



FAIR ISLE BIRD OBSERVATORY

Report for 2011



FAIR ISLE ~ 2011

Bird ① SPRING.
2nd May: adult / 2CY-type.

- ① Very big, heavily-built, pot-bellied....
Plumage v. dark, although quite contrasty in places.



- ① wings bolding - striped with narrow white bars and spotting. Dark panel across fir coverts, heavy white spotting along tips of primary coverts, narrow and indistinct white trailing edge.



Pattern of outer tail feathers very hard to discern in flight, only seen for split-seconds when birds take-off or landed and tail momentarily spread open.

Wings beats slower than Lesser Snipe, no trough wings heavy and cumbersome, but young-speed still very quick.



T 4-5



- ① Outer tail feathers white, no barring seen, appearing as big, pure white patches.



Bird ② AUTUMN.
August into September, juv-type.
Slightly smaller with lighter build, but pot-bellied.
Plumage extremely pale, looking far more uniform, contrast and ID characters harder to see with almost black-looking tones. Strongly reminiscent of freshwater Lawrence Snipe.

③ wings weakly spotted with white tips to median, greater and primary coverts v. narrow. Extent of white much easier to see when bird flying against dark hillside.



- ② Outer tail feathers (juv-type) white with brown barring. No 'big patch' effect.

Tight direct, not zigzags.



Fair Isle Bird Observatory Report no. 63 (2011)

Edited by David Parnaby

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Front cover: Puffin by Dr Christian Hieronymus Fried.

Published in 2013 by: Fair Isle Bird Observatory Trust, Fair Isle Bird Observatory, Fair Isle, Shetland. ZE2 9JU.

Typeset by: H. Scott, PicaDesign (picades@ifb.co.uk). **Printed by:** Swallowtail Print Ltd, Norwich.

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A Company limited by guarantee.

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FIBOT chairman's report

Roger Riddington

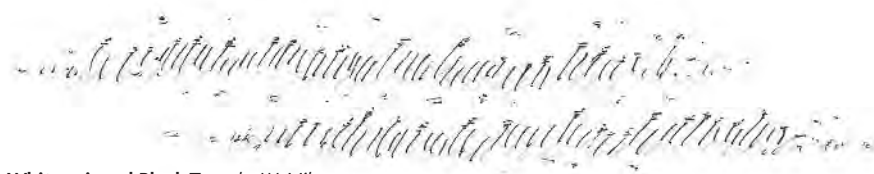
The year 2011 will go down as one of the most memorable in the Observatory's 60-odd years, and it is difficult to do justice to the various milestones in a short report. Dealing with the key events chronologically, the year started with David and Susannah Parnaby arriving on the isle to take up the reins of warden and administrator from Deryk and Hollie Shaw. The 12 years that Deryk and Hollie remained at the helm represent an extraordinary achievement considering the pressures involved in the job and the fact that they oversaw the building of a completely new observatory building. That new building was opened officially on Saturday 2nd July, on a day when we welcomed a diverse (and, for obvious logistical reasons, necessarily limited) range of guests to the Observatory, together with the isle residents. Speeches were made, glasses raised and the future was looked to, yet with an eye to the past. The building had been operational for almost a year at that point, although not always at full capacity, but it was important to open the new place formally, so that we could formally acknowledge the support of funders and contributors. Cutting the ribbon to declare the Observatory open was Roy Dennis, who will probably not thank me for pointing out that he was the oldest warden among an unprecedented gathering of previous wardens and administrators to attend the ceremony. That is more than a flippant comment though, since it was particularly apparent that weekend just what extraordinary hold this small island has over people who have worked at the Obs. There are very few staff who, having moved on to do other things, do not regard their time on Fair Isle as a real highlight of their lives, a career move that in so many cases has been life changing. So it was a particular pleasure for me to welcome previous staff members, and a regret that we could not invite them all. The day after the opening, on 3rd July, Roy formally handed on the chairmanship of the trust to me, the end of an even more mammoth stint than that of Hollie and Deryk - a tenure in the FIBOT chair that began in my second year as warden. Roy, Deryk, Hollie: we salute your contribution to Fair Isle, in all its various guises and across all the years. Roy will remain in touch with the Obs as Hon President, a newly created post. This seems a suitable point also for me to thank all the many people, in Fair Isle, in Shetland and further afield, who do their bit, large or small, to keep the Observatory going.

Having dealt with all those milestones, there is rather little space left for me to talk about birds. Every year on Fair Isle brings milestones, a record year (good or poor) for this species or that, whether migrant or breeding bird. It was a good year for migrants - but then it almost always is. A Lesser Scaup on Bunness was the first for the isle, two Pallid Harriers were the second and third for the island (and part of a remarkable influx of this species to Britain), while White-winged Black Tern and Eastern Olivaceous Warbler were both third for the isle. Britain's first Pallid Harrier

was shot by James A. Stout on Fair Isle in May 1931 and, talking of milestones, it gives me enormous pleasure to note that Mires Jimmy celebrated his 100th birthday in 2011, although now as a resident of Levenwick, in mainland Shetland, rather than at Midway. A dram at Midway will be something that virtually every one of those previous staff members I mentioned earlier will remember with great fondness. Fair Isle's seabirds had a terrible year. It is hard for me to comprehend just how things have changed, even in the 20 years that I have known Fair Isle. With the exception of Gannets, which continue to increase, and Fulmars and Bonxies, which more or less hold their own, the news is bleak. It is widely predicted that the Arctic Skua, captured so magnificently by Richard Richardson for the FIBOT logo, may become the next regular breeding species to be lost from the British avifauna. Fair Isle is still a stronghold for this most spectacular seabird, but ducking a dive-bombing scooty allan on the hill is now much less common than it once was. The finding that a bird such as a Razorbill, breeding on Fair Isle, may be travelling as far as the Aberdeenshire coast in search of food speaks volumes. Such pressures are extraordinary and it is hard to have optimism about the seabirds' long-term future either, for climate-driven shifts in fish populations are not amenable to human management.

Not wishing to end on a low note, I encourage all of you to raise a glass to Fair Isle and its future. If you haven't already visited, I commend the 'new obs' highly - it's a fantastic building. And a visit to Fair Isle, whatever the season, is always special.

Sadly, we learned of the death of James Anderson Stout, or Mires Jimmy, in January 2013 as this report was going to press. A full obituary will appear in due course.



White-winged Black Tern by W. Miles

Warden's report

David Parnaby

In a year of plenty of excitement, the obvious personal highlight was moving with the family to Fair Isle. A delayed arrival was caused by strong winds, snow and generally unpleasant conditions, but by the end of February we had arrived. The help of the islanders in getting us moved to the island (not least in helping us shift a few vanloads of furniture off the Good Shepherd) was massively appreciated and was just the start of the typical Fair Isle welcome that helped us to quickly settle on the island.

A handover period in which we worked alongside Hollie and Deryk was an insight into the work that is involved in running FIBO: one of my first jobs was to go to Lerwick to gain a Personal Licence enabling me to run the bar at the Obs; there is perhaps more to FIBO than some people realise! We owe Deryk many thanks for ensuring that we had a home that was suitable to move into, as he was kept busy finishing off the final touches to the warden's flat (especially the heating), alongside finishing his work as Warden, showing us the ropes and preparing for life down the island. It quickly became apparent how much Hollie and Deryk had put into the development of the new building and it will stand as a fitting tribute to their twelve years at the helm. The new Obs really is a fantastic building; the lack of time that now needs to be spent dealing with plumbing, leaks etc will no doubt make a few previous Wardens somewhat envious, whilst it also retains a lot of the atmosphere of the previous incarnations of FIBO. As Hollie and Deryk settled permanently at Burkle with their family we were grateful for their continued input, help and advice.

We were soon joined on the island by the rest of the staff and I was grateful for the knowledge and enthusiasm of Ringing and Seabird Warden Will Miles and Assistant Warden Jason Moss during the season. Carrie-Marell Gunn returned for her second season as Ranger and her experience proved most useful during the year. Thanks are obviously due also to all the domestic team (detailed in the Administrator's report) for their work and for their extra efforts in taking part in ringing and monitoring work, special mention must be made of Becki Rosser and Rob Hughes, both seasoned FIBO workers. During the course of the year we were assisted by volunteers (including those benefiting from the JHMF), with Joseph Cooper, Teresa Donohue, Arnaud Barras and Virginia Diaz all putting in spells that were hopefully as useful for them as they were for us. I'm sure that we shall see at least some of them return in years to come and they will be welcome.

A Great Grey Shrike and Hawfinch at the end of March were the first scarcer birds of the spring (although five Bewick's Swans found by Deryk on Da Water in February before we arrived were the rarest birds in Fair Isle terms from the start of the year)

and from then on in the birding kept producing highlights, with a decent total of 210 species recorded throughout the year.

Amongst the highlights of the ornithological year were; Eastern Olivaceous Warbler in early September (the rarest bird recorded on the island during the year in national terms); a superb run of good birds from late April (including a stunning male Collared Flycatcher and the first of the year's three Great Snipe); a good August that had already seen a magnificent juvenile Pallid Harrier and several other rarities crowned by a notable fall late in the month when hundreds of common migrants included at least 19 Wryneck; multiple occurrences during the autumn of several rarities including Blyth's Reed Warbler, Olive-backed Pipit and Citrine Wagtail (making Fair Isle surely one of the best places in the country to find your own rarities); and a superb White-winged Black Tern found from the Obs van whilst picking up the food order from Stackhoull in July, showing you can never relax when it comes to finding good birds on Fair Isle! An autumn during which the peak period was dominated by westerly winds showed the ability of very good birds to turn up in even the most marginal of conditions, with the Lanceolated and Pallas's Grasshopper Warblers that arrived being the only ones of their kind to be found in the UK during the year (a similar accolade applied to the Thrush Nightingale found in the spring). The westerly winds did deliver a new species for Fair Isle, when a Lesser Scaup was found on Bunes, the fourth species of American duck to be added to the island list in the last six years!



Collared Flycatcher by W. Miles

Sadly, the seabird season was a major disappointment. Although the woes of Shetland's seabirds have been well documented, witnessing the colonies of dead and dying auk chicks proved to be a harrowing experience and somewhat detracted from the otherwise exciting experience of visiting Fair Isle's geos and cliffs by rope and boat. Thankfully, not all encounters with this group of birds were so gloomy, with Gannets doing well, Bonxies and Fulmars holding their own and many an entertaining evening spent amongst the various Puffin colonies.

Visitor-wise it was a busy year and I was struck by the fantastic atmosphere that the visitors to FIBO help to create. The mixture of reasons for visits was fascinating, although many people confessed to leaving with a new found interest in birds. Of course, the really busy spell in late September and early October is still filled almost entirely with birders, but other times of the year can see very few pairs of bins scouring the island apart from the staff. Surely a few more birds would be found in spring, early autumn and late October if more people visited outside the 'peak season'?

The usual visitor season was also enlivened by a couple of events in July; the Tall Ships visiting Fair Isle and the 'Official Opening' of the new Observatory building, both of which proved to be enjoyable occasions. A less enjoyable occasion was a perforated appendix in mid-September, which at least saw me get an exciting airlift off the island in the Coastguard helicopter (Oscar Charlie) in poor weather conditions. My first visit to hospital as a patient couldn't have come at a worse time; mid-September during my first season as FIBO Warden! Although Pallid Harrier, Great Snipe, Melodious Warbler and Citrine Wagtail all turned up whilst I was off the island, they were all species that put in multiple appearances during the autumn, so thankfully there was no harm done!

Even after the Obs season had come to an end, migrants continued arriving well into November, and a record-breaking influx of Tundra Bean and European White-fronted Geese helped to cap a memorable year.

The year ended as ours on Fair Isle had begun, with gales. These took a heavy toll on the traps and so 2012's work began to be planned out for us.

I can't end a summary of 2011 without a special thanks to Susannah for her support through the year and also thank you to our families who have been so supportive of and helpful with our move to Fair Isle.

Administrator's report

Susannah Parnaby

Looking back on the 2011 season, it's hard to know where to start in summarising such a busy, varied and enjoyable year. We moved onto the island at the end of February, with a view to taking over from Hollie and Deryk at the start of April. Thanks to the ever helpful Good Shepherd crew and other islanders who moved all our belongings up to the Observatory, we were fairly settled in the Warden's flat by the end of the week and beginning the challenging task of absorbing all we could from Hollie and Deryk about our new roles. Working alongside Hollie and Deryk for the first month meant that we could see first-hand how the many separate strands of the job fitted together, something that never quite comes across on paper, and we are very grateful to them both for their ongoing help and support, despite the hard work and energy needed to settle into the rhythm of crofting life at Burkle. As everyone who has spent time on Fair Isle will know, the community is wonderfully welcoming, and it wasn't long before we started to feel part of life on the island, even if it did seem almost incredible that we were actually living here.

Late March saw Assistant Warden Jason Moss arrive to join Seabird and Ringing Warden Will Miles who had been on Fair Isle since late February, followed by our very first JHMF volunteer Joe Cooper in early April. As more staff and researchers arrived through April it was time to move from the comparative 'safety' of life centred around the Warden's Flat, to a fully operating Observatory, ready to open at the start of May. In a situation not uncommon at the Observatory, staff arrivals did not go entirely according to plan, with Ann Prior unable to take up her hoped for position of cook and her replacement unfortunately proving unsuitable, leaving me to juggle office work and catering until the arrival of Chris Findlay, the assistant cook, in late April. Although Chris and his partner Lindsey, who came to work as domestic assistant alongside Observatory regular Becki Rosser, left at the end of July to pursue other opportunities, we are very grateful to Chris for taking on the burden of cooking on his own at the start of the season.

These early changes to the domestic staffing arrangements were the precursor to a particularly changeable season. Ann Prior kindly helped in the kitchen for a fortnight in May, prior to the arrival of a new cook Roy Ball. Chris and Lindsey were replaced by Sue Squirrell and Elizabeth Morrison respectively in August, with Robin Mortlock, initially intended as an additional support for the domestic team during August, fortuitously able to step in until the end of the season following Elizabeth's unexpected early departure. September finally saw the establishment of a settled team, with Paul Cook taking up the reins as assistant cook early in the month. We are very grateful to everyone who helped to keep the Guest House running to a high standard despite the challenges of the season, but in particular to Roy for his steady professionalism and to Becki Rosser, who provided much needed experience and advice.

As in previous years the domestic team was complimented by a volunteer, responsible for the downstairs cleaning every morning, a very necessary task given the size of the new Observatory. In 2011 this post was filled by Gillian Shorter, Charlotte Kingston, Lena Holstrom and Rob Hughes (who had been working at the Observatory as a researcher for the RSPB until the end of July).

In addition to the day-to-day work of the Observatory, 2011 was marked by two particularly special events: the official opening of the Observatory on July 2nd and the coming of the Tall Ships to Shetland in mid-July. Visitors to the Observatory in the latter half of the year will be aware that the former Interpretative Room has been replaced by a Visitor Centre, with custom-made interpretative boards and some fantastic artwork designed by Sheila Scott from Orkney. These arrived with Sheila at the end of June, forming an impressive backdrop to the ceremonies of the Official Opening, which passed off very well, and generated some very good publicity for the Observatory. This has been particularly apparent on Shetland, where the Observatory is increasingly seen as a short-break destination for residents who may never have made the trip across the water before. Speeches by island resident Jimmy Stout and former warden Roy Dennis, in particular, coupled with the attendance of numerous ex-wardens and administrators, emphasised for us the importance of the work of the Observatory since it first opened in 1948 and the privilege of being able to contribute to its future.

The festivities continued with the arrival of 13 Tall Ships over the course of the weekend of the 16th–17th July. With children's workshops, craft demonstrations, evening barbecues, music and dancing the weekend was a real celebration of all that Fair Isle has to offer, culminating in a symbolic barter of traditional fishermen's keys with the crew of the Sørlandet. This last was captured on film by the BBC programme *Coast*, for broadcast in 2012.

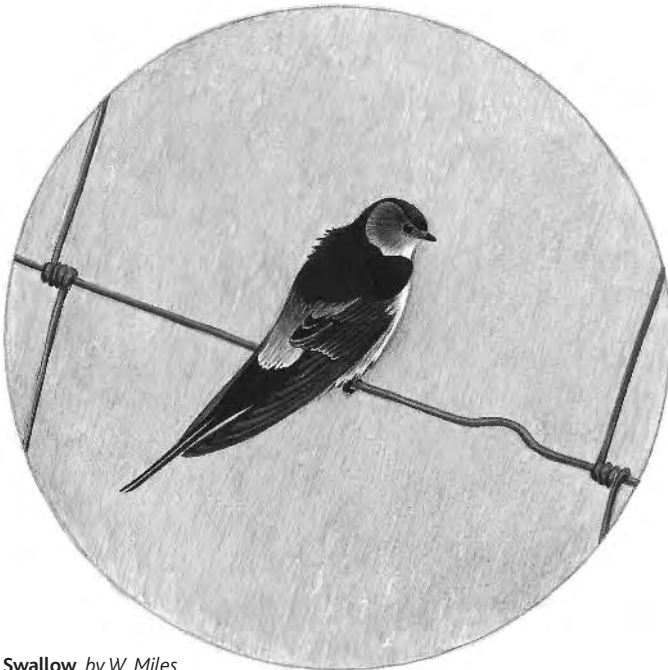
By August the seabirds had given way to the first of the autumn migrants and the arrival of birders to the island. The atmosphere at the Observatory in the autumn is always a special one, with the constant anticipation of what the next day might bring, but it was the cheerfulness and community spirit of all our guests, new faces and regulars alike, that made the autumn particularly memorable, and this often despite howling westerlies and rain.

Many residents and visitors to the island will be aware of the concept of 'Fair Isle time' which somehow makes it possible for you to simultaneously make time for people and the community aspect of life on Fair Isle, whilst the months vanish in a flash and you only know what day it is by the plane and boat schedule. All too soon it was time to say goodbye to the last of the guests and shut the Observatory down for the winter, with very mixed feelings. Relief that we had made it to the end of our first season and would now have some time to take stock as a family and get to know our fellow islanders beyond day to day conversations at the shop or airstrip, and

regret that the end of the season meant saying goodbye to some of the staff we'd lived and worked with for the past 7 months, and who wouldn't be returning the following season.

Alongside the many personal highlights: first seeing the Northern Lights, my first Killer Whales magically appearing in the bay between Landberg and Sheep Rock, watching our daughter take to island life like a duck to water, and celebration of the safe arrival of a new baby Daniel to Maree Wallace in June, 2011 brought sadness to the island, with the passing of Jane Wheeler in September. We also remember Barry Mason and David Roberts, to whom Fair Isle was a very special place.

In summing up our year, it just remains to thank all our staff and volunteers for their hard work throughout the season: Will, Jason, Carrie, Becki, Ann, Chris, Lindsey, Roy, Sue, Paul, Liz, Robin, Gillian, Charlotte, Lena and Rob. Thank you too to Deryk and Hollie for all your hard work and support in getting us settled and established in the job and to everyone on Fair Isle for making us feel so welcome. Finally we would like to thank everyone who came to stay or supported the Observatory in other ways; we've loved getting to know at least some of you, and hope to meet many more during our time here.



Red-rumped Swallow *by W. Miles*



the National Trust
for Scotland
a place for everyone

Fair Isle in 2011

Alexander Bennett (Group Manager, Countryside and Islands North)

The Trust staff responsible for the management of its interests on Fair Isle remain the same with me in the Group Manager role, Angus Jack providing Building Surveying advice and support and Alan Barrow in a slightly re-adjusted role of Rural Surveyor (Factor in old language!). We are also delighted to welcome Rob Dewar as our Nature Conservation Advisor, Rob is busy settling in with us at Balnain House in Inverness after moving from his role as Trust Ranger at Inverewe Garden. Rob will no doubt be visiting the island in the coming years and he will be keen to work closely with the FIBOT rangers and staff and Nick Riddiford *et al.* as and when required.

After the successful visit by the NTS Patrons Club in 2010, Kate Mavor, NTS Chief Executive, visited Fair Isle for the first time to represent the NTS at the opening of the new Bird Observatory and took the opportunity to visit as many islanders as possible. She also took the opportunity to talk to the Shetland Times and BBC Radio Shetland on leaving Fair Isle to emphasise the case for a marine designation in the waters around the isle.

Marine protection of the waters around Fair Isle remains a priority for the Fair Islanders and the National Trust for Scotland. So much so that the last renewal of the Council of Europe Diploma made it a requirement that marine protection be afforded to Fair Isle otherwise we may face loss of this important European designation. This would be embarrassing and a great loss for Fair Isle, the NTS and the Scottish Government who support this accolade. Fair Isle is currently determining ways to take this forward and will lodge a petition to the Scottish Government Petitions Committee in 2012 setting out their case for further protection.

Under the terms of the current Management Plan for Fair Isle 2009–2019 we worked closely with the community during 2011 to consider how we might assess the island's future sustainability. It is agreed that a holistic island sustainability

study would be the best mechanism for identifying the island's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats. Investigations are ongoing by Islanders and the Trust alike to secure funding for this study.

The Trust was able to let Brecks house, an example of an eco-friendly house built by the late David Royle, for the first time to Kenny Stout and Sue Hutchison and we are delighted that they are choosing to stay on the island. Kenny certainly has the will and ability to fathom the heating systems and controls in the house which is fantastic news for us. We are beginning the process of re-advertising Upper Stoneybrek croft to new tenants.

The croft re-letting process is delivered in conjunction with the Fair Isle Housing Forum and great attention is given to ensure that the expectations of incoming tenants are properly managed re island life and also that they are aware of key jobs they may be able to have an involvement in such as a deck hand on the Good Shepherd, airstrip firemen, etc. Midway croft also came back in hand this year as Jimmy (Midway) Stout, Fair Isle's first centenarian, has moved into care in Shetland. The Trust are investigating options for renovating the house before the croft and house are re-let and an application has been made under the "Innovation" grant scheme to undertake the renovation of Midway and some new residential space at South Light are part of the same bid.

Sadly Stewart Wilson (Aesterhoull) passed on this year and many may remember him as the Church of Scotland minister at the Kirk. Stewart will be missed and was well known for his hospitality and his skills at the easel where he captured many stunning views of Fair Isle and it is testament to him that so many are displayed in houses around the isle.

The concordat agreement between the NTS and SNH continued to support Fair Isle based activities related to biodiversity, conservation, monitoring and community involvement. The community involvement element comprises financial support for the continuation of FIMETI's commitment to seeing the Council of Europe Diploma recommendations, such as the establishment of a MPA for Fair Isle and for Fair Isle Wildlife Club to buy materials and field equipment.

We are delighted to report that there has been some considerable movement in relation to the provision of a new Fire Service building and Health Board Surgery on the island; this is primarily down to hard work from Islanders which the NTS have supported as and when to make the respective cases for each of these essential service facilities. At this stage we are very hopeful that 2012 may be the year where we finally see options crystallising for both of these long standing matters and we have retained land and building options to ensure we can facilitate whatever may be decided.

Despite retaining these options we were glad to be able to accommodate Will Miles, FIBO Assistant Warden, at the Chalet over the winter months while the new observatory is closed for the winter.

The Trust continues to work with the Fair Isle Community Association, The Housing Forum, FIBOT, SIC, SNH and many individuals on a wide range of issues, as always this work is interesting and rewarding. As always the Trust remains committed to Fair Isle and is proud of its long association (57 years at the last count) and looks forward to the next 57.



Woodchat Shrike *by W. Miles*

Ornithological monthly summary

Jason Moss and David Parnaby

The monthly totals of species recorded were:

Jan	35	Apr	124	July	83	Oct	147
Feb	55	May	143	Aug	114	Nov	94
Mar	88	June	111	Sep	144	Dec	58

January–February: Highlights of the first winter period included a flock of five Bewick's Swans on 16th February; three adults (including a neck-collared bird) and two juveniles. Further highlights included three Waxwings (3rd January), with six more on 13th. A peak of 200 Greylag Geese wintered on the island and the flock also attracted up to six Pink-footed and two European White-fronted Geese. A Whooper Swan arrived and lingered from 10th February whilst two Wigeon and singles of Common Scoter, Goldeneye and Red-breasted Merganser completed February's wildfowl presence. Grey Heron first appeared on 17th February, while a male Merlin wintered on the isle and was joined by the first Peregrine on 10th February. A Grey Plover on 5th January and another on 19th February were both unseasonal records, with other winter waders including up to 60 Curlew, 25 of both Redshank and Turnstone, an occasional Woodcock and two Lapwings that passed through on 24th January. The first Oystercatchers and Ringed Plovers of the year arrived in February (2nd and 17th respectively), peaking at 75 and ten respectively by the end of the month. The first Sanderling arrived on 4th while two Dunlin appeared on 19th February. A steady turnover of white-winged gulls through the first winter period included Iceland Gulls on three dates in January and two dates in February, involving at least two birds, and Glaucous Gulls on six dates, involving at least three birds. Commoner fare included the first Black-headed Gulls on 9th January and Common Gulls on 17th February, with numbers of the latter steadily increasing and peaking at 35 on 23rd. The first Guillemots were noted ashore in large numbers on 27th February in fine weather. Small numbers of Skylarks appeared to have wintered, while up to four Robins, 15 Blackbirds, small numbers of Fieldfare (along with a small arrival of 45 on 2nd January), a Song Thrush, around five Redwings, five Twite and small numbers of Snow Buntings also braved the Fair Isle winter. However small migrant movements were obviously thin on the ground at this time of year, but notable movements did include three Woodpigeons on 25th February, a Mistle Thrush and small numbers of commoner thrushes on 23rd February, a female Greenfinch, male Chaffinch and five Mealy Redpolls on 2nd January and Linnet on 4th February.

March: The start of the month saw a selection lingering wildfowl including Whooper Swan, six Pink-footed Geese (with seven on 3rd), two European White-fronted Geese (one lingering until 18th), 103 Greylags, six Wigeon, up to six Teal, Long-tailed Duck, Red-breasted Merganser. Other species present that lingered included Grey Heron, two Merlin, Glaucous Gull (with three individuals identified during the month) and two Woodpigeon. Small birds were generally in short supply, although 70 Skylark were present by the start of the month and the 1st also saw Robin and eight Fieldfare. A Kestrel arrived on 2nd and 3rd saw Golden Plover, six Snow Buntings, Woodcock, 13 Fieldfare and a Redwing, with a Song Thrush on 4th. The 5th saw the arrival of a Short-eared Owl, Robin and Goldeneye and the following day saw the first Peregrine of the month, a Lapland Bunting and a first-winter Iceland Gull that lingered throughout the month. A quiet spell saw a second Grey Heron (7th), the first Siskin of the year (9th, with two on 10th), a peak of 60 Purple Sandpiper (10th), three Woodcock (11th), returning Razorbills (11th), the first Cormorant of the year (12th with another 14th) but all these were eclipsed by a Coot in the Meadow Burn (11th–21st)!

Things picked up just after mid-month heralded by the first Collared Dove of the year (15th) and a high count of 63 Lapwing, whilst a flurry of arrivals over 16th–17th included several additions to the year list: Meadow Pipit, Pied Wagtail, Grey Wagtail, Dunnock, Black Redstart, Chiffchaff and Reed Bunting. Other arrivals during this period included five more Whooper Swans to add to the lingering bird, six Dunlin, five Woodcock, 227 Skylark, six Robin, 73 Blackbird, four Song Thrush, two Mistle Thrush, Chaffinch, Greenfinch and Siskin. A Moorhen in the Gully (18th) was also new and the same day saw a Lapland Bunting arrive the Obs garden and linger until 21st, a Common Redpoll, two Woodcock, three Mistle Thrush and 16 Fieldfare.

The year's first Carrion Crow (19th) was followed by the first Water Rail and Shelduck (both 20th). Two fine additions to the year list on 22nd were Stonechat in Schwarzi geo and Great Grey Shrike in the trapping area. The 22nd saw a Lesser Black-backed Gull, a passage of Kittiwake past South Light, Water Rail, Dunlin and Common Redpoll. Another small arrival saw Meadow Pipits rise to 24 and Golden Plover to seven (23rd), with 'blue' Fulmar, three Peregrine (putting on a tremendous fight display!), Black Redstart, the year's first Goldcrest and Siskin on 24th. The first Puffins and Bonxies arrived on 25th, with two Carrion Crow, two Common Redpoll, Chaffinch, 12 Snow Bunting, Reed Bunting and the year's first Bramblings also seen. A 'blue' Fulmar and Woodcock the following day preceded a few quieter days, although ten Siskin arrived on 28th. A Hawfinch at Schoolton (29th–30th) was the first of a very good year for this species and a Wheatear on 30th was the highlight of a day that also saw five each of Siskin and Chaffinch and a Common Redpoll. A small fall at the end of the month saw Grey Heron, Sanderling, Collared Dove, 71 Meadow Pipit, 18 Dunnock, ten Robin, 63 Blackbird, ten Fieldfare, six Song Thrush, nine Redwing, Mistle Thrush, Chiffchaff, Carrion Crow (seen arriving off the sea), 17 Hooded Crow, five Brambling, 33 Twite and Common Redpoll on 31st.

April: The month began with a nice arrival of thrushes on the 1st and 2nd, producing maxima of 187 Fieldfare, 85 Blackbirds, 74 Redwing and four Song Thrush, along with the first Sparrowhawk of the year and small numbers of Wheatears, Chiffchaffs, Goldcrests, Chaffinches, Woodcocks and single Snow and Lapland Buntings. A couple of Bonxies were on the island top and small numbers of Golden Plovers were passing north on 2nd. Light winds during the next few days saw a steady increase in summer migrants with highlights of two Black Redstarts in Hjukni Geo, a male Ring Ouzel trapped in the Gully, Crossbill, two each of *littoralis* Rock Pipit and White Wagtail and four Linnets as well as the arrival of over 400 Puffins into Fair Isle waters. The fair weather also provided us with the sounds of drumming Snipe and singing Golden Plovers for the first time this year, while a Grey Heron, three Lesser Black-backed Gulls and a Red-breasted Merganser also arrived. The 7th and 8th were wet and windy, but saw Jackdaw and two Rooks added to the year list. However the 10th saw calmer conditions reveal the welcome arrival of our first Blackcap, 11 Swallows, a House Martin, four Sand Martins and two Willow Warblers of the year. A male Hawfinch arrived on the 11th (and was trapped in a chicken coop), with 20 Dunnocks and five Bramblings also arriving. The 14th saw a few more new summer migrants plus four Whooper Swans heading north on the same day, whilst the first Gannet eggs were also found in Guidicum. A female Bluethroat (presumably a 'white-spotted' bird) trapped in the Vaadal was the highlight of a good couple of days on the 16th–17th, with further firsts for the year including a Tree Pipit at Hill Dyke, six Whimbrel, the first Arctic Skuas and four Barnacle Geese, all supported by a new Moorhen, Black Redstart, Ring Ouzel and Kestrel. The next four days saw several year ticks arrive in the shape of a male Redstart trapped in the Gully, drake Scaup on Golden Water, Green Sandpiper on Buness, Common Sandpiper and Knot in South Harbour, Black-tailed Godwit and a Sedge Warbler in the Gully. Our second Coot of the year also appeared on Da Water on 20th. The light winds on the 21st also saw a nice scattering of migrants arrive, including a good number of Swallows, a few House Martins and a Sand Martin, double figures of Willow Warblers and Chiffchaffs and smaller numbers of Blackcaps, White Wagtails, Lapland Buntings, Bramblings, Siskins and Linnets. The year ticks continued to arrive during the next couple of days with Greenshank and Yellow Wagtail on 22nd and singles of Grasshopper Warbler, Whitethroat and Lesser Whitethroat on 23rd. Other new migrants on the 23rd included a few common thrushes headed by six Ring Ouzels, small numbers of the commoner warblers and finches, while ten Lapland Buntings on 22nd included some smart males. The 24th provided us with the first real piece of quality of the year in the shape of a smart female Subalpine Warbler found just before lunch in the Lower Stoneybrek garden. The bird showed well and lingered beyond the month's end. Other interesting migrants on the day included the first Common Scoter of the year, 86 Golden Plovers, a small number of Tree Pipits, single Yellow Wagtail, two Grasshopper Warblers and small numbers of commoner warblers, five Rooks, ten Bramblings, three Common (Mealy) Redpolls and a female Crossbill. A Common Buzzard drifted south over the island the next morning and

was followed on the 26th by further quality arrivals, in the shape of a flighty Black-bellied Dipper near the Gilly Burn, a ringtail Hen Harrier between Setter and Homisdale and a Wood Sandpiper on Da Water. Very light south-easterly winds and soaring temperatures continued through to the end of the month and paved the way for the arrival of some great birds, including Osprey and Waxwing on the 27th and a dapper male *albistriata* Subalpine Warbler on the cliffs at Dronger on the 28th. That day also saw a small arrival of common warblers and chats, with a Black Redstart and male Stonechat discovered, along with a Mistle Thrush and a good count of 24 Willow Warblers. The first Common Tern of the year was discovered on 29th. However all of this was blown out of the water the following day with a switch to north-easterly winds producing a nice arrival of birds and, to top it all off, an incredible first-summer male Collared Flycatcher on the cliffs at the top of Hoini. The bird showed well, flycatching from prominent lichen-covered rocks on the cliff-face and lingered until 5th May. In addition, new birds for the year came in the shape of a male Pied Flycatcher in North Gunnawark, two Wood Warblers on the south-west cliffs and a Garden Warbler, while good numbers of common migrants, included 17 Tree Pipits, four Black Redstarts, nine Common Redstarts (all males), a Grasshopper Warbler, three Sedge Warblers, 15 Blackcaps and Lapland Buntings made this an end of the month to savour.

May: The month pretty much continued where April left off, with the first three days producing some great new birds, along with lingering Collared Flycatcher and male and female Subalpine Warblers. The first major discovery was made on 2nd, with a Great Snipe at Utra giving good views, both on the ground and in flight. The following day saw a steady hirundine passage produce Fair Isle's 8th Red-rumped Swallow, hawking for insects over Kirki Geo late in the afternoon and giving fabulous views. The first Wryneck of the year was found near Single Dyke on 1st, with three the following day, whilst the 1st also produced an Osprey heading south, a Waxwing at the Obs and the year's first Goldfinch and Swift. The 2nd, in addition to the Great Snipe, also saw our first Quail and Tree Sparrow of the year arrive, along with good numbers of common summer migrants. Highlights and high counts included 20 Tree Pipits, two *flava* Wagtails, three Black Redstarts, six Common Redstarts, 14 Ring Ouzels, Grasshopper Warbler, four Blackcaps, ten Willow Warblers and two Pied Flycatchers. The 3rd saw Tree Sparrow numbers increase to four while both Blue-headed and Grey-headed Wagtails were present amongst a good array of common migrants. The next few days saw things settle down a bit, with fewer dramatic arrivals. However a few interesting bits did still appear in light easterly winds, including two Quail, eight Ring Ouzel and six Tree Sparrows on 5th, Greenshank and Mistle Thrush on 6th and Wood Sandpiper and the first Canada Goose of the year on 7th all adding interest to a good variety of lingering summer migrants. Increasing south-easterly winds and occasional heavy rain saw another flurry of arrivals on 8th, with year ticks in the shape of a single Cuckoo, three Whinchats, a Reed Warbler and a Spotted Flycatcher. Interesting waders were represented by a Wood Sandpiper on Da Water, a fly-over

Greenshank, 12 Whimbrel, 25 Golden Plovers and a Common Sandpiper, while additional passerine migrants of interest included three *littoralis* Rock Pipits, a Blue-headed Wagtail, seven Lesser Whitethroats, ten Common Whitethroats, nine Blackcaps and two Goldfinches. The 9th saw a Storm Petrel flutter into North Haven at 11pm; our first of the year, while a good Swallow passage saw 77 birds fly through, along with 11 House Martins and a Sand Martin. The next few days were very much a continuation of the last few, with light to moderate S/SE winds and bright fine conditions allowing a steady procession of common summer migrants to arrive along with a drake Goosander, the first major arrival of Arctic Terns (40 over Bunness) and an exceptional arrival of 20 Hooded Crows and 65 Carrion Crows on 11th. On 12th some good birds arrived in the shape of a Bullfinch at the Shop, a south-bound Wood Sandpiper, Wood Warbler at the Haa and a Hawfinch at Schoolton. South-westerly winds prevailed for the next week or so, and with them the number of common migrants dwindled. However a few good birds were still found with our first Short-toed Lark of the year at the airstrip on 13th. Other new birds included the first Red-throated Diver and Corncrake of the year (the latter found at Lower Leogh) and an Iceland Gull in South Harbour on 14th and Ring Ouzel on 15th. Things were livened up by a surprise female Marsh Harrier heading south over the island on 17th, while a Wood Sandpiper and a Quail both also arrived and were followed on 18th by a very handsome male Grey-headed Wagtail at Da Water and a juvenile Crossbill was also trapped in the Plantation. Another Iceland Gull and a Quail arrived on 19th, but with westerly winds dominating, the number of common migrants remained very low, with highlights on 20th provided by an incredibly showy Quail at the Obs and a Short-eared Owl at Wirvie. A breath of much awaited easterly wind on 21st brought in a few migrants, capped off by a smart Rustic Bunting at Quoy. The bird showed well as it fed along the recently ploughed crop furrows before moving to the Obs and lingering until 25th. The final legs of the month saw the winds varying dramatically from force zero to force ten, and daily changes in direction from north-easterly to south-westerly producing a great series of scarcities on the island, with the odd rarity thrown in for good measure. The 22nd produced the first Icterine Warbler of the year (in North Naarversgill), along with a Hawfinch at the Haa and a Bluethroat in Easter Lothar, while 70 Swallows and 40 House Martins moved through. The 23rd was another good day, with strong south-easterlies and occasional showers producing a Common Rosefinch at Schoolton, a male Grey-headed Wagtail at the Chalet, an Icterine Warbler trapped in the Gully, a Pied Flycatcher and a few common migrants. The 24th saw the first Manx Shearwater of the year pass Bunness. A Turtle Dove was found on the cliffs at Kirm O'Scroo on 25th and things hotted up again on 26th, with ENE winds and heavy rain in the morning dropping two Bluethroats, two Red-backed Shrikes, a Marsh Warbler and three Icterine Warblers across the island. A further highlight was the discovery of the first breeding Blackbirds on the island since 1973 at Quoy! Good common migrant sightings and totals on the day included a Quail, 18 Sedge Warblers, four Spotted Flycatcher, a Crossbill and a stunning summer male Snow Bunting. Two Common Rosefinches were added to

the island's scarcity tally on 27th and 28th produced the first real rarity of the period; a flighty Thrush Nightingale at the Haa. The Common Rosefinch tally reached four on 29th, along with what were probably a new Bluethroat at Busta and a new Marsh Warbler at the Haa. The month went out in style however, with a nice male 'western' Subalpine Warbler trapped in the Gully early in the morning and later joining the long-staying 'eastern' Subalpine Warbler in the Obs plantation, causing a certain amount of territorial dispute between the two!

June: The month began as May left off, with a lingering Subalpine Warbler! The *albistriata* bird went on to remain in the Obs plantation until 4th, making it the longest staying Subalpine Warbler in Fair Isle history. The 1st also produced a Short-eared Owl at Dronger and an unseasonable Redwing, while four Common Rosefinches lingered. A Swift flew through on 2nd with two White Wagtails and a Crossbill also arriving. The 3rd produced the hottest day on Fair Isle since June 2009 (18°C), and with it a Great Northern Diver and Common Buzzard along with steady Swift and hirundine passage and six Crossbills. A Hobby arrived on 4th, with the following day seeing a Wood Warbler trapped in the Obs garden plus two Barnacle Geese and eight Common Crossbills. A male 'eastern' Subalpine Warbler in the garden at Schoolton on 6th was found not to be ringed and was therefore a new bird and a new Marsh Warbler was trapped in the afternoon. A Bluethroat arrived on 8th while the 9th saw easterly winds produce Fair Isle's 8th spring Greenish Warbler at the Haa along with two Icterine Warblers. Things got even better on 10th when a Blyth's Reed Warbler was picked out of the Plantation trap box after lunch and two Quail were in the north. Two Marsh Warblers arrived on 12th and were followed on 14th by a nice female Woodchat Shrike that showed well at Field in the evening and lingered until 16th. The 15th saw a Turtle Dove arrive, followed on 17th by the first Bar-tailed Godwit of the year along with a Cuckoo. The final Bluethroat of the spring was trapped on 18th, as was a Marsh Warbler on 19th. Another Marsh Warbler was trapped on 21st and a female Red-backed Shrike was at Barkland on 23rd. Things then settled down for the end of the month, with bird work being dominated by seabirds. The final moments of excitement for the month were provided by a pod of eight Killer Whales seen incredibly well by the whole Obs and most of the islanders as they circumnavigated the island before hunting Grey Seals in South Harbour.

July: A quiet month overall for migrant birds, July still threw in a few surprises. The 1st saw a stunning, but initially very elusive Black-headed Bunting discovered feeding by the Plantation trap, with Wryneck and Common Rosefinch also seen, with a Lapland Bunting on 3rd. The Black-headed Bunting was relocated going to roost at Schoolton on 5th, where it continued to roost and delight visitors until 17th. Another shock arrival was a stunning adult White-winged Black Tern on 16th. Discovered during a routine trip to collect the shop order, the bird showed very well as it hawked insects over the fields at Setter. Beyond these highlights, the month petered out quietly, though with a few sniffs of autumn migration coming through by the end of the month...

August: The start of the month brought with it our first Black Redstart, Willow Warbler and Common Whitethroat of the autumn on the 2nd along with three Common Redpolls the same day. The 5th brought with it the first Whinchat, two Reed Warblers and Pied Flycatcher of the autumn, with a Wood Warbler the following day at Chalet. The first real scarcity of the autumn came in the shape of a Short-toed Lark by the airstrip on 7th, with a Leach's Petrel trapped the same evening. A juvenile Moorhen at Chalet on 10th was the earliest ever autumn record on the isle. North-easterly winds on 11th produced a Red-backed Shrike at Chalet, but things really kicked off on 12th, with moderate south-easterlies bringing with them Fair Isle's second Pallid Harrier and an Arctic Warbler at Schoolton (both discovered by Nick Riddiford, whose daughter was also getting married on the island that weekend!). The Pallid Harrier patrolled the south of the isle until the 15th. The day also saw the first Redstart of the autumn arrive, along with 21 Willow Warblers. The 13th produced a flighty but vocal Citrine Wagtail at Da Water as well as a Spotted Redshank near Malcolm's Head and a Stonechat at Schoolton. The first Barred Warbler and Common Rosefinch of the year arrived on 15th, with the former building up in number to three on 17th. A good passage of Swifts occurred on 20th, with 45 moving through. Six Common Rosefinches arrived on 21st while the 22nd saw the re-appearance of the Short-toed Lark, plus two Barred Warblers and two Black Redstarts. A change in wind direction to light easterlies on 23rd brought another flurry of migrants to the island and highlights of another Arctic Warbler trapped in the Vaadal, six Barred Warblers and four Common Rosefinches. The first Grasshopper Warbler of the autumn also arrived, but all this was eclipsed on 24th with fall conditions of heavy rain and north-easterlies in the morning producing an unforgettable fall of migrants, including: 19 Wrynecks, a Corncrake trapped in the Plantation, eight Barred Warblers, seven Common Rosefinches, three Wood Warblers, 25 Ruff, 71 Tree Pipits, Robin, four Redstarts, nine Whinchats, three Grasshopper Warblers, 14 Garden Warblers, three Blackcaps, 80 Willow Warblers and eight Pied Flycatchers. A truly unforgettable day! The following day saw increased numbers of some commoner migrants, including 104 Tree Pipits, three Yellow Wagtails, 15 Redstarts, 20 Whinchats, 93 Willow Warblers and ten Pied Flycatchers, while highlights included a Dotterel on Ward Hill and the first Little Stint and Curlew Sandpiper of the year. Calm conditions on 26th saw the first real rarities of this spell arrive, in the shape of a Booted Warbler at Burkle and a Melodious Warbler at the Haa, while a Wood Warbler was also seen along with nine Common Rosefinches and lingering Red-backed Shrike, two Wrynecks and seven Barred Warblers. The 29th saw another good bird in the form of our second Great Snipe of the year, found in a Kenaby tattie crop, where it remained until the 3rd September. The month ended with small numbers, but a good variety of common migrants lingering across the island, while final highlights included a Grey-headed Wagtail on 27th, Curlew Sandpiper on 30th and three Bar-tailed Godwits on 29th.

September: The magic month of September (one of many magic months on Fair Isle!) got off to a fine start on 2nd with an elusive Eastern Olivaceous Warbler at Taft that eventually settled at Schoolton. The 1st also saw, with winds shifting to the east, an arrival of 16 Whinchats, two Barred Warblers, a Wood Warbler, 16 Willow Warblers and eight Common Rosefinches, with a further arrival of two Red-backed Shrikes on 2nd. Highlights from the following days included a brief Pectoral Sandpiper on Meoness on 3rd along with 15 Storm Petrels from the Good Shepherd, 20 Whinchats and 15 Common Rosefinches in one flock at Neder Taft (probably the largest flock of this species ever seen in Britain!). The first Grey Wagtail of the autumn arrived on 5th. Continuing easterlies on 6th saw a Corncrake arrive at Vaila's Trees, the Pectoral Sandpiper was relocated at Easter Locher Water and a Citrine Wagtail was initially seen in Furse, before being trapped whilst mist-netting the Obs *alba* wagtail roost. A Jack Snipe and two Sedge Warblers also arrived, with three Lapland Buntings and a Snow Bunting the following day. Fourteen Lapland Buntings arrived on 8th and reached an autumn peak of 50 on 12th, while the first five Barnacle Geese of the autumn arrived on 9th. A second Barred Warbler arrived the next day while 11th saw our second Pallid Harrier of the autumn arrive, sweeping over Gilsetter during morning traps and going on to linger until 14th. The second Melodious Warbler of the autumn arrived the following day along with a Little Stint and another Barred Warbler. Three Whooper Swans flew south on 13th while ten Garden Warblers, 23 Blackcaps and three Barred Warblers were also present. A Long-eared Owl arrived the following day while 15th provided an elusive Citrine Wagtail and our first Slavonian Grebe of the autumn in North Haven. Thirty-five Whooper Swans arrived along with six Pink-footed Geese on 16th while easterlies and rain on 17th produced another Citrine Wagtail and a Great Grey Shrike, Wryneck trapped in the Plantation and a Short-eared Owl 'in-off'. The following day saw this good run continue with our third Great Snipe of the year appearing at Da Water along with four Yellow-browed Warblers, Little Bunting, Short-toed Lark, four Common Rosefinches, Curlew Sandpiper and four Jack Snipe. A Blyth's Reed Warbler was discovered at the Obs on 19th (from an Assistant Warden's bedroom window!) and later trapped, while further highlights included the lingering Great Grey Shrike (also trapped in the Obs Garden), a Bluethroat in the Gully and the first Ring Ouzel of the autumn. A Sabine's Gull flew past South Light on 20th, with another sighting the following day possibly relating to the same bird. The 21st also produced five Sooty and three Manx Shearwaters offshore (classic Fair Isle seawatching!), while Curlew Sandpiper and two Lesser Redpolls were also recorded and a Grey Plover appeared on 22nd. The westerly winds delivered the goods on 24th in the form of a smart juvenile Baird's Sandpiper in the Havens, found during breakfast and lingering through the day, a Long-eared Owl also arrived but migration was generally fairly slow-going. The 25th saw a brief breath of easterlies provide a juvenile Rose-coloured Starling at the Obs feeders (which then lingered at North Light until 3rd October), while the first Long-tailed Duck of the autumn, a Quail, a Water Rail and two Barred Warblers also arrived and the only Stock Dove of the year flew through the following day. Pink-footed Geese moved through in

reasonable numbers on 27th, totalling 95 birds while the Kestrel total reached seven. The final day of the month saw September go out in style with a stunning Pallas's Grasshopper Warbler found in the late afternoon below the ringing hut in Gilsetter. This showy bird saw off a great day that also produced a Richard's Pipit, ten Yellow-browed Warblers, 12 Common Redpolls, four Crossbills, a Hawfinch and three Little Buntings, along with a good arrival of Meadow Pipits (504) and Redwings (496). The month's end also saw lingering Melodious Warblers, Citrine Wagtail and Rose-coloured Starling continuing to delight guests and staff alike.

October: The 1st of the month continued in a similar fashion to the end of September with good birds coming in, the outstanding highlights being an Olive-backed Pipit at North Light in the morning, followed by an initially tricky Blyth's Reed Warbler on South Haven Beach. Pink-footed Geese continued to move through in good numbers while other sightings included Hen Harrier, Swift, Bluethroat, over 1000 Redwings, two Barred Warblers, 62 Blackcaps, 15 Yellow-browed Warblers, Red-breasted Flycatcher, two Crossbills, three Hawfinches and a Little Bunting. A Barnacle Goose was seen the following day along with a Grey Wagtail and a second Little Bunting. The 5th saw an impressive movement of wildfowl with 99 Whooper Swans, 363 Pink-footed Geese and 406 Greylag Geese moving through, along with other highlights of a Short-toed Lark at the Sheep Cru, two Grey Phalaropes past South Light, Great Northern Diver and Slavonian Grebe. A Lesser Scaup, an addition to the Fair Isle list, was found on a rock pool on Buness on 7th and lingered through to the 9th. The 8th saw another Slavonian Grebe arrive along with five Merlin, the first Glaucous Gull of the autumn and a Barred Warbler, while a Little Auk passed Buness and a Hawfinch was at the Obs on 9th. A Citrine Wagtail was seen briefly at the Walli Burn on 10th with the following day producing three Velvet Scoters past Buness and a Grey Phalarope in Furse. Our first Lanceolated Warbler arrived on 13th in Field Ditch where it showed well to Obs guests (although it was unfortunately found dead near Pund the following day), while two Hen Harriers and two Yellow-browed Warblers also arrived. The following day saw good birds continue to arrive onto the isle, including our fourth Blyth's Reed Warbler of the year on the beach at Easter Lothar and a Little Bunting at Dronger. A Bluethroat, five Yellow-browed Warblers and a Common Rosefinch were also found. Four Short-eared Owls were present on 15th along with a Grey Phalarope in the Havens, 50 Blackcaps, 11 Crossbills and a Yellowhammer while the following day saw a Shoveler, three Hen Harriers, Long-eared Owl, Iceland Gull and a Barred Warbler arrive. The 17th produced another Olive-backed Pipit; this one a confiding bird at Setter, along with three Grey Phalaropes, Pintail, Gadwall, Scaup and a Great Northern Diver, along with a good passage of 800 Kittiwakes past the isle through the day. The 18th was a veritable raptor fest with totals including at least four Hen Harriers (a Fair Isle record count), Sparrowhawk, two Kestrels, four Merlins, two Peregrines along with seven Short-eared Owls. The following day saw another influx of geese with 585 Greylag Geese arriving along with a Bar-tailed Godwit and two Glaucous Gulls. The 21st saw another decent thrush arrival, with Fieldfare dominating at just under 1000 birds.

The 23rd saw a small arrival of 34 Blackcaps, while the following saw four Greenfinches arrive but little else. Continuing strong easterlies the following day saw a few new birds including an adult Little Gull in the Havens, a Great Grey Shrike at Hjukni, Swallow, Stonechat, reasonable numbers of thrushes (282 Blackbirds, 401 Fieldfare, 31 Song Thrushes and 277 Redwings) and 26 Jackdaws in the south (building to 77 by the end of the month). A further thrush arrival on 26th also saw a Red-necked Grebe in Gunnawark along with two Water Rails, a Grey Plover over Meoness, four Jack Snipe, ten Short-eared Owls, Mistle Thrush and five Yellowhammer, along with a smattering of other common chats, warblers and finches. A flock of 66 Barnacle Geese arrived the following day along with six Jack Snipe, Long-eared and 11 Short-eared Owls and three Black Redstarts. A second Great Grey Shrike was logged at the Mast on 28th along with our second Red-breasted Flycatcher of the year at Easter Lother while other migrants included a Long-eared Owl, Ring Ouzel and two Mistle Thrushes, a Rook and two Goldfinches. The final few days of the month went on to see thrush numbers continue to build, with 655 Blackbirds and 1053 Fieldfare present on 29th, while highlights of this final period included an elusive Spotted Crake in Da Water also on 29th and two Little Gulls on 30th. The final day of census produced 15 Short-eared Owls, a Stonechat in Kirki Geo, 34 Bramblings, 99 Show Buntings and seven Yellowhammers.

November: A busy start to the month saw a Grey Phalarope off South Light, five Whooper Swan, three Sparrowhawk, Glaucous Gull (until 2nd), Long-eared Owl, eight Short-eared Owl, a lingering Stonechat (until 5th), Wheatear, 16 Blackcap, the Great Grey Shrike still present, three Rook heading south and eight Yellowhammer on 1st. Birds kept arriving all through the first week of the month, with six Barnacle Geese, a Wheatear and a very late House Martin on 2nd. A Blyth's Reed Warbler was on Dronger on 4th with a *tristis* Chiffchaff, four Black Redstart, Short-eared Owl, 20 Wigeon and Iceland Gull elsewhere on the island. The 5th saw 35 Robin (the highest count of the year), two Jack Snipe, 13 Woodcock, four Short-eared Owls, Waxwing, Black Redstart, three Chiffchaff, Carrion Crow, six Chaffinch and a Common Redpoll with the following day producing Grey and White Wagtails (the last of the year), Black Redstart, Wheatear, Ring Ouzel and Common Redpoll. Another rarity arrived on 7th, when an Olive-backed Pipit was near Double Dyke, with an interesting swift species seen at Lericum and also a Crossbill and three Greenfinch (the month's high count). Good numbers of birds continued into the second week of one of the best early November periods of recent times with counts over 9th–10th producing totals of 66 Woodcock, four each of Long-eared and Short-eared Owl, 800 Blackbird, 250 Fieldfare, 250 Redwing, along with other highlights of two Olive-backed Pipits together in the Gilly Burn, Bullfinch, Stonechat (also in the Gilly Burn), Ring Ouzel and the last Goldcrest of the year. The 11th saw the last records of Goldfinch (two) and Brambling (eight) of the year along with a Great Grey Shrike (which lingered until 12th) and a Tundra Bean Goose near Stackhoull that was to be the start of a remarkable arrival of this species. The following day saw geese everywhere, with final totals of 59 Tundra Bean, 63 European White-fronted, 64

Greylag and 20 Pink-footed Geese (with all these species lingering in varying numbers until the end of the month), other arrivals were headlined by a Rough-legged Buzzard over Swey, whilst there were also Tufted Duck, eight Scaup, 37 Lapwing, four Short-eared Owl and three Reed Buntings. The 13th saw an impressive collection of raptors, with the Rough-legged Buzzard sharing the island's airspace with a Buzzard, Hen Harrier, three Sparrowhawk, Merlin and Peregrine. Other birds on the 13th included Little Gull in South Harbour, three Goldeneye, two Water Rail, a passage of 20 Meadow Pipit, Black Redstart and Mistle Thrush. Things were quieter the next day, although two Long-eared Owl, four Woodpigeon, Blackcap (the last of the year) and Common Redpoll were seen. The high count of Bean Geese occurred on the 15th, when 59 Tundras were joined by four Taigas, but the bird of the day was probably the Great Crested Grebe in North Haven (found just after the Warden had left the island on holiday!). The rest of the month was quieter, with a late Chiffchaff (19th), the last Reed Bunting of the year on 22nd when European White-fronted Geese peaked at 87 and the following day seeing two Little Gulls in South Harbour (with one also on 25th), three Whooper Swan and five Barnacle Geese. The month ended with many geese still present including 33 Tundra Beans, 244 Greylag and five Barnacle.

December: Typically a quiet month, with little movement noted. A selection of birds that lingered throughout included three Long-tailed Duck (although eight were seen on 27th), Common Scoter, Red-breasted Merganser, two Merlin, two Water Rail, a few Woodcock, two Long-eared Owl (in the Obs garden), a few Skylark, Dunnock, four Robin, around 50 Blackbird, five Fieldfare, two Song Thrush, 40 Redwing and up to 24 Snow Bunting. Smaller numbers of geese remained from the previous month, with up to 16 Tundra Bean Geese seen until 13th, and they were joined by a Taiga Bean Goose on 7th–11th. A Black Redstart on 5th was late, a Great Northern Diver lingered around the Havens from 8th–16th, six Golden Plover and a Black-headed Gull were seen on 8th and a Carrion Crow was present from 9th–10th. The 10th saw two Glaucous Gulls (with others seen on 19th and 27th) and the first Little Auk sighting of the month, with six seen. Little Auks went on to be seen until 22nd, with a count of 221 on the latter date the clear peak. An Iceland Gull was seen on 15th, two 'blue' Fulmars passed Bunes on 16th, when three Lapwings also arrived. The final sighting of note was a Cormorant on 27th, before an excellent year of birding on Fair Isle finally petered out and all thoughts turned to what 2012 would bring.

Systematic list 2011

David Parnaby

Notes:

Nomenclature - the species order is taken from 'the British List' published by the BOU in January 2012. Species names are from the BOU 'vernacular name' list.

Status Categories

- Vagrant - *ten records or fewer in the past 20 years*
- Rare - *11–40 records in the past 20 years*
- Scarce - *averaging ten records or fewer 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

- AIA - *Apparently Incubating Adult*
- AON - *Apparently Occupied Nest*
- BBRC - *British Birds Rarities Committee*
- Obs - *Fair Isle Bird Observatory*
- * - *Indicates record(s) requiring assessment by the relevant records committee*

***Bewick's Swan** *Cygnus columbianus*

Vagrant; five previous records involving twelve individuals

Five (three adults and two juveniles) arrived on Da Water on 16th February, but did not linger and had gone by the following day. This is only the second Fair Isle record since 1925. One of the adults was neck-collared having first been caught in the Netherlands on 30th December 2009. Having visited Norfolk in January 2010 it was next seen in Latvia in October of that year and was wintering in the Netherlands from November (with a brief visit to Germany) before heading to Norfolk again in late January 2011. It then returned to the Netherlands where it was seen just six days before its visit to Fair Isle.

Whooper Swan *Cygnus cygnus*

Frequent autumn migrant, scarce in spring

An adult that arrived on 10th February went on to remain throughout the summer, being last seen on 1st October. Spring records consisted of a further five on 16th–17th March and a flock of four that flew north on 14th April (with the 'resident' bird also

being seen on these dates). Autumn passage began when a total of four were seen on 13th September, followed by 36 (an impressive flock of 35 plus the lingering 'resident') on 16th–17th September. In October, a minimum of 99 birds were recorded on 5th, with many of them moving straight through, although 34 remained until 6th, with six still the following day. The next arrival was on 10th October, with 27 (followed by counts of four and one in the following days) and four on 18th–19th October. Birds continued moving with five on 1st and three on 23rd November, followed by 13 on 2nd December. Small numbers of this last group lingered into the month, but obviously struggled to find enough food, with three being found dead and none seen after 24th December.

Bean Goose *Anser fabalis

Rare autumn and winter migrant, approximately 35 previous records of around 79 individuals

Tundra Bean Goose *A.f.rossicus*

One of the avian highlights of the year was an unprecedented influx of this rare visitor to the island (and also the rest of the east coast of the UK). A single at Lower Stoneybrek on 11th November was the first, with numbers increasing to a remarkable 59 the following day. Although counts dropped to 46 on 13th, there were 59 again on 14th and 15th November. Numbers fluctuated later in the month with counts of 14, 39 and 33 on 22nd, 23rd and 30th respectively. Smaller numbers remained into December, with 16 on 10th and 14 on 11th but they did not stay until the end of the year, with the last record of at least ten on 14th December.

Taiga Bean Goose *A.f.fabalis*

The Tundra Bean Goose influx also brought a few of these larger visitors with them, with four on 15th November and one on 7th and 11th December, the first confirmed records of this race since 2003.

The total Bean Goose count on 15th November was 63, easily breaking the previous Fair Isle record of 16 on 3rd February 1980 and also the highest number ever recorded in Shetland.

Pink-footed Goose *Anser brachyrhynchus*

Frequent autumn migrant, scarce in spring

After a single on 4th February there were up to seven from 20th February and throughout March with four remaining to 11th April. Spring passage saw one on 18th and four on 25th April, with late birds on 27th May and five on 4th June. The first autumn bird was on 15th September with numbers increasing to 50 on 22nd September, with 35 the following day. Daily records between 27th September and 10th October saw a sum total of 1392 recorded, with most moving south. Peak counts during this time were 363 on 5th October, 200 on 28th September and 176 on 29th September. Twelve remained on 11th October, with one lingering into November when further arrivals saw up to four in the first week, 11 on 10th and 20–25 from 12th until the month's end, with up to nine remaining until 14th December.

White-fronted Goose *Anser albifrons***Scarce autumn migrant, occasional in spring and winter****European White-fronted Goose** *A.a.albifrons*

Two (an adult and immature) arrived on 21st February and lingered with Greylags in the south of the island until 8th March, with the adult remaining until 18th March. A sudden influx in November brought record numbers to the island when 63 arrived on 12th, followed by further peaks of 74 on 13th and 87 on 22nd November (the previous highest count for the island was 50 on 14th October 1948). Numbers gradually declined through late November, with 64 on 30th, and fell away sharply in the following month with 25 on 10th, 24 remaining until 16th and the last six seen on 17th December.

Greenland White-fronted Goose *A.a.flavirostris*

The only record of this race was an adult from 10th–16th December.

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

Maximum monthly count of Greylag Goose on Fair Isle 2011:

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
200	150	103	82	22	0	1	10	70	585	244	149

A typical set of records, with the wintering flock gradually decreasing through the spring and a few scattered records during the summer. Main migration was in October, with peaks of 585 (19th) and 406 (5th) and nine other dates with more than 100, mostly in the second week of the month as birds moved south.

Canada Goose *Branta canadensis***Rare spring migrant, mainly May and June, has summered, vagrant in winter**

An increasingly regular visitor to Fair Isle, this year saw a long-staying bird that arrived on 7th May and lingered until 14th June. Initially found at Easter Lother Water it spent most of its stay in the south of the island. On the last date it was seen flying out to sea before returning to the island, but it presumably tried again more successfully later in the day.

Barnacle Goose *Branta leucopsis***Frequent autumn migrant, occasional in spring**

Four that flew south over Wirvie on 17th April relocated to near Chalet where they remained to 21st April. Two were present on 23rd–25th May and a final spring record was a late bird at Easter Lother on 5th June. Autumn passage began with five early birds heading south on 9th September then a good showing in October saw a flock present from 2nd–8th that peaked at 13 on 6th, high counts of 86 birds passing on 10th and 66 on 27th and smaller numbers present on three other dates. In November, six were present on 2nd–4th and five were seen on 23rd–30th before a late bird lingered from 12th–19th December.

Shelduck *Tadorna tadorna*

Scarce spring migrant, rare in autumn

One on 20th–26th March preceded further singles in April on 1st, 10th and 16th and three in South Harbour on 21st April. Two flew over Gilsetter on 9th May and the last of the year was seen on 24th May.

Wigeon *Anas penelope*

Frequent spring and autumn migrant, scarce in winter

After one on 17th February there were occasional records of up to six throughout March and April, with sightings of up to five sporadically in May. Summer records included six on 25th June with 17 the following day and one or two on four dates between 30th June and 24th July. From 15th August sightings became more regular and were daily in September and October with peaks of 26 on 5th and 19th October and 16 on 3rd September. After 20 on 4th November, there were sporadic sightings of up to eight through to December.

Gadwall *Anas strepera*

Rare spring and autumn migrant, three winter records; total of 42 records of 64 individuals

The only record was a male on 17th October, which was seen at several sites around the island.

Teal *Anas crecca*

Frequent spring and autumn migrant, scarce in winter

Present from 4th March, with sightings in spring of small numbers through to June, with a peak of eight in April. Three singles were seen in July and by August birds were regular on the island's wetlands, with 18 present late in the month. Sightings were then frequent throughout the rest of the autumn, with monthly maxima of 32 on 5th September, 28 on 26th October and 15 in early November. By mid-November counts had dropped to single figures and up to three were seen on two dates in December.

Mallard *Anas platyrhynchos*

Frequent spring and autumn migrant

With a large flock of semi-feral 'Mallards' on the island, accurate counts of migrants are difficult, although it was thought that up to 15 were present in March and 20 in late October, with small numbers seemingly overwintering. Two females with ducklings near Pund and Chalet may have been 'wild' birds.

Pintail *Anas acuta*

Scarce spring and autumn migrant

In a quiet year for this elegant duck, the only sightings were a female on 9th and a male on 17th October.

Shoveler *Anas clypeata***Scarce and irregular spring and autumn migrant**

A typical year produced a single spring record, one was at Utra on 14th June, and two in the autumn: with one on 2nd October and a male in South Harbour on 16th–17th October.

Tufted Duck *Aythya fuligula***Scarce spring migrant, rare in autumn**

The first was a male on the sea in Furse on 20th April and a series of records during the rest of the month and through May saw regular sightings of up to four (involving at least three males and two females). During this time, regular records were made of a pair in suitable breeding habitat near the Kirk, although there was not thought to have been any nesting attempt. Late spring records involved three (a pair and a male) on 17th June and a male on 30th June. Autumn records involved two on 8th–10th August, with one remaining until 11th, one on 10th September, one on 2nd–10th October, joined by two more on 7th and one in South Harbour on 12th November.

Scaup *Aythya marila***Scarce spring and autumn migrant**

The only spring bird was a male on Golden Water on 20th–23rd April. In the autumn, a long-staying juvenile male arrived on 17th October and remained until 6th November, spending much of its time on the small ponds in the Haa garden! A second bird was present on 18th October and a further spate of sightings saw one on 10th November, then eight on the sea on 12th with singles on 13th and 14th November.

Lesser Scaup** *Aythya affinisVagrant, no previous records**

One of the high points of the seemingly constant westerlies during the peak autumn migration period was a female found on Bunes on 7th October, the first for Fair Isle of this North American species. An approachable bird, it remained until 9th October, during which time it was trapped and ringed.

Eider *Somateria mollissima***Resident, breeds in small numbers**

Whole-island counts produced 120 on 10th April and 139 on 25th May. The first females were noted in breeding areas on 15th May, the first ducklings were seen on 17th June and several broods produced fledged young. There was no count made of breeding birds (many of which nest at the bottom of geos).

Long-tailed Duck *Clangula hyemalis***Frequent autumn migrant, less common in spring**

The only sighting in the first half of the year was a female in North Haven from 28th February to 1st March. Autumn sightings began on 25th September, with regular sightings of up to nine in October. At least three remained during November and

early December then a calm day on 27th December saw eight sheltering around the calm waters to the east of the island following SW gales.

Common Scoter *Melanitta nigra*

Scarce spring, autumn and winter migrant

In spring, records of males in Furse on 24th–26th April and North Haven from 29th April to 7th May were presumably the same bird, while a female was in Furse from 10th–13th May and two were seen off Bunes on 16th May. In autumn, there were two in North Haven on 25th September and two off South Light on 24th October. Singles in North Haven on four dates in November between 7th–17th then off Finniquoy on 18th and 24th December may well have been the same wintering individual.

Velvet Scoter *Melanitta fusca*

Scarce autumn migrant, rare at other times of year

October produced two sightings, with three (including two males) south past Bunes on 11th and two (females or juveniles) east past South Light on 17th. The second consecutive year of sightings after three blank years prior to 2010.

Goldeneye *Bucephala clangula*

Regular winter, spring and autumn migrant

A scattering of records early in the year saw singles on 17th February, 5th–10th March, 20th April and 29th–30th April. Autumn passage began on 10th October with records on just five further dates during the month peaking at just three. At least three were present in mid-November but the only record after this was a bird found long dead in the wader scrape in December.

Red-breasted Merganser *Mergus serrator*

Frequent spring and autumn migrant

Early birds were seen on 2nd and 10th February, then up to three were present in the first half of March. In April sightings became more frequent, with a peak on 22nd of four. A female was present from 23rd May and up to two were seen regularly during June, with one lingering to 5th July. The first autumn record was 11th September, with sightings of up to four from 27th September, then up to eight in early October with two later in the month and one in early November. A male was seen on three dates in December in Finnequoy.

Goosander *Mergus merganser*

Rare migrant in winter, spring and late autumn

The only record of the year was a male flying south down the island on 11th May, the first since 2008.

Quail *Coturnix coturnix*

Scarce spring, summer and autumn migrant; has bred

The first of the year showed exceptionally well in a ditch near Utra on 2nd May. Records from eight further dates in May were from scattered localities across the island, including one that spent several hours sat in the open in the Obs garden on 20th, with the last of the spring being two on 10th June. The only singing bird was heard in the early hours of 5th May along the Meadow Burn. July records consisted of singles on 1st and 12th, with a late bird flushed from the Taft oats then the Meadow Burn on 24th–26th September.

Red-throated Diver *Gavia stellata*

Regular migrant, mainly late spring and autumn

In spring there were sightings of 17 birds on 12 dates between 14th May and 24th June, peaking at four on 22nd June, with most sightings involving birds moving north offshore. Autumn passage began with two seen on 10th August, with a single on 17th August the only other sighting until a total of 13 seen on eight dates between 20th September and 12th October.

Great Northern Diver *Gavia immer*

Scarce autumn migrant, occasional in spring

A good showing in spring saw five records between 28th May and 29th June. October saw records on ten dates, including the peak count of eight moving south on 18th and a lingering bird in North Haven at the end of the month. Finally, an adult appeared intermittently in North Haven from 8th to 16th December.

Fulmar *Fulmarus glacialis*

Resident; breeds in large numbers

The whole-island count produced a total of 29,640 AOS, an increase of 6.25% from the last survey in 2006. Breeding success was good for the third consecutive year, with 52% of nests fledging a chick, many fledglings being found around the island from late August. Some interesting behaviour was noted on several occasions, where Fulmars chased Bonxies off their prey (mainly Puffins) in order to scavenge the carcasses. In a good year for 'blue' Fulmars there were sightings on 24th and 26th March, 23rd April, 26th May (2), 23rd July, 31st August, 12th October (12), 17th October (4), 19th October (2), 20th October and 16th December (2). They were mostly seen from seawatches at South Light and Bunness, although 'pale blue' birds were twice seen patrolling cliffs in the spring.

Sooty Shearwater *Puffinus griseus*

Regular autumn migrant

The first of the year were on the relatively early date of 18th July when one was off South Light and three were seen from the Good Shepherd. A single on 28th August was the only record for the month. Five on 21st September was the peak count for the year with further records on 22nd and 29th September (two on the latter date) and finally a late bird on 16th October.

Manx Shearwater *Puffinus puffinus*

Scarce autumn migrant, rare in spring

There were sightings on four dates between 24th May and 3rd June, all singles except for three on 28th May. A similar pattern of occurrence in the autumn saw singles recorded on three dates between 20th August and 19th September then three on 21st September. As with the previous species, all sightings were from the typical locations of Buness, South Light and the Good Shepherd.

Storm Petrel *Hydrobates pelagicus*

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

The first of the year was seen in North Haven at 11pm on 9th May. A total of 37 birds were seen in Fair Isle Waters from the Good Shepherd on 11 dates between 26th May and 8th September. As ever, late night tape luring in the Havens was the best chance to see the species, with a total of 685 trapped in the summer (659 'new' birds and 26 previously ringed) on 26 dates between 31st May and 6th September. Most of the larger catches came after mid-July, with the best night falling on 22nd / 23rd August when 111 birds were caught.

Leach's Petrel *Oceanodroma leucorhoa*

Scarce migrant, summer and early autumn

A good year with seven birds recorded, all at the Havens during 'stormie sessions'. Birds were trapped on 9th, 21st, 28th and 31st July (with two on the latter date) and 7th August. In addition, another bird was seen over the nets on 21st July. One of the birds trapped on 31st July spent some time singing from South Haven beach in response to the tape lures before making its way into the nets. No responses were noted however from nine sites across the island during call-playback in the summer.

Gannet *Morus bassanus*

Breeds in large numbers, seen offshore all year

Although the breeding population continued to grow, the rate showed signs of slowing, with 4085 AON representing a 2.95% increase from 2010. Productivity was again good, at 0.72 chicks per AON, with the first fledged youngsters noted on 13th August.

Cormorant *Phalacrocorax carbo*

Frequent autumn migrant, less common in winter and spring

A scattering of sightings in the spring and summer saw singles on 12th and 14th March, one or two on five dates in May and singles on 3rd and 16th June and 1st July. More in the autumn saw birds on four dates in August from 14th, 21 days in September, twelve October dates and 8th November. Generally counts were from one to five, although there were 20 on 12th September. A late bird was in South Harbour on 27th December.

Shag *Phalacrocorax aristotelis****Resident, breeds in moderate numbers***

A terrible season for this rapidly declining species, with the monitoring plots showing a decline of 59.2% to just 20 AON. The first eggs were noted on 21st April, but breeding productivity was the second lowest on record, with just 0.11 chicks fledged per AON.

Grey Heron *Ardea cinerea****Frequent autumn migrant, less common in winter/spring***

The first of the year lingered from 17th February until 18th March and was joined briefly by a second on 7th March. Birds were then seen on 30th March and 4th April, before scattered sightings in May and up to two in June, with three on 3rd June. In July, up to three were regular, with some southerly movement noted, and sightings of up to three continued sporadically in August and regularly in September, with numbers rising to a peak of 11 on 18th September. Five were present in early October and the last were three on 29th October.

Great Crested Grebe *Podiceps cristatus****Vagrant; 13 previous records***

An adult was in North Haven on 15th November, the second consecutive year the species has been recorded, but only the third record for the island since two in 1994.

Red-necked Grebe *Podiceps grisegena****Vagrant; 22 previous records (24 individuals)***

During a period of strong south-easterly winds, one was seen in Gunnawark on 26th October. This is only the 7th record (including one found recently dead on the shoreline in 1996) since an influx of five in 1979.

Slavonian Grebe *Podiceps auritus****Scarce autumn migrant, occasional in spring***

A juvenile off Furse on 15th September was the first of the year, with further sightings on 5th, 8th, 11th and 14th October. Although the majority of the sightings were between Hesswalls and Furse, at least three birds were thought to be involved.

Marsh Harrier *Circus aeruginosus****Rare spring migrant, vagrant in autumn; 41 previous records (33 in spring, 8 in autumn)***

One flew south over the island on 17th May. An immature female, it may have been the same bird as one seen earlier in the day at Sumburgh Head (on Shetland Mainland): remarkably the same group of people found both birds!

Hen Harrier *Circus cyaneus****Scarce spring and autumn migrant***

A ringtail was present in the north of the island on 26th–28th April, the only spring

record. A record-breaking autumn passage began with a juvenile heading north along the west cliffs on 19th September. One on 1st October was followed by another single on 6th–9th and a new bird on 12th that headed south along the island. Between 13th and 19th October there were daily records, peaking at a minimum of four on 19th (a record day count), with the birds generally favouring the areas around Pund and Da Water. The last of the year was in the north on 13th–14th November. A minimum of ten birds represents a record annual total.

Pallid Harrier *Circus macrourus

Vagrant; one previous record

A stunning juvenile was found on 12th August on a clear, sunny day with a south east wind. First seen at the foot of Malcolm's Head, it showed well on several occasions as it roamed the south of the island attempting to catch Meadow Pipits, Snipe and Rabbits. It remained on the island until 15th August and constitutes the second Fair Isle record following the first for Britain that was shot by Jimmy Stout (Midway) in May 1931. This bird turned out to be the precursor for an unprecedented influx into the UK and it was perhaps not altogether a surprise when the third for the island followed just a month later, when another juvenile was seen over Gilsetter on 11th September, remaining on the isle until 14th September.

Sparrowhawk *Accipiter nisus*

Regular spring and autumn migrant

After the first of the year on 1st April, sightings were regular during the month, with two seen on 23rd April and into May. Three were seen on 11th May, then singles on 12th, 18th and 31st May and 3rd June. An unseasonal bird was seen on 22nd July, with August records on two dates then nine records in September, with three on 18th the highest count. Three were regularly seen in October, with four on 19th and three lingered to 13th November with the last bird a single in the Vaadal on 14th November.

Buzzard *Buteo buteo*

Scarce spring and autumn migrant

In a good spring for large raptors, two were seen. The first headed south over Bunness on 25th April with the second seen flying north on 3rd June. A final record of the year was one in the north of the island on 13th November. Three in a year is the best showing since 2006.

Rough-legged Buzzard *Buteo lagopus

Vagrant; around 42 previous records (44 individuals)

A second-winter bird was found over Svey on 12th November and was still present the following day. Although seen in six years in the 1980s, the species has become much harder to see on Fair Isle recently, with records in just five years since then.

Osprey *Pandion haliaetus***Scarce migrant; 96 previous records of 98 individuals (78 in spring, 18 in autumn)**

One was watched heading north over the island on 27th April, leaving from Easter Lother with an entourage of gulls. A second bird was seen over South Light on 1st May. These are somewhat earlier than the average dates of spring birds.

Kestrel *Falco tinnunculus***Regular spring and autumn migrant**

A very early migrant was present on 2nd March with the next not seen until 15th April. From 19th April until 3rd June there were regular sightings of one to three, with late spring records on 17th and 26th–27th June. The first autumn record was a bird on 9th August, with regular sightings of a single after this, rising to two on 25th August, four by early September and the year's peak count of eight on 11th and 18th September. At least four lingered into the following month, with the last seen on 20th October.

Merlin *Falco columbarius***Regular spring and autumn migrant**

Occasional records in January and February were presumably of an overwintering bird. Spring passage brought more regular sightings of up to two in March and three in April, with one lingering until 12th May. Returning birds were noted from 16th August, with up to three by the end of the month. Regular sightings in September and October saw a peak of five on 5th October. Up to two remained through November and early December, with one bird remaining to the end of the year.

Hobby *Falco subbuteo**Rare spring and summer migrant, vagrant in autumn; 52 or 53 previous records**

Two in the spring made it a good year for this dashing falcon, with one found at Midway on 4th June that was seen later in the day at the Obs and Easter Lother. The second was at Furse on 15th June and lingered around the island until the 18th, with presumably the same bird also seen on 21st June.

Peregrine *Falco peregrinus***Regular spring and autumn migrant; bred regularly until 1973 then again in 2008–2009**

The first record was a male on 10th February, with scattered records during March becoming more regular from the last week when up to three were seen. There were regular sightings during the spring and it was thought that two pairs were present at one stage. Display was noted on the west coast and birds were present throughout the summer (although sightings were irregular in July), but the male was probably oiled by Fulmars, which may have been the reason that there was no confirmed breeding attempt. Sightings of at least two were regular during the autumn, with three on 16th October, but none was seen after 13th November.

Water Rail *Rallus aquaticus*

Regular spring and autumn migrant; occasionally over-winters

The first of the year was in Boini Mire on 20th March, with a dead bird at Gilsetter on 22nd March the only other spring record. Autumn passage started with one seen dropping out of the sky onto a puddle on Bunes before flying off over the sea towards Furse on 25th September! Regular sightings in October peaked at three on 16th but the only November record was of two on 13th. Occasional sightings from Haa in early December and Schoolton later in the month may have related to the same individual attempting to overwinter.

***Spotted Crake** *Porzana porzana*

Rare migrant; 45 previous records (36 in autumn, nine in spring)

One flushed from the burn east of Da Water on 29th October was generally elusive, but did show well on one occasion in short grass. Recorded for the second successive year following four blank years, this was the latest ever record for Fair Isle.

Corncrake *Crex crex*

Scarce spring and autumn migrant; formerly bred

One was flushed twice from the roses at Lower Leogh on 14th May but was not seen again after this date. Two typical autumn records were of a juvenile trapped at the Plantation on 24th August and one flushed from Vaila's Trees on 6th September.

Moorhen *Gallinula chloropus*

Scarce spring and autumn migrant

During a reasonable year for the species one was at Barkland on 18th March followed by one in the Gully on 17th and 20th April. One at Pund on 22nd April was probably a new bird. A juvenile at Chalet on 10th August was the earliest ever autumn migrant for the island, although birds have previously oversummered. The final record of the year was one found dead in Gilsetter on 1st October.

Coot *Fulica atra*

Rare visitor (83 previous records); most in spring, also late autumn and winter, has summered

After no records since 2004 the two in 2010 were followed by two more this spring, typically the best time of year to catch up with this unlikely looking migrant. One was in the Meadow Burn on 11th–21st March and one was on Da Water on 20th–25th April.

Oystercatcher *Haematopus ostralegus*

Common spring and autumn migrant; breeds in small numbers

The first of the year returned on 2nd February when four were in the Havens, with numbers building rapidly to 75 by late in the month. Numbers in March rose to 112 and during April counts fluctuated between 51 and 122 as the breeding population became settled. The first eggs were found on 4th May and the breeding population was estimated to be 35–40 pairs, although counts in May peaked at 163 as passage

and non-breeding birds continued to be recorded. In June the first chicks were noted on 10th and a flock of up to 74 non-breeding (or failed breeding) birds settled around Shirva. The highest count of the year occurred on 17th July, when 212 were counted, including several fledged chicks. Numbers dwindled after this with up to 42 in early August, but no more than 20 after 17th and only three dates in September recording double figures. The last birds lingered until 29th October.

Ringed Plover *Charadrius hiaticula*

Frequent spring and autumn migrant; breeds in small numbers

The first birds returned on 17th February, with spring passage peaking at 35 in early April. The first chicks were noted on 13th May, with the breeding population estimated at 10–14 pairs. August passage saw monthly peaks of 54 on 29th August, 102 on 6th September and 26 on 2nd October, with the last birds noted on 18th October.

Dotterel *Charadrius morinellus*

Scarce spring and autumn migrant

There were none in the spring for the first time since 2007 and the only record of the year was a juvenile on Ward Hill on 25th–26th August.

Golden Plover *Pluvialis apricaria*

Common spring and autumn migrant; has bred

The first was seen on 3rd March, with up to seven later in the month and numbers continuing to rise to a peak of 107 on 20th April. Numbers tailed off in May, with 25 early in the month, but only four remaining by the end, although eight were seen in early June. One by the Mast on 21st June was in suitable breeding habitat, but present on one day only. Two at Field on 30th June were probably the start of return passage as they preceded a few sightings of up to four during July. In August through to early October records were virtually daily, with peaks of 36 on 1st October, 35 on 30th September and 31 on 29th August. After 9th October counts were all in single figures, with just two remaining in early November and the last sightings of six on 8th and a single on 10th December.

Grey Plover *Pluvialis squatarola*

Scarce autumn migrant, rare in spring

There were two unseasonal records of winter birds on 5th January and 19th February and more typical records, again of single birds, on 22nd September and 26th October.

Lapwing *Vanellus vanellus*

Frequent spring and autumn migrant; breeds in small numbers

There were occasional sightings during the first winter period becoming more regular from mid-February, peaking on 19th with 95. There were up to 63 in March and light passage continued through April with up to 36 recorded. Approximately seven pairs bred, principally around Pund and Da Water, with the first chicks seen on 12th May, but productivity appeared to be very poor. A count of 23 on 3rd July

included passage birds, but autumn counts were low, with peak counts of just 15 during August and September. An arrival in mid-November saw a peak count of 37, with up to three recorded occasionally in December.

Knot *Calidris canutus*

Regular autumn migrant, scarce in spring

Spring passage was sparse, with one in South Harbour on 21st–24th April and records on nine dates in May between 14th–28th, all singles except two on 24th May. One was seen on 24th July then passage increased from 13th August when a flock of 18 arrived. Small groups were seen throughout the rest of the month peaking at 23 on 29th August. Up to six were seen in early September, with the last on 22nd until a late juvenile was in the Havens on 11th–12th October.

Sanderling *Calidris alba*

Regular autumn migrant, less common in spring

The first of the year was an unusually early bird on 4th–6th February, which had been colour-ringed in Iceland on 21st May 2007. Spring passage consisted of one in Hjukni from 31st March to 2nd April, records on five dates in May (peaking at six on 23rd) one on 3rd June and two on 25th June. In July there were six on 17th and two on 19th, then regular sightings in August, peaking on 24th at just six. Numbers rose in September to 14 on 6th then up to three were present from 17th to 11th October.

Little Stint *Calidris minuta*

Scarce autumn migrant, vagrant in spring

What was probably the same mobile juvenile flew north over South Harbour on 25th August, was at Da Water the following day and then Easter Lother Water on 27th and 29th August. The only other record was a juvenile in South Harbour on 12th September.

***Baird's Sandpiper** *Calidris bairdii*

Vagrant; three previous records

A juvenile was found before breakfast at North Haven on 25th September. It showed well during the day, often on the road, but was not seen after this date. The three previous records, in 1982, 1991 and 1996, were all also juveniles and arrived between 5th September and 1st October.

***Pectoral Sandpiper** *Calidris melanotos*

Vagrant; 28 previous records

One flushed from Meoness on 3rd September was presumably the same as a confiding adult at Easter Lother Water on 6th–8th September. After a fairly regular pattern of occurrence (there were five in the 1960s, four in the 1970s, three in the 1980s and five in the 1990s), records have increased recently, with ten seen from 2000 to 2009 and two already this decade.

Curlew Sandpiper *Calidris ferruginea***Scarce autumn migrant, vagrant in spring**

A juvenile was at Easter Lothar on 25th August, with probably the same bird in South Harbour the following day. Another juvenile was at North Light on 30th–31st August, with possibly the same bird there on 4th September. A juvenile at Da Water on 18th September was presumably the bird that then lingered around Meoness on 21st–26th September.

Purple Sandpiper *Calidris maritima***Frequent spring and autumn migrant; also over-winters**

Small numbers in the early winter were bolstered by passage migrants in spring, producing a peak of 60 on 10th March. The peak count in April was 23, then numbers declined to ten in May and a few remained until 9th June. Autumn passage began on 3rd July, with numbers rising to 15 in August. Peak counts in the autumn were 27 on 15th October and 45 on 10th November with counts in single figures into December.

Dunlin *Calidris alpina***Frequent spring and autumn migrant**

The only early winter record was two on 19th February. Spring passage began with six on 17th March, but proceeded slowly with sightings on just three more dates in March and two dates in April. Sightings were more regular in May, with a peak of 13 on 26th and up to six remained until 16th June. In July records of up to four birds on six dates preceded regular sightings in August that rose to 19 on 31st, before virtually daily sightings in September that peaked at 35 on 13th. Up to four were seen in early October with occasional sightings until 27th October.

Ruff *Philomachus pugnax***Regular autumn migrant, rare in spring**

The first of the year were two at Da Water on 31st July, with three there the next day. There were virtually daily records throughout August with peaks early in the month of 11 on 7th and seven on 13th and the highest count for the year on 24th when 25 were recorded. In early September up to five were seen regularly, with eight on 10th then up to three later in the month until the last was seen on 22nd September.

Jack Snipe *Limnocyrtus minimus***Frequent autumn migrant, less common in winter and spring**

Spring migrants were at Pund on 30th April and the Plantation on 15th May. Autumn passage began with a single on 17th September, with up to four seen regularly until the end of the month. Numbers rose in early October to a maximum of ten on 9th, with single-figure counts for the rest of the month. One at North Light on 4th November was presumably a newly arrived migrant, with the last record of two on 5th November.

Snipe *Gallinago gallinago*

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

Up to 28 were recorded in March, presumably as breeding birds returned, as there was no real evidence of spring passage. The first birds were recorded on eggs on 25th April and the population was estimated at 15 to 20 pairs. The protracted breeding season of the species is illustrated by the two nests with adults still incubating eggs on 11th August. Three were seen coming in off the sea on 17th September, but there were few peaks in numbers until 74 on 26th October. Reasonable numbers were also seen in early November, with 37 in the south-west of the island alone on 4th, but just single-figure counts in December.

Great Snipe *Gallinago media

Vagrant; around 38 previous records, mostly autumn (two previous spring records in FIBO period)

The second spring record for Fair Isle since 1965 was found in a ditch near Utra scrape on 2nd May, it went on to show well in the area for the rest of the day. A relatively early autumn record concerned one flushed from the Kenaby tattie rig on 29th August which was seen here every morning until 3rd September. The third record of the year was a bird flushed at Da Water on 18th September. These are the first records on Fair Isle since 2001 and the best year for this chunky *Gallinago* since 1996.

Woodcock *Scolopax rusticola*

Regular spring and frequent late-autumn migrant, occasionally overwinters

A single on 1st January was the sole record from the first winter period, with sightings in March, reflecting northward bound migrants, of up to five on five dates during the month. Sightings of up to three in the first four days of April were the last of the spring. In autumn, there were singles on 17th September and 1st October then regular records from 13th October onwards. Notable arrivals included 28 on 26th October and large numbers in November with 52 counted in the north of the island on 9th and 14 in the south the following day. One or two on several dates in December suggested that small numbers overwintered.

Black-tailed Godwit *Limosa limosa*

Scarce spring and autumn migrant

The first of the year appeared at Da Water on 20th April then lingered in the south of the island until 10th May, with a second bird on the last two dates. Autumn passage began with one seen coming in from the north over Easter Lothar with a group of Ruff on 12th August, with probably the same individual responsible for regular sightings in the south of the island until 28th August. Another lingered from 2nd to 8th September having first been seen coming in off the sea at North Light.

Bar-tailed Godwit *Limosa lapponica***Regular autumn migrant, rare in spring**

The first of the year was on 17th June over Meones. A good autumn passage began with an adult around Setter on 16th–17th July followed by another on 26th July. Birds moved north on 17th and 29th August (three), 5th September (two) and one lingered from 11th to 18th September. The last of the year were singles on 16th and 19th October.

Whimbrel *Numenius phaeopus***Frequent spring and autumn migrant; has bred**

The first of the year were six on 16th April, with records daily from 21st April until 15th June. During this time peak counts included nine on 26th April, 12 on 8th and 14th May, 13 on 16th May and 16 on 22nd May. Records became sparser later in June and two heading south on 30th seemed to signify the start of autumn passage. Up to eight were recorded on nine dates in July and in August a flock of 12 heading south on 4th was the peak count from the 15 dates with records. Singles on three September dates until 7th were the last of the year.

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

Up to 50 were seen in January and February. Although the peak number in March was 22 and that in April 26, counts in this period were mostly between seven and ten as birds settled onto breeding territories. Three pairs were thought to have bred and two of these fledged young. Southerly passage was noted in August, with a maximum of 23, but no more than 12 were recorded for the rest of the autumn. Although a maximum of three were recorded in November, numbers rose to 23 in December as a wintering flock was again present.

Common Sandpiper *Actitis hypoleucos***Frequent spring and autumn migrant**

The first of the year appeared on the typical date of 21st April, with singles on two further dates in the month. Light passage in May saw birds recorded on nine dates, peaking at three on 9th and 27th, and up to two in the first three dates of June. Singles were at South Light on 9th and 19th July with autumn passage from 12th August to 18th September consisting of records on nine dates in August and six in September, peaking at just four on 25th August.

Green Sandpiper *Tringa ochropus***Regular spring and autumn migrant**

The first was on Bunes on 21st April, with one at Gilsetter on 27th–28th April then up to two during the first six days of May and a late spring bird on 9th June. One on 10th July was followed by a single on 27th July then virtually daily records in August, with arrivals noted at the start of the month, peaking at a minimum of six on 5th, and on 24th when three were recorded. The final record for the year was two on 1st September.

Spotted Redshank *Tringa erythropus*

Rare autumn migrant, vagrant in spring

A single heard on 13th August over Utra scrape was the only record of the year and the first since 2008.

Greenshank *Tringa nebularia*

Regular autumn migrant, scarce in spring

The first of the year flew over Shirva on 22nd April and one was present on 6th–13th May. An early autumn bird was on Sukka Mire on 30th June and records on five dates in July probably referred to two individuals. August saw one or two on 20 dates, with three on 9th, and one was recorded on five dates between 12th–18th September.

Wood Sandpiper *Tringa glareola*

Scarce spring and autumn migrant

A good spring for the species saw at least four recorded, the highest total in this season since 1992. The first was on Da Water on 26th–30th April. One flying south over the Naaversgills on 7th May was presumed to be the same as one on Da Water the following day. Another flew south over the island on 12th May before the final record of the year on Golden Water on 17th May.

Redshank *Tringa totanus*

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

Counts in the early part of the year were fairly consistent, with monthly maxima from January to April of 25, 20, 21 and 28 although numbers then dropped away to just one or two until 28th May. Birds were seen again from 13th June, with up to six by the end of the month and numbers rising to 12 in July. August to October produced monthly peaks of between 28 and 32, with up to 25 remaining until the end of the year.

Turnstone *Arenaria interpres*

Common winter, spring and autumn migrant

Maximum monthly count of Turnstone on Fair Isle 2011:

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
25	n/c	111	103	40	20	50	130	113	210	n/c	130

A typical year, with birds present in every month and the largest counts in October.

***Grey Phalarope** *Phalaropus fulicarius*

Vagrant; 31 previous records (c36 individuals)

Another good year for this increasingly frequent visitor, with seven individuals recorded. The first two were off South Light on 5th October, with another seawatching record of one heading north off Bunness on 11th October. One in South Haven on 15th–18th October was joined by a second on 17th–18th, whilst another flew past Bunness on 17th October. The final record was one off South Light on 1st November.

Arctic Skua *Stercorarius parasiticus*

Frequent passage migrant, breeds in small numbers

The first returned on 16th April and numbers had risen to 20 by the end of the month. Only 29 AOT were recorded, a 58.6% decline on 2010 figures and the lowest number of breeding birds recorded since the Fair Isle colony was fully established in the 1950s. No chicks fledged, with virtually all eggs predated. With such a poor breeding season, it was no surprise that very few remained on the island during the late summer, with the last seen on 27th August. Seawatching produced records on seven dates between 25th September and 18th October, totalling ten individuals.

Great Skua *Stercorarius skua*

Frequent passage migrant, breeds in moderate numbers

The first three were seen on 25th March, with numbers rising rapidly through April and 56 were present by early May, with the first eggs noted on 9th May, with the first chicks seen on 8th June. The number of AOT was 227, an 18.9% decline on the 2010 count, a figure at odds with the recent increase in breeding population. Breeding productivity was very poor at just 0.25 chicks fledged per AOT, continuing the recent trend of low productivity. By early October there were around 24 remaining, with the last bird on land on 19th and the last seen offshore on 24th October.

Sabine's Gull *Xema sabini

Vagrant, five previous records, all juveniles in autumn

Strong westerly winds in the autumn displaced a large number of this delicate gull into British waters and adults were seen off South Light on 20th September and Bunness the following day. Given the species' rarity in Shetland, the sightings were taken to be of the same individual.

Kittiwake *Rissa tridactyla*

Common passage migrant, breeds in large numbers

Small numbers were present early in the year, with numbers arriving from late March. The first eggs were noted on 17th May, but the breeding season was another disastrous one. No chicks fledged from the monitoring plots, which has occurred only four times previously since monitoring began in 1986, with three of these years falling in the last decade. The whole-island count of breeding birds produced 1438 AONs, a 46.5% decline since the last whole island count in 2008, continuing the catastrophic slump in breeding numbers since the late 1980s. By August the island was virtually abandoned by Kittiwakes, with just scattered sightings of up to three. A few more were seen offshore in September and large numbers passed offshore regularly in October, including 800 (including just one juvenile) on 17th and 700 on 19th in just 90 minutes. There were occasional records up to ten in the last two months of the year.

Black-headed Gull *Chroicocephalus ridibundus*

Frequent spring and autumn migrant

There were scattered records in the early winter, with three on 9th January, up to eight in February and up to five in March. Sightings became more regular in April, with a peak of 19, and May when up to 20 were seen. The first week of June saw northward passage of up to 20 a day, with just scattered records through the rest of the month and into July. One to ten were regularly seen in August and 11 dates in September saw up to six recorded. The late autumn generally saw small numbers, although the peak count of 81 occurred on 5th October and just one was seen in December.

Little Gull *Hydrocoloeus minutus*

Vagrant; 25 individuals previously recorded, most in late autumn

An adult was in South Harbour on 25th–26th October, with presumably the same bird in South Haven on 27th before moving to Mid Geo on 28th October. An adult found exhausted at North Light on 30th October that was later released in the Havens was presumed to be the same individual, but a first-winter in South Harbour that day was obviously new. The third individual of the year was another adult in South Harbour on 13th November, with presumably the same bird there on 23rd when it was joined by a second adult, with one seen again on 25th November. A minimum of four in a year is an impressive tally for this still rare, although increasingly frequent, visitor.

Common Gull *Larus canus*

Common spring and autumn migrant, breeds in small numbers

Small numbers were seen in the winter, with up to 35 recorded. Birds had returned to the breeding colony by early April, but only seven nests were found and none got as far as chick stage. Up to 64 were recorded in May, but the largest numbers occurred in late summer as dispersing birds saw counts rise to 120 in late July then at least 850 on 5th August. These flocks contained several very young juveniles suggesting the influx probably involved birds from colonies elsewhere in the Northern Isles. Numbers were generally fairly low in the autumn, but several waves of arrivals saw counts of 130 on 3rd, 397 on 9th and 225 on 29th October. Small numbers lingered to the end of the year, with one to five seen in December.

Lesser Black-backed Gull *Larus fuscus*

Frequent spring and autumn migrant; breeds in small numbers

The first of the year was an adult on 2nd February, the earliest Fair Isle record by over a month. The next was not until the more typical date of 22nd March, with sightings regular from 10th April until the end of the month but of only up to ten birds. Numbers rose to 34 on 30th May, including five pairs nesting on Goorn. Counts were of less than three after mid-August, with sightings on two dates in September then two on 3rd and one on 4th October.

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

Very few counts were made of this species, which is present in variable numbers throughout the year, although several hundred were present on several windy days in late autumn. There were 33 nests in the colony at Goorn, seven nests on Greenholm and a pair fledged chicks at Mid Geo, with the first chicks noted on 5th June.

Iceland Gull *Larus glaucoides***Scarce migrant in winter and spring**

Records of first-winters on three dates in January and one in February were possibly the same bird and may also have been the individual seen throughout March and up to 1st April. During this time there was also an adult on 20th February. Two separate first-winter birds were on the island between 14th and 24th May. The first bird of the autumn was a first-winter from 16th to 21st October, with further records of first-winters on 4th November and 15th December.

Glaucous Gull *Larus hyperboreus***Regular migrant in spring, late autumn and winter**

First-winter birds were present on 10th–11th and 25th January, with two on the latter date. In February a second-winter appeared on the island and remained intermittently until the 25th April, with other immatures also seen on 5th and 30th March and 8th April. In autumn an immature was over Easter Lothar on 8th October, with three birds (an adult and two first-winters) present from 19th–23rd and one of the young birds remaining until 2nd November. What could have been the same individual was also seen on four dates in December. Gauging the number of individuals involved in sightings of this species is always difficult as birds are apparently often out at sea, coming ashore often only in rough weather.

Great Black-backed Gull *Larus marinus***Resident, breeds in small numbers. Also hard-weather migrant in autumn and winter**

Present throughout the year, with large numbers sometimes taking shelter on the island during stormy conditions, although the largest recorded count was just 450 on 15th October. Large chicks were noted on 5th June on Greenholm and small numbers of breeding birds were scattered around the coast with seven pairs noted, although the declining Sheep Rock colony was not counted.

White-winged Black Tern** *Chlidonias leucopterusVagrant, two previous records.**

A moulting adult was discovered hawking over the fields at Setter on 16th July where it remained for the afternoon, often giving close views. Only the third for Fair Isle following records in June 1973 and May 1982, both previous birds were also breeding-plumaged adults.

Common Tern *Sterna hirundo*

Summer visitor, formerly bred in small numbers but last nested in 2005

The first arrived on 29th April then a pair were seen in May that remained during the spring and early summer around Buness and the Havens, although they were not thought to have bred. The highest count of the year was four on 3rd June and although there were three on 17th July, records were sparse after this with singles on two dates in August and an adult and juvenile from 12th–18th September.

Arctic Tern *Sterna paradisaea*

Summer visitor, breeds in large numbers

The first was relatively early on 26th April, but birds were then very slow to arrive. Daily sightings didn't occur until 7th May and, although 70 had arrived by mid-month, only 190 were present by the end of May. Just nine AIA were noted and all nests were predated before reaching chick stage, the eighth year in the last ten with zero productivity. Around 80 birds remained by mid-June, but by the end of the month there were fewer and by mid-July, all had gone. Only passing birds were noted after that, with 32 heading west on 23rd July for example, then up to five on six dates in August. Three headed south on 6th September and three late birds were seen on 10th October.

Guillemot *Uria aalge*

Common passage migrant, breeds in large numbers

Birds were noted ashore on 27th February, although the first eggs were not seen until 12th May and the first chicks were seen on 7th June. Sadly another very poor breeding season followed, with plot counts showing a decline of 29.2 % from 2010 to 995 individuals. Productivity on the monitoring plots was zero for only the third time since such monitoring began in 1988 (the other years being 2004 and 2008). The 24 hour feeding watch showed a feeding frequency of just 1.59 feeds per chick per day, 43.4% lower than 2010. With adults away from the nest for extended periods, Herring Gulls were able to take advantage and were seen predated several chicks. Individual chicks were noted on the sea on 6th and 7th August, but were presumed to be from colonies elsewhere in the Northern Isles. A maximum of 39 were offshore in September and there were regular counts of up to 30 in October, with large numbers also seen at sea occasionally in December.

Razorbill *Alca torda*

Summer visitor, breeds in large numbers

Present in numbers offshore from 11th March with birds at the colonies from 25th March. The first eggs were noted on 2nd May and the first chicks on 2nd June. The monitoring plots showed a continued decline in numbers, with just 23 individuals compared to 28 in 2010. Productivity was again alarmingly low, with 0.02 chicks fledged per egg laid. Only small numbers were noted offshore in September and October.

Black Guillemot *Cephus grylle***Resident, breeds in moderate numbers**

Present throughout the year, with the 161 individuals in breeding plumage counted on the east coast monitoring plot (North Lighthouse to South Lighthouse) on 21st April being 16.1% lower than the 2010 count, although similar to the 168 recorded in 2009.

Little Auk *Alle alle***Frequent late autumn/winter visitor.**

Small numbers were seen from seawatches (mainly from South Light and Bunes) in October, with nine dates producing a total of 20 birds from 9th (including one bird which spent most of 14th in North Haven). Counts of up to seven were regular offshore in December, although 221 moved south past Bunes in an hour on 22nd (mostly viewed from the Warden's kitchen window!).

Puffin *Fratercula arctica***Summer visitor, breeds in large numbers**

The first was seen on 25th March and by 3rd April there were birds ashore and 400 off Furze, with thousands present the following week. Chicks were first noted on 5th June and productivity was reasonable, with 0.39 chicks fledged per egg laid. An adult was taking fish down a burrow on 24th August but by the end of the month there were none present on the island, with just a scattering of records offshore until 21st September.

Rock Dove *Columba livia***Resident, breeds in small numbers. Also frequent spring and autumn migrant**

Present throughout the year, although no significant counts were made. Occasional lost 'Racing' Pigeons were recorded and the odd Feral Pigeon appeared in the flocks, although the majority of the birds remain of apparently 'pure' stock.

Stock Dove *Columba oenas***Scarce spring and autumn migrant**

One was in the south of the island on 26th September, the worst showing since none were seen in 2008.

Woodpigeon *Columba palumbus***Frequent spring and autumn migrant**

Up to three were seen from 25th February to 7th March and in late March, and sightings were then regular in April with up to seven seen. In May up to 12 were regularly seen, but the peak was 26 on 31st, which included some birds moving north. In June up to six were recorded to 14th, then unusual summer records were singles on 29th–30th June, 5th–6th July and 13th August. Autumn saw sporadic sightings of one or two in September, up to nine in October and four lingering until 14th November.

Collared Dove *Streptopelia decaocto*

Frequent spring migrant, less common in autumn

An early spring bird was at Utra on 15th March, there were then sporadic sightings from 31st March through April, with up to five towards the end of that period. The species was often present during the summer with peaks of six in May and ten in June and the last seen on 20th July, although there was no suggestion of any breeding activity. Three individuals were seen in the autumn; on 3rd September, 30th September to 5th October and 13th–17th October.

Turtle Dove *Streptopelia turtur*

Scarce spring and autumn migrant

Just two were recorded this year, both in the spring, with one at the Kirn o'Scroo on 26th May and one in the south of the island on 15th–27th June that spent most of its time on Meoness or the Lower Stoneybrek crop.

Cuckoo *Cuculus canorus*

Regular spring migrant, scarce in autumn, has bred

The first of the year was at South Naaversgill on 8th May with singles also on 9th and 10th, the latter a singing bird at Wirvie. Further sightings followed on 22nd May, 10th and 17th June before an early juvenile was seen at South Light on 26th June. Although clearly a very young bird, it was not seen in the company of any adopted parents and it appeared quite exhausted suggesting it was more likely to be a migrant than a Fair Isle-bred chick. What was probably the same bird was found predated near Malcolm's Head on 2nd July. Sightings during 16th–20th July involved at least two juveniles, one of which was found exhausted and later died. The final record was on the typical date of 8th Aug when another juvenile was at South Light.

Long-eared Owl *Asio otus*

Regular autumn migrant, scarce in spring

One was seen at Stackhoull on 28th February, an unusually early record. Autumn began with singles on 14th and 24th September, then records on 16th, 22nd–23rd and 27th–30th October (with two on the latter date). Sightings continued in November with a single on 1st and two on 9th, 10th and 14th, although ringing showed that there was a considerable turnover of birds. Two were in the Obs garden from 8th–10th December with at least one remaining until 26th December, an unusual but not unprecedented overwintering attempt.

Short-eared Owl *Asio flammeus*

Regular spring and autumn migrant

A good spread of records in spring began with an early bird on 5th March at Field, followed by one on 8th April and singles on five dates in May (probably three birds) and eight dates in June (probably involving another three birds). The first autumn migrant occurred on 15th September, with numbers rising to three on 17th and one lingering to the end of the month. In October three were present at the start of the

month, numbers rose to seven on 18th then dropped before another arrival saw ten on 26th, 11 on 27th and a minimum of 15 on 30th October. At least eight birds remained beyond the end of the month, with the last sighting of a very good year for the species on 12th November.

Swift *Apus apus*

Frequent spring, summer and autumn migrant

The first of the year was early, arriving on 1st May and lingering until 3rd, although it turned out to be the only record for the month and spring passage on nine early June dates peaked at 15 on 3rd June. Sightings from 27th June, peaking at 23 on 29th June, and five July dates could have been the start of autumn passage, which was better than average this year. After up to two in the first two days of the month, August saw the main passage from 10th with the year's highest count of 45 noted on 20th, with some birds seen heading south. Two lingered until 7th September and a late bird was present on 1st October.

***Swift/Pallid Swift** *Apus apus/A. pallidus*

Pallid Swift is a vagrant with one previous record

A swift at Lericum on 7th November showed some characteristics that are associated with Pallid Swift, although it was thought that Common Swift could not be ruled out. Notes have been sent to the BBRC for comment.

Wryneck *Jynx torquilla*

Regular spring and autumn migrant

The first was near the Plantation on 1st May, with three seen the following day and one remaining until 3rd May. An unseasonal bird was in the Gully on 1st July, the first record for that month on Fair Isle. A fantastic arrival on 24th August saw a minimum of 19 around the island, the second highest autumn count (after 20 on 2nd September 1974) and the fourth highest ever daily total for the island. Numbers decreased rapidly with just five on the 25th, two on the 26th and one (in the Obs garden) on 27th–28th August. The only other records from the autumn were one trapped in the plantation on 17th September with an unringed bird in the south of the island the following day.

Red-backed Shrike *Lanius collurio*

Regular spring and autumn migrant

Two males arrived on 26th May, at North Haven and Da Water, with both remaining until 27th May. The only other record in a very quiet spring was a female at Barkland on 23rd June. The first of the autumn was a juvenile at Chalet on 11th–14th August, with two more juveniles on 25th August (at the Obs) and 26th August (at Field), both remaining until 4th September.

Great Grey Shrike *Lanius excubitor*

Scarce autumn migrant, rare in spring

This magnificent butcher has gone through a lean spell on Fair Isle in recent years, but 2011 produced at least five birds, the best year since 1989 when four or five were seen. One at Dutfield on 22nd March was only the third spring record since 2000, although sadly it was found dead in the Plantation the following day having probably been killed by a cat. A good showing in autumn started with one at the Obs on 17th September which roamed the island until 29th, during which time prey items included Blackcap, Tree Pipit and Whinchat. One found at Hjukni on 25th October was presumably the bird trapped in the Plantation on 26th, which went on to linger in the north of the island until 1st November. Another (unringed) was found at the Mast on 28th October and may have been the bird seen at Utra on 30th October. The final sighting of the year was a bird at Haa then the Plantation on 11th–12th November.

***Woodchat Shrike** *Lanius senator*

Vagrant; 28 previous records (13 spring, one mid-summer, 14 autumn)

A female was around the Chalet and Field on 14th–16th June, the first record since 2006.

Jackdaw *Corvus monedula*

Scarce spring and autumn migrant

The only spring bird was one that moved south through the island on 7th April. In October, one was present from 15th, joined by another bird the following day with numbers increasing to 26 on 25th, and rising to 77 by 30th October, the largest count since the large influx in autumn 2007. Twenty-two remained into November, with numbers declining rapidly through the month until the last was seen on 11th November.

Rook *Corvus frugilegus*

Regular spring migrant, less common in autumn

Light passage in spring from 8th April saw scattered records of up to five until 5th May, involving a minimum of 12 birds. In autumn, there were records on 12th, 20th and 26th–29th October and three flew south on 1st November.

Carrion Crow *Corvus corone*

Frequent spring migrant, less common in autumn

The first was on 19th March, with sightings to the end of the month of up to three birds, then four in early April. Passage at the end of April saw counts of up to 13 on six dates, including at least 29 that headed south during this time. In early May there were 19 on 5th then numbers rose to 65 on 11th May (the highest count since 90 in May 2000), with 20–30 lingering until 24th and just six remaining until the end of the month and four into early June. Two on 26th July were the only record for the month with an occasional sighting in August, along with a hybrid that lingered for several days. Four dates in October produced sightings of up to two, with the final singles on 5th November and 9th–10th December.

Hooded Crow *Corvus cornix***Resident, breeds in small numbers**

Counts were generally fewer than ten in the first part of the year, although 17 on 31st March presumably involved some migrants. Counts in April and May suggested four or five pairs on the island, although a large Carrion Crow flock that arrived on 11th May also contained an additional 20 Hooded Crows. Breeding success was not monitored, but appeared to be very poor, with few juveniles noted and counts in August generally not rising above eight. No real autumn migration was recorded.

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

Presumed migrants were seen in spring from 19th March throughout the spring, with a flock of 11 flying south on 29th March the peak count. A small number of pairs were noted across the island and, although no successful nests were observed, a family party was seen on Bunes in July. Possible migrants were noted on a couple of dates in the autumn, although never more than two.

Goldcrest *Regulus regulus***Frequent spring and autumn migrant**

Spring passage was very light, with the first on 24th March at Schoolton followed by up to three on 1st–8th April, a single at the Obs on 12th–14th April then one in the Plantation on 22nd April. Autumn passage began early on 26th August when one was in Muckle Jorns Geo. Birds were regular between 3rd September and 9th October (with only five days with none recorded), but peaked at just seven on 24th September. Influxes in October saw 25 on 13th then 36 on 14th with numbers decreasing with up to seven until the end of the month. In November, one or two were seen regularly until 6th, a relatively late date.

Short-toed Lark** *Calandrella brachydactylaScarce spring and autumn migrant**

One was found on 13th May along the Vaadal burn near the airstrip. It showed well at times during the day but was not seen again. An early autumn bird was found at the north end of the airstrip on 7th August, with further sightings from this area and Homisdale on 12th, 22nd, 27th and 30th August all assumed to be the same elusive bird. Later in the autumn there were a series of sightings on 18th–20th and 26th September and 5th–7th October mostly from around the Sheep Cru, but ranging as far as the North Haven and Gilsetter, which were taken as referring to one bird.

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

Small numbers of overwintering birds were soon augmented by new arrivals with counts of 35 on 17th and 60 on 20th February and then 227 on 16th March. In early April there were still 194 on 4th with subsequent counts during the breeding season

of 40–60 and the first fledged young seen on 17th June. Autumn passage was relatively light, with monthly maxima of 63 on 9th August, 147 on 15th September and 155 on 6th October. Although arrivals continued until late in the month, with 98 on 27th October for example, only 1–3 were noted at the end of the year.

Sand Martin *Riparia riparia*

Regular spring migrant, less common in autumn

The first were four on 10th April, with regular sightings of one to four between 21st April and 11th May. Two were seen on 24th–26th and 30th–31st May with singles on seven further dates until 24th June. Autumn passage was restricted to singles on 15th–16th August and six dates during 13th–21st September.

Swallow *Hirundo rustica*

Common spring and autumn migrant; occasionally breeds

The first arrival was of 11 on 10th April, with a peak during the month of 58 on 21st April. Daily passage during the following month saw regular counts of up to 60, with peaks of 75–78 on 9th–11th and 70 on 22nd May. After 47 on 3rd June, numbers quickly settled to just the breeding birds, with pairs nesting successfully at the airstrip, Setter and Upper Stoneybrek and up to three other pairs possibly breeding. Fledged birds were noted from 17th July and autumn passage began on 18th August when 41 were seen. Passage was light during September, with never more than 20, then after daily sightings to 6th October there were singles on 12th, 14th and 25th October.

House Martin *Delichon urbicum*

Frequent spring and autumn migrant; has bred

After two on 10th April (the earliest Fair Isle record), passage was regular until 29th June, with peak counts of eight in April, 40 on 22nd May and 50 on 3rd June. Autumn passage was light with four on 1st August (one lingering until 3rd), one on 10th August, three on 6th September and up to two from 28th September until 4th October. A very late bird was along the North Cliffs on 2nd November, only the second for this month (after on one 1st November 1987) and the latest ever Fair Isle record.

Red-rumped Swallow *Cecropis daurica

Vagrant; seven previous records, six in spring, one in autumn

One appeared over Kirki Geo in the late afternoon of 3rd May during a small arrival of hirundines and performed well around Utra for the rest of the day. Following 2009's earliest ever arrival date on Fair Isle, this was the second earliest to turn up on the island. The four records since 2000 is in line with an increase in sightings in the UK in recent years.

Greenish Warbler *Phylloscopus trochiloides

Rare migrant; 41 previous records (34 autumn and 7 in spring)

One was found at Haa on 9th June and was at Schoolton the following day, the first in this season since 1992 and the only spring record in the UK in 2011.

Arctic Warbler** *Phylloscopus borealisRare migrant; 77 previous records (72 autumn and five in spring/summer)**

An early bird was at Schoolton on 12th–14th August. A first-winter was trapped in the Vaadal on 23rd August and was seen again in the Plantation the following day. This is the fourth consecutive year this species has been recorded on the island.

Yellow-browed Warbler *Phylloscopus inornatus***Regular autumn migrant**

The first of the year were four on 18th September, a typical arrival date, increasing to eight the following day. Until 8th October only two dates produced no records, counts of up to four were regular with an influx producing ten on 30th September and 15 on 1st October, with ten still present on the following day. Another small arrival saw daily sightings during 13th–18th October, peaking at five on 14th, with the last of the year at Double Dyke on 23rd October. Although no year had produced more than 30 individuals prior to 2003, only 2004 and 2009 have since failed to reach this total, so this year's minimum count of 34 individuals is in line with recent years.

Wood Warbler *Phylloscopus sibilatrix***Regular spring and autumn migrant**

Two on the early date of 30th April at Hoini were the first of the year. Further singles in spring were at Haa on 12th May and the Obs on 5th June. Records on 6th–8th August probably referred to one bird, but three were seen on 24th August and further singles were present on 26th August and 1st September.

Chiffchaff *Phylloscopus collybita***Frequent spring and autumn migrant**

Two were seen on the early date of 17th March, with one remaining until 20th and one was seen on 31st March. Sightings were regular during the spring, peaking at 15 on 21st April and 11 on 8th May. Up to five were still present in early June, with three remaining to July and one spending the whole summer at the Obs. It was joined by returning migrants from 18th August, although numbers remained low until the second half of September, when numbers peaked at nine on 29th September. Seven remained into October with another arrival in mid-month seeing ten on 15th, with up to three remaining until the end of the month and small numbers in early November until the 19th, including at least two *tristis*-type birds at the Obs early in the month.

Comparison of Chiffchaffs and Willow Warblers counts in 2011 (measured in bird-days):

	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov
Chiffchaff	5	139	98	60	29	29	41	90	12
Willow Warbler	0	99	168	19	3	418	275	11	0

Note the later spring and earlier autumn peaks of Willow Warbler, the more prolonged period of presence of Chiffchaffs and the abundance of Willow Warblers in early autumn.

Willow Warbler *Phylloscopus trochilus*

Frequent spring and autumn migrant

The first arrived on 10th April with regular sightings through the rest of the month and into May, peaking at 24 on 29th April and 20 on 11th May. Three remained in early June, with occasional sightings until 21st June then three in the first week of July. A juvenile on 2nd August marked the start of autumn passage, with numbers rapidly increasing and a large arrival of 93 on 25th August. There were frequent counts of ten or more in September, with a peak of 25 on 19th and the last was seen on 5th October.

Blackcap *Sylvia atricapilla*

Common spring and autumn migrant

One on 10th April preceded an increase in numbers through the month to 15 on 30th April and daily sightings in May, although only four dates produced double figure counts. There were still regular sightings in early June and scattered records later in the month until 25th, although no more than two were seen. After three on 24th August there were virtually daily records until the last on 14th November. Several waves of arrivals were noted during this time, with the largest count being 62 on 1st October. Peaks in September included 23 on 13th, 40 on 18th and 22 on 30th, in October there were 50 on 15th, 34 on 23rd and 32 on 26th, whilst 16 remained into November.

Garden Warbler *Sylvia borin*

Frequent spring and autumn migrant

The first was on 30th April with sightings on 16 dates in May and 14 in June, peaking at eight on 26th May. An unusual summer record was of one on 14th July. After the first of the autumn on 9th August, sightings became virtually daily later in the month, peaking at 15 on 25th August. There were regular sightings through September until 5th October, with peaks of ten on 13th and 20 on 18th September. A late bird was at Wirvie Burn on 21st October.

Barred Warbler *Sylvia nisoria*

Regular autumn migrant, vagrant in spring (three records)

One in the Obs mist nets on 15th August was the first of the year, with numbers rising to three by 17th and then a surge of records at the end of the month producing the year's peak count on 24th when eight were present around the island. During September birds were recorded on 16 dates, peaking at five on 5th September. Two lingered until 1st October, with one the following day then late birds on 8th and 16th October. A minimum of 25 individuals were thought to be involved.

Lesser Whitethroat *Sylvia curruca*

Frequent spring and autumn migrant

After the first on 23rd April records were virtually daily until 4th June, with a peak of 12 on 12th May, and occasional later records until 20th June. After records on five dates in August from 5th there were daily records in September until 20th, with scattered records until 3rd October and the last on 13th October. The autumn peak was just six on 19th September.

Whitethroat *Sylvia communis***Frequent spring migrant, less common in autumn**

One on 23rd April preceded regular records through the spring until 24th June. Although there were peaks of ten on 8th and 12 on 12th May, all other counts were in single figures. August saw records on 13 dates from 2nd but a peak of just three and although birds were regular through September, numbers peaked at only four on 18th September. There were records on four October dates until 16th, when two were seen.

Subalpine Warbler** *Sylvia cantillansRare migrant; 75 records (71 in spring and four in autumn)**

A good year with four records all of which were in spring. An unraced female at Lower Stoneybrek on 24th April, a relatively early date, lingered until 3rd May. A male of the 'eastern' race *S.c.albistriata* was found on Loangie, Dronger on 29th April before moving to the Obs the following day. It obviously found the garden to its liking as it became the longest ever staying Subalpine Warbler on Fair Isle, remaining here until 4th June. During the latter part of its stay it was heard singing on several occasions and was also noted in close attendance to a Lesser Whitethroat, at times even being seen to huddle next to it. A nice comparison was available on 31st May when a male of the nominate 'western' race *S.c.cantillans* was trapped in the Gully and was later seen in the Obs garden briefly skirmishing with the 'resident' bird. After a run of 42 consecutive days of Subalpine Warbler presence on the island, only one blank day elapsed before the fourth of the year was found on 6th June in the Schoolton garden. This was again a male *S.c.albistriata* (although unringed, so clearly a new bird) but it was not seen again after this date.

Pallas's Grasshopper Warbler** *Locustella certhiolaVagrant; 21 previous records all between mid-September and mid-October**

Following prolonged westerly winds, a switch to southerlies on 30th September saw an arrival of Redwings and, remarkably, one of these Fair Isle specials was found in a ditch in Gilsetter opposite the ringing hut and showed fairly well to all observers.

Lanceolated Warbler** *Locustella lanceolataRare autumn migrant (80 previous records)**

The morning of 13th October saw a number of Redwings and other migrants arrive on the island and high hopes for a 'good' migrant were swiftly met when this classic Fair Isle rarity was discovered along the Field Burn whilst most folk at the Obs were having breakfast! It was a well-streaked, rather elusive individual. Sadly, what was probably the same bird was found dead on 14th October near Pund.

Grasshopper Warbler *Locustella naevia***Regular spring and autumn migrant**

A relatively good spring showing started with one at Double Dyke on 23rd April. Birds were then present daily until 14th May (when one was singing at Lower Stoneybrek), counts were mostly of one or two except for three on 4th and 5th and

four on 9th May. A late passage at the end of the month saw daily sightings from 26th–30th, peaking at three on 27th May. Autumn passage was also relatively strong, with the first at Da Water on 23rd August preceding records on four further dates in the month, peaking at three on 24th August. Records on seven dates the following month peaked at four on 18th September. The final birds were individuals in Da Water and Gilsetter on 2nd October.

Booted Warbler *Iduna caligata

Vagrant; 12 previous records, all in autumn

One was found in fields near Burkle on 26th August and showed very well near Kenaby later in the day. The first on Fair Isle since 2005 and the fourth August record.

Eastern Olivaceous Warbler *Iduna pallida

Vagrant; two previous records

The first autumn record for the island of this pale, tail-pumping warbler occurred on 2nd September when one was seen briefly in the Nether Taft oat crop before eventually showing well at Schoolton. It was still present there the following morning but was not seen again.

Icterine Warbler *Hippolais icterina*

Scarce spring and autumn migrant

The first of a reasonable spring showing was on 22nd May at North Naaversgill with possibly the same bird trapped the following day in the Gully then lingering at the Obs until 26th, during which time it was heard singing. The 26th also saw two new birds arrive with up to three present on the island until 30th May. Two arrived on 9th June with one still present the following day. At least seven individuals were involved in the spring sightings, but by contrast none was recorded in the second half of the year, the first blank autumn since 2003.

Melodious Warbler *Hippolais polyglotta

Vagrant; 15 previous records, five in spring and ten in autumn

A good year saw the first records since 2006, with one at Haa on 26th August and one at Schoolton on 12th September that remained until 3rd October, a record stay.

Sedge Warbler *Acrocephalus schoenobaenus*

Regular spring migrant, less common in autumn

The first was an early bird on 21st April in the Gully with up to three present by the end of the month. In May sightings were almost daily, with a peak of 18 on 26th, and up to four were seen occasionally in June until 21st, completing a good spring passage of the species. Sadly, there was no repeat of the 2010 breeding attempt. Autumn started slowly, with one from 29th July to 6th August and a second on 1st August, the only records until birds were seen on 17 dates between 6th–26th September, with a peak of just four on 12th September.

Blyth's Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus dumetorum***Rare migrant; 25 previous records, 18 in autumn and seven in spring***

An exceptional year saw five records, with four of these trapped, the first of these in the Plantation on 10th June. A fantastic autumn began with one found, then trapped, at the Obs on 20th September. A showy individual was on South Haven beach on 1st October and one was found on the beach at Easter Lothar on 14th October, with both trapped to confirm their identification. The final of the year was the latest ever record for Fair Isle (and the third latest for the UK) and was found on Dronger on 5th November. This is the best year on Fair Isle since four or five were seen in autumn 1913 and the island is responsible for over 20% of British records of this species.

Marsh Warbler *Acrocephalus palustris****Scarce spring migrant, rare in autumn***

The first of the year arrived on cue on 26th May at Lower Stoneybrek where it remained until the 27th before relocating to the Obs the following day. The 29th May saw a new bird at Haa. The next was trapped in the Plantation on 6th June and was then seen at the Obs on 7th and 11th June. On 12th June two new birds arrived, with singles at Charlie's Trees and Schoolton. The species is typically a late migrant in the spring and two further birds appeared in late June, with one trapped in the Plantation on 19th June and a singing bird at the Obs on 19th–21st June.

Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus scirpaceus****Scarce spring migrant, regular in autumn***

One at Taft on 8th May preceded almost daily sightings of up to three until 1st June. A good spring was rounded off by one at Chalet on 15th June that moved to the Obs on 17th where it was heard singing. Autumn passage began with one on 5th August at Schoolton where there were two the following day. There were regular sightings of one or two on 12th–24th August, and 2nd–11th September, then later sightings on 18th (2), 20th and 27th September and a late bird at Schoolton on 14th October.

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

In January there were three on 3rd and six on 13th before a very light spring passage saw singles on 23rd and 27th April and 1st May. The only autumn record was one on 5th November at the Plantation.

Wren *Troglodytes troglodytes****Endemic race 'Fair Isle Wren' *T.t.fridariensis* is resident in small numbers. Other races probably occur as rare spring and autumn migrants***

Dedicated surveys combined with sightings during census and casual observations revealed a total of 37 territories, the highest total since the 38 recorded in 2006, although it is possible that the survey effort may have detected a few more territories than usual. The first fledged chicks were noted on 8th June in the Havens, with further fledged birds noted at the Observatory, South Naaversgill and Dronger, although there was no indication of overall breeding success.

Starling *Sturnus vulgaris*

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

Present throughout the year with the large breeding population making detection of migrants difficult. A count of 555 in the south-west of the island on 9th April suggested larger numbers than usual were present. The first eggs were noted on 26th April, with hatched chicks recorded on 11th May and a large number of fledged juveniles noted from 31st May. Second broods were noted from 10th June, but generally the breeding season was a poor one, with the dry spring possibly responsible for a lack of food for first broods, whilst cold, wet weather affected second broods. There were no counts made during the autumn, although passage birds were evident in late October.

Rose-coloured Starling *Pastor roseus*

Rare spring, summer and autumn migrant (39 previous records, 40 individuals)

A juvenile dropped into the Obs garden on 25th September and showed well on the feeders before relocating to North Light where it remained until 3rd October. It generally shunned the Starling flocks and fed by itself, usually giving very good views.

Dipper *Cinclus cinclus

Rare spring and autumn migrant; 36 previous records

One 'Black-bellied Dipper' *C.c.cinclus* was seen near the mouth of the Gilly Burn in Hjukni Geo on 26th April. It remained here for the rest of the day but was rather elusive, although at one point it flew through one observer's legs!

Ring Ouzel *Turdus torquatus*

Frequent spring and autumn migrant

A strong spring passage began with one trapped in the Gully on 5th April, with records on ten further dates in the month after 15th peaking at six on 23rd and involving at least ten birds. During May birds were present on an almost daily basis until 22nd, peaking at 14 on 2nd, with a minimum of 26 birds involved in sightings. One on the 25th May was the last of the spring. Autumn passage was quieter with the first on 19th September followed by singles on two more September dates and three on 30th, followed by singles on five October dates. November saw one on 6th at Setter and a late individual on 10th in the Gully.

Blackbird *Turdus merula*

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

Small numbers overwintered, with 10–15 counted in the first two months of the year. The first falls of the spring saw peaks of 77 on 17th March and 85 on 2nd April. Although there were daily sightings in May, counts were all single figures and the majority probably related to a pair which nested at Houll. This pair became the first successful breeding Blackbirds on Fair Isle since 1973 and they produced two broods, in late May and early July. An intriguing cluster of records of a female and juvenile around the Gully and Hill Dyke in June may have been birds dispersing from Houll.

August records probably all referred to the breeding birds, with September also very quiet, just 17 dates producing counts of no more than two. October saw several arrivals with 59 on 9th, 63 on 14th, 98 on 23rd, 282 on 25th, 565 on 26th and 766 on 27th October. There were regularly 600–650 to the end of October and still over 270 on 5th November. Further arrivals saw around 800 present on the island on 9th–10th November, good numbers lingered into the month with 49 still present into December.

Fieldfare *Turdus pilaris*

Common spring and autumn migrant, often over-winters

There were occasional sightings in early winter, although 45 were counted on 2nd January. Up to 16 were regular in March then an arrival in early April saw 187 on 2nd, before numbers quickly petered out with none after 9th until four to six were recorded from 23rd April to 14th May. An unusual, but not unprecedented, record was one at the Plantation on 21st July. The first autumn record was on 17th September, with small numbers recorded sporadically until the end of the month. Several waves of arrivals in October saw counts of 156 on 9th, 251 on 14th, 985 on 21st, 899 on 27th and an impressive 1053 on 29th and at least 250 remained into November. One or two were recorded into December.

Song Thrush *Turdus philomelos*

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

A couple of records of up to five early in the year suggested possible over wintering in small numbers. From 17th March up to six were recorded regularly and spring passage continued to be light, with peak count of just four throughout April and until 12th May. Daily sightings from 17th September were generally of low numbers until a fall in late September saw numbers rise to 44 on 1st October with another arrival of 78 on 9th October. Small numbers were then present until a further arrival saw 87 on 26th October, with 45 still remaining in early November, but none seen in December.

Redwing *Turdus iliacus*

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

Ten were counted on 23rd February and records of one to four in March involved some spring migrants, with nine seen on the last day of the month. April began with a fall of 74 on 1st, with smaller numbers for the rest of the month and three singles recorded the following month until 13th May. Three unusual late spring passage records consisted of birds on 1st, 10th and 24th June. The first autumn passage birds returned on 18th September, but just single figures were recorded until 26 on 29th and then 496 on 30th September. Numbers rose again to 1018 on 1st October then after dropping to 394 the following day had climbed to 799 on 3rd October. Although most had moved on by the start of the second week another large fall brought 2892 on 9th October, with further small arrivals bringing 286 on 13th, 150 on 18th, 161 on 21st, 277 on 25th and 623 on 27th October. At least 250 were present in early November, with a reasonable number overwintering, with around 40 remaining throughout December.

Mistle Thrush *Turdus viscivrus*

Scarce spring and autumn migrant

An early bird was in a small influx of thrushes on 23rd February then two arrived on 17th March and were joined by a third the following day, one remaining to 21st March. Further singles were noted on 31st March–3rd April, 29th April–1st May and 6th May in a good spring for the species. A quiet autumn saw one from 26th October–2nd November, joined by a second on 28th–30th October and one on 13th November.

Spotted Flycatcher *Muscicapa striata*

Frequent spring and autumn migrant

The first was on 8th May with numbers rising to three by 12th May. There was then a gap in records until 23rd May, with counts increasing to eight by the end of month and small numbers seen regularly throughout June until 22nd, with a peak of seven on 10th June. An unusual mid-summer record was of one at Schoolton on 12th July. Small numbers were recorded from 14th August building up to nine on 26th August. There were records on 20 dates in September, but a maximum of just five on 26th, and four were still present on 1st October before a late bird in Furse on 6th–10th October.

Robin *Erithacus rubecula*

Common spring and autumn migrant

Small numbers were probably overwintering on the island, with up to four seen in February. The first arrival of migrants seemed to be six on 17th March, preceding up to ten by the end of the month. Records on 16 dates in April produced a maximum of ten on 30th, with up to nine seen regularly in May. A late spring bird was in the Havens on 7th June. Singles on 24th and 25th August kicked off autumn passage, although after records on 1st–4th September there were none until 16th September. After this records became more regular and were daily through October until 23rd before an arrival from 25th saw numbers rise to 27 the following day. Continued arrivals saw the year's highest count of 35 recorded on 5th November, with at least five lingering into December.

Thrush Nightingale *Luscinia luscinia

Rare migrant; 54 records, 44 in spring and ten in autumn

An elusive individual was in the garden of Haa on 28th May. Only the fourth spring record in the last ten years, during which time there have been seven autumn birds, reflecting something of a shift in seasonal occurrence.

Bluethroat *Luscinia svecica*

Regular spring and autumn migrant

A female trapped in the Vaadal on 17th April was presumably a 'white-spotted' bird based on the date, although measurements and plumage could not confirm this. In a relatively quiet spring for the species the next record was one in flight at Easter Lothar on 22nd May, followed by two females in the south of the island on 26th May. Further females at Setter on 28th May and Busta on 29th May could well have been

new migrants. A male was at Utra on 8th June and a late female was trapped in the Vaadal on 18th June. A quiet autumn saw a bird trapped on 19th September followed by sightings on 1st and 14th–16th October.

Red-breasted Flycatcher *Ficedula parva*

Rare spring and scarce autumn migrant

There were only two records, both in autumn and both present for only a short time. The first was at Leogh on 1st October, the second was in Easter Lothar on the relatively late date of 28th October.

Collared Flycatcher *Ficedula albicollis

Vagrant; three previous records, two in spring, one in autumn

A stunning first-summer male was found on the cliffs of North Krojeals Geo on Hoini during morning census on 30th April. It remained there until 5th May, although it could be elusive at times when it was flycatching from the bottom of Hundi Stack.

Pied Flycatcher *Ficedula hypoleuca*

Frequent spring and autumn migrant

Light spring passage saw 1–2 between 30th April and 3rd May with further singles on 14th, 23rd and 28th May. Autumn passage began with one on 5th August and further records on 14th, 16th (two), 17th and 21st before a small fall of eight on 24th, increasing to a maximum of 11 on 26th with up to two remaining until 31st August. September saw records on just three dates with a peak of three on 17th and the last of the year was on 1st–2nd October.

Black Redstart *Phoenicurus ochruros*

Regular spring migrant, scarce in autumn

Early birds were seen on 16th and 24th March, with two on 3rd–6th April, one remaining until 7th April. Singles were seen on 15th–17th and 29th April before a small flurry saw four arrive on 30th April. There were then virtually daily records of 1–3 until 13th May, involving around eleven birds. A late spring record saw two present on 10th June. A protracted autumn migration began with birds on 2nd, 5th and 22nd August, with two on the latter date. There were no more until 15th October, with records on 12 further dates until 13th November, peaking at three on 27th and 29th October. A very late bird was at South Light on 5th December.

Redstart *Phoenicurus phoenicurus*

Frequent spring and autumn migrant

The first of the year was on the typical date of 19th–22nd April. A small arrival saw daily records between 30th April and 12th May, peaking at nine on 30th April and 3rd May. The only other spring sighting was one in the Plantation on 1st June. Autumn passage began with one on 12th August then four on 24th rising to 15 the following day, with up to four until the end of the month. September saw sightings on just 13 dates with a peak on 27th of just three. Two lingered into October, with one on the 2nd the last of the year.

Whinchat *Saxicola rubetra*

Frequent spring and autumn migrant

A light spring passage saw three to five on 8th–12th May, with singles on four further dates until 30th May. In August there were up to four on 5th–17th then daily sightings from 24th until 18th October. Several arrivals during this period saw peaks of 20 on 25th August, 20 on 3rd and 12 on 18th–19th September.

Stonechat *Saxicola rubicola*

Scarce spring and autumn migrant

A male was in Schwarzi Geo on 24th–25th March, with a female at Stackhoull on 31st March and a male at Schoolton on 29th April. A very early returning bird was at Schoolton on 13th August with the next not until October, when a juvenile was at Nether Taft on 25th and a male at Kirki Geo on 30th that lingered until 6th November. Finally, a late male was in Gilly Burn on 10th November.

Wheatear *Oenanthe oenanthe*

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

The first was a male on the typical date of 30th March at Single Dyke, with numbers rising to 95 by 10th and 207 by 18th April. Counts in May were generally between 75 and 155 as birds settled into territories. The first fledged youngsters were seen on 10th June and a good breeding season followed. During August and early September most counts fluctuated between 90 and 130, with a peak of 177 on 5th September followed by a rapid decrease, with most counts after this date of fewer than 50. Sightings continued regularly through October, with generally no more than 40, a peak of 57 on 6th and just single-figure counts after 17th and the last on 6th November.

Dunnoek *Prunella modularis*

Frequent spring and autumn migrant; has bred

From the first on 17th March sightings were regular through the spring until 24th May, with the two largest arrivals being 18 on 31st March and 20 in late April. Late spring migrants occurred on 30th May and 11th June. The first autumn migrants arrived on 19th September, when four were seen, with sightings becoming daily from 3rd October, although the peak was only six on 11th October. Three remained to mid-November and at least one bird attempted to overwinter in the south of the island.

House Sparrow *Passer domesticus*

Resident, breeds in small numbers

Counts in the spring and a survey of birds at the start of the breeding season suggested a population of around 30–35 pairs. The first fledged chicks were noted on 3rd June, when several were present around the south of the island. August counts of up to 139 suggested a reasonably productive breeding season.

Tree Sparrow *Passer montanus*

Scarce spring and autumn migrant

One touring the south of the island on 2nd May was the precursor of a small arrival that saw up to six until 11th May, the birds generally favouring garden feeders in the south and at the Obs.

Yellow Wagtail *Motacilla flava*

Regular spring and autumn migrant

A male Yellow Wagtail *M.f.flavissima* was present on 22nd–28th April and during this time there were also female Grey-headed *M.f.thunbergi* birds on 25th and 27th and unidentified *flava* wagtails on 23rd and 27th April. Early May saw female Blue-headed *M.f.flava* and Grey-headed types on 3rd, a female Yellow from 5th–6th, a female Blue-headed on 8th and an arrival of up to four Yellows on 9th–12th May. A very smart male Grey-headed bird was at Barkland and Da Water on 18th–20th May, with possibly another on 23rd May. Autumn passage saw juveniles on 1st (probably Grey-headed), 3rd (two birds, both probably Grey-headed), 4th and 30th September before a confiding juvenile was in the south of the island from 2nd to 16th October.

***Citrine Wagtail** *Motacilla citreola*

Rare migrant; 61 previous records, 58 in autumn and three in spring

Considering that one trapped in the Gully on 20th September 1954 was the first British record, the transformation to an almost expected autumn migrant has been extraordinary, with just three blank years on Fair Isle since 1985. The first this year was an early bird on a foggy 13th August that was eventually pinned down at Da Water after first being heard calling over Haa. What was presumably the same bird was seen again in the same area on the 16th August. On 6th September one was at Furse before being trapped at the Obs that evening as it came into roost. It lingered at Furse until 8th September then what was presumably the same bird reappeared at Furse on 16th–17th September (photographs showed that bird to be ringed). Mid-September also saw two more arrive, with an unringed bird at Easter Lothar on 15th and a brighter (also unringed) bird at Barkland and Da Water from 17th which remained until 3rd October. The latter bird often showed very well, but sadly was injured during its stay, after apparently being attacked by a cat. The fifth record of the autumn was one briefly at the Walli Burn on 10th October.

In addition to the above records, there were further birds which were seen only in flight as they flew over calling. Due to the impossibility of being able to rule out 'eastern' Yellow Wagtails in these situations, these records are not submitted but are included here out of interest. One was near South Light on 23rd August, one was at Gilly Burn on 16th September (presumably the bird that appeared at Barkland the following day), one went south over Double Dyke on 30th September and one circled low over Gilsetter on 1st October before heading south.

Grey Wagtail *Motacilla cinerea*

Scarce spring and autumn migrant; has bred

A quiet year produced just one spring record, at Wirvie on 17th–18th March. Autumn was only slightly better with singles on 2nd, 6th and 28th October and 6th November.

Pied Wagtail *Motacilla alba*

Frequent spring and autumn migrant; occasional breeder

The first *alba* wagtails returned on 16th March, with 11 the next day the maximum for the month as small numbers of Pieds *M.a.yarrellii* and Whites *M.a.alba* were both noted. Passage of both subspecies was regular in small numbers throughout April and May, with a maximum of 22 on 19th April and up to ten Pied and eight Whites. In June, small numbers of Pieds were presumably birds on territories, with a few sightings of Whites until 15th, when there were four. A good breeding season saw four pairs of Pied Wagtails apparently breeding successfully (at Easter Lother, Furse, the Havens and South Harbour), with fledglings noted in early June. Passage *alba* wagtails appeared from 30th July, starting a run of regular sightings. A roost formed in the Obs garden that peaked at 53 on 23rd August then 60 on 6th September, after which sightings continued in much smaller numbers until the last of the year was seen on 18th October.

Richard's Pipit *Anthus richardi*

Scarce autumn migrant; vagrant in spring

A poor year for this jumbo pipit saw just one seen; a bird at Field on 30th September. This is the second consecutive year with just a single record.

Olive-backed Pipit *Anthus hodgsoni

Rare migrant; at least 74 records, 72 in autumn and two in spring

The first of a good autumn for the species was found at North Light (before relocating to North Restengeo) on 1st October. The second was found at Setter on the 17th October, where it was elusive but occasionally showed well as it crept around in long grass. On 7th November one was near Double Dyke before moving to Gilsetter. Two were found within a hundred yards of each other along the Gilly Burn on 10th November with one remaining to the 12th, a relatively late date. Five in a year is the best showing since 2000.

Tree Pipit *Anthus trivialis*

Frequent spring and autumn migrant

The first was on the relatively early date of 16th April, with almost daily sightings throughout the spring until 3rd June. Peak counts were 20 and 15 on 2nd and 9th May respectively. Autumn passage began suddenly with an impressive fall of 71 on 24th August, with 104 recorded the following day, the largest autumn count since 1981. Numbers fell rapidly with up to 19 remaining until 7th September, with one to three from 11th–13th September and 18th September to 1st October.

European White-fronted (left) and Tundra
Bean Goose, November, Shirva © D. Parnaby



'blue' Fulmar, March, Roskillie
© D. Parnaby



Leach's Petrel, August, South Haven
© W. Miles



Pallid Harrier, August, Schoolton
© D. Parnaby



Rough-legged Buzzard, November, Swey
© D. Parnaby



Pallid Harrier, September, Gilsetter
© J. Moss



Corncrake, August, Plantation
© D. Parnaby



Pectoral Sandpiper, September, Easter Locher Water
© A. Barras



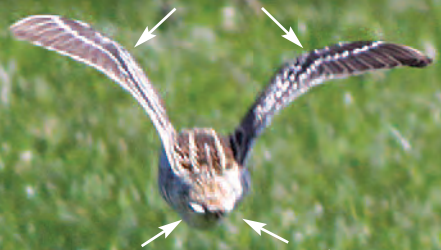
Baird's Sandpiper, September, Obs
© L. Dalziel



Great Snipe, May, Utra
© all W. Miles



Distinctive wing pattern - predominantly dark, with white bands across the median, greater and primary covert tips

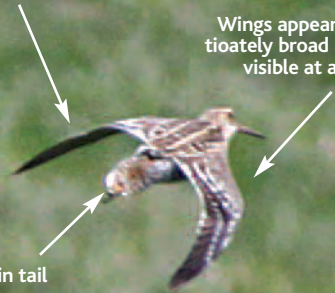


White outer tail feathers visible in flight (appearing much larger and very striking when tail spread e.g. upon landing)

Dark underwings

Wings appearing proportionately broad (white bands visible at all times)

White in tail



Curlew Sandpiper, August, North Light
© D. Parnaby



White-winged Black Tern, July, Setter
© J. Moss



Little Auk, December, North Haven
© D. Parnaby



Red-rumped Swallow, May, Utra
© J. Moss



Collared Flycatcher, May, North Krojeals Geo
© D. Parnaby



'Eastern' Subalpine Warbler, May, Obs
© L. Dalziel



Booted Warbler, August, Kenaby
© A. Barras



Yellow-browed Warbler, September, Obs
© S. Arlow



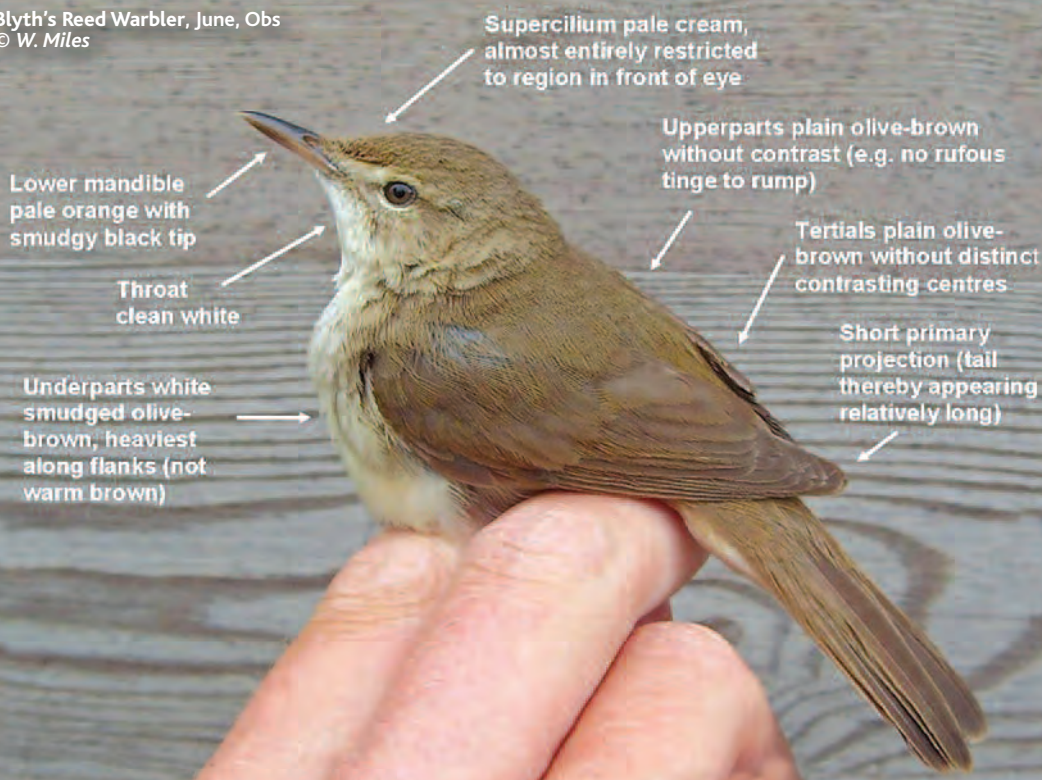
Eastern Olivaceous Warbler, September, Schoolton
© D. Parnaby



Melodious Warbler, September, Shirva
© L. Dalziel



Blyth's Reed Warbler, June, Obs
© W. Miles



Citrine Wagtail, September, Barkland
© L. Dalziel



Common Rosefinch, September, Schoolton
© D. Parnaby



Lesser Redpoll, September, Bull's Park
© S. Arlow



Little Bunting, September, Haa
© S. Arlow



Snow Bunting, May, Buness
© L. Dalziel



Lapland Bunting, April, Gilsetter
© D. Parnaby



Rustic Bunting, May, Obs
© L. Dalziel



Meadow Pipit *Anthus pratensis*

Common spring and autumn migrant; breeds in small numbers

The first of the year returned on 17th March with 74 present by the end of the month. Counts in April were generally between 100 and 150, with 253 on 4th the peak count. May counts were usually around 50, presumably mostly breeding birds, with food-carrying noted from 27th May. Around 100 in early August had increased to a peak of 443 on 29th during a large fall. Counts never dropped below 150 in September with peaks of 456 on 3rd, 382 on 15th and 584 on 30th September. Around 190 in the first week of October had declined to 65 by the end of the month and only small numbers in November included birds moving south.

Rock Pipit *Anthus petrosus*

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

Present all year, with perhaps fewer present in winter, although monitoring numbers is difficult given the birds' habitat preference. Food carrying was noted from 15th May with the first fledged young seen on 3rd June. The highest count of the year was 87 on 22nd August. Single 'Scandinavian' Rock Pipits were recorded on seven dates throughout April with two on 3rd and 30th, then three on 8th and one on 10th May.

Chaffinch *Fringilla coelebs*

Common spring and autumn migrant

Single males were seen on 2nd–4th January, 4th February and 16th–17th March, with sightings becoming more regular from 25th, building to 5 by 30th March. There were records on 20 dates in April peaking at 11 on 3rd, with one to four seen on four further dates until 18th May. Autumn passage was light, with the first on 26th September and numbers building to 16 on 30th and 37 in early October. Although records were daily in October, there were just single figure counts after 11th, with small numbers lingering until 13th November.

Brambling *Fringilla montifringilla*

Common spring and autumn migrant

Spring passage extended from 25th March to 11th May, with two later singles on 21st and 24th May. Up to five were seen in March, with a peak of ten on 24th April. Autumn passage began on 18th September with the first reasonable arrival producing 29 on 1st October. The peak count for the year was 56 on 9th October, with other falls producing 51 on 16th and 38 on 26th October. At least 25 remained into November with the last eight seen on 11th November.

Greenfinch *Chloris chloris*

Regular spring and autumn migrant

One was around the Obs on 1st–3rd January and the only spring migrant appeared at Burkle from 16th–17th March. An unusual midsummer record concerned a juvenile on 26th July, with more expected autumn passage seeing two on 8th October (with one remaining to the 10th) and a group of up to five present around the Obs from 24th October with the last of these lingering until 12th November.

Goldfinch *Carduelis carduelis*

Scarce spring and autumn migrant

One at the Obs on 1st May started the year's records with two at Setter on 8th May the only other spring sighting. Two arrived in the north of the island on 28th October with occasional sightings of one or two around the island until 11th November probably the same wandering pair.

Siskin *Carduelis spinus*

Frequent autumn migrant, less common in spring

After one on 9th and two on 10th March, there were regular sightings later in the month, peaking at ten on 28th March. Up to five were recorded on 16 April dates and one to nine were present on 21 dates in May. A remarkable series of records in June saw up to 12 in the first week, then small numbers regularly throughout the rest of the month, with juveniles noted from 27th and up to nine present by the end of the month. Numbers continued to rise to 15 in early July before sightings petered out, with irregular records until 2nd August. Although summer sightings do occur, such numbers and constant presence are very unusual. Autumn passage began with six on 25th September with regular sightings until 11th October, peaking at 35 on 2nd October. There were singles on three further October dates and 1st November.

Linnet *Carduelis cannabina*

Regular spring migrant, scarce in autumn

An unusual winter record was of one on 4th February. Spring passage began on 26th March, with regular sightings from 3rd April throughout the month, peaking at six on 21st April. In May, birds were recorded on 15 dates peaking on 8th when four were present. One on 15th July was the only other record until regular sightings from 19th September to 6th October, peaking at eight on 30th September.

Twite *Carduelis flavirostris*

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

Maximum monthly count of Twite on Fair Isle 2011:

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
8	n/c	33	59	57	37	n/c	277	407	314	n/c	5

A similar pattern to recent years, although the winter counts were rather low. There appeared to be light spring passage and counts in the summer suggested maybe 12–20 breeding pairs, although there was no formal monitoring of nesting numbers. The first fledgling was noted at the Obs on 6th June. The autumn counts were especially impressive, with large flocks using the crop strips and grassy areas of the island.

Lesser Redpoll *Carduelis cabaret***Scarce migrant in spring, summer and autumn**

Two birds that were trapped and showed measurements and plumage consistent with this species occurred on 21st September, with another on 9th October. There were also regular sightings of redpolls that appeared to be this species from 21st September until 16th October, with at least four individuals involved.

Common Redpoll *Carduelis flammea***Frequent spring and autumn migrant**

A flock of five on 2nd January were the only winter records. Spring passage was light, with records on five March dates, including 'North-western' *C.f.rostrata/islandica* types on 18th, 25th (two) and 30th March. Small numbers were seen in April until regular records of up to four from 22nd until the end of the month. Up to three were seen on several May dates and sporadic sightings in June included five on 3rd and three on 28th, with birds occasionally noted in song. Sightings continued throughout the summer, with singles on 16th–20th and 24th–27th July, with two on 1st and three on 2nd August. A gap then occurred until 23rd September, with numbers rising to 12 by 30th and up to five seen regularly throughout October with singles on 5th–6th and 14th November, all autumn sightings were attributed to the race 'Mealy' Redpoll *C.f.flammea*.

Common Crossbill *Loxia curvirostra***Irregular irruptive summer/autumn migrant**

The first of a light scattering of spring records was around Quoy on 3rd–4th April. One was around the Plantation on 24th–26th April and in May there were singles on 10th (a juvenile trapped in the Plantation) and 18th, with two on 21st, one on 25th then daily sightings from 30th May to 4th June peaking at eight on the latter date. There was another small flurry of sightings from 9th–12th June, with up to six seen, and two on 22nd–23rd June. With no influx during the summer, the next record was four south on 30th September, then sightings on four dates in October, peaking at 11 on 15th and finally a male at Guidicum on 7th November.

Common Rosefinch *Carpodacus erythrinus***Regular spring and autumn migrant**

The first of the year was at the Chalet on 23rd May, with daily counts of up to four during 27th May to 3rd June, including a pair at the Obs for several days, the (immature) male of which was regularly heard singing. A late bird was present around the Obs on 1st–3rd July. An impressive autumn passage began with one on 15th August, then sightings were virtually daily from 19th August until 25th September. There were several waves of arrivals during this time, with six (including the only red male of the year) on 21st August, nine on 26th August and 15 on 3rd September. The latter count was a single flock feeding on oats at Nether Taft and sheltering in Schoolton and is the highest ever autumn count on Fair Isle (and probably the largest flock ever seen in the UK). Two from 13th–20th and one on 22nd

October were the only later birds. A conservative estimate (i.e. assuming birds from the large flock were responsible for other sightings around the island at the same time) suggests eight spring birds and 28 in the autumn.

Bulfinch *Pyrrhula pyrrhula*

Scarce autumn migrant, less regular in spring

The first spring record since 2006 concerned a male that visited several crofts as it headed north across the island on 12th May. There was just one in the autumn, a male near School on 9th November.

Hawfinch *Coccothraustes coccothraustes*

Scarce spring and autumn migrant

An early bird was in the garden at Schoolton on 29th–30th March, followed by further singles (all in the south of the island) on 11th April, 12th May and 22nd May. One seen at the Chalet on 30th September started a run of daily sightings until 6th October peaking at three on 1st October. A bird ringed at the Obs showed the mobility of migrants as it roamed the island, frequently feeding at Haa. A final bird trapped at the Obs on 9th October was thought to be a new arrival. Although pretty much annual on Fair Isle (the last blank year was 1996), a total of eight birds during the year is the best ever showing.

Snow Bunting *Plectrophenax nivalis*

Common spring and autumn migrant, often over-winters

Occasional sightings of up to six from January through to early March probably involved birds overwintering at low densities across the island. From the end of March through April sightings became more frequent, presumably reflecting spring passage, with a maximum of 12 on 25th March. One lingered on Ward Hill until 3rd May and an unusual series of very late spring records involved a male on Bunes from 26th May–3rd June, another present on 1st–2nd June and one by the peat cuttings on 9th June. The first returning birds on 7th September preceded virtually daily sightings through to early November. Peaks during this time included 99 on 30th October and 60 in early November, with small numbers remaining to the end of the year.

Lapland Bunting *Calcarius lapponicus*

Frequent autumn migrant, less common in spring

Following the exceptional autumn passage in 2010, it was no surprise that a strong spring passage followed. The first was in Gilsetter on 6th March, followed by a male in the Obs garden from 18th–21st March. After one or two daily from 2nd–5th April, passage picked up from 10th April, when nine were seen, then peaked at 14 on 29th April. Eight lingered into May with birds seen regularly until 11th then late singles seen from 21st–29th May. An unusual record was one flushed from Pund on 3rd July, the first ever Fair Isle record for this month. Autumn passage began on 1st September, with one on 3rd–4th then daily sightings from 7th September until 30th October. The peak count of 50 occurred on 12th September, with 25–40 for the rest of the month. The peak count in October was 22 on 6th then up to seven lingered until the end of the month.

Yellowhammer *Emberiza citrinella***Regular spring and autumn migrant**

A young male arrived at the Obs in atrocious conditions on 15th October but despite its drenching it lingered there until November. A small arrival on 26th October saw a total of five around the island rising to seven on 30th October and eight on 1st November. There were still three on 3rd November, but none were recorded after this date.

Rustic Bunting** *Emberiza rusticaScarce spring and autumn migrant; 127 previous records**

A female or first-summer male was found in the Quoy vegetable patch on 21st May. The next day it had relocated to the Havens and then the Obs garden where it showed exceptionally well until 25th May.

Little Bunting *Emberiza pusilla***Scarce autumn migrant, rare in spring (27 previous spring records)**

The first of the autumn was in the Bull's Park crop on 18th September, with records from Walli Burn on 19th, Utra on 20th, 22nd–23rd and 26th, Schoolton on 28th–29th and Haa on 30th presumed to be the same wandering individual. On 30th September there were also singles at Hjukni Geo and the Obs. Presumed lingering birds were recorded on 1st–4th (with two on 2nd–3rd) October. A new bird was on Dronger on 14th October. A minimum of four in the autumn was a reasonable showing.

Reed Bunting *Emberiza schoeniclus***Frequent spring and autumn migrant**

A female was in the Meadow Burn on 16th March with a male at the Obs on 17th–25th March. In early April up to three were seen regularly, then from 23rd April to 25th May records were daily peaking at 17 on 2nd May, although no more than three were present after 11th May. Autumn passage began with up to five on 9th–18th October then records from 25th October to 22nd November, peaking at eight on 28th October. From November, all records referred to the same two or three birds lingering in the Nether Taft oat crop.

Black-headed Bunting** *Emberiza melanocephalaVagrant; 24 previous records**

A smart male was found at the Vaadal on 3rd July but promptly vanished. It remained hidden until late on 5th July when it was found going into roost at the garden at Schoolton before disappearing again until 12th July when it again appeared at Schoolton. The following day it was seen at the Obs, before roosting at Schoolton again on 15th–17th July. Only the second record since three in 2001.

Category E

Bar-headed Goose *Anser indicus*

One of these frequent escapes from captivity was by the base of Malcolm's Head on 14th June.

Ringling report

Will Miles

A total of 3494 birds of 95 species were ringed during 2011. Seabirds contributed little to this total (with the exception of storm-petrels) because Shag, skua, Kittiwake and auk chick mortality was extremely high in 2011, even by recent poor standards, and adult Shags, Kittiwakes and auks were often absent from the colonies, presumably due to food shortages causing early breeding failures or necessitating extra time away foraging. As usual, the Helgoland Traps accounted for the vast majority of passerines ringed. Between late March and early November they were run daily, weather permitting, with standardised morning and afternoon trap rounds from mid-April to mid-June and from mid-August to 31st October (the peak migration periods). Table 1 shows the ten most commonly ringed species in 2011.

Table 1. The ten most commonly ringed species on Fair Isle in 2011, with species totals (2010 totals for comparison).

Species	2011	2010
Storm Petrel	659	153
Starling	527	858
Blackbird	419	142
Wheatear	251	528
Blackcap	186	73
Meadow Pipit	163	220
Puffin	143	139
Redwing	137	52
Twite	128	135
Great Skua	66	267

Two additions were made to the Fair Isle ringing list in 2011: a Lesser Scaup (the first record of this species on Fair Isle) and a Little Gull. In an excellent year for Blyth's Reed Warbler and Hawfinch sightings, four Blyth's Reed Warblers were caught (for identification purposes), becoming the 15th-18th to be ringed on the isle, and three Hawfinches trapped, our 26th-28th ringed birds. Equally unusual (in a local context) was Fair Isle's 2nd Carrion Crow to be ringed; a bird trapped behind the observatory by researchers during a morning Starling-trapping session, using the 'Axel' crow trap, built by Bert Axel. Other interesting ringing records in 2011 included our 7th Citrine Wagtail, 8th Greater Scaup, 32nd and 33rd Subalpine Warblers (a male of the eastern race *Sylvia cantillans albirostrata* on 30th April and a male of the western race *S.c.cantillans* on 31st May), our 100th Leach's Petrel, and a colour-ringed first-year Common Rosefinch seen in September, which had been ringed nine days previously in Sweden (for details of recoveries and controls see below).

Table 2. Numbers of birds ringed on Fair Isle in 2011, ringing recoveries/controls received in 2011, and cumulative totals since 1948

Species	Ringed as:		Total 2011	Total 1948-2011	Recoveries/controls	
	Ad / Juv	Pullus			2011	1948-2011
Whooper Swan	1	-	1	51	-	8
Bean Goose	-	-	-	1	-	-
Pink-footed Goose	-	-	-	18	-	1
White-fronted Goose	-	-	-	3	-	1
Greylag Goose	1	-	1	101	2	16
Barnacle Goose	-	-	-	4	-	-
Shelduck	-	-	-	5	-	-
Wigeon	-	-	-	57	-	5
Teal	-	-	-	86	-	4
Mallard	-	-	-	17	-	1
Pintail	-	-	-	2	-	1
Shoveler	-	-	-	1	-	-
Pochard	-	-	-	3	-	-
Ring-necked Duck	-	-	-	1	-	-
Tufted Duck	-	-	-	25	-	-
Scaup	1	-	1	8	-	-
Lesser Scaup	1	-	1	1	-	-
Eider	-	-	-	172	-	1
Long-tailed Duck	-	-	-	19	-	1
Velvet Scoter	-	-	-	2	-	-
Goldeneye	-	-	-	23	-	1
Red-breasted Merganser	-	-	-	3	-	-
Goosander	-	-	-	3	-	1
Quail	-	-	-	8	-	-
Red-throated Diver	-	-	-	1	-	-
Fulmar	13	27	40	17692	2	182
Storm Petrel	659	-	659	32091	9	1253
Leach's Petrel	6	-	6	105	-	3
Gannet	-	-	-	643	4	17
Cormorant	-	-	-	7	-	-
Shag	1	1	2	23721	2	591
Grey Heron	1	-	1	23	-	-
Little Grebe	-	-	-	10	-	-
Great Crested Grebe	-	-	-	1	-	-
Red-necked Grebe	-	-	-	1	-	-
Slavonian Grebe	-	-	-	3	-	-
Marsh Harrier	-	-	-	1	-	-
Hen Harrier	-	-	-	2	-	-
Goshawk	-	-	-	2	-	-
Sparrowhawk	8	-	8	420	-	25
Kestrel	-	-	-	53	-	8
Red-footed Falcon	-	-	-	1	-	-
Merlin	1	-	1	199	-	12
Peregrine	-	-	-	6	-	1

Species	Ringed as:		Total 2011	Total 1948-2011	Recoveries/controls	
	Ad / Juv	Pullus			2011	1948-2011
Water Rail	1	-	1	336	-	3
Spotted Crake	-	-	-	19	-	-
Little Crake	-	-	-	1	-	-
Baillon's Crake	-	-	-	1	-	-
Corncrake	1	-	1	44	-	2
Moorhen	1	-	1	105	-	3
Coot	-	-	-	15	-	1
Great Bustard	-	-	-	1	-	-
Oystercatcher	2	5	7	1577	-	73
Little Ringed Plover	-	-	-	1	-	-
Ringed Plover	9	-	9	794	-	6
Dotterel	-	-	-	4	-	-
Golden Plover	-	-	-	27	-	-
Grey Plover	-	-	-	1	-	-
Lapwing	-	-	-	375	-	6
Knot	-	-	-	109	-	4
Sanderling	1	-	1	123	-	1
Western 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	-	-	-	193	-	1
Dunlin	1	-	1	620	-	8
Buff-breasted Sandpiper	-	-	-	1	-	-
Ruff	-	-	-	41	-	1
Jack Snipe	1	-	1	154	-	3
Snipe	4	4	8	567	-	4
Great Snipe	-	-	-	2	-	-
Woodcock	29	-	29	537	-	25
Black-tailed Godwit	-	-	-	1	-	-
Bar-tailed Godwit	-	-	-	9	-	2
Whimbrel	-	-	-	18	-	-
Curlew	-	3	3	214	-	6
Common Sandpiper	-	-	-	69	-	1
Green Sandpiper	1	-	1	63	-	1
Spotted Redshank	-	-	-	3	-	-
Greenshank	-	-	-	15	-	-
Wood Sandpiper	-	-	-	19	-	-
Redshank	1	-	1	293	-	3
Turnstone	-	-	-	111	-	-
Red-necked Phalarope	-	-	-	5	-	-
Grey Phalarope	-	-	-	3	-	-
Pomarine Skua	-	-	-	1	-	-
Arctic Skua	-	-	-	4056	-	71

Species	Ringed as:		Total 2011	Total 1948-2011	Recoveries/controls	
	Ad / Juv	Pullus			2011	1948-2011
Great Skua	1	65	66	3793	1	58
Kittiwake	8	-	8	7183	-	39
Black-headed Gull	-	-	-	51	-	2
Little Gull	1	-	1	1	-	-
Common Gull	-	-	-	313	-	3
Lesser Black-backed Gull	-	-	-	1466	-	35
Herring Gull	-	5	5	4565	1	102
Iceland Gull	-	-	-	1	-	-
Glaucous Gull	-	-	-	40	-	1
Great Black-backed Gull	1	2	3	2870	1	114
Common Tern	-	-	-	485	-	3
Arctic Tern	-	-	-	11882	-	39
Guillemot	7	-	7	37843	1	1105
Razorbill	20	2	22	11809	1	291
Black Guillemot	-	-	-	1670	-	19
Little Auk	-	-	-	14	-	-
Puffin	113	30	143	13998	-	34
Rock Dove	4	-	4	177	-	-
Wood Pigeon	1	-	1	76	-	2
Collared Dove	3	-	3	412	-	6
Turtle Dove	-	-	-	82	-	2
Cuckoo	2	-	2	111	-	1
Scop's Owl	-	-	-	2	-	-
Snowy Owl	-	-	-	1	-	1
Long-eared Owl	6	-	6	272	-	14
Short-eared Owl	-	-	-	18	-	-
Nightjar	-	-	-	6	-	-
Swift	-	-	-	19	-	1
Hoopoe	-	-	-	3	-	-
Wryneck	7	-	7	257	-	-
Great Spotted Woodpecker	-	-	-	29	-	-
Golden Oriole	-	-	-	8	-	-
Brown Shrike	-	-	-	1	-	-
Isabelline Shrike	-	-	-	2	-	-
Red-backed Shrike	-	-	-	357	-	-
Lesser Grey Shrike	-	-	-	7	-	-
Great Grey Shrike	2	-	2	118	-	1
Woodchat Shrike	-	-	-	13	-	-
Jackdaw	-	-	-	16	-	-
Rook	-	-	-	10	-	-
Hooded Crow	-	-	-	49	-	-
Carriion Crow	1	-	1	2	-	-
Raven	-	-	-	29	-	-
Goldcrest	11	-	11	1941	-	3
Firecrest	-	-	-	2	-	-
Blue Tit	-	-	-	2	-	-
Great Tit	-	-	-	14	-	-

Species	Ringed as:		Total 2011	Total 1948-2011	Recoveries/controls	
	Ad / Juv	Pullus			2011	1948-2011
Coal Tit	-	-	-	1	-	-
Short-toed Lark	-	-	-	8	-	-
Woodlark	-	-	-	3	-	-
Skylark	1	-	1	1420	-	3
Shorelark	-	-	-	5	-	-
Sand Martin	-	-	-	8	-	-
Swallow	3	5	8	318	-	2
House Martin	-	-	-	150	-	1
Greenish Warbler	-	-	-	25	-	-
Arctic Warbler	1	-	1	35	-	-
Pallas's Warbler	-	-	-	4	-	-
Yellow-browed Warbler	11	-	11	182	-	-
Hume's Warbler	-	-	-	1	-	-
Dusky Warbler	-	-	-	7	-	-
Radde's Warbler	-	-	-	1	-	-
Bonelli's Warbler	-	-	-	2	-	-
Wood Warbler	2	-	2	117	-	-
Chiffchaff	52	-	52	1656	-	5
Willow Warbler	63	-	63	4192	-	7
Blackcap	186	-	186	6297	-	26
Garden Warbler	26	-	26	3882	1	6
Barred Warbler	10	-	10	463	-	1
Lesser Whitethroat	10	-	10	876	-	1
Whitethroat	8	-	8	1081	-	-
Subalpine Warbler	2	-	2	33	-	-
Sardinian Warbler	-	-	-	1	-	-
Pallas's Grasshopper Warbler	-	-	-	13	-	-
Lanceolated Warbler	-	-	-	39	-	-
Grasshopper Warbler	6	-	6	156	-	-
River Warbler	-	-	-	9	-	-
Savi's Warbler	-	-	-	4	-	-
Thick-billed Warbler	-	-	-	2	-	-
Booted Warbler	-	-	-	8	-	-
Syke's Warbler	-	-	-	2	-	-
Eastern Olivaceous Warbler	-	-	-	2	-	-
Icterine Warbler	1	-	1	134	-	-
Melodious Warbler	-	-	-	13	-	-
Aquatic Warbler	-	-	-	25	-	-
Sedge Warbler	22	-	22	598	-	1
Paddyfield Warbler	-	-	-	10	-	1
Blyth's Reed Warbler	4	-	4	18	-	1
Marsh Warbler	3	-	3	155	-	-
Reed Warbler	5	-	5	346	-	1
Great Reed Warbler	-	-	-	8	-	-
Waxwing	-	-	-	144	-	1
Treecreeper	-	-	-	1	-	-
Wren	7	-	7	1006	-	-

Species	Ringed as:		Total 2011	Total 1948-2011	Recoveries/controls	
	Ad / Juv	Pullus			2011	1948-2011
Starling	209	318	527	30522	3	204
Rose-coloured Starling	-	-	-	3	-	-
Daurian Starling	-	-	-	1	-	-
Dipper	-	-	-	17	-	-
White's Thrush	-	-	-	1	-	-
Hermit Thrush	-	-	-	1	-	-
Grey-cheeked Thrush	-	-	-	2	-	-
Ring Ouzel	7	-	7	533	-	9
Blackbird	419	-	419	25087	-	346
Eye-browed Thrush	-	-	-	1	-	1
Dusky Thrush	-	-	-	1	-	-
Black-throated Thrush	-	-	-	2	-	-
Fieldfare	-	-	-	669	-	1
Song Thrush	33	-	33	3223	-	32
Redwing	137	-	137	9895	-	75
Mistle Thrush	-	-	-	22	-	-
Brown Flycatcher	-	-	-	1	-	-
Spotted Flycatcher	9	-	9	856	-	3
Robin	61	-	61	9548	-	41
Rufous-tailed Robin	-	-	-	1	-	-
Thrush Nightingale	-	-	-	35	-	-
Nightingale	-	-	-	30	-	-
Bluethroat	3	-	3	314	-	2
Siberian Rubythroat	-	-	-	2	-	-
Red-flanked Bluetail	-	-	-	2	-	-
Red-breasted Flycatcher	-	-	-	62	-	-
Collared Flycatcher	-	-	-	1	-	-
Pied Flycatcher	6	-	6	1015	-	-
Black Redstart	-	-	-	163	-	-
Redstart	9	-	9	1912	-	1
Rock Thrush	-	-	-	1	-	-
Whinchat	9	-	9	693	-	2
Stonechat	-	-	-	62	-	-
Wheatear	148	103	251	18817	5	83
Pied Wheatear	-	-	-	1	-	-
Black-eared Wheatear	-	-	-	3	-	-
Dunnock	29	-	29	2780	-	10
House Sparrow	45	-	45	1911	-	4
Tree Sparrow	-	-	-	121	-	1
Yellow Wagtail	-	-	-	11	-	-
Citrine Wagtail	1	-	1	7	-	-
Grey Wagtail	-	-	-	59	-	1
Pied/White Wagtail	34	-	34	943	-	5
Richard's Pipit	-	-	-	12	-	-
Blyth's Pipit	-	-	-	2	-	-
Tawny Pipit	-	-	-	3	-	-
Olive-backed Pipit	-	-	-	9	-	-

Species	Ringed as:		Total 2011	Total 1948-2011	Recoveries/controls	
	Ad / Juv	Pullus			2011	1948-2011
Tree Pipit	5	-	5	678	-	-
Pechora Pipit	-	-	-	10	-	-
Meadow Pipit	135	28	163	11861	-	45
Red-throated Pipit	-	-	-	9	-	-
Rock Pipit	12	-	12	10007	-	30
Chaffinch	7	-	7	3373	-	15
Brambling	33	-	33	4113	-	20
Greenfinch	1	-	1	537	1	33
Citril Finch	-	-	-	1	-	-
Goldfinch	1	-	1	23	-	1
Siskin	21	-	21	625	-	1
Linnet	-	-	-	203	-	5
Twite	128	-	128	6868	6	34
Lesser Redpoll	4	-	4	31	-	-
Common Redpoll	7	-	7	869	-	6
Arctic Redpoll	-	-	-	23	-	-
Two-barred Crossbill	-	-	-	7	-	-
Common Crossbill	3	-	3	565	-	2
Parrot Crossbill	-	-	-	37	-	-
Pallas's Rosefinch	-	-	-	1	-	-
Scarlet Rosefinch	13	-	13	262	1	2
Bullfinch	-	-	-	309	-	-
Hawfinch	3	-	3	28	-	1
Snow Bunting	1	-	1	677	-	3
Lapland Bunting	-	-	-	100	-	-
Savannah Sparrow	-	-	-	2	-	-
Song Sparrow	-	-	-	3	-	-
White-crowned Sparrow	-	-	-	1	-	-
White-throated Sparrow	-	-	-	1	-	-
Pine Bunting	-	-	-	2	-	-
Yellowhammer	1	-	1	73	-	-
Ortolan Bunting	-	-	-	20	-	-
Cretzchmar's Bunting	-	-	-	1	-	-
Yellow-browed Bunting	-	-	-	1	-	-
Rustic Bunting	-	-	-	17	-	1
Chestnut-eared Bunting	-	-	-	1	-	-
Little Bunting	1	-	1	39	-	1
Yellow-breasted Bunting	-	-	-	6	-	-
Reed Bunting	5	-	5	525	-	3
Pallas's Reed Bunting	-	-	-	2	-	-
Black-headed Bunting	-	-	-	4	-	-
Corn Bunting	-	-	-	4	-	-
Red-headed Bunting	-	-	-	5	-	-
Chestnut Bunting	-	-	-	2	-	-
Tennessee Warbler	-	-	-	2	-	-
Blackpoll Warbler	-	-	-	1	-	-
Grand totals	2896	598	3494	363030	41	5315

Ringling recoveries & controls reported to Fair Isle Bird Observatory in 2011

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

Order of data for each record:

Ring number – age/condition of bird - dates of records - locations (with distance (km), direction (°) and duration (days) between ringing and recovery/control)

Age: The numbers given are EURING age codes and do not represent years. Definitions are as follows:

- 1 pullus (nestling or chick)
- 2 fully grown, but year of hatching quite unknown
- 3 definitely hatched during calendar year of ringing
- 4 hatched before calendar year of ringing, but exact year unknown
- 5 definitely hatched during calendar year previous to year of ringing
- 6 hatched before calendar year previous to year of ringing, but exact year unknown
- 7 definitely hatched in the calendar year 2 years previous to the year of ringing
- 8 hatched three or more calendar years previous to year of ringing, 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

Listed below are ringing recoveries and controls for which details were reported to Fair Isle in 2011 by the BTO or, rarely, other national ringing schemes.

Bewick's Swan

A neck-collared individual was seen on the isle on 16.02.2011 that had been ringed in Scherveweg, Wieringerwerf, Noord-Holland, The Netherlands on 30.12.2009 (52°49.53'N, 05°05.50'E). This bird was on the Ouse Washes in Norfolk in January 2010, before being recorded in Latvia through October 2010, The Netherlands (Flevoland) in November 2010, The Netherlands (Noord-Holland), Germany (Niedersachsen) and then again in The Netherlands (Noord-Holland) through December 2010, then in The Netherlands (Zeeland) and on the Ouse Washes (Norfolk) in January 2011, then back in The Netherlands (Zeeland) on 10th February 2011, before being seen on Fair Isle on the 16th!

Whooper Swan

A darvic-ringed adult was seen on Fair Isle at Setter on 11/10/2011. It had been ringed at WWT Martin Mere, Lancashire (53°37.50'N, 02°52.02'E) on 10/02/2010 and was at WWT Welney, Ouse Washes, Norfolk (52°31.50'N, 00°16.98'E) during the winter of 2010/11.

Greylag Goose

5201554	4	20/10/08	Fair Isle, Shetland
	+	04/09/10	Strjugsstadir, Langidalur, Austur-Hunavatns, Iceland (1154km, 306°, 684 days)
5201557	3	20/10/08	Fair Isle, Shetland
	+	21/08/11	Brekka, Nupasveit, Nordur-Thingeyjar, Iceland (1059km, 316°, 1035 days)

Fulmar

FP18593	1	02/08/09	Fair Isle, Shetland
	XF	23/04/11	Husmoderstranden, Nordjyllands Amt, Denmark (706km, 108°, 629 days)
FC71840	1	27/07/96	Fair Isle, Shetland
	XF	27/10/11	Foroyar Banki, Faroe Islands (360km, 279°, 5570 days)

Storm Petrel

2391442	4	12/08/90	Fair Isle, Shetland
	R	10/06/10	Inishirahull, Donegal, Ireland (567km, 217°, 7242 days)
2509391	4	01/08/99	Fair Isle, Shetland
	R	19/06/11	Priest Island, Highland (285km, 232°, 4340 days)
2509182	4	30/07/99	Fair Isle, Shetland
	R	17/06/11	Priest Island, Highland (285km, 232°, 4340 days)
2552701	4	09/08/10	Fair Isle, Shetland
	R	11/08/10	Fitful Head, Shetland (42km, 22°, 2 days)
2552456	4	05/08/10	Fair Isle, Shetland
	R	20/08/11	Copinsay, Orkney (94km, 220°, 380 days)
2552549	4	27/07/11	Fair Isle, Shetland
	R	04/08/11	Birsay, Orkney (104km, 243°, 8 days)
2552921	4	31/07/11	Fair Isle, Shetland
	R	15/08/11	Tres Ness, Sanday, Orkney (61km, 235°, 15 days)
2552923	4	31/07/11	Fair Isle, Shetland
	R	04/08/11	Birsay, Orkney (104km, 243°, 4 days)
2552954	4	07/08/11	Fair Isle, Shetland
	R	23/08/11	Tres Ness, Sanday, Orkney (61km, 235°, 16 days)

A series of records showing typical movements around the north-east Atlantic of this tiny, yet relatively very long-lived species.

Gannet

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

Shag

1339456	1	07/07/97	Fair Isle, Shetland
	XF	25/03/11	Mangaster, Shetland (99km, 8°, 5009 days)
1417923	0	06/07/10	Fair Isle, Shetland
	X	11/08/11	North Hill, Papa Westray, Orkney (73km, 256°, 401 days)

Sanderling

NS99769	4	06/11/10	Sanday, Orkney
	VV	17/07/11	Fair Isle, Shetland (66km, 235°, 253 days)

Arctic Skua

A bird ringed on Fair Isle as a pullus on 27th June 1995 was found dead on the isle on 5th June 2011 (5822 days).

Great Skua

HT78376	1	13/07/06	Fair Isle, Shetland
	SR	29/12/09	Fiers d'Ars, Ars-en-Re, Charente-Maritime, France (1480km, 180°, 1232 days)

A bird ringed on Fair Isle as a pullus on 12th July 2007 was found dead on the isle on 8th September 2011 (1519 days).

Herring Gull

GR11005	1	03/07/10	Fair Isle, Shetland
	R	08/07/11	Lynn, Kirkwall, Orkney (98km, 230°, 370 days)

Great Black-backed Gull

MA22401	1	03/07/10	Fair Isle, Shetland
	XF	01/01/11	Alnwick, Northumberland (456km, 181°, 182 days)

Guillemot

X45989	1	22/06/96	Fair Isle, Shetland
	X	26/06/11	Sarclett, Wick, Highland (155km, 214°, 5482 days)

A bird of at least 28 years old, ringed on Fair Isle as an adult (age code 4) on 19th June 1980, was found dead on the isle on 16th April 2008 (10163 days). Another, of 15 years old, ringed on Fair Isle as a pullus on 22nd June 1996, was found dead on the isle on 26th June 2011 (5482 days).

Razorbill

M79037	8	27/06/94	Fair Isle, Shetland
	+	20/01/07	Tangafjordur, Streymoy, Faroe Islands (401km, 316°, 4590 days)

An unusual recovery of a Razorbill that had been shot, presumably for food.

Puffin

A 21 year old Puffin, ringed on Fair Isle as a pullus on 21st July 1990, was found dead on the isle on 5th June 2011 (7624 days). Another, of at least 13 years old, ringed on Fair Isle as an adult (age code 8) on 16th July 1998, was found dead on the isle on 11th July 2011 (4743 days).

Rock Dove

A bird ringed on Fair Isle as an adult (age code 4) on 13th May 2010 was found dead on the isle on 6th May 2011 (358 days).

Chiffchaff

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

Garden Warbler

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

Starling

LB75645	3J	14/06/10	Fair Isle, Shetland
	VV	26/09/10	Out Skerries, Shetland (110km, 27°, 104 days)
LB75598	3J	26/06/10	Fair Isle, Shetland
	VV	27/12/10	Scalloway, Shetland (68km, 17°, 184 days)
LB75646	3J	15/06/10	Fair Isle, Shetland
	X	04/09/11	Clumlie, Shetland (47km, 25°, 446 days)

A series of relatively short-distance movements, similar to most previous movement records of Fair Isle Starlings. A bird ringed on Fair Isle as a juvenile on 27th September 2009 was found dead on the isle on 3rd April 2011 (553 days). Another bird ringed on Fair Isle as a pullus on 26th May 2007 was found dead on the isle on 28th April 2011 (1433 days). A bird ringed on the isle as a juvenile on 4th June 2003 was found dead on the island on 25th July 2011 (2973 days).

Wheatear

X713558	4 F	21/06/10	Fair Isle, Shetland
	VV	28/08/10	Dungeness, Kent (974km, 171°, 68 days)
TP38815	1	14/06/10	Fair Isle, Shetland
	VV	16/09/10	South Shields, Tyne & Wear (506km, 179°, 63 days)
TP38740	1	09/06/10	Fair Isle, Shetland
	VV	02/10/10	Princetown, Devon (1012km, 189°, 115 days)

X713578	5 M	05/07/10	Fair Isle, Shetland
	VV	03/04/11	Barns Ness, East Lothian (398km, 187°, 272 days)
V683104	3J	06/07/08	Fair Isle, Shetland
	VV	22/08/11	Rame Head, near Torpoint, Cornwall (1039km, 190°, 1142 days)

A good number of records and range of movements within the UK, all of birds colour ringed during a PhD study carried out on Fair Isle between 2008 and 2011.

Greenfinch

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

Twite

V480940	3 M	12/12/09	Dale, Costa, Evie, Orkney
	R	08/08/11	Fair Isle, Shetland (101km, 63°, 482 days)
X713239	5 M	01/04/10	Fair Isle, Shetland
	R	16/01/11	Stromness, Orkney (115km, 236°, 290 days)
X713340	4 F	30/04/10	Fair Isle, Shetland
	R	27/01/11	Stromness, Orkney (115km, 236°, 272 days)
X713196	5 F	19/04/10	Fair Isle, Shetland
	R	15/03/11	Dale, Costa, Evie, Orkney (101km, 243°, 330 days)
X249888	5 F	11/04/11	Fair Isle, Shetland
	R	18/03/11	Dale, Costa, Evie, Orkney (101km, 243°, 341 days)
X713196	5 F	19/04/10	Fair Isle, Shetland
	R	18/03/11	Dale, Costa, Evie, Orkney (101km, 243°, 333 days)
X713340	4 F	30/04/10	Fair Isle, Shetland
	R	24/03/11	Stromness, Orkney (115km, 236°, 328 days)

This is a typical series of records; the vast majority of Fair Isle Twite controls are of Fair Isle birds wintering on Orkney or of Orkney-ringed birds on Fair Isle in the summer.

Common Rosefinch

X712648	4	03/06/11	Fair Isle, Shetland
	R	20/06/11	Kilnsea Clays, East Riding of Yorkshire (668km, 171°, 17 days)
2KJ87363	3	25/08/11	Ringenas Skjutfalt, Halmstad, Halland, Sweden
	VV	03/09/11	Fair Isle, Shetland (897km, 297°, 9 days)

Two exceptional records: one a north to south movement in 17 days within the UK in spring, the other an international movement in 9 days of a colour ringed bird (L=Orange/Green R=metal 2KJ87363).

Fair Isle's seabirds in 2011

Will Miles

Overview: 2011 was the worst season on record for seabirds breeding on Fair Isle, yet another very poor year for most of the 12 species annually monitored. Declines in population size since 2010 were recorded for every species except Fulmars and Gannets. Declines in productivity since 2010 (or, in some cases, zero breeding attempts now for two or more years running) were recorded for every species except Razorbills and Puffins. Widespread chick starvation was evident throughout the breeding season, with many, many tiny corpses littering the colonies at all times during the pre-fledging period. Seabird monitoring has been carried out systematically on Fair Isle since 1986 and long-term, particularly severe population declines have been observed for Kittiwakes, Shags and auks - trends which continued in 2011. The one seabird consistently doing well breeding on Fair Isle is the Gannet.

Fulmar: A decline of 19.6% was recorded at the population monitoring plots in 2011 (303 AOS), in comparison with 2010 (377 AOS). The general long-term trend at the monitoring plots has been a gradual decline; however, the whole-island census in 2011 showed there to have been a slight increase in numbers by 6.25% since 2006, from 27,896 AOS (2006) to 29,640 AOS (2011). Fulmar breeding success on the monitoring plots declined slightly (-3.7%) between 2010 and 2011, from 0.54 to 0.52 chicks fledged per AOS.

Gannet: In comparison with 2010, the island population of Gannets increased by 2.95% in 2011, from 3968 to 4085 AON. This was in agreement with the long-term trend, which has been for numbers to increase steadily. Gannet productivity in 2011 was 0.72 chicks fledged per AON, representing a slight decline of -6.5% since 2010, when productivity was 0.77. The 2011 figure is in line with the trend for productivity values to remain relatively high during the last ten years (>0.6).

Shag: Long-term whole-island monitoring and plot counts have shown that the island's population of Shags has declined considerably since 1969. The plot count for 2011 was the lowest on record: just 20 apparently occupied nests, a decline of 59.2% since 2010 (49 AON). Shag productivity in 2011 was considerably lower than in 2010 (0.11 and 0.86 chicks fledged per AON respectively, a decline of 87.2%). The 2011 productivity value is the second lowest on record, after productivity of 0.03 was recorded in 2008. The long-term trend since 1986 has been a gradual decline in productivity, with particularly poor breeding success recorded recently in 2008, 2009 and 2011.

Arctic Skua: The numbers of Arctic Skua pairs (AOT) dropped by 58.6% in 2011 (29 AOT) in comparison with 2010 (70 AOT). The long-term trend in the population has been a gradual and slight decline with occasional fluctuations. In 2011, no Arctic Skua

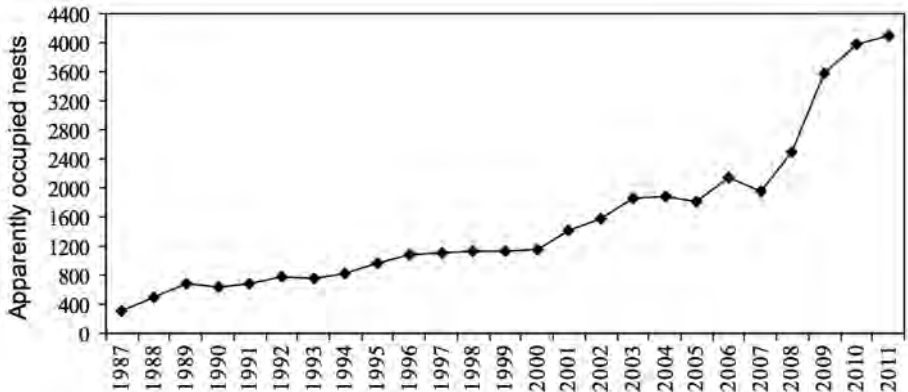


Fig 1. Population change of Gannets on Fair Isle, 1987–2011 (whole-island counts of apparently occupied nests).

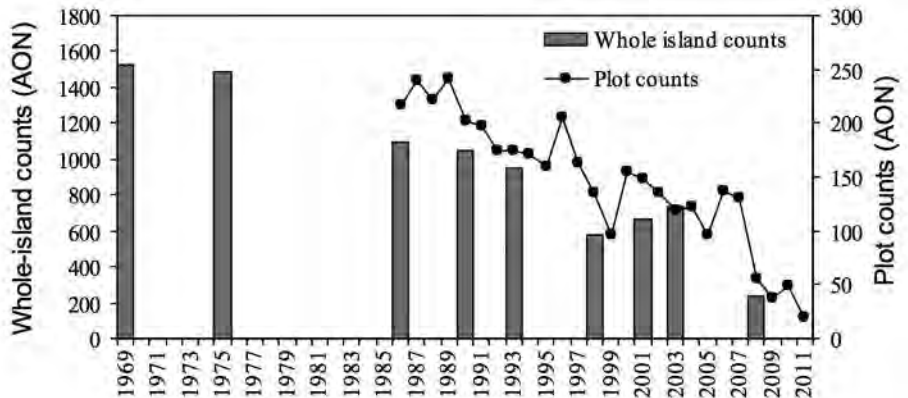


Fig 2. Population change of Shags on Fair Isle, 1969–2011 (whole-island counts and plot counts of apparently occupied nests).

chicks fledged. In the last 23 years, this situation has only occurred three times ever before. With the exception of 2006, when productivity was 0.82, breeding success has been consistently low during the last decade, never rising above 0.3.

Great Skua: The number of Great Skua pairs (AOT) declined by 18.9% in 2011 (227 AOT) compared with 2010 (280 AOT). This decline is at odds with the long-term pattern of population increase, which was particularly rapid between 2004 and 2008. Breeding success was 59.7% lower in 2011 (0.25 chicks fledged per AOT) than in 2010 (0.62 chicks fledged per AOT). In only five out of the last twenty-three years has Great Skua productivity been less than 0.3; these five years were all in the last decade: 2002, 2003, 2004, 2005 and 2011. Recent increases in the population of Great Skuas on Fair Isle have not been mirrored by breeding success.

Kittiwake: Since 1987, Kittiwakes have severely declined on Fair Isle. Plot counts in 2011 (81 AON) revealed a decline of 52.4% compared with 2010 (170 AON). Similarly, the 2011 whole-island count of 1438 AON equated to a 46.5% decline since 2008 (2688 AON). The whole-island count and plot counts in 2011 were the lowest on record. In 2011, no Kittiwake chicks fledged at the productivity monitoring plots. This has occurred four times previously since 1986: three times in the last decade (2003, 2004 and 2008) and in 1990.

Arctic Tern: In 2011, just 9 apparently incubating adults were recorded on Fair Isle, a decline of 97.6% since 2010 (377 AIA). However, breeding numbers have fluctuated greatly since 1987, likely due to aspects of the species' breeding ecology: Arctic Terns often prospect for nest sites in large, cohesive flocks, breed colonially, and do not always nest at the same site every year. Productivity was zero in 2011, for the eighth year in the last decade. Breeding success for this species since 1988 has been highly variable, possibly due to variable food availability. In 2011, from May onwards, many adults were seen hawking for insects over the meadows on Fair Isle, which suggests foraging for fish was difficult and that fish prey of suitable size may have been particularly scarce.

Common Tern: In 2011, for the sixth year running, Common Terns did not attempt to breed on Fair Isle. Common Terns last bred successfully in 2005, when three nests fledged three chicks.

Guillemot: Plot counts showed a decline of 29.2 % in numbers of Guillemots in 2011 (995 individuals) compared with 2010 (1405 individuals). This was in agreement with the gradual decline seen from plot counts and whole-island counts since 1999. No Guillemot chicks fledged from the productivity monitoring plots in 2011. Within the period of monitoring (1988 - 2011), productivity has previously been zero chicks fledged per AIA in only two years: 2004 and 2008. During a 24hr watch, the number of occasions when fish were observed being brought back by adults was 77.9% less in 2011 (27 return flights with fish) than in 2010 (122). Sandeels were the most common prey-type seen in 2011 (51.9% of fish brought back were this species), then Clupeids (33.3%) and then Gadoids (14.8%). By comparison, in 2010 Clupeids were the most common prey-type (45.9%), then Sandeels (35.2%) and then Gadoids (10.6%). The majority of fish brought back were 1 to 1.5 times the length of the bill in 2011 (59.3%), as in 2010 (63.1%). Daily chick feeding frequency was found to be 43.4% lower in 2011 (1.59 feeds per chick per day) than in 2010 (2.81).

Razorbill: Razorbill numbers at the population monitoring plot had declined by 17.8% in 2011 (23 individuals) compared with 2010 (28 individuals). Whole-island counts since 1988 have shown a sustained, gradual decline in the island population. Razorbill productivity in 2011 was low (0.02 chicks fledged per egg laid), although higher than in 2010 when no chicks fledged. Since 2003, productivity has been consistently low (<0.5).

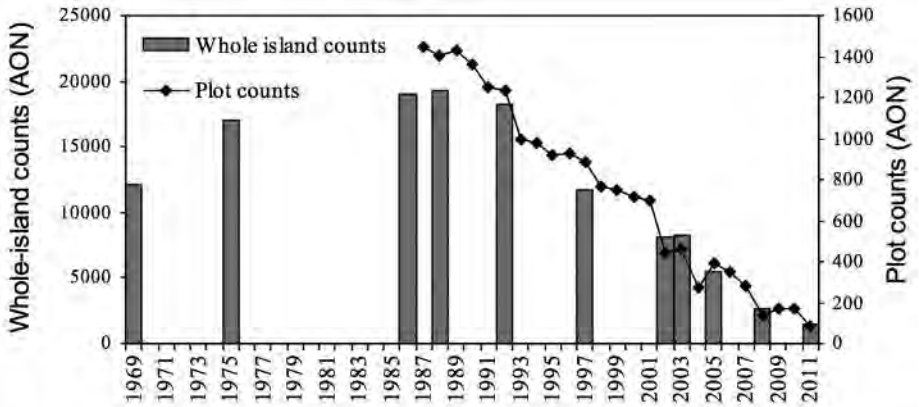


Fig 3. Population change of Kittiwakes on Fair Isle, 1969–2011 (whole island counts and plot counts of AON).

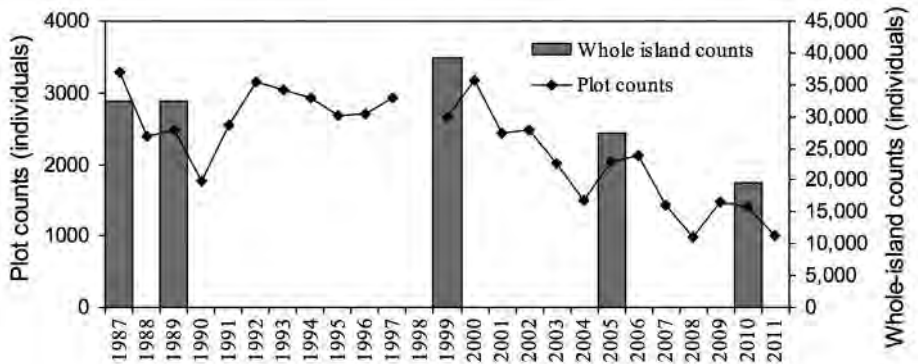


Fig 4. Population change of Guillemots on Fair Isle, 1987–2011 (whole-island counts and plot counts of individuals).

Black Guillemot: The number of Black Guillemots counted on the east coast of Fair Isle (North Lighthouse to South Lighthouse) was 16.1% lower in 2011 (161 individuals in breeding plumage) than in 2010 (180 individuals in breeding plumage). This was at odds with the recent trend of slightly increasing numbers, recorded between 2004 and 2010.

Puffin: The Puffin population on Fair Isle was not monitored in 2011 as this was not a scheduled year for a whole-island count. However, the long-term trend in numbers from whole-island counts has been a gradual decline since 1989. Productivity was 17.9% higher in 2011 (0.39 chicks fledged per egg laid) than in 2010 (0.32). In comparison with Guillemots and Razorbills, Puffin breeding success in the last decade has remained relatively high, with no years of zero productivity. In 2011, 71

colour-ringed Puffins were re-sighted from the year total of 127 colour-ringed Puffins known to have been alive in 2010, giving a year to year survival estimate of 55.9%. This figure was relatively low compared with the 2009 to 2010 survival estimate (80.4%). The long-term trend is that adult survival was relatively high and stable from 1987 to 1999 but has fallen since 2000. During a 24hr feeding watch, the total number of times that fish were brought back to chicks by adults was 69.8% less in 2011 (86 return flights with fish) than in 2010 (285 return flights with fish). Rockling were the most common prey-type seen during the feeding watch (72.1% of fish were this species) followed by small Sandeels (11.6%). Similarly, Rockling and small Sandeels were the most abundant prey-types in food samples collected in 2011. Daily chick feeding frequency was 71.3% lower in 2011 (1.68 feeds per burrow per day) than in 2010 (5.85 feeds per burrow per day; see Table 21).

Note: As in previous years, monitoring of the populations, productivity, survival and diet of Fair Isle's seabirds was carried out by FIBO under government contract from JNCC (Joint Nature Conservation Committee). JNCC contracts annual seabird studies at four key monitoring sites around UK waters (Isle of May, Fair Isle, Canna and Skomer), with Fair Isle representative of the far North. Full details of the 2011 season can be found in the annual seabird report (Miles, W. T. S., Parnaby, D., Moss, J. W., Gunn, C-M. & Hughes, R. D. 2011. *Fair Isle Seabird Studies 2011*. Joint Nature Conservation Committee, Aberdeen).

AON = apparently occupied nest, **AIA** = apparently incubating adult, **AOT** = apparently occupied territory, **AOS** = apparently occupied site.

Other seabird studies on Fair Isle in 2011: Research was undertaken by RSPB and Aberdeen University to determine the foraging behaviour of Fulmars, Shags, Kittiwakes, Guillemots and Razorbills and identify important feeding areas. This involved fitting adults with GPS trackers and TDR data loggers and integrates into a UK-scale study lasting 3 years (Future of the Atlantic Marine Environment project, 2010-2012; www.FAMEproject.eu). Glasgow University carried out a pilot research project to monitor puffin populations using remote cameras and time-lapse photography. The photographic data collected by staff at the Bird Observatory will be analysed by Glasgow University over the winter of 2011-12. Fair Isle was included in a Shetland-wide project looking at burrow occupancy by Leach's Petrels and the breeding status of adults, this part-funded by the Seabird Group and RSPB. Using call-playback, nine sites were surveyed on the island for burrows occupied by Leach's Petrels but none were found.

First and last migrant dates

David Parnaby

Species	Earliest ever	Earliest 2011	Latest ever	Latest 2011
Quail	30.04.61	2nd May	13.10.89	26th Sep
Osprey	25.04.66	27th Apr	04.11.35	1st May
Corncrake	10.04.66	14th May	03.11.77	6th Sep
Dotterel	25.04.73	25th Aug	06.11.76	26th Aug
Whimbrel	12.04.10	16th Apr	12.12.1907	7th Sep
Common Sandpiper	05.04.83	21st Apr	02.11.1908	18th Sep
Green Sandpiper	08.04.79	21st Apr	12.11.70	1st Sep
Arctic Skua	04.04.88	16th Apr	25.10.	18th Oct
Great Skua	17.03.09	25th Mar	16.11.	24th Oct
LBB Gull	06.03.85	2nd Feb*	12.12.57	4th Oct
Sandwich Tern	23.04.07	-	18.09.77	-
Common Tern	25.04.83	29th Apr	18.10.75	18th Sep
Arctic Tern	No data	26th Apr	30.10	10th Oct
Turtle Dove	23.04.71	26th May	01.11.82	27th Jun
Cuckoo	17.04.87	8th May	08.10.77	8th Aug
Swift	29.04.01	1st May	26.10.75	1st Oct
Wryneck	18.04.81	1st May	17.10.74	18th Sep
Red-backed Shrike	04.05.84	26th May	08.11.93	4th Sep
Goldcrest	27.02.	24th Mar	19.12.03	6th Nov
Sand Martin	02.04.89	10th Apr	19.10.78	21st Sep
Swallow	31.03.02	10th Apr	02.11.84	25th Oct
House Martin	13.04.09	10th Apr*	01.11.87	2nd Nov*
Wood Warbler	14.04.81	30th Apr	06.10.73	1st Sep
Chiffchaff	12.03.73	17th Mar	no data	19th Nov
Willow Warbler	25.03.10	10th Apr	23.11.27	5th Oct
Blackcap	28.03.10	10th Apr	20.12	14th Nov

First and last migrant dates

Garden Warbler	21.04.68	30th Apr	20.11.76	21st Oct
Lesser Whitethroat	20.04.09	23rd Apr	08.11.	13th Oct
Whitethroat	11.04. Pre 59	23rd Apr	21.10.78	16th Oct
Subalpine Warbler	20.04.00	24th Apr	29.10.07	6th Jun
Grasshopper Warbler	07.04.02	23rd Apr	23.10.00	2nd Oct
Icterine Warbler	12.05.07	22nd May	13.10.76	10th Jun
Sedge Warbler	19.04.87	21st Apr	11.11.75	12th Sep
Marsh Warbler	22.05.84	26th May	06.10. Pre 63	21st Jun
Reed Warbler	28.04.01	8th May	31.10.80	14th Oct
Ring Ouzel	16.03.88	5th Apr	18.12.1909	10th Nov
Spotted Flycatcher	20.04.49	8th May	26.10.85	10th Oct
Bluethroat	22.03.1908	17th Apr	13.11.83	16th Oct
Black Redstart	09.02.1989	16th Mar	22.12.86x	5th Dec
Redstart	12.04.1981	19th Apr	11.11.81	2nd Oct
Whinchat	14.04.81	8th May	26.11.90	19th Sep
Northern Wheatear	13.03. Pre 59	30th Mar	19.11.59	6th Nov
Pied Flycatcher	21.04.83	30th Apr	29.10.85	2nd Oct
Yellow Wagtail	25.03.54	22nd Apr	20.11.57	16th Oct
Pied Wagtail	20.02.03	16th Mar	17.11	18th Oct
Tree Pipit	14.04. Pre 63	16th Apr	09.11.1908	1st Oct
Red-throated Pipit	08.05.36	-	01.11.1908	-
Common Rosefinch	08.05.77	23rd May	30.11.91	22nd Oct
Ortolan Bunting	26.04.64	-	01.11.00	-
Rustic Bunting	25.04.80	21st May	08.11.75	25th May
Little Bunting	04.04.58	18th Sep	19.11.75	14th Oct

* = new record

x = latest arrival (went on to winter)

A selection of 2011 rarity descriptions

Lesser Scaup 7th October 2011: the first for Fair Isle

David Parnaby, Will Miles and Al Hitchings

The morning of 7th October saw the Obs staff (and a few guests) helping out with a round-up of the hill sheep. Whilst this was going on, AH was taking advantage of a delay to his scheduled flight off the island to get in some last minute birding around the Havens and Bunes. On reaching the most easterly point of the island, the small geos of Bunes, AH discovered a small *aythya* duck in a small rock pool that looked interesting. The combination of small size, head shape, facial pattern and a brief view of the flapped wing suggested that Lesser Scaup was a possibility and so, unable to reach anyone on the phone, AH returned to the Obs to get help.

WM and DP (along with Rob Hughes) had just returned from the Sheep Hill and agreed that the photos showed a good candidate for Lesser Scaup and headed straight to Bunes to get field views of the bird. It was still on its small rock pool in a small gully and, although it was regularly diving and seemed alert, it was quite approachable and gave good (albeit slightly unusual) views as it was observed from a height of about five metres from almost directly above the bird. It was clearly a small duck, the head shape was not easy to judge as the bird regularly dived and kept its feathers flattened, but the plumage features identified it as a scaup *sp.* and it lacked the broad beam and large bill of (Greater) Scaup. The bill was largely dark grey, with the nail looking darker (although at times the whole bill seemed all dark). Eventually the bird flapped and, although the views were brief, a photo by DP showed the crucial wing pattern of a white secondary bar and a dusky grey/brown bar across the primaries. With the identification confirmed, news was put out around the island and all observers were able to get good views of this first for Fair Isle.

Once everyone had seen the bird, the decision was taken to ring it. It was decided that the opportunity to get in-hand measurements and plumage descriptions of this species would be worth taking, especially as we hoped to get further information that could help to age the bird. There were also apparently some observers who were not convinced with the identification, so it was hoped that the measurements and in-hand details would clear this up.

The bird was easily caught with a hand net by WM and was processed, with all measurements confirming the identification, as did other features including the underwing pattern. Ageing was not so simple (see 'age and sex' in the description), with the bird eventually being recorded as an adult (i.e. not juvenile/first-winter)

female. Once the ringing process was over, the bird was returned to the original rock pool, where it remained until the evening of 9th October, after which it was not seen again. Given the fact it hadn't moved from the small pond, and its very low weight, there had to be the possibility that the bird may not have survived, however, a search of the rock pool and surrounding area found no sign of a body, nor any signs of the bird having been predated, so it is hoped that had moved on.

Description (WM):

General appearance in the field: a very small *aythya* duck with plumage basically typical of female scaups: brown flanks and neck, darker brown back and head, with much white around the base of the bill. **Size as seen in the field:** very small (tiny) - akin to a Tufted Duck, but seemed to me even smaller. **Structure as seen in the field:** compact like a Tufted Duck, but body flatter and lower in the water and head seemed proportionally smaller in relation to body length. **Bill pattern:** quite dark, plain blue-grey with isolated dark greyish-black nail. The bill was smooth, shiny and frequently wet and these features often made it difficult to assess the true pattern. Accurate assessment was far easier in the hand, when the bird was totally dry and could be positioned in flat light. The bill appeared very small and dinky and measured relatively very short. For most of its length it was parallel sided, widening only very slightly at the tip. The slope of the bill looked smooth and slightly concave, not convex or bumpy. **Head pattern:** dark chocolate brown all over except for 1) a pale warm-brown crescent on the rear of each cheek and 2) a broad, pure white surround to the base of the bill ('blaze'), this most extensive over the loreal region. The head was peaked at the rear of the crown, behind the eye. This feature was consistent and very obvious in the hand but in the field was sometimes affected by the posture of the head and by water-logging (was least noticeable when the bird resurfaced after diving and/or was very alert). There was no tuft on the rear head, which was smoothly curved. When viewed from the front, the bird showed distinct bulging cheeks and a high crown. The bill and head patterns, as well as all other features, matched well with those of Lesser Scaup described by Bradshaw in 2005 (British Birds, Vol 98: Pp 89-95). **Neck, upper breast and flank-sides:** plumage warm brown with distinct, slightly paler grey-brown feather fringes. **Back and Mantle:** feathers mostly dark chocolate brown with slightly paler grey-brown fringes (these still quite dark however). Here and there was the odd 'frosted' feather (each finely vermiculated pale grey and black). **Upper wing pattern:** alula, greater-, median-, lesser- and primary-coverts dark grey-brown. Tertiaries brownish black. Secondaries with broad white band (thick wing bar) across the whole length of the 'arm' and much thinner black band along the trailing edge. Primaries with corresponding broad pale brown-grey band (thick wing bar) across the whole length of the 'hand' and much thinner black band along the trailing edge. The brown-grey colouration on the primaries was solid and present on the inner and outer web of each feather, although slightly darker on the outer webs of the outer three primaries. The boundary between the white colouration on the secondary wing bar and brown-grey of the primary wing bar was clear-cut and well defined at the join of these feather tracts. This pattern was quite unlike the upper wing of Greater Scaup where there is much white extending from the secondaries onto the primaries, and the secondary-primary border far less well defined within the wing bar. **Under wing pattern:** axillaries, inner primary-, greater-, median- and lower lesser-coverts clean white. Primaries, secondaries, outer primary- and outer lesser-coverts (i.e. lesser-coverts along leading edge of the wing) all dark greyish-brown. Overall, the

Plates 1–8: Lesser Scaup (left 4), October, Buness and Greater Scaup (right 4), Haa, October. Top; note smaller body and distinctive head shape of Lesser Scaup (note Scaup's head is turned slightly away from camera, making bill appear shorter than it is). Second top; note dark restricted to nail of Lesser Scaup and more extensive across bill tip on Scaup, also note high peaked crown of Lesser Scaup. Second bottom; on Lesser Scaup the white secondary bar is clearly distinct from grey/brown primary bar on Scaup this distinction is less clear cut with the primaries showing more extensive white. Bottom; the white axillaries and central underwing stripe of the Lesser Scaup stands out from the rest of the greyer underwing, on Scaup the whole underwing is plain white.



wing appeared to have a large interior area of clean white ('wing lining'), bordered on all sides by dark greyish-brown. There was a thin, darker greyish brown band visible along the trailing edge of the secondaries and primaries, particularly noticeable across the latter. Overall, the pattern conformed well to the underwing pattern for female Lesser Scaup described by Garner in 2002 (Birding World Vol 15: Pp 506-508). **Lower breast and belly:** unmarked creamy-white. **Tail and tail-coverts:** Tail feathers dark blackish-brown with very sharply pointed tips. Upper and lower tail-coverts warm brown with distinct, slightly paler brown feather fringes. **Eye colour:** iris dull yellow-amber. **Feet and legs:** cold steely-grey. **Biometric measurements:** (see table below) the wing length, tarsus length, bill length and weight were measured and these data all fell within or below ranges given for Lesser Scaup and were all outside (well below) the lower boundary limits given for Greater Scaup (e.g. Madge & Burn, 1988 - Helm Wildfowl).

Table 1: Biometric measurements of Lesser Scaup ringed on Fair Isle compared to published measurements for Lesser Scaup and (Greater) Scaup.

Species	Lesser Scaup 07/10/11 Fair Isle	Measurements for Lesser Scaup	Measurements for (Greater) Scaup
Ring No.	FP18899	-	-
Wing length	198mm	185mm–201mm	211mm–237mm
Tarsus (max)	35.0mm	36mm–38mm	37mm–42mm
Tarsus (width)	8.4mm		
Bill length (to feather)	36.3mm	36mm–42mm	40mm–47mm
Weight	473g	Mean (female) 790g	Mean (female nominate) 1050g

Measurements from Madge, S. & Burn, H.; 1988; Wildfowl; Helm

Plumage state / moult: the plumage felt silky and very soft - all feathers seemed to be very new, fresh, quite glossy and recently moulted. **Age and sex:** the dull yellow-amber colour of the iris suggested the bird was not an adult or juvenile (see Trauger, 1974, THE AUK, Vol 91: Pp 243-254) and the quite dark blue-grey coloration to the bill (including the slight greyness to the isolated black nail) would also suggest a young bird but perhaps not a juvenile (see Scott: <http://www.albaecology.co.uk/birdscot/docs/article2-3.htm>). The tail feathers were extremely sharply pointed, with no nicks out of the tips, which suggest the bird was not a juvenile or first-winter (Madge & Burn, 1988). All considered, the bird was considered to be a young female, probably a 2nd calendar-year individual with all plumage recently moulted.

Pallid Harrier 12th August 2011: the second for Fair Isle

David Parnaby

A pleasant day on census had seen a few more migrants about, although nothing particularly unusual, as the east winds and predicted overnight rain saw us hoping for the first batch of scarcities arriving soon. A Swedish ringed Kestrel on the 9th August had given us some chance for discussion as to what might be following in its wake, although none of us had predicted that the raptor theme would continue in such spectacular fashion!

At about four o'clock, Nick Riddiford contacted the Obs to let us know that he had seen a 'ringtail' harrier near the base of Malcolm's Head, although he could not get to his binoculars in time before it disappeared. With his daughter due to marry the following day, he didn't have time to pursue the bird!

Nick was the man of the moment and called at about half past five to say that he had just found an Arctic Warbler in his garden at Schoolton. Jason Moss, who was working elsewhere on the island, headed to Schoolton and had a fly past from the harrier on the way, so phoned DP (who was bringing the Obs people carrier to Schoolton) to tell him to watch out for it. With one eye on the fields, DP picked up the harrier as it flew low behind the School and, although still driving, was concerned enough about the colour of the bird to exclaim, 'that's not a Hen Harrier, it's orange', hastily park the people carrier on the grass verge and leap out to rattle off a couple of record shots as the bird banked close by then headed off across the road.

The suspicion from the fly past was that Pallid Harrier was the most likely possibility, and the record shots seemed to confirm this. A variety of Obs staff, guests and islanders were gathered and it soon became clear that the bird was doing large laps of the island, so everyone was able to gain good views and pick out the crucial identification features. The bird performed well, albeit unpredictably in its appearances for the following two days and was seen briefly on the morning of 15th by NR.

During its stay, the bird was seen chasing several species of birds, including Meadow Pipit and Snipe, as well as rabbits, although its only successful kill was too distant to identify the prey species. At one point when it was hunting at the base of Malcolm's head (a favoured feeding area due to the large rabbit warren) it was seen to drop down and pick up what appeared to be a lump of wool that it had presumably mistaken for a small mammal.

The bird turned out to be the forerunner of a record-breaking invasion of Pallid Harriers to the UK, with Fair Isle being visited by another on 11th–14th September; these represented the first records of Pallid Harrier on Fair Isle since the first for Britain was seen (then shot) in 1931.

Although Fair Isle provides any number of magical moments, there can't be many that match NR's experience of Sunday 13th August 2011 when he was preparing to take his daughter Naomi to the Chapel for her wedding whilst watching an Arctic Warbler in his garden, when the Pallid Harrier flew past, the sun came out from the fog for the first time that day and Tim Bresnan took the catch that meant England won the test against India!

Description

General appearance in the field: a small harrier, but not a particularly 'floaty' looking bird as Montagu's often seems to appear. With no immediate comparisons and without regular sightings of other large raptors on the island it was not especially easy to draw conclusions as to its size and build. It appeared relatively broad-winged, and didn't look especially slim, but with nothing approaching the bulk of Hen Harrier. Although not easy to count in the field, photographs show four clearly fingered primaries. Although normally slowly quartering fields in a typical harrier fashion (i.e. wings raised in a slight 'V'), it could also show a turn of speed when chasing small birds or rabbits. **Underparts:** The main feature of the bird was the underparts, which were a bright, unstreaked orange. The orange was an even colour

across the whole of the body, undertail coverts and most of the underwing coverts. The underwing pattern was also quite distinctive. The basic pattern was of dark secondaries and pale primaries with irregular barring, pale bases and no obvious dark trailing edge. Examining the photos gave better detail of the patterning. The secondaries had a thin pale trailing edge, and a pale bar towards the rear edge. The primaries were indeed mostly pale and the bases were unmarked, providing the oft-quoted pale 'boomerang'. The barring on the primaries was mostly irregular, with three to five dark bars against the pale background on most feathers. The dark bars were neither regularly placed, nor of even width and some did not reach across the whole width of the primaries. **Upperwings:** were very dark brown, with an obvious oval shaped orangey-brown patch on the forewings. The photographs show various pale tips to upperwing feathers, in particular forming an outline to a dark bar along the greater coverts. The secondaries were also finely tipped pale. **Tail:** was dark brown above with three darker bands (not always easy to see against the dark background colour) with a thin, but distinctive white rump and a thin white tip. When spread (during pursuits) the outer feathers could be seen to be pale orangey with dark bands. **Facial pattern:** was particularly distinctive, with a largely dark face surrounded by a pale orangey-buff neck collar, of a relatively broad and even width. The eyes were highlighted by a white 'eyeliner' pattern, with a thin white band above the eye and a slightly thicker crescent below it (these did not join up). **Legs:** were yellow, the bill was pale blue/grey at the base and dark-tipped. The eye colour appeared to be dark in the field.

Eastern Olivaceous Warbler 2nd September 2011

David Parnaby

Pishing the large oat crop at Taft at around midday resulted in a warbler jumping out and landing on the fence c200 yards away from me. My initial views were of a medium sized warbler, pale and brown with a large bill and pale outer tail feathers. It seemed to be a *hippolais* and on landing on the fence it appeared to dip its tail twice. Given the plumage and behaviour, my thoughts were that Eastern Olivaceous was definitely a possibility, but I really hadn't seen enough on the bird before it jumped across the road to Leogh and disappeared into a grass field. The tail dipping was certainly getting me excited, but it was a windy day and perhaps the bird was just balancing on the fence? After back-up arrived in the form of Will Miles and Rob Hughes, we swept through the likely areas that the bird may have been hiding in, but although Reed and Grasshopper Warblers were found, there was no sign of the *hippolais*. Another search in the evening looked to be petering out unsuccessfully so I decided to head to Schoolton in the hope that it may turn up there or at the very least I might get a count of the Common Rosefinch roost that had been building up impressively in the area. As I was approaching the Meadow Burn from the small plantation near the Chapel, a few birds flew up and immediately obvious was a pale warbler amongst them, which thankfully landed on the fence a few metres in front of me – this was it! I took note of some of the features then tried to get a few photos (only one of which was actually in focus) and noted again the tail dipping as the bird alighted on the fence. The warbler then flew into the Schoolton crop strip where the tail dipping was again noticed before the bird disappeared into cover. I tried to contact Nick and Elizabeth Riddiford at Schoolton, but the phone was engaged, so I

gave the crops a wide berth and headed to the croft. As I approached the garden, a movement in the *Rosa rugosa* turned out to be the Eastern Olivaceous and it was now showing extremely well a few metres in front of me, dipping its tail regularly as it moved in a fairly deliberate way through the bushes – superb! After it skulked back into the bushes, I let Nick and Liz know and they invited me into the house where we again had good views from the window as the bird regularly fed in the open for a few minutes before disappearing back into the vegetation again. It remained in the garden until dusk, showing well to several happy people. It was still present the following morning, although had disappeared by the afternoon and was not seen again despite some extensive searching.

Description

Overall: Slightly larger than Lesser Whitethroat (which it was seen alongside), the bird seemed to give the impression of being a slightly larger warbler than it actually was, probably due to the large bill and slow, deliberate movements. The main impression was of a pale typical-*hippolais* warbler, brown above and pale below. **Structure:** The head was the most structurally significant part of the bird, with a long, slightly downcurved bill and a peaked (behind the eye) crown, which at times was held flatter but was occasionally raised. The tail was quite long and square-ended. The wings were relatively long with quite a prominent primary projection. The legs were relatively stout. **Head pattern:** Pale brown with relatively open (but darkish) lores, a short pale supercilium, most prominent in front of the eye and extending slightly behind it. The super was edged slightly darker along the upper edge, although this was only noticeable at some angles. A pale ring was noticeable, particularly below the eye. **Upperparts:** although sometimes looking sandy in flight, closer views showed the mantle to be pale brown, with a cold, hint of grey, tone. The secondaries were pale fringed, forming a noticeable panel (reminiscent in some ways of Icterine Warbler), the primaries were darker than the rest of the wing but were pale tipped. The greater coverts were diffusely tipped pale, helping to add to the impression of a relatively well-marked wing. The tail was plain, pale brown with pale outer edges (although the exact pattern was not noticed).

Underparts: Pale, mostly white, with a slight off-white cast to the belly, creating a slightly paler throat.

Bare Parts: Eye black. Legs grey. Bill had pale lower mandible, upper mandible dark with a pale tip. Nostrils appeared pointed (seen in photos), the bill was long and slightly decurved (particularly the tip to the upper mandible) and was relatively broad, particularly at the base. Overall the bill looked slightly out of proportion to the bird. **Behaviour:** As already mentioned, the tail dipping was the most noticeable feature of the behaviour. The movement always involved a downwards 'push', often repeated. There were no movements noted in any other direction. The tail movement seemed to be given more when the bird had just moved between sites, but was also seen as the bird was moving through the bushes feeding. The tail was generally pushed down when the bird called. Feeding was generally quite deliberate; it sometimes appeared to 'crash' through the vegetation in the style of a larger bird. It generally kept low in the garden, although it moved to the top of the *Rosa* on one occasion when it was chased by a Lesser Whitethroat.

Call: reported by other observers as being a quite loud 'chek', although at the time I was viewing the bird from behind the windows in Schoolton, so didn't hear the call. This represents the third record for Fair Isle following birds in June 1995 and June 2009.

Collared Flycatcher 30th April 2011: the fourth for Fair Isle

Jason Moss

The morning of 30th April saw myself and my visiting girlfriend Sarah West heading out after breakfast to carry out South West census. The preceding week had been dominated by a constant flow of easterly to south-easterly winds and very settled weather, bringing with it some good birds.

The wind was set in a fairly brisk north-easterly direction giving everyone at the Obs optimism for a good day. The first crofts and fields that we checked held a reasonable number of thrushes, chats and commoner warblers, with a couple of male Redstarts and several Blackcaps and *phylloscopus* warblers suggesting a new turnover of birds onto the island that morning. Working our way up Hill Dyke to the mouth of Gunnawark, a text from fellow Assistant Warden Will Miles revealed that birds were also in up north, with the first male Pied Flycatcher of the year in North Gunnawark. Pied Flycatchers are easily one of my favourite migrants, so hopes were high that we may discover our own pristine male somewhere along the cliff-tops ahead of us. Little did we expect what would present itself to us around the corner!

Working the cliff-tops and checking the sheltered cracks and crevices in the vast cliff faces revealed the odd thrush and *phylloscopus* warbler. On reaching the high cliffs to the south of Hoini, the distinctive shape and colouration of a black and white flycatcher caught my eye as it shot around a rocky outcrop at the top of the cliffs and out of view. I suggested to Sarah that we appeared to have discovered the Pied Flycatcher we were hoping for. However, on rounding the corner, the sight that met my eyes was almost unbelievable. A pristine black and white flycatcher on a rocky outcrop, adorned with a complete, broad, snowy white neck collar and huge white forehead patches! A number of choice expletives were uttered as I said to Sarah that we had a stunning male Collared Flycatcher right in front of us! The image was truly magical as the bird sat, in all its glory, posing in the sunshine, shuffling and flicking its wings and generally looking incredible set against a vast, lichen-covered cliff-face. Politely asking Sarah (or possibly not, as I've been informed) to watch the bird so that we didn't lose it, I contacted David Parnaby and Will Miles, along with the Observatory to try and gather as many people as possible who wanted to see the bird. Within 30 minutes a small mix of anxious and excited observers had gathered on the cliff top and were enjoying this stunning bird; a dream species for many present (not least for myself!).

The bird lingered on the island until 5th May, spending its time along the same stretch of west-facing cliffs, although it relocated to the base of the Hundi Stack during the end of its stay, making it rather difficult to observe, but still looking incredible amongst the vast west cliffs. What a location and what a bird!

Great Snipes on Fair Isle

Will Miles and David Parnaby

Great Snipe has traditionally been one of Fair Isle's 'big five' rarity specials, along with Lanceolated Warbler, Pallas's Grasshopper Warbler, Pechora Pipit and Yellow-breasted Bunting. Whilst Lanceolated Warbler is now a virtually annual visitor, Pallas's Grasshopper Warbler is occurring more regularly and Pechora Pipit still turns up with reasonable regularity, the other two species have become much harder to catch up with on Fair Isle in the last decade. The bunting has become much rarer in the UK and there has been a corresponding decrease in records on Fair Isle, with just one in the last eight years, with the decrease in oat crops on the island possibly also affecting sightings. Great Snipe has also become a much harder bird to encounter on Fair Isle, with an annual run of records from 1995 coming to an end in 2001, since when, there had been none until this year. Although they are now scarcer in the UK than their peak in the 1990s, this gap in sightings is harder to explain.

The three Great Snipe seen on Fair Isle in 2011 involved one in the spring and two in the autumn and constitute the 39th- 41st records of the species on the island. Spring sightings are very rare, there having previously been just five: in 1908 (two), 1910, 1965 and 2001, all in May. Three records in a year are not unprecedented, as three were seen in 1995 and 1996, and an exceptional four were found in 1987. The three individuals in 2011 exhibited an unexpected degree of variation relative to each other, and this is briefly summarised with the circumstances of each bird's finding.

The first of the year was found by WM on the morning of the 2nd May at Utra scrape whilst carrying out SW census. It was seen several times in flight and on the ground, once in a very exposed position in short grass. Although it was only seen on this date, it lingered long enough for all observers present on the island to successfully twitch it. This bird was classically large and bulky, showing broad wings and the typical, heavy, direct flight action of the species. The outer tail feathers were pure white, appearing as gleaming white flashes when the tail was splayed upon landing. The wings were predominantly dark blackish-brown but for very prominent, rounded, pure white tips to the primary, greater and median coverts, collectively forming bold white bands across the upper surface of each wing. The underwings were relatively unmarked and dark. The critical identification features of the wing and tail plumage were only clear in flight; when grounded, the true identity of the bird was far from obvious, despite its large size.

The second bird was found by DP during SE census on 29th August in a crop strip at Kenaby, when it was flushed twice before disappearing towards Quoy. It was seen daily in the same place every morning until September 3rd, when it would follow a similar pattern of disappearing after being flushed from the crop. Compared with the relatively bold plumage, large size, and heavy structure of the spring bird, this

individual was quite subtle and a more difficult identification. Appearing only slightly larger than a Common Snipe, it was not such a strikingly big, chunky bird, although it still showed a 'pot-belly'. The outer tail feathers were predominantly white but with narrow brown zigzags across each feather, this resulted in the white tail sides being visible on close take-off, but not giving the gleaming flash effect of the spring bird. Similarly, the white markings in the upper wing were much reduced compared with the spring bird: the greater coverts, median coverts and, crucially, the primary coverts being tipped white, but only narrowly, and the resultant white bands across the wings appearing relatively subdued. The pattern of the wings and the vermiculated outer tail feathers indicated the bird was a first-year. Identification was made harder by the fact that views were often brief; it was only on the final day of its stay that more prolonged flight views were obtained and photographs were obtained that showed the crucial identification features. The critical features for identification as Great Snipe were most obvious when the bird was seen against a dark background, whilst against bright skies, it appeared particularly dark, unmarked and in these circumstances it could have been easier to pass the bird off as a Common Snipe, particularly a larger, darker bird of the race *G. g. faeroeensis*. Interestingly, the bird often flushed at close range (around two metres) and on a couple of occasions a low, grunted 'grrrst' call was heard on take-off, quite unlike the calls of Common Snipe. The flight was usually direct and low and often didn't seem to go too far. This was a familiar feature of all three sightings of the species in 2011, but it should be noted that every year there are some Common Snipe (presumably tired migrants) seen flying in a similar manner. Although the habitat of this bird was usually in drier areas than are typically associated with Common Snipe this feature is seemingly of limited use on Fair Isle, where migrant Common Snipe regularly utilise any patches of cover during autumn migration.

The third bird of the year was found by Roger and Ian Broadbent at Da Water on September 18th during a peak time for rare birds and birders on the island, and it was enjoyed by many! Its very large size and bulky structure were immediately obvious, and heavy barring on the flanks and belly, bright white tail corners, and white tips to the greater, median and primary coverts were clear from the first sighting onwards. The extent and clarity of the white markings in the tail and wings were less subtle than the previous bird of the autumn, although not quite as bright as the spring bird, and the outer tail feathers were weakly zigzagged brown, again indicative of a first-year. Overall, this was a classic autumn Great Snipe.

Whether this impressive, and instructive, year for Great Snipe on Fair Isle relates to a return to former glories or a one-off to be savoured remains to be seen.

A memorable August fall

Jason Moss and David Parnaby

One of the joys of studying migration, whether it be on Fair Isle, the UK's east coast, or anywhere else in the world, is the unpredictability and the constant and exciting changes that occur day by day throughout the migration periods. A close study of weather conditions and pressure maps can lend an insight into migrant bird arrival times and locations, and the time of year can also hint at what species may be involved. However, the exact way in which a day in the field may pan out is never predictable, and this is for many what keeps the subject endlessly fascinating and exciting.

In some respects, the events of the fall on the 24th August 2011 were predictable. The 23rd had seen the wind direction swing 180 degrees from a light westerly to light easterly winds, bringing overcast skies and 'close' conditions, and in doing so producing a small arrival of common migrants and rarer highlights of six Barred Warblers, four Common Rosefinches and an Arctic Warbler trapped in the Plantation on the final trap round of the day. A great selection of birds and an exciting day, but astonishingly this was only the tip of the iceberg, as the 24th would go on to show.

The day dawned with ideal conditions for a fall of migrants; heavy rain and a moderate north-easterly wind, with a forecast of the rain clearing by midday, leading to the decision that census should be held off until after lunch. A sensible decision, but one that left us all on edge! What were we missing?

This decision gave JM the chance to have an ankle pain checked out by the island nurse, who advised resting the ankle for a week. The medical advice was heeded for at least half a mile, when the Willow Warblers seemingly flicking from every fence line and *Angelica* head on the drive back to the Obs proved just too tempting... The traps are all fairly close to the road after all, so surely a quick check of them couldn't hurt could it? A Wryneck, a Corncrake, two Pied Flycatchers, a Tree Pipit and several Willow Warblers later and the ankle pain was forgotten about! With a hint of the weather brightening up, the Wardening team headed out once the birds had been processed with a distinctly optimistic air.

The promise was more than lived up to: this fall was not the subtle affair of the previous day, with a modest number and variety of commoner migrants; this was closer to an avalanche! It was clear that Willow Warblers had arrived in impressive numbers, but they had also brought with them 'pseeping' Tree Pipits in every patch of short grass, totalling 71 across the island. Several Whinchats stood sentinel along croft fence-lines, whilst active Redstarts and elusive Grasshopper Warblers were also to be found. Three smart Wood Warblers arrived in the south-west, whilst a reasonable number of unobtrusive Garden Warblers and Blackcaps also made landfall across the island along with flighty Spotted and Pied Flycatchers and the autumn's first Robin. However, the main story of this fall was with its Wryncks;

they were everywhere! With at least five in the southeast, seven in southwest, and seven more in the north of the island, this staggering total of 19 birds represented the second highest autumn day total ever on Fair Isle, and was very probably an underestimate, with many more almost certainly remaining hidden along the vast vegetated cliff faces and inaccessible beaches. Birds were found in every conceivable piece of cover, including under islanders' vehicles, among the slides and climbing frames of the children's play-area, on the Mast and amongst the upland heathers of the north, creating a spectacle that no-one involved will likely forget in a hurry. Add to this a total of eight Barred Warblers, seven Common Rosefinches and the Corncrake, and it's no wonder that the Arctic Warbler from the day before saw itself slightly lacking in attention!

The following day saw an increase in Tree Pipits and Willow Warblers amongst others and a Dotterel on Ward Hill, but the lack of major rarities was more than made up for by the sheer volume of birds. There can be few finer birding experiences than being in the middle of one of these large falls with birds flicking out of every patch of cover, whilst going through a notebook bursting with tallies of birds at Log is a satisfying way to end the day. In typical Fair Isle style, there were fewer birds arriving as the weather calmed on 26th, but the fall was topped with a fantastic Booted Warbler and Melodious Warbler within a couple of hundred yards of each other.

August may not be the classic month that people think of when picturing migration on Fair Isle, but for the volume and variety of birds, this fall took some beating and ranked as one of the major highlights of a good year.



Wryneck by W. Miles

Fair Isle invertebrates in 2011

Nick Riddiford

It was an extremely poor year for migrant moths. The few migrants included a small autumn influx of Red Sword-grass *Xylena vetusta*, accompanied by a Scarce Brindle *Apamea lateritia*. The latter was the second Fair Isle record – two years after the first – but that was only the 15th record for the UK. A first for the island was a Haworth's Minor *Celaena haworthii* trapped at the Bird Observatory. Despite the paucity of migrants, long-term monitoring provides valuable results for the resident moth populations. This shows that all the resident species are doing well. The Observatory has started recording micro moths from its trap and this produced another new species for the isle, *Blastobasis lacticolella*. This is likely to be an overlooked resident rather than a migrant. Fair Isle is part of the National Moth Recording Scheme, organised by Butterfly Conservation.

Hoverflies also include migrant species. Regulars such as the marmalade hoverfly *Episyrphus balteatus* are common summer visitors attracted to our roadside flowers. Rarer species do occur from time to time and in May 2011 included *Scaeva selinitica*, a scarce species in much of Britain more normally associated with conifers. Its congener *Scaeva pyrastris* was recorded in July. This is another migrant. It is commoner in southern parts but rare in Scotland.

The biggest surprise of the year was the appearance of three longhorn beetles *Rhagium bifasciatum*. This woodland species occurs in Scotland and Scandinavia but has no suitable habitat on the isle. All three were at the Bird Observatory. Subsequent investigation revealed that the breeding site was almost certainly driftwood found on the shore and deposited outside the Bird Observatory building. The evidence included crumbly rotten wood (ideal for larvae) and exit holes. This indicates that the larvae or eggs were able to survive a long journey by sea before their home was washed up on South Haven beach. For those concerned that a wood-boring beetle should be found next to a newly erected wooden building, this species requires wood in latter stages of decay. So there is little habitat encouragement for the beetle to establish itself.

It is always interesting to muse on how newcomers make it to the isle. An imperfectly formed specimen of a medium sized yellowish-brown beetle, found in June inside the Bird Observatory proved to be a mealworm beetle *Tenebrio molitor*. This first record for the isle coincided with a scientific study incorporating the use of mealworms to attract birds. This beetle had clearly made a bid for freedom to reached adulthood - though not entirely successfully as its elytra (wing-cases) were damaged and crumpled, exposing the wings.

Cetaceans and other wildlife

David Parnaby

For recording purposes, Fair Isle cetacean sightings include all those made from the Good Shepherd in 'Fair Isle waters' (i.e. half way from Fair Isle to Shetland) as well as those from land. For the sake of completeness, all sightings made from the Good Shepherd in 'Shetland waters' are also included here.

Minke Whale *Balaenoptera acutorostrata*

A reasonable year with sightings on 25th May, 10th and 27th June, 10th July, 19th September and 1st November, four from land and two from the Good Shepherd. In addition there were sightings made from the Good Shepherd in Shetland waters on 27th May (three animals) and 23rd August.

Risso's Dolphin *Grampus griseus*

The first sighting of this distinctive dolphin was of at least twelve seen from the Good Shepherd just north of Fair Isle on 12th July. Further land-based sightings occurred on 10th August (at least four), 16th August (five) and 19th August (at least six), presumably these latter sightings may all have related to the same group.

White-sided Dolphin *Lagenorhynchus acutus*

One was seen on 16th August from the Good Shepherd, with a pod of at least 30 seen from Bunness on 19th August. In addition, there were six seen from the Good Shepherd in Shetland waters on 19th July.

White-beaked Dolphin *Lagenorhynchus albirostris*

The only sightings were of at least three off South Light on 26th July and three off the north of the island on 8th September.

Killer Whale *Orcinus orca*

A superb year for sightings started with a pod of eight (including two adult bulls) seen on 25th March. Initially located off Dronger, they were then seen later from the Observatory before heading to South Light and eventually passing North Light that evening. What were presumably the same group of eight were also seen on 26th March, when they cruised slowly north very close to Bunness. On 2nd April, five were seen from the Good Shepherd in Shetland waters, then two bulls were seen from North Light on 13th April. One of the highlights of the summer was a group of eight (not the same as those seen in the spring) that were seen from Pietron on 30th June during a Guillemot feeding watch before heading to South Harbour. Here the adult bull sat offshore whilst the females and younger animals came into the harbour and spent a considerable time trying to dislodge a Grey Seal that was perched on a precarious flat rock just above the water's surface. Although they were unsuccessful,

the spectacle was superb, with Fair Isle Primary School's end of term rounders match being put on hold to witness the performance! Four seen from North Light on 1st September rounded off an excellent year.

Harbour Porpoise *Phocoena phocoena*

The first was seen from Bunness on 11th May, with sightings on seven dates in June (maximum five), two in July (maximum three), nine in August (maximum 17), eight in September (maximum five) and four in October until 12th (maximum two).

Unidentified cetaceans

One was seen on 18th August, with unidentified dolphins on 19th August (two), 20th August (three), 19th September (three) and 21st September, with the latter two sightings possibly Risso's Dolphins.

Other wildlife

Grey Seal *Halichoerus grypus*

Common throughout the year around the island, counts are not regularly made of adults (although around 250 seen on 17th March was probably a fairly typical count). The first pup was noted on the early date of 10th September, although the bulk of pups were actually born in the second half of October. The minimum figure of 58 pups was lower than the last two years (and the same as 2008) and continues the general downward trend of breeding success of this species.

Nathusius's Pipistrelle *Piistrellus nathusii*

Bats are rarely observed on Fair Isle, although there were two sightings in 2011. The first was seen over the Vaadal on 11th June but views meant that it couldn't be identified to species. One that was found in an apparently exhausted state at Barkland on 26th October in very poor weather was identified as a Nathusius's Pipistrelle, which is likely to be the species responsible for the majority of bat sightings on the island. After a short spell of recuperation it recovered sufficiently to be released.

Common Frog *Rana temporaria*

A common resident: the first frog spawn was seen in North Park on 5th March, the earliest date for at least nine years, although it is typically noted in the first week of March.



Plate 1: *Nathusius's Pipistrelle*, Obs, October © C-M. Gunn. Bats are very rare visitors to Fair Isle, with sightings being less than annual. Most are seen only in flight and so are left unidentified, but this individual was rescued during poor weather and measurements and other features enabled a specific identification.

Meteorological data, Fair Isle 2011

Temp. (°C)	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC	YEAR	1974-2000
Mean	4.9	5.1	5.2	8.2	8.9	10.5	12.0	12.0	11.7	9.9	9.5	5.1	8.6	7.6
Highest Maximum	9.1	9.6	11.0	12.5	11.9	18.0	15.9	16.4	16.6	14.5	12.8	11.9	18.0	20.2
Lowest Minimum	-2.0	1.0	-1.3	3.3	4.1	4.4	7.2	7.8	7.3	1.9	3.5	-0.8	-2.0	-5.6
Sea	7.7	7.3	7.1	8.1	9.4	10.8	12.8	13.0	12.5	11.6	10.9	9.1	10.0	9.2
Rainfall (mm)														
Monthly	66.2	112.2	39.5	25.0	59.2	38.6	29.8	105.4	53.2	82.8	65.2	132.0	809.1	924.4
Maximum Daily Fall	10.8	23.2	9.0	7.2	5.8	18.4	11.2	28.0	5.8	9.4	13.6	21.0	28.0	46.2
Sunshine (hours)														
Total	35.7	57.2	82.0	170.0	213.1	174.6	147.6	142.4	119.5	90.9	44.2	10.8	1288.0	1223.5
Maximum Daily	3.8	9.0	7.6	14.6	15.1	14.9	16.0	11.8	10.4	8.3	5.5	1.6	16.0	16.9
Wind speed (knots)														
Mean	14.8	20.3	15.5	12.5	14.1	9.2	10.9	11.1	12.7	19.4	18.8	20.0	14.9	16.0
Maximum Gust	48	76	51	48	59	60	41	50	48	53	78	80	80	109
Number of days														
Hail	10	6	5	0	3	0	0	0	0	6	6	21	57	79.0
Snow/sleet	12	6	6	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	4	12	41	65.5
Rain, >0.1mm	18	22	19	13	24	15	13	18	20	24	14	28	228	242.3
Wet, >0.9mm	14	19	12	6	20	8	6	14	16	21	12	23	171	175.9
Ground frost	9	2	7	1	1	2	0	2	0	0	0	13	37	59.9
Air frost	3	0	6	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	12	18.0
Gale	1	7	3	0	3	1	0	2	0	5	7	13	42	56.5
Fog during 24hr	0	0	0	9	0	0	0	7	0	2	0	0	18	78.1
Wind (direction at 0900)														
North	3	0	0	0	1	4	9	4	0	1	0	1	23	42.3
North East	0	0	5	1	0	3	3	4	2	1	0	0	19	22.1
East	2	3	0	1	3	2	6	3	2	0	0	1	23	34.7
South East	2	11	4	5	7	8	4	6	5	4	11	1	68	50.0
South	2	1	5	6	5	2	0	1	12	11	11	4	60	60.0
South West	7	9	8	10	6	2	1	3	2	4	5	7	64	51.3
West	10	3	7	7	7	5	0	6	5	7	1	11	69	62.5
North West	5	1	2	0	2	4	8	4	2	3	2	6	39	37.1
Calm	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	5.5

RSPB FAME seabird tracking project: annual research report summary

Mark Bolton and Ellie Owen

Following the successful pilot study in 2010, the RSPB and Aberdeen University collaborated again to track seabirds breeding on Fair Isle in 2011. The study used miniature GPS tags, temporarily attached to the birds' dorsal feathers, to track birds to their foraging areas. The work is part of a larger programme of tracking several seabird species from around a dozen colonies in UK and overseas (see www.fameproject.eu). The tags provide extremely high resolution data, which are used to provide information on the locations of persistent seabird foraging aggregations which could qualify for future designation as protected areas.

The very small number of birds tracked in 2010 provided a preliminary indication that seabirds from Fair Isle were travelling vastly further in search of food than previously thought possible. A Razorbill with a recently hatched chick in the colony at Gunnawark was tracked to the coast of Aberdeenshire, some 212 km from the colony. It departed the colony at 20:26 hrs on 28th June, but when it returned 36 hours later having covered 474km, it had no fish for its chick. Similarly, a Kittiwake nesting at Easter Lothier flew SE from Fair Isle to feed some 102km from the colony, on a trip that covered nearly 400km. In 2011 Rob Hughes (Senior Research Assistant, RSPB) and Beckie Langton (Aberdeen University, PhD student) planned a larger programme of tracking to establish whether these were exceptional cases, or whether such long foraging trips were typical of seabirds on Fair Isle. Following the all-too-familiar pattern of recent years, breeding success of seabirds on Fair Isle was very poor in 2011, which hampered the tracking programme, but Rob and Beckie were able to successfully track 19 Razorbills, three Guillemots and four Kittiwakes. The two exceptionally long trips recorded in 2010 were repeated in 2011. Fifteen of the razorbills undertook long trips to forage at over 200km from Fair Isle – off the Aberdeenshire coast, and one individual foraged over 300km from Fair Isle. Two of the three Guillemots tracked flew 300km from Fair Isle to find food for their chicks, covering around 800km in total. These distances are around three times larger than those recorded in previous studies and it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that such long trips are indicative of low food availability closer to the colony, and associated with the breeding failures experienced by seabirds on Fair Isle in recent years. We will be tracking seabirds again in 2012 to compare foraging behaviour and breeding success with the previous years.

Maps of the foraging trips of all birds tracked from Fair Isle in 2010 and 2011 can be viewed and downloaded from the RSPB's website (www.rspb.org.uk/FAME), along with tracks of seabirds tagged at the other study colonies in the UK.

We thank FIBO for supporting this work by provision of research accommodation and first class research facilities at the Bird Observatory in both 2010 and 2011. Our thanks to Deryk Shaw and Jack Ashton-Booth for advice on accessing the seabird colonies on Fair Isle, and to Deryk and Hollie, David and Susannah Parnaby, and the Bird Observatory team for their outstanding hospitality during the researchers' residence on the island. This work was funded by the RSPB, the European Regional Development Fund through its Atlantic Area Programme, and Marine Scotland.

Small-scale spatial variation in phenotype, genotype and selection in Starlings on Fair Isle

**Report on field work carried out between April 2011 and July 2011
as funded by the FIBO grant.**

Jessica Walkup*†, Peter Evans+, Jane Reid†,

***PhD student, (j.walkup@abdn.ac.uk)**

†University of Aberdeen, AB24 2TZ

+University of Bangor.

The aim of my PhD is to describe and understand variation in morphology, selection on morphology and genotype at a small spatial scale. I am using the colour-ringed Starlings on Fair Isle as a model population to understand these effects. Over the course of my three-year PhD I plan to establish whether Starling morphology varies across different areas of Fair Isle, whether morphology is subject to selection through improved survival or reproduction given certain morphologies, whether selection varies across the island and whether there is genetic differentiation among different sub-groups in the population. After carrying out a successful season in 2010 my aim was once again to collect as much data as possible to build a comprehensive data set which will allow me to fulfil the aims of my PhD. I carried out this second season of field work between the 27th April and the 21st July 2011.

I arrived on Fair Isle on Tuesday 27th of April 2011, the first stage of my research involved carrying out resighting observations of previously colour ringed Starlings to establish which individuals have survived since the previous years. The success of 2010's colour ringing efforts (with nearly 800 individuals ringed) meant there were many ring-wearing individuals to identify across the island. I was joined in this task by my supervisor Jane Reid and a post doctorate researcher, Johan Nilsson, who is studying physiology, specifically the role of oxidative stress in survival, in the Starling population. The first three weeks were comprised of an intensive re-sighting effort which continued, as time allowed, throughout the rest of the season. We were particularly successful during 2011 with 1910 re-sightings recorded, identifying around 540 individual Starlings. These resightings will be used to estimate annual survival rates for the ringed individuals as well as letting us estimate how much individuals move around the island.

Towards the end of April I began to monitor the breeding attempts of Starling pairs at nest sites across the island. Many of the pairs nested in previously occupied sites which have been studied in earlier years but I also looked to identify any new nest sites which were occupied for the first time in 2011. Accessible nests were monitored by checking for the presence of eggs every 3 days. Once eggs are found at a nest I revisited approximately 6 days later to count the final clutch size for that nest. Once the eggs had hatched and the parents began to feed their chicks, I revisited to observe this activity from a distance and identify colour ringed parents. By knowing which



Plate 1: This "re-sighted" individual was found near North-Light after falling prey to a Skua, it had been seen 9 days earlier near Setter croft.

parents “own” which nest, I was able to link brood size to parent identity, allowing individual reproductive success to be calculated.

The success of the first broods was lower than in recent years, probably partly due to persistent heavy rain during late incubation and early chick rearing resulting in many nests being flooded or abandoned. The nests in the walls at The Parks, at lower Vaassetter, seemed particularly vulnerable to this in 2011 with several nests being lost during periods of heavy rain and one Starling pair making 3 attempts at raising chicks only to have the nest cup flood twice drowning all the chicks and once saturating a clutch of eggs. In 2011 chicks



Plate 2: The parent of a nest on Bunes is identified.

were ringed at 114 nests. 62 nests produced 197 chicks in their first attempt that survived to 12 days old. 52 nests (some of which had failed to produce surviving chicks the first time around) produced 138 chicks in their second attempt. This relatively high number of second broods is falsely inflated by the failure of many of the first broods. Failed pairs laid again, producing a second clutch of eggs – but only their first successful brood – at the same time as some successful pairs were rearing their second brood of chicks, their first having already fledged.

Approximately 12 days after hatching I visited accessible nests to weigh, measure and ring chicks with both a BTO ring and a unique colour ring combination. I was joined by my supervisor Peter Evans during this task. This whole process was repeated when adults started to re-nest and produce second broods.

During late incubation and the early chick rearing period, I began to attempt to trap adult starlings using baited drop traps situated at several sites across the island. The crow trap situated near the Observatory was utilized and two smaller, portable traps were situated at the School and at the Puffin. Later in the season, once chicks had fledged, I also targeted juvenile birds whose fearlessness at baited drop traps and tendency to flock in and near the observatory Heligoland traps meant I could capture large numbers. The great number of starlings I ringed in 2010 under the supervision of

Jane Reid, Peter Evans, Deryk Shaw, Simon Davies and others meant I was able to gain a restricted C-permit from the BTO allowing me to trap and ring independently in 2011. As in previous years captured birds were ringed with BTO and colour rings, or, in the case of a recapture, had their BTO ring number and colour combination recorded. All birds then had a series of ten different morphological measurements taken, including wing, tail, tarsus and beak length as well as weight. Sex and age, when known, were also recorded. This year, trapping proved difficult at times with few birds coming to the bait – maybe due to the wet weather increasing the availability of their natural invertebrate prey. However trapping effort was eventually rewarded and by the end of the season there were 368 captured events of 284 individuals.

Finally, I took small blood samples (under appropriate licence) from chicks from the first and second broods and some captured adults. Over the winter of 2011-2012 I have been working in the Molecular Genetics Facility laboratories at Sheffield University to genotype blood sampled individuals to allow me to analyse the genetic structure of the population.

Preliminary analysis of the morphological data collected in 2010 and 2011 show that there is variation in the body structure of the Starlings across the island. Individuals living further south on Fair Isle are seen to have longer wings and legs. Early analysis of the genetic data shows that genetic diversity exists within the Starling population on Fair Isle, further analysis will show whether this diversity follows variation in a similar pattern to the morphological data.

The success of my 2011 field season relied greatly on the help I received on the island. I would like to extend thanks to Susannah and David for their hospitality at the Observatory, Will Miles for being regularly on hand with help and advice on ringing and research and finally Declan and Lisa at the Schoolhouse for letting me set up a drop-trap and catch by their garden and for the numerous cups of tea they provided while I did so!

Oxidative stress and life history trade-offs: project report

Johan Nilsson

The aim of this project was to collect blood samples and measure oxidative stress on the Starlings on Fair Isle and relate this to their reproduction, growth and survival. The project took advantage of the long term study on the island's Starlings that has been piloted by Dr. Peter Evans (Bangor University) and Dr. Jane Reid (University of Aberdeen) for many years. I started my project in 2010, but this report is mainly for the 2011 field season.

The aim for this season of the project was to target birds that already had been blood sampled the year before and also to target birds with extensive records in the database. I also intended to do a more intense effort on the nestlings and to take multiple blood samples from a few selected nestlings, to be able to follow how oxidative stress changes over the growth period.

All in all, the data collection went very well and with the help from Jessica Walkup (University of Aberdeen), I managed to get blood samples from around 150 adults, 300 nestlings and 150 juveniles. Together with the samples from the previous year, this has given me a unique data set to test how oxidative stress is related to life history trade-offs. By chance, both 2010 and 2011 turned out to be years where the Starlings laid a lot of second clutches and fortunately I managed to get blood samples from both the first and the second broods these years. The two years also turned out to be very different in relation to resource availability for the Starling, and it was evident that the nestlings in the second broods struggled a lot more in 2010 than they did in 2011. When I looked at the oxidative stress data, there were also clear differences in how much the nestlings were suffering. In 2010 the nestlings in the second broods had a lot higher oxidative stress than those in the first broods, in 2011 this difference had however almost disappeared and nestlings in first and second brood then showed similar levels of oxidative stress. These results will be presented at the ISBE conference later this summer. So far I haven't had a chance to look at the rest of the dataset, but given how little we know about oxidative stress dynamics, I'm sure that the results from the other samples will be very interesting too.

I am very grateful that FIBO decided to sponsor my stay at Fair Isle and also that I could prolong my stay, so that I got a chance to also sample the second broods.

The John Harrison Memorial Fund (JHMF)

Are you a keen conservationist aged between 16 and 24, or do you know someone who is? If so, please read on as the JHMF is a great opportunity for young people to stay at Fair Isle Bird Observatory at minimal cost.

The John Harrison Memorial Fund provides financial assistance in the form of grants to anyone between the ages of 15 and 21 to enable them to visit Fair Isle and take part in the daily work schedule of the Observatory. It was established in 1968 by Richard Richardson in memory of John Harrison who visited Fair Isle three times before he died at the early age of 19.

Grants normally cover the cost of travel by the most economical means possible to the Observatory and back home. Full travel costs will normally only be given for visits of two full weeks or longer.

Whilst at the Observatory awardees are required to pay £10 per day to cover the cost of three substantial meals a day, bed linen and towels, laundry costs and to offset fuel costs. Awardees are expected to take part in the regular work routine conducted by Observatory staff on a six-days-a-week basis. Work varies depending on the time of year so you are advised to discuss with the warden any particular interest you may have in ringing, migration or seabird work so you can arrange your visit at the appropriate time. Duties may involve some data entry on the Observatory computers, migration census work, ringing, trap repairs, maintenance work, assistance with visitors and the general daily operation of the Observatory.

It is unlikely there will be accommodation available for JHMF awardees between early September and early October.

Application forms can be obtained from the Administrator at Fair Isle Bird Observatory (01595 760258 or fiboadministrator@btconnect.com). Completed application forms should be sent to Dr Peter Evans, Ewyn y Don, Bull Bay, Amlwch, Isle of Anglesey LL68 9SD along with your detailed CV, your phone number and the names, addresses and phone numbers of two referees.

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

My JHMF experience

Teresa Donohue

Early this year, after weeks of waiting in agonising anticipation, I received an email saying I had been awarded the John Harrison Memorial Fund grant to work on Fair Isle during the summer. The months following were spent in dizzying disbelief, trying to contain my irrepressible excitement, and scratching my head over the multitude of transport forms needed to get there. I had been increasingly fascinated by seabirds through my time at university in Cornwall, so the prospect of staying at one of the most well-renowned bird observatories in Britain, home to such an array of different breeding species, in addition to being situated miles and miles of ocean away from anywhere - was difficult to calmly comprehend.



Plate 1: *Teresa Donohue.*

I spent four fantastic weeks at the observatory and was already thoroughly impressed by the end of my first day - walking along the north cliffs beneath soaring Arctic and Great skuas, staring out across thousands of auks rafting on the ocean, then helping to colour-ring puffins by the evening. Over the weeks I got my fair share of puffin-inflicted wounds, notably during the trips to Tor o' da Ward Hill where we mist-netted the birds as they wheeled over the colony in their hundreds. Fewer battle scars were incurred on our visits to Greenholm to ring and monitor the less dangerously-equipped chicks, and it was a wonderful chance for me to see how these birds develop and grow; from balls of fluff to beautiful, sleek birds of muscle.

Wandering amidst Bonxie territories was a little alarming at first; it was certainly very different to my previous, distant glimpses of the birds out at sea from South-West England! However, I soon warmed to them, despite their fearsome appetites and habit of fatally terrorising every other living creature. I was thrilled to help trample over the heather, finding and ringing chicks over several days, learning to read the adults' behaviour to locate nest sites, and just spending time quietly watching their social antics and listening to their awesome reptilian calls. I also helped to collect and record lots of Bonxie pellets, during which we made many, many gruesome discoveries. The most memorable was the single nest site with around 30 predated

Kittiwake egg shells sprawled around it. It was a horrendous find, but really demonstrated the potential impact these predators can have on other seabirds.

All the work on Fair Isle was incredible, but the top highlight had to be ringing Storm Petrels. Assistant Warden Will took me to the small colony at Kirm o' Scroo where I first heard the birds chrrr-ing in the dark, as we waited by the net. Later that night we watched as shadowy creatures fluttered into the rubble and around the steep hillsides. We then caught a few, and I was able to handle the delicate creatures and see (and smell!) all their incredible features in the hand. Towards the end of my stay the weather conditions down on the Havens were perfect for several nights running, bringing in big catches with the tape lure, and allowing me some spectacular ringing practice. I had the privilege to ring a Leach's Petrel and even hear one calling back to the tape, and fly over my head - totally worth becoming a sleepless zombie for a while!

Living on Fair Isle also meant experiencing the wonderfully rich and welcoming character of its people, by getting to know the islanders and integrating into their close-knit community. The musical delights of 'Fair Isle Thursday' made a great, relaxing evening at the observatory, whilst the enormous task of Sheep Hill was an exhausting, but enjoyable day-out. The unforgettable Tall Ships Island party was a brilliant surprise for me; a two day extravaganza of live music (traditional and not-so traditional!), lots of ale, sea-shanties (from the island choir and visiting Danish crew), beastly burgers, dancing, walks, engaging talks, demonstrations of traditional crafts, and general laughter and madness. I honestly didn't think it was possible to cram in so many of my favourite things all into one, small island.

So after coming home from Fair Isle - apart from talking about it endlessly to everyone and anyone - I have been busy looking for the next steps for developing my career in seabird conservation. I now have my BTO 'T' permit and have been ringing Yellow Wagtails and Swallows amongst many others near my Dorset home. I am still earnestly volunteering for local nature reserves and action groups; building up my confidence in talking to kids and adults alike and sharing my love for nature and the seaside. I am also in the last year of my degree (BSc Wildlife Conservation) at the University of Plymouth, using data that I collected on Fair Isle for my final year dissertation, and hoping to graduate in May 2012.

After that, I hope to spend a lot more time island-hopping, volunteering and visiting more amazing observatories to develop my ringing skills. My dream job would be working as a warden on one of the Pembrokeshire islands, or perhaps someday undertaking a doctorate on some aspect of seabird ecology, such as researching winter distributions and dispersal. Fair Isle has been a brilliant opportunity to travel and study birds; it has helped me to focus clearly on the type of career I hope to achieve, and I am sure I will be back again one day in some shape or form!

Map of Fair Isle

Toilets:

FIBO
Stackhoull
Airstrip

Payphones:

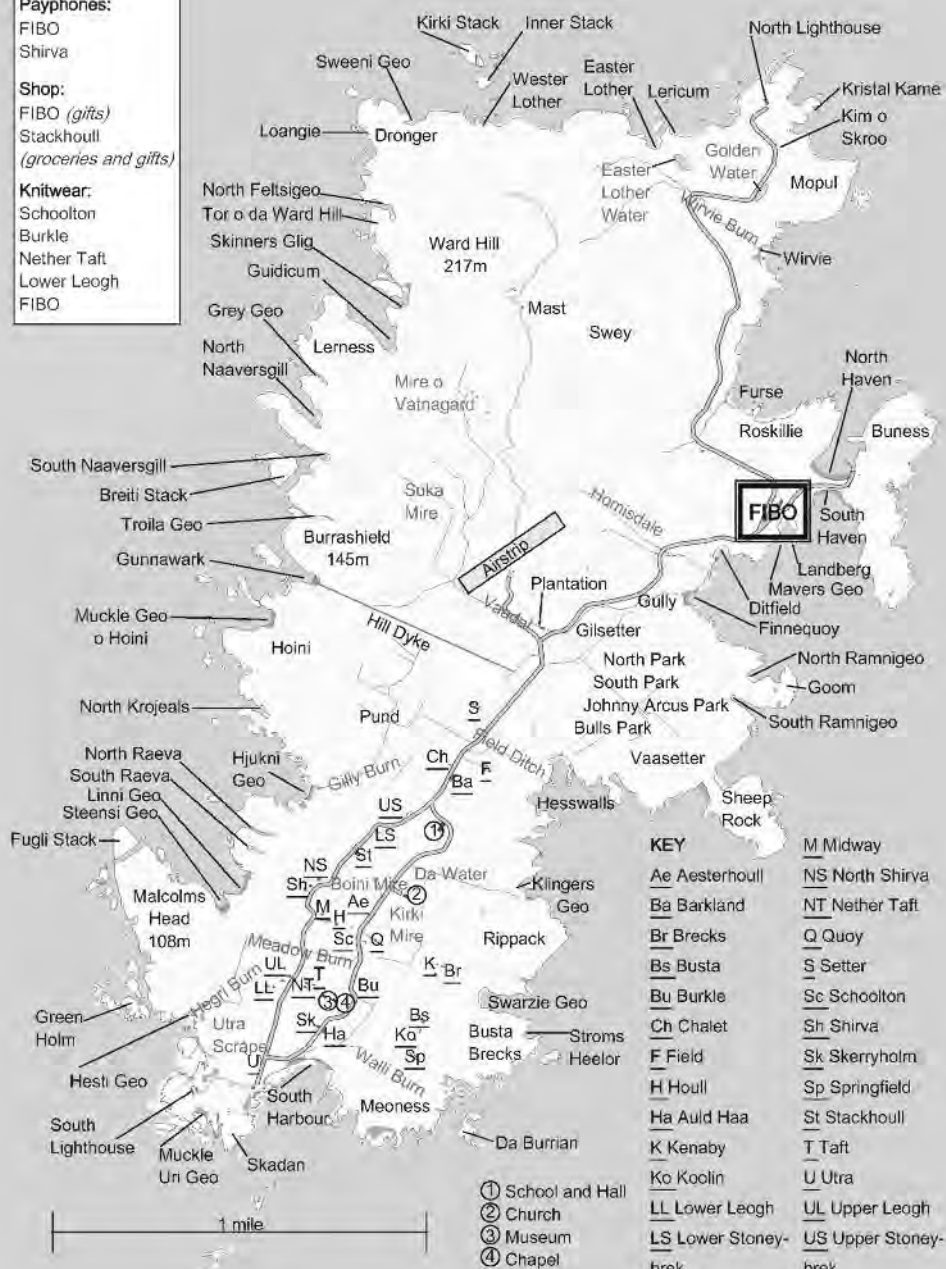
FIBO
Shirya

Shop:

FIBO (*gifts*)
Stackhoull
(*groceries and gifts*)

Knitwear:

Schoolton
Burkle
Nether Taft
Lower Leogh
FIBO



Fair Isle Bird Observatory Trust financial report and accounts for 2011

Mike Wood (Finance Director)

A summary of FIBOT's draft accounts for the year ended 31st October 2011 appears on the following pages. The full statutory accounts can be inspected at the Bird Observatory on Fair Isle. I have shown 2008 as the comparison year below because that was the last year (prior to 2011) in which the Observatory was open for visitors for a full season from April to October.

The year ended 31st October 2011 was a very satisfactory year for FIBOT as a business. The total visitor numbers at 2942 bed-nights was above average, despite our decision to operate at below maximum capacity while David and Susannah Parnaby settled in for the first season in charge and we adjusted to the different requirements of the new building. Some items of expenditure (eg insurance, lighting and heating) proved to be significantly higher than expected, hence the need to increase our charges from 2012 in order to remain financially secure.

My personal thanks go to David, Susannah and their staff for their hard work and dedication during a period of learning and adjustment to the new building.

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

I would like to thank everyone who contributed to the Appeal Fund which enabled the rebuild project to take place. Unusually for such ambitious projects, we ended with a surplus that has been returned to the FIBOT Endowment Fund. Whilst our finances are in a satisfactory state, any readers wishing to make a specific or non-specific donation to support the Observatory can be assured it would be gratefully received and effectively used.

Table 1: Income and Expenditure Report for the year ended 31st October 2011.

Sales Income	2011 (£)	2008 (£)
Hostel Income	114,558	87,072
Shop Sales	8,839	7,699
Bar Income	20,754	16,429
	144,151	111,200
Cost of Sales		
Purchases	57,964	46,213
Wages & Salaries	44,771	32,673
	102,735	78,886
Trading Profit	41,416	32,314

Systematic checklist of the birds of Fair Isle

Other Income

Interest Received	1,436	5,019
Deferred Grant Income released	82,290	0
Subscriptions	5,395	5,600
Donations	7,592	4,001
Grants Received	22,113	18,312
Other Income	0	0
	118,826	30,834

Gross Profit	160,242	63,148
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Other Expenses

Administration	24,475	9,005
Establishment	48,468	36,764
Sales & Marketing	6,183	6,949
Financial & Legal	7,285	2,768
Depreciation	96,473	12,000
	182,884	67,486

Surplus/(Deficit) for the year	(22,642)	(4,338)
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Balance Sheet as at 31st October 2011

Fixed Assets	31/10/11 (£)	31/10/08 (£)
Tangible assets	3,993,285	57,384
Investments	0	12,700
	3,993,285	70,084

Current Assets

Stocks	14,894	7,339
Debtors	78,992	11,866
Cash at bank and in hand	693,536	104,621
	787,422	123,826

Creditors: amounts falling due within one year	(708,051)	(14,944)
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Net Current Assets/(Liabilities)	79,371	108,882
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Total assets less current liabilities	4,072,656	178,966
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Creditors: amounts falling due after more than one year	(28,114)	(0)
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	4,044,542	178,966
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Representing:

Accumulated Surplus	4,044,542	178,966
Appeal Reserve	0	0

	4,044,542	183,611
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Systematic checklist of the birds of Fair Isle

David Parnaby

The table below is a checklist of the birds of Fair Isle at the start of 2012. All decisions follow those of the BBRC and BOURC, with the main list comprising all species on the Categories A-C, with those species on Category D (uncertain origin) and E (presumed escapes), along with one extinct species and one species not identified to species level, included at the end of the list for completeness.

With Hudsonian Whimbrel and Siberian Stonechat being formally announced as 'splits' from Whimbrel and Stonechat in 2011, these species are added to the Fair Isle list, along with the one new species seen on the island in 2011, Lesser Scaup. Black-browed Albatross is removed from the Fair Isle list as the BOURC and Scottish Birds Record Committee both consider that other immature albatross species cannot be excluded. This leaves the Fair Isle list on 378 at the end of 2011.

Status Categories

Vagrant (V)	ten records or less in the past 20 years, number of records shown in brackets
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:

Small Numbers (BS)	on average less than 100 pairs per annum
Moderate Numbers (MS)	on average 101–1000 pairs per annum
Large Numbers (LS)	on average more than 1000 pairs per annum

<input type="checkbox"/> Mute Swan V (9)	<input type="checkbox"/> Mandarin Duck V (1)	<input type="checkbox"/> Pochard R
<input type="checkbox"/> Bewick's Swan V (6)	<input type="checkbox"/> Wigeon FM	<input type="checkbox"/> Ring-necked Duck V (1)
<input type="checkbox"/> Whooper Swan FM	<input type="checkbox"/> American Wigeon V (1)	<input type="checkbox"/> Tufted Duck RM
<input type="checkbox"/> Bean Goose R (36)	<input type="checkbox"/> Gadwall R (39)	<input type="checkbox"/> Scaup S
<input type="checkbox"/> Pink-footed Goose FM	<input type="checkbox"/> Teal FM	<input type="checkbox"/> Lesser Scaup V (1)
<input type="checkbox"/> White-fronted Goose S	<input type="checkbox"/> Green-winged Teal V (1)	<input type="checkbox"/> Eider FM BS
<input type="checkbox"/> Greylag Goose CM	<input type="checkbox"/> Mallard FM BS	<input type="checkbox"/> King Eider V (17)
<input type="checkbox"/> Canada Goose R	<input type="checkbox"/> Black Duck V (1)	<input type="checkbox"/> Steller's Eider V (1)
<input type="checkbox"/> Barnacle Goose FM	<input type="checkbox"/> Pintail S	<input type="checkbox"/> Harlequin Duck V (2)
<input type="checkbox"/> Brent Goose R	<input type="checkbox"/> Garganey V (12)	<input type="checkbox"/> Long-tailed Duck FM
<input type="checkbox"/> Shelduck S	<input type="checkbox"/> Shoveler S	<input type="checkbox"/> Common Scoter S

- ☐ Surf Scoter V (2)
- ☐ Velvet Scoter S
- ☐ Goldeneye RM
- ☐ Smew V (7)
- ☐ Red-breasted Merganser FM
- ☐ Goosander S
- ☐ Quail S
- ☐ Red-throated Diver RM
- ☐ Black-throated Diver V (7)
- ☐ Great Northern Diver S
- ☐ White-billed Diver V (4)
- ☐ Fulmar CM BL
- ☐ Cory's Shearwater V (3)
- ☐ Great Shearwater V (16)
- ☐ Sooty Shearwater RM
- ☐ Manx Shearwater S
- ☐ Storm Petrel FM BS
- ☐ Leach's Petrel RM
- ☐ Gannet CM BL
- ☐ Cormorant FM
- ☐ Shag CM BL
- ☐ Little Bittern V (1)
- ☐ Night Heron V (2)
- ☐ Grey Heron FM
- ☐ Purple Heron V (3)
- ☐ White Stork V (4)
- ☐ Little Grebe R (c40)
- ☐ Great Crested Grebe V (14)
- ☐ Red-necked Grebe V (22)
- ☐ Slavonian Grebe S
- ☐ Honey Buzzard R (52)
- ☐ Black Kite V (1)
- ☐ Red Kite V (8)
- ☐ White-tailed Eagle V (13)
- ☐ Marsh Harrier R (42)
- ☐ Hen Harrier S
- ☐ Pallid Harrier V (3)
- ☐ Montagu's Harrier V (2)
- ☐ Goshawk V (5)
- ☐ Sparrowhawk RM
- ☐ Buzzard S
- ☐ Rough-legged Buzzard V (41)
- ☐ Golden Eagle V (1)
- ☐ Osprey S
- ☐ Lesser Kestrel V (1)
- ☐ Kestrel RM
- ☐ American Kestrel V (1)
- ☐ Red-footed Falcon V (5)
- ☐ Merlin RM
- ☐ Hobby R (53)
- ☐ Gyr Falcon V (13)
- ☐ Peregrine RM
- ☐ Water Rail RM
- ☐ Spotted Crake R (46)
- ☐ Little Crake V (1)
- ☐ Baillon's Crake V (2)
- ☐ Corncrake S
- ☐ Moorhen S
- ☐ Coot R (85)
- ☐ Crane R (21)
- ☐ Sandhill Crane V (1)
- ☐ Little Bustard V (1)
- ☐ Great Bustard V (1)
- ☐ Oystercatcher FM BS
- ☐ Avocet V (1)
- ☐ Stone Curlew V (8)
- ☐ Collared Pratincole V (1)
- ☐ Black-winged Pratincole V (1)
- ☐ Little Ringed Plover V (3)
- ☐ Ringed Plover FM BS
- ☐ Kentish Plover V (1)
- ☐ Caspian Plover V (1)
- ☐ Dotterel S
- ☐ American Golden Plover V (10)
- ☐ Pacific Golden Plover V (2)
- ☐ Golden Plover CM
- ☐ Grey Plover S
- ☐ Lapwing FM BS
- ☐ Knot FM
- ☐ Sanderling FM
- ☐ Semi-palmated Sandpiper V (3)
- ☐ Red-necked Stint V (1)
- ☐ Little Stint RM
- ☐ Temminck's Stint V (17)
- ☐ White-rumped Sandpiper V (5)
- ☐ Baird's Sandpiper V (4)
- ☐ Pectoral Sandpiper R (29)
- ☐ Curlew Sandpiper S
- ☐ Purple Sandpiper FM
- ☐ Dunlin FM
- ☐ Buff-breasted Sandpiper V (12)
- ☐ Ruff RM
- ☐ Jack Snipe FM
- ☐ Snipe CM BS
- ☐ Great Snipe R (41)
- ☐ Long-billed Dowitcher V (2)
- ☐ Woodcock FM
- ☐ Black-tailed Godwit S
- ☐ Bar-tailed Godwit RM
- ☐ Hudsonian Whimbrel V (2)
- ☐ Whimbrel FM
- ☐ Curlew FM BS
- ☐ Terek Sandpiper V (1)
- ☐ Upland Sandpiper V (1)
- ☐ Common Sandpiper FM
- ☐ Spotted Sandpiper V (1)
- ☐ Sandpiper RM
- ☐ Solitary Sandpiper V (1)
- ☐ Spotted Redshank S
- ☐ Greenshank RM
- ☐ Lesser Yellowlegs V (3)
- ☐ Wood Sandpiper S
- ☐ Redshank CM
- ☐ Turnstone CM
- ☐ Red-necked Phalarope V (21)
- ☐ Grey Phalarope R (38)
- ☐ Pomarine Skua R
- ☐ Arctic Skua FM BS
- ☐ Long-tailed Skua R
- ☐ Great Skua FM BM
- ☐ Ivory Gull V (2)
- ☐ Sabine's Gull V (6)
- ☐ Kittiwake CM BM
- ☐ Black-headed Gull FM
- ☐ Little Gull R (29)
- ☐ Laughing Gull V (1)
- ☐ Mediterranean Gull V (1)
- ☐ Common Gull FM BS
- ☐ Ring-billed Gull V (2)
- ☐ Lesser Black-backed Gull FM BS
- ☐ Herring Gull CM BS
- ☐ Iceland Gull S
- ☐ Glaucous Gull RM
- ☐ Great Black-backed Gull CM BS
- ☐ Gull-billed Tern V (1)
- ☐ Caspian Tern V (2)
- ☐ Black Tern V (2)
- ☐ White-winged Tern V (3)
- ☐ Sandwich Tern S
- ☐ Common Tern RM
- ☐ Roseate Tern V (2)
- ☐ Arctic Tern FM BM
- ☐ Guillemot CM BL
- ☐ Brünnich's Guillemot V (1)

- ☐ Razorbill FM BL
- ☐ Black Guillemot FM BL
- ☐ Little Auk FM
- ☐ Puffin CM BL
- ☐ Pallas's Sandgrouse V (1)
- ☐ Rock Dove FM BS
- ☐ Stock Dove S
- ☐ Woodpigeon FM
- ☐ Collared Dove FM
- ☐ Turtle Dove S
- ☐ Rufous Turtle Dove V (1)
- ☐ Cuckoo RM
- ☐ Barn Owl V (5)
- ☐ Scops Owl V (2)
- ☐ Snowy Owl V (24)
- ☐ Long-eared Owl RM
- ☐ Short-eared Owl RM
- ☐ Nightjar V (27)
- ☐ Swift FM
- ☐ Pallid Swift V (1)
- ☐ Alpine Swift V (7)
- ☐ Little Swift V (1)
- ☐ Kingfisher V (1)
- ☐ Bee-eater V (8)
- ☐ Roller V (1)
- ☐ Hoopoe R (38)
- ☐ Wryneck RM
- ☐ Great Spotted Woodpecker S
- ☐ Golden Oriole R (44)
- ☐ Brown Shrike V (1)
- ☐ Isabelline Shrike V (4)
- ☐ Red-backed Shrike RM
- ☐ Lesser Grey Shrike V (21)
- ☐ Great Grey Shrike S
- ☐ Southern Grey Shrike V (2)
- ☐ Woodchat Shrike V (29)
- ☐ Magpie V (1)
- ☐ Jackdaw S
- ☐ Rook RM
- ☐ Carrion Crow FM
- ☐ Hooded Crow RM BS
- ☐ Raven RM BS
- ☐ Goldcrest FM
- ☐ Firecrest V (4)
- ☐ Blue Tit V (8)
- ☐ Great Tit R (33)
- ☐ Coal Tit V (7)
- ☐ Calandra Lark V (4)
- ☐ Bimaculated Lark V (1)
- ☐ Short-toed Lark S
- ☐ Crested Lark V (1)
- ☐ Woodlark R (55)
- ☐ Skylark CM BS
- ☐ Shore Lark R
- ☐ Sand Martin RM
- ☐ Swallow CM
- ☐ House Martin FM
- ☐ Red-rumped Swallow V (8)
- ☐ Greenish Warbler R (42)
- ☐ Arctic Warbler R (79)
- ☐ Pallas's Warbler R (40)
- ☐ Yellow-browed Warbler RM
- ☐ Hume's Warbler V (2)
- ☐ Radde's Warbler V (6)
- ☐ Dusky Warbler V (13)
- ☐ Western Bonelli's Warbler V (3)
- ☐ Wood Warbler RM
- ☐ Chiffchaff FM
- ☐ Willow Warbler CM
- ☐ Blackcap CM
- ☐ Garden Warbler FM
- ☐ Barred Warbler RM
- ☐ Lesser Whitethroat FM
- ☐ Whitethroat FM
- ☐ Dartford Warbler V (1)
- ☐ Subalpine Warbler R (79)
- ☐ Sardinian Warbler V (2)
- ☐ Pallas's Grasshopper Warbler R (22)
- ☐ Lanceolated Warbler R (81)
- ☐ Grasshopper Warbler RM
- ☐ River Warbler V (14)
- ☐ Savi's Warbler V (7)
- ☐ Eastern Olivaceous Warbler V (3)
- ☐ Booted Warbler V (13)
- ☐ Sykes's Warbler V (2)
- ☐ Icterine Warbler S
- ☐ Melodious Warbler V (17)
- ☐ Aquatic Warbler V (37)
- ☐ Sedge Warbler FM
- ☐ Paddyfield Warbler V (17)
- ☐ Blyth's Reed Warbler R (30)
- ☐ Marsh Warbler S
- ☐ Reed Warbler RM
- ☐ Great Reed Warbler V (14)
- ☐ Thick-billed Warbler V (2)
- ☐ Waxwing S
- ☐ Treecreeper V (8)
- ☐ Wren BS
- ☐ Starling FM BM
- ☐ Rose-coloured Starling R (40)
- ☐ Dipper R (37)
- ☐ White's Thrush V (12)
- ☐ Siberian Thrush V (1)
- ☐ Hermit Thrush V (2)
- ☐ Swainson's Thrush V (2)
- ☐ Grey-cheeked Thrush V (3)
- ☐ Ring Ouzel FM
- ☐ Blackbird CM
- ☐ Eyebrowed Thrush V (2)
- ☐ Dusky Thrush V (1)
- ☐ Black-throated Thrush V (12)
- ☐ Fieldfare CM
- ☐ Song Thrush CM
- ☐ Redwing CM
- ☐ Mistle Thrush RM
- ☐ Brown Flycatcher V (2)
- ☐ Spotted Flycatcher FM
- ☐ Robin CM
- ☐ Rufous-tailed Robin V (1)
- ☐ Thrush Nightingale R (55)
- ☐ Nightingale R (53)
- ☐ Siberian Rubythroat V (3)
- ☐ Bluethroat RM
- ☐ Red-flanked Bluetail V (9)
- ☐ Black Redstart RM
- ☐ Redstart FM
- ☐ Whinchat FM
- ☐ Siberian Stonechat R (41)
- ☐ European Stonechat S
- ☐ Isabelline Wheatear V (1)
- ☐ Wheatear CM BS
- ☐ Pied Wheatear V (1)
- ☐ Black-eared Wheatear V (5)
- ☐ Desert Wheatear V (5)
- ☐ Rock Thrush V (1)
- ☐ Red-breasted Flycatcher S
- ☐ Collared Flycatcher V (4)
- ☐ Pied Flycatcher FM
- ☐ Dunnock FM
- ☐ Alpine Accentor V (2)
- ☐ House Sparrow BS
- ☐ Tree Sparrow R
- ☐ Yellow Wagtail RM
- ☐ Citrine Wagtail R (71)

- ☐ Grey Wagtail S
- ☐ Pied Wagtail FM BS
- ☐ Richard's Pipit S
- ☐ Blyth's Pipit V (4)
- ☐ Tawny Pipit V (17)
- ☐ Olive-backed Pipit R (79)
- ☐ Tree Pipit FM
- ☐ Pechora Pipit R (42)
- ☐ Meadow Pipit CM BS
- ☐ Red-throated Pipit R (77)
- ☐ Rock Pipit FM BS
- ☐ Buff-bellied Pipit V (3)
- ☐ Chaffinch FM
- ☐ Brambling FM
- ☐ Serin V (3)
- ☐ Greenfinch RM
- ☐ Citril Finch V (1)
- ☐ Goldfinch R
- ☐ Siskin FM
- ☐ Linnet RM
- ☐ Twite FM BS
- ☐ Lesser Redpoll S
- ☐ Mealy Redpoll FM
- ☐ Arctic Redpoll R (94)
- ☐ Two-barred Crossbill R (49)
- ☐ Common Crossbill RM
- ☐ Parrot Crossbill V (68)
- ☐ Common Rosefinch RM
- ☐ Bullfinch RM
- ☐ Hawfinch S
- ☐ Snow Bunting CM

- ☐ Lapland Bunting FM
- ☐ Savannah Sparrow V (2)
- ☐ Song Sparrow V (3)
- ☐ White-crowned Sparrow V (1)
- ☐ White-throated Sparrow V (5)
- ☐ Black-faced Bunting V (1)
- ☐ Pine Bunting V (9)
- ☐ Yellowhammer RM
- ☐ Ortolan Bunting S
- ☐ Cretzschmar's Bunting V (2)
- ☐ Yellow-browed Bunting V (1)
- ☐ Rustic Bunting S (128)
- ☐ Chestnut-eared Bunting V (1)
- ☐ Little Bunting S
- ☐ Yellow-breasted Bunting R (103)
- ☐ Reed Bunting FM
- ☐ Pallas's Reed Bunting V (2)
- ☐ Black-headed Bunting V (25)
- ☐ Corn Bunting R
- ☐ Bobolink V (1)
- ☐ Brown-headed Cowbird V (1)
- ☐ Baltimore Oriole V (1)
- ☐ Tennessee Warbler V (2)
- ☐ Blackburnian Warbler V (1)
- ☐ Yellow-rumped Warbler V (2)
- ☐ Blackpoll Warbler V (2)

Category D:

- ☐ Daurian Starling
- ☐ Red-headed Bunting

Category E:

- ☐ Black Swan
- ☐ Bar-headed Goose
- ☐ Red-breasted Goose
- ☐ Wood Duck
- ☐ Lanner Falcon
- ☐ Saker Falcon
- ☐ White-shouldered Starling
- ☐ Yellow-headed Blackbird
- ☐ Lazuli Bunting
- ☐ Indigo Bunting
- ☐ Painted Bunting
- ☐ Varied Bunting
- ☐ House Finch
- ☐ Pallas' Rosefinch
- ☐ Long-tailed Rosefinch
- ☐ Chestnut Bunting
- ☐ Red-headed Bunting
- ☐ Yellow-billed Grosbeak
- ☐ Black-headed Grosbeak

Extinct:

- ☐ Great Auk

Unidentified to species:

- ☐ Albatross sp.

Pallas's Grasshopper Warbler (left) and Lanceolated Warbler (right) © W. Miles.
Fair Isle was the only site in Britain to host either of these species in 2011.

FAIR ISLE ~ 2011.

Pallas's Grasshopper Warbler
30th September

Large; ground tone warm
(rusty); reddish rump;
long tail; long pp-
projection; unstreaked
flanks; upright
posture.



Tertial pattern
diagnostic:



Pg.

Lance-
(Grasshopper W.)

Small; ground tone
neutral (olive); little
contrast; short pp-
tail; short pp-
projection;
streaked
flanks; squat



Lanceolated Warbler
13th October





Killer Whales, March, Bunes © *D. Parnaby*. Part of the group of eight that were first seen from the Warden's kitchen window.



Killer Whale, June, Roskillie © *J. Moss*. This bull gave amazing views directly under the cliffs before taking his pod to South Harbour.



Killer Whales and Grey Seal, June, South Harbour © *D. Parnaby*. The pod was first seen at Roskillie then spent some time putting on a tremendous show as they tried to dislodge this seal from its rock.