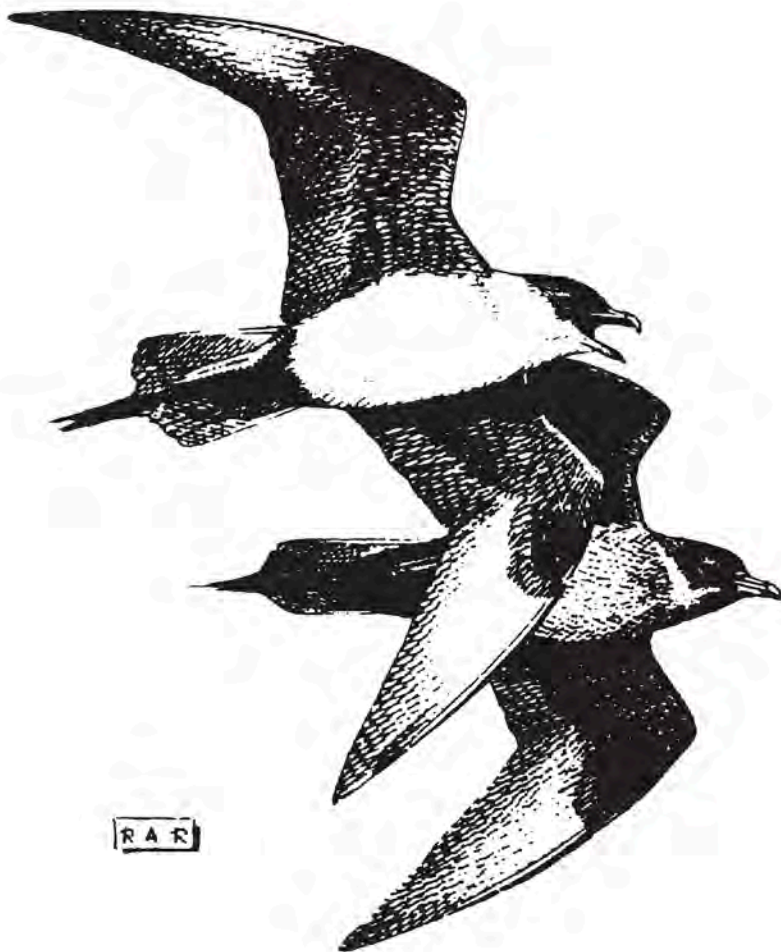


# FAIR ISLE BIRD OBSERVATORY

Report for 2008



# Fair Isle Bird Observatory Report no. 61 (2008)

Edited by Deryk Shaw

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A Company limited by guarantee.

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# Warden's Report

Deryk Shaw

**Overview:** My tenth season at the helm was, as in most years, a mixture of lows and highs. Another tremendously busy season for guest bookings in the lodge and a wonderful year for numbers and variety of migrants were offset by yet another disastrous breeding season for Fair Isle's seabirds.

**Migrants:** A total of 212 species was recorded, including five new to the isle. Spring produced Fair Isle's first (two) Night Herons, Caspian Plover, Black Kite and the first Citril Finch for Britain plus our second Surf Scoter as well as a King Eider and the best spring passage of common and scarce migrants for many many years. Autumn was outstanding with an influx of Two-barred Crossbills (totalling 17), Sabine's Gull, Western Bonellis Warbler, TWO Pallas's Grasshopper Warblers, two Lanceolated Warblers and no less than THREE Whites Thrushes. However, these paled into insignificance compared to Britain's third (Fair Isle's second) Brown Flycatcher and the isle's first Siberian Thrush.

**Seabirds:** Another disastrous season. All species bred in low numbers except for Gannet and Great Skua (which are both now at record levels) and many failed to raise a single chick to fledging. Again it is the lack of sandeels behind the failures but it was also noticed that, in contrast to recent years, there were very few Snake Pipefish in the diet. Our detailed contract work for JNCC to monitor numbers, survival, breeding success and diet has never been more vital as seabirds continue to struggle in the face of a changing environment.

**Ornithological Staff:** Mark Breaks and Simon Davies both returned for a second season as Assistant Wardens. Both did a grand job and Simon is returning for a third season in 2009 whilst Mark is spreading his wings further and venturing across the ocean to Prince Edwards Point Bird Observatory in Canada. I wish him the best of luck and will miss his photographic input to the FIBO website.



White's Thrush © WT Miles

**Volunteers:** Rob Hughes and Paul King were both long-term volunteers for the season and in fact between them took on the majority of the Ranger Service. With a fair bit of guidance they did a wonderful job and we received many positive comments from guests. Their future career prospects will certainly have benefited from the experience. Serene Chng, Tara Proud, Adrian Brockhurst, Matt Johnson, Ann Roels, Maggie Burgh all came for 2-3 weeks each at varying times as JHMF recipients or volunteers to learn and gain experience. All successfully reached their objectives and more.

**Other Research:** Dr Peter Evans, Dr Jane Reid, Dr Mark Whittingham, Jeroen Minderman, Daisy Brickhill, Suzi Hogg and Matt Denny, from Cardiff, Newcastle and Aberdeen Universities were all present for varying lengths of time to continue the long-term study of the local Starling population. Adam Seward from Cardiff University/Macauley Institute was also present for most of the season studying the affects of supplementary feeding on the growth rates and fledging success of the breeding Wheatears and later, fat provisioning rates of migrant birds. He is due to return in April 2009 to continue with this. Additionally, Emily Barlow from CEH/Aberdeen University came to gather some biometric data of Shags from the ringing logs as part of an investigation into differences between isolated populations.

**Maintenance/Vehicles:** Because of the imminent rebuild we carried out only essential maintenance this year and thankfully there were no really major works required. The people carrier required a large amount of work early in the season and we also purchased a new works van from Shetland. During spells when we were without the people carrier or van we were able to use our own car to pick up guests and borrowed Kenny Stout's pickup and the Stackhoull shop van to move large items and pick up shop goods and we are extremely grateful to all.

**Conservation areas:** Again we continued to plant small areas of crops and bushes/trees for migrants and these were successful in attracting and holding many birds. The Observatory Plantation is now so dense that it is now difficult to spot birds in it, so we have started to thin it out and transport cuttings into areas down the isle. Many of the cropped areas have now been used for several years and we will have to move them, which will mean a load more fencing and ploughing in the coming years.

**Thankyous:** FIBO could not operate without the financial assistance of our paying guests and bodies such as JNCC, SNH and SOTEAG and this help is gratefully acknowledged. The support of the island community is also vital and I am pleased that we have the backing of the entire population, especially important as we make plans for rebuilding. Finally, I would like to thank all the staff who have worked here this year and hope that all had an enjoyable Fair Isle experience.



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## **Fair Isle in 2008**

**Alexander Bennett (Group Manager, Countryside & Islands, North)**

In 2008/2009 the Trust continued to work with the Community, Housing Forum and individuals on a wide range of issues and, as always, this work is interesting and rewarding.

The Trust restructure which took place in 2007 bedded in during 2008/2009 with responsibility toward the island remaining headed up by Alexander Bennett, Group Manager North with primary support from Angus Jack, Senior Building Surveyor North and Alan Barrow, Rural Surveyor North. Between us we offer the island a combined knowledge of working with Fair Isle for over 49 years.

It has been an extremely challenging time for the Trust as we have faced our worst financial crises in our history. However, things are improving now but, sadly, in the process we have lost a number of key staff but with some efficiencies and hard work we will move on to great achievements.

It was heartening to confirm that a new three-year concordat agreement was been agreed between the NTS and SNH. The Fair Isle element of this concordat comprises support to Fair Isle based activities related to biodiversity conservation monitoring and community involvement. The community involvement element comprises financial support for the continuation of FIMETI's commitment to seeing Diploma recommendations, such as the establishment of a MPA for Fair Isle and for Fair Isle Wildlife Club to buy materials and field equipment.

There are a number of strands to the biodiversity conservation monitoring. The first involves support for the ongoing study of grassland fungi, particularly waxcaps *Hygrocybe*, in relation to targeted croft management. The second relates to a wide ranging study to demonstrate the ecological significance of Ward Hill and the third

monitoring strand comprises support for the ongoing biological data management programme maintained by resident ecologist, Nick Riddiford. This will include participation in national monitoring schemes such as the National Moth Monitoring Scheme.

We feel this, driven by the significant collective knowledge of islanders such as Nick, has real potential to help to distinguish Fair Isle as a place that is remote from the background noise which can blight mainland study and accordingly of real national and international value for research including, highly relevant, change monitoring. It goes without saying that the Fair Isle Wildlife Club, another island initiative, will ensure there is a steady stream of environmentally aware custodians for the future.

Further to this Abbie Paterson, Species Recovery Officer for NTS, visited the island and introduced our wider initiative for crofters to undertake habitat creation for breeding corncrakes. There has been interest in this and although no corncrakes are currently breeding it is hoped that this may encourage favourable conditions for passing birds in due course. Sadly, Abbie has now moved on to pursue his own work outwith the Trust.

So on the whole it has been an encouraging year and we look forward with one final but very significant thought:

### **The passing of David Royale**

David has been closely associated with the NTS and recently resided on Fair Isle at The Brecks and had helped the Trust achieve its conservation aims on Fair Isle, Canna and St Kilda, three of his favourite places, throughout our areas of operation during his time as a Trust Patron. He passed away on 30th July and was laid to rest in the cemetery on Fair Isle. The assistance during his lifetime and his ongoing legacy, The Royale Fund, is greatly appreciated by the Trust and he will be missed.

# Five firsts for Fair Isle!

*To the end of 2007, the Fair Isle bird list stood at an impressive 369 species, however barely a year goes by when this is not added to. In 2008, there were no less than five additions to the list...*

## Night Heron

### Mark Breaks

The morning of 5th April started as usual with bird census after breakfast and it was my turn on southeast. As I made my way around Meoness following the cliff edge checking for any birds sheltering from the strong north-westerly gale and snow flurries I dropped down to South Harbour (10.55hrs) and started scanning for waders. Seconds later a bird flew from under the cliff below me, headed straight out and around the cliffs from where I'd just come. From this brief view I saw that it was a reasonably sized bird with a very floppy flight - a heron - but it was too small for a Grey Heron. I was able to note just a few plumage details; rounded grey wings and a square black back. However, even after this brief view I was certain that it was a Black-crowned Night Heron (*Nycticorax nycticorax*) and probably a full adult. Informing Deryk Shaw and Simon Davies, an extensive search of the sheltered east coast produced nothing. We decided to head back to the observatory for lunch as the (by now) blizzard conditions were hampering the search! On the way, Simon Davies checked the Plantation trap, when from behind the trap a (the) Heron jumped up out of the ditch. Its long white plume, black cap and mantle, dark bill, yellowish legs with grey wings and whitish underparts made it unquestionably an adult Night Heron. It flew and quickly vanished over the top of the Vaadal Trap into yet another snow shower. Despite thoroughly searching all afternoon there was no further sign. Thankfully, the next morning it was relocated at Setter, where it narrowly escaped becoming a cat's breakfast! It later settled around the Field pond until the 13th where it fed on sticklebacks, crustaceans and frogs. However, with a lack of enough suitable food, a sad end was somewhat inevitable and on the 24th its remains were discovered in Gilsetter.

Meanwhile, on 9th April, Deryk Shaw discovered the fairly fresh, half-eaten remains of an adult Night Heron in Klingers Geo. This was actually possibly (probably?) the bird flushed from South Harbour on 5th which flew along the east coast and the bird discovered at the Plantation later that morning may have actually been a second bird? Whatever, there were TWO adult Night Herons on Fair Isle this spring.

*The nominate race of Black-crowned Night Herons is fairly widespread over much of southern and central Europe extending east into Asia, with a subtly different race (*N.n.hoactli*) occurring in North America. The former is a more than annual visitor to southern Britain (600+ British records) - usually as an overshooting spring migrant. These were the 9th & 10th to reach Shetland.*



## **Caspian Plover**

**Deryk Shaw**

It was 1st May with an overcast sky and a stiff easterly breeze. Jane Reid, armed with binoculars, telescope and notebook was diligently scouring the island for colour-ringed Starlings but, of course, with an eye and ear open for anything more interesting! She had arrived at Upper Stoneybrek and was beginning to scan through a flock of Starlings feeding in the field there when a small wader that she didn't immediately recognise flew over and landed in the adjacent field. She already suspected it may be something good and immediately got her telescope onto it... I meanwhile was nearing the end of an enjoyable census of southwest and was just passing Lower Stoneybrek when my mobile rang. Reception was for some reason poor but Jane managed to blurt out the words "I think I've got a Caspian Plover!" My heart jumped. If Jane thinks she has a Caspian Plover, the chances are she definitely does! "Where are you?" I screamed. "Upper Stoneybrek" came the excited reply. "Great!" I thought "I'm only a couple of minutes away - seconds if I run!" I phoned Simon Davies, who was censusing southeast and relayed the message and started sprinting up the hill. Simon and I arrived at exactly the same time and Jane pointed to the field where, moments before, the bird had been! It had disappeared as she phoned out the news. She described to us what she had seen and her description fitted perfectly a female Caspian Plover! We were soon joined by Mark Breaks and began a search of the surrounding area. Half an hour later Mark relocated it near to Setter, where we all had reasonable though distant views before it took off again. Thankfully it did not go far and re-aliighted near Pund, where, with careful approach we all gained good views and were joined by several islanders who came along for a look at the cause of all the commotion.

It was a small plover, slightly larger and with similar upperpart colouration to a Ringed Plover but had longer, slender, dark legs, giving it a much more elegant look. Upperparts, including the crown, were a uniform sandy. Underparts were white but for a very broad sandy-grey breast band, clearly demarcated from the white throat and belly. Its forehead was also white, joined to a very long white supercilium, giving a capped appearance to the crown. The cheeks were a very pale sandy colour below a large black beady eye. The bill was also black, fairly long, straight and fine compared to a Ringed Plover being almost as long as the head length.

It remained in the general area until early evening when it disappeared once again but with the sky even more laden with cloud than it had been earlier I thought it would not go far.

It remained overcast all that night and a search again commenced very early the next morning as twitchers and charter planes the length of Britain were on tenterhooks waiting for news. After three hours of fruitless searching we returned to the Obs for breakfast and phoned out news that there was, as yet, no sign. Everyone headed out again before 9am to begin census and continue the search and at 9.30 Mark found it

again near Barkland. The joyous news was released and almost immediately the Obs van rolled up with two (lucky) opportunistic birders who had got on the scheduled morning plane at 9am - despite the negative news!

However, by now the sky had cleared to reveal a bright, sunny cloudless day with a light southerly breeze. The bird was evidently becoming agitated and an hour or so later it took off and flew high to the north, never to be seen again and before the arrival and much to the disappointment of the several plane-loads of travelling twitchers.

*Caspian Plover is a long-distance migrant that breeds in the steppes of central Asia and winters in eastern and southern Africa. This was a long-awaited fifth British record, the last being another female at Skelberry, in south Mainland Shetland on 3rd-5th June 1996. There were two (Scilly Isles and Lothian) in 1988 and you have to go way back to Norfolk 1890 to find the first record (a pair). How long must we wait for the sixth?*

## Black Kite

Simon Davies

It was 7th May and spring was really getting started up here with most of the common summer migrants having made an appearance and one or two mega birds thrown in (Calandra Lark and Caspian Plover) and with light south easterlies we were hopeful for something good to turn up. The previous night (6th May) we had heard from North Ronaldsay that a Marsh Harrier had been seen to leave to the north quite late in the evening, so it was with little surprise that as Deryk Shaw & I left to carry out the census of the south on the morning of the 7th we saw a large, dark raptor in the distance float across and disappear over the top of Vaassetter. With the poor views we had we assumed that it was the aforementioned Marsh Harrier and we'd see it again later and carried on south to our respective census of Southwest and Southeast.

Later on, I was walking around the cliffs of Meoness when I saw a large dark raptor flying slowly away from me towards Malcolm's Head. As I raised my bins I was expecting to see the Marsh Harrier but as soon as I saw it I immediately suspected that it might in fact be a Black Kite. It was essentially all dark with a slightly paler greyish head. The tail shape was the most critical feature in these first proper views, it being long and thin with sharp corners and a shallow notch in the end which went most of the way to eliminate both Marsh Harrier and Red Kite. It was pretty similar in size to a Marsh Harrier but with slightly thinner wings and with much more prominent 'fingers' than a Marsh Harrier would show.

The flight action was also different as it appeared more 'floppy' and it appeared 'skinnier' when seen side on than a Marsh Harrier and as it glided away from me it held its wings level and not in the shallow V associated with Harriers.

I quickly called up Deryk Shaw who was on SW census and said that the large raptor

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that we had seen this morning was almost certainly a Black Kite and he should get on it as soon as possible as it was heading over to him. I watched it distantly head to Malcolm's Head then turn north along the cliffs and as it reached Hjukni Geo Deryk phoned back and shouted "IT IS ONE!!" then hung up!

It proceeded to cruise round the south of the island for most of the morning being mobbed by various birds, most entertainingly the breeding female Peregrine who wasn't impressed at all! All the Obs staff and interested islanders soon all had excellent views as throughout the afternoon and the next three days it followed a circuit which included Vaasetter, Hoini, airstrip, Homisdale and the Obs, allowing everyone to study it at length.

It was a large, dark raptor with a classic Kite profile with long, quite thin wings with a prominent bend at the carpal on the leading edge of the wing and a long narrow brown tail with a very shallow fork. Its body and axillaries were fairly uniform dark brown but could show a very dark reddish tinge in strong light, the base of the primaries and secondaries were slightly paler creating, from below, a pale patch which contrasted with the dark primary tips and carpal area. It had a paler, greyish head and its yellow cere was obvious with good enough views. Its upperwings were also distinctive with an obvious pale panel on the median coverts forming a band across the wing.

*The breeding range of Black Kite (Milvus migrans) covers most of southern, central and eastern Europe, north Africa, Asia and the middle east with most wintering in sub-Saharan Africa where they mingle with resident populations. It is a regular visitor to southern Britain (300+ British records) but this was only the third to ever reach Shetland.*

## **Citrel Finch**

**Deryk Shaw**

At around midday on 6th June, Tommy Hyndman, the American resident of Auld Haa, found a yellowy-green finch-sized bird feeding in his garden. He consulted a bird book and identified it as a Citrel Finch (*Carduelis citrinella*). Being fairly new to the British birding scene he did not realise the significance of this, but knowing he had not seen one before and thus assuming it would be a rarity he looked around for someone to help him! Unfortunately it was 1pm - lunchtime at the Bird Obs (and no-one would be willing to miss that!!!) - so there was nobody to be seen. He phoned the Obs and left a message on the answerphone. At around 2.15pm, Mike Gee came ambling along and Tommy recounted what he had seen to him. Mike was, understandably, very doubtful (here was a novice American birder claiming what would be a first for Britain) but changed his mind when c30 minutes later the bird

popped up on the wall “My God, it is a Citril Finch! It’s a first for Britain!” was the cry. Elizabeth Riddiford, who happened to be passing, was the next to see it, followed by Paul King from the Obs who, having finally heard the phone message, came to investigate. A few moments later Kevin Shepherd and his wife Roya (who were staying at Tommy’s B&B) arrived on the scene then, as news spread, everyone else at the Obs and other islanders made their way to Auld Haa. I meanwhile was on Mainland, Shetland for the day (with my phone off and having left strict instructions with my Assistants for them **not** to find any rarities) and thus totally unaware of the furore that had been created back home. It was whilst on the way back to catch the *Good Shepherd* (in Roger Riddington’s car - and with my phone now on) at 4pm that I got the voice message from my Assistant Warden, Simon Davies “I’m really sorry Deryk but we’ve got a male Citril Finch here!” As I relayed the message, Roger’s foot suddenly pressed harder on the accelerator and within a few moments we were back at Grutness, having also called in at his house to pack a bag! A stressful two and a half hours on the *Good Shepherd* followed but the whole journey passed in thick fog so I knew the bird wouldn’t have left. Luckily it was still present when I (along with Roger Riddington and Rory Tallack) arrived back on the isle and we all got great views before it disappeared into the fog, shortly before the rest of the Shetland birding crowd arrived on a charter boat.

It was a distinctive bird... Its face had greeny yellow cheeks, chin and fore-crown whilst its ear coverts, rear crown and nape were pure grey, the latter reaching around the front (but not joining) like a shawl. The mantle / upper back was a dirty grey green, similar to (but less brown than) a female Greenfinch. Lower back and rump were a startling bright lemon yellow - the most striking part of the bird. Wings were quite Siskin-like with dark blackish flight feathers edged green and with broad yellow tips to black greater coverts. Tertiaries were edged a paler dirtier green fading to dirty white (aka Siskin). The underparts were almost entirely yellow - slightly brighter than the face but not as bright as the rump. Some undertail coverts were whiter. It had a conical bill (typical finch-like), grey with matted brown nasal hairs forming two ‘lumps’ at base of bill. Legs were short, dark pink. Eye was black, quite beady.

The following day it was still present but had moved to Barkland where, in front of an admiring crowd of twitchers from south it quietly fed on dandelions on the ground outside the house. A short while later it flew into the Heligoland trap there and was trapped. It was taken back to the Observatory for ringing and processing and the following details were taken:

Ring No	Age	Sex	Wing	Weight	Fat Score	Pectoral Score
V682771	Adult	Male	81mm	14.7gms	3/8	2/3

It was obviously a male based on the pure, bright colouration of upperparts and head. It was aged as an adult by the broad shape of the tail feathers and that all greater coverts were of the same age, reasonably fresh, green edged with no moult contrast.

It was released back at Barkland and visited various gardens in the south of the isle, allowing many more birders to twitch it, until 11th June.

**Discussion:** Obviously the occurrence of this bird (an adult male of a short-distance migrant) has raised some doubts about its origin. In the hand it had pristine plumage with no signs of foot or bill damage - no indication of ever having been in captivity. Dr Marc Förschler of the Institute of Avian research on Helgoland, Germany has been studying populations of this species since 1999 and he thought he could probably identify the origins of this bird from its song/calls and also stable isotope analysis. I therefore sent him a DVD of some footage of the bird singing and also a few body feathers that fell out when the bird was handled. His findings follow:

“Unfortunately analysis of the songs and the calls revealed no clear pattern, since the number of available recordings was too low. However, the short length of the song and the compact trill at the beginning of the song favour a bird from more northern breeding sites. Analysis of the feathers using the hydrogen isotope tracer method indicated that the deuterium value found in the feathers of the Fair Isle Citril Finch fits best to deuterium precipitation values from high altitudes in the Alps, which makes it more probable that the bird moulted its feathers in such an area.”

*Citril Finch has a fairly restricted breeding and wintering range with 80% of the world population found in Spain where it inhabits all higher mountain ranges from the Pyrenees in the North over the Central System to the Sierra Nevada in the South. Outside Spain, Citril Finches are only found in the mountains of the Alps, the Black Forest, the Jura, the Mont Ventoux and the Massif Central (Cramp & Perrins 1994). In general, they are altitudinal migrants and rarely recorded away from their preferred habitat of semi-open montane coniferous forest, particularly those dominated by Pine Pinus ssp, in either the breeding or non-breeding seasons. Most of the accepted extra-limital records come from areas close to the distribution range of the species. Thus, the vagrancy potential of Citril Finch must be considered quite low and it is not surprising that the species has never been recorded in Britain before. It has been accepted by both BBRC and BOURC as the first record of wild origin for Britain but was left as age uncertain, as some first-year finches can go through a complete moult.*

## **Siberian Thrush**

**Deryk Shaw**

I had found an Asian Brown Flycatcher at the Communications Mast on 24th September and it had been reported as still present very early the following morning, however had disappeared by the time I went up there at 0800hrs. I returned to the area after breakfast as there were people sitting at Tingwall airport on Mainland Shetland waiting for news. After checking the mast area, Ward Hill and the peat

cuttings I decided to check Skinners Glig and Guidicum before I had to leave for plane duty! I'd just reached the narrow gully at Guidicum and peering over the edge saw a Song Thrush dive down past a 'Blackbird', which was scrubbing about in the short vegetation c20m below me. I raised my bins in time for the 'Blackbird' to cock its head to one side and show a long white supercilium. My heart jumped into my mouth. "Oh, my God! It's a male Sibe Thrush!" I could not believe it. Brown Fly yesterday and now this!!! - one of the most wanted birds on any British birder's list, let alone their 'finds' list! HOW LUCKY AM I? I took a couple of record shots in case it disappeared. Trembling I then phoned my Assistant Warden Simon Davies who was on North census but he was out of signal so, (harping back to a message he left on my phone when a Citril Finch turned up when I was away) I left a message "Simon, I'm really sorry but I've found a male Sibe Thrush at Guidicum!" I then phoned the Obs and a few other birders on the isle and also quickly found someone to cover my plane duty. Everyone eventually arrived, including those waiting at Tingwall for news about the Brown Flycatcher plus Paul Harvey and Roger Riddington on the *Good Shepherd*. The bird barely moved 20 feet all day, but had departed by the next morning. I had a huge grin on my face for days afterwards!!!!

**Description:** Its so obvious that I'll keep this brief. A very dark 'mid-night' blue bird (especially in the dark gully where it was) with an obvious long supercilium, buffish and narrower in front of eye, broad and white behind. A light buff submoustachial and throat, speckled dark, was divided by a dark malar stripe. A whitish, flecked dark, cheek patch and a few whitish flecks on upper breast. There was a broad whitish strip on centre of belly but exact shape difficult to see due to always viewing from above. Tips of undertail coverts were (all) neatly fringed white, forming chevron patterns. The rest of the bird was a very dark grey-blue although primaries and greater coverts were slightly browner.

**Bare parts:** Legs; yellowy-brown. Bill; thrush-like, dark but for small pale base to lower mandible. Eye; black with obvious broken eyering, white and more obvious above, dirtier below.

*Siberian Thrush breeds in central and eastern Siberia from Yenisey and Lena Rivers south to northeast Mongolia and east to northeast Chin, Amurland, Sakhalin and northern Japan. The wintering range engulfs an area in southeast Asia from central Burma, Indochina and Thailand south to Singapore, Sumatra and Java. This, the tenth British record came hot on the heels of the ninth British and first Shetland record, a first-winter male on Foula on 28th September 2007.*

# Not 'firsts' but good records nevertheless...

## Calandra Lark

Simon Davies

It was 20th April and there had been a few bits and pieces seen on my southwest census in the morning including a new party of three Ring Ouzels and a Hawfinch seen flying over Barkland so, after lunch, I quickly returned to Barkland in the hope that it would settle down there. A few minutes after I arrived, not one but two Hawfinches popped up, I backed off in the hope that they would be tempted toward the seed on the ground at the mouth of the Heligoland trap there.

Mark Breaks, Rob Hughes and Paul King then arrived and we stood around pondering if there was anyway to get them into the trap (there wasn't!). It was then that I heard a Skylark-like call from the field across the road. I turned around as it didn't sound quite right and was in time to see a very big lark land in the open less than 30m away. As I got it in my binoculars I must admit words failed me, I managed to blurt out "What is that?" then increasing in volume "Its got black round its neck" then, now shouting, "IT'S A CALANDRA LARK".

Everyone immediately got it in their binoculars and made appreciative noises! Then as reason asserted itself again (or blind optimism kicked in) I realised I hadn't eliminated Bimaculated Lark! Right on cue the bird then took off and flew towards Upper Stoneybreck revealing a strong and obvious white trailing edge to the wing and blackish underwings confirming that it was indeed a Calandra Lark.

It flew away strongly to the south with a very powerful flight action, accentuated by its large broad-based wings, but fortunately landed again c300m away near Upper Stoneybreck. It was only then that I really appreciated how large the bird actually was as it landed next to a Skylark which was absolutely dwarfed by the Calandra, it almost seemed twice the size but in reality was roughly 20-30% larger. While the others kept the bird in view I quickly called Deryk Shaw back at the Obs who made his way rapidly out to Barkland, despite listening to Newcastle United playing Sunderland on the radio (well they were already 2-0 up!).

Just as Deryk arrived the bird took off and flew round the back of Upper Stoneybreck but instead of heading south, as we feared it would, it turned and headed back straight towards us. It flew low directly over our heads and headed towards Setter -



allowing awesome views (accompanied by the clicking of Mark's camera) - where it eventually landed near the croft.

After everyone concerned congratulated themselves, we walked over to where the bird had gone down and quickly re-found it feeding in a short grassy field and watched it for about 15 minutes before it disappeared behind a mound. We then waited for interested islanders to arrive before moving again and found it feeding in a recently ploughed rig. It gave excellent views as it sat up on a clod of earth facing us where its large broad-based and horn coloured bill could be seen along with the distinctive black neck markings with a patch on either side of the breast connected by a thin line across the top of the chest.

**Summary of features:** A huge lark! Considerably larger and bulkier than a Skylark which it was seen next to on several occasions. One of the most obvious features were the two black patches at either side of the upper chest which were joined together by a thin black line which was more obvious when the bird stretched upwards i.e. when it was alert.

In flight the blackish underwing which appeared completely black at most angles apart from when looking up at it from directly underneath and the white trailing edge to the wing were extremely obvious. The flight itself was very powerful, accentuated by the long, broad-based wings. It had a large and heavy looking head which was accentuated by the large, horn-coloured, deep-based bill, with a slightly darker tip.

**Underparts:** Its throat was clean buff-white right down to the black neck / chest patches, under the patches the chest was streaked brown down to bottom of the chest / start of the belly where there was quite a sharp demarcation to a pretty much unmarked buff-white belly and vent.

**Upperparts:** The ground colour was buffish-grey with brown streaks covering, the most obvious feature was the line of dark centred median coverts. The tail was dark brown with white outers.

**Head:** There was a faint buffish-grey supercillium and a narrow pale eye-ring almost creating a spectacled appearance.

The bird called frequently when in flight which recalled a Skylark but slightly less scratchy and clearer which could be written as "*driip driip*".

It then flew again, past us towards Setter with its very powerful flight. It showed on and off for the rest of the afternoon but could not be located the following morning. However, it was re-found on the morning of the 22nd April again near Setter and showed well, if distantly throughout the day but it could not be found on the 23rd and wasn't seen again.



*from Morocco and Iberia through the Mediterranean basin and east to Turkey and extending into Asia Minor as far as Kazakhstan and Afghanistan. There have been 15 British records to the end of 2008, almost all to offshore islands, and this was the fourth to reach Fair Isle.*

## **Asian Brown Flycatcher**

**Deryk Shaw**

Despite the localised (very light) westerly winds on the 23rd September, the overall pressure chart showed a huge high pressure over northern Europe extending into Siberia, resulting in a significant arrival including Pectoral Sandpiper, Red-throated Pipit, two Lanceolated Warblers and rounded off with a Pallas's Grasshopper Warbler. The wind was still in the west, slightly more northerly and very light the following morning, 24th September. The first trapround had produced a few warblers, including a couple of Yellow-broweds and with everyone still on a high from yesterday, it was with optimism that I headed out on north census - whilst *everyone* else headed south!!

It had been a pleasant walk (nice not to be battling against a wind) and I'd seen a handful of migrants, including half a dozen Y-b Warblers and a few Pied and Spotted Flycatchers by the time I'd reached Felsi Geo on the west side of Ward Hill. As I started to ascend the steep side of the hill I could see a few Y-b Warblers flitting ahead of me and as I got within sight of the ruins on the top I spied the silhouette of a dumpy-looking flycatcher doing its thing (flycatching). Its shape puzzled me slightly but thought I'd catch up with it in a minute once I reached the top. Meanwhile I had a load of Yellow-browed Warblers to try and count. As I followed them to the top I managed to count *ten* Y-b Warblers in view at once (there may have been more) but there was no sign of the Flycatcher. I headed down to the next building, half way down the other side of the hill with a couple of Y-b warblers flitting ahead of me. As I got there a greyish bird flitted out at the far end of the ruin and sat for a split second in the open. I raised my binoculars and saw it had a fairly plain greyish brown face with a large black eye with a prominent whitish eyering - the missing flycatcher! From the fleeting view, I thought it looked most like a Red-breasted Flycatcher and as it disappeared round the end of the building I expected to see the white in the tail. But no! It was completely plain - greyish! This got me thinking - could it have been a Brown Flycatcher? I rushed to the end of the building but it had gone again! Blast! I hurried down to the peat cuttings, hoping to find it there but there was no sign of it. I made my way round to the mast where I saw a few Y-b Warblers and a Pied Flycatcher and then spent 10-15 minutes chatting to the workman there and identified the large brown bird with white wingtips he had seen as a Bonxie. He departed and I was having another look around the buildings when I saw the mystery bird again on the roof of one of the old buildings before it flitted off again and sat on the hillside

behind. This was the first chance I had to get a decent look at it and I had almost convinced myself that yes, it was a Brown Flycatcher!! Trembling, I attempted to take a few record shots in case it disappeared. I then phoned my AWs and a few birders on the isle who I had numbers for and phoned the Obs to get the Red Flag in motion. I then texted the Shetland Grapevine before settling down to take some notes and a few more photos of the bird. My AW, Mark Breaks, was first to arrive and the flycatcher was by now much more settled and feeding from the fence surrounding the mast. The crowds (c40 people in total) soon arrived and all had excellent views. There was a trickle of interested islanders all afternoon making their way up there and the bird dutifully obliged right up to dusk. It was seen again at first light the following morning by one Obs guest with a big camera, but not afterwards. AWESOME!!!

**Description:** A small squat greyish-brown flycatcher with a short tail and large black eye.

**Head:** Crown plain, grey brown. Lores and ear coverts similar (although photos actually show an area of grey in front of eye, I did not note this). Narrow white eyering and large black eye stood out. Broad off-white sub-moustachial and a faint thin grey-brown malar stripe.

**Upperparts:** Nape, mantle, back, rump all uniform greyish-brown. Tail and wings slightly darker but tertials were also thinly edged buff along outer web with prominent white blobs at the tip that extended onto inner web. Similarly, the greater coverts were also thinly edged white-buff with prominent white tips forming an obvious wingbar although the outer two seemed slightly shorter with a deeper buff along edge and at tip. On close views, the secondaries were also *very* thinly edged white-buff, forming a very slight panel.

**Underparts:** Chin/throat unmarked off-white. A very slight greyish wash to unmarked breast. Belly and undertail coverts white.

**Bare parts:** Eye; large, black; Legs short, black; Bill; broad-based, dark with pale pinky base to lower mandible.

*Asian Brown Flycatcher breeds across northern Asia from western Siberia to Japan, also locally in southern Asia. The nominate race, from the northern part of the range, is a long-distance migrant that winters across India and southeast Asia to the Philippines. Since the discovery of this bird, two previous British occurrences have now been accepted onto Category A of the British List; a first-summer on Fair Isle on 1st-2nd July 1992 spent many years on Category D - mainly due to the unusual date of occurrence and lack of a vagrancy pattern for such insectivorous Siberian species - but has now been confirmed as the first British record. An adult at Flamborough, East Yorkshire on 3rd-4th October 2007 has been accepted as the second British record. This then becomes the third British record - and a Fair Isle Special.*

## Pallas's Grasshopper Warbler

Simon Davies

The morning of the 23rd September had proved to be extremely quiet but I kept telling myself with the wind almost non-existent and a great big high pressure over Scandinavia that something would turn up. I was proved right as late in the morning a Lanceolated Warbler was found in Bull's Park (I had walked through there earlier!) and showed amazingly well. So it was with raised hopes that I headed out again in the afternoon re-tracing the SE census route I had followed prior to lunch, with a diversion to twitch a recently-discovered Red-throated Pipit in Boini Mire.

Around mid-afternoon, I was walking along the cliffs at Meoness and was approaching Busta Geo when I paused to look down a small geo (I now know its actually called *Skraavilskin* of all things!) when I flushed a dark warbler from a tangle of vegetation a couple of metres from the top of the cliff. I instantly thought *Locustella* but the overall impression was far too dark for a Grasshopper Warbler and too big for a Lanceolated Warbler. Incredibly, instead of zooming round the corner never to be seen again it perched right out in the open on a bare patch of rock less than 10m away and as I got it in my binoculars I really couldn't believe my eyes because surely it was a Pallas's Grasshopper Warbler.

My initial impression was correct, it was a *Locustella* warbler but what a bird!! It was much darker than a Common Grasshopper Warbler but also far more colourful and well marked, it was as if the whole bird was tinged dark orange rather than the browns and greys of the other *Locustella*'s. The most obvious feature of the bird was the rump which was a quite bright orange/brown colour with dark centres to the feathers giving a spotted appearance, this was most obvious as it contrasted so dramatically with the dark tail (I couldn't make out any pale tips to the tail feathers), browner back and darker wings, especially the tertials which were dark, almost blackish with brown edges except for a spot on the inner web which turned white - the characteristic pale tips!

The head was also very distinctive having a very obvious grey ground colour to it which contrasted markedly with the warmer brown mantle, it also had a very distinct supercillium which started at the eye and flared slightly outwards, the cheeks were the same colour as the head (minus the dark streaks), giving the bird a rather obvious grey cheek patch.

The bird perched out in the open for roughly 30 seconds before diving back into the tangle of vegetation where it had originally been flushed from, almost beneath my feet!! I stood stock still for a few seconds not quite believing what I had seen but there was no doubt... was there? It was a Pallas's Grasshopper Warbler on a cliff not in some thick vegetated, wet ditch and it was me finding it! That's not right, surely?

As if on cue the bird then hopped out on to the cliff face for a second (possibly chasing an insect), then dived back into the vegetation, giving me a split second view of the contrasting bright rump and dark tail, which shook me out of my daze. So, not taking my eyes off the spot where it went in I phoned Deryk Shaw, Mark Breaks and Micky Maher and within 5 minutes I glanced round and could see the red flag zooming up and down the road. That's it now I thought, news is out!

Within 10 minutes the first people had arrived but I hadn't seen the bird since that split second view. The bird dutifully waited until most people had arrived before flying out of the tangle and apparently, to my horror, seemed to fly off round the corner of the cliff. We jumped up to chase it but it rapidly reappeared and amazingly, for the second time, posed out in the open giving me a new view of it head-on, revealing an obvious yellowish colour on its underparts, brightest on the chest. It also had a fairly narrow necklace of streaks across its chest but below that it was plain with the yellowish colour extending right down its front.

It then tried to go back into its favourite tangle but, due to the now large crowd on the cliff top, it just perched on the bare rock above the tangle for a few seconds before diving in. A minute later it came zooming out again and flew round the corner of the cliff towards Busta Geo. I looked round for confirmation and received a pat on the back from Deryk and a handshake from Micky - that was all I needed to know!

Someone soon relocated the bird on the cliff in the next small geo and I got brief views before it dropped down the cliff and flew into a cave at the bottom where it stayed hidden for a while. Fifteen minutes passed before it came sneaking out, foraging on the small beach at the base of the cliff where it gave good, if rather unusual views as it hopped around on the seaweed. It was still there when I left and apparently stayed until it started to get dark when it retreated back into its cave, presumably to roost. Unsurprisingly, it was not seen the following day.

*Pallas's Grasshopper Warbler breeds from western Siberia, east across central Asia to north-east China and winters in India and south-east Asia. Up to the end of 2008 there have been 41 accepted British records with Fair Isle accounting for almost half of them (20 records). With a further 14 elsewhere in Shetland, these islands really do hold the monopoly (83%) of records of this Siberian gem.*

# Map of Fair Isle



# Fair Isle Weather in 2008

Dave Wheeler

Across the UK, the first half of 2008 had daily mean temperatures around 1°C above average, whilst during the second half of the year they were close to average. Overall, UK annual temperatures were generally 0.5° to 1°C above average, with most areas experiencing their coldest year since 2001.

2008 was the third-wettest year on record, with rainfall well above average across most of the UK. Parts of south east Scotland and north east England recorded around 140% of their average annual rainfall. Eight months of 2008 had above-average rainfall for the UK, with only February, May, November and December having less than average.

Sunshine duration for 2008 was generally just above average, with the UK receiving 103%. February and December 2008 were very sunny months for the UK, with around 140% to 160% of average sunshine. In contrast, August 2008 was a very dull month, with only around 65% of average sunshine.

## **JANUARY - Very wet but sunny**

With an intense anticyclone of 1060hPa over northwest Russia extending a ridge southwest over Scandinavia and the North Sea, the first week of January saw a cold and very strong SE'ly airflow. Otherwise it was a very cyclonic and usually mild, as a mobile and unsettled W'ly airflow dominated the weather for much of the month. An intense low - tracking east across Shetland - brought a stormy end to the month. Despite being the second wettest month on record for Shetland,, it was also the third sunniest January since 1930. Though temperatures were still above the average, it was the coolest January since that of 2001.

## **FEBRUARY - Very mild and dull, but drier than normal**

With a mainly strong SW'ly airflow over the Northern Isles, this was Shetland's second mildest February – shared with 1939 - since 1930. The month divided into three more or less equal parts. The first was an unsettled, cyclonic period, with depressions tracking northeast past Scotland. The middle section was dominated by high pressure, as an anticyclone - developing over Scandinavia - migrated south into central Europe. The final third was again dominated by low pressure to the northwest, with a strong SW to W'ly airflow across northern Scotland.

## **MARCH - Cool, dry and very sunny**

March was unsettled across the UK with depressions - occasionally deep and vigorous - tracking northeast or east close to the north of Scotland, bringing a mixture of mild, wet conditions and a few cold snaps with significant snowfall to

some areas. Shortly after midmonth, an anticyclone - appearing to the west of Scotland - resulted in a spell of more settled weather. Probably due to this, the month was Lerwick's sunniest March, beating the previous highest of 135.7 hours in 1931. Later - as low pressure moved east and an anticyclone developed in mid-Atlantic - a cold N'ly airflow developed. The high quickly declined and the month ended unsettled, as a complex area of low pressure to the west and north of Scotland resulted in milder SW'ly winds.

#### **APRIL - Milder, drier and sunnier than average**

April was also mostly cyclonic. High pressure did flirt with the south of the UK for a few days at the start of the month. Cold air swept south early in the month, behind a depression tracking east over northern Scotland, with snow causing major disruption in parts of the Midlands and south-east England. By the second week, milder cyclonic conditions had returned to the UK. The third week saw high pressure - developing near Iceland - extending south across Scotland. Unsettled conditions returned to end the month, as Atlantic depressions carried fronts east. Mean temperatures were close to average across the whole of the UK. Rainfall was generally above average, and especially so across parts of eastern Scotland and north-east England. Sunshine was generally above normal.

#### **MAY - Dry, warm and sunny**

For most of the month, pressure was well above normal over Scotland, the Norwegian Sea, Iceland and Greenland. It was below normal over southern Britain, much of France and Iberia. The Azores anticyclone was also weaker than usual. This situation produced a markedly SE to E'ly airflow across the British Isles, the strongest such in a record extending back some 136 years. As a result, it was the warmest and driest May on record in many parts of Scotland, Northern Ireland and northwest England, and it was also the sunniest locally in northern Scotland. For Lerwick this was the driest May on record. Fair Isle had its sunniest month ever with 304.7 hours, an average of almost 10 hours a day! This easily beat the previous record of 278.1 hours in May 1994. Fair Isle was also hoping for its driest May, but very welcome rain towards the end of the month saw the amount rise from 1.9 mm by the 28th to a total of 7.7mm. The driest month ever on Fair Isle was April 1974, when a mere 1.0 mm of rain fell. However, with a record extending back many more years, Lerwick can beat this with August 1947, when just 0.7 mm of rain fell. Their sunniest month was May 1948 with 271.5 hours.

#### **JUNE - A changeable, unsettled month**

High pressure to the north gave Shetland a fine start to June, but cyclonic conditions over the rest of the UK soon pushed northwards. It then became rather unsettled, with a mobile W'ly airflow dominating and only short spells of fine weather. Mid-month saw a period of cold N'ly winds as a depression moved into Scandinavia and high pressure - briefly building over the Atlantic - temporarily blocked depressions for a while. If anything, the rest of the month



was even more disturbed, as depressions tracked northeast closer to the Northern Isles. Daytime temperatures were average but, with rainfall above normal, cloudier conditions meant milder nights. Despite this it was the coolest June since 2001 for the UK.

### **JULY - A mild, wet month with a few 'hot' days**

Unsettled conditions continued into July, with one depression after another tracking across the British Isles, resulting in above or well-above the average rainfall for much of the UK. On the northern edge of these lows, the Northern Isles tended to fair slightly better, though with frequent E or NE'ly winds. After mid-month, Atlantic depressions mostly followed their usual track nearer Iceland, and the airflow became more W'ly across northern Scotland. Towards the end of the month it became less unsettled, as an anticyclone developed over Scandinavia. With pressure remaining low to the west of the British Isles, a warm and sometimes moist SE'ly airflow became established over Shetland,

### **AUGUST - wet or dry, it was certainly a sunny month**

As depression after depression affected the British Isles, August was very wet and exceptionally dull across much of the UK, with widespread flooding reported in Northern Ireland and parts of eastern Scotland. During the first two weeks - with the majority of fronts kept south of the Pentland Firth by high pressure to the north - the Northern Isles were drier and sunnier than average. On the 10<sup>th</sup> a very localized, almost monsoon-like event, gave Fair Isle a 24-hour rainfall total of 101.2 mm - an exceptional occurrence likely to be equalled only once in 200 years. As a result, the Isle experienced its wettest August on record! During the third week, Shetland was one of the few places to see anything approaching a settled spell, as the anticyclone to the north extended its influence to include Shetland. Fair Isle, with a monthly total of 168.3 hours, was the sunniest place in the UK. The last week brought unsettled conditions as pressure built to the south of the British Isles, and depressions - taking a more northerly course east through the Iceland region - trailed fronts across northern Scotland.

### **SEPTEMBER - A mild and dry but rather cloudy month**

While, during most Septembers, it is normal to expect Atlantic depressions to pass by in quick succession, this year the month was unusually anticyclonic. Though not often situated near Shetland, the centres of high pressure were generally close enough either to keep fronts away or - those that did reach our shores - were often weak affairs. On a broad scale, high pressure - initially centred over Scandinavia - became more or less confined to the south as the month progressed. The result was that wind directions were often S or SE'ly at first, but became SW or W'ly later. Because of our peripheral position on the edge of the anticyclones, cloudy conditions often prevailed.

### **OCTOBER - Changeable - a month of contrasts**



With low pressure usually not far from - and often to the north of - Shetland, a mainly W'ly cyclonic airflow gave a very changeable, unsettled and cool month. Like the rest of Scotland, while Shetland experienced rainfall significantly above average, it was at the same time reasonably sunny. Helped no doubt by the two outbreaks of - for October - unusually cold Arctic air, the month was also the coolest since 2003. While the first snowfall on the 4th was possibly one of the earliest recorded (certainly since the snow-cover of 13th October 1957), it was local to Shetland. The second, on the 28th, saw substantial snowfall, possibly the heaviest and most widespread such event in lowland Britain since 1880, with some places seeing their coldest October day for 50 years.

### **NOVEMBER - Cool, cloudy and windy**

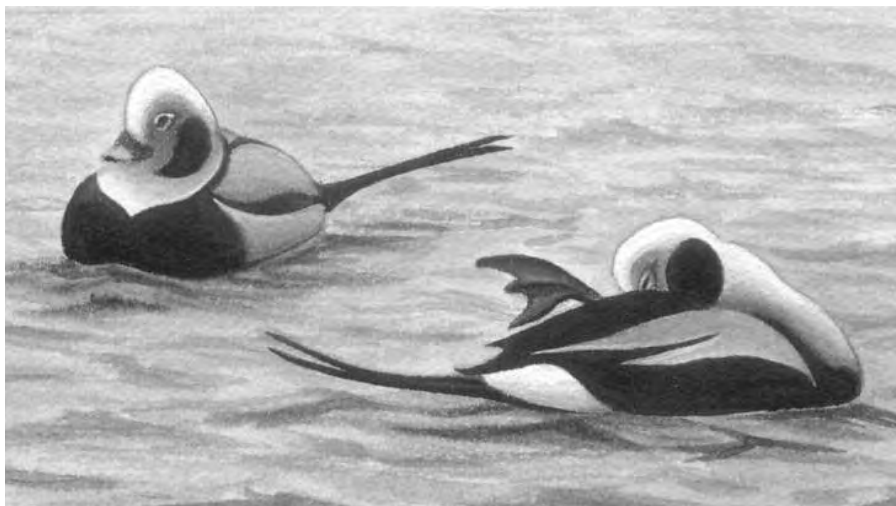
The Icelandic low was deeper and displaced towards the Norwegian Sea, while at the same time the Azores anticyclone was slightly further north than its usual position. As a result - with just a couple of exceptions - low pressure dominated the month's weather patterns, bringing a cyclonic W to NW'ly airflow across Shetland for much of the time. It was probably the most 'northerly-type' November for the past four decades but, despite this, the month's mean temperature was still above the 1971-2000 average. Early in the month a brief anticyclonic spell occurred, as a small high drifted northeast over Shetland. Shortly after mid-month, a marked outbreak of cold Arctic air brought a snowy period, as low pressure moved east and the rather persistent anticyclone in mid-Atlantic ridged north.

### **DECEMBER - Cool and windy, but a little sunnier and drier than average**

Though the focus of low pressure was in its normal December position over Iceland, it was considerably deeper than usual. Despite this, mean atmospheric pressure was above average at Lerwick. As a consequence of the increased pressure gradient, for much of the month the Northern Isles experienced rather windy and cyclonic conditions, as a sequence of lows - separated by brief ridges - tracked either northeast or east close to Shetland. The last week - from Christmas Eve until Hogmanay - was much more settled, as an anticyclone moved east over the North Sea and then into southern Scandinavia. It was provisionally the coldest December since 1999 for Scotland as a whole. However, for Lerwick, December 2003 was marginally colder. While cold, anticyclonic conditions brought below-average temperatures for much of mainland Britain, on the maritime periphery of the high, Shetland was still significantly milder than normal. Rainfall was below or well-below average in most areas, only around 50% of normal over parts of England and Wales, but locally wet with 150% in eastern Scotland. Sunshine was above normal virtually everywhere, approaching 200% in some parts of England.

**Table 1.** Meteorological data, Fair Isle 2008

Temp. (°C)	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC	YEAR	1974-00
Mean	5.1	5.8	4.2	6.1	9.2	10.2	12.4	12.9	11.8	7.6	6.4	5.7	8.1	7.6
Maximum	10.0	10.7	8.7	11.2	14.0	14.6	19.4	16.7	14.9	13.8	11.7	10.0	19.4	
Minimum	0.0	-3.7	-3.3	-1.0	1.7	5.9	7.0	7.4	7.5	-0.3	-3.3	-0.5	-3.7	
Sea	8.2	7.9	7.5	7.8	9.6	10.9	12.3	13.6	13.1	11.6	9.9	8.9	10.1	9.2
<b>Rainfall (mm)</b>														
Monthly	182.6	68.7	99.5	77.0	7.7	80.2	65.2	162.2	55.5	182.7	86.7	85.4	1153.4	924.4
Maximum Daily Fall	31.4	11.6	13.3	16.0	4.9	23.9	19.5	101.2	13.6	21.6	15.1	12.7	101.2	
<b>Sunshine (hours)</b>														
Total	23.8	56.1	141.2	190.4	304.7	163.1	144.6	168.3	108.3	82.4	32.9	21.7	1437.5	1223.5
Maximum Daily	3.8	7.1	10.7	13.3	16.3	14.7	12.5	13.8	12.3	7.8	6.0	3.1	16.3	
<b>Wind speed (knots)</b>														
Mean	19.3	18.8	17.2	14.3	13.4	10.7	11.0	9.9	10.7	22.4	18.9	17.7	15.4	16.0
Maximum Gust	67	66	62	52	51	40	44	40	38	78	53	67	78	
<b>Number of days</b>														
Hail	13	9	15	6	0	1	0	0	1	11	8	5	69	79.0
Snow/sleet	12	8	13	4	0	0	0	0	0	10	6	5	58	65.5
Rain, >0.1mm	28	17	28	19	7	21	15	14	15	28	25	25	242	242.3
Wet, >0.9mm	23	15	19	15	1	12	10	12	10	24	21	20	182	175.9
Ground frost	8	3	14	4	1	0	0	0	0	3	8	6	47	59.9
Air frost	0	4	10	3	0	0	0	0	0	1	5	2	25	18.0
Gale	11	8	3	2	0	0	0	0	0	10	7	9	50	56.5
Fog during 24hr	1	2	3	4	4	11	19	11	5	2	4	0	66	78.1
<b>Wind (direction at 0900)</b>														
North	5	1	8	5	5	3	4	7	1	4	2	3	48	42.3
North East	0	0	1	4	6	1	5	2	3	0	2	0	24	22.1
East	3	2	1	6	7	9	11	6	3	0	1	2	51	34.7
South East	4	2	2	4	6	0	3	5	6	2	5	5	44	50.0
South	4	8	1	5	2	4	0	5	7	7	3	6	52	60.0
South West	6	9	6	1	1	3	3	1	1	9	4	8	52	51.3
West	9	6	5	1	1	7	3	2	8	4	6	4	56	62.5
North West	0	1	7	4	3	3	2	3	1	5	7	3	39	37.1
Calm	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	5.5



Long-tailed Duck © WT Miles

# Report on investigations into causes of death and disease states in casualty birds found on Fair Isle in 2007–2008

J. C. Waine

This year 36 bird casualties were sent from Fair Isle for post-mortem examination. 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 fourteenth year on Fair Isle.

The 36 specimens were collected between September 2006 and November 2008 and are represented by 25 species from 12 families are four orders (Pelecaniformes: two families - *Sulidae* and *Phalacrocoracidae*; Anseriformes: one family - *Anatidae*; Charadriiformes: three families - *Scolopacidae*, *Stercorariidae* and *Alcidae*; Passeriformes: six families- *Alaudidae*, *Motacillidae*, *Prunellidae*, *Turdidae*, *Silvidye* and *Fringillidae*. For the second year running the number of *Alcids* are down on previous years with just three Common Guillemots (*Uria aalge*) and four Atlantic Puffins (*Fratercula arctica*) but this probably reflects a failure to fledge as

many young as previously. However these two species are amongst the most common with four Puffins, three Guillemots, three European Shag (*Phalacrocorax aristotelis*) and three Northern Wheatear (*Oenanthe oenanthe*). Of the 36 birds, six were pulli, 17 were immature and 13 were adult. Most deaths occurred during autumn migration when a number of immature birds were involved with 17 birds collected during September, October and November. Eight deaths were recorded during the spring months of March, April and May whilst of the ten birds found during June, July and August, six were pulli.

The most common cause of death continues to be collision injuries - accounting for 16 birds - with primary starvation being the culprit in 11 cases. Of the collision injuries only four involved the lighthouse this year – perhaps the Redwings are learning to avoid them! Two happened as a direct result of predator chase, one by a Sparrowhawk, another by a cat. Of those cases that starved to death, all were seabirds and five were pulli. Life continues to be hard for breeding seabirds in this area. A young Arctic Skua (*Stercorarius parasiticus*) that had starved was also suffering from metabolic bone disease – another indication in this case of inappropriate as well as inadequate diet.

Three birds (two Shags and a Guillemot) were suffering from parasitic gastritis – a severe worm infection that damages the mucosa of the glandular stomach or proventriculus. The pathogenicity (ability to cause disease) of this condition is debatable but it certainly will not help individuals with low nutritional status.

Two cases of interest included a second year Northern Wheatear that had become entangled in wire and an adult male Puffin that had suffocated after it's burrow collapsed on top of it.

There were no signs of infectious disease in any of the birds examined.

Once again I would like to thank the staff and friends of the Fair Isle Bird Observatory for their help and cooperation with this project and would ask any visitors to report casualties to the Warden or other Observatory staff.

**Table 1: List of post-mortem findings arranged by species**

Species / Latin Name	Age	Sex	Date fnd.	Conclusions
Common Skylark <i>Alauda arvensis</i>	juv	F	23/09/2006	collision injuries - lighthouse
Greylag Goose <i>Anser anser</i>	adult	?	27/12/2006	collision injuries
Rock Pipit <i>Anthus petrosus</i>	juv	F	04/09/2008	collision injuries
Meadow Pipit <i>Anthus pratensis</i>	juv	M	16/07/2008	collision injuries - rta
Purple Sandpiper <i>Calidris maritime</i>	2nd Yr	F	19/03/2007	collision injuries - lighthouse
Twite <i>Carduelis flavirostris</i>	adult	M	20/05/2008	collision injuries - trap (sparrowhawk chase)

Eurasian Siskin <i>Carduelis spinus</i>	adult	M	25/10/2007	no diagnosis
Long-tailed Duck <i>Clangula hyemalis</i>	juv	F	26/10/2008	starvation - primary
European Robin <i>Erithacus rubecula</i>	adult	M	15/10/2007	hypostatic pulmonary congestion
European Robin <i>Erithacus rubecula</i>	juv	F	11/11/2008	no diagnosis
Atlantic Puffin <i>Fratercula arctica</i>	adult	M	02/07/2008	suffocation - burrow collapse
Atlantic Puffin <i>Fratercula arctica</i>	pullus	M	09/08/2007	starvation - primary
Atlantic Puffin <i>Fratercula arctica</i>	pullus	M	09/08/2007	starvation - primary
Atlantic Puffin <i>Fratercula arctica</i>	pullus	F	09/08/2007	starvation - primary
Chaffinch <i>Fringilla coelebs</i>	adult	F	24/04/2008	collision injuries - trap
Jack Snipe <i>Limnocyptes minimus</i>	adult	M	14/11/2008	collision injuries
Northern Gannet <i>Morus bassanus</i>	adult	F	26/05/2007	starvation - primary; drowned
Northern Wheatear <i>Oenanthe oenanthe</i>	2nd Yr	F	22/04/2008	traumatic injury - cause unknown
Northern Wheatear <i>Oenanthe oenanthe</i>	2nd Yr	M	05/07/2008	accidental entrapment
Northern Wheatear <i>Oenanthe oenanthe</i>	pullus	?	05/07/2008	no diagnosis
European Shag <i>Phalacrocorax aristotelis</i>	juv	M	29/04/2007	starvation primary; parasitic gastritis; drowned
European Shag <i>Phalacrocorax aristotelis</i>	juv	F	08/10/2007	starvation primary; parasitic gastritis
European Shag <i>Phalacrocorax aristotelis</i>	pullus	F	26/06/2008	starvation - primary
Common Redstart <i>Phoenicureus phoenicureus</i>	adult	M	15/05/2007	collision injuries - cat
Duncock <i>Prunella modularis</i>	2nd Yr	M	04/04/2008	collision injuries
Arctic Skua <i>Stercorarius parasiticus</i>	pullus	F	13/07/2007	starvation - primary; metabolic bone disease
Garden Warbler <i>Sylvia borin</i>	2nd Yr	M	22/08/2007	collision injuries - window
Garden Warbler <i>Sylvia borin</i>	adult	M	13/09/2008	collision injuries - lighthouse
Common Whitethroat <i>Sylvia communis</i>	juv	F	19/10/2008	collision injuries
Redwing <i>Turdus iliacus</i>	juv	F	23/10/2008	collision injuries - window
Eurasian Blackbird <i>Turdus merula</i>	adult	M	16/11/2008	collision injuries
Song Thrush <i>Turdus philomelos</i>	juv	F	16/09/2008	collision injuries
Fieldfare <i>Turdus pilaris</i>	juv	F	06/11/2008	collision injuries - lighthouse
Common Guillemot <i>Uria aalge</i>	adult	F	08/10/2007	urolith; starvation - secondary
Common Guillemot <i>Uria aalge</i>	adult	M	08/10/2007	starvation - primary; drowned
Common Guillemot <i>Uria aalge</i>	juv	F	17/10/2008	starvation - primary; drowned; parasitic gastritis

# Ornithological Monthly Summary

Mark Breaks & Deryk Shaw

The monthly totals of species were:

Jan	50	May	151	Sep	159
Feb	49	June	114	Oct	133
Mar	70	July	78	Nov	85
Apr	123	Aug	105	Dec	48

**January:** Over-wintering birds from 2007 included a Black-bellied Dipper (from December), which relocated from Wirvie to Finnequoy on 23rd and seven Jackdaws from last autumn's influx. Other over-wintering birds included a pair of Whooper Swans (one of which died), at least three Water Rails, a Moorhen, a male Peregrine and a couple of Skylarks. Various common wildfowl were present throughout including peak counts of 37 Greylag Geese, 21 Mallard, three Teal, two Wigeon and singles of Scaup, Goldeneye and Common Scoter. A handful of passerines included c40 Blackbird, five Redwing, four Robins, 25 Twite and singles of Fieldfare and Song Thrush. Just a single (first-winter) Glaucous Gull and three Iceland Gulls were seen. Calm weather on 22nd enticed the first Gannets and Guillemots ashore.

**February:** The first returning Oystercatcher appeared on 1st increasing to two on 3rd when strong winds caused large numbers of Great Black-backed and Herring Gulls to seek shelter on the isle and amongst them were four Iceland Gulls and three Glaucous Gulls. Pleasant weather on 5th encouraged many Guillemots ashore, but Razorbills were very scarce and a walk around the south produced highlights of Peregrine (a pair), three Skylark, a Mistle Thrush, seven Jackdaws and a Linnet. Oystercatchers slowly began to build up with six on 6th rising to 15 on 9th, 23 on 12th and 39 on 13th. Likewise, ten Skylarks on 12th had risen to 30 two days later. The first Ringed Plover was seen on 12th and there were seven by 15th when two 'blue' Fulmars were also spotted. A report of a Stonechat on 12th was confirmed on 14th. The remainder of the month continued in the same vein with Oystercatchers, Ringed Plovers and Skylarks trickling through - the latter even heard singing from 24th. Purple Sandpipers began to move, with 27 counted on 19th and new in were three male Siskins on 26th. The Black-bellied Dipper, six Jackdaws, the Mistle Thrush and an Iceland Gull (with another picked up freshly dead) lingered all month.

**March:** There was little to report in the early part of the month apart from a spell of poor weather! The first ten days produced counts of 58 Oystercatcher, 17 Ringed Plover and 60 Skylark with a Wood Pigeon, a couple of Siskin and 15 Snow Bunting the only other birds of note. The first frogspawn of the year was found in Pund Ditch on 6th. The wind switched towards the south on 11th when Siskins increased to four and a Goldcrest appeared. The 12th saw the nicest day of weather for a long time and a good thrash around the south indicated there had been some movement. New for the year were a Dunnock at Shirva, Chiffchaff at Stackhoull, Pied Wagtail at the airstrip and later on a Reed Bunting in the Observatory garden. The nice weather also encouraged a bit of courtship display from Lapwings and several territorial Curlews and Oystercatchers were noted. Thrush numbers were up with 45 Blackbird, 38 Redwing, five Fieldfare and a couple of Song Thrush noted. Other counts and sightings included 60 Oystercatcher, 14 Ringed Plover, 135 Turnstone, 70 Skylark, three Robin, five Jackdaw, six Siskin and 92 Snow Bunting plus a couple of Wood Pigeon and singles of Long-tailed Duck and Jack Snipe. The following day there was a Dunnock at the Observatory, where the Goldcrest and at least four Siskin lingered and further south were an Iceland Gull and three Stonechat, whilst the Black-bellied Dipper was seen for the last time. A fairly quiet ten days followed with a Meadow Pipit on 16th, the only new species for the year, whilst the Chiffchaff from 12th lingered and single Pied Wagtail and Goldcrest the only other birds of note. The final week commenced with two days of heavy snow and appropriate sightings of parties of Whooper Swan (5 & 13) and Iceland Gulls (1st winter & 2nd winter). After the snow cleared and the wind veered round to the south, a Brambling on 27th was followed with Black Redstart, Greenfinch and two Stonechats the following day. The most significant arrival of 29th were the two seasonal Assistant Wardens, just in time to greet the first Bonxies (2) of the year - spring must be here!! A small fall was also evident with counts of 100 Oystercatcher, 17 Golden Plover, 120 Skylarks, six Meadow Pipit, seven Robins, 50 Blackbirds, four Song Thrush, two Chiffchaff and a few finches (Greenfinch, two Chaffinch and four Siskin) logged whilst Common Scoter and Grey Wagtail were also new for the year. The 30th witnessed the arrival of our first Puffins in Furse plus the first Yellowhammer and an influx of Jackdaws (21) along with a couple of Meadow Pipits, two Stonechats, 17 Snow Bunting and a Reed Bunting. The last day of the month saw Bonxies increase to four and an influx of crows (11 Hooded, 3 Carrion) but the best bird was a Common Crane that circled around the isle for hours before settling, first at Setter, then Vatnagard.

**April:** The month started with the Common Crane still present and a continued southerly airflow bringing in the first Wheatear and Ring Ouzel of the year. Also on the move were many Blackbirds, with a scattering of Fieldfare, Song Thrush, Redwing, Jack Snipe, Woodcock, Robin, Chiffchaff and 35 Goldcrests. The next year tick was a Long-eared Owl at Wirvie the following day. Winter returned on the 4th as a cold northerly wind set in for the week but a summer-plumaged male Lapland Bunting lifted spirits. The next day saw several heavy snow showers but amazingly a bird more regularly seen in the Mediterranean was spotted flying out of South



Harbour into a blizzard - an adult Night Heron, a first for Fair Isle! It was relocated behind the Plantation prior to lunch but again it disappeared - each time having only been seen by a single person. However, a phone call early the next morning from Iain Stout at Setter reporting a strange bird in his garden proved to be the heron. The weather started to ease on the 7th and the Night Heron finally got a chance to feed, catching very small fish in Field Pond and giving great views to all as they drove by. Another snowball on the 8th was a brief *hornemanni* Arctic Redpoll. There was a touch of sadness the following day when a (the) Night Heron was found dead at the base of Klingers Geo during morning census. However, a big surprise that afternoon was the sight of a Night Heron, happily feeding away, back on Field Pond! Proof of a second record for the isle! The weather was now rather pleasant and sunny with the wind briefly back into the south-east and a good year tick appeared in the form of a Canada Goose (remaining until 23rd). Two Mistle Thrushes made an appearance on the 11th and small numbers of finches continued to pass through followed by a Sparrowhawk on the 12th. The following day both Kestrel and White Wagtail were new but a second Black-bellied Dipper of the year, frequenting the Wirvie Burn, stole the honours. Sadly the long staying Night Heron was also seen for its last time on the 13th before being discovered dead a few days later.

The weather for the third week was dominated by a cool light north-easterly wind and migration was very slow. Highlights were a Merlin (14th), Slavonian Grebe, Whimbrel and Willow Warbler (16th). The 17th produced two Sandwich Terns before a possible 3rd winter Kumlien's Gull was at Barkland and a Common Crane flew north over the Havens. The months maximum count of ten Woodcocks was also logged. Shelduck and Arctic Skua were next for the year list on the 19th, a new 3rd winter Kumlien's Gull joined the long staying Iceland Gull the following day and both remained until the end of the month. All was eclipsed when a Calandra Lark was discovered at Barkland mid-afternoon, found whilst staff were admiring a stunning pair of male Hawfinches. The Lark settled down between Setter and Pund, although there was no sign of it the next morning, but new additions were Shoveler, Green Sandpiper and Swallow. The 22nd brought in Lesser Whitethroat, Greenshank and a Short-toed Lark - present in the same field as the re-appearing Calandra Lark!

A change to south-easterly winds on the 23rd resulted in an instant influx of common summer migrants with additions for the year being Black-tailed Godwit, Sand Martin, Tree Pipit, Yellow Wagtail and Blackcap as Wheatears finally reached a respectable 103. The curse of the south-east wind saw the island shrouded in fog on 24th but despite this it was clearly obvious that a large fall of thrushes had occurred overnight, with counts of 240 Fieldfare, 63 Redwing and 43 Song Thrush along with 46 Robins, 40 Brambling, two Linnets, four Jack Snipe and two Short-eared Owls. Frustration came when a large wader flew across Easter Lothar Geo before rising up over the cliff and disappearing into the mist - a Great Snipe, which could not be relocated. Bright clear skies on the 25th saw birds continue to flood in and a few year ticks were added. A female Great Tit (ringed three days earlier on North Ronaldsay), Grasshopper Warbler and a Dunlin were all new for the year. Blackbirds reached a



peak of 145, supported by six Woodcock, four Ring Ouzel, 27 Chiffchaff, 36 Willow Warblers, 11 Siskin, a Hawfinch and a Yellowhammer. Three Common Cranes were logged flying north over the Observatory on the 27th and the first Arctic Terns arrived. Census was put on hold due to foul weather on the 28th but battling against the wind during the afternoon were a Bar-tailed Godwit and Whinchat. Winds died down again on the 29th with long periods of sunshine and birds of note were Swift, House Martin and Common Whitethroat. A Common Sandpiper was the only bird worthy of mention on the final day of a rather productive month for numbers of common migrants.

**May:** The month got off to a perfect start as the easterly winds delivered a female Caspian Plover - another first for Fair Isle. It was found near Upper Stoneybrek before relocating to the Setter/Pund area. Other new arrivals included a Wryneck, two Redstarts, Pied Flycatcher, Sedge Warbler and a northbound Osprey. Attempts to relocate the Plover from dawn the following morning proved unsuccessful until after breakfast, when it re-appeared at Barkland. Unfortunately it was present for less than an hour before being lost in flight, moments ahead of the first charter plane. A bright sunny day on 2nd saw a reasonable count of *hirundines*, with 54 Swallows, six Sand and five House Martins. Additionally, a male Grey-headed Wagtail, a Shelduck and a fine male Dotterel (with the small Golden Plover flock at Kenaby) were all new for the year. The winds increased to near gale force south-easterlies on 4th making birding difficult, but a Wood Sandpiper was new as were a Moorhen and a Glaucous Gull whilst the long staying Iceland Gull finally departed. In contrast, the 5th was a glorious warm sunshine-filled day with hardly any wind and additions for the year list came in the form of a Quail, Cuckoo and Lesser Redpoll and an adult Iceland Gull joined the Kumlien's Gull, which remained until 10th. The 7th saw a group of three Dotterel on Ward Hill, over-flown by another northbound Osprey but best of all was a majestic Black Kite - the third new species for the island list this year! It spent all day following a circuit round the isle, being harassed by the Skuas, Ravens and Peregrines. However, undeterred, it remained until the 10th. Dotterel numbers increased to eight on the 9th and as the bright warm weather continued a Subalpine Warbler and a male Bluethroat arrived. Spotted Flycatcher and Hobby on 10th were quickly followed by Common Tern and a female Citrine Wagtail on Da Water on 11th (staying until 13th) and Common Crane and Sandwich Tern the next day.

The wind switched further around to the north on the 15th as a second-calendar year male Surf Scoter - only the second isle record, following the first in 2007 - sheltered in South Harbour. Late that afternoon a Common Buzzard graced the isle before departing early on the 17th when a second Subalpine Warbler was trapped in the Plantation. South Harbour was the place to be again on 18th when a second-calendar year male King Eider was discovered mid-morning. Later that afternoon, visitors had the experience of watching King Eider alongside Surf Scoter!

As the wind moved back round to the east, the first Icterine Warbler of the year was trapped on 20th and a Wood Warbler frequented the Stackhoull area. A notable fall on the 22nd included an arrival of 21 Spotted and four Pied Flycatchers, six Redstart,

two Common Rosefinch and a Bluethroat but highlights were a Golden Oriole and a Savi's Warbler, at Quoy and Chalet respectively. Fine weather, light easterly winds and scarce migrants continued to be the theme for the next few days with a pair of Common Rosefinches and four Bluethroats on 23rd, followed with a smart Rustic Bunting and three Icterine Warblers the following day. The 25th saw a Quail flushed from Schoolton Ditch which by the next morning had managed to attract a mate. Clouds bringing showers on the 28th finally blocked the sun out and along with a strong easterly wind there was a noticeable fall of migrants. The star bird was a Red-breasted Flycatcher at Hjukni Geo with a supporting cast of three Bluethroat, Cuckoo, two Marsh, single Reed, seven Icterine and 13 Garden Warblers, 25 Lesser Whitethroat, five Common Whitethroat, 23 Spotted Flycatchers, ten Red-backed Shrikes, four Common Rosefinch and a Hawfinch. The following day started off with low fog, but calmer winds and birds still revealed themselves with highlights of Quail, Crossbill and a flock of 13 Grey-headed Wagtails. The fog finally lifted in time for an Osprey to be spotted passing overhead. The penultimate day of the month was quite eventful as a cracking male Rustic Bunting at Wirvie was joined by a Little Bunting and higher up the valley a flighty Red-throated Pipit was also found. Meanwhile, back at the Observatory... a European Nightjar was flushed from close to the Observatory trap whereupon it flew and landed on a post in the Observatory Plantation and returned to sleep allowing amazingly close views to all. There was also a liberal covering of common and scarce migrants around the south, including ten Red-backed Shrikes, 11 Grey-headed Wagtails and several Bluethroats, Marsh Warblers, Icterine Warblers and Common Rosefinches. A massive clearout overnight left just a few of these remaining to the final day of the month. News of the day however was the discovery of a Peregrine nest at Guidicum, containing two small chicks - the first nesting attempt since 1973!

**June:** A new Rustic Bunting at Lower Leogh, with Bluethroat, two Icterine Warblers, 10 Red-backed Shrikes, two Crossbills and a Common Rosefinch continued the good birding into the new month. There then followed a week of thick blanket fog, severely hampering census and the ability of birds to find Fair Isle! However, with the wind in the south-east a few birds did make it on 6th... singles of Whinchat, Stonechat, Hobby and Osprey. But no-one could ever have predicted the events unfolding at Auld Haa that day! Tommy Hyndman found a 'funny Siskin' in his garden which was (several hours later) confirmed as Britains first CITRIL FINCH (a male)!! Thankfully the bird stayed on the isle until 11th by which time the fog had at last cleared and it was successfully twitched by many birders from further south (and a few from further north). A Honey Buzzard visited during the afternoon on 9th. Strong north-westerly winds on the 11th brought two un-seasonal Waxwings and a rather unusual looking '*islandica*' type Common Redpoll as well as a Black-tailed Godwit. Just one Waxwing remained the next day and a male Red-backed Shrike lingered until 15th when an Osprey was spotted heading north. As seabird monitoring started to take up more and more of the bird staff's priorities, there was little time left to spend out in the field looking for migrants. The best sighting from

the latter part of June must go to the large bull Killer Whale in Furse on 21st before it headed south then back north again past Buness. Common Crossbills were present on most days with groups of up to seven, two Swifts (18th), a female Red-backed Shrike (19th), a summer-plumaged Slavonian Grebe (25th) and three Sandwich Terns on the final day of the month.

**July:** Traditionally a quiet month for migrant birds, but there was however a steady turnover of Common Crossbills throughout. A Marsh Warbler was trapped on the 1st and remained in the Observatory garden until 23rd. The 4th was a day of joy when news that both juvenile Peregrines had now fledged - the first to fledge on the isle since 1969! A few common birds were noted during the first week, with four Collared Doves, Swift, Blackcap and the first southbound waders. A Hobby on 7th was seen on and off until 25th whilst a Honey Buzzard sailed through on 13th. 'Stormie' ringing season commenced with a catch of 12 on 10th and the first Leach's Petrel trapped on 13th. A Wood Sandpiper on Da Water on 11th was nice. A female Common Rosefinch on 21st was the precursor to a slight increase in passage during the final week, including a nice variety of common waders and (in the last three days) a few common warblers plus an early Fieldfare and a Cuckoo. The highlight of the month however was the start of a Two-barred Crossbill invasion from 25th - an adult female at Easter Lothar had found a friend at Skaddan by 27th with both birds relocating to Malcolm's Head the following day.

**August:** The start of a new month and the start of daily bird census once again. The female Two-barred Crossbills at Malcolm's Head were joined by a third bird and then a fourth - an absolutely stunning bright red male - and also three Common Crossbills. Elsewhere on 1st were a juvenile Cuckoo, Common Redstart, Marsh Warbler and a Common Rosefinch. A glorious sunny day followed with the male Two-barred Crossbill still at Hesti Geo showing exceptionally well, but there was no sign of any of the females. Other new birds logged were a Wood Sandpiper, Mistle Thrush and Pied Flycatcher. Over-night, 77 Storm Petrels were ringed. There were no sign of any Crossbills on the 3rd as rain set in. After a couple of quiet days another Two-barred Crossbill, this time a juvenile, was found outside the Observatory on 5th - later moving to Vaasetter where it was joined by a female. The influx took another huge jump on 6th when a flock of 13 Crossbills on Buness was found to contain a record breaking nine (all juveniles) Two-barred Crossbills. Apart from these cracking birds, the only other bird of note was an Icterine Warbler in Skinners Glig. The 7th saw just nine 'Crossbills' left on Buness, however these were all Two-barred and all remained until 9th, decreasing to eight from 10th-12th and were down to four before they all departed on 19th.

Another record was annihilated on the 10th as torrential rainfall saw the 24-hour rainfall total reach 101.2mm - twice the previous record! The repercussion the following day was eight fledged Puffins found hiding in walls and streams in the trapping area alone, birds that had obviously been forced to leave their flooded burrows a little early. Happily, they all flew off strongly out to sea when pointed in

the right direction. That evening's Storm Petrel ringing session produced 68 birds and two Leach's. A Thrush Nightingale was spotted on early morning trap round on 13th, hopping down the road past Single Dyke before disappearing towards the Gully never to be seen again. The wind then switched to southeast on 15th and the autumn's first Tree Pipit and Spotted Flycatcher graced the island amongst 126 Meadow Pipits, three White Wagtails and a Lesser Whitethroat. Barred Warbler and Citrine Wagtail arrived the following day and a Turtle Dove on 17th was also a new species for the year. Continued easterly winds and clear conditions brought our second Thrush Nightingale of the year on the 18th and many other migrants were also around including two Wrynecks, Barred Warbler, two Red-backed Shrikes, eight Whinchat, with five Reed, 16 Garden and 31 Willow Warblers and two Pied Flycatchers. There were two Barred Warblers and two Wood Warblers on 19th whilst the traps produced birds when a Moorhen and a Grey-headed Wagtail were caught at dusk. A second Wryneck the following day and three Tree Pipit, 19 Whinchat, ten Reed and 24 Garden Warblers were all increases. There was very little change over the next few days, but a second Citrine Wagtail arrived on 23rd and a Black Redstart was also logged. The 25th brought the first autumn Lapland Bunting as well as two new Common Rosefinch and another Wryneck, whilst a sea-watch in the morning yielded 11 Manx Shearwater, Storm Petrel and two Arctic Terns during heavy rain showers brought in by the strong south-easterly wind. The first returning Goldcrest appeared on 26th as another sea-watch saw Sooty Shearwater added to the year list, whilst nine Knot and a Bar-tailed Godwit were new in. On the 28th a gentle southerly breeze with low cloud and drizzle triggered a mass arrival of Wheatears - a total of 400 were logged including a high proportion of Greenland race birds - also White Wagtails reached 61 and a Grasshopper Warbler was seen. By the next morning Wheatear numbers were back down to 160, a Jack Snipe was new and four Swifts seemed settled at Easter Lother. An Icterine Warbler on 31st saw the month out.

**September:** The month opened with dense fog and census was held until the afternoon, but this didn't stop birds from arriving on the south-easterly winds with Citrine Wagtail on Da Water, three Wrynecks, two Barred Warblers, Wood Warbler and a Rosefinch the recorded highlights. The skies cleared the following day and migrants continued to arrive during the ensuing days with multiple Wrynecks, Barred Warblers, Icterine Warblers and Common Rosefinches plus an Ortolan (3rd) and yet another Citrine Wagtail (4th-9th). Remarkably, yet another juvenile Two-barred Crossbill was then found on 7th, however this one was very flighty and despite being present until 14th was only seen briefly once or twice a day. A strong south-easterly wind with rain on 10th caused a fall of common migrants with 35 Tree Pipits, 20 Robins, 28 Common Redstarts, 15 Whinchat, 24 Garden Warblers, 36 Willow Warblers, 15 Spotted and 19 Pied Flycatchers recorded. Frustrating and inconclusive glimpses were also had of a Nightingale species near the Observatory and a possible Corncrake in Meadow Burn. A Minke Whale off South Light was the highlight for many. Settled conditions, with lighter south-easterly winds, low cloud and patchy rain created conditions for one of the best falls of common migrants in recent times

with a most incredible array of species and numbers of birds around the north and west cliffs. On 12th, new scarcities included three Wryneck, two Barred Warblers, three Rosefinch and an Ortolan Bunting but it was the common birds that made it a memorable day with 54 Tree Pipit, five Grey-headed Wagtail, 25 Robin, 38 Common Redstart, 32 Whinchat, three Grasshopper Warblers, 30 Garden Warbler, 52 Willow Warbler, 11 Spotted and 17 Pied Flycatchers to list a few. New for the year was a juvenile Little Stint on Da Water and a juvenile Osprey ended up being stranded on the isle for the next five days. The 13th got off to a good start with a Corncrake before breakfast and then shortly later a Thrush Nightingale gave many the run around at the Haa. Bird numbers on the cliffs were rising with numbers peaking at 96 Tree Pipits, 100 Redstart, 80 Garden Warblers, 30 Blackcap and 19 Common Whitethroats. The Osprey had been joined by a male Marsh Harrier (until 16th) along with ten Kestrels, six Sparrowhawks and a Merlin making an impressive raptor tally. There were also now three Little Stints along with five Grey-headed Wagtails. But it wasn't until mid-afternoon that a national rarity was found - a flighty Paddyfield Warbler in the potato crop at Setter. The fall continued on 14th with birds everywhere, new high counts included 49 Whinchat, 114 Wheatear, 236 Song Thrush, the first Redwing of the autumn, nine Grasshopper Warblers and a record count of 19 Reed Warblers. Finch numbers also grew with 109 Chaffinch and a couple of Brambling. Scarcities included the first Yellow-browed Warbler of the year at North Naaversgill as well as the Ortolan Bunting, two Wrynecks, Corncrake and three Common Rosefinches, whilst a Grey Plover and a Curlew Sandpiper were also year ticks. A damp 16th was probably the best day of the spell for numbers of common warblers with counts including 135 Willow Warbler, 27 Blackcap, 13 Reed Warbler, 12 Common and 10 Lesser Whitethroats with 45 Pied Flycatchers also a maximum count. A juvenile Rose-coloured Starling was also a new highlight and many of the previous day's birds remained also. As the good spell continued, counts of 70 Redstart and 35 Spotted Flycatchers were made the following day, along with a Pectoral Sandpiper and a cracking Western Bonelli's Warbler. Numbers began to fall after that and by 19th, westerly winds had arrived bringing our first 20 Whooper Swans of the autumn along with 73 Pink-footed Geese and four *rostrata/islandica* Common Redpolls. A Snow Bunting was found the following day and a brief Buff-breasted Sandpiper was seen on 22nd. The wind had died down to a light south-westerly by the morning of the 23rd and before breakfast the Buff-breasted Sandpiper was seen again at North Light, whilst morning census produced 850 Pink-footed Geese moving through along with a small haul of common migrants, Swallow, House Martin, nine Tree Pipits, 15 Blackcaps, two Yellow-browed Warblers, Spotted Flycatcher, two Brambling, four Siskin and six *rostrata/islandica* Common Redpolls. But just before noon things started to kick off with a very obliging Lanceolated Warbler in the Bull's Park crop. Straight after lunch a Red-throated Pipit showed well in Boini Mire followed shortly after by a Pectoral Sandpiper at the Haa and less than half an hour later a Pallas's Grasshopper Warbler was discovered on the cliffs near Busta Geo. The bird was very flighty to start with, but settled down in a small dark cave at the base of the cliff where it remained hopping around on seaweed and the rocks, looking totally out of place! A very bizarre

experience! There was still time however for a second Lanceolated Warbler, found in Gilsetter on the way home for tea! What a day!

Everyone awoke the next morning (24th) still in shock, but it seemed very quiet on early morning trap round and even after breakfast as census commenced... however by mid-morning Yellow-browed Warblers started to appear (resulting in an estimated day total of 45+), quickly followed by a first-winter BROWN FLYCATCHER, initially on Ward Hill then later around the Communications Mast, where everyone had excellent views. Later that afternoon, a fine first-winter Red-flanked Bluetail rounded off another superb day. With the weather unchanged, expectations remained high the next day and the early morning trap round started the ball rolling with a cracking Long-eared Owl caught in the Plantation, whilst news that the Brown Flycatcher was still present drew interest from Shetland birders! However by 8.15am it had suddenly vanished. Straight after breakfast, Warden Deryk Shaw headed out in search for it again checking all likely spots around Ward Hill. He had reached Guidicum with no sign of it, but instead stumbled upon a superb first-winter male SIBERIAN THRUSH!! This dream bird remained all day, happily feeding in a gully half way down the cliff allowing a charter plane of birders from Shetland and a couple of ex-FIBO Wardens on *The Good Shepherd IV* to twitch it. An Arctic Warbler at Auld Haa, a Red-breasted Flycatcher at Springfield, a Little Bunting at Lower Stoneybrek, a flyover Honey Buzzard, three Bluethroats, but only (!) 32 Yellow-browed Warblers made for yet another happy evening at the FIBO Bar!

The wind then picked up from a south-westerly direction on 26th and there was a new bird of the day in the form of a Siberian Stonechat around Da Water. Scarcities hanging on were Pectoral Sandpiper, Bluethroat, 29 Yellow-browed Warblers, Red-breasted Flycatcher and the Little Bunting. Also noted were both Long-eared and Short-eared Owls, Common Scoter and 420 southbound Pink-footed Geese. A second Pectoral Sandpiper joined the lone bird on Utra Scrape on 28th resulting in the isle's first multiple sighting. The last day of a very thrilling month saw very little change with the two Pectoral Sandpipers, Bluethroat, five Yellow-browed Warblers and Little Bunting staying put, but six Linnet, three 'Mealy' Redpolls and 40 Snow Buntings were also noted.

**October:** The new month got off to a cracking start! The wind had moved over night from a westerly to a strong north-westerly. The day started with a somewhat predictable *hornemannii* Arctic Redpoll at Pund pre-breakfast. Shortly after, a juvenile Sabine's Gull was seen flying past Setter and down the centre of the isle. News filtered through that there was a possible White's Thrush around Houll, but attentions were diverted when a very obliging Pallas's Grasshopper Warbler was found in a wet area of rough grazing near Walli Burn. It performed well giving excellent close views as it scurried through the grass. As everyone dispersed once again it wasn't long before the WHITE'S THRUSH was confirmed as one lucky visitor achieved brief flight views near Quoy, but unfortunately it disappeared once again. After lunch, the search for the elusive bird resumed and most efforts were spent working the sheltered east cliffs. Thankfully the bird was re-found in Swartzi



Geo, but then seconds later it was reported further north, at Sma' Trinket Geo, before being seen again moments later in Swartzi Geo. What's going on? Everyone converged at Swartzi just in time to see the magnificent bird fly around the Geo giving great views before heading off south around the coast. Later conversations concluded that there were in fact TWO birds present. As the afternoon progressed, the original White's Thrush popped up around the Chapel before moving across to Malcolm's Head. The evening log was quite eventful with the star rarities supported by a cast including 13 Whooper Swans, 15 Jack Snipe, Barred Warbler, seven Yellow-browed Warblers, Little Bunting, Common Rosefinch, two Bluethroat (which remained until 14th), two Tree Pipit, eight Whinchat, Grasshopper Warbler and increased numbers of Redwing (340) concluding a great days birding.

The excitement had abated somewhat the next day although the *hornemanni* Arctic Redpoll was still present. The first Richard's Pipit of the year was seen flying in off the sea on 3rd. Wildfowl increased as birds seeking shelter from the gale force westerly winds were noted with three Pintail, five Scaup, Common Scoter, three Long-tailed Ducks and 34 Pink-footed Geese joining the 320 Greylag Geese. A late Swallow was recorded as were a Willow Warbler, Chiffchaff and the Little Bunting made its final appearance. An elusive Citrine Wagtail was seen on 6th and a Common Crossbill was of interest and Snow Buntings reached 108. The rain and wind eased slightly swinging back north west on 8th and the resident Bluethroats were joined by a third bird as Common Rosefinch and Yellow-browed Warblers also reached three, a Slavonian Grebe frequented Finnequoy, a Pectoral Sandpiper arrived and the only Ring Ouzel of the autumn was logged. These were all over shadowed by our *third* WHITE'S THRUSH of the autumn, which gave amazing views as it moved between the strips of crops at Quoy and Houll. Gale force westerly winds returned on 10th and these were much the dominant feature for the rest of the month. However, every cloud has a silver lining as the Atlantic weather systems resulted in an amazing movement of Grey Phalaropes, commencing with a lone bird in Klingers Geo on 11th. The Pectoral Sandpiper shared its little pool in the Parks with another on 12th. Two more Grey Phalaropes arrived close to shore in South Haven on 15th allowing many people pleasurable views and by 28th there had been a total of seven birds logged (max three on 18th). The autumn's largest movement of Redwings (1440) also occurred on 15th. A male Gadwall on 17th was nice but more of a shock (given the weather) was a Barred Warbler trapped in the Plantation! Late autumn/winter birds became prevalent during the following weeks as divers, geese, swans and ducks were frequently spotted offshore including at least three Glaucous Gulls, the first Little Auks whilst two Killer Whales were a nice surprise. Star find of the 23rd was a Little Grebe in Furse as a movement of thrushes consisted of an estimated 1000 Fieldfare and 1300 Redwing. The 24th brought a Rook, a Glaucous Gull and the final Corncrake of the year.

The strong winds finally abated on 29th as a gentle north-north-easterly breeze blew. A handful of late migrants arrived including eight Chiffchaffs (mainly 'eastern' types), three Waxwings, 24 Goldcrest, three Common Redpolls and a Yellowhammer. On the 30th another pleasant day saw the arrival of a Long-eared Owl and 14 Robins as Goldcrests peaked at 40. The month drew to a close with just a Waxwing, *tristis* Chiffchaff and a female Goldeneye of note.



**November:** The month started with six Waxwings and a similar number of Barnacle Geese with a new Grey Phalarope the following day and a high count of 220 Snow Buntings followed by a Yellow-browed Warbler and two Long-eared Owls on 3rd. A Black Redstart on 4th was followed with a small influx of thrushes, three *tristis* Chiffchaffs and a Shore Lark on 5th. A cool south-easterly on 6th caused thrush numbers to increase further with 290 Blackbird, 350 Fieldfare and 550 Redwing logged as well as 40 Woodcock, 33 Waxwing, 12 Robin, 25 Goldcrest, eight 'Mealy' Redpolls and the highlight - a fine Woodlark at Midway. Gale force south-easterly winds over the next week made birding difficult but good numbers of thrushes (1-2,000) and Woodcock (2-400) were still present and other arrivals of note during the next week included three (rising to six) Brent Geese, Slavonian Grebe, adult Iceland Gull, another Grey Phalarope, Stonechat and a long-awaited Olive-backed Pipit whilst both the Shore Lark and Woodlark remained throughout. Some goose movement overnight on 12th brought in four Eurasian White-fronts whilst Greylags dropped to 90, Brent to five and Barnacles to three. The Shorelark finally departed on 15th whilst the Woodlark was last seen on 18th just ahead of a few days of snow! A Stonechat on 16th was followed with a Yellowhammer the following day. As autumn migration tailed off, other sightings of note in the last two weeks included Oystercatcher (24th), Waxwings (23rd & 30th), a Chiffchaff (18th), Blackcap (28th), a couple of Chaffinches and single first-winter Iceland and Glaucous Gulls (27th). The goose flock increased again with 180 Greylag, three Brent Geese and single Pink-footed and Taiga Bean Goose (the latest addition to the year list). Male Kestrel and Peregrine, Long-eared Owl, five Teal, Common Scoter and a peak of eight Meadow Pipits were also present.

**December:** The early part of December saw very little of note as cold winter weather really set in. A 'mealy' Common Redpoll was seen on 1st. Two dark-bellied Brent Geese remained with the Greylags and a single Common Scoter and occasional sightings of Wigeon and Teal were other wildfowl sightings. Two Merlins and a dead Dutch-ringed Kestrel were found in the last week of the month. Single Water Rail and Moorhen were presumably attempting to over-winter. An Oystercatcher lingered until 27th while a small number of Curlew and Lapwings were noted and there were sporadic sightings of Woodcock. Single Waxwings were present on 3rd and 20th and Glaucous Gull (5th-6th & 18th). A Slavonian Grebe was in the Havens/Furse area on 24th & 26th. The most obvious records were the unusually high numbers of Fieldfares with 100 counted on 15th. Four or five Robins, the odd Skylark and Meadow Pipit and two female Chaffinches remained to the end of the year and a *rostrata/islandica* Common Redpoll was present during the last few days of the month.

# Systematic List for 2008

Alan Bull & Deryk Shaw

## Notes

**Nomenclature** - the species order complies with the official British List as published by the British Ornithologists Union (BOU) in January 2009, with some species names following the International English name as recommended by Gill & Wright (2006). Where species confusion may be possible, the vernacular 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	British Birds 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.

**Whooper Swan** *Cygnus cygnus***Frequent autumn migrant, scarce in spring**

The year began with singles on four dates from 2nd January–3rd February, with two present on 22nd January. Two additional juveniles were also found dead in January. In spring, a party of thirteen adults passed over the isle on 24th March, with five more the following day and further singles on 7th April and 2nd May. A party of 20 on 19th September were the first autumn birds and single figure counts were made on five dates until 27th September, but for 34 on 22nd. Near-daily October records included 1-13 birds recorded until 19th, followed by a moderate daily passage (of between 9-26 birds) until 26th. Thereafter, single figure counts were made on most dates (but for 10 on 30th October), until the last on 18th November.

**Pink-footed Goose** *Anser brachyrhynchus***Frequent autumn migrant, scarce in spring**

In autumn, 73 on 19th September were soon followed by the first sizeable movement on the 23rd September with 850 birds. Much smaller numbers (3-77) were noted daily up to 17th October but for another peak of 420 on 26th September with 250 the following day. Sporadic counts of 1-8 were made up to the end of the month. A single on the 30th October remained until the end of the year.

**+ Greater White-fronted Goose** *Anser albifrons***Scarce autumn migrant, occasional in spring and winter**

A good autumn comprised birds of the Greenland race (*A. a. flavirostris*) on the 10th, 16th (2) and 20th October. These were quickly followed with records on 21st (6), 25th (2) and 30th October - all were un-assigned to race. Finally, a bird of the Greenland race from 1st–18th November was joined, from 13th–18th, by four individuals of the Eurasian race (*A. a. albifrons*).

**Greylag Goose** *Anser anser***Common spring and autumn migrant**

The winter flock peaked at 92 birds on 5th February and had dropped to single figures by 21st April, until the last on 25th May. Single-figure mid-summer records, of presumed dispersed local breeders were recorded on seven dates from 16th June–5th July (max six on 21st June). In autumn, two on 4th September and four the following day were not followed until 28 on 28th September. Thereafter, birds were ever-present until the end of the year. Heavy passage during October saw daily counts exceeding 100 birds including eight counts over 300 and peaks of 510 (5th), 400 (19th), 615 (21st) & 725 (22nd). Numbers fluctuated in November (between 90-202 birds) and gradually settled to a wintering flock of 160 birds in December.

**+ Canada Goose** *Branta canadensis***Rare spring migrant, mainly May & June. Has summered. Vagrant in winter**

One arrived on 9th April and remained until 23rd.

## **Barnacle Goose** *Branta leucopsis*

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

Ten birds on the 30th April were the first, followed in May by two birds from 15th-25th and a group of 21 on 30th. Autumn passage began with 270 on 3rd October, with 58 remaining the following day and numbers dropped to 14 birds by 9th, which lingered until 16th October. Fourteen on the 22nd October, two the following day preceded a party of six from 1st November, which remained intact until 12th before petering out to the last two on 19th November.

## **+ Brent Goose** *Branta bernicla*

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

Three birds of the nominate Dark-bellied race (*B. b. bernicla*) arrived on 8th November and were joined by three more on 11th. Gradually, birds left the group, until three remained on 24th November, two by 3rd December and a lone bird by 23rd December to the end of the year.

## **Common Shelduck** *Tadorna tadorna*

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

In spring, singles were seen on four dates in late April, with another on the 3rd May and three together on 14th May were the last.

## **Eurasian Wigeon** *Anas penelope*

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

Sporadic counts of 1-6 were made on nine dates from January to March, preceding a light spring passage of 1-3 birds on seven dates in April and five dates in May. In autumn, a single on 18th August was the first, with daily sightings from 26th August. Numbers slowly increased to low double figure counts and regularly exceeded 20 birds from 10th September. The first influx was of 60 birds on 12th, rising to 94 by 14th and 108 (the month's max) on 15th. Numbers then remained high and fluctuated between 19 and 97 birds, but for a dip of seven birds on 28th September. Daily October counts were still in the low double figures, peaking at 43 on 4th before petering out to single figure counts from 26th October to the end of the year.

## **Eurasian Teal** *Anas crecca*

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

In January, a group of five on 6th and three on 15th were the only winter records. Spring commenced with six on 19th March, followed by almost daily single figure counts from 30th March until 25th April, with peaks of 10 (20th) and 12 (22nd & 24th). Thereafter, 1-3 were recorded on seventeen dates from 5th May–12th June. Irregular sightings of 1-2 individuals were made in July and early August, with passage increasing, but still light from 9th August onwards. The first real influx was of 81 birds on 1st September and moderate passage through the month saw fluctuating counts (of 11-64) until numbers dropped from 23rd onwards.

Predominantly single-figure counts followed into October, exceeding ten birds on four dates, with sporadic single figure sightings in the final two months of the year.

**+ Gadwall** *Anas strepera*

**Vagrant; 19 spring, 16 autumn, two winter records; (57 individuals in total)**

A pair on 4th October was followed with a ♀ on 8th and a ♂ on 17th October.

**Mallard** *Anas platyrhynchos*

**Frequent spring and autumn migrant**

The increasing number of resident semi-feral birds makes it difficult to distinguish any real passage but if there was any it was slight. At least six pairs bred and the first ducklings were seen on 12th May.

**Northern Pintail** *Anas acuta*

**Scarce spring and autumn migrant**

An above average year with singles seen on eight scattered dates in September and a peak of three birds on the 13th. Another three on 3rd October and singles on 4th and 22nd October were the last.

**+ Northern Shoveler** *Anas clypeata*

**Scarce and irregular spring and autumn migrant**

A pair on 21st April was the only spring record. In autumn, a single on 12th September was joined by another the following day and they both remained until 18th September.

**Tufted Duck** *Aythya fuligula*

**Scarce spring migrant, rare in autumn**

A quiet spring with one ♂ from 15th-22nd May and another ♂ from 21st-24th June, with two on 22nd. Single ♀'s were seen on 6th & 26th July, with the first autumn bird (also a ♀) from 19th-29th September. Three on 3rd October preceded an incredible 27 the following day, with still 13 on 5th. Thereafter 1-2 were recorded almost daily through October (but for four on 20th), until the last on 13th November.

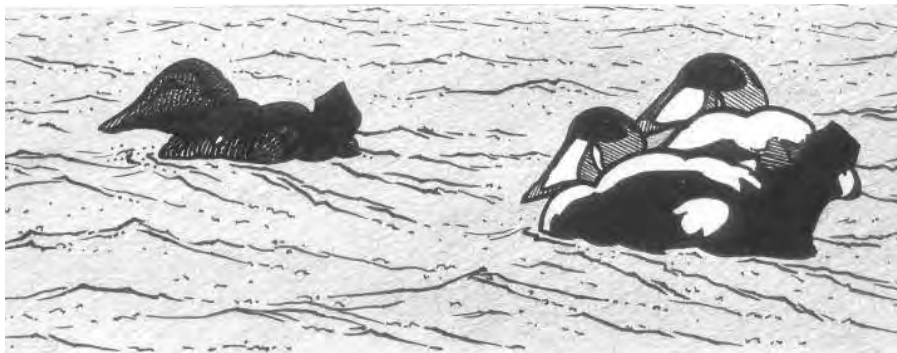
*The count on 4th October far exceeds the previous record count; 12 on 28th September 1981*

**+ Greater Scaup** *Aythya marila*

**Scarce spring and autumn migrant**

An immature ♂ was in South Harbour on 10th and 15th January. A good autumn saw four on 15th September, followed by a single ♂ from 16th-20th September and another single on 27th September. Five on 3rd October with singles until the 5th and another single in Furse from 14th-18th October.

*The January sighting is the first Fair Isle record for that month and only the second ever in winter following three on 22nd February 1952.*



Common Eider © WT Miles

### **Common Eider** *Somateria mollissima*

*Resident, breeds in small numbers*

Present offshore all year. The first chicks were noted on 8th June. The annual early autumn count found that numbers were significantly higher than in recent years - a total of 347 birds is well over twice that of the previous year and in fact is the highest since 2002. The only other counts made were of 150 and 160 off South Light on 30th October and 1st-2nd November.

### **+ King Eider** *Somateria spectabilis*

*Vagrant; 16 previous records (12 individuals)*

A first-summer ♂ joined a Surf Scoter already there from 18th-21st May. *Accepted by BBRC*

*This is the first since a fly-by adult male on 30th March 2006. It was seen a few days later near Sumburgh, Mainland Shetland.*

### **Long-tailed Duck** *Clangula hyemalis*

*Frequent autumn migrant, less common in spring*

A ♀ on 12th March was the first, followed by another ♀ on 24th March and singles on 29th & 30th March. A ♀ was seen from 16th–20th April. Two on 12th June were not that unusual for the time of year. In autumn, single figure counts were made on most days in October and November, following the first on the 3rd October, with a max count of eight birds on the 18th October. The last record was of two birds on 19th November.

### **+ Black (Common) Scoter** *Melanitta nigra*

*Scarce spring, autumn and winter migrant*

A ♂ was in Furse from 29th March–7th April, with further April singles on the 10th, 13th and 24th. In June, a ♂ on 3rd, two on 6th and a ♀ on the 11th were the only records. Autumn records comprised birds on 5th, 24th (5) and 26th September, followed by three singles between 3rd–9th October. Single ♀'s, possibly the same in each case, were seen on 16th & 24th November and 9th December.

**+ Surf Scoter** *Melanitta perspicillata*

**Vagrant; one previous record**

A first-summer ♂ was discovered in South Harbour on 16th May and remained in the general area until 26th May. *Accepted by SBRC*

*This comes hot on the heels of Fair Isle's first record, a female in Furse/North Haven in May 2007 and like the King Eider before, it was later seen in Shetland, where it remained well into the summer.*

**+ Common Goldeneye** *Bucephala clangula*

**Regular winter, spring and autumn migrant**

A poor year. Singles on 22nd January and 12th February were the only sightings until the first autumn record on the 19th October. A single on the 29th October and a ♀ from 31st October–1st November was followed by a ♂ from 4th–5th November.

**Red-breasted Merganser** *Mergus serrator*

**Frequent spring and autumn migrant**

In February, a ♀ on 12th, a pair on 14th and a ♂ on 15th were not followed until a ♂ in the Havens from 29th March until 6th April. Thereafter, a ♀ was present from 15th–17th April with a ♂ from 23rd–27th April. In May, a week of daily sightings from 7th rose from one bird to five birds by 13th, followed by a single on 30th. Further singles were seen on 15th June, 21st July and 3rd August, before autumn passage in September recorded 1–2 on two dates from 16th onwards and four on 18th. Near-daily single figure counts were made in October, peaking at 11 birds on the 3rd. The last sightings of the year were in early November with a single on the 4th and two on the 10th.

**+ Goosander** *Mergus merganser*

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

Two ♂ on 30th May was the only record.

**Common Quail** *Coturnix coturnix*

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

One on 5th May was the first, followed by 1–2 birds on six dates from 25th May until 5th June and singing ♂ recorded on two dates within this period, although breeding was once again not proven. A single on 13th October was the only autumn record.

**Red-throated Loon (Diver)** *Gavia stellata*

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

In spring, sporadic sightings of singles were made on ten dates from 27th April–26th July, with two birds on 7th & 18th June. Autumn began with three on 4th August, followed by a single on 19th August and four birds seen from the *Good Shepherd IV* on 2nd September. Thereafter, irregular counts of 1–2 were made from 12th September until the last on the 1st November, but for a max of five birds on 10th October.



## **Great Northern (Loon) Diver** *Gavia immer*

**Scarce autumn migrant, occasional in spring**

In spring, singles were recorded on 10th & 28th April with another on 16th June. Autumn passage was light following the first on 17th September, with sightings of 1-3 recorded on a further eight dates until the last on 1st November.

## **+ Little Grebe** *Tachybaptus ruficollis*

**Vagrant; c39 previous records**

One was present in Furse on 23rd October.

## **+ Slavonian Grebe** *Podiceps auritus*

**Scarce autumn migrant, occasional in spring**

In spring, a summer-plumaged bird was off Buness on 10th April. Another was in South Haven on 25th June. In autumn, singles were seen on 8th October and 8th November. Finally, a single was in the Havens / Furse area on 25th and 27th December.

*The June sighting is the first ever record for that month.*

## **Northern Fulmar** *Fulmarus glacialis*

**Resident; breeds in large numbers**

Numbers on the monitoring plots increased slightly on the previous year's low figure whilst breeding success at 0.38 fledged per AOS was below the long-term mean.

'Blue' individuals were recorded on 12th February (2), 14th April, 29th August, 7th September and 20th October (2).

## **Sooty Shearwater** *Puffinus griseus*

**Regular autumn migrant**

Singles on 26th & 31st August were the first, quickly followed by a light autumn passage through September, with small numbers on ten dates from either the *Good Shepherd IV* or from land-based observations. Four from the *Good Shepherd IV* on the 4th and five from land on 18th were the monthly maxims. Four on 4th October were the last.

## **+ Manx Shearwater** *Puffinus puffinus*

**Scarce autumn migrant, rare in spring**

Two from the *Good Shepherd IV* crossing on 5th June and another on 6th June were the first, followed by five off Buness on 17th June and another off there the following day. Singles were then recorded on 11th & 15th July with two on 12th. A record count of eleven on 25th August was the only autumn sightings until singles on 3rd & 5th October, with two on the 4th.

*The counts of five and eleven are exceptional, the latter a record, beating the nine on 16th August 1989.*

### European Storm Petrel *Hydrobates pelagicus*

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

Small numbers were seen on four dates in June from the *Good Shepherd IV*, with 16 on the 5th the peak count. Mist-netting sessions in July and August totalled 289 birds caught on nine dates, with 80 on 4th August the max number caught in one night. Sightings of singles either from the crossing or land were made on 14th & 25th August, 2nd & 11th September (with seven on 4th) and the final sighting was a single on 16th October.

### + Leach's Storm Petrel *Oceanodroma leucorhoa*

**Scarce migrant, summer and early autumn**

In July, singles were mist-netted during Storm Petrel ringing sessions on the 13th and 18th, whilst two birds were seen around the net, but not caught on the 28th. Two more birds were trapped on the 12th August.

### Northern Gannet *Morus bassanus*

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

The breeding population increased by over a quarter in a year to 2488 AON and with a slightly above average breeding productivity of 0.75 this looks set to relentlessly continue.

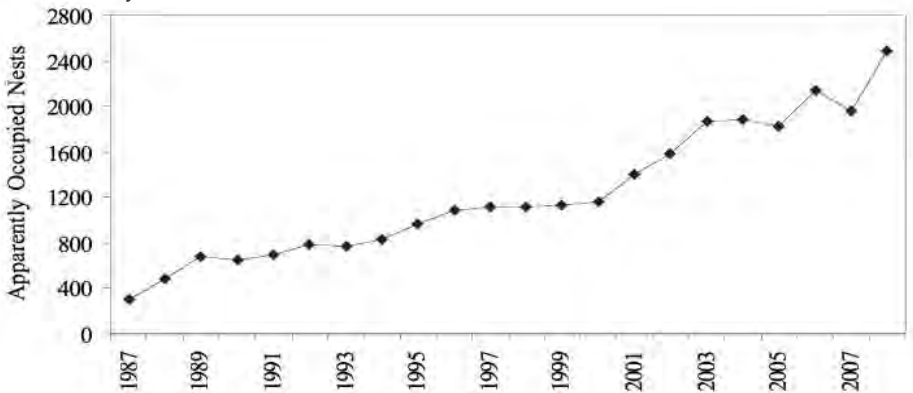


Fig 1. Whole island counts of Northern Gannet on Fair Isle, 1987-2008.

### Great Cormorant *Phalacrocorax carbo*

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

In spring, counts of 1-4 were made on three dates in April (following the first on the 1st), seven dates in May, four dates in June and two dates in July. Autumn passage was more regular following three on 15th August, with almost daily passage noted from the 28th August until the last on 30th October. Counts were mainly of 1-4 birds, but for peaks of 10 on 2nd September and 11 on 19th September.

## **European Shag** *Phalacrocorax aristotelis*

**Resident, breeds in moderate numbers**

There appears to have been extensive non-breeding this year with plots recording a 58% drop in AON since 2007 whilst a whole island census produced just 235 AON - a massive 67.8% reduction on the last count, in 2003. Those that did breed fared very poorly with just a single chick fledging from 32 monitored nests.



**European Shag** © WT Miles

## **+ Black-crowned Night Heron** *Nycticorax nycticorax*

**Vagrant; no previous records**

An adult was flushed from South Harbour amid blizzard conditions on 5th April and disappeared along the east coast. Following two hours of searching, what was assumed to be the same bird was found near the Plantation. It moved to Setter the following morning, then Field Pond where it remained until 13th April. Meanwhile a freshly eaten corpse of an adult was found at Klingers Geo on 9th April. The remains of the Field Pond bird were discovered in Gilsetter on 24th April.

*These are the first records for the isle and 9th-10th for Shetland. The corpses were sent to National Museums of Scotland.*

## **Grey Heron** *Ardea cinerea*

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

Recorded in every month. Irregular sightings of a single bird were made in January/February which may have all related to one over-wintering bird. Perceived spring migrants were noted on 19th & 29th-30th March before sightings of 1-2 birds on most dates in April and May. A single from 12th-15th June and singles on four more well dispersed dates until 24th July preceded daily passage from 26th July-5th October. Single figure counts were the norm, with peaks of 10 (18th August), 12 (24th September) and 17 (25th September). Sightings of 1-3 were then made daily from 8th October-1st November with further singles seen on two dates in mid-November and on two dates from 23rd-26th December.

## **+ European Honey-buzzard** *Pernis apivorus*

**Rare spring & autumn migrant; 47 previous records (49 individuals)**

Singles passed through on 9th June, 13th July & 25th September.

## **+ Black Kite** *Milvus migrans*

**Vagrant; no previous records**

A distant, dark bird of prey over Vaasetter on the morning of 7th May was relocated over Meoness a couple of hours later and identified as a Black Kite. It toured around the isle until 10th May.

*This is the first record for Fair Isle and only the third for Shetland.*

**+ Western Marsh Harrier** *Circus aeruginosus*

*Rare spring migrant, vagrant in autumn; 36 previous records (31 in spring, 5 in autumn)*

In September, a juvenile went straight through on 4th and a ♂ lingered from 13th-16th.

**Eurasian Sparrowhawk** *Accipiter nisus*

*Regular spring and autumn migrant*

A ♀ on 13th March was the first and was not followed until four on 12th April. Subsequent sightings of 1-2 were then made on most dates through the rest of April and throughout May, before three on 2nd-3rd June, petered out to a single bird by the 8th June. In autumn, 1-2 were recorded on seven dates from 20th August-6th September before a period of slightly heavier passage from 14th-25th September saw daily counts of 1-5 birds, with six on 18th. Daily sightings of 1-2 were then made from 7th-15th October before singles on 29th-30th October and the last on 6th November.

**+ Common Buzzard** *Buteo buteo*

*Scarce spring and autumn migrant*

In May, a single bird was present from 16th-17th.

**+ Osprey** *Pandion haliaetus*

*Scarce spring and rare autumn migrant (88 previous records (90 individuals); 71 in spring, 17 in autumn)*

In spring, singles passed through on 1st, 7th & 29th May and 6th & 14th June. In autumn, a single was found settled at South Light on the 12th September and remained on the isle until 17th September.

*Six individuals in a year is a record.*

**Common Kestrel** *Falco tinnunculus*

*Regular spring and autumn migrant*

Singles on 12th, 21st & 23rd April were the first, followed by sightings of singles on most dates through May, June and irregularly in July but for counts of two birds on five dates in May. Autumn passage began on 3rd August with near daily sightings of 1-3 birds on most dates until the months end. Daily passage in September comprised single-figure counts (of 1-7 birds), but for 10 from 15th-17th. Two were seen on 3rd October with singles on 12th October and 18th November. Finally, a Dutch-ringed bird was found dead on 23rd December.

**Merlin** *Falco columbarius*

*Regular spring and autumn migrant*

Irregular sightings in January/February involved at least two over-wintering birds. Spring migrants were seen from 14th April, with 1-2 birds recorded sporadically until the 3rd May and again from 23rd-30th May. In autumn, passage was almost daily following the first on 1st September, with counts of 1-3 made until 3rd November and four birds noted on 27th September and 26th October. Two sightings in mid-November of single birds (11th & 13th) were then followed by two on 18th

December and sightings of both of these birds from 23rd-27th December.

**+ Eurasian Hobby** *Falco subbuteo*

*Rare spring & summer migrant, vagrant in autumn; 47 or 48 previous records*

Singles were present on 6th-7th June and 7th-25th July.

**Peregrine Falcon** *Falco peregrinus*

*Regular spring and autumn migrant; formerly bred*

Five well-spaced sightings of a pair were made during January-March with more regular (almost daily) sightings made through April and May. Breeding was heavily suspected and was confirmed when a nest containing two small chicks was found at Guidicum on 31st May and on 4th July both chicks successfully fledged the nest. Sightings thereafter concerned 1-3 birds daily through August-October, with the only obvious migrants noted on 1st October, when two adult ♀ were present. Finally, an adult ♂ was seen on 13th and 25th November.

*The breeding attempt is the first since 1973 and the first to successfully fledge young since 1969.*

**Water Rail** *Rallus aquaticus*

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

At least four birds were thought to have over-wintered, with irregular sightings made at the Observatory, Barkland/Chalet, Lower Stoneybrek and Haa areas during January-March. Sightings on five dates of 1-2 birds from 2nd-8th April may have also involved two 'new' birds. One on 8th May was the only definite spring migrant. In autumn, one found dead on 21st September was the first, followed by singles on a further four dates until the months end. October records comprised singles on six dates and involved four individuals, with three sightings at the Observatory in early November probably relating to the same bird. Finally, one was seen at Barkland on 24th December.

**+ Corn Crake** *Crex crex*

*Scarce spring and autumn migrant; formerly bred*

Two on 13th September were the first confirmed records of the year. Singles were then seen on 14th, 15th, 18th & 24th September with the last sighting of a single at Furse on 24th October.

**+ Common Moorhen** *Gallinula chloropus*

*Scarce spring and autumn migrant*

A single at the Chalet on 18th January, 30th March and 2nd-3rd April may have been the same over-wintering individual. The first definite spring migrant was noted on 3rd April, with further singles on 9th-11th & 15th April and 4th & 9th May. In autumn, one was trapped on the very early date of 19th August and singles were seen on 15th & 20th October and 28th December.

*There have only been three other August records and this one is the earliest.*

### **+ Common Crane** *Grus grus*

***Rare migrant, April to October, mainly May; 16 previous records (23 individuals)***

One arrived on 31st March, remaining until the following day. Another rested for a few hours on 17th April, followed by a group of three which flew through on 27th April. The last circled overhead for a while before departing on 12th May.

*Six individuals is a record year count. The March record is the earliest ever.*

### **Eurasian Oystercatcher** *Haematopus ostralegus*

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

A single on 1st February was the first and numbers slowly built up during the rest of the month and into March, peaking at 89 birds on 12th March and 100 birds by the 29th. Daily counts in April always exceeded 40 birds, with a max of 112 on the 26th. May passage was heavier and counts exceeded 100 birds on most days, with a peak of 199 on the 22nd. Counts of breeding birds put the population at 40-45 pairs. A post-breeding count of 172 on 16th July was the maximum and numbers petered out slowly through August and early September, falling to single figures by the 9th September through until the 27th October. A single in the Havens on 24th November and six dates in December was presumably attempting to over-winter on the isle.

### **Common Ringed Plover** *Charadrius hiaticula*

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

A single on the 13th February was the first with numbers increasing through the month and daily records from March, with spring peaks of 29 (22nd March) and 32 (6th April), mainly involving the 15 or so breeding pairs. Main autumn passage was from 20th August–19th September with peaks of 36 (20th & 26th August) and 41 (13th September). Thereafter single-figure counts were made until the months end and on eight dates in October, the last on the 30th.

### **+ Eurasian Dotterel** *Charadrius morinellus*

***Scarce spring and autumn migrant***

In May, a ♂ in the south of the isle from 3rd-5th was then followed by a group of three on Ward Hill on 7th. These then increased to five the following day and eight by the 9th, falling to six birds by the 10th. Two birds on 12th and five more on the 14th could well have been different.

### **European Golden Plover** *Pluvialis apricaria*

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

The first on 28th March increased to 18 the next day and was followed by a light passage of mainly single-figure counts through April, but for 20 on the 1st and 19 on the 29th. May passage was equally as light following 24 on the 1st and numbers tailed off to single figure counts from the 5th May until 16th June. In autumn, 1-3 birds were noted on seven dates in July before daily passage from August to October.

Passage was light, with only six double-figure counts made in August (max 34 on 16th) and was slightly heavier in September where the majority of counts exceeded 20 birds with a monthly max of 48 (28th). October records peaked at 25 birds (5th) and petered out to just a single bird, the last, on the 29th.

**+ Grey Plover** *Pluvialis squatarola*

*Scarce autumn migrant, rare in spring*

One at South Light from 14th–16th September was, typically, the only record.

**Northern Lapwing** *Vanellus vanellus*

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

A small influx in January gave a count of 21 on 6th but counts were mainly single figures. Sixteen on 12th March included the first displaying birds. Sightings through April and May probably only referred to the breeding pairs, with just six pairs noted. Autumn passage from 16th June–25th September was light and fluctuated widely from single birds to 36 (the autumn max) on 10th August. Thereafter, single-figure counts were the norm, but for double figure counts on four dates in October (max of 28 on 26th), two dates in November and three dates in December.

**Red Knot** *Calidris canutus*

*Regular autumn migrant, scarce in spring*

A single on 27th July was the first, with another single on 31st July. These were followed by almost daily sightings of 1-5 birds through August (peaking at seven birds on 20th & 25th and nine birds on 26th) and 1-3 birds through September. In October, 1-2 were seen on most dates from 3rd-11th and again from 25th-28th, with the last bird of the year on 8th November.

**Sanderling** *Calidris alba*

*Regular autumn migrant, less common in spring*

Singles on 15th May and 8th, 11th & 15th June were the only spring sightings. One on 27th July was the first autumn migrant, followed by seven on 31st July and almost daily sightings of 1-4 birds from 2nd August until 27th September, but for a peak of seven birds on 2nd September. A flock of 13 on 25th October was unusual for the time of year, petering out to nine the following day and a single on the 27th October.

**+ Little Stint** *Calidris minuta*

*Scarce autumn migrant, vagrant in spring*

In September, there was a run of sightings from 12th-21st with 1-5 seen daily.

**+ Curlew Sandpiper** *Calidris ferruginea*

*Scarce autumn migrant, vagrant in spring*

A lone bird present around the South Light area from 14th-21st September was the



only record.

**+ Pectoral Sandpiper** *Calidris melanotos*

*Vagrant; 22 previous records (3 in spring)*

The first, a juvenile, was on Vatnagard on 17th September. Another arrived on 23rd September and was joined by a third bird on 28th with both remaining until 1st October. The fourth of the autumn appeared on 8th October, remaining until 13th, with two present on 12th.

*Five in a year beats the previous record of three, set in 1999.*

**Purple Sandpiper** *Calidris maritima*

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

Winter counts were infrequent and of no more than 1-3 birds but counts of 20 & 27 were made on 18th-19th February. A light passage was noted in April with single figures noted daily and peak counts of 24 (5th), 27 (21st) & 18 (24th) and petered out in May with four on 18th the last of the spring. Counts of 1-5 were made on six dates in July / August before regular sightings from mid—September until early November saw single figures on most days and peaks of 17 on 23rd & 25th October. Thereafter, sightings once again became very infrequent with six on 26th December the peak count.

**Dunlin** *Calidris alpina*

*Frequent spring and autumn migrant;*

A single on 12th January was an unusual winter record. Spring passage comprised one on 25th April and single-figure counts on most days from 30th April until 30th June, with peaks of 12 (2nd & 4th May) and 14 (4th June). Nine on 5th June included displaying pairs on both Vaasetter and Svey but breeding was not proven. Autumn began much the same with predominantly single-figure counts from July to mid-August, with four counts in the 'teens at the end of July. Higher counts became the norm from the end of August through September when counts were rarely below ten birds and peaked at 99 birds on 16th. Irregular single-figure counts were then made in October with the last single on 3rd November.

**+ Buff-breasted Sandpiper** *Tryngites subruficollis*

*Vagrant; ten previous records (all September)*

One, first seen briefly on the airstrip on 22nd September was found at North Light the following morning and was seen flying south later that day. *Accepted by SBRC*

*This is the third record in consecutive Septembers*

**Ruff** *Philomachus pugnax*

*Regular autumn migrant, rare in spring*

Singles from 29th-31st July were then followed by 1-3 birds on most days from 9th-29th August before passage increased slightly. Daily counts of 1-5 were then made

until 27th September with nine (2nd) the monthly max.

**Jack Snipe** *Lymanocryptes minimus*

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

In spring, a single on the 12th March was followed with singles on six dates in April with two (1st) and four (24th) also logged and further singles on 5th & 20th May. Autumn began with early singles on 29th August and 5th September, with 1-2 seen on a further six dates until the months end and a max of four on 19th. October passage was daily with 15 on the opening day of the month dwindling to single figure counts by 9th. November saw just five sporadic singles until the last on 15th.

**Common Snipe** *Gallinago gallinago*

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

Winter counts included peaks of 50 on 15th January and 65 on 19th March. The spring peak was of 105 birds on 24th April. No breeding census was made. Autumn counts were made from 4th August onwards, with daily, moderate counts (of between 15-68 birds) noted up to 2nd November. The autumn max during this period was of 82 birds on 29th October. Counts thereafter were few and 30 on 27th December was the peak end of year count.

**Eurasian Woodcock** *Scolopax rusticola*

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

Singles on 29th-31st March were the first, followed by single-figure counts throughout April (max 10 on 18th) and singles on three dates in May. Two on 22nd July is unusual. In autumn, single-figure counts were made on most dates in October, but for 20 on 18th. A fall of 40 on 6th November was the first real arrival, with 'hundreds' reported on 10th and c400 birds on the 11th. Numbers had dropped off (to 50) by 12th and just three were seen on 15th and singles on four dates in December, the last on 29th.

**+ Black-tailed Godwit** *Limosa limosa*

*Scarce spring and autumn migrant*

In spring, a single was seen on four dates from 23rd April-1st May, with further singles from 16th-22nd May and 8th-15th June. In autumn, one on 28th August was the only record.

**+ Bar-tailed Godwit** *Limosa lapponica*

*Regular autumn migrant, rare in spring*

Singles from 28th April-1st May and on 24th May were the sole spring records. Singles on 2nd and 14th July were followed by another on 26th August and one from 1st-9th September. Two on 3rd October and another single from 25th-27th October were the last.

### **Whimbrel** *Numenius phaeopus*

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

The first of the year was on 16th April and passage was daily until 31st May. Most counts were of single-figures, but for a period of slightly heavier passage from 14th-20th May when counts were in double-figures, with 17 (17th) the max. June onwards saw 1-4 recorded on most dates and peaks of eight (8th July), 10 (30th July) and seven (16th August), with the last single on 25th September.

### **Eurasian Curlew** *Numenius arquata*

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

The peak winter count was 15 birds on 4th January. Breeding birds were back on territory by mid-March with very few recognised spring migrants noted. Nine territories were mapped. Returning failed breeders were noted from mid-June but autumn counts were all single figures right up to the end of the year except for 24 & 20 (on 6th & 11th August respectively).

### **Common Sandpiper** *Actitis hypoleucos*

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

A single on 30th April was the first, followed by regular sightings of mainly 1-4 birds through May until mid-June, with monthly maximums of seven (31st May) and six (5th June). A single on 4th July was followed by two on 11th July and records of 1-2 through August (but for four on 20th), until the last on 21st September.

### **Green Sandpiper** *Tringa ochropus*

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

Two on 21st April were then followed with singles on 4th May and 27th-30th May. In autumn, 1-4 were regularly recorded from 25th July-17th September, with peaks of five on 1st & 8th August.

### **+ Spotted Redshank** *Tringa erythropus*

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

One on 15th August was the only record.

### **+ Common Greenshank** *Tringa nebularia*

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

In spring, singles were recorded on 22nd & 25th April and on five dates in May. A single on 22nd June, two more in July (12th & 26th) and another on 12th August were then followed by one from 1st-2nd September and two on 12th September.

### **+ Wood Sandpiper** *Tringa glareola*

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

In spring, a single in Da Water from 4th-5th May was then followed by one flying over the Observatory on 9th May. In autumn, singles were seen on 12th July and 2nd August.

## 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
24	15	41	39	5	7	35	108	50	66	40	35

## 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
135	155	135	127	17	7	46	44	53	262	142	103

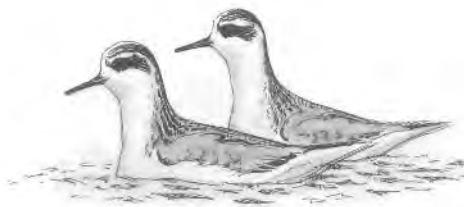
*The count in May is perhaps lower than expected, whilst the October count is slightly above the recent average.*

## Red (Grey) Phalarope *Phalaropus fulicarius*

*Rare autumn migrant, vagrant in spring/summer; 22 previous records (26 individuals)*

Strong westerly gales resulted in a huge influx into waters of the Northern and Western Isles and Fair Isle logged no less than nine individuals. The first was in Klingers Geo on 11th October. This was followed with daily counts of 1-3 in South Haven from 15th-28th October (plus one at South Light on 18th) and another there on 2nd-3rd November. One in South Harbour on 9th November was the last.

*The most in any previous year has been three (1989 & 2005). An estimated 35 were seen elsewhere in Shetland and much larger numbers in Orkney and Western Scotland.*



Red (Grey) Phalarope © WT Miles

## Arctic Skua *Stercorarius parasiticus*

*Frequent passage migrant, breeds in small numbers*

A single on 19th April was the first and numbers slowly built up from 25th April. Following last year's disastrous breeding season, the number of AOT fell by 45% to just 37 and once again, no chicks fledged. Some very light autumn passage was noted with singles passing South Light on four dates in September, with two on 9th October the last.

## **Great Skua** *Stercorarius skua*

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

Two on 29th March were the first and numbers had reached >100 by 25th April. The number of AOT continues to increase, reaching 294 this year (a 31% increase on 2007). First eggs were laid on 12th May. Productivity was 0.39 - less than previous two years. The last bird seen was on 25th October.

## **Black-legged Kittiwake** *Rissa tridactyla*

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

The first birds were not noted back until 1st April and the first eggs were noted on 3rd June. A whole island census produced just 2,688 AON (a 50% drop from last census in 2005). Numbers on breeding productivity plots dropped by 42% in a year and, predictably, no chicks fledged. Small numbers were regularly seen offshore from September–early November, with a max count of 75 on 18th October.

## **+ Sabine's Gull** *Xema sabini*

### ***Vagrant; four previous records (all juveniles)***

A juvenile was seen by just a handful of lucky observers on 1st October as it drifted south past Setter and disappeared somewhere near Hjukni Geo. *Accepted by SBRC Previous records; 5th September 1977, 17th September 1979, 11th September 1982, 12th November 2005*

## **Common Black-headed Gull** *Chroicocephalus ridibundus*

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

Sporadic sightings were made (of 1-3 birds) during the first few months of the year before more regular passage from April–June. Counts were mostly <10 with peaks of 16 (25th April) and 40 (8th June). Passage was more moderate (but irregular) in July with counts in double-figures on six dates and a max of 120 on 4th. Daily passage from August until October saw counts mainly in single-figures (>10 on four dates in mid-August), with the last on 11th November.

## **Mew (Common) Gull** *Larus canus*

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

Single-figure counts were made on ten dates from January–March, with 15 (28th January) and 12 (29th March) the peaks. Passage was daily from April with double-figure counts the norm and monthly peaks of 60 (18th April), 71 (22nd May) and 54 (9th June) before numbers dwindled to leave the breeding birds from mid-June. Six nests on Buness fledged four chicks. Sporadic sightings of migrants were noted through July and an influx of 320 (26th) was followed by more moderate and daily passage from August, with counts fluctuating widely (from 8 to max 360 on 2nd), before petering out through September (but still in double-figures) and predominantly single-figure counts by October. Small numbers were seen in November and December, with an influx of 27 on 8th November.

## **Lesser Black-backed Gull** *Larus fuscus*

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

A single on 1st April was the first and numbers were generally <10 until 13 on 25th April (with 18 the next day) before numbers dropped to predominantly single figures thereafter. Four pairs bred on Goorn. Small numbers of migrants were seen from July until October, with numbers predominantly <10, but for 10 & 28 on 27th & 28th August respectively. Dark individuals resembling *L. f. intermedius/fuscus* were seen on 31st May, 6th June & 4th October.

## **Herring Gull** *Larus argentatus*

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

Present all year. Around 30 pairs bred, mainly on Goorn and Greenholm but fledging success was thought to be low. Just two counts of storm-driven birds were made, with 2500 on 6th November and 5000 on 5th December.

## **Iceland Gull** *Larus glaucoides*

**Scarce migrant in winter and spring**

A first-winter was found freshly dead on 2nd January. Single birds, involving at least two individuals (first-winter and adult), were seen sporadically from January to March, with four present during a storm on 3rd February. A first-winter was recorded through April until 7th May, with sporadic sightings of a second-winter through this period and another adult on 5th May. Late in the year, an adult on 8th November and a first-winter on 27th November were the only records.

**Kumlien's Gull** *L. g. kumlieni* Birds showing features of this race were seen on 17th April (third-winter), 20th April-27th April (second-winter) and 1st-10th May (third-winter).

## **Glaucous Gull** *Larus hyperboreus*

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

A first-winter on 15th January was then followed by three first-winters on 3rd February and another on 4th May. In October, sightings included three birds on 20th and at least three first-winters, a second-winter and an adult between 24th-31st. There were no others until a first-winter on 27th November followed with further first-winters on 4th-5th & 18th December.

## **Great Black-backed Gull** *Larus marinus*

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

Present all year. Around 20 pairs were counted on Sheep Rock but no breeding data was collected. Birds seeking refuge on the isle during hard weather included 450 (10th September), 800 (6th November) and 1000 (5th December).

**+ Sandwich Tern** *Sterna sandvicensis**Scarce spring/summer migrant, rare in autumn*

Two on 17th April were the first, followed by a single on 12th May. In June, a single on 17th was then followed by three on 30th.

**Common Tern** *Sterna hirundo**Summer visitor, breeds in small numbers*

One on 11th May was the first and 1-4 were regularly recorded from 20th May until 25th July. For the third consecutive year, no breeding took place. Autumn passage in September saw three on 10th & 11th, single juveniles on 13th & 15th and ten on 14th. A 'commic' tern on 17th September may have been this species.

**Arctic Tern** *Sterna paradisaea**Summer visitor, breeds in large numbers*

A single on 27th April was not followed until two on 5th May. Numbers increased rapidly and 400 birds were prospecting by 14th May, however none settled to nest and virtually all had departed by the end of May. Small numbers of passage juveniles (1-5) were seen on seven dates in August, with four singles on four dates in September and later adults seen on 11th & 16th October.

*This is the first year since colonisation in 1980 that no nesting has taken place*

**Common Murre (Guillemot)** *Uria aalge**Common autumn passage migrant; breeds in large numbers*

A few birds were seen ashore on 22nd and 29th January (no more than 30) and calm days in February enticed more birds on reconnaissance surveys to breeding ledges. Attendance at breeding ledges was the worst on record and only small numbers of eggs were laid. Predictably, this resulted in no chicks fledging from the monitoring plots - in fact (as in 2004) no chicks were thought to have fledged from the entire island. Small numbers were seen offshore during the autumn months, with a max of 22 on 5th October.

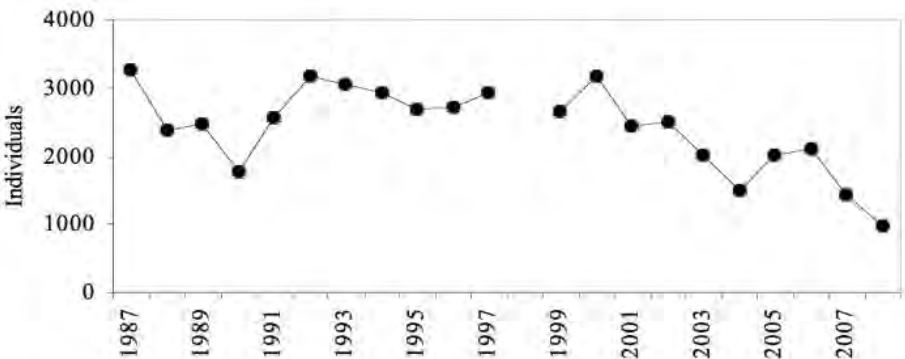


Fig 2. Plot counts of Common Guillemot on Fair Isle 1987–2008. Note: no counts in 1998.



## **Razorbill** *Alca torda*

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

Attendance at monitoring plots was low whilst only half of the eggs laid at the Easter Lother productivity site even hatched. Chicks were lucky to survive more than a few days and, for the second year running, none fledged. Birds were seen offshore in small numbers on most dates in September and October, with the last on 31st October.

## **Black Guillemot** *Cephus grylle*

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

Since 2007, numbers of breeding birds along the east coast monitoring plot (North Light to South Light) fell by 12.1% to 144 - an average number for the last ten years.

## **+ Little Auk** *Alle alle*

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

A single in the Havens on 21st October, five from the *Good Shepherd IV* crossing on 4th November and singles on 10th & 18th November - a poor year.

## **Atlantic Puffin** *Fratercula arctica*

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

Three in Furse on 30th March were the first and most birds had arrived back by mid-April. Breeding success was once again poor - a productivity of 0.40 is the third worst on record. The cause would appear to be the lack of suitable food with diet samples being split almost entirely and equally between small 0-group Sandeels (49%) and Rockling fry (49%). In autumn, good numbers were seen offshore on 16th August with subsequent sightings of 1-2 made on several dates until the last on 30th September.

## **Rock Dove** *Columba livia*

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

Present all year and not regularly counted. Four counts were made in October, with between 41-65 birds logged.

## **Common Wood Pigeon** *Columba palumbus*

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

A single on 12th March was the first and birds were noted daily from 29th March-11th June. Passage was heaviest in late April when double figures were logged daily and peaks of 14 and 16 (26th) were made. A single was present on 2nd July. Autumn sightings were scarce with singles on 1st-3rd August, 22nd-26th September, 1st-4th and 11th-16th October and two on 30th October were the last.

## **Eurasian Collared Dove** *Streptopelia decaocto*

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

In spring, a single on 13th & 16th April was the precursor to daily sightings from 25th April-18th June. Single figures were the norm but there were ten on 20th May and 14 on 9th June. Counts of 1-4 were made between 30th June-12th July. By contrast, a single on 22nd September was the only autumn sighting.

**+ European Turtle Dove** *Streptopelia turtur*

**Scarce spring and autumn migrant**

Single juveniles were seen on 17th & 20th August and 10th & 16th September.

**+ Common Cuckoo** *Cuculus canorus*

**Regular spring migrant, scarce in autumn**

In spring, a single on 5th May was the only record until another on 25th and singles daily from 28th May–9th June, but for two on 29th May. A ♂ on 29th July was followed with a juvenile two days later and a ♂ on 4th August. One on the comparatively late date of 12th September was the last.

**Long-eared Owl** *Asio otus*

**Regular autumn migrant, scarce in spring**

Singles on 2nd & 11th April were the only spring sightings. In autumn, one trapped on 25th September was still present the following day and there were further singles on 18th & 30th October before 1-2 on seven dates in November - an autumn total of around eight individuals.

**Short-eared Owl** *Asio flammeus*

**Regular spring and autumn migrant**

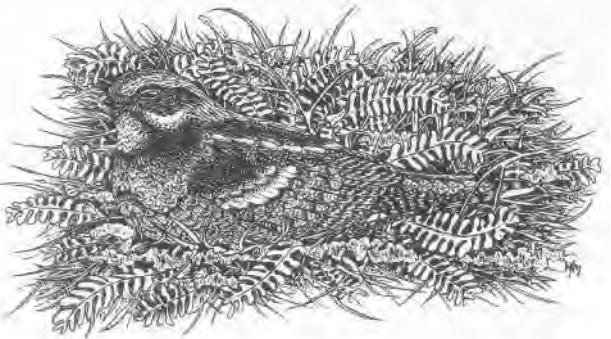
Recorded regularly (on about a third of dates) between 4th April and 14th June, mostly singles but two were seen on five dates. A single on 21st August was the first of the autumn and further singles were noted on nine scattered dates in September. In October, sightings were fewer, on just five dates but included a count of two (8th) whilst in November one on 8th and a maximum three on 11th were the last seen.

**+ European Nightjar** *Caprimulgus europaeus*

**Vagrant; 25 previous records (three in autumn)**

The first since 2004. One flushed by a guest from outside the Observatory, flew and landed on a post beside the mist-net in the Obs Plantation. It was later caught and ringed. Upon release it sat motionless on the ground as people walked within a few feet. After an hour, it got up and flew to the Havens and was lost.

Accepted by SBCRC



European Nightjar © WT Miles

**Common Swift** *Apus apus*

**Frequent spring, summer and autumn migrant**

In spring, one on 29th April (equalling our earliest ever, in 2001) was the only sighting until another on 16th May. Peak influx occurred in late May when 2-4 on 25th-29th rose to 12 the following day. There were just sporadic sightings of 1-2 in June & July until regular counts of up to four from 23rd August–21st September.

**+ Eurasian Wryneck** *Jynx torquilla*

**Regular spring and autumn migrant**

Spring sightings were all in May with singles on 1st-3rd, 11th & 21st. Autumn was (as usual) better with 1-2 daily between 18th & 25th August and regular counts of 1-4 between 1st & 20th September.

**+ Great Spotted Woodpecker** *Dendrocopos major*

**Rare (and irruptive) migrant, mostly in autumn**

One on 14th September was the first autumn record since the large influx of October 1999.

**+ Calandra Lark** *Melanocorypha calandra*

**Vagrant; three previous records**

One dropped in at Barkland on the afternoon of 20th April. It spent the rest of the day in the fields here and at Setter. It could not be found on 21st but was back in the rig at Setter the following day. *Accepted by BBRC. Previous records; 28th April 1978, 16th-17th May 1999, 13th May 2000*

**+ Greater Short-toed Lark** *Calandrella brachydactyla*

**Scarce spring and autumn migrant**

One was discovered at Setter on 22nd April, in the same field as the Calandra Lark, and remained there until 24th April.

**+ Woodlark** *Lullula arborea*

**Vagrant; 52 records since 1948 (23 spring, 29 autumn)**

One found at Midway on 6th November had relocated to the Stoneybrek bird crop by 12th, where it remained until 18th. *Accepted by SBRC*

**Sky Lark** *Alauda arvensis*

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

Two over-wintering birds were present in January and ten on 12th February, rising to 30 on 14th, signalled the start of spring passage. The first birds singing were noted on 24th February. Peak counts in March were just 70 on 12th and 120 on 29th and numbers peaked at 200 in early April. Numbers dropped below 100 from mid-April and the first chicks were found on 18th May. Autumn passage was evident from early September to mid-October with almost daily counts over 100 and maxims of

140 on 30th September and 185 on 5th October. Numbers tailed off into November but there were still 32 on 12th and at least two stayed to the end of the year.

**+ Horned (Shore) Lark** *Eremophila alpestris*

**Scarce spring and autumn migrant**

The first autumn record for four years. One at Lower Leogh on 5th November remained on the isle until 15th by which time it had moved to Shirva.

**Sand Martin** *Riparia riparia*

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

The first (3) appeared on 23rd April (the same date as in 2007) and there were 1-2 on 17 dates to the end of May and peaks of four on two dates and a maximum six on 2nd May. One on 7th June was the last of the spring. In autumn, a single on 31st July was followed with another on 2nd August, three on 18th (with two on 19th) and four singles in September, the last on 18th.

**Barn Swallow** *Hirundo rustica*

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

The first was not until 21st April but birds were then ever-present until late June. Peak passage was in early May when peaks of 54 (2nd), 45 (7th) and 33 (9th) occurred. Most other counts were below 20 but there was a count of 50 on 30th May. Counts of 1-5 were sporadic throughout July & August and similar numbers were regularly recorded in September (but for nine on 22nd). A single on 4th October was the last.

**Common House Martin** *Delichon urbicum*

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

A single on 29th April was followed with 1-5 on most days in May and early June. Maximum counts were 12 on 21st and 21 on 30th May. Three on 31st July were the only autumn birds apart from a single from 14th-25th September.

**+ Richard's Pipit** *Anthus richardi*

**Scarce autumn migrant; vagrant in spring**

A poor year with a single on 3rd October, rising to three on 7th with one until 10th.

**Tree Pipit** *Anthus trivialis*

**Frequent spring and autumn migrant**

In spring, a single on 23rd-25th April was the first, followed with almost daily single-figure counts from 30th April-7th June but for peak counts in late May when ten on 29th, rose to a maximum 15 the following day and 13 on 31st. In autumn, a single on 15th August then saw 1-4 on most dates until much heavier passage between 10th-22nd September produced regular counts over 30 and over 50 on six dates, including 96 (13th), 79 (14th) and 71 (16th). Counts then dropped to single figures until 29th and stragglers in October were seen on five dates up to 18th.

### **Meadow Pipit** *Anthus pratensis*

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

A single on 16th March was the first of the year but passage did not start until six on 29th and ten on 31st had risen to 70 by 1st April. Daily counts of c40-90 were made until heavier passage in the second half of April saw regular counts over 100 and a maximum of 163 on 24th. Autumn passage from mid-August was heaviest in September when counts over 200 were daily, exceeded 300 on 16 dates with peaks of 570 (2nd) and 540 (24th). Numbers dropped below 100 from mid-October, dwindling to less than 20 by November. There were still 1-2 present in late December.

### **Red-throated Pipit** *Anthus cervinus*

**Rare spring & autumn migrant; 72 previous records**

Following a blank year in 2007 there were records in both spring and autumn this year. A flighty ♀ or first-summer ♂ was at Wirvie on 30th May. One was at Boini Mire on 23rd September. *Both accepted by SBRC*

### **Eurasian 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 4th & 27th April.

### **Yellow Wagtail** *Motacilla flava*

**Regular spring and autumn migrant**

A ♂ of the Grey-headed race (*M.f.thunbergi*) on 1st-3rd May was the first followed by an unidentified ♀ from 9th-14th May. 1-2 of this race from 13th-27th May increased to six on 29th, rising to a maximum 13 the following day and 11 on 31st dropping to three and one on consecutive days.

Birds of the Blue-headed race (*M.f.flava*) were noted on 13th, 21st, 22nd & 23rd May. One of the British race *M.f.flavissima* from 2nd-4th June was the last of the spring. In autumn, a juvenile Grey-headed on 1st September was not followed until counts of 1-5 of this race daily between 10th-20th September also included single Blue-headed on three dates. Finally, unidentified singles were seen on 24th & 30th September.

### **+ Citrine Wagtail** *Motacilla citreola*

**Rare autumn migrant, vagrant in spring; 54 previous records (including two in spring)**

A ♀ frequented Da Water from 11th -13th May - only the third spring record. Autumn produced five further birds; one at Barkland then Da Water and Ultra Scrape from 16th-23rd August was joined by a second bird on the last date. Another was present on Da water on 1st & 2nd September. The fourth of the autumn was found in the Havens on 4th September and commuted between here and Finnickquoy Gully until 8th September. This individual was a very brown juvenile bird, not the grey birds we are used to seeing and created some debate but was thought most likely to be a very juvenile bird from a late brood. Finally, one was observed on South Harbour beach on 6th October. *All six accepted by BBRC*



King Eider, May  
© Mark Breaks



Long-tailed Duck, October  
© Mark Breaks



Night Heron, April  
© Mark Breaks



**Black Kite, May**  
© Mark Breaks



**Honey Buzzard, June**  
© Mark Breaks



**Dotterel, May**  
© Mark Breaks



**Caspian Plover, May**  
© Paul Baxter



**Caspian Plover, May**  
© Paul Baxter





Pectoral Sandpiper, September  
© Mark Breaks



Grey Phalarope, October  
© Mark Breaks



Kumlien's Gull, April  
© Mark Breaks



Long-eared Owl, November  
© Deryk Shaw





Calandra Lark, April  
© Mark Breaks



Citrine Wagtail, May  
© Mark Breaks



White's Thrush, October  
© Rebecca Nason





Siberian Thrush, September  
© Deryk Shaw



Pallas's Grasshopper Warbler, October  
© Mark Breaks



Grasshopper Warbler, September  
© Mark Breaks



Lanceolated Warbler, September  
© Mark Breaks





Savi's Warbler, May  
© Mark Breaks



Paddyfield Warbler, September  
© Mark Breaks



Western Bonelli's Warbler, September  
© Mark Breaks



Siberian Chiffchaff, April  
© Mark Breaks



Arctic Warbler, September  
© Mark Breaks



Brown Flycatcher, September  
© Deryk Shaw



Citril Finch, June  
© Mark Breaks



Citril Finch, June  
© Mark Breaks



Arctic Redpoll, October  
© Mark Breaks





Two-barred Crossbill, August  
© Mark Breaks



Two-barred Crossbill, July  
© Mark Breaks



**Grey Wagtail** *Motacilla cinerea***Scarce spring and autumn migrant; has bred**

In spring, one on 29th March was the first and there were regular singles throughout April and a maximum four on 23rd April. One on 11th-14th May was followed with another on 30th and singles on eight further dates to 21st June. A ♀ trapped on 5th June had a well-developed brood patch but breeding was not suspected.

Five on 21st September were the first of the autumn and birds were regularly seen until the last on 28th October. Most counts were below five but there was a record count of eight on 10th October.

**White/Pied Wagtail** *Motacilla alba***Frequent spring and autumn migrant; occasional breeder**

The first was not seen until 12th March - a ♂ Pied Wagtail *M.a.yarrellii* with another on 19th March. Birds of this race were seen daily from 27th March but just single figures were noted. The first White Wagtail *M.a.alba* appeared on 13th April and peak passage of this race was in early May when up to eight were seen (on 3rd & 5th). Three pairs of Pied Wagtails and a mixed pair of a ♂ White and ♀ Pied remained to breed. The first fledged juveniles left the nest on 15th June. Main autumn passage (nearly all White Wagtails) was noted from mid-August until mid-September. Most counts were less than 20 and numbers peaked in late August at just 41 (27th) & 61 (28th). High single figures in late September dropped to less than four (mainly Pied Wagtails) in October, until the last on 30th.

**+ Bohemian Waxwing** *Bombycilla garrulus***Scarce/irruptive autumn migrant, rare in spring**

In spring, two very late northbound migrants were seen on 11th June, with one present until 19th June. In autumn, three on 29th October had risen to six by 1st November with still three on 5th. Passage was noted on 6th November when a total of 33 birds went through. Singles were seen on three further scattered dates in November and on 3rd & 20th December.

*The June records are our first in that month and also the latest Shetland spring records.*

**+ White-throated Dipper** *Cinclus cinclus***Rare spring & autumn migrant; 34 previous records**

A single bird of the nominate race (Black-bellied Dipper) was found in Wirvie on 5th December 2007 and was still present there in the New Year, relocating to the Finnickuoy Gully on 23rd January. It was trapped and ringed there on 10th February and was often heard singing at the Click Mills waterfall during its stay. It was last seen in the Vaadal on 13th March. Another present in Wirvie on 12th & 13th April was unassigned to race. *The first bird has been accepted by BBRC.*



### **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 an absolute minimum of 20-24 territories were recorded on the island during 2008. This is lower than average (26-30 territories) although only 21 were counted as recently as 2002. A summary of the population fluctuations can be found in the 2006 Report.

### **Dunnock** *Prunella modularis*

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

In spring, a single on 12th–15th March was followed with 1-2 between 26th March–4th April and almost daily counts of 1-5 until 6th May. Six on 21st April was the maximum count. Autumn counts, from 9th September–7th October were little better with six counted on two dates. Singles on 30th October and 2nd–3rd November were the last.

### **European Robin** *Erithacus rubecula*

**Common spring and autumn migrant**

In January/February birds were present at the Observatory, Wirvie and Auld Haa. Five on 12th March were the first signs of spring passage and birds were noted daily from 29th March–14th May. Peak passage occurred in the second half of April when counts of 14-46 were received. Stragglers (1-3) were noted on a further nine dates to 8th June and a bird that lingered from 12th June–2nd July. A lone bird from 22nd August–8th September preceded main autumn passage, from 10th–22nd September, when double figures were counted daily and peaks of 42 (13th) and 40 (15th & 16th) were made. Single figures were recorded up to 22nd October and there was another smaller influx in late October/early November, which peaked at 14 (30th) and 12 (6th). Small numbers (up to five) were noted to the end of the year.

### **+ Thrush Nightingale** *Luscinia luscinia*

**Rare spring migrant (44 records), vagrant in autumn (seven previous records)**

One was seen for a few minutes on early morning trap round on 13th August and a different bird was trapped at Houll on 18th and was still present the following day. The third of the autumn frequented the environs of Auld Haa from 13th–15th September. *The latter two have been accepted by BBRC*

*This is the fourth consecutive autumn of occurrence but the first that more than one has been logged.*

### **Bluethroat** *Luscinia svecica*

**Regular spring and autumn migrant**

A ♂ on 9th May and further ♂ on 10th-11th were followed with a ♀ on 20th and daily counts of 1-4 from 22nd May–1st June and the last on 7th June. In autumn, a ♂ at Setter from 15th-17th September was followed with one at Quoy on 20th and counts of 1-3 from 24th September–14th October with further singles on 21st-22nd and 30th October.



**Red-flanked Bluetail** © WT Miles

**+ Red-flanked Bluetail** *Tarsiger cyanurus*

*Vagrant; five previous records*

A first-winter was found at Setter on the afternoon of 24th September - an added bonus after the Brown Flycatcher that day! *Accepted by BBRC*

**Black Redstart** *Phoenicurus ochruros*

*Regular spring migrant, scarce in autumn*

A ♀ on 28th March was the first then 1-2 almost daily from 9th–25th April and 1-2 on 11 dates throughout May and a single on 6th–8th June being the last of the spring. In autumn, singles on 23rd & 28th August were followed with further birds on 2nd, 16th, 17th (2) & 19th September and finally one on 4th November.

**Common Redstart** *Phoenicurus phoenicurus*

*Frequent spring and autumn migrant*

Spring passage comprised irregular counts of 1-2 from 1st–21st May before six (max count) on 23rd saw slightly higher daily numbers until the last on 5th June. In autumn, a single on 1st August was the first and further singles were seen on 18th–19th August, 1st, 2nd–5th & 7th September before 28 on 10th signalled the start of main passage. Nine on 11th had risen to 38 the following day and an incredible 100 by 13th before dropping to 48 the next day and rising back to 70 by 17th. Numbers rapidly dropped to single figures by 20th and just 1-3 by 22nd, tailing off to the last on 1st October.

*The 1st August sighting is the earliest ever Shetland autumn record whilst the peak count on 13th September was the highest since the large influx of 1995, when 155 were logged. Prior to that one has to go way back to the incredible autumns of 1956 & 1957 (when 1,000 were logged in each) to find a better count.*

## **Whinchat** *Saxicola rubetra*

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

In spring, one on 28th April was followed with regular counts of 1-2 in May until six on 29th and nine on 30th all but terminated passage with stragglers on 6th & 7th June. Eight on 18th August were the first of the autumn and passage was daily right up to 8th October. A count of 28 on 2nd September was easily the highest until daily counts over 30 between 12th–19th, peaked at 49 on 14th. Numbers dropped below 20 on 21st and below ten by 27th. Singles on 10th and 12th-13th October were the last.

## **Eurasian Stonechat** *Saxicola torquatus*

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

A ♂ on 14th February was not followed until one on 12th March, rose to three the following day and regular sightings of 1-2 from 28th March–9th April. Later birds were noted on 16th & 27th April and two from 6th-8th June were very late! In autumn, singles were seen on 11th-12th October, 21st October and 8th-16th November.

*The February bird is our earliest record.*

## **+ Siberian Stonechat** *Saxicola torquatus maura/stejnegeri*

### **Vagrant; c38 previous records**

A flighty dark individual was well watched on 26th September - the first since 2002.

*Accepted by BBRC*

## **Northern Wheatear** *Oenanthe oenanthe*

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

Two on 1st April was followed with daily counts of 1-6 from 3rd-14th before 15 (13 ♂) on 15th and 69 (62 ♂) on 16th signalled the start of heavier passage. Counts exceeded 100 on most dates until late May with a peak of 172 on 5th May. Autumn passage was noted from early August and counts generally between 60–110 were received daily until early September apart from a large fall of 400 on 28th August. Numbers then were generally below 50 and were down to single figures in October with the last a lingering bird from 27th-31st October.

## **+ White's Thrush** *Zoothera dauma*

### **Vagrant; eight previous records**

One was seen briefly at Schoolton on the morning of 1st October. It was relocated that afternoon at Swartzi Geo where an admiring crowd watched it, but meanwhile the Warden was also watching one at Sheildi Geo/Hesswalls. After some initial confusion, it transpired that there were indeed two individuals on the isle that day! Remarkably, another was found at Quoy one week later. It flew as far as Linni Geo before returning to the bird-crop at Houll where another admiring crowd had the chance to experience this enigmatic bird! *All three accepted by BBRC*

*The freshly killed remains of one were found near Kenaby on 2nd October 2007 - erroneously omitted from 2007 report.*

## **+ Siberian Thrush** *Zoothera sibirica*

**Vagrant; no previous records**

The first for Fair Isle. An immature ♂ was discovered foraging down the cliff at Guidicum on 25th September. It remained there all day, allowing the entire island's birders (and some from Mainland Shetland) to get good views of this dream bird!

*Accepted by BBRC*

## **Ring Ouzel** *Turdus torquatus*

**Frequent spring and autumn migrant**

The first of the spring was reported on 1st April but there wasn't another until 10th and 1-5 daily from 17th April–7th May. A few later birds (counts of 1-3) passed through between 22nd–31st May.

Autumn was the worst since the complete blank of 1956, with just a sole record - a ♂ on 8th October.

## **Common Blackbird** *Turdus merula*

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

Counts of 20-30 were made in the first two months and 40 on 12th March were the first indication of spring passage. Heaviest passage was in April with five counts over one hundred; 120 on 1st and 145 on 25th being the highest. Most other counts were around 50 and were down to single figures by May with stragglers well into June. A lone ♂ summered on the isle. Two on 14th September were the first autumn migrants but numbers remained in single figures until November. Twenty on 5th increased to a maximum 290 the following day and counts remained between 100-200 until the middle of the month and then gradually decreased to around 20 by December.

## **Fieldfare** *Turdus pilaris*

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

During the first three months there was a peak count of 12 on 7th January but generally there were less than five present. Very few were seen in April also until a large influx on 23rd produced a count of 240 with 200 still the following day, dropping to 68 on 26th and petering out to 18 by 2nd May. There were none between 6th-30th May, when three were seen and 1-2 in early June (up to 7th) were the last. In summer a single arrived on 26th July and two were seen throughout August and September. Main autumn passage commenced with a bang when 1,000 were logged on 23rd October, 650 the following day and 260 on 25th before rapidly petering out. A further influx from 6th-12th November produced daily counts between 100-550 before numbers once again dropped rapidly to single figures. There was more passage in December when 100 were logged on 15th and there were still 35 on 26th - the last count of the year.

## **Song Thrush** *Turdus philomelos*

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

Just a single was recorded in January and none in February. Small numbers in late March slowly built up to double figures by mid-April with large peaks of 26 (14th), 41 (24th) & 43 (25th) and there were none again by 8th May. A few stragglers (1-3) were recorded from 27th May–7th June. There were mid-summer singles on 10th–11th & 29th July. In autumn, a single on 10th September was the first and 29 on 12th rapidly built up to 142 the following day and a maximum 236 by 14th. Counts had fallen below 100 again by 18th and were generally below 20 from 22nd September but for an influx of 70 on 7th October. Only small numbers (<5) were seen from mid-October and just a single was noted in December.

## **Redwing** *Turdus iliacus*

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

Just a handful (<5) were noted in January and none in February. Spring passage commenced with 40 on 12th March but most counts were not even double figures and peak counts in April were 32 (1st), 63 (24th) & 56 (25th). Thereafter sporadic counts of 1-4 were made until 30th May. Autumn passage, from 14th September, started slowly but an influx of 200 was noted on 24th and numbers fluctuated greatly from then as birds passed rapidly through, producing peaks in October of 340 (1st), 570 (8th), 1440 (15th), 455 (22nd), 1300 (23rd) & 470 (26th). In November, counts of 250–590 were made daily between 5th–12th before numbers rapidly dwindled to 50 by 15th and less than ten by December.

## **Mistle Thrush** *Turdus viscivorus*

**Scarce spring and autumn migrant**

A single on 5th & 12th February was a very early record. Later spring produced two on 11th–12th April and 1-3 daily between 17th–24th April. In autumn, a single on 2nd–7th August was unusually early but there were just two others, on 25th September and 8th November.

## **+ Pallas's Grasshopper Warbler** *Locustella certhiola*

**Rare autumn migrant (18 previous records)**

Two records. One was discovered in Scaavilskin mid-afternoon on 23rd September. As the crowd gathered it flew round to Busta Geo where, although viewing conditions were precarious, everyone obtained reasonable views. Another was found on 1st October in an area of rough grass near Springfield. Unlike the previous one this bird showed exceptionally well as it scurried through the rough grass, allowing excellent views and some superb photographs to be obtained. *Both accepted by BBRC*

## **+ Lanceolated Warbler** *Locustella lanceolata*

**Rare autumn migrant (77 previous records)**

One was found in the bird-crop at Bull's Park after breakfast on 23rd September and a differently marked individual was discovered in Gilsetter late that afternoon. *Both accepted by BBRC*

**+ Common Grasshopper Warbler** *Locustella naevia*

*Regular spring and autumn migrant*

In spring, two on 25th April were the first of daily sightings until 6th May with a peak of three on 2nd May. A good autumn started with singles on 27th-28th August another on 31st August and 1-2 in early September. Daily sightings from 12th-20th September included three counts of seven birds, one count of eight and a maximum ten on 14th. Singles on 30th September, 1st-3rd October and 8th October were the last.

**+ Savi's Warbler** *Locustella lusciniodes*

*Vagrant; six previous records*

One was trapped at Chalet on 22nd May. *Accepted by BBRC*

*The first since our only autumn record in 2003 and the first in spring since 1996*

**Sedge Warbler** *Acrocephalus schoenobaenus*

*Regular spring migrant, less common in autumn*

In spring, there were regular sightings from 1st May-4th June. Most counts were of 1-3 birds but there were six on 9th May. In autumn, singles on 13th and 19th August preceded regular sightings from 29th August-25th September. As in spring, most counts were of 1-3 birds but five were logged on 15th September. Singles on 8th and 10th-11th October were the last.

**+ Paddyfield Warbler** *Acrocephalus agricola*

*Vagrant in spring (four previous records), rare in autumn (13 previous records)*

One was discovered in the tattie rig at Setter on 13th September - the first in autumn since 2003. *Accepted by BBRC*

**+ Marsh Warbler** *Acrocephalus palustris*

*Scarce spring migrant, rare in autumn*

An excellent spring saw daily counts of 1-4 from 28th May-8th June, including a maximum five on 7th June. One inhabited the Observatory Plantation from 1st-23rd July and one on 1st August may have been the same. In contrast, there were no autumn records.

**Eurasian Reed Warbler** *Acrocephalus scirpaceus*

*Scarce spring migrant, regular in autumn*

Similarly to the previous species, birds were noted from 28th May-12th June but there were never more than three in any one day. In autumn, one on 29th-30th July was followed with sporadic singles on five further dates until almost daily sightings from 17th August-26th September. August counts were between 1-5 but for ten on 20th whilst good passage in mid-September saw counts of 19 (14th), 14 (15th) & 11 (19th). October produced a single on 2nd and 1-2 between 12th-16th.

*The count of 19 on 14th October is the second highest ever, following 20 on 28th August 1997*

### **+ Icterine Warbler** *Hippolais icterina*

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

In spring, recorded daily from 20th May–12th June with most counts being of 1-2 but there were seven on 28th May, six the following day and four on 8th June. In autumn, one was found in Skinners Glig on 6th August but there were no more until another at Setter on 31st August and three more singles between 2nd–10th September.

### **Eurasian Blackcap** *Sylvia atricapilla*

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

In spring, two on 23rd April were the first and sightings were daily up to 24th May and less frequently until 19th June with a late bird lingering from 25th June–7th July. Six on 2nd May was the maximum with most counts being no more than three. Autumn passage commenced on 30th August and sightings were almost daily right up to 6th November. The majority of birds passed through between 10th–25th September when double-figure counts were daily and peaks of 34 (13th) and 27 (16th) were noted. October numbers were all single figures but for 17 on 8th. Late stragglers were noted on 12th, 14th and 28th November.

### **Garden Warbler** *Sylvia borin*

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

Singles on 2nd & 6th May were the first before daily passage from 19th May–9th June which included peaks of 13 (28th), 15 (30th & 1st) and 13 (5th). A single from 15th–17th June was the last of the spring. In autumn, sporadic singles from 30th July–6th August preceded daily passage from 11th August–25th September. Single-figure counts were the norm but there were also peaks of 24 (20th Aug), 24 (10th Sept), 30 (12th) and an impressive 80 on 14th September. Stragglers were noted on five dates in October with one on 29th being the last.

### **Barred Warbler** *Sylvia nisoria*

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

One on 16th August was followed with 1-2 daily until 21st then none until daily sightings again from 30th August–19th September. Six on 2nd September was the maximum, with still five on 3rd–4th. All other counts were no more than three. Singles on 1st–2nd October and 17th October were the last.

### **Lesser Whitethroat** *Sylvia curruca*

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

Spring passage commenced early with 1-2 from 22nd–26th April. Regular counts of 1-3 were made between 30th April–25th May before six on 27th preceded a fall of 25 the following day and 34 on 30th with 15 still on 31st. Smaller numbers were noted daily up to 10th June and stragglers up to 21st with one lingering to 13th July. In autumn, one on 30th July was very early and was not followed until another on 11th August and regular counts of 1-3 from 15th August–2nd September. Daily passage was noted from 6th September–3rd October with peaks of ten (16th) & 14 (17th) and stragglers up to 23rd October.



## Common Whitethroat *Sylvia communis*

*Frequent spring migrant, less common in autumn*

One on 29th April was the first and 1-4 were seen almost daily until 23rd May. Slightly heavier passage from 28th May–7th June saw daily counts of 5+ and a peak of 12 on 30th May. Stragglers were seen on 11th, 18th & 26th June. In autumn, counts of 1-5 were made daily between 17th August–3rd September before heavier passage from 10th–18th September saw high single figures and peaks of 19 (13th) & 12 (16th). Numbers then dropped below five until 29th September. A single from 17th–19th October (found dead on latter date) was the last.

## + Subalpine Warbler *Sylvia cantillans*

*Rare spring migrant (68 previous records), vagrant in autumn (three records)*

A ♀ was trapped in the Plantation on 9th May and was present up to 18th May. Another was trapped on 17th May and remained until 20th May. Both accepted by SBCRC

## + Arctic Warbler *Phylloscopus borealis*

*Rare autumn migrant (68 previous records), vagrant in spring/summer (five records)*

One frequented the Auld Haa/Skerryholm area on 25th September - the first autumn record for five years! Accepted by SBCRC

## Yellow Browed Warbler *Phylloscopus inornatus*

*Regular autumn migrant*

A single on 14th September was followed with 1-2 each day from 17th–19th before daily sightings from 21st–2nd October and stragglers up to 15th October. All counts were single figures except for a record 45+ on 24th September, with 32 the following day and 29 on 26th. Finally, one was trapped on 3rd November.

The count of 45+ is nearly three times the highest previous record day total (16 on 4th October 1988), contributing to an estimated autumn total of 65 birds - another record.

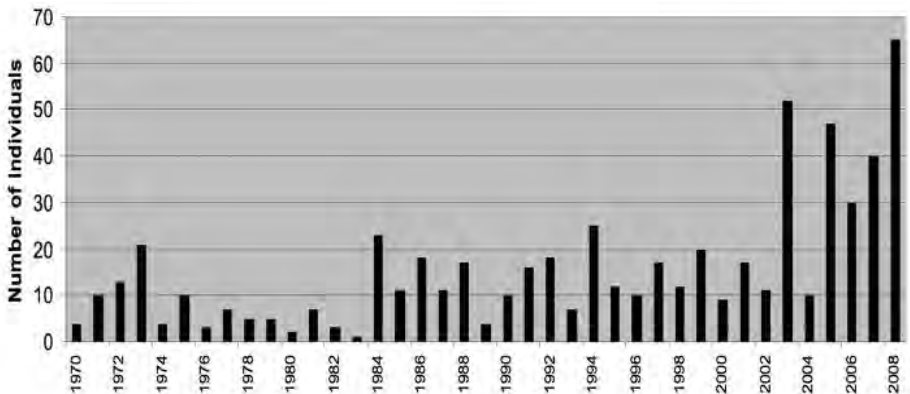


Fig 3. Estimated numbers of Yellow-browed Warblers on Fair Isle in autumn 1970–2008.

## **+ Western Bonelli's Warbler** *Phylloscopus bonelli*

### ***Vagrant; two previous records***

A Bonelli's Warbler frequented the Hjukni Geo/Raevas area on 17th September and caused some debate as to which species it belonged. However it eventually gave itself up when it called several times. It was still present there the following day.  
*Accepted by BBRC*

*Previous records were 22nd September 1961 and 10th September 2005*

## **+ Wood Warbler** *Phylloscopus sibilatrix*

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

In spring, there were singles on 20th & 25th May and two on 30th May. Autumn commenced with 1-2 daily between 19th-22nd August followed with regular singles between 1st-18th September.

## **Chiffchaff** *Phylloscopus collybita*

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

The first in spring arrived on 12th March and another on 23rd before daily sightings from 29th March-11th June. All counts were single figures except for 11 on 23rd April, rising to 23 the following day and to 27 on 25th, plus a count of 13 on 1st May. One summered from 26th June-9th August at least. Autumn passage consisted of daily single figure counts from 5th September-22nd October (but for 12 on 24th September) and less regular sightings from 29th October-18th November. A few of those in mid-October and the majority in later autumn were of eastern origin.

## **Willow Warbler** *Phylloscopus trochilus*

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

Two on 16th April kicked off spring passage and 2-3 over the following week before 19 on 24th reached a maximum 36 on 25th, with 18 still the following day. Most counts were single figures but other peak counts in May were; 14 (1st), 17 (5th), 20 (29th) and 28 (30th). Sightings were daily up until 9th June with stragglers up to 26th. In autumn, early singles on 11th & 13th July preceded the next migrant by a fortnight. Sightings became daily from 12th August right up to the last on 12th October. Main passage was from 14th August-21st September but the bulk of birds passed through during the week 12th-19th September when daily counts exceeded 50 and peaked at 135 on 16th, with 120 the following day.

## **Goldcrest** *Regulus regulus*

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

In spring, singles on 11th & 19th March were followed with daily sightings from 31st March-3rd May. Most counts were single figures but there were 35 on 1st April, 13 on 3rd, 11 on 16th and 10 on 24th.

Autumn passage commenced on 26th August and sightings were daily up to 18th October. Nearly all counts were single figures but for peaks of 15 on 2nd September, 17 on 16th September and 12 on 1st-2nd October. A later influx saw 24 on 29th

October rising to a maximum 40 the following day rapidly petering out with another 25 on 6th November. Six on 8th November were the last.

### **+ Asian Brown Flycatcher** *Muscicapa daurica*

**Vagrant; one previous record**

Quite possibly, the bird of an excellent autumn - a first-winter was spotted briefly on Ward Hill on the morning of 24th September before being relocated at the Communications Mast, where it was watched and photographed for hours by a procession of birders and islanders caught up in the euphoria! It was still present at first light the following day but departed shortly after. Accepted on to Category A by BBRC

Following this record, Fair Isle's and Britain's first record on 1st-2nd July 1992 has been promoted from Category D to Category A and an adult at Flamborough, East Yorkshire 3rd-4th October 2007 has now also been accepted onto Category A



Asian Brown Flycatcher, September © Mark Breaks

### **Spotted Flycatcher** *Muscicapa striata*

**Frequent spring and autumn migrant**

Singles on 10th & 12th May were the first but there were no others until daily passage commenced on 21st May–9th June. May counts were double figures with peaks of 30 (23rd), 23 (28th ) and 33 (30th) whilst just single figures were in June. In autumn, regular counts of 1-2 from 15th August–7th September preceded heavier passage from 10th-21st September when daily double figure counts peaked at 35 on 17th. A few were seen up to the last on 26th September.

### **+ Red-breasted Flycatcher** *Ficedula parva*

#### ***Rare spring and scarce autumn migrant***

In spring, one was in Hjukni Geo on 28th May. Autumn produced three singles, all in September on 15th, 16th-17th & 25th-27th.

### **Eurasian Pied Flycatcher** *Ficedula hypoleuca*

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

In spring, singles on 1st-5th May were the first but there were no others until a handful of birds (max 8) daily from 21st-28th May and a lone ♀ on 11th-12th June. Autumn passage was much better. An early ♀ on 2nd August preceded 1-6 almost daily from 17th-31st August. Daily passage in September (up to 27th) produced fluctuating counts and a period of heavier passage around the middle of the month included three counts over 30 and a maximum 45 on 16th. Stragglers were seen on 1st, 7th & 8th October.

*The count of 45 on 16th September is the highest autumn count for 10 years.*

### **+ Great Tit** *Parus major*

#### ***Rare spring & autumn migrant***

One, a ♀, frequented the Observatory environs from 25th-29th April. It was already sporting a ring and was found to have been ringed two days previously on North Ronaldsay, Orkney.

### **+ Eurasian Golden Oriole** *Oriolus oriolus*

#### ***Rare in spring. Vagrant in autumn; 41 previous records (34 in spring, 7 in autumn)***

An immature ♂ at Quoy on 22nd May was, typically, the only record.

### **Red-backed Shrike** *Lanius collurio*

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

The first birds arrived en-masse when no less than ten were logged on 28th May. Counts of 8-11 were made up to 1st June before dropping below six to 6th then singles to 14th June with a ♀ on 19th June the last of the spring. In autumn, two juveniles on 18th August (with one remaining until 21st) and further juveniles on 15th-16th and 17th-18th (two on latter date) were, typically, the only records.

### **Western Jackdaw** *Corvus monedula*

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

A flock of seven remained from the large influx from Scandinavia in autumn 2007, being reduced to five by mid-March. Twenty-one were counted on 30th March and fluctuating numbers (4-19) were seen up to 13th April indicating some return movement. Singles were seen on five later dates to 1st May and two others from 8th-12th May.

**Rook** *Corvus frugilegus*

*Regular spring migrant, less common in autumn*

One on 2nd April was followed with another 16th-24th and two on 27th April. Further regular sightings of 1-2 were made between 3rd & 23rd May. A lone bird on 24th October was the only autumn record.

**Carrion Crow** *Corvus corone*

*Frequent spring migrant, less common in autumn*

An over-wintering bird paired with a Hooded Crow was seen intermittently from January to April. Passage in late April and May produced high single-figure counts and peaks of 12 on 7th & 20th May. A lone (perhaps resident) bird was seen occasionally in June through to mid-September plus one or two migrants from mid-September to early November.

**Hooded Crow** *Corvus cornix*

*Resident, breeds in small numbers*

Present all year. A light spring passage was evident from April to early May with the three resident pairs joined by small numbers, reaching a maximum count of 15 on 26th April.

Numbers (max 13) increased again in August as fledged birds joined their parents, most of which had departed by October with occasional migrants up to November when just the resident birds remained.

**Northern Raven** *Corvus corax*

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

Present all year. In spring, parties of five on 30th March and 5th April and a single on 10th April disturbed the five resident pairs. The first fledged chicks were noted on 28th May. There was no discernible passage in the autumn.

**Common Starling** *Sturnus vulgaris*

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

Present all year and no formal counts made. The annual monitoring of the island's interior breeding population gave a modal hatching date of 24th May, a mean clutch size of 4.82 eggs, a mean brood size of 4.20 (87% eggs hatched) and a fledging success of 3.34 (69% of eggs laid).

**+ Rosy Starling** *Sturnus roseus*

*Rare spring, summer & autumn migrant (38 previous records, 39 individuals)*

A juvenile was found amongst Common Starlings on Skadan on 16th September.  
*Accepted by SBCRC*

**House Sparrow** *Passer domesticus*

*Resident, breeds in small numbers*

Present all year. Around 40 on 14th February was the only count made.

## **Chaffinch** *Fringilla coelebs*

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

Spring passage commenced with two on 29th March and sightings were daily throughout April, less regular in May with the last on 4th June. Numbers were very small with double figures noted on just four dates, including a maximum of 18 on 13th April. Autumn migration commenced with four on 10th September. The vast majority of birds passed through between 14th–25th September when there were four counts over 100 (max 147). Daily counts outside this period were just single figures right up to the end of October, with stragglers into early November. Two ♀ were seen regularly up to the end of the year.

## **Brambling** *Fringilla montifringilla*

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

In spring, a single on 27th March was followed with irregular counts of 1-3 until 19th April. Main passage, from 20th–29th April included peaks of 23, 39 & 40. Stragglers were noted right up to 23rd May. In autumn, two on 14th September were followed with 1-5 daily from 20th–26th September but there were no more until 2nd October. Most birds passed through between 7th–15th October when counts ranged from 12 to a maximum 65. From then, low single figures were noted up to 12th November.

## **European Greenfinch** *Carduelis chloris*

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

The first, on 28th March was trapped the following day and found to be sporting a Norwegian ring! Thereafter single figures (max 8) were seen up to 27th April and a later bird on 3rd–4th May. In autumn, there were just two birds present from 29th Oct–1st November, with one remaining until 13th November.

## **+ European Goldfinch** *Carduelis carduelis*

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

Two on 20th April were the only record.

## **+ Citril Finch** *Carduelis citrinella*

### **Vagrant; no previous records**

An unpredicted first for Britain; a ♂ was discovered at Auld Haa on 6th June. It was trapped the following day at Barkland, ringed and tentatively aged as an adult. It remained in the south of the isle until 11th June, by which time it had been twiched by over 100 birders. *Accepted by BBRC. Awaiting BOURC decision. Read a full report elsewhere in this journal.*

## **Eurasian Siskin** *Carduelis spinus*

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

Three ♂ on 26th February was, as in 2007, an unusual record. One remained the following day and there were further arrivals when 2-6 were counted daily from 10th–13th March. Spring passage proper began with four on 29th March and single

figures were logged almost daily up to 15th May but for peaks of ten on 3rd April and 11 on 25th April. There was a flurry of late migrants with daily counts up to seven between 29th May–5th June and later birds on 9th & 15th June. A single on 8th September kicked off autumn passage and single figures were noted daily from 15th September–12th October but for a maximum 18 on 24th September. Two on 15th October were the last.

### **Common Linnet** *Carduelis cannabina*

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

In winter, a single was seen on 5th February. Spring records comprised almost daily counts of 1-7 from 9th April–12th May with stragglers on four dates up to 6th June. In autumn, there were irregular counts of 1-6 on 12 dates between 22nd September–26th October.

### **Twite** *Carduelis flavirostris*

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

Present all year. Peak count in the early part of the year was 25 on 14th February. Peak spring count was 45 on 19th April with most counts being 20-35 attributed to the breeding population. As usual, numbers built up from early August and were over 100 from 25th onwards right up to 13th October (max. 195 on 22nd September), gradually dropping to around 50 by November and 20 by December.

### **+ Lesser Redpoll** *Carduelis cabaret*

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

A single from 5th-13th May was the sole spring record and in autumn intermittent singles between 22nd September–1st October may also have referred to just one bird.

### **Common Redpoll** *Carduelis flammea*

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

A flyover Redpoll sp was seen on 15th January. In spring, small numbers (max. three) 'Mealy' Redpolls *C. f. flammea* were noted regularly from 11th April–22nd May and singles on 5th-6th & 8th June. A bird of 'north-western' origin *C. f. rostrata/islandica* on 11th-16th June was an unusual spring record. In autumn, birds of all races were noted between 13th September–13th November. The majority were 'Mealy' Redpolls with a maximum of just eight on 6th November but 4-6 'north-western' types were present from 19th–26th Sept and 1-2 were regularly recorded throughout October up to 4th November. Finally, a 'Mealy' was seen on 1st December and a 'north-western' from 26th-31st December.



### **+ Arctic Redpoll** *Carduelis hornemanni*

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

Two records both *C. h. hornemanni* (Hornemann's Redpoll); one was seen for less than a minute in Barkland garden on 8th April. One was found at Setter on 1st October, remaining until 2nd, during which time it visited virtually every croft on the isle.

*These and one from October 2006 are awaiting the results of a BBRC review of all Arctic Redpoll records.*

### **+ Two-barred Crossbill** *Loxia leucoptera*

#### **Vagrant; 21 records, mainly July–September**

A record-breaking influx involving at least 16 individuals. A single adult ♀ on 25th July became two on 27th–30th July. A further two, including an adult ♂ arrived on 1st August. Two more arrived on 5th August and the following day a flock of nine, all juveniles, was discovered on Bunes. These all remained up to 9th but there were eight still on 12th and four on 18th were the last to leave. Finally, a mobile juvenile was present from 7th–14th September. *All except the last of these have been accepted by BBRC*

### **Common Crossbill** *Loxia curvirostra*

#### **Irregular irruptive summer/autumn migrant**

A single on 14th May was the precursor of an influx commencing on 29th May that lasted right up to 15th October. Numbers were quite small with regular counts of single figures throughout the whole period and three larger counts; 17 on 2nd July, rose to 42 the following day and there were 12 on 14th July.

### **Common Rosefinch** *Carpodacus erythrinus*

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

In spring, two on 22nd–23rd May included a nice red ♂ which was frequently heard singing. Singles on 25th & 27th May rose to four on 28th and to six by 30th, dwindling to the last on 3rd June.

A mid-summer record, an adult ♀ from 21st July–1st August, was an unusual record, but not unheard of. In autumn, the first was on 22nd August and counts of 1–4 were made almost daily right up to the last on 17th October.

### **+ Hawfinch** *Coccothraustes coccothraustes*

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

Two dropped into the Barkland garden on 20th April and another was present on 25th April. The fourth of the spring was seen on 28th May.

### **Lapland Longspur (Bunting)** *Calcarius lapponicus*

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

In spring, fine ♂ were present on 4th & 27th April and a ♀ on 14th May. In autumn, a single on 25th–27th August was followed with almost daily sightings of 1–4 from 4th September up to 17th October. Two on 22nd October were the last of the year.

### **Snow Bunting** *Plectrophenax nivalis*

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

The only record in January was two on 15th. There were no further sightings until 15 arrived on 6th March, rapidly rising to 92 on 12th but these departed quickly. There was daily passage from 29th March–19th April, with a peak of 42 on 7th April. Autumn sightings were from 20th September and birds were ever-present at least until the end of November. Counts fluctuated widely but six counts exceeded 100, including 146 on 14th October and 228 on 2nd November. A count of 35 was made on Christmas Day.

### **Yellowhammer** *Emberiza citrinella*

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

In spring, singles from 30th March–10th April and 25th–27th April were the only records. Autumn fared only slightly better with singles on 8th–14th October, 29th October, 1st November and 17th November.

### **+ Ortolan Bunting** *Emberiza hortulana*

#### **Scarce spring & autumn migrant**

Singles on eight dates between 3rd–19th September possibly only related to two individuals.

### **+ Rustic Bunting** *Emberiza rustica*

#### **Scarce spring & autumn migrant; 119 previous records**

In spring, different individuals were seen on 19th, 24th and 30th May and another on 1st June. *All accepted by SBCRC*

*This constitutes the best spring since a similar number were logged in 1999*

### **+ Little Bunting** *Emberiza pusilla*

#### **Scarce autumn migrant, rare in spring (25 previous records)**

One at Wirvie on 30th May was in the company of a Rustic Bunting! In autumn, singles frequented Lower Stoneybrek from 25th–29th September and around Utra/Skerryholm from 1st–4th October.

### **Common Reed Bunting** *Emberiza schoeniclus*

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

In spring, a ♂ on 12th March was not followed until another on 30th March signalled the start of a light passage with regular counts of 1–4 and peaks of eight and six (on 1st & 5th May respectively) up to 6th June.

Autumn passage was, typically, even lighter with 1–2 daily from 18th–27th September, from 8th–13th October and 19th–21st October.

# Ringling Report

Alan Bull & Deryk Shaw

A total of 4372 birds of 109 species were ringed during 2008. Once again, seabirds contributed little to this total with barely 1000 birds ringed during the year - a far cry from 10 years ago when over 2000 Guillemots alone were ringed. Table 1 highlights the ten most commonly ringed species in 2008.

**Table 1.** The ten most commonly ringed species, with totals, on Fair Isle in 2008; (2007 totals for comparison).

Species	2008	2007
Starling	514	628
Northern Wheatear	377	178
Storm Petrel	332	154
Blackbird	287	361
Redwing	272	132
Meadow Pipit	233	166
Great Skua	220	231
Puffin	197	191
Robin	183	40
Twite	138	121

One addition was made to the ringing list in 2008 - a Citril Finch (the first British record) caught in June at Barkland. An impressive influx of Two-barred Crossbills in August resulted in six being caught, only our 2nd-7th to be ringed. Up to 2006, only 8 had previously been ringed in Britain! Our 5th Savi's Warbler and Nightjar and 6th Scaup were also ringed during the year. Other unusual species trapped included our 11th Yellow Wagtail (caught in the Gully trap), 16th-17th Dipper, 18th-19th Swift (mist-netted at North Light) and our 19th Long-tailed Duck.

Once again the Heligoland trap at Barkland was operational throughout the year and contributed 259 birds of 42 species to the Observatory totals.

Following recent taxonomic decisions and changes to the British List, Southern Grey Shrike and Sykes's Warbler have been added to the Fair Isle ringing list, following respective single birds trapped in 1956 and 1959 (both first British records!). Incidentally, the second British records of both species were trapped on Fair Isle in 1964 and 1977 respectively. These and the Citril Finch caught in 2008 take the total number of species ringed on Fair Isle to 275.

**Table 2.** Numbers of birds ringed on Fair Isle and recovered/controlled elsewhere in 2008, together with cumulative totals from 1948.

Species	Ringed as:		Total 2008	Total 1948–08	Recovery/Control	
	Juv/Ad	Pullus			2008	1948–08
Whooper Swan	9	-	9	50	1	8
Bean Goose	-	-	-	1	-	-
Pink-footed Goose	1	-	1	16	-	1
White-fronted Goose	-	-	-	3	-	1
Greylag Goose	37	-	37	90	1	12
Barnacle Goose	-	-	-	4	-	-
Shelduck	-	-	-	5	-	-
Wigeon	1	-	1	57	-	5
Teal	9	-	9	83	-	4
Mallard	-	-	-	17	-	1
Pintail	-	-	-	2	-	1
Shoveler	-	-	-	1	-	-
Pochard	-	-	-	3	-	-
Ring-necked Duck	-	-	-	1	-	-
Tufted Duck	3	-	3	23	-	-
Scaup	1	-	1	6	-	-
Eider	1	-	1	171	-	1
Long-tailed Duck	1	-	1	19	-	1
Velvet Scoter	-	-	-	2	-	-
Goldeneye	-	-	-	22	-	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	45	65	110	17245	2	178
Storm Petrel	332	-	332	31241	17	1232
Leach's Petrel	4	-	4	99	-	3
Gannet	1	-	1	521	1	10
Cormorant	-	-	-	7	-	-
Shag	1	6	7	23692	13	586
Grey Heron	1	-	1	22	-	-
Marsh Harrier	-	-	-	1	-	-
Hen Harrier	-	-	-	2	-	-
Goshawk	-	-	-	2	-	-
Sparrowhawk	14	-	14	396	-	24
Kestrel	1	-	1	53	-	8
Red-footed Falcon	-	-	-	1	-	-
Merlin	6	-	6	202	-	12
Peregrine	-	-	-	6	-	1
Water Rail	-	-	-	335	-	3

Species	Ringed as:		Total	Total	Recovery/Control	
	Juv/Ad	Pullus	2008	1948-08	2008	1948-08
Spotted Crane	-	-	-	19	-	-
Little Crane	-	-	-	1	-	-
Baillon's Crane	-	-	-	1	-	-
Corncrake	-	-	-	43	-	2
Moorhen	1	-	1	104	-	3
Coot	-	-	-	15	-	1
Great Bustard	-	-	-	1	-	-
Oystercatcher	3	5	8	1544	1	74
Little Ringed Plover	-	-	-	1	-	-
Ringed Plover	9	21	30	761	-	6
Dotterel	-	-	-	4	-	-
Golden Plover	-	-	-	24	-	-
Grey Plover	-	-	-	1	-	-
Lapwing	-	4	4	352	-	6
Knot	-	-	-	105	1	4
Sanderling	3	-	3	120	-	1
Semipalmated 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	16	-	16	190	-	1
Dunlin	10	-	10	604	-	8
Buff-breasted Sandpiper	-	-	-	1	-	-
Ruff	-	-	-	41	-	1
Jack Snipe	2	-	2	145	-	3
Common Snipe	13	-	13	522	-	4
Great Snipe	-	-	-	2	-	-
Woodcock	11	-	11	490	2	26
Black-tailed Godwit	-	-	-	1	-	-
Bar-tailed Godwit	-	-	-	9	-	2
Whimbrel	-	-	-	17	-	-
Curlew	-	1	1	197	-	6
Common Sandpiper	-	-	-	70	-	1
Green Sandpiper	1	-	1	59	-	1
Spotted Redshank	-	-	-	3	-	-
Greenshank	-	-	-	14	-	-
Wood Sandpiper	-	-	-	19	-	-
Redshank	3	-	3	288	-	3
Turnstone	-	-	-	96	-	-
Red-necked Phalarope	-	-	-	5	-	-
Grey Phalarope	-	-	-	3	-	-
Pomarine Skua	-	-	-	1	-	-
Arctic Skua	1	-	1	3949	-	71
Great Skua	-	220	220	3195	3	55

Species	Ringed as:		Total	Total	Recovery/Control	
	Juv/Ad	Pullus	2008	1948-08	2008	1948-08
Kittiwake	-	-	-	7083	1	38
Black-headed Gull	-	-	-	48	-	2
Common Gull	-	7		239	-	3
Lesser Black-backed Gull	2	5	7	1460	-	35
Herring Gull	2	22	24	4488	1	98
Iceland Gull	-	-	-	1	-	-
Glaucous Gull	-	-	-	40	-	1
Great Black-backed Gull	1	4	5	2854	-	113
Common Tern	1	-	1	482	-	3
Arctic Tern	-	-	-	11753	1	39
Guillemot	21	1	22	37056	14	1100
Razorbill	21	-	21	11493	4	290
Black Guillemot	-	-	-	1667	-	19
Little Auk	-	-	-	14	-	-
Puffin	160	37	197	13576	-	33
Rock Dove	25	-	25	130	-	-
Wood Pigeon	-	-	-	74	-	2
Collared Dove	7	-	7	389	-	6
Turtle Dove	-	-	-	83	-	2
Cuckoo	1	-	1	109	-	1
Scops Owl	-	-	-	2	-	-
Snowy Owl	-	-	-	1	-	1
Long-eared Owl	2	-	2	257	-	13
Short-eared Owl	-	-	-	18	-	-
Nightjar	1	-	1	5	-	-
Swift	2	-	2	19	-	1
Hoopoe	-	-	-	3	-	-
Wryneck	10	-	10	248	-	-
Great Spotted Woodpecker	-	-	-	29	-	-
Short-toed Lark	-	-	-	9	-	-
Woodlark	-	-	-	3	-	-
Skylark	4	15	19	1372	-	3
Shore Lark	-	-	-	5	-	-
Sand Martin	-	-	-	8	-	-
Swallow	2	-	2	265	-	2
House Martin	-	-	-	142	-	1
Richard's Pipit	-	-	-	12	-	-
Blyth's Pipit	-	-	-	2	-	-
Tawny Pipit	-	-	-	3	-	-
Olive-backed Pipit	-	-	-	10	-	-
Tree Pipit	9	-	9	669	-	-
Pechora Pipit	-	-	-	9	-	-
Meadow Pipit	185	48	233	11350	-	45
Red-throated Pipit	-	-	-	9	-	-
Rock Pipit	70	18	88	9913	-	29
Yellow Wagtail	1	-	1	11	-	-
Citrine Wagtail	-	-	-	6	-	-

Species	Ringed as:		Total	Total	Recovery/Control	
	Juv/Ad	Pullus	2008	1948-08	2008	1948-08
Grey Wagtail	4	-	4	50	1	2
White/Pied Wagtail	17	-	17	841	1	5
Waxwing	1	-	1	68	-	-
Dipper	2	-	2	17	-	-
Wren	19	-	19	970	-	-
Dunnock	15	-	15	2704	-	10
Robin	183	-	183	9333	1	41
Rufous-tailed Robin	-	-	-	1	-	-
Thrush Nightingale	1	-	1	35	-	-
Nightingale	-	-	-	30	-	-
Siberian Rubythroat	-	-	-	2	-	-
Bluethroat	4	-	4	296	-	2
Red-flanked Bluetail	-	-	-	2	-	-
Black Redstart	1	-	1	164	-	-
Redstart	30	-	30	1876	-	1
Whinchat	24	-	24	666	-	2
Stonechat	-	-	-	61	-	-
Northern Wheatear	287	90	377	17638	-	75
Pied Wheatear	-	-	-	1	-	-
Black-eared Wheatear	-	-	-	3	-	-
Rock Thrush	-	-	-	1	-	-
White's Thrush	-	-	-	1	-	-
Hermit Thrush	-	-	-	1	-	-
Grey-cheeked Thrush	-	-	-	2	-	-
Ring Ouzel	3	-	3	511	-	9
Blackbird	287	-	287	24253	3	338
Eye-browed Thrush	-	-	-	1	-	1
Dusky Thrush	-	-	-	1	-	-
Black-throated Thrush	-	-	-	1	-	-
Fieldfare	6	-	6	655	-	1
Song Thrush	42	-	42	3134	-	32
Redwing	272	-	272	9590	-	74
Mistle Thrush	-	-	-	22	-	-
Pallas' Grasshopper Warbler	-	-	-	13	-	-
Lanceolated Warbler	-	-	-	39	-	-
Grasshopper Warbler	6	-	6	143	-	-
River Warbler	-	-	-	9	-	-
Savi's Warbler	1	-	1	5	-	-
Aquatic Warbler	-	-	-	25	-	-
Sedge Warbler	8	-	8	553	-	1
Paddyfield Warbler	-	-	-	10	-	1
Blyth's Reed Warbler	-	-	-	12	-	1
Marsh Warbler	6	-	6	145	-	-
Reed Warbler	18	-	18	330	-	1
Great Reed Warbler	-	-	-	7	-	-
Thick-billed Warbler	-	-	-	2	-	-
Eastern Olivaceous Warbler	-	-	-	1	-	-



Species	Ringed as:		Total	Total	Recovery/Control	
	Juv/Ad	Pullus	2008	1948-08	2008	1948-08
Booted Warbler	-	-	-	8	-	-
Sykes's Warbler	-	-	-	2	-	-
Icterine Warbler	11	-	11	124	-	-
Melodious Warbler	-	-	-	13	-	-
Blackcap	104	-	104	6019	1	27
Garden Warbler	91	-	91	3786	-	4
Barred Warbler	6	-	6	445	-	1
Lesser Whitethroat	40	-	40	830	-	1
Whitethroat	26	-	26	1045	-	-
Subalpine Warbler	2	-	2	31	-	-
Sardinian Warbler	-	-	-	1	-	-
Greenish Warbler	-	-	-	24	-	-
Arctic Warbler	-	-	-	33	-	-
Pallas's Warbler	-	-	-	4	-	-
Yellow-browed Warbler	10	-	10	166	-	-
Hume's Warbler	-	-	-	1	-	-
Radde's Warbler	-	-	-	1	-	-
Dusky Warbler	-	-	-	7	-	-
Western Bonelli's Warbler	-	-	-	2	-	-
Wood Warbler	2	-	2	113	-	-
Chiffchaff	63	-	63	1472	-	5
Willow Warbler	95	-	95	4013	-	7
Goldcrest	25	-	25	1829	-	3
Firecrest	-	-	-	2	-	-
Brown Flycatcher	-	-	-	1	-	-
Spotted Flycatcher	35	-	35	827	-	3
Red-breasted Flycatcher	-	-	-	60	-	-
Collared Flycatcher	-	-	-	2	-	-
Pied Flycatcher	17	-	17	997	-	-
Blue Tit	-	-	-	2	-	-
Great Tit	-	-	-	14	-	-
Coal Tit	-	-	-	1	-	-
Treecreeper	-	-	-	1	-	-
Golden Oriole	-	-	-	8	-	-
Brown Shrike	-	-	-	1	-	-
Isabelline Shrike	-	-	-	2	-	-
Red-backed Shrike	8	-	8	253	-	-
Lesser Grey Shrike	-	-	-	7	-	-
Great Grey Shrike	-	-	-	114	-	1
Southern Grey Shrike	-	-	-	2	-	-
Woodchat Shrike	-	-	-	13	-	-
Jackdaw	-	-	-	13	-	-
Rook	-	-	-	8	-	-
Hooded Crow	-	-	-	48	-	-
Raven	1	-	1	29	-	-
Daurian Starling	-	-	-	1	-	-
Starling	258	256	514	28627	3	199

Species	Ringed as:		Total	Total	Recovery/Control	
	Juv/Ad	Pullus	2008	1948-08	2008	1948-08
Rose-coloured Starling	-	-	-	3	-	-
House Sparrow	57	-	57	1766	-	3
Tree Sparrow	-	-	-	118	-	1
Chaffinch	41	-	41	3193	-	12
Brambling	83	-	83	3890	1	19
Citril Finch	1	-	1	1	-	-
Greenfinch	22	-	22	515	2	33
Goldfinch	-	-	-	20	-	1
Siskin	39	-	39	569	-	1
Linnet	12	-	12	193	-	5
Twite	138	-	138	6329	-	12
Lesser Redpoll	-	-	-	36	-	-
Common Redpoll	14	-	14	757	-	6
Arctic Redpoll	-	-	-	23	-	-
Two-barred Crossbill	6	-	6	7	-	-
Common Crossbill	4	-	4	538	-	2
Parrot Crossbill	-	-	-	37	-	-
Pallas's Rosefinch	-	-	-	1	-	-
Common Rosefinch	10	-	10	235	-	1
Bullfinch	-	-	-	300	-	-
Hawfinch	-	-	-	26	-	1
Tennessee Warbler	-	-	-	2	-	-
Savannah Sparrow	-	-	-	2	-	-
Song Sparrow	-	-	-	3	-	-
White-crowned Sparrow	-	-	-	1	-	-
White-throated Sparrow	-	-	-	2	-	-
Lapland Bunting	-	-	-	49	-	-
Snow Bunting	11	-	11	675	-	3
Pine Bunting	-	-	-	3	-	-
Yellowhammer	3	-	3	72	-	-
Ortolan Bunting	-	-	-	20	-	-
Cretzschmar's Bunting	-	-	-	1	-	-
Yellow-browed Bunting	-	-	-	1	-	-
Rustic Bunting	-	-	-	17	-	1
Chestnut-eared Bunting	-	-	-	1	-	-
Little Bunting	-	-	-	35	-	1
Chestnut Bunting	-	-	-	2	-	-
Yellow-breasted Bunting	-	-	-	6	-	-
Reed Bunting	6	-	6	498	-	3
Pallas's Reed Bunting	-	-	-	2	-	-
Red-headed Bunting	-	-	-	5	-	-
Black-headed Bunting	-	-	-	4	-	-
Corn Bunting	-	-	-	4	-	-
<b>Totals:</b>	<b>3547</b>	<b>825</b>	<b>4372</b>	<b>350322</b>	<b>76</b>	<b>5204</b>

## Ringling recoveries/controls reported to Fair Isle Bird Observatory during 2008

The co-ordinates of Fair Isle are 59°32'N, 01°38'W.

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

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

pullus (nestling or chick)

definitely hatched during calendar year of ringing

hatched before calendar year of ringing, but exact year unknown

definitely hatched during previous calendar year

hatched before previous calendar year, but exact year unknown

definitely hatched more than two calendar years before year of ringing

8 hatched three or more years ago, but exact year unknown

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

### Condition at recovery:

X	found dead
XF	found freshly dead or dying
SR	sick or injured, released with ring
+	shot
V	alive and probably healthy, caught and released but not by ringer
VV	alive and probably healthy, ring or colour marks read in the field
R	caught and released by ringer

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

### Whooper Swan

A7811	1M	02/08/07 Hallgilsstadir, Fnjoskadalur, <b>Iceland</b>
	r	24/10/08 Fair Isle, Shetland (1078 km, 130°, 449 days)
A8195	8M	08/08/08 Sandvatn, Myvatnsheidi, <b>Iceland</b>
	r	24/10/08 Fair Isle, Shetland (1036 km, 130°, 77 days)
Z49034	3	04/10/08 Fair Isle, Shetland
	sr	08/10/08 North Ronaldsay, Orkney (47 km, 249°, 4 days)

The adult A8195 and first-year A7811 arrived together in a party of 19 birds and were from the breeding populations in Iceland.

## Greylag Goose

A juvenile ringed on 21st October was shot seven days later, having made it no further south than Holm, Orkney (101 km, 224°).

## Eider

An adult female ringed on Fair Isle in June 1992 was found dead on the isle in August 2008.

## Fulmar

FR78805	1	21/07/92 Fair Isle, Shetland
	x	04/06/08 Brancaster, Norfolk (743 km, 170°, 5797 days)
FP17354	6	15/07/00 Fair Isle, Shetland
	x	30/12/07 Terschelling, <b>Netherlands</b> (802 km, 149°, 2724 days)

Two typical recoveries of Fair Isle Fulmars.

## Storm Petrel

Seventeen reports were received during 2008 of Fair Isle ringed Storm Petrels being controlled elsewhere. Birds ringed on Fair Isle and controlled at regular sites included birds found at Priest Island, Highlands (3); Craig Stirling, Grampian (2); Eilean Nan Ron, Highland (7), Tres Nes, Orkney (2) and Hauxley, Northumberland. The only two foreign movements are detailed below.

2442757	4	23/07/95 Fair Isle, Shetland
		28/08/06 Nolsoy, <b>Faeroes</b> (386 km, 315°, 4054 days)
2606004	4	24/07/06 Fair Isle, Shetland
		14/08/06 Revekaiaen, Klepp, <b>Norway</b> (416 km, 103°, 21 days)

Eight birds ringed elsewhere and controlled on the isle in July/August 2008 were from Klepp (**Norway**), Western Isles, North Ronaldsay (Orkney), Fife Ness, Dunbeath and Craig Stirling (Highlands), Trondra (Shetland) and Filey (North Yorkshire).

## Gannet

A juvenile ringed in August 2005 was found dead in November 2005 at Corrubedo, Coruna, **Spain** (1952 km, 196°, 105 days). This is only our tenth recovery of a Fair Isle ringed Gannet and the first in Spain.

## Shag

Thirteen reports were received, all of birds ringed on the isle as chicks and found dead between January–May (and one in July) 2008. Eight reports came from Orkney, with all but one (ringed in June 1995) having been ringed in June 2007. Three reports were from Shetland (ringed in July 1985, June 1994 and June 2007). Our furthest travelled birds were found on the **Faeroes** (405 km, 320°) and in **Norway** (691 km, 51°).

## Oystercatcher

FC79238	8	16/03/98 Fair Isle, Shetland
	r	12/12/08 Heysham, Lancashire (616 km, 188°, 3924 days)
FP16089	8	11/07/99 Bangor, Wales
	xf	16/07/08 Fair Isle, Shetland (716 km, 12°, 3293 days)

FP16089 was found in a poor state, with its legs entangled in sheep's wool - a common fate of Fair Isle's Oystercatchers.

## Knot

SV76058	3	10/09/07 Fair Isle, Shetland
		12/01/08 Munlochy Bay, Highland Region (268 km, 214°, 124 days)

Only the fourth recovery of a Fair Isle ringed Knot.

## Snipe

Birds ringed on Fair Isle and subsequently found dead on the isle included a juvenile ringed in August 1998 and found dead in September 2008 and a juvenile ringed in July 2005 and found dead in June 2007.

## Woodcock

EW19338	3	22/10/07 Fair Isle, Shetland
	x	26/12/08 Raloo, Larne, Northern Ireland (587 km, 206°, 431 days)
EW19410	3	02/11/07 Fair Isle, Shetland
		27/12/07 Lyne Husted, Jylland, <b>Denmark</b> (718 km, 126°, 55 days)

EW19410 is only the tenth BTO ringed Woodcock to Denmark (all were shot). A Fair Isle ringed bird in 1966 was the third. EW19338 is not the first Fair Isle ringed Woodcock to be found in Northern Ireland and is indicative of this species' westward migration out of Northern and Eastern Europe.

## Curlew

An adult female ringed in March 1998 on Fair Isle was found dead on the isle in July 2008.

## Turnstone

3M003182	6	16/04/07 Parque Natural, Bahia de Cadiz, <b>Spain</b>
		11/05/07 Fair Isle, Shetland (2583 km, 8°, 254 days)

Our first foreign-ringed control; a bird wintering on Mediterranean (or North African) shores using Fair Isle as a staging post on its way back to its breeding

grounds in Greenland/NE Canada.

### Great Skua

Three birds ringed as chicks on Fair Isle were found dead on beaches. One, ringed in July 2006 was found near Whitby in October 2008 (563 km, 175°, 806 days). One ringed in July 2007 was found near Lion-sur-Mer, **France** in October 2007 (1141 km, 176°, 91 days) and finally another ringed in July 2008 was found in Friesland, **Netherlands** in December 2008 (825 km, 148°, 154 days).

Two birds ringed as chicks on Foula, Shetland were found dead on Fair Isle in 2008 (71 km 161°). One ringed in July 1990 and found in August (6615 days) and another ringed in July 2002 and found in July (2195 days).

### Kittiwake

ET83840	8	10/07/03 Fair Isle, Shetland
		13/09/07 Sisimut, <b>Greenland</b> (2715 km, 288°, 1526 days)

A typical recovery, following post-breeding dispersal into the North Atlantic.

### Great Black-backed Gull

A chick ringed on Fair Isle in June 1995 was found dead on the isle in July 2008.

### Herring Gull

GA22467	1	08/07/08 Fair Isle, Shetland
		09/12/08 Mousa, Shetland (76 km, 21°, 154 days)

### Arctic Tern

SV16443	6	17/06/98 Fair Isle, Shetland
	xf	12/06/08 Klitheden, Bedsted, Jylland, <b>Denmark</b> (666 km, 118°, 3648 days)

This bird was killed by a dog - an unfortunate end!

### Guillemot

Fourteen reports of Fair Isle ringed Guillemots were received during 2008. These are summarised below:

**Orkney:** One chick ringed in June 1991 was found dead on Sanday in June 2008 (56 km, 238°, 6187 days) and a chick ringed in June 2007 was found dead at Burray in October 2007 (104 km, 225°, 97 days). **Grampian Region:** Chicks ringed in June 1992, June 1997 and June 2000 were found dead in April-May 2008 at Balmedie (257 km, 186°). A chick ringed in June 1997 was found dead at Blackdog in May 2008 (261 km, 186°, 3988 days) and a chick ringed in June 1998 was found dead at Footdee in April 2008 (268 km, 186°, 3595 days). **Denmark:** Two birds, ringed as adults, were found dead. One, ringed in June 1996, was found Northeast of Hanstholm In November 2006 (660 km, 113°, 3797 days) and another, ringed in June 2000, was found at Vederso Klit in September 2007 (683 km, 123°, 2633 days). **Faeroes:** An adult

ringed in June 1984 was found dead near Bordoy in November 2008 (391 km, 318°, 8896 days). **Norway:** A chick ringed in June 1982 was found dead at Sandoy, More og Romsdal in January 2008 (562 km, 51°, 9339 days) with another chick, ringed in June 1997, found dead at Ringsaker, Hedmark in October 1999 (712 km, 80°, 828 days). An adult ringed in June 1982 was found dead in September 2003 at Verevoien, Farsund (498 km, 109°, 7769 days). **Sweden:** A chick ringed in June 2007 was recovered at Marstrand in January 2008 (785 km, 104°, 205 days). This bird's ring was found in an Eagle Owl pellet! **Fair Isle:** Birds ringed as chicks in June 1994 and June 1997 were subsequently found dead on the isle in May/June 2008.

### Razorbill

M77842	1	30/06/92 Fair Isle, Shetland 17/11/07 Nakkholmen, Oslo, <b>Norway</b> (692 km, 87°, 5618 days)
M91535	1	05/07/98 Fair Isle, Shetland 16/02/08 Aldwick Bay, Bognor Regis, Sussex (976 km, 177°, 3513 days)
M77813	8	30/06/02 Fair Isle, Shetland 20/02/05 Senneville-sur-Fecamp, <b>France</b> (1093 km, 174°, 4618 days)
K13907	1	27/06/06 Fair Isle, Shetland 06/01/07 Jonville, Manche, <b>France</b> (1103 km, 179°, 193 days)

### Puffin

Chicks ringed on the isle in July 1995 and July 1997 were found dead on the isle in July 2008 and May 2008 respectively.

### Grey Wagtail

V683610	3F	12/10/08 Fair Isle, Shetland 24/12/08 Horsewells, Drumoak, Grampian Region (274 km, 190°, 73 days)
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Only our second recovery of a Fair Isle ringed Grey Wagtail.

### White Wagtail

V159674	3	19/08/08 Fair Isle, Shetland 31/08/08 Kennemer Duinen, <b>Netherlands</b> (879 km, 155°, 12 days)
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Our fifth White Wagtail movement. A swift journey south-east for this bird and only the second British recovery in the Netherlands. Could this have been an Icelandic



*alba* on passage towards the low countries for the winter?

### Robin

V159128	5	01/04/07 Fair Isle, Shetland 23/10/08 Limburg, <b>Netherlands</b> (1029 km, 154°, 571 days) 02/11/08 Limburg, <b>Belgium</b> (1072 km, 156°, 581 days)
U232887	3	02/10/07 Helgoland, <b>Germany</b> 08/04/08 Fair Isle, Shetland (832 km, 316°, 189 days)

V159128 was controlled in TWO Limburgs, in different countries, 100km and ten days apart! Two recoveries further highlighting the continental origin of Fair Isle's migrant Robins!

### Blackbird

CL41595	3F	25/10/05 Fair Isle, Shetland 09/12/08 Scone, Perth, Tayside (364 km, 197°, 1141 days)
CL41683	5F	28/03/06 Fair Isle, Shetland 21/05/08 Sverige Alsang, Orebro, <b>Sweden</b> (979 km, 91°, 785 days)
CL41954	5M	16/04/06 Fair Isle, Shetland 06/11/08 Fife Ness, Fife (368 km, 189°, 935 days)

CL41683 was caught during a large fall of thrushes which also saw Blackbirds ringed on the same day recovered in Essex and Finland (previously reported in the 2007 FIBO report).

An adult female ringed on North Ronaldsay, Orkney in April 2008 was controlled on Fair Isle in June 2008 (49 km). An adult male ringed in March 2007 at Helgoland, **Germany** was controlled on Fair Isle in November 2008 (832 km, 316°, 625 days).

### Blackcap

V683611	3M	13/10/08 Fair Isle, Shetland 15/10/08 Titran, Froya, Sor-Trondelag, <b>Norway</b> (698 km, 49°, 2 days)
8E43912	3M	18/08/08 Bygnes, Karmoy, Rogaland, <b>Norway</b> r 07/09/08 Fair Isle, Shetland (393 km, 274°, 20 days)

V683611 was a rapid and unusual recovery. Most autumn Blackcaps to arrive on Fair Isle are from Scandinavia, so why this bird was heading back there is a mystery!

### Willow Warbler

9X94724	5	22/05/07 Sylviastien, Grene, <b>Denmark</b> 03/07/07 Fair Isle, Shetland (557 km, 70°, 42 days)
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July Willow Warblers are fairly infrequent on Fair Isle and the ringing date in Denmark suggests that this bird was probably a very late northbound migrant. This is only the sixth recovery of a Danish-ringed bird in Britain, whilst there have been

nine in the opposite direction.

### Great Tit

V361258 5F 22/04/08 North Ronaldsay, Orkney  
25/04/08 Fair Isle, Shetland (49 km, 68°, 3 days)

### Starling

CL40999 1 03/06/05 Fair Isle, Shetland  
15/02/08 Broadhaven, Wick, Highland Region (148 km, 215°, 987 days)

LA02336 1 06/06/06 Fair Isle, Shetland  
09/02/08 Broadhaven, Wick, Highland Region (148 km, 215°, 613 days)

LA56178 1 06/06/08 Fair Isle, Shetland  
10/07/08 North Ronaldsay, Orkney (51 km, 247°, 34 days)

### Brambling

V682175 4M 10/10/07 Fair Isle, Shetland  
13/04/08 Dunecht, Grampian Region (267 km, 19°, 186 days)

### Greenfinch

VX87555 3M 10/10/02 Fair Isle, Shetland  
22/05/03 Dybo, Vest-Agder, **Norway** (555 km, 108°, 224 days)

V518202 3F 10/11/05 Fair Isle, Shetland  
17/04/06 Nordfjordeid, **Norway** (491 km, 58°, 158 days)

A male ringed at Anvik, Vetsfold, **Norway** in July 2007 was controlled on the isle in March 2008 (663 km, 276°, 249 days). Three birds ringed on 23rd October 2007 at Revtingen, Klepp, **Norway**, were all controlled on Fair Isle on 29th/30th October 2007 (416 km, 283°, 6 days). One ringed at Fladdabister, Shetland on 31st October 2007 was controlled on Fair Isle on 2nd November 2007 (64 km, 201°, 2 days).

### Lesser Redpoll

T186299 3 08/09/07 Wishaw, Strathclyde  
r 05/05/08 Fair Isle, Shetland (440 km, 18°, 240 days)

The origin of Fair Isle's Lesser Redpolls has been much discussed amongst Observatory staff and it had widely been assumed that Lesser Redpolls on Fair Isle are from Scandinavian populations, but T186299 suggests otherwise!

*Many thanks to Mark Grantham at the BTO for some interesting facts and figures concerning Fair Isle ringing recoveries and controls.*

# Seabirds on Fair Isle in 2008

Deryk Shaw

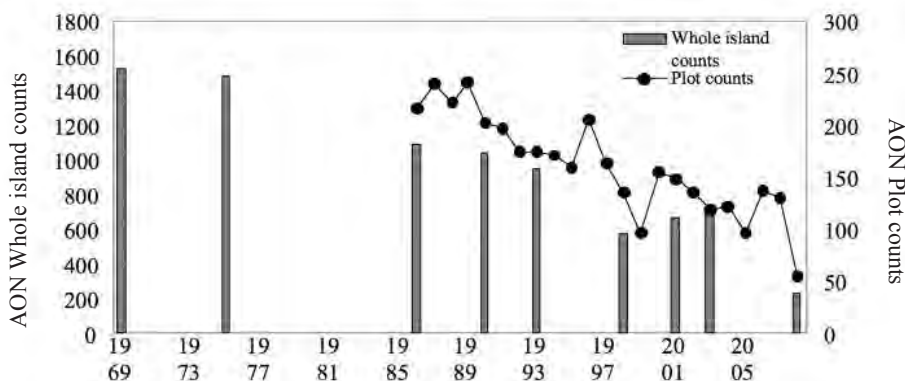
**Overview:** The worst breeding season on record! With few exceptions (Great Skua & Northern Gannet) breeding numbers were very low and several species failed to produce a single chick to fledging. Lesser Sandeels were still in very short supply but in contrast to recent years Snake Pipefish too were scarce.

**Northern Fulmar:** Numbers of AOS on the monitoring plots showed a small (7.9%) increase on 2007's low figure. Productivity was similar to last year with a final figure of 0.38 being somewhat below the long-term mean.

**Northern Gannet:** The breeding population continues to rise, reaching a new record of 2488 AON - a large 27.1% increase since 2007. Increases were noted at all sub-colonies, including the last year's new colony at Lerness, which almost doubled to 108 AON and Sheep Rock, up from 50 to 63 AON.

Breeding success (0.75 chicks fledged per monitored nest) was characteristically high, despite some losses during 'the Fair Isle Monsoon' on 10th August!

**European Shag:** The almost complete failure to fledge young by this species is perhaps the most surprising result of all. There appears to have been extensive non-breeding this year with only 32 AON on the productivity plot (previous lowest was 51 in 2006), most of which were abandoned either before eggs were even laid or



**Fig 1.** Whole island counts and plot counts of European Shag on Fair Isle, 1969–2008. Plot counts are the sum of five study plots. Note that the 1990 and subsequent whole island counts are inclusive of trace nests - earlier counts are exclusive of these.

during incubation. Only three nests hatched young and just a single chick fledged (0.03 productivity). Numbers at the annual population monitoring plots were also much reduced, dropping by 58% overall since last year, whilst a whole island census produced just 235 AON - a massive 67.8% reduction on the last count, in 2003 (Fig 1).

**Great Skua:** Numbers of AOT increased for the third consecutive year - up from 224 in 2007 to 294 (+31.25%) this year to a new record high (Fig 2). The vast majority laid eggs but only 114 chicks managed to fledge. A productivity of 0.39 is very low (Fig 3) but given the troubles other species were having it is quite satisfactory. A sample of 93 nests were monitored more closely; 79 (84.9%) hatched, 22 fledged one chick, 8 fledged two chicks - a sample productivity of 0.41

**Arctic Skua:** This species has been in trouble since 1998 with falling numbers and very low breeding success. The years 2003–2005 saw a total of just ten birds fledge. Things improved dramatically in 2006 with the highest number of AOT (105) since the early 1990s and good productivity (0.82). In 2007 however, the situation deteriorated once again and from 68 AOT (a 35.2% decrease), not a single chick fledged. Numbers fell even further this year to just 37 AOT (Fig 2). Only 17 of these managed to lay eggs but most (12) failed within a week and the remainder by a week later (Fig 3) - mainly due to predation from Bonxies (Great Skuas).

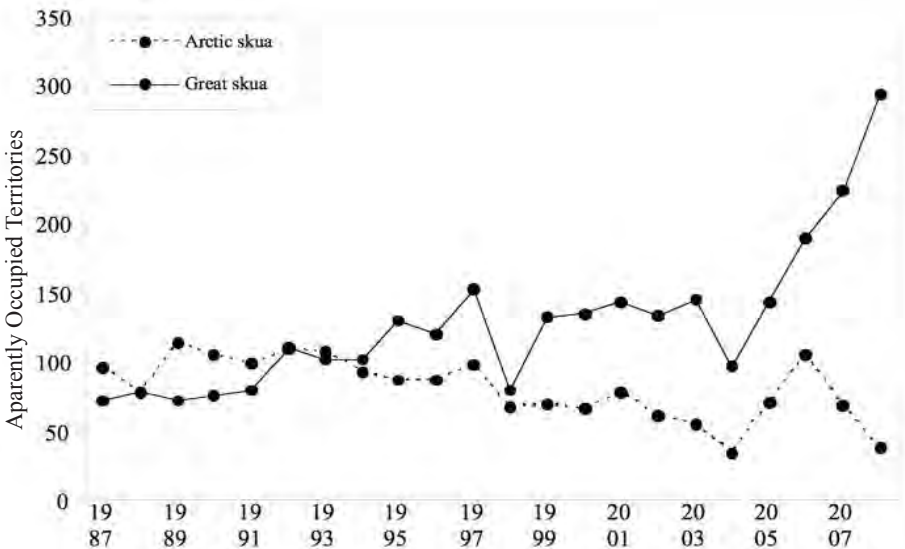
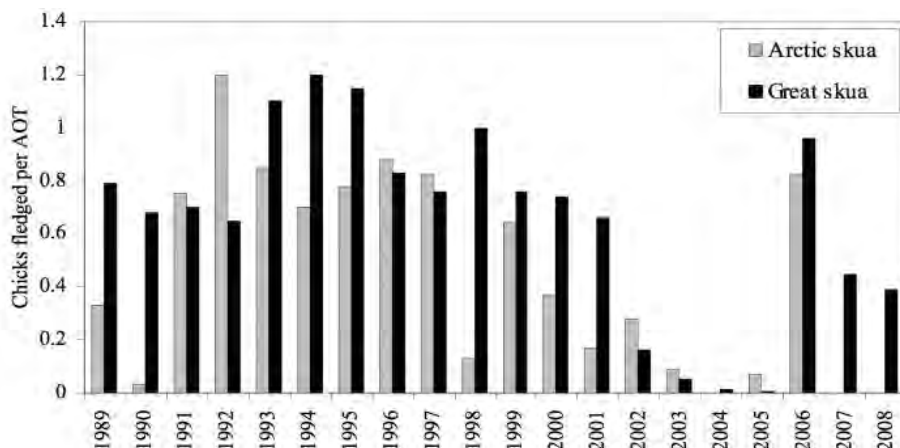
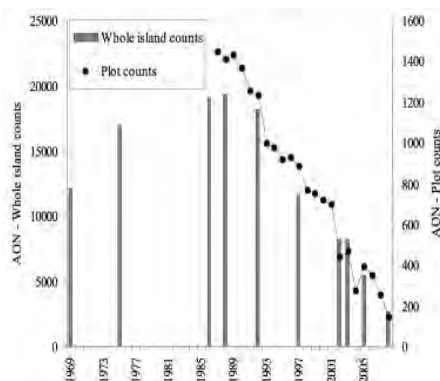


Fig 2. Whole island counts of Arctic Skua and Great Skua on Fair Isle, 1987–2008.



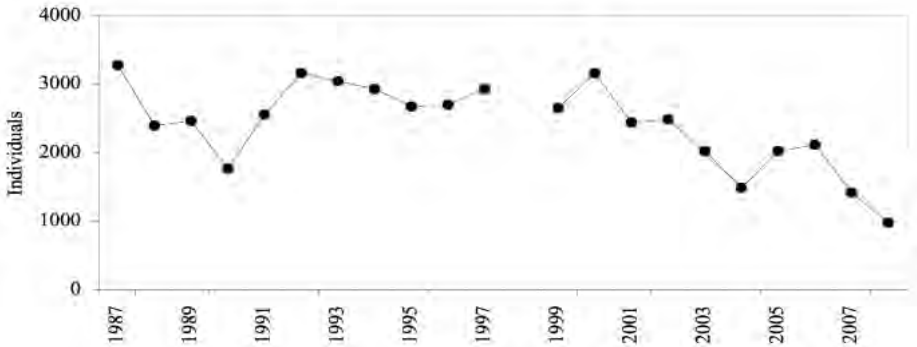
**Fig 3.** Breeding success of Arctic and Great Skuas on Fair Isle, 1989–2008. Note: Arctic Skua failed to fledge any young in 2004, 2007 & 2008.

**Black-legged Kittiwake:** The species in most trouble! In 1988, a whole island census estimated the breeding population at 19,340 AON. Twenty years later, only 14% of this number remain (2688 AON) (Fig 4). Mirroring this, numbers of AON at the monitoring plots continue to fall (by 44.1% since 2007) to the lowest ever - only 10% of the number in 1987 (Fig 4). Although, as last year, the vast majority of nests produced eggs (137 out of 142), only 19 of these hatched and all chicks died before they were 10 days old - mainly from predation by gulls and skuas.



**Fig 4.** Whole island and plot counts of Black-legged kittiwake nests on Fair Isle, 1969–2008.

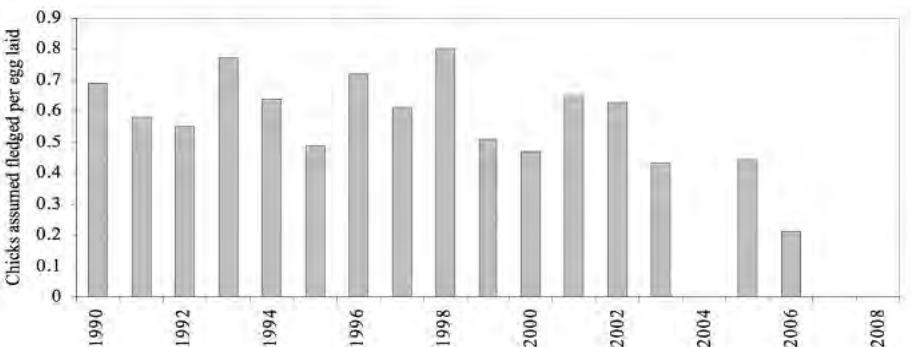
**Arctic Tern:** In 2006, after five consecutive years of failure to fledge any chicks and with numbers of nesting birds dwindling each year, it was a surprise to record over 800 AIA and even more surprise that over 300 chicks fledged - a productivity of 0.39. We therefore waited with baited breath to see what would happen in 2007. Around 150 birds arrived in mid-May but all departed a week later. Birds returned in late May and an estimated 208 AIA were counted in two colonies - on Buness and at South Light. However, only a handful of eggs managed to hatch (the chicks of which died shortly after) before the whole colony was deserted for good. A similar pattern evolved in 2008 with c400 birds prospecting in mid-May but all had departed by the end of the month and did not return - the first time no nesting has taken place since monitoring began in 1987.



**Fig 5.** Plot counts of Common Guillemots on Fair Isle, 1987–2008. Counts shown are the sum of five study plots.

**Common Guillemot:** Numbers on the monitoring plots dropped (by 31.4% compared to 2007) to a new low and were below 1,000 for the first time on record - a massive 70% reduction in numbers since 1987 when monitoring began. Only a small number of eggs were laid on the productivity plots and with few birds present to defend them, eggs gradually disappeared as gulls and skuas helped themselves. From 92 eggs laid, only two hatched chicks, neither of which lasted more than two days. As in 2004, no birds are thought to have fledged from the entire island and all colonies were deserted by the end of June.

**Razorbill:** The ten years (1994–2003) saw a mean productivity at the Easter Lother monitoring plot of 0.60. However in 2004, productivity was **zero** for the first time ever and despite record numbers of eggs being laid, fledging success has been poor each year since (0.44 in 2005, 0.23 in 2006, zero in 2007). Fewer eggs were laid this year (78 compared to 94 last year) but as in 2007, only half of these hatched and only three (from 39) chicks survived longer than a week. None fledged - the third complete failure in the last five years! (Fig 6).



**Fig 6.** Breeding success of Razorbill at Easter Lother, Fair Isle, 1990–2008.

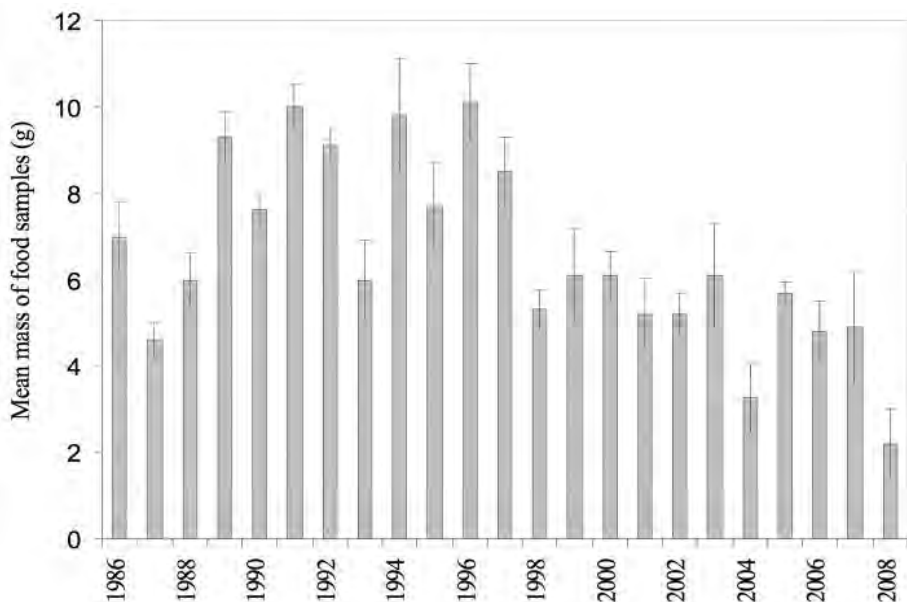


Fig 7. Mean mass of food samples of Atlantic Puffin on Fair Isle, 1986–2008. Error bars represent standard error of the mean.

**Atlantic Puffin:** In 2008, almost a third of marked burrows with eggs in mid-May had failed by the next visit in early July. An estimated final productivity of 0.40, although much improved on the 2007 figure (0.17) is the third lowest on record. Mean productivity in the last ten years (1999–2008) is 0.53 compared to the previous ten years (1989–1998) of 0.74. The 2008 figure may even be an over-estimate as record-breaking torrential rain on 10th August must have flooded almost all of the burrows. Indeed many fledged birds were found around the isle - birds that may have not been quite ready to leave yet and certainly wouldn't have chosen that night to go!

Food samples collected were split almost equally between very small Rockling and 0-group Lesser Sandeels, with a few Gadoids thrown in. Individual Sandeel lengths were very small and sample weights were the lowest on record (Fig 7). In contrast to recent years there were no Snake Pipefish collected, although a few were observed during the 24-hour feeding watch at Roskilie, where over half (57.9%) of feeds were small Rockling and 35% were Lesser Sandeels.

**Note:** AON = Apparently Occupied Nest. AOS = Apparently Occupied Site AOT= Apparently Occupied Territory. **Productivity** = Number of chicks fledged per nesting attempt.



# Fair Isle Bird Observatory Trust Ornithological Scholarship Fund

*FIBOT has set up a scholarship fund to encourage research on the abundant natural history of the isle. Applications are invited from independent individuals or students from a College, University or Institute. Each application is adjudged on its own merit by a sub-committee chosen by the FIBOT Directors. There were five recipients of a grant towards PhD and MSc studies in 2008. Each recipient was asked to produce a short summary of their work and two of these follow...*

## **Range size and habitat use of juvenile Starlings *Sturnus vulgaris* on Fair Isle**

Suzanne Hogg

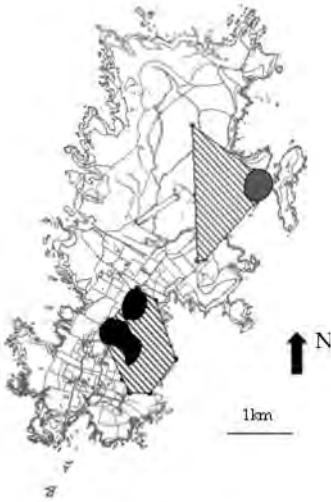
The European starling is an obligate cavity nester found throughout Britain. Large numbers can be found nesting in the dry stone dykes and cliffs of Fair Isle.

Although the starling is red listed in the current UK list of Birds of Conservation Concern (RSPB, 2007), their distribution is highly irregular throughout the British Isles. Those more northern populations, where starlings are thriving, represent a stronghold for British starling populations (P. Evans *pers comm.*).

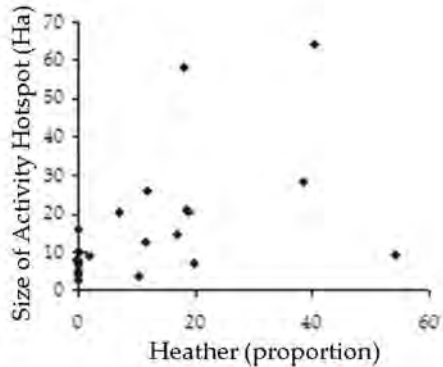
Previous studies have shown starlings to predominantly forage within areas of open grassland where soil-living invertebrates, particularly leatherjackets, constitute their most important food source (Robinson *et al.* 2005; Dunnet, 1955). As yet, there are no reports of how starlings fare in areas of heather moorland, where leatherjacket abundance is reportedly low.

An understanding of how starlings behave, in terms of movement and search patterns, between areas of heather and grass may reveal important information for starling conservation schemes throughout Britain. I therefore set out to explore the movement and range behaviour of starlings on Fair Isle, where there is an obvious divide in habitat type (heather moorland in the northern half and improved grassland in the crofting land to the south). I expected juvenile starlings in areas of heather to travel further to obtain food and hence have a larger range size than of those individuals from areas of grassland.

Home-range size and habitat usage of juvenile starlings was studied for 6 weeks post-fledging using radio-telemetry. Juvenile starlings were trapped in either, drop, heligoland or crow traps and fitted with single celled radio-transmitters, weighing about 2% of their body mass. Three main areas were selected for trapping: the



**Fig 1.** Map of Fair Isle showing the home-range calculations for two individuals: i247 in the North (red) and i276 in the South (blue). The hatched pattern highlights the range and the blocks of solid colour are of activity hotspots.



**Fig 2.** The relationship between the proportion of heather and the core area (ha).

Observatory (crow-trap), the Haa (drop-trap) and Barkland (heligoland). Transmitters were glued to two central tail feathers and only onto those juveniles around 5 days post-fledging. Juvenile starlings lose these tags in autumn during moult whilst developing their adult plumage. After being fitted with radio-tags, the captured individuals were released within the same area they were trapped.

Movements of juvenile radio-tagged starlings were monitored from the first day after tagging for about three weeks. The location (a fix) of each tagged bird was determined up to three times each day.

Using this data, individual home-range sizes were calculated using GIS software. Two methods were employed to estimate the range size of juvenile starlings on Fair Isle. The most basic method gave a very crude estimate of range size and included every fix to describe the outer limits of each animal's movements. A more complex analysis highlighted hotspots of activity where 60% of the foraged fixes were found within an individual's range. For an example of the type of results GIS software can give see Figure 1.

The resulting juvenile starling locations were overlaid onto a digitized habitat map of Fair Isle and the proportion of each habitat type within both the range and activity hotspot of an individual was established. The effect of proportions of habitat upon an individual's range and hotspot size were then evaluated.

Not surprisingly the habitat confined within a juvenile starling's range differed between those caught in the north and the south: those northern birds encompassing a greater proportion of heather in their range than those southern birds which largely move within areas of improved grazing grassland.

However, contrary to my prediction local habitat did not seem to influence the range size of a juvenile starling; there was no obvious difference found between those caught in the north and the south. Out of 22 individuals, analysis revealed that the average range size of a juvenile starling on Fair Isle was 45.4 hectares.

Further analysis revealed that while individuals from the north focused their activity within an average hotspot area of 20 hectares, individuals from the south were found to focus their activity within an average of 12 hectares. However, this difference was not supported by statistical analysis. Despite this, I felt that something must be driving this apparent difference and decided to test for an effect of habitat type on the size of these hotspots. This revealed a very interesting result. The proportion of heather contained within both an individual's range and hotspot influenced the ultimate size of a hotspot (see Fig 2). In other words, if heather was present individuals increased the size of the area they foraged. This suggests that juvenile starlings select against areas of heather for foraging and concurrently supporting previous studies where optimal foraging habitat has been found within grassland.

Studies like this are of paramount importance to vulnerable species. An investigation on post-fledging movements and ascertaining how individuals adhere to different habitat types during the pre-migratory period is promising work. Such studies will assist in improving an understanding of post-fledging biology and the associated efficacy of conservation and management programmes by describing what habitats need to be provided and on what temporal and spatial scales.

### **Future studies**

This study fits into a much wider study on the Fair Isle starling population. PhD student Jeroen Minderman is taking the radiotracking a step further and linking range size to individual behavioural scores.

My project has revealed another interesting question to ask. PhD student, Daisy Brickhill has been analysing the breeding success of starlings on Fair Isle and found that a colony in the far north, surrounded by heather moor has consistently had the best breeding success of all the studied colonies (unpublished data). If starlings actively select against heather for foraging how is it that this colony can not only cope but thrive under such conditions? Currently we may only speculate possible reasons for such a finding and much more research is clearly needed.

To unveil the impact of habitat upon individual movements and foraging habitat selection, it would be interesting to carry out some food supplementation experiments.

*Acknowledgements: There are many people who helped in my project. Most of all I'd like to thank my supervisors Dr Jane Reid, Daisy Brickhill and Dr Peter Evans for all their support both in the field and back in Aberdeen. I'd like to thank those who gave me great advice and help with fieldwork, especially to Dr Matthew Denny, Jeroen Minderman, Mike Finnie and also to Matt Johnson for continuing radiotracking once I'd left Fair Isle and adding to our dataset. Big thanks go to Del and Hollie Shaw at Fair Isle Bird Observatory for entertaining, feeding and putting a roof over my head over the six weeks. Much appreciation goes out to everyone who put up with me wandering through their croftland in search of the starlings last summer.*

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## Impacts of climate change on a long-distance migrant bird, the Northern Wheatear

Adam Seward

Changes in temperature, atmospheric CO<sub>2</sub> and rainfall patterns have already had major impacts on ecological systems. Ecological impacts of climate change include changes in plant and animal growth, phenology, breeding performance, annual survival, distributions and abundances and interspecific interactions. There remain, however, major gaps in our knowledge of how climate change affects species, populations and individuals and of the mechanisms that underlie such effects.

Long-distance migrant birds may be among the most affected by climate change because the strength and direction of climate change may vary between the different areas utilised, and because of disruption to the systems controlling timing of migration. Climate change is likely to have effects on the population regulation of migrant birds by affecting their invertebrate food supply (e.g. Both *et al.*, 2006).

Two subspecies of northern wheatear *Oenanthe oenanthe* (henceforth “wheatear”) are being studied, both of which migrate from or through NW Europe, and have contrasting migration strategies. The nominate subspecies *O. o. oenanthe* has a wide breeding distribution stretching from NW Europe to NW Canada. The “Greenland wheatear” *O. o. leucorhoa* breeds in Greenland, Iceland and NE Canada, and undergoes one of the longest trans-oceanic flights of any passerine during migration. Both subspecies overwinter in Africa, south of the Sahara. The contrasting migration strategies of these wheatear subspecies facilitate comparison of climate change impacts on the mechanisms underpinning migratory phenology, while holding other factors such as habitat choice and prey selection relatively constant.

The aims of the fieldwork carried out on Fair Isle were to investigate the impact of changed food availability (simulating a predicted effect of changes in temperature and rainfall) on wheatear breeding performance, body mass regulation, annual survival and migratory fuelling strategies.

## Methods

Wheatears breeding on and migrating through Fair Isle were studied between 15th April and 29th September 2008. Wheatears were studied in the NE part of the island. A total of 371 wheatears were captured and ringed for the first time whilst 35 wheatears were recaptured. Of these, 207 were given colour rings to enable identification in the field.

Two experiments were carried out during the 2008 field season:

**Experiment 1. Food supplementation to simulate the impacts of climate-driven changes in food supply on breeding productivity and survival.** Live mealworms were provided *ad libitum* to breeding wheatears. Fed birds were compared to unfed control birds in timing of breeding, breeding productivity, body mass of adults and offspring and annual survival. Annual survival will be estimated by resighting of colour ringed individuals returning to Fair Isle in spring 2009 from their African wintering grounds.

**Experiment 2: Food supplementation to measure impacts of changing food supplies on contrasting migration strategies.** Supplementary feeding of the two subspecies *O. o. oenanthe* and *O. o. leucorhoa* was carried out during spring and autumn migration at a breeding (*O. o. oenanthe* only) and stopover (both subspecies) location (Fair Isle). Repeated remote weighing and observations were carried out and will be used to estimate fuel deposition rates, departure fuel loads and timing of departure for the two subspecies, which differ markedly in their current migration strategies. Meteorological data was gathered by the Fair Isle Weather Station. Multi-factor analyses will be carried out to investigate the impact of supplementary feeding on fuel deposition rates, departure fuel loads and timing of departure, while accounting for meteorological conditions.

To supplementary feed experimental birds, mealworm feeders were set up. At first, these consisted of a saucer with a small tub placed inside and kept filled with live mealworms. Later, wire cages were fitted over the feeders to prevent access by starlings. A counter-weighted tipping platform permitted wheatears and other lightweight birds to enter, while denying access to starlings. The modified feeder was successful in reducing starling visits to feeders, but did not prevent access by the most determined starlings. Wheatear territories were randomly selected for supplementary feeding, so that fed territories were interspersed amongst unfed territories. This was to remove any spatial or habitat bias that could confound the effects of supplementary feeding. A total of 17 feeders were established throughout the breeding season, of which seven were attended regularly by adult wheatears. Eleven feeders were used by local juvenile birds after fledging. Four migrant wheatears were recorded attending feeders in the spring and ten migrant wheatears were recorded attending feeders in the autumn.

## Results

Six nests belonging to supplementary fed wheatears and 38 nests of control (unfed) wheatears were found. Twenty (3 supplementary fed and 17 control) nests were checked more than once, enabling their breeding outcome to be estimated by the Mayfield method (Mayfield, 1975). Only one control nest of the 17 monitored nests failed completely. No supplementary-fed nest failed. Dead chicks were, however, found in three nests, all of which were unfed, while an unhatched egg was also found in another unfed nest. There was no difference in mean number of nestlings

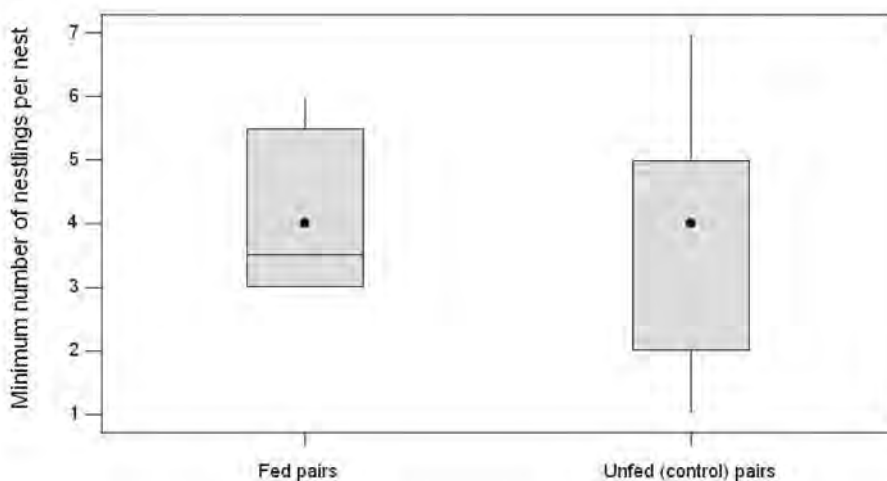
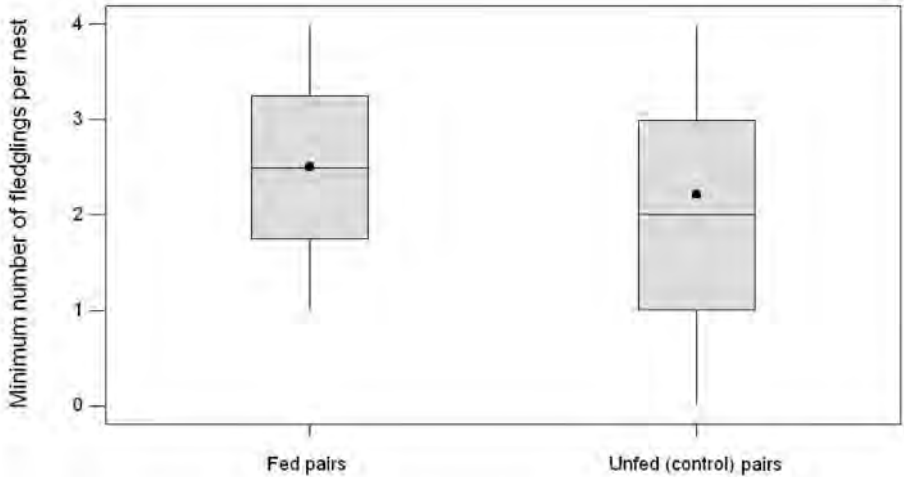


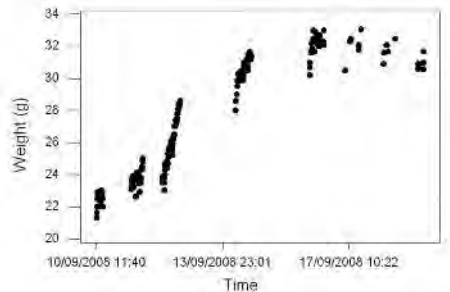
Fig 1. Variation in minimum number of nestlings known to be present in nests of supplementary-fed wheatears and control nests where the parents received no extra food.



**Fig 2.** Variation in minimum number of fledglings known to have fledged from nests of supplementary-fed wheatears and from control nests where the parents received no extra food.

or fledglings between supplementary-fed and control nests (Figures 1 and 2). There was, however, a trend for a greater frequency of broods with smaller numbers of nestlings or fledglings in the control group (Figures 1 and 2).

Data on body mass regulation of adult wheatears breeding on Fair Isle, and on fuelling rates and departure decisions of migrating wheatears are still being analysed. An example of a fuelling sequence recorded using remote weighing is illustrated in Figure 3.



**Fig 3.** Example of a typical fuelling sequence by a migrating first year *O. oenanthe* in autumn 2008.

## Discussion

Supplementary feeding of breeding wheatears did not lead to an increase in nesting success, brood size or fledging rates. The sample sizes were, however, rather small, particularly for the supplementary-fed pairs. Logistical difficulties were encountered during the nesting period in 2008, when the numbers of starlings on feeders became unmanageable. The quantity of data on nesting success was restricted due to the amount of time devoted to reducing starling access to feeders. Given the current mismatch of sample sizes between supplementary-fed and control wheatears, it is difficult to draw conclusions from this result. There was a greater frequency of small brood sizes (numbers of both nestlings and fledglings) within the control sample (Figures 1



and 2). A research priority for the field season in 2009 is to locate and monitor a greater number of nests, and to monitor these nests more often, to enable analyses with more statistical power. Methods of monitoring wheatear nests without the need to reach into them are currently being investigated, including endoscopes and miniature cameras. This will enable data to be collected from nests inaccessible by hand, as well as enabling increased monitoring of accessible nests while minimising disturbance.

Supplementary feeding and remote weighing of migrant wheatears was more successful in the autumn than in the spring. This was probably due to better field technique in the autumn, as well as divided research priorities in the spring (breeding birds and migrating birds). It is also possible that migrating wheatears stopover for a shorter duration in the spring than in the autumn. More data on the effect of increased food availability on migratory strategies will be collected in both spring and autumn 2009. Data on migratory fuelling is currently being analysed.

*Acknowledgements: Many thanks to my supervisors, Dr Rob Thomas, Dr Colin Beale and Dr Hefin Jones, for advice and support. Thanks also to Deryk and Hollie Shaw and the other staff at the Fair Isle Bird Observatory, for their hospitality and assistance in the field. Funding was provided by the Natural Environment Research Council and Fair Isle Bird Observatory Trust.*

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# Butterflies, Moths and other Invertebrates in 2008

Nick Riddiford

Butterflies have wings, are seen by day and are generally migrants to the isle. So it is perhaps not surprising that the Bird Observatory has always monitored the occurrence of these “honorary birds”. Moths, with their night-time tendencies, remained the poor relations and little attention was made to them until the late 1980s. Since then, however, moths have been monitored as intensively and consistently as the weather allows.

Our knowledge of other invertebrates has depended on the interest and skills of individuals visiting the isle, so is intermittent and patchy... and there remain many gaps to be filled. There is now a move to fill some of those gaps as well as continue the level of monitoring for butterflies and moths. Reporting of these activities in 2008 follows:

## Butterflies

From time to time we encounter butterflies laying eggs or find their caterpillars on food plants, but there is no permanent population and the adults we see will almost certainly have migrated to the isle. The tendency for butterflies to arrive with south-east winds suggests that many will have crossed the North Sea from the continent.

Painted Lady and Red Admiral normally vie for “most frequent”, a position held in 2008 by the latter. However, there was a surprise candidate for second place, with an unprecedented series of Peacock butterfly arrivals, the species outnumbering Painted Ladies by more than 3 to 1. Peacocks outnumbered Small Tortoiseshells by a factor of 13 to 1 and prompted musings over the fortunes of populations over time. Thirty years past, the Small Tortoiseshell was relatively common (e.g. 35 in a day in 1980) but the decrease in numbers reflects a general decline in the UK (and elsewhere?), demonstrating a strong link between population size and strength of migration. Peacocks have gone in the opposite direction and the generally upwards trend on the isle has led to a record number of 39 butterfly-days logged in 2008.

**Painted Lady** *Vanessa cardui* It was a very quiet year. Apart from 2 on 1st and 2 on 5th June, there were just seven singles: on 7th, 8th, 15th, 18th June, 6th, 30th July & 7th August.

**Red Admiral** *Vanessa atalanta* After the first two on 30th May, there were sightings on

ten days in June, all singles except for 3 on 5th. Two small influxes in July gave sightings of 6 on 7th and 8 on 13th. Just one was seen in August, on 28th. This

preceded the only sustained period of arrivals, between 4th and 22nd September which contributed 38 butterfly-days including 7 on 14th and 14 on 17th. One further individual was seen on 8th October.

**Peacock** *Inachis io* A record year began with one on 21st June. An extended small influx occurred from 26th July with 1-3 seen on fourteen relatively evenly spaced dates to 7th September. These preceded an arrival of 5 on 14th, rising to 11 on 16th September. Further singles were observed on 22nd September and the late dates of 22nd October and 2nd November.

**Small Tortoiseshell** *Aglais urticae* Single individuals on 4th July, 31st July and 30th September were the only records.

Not included in the list above was a Lycaenid (blue butterfly) caterpillar discovered in a mange-tout pea by John and Betty Best on 16th April. The pea came from a sealed packet bought at the island shop, Stackhoull Stores. The packet was labelled *Kanguu fresh; fresh from Kenya and exported by Springgrown Kenya Ltd, Nairobi, Kenya*. The caterpillar was kept in a transparent container where it continued to eat voraciously. On 21st April it left the pea but died prior to pupation. It was not possible to be certain of the identity but it may have been the caterpillar of a blue butterfly (Lycaenidae), quite possibly long-tailed blue *Lampides boeticus*.

## Moths

Two of the three regular light traps were operated in 2008: at the Bird Observatory and Schoolton. The Lower Stoneybrek trap, though the first to see action - in April - broke down and only returned to service in September. The Bird Observatory began trapping on 24th May and Schoolton on 22nd June. Trapping at both sites continued until September. Monitoring concentrated on macro moths at the Bird Observatory and Lower Stoneybrek but was inclusive of micros at Schoolton.

In addition to the traps, moths attracted to sugared posts were systematically recorded at Schoolton. Further records came from casual trapping and observations in the field.

**Table 1.** Summary of systematic recording effort in 2008

Site	Year	Trap nights					
		Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep
All sites	121						
Observatory (Mercury Vapour)	41		8	7	10	10	6
Lower Stoneybrek (Actinic)	11	1					10
Schoolton (Actinic)	56			5	19	24	8
Schoolton (sugar)	13				1	11	1

Moths are generally scarce in the early part of the season, with captures also depressed by inclement weather and the very short nights of mid summer. The main moth activity period, therefore, appears not to start before late July and is then intensive into September, when weather conditions are certainly the determining

factor on numbers caught and probably the main limiter for late season moth activity. For most species, the 30-day period spanning the last ten days of July and first twenty of August is the peak time, though some species - in particular Autumnal Rustic, Rosy Rustic and Square-spot Rustic are most abundant in the latter part of August.

Most of the moths encountered were local residents. However, there were some interesting migrants, particularly in August. The rarest of all may not have been recorded but for the sharp eyes of Tommy and Henry Hyndman at the Haa. They captured and correctly identified a Blood-vein on 28th July. Two in Orkney on the same night in 1969 was the previous northernmost record but our 2008 Blood-vein was part of a small movement as it coincided with two more in Shetland about the same time. By evening we had added another new species to the Fair Isle list, the tortricid *Epinotia nisella* which came to a lighted window at Schoolton. This too was well beyond its normal range. A few days later came a second "double": Knot Grass and Lime-speck Pug, both entering the Schoolton trap on 2nd August, were two more "firsts for Fair Isle". That was clearly a night of migration because it also produced Fair Isle's 5th-7th records of Large Ear: at the Observatory, Schoolton trap and on Schoolton sugar. Another at Schoolton on 8th August brought the year's total to four. The earliest migrant was a Double-striped Pug at the Observatory in May. This was the third Fair Isle record and the second in consecutive years. We had formerly considered the Small Wainscot to be a migrant but the plethora of records in 2008 suggests that it may now be breeding on the isle

## Systematic List

The following list summarises all moth records for the year by species. A small selection of the commonest species are treated differently. Their records are summarised in a table (Table 2). 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.

The number preceding the species name in the systematic list which follows corresponds to that allocated in the official UK list. \*An asterisk 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.

### Hepialidae

- 18 **Map-winged Swift** *Hepialus fusconebulosa*. The earliest was on 31st May at the Observatory which also recorded 1 on 2nd, 4 on 4th, 5 on 5th, 1 on 7th June and singles on 2nd and 4th July. Two were on Lower Stoneybrek wall on 5th June; the Schoolton trap produced 2 on 28th June and 1 on 10th July.

### Plutellinidae

- 464 **Diamond-back Moth** *Plutella xylostella*. There were singles in the Schoolton trap on 22nd July and 14th August. This is a commonplace migrant and trap

records poorly reflect the sometimes considerable numbers present.

466 \**Rhigognostis senilella*. One on sugar at Schoolton on 4th August.

#### Eperminiidae

478 *Phaulernis fulviguttella*. A patch of Angelica behind Skerryholm garage held a swarm of at least 50 of this pretty little micro on 28th July. Angelica is an important food plant for a range of insect species.

#### Elachistidae

610 \**Elachista argentella*. One flushed from the edge of Boini Mire on 4th July was the second Fair Isle record. This tiny species is presumably established but overlooked on the isle. It is known from Orkney, but not apparently from Shetland.

#### Oecophoridae

648 **White-shouldered House-moth** *Endrosis sarcitrella*. The only reported records were at Schoolton: one inside the house on 25th March and one in the trap on 26th August. However, the species is common in houses and outhouses on the isle.

674 \**Depressaria badiella*. One in the Schoolton trap on 27th August.

#### Tortricidae

1029 *Eana osseana*. A typical year at Schoolton: there were 64 moth-nights in the Schoolton trap between 9th July and 26th August, maximum 12 on 3rd and 8th August. Peak numbers between 2nd and 12th August when recorded on all trap-nights. One was attracted to sugar on 5th August.

1030 *Eana penziana*. All records were from the Schoolton trap: one on 10th July preceded 1-2 on nine nights from 2nd to 28th August.

1043 \**Acleris aspersana*. One in the Schoolton trap on 7th August was only the second record away from the Observatory.

1055 *Acleris hyemana*. One was flushed from the heather just south of Lower Station on 19th February. This is one of very few Fair Isle species active as an adult during the winter months.

1062a \**Acleris effractana*. One trapped at the Observatory during the summer, date not recorded, was the only record.

1109 \**Lobesia littoralis*. The only records were a female on the South Light outer wall on 23rd July and one trapped at the Observatory, date unrecorded.

1111 *Bactra lancealana*. There were several flying at Schoolton on the evening of 26th June followed by "plenty" in damp grassland north of Quoy the following day.

1138 \**Epinotia nisella*. One on the outside pane of a Schoolton window prior to dusk on 28th July was the first for Fair Isle and the northernmost UK record.

1201 *Eucosma cana*. None trapped, but one was on spear thistle at the head of Mid

Geo on 26th June.

Pyralidae

- 1304 **Agriphila straminella**. Trap records comprised singles on 27th & 29th July, 2 on 30th July, 1 on 4th and 2 on 5th August, all at Schoolton. Captures do not reflect the abundance of the species in grassy areas but give some guidance to the main adult flight period.
- 1388 **Udea lutealis**. Captures in the Schoolton trap were all in August: singles on 2nd, 5th, 26th and 28th, 3 on 7th and 2 on 8th. The species was super abundant in late July and much of August in areas of longer grass, such as roadsides.

Geometridae

- 1723 **Red Carpet** *Xanthorhoe munitata*. One alongside Meadow Burn on 27th June. All trap records were at Schoolton: one on 29th & 4 on 30th July, 14 moth-nights from 2nd-27th August, maximum 3 on 8th.
- 1727 **Silver-ground Carpet** *Xanthorhoe montanata*. The first of the year was in Lower Stoneybrek yard on 8th June. Other field records included "a number" in Schoolton wet meadow on 27th June. Trapping records began with one at the Observatory on 2nd July, followed by singles at Schoolton on 9th, 14th, 22nd, 30th July and 1st August.
- 1728 **Garden Carpet** *Xanthorhoe fluctuata*. One at Lower Stoneybrek on 27th April w a s an early record. There was one at the Observatory on 5th & 21st June and 2nd August. Schoolton records were all in August: on 6th, 8th & 26th August, with 2 on 22nd.
- 1742 **Yellow Shell** *Camptogramma bilineata*. As usual, this resident species kept its distance from traps. The only sighting of an adult was on Eas Brecks, on 26th June. Caterpillars were found happily munching peas in the Quoy polytunnel on 9th July.
- 1682 **Blood-vein** *Timandra comae*. One amongst a patch of Angelica behind the Skerryholm garage on 28th July was the first Fair Isle record.
- 1777 **\*July Highflier** *Hydriomena furcata*. One was seen in the Plantation on 16th August and one trapped at Lower Stoneybrek on 23rd September: fifth and sixth Fair Isle records.
- 1809 **Twin-spot Carpet** *Perizoma didymata*. This species seems to have had a good year. It was much in evidence on the isle and this was reflected in considerably more captures than in any previous year, all at Schoolton - which is close to its preferred localities on the isle. The trap took one on 21st July, 2 on 29th July, one on 31st July and 4 on 5th August. Singles were attracted to sugar on 2nd and 14th August.
- 1823 **Netted Pug** *Eupithecia venosata*. One was noted on Lower Stoneybrek wall on 14th May and one was trapped at the Observatory during the summer, date unrecorded.

- 1825 **Lime-speck Pug** *Eupithecia centaureata*. One in the Schoolton trap on 2nd August was the first Fair Isle record. Two records in Shetland on 31st July indicated that it was part of a small influx to the northern isles.
- 1828 **\*Satyr Pug** *Eupithecia satyrata*. one trapped at the Observatory during the summer, date unrecorded.
- 1846 **Narrow-winged Pug** *Eupithecia nanata*. One in the Observatory trap on 30th May.
- 1862 **Double-striped Pug** *Gymnoscelis rufifasciata*. One in the Observatory trap on 30th May: third Fair Isle record.
- 1884 **The Magpie** *Abraxas grossulariata*. The phenomenal year-on-year growth in magpie moth numbers since the first record in 1999 has stuttered. This year's influx began with a field record on 12th July, rising to at least 16 on 13th and 6 the next day. There were just two captures, both in Schoolton trap on 21st and 22nd July. A further influx on 23rd July was unusual in producing no records on land but a report of live and dead magpie moths on the surface of the sea just offshore (S. Thomson, Quoy, *pers. comm.*). At least 10 had succumbed before reaching land.

#### Sphingidae

- 1972 **Convolvulus Hawk-moth** *Agrius convolvuli*. One found refuge at the wartime Heinkel remains above Gilsetter on 16th August and another was found dead near the Observatory on 12th September.



Convolvulus Hawk Moth, September © Mark Breaks



- 1984 **Hummingbird Hawk-moth** *Macroglossum stellatarum*. One was seen at the Auld Haa on 17th June.

Noctuidae

- 2104 **Northern Rustic** *Standfussiana lucerneae*. Captures are summarized in Table 2.
- 2107 **Large Yellow Underwing** *Noctua pronuba*. At Schoolton, recorded on every t r a p night in July, August and to 11th September. Captures are summarized in Table 2.
- 2117 **Autumnal Rustic** *Paradiarsia glareosa*. This is a moorland species so most of the captures are in the Observatory trap. There were 32 moth-nights there between 11th & 29th August, maxima 7 on 11th & 19th and a late individual on 8th September. Schoolton trap had a better than average year with 1-4 on twelve nights between 12th & 29th August including one of the dark Shetland form *edda* on 12th.
- 2118 **True Lover's Knot** *Lycophotia porphyrea*. A heather moorland species, commonest at the Observatory. Captures are summarized in Table 2.
- 2120 **Ingrailed Clay** *Diarsia mendica*. Captures are summarized in Table 2.
- 2123 **Small Square-spot** *Diarsia rubi*. A poor year for this species. The only records were 4 on 10th July and singles on 23rd, 27th July and 2nd August, all in the Schoolton trap.
- 2134 **Square-spot Rustic** *Xestia xanthographa*. Captures are summarized in Table 2.
- 2147 **The Shears** *Hada plebeja*. All records were at the Observatory and comprised 2 on 21st, 1 on 25th, 2 on 26th, 4 on 27th May, 1 on 1st and 2 on 2nd June - typical dates for this "early" moth.
- 2171 **Marbled Coronet** *Hadena confusa*. Another early moth with all records at the Observatory where singles were trapped on 1st, 5th, 7th June and 2nd July.
- 2176 **Antler Moth** *Cerapteryx graminis*. Captures are summarized in Table 2.
- 2198 **Smoky Wainscot** *Mythimna impura*. It was a remarkable year for this species. Despite steady increases in the last few years, 2008 captures were more than all previous records put together. It was commonest at Schoolton where trapped on ten dates between 10th July and 7th August, including 3 on 29th July and a record 5 on 30th July, 2nd & 5th August. A further 2 were attracted to sugar on 2nd and 4th and 3 on 5th August. The Observatory trapped singles on 3rd and 16th August. A total of 33 moth/nights.
- 2289 **Knot Grass** *Acronicta rumicis*. One in the Schoolton trap on 2nd August was the first for Fair Isle.
- 2306 **Angle Shades** *Phlogophora meticulosa*. The Observatory recorded 2 on 5th June & 8th July and one on 19th September. One was trapped at Lower Stoneybrek on 4th September, where the species also bred. The final record was on 3rd October, intercepted by a visitor.

- 2321 **Dark Arches** *Apamea monoglypha*. One of Fair Isle's most abundant species. Captures are summarized in Table 2.
- 2329 **The Confused** *Apamea furva*. One in the Schoolton trap on 27th July was the only record. This species has become extremely scarce in recent years.
- 2330 **Dusky Brocade** *Apamea remissa*. There were just two records, on 28th June and 9th July; both in the Schoolton trap.
- 2340 **Middle-barred Minor** *Oligia fasciuncula*. One was attracted to sugar at Schoolton on 2nd August. This is typical. The species is commonly met in the field, even by day, from mid July-early August but few are trapped. Field observations in 2008 included "lots" on 13th July.
- 2357 **\*Large Ear** *Amphiopoea lucens*. A small arrival on 2nd August comprised one in the Observatory trap, one in the Schoolton trap and another to sugar at Schoolton. A fourth individual was trapped at Schoolton on 8th August.
- 2361 **Rosy Rustic** *Hydraecia micacea*. Captures are summarized in Table 2.
- 2368 **\*The Crescent** *Celaena leucostigma*. One to sugar on 3rd August and a different individual trapped the following night, both at Schoolton, were the only records.
- 2441 **Silver Y** *Autographa gamma*. This well-known migrant is grossly under-represented in traps compared with the sometimes considerable arrivals on the isle but give some measure of the dates when these migrants are present. Thus there were captures of 1-2 at the Observatory on all nights from 30th May-5th June, 1-4 on four nights between 2nd & 8th July, one on 16th August and 1-2 on three trap-nights between 19th and 25th September. The species was scarcer elsewhere but capture dates were relatively similar although singles on four nights between 26th August and 2nd September suggested another influx then. The pattern was similar for field records: first seen on 30th May, a moderate influx for a few days from 4th June and another small influx in September being noted. A further influx at a time of year when traps are ineffective was detected on 27th June when individuals were "everywhere".

**Table 2.** Moth-nights, first dates, last dates and maximum catch size for selected species at Fair Isle trap sites, 2008.

	Moth-nights per site & trap				First	Last	Max; Date;
	L	O	S-t	S-s	Date	Date	Locality
Northern Rustic	10	30	226	1	2/7	8/9	37; 2/8; S-t
Large Yellow Underwing	78	43	380	141	4/7	19/9	49; 2/8; S-t
True Lover's Knot	0	50	5	0	28/6	8/8	12; 14/7; O
Ingrailed Clay	96	127	751	61	5/7	16/9	58; 20/8; S-t
Square-spot Rustic	75	15	641	45	30/7	16/9	86; 26/8; S-t

Antler	0	131	191	1	8/7	3/9	39; 2/8; <b>O</b>
Dark Arches	1	106	1063	96	28/6	1/9	142; 29/7; <b>S-t</b>
Rosy Rustic	62	8	114	0	2/8	14/9	18; 26/8 & 27/8; <b>S-t</b>

Key: L = Lower Stoneybrek; **O** = Bird Observatory; **S-t** = Schoolton actinic; **S-s** = Schoolton sugar

## Other insects

Caddisflies are another group recorded systematically at the Schoolton trap. Five species are recorded on a regular basis. They are *Stenophylax permistus*, *Limnephilus sparsus*, *Limnephilus affinis*, *Platynemia conspersa* and *Halesus radiatus*. The first two are by far the commonest amongst captures and record numbers were achieved on 26th August when 79 *L. sparsus* and 23 *S. permistus* were trapped. All five species were among 89 caddis on 20th August including a record 7 of the usually rarer *L. affinis*.

### Bugs (Heteroptera)

*Spilostethus pandurus*. This is a Mediterranean species! The beast was found moribund by Pat Thomson in a bunch of grapes bought at Stackhoull Stores on 9th April.

**Lace bug** *Acalypta parvula*. One taken in early November in a pitfall trap at the entrance to a rabbit burrow in Finniequoy gully was a first Fair Isle record. A very attractive species, no doubt previously overlooked due to its minute size and skulking tendencies.

### Planthoppers (Auchenorrhyncha)

*Neophilaenus exclamationis*. Henry Hyndman's expertise with the sweep net produced a large series of this planthopper at Chatham's Land during a Fair Isle Wildlife Club excursion on 12th July. Despite the fact that there must have been hundreds in the damper parts of the field, this amounts to the first Fair Isle record. It demonstrates how much remains to be discovered amongst our lesser known invertebrate groups.

Other hoppers recorded during the year included *Neophilaenus lineatus*, *Macrosteles ossiannilssoni*, *Psammotettix nodosus*.

### Lacewings (Neuroptera)

A *Hemerobius lutescens* intercepted on the outside of a Schoolton window on 7th July was the first brown lacewing of any species to be recorded for the isle. Amazingly, a second individual of this species was intercepted above Kirki Geo on 1st August; and a second species, *Wesmaelius subnebulosus*, chose FIBO's 60th birthday party to turn up at the Observatory on 30th August - a fine male. Three records, two species! Climate change?

*Acknowledgements:* The systematic records are down to the endeavours of Deryk Shaw and his assistants at the Bird Observatory, Pat and Neil Thomson at Lower Stoneybrek, Elizabeth Riddiford and John Walmsley at Schoolton. Sharp-eyed islanders made some significant finds and visitors also contributed records. Mark Young once again provided expert opinions on new and tricky moths,

# Other Wildlife in 2008

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. Cetaceans, Butterflies and Moths make up the bulk of these sightings. These records are also submitted to the relevant organisations in Shetland:

## Summary of Cetaceans

Compared to recent years, 2008 was a poor year for sightings, with just four species recorded.

**Whale sp.** The decomposing corpse of an unidentified large whale was seen from the *Good Shepherd* crossing on 14th October.

**Minke Whale** (*Balaenoptera acutorostrata*): Singles were seen on 4th & 22nd July with another on 11th September the only other record.

**Killer Whale** (*Orcinus orca*): Two off South Light on 14th April was the only record until a single off the isle on 21st June, the same day that a pod of six were seen from the *Good Shepherd*. Two off Bunness on 17th October was the last sighting.

**Atlantic White-sided Dolphin** (*Lagenorhynchus acutus*): A single off Bunness on 12th July was the only record.

**Harbour Porpoise** (*Phocoena phocoena*): Singles on 12th May and 22nd June were followed with two on 7th July, two on 16th August and sightings of two, four and one on 4th, 9th & 16th September respectively.

## Pinnipeds

**Grey Seal** (*Halichoerus grypus*): The annual autumn census of newborn pups, carried out every four days from late September to mid-November has found that in recent years, pupping has started later with the first not arriving until October, a week later than in the 1990s. In 2008, the first was not born until 6th October and by the end of the pupping period, only 58 had been estimated. This is even worse than the previous low of 63 born in 2007 and a long way short of the record 126 born in 2003 and a sign that, like the seabirds, Grey Seals are perhaps also struggling to survive.

**Common Seals** (*Phoca vitulina*) were regularly seen in spring and autumn in South Harbour with c15 often hauled out on the shingle there - a slightly lower figure than normal (c20).

## Summary of other miscellaneous sightings

**Common Frog** (*Rana temporaria*) The first spawn was noted in the ditches around Pund/Barkland on 6th March, the same date as last year.

**Common Eels** (*Anguilla anguilla*) were noted in the Vaadal stream on 31st June and 2nd September with another at the Utra Scrape on 19th September.

# Grants for young birdwatchers to visit Fair Isle

*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 are towards the cost of travel (so long as it is by the most economic means) from home to the Observatory and back. A full grant 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 own 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. However there are no places available in September & October. Daily duties can involve on average two hours of data entry on computers, as well as migration censusing, ringing, trap repairs, fencing, stile building, tree planting, visitor liaison and building 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 copies should be sent to the Warden at FIBO (see contacts at front pages) and to Dr Peter Evans, Cynifryn, Abershore, Llanfaglan, Caernarfon, Gwynedd LL54 5RA (e-mail [peter.evans@bangor.ac.uk](mailto:peter.evans@bangor.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 the Administrator at the Observatory, and reserve your bed. Once booked, you should provide the Administrator with details of your travel, and don't forget to save all travel receipts and present them when you arrive, to claim them back. Cost of travel will be offset against your bill for accommodation. ***Don't miss this opportunity!***

## **The JHMF Experience** by Matt Johnson

In May of 2008 I got the chance to fulfil a childhood dream, to go and work on the bird watching Mecca that is Fair Isle. I was given this opportunity thanks to the John Harrison Memorial Fund. The JHMF is a programme which gives financial support, in the form of a travel grant, to young birdwatchers like me so that they can have the opportunity to experience living and working on this unique island. At the time of applying for the grant I was at the upper limit of the JHMF age range so it really was a once in a lifetime opportunity, an opportunity I am so very thankful for as a childhood dream turned into the time of my life.

Whilst on the island I was given an insight into all the work of the Fair Isle Bird Observatory which was roughly split into three sections; bird work, maintenance and hospitality. During my time at the observatory I was mainly involved in working with my passion, the birds. As an Environmental Biology graduate I had a lot of experience of the theory of working with birds but this was the first time I had the chance to get my hands dirty in the field, and dirty is the operative word!

Some of my bird related duties included looking for colour-ringed Wheatears and Starlings, mapping out Oystercatcher territories and monitoring seabird nests such as Razorbills and Puffins. Being involved in these was a great experience but there were three tasks that I carried out that really stand out in my memory. The first of these was carrying out the morning migrant census in the place of the warden. The morning census sees the island split into three sections and the warden and assistant wardens each covering one section and recording all the migrant birds seen. To be given the chance to carry out a census solo was a real privilege and a task which I enjoyed thoroughly. Highlights of the morning census for me were finding my own Bluethroat and watching a Short-eared Owl make its first landfall on the cliffs after battling with the Fair Isle wind. The second task which stands out was monitoring Starling nests and having my first bird in hand experience. I had always had a fear of holding birds in case, somehow, I managed to break them (and the same applies to babies!), so holding a brood of day old Starling chicks in my hand was an awesome experience and one which really increased my confidence of working with birds.

My final stand out memory of working with the birds was definitely the Fair Isle highlight for me, mapping out Bonxie nests. Before going to the island I had looked at the tasks that I might be doing and the one I really wanted to avoid was working with these birds as their reputation for attacking people was legendary. I wish I could have seen my face on the morning when I was told that I would be working



up close and personal with these menaces as I believe it would have been a look of sheer terror! I first entered the Bonxie colony wielding a very large stick in order to protect myself but my trepidation soon faded as I found my first nest and really started to enjoy the task. On the second morning, feeling oh so confident, I ventured out without my whacking stick and duly felt the full force of a Bonxie attack, as I lay on the heather rubbing my bruised head I realised how much I love this work!

Away from the bird work I had the chance to help out with some of the maintenance on the island. I was involved in building fences, inflating and patching the zodiac, pumping diesel, weeding the new plantations and attempting to fix the garage doors. For a couple of days I was also asked to help out with the hospitality side of running the bird observatory, this involved washing the pots after meals, setting the tables, hoovering and making beds. I can honestly say that these were the most draining tasks I carried out on Fair Isle and my full respect goes out to all the kitchen and household staff as they work incredibly hard to make life at the observatory so comfortable. I also had the chance to work face to face with the guests with brief stints on the bar and in the shop and on one occasion leading a very unplanned guided walk. This was great as there is no better feeling than showing people birds that they have never seen before and on Fair Isle there is always the chance of finding something that is really special.

Working at the observatory was an excellent experience and allowed me to carry out tasks that I would otherwise never have had the opportunity to do. The work though was only one part of the JHMF experience, living on the island is an adventure that I recommend everyone to do. As I mentioned earlier I had the time of my life on Fair Isle and this was in large part due to the people that live and work at the observatory and the guests that visit. The one thing that I had really not expected on the island was the social life, I never imagined that in my first week I would be going to a stag party and two wedding receptions and my clothing was testament to this, a hoodie at a wedding really stands out! The islanders themselves were extremely welcoming and life at the obs had a real family atmosphere, it was incredible how quickly I felt at home on the island and that made the JHMF experience so very special.

On leaving the island I was asked if I would recommend other young birdwatchers to take advantage of the JHMF grant, the answer is a most resounding yes! This opportunity has fuelled my desire to work in the conservation industry, has given me practical experiences that I would never have had and opened my eyes to the fact that there are other young birdwatchers out there going on the same path. From this experience I have gained so much more confidence in working with birds and I am so thankful that I took this opportunity. My resounding memory of working on Fair Isle is finishing a day's work covered in mud, sweat, blood, seaweed and Razorbill muck and absolutely loving it!

My thanks go to Dr Peter Evans for awarding me the JHMF grant, to Deryk and Hollie Shaw for all the opportunities they gave me whilst at the obs, and to all the staff and guests for making it such a memorable experience. Cheers!

# **Fair Isle Bird Observatory Trust (FIBOT) Financial Report & Accounts for 2008**

**Mike Wood (Finance Director)**

A summary of FIBOT's draft accounts for the year ended 31st October 2008 appears on the following pages. The full statutory accounts can be inspected at the Bird Observatory on Fair Isle.

The year ended 31st October 2008 was another excellent year for FIBOT as a business. Visitor numbers remained high and the financial performance was excellent despite the pressures and problems caused by the age of the building and its imminent replacement.

My personal thanks go to Hollie, Deryk and their staff for their hard work and dedication, often in difficult circumstances. Their help in the specification of FIBO's requirements for the new observatory has been invaluable.

We have continued 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.

## Income and Expenditure Report for the year ended 31st October 2008

	2008	2007
	£	£
<b>Sales Income</b>		
Hostel Income	87,072	91,818
Shop Sales	7,699	8,493
Bar Income	16,429	15,269
	111,200	115,580
<b>Cost of Sales</b>		
Purchases	46,213	43,607
Wages & Salaries	32,673	35,820
	78,886	79,427
<b>Trading Profit</b>	32,314	36,453
<b>Other Income</b>		
Interest Received	5,019	5,047
Deferred Grant Income released	0	0
Subscriptions	5,600	5,558
Donations	4,001	6,910
Grants Received	18,312	18,736
Other Income	0	0
	30,834	25,944
<b>Gross Profit</b>	63,148	62,397
<b>Other Expenses</b>		
Administration	9,005	7,727
Establishment	36,764	33,370
Sales & Marketing	6,949	7,792
Financial & Legal	2,768	2,282
Depreciation	2,000	12,000
	67,486	63,171
<b>Surplus/(Deficit) for the year</b>	(4,338)	(774)

## Balance Sheet as at 31st October 2008

	31/10/08	31/10/07
<b>Fixed Assets</b>	<b>£</b>	<b>£</b>
Tangible assets	57,384	64,484
Investments	12,700	10,857
	70,084	75,341
 <b>Current Assets</b>		
Stocks	7,339	7,943
Debtors	11,866	12,995
Cash at bank and in hand	104,621	103,922
	123,826	124,860
 <b>Creditors: amounts falling due within one year</b>	<b>(14,944)</b>	<b>(18,995)</b>
 Net Current Assets/(Liabilities)	108,882	105,865
Total assets less current liabilities	178,966	181,206
 <b>Creditors: amounts falling due after more than one year</b>	<b>(0)</b>	<b>(0)</b>
	178,966	181,206
 <b>Representing:</b>		
Accumulated Surplus	178,966	181,206
Appeal Reserve	0	0
	183,611	181,206

# 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 2008. 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 (372 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

<input type="checkbox"/> Mute Swan (V)	<input type="checkbox"/> Garganey (V)	<input type="checkbox"/> Common Quail (S)
<input type="checkbox"/> Bewick's Swan (V)	<input type="checkbox"/> Northern Shoveler (S)	<input type="checkbox"/> Red-throated Diver (RM)
<input type="checkbox"/> Whooper Swan (FM)	<input type="checkbox"/> Common Pochard (R)	<input type="checkbox"/> Black-throated Diver (V)
<input type="checkbox"/> Bean Goose (V)	<input type="checkbox"/> Ring-necked Duck (V)	<input type="checkbox"/> Great Northern Diver (S)
<input type="checkbox"/> Pink-footed Goose (FM)	<input type="checkbox"/> Tufted Duck (RM)	<input type="checkbox"/> Yellow-billed Diver (V)
<input type="checkbox"/> Greater White-fronted Goose (S)	<input type="checkbox"/> Greater Scaup (S)	<input type="checkbox"/> Little Grebe (R)
<input type="checkbox"/> Greylag Goose (CM)	<input type="checkbox"/> Common Eider (BS, FM)	<input type="checkbox"/> Great Crested Grebe (V)
<input type="checkbox"/> Canada Goose (R)	<input type="checkbox"/> King Eider (V)	<input type="checkbox"/> Red-necked Grebe (V)
<input type="checkbox"/> Barnacle Goose (FM)	<input type="checkbox"/> Steller's Eider (V)	<input type="checkbox"/> Slavonian Grebe (S)
<input type="checkbox"/> Brent Goose (R)	<input type="checkbox"/> Harlequin Duck (V)	<input type="checkbox"/> Black-browed Albatross (V)
<input type="checkbox"/> Common Shelduck (S)	<input type="checkbox"/> Long-tailed Duck (FM)	<input type="checkbox"/> Northern Fulmar (BL, CM)
<input type="checkbox"/> Eurasian Wigeon (FM)	<input type="checkbox"/> Common Scoter (S)	<input type="checkbox"/> Cory's Shearwater (V)
<input type="checkbox"/> American Wigeon (V)	<input type="checkbox"/> Surf Scoter (V)	<input type="checkbox"/> Great Shearwater (V)
<input type="checkbox"/> Gadwall (R)	<input type="checkbox"/> Velvet Scoter (S)	<input type="checkbox"/> Sooty Shearwater (FM)
<input type="checkbox"/> Eurasian Teal (FM)	<input type="checkbox"/> Common Goldeneye (RM)	<input type="checkbox"/> Manx Shearwater (S)
<input type="checkbox"/> Mallard (BS, FM)	<input type="checkbox"/> Smew (V)	<input type="checkbox"/> European Storm Petrel (BS, FM)
<input type="checkbox"/> American Black Duck (V)	<input type="checkbox"/> Red-breasted Merganser (FM)	<input type="checkbox"/> Leach's Storm Petrel (B?, RM)
<input type="checkbox"/> Northern Pintail (S)	<input type="checkbox"/> Goosander (S)	<input type="checkbox"/> Northern Gannet (BL, CM)

- |  |  |  |
|--|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Great Cormorant (FM)            | <input type="checkbox"/> Eurasian Dotterel (S)       | <input type="checkbox"/> Ivory Gull (V)                    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> European Shag (BL, CM)          | <input type="checkbox"/> Caspian Plover (V)          | <input type="checkbox"/> Sabine's Gull (V)                 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Little Bittern (V)              | <input type="checkbox"/> American Golden Plover (V)  | <input type="checkbox"/> Black-legged Kittiwake (BM, CM)   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Night Heron (V)                 | <input type="checkbox"/> Pacific Golden Plover (V)   | <input type="checkbox"/> Black-headed Gull (FM)            |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Grey Heron (FM)                 | <input type="checkbox"/> European Golden Plover (CM) | <input type="checkbox"/> Little Gull (V)                   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Purple Heron (V)                | <input type="checkbox"/> Grey Plover (S)             | <input type="checkbox"/> Laughing Gull (V)                 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> White Stork (V)                 | <input type="checkbox"/> Northern Lapwing (BS, FM)   | <input type="checkbox"/> Mediterranean Gull (V)            |
| <input type="checkbox"/> European Honey-buzzard (R)      | <input type="checkbox"/> Red Knot (FM)               | <input type="checkbox"/> Mew (Common) Gull (BS, FM)        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Red Kite (V)                    | <input type="checkbox"/> Sanderling (FM)             | <input type="checkbox"/> Ring-billed Gull (V)              |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Black Kite (V)                  | <input type="checkbox"/> Semi-palmated Sandpiper (V) | <input type="checkbox"/> Lesser Black-backed Gull (BS, FM) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> White-tailed Eagle (V)          | <input type="checkbox"/> Red-necked Stint (V)        | <input type="checkbox"/> Herring Gull (BS, CM)             |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Western Marsh Harrier (R)       | <input type="checkbox"/> Little Stint (RM)           | <input type="checkbox"/> Iceland Gull (S)                  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Hen Harrier (S)                 | <input type="checkbox"/> Temminck's Stint (V)        | <input type="checkbox"/> Glaucous Gull (RM)                |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Pallid Harrier (V)              | <input type="checkbox"/> White-rumped Sandpiper (V)  | <input type="checkbox"/> Great Black-backed Gull (BS, CM)  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Montagu's Harrier (V)           | <input type="checkbox"/> Baird's Sandpiper (V)       | <input type="checkbox"/> Gull-billed Tern (V)              |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Northern Goshawk (V)            | <input type="checkbox"/> Pectoral Sandpiper (V)      | <input type="checkbox"/> Caspian Tern (V)                  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Eurasian Sparrowhawk (RM)       | <input type="checkbox"/> Curlew Sandpiper (S)        | <input type="checkbox"/> Black Tern (V)                    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Common Buzzard (S)              | <input type="checkbox"/> Purple Sandpiper (FM)       | <input type="checkbox"/> White-winged Tern (V)             |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Rough-legged Buzzard (V)        | <input type="checkbox"/> Dunlin (FM)                 | <input type="checkbox"/> Sandwich Tern (S)                 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Golden Eagle (V)                | <input type="checkbox"/> Buff-breasted Sandpiper (V) | <input type="checkbox"/> Common Tern (BS, RM)              |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Osprey (S)                      | <input type="checkbox"/> Ruff (RM)                   | <input type="checkbox"/> Roseate Tern (V)                  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Lesser Kestrel (V)              | <input type="checkbox"/> Jack Snipe (FM)             | <input type="checkbox"/> Arctic Tern (BM, FM)              |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Common Kestrel (RM)             | <input type="checkbox"/> Common Snipe (BS, CM)       | <input type="checkbox"/> Guillemot (BL, CM)                |
| <input type="checkbox"/> American Kestrel (V)            | <input type="checkbox"/> Great Snipe (R)             | <input type="checkbox"/> Brännich's Guillemot (V)          |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Red-footed Falcon (V)           | <input type="checkbox"/> Long-billed Dowitcher (V)   | <input type="checkbox"/> Razorbill (BL, FM)                |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Merlin (RM)                     | <input type="checkbox"/> Eurasian Woodcock (FM)      | <input type="checkbox"/> Black Guillemot (BM)              |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Eurasian Hobby (R)              | <input type="checkbox"/> Black-tailed Godwit (S)     | <input type="checkbox"/> Little Auk (FM)                   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Gyrfalcon (V)                   | <input type="checkbox"/> Bar-tailed Godwit (RM)      | <input type="checkbox"/> Atlantic Puffin (BL, CM)          |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Peregrine Falcon (RM)           | <input type="checkbox"/> Whimbrel (FM)               | <input type="checkbox"/> Pallas's Sand grouse (V)          |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Water Rail (RM)                 | <input type="checkbox"/> Eurasian Curlew (BS, FM)    | <input type="checkbox"/> Rock Dove (BS, FM)                |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Spotted Crake (R)               | <input type="checkbox"/> Terek Sandpiper (V)         | <input type="checkbox"/> Stock Dove (S)                    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Little Crake (V)                | <input type="checkbox"/> Upland Sandpiper (V)        | <input type="checkbox"/> Common Wood Pigeon (FM)           |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Baillon's Crake (V)             | <input type="checkbox"/> Common Sandpiper (FM)       | <input type="checkbox"/> Eurasian Collared Dove (FM)       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Corn Crake (S)                  | <input type="checkbox"/> Spotted Sandpiper (V)       | <input type="checkbox"/> European Turtle Dove (S)          |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Common Moorhen (S)              | <input type="checkbox"/> Green Sandpiper (RM)        | <input type="checkbox"/> Oriental Turtle Dove (V)          |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Common Coot (R)                 | <input type="checkbox"/> Solitary Sandpiper (V)      | <input type="checkbox"/> Common Cuckoo (RM)                |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Common Crane (V)                | <input type="checkbox"/> Spotted Redshank (S)        | <input type="checkbox"/> Barn Owl (V)                      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Sandhill Crane (V)              | <input type="checkbox"/> Common Greenshank (RM)      | <input type="checkbox"/> Eurasian Scops Owl (V)            |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Little Bustard (V)              | <input type="checkbox"/> Lesser Yellowlegs (V)       | <input type="checkbox"/> Snowy Owl (V)                     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Great Bustard (V)               | <input type="checkbox"/> Wood Sandpiper (S)          | <input type="checkbox"/> Long-eared Owl (RM)               |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Eurasian Oystercatcher (BS, FM) | <input type="checkbox"/> Common Redshank (CM)        | <input type="checkbox"/> Short-eared Owl (RM)              |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Pied Avocet (V)                 | <input type="checkbox"/> Ruddy Turnstone (CM)        | <input type="checkbox"/> European Nightjar (V)             |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Eurasian Stone-curlew (V)       | <input type="checkbox"/> Red-necked Phalarope (V)    | <input type="checkbox"/> Common Swift (FM)                 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Collared Pratincole (V)         | <input type="checkbox"/> Grey Phalarope (V)          | <input type="checkbox"/> Pallid Swift (V)                  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Black-winged Pratincole (V)     | <input type="checkbox"/> Pomarine Skua (R)           | <input type="checkbox"/> Alpine Swift (V)                  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Little Ringed Plover (V)        | <input type="checkbox"/> Arctic Skua (BS, FM)        | <input type="checkbox"/> Little Swift (V)                  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Common Ringed Plover (BS, FM)   | <input type="checkbox"/> Long-tailed Skua (R)        | <input type="checkbox"/> Common Kingfisher (V)             |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Kentish Plover (V)              | <input type="checkbox"/> Great Skua (BM, FM)         | <input type="checkbox"/> European Bee-eater (V)            |



- |  |   |  |
|--|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> European Roller (V)           | <input type="checkbox"/> Black-eared Wheatear (V)         | <input type="checkbox"/> Radde's Warbler (V)           |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Hoopoe (R)                    | <input type="checkbox"/> Desert Wheatear (V)              | <input type="checkbox"/> Dusky Warbler (V)             |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Eurasian Wryneck (RM)         | <input type="checkbox"/> Rufous-tailed Rock Thrush (V)    | <input type="checkbox"/> Western Bonelli's Warbler (V) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Great Spotted Woodpecker (S)  | <input type="checkbox"/> White's Thrush (V)               | <input type="checkbox"/> Wood Warbler (RM)             |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Calandra Lark (V)             | <input type="checkbox"/> Siberian Thrush (V)              | <input type="checkbox"/> Chiffchaff (FM)               |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Bimaculated Lark (V)          | <input type="checkbox"/> Hermit Thrush (V)                | <input type="checkbox"/> Willow Warbler (CM)           |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Greater Short-toed Lark (S)   | <input type="checkbox"/> Swainson's Thrush (V)            | <input type="checkbox"/> Goldcrest (FM)                |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Crested Lark (V)              | <input type="checkbox"/> Grey-cheeked Thrush (V)          | <input type="checkbox"/> Firecrest (V)                 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Wood Lark (V)                 | <input type="checkbox"/> Ring Ouzel (FM)                  | <input type="checkbox"/> Spotted Flycatcher (FM)       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Sky Lark (BS, CM)             | <input type="checkbox"/> Common Blackbird (CM)            | <input type="checkbox"/> Red-breasted Flycatcher (S)   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Horned (Shore) Lark (R)       | <input type="checkbox"/> Eyebrowed Thrush (V)             | <input type="checkbox"/> Asian Brown Flycatcher (V)    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Sand Martin (RM)              | <input type="checkbox"/> Dusky Thrush (V)                 | <input type="checkbox"/> Collared Flycatcher (V)       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Barn Swallow (CM)             | <input type="checkbox"/> Dark-throated Thrush (V)         | <input type="checkbox"/> Pied Flycatcher (FM)          |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Common House Martin (FM)      | <input type="checkbox"/> Fieldfare (CM)                   | <input type="checkbox"/> Blue Tit (V)                  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Red-rumped Swallow (V)        | <input type="checkbox"/> Song Thrush (CM)                 | <input type="checkbox"/> Great Tit (R)                 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Richard's Pipit (S)           | <input type="checkbox"/> Redwing (CM)                     | <input type="checkbox"/> Coal Tit (V)                  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Blyth's Pipit (V)             | <input type="checkbox"/> Mistle Thrush (RM)               | <input type="checkbox"/> Eurasian Treecreeper (V)      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Tawny Pipit (V)               | <input type="checkbox"/> Pallas's Grasshopper Warbler (V) | <input type="checkbox"/> Eurasian Golden Oriole (V)    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Olive-backed Pipit (R)        | <input type="checkbox"/> Lanceolated Warbler (R)          | <input type="checkbox"/> Brown Shrike (V)              |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Tree Pipit (FM)               | <input type="checkbox"/> Common Grasshopper Warbler (RM)  | <input type="checkbox"/> Isabelline Shrike (V)         |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Pechora Pipit (R)             | <input type="checkbox"/> River Warbler (V)                | <input type="checkbox"/> Red-backed Shrike (RM)        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Meadow Pipit (BS, CM)         | <input type="checkbox"/> Savi's Warbler (V)               | <input type="checkbox"/> Lesser Grey Shrike (V)        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Red-throated Pipit (R)        | <input type="checkbox"/> Aquatic Warbler (V)              | <input type="checkbox"/> Great Grey Shrike (S)         |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Eurasian Rock Pipit (BS, FM)  | <input type="checkbox"/> Sedge Warbler (FM)               | <input type="checkbox"/> Southern Grey Shrike (V)      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Buff-bellied Pipit (V)        | <input type="checkbox"/> Paddyfield Warbler (V)           | <input type="checkbox"/> Woodchat Shrike (V)           |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Yellow Wagtail (RM)           | <input type="checkbox"/> Blyth's Reed Warbler (R)         | <input type="checkbox"/> Eurasian Magpie (V)           |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Citrine Wagtail (R)           | <input type="checkbox"/> Marsh Warbler (S)                | <input type="checkbox"/> Western Jackdaw (S)           |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Grey Wagtail (S)              | <input type="checkbox"/> Eurasian Reed Warbler (RM)       | <input type="checkbox"/> Rook (RM)                     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> White / Pied Wagtail (BS, FM) | <input type="checkbox"/> Great Reed Warbler (V)           | <input type="checkbox"/> Carrion Crow (FM)             |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Bohemian Waxwing (S)          | <input type="checkbox"/> Thick-billed Warbler (V)         | <input type="checkbox"/> Hooded Crow (BS, RM)          |
| <input type="checkbox"/> White-throated Dipper (V)     | <input type="checkbox"/> Eastern Olivaceous Warbler (V)   | <input type="checkbox"/> Northern Raven (BS, RM)       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Winter Wren (BS, RM)          | <input type="checkbox"/> Booted Warbler (V)               | <input type="checkbox"/> Common Starling (BM, FM)      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Duncock (FM)                  | <input type="checkbox"/> Sykes's Warbler (V)              | <input type="checkbox"/> Rosy Starling (R)             |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Alpine Accentor (V)           | <input type="checkbox"/> Icterine Warbler (S)             | <input type="checkbox"/> House Sparrow (BS)            |
| <input type="checkbox"/> European Robin (CM)           | <input type="checkbox"/> Melodious Warbler (V)            | <input type="checkbox"/> Eurasian Tree Sparrow (R)     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Rufous-tailed Robin (V)       | <input type="checkbox"/> Blackcap (CM)                    | <input type="checkbox"/> Chaffinch (FM)                |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Thrush Nightingale (R)        | <input type="checkbox"/> Garden Warbler (FM)              | <input type="checkbox"/> Brambling (FM)                |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Common Nightingale (R)        | <input type="checkbox"/> Barred Warbler (RM)              | <input type="checkbox"/> European Serin (V)            |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Siberian Ruby throat (V)      | <input type="checkbox"/> Lesser Whitethroat (FM)          | <input type="checkbox"/> European Greenfinch (RM)      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Bluethroat (RM)               | <input type="checkbox"/> Common Whitethroat (FM)          | <input type="checkbox"/> European Goldfinch (R)        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Red-flanked Bluetail (V)      | <input type="checkbox"/> Dartford Warbler (V)             | <input type="checkbox"/> Eurasian Siskin (FM)          |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Black Redstart (RM)           | <input type="checkbox"/> Subalpine Warbler (R)            | <input type="checkbox"/> Citril Finch (V)              |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Common Redstart (FM)          | <input type="checkbox"/> Sardinian Warbler (V)            | <input type="checkbox"/> Common Linnet (RM)            |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Whinchat (FM)                 | <input type="checkbox"/> Greenish Warbler (R)             | <input type="checkbox"/> Twite (BS, FM)                |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Eurasian Stonechat (S)        | <input type="checkbox"/> Arctic Warbler (R)               | <input type="checkbox"/> Lesser Redpoll (S)            |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Isabelline Wheatear (V)       | <input type="checkbox"/> Pallas's Leaf Warbler (R)        | <input type="checkbox"/> Common Redpoll (FM)           |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Northern Wheatear (BS, CM)    | <input type="checkbox"/> Yellow-browed Warbler (RM)       | <input type="checkbox"/> Arctic Redpoll (R)            |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Pied Wheatear (V)             | <input type="checkbox"/> Hume's Leaf Warbler (V)          | <input type="checkbox"/> Two-barred Crossbill (V)      |

- ☐ Common Crossbill (RM)
- ☐ Parrot Crossbill (V)
- ☐ Common Rosefinch (RM)
- ☐ Eurasian Bullfinch (RM)
- ☐ Hawfinch (S)
- ☐ Tennessee Warbler (V)
- ☐ Blackburnian Warbler (V)
- ☐ 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)
- ☐ Ortolan Bunting (S)
- ☐ Cretzschmar's Bunting (V)
- ☐ Yellow-browed Bunting (V)

- ☐ Rustic Bunting (S)
- ☐ Chestnut-eared Bunting (V)
- ☐ Little Bunting (S)
- ☐ Yellow-breasted Bunting (R)
- ☐ Reed Bunting (FM)
- ☐ Pallas's Reed Bunting (V)
- ☐ Black-headed Bunting (V)
- ☐ Corn Bunting (V)
- ☐ Bobolink (V)
- ☐ Baltimore Oriole (V)

#### CATEGORY D

- ☐ Saker Falcon (V)
- ☐ Daurian Starling (V)
- ☐ Chestnut Bunting (V)
- ☐ Red-headed Bunting (V)

#### CATEGORY D CANDIDATES

- ☐ Wood Duck (V)
- ☐ Yellow-headed Blackbird (V)

#### CATEGORY E

- ☐ Black Swan
- ☐ Bar-headed Goose
- ☐ Red-breasted Goose
- ☐ Lanner Falcon
- ☐ White-shouldered Starling
- ☐ House Finch
- ☐ Pallas' Rosefinch
- ☐ Long-tailed Rosefinch
- ☐ Yellow-billed Grosbeak
- ☐ Black-headed Grosbeak
- ☐ Indigo Bunting
- ☐ Lazuli Bunting
- ☐ Painted Bunting
- ☐ Varied Bunting

#### EXTINCT

- ☐ Great Auk

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