dronger respectively. Add to this seven Grey Heron, five Tree Pipits, three Redstart, five Lesser Whitethroat, 13 Garden, two Wood, 42 Willow Warbler and four Pied Flycatcher to make a pretty reasonable days birding. The next few days were easily forgettable with barely a bird on the Island but for a Marsh Warbler (9th-11th), Red-backed Shrike (11th), an Icterine Warbler and eight Rosefinches (12th) the only exceptions. Twite numbers were on the increase from early on in the month, 200 being the highest count on 11th, with 41 White Wagtails on 13th also notable. Thick fog during the morning of 14th postponed census to the afternoon but nonetheless the Islands first autumn Garganey, a juvenile, was flushed off Field Pond a couple of times to subsequently vanish into the gloom, although it did remain until 21st allowing most to catch up with it. With the wind shifting late afternoon from South-east to north-east, the arrival of a Red-breasted Flycatcher and two Wrynecks in the Springfield area were an encouraging sign that things might be about to "kick-off". The morning of the 15th was looking like being a complete 'washout', with torrential rain and thick fog all morning. Fortunately a few brave souls headed out and news was quickly

received by those computer/arm-chair bound at the Obs of a '*Locustella*' Warbler beside the road at Setter. The bird was wet and couldn't be confidently identified, so a mist net was fetched and after half an hour the bird was caught and confirmed as a Lanceolated Warbler. After lunch the fun really started – a Pechora Pipit was found in grassy fields near Midway, but clearly had only just arrived as it was mobile and disappeared before any other birders (all 10 of them!) could get there. The subsequent search turned up a Yellow-breasted Bunting in the Skaddan crop and with the Pechora re-found shortly after in Schoolton Ditch, people were soon running in all directions! After the mid-afternoon chaos, census was resumed and a second Lanceolated Warbler was found in thick grass between Pund and Horstibrekkas just before dinner. The term 'classic' is very much overused these days but this 'Lancy' was just that, performing superbly as it ran in mouse-like fashion through the grass at close range. With a strong supporting cast of two Wrynecks, two Yellow-browed Warblers and an Ortolan, the day really summed up Fair Isle at its best. There were plenty of common migrants too, with two Shoveler, 22 Cormorant, nine Grey Heron, seven Kestrel, 30 Dunlin, four Little Stint (year tick), 12 Ruff, Spotted Redshank (year tick), 177 Common Gull, Sand Martin, seven Swallow, 11 Tree Pipit, two Reed Warbler, 15 Garden Warbler, five Pied Flycatcher, three Spotted Flycatcher and the first Brambling of the autumn.

Thick fog the next day hampered the mornings birding once again but didn't prevent the discovery (with some assistance from a big stick!) of a cracking Aquatic Warbler in Boini Mire just before lunch. The bird was trapped and ringed as the species is of International concern and returned to Boini, where it remained for the rest of the day. Both the Pechora Pipit and Yellow-breasted Bunting were both still present (the former was to remain for over a week) but neither Lanceolated Warbler could be found. Wildfowl increased, with 35 Wigeon and 37 Teal counted. Three Common Sandpipers were on northern beaches and Whinchats increased to ten. It was 'déjà vu' for the Warden on the 18th when he discovered an Olive-backed Pipit on the West cliffs at North Naaversgill for the second year in a row! In clear conditions, 77 Cormorant passed over and a late Swift was scrutinised aplenty. A mobile Buff-breasted Sandpiper commuted between Meoness and the Rippack in the morning of 19th, but with a south-westerly gale whipping up, the afternoon was practically un-birdable. The van was called upon to act as a sea-watching hide and somehow we managed to log two Leach's and eight Storm Petrels passing by the rocks, just off South Light. A Corncrake did its best to hide in the Barkland garden on the 21st and the Aquatic Warbler was surprisingly re-discovered in Boini Mire. The autumn's second Olive-backed Pipit in South Raeva was a nice birthday present for one Assistant Warden and there was a good supporting cast with a Little Bunting on the cliffs at Bergaroo and a late afternoon arrival of Yellow-browed Warblers with seven in all.



The first few Geese passed through, with eight each of Greylag and Barnacle, the latter in the company of a juvenile Shelduck! Perhaps the most interesting bird of the day was an eclipse drake Eider seen off Furse which exhibited a bright orangey- yellow bill! A glorious sunny day on the 23rd produced two quality fly-overs – a Short-toed Lark flew south over the Rippack mid-morning, followed an hour later by a dark-morph juvenile Honey Buzzard which flew straight through the middle of the Island and out to sea over Meoness. There were also 34 Barnacle Geese, a late Sandwich Tern, single Turtle Dove, 14 Whinchat and 20 Siskin. A Red-backed Shrike at Leogh was the next new arrival on the 24th and there was also a smattering of common warblers and over 100 Chaffinch. A typically approachable Dotterel at Tarryfield the next day was a surprise discovery given the weather conditions – thick ‘Pea Soup’. A Grey Plover in the North on the 26th was, as usual, our only record of the year, while a Grasshopper Warbler in Da Water caused the usual bit of fun until seen well. Geese had been on the move since the middle of the month, with both Pink-footed (190) and Barnacle (160) peaking on 27th in what was a poor year for the two species. Another Honey Buzzard was seen by many around the middle of the Island and a Short-toed Lark was found on Meoness. It was a raptor fest on the 28th with four Sparrowhawk and five Merlin terrorising the 85 Golden Plovers on the Isle. Seventy-five Siskins was the highest count of the year with 14 Swallow and three Pied Flycatchers also of note. An Ortolan was at North Light on the 29th, while a sea-watch from the opposite end of the Island produced an Osprey and a second-winter Iceland Gull. In addition, a Slavonian Grebe was in Furse and the pick of migrants on land included a Sand Martin, eight Tree Pipits, 42 Wheatear and a single Reed Warbler. The final day of the month saw no rarities but there was a large arrival of common migrants with totals of 72 Wigeon, 11 Grey Heron, 13 Jack Snipe, 144 Snipe, four Wood Pigeon, four Short-eared Owl, eight Dunnock, 19 Robin, 100 Wheatear, eight Garden Warbler, 34 Blackcap, seven Chiffchaff and five Lapland Buntings. Sea-watchers had a decent day with 14 Sooty Shearwaters, a Great Northern Diver and a late Arctic Skua, while the surprise rarity of the day was yet another duck – a drake Gadwall on the scrape at Utra.

## October

The month began with little of note but for a Corncrake at Shirva and a Grey-headed Wagtail, the latter lingering on the island until the 20th. The drake Gadwall was still on the scrape and as is typical of a quiet day, there was renewed interest in the ‘yellow-billed’ Eider which had now moved to the Havens, particularly as the scapulars seemed to exhibit the ‘sails’ of the Northern race ‘*borealis*’. Autumn on Fair Isle rarely show any trends, but 2006 will have to go down as ‘year of the Duck’ with even rarer quack’s still to come! A flock of 18 Grey Herons were on Meoness on the 2nd, while a juvenile Hen Harrier also arrived, causing much debate due to it’s particularly bright orange underparts (another sign of quiet

times – we needed a rare bird fast!) Chaffinch numbers increased to 50, a Common Rosefinch was at Kenaby and the eight Lapland Buntings together on the Rippack was the highest count of the year. A temporary rest-bite from insanity was found just before the sheep round up on the 3rd, with a smart Rustic Bunting which lingered around (and superbly dodged on numerous occasions) the Vaadal trap. An adult Glaucous Gull also appeared outside the Observatory and lingered in the north for a few days. Sea-watchers maintained their vigil at South Light logging seven Long-tailed Ducks, 24 Kittiwakes and the first two Little Auks of the autumn. Those watching the land had to be content with yet another Grasshopper Warbler, this time at Midway. The four Yellow-browed Warblers on the 5th was the highest day count in October. There were now three immature Hen Harriers on the Island plus a Stonechat. At sea, 11 Long-tailed Ducks and two Great Northern Divers passed by. With the onset of strong South-westerly winds for about a week, we would all have given up and gone home if a smart juvenile White-rumped Sandpiper hadn't arrived on the Utra scrape on the 7th. Only the fourth record for Fair Isle the bird toured most water bodies but rarely settled and seemed like the only bird on the Island for several days! A return to easterlies on the 10th brought instant results with a Red-breasted Flycatcher caught on the morning trap-round and the third (and brightest) Olive-backed Pipit of the autumn was briefly near the Water Works and subsequently at the 'OBP' hotspot that is South Naaversgill! In gale force easterly winds there was a good arrival of common migrants the following day with five Goldeneye and a high count of 50 Jack Snipe. The first significant arrival of Thrushes was obvious with 70 Blackbird and 7000 Redwing. Thirty-five Blackcaps and 30 Goldcrests were sheltering on the cliffs and there was a Little Bunting briefly on the track at Koolin before disappearing into the wind. The 12th was a much calmer day enabling us to find and count the migrants which had presumably arrived the day before. Totals for the day were three Tufted Duck, a single Common Scoter, 24 Jack Snipe, 12 Woodcock, 96 Common Gull, late singles of Arctic Tern and Turtle Dove, 26 Dunnock, an autumn high of 60 Robin, 17 Ring Ouzel, 115 Blackbird, 400 Song Thrush, Redwing down to 4400, yet another Grasshopper Warbler, 120 Blackcap, 20 Chaffinch and 27 Brambling. Oddities that day were a late Wryneck at North Shirva, a second Rosefinch joining the seemingly resident bird at Kenaby and, late in the day, an obliging Red-throated Pipit at Easter Lother. The Brambling flock at Quoy increased to 39 the next day and the last Reed Warbler of the year was in Hjukni Geo. Yet another Olive-backed Pipit was found on the 15th, this time at Quoy and scarcities included a Red-breasted Flycatcher on Buness, Short-toed Lark at Pund and (finally) an autumn Bluethroat at Setter. Also recorded were a Shoveler (which lingered into November) and seven Reed Buntings – the highest count of the autumn. Twenty-six Hooded and three Carrion Crows on the 16th were indicative of some 'corvid' passage, but otherwise the day was largely forgettable.

Early morning on the 17th things were looking promising, with both a fly-over Little Bunting at Barkland and a new Red-breasted Flycatcher trapped in the Gully. Early promise fizzled out into disappointment as the only other birds of note were a single Lesser Redpoll, and an increase in Yellow-browed Warblers to four. A clear morning followed bringing hordes of Greylag Geese to the Isle, with an estimated total and new record count of at least 2100 birds. This is, perhaps an under-estimate as this was the number of birds grounded or in the air at one time late afternoon – how many flocks continued south over the Isle in between will never be known! In a day dominated by non-passerines, there were also 17 Pink-footed Geese, 46 Wigeon, 11 Long-tailed Duck, five Goldeneye, four Red-throated and five Great Northern Divers, a Sooty Shearwater, Knot, 16 Purple Sandpiper and a late Whimbrel. Less than half the ‘Greylags’ remained the following day but there were now 32 ‘Pink-feet’. Five Short-eared Owls were flushed from Da Water and four Peregrines, seen in the air at the same time, must have been quite a sight. Passerines included a Bluethroat and a late Lesser Whitethroat which unfortunately couldn’t be turned into one of the more interesting races (we tried!). Likewise a Yellowhammer in the Midway oats definitely wasn’t the Pine Bunting it should have been! A Bean Goose with the ‘herd’ on Meoness disappeared into the fog once flushed on the 20th, not to be seen again. Easterly winds followed, but heavy rain all day made birding difficult and the morning produced just a first- winter Glaucous Gull and Jackdaw – both in the North. Later on however, a large Pipit giving ‘buzzing’ calls, appearing short-tailed and with a ‘jizz’ much like a Meadow Pipit was found just before dark in the fields at Shirva. Initially thought to be a Blyth’s by the finder, it was far too easily dismissed as just a Richard’s given the poor views when it began to call less favourably. The Pipit was flushed again the following morning and subsequently viewed and photographed in the afternoon, with Blyth’s seeming like the most favourable identification, although diagnostic features were lacking. Three Whooper Swans flew south and there were at least seven Short-eared Owls on the Isle while there was an increase in migrants on the cliffs with 52 Blackcaps and 70 Goldcrests present. The Pipit was finally ‘nailed’ as a Blyth’s on the 23rd and when seen to be favouring a grassy area between Quoy and Schoolton, it was expertly caught and ringed. Two Long-eared Owls that day was the highest count of the autumn. Finally, the rarities arrived with a cracking ‘hornemanni’ Arctic Redpoll at Stoneybrek mid-morning on the 25th, trapped at Barkland a few hours later. Sea-watchers logged eight Long-tailed Ducks and 18 Little Auks, while 135 Snow Buntings was reflective of the cool winter conditions. Surprise of the day however was a Thrush Nightingale found late afternoon in the Havens by the Warden’s 13 year old son. A tricky individual to identify in the field, once it was trapped and ringed, the identification was confirmed and it became the Island’s latest record of the species by over three weeks!

A horrendous day of gales and torrential rain on the 26th resulted in no sightings,

other than those from the Observatory lounge! It was back to the sea the following day with singles of Common and Velvet Scoter, Great Northern Diver and a very late Manx Shearwater, plus 50 Kittiwake and 29 Little Auks. The Thrush Nightingale somehow survived the storm, while a Waxwing and two Tree Sparrows were the only other birds of note on land. On 28th, a Slavonian Grebe was in the Havens and 40 Kittiwakes and 50 Little Auks passed South Light. There was a small arrival of Thrushes on land with 200 Blackbird, 650 Fieldfare and 700 Redwing counted. A Black-throated Diver passing close offshore was just rewards for the sea-watchers' persistence on 29th. Stormy conditions once again on the 30th resulted in thousands of Gulls taking shelter on the Island and it was no surprise when three Glaucous were found among them. Quite un-expected though was an obliging second '*hornemanni*' Arctic Redpoll between the fog-horn and North Light. A count of the Gulls the next day resulted in totals of 2500 Herring and 1500 Greater Black-backed. Turnstone numbers were up to 148 and a Bluethroat lingered at Skerryholm.

## November

The month opened with a surprise first for the island – a male American Black Duck!! It joined up with a group of Mallards and lingered around the south of the isle until 5th. The 1st also produced single Long-eared Owl, Waxwing, Lapland Bunting and 66 Snow Bunting. A Little Grebe was in South Harbour on 2nd when Snow Buntings reached 90. Greylags peaked at 188 on 3rd but numbers never fell below 100 all month and the *borealis* Northern Eider also remained. The Bluethroat remained until 7th but as the weather turned wintry, migration rapidly petered out after the first week. The last Oystercatcher departed on 3rd but a handful of Golden Plover, Lapwing, Jack Snipe, Purple Sandpiper, Woodcock and Curlew were noted throughout with higher numbers of Common Snipe (140), Redshank (40) and Turnstone (110) also. Storm-force winds on 11th encouraged a large number of gulls to seek shelter on the isle with 1700 Herring and 1300 Great Black-backed counted. White-winged gulls were noted infrequently with peak counts of just three Glaucous and two Iceland Gulls whilst Little Auks were occasionally seen offshore. A Blackcap (20th), Waxwing (25th), Black Redstart (21st-25th) and a '*tristis*' Chiffchaff (26th-27th) were the more unusual sightings of the last two weeks of the month, with small numbers of thrushes, two Dunnocks and eight Robins recorded up to the 25th. Up to 53 Snow Buntings were also recorded.

## December

As Fair Isle entered the depths of winter, there were very few new arrivals. A flock of 18 Barnacle Geese and a Pink-footed Goose joined the Greylag flock (which peaked at 140 on 23rd). Occasional Long-tailed Duck and Goldeneye were seen and a Grey Heron (from 19th). The wintering waders were joined by three

Oystercatchers on the final day of the year whilst two Moorhens joined the four Water Rails on the Chalet pond. One or two Glaucous Gulls and Iceland Gulls were seen regularly throughout and the occasional Little Auk offshore. A Long-eared Owl (15th – 25th), a Skylark, two Meadow Pipits, a Dunnock, nine Robins, a Chaffinch and a Mealy Redpoll were all brave enough to spend time on the island during December, joining the small flock of Thrushes (max. 50 Blackbird, 35 Fieldfare and 60 Redwing), 55 Twite and 32 Snow Buntings all happy to see in the New Year.

# First and Last Dates for Summer Migrants 2006

*Deryk Shaw and Alan Bull*

The species in the table below occur as both spring and autumn migrants to Fair Isle. Where available, the year of the particular sighting has also been included.

Species	Earliest	Earliest in 2006	Latest	Latest in 2006
Quail	30.04.61	09.05	13.10.89	25.07
Osprey	25.04.66	14.05	04.11.35	29.09
Corncrake	10.04.66	—	03.11.77	01.10
Dotterel	25.04.73	05.05	06.11.76	26.09
Whimbrel	15.04.72	21.04	12.12. pre FIBO	20.10
Green Sandpiper	08.04.79	25.04	12.11.70	29.08
Common Sandpiper	05.04.83	28.04	02.11. pre FIBO	01.10
Arctic Skua	04.04.88	21.04	25.10.	15.10
Great Skua	17.03. pre 80	30.03	16.11.	28.10
LBB Gull	06.03.85	26.03	12.12.57	22.09
Sandwich Tern	30.04.01	26.03*	18.09.77	23.09*
Common Tern	25.04.83	30.04	18.10.75	19.09
Arctic Tern	No data	28.04	30.10.	12.10
Turtle Dove	23.04.71	04.05	01.11.82	15.10
Cuckoo	17.04.87	10.05	08.10.77	17.08
Swift	29.04.01	17.05	26.10.75	18.09
Wryneck	18.04.81	11.05	17.10.74	12.10
Sand Martin	02.04.89	31.03*	19.10.78	01.10
Swallow	31.03.02	16.04	02.11.84	20.10
House Martin	19.04.	24.04	14.11.	15.09
Tree Pipit	14.04. pre 63	20.04	02.11. pre 63	17.10
Red-throated Pipit	08.05.36	11.05	01.11. pre FIBO	15.10
Yellow Wagtail	25.03.54	04.05	20.11.57	20.10
Pied Wagtail	20.02.03	12.02*	17.11.	28.10
Bluethroat	22.03. pre 63	07.05	13.11.83	07.11
Black Redstart	01.03.	27.03	22.12.86	25.11
Redstart	09.04. pre 63	26.04	11.11.81	12.10
Whinchat	14.04.81	02.05	26.11.90	24.10
Northern Wheatear	13.03. pre 59	02.04	19.11.59	03.11
Ring Ouzel	16.03.88	19.04	19.12. pre FIBO	30.10
Grasshopper Warbler	07.04.02	24.04	23.10.00	12.10
Sedge Warbler	19.04.87	02.05	11.11.75	23.09
Marsh Warbler	22.05.84	11.06	06.10. pre 63	11.09
Reed Warbler	28.04.01	08.05	31.10.80	13.10
Icterine Warbler	13.05.99	19.05	13.10.76	12.09
Subalpine Warbler	20.04.00	06.06	04.10.79	—
Lesser Whitethroat	20.04.	04.05	08.11.	25.10
Whitethroat	11.04. pre 59	01.05	21.10.78	19.10
Garden Warbler	21.04.68	06.05	20.11.76	20.10
Blackcap	07.04.	21.04	20.12.	20.11
Wood Warbler	14.04.81	08.05	06.10.73	20.09
Chiffchaff	12.03.	27.03	No data	27.11
Willow Warbler	03.04.81	19.04	23.11.27	02.10
Goldcrest	27.02	27.03	19.12.03	02.11
Spotted Flycatcher	20.04.49	03.05	26.10.85	29.09
Pied Flycatcher	21.04.83	01.05	29.10.85	11.10
Red-backed Shrike	04.05.84	08.05	08.11.93	24.09
Common Rosefinch	08.05.77	30.05	30.11.91	17.10
Ortolan Bunting	26.04.64	08.05	01.11.00	29.09
Rustic Bunting	25.04.80	—	08.11.75	05.10
Little Bunting	04.04.58	—	19.11.75	17.10
* denotes new record				

# SYSTEMATIC LIST 2006

*Paul Baxter, Alan Bull & Deryk Shaw*

## 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

## Abbreviations

+	all records documented
AIA	Apparently Incubating Adult
AON	Apparently Occupied Nest
BBRC	<i>British Birds</i> Rarities Committee
BOURC	British Ornithologists' Union Records Committee
BTO	British Trust for Ornithology
JNCC	Joint Nature Conservation Committee
SBCRC	Shetland Bird Club Records Committee
SOTEAG	Shetland Oil Terminal Environmental Advisory Group

Species considered by the British Birds rarities Committee (BBRC), Scottish Birds Records Committee (SBRC) or Shetland Bird Club Records Committee (SBCRC) are followed by a statement as to whether records have been accepted or are still under consideration.

**+MUTE SWAN** *Cygnus olor*

### ***Vagrant; six previous records***

A single bird flew north over the island on 17th December. The first record since 2001.

**+WHOOPE SWAN** *Cygnus cygnus*

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

The only record during the first half of the year was of a single adult on 17th January until 19th February, when it was joined by a second bird on the latter date. Autumn records were very few. The first were three on 22nd October, followed by birds on 25th (2), 27th (3) and 28th (4). A group of nine on 6th November was the last of the year.

**+BEAN GOOSE** *Anser fabalis*

***Vagrant; approximately 33 previous records (approx. 77 individuals)***

A single bird was present on 20th September, but was not assigned to race.

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

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

Two on 26th January were the only record until the 17th April when a single bird arrived and remained on the island until 16th May. The only other spring count was of ten birds on 23rd April. The first of the autumn period were six on 10th September, although then followed a fortnight gap until the next birds arrived, with 191 recorded on 27th, the highest count of the autumn. Smaller numbers (generally less than 25 birds, maximum 36) were recorded irregularly until the 8th November. There were no further sightings until a single bird arrived on 23rd December and remained until the end of the year.

**GREYLAG GOOSE** *Anser anser*

***Common spring and autumn migrant***

The wintering flock remained on the island from 2005, involving c.60 individuals with numbers dwindling to 28 by the 2nd February. Numbers during February were generally less than 50, although 107 were present on 19th. During March, numbers of Greylag were consistently higher, with peak counts of 92 on 7th and 98 on 28th. April saw peak turnover of birds with several counts in excess of 100, although numbers were generally less than 50 towards the end of the month. Small numbers were still present on the island in May, although these were fewer than ten birds. There were sporadic sightings in June, including 12 on 13th and five on 28th. Early autumn produced several records, with 11 birds from two dates in August and 20 birds from four dates in September. Numbers increased in October with 95 on 4th and 51 on 8th being the highest counts from the first half of the month. Daily totals were typically less than 50 birds until 18th, when a huge arrival saw a total of 2100 birds; the highest island count. Numbers had decreased to 1000 on 20th and 300 by 27th. During November and December, 100-150 birds were present on the island.



**+CANADA GOOSE** *Branta canadensis*

***Rare spring visitor; 23 previous records (41 individuals)***

Recorded for the sixth consecutive year. Singles were present on 9th January and 17th May and a flock of 26 were present at the south end on 18th-20th June, the largest group recorded on the island.

**BARNACLE GOOSE** *Branta leucopsis*

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

The first of the year were recorded in April, with six on 23rd and five on 30th. The only other multiple spring count was of 47 on 17th-18th May (the third highest spring count). Additionally, single birds were recorded on several dates throughout May until 2nd June. The first of the autumn were a group of eight on 23rd September, after which numbers increased, with counts of 46 on 24th and 160 on 27th. Over 100 birds remained on the island until the end of the month. Counts were sporadic during October and during the first fortnight, birds were recorded on just eight days, peaking at 39 on 13th. Fewer than ten birds remained on the island during the latter half of the month, with three birds remaining until 3rd November. A single bird arrived on 18th December and stayed into 2007.

**+BRENT GOOSE** *Branta bernicla*

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

A single bird (of the dark-bellied race *B.b.bernicla*) on the unseasonable date of 24th-25th June was the only sighting of the year.

**+SHELDUCK** *Tadorna tadorna*

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

A very good spring, with perhaps ten individuals involved. Pairs were seen on 15th & 25th April and 15th & 17th May, with additional singles on 27th-30th April and 6th-7th May. The sole autumn record concerned a single on 22nd September.

**EURASIAN WIGEON** *Anas penelope*

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

Six on 26th January were the first of the year and the only sighting until early March. Six birds on 4th March were followed by three on 22nd-23rd March and a single ♂ on 26th-28th. Counts remained low during April with five records totalling six birds. During May, there were scattered records of between one and three birds on ten dates, the last occurring on 29th. The first autumn birds involved three on 29th August. Thereafter, birds were recorded daily on the island throughout the autumn until mid-November. During early September, numbers remained low with less than 20 birds, but increased as the month progressed, reaching a peak of 72 on 30th. Numbers in October remained between 10-40 birds

until the final week, with no count thereafter exceeding 11 birds. Six birds on 1st November had decreased to a single by 12th, the last record of the year.

**+GADWALL** *Anas strepera*

***Rare spring and autumn migrant; 34 previous records (54 individuals)***

A ♂ remained on the island from 30th September until 6th October. The first record since September 2000.

**EURASIAN TEAL** *Anas crecca*

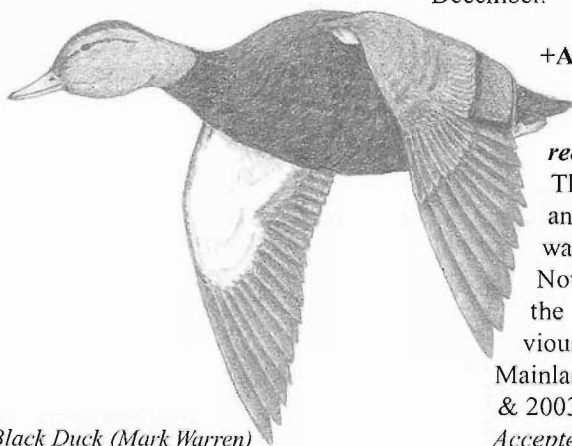
***Frequent spring and autumn migrant, scarce in winter***

Small numbers were recorded during the winter months, with a maximum of seven birds during January and five during February. Sightings became more regular during spring passage with ten in late March and daily sightings in April with a maximum of five mid-month. Sporadic single figure counts continued to be recorded during the summer period. Autumn passage commenced during the latter half of August, with up to 15 present on the island at the months end. During September and October, Teal were recorded daily on the island, with maximum monthly counts of 39 on 15th September and 59 on 11th October. Numbers during November and December were reduced to periodic single figure counts.

**MALLARD** *Anas platyrhynchos*

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

A small number (4-8) wintered on the isle. Counts during April saw a small turnover of birds with daily fluctuations of numbers present and a maximum of seven on 3rd. The highest numbers occurred during the autumn, with a maximum count of 21 birds on both 11th October and 1st November. Small numbers remained to winter on the island, with ten birds present during the latter half of December.



*Black Duck (Mark Warren)*

**+AMERICAN BLACK  
DUCK** *Anas rubripes*  
***Vagrant; no previous  
records***

The first record for Fair Isle and fourth for Shetland. A ♂ was found at Barkland on 1st November and remained on the island until 5th. Previously, males have occurred on Mainland Shetland in 1990, 2002 & 2003.

*Accepted by BBRC*



*White-rumped Sandpiper – October*

*Deryk Shaw*



*Buff-breasted Sandpiper – September*

*Deryk Shaw*



*Little Stint – September*

*Paul Baxter*



*Scops Owl – May*

*Rebecca Nason*



*Woodchat Shrike – September* *Paul Baxter*



*Wryneck – September*

*Paul Baxter*



*'borealis' Northern Eider* *Rebecca Nason*





*Arctic Skua*



*Great Skua*

*All photos by Rebecca Nason*



*Arctic Tern*



*Puffin with Snake Pipefish*



*Pechora Pipit – September Paul Baxter*



*Olive-backed Pipit – October Rebecca Nason*



*Blyth's Pipit – October  
Rebecca Nason*



*Olive-backed Pipit – October*

*Rebecca Nason*

**+NORTHERN PINTAIL** *Anas acuta*

**Scarce spring and autumn migrant**

Two on 28th April was the only sighting.

**+GARGANEY** *Anas querquedula*

**Vagrant; nine previous records (16 individuals), all in spring**

A juvenile on 14th-21st September was the first autumn record for the island.

**+NORTHERN SHOVELER** *Anas clypeata*

**Scarce and irregular spring and autumn migrant**

The only spring record involved a single ♂ on 12th-13th May. Sightings during the autumn involved two on 15th September and a long staying ♀ from 15th October, which remained until the end of the year.

**+TUFTED DUCK** *Aythya fuligula*

**Scarce spring migrant, rare in autumn**

The first of the year were a pair on 15th April, followed by a single ♂ on 22nd April. In May, a pair was present from 12th-14th. A single bird was present on 27th July. During the autumn, a single bird was present from 27th September until 18th October. There were additional singles on two dates and three were present on 12th October.

**COMMON EIDER** *Somateria mollissima*

**Resident, breeds in small numbers**

Present offshore all year. The post-breeding count on 21st August revealed just 48 ♂, 34 ♀ and 44 juveniles.

A moulting ♂ showing features of Northern Eider *S.m.borealis* was present from 22nd September right into early 2007.

**+KING EIDER** *Somateria spectabilis*

**Vagrant; 15 previous records (11 individuals)**

An adult ♂ flew west past one fortunate observer at South Light on 30th March. The first island record since March 1991.

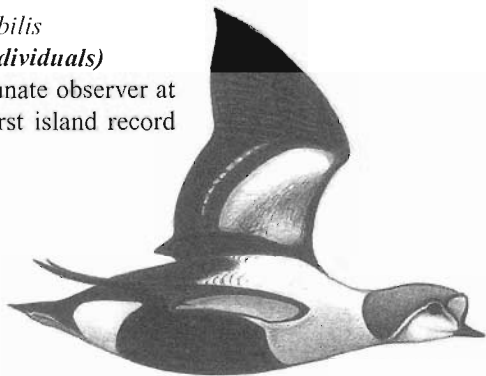
Accepted by BBRC

**LONG-TAILED DUCK**

*Clangula hymnals*

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

The first of the year was a ♂ on 25th March, which was joined by



King Eider (Will Miles)

a second bird the following day, both remaining until 30th. During April, single ♀ were seen on three dates, possibly involving the same individual. The first autumn record was of two birds on 29th September, which were still present the following day. During October, birds were seen on a daily basis, involving counts of 1-4 individuals, but 11 were present on 18th. Small numbers continued to be seen during the first half of November, but no single count exceeded six birds. Four birds at Furse on 23rd-24th December were the only sightings during the month.

**COMMON SCOTER** *Melanitta nigra*

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

A good year with all records confined to the period 12th October to 4th November. Birds were seen on 14 dates during this period, all singles, with the exception of 12 on 16th, two on 17th and three on 18th October.

**+VELVET SCOTER** *Melanitta fusca*

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

Two on 2nd August and a single on 27th October were the only sightings of the year. The August birds are un-seasonal (10th occurrence in that month).

**COMMON GOLDENEYE** *Bucephala clangula*

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

The only sightings during the first half of the year were single birds seen on two dates in March and two dates in April. The majority of sightings were restricted to the last fortnight of October, when birds were seen on an almost daily basis, with maximum counts of five on 11th and 19th. November produced two singles, on 6th and 13th. The last of the year were a ♂ on Field Pond on 12th December and a ♀ in the Havens on 28th-29th December.

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

***Frequent spring and autumn migrant***

The first of the year was a single ♂ on 19th-20th February. There were no further sightings until the end of March when a ♂ was seen on 27th-28th, followed by a ♀ on 29th-31st. The beginning of April produced several sightings of 1-2 birds. Birds were seen on a daily basis during 8th-18th May, the majority consisting of single birds, although two birds were seen on three dates, with three present on 9th. A single ♂ on 30th May and two on 2nd June were the last of the spring period. Autumn sightings commenced on 26th September and thereafter, birds were recorded on an almost daily basis until 6th November, with the majority of sightings consisting of 1-4 birds, although five were recorded on six dates. The highest count was seven on 4th October. Two singles in mid-November were the last of the year.



**+GOOSANDER** *Mergus merganser*

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

A single ♀ on Field Pond on 5th January was the only sighting of the year.

**+COMMON QUAIL** *Coturnix coturnix*

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

The first of the spring was an obliging bird at Lower Stoneybrek on 9th-13th May, with a further bird at Ward Hill on 11th May. During June, singing birds were recorded on several evenings from Pund and Schoolton. One, caught by a cat on 25th July, was released at Barkland and there were no further autumn records.

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

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

A single on 28th March was the only sighting during the first four months of the year. Two singles were logged in May, on 11th and 31st. The period 4th-16th June produced six individuals and there were single sightings during July and August. Passage was most marked between 13th September and 18th October, when 12 were logged, with the latter date producing the highest count of the year with four recorded.

Unidentified diver species were recorded on 28th March, 26th April, 6th October (2) and 18th October.

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

***Vagrant, six previous records (four in autumn)***

One flew close to shore past South Light on 29th October, constituting only the seventh record for the island.

*Accepted by SBCRC*

**GREAT NORTHERN DIVER** *Gavia immer*

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

The first of the year were recorded during April, with singles on 20th-23rd and 29th-30th. Four May records included two on 11th and the first week of June produced three singles. Autumn saw slightly higher than usual numbers. Although only two singles were logged at the end of September, in comparison, October produced 19 birds on nine dates, peaking at five on 18th with three on 27th being the last sighting of the year.

**+LITTLE GREBE** *Tachybaptus ruficollis*

***Rare migrant, mostly in autumn***

Single birds were recorded on 24th March and 2nd November, both in South Harbour. The March bird is the first seen in spring since 1995.

**+SLAVONIAN GREBE** *Podiceps auritus*

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

Singles on 15th-16th January, 29th September and 28th-29th October were the only sightings.

**NORTHERN FULMAR** *Fulmarus glacialis*

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

A whole island census in June showed that following a 52.6% crash in breeding numbers between 1996 and 2000 (from 43,178 to 20,424 AOS), they have recovered slightly, rising by 36.6% to 27,896 AOS. Breeding success at monitoring plots was also good, 0.5 chicks per AON is the best since 1994.

Single 'blue' individuals were recorded on 29th April and on five dates in October.

**SOOTY SHEARWATER** *Puffinus griseus*

***Regular autumn migrant***

The first of the year, a single, was seen from the *Good Shepherd IV* on 17th August. Ten more were logged before the months end. There were regular sightings during September, both from the *Good Shepherd IV* and land-based watching. In total, 42 birds were logged during the month, with a peak count of 14 on 30th. Small numbers, all singles, continued to be seen during the first week of October, with the exception of three on 1st and a single on 18th.

**+MANX SHEARWATER** *Puffinus puffinus*

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

Spring sightings comprised counts of two birds on both 30th May and 17th June. Autumn produced five birds; one in August, three in September and a late bird past South Light on 27th October.

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

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

The first sighting of the year was a single seen from the *Good Shepherd IV* on 19th May. The majority of sightings involved birds either seen during the *Good Shepherd IV* crossings or trapped during tape-luring sessions at the Observatory. Peak counts from the crossings were during the first week of August, with 20 on 3rd and 15 on 5th. Sixteen on 7th September was the only other count in excess of ten birds. Eight seen from South Light on 19th September was the highest number seen during land-based watching. August saw the largest numbers attracted to mist nets, with 140 trapped on 17th (at South Light) and 58 on 26th (at the Havens). Additionally, five occupied burrows were located amongst the boulder scree in Kirn o'Skroo and trapping there saw over 50 birds caught without the aid of a tape-lure.

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

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

There were five sightings of six birds during the year. Three were trapped during

tape-luring sessions at the Observatory on 25th July, 3rd August and 26th August. A single was seen from the *Good Shepherd IV* on 14th September and two passed South Light on 19th September. Additionally, one was heard calling in the Kirn o'Skroo in the early hours of 15th July.

#### **NORTHERN GANNET** *Morus bassanus*

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

A full census was not satisfactorily carried out this year but it was confirmed that the newest colony, initiated on Sheep Rock in 1998, continues to rise, from 25 AON in 2005 to 44 AON this year.

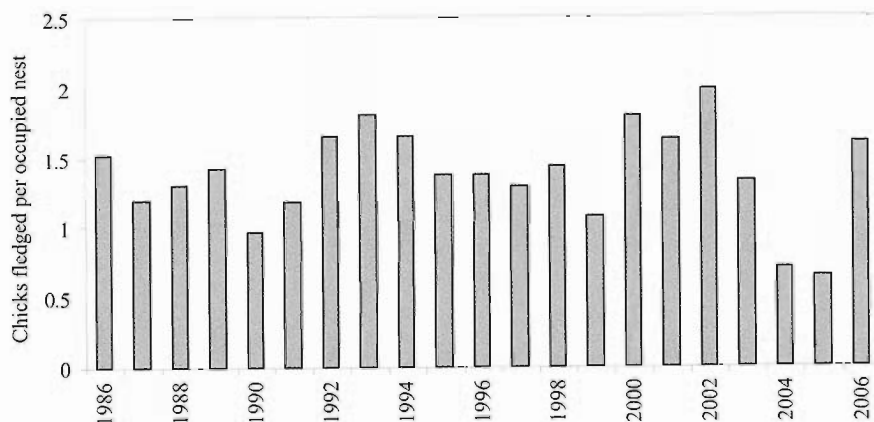
#### **GREAT CORMORANT** *Phalacrocorax carbo*

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

Sightings averaged one a month during January to March. Ten on the 30th April were the first multiple occurrence of the year. Sightings became more regular during May, with birds noted on seven dates, although no count exceeded three birds. A single on 10th June was the last of the spring. The first of the autumn were noted on 25th August. Thereafter, birds were noted more regularly during September and October. Ten on 5th September was the highest day count prior to 15th September, on which date 22 were counted. A count of 77 on 18th September was, by far, the highest count for the island. Numbers dropped during October, although birds were still noted on 18 days, usually involving less than five individuals. The last of the year was a single on 7th November.

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

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



**Figure 1. Breeding success of European Shag on Fair Isle, 1986-2006.**

Following five years of gradual decline, a 41.2% increase in AON was noted at monitoring plots to the highest number since 2001. Breeding success was also high with a productivity of 1.6 being well above the previous long-term mean (1.44) (Fig 1).

**GREY HERON** *Ardea cinerea*

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

Prior to the final week of March, singles were recorded on only five dates. A group of three birds on 26th March marked the start of an increase in numbers, with eight the following day being the largest group of the spring period. During April, 1-3 birds were recorded on 21 days. The last records of the spring were of 1-2 birds during the period 15th-23rd May. Autumn passage commenced at the end of July, with 1-3 birds noted during the final week. Thereafter, birds became an almost daily feature from August to the beginning of November, with the daily fluctuation of numbers indicating a high turnover of individuals. The majority of counts involved 1-6 birds although there were several instances of heavier passage with 18 on 2nd October and 11 birds noted on two occasions (21st August and 30th September). Numbers dropped during November, with no count exceeding two birds, with the final bird noted on 22nd.

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

***Vagrant, 45 previous records (47 individuals)***

A 'Buzzard' which floated through on 23rd September was thought by most observers to be this species. A single bird was seen over the south end of the island on 27th September.

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

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

Recorded for the ninth successive year. During May, a ♂ flew north on 18th and a ♀ was present 28th-29th.

**HEN HARRIER** *Circus cyaneus*

***Scarce spring and autumn migrant***

Spring records were confined to single ♂ on 11th-13th May and 26th May. All autumn records occurred in October, with at least one bird seen daily from 2nd-29th. Two were seen on six dates, with three birds present on 5th. All autumn records involved 'ring-tails'.

**EURASIAN SPARROWHAWK** *Accipiter nisus*

***Regular spring and autumn migrant***

Spring passage commenced during the last week of March, with single ♂ on 22nd-23rd and 29th. During April, birds were recorded on 13 days, mostly involving

singles, although two birds were present on three dates. Numbers peaked during the first fortnight of May, with three on 1st and 1-2 daily until 12th. The last birds of the spring were singles on 23rd and 24th May. An isolated mid-summer occurrence involved a ♂ on 23rd August. Autumn passage commenced in mid-September and singles were recorded on ten dates, but four birds were present on 28th. Sightings of single birds were sporadic during October with occurrences on 13 dates. The final bird of the year was a ♀ on 2nd November.

**+COMMON BUZZARD** *Buteo buteo*

***Scarce spring and migrant***

A single bird, first seen on 29th January, remained on the island until mid-April, with a second individual present on 10th-17th April. Autumn singles were noted on 28th August, 2nd September and 28th September. Five birds in one year represents the most logged since 1999, when seven were recorded.

**+OSPREY** *Pandion haliaetus*

***Rare spring and autumn migrant (82 previous records; 66 in spring, 16 in autumn)***

The first of the year was a group of three (the first multiple sighting) heading north on 14th May. Singles were recorded on 5th June and 29th September.

**COMMON KESTREL** *Falco tinnunculus*

***Regular spring and autumn migrant***

A wintering ♀ was seen occasionally during the first three months of the year. In April, up to four separate individuals were noted, but it was not until May when spring passage was most obvious. Sightings were almost daily, although no count exceeded two birds. There were sporadic sightings of singles through to mid-June. Summer occurrences involved birds on 30th June and 18th July. Autumn passage commenced at the end of August, with up to two birds recorded during the final week of the month. September saw numbers increase and daily sightings of 1-4 birds became commonplace and counts of seven birds were made on four days during the month. During October, five birds were present on 1st and 1-3 birds were seen daily until the final sighting of the year, of two birds on 25th.

**MERLIN** *Falco columbarius*

***Regular spring and autumn migrant***

A ♂ was seen on three occasions in January and February. The end of March saw a slight increase with two birds seen on three dates. Spring passage was light, with seven sightings of single birds spread throughout April and a single ♀ on three dates at the beginning of May. Two sightings at the end of August commenced autumn passage. During September, 1-2 were recorded on 16 dates, with a peak at the end of the month of five birds on 28th. October produced daily sightings,

mostly involving 1-2 birds, with three birds on two dates and four on 7th. A single on 3rd November was the only sighting of the month. The final bird of the year was a wintering ♂ on 30th December.

**+HOBBY** *Falco subbuteo*

***Vagrant; 44 or 45 previous records***

An adult was present near Houll on 16th June, moving to Barkland on 18th.

**PEREGRINE FALCON** *Falco peregrinus*

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

A single ♂ on three dates in February was the first of the year. There were no further sightings until the end of March when a pair was seen on several days. There were sporadic sightings of birds of both sexes during April and early-May, probably involving the same individuals. The final bird of the spring was a ♀ on 13th May. An immature ♂ arrived on 27th July with possibly the same individual seen regularly until early-September. There were regular sightings of 1-2 birds during August to October with three on 16th August and four present on 19th October. The final bird of the year and the only November sighting concerned an immature on 12th.

**WATER RAIL** *Rallus aquaticus*

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

Several birds remained on the island during the winter period, with singles reported from several sites during January and February, notably Barkland/Chalet, Midway, Meadow Burn and the Observatory. Records increased during late March and April, with 1-3 birds reported from many sites. Sporadic sightings continued into early May. An unusual summer sighting was a singing bird in Boini Mire on 16th June. The first of the autumn was at the favoured location of the Chalet on 27th September. Thereafter, sightings were daily from many sites, with 1-3 birds seen during October and November, including four on 28th November. Birds were regularly seen until the year's end, including four birds at the Chalet throughout December, with others reported from several locations.

**+CORN CRAKE** *Crex crex*

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

Three autumn sightings involved singles at Quoy on 25th August, Barkland on 21st-22nd September and Midway on 1st October.

**+COMMON MOORHEN** *Gallinula chloropus*

***Scarce spring and autumn migrant***

The two birds from 2005 remained and were seen during January and February. The first migrant was at the Chalet from 29th March until 10th April. The only other

spring sighting was at the Observatory on 23rd April, remaining until 9th May. Autumn sightings were restricted to singles on 24th September and 14th October. Two birds (an adult and immature) arrived at the Chalet at the beginning of December and remained until the end of the year.

**EURASIAN OYSTERCATCHER** *Haematopus ostralegus*

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

The first of the year were a pair on 26th January, preceding the next record on 10th February, when a flock of eight arrived. Counts then increased, with a February peak of 38 on 20th. Numbers continued to increase during March with three counts of over 100 by the months end, the highest being 141 on 27th. Late migrants and non-breeders swelled numbers during April and May, with peak counts of 188 (6th April) and 189 (26th May). Around 50 pairs are thought to have bred. Return passage was most marked in August with counts of 179 (6th) and 128 (11th) being the highest. In contrast, September's peak count was 14 on 6th. Occurrences during October and early November involved single birds, with the exception of four on 21st October. Three birds arrived on 31st December.

**RINGED PLOVER** *Charadrius hiaticula*

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

The first birds arrived in mid-February, with a single on 17th increasing to seven the following day. Three on 24th were the only other sighting during the month. Numbers increased in mid-March with 17 on 9th followed by 37 on 19th and numbers remained stable until the months end. The beginning of April saw the highest counts of the spring, with 63 present on 1st. Smaller numbers, typically less than 30 birds, were noted until early June. Around 15 breeding territories were counted. Autumn passage commenced mid-August with ten birds on 11th, and numbers remained similar until the months end. September saw peak numbers with several counts of 25+ birds recorded (maximum 37). Twenty-one birds on 1st October was the final multiple count of the year, with all other sightings involving single birds until the final sighting on 17th.

**+EURASIAN DOTTEREL** *Charadrius morinellus*

***Scarce spring and autumn migrant***

Spring records were confined to an eight day period in May. Records commenced with three on Dronger on 5th, followed by four on Vaasetter on 7th and five on Ward Hill on 10th. The final bird of the spring was a single on 11th. The sole autumn sighting was a single on Tarryfield on 25th-26th September.

**EUROPEAN GOLDEN PLOVER** *Pluvialis apricaria*

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

Single birds were noted on several dates during February and March. The first groups of spring migrants appeared during the final week of March with 40 present

on 26th. Thereafter, small groups were present on the island throughout April and May, typically numbering less than 25 birds, although up to 46 were noted during the last week of April. Numbers dropped after mid-May with single figure counts almost daily throughout the remainder of the month and into June. Return passage commenced at the beginning of August but with the exception of 42 on 7th August, no count exceeded 20 birds until late-September when 60 were present on 22nd and 85 on 27th. October numbers peaked at 99 on 5th, tailing off to 32 by the month's end. The last bird of the year was noted on 3rd November.

**+GREY PLOVER** *Pluvialis squatarola*

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

Single birds were seen on 26th-28th September and 2nd October – a typical showing.

**NORTHERN LAPWING** *Vanellus vanellus*

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

Approximately 40 birds were present on the island during the first two months of the year and regular counts commenced from March, with the first fortnight of the month producing counts of ten birds on 3rd increasing to 119 on 15th. Then followed a huge influx with numbers increasing rapidly to 418 on 28th – the second largest number ever counted on the isle (500 on 26th March 1980 is the record). April produced more typical counts of 10-20 migrant birds, with numbers similar during early-May, with the last group of 21 on 11th. Twelve breeding pairs were recorded but the majority failed to produce any chicks to fledging. Small numbers of non-breeders were present on the island during the summer months. Autumn passage was very light with peak month counts of 17 in August, five in September and 17 in October. Small numbers, generally less than ten birds, remained on the island during November and December, with the exception of 17 present on 24th December remaining until the year's end.

**RED KNOT** *Calidris canutus*

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

The first of the year was a single present from 27th-31st March. There were no further sightings until 25th April when three birds were recorded, with a single remaining until 27th. May produced two sightings, with singles on 19th-20th and 30th May-3rd June. Sightings were more regular during the autumn, with almost daily counts of 1-6 birds from mid-August until mid-September. Seven on 5th September was the highest count of the year. A single bird on 18th October was the final sighting of the year.

**SANDERLING** *Calidris alba*

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

Spring sightings were confined to singles on 11th April, 11th May, 27th May (2)



and 5th June. Return passage commenced at the end of July, with four birds on 23rd, increasing to 31 on 29th. With the exception of 13 on 2nd August, no other autumn count exceeded six birds. Birds were noted on a daily basis throughout August, September and early October until the final sighting of the year, a single on 10th October.

**+LITTLE STINT** *Calidris minuta*

***Regular autumn migrant***

In autumn, four birds arrived on 15th September, increasing to five the next day. Thereafter 1-2 birds were noted daily until 27th September. The only other sighting was a single at Sprittery Hole on 15th October.

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

***Vagrant; three previous records***

A very mobile first-winter, found at Utra scrape on 7th October, remained until 10th, during which time it toured almost the whole island. The fourth record for Fair Isle.

*Accepted by SBRC*

**PURPLE SANDPIPER** *Calidris maritima*

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

Twenty-seven present on 17th February was the largest count prior to the last week of March when regular counts indicated a high turnover of birds. A count of 65 on 26th March was the highest of the spring period. Birds were seen daily until mid-June, with numbers generally less than 20. Monthly maxima were 27 on 25th April, 29 on 23rd May and 11 on 4th June. Several single-figure counts were recorded in mid-summer. During the autumn months, only three counts exceeded ten birds, with the highest being 23 on 24th October. Few counts were made during November and December, although 15 were present in South Haven on 30th December.

**DUNLIN** *Calidris alpina*

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

The first of the year were 12 on 15th March. The final week of the month produced the spring peak count of 36 on 27th. There were relatively few sightings during April but May produced daily sightings of generally less than ten birds, although counts of 20-25 were made on three occasions. Small numbers remained during the summer months, with monthly maxima of 22 in June, 21 in July and 11 during August. A pair holding territory on Sukka Mire are thought to have successfully fledged two young – the first breeding attempt since 1988. Autumn passage was most notable during mid-September, peaking at 34 on 18th. Small numbers, less than ten birds, were present until the end of October. The final sighting of the year was a single on Easter Lothar on 28th November.

**+BUFF-BREASTED SANDPIPER** *Tryngites subruficollis*

***Vagrant; eight previous records***

A juvenile, initially seen briefly on the Rippack and Meones on 19th September, was eventually relocated on Vaasetter and remained until 21st. The ninth record for the island and the first since 2002. All previous records have occurred in September.

*Accepted by SBCRC*

**RUFF** *Philomachus pugnax*

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

The first of the year was noted on 10th August. Three further singles were noted prior to the months end. Sightings during the first half of September were sporadic, with four on 2nd and singles on five dates. From mid-month, birds were noted daily until 2nd October, involving 4-8 birds. The last of the year was a single on 5th October.

**JACK SNIPE** *Lymnocyrtes minimus*

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

Two on 26th January and four on 19th February were the only multiple counts during the first three months of the year. Spring passage was very light, with six birds in total during April and May. The first sighting of the autumn was a single on 11th September. From 16th September, birds were recorded on a daily basis until the first week of November. September numbers peaked at 12 on 27th, with similar numbers recorded daily during October, with the exception of 50 (second highest ever) on 11th October and 24 the following day. Single figure counts continued to be made into November, with the last sighting involving six birds on 7th.

**COMMON SNIPE** *Gallinago gallinago*

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

Numbers were ever-present during the winter months although few counts were made, with 60 present on 26th January and 100 on 19th February. Regular counts commenced during the last week of March, producing a count of 143 on 27th which was the highest of the spring although several counts of 100+ were made during the first week of April. Numbers tailed off during the remainder of the month with no count exceeding 50 birds, with similar numbers noted during the first half of May, after which regular counts ceased. The first counts of the autumn were undertaken during mid-August revealing 20-40 birds on the island, with numbers remaining similar to the months end. During September, numbers increased, with 66 on 3rd rising to 144 by the months end. Numbers dropped during October, with regular counts of 40-70 birds and occasional dips to as low as 16.

Census counts revealed a second peak in numbers during the beginning of November with 140 present on 1st, with 80 still on the island mid-month. Occasional counts during December saw 40-60 remain until the end of the year.

**EURASIAN WOODCOCK** *Scolopax rusticola*

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

Three on 26th January were the first of the year. There were few sightings until the last week of March when spring migrants appeared, maximum of 16 on 27th-28th and ten on two other dates. Numbers during April were in single figures with no daily count exceeding four birds. The end of April and beginning of May saw singles on five dates, the last on 8th May. An unusual occurrence was a single on 8th-16th August. September produced a single on 7th before October saw daily sightings (2-7 birds) from 8th, with peak counts of just 12 birds on two dates. Up to five birds were recorded in early November and single birds were noted on several dates in December.

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

***Scarce spring and autumn migrant***

Singles on 3rd and 28th May were the only spring records. Autumn produced three records commencing with a flock of 19 flying north on 20th August, three on 3rd September and a single on 24th September. The flock of 19 represents the largest number ever recorded on the island.

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

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

Two singles in the latter-half of June were the first of the year, on 22nd and 29th-30th. Two were present on 20th July. There were daily sightings of 1-3 birds from 14th September to 3rd October.

**WHIMBREL** *Numenius phaeopus*

***Frequent spring and autumn migrant***

Spring passage commenced with a single on 21st April and thereafter, birds were noted daily until mid-June. The majority of sightings involved single figures, with peak counts of 12 on 30th April and 18 on 19th May. July produced 1-2 birds on five dates. August saw singles recorded on ten dates, with the exception of ten on 20th. September totalled eight birds on four dates and sporadic sightings of single birds were made during the first half of October until the last of the year on 20th.

**EURASIAN CURLEW** *Numenius arquata*

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

Counts during the early part of the year consisted of three in January and nine in

February. Numbers increased during March, peaking at 36 on 28th. Daily sightings during April mainly involved the eight breeding pairs plus occasional small parties (1-5) of migrants. Small numbers of failed Shetland breeders began to appear from mid-June but daily autumn passage was not until the latter half of August. Just ten double-figure counts were noted, with a peak of 23 on 25th August. September saw daily counts of less than ten birds, with similar numbers recorded during October. November produced ten occurrences totalling 25 birds. The last of the year were three on 5th December, which remained until the year's end.

**+SPOTTED REDSHANK** *Tringa erythropus*

*Scarce autumn migrant, rare in spring*

The only record of the year was a very vocal and mobile bird present on 15th September. The first since 2003.

**COMMON REDSHANK** *Tringa totanus*

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

Recorded in every month. Peak monthly counts as follows.

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
60	50	35	38	8	6	30	33	48	38	59	38

Numbers during the first half of the year were typical in terms of both numbers and distribution. Autumn numbers, particularly the August count, are lower than expected.

**COMMON GREENSHANK** *Tringa nebularia*

*Regular autumn migrant, scarce in spring*

Two April sightings, on 12th and 18th, were the first of the spring, followed by five singles in May, the last on 30th. Return passage commenced with a single bird on 29th July. Passage was most prominent during August with daily sightings of 1-3 birds from 12th-28th. September saw records on eight dates, all singles, with the last sighting on 22nd.

**GREEN SANDPIPER** *Tringa ochropus*

*Regular spring and autumn migrant*

Spring records involved two singles at the end of April and four birds on three dates in mid-May. Return passage commenced at the end of July with the first bird on 27th-29th July. All other records concerned birds in August, with records on 17 days, all single birds with the exception of three on 19th and two the following day.

**+WOOD SANDPIPER** *Tringa glareola*

**Scarce spring and autumn migrant**

Single birds were at Da Water on 5th-7th May and on Utra Scrape on 10th May. The first spring records since 2002.

**COMMON SANDPIPER** *Actitis hypoleuca*

**Frequent spring and autumn migrant**

Singles on 28th and 30th April were the first of the spring. May saw daily sightings of 1-3 birds during 2nd-21st, with the exception of eight on 8th. The last of the spring were four birds during 5th-7th June. Autumn sightings were reported on six dates in August and seven dates during September, all singles with the exception of three on 16th September. The last of the year was the sole October sighting, on 1st.

**RUDDY TURNSTONE** *Arenaria interpres*

**Common winter, spring and autumn migrant**

Recorded in every month. Peak monthly counts as follows.

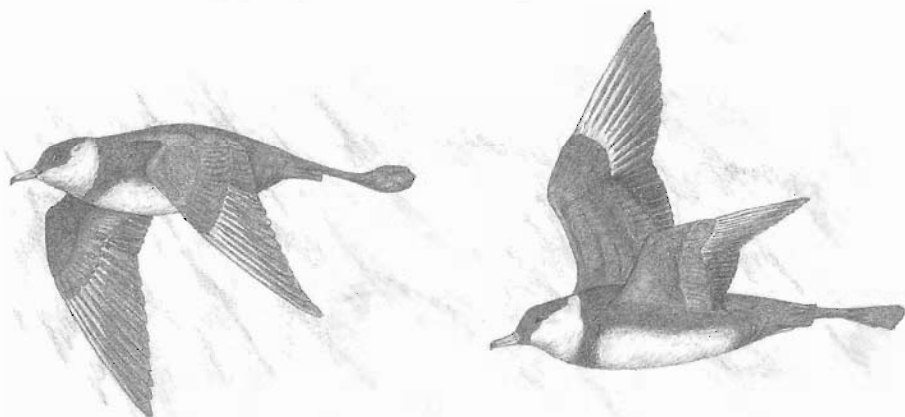
Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
95	75	184	258	65	22	78	38	74	148	152	120

The April figure is the highest island count since 1995.

**+POMARINE SKUA** *Stercorarius pomarinus*

**Rare spring and autumn migrant; at least 58 previous records**

Two were recorded passing Bunes on 30th May.

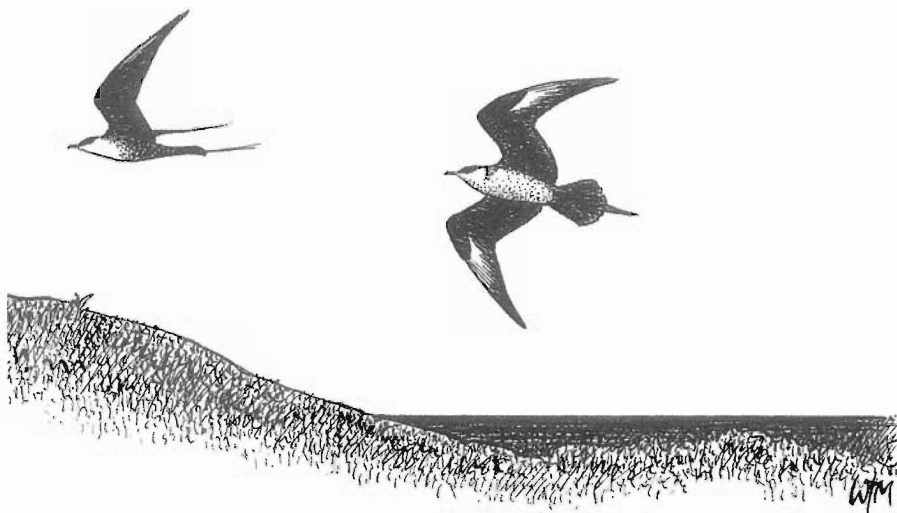


*Pomarine Skuas (Mark Warren)*

**ARCTIC SKUA** *Stercorarius parasiticus*

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

The first was a dark-morph bird on 21st April and numbers quickly built up, reaching 50 by 4th May. The breeding population continued the recovery first noted in 2005 and from 105 AOT (47.9% up from the 71 AOT counted in 2005) a total of 86 chicks fledged – a productivity of 0.82 (Fig 2). This is a dramatic reversal of fortune – a total of just ten birds had fledged in the previous three years. However, many were killed by Great Skuas shortly after they took to the wing! The last juveniles departed in early September and birds were seen passing South Light on just three later dates; 28th & 30th September and 15th October.



*Long-tailed & Arctic Skuas (Will Miles)*

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

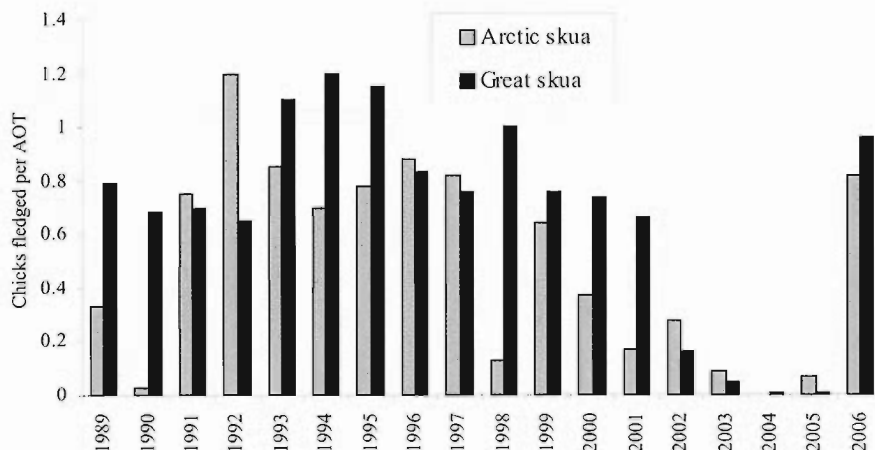
***Rare migrant, spring, summer and autumn***

Singles were recorded past Wirvie on 25th May and on Vaasetter on 4th June.

**GREAT SKUA** *Stercorarius skua*

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

One on 30th March was the first but the main arrival was in late April and counts in early June revealed a record 189 AOT (up from 144 in 2005). Breeding success was also greatly improved – a total of 181 chicks fledged, a productivity of 0.96 being the best since 1998 (Fig 2). Numbers dwindled rapidly after mid-September. The last juvenile departed on 20th October and the final sighting was off South Light on 28th October.



**Figure 2 Breeding success of Arctic and Great Skuas on Fair Isle, 1989-2006.**

Note: Although productivity appeared high in 2006 many Arctic Skuas were killed shortly after fledging

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

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

The first of the spring were recorded in mid-March with two birds present on 15th. Numbers rapidly increased during the final week of the month with 163 present on 20th, increasing to an exceptional record count of 300 the following day. Numbers had much reduced by the last day of the month with 50 present. The remainder of the spring period saw much smaller numbers and April saw a maximum of 26 during the first week, although no count exceeded 13 during the remainder of the month. The May maximum count was of 18 on 18th, although the majority of sightings throughout the remainder of the month referred to 1-10 birds. Small numbers of non-breeding birds remained on the island during June and July with peak counts of 19 in June and 26 in July. Autumn passage was very light and birds were recorded daily during August and September but were much more sporadic during October, with no autumn count exceeding seven birds. November produced 13 birds on four dates with the final bird of the year being a single adult noted on several dates in late December.

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

#### ***Common spring and autumn migrant, breeds in small numbers***

Up to four birds were recorded occasionally during January to mid-March. The end of March saw the beginning of spring passage with thirty-four on 26th increasing to 72 the following day. April counts were typically between 5-30 birds, with the

exception of 68 on 2nd. May saw slightly higher numbers present with daily counts of 10-40 birds with 51 on 10th and 54 on 18th. Small numbers of non-breeding birds remained on the island during the summer months, involving less than 15 birds. The small breeding colony on Buness fledged eight young from ten nests – the highest productivity (0.8) since 1996. August numbers peaked at 70 on two dates although generally 10-20 birds were recorded daily, with September recording similar numbers although an influx of 177 birds occurred on 15th. October continued with daily sightings of 5-20 birds with influxes of 96 on 12th and 43 on 19th. Few numbers were present in November with birds present on five dates totalling ten birds. There were occasional sightings of single birds during December.

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

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

The first spring arrivals were two on 28th March. Thereafter there were frequent sightings of 1-2 birds until mid-April when birds became more regular, with daily sightings of 2-8 birds, the exception being 14 on 17th. Daily sightings occurred during May with peak counts of 22 on 18th, 35 on 28th and 40 the following day. The largest numbers were present on the island during June consisting of mainly non-breeding sub-adults. There were regular counts of 100+ birds during the third week of the month, peaking at 149 on 17th – the largest count of the species on the island since September 1997. July numbers peaked at 27 on 1st. Just two pairs bred, within the small Herring Gull colony on Goorn. Autumn passage was very light with no count exceeding six birds during August and September, the latter month recording birds on five dates, the last of the year being four on 22nd.

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

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

Present all year. Counts were restricted to the late-autumn period, with 2500 present on 31st October and 1700 on 11th November. Around 20 pairs bred, the majority on Goorn (10 pairs) and Greenholm (6 pairs).

### **ICELAND GULL** *Larus glaucoides*

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

A minimum of 15 individuals were recorded during the year. Rough weather in mid-February produced an influx of large gulls onto the island, including four Iceland Gulls (an adult, second-winter and two first-winters) on 17th, with one present the following day. A single first-winter was recorded on 13th March, followed by four different individuals at the end of the month (3 first-winters and a second-winter). The final bird of the spring was a first-winter on 8th April. A



third-calendar year bird was present on 20th-21st June. The first of the autumn was a second calendar year bird on 29th September. November saw 1-3 first-winter birds present on five dates during the month, followed by sporadic sightings of single first-winters on several dates during December, with two together on 30th.

#### **GLAUCOUS GULL** *Larus hyperboreus*

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

A minimum of 12 birds were recorded during the year, although it is feasible that up to 18 individuals may have been involved. The influx of gulls in February brought four Glaucous Gulls to the island (second-winter and three x first-winters) on 17th, with two further sightings of first-winter birds during the month. Three different birds were present on 25th-26th March (adult, second-winter and first-winter). A single first-winter was on the island on 16th April. During July, an adult was noted on 3rd July. The first birds of the autumn were recorded during October with an adult on three dates early in the month, a first-winter on 21st, two first-winters on 27th and an adult and two first-winters on 30th-31st October and 1st November. An adult and first-winter were seen during mid-November. December saw sightings of three first-winters early in the month and singles on two dates with an adult on 23rd.

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

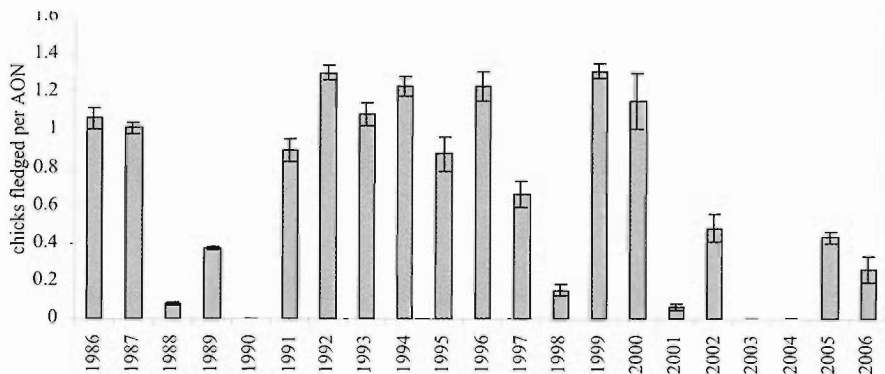
##### ***Resident, breeds in small numbers. Also hard-weather migrant, autumn and winter***

Present all year. Around ten pairs bred on Sheep Rock with single pairs on Goorn, Toor o' da Ward Hill, Dronger and Greenholm. High late-autumn counts included 1500 on 31st October and 1300 on 11th November.

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

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

The first birds were noted back on breeding ledges on 9th March. The long-term decline in the breeding population continues, with a 10.3% decrease at monitoring plots from 2005. Breeding success was also poor, a mean productivity of 0.26, less than that recorded in 2005 (0.37) and (excluding the complete failures in 2003 & 2004) well below the previous long-term (1986-2002) mean of 0.68 (Fig 3). Snake Pipefish was by far the commonest food item collected from chick regurgitates and nests were littered with dried Pipefish. A large number of birds flying past in late summer could be observed to have a pipefish tail protruding from the bill. Birds were regularly seen offshore well into November.



**Figure 3. Breeding success of Black-legged Kittiwake on Fair Isle, 1986-2006.**

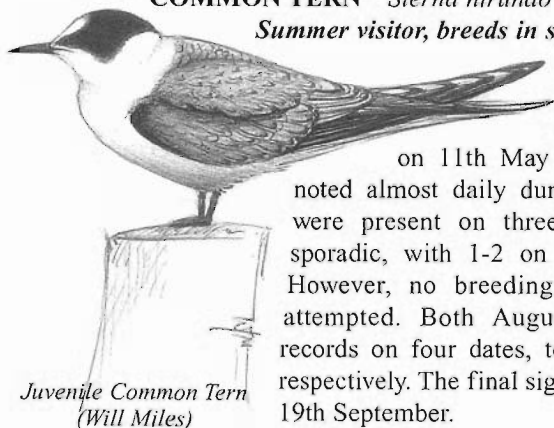
### **+SANDWICH TERN** *Sterna sandvicensis*

#### ***Scarce summer migrant***

A good year, possibly involving seven individuals. Two were present in the Havens on 26th March, increasing to three the following day with a single remaining until 29th. These represent the earliest ever sightings on the island, with the previous earliest sighting occurring on 30th April. One flew past South Light on 29th April. During May, a single was in South Harbour on 28th-30th. June produced two birds on 14th and 23rd and a single on three dates during the month, with a further single on 3rd July. A single flew over Barkland on 23rd September, the latest island sighting by two days.

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

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

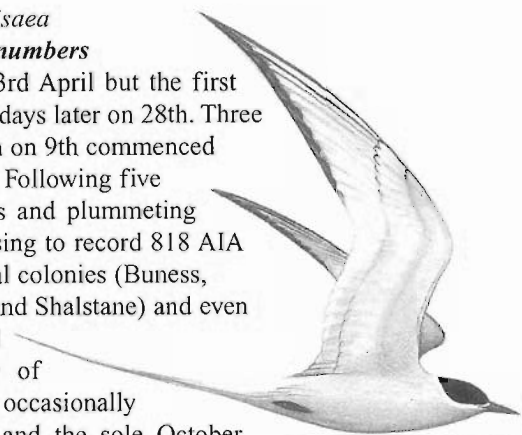


The first of the year was in Furse on 30th April but was not followed until two arrived on 11th May and hereafter 1-2 birds were noted almost daily during the month, although four were present on three dates. June sightings were sporadic, with 1-2 on six dates and four on 10th. However, no breeding was thought to have been attempted. Both August and September produced records on four dates, totalling seven and eight birds respectively. The final sighting of the year was of two on 19th September.

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

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

A 'commic' tern was seen on 23rd April but the first confirmed Arctic Tern was a few days later on 28th. Three on 5th May were the next and ten on 9th commenced daily sightings until mid-August. Following five extremely poor breeding seasons and plummeting numbers it was extremely surprising to record 818 AIA in 2006, scattered between several colonies (Buness, Bullock Holes, Horsti Brekkers and Shalstane) and even more surprising that at least 321 chicks fledged, a productivity of 0.39. Small numbers were seen occasionally offshore throughout September and the sole October sighting (on 12th) was the last.



*Arctic Tern (Will Miles)*

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

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

One flew past South Light on 26th January and increasing numbers were noted from 10th February and small numbers were occasionally ashore from mid-February. Large numbers were ashore on 16th March but still attendance was erratic right up to when the first eggs were laid on 11th May (five days earlier than in 2005). Numbers in attendance at the monitoring plots were slightly (4.2%) up on those in 2005 but numbers laying eggs were low. Comparative fledging success was the highest for four years (0.57 chicks per egg laid) but chicks were underweight and it was still low compared to the previous long-term mean (0.74). Small numbers were seen daily offshore right through the autumn.

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

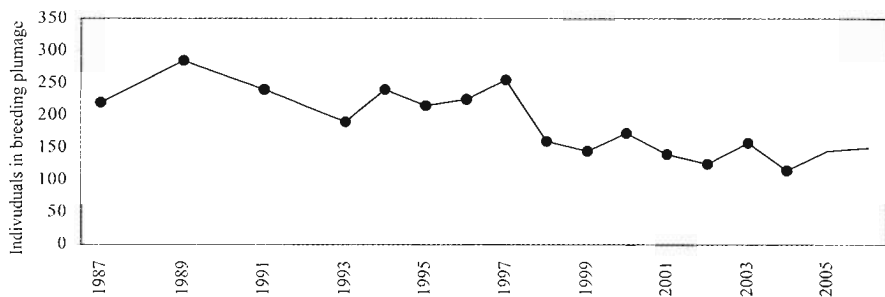
#### ***Summer visitor, breeds in large numbers***

Numbers at the Lericum population monitoring plot increased by 5.7% from 2005 to a new high. Likewise the largest number of eggs ever recorded were laid on the breeding success plot, however for the fourth consecutive year very few chicks fledged. The majority starved before fledging and the few that did fledge (a productivity of 0.23 is lowest ever, apart from the complete failure in 2004) were very underweight.

### **BLACK GUILLEMOT** *Cephus grylle*

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

The number of birds along the east coast of the isle rose by 4.9% between 2005 & 2006 to 151 birds in breeding plumage (Fig 4).



**Figure 4. East coast counts of Black Guillemots on Fair Isle, 1987-2006.**

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

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

All sightings occurred during the final three months of the year. With the exception of two on 4th October all sightings were made during the final fortnight of the month, with 1-6 on ten dates. An impressive 50 birds passed South Light on 28th, with lesser counts of 29 on 27th and 18 on 25th. November produced six birds on three dates. The final sightings of the year involved singles on two dates in December.

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

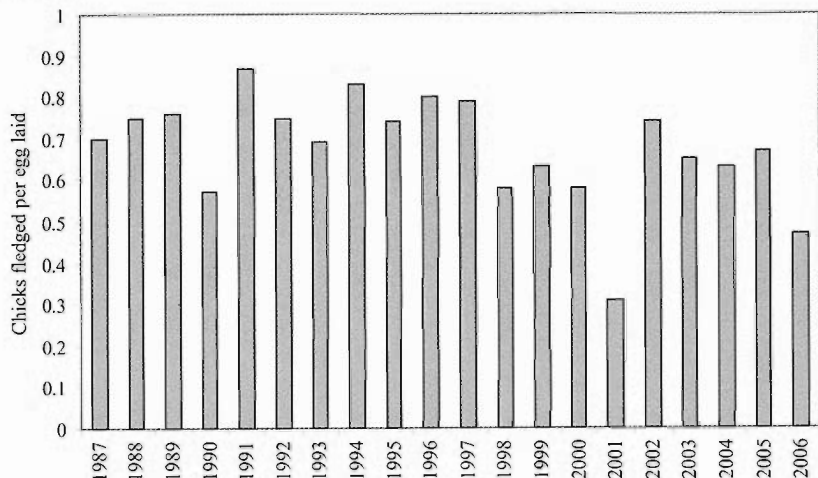
#### ***Summer visitor, breeds in large numbers***

The first returning birds arrived on 30th March and large numbers were present up to early August, before rapidly dropping to low single figures following the post-breeding exodus. Birds were seen occasionally offshore up to 19th October. In recent years breeding Puffins have appeared to fare better than the other auk



*Puffin (Will Miles)*

species. However, in 2006, Puffins produced just 0.47 chicks per monitored burrow, the second lowest productivity on record (0.31 in 2001) (Fig 5). Snake Pipefish was a common food item brought back to chicks and these were often found discarded near the entrance to burrows – one nest had 85 such items inside! Feeding rates were low and food samples collected constituted 41.2% Snake Pipefish, 39.7% Gadidae, 10.3% Sprat, 7.4% (small) Lesser Sandeel and 1.5% Flatfish.



**Figure 5. Breeding success of Atlantic Puffin on Fair Isle, 1987-2006.**

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

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

Present all year and not regularly counted. The highest count of the year was 42 on 29th September.

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

***Scarce spring and autumn migrant***

All sightings occurred during the spring period. A single bird on 26th March had increased to three the following day and 1-3 birds were seen daily until 2nd April. Two birds were present 8th-18th April and the final sighting was of a single on 6th-20th May.

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

***Frequent spring and autumn migrant***

The first of the year was a single bird on 19th-24th February. There were occasional sightings of single birds during the first three weeks of March before 42 arrived on the island on 26th, with numbers increasing to 110 the following day and peaking

at a record-breaking 144 on 29th. The previous highest spring count for the island was 48 in March 2003. The majority of birds remained into April, with daily counts of c.100 until 11th. Numbers tailed off during the remainder of the month although 69 were still present on 19th and the last week saw numbers drop from 28 on 26th to three on 30th. During May, with the exception of 19 on 4th-6th, the majority of sightings involved less than ten birds. June saw 1-5 birds during the first fortnight, and then occasional singles until 2nd July. Autumn passage was light with two singles in August and 12 birds on eight dates in September. October numbers peaked at six on 2nd, with daily sightings of 1-4 birds from 11th-30th.

**EURASIAN COLLARED DOVE** *Streptopelia decaocto*

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

The first of the year were three on 20th April. Thereafter, sightings became almost daily through late April and May, typically involving 1-5 birds, with the exception of 11 on 10th May. Passage was slightly heavier during June, with six or more birds recorded on 15 dates, peaking at 14 on 6th and 15 on 27th. Seven on 4th July were the last of the spring. Autumn sightings were confined to single birds on 7th August, 1-3 birds on 26th August to 2nd September and 1-2 birds on 29th September to 1st October.

**EUROPEAN TURTLE DOVE** *Streptopelia turtur*

***Regular spring and autumn migrant***

During May, single birds were recorded on 4th, 10th and 18th-19th. In September, single birds were recorded on 14 dates between 2nd and 29th. October produced singles on 3rd and 12th-15th.

**+COMMON CUCKOO** *Cuculus canorus*

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

A single on 10th May was the first of the spring, with two on 11th-12th. Further spring singles were present on 19th and 24th May and 3rd June. A single on 17th August was the final sighting of the year.

**+EURASIAN SCOPS OWL** *Otus scops*

***Vagrant; one previous record***

One was caught in the Gully Trap on 16th May. The second record for the island, following the first in July 2003.

*Accepted by BBRC*

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

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

A single bird at the Observatory on 18th January was the only sighting prior to the end of March when 1-2 birds were noted from 27th March to 5th April. A further

single was noted on 21st April. During May, up to three birds were recorded at the beginning of the month, with singles noted almost daily from 18th-28th, with two on 24th. Occasional sightings of 1-2 birds were made during June with the final sighting of a single bird on 21st. The late May and June records presumably relate to the same two individuals. The first of the autumn was recorded on 6th September, with a single seen on six further dates before the months end. October produced single birds on 12 dates, with the only multiple sighting comprising two birds on 23rd. Three sightings during December presumably relate to the same individual.

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

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

The first sighting of the year was a single on 18th March, followed by a further single on 30th. During April, singles were noted on five dates. The first multiple occurrence during the spring was of two birds on 3rd May, followed by singles on a further eight dates during the month. Two on 2nd June were followed by sporadic sightings of a single until 15th. One on 1st July was the only sighting that month. August saw a single on six dates during 9th-19th and September continued with sightings of single birds on five dates. Four on 30th saw the first noticeable autumn arrival, with 1-4 birds recorded thereafter on many dates during October, peaking at seven on 22nd with the last on 31st.

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

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

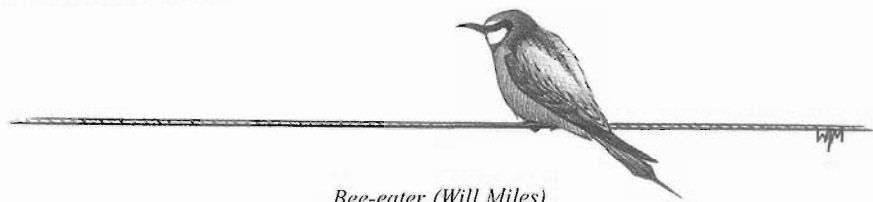
Two on 17th-18th May were the first of the year, with one remaining until 21st. During June, birds were recorded on nine dates, mainly involving 1-3 birds, although five were present on 13th and eight on 28th. July saw 1-2 birds recorded on five dates and August produced 1-3 during 21st-24th. Singles on 12th and 16th September were the final sightings of the year.

### **+ EUROPEAN BEE-EATER** *Merops apiaster*

#### ***Vagrant; five previous records (seven individuals)***

The first record since 1982. A fleeting glimpse of 'a possible Bee-eater' in the fog on 20th June held true when one was discovered near Pund on 22nd. It was very mobile but eventually showed well to all present on the fence at Dutfield.

*Accepted by SBCRC*



*Bee-eater (Will Miles)*

**EURASIAN WRYNECK** *Jynx torquilla*

***Regular spring and autumn migrant***

Spring sightings were confined to the period 11th-18th May, with two on 13th and singles on five dates. Autumn passage commenced with two on 19th August, increasing to three on 24th and five on 25th-26th with just a single seen on 27th-31st. During September, birds were noted almost daily from 3rd-26th, with two birds on eight dates and singles on ten dates. There were no further sightings until 12th October when one was present at North Shirva – the final sighting of the autumn.

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

***Scarce spring and autumn migrant***

A good year with spring records comprising singles in May, on 6th-11th, 13th-16th and 23rd-30th. In June, one was at Kenaby, 12th-17th. The first of the autumn was on the Rippack on 23rd September, followed by another on Meoness from 27th-29th, with the last of the year on 14th October.

**+ WOOD LARK** *Lullula arborea*

***Vagrant; 50 previous records since 1948 (23 spring, 27 autumn). Formerly more numerous***

One at Upper Stoneybrek on 5th November was the only record and the first since 2003.

*Accepted by SBRC*

**SKY LARK** *Alauda arvensis*

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

Sporadic counts were made between January and early March, peaking at 50 on the 8th March, when the first singing birds were also noted. A large influx of 700 birds was recorded on 26th March and numbers remained high (135-400) until 27th April. Regular counts of less than 100 were made hereafter until mid-May, but for a peak of 125 on 4th May. Autumn counts were made from 23rd August, with fewer than 100 birds recorded daily until 18th September. Numbers then increased and remained quite high until mid-October, with counts exceeding 60-100 birds daily and peak counts in September of 154 (22nd), 238 (27th) and 317 (30th) with 380 recorded on 2nd October. Good numbers (17-73) remained until mid-November, tailing off to single figures by the months end, with the last record on 5th December.

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

***Scarce spring and autumn migrant***

Three on the Airstrip on 24th April was the only record.



**SAND MARTIN** *Riparia riparia*

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

An early bird on 31st March was followed by singles on five dates from 23rd-30th April. 1-3 birds were recorded on ten dates between 3rd and 20th May, with a peak count of eight on 8th. One on 5th June was the last of the spring. Autumn records were of singles on 26th August, 1st, 15th & 29th September and 1st October.

**BARN SWALLOW** *Hirundo rustica*

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

Spring sightings were almost daily from 16th April and numbers fluctuated between 1-54 birds during May, but for peak counts of 70 (4th), 94 (8th) and 90 (18th). The first week of June saw numbers rise to a monthly maxima of 30 (6th), after which numbers were less, falling to single figures at the months end and into July. One pair successfully raised three young at Barkland. Fifteen on 5th August preceded more regular autumn passage from 23rd, with counts of 1-9 made almost daily until the first week of October, with peak counts of 10 (23rd August), 14 (28th September) and 10 (1st October). Three birds lingered 12th-18th October and the final bird of the year was seen on 20th October.

**HOUSE MARTIN** *Delichon urbicum*

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

The first of the year was a single on 24th April, followed by single figure counts of 1-9 on most days in May and June. Counts exceeded ten birds on just five dates during this period, with peaks of 27 (10th May), 48 (18th May) and 12 (6th June). Autumn records comprised singles on eight dates from 25th July-15th September.

**+ BLYTH'S PIPIT** *Anthus godlewski*

***Vagrant; two previous records***

A possible Blyth's was seen briefly near Shirva late on 21st October and again at Barkland the following morning before it was pinned down at Burkle/Quoy where identification was 90% confirmed. It was (surprisingly easily) trapped at Quoy to make absolutely sure. After ringing it was released back at Quoy and remained in the area until 24th October. Previous records were of singles on 13th-22nd October 1988 and 31st October-10th November 1993.

*Accepted by BBRC*

**LARGE PIPIT SP.** *Anthus sp*

A flighty large pipit at Dronger on 8th May was thought to probably be a Tawny Pipit *A. campestris*, but could not be confirmed. Another on 24th May was seen too briefly to even guess at!

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

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

Singles in September were seen at North Naaversgill on 18th and South Raeva on 22nd. Further birds were seen in October, with one on 10th and a long-stayer at Quoy from 15th-23rd.

*All four accepted by BBRC*

**TREE PIPIT** *Anthus trivialis*

***Frequent spring and autumn migrant***

Three birds on 20th April were the first of the year, followed by 1-2 on six dates until the months end. Good numbers were then seen daily until 26th May, with double figure counts made on most days and peak counts of 23 (8th), 30 (18th) and 29 (20th). Single figure counts (of 1-4) were noted until 5th June. Autumn passage saw 1-2 recorded from 19th-27th August. Five on 7th September were followed by single figure counts of 1-8 through the month, with a peak of 15 on 11th. Counts of 1-3 were then made until the last on 17th October, but for six on 2nd.

**+ PECHORA PIPIT** *Anthus gustavi*

***Rare autumn migrant***

One in the Schoolton/Quoy area on 15th September remained there until 24th. The first record since 2003.

*Accepted by BBRC*

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

***Rare spring & autumn migrant***

In spring, a single was in the Gully/Parks area from 11th-12th May and what was assumed to be the same was at Furse, on 16th May. In autumn, there was one at Easter Lothar from 12th-15th October.

*Both accepted by SBRC*

**MEADOW PIPIT** *Anthus pratensis*

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

Single figure counts were made on four dates in March up to the 26th, from when passage become more regular through early April (peak count of 112 on 8th) and then frequent until mid-May, with numbers generally in excess of 100 and a further peak of 210 on 25th April. Autumn passage was noted from 23rd August (80) and was heavy throughout September, where counts of over 200 were the norm until 2nd October. Influxes included 300 on 2nd September, 600 on 5th and 480 on 21st. Numbers then petered out through October, dropping below 30 on 25th and then single figure counts into November, with 10 on 3rd. Two birds were recorded on two dates in December.

**ROCK PIPIT** *Anthus petrosus*

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

Present all year. Individuals of the Scandinavian race *A.p.littoralis* were seen on 26th March, with 1-2 recorded on 11 dates between 11th April-9th May and a single from 17th-18th June.

**YELLOW WAGTAIL** *Motacilla flava*

**Regular spring and autumn migrant**

A ♂ of the British race *M.f.flavissima* was recorded on 4th May. A ♀ of the Blue-headed race (*M.f.flava*) was also recorded on this date and was followed by sightings of 1-2 birds of this race until 10th May. Unidentified 'flavas' were recorded on 6th, 10th and 21st May. A ♀ of the Grey-headed race (*M.f.thunbergi*) was recorded on 8th and 10th June. Autumn records comprised singles on 25th August, 7th-9th September and 24th September. A single, recorded almost daily between 1st and 20th October may have referred to the same bird. All autumn records were un-assigned to race.

**+ CITRINE WAGTAIL** *Motacilla citreola*

**Vagrant; 48 previous records (including two in spring)**

A juvenile, initially very elusive, was found near Shirva on 3rd September and remained in the south of the island until 12th September.

Accepted by BBRC

**GREY WAGTAIL** *Motacilla cinerea*

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

Sightings of 1-3 birds were almost daily from 26th March until 27th April, with five recorded on four dates and seven on 2nd April. Singles were recorded on six dates in May, probably involving four individuals. In autumn, a single on 28th August was followed by sporadic counts of singles on four dates in September (with two on 28th) and irregular sightings of 1-2 birds from 4th -25th October.

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

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

An early ♀ Pied Wagtail *M.a.yarrellii* was seen on 12th February, but passage was not recorded until 26th March when daily records of 1-8 birds were received until mid-June. Mirroring Pied Wagtail, passage of White Wagtail *M.a.alba* also commenced on 26th March, with almost daily sightings of 1-9 birds until mid-June. Counts of ten were made on 2nd April and 2nd May. Four Pied and a single White Wagtail were recorded on 3rd July. Autumn passage commenced in early August with Pied Wagtails on the move, followed in mid-August by records of White Wagtail. Passage was heaviest from here until the third week of September, when most counts made were of over 20, peaking at 50 on 5th September. Counts

dwindled towards the months end with fewer than 20 birds recorded and had become single figures until the last on 28th October.

**BOHEMIAN WAXWING** *Bombycilla garrulus*

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

A single from 1st-4th April was followed by another from 8th-9th May. In autumn, 1-2 were recorded between 27th October and 1st November, probably involving eight individuals. The final sighting of the year was a single on 25th November.

**+ WHITE-THROATED DIPPER** *Cinclus cinclus*

***Rare spring & autumn migrant; 33 previous records***

A single bird of the nominate race (Black-bellied Dipper) was seen in the Vaadal from 26th-31st March.

**WINTER WREN** *Troglodytes troglodytes*

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

Birds of the local race (*T.t.fridarensis*) were present all year and a minimum of 38 territories were recorded on the island during 2006. Birds of the nominate British race were recorded on 31st March (2) and singles on three dates in the first week of April. No autumn passage was noted.

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

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

Spring passage began on 26th March with a peak count of seven birds and daily sightings of 1-6 recorded until mid-May. A long-staying bird was present from 17th May-28th June. Autumn passage began on 15th September, with mainly single-figure counts until mid-October when a period of heavier passage from 12th-27th saw daily counts over ten with a peak of 47 on 16th. Single-figure counts of 1-7 were then recorded on 13 dates until the last on 23rd December.

**EUROPEAN ROBIN** *Erithacus rubecula*

***Common spring and autumn migrant***

Counts of 1-4 were made on nine dates in January-March, involving a minimum of 15 individuals. Spring passage 'proper' commenced on 26th March and was heaviest in late March/early April, with counts regularly exceeding 20 until mid-April and with peak counts of 75 on 20th & 31st March and 54 on 3rd April. Single-figure counts were then made until mid-May, but for double-figure counts on three dates. From this date until mid-September a 'pair' of birds was recorded in South Raeva and breeding was confirmed when a bird was seen carrying food into a hole in the cliff face, however they were thought to be unsuccessful as no fledged juveniles were seen. This is the first breeding record for the isle and the

## **COMMON REDSTART** *Phoenicurus phoenicurus*

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

Spring records comprised a ♂ on 26th April, followed by 1-4 until 4th May. An influx of 35 on 8th May was followed by daily sightings until 21st May (including another influx, of 13, on 17th). In autumn, daily sightings of 1-2 from 18th-28th August were not followed until three on 7th September, with 1-3 seen almost daily until 12th October (max. six on 18th September).

## **WHINCHAT** *Saxicola rubetra*

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

Spring counts of 1-9 were daily until 24th May, following the first on 2nd May (peaks of 11 on 10th and 18th), with 1-2 seen on eight dates until 7th June. Two on 11th August were the first autumn records, quickly followed by regular sightings of 1-9 from 17th August-15th September. A week of heavier passage followed, with peaks of 11 (17th), 12 (20th) and 14 (23rd). Thereafter, sightings of 1-5 were daily until 24th October.

## **STONECHAT** *Saxicola torquata*

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

A light spring passage from 14th March-28th April saw irregular counts of 1-2 birds on fourteen dates, followed by a ♂ considered to probably be of the race *S.l.rubicola* from 8th-10th May and a late ♀ on 24th May. A single from 27th-30th September was the first of the autumn, followed by daily sightings of 1-3 from 5th-24th October and a max. count of four on 19th.

## **NORTHERN WHEATEAR** *Oenanthe oenanthe*

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

In spring, singles were seen on 2nd and 3rd April, followed by daily counts from 8th. Single figures were recorded until 17 on 13th April saw counts continuously into double figures and fluctuating above 100 on sixteen dates up to the end of May. Passage was strongest towards the end of April and first week of May (peak of 191 on 4th May), but for a further influx of 140 on 22nd. The first autumn passage was noted in early August, with 200 on 11th the first significant arrival. Thereafter, numbers ranged widely from 23-150 birds until the end of September, apart from another peak of 200 on 18th August. Numbers then dropped below 40 until 6th October, below 20 until 17th and then single figure counts until the last on November 3rd.

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

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

A ♂ on 19th April was followed by almost daily sightings of 1-7 from 21st April-17th May, with nine on 4th – the highest spring count of the year. In autumn,

only record for Shetland outside of Kergord. The first autumn migrant was recorded on 7th September and irregular counts of 1-7 were made until the first influx (of 19 birds) on 30th September. A light passage in early October preceded heavier passage mid-month, with 60 on 12th, followed by predominantly double-figure counts (14-48) until early November and 7-9 recorded until 5th December.

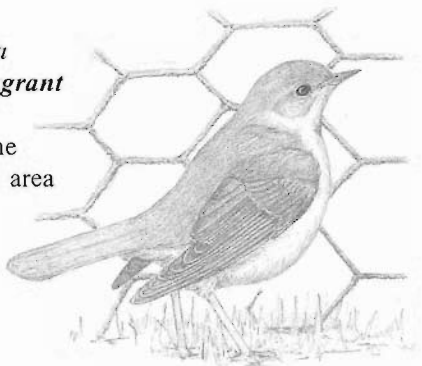
#### **+ THRUSH NIGHTINGALE**

*Luscinia luscinia*

***Rare spring migrant (43 records), vagrant in autumn (five records)***

A first-winter found and trapped in the Havens on 25th October, frequented that area until the 28th – our latest ever autumn record by 3 weeks!

*Accepted by BBRC*



#### **+ COMMON NIGHTINGALE**

*Luscinia megarhynchos*

***Rare spring migrant (c. 41 records), vagrant in autumn (eight records)***

*Common Nightingale (Mark Warren)*

A single at Shirva on 16th June was the only record.

#### **BLUETHROAT *Luscinia svecica***

***Regular spring and autumn migrant***

A ♂ in Da Water on 7th May was followed next day by six ♂ and daily counts of 2-6 until 14th (including the first ♀). A single was at Quoy, 16th-19th May. A singing ♂ on 24th May increased to two ♂ the next day, followed by two ♀, with one remaining until the months end – a minimum spring total of at least 19 birds. In autumn, a ♂ was seen from 14th October-7th November, with two birds present 18th-22nd October.

#### **BLACK REDSTART *Phoenicurus ochruros***

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

A ♂ on 27th March was followed by sporadic sightings of 1-2 birds through April (peak of 3 on 2nd) and almost daily sightings of 1-3 until 12th May (peak counts of six on 4th and eight on 10th). A ♀, possibly the same bird on each occasion, was seen on four dates in June. Autumn sightings began with a ♀ on 11th-31st August and irregular records of 1-2 during September and October. The last sighting was of one at Barkland from 1st-25th November.

a single on 2nd October was not followed until another single on 11th, rising to 17 the following day and dwindling to 1-6 until 30th October, but for eight on 22nd.

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

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

Sporadic counts of 8-50 birds were made from January-23rd March, before an arrival of 100 on 24th March preceded a good passage, which saw at least 100-600 recorded daily until 13th April. Larger influxes during this period included 720 (26th) rising to 1200 the next day, 2200 on 2nd April and 935 on 5th April. Double-figure counts (13-90) were then the norm until 24th April, before petering out to single figures until 27th May. Two ♀ were seen on several dates in June. In autumn, 70 on 11th October were the first arrivals and counts were mainly below 30 but for seven counts over 100 and a peak of 200 on 28th October. Fifty on 5th December was the highest count for that month.

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

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

Good numbers were seen during the first three months of the year with harsh weather influxes producing a peak of 200 on 19th February, tailing off to double figure counts by the end of March. An influx of 670 on 2nd April was the first significant spring arrival, gradually petering out to 23 birds by the 12th and then mainly single figure counts up to 27th May but for double-figure counts on seven dates, including 32 on 25th April. In autumn, three well dispersed singles from 15th-30th September and daily single-figure counts from 2nd-17th October were followed by a period of heavier passage, with daily counts of 12-75 until 7th November but including a large peak of 650+ on 28th October. Four on 12th November and an influx of 35 on 5th December were the last.

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

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

Regular single-figure counts of 1-10 birds were made during the early part of the year until an impressive arrival of 1500 birds on 26th March – a record Spring count. The following day, 650 birds remained and numbers from this fall slowly petered out to below 100 by the 4th April. Numbers then fluctuated between 43-75 birds until 11th April, before dropping to single figures until the end of May (apart from a further influx of 29 on 21st April). Singles on 12th & 24th June and 22nd July were not uncommon summer records. Autumn migrants first appeared on 12th September but numbers were never more than 35 until an arrival of 275 on 11th October, increased to 400 the following day. Counts then ranged from 50-300, before dropping to 45 on 22nd October and below 20 into November. Two on 12th and one on 22nd November were the last.

**REDWING** *Turdus iliacus*

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

Sporadic winter counts varied from 25 to the maximum of 105 on 26th January. Double-figure counts of spring migrants were the norm from 26th March, steadily increasing to a maximum of 1000 birds on 2nd April. Birds quickly departed and numbers had dropped below 100 by the 7th and below 50 by the 11th. Single-figure counts were then made on most dates from 28th April-13th June. In autumn, single-figure counts were made on six dates from 11th-30th September, but passage was typically heaviest in October with numbers never below 100. A large arrival of 7000 birds on 11th October was followed by high counts of 1000-4400 until the 22nd. Thereafter, fluctuating counts of 128-950 were the norm until numbers dropped to below 25 from 12th November. Daily sightings were then made until the 22nd November and a group of 60 was noted on 5th December.

**MISTLE THRUSH** *Turdus viscivorus*

***Scarce spring and autumn migrant***

One on 17th January was unusual, with the first true spring migrants noted on 15th March (2). A record arrival of 26 on 26th March and a further influx of 18 on 29th were followed by almost daily sightings of 1-3 until 21st April. In autumn, counts of 1-2 were made on eleven dates from 12th-28th October.

**+ LANCEOLATED WARBLER** *Locustella lanceolata*

***Rare autumn migrant (70 previous records)***

Singles were found at Bull's Park and Pund on 15th September. The former was trapped and ringed, but was unfortunately found dead on 20th September.

*Both accepted by BBRC*

**COMMON GRASSHOPPER WARBLER** *Locustella naevia*

***Regular spring and autumn migrant***

A poor spring saw birds on five dates between 24th April and 8th May, with two on 5th. Autumn migrants were recorded from 15th August, with singles on ten dates until 12th October and peaks of two on 20th and 25th August – an estimated 12 individuals.

**+ RIVER WARBLER** *Locustella fluviatilis*

***Vagrant; ten previous records (four spring, six autumn)***

One was heard singing (and recorded on an MP3!!) in the Schoolton Rose Bushes on 15th June, but frustratingly was not seen – the first record since 2002.

*Accepted by BBRC*



**+ AQUATIC WARBLER** *Acrocephalus paludicola*

***Vagrant; 36 previous records (all autumn)***

A first-winter, trapped at Boini Mire on 16th September, remained in that area until 21st.

*Accepted by SBRC*

**SEDGE WARBLER** *Acrocephalus schoenobaenus*

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

Regular spring counts of 1-5 were made between 2nd May and 19th June, with a peak count of eight birds on 7th May. Autumn records comprised 1-2 between 11th August and 7th September (involving 10 individuals) and a further 1-2 birds seen daily from 12th-23rd September, with three on 17th.

**+ MARSH WARBLER** *Acrocephalus palustris*

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

Typical June records involved singles on 11th, 14th-17th and 22nd, with two birds present on 13th. A single on 11th August was followed by another from 25th-28th (with two on 27th) and a single from 9th-11th September.

**EURASIAN REED WARBLER** *Acrocephalus scirpaceus*

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

Three on 8th May were followed by singles on seven dates until 6th June – a spring total of six individuals. In autumn, a single on 13th August was followed by daily sightings of 1-3 birds from 18th-31st August and irregular counts of 1-3 on sixteen dates in September. The last was one on 13th October.

***Acrocephalus sp.***

An un-streaked 'acro' was seen on 5th June and was either a Reed or Marsh Warbler.

**+ ICTERINE WARBLER** *Hippolais icterina*

***Scarce spring and autumn migrant***

Spring birds were in South Harbour on 19th May and at the Observatory on 12th June. In autumn, one was at Barkland on 11th August, with another at Lower Stoneybrek on 12th September.

**+ MELODIOUS WARBLER** *Hippolais polyglotta*

***Vagrant; 14 previous records***

A first-winter at Setter on 27th August moved to the Chalet the following day where it remained until the 2nd September. The first since 2002.

*Accepted by SBRC*

### **BLACKCAP** *Sylvia atricapilla*

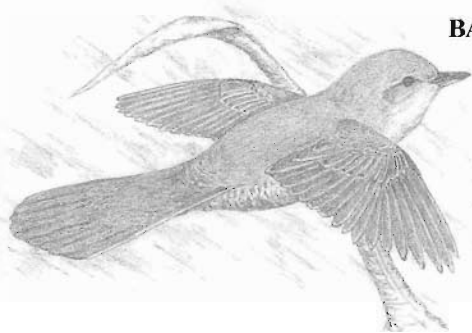
#### ***Common spring and autumn migrant***

In spring, singles on four dates from 21st-27th April, were followed by daily records of 4+ birds from 1st-10th May (peak counts of 11 on 4th and 10th) and 1-4 from 11th-19th. Late May/early June saw singles on three dates and two on two dates. Up to four birds were seen 12th-17th June. In autumn, single-figure counts were daily from 8th September until mid-October when passage became heavier, but for small influxes of 29 (22nd September) and 34 (30th September). Double-figure counts were daily from 8th-24th October and included peaks of 120 (12th) and 52 (22nd), before dwindling to single figure counts until 3rd November. The final sightings of the year included five on 7th and a lone ♂ on 20th November.

### **GARDEN WARBLER** *Sylvia borin*

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

Spring records were few following two on 6th May (increasing to three on 8th), with singles recorded on just seven later dates in May and two dates in June, with two on 6th. A single on 26th July was presumably an early autumn migrant and was not followed until single-figure counts from 5th August. Peak passage was in late August, with counts regularly exceeding ten birds and a peak of 80 on 19th. Thereafter, counts below ten were the norm until the last on 20th October, but for September peaks of 13 (7th) and 15 (15th).



*Barred Warbler (Mark Warren)*

### **BARRED WARBLER**

*Sylvia nisoria*

***Regular autumn migrant,  
vagrant in spring (three  
records)***

One from 11th-13th August was the first, followed by regular counts of 1-5 until 23rd September. Six on 25th-26th August and seven on 12th September were the monthly maxima.

### **LESSER WHITETHROAT** *Sylvia curruca*

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

The first of the year were four on 4th May and daily single-figure counts were made until the months end, but for peaks of 15 (8th) & 13 (10th). Singles were seen on four dates in early June, up to the 8th. Autumn passage began with singles on four dates from 19th-31st August, preceding regular counts of 1-4 through September (max of five on 7th). Stragglers from September were recorded until

2nd October, followed by a single on 11th and two on 19th, with one remaining until 25th.

**COMMON WHITETHROAT** *Sylvia communis*

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

Three on 1st May were the first, followed by almost daily counts of 1-8 until the months end, with double figures on four dates and a monthly max of 22 (10th). A ♂ on 13th June was a late straggler. In autumn, 1-4 daily from 19th August-1st September and 9th-25th September were followed by irregular sightings of singles until 19th October.

**+ SUBALPINE WARBLER** *Sylvia cantillans*

***Rare spring migrant (66 previous records), vagrant in autumn (two records)***

One, a first-summer of the nominate western race was near Hesti geo on 6th June – the only record.

*Accepted by SBCRC*

**+ GREENISH WARBLER** *Phylloscopus trochiloides*

***Rare autumn migrant (27 records), vagrant in spring (11 records)***

One was at Field on 18th August and another frequented Lower Stoneybrek from 25th-28th August. The first since 2002.

*Both accepted by SBCRC*

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

***Regular autumn migrant***

Small numbers (1-4) were logged on eight dates from 12th-30th September, with seven on 22nd – the highest count of the year. October counts fluctuated between 1-4 and were almost daily until 22nd – a minimum total of 30 birds.

**WOOD WARBLER** *Phylloscopus sibilatrix*

***Regular spring and autumn migrant***

Spring singles were seen in May, on 8th, 10th and 12th. Autumn passage was typically heaviest in August, with 1-4 recorded almost daily from 14th-27th, with eight 19th-20th. Two on 7th and a single on 20th September were the last.

**COMMON CHIFFCHAFF** *Phylloscopus collybita*

***Frequent spring and autumn migrant***

In spring, singles on 27th & 30th March were followed by further singles on four dates from 2nd-19th April, after which sightings were daily until 16th June with further singles on 23rd & 27th June. Peak counts during this period were 25 (21st April), 12 (30th April) and 15 (4th May). Autumn passage began with singles from 20th-24th August and irregular counts of 1-8 on most days in September and

October, peaking at 12 on 24th October. November records comprised 1-2 birds until 8th and the last on 26th-27th. Individuals of the eastern races *P.c.abietinus* or *P.c.tristis* were seen on three dates in May, with 1-3 on ten dates in October, with the final bird of the year also believed to have been one of these races.

An unusually long-billed and bright-plumaged bird, seen and trapped on 14th June, may have been a hybrid Chiffchaff x Willow Warbler *Phylloscopus collybita* x *trochilus*.

### **WILLOW WARBLER** *Phylloscopus trochilus*

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

Three on 19th April were the first, increasing to 14 by 21st with daily counts from 26th until the end of May. Single-figure counts were the norm, but double-figures were logged as follows; counts of 12-40 (4th-10th) and 12-28 (15th-19th). Stragglers were recorded on ten dates in June and, unusually, three dates in July. Autumn migrants were recorded from 3rd August- 2nd October. Main passage was from mid-August to mid-September with up to 20 birds recorded daily, but exceeded this figure on 19 dates. A large fall of 100+ on 18th August had increased to 160 the following day, the highest count of the year.

### **GOLDCREST** *Regulus regulus*

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

In spring, 3-4 from 27th-29th March were the first, followed by 50 on 30th, with 35 remaining the following day. Single-figure counts were made on most days in April and five dates in May (up to 15th), with peaks of 14 on 20th April and 23 the following day. In autumn, birds were recorded from 3rd September, with 1-7 logged on most days until 30 on 11th October signalled the start of heavier passage. Counts were regularly in double figures and reached a maximum of 70 on 22nd, before petering out to single figures by the months end and the last on 2nd November.

### **SPOTTED FLYCATCHER** *Muscicapa striata*

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

A light spring passage saw counts of 1-9 on most dates from 4th May-14th June, reaching a peak of ten on 10th May, with a late straggler on 30th June. In autumn, singles were recorded on 13 dates from 31st August-29th September, with three (1st & 15th September) and two (4th & 16th September).

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

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

One on 19th August became our earliest autumn arrival by six days and was not followed until further singles from 14th-16th September and 10th, 14th & 17th October.

**PIED FLYCATCHER** *Ficedula hypoleuca*

**Frequent spring and autumn migrant**

Very few were seen in spring, with 1-2 recorded on 12 dates in May and peaks of 17 on 8th (with 11 remaining until 10th) and six on 17th. In autumn, there were 2-6 daily from 19th-27th August followed by sporadic counts of 1-4 in September (peak of five on 15th) and later singles on 2nd, 6th & 11th October.

**+ GREAT TIT** *Parus major*

**Rare spring & autumn migrant; 32 previous records (c.45 individuals)**

A ♂ at the Observatory from 27th April-1st May was joined by a second bird from 29th-30th April.

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

**Regular spring and autumn migrant**

Two ♀ on 8th May, increased to three the next day, followed by a ♂ on 10th. Further singles were seen on six dates from 16th-31st May and almost daily sightings of singles until 23rd June (with two on 8th) – a total of at least 14 birds. Autumn sightings began with an adult ♂ on 19th August, two the following day with one remaining until 21st. Singles were then recorded from 25th August-6th September (with two on 27th and 31st), and additional singles on 11th & 23rd September – a minimum of eight birds.

**+ WOODCHAT SHRIKE** *Lanius senator*

**Vagrant; 26 previous records (13 spring, one mid-summer, 12 autumn)**

Our first records since 1992. Two individuals were recorded, both juveniles. The first, from 18th-20th August showed characteristics of the eastern race *L.s. niloticus*, whilst the second bird, present at Quoy from 2nd-13th September was of the nominate race.

*Both accepted by SBRC*

**EURASIAN JACKDAW** *Corvus monedula*

**Scarce spring and autumn migrant**

Two on 4th April were the first, followed by irregular counts of 1-2 until 27th May, with three on 9th April and 2nd May. In autumn, a single from 20th-22nd October was joined by a second until 24th. One on 1st November was the only other record.

**ROOK** *Corvus frugilegus*

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

An early bird on 22nd-24th February was not followed until two on 18th March and, but for six on 19th April, 1-2 were then recorded on 20 dates until the end of April. Five on 2nd May, then six on 5th May were followed by daily counts of 1-4 until 4th June. Two birds favoured the Observatory area until 19th June, with

one 'summering' and remaining on the island until it was found dead on 15th September.

**CARRION CROW** *Corvus corone*

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

In spring, following the first on 30th March, counts were made on most days until 28th June. Double-figure counts were reached on 14 dates in this period, with the highest being 34 on 3rd May. Autumn sightings comprised 1-3 birds irregularly from 13th August-22nd November but four were logged on 10th October.

**HOODED CROW** *Corvus cornix*

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

Present all year. Double-figure counts were reached just four times from 23rd March-31st July and may have involved migrants. Two pairs bred, at Busta Geo and Restens Geo – the former fledging five young. Daily autumn counts ranged from 1-12 from mid-August to mid-November, but 26 on 16th October were mainly migrants.

**COMMON RAVEN** *Corvus corax*

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

Present all year. One or two migrants were noted in April, with eight on 7th. The first fledglings from the resident four pairs were noted on 25th May. Autumn migrants were virtually non-existent, with six recorded on 28th September the highest count.

**COMMON STARLING** *Sturnus vulgaris*

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

Present all year and no formal counts made.

**HOUSE SPARROW** *Passer domesticus*

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

Present all year. No counts made.

**EURASIAN TREE SPARROW** *Passer montanus*

***Scarce spring and autumn migrant***

In spring, one was seen from 2nd-8th May. One from 1st-2nd July is potentially the first mid-summer record on the island since this species last bred in 1972. A good autumn saw a single on 2nd September, with 12 the following day (until 5th), with fluctuations of 3-11 birds until 17th. Six birds then remained until the month's end (with seven on 29th). Five remained on 1st October, with one the following day and a further two on 27th (with one remaining until 30th).

**CHAFFINCH** *Fringilla coelebs*

***Common spring and autumn migrant***

Two wintering birds were present from January to mid-March. An influx of 220 on 26th March heralded the first wave of spring migrants. Numbers ranged between 11-135, before tailing off to single-figure counts from mid-April until 23rd June. A ♀ was noted on two dates in July before autumn migration began on 14th September. A moderate passage saw double-figure counts (of 10-88) on most days until the month's end, with a peak of 121 on 24th (with 110 still present on 26th). Numbers in October fluctuated between single figures and a monthly maximum of 55 on 19th. Small numbers (1-9) were seen in November, with a ♀ remaining until at least 23rd December.

**BRAMBLING** *Fringilla montifringilla*

***Common spring and autumn migrant***

A light spring passage between 26th March-21st May saw mainly single-figure counts on most days, but for monthly peaks of ten (2nd-3rd April) and 20 (2nd May). In autumn, 1-6 from 15th-29th September (with 13 on 24th) were followed by daily counts in October. Passage was heaviest mid-month when numbers hit double-figures and a peak of just 39 on 13th, but had returned to single figures by the 24th. The last was a single on 3rd November.

**EUROPEAN GREENFINCH** *Carduelis chloris*

***Regular spring and autumn migrant***

In spring, one on 26th March was followed by 1-5 until the month's end, increasing to a spring peak of ten birds on 2nd April. Thereafter, 1-6 were seen almost daily until the 28th April, with two stragglers on 13th May. A single on 10th-11th October was the only autumn record.

**+ EUROPEAN GOLDFINCH** *Carduelis carduelis*

***Scarce spring and autumn migrant***

In spring, there were singles on 14th, 23rd-26th, 28th and 30th April, with additional May birds on 3rd-6th and 14th-15th.

**EURASIAN SISKIN** *Carduelis spinus*

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

In spring, sporadic sightings of 1-9 birds were made from 20th April-23rd May, with a peak of ten on 6th-7th May. A single, possibly the same bird on each occasion, was seen on five dates in June. Autumn migration began with a single on 22nd September, quickly rising to 40 the following day and numbers fluctuated from 10-75 until 2nd October. Single figures were then recorded (apart from 12 on 20th and 20 on 22nd) until the end of October, with a single on 3rd November the last.

**COMMON LINNET** *Carduelis cannabina*

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

In spring, one on 15th March was followed by a single ♀ from 27th-31st March, before daily sightings of 1-3 from 12th-30th April and 1-5 from 2nd-25th May and a later single on 3rd June. Two on 20th-21st August were the first of the autumn. Singles were then seen on five dates from 12th-30th September and three on 28th, followed by 1-4 on most days until the last on 22nd October.

**TWITE** *Carduelis flavirostris*

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

Present all year. Spring passage was fairly light, but generally in double figures with a peak of 43 on 30th April. Breeding birds are fairly inconspicuous but there were probably no more than ten pairs. As usual autumn migrants were far more numerous than in spring, with most-counts from 17th August to 27th October exceeding 100 birds, with monthly peaks of 200 (17th August), 205 (12th September) and 220 (4th October). Numbers then ranged from 27-78, with the last count, of 55, on 5th December.

**+ LESSER REDPOLL** *Carduelis cabaret*

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

In spring, singles on 6th, 15th-19th and 25th May were the only records. In autumn, singles were identified on 2nd September and 17th October.

**COMMON REDPOLL** *Carduelis flammea*

***Frequent spring and autumn migrant***

Two on 26th January and a single on 24th February were unusual winter records. In spring, a single on 29th April was the first. Thereafter, 1-5 were regularly recorded from 2nd May- 19th June. A light autumn passage saw singles on 1st and 4th September, singles on five dates from 18th-31st October and two on 19th. All were of the Fenno-Scandian race *C.f.flammea* ('Mealy' Redpoll).

Un-identified Redpolls (either Lesser or Common), involving 1-2 birds in each instance, were recorded on five dates in May, three dates in June, one date in August, three dates in September and seven dates in October. Another un-identified Redpoll on 29th September was thought to be one of the Greenland/Icelandic races *C.f.rostrata/islandica*.

**+ ARCTIC REDPOLL** *Carduelis hornemann*

***Rare autumn migrant; vagrant in spring***

Individuals of the nominate race (*C.h.hornemanni*), which breeds in Greenland, were identified on 25th and 30th October.

*Former accepted by BBRC, latter awaiting decision*



**+ COMMON CROSSBILL** *Loxia curvirostra*

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

A single on 29th March was followed by a ♂ 3rd-4th May, two on 8th July, four on 19th July and two on 14th August.

**COMMON ROSEFINCH** *Carpodacus erythrinus*

***Regular spring and autumn migrant***

A ♂ on 30th-31st May was followed by another ♂ on 6th June. One-two were then recorded on seven dates up to 3rd July – at least seven birds in total. In autumn, one on 12th August preceded daily counts of 1-6 from 21st August-29th September, with eight on 12th September. October records comprised 1-2 almost daily from 2nd-17th.

**+ COMMON BULLFINCH** *Pyrrhula pyrrhula*

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

In spring, single ♂ of the large nominate race (Northern Bullfinch *P.p.pyrrhula*) were seen on 30th April and 4th May. A ♂ from 13th-19th June was most unusual and is the first record in this month. It was also smaller and thought to be either of the British (*P.p.pileata*) or the Western European (*P.p.europaea*) race – the first confirmed record for Shetland.

**+ HAWFINCH** *Coccothraustes coccothraustes*

***Scarce spring and autumn migrant***

Singles were seen on 12th-14th April and 10th May.

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

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

A ♂ on 31st March was followed by three on 3rd April and singles on 11th and 14th May. In autumn, 1-2 were reported from 8th September until the months end, with six on 17th and five on 30th, before almost daily records until 24th October. Most counts were of 1-4 but for 6-8 (2nd-4th) and five (15th). The last of the year was seen on 1st November.

**SNOW BUNTING** *Plectrophenax nivalis*

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

Small numbers were recorded in the winter months (max 31 on 15th March), followed by near daily sightings from 24th March-20th May. Double-figure counts were achieved on 18 dates within this period, peaking at 44 on 24th March and 10th & 15th April. September produced the first autumn singles on 15th and 20th, preceding daily sightings from 22nd September-22nd November. Counts fluctuated, but were generally into double figures ranging from 10-90 birds. An

arrival of 120 on 24th October had increased to 135 the following day – the highest count of the autumn. December records included 32 on 5th and three on 23rd and 31st.

**YELLOWHAMMER** *Emberiza citrinella*

***Regular spring and autumn migrant***

In spring, 1-3 were recorded daily from 23rd-31st March, followed by 2-5 from 1st-11th April (with seven 2nd-3rd). One lingered from 26th April-2nd May. Autumn produced just two singles, on 19th and 20th October.

**+ ORTOLAN BUNTING** *Emberiza hortulana*

***Scarce spring and autumn migrant***

Spring males were recorded from 8th-15th May in Gilsetter/Homisdale and 24th-26th May at Wester Lothar. Autumn sightings began with two on 7th September (with one the following day) and singles on 15th and 29th September.

**+ RUSTIC BUNTING** *Emberiza rustica*

***Scarce spring & autumn migrant; 118 previous records***

An elusive individual, an immature male, was seen on and off near the Plantation & Vaadal traps from 3rd-5th October.

*Accepted by SBCRC*

**+ LITTLE BUNTING** *Emberiza pusilla*



*Little Bunting (Mark Warren)*

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

Singles on 22nd September, 11th October and 17th October were the only records.

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

***Rare autumn migrant***

One in the Skadan Bird Crop on 15th September, was still present the following day – the first since 2003

*Accepted by BBRC*

**REED BUNTING** *Emberiza schoeniclus*

***Frequent spring and autumn migrant***

In spring, four on 26th March preceded regular counts until 26th May. Counts were mainly of single figures, but for a period of heavier passage in mid-May when

double figures were achieved on nine dates, peaking at 19 on 12th. Stragglers were seen on 1st, 2nd and 17th June. Autumn passage was light following the first on 15th September, with singles on three dates in September (with three on 17th) and almost daily counts in October of 1-5 birds, peaking at seven on 15th.

+ **CORN BUNTING** *Emberiza calandra*

***Vagrant; formerly bred***

One, initially found at Barkland, roamed the south of the island from 8th-27th May – only the fifth since the 1970s but recorded for the second year in succession.

## 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:

2003: Savi's Warbler (of eastern race <i>L.l.fusca</i> ), 30th September	Awaiting BBRC decision
2004: Chestnut-eared Bunting ( <i>Emberiza fucata</i> ), 15th-20th October	Accepted by BOURC
2005: Black-throated Diver, 9th October	Awaiting SBCRC decision
Cory's Shearwater, 8th September	Not accepted by SBRC
Northern Goshawk, 7th December	Awaiting SBCRC decision
Blyth's Reed Warbler, 16th-17th June	Accepted by BBRC
Great Reed Warbler, 13th May	Accepted by BBRC
Booted Warbler, 4th-6th September	Accepted by BBRC
Subalpine Warbler, 1st-5th June	Accepted by BBRC
Western Bonelli's Warbler, 10th September	Accepted by BBRC
Arctic Redpoll, 20th-25th October	Accepted by BBRC
Rustic Bunting, 8th May	Accepted by BBRC
Rustic Bunting, 13th June	Accepted by BBRC

# ***RINGING REPORT***

*Paul Baxter*

Ringling numbers in 2006 were a marked improvement on previous years. The total of 6599 is the highest figure since 2000, whilst the variety of species ringed (112) is the highest since 1998 (see Table 2). It is pleasing to report good numbers of Seabirds in the ringling totals, reflecting a much better breeding season compared to recent years. Table 1 gives the ten most commonly ringed species in 2006.

*Table 1. The ten most commonly ringed species, with totals, on Fair Isle in 2006; (2005 totals for comparison).*

<b>Species</b>	<b>2006</b>	<b>2005</b>
Guillemot	1019	252
Blackbird	522	277
Shag	506	241
Arctic Tern	459	16
Razorbill	451	396
Starling	451	549
Storm Petrel	375	493
Great Skua	250	2
Northern Wheatear	197	271
Willow Warbler	184	39

Once again, there were no additions to the ringling list, although several rare species were trapped and ringed with both Scops Owl and Blyth's Pipit featuring in this ringling report for only their second time. Other unusual species ringed during the year included our 4th Corn Bunting, 8th Rook, 12th-13th Great Tit, 14th Melodious Warbler and Little Auk, 15th Pink-footed Goose and 16th-17th Goldfinch. Scarcely ringed species included Rock Dove (9), Grey Wagtail (2) and single Aquatic Warbler and Arctic Redpoll.

Additional to the good numbers of Seabirds, high annual totals were achieved for Blackbird (522) and Willow Warbler (184), the latter species featuring as a result of a strong early autumn passage which also produced good numbers of *sylvia* warblers including no less than 19 Barred Warblers.

As well as the nine observatory heligoland traps, the new ringling station at Barkland was fully operational throughout the year and contributed to the Observatory totals with 413 birds of 53 species ringed on the croft.

*Table 2. Numbers of birds ringed on Fair Isle and recovered/controlled elsewhere in 2006, together with cumulative totals from 1948*

Species	Ringed as:		Total	Total	Recovered/Controlled	
	Juv/Ad	Pullus	2006	1948-06	2006	1948-06
Whooper Swan	—	—	—	41	—	7
Bean Goose	—	—	—	1	—	—
Pink-footed Goose	1	—	1	15	—	1
White-fronted Goose	—	—	—	3	—	1
Greylag Goose	11	—	11	53	2	11
Barnacle Goose	—	—	—	4	—	—
Shelduck	—	—	—	5	—	—
Wigeon	—	—	—	56	—	5
Teal	—	—	—	73	—	4
Mallard	—	—	—	16	—	1
Pintail	—	—	—	2	—	1
Shoveler	—	—	—	1	—	—
Pochard	—	—	—	3	—	—
Ring-necked Duck	—	—	—	1	—	—
Tufted Duck	—	—	—	19	—	—
Scaup	—	—	—	5	—	—
Eider	—	—	—	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	13	76	89	17004	2	176
Storm Petrel	375	—	375	30755	11	1202
Leach's Petrel	3	—	3	95	—	3
Gannet	—	—	—	470	—	9
Cormorant	—	—	—	7	—	—
Shag	37	469	506	23292	3	566
Grey Heron	—	—	—	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>2006</i>	<i>1948-06</i>	<i>2006</i>	<i>1948-06</i>
Goshawk	—	—	—	2	—	—
Sparrowhawk	4	—	4	380	—	24
Kestrel	1	—	1	51	—	8
Red-footed Falcon	—	—	—	1	—	—
Merlin	1	—	1	195	—	12
Peregrine Falcon	—	—	—	6	—	1
Water Rail	2	—	2	330	—	3
Spotted Crane	—	—	—	19	—	—
Little Crane	—	—	—	1	—	—
Baillon's Crane	—	—	—	1	—	—
Corncrake	1	—	1	43	—	2
Moorhen	2	—	2	103	—	3
Coot	—	—	—	15	—	1
Great Bustard	—	—	—	1	—	—
Oystercatcher	3	11	14	1526	1	73
Little Ringed Plover	—	—	—	1	—	—
Ringed Plover	14	4	18	713	—	6
Dotterel	—	—	—	4	—	—
Golden Plover	—	—	—	24	—	—
Grey Plover	—	—	—	1	—	—
Lapwing	—	6	—	346	—	6
Knot	2	—	2	104	1	3
Sanderling	5	—	5	114	—	1
Semi-palmated Sandpiper	—	—	—	1	—	—
Little Stint	—	—	—	123	—	—
Temminck's Stint	—	—	—	2	—	—
White-rumped Sandpiper	—	—	—	1	—	—
Baird's Sandpiper	—	—	—	1	—	—
Pectoral Sandpiper	—	—	—	5	—	—
Curlew Sandpiper	—	—	—	6	—	—
Purple Sandpiper	4	—	4	174	—	1
Dunlin	9	—	9	594	—	7
Buff-breasted Sandpiper	—	—	—	1	—	—
Ruff	—	—	—	41	—	1
Jack Snipe	4	—	4	141	—	3
Common Snipe	16	—	16	501	—	4
Great Snipe	—	—	—	2	—	—
Woodcock	6	—	6	466	—	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>2006</i>	<i>1948-06</i>	<i>2006</i>	<i>1948-06</i>
Whimbrel	—	—	—	17	—	—
Curlew	—	9	9	181	—	6
Spotted Redshank	—	—	—	3	—	—
Redshank	1	—	1	284	—	3
Greenshank	—	—	—	13	—	—
Green Sandpiper	—	—	—	57	—	1
Wood Sandpiper	—	—	—	19	—	—
Common Sandpiper	—	—	—	70	—	1
Turnstone	3	—	3	89	—	—
Red-necked Phalarope	—	—	—	5	—	—
Grey Phalarope	—	—	—	3	—	—
Pomarine Skua	—	—	—	1	—	—
Arctic Skua	—	84	84	3945	2	71
Great Skua	2	248	250	2744	3	51
Black-headed Gull	2	—	2	48	—	2
Common Gull	1	9	10	219	—	3
Lesser Black-backed Gull	1	4	5	1449	—	34
Herring Gull	4	31	35	4416	—	96
Iceland Gull	—	—	—	1	—	—
Glaucous Gull	—	—	—	40	—	1
Great Black-backed Gull	2	1	3	2848	—	113
Kittiwake	40	16	56	7074	—	37
Common Tern	—	—	—	481	—	3
Arctic Tern	—	459	459	11741	2	38
Guillemot	50	969	1019	36803	9	1078
Razorbill	45	406	451	11454	7	266
Black Guillemot	3	14	17	1658	—	19
Little Auk	1	—	1	14	—	—
Puffin	55	47	102	13188	—	33
Rock Dove	9	—	9	77	—	—
Wood Pigeon	—	—	—	72	—	2
Collared Dove	17	—	17	376	—	6
Turtle Dove	1	—	1	82	—	2
Cuckoo	—	—	—	108	—	1
Scops Owl	1	—	1	2	—	—
Snowy Owl	—	—	—	1	—	1
Long-eared Owl	2	—	2	255	—	13
Short-eared Owl	—	—	—	18	—	—
Nightjar	—	—	—	4	—	—
Swift	—	—	—	17	—	1



<i>Species</i>	<i>Ringed as:</i>		<i>Total 2006</i>	<i>Total 1948-06</i>	<i>Recovered/Controlled</i>	
	<i>Juv/Ad</i>	<i>Pullus</i>			<i>2006</i>	<i>1948-06</i>
Hoopoe	—	—	—	3	—	—
Wryneck	7	—	7	237	—	—
Great Spotted Woodpecker	—	—	—	29	—	—
Short-toed Lark	—	—	—	9	—	—
Woodlark	—	—	—	3	—	—
Skylark	29	8	37	1338	—	3
Shorelark	—	—	—	5	—	—
Sand Martin	—	—	—	8	—	—
Swallow	1	—	1	261	—	2
House Martin	—	—	—	142	—	1
Richard's Pipit	—	—	—	12	—	—
Blyth's Pipit	1	—	1	2	—	—
Tawny Pipit	—	—	—	3	—	—
Olive-backed Pipit	—	—	—	10	—	—
Tree Pipit	4	—	4	658	—	—
Pechora Pipit	—	—	—	9	—	—
Meadow Pipit	122	10	132	10951	—	45
Red-throated Pipit	—	—	—	9	—	—
Rock Pipit	87	—	87	9707	—	29
Yellow Wagtail	—	—	—	10	—	—
Citrine Wagtail	—	—	—	5	—	—
Grey Wagtail	2	—	2	41	—	1
White/Pied Wagtail	30	—	30	790	—	4
Waxwing	1	—	1	67	—	—
Dipper	—	—	—	15	—	—
Wren	30	—	30	935	—	—
Dunnock	52	—	52	2675	2	10
Robin	118	—	118	9110	—	40
Thrush Nightingale	1	—	1	34	—	—
Nightingale	—	—	—	30	—	—
Rufous-tailed Robin	—	—	—	1	—	—
Siberian Rubythroat	—	—	—	2	—	—
Bluethroat	1	—	1	290	—	2
Red-flanked Bluetail	—	—	—	2	—	—
Black Redstart	2	—	2	162	—	—
Redstart	16	—	16	1842	—	1
Whinchat	5	—	5	639	—	2
Stonechat	3	—	3	59	—	—
Northern Wheatear	197	—	197	17083	—	74
Pied Wheatear	—	—	—	1	—	—

<i>Species</i>	<i>Ringed as:</i>		<i>Total 2006</i>	<i>Total 1948-06</i>	<i>Recovered/Controlled</i>	
	<i>Juv/Ad</i>	<i>Pullus</i>			<i>2006</i>	<i>1948-06</i>
Black-eared Wheatear	—	—	—	3	—	—
Rock Thrush	—	—	—	1	—	—
White's Thrush	—	—	—	1	—	—
Hermit Thrush	—	—	—	1	—	—
Grey-cheeked Thrush	—	—	—	2	—	—
Ring Ouzel	—	—	—	506	—	9
Blackbird	522	—	522	23605	1	332
Eye-browed Thrush	—	—	—	1	—	1
Dusky Thrush	—	—	—	1	—	—
Dark-throated Thrush	—	—	—	1	—	—
Fieldfare	1	—	1	644	—	1
Song Thrush	38	—	38	3068	—	32
Redwing	116	—	116	9186	—	74
Mistle Thrush	—	—	—	22	—	—
Pallas' Grasshopper Warbler	—	—	12	—	—	—
Lanceolated Warbler	1	—	1	37	—	—
Grasshopper Warbler	2	—	2	134	—	—
River Warbler	—	—	—	8	—	—
Savi's Warbler	—	—	—	4	—	—
Aquatic Warbler	1	—	1	25	—	—
Sedge Warbler	16	—	16	515	—	1
Paddyfield Warbler	—	—	—	9	—	1
Blyth's Reed Warbler	—	—	—	11	—	1
Marsh Warbler	2	—	2	136	—	—
Reed Warbler	8	—	8	309	—	1
Great Reed Warbler	—	—	—	7	—	—
Thick-billed Warbler	—	—	—	2	—	—
Olivaceous Warbler	—	—	—	1	—	—
Booted Warbler	—	—	—	10	—	—
Icterine Warbler	2	—	2	109	—	—
Melodious Warbler	1	—	1	13	—	—
Subalpine Warbler	—	—	—	28	—	—
Sardinian Warbler	—	—	—	1	—	—
Barred Warbler	19	—	19	434	—	1
Lesser Whitethroat	15	—	15	769	—	1
Whitethroat	15	—	15	1009	—	—
Garden Warbler	76	—	76	3653	—	4
Blackcap	172	—	172	5864	1	26
Greenish Warbler	—	—	—	23	—	—
Arctic Warbler	—	—	—	33	—	—

<i>Species</i>	<i>Ringed as:</i>		<i>Total 2006</i>	<i>Total 1948-06</i>	<i>Recovered/Controlled</i>	
	<i>Juv/Ad</i>	<i>Pullus</i>			<i>2006</i>	<i>1948-06</i>
Pallas's Warbler	—	—	—	4	—	—
Yellow-browed Warbler	6	—	6	142	—	—
Hume's Warbler	—	—	—	1	—	—
Radde's Warbler	—	—	—	1	—	—
Dusky Warbler	—	—	—	7	—	—
Western Bonelli's Wblr	—	—	—	2	—	—
Wood Warbler	2	—	2	111	—	—
Chiffchaff	53	—	53	1358	—	5
Willow Warbler	184	—	184	3858	—	7
Goldcrest	21	—	21	1773	—	3
Firecrest	—	—	—	1	—	—
Brown Flycatcher	—	—	—	1	—	—
Spotted Flycatcher	6	—	6	785	—	3
Red-breasted Flycatcher	2	—	2	60	—	—
Collared Flycatcher	—	—	—	2	—	—
Pied Flycatcher	10	—	10	974	—	—
Blue Tit	—	—	—	2	—	—
Great Tit	2	—	2	13	—	—
Coal Tit	—	—	—	1	—	—
Treecreeper	—	—	—	1	—	—
Golden Oriole	—	—	—	8	—	—
Brown Shrike	—	—	—	1	—	—
Isabelline Shrike	—	—	—	2	—	—
Red-backed Shrike	1	—	1	239	—	—
Lesser Grey Shrike	—	—	—	6	—	—
Great Grey Shrike	—	—	—	116	—	1
Woodchat Shrike	—	—	—	13	—	—
Jackdaw	—	—	—	4	—	—
Rook	1	—	1	8	—	—
Hooded Crow	—	—	—	48	—	—
Raven	—	—	—	27	—	—
Daurian Starling	—	—	—	1	—	—
Starling	180	271	451	27485	3	195
Rose-coloured Starling	—	—	—	3	—	—
House Sparrow	46	—	46	1679	—	3
Tree Sparrow	3	—	3	118	—	1
Chaffinch	157	—	157	3144	—	12
Brambling	40	—	40	3761	1	17
Greenfinch	21	—	21	475	2	31
Goldfinch	2	—	2	17	1	1

<i>Species</i>	<i>Ringed as:</i>		<i>Total</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>Recovered/Controlled</i>	
	<i>Juv/Ad</i>	<i>Pullus</i>	<i>2006</i>	<i>1948-06</i>	<i>2006</i>	<i>1948-06</i>
Siskin	32	—	32	502	—	1
Linnet	8	—	8	173	1	5
Twite	133	—	133	6070	1	12
Lesser Redpoll	6	—	6	35	—	—
Common Redpoll	5	—	5	648	—	6
Arctic Redpoll	1	—	1	22	—	—
Two-barred Crossbill	—	—	—	1	—	—
Common Crossbill	1	—	1	534	—	2
Parrot Crossbill	—	—	—	37	—	—
Pallas's Rosefinch	—	—	—	1	—	—
Common Rosefinch	12	—	12	219	—	1
Bullfinch	1	—	1	300	—	—
Hawfinch	1	—	1	26	—	1
Tennessee Warbler	—	—	—	2	—	—
Savannah Sparrow	—	—	—	2	—	—
Song Sparrow	—	—	—	3	—	—
White-crowned Sparrow	—	—	—	1	—	—
White-throated Sparrow	—	—	—	2	—	—
Lapland Bunting	—	—	—	48	—	—
Snow Bunting	28	—	28	663	—	3
Pine Bunting	—	—	—	2	—	—
Yellowhammer	4	—	4	69	—	—
Ortolan Bunting	—	—	—	20	—	—
Cretzschmar's Bunting	—	—	—	1	—	—
Yellow-browed Bunting	—	—	—	1	—	—
Rustic Bunting	—	—	—	17	—	1
Little Bunting	—	—	—	35	—	1
Chestnut Bunting	—	—	—	2	—	—
Yellow-breasted Bunting	—	—	—	6	—	—
Reed Bunting	5	—	5	490	—	3
Pallas's Reed Bunting	—	—	—	2	—	—
Chestnut-eared Bunting	—	—	—	1	—	—
Red-headed Bunting	—	—	—	5	—	—
Black-headed Bunting	—	—	—	4	—	—
Corn Bunting	1	—	1	4	—	—
<b>Totals:</b>	<b>3447</b>	<b>3152</b>	<b>6599</b>	<b>341825</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>5072</b>

## Selected ringing recoveries/controls reported to Fair Isle Bird Observatory during 2006

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

### Key to symbols and abbreviations used in the text

**Age:** The figures do not represent years. Interpretation is as follows:

- 1 Pullus (nestling or chick)
- 3 hatched during calendar year of ringing
- 4 hatched before calendar year of ringing, but exact year unknown
- 5 hatched during previous calendar year
- 6 hatched before previous calendar year, but exact year unknown
- 8 hatched more than two calendar years before year of ringing

**Sex:** M = male, F = female

### **Condition at recovery:**

- x found dead
- + shot
- v alive and probably healthy, caught and released
- vv alive and probably healthy, ring or colour marks read in the field

Birds ringed *and* found dead on the isle are not included in table 2.

### **Greylag Goose**

5028387	6F	24/02/98	Fair Isle, Shetland
	+	10/10/04	Arbaer, Myrar, Austur-Skaftafells, <b>Iceland</b> (893km)
5207644		24/10/00	Loch Eye, Highland
	vv	23/12/06	Fair Isle, Shetland

Our tenth and eleventh recoveries. Most of the migratory Greylags wintering in Shetland originate from Iceland. 5207644 was also marked with a neck collar (HCY), enabling it to be read in the field. After being ringed in 2000, it was sighted during the winter months in Easter Ross, Fife (in 2002-2004) and the Isle of Bute (2004), before arriving on Fair Isle in December 2006.

### **Eider**

HT64851	8F	04/06/98	Fair Isle, Shetland
	x	06/08/05	Fair Isle, Shetland

### **Fulmar**

FR57035	8	14/07/82	Fair Isle, Shetland
	x	30/06/06	Ameland, <b>Netherlands</b> (817km)
FR78804	1	21/07/92	Fair Isle, Shetland
	v	02/07/06	Eilean Cluimbrig, Highland (205km)

FR57035 was at least 26 years old when found dead in the Netherlands. FR78804 was a Fair Isle chick found nesting in Highland region.

### **Storm Petrel**

2304716	4	01/08/88	Fair Isle, Shetland
	v	02/08/05	Fair Isle, Shetland
2E05203	4	09/08/04	Vinappen, Fedje, Hordaland, <b>Norway</b>
	v	15/07/05	Fair Isle, Shetland (377km)
9924085	4	16/08/04	Tjornudalsa, Skuvoy, <b>Faeroes</b>
	v	02/08/05	Fair Isle, Shetland (377km)

2304716 was retrapped on the island after being ringed here 17 years ago. In addition to the above records, Fair isle ringed birds were controlled in Highland (3), Fife (1), Orkney (5), Borders (1) and North-East Scotland (1) whilst two birds originally ringed in Orkney were controlled on the isle.

### **Shag**

1186531	1	01/07/85	Fair Isle, Shetland
	x	23/04/06	Gulberwick, Shetland (69km)
1359997	1	26/06/03	Fair Isle, Shetland
	x	15/07/05	Utsira, Rogaland, <b>Norway</b> (371km)

1186531 was nearly 21 years old when found. Although Shetland bred Shags mostly winter in Scotland or Northern England, a small number of birds cross the North Sea, as shown by 1359997.

### **Oystercatcher**

FC99530	1	20/06/05	Fair Isle, Shetland
	x	19/06/06	Llansteffan, Dyfed, Wales (880km)

Recoveries of ringed birds show that most Shetland Oystercatchers winter on the British mainland, particularly around the Irish Sea. An analysis of the 56 Oystercatchers ringed on the island and later recovered (1958-2006), showed that



*Bluethroat – May*

*Rebecca Nason*



*Bluethroat – June*

*Paul Baxter*



*Bluethroat – May*

*Rebecca Nason*



*Bluethroat – November*

*Paul Baxter*



*Red-breasted Flycatcher – October*

*Rebecca Nason*



*Red-breasted Flycatcher – September*

*Paul Baxter*



*Red-breasted Flycatcher – September*

*Deryk Shaw*



*Aquatic Warbler –  
September*      *Deryk Shaw*



*Wood Warbler – August*

*Paul Baxter*



*Main picture and inset – Melodious Warbler – August*

*Paul Baxter*





*Main picture and inset – Greenish Warblers – August*

*Paul Baxter*



*Main picture and inset – Lanceolated Warbler – September*

*Paul Baxter*



*Arctic Redpoll – October*

*Rebecca Nason*



*Ortolan – May*

*Deryk Shaw*



*Hawfinch – April*

*Paul Baxter*

30 were in coastal areas bordering the Irish Sea, from Dumfries & Galloway, south to Glamorgan, with the highest number of sightings from Wales. FC99530 therefore fits the established pattern expected from Fair Isle Oystercatchers. Additionally, several birds headed further south, with recoveries from Devon, the Isles of Scilly, France (2) and Spain (2).

### **Knot**

SV23966	3	14/08/06	Fair Isle, Shetland
	vv	25/09/06	Kustwachtoren, Noord-Holland, <b>Netherlands</b> (830km)

Although our third Knot recovery, this is our first abroad. Knot breed in northern Greenland and the islands of high Arctic Canada, with the core wintering grounds being the large estuaries of the southern North Sea and western Britain, so this individual had probably already completed its mammoth journey by the end of September. Amazingly, the ring number of this bird was read in the field.

### **Turnstone**

13Z60474	3	28/12/97	Nieuwpoort, West-Vlaanderen, <b>Belgium</b>
	v	16/05/05	Fair Isle, Shetland (973km)
99Z18181	4	08/12/04	Mariakerke, Oostende, West Vlaanderen, <b>Belgium</b>
	v	16/05/05	Fair Isle, Shetland (967km)

Although there was a seven year gap between dates, both birds were wintering in Belgium when ringed. Remarkably they were controlled together on Fair Isle on 16th May 2005, probably en-route to their breeding grounds in Greenland or north-east Canada.

### **Arctic Skua**

EP88900	1	29/06/91	Fair Isle, Shetland
	x	27/05/06	Handa Island, Highland (241km)

EP88900 was ringed as a chick on Fair Isle and was presumably breeding on Handa Island when found dead in June 2006, having fallen prey to a Great Skua. Of the seven ringed birds found dead on Fair Isle during the year, at least three were reported as victims of Great Skuas.

### **Great Skua**

HT78238	1	13/07/01	Fair Isle, Shetland
	x	14/11/05	St Denis d'Oleron, Charente-Maritime, <b>France</b> (1500km)
HT78442	1	17/07/06	Fair Isle, Shetland
	x	07/10/06	Noordzeestrand, Texel, <b>Netherlands</b> (815km)

Great Skuas winter mostly in the Bay of Biscay, on the Iberian coast and in the western Mediterranean, with immature birds as far south as off the coast of West Africa. HT78238 is our eighth chick to be found dead on the French coast since 2000. There have also been three recoveries from the Spanish coast. In addition to the above, a five year old was found dead in Orkney.

### Arctic Tern

SX92463	1	09/07/96	Fair Isle, Shetland
	x	25/05/05	Fair Isle, Shetland

An island bred chick returning for its ninth year, unfortunately killed by a cat. In addition, two Fair Isle ringed chicks were found dead on Orkney during the year.

### Guillemot

GK93654	8	04/07/79	Fair Isle, Shetland
	x	30/09/06	Stronsay, Orkney (74km)
X71271	1	23/06/96	Fair Isle, Shetland
	v	14/07/06	Bonden, Vasterbotten, <b>Sweden</b> (1228km)
R37514	1	29/06/03	Fair Isle, Shetland
	v	24/06/06	Castle Craig, North Sutor, Highland (245km)
R49570	1	10/07/06	Fair Isle, Shetland
	x	25/09/06	Vigso Bredning, Hanstholm, Thy Jylland, <b>Denmark</b> (663km)

GK93654 had reached the ripe old age of 29+ years when found dead on Orkney. X71271 and R37514 were both found alive and well, breeding in Guillemot colonies in Sweden and Highland. R49570 had travelled a considerable distance in its first two months, but was unfortunately found dead. In addition, there were five further reports of Fair Isle ringed birds during the year – three were found dead in North Sea fishing nets and the remaining two were victims of oil pollution. Since 1991, a minimum of 132 ringed Fair Isle Guillemots were reported as having drowned in fishing nets – one wonders how many unringed and unreported birds end up this way?

### Razorbill

M90292	1	24/06/97	Fair Isle, Shetland
	v	05/07/06	Sanda Island, Kintyre, Strathclyde (530km)
M34257	8	04/07/79	Fair Isle, Shetland
	v	21/06/04	Sanda Island, Kintyre, Strathclyde (530km)

K04223	1	19/06/03	Fair Isle, Shetland
	x	15/11/03	St Pierre Quiberon, Morbihan, <b>France</b> (1339km)
K13619	1	30/06/05	Fair Isle, Shetland
	x	26/10/05	near Eystness, Eysturoy, <b>Faeroes</b> (377km)

M90292 and M34257 were both breeding on Sanda Island, off the Mull of Kintyre – the former, a dispersing chick, the latter a relocating adult – now in at least its 27th year. K04223 and K13619 were both found dead within their first autumn, although the direction of their dispersal could hardly be any different. In addition, three Fair Isle ringed chicks were found dead on Scottish tide lines during the year.

### **Dunnoek**

T668415	3	12/09/05	Fair Isle, Shetland
	v	05/10/05	North Ronaldsay, Orkney (49 km)

### **Blackbird**

CW23605	6F	01/06/05	North Ronaldsay, Orkney
	v	10/08/05	Fair Isle, Shetland (49km)
CL41598	3F	25/10/05	Fair Isle, Shetland
	v	26/10/05	Noss Farm, Wick, Highland (145km)

CL41598 was a very rapid movement south – having been ringed on the island at 11.30am it was controlled at noon the following day at Wick.

### **Redwing**

878652	4	12/10/04	Langahlid, Akureyri, Eyjafjardar, <b>Iceland</b>
	v	08/11/05	Fair Isle, Shetland (1083km)

Only our fourth ringed bird of the darker Icelandic race *T.i.coburni*

### **Blackcap**

T330690	3M	26/08/04	Cauldwell Farm, Hollesley, Suffolk
	v	24/09/05	Fair Isle, Shetland (854km)
T668139	4F	25/06/05	Fair Isle, Shetland
	v	29/06/05	Foula, Shetland (71km)

T330690 fits nicely into the established pattern that birds from the central European population migrate WNW in autumn, to winter in Britain. This is our eighth example of such movements since 1991, with the previous seven involving birds from Belgium (4), Netherlands (2) and Germany (1).

### **Starling**

CL02757	3	28/06/03	Fair Isle, Shetland
	x	19/06/06	Bylbster, Watten, Highland (152km)
CL40266	1	28/05/04	Fair Isle, Shetland
	X	20/09/04	Oil Platform, North Sea (153 km)
CL41337	3	26/07/05	Fair Isle, Shetland
	x	27/06/06	St. Margarets Hope, Orkney (111km)

Three examples of locally bred Starlings dispersing south. It is interesting to note that two of these birds were found during the breeding season, away from Fair Isle.

### **Brambling**

5E60662	4M	21/09/05	Utsira, Rogaland, <b>Norway</b>
	v	05/10/05	Fair Isle, Shetland (370km)
T998855	3F	25/10/05	Fair Isle, Shetland
	x	08/01/06	Reduzum, Friesland, <b>Netherlands</b> (847km)

T998855 was probably wintering in the Netherlands when it was found dead after hitting a window.

### **Greenfinch**

VS18144	3M	20/10/05	Fair Isle, Shetland
	v	17/12/05	Crantit House, Kirkwall, Orkney
	v	08/01/06	Lynn, Kirkwall, Orkney (98km)

Yet another Fair Isle ringed autumn Greenfinch controlled on Orkney during the winter, presumably the wintering destination of many of our autumn Greenfinches. Since the first in 1995, nineteen Greenfinches ringed on the island in autumn have now been controlled on Orkney the following winter.

### **Goldfinch**

T393544	4M	05/04/05	Fair Isle, Shetland
	v	12/12/06	Broadhaven, Wick, Highland (148km)
T668500	6F	04/05/06	Fair Isle, Shetland
	V	06/05/06	Cunningsburgh, Shetland (50km)

There have only been 17 Goldfinches ringed on Fair Isle and these are our first ever recoveries and perhaps confirming that birds here may be of British origin as

opposed to continental migrants. T668500 was controlled together with another bird, which had been ringed in London in February 2006.

### **Linnet**

T393369	5M	03/05/05	Fair Isle, Shetland
	v	13/05/05	North Ronaldsay, Orkney (49km)

Our fifth Linnet movement, the previous four also involving movements from/to North Ronaldsay.

### **Twite**

T668248	3	08/08/05	Fair Isle, Shetland
	v	18/11/05	Dale, Costa, Evie, Orkney (101km)

Since 1992, ten Fair Isle ringed birds have been controlled on Orkney during the winter months, proving that many of our breeding birds do not venture too far from Fair Isle. Additionally, four birds ringed on Orkney during the winter months have been controlled on Fair Isle during the breeding season. However, a colour-ringed bird wintering in Caithness in 1999/2000 was spotted on Fair Isle in June 2002, indicating that not all our breeding birds winter in Orkney.

### **Bullfinch**

2KK36231	3F	22/09/04	Stora Fjaderagg, Holmon, Vasterbotten, <b>Sweden</b>
	v	18/10/04	Fair Isle, Shetland (1283km)

One of the birds involved in the large irruption of 'Northern' Bullfinches in 2004, travelling at an average of 50km per day. This is only the second foreign ringed Bullfinch to be controlled in Britain, the other involving a bird ringed in the Netherlands and controlled in Essex. There is one record, however, of a Scottish ringed bird being controlled in northern Sweden.



## Seabirds on Fair Isle in 2006

*Deryk Shaw*

**Overview:** A much better season than of late with record numbers of some species and lots of chicks produced. There does still seem to be a shortage of 1-group Sandeels at the correct time, however this was partly compensated for by an apparent abundance of Gadoids. Things were not all rosy however as a large number of Snake Pipefish were collected in colonies and from regurgitates of all bird species. These are particularly hard for chicks to swallow and digest and are also low in nutrition. Many are just discarded by chicks.

**Northern Fulmar:** Numbers of AOS on the plots increased by 18.0% from 2005 (and by 95% since 2004) but are still nearly 40% less than 20 years ago. Breeding success was high with a mean productivity of 0.49 (at the five monitoring plots) being the highest since 1995.

**Northern Gannet:** A large increase was noted at the newest colony on Sheep Rock, from 23 AON to 44 AON. However, the remaining colonies were not counted accurately and similarly, breeding success was not followed efficiently. Therefore, Gannets are unfortunately excluded from this year's analysis.

**European Shag:** Overall numbers of nests at the population plots were the highest since 2001 and a massive 41.2% up on the 2005 figure. Productivity was 1.60, the highest since 2002 and over twice as productive as 2004 & 2005. The few food samples collected consisted predominantly of Sandeel.

**Gulls:** Ten pairs of Common Gulls raised eight chicks to fledging – the highest number on record – whilst Herring Gulls and the few pairs of Lesser Black-backed Gulls also fledged the majority of chicks. Gulls seemed to be feeding predominantly on Snake Pipefish with large numbers regurgitated by chicks during handling.

**Skuas:** Surprisingly (following several years of extremely low productivity), both Arctic and Great Skua had a very successful breeding season. A record number (189) of 'Bonxie' pairs set up territories (previous highest was 152 in 1997) and around 180 chicks fledged – a productivity of 0.95. Similarly, 105 Arctic Skua AOT (the highest since the early 1990s) produced 86 chicks to fledging – a productivity of 0.82.

**Black-legged Kittiwake:** The least successful of all species. Numbers of AON fell by 10.3% compared to 2005 (although still 27% higher than in 2004). Fledging success, whilst better than the complete failures of 2003 & 2004, was quite low. A

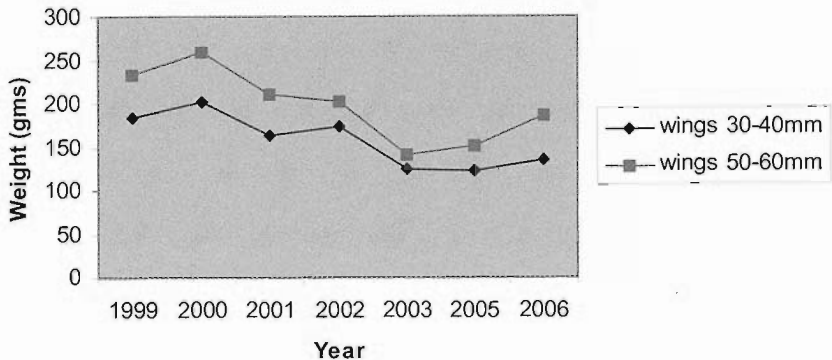


mean productivity of 0.26 is below the 0.37 recorded in 2005. Productivity during the previous ten years has ranged from 0 – 1.31 (mean 0.54). Many chicks and adults regurgitated Snake Pipefish and these were also evident as discards in nests indicating a lack of availability of favoured food. Butter Fish and Gadoids were also collected but no Sandeels.

**Arctic Tern:** ‘Tirricks’ were the great success story this year. After five consecutive years of failure to fledge any chicks and with numbers of nesting birds dwindling each year, it was a surprise to record over 800 AIA this year and even more surprise that over 300 chicks fledged – a productivity of 0.39. Whilst Sandeels were evident during the courtship period, by the time chicks had hatched adult birds were mainly seen carrying small individuals of other fish species. Samples collected during ringing trips into colonies were almost exclusively 3-spined Stickleback. – but this may have been the species that was discarded by chicks whilst other species were eaten.

**Common Guillemot:** Numbers of attendant adults were similar to the previous year (+4.2%) but numbers apparently laying eggs on the productivity plots were low. Fledging success was 0.57 – the highest since 2002 but well below the previous ten-year (1992 – 2001) average (0.74). Fledging chicks were particularly underweight, which will no doubt affect their future survival chances (see graph below). Feeding watches and collected samples showed that a variety of fish were being fed to chicks. During the 24hr feeding watch in early July, 40% were Sandeels, 26% were Gadoids and 5% Pipefish. Food samples obtained during ringing trips were varied; Lesser Sandeel, Snake Pipefish and Gadoids – several individuals of Poor Cod were identified.

Average weights of Guillemot pulli



**Razorbill:** The number of eggs in the breeding-monitoring plot was again (as last year) a new record but fledging success was low. A productivity figure of 0.23 is less than half that of the previous year (0.44) and only the complete failure in 2004 was worse. The ten years prior to these (1994-2003) saw a mean productivity of 0.60. As in recent years, chicks were also very underweight this year with some even losing weight between visits to the colony. The majority of food items collected were Lesser Sandeels (mean length 66.9mm).

**Atlantic Puffin:** Breeding success was particularly low – a productivity of 0.47 is the second worst on record (0.31 in 2001) and some way below the 1990 – 2005 average (0.68). During the 24 hour feeding watch on 14th/15th July, 43% of feeds were 0-group Sandeels and a further 26% 1-group Sandeels. A significant proportion (21%) were Pipefish, the majority of which would have been discarded by the chicks near the entrance to the burrow. Feeding rates were 4.46 feeds/burrow/day – a below average figure. Food samples collected from adults returning to colonies in July were; 41% Snake Pipefish, 40% Gadoid and just 7.4% Lesser Sandeel (mean length 63mm). During one colony visit a total of 85 discarded Snake Pipefish were retrieved from *a single* burrow!

**Note:** AON = Apparently Occupied Nest. AOS = Apparently Occupied Site

# **Spatial variation in the productivity and postfledging survival of the Fair Isle Starling population**

*Graeme Cook*

Productivity and mortality rates may vary spatially within natural populations, and this paper summarises a study aiming to describe demographic variation in Fair Isle's Starling population. More specifically the intention of this project was to demonstrate spatial differences in reproductive output measurements, and the survival of fledglings.

While spatial variation in reproductive output has previously been illustrated for many natural populations, similar descriptions of postfledging survival are not usually available. Variation in the survival of juvenile birds is less well understood because it is more difficult to study. The propensity of fledglings to disperse out of study sites often makes it impossible to differentiate between emigration and mortality.

Fair Isle is an ideal site for this project for several reasons. Firstly, the relative isolation of its Starling population means that fledglings are unlikely to successfully emigrate out of the study area. Any declines in fledgling abundance can therefore be attributed solely to mortality. Secondly, its Starlings are the focus of a long term population ecology study co-ordinated by Dr Peter Evans, and as a result many nests are marked and accessible. Thirdly, there is very little tall vegetation on the island, making it particularly straightforward to locate fledglings.

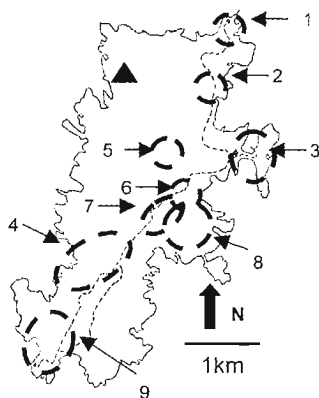
## **Methods**

Fair Isle's breeding Starling population was divided into spatially distinct nest groupings in areas of similar habitat (Fig. 1). To assess spatial variation in productivity clutch and brood parameters were recorded during visits made between mid-May and mid-June 2006. Supplementary to the main sampling effort, a subset of nine nests (included in the main sampling effort) was revisited daily, or once every two days, and chicks were weighed in order to plot their change in mass with age (i.e. the growth curve). This curve was used to estimate the age of all sampled nestlings from their mass.

While brood parameters were collected nestlings were fitted with unique combinations of three coloured plastic leg rings and one metal BTO leg ring. Leg ring combinations were later also fitted to unringed fledglings caught in the island's heligoland traps and crow trap. This allowed the identification of specific fledglings, and thus permitted the use of mark-recapture analysis methods to quantify post-fledging survival rates.

**Figure 1: Nest grouping clusters identified by habitat similarity and Z-score standardised cluster analysis of coordinates and altitude data.**

- 1 = North Light (6)
- 2 = Wirvie (5)
- 3 = Buness and  
the Observatory (10)
- 4 = Charlie's trees,  
Gillys crus and  
the Raevas (10)
- 5 = Homisdale (5)
- 6 = The Mills (6)
- 7 = Gilsetter Dyke and  
the Ringing-hut Dyke (7)
- 8 = The Parks (7)
- 9 = Hesti Geo, South Light,  
Utra & South Harbour (20)

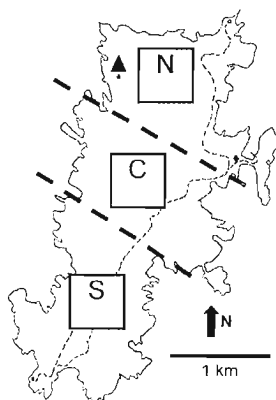


*(No. in brackets indicates No. of nests in each grouping at which an attempt was made to rear chicks.)*

In an attempt to standardise recapture probabilities over the study area a structured sampling schedule was followed, with the island divided into three sampling regions; north, central and south (Fig. 2). Surveying efforts focused on a different region each day and regions were resurveyed at intervals of approximately four days. During surveying the entire sampling region was covered and the colour ring combinations of any fledglings observed were recorded.

**Figure 2: Fair Isle map illustrating resighting regions used in capture-mark-recapture analysis.**

- N = Northern sector
- C = Central sector
- S = Southern sector



Each region of the island was surveyed four times and simple ‘1 and 0’ recapture histories were produced for each ringed juvenile, for example the history 1 1001 shows a fledgling that was ringed on the nest and observed in the 1st survey period, but not on the 2nd or 3rd, then was again seen in the final survey period. Recapture histories were processed using survival modelling software and postfledging survival rates were calculated for the whole island population. Additional models were produced to investigate whether there were differences in the survival rates of fledglings from different natal regions, or which were in different body conditions when ringed.

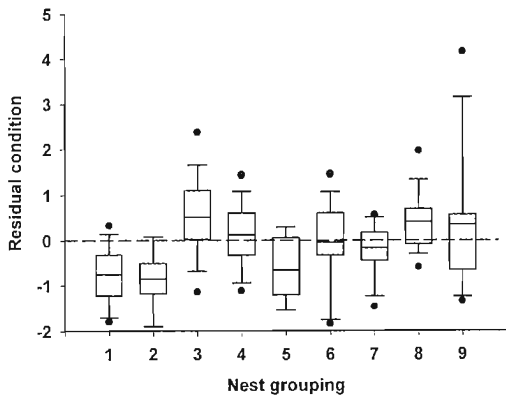
When brood measurements were collected the exact location of each nest was noted using a GPS. During surveying the location of colour ringed juveniles was also recorded and it was therefore possible to monitor the dispersal of fledglings from their natal sites.

**Results**

Productivity parameters

For most brood and clutch measurements no significant differences were observed between spatially distinct nest groupings, even after differences in nestling age were corrected for. One exception to this was nestling condition (Fig. 3). Condition values were calculated as chick mass divided by chick tarsus length<sup>3</sup>, i.e. mass corrected for the structural size of nestlings. The mean condition values of chicks in three of the four most northern nest groupings were significantly less than the mean of all 214 chicks sampled.

**Figure 3: Variation in the residuals of condition for chicks from different nest groupings (correcting for age effects upon condition).**



*The dashed line represents the mean condition of all chicks allocated to nest groupings (n = 214) after correcting for age effects upon condition.*

### Survival parameters

Initially survival models were constructed using the entire, undivided dataset, and the fledgling survival rate for the whole group of individuals sampled over their first 16 days after leaving their nests was estimated to be 61.6%.

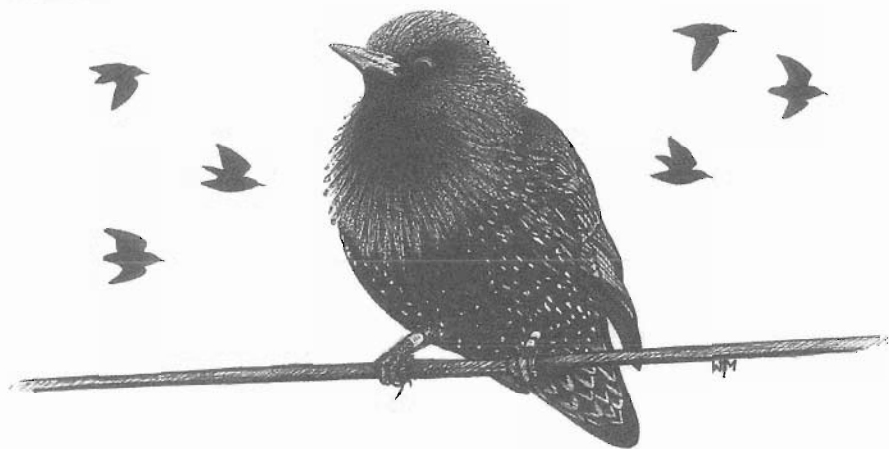
Two additional survival models were also produced, and in these the dataset was divided to differentiate groupings of fledglings.

Firstly, individuals from different natal regions (North, Central and South) were considered separately. No evidence of regional variation in juvenile survival was observed, as the most parsimonious models grouped the survival rates of individuals from the north, centre and south of the island into a single parameter. The resultant model estimated that 49.6% of fledglings survived their first 16 days out of the nest.

Secondly, individuals which were in different body condition when ringed were differentiated into three groups; poor, medium and good condition. Once again no difference was found in the survival of these fledgling groupings, with a 58.9% survival rate over the 16 days following fledging.

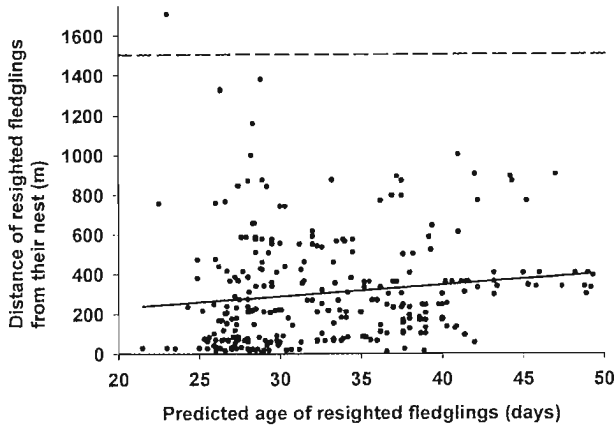
### Dispersal

Most (55.3%) of the chicks ringed in the nest were observed in the 28 day period subsequent to fledging. The distance that fledglings dispersed was extremely variable (coefficient of variation = 89.3%), and while dispersal distance increased significantly with age, age described very little of the variation within dispersal (Fig. 4).



*Starling (Will Miles)*

**Figure 4: Relationship between fledgling dispersal distance and predicted fledgling age.**



*The solid line represents the regression line.*

$$y = 5.77x + 113.98$$

$(n = 276, R^2 = 0.02, r = 0.13, p = 0.03)$

*This shows how mean dispersal distance changed over time.*

*The dashed line represents a conservative estimate of the mean distance that fledglings might be expected to disperse if natal site has no influence upon resighting locations, i.e. dispersal was random (1500m).*

Notably, the vast majority of fledglings did not disperse as far as the theoretical random dispersal distance. The observed mean dispersal distance ( $304 \pm 16$  m) was approximately one fifth of the hypothesised mean under the assumption that fledglings disperse randomly across the island.

**Discussion**

That there was no evidence of spatial variation in post-fledging survival rates and most of the productivity parameters measured is particularly interesting in light of obvious habitat differences around nest groupings and between different areas. Despite their different composition the habitats around nest groupings may have been of similar quality for breeding Starlings. For example, the availability of tipulid larvae (leather jackets), the main prey item taken by chicks and fledglings, may not have differed.

Alternatively, the resources required to produce nestlings and for fledglings to survive may have varied in their availability between sites but not to such an extent that they influenced demographic parameters, i.e. even in the lowest quality habitats parents and fledglings were able to acquire sufficient resources in this breeding season. The observed spatial homogeneity in demographic parameters may therefore be attributable to the fact that Starlings had a good breeding season in the period of this study. If habitat quality influences demographic parameters only when environmental conditions are less ideal, in bad years nest groupings in low quality habitats may negatively influence population growth.

Proximity to pastoral grassland is known to positively influence the productivity of breeding Starlings, and this may partly explain the lower mean condition of chicks from most nest groupings in short grass and heather dominated habitats, such as North Light, Wirvie and Homisdale in the north of the island. Resource availability may be lower in these areas, but in this breeding season not so low that it influenced the survival of nestlings or newly fledged juveniles.

Productivity parameters were similar to those noted by other observers on Fair Isle, elsewhere in the UK, and in other countries. In contrast, despite environmental conditions appearing to relatively benign (i.e. generally relatively dry, warm and not very windy) in the period subsequent to fledging, the survival rates calculated by mark-recapture models (49.6% to 61.6% in the first 16 days after leaving the nest) seem low when compared to similar studies. For example on farmland on mainland Britain 52.2% of fledglings are estimated to survive their first year in areas with stable populations, and 61.4% in areas with decreasing populations.

The low survival rates found in this experiment may partly be an artefact of the experimental design. The survival models used included the interval in which juveniles were ringed on the nest as the first sampling interval in the recaptures matrix, thus some mortality occurring before fledging will be considered when attempts are made to quantify postfledging survival rates. As nestling mortality rates are usually higher than postfledging mortality rates for many songbird species this may have reduced the estimated postfledging survival rate.

The accuracy of survival parameters calculated in this study may be reduced by the relatively low probability of resighting ringed birds in each surveying effort. The mean recapture probability from all sampling intervals in 11 optimal models was just  $29\% \pm 4\%$ . In addition the assumptions upon which survival modelling from recapture data is based were, by necessity, occasionally broken. For example sampling effort should have been constant over all areas surveyed, however opportunistic sightings of fledglings around the Observatory were used, hence sampling effort was slightly greater in this area.



That nestling condition did not influence postfledging survival was supported by a study of the growth and survival of juvenile Starlings from a population in New Zealand, which found no difference between the likelihoods of the heaviest chicks in broods, those of middle weight, and the lightest chicks, being recruited into the breeding population.

There are no other studies of early postfledging dispersal in isolated passerine populations to compare directly with this study. Comparisons with dispersal studies of non-isolated Starling populations, however, indicate that the dispersal behaviour of isolated island Starling populations may be extremely different from that of their mainland counterparts. One North American study estimated the mean distance that Starlings bred from their natal site was approximately 100km, and observed that some birds (c. 7%) dispersed over a 1000km. This contrasts starkly with the extreme natal site fidelity observed in Fair Isle's Starling population. For example, over the 26 year period in which the island's Starling population has been studied, no individual raised on Bunness has ever been observed to nest in the south of the island, approximately 3km away. That the distance fledglings travel from the nest increases with age, while being extremely variable, is a recurring pattern in studies of post-fledging dispersal.

As no spatial variation was observed in either productivity or post-fledging survival little could be inferred about how these factors co-vary, other than on this occasion when productivity did not vary spatially nor, apparently, did post-fledging survival. No conclusions can be drawn about whether spatial variation in juvenile survival accentuates or nullifies the effects of spatial variation in productivity. In years when breeding conditions are less optimal, if spatial variation was to occur, it may be possible to compare these factors.

If the early post-fledging dispersal is as limited in years in which resource availability is lower, it is reasonable to postulate that spatial variations in productivity would be accentuated by spatial variations in juvenile survival. Fledglings staying in poor quality habitats, where their parents were unable to collect enough prey items to raise similarly sized broods to those in high quality habitats, are likely to experience elevated mortality rates through starvation.

## **Acknowledgements**

Thank you to Jane Reid, Peter Evans and Jeroen Mindermann for their support, and for collecting huge amounts of data. Thank you also to the Fair Isle Bird Observatory Trust for funding this project, and to Deryk and Hollie Shaw and the other Observatory staff for their excellent company. Finally, thanks to Mark Whittingham for assisting with growth curves and statistics.

## Fair Isle's Favourite Geodytes

*Simon Aspinall\* & Richard Aspinall*

It is now over fifty years since Ken Williamson, the first Observatory warden, determined that the Fair Isle Wren represented a distinct subspecies *Troglodytes t. fridariensis*. A population census of territorial, singing male Wrens has been completed almost annually in spring since 1957, with two earlier counts being known, from 1950 and 1951, and we now have population figures for a total of 51 years. In the 1987 bird report 'Fluctuating Fortunes of the Fair Isle Wren' described just that, and now, twenty years on, it would seem time to make another analysis.

Since the first census was undertaken the population has indeed fluctuated widely. The highest count came in far-off 1964 when 52 territorial males were located, a figure which may have been matched the following year. The lowest ever count came in 1981 when just ten territories were occupied; fortunately numbers have rebounded since. Figure 1 shows the results of the annual censuses. The peak count in different decades, 1950s to 2000s, has been, respectively: 48 (1957); 52 (1964-5); 38 (1974-5), 39 (1988), 37 (1996-7) & 38 (2006). The annual mean (average) is just under 32 occupied territories.

Up to 95 different named territories have apparently been occupied over time, although since the highest count has only been just over half this number, it must be that some sites fall within the same territories and these should thus be merged into single territories (we still don't know the limits to most territories). Anyway, that's partly the problem with every nook and cranny on the island's cliffs bearing a place name.

There is some suspicion that survey effort isn't all it might have been in some years (too many seabird colonies to count?) and instead of a single count figure being given a range might be a better statistic (e.g. 21-30 in 2002). Counts from the "early" years may be of single registrations of songsters, whereas, in more recent years, only territories where males have been recorded singing more than once have been summed.

For 16 of the 51 years for which data exists we have a site by site breakdown and this permits some interesting observations to be made. The years for which precise site data exist are: 1957, 1964, 1981-84, 1987, 1998-2006.

One site, and only one site, the Gully, has been occupied in all 16 of these years. Hesswalls and Easter Lothar have been occupied in 15 of the 16 years; Swartz geo & Wester Lothar 14 times, and so on (see map; full results are shown in the appendix, with some 88 sites being listed). So just what is it that makes one site better than another?

If you were a Wren would you not choose the Gully as one of the island's best sites in which to nest – even with AWs tramping through there several times daily? Occupancy appears, not in any order, and apart from size of the site, to be a function of several inter-related variables: shelter, running water, vegetation i.e. cover (itself probably relating to shelter and moisture), food supply (reflecting vegetation luxuriance), presence of a beach with rotting seaweed and perhaps absence or low numbers of Fulmars *Fulmarus glacialis*.

As already stated, the population was reduced to just ten territories in 1981 (this crash lasting six years from 1979 until 1984) and these territories are all known. The average occupancy of these ten sites over the sixteen years for which site data exists is 13 years, although this average is dragged down by one site, Hill Dyke, being occupied only eight times in the 16. Nine of the 15 most frequently occupied sites were tenanted in 1981. Only five or six other sites might or could have been 'expected' to appear – those occupied as or more frequently in the sixteen years – and it is no coincidence that when in 1982 the population had risen to 16, no fewer than 14 of the 15 most frequently occupied sites featured (see Appendix). This must say something about the suitability of these sites for Wrens. Obviously the same individual birds are not necessarily those involved in each site each year, but clearly the 'best' sites either remain continuously occupied or get re-occupied preferentially, while some re-occupancy would seem not to be entirely independent of the proximity of sites already occupied in the previous year.

It is easy too to look at what makes a site less suitable. Jivvi geo, for example, has been occupied just four times in those 16 years, and Hesti geo and Kirn o' Skroo each only once. Jivvi geo lacks lush vegetation, is rather exposed and has a negligibly small beach, Kirn o' Skroo is alone probably too small, Hesti far too exposed and so on. The island population over the four years Jivvi has been occupied averaged 38, well above the annual mean of 32 over the fifty years for which we have data and is thus as would be expected if poorer territories are only occupied when populations are high and better sites then full. Conversely, one might have expected Gunnawark to appear more often than just seven times in the 16 years.

On a final note, in the last few years Wren territories have been located in certain croft gardens, even though the population is still nowhere near its peak of the (apparent) heydays of the late fifties and 1960s. There must still be many vacant territories on the cliffs, despite the expansion and increase in Fulmars. Although commonplace elsewhere on Shetland, gardens have hitherto been shunned as nesting sites on Fair Isle and it remains to be seen whether this pattern will persist. Might it suggest immigration be playing a part?

It is too early to say whether winter survival is more important than breeding success in regulating the Fair Isle Wren population. While cold wet summers may well result in fewer young fledging, even with double-brooding, it is suspected that wet winter weather or storms and spray, rather than cold, may be more limiting as such. Only by continuing to collect data using a standardized method (and an equal amount of effort each year) will this be possible to assess.

### Acknowledgements

Thanks go to Deryk Shaw, Shetland Biological Records Centre, Paul Harvey, Nick Riddiford, Roger Riddington and Iain Robertson all of whom supplied data, and also, of course, to those FIBO assistant wardens and others who censused the Wrens in the first place.

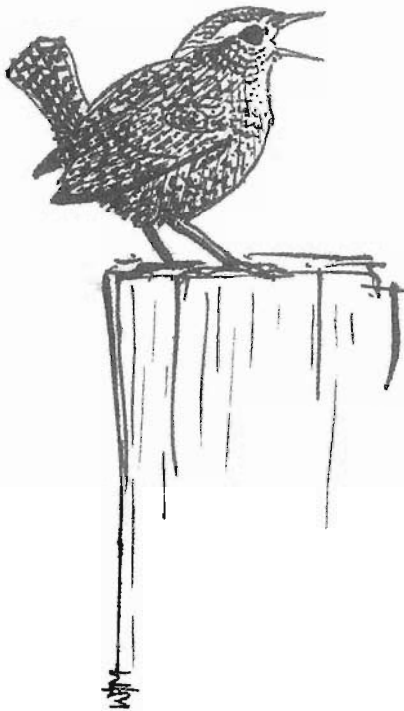
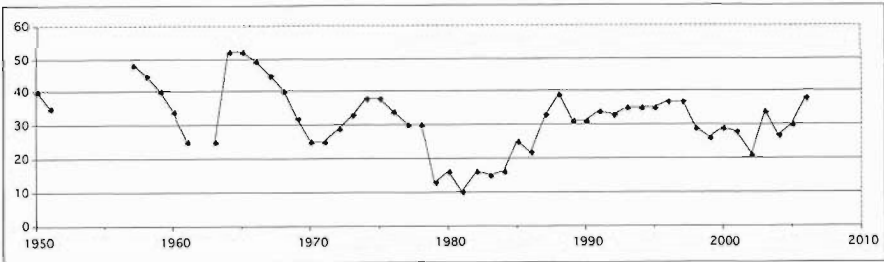
**\* – Author for correspondence: c/o P.O. Box 45553, Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates.**

### Appendix 1. Site occupancy over 1957, 1964, 1981-84, 1987, 1998-2006 (N=16)

1. *\*Gully*, occupied all 16 years.
- 2-3. *\*Hesswalls & \*Easter Lother* occupied 15 times.
- 4-5. *\*Swartz geo & \*Wester Lother* 14.
- 6-10. *\*Furse, \*South Raeva, \*North Haven, \*Klingers & \*North Restensgeo* 13.
- 11-13. *Dutfield, \*Guidicum & \*Skinners Glig* 12.
- 14-15. *\*Mavers geo & \*Leestat* 11.
16. *Wirvie* 10.
- 17-19. *North Naaversgill, Linni & S. Restensgeo* 9.
- 20-25. *South Naaversgill, N. Ramnigeo, N. Felsigeo, Busta geo, \*Hill Dyke, Kame/Roskillie* 8.
- 26-28. *Gunnawark, Troili geo, \*Kroga* 7.
- 29-31. *South Hoini, S. Harbour/Mid-geo, Hjukni geo* 6.
- 32-37. *South Ramnigeo, Shieldi geo, W. Buness, , Bergaroo, Johny's Peats, Fieldy's Hole* 5.
- 38-44. *Mid-Hoini, Obs garden, 2nd Gully, 2nd E. Lother, S. Felsigeo, Jivvi geo & E. Malcolm's Head* 4.
- 45-50. *S.E Felsigeo, E. Hill Dyke, Sma' Trinket geo, Sheep Rock, Kuthin & 2nd E. Malcolm's Head* 3.
- 51-62. Up to 12 sites occupied twice only.
- 63-88. Up to 26 sites occupied once only.

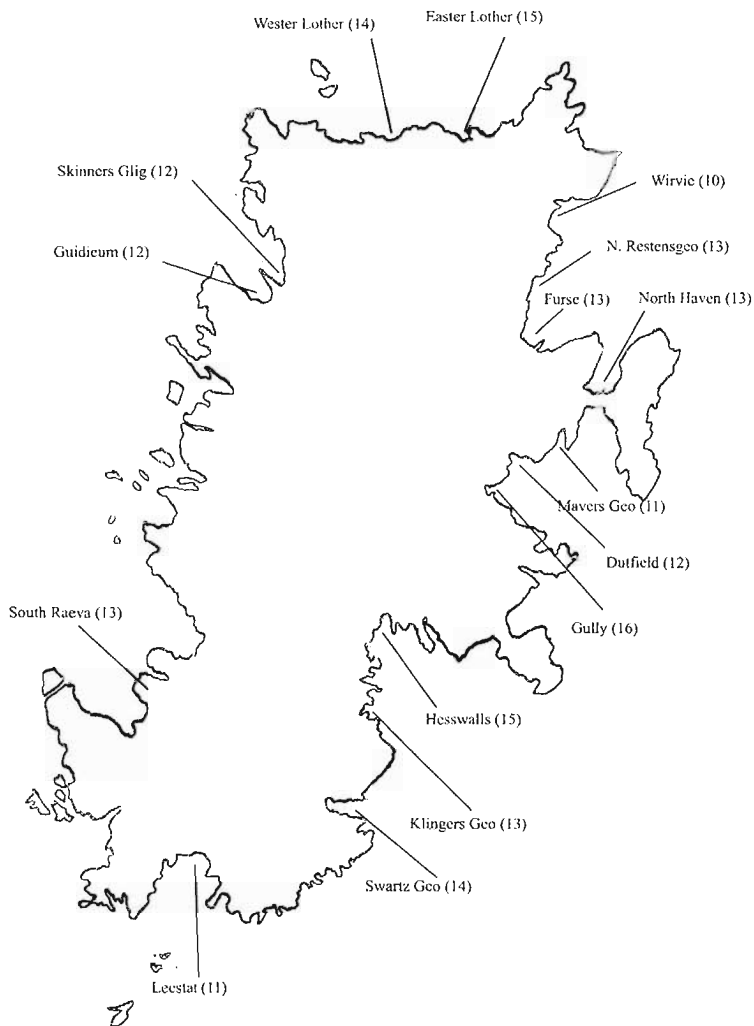
**Key:** Site in *italics* occupied in 1981 (N=10); \* – site occupied in 1982 (N=16)

Figure 1. Number of apparently occupied Fair Isle Wren (*T.t.fridariensis*) territories, 1950-2006.



Wren (Will Miles)

Fair Isle Wrens : Occupancy of main sites  
 over sixteen years for which data exists  
 (see also text and Appendix 1)



# Lepidoptera on Fair Isle in 2006

Nick Riddiford

## Moths

There has been a tendency in recent years for new species to appear, but never as in 2006. No less than 12 ‘firsts’ for Fair Isle were encountered. Two micro moths are likely to be overlooked residents and the same could apply to some of the macros. However, most were certainly migrants. One, the Delicate, is an extreme rarity in Scotland and was well north of its previous known range. In addition to the “firsts”, there were a number of second, third and fourth records, keeping interest high throughout the summer moths.

The rash of new and unusual species was partly due to better coverage. Light traps were operated regularly at four sites and sugar put out at two (Table 1). Greater attention was also given to field records for micro moths, particularly in late June and July. Nevertheless, it is hard not to equate the accelerating numbers of newcomers with climate change, particularly as it coincides with northward range expansions of many insect species in the UK.

Apart from a few fruitless attempts earlier in the year, serious moth trapping began in late June (in May at Lower Stoneybrek) and continued until October. Baiting with sugar began in late July and continued regularly until the end of October. Calmer weather prevailed for much of that period, allowing for more nights to be sampled than is usually possible. This factor, increased field effort and a run of migrants contributed to the 76 species recorded, a 50% increase on the number of species reported the previous year.

The new macro moths for the isle were: the *Lychnis* (with two records), the Nutmeg, the Broom Moth, the Gold Spot, the Lesser Broad-bordered Yellow Underwing (2), the Small Autumnal, the Delicate and the Yellow-line Quaker (4). The new micro moths were *Micropterix aruncella* (four individuals), *Aethes cnicana*, Bird-cherry Ermine and the Honeysuckle Moth (2).

Another feature was the recurrence of species unknown until recently. This included (previous occurrences in parentheses): *Chrysoteuchia culmella* (2005), July Highflyer (2003), Turnip Moth (2000, 2005), Six-striped Rustic (2004, 2005) and Clouded-bordered Brindle (2005).

**Table 1. Summary of trapping effort in 2006.**

Site	Trap nights						
	Year	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct
All sites	282	3	27	78	65	74	31
Observatory (Mercury Vapour)	61	4	6	23	14	11	3
Barkland (Mercury Vapour)	22			13	9		
Lower Stoneybrek (Actinic)	49	3	3	13	14	15	1
Lower Stoneybrek (sugar)	4					4	
Schoolton (Actinic)	100		18	26	24	26	6
Schoolton (sugar)	46			3	4	18	21

*Note:* the table does not include two unsuccessful trap nights at Schoolton in both February and March, and at Lower Stoneybrek and the Observatory in April.

### Systematic List

The following list summarises all moth records for the year by species. Selected commoner species are treated differently. Their records are summarised in a table for light trap captures (Table 2) and/or coming to sugar (Table 3). These summaries have been standardised as moth-nights per locality, first and last dates, maximum captures and where. Presenting the data in this manner reveals some interesting differences in relative abundance at each site (Table 2).

\*An asterisk preceding a record in the systematic list indicates that the moth has been seen and confirmed or determined by Dr Mark Young of Aberdeen University – including from genitalia characters in the case of difficult species.

#### Micropterigidae

4 \**Micropterix aruncella*. Four were found in an abandoned margarine tub half-full with water against the fence on the north side of the Houll on 26th June – two fresh individuals floating on the surface and a further two which had sunk to the bottom of the container. The first Fair Isle and northernmost UK record.

#### Hepialidae

18 **Map-winged Swift** *Hepialus fusconebulosa*. A large evening emergence was noted at Schoolton on 23rd June. Trap records are summarised in Table 2.

#### Glyphipterigidae

397 *Glyphipterix thrasonella*. A number were noted in Springfield wet flush on 8th July. \*One was netted by day at Lower Stoneybrek on 18th July.

#### Yponomeutidae

424 \***Bird-cherry Ermine** *Yponomeuta evonymella*. One in the Observatory warden's flat on 9th August: the first for Fair Isle.



### Plutellinidae

464 **Diamond-back Moth** *Plutella xylostella*. Only a small proportion enters the light traps. Nevertheless, the captures give a general idea of the extended arrival period for this common migrant. At the Observatory, two were trapped on 21st July, 1 on 22nd July and 1 on 12th September. Singles entered the Schoolton light trap on 17th & 30th June, 21st, 23rd, 29th & 30th July and 4th August, with two on 16th August.

466 \**Rhigognostis senilella*. Captures at Schoolton were one on 30th July, one on 4th & two on 16th August and one on 8th September.

### Oecophoridae

647 **Brown House-moth** *Hofmannophila pseudospretella*. Few enter the light traps so single individuals on 25th and 27th July in the Schoolton trap are not representative of the true status of the species on the island.

648 **White-shouldered House-moth** *Endrosis sarcitrella*. This species is frequent in out-buildings but far less so in the traps. Captures were all at Schoolton – singles on 11th, 16th & 26th June, 4th July & 11th September.

674 \**Depressaria badiella*. One in the Schoolton trap on 22nd August: fourth Fair Isle record.

### Gelechiidae

787 \**Bryotropha terrella*. One netted by day on 5th July at Eas Brecks constitutes the third Fair Isle record. This is probably an overlooked, resident species.

### Tortricidae

945 \**Aethes cnicana*. One netted by day on 5th July amongst lank vegetation at Setter: the first Fair Isle record.

988 **Bilberry Tortrix** *Aphelia viburnana*. Numerous on the Rippack on 26th June.

1029 *Eana osseana*. Captured most nights in the Schoolton trap between 20th July and 22nd August; 111 moth-nights, maximum 12 on 11th August.

1030 *Eana penziana*. Common in the Observatory trap: 44 moth-nights 14th-31st July including 39 moth-nights on 20th-23rd, maximum 15 on 21st; 14 moth-nights 5th-24th August; one on 8th September. Schoolton captures were one on 21st & 22nd and two on 23rd July, one on 11th, 14th, 20th & three on 22nd August, one on 2nd September.

1062a \**Acleris effractana*. Single individuals trapped at the Observatory on 11th and 16th September were the second and third Fair Isle records. The previous record was in September 2003 when it was noted under its former name of *Acleris stettinensis*.

### Alucitidae

1288 \***Honeysuckle Moth** *Alucita hexadactyla*. Singles in the Schoolton trap on 8th and 17th September were the first Fair Isle records.

## Pyralidae

1293 \**Chrysoteuchia culmella*. One at Schoolton on 6th July; the second Fair Isle record, only a year after the first.

1301 *Crambus lathoniellus*. One was noted on the Houll on 18th June and several on Houll and Brecks low rough grassland on 23rd June.

1304 *Agriphila straminella*. Two entered the Schoolton trap on 26th July and one on 28th. The species was common in grassy areas towards the end of July but no specific field records were made.

1305 \**Agriphila tristella*. The second Fair Isle record entered the Schoolton trap on 16th August, ten years to the day after the first!

1334 *Scoparia ambigualis*. This species was common in damp grassland and marsh in the Kirk Park on 9th July (\*3 netted) and Boini Mire on 26th July (\*5 netted).

1388 *Udea lutealis*. 40 moth-nights, Schoolton trap, 21st July to 20th August; maximum 6 on 16th August. Abundant in all areas of long grass in the crofting area during the same period.

1398 **Rush Veneer** *Nomophila noctuella*. Unprecedented numbers were recorded in 2006. There was a major influx on 25th-30th September when many were reported in the field; 26 moth-nights were recorded during the same period at the Observatory, including nine on 26th and 30th. Schoolton shared in the influx with two in the trap and one to sugar on 25th, four trapped & two to sugar on 26th and one to sugar on 29th. Schoolton trapped an early one on 22nd August and Lower Stoneybrek one on 15th September. October records were all in the field; on 12th & 17th and four on 22nd.

1454 \**Dioryctria abietella*. One trapped at the Observatory on 17th September. Second Fair Isle record, previously at Quoy on 1st August 1991.

## Geometridae

1723 **Red Carpet** *Xanthorhoe munitata*. Singles were attracted to Schoolton sugar on 16th August and 11th September. Trap records are summarized in Table 2.

1727 **Silver-ground Carpet** *Xanthorhoe montanata*. Several were flushed from marshy grassland at Schoolton on 4th July. Trap records are summarized in Table 2.

1728 **Garden Carpet** *Xanthorhoe fluctuata*. Trap records are summarized in Table 2.

1742 **Yellow Shell** *Campptogramma bilineata*. One was trapped at the Observatory on 21st July. This species is commonest on the cliffs and rarely enters traps.

1777 \***July Highflier** *Hydriomena furcata*. Single individuals were trapped at Lower Stoneybrek on 17th August, Barkland on 25th August and Lower Stoneybrek on 11th September.

1798 \***Small Autumnal** *Epirrita filigrammaria*. One in the Schoolton trap on 3rd September was the first for Fair Isle.

1809 **Twin-spot Carpet** *Perizoma didymata*. One in the Schoolton trap on 31st July. Good numbers frequent the reed-grass alongside the Meadow Burn, but are not normally attracted to light or sugar.

1823 **Netted Pug** *Eupithecia venosata*. There was an intriguing record of one on the *Good Shepherd IV* mail boat in the Havens on 15th May. One was on the outside wall at Lower Stoneybrek on 15th June and one in the trap there on 26th June.

1854 **\*Juniper Pug** *Eupithecia pusillata*. Intriguingly, singles were trapped at the Observatory and Schoolton on the same night, 28th July.

1884 **The Magpie** *Abraxas grossulariata*. Considering that the first Magpie moth for the isle turned up as recently as 1999, we are becoming accustomed to an invasion in July. Each year the influx is larger and it is now impossible to give accurate figures of the numbers involved. An early one in the Observatory trap on 7th July preceded a major arrival on 14th. Only one was trapped, at the Observatory, but reports were coming in all the time: five between Burkle and Quoy in the morning; one on the Rippack and four at South Light in the evening – including one which appeared to be just arriving downwind with some urgency; Quoy Stewart reported one flying past Sheep Rock at sea; a further 20 or more were reported by Observatory staff and visitors. Later, Barkland Paul reported loads flying around Kirn o Skroo during a night-time Storm Petrel session – including up to six sitting on the net at times – and magpie moths were “all over the place”. It seems that the influx may have been as many as 100, and perhaps more. It was short-lived. There were captures at the Observatory on 16th and Schoolton on 17th. One trapped at Barkland on 20th July was the last of an impressive, if short-lived invasion.

### Sphingidae

1972 **Convolvulus Hawk-moth** *Agrius convolvuli*. A very fresh individual was found clinging to a gatepost at Schoolton on 22nd September.

1984 **Hummingbird Hawk-moth** *Macroglossum stellatarum*. June records have become annual in the last few years, in 2006 represented by singles on 15th and 28th June. The first was nectaring at red campion *Silene dioica* and Shetland garden rose *Rosa rugosa* at Schoolton. There had only been one previous autumn record so a small autumn influx, comprising single individuals on 29th September, 5th and 10th October, was unexpected. All were field records.

### Noctuidae

2087 **\*Turnip Moth** *Agrotis segetum*. Four records in September, the best year ever for this species. One was on sugar at Schoolton on 22nd; light trap captures comprised one at the Observatory on 25th, one at Lower Stoneybrek on 29th and one at Schoolton the following night. Third to sixth Fair Isle records.

2091 **Dark Sword-grass** *Agrotis ipsilon*. Trap records are summarized in Table 2

and attractions to sugar in Table 3. In addition, one visited a lighted window at the Observatory on 29th October. This is a late record for Fair Isle, though one was recorded on 4th November in 2004.

2104 **Northern Rustic** *Standfussiana lucerneae*. Trap records are summarized in Table 2.

2107 **Large Yellow Underwing** *Noctua promuba*. Trap records are summarized in Table 2 and attractions to sugar in Table 3.

2111 **Lesser Broad-bordered Yellow Underwing** *Noctua janthe*. One entering the Schoolton trap on 11th August\* and one in the Lower Stoneybrek trap on 22nd August were the first records for Fair Isle.

2117 **Autumnal Rustic** *Paradiarsia glareosa*. Trap records are summarized in Table 2.

2118 **True Lover's Knot** *Lycophotia porphyrea*. Trap records are summarized in Table 2.

2119 **Pearly Underwing** *Peridroma saucia*. An unprecedented influx: at Schoolton there was one on 28th September, two on 29th and singles on 30th September and 4th, 6th, 9th 10th, 12th, 22nd and 24th October, all on sugar. The only one to light was at the Observatory, on 30th September.

2120 **Ingrailed Clay** *Diarsia mendica*. Trap records are summarized in Table 2 and attractions to sugar in Table 3.

2123 **Small Square-spot** *Diarsia rubi*. Two came to sugar at Schoolton on 26th July. Trap records are summarized in Table 2.

2126 **Setaceous Hebrew Character** *Xestia c-nigrum*. One at Barkland on 25th August and one in the Schoolton trap on 17th September.

2133 **Six-striped Rustic** *Xestia sexstrigata*. Recorded for the third consecutive year: one on 30th July\* and another on 3rd August, both in the Schoolton trap – third and fourth Fair Isle records.

2134 **Square-spot Rustic** *Xestia xanthographa*. Trap records are summarized in Table 2 and attractions to sugar in Table 3.

2145 **\*The Nutmeg** *Discestra trifolii*. One trapped at Barkland on 23rd July: first Fair Isle record.

2147 **The Shears** *Hada plebeja*. The earliest were trapped at Schoolton on 7th June and at the Observatory on 9th June. Further captures were at Schoolton on 26th June, Lower Stoneybrek on 6th July, two at Schoolton on 17th and one there on 19th July.

2163 **\*Broom Moth** *Ceramica pisi*. One at the Observatory on 27th July: another new species for the isle.

2171 **Marbled Coronet** *Hadena confusa*. The earliest was on the Schoolton wall on 7th June. All other records were single individuals in the light traps: at the Observatory on 9th June, Lower Stoneybrek on 6th July, Barkland on 28th July and Schoolton on 20th, 26th and 30th July.

2173 **\*The Lynchnis** *Hadena bicruris*. The first for Fair Isle, trapped at Lower Stoneybrek on 6th July was soon followed by the second, in the Schoolton trap on 24th July.

2176 **Antler Moth** *Cerapteryx graminis*. Trap records are summarized in Table 2.

2195 **The Delicate** *Mythimna vitellina*. One on sugar at Schoolton on 22nd September was the first for Fair Isle. This species is virtually unknown north of the Scottish borders.

2198 **Smoky Wainscot** *Mythimna impura*. An excellent run of captures, far more than in any previous year. The earliest was caught at Barkland on 21st July. Singles were taken at the Observatory on 30th July & 11th August, at Lower Stoneybrek on 17th August and at Schoolton on 24th, 26th & 28th July. Two were trapped there on 3rd August and one on 13th.

2229 **Brindled Ochre** *Dasytopolia templi*. One trapped at Schoolton on 30th September.

2241 **Red Sword-grass** *Xylota vetusta*. One was on sugar at Schoolton on 22nd September.

2256 **The Satellite** *Eupsilia transversa*. One trapped at the Observatory on 17th September was the precursor of singles at Schoolton sugar on 18th, 28th & 29th September, 5th, 6th, 7th, 20th and 21st October.

2262 **The Brick** *Agrochola circumcellaris*. All but one of the 2006 records were at sugar (see Table 3). The exception was in the Schoolton trap on 29th September.

2264 **Yellow-line Quaker** *Agrochola macilenta*. A new species for Fair Isle, intriguingly occurring simultaneously in the Lower Stoneybrek and Schoolton traps on 29th September. Two more followed in October, on 6th and 8th, both on sugar at Schoolton.

2299 **Mouse Moth** *Amphipyra tragopogonis*. One trapped at Lower Stoneybrek on 20th August – a species trapped only infrequently on the isle.

2306 **Angle Shades** *Phlogophora meticulosa*. All trap records apart from one at Barkland on 28th July, were at the Observatory: two on 10th September, one on 11th & 12th September, one on 3rd October, two on 5th & one on 12th October. There were also field records, on 22nd and 25th October. Based on light captures alone, the Angle Shades would be considered a scarce migrant. The species, however, shows a much stronger preference for sugar, as demonstrated by the numbers in Table 3.

2321 **Dark Arches** *Apamea monoglypha*. Trap records are summarized in Table 2.

2326 **\*Clouded-bordered Brindle** *Apamea crenata*. One trapped at Barkland on 24th July. Second for Fair Isle and recorded for the second consecutive year.

2329 **The Confused** *Apamea furva*. Trap records are summarized in Table 2.

2330 **Dusky Brocade** *Apamea remissa*. Trap records are summarized in Table 2.

2340 **Middle-barred Minor** *Oligia fasciuncula*. This species can be numerous during the day on the flower heads of marsh ragwort and wild angelica in the crofting area. By contrast rather few enter the traps. Nevertheless the captures, all in the last 11 days of July, mirror reasonably well the appearance period of the species in 2006. Schoolton captures were one on 20th & 24th, 2 on 26th and one on 29th. Barkland caught 2 on 24th, 4 on 27th & 28th. The Observatory had one on 21st and Lower Stoneybrek one on 22nd. Three were on sugar at Schoolton on night of 26th July.

2343a **\*Lesser Common Rustic** *Mesapamea didyma*. Two males in the Schoolton actinic on 21st July, a female there on 23rd July and a male in the Barkland trap on 26th July were all determined as this species on genitalia characters: third to sixth records for Fair Isle.

2350 **Small Wainscot** *Photedes pygmina*. Best year ever for this scarce species: in the Schoolton trap on 22nd, 27th August and 4th September with another on 4th September at Lower Stoneybrek.

2361 **Rosy Rustic** *Hydraecia micacea*. Trap records are summarized in Table 2 and attractions to sugar in Table 3.

2368 **\*The Crescent** *Celaena leucostigma*. One was at Barkland on 22nd July, 2 at Schoolton on 20th August and 1 there the following night, all attracted to light: only the sixth to ninth for Fair Isle but recorded for the third consecutive year.

2375 **Large Wainscot** *Rhizedra lutosa*. A record year: all were at Schoolton, one on sugar on 18th September, singles in the trap on 25th & 30th September, 2nd & 3rd October; and one on sugar also on 3rd October (different individual).

2439 **\*Gold Spot** *Plusia festucae*. One entered the Schoolton trap on 7th August: the first Fair Isle record.

2441 **Silver Y** *Autographa gamma*. Casual field records were from 6th June – 24th October. Captures do not necessarily reflect the fluctuations and volume of individuals that reach the isle throughout the summer. The wide spread of capture dates does, however, give some indication of the continuous nature of arrivals. The earliest capture was at Lower Stoneybrek on 19th May and 2 more were trapped there on 24th June. Further captures followed on 21st July and 8th & 15th September. The Observatory caught singles on 1st, 22nd and 28th July, and 3 on 11th September. Barkland captures were on 30th July and 1st August. Schoolton trap had 20 moth-nights between 9th July and 30th September – almost nightly from 20th July-3rd August.

2469 **The Herald** *Scoliopteryx libatrix*. One was on sugar at Schoolton on 8th October.

**Table 2. Moth-nights, first dates, last dates and maximum catch size for selected species in Fair Isle light traps. 2006.**

	Moth-nights per light trap				First	Last	Max; Date;
	S	L	B	O	Date	Date	Locality
Map-winged Swift	17	3		33	9/6	28/7	9; 23/6; O
Red Carpet	22	3	79		21/7	8/9	28; 3/8; B
Silver-ground Carpet	18	2		2	26/6	31/7	4; 19/7; S
Garden Carpet	13	8	4	14	6/7	11/9	5; 22/8; S
Dark Sword-glass	12	6		4	30/8	4/10	2;*
Northern Rustic	242	112	198	174	5/7	17/9	44; 28/7; B
Large Yellow Underwing	259	148	46	48	17/7	26/9	19; 18 & 20/8; S
Autumnal Rustic	3	47		54	15/8	4/9	17; 21/8; O
True Lover's Knot	2		2	122	5/7	3/8	28; 22/7; O
Ingrailed Clay	730	470	92	144	5/7	4/10	72; 20/8; O
Small Square-spot	22	6	27	3	6/7	4/8	9; 23/7; B
Square-spot Rustic	1090	424	5	61	3/8	30/9	115; 1/9; S
Antler	179	16	73	279	5/7	7/9	28; 27/7; O
Dark Arches	1513	453	1180	330	4/7	17/9	377; 27/7; B
Confused	7	6	10	13	19/7	1/9	4; 28/7; B
Dusky Brocade	14	20	21	9	6/7	23/8	5; *
Rosy Rustic	213	152	5	48	4/8	5/10	17; 21/8; L

**Key:** S = Schoolton; L = Lower Stoneybrek; B = Barkland; O = Bird Observatory

\* = various dates and sites

**Table 3. Moth-nights, first dates, last dates and maximum catch size for selected species attracted to sugar, Fair Isle, 2006.**

	Moths-nights on sugar		First date	Last date	Max; Date
	S	L			
Dark Sword-grass	69	4	15/9	22/10	6; 30/9
Large Yellow Underwing	21		26/7	8/10	7; 21/8
Ingrailed Clay	80		16/8	4/10	23; 16 & 20/8
Square-spot Rustic	155		16/8	10/10	25; 11/9
Brick	19	3	15/9	4/10	5; 15 & 17/9
Angle Shades	82	4	17/9	22/10	15; 5/10
Dark Arches	73		25/7	16/9	24; 26/7
Rosy Rustic	8		20/8	3/10	2; 9/9

**Key:** S = Schoolton; L = Lower Stoneybrek

**Note:** all maxima were at Schoolton

## **Butterflies**

**Painted Lady** *Vanessa cardui*. A single on 19th May was followed by six on 27th. Almost daily sightings from 6th June-3rd July produced a maximum of 20 (7th) and four counts of ten. There were a few scattered records in early August before

another run of daily records from 18th-3rd September. Single figures predominated but there were 12 on 23rd August. 1-2 were noted on four further dates until 29th September.

**Red Admiral** *Vanessa atalanta*. Occurring from 6th May-25th October in two distinct periods; 6th May-4th July and 19th August-25th October. Sightings were frequent within these periods, mainly of single figures but there was an increase in October, which produced peaks of 20 (12th), 30+ (15th) and 17 (22nd).

**Peacock** *Inachis io*. The sole record was on 7th June.

**Small Tortoiseshell** *Aglais urticae*. Appeared six times and in every month between 5th May & 28th August.

**Long-tailed Blue** *Lampides boeticus*. An unidentified caterpillar spotted crawling across the floor at Stackhoull in early September was kept. It pupated within a day or so, emerging a month later, on 15th October, as a female of this southern European species. It presumably arrived attached to supplies for the shop.

### **Other insects**

Away from the Lepidoptera, less attention was given to other insect groups. However, there were two new species for the isle, a caddis and a plant bug.

#### **Caddis (Trichoptera)**

***Agapetus fuscipes***. A male of this small dark caddis was captured in Gilsetter on 10th August. Though the first Fair Isle record, there are Shetland records and it can be safely assumed that this species is an island resident.

#### **Plant bug (Heteroptera)**

**Birch Shield-bug** *Elasmotethus interstinctus*. One in the Lower Stoneybrek trap on 25th September. We had been hearing of a massive and totally unexpected influx into Shetland during the previous week or so, but this was the only one known to have made it to Fair Isle.

### **Acknowledgements**

The proportion of households collecting systematic records – 4 out of a total of 25 or so – must make Fair Isle one of the most intensive moth study localities in the world! Take a bow, Deryk Shaw and his assistants at the Bird Observatory, Pat and Neil Thomson at Lower Stoneybrek, Paul Baxter at Barkland, Elizabeth Riddiford and John Walmsley at Schoolton. Other islanders and visitors also contributed records. Mark Young provided expert opinions on new and difficult species, and enthusiastic encouragement. Ian Wallace of Liverpool Museum very kindly determined the caddis. Many thanks to all.



## 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 and during the evening log. It is Cetaceans, Butterflies and Moths, which 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 crossings to and from Shetland). Membership £8, includes Annual Report. Contact Austin Taylor, 3 Murrayston, Lerwick, Shetland, ZE1 0RE

### Summary of Cetaceans

Cetaceans are often seen during the *Good Shepherd IV* crossings during the summer months, but there were also many seen from the isle in 2006, including three sightings of Killer Whales and some (relatively) large aggregations of dolphins and porpoises.

**Minke Whale** (*Balaenoptera acutorostrata*): An excellent year with regular sightings in June in particular. At least eight were seen around the isle on a calm 10th May. A single on 24th May was followed by almost daily records from 4th-26th June. Most counts were of 1-2 but there were six on 4th, five on 16th & 26th and an amazing 13 on 7th. There were no July sightings and just singles in August and September were the last.

**Killer Whale** (*Orcinus orca*): Orcas are often very obliging when they visit us, coming very close to shore as they hunt for seals, allowing excellent viewing opportunities. Pods were noted thus: six on 3rd June; three on 30th September; five on 27th October.

**White-beaked Dolphin** (*Lagenorhynchus albirostris*): The only sighting from land was at least 15 together off the east side of the isle on 31st August.

**Atlantic White-sided Dolphin** (*Lagenorhynchus acutus*): At least two together on 3rd July and 12 on 30th September were the only confirmed sightings.

**Risso's Dolphin** (*Grampus griseus*): There was a good run of records in late summer commencing with at least 25 together (with a similar number of Harbour Porpoise) on 25th August, followed by counts of 2-7 on six dates between 31st August-14th September.

**Harbour Porpoise** (*Phocoena phocoena*): There were land-based sightings in every month from May to October commencing with two on 10th and a single on 30th May. June records comprised six on 4th & 7th, a single on 8th and three on 27th, followed by a school of eight on 3rd July and a single on 21st. Regular sightings in August and early September (up to 14th) were mainly of 1-7 but included 20 on 24th August and 25 the following day! In October there were sightings on five scattered dates throughout the month, including 10 on 18th & 23rd.

**Dolphin spp** Unidentified dolphins were seen on 7th June (3), 24th August and 1st October (6).

### **Pinnipeds**

**Grey Seal** (*Halichoerus grypus*): The autumn census of newborn pups, carried out every four days from late September to mid-November, found that cows were slightly late to start pupping in 2006 with the first not born until 6th October. An estimated total of 96 pups were born in various geos around the isle. This figure represents a 21.5% increase on the previous year's very low figure (79 pups) but is still below the 109 born in 2004 and the record 126 in 2003.

**Common Seals** (*Phoca vitulina*) were regularly seen in spring and autumn in South Harbour with c20 often hauled out on the shingle there.

### **Other Marine Sightings**

**Basking Shark** (*Cetorhinus maximus*): This species is making a comeback into Shetland waters. Following the first sighting since the 1970s, off Bunness in October 2004, another was seen in July 2005 and the recovery continued in 2006 with no less than *four* sightings! Two were observed together, just off the north end of Bunness on 21st July, by a lucky group of startled guests. Further singles were spotted in August, on 16th, 25th & 30th.

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

**Bat sp** (order **Chiroptera**); a small brown bat, almost certainly a Pipistrelle (*Pipistrellus ssp*), was seen flying around South Ramnigeo on the afternoon of

3rd June. **Common Frog** (*Rana temporaria*) the first spawn was noted in the ditches around Pund/Barkland on 17th March – over a week later than in most recent years. **Shetland Bumble Bees** (*Bombus muscorum*) were recorded regularly from 10th May until mid-August. One strange discovery was several examples of **Buoy Barnacle** (*Dosima fascicularis*) in the middle of the Arctic Tern colony near Horstibrekkas!

## The JHMF Experience

*Richard Else*

On the 11th of July I arrived on Fair Isle to spend two weeks as a John Harrison Memorial Fund volunteer at the Bird Observatory. The journey on board *The Good Shepherd IV* had been particularly stomach-churning and I was very glad to get onto dry land, as were all the guests who had also been on the boat. Hollie met us at the harbour and took us to the Obs for some food, where I was introduced to Deryk the warden, Mark and Will the assistant wardens, Phil the ranger and the rest of the staff. Soon after, I was to be taken gull ringing, but the weather looked ominous, so I spent the afternoon recovering and having a bit of a look around.

A football match was organised after tea, so all of the islanders and guests who felt energetic enough drove down to the pitch by the south lighthouse. Despite the unevenness of the pitch it was a really good game, with lots of goals and plenty of hard challenges flying in.

That night we did some Storm Petrel ringing. Although we only caught four, it was the first time I'd seen 'Stormies' close up. We also heard a Leach's Petrel – a bird that Will and I had never seen before. Unfortunately it did not come near the net. Hopefully we would have other chances to catch one before my stay was over.

The next day I went with the ornithological staff to access auk and Kittiwake colonies in the Zodiac dinghy. Guillemot and Razorbill chicks were found under rocks by clambering around boulder-beaches, and were ringed and weighed. Adult Kittiwakes were pulled off their high ledges with a noose on the end of a long telescopic pole and processed in the boat. We also extracted food samples from them, usually in the form of slimy clumps of partially digested Pipefish, to be analysed later. It was clear why I'd been advised to bring old, unwanted clothes with me for doing seabird work!

In the days that followed we did lots more Seabird ringing, either using the boat or climbing down steep slopes and cliffs on a rope to get to Auks and Shags. Arctic and Great Skuas were found by walking across the moorland in a line, sometimes with everyone at the obs helping out, and looking for the chicks hiding in the heather. Puffins were caught by reaching down the burrows and feeling around for the chicks, or sometimes adults, deep inside.

On a couple of dark nights we stayed out catching Storm Petrels using a mist net

and tape lure by the harbour. On one occasion we failed to get any birds at all, but other times were more successful with twenty or so Stormies caught.

One day we entered deep caves in the boat to get to where Tysties were nesting. The chicks were found hiding in dark corners and crevices and we ringed and measured them by torchlight. Mark even managed to catch an adult in flight using a hand-net as it flew out past the boat.

After nice weather for the first week, the island suddenly became engulfed in thick fog, which lasted for five days, with only occasional, brief spells of sun. During one of these bright intervals the islanders took the opportunity for the annual sheep round-up and shearing day, in which just about everyone on the island took part. We all took up strategic positions, from which we were to herd all the sheep on the island into the pens. Although a lot of the participants, including myself, didn't really know what we were doing, we eventually got most of the sheep together, and all had a go at shearing them.

Later in the week, during another break in the mist, I went with the wardens to ring and take measurements of Puffins and Fulmars. After a pleasant morning having my fingers lacerated by Puffin claws, and being treated to 'the Maalie experience', the fog came down again, leaving us to sail back around the island without being able to see it. Fortunately Deryk's claim to knowing his way around the island blindfolded was fairly accurate, and we were back at the Obs in time for lunch. Phil had seen two Basking Sharks while we were out, but unfortunately they had disappeared by the time we heard about them.

The weather eventually brightened up again properly, giving us opportunity to visit a gull colony and the rest of the Arctic Tern colonies. Many of the gulls had already fledged, as had some of the terns, but there were still plenty around to be ringed.

My last day on Fair Isle was particularly eventful. After finishing petrelling at about 3am the previous night, I got up early to accompany Mark on the morning trap round. Still half asleep as we walked up the side of the gully, I stepped on something that I must have mistaken for solid ground, but which actually gave way completely, leaving me to fall into the pool of water at the bottom. Much to my surprise, the pool was deeper than I was tall and I found myself swimming in the cold, mossy water, while Mark, having wandered back to see where I'd got to, dissolved into fits of laughter. We completed the trap round, without finding a single bird.

The rest of the day was spent ringing Puffins and Arctic Terns, while most of my

stuff was drying out on the boiler. The weather looked promising, so after dark, the net and tape-lures were brought out for my last chance of catching a Leach's Petrel. By 01:30 we'd caught around 20 Stormies, but no Leach's. I wandered over to the net to see if there were any more birds and found Will, just tying up a bird bag. He looked up, and with a big grin and the words "get in!" hurried over to the ringing room and brought out a fantastic Leach's Petrel: A lifer, and a fantastic way to end a brilliant two weeks.

The next morning I was sad to be leaving. It had been an exciting and energetic fortnight, full of interesting work with many different seabirds, a bit of sheep shearing and a fair amount of football. I wish I could have stayed for longer. Thanks to everyone at FIBO for a rewarding and enjoyable stay.

*Have you thought of joining the staff of Britain's most famous Bird Observatory as a supported volunteer? A limited number of grants are given to young people to work with other ornithologists at Fair Isle Bird Observatory.*

**The John Harrison Memorial Fund** provides financial assistance to young ornithologists between the ages of 16 and 24 to enable them to visit Fair Isle and take part in the daily work schedule of the Bird Observatory. This opportunity has launched the careers of many budding ornithologists, and several have later become staff of Fair Isle Bird Observatory itself. It was established in 1968 by the late Richard Richardson in memory of John Harrison of Hunstanton, Norfolk, who visited the island three times before he died, aged just nineteen.

Grants cover the cost of travel (so long as it is by the most economic means) from home to the Observatory and back. Full travel costs may only be given for visits of two weeks or longer. While at the Observatory, awardees pay just £10 per day towards the cost of food and accommodation. Successful applicants are responsible for arranging their travel.

Awardees take part in the routine work conducted by the ornithological staff. The type of work varies depending on the time of year, so you are advised to contact the Warden if you have a particular interest such as seabird ringing or migration studies, so that you can arrange your visit at the most appropriate time. Preference will be given to applicants wanting to come between April and July, which incidentally are great times for spring migrants and breeding seabirds. Daily duties can involve on average two hours of data entry on computers, as well as migration censusing, ringing, trap repairs, tree planting, visitor liaison and maintenance tasks.

Successful applicants will be expected to write a short report of their stay suitable for publication in the Fair Isle Bird Observatory Annual Report.

Application forms are available from the Bird Observatory and once completed should be sent to Dr Peter Evans, Cynifryn, Abershore, Llanfaglan, Caernarfon, Gwynedd LL54 5RA (e-mail [peter.evans@zoology.oxford.ac.uk](mailto:peter.evans@zoology.oxford.ac.uk), tel. 01286 672071) along with a detailed CV (including your e-mail address and phone number), and two references (such as from a school teacher or university lecturer, and a senior naturalist/ornithologist) with whom you are well acquainted.

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

*Don't miss this opportunity!*

## **Fair Isle Bird Observatory Trust (FIBOT) Financial Report and Accounts for 2006**

Mike Wood

A summary of FIBOT's draft accounts for the year ended 31st October 2006 appears on the following pages. The full statutory accounts can be inspected at the Bird Observatory on Fair Isle. The year ended 31st October 2006 was another excellent year for FIBOT as a business, although in absolute numbers it was slightly below the record-setting figures of 2005.

The guest numbers in 2006 totalled 2,610 bed-nights, compared to 2,739 in the previous year and well above our break-even level of 2,000 bed-nights. The distribution of visitors across the months was interesting, as possibly for the first time ever October was much more popular than September. Overall revenue was a new record, exceeding £100,000 for the second successive year. Both Shop and Bar income were excellent.

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. 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. We have opened a new bank account for donations that have been made specifically for the new Observatory project.



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 2006

	2006 £	2005 £
<b>Sales Income</b>		
Hostel Income	74,410	77,436
Shop Sales	8,332	6,847
Bar Income	15,039	16,123
Miscellaneous Hostel Income	4,510	982
	<u>102,291</u>	<u>101,388</u>
<b>Cost of Sales</b>		
Purchases	40,085	38,027
Wages & Salaries	31,307	31,289
	<u>71,392</u>	<u>69,316</u>
<b>Trading Profit</b>	30,899	32,072
<b>Other Income</b>		
Interest Received	5,156	4,916
Deferred Grant Income released	0	0
Subscriptions	5,586	4,998
Donations	1,769	3,296
Grants Received	17,411	17,624
Other Income	0	0
	<u>29,922</u>	<u>30,834</u>
<b>Gross Profit</b>	60,821	62,906
<b>Other Expenses</b>		
Administration	7,661	8,098
Establishment	33,375	33,394
Sales & Marketing	7,388	5,478
Financial & Legal	1,038	1,644
Depreciation	11,000	11,000
	<u>60,462</u>	<u>59,614</u>
<b>Surplus/(Deficit) for the year</b>	<u>359</u>	<u>3,292</u>

## Balance Sheet as at 31st October 2006

	2006 31/10/06 £	2005 31/10/05 £
<b>Fixed Assets</b>		
Tangible assets	69,484	65,908
Investments	10,857	10,857
	<u>80,341</u>	<u>76,765</u>
<b>Current Assets</b>		
Stocks	9,368	7,333
Debtors	11,504	11,136
Cash at bank and in hand	99,493	115,828
	<u>120,365</u>	<u>134,297</u>
<b>Creditors: amounts falling due within one year</b>	<u>(11,063)</u>	<u>(27,451)</u>
<b>Net Current Assets/(Liabilities)</b>	<b>109,302</b>	<b>106,846</b>
<b>Total assets less current liabilities</b>	<b>189,643</b>	<b>183,611</b>
<b>Creditors: amounts falling due after more than one year</b>	<u>( 0)</u>	<u>( 0)</u>
	<u>189,643</u>	<u>183,611</u>
<b>Representing:</b>		
<b>Accumulated Surplus</b>	189,643	183,611
<b>Appeal Reserve</b>	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>
	<u>189,643</u>	<u>183,611</u>

# Systematic Checklist of the Birds of Fair Isle

*Alan Bull & Deryk Shaw*

The table below is a checklist of the birds of Fair Isle up to the end of 2006. 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 (365 species). Five species in Category D, two Category D candidates, presumed escapes (Category E) and one extinct are also included in lists at the end.

## Status Categories

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

## Breeding Categories (B, followed by:)

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

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

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

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

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

# DIRECTFLIGHT



Inter Island service from Lerwick and Sumburgh to Fair Isle.  
Please telephone 01595 840246

Intelligent Aviation

## WWW.REBECCANASON.COM

REBECCA@REBECCANASON.COM

TEL: (01223 891510)

*Bird Photographs by Rebecca Nason from Fair Isle, Shetland & Beyond now on her website.*

*Winner of 'Best' Photographic Display at the British Birdwatching Fair 2006.*

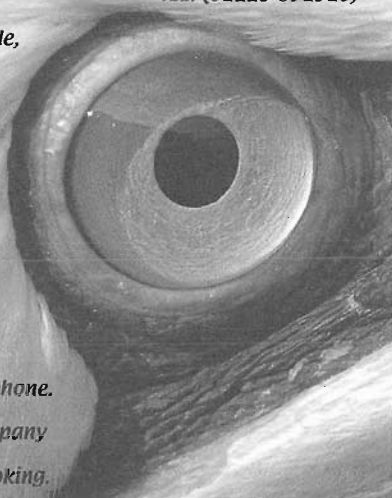
*Limited Edition - High Quality Prints available from standard 6" x 4" to A4 and A3. Prices from as little as £3.50 including postage!*

*Extensive Photo Library including Fair Isle Spring & Autumn rarity highlights 2003-2006.*

*Seabird Portfolio - Bird in the Hand - Owl Gallery.*

*Professionally made 'Puffin Passion' Greeting Cards for all occasions- Buy online or phone.*

*Join me on Fair Isle, Autumn 2007 with tour company 'AVIAN ADVENTURES' for a memorable birding & photography experience - call now to make a booking.*





## NOTES

# HUGH HARROP

---

**extensive photo library - commissioned photography - limited edition prints  
illustrated features - lectures - photography workshops & holidays**

---



**Longhill, Maywick, Shetland, UK, ZE2 9JF**

**Tel +44 (0) 1950 422483 or +44 (0) 7909 917394**

**[hugh@hughharrop.com](mailto:hugh@hughharrop.com)**

**[www.hughharrop.com](http://www.hughharrop.com)**

**Registered in Scotland Company No: 245606**