FAIR ISLE BIRD OBSERVATORY

Report for 2009–10

Fair Isle Bird Observatory Report no. 62 (2009/2010)

Edited by Deryk Shaw

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Chairman's Report

Roy Dennis MBE

The last two years were remarkable but difficult years for the Fair Isle Bird Observatory and its staff and directors. We were also sad that we could not accommodate any visitors in 2009, because we had to close for the year so that the old building could be removed and the new one built on the same site. Our dedicated staff continued the daily migration census as well as the important studies on seabirds. They worked from several houses in the south of the island, courtesy of the National Trust for Scotland, and we were also able to host those researchers with continuing projects.

The major task in early 2009 was finalising the funding of the new Bird Observatory. Thank goodness we made the decision to start the project and start fundraising before the financial collapse in autumn 2008. Our Friends of Fair Isle and the birding community were fantastic in supporting us. Wm Grant & Sons (Glenfiddich Distillery), Dulverton Trust, The Gannochy Trust, The Robertson Trust, Martin Wills Fund and others came in with great donations, which added to the generous support funding from Shetland Islands Council, the Scottish Government SRDP and Highlands & Islands Enterprise, all of which resulted in us achieving the £4 million target. We are extremely thankful to everyone who supported us in this project. We were most grateful to have the advice and experience of Andrew Blackadder, Scalloway, in this crucial stage. At times, it was very worrying to make sure we achieved monies at the opportune time to place orders, and I, as Chairman, am grateful for the work of all trustees, but in particular recognise and applaud the ability and resolve of Mike Wood, our Finance Director.

The design of the new Bird Observatory was conceived by the Trustees and Deryk & Hollie Shaw and then designed in detail and built by AH Wilsons of Kirkwall, Orkney, in conjunction with Synergie in Inverness. Terry O'Hara and his team listened to all our requests and concerns, and came up with a remarkable building. The wooden building was built in Kirkwall in prefabricated pods, while at the same time the company workforce demolished the old building and prepared the site on the island. This was completed in a remarkably short period and the pods started to arrive in September 2009. The building was basically watertight before October.

Our warden and administrator, Deryk and Hollie Shaw on Fair Isle became to all extents the project managers, on top of their normal duties. Without their enthusiasm and hard work the building would have suffered. Despite working throughout the winter, the builders were unable to deliver the finished Bird Observatory on time in

April 2010. Very sadly, the building firm went into receivership in June and we had to cancel the official Opening. It was a time of 'many hands to the pump' to complete the project. Fair Isle's Northmen took on many of the tasks required for us to be granted a habitation certificate. The directors, the first residents held their AGM on 20th June. Thereafter there was a gradual completion and the new Observatory was completed in the autumn.

The prestigious new building is everything we had hoped for. It looks good, it's energy-efficient with high spec insulation, it's very comfortable and it retains the fantastic view to the Havens and to Sheep Rock from Mavers Cup. Inside, it has the feel of the old building, but with far more room and comfort. We now have a high quality building to welcome our visitors - now is the time to revisit or come for the first time.

This is my last Chairman's report, on 1st November 2010 after 16 years as Chairman of the Fair Isle Bird Observatory, I decided to step down. I first came to the island in March 1959 as assistant warden to Peter Davis, and then as warden from 1963 to 1970, and like many others fell for this beautiful island. It's fantastic that the Observatory goes from strength to strength in its 62nd year of operation on Fair Isle. For me it still retains the excitement of great bird-watching, the magnificent breeding seabirds, the camaraderie at the observatory and the friendship of the Fair Islanders.

When I took over as Chairman in 1995, we were faced with bleak income figures but my first appeal to our Friends of Fair Isle got us back into the black. It is so encouraging that we have managed to build such an excellent new Observatory and managed our finances so well that we can now see a secure future on Fair Isle. Recently, FIBO has also received a fantastic bequest from the late John Forster, who used to come bird-watching in the 1960s and 1970s. We hope to use some of it to promote new research scholarships on bird migration, seabirds and the marine ecosystems.

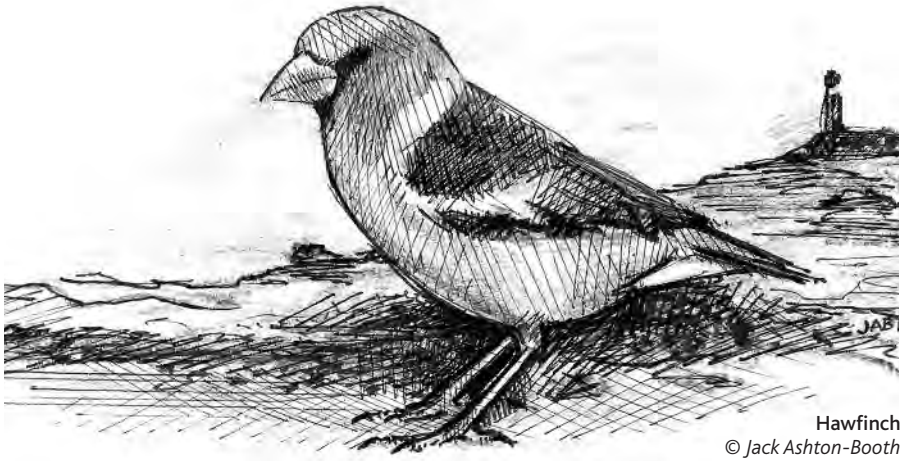
In my time as Chairman, I'm pleased that we moved our AGM and our focus from Edinburgh to Fair Isle, that we have appointed our first Fair Islander as a Director and restored our focus on ornithology and seabird research. We had a very successful 50th birthday in 1998, when we also hosted the Main Board of SNH, but I'm very disappointed there is still no Fair Isle Marine Reserve (something that the whole island community has been fighting for since 1990) and I am deeply saddened by the seabird breeding disasters.

I was very fortunate that Deryk and Hollie Shaw excelled at running the Observatory, as warden and administrator, through 12 years of my Chairmanship. They have been fantastic in every way. We will miss them and their children, they added so much to our enjoyment of staying at the Obs. We will still meet them, for they have decided to settle on Fair Isle as crofters at Burkle - we wish them every success.

The new wardens are David and Susannah Parnaby who arrived in February 2011.

The new Chairman is Roger Riddington, a former FIBO warden, and current editor of the journal *British Birds*, who lives on Mainland Shetland and can nearly see Fair Isle from his house. I have not mentioned birds in this report but Fair Isle remains as fantastic as ever with its breeding seabirds, exciting migration days and amazing rare visitors from around the world. I hope we can welcome you back very soon and remember to encourage your friends to experience the excellence of Fair Isle also.

Finally, my sincere thanks and appreciation to all Friends of Fair Isle, to the Fair Islanders, to the staff at the Observatory over the years and to my fellow Directors. I wish Fair Isle Bird Observatory all success in future years.



Hawfinch
© Jack Ashton-Booth

Warden's Report

Deryk Shaw

My final two years in charge were very different to the previous ten, with no Observatory building and no guests in 2009, followed by a very stressful first six months of 2010 as building works deviated from the plan but ultimately, in the latter half of the year, a lovely brand new Observatory to run.

Once we had been given the financial green light to start removing the old Observatory in April 2009, Hollie, the children and I moved into Burkle - a vacant house on the isle. Little did we know then that that this was to become our permanent residence and we were never to return to the Observatory.

Although there was no Observatory building, the ornithological work had to continue and in both 2009 & 2010 I was ably assisted with this by Simon Davies and Jack Ashton-Booth. Simon, a consistently reliable and hard worker had been my Assistant Warden since 2007 and was a thoroughly dependable right-hand man. Since departing at the end of 2010, he went on to Warden the observatory on the Calf of Man in 2011 and in 2012 landed a job at Broome Bird Observatory in Australia. I publicly thank him for his dedication to myself and FIBO and wish him good luck (with a hint of envy) in Australia. Jack is one of the nicest people I have ever met, exceptionally enthusiastic about the work he did for me and FIBO and loved imparting information to our guests - he was an absolute delight to have around. On top of all that, he is also an exceptionally gifted artist and many of his vignettes can be found adorning the pages of this report. Since leaving Fair Isle, he is pursuing a career in bird art. He is already struggling to keep up with the commissions he has and his work has been published in several journals and books. I am delighted and privileged to own some pieces of his work and as word spreads about his talent I have no doubt that in a few years he could be as famous as Lars Jonsson or Ian Lewington.

These two hard-working AWs helped to ensure that there were plenty of rarity highlights in my last two seasons in charge, including White-tailed Eagle, Stone Curlew, Green-winged Teal (the isle's first), Pechora Pipit, two Great Reed Warbler, Eastern Olivaceous Warbler, Two-barred Crossbill, Brown-headed Cowbird and Blackpoll Warbler in 2009 and King Eider, White-tailed Eagle, two Rough-legged Buzzards, Buff-bellied Pipit, three Red-flanked Bluetail, White's Thrush, Swainson's Thrush, Black-throated Thrush, Pallas's Grasshopper Warbler and a (tan-striped) White-throated Sparrow in 2010.

Birding on Fair Isle, as with any coastal site, can at times be disappointing but when looking back at the end of each year, these lean periods have always been more than compensated for by the good times and I have enjoyed some exhilarating times as

Warden of this, the best rarity hotspot in Britain. My first BBRC rarity on Fair Isle was a Lesser Yellowlegs on Golden Water on 1st May 1999 (and its still the only one I have seen) and my last was a Black-throated Thrush on 23rd October 2010 - the sixth I have seen here. In the years between I have been fortunate to see such sought after British rarities as Harlequin Duck, Terek Sandpiper, two Scops Owl, three Calandra Larks, seven Pechora Pipit, two Buff-bellied Pipit, two Siberian Rubythroat, Rufous-tailed Robin, five White's Thrush, Siberian Thrush, five Pallas's Grasshopper Warbler, over 25 Lanceolated Warbler, four River Warbler, a dozen Blyth's Reed Warbler, Asian Brown Flycatcher, Brown Shrike, Citril Finch, Savannah Sparrow, Yellow-rumped Warbler, Black-faced Bunting and Chestnut-eared Bunting. Not a bad effort!

But Fair Isle is not just about rare birds, it also has internationally important numbers of seabirds and it is arguably whilst amongst them that I have had some of my most fun Fair Isle days. The smell, the noise, the life of a bustling colony is just fantastic and the efficiency of the team accompanying me, which meant we could get an awful lot done in a short space of time, was extremely satisfying. However I am saddened that the seabirds of Fair Isle are now struggling, really struggling. Breeding success has been extremely low for many years now, driven by food shortages and (as can be read elsewhere in this journal) the situation did not improve any in either 2009 or 2010. The seabird studies carried out by FIBO staff are as important as ever and with recent advancements in technology, the data that can now be collected is quite extraordinary. From data loggers fitted to a sample of our breeding Kittiwakes in 2009, we know that our birds (and the majority of North Sea/Northern Atlantic Kittiwakes) winter in a small area of the Labrador Sea in the western side of the Atlantic Ocean. A research team from RSPB also fitted data loggers to a number of species of seabirds on Fair Isle in 2009 & 2010 and these produced some surprising results. During the breeding season, rather than feeding within just a few kilometres of the isle, some auks were travelling hundreds of kilometres along the coast of mainland Scotland to fish. Unfortunately because this technology has only recently become available we do not know whether birds have always done this, but we can perhaps surmise that they would not choose to regularly travel such great distances to collect food for their young and are perhaps being forced to do it due to a lack of food locally? If we are to help our seabirds recover then the more we know about their lives the better and hopefully this technology can aid us.

Aside from seabird studies, the lives of the local Starlings continue to be a focus of visiting researchers from Aberdeen University and interesting insights into local movements of individuals and sub-populations are now emerging. Adam Seward from Cardiff University/MacAulay Institute completed his PhD studies into the effects of supplementary feeding on breeding success and survival of Wheatears. A summary of his work can be read in this journal. As a result of his work Fair Isle now has a large population of colour-ringed birds which I hope will be used for further study.

Apart from the FIBO staff and visiting researchers, the Obs is also home for a few weeks at a time to young volunteers, grant-aided by the JHMF, who have come to learn more about ornithology and experience observatory life. It is a very worthwhile visit for most and James Dixon, Tim Jones and Oliver Simms all agreed that they had a fantastic time in 2010 and learnt a lot! I would urge any budding ornithologist to seriously consider applying for such a placement.

So, as Hollie and I bow out of the Observatory I would firstly like to thank all the loyal staff who have worked for FIBO during my time in charge, many of whom have since become firm friends. FIBO is very much a team effort and I am proud to have led several winning ones! Of all my loyal staff over the years, I must single out one for special praise. Alan Bull has been a stalwart right through my time as Warden, not only during the four years he was employed at the Obs but for helping me out doing bits of work in all 12 years I was in charge and his contribution to this, my final FIBO Report, is considerable! I thank him wholeheartedly for everything he has done for FIBO and he will always be welcome at Burkle as one of the family. Also, it has been a delight to meet so many new people who have come to stay at the Obs and I am pleased to have made many new friends there also. My thanks also to all those professional tradesmen who have helped me to keep the Obs running over the years; Malcolm Adamson for help with all things generator, Kenny Stout for averting all those potential plumbing crises in the old Obs and especially Brian Wilson and the Northmen for countless building repairs in the old Obs, for all their help with the new building project and especially for stepping in to help finish the new building. As the Northmen begin to wind down as a company, I wish them all the best in their well-earned 'retirement' - although I know that Brian will never really stop! In fact in his 'sparetime' Brian has built FIBO a fabulously stylish but sturdy bench out of wood from the old Obs, which now has pride of place outside the main entrance to the new Observatory. Of course I must also thank the FIBOT Board of Directors for their support over these 12 years and I am pleased that in that time Fair Isle has increased in popularity as a holiday destination and with a fabulous new building the future for FIBOT looks secure.

I wish David & Susannah every success with it and as Hollie and I begin our new lives at Burkle, I look forward to being one of those islanders that must be phoned when a rare bird turns up and adding to my Fair Isle list!

Administrator's Report

Hollie Shaw

The 2009 and 2010 seasons proved to be an enormous challenge from an Administrative point of view, but were ultimately hugely satisfying with the building of the new Observatory and the completion of its first season.

The winter of 2008/2009 was a time of uncertainty whilst we waited to hear if enough funds had been raised to start the new Observatory project. What happened next is described in detail in a separate article in this journal and so I will try not to repeat too much here and instead reflect on the Administrative aspects of these two seasons. Whilst waiting for news regarding funding, no bookings for 2009 were taken and no domestic staff were arranged. The New Observatory Appeal had been launched in August 2008 and donations big and small were coming in to FIBO by cheque, bank transfer and online on an almost daily basis. As spring approached, it became essential to know if we were going to open to guests for the season or to demolish the current building. Finally, we got the news we had been waiting for - that FIBO had been awarded £1.9 million (approximately 50% of the total project cost) and together with other funds already raised this meant we could press on with the demolition with immediate effect. Deryk, myself and the Shaw brood were hurriedly re-housed in Burkle at the south end of the island and we secured use of the Chalet to house AW's and the Puffinn to accommodate researchers for the season. Within a week of receiving the news that funding had been secured, the stripping out of the old building began. With no Observatory to get ready for opening, no staff to recruit and no guests to look after, the six month 2009 season was very different indeed. FIBO 'Headquarters' was set up in the Burkle workshop and it was from here that we sent out thousands of fundraising appeal letters and processed all donations. Logistics can prove challenging on Fair Isle at the best of times, but moving home and offices in a matter of days (much of it carried out by my parents using our trusty Ford Mondeo) was testing enough without the subsequent prolonged telecommunications problems - which left us with no landline, no email and no internet for several weeks. We are extremely grateful to everyone who remained patient with us throughout this time, and to Fiona and Robert who let us regularly gate-crash their kitchen to use their Wi-Fi. Making business calls by mobile phone from the upstairs Burkle bathroom (where it was possible to get reception) was not ideal at all and we were extremely relieved when eventually we were reconnected with the outside world. The phone line was then immediately kept busy with people interested in what was happening and with those keen to book as soon as the new building would be ready for guests. Later, once the new building began to be erected, we were in almost daily contact with FIBO Directors. So although we were both very busy (Deryk's daily ornithological duties as Warden were very similar to those when we were at the Observatory) it would be untrue to pretend the season of 2009 was the fast-paced, exceedingly busy period that we were by now used

to at the Obs. I was able to spend much more time with the children and for the first time in several years, did not employ a childminder. I grew a wide variety of vegetables in Burkle garden and we bought two ponies for the children (which we share with Kenaby and house on their croft). This taste of a more 'normal' life had a more profound effect on us than we realised at the time and was a major catalyst for some big decisions we made a few months later. However, before we could rest on our laurels the new building was beginning to take shape and Deryk and I began a prolonged period of almost daily site visits. The first pods arrived in September 2009 and the workload picked up immediately. Watching the building take shape was very exciting and more than a little daunting. It was far bigger than we had imagined and I spent many a sleepless night worrying how we were ever going to fill it with furniture! As rooms started to take shape and whilst Deryk busied himself discussing electrics, heating systems, fuel storage, fire regulations, more electrics etc with builders, architects, planners and FIBOT Directors, I set about the task of working out what we needed to buy in order to furnish the interior to match the standard of the building. In consultation with previous staff members and the architect, I also planned the new commercial kitchen and discussed layouts of offices/laundry rooms and storerooms. Deryk and I were by now visiting the site at least once daily and would routinely climb the ladder to the first floor to measure and re-measure room sizes, windows, ceiling heights and anything else that could be usefully measured! It had always been my hope that the new Observatory would achieve a 3-star rating with 'VisitScotland' (the Scottish Tourist Board). The old Observatory was 2-stars but due to lack of *en-suite* could never have achieved 3 stars even with a total refurbishment. It became clear to us very early on that the new building was of a very high standard - the bedrooms were much bigger than the minimum size required to achieve three stars and they were all *en-suite* - so with careful planning of layout, soft furnishings and public rooms, a 3-star grading was very achievable. I pored over the regulations and Standards & Quality Specifications used by 'VisitScotland' in their ratings. Each decision had a bearing on another decision and it was hard to know where to start - so we decided to start with the bedrooms as these were the closest to being finished. After discussion with Directors, it was agreed to buy special beds that can either be standard single beds or can have the bases locked together and the mattresses zipped together to make super king-size doubles. This was a clear move away from the old Observatory which only had single, twins or bunks! With this in mind we had to also decide where these beds would go in every bedroom, taking into account where the radiator was, where the *en-suite* bathroom door was and where the window was. No two rooms were identical in layout. This brought us to one of the many 'battles' we had with the architects/builders. It turned out that they had decided that it was not necessary to have any form of bedside light facility in the bedrooms - neither a suitable electrical socket in which to plug in a table lamp, nor wall lights. Despite Deryk and I raising this issue with the architects whilst still at design stage, nothing had been done to rectify the matter and when I queried why this was the case with one of the electricians on site I was informed that the architects/builders didn't think our type of visitor would spend much time in their rooms and therefore they wouldn't need bedside lights! This

brought home to myself and Deryk that Fair Isle Bird Observatory is a totally unique place and whilst you may get other observatories/outdoor centres/rural guesthouses that share many similar aspects, no one can really understand how FIBO works unless they have worked there themselves or at least visited several times when it is open. So many aspects of daily life at FIBO (power supply, heating, fuel supply, transport etc) are totally unique, that it is hard for even professionals who have the best intensions to be able to grasp exactly what we needed and what would and more importantly *what* just simply *wouldn't* work. However, after a good natured 'rant' at the poor unsuspecting electrician, we were delighted to hear the next day that we could have wall lights fitted in every bedroom if we went up to the Observatory that morning and said exactly where they should be placed! This we duly did, again trying to take into account where the beds would be situated and making sure the lights were positioned so that they worked if the beds were in a twin or double configuration. It would take an entire FIBO report of it's own to record every such incident during the building phase of the new Observatory and so to spare you having to read that, it is suffice to say that Deryk and I became regular fixtures at the building site, no doubt met with a silent groan from many of the workmen as they knew we would ask questions/request small changes and sometimes dig our heels in over an issue we knew was too important to let pass. However, we were never made to feel uncomfortable, we were always listened to (even if sometimes we didn't get our way in the end) and we nurtured an excellent working relationship with these men who we saw as our colleagues. At times, there were about 16-20 workmen on site everyday. Most stayed at the three B&B's on the isle, but there were more than could be accommodated there, so the National Trust for Scotland kindly allowed some to stay at Taft (Adam Seward had been staying there through much of the summer whilst carrying out his PhD research). These men were fed by Tommy at Auld Haa and really just used Taft as somewhere to sleep and spend the very few hours of time off they had. I became their unofficial, unpaid house-keeper for the next few months, going over twice a week to clean, tidy and generally keep the house in order and to change their bedding. At this point the isle was stretched to its limit housing as many men as it possibly could in order to try and keep the project moving forwards. The three island B&B's housed and catered for the vast majority of these workmen and for this FIBOT is very grateful.

On the 4th December the isle had a huge morale boost when it gained a new member of the population. James Fin Bracken was born in Lerwick, to Lisa and Declan from Schoolhouse. Lisa, Declan, big brother Oisin, big sister Orla and baby James all returned to Fair Isle a few days later.

Despite some concerns that the Observatory project was not running to schedule, the decision was made to start taking bookings for the 2010 season on 2nd January 2010, with the opening date set for 1st May. This was advertised on the website and anyone who phoned prior to this was told that 2nd January would be the time to contact us again... and contact us they did! The first few days of 2010 were spent

mostly answering the phone and replying to email enquiries. It was an exciting time and Deryk and I both started to enjoy 'selling' the new Obs to potential visitors, describing the new *en-suite* bedrooms, enormous lounge-bar and new Visitor Centre. Adverts were placed in various birding publications, the website was updated with the latest building news and we began to fall into the 'pre-season routine' of marketing, recruitment and preparing for the opening day. It was around this time that we informed the FIBOT Directors that 2010 would be our last season as Warden and Administrator. We said we would stay to see the new Observatory built and through its first season and it seemed that the time was now right to move on. This was an incredibly difficult decision for us both as FIBO had been so much part of our lives for the last 11 years. However the house we were temporarily staying in, Burkle, had been advertised for rent in the spring and houses of this size do not come up very often on Fair Isle, so we knew if we wanted to stay on the isle, this was our best chance. The plan was to move back into the Obs as soon as it was ready - as we knew how difficult it would be to do our jobs when not living on site, and then to move back to Burkle once the season ended. However, there was no time to think about our post-FIBO lives as we were now completely occupied with the rapidly approaching start of the 2010 season. We were lucky to have a number of staff wishing to return to see the much-anticipated 'New Obs' for themselves. Ann Prior was going to lead the kitchen team as Cook for the season and she was to be ably assisted by the lovely Lois Smallwood as Assistant Cook. Tracey Weekes, who always rises to a challenge, was once again lined up to be General Assistant (a role that was clearly going to require a huge amount of flexibility whilst we worked out the new domestic routines in the now much bigger building) and a new face, June Taylor would make up the four-strong kitchen/domestic team. I had anticipated a long while ago that with *en-suites* in every guest room and much bigger public/reception rooms, it was going to be essential to have some extra help with cleaning. Rather than bringing in a fifth, full-time member to the team I suggested we look for a 'domestic volunteer', who in return for approximately 4 hours cleaning a day, would get board and lodgings at the Observatory. This was agreed and I advertised the 'post' on the website and within a few weeks had secured four young people who would each work as the domestic volunteer for 7 or 8 weeks each, covering the entire season between them. We would start the season with the very familiar face of the ever reliable Becki Rosser, followed by a young Italian lad, Marco Plebani. He would be replaced by Maggie Burgh, who had been a JHMF in 2008 and finally Rob Hughes, who had been the Ranger in 2008, would take us through September and October. Volunteers are a great help when running somewhere like FIBO, but as with most people, some are more suited to certain roles than others. It remained to be seen if my choice of domestic volunteers would suit the job in hand.

By April, with delays to the building project now very evident we had to weigh up the pros and cons of bringing staff to the island before the building was ready to house them. The Warden's accommodation had effectively been put on hold, with the hope that this might speed up the guest and staff sections - and so Deryk, myself and

the children would have to stay put at Burkle for the foreseeable future. Ironically this was only possible because we had applied to live there permanently. Additionally, with the main furniture delivery (all 30+ beds, bedroom furniture, 5 sofas, coffee tables, 5 large dining tables and 50 dining chairs etc) due to arrive by chartered ferry on 8th April, we really needed access to the upstairs immediately - at this time two of the three staircases had not been started and one (which only provided access to the staff bedrooms) was no way near complete. Up to this point we were still climbing a ladder to the first floor to do all our measuring up etc. In order to clean the bedrooms prior to the furniture delivery, myself and my willing volunteers, (Ruth Stout and Lise Sinclair), had to drag the hoovers up the same ladder! However, the furniture arrived as planned and much of the island population turned up to help us get it from the pier to the Obs. One workman was still welding the stairs just minutes before we carried the first beds up! At last we felt we had achieved something, but we quickly covered the new bedroom furniture in dustsheets and all the other furniture was stored in the 'Visitor Centre' as no other rooms were near completion. After much discussion and thought it was agreed in the end that it would be best for the seasonal staff to be on-isle to help get the building ready as soon as each area was finished - but we had nowhere to house them. The National Trust for Scotland again helped us out by allowing us to house some of the staff at the Chalet (Simon and Jack) and some others (plus researchers who were also arriving back to start their field work) at the Puffinn. We also hired Springfield for a few weeks to provide more comfortable accommodation for a few. Old hand Alan Bull had always planned to come for a week at this point - with the main purpose of his visit to help us move back in to the newly completed Obs. This was of course not possible, but he was put to good use helping Carrie, the new Ranger, put together flat-packed furniture in the staff bedrooms. As we have been privileged to witness on so many occasions, Alan threw all his energies in to the task in hand with his usual sense of humour and fun. He left a week later with us no nearer moving in to the Obs but with many mundane and time-consuming jobs behind us. Alan's loyalty to FIBO as an organisation for the last 15 years and also to myself and Deryk, is second to none. He has helped us on numerous occasions (and continues to do so with the production of this report) for no formal acknowledgment or reward and so we wish to take this opportunity to publicly thank him now, whilst we have the forum to do so.

Early spring was a period of great frustration and uncertainty, particularly for those of us who mostly worked on the guesthouse side of the organisation. Deryk, Simon and Jack began their usual early season work (trap repairs, census etc) and the researchers were able to start their fieldwork, but for a couple of weeks after the arrival of all the domestic staff, very little progress was made at all in preparing the building for opening. We were able to prepare staff bedrooms and guest bedrooms (as these areas had been almost complete when the pods arrived back in September), cleaning, hanging curtains, arranging furniture etc. But after just a few days with an efficient team we reached the end of what could be done. It was during this period that Ann Prior received news that she was seriously ill and would require prolonged

medical treatment. She left the isle a week later but was never far from our thoughts all season. We are delighted to report that Ann recovered well (although not in time to be able to take up her post in 2010) and will no doubt be a regular visitor to the isle once more. As each new deadline passed us by without gaining any further access to the building we realised that we were not going to achieve the planned opening date of 1st May. We then set about cancelling bookings - eventually having to cancel 8 weeks worth of bookings up to 20th June! This was probably one of the lowest points in the whole project for myself and Deryk as we felt we had disappointed so many people and stretched their good will to the limit! Eventually after continued daily visits from myself and Deryk, the builders gave us access to the main kitchen and staff offices allowing the domestic team, plus Carrie the Ranger to get stuck in! As was expected, every surface, wall and cupboard was covered in building dust and the cleaning operation kept all the domestic staff busy for many days. We were lucky, as we have been so many times before, that we had staff who were happy to turn their hands to anything to help at this point and didn't hold us to their job descriptions. It wasn't long before we had done everything that could be done and we were again waiting for the builders to complete another area for us to start on. Doing nothing does not seem to be in the mindset of most of our FIBO staff and so the domestic team turned their hands to anything they could think of to help with the project as a whole. Becki and June dug over a patch of the garden/grounds to start a modest veggie patch, Lois and Tracey fed all the staff at lunchtime (everyone was still living at the Puffinn/Chalet/Springfield at this point) and began to familiarise themselves with the kitchen. They also slowly but surely crept along behind the builders cleaning each new space (store room, corridor etc) as it was completed. Carrie began the process of preparing welcome packs and other interpretative information, room brochures for bedrooms and in conjunction with myself, planning the Ranger Service activities for the season. Just as luck would have it, these weeks of all the seasonal staff working at the Obs but living in the south of the isle happened to coincide with a serious shortage of FIBO vehicles. The old van was out of action, the old people carrier had never returned from its service in Lerwick and we were informed it never would, and finally our own personal, dependable Mondeo had broken down in April. For a very short period we were actually carless, but one look at my despairing face outside the shop when my car broke down brought sympathy and help from Pat and Neil Thomson and they gave us their second car - there and then! This was a life-saver as it took two trips to get everyone up the road each morning as it was and it is another example of how folk helped us in so many ways through this project. As time passed by with us no nearer to moving back into the Observatory as a whole and even further away from being able to move our family into the Warden's accommodation, it became clear we could not continue to 'commute' between Burkle and the Obs with the children in tow every day. Whilst they were very good about it, there was nothing for them to do at the Obs and it was still an 'out-of-bounds' building site in many areas. A childminder would not really have solved our problems as we really needed someone to be at home with them at Burkle. So I turned to my mum and she arrived in late May and stayed until the

middle of October! We saw very little of our children during those months as we were almost never home before they went to bed in the evenings, but we reminded ourselves it was only temporary and that they were happy and well looked after. Our gratitude to my mother for doing this for us all (and to my father for supporting her decision) is impossible to express in words.

Back in 2009 I had agreed to host a 'Book Launch' event for crime writer, Ann Cleeves, in May 2010, at the new Observatory. Ann has a long association with Fair Isle having been an Assistant Cook at FIBO many years ago. It was in fact here she met her husband-to-be, Tim, who was a guest at the Observatory whilst she worked there. Ann's latest project was a quartet of Shetland murder mysteries and the last in the series, '*Blue Lightning'* was set on Fair Isle and featured the Observatory. To mark the completion of '*Blue Lightning'* Ann had block-booked the Observatory for a weekend in early May and had invited journalists, travel writers and other professionals from the publishing world to join her at a 'launch party', to which she would also invite the whole island. I was confident about hosting such an event as I had anticipated all along that I would have the very capable Ann Prior at the head of our domestic team; and a brand new kitchen from which to provide the catering. As it turned out neither was the case and we couldn't even house Ann and her guests. Not to be put off, I helped Ann relocate her guests to willing islanders homes and the FIBO domestic team used the Community Hall to produce a wonderful feast of buffet food. The party was attended by the whole isle and was in every way a great success.

It is events such as this that make you appreciate living in a small tight-knit community and the strength of that community is never felt more strongly when someone leaves. On 25th May, George Stout, formally of Barkland and latterly of Aesterhoull passed away. Georgie (as he was known to everyone on the isle) had moved just a year before to a care home in Lerwick. His funeral was held on the isle on 28th May and was well attended by not only the whole island community but also many family members and friends who had travelled into the isle to pay their respects. It seemed fitting that Georgie, who was a great lover of the sea and boats should make his final journey to Fair Isle aboard the *Good Shepherd IV* - a boat he previously skippered.

Eventually, after more deadlines passed us by, things started to come together. We gained access to every Observatory area apart from the Warden's accommodation (although workmen were still working in many of the rooms, but we were able to work round them) and we started the massive job of moving everything out of storage at South Lighthouse and back into the Observatory. The bulk of the removal work was carried out by Simon and Jack - again two uncomplaining, hard-working staff members who did whatever they could to get us up and running. Meanwhile, as opening now actually began to loom in front of us, I spent many hours trying in vain to sort out our staff shortage (we still did not have a Cook, which whilst not really a problem when we were not open, would become a very big problem the

moment we did). In the end, Lois valiantly volunteered to step up to Cook (a role she had done very successfully before, but one that she really didn't want to do this time) and I would stand in as Assistant Cook (cooking on Lois's days off and helping out on other days), just until I could find someone else! I knew if I didn't find another cook before the first guests arrived I would be burdening the entire kitchen staff by being short staffed (Lois in particular) and I really didn't want to do that, but at this point I had little choice.

Last minute hold ups (fire regulations - meaning multiple door frames that were finished, painted and had been carpeted round would now need to be ripped out and re-done) meant that even as we approached mid June we did not have the long awaited and vitally important Habitation Order. Without this, we could not live in the building (although we were allowed to work in it and had been doing so for many weeks) and of course we could not have paying guests. This meant more booking cancellations including one for the National Trust for Scotland's Patrons Club that had made a large group booking for a weekend in mid June at the Observatory, which we were no longer able to honour. The NTS were very determined however and once again islanders put people up in their houses so that their trip did not have to be cancelled. On this occasion we were able to cater for them at the Observatory in the evenings as the kitchen was now completed and fully functional. This gave us a trial run at catering for guests and a first run for the new dining room and its fabulous furniture. The solid oak tables had been sanded and oiled multiple times by a couple of the 'chippies' on site, after they finished their shift in the evenings - a very generous and thoughtful contribution from men who were working very long hours already.

One week later, on 18th June, we received the habitation order and FIBO was at last allowed to open its doors to the public. The seasonal staff and researchers immediately moved into their respective rooms and a massive clean up operation began inside and out as we now had just two days to get the parking area/driveway and entrance cleared of building materials, the building cleaned, all the remaining furniture unwrapped and in position and areas like the bar, shop and visitor centre operational. Two areas that had so far not been completed were the library and the Visitor Centre. There were big plans for both these areas - a bespoke bookcase made from wood from the old Observatory for the library and professionally designed interpretative panels and displays for the visitor centre. Both would take some planning and would not be ready before the end of the 2010 season. As a short term measure Brian Wilson made a sturdy, temporary bookcase for the library and Carrie and Maggie moved in as many books as the room could hold. Carrie set up the Visitor Centre with temporary displays and a multitude of interpretative material as well as a new computer for guest use.

The receipt of the habitation order happened to coincide with the weekend of the FIBO Directors AGM, which they had planned all along to hold on Fair Isle on 20th

June. So, rather appropriately our very first 'guests' were those people who had put so much into making this project happen in the first place. Mike Wood brought our brand new minibus up with him, meaning that just in the nick of time we had a suitable vehicle for transporting guests. It has been well documented elsewhere that just one day after receiving the habitation order we got the devastating news that the building company, AHW, had gone into receivership. This was a massive blow to morale, just at a time when we thought we had made progress and was made all the more painful because we had six men on site, who we considered part of our 'team' and who had just lost their jobs overnight. A few of the workmen left the same day but others stayed and worked for nothing to help us get some last details completed - including Derek Johnston, the foreman, who worked through the night to complete the impressive wooden bar in the lounge. As the last workmen left, the Directors arrived and immediately rolled up their sleeves, helping to get last minute details ready for the arrival of the first 'proper' guests two days later.

There had always been the intention of having a 'Grand Opening' during this weekend - with the idea being that the Observatory would have been operating for several weeks and most 'snagging' issues would have been sorted out. Clearly this was not the case and with the delays to building works evident several weeks earlier, the 'Official Grand Opening' was put on hold. Now, with the uncertainty created by the sudden collapse of AHW it was felt it would be inappropriate and somewhat premature to even celebrate the belated opening of the Observatory. However it was agreed that it was important to invite the islanders, who had been so supportive through this process, up to the new building and to show them round in an official capacity and to thank them for their support. For most of them this would be their only opportunity to see the guest bedrooms/staff offices/research facilities etc. An 'Open Afternoon' event was organised and the Directors proudly took small groups of islanders round the building before sharing a glass of 'bubbly' to toast the 'New Obs'. The Director's meeting the following day was dominated by talk of the financial situation caused by the collapse of AHW and concerns over how we were now going to complete the extensive list of building works that still needed to be completed.

June is always a busy month at FIBO and even though we were only open for the last 10 days, this June was no exception. As the news spread that we were at last open, bookings flooded in and the 2010 season, although clearly not as busy in terms of 'guest bed-nights' as in recent years (as a direct result of opening 8 weeks late), was reassuringly busy for guest numbers. With all the cooking I had to do and the extra workload from setting up the new building, it soon became clear I could simply not manage it all and something had to give. Carrie at this point took over picking up and dropping off guests and giving them their Welcome Talks. I had always felt it was important that the Administrator picked up guests as it is the best way to get to know them and hopefully gives them a good first impression and I particularly liked to see them off at the end of their holiday. But Carrie with her bubbly personality and excellent organisational skills was able to take on this role for me, removing a huge

weight from my shoulders and giving me much needed time to do other work. Staffing continued to be a problem - despite repeated advertising and thinking I had recruited, twice I was let down and had still not secured a Cook. When you are cooking from scratch for a full Observatory, being short of even one member of staff is very difficult and put immediate strain on all other members of staff. Lois, Tracey and Becki were not just valued members of staff but also very dear friends by now, having worked with them all for so many seasons. It left me feeling I had let them down because I couldn't solve the staffing problem. I can only assume it was our close friendship and their loyalty to FIBO that gave them the determination to work through the problem. As had been the case so many times before, the ornithological staff and researchers also helped by taking it in turns to wash up in the evenings. This extra pair of hands in the kitchen, at the end of the day, helped keep morale up in the kitchen and I am so grateful to the domestic team who just kept their heads down and worked longer hours without complaint and to the birding staff and researchers who supported them. Becki Rosser had been due to leave us at the end of May, as Maggie Burgh arrived then to take on the position of domestic volunteer. However, there was still so much to do and Becki was such a stalwart member of the team that I asked her to stay on longer and help out in the kitchen to try and make up in some way for the staff shortage. Becki discovered a skill in baking and soon was able to support Lois (and myself) with daily homemade bread and home bakes. Maggie on the other hand brought her super efficient skills into play, getting the downstairs cleaning completed to a high standard every day and then still having time to help me with a multitude of administrative duties that I had less time to do when I was cooking - including cataloguing the entire FIBO library. Maggie unfortunately spent very little time in the new building - leaving just a week or so after we gained official entry and she was replaced by Marco Plebani. Any fears I may have had about a young Italian lad, who had never had a real job, being able to carry out the tasks of domestic volunteer, were soon dispelled as Marco proved to be a very pleasant, hard working member of the team. Our staff and volunteers come from all walks of life and all with different reasons/ambitions bringing them to Fair Isle. I am often surprised and pleased to see that you do not have to be a mad keen birder (or to have any interest in birds at all) to work here or to gain a truly enjoyable experience from being part of a Bird Observatory. Indeed the Observatory would be a much poorer place without all the non-birder personnel it has attracted over the years, both in staff and guests.

We were delighted to see building work begin again towards the end of July, this time led by the island building company, 'Northmen'. The effect was immediate, with work on the garage (which was still barely more than a shell) and the Warden's accommodation commencing straight away. Not everything was going so well however, and for a variety of reasons June decided working at FIBO was not for her and she returned home to her family in early July. This left us even shorter-staffed and with Lois due to leave as planned at the end of July, I was looking at the worst staffing crisis I had faced since working at FIBO. Becki was immediately promoted

to General Assistant and I continued to try and recruit a Cook with no success and eventually as I had done many times before, I turned to a former member of staff for help. Phil Bell arrived on the island two days after Lois left and, although now officially retired, he had agreed to work as Cook for a month. This was a great bonus but we were still short of an Assistant Cook, as we had been all season, so I was still responsible for all the cooking on Phil's days off. I had waited until Phil had agreed to be Cook before I broke the news to him that we were hosting a wedding reception just three weeks after he arrived! Jimmy Stout's cousin, Marilyn Rowan and her husband-to-be, Gordon Rhind, were due to marry in Fair Isle in late August. They had asked me many months ago if FIBO could provide the catering for the reception at the Community Hall to allow all the islanders to fully enjoy the day. Again this was another event I had agreed to in the confident knowledge that I would have Ann Prior at the helm in the kitchen. Added to this, the Community Hall was no longer available due to having its roof replaced and so now the reception for 100 guests was to be held at the Observatory. Phil however took it all in his stride and in conjunction with Marilyn and Gordon we devised a menu and planned what elements of the event would take place in what rooms. After a charming service at the Chapel, on the 21st August, Marilyn, Gordon, and their grown up children welcomed the whole island community to a reception meal and dance at the Observatory. Although not their first choice of venue, it was clear that the new Observatory lent itself well to such an event and Marilyn and Gordon were delighted with their day.

By now the Observatory was in full flow - we were still relatively busy, despite August traditionally being a quiet time. There is no doubt that FIBO works best when it is busy, as each member of staff falls into their daily routine and looks after their responsibilities and the passing of the days are marked by mealtimes shared by guests, staff and researchers alike. Rob Hughes had arrived the day of the wedding and threw himself into helping in any way he could. He was the final domestic volunteer, staying with us to the end of the season and his quiet loyalty to FIBO and pleasant manner were a hit with both guests and staff.

As work on finishing the building progressed we were able to take advantage of having workmen on site every day and get minor details changed or improved, such as an extra shelf here or a hook there and Brian Wilson and his team were always happy to oblige. One such issue was the dining room. The new dining room had a hard floor and little in the way of soft furnishings. This gave it a smart, clean appearance but the rattle of cutlery and chatter of multiple voices at mealtimes echoed round the room and could be quite noisy when we were busy. FIBOT therefore commissioned Orkney artist, Sheila Scott, to create three large pieces of art work to display in the dining room, which as well as adding to the aesthetics would also help absorb the sound in this room. These arrived late summer and along with pictures from storage and newly commissioned canvas photos by Rebecca Nason, the walls of the building started to look less bare. The modern style of Rebecca's images really suited the large airy rooms and FIBO commissioned Rebecca to

produce two such canvases for each bedroom - 32 in total, although these would not arrive in time for this season.

As the season progressed with alarming speed, we approached the end of August and we were once again visited by a number of FIBOT Directors. The 28th August was the 62nd anniversary of the opening of the original Fair Isle Bird Observatory and it had been felt this would have been an ideal time to hold the Official Opening of the new building. However, with the building still not complete, this idea had been abandoned some time ago but the weekend was earmarked instead for the interviews of the prospective new FIBO Warden and Administrator. Four couples visited the island and stayed at the Observatory. An informal music night for the island community was held at the Obs on the Saturday evening, with formal interviews on the Monday. At the end of it all, David and Susannah Parnaby were selected to be the new Warden and Administrator and along with their young daughter, Grace, would be moving into FIBO early in 2011. Those few days of showing prospective candidates around and speaking about our jobs, were very difficult indeed. Whilst it had been entirely our choice to leave, it was almost impossible for Deryk and I to think of life after FIBO, never mind imagine someone else doing our jobs. We consoled ourselves by remembering how much we had enjoyed the last 12 years and strived to try and make the Obs as ready for Susannah and David as we possibly could to help make their transition into their new roles as smooth as possible.

Phil Bell had to leave in the last week of August to go on a previously planned holiday and despite continued efforts on my part, I still had not secured another Cook or Assistant Cook. The time involved in repeated recruitment attempts was wearing me down and so Phil kindly offered to return a month later, for a further month. In the meantime, I had no Cook or Assistant Cook and no more time to find them. I decided there really was no option but to just do the jobs myself for that period - and so for the next four weeks I barely left the kitchen. Becki and Tracey were a huge support as always and Deryk took over as much of answering phones and emails as he could (when he was in the building). Every staff member and volunteer stepped up to help, doing extra hours, extra duties and basically ensured that we got through that four week period with our sanity and senses of humour still intact. Phil arrived back in late September and stayed until mid-October when Lois returned for the final two weeks of the season. I don't know what I would have done without them.

As we hurtled headlong into the busy autumn period, Deryk and I started to realise that time was running out to get all the outstanding 'new building tasks' completed whilst we still had staff to help. A serious amount of delegation took place and everyone busied themselves with end of season tasks. My mum left in mid-October to go on a more than well deserved holiday with my Dad and Deryk's parents came to look after the children. They have only visited Fair Isle a couple of times before so it was lovely to see them both and for them to spend some quality time with the children. Maggie returned to help me as an 'admin volunteer' for the last two weeks

of the season and together with Carrie they brought the last hundred or so boxes out of storage and up to the Obs and then spent many hours trying to find homes for their contents (mostly books, journals and pictures).

The Warden's accommodation was now ready but there was clearly no point in moving in at this late stage and so I just hoped that Susannah and David would like purple carpets! The Scottish Tourist Board never made it to the island due to weather delays and so it remained to be seen if the new Observatory would achieve the 3-star grading. The Official Opening was rescheduled for 2011 when we could be confident that all works would be completed and most snagging issues would be resolved. Before we knew it, we had reached the end of the season. We have been very fortunate over the years to work with dozens of great individuals but we said time and time again during 2010 that we couldn't have had a better team for our last season. Working at FIBO is not like most jobs and it does not suit everyone - the hours are long and weather and geographical isolation can play havoc with logistics meaning staff might suddenly have to do extra or adapt to a new situation with little warning. That year, almost without exception, we had individuals who excelled in their jobs and showed unwavering support to myself, Deryk and FIBO. It is hard to do them all justice - it is one thing to work longer hours and be asked to do jobs that are not in your remit for extended periods, it is another thing to do all of that without complaint, but this they did and for that and everything else they did to make it such a great year, Deryk and I are both so very grateful. To mark the end of an era we had an end of season/'retirement' party at the Observatory to which we invited the whole island. Unbeknown to us, the staff had trawled through old 'chatty logs' and photos and decorated the foyer and living room with pictures and quotes from the past 12 years. It was a very thoughtful gesture and the photos brought it home to us all just how young Deryk and I were when we arrived! As the last guests left we set about 'closing down' the Observatory for the winter and socialising with our seasonal team for the last time. Deryk and I were acutely aware at this point just how much we would miss almost every element of FIBO - I wouldn't miss the cooking and Deryk wouldn't miss the paperwork but we knew that we would both miss the people, the camaraderie of being part of a team and most of all the great atmosphere. We both wish Susannah and David all the very best with FIBO and look forward to seeing the new building come into its own and go from strength to strength. We hope very much to be associated with the organisation in some ways for many years to come and hope we will therefore get the opportunity to see many of the guests that we have got to know so well over the years.

All that remains is for me to say some thank yous - but it is almost impossible to know where to start. I have decided therefore not to thank any specific individuals, partly for fear of missing someone out but mostly because it would simply take too long!

Firstly, I would like to thank the FIBOT Directors. You have been such a very supportive group of people to work for, who clearly want what is best for FIBO - this

makes it very easy to want to help you achieve that. You always listened to any concerns we may have, or indeed new ideas and although we knew you were available if we needed you, we never felt we were being watched or judged. As is inevitable I had more contact with a few of you than others and this in turn led to a closer working relationship with some - I feel very lucky to have had such dedicated and supportive 'line managers' for so long. A couple of you have also let me cry on your shoulder on more than one occasion when things have got a bit much, or politely listened to me 'rant' to get something off my chest - both of which were greatly appreciated. We really wish you all the best and look forward to seeing you on your future visits to the isle.

Secondly, I would like to thank our seasonal staff, volunteers and researchers from the last twelve years. We really could not have done it without you all. I have spoken about the staff throughout this report and although I was referring in this case to the staff of 2009/2010, the sentiments also extend back over the decade before.

Thirdly, I would like to thank the Islanders. Deryk and I were made to feel part of the Fair Isle community the minute we arrived here and this is still very much the case today. We are particularly grateful to all of you who have supported us socially, practically and emotionally during our time at the Obs. This was never more needed than in the last two years and I have been humbled by the offers of help and simple gestures of support that we have received - it really did help keep us going.

Fourthly, I would like to thank the guests from the last twelve years - without you all, FIBO would be a much less colourful place. FIBO is lucky to have a loyal following of guests who return again and again and those of you who visited numerous times during our tenure felt to us like part of the FIBO family. Many of you have become firm friends. We look forward to seeing you during your future visits to the isle. FIBO and Fair Isle as a whole would be a much reduced entity without the good numbers of guests coming to stay, not only financially but also socially - so please keep visiting to help secure their future.

Finally I would like to thank Deryk; for being so calm, patient and thorough (all the things I am not) - and for making us move here in the first place! Your quiet, solid leadership has got us through so many crises - I hope we made a good team?

The building of a new Fair Isle Bird Observatory

Deryk Shaw

The original Fair Isle Bird Observatory was based in the old war-time naval huts at North Haven and this served as a base for the increasing ornithological study and visitor accommodation for 20 years. In 1969, a new purpose-built wooden building was erected nearby in Mavers Cup. This was a very homely place with single, twin and dormitory rooms, a large kitchen, dining room and a lounge with an open fire where staff, researchers and visitors all socialised together in the evenings. However, the harsh Fair Isle climate, in winter especially, was not kind to the structure and in 1989 the whole building was cased in blockwork but also extended to include extra bedrooms for staff.

Fast forward 15 years and the building was once again in a sorry state, the elements having taken their toll on the external blockwork and felted flat roof, whilst internally the plumbing and wiring were suffering from age. The wardening staff were finding they were having to spend more and more of their time doing repairs and 'patching up' whilst skilled islanders were being called upon more and more frequently to carry out more sophisticated repairs. It was agreed that something had to be done before there was a major crisis.

Professional help was brought in to assess the building. Could the shell of the building be re-used? Could the roof be removed, the building refurbished and a new roof fitted? I accompanied architect Chris Morgan as he went around the outside of the building, poking his pencil into the blocks and watching as it disappeared into the wall. It rapidly became clear that a refurbishment was not going to be economically feasible. So, a new building was required!

An initial scoping study was carried out, along with a feasibility study, impact study (and several other studies) plus meeting after official meeting. Finally, it was agreed at an Observatory Directors Meeting in Edinburgh in January 2006 that FIBOT should go ahead with the new build project. A visit to the isle in June 2006 to look at where to build a new Observatory identified six potential sites. It was agreed that, for many reasons, a new building should not be more than 200m away from where the current building stood. All the sites were looked at carefully, but five of them were ruled out (too exposed, on an SPA, too steep, required digging into the hill, poor view). This left just one site - where the existing building stood! It was unanimously agreed by all the Directors that this was the best site. However building here posed its own problems - would we have to close the Obs for a season? Where

would we store all the Obs belongings? Where could we house the warden's family, the staff and researchers? Where would the builders be housed? What about the impact on the island? And transport? Another feasibility study was required...

By January 2008, all had been completed - feasibility study, business plan, specifications and initial drawings, indicative funding package, quantity surveyors report, etc, etc and in May 2008, invitations for tender were sent out. In July, a meeting of Directors in Lerwick chose the Orkney building firm AH Wilson Building Solutions (with Synergie Scotland design team) as the preferred bid. The cost of the project would be just short of £4M.

Fittingly, at a party at the Observatory on 28th August to celebrate FIBO's 60th birthday, an appeal for funds was launched. An announcement was made at the British Birdwatching Fair, fliers were distributed and widespread press coverage ensured we reached as wide a target audience as possible. Shetland Island's Council were extremely supportive and were quick to offer £1.15M toward the project and Highlands & Islands Enterprise promised £400,000. Combined with the fundraising activities by (and the hundreds of donations from) our wonderful Friends of Fair Isle, plus those from various charitable organisations, by the end of the following winter we had raised almost 50% of the total cost. However this was not enough to give the go ahead to start demolishing the Obs; we were waiting on tenterhooks for the last piece of the funding package to be approved! In early April 2009, we finally received the joyous news we'd been praying for - that the Scottish Rural Development Programme (SRDP) had granted over £1.9M (50% of the total) towards the project.

It was immediate action stations... a week later the Shaw family were packed and moved into Burkle (a vacant house down-isle), the Assistant Wardens into the Chalet and the Observatory's belongings were all being boxed up and transported to the South Lighthouse for storage. Meanwhile, Northmen (the Fair Isle builders) started dismantling the Obs, salvaging many fixtures and fittings, doors, windows and then blockwork for use 'down the isle'. Also, several tonnes of wood were salvaged, either for future small building projects or for firewood. Very little went to waste!

Over the next few months, Hollie & I were kept busy poring over copy after revised copy of drawings, suggesting necessary functional changes to the design, room sizes and configuration.

On 2nd July 2009, the AHW team of builders arrived with their machinery; they wasted little time and they made short work of demolishing the existing building. I shed a tear at 1107 hrs on 7th July 2009 as I watched the 'old' Obs succumb to the final push from Terry Todd's digger!

Much of July and August was spent carrying out ground-works - involving the removal of several tonnes of rubble and earth - and laying the new foundations.

Meanwhile, the new Observatory was being built in Orkney - a wooden-framed building put together in sections (pods), which fitted together like Lego and was clad in Siberian Larch. Hollie & I were shopping on-line furiously, as we had to choose from an available selection of carpets, curtains, units and fixtures for the bedrooms, bathrooms, offices, kitchen and Warden's house.

As the foundations neared completion AHW hired (at great expense) a massive barge from Sweden to carry all the pods at once from Orkney to Fair Isle. However, they had totally underestimated how turbulent the waters are around the Northern Isles, even on a 'calm' day. The vessel was just not suited to the conditions and following several aborted attempts they eventually had to admit defeat and find an alternative.

In late August a smaller barge arrived carrying two huge cranes - one to lift the pods at the pier and another to position them on-site - and a lorry to transport them from the pier to the site. On 2nd September, the excitement on the isle was palpable when in the dead of night the lights of the barge re-appeared on the horizon. Despite it being the early hours of the morning, many islanders drove to the pier to greet the first of the pods! Fortuitously this coincided with a very settled spell of weather and by 15th September all 20 pods (shipped three at a time from Kirkwall) had been delivered and lifted into place! A team of up to 20 men, who were being housed at the three B&Bs and the Puffinn hostel down the isle, set to work to complete the indoor joinery, plumbing, wiring, plaster-boarding, painting and carpeting whilst outside draining, flashings, lighting, paving, ground-works all continued. Hollie & I were frequently called up to the site to discuss the position of units, sockets, light switches and to tweak 'final' plans!

However, the Fair Isle autumn weather then began to take control of proceedings, creating havoc with transport and causing delays in getting building supplies and personnel to the isle. By December, work had slowed right down as the number of personnel had dropped to around six. I was on-site daily now and found myself effectively working as (an unqualified) project manager - but one lacking the means to speed things up! However we were assured that, following their three week Christmas break, AHW would have a larger team available and the building would be finished by the projected date of mid-April - ahead of the first booked guests on 1st May. As a long winter finally gave way to spring, progress had been made, but it was not nearly fast enough. At that stage though, despite our anxieties and repeated enquiries, we were told it would still be ready on time.

On 8th April the entire bedroom, dining room and lounge furniture arrived on a ferry from Shetland and in true Fair Isle fashion, many island bodies and vehicles turned out to help manhandle it from the ferry and transport it to the Obs. With most of downstairs still not ready, much of it had to be stored in the Visitor Centre. A few days later, the builders' foreman finally admitted what we had suspected for a while - that

the building would not be finished by 1st May. We were thus forced to cancel the first three weeks of bookings - a difficult and disappointing start. As mid-May approached, Building Control inspectors found that the ceiling hatches and many of the door frames failed current fire safety standards and had to be removed and replaced. This would clearly take some time to rectify and I was forced to cancel a further five weeks of bookings! Rumours became rife that AHW were in financial difficulties and that that was why supplies and manpower had been limited. Work continued however and in mid-June the vast majority of the main Observatory and guesthouse had been completed. The Warden's house, the new garage and some outside landscaping and fittings were not yet completed but these would not affect the running and safety of the guesthouse and we were thus granted a Temporary Habitation Order by Building Control. This could not have happened at a more fortuitous time as the following day, AHW Building Solutions went into receivership.

Thus, the first people to experience the New Observatory were the FIBOT Directors who arrived on 21st June for a Directors Meeting. Despite the dark cloud now hanging over the project, Hollie & I were still delighted to be able to show them round, including the spacious new en-suite bedrooms, the grand dining room with its solid wood furniture and beautiful textured wall hangings, the huge lounge with its comfortable leather settees and corner bar and the brand new visitor centre packed with information about the work of the Observatory. The following day, we held an open-day and the Directors invited all the Fair-islanders for a celebratory glass and a guided tour.

AHW going into receivership left us with a whole raft of problems. How were we to get the job finished? Initially nothing could be done until the Receiver was happy that FIBOT could use the final round of payments to pay an alternative contractor to complete the job. Permission was granted in August and work on the remaining jobs started quickly, with an external workforce employed and organised by Fair Isle's Northmen. The finishing works proceeded (largely) without hitch, although various teething problems such as wet-room showers flooding the bedrooms, had to be negotiated.

By October, all the finishing touches had been applied to the main building, the garage had been completed and the external grounds secured and tidied up. All that remained to do were some fittings and fixtures to the Warden's house... and to replace the main hot water tank, which had begun to corrode and was springing leaks... and to sort out how to heat the Warden's house as the power supply was not sufficient to run the separate boiler. However, with our family not moving back to the Obs and the new incumbents not arriving until February, there was plenty of time to sort these issues out! Northmen and I ensured that by the time that David, Susannah & Grace Parnaby arrived, all was working well.

We are very pleased with the finished building. Some issues still have to be resolved

such as how to properly vent the laundry room and how to refill the main fuel tank easily but the guesthouse is excellent. The electricity supplied by diesel generators is supplemented by three photovoltaic cells on the roof. The energy-efficient design of the building, including a 'breathing wall' system which circulates fresh air from outside whilst also extracting the heat from the outgoing air ensures that for most of the year, the radiators rarely have to be used. The main boiler is fuelled by kerosene and this provides hot water and heats the radiators but we are looking at ways of reducing the reliance on such fuels even further e.g. by adding more photovoltaic cells on the roof, by linking up with the island supply, by having our own wind-turbine or even some wave powered system which may ultimately benefit the whole island.

The old Observatory © *D. Shaw*

the National Trust for Scotland
a place for everyone

Fair Isle in 2009–2010

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

The Trust was delighted to witness the great progress with the Bird Observatory rebuild over the course of this year and also we were glad to be able to facilitate the work in a small way by making alternative accommodation available 'down the isle.' The progress of the entire project has been awe-inspiring and it bodes exceptionally well for the future sustainability of Fair Isle.

The Trust Management Plan for Fair Isle 2009–2019 was finalised during this period and its actions are key to dictating the Trust management. We would very much like to thank the whole community and associated stakeholders for their input into this process. Nicholas Meny, our Management Planner, was particularly involved and we felt he was a very positive influence in that respect. Also, on the journey across to the isle, he put the rest of the NTS team to shame when it became apparent that his Edinburgh "sea legs" were those of a natural.

The year did also present some challenging island issues and in particular we worked closely with the community to consider how best Fair Isle may be able to create local models for national issues such as crofting management. This work produced some very clear commitments to protect the island crofting recourse - as best as could be achieved in line with current legislation. There is strong community support to enable the Trust to use our Conservation Agreements, as empowered by the Trust's founding acts, to ensure that any croft house that may be purchased by the crofter in the future will be protected by a number of measures, most importantly that it must be permanently occupied and thus contributing positively to the islands sustainability.

Further to this, we also took advice to ascertain whether there may be more protection available and this advice led us to understand that under Section 7 of the Crofting Reform etc Act (2007) the Landlord and tenant can enter into an

agreement that the tenant will relinquish their right to purchase the croft house site, any part of the croft or the whole croft. Tenants signing up to this agreement could do so on the understanding that it could only be binding while the Trust were the owners. Bearing in mind that the Trust hold Fair Isle inalienably for the nation it would be highly unlikely that the Trust would willingly consider disposal of it! There has been a form of unwritten understanding between the Trust and the crofters/islanders since the Trust acquired the island in 1954 and this detail has been sent out to all crofting households for their further consideration. It is good to know that it is a sound option request.

The concordat agreement between the NTS and SNH continued to support Fair Isle-based activities relating to biodiversity, conservation monitoring and community involvement. The community involvement element comprises financial support for the continuation of FIMETI's (Fair Isle Marine Environment & Tourism Initiative) commitment to seeing the European Diploma recommendations, such as the establishment of a Marine Protected Area (MPA) for Fair Isle and for Fair Isle Wildlife Club to buy materials and field equipment.

The Trust continued over the year to work closely with the community to try and help deliver suitable fit for purpose infrastructure from both the local Health Board and the Fire Department and this work is ongoing. The Trust continue to work with the Community Association, Housing Forum and individuals on a wide range of issues. As always this work is interesting and rewarding.

We wish FIBOT every success with the new Observatory building and for its important role in the future sustainability of Fair Isle. All that is left to say is that we are very glad to know that Deryk, Hollie and their children will be staying on the island, albeit in a new guise as crofters and to acknowledge the fantastic work they have done over the years and to go on to wish the best of luck to David and Susannah Parnaby as they settle into the new role in FIBOT's lovely new building.

Golden Oriole
© Jack Ashton-Booth

Meteorological data 2009 (*collected & compiled at Field by Dave Wheeler*)

Temp. (°C)	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC	YEAR	1974–2000
Mean	5.5	4.3	5.7	7.5	8.9	10.7	13.2	13.1	11.9	9.4	8.1	5.2	8.6	7.6
Maximum	10.4	9.0	9.5	11.5	14.8	19.4	19.9	17.1	16.6	14.0	11.8	10.1	19.9	
Minimum	0.8	-2.8	-1.0	3.7	4.0	5.1	6.8	9.5	5.5	3.4	0.9	-2.4	-2.8	
Sea	8.3	7.4	7.7	8.1	9.4	11.3	13.3	13.9	13.0	11.7	10.9	9.5	10.4	9.2
Rainfall (mm)														
Monthly	72.5	81.7	65.3	30.1	46.3	30.1	49.6	97.1	72.8	146.4	142.2	85.2	919.3	924.4
Maximum Daily Fall	29.4	16.2	9.8	7.2	9.0	11.9	20.1	23.3	14.0	26.1	20.2	15.1	29.4	
Sunshine (hours)														
Total	47.1	49.6	107.5	119.3	282.8	299.7	175.0	165.9	105.7	69.8	41.9	19.3	1483.6	1223.5
Maximum Daily	5.3	6.7	8.8	12.5	15.9	17.1	13.4	13.4	9.7	8.4	4.3	3.2	17.1	
Wind speed (knots)														
Mean	20.1	13.8	16.1	12.3	13.8	10.7	11.0	9.9	10.7	16.3	17.0	15.0	13.9	16.0
Maximum Gust	61	57	63	48	51	40	44	40	38	65	66	54	66	
Number of days														
Hail	4	4	6	0	4	0	0	0	0	3	4	11	36	79.0
Snow/sleet	4	11	6	0	1	0	0	0	0	2	4	12	40	65.5
Rain, >0.1mm	18	24	25	10	17	13	13	22	19	23	27	24	235	242.3
Wet, >0.9mm	13	16	18	8	12	4	9	16	12	18	24	16	166	175.9
Ground frost	8	11	3	2	2	0	1	1	1	3	3	15	50	59.9
Air frost	0	12	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	7	21	18.0
Gale	10	2	2	0	2	0	0	0	3	5	1	3	28	56.5
Fog during 24hr	0	8	6	9	6	8	13	11	3	3	1	3	71	78.1
Wind (direction at 0900)														
North	1	5	1	0	0	6	10	1	2	4	4	4	38	42.3
North East	2	2	0	4	0	5	2	1	1	0	2	5	24	22.1
East	0	3	1	4	7	4	8	3	1	2	6	4	43	34.7
South East	7	1	3	10	7	5	3	11	0	10	6	7	70	50.0
South	12	1	7	7	4	1	3	3	5	3	6	6	58	60.0
South West	5	6	8	5	6	1	1	6	10	4	3	0	55	51.3
West	2	9	8	0	7	3	3	5	10	4	2	3	56	62.5
North West	2	1	3	0	0	5	1	1	1	4	1	2	21	37.1
Calm	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	5.5

Monthly Summary 2009

Jack Ashton-Booth

198 species were recorded during the year, the monthly totals of species were:

Jan	49	Apr	121	July	71	Oct	129
Feb	43	May	142	Aug	82	Nov	80
Mar	73	June	95	Sep	110	Dec	53

January: Typically a very quiet month for birds, with generally poor weather neither encouraging birds to surface or coverage to be made! The highlights of the month were the Brent Goose (from 2008) seen until 24th, an unseasonal Waxwing at Schoolton on 13th and two Glaucous Gulls on 15th (with one or another seen on 18th). Non-passerines seen occasionally throughout the month included five Teal on 1st, 1–3 Pink-footed Geese, 12–13 Wigeon and 4–7 Curlew. A Grey Heron was around the south on 15th and 16th (with six Mallard on the former date) and a Goldeneye was in Furse on 18th. Numbers of waders were beginning to increase on 18th, with three Oystercatchers, a Golden Plover and 11 Lapwing. A female Common Scoter was in the Havens on 20th (also there on the 24th), when two Chaffinches were in the south and a Peregrine (one of the returning breeders?) was also seen. The 21st was a fine day for getting out and about and allowed for counts of 183 Greylag Geese, five Purple Sandpipers, three Jack Snipe, 16 Lapwing, 54 Common Snipe, 113 Turnstone, nine Redshank, a Meadow Pipit, two Skylark, four Robins, 14 Blackbirds, 110 Fieldfare, two Song Thrushes, 23 Redwing and 83 Twite! A Merlin and 36 Snow Buntings on 24th rounded up the month.

February: The month opened with a fairly unseasonal Barnacle Goose on 1st, but the best bird of the month was the Tundra Bean Goose found amongst the goose flock on 5th. A few counts that day were of Teal (5), Mallard, the first Long-tailed Duck of the year, the Common Scoter, a female Goldeneye, ten Redshank, 50 Common Snipe, Woodcock, a Meadow Pipit, four Snow Bunting, three Chaffinches and a few thrushes that included 18 Blackbird, 50 Fieldfare, Song Thrush and 22 Redwing. The wintering Greylag flock peaked at 220 birds on 11th and next day a Water Rail was seen at Barkland, a Woodcock was in the south and in the north, a few Gannets were ashore. A quiet spell followed, but the first Ringed Plover was seen on 17th, with eight birds on 24th. A Brent Goose was also seen on the latter date. Monthly peak counts were achieved for a few species on 27th, with 40 Oystercatcher, 20 Lapwing, 30 Skylarks and 43 Twite. A few Guillemots were ashore on 28th - a day that saw Curlew numbers increase to 37 and Turnstone to 110. An odd month, with no early passerine migrants; roll on spring...

March: Spring tried its best to dig its heels in with singles of Hen Harrier (3rd–4th), Mistle Thrush (9th) and both Goldcrest and Black Redstart noted on the 14th but winter didn't release its grip entirely and Barnacle Goose (5th), Brent Goose, Common Scoter, Goldeneye, Red-breasted Merganser, Long-tailed Duck as well as a Grey Heron (12th–15th) all re-affirmed this. Other notable winter birds included seven Whooper Swans on the 26th, ten Teal the following day, a second-winter Glaucous Gull on the 30th and a single White-fronted Goose (31st). Water Rails (wintering birds?) were also seen on and off during the first part of the month as were females of both Sparrowhawk and Merlin. The first pair of Great Skuas arrived back on the 17th with the first Lesser-Black Backed Gull (23rd) hot on their heels, as were the Kittiwakes that were beginning to return back to their ledges. The first Short-eared Owl (28th) coincided with frequent sightings of the resident Peregrines, which were seen displaying on one occasion, reinforcing springs forthcoming. A Reed Bunting on 23rd was quickly followed by the first Wheatear arrival, along with three Robins and three Woodcock on the 26th. Hopes were fading for an early spring warbler, but a Chiffchaff made an appearance by the end of the month (30th) and soon set the stage for the arrival of a few other migrants with the first Linnet, Dunnock (30th) and Black-tailed Godwit of the year (31st). Thrush numbers were relatively steady during the start of the month but did begin to increase towards the months end with 27 Blackbirds on the 26th, 26 Redwing on the 27th and 32 Fieldfare on the 28th as well as three Song Thrushes. The increase in thrushes coincided with increased observer coverage with the arrival of the new Assistant Warden and the returning Seabird Warden. Other notable passerine species that were recorded included two Woodpigeons on the 28th, three Rooks (29th) and a handful of Stonechats, Chaffinches and the first of the years Pied Wagtails. Notable passerine counts included 255 Skylarks, 16 Snow Buntings and a late influx of Meadow Pipits with 50 recorded on the 30th.

April: The month began in the usual fashion with the lingering winter birds making their gradual departure. Unsurprisingly, this comprised of wintering sea-duck; a drake Long-tailed Duck that was with us until the 11th; a female Common Scoter that stayed until the 20th and a drake Red-breasted Merganser that was seen briefly on the 1st along with a '*littoralis*' Rock Pipit and a single Greenfinch. The predominantly wintry theme continued with another stream of winter birds making their exodus with three Woodcock and a second-summer Glaucous Gull noted on the 2nd. The first White Wagtail of the year was also seen, and on the 3rd, two Merlin and two Water Rails arrived (and promptly departed back out to sea). Next day a Shelduck and a Mistle Thrush were new. A very quiet day on the 5th produced just a single Wigeon as the highlight. In stark contrast, the following day produced a good count of 220 Meadow Pipits, two Grey Wagtails, three Rooks, three Greenfinches, 17 Snow Buntings; a first-summer Kumlien's Gull and an emaciated Long-eared Owl that was found dead in the Gully. A '*littoralis*' Rock Pipit was seen on the 7th and by the next day it finally felt like the stimulus to breed was beginning to take hold and spring urgency was in the air, expressed by the arrival of the first two Ring Ouzels of the year. Seven Pink-footed Geese and two Wigeon were also noted on the 8th and the

following day spring had well and truly sprung and the island hosted two Short-eared Owls, nine Robins, three Black Redstarts, a single Stonechat (remaining until the 12th) and the first Blackcap and Willow Warbler of the year. A Lapland Bunting was a nice surprise on the 10th and migrants continued to arrive on the 11th including 23 Lapwing, 23 Woodpigeon, the first two Arctic Skuas of the year as well as the first Redstart and Grasshopper Warbler of the spring, six Goldcrests and 11 Siskin. Undoubtedly the highlight on the 12th had to be the White-tailed Eagle that graced us with its presence. First reported on North Ronaldsay the day before, it obviously thought that Fair Isle would be its best bet to catch up with the elusive Easter bunny. After being kindly tipped off about the Eagle leaving high to the north from North Ronaldsay, the bird was first picked up flying over Sheep Rock. It then chose to sit on Ward Hill for 20 minutes before flying purposefully out to sea towards Shetland, with its entourage of a Raven, Greater Black-backed Gull and the resident female Peregrine. Another new bird that also stood out like a sore thumb was a male Hawfinch that had found the newly erected bird feeders at the Chalet and toured the island feeding stations until the 18th. Other birds of note that day included four Linnets and an immature female Peregrine. New migrants were encountered almost daily from the 12th with a Shelduck and a pair of Shoveler seen in the south and a Stock Dove, seven Pied Wagtails and 13 Chaffinches on the 13th. The 14th produced the first of the years Green Sandpipers as well as another good raptor record - a Marsh Harrier that was first seen hunting Snipe around Hill Dyke. The Harrier continued its stay on the isle into the 15th and the second Sylvia warbler of the year was added to the list in the form of a male Common Whitethroat. The 16th was a lot quieter but still produced four Dunnocks and an ever-diminishing flock of 11 Snow Buntings. Waders stole the show on the 18th with an unusually large flock of 50 Whimbrel seen leaving high to the north-east over the Bird Observatory, only to be replaced by the first Greenshank of the year. Flat calm conditions enabled the first of the year's Black Guillemot counts to be conducted that not surprisingly produced a single Wigeon, a drake Tufted Duck and Red-breasted Merganser, three Red-throated Divers and a noteworthy first-summer Kittiwake. The calm conditions also induced passage on the island and the best of a nice mixture of migrants included two Kestrels, 200 Common Gulls, a Short-eared Owl, 18 Brambling and six 'Mealy' Redpoll. Clear conditions on the 20th continued to be favourable for passage over sea and land and produced the first Cormorant and Lesser Whitethroat of the spring as well as two Stock Doves and a very showy Red-rumped Swallow that was found in the evening near Hesti Geo. This stunning hirundine had a tendency to stall in mid-flight right in front of all the mesmerised onlookers as it hawked the cliff tops. A Yellowhammer brightened up an otherwise dull day on the 21st and was joined by a second on the 22nd as well as two Goldfinches. The wintering Dark-bellied Brent Goose had finally departed by the 23rd as a pair of Gadwall were on the scrape, along with a summer plumaged Black-tailed Godwit. From then on things seemed to get better and better and a second Marsh Harrier was seen on the 25th but was quickly eclipsed by the arrival of a drake Green-winged Teal amongst a flock of eight Eurasian Teal on Da Water - representing the first record of this long overdue species for Fair Isle. The first Tree

Pipit of the year was also recorded along with two each of Collared Dove, Sand Martin and House Martin and 19 Chiffchaff. The Green-winged Teal continued its stay on Da Water on the 26th and either the very naïve or very brave Marsh Harrier continued its island tour amidst an ever increasing mine-field of Great Skua territories. However the highlight of the day had to be a female Great Spotted Woodpecker seen at the Chalet feeders in the morning as well as a second wave of Wheatears with 122 being counted (roughly twice as many as in the past week) comprising mainly of males, much to the dislike of the local breeding Wheatears. The first Common Sandpiper was noted on the 27th and the 28th proved to be another good late April day with three more additions to the year list being noted in the shape of two Manx Shearwaters, three Yellow Wagtails (Ssp. flavissima) and a Whinchat. A first-summer Glaucous Gull put in a brief appearance and a Shelduck was seen on Da Water along with a group of four Teal, but there was no sign of their Neartic equivalent. The elusive Great Spotted Woodpecker was also seen briefly by the island nurse - this time up on the Mast, much to the disappointment of the seabird warden who was at his wit's end with this game of cat and mouse in search of this island scarcity. Two Grasshopper Warblers and a Stock Dove were noted on 29th and the month ended on a very good note with two subsequent additions to the year list: Sanderling and Jackdaw.

May: The month started somewhat miserably in terms of weather but somewhat brilliantly in terms of birds as a result of it. The Greenland White-fronted Goose remained and was last seen on the 6th. Two Greenshank were new in on the 1st and paved the way for new birds on a daily basis. A Long-eared Owl and a Wryneck were noted on the 2nd and a Shelduck, a Stock Dove, the years first Sedge Warbler and another Red-Rumped Swallow made for a good day on the 3rd. The 4th saw the arrival of a Black Redstart and a Hawfinch in the south of the island and two Shelduck and a Goldfinch were notable species on the 5th. A quiet week then ensued with the only birds of note being a 'blue' Fulmar (6th), a Sandwich Tern (8th) and four Goldfinches (9th). Strong westerly and south-westerly winds were dominating the first half of the month and clearly stemmed deep from within the Atlantic; indicated by very heavy showers. Quality soon made up for the lack of quantity with the arrival of a second record for Britain - a Brown-headed Cowbird at Upper Stoneybrek (8th–10th). It's true what they say about treasure laying at the end of the rainbow because this Neartic Mega arrived along with some glorious sunny spells just at the tail end of the front. A Richards Pipit and two Dotterel (10th) went barely unnoticed as the Cowbird kept the main stage. May just kept getting better and the second half of the month was governed by prevailing south-easterly and easterly winds bringing with it some warm and bright days that seemed to defy all trends relating to weather patterns dictating falls of migrants. Although the winds were in the right direction there seemed to be hardly any precipitation, which is usually synonymous with falls of birds. However, we didn't miss out and witnessed the biggest spring fall of birds since 1994, even with very clear skies. A Wryneck, two Bluethroats and three Wood Warblers on the 14th got the ball rolling and by the 16th the island hosted a Wood Sandpiper, 49 Tree Pipits, both Grey-headed and a Blue-

headed Wagtail, 15+ Bluethroats, 50 Redstarts, 30 Whinchat, 16 Lesser Whitethroats, 26 Whitethroats, 12 Garden Warblers, four Blackcaps, four Wood Warblers, 84 Willow Warblers, 20 Spotted Flycatchers and 25 Pied Flycatchers. Numbers of migrants remained relatively constant up to the 20th as the south-easterly winds continued, with only minor fluctuations in numbers of certain species. Counts on the 17th comprised 11 Bluethroats, three Ring Ouzels, two Grasshopper Warblers, the first Reed Warbler of the year, a Wood Warbler, 98 Willow Warbler, 55 Barnacle Geese, two Sanderling, two Wood Sandpipers, a Long-eared Owl, two Grey-headed Wagtails, a Golden Oriole in Hjukni Geo and an adult Long-tailed Skua that flew over the isle. Birds continued to arrive on the 18th and a Red-throated Pipit that was near Pund, a Nightjar, two Kestrels, 19 Common Sandpipers, five Sand Martins, nine Grey-headed Wagtails, seven Bluethroats, 12 Chiffchaffs, 112 Willow Warblers, three Mealy Redpolls and six Reed Buntings represented an influx of migrants. A Quail, an Osprey, three Cuckoos, three Grey-headed Wagtails, two Blue-headed Wagtails, four Bluethroats, four Blackcaps, two Wood Warblers, four 'Mealy' Redpolls and a Tree Sparrow were noted on the 19th and birds observed on the 20th included a Quail, Iceland Gull, five Sand Martins, 100 Swallows, 60 House Martins, four Sedge Warblers, two Reed Warblers, four Siskin and a Bluethroat. The 21st was another great spring day that began with the discovery of a Subalpine Warbler at Kenaby and a Nightingale at Lower Leogh that subsequently relocated to the mast two days later. Further discoveries were made during the afternoon, the first taking the form of a Long-eared Owl and the second being a Honey Buzzard, whose presence was highlighted by the breeding Ravens which continually mobbed this stunning raptor as it ventured south before u-turning and disappearing out of sight at sea. A Bee-eater was a nice addition to the garden bird list at the Chalet on the 22nd. It was first seen by the Seabird Warden whilst having a cup of tea and was last heard sky high over Field heading south-east. Other new arrivals that day included a Nightjar and a Sandwich Tern. A Wood Warbler, Common Rosefinch and the first Red-backed Shrike of the year were seen on the 23rd and a great day on the 24th produced a Ruff, a Quail, two Common Rosefinches and the islands eighth Stone Curlew - after a gap of 14 years. Initially it was found on Meoness and then relocated to the Kirk after being unintentionally disturbed. The month continued on a high and just when we thought it couldn't get any better it did on the 26th with the discovery of a male Rustic Bunting and a dawn chorus from Whitethroat, Lesser Whitethroat, Reed Warbler and Sedge Warbler in the Chalet garden that could have easily been mistaken for a copse somewhere on the mainland. South-easterly winds continued up to the months end and new arrivals were witnessed daily. A new Quail appeared on the 27th and the first Turtle Dove of spring was seen feeding alongside the cow at Quoy on the 29th. A Common Rosefinch arrived on the morning of the 30th and set the stage for the arrival of a Great-Reed Warbler in the afternoon at Lower Leogh. The month ended in style with a very showy but mobile Hobby that sat on fence lines around Burkle before touring the island and with a River Warbler that was equally as mobile; first discovered by the Warden in Vaila's Trees, it spent short stints at Pund and Lower Stoneybrek.

June: A continual south-easterly air flow failed to abate at the end of May and saw the arrival of a Black Redstart, a Marsh Warbler, a Lesser Whitethroat, a Whitethroat and a single Mealy Redpoll and a Siskin on the 1st. New arrivals continued with six House Martins, a Bluethroat, a Black Redstart, a Sedge Warbler, a Marsh Warbler, an Icterine Warbler, two Whitethroats, three Garden Warblers, two Blackcaps, five Chiffchaffs, two Willow Warblers, three Spotted Flycatchers, two Linnets, a Red-backed Shrike and a Common Rosefinch on the 2nd. A Common Scoter was noted on the 4th and two Redwing, a single Pied Flycatcher, a Red-backed Shrike, a Marsh Warbler, a Lesser Whitethroat were all new in on the 6th as were four Chiffchaffs on the 7th. Two Common Terns, eight Swallows, two House Martins, a Spotted Flycatcher, a Redstart and a Willow Warbler were new immigrants on the 8th as was a cracking male Red-breasted Flycatcher that was caught in the Vaadal and was shown to a delighted freshly awoken crowd. Another great bird took the form of a Corn Bunting that was discovered at Burkle and not only represented the fifth record since the 1970's but also represented a much sort after addition to the Seabird Warden's ever increasing Fair Isle list. Other birds observed on the 9th included a Marsh Warbler, a Lesser Whitethroat, a Garden Warbler and two Chiffchaffs. Another Lesser Whitethroat and two Chiffchaffs were new in on the 10th, as was a Marsh Warbler on the 11th and a female Red-breasted Flycatcher was at the Bird Observatory on the 12th with a supporting cast of two Whimbrel, a Swift, a Swallow, a Garden Warbler, a Reed Warbler and two more Chiffchaffs. Two first-summer Arctic Terns were seen in the south of the isle on 13th as were two Common Terns and a new Marsh Warbler. Four drake Wigeon were seen over the sea in the north and a Lesser Whitethroat was the only grounded migrant on the 14th. A Spotted Flycatcher, a Garden Warbler and a Yellowhammer were all new in on the 15th and four Golden Plover and a Cormorant were noted on the 16th, but were soon overshadowed by a Canada Goose (a good island record) and the presence of two Sandwich Terns over the sea on the 17th. Four Swifts, a Marsh Warbler and a Red-backed Shrike were new arrivals on the 18th and three more Swifts, a Garden Warbler and a Spotted Flycatcher were new on 19th. The 21st was undoubtedly the red-letter day in June though with an Eastern Olivaceous Warbler caught in the Plantation on an early morning trap round. It arrived alongside a Bluethroat, a Whitethroat, a Tree Sparrow, a Sanderling and a Red-breasted Merganser. Four Sandwich Terns were recorded on the 24th as was another female Red-breasted Flycatcher, a Sedge Warbler, a Garden Warbler and a single Common Crossbill. Thirteen first-summer Arctic Terns were an extraordinary count on the 25th and a new Quail was seen on the 26th as were four Crossbills that were the beginning of a major island influx of this fantastic finch. Twenty Crossbills were recorded on the 27th along with a Red-throated Diver, a Garden Warbler, a Spotted Flycatcher and a Siskin. More Crossbills were logged on the 28th (47) and were followed by 34 on the 29th, on the same day as a drake Tufted Duck, two Swifts and a Marsh Warbler. The month again ended on a high note with a late spring Icterine Warbler, two Marsh Warblers and 27 Crossbills (30th).

July: Unsurprisingly, the main talking point throughout July was the major invasion of Common Crossbills that continued to arrive in force after the initial incursion of these stunning birds in late June. The majority of birds were seen on the vast carpets of Thrift that adorn the cliff tops around the isle, but birds could be heard almost anywhere on the island on a daily basis. Although these birds were counted daily, flocks of around 30+ birds could be found regularly around Buness and the Malcolm's Head/Lighthouse area throughout the month. However the turnover of birds was rather remarkable with 145 birds counted on the 4th, 123 on the 7th, 85 on the 9th, 99 on the 12th and 118 on the 18th, with some individuals expressing rather prominent wing-bars. Other birds that took refuge on the island alongside the Crossbills after a lengthy North Sea crossing included a Whimbrel and Common Sandpiper on the 1st, a Green Sandpiper (2nd) and a Blackcap (3rd). On the 4th, a Red-throated Diver was seen on the sea in the south and nearby a Bar-tailed Godwit, Grey Heron and Collared Dove were noted. A Great Northern Diver had replaced the Red-throated Diver on the 5th and was seen again on the 6th along with four Common Terns off the south coast. More interesting however was the arrival of a male Red-backed Shrike on the 5th and a Woodcock that was trapped in the Plantation the following day. The south produced the birds once again on the 7th with a drake Teal, three Redshank, two Whimbrel, single Bar-tailed and Black-tailed Godwit (until 11th), a Dunlin and 37 first-summer Arctic Terns. A single Green Sandpiper arrived with a second Bar-tailed Godwit, a Whimbrel, a Cormorant and a Wood Pigeon on the 9th. Two Great Northern Divers and a Manx Shearwater were also seen on the sea on this same date. The next new arrival wasn't until the 12th, but did however take the form of another cracking male Red-backed Shrike that happily fed around the Chalet garden much to the appreciation of the Assistant Wardens. Two Grey Herons, six Golden Plover and a single Knot were noted on the 13th and a Blackcap arrived on the 14th. By the 15th it finally seemed like a line could finally be drawn under spring with the departure of the Red-backed Shrike. However, this wasn't to be as the second Great Reed Warbler of the year appeared at Schoolton croft. Not only did the arrival of this bird represent the second record of this species on the island this year but once again highlights how the once defined period between spring and autumn passage appears to be getting that little bit hazier. A drake Wigeon, three Whimbrel, 30 Redshank, a Green Sandpiper, a Blackcap, two Swifts and a Mealy Redpoll were also recorded on the 15th. The 16th saw unseasonal arrivals of a third-summer Glaucous Gull along with an adult Iceland Gull. Eight Swifts and a Swallow were also seen on the 16th and two Golden Plover and a single Knot were recorded on the 17th. Waders were definitely commencing their return south by the 18th with an adult Wood Sandpiper, four Green Sandpipers, a Dunlin, 18 Lapwing and two Whimbrel arriving along with four Grey Herons. Wader movements continued for the next few days with five Whimbrel, four Turnstone (19th), seven Golden Plover, five Green and a single Common Sandpiper joining the Wood Sandpiper on the scrape on the 20th. Common Gull numbers were also increasing steadily as migrants arrived in off the sea in small flocks and gathered around the freshly cut hay crops to recuperate, making them a lot easier to count. At

least 125 were counted on the 19th and by the 22nd there were no less than 350 birds. The latter part of July wasn't all about the quantity of birds however and quality soon made an appearance on the 23rd with a stunning male Two-barred Crossbill (until the 24th) and a female Common Rosefinch (until the 25th). Presumably the same Great Reed Warbler was again seen at Lower Leogh briefly on the 24th and then gave exceptional views on the 25th after being undetected for nearly ten days. Birds on the 26th were represented by a drake Tufted Duck flying south over the island, 25 Redshank, five Purple Sandpipers, seven Knot, 12 Turnstone, single Green and Common Sandpipers, a Whimbrel, a Sanderling, a Dunlin and a Swallow. By night, a Storm Petrel was trapped and a Leach's Petrel was seen circling the net. The following day, the Green Sandpiper was joined by two more and three juvenile Dunlin and a stunning juvenile Ruff (that remained until the 28th) were also seen. Activity was still predominantly in the south by the end of the month with a female Teal and a Green Sandpiper flushed off the scrape, a Cormorant, 44 Redshank, 12 Turnstone, three Whimbrel, nine Dunlin, six Swallows and six mobile Golden Plover on the 30th with the month ending rather quietly with just a group of three Knot.

August: The month began in earnest with four Green Sandpipers and the first of the autumn's warblers arriving in the form of two Icterine Warblers and a Garden Warbler on the 2nd. Two Sedge Warblers were the autumns first and a Whitethroat (suspected to be the moulting summering bird) was seen alongside an Icterine Warbler on the 3rd. A female Common Scoter was seen in the south as were 1200 Common Gulls and the autumn's first Willow Warbler was seen in the north on the 4th. A Shoveler and six Swift arrived alongside a small wader incursion comprising of 24 Knot, nine Purple Sandpipers, three Greenshank and a Bar-tailed Godwit by the 5th. Nine Storm Petrels were caught and ringed on the night of the 5th/6th and coincided with the arrival of the first Redstart of the autumn on the 6th. The first Reed Warbler arrived on the 7th shortly followed by a Wood Warbler on the 8th. Fourteen Storm Petrels were caught and ringed that night and a Leach's Petrel was observed circling the net. Something else that was observed 'circling' was a Basking Shark that gave remarkable views as it circled beneath the zodiac in the South Harbour on the 9th. It was so content with feeding around the boat that it even scraped its dorsal fin against the bottom of the boat at one point much to the delight of the onboard on-lookers. The morning of the 10th produced the first Whinchat of the autumn as well as four Wood Warblers and the first Whitethroat and Pied Flycatcher arrived on the island (11th & 12th). An adult and juvenile Dotterel were a nice surprise on the 13th and 11 Swallows on the 14th not only represented the month's highest count but also carried the autumns first Sand Martin. The first Barred Warbler of the year was seen on the 15th as was a Sooty Shearwater along with six Manx Shearwater on the 16th. New migrants on the 17th included two Collared Doves, three Ruff, a Blackcap, a Barred Warbler and a Greenish Warbler (17th–19th). Two Barred Warblers were seen on 18th and four Whimbrel and two Greenshank were new in on the 19th. Fifteen White Wagtails represented the first migrant '*albas*' of the autumn and another Barred Warbler was seen on the 20th. Four

Reed Warblers were the month's highest count and another Icterine Warbler had arrived by the 21st. Arrivals continued the following day, with 26 Golden Plovers and seven Garden Warblers observed along with an Icterine Warbler, a Barred Warbler, a Common Rosefinch and the autumns first Lesser Whitethroat. A Barred Warbler new in on the 25th was the start of a small arrival with a Sand Martin, 66 White Wagtails, ten Whinchat, four Reed Warblers, an Icterine Warbler, four Barred Warblers, two Whitethroats, eight Garden Warblers, 43 Willow Warblers, the autumns first Pied Flycatcher and Tree Pipits (2) and August's second Greenish Warbler arrived on 26th. Birds continued to arrive with 10 Wigeon, three Greenshank, a Wryneck, 10 Whinchat, an Icterine Warbler, a single Barred Warbler and juvenile Red-backed Shrike and 13 Garden Warblers observed on 27th and two Wrynecks, five Whitethroats, three Pied Flycatchers, 25 Crossbills and the first Grasshopper Warbler of the autumn arriving on the 28th. A flock of 19 Teal and a Cormorant on the 29th and a lone Arctic Tern at sea on the 30th was a very fitting end to an otherwise very quiet month.

September: The autumn's first Marsh Warbler on the 1st was followed by an Icterine Warbler and a Barred Warbler on the 2nd. A Greenish Warbler was trapped and ringed on 3rd and a sub-adult Pomarine Skua was seen circling around the Mast, before gliding east accompanied by two rather aggressive Arctic Skuas. The autumn's first Chiffchaff arrived in the company of four Wrynecks, three Tree Pipits, seven Redstarts, seven Whinchat, 44 Willow Warblers, ten Garden Warblers and three each of Blackcap, Lesser Whitethroat and Pied Flycatcher on the 4th. The only Spotted Flycatcher of the autumn was seen on the 5th and three Barred Warblers, three Common Rosefinches, an Icterine Warbler and a Wryneck were observed (6th/7th). The first Greylag Goose and Lapland Buntings (2) of the autumn arrived on the 8th and the first Snow Bunting was seen along with a Redstart and 34 Teal on the 9th. Two Snow Buntings were found on the 10th and the autumn's first Merlin was noted as was a Lesser Whitethroat on the 11th. The lonesome Lesser Whitethroat was joined by another and a Whitethroat, a Ruff and a Sand Martin (12th). A juvenile Dotterel, Marsh Harrier and first Pink-footed Geese (6) of the autumn were observed on the 13th. The onset of easterly winds brought about the arrival of Little Bunting, two Bluethroats, a Red-backed Shrike and a new Common Rosefinch on 14th, alongside a supporting cast of 385 Meadow Pipits, 251 Skylark, 70 Wheatear, 17 Grey Herons, 15 Cormorant, seven Lesser Whitethroats, two Sand Martins, a Pied Flycatcher, a Barred Warbler, four Lapland Buntings and the first Dunnock, Linnet, Siskin and Reed Bunting of the autumn. The purple patch continued with a stunning Arctic Warbler found by the warden, whilst working on his computer, a Yellow-Browed Warbler and two Barred Warblers (16th), shortly followed by a Richards Pipit (18th) and two new Little Buntings (19th & 21st). Two Sand Martins toured the island (22nd) and the first Chaffinch of the autumn was seen (23rd). The first Robin and Whooper Swans (2) of the autumn were noted as was an '*abietinus*' Chiffchaff, a 'north-western' type Redpoll and six Linnets (24th). The sea produced a Sooty Shearwater, 14 Whooper Swans and a drake Tufted Duck (25th) that was soon

overshadowed by a report of a 'dark-rumped Petrel' that was seen by the skipper of the Good Shepherd IV (27th): the description possibly fitting Bulwers Petrel rather than Swinhoes! Grounded birds on the same day included 1400 Pink-footed Geese and two Barnacle Geese. By the end of the month winter began to make its presence felt with two Tufted Ducks, three Redwings, three Common Redpolls, a minor Chaffinch influx and 40+ Snow Buntings (28th). A Short-eared Owl, a Pintail and Common Rosefinch were new in on 29th and the month went out with a bang with the discovery of a cracking Pechora Pipit at Kenaby on 30th.

October: The Pechora Pipit found at the end of September was trapped and ringed at Burkle on the 1st and a Slavonian Grebe, a Barred Warbler, a Lesser Whitethroat, a Pied Flycatcher, two Linnets, a 'north-western' type Redpoll and two Common Rosefinches were also observed. A healthy count of 120 Skylarks was made (2nd) and two Barnacle Geese, 17 Teal, a single Pintail and five Grey Herons were noted (3rd). Twenty Chaffinch and three 'Mealy' Redpolls on the 4th were well beaten by an unidentified large Locustella in Da Water. A Blyth's Reed Warbler was found early morning of the 5th at Lower Stoneybrek and whilst observers were watching this they were further rewarded when a River Warbler decided to pop up on the wall next to them - presumably the bird from the day before. Other birds that day included three Merlin, a 'nominate' Wren, single Reed Warbler and Lesser Whitethroat, two Garden Warblers, 85 Brambling and a Little Bunting. Three 'blue' Fulmars, a late Arctic Tern, nine Grey Wagtails, a Yellow-browed Warbler, a single Siskin and a Common Rosefinch were new in on the 6th. A Slavonian Grebe, ten Jack Snipe, two Bluethroats, a Barred Warbler, a 'Greenland' Redpoll and two Little Buntings made for an enjoyable day (7th). A record count of 2128 Greylag Geese and three Cormorants headed south and a Barred Warbler, a Lesser Whitethroat and 14 Lapland Buntings were noted on the land (8th). A new Barred Warbler was witnessed (9th) and 167 Turnstone, a male Stonechat, 3660 Redwing and 41 Goldcrests induced a very autumnal feeling that was soon exacerbated by a cracking White's Thrush found at Hjukni Geo on the evening of the 10th. With autumn spirits high and not a sniff of westerly winds in the air, good counts were made including four Water Rails, 83 Snipe, 100 Redshank, 11 Dunnocks, 16 Ring Ouzels, 286 Song Thrushes, two Grasshopper Warblers, two Garden Warblers, 24 Blackcaps, a Yellow-browed Warbler, two late Willow Warblers, a Pied Flycatcher, two Siskin, three Little Buntings and eight Reed Buntings (11th). Good numbers continued with 19 Lapwing, a Long-eared Owl, 110 Meadow Pipits, two Yellow-browed Warblers, 13 Chiffchaffs (including three 'eastern' individuals) and 125 Snow Buntings noted (12th). A new Yellow-browed Warbler arrived alongside an adult male Siberian Stonechat (13th). A Goldeneye, an adult male Kestrel, 10 Curlew, a Lesser Whitethroat, a Short-toed Lark and a Rustic Bunting were noted (14th). A new Barred Warbler was encountered during the morning of the 15th and was shortly followed by the discovery of the month's second Siberian Stonechat - this one a first-winter bird. However, nobody could have foreseen the discovery of Fair Isle's second Blackpoll Warbler that was caught during a routine trap round (15th). The

Blackpoll Warbler toured the south of the island on 16th and the long awaited 'purple patch' continued as a Lesser Whitethroat expressing strong characteristics of one of the Asian sub-species '*halimodendrii*' or '*minula*' was trapped and ringed. A Slavonian Grebe and a late Whinchat were seen (17th) and a Glaucous Gull and seven Greenfinches were recorded (18th). Two Barnacle Geese, a Reed Warbler, three Linnets, a 'Greenland' Redpoll and two 'Mealy' Redpolls (19th) were joined by two 'eastern-type' Chiffchaffs (20th). Quality and quantity were soon witnessed alongside one another with three Long-tailed Ducks, 108 Golden Plover, 8000 Herring Gulls, 300 Great Black-backed Gulls, five Jackdaws and Fair Isle's fifth Firecrest (21st). Nine Jackdaws were now touring the island as was a Yellowhammer (22nd) and a Shelduck, four Sparrowhawk, six Woodpigeons and 1267 Fieldfare and a Woodlark arrived on the 23rd. Other arrivals included two Tufted Duck, a Stock Dove, an '*abietinus*' Chiffchaff (24th), two Linnets and two 'North-western' type Redpolls (26th). Four '*tristis*' type Chiffchaffs and an '*abietinus*' Chiffchaff were identified on the 27th, with other notables including two Black Redstarts, 57 Robins, 614 Blackbirds, six 'eastern' Chiffchaffs and a Shorelark (27th). The 30th was quiet, with 16 Wigeon, a Long-eared Owl, three Jackdaws and a stunning male Yellowhammer. The months end saw 106 Woodcock, a Long-eared Owl, four Short-eared Owls, two Barred Warblers, 12 Chiffchaffs (including at least one '*tristis*' type) and a Lesser Whitethroat that displayed plumage tones and feather topography of the central-Asian steppe form '*halimodendri*'.

November: Migrants were still evident through the early half of the month with Moorhen, 50 Golden Plovers, two Long-eared Owls (preceding an impressive run of records for this species), two Black Redstarts (until 4th), 465 Blackbird, two Mistle Thrushes, a Lesser Whitethroat (until 2nd), Goldcrest and Mealy Redpoll on the 1st. The highlight for this day however, was the discovery of three Woodlarks at Neder Taft! All three birds were present the following day, when a Goldfinch was a new arrival. The following day, three Short-eared Owls were flushed in the south and a Ring Ouzel was new. A windy day on the 4th made for some impressive numbers of gulls seeking shelter on the island with 4000 Herring, 450 Great Black-backed, seven Common and an adult Iceland Gull found. Elsewhere around the isle, a Barnacle Goose was new as were three Eurasian White-fronted Geese in amongst the Greylags (with two remaining until 19th), Wigeon peaked at 20, a Long-tailed Duck, two Grey Herons, the Moorhen, 167 Turnstone, 30 Redshank, two Short-eared Owls, 530 Fieldfare, 30 Song Thrushes, 500 Redwing, a couple of Chiffchaffs, a small number of Chaffinch and Brambling, a Goldfinch, Reed Bunting and October's Shorelark all made for a busy days birding! The following two days were quiet, with Greylag Geese peaking at 189 birds, two Merlin, eight Purple Sandpipers and six Jack Snipe on 5th, followed by a Barnacle Goose, ten Teal, 26 Lapwing, a Stonechat, Ring Ouzel, Goldcrest and a Lapland Bunting on 6th. The latter species had increased to three birds the next day and another mini-arrival included, four Water Rails, 115 Woodcock, a late Great Skua, three Short-eared Owls, 28 Meadow Pipits, 56 Robins, 20 Blackcaps and more unexpected, a Great-Spotted Woodpecker in Hjukni Geo.

Migration tailed off after this, with highlights including Lapland Bunting (8th), two Red-breasted Mergansers, Black Redstart and two Short-eared Owls (11th) and Pale-bellied Brent Goose, six Mallard, Woodpigeon, Jackdaw and two Linnets on 15th. Snow Buntings peaked at 570 birds on this date also. A Siskin on 16th was the highlight that day and the 17th was a little better with the Pale-bellied Brent Goose, a Wood Pigeon, Blackcap, Jackdaw and the last Chaffinches of the year. Four Whooper Swans flew south on 18th and the Siskin and Jackdaw were also seen again. The latter species was last seen on 23rd, a day which also produced the last Blackcaps of the year and last two Chiffchaffs of the month.

December: December is often a quiet month, but this year proved a slight exception with small numbers of thrushes recorded throughout and a few interesting birds. Three Grey Herons and two Water Rails were new on 4th, but two Dark-bellied Brent Geese provided the interest. A Wigeon and Barnacle Goose (with 220 Greylag Geese) were new in on 5th, but a Red-necked Grebe in South Harbour stole the show. A dead Short-eared Owl, an unseasonal Waxwing and peaks of 140 Turnstone and 35 Redshank were seen on 6th and on 8th, Woodcock peaked at four birds, two Glaucous Gulls, a Chiffchaff and Jackdaw were all present. A Wigeon, nine Teal, 15 Skylarks and a Chiffchaff were all found on 11th and were kept on their toes by a male Sparrowhawk on 13th. Two Merlin were seen on 17th as were two Jack Snipe and the following day a female Hen Harrier kept up the raptor interest. A wander round the isle on Boxing Day to walk off the Christmas Pudding produced some unexpected arrivals with a Gadwall, seven Dunlin, two Sanderling (the second winter record in the FIBO period), 39 Curlew and a Barnacle Goose.

Meteorological data 2010 (*collected & compiled at Field by Dave Wheeler*)

Temp. (°C)	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC	YEAR	1974–2000
Mean	3.7	2.6	5.4	6.2	7.5	10.4	12.2	12.0	10.9	9.0	5.0	3.0	7.3	7.6
Maximum	8.7	7.2	9.2	11.5	14.7	15.7	15.9	16.2	15.1	13.2	10.4	9.2	16.2	
Minimum	-2.2	-4.6	-0.2	0.1	0.3	6.5	6.3	6.9	5.1	0.4	-3.6	-4.2	-4.6	
Sea	8.3	7.5	7.2	7.8	8.8	10.7	12.2	13.5	12.4	11.4	9.9	8.4	9.8	9.2
Rainfall (mm)														
Monthly	68.5	72.2	66.0	50.5	25.8	15.1	101.8	86.4	88.2	96.7	71.6	48.9	791.7	924.4
Maximum Daily Fall	7.3	11.5	12.7	9.5	3.1	8.2	26.0	30.1	18.0	17.6	14.4	10.8	30.1	
Sunshine (hours)														
Total	39.9	80.6	106.9	133.0	257.1	132.9	200.9	132.7	160.8	95.6	52.8	27.1	1420.3	1223.5
Maximum Daily	6.3	8.2	10.1	11.8	15.6	14.3	16.0	12.1	13.0	9.6	6.4	4.7	16.0	
Wind speed (knots)														
Mean	17.6	12.6	14.0	14.4	9.6	10.7	11.0	9.9	10.7	16.1	15.2	13.8	13.0	16.0
Maximum Gust	53	45	63	42	36	40	44	40	38	58	57	54	63	
Number of days														
Hail	13	12	4	4	7	0	0	0	1	4	6	10	61	79.0
Snow/sleet	17	15	7	8	5	0	0	0	0	3	8	21	84	65.5
Rain, >0.1mm	24	18	21	20	16	9	22	20	16	20	25	26	237	242.3
Wet, >0.9mm	19	14	15	13	11	4	15	12	12	14	18	13	160	175.9
Ground frost	16	21	5	7	4	0	0	0	1	3	11	19	87	59.9
Air frost	8	14	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	9	22	55	18.0
Gale	7	0	3	0	0	0	1	0	1	3	7	2	24	56.5
Fog during 24hr	7	2	1	5	6	7	15	11	5	0	4	6	69	78.1
Wind (direction at 0900)														
North	9	9	8	1	6	4	2	5	2	3	6	9	64	42.3
North East	2	4	2	2	3	1	3	1	3	1	6	4	32	22.1
East	3	7	1	3	1	5	3	4	4	2	5	3	41	34.7
South East	10	1	3	4	6	5	4	1	10	5	5	5	59	50.0
South	3	2	3	3	3	1	11	3	2	7	2	1	41	60.0
South West	3	2	4	4	2	4	4	2	2	1	2	0	30	51.3
West	0	2	9	7	6	7	2	9	2	8	3	4	59	62.5
North West	1	1	1	6	4	3	2	6	5	4	1	5	39	37.1
Calm	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	5.5

Monthly Summary 2010

Jack Ashton-Booth & Deryk Shaw

210 species were recorded during the year, the monthly totals of species were:

Jan	53	Apr	104	July	70	Oct	153
Feb	40	May	128	Aug	99	Nov	67
Mar	83	June	102	Sep	154	Dec	37

January: A cold start to the year saw some lingering birds from 2009, including at least ten Skylarks, a Sanderling and Dunlin, with two Red-breasted Mergansers and a Merlin. What were presumably the same birds were also seen on 6th, along with a peak winter count of five Water Rails. Small numbers of wildfowl were seen throughout the month, with Teal, Wigeon and a Barnacle Goose and an influx of Greylag Geese peaked at 295 birds on 7th. Small numbers of waders were also recorded through the month and peak counts were noted for some species on 8th with 16 Golden Plover, two Lapwing and six Dunlin plus the first Oystercatcher, whilst smaller birds included a peak of four Robins. Curlew numbers increased to an amazing 207 birds on 10th, with a few Skylark also from this date. Snow Buntings were sporadically seen, but peaked at just ten birds on 13th, with a male Chaffinch and two Linnets also seen occasionally throughout the month. A Grey Heron on 13th was new and birds on 17th included a Coot, Goldeneye, Merlin, four Purple Sandpipers, 25 Redshank (peak), 16 Woodcock, 75 Snipe, six Skylark, Meadow Pipit and 180 Thrushes, including a Mistle Thrush. A Short-eared Owl and Cormorant arrived the following day when Dunlin increased to eight, but it wasn't until the 27th that thrushes peaked, with two Song Thrush, 60 Redwing, 35 Blackbird and 150 Fieldfare noted. Unfortunately, the Coot was also found dead on this date as six Pale-bellied Brent Geese touched down with the goose flock and a cold, snowy month ended with 12 Lapwing, two Oystercatchers and a Knot on 29th.

February: A Tundra Bean Goose on the opening day of the month was a nice find (remaining until the 26th) and it had obviously arrived with other geese as Greylags increased again to 260 birds. The Barnacle Goose and six Pale-bellied Brent Geese were also recorded while other influxes and peak counts included 65 Turnstone, 41 Curlews and the male Chaffinch. The snow had disappeared and Guillemots were ashore on 6th and the spell of fine weather also allowed skulking wintering birds to be found as counts of 50 Blackbird, 80 Fieldfare, 50 Redwing, 15 Twite, three Wigeon and two Woodcock were made, along with a Merlin. A quiet spell followed with few new arrivals or influxes noted; seven Oystercatchers and 11 Snow Buntings were perhaps expected, but the Great Crested Grebe in Furse on 17th was not. A beautiful

clear, sunny, cold, spell saw Skylarks peak at 45 birds on the 19th (including the first singing birds) and the following day wader numbers peaked with 37 Oystercatchers, 10 Golden Plover and 45 Lapwing. A Pink-footed Goose on 26th was a year-tick and the final highlight of a quiet month.

March: The quiet spell continued into early March, with stragglers remaining and few new arrivals. Two Common Gulls on 1st began a period of light passage for this species through the month and a Tufted Duck and Common Scoter on 3rd were new (both still present on 5th), with the first Ringed Plover, a Water Rail and Chaffinch also noted. The wintering Mistle Thrush was noted with thrushes on 5th, as was the Chaffinch and the 11 Snow Buntings still present. Chaffinch increased to two on 8th, two Cormorant arrived on 9th, Ringed Plovers increased to 17 on 11th and another Tufted Duck was seen on 13th. The Bean Goose was recorded on and off with the goose flock and the first Siskin arrived on the 18th, but with the arrival of the Assistant Warden's on 20th came the first decent spell of weather and an increase in spring migrants. A Pink-footed Goose, a Dunnock in the Chalet garden, a Woodpigeon at Pund followed by the first Puffin offshore and Pied Wagtail in the Haven on the 21st were all somewhat overshadowed by two Orcas cruising past Buness on flat calm seas! A Long-eared Owl found its way into the Gully trap on the 22nd as did the Woodpigeon, whilst the first Linnet of the month was a bit more trap shy. A flock of 45 Purple Sandpipers on 23rd was a further sign of northward movement as were the eight Golden Plovers, two Merlin, two Siskin and a Rook. New arrivals kept on coming with five new additions to the year list on the 24th comprising Stonechat, Mistle Thrush, Goldcrest, Chiffchaff and Black Redstart. Other fresh migrants included five Robins, a corking male Mealy Redpoll and a dramatic increase in Meadow Pipits (23), which were doing their best to stay clear of the very large female Sparrowhawk that passed through. The following day saw a very respectable March arrival of Chiffchaffs (17) and the isle's earliest ever Willow Warbler, plus the first Bonxie and two Wheatears of the year, White Wagtail, a Stock Dove, five Black Redstarts, 28 Robins, two Dunnocks, 13 Chaffinches and 13 Snow Buntings. Stonechats were very much the birds of topic on the 26th with at least seven birds seen, some showing features of the ssp. '*rubicola*'. The first Puffins were noted on-land as was the first Reed Bunting whilst Wheatears now numbered five and Chiffchaffs 16. The wind swung round to the west on 27th, slowing things down, but the first Greenfinch arrived and alba wagtails had built up considerably with three White Wagtail and 15 Pied Wagtails present on the isle whilst three Black Redstarts and eight Chiffchaffs remained. Woodpigeons had also built up to a respectable flock of eight birds in the south and a Water Rail had found appropriate cover in amongst the railway sleepers at the garage! A Grey Wagtail, a Brambling and our earliest ever Blackcap on the 28th indicated that birds were once again passing through. Ringed Plovers were also now clearly on passage with the flock growing to 29 strong. The winds on the 29th had turned to a brisk north/north easterly but due to bright sunny conditions birds were easily detectable. Blackbirds reached a monthly peak of 41 and other sightings included four Dunnocks, two Greenfinches, single Mealy Redpoll and

Siskin, 14 Chaffinches and the Brambling. Winds then took a turn for the worst and got progressively stronger and stronger from the north. Census on 30th was quiet, but the afternoon produced Grey Wagtail, three Bonxies, a Mistle Thrush (that came in off the sea at South Light) and the first Ring Ouzel of the year. By the end of the month the weather suddenly decided to resort back to January with the Assistant Wardens awakening to two inches of snow caking the Chalet. With northerly blizzards making viewing difficult, little was expected but census counts included the first Shelduck of the year, a Common Scoter, 10 Woodpigeons, two Ring Ouzels, four Chiffchaffs, three Brambling, 18 Chaffinch, Rook, Woodcock, Black Redstart and a male Reed Bunting that joined the existing female at Schoolton.

April: The month began in stark contrast to how March ended and once again goes to show how variable the weather can be on islands in the North Sea. Birds had clearly arrived overnight with both the traps and census indicating a good influx of Robins with a total of 77 being counted. Other birds to arrive early morning included either a very wise or very lucky Swallow that was sat preening on the fence line next to the Chalet Pond. If the bird had arrived the day before it would almost certainly have perished and makes you think how many of these valiant early migrants perish at sea on the way here. Other intrepid migrants consisted of a Carrion Crow, eight Goldcrest, nine Chiffchaff, Stonechat, three Wheatear, Black Redstart, White Wagtail, Redpoll, Greenfinch and the first Yellowhammer of the year. Robins were still very much evident around the dykes and the traps on the 2nd and were joined in reasonable numbers by thrushes, which included 30 Song Thrush, Mistle Thrush, 43 Blackbirds, 4 Redwing and three male Ring Ouzels. Wader movement was also evident with Turnstone numbers building to 135 and parties of Snipe coming in off the sea. Late afternoon, a cracking female Hen Harrier made for a very nice end to the day. Overnight the winds swung round to the east but frequent squally showers made birding quite tricky. However, several Goldcrests were sheltering on the cliffs and two each of Wheatear, Rook and Woodcock were found along with a Swallow which was hawking the very few insects available to it in the North Light complex. With easterlies continuing throughout the night and into midday on the 4th, more migrants were grounded and with the rain having tailed off during the early hours of the morning the bright sunny conditions made for a very pleasant days birding. Trap rounds revealed a very trap savvy Long-eared Owl and a not so trap savvy Siskin and Lesser Redpoll. Away from the traps it was just as action packed with non-passerines comprising a Canada Goose in amongst the Greylag flock, a Common Scoter and a Short-eared Owl. Newly arrived passerines consisted of five Rooks (that took a fond interest in the wardens whoosh net site), three Black Redstarts, a Willow Warbler and three Reed Buntings with the lingering Yellowhammer. The nice weather was short lived however and a couple of days of easterly gales and driving rain reduced passage to a trickle at best with a Tufted Duck, a couple of Wheatears, Willow Warbler and a Greenfinch new. Glorious April sunshine returned on the 7th, accompanied by light winds and birds that had been sheltering throughout the spell of bad weather were now on show with five

Goldcrests, three Linnets, two Common Scoters (including a new drake), eight Black-headed Gulls, three Wheatears, two Black Redstarts and five Chiffchaffs. With the calm and sunny conditions, seabirds were noticeably more visible with Puffins whirring about and 28 Great Skuas on the wing over the isle. After moving the new furniture into the Obs with the help of the islanders on the morning of 8th, census was conducted in the afternoon (with what strength the birding team had left to lift their binoculars!) and produced 11 Wheatears, a Jack Snipe, 11 Golden Plover, six Chiffchaffs, four Linnets, single Rook and Carrion Crow and two Yellowhammers together. An unidentified dark Locustella was flushed in Schoolton ditch and confirmed as a Grasshopper Warbler when it was heard singing the next day. The only marked additions were a few more Wheatears in the north, a Black Redstart at the Obs, four Dunnock and a Lapland Bunting. With a slight south-easterly wind gaining in strength throughout the morning of the 10th birds were very much apparent on the island and Blackbirds had clearly trickled in overnight with 78 birds counted and the majority were sticking to cover, escaping the attention of the pair of lingering Merlins. Other sightings included Ring Ouzel, a new Black Redstart, 24 Wheatears, seven Chiffchaffs, two Willow Warbler, a male Stonechat, Sand Martin, Swallow, Sparrowhawk and 18 Barnacle Geese. A pair of Shelduck were the highlight of the 11th and the year's first Arctic Skua (pale phase) and Whimbrel were the best of the 12th, along with 56 Wheatears, seven Siskins and a male Blackcap. A relatively quiet day followed but things were quick to improve on the 14th, with some beautiful additions to the islands avifauna with a simply stunning drake Garganey found on Da Water and a Long-eared Owl caught in the Plantation. Other non-passerine highlights included a very raucous flock of 23 migrant Ravens, a Whimbrel and a Canada Goose heading south. Thankfully, the volcanic ash storm that was prevailing from Iceland passed over high enough not to affect the visibility on census on the 15th. The drake Garganey was still present, back and forth between the Scrape and Da Water; a Tufted Duck was on Golden Water and an absolutely cracking summer plumaged Slavonian Grebe was feeding in South Haven. Two Tree Pipits were also an addition to the year-list. The following couple of days were very quiet but by the 20th the adverse weather conditions were having the opposite effect and instead of an absence of birds, the island was festooned with migrants heading for the slowly thawing clines of Iceland and Greenland. From first light the nasal cackles of hundreds of Pink-footed Geese filled the island skies as birds were grounded due to a driving headwind and cold wintry showers. Skeins were spread across the island as birds were coming in from all directions. In total 1250 were counted and accompanying them were 39 Barnacle Geese and small numbers of migrant Greylag Geese. Other birds forced to take refuge from the elements included five Teal, three Collared Doves and a single Goldcrest. Pulses were racing on 21st as a Bonxie count towards Hoini picked up a White-Tailed Eagle hovering over the cliff edge just off Burrashield. The first-summer wing-tagged bird toured the island for the next three days before departing for mainland Shetland. After a switch to south-easterlies, an unexpected first for Fair Isle on 24th was a Canada/Greylag Goose hybrid accompanying a Canada Goose. A flock of 44 Barnacle Geese was a very

respectable count and included two birds wearing green darvics. The small number of other migrants were mainly restricted to the west cliffs and comprised a female Sparrowhawk, 12 Blackbirds, 10 Song Thrush, four Fieldfare, five Redwing, Ring Ouzel, two Black Redstarts, three Willow Warblers, four Chaffinch and singles of Robin, Dunnock, Swallow and Reed Bunting. South-easterlies continued on 25th, bringing warm and sunny conditions that were enjoyed by both the birds and birders alike and with migrants in every corner of the island it felt like the first real day of spring. Five Arctic Skuas were back in the skies over the isle and other non-passerines included eight Whimbrel and the first three Dunlin of the spring. Passerines arrived en-masse and Wheatears could be seen on nearly every dyke with 291 tallied by the day's end. Other species that took a liking to the dykes included two very showy Grasshopper Warblers feeding out in the open near Hill Dyke, along with a male Ring Ouzel. Another 'Gropper' was in the garden at Schoolton along with two Black Redstarts and the first Common Redstart and Lesser Whitethroat of the year. Other passerines included 15 Redwing, eight Song Thrush, ten Blackbirds and six Fieldfare, 13 House Martins, 23 Swallows, Sand Martin, three Willow Warbler, eight Chiffchaff, three White Wagtail, six Pied Wagtails, five Dunnock, Mealy Redpoll and two each of Chaffinch, Brambling, Reed Bunting and Yellowhammer. The south-easterlies were short-lived however and by the 26th the winds had swung around to the south-west. A Tree Pipit was trapped in the Gully on an evening trap round (27th) and waders were evidently heading to breeding grounds on the 28th, with small numbers of Curlews, Oystercatchers, Whimbrel and Golden Plovers recorded along with four Dunlin and the first Green Sandpiper and Common Sandpiper of the year. Other notable birds included a Shelduck, Kestrel and Short-eared Owl. Passerines weren't so obvious, but a new 'Mealy' Redpoll was noted and hirundines in South Harbour comprised two Sand Martins, two House Martins and several Swallows. Favourable weather conditions for migration continued well in to the closing days of the month and gave rise to a very nice month's end. A southerly tail-wind on the 29th brought in 22 Whimbrel, 10 Purple Sandpipers, a Tree Pipit, a Grasshopper Warbler, 12 Willow Warblers and the first Common Tern, Whinchat and *littoralis* Rock Pipits (2) of the Year. The first two Dotterel of the year were found on 30th and other arrivals included two Tree Pipit, 20 White Wagtails, a new Ring Ouzel, a Lesser Whitethroat, three Dunnock, five Collared Doves, three Carrion Crows and 73 Common Gulls.

May: The month began well with the discovery of a Hoopoe in the Vaadal on the evening of the 1st. This species is notorious for simply bombing about the isle in a restless manner, so when the bird was staked down in the ditch beyond the reservoir, islanders began to arrive (including all the children) to witness the feathered firework display. The day wasn't restricted to one bird though and a quality supporting cast included 159 Golden Plover in the south, 561 Meadow Pipits (including 300 on Meoness), Wigeon, Shelduck, 15 Whimbrel, seven Dunlin, two Green Sandpipers, Kestrel, Ring Ouzel, Lesser Whitethroat, Blackcap, Siskin and a Reed bunting. Glorious sunny spells on 2nd led to a beautiful Sunday afternoon with a real continental

summer feel to it. Both Redwing and Blackbird could be heard singing at Midway, a newly arrived summer-plumaged Black-tailed Godwit and the Hoopoe present for its second day rounded it off. Other new immigrants included 14 Teal, four Tree Pipits, a Grasshopper Warbler, Willow Warbler, 19 White Wagtails, two male Blackcaps, 41 Redwing and four Brambling. The 3rd was a quiet day, but a drake Shoveler was seeking company with 11 Teal on Da Water and the first Sedge Warbler, seven 'commic' Terns (out at sea) and the first Arctic Tern of the year were the best of the birds. The first Whitethroat of the year was trapped in the Plantation on 4th and two Dotterel found feeding alongside Wheatears on Meoness were presumed to be the birds seen in late April. A Great Grey Shrike was along Field Ditch on 6th and the 7th brought the years first Pied Flycatchers (two) in the north and three Sedge Warblers, six Blackcap and two Grasshopper Warblers in the south. The long-staying pair of Dotterel remained on 8th when a Ring Ouzel was trapped in the Plantation. A Little Bunting on 9th was an unexpected surprise. On 13th, following a Wood Sandpiper at the Chalet first thing, the days census produced a nice diversity of migrants including 33 Lesser Black-backed Gulls, a Sparrowhawk, four Knot, 35 Carrion Crows and the first Bluethroat of the year. Warblers included three Willow, Sedge, Whitethroat, Lesser Whitethroat, two Blackcaps, and two Chiffchaff. The first Goldfinch of the year, a superb Common Crossbill and a healthy count of six Reed Buntings were also new. The 15th saw a Pied Flycatcher and Bluethroat, the first Reed Warbler of the year and Goldfinches increase to four. A Short-toed Lark at Quoy on 16th fed happily alongside a chicken for most of the afternoon and the next day two Pale-bellied Brent Geese accompanied a Pink-footed Goose on Meoness. Although there were avian arrivals on the 17th the ongoing Icelandic volcanic eruption meant that all other flights were cancelled. The song of Sedge Warbler and Chiffchaff filled the islands dust free skies the following day, as planes began to fly again and the Good Shepherd IV returned from Shetland bringing in the first birding group of 2010. Their arrival happened to coincide with easterly winds and it didn't take long before a Bluethroat was uprooted in the south along with a Spotted Flycatcher. Undoubtedly the highlight of the 19th was a very confiding White-throated Sparrow at the Obs. Not only was the bird's plumage tones subject of conversation (being a tanned variant) but also its origin, which is always an intriguing subject for birders nationwide as American Sparrows have a tendency to cross the Atlantic by boat. Perhaps it arrived with the American yacht in North Haven that day? Or was it one of five birds that boarded a vessel as it left America that subsequently arrived in Southampton docks with only four birds still on deck?! Other birds that arrived from a little closer to home, but just as crowd pleasing comprised a mobile Golden Oriole, the first Red-backed Shrike and Garden Warbler of the year, two female '*flava*' Wagtails, and a Bluethroat trapped in the Plantation. The arrival of a corking male Rustic Bunting on the 20th thrilled all who were lucky enough to see the bird around the Scrape. Other new birds that were appreciated in fine sunshine and light easterlies comprised two each of Common and Green Sandpiper, eight Sanderling, the first Cuckoo of the year, a female Ring Ouzel, a beautiful adult male Redstart, a Black Redstart, two Whinchat, three Spotted Flycatcher, two Tree Pipit, two House Martins along with a Sand Martin, a Goldfinch

and a mobile 'Mealy' Redpoll. The fine weather must have been appreciated by the birds also and Whinchat, Sedge Warbler, Swallow, Cuckoo, Dunnock and Chiffchaff were all heard singing around the isle making the day even more superb. The Rustic Bunting relocated to Hjukni Geo on 21st and year-ticks included the first Swift (amidst a flock of around 90 Swallows and six House Martins) and the first Greenshank. The first Common Rosefinch of the year was found on a very foggy census on 22nd, with two Wood Sandpipers another notable insertion into the log. An increase of waders on 23rd saw a record 172 Dunlin scattered about the island along with 39 Ringed Plovers and a Sanderling, whilst the next day 23 Whimbrel were noted once the fog had dispersed. The highlight however was a bright Red-throated Pipit at Lower Leogh. The first Icterine Warbler of the year gave superb views on 27th. A large falcon, thought to be a Saker, the following day was however seen frustratingly too briefly to be sure. Other notable migrants that were a little easier to pin down comprised a male Red-backed Shrike, seven Spotted Flycatchers, six Willow Warblers, two Sedge Warblers, four Blackcaps, 22 Swallows, 16 Hooded Crows, two male Linnets and a Reed Bunting. More new birds followed on the 29th with two additions to the year list in the form of a Hobby and Marsh Warbler and these shared the isle with a Pintail, two Red-backed Shrikes and two Pied Flycatchers as well as a host of commoner migrants. Easterly winds continued through the night and the following day an Osprey was soon picked up flying north over Leogh, a singing Common Rosefinch was at Burkle and the first Tree Sparrow of the year, an Icterine Warbler, a male Redstart, a Cuckoo and a new Tree Pipit were found. The month ended with a Lesser Redpoll, Short-eared Owl, four Common Terns and a new Icterine Warbler.

June: The month opened with strong easterly gales keeping birds well-hidden so it wasn't until they subsided on 3rd that a nice Marsh Warbler was found singing in the Chalet garden, a corking male Red-backed Shrike and an equally as smart male Bluethroat were also discovered. The 5th and 6th were equally as eventful and the first migrant Silver Y moths and Red Admiral butterflies of the year were a good sign that the winds were coming from the right area and a scattering of migrants included a singing male Bluethroat and a flyover Honey Buzzard. On the 8th, two Short-eared Owls were together in Field ditch, a female Red-backed Shrike was caught in the Vaadal and five Spotted Flycatchers were around the south. A Blyth's Reed Warbler at the Chalet on the 10th was nice for all and a female Pied Flycatcher with an extensive brood patch was in the Gully on the 14th and a male Bluethroat in the Vaadal indicated that spring may not be over yet. By the morning of the 15th it was clear that spring was by no means over and two Chiffchaff, a Blackcap, Lesser Whitethroat, Song Thrush, five Collared Doves, two Robins, and a female Red-backed Shrike were all new in. Best of all was a stunning male Rustic Bunting at the Chalet pond - a fitting end to the AW's time in the Chalet. As the ornithological staff moved to the Observatory to join the domestic staff (who had been working solidly to prepare for forthcoming Observatory guests) on 16th, a Common Crane flew over. Although it wasn't a pair of White Storks choosing to nest on the Observatory roof it was a still an incredibly nice blessing to mark a new chapter in the history of Fair Isle

Bird Observatory! A Garden Warbler, Willow Warbler and Blackcap christened the new ringing room on the 17th. A drake Common Scoter in North Haven on 20th was later found dead on the shore in South Haven. A Turtle Dove on 23rd and a flighty Shorelark were a little unexpected to say the least. A little less surprising was a Garden Warbler trapped in Hjon Dyke and two House Martins that passed south in the evening. Some wandering late migrants on the 24th comprised a Spotted Flycatcher, a singing male Linnet that had not quite come to terms with a failed breeding season, a new fully-feathered Short-eared Owl and two female Crossbills. The first still day for a while on the 26th facilitated some drift migration with a Marsh Warbler, two Rosefinches and both Willow Warbler and Chiffchaff together in the Obs plantation. With light south-westerly winds at the months end, a handful of migrants put in a late appearance including our second Hobby of the spring, a Black Redstart, a Song Thrush, a Willow Warbler, a Siskin and two Crossbills (28th), four Siskin, a Whitethroat and a Turtle Dove on the 29th and four Swifts on the 30th.

July: With southerly winds at the start of the month it wasn't long before failed breeding waders began their southward journey. The first few days saw small parties of Curlews and single Redshanks cruising over the isle as well as numbers of Oystercatchers slowly building up. By the 3rd the first real signs of 'autumn' were visible with a Green Sandpiper taking flight from Easter Lother water and wader passage was sustained through the next couple of days with two Dunlin on Easter Lother on the 4th and another couple of Redshanks heading south on the 5th. A Robin and a Whitethroat were also seen in the Chalet garden. By the 6th one or two Crossbills toured the island, in the same way they did during the beginning of last year's late summer irruption. Hirundines stole the show on the 8th with a Sand Martin whizzing through and a brood of Swallows ringed at the Mast. A male Blackcap caught first thing on the 9th was a good sign that migrants were in and new incursions were soon reinforced by a Chiffchaff, three Crossbills, 48 Redshanks, 18 Black-headed Gulls, 30 Common Gulls, 47 Lesser Black-backed Gulls , 400 Arctic Terns (including 10 first-summers) a Green Sandpiper and a Teal. On 10th, 24 Crossbills arrived in off the sea and a Shoveler was just offshore in Furse. Two more Chiffchaffs were seen on the 14th and the first Whimbrel of the autumn was also recorded along with nine Crossbills. Two Black-tailed Godwits arrived just ahead of a 15 strong flock of Curlews on the 15th. An immature Mute Swan in North Haven on 17th had departed by the 18th and, following its little stint on the island, it was replaced by a Little Stint on the scrape! A fine supporting cast included a Pintail, five Teal, two Wigeon, two Grey Herons, a Green Sandpiper, the first and ONLY Arctic Tern fledgling of the year, a Siskin and a Garden Warbler that was in full song in the Plantation! Apart from two Sand Martins observed on an early morning trap round the other avian highlights on the 19th included small but ever increasing flocks of Turnstones, Redshanks, Dunlin and Whimbrel as well as a Great Northern Diver and two Crossbills. With the weather taking a turn for the worse throughout the 20th and the 21st, migrants were limited but included a Sanderling, a Green Sandpiper and the first three Golden Plover of the autumn. A very light easterly wind on 23rd brought

about the arrival of three Grey Herons, 24 Lapwing, a Collared Dove, a Quail and a mobile Common Rosefinch. The winds dropped completely on 24th allowing the 'Storm Petrel net' to be unfurled and soon after the tape lure was turned on the first Leach's Petrel of the year bounced out of the net. The first juvenile Willow Warbler was observed in the Plantation on the 26th as were the first two juvenile Dunlin feeding alongside four adults on Easter Lother. Another juvenile Willow Warbler was observed by the Warden in his garden at Burkle on the 27th and two Siskin flew high over Pund on the same date. Two Shelduck on the 28th and a flyover female type Shoveler were a further boost to the islands recent arrivals of wildfowl. The island's waders were also amplified with the arrival of 50 Lapwings and a Golden Plover on the 29th and a further influx of wading birds noted on the 30th comprised four adult Sanderling, 12 Dunlin, 20 Redshank, 160 Oystercatchers and three new Golden Plover. Grey Herons were also on the move with a group of five sat in the south, a sign of things to come...?

August: Visual migration continued into the start of August with a respectable flock of nine Cormorants flying north on the 1st and two more the following day. Meanwhile, a singing male Sedge Warbler in Schoolton ditch was seen chasing a female and carrying nesting material, indicating the first breeding attempt on Fair Isle. The wind swung round to the south-east on 3rd and by the 4th, the first Common Rosefinch of the month was in the Obs plantation and the first Greenshank of the autumn flew over. A Garden Warbler, Short-eared Owl and Green Sandpiper were the highlights of 6th. A juvenile Ruff, Wood Warbler, Green Sandpiper, Knot, three Willow Warblers and the autumn's first Grasshopper Warbler arrived on the 11th, with the Ruff remaining until the following day as Knot increased to ten and Willow Warbler to 11 birds. Autumn then just exploded into action on the 14th with true autumn gems spread across the isle. The early morning trap round revealed birds had arrived, with a juvenile Sand Martin overhead and two Willow Warblers caught in the traps. The second Wood Warbler of the autumn was then found in the Obs plantation along with three Willow Warblers and the first Reed Warbler of the autumn. With birds evidently newly arrived, census was promptly conducted and further arrivals were celebrated, none more so than a first-winter Arctic Warbler discovered at Shirva and a supporting cast of a Barred Warbler at Midway, 16 more Willow Warblers, a Blackcap and two Garden Warblers. Most birds were still present the following day and, despite fog on 16th, visibility was still good enough to warrant the discovery of new migrants and the days total comprised of the first migrant Sedge Warbler of the autumn, three Barred Warblers, two Garden Warblers, 17 Willow Warblers, three Wood Warblers, the first Pied Flycatcher and Whinchat of the autumn, a House Martin, six Grey Herons, four Teal, a Green Sandpiper and the lingering Short-eared Owl. Census on the 18th was hampered by rain, fog and strong winds but nevertheless, a Spotted Crake on Da Water and the first Lesser Whitethroat of the autumn were found along with two Green Sandpipers, a Barred Warbler, 21 Willow Warbler and a Wood Warbler. The weather worsened the following day, but new birds continued to arrive in small numbers, with three Wood

Warbler the highlight, but it wasn't until the 20th when the prevailing south-easterly winds were accompanied by bright sunshine and timely migrations were made by the first Wryneck, Goldcrest and Turtle Dove of the autumn as well as a Sand Martin, a Common Rosefinch and a Pied Flycatcher. More new arrivals had made it by the 22nd with the first Fieldfare, Tree Pipit, Marsh Warbler and Spotted Flycatcher of the autumn together with two new Barred Warblers, a new Whinchat, a Grasshopper Warbler, a Kestrel, seven Bar-tailed and four Black-tailed Godwits, three Sand Martins and 20 Willow Warblers. It was also clear that common migrants were on the move with increasing numbers of Teal (35+) and an increasing abundance of Meadow Pipits and Wheatears (148) on the island. The first Whitethroat of the autumn then followed on the 24th along with a 60+ strong incursion of alba Wagtails plus three Wood Warblers, two Barred Warblers and a Common Rosefinch, followed by the first Icterine Warbler on the 25th. With the wind dropping and the sun making an appearance, another two Rosefinches arrived on the 27th along with the first two Lapland Buntings of the year. These two birds got the ball rolling as the following day it was 'raining' Lapland Buntings with the evening log call tallying 60 of these large northern beauties, including a flock of 30 on Ward Hill. A juvenile Curlew Sandpiper also made an impromptu arrival. Winds continued to suck up birds from a northerly origin as the month came to a close and on 30th a female Shoveler, 18 Grey Herons, a 'blue' Fulmar, a juvenile Glaucous Gull and a Crake sp. (seen very briefly at the Chalet) had all been added to the notebook and Lapland Buntings had risen to no less than 90! The final day of the month was by far one of the best and with arctic winds came arctic birds... a late morning trap round was well worth it with the discovery of the second Arctic Warbler of the month in the Vaadal trap. This bird arrived alongside yet more birds from the same latitude and Lapland Buntings were now 142 strong! Other migrants to creep in with this airflow included two more Lesser Whitethroats, 7 Garden Warblers, a very obliging first-winter Marsh Warbler, and three more Rosefinches - doubling the island flock!

September: An early Slavonian Grebe and the first Black Redstart of the autumn arrived on the 1st as Lapland Buntings continued to rise, to 184. By the 2nd, Fair Isle should have been renamed 'Halcyon Isle' as the weather was incredible with mirror like seas, no wind and incandescent sunshine. Birds were inevitably thin on the ground as birds passed straight over, but a freshly arrived Wryneck, a pod of Risso's Dolphins and a Minke Whale just offshore was a beautiful bonus to an altogether beautiful day. Flat calm seas were short lived however as south easterly winds picked up on 3rd and new birds to arrive included a Tree Pipit and Whitethroat. Fresh immigrants on 4th included a respectable flock of 17 Cormorants, a female Peregrine (that was seen harassing the Shoveler on Field Pond), two new Tree Pipits, a Whinchat, two Common Redstarts, a Blackcap, Barred Warbler, two Pied and a single Spotted Flycatcher and a new Common Rosefinch. Six southbound Cormorants passed through on the 5th and a bit of raptor passage commenced with a male Sparrowhawk and three Kestrels. A light supporting cast included two Common Sandpiper, two Tree Pipits, a male Black Redstart, three Common

Redstarts, a Whinchat, two Spotted Flycatchers and a Pied Flycatcher. The first Dunnock and Song Thrush of the autumn were found on 6th but these were just forerunners of a nice fall on 7th. Counts included 13 Wigeon, two Knot, a Greenshank, a House Martin, 12 Tree Pipits, two '*flava*' Wagtails, three Robin, 29 Redstart, seven Whinchat, 63 Wheatears, four Fieldfare, four Song Thrush, Marsh Warbler, two Reed Warbler, 12 Garden Warblers, 10 Blackcaps, 25 Willow Warblers, 16 Spotted Flycatchers, seven Pied Flycatchers and three Siskin. Adverse weather on 8th grounded a number of migrants including 48 Teal, Common Scoter, 11 Kestrel and seven Sparrowhawk, three Ruff, Greenshank, three Common Sandpipers, 45 Turnstone, 26 Tree Pipits, four '*flava*' Wagtails, 17 Redstart, 18 Whinchat, five Fieldfare, six Song Thrush, one Grasshopper Warbler, three Barred Warblers, 23 Garden Warblers, 12 Blackcap, 36 Willow Warblers, eight Spotted Flycatchers, four Pied Flycatchers, three new Common Rosefinches and the first Chaffinch and Brambling of the autumn. Waders were by far the most notable migrants on the island on the 9th, with the first Jack Snipe of the autumn amongst 83 Snipe and 15 Knot, 40 Ringed Plovers, 11 Dunlin and a nice count of eight Ruff in with a flock of 32 Golden Plovers. Other sightings included the autumn's first Water Rail, two family parties of both Common and Arctic Tern, a very showy Wryneck at the Obs and the first Redwing of the autumn - accompanying seven Song Thrushes. Notable bird movements on the 10th were made by species with gregarious tendencies rather than by those that travel alone. By the end of the day 460 Meadow Pipits, 34 Tree Pipits, 16 '*flava*' Wagtails (including nine Grey-headed Wagtails), 30 Chaffinches, 17 Siskin and 270 Twite had been logged. Skylarks also continued to increase with 64 individuals counted and were joined by a Short-toed Lark that presumably got caught up in inter-island movements. Further influxes were noted for some species on 11th, but a Common Buzzard and the autumn's first Mealy Redpoll were the pick of the birds. The wind changed to the south-west on the 12th, after a prolonged period of easterlies and hopes were high for the mega. However, the highlights were waders - a peachy juvenile Curlew Sandpiper, Little Stint and, in the afternoon, a juvenile Pectoral Sandpiper on Da Water. By the following day, there was so much water around following torrential rain throughout the night and day that the Pectoral Sandpiper could be found bathing in puddles in the middle of the road! Birding was quite limited over the next few days as heavy rain continued, but new additions on the 13th included the first 12 Pink-footed Geese of the autumn, another Jack Snipe and a passing Whimbrel. With yet more overnight rain the water table remained high and ephemeral pools were plentiful and attracted further juvenile Curlew Sandpipers bringing the count to four on 14th. Although the rain was beneficial to some species, it was also detrimental to others and Britain's earliest and Fair Isle's second Swainsons Thrush on the 15th was forced to take cover at Lower Stoneybrek. Unfortunately, views were altogether limited as the gale force westerly winds forced it into dense cover in the croft gardens and also made it very flighty. Despite a very black and white under-wing its final whereabouts (after initially being seen superbly by one lucky individual) weren't as black and white and despite best efforts by all eyes on the island, this sought after *Catharus* couldn't be tracked down.

A pair of Buff-breasted Sandpipers were found on the 18th amongst the flock of Golden Plovers at Barkland and despite showing well they didn't choose the best field to be appreciated in, owing to the presence of a large frisky bull. Thankfully they weren't rare enough to warrant the red flag to fly or the Observatory may have been without a Warden! They were both still present the following day and one remained right to the month's end. A Slavonian Grebe and the first Whooper Swans (2) of the autumn were also recorded, but had departed by the 19th as the conditions at sea and overland were perfect for migration. With an influx of new visitors to the Obs and new eyes trained on the crofts, other new autumn birds were exposed with a reasonably showy first-winter Ortolan Bunting feeding in the oats at Quoy and a Bluethroat at Shirva. With no cattle in sight on the 20th the red flag was soon airborne after the discovery of a Buff-bellied Pipit at North Light which was accompanied by a Bluethroat and the first Yellow-browed Warbler of the autumn. Although the pipit had made a significant journey east, other migrants had converged on the island after their own journey west and by the end of the day a nice array of birds were logged. Totals included five Jack Snipe, four more Yellow-browed Warblers, another Bluethroat, a Barred Warbler, two Marsh Warblers, a Lesser Whitethroat, 12 Pied Flycatchers, 30 Brambling, ten Chaffinches and ten Snow Buntings. Just three Common Rosefinches and a Turtle Dove were the highlight of the 21st and overnight easterlies led to the discovery of a very mobile *Locustella* around Upper Leogh. Once the bird had got past its initial migratory restlessness it soon settled down and with daylight getting progressively brighter, the tips to the tertials also became progressively brighter and its identity was confirmed as a Pallas's Grasshopper Warbler. Although this species is a renowned skulker this individual couldn't have been further from the norm and showed remarkably well in the garden and sheep cru at Leogh. This couldn't be said for a first-winter Citrine Wagtail found in the Havens that only showed to a select few before choosing to dash about the island. With a northerly wind picking up on the 23rd, birding conditions were hard indeed but with more birders arriving in search of the Buff-bellied Pipit and Pallas's Grasshopper Warbler, new birds were likely to be found. Sure enough this was to be the case and in trying to relocate the pipit by north light they discovered an Arctic Redpoll. A less eye-catching find involved a Corncrake that was flushed from the roadside ditch by Bullock Holes and disappeared towards Burn o' Furse. With the northerly winds slowly easing on the 26th, birds were not only easier to find but were there to find, with highlights comprising of birds from all four compass bearings, ranging from a Nightingale and a Subalpine Warbler to three Barred Warblers, two Greenland White-fronted Geese and two juvenile Hen Harriers. The 27th was definitely a red-letter day, with the island boasting not one but two Red-flanked Bluetails, a Horneman's Arctic Redpoll, a Red-throated Pipit and a fine supporting cast that included a Richard's Pipit, five Bluethroats, 15 Yellow Browed Warblers, four Barred Warblers, a Rosefinch, 120 Bramblings, 95 Song Thrushes, 14 Redwings, 32 Snow Buntings, the autumn's first Long-tailed Duck, 68 Barnacle Geese, four Ring Ouzels and four Reed Buntings. Three Red-breasted Flycatchers (28th) were a nice accompaniment to an ample advent of classic

autumnal migrants. The main movements consisted of thrushes with the first Blackbirds, Song Thrushes (over 300), Redwings and Mistle Thrushes journeying west. Wildfowl were also undertaking a similar journey and an intermittent stream of Barnacle Geese and Wigeon passed through with a single Pintail and three Long-tailed Ducks shadowing them. A juvenile Mandarin Duck in the Gully on 29th was unexpected and the first record for the isle! Other migrants spread about the isle included a couple of Water Rails, Corncrake, Stock Dove, four Short-eared Owls, one or two Woodcock with 80 of their pilots (Goldcrests), 170 Brambling, 29 each of Chaffinch and Siskin, 11 Reed Buntings and a Little Bunting at the shop. The last day of the month ended on a high with a Hawfinch in off the sea, a lingering Horneman's Arctic Redpoll that was now in with a flock of over 60 Siskin at Dronger and a Great Grey Shrike at the Mast. Other autumnal delights included 14 Ring Ouzels, four Mistle Thrushes, nine Yellow-browed Warblers, two Common Rosefinches and four Greenfinches.

October: The month opened with the lingering Buff-breasted Sandpiper, Arctic Redpoll and Mandarin Duck from September, with new birds comprising of three Woodcock, six Swallows, a late Swift, 28 Ring Ouzels, five Dunnock, a Bluethroat, a Red-breasted Flycatcher, two Yellow-browed and two Barred Warblers and the autumns first Yellowhammer. The first confirmed Lanceolated Warbler of the year in Schoolton ditch was a superb find on 2nd and other new discoveries included a Corncrake and a Red-breasted Flycatcher. The 3rd was quiet, with the Lanceolated Warbler at Quoy and the first Stonechat of the autumn. With the wind swinging around a little more to the south on the 4th a few birds decided to take to the wing and arrived here. These included ten Barnacle Geese, a first-winter Little Gull and a Black Redstart. By the 5th the southerlies had picked up to such a degree the sea swell was pretty intense and as a result washed in large amounts of kelp on to the south facing shores. This beachcast not only attracted good numbers of waders and Starlings but also attracted a second Little Gull and a Grey Phalarope. A dark morph juvenile Honey Buzzard toured the south of the island on 6th and the raptor-fest continued into the 7th with a female Peregrine (being mobbed by one of two Merlins) three Kestrels, three Sparrowhawk and a Hen Harrier. Passage wasn't confined to birds with talons though and lighter southerly winds and sunshine spurred on 166 Pink-footed Geese, Red-throated Diver, a Sooty Shearwater, a Grey Plover, a Lesser Black-backed Gull, three Little Gulls, 11 Wood Pigeons, 160 Skylarks, 575 Meadow Pipits, two Grey Wagtails, a Black Redstart, five Whinchat, 35 Wheatears, five Ring Ouzel, 17 Blackbird, four Fieldfares, 156 Song Thrushes, 17 Redwings, a Grasshopper Warbler, a Reed Warbler and a Greenland Redpoll to migrate. A Treecreeper on 8th was a little unexpected to say the least. Other visitors that arrived alongside it comprised a Hawfinch, a new Bluethroat and four Yellow-browed Warblers. A good fall on the 9th included a Barred Warbler, two Yellow-browed Warblers, Red-breasted Flycatcher, a Hawfinch, three Tree Pipits, 545 Meadow Pipits, seven Dunnock, 140 Robins, single Black and Common Redstarts, six Whinchat, 21 Wheatears, 18 Ring Ouzels, 260 Blackbirds, 41 Fieldfares, 650 Song Thrushes, over

3000 Redwing, three Mistle Thrushes, a Grasshopper Warbler, a Reed Warbler, a Whitethroat, three Garden Warblers, 55 Blackcaps, 39 Chiffchaffs, a Willow Warbler, 152 Goldcrests, a Spotted Flycatcher, a Pied Flycatcher, 80 Chaffinches, 77 Brambling, 81 Siskin, five North-western type Common Redpoll, a Lesser Redpoll, a Yellowhammer and 22 Reed Buntings. Following a clear night the majority of birds had departed but made way for an Olive-backed Pipit, a Dotterel, a new Red-breasted Flycatcher, two new Yellow-browed Warblers and Pied Flycatchers, a new Lesser Redpoll and two Yellowhammers, whilst a flat calm sea allowed a Great Northern Diver and Slavonian Grebe to be observed. The next day, a Blyth's Reed Warbler was at the Haa while, rare on Fair Isle, a Red Kite arrived in off the sea and the first Scaup of the year touched down briefly and 12 Yellow-browed Warblers were new. With little wind, the sea remained calm into the 12th and scans from various vantage points on the island and from the Good Shepherd IV soon revealed a handful of 'Blue' Fulmars, 37 Barnacle Geese, a White-fronted Goose, five Long-tailed Ducks, a Great Northern Diver, three Slavonian Grebes, a Sooty Shearwater, three Arctic Skuas and the first Little Auk of the autumn. Landbirds included a 'Coues' Arctic Redpoll, a Red-breasted Flycatcher, a Black Redstart, five Yellow-browed Warblers and a handful of Common Redpolls. A progressively strengthening north-westerly wind on the 13th encouraged wildfowl movements and the cackling of geese could be heard as 1000+ Greylags, 80+ Pink-footed Geese, 12 Barnacle Geese and 13 Whooper Swans went through. On land, birds were hard to find, but an incredibly showy Long-eared Owl was at Stackhoull and a Radde's Warbler was in the Schoolton crop. Before long, autumn had really taken hold and we received the first reminder that winter was just around the corner as the island was hit by cold northerly winds. Northern birds made a modest arrival to start with, with two Little Auks and a Little Bunting new in on the 14th and the next day arrivals included a drake King Eider, a first-winter Little Gull, four Whooper Swans, 14 Long-tailed Ducks, two Velvet Scoters, five Red-breasted Mergansers, a Great Northern Diver and five Slavonian Grebes. Two Rough-legged Buzzards on 16th were found before our third Red-flanked Bluetail of the season, a Horneman's Arctic Redpoll, seven Yellow-browed Warblers, two Waxwings, three Little Auks, two 'Northern' Bullfinches, 15 Lesser Redpolls, 100+ Mealy Redpolls, a North-western type Common Redpoll, four Common Crossbills, three Whooper Swans, three Sooty Shearwaters, nine Woodcock, a Black Redstart, a Mistle Thrush, a Grasshopper Warbler and three Tree Sparrows. A considerable clearout had occurred on the 17th but an adult Glaucous Gull was found roosting in amongst an 800 strong flock of Gulls on Easter Lother. A juvenile was logged on the 20th, but arrived on a new influx of birds from the north including a (new) Horneman's Arctic and a North-Western Redpoll at the Haa and a significant Corvid incursion comprising eight Hooded Crows, two Carrion Crows, a Rook and a Nordic Jackdaw. Winds continued to roll in off the Norwegian coast during the run up to the end of the month bringing with them a first-winter male Black-throated Thrush on the 23rd and 12 Waxwings on 24th, which rose to over 50 the following day. Two sea-watches on 26th produced a juvenile Glaucous Gull, two Sooty Shearwaters and a single Great Northern Diver

but viewing was dominated by a total of 108 Little Auks whilst on-land 'mealy' Common Redpolls totalled 58. A Goldfinch was a cracking little bonus on the 27th and, apart from the re-discovery of the Black-throated Thrush on Hoini on the 28th and a steady trickle of both Icelandic and continental Redwings, the end of the month was pretty quiet (for birds anyway) - due to the very strong southerly winds that were battering the island!

November: Dwindling numbers of October's migrants remained into November and the month opened with four Waxwing, 15 Meadow Pipits, a pair of Peregrines and a Goldeneye. The 2nd brought more Waxwings (25) and a late Lesser Whitethroat. The 4th was the best day of the month for numbers and variety, with counts including a Pink-footed Goose, 211 Greylags, Red-breasted Merganser, Red-throated Diver, Slavonian Grebe, Great Northern Diver, Sparrowhawk, Kestrel, Merlin, 100 Turnstone, 25 Golden Plover, 19 Lapwing, 45 Redshank, Common Gull, Wood Pigeon, Short-eared owl, 15 Skylark, Chiffchaff, six 'Mealy' Redpoll and two Lapland Buntings. Two Linnet were new on 6th, with a Water Rail the next day also new. Another Water Rail was found on 9th, a day that also saw highlights of Long-eared Owl, Black Redstart, eight 'Mealy' Redpolls, 45 Snow Buntings, a male Northern Bullfinch and thrushes peaking at 255 Blackbird, 115 Fieldfare and 140 Redwing. Two Chiffchaff and a Dunnock were new on 10th and further late migrants on 12th included a Hawfinch (with it or another on 14th), a peak of ten Chaffinches, a Blackcap, three Teal, a Pink-footed Goose and peaks of 11 Purple Sandpiper and just 35 Snipe. Another male Northern Bullfinch on 15th (and a female on 20th) plus a first-winter Iceland Gull on 16th were the only notable sightings until 23rd when new arrivals included a Long-tailed Duck, Goldeneye, nine Song Thrushes and a late Greenfinch. Two Teal and a Long-eared Owl on 25th provided some excitement, with the final count of the month on 27th revealing a large influx of Curlew with 120 counted plus a Great Northern Diver (still present on 29th) and six Woodcock.

December: A very quiet month and not surprising given that on the 2nd, three Peregrines, a Merlin, a ring-tail Hen Harrier and two Long-eared Owls were patrolling the island. Five Wigeon and a Great Northern Diver were obviously big enough to escape the attentions of the predators. Two Chaffinches and a Brambling were keeping quiet on the 3rd, but the same couldn't be said for the 104 Greylag Geese on 5th. Another Great Northern Diver was found on 7th and a new Hen Harrier arrived on 10th. Greylag Geese peaked at 250 birds on 23rd, with Curlew peaking at 100 birds and a Linnet new, keeping away from the Hen Harrier which was still present and a pair of Peregrines. Five Mealy Redpolls on 25th must have been a present from Santa, dropped off on his way south. A Greenfinch and three Woodcock were around the Observatory on 26th and the final venture of the year on 29th found four Golden Plover, four Dunlin, 45 Fieldfare and eight Blackbird.

A selection of 2009/10 Rarity Descriptions

Green-winged Teal, Da Water, 25th April 2009

Nick Riddiford

Throughout the lambing period, Fair Isle folk resolutely stride the hill checking that the expectant ewes are OK. A rota system ensures daily coverage, in which each crofter takes his or her turn. A testing task in poor weather, it becomes an absolute pleasure on calm, sunny days. Such conditions inspire me to leave the house early. By April the days are really drawing out and I think nothing of setting out at 5 o'clock in the morning to make a sweep of the north before breakfast. It is an inspirational time. Normally there is not a human to be seen or heard. For a short period I "own" the open air, or at least share it with noisy fulmars, cackling skuas, blissful skylarks, dancing lapwings, bubbling curlews and drumming snipe - their cacophony a more than acceptable counterpoint to the tranquil landscape.

If the spirit was blithe, by 8 o'clock the stomach was not. Time to head home for a hearty breakfast washed down by a Lapsang Souchong or Gunpowder tea. Despite tummy protestations, I paused my bike on the road overlooking Da Water to see whether the habitual teal were sharing their pools. Sure enough there was a small flock of teal and the very first I looked at was a splendid male... with a clearly-demarcated vertical white flash running down the forepart of its flank. The penny dropped immediately. Nevertheless, I looked again - at it and its companions, the males of which appeared quite dowdy in comparison. There was some elation but this was tempered by relief. Thank goodness I did not look when I cycled north some three hours earlier. How popular would I be waking folk then?

Nobody seemed to object to an 8 o'clock call and it took very little time for a small knot of residents to gather, and a forest (more like a tiny copse really) of telescopes and cameras to assemble. The bird was still there and folk were happy... though not as happy as me as I'd had a lovely walk, a first for Fair Isle and a fine breakfast to come.

Description: Basically resembled a male Eurasian Teal but with a glaringly obvious vertical white stripe down the fore flank instead of a horizontal line along the edge of the body. Closer scrutiny reveals that the narrow deep yellow stripes bordering the green face mask on a drake Eurasian Teal are virtually lacking on this bird. The ground colour of the breast was a deeper cinnamon colour compared to the paler buff of Eurasian Teal. In all other respects it appeared identical to the accompanying drake Eurasian Teal and mingled with the rest of the flock of eight.

'Asian' Lesser Whitethroat, Burkle, 16th–17th October 2010

Deryk Shaw

A Blackpoll Warbler had arrived the previous day and much of my day had been spent watching it feeding on the South Harbour beach. Rustic Bunting, Little Bunting and Short-toed Lark were also around plus a few Bluethroats and lots of thrushes. As the light faded, it clouded over and the temperature dropped dramatically. I headed for home and as I entered the drive to Burkle I caught sight of a small bird flitting above in the rough grass at the end of the track. I raised my 'bins' and saw it was a tiny warbler, resembling a Lesser Whitethroat but clearly different. I had just spoken to Micky Maher a few moments ago as he was heading back to Taft. I phoned him up and told him I had an interesting Lesser Whitethroat that he should turn around and come and look at. I then phoned my two AWs (Simon Davies & Jack Ashton-Booth) to come along asap. Another small warbler then appeared on the garden wall - a Yellow-browed Warbler (the only one of the day), actively feeding in the fading light. I returned my attentions to the LWT as Micky arrived. We watched it for ten minutes or so before it flew up the road towards Quoy just as the 'boys' arrived in the Obs van and we lost it in the gloom.

The following morning, I spied it in my garden from the kitchen window. I phoned everyone again and raced outside with my bins and camera and obtained some nice photos. Once the others had arrived we erected a net and trapped it. Measurements indicated that (according to Shirihai's *Sylvias* book) it may in fact be a '*minula*' as opposed to '*halimodendri*'.

Description: A tiny pale warbler which instantly drew attention, looking very different to the usual Lesser Whitethroats I see on Fair Isle - many of which are short-winged and lacking contrast between head and mantle. This bird was smaller, daintier, paler and even shorter-winged. It also appeared to have more white in the outer tail. Its behaviour was different too, hopping amongst the rough grass and weeds, avoiding the nearby vegetable patch, normally only flying a few yards when approached to within a few feet before flopping back down into the grass. It would frequently flick wings and tail as it hopped around.

Head: Sandy-brown with a small amount of grey admixed, mainly in the forecrown and ear coverts, appearing very plain in most views but a slight eye-mask (appearing brown rather than grey) could sometimes be seen. Pure white submoustachial bordered lower edge of ear coverts running into a similarly coloured chin/throat. Lower half of eye bordered by white crescent.

Upperparts: Crown sandy brown, concolourous with the mantle and back. Primaries and secondaries darker grey-brown, the latter with pale edges forming a wing panel. Tertials appearing paler (especially uppermost) and sandier (bleached) with pale edges - smallest one missing from left wing. Alula dark grey standing out from rest of wing. Coverts sandy, similar to mantle. Very small primary projection,

c¼ of tertial length. Tail dark grey with much white - outer feathers almost entirely pure white and tips of all other retrices white (c10mm on T5, 5mm on T4 gradually getting less towards central pair T1).
Underparts: White throat contrasting with pale dirty buff breast/belly and slightly buffier flanks.
Eye: Dark brown. Bill: shorter, finer than '*curruca*', blue-grey proximal half, dark grey distal half giving a distinct dark-tipped appearance. Legs: dark brownish-grey.
Call: It called a few times on the first evening a repeated single '*tac*' not as hard as '*curruca*'

Postscript: *A few body feathers which became dislodged during handling were sent away to Sweden for DNA analysis, the result of which indicated that (on current knowledge) it was closest to the DNA profile of S.c.halimodendri.*

River Warbler, Vaila's Trees, 31st May 2009

Deryk Shaw

It was an early morning start to carry out a Breeding Bird Survey in south Fair Isle. There were many migrants around and the start of an influx of Painted Lady butterflies. As I wandered through Vaila's Trees - a newly-planted area of saplings in memory of Vaila Harvey - near to the shop, I flushed a warbler out of the grass which flew and landed on the wall just five metres away. Initial views were of a chunky brown warbler with a large rounded tail - a River? I slowly raised my bins to confirm my suspicions and noted the diffuse breast streaking, large rounded tail with long bulky undertail coverts and pink legs with large pink feet. It then flew across the road and landed on the dry-stone dyke there. I then swapped my bins for camera and managed to get a couple of record shots before it flew again - a much greater distance, over the brow of the hill past Lower Stoneybrek heading towards Pund.

Head: Crown olive-brown. Supercilium from base of bill to well beyond eye was dirty creamy-white, narrower in front of eye, wider behind and quite obvious in some views but very indistinct in others.
Upperparts: Uniform earthy brown. Wings appeared fairly short and curved in typical *Locustella* fashion. Tail was broad and rounded, same colour as upperparts.
Underparts: Throat off-white. Breast dirty creamy-white with diffuse, messy olive-grey streaking. Flanks washed dirty buff. Belly white. Undertail coverts bulky, white with olive-grey chevrons.
Bare Parts: Eye; black, beady. Bill; dark. Legs; pale pink, sturdy. Feet; pale pink, large.

I called Simon Davies and Jack Ashton-Booth to inform them. They caught up with it for a few brief moments over the course of the day as it became very mobile, ranging from Pund to Lower Stoneybrek!

Eastern Olivaceous Warbler, Plantation & Chalet, 21st June 2009

Jack Ashton-Booth

I was on a morning trap round and had no birds in any other traps but on getting into the middle of Plantation Trap I flushed a medium sized Warbler from the left flank of the trap and it headed straight towards the catching area and on opening the flap to the catching box it immediately flew in and on doing so gave a single '*tack*' not dissimilar to a Lesser Whitethroat/Blackcap. Given the fact we had a Marsh Warbler in the vicinity of the gully just days before and the fact Marsh Warblers are so vocally variable I immediately assumed it was going to be that and on walking around to the catching box had pre-conceived ideas that I was about to withdraw an *Acrocephelus* warbler of some description from the catching box. My immediate thoughts on seeing the bird in the hand was one of pure confusion and my head went to pulp and confusion immediately kicked in as I expected nothing out of the ordinary on unfavourable winds, but how wrong I was proven to be. To be fair to myself I didn't really look that intensely at the bird immediately as I was always taught to place the bird in a bag as soon as possible to reduce any undue stress on the bird before processing it but my overall impression was of a very sandy brown/greyish and worn Marsh Warbler that had diffuse tertial fringes and immediately struck me as very odd as you would expect Marsh Warblers to be very fresh in spring given the fact they moult later than Reed Warblers on their wintering grounds and therefore return with an overall fresher plumage condition.

However with any bird I catch I always put the bird's welfare foremost over anything and knew I had to get it back to the ringing station as soon as possible. On returning to the ringing station at the Chalet I hung the bird up in the bag and phoned Simon Davies (other assistant warden) and Deryk Shaw (warden) to come and have a look at the bird as I wasn't sure of the bird's identification but unfortunately couldn't get through to either of them.

On extracting the bird from the bird bag I still wasn't convinced that it was a Marsh Warbler at all and knew I was dealing with something out of the ordinary and knew I needed to take some preliminary biometric measurements to establish the bird's identification and to justify ringing it. I immediately worked out where the P2 fell on the bird's wing and it fell between the 5th and 6th primary (more the 6th) and took a 2nd primary notch measurement that equated to 14mm as well as the bird's wing length that was 67mm. These measurements along with the bird's general worn plumage fell well within the range of Reed Warbler so I convinced myself I had caught an unusually cold and worn individual that may have had a challenging migration northwards or a Caspian type Reed Warbler (*fuscus)* given the fact the 2nd primary fell more towards the 6th primary, like that found on *fuscus* Reed Warbler.

The bird also showed prominent pale fringing/tips to the 6th tail feather which some Reed Warblers, especially the sub-species *fuscus* can show, but usually in *fuscus* it is accompanied by pale tips to the 5th and 4th tail feathers which exacerbated my confusion. Looking back I STUPIDLY ringed the bird as a Reed Warbler and can remember making a mental note of the bird's legs that also struck me as being unusually desiccated, slender and grey. They were very unusual and not like the fleshy foot pads and sturdy pale brownish/pinkish toned legs usually shown by Reed Warblers. I quickly took a fat and pectoral muscle score on the bird, a wing length and then weighed the bird but felt physically sick as was still not sure about the bird as I know how uncommon *fuscus* Reed Warblers are in the British Isles and the time of year just didn't add up. However at this point I did browse quickly at the Svensson guide at Olivaceous Warbler and realised it also matched the biometrics of that species and can remember thinking to myself "It will never be Olivaceous Warbler! Not me! Not in Britain!" Just to rule it out I knew I needed to check how many of the birds primaries were emarginated but the bird began to gape and showed the first signs of stress so I decided to immediately release the bird as the last thing I would wish to do would be to jeopardise its health as this would completely defeat the object of everything I believe in.

In hindsight I think my adrenaline got the better of me and in all honesty should have checked the emarginations well before ringing the bird and shouldn't have ringed the bird but as I was more concerned for the bird's welfare I processed it as quickly as possible. I would like to think that on checking the emarginations I could have ruled out Reed Warbler and decided it was in fact Olivaceous Warbler but am really sorry that things didn't work out the way I would have wished they would have.

On releasing the bird it flew promptly towards the garden pond and landed for a few seconds on the *Rosa rugosa* and pumped its tail downwards which sent alarm bells ringing and did nothing in the way of calming my nerves as I knew this was a character trait of Olivaceous Warbler having seen them in the field in Israel. But the bird soon disappeared and flew towards Barkland just over the road but I couldn't find it on searching for it and still didn't get any other views of the bird in the field. At that point I can remember checking the updated list of Nick Dymond's *The Birds of Fair Isle* and seeing the sole Olivaceous Warbler record for the island that had occurred in June back in 1995. Now I was seriously annoyed with myself and needed to at least tell someone as I still couldn't get in touch with any of the rest of the Bird Observatory staff.

I decided to phone my friend Rael Butcher (assistant warden on North Ronaldsay) and told him that "I think I may have just caught an Olivaceous Warbler" and with this he replied "how many primaries were emarginated on the bird". I then explained the series of events that had taken place and why I STUPIDLY didn't look at the emarginations after which he said that I was now my own worst enemy for not checking the bird's emarginations and told me I needed to relocate the bird.

I later mentioned to Deryk whilst playing football that I saw the bird briefly flick its tail downwards and said I can't see why it wasn't a *Hippolais* warbler and said I'm really unsure and am desperate for a second opinion. On returning from football I turned to Simon Davies (my colleague) and said "I think I might have made a mistake with the bird and bet it turns out to be an Olivaceous Warbler". Minutes after saying that the bird re-appeared in the Chalet garden (where it was released) and was spotted on the west fence line by Simon who immediately phoned Deryk and said "you best get here quick it looks good for Olivaceous Warbler". Simon opened the net in the garden as Deryk and Roy Dennis arrived and both Deryk and Roy agreed with both mine and Simon's thoughts. These were the first real views of the bird in the field as the bird worked its way along the fence in a very jerky manner with regular 180 degree turns with interspersed downward tail movements. By this point it was clear this was no cold toned Reed Warbler and on realising this it dawned on me that I should have stuck my neck out and gone with my gut instincts of Olivaceous Warbler but I thought it was probably best to err on the side of caution.

In-hand measurements:

Ring No: V683833; **Age:** 4; **Wing:** 67mm; **Emarg:** P3, P4, slightly P5; **1st P:** 5.7mm>pc; **P2 =** P5/6; **Prim Proj:** 15.4mm; **1st Tertial spacing:** 5.3mm; **2nd Tertial spacing:** 5.6mm; **Notch P2 =** 14mm; **Bill(S) =** 18.5mm; **Bill (w) =** 5.2mm; **Weight:** 11.7g.

No further measurements were taken as the bird began to show signs of stress, so was released. Thus, a detailed in-hand plumage description was not taken but photographs and measurements proved the identification.

Blyth's Reed Warbler, Lower Stoneybrek, 5th October 2009

Alan Bull

After two weeks on Fair Isle, it was my last morning and chance to find a BB rarity. I approached Lower Stoneybrek with the view to it being my last croft to check before heading back to jump on the plane and sadly leave the island. 'This is it', I thought as I approached the garden 'now or never'! A scan of the garden revealed nothing, but a soft '*tec*' call from behind me in the nearby oats sounded worthy of further investigation and I headed across the road. The bird was calling a lot (although I couldn't see it at this point) and my suspicions were drawn towards it coming from an *Acrocephalus* warbler and probably an interesting one at that! After some gentle pishing a bird duly popped up, albeit briefly. Confirming it was an *acro*, I phoned Deryk Shaw and Chas Holt with 'an interesting *acro*' and asked them to pop over as I knew I only had 15 minutes before I had to leave. After some more careful pishing the bird popped up briefly again where I noted the upperpart colouration, plain tertials, short wings with short primary projection and head details. Chas Holt arrived

and I informed him it was 'probably a Blyths Reed' but views were brief. In 5-10 minutes more of pishing and watching, the elusive *acro* showed only briefly and I could add nothing more to my initial observations, but Chas, from some brief views, said that 'he would be surprised if it wasn't one'. Unfortunately we headed back, but I informed Deryk and his assistants that I was now fairly sure of the birds identity and this was confirmed a couple of hours later by Deryk when he trapped the bird.

The description below is taken from field notes following my brief sightings.

Description: Obviously an *acro*, skulking in the oats and showing (at the time of finding) only briefly, suggesting it had just arrived. Quite 'cold' in colouration tones. Perhaps very slightly smaller than Reed Warbler, but only owing to the shorter wings. In flight, whilst flicking over the oats into tatties, the bird was noticeable smaller than a Reed or Marsh Warbler.

Upperparts: Cold earth brown upperparts, very plain and concolorous from head to tail. The tertials appeared very plain, lacking the full dark centres of other *acros*. The wings were short, the primary projection appearing shorter than the length of the exposed tertials. The tail also appeared shorter than that of a Reed or Marsh Warbler.

Underparts: I did not note much about the underparts at the time as I was concentrating on other features and the views were usually brief, but they did appear cold and appeared to lack any warm tones.

Head: The head appeared more rounded than a Reed Warbler and more akin to a Marsh Warbler profile when the bird was in profile and sitting up. A slight fore-supercilium was present, but I did not note the extent.

Bare parts: Legs: appeared pale brown, exact colour not noted. Bill: Dark upper mandible. Lower mandible was dark toward the tip, but basally pale. Cutting edge pale. Eye-ring: a buff coloured eye-ring was fairly prominent and appeared complete. Eye: brown

Call: This is what first alerted me to the bird. A soft '*tec*', not as harsh as Reed Warbler or Blackcap and not too dissimilar from Lesser White Throat. This was repeated several times in quick succession after I'd found the bird '*tec.....tec...tec...tec*'

Prior to 1996, all 29 accepted British records were of trapped birds - nine of them from Fair Isle. With the increasing observer awareness of the field identification features of this tricky species and combined with the increasing Fennoscandian population (eg 5,000–8,000 pairs in Finland in 2004), the number of records looks set to continue to increase at a rapid rate. By the end of 2002 there had been 56 British records and by 2010 there had been 115, with 25 of these coming from Fair Isle.

White's Thrush, Hjukni Geo, 10th October 2009

Micky Maher

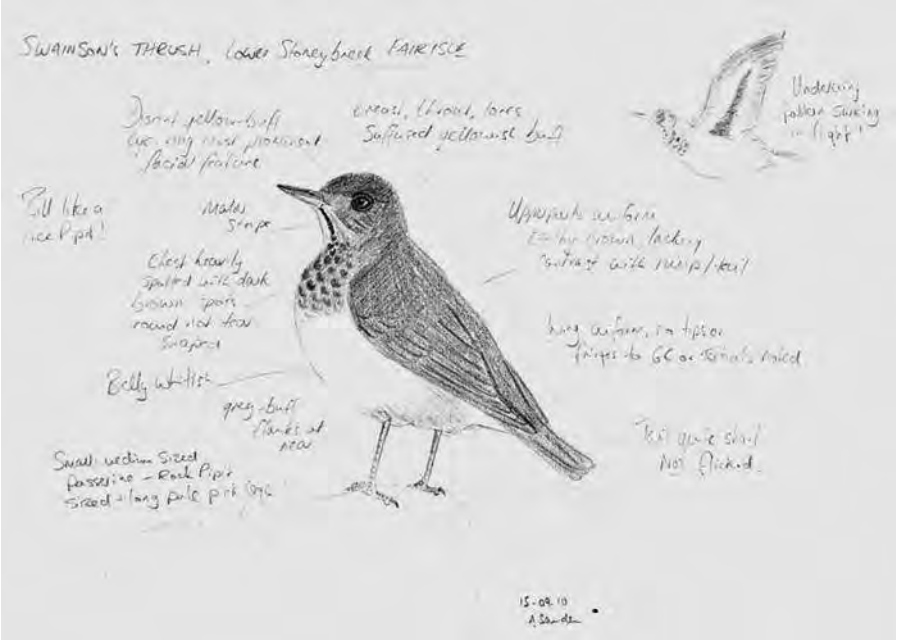
I had just been to the shop on Fair Isle and decided to head home via the cliffs as I had just walked up the road and seen little of note. There was a large movement of thrushes that day and I had seen a few hundred moving through just on the way across to Hjukni Geo. I crossed the fence at the southern end of the Geo and walked about ten metres when up from under my feet came a large golden-spangled thrush with incredibly obvious white outer tail feathers and perhaps surprisingly as it was flying at 45 degrees away from me, an obvious and striking black and white under wing. It was clearly a White's Thrush. The bird landed in a gully out in the open for a couple of minutes and I began to panic that it was going to head off goodness knows where. I found my phone and with one eye still on the bird dialled Deryk Shaw's number. Del was engaged, the bird hopped into the gully and turned to face me, I could just see its head and long bill. I called Simon Davies, Jack Ashton-Booth, Tim Sykes and Dougie Barr still with one eye on the bird, which was the greatest achievement. After that I sat with both eyes on it until after about fifteen minutes (which seemed like a lifetime) I heard heavy breathing behind me and a whispered 'where is it' from Del and Simon. They both got on to it straight away and others began to arrive. Simon then very kindly offered to go and pick up Tim Sykes who was miles away and would never have got there before dusk ('Karma' as he found a Blackpoll Warbler a few days later). Tim arrived and the bird several times came right out into the open giving good views to all, occasionally being scolded by a pair of rather unhappy Blackbirds. It departed during a heavy shower around dusk flying out of the gully and towards us, dropping below and out of sight. Again in flight I could see the obvious underwing pattern, but nowhere near as well as I could initially in good light. We all headed off back across the parks to the road getting completely soaked in process!

Description: Size & structure: A large Thrush, appearing elongated, due to long wings/tail and long bill. Primary projection c1.5 times that of exposed tertials.
General appearance: A stunning and unmistakeable large golden spangled, black scaled *Zoothera* Thrush. Upperparts, sparkling golden brown from crown to rump and uppertail, with broad, black fringes, giving an unmistakeable golden with black scaled appearance. In flight, long wings, with black and gold pattern on upperwing, striking white outer rectrices, obvious in flight and contrasting with darker inner rectrices. Golden breast with broad black scaled pattern, rest of underparts whitish with bold black curved scales. Undertail white with reduced black scales. Underwing seen very well, striped bold black and white, very obvious on initial views and still visible on final flight view around dusk.
Bare parts: Stout pink legs and feet. Black eye. (Unbroken white eyering). Long bill, almost comparable to length of head (nape-bill base). Dark greyish with half pink base to lower mandible and quarter pink base to upper mandible.

Swainson's Thrush, Lower Stoneybrek, 15th September 2010

Ashley Saunders

From 11th–18th September 2010 I was fortunate enough to be leading an Oriole Birding tour around Fair Isle, my fourth visit to the island. With the winds set in a westerly quarter and strengthening, often accompanied by rain, conditions were not good for finding migrants of any kind. The big low pressure causing these winds had originated from the recent hurricane that had struck the eastern seaboard of the United States, and this at least gave some hope that an American wader, or passerine, might arrive on the magic isle. Walking back up the island early afternoon on 15th, we arrived at Lower Stoneybrek at 1400 having virtually given up on seeing anything of note. The wind abated a little and the sun came out, encouraging me to pop my head round the drystone wall and check the garden. A few House Sparrows erupted from the roses, and a Willow Warbler flitted among the cabbages. Just then, a small to medium sized passerine flew from the back of the vegetable plot, towards the corner of the wall, where it perched for a few seconds. Slightly larger than a European Robin but clearly smaller than a Song Thrush [I likened it to Rock Pipit in size, a bird we had seen plenty of during the trip!]. I raised my bins, which was the signal for the bird to fly, and it shot back across the same garden and round the back



of the shed. In this brief moment I had a clear view of the birds underwing, a dark band across the axillaries bisecting the white underwing coverts, and I realised that we had a *catharus* thrush! I thought I had noted a buffish face and throat in flight, but couldn't be sure, so phoned the observatory to notify them and ask for back up. Trying to relocate the bird, we moved around the back of the house, with no joy. I then decided to walk on the field side of the drystone wall near to where the bird had been originally. Sure enough, it shot out of the grass again and landed on the wall, this time for about thirty long and enjoyable seconds when I was able to confirm its identity and compile the following description:

Description: Size: clearly smaller than Song Thrush and slightly larger than European Robin [likened to a Rock Pipit as nearest match]. When perched it remained in an alert posture, slightly stretched as if poised to fly at any moment. The bird did not nervously flick its wings or pump its tail.

Upperparts: including crown, nape, mantle and tail a fairly warm earthy brown, not particularly rufous, and bearing in mind the sun was behind me and the bird was perfectly lit at only 10 metres distance. It lacked the cold grey tones though which I have noted on all the Grey-cheeked Thrushes I have seen. There was no obvious contrast between the colour of the tail and the rest of the upperparts. There was no white in the tail. In the superb light, the edges of the primaries and secondaries could be seen to have a slightly brighter more yellow-olive edge, forming a slight wing panel, though this did not contrast markedly with the rest of the upperparts as you might expect it to on say Hermit Thrush [which would also show a more rufous panel]. Otherwise the upperwing was fairly uniform, with no buff tips or edges to tertials or greater coverts noted.

Underparts: The throat and upper breast, but not the lower breast or flanks, were neatly spotted with dark brown, neat rounded spots [not tear shaped]. This included a fine line of spotting which created a malar stripe. The spots faded into the clean whitish belly. They were not distinctly black and contrasting as they would be on Hermit Thrush. The throat and upper breast, and crucially the distinct broad and unbroken eye ring, were yellowish brown, contrasting with a paler belly. The yellowish eye ring was very distinct, and formed the most prominent feature on the birds face, especially due to the lack of an eye stripe or obvious supercilium. The lores shared the same yellowish buff tone. The belly was basically whitish, the flanks suffused slightly buff-grey towards the vent. A long primary projection could be seen [i.e beyond exposed tertials] though the specific length of this was not noted.

Underwing: distinctive with a dark band leading up from the axillaries and bisecting the creamy white underwing coverts and underside of secondaries.

Bare parts: The bill was short and quite stout, seeming more pointed than on a Song Thrush [culmen less curved?], and basically dark but the lower mandible seemed paler at the base. Very reminiscent of a Tree Pipit. The legs were long, thin and pale pink in colour.

Call: It was not heard to call.

The bird was observed on the wall for about thirty seconds, at 10m distance, through Leica 8x42 HD Ultravid binoculars with the sun directly behind me. It was also seen by myself twice in flight, and by other observers once in flight as it was flushed from Stackhoull towards North Shirva. It was very flighty, and seemed in pretty good physiological condition. Despite extensive searching it was not seen subsequently that day. Interestingly an American Buff-bellied Pipit was seen in Iceland on the same day as the Fair Isle bird. I have been fortunate to find several rarities over the years and almost uniquely on this occasion I feel that I was able to observe every salient feature clearly to confirm the birds identity beyond doubt, given the excellent viewing conditions, proximity of the bird and duration of the observation.

Buff-bellied Pipit, North Light, 20th–30th September 2009

Jack Ashton-Booth

I headed straight out after breakfast on what can only be described as a cracking sunny morning and walked the east cliffs with nothing of note until I made it to Kristal Kame and flushed a Yellow-browed Warbler off the top of the cliff - the first I had seen so far during 2010. However, after carrying on towards the North Light I decided to scan through the 40 or 50 so Meadow Pipits on the ground surrounding the North Lighthouse complex to see if there were any other Pipits in amongst them as well as to count them. After counting and seeing just Meadow Pipits I headed towards the lighthouse and noticed a pipit sat on the lighthouse wall (at a distance of about 30 metres) that immediately struck me as a good contender for American Buff-bellied Pipit given the relatively unstreaked greyish-brown mantle, pale lores, pale eye ring, a pinkish/buff flush extending from the flanks to a breast and dark legs as it perched up - in superb light.

As soon as I locked on to it flew and headed out to sea before flying back around to land near to the fog horn where it gave a single note call that was somewhat more drawn out and higher pitch *zzzipp* call (somewhat reminiscent of Grey Wagtail) than the Meadow Pipits classic *zip*, *zip*. The call was so distinctive that it helped me relocate the bird when it disappeared. However I wanted to get better views of the bird and stay on it for others to see but I lost it after a Raven flew through the Meadow Pipits and put them all up again, scattering them.

I once again relocated it by the cliffs just the other side of lighthouse and got some more features on it (eg very dark centres to the tertials (reminiscent of an *Alba* Wagtail) and its unusual reptilian almost Buff-breasted Sandpiper-like gait that made it easy to pick out given its jerky and purposeful walk.

Having found it again I followed it and phoned Deryk Shaw to see if he could come and confirm my feelings, having never seen one before.

Buff-bellied Pipit © *D. Bradnum*

Unfortunately it was flushed once more by a juvenile male Merlin but thankfully landed back where it was feeding before. After an agonising ten minutes Deryk arrived and confirmed my thoughts he having seen this species (on Fair Isle) before.

After Deryk had seen the bird I could then relax and look at the bird properly with the 15 or so birders who had now gathered to see the bird. The bird fed in full sunlight on the cliff edge and was joined at times by a a Yellow-browed Warbler and a Bluethroat and showed extremely well allowing me to note the following features:

Description: Marginally larger than Meadow Pipit yet smaller than Rock Pipit (giving a hybrid like size and behaviour between the two).

Upperparts: A very plain greyish mantle (like satin) with very diffuse streaking leading down towards well marked tertials with prominent white outer-web fringes. Subtle, yet distinctive, double white wing bar.

Underparts: Grey lateral throat striping, isolating and accentuating a white throat and white sub-moustachial stripes. Buffish underparts (from breast to vent; richest at breast and base of undertail coverts) appearing almost pinkish at times and decorated with diffuse grey/brown streaking becoming finer towards flanks.

Bare parts: Dark/black legs at distance that on closer views weren't dissimilar to the colour of dried blood, contrasting greatly with the off white tibia feathering that was very eye-catching in strong sunlight. The bill was predominantly dark apart from a dirty yellow base that bordered the birds pale lores; giving the bird an open fronted facial expression (not dissimilar to the facial expression shown by Skylarks).

White-throated Sparrow, Observatory, 19th–20th May 2010

Simon Davies

The new Obs was not completed yet so I was still living at the Chalet. I decided to combine North census with some seabird monitoring work, starting at Hill Dyke and working my way north, so it wasn't until late morning that I got round to the Obs and started walking down the steep slope from the road down to the Obs plantation. As I got to within 35m away from the plantation I noticed a chunky passerine hopping around on the short grass just in front of the plantation fence, I raised my binoculars, just expecting it to be a Dunnock but was amazed to see it was a cracking North American Sparrow!

Initially I was slightly confused as it was pretty subdued in colouration but the combination of a broad, dirty white supercilium extending right to the back of the head bordered in black (thicker above the supercilium than below it) with the supercilium turning dull yellow in front of the eye, an ill-defined pale crown stripe and pale throat bordered with (and bisected by a thin malar stripe) thin black lines told me that it was a White-throated Sparrow, I assumed it was a first year by the subdued colouration (it wasn't until later that I found out that it was a 'tan-striped' individual which is much duller than the classic bold black, white and yellow head patterned birds which I am more familiar with in the literature).

I then phoned various people and sat back to enjoy the bird which was by this stage just hopping around pretty much at my feet just a few metres away, it was quite a large, chunky sparrow with a long tail. The most distinctive feature of the bird was the head pattern which consisted of the obvious white supercilium, yellow fore-supercilium and dirty white throat (as described in more detail above) which was demarcated from the unstreaked grey-washed chest extending down to the belly. It had greyish cheeks which then contrasted with a largely rufous-brown based back and upperwings, its mantle was boldly striped with black down to a paler, largely unstreaked rump which also contrasted well with the quite boldly marked tertials (dark centres with fairly bright rufous edges). Its other main feature were two narrow wing bars.

Other people started to arrive and it showed well to all comers (albeit at a slightly greater range than when it had just been myself), it flew around occasionally which accentuated its bulky long-tailed appearance when it would call frequently with a surprisingly loud, metallic sounding '*tseeet*' flight call-note which was very distinctive and piercing.

It showed well around the Obs for the remainder of the day, being well-photographed by a variety of people. The following day it was also present in the same location but became more elusive, often feeding more on the hillside and down towards the

Havens, even being seen several times around the edge of the new 'wader pools'.

Another bird arrived on Shetland the following day - all part of a national influx around that time. I possibly would have preferred a bright individual but it was still a lovely bird which performed well throughout its stay.

Brown-headed Cowbird, Upper Stoneybrek, 8th–10th May 2009

Deryk Shaw

On the afternoon of Friday 8th May I picked up a voicemail on my mobile phone. It was from Kenny Stout who lives at Upper Stoneybrek. The majority of islanders on Fair Isle do not claim to be knowledgeable birders but are aware if they see something different in their garden and I periodically get calls reporting sightings of "strange birds". Nine times out of ten it actually turns out to be just something common, a colourful spring male or an aberrantly-plumaged individual, but we at the Bird Observatory always check them out - because you never know... On this occasion Kenny described "a bird about the size of a Starling with a black shiny body, a broon heid and a big bill, kinda like a Hawfinch. I think you should come right away as soon as you get this message" It took a few seconds to digest this information and I thought "Hmmm it sounds like a Brown-headed Cowbird" I jumped in the car and headed straight up there. As I arrived at Kenny's house I saw the Obs van parked outside and as I stopped, my mobile rang again. It was my Assistant Warden, Simon Davies "Del, there's a Brown-headed Cowbird at Upper Stoneybrek!" "I know" I replied "I'm right behind you!"

I rushed inside, setting off the dogs, Kenny hollered at them and ushered me into the lounge and pointed out the window to where the bird was. There it was, a cracking male Brown-headed Cowbird, casually strolling around amongst Kenny and Sue's collection of odd-looking ducks on their grassy piece of garden. I put the news out on the Shetland Birders Grapevine and phoned several islanders who I knew would want to see it, informing all that it was a second record for Britain. My other AW Jack Ashton-Booth then arrived and informed me that a possible Brown-headed Cowbird had been seen briefly in Norfolk the previous day! As more locals arrived to admire it my mobile kept ringing as birders from Shetland and from south wished to congratulate me and learn more! An hour or so later it flew south and everyone ventured back to their respective homes. Some of us set out on foot in search of the bird. Twenty minutes later, my wife Hollie phoned to tell me that she had just added Brown-headed Cowbird to our garden list! During the rebuild of the Obs, we and our children have been rehoused at Burkle (the red & blue house in the south-east corner

Brown-headed Cowbird © *D. Shaw*

of the isle) and I have started a Burkle garden list. It favoured the Burkle garden during its three day stay but occasionally visited Auld Haa and Schoolton.

Seven plane-loads of birders came in to Fair Isle to see it on the Saturday and all were successful. There would have been eight plane-fulls but one plane (from Benbecula) came in, swooped over the airstrip and left again without touching down. Apparently the pilot thought the airstrip too short for his plane!? I wouldn't like to have been one of the birders (or the pilot) on that journey home! The wind switched from a south-westerly to north-westerly and picked up overnight and by Sunday conditions at the Fair Isle airstrip were too poor for the small charters to land. Monday dawned bright, calm and sunny and the bird was nowhere to be seen - unfortunate for the poor birders who had travelled to Shetland and chartered a boat to bring them over.

Description: A Starling-type bird in its gait and habits but slightly smaller and slimmer, with a more thrush-like shape. Its head was a milk chocolate brown colour with a very slightly darker colour on the cheeks, around the eyes and on the lores. The rest of the bird was entirely black with (apart from flight feathers) a glossy green sheen. One tail feather was in pin, about 1/3 grown. Bill was large, conical, similar to a Hawfinch but not quite as strong, slightly longer, more pointed and dark grey. Legs and feet were starling-like, black with strong claws.

Many thanks to Kenny Stout and Sue Hutchison for being so vigilant and to the 40 or so birders who came to see it, who all behaved well and contributed to the Obs tick tin. It also allowed some regulars to say a fond farewell to the old Obs.

The above article first appeared in the journal Birding World*, along with some excellent photographs of the bird and an editorial.*

Brown-headed Cowbird is a very common species over much of North America where, being a brood parasite, it has been blamed for the declines in the populations of many of its host species eg Kirtland's Warbler. Northern populations are migratory, wintering in Mexico and southern North America. This individual was the second record for Scotland. The first for Scotland & Britain was seen briefly by just one person on Islay, Argyll on 24th April 1988. Photographs of the first for England emerged later, a bird that was present in a private garden in Belford, Northumberland from 25th April–2nd May 2009. Later that summer, the fourth for Britain was photographed in another garden, in Angle, Pembrokeshire on 14th–15th July and there has been a fifth since then, photographed in Seaburn, County Durham 10th May 2010.

Blackpoll Warbler, Vaadel, 15th–17th October 2009

Simon Davies

It was a fine day, following a long period of extremely windy weather but [unfortunately] the morning was taken up with the gathering of the hill sheep across the north of the island so not much birding was done. After lunch I set out to do the north census route (after twitching a Siberian Stonechat in Hjukni Geo) but despite the promising conditions the highlight was just a Barred Warbler which I had caught in the Plantation on the way out.

I was heading back south and pushed all the traps on the way, I caught a Blackbird and a Blackcap in the Gully, pushed the empty Plantation then walked up the stream to the Vaadel trap and as I was approaching the entrance to the trap I flushed a greeny-yellow warbler which flew lazily ahead of me into the trap.

I was slightly puzzled initially as the bird, which I assumed to be a Chiffchaff appeared too bulky and just looked a bit odd, I didn't raise my binoculars, instead concentrating on catching the bird. My mild puzzlement turned to bafflement as it called with a '*chip*/*tick*' call - retrospectively not dissimilar to a Little/Rustic Bunting call. At this stage I had no idea what the bird was and as I saw it silhouetted against the light in the Vaadel catching area when it briefly clung to the wire before going into the catching box I noted quite a chunky, stubby bill - unlike the *Phylloscopus* warbler I was still expecting it to turn into.

Blackpoll Warbler © *D. Shaw*

With mounting anticipation I went round to the catching box and simply couldn't believe my eyes as I saw an extremely bright looking warbler with two very obvious white wing-bars in the box which I immediately realised was an American warbler, probably a *Dendroica* sp. and probably a Blackpoll Warbler.

After a few phone calls where I tried my best to appear calm, I made my way to the Chalet with the birds, Deryk Shaw soon arrived and between us we set about taking a description and eliminating the two main confusion species - Bay-breasted and Pine Warblers.

Description: It was a medium sized warbler, overall larger and bulkier than a Chiffchaff, closer in size to Garden Warbler but somewhat retaining a *Phylloscopus*-like appearance despite its wing length of 77mm. The most obvious feature that the eye was drawn to was the two obvious whitish wing-bars which, while not as broad or bright as Bay-breasted Warbler would show were distinctive and these, combined with the obvious whitish edges to the tertials and white tips to the primaries (accentuated by the extremely fresh feathers) gave it a unique appearance.
Its mantle was grey-green with dark centres to the feathers creating a faintly streaked appearance (in parallel lines) although this feature was more obvious during subsequent views in the field. It had a dark tail with obvious white spots on the two outer tail feathers - less extensive than Pine Warbler would show.

Its head was also grey-green with a darker grey eye-stripe passing through the obvious pale yellow eye-ring creating two halves. The birds throat was pale, unmarked yellow which contrasted with faint but distinctive greyish streaks most prominent on the sides of the breast but also faintly on the chest thus making the yellow colouration appeared sullied - the obviously demarked paler yellow throat was again much more obvious in the subsequent field views. The yellow colour faded to grey on the belly then became bright white on the under tail coverts - which again is different to the unstreaked, brighter yellow that Bay-breasted Warbler would show.

After showing the bird to the assembled hoard we decided to release the bird into the Plantation - the nearest thing to a wood on the isle! Upon release the bird appeared to be exhausted (also backed up by the fact that in the hand the bird was extremely thin) and just remained in the 'trees' until dusk showing very well allowing us to note the differences which were obvious in the field compared to in the hand (described above) but on checking the area first thing the next morning there was no sign.

However, late morning on the 16th it was re-found in the south of the island around The Haa and Skerryholm where it continued to appear to be quite tired, showing no fear of people, actually landing on someone's foot at one stage! It then went missing again but was later discovered feeding actively on flies on the seaweed in South Harbour. It was still present there the following day and seemed to be gaining strength rapidly and presumably it moved on sometime in the afternoon of the 17th as they are diurnal migrants.

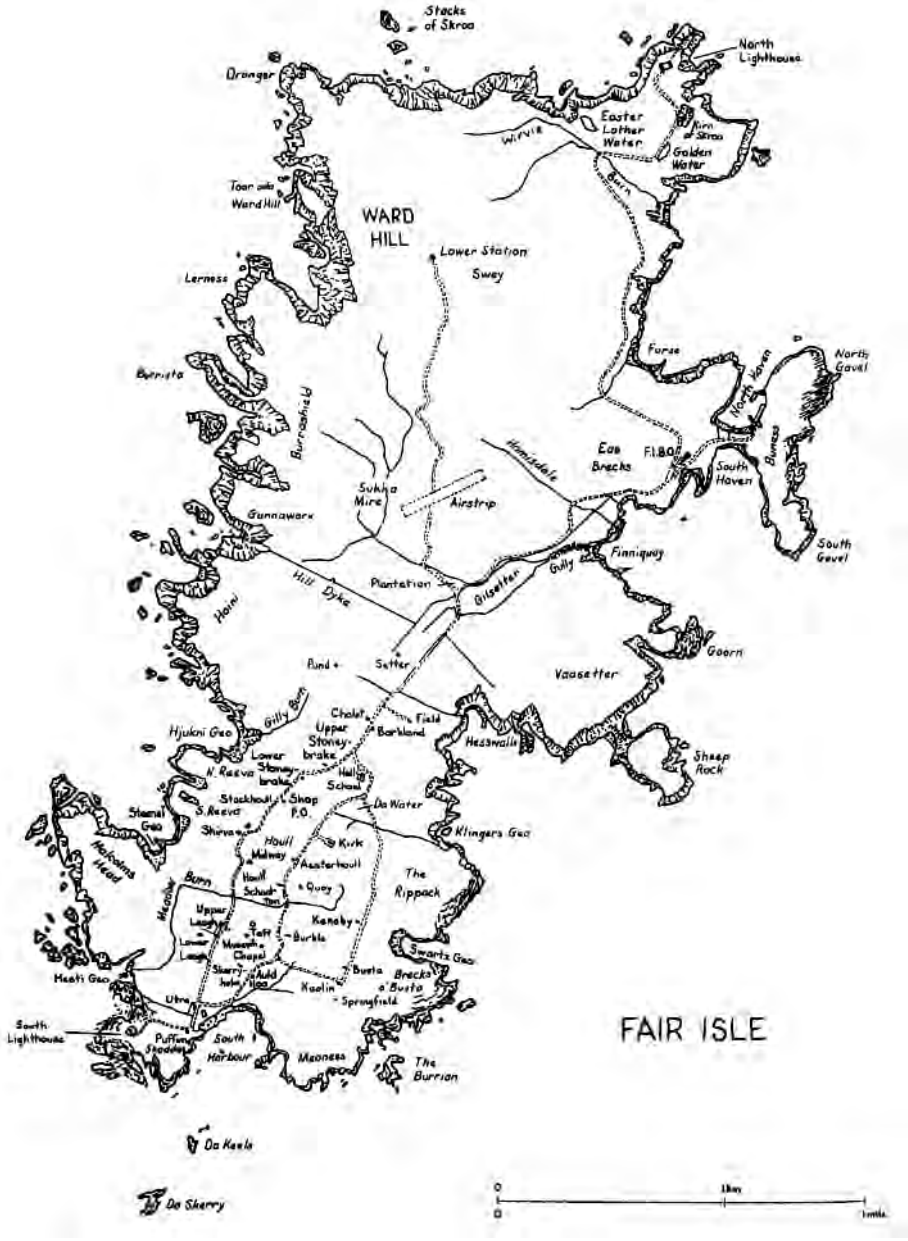
This was Fair Isle's second record, following one on 30th September 1991. There have been two other Shetland records accepted by BBRC, of over 40 British records of this the commonest New World Warbler to visit Britain.

First and Last migrant dates

Simon Davies & Deryk Shaw

Species	Earliest	2009	2010	Latest	2009	2010
Quail	30.04.61	19.05	08.06	13.10.89	-	23.07
Osprey	25.04.66	19.05	30.05	04.11.35	-	-
Corncrake	10.04.66	20.06	-	03.11.77	-	02.10
Dotterel	25.04.73	12.05	30.04	06.11.76	13.09	10.10
Whimbrel	15.04.72	16.04	12.04*	12.12. Pre FIBO	03.09	13.09
Green Sandpiper	08.04.79	14.04	28.04	12.11.70	04.09	08.09
Common Sandpiper	05.04.83	27.04	28.04	02.11. Pre FIBO	24.08	23.09
Arctic Skua	04.04.88	11.04	12.04	25.10.	12.09	12.10
Great Skua	17.03. Pre 80	17.03*	25.03	16.11.	07.11	28.10
LBB Gull	06.03.85	23.03	25.03	12.12.57	28.09	09.10
Sandwich Tern	23.04.07	08.05	-	18.09.77	-	-
Common Tern	25.04.83	19.05	28.04	18.10.75	23.09	11.09
Arctic Tern	No data	28.04	06.05	30.10.	06.10	09.09
Turtle Dove	23.04.71	29.05	23.06	01.11.82	-	21.09
Cuckoo	17.04.87	16.05	20.05	08.10.77	-	-
Swift	29.04.01	16.05	21.05	26.10.75	08.09	07.10
Wryneck	18.04.81	02.05	-	17.10.74	05.09	09.09
Sand Martin	02.04.89	25.04	10.04	19.10.78	28.09	07.10
Swallow	31.03.02	01.04	1.04	02.11.84	27.09	13.10
House Martin	13.04.09	13/04*	25.04	14.11.	-	09.10
Tree Pipit	14.04. Pre 63	25.04	15.04	02.11. Pre 63	19.09	16.10
Red-throated Pipit	08.05.36	18.05	24.05	01.11. Pre FIBO	-	27.09
Yellow Wagtail	25.03.54	28.04	19.05	20.11.57	23.09	26.09
Pied Wagtail	20.02.03	21.03	21.03	17.11.	23.10	20.10
Bluethroat	22.03. Pre 63	14.05	13.05	13.11.83	16.10	23.10
Black Redstart	01.03.	14.03	24.03	22.12.86	11.11	09.11
Redstart	09.04. Pre 63	11.04	25.04	11.11.81	15.09	23.10
Whinchat	14.04.81	28.04	29.04	26.11.90	17.10	22.10
Northern Wheatear	13.03. Pre 59	26.04	25.03	19.11.59	28.10	27.10
Ring Ouzel	16.03.88	08.04	02.04	19.12. Pre FIBO	06.11	24.10
Grasshopper Warbler	07.04.02	11.04	08.04	23.10.00	12.10	19.10
Sedge Warbler	19.04.87	03.05	07.05	11.11.75	06.09	30.09
Reed Warbler	28.04.01	17.05	16.05	31.10.80	21.10	10.10
Marsh Warbler	22.05.84	31.05	29.05	06.10. Pre 63	01.09	20.09
Icterine Warbler	12.05.07	14.05	27.05	13.10.76	15.09	01.09
Subalpine Warbler	20.04.00	21.05	-	29.10.07	-	26.09
Lesser Whitethroat	20.04.	20.04*	25.04	08.11	02.11	02.11
Whitethroat	11.04. Pre 59	15.04	09.05	21.10.78	26.09	12.10
Garden Warbler	21.04.68	14.05	19.05	20.11.76	11.10	27.10
Blackcap	07.04.	09.04	12.04	20.12	23.11	29.10
Wood Warbler	14.04.81	14.05	-	06.10.73	13.08	14.09
Willow Warbler	03.04.81	09.04	25.03*	23.11.27	11.10	17.10
Chiffchaff	12.03.	30.03	24.03	No data	11.12	27.10
Goldcrest	27.02.	14.03	24.03	19.12.03	06.11	23.10
Spotted Flycatcher	20.04.49	14.05	18.05	26.10.85	05.09	09.10
Pied Flycatcher	21.04.83	12.05	07.05	29.10.85	16.10	17.10
Red-backed Shrike	04.05.84	23.05	29.05	08.11.93	23.10	-
Common Rosefinch	08.05.77	23.05	30.05	30.11.91	06.10	02.10
Ortolan Bunting	26.04.64	-	-	01.11.00	-	20.09
Rustic Bunting	25.04.80	26.05	20.05	08.11.75	16.10	-
Little Bunting	04.04.58	-	09.05	19.11.75	16.10	17.10

Map of Fair Isle



Systematic List 2009 & 2010

Alan Bull and Deryk Shaw

Notes:

Nomenclature - the species order complies with the official British List as published by the British Ornithologists Union (BOU), which follows the revised taxonomic recommendations as published in *Ibis* in January 2010. Most species names follow the International English name as recommended by Gill & Donsker (2010). 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
AOT	Apparently Occupied Territory
BBRC	British Birds Rarities Committee
BOURC	British Ornithologists' Union Records Committee
SBCRC	Shetland Bird Club Records Committee
SBRC	Scottish Birds Records Committee
BTO	British Trust for Ornithology
JNCC	Joint Nature Conservation Committee

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

+ Mute Swan *Cygnus olor*

Vagrant; eight previous records

2010: A first-summer was in North Haven on 17th July.

This is our second mid-summer arrival; half of the previous records are from winter, plus two in autumn and a single in spring.

+ Whooper Swan *Cygnus cygnus*

Frequent autumn migrant, scarce in spring

2009: A party of seven on 26th March were the first, followed by six from 30th–31st March. In autumn, two on 24th September were followed with 14 the next day and five on 28th. These were then followed by five on 1st October, four on 4th, two on 16th October and finally four on 18th November.

2010: Two on 18th September were the first of the year and were not followed until 13 (two family parties: one of seven, one of six) on 13th October. Thereafter, four on 15th and three on 16th October were followed by seven on 20th and ten, the last of the year, on 21st October.

+ Bean Goose *Anser fabalis*

Rare autumn & winter migrant

2009: One of the Tundra race *(A.f. rossicus*) was present on Meoness on 5th February.

2010: A single bird of the Tundra race *(A.f. rossicus*) was present from 1st February to 22nd March.

Pink-footed Goose *Anser brachyrhynchus*

Frequent autumn migrant, scarce in spring

2009: In winter, 1–3 were seen in January/February and seven were recorded on 8th April, followed by a long-staying single from 13th–29th April. In autumn, ten on 13th September were the first, but the main influx was not until 21st September when 140 were recorded. Thereafter, numbers fluctuated between 4 and 332 until the month's end, with a record peak of 1655 birds on 27th. Small numbers (1–5) were seen on most dates in October and five dates in November.

The record 1655 on 27th September smashes the previous highest count of 600 on 28th–29th September 2002. The rapidly increasing Icelandic population (currently around 350,000) ensures that larger counts in years to come are inevitable.

2010: A single on 26th February was the first, followed by singles on six dates in March. Small numbers in early April (<5) preceded a huge influx on 20th April when gale force north-westerly winds grounded 1250 birds. The following day, 474 birds remained, rising to 593 birds on 22nd. Counts hereafter fluctuated between 37 and 71 until 29th April and numbers tailed off through May to a single bird by 1st June. Autumn passage was light, with 12 on 13th September the first and counts of 1–57 on six dates until 27th September. 166 birds on 7th October was the autumn peak and moderate, almost daily passage followed until the 31st October with numbers fluctuating between 7–80 birds. Singles were seen on three dates in November, the last on 25th.

+ Greater White-fronted Goose *Anser albifrons*

Scarce autumn migrant, occasional in spring and winter

2009: A single bird of the Greenland race *(A.a.flavirostris)* was present from 31st March–6th May. Three birds of the Eurasian race (*A.a.albifrons*) were present from 4th –7th November, with two remaining until 19th November.

2010: Two of the Greenland race *(A.a.flavirostris)* were seen on 26th September, with a single bird, un-assigned to race on 12th October.

Greylag Goose *Anser anser*

Common spring and autumn migrant

2009: A large number over-wintered and three-figure counts were the norm from January–March (peaking at 220 on 12th February and 10th March), slowly petering out to single-figure counts by late April through early May. June records comprised 1–4 on five dates and 28 on 15th June probably relating to local Shetland/Orkney breeders. Local birds were then encountered again in August when counts of 1–4 were made on six dates through to mid-September. Birds from further north started to arrive in late September, quickly reaching three figures on 27th. Numbers fluctuated widely through October, the maximum count of 2128 on 8th being a record count. Moderate, mainly double figure, numbers were recorded through November before further arrivals in December saw numbers reach a max of 220.

2010: As in 2009, a large number over-wintered on the isle, with a max winter count of 281 birds on 17th January. Wintering birds lingered, making spring passage difficult to detect, but birds were noted daily from 21st March–30th April, with counts ranging from 1–175 suggesting a turnover of birds. 34 birds on 1st May increased to 45 by 4th with counts of 1–4 birds until 15th May. In June, nine on 21st and ten on 25th were probably dispersing local breeders. Singles, presumed local breeders, were seen on three dates in August and 1–2 birds in early September preceded the first real influx of 19 on 17th September, 38 the next day but then just 1–3 birds until 20 on 8th October. Hereafter, passage was strong, with three-figure counts the norm until the months end with a peak count of 1000 birds on 13th October. Birds were still present through November and December, with 211 on 4th November and 250 on 23rd December the monthly maxims.

+ Canada x Greylag Goose

2010: A strange-looking goose on 24th April was thought to be a hybrid between these two species.

+ Greater Canada Goose *Branta canadensis*

Rare spring migrant, mainly May & June. Has summered. Vagrant in winter

2009: One was seen on 16th June.

2010: One was seen on 4th April, with presumably the same bird on 14th & 24th of the month.

Barnacle Goose *Branta leucopsis*

Frequent autumn migrant, occasional in spring

2009: In the first half of the year, singles were seen on 9th February and 4th March, with a flock of 55 passing over on 17th May. In autumn, nine on 30th September were followed by 1–2 on 12 dates from October–December, probably involving seven birds.
2010: A single bird from 2009 over-wintered and was present up to 9th March. The first spring migrants were 18 birds on 10th April followed by 39 on 20th April. Moderate numbers (16–32) were then recorded on most dates until the months end before 18 birds lingered from 2nd–4th May. Fifteen on 24th May were the last. In autumn, 68 on 27th September were the first, with 35 on 28th and 14 on 29th. October records comprised 1–10 on most dates from 3rd–24th, but for 37 on 12th.

+ Brent Goose *Branta bernicla*

Rare autumn migrant, occasional in spring and winter

2009: An over-wintering bird from 2008, of the dark-bellied race *(B.b.bernicla)* was present from 1st January–22nd April. In November, a single of the pale-bellied race *(B.b.hrota)* was present from 15th–17th and two dark-bellied birds were seen on 4th December.
2010: Six birds of the pale-bellied race *(B.b.hrota)* arrived on 27th January and were present right up to 5th March. A single pale-bellied bird was present from 11th–17th April, with two more birds of this race at the Haa from 17th–28th May.

Common Shelduck *Tadorna tadorna*

Scarce spring migrant, rare in autumn

2009: In spring, singles were seen on 4th, 13th and 26th April and on five dates up to 19th May, with two on 5th May. One on 23rd–24th October was the only autumn record.
2010: A single on 31st March was the first, followed by a pair at Easter Lother Water from 11th–13th April. Further ♂ were seen on 1st and 16th–21st May. Finally, two were seen on 28th July, with a single off Buness on 1st August.

+ Mandarin Duck *Aix galericulata*

Vagrant; no previous records

2010: A ♀ was in the Gully from 29th September to 3rd October.
This is the first record for the isle.

Eurasian Wigeon *Anas penelope*

Frequent spring and autumn migrant, scarce in winter

2009: In winter, a small flock of up to 13 birds were seen sporadically in January up to early March. Spring migrants were recorded on nineteen dates through April to mid-June, peaking at four birds on 14th June. A ♂ on 15th July may have been an early autumn bird, but was not followed until two on 16th August. More regular passage followed, with predominantly single-figure counts made on most dates until 19th November and double-figure counts made on 11 dates, with a max of 20 on 4th November. Singles were recorded on 4th and 11th December.

2010: Records in January–early March were few and involved counts of <6 birds on three dates. Spring passage was light, evident from 21st March, with 1–4 birds recorded on twenty dates before a peak of six birds on 27th May. A ♂ on 20th & 24th June, with two birds on 18th July were not followed until a ♂ on 14th August signalled the start of autumn passage proper. Small numbers (<9) were the norm before daily passage commenced with 13 birds on 7th September. Through September, counts fluctuated between 4–25 birds until the months end, with a larger influx of 110 birds on 25th. Passage in the first weeks of October (up to 26th) was moderate, with counts rarely <10 and a peak of 28 on 10th. Hereafter, counts of 1–6 birds were made on six dates until the last on 2nd December.
The count on 25th September is a record, beating 90 on 20th September 1975

+ Gadwall *Anas strepera*

Vagrant; 19 spring, 19 autumn, two winter records; (61 individuals in total)

2009: A pair was found on 23rd April and a ♀ was seen on 26th December.
The December sighting is the isle's first for that month.

Eurasian Teal *Anas crecca*

Frequent spring and autumn migrant, scarce in winter

2009: Five birds over-wintered. Spring passage began on 1st March with six birds and from then on single-figure counts were made on most dates until 31st May, with ten birds on two dates and 11 on 23rd April the max. A ♂ on 7th July and a ♀ on 30th July were probably the first autumn migrants and counts of 1–34 were made on most dates thereafter until 19th November. A small number were present in December, peaking at nine birds on 11th.
2010: A small number (<9) were seen on five dates in January, before two birds were recorded on 9th February, 3rd & 9th March. Spring passage was light, but almost daily from 21st March–2nd June, with single-figure counts the norm and peaks of 11 (29th April) and 14 (2nd May). Summer records comprised singles on 11th & 23rd June and 8th–9th July, with five birds on 11th & 18th July. Autumn passage commenced with two birds on 11th August and counts fluctuated hereafter between 1–48 birds until 30th September before dwindling to 1–16 birds up to 26th October. In November, three on 12th and two on 25th were the last of the year.

+ Green-winged Teal *Anas carolinensis*

Vagrant; no previous records

2009: A ♂ on Da Water from 25th–27th April was a long-awaited first record for the isle.
Accepted by SBRC

Mallard *Anas platyrhynchos*

Frequent spring and autumn migrant

2009: A small number (<15) over-wintered with the semi-feral birds on the island and a light passage was noted throughout April and on two dates in May. Autumn passage was equally as light, with 12 birds the max on 20th and 24th October.

2010: Formal counts through the year of presumed migrants were few, with 12 on 21st March and five on 26th March the only spring counts. Three on 29th September and 1–3 from 18th–22nd October were the only autumn records.

+ Northern Pintail *Anas acuta*

Scarce spring and autumn migrant

2009: In autumn, five on 3rd September were the first, followed by singles on 22nd September, 29th–30th September and 3rd October - a good showing.

The five birds on 3rd September represent the highest autumn count since seven birds in October 1981.

2010: A ♂ from 29th–31st May and another on 2nd June were the only spring records. One on 18th July is a rare sighting for this time of year. In autumn, a ♂ from 28th–29th September and a single on 18th October were the only records.

+ Garganey *Anas querquedula*

Vagrant; 11 previous records (18 individuals). March to May, one September record

2010: A ♂ was on the Scrape from 14th–16th April.

+ Northern Shoveler *Anas clypeata*

Scarce and irregular spring and autumn migrant

2009: Two birds were present on 13th April whilst in autumn, a single was seen on 5th August.

2010: A ♂ on 3rd May was the sole spring record, with a ♀ on 10th July and a single on 28th July being more unusual summer sightings. A ♀ from 30th August–4th September was the only autumn sighting.

Tufted Duck *Aythya fuligula*

Scarce spring migrant, rare in autumn

2009: In spring, singles were seen on 19th April and 2nd, 14th & 20th May. Mid-summer records comprised singles on 29th June and 26th July. One on 25th September was the first of the autumn, followed by two from 28th–30th September and two on 24th October.

2010: In spring, a ♀ from 3rd–5th March was the first of the year, with another ♀ on 13th March. Singles were then recorded on 6th, 12th & 15th April, before three on 21st May and two on 24th May. A ♂ from 6th–10th June was the only summer sighting. In autumn, two on 11th September were the first, with singles on a further six dates until 22nd September and 1–2 on seven dates from 8th–23rd October, but for four on 15th.

+ Greater Scaup *Aythya marila*

Scarce spring and autumn migrant

2010: A ♀ in Furse from 11th–17th October was the only record.

Common Eider *Somateria mollissima*

Resident, breeds in small numbers

2009 & 2010: Present throughout both years, with no formal counts made.

+ King Eider *Somateria spectabilis*

Vagrant; Approx 16 previous records (12 individuals)

2010: A first-summer ♂ was in Finniquoy from 15th–16th October, before moving to the Buness area from 18th–20th October.

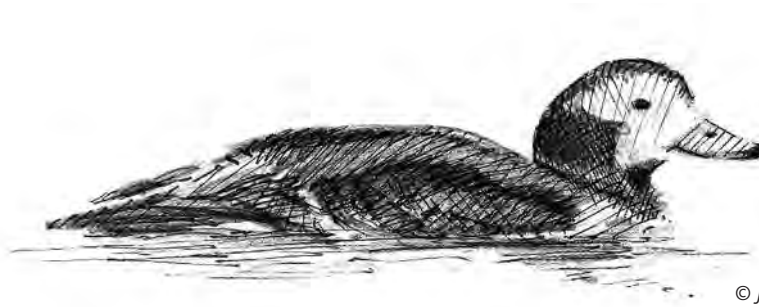
Accepted by BBRC

Long-tailed Duck *Clangula hyemalis*

Frequent autumn migrant, less common in spring

2009: Single ♀ were seen on 4th February and 4th March, with a ♂ from 1st–11th April. Small numbers (1–3) were recorded in autumn, from 17th October–4th November.

2010: A ♂ on 27th September was the first, followed by three on 29th September. Passage in October was, typically, more evident with single-figure counts made on 19 dates and peaks of 14 (15th) and 15 (26th). A ♀ on 23rd November was the last.



Long-tailed Duck
© Jack Ashton-Booth

Common Scoter *Melanitta nigra*

Scarce spring, autumn and winter migrant

+ 2009: A ♀ in the Havens on 20th and 24th January was seen intermittently in the Furse/Havens area until 26th May. A ♂ was present there from 4th–8th June. Finally, a ♀ was in South Harbour on 4th August.

2010: An immature ♂ from 3rd–8th March was the first, with singles on 21st, 27th and 31st March with three on 26th. In April, 1–2 were recorded sporadically from 4th–14th, before a long-staying ♀ from 18th April–13th May. Further ♂ were seen on 16th–18th May, 20th–21st June and 8th September. Ten past South Light on 16th October were the last.

+ Velvet Scoter *Melanitta fusca*

Scarce autumn migrant, rare at other times of year

2010: Two on 15th October was the only record.

Common Goldeneye *Bucephala clangula*

Regular winter, spring and autumn migrant

+ 2009: A poor year. Single ♀ were in the Furse area on 18th January, 4th February and 4th March and may possible have related to the same bird. In autumn, one from 14th–22nd October was the only record.

2010: A single from 17th–18th January was the only sighting before three on 13th October. 1–4 were then recorded on most days from 16th October–1st November, with a peak of eight on 24th October. In November, a ♂ on 23rd and a ♀ on 25th were the only records.

Red-breasted Merganser *Mergus serrator*

Frequent spring and autumn migrant

2009: In spring, single ♂ were seen from 25th–30th March and on three dates in April. A pair on 1st May was then followed by singles on six dates until 25th May, with a final ♂ from 21st–26th June. In autumn, a ♂ on 10th September was the first, before a small period of passage between 25th–30th September saw numbers peak at eight birds on 28th. Sightings of 1–2 birds were made on several dates in October and November, but for four on 8th October.

2010: Two birds on 1st and 6th January were the first before spring migrants in South Harbour on 26th March (2). Singles were seen on seven dates from 17th April–21st June, with two on 26th April and three on 21st May. In autumn, six on 16th & 17th September preceded counts of 1–2 on seven dates up to the months end. October passage was heavier, with almost daily sightings of 1–9 birds. A single on 4th November was the last.

+ Common Quail *Coturnix coturnix*

Scarce spring, summer and autumn migrant; has bred

2009: One on 19th May was the first, with further singles on 20th, 24th and 27th May. A further single was seen on 26th June.

2010: In June, singing ♂ were recorded on 7th, 23rd and 25th, with two singing birds on 10th & 12th and sightings of non-singing singles on 8th & 28th. The last was a single on 23rd July. Despite the number of singing birds, breeding was not confirmed.

Red-throated Loon (Diver) *Gavia stellata*

Regular migrant, mainly late spring and autumn

+ 2009: Three on 19th April were the only spring sightings. Mid-summer sightings were made of single birds on 4th and 6th July. Autumn passage was no better, with three off South Light on 22nd September, one there the following day and another single on 4th October.

An unidentified Diver off South Light on 23rd September was probably this species.

2010: Singles on 19th & 27th May were the first, with two on 13th & 25th June. There were singles on four other dates in June, three dates in July and three dates in August. In autumn, September records included three on 11th, one on 18th and four on 23rd. Singles were then recorded on three dates in October before the last on 4th November.

Great Northern Loon (Diver) *Gavia immer*

Scarce autumn migrant, occasional in spring

+ 2009: In spring, a single was seen on 22nd and 23rd May. Singles in July were seen on 5th & 13th, with two on 9th. Autumn passage was light, with singles recorded on 24th & 29th September and 1st October.

2010: A good year following the first in South Harbour on 23rd April. Further singles were seen on four dates in May, five dates in June and three dates in July, probably relating to six individuals. Two on 29th August and a single on 23rd September preceded October sightings on 10th–16th, 17th (3), 26th & 28th (2). A summer-plumaged bird on North Haven on 4th November was then followed by singles on 27th & 29th November and 2nd & 7th December.

Northern Fulmar *Fulmarus glacialis*

Resident; breeds in large numbers

2009: Breeding numbers on the monitoring plots continue to recover from the 2004 crash, rising 26.3% since 2008. Breeding success was also good with a mean productivity figure across five monitored plots of 0.51 being the highest since 1993.

'Blue' Fulmars were seen on 6th May, 15th September (2), 29th September and 6th October (3).

2010: There was a further increase in the recovery, numbers on the plots up 5.5% on the previous year. Breeding was similarly successful, a productivity of 0.52 being just slightly above last year's good figure.

'Blue' Fulmars were seen on 13th April, 29th August, 21st September, on six dates in October including six birds on 21st October.

Sooty Shearwater *Puffinus griseus*

Regular autumn migrant

2009: A single on 16th August was the first and further singles were seen on six dates from 4th–26th September.

+ 2010: One from the *Good Shepherd IV* on 30th August was the first, with singles from land on 26th & 29th September and 7th October. Another *Good Shepherd IV* single was seen on 12th October

+ Manx Shearwater *Puffinus puffinus*

Scarce autumn migrant, rare in spring

2009: In spring, two were seen from the *Good Shepherd IV* on 28th April. A single on 9th July was the first land-based sighting, followed by six on 16th August. Two on 1st September, three on 8th and a single on 22nd September were the last.

European Storm Petrel *Hydrobates pelagicus*

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

2009: A very poor year, with the first trapped during regular tape-luring ringing sessions near the Observatory on the night of 21st July. A small number were then trapped on a further four dates in July and August, max 14 on 8th August. Eight

birds were reported on 8th September.
2010: Another fairly quiet year. Five birds attracted to a tape-lure and trapped on 23rd July were the first, followed by 12 on 25th and 17 on 29th. Regular sessions during August saw catches ranging from 3–41 with five on 1st September being the last attempt. Very few were reported from the *Good Shepherd* crossing this year.

+ Leach's Storm Petrel *Oceanodroma leucorhoa*

Scarce migrant, summer and early autumn

2009: Singles were seen around the mist-net during Storm Petrel ringing sessions on 26th July and 8th August.
2010: One was seen around the mist-net, but not caught on the night of the 24th July.

Northern Gannet *Morus bassanus*

Breeds in large numbers, seen offshore all year

2009: The first were noted back on breeding ledges in early February with 30 on Yellow Head and 10 on Inner Stack. By 1st March, there were 400 on Kirk Stack. The ever-growing breeding population witnessed an incredible 43.9% increase to 3582 AON (including 95 on Sheep Rock) and fledging success (0.69 chicks per AON) also compares well to the previous ten-year mean (0.68).
2010: The population continued to rise, but by a more modest 10.7%, to 3968 AON and an increased number of chicks fledging gave an excellent productivity of 0.77

Great Cormorant *Phalacrocorax carbo*

Frequent autumn migrant, less common in winter and spring

2009: Spring singles were recorded on 20th and 26th April. Further singles were seen on one date in June, two dates in July and one date in August, with two on 1st–3rd August. Main autumn passage was from 3rd September, when 1–5 were recorded on most dates until 7th October, with peaks of 15 on 15th September and 11 on 3rd October.
2010: Two on 9th March were the first and were not followed until a single on 22nd June and two on 26th July. Autumn passage was more pronounced, with August records including nine on 1st, two on 2nd and singles on 6th & 8th, with three on 10th. September produced records of 1–9 birds on twelve dates, with 12 on 3rd and a peak of 17 on 4th. October sightings were of 1–4 birds on most dates until 26th and a peak of five on 12th.

European Shag *Phalacrocorax aristotelis*

Resident, breeds in moderate numbers

2009: Following the population crash in 2008, numbers on the monitoring plots fell by a further 30.9% to a desperately low level. Breeding success was equally poor with just five chicks fledging from 38 nests on the plots.
2010: Numbers on the plots increased by 145% but are still critically low and whilst a productivity of 0.86 may seem high, just 22 nests were built.

Grey Heron *Ardea cinerea*

Frequent autumn migrant, less common in winter/spring

2009: Recorded in every month. A single bird was present from January–March and single birds, presumably migrants, were recorded on four dates in April, 13 dates in May and three dates in June, with a spring peak of three birds on 19th April. July saw records of 1–5 birds on four dates before more regular passage of 1–6 birds from 2nd August – 10th November, with peaks of 14 on 18th August and 15 on 19th September. Three on 4th December were the last.

2010: Winter and spring sightings were few, with singles on just five dates from January–May and a peak of two birds on 10th April. July produced records (of 1–3 birds) on five dates before almost daily sightings through August and September saw numbers fluctuate between 1–15 birds and monthly peaks of 18 (30th August) and 16 (9th September). Hereafter, sightings of 1–5 birds were almost daily through October, with singles recorded on three dates in November, the last on 12th.

+ Great Crested Grebe *Podiceps cristatus*

Vagrant; 12 previous records

2010: One was in Furse on 17th February - the first record since 2005.

+ Red-necked Grebe *Podiceps grisegena*

Vagrant; 21 previous records (23 individuals)

2009: One frequented South Harbour on 5th December - the first since 1996.

This was the first December record of Red-necked Grebe and this species has now occurred in every month of the year except January, March & July.

Horned (Slavonian) Grebe *Podiceps auritus*

Scarce autumn migrant, occasional in spring

+ 2009: One was in Hesti Geo on 29th September, with the same or another there on 1st October (with a further bird in the Havens). Further singles were noted on 7th & 17th October.

2010: In autumn, an early single in South Harbour on 1st September was followed by another on 18th September before almost daily sightings of 1–5 birds from 10th–28th October and the last single in North Haven on 4th November.

+ European Honey Buzzard *Pernis apivorus*

Rare spring & autumn migrant; 50 previous records (52 individuals)

2009: A single passed over on 21st May.

2010: In spring, a pale-morph flew over the island on 6th June and in autumn, a dark morph juvenile was seen on 6th October.

+ Red Kite *Milvus milvus*

Vagrant; seven previous records, four in spring

2010: One toured the island from 11th–12th October - the first since October 2005.

+ White-tailed Eagle *Haliaeetus albicilla*

Vagrant; twelve previous records

2009: An immature departed North Ronaldsay, 26 miles to the south-west, on the morning of 12th April (Easter Sunday). Forty minutes later it was spotted circling over Sheep Rock (causing an interruption in an Easter egg hunt at the Observatory). Following a 20 minute rest on top of Ward Hill it departed northwards once more and was seen coming in off the sea at Sumburgh 35 minutes later. It was a wing-tagged individual and was traced back to the 2007 introductions into eastern Scotland and had spent the previous two months on the Isle of Mull.

2010: A first-summer bird frequented the Airstrip area from 21st–23rd April. Like the bird from the year before, this one had also been released in Fife but in 2009. Prior to its arrival on Fair Isle it had last been sighted in Perthshire on 16th March 2010.

+ Western Marsh Harrier *Circus aeruginosus*

Rare spring migrant, vagrant in autumn; 38 previous records (31 in spring, 7 in autumn)

2009: A 'cream-crown' bird from 14th–15th April was soon followed by a ♀ from 24th–28th April. In autumn, a single on 13th September is only our eighth autumn record.

+ Northern (Hen) Harrier *Circus cyaneus*

Scarce spring and autumn migrant

2009: A second-summer ♂ was seen from 3rd–4th March, and a ♀ on 18th December.

2010: A ♀ on 2nd April was the only spring record. In autumn, two ring-tails on 26th September remained on the isle until 29th September, with one still the following day. Singles, possibly the same bird, were then seen on five dates in early October before two birds on 9th. In December, a ring-tail on 2nd and an immature ♂ on 10th & 23rd were unusual winter records.

Eurasian Sparrowhawk *Accipiter nisus*

Regular spring and autumn migrant

2009: An adult ♀ from 12th–13th March was the first and was not followed until a ♀ from 13th–18th April. Two on 27th April preceded sightings of 1–2 birds on eight dates until 2nd June. Autumn passage began with three birds on 10th October, with further sightings of 1–2 birds on nine dates until the last ♂ on 4th November, with four birds on 23rd October. A ♂ on 14th December may have been that seen on 4th November.

2010: A ♀ trapped on 24th March was the first, before a ♂ on 27th March and single ♀ on three dates in April. Further sightings of singles were made on seven dates in May, probably involving six individuals, with the last on 3rd June. A ♂ on 5th–6th September was the first of the autumn, preceding daily sightings of 3–4 until 11th September (with seven on 8th) and sightings of 1–2 birds on eleven further dates until 17th October, but for three on 7th. A ♂ on 4th November and a ♀ on 21st November were the last.

The count of seven on 8th September 2010 is an island record count, beating six in September 1998 and five in October 1979.

+ Common Buzzard *Buteo buteo*

Scarce spring and autumn migrant

2010: One on 11th September was the only record.

+ Rough-legged Buzzard *Buteo lagopus*

Vagrant; 40 previous records (41–42 individuals)

2010: Two birds were sighted on 16th October, with one bird present for most of the morning and another passing straight over the island early afternoon.
The first since 2005 and an exhilarating experience for many.

+ Western Osprey *Pandion haliaetus*

Scarce spring and rare autumn migrant (94 previous records (96 individuals); 76 in spring, 18 in autumn)

2009: A poor year by recent standards, with just one bird recorded passing over on 19th May.

2010: A single passing over the isle on 30th May was the only record.

Common Kestrel *Falco tinnunculus*

Regular spring and autumn migrant

2009: Following the first on 7th April, sightings of 1–2 birds were made on most dates in April and May. Autumn passage was poor with singles on 18th & 21st–22nd September and three birds recorded on four dates from 11th–23rd October.

2010: A ♂ on 25th April was the first, followed by singles on six dates until 14th May and a late spring straggler on 23rd June. Autumn passage was more notable, with singles recorded on four dates in August (from 12th) before sightings on most dates between 3rd September & 13th October. Passage in this period was of 1–10 birds, peaking at 11 from 8th–10th September. A single on 4th, 6th & 7th November was the last of the year.

Merlin *Falco columbarius*

Regular spring and autumn migrant

2009: An over-wintering bird was noted in January. A ♀ was seen on 27th & 31st March before 1–2 were seen on most dates in April and May. Autumn sightings were more regular following the first on 14th September, with 1–3 seen almost daily until 17th November.

2010: A single bird was recorded on three dates in January and one date in February and was presumably an over-wintering individual. Spring passage birds were recorded from 3rd March with sightings of 1–2 birds almost daily until the end of April and a peak of four on 8th April. A single on 31st August was the first autumn migrant before more regular sightings of 1–5 birds on most dates between 15th September and 12th November. Records of singles on four dates in December were presumably of the same bird.

+ Eurasian Hobby *Falco subbuteo*

Rare spring & summer migrant, vagrant in autumn; 49 or 50 previous records

2009: A first-summer was present at Leogh on 31st May.

2010: One was present on 29th May whilst in June, another single was seen on 28th.

Peregrine Falcon *Falco peregrinus*

Regular spring and autumn migrant; bred regularly until 1973, started breeding again in 2008

2009: A ♂ was spotted twice in January but there were no further sightings until a pair were seen displaying over Sheep Rock on 26th March. An immature ♀ was also seen on three dates in April. The breeding pair nested at Felsigeo, hatching three chicks on 17th May with at least two successfully fledging in late June. One juvenile was still present in late August and the adults were seen off and on until late October.

2010: A ♂, presumably the returning breeding bird from 2009, was recorded on three dates in late March/early April, before a ♀ was seen on 9th April. A ♀ on 15th and a ♂ on 17th April confirmed the presence of a pair, before both birds were seen together at Easter Lother on 18th April. Both birds were seen on and off in May, but the ♀ was discovered to be Fulmar-oiled and was presumed dead by the 31st. However, a single bird was seen on 7th June with a ♀ the following day. A ♂ was seen on 13th July and 24th August. September and October produced nearly daily sightings of both a ♂ and ♀ (recorded both intermittently and on the same day), with an extra ♀ recorded on 11th & 23rd October. A ♂ and ♀ were recorded on 1st November and 23rd December, with the three birds recorded again on 2nd December.

Water Rail *Rallus aquaticus*

Regular spring and autumn migrant; occasionally over-winters

2009: One was at Barkland on 12th February and singles were reported in March from Lower Stoneybrek, Boini Mire and Burkle. These were then followed by two on 3rd April and a single on 19th May. In autumn, one at Field on 2nd October was the first and was followed by regular sightings of 1–4 birds until 17th November. Two on 4th December were presumably attempting to over-winter.

2010: Five overwintering birds were noted in January. None were then recorded until a single, presumed spring migrant, on 3rd March. Single birds were then recorded on a further 18 dates until 19th May. A mid-summer bird was seen on 12th June. The first of the autumn was a single on 9th September, but was not followed until another single on 25th September and further singles on 28th & 30th September, with two on 29th. Birds were found dead on 1st & 2nd October before sightings of 1–2 birds on most dates in October and singles on 7th & 9th November, the last of the year.

+ Spotted Crake *Porzana porzana*

Rare migrant, mostly autumn (44 previous records; nine in spring)

2010: One on 17th–18th August was the first record on the isle since 2005

A Crake sp. thought possibly to be this species was at the Chalet on 30th August.

+ Corn Crake *Crex crex*

Scarce spring and autumn migrant; formerly bred

2009: One was heard calling from Schoolton Ditch on most nights between 21st June and 26th July but was not thought to have attracted a mate.
It is hardly surprising it failed to attract a female as its call was most unusual, having the correct rhythm but a wailing noise likened to a cat!

2010: In autumn, singles were flushed near Furse on 23rd September and near Setter from 28th–29th September. Finally, one was at Kenaby on 2nd October.

+ Common Moorhen *Gallinula chloropus*

Scarce spring and autumn migrant

2009: The only record was a single from 1st–5th November, found dead on the latter date.
2010: One was in the Gully on 28th September and another was at Quoy on 2nd October.

+ Eurasian Coot *Fulica atra*

Very rare visitor (81 previous records) in late autumn, winter and spring; has summered

2010: In January, one was at Barkland on 17th, but was then found dead there on 27th. Another bird was found dead at Taft on 28th March.
These are the first records since 2004.

+ Common Crane *Grus grus*

Vagrant; 20 previous records (29 individuals), 16 in spring

2010: One flew over Buness on 16th June.

Eurasian Oystercatcher *Haematopus ostralegus*

Common spring and autumn migrant; breeds in small numbers

2009: A small number (max 3 birds) were seen in January but the first migrants were 13 on 8th February. Passage was slow to get going, with 40 on 27th February and daily records from 1st March. Numbers were predominantly in double-figures, hitting three figures on four dates in March and fluctuating in April between 52 and the spring peak of 175 on 19th April. The first eggs were found on 1st May, with migrants/non-breeders noted throughout the month and counts ranging from 35–119. The highest autumn count was 177 on 23rd July, the next highest count being 166 on 1st August dwindling to single-figure counts from September until the last on 31st October.
2010: A small number (1–2 birds) were seen occasionally in January and February, with the first migrants (7) noted on 17th February, with 37 on 20th February. Records hereafter were sporadic, fluctuating between 8–25 birds, before daily passage from 21st March. Counts ranged from 8–93 birds through until early June when counts ceased. Summering numbers of non-breeders were lower than in most years with a max of 21 counted. Following an arrival of 160 birds on 30th July, numbers until the end of August were predominantly in double-figures, peaking at 75 on 18th. Single-figure counts were made on most dates in September, with the exception of 16 on 4th and 13 on 6th, and nine dates in October - the last on 23rd.

+ Eurasian Stone Curlew *Burhinus oedicnemus*

Vagrant; seven previous records (six in spring)

2009: One was found on Meoness on 24th May before relocating to near the Kirk, then Taing.

Common Ringed Plover *Charadrius hiaticula*

Frequent spring and autumn migrant; breeds in small numbers

2009: The first, on 17th February, was followed with eight and four (24th & 28th February). An arrival of 50 on 1st March was the peak count and numbers ranged from 4–35 hereafter until just the breeders remained from 6th May. First fledged juveniles were seen on 16th June. Autumn counts were unspectacular with peak counts of 20–25 in late August and 2–14 in September until 9th October, with a late bird on 5th–6th November.

2010: Two on 2nd March were the first and counts thereafter fluctuated widely between 1–44 birds until end of May. Monthly peaks in this period included 44 (March), 43 (April) and 47 (May). Autumn passage was similar to spring with a peak of 66 in August, 46 in September and just eight in October with the last on 27th.

+ Eurasian Dotterel *Charadrius morinellus*

Scarce spring and autumn migrant

2009: In spring, two were found on Hoini on 12th May. An adult and juvenile were present on 13th August and a juvenile was on Ward Hill on 13th September.

2010: A ♂ and ♀ were found near Restens Geo on 30th April and were re-found on Meoness on 3rd–4th May. Two birds, considered the same, were then present from 9th–13th May, commuting between Busta Brecks and Meoness. In autumn, a single was on Hoini on 10th October.

European Golden Plover *Pluvialis apricaria*

Common spring and autumn migrant; has bred

2009: A single on 18th January was not followed until another on 5th March and sporadic sightings (of 1–7) through until the months end. Passage was daily through April and fluctuated between 1–36 birds. Numbers petered out through May and single figure counts were made intermittently through June and July and the first half of August. Autumn passage began in earnest from 15th August and was almost daily through until 19th November. Numbers ranged widely from 1–111 during this period, indicating a good turnover of birds.

2010: A small number (1–16) were recorded on eight dates in January and February and were either over-wintering birds or migrants triggered by the cold weather around the UK. March records included 13 on 3rd and 11 on 5th before sightings of 1–9 birds from 20th until the months end. Hereafter, numbers gradually built up through April, reaching at 73 on 16th before dwindling to two birds by 25th and rising again to 90 by 29th. May 1st saw 159 birds (the spring peak) dropping to 35 by 6th and single-figure counts from 14th until months end. Three on 22nd July were early autumn birds with 1–14 on a further ten dates before daily sightings from 18th

August–30th October. Numbers fluctuated but were predominantly in double-figures, reaching three-figures on nine dates in mid-October, peaking at 162 birds on 16th. Four counts were made in November, max 25 on 4th. Four birds on 29th December were the last.

+ Grey Plover *Pluvialis squatarola*

Scarce autumn migrant, rare in spring

2010: One was on Hoini from 7th–10th October.

Northern Lapwing *Vanellus vanellus*

Frequent spring and autumn migrant; breeds in small numbers

2009: A small number (10–20 birds) were noted in January and February and moderate daily passage began on 1st March with numbers in double-figures, but not exceeding 47 birds until early May. Seven pairs attempted to breed but most failed. Autumn passage was light with numbers scarcely into double-figures and a max of 26 on 6th November. In December, a small group of 10–14 birds were occasionally seen.

2010: Counts in January/February were erratic, fluctuating between 1–45, with more regular sightings from 1st March and moderate daily passage from 20th. Passage through April was light, peaking at just 12 birds on 3rd. Breeding attempts were made by two pairs in the Parks, three pairs at Setter/Pund and one pair at Da Water. Only the last site is thought to have successfully fledged chicks. Small counts were made on four dates in June/July (of 12–50 birds) and autumn passage was evident from 4th August. Numbers fluctuated hereafter between 1–47 birds through until 12th November.

Red Knot *Calidris canutus*

Regular autumn migrant, scarce in spring

2009: In spring, one on 7th May was the only record. A good autumn showing saw single-figure counts made on four dates in July (from 13th) and most dates in August and September, with peaks of 25 (5th August) and 11 (8th September).

2010: One on 28th January was an unusual winter record. In spring, four on 13th May were more typical. Autumn passage began with two birds on 7th August and counts were predominantly single-figures until 25th September, but for peaks in August of 10 (12th), 12 (25th) and in September of 15 (9th).

There have been only six previous winter records

Sanderling *Calidris alba*

Regular autumn migrant, less common in spring

2009: A single on 30th April was not followed until two from 16th–17th May with one remaining until 22nd May. A single from 19th–22nd May and another on 26th July were the only summer records before autumn passage began on 4th August. Near-daily counts of 1–5 were the norm but for peaks of 11 and 10 (4th & 9th September) with the last on 23rd September. Two recorded on 26th December are only the second winter record in the FIBO period.

2010: A single on 1st & 6th January may well have been one of the birds present in December 2009. Two on 11th May were the first spring birds, with 1–2 recorded on a further five dates up to 26th May and eight birds on 19th May the spring peak. Singles on 16th & 21st July were followed with four on 30th another single on 8th August and four more on 11th August. Sightings of 1–3 birds were then made on five dates up to 24th August and of 1–2 birds on four dates in September (until 18th). A single on 15th October was the last of the year.

+ Little Stint *Calidris minuta*

Scarce autumn migrant, vagrant in spring

2010: One on the Scrape on 18th July and a single in the Havens area from 12th–15th September were the only records.

The July record is the earliest autumn record on Fair Isle.

+ Pectoral Sandpiper *Calidris melanotos*

Vagrant; 27 previous records, three in spring

2010: A juvenile was on Da Water from 12th–14th September.

+ Curlew Sandpiper *Calidris ferruginea*

Scarce autumn migrant, vagrant in spring

2010: A single on 28th August was the first, followed by one on Buness from 12th–13th September, four on 14th and singles on eleven dates, but possibly only involving one individual, until the months end. Finally, a single was recorded on 1st October.

Purple Sandpiper *Calidris maritima*

Frequent spring and autumn migrant; also over-winters

2009: Up to five birds were noted in January and few were noted before an arrival of 35 on 8th April indicated some spring passage. Regular sightings were made until 23rd May, seldom exceeding double figures, but peaking at 26 on 8th May. Single-figure counts were made on eight dates between June and September, on six dates in October and nine dates in November, with no significant passage noticed.

2010: Four on 17th January and a single on 21st March were the first before 45 on 23rd March hinted spring passage was underway and regular sightings followed until 26th May. Counts were predominantly of single-figures, but for 30 on 27th March, 18 on 6th April, 15 on 29th April, 14 on 9th May and 13 on 13th May. Autumn passage mirrored spring, commencing with a single on 4th August and single-figure counts made on a further three dates in August, fifteen dates in September, nineteen dates in October and two dates in November. Monthly peaks were; 15 on 21st September and 26th October and 11 on 12th November - the last birds of the year.

Green-winged Teal, April 2009
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White-tailed Eagle, April 2010
© D. Shaw

Hobby, May 2009
© D. Shaw

Dotterel, May 2010
© D. Shaw

Pectoral Sandpiper, September 2010
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Buff-breasted Sandpiper, September 2010
© D. Bradnum

Ruff, August 2010
© J. Ashton-Booth

Long-eared Owl, October 2010
© D. Shaw

Red-rumped Swallow, May 2009
© A. Seward

Olive-backed Pipit, October 2010
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Buff-bellied Pipit, September 2010
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Red-throated Pipit, May 2010
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Bluethroat, May 2009
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Red-flanked Bluetail, September 2010
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Black-throated Thrush, October 2010
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Pallas's Grasshopper Warbler, September 2010
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Grasshopper Warbler, April 2010
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Sedge Warbler, August 2010
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Eastern Olivaceous Warbler, June 2009
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Blyth's Reed Warbler, October 2010
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Icterine Warbler, August 2010
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Asian Lesser Whitethroat, October 2009
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Subalpine Warbler, May 2009
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Greenish Warbler, August2009
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Arctic Warbler, August 2010
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Yellow-browed Warbler, October 2010
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Wood Warbler, April 2010
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abietinus Chiffchaff, October 2010
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Two-barred Crossbill, July 2009
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Arctic Redpoll, October 2010
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Arctic Redpoll, September 2010
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Blackpoll Warbler, October 2009
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White-throated Sparrow, May 2010
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Lapland Bunting, September 2010
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Brown-headed Cowbird, May 2009
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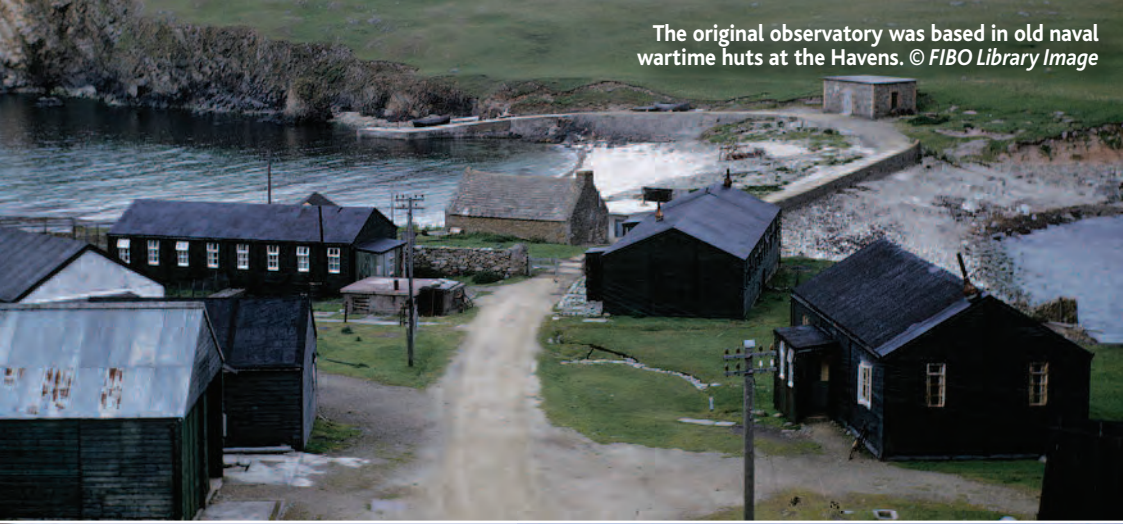


The original observatory was based in old naval wartime huts at the Havens. © *FIBO Library Image*

A new purpose built wooden building was erected in Mavers Cup in 1969. © *FIBO Library Image*

The wooden building was extended and cased in blockwork in 1989. © *D. Shaw*

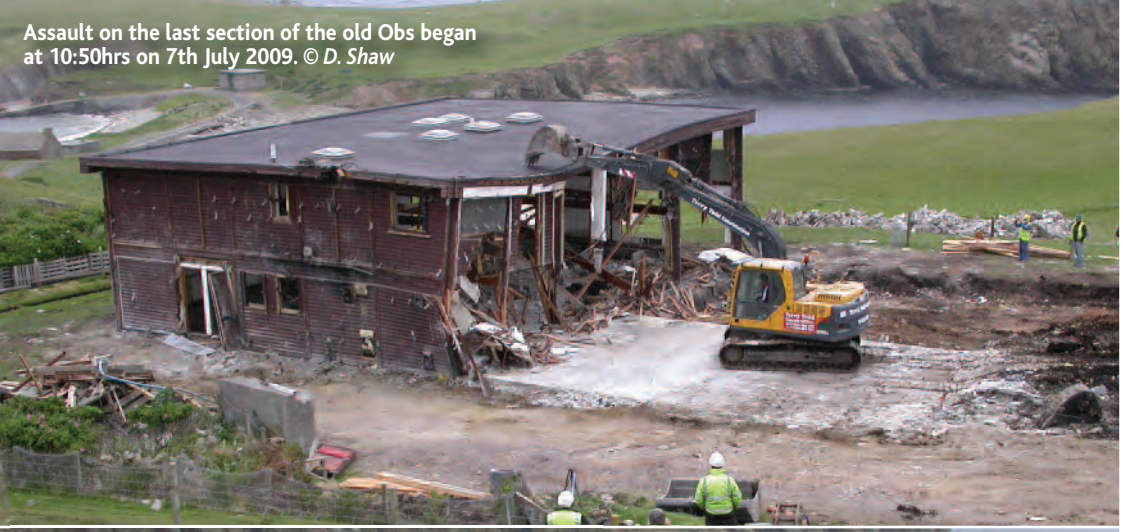
The Northmen began dismantling the old Obs in April 2009, including carefully removing the floorboards for use elsewhere. © *D. Shaw*

Blockwork was also removed to be recycled 'down isle'. © *D. Shaw*

Blockwork was also removed to be recycled 'down isle'. © *D. Shaw*

Hollie Shaw laments the loss of the Warden's flat – her home for the previous ten years. © *D. Shaw*

The old building was no match for Terry Todd's digger! © *D. Shaw*



Assault on the last section of the old Obs began at 10:50hrs on 7th July 2009. © *D. Shaw*

The final push! © *D. Shaw*

The old Obs was laid to rest at 11:05hrs on 7th July 2009. © *D. Shaw*

The footprint of the new Obs was larger than the old one, necessitating clearing some extra space. © *D. Shaw*

Several tonnes of earth had to be removed to make a solid base for the foundations. © *D. Shaw*

Most of August was spent laying new foundations. © *D. Shaw*

The 'pods' of the new Observatory await delivery to Fair Isle in a field on the outskirts of Kirkwall, Orkney. © *D. Okill*

The first 'pod' arrives at Fair Isle pier on 2nd September 2009. © *D. Shaw*

The first sections are lifted into place – the plant room, seabird and ringing rooms. © *D. Shaw*

Two large cranes were required to lift the 'pods' – one at the pier and another on-site. © *D. Shaw*

By 15th September 2009 all 20 'pods' had arrived and were in position. © *D. Shaw*

The new Observatory was finally completed in July 2010. © *D. Shaw*

Dunlin *Calidris alpina*

Frequent spring and autumn migrant;

2009: A single on 18th January was an unusual occurrence. The first spring migrant was noted on 21st April and thereafter, 1–9 were recorded almost daily until 8th June, peaking at ten birds on 18th May. A small number were recorded through July, with near daily passage through August and September, with counts between 1–21 birds. October passage was exceptionally light with just 1–2 birds logged through the month until the last on 5th November. Seven birds on 26th December were fairly unseasonal.
2010: A small number of birds (3–8) were recorded on six dates in January, with the first spring migrants on 25th April (3). Hereafter, passage was light, with counts in single figures until an arrival of 60 on 22nd May and an incredible 172 birds the following day. This dwindled to 88 birds by 25th but a further influx saw a count of 159 on 26th before numbers dropped to single-figures by 30th May and into early June. Small numbers were recorded sporadically in July before autumn passage proper commenced in August. Sightings were almost daily through until 25th October, with counts mainly in single-figures and hitting double-figures on just sixteen dates, max 22 on 12th September. Four on 29th December were the last.
The May influx produced by far the highest numbers ever recorded on the isle, smashing the previous record count - just 40 in 1981 & 1991.

+ Buff-breasted Sandpiper *Tryngites subruficollis*

Vagrant; 11 previous records, all in September

2010: Two birds arrived at Barkland on 18th September, with both birds present the next day. One then lingered in that area until 1st October.

Ruff *Philomachus pugnax*

Regular autumn migrant, rare in spring

2009: In spring, a ♀ was present on 24th May. Autumn records comprised a juvenile on 27th–28th July, followed by 1–3 regularly through August, two on 4th September and a single from 12th–13th September.
2010: One from 11th–12th August was the first, with passage from 8th–15th September producing daily counts of 2–8 birds within this period. A single on 24th September was the last.

Jack Snipe *Lymnocryptes minimus*

Frequent autumn migrant, less common in winter and spring

2009: Three on 21st January were the only winter sightings and there were no spring records. Three on 30th September signalled the beginning of autumn passage and daily single-figure counts were made until census ceased in mid-November. Finally, one on 6th December and two on 17th were probably over-wintering.
2010: A single on 18th January was the first and the only spring sighting was logged on the 8th April. Autumn passage commenced with one on 9th September and single-figure counts were made on most dates until 28th October, reaching double-figures on three dates and monthly peaks of 12 birds on 30th September and 8th October.

Common Snipe *Gallinago gallinago*

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

2009: Approximately 50 birds were counted during January and February. Spring passage was negligible with counts of 25–40 from late March-early May quite possibly just relating to breeding birds. Eight birds seen flying 'in-off' the sea on 3rd August were the first autumn migrants but no formal counts were made until early September. Counts were daily and predominantly 30–50 with a peak of just 83 on 11th October.

2010: A count of 115 birds on 10th January may have been over-wintering birds or an influx associated with cold weather. Daily counts commenced from 21st March with 93 birds and was moderate (12–93 birds) until 12th April when passage became lighter and the breeding birds remained. Autumn counts began on 25th August and were daily until 28th October. Numbers were usually in the region of 30–60 peaking at 95 birds on 30th September. A count of 35 on 12th November was the last formal count of the year.

Eurasian Woodcock *Scolopax rusticola*

Frequent spring and late autumn migrant, occasionally over-winters

2009: Single birds on two dates in February were winter movements. Counts of 1–3 between 12th March and 21st April with a late bird on 25th May indicated a typically light spring passage. As in 2008, one was trapped in July - on the 6th. In autumn, small numbers from 10th October preceded a fall on 30th when 104 were logged with 106 the following day. Numbers tailed off rapidly until another large fall on 7th November produced a count of 115 with small numbers from this remaining (or later arrivals) well into December.

2010: Four birds on 10th January and 16 on 17th were presumed cold-weather migrants. Counts of 1–2 birds were then made on two dates in February, seven dates in March and six dates in April, the last on 12th. A single on 28th September was the first autumn bird and was followed by single-figure counts on most dates until 25th October, with 13 on 23rd. A small number (<6) were recorded occasionally in November and three birds were at the Observatory on 26th December.

Black-tailed Godwit *Limosa limosa*

Scarce spring and autumn migrant

+ 2009: In spring, a single on 31st March was followed by another on 23rd April and two from 1st–9th May. In autumn, one was seen at the Walli Burn from 7th–11th July.

2010: In May, singles from 1st–2nd and 26th–27th were the only spring sightings. July sightings comprised two on 15th and singles on 18th & 24th. A small number (1–4) were then noted on most dates from 7th–25th August.

Bar-tailed Godwit *Limosa lapponica*

Regular autumn migrant, rare in spring

+ 2009: One near the Haa on 4th July was joined by a second bird on 9th. Singles were seen on 5th & 24th–25th August, 7th–11th September and 15th–16th September.

2010: Two birds on 19th August were the first, rising to seven birds from 22nd-23rd and dwindling to a single by 28th.

Whimbrel *Numenius phaeopus*

Frequent spring and autumn migrant

2009: An arrival of fifty birds on 18th April were the first of the year and hereafter numbers returned to predominantly single-figures, with birds recorded on most dates from May–August. Influxes of 25, 10 and 13 were noted on 3rd, 5th and 8th May respectively. A single on 3rd September was the last.

The flock of 50 on 18th April represents the highest count on the island since the record passage in May 1999 when 77 were seen on 10th and 62 on 11th.

2010: The first of the year were two birds on 12th April and regular sightings were made on most dates in April/May, sporadically in June and July and on most dates in August. Counts were mainly single-figures, hitting double-figures on five dates and seasonal peaks of 23 (24th May) and ten (19th August). Finally, two on 3rd September and a single on 13th September were the last.

Eurasian Curlew *Numenius arquata*

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

2009: Small numbers were recorded in January and numbers slowly increased through February, peaking at 37 birds on 28th. Counts were constantly in double-figures through March–May including a further peak of 39 birds on 19th April. Nine pairs set up territory with at least six producing chicks. The first returning migrants were noted in mid-June, but autumn passage was very light with a peak of 20 birds on 10th August. In December, cold weather triggered some movement with 39 birds counted on 26th & 29th.

2010: January records comprised 74 on 7th, rising to an island record of 207 on 10th and 'lots' on 14th, before dwindling to 20 by 27th and 11–41 into early February. Spring passage commenced with 50 birds on 1st March and was followed by regular counts (of 1–28 birds) on most dates through the month and into May before just the breeders remained. Autumn passage was light, following the first migrants in July, with fluctuating numbers (of 2–33 birds) recorded until 30th September and daily, single-figure counts through October. A count of 120 birds on 27th November was induced by a cold snap and many lingered into December and with further movements producing counts of 90 (3rd), 100 (23rd) & 15 (29th) birds.

Common Sandpiper *Actitis hypoleucos*

Frequent spring and autumn migrant

2009: One on 27th April was the first and passage was very light until an arrival of 14 on 17th May, increasing to 19 the following day. Eleven birds were still present on 19th, with singles seen on a further three dates until 26th May. One in the Gully on 25th June was followed by singles on three dates in July and two dates in August. Two birds present on 24th August were the last of the year.

The 19 birds on 18th May is the fourth highest spring count, following a maximum of 35 from 20th–22nd May 1996

2010: Following the first on 28th April, singles were recorded on six dates up to the end of May, with three present on 22nd May. In autumn, singles were recorded on seven dates in August before regular sightings (of 1–3 birds) were made from 5th–23rd September, with a peak of five birds on 10th.

Green Sandpiper *Tringa ochropus*

Regular spring and autumn migrant

2009: One on 14th April was the only spring sighting. Autumn produced counts of 1–5 on most dates in July and early August, petering out to sightings of single birds from mid to end August and the last on 4th September.

2010: In spring, a single on 28th April was the first, with further singles on seven dates until the end of May and two birds on 20th May and 2nd June. Singles in July, presumably early autumn migrants, were recorded on 3rd, 8th, 18th & 21st. Thereafter, 1–4 birds were recorded on most dates in August until the last on 8th September.

Common Greenshank *Tringa nebularia*

Regular autumn migrant, scarce in spring

2009: Singles were logged on 18th & 30th April, before two birds from 1st–2nd May and another single on 5th May. Passage in autumn was poor, with 1–3 birds recorded on just six dates in August.

2010: A single on 21st May was the only spring record. In autumn, following the first on 4th August, singles were recorded on a further 12 dates until the months end (with two on 19th), on 10 dates in September and a lingering bird from 1st–23rd October. A single on 30th October may have been a new, late migrant.

+ Wood Sandpiper *Tringa glareola*

Scarce spring and autumn migrant

2009: One on the Scrape on 16th May, moved to Da Water the following day where it was joined by a second bird. Both remained until 18th, before just one was found back on the Scrape on 19th May. A single from 18th–20th July was the only autumn record.

2010: A single at the Chalet from 13th–15th May was the first, followed by two birds on 22nd May.

Common Redshank *Tringa totanus*

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

2009: Recorded in every month. Peak monthly counts as follows.

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
9	10	30	40	4	5	44	48	35	100	30	35

A typical showing, but numbers in January and February were lower than previous years and the 100 in October is above average for this month.

2010: Recorded in most months. Peak monthly counts as follows.

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
25	25	30	41	6	4	48	71	73	77	45	35

Ruddy Turnstone *Arenaria interpres*

Common winter, spring and autumn migrant

2009: Recorded in every month. Peak monthly counts as follows.

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
113	110	185	89	37	1	12	50	79	167	167	140

2010:

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
100	65	120	135	40	4	15	58	100	156	100	100

+ Red (Grey) Phalarope *Phalaropus fulicarius*

Vagrant; 30 previous records (c35 individuals)

2010: One was off South Light on 5th October.

+ Pomarine Skua *Stercorarius pomarinus*

Very rare spring and autumn migrant; at least 64 previous records

2009: A sub-adult bird was seen well at the Mast on 3rd September - the first since 2007.

Arctic Skua *Stercorarius parasiticus*

Frequent passage migrant, breeds in small numbers

2009: Two dark morph birds on 11th April were the first and sightings were daily from 25th April. Breeding numbers recovered from 37 AOT in 2008, to 65 this year but just 17 chicks fledged (the first on 23rd July), many of which succumbed to the Great Skuas. The last departed on 12th September.

2010: A pale-phase bird on 12th April was the first, but the main arrival was on 30th April when 54 birds were present. Birds were ever-present until 24th August. The breeding population continued to recover, rising to 70 AOT, however, as in most recent years very few (11) chicks fledged (a disappointing productivity figure of 0.15) and those that did were soon taken by Great Skuas. Singles on 30th August, 29th September and three on 12th October were the last.

+ Long-tailed Jaeger (Skua) *Stercorarius longicaudus*

Very rare visitor in spring, summer and autumn

2009: An adult on 17th May is the first record since 2006.

Great Skua *Stercorarius skua*

Frequent passage migrant, breeds in moderate numbers

2009: Two on 17th March were the first but no others until 30th March when birds were ever-present until early October. Numbers reached over 100 in late April and a breeding population of 277 AOT is a slight reduction on the previous years record (294 AOT). Productivity (0.61) was higher than in most recent years. Almost all had departed by early October, with stragglers from mid-October and a lone individual on 7th November was the last.

2010: One on 25th March was the first, with numbers slowly building up through April. A similar number of breeding pairs to the previous year (280 AOT) produced similar fledging success (0.62). The last of the breeders remained into early October, with numbers augmented by migrants passing through on the sea, the last on 28th October.

Black-legged Kittiwake *Rissa tridactyla*

Common autumn passage migrant; breeds in large numbers

2009: Birds were first back on breeding ledges from 26th March and were noted collecting nesting material from 9th May. Breeding numbers on the monitoring plots (173 AON) were still very low, but a welcome 26.7% increase on the previous year's rock bottom figure. Fledging success was also much improved; following several years of almost complete failure a productivity figure of 0.41 is pleasing, although well short of those of the 1990's when success over 1.0 was the norm.

2010: Birds were onshore from 26th March and were collecting nesting material on 4th May. It was a poor breeding season with only 166 AON on the plots and just 29 chicks fledging (productivity 0.17). In September, 1–4 birds were recorded on most dates. October passage was more marked, with birds seen on most dates and 97 on 26th the max.

Black-headed Gull *Chroicocephalus ridibundus*

Frequent spring and autumn migrant

2009: Two on 19th January were not followed until sporadic sightings of 1–3 birds in March before a light passage throughout April and May, with peaks of 32 on 6th April, 41 on 19th April and 18 on 31st May. Single figure counts were the norm through June and July, but for 25 on 2nd June. Sightings were almost daily from August–October, but only reached double figures on five dates (max 22 on 28th September). Two on 5th November were the last.

2010: Three on 17th January were the first of the year, with four on 17th March a more typical sighting and the first of the spring. Thereafter, counts were regular through April and May, mainly of single-figures, reaching double-figures on nine dates and a spring peak of 20 birds on 26th & 28th April. Small numbers were occasionally sighted in June before autumn passage commenced from 2nd July. Numbers fluctuated through the month, reaching a max of at 65 birds on 18th. Subsequent counts were predominantly single-figures, reaching double-figures on four dates and a peak of 20 on 18th October with the last on 27th October.

+ Little Gull *Hydrocoloeus minutus*

Vagrant; 17 previous records (20 individuals)

2010: A good year, with a first-winter on 4th and an adult on 5th October before a first-winter *with* an adult the following day. Three adults were then recorded on the 7th, before further single adults on 8th & 9th October. Finally, a first-winter was seen on 15th October.

Mew (Common) Gull *Larus canus*

Common spring and autumn migrant, breeds in small numbers

2009: A small number (<8) were occasionally recorded from January to mid-March before 17 on 28th March signalled the beginning of spring passage. Hereafter, through April, May and early June a light passage was noted with daily counts (of generally less than 50 birds) and a peak of 200 on 19th April. Just six pairs bred on Buness, raising a similar number of chicks to fledging. An arrival of 125 birds on 19th July and an influx of 350 on 22nd July preceded a heavier wave of migration in early August when birds reached a peak of 1200 at the Walli Burn. Passage was moderate through August, petering out through September (to less than 20 birds) before further influxes in October of 45 (10th) and 42 (24th). A small number (max 8) were noted in November and December.

2010: In January, 1–5 birds were recorded on five dates and spring passage was not noted until two on 1st March. Numbers built up through April, although passage was light and reached 68 birds on 30th. Numbers were predominantly <25 through May. Seven pairs nested and although 15 medium-sized chicks were seen, none are thought to have fledged with Skuas and Herring Gulls the prime suspects. Four counts made in July were of between 30–50 birds. August–October records comprised counts on most dates of between 1–90 birds and a good count of 1000 on 19th August. A single on 4th November was the last.

Lesser Black-backed Gull *Larus fuscus*

Frequent spring and autumn migrant; breeds in small numbers

2009: The first returning birds were recorded on 23rd March (2) and 1–6 were seen on most dates until the end of April. The 2nd May saw the first main arrival (21) and numbers fluctuated through the month (and into June) between 3–59 birds. Just two pairs bred, among the Herring Gulls on Goorn. Single-figure counts were made on one date in July, six in August and six in September (last on 28th). Twenty-two on 26th August was by far the highest autumn count.

2010: Two adults on Goorn on 25th March were the first and predominantly single-figure counts followed through to June, with monthly peaks of 19 (30th April), 33 (13th May) and 15 (3rd June). Two pairs bred on Goorn. Forty-seven birds on 8th July were an early autumn influx and, but for 19 on 11th July, single-figure (1–4) counts followed in August and September, with the last on 10th September. Finally, an immature bird was present from 7th–9th October.

European Herring Gull *Larus argentatus*

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

2009: Generally only counted when late autumn storms cause large numbers to seek shelter on the isle. Thus, several hundred could be counted on many days in October/November with peaks of 8000 (20th & 21st October) and 4000 (4th November). Approximately 20 pairs nested on Goorn, six pairs on Greenholm and two pairs on Buness.

2010: Present all year. Three counts in October were of 120 (1st), 250 (23rd) and 1700 (26th). Breeding numbers were similar to the previous year but fledging success was low, on Greenholm at least.

+ Iceland Gull *Larus glaucoides*

Scarce migrant in winter and spring

2009: A first-winter on 6th April was, unusually, the first sighting of the year, before single first-summers on 20th and 28th–29th May. An adult was present on 16th July. One on 4th October and an adult from 4th–5th November were the last of the year. *The bird on 6th April showed characteristics of the race Kumlienii (Kumlien's Gull). The adult in July is only the second record for that month.*

2010: A first-winter on 16th November was the only record.

+ Glaucous Gull *Larus hyperboreus*

Regular migrant in spring, late autumn and winter

2009: In January, a first-winter and second-winter were seen on 15th, with the former still present on 18th. A second-winter on 30th March and 2nd April may have been the same bird. A third-summer on 16th July (the same day as the adult Iceland Gull) is not unusual. One was seen on 18th October and finally two first-winters on 8th December.

2010: An early juvenile on 30th August was the first, followed by a first-winter on 25th September. In October, adults were recorded on 17th & 19th and single first-winters were seen on 20th & 28th.

Great Black-backed Gull *Larus marinus*

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

2009: As with Herring Gull, only counted when stormy weather encourages birds to seek shelter on land. Many days in October/November produced flocks of several hundred with peaks of 2000 on 20th October rising to 3000 the following day.

2010: Present all year. Two hundred on 29th March was the only spring count. Around 20 apparently incubating birds could be seen on Sheep Rock in June. Additionally, single pairs nested on Greenholm and Toor o' da Ward Hill. Numbers increased through September, largely through birds sheltering from stormy weather. Peaks included 550 birds at Easter Lother on 29th September and 700 on 26th October.

+ Sandwich Tern *Sterna sandvicensis*

Scarce spring/summer migrant, rare in autumn

2009: Singles were recorded on 8th & 22nd May. Two on 17th June were followed by four on Buness on 24th June.

Common Tern *Sterna hirundo*

Summer visitor, breeds in small numbers

2009: A pair arrived in North Haven on 19th May, remaining until 13th June but was not thought to have attempted to nest. Small numbers (1–4) were seen on five dates in July and two in North Haven from 7th–9th September were the last.

2010: A single on 28th April was the first, with seven on 3rd May the first real arrival. Thereafter, a small number were recorded from 16th May, with a peak of eight birds on 28th May. Two pairs lingered through the summer but nesting was not thought to have been attempted. An adult on 31st August and singles on 8th, 10th & 11th September (with four on 9th) were the last.

Arctic Tern *Sterna paradisaea*

Summer visitor, breeds in large numbers

2009: A single on 28th April was the first but was not followed until two on 5th May signalled the start of the main arrival with influxes on 20th and 26th boosting numbers to 350 & 600 respectively. Around 300 pairs nested, spread over four sites; Bullock Holes, Horsti Breckers, Shalstane and Buness but chicks only fledged from the latter two giving an overall productivity of 0.25. Unusually high numbers of first-summers were noted in June/July with flocks of 13 (25th June), 37 (7th July) and 14 (9th July). Most birds had departed by August with late singles on 29th September and 6th October being the last.

2010: One on 3rd May was the first and number had risen to 45 by mid-May. A good-sized colony settled on Buness (377 nests were counted in late June) with a handful of others at Horsti Brekkers, Shalstane and Busta Brecks. However, all chicks died shortly after hatching and therefore none fledged. Gatherings of failed breeders at South Light in July produced counts of 400 (8th) and 650 (11th). First-summer birds were also with these flocks, with 10 & 15 respectively. Three first-summers on 20th August, two birds on 28th August and two on 9th September were the last.

Common Murre (Guillemot) *Uria aalge*

Common autumn passage migrant; breeds in large numbers

2009: The first birds were noted ashore in late February and a quiet spell of weather mid-March encouraged many more, however attendance was erratic right up until the first eggs were laid in early May. Peitron monitoring plot reached 100 eggs on 21st May. Overall productivity at the two monitoring plots was 0.40, a low figure but much improved on the complete failure in 2008. The colonies were deserted again by August and small numbers were noted offshore in September with the odd sighting in October.

2010: Birds were onshore from 6th February, with the first eggs noted at Peitron on 6th May. The two productivity monitoring plots gave a mean fledging success of 0.43 per pair. A whole island count in June indicated there had been a 28.6% drop in numbers since 2005, to 19,500 birds. In autumn, single-figure counts (<5) were made on most dates from 25th August–28th October, with a peak of 12 birds on 1st September.

Razorbill *Alca torda*

Summer visitor, breeds in large numbers

2009: As with Guillemot, large numbers were not seen ashore until mid-March. Although the number of nesting birds was low, fledging success at 0.47 was much better than the previous two years (when no birds fledged) and was in fact the best since 2002. Small numbers were recorded offshore in September and early October.

2010: The first birds were ashore from 24th March. A whole island count in June indicated there had been a huge 60% drop in numbers since 2005 to just 1,365 birds. Breeding numbers at Easter Lother were similar to the previous year but fledging success was dramatically different with no chicks fledging. A light autumn passage from 13th September saw 1–8 birds recorded on most dates until 28th October.

Black Guillemot *Cepphus grylle*

Resident, breeds in moderate numbers

2009: The number of birds on the monitoring plot (entire east coast of the isle) increased from 144 in 2008, to 168 this year - a similar figure to that in 2007 (164).
2010: Present all year. Numbers on the monitoring plot rose by 7.1% to 180 - the highest since 1997.

Little Auk *Alle alle*

Frequent late autumn/winter visitor

2010: A single seen from the *Good Shepherd IV* on 12th October was the first and 1–5 birds were logged either passing the island or storm-driven until 108 passing Buness on 26th October signalled a wave of heavier movement. Two birds were in the Havens the following day, with 19 passing South Light on 28th October.

Atlantic Puffin *Fratercula arctica*

Summer visitor, breeds in large numbers

2009: First birds were seen on 1st April, when 200+ congregated in Furse and the first were ashore the following day. A whole-island count in early May indicated that numbers had dropped by an alarming 46% since 2001 with just 7,278 individuals spotted. A productivity of 0.65, although not as high as figures of most of the 1990's (mean 0.72), is respectable compared to the years since then and much better than the most recent three years. Diet consisted almost entirely of 0-group Sandeels (61%) and Rockling fry (37%).
2010: A single off Buness on 21st March was the first, with the main arrival on 3rd April. Despite good numbers of occupied burrows on the plots, fledging success was one of the worst on record at 0.32. A shortage of food in the early chick stage was thought to be the reason. A single on 16th October and two the following day were the last.

Rock Dove *Columba livia*

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

2009: Present all year. Irregular counts in April and May peaked at 33 birds on 26th May. More regular counts were made in October and ranged from 11–81 birds.
2010: Present all year. Seasonal peaks were of 33 on 29th April and 33 on 25th August.

Stock Dove *Columba oenas*

Scarce spring and autumn migrant

+ 2009: In spring, one was seen on 13th April and two were recorded on 20th April. Another single was seen on 3rd May. One at Quoy on 24th October was the only autumn record.

2010: One in Bull's Park with Rock Doves on 25th March was the only spring sighting. In autumn, sightings of singles on most dates from 25th September–10th October may have been of the same bird.

Common Wood Pigeon *Columba palumbus*

Frequent spring and autumn migrant

2009: The first of the year was seen on 4th March, followed by another on 9th. Passage was more regular from 26th March, with 1–8 recorded daily before an influx of 23 on 11th April. Passage was slightly heavier until the month's end, before petering out through May to predominantly single-figure counts (reaching double-figures on just three dates). Counts of 1–3 were made in the first half of June and a single was found on 9th July. Autumn passage was light with 1–6 recorded on most dates from 6th October–17th November.

2010: A single on 21st March was the first and was followed by single-figure counts until ten on 29th March signalled the beginning of moderate passage, with predominantly double-figure counts (max 20 on 1st) until 13th April. Thereafter, regular counts of 1–8 birds were made until the end of May and 1–2 birds on five dates in June and July. Autumn passage commenced with a single on 15th September, with subsequent counts recording 1–8 birds on most dates until 31st October, reaching double-figures on three dates and a max. of 20 on 10th. Singles on 4th & 9th November were the last.

Eurasian Collared Dove *Streptopelia decaocto*

Frequent spring migrant, less common in autumn

2009: Three on 1st April were the first and low single-figure counts were made on most dates until 25th June, peaking at eight birds on 31st May. Singles were seen on three dates in July and on 12th August, with two on 17th August. One on 21st October was found in a poor state and taken into care, before being released and remaining until the month's end.

2010: Two on 11th April were the first and, but for peaks of five on 30th April and six on 20th May, counts of 1–4 were regularly made until 28th June. A poor autumn saw singles noted on 12th & 23rd July, 18th August and two birds on 19th August.

+ European Turtle Dove *Streptopelia turtur*

Scarce spring and autumn migrant

2009: A single from 29th–30th May was the only record.

2010: In spring, sightings of a single on 23rd, 27th & 29th–30th June may well have been of the same bird. In autumn, singles were logged on 20th August and 21st September.

+ Common Cuckoo *Cuculus canorus*

Regular spring migrant, scarce in autumn

2009: A short spring passage saw 1–3 birds recorded daily from 16th–26th May.

2010: A very poor year with just two sightings of singles in May, on the 20th & 30th.

Long-eared Owl *Asio otus*

Regular autumn migrant, scarce in spring

2009: The first of the year was unfortunately found dead on 6th April. May records comprised single birds on 2nd and one on six dates from 17th–26th (found dead on the latter date). In autumn, one on 12th October was then followed by 1–3 birds almost daily from 30th October–17th November. Many birds during this period were trapped and indicated a good turnover, with eight birds ringed.

2010: The first of the year was trapped on 22nd March and further spring singles were recorded on 4th April and 13th–14th April. In autumn, singles were recorded on 28th September, 13th October, 9th & 25th November. Two were in the Vaadal on 2nd December.

Short-eared Owl *Asio flammeus*

Regular spring and autumn migrant

2009: A single on 28th and 30th March preceded sightings of singles on five dates in April, nine dates in May and one in June, with two birds present on 9th April. A single on 28th–29th September was the first autumn sighting, with another on 5th, 6th and 10th October, three on 12th and four on 31st October. Counts of 1–3 were regularly made from 3rd–20th November. One was found dead on 6th December.

2010: One on 18th January was an unusual sighting, with a single on 22nd March the first spring migrant, followed by another on 26th March. Further singles were recorded sporadically through until June (on just eight dates), with two birds present from 6th–7th June. Autumn records mirrored spring, with sporadic singles in August and September, before four birds on 29th September preceded daily sightings (bar one date) of 1–5 birds until 14th October. One on 4th November was the last record of the year.

+ European Nightjar *Caprimulgus europaeus*

Vagrant; 26 previous records (three in autumn)

2009: Singles were in the Gully on 18th & 22nd May and flushed near Midway on 2nd June.

European Nightjar
© Jack Ashton-Booth

Common Swift *Apus apus*

Frequent spring, summer and autumn migrant

2009: In spring, one on 16th May was the first, followed by 1–7 regularly until the month's end and counts of 1–4 on four dates in June. Two were seen on 15th July with eight (max year total) the next day. Daily counts from 2nd–5th August peaked at six birds on the latter date with a further four singles before the month's end and a late single on 8th September.

2010: In spring, singles on 21st and 22nd May were the first, with further singles on five dates in June (up to 10th), before 1–4 birds from 30th June–8th July. Singles were sighted on three dates in both August and September, before a late bird from 3rd–7th October.

+ European Bee-eater *Merops apiaster*

Vagrant; seven previous records

2009: One was heard calling and spotted flying over the Chalet on 22nd May.

+ Eurasian Hoopoe *Upupa epops*

Vagrant; at least 37 previous records of single birds

2010: One was in the Vaadal stream from 1st–2nd May - a typical date.

This is the first record since 2001

+ Eurasian Wryneck *Jynx torquilla*

Regular spring and autumn migrant

2009: One on 2nd May was the first, with two on 14th May the only other spring sighting. A single on 27th August and two on 28th were then followed with four (three trapped) on 4th September and one the following day.

2010: Following a blank spring, one on 20th August was the first, with singles on 2nd and 9th September the only other records.

+ Great Spotted Woodpecker *Dendrocopos major*

Rare (and irruptive) migrant, mostly in autumn

2009: One frequented various gardens on the isle from 27th–28th April. In autumn, one was in Hjukni Geo on 7th November.

This is only our ninth spring record and first since 2005

+ Eurasian Golden Oriole *Oriolus oriolus*

Rare in spring; vagrant in autumn; 42 previous records (35 in spring, 7 in autumn)

2009: A ♂ at Hjukni Geo on 17th May was, typically, the only record.

2010: One on 19th May was the only record.

Accepted by SBRC

+ Red-backed Shrike *Lanius collurio*

Regular spring and autumn migrant

2009: Single ♂ were seen on 23rd, 24th and 31st May, with two more in June (2nd & 5th–6th). The only ♀ of the spring was trapped on 18th June. Late spring ♂ were found on 5th July and at the Chalet from 12th–15th July. In autumn, juveniles were at Quoy from 27th–31st August and around the Observatory from 14th–16th September. A late juvenile was around the Chalet on 23rd October.

2010: In spring, one on 19th May was the first, followed by a ♂ on 28th May and two ♂ the following day. Another ♂ on 4th June was followed by ♀ on 7th–8th and 15th June.

+ Great Grey Shrike *Lanius excubitor*

Scarce autumn migrant; rare in spring

2010: A single at Field on 6th May is a good spring record. In autumn, one was at the Mast on 30th September.

Most spring sightings are in April but May records are not unheard of and there is even one June record (27th–28th June 1965)

+ Western Jackdaw *Corvus monedula*

Scarce spring and autumn migrant

2009: In spring, one flew over on 30th April. Autumn birds included five on 21st October, rising to nine birds from 22nd–23rd. Eight were still present on 26th, seven the following day, three still on 30th and a single on 31st which remained right up to 8th December at least.

2010: In spring, one from 17th–19th May was the only record. In autumn one was present from 20th–21st October.

Rook *Corvus frugilegus*

Regular spring migrant, less common in autumn

2009: A single on 28th March was the first, rising to three from 28th–31st. Three more on 6th April and two from 15th–16th April were the final sightings of the year.

2010: One from 22nd–23rd March was the first, followed by another single on 31st March and regular counts of 1–7 birds in April and a peak of 12 on 28th. Four well-spaced singles were seen in May and on 2nd June. In autumn, a single on 20th October rose to three the next day and further sightings of these birds until 25th October.

Carrion Crow *Corvus corone*

Frequent spring migrant, less common in autumn

2009: Single-figure counts were made on most dates in April, but passage was evident in May when 22 on 1st increased to 37 the following day and 20–41 were recorded until 10th. Thereafter, 1–7 birds were the norm up to the last on 4th June, with ten (18th) and 12 (20th). In autumn, a single was seen occasionally in September and October, often in the company of a Hooded Crow.

2010: Single-figure counts (of 1–4) were made on twelve dates from April–early June, with an influx of 32 birds on 13th May the only double-figure count. A single on 12th August was an early autumn bird, with further sightings of 1–4 birds between 20th & 25th October.

Hooded Crow *Corvus cornix*

Resident, breeds in small numbers

2009: Present all year. Migrants were recorded from late March and double-figure counts were the norm through April, with a max of 20 on 30th. Numbers dropped through May to <10 as the breeders remained. Three pairs were noted but breeding success not recorded but was thought to be minimal. Single-figure counts were made on several dates from August to November, with no real migration noted and numbers reaching double-figures on 4th August (10) and 10th September (12).
2010: Present all year. Eight birds on 24th March were the first migrants noted, with counts of three (25th), ten (27th) and six (29th) the only other counts made before six (1st May) and 16 (28th May). Three pairs bred and at least one pair fledged young, at Busta Geo. In autumn, single-figure counts probably referred to the resident birds whilst double-figure counts (max 15 on 8th) on four dates in October indicated a slight passage.

Carrion x Hooded *Crow hybrid.*

2010: Singles were recorded on 12th April, 19th–21st April and on 14th May.

Northern Raven *Corvus corax*

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

2009: Present all year. A noisy flock of 22 passed through on 27th February. A handful (c.6) of other migrants was seen in early April. Four territories were logged and eggs were seen in Gunnawark on 11th April and three large chicks were seen in each nest at Gunnawark and Milens Houlan. The first presumed autumn migrants were noted from 10th September, with 2–10 birds recorded occasionally until 6th November.
2010: Present all year. Spring migrants were noted on six days in April, with 23 on 14th the highest count. In autumn, four counts (1–4 birds) of migrants were made in September and five counts, of 1–3 birds (but for six on 13th) were made in October.

Goldcrest *Regulus regulus*

Frequent spring and autumn migrant

2009: One in the Raevas on 14th March was the first, preceding a meagre passage in April of singles on six dates and the heaviest period recording 3–6 almost daily from 8th–11th. One on 1st May was the last. Autumn passage was more marked following the first on 3rd October. Influxes of 41 on 10th October (the peak count) and 23 (12th) were recorded before numbers dropped to mainly 3–6 birds regularly until the month's end, but for a further influx of 20 on 21st. Late singles were seen on 1st & 6th November.

2010: A single on the 24th March was the first, with a light passage following (3–8 birds on most dates from 1st–9th April) and a single from 20th–21st April. An early autumn bird from 20th–22nd August preceded 14 birds on 27th September, rising to 80 birds the following day. Numbers dropped to 25 by 30th, increasing to 41 again on 1st October. Again, numbers dropped to six birds by the 6th, but increased to 152 on 9th and 240 by the 11th. Thereafter, numbers gradually decreased to a single by 21st, with three on 23rd October the last.

+ Common Firecrest *Regulus ignicapilla*

Vagrant; four previous records

2009: One was in Gunnawark on 21st October

Accepted by SBCRC

+ Greater Short-toed Lark *Calandrella brachydactyla*

Scarce spring and autumn migrant

2009: One frequented Meoness from 14th–16th October.

2010: In spring, one was present from 16th–17th May and in autumn, one was seen on the early date of 10th September.

All three accepted by SBCRC

+ Woodlark *Lullula arborea*

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

2009: One was found at Neder Taft on 23rd October and remained until the month's end. Incredibly, three birds were found there on 1st November and were still present the following day.

The three birds on 1st–2nd November represent the second highest count since 15 birds on 26th October 1948. Three birds accepted by SBRC

Eurasian Sky Lark *Alauda arvensis*

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

2009: A small number (<5) were recorded in the winter months before an arrival of 30 on 27th February. Counts were daily from 1st March, peaking at 255 birds on 5th March. Numbers remained high (24–200) until early May when migration ceased. Return passage was evident from early September, with 252 birds on 14th the first real arrival. Numbers were constantly >65 birds until the month's end with another peak of 258 on 28th. Counts in October fluctuated between 10–120 birds, and between 15–42 birds in November, before slowly dwindling to 3–15 birds in December.

2010: A few (<10) birds were recorded in January and early February, with 45 birds recorded on 19th February being the first real arrival. Similar numbers were recorded intermittently before 298 birds (the spring peak) on 22nd March, the main arrival. Daily passage followed, with numbers rarely below three-figures (generally <200) before fluctuating numbers (16–106) from 10th–30th April. In autumn, counts <100 were the norm before 125 on 19th September and three-figure counts daily until 10th

October, peaking at 260 on 7th October. Moderate passage (<75) followed, petering out to single-figures into early November and two on 23rd November were the last logged.

+ Horned (Shore) Lark *Eremophila alpestris*

Scarce spring and autumn migrant

2009: One at Wester Lother on 28th October remained in that area until 4th November.
2010: A single was at the Airstrip on the unusual date of 23rd June.
Although June records are not unprecedented, most spring records are from mid-April to mid-May whilst in autumn birds can turn up any time from mid-September to mid-November

Sand Martin *Riparia riparia*

Regular spring migrant, less common in autumn

2009: In spring, two on 25th April were the first, with another two following on 2nd May. Five on 18th & 20th May were the peaks, with singles on five dates from 18th–31st May. Autumn records comprised singles on 14th & 26th August and an influx of four birds was noted on 1st September. Counts of 1–3 were then made on nine dates until 28th September.
2010: A single on 10th April was the first, with passage stronger from 25th April when 1–5 were seen on most days until 27th May, peaking at seven birds on 29th April. In July, singles, presumably the same bird, were seen from 8th–11th, with two on 19th. Autumn passage was light, confined to singles on two dates in August and September (with three birds from 22nd–23rd August) and a late single on 7th October.

Barn Swallow *Hirundo rustica*

Common spring and autumn migrant; occasionally breeds

2009: In spring, a single on 1st April was followed by predominantly single-figure counts until the month's end, with influxes of 22 (25th) and 25 (28th). Thereafter, passage was steady with near daily counts of between 5 and 100 birds (the monthly max from 20th–22nd May), before tailing off to single-figure counts through June. Single-figure counts were then regularly made between 16th July and 27th September, with peaks of 11 (14th August) and 15 (1st September).
2010: Typically, a single on 1st April was the first and was followed with singles on six dates before 23 on 25th April preceded almost daily passage through May and sporadically into June. Passage within this period fluctuated between two and the spring peak of 46 birds on 29th May. Incredibly, four pairs bred in the summer with nests at the Mast, waterworks, the airstrip and the new Observatory garage. Three of these successfully fledged young with one pair even attempting a second brood. In autumn, counts of 9–27 in August may have been the breeding birds. Single figures in September may have included a few migrants with a peak of 15 on 12th and four on 13th October were the last.
Swallows are infrequent nesters on Fair Isle with 1–2 pairs from time to time, so to get four pairs in one year was most unexpected. It is also interesting that all four pairs chose to nest in the north of the isle!

Common House Martin *Delichon urbicum*

Frequent spring and autumn migrant; has bred

2009: A single on 13th April was the first with a further 1–2 between 24th and 28th April. There were then no sightings until six on 14th May and 22 on 16th. The following daily passage was steady, rising to 60 on 21st–22nd before quickly dropping to two birds on 23rd May. Numbers then fluctuated between 1–17 birds until the last of the year on 8th June.

2010: An arrival of 13 birds on 25th April were the first and was followed by single-figure counts on most dates through until 5th July, but for peaks of 15 and 12 (21st and 22nd May). A good autumn by recent standards saw singles recorded on three dates in September and four dates in October, with two birds on 7th September.

+ Red-rumped Swallow *Cecropis daurica*

Vagrant; six previous records

2009: One spent the late afternoon patrolling the shore near Hesti Geo on 20th April and another was seen around there on 3rd May, before relocating to the east coast at Hesswalls.

Whilst all the Observatory staff are certain these were different birds, SBRC assumed them to be the same and therefore accepted just one bird.

+ Greenish Warbler *Phylloscopus trochiloides*

Rare autumn migrant (31 records), vagrant in spring/summer (7 records)

2009: A good year with singles found at Stackhoull on 17th–19th August, at Lower Leogh on 26th August and a first-year trapped on 3rd September.

Three records in a year are the most since 2000, when three birds were also seen.

+ Arctic Warbler *Phylloscopus borealis*

Rare autumn migrant (69 previous records), vagrant in spring/summer (five records)

2009: A first-winter was found at Burkle on 16th September, moving to Kenaby the next day and favouring Schoolton from 18th–19th.

Accepted by BBRC

2010: A first-winter at Shirva on 14th–15th August was the first, followed by another first-winter trapped in the Plantation on 31st August and remaining in the Observatory area until the 2nd September.

Both accepted by BBRC

Yellow-browed Warbler *Phylloscopus inornatus*

Regular autumn migrant

+ 2009: One was at Shirva from 16th–18th September and was not followed until singles on 6th, 7th, 11th and 13th–15th October, with two on 12th. A poor year by recent standards.

2010: Five on 20th September were the first, falling to a single bird by the 23rd. Another single on the 26th, before 15 the following day fell to 11 by the 28th, a single by the 29th and increased to nine birds on the 30th. In October, 1–5 birds were recorded on most dates until the 19th, with influxes of 12 (11th) and seven (16th).

+ Radde's Warbler *Phylloscopus schwarzi*

Vagrant; five previous records; one in September, four in October

2010: One was in Schoolton crop from 13th–14th October.
Accepted by SBRC

+ Wood Warbler *Phylloscopus sibilatrix*

Regular spring and autumn migrant

2009: Spring passage was confined to a ten day period in May, with three on 14th (also first of the year) and four on 16th being the highest counts followed by 1–2 on five dates until 24th. Autumn singles were seen on 8th, 11th and 13th August, with four birds on 10th.

2010: One at the Observatory on 11th August was the first of the year and was followed by regular counts of 1–3 birds on most dates until the month's end (minimum of 13 individuals). A late bird on 14th September was the last of the year.

Common Chiffchaff *Phylloscopus collybita*

Frequent spring and autumn migrant

2009: A steady passage was recorded, following the first on 30th March. Records were daily from 7th April and fluctuated between 8–13 birds until the month's end, with a peak of 19 on 25th. May was similar, with records of 1–8 daily until 10th and 18 on 14th before daily records recommenced from 16th, with single-figure counts on most days until 16th June and influxes of 12 (18th May) and 10 (20th May). Autumn began with a single on 4th September and was not followed until another on 13th September and hereafter irregular counts (of 1–9) were made on most days until end October. October peaks during this period included 13 (12th) and 12 (31st). Some of the birds recorded in mid-late October included birds that showed characteristics of *P.c.abietinus* and *P.c.tristis*. November records included 1–2 *'collybita'* (last on 23rd) and 1–3 'eastern types' (from 1st–8th). A single *P.c.tristis* on 8th & 11th December was the last.

2010: Five birds on 24th March were the first, increasing to 17 birds (spring peak), the following day. Numbers dwindled to four birds by the month's end and single-figure counts were then made on most dates through April and May. Singles were recorded on 12 dates in June (with three on 16th), before a moulting bird over-summered from 9th July–4th September, at least. The first autumn migrant was noted on 26th August and 1–5 birds were logged through September, increasing to 13 birds on 28th. Daily October counts fluctuated, from 1–60 (peaking at 73 birds on 12th) until the last on 27th. A single on 4th November and two on 10th were the last. Birds showing characteristics of *P.c.abietinus* and *P.c.tristis* were recorded from late September.

Willow Warbler *Phylloscopus trochilus*

Frequent spring and autumn migrant

2009: One on 9th April was the first and 1–7 were regularly recorded before an arrival of 31 on 14th May. Numbers soon built up to 84 (16th) and 112 (18th), but dropped as quickly to 25 (20th) and six (23rd). These were followed by 1–7 to 31st May, with two on 1st June and a single from 8th–9th. The first autumn migrant was on 4th August and numbers were constant through August until mid-September, though

never exceeding 30 birds, but for 44 (4th September) and 36 the following day. Predominantly single-figure counts followed from 15th until the month's end, with stragglers on three dates in October and the final two on 11th.
2010: A single in the Raevas on the very early date of 25th March was not followed until a single on the more typical date of 6th April. Spring migrants then arrived in waves, with 1–2 from 10th–14th April and then more regular sightings (of predominantly single-figure counts) from 23rd April until the end of May and peaks of 15 (27th April), 13 (29th April) and 14 (7th May). Singles were recorded on nine dates in June, with four birds on 11th. In autumn, singles on 26th & 27th July were the first and following two on 7th August, counts of migrants fluctuated until 12th September of between 2–36 birds. Thereafter, single-figure counts were the norm (but for 12 on 20th September), falling to 1–3 birds in October, the last on the 17th.
The bird on 25th March 2010 is, by nine days, our earliest ever record.

Eurasian Blackcap *Sylvia atricapilla*

Common spring and autumn migrant

2009: A ♀ on 8th April was the first, with a ♂ the following day and another on 12th. Three on 19th preceded passage from 23rd with 1–6 birds daily until 10th May. A monthly maximum of eight birds was recorded on 14th, with 1–4 on most dates until the month's end and 1–2 in the first few days of June. In July, a ♀ was trapped on the 3rd, with a ♂ present from 14th–15th. Singles on 17th & 21st August were the first autumn birds, with 1–2 on most dates through September and peaks of three (3rd) and five (19th). Single-figure counts were the norm in October, but for influxes of 24 (11th), 13 (21st) and 12 (28th). But for 20 on 7th and three on 5th, November records comprised singles on five dates up to 23rd.
2010: A ♂ on 28th March preceded sightings of ♂ on three dates in April before the first female on 1st May. High single-figure counts were the norm through May, falling to records of 1–2 birds occasionally in June and a late ♂ on 9th July. In autumn, an early ♂ on 14th August and another on 4th September preceded daily counts of predominantly single-figures from 6th September, reaching double-figures on eight dates until the months end (max. 16 birds on 9th & 11th). October began with 18 birds on 1st and hereafter daily counts up to 20th saw fluctuations between 1–55 birds. Counts of 1–3 were then occasionally made until the months end and a late ♀ on 12th November the last.
The male on 28th March 2010 is our earliest ever by a full week!

Garden Warbler *Sylvia borin*

Frequent spring and autumn migrant

2009: Spring passage commenced with five birds on 14th May before twelve on 16th (also on 20th) and daily counts of 1–9 until the month's end. Three on 2nd June fell to two birds the next day and singles on a further nine dates. In autumn, single-figure counts were the norm through August and September, reaching double-figures on just two dates - 27th August (13) and 4th September (12). Two birds in October (5th & 11th) were the last.

2010: A poor spring, with 1–3 birds recorded on just eleven dates between 19th May and 18th June. A late single was logged on 18th July. Autumn passage commenced with a single on 6th August and was followed with predominantly single-figure counts through until 30th September. Influxes included 12 birds on 7th September (rising to 32 on 9th and falling to 12 by 12th) and 12 on 27th September. In October, 1–3 birds were seen occasionally through the month until the last on the 27th.

Barred Warbler *Sylvia nisoria*

Regular autumn migrant, vagrant in spring (three records)

2009: Passage, typically, began in mid-August with the first on the 15th. Counts of 1–2 then followed on most days until 19th September, with four birds the max on 26th August. Singles were seen on five dates in early October (probably involving just three individuals). Finally, two late stragglers were seen on 31st October.

2010: One on 14th August was the first and 1–3 birds, with peaks of four on 4th & 27th September, were regularly recorded on most dates until the last on 16th October.

Lesser Whitethroat *Sylvia curruca*

Frequent spring and autumn migrant

2009: The first of the year was on 20th April and was then followed by a light passage of 1–3 birds almost daily until 10th May. A good count of 16 on both 14th & 16th May and 15 on 19th had dwindled to 1–3 from 23rd May to 16th June. Autumn birds comprised singles on 22nd & 24th August and 1–2 on most days through September, but for a wave of slightly heavier passage from 12th–18th when counts ranged from 1–8 birds. Five further singles were seen up to mid-October and one from 31st October–2nd November was the last.

The last two birds of the autumn (16th–17th October and 31st October–2nd November) bore characteristics of one of the East Asian subspecies S.c.halimodendri or S.c.minula. The former was trapped and whilst most measurements suggested it was closer to S.c.minula, DNA analysis indicated it was (on current knowledge) of the race S.c.halimodendri

2010: A single on 25th April was the first, with two birds on 26th & 30th April. Singles were recorded on eight dates in May, with three on 31st. In June, up to the 15th, 1–3 birds were noted on most dates, with six on the 3rd. Autumn passage produced records of 1–3 on most dates from 18th August until 19th October and influxes in September of four (1st) and five (30th).

Common Whitethroat *Sylvia communis*

Frequent spring migrant, less common in autumn

2009: Four singles were recorded between 15th April and 1st May before five on 14th and a fall of 26 on 16th May. Numbers dropped to 17–18 birds over the next two days before another influx of 34 on 19th May quickly dropped to 1–6 birds until the months end. Three or four birds were noted in June. A moulting ♂ was present at Schoolton from 5th July until 13th August, joined by second birds on 3rd and 11th. 1–5 birds were seen from 24th August to 2nd September with at least three further birds noted up to 26th September.

2010: A single on 4th May was the first, followed by 1–3 birds on most dates until the months end and singles on 1st & 2nd June. In autumn, singles on 24th August and 3rd September were followed with sightings of 1–4 on most dates in September (with six on 11th) and up to 12th October.

+ Subalpine Warbler *Sylvia cantillans*

Rare spring migrant (70 previous records), vagrant in autumn (three records)

2009: A first-summer ♂ was found at Skerryholm on 21st May.
2010: One was at Lower Leogh on 26th September.

+ Pallas's Grasshopper Warbler *Locustella certhiola*

Vagrant; 20 previous records, mid-September to mid-October

2010: One was at Leogh from 22nd–23rd September.
Accepted by BBRC

+ Lanceolated Warbler *Locustella lanceolata*

Rare autumn migrant (79 previous records)

2010: One was in the Quoy/Schoolton area from 2nd–3rd October - a typical date and location.
Our 80th individual (out of 130 British records) to be accepted by BBRC. The year 2009 was the first 'blank' year since 1995.

Common Grasshopper Warbler *Locustella naevia*

Regular spring and autumn migrant

2009: Singles from 11th–13th April and on 16th & 28th April preceded counts of 1–2 on 14 dates until 31st May. Autumn singles were seen on 28th–29th August, 1st September and two from 11th–12th October.
2010: A single was at Schoolton on 8th–9th April, with further counts of 1–2 birds made on eight dates until 27th May. In autumn, an early single on 11th August was not followed until another on 8th September. Following the season peak of three birds on 11th September, 1–2 birds were recorded on 14 dates up to 19th October, but probably involving no more than 11 birds.

+ River Warbler *Locustella fluviatilis*

Vagrant; 12 previous records (six spring, six autumn)

2009: One was discovered in Vaila's Trees on 31st May. In autumn, an unstreaked large *Locustella* found in Da Water on 4th October was thought most likely to be an 'eastern' Savi's Warbler (*Locustella luscinioides*). However, the following day a River Warbler was positively identified in Lower Stoneybrek garden and, following extended observations, it was thought to be the same individual that had been seen the previous day in Da Water. It remained in Lower Stoneybrek until 11th October.
The spring bird has been accepted by BBRC. The autumn bird is still being deliberated over.

+ Eastern Olivaceous Warbler *Iduna pallida*

Vagrant; one previous record

2009: An interesting warbler trapped on 21st June was identified as this species.
Accepted by BBRC. Previous record 5th–13th June 1995.

Icterine Warbler *Hippolais icterina*

Scarce spring and autumn migrant

2009: In spring, two on 14th May were the first and 1–3 were seen on most dates until the month's end - at least 14 individuals. The last spring migrant was seen around Midway from 2nd–3rd June. Two on 2nd August were early, with one present the following day. Singles then followed on five dates from 21st–28th and on 2nd & 15th September - a minimum of six birds.
2010: In spring, singles on 27th, 30th & 31st May were the only records. Autumn passage was no better with singles recorded on six dates between 25th August and 1st September.

Sedge Warbler *Acrocephalus schoenobaenus*

Regular spring migrant, less common in autumn

2009: The first of the year was in the Plantation on 3rd May and 1–2 birds were recorded on 10 dates from 8th–30th May, with peaks of three (9th & 14th) and four (20th). Late spring birds were seen on 2nd and 24th June. In autumn, two birds on the 3rd August were followed with 1–2 on nine dates until 6th September and a peak of three on 2nd September - approximately 16 individuals.
2010: One on 3rd May was the first and 1–3 were regularly recorded until the months end, with a peak of seven birds on 21st. A ♂ was singing in Schoolton ditch from mid-July and he quickly attracted a mate. A nest was built and they were observed feeding young on 12th August and at least two fledged juveniles on 26th August. The first migrant was recorded on 16th August and thereafter 1–2 birds were seen daily up to mid-September probably referring to the breeders, but 1–2 on just four further dates to 30th September may have been migrants.
This is the first breeding record for Fair Isle and only the fourth for Shetland.

+ Blyth's Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus dumetorum*

Vagrant in spring (six previous records); Rare in autumn (16 previous records)

2009: A first-winter was trapped in the bird-crop strip at Lower Stoneybrek on 5th October.
2010: In spring, one was trapped at the Chalet on 10th June. In autumn, one was at the Haa on 11th October, with presumably the same bird relocating to South Harbour from 14th–18th October.
All three accepted by BBRC. In-line with the national statistics for this species the number of accepted records is increasing - 16 of the 25 accepted Fair Isle records have been since 1995.

Marsh Warbler *Acrocephalus palustris*

Scarce spring migrant, rare in autumn

2009: Typically a late spring migrant, three on 31st May were the first and singles were seen on 12 dates in June, with two on 30th - a total of at least 11 individuals. One on 1st September was the only autumn record.

+ 2010: Singles on 29th May, 3rd & 4th June and 26th June were the only spring sightings. In autumn, one at Kenaby on 22nd August was followed by a single at the Chalet from 31st August–4th September and another on 7th September. Two on 20th September were the last.

Eurasian Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus scirpaceus*

Scarce spring migrant, regular in autumn

2009: Singles were seen on ten dates in May from 17th–29th and two birds on 20th - a maximum of nine individuals. The first autumn migrant was on 7th August, then three birds on 9th preceded a period of more regular passage of 1–4 birds recorded on most dates from 18th–31st. Three singles were seen in September - on the 1st, 6th and 14th.

2010: In spring, one from 15th–16th May, one on 31st May and another on 5th June were the only records. Autumn records comprised a single on 14th August and records of 1–4 on most dates from 6th–28th September. Singles were seen on four dates in October, up to the 10th.

+ Great Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus arundinaceus*

Vagrant; 12 previous records (11 in spring)

2009: One was trapped and ringed at Leogh on 30th–31st May. Another frequented Schoolton & Shirva on 15th July with presumably the same seen at Leogh on 24th–25th July.

Both accepted by BBRC

+ Bohemian Waxwing *Bombycilla garrulus*

Scarce/irruptive autumn migrant, rare in spring

2009: A single was at Schoolton on 13th January and a single was seen on 6th December.

Sightings of Waxwings in January and December on Fair Isle are rare (<20 records)

2010: Two birds on 16th October were followed by 1–3 birds sporadically until 23 on 23rd October signalled the beginning of a heavier period of passage. Birds were seen daily and numbers fluctuated between 4–45 birds until 3rd November and a peak of '50+' on 25th October. A single on 27th November was the last.

+ Eurasian Treecreeper *Certhia familiaris*

Vagrant; seven previous records; five in autumn, one in winter, one in spring

2010: One was in South Raeva from 8th–9th October, before re-locating to Hjukni Geo on 10th October.

This is the first record on the island since 1998

Eurasian Wren *Troglodytes troglodytes*

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

2009: Birds of the local race *(T.t.fridarensis)* were present all year and an absolute minimum of 29 territories were recorded. Birds of the 'nominate' race were found on 4th May, 2nd October (2) and 5th October.

2010: The regular survey of singing males produced a count of 31 territories.

Common Starling *Sturnus vulgaris*

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

2009 & 2010: Present all year and no formal counts made. Breeding success is summarised below.

Year	Modal Laying Date	Mean Clutch Size	Mean Brood Size	Mean No. Fledged	% Eggs Fledged
2009	16th May	4.74 (n=58)	3.92	3.44	78%
2010	20th May	4.70 (n=50)	4.24	3.75	88%

+ White's Thrush *Zoothera dauma*

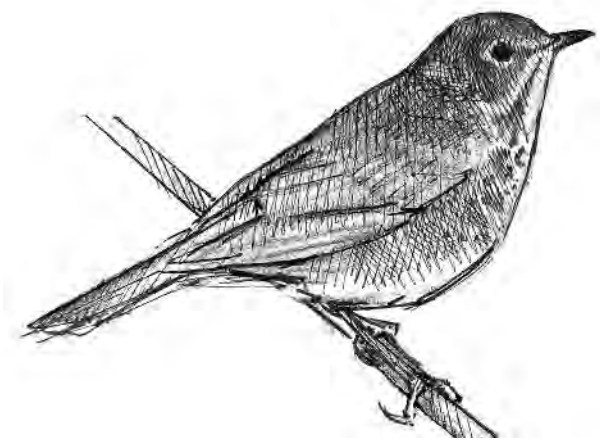
Vagrant; eleven previous records

2009: One skulking in Hjukni Geo on the evening of the 10th October continued this species' impressive recent showing on Fair Isle, following the three birds in 2008! *Accepted by BBRC*

+ Swainson's Thrush *Catharus ustulatus*

Vagrant; one previous record

2010: A very elusive bird was in the Lower Stoneybrek/Stackhoull area on 15th September. *A long-awaited second record (and by 12 days, the earliest British record), our first frequented Hjukni Geo from 30th September–6th October 1990. Accepted by BBRC*



Swainson's Thrush
© Jack Ashton-Booth

Ring Ouzel *Turdus torquatus*

Frequent spring and autumn migrant

2009: Two on 8th April preceded singles on a further seven dates up to 21st April, another on 2nd May, three on 17th May and one the following day. In autumn, five arrived on 6th October with a further 15 on 10th (rising to 16 the next day) and a single on 17th. Four on 20th were then followed by singles on seven dates until 6th November, but for two on 23rd October.

2010: Three birds on 2nd April were the first and were followed by singles on 14 dates in April and May, with two birds on 11th–12th May - a spring total of approximately 15 birds. Four birds on 27th September were the first of the autumn and had increased to 14 by 30th September and 28 by 1st October. Numbers then dropped to <10, but there was a further influx of 18 birds on 9th October. Thereafter there were singles on six dates until the last on the 24th October.

Common Blackbird *Turdus merula*

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

2009: Small numbers were seen in January and February (max 18 on 5th February), with daily passage from 1st March. Numbers fluctuated between 9–20 birds until 27 on 26th preceded a period of heavier passage until 11th April when numbers were between 11–37 and 55 on 1st April the max. Single-figure counts followed on most dates until the month's end and 1–4 occasionally in May, with a late ♀ in June. In autumn, one on 30th September was the first and another on 4th October before numbers steadily increased to 175 by 11th. Double-figure counts (of 37–85 birds) followed daily until 176 on 20th and a decent arrival of 570 on 23rd. Three-figure counts were then made (>200 birds) on most dates until dropping to <200 by 11th November. Peaks during this period were of 614 (28th) and 604 (30th). Less than 50 were then recorded until the end of November and up to 13 in December.

2010: Around 50 were counted in January and February, falling to <20 in early March. A light passage from late March saw double-figure counts (14–78) up to 11th April, falling to <10 until the months end and <9 sporadically through May. 1–2 birds were recorded occasionally in June. A ♂ on 14th August was an early autumn migrant, presumably a fairly local breeder and was followed with <4 birds sporadically until 13 on 27th September. Daily passage followed (counts of 16–53) before the autumn peak of 260 on 9th October. Numbers remained high (47–130 birds) until 17th, dropping to <30 the following day, before another arrival of 255 birds on 9th November. Numbers slowly petered out to 60 by 23rd November and <30 by December.

+ Black-throated Thrush *Turdus atrogularis*

Vagrant; 11 previous records, nine in autumn

2010: A first-winter ♂ was found near the Observatory on 23rd October, later moving to the Gully area (where it was trapped and ringed) and remaining in the vicinity until 24th before being re-found on Hoini on 28th October.

This is the first since a female in spring 2007 and the first in autumn since October 2005. Accepted by BBRC

Fieldfare *Turdus pilaris*

Common spring and autumn migrant, often over-winters

2009: Numbers in January and February were unusually high with counts in January between 55–110 and up to 50 birds in February. Counts were daily in March and April and numbers fluctuated widely from 2–62 birds. Three on 1st May, with one remaining until 6th, were the last. Two on 5th October were the first autumn sightings, but the first real arrivals were not until 10th (37), 13th (180) and 14th (383). Heavy passage was then noted, with varying numbers (320–773) until the months end and peaks of 1267 (23rd) and 1372 (28th).Three-figure counts were made on most dates in the first week of November (110–530), before slowly decreasing to <30 by 19th and 1–3 birds in December.

2010: Birds were ever-present between January and early March, with 150 on 27th January the highest count. A very light spring passage saw counts of 1–22 birds on most dates between 20th March and 4th May. In autumn, following the first on 22nd August, single-figure counts (<6) were made on most dates in September and early October before 41 on 9th October. Numbers hereafter fluctuated between 1–60 birds, with influxes of 200 (13th October) and 115 (9th November) the only larger arrivals.

Song Thrush *Turdus philomelos*

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

2009: January to mid-March produced counts of 1–2 birds on five dates before 1–6 birds were regularly counted from 27th March to end-May, with an influx of 15 on 11th April. In autumn, single birds were noted on eight dates from 16th–30th September (with two on 23rd), but 184 birds on 6th October was the first fall, dropping to just three birds by 9th and a further influx of 548 birds on 10th. Numbers soon dropped to <50 by 12th and <30 into November, becoming single-figures by 8th November until counts ceased on 17th. December records were of 1–2 birds on three dates.

2010: Single-figure counts were the norm in the early months of the year, before 30 birds on 1st–2nd April. Numbers soon dropped back to <10 by the 5th and single-figure counts were made on most dates until 15th May, but for 10 on 24th April. Singles were seen on three dates in June. The first autumn bird was noted on the 6th September, with predominantly single-figure counts made on most dates before an arrival of 95 birds on 27th September. Thereafter, three-figure counts were the norm until 12th October, with 650 on 9th October the autumn peak. Numbers soon dwindled to single-figure counts by 19th October through to the month's end, with occasional counts made until the last (9) on 23rd November.

Redwing *Turdus iliacus*

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

2009: A small number (<30) were recorded in January through to March. Passage was daily through April, but numbers were still generally <30 until 11th and then <12 until the 29th. Further sightings comprised 1–2 birds on a few dates in May with two on 6th June the last. Singles on 28th & 30th September were the first autumn birds and subsequently, birds were present to the end of the year. The first significant fall was

1990 birds on 6th October, <100 birds from 7th–9th until another fall of 3660 birds on 10th. Numbers then fluctuated from 100–823 birds until the month's end but for another arrival of 1955 on 20th October. November counts were generally below 300, but for 500 (4th) and 360 (5th). Ten on 6th December was the highest count for that month.
2010: A good number of wintering birds were recorded in January and February (max 60 on 27th January). From 3rd March–17th May, single-figure counts of migrants were made on most dates, with double-figure counts on just 13 dates within this period and a peak of 41 on 2nd May. A late migrant was present on 13th June. In autumn, singles on 9th & 20th September preceded daily passage, with numbers building up slowly to 80 birds by 30th September, but falling to 17 birds by 7th October. There was an arrival of 250 birds the following day, before an impressive 3000 birds on 9th October, but numbers dropped to <500 by 11th, increasing to 750 birds by 13th, before falling to <100 by 16th. Counts fluctuated hereafter (10–140 birds), until the last on 23rd November.

Mistle Thrush *Turdus viscivorus*

Scarce spring and autumn migrant

+ 2009: One was in the Havens on 9th March and another single was found on 4th April. Two on 1st November were the only autumn sightings.
2010: A single was at Busta on 17th January, with presumably the same bird recorded on 18th & 28th January and again on 17th February. Spring singles were recorded on three dates in March and on 2nd April, with two birds present on 24th March. In autumn, 1–4 birds were logged almost daily from 28th September–16th October. A late single was seen on 12th November.

Spotted Flycatcher *Muscicapa striata*

Frequent spring and autumn migrant

2009: Two on 14th May became 20 on 16th, with 10–18 daily until 20th and 1–6 regularly until the months end. Three on 2nd June and four scattered singles (last on 27th June) were the final spring migrants. There was just one autumn record, on 5th September.
2010: In spring, a single on 18th May was the first and single-figure counts were then made on most dates up to 11th June. A single on 24th–25th June was the last. Autumn records comprised a single from 22nd–23rd August, with another on 4th September and 1–4 birds were then recorded on most dates until the last on 9th October. Double-figures were reached on four dates and a peak of 16 on 7th September.

European Robin *Erithacus rubecula*

Common spring and autumn migrant

2009: Up to four birds were seen in January and 1–5 were seen sporadically in March, with passage becoming slightly heavier through April and May, but counts never reached double-figures. In autumn, one was at the Mast from 23rd September until 7th October and 12 birds arrived on 10th. Numbers soon increased to 46 birds by 13th and slowly dropped again to single-figures, before 24 on 23rd steadily built up

to the monthly max of 57 by 28th. Numbers fluctuated hereafter between 4 and 56 birds until 20th November. Counts of 4–8 birds were made in December.
2010: In January, up to four birds were seen on three dates, but spring passage commenced on 20th March with a single. Numbers steadily increased to a peak of 77 birds on 1st April, before slowly dwindling to <10 by 11th April and just 1–4 birds on most dates from 25th April to 21st June. In autumn, predominantly single-figure counts were made on most dates from 7th September, increasing to 16 on 29th and 17 by 30th September. Passage in October was daily, with 14–30 birds from 1st–8th before 140 on 9th and 150 on 11th. Numbers then slowly dropped to <50 by 16th and <20 by 19th. Small numbers were then recorded until 12th November, with a late single on 23rd November.

+ Red-flanked Bluetail *Tarsiger cyanurus*

Vagrant; six previous records, all in September/October

2010: Incredibly, *two* birds were discovered on 27th September, with one at the Gully soon after lunch and another found at the Mast in mid-afternoon. Another was found on 16th October, below the Mast on Vatnagaard, where it showed well to the assembled crowd.
All three accepted by BBRC

+ Common Nightingale *Luscinia megarhynchos*

Rare spring migrant (c. 41–42 records), vagrant in autumn (eight records)

2009: One was at Lower Leogh on 21st May and what was presumed to be the same bird was at the Mast two days later.
2010: A single was at the Mast on 26th September.
The 2010 individual was a distinctive bird appearing to be long-tailed and with a very marked supercilium and on plumage/structure seemed closer to 'africana, than 'hafizi' or megarhyncos'. Details were sent to BOURC & BBRC for reference.

+ Bluethroat *Luscinia svecica*

Regular spring and autumn migrant

2009: Two on 14th May preceded a colourful arrival of 15+ birds on 16th May. Eleven the following day, became seven by 18th, four by 19th and singles on 20th & 22nd–26th. Single ♀ were seen at Kenaby on 2nd June and in the trapping area from 19th–21st June. Two on 14th September were the first of the autumn and a single was seen on 16th. In October, a single was trapped on 3rd, with a new bird on 4th and 1–2 almost daily between 6th and 16th.
2010: A light spring passage saw ♂ recorded on 13th, 15th and 18th–19th May. Further singles were recorded on 3rd, 5th and 14th June. In autumn, a single on 19th September, increased to two the following day before five birds arrived on 27th (with one remaining on 28th). One lingered from 1st–9th October before the final single, at the Haa, on 23rd October.

Red-breasted Flycatcher *Ficedula parva*

Rare spring and scarce autumn migrant

+ 2009: A good spring saw a ♂ on 9th June, a ♀ on 12th June and a ♀ on 24th June. There were no autumn records.

2010: A good autumn, with three birds on 28th September and singles on five dates in October, up to 12th. A minimum of six birds were involved.

European Pied Flycatcher *Ficedula hypoleuca*

Frequent spring and autumn migrant

2009: In spring, three on 14th May were followed by an influx of 25 on 16th May. Numbers dropped slightly over the next two days, before another arrival increased numbers to 19 on 19th. Thereafter, 1–5 were recorded until 24th. Finally, a ♂ was seen on 6th June. Autumn migration almost passed unnoticed, with just nine well-spaced singles from 12th August–16th October and low peaks of just three (28th August) and four (4th September).

2010: A very light spring passage; two ♂ on 7th May was followed by a single on 15th, two on 29th and a ♀ on 30th May and a ♀ on 14th June. In autumn, singles were recorded on four dates in August, between 16th & 24th, before two on 4th September. Single-figure counts were then made until 13th, before 12 on 20th (with two the following day) and nine on 27th. The autumn peak of 19 birds on 28th, dropped to three the following day and a single on 30th, with 1–3 birds recorded on most dates in October, up to the last on 17th.

Black Redstart *Phoenicurus ochruros*

Regular spring migrant, scarce in autumn

2009: A single at the Plantation on 14th March was the first and a decent passage in April saw 1–3 birds regularly counted between 6th and 28th before a ♂ from 4th–10th May. Another ♂ was seen on 1st–2nd June. Autumn migrants were found at the Mast on 26th October (with two there the next day) and two new birds on 1st November, with one remaining until 4th. A final bird was seen on 11th November.

2010: Five birds on 23rd March were the first and daily sightings (of 1–4) continued until the months end, with sporadic sightings (of 1–3) made until 26th April. A late spring/early autumn migrant was seen on 28th June. In autumn, a ♂ on 1st September was followed with further singles on seven dates in September and 14 dates in October, probably involving no more than five birds. One on 9th November was the last.

Common Redstart *Phoenicurus phoenicurus*

Frequent spring and autumn migrant

2009: In spring, single ♂ were seen on 11th & 15th April before two (mm and ♀) from 29th–30th April. Single-figure counts (of 1–3 birds) were made on six dates before 17 on 14th April and an influx of 50 on 16th May. Numbers soon petered out (35 still on 19th and six the following day) to just single birds by the month's end. A late ♀ was at Leogh on 8th June. A poor autumn with singles on 6th & 24th August the first arrivals,

followed by seven (peak count) on 4th September and 1–2 until 15th September.
2010: A ♂ on 25th April was the first, with further ♂ on three dates in May and ♀ on 31st May and 2nd June - a poor spring. Autumn passage commenced with two birds on 4th September, increasing to 29 birds on 7th (autumn peak) before dwindling to predominantly single-figure counts on most dates until the month's end. Counts of 1–6 birds on most dates were the norm through October, the last on 23rd.

Whinchat *Saxicola rubetra*

Frequent spring and autumn migrant

2009: A ♂ at Field on 28th April was the first, rising to four by 30th and down to three from 1st–2nd May. Six were then seen on 14th May before an arrival of 30 on 16th May. Numbers dwindled to 16 by 19th and three by 20th. Singles were then seen on four dates from 25th–29th May. Autumn passage was steady, with 1–4 birds seen on most dates from 10th August–9th September and 1–2 on most dates until 17th October, with peaks of 10 (26th & 27th August), seven (4th September) and three (1st October).
2010: Unusually, the first of the year was a ♀ on 29th April, with the first ♂ playing catch up on 4th May. 1–2 birds were then seen on thirteen dates until 1st June. In autumn, single-figure counts were the norm following the first on 16th August, before an arrival of 18 birds on 8th September rose to 31 birds by 11th. Numbers dropped to 25 birds the following day and daily sightings involving <10 were the norm until the months end, but for influxes of 13 (20th) and 16(26th). In October, daily sightings of 4–8 birds from 1st–11th, dropped to 1–3 birds until the last on 22nd.

+ Siberian Stonechat *Saxicola maurus*

Vagrant; c.39 previous records

2009: A ♂ was briefly at Schoolton on 13th October and a first-year was found in Hjukni Geo on 15th October.
Still awaiting descriptions

European Stonechat *Saxicola torquatus*

Scarce spring and autumn migrant

2009: In spring, a ♀ at Quoy from 4th–10th March was joined by a ♂ on the latter date. Six on 15th March (five ♂) was the peak, with three still on 17th. Four different singles were seen on 19th, 24th & 25th March and 9th–12th April. Autumn birds were seen on 10th October and 6th November.
2010: A ♀ on 24th March was the first, with five birds the next day, seven on 26th, four on 27th and 1–2 until the months end. A ♂ was at the Chalet from 9th–11th April. In autumn, a single was seen on 3rd October.

Northern Wheatear *Oenanthe oenanthe*

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

2009: A ♂ on 26th March was the first, but sightings were not daily until three ♂ on 1st April. Passage was slow, with numbers generally less than 80 birds before 122 on 26th April and 139 the next day. Autumn migration was similar, with 50 on 17th August the first 'fall' and 163 on 22nd August the highest count of the year. Counts in September ranged from 6–87 and, but for 15 on 1st, October counts were <10, with the last single on 28th.

2010: Two ♂ on 25th March were the first, with 1–3 following before counts exceeded double-figures from 8th April. Passage was slow (11–56 birds), before 291 on 25th April. Hereafter, numbers were >113, before settling to <100 by 8th May, when just breeding birds remained. The first autumn count was of 34 birds on 12th August and double-figure counts were the norm until the end of September, dropping to single-figures on just one date and >100 on three dates, peaking at 148 birds on 22nd August. October counts fluctuated between 5 and 35 birds until 21st, with singles on four further dates, the last on 27th.

Dunnock *Prunella modularis*

Frequent spring and autumn migrant; has bred

2009: One at the Chalet on 30th March was the first and regular sightings were made of 1–4 birds in April and singles on two dates in May (18th & 25th). In September, singles were seen on six dates (14th–25th), before another on 9th October was followed by 11 on 11th October. Ten were still present the following day and records of 1–8 birds were daily until the month's end. November sightings comprised 1–3 birds on just six dates, the last being on 23rd.

2010: The first of the year was at the Chalet on 20th March and hereafter 1–7 birds were recorded on most dates until 27th May. In autumn, a single on 6th September was the first and, mirroring spring, predominantly single-figure counts were made on most dates until 23rd October, but for ten birds on 11th–12th October. The last was a single on 10th November.

House Sparrow *Passer domesticus*

Resident, breeds in small numbers

2009 & 2010: Present all year and no formal counts made.

+ Eurasian Tree Sparrow *Passer montanus*

Scarce spring and autumn migrant

2009: One on 19th May and another trapped on 21st June were the only records.

2010: A single was present from 30th May–6th June. In autumn, three at the Observatory on 16th October remained until the 21st October.

Western Yellow Wagtail *Motacilla flava*

Regular spring and autumn migrant

2009: The first of the year were three birds of the British race (*M.f.flavissima)* on 28th

April, still present the following day. Two on 30th April, a single from 1st–3rd May, two on 5th and a ♀ on 17th May were the last. Birds of the Grey-headed race *(M.f.thunbergi)* were recorded on 16th May, 17th May (2), 18th May (9), 19th May (3) and a ♂ on 26th May. Singles of the Blue-headed race *(M.f.flava)* were seen from 16th–18th May, with two on 19th May. Unidentified '*flavas*' were recorded on 3rd May (2) and singles on six dates from 14th–28th May. The only autumn record concerned an unidentified *'flava'* flying over the Haa on 23rd September.
2010: Two birds of the Grey-headed race *(M.f.thunbergi)* on 19th May were the first of the year, with one remaining until the following day. Single unidentified '*flavas*' were then recorded on 31st May and 6th June. Autumn passage was strong, with birds recorded on most dates between 7th and 26th September. Numbers during this period were predominantly in single-figures, peaking at 16 birds on 10th September and 13 the following day. The majority of birds were un-raced, but a single of the Blue-headed race *(M.f.flava)* was logged on 7th September, plus a few birds considered to be of the Grey-headed race with peaks of this race of four (9th) and nine (10th).

+ Citrine Wagtail *Motacilla citreola*

Rare autumn migrant, vagrant in spring; 60 previous records (including three in spring)
2010: One in the Havens on 22nd September, re-located to South Harbour the following day.
Accepted by BBRC

Grey Wagtail *Motacilla cinerea*

Scarce spring and autumn migrant; has bred
2009: A light passage in early April saw 1–2 birds on most dates from 1st–14th, followed by single birds on 27th–29th. Another single was found on 9th May. In autumn, the first was seen on 19th September, with singles on three dates from 27th–30th September. A good October passage saw single-figure counts of 1–6 birds on most dates, with nine on 6th. November saw sightings of 1–2 birds regularly from 2nd–15th.
The count of nine on 6th October is the highest ever count, with counts of six (28th) and five (on three dates) making this October's passage the heaviest ever through Fair Isle.
2010: The first, on 27th March, was followed with singles on nine scattered dates up to 13th May, apart from two on 30th March. One was present on 8th June. In autumn, one on 14th September was followed with 1–2 on most dates up to 30th October and a peak of four on 2nd October.

White/Pied Wagtail *Motacilla alba*

Frequent spring and autumn migrant; occasional breeder
2009: A ♂ Pied Wagtail (*M.a.yarrellii)* on 21st March was the first, with 1–5 birds recorded almost daily from 26th March–29th May and peaks of seven (13th April) and six (28th April). A ♂ on 2nd April was the first White Wagtail *(M.a.alba)* with daily single-figure counts continuing until 26th May. Autumn passage was, typically, heaviest in August and, following birds of both races on 17th August,

numbers of White Wagtails soon built up to a max of 66 on 26th August, before dwindling to mainly single-figure counts through September and sporadic sightings in October, until 23rd. Numbers of Pied Wagtails during this period were concentrated in single-figures (mainly 1–5), with ten on 22nd August the peak count.
2010: Typically, a Pied Wagtail *(M.a.yarrellii)* on 21st March was the first and an arrival of ten birds on 25th March also included a single White Wagtail *(M.a.alba)*. Single-figure counts of both races were then made on most dates through April and May, exceeding double-figures (White Wagtail only) on just five dates and a peak of 21 birds on 3rd May. In June, a single White Wagtail on 3rd and singles of both races were seen on 6th. Autumn began with 20 'Pied' roosting on 19th July and were not followed until 30 *'albas'* on 18th August. Most were unraced and, following a peak of 34 *'albas'* on 25th August, fluctuating numbers (1–30) continued on most dates until 20th October.

+ Richard's Pipit *Anthus richardi*

Scarce autumn migrant; vagrant in spring

2009: The fourth FIBO spring record frequented the Houll/Da Water area from 10th–14th May. In autumn, one at Kenaby on 16th September remained on the island until 10th October, seen in various locations in the south, but favouring Quoy and Schoolton. A late bird was found on 23rd October.
2010: A single at Easter Lother on 27th September was the only record.

+ Olive-backed Pipit *Anthus hodgsoni*

Rare autumn migrant, vagrant in spring

2010: A single moving between Vaila's Trees and Schoolton from 10th–13th October was the first on the isle since 2006.
Accepted by BBRC

Tree Pipit *Anthus trivialis*

Frequent spring and autumn migrant

2009: In spring, a single was found on 25th April and was then followed by 1–3 birds regularly until an arrival of 49 birds on 16th May. Counts hereafter ranged between 33–45 birds before dropping to 11 on 21st and petering out to single-figure counts until the month's end. Autumn migration was light, with 1–4 birds recorded on twelve dates between 26th August and 19th September.
2010: Two on 15th April were the first, followed by 1–2 birds on most dates between 27th April and 30th May, with peaks of four birds on 2nd and 16th May. In autumn, one on 22nd August was not followed until a single on 3rd September, rising to 12 birds by 7th and a peak of 44 on 11th–12th. Numbers had dropped to 13 birds by 15th and 1–4 birds were then recorded on most dates until the last, a single, on 16th October.

+ Pechora Pipit *Anthus gustavi*

Rare autumn migrant

2009: Following persistent north-westerly winds, one was found at Kenaby crop on 30th September. It was a mobile individual, but finally settled in the Burkle/Quoy area, where it remained until the following day.

The first since 2006. Accepted by BBRC

Meadow Pipit *Anthus pratensis*

Common spring and autumn migrant; breeds in small numbers

2009: A single bird was seen in January/February before five birds on 19th March hinted that spring passage had begun. A light passage followed until 100 on 5th and a peak of 220 on 6th April. Thereafter passage was regular until the month's end with counts reaching three figures on most dates. An arrival of 162 birds on 22nd August was the first autumn fall noted and a steady passage was logged before a period of heavier passage from 10th–26th September saw counts regularly in excess of 200 birds and a max of 674 on 13th. Passage was steady through October (20–100 birds daily), before dwindling into November to <20 and 2–3 in December.

2010: A single was recorded on 17th January and there were no further sightings logged until a single on 21st March. Moderate daily passage then followed, with fluctuating counts generally of 12–142 birds, before a big arrival on 1st May saw 561 birds counted. Numbers soon dwindled to 205 birds by 3rd and 35 birds by 4th May. Thereafter, just the breeders remained. Autumn counts began on 23rd August, with 110 birds recorded. Three-figure counts were then the norm. until 22nd October and monthly peaks of 930 (16th September) and 545 (9th October). Numbers slowly dwindled to <105 birds into early November and <10 by the 5th November. A single on 23rd November was the last record of the year.

+ Red-throated Pipit *Anthus cervinus*

Rare spring & autumn migrant; 74 previous records

2009: A ♂ was found at Pund on 18th May.

2010: In spring, a ♂ was at Lower Leogh on 24th May. In autumn, one was on Hoini on 27th September.

All three individuals accepted by SBCRC.

Eurasian Rock Pipit *Anthus petrosus*

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

2009 & 2010: Present all year. Individuals of the Scandinavian race *A.p.littoralis* were seen on 1st, 3rd and 7th April 2009. In 2010, two birds were present on 29th April.

+ Buff-bellied Pipit *Anthus rubescens*

Vagrant; two previous records

2010: One lingered near North Light from 20th–30th September.

This, our third record comes only three years after our second, on 23rd September–7th October 2007. The first was back in 1953, on 17th September. Accepted by BBRC

Common Chaffinch *Fringilla coelebs*

Common spring and autumn migrant

2009: Two overwintering ♀ were seen occasionally from January–mid-March and a ♂ was also present on 5th February and 4th March. Passage was from 20th March and became daily in April, up to 28th. Counts in April were mainly in single-figures, reaching double-figures (10–13 birds) on just three dates. Two singles were recorded in May. In autumn, one from 23rd September was the first, with numbers quickly rising to 22 by 27th and up to 25 by 29th. Early October records were still between 1–20 birds, dropping to <8 from 13th and <5 from 24th October to 17th November.

2010: A single ♂ was seen occasionally in January, February and early March, with two birds present from 8th March. Thirteen on 25th March was the first real arrival, with double-figure counts the norm until 11th April (<10 recorded on six dates in this period and a max 30 birds on 1st April). Numbers then dropped to single-figure counts on most dates until the month's end and 1–3 birds in May, up to 18th. A single on 3rd June was presumably a late spring bird. In autumn, a single on 8th September was the first, with subsequent counts fluctuating between 1–43 birds until the month's end. Passage was heaviest during the first ten days of October, reaching a peak of 130 birds on 6th and falling to <30 from 11th and <10 from 26th. Small numbers passed through in early November, including ten on 12th. Two ♂ lingered into December with at least one still present on 26th.

Brambling *Fringilla montifringilla*

Common spring and autumn migrant

2009: A very light spring passage in April recorded 1–7 birds on most dates from 9th, with double-figure counts on four dates (max 18 on 19th). May records were few with two on 1st and a ♂ on 10th. Autumn passage began with two on 3rd October and had risen to 85 birds by 6th. Numbers kept fluctuating thereafter between 1–67 birds until 24th, dropping to 3–9 from 26th–31st October and 1–5 on most dates until the last on 11th November.

2010: A ♂ on 28th March was the first and 1–4 birds were seen on most dates through the spring, peaking at just seven birds on 27th April, with the last on 11th May. In autumn, five on 8th September were the first, but 30 on 20th September was the first real arrival. The majority of birds passed through between 27th September and 1st October when daily counts were >100 with a peak of 170 on 29th. Hereafter numbers fluctuated from 10–77 birds up to 26th October. Smaller numbers were recorded up to 12th November and a single on 3rd December.

European Greenfinch *Chloris chloris*

Regular spring and autumn migrant

2009: A ♀ on 1st April was the first, with seven birds the following day. Three from 6th–7th (with two on 8th) and a single from 17th–18th were the last. Autumn passage was light and 1–5 were recorded almost daily from 12th–26th October and a peak of seven on 18th.

2010: A ♂ at the Observatory on 27th March was followed by regular counts of 1–2 birds through until 2nd May. In autumn, four on 30th September decreased to 1–3 birds daily up to 15th October. A late single was at the Observatory on 23rd November.

+ European Goldfinch *Carduelis carduelis*

Scarce spring and autumn migrant

2009: Two were at Lower Stoneybrek on 22nd April and a single on 24th & 27th–30th was almost certainly the same individual. In May, one was at the Haa on 5th, with two on 7th, four (8th–9th) and one on 10th. In autumn, one was seen on 2nd and 4th November.

2010: One on 13th May increased to two birds the following day and four on 15th. Thereafter, May records included two on 16th, one on 20th and two on 29th, with a further single on 2nd June. In autumn, a single at the Observatory on 28th October was the only record.

Eurasian Siskin *Carduelis spinus*

Frequent autumn migrant, less common in spring

2009: In spring, sightings were almost daily between 6th April and 10th May with 3–9 birds recorded and a peak of 11 on 11th April. Sporadic sightings of 1–4 were made on seven further dates up to 5th June. Two on 26th June and one the following day were late migrants, but not unprecedented. Autumn passage was light and confined to short periods, with 1–2 from 14th–22nd September and from 6th–14th October. The last of the year was a single ♂ on 16th–18th November.

2010: A ♀ on 18th March was the first, with 1–2 birds recorded on five further dates in March and 11 dates in April, with a peak of seven birds on 12th. In May, 1–3 birds were noted on 12 dates, with five on two dates and eight birds from 12th–13th. Singles were seen on three dates in June (four on 29th) and on five dates in July, with two present on 12th & 27th July. Three on 7th September were the first of the autumn and numbers fluctuated (between 1–29 birds), before an exceptional arrival of 210 birds on 30th September, rose to a staggering 290 birds on 1st October. Passage continued, ensuring counts remained over 100 until 7th before slowly tailing off to single figures by 15th until the last on 28th October.

There have been just three higher counts; 300 23rd September 1980, 300 September 1993 and 360 23rd September 2000.

Common Linnet *Carduelis cannabina*

Regular spring migrant, scarce in autumn

2009: A ♂ on 30th March was the first, with 1–4 seen on most dates in April, four singles in late May and further singles on 2nd & 3rd June. In autumn, but for an influx of six on 24th September and three on 19th October, counts of 1–2 were the norm, made on six dates in September and five dates in October. Two on 15th November were the last.

2010: A single from 7th–8th January, with two from 10th–17th January are unusual, but not unprecedented. More typical records included 1–2 birds in late March, 1–4 birds on most dates in April and 1–3 birds on most dates in May. Two singles were recorded in

June; on 1st & 24th. In autumn, two on 19th–21st September and sporadic singles from 27th September–10th October were punctuated only by two birds on 9th October. Three on 22nd October, two on 6th November and a single on 23rd December were the last.

Twite *Carduelis flavirostris*

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

2009: Recorded in all months, bar December, with monthly peaks as follows:

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
83	43	24	40	26	P	P	P	115	70	70	-

***Note:** no formal counts in June–August as no passage was evident

Passage was most prominent throughout April and in the first two weeks of September.

2010: Recorded in all months, with monthly peaks as follows:

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
12	15	22	50	P	P	P	267	335	260	25	P

***Note:** no formal counts in May–July as no passage was evident

Passage was most prominent in early April and throughout September and October, peaking at 335 birds on 21st September.

Lesser Redpoll *Carduelis cabaret*

Scarce migrant in spring, summer and autumn

2010: In spring, singles were seen on 2nd & 4th April, 31st May and 2nd June. Autumn birds comprised 1–3 birds from 9th–23rd October and a peak of 14 on 16th. *Records of this smaller 'race' have always been logged even before it achieved full species status in 2001. Usually only very small numbers are recorded each year in spring and autumn but better years have occurred, e.g. a count of 20 in spring 1981, ten in July 1982 and six in September 1982. The 2010 peak of 14 birds is the highest autumn count.*
Unidentified Redpolls, thought either to be *C.f.flammea* or *C.f.cabaret* were recorded on 1st, 2nd and 11th April and in October on 10th (4), 11th, 13th (2) and 23rd (2).

Common Redpoll *Carduelis flammea*

Frequent spring and autumn migrant

2009: Birds of the race *C.f.flammea* ('Mealy' Redpoll) were recorded on most dates in April, with 1–5 birds seen on 18 days and a max of six birds on 19th. Passage in May was lighter, but still involved records of 1–3 on 10 dates and a max of four on 19th. Lone birds were seen on 1st June and 15th July. Autumn records comprised a single on 17th September, followed by 1–3 almost daily in October, up to 24th. A later bird was seen on 1st November. Birds of 'north-western' origin *(C.f.rostrata/islandica)* were noted in Bull's Park from 20th–26th September, with three there from 28th–30th. Further singles were seen on 1st & 7th October, with two present on 26th.
Unidentified Redpolls, thought to be either *C.f.flammea* or *C.f.islandica* were seen on 14th May and 14th, 23rd and 30th September (2).

2010: Single birds of the race *C.f.flammea* ('Mealy' Redpoll) were recorded on 24th–29th March and from 25th–29th April, before 1–2 birds were seen on ten dates in May. In autumn, singles were recorded on four dates in September (with four on 29th) and on three dates in early October before another four on 12th. Passage then increased, with 11 birds on 15th and 100 the following day. Numbers then settled, but still in double-figures (of 10–35 birds), before another influx of 52 birds on 26th, dropping to <10 by 30th–31st. Single-figure counts were made on seven dates in November, with two on 25th December the last. Single-figure counts of birds of 'north-western' origin *(C.f.rostrata/islandica)* were made daily from 14th–28th September (peak of eight on 22nd) and on most dates from 3rd–20th October, peak of seven on 11th.
Sizeable influxes of Scandinavian redpolls occur from time to time producing good counts eg 80 in October 1972, 110 in November 1985, 45 in November 1995 but nothing comes close to the 500 logged in October 1975.

+ Arctic Redpoll *Carduelis hornemanni*

Rare autumn migrant; vagrant in spring

2010: Records of the race *C.h.hornemanii* (Hornemann's Redpoll) were recorded at Easter Lother from 23rd–24th September, on Hoini on 27th September and on Dronger/Lerness from 30th September–4th October. Further individuals were recorded from 16th–18th October and from 20th–26th October. A single bird of the race *C.h.exilipes* (Coues' Redpoll) was recorded from 12th–13th October.
BBRC adjudicated that just two 'hornemanni' redpolls were involved; 23rd September–4th October and 16th–26th October.

+ Two-barred Crossbill *Loxia leucoptera*

Vagrant; 27 previous records (48 or 49 individuals), mainly July–September

2009: A fine ♂ was at South Light from 23rd–24th July.
Accepted by BBRC

Red (Common) Crossbill *Loxia curvirostra*

Irregular irruptive summer/autumn migrant

2009: A single on 24th June was the vanguard to what was a decent 'irruption' thereafter and through July, with near daily counts and fluctuating numbers indicating a good turnover of birds. Numbers scarcely dropped below ten (mostly between 12–85 birds) and peaks included 145 (4th), 123 (7th) and 118 (18th). Records in August and September were equally as frequent, though numbers were lower, ranging from 1–23 birds in August and, following 25 on 1st September, between 1 and ten birds until 17th September.
2010: A single on 8th May, a ♂ from 13th–18th May, two on 26th May and a single on 2nd June were the only spring records before 1–3 on four dates in July and 24 birds on 10th July. Thereafter, there were two singles in August (with two on 1st) and five on 29th (with two remaining until 1st September), another on 4th October and four on 16th October.

Common Rosefinch *Carpodacus erythrinus*

Regular spring and autumn migrant

2009: A ♂ singing at the Chalet on 23rd May was the first, joined by a ♀ the next day. Singles were then seen on 30th–31st May, 3rd June and a ♀ from 23rd–25th July. One at Shirva on 22nd August was the first autumn migrant and in September, singles were recorded on nine dates, with two birds present from 6th–10th. Two on 1st–2nd October and a single on 6th were the last.

2010: In May, singles were seen on 22nd, 29th and 30th. Two on 26th June (with one remaining until 27th) were followed by an adult ♀ on 23rd–24th July and four singles in August (4th, 10th, 20th & 25th) before two on 27th August preceded daily passage (of 1–7 birds) until 12th September and again (of 1–4 birds) from 20th September–2nd October.

Eurasian Bullfinch *Pyrrhula pyrrhula*

Scarce autumn migrant, less regular in spring

2010: In autumn, two ♀ on 16th October were the first, with 1–3 birds seen on most dates until the month's end and four birds on 25th. In November, single ♂ were seen on 9th & 15th and a ♀ on 20th.

These are the first sightings since 2006

+ Hawfinch *Coccothraustes coccothraustes*

Scarce spring and autumn migrant

2009: A ♂ was at the Chalet from 12th–13th April, with another ♂ at the Haa from 16th–18th. Another bird was at the latter site on 4th May.

2010: In autumn, singles were seen on 27th & 30th September, 8th–9th October and on 12th & 14th November

There were no autumn records prior to 1988 but they have been almost annual since then. Whilst most autumn records are in October there is one other November record (6th Nov 1997) and even two winter records; on 10th December 2002 (found dead on 11th) and in January 1984.

Snow Bunting *Plectrophenax nivalis*

Common spring and autumn migrant, often over-winters

2009: Small numbers were seen during January–March with a peak of 36 on 24th January. Counts in April were more frequent, indicating some movement, with 1–17 birds on most dates up to the last of the spring on 6th May. In autumn, following two on 9th September, numbers gradually built up through the month, peaking at 43 birds by 29th. Good passage from 1st October–15th November saw numbers fluctuating between 5–125 birds in October and built up in November from 20 on 1st to a max. 570 birds on 15th. A flock of 130 on 10th December was the highest count for that month.

2010: Ten birds on 13th January was the most seen in January–mid-March before daily passage from 21st–30th March saw counts of between 1–18 birds. Predominantly single-figure counts were made on most dates in April (but for 10 on 11th) and 1–2 birds on three dates in May, up to 14th. Autumn passage began with a

single on 16th September and numbers increased to a peak of 35 birds on 27th, before dropping to 12 by 30th September. Counts fluctuated hereafter, until 28th October, from between five and 50 birds, with five birds on 7th October the only count <16. Five counts were made in November, with 45 birds on 9th the highest.

Lapland Longspur (Bunting) *Calcarius lapponicus*

Frequent autumn migrant, less common in spring

2009: In spring, one from 10th–11th April was the only record. Two on 6th September were the first autumn record but passage was light with a peak of just 18 in early October and there were no records after 8th November.

2010: Spring singles were noted on 9th & 25th April. In a record autumn, two birds on 27th August increased to 60 the following day and 184 birds on 1st September. Numbers slowly declined to 72 by 9th, with a further influx of 104 the next day, rising to 148 birds by 11th. This pattern continued through the month and into October, with counts fluctuating between 42–185 birds, before levelling to double-figure counts (of <90) from 9th October, <50 by 11th and <20 from 24th–month's end. Two birds were seen on 4th & 7th November.

Record-breaking numbers flooded into Iceland and the Northern and Western isles of Scotland in September 2010 and the influx then spread right down the west coast of Britain and into mainland Europe.

+ White-throated Sparrow *Zonotrichia leucophrys*

Vagrant; four previous records

2010: One at the Observatory from 19th–20th May was of the unusual tan-striped variant.

Accepted by BBRC and one of seven that arrived in Britain in spring 2010. Previous Fair Isle records; 13th May 1966, 17th June 1978 & 9th June 2003. All have been males.

Yellowhammer *Emberiza citrinella*

Regular spring and autumn migrant

2009: A ♂ was at the Haa on 21st May, with two from 22nd–25th and another single on 28th May. A late ♂ was around the Observatory on 15th June. Autumn singles were seen from 22nd–23rd and 30th–31st September and 1–2 from 4th–7th November with the last on 15th November.

2010: A single on 1st April was the first and was followed with birds on most dates until 15th April, with two birds recorded on 8th, 14th and 25th April. In autumn a single on 1st October was then followed by 1–2 birds on all dates bar one from 9th–20th October.

+ Ortolan Bunting *Emberiza hortulana*

Scarce spring and autumn migrant

2010: One at Quoy from 19th–20th September was the only record and the first since 2008.

+ Rustic Bunting *Emberiza rustica*

Scarce spring & autumn migrant; 123 previous records

2009: In spring, a fine ♂ was seen at Wirvie on 26th May and in autumn, a first-year favoured the crop at Lower Stoneybrek from 14th–16th October.

2010: A fine ♂ was present from 20th–21st May, with another ♂ on 15th June.

All four accepted by SBCRC

+ Little Bunting *Emberiza pusilla*

Scarce autumn migrant, rare in spring (26 previous records)

2009: A single on 14th September was seen in the Neder Taft area until 19th, joined by a second bird on the latter date. Another individual was seen on 21st. Sightings were then made of 1–3 birds daily from 5th–13th October, with a different bird on 16th - probably an autumn total of nine birds.

2010: In spring, one was seen on 9th May. In autumn, one was in Boini Mire from 28th September–3rd October and another was at the Haa from 14th–17th October.

Common Reed Bunting *Emberiza schoeniclus*

Frequent spring and autumn migrant

2009: One on 23rd March was the first, with 1–4 birds seen on most dates in April and eight dates in May and a spring peak of six birds on 18th May. Autumn migration was similar, with singles on 11 dates in September (probably involving just four birds) and sightings of 1–3 regularly through October and peaks of eight (11th) and six (23rd and 26th). Sightings of 1–2 birds were made on seven dates in November, the last on 17th.

2010: A single on 26th March was the first of the year and 1–4 birds were recorded on most dates in April and May, peaking at six birds on 13th May. In autumn, four on 27th September, increased to 13 by 30th and continued to fluctuate until reaching a peak on 9th October when 22 birds were recorded. Thereafter, there were records on most dates, where numbers fell to <10 from 10th, <3 from 15th and to singles from 20th until the last on 28th October.

+ Corn Bunting *Emberiza calandra*

Vagrant since 1970; formerly bred (last in 1905)

2009: One was at Burkle on the 9th June.

Mirroring the national decline in this species, which once bred widely throughout Shetland, this is only the eighth isle record since the 1970's - all have been in spring.

+ Brown-headed Cowbird *Molothrus ater*

Vagrant; no previous records

2009: The bird of the year for many. Island residents Kenny Stout & Sue Hutchison spotted a strange bird feeding with the Starlings in their Upper Stoneybrek garden on 8th May. Observatory staff were informed and it was soon identified as a fine ♂ of this species. It later toured around several island gardens and was successfully twitched by several plane-loads of birders during its three-day stay.

This was (at the time) only the second British record (following one on Islay, Argyll on 24th

April 1988) and was part of a small arrival to British shores in spring 2009; others were photographed in gardens in Northumberland (25th April–2nd May) and Pembrokeshire (14th–15th July)

+ Blackpoll Warbler *Dendroica striata*

Vagrant; one previous record

2009: One was trapped in the Vaadal on 15th October and remained until the 16th.
The first Fair Isle record was at Busta/Kenaby on 30th September 1991

Possible Category D & Escapes

+ Saker Falcon *Falco cherrug*

Vagrant; one previous record (Category D)

2010: A large falcon seen fleetingly several times on 28th May was thought to possibly be this species, however it was not observed well enough (or photographed) to rule out a hybrid. It has not (yet) been submitted to BBRC.
The first isle record was present from 23rd October–3rd December 1986 and was the third for Britain. Additionally, a decision is still waiting for a Fair Isle record from 26th & 29th May 2007. Saker Falcon is not on the British List, it currently sits on Category D - a holding area for birds of unknown origin, in this case due to the possibility of escape from captivity.

Records not accepted by BBRC

Olive-backed Pipit 30th September 2010
Citrine Wagtail 7th October 2009, 28th May 2010

Addendum

2008 Caspian Plover *Charadrius asiaticus*

Vagrant; no previous records

The first for Fair Isle, at Upper Stoneybrek, then Setter and Pund on 1st–2nd May, although referred to elsewhere in the 2008 FIBO Report, was inadvertently omitted from the Systematic List for 2008.

Ringing Report

Alan Bull

In 2009, a total of 4124 birds of 105 species were ringed, with 4948 birds of 106 species ringed in 2010. More seabirds were ringed over the two year period than in recent years - perhaps a sign of potential recovery following several poor breeding seasons. Table 1 highlights the ten most commonly ringed species in 2010.

Table 1. The ten most commonly ringed species, with totals, on Fair Isle in 2010; (2009 totals for comparison).

Species	2010	2009
Starling	858	619
Guillemot	535	335
Wheatear	528	392
Great Skua	267	217
Meadow Pipit	220	177
Fulmar	175	231
Storm Petrel	153	27
Blackbird	142	295
Puffin	135	138
Twite	135	117

Two additions were made to the ringing list - a Blackpoll Warbler caught in the Vaadal in 2009 and a Carrion Crow caught in the Crow Trap in 2010. An Eastern Olivaceous Warbler in 2009 and a Black-throated Thrush in 2010 were only our second to be ringed, whilst a Red-flanked Bluetail caught in the Gully in 2010 was only our third. Our sixth Nightjar, seventh Scaup and eighth Great Reed Warbler were also ringed. Other unusually ringed species included Rook (9th & 10th), Pechora Pipit (10th), Blyth's Reed Warbler (13th & 14th), Jackdaw (14th–16th), Greenshank (15th), Pink-footed Goose (17th & 18th) and Whimbrel (18th & 19th).

Record annual totals were achieved for Gannet (122 in 2010), Waxwing (76 in 2010 where only 68 had previously been ringed on the isle) and Lapland Bunting (40 in 2010 following 10 in 2009). Other Species ringed in unusually high numbers included 17 Lesser Redpoll and 67 Common Redpoll in 2010.

A number of trapping methods were deployed over the two years to achieve the annual totals, ranging from Heligoland traps, mist-nets, dazzling, maze traps, whoosh netting, spring and walk-in traps and pulli ringing

Table 2. Numbers of birds ringed on Fair Isle and recovered/controlled elsewhere in 2009 and 2010 together with cumulative totals from 1948.

	2009:			2010:			Total	Recovery/Control		
Species	**F.G.**	**Pull**	**Tot**	**F.G.**	**Pull**	**Tot**	**1948–10**	**09**	**10**	**1948–10**
Whooper Swan	-	-	-	-	-	-	50	-	-	8
Bean Goose	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-
Pink-footed Goose	2	-	2	-	-	-	18	-	-	1
White-fronted Goose	-	-	-	-	-	-	3	-	-	1
Greylag Goose	10	-	10	-	-	-	100	1	2	14
Barnacle Goose	-	-	-	-	-	-	4	-	-	-
Shelduck	-	-	-	-	-	-	5	-	-	-
Wigeon	-	-	-	-	-	-	57	-	-	5
Teal	1	-	1	2	-	2	86	-	-	4
Mallard	-	-	-	-	-	-	17	-	-	1
Pintail	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	-	-	1
Shoveler	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-
Pochard	-	-	-	-	-	-	3	-	-	-
Ring-necked Duck	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-
Tufted Duck	1	-	1	1	-	1	25	-	-	-
Scaup	-	-	-	1	-	1	7	-	-	-
Eider	1	-	1	-	-	-	172	-	-	1
Long-tailed Duck	-	-	-	-	-	-	19	-	-	1
Velvet Scoter	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	-	-	-
Goldeneye	1	-	1	-	-	-	23	-	-	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	65	166	231	16	159	175	17651	1	1	180
Storm Petrel	27	-	27	153	-	153	31421	8	7	1244
Leach's Petrel	-	-	-	-	-	-	99	-	-	3
Gannet	-	-	-	7	115	122	643	-	4	13
Cormorant	-	-	-	-	-	-	7	-	-	-
Shag	3	5	8	5	19	24	23724	3	-	589
Grey Heron	-	-	-	-	-	-	22	-	-	-
Marsh Harrier	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-
Hen Harrier	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	-	-	-
Goshawk	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	-	-	-
Sparrowhawk	6	-	6	10	-	10	412	1	-	25
Kestrel	-	-	-	1	-	1	54	-	-	8
Red-footed Falcon	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-
Merlin	1	-	1	1	-	1	204	-	-	12
Peregrine	-	-	-	-	-	-	6	-	-	1
Water Rail	2	-	2	1	-	1	338	-	-	3
Spotted Crake	-	-	-	-	-	-	19	-	-	-
Little Crake	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-

	2009:			2010:			Total	Recovery/Control		
Species	**F.G.**	**Pull**	**Tot**	**F.G.**	**Pull**	**Tot**	**1948–10**	**09**	**10**	**1948–10**
Baillon's Crake	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-
Corncrake	-	-	-	-	-	-	43	-	-	2
Moorhen	-	-	-	-	-	-	104	-	-	3
Coot	-	-	-	-	-	-	15	-	-	1
Great Bustard	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-
Oystercatcher	1	9	10	1	12	13	1567	-	-	73
Little Ringed Plover	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-
Ringed Plover	1	11	12	7	1	8	781	-	-	6
Dotterel	-	-	-	-	-	-	4	-	-	-
Golden Plover	3	-	3	-	-	-	27	-	-	-
Grey Plover	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-
Lapwing	-	7	7	-	12	12	371	-	-	6
Knot	4	-	4	-	-	-	109	-	-	4
Sanderling	1	-	1	1	-	1	122	-	-	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	-	-	-	4	-	4	194	-	-	1
Dunlin	7	-	7	12	-	12	623	-	-	8
Buff-breasted Sandpiper	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-
Ruff	-	-	-	-	-	-	41	-	-	1
Jack Snipe	6	-	6	2	-	2	153	-	-	3
Common Snipe	26	-	26	13	-	13	561	-	-	4
Great Snipe	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	-	-	-
Woodcock	24	-	24	5	-	5	519	-	-	25
Black-tailed Godwit	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-
Bar-tailed Godwit	-	-	-	-	-	-	9	-	-	2
Whimbrel	-	-	-	2	-	2	19	-	-	-
Curlew	1	7	8	1	5	6	211	-	-	6
Common Sandpiper	-	-	-	-	-	-	70	-	-	1
Green Sandpiper	-	-	-	3	-	3	62	-	-	1
Spotted Redshank	-	-	-	-	-	-	3	-	-	-
Greenshank	-	-	-	1	-	1	15	-	-	-
Wood Sandpiper	-	-	-	-	-	-	19	-	-	-
Redshank	1	-	1	4	-	4	293	-	-	3
Turnstone	5	-	5	12	-	12	113	-	-	-
Red-necked Phalarope	-	-	-	-	-	-	5	-	-	-
Grey Phalarope	-	-	-	-	-	-	3	-	-	-
Pomarine Skua	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-
Arctic Skua	-	29	29	-	63	63	4041	-	-	71
Great Skua	-	217	217	-	267	267	3679	2	-	57
Kittiwake	13	4	17	15	1	16	7116	1	-	39
Black-headed Gull	3	-	3	-	-	-	51	-	-	2
Common Gull	49	9	58	-	16	16	313	-	-	3
Lesser Black-backed Gull	7	1	8	2	1	3	1471	-	-	35

	2009:			2010:			Total	Recovery/Control		
Species	**F.G.**	**Pull**	**Tot**	**F.G.**	**Pull**	**Tot**	**1948–10**	**09**	**10**	**1948–10**
Herring Gull	6	37	43	4	32	36	4567	3	-	101
Iceland Gull	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-
Glaucous Gull	-	-	-	-	-	-	40	-	-	1
Great Black-backed Gull	3	1	4	9	4	13	2871	-	-	113
Common Tern	-	-	-	-	-	-	482	-	-	3
Arctic Tern	-	129	129	-	-	-	11882	-	1	39
Guillemot	64	271	335	38	497	535	37926	5	-	1104
Razorbill	49	123	172	20	99	119	11784	-	2	290
Black Guillemot	-	-	-	1	-	1	1668	-	-	19
Little Auk	-	-	-	-	-	-	14	-	-	-
Puffin	85	53	138	79	60	139	13853	1	-	34
Rock Dove	16	-	16	24	-	24	170	-	-	-
Wood Pigeon	-	-	-	1	-	1	75	-	-	2
Collared Dove	16	-	16	7	-	7	412	-	-	6
Turtle Dove	-	-	-	-	-	-	83	-	-	2
Cuckoo	-	-	-	-	-	-	109	-	-	1
Scops Owl	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	-	-	-
Snowy Owl	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	1
Long-eared Owl	9	-	9	3	-	3	269	-	1	14
Short-eared Owl	-	-	-	-	-	-	18	-	-	-
Nightjar	1	-	1	-	-	-	6	-	-	-
Swift	-	-	-	-	-	-	19	-	-	1
Hoopoe	-	-	-	-	-	-	3	-	-	-
Wryneck	3	-	3	-	-	-	251	-	-	-
Great Spotted Woodpecker-	-	-	-	-	-	29	-	-	-	
Short-toed Lark	-	-	-	-	-	-	9	-	-	-
Woodlark	-	-	-	-	-	-	3	-	-	-
Skylark	16	18	34	16	16	32	1438	-	-	3
Shore Lark	-	-	-	-	-	-	5	-	-	-
Sand Martin	-	-	-	-	-	-	8	-	-	-
Swallow	2	-	2	3	12	15	282	-	-	2
House Martin	-	-	-	-	-	-	142	-	-	1
Richard's Pipit	-	-	-	-	-	-	12	-	-	-
Blyth's Pipit	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	-	-	-
Tawny Pipit	-	-	-	-	-	-	3	-	-	-
Olive-backed Pipit	-	-	-	-	-	-	10	-	-	-
Tree Pipit	3	-	3	1	-	1	673	-	-	-
Pechora Pipit	1	-	1	-	-	-	10	-	-	-
Meadow Pipit	145	32	177	216	4	220	11747	-	-	45
Red-throated Pipit	-	-	-	-	-	-	9	-	-	-
Rock Pipit	39	9	48	56	-	56	10017	-	1	30
Yellow Wagtail	-	-	-	-	-	-	11	-	-	-
Citrine Wagtail	-	-	-	-	-	-	6	-	-	-
Grey Wagtail	6	-	6	3	-	3	59	-	-	1
White/Pied Wagtail	9	5	14	48	-	48	903	-	-	5
Waxwing	-	-	-	76	-	76	144	-	1	1
Dipper	-	-	-	-	-	-	17	-	-	-
Wren	15	-	15	16	-	16	1001	-	-	-
Dunnock	11	-	11	35	-	35	2750	-	-	10

	2009:			2010:			Total	Recovery/Control		
Species	**F.G.**	**Pull**	**Tot**	**F.G.**	**Pull**	**Tot**	**1948–10**	**09**	**10**	**1948–10**
Robin	60	-	60	129	-	129	9522	-	-	41
Rufous-tailed Robin	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-
Thrush Nightingale	-	-	-	-	-	-	35	-	-	-
Nightingale	-	-	-	-	-	-	30	-	-	-
Siberian Rubythroat	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	-	-	-
Bluethroat	9	-	9	6	-	6	311	-	-	2
Red-flanked Bluetail	-	-	-	1	-	1	3	-	-	-
Black Redstart	1	-	1	-	-	-	165	-	-	-
Redstart	19	-	19	8	-	8	1903	-	-	1
Whinchat	4	-	4	4	-	4	674	-	-	2
Stonechat	-	-	-	1	-	1	62	-	-	-
Northern Wheatear	215	177	392	247	281	528	18558	-	3	78
Pied Wheatear	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-
Black-eared Wheatear	-	-	-	-	-	-	3	-	-	-
Rock Thrush	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-
White's Thrush	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-
Hermit Thrush	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-
Grey-cheeked Thrush	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	-	-	-
Ring Ouzel	1	-	1	4	-	4	516	-	-	9
Blackbird	295	-	295	142	-	142	24690	4	4	346
Eyebrowed Thrush	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	1
Dusky Thrush	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-
Black-throated Thrush	-	-	-	1	-	1	2	-	-	-
Fieldfare	6	-	6	8	-	8	679	-	-	1
Song Thrush	30	-	30	46	-	46	3210	-	-	32
Redwing	139	-	139	52	-	52	9781	1	-	75
Mistle Thrush	-	-	-	-	-	-	22	-	-	-
Pallas' Grasshopper Warbler-	-	-	-	-	-	13	-	-	-	
Lanceolated Warbler	-	-	-	1	-	1	40	-	-	-
Grasshopper Warbler	3	-	3	4	-	4	150	-	-	-
River Warbler	-	-	-	-	-	-	9	-	-	-
Savi's Warbler	-	-	-	-	-	-	5	-	-	-
Aquatic Warbler	-	-	-	-	-	-	25	-	-	-
Sedge Warbler	8	-	8	15	-	15	576	-	-	1
Paddyfield Warbler	-	-	-	-	-	-	10	-	-	1
Blyth's Reed Warbler	1	-	1	1	-	1	14	-	-	1
Marsh Warbler	6	-	6	2	-	2	153	-	-	-
Reed Warbler	5	-	5	5	-	5	340	-	-	1
Great Reed Warbler	1	-	1	-	-	-	8	-	-	-
Thick-billed Warbler	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	-	-	-
Eastern Olivaceous Warbler1	-	1	-	-	-	2	-	-	-	
Booted Warbler	-	-	-	-	-	-	8	-	-	-
Sykes's Warbler	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	-	-	-
Icterine Warbler	2	-	2	1	-	1	127	-	-	-
Melodious Warbler	-	-	-	-	-	-	13	-	-	-
Blackcap	40	-	40	73	-	73	6132	-	-	26
Garden Warbler	33	-	33	37	-	37	3856	-	1	5
Barred Warbler	4	-	4	5	-	5	454	-	-	1
Lesser Whitethroat	24	-	24	12	-	12	866	-	-	1

	2009:			2010:			Total	Recovery/Control		
Species	**F.G.**	**Pull**	**Tot**	**F.G.**	**Pull**	**Tot**	**1948–10**	**09**	**10**	**1948–10**
Whitethroat	17	-	17	11	-	11	1073	-	-	-
Subalpine Warbler	-	-	-	-	-	-	31	-	-	-
Sardinian Warbler	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-
Greenish Warbler	1	-	1	-	-	-	25	-	-	-
Arctic Warbler	-	-	-	1	-	1	34	-	-	-
Pallas's Warbler	-	-	-	-	-	-	4	-	-	-
Yellow-browed Warbler	-	-	-	5	-	5	171	-	-	-
Hume's Warbler	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-
Radde's Warbler	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-
Dusky Warbler	-	-	-	-	-	-	7	-	-	-
Western Bonelli's Warbler	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	-	-	-
Wood Warbler	2	-	2	2	-	2	117	-	-	-
Chiffchaff	74	-	74	58	-	58	1604	-	-	5
Willow Warbler	77	-	77	39	-	39	4129	-	-	7
Goldcrest	6	-	6	22	-	22	1857	-	-	3
Firecrest	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	-	-	-
Brown Flycatcher	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-
Spotted Flycatcher	6	-	6	15	-	15	848	-	-	3
Red-breasted Flycatcher	1	-	1	-	-	-	61	-	-	-
Collared Flycatcher	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	-	-	-
Pied Flycatcher	6	-	6	6	-	6	1009	-	-	-
Blue Tit	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	-	-	-
Great Tit	-	-	-	-	-	-	14	-	-	-
Coal Tit	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-
Treecreeper	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-
Golden Oriole	-	-	-	-	-	-	8	-	-	-
Brown Shrike	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-
Isabelline Shrike	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	-	-	-
Red-backed Shrike	3	-	3	1	-	1	257	-	-	-
Lesser Grey Shrike	-	-	-	-	-	-	7	-	-	-
Great Grey Shrike	-	-	-	-	-	-	114	-	-	1
Southern Grey Shrike	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	-	-	-
Woodchat Shrike	-	-	-	-	-	-	13	-	-	-
Jackdaw	3	-	3	-	-	-	16	-	-	-
Rook	-	-	-	2	-	2	10	-	-	-
Hooded Crow	1	-	1	-	-	-	49	-	-	-
Carrion Crow	-	-	-	1	-	1	1			
Raven	-	-	-	-	-	-	29	-	-	-
Daurian Starling	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-
Starling	321	298	619	473	385	858	28627	1	2	201
Rose-coloured Starling	-	-	-	-	-	-	3	-	-	-
House Sparrow	45	-	45	43	-	43	1854	1	-	4
Tree Sparrow	1	-	1	1	-	1	120	-	-	1
Chaffinch	26	-	26	55	-	55	3274	1	2	15
Brambling	38	-	38	86	-	86	4014	-	1	20
Citril Finch	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-
Greenfinch	9	-	9	10	-	10	534	-	1	32
Goldfinch	1	-	1	1	-	1	22	-	-	1
Siskin	18	-	18	14	-	14	601	-	-	1

	2009:			2010:			Total	Recovery/Control		
Species	**F.G.**	**Pull**	**Tot**	**F.G.**	**Pull**	**Tot**	**1948–10**	**09**	**10**	**1948–10**
Linnet	1	-	1	9	-	9	203	-	-	5
Twite	117	-	117	135	-	135	6581	6	10	28
Lesser Redpoll	-	-	-	17	-	17	53	-	-	-
Common Redpoll	8	-	8	67	-	67	832	-	-	6
Arctic Redpoll	-	-	-	-	-	-	23	-	-	-
Two-barred Crossbill	-	-	-	-	-	-	7	-	-	-
Common Crossbill	23	-	23	1	-	1	562	-	-	2
Parrot Crossbill	-	-	-	-	-	-	37	-	-	-
Pallas's Rosefinch	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-
Common Rosefinch	5	-	5	11	-	11	251	-	-	1
Bullfinch	-	-	-	2	-	2	302	-	-	-
Hawfinch	-	-	-	-	-	-	26	-	-	1
Savannah Sparrow	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	-	-	-
Song Sparrow	-	-	-	-	-	-	3	-	-	-
White-crowned Sparrow	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-
White-throated Sparrow	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	-	-	-
Lapland Bunting	10	-	10	40	-	40	99	-	-	-
Snow Bunting	3	-	3	-	-	-	678	-	-	3
Pine Bunting	-	-	-	-	-	-	3	-	-	-
Yellowhammer	-	-	-	1	-	1	73	-	-	-
Ortolan Bunting	-	-	-	-	-	-	20	-	-	-
Cretzschmar's Bunting	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-
Yellow-browed Bunting	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-
Rustic Bunting	-	-	-	-	-	-	17	-	-	1
Chestnut-eared Bunting	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-
Little Bunting	2	-	2	-	-	-	37	-	-	1
Chestnut Bunting	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	-	-	-
Yellow-breasted Bunting	-	-	-	-	-	-	6	-	-	-
Reed Bunting	2	-	2	14	-	14	514	-	-	3
Pallas's Reed Bunting	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	-	-	-
Red-headed Bunting	-	-	-	-	-	-	5	-	-	-
Black-headed Bunting	-	-	-	-	-	-	4	-	-	-
Corn Bunting	-	-	-	-	-	-	4	-	-	-
Tennessee Warbler	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	-	-	-
Blackpoll Warbler	1	-	1	-	-	-	1	-	-	-
Totals:		**4124**[1]			**4948**[2]		**350331**	**40**	**44**	**5274**

Notes on Table 2:
[1]4124 birds were ringed in 2009, 2506 Full grown and 1618 Pullus.
[2]4948 birds were ringed in 2010, 2887 Full-grown and 2061 Pullus.

Ringing recoveries/controls reported to Fair Isle Bird Observatory during 2009 & 2010

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:
1 pullus (nestling or chick)
3 definitely hatched during calendar year of ringing
4 hatched before calendar year of ringing, but exact year unknown
5 definitely hatched during previous calendar year
6 hatched before previous calendar year, but exact year unknown
7 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
? unknown finding circumstances
Some records, reported from January–March 2011, arrived amongst late batches of 2010 records and have been included within this report.

Greylag Goose
Three adults, ringed on 21st (2) and 23rd October 2008, were shot in Iceland. The recovery dates being 20th September 2009, 24th April 2010 and 25th September 2010. All had travelled a distance of 1050–1075 km and gives a clear indication of the origin of Fair Isle's passage Greylag Geese.

Fulmar

FS46429	1	27/07/72	Fair Isle, Shetland
	r	31/05/09	Urter, Rogaland, **Norway** (376 km, 93°, 13457 days)
FR70265	1	20/07/83	Fair Isle, Shetland
	x	16/06/08	At sea, North Sea (643 km, 160°, 9098 days)

FS46429 was an incredible 37 years old when controlled in Norway! This bird had previously been caught at the same site in 1985. This control is even more remarkable when you consider the vast distance this bird will have travelled in its lifetime - and at sea! The current longevity record for a British ringed Fulmar is held by a bird ringed in Orkney in 1951 and retrapped still breeding there almost 41 years later.

Storm Petrel

Fifteen reports were received of Fair Isle ringed Storm Petrels controlled elsewhere. Regular sites from which birds were reported included Eilan Nan Ron (2); Priest Island (3); Tres Nes, Orkney (2); Mousa Isle, Shetland (4) and a single to North Ronaldsay, Orkney. Two birds were also controlled at Carn Mor, St Kilda. The oldest bird controlled was ringed on Fair Isle in July 1974 and found on Mousa Shetland in May 2010! This is now the oldest BTO ringed Storm Petrel. Other 'oldies' included birds ringed in 1991, 1994 and 1999 (2). One foreign recovery was reported:

2507269	4	08/08/98	Fair Isle, Shetland
	r	06/06/08	Ponta de Almdena, Faro, **Portugal** (2549 km, 192°, 3590 days)

Three birds ringed elsewhere and controlled on the isle were reported in 2009/2010. One from North Ronaldsay (July 2008 to August 2009) and two foreign controls, detailed below.

E760704	4	25/07/99	Lindesnes Fyr, Vest Agder, **Norway**
	r	06/08/09	Fair Isle, Shetland (530 km, 290°, 12 days)
D21244	6	20/06/08	Ponta de Almadena, Algarve, **Portugal**
	r	11/08/08	Fair Isle, Shetland (2549 km, 12°, 52 days)

Gannet

1374233	1	27/06/03	Fair Isle, Shetland
	x	03/01/11	Sty Wick, Sanday, Orkney (65 km, 237°, 2747 days)
1427008	1	14/07/10	Fair Isle, Shetland
	x	29/11/10	Cueta, Cueta (2642 km, 186°, 138 days)
1427044	1	14/07/10	Fair Isle, Shetland
	x	04/11/10	Faro, **Portugal** (2543 km, 191°, 113 days)
1427088	1	14/07/10	Fair Isle, Shetland
	x	18/09/10	Embo, Highland (228 km, 217°, 66 days)

Our 10th–13th recoveries of Fair Isle ringed Gannets. The population increase on Fair Isle and more accessible colonies for ringing, coupled with the species' longevity should result in more recoveries for this species in the near future.

Shag

Just three reports were received, all of birds ringed as chicks on the isle and found dead. One ringed in July 1989 was found on Hoy, Orkney in September 2009 with another ringed in July 2006 found on Sanday, Orkney in March 2010. Finally, one ringed in June 2003 was found in a Fox's den at Noss Head, Wick on 30th April 2009.

Sparrowhawk

DB86900	3M	12/10/09	Fair Isle, Shetland
	r	17/10/09	North Ronaldsay, Orkney (49 km, 248°, 5 days)

Great Skua

HT62465	1	22/06/96	Fair Isle, Shetland
	x	24/01/09	Valdelagrana, Huelva, **Spain** (2531 km, 188°, 4599 days)
MA22180	1	21/07/09	Fair Isle, Shetland
	x	31/10/09	Rothbury, Northumberland (467 km, 182°, 102 days)

HT62465 was found dead on beach, presumably not far from where this bird had chosen to spend the winter. MA22180 was found nearly 25km inland after a violent storm.

Kittiwake

ES19385	1	30/06/95	Fair Isle, Shetland
	x	28/01/09	Ciboure, **France** (1795 km, 181°, 4961 days)

Herring Gull

GA22061	8	17/10/98	Fair Isle, Shetland
	v	19/09/09	near Karhamn, Finnmark, **Norway** (1677 km, 44°, 3990 days)
GA22076	3	18/10/98	Fair Isle, Shetland
	vv	31/01/09	Pitsea landfill, Essex (899 km, 172°, 3758 days)
GA22343	1	09/07/05	Fair Isle, Shetland
	?	06/05/09	Aberdour, Fife (400 km, 195°, 1397 days)

GA22061 landed on the deck of a fishing boat and was released.

Arctic Tern

SX68560	1	01/07/96	Fair Isle, Shetland
	r	31/07/10	Rattray Head, Aberdeenshire (214 km, 184°, 5143 days)

This bird will have covered a few thousand miles between time of ringing and its recovery.

Guillemot

Five reports of Fair Isle ringed Guillemots were received during 2009/2010. These are summarised below:

Denmark: An adult, ringed in June 2008 was found dead at Pakhusbugten, Anholt in January 2009 (837 km, 112°, 191 days).

Belgium: A chick ringed in June 1997 was found dead in Nieuwpoort, West-Vlananderen in February 1999 (973 km, 164°, 609 days).

Norway: A chick ringed in June 1982 was found dead in a fishing net at Osthasselneset, Farsund in January 2005 (503 km, 109°, 8259 days). A chick ringed in July 2009 was found dead at Gulhaugvika, More og Romsdal in September 2009 (527 km, 53°, 83 days).

Sweden: A chick ringed in June 1999 was found dead on a beach at Hoganas, Malmohus in January 2009 (917 km, 114°, 3506 days).

A chick ringed at Sumburgh, Shetland in July 1996 was found dead on Fair Isle in June 2009 (41 km, 210°, 4740 days).

Razorbill

K16333	1	27/06/09	Fair Isle, Shetland
	x	24/11/09	Port Erin, Isle of Man (635 km, 198°, 150 days)

This bird was found amongst a lot of other dead seabirds washed ashore that were also 'quite thin'.

M91773	1	25/06/99	Fair Isle, Shetland
	x	25/02/11	Seaton, Devon (986 km, 186°, 4263 days)

Long-eared Owl

GA22350	3F	17/10/05	Fair Isle, Shetland
	sr	12/02/10	Gillock, Highland Region (150 km, 221°, 1579 days)

This bird was hit by a car and, after care, was released on 23rd February. Given that most Long-eared Owls passing through Fair Isle are thought to originate from Scandinavia, it is interesting to consider this bird's movements between 2005 and 2010 - was it originally from or is it now breeding in Highland?

Puffin

EK46831	1	12/07/84	Fair Isle, Shetland
	x	06/07/87	Sule Skerry, Orkney (165 km, 253°, 1089 days)

This bird was found dead on Orkney. 1089 days between ringing and recovery and approximately 8000 days to receive the details!

Rock Pipit

2551461	3	07/09/07	Fair Isle, Shetland
	r	20/10/10	New Aberdour Beach, Aberdeenshire (210 km, 189°, 1139 days)

Waxwing

NW37183	3M	25/10/10	Fair Isle, Shetland
	r	23/11/10	Rosemount, Aberdeen (267 km, 187°, 29 days)

Our first control of a Fair Isle ringed Waxwing and one of 74 birds ringed in 2010.

Wheatear

V159973	4F	14/06/08	Fair Isle, Shetland
	vv	12/04/10	North Ronaldsay, Orkney (49 km, 248°, 667 days)
TP38740	1	09/06/10	Fair Isle, Shetland
	vv	02/10/10	Princetown, Devon (1012 km, 189°, 115 days)
X712558	4F	21/06/10	Fair Isle, Shetland
	vv	28/08/10	Dungeness, Kent (974 km, 171°, 68 days)

Hopefully with the number of Wheatears colour-ringed on Fair Isle over the years, yet more sightings will be made and a clearer picture of movements from/to Fair Isle will emerge.

Blackbird

CL41800	5M	01/04/06	Fair Isle, Shetland
	x	10/01/09	Rawdon, Leeds (634 km, 181°, 1015 days)
CL41934	6F	07/04/06	Fair Isle, Shetland
	?	25/10/07	Stafsenga Kirkoy, Ostfold, **Norway** (722 km, 95°, 566 days)
LA02668	3M	18/10/07	Fair Isle, Shetland
	x	13/03/10	Bearsden, Glasgow (433 km, 202°, 877 days)
LA02772	5F	11/04/07	Fair Isle, Shetland
	x	28/03/09	Sondervig, Jylland, **Denmark** (690 km, 124°, 717 days)
LA03627	5F	04/04/08	Fair Isle, Shetland
	x	16/01/10	Avernish, Kyle of Lochalsh, Highland (341 km, 223°, 652 days)
LA03836	6M	16/04/08	Fair Isle, Shetland
	+	14/07/09	Lake Randsfjorden, Opland, **Norway** (672 km, 83°, 454 days)
LA56441	3M	19/11/08	Fair Isle, Shetland
	x	27/03/10	Riihivalkama, Hame, **Finland** (1410 km, 85°, 493 days
LA56573	3F	06/10/09	Fair Isle, Shetland
	r	05/04/10	Sore Merkeskog, Utsira, **Norway** (369 km, 95°, 181 days

Bizarrely, LA02772 was found dead in a fishing net on the beach and LA03836 was shot - both quite unusual finding circumstances for Blackbird!

7857012	5F	20/03/08	Helgoland, **Germany**
	r	01/11/09	Fair Isle, Shetland (832 km, 316°, 591 days)

A first-year female ringed on North Ronaldsay, Orkney in October 2009 was controlled on Fair Isle in April 2010 (49 km).

Redwing

RW56981	3	19/10/09	Fair Isle, Shetland
	r	23/12/09	Nigg Ferry, Cromarty Firth, Highland (247 km, 215°, 65 days)

Blackcap

PC02310	3M	10/10/05	Brieselang, havelland, **Germany**
	r	15/10/05	Fair Isle, Shetland (1190 km, 311°, 5 days)

A rapid movement NW and confirming that German Blackcaps do indeed winter in the UK.

Garden Warbler

P777657	3	17/08/03	Fair Isle, Shetland
	x	26/06/10	Sveio/Tysaver, Rogaland, **Norway** (399 km, 91°, 2505 days)

An unfortunate road casualty, this is only our fifth recovery of a Fair Isle ringed Garden Warbler.

Chiffchaff

DBE506	4	24/04/10	Portland Bill, Dorset
	r	06/06/10	Fair Isle, Shetland (1004 km, 3°, 43 days)

Starling

LA56722	1	26/05/09	Fair Isle, Shetland
	vv	25/12/09	Inverness, Highland Region (275 km, 214°, 213 days)
LC43142	3J	23/06/10	Fair Isle, Shetland
	vv	12/09/10	Out Skerries, Shetland (110 km, 27°, 81 days)
LC43174	3J	26/06/10	Fair Isle, Shetland
	vv	07/12/10	Finstown, Orkney (103 km, 235°, 164 days)

LC43142 was also recorded on Out Skerries on 24/09/10.

House Sparrow

VS18442	4F	03/04/08	Fair Isle, Shetland
	x	10/05/09	Lerwick, Shetland (72 km, 22°, 402 days)

Chaffinch

V159408	6F	07/04/07	Fair Isle, Shetland
	r	13/11/09	Woolston Eyes, Warrington, Cheshire (686 km, 185°, 951 days)
X712237	3F	06/10/10	Fair Isle, Shetland
	x	27/02/11	Wick, Highland (149 km, 215°, 144 days)
X712291	4M	10/10/10	Fair Isle, Shetland
	x	27/10/10	Mynytho, Llanbedrog, Gwynedd (766 km, 194°, 48 days)

Brambling

X713179	5F	14/04/10	Fair Isle, Shetland
	x	13/05/10	Langoyna, Hordaland, **Norway** (378 km, 77°, 29 days)
8E65308	3M	14/09/08	Hovden, Hareid, More og Romsdal, **Norway**
	r	18/04/09	Fair Isle, Shetland (516 km, 233°, 216 days)
V939800	5M	18/03/09	Headley hall, Tadcaster, West Yorkshire
	r	14/04/09	Fair Isle, Shetland (630 km, 359°, 27 days)
L135095	5M	14/01/10	Symington, Biggar, Strathclyde
	r	03/05/10	Fair Isle, Shetland (453 km, 15°, 109 days)

Greenfinch

VS18643	5F	12/04/10	Fair Isle, Shetland
	r	30/11/10	Broadhaven, Wick, Highland (148 km, 215°, 232 days)

Twite

Sixteen reports were received of Fair Isle ringed birds controlled elsewhere. Fifteen of these were reported from Orkney and, with the exception of six birds, were controlled within a year. One bird travelled further south, ringed in September 2009 and controlled in December 2009 at Lochinver, Highland (261 km, 235°, 75 days). Previously, only 12 Fair Isle ringed Twite had been recovered away from the isle.

Four birds ringed on Orkney were controlled on Fair Isle in March / April 2010. Three were from Sandwick and one from Evie.

Selected longevity records

The records below refer to birds ringed on Fair Isle and subsequently re-trapped or recovered on the isle. For interest, only birds found after five years are included. Birds ringed and found dead on the isle are not included in Table 2.

Fulmar: An adult ringed in July 1990 was found dead in August 2009 (19 years, 1 month).

Snipe: An adult ringed in July 2002 was found dead in April 2009 (6 years, 9 months).

Arctic Skua: A chick ringed in July 1995 was found dead in August 2009 (14 years, 1 month).

Great Skua: A chick ringed in July 1994 was found dead in June 2009 (14 years, 11 months). An adult ringed in June 1997 was found dead in July 2009 (12 years, 1 month).

Arctic Tern: A chick ringed in June 1991 was found dead in July 2010 (19 years, 1 month). Two chicks ringed in June 1992 were found dead in July 2009 (17 years, 1 month). A chick ringed in July 1994 was found dead in July 2009 (15 years). An adult ringed in June 1998 was found dead in August 2009 (11 years, 2 months). All were thought to be taken by Arctic Skuas.

Puffin: A chick ringed in July 1989 was found dead in July 2009 (20 years). An adult ringed in July 1997 was found dead in September 2009 (12 years, 2 months). An adult ringed in July 1995 was found dead in July 2009 (14 years). All were thought to be killed by Great Skuas.

Fair Isle's Seabirds in 2009/2010

Deryk Shaw

Razorbill chick
© *Jack Ashton-Booth*

Overview: For the past 10–15 years, with few exceptions low breeding success seems to be the norm, interspersed with very poor years. In 2009 & 2010, most species produced more chicks to fledging than in the previous 4–5 years, but figures were still well below the long-term mean, whilst some continued to fare very badly. The exception has been Northern Gannet, which is heading in the opposite direction to all other species!

Gannet: Ever since they first nested in 1975, the breeding population has been rising at a steady rate but 2009 saw a huge 43.9% increase in size to nearly 3,600 AON. They increased further in 2010 to 3,968 AON (Fig 1). Birds first nested on Sheep Rock on 1998 and by 2010 this had risen to 115 AON whilst a new colony has sprung up at Sheena Weetha (20 AON). Breeding success continues to be high (0.69 in 2009, 0.72 in 2010) so the rise in population looks set to continue.

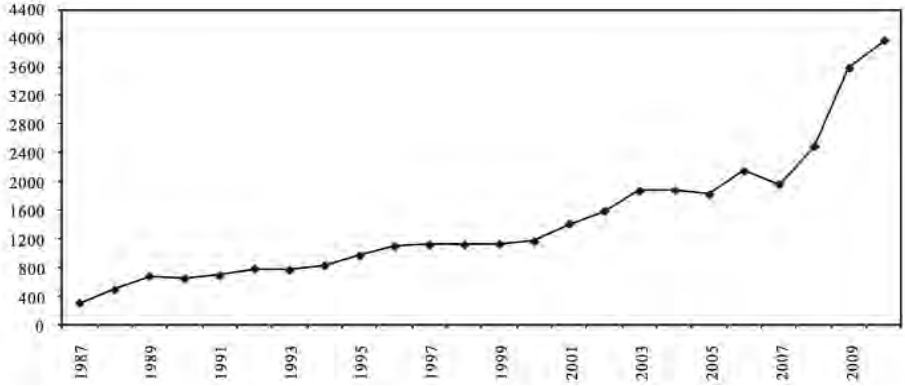


Fig. 1: The Rise of the Fair Isle Breeding Gannet Population.

Fulmar: Numbers on the plots continue to recover from the crash in 2004 and are now back to the levels observed in 2000 (Fig 2). Breeding success has also been good with around 50% of nests fledging a chick in both 2009 and 2010.

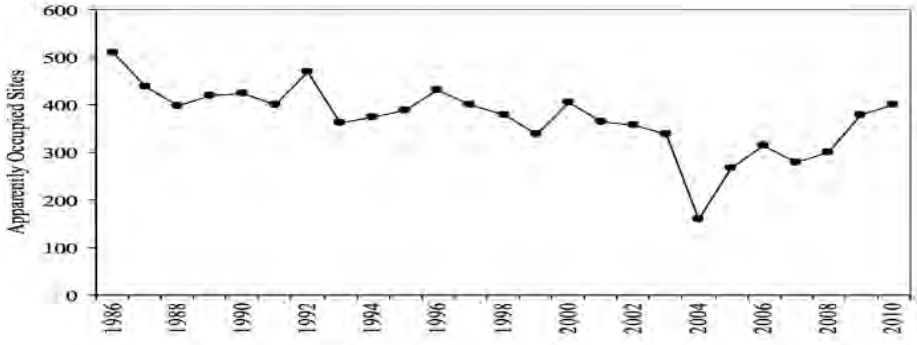


Fig. 2: Plot counts of Northern Fulmar on Fair Isle, 1986–2010.

Shag: Following a disastrous breeding season in 2008, very few birds even nested in 2009 (just 10% of the number noted in 1986 when monitoring began) and almost all failed. In 2010, numbers rallied slightly on the population plots (from 20 to 49 AON) whilst the productivity plot produced 19 chicks from 22 nests giving a somewhat distorted productivity of 0.86. Usually there are around 50–60 nests on this plot (a peak of 95) so the apparent 'success' must be treated with caution. Elsewhere on the isle, very few chicks fledged, with birds dying at the small chick stage. Later broods fared better than early ones.

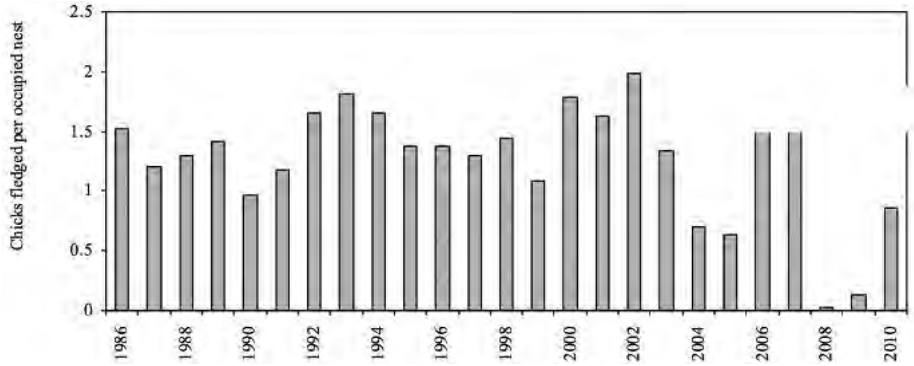


Fig. 3: Shag Productivity at Monitored Nests, 1986–2010.

Arctic Skua: Following a long period of decline, numbers increased from just 37 AOT in 2008 to 65 AOT in 2009 and rose again slightly in 2010 to 70 AOT (Fig 4). However just 11 chicks managed to fledge giving a productivity of 0.16, continuing the recent run of poor form - a total of just 28 fledging in the past four years, many of which will then have succumbed to Bonxies.

Great Skua: Following record numbers in 2008 (294 AOT), there was a slight reduction in 2009 to 277 AOT but numbers increased by 1% to 280 AOT in 2010 (Fig 4). Productivity was similar in both years (0.61 in 2009 and 0.62 in 2010).

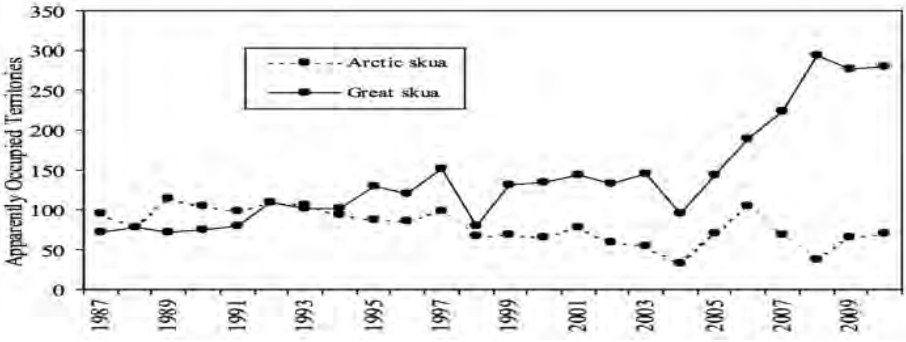


Fig. 4: Whole island counts of Arctic Skua and Great Skua on Fair Isle, 1987–2010.

Kittiwake: Numbers of AON in 2009 were low (but 17% up on 2008 - not including trace nests, 0.1% down if traces are included). Productivity was 0.41 - similar to 2005 & 2006 (but with less than half the number of fledged chicks). Numbers reached a new low in 2010 (166 - just 12% of the figure 20 years ago) and just 29 chicks fledged giving a productivity of 0.17 - the tenth consecutive season of poor fledging success. The future for Fair Isle's Kittiwakes looks grim.

In the summer of 2009, 18 of our breeding adult Kittiwakes were fitted with tiny data-loggers as part of a North Atlantic-wide collaboration to research the species habits and movements outside of the breeding season. Given the poor health of the species on Fair Isle, we were wondering if we would see any of them even return in 2010! We were however delighted to see and retrieve no less than 15 of them! The data was downloaded and analysed and we received a map showing the locations of these birds in December 2009. It would appear that Fair Isle's Kittiwakes (and the vast majority of

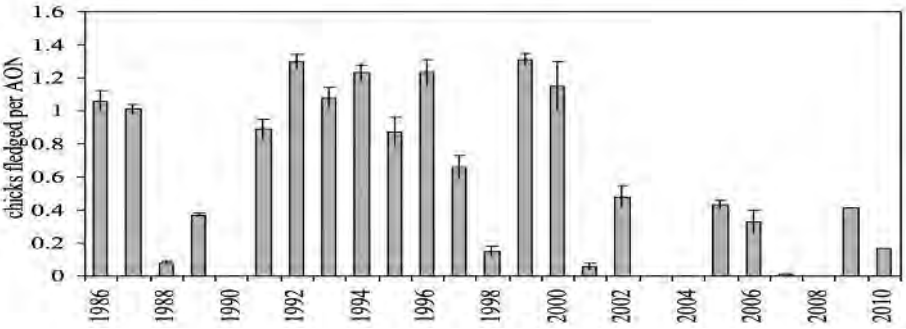


Fig. 5: Breeding success of Black-legged Kittiwake on Fair Isle, 1986–2010.

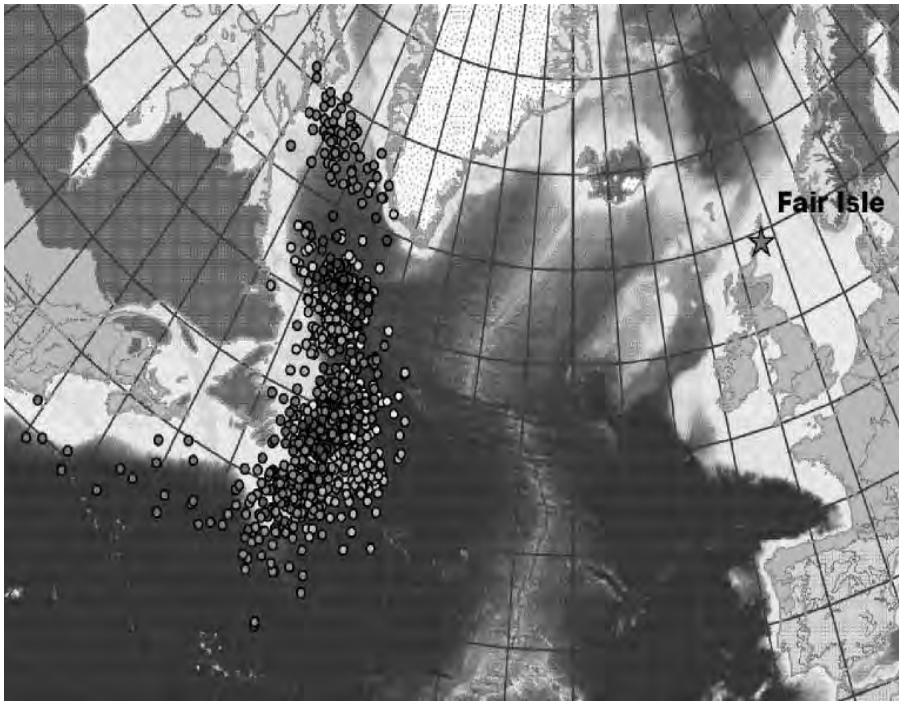


Fig. 6: Locations of Fair Isle Kittiwakes in December 2009. **Key:** Each dot represents a location in December with a different shade for individual birds.

Kittiwakes in the North Atlantic) head west after the breeding season and spend the winter on the other side of the Atlantic. All the birds were found to have spent the winter off the Newfoundland coast in the Labrador Sea as far north as the southern tip of Baffin Island, although one bird went further south along the coast, almost as far as New York (Fig 6). For further information, a paper about the project can be found in...

Arctic Tern: Around 600 pairs settled in 2009, mainly on Buness (c300) with smaller colonies at Bullock Holes, Horsti Breckas and Shalstane. Around 70 chicks fledged - only the second time in the last ten years that any have done so. In 2010 a colony of around 600 birds on Buness, with smaller numbers at the other sites gave a total of some 800 birds but they failed to fledge any chicks. Most nests failed at the egg or very small chick stage. Birds were frequently observed hawking insects over land - always a sure sign that preferred food (fish) is scarce.

Common Guillemot: A whole island count in 2010 indicated that the population had fallen by 30% since 2005, to 19,500 birds. Only small numbers of eggs were laid on the monitoring plots in 2009 and the mean productivity was just 0.30 whilst in 2010 breeding success (0.43) was not brilliant but on a par with the performance since 2002.

The years 1990–2002 saw an average productivity of 0.62. With fewer breeding birds and continued poor fledging success, the population looks set to decrease further.

Razorbill: In 2009, following two years of complete failure to fledge any chicks at the Easter Lother monitoring plot, a productivity of 0.47 is similar to that observed in 2003 & 2005 (0.44) and also better than 2006 (0.21) and 2004 (zero). In 2010, a whole island count found just 1,365 birds - a 60% decrease since 2005 (Fig 7) whilst the productivity plot, for the third time in the last four years, failed to fledge any young.

As has been the case recently, adult birds were finding it hard to feed their chicks and as a result young were losing weight between colony visits and eventually starving to death. One breeding adult, fitted with a data-logger, was tracked to the Aberdeenshire coast in its search for food for its chick. It was seen to return *two days later* without food, (possibly having lost it to a gull or skua on the way home). If this situation is replicated throughout the colony it is little wonder that chicks are starving to death. What of the struggling adults? Having to work so much harder to find food for their young must surely have an adverse affect on their long-term fitness and survival - hence why the breeding population seems to be falling. Suffering extreme losses at both ends of the life cycle, the viability of the colony looks in doubt!

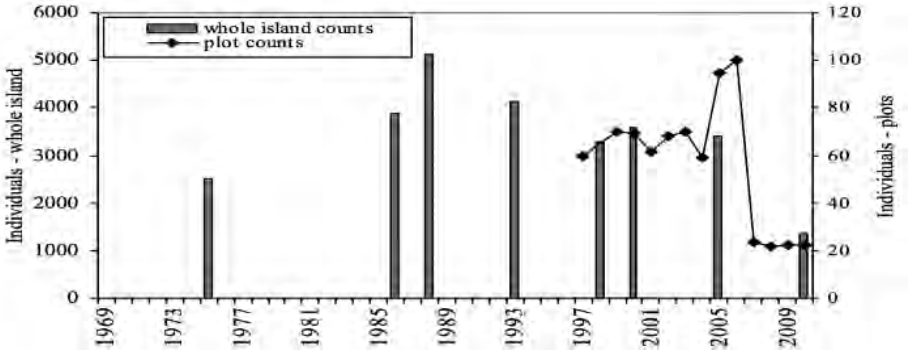


Fig. 7: Whole island and plot counts of Razorbills on Fair Isle 1969–2010.

Atlantic Puffin: In 2009, a whole island count indicated that the breeding population had dropped by a massive 46% since 2001 with just 7,278 individuals counted during an early May census. A productivity of 0.65, although not as high as figures for most of the 1990's (mean 0.72), is respectable compared to the years since then. In 2009 Diet consisted almost entirely of 0-group Sandeels (61%) and Rockling fry (37%).

Things reverted back to recent type in 2010 - a productivity figure of 0.32 in 2010 is the third lowest on record (apart from 0.31 in 2001 & 0.17 in 2007). Many chicks were still in the nest well into August indicating a late season and perhaps that adults were struggling to supply enough food to maintain normal chick growth rates.

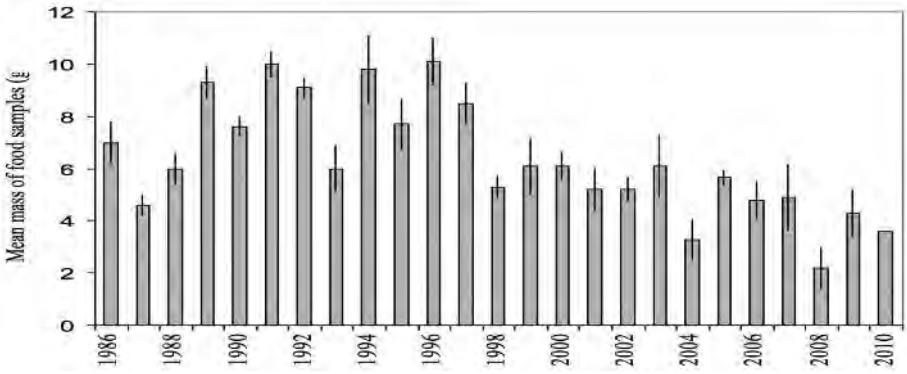


Fig. 8: Mean mass of food samples of Atlantic Puffin on Fair Isle, 1986–2010.

Food sample and feeding watch analysis indicated that chicks were being fed a mixture of 0-group Sandeels (60%), Rockling fry (30%) and Gadoids (10%). The mass of samples was very low (Fig 8), a further indication that chicks were underfed.

Fair Isle's seabirds are clearly struggling and some have been struggling for ten years or more. However, because seabirds are long-lived birds and take several years to reach maturity, it can take many years before the failure to produce young has an impact on total numbers. This is now being felt with many sections of cliff and boulder beaches far quieter than they used to be or even entirely deserted. If the situation does not improve soon then breeding Kittiwakes, Arctic Terns, Razorbills, Shags days are numbered! Have Sandeels become fewer? Or has their breeding season simply shifted so that it no longer coincides with that of the seabirds? Are they spending longer buried in the sand where they are not accessible? More research is urgently required to determine what is happening to the Sandeels and why!

Note: AOT/N = Apparently Occupied Territory/Nest.

Fair Isle Wren © *D. Shaw*

The Fair Isle Wren: population and territory occupancy, 1950–2010

Simon Aspinall and Richard Aspinall

The Fair Isle Wren *Troglodytes troglodytes fridariensis*, described as a new subspecies of Wren by Kenneth Williamson in 1951 (Williamson 1951), is the least numerous endemic bird subspecies in Britain and perhaps also in Europe. The Fair Isle Wren is included in the list of those species and subspecies of bird covered by the UK's national Biodiversity Action Plan. It also appears in Annex 1 of the 1979 European Wild Birds Directive, requiring conservation measures be taken, as appropriate, to ensure its survival. The bird is restricted to Fair Isle and nests almost exclusively on the island's cliffs, which reach to nearly 200 m in the north and west of the island, and largely ignore the gardens of the island crofts and other inland sites. Fair Isle is roughly 5 km long and 2 km wide but, because of its deeply indented coastline, has a circumference of almost 30 km.

Footnote: This paper first appeared in *British Birds* in June 2011, and is reproduced here with the journal's permission. To find out more about *British Birds* go to their website *www.britishbirds.co.uk* where among other things you can read a sample issue of the journal.

Ornithologists from the bird observatory have carried out an annual breeding-season census of Wren territories. In the past 60 years, the number of singing males peaked at 52 in 1964 and was at an all-time low in 1981, when just ten singing males were to be heard. Since the mid 1980s, however, the population has fluctuated between 20 and 40 territories (fig. 1). Population fluctuations almost certainly occur in response to weather conditions (although the data are yet to be fully analysed), which affect survival and breeding success, but the increase in number of nesting Fulmars *Fulmarus*

glacialis on the island may also be implicated, both in affecting the Wren's distribution and in lowering its maximum attainable population size. The pattern of territory occupancy, for a given population size, has been remarkably predictable through time, with apparently 'better' territories being used with greatest frequency.

How does the Fair Isle Wren differ from the Shetland Wren *T. t. zetlandicus*, which occurs throughout the rest of Shetland? Williamson (1965) stated that it is 'a paler and brighter brown above, more rufescent on the lower back and rump, and suffused with grey on the head and neck in fresh plumage; it is also a little whiter and less heavily marked beneath. Curiously, its plumage inclines more towards the still paler brown and whiter wren of St Kilda *T. t. hirtensis* - perhaps the result of convergent adaptation to similar conditions of climate and exposure. I decided our bird was as worthy of a scientific name as the others [the St Kilda and Shetland Wrens], so called it *T. t. fridariensis*, Fridarey being the name given to Fair Isle in the *Orkneyinga Saga*.'

Williamson continued: 'the Fair Isle [Wren] population is very small, between 45 and 50 pairs, but within the limitations imposed by its rigorous environment it seems to be very successful. It is strictly a bird of the cliffs, especially in geos [mainly narrow, rock-walled coastal clefts or chasms] with tide-washed stony beaches, where I have seen Wrens feeding among the wrack as Rock Pipits [*Anthus petrosus*] do. They are to be seen in the gardens and cabbage-patches of the crofting area from late summer onwards when the young are dispersing, but I never knew of a pair nest in the village, and indeed the only 'inland' nest I found was a hundred yards from the sea in the lower mill at Finniquoy.

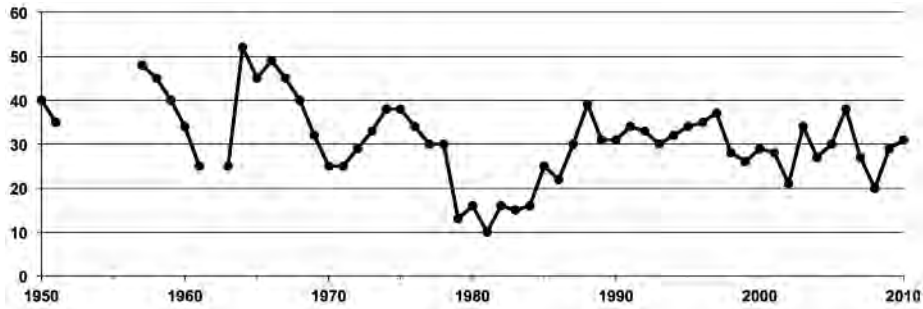


Fig. 1. Numbers of singing male Fair Isle Wrens *Troglodytes troglodytes fridariensis*, 1950–2010. Note: Several quoted figures from the 1950s and 1960s - specifically 1950, 1951 (population given by Williamson 1951 as between 30 and 40 pairs), 1960, 1961, 1963 and 1965 (minimum of 45 territories but perhaps, as in 1964, actually over 50) - were not the result of complete censuses but estimates of the population. There is some suspicion that some of these were underestimates; certainly the apparent doubling in Wren numbers from 1963 to an all-time population high in 1964 seems improbable. Mapped sites were not retained for the complete censuses in a number of years since 1965, and in these years there is less that can be gleaned from the available record. However, none of the potential shortcomings to these data affect the discussion concerning territory occupancy, which itself relates to precisely mapped original census data.

'The east coast, with its many indentations (especially in the region of Wick o' Furse), and the great [west coast] cliffs under Ward Hill, were usually their stronghold; but Peter Davis [observatory warden 1957–63] found that there was a definite tendency for the birds to concentrate on the lee side of the isle so that a cold easterly spell in early spring would result in most of the Wrens taking up territories along the western cliffs.'

Commenting on a number of sites where Fair Isle Wrens had bred previously, but where absent in 1957, Williamson observed that 'perhaps these are more austere locations which attract Wrens only when numbers are high and competition for territories is strong… future surveys should seek to elucidate this situation and find out how the numbers fluctuate' (Williamson 1957).

This paper investigates Williamson's comments, being the latest in a series of notes and papers in which the Fair Isle Wren is the main subject. It is hoped that this contribution to the study of Britain's least numerous endemic subspecies of bird will serve to stimulate further inquiry into its ecology.

Annual census

A breeding population estimate of Wrens is available for 55 years between 1950 and 2010 inclusive (fig. 1), although mapped locations of singing males are available for only 20 of those years, between 1957 and 2010. Since 1950 the Wren population has fluctuated between 10 and 52 territorial males, with a mean of 31.0 (n=55).

Including Geo o' Sheep Craig (occupied before 1957 but apparently not since), some 83 different 'sites' have been occupied (table 1, fig. 2). The data from 1957 and 1964 resulted from dedicated dawn surveys, the former undertaken in June (most sites being visited twice), and the latter over consecutive days in May. For the 18 surveys from 1981 onwards, none was dedicated, instead being rather more piecemeal and completed over the course of several visits each breeding season. For 1981 onwards, only sites holding a singing male on two or more occasions have been included in the following analysis, thereby eliminating, at least in theory, any unpaired or wandering males (and the occasional singing female), and giving a more accurate assessment of the true number and location of active breeding territories.

The Wrens of the North Atlantic islands have generally been considered monogamous and single-brooded (e.g. Armstrong 1955, Snow & Perrins 1998). Fair Isle Wrens can certainly be double-brooded, however, as apparently first confirmed in 1987 (Aspinall 1987). In that year, second broods were raised in three of the most regularly occupied territories on record (Hjukni Geo, Gully mouth and Gunnawark). First or single broods fledge between early and late June (earliest recorded 1st June), with up to six young recorded per pair. Second broods, the frequency of which is unknown, fledge fewer young (no more than three or four young recorded to date), from early August at least (earliest 1st August).

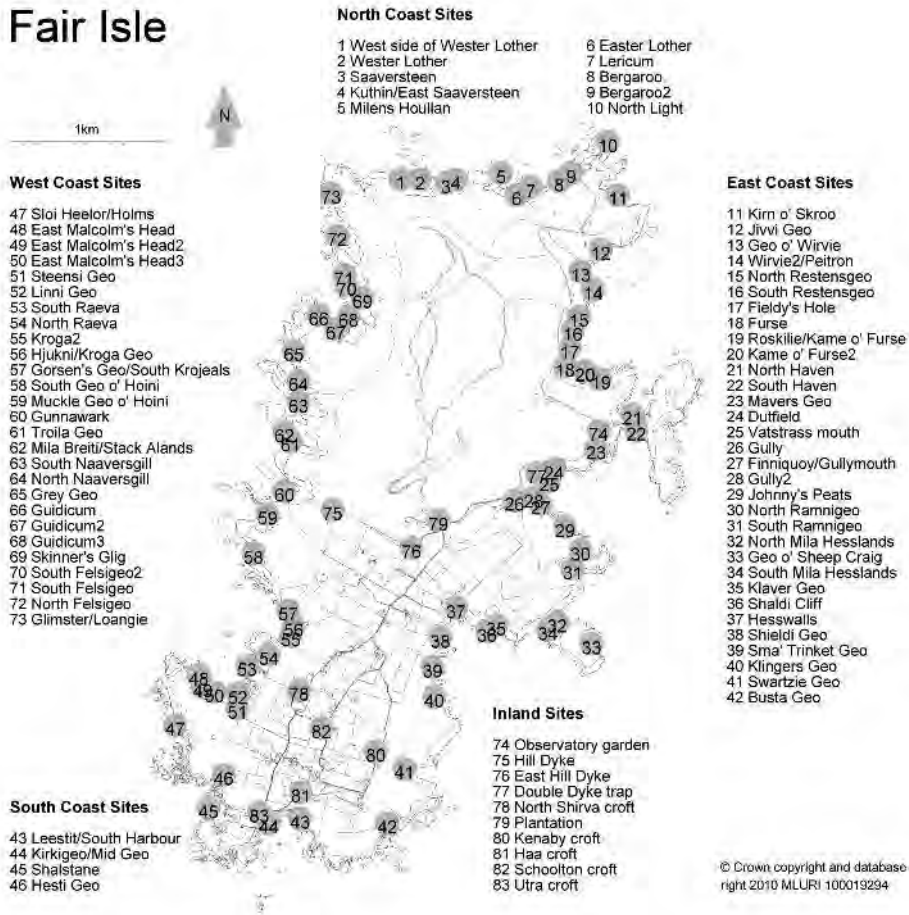


Fig. 2. Fair Isle Wren *Troglodytes troglodytes fridariensis* territories, 1950–2010.

Song may be heard throughout the breeding season but, after first broods fledge, may be heard from sites where it was unrecorded earlier that year. Whether or not broods might be raised with a different partner in a nearby site in the same season is yet to be discovered; successive polygyny, with respective broods overlapping, is certainly frequent in the Wren's mainland European range (Snow & Perrins 1998).

Site occupancy versus population

Most registrations during the annual census simply plot one or more song-posts for each territory and, while this may accurately reflect the island's breeding Wren population, it does not map the boundaries of individual territories or delimit neighbouring ones. Around South Harbour, for example, it is evident that Kirkigeo and

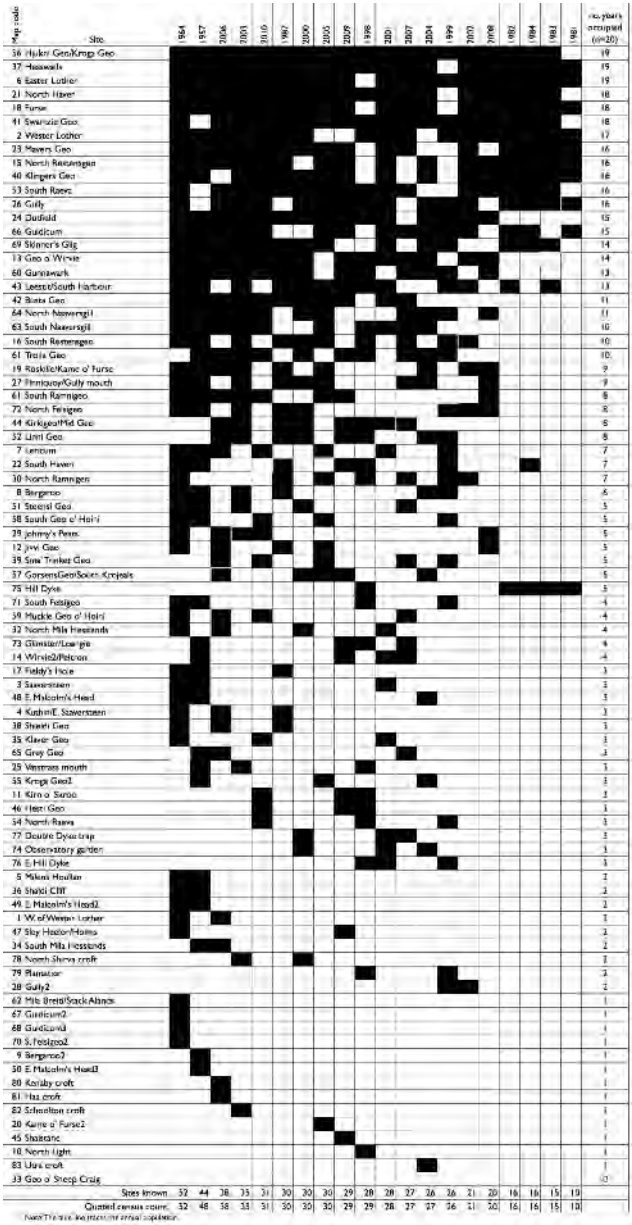


Table 1. Fair Isle Wrens *Troglodytes troglodytes fridariensis*: site occupancy by decreasing population size, 1957–2010.

Mid Geo are part of a single territory, separate from that at Leestit, while registrations at Haa and Utra crofts are doubtless individuals from one or other of these two territories. This is borne out by the apparent absence of one or both of these respective territories in years when one of these croft gardens, which are more or less adjacent to the coastline, held a singing male (or at least when a Wren was plotted there on the map). Kroga Geo and Hjukni Geo appear to be alternatives to each other, in some years forming one large territory, in others two separate territories, and the same appears to be true of a few other neighbouring locations (including Steensi and Linni Geos, North Felsigeo and Glimster/Loangie, Gully and Gully mouth, and either side of the last, from Johnny's Peats to the mouth of the Vatstrass burn). Wrens clearly sort out their territories accordingly, with 'better' sites being able to accommodate two pairs (or perhaps a

bigamous male) in years when the population is higher - when less favourable sites might also be occupied. Conversely, larger territories may be occupied in years when the population is lower. Across the total of 83 known sites, probably fewer than ten may be alternatives, either merging to form an enlarged single territory or being divided into separate territories according to need. On higher sections of cliff in the north and west of the island, some adjoining territories may separate vertically rather than horizontally, with, perhaps significantly (as explained later), only the lower having direct access to the beach below.

Aside from possible reservations of census or mapping accuracy, the pattern of site occupancy, given a particular population size, shows a high degree of predictability - around 75%. Although it is a somewhat circular argument, the 'best' sites (by definition those most frequently

Table 2. Fair Isle Wrens *Troglodytes troglodytes fridariensis*: territories arranged geographically around the island, 1957–2010.

occupied) rarely have more than a one-year gap without a tenant (unless a so-called alternative site is used), whereas sites that are occupied only when the total population is at its highest levels may have a run of many years without any occupants (table 2). Although not all sites known from 1957 onwards can now be placed precisely (three or four remain missing) and the location of one occupied site from each of 1998 and 2004 is also uncertain, data from these years appear in tables 1 and 2. Unfortunately, for 1958 the exact location of about a quarter of the 45 singing males was not published (in Davis 1959) and the data are thus not incorporated into these same tables; even so, at least 16 of the 'top' 25 sites in table 1 are known to have been occupied in that year.

Table 1, which arranges sites based on descending population size for the 20 different years of survey data, and table 2, arranged chronologically and by geographical location, show clearly when the established pattern of occupancy is disrupted. For example, both 1998 and 1999 stand out in deviating somewhat, with seven of the top 15 sites being absent in each of these years (ten sites in total), although the situation returned to 'normal' in 2000 and thereafter. Filled cells above (and open cells below) the blue line in table 1 would represent a perfect relationship between population size and site quality or selection preference. One notable contradiction, lying below the blue line, concerns the unexpected, temporary tenancy of the (dry-stone) Hill Dyke. Just why should this site have suddenly become occupied

Table 3. Fair Isle Wrens *Troglodytes troglodytes fridariensis*: Annual distribution of territories by coastline (west, east, north and south) and inland.

Year	West	East	North	South	Inland	Total
1957	17	21	8	1	0	47[1]
1958[2]	21	17	7	0	0	45
1959[2]	12	21	6	1	0	40
1964	19	24	8	1	0	52
1981	1	6	2	0	1	10
1982	4	8	2	1	1	16
1983	3	8	2	1	1	15
1984	4	9	2	0	1	16
1987	6	18	4	2	0	30
1998	9	11	2	3	3	28
1999	11	8	4	1	2	26
2000	10	13	2	2	3	30
2001	5	14	4	2	3	28
2002	4	14	2	1	0	21
2003	11	17	3	2	2	35
2004	11	11	2	0	2	26
2005	9	18	2	1	0	30
2006	12	18	5	1	2	38
2007	11	12	2	1	1	27
2008	5	13	2	0	0	20
2009	9	15	1	4	0	29
1957–2009	**27**	**32**	**10**	**4**	**10**	**83**

[1] The 1957 population is given by Williamson (1957; 1958) as 48. [2] From Dennis (1966).

Fair Isle Wren © *T. Loseby*

over the four-year period 1981–84 when the Wren population was at its lowest levels in over 50 years? The continued presence over those four years is not so much the surprise, rather the fact that Wrens turned up in this otherwise unassuming linear inland site at all, especially when never previously occupied - unless perhaps immigrant birds were involved? This site was also occupied in 1998.

More concerted survey effort over the years might well have seen 'unexpected' gaps among better territories filled and/or seen any possibly erroneous records removed; the latter are most likely to involve a number of the inland records. Williamson commented on the surprising absence of Wrens from Swarzie Geo in 1957, for example, while in 1964 birds were missed in Klingers Geo during the dedicated census but a family was subsequently found there.

What might be the reasons for such a predictable pattern? Clearly, survival of adults is more likely in better territories, while dispersing young birds, or adults forced out of an existing territory by inclement weather or the death of a mate, would allow any of the more favourable yet vacant sites to be selectively reoccupied year after year. The degree of post-breeding movements is unknown, although Davis (1959) suggested that the Fair Isle Wrens are 'still mobile' in the late winter and early spring and that a run of storms from a particular direction would force them to concentrate breeding territories on the lee side of the island. As a general principle, however, that appears not to be borne out by the distribution of territories mapped since (tables 2 & 3).

In the 1950s and 1960s, the mean number of territories on the annual census was 39.6 (n=14), yet numbers since then have been consistently lower. The population was at a precariously low ebb during 1979–84 (mean 14.3, n=6), but since 1987 counts have fluctuated about a mean of 30.6 (n=24). Moreover, the reduction from the heyday of the 1950s and 1960s seems to have been proportionately greatest on the north and west coasts (table 3). Some factor(s) appear to be preventing Fair Isle Wrens from reaching their full potential, acting to limit the availability of suitable nesting territories along the island's coastline rather than necessarily affecting breeding productivity (given the confirmed records of double-brooding).

What aspects of the Fair Isle coastline may have changed since the 1950s and 1960s? The numbers of hill sheep grazing the common land, mainly in the northern half of the island, have remained relatively constant for most of this period, although stocking levels on the in-bye land, south of Hill Dyke, have fluctuated, for example in response to Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) subsidies. However, it is mostly the hill sheep that graze the cliff areas, where accessible, and the original decline in Wren numbers pre-dates the CAP, with proportionately more territories having been lost from the coastline north of Hill Dyke. Numbers of Rabbits *Oryctolagus cuniculus* have increased markedly in recent decades (Dave Wheeler pers. comm.) and have probably had some effect on the cliff vegetation, although, once again, this increase post-dates the Wrens' decline. Grazing pressure notwithstanding, the timing of the decline in Wren numbers does coincide with the increasing numbers of Fulmars on Fair Isle, and this may be a reason why the counts of Wrens in the late 1950s and 1960s has never been matched since.

Fair Isle Wren © *M. Breaks*

From its arrival and initial tenancy of Fair Isle in 1903 (Fisher & Waterston 1941), the Fulmar population increased to 3,000 occupied sites in 1949, then 5,000 in 1959, 16,264 in 1969, 25,648 in 1975, 26,995 in 1986, 35,213 in 1991, 43,317 in 1996, 20,424 in 2000 and 27,896 in 2006 (FIBO data). Much of the population and increase was on the island's north and west coasts, although sections of the east coast hold large numbers too, and all these areas now show lower Wren numbers than in the early days, prior to the explosion of nesting Fulmars. Fulmars may thus have displaced a number of Wrens by making some of their previous territories untenable - there are at least ten previously occupied Wren territories that have remained unused since 1964, if not 1957, with a further 13 used only once or twice since 1964. Perhaps significantly, the majority of these 23 sites have little or no storm beach on which Wrens might otherwise forage - the presence of a wrack-strewn beach being a consistent feature of the most frequently occupied sites. Foraging solely on cliffs and grassy slopes now plastered with regurgitate-at-the-ready Fulmars must be a somewhat hazardous pursuit for a Wren, although the impact of Fulmars on the cliff flora may also have affected site suitability for Wrens.

St Kilda Wrens are unlike Fair Isle Wrens in not being restricted to cliffs (Clarke 1912; Williamson 1958) and, despite the presence of Soay sheep and a similarly burgeoning Fulmar population, the Wrens on St Kilda have held their ground. In 1957, Hirta, the largest island in the St Kilda group (yet substantially smaller than Fair Isle, and lacking geos), held no fewer than 117 singing Wrens, more than double the number of *fridariensis* in that same year (Williamson 1958). In 1990 the population on Hirta reached 145–157 territories, dropping back to 113–117 in 1993 (Holling *et al*. 2010), numbers well out of reach of the Fair Isle Wren unless ever to forsake its coastal redoubts. The observations of Eagle Clarke (1912) confirm that the cliff-dwelling habit of the 'fairly abundant resident' Wrens on Fair Isle is long-standing, certainly pre-dating the arrival of Fulmars.

Territory quality

What may make an ideal Fair Isle Wren territory was discussed briefly by Aspinall & Aspinall (2007) and deserves revisiting. A number of inter-related variables or features are called into play: diverse and luxuriant vegetation (particularly in smaller territories), freshwater or moisture, aspect and shelter (with, for example, kames, stepping or landslips acting as baffles to wind and spray), a storm beach with wrack, absence or low numbers of Fulmars and area (size) of the site. Small, exposed and bare sites are shunned, as indeed, less explicably, are inland sites such as gardens (admittedly most being small) and freshwater burns. Some of these features may be more important in the breeding season than in winter - for example, vegetation cover and its associated invertebrate food supply might be crucial for rearing young but of little value in the winter months.

Predation of Wren nestlings by Common Starlings *Sturnus vulgaris* is one cause of nest failure (pers. obs.) and could possibly influence site selection or occupancy, though

would be expected to be more prevalent along the island's south and east coasts than on the higher cliffs of the north or west coasts. Williamson (1958) commented that there is no association of nesting Wrens with Puffin *Fratercula arctica* colonies on Fair Isle, as there is on St Kilda, but the significance of Wrens foraging or sheltering (pers. obs.) in vacated Puffin (or Rabbit) burrows in autumn and winter might help to explain why Wrens favour certain stretches of coast. Wrens also forage in such burrows, in autumn at least, including in exposed sites never used (by themselves) for breeding, for example at South Gavel on Buness. Any possible beneficial association with nesting European Storm-petrels *Hydrobates pelagicus*, or other breeding seabirds, as suggested by Miles (2011) for St Kilda Wrens, is an intriguing possibility and may explain the tenacity of Fair Isle Wrens to certain nesting sites.

It is probable that territory quality will also have varied over time, affecting site occupancy and explaining some of the variation in the figures presented here. For example, occasional landslides and cliff falls, as well as winter storms, can all alter coastal territories appreciably.

Concluding comments: future research

The Fair Isle Wren deserves more concerted attention than it receives currently. Although the annual census has provided a remarkable trove of data and shown up a predictable pattern of territory occupancy for a given population size, and also a somewhat surprising negative relationship between the numbers of nesting Wrens and Fulmars, an analysis of any relationship between population levels and weather is still to be carried out, for example. Williamson (1951) suggested that hard winters have little overall adverse effect on the Wren population, provided that their main feeding area (the shoreline) is not rendered inaccessible by storms for long periods. In winter, perhaps the only other passerine species on the island competing for food resources would be the Rock Pipit.

Some explanation is also still needed for the dramatic population slump of the late 1970s and slow recovery thereafter, while annual variation in breeding success (fledgling survival) also merits study. Apart from a dedicated annual census and monitoring, mapping of territories and determining whether there is any inter-territory movement or variation in the Wrens' mating system, it would also be interesting to establish whether breeding ever takes place successfully at inland sites. Aspinall & Aspinall (2007) speculated that occasional records of territory-holding males at inland sites might suggest immigrant birds. Wrens showing characteristics of those from Shetland and also the British mainland do occasionally reach Fair Isle, as do birds of the nominate race from continental Europe (Williamson 1965), and could potentially be absorbed into the breeding population, which could prove another avenue for DNA work. Nonetheless, it appears that the majority of Fair Isle Wrens are resolutely wedded, perhaps by heritable characters, to the cliffs of the isle, where they remain subject to the restrictions they and apparently also the Fulmars impose.

Acknowledgments

Thanks go to all FIBO staff, past and present, in particular to Paul Harvey, Roger Riddington and Deryk Shaw, and also to the Shetland Biological Records Centre, for providing data.

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Simon Aspinall first came to Fair Isle in 1987, when he was Assistant Warden for that season. As so many bird observatory staff do, he developed a particular affinity for the island, and returned regularly as a visitor. The island Wrens were a source of special interest for Simon, as this paper, co-written with his brother Richard, illustrates. Simon died on 31st October 2011 after a long and courageous struggle with motor neurone disease, and this paper, published in British Birds *in June 2011, was one of his last pieces of written work. An obituary of Simon can be found in the February 2012 issue of* British Birds.

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

Adam Seward

Introduction

A key mechanism by which climate change may impact on animal populations is by the effects of climate on food availability. For example, climate variation is likely to have strong effects on populations of migrant birds by affecting their invertebrate food supply (Both *et al*., 2006; Pearce-Higgins *et al*., 2009). Changes in temperature and rainfall affect invertebrate abundance and phenology (Bale *et al*., 2002; Dell, Sparks, & Dennis, 2005), which in turn may affect the ability of insectivorous birds to obtain sufficient energy reserves for reproduction, or to provide adequate food for their young (Both *et al*. 2006). Food availability may therefore limit the reproductive output of migrant birds by limiting the number or quality of offspring fledged in individual nesting attempts, or by limiting the number of nesting attempts during each breeding season (Illera & Díaz, 2006; Nagy & Holmes, 2005).

Long-distance migrant birds might be expected to be among the taxa most severely affected by climate change, because the strength and direction of changes in climate variables may vary between the different locations utilised across the annual cycle, and because of disruption to the systems controlling timing of migration. Indeed, numerous studies have described associations between climate variables and aspects of the annual cycles of migratory birds, including: migration phenology (Gordo & Sanz, 2006) and speed of migration (Ahola *et al*., 2004), breeding phenology (Musters, ter Keurs, & de Snoo, 2010; Torti & Dunn, 2005), clutch size (Laaksonen *et al*., 2006; Wilson & Martin, 2010), egg size (Jàrvinen, 1994), offspring survival (McMahon & Burton, 2005), overall nesting success (Rajchard, Procházka, & Kindlmann, 2006), number of offspring (Winkel & Hudde 1997) and territory occupancy (Beale *et al*., 2006).

Despite these numerous documented instances of correlations between climate variables and the biology of species, populations and individuals, there remain major gaps in our knowledge of the causal mechanisms that underlie such effects (Møller, Fiedler, & Berthold, 2004; 2010). For example, though food availability may strongly influence survival and reproductive success of insectivorous migrant birds (Marshall *et al*., 2002; Nagy & Holmes, 2005), its impacts on different stages of the reproductive cycle and its importance compared to other factors is unclear (Boutin, 1990). To understand and evaluate the mechanisms linking climate change and ecological change, an experimental approach is advocated (Møller, Fiedler, & Berthold, 2004; Helmuth, Kingsolver, & Carrington, 2005). In the present study, food

availability was experimentally manipulated (simulating a key biological effect of predicted changes in temperature and rainfall) to evaluate the potential role of climate-driven changes in food supply on the breeding productivity of a model species of long-distance migrant. The central aims were to test whether reproductive success is limited by food availability, and if so, which aspects of reproductive performance and timing are most sensitive to changes in food availability.

The Northern Wheatear *Oenanthe oenanthe* (henceforth "Wheatear") was chosen as the study species for its extreme long-distance migrations, its tractability for field experiments and the fact that a series of detailed recent studies have paved the way for the present work (Dierschke & Delingat, 2001; Pärt, 2001a, 2001b; Schmaljohann & Dierschke, 2005). In common with most other long-distance migrant passerine birds, Wheatears are mainly insectivorous (Conder, 1989; Panov, 2005). Their reproductive success is expected to depend to a large extent on timing their breeding to match peak emergence of their highly seasonal invertebrate prey, as has been shown in other species (Both & Visser, 2005; Pearce-Higgins & Yalden, 2004).

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. This research project was begun on Fair Isle in 2008 and this report describes the work carried out in 2009 and 2010.

Objectives

The research objectives on Fair Isle in 2009 and 2010 were as follows:

- Continue to provide Wheatears breeding on Fair Isle, and their fledged young, with a supplementary food source (mealworms), and compare their body mass regulation, breeding success and annual survival with sympatric Wheatears receiving no additional food (Experiment 1).
- Provide supplementary food to resident and migrant Wheatears (both nominate and Greenland races) during spring and autumn migration on Fair Isle. To estimate the fuel deposition rates, departure fuel loads and timing of departure of these supplementary-fed Wheatears and compare these data with data obtained from control Wheatears captured over the same period (Experiment 2).

Experiment 1 - Effects of increased food availability on body mass regulation, breeding success and annual survival

Methods: Fully-grown Wheatears were captured, either with spring traps or in Heligoland traps. Plumage features were used to sex and age captured birds according to Svensson (1992) as fledged in the current year (juvenile), in the previous year (young), before the previous year (old) or fledged before the current year (unknown if young or old). All breeding males but only a minority of breeding females could be aged precisely as young or old. All captured birds were measured

(maximum wing length to 1 ♂), weighed on an electronic balance (to 0.1 g), and fitted with unique combinations of a numbered metal ring and a plastic colour ring on the right leg and three plastic colour rings on the left leg. Nestlings were ringed with a numbered metal ring alone when at least 5 days old, usually at 7 days old (or older if they were discovered later). Multiple colour rings could only be put on Wheatear chicks once they were at least 10 days old, as the tarsi only become slim enough along the full length from that age. Young Wheatears were therefore re-caught for colour ringing, either in the nest towards the end of the nestling period where possible or were re-caught with spring traps after fledging.

Prey availability for Wheatears was experimentally increased by providing mealworms in plastic bowls placed directly on the ground. Small stones were placed in the bowls to weigh them down and larger rocks were positioned around the bowls to prevent them being blown away in the wind. The rocks also encouraged Wheatears to investigate the feeding bowls, as they frequently make use of such objects as look-out posts (Conder 1989).

The study areas were chosen for their relatively high densities of breeding Wheatears, although Wheatears occur widely over Fair Isle from spring until autumn. As there are age-related differences in arrival date and breeding success of Wheatears (Arlt & Pärt, 2007; Currie, Thompson, & Burke, 2000), a standard route through the study site was walked almost daily from mid-April until the end of May and pairs of Wheatears were selected alternately as fed and control (i.e. unfed) pairs. A pair was selected if behavioural signs of pair establishment were observed (e.g. a male and female chasing away other Wheatears but not each other, investigating potential nest sites, (Conder, 1989). In this way, fed and control pairs were stratified both spatially and with respect to arrival date. This procedure also avoided the potentially confounding situation of the highest quality individuals establishing territories around feeders, to the exclusion of lower quality individuals.

Each food-supplemented territory was provided with one feeder, located as near to the territory's centre as possible, to minimise the possibility of Wheatears from neighbouring control territories raiding the feeders. Electronic balances were positioned under the feeding bowls to weigh Wheatears visiting them, with small video cameras used to obtain the weights remotely. None of the adult control Wheatears was recorded taking mealworms from any of the feeders in any year. Raids on feeders by Wheatears outside the sample population were recorded, almost always after breeding had finished. Fed Wheatears were sometimes recorded taking mealworms from feeders outside their territory.

To prevent Starlings (*Sturnus vulgaris*) from using the feeders, metal wire mesh cages were placed over the feeding bowls. These cages permitted Wheatears to enter through a small hole cut at the bottom of the wire mesh (lined with strong insulating tape to prevent injury) or via a hinged weighted walkway that swung shut when

Starlings (approximately three to four times heavier than Wheatears) attempted to enter, swinging back open again when they stepped off the platform. Some Wheatear pairs that had at first been attending feeders stopped using them once the cages were placed over them. In 2009, there were 19 fed pairs (including six that stopped using feeders) and 27 control pairs and in 2010 there were 27 fed pairs (including two that stopped using them) and 27 control pairs.

Nests were found as early as possible by observing the parents going to and from nest holes. On finding each nest, its status was recorded as (i) being built, (ii) containing eggs or (iii) containing chicks. Nest contents were subsequently checked every other day. Any dead chicks or un-hatched eggs left in the nest at this stage were counted.

Remote nest monitoring was undertaken in 2010, using a combination of video recording and automated nest recorders. A nest recorder consisted of a tube fitted with infra-red diodes that sent data on the passage of birds through the tube to a data logger. The tubes were inserted into suitable nest holes after ringing the chicks at 1 week old and removed after 48 hours. Videos were used to verify the data from the nest recorders and to obtain additional data at nests unsuitable for the nest recorders.

The whole island was searched each year for returning colour ringed Wheatears to estimate annual survival rates.

Statistical analysis: Linear models, general linear models and generalised linear models were used as appropriate to investigate the factors associated with variation in laying and hatching dates, clutch size, egg size, incubation duration, hatching rates, chick size and fledging rates. Model comparisons were based on values of Akaike's Information Criterion (AICc) for sets of candidate models. I used the package RMark (Laake and Rextad, 2011) in the statistical programme R (version 2.13.0, R Development Core Team, 2011) to implement mark-recapture models in the programme MARK (version 6.1, White and Burnham, 1999).

Results

Body mass regulation: There was no difference in the size-corrected body mass of fed and control adult Wheatears during the breeding season.

Breeding success: The number of juveniles fledged over the season was higher for supplementary fed birds relative to controls. This was due to an increase in breeding attempts for fed birds that started breeding early in the season, rather than an increase in clutch size or fledging rates per nest. The increase was greater for males than females; males could attempt to rear simultaneous broods with multiple females as well as attempting second broods, while females only increased their breeding effort via second broods. Supplementary fed birds also advanced laying dates, and fledged bigger chicks in 2009 (but not in 2010). Preliminary analyses of chick provisioning rates indicated that there was no difference between fed and control adults.

Annual survival: Food-supplemented Wheatears exhibited higher rates of annual survival than control Wheatears and the strength of this effect varied with age. Food-supplementation led to c. 1.9 times higher annual survival of juveniles and c. 1.5 times higher survival of adults. Survival of juveniles was related to their own food availability as fledglings but not to whether their parents were food-supplemented or unfed controls. Combined with increased breeding productivity associated with food-supplementation, these results suggest that a climate-driven increase in food availability, of the magnitude simulated in our experiment, would increase the population growth rate of Wheatears on Fair Isle from approximately □ = 0.92 to □ = 1.14. Such an effect suggests that the food supplementation would turn Fair Isle from a population sink to a population source, if extended to the whole island.

Discussion

The data set on breeding success was substantially increased in 2009 and 2010. Food supplementation did not appear to influence the success of individual nesting attempts, but was associated with increases in the number of fledglings produced across the whole breeding season (from a mean of 4.4 to 6.3 young fledged per male and from 4.3 to 5.3 per female). The main changes in the reproductive parameters underpinning this increased reproductive output across the season were changes in hatching date, chick size and the number of breeding attempts. Specifically, increased food availability led to an advance in laying date of first broods by approximately 2.3 days, an increase in the wing length of chicks measured at 7 days of age in 2009 (but not in 2010) (which could either represent a larger fledging size, or more rapid growth towards an unaltered fledging size) and an increase in second and simultaneous breeding attempts.

The increase in the number of breeding attempts primarily involved those individuals that both started breeding early and were food supplemented. This effect was especially pronounced for male Wheatears, due to an increase in simultaneous brooding (i.e. two or more nests with different females) in addition to second brooding. In contrast, female Wheatears appear unable to maintain two nests simultaneously, and so were limited to second brooding as a means to increase their numbers of breeding attempts. The magnitude of this impact of the supplementary feeding on annual reproductive output varied between years; the smaller effect of the treatment in 2010 being mainly due to the higher success of control nests relative to that in 2009. This suggests that reproduction is more strongly constrained by food availability in some years than in others, presumably due to variation in natural food availability and/or weather conditions.

Habitat-specific differences in population growth rates of Wheatears have previously been shown to be determined by differences in adult survival more than reproductive success (Arlt *et al*., 2008). Foraging conditions determined by vegetation height underpin these differences in habitat-specific population growth (Arlt *et al*., 2008, Low *et al*., 2010). In our studies on Wheatears, we have shown that an increase in food

availability leads to increased fledgling production and that more of these fledglings then survive to recruit to the local population (current study). We also found that increased food availability had a positive impact on adult survival rates. The combination of these factors provided an estimate of a 1.2 times higher annual population growth rate in our fed birds than our control birds. This estimate is likely to be conservative within the context of our experiment, because the cages that we used to prevent more voracious species (Starlings) stealing food also stopped some target Wheatears, causing them to be excluded from the food-supplemented treatment group (and treated as controls) even though they had received a limited amount of supplementary food early in the breeding season. If the food supplementation was extended to all Wheatear territories on Fair Isle, our results suggest that the island would turn from a population sink to a population source. Environmental conditions in the non-breeding season of migratory birds are undoubtedly important determinants of population sizes (Marra *et al*., 1998; Sillett and Holmes, 2002; Norris *et al*., 2004). The results of this study suggest that climate-linked changes in breeding season food availability can affect survival. The direction of change in food availability will determine whether this could exacerbate or buffer lowered survival in the sub-Saharan wintering areas, where climate change could lead to lower food availability.

Experiment 2 - Effects of increased food availability on migration strategies

Methods: Supplementary feeding of the two Northern Wheatear subspecies *O. o. oenanthe* and *O. o. leucorhoa* was carried out during spring and autumn migration in 2008 and 2009 at Fair Isle, a breeding location of O. *o. oenanthe* and a stopover site of both subspecies. Repeated remote weighing and observations were carried out and 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. Additional non-supplemented Wheatears were captured and measured in the study areas during 2008–2010, while further non-supplemented Wheatears were captured and measured on Fair Isle across the period 1956–2010 by staff of Fair Isle Bird Observatory.

Fuel deposition rate and departure fuel load: Fuel deposition rate and body reserves were calculated for the fed Wheatears that used the remote weighing set up. Only birds that could be categorised as either *O. o. oenanthe* or *O. o. leucorhoa* by wing length were included in this analysis. To control for the relatively large size differences between the two subspecies, I modelled fuel deposition rate and body reserves based on lean body mass. To calculate fuel deposition rate and body reserves, I first calculated for each individual bird as follows. Fully-grown Wheatears (including both fed and control individuals, but excluding breeding females in May on Fair Isle, birds in moult and birds with juvenile plumage) captured between 2007 and 2010 were used in the calculation of lean body mass. Lean birds were selected from this dataset, defined as birds with muscle score < 2 and fat score < 2. From this group, a subset of lean birds with mass below the 50 % quartile at each wing length was selected using quantile regression to ensure that individuals developing eggs or

in moult (and not noted at the time of capture) did not elevate the estimate. We followed Schmaljohann *et al*. (2011), regressing body mass (g) of birds in this lean subset on wing length (mm), providing the following equations to (1) calculate lean body mass for Wheatears of a given wing length (Fig. S2.1), (2) body reserves and (3) daily fuel deposition rate:

As there was variation in the times that particular individuals visited feeders and were weighed, I interpolated body masses for standardised times of day. Daily mass change was modelled using Generalised Additive Models (GAM) with three knots, fitted using the mgcv package (Wood, 2008) within R (version 2.10.1, R Development Core Team 2009) to the available data points on each day (using only days with ≥ 3 weight measurements) for each individual. These fitted body mass trajectories were then used to interpolate weights for each hour between 08:00 and 19:00 (except 12:00 and 13:00). This gave a set of predicted weights at different times for each day that an individual was weighed. For each individual, one of these times was used for the calculation of daily fuel deposition rate, by selecting the time that gave the greatest span of days between first and last day, choosing the latest dates and latest times for any ties, as these were likely to be closer to the departure fuel load. For example, if weights for an individual were available at 14:00 over the period 10–15 August, and 17:00 over the period 11–16 August (both 5 day periods), 17:00 was chosen to calculate daily fuel deposition rate for that individual. A similar approach has been used in other studies of fuel accumulation (Fransson, 1998; Bayly, 2006; Delingat *et al*., 2008). Daily fuel deposition rate was calculated over a period of a maximum of 7 days (to ensure that only birds actively fuelling were included) ending on the day of departure (Wheatears depart on migration at night). Box plots of daily fuel deposition rate on time of day revealed no systematic difference between times of day. Departure fuel load was the last recorded measurement of body reserves for each individual that was not subsequently observed at the location.

Data analysis: Fed birds were weighed multiple times by remote weighing at feeding stations, whereas control birds were only weighed when they were captured - often only once. To account for this difference in sampling effort between treatment groups, I randomly selected one weight per individual. This reduced dataset was then used in our analyses of the effects of treatment on body reserves.

Examining the effect of food supplementation on body reserves of Wheatears stopping over on Fair Isle in spring was not possible, because in the spring dataset there were no food-supplemented *O. o. oenanthe* (with wing lengths below the overlap range of *O. o. oenanthe* and *O. o. leucorhoa*) for comparison with control *O. o. oenanthe*, and only two food supplemented *O. o. leucorhoa*.

I fitted a series of models using R to investigate (1) the effects of treatment on body reserves across the annual cycle and (2) variation in fuel deposition rate and departure fuel load between subspecies and stages of the annual cycle. I fitted linear

models for the analyses of body reserves and departure fuel load. I fitted variance models in the analysis of fuel deposition rate, using maximum likelihood and generalised least squares within the R nlme package (gls: Pinheiro *et al*., 2011), because of a large difference in the variance of fuel deposition rate between subspecies. Datasets were reduced so that there were no missing data for any of the factors in full models, to enable direct comparisons between models.

The performance of competing models was compared using Akaike's Information Criterion, corrected for small sample size (AICc; Burnham & Anderson 2002).

Results

Body reserves were higher in fed than control *O. o. oenanthe* at the end of the breeding season on Fair Isle, during the pre-migratory phase from July to early September (Fig. 1a). Larger body reserves were attained by fed than control *O. o. leucorhoa* stopping over on Fair Isle in the autumn (Fig 1b). Fuel deposition rate was higher in *O. o. leucorhoa* than *O. o. oenanthe* (Fig. 2).

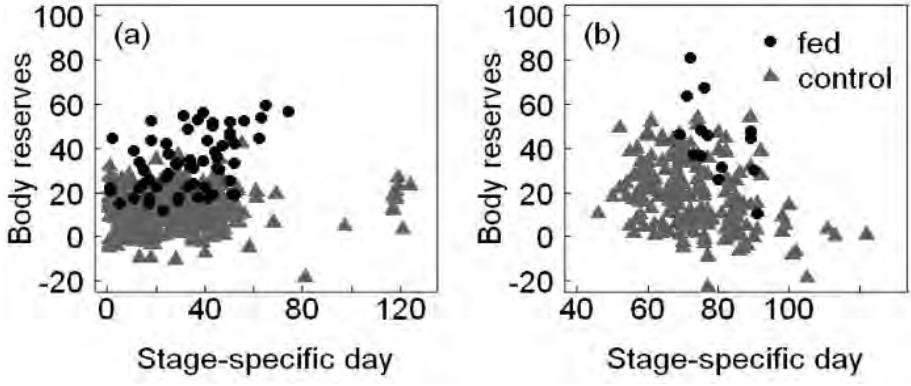

Fig. 1: Body reserves of *O. o. oenanthe* during the pre-migratory autumn period (a) and *O. o. leucorhoa* stopping over on on Fair Isle in the autumn (b).

Discussion

In this study, I show how climate-driven changes in arthropod availability are likely to affect body mass regulation of two subspecies of a long-distance migratory songbird, the northern Wheatear. My findings that fed Wheatears had greater body reserves than control Wheatears during the autumn pre-migratory period and autumn stopover provides evidence that food is currently limiting migratory fuelling of Wheatears. Changes in food availability caused by climate change are therefore likely to affect the rate and extent of fuel accumulation of Wheatears preparing for autumn migration.

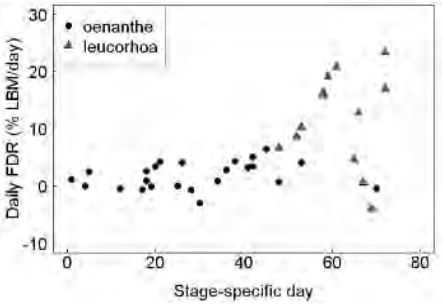

Fig. 2. Daily fuel deposition rate (FDR) of *O. o. oenanthe* and *O. o. leucorhoa* in the autumn on Fair Isle.

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Non-vertebrate Natural History highlights, 2008–2010

Nick Riddiford

Much has been written about the birdlife of Fair Isle and rightly so, but the local natural history offers so much more than just avian highlights. FIBO staff and a growing number of amateur naturalists on the isle keep records of many aspects of the biodiversity and each year throws up new species and surprising records. Here an attempt has been made to highlight some of the most recent of these...

Plants

The **oysterplant** *Mertensia maritima* is an extremely rare plant in the UK, restricted to just a few shingle shores in the northern half of the British Isles. It first colonised Fair Isle in the 1980s. Since then the population has grown and grown and there are now upwards of 1,600 individuals carpeting the shingle at Muckle Uri Geo, making it one of the most important populations in the country. This is in large part due to conservation measures by FIBO staff. Sheep consider the oysterplant very good to eat, so the Observatory maintains seasonal fencing to keep the sheep out during the critical summer period. Unlike a lot of rarities it can be appreciated for its beauty, producing masses of sky blue flowers within rosettes of silvery-green leaves.

Another beautiful flower, the **northern marsh orchid** *Dactylorhiza majalis purpurella* has also prospered, year on year. 2010 was its best year ever and included some magnificently large individuals. Its population is not only growing but spreading into new sites. This reflects the increase in wet soils on the isle in recent years and seasonal grazing changes associated with agri-environmental schemes.

Another species benefiting from agri-environmental management measures is **yellow rattle** *Rhinathus minor*. This species is now widespread, often growing alongside two species of vetch, **bush vetch** *Vicia cracca* and the lovely **tufted vetch** *Vicia sepium*. Their spread is welcome because they fix nitrogen naturally, a much cheaper solution than ever more expensive artificial fertilisers.

Fair Isle still supports a range of arable flora, a guild which has been in severe decline elsewhere in Britain in the face of herbicides and modern agriculture. The highlight of the arable flora in 2009 was thirty **sun spurge** *Euphorbia helioscopia* plants within an oat crop at Kenaby. Sun spurge has not been seen for a number of years, and never in such numbers. Fortunately the seeds of this and other arable plants can lie dormant for many years before springing into life once an area of soil is turned over. The arable rig at Kenaby had not been used for that purpose for some years and

when it was last used in the 1990s also had sun spurge. The 2009 crop also contained abundant **bugloss** *Anchusa arvensis*, while **meadow vetchling** *Lathyrus pratensis* and **tufted vetch** *Vicia cracca* grew just outside the crop. These are showy flowers, much appreciated by visitors to the isle.

Fair Isle's "special" plants continue to thrive in the hill grazing area, including **fir clubmoss** *Huperzia selago* which in 2010 had increased its population from one plant to two in its only known site on the lower slopes of Ward Hill. This unusual plant was reported by the Rev Straker in 1897 but not seen again until the late 1990s. It then chose to disappear again before being relocated in 2009 - mysterious behaviour!

Management of the hill grazing area also remains favourable for plants. A notable observation in 2009 is that the **sundew** *Drosera rotundifolia*, until recently confined to two sites, is expanding. The population in Sukka Mire is growing and a new site was discovered at Swey.

No specific census work was conducted on other plant species but general observations confirmed that **lesser marshwort** *Apium inundatum*, **all-seed** *Radiola linoides*, **bog pimpernel** *Anagallis tenella* and **few-flowered spike-rush** *Eleocharis quinqueflora*, all recognised as rare and declining species in the UK, continue to do well in all their known localities on the isle. These species owe their strong Fair Isle populations to continuity of sensitive management provided by traditional, extensive agriculture. It is not just these species which benefit from long-term good husbandry. The recent Botanical Society of the British Isles publication *Change in the British Flora 1987–2004* (Braithwaite, Ellis & Preston, 2006) lists numerous species which are in decline in all or parts of the UK - often because of retreat away from modern farming methods - which still maintain healthy populations on Fair Isle.

Mosses

Recent research on Fair Isle mosses has established that the extremely rare **St Kilda Hook-moss** *Sanionia orthothecioides* is relatively widespread on the isle. Seven sites have now been found and, as the moss is easily overlooked, more are expected. The favoured habitat is a dry heath/grassland mosaic subject to light extensive grazing. This moss is known from just a few coastal sites from St Kilda to the south Shetland mainland. The largest known colony is on Vaasetter.

Another find is engendering taxonomic interest. A moss from the summit of Ward Hill has currently been named as "somewhere near ***Dicranum fuscescens***" by Gordon Rothero, the specialist in the genus, but its characters differ sufficiently for him to call it *Dicranum flexicaule* for the moment. He is keen to see more material as it may be a distinctive form found only on Scottish islands.

Fair Isle's distance from other landmasses seems to be no barrier for some colonists, and this includes mosses. A clump of the distinctive **Heath-star moss** *Campylopus*

introflexus, discovered on the Hill in July 2010, is the first Fair Isle record for an invasive New Zealand moss which has gradually colonised the UK (and parts of Europe) over the last 50 years. It spreads easily by spores carried on the wind, explaining its arrival in a part of the isle visited by relatively few people - i.e. they did not arrive on a visitor's boots!

Fungi

Ward Hill is a fascinating site, particularly the summit. Although only 217 m above sea level, its highest point is exposed to the most extreme of weather conditions; so no surprise that it supports strong populations of some arctic-alpine plants. Not least among these is **least willow** *Salix herbacea* - if you excuse the contradiction in terms. This, Britain's smallest "tree"*, supports some very rare fungi. The first UK record of ***Russula medullata*** was from here and it is still only known from one other site, being Foula. In the 1990s we found the second UK record of ***Lactarius lanceolatus*** - another species we share with Foula. Monitoring has now established that strong colonies of both species occur on the **least willow**. The latest addition to this list of associates, in 2009, was ***Cortinarius phaeopygmaeus*** - another second UK record. The only previous record was from the Cairngorms in the 1980s, also associated with *Salix herbacea*. Another 2009 Ward Hill find was the **cup fungus** *Neottiella vivida*, described by mycologist Professor Roy Watling (*in litt*.) as "a good find".

Current work on fungi has added a number of species to the Fair Isle list. They included the **rust fungus** *Gymnosporangium clavariiforme*, growing on **prostrate juniper** *Juniperus communis nana* near the airstrip, which was new to Shetland as well; and **tawny grisette** *Amanita fulva*, only the second Shetland record. The latter was also growing on least willow.

*How small is our "smallest tree". I measured a spike in July 2010 which was 6 cm long. I only measured it because it was massively longer than any of its neighbours!

Invertebrates

While local moths were as abundant as ever, there were relatively few migrants in 2008–10. Nevertheless, five new species were recorded for the isle. Four of these were in 2008. The most unexpected of these was a **blood-vein** *Timandra comae*, encountered by day at the Haa. The only previous Northern Isles record was of two taken in Orkney in 1969. However, ours proved to be part of a small influx which included several Shetland records at about the same time.

On the very same day as the Fair Isle blood-vein, a new micro moth for the isle was taken at Schoolton. It proved to be ***Epinotia nisella***, a Tortricid moth with a southern distribution within the UK. **Lime-speck pug** *Eupithecia centaureata* was another southern species taken for the first time, also at Schoolton. All three could have migrated as easily from the continent as from the British mainland. The fourth new species from 2008 was a very small white micro, ***Elachista argentella***, previously

known only as far north as Orkney. The larva mines grass and is likely to be an overlooked resident.

There were no additions in 2010 and only one in 2009; but it was a spectacular one, **scarce arches** *Apamea lateritia*. This is an extreme rarity and constituted the 15th UK record.

The year 2009 will long be remembered for its **painted lady** *Vanessa cardui* invasion, experienced by much of western Europe in May. There were unprecedented numbers for the isle, too, and this led to abundant breeding. By July, groups of caterpillars were present on most of the **spear thistles** *Cirsium vulgare* and quite a few of the **creeping thistles** *Cirsium arvense* throughout the isle as well as on the bugloss plants in the crops.

Newcomers

New invertebrate discoveries on Fair Isle can generally be allocated under one of three headings: previously overlooked; brought in accidentally by humans; and naturally occurring immigrants. In 2010, the centipede ***Schendyla nemorensis*** was new to the isle but is probably a long-time resident previously overlooked. "Previously overlooked" will also apply to the **little cuttlefish** *Sepiola atlantica* and numerous **ghost shrimps** *Schistomysis spiritus* encountered in North Haven in August 2010.

Movement northwards is now a well-established phenomenon amongst UK and European insects, particularly those with the ability to fly. Fair Isle is well placed to register such movements because of its location, its long-term invertebrate monitoring programme and the sharp observational powers of islanders. There are no resident populations of lacewings (Neuroptera) but **green lacewings** *Chrysopa carnea s.l.* turn up most years as migrants. However, no **brown lacewing** had ever been recorded. Yet, amazingly, there were three records involving two species in 2008. The first, in early July, and the second, on 1st August were *Hemerobius lutescens*, a species widespread throughout Britain. The third was *Wesmaelius subnebulosus* a fine male. It is described as widespread in Britain, though localised in Scotland. The *Wesmaelius* chose to enter the bird observatory during FIBO's 60th birthday party and launch of its new Bird Observatory appeal.

There is no doubting that these lacewings were true migrants. The second *Hemerobius* was actually witnessed arriving from the south at Kirki Geo. However, Fair Isle is not immune to "adventives", species arriving accidentally. One such in 2008 was a soldier bug found moribund in grapes bought from the island shop. It proved to be *Spilostethus pandurus*, a pan-Mediterranean species. A white-lipped snail *Cepaea hortensis* found on January 2010 was another surprise new species for the isle, but probably arrived with imported garden plants or shop produce.

There are very few ladybird records for the isle, so a **22-spot ladybird** *Psyllobora 22-punctata* in June 2009 was unexpected. As it was found near the shop, it may have been brought in accidentally on produce. The same applies to the **rice weevils**

Sitophilus oryzae found among stores at one croft. Both are new to the isle - the second a far from welcome one! Another unwelcome species, encountered for the first time in 2009, was the **backswimmer** *Notonecta glauca*. This is a strong flier and has been pushing northwards in recent years. The northernmost record was previously in South Ronaldsay (Orkney), but it is now well established in Golden Water and beginning to colonise other Fair Isle pools. *Notonecta* is a voracious predator and was seen attacking our special water boatman *Corixa iberica* in the holding trays. *Corixa iberica* is known from just a few extreme Atlantic coastal pools from north Portugal to Shetland, which are its last points of refuge in the World. The arrival of the Notonecta *may* have serious consequences for the long term survival of the rarer species.

Sufficient studies of better known invertebrate groups have been carried out to recognise species which are likely or certain to be new arrivals. The same does not apply to more poorly studied or hard-to-find groups. This issue is being addressed by the introduction of a study using pitfall traps across the Fair Isle hill. The first unexpected capture was a **lace bug** *Acalypta parvula* taken at the entrance of a rabbit burrow at Funniequoy Gully. As it is 2 mm long and lives in moss, it is perhaps not surprising that it has been overlooked before. This was followed by the discovery of a new species of spider for Scotland on Ward Hill, ***Mioxena blanda***. It is possible that this tiny money spider made its own way to the isle on a gossamer thread. The alternative is that it was previously overlooked, in which case spider enthusiasts should be looking out for it in other Scottish hill districts. The Fair Isle study will set a baseline for overlooked species, which is essential for monitoring the impact of environmental change on invertebrate communities.

Climate change

There has been a trend of discoveries in recent years of "southern" species, including biota well north of their previous known range. This trend continues, emphasizing the biogeographical importance of Fair Isle during this period of flux. The enthusiasm and sharp eyes of children contribute to these discoveries and that was the case in March when an eight-year old resident found the tiny **sand creeplet anemone** *Epizoanthus couchi*. The UK marine database, MarLIN, records it as occurring no further north than the NW corner of mainland Scotland. This record extends the distribution nearly one degree farther north (more than 100 km to the north-west).

Terrestrially, warmer conditions in Britain may have contributed to the colonisation of the **smoky wainscot moth** *Mythimna impura*, first recorded in 1998 and now established on the isle, with a growing population judging from light trap captures. But new arrivals may be balanced by losses. **Wilson's filmy fern** *Hymenophyllum wilsonii* has declined enormously on Ward Hill in the last few years. It prefers cool, damp habitats and although the north flank of Ward Hill summit still remains one of the coldest sites on the isle, the extremely dry conditions of the last few years has led to drier habitats there and the consequent retreat of this scarce aberrant fern.

The water boatman *Notonecta* arrival discussed above is an example of a population extending northwards under ameliorating climate conditions and the potential negative effects this can have on other elements of the ecosystem. Species pushing northwards were not confined to terrestrial species. The rare **small cushion star** *Asterina phylactica* was previously known only as far north as the Inner Hebrides, so the discovery of one near South Light in April 2009 is a significant extension northwards. The same year in October, there was an unprecedented wreck of thousands of the **mauve stinger jellyfish** *Pelagia noctiluca* washed ashore on North Haven beach, with many others noted in the geos and offshore. This species has only been seen on a handful of occasions on the isle before, and never in such numbers. This species is commonly encountered as far south as the Mediterranean, though it is known from deeper Atlantic waters too. Extreme prolonged westerly winds may have played a part in forcing them eastwards.

Many of these observations come from islanders, especially the children, as well as visitors to the isle. These records are really important in keeping tabs on the natural world on Fair Isle during a period of change... so keep them coming!

Other Wildlife

Deryk Shaw

Records of most forms of wildlife are kept at the Observatory and visitors are encouraged to report their sightings to a member of staff and during the evening log. 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

In **2009** the crew of the *Good Shepherd IV* reported regular sightings between the months of May and August. **Minke Whales** *(Balaenoptera acutorostrata)* were seen on four dates in May, twice in June and once in July – all were singles except for two together on 30th June. A lone bull **Killer Whale** *(Orcinus orca)* was reported on 12th May and a pod of three on 13th June, the latter along with four unidentified dolphins. **Harbour Porpoise** *(Phocoena phocoena)* were seen on 26th May (2), 30th June (6+) and 16th (4-6), 22nd (1) & 30th (2) July. During the crossing on a calm sea on 8th August, Harbour Porpoise were very evident with several small groups spotted, totalling some 30+ animals. Finally, three **White-beaked Dolphins** *(Lagenorhynchus albirostris)* on 22nd August was the last sighting during the ferry crossing.

Land-based sightings were far fewer with a large unidentified cetacean seen off North Light on 29th June and **Risso's Dolphins** *(Grampus griseus)* reported twice in October; four off North Light on 7th and seven in the same area exactly a week later, the final records of the year.

In **2010**, two **Killer Whales** off Buness on 21st March were the first and only cetaceans seen from the isle until the end of July when four **White-beaked Dolphin** were spotted, also off Buness. **Harbour Porpoise** were seen in August with c20 from Buness on 15th and two there on 28th when three were observed from the *Good Shepherd IV* crossing. Early September brought a flurry of sightings with 12 **Harbour Porpoise**, two **Minke Whale** and two **Dolphin sp** off Buness on 1st and the following day producing six **Risso's Dolphin,** three **Harbour Porpoise**, and singles of **Minke Whale** and **Killer Whale**. Three more **Harbour Porpoise** were spotted on 16th September and a single **Minke Whale** was off South Light three days later. There were no further sightings until another good day on 12th October produced a pod of 15 **Harbour Porpoise** off Buness whilst the *Good Shepherd IV* crossing produced four more plus two each of **Minke Whale** and **Risso's Dolphin**. Four **Killer Whales** and a single **Harbour Porpoise** off Buness on 18th October were the last sightings of the year.

Pinnipeds

Grey Seal (*Halicherous 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 2009, the first pup was in Troili Geo on 5th October (one day earlier than in 2008) and by the end of the pupping period in late November an estimated total of 76 had been born. This is an improvement on the 58 (a very low figure) counted in 2008, but still some 25% short of the recent average. In 2010, the first two pups appeared on 20th & 27th September but pupping did not begin in earnest until 14th October and by the end of the period in late November a total of 64 had been born.

Common Seals (*Phoca vitulina*) were regularly seen in spring and autumn in South Harbour with c15 often hauled out on the shingle there in both 2009 & 2010 - a slightly lower figure than normal (c20).

Other Marine sightings

Little Cuttlefish (*Sepiola atlantica);* The first for Fair Isle was discovered on 6th August 2010 but this is probably simply a previously over-looked species than a new arrival to Fair Isle.

Basking Shark *(Cetorhinus maximumus);* A single animal was observed in South Harbour on 9th August 2009 and similarly one brushed past the Observatory zodiac off South Light on 20th August 2010 - the first records since 2006.

Brill *(Scophthalmus rhombus)*; The dried remains of one of these deep water fish belonging to the Turbot family was found on Hoini on 21st October 2010.

Ray's Bream (*Brama brama*); One was washed up on South Harbour beach on 21st October 2010 - an unusual record of a species more commonly found in southern European waters.

Summary of other miscellaneous sightings

Bat sp. (order **Chiroptera**); one was observed around the Chalet on 31st May. From size, shape and colour it was almost certainly a Pipistrelle ssp.

Common Frog *(Rana temporaria)* In 2009, the first frogspawn was noted in the ditches around Pund/Barkland on 7th March, one day later than in the previous two years, whilst in 2010 the first balls of spawn did not appear until 9th March.

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, 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 Oliver Simms

I originally applied for the John Harrison Memorial Fund award in early 2009, having seen it advertised on the bird observatory website, but due to the observatory being rebuilt in 2009, I was not able to travel to Fair Isle until July 2010. The original plan was to arrive on Fair Isle on 20th July. However, my flight to Shetland was delayed due to fog and then when it did go the pilot, due to adverse weather, was forced to land in Kirkwall, Orkney. From there I took the overnight ferry to Lerwick and finally arrived on Fair Isle by plane late afternoon on 22nd.

As a keen birdwatcher, I had always wanted to visit Fair Isle and so was delighted to have finally got there. Even on this first evening, I saw birds such as Black Guillemot and Great Skua, which I had only seen a few times before, as well as my first Common Seal for over three years. On the following morning, I started work by helping with the ringing of Fulmar chicks. Throughout my time on Fair Isle, I did a wide variety of work including painting a building, clearing grass from around small trees and helping to check on Arctic Skua chicks, which one of the Assistant Wardens was monitoring. The latter was particularly eye-opening as of the twenty or so nests we looked at there were only two surviving chicks. Before I travelled to Fair Isle, I had been unaware of the severity of the problems the bird population was facing, largely as a result of declining fish stocks.

A particular highlight for me was travelling on a Zodiac to a small island just off the south end of Fair Isle to extract Puffin chicks from their burrows in order to weigh and measure them. It was great to be able to hold such popular and charismatic birds, on top of the feeling that I was helping with the study of Puffins, which will be essential to conserve them. Other highlights included joining the island residents in rounding up the hill sheep in order to shear them. This was a great experience and was very different from what I normally do at home in London!

During my time on the island, I also had the opportunity to observe some of the work of the Assistant Wardens as well as the practical taking part. This incorporated accompanying them on the morning heligoland trap round, where catches included the Fair Isle subspecies of Wren, Common Snipe and Song Thrush, and watching the Storm Petrel ringing one night. The latter was particularly pleasing as I had only ever seen a Storm Petrel with distant views before so it was great to be able to get so close

to these amazing birds. I also spent a day shadowing a research student, who was investigating the effect of supplementary feeding on the breeding productivity of the Wheatear. Seeing this different side of work that occurs at the Observatory was particularly valuable. I also had some free time to explore the beautiful island, which I thoroughly enjoyed.

I would like to thank all the Observatory staff for helping to make the 11 days I spent there such a worthwhile and enjoyable experience.

White's Thrush
© Jack Ashton-Booth

Fair Isle Bird Observatory Trust (FIBOT) Financial Report for 2009 & 2010

Mike Wood (Finance Director)

The two years from 1st November 2008 to 31st October 2010 were largely spent rebuilding the Observatory and the formal accounts for these years are, therefore, complicated by the considerable expenditure incurred and the grant funding and donations received that enabled this expenditure to be financed. The full statutory accounts can be inspected at the Observatory. This report summarises those accounts in a form that can be easily understood and appreciated by readers without necessitating a background in accountancy.

Although the building project was disrupted for a time in mid-2010 by the contractor entering into receivership, FIBOT was fortunate in that this occurred after most of the building had already been completed and we were subsequently able to reach agreement with *Northmen Ltd* of Fair Isle to finish the work. Our original plan was to have been open for business from May 2010; this was not possible but we were able to welcome our first guests in June 2010. Completion of the warden's accommodation and garage was able to continue until October 2010 whilst guests were accommodated in the completed parts of the building.

FIBO received substantial grant funding from the Scottish Government Rural Development Programme, Shetland Islands Council and Highlands & Islands Enterprise, and I would personally like to thank the staff of these bodies for their help and flexibility at crucial points in the project. Generous donations, large and small, were received from hundreds of people located on Fair Isle itself, Shetland, throughout the UK and in several other countries. We also received large donations from William Grant Ltd, Robertson Trust, Gannochy Trust and the HDH Wills Trust. The generous legacy received from Dr Forster's estate helped underpin FIBO's contribution to the funding.

INCOME	**£**	**EXPENDITURE**	**£**
Grant Funding	3,488,250	Cost of Building	3,967,979
Donations	500,726	Fixtures & Fittings	118,601
FIBO Contribution	403,514	Legal & Financial	60,855
		Miscellaneous	116,290
Total	**4,392,490**	**Total**	**4,263,725**

The surplus remaining from the project has been returned to FIBO's Endowment Fund.

My personal thanks go to Hollie and Deryk for their hard work and dedication, often in difficult circumstances as the building work disrupted their domestic arrangements.

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

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 2010. 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, following recommendations by the BOURC Taxonomic Sub-committee (378 species). Four species of uncertain origin (Category D), presumed escapes (Category E) and one extinct are also included in lists at the end.

Status Categories

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

Breeding Categories (B, followed by:)

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

- ☐ Mute Swan (V)
- ☐ Mute Swan (V)
- ☐ Bewick's Swan (V)
- ☐ Whooper Swan (FM)
- ☐ Bean Goose (V)
- ☐ Pink-footed Goose (FM)
- ☐ Greater White-fronted Goose (S)
- ☐ Greylag Goose (CM)
- ☐ Greater Canada Goose (R)
- ☐ Barnacle Goose (FM)
- ☐ Brent Goose (R)
- ☐ Common Shelduck (S)
- ☐ Mandarin Duck (V)
- ☐ Eurasian Wigeon (FM)
- ☐ American Wigeon (V)
- ☐ Gadwall (R)
- ☐ Eurasian Teal (FM)
- ☐ Green-winged Teal (V)
- ☐ Mallard (BS, FM)
- ☐ American Black Duck (V)
- ☐ Northern Pintail (S)
- ☐ Garganey (V)
- ☐ Northern Shoveler (S)
- ☐ Common Pochard (R)
- ☐ Ring-necked Duck (V)
- ☐ Tufted Duck (RM)
- ☐ Greater Scaup (S)
- ☐ Common Eider (BS, FM)
- ☐ King Eider (V)
- ☐ Steller's Eider (V)
- ☐ Harlequin Duck (V)
- ☐ Long-tailed Duck (FM)
- ☐ Common Scoter (S)
- ☐ Surf Scoter (V)
- ☐ Velvet Scoter (S)
- ☐ Common Goldeneye (RM)
- ☐ Smew (V)
- ☐ Red-breasted Merganser (FM)
- ☐ Goosander (S)
- ☐ Common Quail (S)
- ☐ Red-throated Diver (RM)
- ☐ Black-throated Diver (V)
- ☐ Great Northern Diver (S)
- ☐ White-billed Diver (V)
- ☐ Black-browed Albatross (V)
- ☐ Northern Fulmar (BL, CM)
- ☐ Cory's Shearwater (V)
- ☐ Great Shearwater (V)
- ☐ Sooty Shearwater (FM)
- ☐ Manx Shearwater (S)
- ☐ European Storm Petrel (BS, FM)
- ☐ Leach's Storm Petrel (B?, RM)
- ☐ Northern Gannet (BL, CM)
- ☐ Great Cormorant (FM)

☐ European Shag (BL, CM)
☐ Little Bittern (V)
☐ Black-crowned Night Heron (V)
☐ Grey Heron (FM)
☐ Purple Heron (V)
☐ White Stork (V)
☐ Little Grebe (R)
☐ Great Crested Grebe (V)
☐ Red-necked Grebe (V)
☐ Slavonian Grebe (S)
☐ European Honey-buzzard (R)
☐ Black Kite (V)
☐ Red Kite (V)
☐ White-tailed Eagle (V)
☐ Western Marsh Harrier (R)
☐ Hen Harrier (S)
☐ Pallid Harrier (V)
☐ Montagu's Harrier (V)
☐ Northern Goshawk (V)
☐ Eurasian Sparrowhawk (RM)
☐ Common Buzzard (S)
☐ Rough-legged Buzzard (V)
☐ Golden Eagle (V)
☐ Western Osprey (S)
☐ Lesser Kestrel (V)
☐ Common Kestrel (RM)
☐ American Kestrel (V)
☐ Red-footed Falcon (V)
☐ Merlin (RM)
☐ Eurasian Hobby (R)
☐ Gyrfalcon (V)
☐ Peregrine Falcon (RM)
☐ Water Rail (RM)
☐ Spotted Crake (R)
☐ Little Crake (V)
☐ Baillon's Crake (V)
☐ Corn Crake (S)
☐ Common Moorhen (S)
☐ Eurasian Coot (R)
☐ Common Crane (V)
☐ Sandhill Crane (V)
☐ Little Bustard (V)
☐ Great Bustard (V)
☐ Eurasian Oystercatcher (BS, FM)
☐ Pied Avocet (V)
☐ Eurasian Stone-curlew (V)
☐ Collared Pratincole (V)
☐ Black-winged Pratincole (V)
☐ Little Ringed Plover (V)
☐ Common Ringed Plover (BS, FM)
☐ Kentish Plover (V)
☐ Caspian Plover (V)
☐ Eurasian Dotterel (S)
☐ American Golden Plover (V)
☐ Pacific Golden Plover (V)
☐ European Golden Plover (CM)
☐ Grey Plover (S)
☐ Northern Lapwing (BS, FM)
☐ Red Knot (FM)
☐ Sanderling (FM)
☐ Semi-palmated Sandpiper (V)
☐ Red-necked Stint (V)
☐ Little Stint (RM)
☐ Temminck's Stint (V)
☐ White-rumped Sandpiper (V)
☐ Baird's Sandpiper (V)
☐ Pectoral Sandpiper (V)
☐ Curlew Sandpiper (S)
☐ Purple Sandpiper (FM)
☐ Dunlin (FM)
☐ Buff-breasted Sandpiper (V)
☐ Ruff (RM)
☐ Jack Snipe (FM)
☐ Common Snipe (BS, CM)
☐ Great Snipe (R)
☐ Long-billed Dowitcher (V)
☐ Eurasian Woodcock (FM)
☐ Black-tailed Godwit (S)
☐ Bar-tailed Godwit (RM)
☐ Hudsonian Whimbrel (V)
☐ Whimbrel (FM)
☐ Eurasian Curlew (BS, FM)
☐ Upland Sandpiper (V)
☐ Terek Sandpiper (V)
☐ Common Sandpiper (FM)
☐ Spotted Sandpiper (V)
☐ Green Sandpiper (RM)
☐ Solitary Sandpiper (V)
☐ Spotted Redshank (S)
☐ Common Greenshank (RM)
☐ Lesser Yellowlegs (V)
☐ Wood Sandpiper (S)
☐ Common Redshank (CM)
☐ Ruddy Turnstone (CM)
☐ Red-necked Phalarope (V)
☐ Grey Phalarope (V)
☐ Pomarine Skua (R)
☐ Arctic Skua (BS, FM)
☐ Long-tailed Skua (R)
☐ Great Skua (BM, FM)
☐ Ivory Gull (V)
☐ Sabine's Gull (V)
☐ Black-legged Kittiwake (BM, CM)
☐ Black-headed Gull (FM)
☐ Little Gull (V)
☐ Laughing Gull (V)
☐ Mediterranean Gull (V)
☐ Mew (Common) Gull (BS, FM)
☐ Ring-billed Gull (V)
☐ Lesser Black-backed Gull (BS, FM)
☐ Herring Gull (BS, CM)
☐ Iceland Gull (S)
☐ Glaucous Gull (RM)
☐ Great Black-backed Gull (BS, CM)
☐ Gull-billed Tern (V)
☐ Caspian Tern (V)
☐ Black Tern (V)
☐ White-winged Tern (V)
☐ Sandwich Tern (S)
☐ Common Tern (BS, RM)
☐ Roseate Tern (V)
☐ Arctic Tern (BM, FM)
☐ Guillemot (BL, CM)
☐ Brünnich's Guillemot (V)
☐ Razorbill (BL, FM)
☐ Black Guillemot (BM)
☐ Little Auk (FM)
☐ Atlantic Puffin (BL, CM)
☐ Pallas's Sand grouse (V)
☐ Rock Dove (BS, FM)
☐ Stock Dove (S)
☐ Common Wood Pigeon (FM)
☐ Eurasian Collared Dove (FM)
☐ European Turtle Dove (S)
☐ Oriental Turtle Dove (V)
☐ Common Cuckoo (RM)
☐ Western Barn Owl (V)
☐ Eurasian Scops Owl (V)
☐ Snowy Owl (V)
☐ Long-eared Owl (RM)
☐ Short-eared Owl (RM)
☐ European Nightjar (V)
☐ Common Swift (FM)
☐ Pallid Swift (V)

- ☐ Alpine Swift (V)
- ☐ Little Swift (V)
- ☐ Common Kingfisher (V)
- ☐ European Bee-eater (V)
- ☐ European Roller (V)
- ☐ Eurasian Hoopoe (R)
- ☐ Eurasian Wryneck (RM)
- ☐ Great Spotted Woodpecker (S)
- ☐ Eurasian Golden Oriole (V)
- ☐ Brown Shrike (V)
- ☐ Isabelline Shrike (V)
- ☐ Red-backed Shrike (RM)
- ☐ Lesser Grey Shrike (V)
- ☐ Great Grey Shrike (S)
- ☐ Southern Grey Shrike (V)
- ☐ Woodchat Shrike (V)
- ☐ Eurasian Magpie (V)
- ☐ Western Jackdaw (S)
- ☐ Rook (RM)
- ☐ Carrion Crow (FM)
- ☐ Hooded Crow (BS, RM)
- ☐ Northern Raven (BS, RM)
- ☐ Goldcrest (FM)
- ☐ Common Firecrest (V)
- ☐ Eurasian Blue Tit (V)
- ☐ Great Tit (R)
- ☐ Coal Tit (V)
- ☐ Calandra Lark (V)
- ☐ Bimaculated Lark (V)
- ☐ Greater Short-toed Lark (S)
- ☐ Crested Lark (V)
- ☐ Woodlark (V)
- ☐ Euasian Skylark (BS, CM)
- ☐ Horned (Shore) Lark (R)
- ☐ Sand Martin (RM)
- ☐ Barn Swallow (CM)
- ☐ Common House Martin (FM)
- ☐ Red-rumped Swallow (V)
- ☐ Greenish Warbler (R)
- ☐ Arctic Warbler (R)
- ☐ Pallas's Leaf Warbler (R)
- ☐ Yellow-browed Warbler (RM)
- ☐ Hume's Leaf Warbler (V)
- ☐ Radde's Warbler (V)
- ☐ Dusky Warbler (V)
- ☐ Western Bonelli's Warbler (V)
- ☐ Wood Warbler (RM)
- ☐ Common Chiffchaff (FM)
- ☐ Willow Warbler (CM)
- ☐ Eurasian Blackcap (CM)
- ☐ Garden Warbler (FM)
- ☐ Barred Warbler (RM)
- ☐ Lesser Whitethroat (FM)
- ☐ Common Whitethroat (FM)
- ☐ Dartford Warbler (V)
- ☐ Subalpine Warbler (R)
- ☐ Sardinian Warbler (V)
- ☐ Pallas's Grasshopper Warbler (V)
- ☐ Lanceolated Warbler (R)
- ☐ Common Grasshopper Warbler (RM)
- ☐ River Warbler (V)
- ☐ Savi's Warbler (V)
- ☐ Thick-billed Warbler (V)
- ☐ Booted Warbler (V)
- ☐ Sykes's Warbler (V)
- ☐ Eastern Olivaceous Warbler (V)
- ☐ Icterine Warbler (S)
- ☐ Melodious Warbler (V)
- ☐ Aquatic Warbler (V)
- ☐ Sedge Warbler (FM)
- ☐ Paddyfield Warbler (V)
- ☐ Blyth's Reed Warbler (R)
- ☐ Marsh Warbler (S)
- ☐ Eurasian Reed Warbler (RM)
- ☐ Great Reed Warbler (V)
- ☐ Bohemian Waxwing (S)
- ☐ Eurasian Treecreeper (V)
- ☐ Eurasian Wren (BS, RM)
- ☐ Common Starling (BM, FM)
- ☐ Rosy Starling (R)
- ☐ White-throated Dipper (V)
- ☐ White's Thrush (V)
- ☐ Hermit Thrush (V)
- ☐ Swainson's Thrush (V)
- ☐ Grey-cheeked Thrush (V)
- ☐ Siberian Thrush (V)
- ☐ Ring Ouzel (FM)
- ☐ Common Blackbird (CM)
- ☐ Eyebrowed Thrush (V)
- ☐ Dusky Thrush (V)
- ☐ Black-throated Thrush (V)
- ☐ Fieldfare (CM)
- ☐ Song Thrush (CM)
- ☐ Redwing (CM)
- ☐ Mistle Thrush (RM)
- ☐ Asian Brown Flycatcher (V)
- ☐ Spotted Flycatcher (FM)
- ☐ European Robin (CM)
- ☐ Rufous-tailed Robin (V)
- ☐ Siberian Ruby throat (V)
- ☐ Red-flanked Bluetail (V)
- ☐ Thrush Nightingale (R)
- ☐ Common Nightingale (R)
- ☐ Bluethroat (RM)
- ☐ Red-breasted Flycatcher (S)
- ☐ Collared Flycatcher (V)
- ☐ Pied Flycatcher (FM)
- ☐ Black Redstart (RM)
- ☐ Common Redstart (FM)
- ☐ Rufous-tailed Rock Thrush (V)
- ☐ Whinchat (FM)
- ☐ Siberian Stonechat (V)
- ☐ European Stonechat (S)
- ☐ Isabelline Wheatear (V)
- ☐ Northern Wheatear (BS, CM)
- ☐ Pied Wheatear (V)
- ☐ Black-eared Wheatear (V)
- ☐ Desert Wheatear (V)
- ☐ Dunnock (FM)
- ☐ Alpine Accentor (V)
- ☐ House Sparrow (BS)
- ☐ Eurasian Tree Sparrow (R)
- ☐ WesternYellow Wagtail (RM)
- ☐ Citrine Wagtail (R)
- ☐ Grey Wagtail (S)
- ☐ White/Pied Wagtail (BS, FM)
- ☐ Richard's Pipit (S)
- ☐ Blyth's Pipit (V)
- ☐ Tawny Pipit (V)
- ☐ Olive-backed Pipit (R)
- ☐ Tree Pipit (FM)
- ☐ Pechora Pipit (R)
- ☐ Meadow Pipit (BS, CM)
- ☐ Red-throated Pipit (R)
- ☐ Eurasian Rock Pipit (BS, FM)
- ☐ Buff-bellied Pipit (V)
- ☐ Common Chaffinch (FM)
- ☐ Brambling (FM)
- ☐ European Greenfinch (RM)
- ☐ European Serin (V)
- ☐ Citril Finch (V)
- ☐ European Goldfinch (R)
- ☐ Eurasian Siskin (FM)
- ☐ Common Linnet (RM)

☐ Twite (BS, FM)
☐ Lesser Redpoll (S)
☐ Mealy Redpoll (FM)
☐ Arctic Redpoll (R)
☐ Two-barred Crossbill (V)
☐ Common Crossbill (RM)
☐ Parrot Crossbill (V)
☐ Common Rosefinch (RM)
☐ Eurasian Bullfinch (RM)
☐ Hawfinch (S)
☐ Snow Bunting (CM)
☐ Lapland (Bunting) Longspur (FM)
☐ Savannah Sparrow (V)
☐ Song Sparrow (V)
☐ White-crowned Sparrow (V)
☐ White-throated Sparrow (V)
☐ 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)
☐ Common Reed Bunting (FM)
☐ Pallas's Reed Bunting (V)
☐ Black-headed Bunting (V)
☐ Corn Bunting (V)
☐ Bobolink (V)
☐ Brown-headed Cowbird (V)
☐ Baltimore Oriole (V)
☐ Tennessee Warbler (V)
☐ Blackburnian Warbler (V)
☐ Yellow-rumped Warbler (V)
☐ Blackpoll Warbler (V)

CATEGORY D
☐ Saker Falcon (V)
☐ Daurian Starling (V)
☐ Yellow-headed Blackbird (V)
☐ Red-headed Bunting (V)

CATEGORY E
☐ Black Swan
☐ Bar-headed Goose
☐ Red-breasted Goose
☐ Wood Duck
☐ 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
☐ Chestnut Bunting

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